

Parks & Recreation Master Plan Update



Executive Summary



Town of
Yucca Valley

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Master Plan) is based on the vision that recreation facilities, programs, and open space are important resources within the Town of Yucca Valley, enhancing community health, enriching the lives of residents, and contributing to a unique community identity and quality of life.

The Master Plan is an implementation tool of the General Plan, providing strategies for addressing the General Plan's goals and policies based on current analysis and community input.

What recreational facilities and programs does Yucca Valley have? Who uses Yucca Valley's facilities and programs? What role do parks, facilities, open space, and recreation programs have in the lives of residents? What type of facilities and programs does the Town need? Where will these facilities and programs be located and how will they be funded?

These are the key questions discussed and answered by this Master Plan. To some, parks are active sports fields; others have images of passive open spaces with walking trails and view points; still others may envision parks as places for community gatherings and events. In actuality parks and recreation facilities are used for all of these purposes.

Several professional organizations such as the California Park and Recreation Society and the National Recreation and Parks Association describe the many important ways recreation facilities and programming can help in creating healthy lifestyles and livable communities. Some of these ways are:

- ◆ Strengthen community identity and sense of place.
- ◆ Protect important places (environmentally, historically, aesthetically, and culturally).
- ◆ Encourage human contact and education.
- ◆ Support economic development.

- ◆ Preserve cultural unity.
- ◆ Encourage fitness and health.
- ◆ Provide social meeting places.
- ◆ Support families.

Through a comprehensive inventory of the recreation resources available in Yucca Valley, and an understanding of resident demand, the Master Plan provides a blueprint for how to meet the recreation needs of the community and to enhance quality of life for all Yucca Valley residents and visitors.

PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN

The purpose of the Master Plan is to provide a realistic guide for the creative, orderly development and management of recreation facilities and programs for Yucca Valley. This Master Plan builds on previous planning efforts including coordinating with concurrent Master Plan projects (*Public Facilities Master Plan* and *Old Town Specific Plan*) while obtaining new community input that has resulted in an up to date understanding of current and future recreation and park needs and opportunities specific to Yucca Valley.

The Master Plan provides data and analysis that lead to recommendations that establish how Yucca Valley should maintain and develop recreation facilities and programs throughout the Town now and into the future. The Master Plan covers an appropriate time period from 2008 through 2020 and is intended to be a flexible document, presenting findings and recommendations that will be evaluated, validated, and/or modified periodically as the Town responds to unforeseen issues and opportunities as well as changes in residents' needs and demands.

It is anticipated that Master Plan recommendations will be considered on an annual basis in the context of other Town projects and, as appropriate, Park and Recreation projects will begin the process of implementation as permitted by the Town's budget and the success of other funding initiatives.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EACH CHAPTER

The following presents the highlights of each chapter of the document. While the reader is encouraged to read each individual chapter in the document, this overview will provide a quick reference to the key findings of each chapter and offers a summary for a speedy review of the document.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

This chapter summarizes the purpose and process of the Master Plan. It details the scope and purpose of the Master Plan, describes the planning process, outlines the public involvement and presents how the report is organized.

Chapter 2 – Planning Context

This chapter provides an overview and description of the study area for the Master Plan. It is important to understand both the regional and local context of the planning area in order to determine its specific needs for park and recreation services. Some of the planning context highlights are:

- ◆ Yucca Valley is a Southern California high desert community (elevation 3,300 ft.) in San Bernardino County that lies conveniently between the San Bernardino Mountains and the Joshua Tree National Park.
- ◆ It is located about 25 minutes from Palm Springs; the town is characterized by moderate temperatures, clean air and amazingly starry nights.
- ◆ It is situated on State Highway 62 where it is intersected by State Highway 247; Yucca Valley is the hub of the Morongo Basin communities and plays host to a number of recreational opportunities and tourist attractions.

This chapter also presents the demographic composition of Yucca Valley and its implications and impacts on future recreation needs. Some highlights of the demographic characteristics include the approximate population distribution by age category:

Children 5 or under

2,000

Youth 6 to 17	4,000
Adults 18-65	14,500
Seniors 65 and over	5,000

The number of both youth and seniors is projected to grow larger as new residential development is designed to attract young families and senior citizens.

Demographic trends, both national and local, are presented in this chapter, highlights of local trends include:

- ◆ The Town is primarily a middle class community with somewhat limited discretionary income
- ◆ Residents are desirous of protecting their “small town atmosphere” and are concerned about uncontrolled growth
- ◆ Residents want to protect their open space and environment
- ◆ The Town’s family and senior citizen populations are increasing.

One of the key findings in this chapter that impacted the planning context was the fact that although the Town of Yucca Valley Community Services Department primarily provides facilities and recreation services for residents of Yucca Valley, the actual service area extends beyond the Town’s limits due to the fact that no park and recreation agencies provide comparable facilities and services in Morongo Valley, Joshua Tree, and the other nearby unincorporated areas of San Bernardino County.

Chapter 3 – Existing Parks and Facilities

Understanding the existing conditions in the community is an essential step in the Master Plan process. Chapter 3 provides an inventory of Town recreation facilities as well as other recreation facilities open to the public and includes discussion of public school facilities, private recreation facilities and a listing of other publicly owned lands (opportunity sites) within and surrounding the Town limits.

This chapter defines the characteristics of community parks, neighborhood parks, regional parks, natural open space and special use areas. An inventory of current park and recreation facilities serving the community along with an aerial photograph of each site is also included.

There is a discussion of the non-profit organizations that also offer programs and activities and share facilities with the Town, enabling it to expand needed programs and activities.

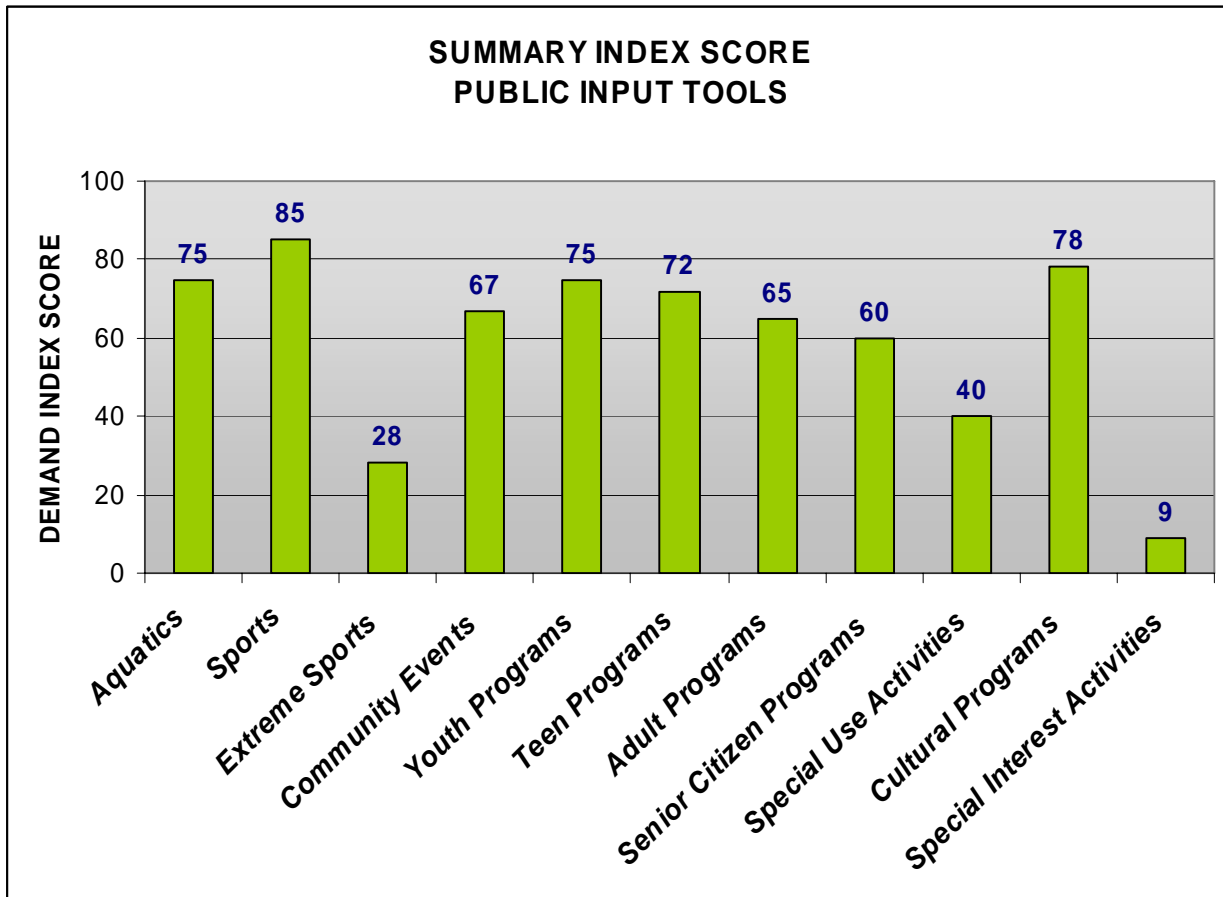
Chapter 4 – Recreation Programs and Services

Yucca Valley residents enjoy a variety of recreation activities, programs and services. The Town, along with various nonprofit organizations and community groups offer many recreation pursuits to the community. Neighboring recreation opportunities include the Joshua Tree National Park. Human and social services are offered through local nonprofits along with Town, County and State offices.

Chapter 4 summarizes the recreation program analysis which included a review of the current level of recreation program and services offered by the Town of Yucca Valley Recreation Division. The program needs assessment was completed by using the community input given and the demographic trends analysis done in Chapter 2. Recommendations to address the identified recreation program needs are included in both Chapter 4 and in Chapter 9, where both facility and program recommendations are contained.

They are presented by program/service category in order to address the concerns and input received during the community outreach and public input process. This method of presentation should allow the community to see that their desired areas of importance for programs and services will be met in the future. The program categories include Aquatics, Sports, Community Events, Youth Programs, Teen Programs, Adult Programs, Senior Citizen Programs, Special Use Programs, Cultural Programs and Special Interest Programs.

The following graph summarizes the most requested programs/services as a result of the community input process.



As indicated on the above graph, the community’s perception of the most needed program categories are: sports; aquatics; cultural programs; youth, teen, adult, senior citizen programming; community events; followed by special use programs, extreme sports; and special interest programs.

Chapter 5 – Cultural Component

The Cultural Component to the Master Plan provides an overview of cultural services, programs, and facilities available to Yucca Valley residents and visitors and provides recommendations for meeting the community’s future cultural needs.

Some of the cultural planning context highlights in this chapter include:

- ◆ Yucca Valley has a rich and diverse cultural environment.
- ◆ There is a significant population of artists and musicians in the Morongo Basin.
- ◆ There is a very high interest in the programs, events and exhibits presented by the Hi-Desert Nature Museum, the Yucca Valley Branch Library, the Community Services Department and various cultural groups and organizations.

The Cultural Component provides an updated look at conditions of existing cultural facilities; analyzes the need and demand for cultural facilities and programs; and presents strategies for the Town's consideration to address future needs. There are a number of key issues related to providing cultural arts including:

- ◆ The effect of two concurrent planning projects (*Public Facilities Master Plan* and *Old Town Specific Plan*) has on the Hi-Desert Nature Museum and the San Bernardino County Branch Library in Yucca Valley.
- ◆ Residents and visitors to Yucca Valley enjoy a number of cultural activities throughout the year. A variety of festivals, concerts, exhibits and events contribute to an emerging cultural image.
- ◆ Over the past five years, the Town has developed a public art program which is complimented by various special events and a growing number of private galleries.

While Yucca Valley's art organizations face financial challenges, public support for the arts has confirmed a community interest in expanding a diverse range of cultural opportunities.

The Cultural Component provides Town leaders with a vision for developing and expanding these cultural opportunities in Yucca Valley and strategies and options to accomplish that vision.

An analysis of Yucca Valley's cultural strengths and assets, confirmed by the stakeholder interviews and surveys conducted during the Master Plan process are:

- ◆ The abundance of local creative talent
- ◆ The popularity and awareness of the Hi-Desert Nature Museum
- ◆ The high attendance and use of the Branch Library
- ◆ The large community support for festivals and town wide events
- ◆ A population interested in arts education
- ◆ A vibrant music and art scene in the region
- ◆ Local leaders with a desire to enhance cultural programming
- ◆ A diverse number of private sector commercial art establishments

One of the key findings was the economic benefits of pursuing cultural facilities and programs in Yucca Valley:

- ◆ Increased Transit Occupancy Tax (TOT) from visitors attending festivals and events
- ◆ Spending by non-profit arts businesses and industry
- ◆ Employment in both public and private arts related jobs
- ◆ Event related spending (meals, lodging, souvenirs, retail)
- ◆ Admission fees
- ◆ Increased donations

A summary of recommended strategies for meeting future cultural needs presented in this chapter include:

- ◆ Support cultural groups with facilities in which to work, perform, exhibit, and teach.
- ◆ Plan comprehensively for cultural facility development
- ◆ Pursue development of a new Hi-Desert Nature Museum and Branch Library, along with a amphitheater/activities plaza in the Old Town Specific Plan
- ◆ Pursue development of a Yucca Valley Show Grounds and Events Center to provide a venue for large scale community events, equestrian activities, exhibitions, and specialty shows and festivals

- ◆ Include smaller amphitheater/activity plazas in the design of the future community centers and community parks
- ◆ Market Yucca Valley as a major center known for quality arts offerings
- ◆ Increase media participation in marketing cultural arts in Yucca Valley
- ◆ Promote multi-cultural expression and participation in the arts through support of diverse ethnic and life style cultures
- ◆ Act as an advocate on behalf of Art in Public Places and take steps to expand the Art in Public Places Program to compliment Yucca Valley's natural beauty
- ◆ Continue to expand online event's calendar for cultural arts programs and activities
- ◆ Promote Old Town when it is developed as a "Cultural Corridor"
- ◆ Work to increase public awareness of the value of arts and culture in Yucca Valley and the region
- ◆ Build participation in cultural arts programs and activities
- ◆ Increase collaboration with the schools and library to provide targeted education programs and educational outreach designed to be engaging and tied to broad themes of natural science, history, and art
- ◆ Work to coordinate organizational development efforts of community art's organizations
- ◆ Pursue development of a Cultural Arts Commission with representation from the many cultural organizations now established in Yucca Valley whose mission should be to oversee and encourage collaboration between public arts and community arts organizations
- ◆ Pursue development of a Yucca Valley Cultural Foundation as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with the specific purpose of raising funds for implementation of the Cultural Component recommendations.

Finally, this chapter concludes that the key to successfully implementing the Cultural Component will be the Town's ability to develop greater resources within public and private sectors to support the arts. The Town will have to broaden partnerships beyond Town boundaries to become a part of a regional arts community. The Town will need to work to support the efforts of Yucca Valley's Arts Organizations to help them sustain each other through collaborations and by sharing information, resources, and facilities.

Chapter 6 – Needs Assessment

Chapter 6 provides a detailed assessment of the recreation facility needs of the Yucca Valley community. Data from the community was obtained to develop an understanding of the demand for various facilities. The Needs Assessment utilizes the following needs identification tools to generate this understanding:

Community Outreach: Information gathered from the community through a series of workshops, stakeholder interviews, community organization questionnaires, and a sports organization survey.

Townwide Telephone Survey: The Citywide survey provides current statistically valid information specific to Yucca Valley that provides detailed information for the types of recreation facilities most often utilized by Yucca Valley residents. A total of 300 randomly selected, geographically distributed telephone interviews were completed with households in the Town of Yucca Valley.

Demand and Needs Analysis: An evaluation of selected current and future facility needs was developed using results from the telephone survey, sports organization survey, facility inventory, and relevant demographic projections.

Service Area Analysis: An evaluation of how parks and recreation facilities are distributed throughout residential areas in Yucca Valley.

Acreege Analysis: An evaluation of parkland acreage needs in the Town based on established standards and on identified need for specific recreation facilities such as sports fields, gyms, pools, etc.

Key Findings:

The Townwide Telephone Survey results indicated some very important facts that were used in the needs analysis:

- ◆ Satisfaction with park maintenance was 95%.
- ◆ Recreation program needs were ranked as follows:
 - Open Space Preservation and Enjoyment
 - Cultural Arts, Museum, and Performing Arts
 - Active Sports Facilities and Programs
 - Community Events and Activities
- ◆ More than half the families surveyed participate in Town events
- ◆ The Hi-Desert Nature Museum is well known among residents
- ◆ Nearly 75% of residents would support at least a \$12 annual tax increase to build new community park facilities
- ◆ Nearly 75% of residents would make frequent or moderately frequent visits to a new performing arts or event center

Using the above methodology the key findings from the needs assessment indicates that the following facilities are the Towns highest priorities for the future:

- ◆ Multi-Generational Community Complex to serve all ages for recreation classes, meeting rooms and community events
- ◆ Aquatics Complex
- ◆ Trails for fitness and recreation access
- ◆ Fair/Show Grounds/Equestrian Center
- ◆ Neighborhood Parks with fields, tot lots, spray pools, family picnic areas, and informal open space

- ◆ Community Parks with sports fields, dog parks, group picnic areas, tennis and basketball courts, trails, tot lots, rest rooms and open space
- ◆ Nature Parks with educational/interpretive trail systems
- ◆ Cultural Facilities, including Museum, Library, Performing Arts Center, Outdoor Amphitheater, Community Events Plaza
- ◆ Special Use Park for Extreme Sports

This chapter also concludes that through the surveys and interviews obtained from the community, it is apparent that people expect the Community Services Department to provide essential recreation opportunities.

Chapter 7 – Park Land Dedication, Park Impact Fee Ordinances and Other Strategies

This chapter looks at the Town’s park dedication requirements, park fee requirements and analyzes their effectiveness in securing the five acres of park land per one thousand population that is required in the Towns General Plan. It also analyzes the amount of park land that will be needed in the future to meet this standard and provide enough space to implement the facility recommendations contained in Chapter 9. In addition, it outlines potential strategies for the Town to consider for acquisition of park land and development of new facilities, including:

- ◆ Joint venture projects
- ◆ Multi-agency agreements
- ◆ Working with non-profit organizations
- ◆ Strategies for obtaining land donations
- ◆ Facilitating commercial recreation facility development
- ◆ Funding and financing methods used by public agencies
- ◆ Pursuing grants and establishing public foundations

A summary of the key findings in this chapter include:

- ◆ Yucca Valley Park Dedication and In-Lieu Fee Ordinance is up to date and reflects current law
- ◆ Yucca Valley Park Impact Fee Ordinance is also up to date and reflects current costs for providing park and recreation services
- ◆ There is a deficit of parkland now and it will continue to grow in the future if the Town does not implement a parkland acquisition plan
- ◆ The Town will have to plan and be diligent in its efforts to protect open space to reinforce the community's rural character
- ◆ Given the limited tax dollars available for parks and recreation, the Town will have to look for ways of raising additional revenue to support development of needed facilities and delivery of recreation programs, such as new fees and charges and use of facilities for asset management (leases, advertising, naming rights, concessions, etc.)

Chapter 8 – Policy Recommendations

This chapter covers general guidelines and policies that will provide groundwork for decision making to meet the recreation programming and facility needs of Yucca Valley residents. The chapter contains suggested policies and guidelines to follow when negotiating with developers for park dedications or in-lieu fees; when accepting park property as a dedication requirement; guidelines for park development; operating policies that will help provide direction for staff; and guidelines for locating new parks and developing new programs.

Some of the important policy and guideline highlights include:

- ◆ During the annual budget process, review the community's recreation program and facility needs.
- ◆ Evaluate existing parks on a regular basis and identify the need for enhancement, renovation and/or improvements.

- ◆ Develop general location criteria and guidelines for new community and neighborhood parks.
- ◆ Establish criteria for selecting land for new parks and adopt a strategy for land acquisition
- ◆ Establish and apply criteria to provide new Neighborhood Parks and Community Parks that complement the Town’s existing facilities in the fulfillment of a well-conceived, functional overall park system.
- ◆ Ensure that there are accessible parks and recreation facilities and programs that provide a positive experience and meet community needs.
- ◆ Support and facilitate the growth of the arts and cultural opportunities in Yucca Valley.
- ◆ Design, develop, promote and conduct a year-round schedule of quality programs, events and services that respond to the recreational and cultural needs and interests of the community.
- ◆ Commit to the development of an accessible, functional, expandable, and effectively connected local trails system in Yucca Valley.

Chapter 8 contains many more general and specific policies and guidelines that should help both staff and elected officials in their decision making process regarding parks, recreation, cultural, trail and open space issues.

Chapter 9 – Facility and Program Recommendations and Implementation Strategies

Chapter 9 presents recommendations and strategies for the implementation of recommended new recreation facilities and programs. Recommendations address the recreation facility needs and recreation program needs identified in the Needs Analysis section and are the result of the assessment of existing inventory and demand; the community outreach process; and consideration of the Town’s needs with respect to the *Old Town Specific Plan* and the *Public Facilities Master Plan*

to determine the best option for bringing Town administration functions together at a Civic Center Complex.

Funding, design, and implementation will be determined as a result of the capital improvement project budget process conducted by the Town each year. Item 9.5 provides a proposed time line based on projected population growth increments with necessary actions for a work program to implement the proposed recommendations.

Facility recommendations are organized in no particular order of priority according to key findings identified throughout the community outreach and needs analysis process, as follows:

- ◆ Reconfiguration of existing Community Center Complex for a Civic Center and Neighborhood Park that would include a Dog Park
- ◆ Old Town Specific Plan Cultural Corridor containing the Hi-Desert Nature Museum, Yucca Valley Branch Library, and Amphitheater/Activities Plaza
- ◆ Multigenerational Community Center Complex that serves as the focal point for the community to address the need for a Community Center/Gymnasium, Senior Center, and Teen Center
- ◆ Performing Arts Facility in coordination with Yucca Valley High School
- ◆ Yucca Valley Events, Showground & Equestrian Center.
- ◆ Aquatics Center Complex in coordination with improvements to Sunnyslope Park
- ◆ East End Community Sports Park in coordination with La Contenta Middle School
- ◆ Brehm Park Concept Master Plan that includes a new Boys & Girls Club, Neighborhood Park and Soccer Sports Fields
- ◆ Trail Head and Self-Guided Nature Trails at North Park and South Park
- ◆ A new community park in the Yucca Mesa area

- ◆ A new neighborhood park in the area formerly called the “Southside Community Center Property”
- ◆ Implementation of the Yucca Valley Trails System
- ◆ Improvements to Existing Parks
- ◆ Options regarding Blue Skies Golf & Country Club
- ◆ Potential Development of Burnt Mountain Park

Funding and implementation strategies and options are also presented in this chapter.

Chapter 9 also explains the concept of “Asset Management” and other ways for the Town to generate revenue to pay for parks and recreation services by designing and using its assets (facilities) for revenue producing purposes.

In summary, the recommendations and strategies presented in Chapter 9 are proposed to meet the identified needs, benefit the community, and align with the Town of Yucca Valley’s General Plan goals and policies.