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## **10.0 PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT**

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### **10.1 PURPOSE OF THE ELEMENT**

The intent of the Parks and Recreation Element is to identify park and recreation resources in St. Helena, and to outline a general strategy for meeting the existing and projected demand for recreation facilities in the community. The text and policies of this element need to be considered in conjunction with the Open Space and Conservation Element, particularly with regard to the provision of trails and the maintenance of open space for passive recreation uses. See Figure 6-1 for location of existing and proposed parks and their relationship to open space corridors.

### **10.2 PARKS AND RECREATION ISSUES**

#### **Management and Operations**

The City's parks system and recreation programs are directed and maintained by two City departments: the Recreation Department and Parks Department. The Recreation Department, which is staffed by one full-time director and several part-time employees, is responsible for the planning and funding of new parks, and handles reservations for City-operated facilities such as the parks and the Carnegie Building. The Department also plans and implements a variety of recreation and educational programs for citizens of all ages. A five-member Parks and Recreation Commission acts as a citizen's advisory board to the Recreation Director and City Council.

The Parks Department, which is staffed by a lead person and a parks maintenance person, oversees maintenance of all City parks and park facilities. In addition to these duties the Department also is responsible for: maintaining the landscaping around all City buildings and facilities; maintaining street trees and emptying trash receptacles on Main Street; and the use of herbicides around City facilities and roadsides. The Department is currently understaffed and additional personnel will be needed as the park system grows. Both members of the Parks Department report to the Director of Public Works Department.

#### **Recreation Resources**

St. Helena's park system currently consists of five parks totalling 12 acres. Existing parks include: Baldwin Park (0.8 acres), Crane Park (10.0 acres), Lewis Station Park (0.1 acres), Lyman Park (0.8 acres), and Stonebridge Park (0.3 acres). The operation of the park system is funded by the City. Park use is free to the public, making the parks popular with both residents and tourists alike. An overview of the City's park system shows a poor distribution of park sites within the community. At present, the entire section of the City that lies east of Main Street lacks a park with facilities for active recreation. All of the City's sports facilities lie west of Main Street at the high school, Crane park, or Carpy Field. The east side of town also lacks easy, safe access to westside parks due to heavy traffic on Main Street.

In addition to poor distribution, the City also has a low ratio of active parklands to population. While demographics of the community show a somewhat older population that may not require the typical amount of active park land, the population of school age children has been growing, creating a need for additional park facilities. An unofficial standard adopted by communities throughout the country is five acres of active parkland per 1,000 residents. St. Helena currently provides roughly half that amount, and of the developed parklands the City has, only Lyman and Crane parks have any developed recreation facilities. In order to augment existing parklands, the City uses active recreation facilities at the elementary school and high school.

The City's Recreation Department and park system provide for only a portion of the community's recreation. For a more detailed inventory of recreation resources, including profiles of existing park facilities, refer to Appendix C.

### **Tourism**

Tourists are attracted to St. Helena largely because of its proximity in the Napa Valley wine-producing region. During the summer, holidays, and weekends, St. Helena is crowded with tourists. Highway 29, which forms St. Helena's Main Street within the City limits, funnels tourist traffic, including individual cars and commercial busses and tours, through the center of the community. In addition, the proposed expansion of the Wine Train service would increase the number of tourists brought into the heart of the community.

Tourism has a negative impact on Parks and Recreation. Tourist traffic contributes to congestion on Main Street, constrains the availability of parking, and increases crowding of sidewalks and parks. All of these factors affect the parks in St. Helena; during peak tourist times the parks are crowded, parking is problematic due to cars and tour buses taking up spaces, and traffic noise disrupts the peacefulness of the parks. Overcrowding by tourists and migratory farm laborers is considered a major factor leading to the nonuse by residents of St. Helena's park system.

### **Circulation**

Accessibility to the City's parks is an important factor in their use. Bicycling and walking to a park can be important components of a pleasurable park experience. Traffic congestion and limited parking are problems in St. Helena, especially the limitation they put on park access. Crossing Main Street can be time consuming and difficult, not to mention dangerous for children. In addition, the lack of adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities (trails and in some instances sidewalks) within the community forces pedestrians and cyclists to travel along the sides of community roadways, where they can come in conflict with vehicular traffic.

More attention should be paid to the use of bicycles in the community, since over one third of the residents surveyed ride their bicycles to the parks. Bike paths can provide transportation routes for other modes, such as walking, roller skating, and skateboarding. Neither bicycles or skateboards are allowed to be ridden on the sidewalks along Main Street, and the street itself is very dangerous to ride in, especially for young children. A

survey of the community indicated that, given the right facilities, many people would use alternate modes of transportation, instead of the automobile.

### **Community Opinions**

The City has surveyed the community to get a better sense of the community's recreation concerns/needs. The following discussion summarizes the findings of those surveys.

Although 83% of the people surveyed knew the location of all of three larger parks in St. Helena (Crane Park, Lyman Park, and Stonebridge Park), 25% of the people never use the parks. Another 31% use the parks only a couple of times per year.

Of the nonusers, most of the people surveyed do not go to the parks because they are retired and have other things to do. Other nonusers either think that the parks were too tourist-oriented, they just do not like to go to the park, or they have no reason to go.

Residents said that they use Crane Park the most because of its turf area, picnic area, and tennis courts. In general, Crane Park has the best facilities for large social gatherings. Lyman Park is visited mostly by mothers or grandparents with small children, who go to use the tot lot.

Lyman was rated the nicest park in St. Helena in both facilities and landscaping. Of those surveyed, 96% rated its appearance to be either excellent or good. Stonebridge Park rated almost as well, 86% said its appearance is either excellent or good. Crane Park did not rate as well; only 46% rated its appearance as either excellent or good. Few suggestions were mentioned regarding improvements to Stonebridge and Lyman Park, but there were several for Crane Park, including: better landscaping (31%), better maintenance (28%), and better play equipment (12.5%).

The largest percentage of the people surveyed play tennis (25%), while the self-directed sports, such as walking (19%), cycling (11%), and swimming (10%), are also popular. Although softball tied with tennis as St. Helena's most popular sport (in the opinion of those surveyed), only 3% of the people surveyed said that they actually played it. The majority (56%) of those surveyed indicated that St. Helena's facilities meet their needs. Those who said that existing facilities do not meet their needs, suggested some extra facilities such as a swimming pool (17%), more children's facilities (17%), more aerobics classes (11%), bike paths (11%), and a skateboard park (9%).

The mode of transportation to existing parks varies, but the largest percentage (42%) indicated they drive, 34% indicated that they ride their bicycles, and 22% walk. Forty-one percent (41%) of those surveyed did not think that access is a problem in the current park system. Those who felt there were access problems suggested signs that show the directions to the parks and expanded parking facilities at the parks (especially Stonebridge Park).

### **Implementation**

In the past, implementation has been haphazard due to the lack of funding and the absence of long range planning. The intent of this element is to identify some of the

City's long range recreation needs and provide ideas on how to acquire better funding, in order to promote a smoother implementation schedule for acquiring and developing park and recreation facilities.

### **10.3 GOALS AND POLICIES**

#### **Guiding Policies**

- 10.3.1 Enhance the quality of life and environment in St. Helena through the provision of adequate parks and recreation facilities commensurate with a community of St. Helena's size and demographic composition
- 10.3.2 Establish a city-wide system of parks and open space that are linked together to the degree possible with pedestrian and bicycle trails
- 10.3.3 Provide park facilities that meet a variety of needs ranging from passive use to active recreation activities
- 10.3.4 Locate new parks so that City park facilities are distributed throughout all areas of the City to ensure safe and convenient access by residents. Pursue opportunities for the joint development of parks with schools.
- 10.3.5 Encourage developers to provide open space and recreational facilities as part of new residential developments. The City may consider density bonuses for the inclusion of significant public recreational facilities in new development.
- 10.3.6 Assess park development fees on all new commercial, industrial, and residential development sufficient to fund City-wide park improvements.
- 10.3.7 Give priority in the parks acquisition and improvements program to enhancing the City's active recreation facilities.
- 10.3.8 Financing for park and recreation facilities should not be limited to approval of additional development.

#### **Implementing Policies**

- 10.3.9 Adopt 5 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents as the goal for citywide park acquisition and development.

*With a year 2010 population, the 5 acres per 1,000 residents standard would result in a demand for 32.1 acres of developed parkland, or 20.1 acres more than the City currently has.*

- 10.3.10 Establish a centrally-located park on the east side of town between Pope Street and Sulphur Creek, as shown on the General Plan Land Use Map.

*The Land Use Map (Figure 2-1) shows a 3.8-acre park site on the Signorelli property.*

- 10.3.11 Develop the City-owned lower reservoir area as a water-oriented community recreation facility.

*The 15± acre Lower Reservoir has the potential to provide diverse recreation opportunities to St. Helena residents. The reservoir can fulfill many of St. Helena's needs, while preserving the natural vegetation and wildlife of its surrounding area.*

*Among its assets are unique recreation opportunities such as fishing and boating. Using the reservoir for fresh water swimming can help reduce the occasional overcrowding of the Community Pool during the summer, while also expanding the number of hours that the public is able to swim.*

*Facilities would include a small parking lot, a small dock for launching paddle boats and for fishing, picnic areas, rest rooms, and a small swimming beach. Full time staffing will be necessary due to water safety considerations. The revenues from renting out the boats can help pay for the staff's wages during operation. The park would work best as a seasonal park, open for summers only, as staffing the park would be costly for the City when only a few people attend during the off-season.*

*Many residents are not using the parks in St. Helena because of overcrowding by tourists. Some residents feel more attention is paid to tourists' needs than their own. By making the reservoir accessible only to St. Helena residents (by showing a City recreation card upon entering the park, for example), it will give them a chance to get away from the City during the hectic tourist season.*

- 10.3.12 Obtain easements or title to land along Sulphur Creek and develop a pedestrian trail along the creek from the Napa River to Crane Avenue (Valley View) Bridge.

*The development of a linear trail along Sulphur Creek will not only protect fragile riparian habitat along Sulphur Creek, but also provide community residents with access to downtown through a quiet and natural setting.*

*The trail alignment will be located on the south side of the creek between Main and Pope Streets. Downstream of the Pope Street Bridge the path would be on the north bank of the Signorelli, Paulson,*

*Locati, and Jenkins properties. One hundred feet west of the Bishop property, the trail would leave the creek and traverse the Jenkins, City, and Miller properties to the Napa River. The precise location of the alignment would be decided upon at the time of project review.*

- 10.3.13 Coordinate with countywide efforts to establish a regional river trail along the Napa River.

*In addition to providing for local bicycle riders, the City should work with the County and other jurisdictions to establish a regional trail that will accommodate bicycling up and down the Valley.*

- 10.3.14 Develop a community center that includes a gymnasium which will accommodate the growing demand for indoor sports facilities.

*The need for indoor sports will increase a decade from now, so facilities such as racquetball courts, volleyball courts, basketball courts, and physical fitness equipment should be considered.*

*At present, Recreation Department programs are dependent on the use of school facilities, Native Sons Hall, American Legion Hall, and the Presbyterian Church Hall. The Recreation Department spends thousands of dollars every year on the rental of these facilities for the public. Also, because of limited time and space at these facilities, some recreation programs cannot be offered. During volleyball and basketball season, very little time at the high school gym is left for the community.*

*The recreation facilities of the Community Center will be as follows:*

- 1. A gymnasium/meeting hall that will be large enough for regulation basketball and volleyball courts;*
- 2. A stage would be constructed at one end of the gymnasium;*
- 3. An adjoining commercial kitchen; and*
- 4. Additional rooms for recreation programs and community meetings.*

*The Upper Valley Community Center Inc., a non-profit corporation started by St. Helena service and social club members, has started the fund raising activities for the Community Center. The estimated cost of this facility (in 1993) would be between \$5,000,000-\$8,000,000.*

*The Community Center will need to be on property at least five acres in size. Potential locations that have been considered for the Center include, but are not limited to, the St. Helena School District Property*

*on Grayson and Crane avenues and the Garden Property on Pope Street adjacent to the Napa River.*

*It is also suggested that a swimming pool complex should be integrated into the Community Center plans and be built on the same property.*

- 10.3.15 Provide improvements to the recently acquired Constantini property adjacent to Crane Park, to provide needed parking, picnic facilities, a tot lot, and a vehicular access to the park from Grayson Avenue.
- 10.3.16 Provide a second community park on the east side of town, that would provide active sports facilities such as softball fields and soccer fields.

*Currently, Carpy Field is the only lighted softball field in St. Helena. the field is located on the elementary school property in the middle of a residential area. During softball season as many as 600 adults play five nights a week, causing a great impact on the lives of the residents surrounding the field. For this reason, it is suggested that new fields be located away from sensitive residential areas as much as possible.*

*Soccer is also a popular sport in St. Helena, and will be in greater demand as the children who play the sport get older. Currently, soccer is played at Carpy Field because there is no soccer field in the City. It is suggested that upon the development of the softball fields, a soccer field should be developed in the same area. Suitable locations for such active sports fields include the Garden property along Pope Street and somewhere along the north side of the Adams Street extension, perhaps within the flood plain of the river.*

*The cost for development of these fields (in 1993) has been estimated to be approximately \$325,000-\$350,000.*

- 10.3.17 Develop the City-owned land along the Napa River and Pratt Avenue as a passive park that would provide access to the river while preserving wildlife habitat values.

*Pratt Avenue Park will be very similar to Stonebridge Park in size, use, and environment. St. Helena has passive parks; therefore, it is recommended that development of the park should be delayed, while the land is still maintained as a nature preserve.*

- 10.3.18 Upon the development of the Paulson property, it is suggested that a strip of land be developed with a path linking the Sulphur Springs Creek trail and Hunt Avenue.
- 10.3.19 As residential development occurs in the northwest portion of town (i.e., in the vicinity of the Nicholson property), provide a park that can accommodate active recreation.

- 10.3.20 Designate the undeveloped area adjacent to the west side of Highway 29 and the north side of Sulphur Springs Creek as a future park site.

*The concept is to develop a City park at this critical point in the City's development pattern that will function as a focal point for the community. Located at roughly the center point of the urbanized area, this site would enhance the entry experience into the downtown from the south; would begin to link, rather than separate, the CBD and the commercial area to the south on Highway 29; and would provide an entry point to the downtown from the pedestrian/bicycle trail along Sulphur Springs Creek.*

## 10.4 FUNDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

### **Past Acquisition and Funding**

The following methods have been used in the past to acquire or maintain park land and recreation facilities, and to provide recreation programs:

City General Fund. Daily operational and maintenance costs are funded by the City, as well as sponsoring recreation programs. The City's Bedroom Tax has been used for the expansion of the park and recreation facilities and programs. The renovation of the Carnegie Building is one example.

Gifts. Lyman Park was originally deeded to the City by a private household.

Federal and State Funds. The money from various bond acts has helped with the acquisition and development of Crane Park, and Lyman Park's restoration was also done with bond act money. Stonebridge Park was partially funded by an urban forestry grant.

Volunteer Programs. Stonebridge Park was partially developed by St. Helena Beautification Foundation, with help from the California Conservation Corps and the City staff.

Developer Contributions. Under the Quimby Act, a developer of a residential area can be asked to either donate land, or money, to the City for the right to develop residential property. Baldwin Park has been the only park to be acquired and developed by this means.

Program and Facility Fees. Fees vary between the facilities and programs offered. Revenues generated from facility and program fees relieves the burden that rental of buildings and facilities put on the General Fund.

Commercial Resources. Some companies in the St. Helena area help sponsor recreation programs. One example in recent years is the grant that the City received from Beringer Winery to help pay for the rental and staffing of the

Community Pool during the summers and the renovation of the tot lot at Lyman Park.

**Future Implementation**

Funding for the implementation of the projects that are recommended can come from many sources. Due to the strain acquisition and development of park lands can put on the City's General Fund, it is important to find different sources of funding.

Many of the projects and acquisitions can be financed (or partially financed) by grants. For example, Reservoir Restoration Grant can help develop the Lower Reservoir, while there are countless Bicycle Pathway and River Preservation grants that can help fund the Sulphur Springs Creek Trail.

Upper Valley Community Center, Inc., a non-profit corporation started by St. Helena service and social club members, has been raising money for the Community Center through the proceeds from the St. Helena Hometown Harvest Festival.

Other parks, like the suggested park east of Main Street, can be built by the developer(s) of adjacent residential areas.

For other examples of funding please see Appendix C.

