



NORTH HIGHLANDS RECREATION & PARK DISTRICT

PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

DECEMBER 2023

**NORTH HIGHLANDS
RECREATION & PARK
DISTRICT
PARKS & RECREATION
MASTER PLAN**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

The 2023 North Highlands Recreation and Park District (NHRPD) Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a planning document that will guide the North Highlands Recreation and Park District as a strategic and systematic planning tool to manage the future of their recreation and parks system. This forward-thinking document establishes methods to prepare, plan, and anticipate the growing and diverse needs of its community for the next ten years.

This document is intended to be a usable living document that can be adapted as the community's needs change. This document does not provide specific park plans or specifically designate funds to projects.

WHO WE ARE

NHRPD is located northeast of the City of Sacramento and is a part of Sacramento County. The District serves residents living in North Highlands and the southern portion of Antelope. The area has heavy roots in agriculture and cattle grazing. In the 1930s, the U.S. Army established the McClellan Air Force Base in the area, which brought more people into the area in the 1940s. The McClellan Air Force Base closed in 2001 and has been converted into McClellan Business Park, a master-planned business campus.

Today, the District serves approximately 49,000 residents with roughly 85 acres of park land. The North Highlands population has been slowly growing since 2010, with an average annual growth rate of 1.55%. It is anticipated the District population will continue to grow to a total of approximately 59,000 by 2033.

Demographic data also indicates an increase in racial diversity within the District in the last decade. Even so, a large portion of the population identify as White (Non-Hispanic or Latino). The 2020 Census reveals 47% identify as White (Non-Hispanic or Latino), 30% identify as Hispanic or Latino, 6% as two or more races, 9% as Black or African American, and 8% as Asian.

Overall, the District's population age trends younger than that of the State and United States as a whole. The median age of the District population is 33.2, compared to the median age of California at 37 and the United States at 38.4.

NHRPD demographics indicate that the community is ethnically diverse, speak English and largely speak a second language, is generally younger, and tends to have lower income. North Highlands will likely continue to attract businesses and young adults, diverse neighborhoods, and local attractions in the future.

BENCHMARK COMPARISONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Reviewing trends, along with best practices, is an important part of developing a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Understanding these trends aids in planning efforts and in maximizing opportunities to engage users in creative and relative forms of exercise. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan draws research from the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), and the Outdoor Foundation. Research involving ways to improve diversity and inclusion in parks and recreation, as well as trends in recreational programming, were also presented. A list of comparable agencies were identified based on similarities between population serviced, managed park acreage, and level of service standards.

INVENTORY OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

As inventoried in October 2022, the District has three recreation facilities, 13 parks, and a mix of different recreation programs including adult sports, youth sports, daycares, camps, active adult events, and community events. Below is a list of all parks and recreation facilities the District owns and manages. More information about the District's parks, facilities, and programs can be found in **Chapter 4: Inventory**. A detailed inventory matrix can be found in Appendix A. The District strives to provide adequate programs and park space to its residents as the community grows. To do this, every park and recreation agency establishes a Level of Service standard, which the previous Parks and Recreation Master Plan lists for the District as five acres per 1,000 residents. The five acres are further broken down to 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents for Community Parks and 2.5 acres per 1,000 for Neighborhood Parks.

NHRPD PARKS	TYOLOGY
BROCK PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
CAPEHART PARK	COMMUNITY PARK
CHARDONNAY PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
CHERRY BLOSSOM PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
FREEDOM PARK	COMMUNITY PARK
KARL ROSARIO PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
LARCHMONT PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
MEMORIAL PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
PLANEHAVEN PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
RIDGEPOINT PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
RUTH INMAN PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
SIERRA CREEK PARK	COMMUNITY PARK
STRIZEK PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

NHRPD FACILITIES
CAPEHART GYM
KAY F. DAHILL COMMUNITY CENTER
RECREATION CENTER

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This document was informed by primary research including site visits, meetings with the community, and a public survey. The public engagement process shed light on areas for improvement and areas of particular strength.

Two in-person meetings with the public were held in January 2023, and an additional meeting with focus groups, such as sports groups and community groups, was held in February 2023. Meetings were held at different days and times of the week to add flexibility for residents to attend.

An online survey was conducted from mid-January to early March 2023 and was offered in three different languages—English, Russian, and Spanish—to help more residents access the survey. The survey is meant to be the main source of data collection for demographic data, park use, user experience, satisfaction and needs of the District’s parks, and current priorities for recreational programming. There were a total of 204 responses of which 194 were completed in English, five in Spanish, and five in Russian.

Key themes were identified during the community engagement process. Safety was at the top of the list when it came to concerns around parks. Participants reported an increase in the amount of unlawful activity and unwanted loitering. The second highest concern among respondents was cleanliness and perceived lack of maintenance at parks. The perceived lack of maintenance appears to be based on old and deteriorating amenities and furnishings and in some instances vandalism.

Aquatic programs and facilities was another major theme among participants. North Highlands District currently has secured access to swimming pools at two different Twin Rivers High Schools (Foothill High School and Highlands High School) to offer swim lessons and a competitive swim team program. With the recent lifting of COVID-19 related restrictions, NHRPD will once again be providing aquatic programming at TRUSD pools.

In general, participants requested additional and more diverse programming in parks that are inclusive and multi-generational. Diverse programming can include dog parks and different amenities, such as soccer fields, basketball courts, fitness stations, walking trails, and more.

A large portion of surveyed participants has never participated in District programs due to lack of interest, schedule conflicts, or overall costs. Diversifying and even partnering with third parties to offer a greater variety would likely increase participation rates. Survey participants were asked what type of recreation programs they would like to see in the future. Common programs requested include aquatics, sports leagues (adult), teen/tween programs, senior programs, special needs, health and wellness, and larger and more frequent community events. Information from community input, site investigations, and spatial mapping analysis were used to develop a set of recommendations for the District.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Input from the community, site observations, and spatial analysis led to the following recommendations to improve and build upon the District's park system and recreation programs. An overwhelming number of outreach participants felt the District should first focus its efforts on maintaining, fixing, and upgrading the existing parks as a top priority. Below is a recommendations list of three primary priorities, followed by a list of secondary priorities, for the District to focus on.

PRIMARY PRIORITIES

1. Focus on general maintenance of existing parks and facilities, including any upgrades necessary—particularly existing restrooms and playground facilities.
2. Find more secure and/or permanent method to use a pool facility for swim programs during the hot summer season.
3. Establish joint-use relationships with private organizations or school districts to access facilities, such as sport facilities that the District does not currently have or have the resources to build and/or manage.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

1. Identify and retrofit an existing park with underutilized turf for a fenced dog park.
2. Ensure accessibility, inclusion in programs and park features, and multi-generational users are considered in improvements and new parks.
3. Incorporate more shade into existing parks, whether that's through shade structures, sails, or adding more trees.
4. Incorporate more passive programs at parks such as walking trails or fitness equipment.
5. Expand recreation programs offered to include a broader age range, health and wellness classes, inclusive programs for special needs, and sport leagues for children and adults.
6. Continue to foster community pride through social/community events at different scales.

Additionally, in terms of funding, it is recommended that the District reviews available funding sources and annual budgets before determining where to allocate resources. **Chapter 6: Recommendations** includes a list of different funding mechanisms that the District currently uses, as well as alternative sources such as grants, that they may consider pursuing to address the recommendations identified.

1. INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE PARKS MASTER PLAN

The North Highlands Recreation and Park District's (NHRPD) Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a strategic and actionable plan for meeting the needs, interests, and aspirations of its community. The District strives to continue their commitment and investments in making parks and recreational experiences equitable and accessible for all.

The 2023 Parks and Recreation Master Plan provides new recommendations and goals for improving the District's park system, open space, recreation facilities, and recreation programs to meet the community's current and future needs for the next 10 years.

The following is a summary of the content within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- A comprehensive review of existing parks, facilities, and recreational programming in the District. These include any existing joint-use agreements.
- A detailed review of national trends and other comparison Districts, best practices, and design guidelines.
- An assessment of current needs and gaps within the current park system as it stands in 2023.
- Proposed recommendations and funding mechanisms for planning and managing the District's parks and open space assets.

Thorough analysis and proposed recommendations will serve to guide policy decisions, including prioritizing and balancing demands and opportunities and providing a framework for park and facility improvements and other expenditures for parks and recreation activities. The outcome of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan will be a long-range plan for parks and facility improvements that will enable multi-year planning for capital investments to occur, and may identify potentially shared recreational programming and facilities with other organizations in the community for the future.

Relevant park planning and related documents—including the Sacramento County 2030 General Plan, Sacramento County's 2011 Bicycle Master Plan, Sacramento County Pedestrian Master Plan 2007, North Highlands Recreation and Park District Self-Evaluation and Transition Draft Plan 2022, and Sacramento County Active Transportation Plan 2022—were reviewed to ensure consistency in goals and vision for the North Highlands community.

While specific designs for individual parks are not presented in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the recommendations will generally consider ADA compliance, accessibility, and inclusive designs to increase access to parks and recreational facilities for persons with disabilities. The District has an ongoing commitment to provide programs, services, and activities in a nondiscriminatory manner for individuals with all types of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive challenges.

NORTH HIGHLANDS RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT

The North Highlands Recreation and Park District was established in 1955 and is currently an independent special district governed by a five-member elected board of directors. There are three department divisions within the District: the Administration Division, Maintenance Division, and Recreation Division.

The mission of the North Highlands Recreation and Park District is “To help enrich and fulfill the lives of the citizens through the provision of facilities and programs that will provide and enhance creative, wholesome and imaginative leisure time living patterns with emphasis on family and youth oriented programs.”

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is guided by the principle of this mission statement, and the recommendations outlined aspire to provide an open space system and recreational opportunities where everyone can access, engage, explore, and play. This document is intended to be independent from the previous 2008 Parks Master Plan and utilizes a fresh lens to evaluate the District and its residents.

Value & Benefits of District’s Parks and Recreational Facilities

Great parks contribute to healthy and vibrant lifestyles for communities. Parks provide many opportunities beyond play and recreation—they enhance quality of life, encourage social connection, provide environmental benefits, and build community identity. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan recognizes and encourages ways to enhance the District’s parks and recreation assets for people of all abilities, age, and backgrounds, both now and in the years ahead.

As an integral part of community life, the District’s current parks and open space system offers a wide array of active and passive activities for people to enjoy. Parks and recreational facilities are valuable assets to many residents, and their importance was greatly heightened during the recent pandemic.

As inventoried in fall 2022, the District is comprised of 13 parks, with 12 fully developed parks and one undeveloped park. There are two community parks and 11 neighborhood parks, along with two joint-use agreements with two school districts. The District operates a full-sized gymnasium, community and recreation centers, and leases out a large softball complex and licensed childcare facility. **Chapter 4: Inventory** further discusses the inventory of the District’s parks, facilities, and recreational programs.

The California Association of Recreation and Park Districts recently awarded the District with the 2021 Award of Distinction—OUTSTANDING INNOVATION for its Distance Learning Program. This program was developed during the shelter-in-place order from September 2020 to June 2021 as an education model that would help meet the needs of students and their families in the North Highlands community. In partnership with the Twin Rivers Unified School District, the Distance Learning Program provided an in-person program to the most impacted students in the community: homeless, foster youth, students of single low-income parents, and children of essential workers.

GOALS OF THE MASTER PLAN

The primary goal of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to develop a practical, financially feasible framework that will guide the District in park planning and related policy decisions for the next ten years. The framework is based on review of the District's current parks system and recreational facilities, and community feedback received from the public engagement process. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan aims to provide a clear set of recommendations and funding opportunities for how the District can manage, improve, and develop its parks and recreation resources for the next decade.

Inclusive and meaningful public engagement is a key component in building effective planning strategies that are tailored to the unique needs of the community. Having an equitable community engagement process builds trust between the District and residents and empowers community members to contribute meaningfully to decisions that affect their everyday lives. The District continuously makes efforts to make it easier for people to actively participate in District policies and governance, especially for persons with disabilities and those in marginalized groups.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan seeks to aid in the development of equitable public amenities and accessible recreation, providing many benefits of parks and recreational opportunities to all of the District's residents and visitors. Quality recreation amenities and programs can be achieved by catering to diverse interests, ages, and abilities. Findings and recommendations from this Parks and Recreation Master Plan will aid the District in bringing safe, comfortable, and accessible parks with both passive and active recreation to its residents. This will enable people to develop social connections within communities and celebrate history and culture, all while protecting and promoting natural resources and habitats.





CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

2. CONTEXT

HISTORICAL ROOTS

Historical context has a strong influence on the type of development of parks and recreational facilities we see and enjoy today. Originally, North Highlands consisted of mostly agricultural lands, and the lands had been used for dry farming and grazing. Urban development soon followed the construction of the McClellan Air Force Base by the U.S. Army in the late 1930s. The development of residential subdivisions began in the early 1940s, and the population grew steadily starting in the 1950s.¹

McClellan Air Force Base became a major employer in North Highlands, employing approximately 19,500 people or 39% of the total census population in 1970.² Thus, historically, the McClellan Air Force Base was the basis of the North Highlands community identity for many years until its closure in 2001 and its conversion to McClellan Business Park, a master-planned business campus. The base closure and conversion to civilian activities deeply affected the community. Based on public feedback expressed during the development of the 2006 North Highlands Parks Master Plan, there was a need for a central space where people could gather and build community connection and pride.

One of the District's largest and fully developed parks is Freedom Park, spanning 20 acres, located adjacent to McClellan Business Park. Freedom Park, along with the North Highlands Community Center, was intended to be a positive focal point for the community with its space station themed park and abundant park amenities, including large rent-able picnic pavilions, playgrounds, a splash pad, a full-sized basketball court, and rope climbing area.³ North Highlands has a rich history, and its local attractions, public parks, and museums—including the Aerospace Museum of California and the California Foundry Museum—celebrate the past and its people.

WHO ARE WE?

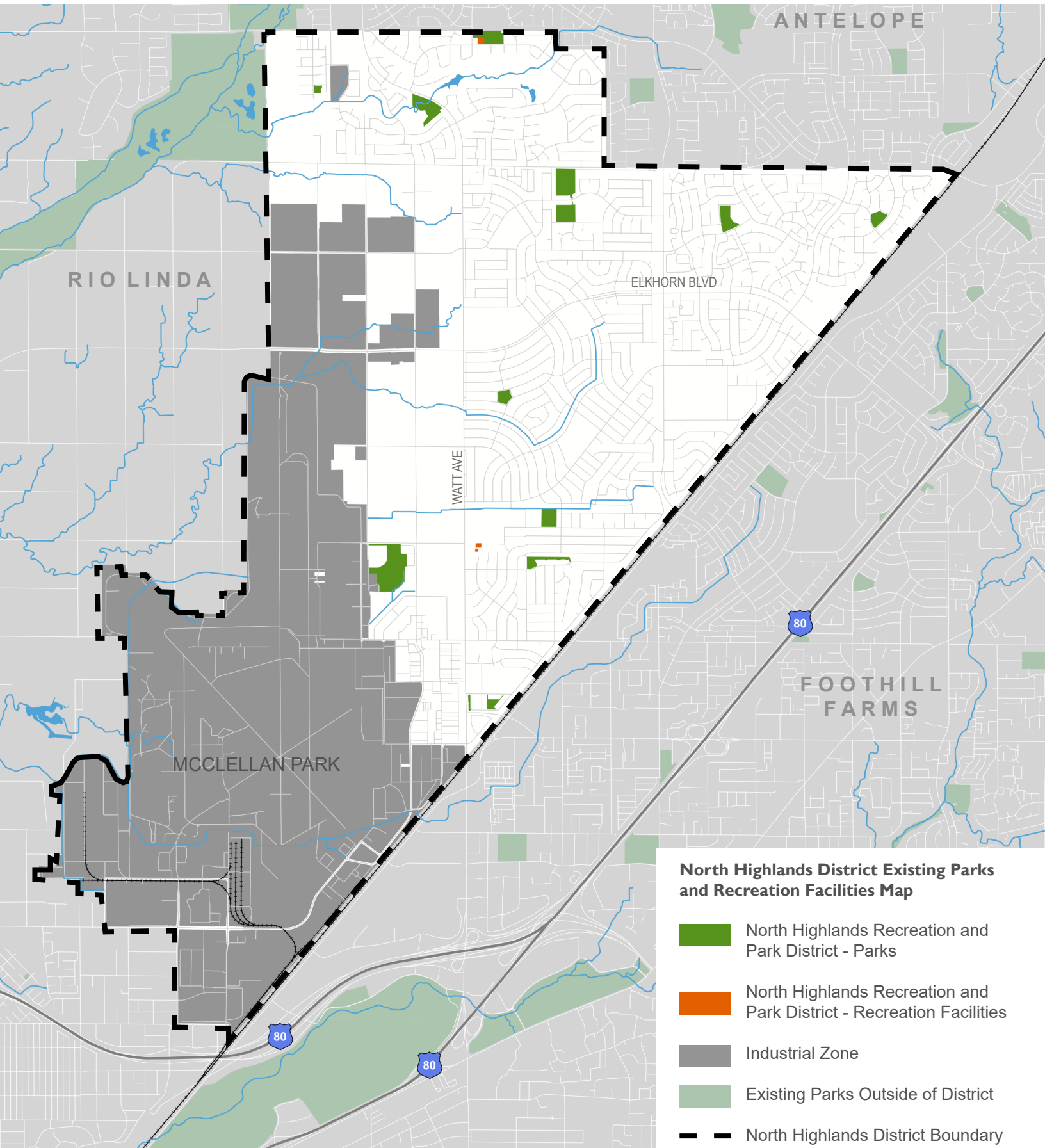
Context

The North Highlands Recreation and Park District (NHRPD) is located north and east of the City of Sacramento within the County of Sacramento. The District is primarily residential in nature, with McClellan Business Park as the main commercial and industrial development in the area.

About 12 miles from Downtown Sacramento, North Highlands encompasses approximately 8.8 square miles in unincorporated Sacramento County and serves approximately 49,000 residents, including residents who live in Antelope and North Highlands within the District's boundaries. The District's boundaries run along 28th Street to the west, following the limits of unincorporated McClellan Park, to the southeast along the Union Pacific Railroad Line, running along Antelope and Elverta Roads to the north.

- 1 Sacramento County Planning Department (1974). North Highlands – North Central Area Community Plan.
- 2 Sacramento County Planning Department (1974). North Highlands – North Central Area Community Plan.
- 3 North Highlands Recreation and Park District (2006). Master Plan of Recreation and Parks.

FIGURE 2.0 NORTH HIGHLANDS PARKS AND RECREATION DISTRICT SERVICE AREA MAP



Population Trends

The 2020 U.S. Census shows that the 2020 North Highlands Recreation and Park District population is 49,327. There has been a slow and gradual population increase since 2010, based on the 2010 population of 42,694, with an average annual growth rate of 1.55%. North Highlands has a population density of 5,598 people per square mile.⁴

Based on an annual growth rate of 1.55%, a conservative projected estimate is that the District will grow by approximately 9,939 to a total population of roughly 59,266 by 2033. This population trend is consistent with the rest of the unincorporated areas in Sacramento County, growing at a slower pace than incorporated areas in Sacramento based on past decennial estimates from the California Department of Finance.⁵ This Parks and Recreation Master Plan addresses the anticipated needs of the growing future population by reviewing the District's existing Level of Service (LOS) standards and goals in **Chapter 4: Inventory**.

Demographics

Demographic data may help inform decision-makers and influence how parks will be planned based on a community's characteristics and their needs. This can help leaders create more inclusive parks, facilities, and programs that meet the needs of their entire community and ensures all residents are being represented in their decisions. Demographic data also provides insight on how a community's characteristics compare nationally and statewide, and helps to understand and anticipate how the community will grow in the future.

The racial composition of North Highlands is becoming increasingly diverse over the last decade, which is consistent with the national trends of the U.S. population becoming more racially and ethnically diverse over the same time period. According to the American Community Survey (ACS) from the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, 47% of the District's residents identify as White (not Hispanic or Latino), 30% as Hispanic or Latino, 6% as two or more races, 9% as Black or African American, and 8% as Asian.⁶

The most common reported ancestries in North Highlands are German, Irish, Ukrainian, Russian, and English. Approximately 5.3% of the total population is of German ancestry, 5% is of Irish ancestry, 4.7% is of Ukrainian ancestry, and 3.7% is of Russian ancestry.⁷

Understanding the diverse ethnic and racial composition of the District's population is necessary for determining park amenities and recreational programs that meet the community's diverse and unique needs. This also includes ensuring people of diverse backgrounds have equitable access in the park planning process where people can contribute meaningfully through efforts that minimize language barriers. While a majority of the District's population speaks English, about 40.3% speak a language other than English at home and about 19.1% speak Spanish at home.⁸ Another primary language spoken is Russian in the North Highlands community.⁹

4 U.S. Census Bureau (2020). 2020 Census.

5 California Department of Finance (May 2022). E-4 Population Estimates for Cities, Counties, and the State, 2011-2020, with 2010 Census Benchmark.

6 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).

7 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).

8 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).

9 Sacramento County Community Planning & Development Department (2019). General Plan of 2005-2030.

Age demographics in the North Highlands community trend younger than the state of California and United States as a whole. The median age of the District population is 33.2, compared to the median age of California at 37 and United States at 38.4. About 11.7% of the population is 65 years and over, and about 74% of the population is 18 years and over.¹⁰

TABLE 2.0 NATIONAL, STATE, AND DISTRICT MEDIAN AGE COMPARISON (2021)				
POPULATION	MEDIAN AGE	POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS	POPULATION 18 YEARS AND OVER	POPULATION 65 YEARS AND OVER
UNITED STATES	38.4	21.7%	77.5%	16%
CALIFORNIA	37	21.8%	77.2%	14.4%
NORTH HIGHLANDS CENSUS DESIGNATED PLACE (CDP)	33.2	26%	74%	11.7%

It is also important to review disability data to make or improve upon access to public parks and recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. About 11.1% of the population has a disability, which is slightly higher than the state of California, but slightly lower than the national average (10.6% and 12.6%, respectively).¹¹ The following table provides a closer breakdown by age regarding people with disabilities in the community.

TABLE 2.1 PEOPLE OF DISABILITIES IN THE NORTH HIGHLANDS CDP BY AGE (2021)						
	UNDER 18 YEARS		18 TO 64 YEARS		65 YEARS AND OLDER	
	TOTAL POP.	PERCENT	TOTAL POP.	PERCENT	TOTAL POP.	PERCENT
NORTH HIGHLANDS CDP	12,561	2.9%	30,147	10.1%	5,537	35.1%

A unique demographic to consider is veteran status, due to the District’s historic ties to McClellan Air Force Base. In North Highlands, 5.9% of the population are veterans, which is higher than the state of California, but lower than the national average (4.8% and 6.9%, respectively). A large population of military personnel served in Vietnam, a number 1.68 times greater than any other conflict. Within the veteran population, approximately 14.8% has a disability and 17.7% live below poverty level.¹²

10 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).
 11 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).
 12 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).



Income greatly impacts an individual's participation in parks and recreational opportunities. A typical household in North Highlands earns \$55,616, which is substantially less than the median household income across the county and state, and less than the national median (\$76,422, \$84,097, and \$69,021, respectively).¹³ Approximately 25.8% of the District's population fall below the poverty line, including 37% of those under the age of 18 and 16% of those age 65 or over. This exceeds the overall Statewide rate of 14.3% and the national rate of 12.8%.

Other noteworthy demographic data includes the District's population having a larger household size, having a higher high school dropout rate, and having a slightly longer average commute time, compared to the overall State rate and nationwide.

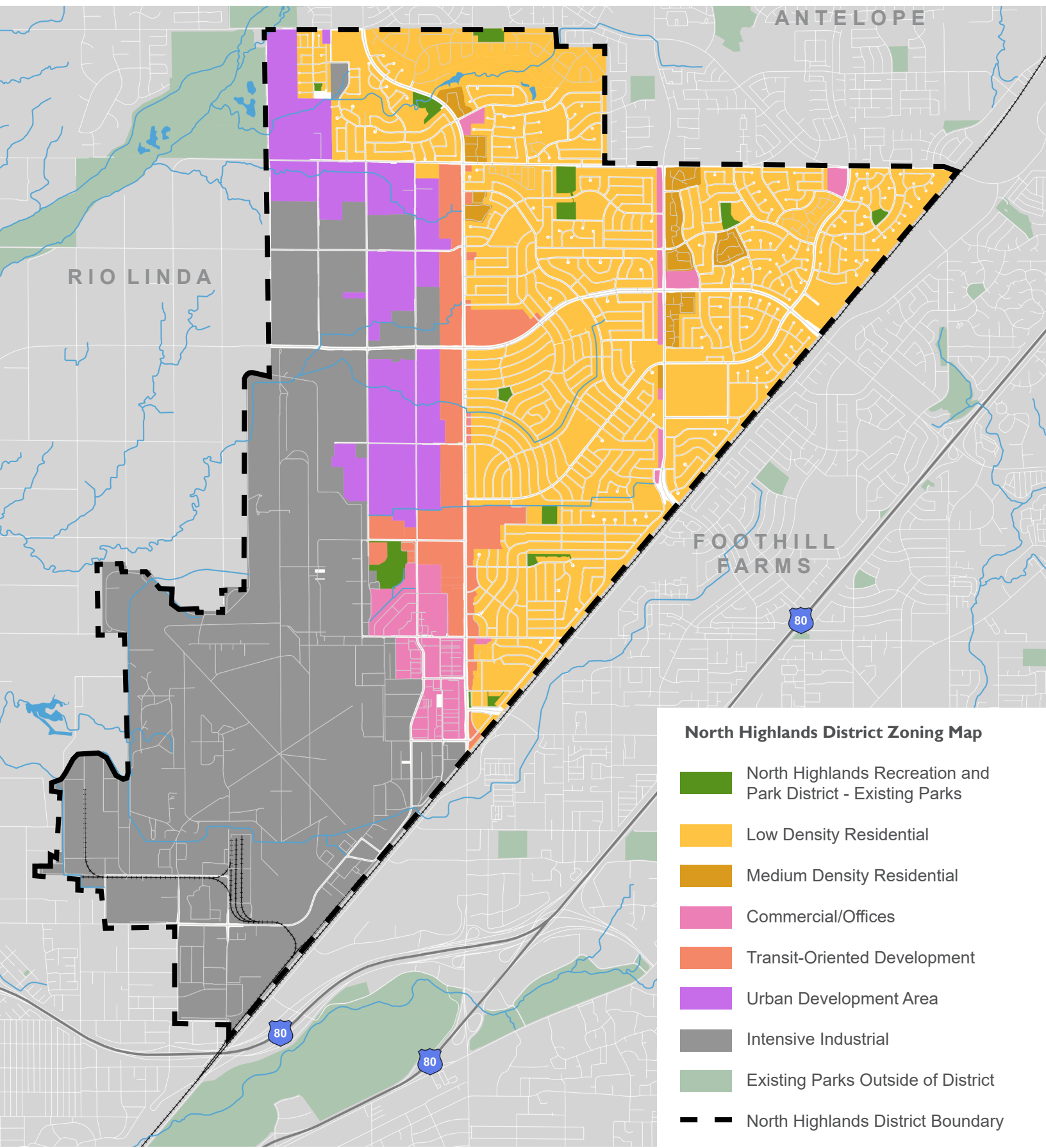
Based on these demographics, this indicates that the community is ethnically diverse, speaks English and largely speak a second language, is generally younger, and tends to have lower income. Population will continue to steadily grow, and North Highlands will continue to attract businesses and young adults with the ongoing growth of McClellan Business Park, diverse neighborhoods, and local attractions. The unique features and demographics of the North Highlands community are incorporated into the recommendations chapter for how the District can plan for the community now and for the 2033 population.

Zoning

The land use of North Highlands is predominantly residential on the east side and primarily industrial on the southwest side, due to the McClellan Business Park. Figure 2.1 shows the District Zoning map overlaid with the District's existing parks. Because of the current land use zoning, there are limited areas for new development of parks. Existing zoning limitations will be taken into consideration when developing recommendations for new parks in **Chapter 6: Recommendations**.

13 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates (2017–2021).

FIGURE 2.1 DISTRICT ZONING MAP



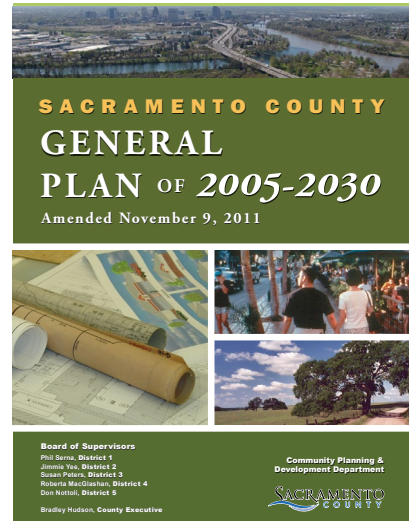
RELATED GENERAL PLAN AND LOCAL PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Regional County planning and relevant local documents provide policies and implementation strategies that relate to the development of parks and recreational programs within a community.

Sacramento 2030 General Plan

Document Summary: This document guides the growth and development within the unincorporated County over the next 20 years and provides key strategies and proactive actions with a focus on economic growth and environmental sustainability. The policies and implementation presented contribute to the quality of new open space and bike facilities development within unincorporated areas of Sacramento County.

- The chapters are divided with required and optional Elements, and the most information related to open space development is in Circulation, Environmental Justice, Open Space, and Public Facilities. The Element chapters are regularly amended with changes and updates since the 2011 version.
- Through the course of the update process, more than 180 public workshops and hearings were held, including 10 large public outreach meetings and 12 public focus group meetings.
- A key goal of the Circulation Element is related to bicycle and pedestrian facilities: “Provide safe, continuous, efficient, integrated, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian systems that encourages the use of the bicycle and walking as a viable transportation mode and as a form of recreation and exercise.” Policies surrounding this goal include:
 - » CI-36. Collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions and regional agencies to coordinate planning and development of the County’s bikeways, pedestrian facilities, and multi-use trails with those of neighboring jurisdictions, and to support a regional bicycle and pedestrian network.
 - » CI-37. Pursue all available sources of funding for the development, improvement, and maintenance of bikeways, pedestrian facilities, and multi-use trails, and to support bicycle and pedestrian safety, education, encouragement and enforcement programs.
- Another goal of the Circulation Element is to incorporate Smart Growth Streets, an extension of Complete Streets, that incorporates a holistic approach of street development that considers factors such as the natural environment and the surrounding community. Relevant objectives are:
 - » Incorporate “green infrastructure” to the greatest extent feasible.
 - » Create and/or improve community identity by coordinating improvements to the streetscape and the surrounding corridor to achieve a consistent look and feel or carry through a specific “theme”.
 - » Create an “outdoor room” along the street to establish a sense of place and improve the comfort and overall experience of all users, particularly pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Refer to the Environmental Justice Community excerpt for a detailed review and findings from the Environmental Justice Element chapter regarding the North Highlands/Foothill Farms community. Relevant objectives are:
 - » Promoting and encouraging physical activity



- » Community design that promotes physical activity (including development that supports pedestrian and bicycle travel)
- » Active transportation (improvement of pedestrian and bicycle network)
- » Promoting and encouraging civil engagement
- » Provision of accessible recreational facilities
- » Equitable distribution of public facilities and services
- Countywide policy measures to address issues in EJ communities include:
 - » EJ-21. Provide safe, low stress, interesting and convenient environments for pedestrians and bicyclists, including inviting and adequately lit streetscapes, networks of trails, paths, parks, and open spaces that connect residences with key destinations, and encourage regular exercise and the reduction of vehicular emissions.
 - » EJ-22. Parks should easily be accessible to the surrounding neighborhood and beyond and be as barrier-free as possible, particularly for those with limited mobility.
 - » EJ-24. Increase tree canopy coverage to at least 35 percent in all unincorporated County neighborhoods by 2040, especially those that are in Environmental Justice Communities.
- The Open Space Element chapter provides objectives and policies related to trails and greenbelt development. A key objective is the “establishment of trails and greenbelts to provide for recreational opportunities and community separators.” A policy related to this is Policy OS-11 that states, “establish trail connections and linkages within the County and across jurisdictional boundaries that are compatible with existing land uses. These trail connections shall have the capability of being Class I trails (off-street, separated facilities) with grade separations wherever feasible.”
- The Public Facilities Element chapter discusses parks standards of Sacramento County. The goal is to “provide a total of 20 acres of regional parks and local parks per 1,000 residents from various sources,” where “out of the 20 acres per 1,000 population target, the County strives to provide 12 acres of Regional Parks per 1,000 residents.” The remaining balance is to be provided by local park districts and other entities.
 - » Sacramento County follows the Quimby Act requirements on residential development for local park agencies or districts in unincorporated areas of the County at the minimum of 3 acres and a maximum of 5 acres of parks per 1,000 population.
- Five Park types are defined in the Public Facilities Element chapter. These are: Pocket Park, Mini Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Regional Park, and Other Park Types, such as open space preserves, parkways along creeks and other drainage or power line corridors, and associated trails.
 - » Pocket Parks are small mini parks uses in constrained developed areas with limited park space or areas with unique recreation opportunities. These parks have limited facilities due to space constraints and may include picnic areas, trail connections, arbors, or sitting areas.
 - » Mini Parks are small parks located within residential neighborhoods and serve residents that live within a one-third-mile radius of the park. These parks are intended to promote alternative modes of transportation and are integral for mixed-use and urban infill development. These parks typically provide play areas, tables, shade structures, walkways, and landscaping. Mini Parks may also take the form of urban parks and include features such as fountains, public art, performance spaces, or community gardens.
 - » Neighborhood Parks are medium sized parks that provide both passive and active recreation opportunities. They serve residents living within two-thirds- to one-mile

radius. Neighborhood parks typically provide playgrounds, sport fields or courts, and game areas.

- » Community Parks are larger than 10 acres and serve residents within a radius of three miles or more. Community parks provide a variety of amenities that may include off-street parking, restrooms, swimming pools, sports complexes, and community center buildings in addition to basic neighborhood park facilities.
- » Regional Parks are the largest among the different park typologies. They typically provide a specialized recreation function such as golf courses, regional trail systems, or interpretive centers. These parks often preserve natural, cultural, historical, or archaeological areas of significance.
- » Other Park Types include open public space that do not fall within any of the above categories. This may include open space preserves, parkways along creeks, associated trails, or open areas along drainage channels or power line corridors.

TABLE 2.2 SACRAMENTO COUNTY PARK TYPOLOGIES AND STANDARDS		
PARK TYPOLOGY	ACREAGE/ 1,000 POPULATION	STANDARD PARK SIZE
POCKET PARK	0 – 2.0 ACRES	≤ 2 ACRES
MINI PARK	0 – 2.5 ACRES	2 – 5 ACRES
NEIGHBORHOOD PARK	0 – 2.5 ACRES	5 – 10 ACRES
COMMUNITY PARK	2.5 ACRES	10 – 75 ACRES
REGIONAL PARK	2.5 ACRES	> 75 ACRES

Environmental Justice Community

The Sacramento County 2030 General Plan identified that the North Highlands/Foothill Farms community, which is a portion of the District's boundaries, is one of four Environmental Justice Communities (EJ Communities). Figure 2.2 shows the map limits of the North Highlands/Foothill Farms Environmental Justice community area that encompasses North Highlands and a portion of Foothill Farms. EJ Communities are "areas that are considered disadvantaged compared to other parts of the unincorporated County" and have geographic inequities that lead to issues of environmental burdens, such as pollution and lack of parks. EJ communities have higher percentages of low-income residents, minority residents, and/or immigrant communities and tend to have higher concentrations of environmental hazards, resulting in health problems from exposure to these hazards.

Physical activity and access to parks and recreational activities are highly correlated with the physical and mental state of a community. A community with a safe system of parks, open spaces, trails, and urban green spaces can contribute to long-term healthy and active lifestyles. Park accessibility and park acreage are important measures to understand park distribution within different neighborhoods. The North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community has a lower percentage of residences located within one-fourth of a mile of a park than non-EJ areas (approximately 40% and 50%, respectively). Park acres per 1,000 residents in the North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community are half that of non-EJ areas.

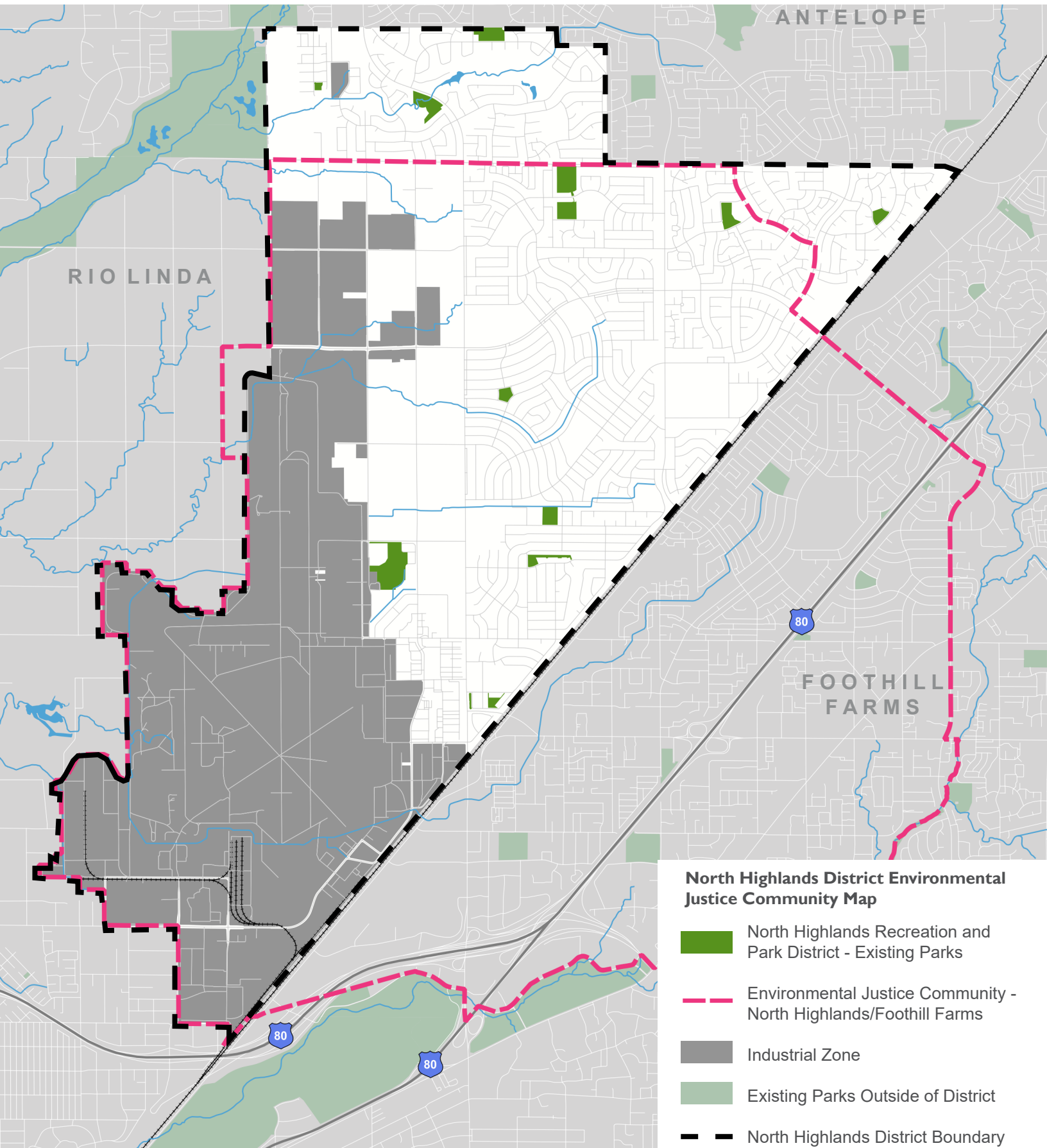
A good bike trail network encourages alternative transportation and bicycle activity within a community. The North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community has the lowest percentage of Class I bike trails per 1,000 residents among the four EJ communities. On the other hand, the North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community has a comparable amount of Class II bike trail miles per 1,000 residents when compared to non-EJ Areas. Also, regarding bike and pedestrian collision rates per 1,000 residents, North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community has a rate more than twice that of non-EJ areas.

Obesity is a serious health issue, and obesity prevalence is increasing across the nation. North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ community has the highest percentage of obese individuals among the four EJ communities with a rate of 35%, while non-EJ areas have a 25.9% rate, respectively.¹⁴ Compared to non-EJ communities, the North Highlands/Foothill Farms community also tends to earn less, have higher percentages of limited English-speaking households, and have higher violent crime and property crime rates.

Based on feedback from a 2019 community workshop, a shared sentiment among North Highlands/Foothill Farms residents was a concern about the safety and lack of bike lanes and sidewalks in their community. Street trees and streetlights are also lacking. Respondents indicated they also tend to not participate in public meetings because they either don't think their opinions will be taken seriously or feel the meetings will be a waste of time. Involving the community's youth in public engagement efforts and partnering with local community-based organizations can help improve public engagement.

14 Sacramento County Department of Health Services (2017, 2018).

FIGURE 2.2 NORTH HIGHLANDS DISTRICT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MAP



- The policies for provisions of parks and recreation facilities include the following:
 - » PF-121. The County supports the adoption and implementation of Parks and Recreation Master Plans by local recreation and park districts to establish goals and policies for community-oriented parks and recreation facilities that are consistent with the goals and policies of this General Plan.
 - » PF-122. To help assure that local recreation and park district Master Plan standards for levels of service may be achieved and maintained, the County may require new development to dedicate land, pay in-lieu fees and development impact fees, or otherwise contribute a fair share to the acquisition and development of parks and recreation facilities. For development in infill areas where land dedication may not be practical, the County in cooperation with the affected park district may explore creative alternatives for providing park and recreation facilities.
- An objective related to policies supporting park operations and maintenance: “Sufficient funding to operate and maintain existing and new parks at an adequate level.” Policies related to meeting this objective include:
 - » PF-126. Encourage local park districts to develop user fees supporting recreation programs for those activities that go beyond providing for basic recreation needs. Examples include sports leagues, tennis and other court complexes, leisure enrichment classes for all ages, aquatic centers and splash parks, and community centers.
 - » PF-128. Encourage park development adjacent to school sites and the formation of joint-use agreements between school and park districts.
 - » PF-129. In cooperation with local park districts and County Regional Parks, the County shall assist in establishing permanent financing systems for the purpose of supporting an adequate level of park services and maintenance.
- An objective related to inter-agency coordination is: “Close coordination with park agencies to insure good regional and local planning, and an efficient use of available funding.” Policies related to meeting this objective include:
 - » PF-130. Encourage local park districts to collaborate and coordinate with other districts, agencies, and organizations.
 - » PF-131. Support the cooperation of local park districts and the County Department of Regional Parks to provide the most efficient delivery of parks and recreation services.

Sacramento Bike Master Plan 2011

Document Summary: This document aims to guide and influence bikeway policies, programs, and development standards to make bicycling in Sacramento County more safe, comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable for all bicyclists. The information in this document provides related information on ways to improve trails and access for pedestrians and bicyclists.

- Six public workshops were held, including one in North Highlands, and a public opinion survey was developed and distributed as part of the bike master planning process.
- This overarching vision was developed based on community feedback collected from the public outreach effort: “Provide safe, continuous, efficient, integrated, and accessible bicycle and pedestrian systems that encourage the use of the bicycle and



- walking as viable transportation modes and as forms of recreation and exercise.”
- A key goal to open space development is to “Increase the total number of bicycle facilities by at least 5% each year.”
- An implementation measure to contribute to this goal is to “Eliminate gaps in the bicycle network to improve connectivity between destinations and expand the network of bikeways that offers riders an array of route choices.”
- Under the proposed countywide projects and support facilities section, there are design guidelines presented for bicycle destination and wayfinding signs and short-term and long-term bike parking. There are also guidelines for monitoring and maintaining both off-street and on-street bikeways.
- Bikeway security is important to ensure bicyclists feel safe, comfortable, and encouraged to use bike paths, routes, and trails around the County. Proper design and maintenance are both essential components to providing a safe, quality bikeway system for users. Specifically for Class I bike paths, the document states to “place benches and other path amenities at locations with good visual surveillance and high activity.”
- In addition to infrastructure guidelines, the Bike Master Plan outlines three important ways to make a bicycling program successful: encouragement programs, education of proper bicycling etiquette and safety, and enforcement programs.

Sacramento County Pedestrian Master Plan 2007

Document Summary: This document presents a guideline for how pedestrian safety and access can be improved on public streets within the unincorporated areas of Sacramento County.

- Overall goal is “to optimize the pedestrian experience, to provide safe and usable pedestrian facilities for all pedestrians, and to assure compliance with all federal, state and local regulations and standards.”
- The document provides several policies related to developing quality pedestrian facilities:
 - » Policy 1 – Pedestrian Safety. Create a safe street environment for pedestrians.
 - » Policy 2 – Disabled Access. Develop, build, and maintain a pedestrian network that is accessible to all.
 - » Policy 3 – Pedestrian Access. Develop, build, and maintain a convenient and well-connected pedestrian network that offers a viable alternative to the use of automobiles.
 - » Policy 4 – Streetscaping and Land Use. Create a comfortable and aesthetically interesting street environment for pedestrians.



North Highlands Recreation and Park District Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan 2022 (Draft)

Document Summary: This document provides a comprehensive accessibility review of the District’s programs, services, activities, policies, buildings, facilities, and parks. The information in this document includes relevant findings regarding accessibility and recommendations to enhance accessibility at existing parks, programs, and facilities.

- While the District is compliant in providing overall access to programs, services, and activities, it is recommended to provide the following to enhance access to public meetings and facilities:

- » Meetings and events open to the public should be held in buildings that meet accessibility requirements, or in the accessible portion of the building with accessible elements that serve the area where the meeting or event is held. For example, parking, restrooms, and drinking fountains that serve the area where the meeting and event is held should be accessible.



- » Information regarding a facility should include information regarding accessible features and elements of the site. For example, accessible parking, accessible restrooms, and other items and elements should be indicated on documents and on the website. Indicating accessible paths of travel and accessible entrances also provides valuable information for persons with disabilities. A contact number and email address should be provided for additional assistance.

- The District is compliant in their outreach materials and activities and can further enhance access through the following general recommendations:
 - » The District should consider including additional pictures and references to persons with disabilities in publications, brochures, and materials.
 - » Organizations representing persons with disabilities and areas with an increased population of persons with disabilities could be targeted for input regarding additional methods to disseminate information regarding programs, services, and activities of the District.
- The District was found to be not compliant in providing access to its programs, services, and activities in leased sites and joint-use agreements. At the time of evaluation, joint-use and lease agreements were not available for review.
 - » Policies and practices to ensure the District leases accessible space from others or to others by the District were not found.
 - » The District should review the accessibility of sites that are and may be leased in the future prior to engaging in a lease or renewal and establish a procedure for a pre-lease inspection.
- The District was found to be in partial compliance in providing special events and activities sponsored by the District and are required to be accessible in accordance with ADA requirements. The following recommendations are outlined below:
 - » Accessible features and elements for special events and activities should be indicated in publications, brochures, and on the website. Accessible features may include accessible parking and restrooms, for example.
 - » A statement of accommodations should be included on the website, flyers, and publications regarding the special event or activity.
- The District was found to be in partial compliance in the maintenance of accessible features in accordance with ADA requirements. The following recommendations are presented below:
 - » The District may consider developing internal procedures or policies to maintain and track accessible features that require general maintenance. A few examples include re-stripping of parking and trimming vegetation or items that interfere with sidewalks and paths of travel.

Sacramento County Active Transportation Plan 2022

Document Summary: This document is a guide for unincorporated areas of Sacramento County in building a balanced transportation system that supports and encourages active modes of travel. Relevant planning document information includes priorities for street improvements in North Highlands to enhance opportunities for alternative modes of transportation, including bicycling, walking, and rolling (i.e., utilizing a wheeled mobility device such as a wheelchair or stroller).

- Watt Avenue within the North Highlands section is shown as a High-Injury Network (HINs). HINs are corridors that have high concentrations of pedestrian-involved and bicycle-involved collisions.
- Antelope Road, Elkhorn Boulevard, Q Street, and Roseville Road were streets identified with sidewalk gaps and are located within the North Highlands District boundaries. Watt Avenue was identified as a Pedestrian District with about four major intersection points.
- Several streets in the North Highlands District boundaries were proposed with the following bicycle facilities improvements:
 - » Elkhorn Boulevard, Q Street, Watt Avenue, Walerga Road, and Roseville Road were recommended to be study corridors for Class IV Separated Bikeway. This type of bicycle facility indicates a physical barrier between the bicycle lane and motor vehicle lane(s); barriers can include bollards, curbs, elevation, or parking. Due to constraints within the built environment, these corridors require additional study and community engagement opportunities before formal recommendations can be made.
 - » Class II Bicycle Lanes are proposed along Antelope Road, 28th Street, 32nd Street, and 34th Street.
- Demand for short-term and long-term bicycle parking were identified in areas within the North Highlands District boundaries, including along Watt Avenue, Don Julio Drive, and Elkhorn Boulevard.
- As a major arterial road, Roseville Road was prioritized to have sidewalk gap improvements. The intersection between Roseville Road and Watt Avenue were also prioritized for closing “gaps” within the network since they provide important connectivity, access, and trip choice benefits. Antelope Road, Q Street, and Elkhorn Boulevard were additional local and collector roads identified for sidewalk gap improvements.
- There are several funding sources available for active transportation-related projects. These funding opportunities include competitive grants, impact fee/assessment district strategies, and formula-based funding methods. The following may be applicable to the District:
 - » Sacramento Transportation Authority (STA) Measure A
 - » Sustainable Transportation Equity Project (STEP)
 - » SACOG Active Transportation Program (ATP)
 - » California Active Transportation Program (ATP)
 - » Urban Greening Grants
- Several existing conditions in North Highlands/Foothill Farms EJ Community were identified:
 - » While most of the roads in North Highlands community have connected sidewalks, the connectivity along Watt Avenue is broken due to missing stretches of bike lanes between Elkhorn Boulevard and Don Julio Boulevard.
 - » Pedestrian violations and right-of-way, as well as unsafe speed, were the most frequent contributing factors to pedestrian collisions. Improper turning and biking on the wrong side of the road were found as the most frequent contributing factor of bike collisions.
- Cost estimates of pedestrian sidewalk improvements and Bicycle Class improvements for individual streets are presented in the Appendix chapter.



CHAPTER 3

BEST PRACTICES & DESIGN GUIDELINES

3. BEST PRACTICES & DESIGN GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Parks and recreation programs are valuable in every community, as they provide many social and health benefits for people. They promote quality of life, strengthen community identity, and support the local environment and economy. Access to parks and recreational facilities became even more apparent during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, where many people found relief and sought refuge in parks during one of the most challenging times of their lives. This reinforces the importance of having safe, accessible, quality parks and recreational facilities for public use and enjoyment for many years to come.

This chapter is intended to provide a snapshot of current trends and best practices in parks and recreation planning. The data also captures the insights and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in parks and recreation in order to understand and provide guidance and recommendations for the District to move forward in a post-pandemic world.

CURRENT TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

Understanding the latest trends in parks and recreation planning provides insight and benchmarking data about the state of the parks, recreation, and sports industry. Research reports used are from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the Outdoor Foundation, Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), and Aspen Institute's Sports and Society Program. Comparison data will later be presented showing where the North Highlands Recreation and Parks District stands in relation to other comparable parks and recreation districts in Northern and Southern California. The comparisons will include population, park acres, Level of Service (LOS), and program participation.

Reviewing trends and best practices is important in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan's goal of maximizing opportunities to engage users in creative forms of exercise. Participation in parks and recreation opportunities is key to ensuring long-term success of parks and recreation facilities and the valuable benefits they provide. Increase in activity and fitness helps support the health and well-being of individuals and the overall community. Engaging users of different demographics strengthens community identity and encourages healthy lifestyles for all.

It is important to note that national trends and metrics are meant to provide general, supplemental information and that the goals, needs, and aspirations related to parks and recreation should be tailored to the unique community the District serves.

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION (NRPA) RESEARCH REPORTS

2022 Engagement with Parks Report

Every year since 2016, the NRPA has conducted a survey to better understand how the American public interacts with parks and recreation. For this report, Wakefield Research, on behalf of NRPA, conducted an online survey between May 18 and May 30, 2022, and surveyed 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older about their perception of parks and recreation in the past year.

Favorite Park and Recreation Activities

Most respondents indicate visiting a local park, playground, dog park, or other local open space as their top favorite park and recreation activity (73%). The second-most popular activity is hiking, biking, and walking on local trails (53%). Playing sports—such as basketball, golf, and tennis—with family, friends, and neighbors ranked third as a favorite park and recreation activity. Gen Zers, those who consider themselves very active, millennials, and parents are groups that indicate playing sports with friends and/or family is a top activity (44%, 42%, 41%, and 41%, respectively).

Other favorite park and recreation activities include visiting a local swimming pool/aquatics center and visiting a local recreation or senior center (24% and 22%, respectively). Taking part in classes/lessons/activities or any other offering at a local recreation center, participating in an organized sports league, and children in the household participating in an out-of-school time program (e.g., summer camp, before-/after-school care) are favorite additional activities indicated by survey respondents (17%, 17%, and 13%, respectively).



Reasons for Visiting Local Parks and Recreation Facilities

The top three reasons for visiting a local park and/or recreation facility are being with family and friends, exercising and being physically fit, and taking a break from day-to-day stresses (54%, 53%, and 32%, respectively). Parents and those ages 18 to 34 are two groups most likely to choose spending time with family and friends as the main reason (60% and 60%, respectively).

Additional reasons for visiting local parks and/or recreation facilities are to experience excitement/adventure, to connect with members of the community, and to learn a skill or craft (30%, 22%, and 13%, respectively). This shows the wide range of reasons people visit parks, showcasing the importance of customizing parks and recreational opportunities that meet the needs and aspirations of the individual community.

Barriers that Kept People from Experiencing Parks and Recreation Opportunities

The most frequently cited obstacle that kept people from greater enjoyment of their local park and recreation facilities was lack of time by 37% of survey respondents, which is the same percentage from the 2019 report. Pandemic-related barriers (e.g., closed facilities, stay-at-home order, budget cuts) was the top obstacle in the 2021 report, and it was the second most cited obstacle in this latest 2022 report, showing that, unsurprisingly, obstacles related to the pandemic remain high on the list. A little over one-third of survey respondents indicated this (34%).

Other barriers include concern about personal safety at the parks/recreation facility, lack of quality facilities near home, and unaware of the location/offers (20%, 16%, and 15%, respectively). Survey respondents also indicated additional barriers that kept them from enjoying local parks and recreation opportunities, such as concern about personal safety traveling to or from the parks/recreation facility, offerings of local parks/recreation facilities do not match areas of interest, and excessive costs/fees (15%, 14%, and 14%, respectively).

Safety concerns related to parks and recreation facilities are important to survey respondents, along with the quality of parks and recreation facilities. Lack of awareness about their local park and recreational opportunities remain on the list, which implies the need for effective marketing methods to reach as many community members as possible.

Preferred Methods for Learning About Local Park and Recreation Amenities, Programming, and Services

Facebook is the preferred method of learning about local park and recreation offerings, indicated by 43% of survey respondents, with millennials indicating Facebook as their top method among other methods (57%). The second preferred method is through email (35%). The top preferred method for Gen Xers is Facebook (45%) and mail from the agency and emails from the agency are the top two methods for Baby Boomers (49% and 45%, respectively). Gen Zers equally prefer learning about these opportunities through Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (45%, 45%, and 45%, respectively).

Generally, the survey response data shows that those ages 55 or older tend to prefer direct methods, such as emails, mailers, or an agency website. Those who are middle-aged or older also prefer traditional methods of learning about local park and recreation opportunities, as well as the social media platform, Facebook. Millennials and Gen Zers tend to generally prefer social media platforms as a source of learning about these opportunities, including Instagram and YouTube. This indicates the importance of using various online communication methods to reach different age groups and keep them aware about parks and recreation opportunities.

Additional Survey Results

Additional survey results highlighted in the report include:

- The top five groups most likely to have visited a local park/recreation facility within the past three months are parents, those who identify as very active, those living near a park, those who identify as Hispanic, and Millennials (87%, 86%, 82%, 82%, and 82%, respectively).
- Those who identify as Hispanic and non-white and as Baby Boomers visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities most frequently, registering 25 visits per year on average.
- Vital services people want their local park and recreation agency to deliver include providing job and volunteer opportunities for youth and young adults and deliver programming and support that improves community physical and mental health (90% and 89%, respectively).



Summary

People value parks and recreation and enjoy the vast array of the opportunities, programs, and services their local agency provides. Reasons for visiting a park and/or recreation facility can vary because each person's relationship with parks and recreation is unique. While the COVID-19 pandemic was regarded as a high barrier that kept people from experiencing parks and recreation opportunities in the past year, restrictions were eventually loosened and many parks and recreation facilities were open at the time of writing of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. Many survey respondents regarded safety concerns and lack of quality of parks and recreation facilities as

major barriers. Safety and quality of parks and recreation facilities are regarded important by most participants and should be considered as part of parks and recreation planning to encourage and maintain public use. **Chapter 5: Needs Assessment & Analysis** provides detailed statistics of survey results and findings.

Lack of awareness about parks and recreation opportunities persists, so it is important for a local agency to use effective marketing strategies to engage with as many community members as possible, especially those of diverse ethnic backgrounds and ages. Using a wide variety of marketing strategies and social media platforms can be helpful in reaching different age groups. It is important to not only reach out to local community leaders, but to also maintain a collaborative relationship regularly with them to build trust between the agency and its community.

Diversity and Inclusion in Parks and Recreation

All people, regardless of race, ethnicity, age, income level, physical ability, sexual orientation, gender, or religion should have access to quality parks and recreation. Every member of every community should enjoy and benefit from quality parks and recreation. The definition of inclusion is “removing barriers, both physical and theoretical, so that all people have an equal opportunity to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation.” Striving for inclusion can increase equitable access and improve access to health opportunities for in-need communities with programs and services that cater to their needs and aspirations.



Findings from the 2018 NRPA Parks and Recreation Inclusion Report can help better describe how agencies across the United States engage with all members of their communities. The NRPA Research team conducted a survey with 26 questions in September 2017 and had a total of 497 responses. Key insights from the report includes:

- Developing and implementing a formal inclusion policy allows park and recreation agencies to maintain consistent guidelines and match their actions to those guidelines. These guidelines should be customized to reflect the agency’s strengths and strategic goals.
- Partnering with third parties—such as local schools, nonprofit organizations, and area wide agencies—can allow more inclusive access to specific programming and activities for the aging population and individuals with a disability.
- Insufficient funding and staffing are the greatest barriers keeping parks and recreation from being inclusive to all members of a community. Lack of staff training, insufficient community outreach, and lack of understanding of the community’s needs are additional challenges noted in the report.

Based in Sacramento, the California Park & Recreation Society has a community that provides information and discussion about diversity and inclusion related to parks, recreation, and leisure service providers. This can be a potential resource to support of the efforts of the District.

General Opportunities

This report also presents opportunities for specific groups, including individuals with a physical or cognitive disability, multicultural/racial/ethnic communities, and refugee and immigrant communities. The following are common examples of general programming offered and designed for these groups.

Individuals with Physical or Cognitive Challenges

Physical activities and fitness training are the top programs offered for individuals with a physical or cognitive disability. Offerings include walking programs, yoga classes, personal training, and sport leagues. Additionally, commonly offered programs are:

- Volunteer or employment activities, including opportunities to volunteer or work at park and recreation centers
- Health and wellness programs, including chronic disease prevention (e.g., arthritis, diabetes), treatment programs, and cooking/nutrition classes
- Field trips, tours, and vacations
- Special Olympics and/or Paralympics
- Therapy and mentoring services, including swimming/water therapy, art/music therapy, and peer coaching
- Specialized programming should be provided to individuals of all ages who live with a physical or cognitive disability, especially children

Multicultural/Racial/Ethnic Communities

Volunteer positions, program involvement, and social engagement are opportunities to increase inclusion for specific groups. Programs that meet the needs of multicultural, racial, or ethnic communities can support the well-being of historically marginalized and vulnerable communities. These programs include:

- Celebrations of the respective communities, such as heritage or a holiday festival
- Health and wellness programs targeted to specific members of the community
- Culturally sensitive program hours (e.g., women-only pool time, female program leaders for female students, etc.)
- Quiet hours for persons with sensory processing challenges

Refugee and Immigrant Communities

Multicultural community programs and events are the most common park and recreation offerings to refugees and immigrants. A majority of park and recreation agencies that offer programming specifically for refugees and immigrants sponsor festivals and other celebrations that highlight these members of a community. Other programs and activities include:

- Community gardens
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Job skills training, including computer skills

While recreation programs for refugee and immigrant communities are often children-focused, many parks and recreation agencies also offer programs and activities for adult members of these populations.

Summary

Understanding the community, along with their needs and aspirations, is important to help park and recreation leaders make optimal decisions regarding their park and recreation offerings. Creating and implementing a formal inclusion policy in an agency can help ensure that actions will match those policies. Agencies can also seek partnerships with third-party organizations to help diversify their park and recreation opportunities to cater to marginalized groups and residents living with a disability.

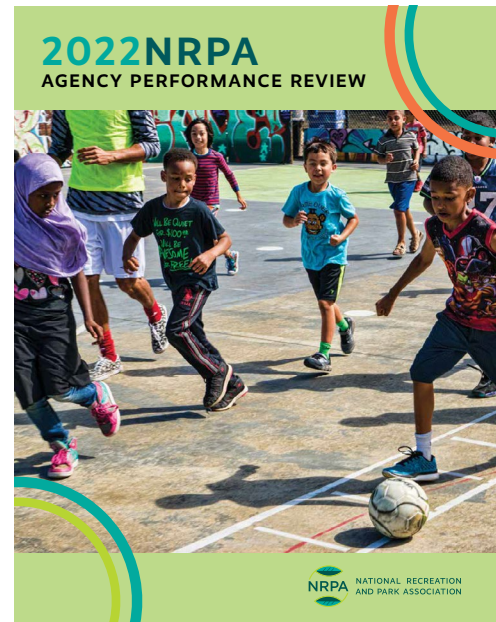
It is also essential to prioritize the type of facilities, services, and offerings offered, especially for agencies with a tight budget and/or other constraints. Engaging with specific community groups can help agencies plan for new park and recreation programs, facilities, and spaces. Focus groups and community leaders are good starting points for inclusive outreach, along with providing staff training and resources that promote parks and recreation inclusiveness.

These are all efforts to make park and recreation opportunities more inclusive in the community an agency is serving. Every community is made up of different groups, so it is important for a park and recreation program to specialize and cater engagement strategies, priorities, and decisions to their community's unique demographics. A focus on expanding inclusive environments and programming will lead to more constituents with access to park and recreation opportunities. This contributes to healthy lifestyles and enhances quality of life for everyone, promoting active, thriving communities.

Recreation Program Trends

As communities grow and continue to diversify, recreational needs change along with them. Providing relevant and high-quality services and programs not only leads to sustained and/or increased participation rates, but also provides physical and mental health benefits to the community. The NRPA reports that programs provide the largest non-tax revenue for agencies, making retaining active participants crucial for many agencies. Researching relevant trends on a national and local level can provide key insights into how the District can better plan for future recreation programs that are both sustainable and meet community needs. This section looks into relevant research and data from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Outdoor Foundation, Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), and Aspen Institute's Sports and Society Program.

The Aspen Institute's Project PLAY focuses on research, resources, and leadership centered around sports participation in youth ages 6 to 18. Every year, Project PLAY releases a State of Play report that provides a comprehensive overview of current sports trends across the nation. Information is gathered through a statistical survey issued in partnership with Utah State University, Louisiana Tech University, and TeamSnap. In addition, Aspen Institute works alongside the Sports & Fitness Industry Association.



SFIA works to promote sports and fitness participation through advocacy, leadership, and research primarily in those aged 6 and above. This Parks and Recreation Master Plan will draw information from the SFIA 2022 “State of the Industry” report and the 2022 U.S. Trends in Team Sports Report. It is important to note that as this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is written, information and data gathered are not reflective of a typical year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



Impacts of the Recent Pandemic

The onset of COVID-19 forced people to look for alternative ways to spend their time. Many turned to the outdoors, setting a breaking record of 164 million participants enjoying the outdoors, which is a little over half the U.S. population in 2021. The Outdoor Foundation is an association dedicated to collaborative research, education, and guiding the recreation industry. Every year, the association performs a study to better understand current recreation trends on a national level. The 2021 study reported 6.8 million Americans tried outdoor recreation for the first time, indicating considerable growing interest in outdoor activities in 2022 and potentially beyond.

Beyond COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the importance of providing programs for all. As people are transitioning into the mindset of “living with COVID,” it is important for parks and recreation agencies to invest in high-quality, diverse, and equitable programs.

People are now motivated to be active and participate in programs. More families are now engaging in outdoor recreation together. Research performed by the Outdoor Foundation indicated that parents who have had outdoor interaction or participated in a recreation program when they were a child are more likely to provide these opportunities for their children. This makes families a crucial demographic to help ensure future and ongoing participation. As more people are looking to participate in programs, agencies will need to look to diversify the types of programs offered.

NRPA Recreation Program Trends

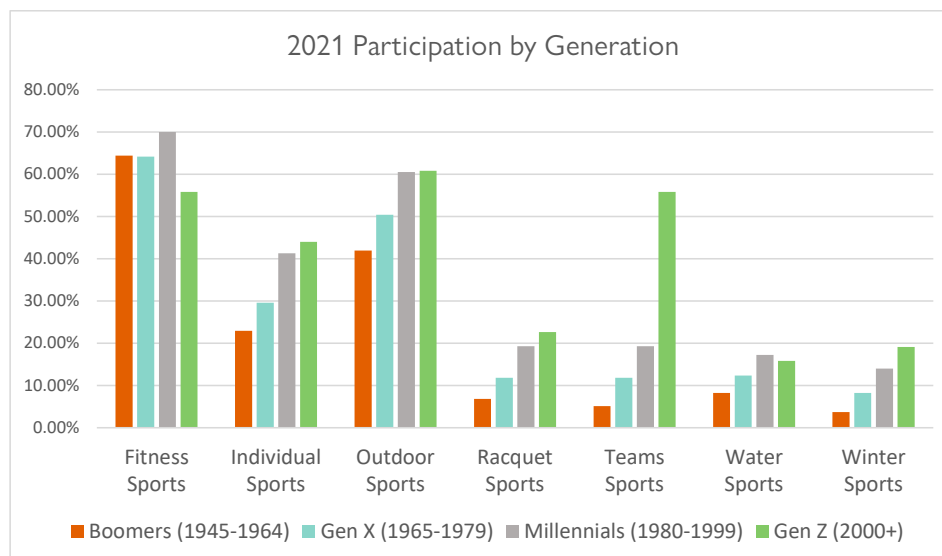
A large portion of the population visits parks because of planned programming, making programs a crucial asset of a Parks and Recreation agency. The 2022 NRPA Agency Performance Review report revealed that most agencies that serve 200,000 residents or more provide at minimum summer camp programs and out-of-school time (OST) care. Out-of-school care included programs for teens and after-school care. On top of OST programs, most agencies will offer programs that cater to different age segments and abilities of the community. Key programming included themed special events, social recreation events, team sports, fitness enhancement classes, health and wellness education, individual sports, safety training, racket sports, and aquatics.

National Trends

The recent pandemic has brought about a big shift in how and which types of sports people participate in. Restrictions enforcing social distancing have left communities desiring more social interaction and social sports. The 2022 SFIA State of the Industry report indicated the fastest growing sports coming out of 2021 are fast-pitched softball (+15.3%), pickleball (+14.8%), and gymnastics (+10.9%). Other top outdoor activities include walking for fitness (+3.9%), day hiking (+18.1%), camping (+27.7%), and tennis (+27.9%) in the past two years. Pickleball and tennis have both emerged as popular sports among youth from the pandemic. Many agencies have been incorporating pickleball courts into parks or adding pickleball court striping within tennis courts. Many enjoy playing pickleball due to the inclusive nature of the sport.

Planning programs across age groups will be important to ensure active participation opportunities for those of all ages. Gen X, Millennials, and Gen Z make up more than 50% of program participants with Millennials and Gen Zers more likely to participate in sports team or individual athletic programs. Figure 3.0 provides a breakdown of outdoor participation by demographic age.

FIGURE 3.0 OUTDOOR PARTICIPATION BY DEMOGRAPHIC AGE¹



Trends in Youth Sports

While there has been a resurgence of people returning to sports, participation in youth team sports is still lower than pre-pandemic levels. Numbers indicate that community-based agencies are reopening programs to near or full capacity. However, survey responses indicate that community-based agencies are struggling with bringing participants back to their programs. On the other hand, many schools have been able to bring back sport leagues.

Overall, the fastest growing team sports include fast-pitch softball (+15.3%), gymnastics (+10.9%), court volleyball (+8.1%), and swimming on a team (+8.0%). Basketball remains the most popular team sport due to low cost of entry and the ability for participants to play casually or competitively. Baseball remains the second most popular, and outdoor soccer follows in third.

1 2022 SFIA State of the Industry, Sports and Fitness Industry Association.

Over the years, agencies are seeing a continuous rise in female youth participation in sports. In the past five years, there has been significant growth in female youth ages 6 to 12 in tackle football (20.9%), flag football (34.9%), and touch football (39.1%). Core participation for this age group is strongest in basketball, outdoor soccer, and cheerleading. Female youth ages 13 to 17 are seen with the greatest participation growth in the last five years in fast-pitch softball (70.8%), ice hockey (61.%), and tackle football (57.7%).

The male youth demographic is seeing growth in participation but not as significant of an increase as seen in female participation. Male youth ages 6 to 12 are seeing strong core participation in baseball, basketball, and outdoor soccer, with track and field (10.9%), volleyball (5.7%), and flag football being the three largest growing within the past years. For male youth ages 13 to 17, the top three are lacrosse (5.7%), wrestling (3.2%), and flag football (2.8%).

The Young Adults (ages 18–24) category has seen a steady trend in participation since 2018. Popular sports with the most growth were gymnastics (17.2%), cheerleading (15.1%), and tackle football (14.0%). Over the last year, female participation in basketball (6.1%), beach volleyball (4.0%), and court volleyball (3.9%) has shown the greatest participation growth. For males of the same age group, top sports with greatest participation growth are basketball (23.1%), baseball (9.4%), and outdoor soccer (8.0%) in the last year.



Challenges in Youth Sports

Community based sport programs are seeing a decline in participation. Parents have indicated that they are opting to place their children in private teams and clubs over local programs, citing the desire for more quality experiences for their children. Participation rates in travel sports have doubled in the past year to 29%, according to survey participants.

Both the State of Play 2022 report and 2022 SFIA Trends in Team Sports report indicate that core sports participants are showing a decreased interest in continuing to participate in their sport or even trying a new sport. Reasons for the decreased interest are related to youth mental health issues. Some are feeling what is being called sport burnout when playing a sport repeatedly for several years. Others are facing the pressure of participating in sport leagues and the need to perform on a competitive level. Survey participants indicated that they would prefer to play sports on a casual level over a competitive level to enjoy the sport more.

Equity in Programs

The closure of recreation programs greatly impacted disadvantaged communities. This entire process has shed further light on the inequity of parks and programs in disadvantaged communities. Agencies should be encouraged to push more resources and effort to provide opportunities for these communities. Children from lower income households are participating in sports at a much lower rate than those from wealthy households. SFIA data has shown an increase in rates, up 24% in 2021, but there are still significant gaps. Currently, the easiest entry for youth from lower income households is to participate in a school-based sport program.

COMPARISON DISTRICTS AND AGENCIES

A comparative analysis of current recreation assets and programming across a sample of parks and recreation agencies can be helpful to establish a broad snapshot of current trends both within and outside NHRPD. The identification of appropriate comparison agencies considers numerous factors, such as population, park area and assets managed, and level of service provided per resident of the jurisdiction. Comparison agencies naturally vary and each one presents its own similarities to and differences from NHRPD. The following sections show comparison studies among four census designated places (CDP) and one park district. They are Altadena CDP, Antelope CDP, Carmichael CDP, Fair Oaks CDP, and Fulton El Camino Recreation and Park District.

Of note, parks and recreation agencies are different between Northern California and Southern California. Altadena is an unincorporated community of Los Angeles County and the park system is managed by County of Los Angeles Department of Parks & Recreation. Altadena was used in the comparison because their population size and income levels were similar to North Highlands. While certain data aligns between Altadena and NHRPD, it is important to note that there may be differences that are not apparent when performing the comparative analysis.

Population

The population served by NHRPD per the 2020 census is listed as 49,327. Comparison agencies were identified based upon similar population numbers in order to make more equitable comparisons. The highest population served by a comparison agency is Carmichael, with a current population of 79,793, while the lowest is Fulton-El Camino with 30,000. These agencies were still included in the comparison analysis due to geographic proximity to NHRPD.

Park Area

The total park area varies widely across the identified comparison agencies. Antelope encompasses 487.71 acres, whereas the total park acres in unincorporated Altadena total 38.1 acres. The acres listed in Table 3.0 are those managed by each recreation agency and do not include other recreation opportunities outside the jurisdiction. Notably, there is a large amount of recreational open space outside the boundary of unincorporated Altadena, which is therefore not included in its acreage.

Level of Service (LOS) Per Population

Level of Service (LOS) is a traditional measurement used to show performance through metrics. Level of Service Per Population means how many acres of parkland the jurisdiction has per 1,000 population. The comparison agencies selected for this report are all under four acres per 1,000 population within the jurisdiction served. The lowest number is from Altadena with 0.9 acres per 1,000, while the highest is Fair Oaks with 3.76 acres per 1,000.

Program Participation

While this Parks and Recreation Master Plan does not review the number of program participants, it is important to note that tracking of participants and reviewing participant data annually is an important Key Performance Indicator to track success of programs. Not all agencies track this information, making it difficult to make comparisons.

TABLE 3.0 COMPARISON DISTRICTS AND AGENCIES ²			
AGENCY/DISTRICT (COUNTY)	2020 POPULATION	PARK AREA (ACRES)	LEVEL OF SERVICE PER POPULATION
NORTH HIGHLANDS CDP (SACRAMENTO)	49,327	85	1.72
ALTADENA CDP (LOS ANGELES)	42,846	38.1	0.9
ANTELOPE CDP (SACRAMENTO)	48,733	487.71	3
CARMICHAEL CDP (SACRAMENTO)	79,793	177.53	2.2
FAIR OAKS CDP (SACRAMENTO)	32,514	122.22	3.76
FULTON-ELCAMINO RECREATION AND PARK DISTRICT (SACRAMENTO)	30,000	83	2.73

² Data S0101, 2010 and 2021 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.



CHAPTER 4

INVENTORY

4. INVENTORY

The District was first founded in 1955 when a five-acre parcel was generously donated by the North Highlands Improvement Association for its first park. This park is now known as Strizek Park. Today, the District has grown from its inception to managing roughly 85 acres of land with a mix of active and passive use parks providing recreation opportunities for its residents. In addition, the District works with adjacent municipalities through joint-use agreements to ensure residents have adequate access to parks and open space facilities.

The District has experienced steady growth and will continue to grow as infill development progresses. As a result, the District will need to reconsider their current parks and recreation programming to adequately serve and meet community demands and needs. The 2008 NHRPD Parks and Recreation Master Plan lists the Level of Service standard for the District to be 5 acres per 1,000 residents. This is further broken down to 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents for Community Parks and 2.5 acres per 1,000 for Neighborhood Parks.

This chapter is intended to provide a snapshot of the District's current park and recreation facilities and recreation programs offered at the time of writing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan. While neighboring parks and programs managed by other agencies may be utilized by residents, they will not be covered in this chapter. These may include parks managed by County, State, other special Districts, Cities, or privately owned parks and facilities.

The following maps show locations of existing District parks and recreation centers. Park boundaries indicated on these maps have been approximated using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) but are not technically exact. County platting and parcel data must be consulted for questions regarding exact park size and boundaries. A detailed breakdown of amenities and observations of each park can be found in Table 4.0.

CURRENT PARKS AND AMENITIES

Based on the five typologies outlined in the 2011 Sacramento County General Plan, NHRPD currently has one community park, seven neighborhood parks, five mini parks, and one pocket park. In addition, NHRPD currently has two joint-use agreements with Center Joint Unified School District and Twin Rivers Unified School District at Sierra Creek Park and Ridgepoint Park, respectively.

An in-depth inventory of the District's parks and facilities occurred in October 2022 to document existing conditions and quantity of park amenities in the NHRPD. The District's parks are generally in mixed conditions, ranging from good to fair. There have been efforts to renovate or build new parks since 2014, so some of the District's parks are in clean and in good condition. However, some of them have facilities and amenities that are outdated, worn-out, and are nearing the end



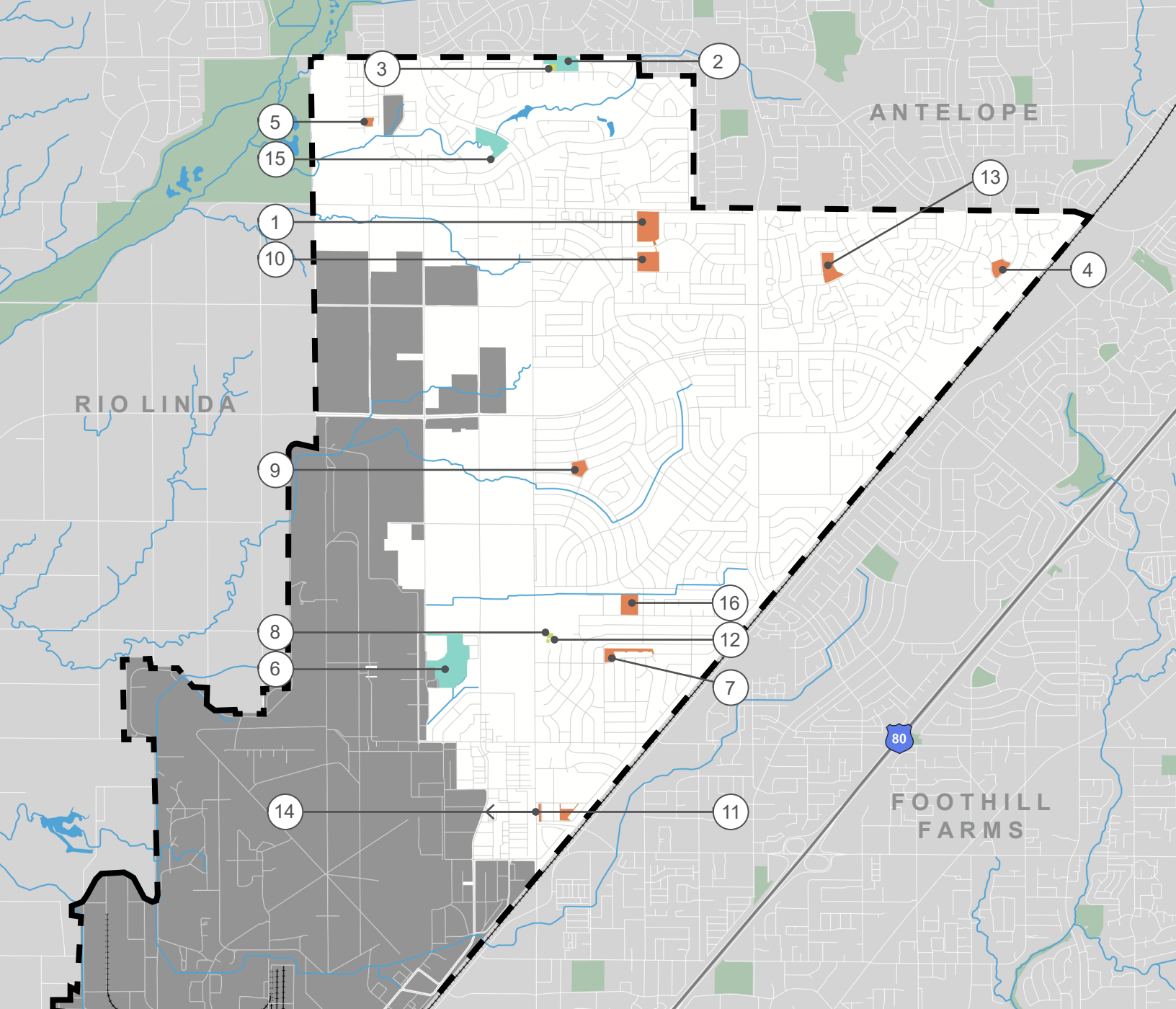


FIGURE 4.0 NORTH HIGHLANDS DISTRICT EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES MAP

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| (1) Brock Park Sports Complex | (9) Larchmont Park | North Highlands Recreation and Park District - Community Park |
| (2) Capehart Park | (10) Memorial Park | North Highlands Recreation and Park District - Neighborhood Park |
| (3) Capehart Center/Gym/Daycare | (11) Planehaven Park | North Highlands Recreation and Park District - Recreation Facility |
| (4) Chardonnay Park | (12) Recreation Center | Industrial Zone |
| (5) Cherry Blossom Park | (13) Ridgepoint Park | Existing Parks Outside of District |
| (6) Freedom Park | (14) Ruth Inman Park | North Highlands District Boundary |
| (7) Karl Rosario Park | (15) Sierra Creek Park | |
| (8) Kay F. Dahill Community Center | (16) Strizek Park | |

of their life cycle. Most parks generally have diverse amenities, including picnic tables, trash cans, benches, barbecues, shade shelter, and play equipment. Open turf dominates most of the parks' landscaping, with the exception of Cherry Blossom Park. Cherry Blossom Park is the latest addition to the District's park system and utilizes a mix of low-water use plantings and open turf.

The District was awarded a Prop 68 Grant to develop Sierra Creek Park. This was formerly a neighborhood park in the previous Parks Master Plan and has now been revised with the community park typology due to the size and new community-level park amenities. Sierra Creek Park is currently in the design phase, with planned amenities that will enhance the site's natural character features. Planned park improvements include a new adventure playground, an expansive sheltered picnic and BBQ space for events and gatherings, and an outdoor amphitheater for hosting community events and performances. The park will also feature a community garden space, a public art installation, walking loop trails, restrooms, and interpretive education signage.

NHRPD is located in an area that experiences extreme heat during the summers. Pools, splash pads, and built shade covers can provide relief during those times. The Capehart pool facility was transferred to NHRPD in 2002 after the closure of McClellan Air Force Base. The pool operated for one season until numerous corrections were mandated by Sacramento County to bring the pool in code compliance. NHRPD already managed and maintained another pool within District boundaries in partnership with what is now Twin Rivers Unified School District (TRUSD). That partnership ended in 2014 by mutual agreement due to the age and excessive cost to renovate the pool. Since then, NHRPD has secured access to swimming pools at two different Twin Rivers High Schools (Foothill High School and Highlands High School) to offer swim lessons and a competitive swim team program. With the recent lifting of COVID-related restrictions, NHRPD will once again be providing aquatic programming at TRUSD pools. Additionally, there is one splash pad located on the west side of the District at Freedom Park. Splash pad operations are dependent on water restrictions and can vary every season.

TABLE 4.0 EXISTING SPORT COURTS, SPORT FIELDS, & PRIMARY PARK AMENITIES IN THE DISTRICT		
CATEGORY	PARKS	QUANTITY/DESCRIPTION
BASKETBALL	5	4F, 1H
BALL FIELD	3	8
SOCCER	2	1 WITH POSTS, 1 INFORMAL
VOLLEYBALL	1	1 WITH POSTS
SHADE STRUCTURES	8	11 STEEL STRUCTURES, 1 WOOD, 2 FABRIC
HORSESHOE	1	1
SPLASH PAD	1	1
TOT LOTS (2-5 PLAY)	5	5
5-12 PLAY	8	8
2-12 PLAY	3	3

Best practices now require shade at play structures because they can encourage users to stay active during hot periods. Currently, there are only two District parks with shade at play structures. One is Chardonnay Park, which has several small shade canopies at the play structure and fitness area. The second one is Ridgepoint Park with integrated shade canopies at the main play structure and shade cover.

Nearly every park contains a playground that serves children between the ages of 2 to 12 years old. All play areas utilize engineered wood fiber for safety surfacing. Play equipment generally appears to be outdated and does not include inclusive features. However, most parks provide accessible ramps into play areas. Many of the parks also lack accessible circulation throughout the park and often confine walking paths near the play areas. There are also inconsistencies between park furniture, park signage, color schemes, and materials within the same park and amongst the different parks.

The District currently owns and operates one gym, Capehart Gym. This gym contains one full sized basketball court and was recently renovated with new court surfacing, bleachers, basketball hoops, and a score board.

While the District strives for safety in their parks, the District can consider expanding their safety measures, including partnering with local law enforcement, enhanced camera security, promotion of a campaign to report suspicious activity, etc.

CURRENT RECREATION PROGRAMS

Part of the District's mission is to provide creative, wholesome, and imaginative programs with a focus on families and youth participation. NHRPD focuses on providing a variety of seasonal and year-round programs to their community. District staff evaluates participation rates, available budget, and resources every season to determine program offerings.

Programs are typically offered and operated through the District. Also, NHRPD offers many programs in partnership with Twin Rivers Unified School District (TRUSD), including day camp, holiday camps, specialty classes and special events. NHRPD did make the decision to no longer operate the after school program at Ridgepoint and sports leagues for TRUSD, but values the partnership with them and plans to continue this well into the future.

Due to the District's pool in the process of a renovation and the closure of all pools during the pandemic, aquatic programs have not been scheduled at the time of writing this Master Plan. However, NHRPD has secured access to two swimming pools in partnership with Twin Rivers High Schools, so aquatic programming is planned to restart after the recent lifting of COVID-related restrictions.

In addition to seasonal programs, the District hosts community social events throughout the year to bring people together and strengthen community bonds. These include holiday events such as Park Spotlights, Holiday Extravaganza, Movie Days, and more. Separate events are hosted for active adults.

FIGURE 4.1 CURRENT DISTRICT PROGRAMS

A variety of seasonal and year-round recreation programs. Residents can participate in programs by creating an account on Active Net Registration System and registering for individual programs or make reservations online.

Winter – Toddler + Youth Aged Basketball Leagues, Youth Cheer, After School Program, Seasonal Break Camp, Contract Classes, Holiday Extravaganza Event, Breakfast with Santa Event, Rockin' Around North Highlands Events, Valentine's Dance Event

Spring – Toddler + Youth Aged Basketball Leagues, Youth Cheer, After School Program, Seasonal Break Camp, Twin Rivers Unified School District Sport Leagues, Mother's Day Kickball Event

Summer – Swim Team, Swim Lessons, Seasonal Break Camps, JR. Recreation Leader, Contract Classes, Teen Camps, Summer Extravaganza, Father's Day Nerf Wars

Fall – Toddler + Youth Aged Flag Football, After School Program, Seasonal Break Camps, Twin Rivers Unified School District Sport Leagues, Contract Classes, Fall Community Yard Sale Event, Halloween Extravaganza & Costume Parade Event

Year Round / Seasonal Offerings – Open Gym, Adult Volleyball, Toddler Play Groups, Park Spotlight, Contract Classes, Cooking Classes, Pee Wee and Youth Sports Programs, Adult Paint Classes, Miscellaneous Teen Workshops, Mini Events, Senior Programs: Harvest Time, Bingo, Movie Days



NHRPD FACILITIES AND RENTALS

The District manages and operates three facilities for programs and rentals.

Capehart Gym

Capehart Gym is the only full-sized gym in the District with a full-sized basketball court, volleyball equipment, scoreboards, and bleachers. As inventoried in fall of 2022, a remodel of the gym had recently occurred. Also, the joint use agreement with TRUSD is still in effect for the Ridgepoint campus. While NHRPD is not offering a subsidized after school program there, the District still has access to the gym, playing fields, and park space. The District also maintains the outdoor spaces outside of school boundaries and offers programming and rental opportunities. Negotiations have begun to extend the current agreement well into the future. The current contract expires in September 2024.



Something Extra Preschool is a vendor that operates a child care and daycare program at Capehart Youth Center. The daycare program operates year-round, Monday through Friday for infants, two-year olds, and three- to four-year-olds. The different ages are separated by rooms. Before and After School programs (Dragon's Den) are also offered by the District. Capehart Youth Center has restrooms, a kitchen for food preparation, a laundry room, and a storage room.

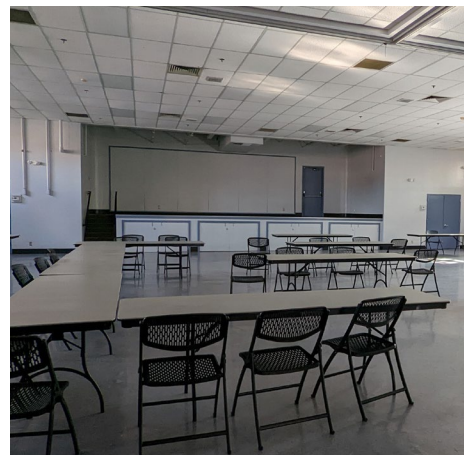
Those interested in gym rentals can begin the process by contacting the Recreation Coordinator. Payment for the rental is performed over the phone and must be done at least two weeks prior to their rental date. There is no deposit associated with the gym rental. Customers must sign a waiver on the day of rental.

Kay F. Dahill Community Center & Recreation Center

The Community Center is located adjacent to the Recreation Center and is only open for community events or reservations. The venue offers a large room with a stage for wedding receptions, baby showers, quinceaneras, and other social gatherings.

While the Community Center is best suited for large events, such as weddings or quinceaneras, the District also utilizes this facility for a variety of day camps and senior programs. The large event room offers a raised platform stage and is equipped with room dividers to create smaller rooms.

The Recreation Center provides spaces for smaller gatherings and meetings. County meetings are also hosted in this building. The 900-square-foot room can comfortably seat 60 for a meal and 78 for assembly. Both centers have fully furnished kitchen facilities available for events and catering use.



Miscellaneous Rentals

The District also offers picnic/barbecue rentals at Freedom Park. These are available all week long beginning the first weekend in March through the last weekend of October. There are five rentable picnic sites, which must be reserved online through the Active Net System.

OPERATIONS AND MARKETING

Marketing

Part of a successful park system is the ability to engage the community and retain participation in District provided programs. NHRPD utilizes a variety of tools to market programs and events. In December 2020, staff began transitioning marketing efforts over to a digital platform. However, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of programs offered were scaled back and a recreation guide was not posted online.

The recreation guide was brought back in 2022 and is now sent out as a seasonal guide with different program offerings for each season. The recreation guide is no longer mailed out to residents. Instead, residents may receive a postcard or flyer in the mail or through school districts with program information. Information is also heavily pushed through the District's website and social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor. The seasonal recreation guide is posted and printed one month before the season begins to allow time to market programs and provide residents time to register for programs.

Operations

All operations and maintenance for NHRPD parks and facilities are performed in-house. The District manages a staff of seven full-time maintenance employees. Their job entails landscape maintenance, parks cleanup, and fixing any operational or maintenance issue.



CHAPTER 5

NEEDS ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

5. NEEDS ASSESSMENT & ANALYSIS

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan was guided by community feedback in order to inform park planning recommendations and guidance of the North Highlands Recreation and Park District's park system. This chapter will describe the methodology and results derived from the community engagement process. An analysis of community input results will also be provided. Community feedback was gathered through a blend of outreach activities, including:

- Online Survey
- Two in-person public meetings
- Interactive and analog polling
- Interactive mural boards
- Open house conversations and poster boards
- One in-person focus group meeting with sport organizations and other community groups

The community outreach process provided a better understanding of the needs within the community, including both aspirations and concerns about the District's assets and priorities for the parks system improvement.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Between January and February 2023, a total of three in-person community outreach meetings were held at the District's Recreation Center. The meetings were heavily advertised in various formats and platforms to reach as many community members as possible. This included the District's social media accounts (Facebook and Instagram), the District's website, the Winter 2022 and Spring 2023 Digital Recreation Guide, and the Nextdoor platform. An email blast was sent to registrants, and physical flyers in various formats were posted on the District's community centers. NHRPD Board Members were also asked to share the flyers with their constituents.

A dedicated website for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan project was created by the District, and all three meeting recordings—both video and audio—were posted on this website. The intent of these meetings was to inform the public about the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the planning process and timeline, and opportunities for how the community can share feedback.

All three meetings were public meetings with a presentation and an open house walk-through. The walk-through provided opportunities to engage community members one-on-one and for them to post feedback on the interactive boards. All three meetings were hybrid meetings where community members had the option to join the meetings in-person or online. People had the opportunity to join virtually via Zoom Cloud Meetings and/or Facebook Live. Interactive and analog polling were woven into the presentation to keep participants engaged and to gather additional community input.

The third community meeting was a focus group meeting that invited local groups and key sport organizations, including the Foothill Highlands Rotary Club, Foothill Farms Little League, North Highlands/Antelope Youth Soccer Club, and Highlands High School. This meeting remained open to the general public, which allowed members of other local groups to participate and provide feedback.

The community meetings were held at different dates and times to add flexibility for attendees.

- Meeting #1: Tuesday, January 17th, 2023, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #2: Wednesday, January 25th, 2023, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM
- Meeting #3: Saturday, February 25th, 2023, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

SURVEY

From mid-January to early March 2023, an online survey in English, Spanish, and Russian languages was made available to the public in order to understand the needs, concerns, and priorities regarding the District's parks and recreation facilities. A total of 204 surveys were completed, while 382 would have been needed to qualify as a statistically valid survey. The total is broken down as follows: 194 completed the English version, 5 completed the Spanish version, and 5 completed the Russian version. The rate of participation leads to a 95% level of confidence with a 6.71% margin of error.

The survey was developed to assess the community's perception and experience regarding the District's parks and recreation system.

- Gather basic demographic information of survey respondents.
- Identify current usage of parks, facilities, and recreation programs.
- Assess importance of and user satisfaction of different elements and qualities of park facilities and recreation programs.
- Understand barriers to user participation in District parks and recreation resources.
- Assess future needs and priorities for park facilities and recreation programs.

The survey used a variety of evaluation measurements to assess community sentiment, including multiple choice, free response, and importance/satisfaction ranking questions. Physical copies of the survey were provided at the community meetings and at the District's main office. The survey link was posted on the dedicated website page and advertised similarly at the community meetings. This allowed the survey to be completed by all who desired the opportunity.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: KEY FINDINGS

Meeting Findings

Over the course of three separate meetings, community members had the opportunity to express their needs outside of the survey. A diverse group of people attended the meetings, including senior citizens, families, Board Members, young adults, and longtime residents of North Highlands.

Attendees were asked a series of questions during the presentation including questions about if they have visited a park in the last month, favorite types of activities at a park, and types of sport courts, fields, and amenities they would like to see more of.



FIGURE 5.0 POLLING QUESTION AND RESULT AT MEETING

What kind of park amenity would you like to see more of?



FIGURE 5.1 SUMMARY OF ATTENDEE RESPONSES FROM MEETINGS

- Attendees were asked the type of improvements they would like to see at the parks. Suggestions included exercise equipment, new slides, more basketball hoops, new and open restrooms, and more programming at parks including community events, dance, and aquatic programs.
- Top activities from attendees include walking, playing, baseball, basketball, and having picnics and barbecues at the park.
- In the future, attendees would like to see more baseball fields, basketball courts, designated soccer fields, tennis courts, and disc golf.
- Parks or facilities frequented by attendees included the Recreation Center, Planehaven Park, Capehart Park, Brock Park, and Strizek Park. Freedom Park was the most visited.
- Additional seating and shade were among the most requested improvements for ball fields and sports facilities. Other suggestions included adding more tennis courts, lighting at courts and fields to extend use, and restrooms.

In addition to the interactive polling, attendees had the opportunity to provide additional feedback on interactive boards. Post-it notes were provided for attendees to add any additional thoughts to the interactive boards. “This or That” questions asked attendees to choose their preference between two options during the presentation. The stakeholder meeting featured additional questions that were sport specific.

Survey Findings

While input from the community meetings were insightful, definitive conclusions regarding community needs cannot be drawn without extreme bias due to the small sample size. Drawing information from the survey provided a better representation of community sentiment. A total of 204 surveys were received from the public. The survey collected information that included demographic data, frequency of visits and participation at parks and programs, areas of concern, areas of priority, and a series of importance and satisfaction questions.

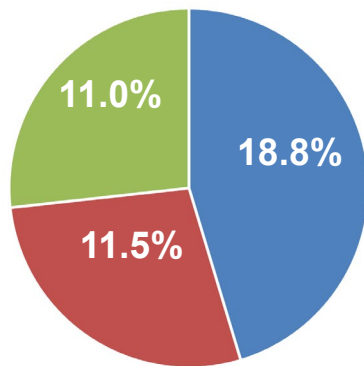
Importance versus satisfaction questions aid in determining areas of need that are adequately met and areas of opportunity for improvement. The questions ask participants to rank a list of benefits associated with parks, facilities, and programs in order of importance and their overall satisfaction with the items. Identified areas of opportunity then become a suggestive guide on where to prioritize funding and new projects. It is important to note that while 204 surveys were received, not all surveys were completed in their entirety. An analysis of the survey findings can be found in the Needs Assessment section of this chapter.

FIGURE 5.2 COMMON THEMES EXPRESSED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

- A little over a quarter (27.6%) of participants visit the parks more than two times per week. A quarter only visit a few times a year (26.1%).
- Participants cite **safety** (27.5%), **lack of restrooms** (22.5%), and **lack of features/amenities** (20.5%) as the top three reasons they don't visit a park or facility.
- An overwhelming majority have visited Freedom Park. The second most commonly visited park is Larchmont Park, with Strizek Park and Brock Park each a close third.
- Many have a significantly increased perception of the value of parks and open space (31.1%) while 43.0% have had no change to how they perceive the value of parks and open space.
- About **95%** of respondents regarded **inclusive play areas promoting play for all abilities as somewhat or very important**.
- The **top 3 concerns** when visiting parks are **loitering people** (21.9%), **safety** (21.7%), and **lack of amenities** (16.9%).
- The **top 3 improvements** participants would like to see are **improve existing parks in general** (18.8%), **improve existing playgrounds** (11.5%), and **renovate and reopen the pool at Capehart Gym** (11.0%).
- 26.5% of respondents participate only once a year, and 20.3% only participate once or twice a month.
- Top three programs or services that participants believe should be a priority are **Youth Sports, Health and Wellness, and Swim Programs**.

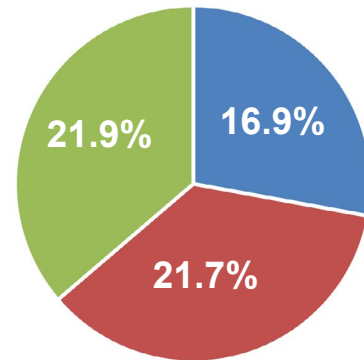
FIGURE 5.3 TOP 3 PRIORITIES AND CONCERNS BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

TOP 3 PRIORITY IMPROVEMENTS PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE



- Improve existing parks in general
- Improve existing playgrounds
- Renovate and reopen the pool at Capehart Gym

TOP 3 CONCERNS WHEN VISITING PARKS



- Lack of amenities
- Safety
- Loitering people

DEMOGRAPHICS

- An overwhelming majority of residents drive to parks (64.5%). Walking (25.5%) is the second most popular form of transportation to reach parks.
- Almost half of all participants who completed the survey identify as white (46.6%). The next largest demographic group who participated in the survey identify as Hispanic or Latino (18.8%). Other demographics groups who took the survey identify as Black or African American (8.9%), Asian (4.04%), Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (3.14%), and American Indian or Alaskan Native (3.14%).
- Almost half of all participants who completed the survey were between the ages of 26 and 39 (48.3%). The second highest completion are those who are aged 55 and up (22.4%), and a third are those between the ages 40 and 54 (20.5%).

TABLE 5.0 AGE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

AGE	%
UNDER 18	1.5%
18–25	4.9%
26–39	48.3%
40–54	20.5%
55 OR OLDER	22.4%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	2.4%

TABLE 5.1 ETHNICITY OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

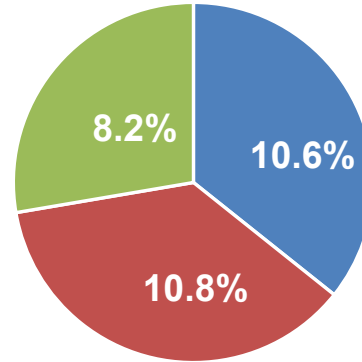
ETHNICITY	%
WHITE	46.6%
HISPANIC/LATINO	18.8%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN	9.0%
ASIAN	4.0%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN OR OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER	3.1%
AMERICAN INDIAN OR ALASKAN NATIVE	3.1%
PREFER NOT TO SAY	9.9%
OTHER	3.1%



RECREATION PROGRAMS

- Most people hear about District events and programs through social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or Nextdoor (19.8%), through the online District Recreation Guide (18.6%), and through word of mouth from friends or neighborhoods (17.1%).
- A majority of survey participants have **never participated** in programs (31.2%), with many citing **lack of interest** in programs offered as the main reason, **schedule conflicts** as the second (33.3%), and the **overall cost** as the third reason (11.1%).
- Several free response questions were incorporated into the survey. Below is a summary of the most mentioned item and the number of times they were mentioned. Note that not all participants provided information for the free response questions.

TOP 3 PROGRAMS/SERVICES PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO BE PRIORITIZED



■ Health and wellness ■ Youth sports ■ Youth programs

- » Additional outdoor facilities participants would like to see:
 - Pool (8)
 - Fitness (6)
 - Dog Park (6)
 - Restroom (6)
 - Splash Pad (4)
- » Community events participant would like to see:
 - Community Fair (8)
 - Movie Nights (7)
 - Music/Concerts (5)
 - Farmers Market (5)
 - Holiday Events (4)
- » Additional recreation programs participants would like to see:
 - Aquatics (5)
 - Health and Wellness (4)
 - Senior Programs (4)
 - Multi-Generational Programs (3)
 - Sport Leagues (3)
- » Any additional comments or thoughts to improve parks or programs:
 - Maintenance of parks (13)
 - Improve security and safety (10)
 - Fix and reopen restrooms (7)
 - Provide more sports (3)

The survey also contained several free responses for people to add additional input that may not have been addressed in the other questions. Information below is a summary of top mentioned themes in the free response.

Respondents had the opportunity to suggest additional outdoor facilities that they would like to see at their parks. There were a total of 59 free response answers. Top themes mentioned included pools (13.56%), dog park (10.17%), fitness (10.17%), restrooms (10.17%), open space for sports (6.78%), and splash pads (6.78%).

Community events are important to build trust, social connections, and form community identity. Survey participants were asked to share additional community events they would like the District to host. There was a total of 41 responses. Top events include:

- Community Fairs (19.51%)
- Movie Nights (17.07%)
- Music/Concerts (12.20%)
- Farmers Markets (12.20%)
- Holiday Events (9.76%)

Regarding additional recreational programs the District should consider, a total of 36 participants provided a response. Top programs desired are:

- Aquatics (13.89%)
- Health and Wellness (11.11%)
- Senior Programs and Events (11.11%)
- Multi-Generational/Inclusive Programs (8.33%)
- Sports Leagues (8.33%)

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

Existing Parks Assessment

Site inventory visits to the District parks concluded in October 2022. A comprehensive matrix of park inventory data is provided in Appendix A.

Based on park site visits, the following general assessments were made for existing North Highlands District parks:

- Most parks offer basic amenities including playgrounds for 2-to-5-year-olds and 5-to-12-year-olds, picnic tables, benches, and open space lawns.
- Parks lack a unifying materials palette both on an individual park level and as a park system. Many parks have mismatched site furnishings and different signage.
- Basic park maintenance is performed at all parks including litter cleanup and landscape maintenance.
- Many parks lack walking trails or loops and are restricted to accessing either sport fields or play areas only.

Demographics

The survey included two questions regarding participant demographics. Understanding the participant demographics will provide insight into who is providing input and ultimately who is helping shape the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As mentioned in the recreation trends section of **Chapter 3: Best Practices and Design Guidelines**, people of different ages, ethnic backgrounds, and income levels recreate differently. It is important to understand who is

providing information, understand the demographic they may represent, and identify any gaps in representation.

Almost half of respondents are between ages 26 to 39 (48.2%), suggesting many may be parents of young children. The next largest respondent group are those ages 55 and up (22.4%), followed by those ages 40 to 54. Young adults and youth were the least represented with only 6.34% of surveys completed. This age group tends to be harder to reach when soliciting information but tends to be the most frequent users of parks and programs. While roughly a quarter of participants were those ages 55 and up, it would be beneficial for the District to continue to solicit input from this age group and those ages 40 to 54 as this age demographic will make up a large portion of the population in the future.

A question about ethnicity was also included to understand which ethnic groups are participating in the planning process. Roughly half of respondents identify as white (46.6%). The second highest ethnicity respondents identified with is Hispanic or Latino (18.8%). Other participant demographics identified as Black or African American (8.9%), Asian (4.0%), American Indian or Alaska Native (3.1%), and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (3.1%).

While North Highlands' majority ethnic group is white, census studies are trending toward more ethnically diverse communities. The results indicate a lack of participation from minority ethnicities within the North Highlands community. Reasons for lack of participation cannot be determined but may be due to lack of understanding of the planning process, lack of awareness, or language barriers. Focusing on engaging these underrepresented groups and ensuring adequate and equitable opportunities for recreation would greatly benefit the larger community.

Safety

Survey participants cite safety as the top concern when visiting the District's parks. Over the past few years, the District has seen a significant increase in the number of people loitering at parks, either participating in unlawful activities or those without a place to be. This is a cause for concern especially for those utilizing parks at night. Comments about increasing surveillance at parks, police presence, or adding lighting at parks dominated safety concerns.

Cleanliness and Maintenance

Many structures and amenities at the parks are aging and are either at the end of their lifecycle or beginning to deteriorate. Participants indicated that they would like the District to prioritize improving existing playgrounds, parks, and pool facilities, which includes routine cleanup of vandalized features and modernizing amenities, such as restrooms, repair of broken amenities, and routine cleaning. Participants have also cited finding dangerous objects on the ground, especially in the play surfacing. Restrooms are frequently mentioned in feedback received from the survey's free response, survey questions, and at community meetings. Many have expressed the need for clean and open restrooms at the parks. Existing restrooms are often unusable due to sanitary issues or vandalism.

Aquatic Facilities and Programs

Aquatic facilities and programs have been an increasingly desired and needed amenity in many communities. There has been an ongoing request from the community to bring more permanent swim programs and water play facilities to North Highlands. Many survey respondents requested bringing back aquatic programs and having a dedicated North Highlands aquatic facility. There is currently only one splash pad located at Freedom Park. Due to the park's location, many residents must drive to the park to use the splash pad. Residents would like to see a better distribution and more water play components in their parks.

Park Programming

A majority of survey respondents and meeting attendees indicated that they do frequent parks at least once a year, if not more. However, many cited safety, lack of restrooms, and lack of amenities and features as reasons why they would not visit the District's parks.

The District currently has a variety of amenities including picnic areas, playgrounds, basketball, ball fields, and horseshoe pits. Many respondents expressed the need for a sports complex or designated spaces for soccer fields, more basketball courts, a community dog park, fitness stations in parks, having access to a community pool for aquatic programs, splash pads, and restrooms.

Many people visit parks for passive recreation such as walking, running, enjoying nature, or spending time with friends or family. Providing more passive recreation opportunities was among the top five priority improvements from survey participants. This includes more walking trails, better bike connections, inclusive amenities, recreational games such as game tables, ping pong, corn hole, fitness equipment, or multi-use spaces for a variety of social gatherings. In addition to passive recreation, residents would like to see more multi-generational programs at parks.

While there are plenty of open spaces for pet owners to exercise their pets, meeting attendees and survey participants have expressed interest in having a dedicated large dog park for the whole District or smaller fenced dog runs throughout the District. Many cited safety and sanitation concerns about off-leash pets at the parks.

Recreation Program Participation

Recreation programs remain the main method for users to engage in outdoor recreation. Around one-third of survey participants indicated that they do not participate in District programs due to lack of interest in current program offerings, schedule conflicts, and overall cost to participate. Of those who do participate, about a quarter only participate once a year, and 20.3% only participate once or twice a month, indicating low reoccurring participation.

NRPA and SFIA studies have cited the importance of retaining program participants as program fees tend to comprise a large portion of revenue used to maintain and continue both park and recreation offerings.

Importance versus Satisfaction Analysis

The public survey included a series of importance and satisfaction questions. A direct comparison of the two question types can identify areas of opportunity for improvement. Items that ranked high on the importance scale but low on the satisfaction scale in the charts revealed opportunity

UNDERSTANDING THE DATA

Figures 5.4 to 5.6 display data compiled from survey participants regarding their satisfaction and importance levels of certain park and recreation program elements. Importance and satisfaction scores are weighted out of 10 and plotted onto an X-Y axis to determine an opportunity score. This opportunity score falls within one of four categories to help identify community priorities.

LEVEL OF OPPORTUNITY

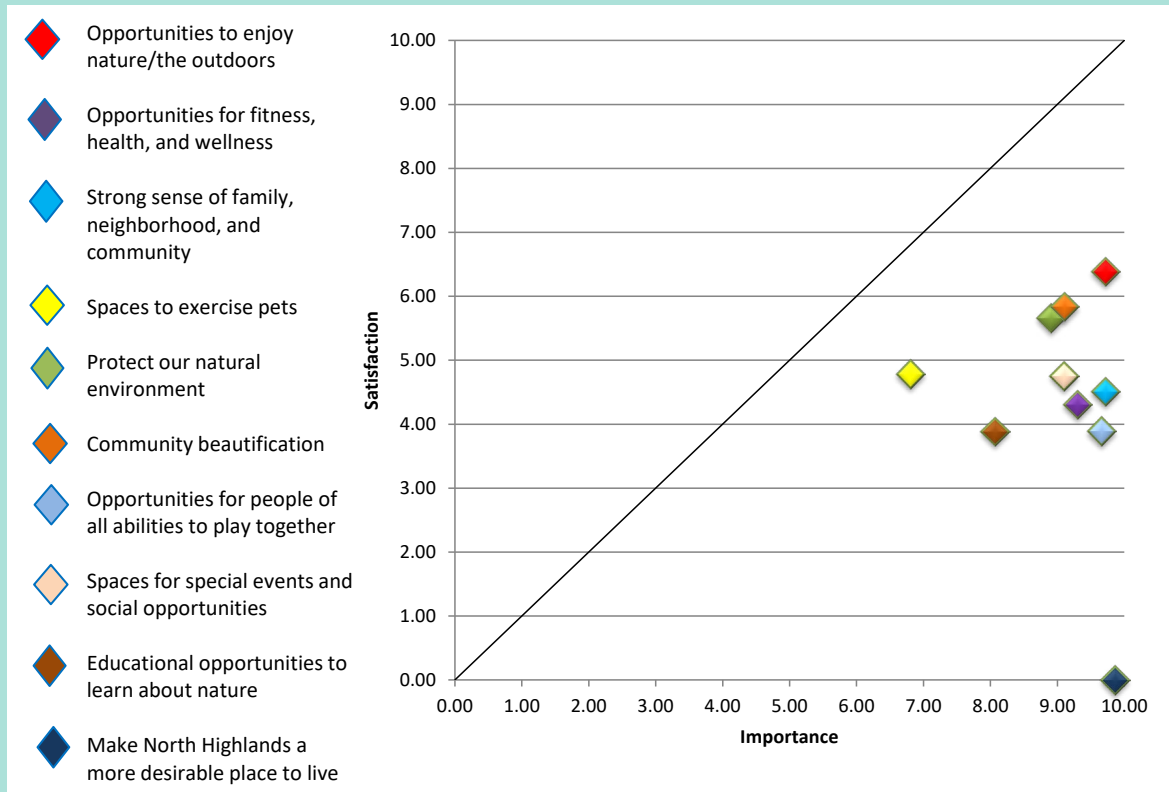
>15 = **extreme opportunity**

12–14 = **high opportunity**

10–11 = **solid opportunity**

<10 = **feature appropriately served or overserved**

FIGURE 5.4 IMPORTANCE VS SATISFACTION: BENEFITS OF PARKS

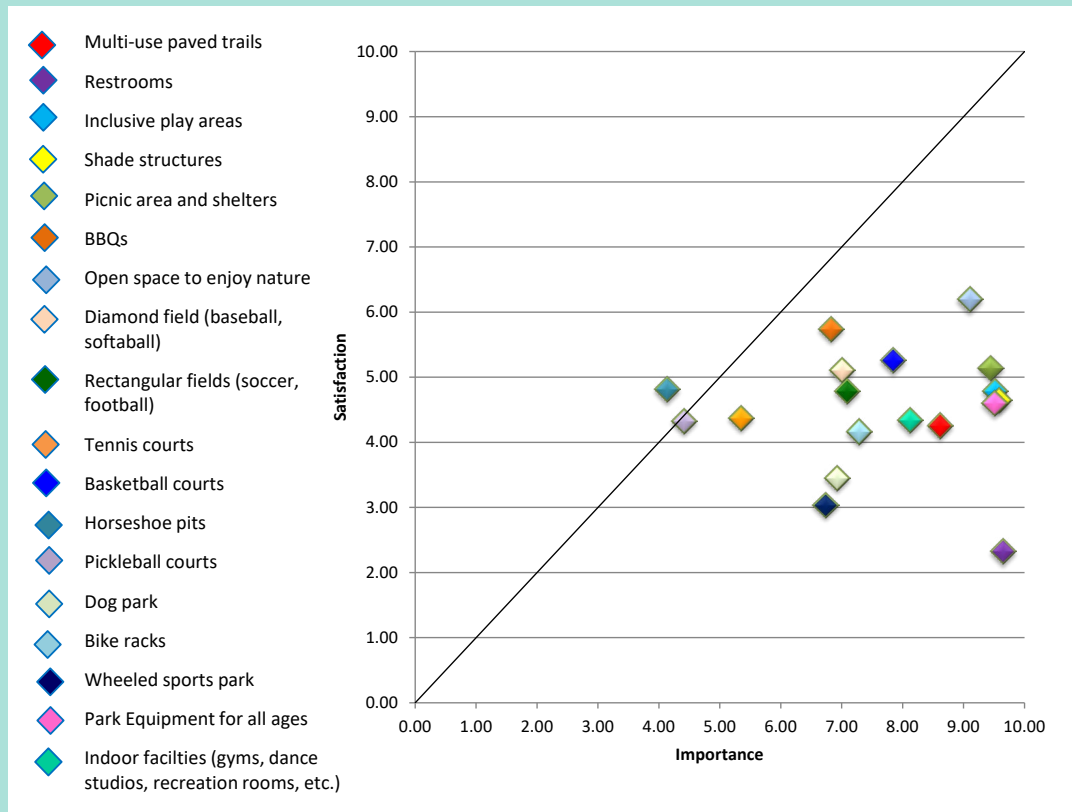


BENEFITS OF PARKS

OPPORTUNITY SCORE

Make North Highlands a more desirable place to live.	19.7
Provide opportunities for people of all abilities to play together.	15.4
Strengthen families, neighborhoods, and the community.	14.9
Improve fitness, health, and wellness.	14.3
Provide spaces for special events and social opportunities.	13.4
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/the outdoors.	13.0
Community beautification (art/gardens).	12.4
Provide educational opportunities to learn about nature.	12.4
Protect our natural environment.	12.1
Provide spaces to exercise pets.	8.8

FIGURE 5.5 IMPORTANCE VS SATISFACTION: FEATURES AND AMENITIES AT PARKS



FEATURES AND AMENITIES

OPPORTUNITY SCORE

Restrooms	17.0
Shade structures	14.5
Park equipment for all ages	14.4
Inclusive play areas promoting play for children of all abilities	14.2
Picnic area and shelters	13.8
Multi-use paved trails	13.0
Open space to enjoy nature	12.0
Indoor facilities (gyms, dance studios, recreation rooms, etc.)	11.9
Basketball courts	10.4
Bike racks	10.4
Dog parks	10.4
Wheeled sports park	10.4
Rectangular fields (soccer, football)	9.4
Diamond fields (baseball, softball)	8.9
Barbecues	7.9
Tennis courts	6.3
Pickleball courts	4.5
Horseshoe pits	4.1

areas to focus improvements on. An opportunity score is derived from adding both importance and satisfaction numbers for each category. The opportunity score is weighed out of 10 to ensure the data is not skewed due to incomplete responses. Scores above 15 indicate areas of extreme opportunity. Scores between 12 and 15 indicate high opportunity. Scores above 10 indicate solid opportunity and scores below 10 indicate that the feature is either appropriately served or overserved.

Recreation Programs

Many survey participants (31.25%) have never participated in the District's recreation program. A little over a quarter of participants only participate once a year and only 20.31% participate once or twice a month. These numbers indicate the District may lack a steady group of core participants in their programs. Core participants are those who actively frequent programs several times a year and are more likely to repeat participation over the course of many years. SFIA research shows that core participants are crucial as many agencies bring in a significant amount of revenue from core participants.

Survey participants were asked why they don't participate, and a majority (40.74%) cited the lack of interest in programs offered as the main reason suggesting that the District should look to diversify their programs more. A third of participants have schedule conflicts with programs that they are interested in. Other reasons listed include the overall cost of programs, lack of information, and concerns about safety.

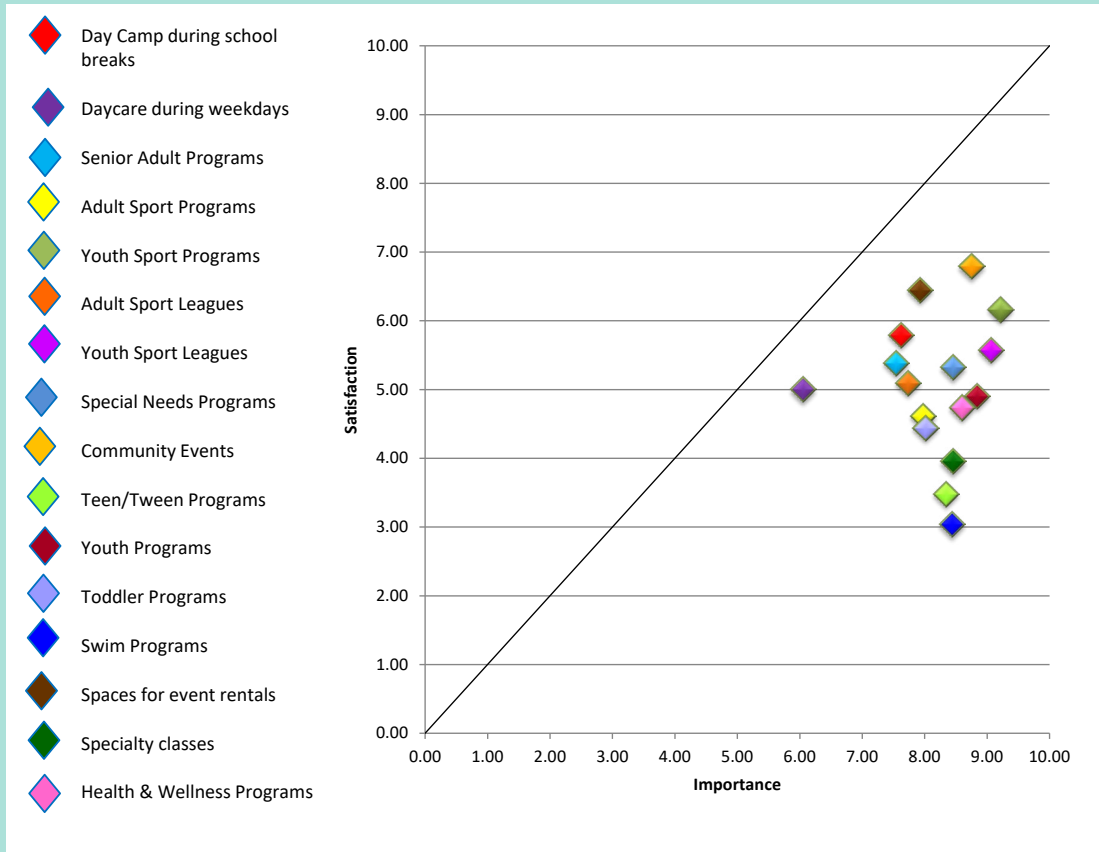
When it comes to preferred programs or services, survey participants prioritize youth sports/programs, health and wellness, swim programs, dog parks, day camps during school breaks, and nature or outdoor programs. However, when comparing information derived from the importance versus satisfaction questions, swim programs, teen/tween programs, special needs programs, youth programs, and youth sport leagues are among the top of the list for areas of opportunity. Some overlap is seen with swim programs and youth programs indicating a greater priority should be placed in these programs first. It is important to note that sport programs are different from sport leagues. Sport programs offer participant opportunities to learn and build technical skills and play on a recreational level. Sport leagues involve playing on a competitive level within a team. Sport programs may be a series of classes over a short time span such as a month or as little as just one class.

Community events are a great way for residents to socialize and be engaged with the larger community. A question was added regarding frequency and type of community events. Forty-one respondents provided input as to what type of community events they would like to see. There was consensus that community events should be held more frequently and at a larger scale for more people to enjoy. These included events like:

- Community Fair (8)
- Movie Nights (7)
- Music/Concerts (5)
- Farmers Markets (5)
- Holiday Events (4)
- Family Events (3)
- Food Events (3)
- Arts/Crafts (2)



FIGURE 5.6 IMPORTANCE VS SATISFACTION: RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS



RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS

OPPORTUNITY SCORE

Swim programs	13.8
Teen/tween programs	13.2
Special needs programs	12.9
Youth programs	12.8
Youth sport leagues	12.6
Health & wellness programs (meditation, mental health, nutrition, etc.)	12.5
Youth sport programs	12.3
Specialty classes (arts & crafts, science, dance, etc.)	11.6
Toddler programs	11.6
Adult sport programs	11.3
Community events	10.7
Adult sport leagues	10.4
Senior adult programs	9.7
Day camp during school breaks	9.4
Spaces for event rentals	9.4
Daycare during weekdays	7.1

- Community Sport Events (2)
- Neighborhood Watch/Community Awareness (1)
- Would like to see more of the following programs offered:
 - » Senior, health and wellness, aquatics, sport leagues, dance

Facility Rentals

While the North Highlands District offers several facilities for rent, most participants have not rented a facility before. Respondents cite they haven't had a need to rent, facilities don't match the need, and overall costs as the top three reasons. A handful of respondents were unaware of facilities available for rent.

Park Distribution and Gaps in Service

Understanding the distribution of parks within the District helps identify communities that lack equitable access to park space, as well as surpluses or deficiencies of parks within neighborhoods. A half-mile is an industry standard measurement used to identify service radius of parks. The half-mile measurement is thought to be the maximum distance people are willing to walk or bike to a park, which is generally equivalent to a 10-minute walk.

The following figures represent the North Highlands Recreation and Park District boundaries and current service elements. The service maps help show neighborhoods that are deficient of parks. While Figure 5.7 appears to show severe service gaps in more than half of the District, looking at both community, neighborhood, and joint-use service maps provides a better picture of where those gaps actually lie. One main area lacking park access can be identified once both maps are studied, which are highlighted with a number on Figure 5.8. The gap located on the east side of the District is predominantly low density residential, while the gap in the west has a mix of industrial, commercial, and less dense residential.

In addition to service maps, Figure 5.9 displays the location and intensity of disadvantaged communities in the District. A visual representation showing disadvantaged communities is important to identify how equitable or inequitable the spatial distribution of parks are. Traditionally, disadvantaged communities have high percentages of low-income residents, minority residents, and/or immigrant communities that have less access to certain resources and opportunities are subject to more environmental hazards. In addition to having disadvantaged communities, the Sacramento County General Plan has identified North Highlands as an Environmental Justice community and has established the need for more resources that mitigate health hazards faced by many residents in these communities.

As shown in Figure 5.9, approximately a third of North Highlands is considered a Disadvantaged Community or a Severely Disadvantaged Community, based on data from California Department of Water Resources. While a majority of the District's parks are located in these areas, it is important to ensure there are adequate, quality park amenities and recreational offerings to encourage park use. Making parks well-maintained, accessible, and safe can also help improve park access for residents living in a disadvantaged community.

Another way to understand current park access is to review the ratio of park acres per thousand residents, as displayed on Figure 5.10. A majority of North Highlands residents live in areas with less than three acres of parks or open space per thousand residents. This indicates the need for more parkland that can provide park amenities and areas for both small and large recreational activities tailored to the community. Lack of adequate open space or opportunities to engage with parks limits park access for residents, especially for those who live outside the half-mile service area.

FIGURE 5.7 COMMUNITY PARKS SERVICE MAP

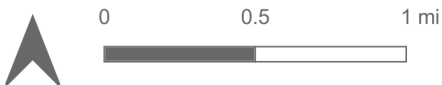
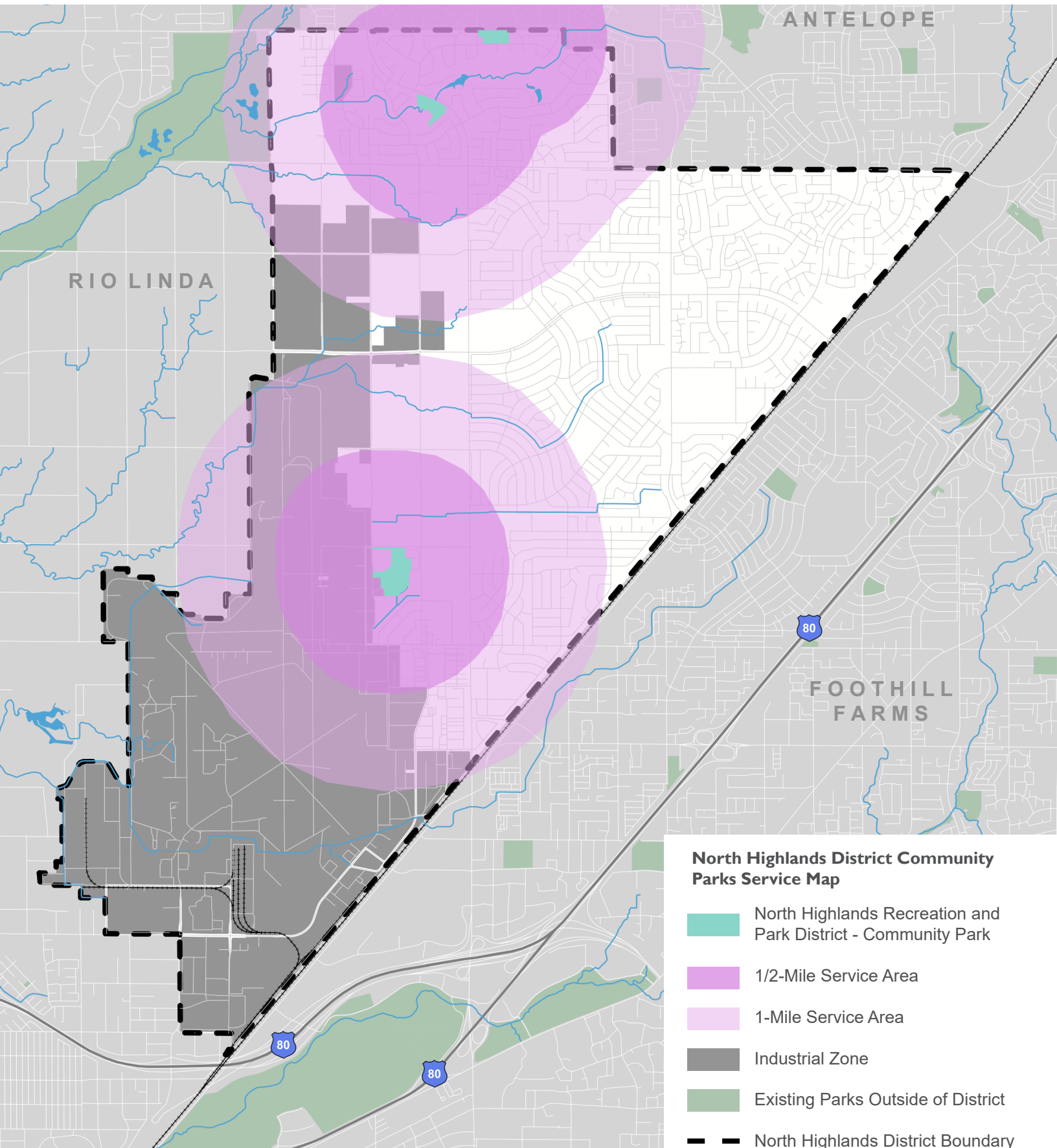


FIGURE 5.8 NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & JOINT-USE SERVICE MAP

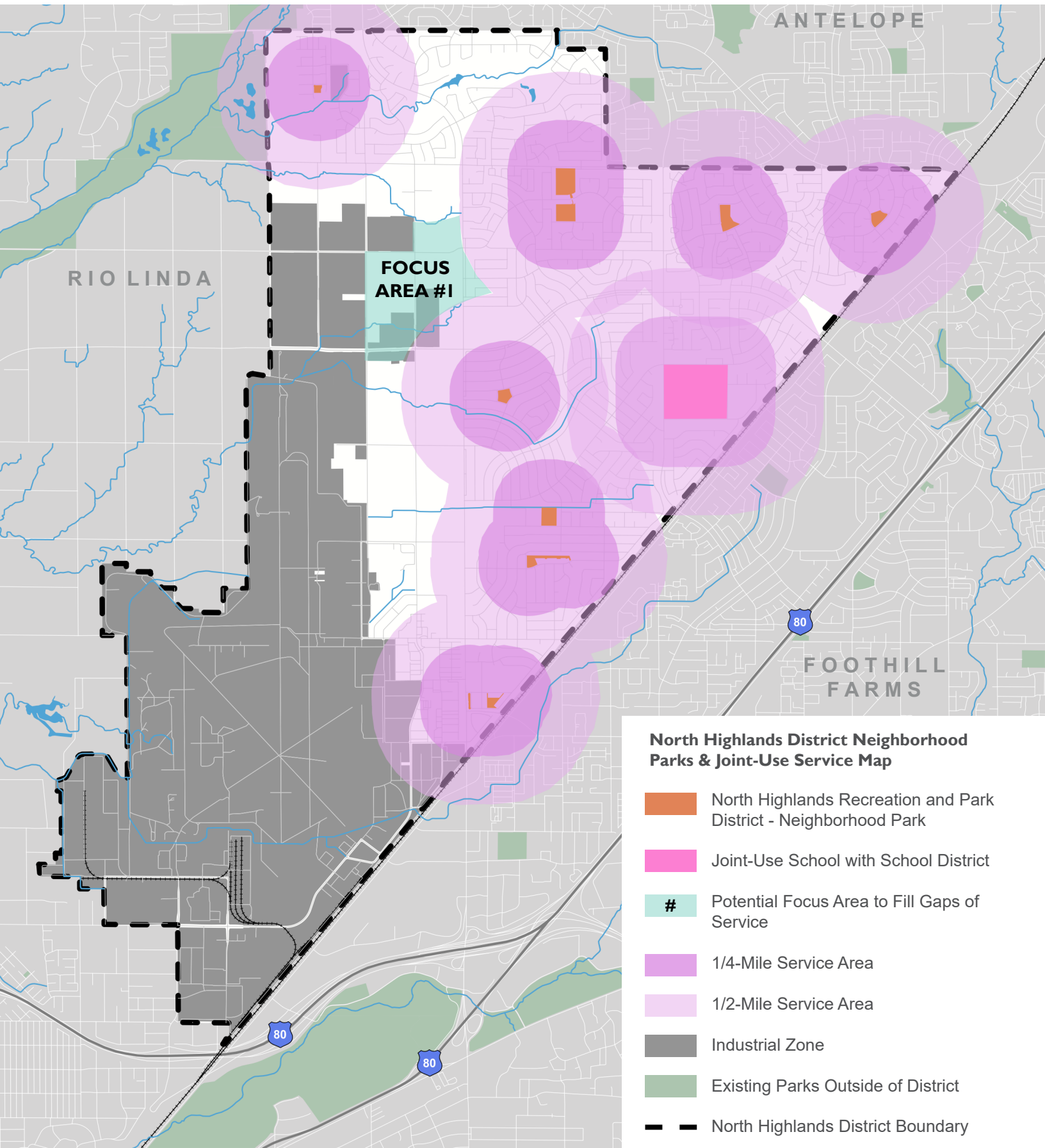
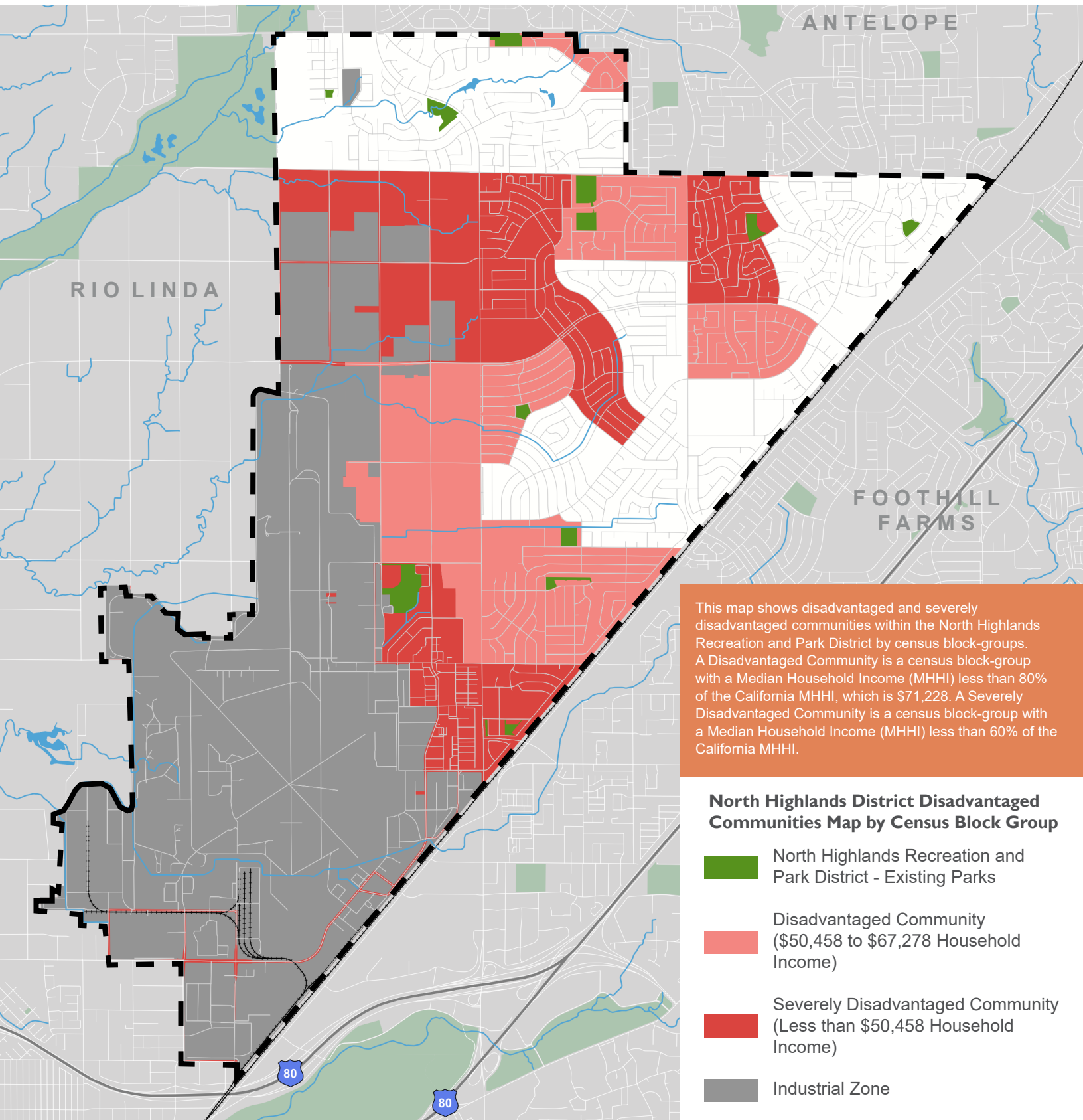


FIGURE 5.9 DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES MAP



This map shows disadvantaged and severely disadvantaged communities within the North Highlands Recreation and Park District by census block-groups. A Disadvantaged Community is a census block-group with a Median Household Income (MHHI) less than 80% of the California MHHI, which is \$71,228. A Severely Disadvantaged Community is a census block-group with a Median Household Income (MHHI) less than 60% of the California MHHI.

North Highlands District Disadvantaged Communities Map by Census Block Group

- North Highlands Recreation and Park District - Existing Parks
- Disadvantaged Community (\$50,458 to \$67,278 Household Income)
- Severely Disadvantaged Community (Less than \$50,458 Household Income)
- Industrial Zone
- Existing Parks Outside of District
- North Highlands District Boundary

Map Source: Thresholds are derived from the American Community Survey 2017-2021 (ACS 2017-21) 5-year estimates at the census block-group geographic level and the California State Median Household Income of \$71,228, California Parks and Recreation, 2023.

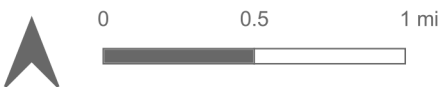
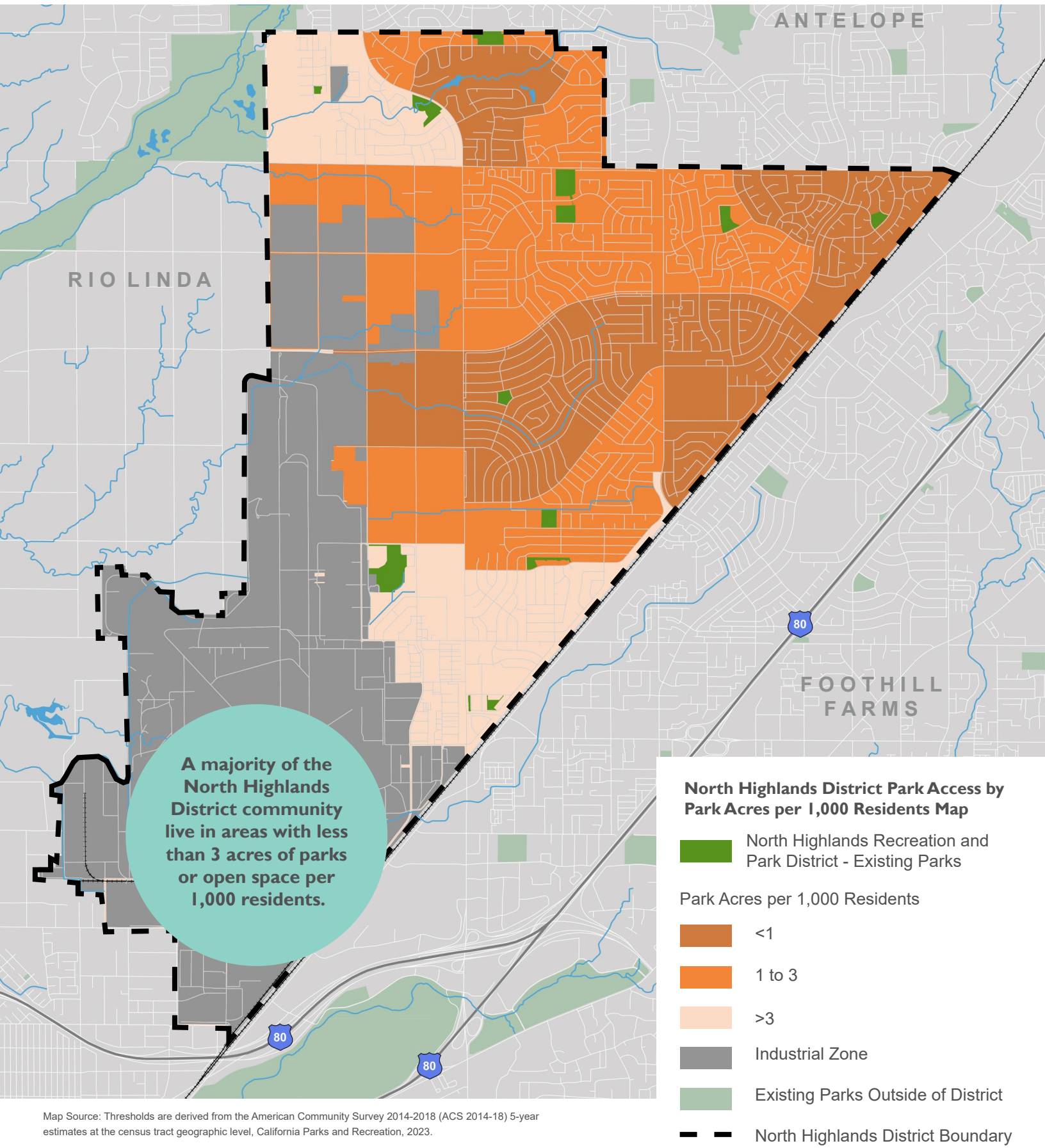


FIGURE 5.10 PARK ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS MAP



Map Source: Thresholds are derived from the American Community Survey 2014-2018 (ACS 2014-18) 5-year estimates at the census tract geographic level, California Parks and Recreation, 2023.



Filling the Gap Within the Industrial Zone

From Figure 5.7 to Figure 5.10, the area indicated in dark gray in the southwest corner represents the former air base that has been decommissioned to a private business park. There could potentially be future opportunities for new parks if some of the land use is converted for new residential development, in which the District can require the developer to dedicate parkland or pay in-lieu fees, known as the Quimby Act. Further information about the Quimby Act, along with standards to consider, are outlined in **Chapter 6: Recommendations**.



CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EXISTING PARKS

Community input provided insightful information about what users are satisfied with and what they believe needs more investment. Combined with observations recorded from site investigations from each existing park, the following recommendations can be applied to any new or existing parks in North Highlands to enhance the District's park system.

Inclusion and Accessibility in Parks

Inclusion in public spaces is becoming an increasingly prominent sentiment in communities across the nation. The space should make all individuals feel welcomed, respected, valued, and enable them to participate in activities, regardless of age, background, gender, or ability. North Highlands residents are no strangers to this sentiment.

Survey participants indicated that inclusive play areas that promote play among children of all abilities are highly important for their community (see Figure 5.2 in **Chapter 5: Needs Assessment & Analysis**). It is recommended for the District to incorporate inclusive features and amenities wherever possible. This includes retrofitting existing parks and providing new parks with site amenities such as picnic tables, bi-level drinking fountains, and benches that meet standards from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Access and circulation throughout parks should be considered. At a minimum, there should be one accessible path of travel to each of the following: ADA picnic table, ADA bench, bi-level drinking fountain, trash/recycling receptacle, restroom, parking lot or park entrance, and any buildings on-site open to the public. A four-foot-wide path is acceptable, but six feet is the preferred minimum to accommodate two-way pedestrian traffic. The main path of travel and walking trail would ideally be ADA compliant to provide passive recreation opportunities.

A recurring barrier preventing people from accessing parks is the lack of safe and accessible routes to walk, bike, or use alternative forms of transportation. While street improvements are outside of the District's purview, the District can bring the concerns from their community to the County to ensure their community is heard. In addition, the District can ensure there is adequate and compliant ramp access from the street to the park for all new parks and repair existing ramps for accessibility compliance. The 2007 Sacramento County Pedestrian Master Plan has identified North Highlands as a high priority area for street improvement projects to improve pedestrian routes and promote safe circulation in neighborhoods.

Inclusion in parks includes providing different age groups with the opportunity to recreate. Multi-generational activities may be incorporated into park settings by adding features like fitness equipment, inclusive play equipment, ground plane recreational games, or low impact sports such as pickleball, bocce ball, table tennis, cornhole, and more. There are many factors to consider when discussing inclusion in play spaces. Refer to the playgrounds and equipment section for recommendations pertaining to inclusivity in playgrounds.

Playgrounds and Equipment

Since 2014 NHRPD has built or renovated six different parks. They are Larchmont Park, Memorial Park, Strizek Park, Cherry Blossom Park, Ridgepoint Park, and Chardonnay Park. The District is committed to upgrading all its facilities in the coming years to meet the growing needs of our community. There are still several playgrounds that remain outdated, are missing equipment, show wear and tear, and/or lack inclusive features. Playgrounds are core features

for neighborhood and community parks and are therefore recommended to be prioritized for upgrades and maintenance.

Certain parks such as Karl Rosario Park or Strizek Park do not separate play areas based on age groups. Due to different levels of complexity play equipment can provide for different age groups, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) requires separation of play spaces and signage at each playground indicating the intended age group in their current guidelines.

Survey participants have cited safety concerns with engineered wood fiber (EWF) due to finding dangerous objects hidden in the surfacing. It is recommended that new parks specify a unitary play surface. Poured-in-place (PIP) rubber surfacing is a great option for safety surfacing. Rubberized play surfacing tends to be more durable, lower maintenance, and more accessible than EWF. If funding is available, it is recommended to install rubberized safety surfacing instead of unitary play surfacing. During site investigations, many play spaces with EWF did not contain adequate fill to meet accessibility requirements. Playgrounds with ADA ramps require EWF to cover a portion of the ramp to ensure leveled transition from the ramp to play surfacing.

There is one designated inclusive playground in North Highlands located at Strizek Park. Moving forward, North Highlands should consider inclusive play equipment as a standard and retrofit existing playgrounds to include inclusive elements. New playgrounds should include inclusive play elements and whenever budget and space allows, maximize the number of inclusive play elements. Inclusive playgrounds should address varying levels of physical and sensory abilities. This means providing play equipment with varying levels of physical complexity and equipment that addresses all eight senses beyond the five commonly known ones. The eight include sight, smell, touch, sound, taste, interoception, vestibular, and proprioception. In addition to including inclusive play elements, inclusive play design should include considerations for parents, caretakers, or chaperones of children. Providing



adequate and accessible seating near play areas with natural shade or shade structures is important to ensure play spaces are shaded for summertime comfort.

Site Furnishings

Site furnishings are a great way to establish identity and maintain cohesiveness. Site investigations revealed inconsistent site furnishings at all of the District's parks. The District does not currently have a set of design standards when it comes to site amenities. It is recommended that site furnishings become standardized at all parks for several reasons. Standardized amenities tend to be more cost effective when it comes to maintenance and replacement, and they provide a cohesiveness throughout all parks. The following site furnishings and park features are items that may be a part of the design standard: picnic tables (standard and ADA), benches, drinking fountains, and park signage.



Park furnishings and amenities should be made of sturdy materials such as concrete or metals. Site investigations noted several parks utilizing variations of concrete picnic tables and trash receptacles in different colors. Cherry Blossom Park is the newest addition to the District's parks and can be potentially used as a foundation for developing site furnishing standards. Exceptions can be made for special features/themed parks, etc.

As part of development standards, it is also important to consider shade over play structures that can help provide refuge during hot periods. Best practices now require shade at play structures because they can not only reduce UV exposure, but also lower playground maintenance and repair costs as well as reduce the heat of the play equipment.

Restrooms

Restroom related concerns were among the top three reasons why survey participants do not visit a park or facility. Many of the District's existing parks do not provide restroom facilities and parks that have restrooms need repair and/or cleaning due to vandalism and improper use. Restrooms should be provided at community parks but are not required at neighborhood parks. Consider including family/unisex stalls over separated gendered facilities to be more inclusive. Some ways to combat issues around restrooms include installing self-cleaning and self-locking facilities. Some prefabricated restroom companies are incorporating inclusivity and technology into their restrooms to address safety, cleanliness, and inclusion. If adequate funding is available, it is recommended that the District install restrooms with these capabilities at new parks and replace existing restrooms where possible.

Park Programming

Fostering community through social gatherings and events is important to the residents of North Highlands. Other than the Recreation Center and the Community Center, the District does not have a location designed for large gatherings, community events, or performances. The community would benefit from an outdoor amphitheater or multi-use plaza for events such as farmers markets, festivals, craft fairs, etc.

Outdoor gyms and training equipment have become a popular addition to public parks. Consider adding fitness equipment or an exercise loop at existing or new parks. Fitness stations may be installed near playgrounds for parents or chaperones to utilize while monitoring children playing.

Many participants in the survey and at the meetings expressed the need for a fenced area for dogs as there is currently no designated dog park in North Highlands District. Existing parks are comprised mostly of turf and open space that can be easily converted into a dog park. Dog parks are an easy and cost-effective way to add programming to park locations by fencing off existing turf areas at parks. Dog parks are often utilized throughout the day, making them a great way to activate a space and allow for more passive security. Ensure adequate amenities when installing dog parks; this includes dog fountains, shade, benches for pet owners, pet waste stations with bags, and trash receptacles.

North Highlands would benefit from diversifying and adding more sport courts or fields to provide diverse programming for the community. Consider adding a disc golf course or pickleball courts; both of which are popular in the senior community. Basketball continues to be a popular sport for recreational play. Installing half courts over full-size courts allows for more people to recreate and reduces conflict between levels of abilities. There has been a shift away from baseball and more toward soccer. The district lacks soccer facilities and would benefit from adding a soccer complex or multi-use fields.

Marketing and Outreach

The District utilizes a variety of media avenues to market their current offerings; however, if residents are not already associated with District social media or do not already frequent parks or programs, then they are not aware of District offerings. Marketing and reaching out to demographics that do not actively participate in offerings remain a challenge for many agencies. The use of unconventional methods to reach the community should be utilized to ensure engagement from different members of the community. The District can work with community leaders of well-known organizations such as social/service groups, sports, private or public schools, and more to disperse information on a larger scale. Information transparency includes addressing language barriers in the community. This includes providing translations of marketing material or even offering programs in languages for ethnic communities.

RECREATION PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Aquatic programs are always a high priority for communities. It would be in the community's best interest to find a way to secure more permanent pool facilities to offer swim programs long term. Swim programs were among the top three requested programs in the survey and should remain a priority for the District.

Sport leagues were previously offered in collaboration with TRUSD. Sport leagues and competitive play tend to have higher rates of reoccurring participants. The District should explore either offering sport leagues or finding alternative organizations to work with to offer sport leagues. Pickleball has been gaining immense popularity with schools incorporating it into physical education. Offering a pickleball program would be another way to engage people of all ages, and this can start as a pilot program to gauge interest.

In general, residents would like to see more diversity within programs offered and include multi-generational and special needs programs. There is a growing demand for inclusion in classes offered. Programs may be offered in-house, or the District may want to work with private organizations who cater to and serve people with disabilities to host programs.

Recently, there has become more of an awareness of mental health issues and nurturing the physical body. Part of diversifying programs may include providing health and wellness programs such as yoga, meditation classes, educational workshops centered around mental health, or host group outings to enjoy nature.

Community events were highly requested from survey participants. While the District hosts several community events throughout the year, survey participants would like additional large-scale events such as movie nights, concerts, or farmers markets. As North Highlands is an ethnically diverse community, cultural events can help educate the community, bring about awareness of other cultures, and foster community identity and pride.

While the District currently collects program registration data, it is important to also track other metrics. Cataloging attendee demographic data and identifying popular programs through participation numbers are great ways to identify how well programs are performing and identify core programs. It is recommended for staff to collect and review this information as a yearly measurement tool to track program success rates. In addition, District staff may consider having program participants complete a short survey at the end of a program or class for constructive feedback on how to improve their program or what was executed well.



PARK SCORING

The quality of a park system should be considered when analyzing parks on a holistic level. While parks may be categorized based on typology, each park offers different amenities, hosts different recreation classes, serves different demographics, and accommodates different communities. These factors affect the quality and value of a park. By understanding a park's current value and opportunities for improvement, planners can better prioritize funds for improvements and maintenance to maximize park usage and resources.

To better understand and develop a method for prioritization based on park value and opportunity, this Parks and Recreation Master Plan utilizes a scoring system that analyzes eight different metrics. The community's unique demographics, public input results, observations from site investigations, and spatial mapping analysis were factored into the creation of the eight metrics.

Figure 6.0 explains the eight different metrics that are used in the park scoring calculations. Each metric is assigned a maximum number of points that can be received. Point values are determined based on the amount of value or opportunity the category brings to a particular park. Categories such as quantity of amenities, usability, and code infractions have higher point values because they hold greater weight in identifying the amount of improvement opportunities are present. These metrics are also more likely to change at a higher rate than the others. As time passes,

North Highlands District will make upgrades, improvements, or additions to a park that may reduce the number of code infractions or increase the number of amenities at a park. These changes will affect the scoring and may move a park’s score up or down. Each park is evaluated based on the eight metrics. Each metric’s total point value is added, then averaged to determine each park’s individual park score. Table 6.0 shows each existing park’s park score as determined in July 2023. Of note, Cherry Blossom Park is the District’s newest park and therefore has significantly fewer code infractions or usability issues. In addition, Sierra Creek Park is undergoing design as this Parks and Recreation Master Plan was being developed and therefore cannot determine values for all metrics but median income and total population categories. Individual park recommendations can be found in Appendix C.

It is important to understand that the park scoring is not intended to rank the parks, but to better understand the current value of existing parks and where there may be opportunities to improve both on an individual park level and as a whole system. It is recommended that the District reevaluate the scores on an annual basis and update the metric data as the community changes and improvement projects are completed throughout the year that may alter the way a park scores. See Appendix B for a detailed park scoring breakdown of each category.

TABLE 6.0 PARK SCORES FOR EXISTING PARKS *		
SCORE	PARK NAME	TYOLOGY
6.1	CAPEHART CENTER PARK/GYM	COMMUNITY
5.8	BROCK PARK SPORTS COMPLEX	NEIGHBORHOOD
5.1	FREEDOM PARK	COMMUNITY
5.1	MEMORIAL PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
4.6	KARL ROSARIO PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
4.3	PLANEHAVEN PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
4.3	RIDGEPOINT PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
3.9	STRIZEK PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
3.6	LARCHMONT PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
3.1	RUTH INMAN PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
2.3	CHARDONNAY PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
1.9	CHERRY BLOSSOM PARK	NEIGHBORHOOD
1.9	SIERRA CREEK PARK **	COMMUNITY

* It is important to note that a higher score means greater needs of improvements.
 ** In design improvement stage.

FIGURE 6.0 EIGHT SCORING METRICS

**5
pts**

POPULATION DENSITY

Population density factors in the number of people a park serves within a half-mile radius of the park. A park within a denser neighborhood has higher value due to a greater amount of people being served and being assigned more points.

**5
pts**

PROGRAMMING

Programming measures the number of programmed elements at a park that draw groups of people together. This includes different recreation programs offered by the District and rentable sport fields/courts for recreational play. Parks that accommodate more programs attract more people and tend to be highly used.

**15
pts**

USABILITY

Understanding the condition of park amenities is useful in determining the likelihood of people frequenting a park. Outdated, broken, or worn-out amenities are often associated with lack of care and crime and may drive users to other parks. Usability qualifies the condition of amenities and places parks that have park amenities in poor and unusable conditions to a higher priority for improvements. Parks that have amenities in good or fair condition are less prioritized.

**5
pts**

COMMUNITY ACTIVATION

Parks capable of hosting larger social/community events are highly valuable. These events foster community identity and social connections. Parks that hold community events such as festivals, concerts, or celebrations are given 5 points.

**10
pts**

MEDIAN INCOME

Lower income communities have traditionally been neglected with limited to no outdoor access and opportunity. Parks within these communities should be prioritized for improvements to improve equity in outdoor spaces. Parks located in areas with lower median income households receive more points.

**10
pts**

QUANTITY OF AMENITIES

This metric quantifies the number of park amenities. Amenities considered include benches, tables, barbecues, drinking fountains, play equipment, shade shelters, and bike racks. Parks with fewer amenities indicate a greater need and prioritization for improvements.

**15
pts**

CODE INFRACTIONS

Code infractions measure the number of local or federal code violations. While the site inventory performed is not an ADA study, some infractions identified may pertain to ADA requirements. Code infractions were determined through visual inspection. Parks with more code infractions would have a higher priority for improvements.

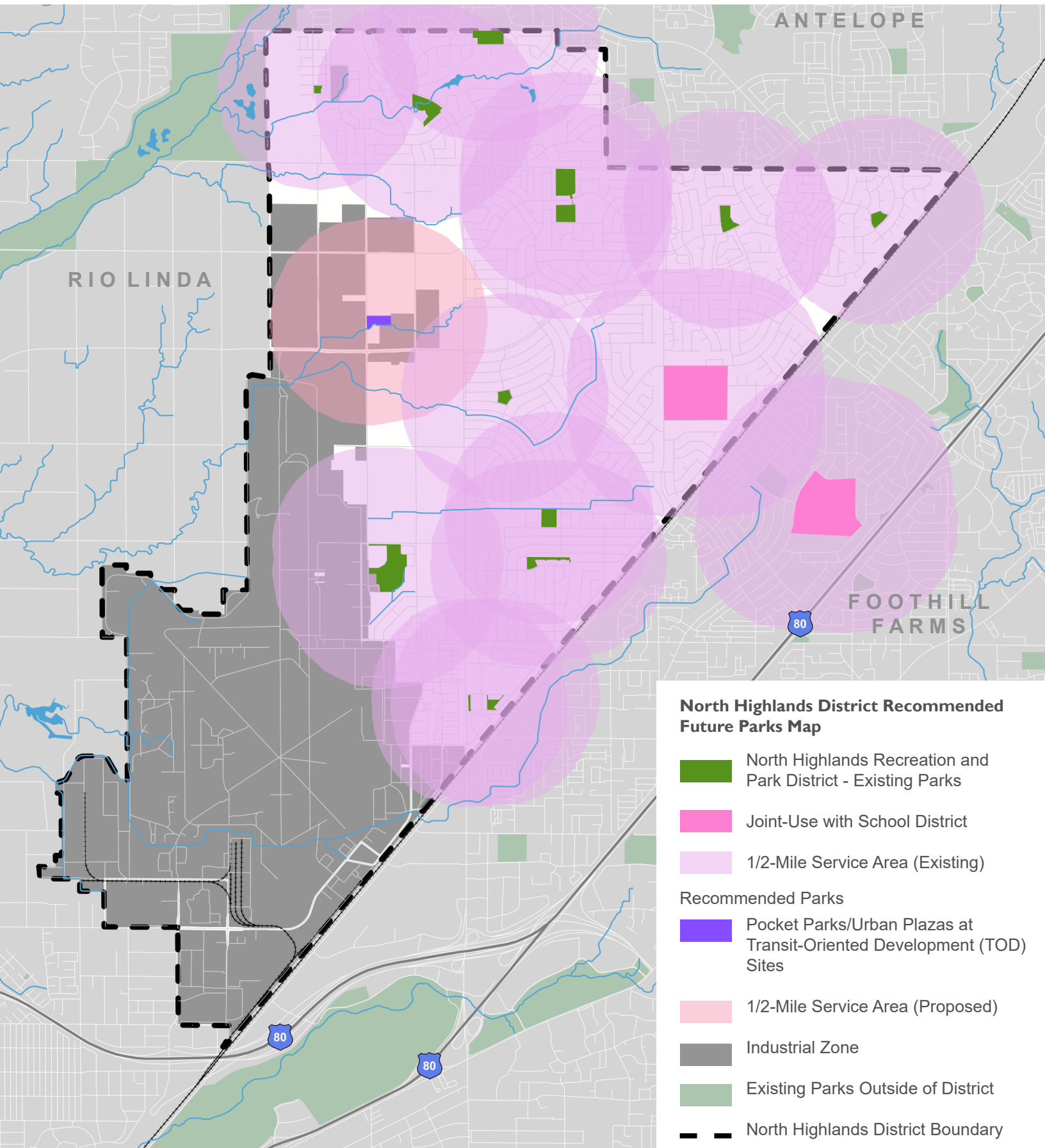
REVENUE GENERATORS

3 pts = use fees

6 pts = entry fees

**10 pts = tournament/
competitive fees**

FIGURE 6.1 CLOSING THE GAPS: RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREA FOR NEW PARKS



CLOSING THE GAPS

Spatial analysis revealed a pocket of the District not currently served by a park. To better guide the District in determining where to focus efforts for new open space, Figure 6.1 shows a District-wide map of existing parks, current half-mile serviced areas, and identifies a recommended location to focus park planning efforts. One main area of focus is shown in purple. The following provides a recommendation that can help guide park investment and close gaps in the District.

- **Pocket Parks/Urban Plazas** - The District is restricted by County zoning, funding, and the lack of undeveloped land to acquire for public parks. Consider parklets or smaller pocket parks in those locations.

A joint-use space with a school district currently serves an area that lacks a park owned by NHRPD. It is important for NHRPD to either maintain this joint-use space at Highlands High School with Twin Rivers Unified School District (TRUSD) or consider filling this gap with parkland, if available, or other opportunities that can provide recreational activities. This will help ensure surrounding neighborhoods in this area can have access to a park or recreational facility.

NHRPD AREAS OF FOCUS

The following is a list of priorities organized by primary and secondary priorities that the District may consider when determining where to allocate resources and funding. It is recommended for the District to carefully review available resources, funding, and timeline to assess when and which priorities should be addressed.

PRIMARY PRIORITIES

1. Focus on general maintenance of existing parks and facilities, including any upgrades necessary—particularly existing restrooms and playground facilities.
2. Find more secure and/or permanent method to use a pool facility for swim programs during the hot summer season.
3. Establish joint-use relationships with private organizations or school districts to access facilities such as sport facilities that the District does not currently have or have the resources to build and/or manage.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES

1. Identify and retrofit an existing park with underutilized turf for a fenced dog park.
2. Ensure accessibility, inclusion in programs and park features, and multi-generational users are considered in improvements and new parks.
3. Incorporate more shade into existing parks whether that's through shade structures, sails, or adding more trees.
4. Incorporate more passive programs at parks such as walking trails or fitness equipment.
5. Expand recreation programs offered to include a broader age range, health and wellness classes, inclusive programs for special needs, and sport leagues for children and adults.
6. Continue to foster community pride through social/community events at different scales.
7. Consider installing additional splash pad at new or existing parks to provide relief during hot periods. They are typically easier to install and maintain.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

Summary of Current District Funds

The District currently has approximately \$3.5 million available in a combination of two reserve accounts that it could use for future park improvements—this includes augmenting the Sierra Creek Park project should additional construction funding be required. Once The Lakes at Antelope project has been completed, the District will receive approximately another \$3.2-\$3.5 million in additional developer impact fees. These fees, while restrictive, can be used for future park and recreation facility improvements as long as the District can create a nexus between where the funds were collected and any future projects. To date, The Lakes at Antelope has recently pulled approximately 35 building permits (generating \$272,000) in impact fees.

General Fund

North Highlands Recreation and Park District maintains a general fund as reserve money for any District-related projects/park development. Excess money after spending on operating and maintenance expenditures as well as any money set aside for new projects are placed in the general fund.

Construction Costs

The District has a healthy general fund reserve and a healthy developer impact fund account. Between the two, the District has access to approximately \$3.5 million (reserves) available should the District's Board of Directors choose to augment the cost to construct Sierra Creek Park or other Parks. Also, the estimated total developer impact fees the district will collect from the Lakes at Antelope is between \$3.2-\$3.5 million (above and beyond current available funding). Those funds could be used to address future park and facility improvements.

Community Facilities District (CFD)

Previously, The Lakes at Antelope and the District created a CFD (Community Facilities District) that would address maintenance costs for the “off-site” recreation improvements as part of the Lakes project. The Agreement states that the preferred use of these funds would be for Sierra Creek Park due to the nexus of where the funds will be collected and the park site. The current maintenance costs for the Lakes project, once the District starts collecting them, is approximately \$140,000 annually with an annual cost of living adjustment tied to future increases. This means that the annual maintenance costs charged to homeowners of The Lakes at Antelope will be used for the maintenance of Sierra Creek Park. It is anticipated that the annual amount received will adequately address the ongoing maintenance of Sierra Creek Park. At the time of writing this Master Plan, the District has not sought other grants for this project. Also, Cherry Blossom Park has a CFD fund that generates about \$125,000 in annual revenue.

Quimby Act

Under the Quimby Act, the District can require a developer to dedicate land or pay in-lieu fees in order to mitigate the impact of new development on the District's park system. Under Quimby, new residential developments that are part of a subdivision of 50 lots or more must provide dedications of park land or pay in-lieu fees for park land acquisition. The dedication of land or the payment of fees is imposed as a condition of approval on the subdivision and may not exceed 5 acres of park per 1,000 residents, provided that the District's existing park acreage meets this standard. The in-lieu fees are based on the cost of the land and do not provide adequate funding for park development. Therefore, most agencies use Quimby in combination with a Park Development Impact Fee.

The decision to receive park-in-lieu fees or receive land dedication and/or amenities is only available at the time of development approval, and it is the District's decision how the requirement will be achieved through the development's condition of approval. The following are some of the standards a municipality should take into consideration when determining whether land dedications are appropriate:

- **Size of parks** - Usually vary based on category (Pocket Park, Neighborhood Park, Community Park, Trails, etc.)
- **Location of parks** - Require adjacency to trails/schools, within 1/4 or 1/2 mile of homes (service area)
- **Minimum width or length** - Sets forth standards to make sure the park space is usable for the purpose of recreation
- **Stormwater basins** - A stormwater basin located within a public neighborhood or community park can receive park land credit. As such, the North Highlands Recreation and Park District may determine whether or not a new parkland with a stormwater basin is eligible for partial park credit. Partial credit for stormwater basin dedication may be up to fifty (50) percent of the actual square footage of usable space for park and recreational purposes. Requirements for credit approval are at the discretion of the District. The following criteria may be considered when determining usable space and requirements for partial credit approval.
 1. A minimum of eight thousand (8,000) square feet of uninterrupted flat turf shall be well drained and suitable for active recreational use for at least three hundred (300) calendar days of the year.
 2. The stormwater basin should be designed to meet peak stormwater runoff, volume, and duration while reducing stormwater pollutants from the development project. Vegetated swales, infiltration basins, perpetually wet areas, intake facilities around drain inlets, and basin side slopes greater than 10% slope may not be counted toward credit as they are not functional spaces for recreation use. A maintenance/management schedule for the stormwater basin may be required to ensure the facility can be operated and maintained to handle peak stormwater runoff. In addition, the applicant/developer may be required to demonstrate that a funding mechanism is in place for ongoing maintenance of the stormwater basin.
 3. Credit will be given only when an agreement with the District has been made and the stormwater basin is constructed within a specified period of time and phase of the project. The District will review park projects on a case-by-case basis for stormwater basin credit.
- **Remnant or leftover pieces** - In-lieu-fees are usually not allowed for parks if the property cannot be developed into another use.
- **Joint use opportunities** - Can the park function/be used as a joint-use facility with schools or other agencies?
- **Timeline** - Development standard that requires completion of the park by a certain percentage of the development or within a timeline approved by the District. Timeline should be agreed upon during the conditions of approval process.
- **Warranty requirements for maintenance** - During the maintenance period, the developer will maintain the park from the time it is deemed complete and should include a warranty period in the future that covers the park once it is open to the public for use.
- **Cost to operate/funding source** - Established at the time of development so that the District is able to design and build a park in the area to serve the community in a timely manner, determine the cost to maintain the park, and identify the appropriate funding source based on the type of park development.

It is important for the District to determine when it is appropriate to accept an in-lieu fee instead of the dedication or construction of a park. Per District policy, the criteria for accepting an in-lieu fee instead of dedication/construction includes:

- The site is unable to support a new park.
- The project is constructing a needed park and the in-lieu fee covers the remaining parkland requirement that can be serviced in another area that is deficient.
- There are other Neighborhood Parks (min. 5 acres) and Community Parks (min. 15 acres) within a 1/4 mile proximity.
- A District park is already planned within a 1/4 mile distance from the property.
- The project is already providing an additional public benefit to the community to enhance levels of services to the area. This could mean joint stations (Police, Fire), additional assessment districts for enhanced services, use of a community facility, or other items that exceed the typical municipal code requirements and further implements general plan policies.

Due to the limited availability of land for new parks, a recommendation for the District is to accept the development of a new park that meets or exceeds the minimum Neighborhood park size if a developer decides to pursue this instead of an in-lieu fee. This will not only help meet Level of Service goals, but may also help close service area gaps for neighborhoods that are disadvantaged, have insufficient park space, or have limited access to parks, depending on the development area.

Development Impact Fees

When districts establish Park Development Impact Fees, the intent, as per AB1600, is to mitigate the full cost to purchase and develop parks based on the adopted level of service standards of the District. A park master plan identifies future park and recreational needs due to growth and related standards and allows a District to set the appropriate fee structure in place to mitigate growth impacts.

The goal of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to identify opportunities for future parks amenities that are appropriate to North Highlands Recreation and Park District's given context, Sacramento County General Plan projections, and socioeconomic factors. This document will be used as a guiding document to quantify exactly which elements are appropriate for development as local conditions continue to evolve over the next decade. It is important to note that development impact fees cannot pay for the renovation of existing parks or the operation and maintenance of parks. At the time of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan's creation, the District is anticipating development fees from The Lakes at Antelope. This will generate approximately \$3.2 to \$3.5 million for future park and recreation facility improvements.

Grant Funding

There are grant opportunities offered by the State and other agencies the North Highlands Recreation and Park District can pursue. Several grant opportunities are listed below.

Outdoor Equity Grants Program (OEP) - Estimated Available Funding of \$50 Million

OEP will increase the ability of residents in low income communities to participate in outdoor experiences at state parks and other public lands by funding program operation and transportation costs. OEP encourages applicants to establish a home base in an underserved community as the hub for local activities and trips to natural areas. OEP empowers youth and families through outdoor leadership education, career pathways, and access to nature.

OEP funds program operation including the following:

- Supplies, Equipment, and Activity Fees/Admissions;
- Travel Costs;
- Labor Costs; and
- Insurance for all activities necessary for the Outdoor Program

Eligible applicants include public agencies, including cities and counties, joint powers authorities, open-space authorities, and regional open-space districts. The application deadline is December 14, 2023.

Proposition 68 Grant: Parks and Water Bond Act of 2018

Proposition 68 is a statewide grant dedicated to providing public agencies the opportunity to receive funding for new parks or park infrastructure improvements in underserved communities. The program has already completed four rounds of funding, providing municipalities \$1.16 billion in grants to 299 grant projects, of which 179 are new parks and 120 are expansion or renovations of existing parks. Grants are awarded based off a competitive chart. Projects that fulfill all requirements of the chart are more likely to be awarded full or partial funding. The District has been a Prop 68 grant recipient for Sierra Creek Park.

Applications for round 5 Proposition 68 funding have been postponed until further notice.

Municipalities interested in pursuing funding through this grant are required to complete a grant application that includes a community outreach portion, scope of work, proposed project timeline, concept level site plan, and more.

Other Potential Grant Funding

The North Highlands Recreation and Park District can regularly review and pursue additional grant opportunities that will become available in the coming years. There are several noteworthy grant opportunities to look out for:

- Funding to local communities to beautify and improve local streets and roads, tribal lands, parks, pathways, and transit centers through the Clean California Grant Program (CCLGP) by the California Department of Transportation
- Support for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and increasing visibility of EV chargers/charging stations/hydrogen refueling stations through sign installation by the California Energy Commission's (CEC's) Clean Transportation Program
- Support for hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks communities face from disasters and natural hazards through Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)
- The Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program to provide local assistance through the Wildlife Conservation Board for conservation projects focusing on resilience to projected climate impacts

Grants and funding mechanisms listed in this section are examples of grants the District may qualify for and look into for additional funding for new park projects. While many of these grants have deadlines for the end of 2023, some may be recurring grants and provide several rounds of grant funding. This may include grants for sidewalk improvements, urban heat island mitigation, community beautification in disadvantaged communities, accessibility grants, park related grants, and more. The District may look into these grants or other similar grants for future funding needs.



APPENDIX A

FIGURE AI.0 2023 PARK SITES AND FACILITIES MATRIX

PARK SITES AND FACILITIES																															
	Type	Size (Acres)	Auditorium	Barbecue Facilities	Baseball Field	Basketball Court	Bike Racks	Bocce Ball Court	Children's Play Equipment	Children's Swings	Concessions or Kitchen	Drinking Fountains	Fitness Equipment	Horseshoe Area	Indoor Activities	Meeting Rooms	Nature Preserve	Off-leash Dog Site	Passive Area	Pet Waste Station	Pickleball Courts	Picnic Area	Plaza Area	Restrooms	Shade Shelter	Soccer Field	Softball Field	Splash Pad	Swimming Pool	Tennis Courts	Trail Access
Brock Park	NP	7			■	■		■			■							■	■		■		■	■		■					
Capehart Daycare Facility	CC	-												■									■								
Capehart Gym	CC	-				■								■														■			
Capehart Center Park	CC	6.42																													
Chardonay Park	NP	3		■				■	■		■							■	■		■			■							
Cherry Blossom Park	NP			■				■	■		■							■	■		■			■							
Freedom Park	CP	20		■	■	■		■	■			■	■					■	■		■		■	■			■				
Karl Rosario Park	NP	2.5			■			■	■									■	■		■			■							
Kay F. Dahill Community Center	CC	-	■											■									■								
Larchmont Park	NP	2.5		■		■		■	■									■			■			■	■						
Memorial Park	NP	6						■	■									■	■		■		■								
Planehaven Park	NP	3.5						■	■									■			■										
Recreation Center	CC	-													■								■								
Ridgepoint Park	NP	6			■	■		■			■							■	■		■			■		■					
Ruth Inman Park	NP	1																■	■												
Sierra Creek Park*	CP	7.5		■		■		■	■		■	■					■	■		■	■	■	■	■							■
Strizek Park	NP	5					■	■										■	■		■			■							

CC = Community Center
 CP = Community Park
 NP = Neighborhood Park
 *Planned Improvements



APPENDIX B

FIGURE BI.0 2023 PARK SCORING CALCULATION TABLE

Park Score	Park Name	Median Income	Weighted Score	Median Income Points (10)	Total Population	Total Population Points (5)	Programming	Programming Points (5)	Quantity of Amenities	Weighted Score	Quantity Points (10)	Usability	Usability Points (15)	Code Infraction	Code Infraction Points (15)	Community Activation	Community Activation Points (5)	Revenue Generators	Revenue Generators Points	TOTAL
6.1	Capehart Center Park/Capehart Gym	\$75,739	10	1	7,722	4	6	5	10	2	9	3	12	4	10	Y	5	Y	3	49
5.8	Brock Park Sports Complex	\$59,731	8	3	5,984	3	3	3	14	2	9	4	15	3	8	Y	5	N	0	46
5.1	Freedom Park (including sports facilities)	\$37,765	5	6	1,660	1	1	1	89	10	1	1	4	3	8	Y	5	Y	15	41
5.1	Memorial Park	\$65,240	9	2	7,121	4	0	0	19	3	8	3	12	6	15	N	0	N	0	41
4.6	Karl Rosario Park	\$60,537	8	3	6,325	4	0	0	12	2	9	2	8	3	8	Y	5	N	0	37
4.3	Planehaven Park	\$35,699	5	6	4,622	3	0	0	9	2	9	2	8	3	8	N	0	N	0	34
4.3	Ridgepoint Park	\$61,988	8	3	9,999	5	0	0	7	1	10	2	8	3	8	N	0	N	0	34
3.9	Strizek Park	\$68,784	9	2	5,680	3	0	0	20	3	8	2	8	4	10	N	0	N	0	31
3.6	Larchmont Park	\$59,608	8	3	4,549	3	0	0	19	3	8	3	12	1	3	N	0	N	0	29
3.1	Ruth Inman Park	\$32,957	5	6	3,798	2	0	0	4	1	10	1	4	1	3	N	0	N	0	25
2.3	Chardonay Park	\$77,526	10	1	4,937	3	1	1	19	3	8	0	0	0	0	Y	5	N	0	18
1.9	Cherry Blossom Park	\$78,164	10	1	2,461	2	1	1	19	3	8	0	0	1	3	N	0	N	0	15
1.9	Sierra Creek Park	\$66,767	9	2	5,016	3	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	N	0	N	0	15



APPENDIX C

FIGURE CI.0 INDIVIDUAL PARK RECOMMENDATIONS



BROCK PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

7 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Replace broken/worn picnic table
- Replace bleachers and benches at ball field
- Repair drinking fountains
- Replace engineered wood fiber (EWF) with unitary play surfacing
- Re-stripe parking lot
- Consider adding lighting at the ball fields to extend hours of use



CAPEHART CENTER PARK

COMMUNITY PARK

6.42 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Repair asphalt pavement by ball fields
- Re-stripe parking lot



CHARDONNAY PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

3 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Relocate trash cans and picnic tables by row of trees so that they are outside of tree critical root zone areas
- Convert areas of lawn to low water plantings



CHERRY BLOSSOM PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

N/A

Recommendation:

- Ensure adequate fill at play areas



FREEDOM PARK

COMMUNITY PARK

20 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Repair poured-in-place surfacing at rock climbing area
- Replace existing site furnishings that are ADA accessible such as tables
- Replace outdated play equipment with inclusive features
- Add shade structure or canopies over play equipment
- Replace engineered wood fiber (EWF) with unitary play surfacing
- Repair splash pad area with new concrete surfacing
- Re-stripe parking lot



KARL ROSARIO PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

2.5 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Repair perimeter offsite sidewalk to meet accessibility requirements
- Create new accessible paths to existing or new site furnishings, such as tables or benches
- Replace engineered wood fiber (EWF) with poured-in-place surfacing
- Replace outdated play equipment with inclusive features



LARCHMONT PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

2.5 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Replace broken/worn site furnishings
- Repair broken or missing play equipment
- Replace engineered wood fiber with unitary play surfacing
- Create accessible path of travel to at least one shaded picnic area
- Convert areas of lawn to low water plantings
- Opportunity to add walking loop or multi-generational amenities



MEMORIAL PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

6 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Repair and relocate restroom closer to play area
- Create accessible path of travel from Blackfield Dr. to play areas
- Convert areas of lawn to low water plantings
- Opportunity to add walking loop or multi-generational amenities



PLANEHAVEN PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

3.5 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Repair perimeter offsite sidewalk to meet accessibility requirements
- Create accessible paths to existing site furnishings to complete circulation
- Replace outdated play equipment with inclusive features
- Replace engineered wood fiber (EWF) with unitary play surfacing



RIDGEPOINT PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

6 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Create accessible path of travel to seating by play area
- Convert areas of lawn to low water plantings



RUTH INMAN PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

1 ACRE

Recommendations:

- Replace outdated site furnishings
- Create accessible paths to existing site furnishings to complete circulation



STRIZEK PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

5 ACRES

Recommendations:

- Replace engineered wood fiber (EWF) with unitary play surfacing
- Repair bare lawn with new sod or hydroseed

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ADMINISTRATOR

Scott Graham

BOARD MEMBERS

Patrick Williams, Chairperson

Crystal Harding-Jenkins, Vice Chairperson

Veya Cummings, Secretary

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