

**CALAVERAS COUNTY**

# **PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

MARCH 14, 2025





# **CALAVERAS COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN**

*Prepared for:*  
*Calaveras County*  
*891 Mountain Ranch Road*  
*San Andreas, CA 95249*

*Prepared by:*  
*O'Dell Engineering, a Westwood Company*  
*6200 Stoneridge Mall Road, Suite 330*  
*Pleasanton, CA 94588*





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>9</b>
CALAVERAS COUNTY.....	11
BACKGROUND OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN .....	12
VALUE & BENEFITS OF THE COUNTY'S PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ...	13
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	14
<b>CHAPTER 2: CONTEXT.....</b>	<b>21</b>
PHYSICAL SETTING .....	23
HISTORICAL ROOTS .....	23
CONTEXT.....	23
ECONOMY AND BUSINESS .....	28
DEMOGRAPHICS.....	30
BENCHMARK COMPARISON COUNTIES.....	33
COUNTY MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET .....	34
LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT .....	35
<b>CHAPTER 3: BEST PRACTICES.....</b>	<b>39</b>
TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION .....	41
BEST PRACTICES IN PARKS AND RECREATION .....	46
<b>CHAPTER 4: INVENTORY .....</b>	<b>51</b>
COUNTY PARKS AND FACILITIES .....	53
PARK TYPOLOGY.....	57
CURRENT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS AND MARKETING.....	59
<b>CHAPTER 5: NEEDS ASSESSMENT .....</b>	<b>61</b>
PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS .....	63
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: KEY FINDINGS .....	65
SURVEY FINDINGS .....	67
NEEDS ASSESSMENT .....	73
PARK DISTRIBUTION AND SERVICE .....	75
HOW CALAVERAS COUNTY COMPARES TO NATIONAL TRENDS .....	82
SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT.....	83
<b>CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>85</b>
GENERAL PARK RECOMMENDATIONS.....	87
RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES OF FOCUS .....	89
PARK SCORING, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION .....	92
RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS .....	99
FINANCIAL ACTION PLAN .....	100
IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK.....	103
CONCLUSION .....	105
REFERENCES .....	106
<b>APPENDIX A: PARK SITES .....</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: PUBLIC OUTREACH RESULTS.....</b>	<b>113</b>

# LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 2.1 NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS BY AGENCY WITHIN  
CALAVERAS COUNTY LIMITS..... 25

FIGURE 2.2 CALAVERAS COUNTY DISTRICT MAP ..... 27

FIGURE 4.1 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES MAP .....55

FIGURE 5.1 INTERACTIVE POLLING RESULTS .....66

FIGURE 5.2 PUBLIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS .....69

FIGURE 5.3 TOP REASONS FOR VISITING NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS..... 70

FIGURE 5.4 IMPORTANCE VS. SATISFACTION: BENEFITS OF  
PARKS & OPEN SPACE ..... 72

FIGURE 5.5 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT  
SERVICE MAP ..... 76

FIGURE 5.6 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT  
SERVICE - DISTRICT 1 & 5 ENLARGEMENT MAP .....77

FIGURE 5.7 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT  
SERVICE - DISTRICT 2 ENLARGEMENT MAP ..... 78

FIGURE 5.8 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT  
SERVICE - DISTRICT 3 ENLARGEMENT MAP ..... 79

FIGURE 5.9 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT  
SERVICE - DISTRICT 4 ENLARGEMENT MAP ..... 80

FIGURE 5.10 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS BY VEHICLE TRIPS  
OVER DISTRICT SERVICE MAP ..... 81

# LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1.1 PARK SCORES OF COUNTY-OWNED PARKS AND FACILITIES.....	18
TABLE 2.1 CALAVERAS COUNTY AND STATE POPULATION PROJECTION - 2030 TO 2060.....	30
TABLE 2.2 CALAVERAS COUNTY AGE DISTRIBUTION - 2000 TO 2020 COMPARISON AND 2030 PROJECTION.....	31
TABLE 2.3 CALAVERAS COUNTY RACIAL DISTRIBUTION - 2010 TO 2020 COMPARISON.....	32
TABLE 2.4 CALAVERAS COUNTY HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE - 2000 TO 2020 COMPARISON.....	32
TABLE 2.5 BENCHMARK COMPARISON COUNTIES .....	33
TABLE 4.1 EXISTING COUNTY-OWNED PARKS .....	53
TABLE 4.2 NON-COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES .....	54
TABLE 4.3 SCHOOL FACILITIES .....	56
TABLE 4.4 TOTAL PARK ACREAGE .....	56
TABLE 4.5 CALAVERAS COUNTY LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS AND GOALS....	57
TABLE 5.1 TOP REASONS FOR VISITING NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS .....	71
TABLE 6.1 PARK SCORES OF COUNTY-OWNED PARKS .....	92
TABLE 6.2 EXAMPLES OF SPECIAL TAXES .....	101
TABLE 6.3 EXAMPLES OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS .....	102
TABLE 6.4 RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION TABLE .....	104







Photo: Frog sculpture on Main Street in front of Murphys Village Toy Store in Murphys, CA

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION



# INTRODUCTION

The 2025 Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a strategic, long-range planning document that creates a road map for meeting the recreational needs and aspirations of the community for the next five to ten years. The purpose of the Plan is to provide a framework for understanding the current parks system and guide Calaveras County on future park planning improvements. It is an action plan that will help strengthen the current parks system and existing partnerships, while emphasizing strategies for long-term financial sustainability.

Good parks create memorable recreational experiences, bring the community together, and encourage people to be outside. Providing opportunities for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities to recreate can enhance the quality of life for individuals and contribute to a healthy environment. Park planning efforts are a strong proponent to help make communities become more accessible, inclusive, and livable. Meeting community needs for the next decade can enhance the experience parks and recreation provide now and in the future.

## CALAVERAS COUNTY

Located in California's central Sierra Nevada region, Calaveras County is approximately two and a half hours east from San Francisco and one and a half hours south from Sacramento. There are many different passive and active recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors to engage in the county, from hiking in the Stanislaus National Forest to camping at Calaveras Big Trees State Park. According to the Calaveras Visitors Bureau, the County relies on tourism for economic growth, where about 2,400 people are employed in the tourism industry in the County.<sup>1</sup> This Parks and Recreation Master Plan identifies opportunities to boost and maintain economic vitality for years to come through parks and recreational investments, funding mechanisms, and potential partnerships.

County-owned parks and recreational facilities are currently managed by other agencies and organizations. While there is currently not a County Parks and Recreation Department, there is a Parks and Recreation Commission that consists of seven Commissioners. They are an advisory commission, to the Board of Supervisors, responsible for issues in relation to parks and recreation in the County.

There is only one incorporated city within the county, and it is Angels Camp, which makes up approximately 6% of the total county population. The remaining population lives in unincorporated areas of the county. There are also several Districts that operate and manage parks and recreational facilities in the County, including San Andreas Recreation and Parks District (SARPD), Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District, Calaveras County Water District (CCWD), and Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District (EPVMD). There are also a number of private homeowner association subdivisions that operate and maintain their own park and recreational facilities that are not open to the public. Understanding public and quasi-public land ownership will be important to coordinate and implement planning activities in the county.

<sup>1</sup> Calaveras Council of Governments. 2017 County Regional Transportation Plan RTP Update.

# BACKGROUND OF THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a practical guide for meeting the recreational needs and interests of the Calaveras community and provides recommendations to improve the County's current park and recreational facilities. A sustainable park system, along with the effort to ensure parks and recreational experiences are equitable and accessible for all, requires continued investment and commitment today and the future.

Calaveras County currently does not have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan. With the adoption of the Calaveras County General Plan in 2019, the General Plan listed measures to maintain a parks inventory and to adopt a Parks Master Plan. This 2025 Parks and Recreation Master Plan will help fulfill these measures. A Parks and Recreation Master Plan can also help support applications for grant opportunities, which aligns with the measure to pursue funding for local community parks and recreation facilities.

Below is a summary snapshot of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- Inventory of existing County-owned and several non-County-owned parks, schools, and facilities
- Findings of current national trends, review of comparison Counties, and summary of best practices and design guidelines
- Needs assessment from the community outreach process
- Recommended priorities of focus and recommendations for park improvements
- Funding mechanisms and implementation framework for sustaining the County's parks system

Analysis of research findings and proposed recommendations can guide Calaveras County on planning decisions that balance demands and opportunities. The systematic framework will provide guidelines on where to prioritize planning efforts in order to meet community recreational needs for the next five years and beyond. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan also identifies partnerships and opportunities for the County to continue to invest, support, and expand recreational offerings. Strategies on creating financial stability and maintaining economic sustainability will be key to supporting long-term park planning efforts for both Calaveras residents and visitors.

The goal of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is to provide a framework for where the County should prioritize efforts in park and recreation planning decisions. A focus of recommendations are potential organizational structures for the County to consider. Recommendations to prioritize park improvements of County-owned parks using a park scoring framework are also presented. As park improvements occur and when funding and resources become available, the County can use the park scoring table to re-score parks on an annual basis.

Once capital investments are implemented and completed, County staff can update the park scoring table with a new numerical value based on the improvements that were made. For example, if new park amenities or facilities were added at Murphys Community Park, each new amenity would be a point added to the total in the Quantity of Amenities metric. On the other hand, if a park amenity or facility was removed, a point would be removed from the total. If conditions of amenities were improved for a park, such as the filling of engineered wood fiber at Murphys Community Park, then a point for this can be removed, lowering the total in the Condition of Amenities metric.



Using the same example, if both improvements were made at Murphys Community Park, the total park score will be lower, which will rank Murphys Community Park lower in terms of priority of park improvements. Based on budget and resources, County staff may continue to make additional improvements at Murphys Community Park or start prioritizing other parks for improvements that are now ranked higher. Thus, the re-calculated park scoring table can help determine where to prioritize park improvements next. County staff can note achievements using supplemental appendices on an annual basis. The act of County staff regularly referencing and applying recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan yearly will make the document living and active.

Parks master planning involves being consistent with Calaveras County's policies and vision. Related park planning and relevant documents, including the 2019 Calaveras County General Plan, will be reviewed to ensure consistency.

It is important to note that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan mainly provides recommendations on what parks and facility improvements the County should consider, not specific designs for individual parks. General park recommendations will consider ADA compliance, accessibility, and inclusive designs to increase access to parks and recreational facilities for persons with disabilities. Calaveras County is committed to ensuring everyone can engage in parks and recreational experiences in an equitable manner. Individual park recommendations will also be presented, along with improvement considerations for community needs based on findings from the public outreach process.

## **VALUE & BENEFITS OF THE COUNTY'S PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

Quality parks promote healthy, vibrant communities. Good, meaningful parks enhance quality of life and contribute to making communities active and prosperous. Parks are more than just places to recreate and relax—they provide opportunities for social interaction, environmental protection, preservation, education of historical and cultural resources, and more. Parks and recreational facilities are valuable assets for a community, so it is essential to ensure these public spaces are accessible to everyone and can cater to diverse interests, ages, and abilities.

The County currently owns six parks as inventoried in late 2023 and early 2024. Four of them are community parks, where at least two parks are heavily used by the local community for various recreational activities, including ball sports, community events, and picnicking. The Calaveras community also enjoys a wide range of non-County-owned parks and recreational facilities within the county. Together, County-owned parks and non-County-owned parks provide one the most unique combination of park and recreational offerings in Central Sierra.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan will acknowledge several non-County-owned parks, facilities, and schools due to recreational assets and resources that highly benefit the Calaveras community. Several non-County-owned parks and facilities will be counted as part of the County's park system, and the recommendations chapter will provide strategies to help fill current gaps in the overall system, including funding, program, and facility needs. It should be noted that not all non-County-owned parks and facilities were included in this Master Plan.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction to the Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Master Plan

As a long-range planning document, the 2025 Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Master Plan presents a framework for how the County can meet community needs and aspirations for the next five to ten years. This document also provides an inventory of the County's current park system, a review of national trends and best practices, and an assessment of the community feedback from the public outreach process. Recommendations are then provided to guide the County on where to prioritize planning efforts.

The County can use the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to strategically determine next steps, based on feasibility and where funding and resources allow. The recommendations from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan can provide guidance on how the County can move forward, including potential organizational structures to consider and where to prioritize focus on park and facility improvements. Due to the County's current parks and recreation budget, these are contingent on the funding the County is able to secure, along with economic growth.

## NATIONAL TRENDS AND COMPARISON COUNTIES SUMMARY

National trends are presented to provide an overview of the state of the parks and recreation industry across the United States. Median data for jurisdictions serving between 20,000 and 49,999 is also presented to provide insight about national trends regarding similarly sized populations to Calaveras County. Though, this is meant to provide a general overview on what the national trends and averages are, as each community has varying characteristics, managing structure, and demographics.

Many people value parks and recreation and use these spaces to socialize, exercise, or seek refuge. Based on national trends, those who participate in parks and recreation are becoming more diverse. Interest in nontraditional sports are rising, including sport climbing, and pickleball remains a popular sport. Hiking is the most popular recreational activity and traditional sports continue to be popular in 2022.

### COMPARISON COUNTIES

Comparison counties have been selected based on similar population size and/or geographic characteristics. The main intent of reviewing comparison counties is to understand how a county of a similar size are currently being managed. This is to provide insight on the potential organizational structure opportunities the County can consider. Based on data from comparison counties, the organizational structure of smaller counties are typically individual Special Districts and partnerships with outside agencies. Plumas County is the only comparison county that is unique in their management entity with three special districts. It is important to note that other aspects, such as budget, programming offerings, and park maintenance, are not included in the comparison table.

## **EXISTING PARKS INVENTORY**

### **EXISTING COUNTY-OWNED PARKS AND FACILITIES**

In November 2023 and April 2024, an in-depth site inventory of six County-owned parks and facilities was performed. These parks are located in Districts 1, 2, and 3 and are managed by local community groups and organizations.

### **NON-COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC PARKS AND SCHOOL FACILITIES**

With the General Plan's policy for the County to work with community organizations and special districts, several non-county parks and school facilities have been included into the County's total park system. There are a total of 14 non-County-owned public parks and facilities and 10 school sites that have been inventoried. These parks are free and open to the public, along with school facilities that are open to the public during designated, non-school hours.

### **LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)**

A common metric to evaluate park type and acreage in an existing park system is Level of Service (LOS). This is a way for a parks and recreation agency to understand how their parks and recreation system are meeting the needs of current and future populations. With a policy of a minimum of 3 acres of local park land for every 1,000 County residents, Calaveras County is currently meeting their LOS standard, and it is anticipated that the County will continue to meet the LOS standard in 2030. Additional information regarding LOS standards and calculations is discussed further in "Chapter 4: Inventory."

## **PLANNING PROCESS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY**

The public engagement process intended to identify areas of particular strength within the County's parks system and areas that may need improvement. The community outreach process provided a better understanding of the needs within the community, including both aspirations and concerns about the County's assets and priorities for park system improvement.

A diverse and substantial public engagement process was conducted to receive as much community input as possible, due to the large scale of the County. The public outreach process involved in-person meetings, and these included five individual stakeholder interviews, five focus group meetings, and five public meetings. The interviews were conducted in January 2024, and the 10 meetings were conducted in April 2024.

From late March to end of April 2024, an online survey was made available to the public in order to understand the needs, concerns, and priorities regarding the County's parks and recreation facilities. Physical copies of the survey were distributed at the community meetings. The survey link was posted on the dedicated website page and advertised similarly to the community meetings. There was a total of 496 respondents. The rate of participation leads to a 95% level of confidence.

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH RESULTS**

In general, many Calaveras residents enjoy visiting local parks, engage in various recreational activities, and value nature and the unique scenic resources throughout the region. There is a strong sense of community and this is reflected through the community's dedicated efforts in providing core recreation programs, sports fields, and public parks that are often volunteer-run by non-profit organizations. However, these parks and programs remain limited in the county.

## ***Key Insights From Survey***

- Murphys Community Park is the top visited park from respondents.
- Respondents tend to visit County parks on a weekly (30.7%) or seasonal (27.7%) basis.
- County parks are an important asset to respondents. 88.1% feel it is very important for County parks to be available for public use.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents visit non-County-owned parks (81.2%). These include Feeney Park, White Pines Park, New Hogan Lake, Calaveras Big Trees State Park, Utica Park, Shutter Tree Park, and Turner Park.
- The top three reasons for visiting non-county-owned parks are the availability of recreational activities and programs, closer proximity or lack of a County park or park in the area, and walking/hiking opportunities.
- Top three concerns regarding visiting County parks in order from first to third are lack of amenities, parks are too far from home, and amenities are outdated.
- Top five recreation opportunities respondents would like to see included or expanded in the County are:
  1. Multi-use trails
  2. Playgrounds
  3. Trails for hiking and jogging
  4. Picnic areas/BBQ
  5. Group picnic areas
- In general, respondents would like to see more special events offered.
- Top three improvements or facilities respondents would like to see are:
  1. More indoor facilities
  2. Facilities for use by groups (for weddings, parties, family reunions)
  3. Special event facilities (for large events like fairs, swap meets, concerts)
- Top five methods the County can improve the park system include:
  1. Improve existing parks in general
  2. Incorporate inclusive play areas for children of all abilities
  3. Improve bike/pedestrian circulation between neighborhoods
  4. Provide more passive recreation opportunities (Walking trails, seating areas, game tables, etc.)
  5. Improve existing playgrounds
- Respondents prefer to stay up-to-date with County parks and recreation news and information through online recreation/information guides (56.5%), Facebook (55.3%), and the County website (53.3%).
- When it comes to recreation programs, respondents would like to see more programs geared toward these age groups: teen/tweens (49.7%), multigenerational (46.4%), and seniors (36.4%).



Funding for both County-owned and non-County-owned parks and facilities has been a strong need by the community. There is also a major need for additional parks, park amenities and facilities, sports fields, and core and diverse recreation programs for different users in the County. Also, County staff has expressed a desire to improve the County's current Parks and Recreation structure.

Based on the public outreach process, several key themes of needs have been highlighted:

- Improvements to park access
- Improvements and maintenance at parks
- Desire to improve the County's current Parks and Recreation organizational structure
- Public awareness about the County's Parks and Recreation process
- Funding for parks
- Recreation programs
  - » The need to maintain and create core diverse recreational activities
  - » The need for programs for different age groups

### **PARKS DISTRIBUTION**

This section discusses the current park distribution of County-owned parks and the 30 non-County-owned parks, facilities, and school sites that have been counted into the County's park system. Detailed maps, along with service areas, are displayed in "Chapter 5: Needs Assessment." It is important to note that the maps are not comprehensive and do not include all non-County-owned parks and facilities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS, FUNDING MECHANISMS, AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Recommendations have been developed based on the following: best practices and national trends findings, site inventory observations, community outreach results, needs assessment, and availability of funding and resources. The recommendations in this section will guide on where the County can prioritize efforts regarding parks and recreation. General park recommendations include inclusion and accessibility at parks, playgrounds and equipment, park amenities, and park maintenance standards.

### **RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES OF FOCUS**

As highlighted by County staff during the community outreach process, a top priority of focus is for the County to consider potential organizational structures. Below are potential considerations:

- Pursue a partnership with a park agency, such as Amador County Recreation Agency (ACRA)
- Develop a parks districts to facilitate parks and recreation
- Develop a county-wide, joint park agency
- Development of a County Parks and Recreation Manager position, based on available funding, resources, and economic growth
- Development of a County Parks and Recreation Department, based on available funding, resources, and economic growth

Additional recommendations for the County to consider are:

- Strengthen community partnerships to improve recreational offerings
- Inform the public of the process in place for management of parks and recreation within the county
- Explore options to develop a regional sports facility

## **PARK SCORING, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION**

A park scoring framework was developed to provide the guidance on where the County can focus and invest park improvements for County-owned parks. This framework is not meant to rank the parks, but where the County can prioritize park improvements for, based on the park's usage and resources.

Six park scoring metrics with associated points are:

1. Population Density (10 points)
2. Programming and Community Activation (5 points)
3. Quantity of Amenities (5 points)
4. Condition of Amenities (10 points)
5. Revenue Generators (5 points)
6. Connectivity (5 points)

Population density, quantity of amenities, and condition of amenities carry greater weight and are assigned higher point values. Table 1.1 shows the park scores for County-owned parks. The park scoring scale is from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. It is important to note that a higher score means greater needs of improvements.

<b>TABLE 1.1 PARK SCORES OF COUNTY-OWNED PARKS AND FACILITIES</b>	
<b>SCORE</b>	<b>COUNTY-OWNED PARK</b>
6.3	Alex Quiñones Community Park
3.7	Murphys Community Park
3.5	Rail Road Flat - Community Center
3.3	Nielsen Park
2.5	Mountain Ranch Community Park
2.0	Friedberger Park

Individual park recommendations are also presented in this section. Refer to “Appendix A: Park Sites” for a detailed park scoring table with a numeric score for each metric.

### **RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended for the County to strengthen relationships with third-party organizations and to continue providing support to local groups, who can continue providing recreational programs for the Calaveras community. New and diverse recreational programs can be provided by local organizations in the future as more funding and resources become available. Additional recreational programs to consider are fitness/exercise/training, art, music, swimming, and hiking, as these were highly desired from survey respondents.

## **FINANCIAL ACTION PLAN**

A financial analysis of current conditions and potential opportunities are discussed in Chapter 6. Calaveras County's efforts to strategically plan for park improvements will require a three-phased approach so that current funding gaps can be addressed over time.

Phase 1 includes reviewing existing funding efforts and the potential allocation of Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) revenue for parks repair. Phase 2 lists potential revenue sources, such as Special Tax Revenue, grant funding, and corporate and community partnerships. Phase 3 presents the feasibility of defining a parks and recreation organizational structure.

## **IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

An implementation framework was developed to outline potential organization structures the County may consider, with general time frames and costs. Some considerations will be dependent on funding, resources, and economic growth. Other considerations can be achieved short-term with some available funding already in place.







Photo: Memorial Park  
Sign at Neilsen Park in  
San Andreas, CA

# CHAPTER 2

## CONTEXT



# CONTEXT

## PHYSICAL SETTING

Calaveras County is located in the central-eastern part of California, in part of the historic region of the Gold Country. The County is bordered by Amador County to the northwest, Tuolumne County to the south, Alpine County to the northeast, Stanislaus County to the southwest, and the San Joaquin County to the west. Calaveras County consists primarily of unincorporated areas, with Angels Camp as its only incorporated city.

The County is within hours away from two economically developed cities—San Francisco and Sacramento—and two scenic, tourist destinations—Lake Tahoe and Yosemite. State Route 4 is a major highway that provides east-west access and connects the county to the wider transportation network. State Route 49 is known as the “Golden Chain Highway,” which runs north-south through the center of the County and connects various Gold Rush-era towns. Public transportation is limited within the county.

## HISTORICAL ROOTS

Calaveras County has a rich history that dates to thousands of years ago when it was inhabited by various Native American tribes before the arrival of European explorers. This includes the now federally recognized tribe, the California Valley Miwok Tribe. The County had substantial growth during the Gold Rush, followed by agricultural development since the 19th century. Gold was discovered in Calaveras County in 1848 when the Gold Rush started. Angels Camp gained prominence during this era and attracted a diverse population. Calaveras County was also a significant center for quartz and copper mining. Angels Camp, Copperopolis, Mokelumne Hill, and Murphys are historic towns that flourished during the Gold Rush and still retain many of their historic buildings and character today. The current development of Calaveras County reflects a blend of its historical charm and natural beauty with contemporary initiatives.

## CONTEXT

### *Land Use*

Calaveras County occupies approximately 662,791 acres in the central Sierra Nevada region. Approximately 22% of land within the County is owned by different federal, state, and other agencies. The County is characterized by rolling hills, valleys, and portions of the Sierra Nevada Mountain range. The topography of the county varies in elevation from near sea level in the western portion to approximately 8,000 feet in the eastern mountains. The Stanislaus River, the New Melones Lake Reservoir, the Calaveras River, the Mokelumne River, and other reservoirs offer not only recreational opportunities but also shape the County’s hydrology and provide riparian habitats. The Calaveras Big Trees State Park is a significant natural and geological landmark of the County, recognized for its diverse ecosystems and ancient giant sequoia trees.

There is a plethora of landscapes that make up the County, including rural landscapes, suburban areas, open spaces, and working lands. Historic development patterns have created small pockets of dispersed communities and development, as well as fragmented infrastructure. Residents in Calaveras County primarily live a rural lifestyle and enjoy the small-town rural character and feel. Preserving historical and cultural heritage and resources are also important to County residents.

Rolling hills of developed areas are generally located on the western side of the County and in communities such as Angels Camp, Valley Springs, San Andreas, and Copperopolis. The mountainous regions are generally on the eastern side and include communities such as Arnold, West Point, Dorrington, Murphys, and Rail Road Flat. The eastern portion also has popular recreational destinations for snow sports, golfing, hiking, camping, fishing, and road and mountain bicycling.

### ***Public Parks and Recreational Resources***

Residents and visitors alike enjoy a diverse and abundant range of public parks and recreational activities in Calaveras County. In addition to County-owned parks and facilities, there are many non-County-owned parks and recreational facilities that allow for unique recreational experiences, from reservoirs to scenic byways. Significant recreation areas include Ebbett's Pass, a National Scenic Byway, and Calaveras Big Trees State Park, a California State Park. Parks are discussed further in "Chapter 4: Inventory."

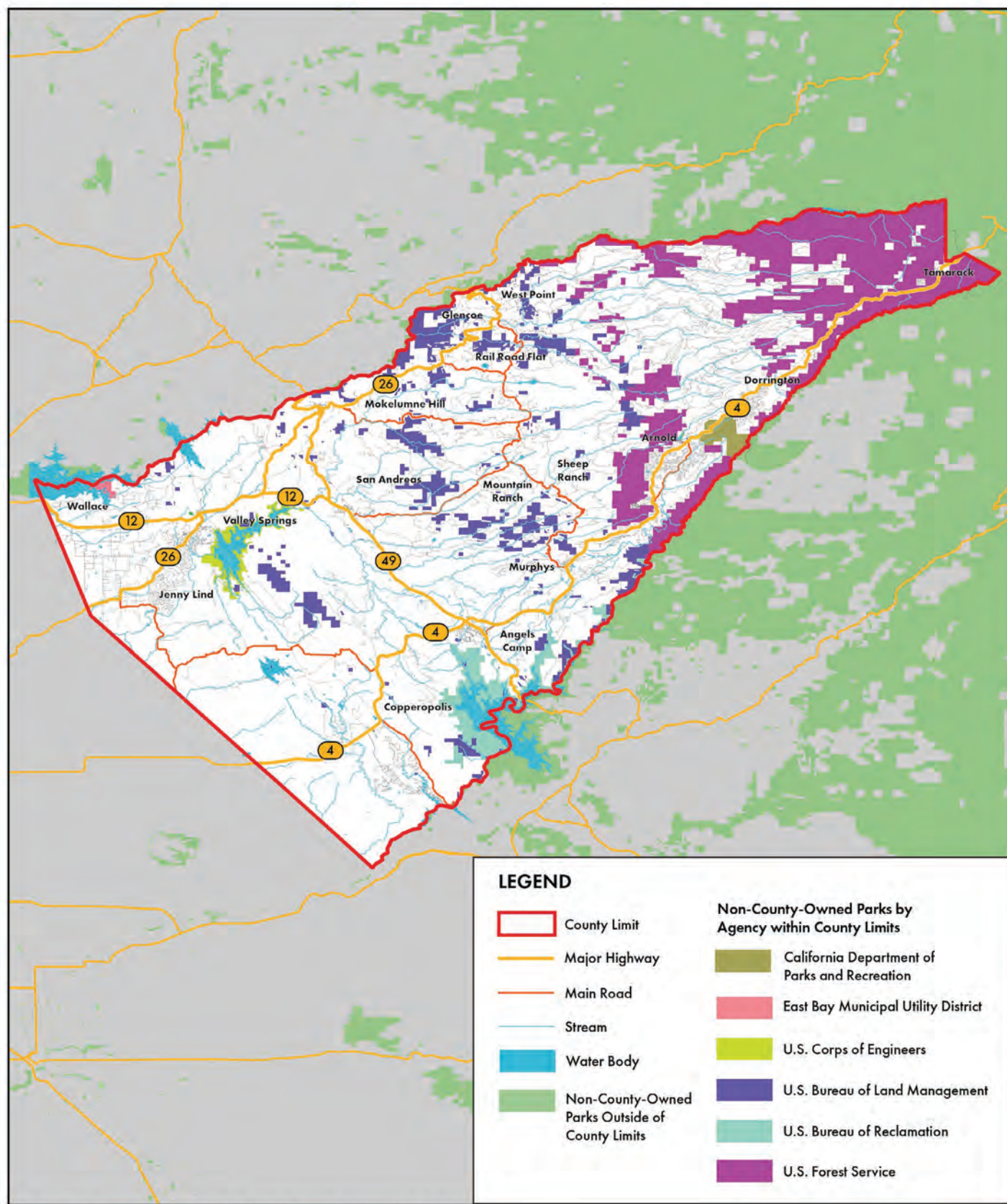
The Calaveras community also enjoys access to a variety of lakes in the region. These include Lake Commanche/Reservoir, New Melones Lake, Lake Hogan/Reservoir, and Pardee Reservoir. Some of these lakes are managed by governmental agencies, such as the East Bay Municipal Utility District and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The lakes are open to the public for a fee. Recreational opportunities include boating, watersports, camping, hiking, equestrian trails, and fishing.

There are a variety of local organizations, districts, and private groups that provide public parks and facilities throughout Calaveras County. They also provide recreational programs and activities, including swim lessons, special events, and youth sports. Many of these organizations are managed by volunteers and are self-funded.

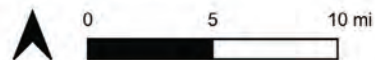
Maps were developed in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan by using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) with data sources noted. Park boundaries and mapping information displayed is approximate and official platting and parcel data must be consulted for questions regarding exact park size and boundaries. Figure 2.1 shows the spatial distribution of non-County-owned parks managed by other agencies. While the map is not comprehensive of all non-County-owned parks, it is meant to generally understand the land distribution of parks and open spaces throughout the County. The recommendations chapter will include suggestions to pursue joint-use agreements with one or more of these agencies to help fill in gaps.



**FIGURE 2.1 NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS BY AGENCY  
WITHIN CALAVERAS COUNTY LIMITS**



Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.



## ***District and Communities***

### **Districts**

The Calaveras County government is Board governed by a five-member Board of Supervisors. The five elected district supervisors are each responsible for one of the five districts delineated based on geographic locations and population. Figure 2.2 shows the District map.

**District 1** is situated at the northwest boundary of the County and encompasses the Community Areas of San Andreas, Valley Springs, Campo Seco, La Contenta, Camanche, Burson, and Wallace.

**District 2** is located on the north side of the County and includes the communities of Mokelumne Hill, Paloma, West Point, Wilseyville, Glencoe/ Rail Road Flat, Sheep Ranch, Mountain Ranch, and Calaveritas.

**District 3** consists of most of the mountain range within the County, covering the communities of Douglas Flat, Murphys, Brice Station, Forest Meadows, Hathaway Pines, Avery, Arnold, White Pines, Dorrington, Camp Connell, Cottage Springs, Skyhigh, Tamarack, Sherman Acres, and Vallecito.

**District 4** is situated in the southern part of the County and includes Angels Camp, Altaville, and Copperopolis.

**District 5** lies between Districts 1 and 4 along the western edge of the County and encompasses the communities of Milton, Jenny Lind, Rancho Calaveras, and Salt Spring Valley.

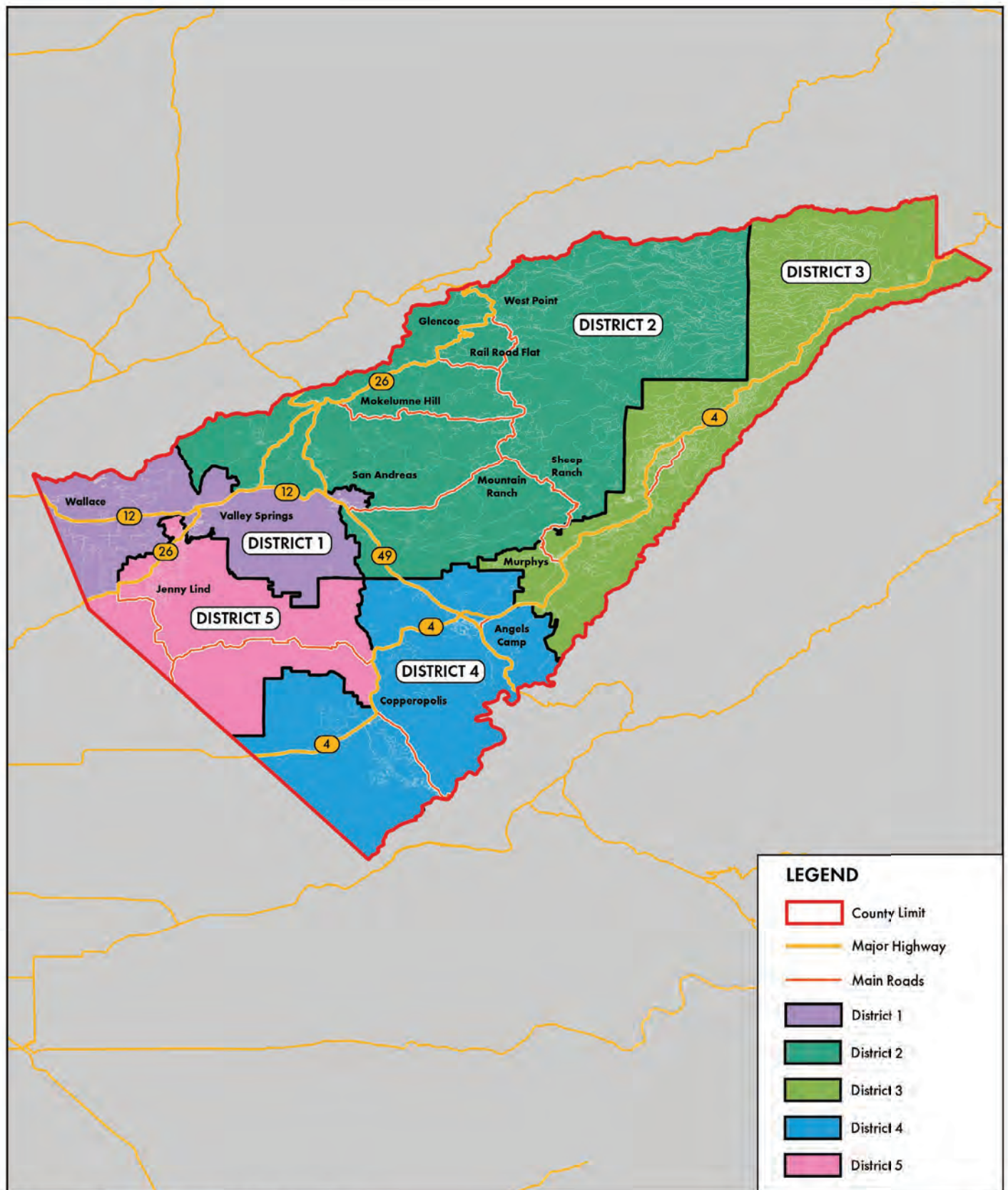
### **Communities**

Calaveras County has defined the term “Community Area” within the County and has utilized it as a regional planning tool in various planning processes since 1975. These Community Areas are unique in either physical settings or economics. As of today, the County has twenty-four Community Areas:

- |                               |                  |                                   |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|
| • Arnold/WhitePines           | • Douglas Flat   | • Murphys                         | • Tamarack       |
| • Avery                       | • Forest Meadows | • Paloma                          | • Vallecito      |
| • Burson                      | • Glencoe        | • Rail Road Flat                  | • Valley Springs |
| • Camp Connell/<br>Dorrington | • Hathaway Pines | • Rancho Calaveras<br>/Jenny Lind | • Wallace        |
| • Copperopolis                | • Mokelumne Hill | • San Andreas                     | • West Point     |
| • Cottage Springs             | • Mountain Ranch | • Sheep Ranch                     | • Wilseyville    |



FIGURE 2.2 CALAVERAS COUNTY DISTRICT MAP



Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County.



0 5 10 mi

## ***Climate and Ecology***

Calaveras County has a typical Mediterranean climate with cool, wet winters, and dry, hot summers. According to the USGS's Ecoregions of California map, Calaveras County is primarily located in the Sierra Nevada ecoregion, with a portion along the west in the "Central California Foothills and Coastal Mountains" ecoregion.<sup>1</sup> These two ecoregions encompass chaparral and oak woodlands, and montane forests. Calaveras County is in USDA Hardiness Zones 7a through 10a. The zones generally run north and south, in accordance with change in elevations from east to west.<sup>2</sup>

Calaveras County's temperate Mediterranean climate provides long growing periods, adding to its renown as a hub for vineyards and wineries. The cultivation of grapes and wine production contribute to the agricultural character to the County's physical setting. As of 2019, there are 600 acres of vineyards operated by 37 wineries in Calaveras County.<sup>3</sup>

## ***Environmental Threats***

With an abundance of natural and undeveloped lands, the County is vulnerable to climate change. Heat and precipitation extremes have increased in recent years. In longer terms, ecologists are expecting declining snowpacks and streamflow timing, which may affect tourism and local ecosystems. Calaveras relies heavily on tourism for economic stability and growth. Wildfires are threats not only to lives or properties, but also tourism-dependent communities. According to the California Climate Change Assessment Report, Calaveras is at the threshold to be categorized as disadvantaged or economically distressed in understanding climate impacts on California counties.<sup>4</sup>

## **ECONOMY AND BUSINESS**

Currently, the economic development of the county follows several key paths: tourism and recreation, agriculture, small businesses, and arts and culture.

## ***Tourism and Recreation***

The County's natural beauty, parks, and outdoor recreational opportunities have been attracting thousands of tourists per year. The most famous tourism sectors include hiking, finishing, and camping. There was visitor-generated \$68M taxable sales in FY 2022–2023, contributing roughly 11% of the total County tax revenue.<sup>5</sup>

The Economic Impact of Travel in California is a study performed by the nonprofit organization called "Visit California." According to the latest report published in 2022, the total visitor direct travel spending in Calaveras County raised steadily each year, with a drop in 2020 impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. There has been an average increase of 4.8% since 2013, reaching \$246 million in 2022.<sup>6</sup> The travel industry employment also grew alongside with travel spending. An average annual growth of 4% in the travel industry employment is seen in the past 9 years.<sup>7</sup>

The trend of visitor spending can be evaluated by the type of accommodation they stayed in, from campgrounds to private homes. Between 2021 and 2022, visitor spending for those who stayed in hotel/motel/short-term vacation rental decreased by 6.9% and was the only accommodation type that had a decrease. In a more detailed breakdown, less spending occurred for visitors who stayed in a short-term

1 U.S. Geological Survey, Ecoregions of California Open File Report 2016–1021.

2 U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, Northern California.

3 The Calaveras Winegrape Alliance, Calaveras Wine Region Facts and Figures 2020.

4 Bedsworth et al. 2018 Statewide Summary Report. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment, 56.

5 Visit California. 2022 The Economic Impact of Travel in California, 20.

6 Visit California. 2022 The Economic Impact of Travel in California, 79.

7 Visit California. 2022 The Economic Impact of Travel in California, 93.

vacation rental and visitors who stayed in a hotel or motel spent more that year. In reviewing visitor spending in the last decade, visitor spending for those who stayed in campgrounds increased to 71% between 2013 and 2022, the greatest among other accommodation types. In the same period, visitor spending for those who stayed in second homes, hotel/motel/short-term vacation rental, and private homes also increased (69%, 43%, 35%, respectively). The spending of day travelers decreased since the Covid-19 pandemic and has not returned to the benchmark of the pre-pandemic years.<sup>8</sup>

In general, tourism continues to be strong and visitor spending has been steadily growing in Calaveras County year after year. Trends show that most spending comes from visitors who stay in hotels, motels, or short-term vacation rentals. The second highest spending comes from those who stay in a second home. Understanding that a large percentage of housing is occupied by those visiting the region can have economic implications for park planning decisions and improvements.

### **Business**

The County had more than 860 establishments.<sup>9</sup> The top three industries are Retail Trade, Accommodation and Food Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance.

### **Arts and Culture**

Calaveras County features various art galleries and studios that showcase local artists. Museums can be found highlighting the region's rich history and cultural heritage with feature exhibits on the Gold Rush era. Festivals and special events are hosted throughout the year. Most events celebrate local traditions, art, music, and cuisine. These diverse arts and culture scenes add to the County's economy.

### **Income and Poverty**

In general, the income level in Calaveras County tends to be lower than statewide statistics. According to the 2022 American Community Survey (ACS), Calaveras County has a median household income of \$77,526, which is 15.3% lower than the State median household income of \$91,551.<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that 13.1% of the County's population fell below poverty level, which is slightly higher than the overall statewide rate of 12.2%.<sup>11</sup> The County's annual per capita income is \$37,935, significantly lower than the overall statewide annual per capita income of \$46,661.<sup>12</sup>

Disadvantaged communities identified in the California Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015 are areas suffering from a combination of economic, health, and environmental burdens. As of 2022, Calaveras does not have any communities that fall under this category.<sup>13</sup> However, there are several factors affecting the County's communities, and the primary ones include exposure to ozone, high unemployment, and rate of cardiovascular disease and asthma. There are several Disadvantaged Legacy Communities identified in the Calaveras County General Plan 2019, and they are:

- Mokelumne Hill (unincorporated community)
- Mountain Ranch (unincorporated community)
- Rail Road Flat (unincorporated community)
- San Andreas (unincorporated seat)

8 Visit California. 2022 The Economic Impact of Travel in California, 108.

9 U.S. Census Bureau. 2017 ECN Core Statistics Summary.

10 U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey, S1701.

11 U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey.

12 U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey.

13 California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. 2022 SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities.

- Vallecito CDP (Census-Designated Place)
- West Point CDP

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### *Population Trends*

Calaveras has experienced drastic population changes since its establishment. The initial population in the County when it was admitted to the Union was 16,884 in 1850. The population later plunged to the lowest 6,008 in 1930 and slowly recovered from the loss since.<sup>14</sup> According to the U.S. 2020 Decennial Census, the total population of the County is 45,292. The total population accounts for one incorporated city, which is the population of Angels Camp, and unincorporated communities in the County. There has been a slight decrease of 0.6% in total population from the previous decade.

There are different pockets of population that are scattered in Calaveras County. Population can vary significantly from one community to the other, especially when comparing between the western and eastern sides of the county. Most of the County's population resides along Highway 4, Highway 49, and Highway 12/26. Rancho Calaveras has the highest population with 5,590, followed by Copperopolis, with a population of 3,400.<sup>15</sup> Both communities are located in the western portion of Calaveras County. The community with the lowest population is Rail Road Flat at 316.<sup>16</sup>

### *Projected Population*

Calaveras is expected to experience a decline in its total population and is projected to decrease by about 6% every decade. In the next 40 years, this trend is anticipated to result in a total drop of about 20%, equivalent to 8,847 people, by the year 2060.<sup>17</sup> Population decline is not uncommon in California. While the state's overall population is expected to remain relatively stable in the coming decades, more than half of the counties in California are projected to experience a decrease in population at various rates.

TABLE 2.1 CALAVERAS COUNTY AND STATE POPULATION PROJECTION - 2030 TO 2060 <sup>18</sup>				
	CALAVERAS		CALIFORNIA	
	#	%	#	%
2030	43,735	-	39,430,871	-
2040	40,752	-6.8%	40,106,449	1.7%
2050	37,686	-7.5%	40,049,519	-0.1%
2060	36,445	-3.3%	39,508,492	-1.4%
<b>TOTAL CHANGE FROM 2030 TO 2060</b>	<b>-7,290</b>	<b>-16.7%</b>	<b>77,621</b>	<b>0.2%</b>

A unique characteristic that Calaveras County has is a high tourism rate due to the County's scenic destinations, regional and state parks, and other unique attractions. This has a direct effect on parks and recreation, as visitors are coming to the region for specific recreational purposes and opportunities. There tends to be more activity on the weekends that is more event and nature-

14 U.S. Census Bureau. Population of Counties by Decennial Census: 1900 to 1990, 31.

15 U.S. Census Bureau. 2020.

16 U.S. Census Bureau. 2020.

17 California Department of Finance. Report P-1A: Total Estimated and Projected Population for California and Counties.

18 California Department of Finance. Report P-1A: Total Estimated and Projected Population for California and Counties.



oriented. Also, there is a high number of non-full-time residents who reside in the county. Since there are residents who do not live in the county full-time, these residents tend to have second homes in Calaveras County. Those who live full-time have different needs than those who visit on the weekends. Full-time resident needs are typically more team sports and exercise oriented.

### Age Characteristics

Each age group has a different lifestyle and family type, which has an impact on recreational uses and affects the planning of recreational programs of a jurisdiction. Alongside the slight drop of population over time, the County is experiencing a similar loss in younger age groups. The population group of 14 and younger has decreased from 18.1% to 14.4% of the total population from 2000 to 2020. In contrast, the population group of 60 and older has increased from 25.4% to 37.8% in the same period. The increase in senior age groups is also revealed in household composition. Nowadays, households in the County have more seniors and fewer young people than 20 years before. The median age of Calaveras County is 52.1, which is significantly higher than the state's median age of 32.9.<sup>19</sup>

The senior population is more likely to experience disabilities compared to younger age groups. It is estimated that in Calaveras, 5,337 persons have ambulatory difficulties. Among them, 194 people are in the age group of 18 and younger, 2,191 people are in the age group of 18 to 64, and 2,952 people in the age group of over 65.<sup>20</sup>

**TABLE 2.2 CALAVERAS COUNTY AGE DISTRIBUTION -  
2000 TO 2020 COMPARISON AND 2030 PROJECTION<sup>21</sup>**

	2000		2010		2020		2030 <sup>22</sup>	
AGE GROUP	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
UNDER 5 YEARS	1,723	4.2%	1,992	4.4%	1,962	4.3%	2,157	4.9%
5–9 YEARS	2,520	6.2%	2,239	4.9%	2,162	4.8%	2,082	4.8%
10–14 YEARS	3,079	7.6%	2,770	6.1%	2,414	5.3%	1,967	4.5%
15–19 YEARS	2,750	6.8%	2,893	6.3%	2,255	5.0%	1,750	4.0%
20–24 YEARS	1,281	3.2%	1,883	4.1%	1,749	3.9%	2,074	4.7%
25–34 YEARS	3,039	7.5%	3,608	7.9%	4,388	9.7%	5,081	11.6%
35–44 YEARS	5,993	14.8%	4,605	10.1%	4,578	10.1%	4,772	10.9%
45–54 YEARS	7,020	17.3%	7,565	16.6%	5,047	11.1%	3,761	8.6%
55–59 YEARS	2,858	7.0%	4,233	9.3%	3,612	8.0%	2,010	4.6%
60–64 YEARS	2,982	7.4%	4,225	9.3%	4,363	9.6%	2,493	5.7%
65–74 YEARS	4,319	10.6%	5,809	12.7%	7,866	17.4%	6,553	15.0%
75–84 YEARS	2,296	5.7%	2,784	6.1%	3,764	8.3%	6,040	13.8%
85 YEARS AND OVER	694	1.7%	972	2.1%	1,132	2.5%	2,995	6.8%
TOTAL	40,554		45,578		45,292		43,735	

The California Department of Finance (DOF) is responsible for providing postcensal population projections, calculated based on current and historic population figures, births, deaths, and net migration. The latest 2019 baseline projections incorporate data as of July 1, 2022, and are

<sup>19</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey, S0101.

<sup>20</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey, S1810.

<sup>21</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2020, 2010, and 2000 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).

<sup>22</sup> California Department of Finance. Report P-2C: County Population by Age.

informed by available information from the 2020 Census. It is projected that there will be a decrease in those under age 14 and under, while there will be an increase in those 60 and over from the 2020 population.

### ***Race and Ethnicity***

Race and ethnicity are important features of any community. The racial composition of Calaveras has become more diverse, though changes are not significant. White remains the most predominant population in the County with a drop from 88.9% in 2010 to 80.2% in 2020. People with two or more races make up the second largest racial group.

<b>TABLE 2.3 CALAVERAS COUNTY RACIAL DISTRIBUTION - 2010 TO 2020 COMPARISON<sup>23</sup></b>				
	<b>2010</b>		<b>2020</b>	
<b>RACE</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>ONE RACE</b>	43,778	96.1%	40,264	88.9%
WHITE ALONE	40,522	88.9%	36,315	80.2%
BLACK OR AFRICAN AMERICAN ALONE	383	0.8%	364	0.8%
AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE ALONE	689	1.5%	747	1.6%
ASIAN ALONE	571	1.3%	743	1.6%
NATIVE HAWAIIAN & OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER ALONE	79	0.2%	100	0.2%
SOME OTHER RACE ALONE	1,534	3.4%	1,995	4.4%
<b>TWO OR MORE RACES</b>	1,800	3.9%	5,028	11.1%
<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>	<b>45,578</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>45,292</b>	<b>100%</b>

### ***Families and Households***

The fluctuations in the count of households and families in the County align with overall population changes. Non-family households are more prevalent today compared to two decades ago. As per the 2020 Decennial Census, the total number of households in 2020 is 18,758.

<b>TABLE 2.4 CALAVERAS COUNTY HOUSEHOLD BY TYPE - 2000 TO 2020 COMPARISON<sup>24</sup></b>						
	<b>2000</b>		<b>2010</b>		<b>2020</b>	
<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS (FAMILIES)	11,707	71.2%	13,039	69.0%	12,662	67.5%
NON-FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS	4,742	28.8%	5,847	31.0%	6,096	32.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16,449</b>		<b>18,886</b>		<b>18,758</b>	

<sup>23</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 and 2010 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).

<sup>24</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2020, 2010, and 2000 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).



### Employment Status

According to the 2022 ACS, about 47.4% of the population 16 years and over are in the labor force.<sup>25</sup> This is significantly lower than the statewide percentage of 63.9%. A 2015 study shows that aging is the primary factor contributing to the rise of population who are not in the labor force.<sup>26</sup> More than 32% of employed civilians work in the occupation of Management, Business, Science, and Arts. The second largest occupation group is Service, Sales and Office. These two large groups comprise a total of over 46% of employed civilians.

## BENCHMARK COMPARISON COUNTIES

The following table introduces several comparable counties both within California and in neighboring states. Benchmark comparison counties provide helpful data points for analyzing the way counties structure parks and recreation management. These counties have been selected for having similar geographic and/or demographic characteristics as Calaveras County. The table includes information comparing population, geographic size, and population trends, in addition to listing the park management entity for each comparison county.

TABLE 2.5 BENCHMARK COMPARISON COUNTIES					
COUNTY NAME	POPULATION (2020 CENSUS)	% CHANGE FROM 2010 CENSUS	SIZE (SQ MI)	POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE	PARK MANAGEMENT ENTITY
CALAVERAS	45,292	-0.60%	1,020	44	Calaveras County; Parks and Recreation Commission as an advisory
AMADOR	40,474	6.30%	606	67	Amador County Recreation Agency (ACRA)
TUOLUMNE	55,620	0.50%	2,236	25	Tuolumne County Recreation Department
PLUMAS	19,790	-1.10%	2,554	8	Three Separate Parks Management Districts
MARIPOSA	17,131	-6.10%	1,451	12	Public Works, Parks and Recreation Division
LASSEN	32,730	-6.20%	4,558	7	County Public Works; co-manages one large park with the BLM
TAOS COUNTY, NM	34,489	4.70%	2,204	16	Parks and Recreation is managed by County Facilities Management
RAVALLI COUNTY, MT	44,174	7.10%	2,400	18	Ravalli County Park Board

25 U.S. Census Bureau. 2022 American Community Survey, DP03.

26 Hipple, Steven F. 2015. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "People who are not in the labor force: why aren't they working?"

### ***Comparison Counties Findings***

An analysis of the comparison counties shows that a few utilize a County Parks and Recreation Department to manage County-owned park assets. Smaller counties, particularly those which contain or are adjacent to State and Federal open spaces, tend to opt for individual Special Districts and partnerships with outside agencies. Plumas County stands out in that its parks and open spaces are managed by three special districts: the Central Plumas Recreation and Park District, the East Plumas Recreation District, and the Almanor Park and Recreation District. Amador County notably utilizes a special district run by an 11-person Board of Directors.

## **COUNTY MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET**

Calaveras County has an approved budget of \$355.04M for FY 2023–2024. This is an increase of 5.12% from the approved budget of \$234.71M from the previous year.<sup>27</sup> The Board of Supervisors have not committed to a specific budget to Parks and Recreation.

The park budget in Calaveras County is overseen by the County Administration Office. The Economic & Community Development Department in Calaveras is a liaison for the Calaveras County Parks & Recreation Commission and pursues grant opportunities. Funding for Parks and Recreation is mainly granted through County Administrative Office under Parks and Recreation.

In recent years, the County received grant funding from Proposition 68. These reimbursements were used for Feeney Park, Alex Quiñones Community Park, and Rail Road Flat Community Club. At the time of writing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, there has been no additional funding allocated to Parks and Recreation, and no additional funding is expected. Funding for parks and recreation continues to be a challenge for Calaveras County since much of it comes from state grants for park and facility improvements.

## **LOCAL PLANNING CONTEXT**

### ***Calaveras County General Plan 2019***

The [Calaveras County General Plan](#) was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2019 and amended twice in 2020. The Plan is intended to guide the future development of the County by directing the planning process to promote economic growth, equity, public health and safety, and to protect the environment. It is recognized in the Plan that the County is made up of small communities with extensive agricultural lands, working forests, wildlands, and recreation lands. Parks and recreation resources are specifically addressed in the Conservation and Open Space Element. Drainage and stormwater facilities are addressed in the Safety Element (Flood Hazard), the Conservation and Open Space Element, and in the Technical Background Report (Public Facilities section). The Plan lays out Goals and Policies, followed by corresponding Implementation Programs.

The following items from the Conservation and Open Space Element have been identified as having a particular impact upon future development of parks and recreation programming within the County:

- Goal: COS-1: “Healthy forests, woodlands, and rangelands free from unnatural accumulation of trees and brush, close to their historic, natural (pre-fire-suppression) condition, thereby decreasing the risk of catastrophic wildfires and increasing water supply and quality, wildlife

---

<sup>27</sup> County of Calaveras, FY2023–24 Final Budget, 75.

- habitat and forage, air quality, scenic resources, and recreational opportunities.”
- Goal: COS-6: “A high-quality system of recreational facilities enhancing the quality of life and health of residents and visitors and contributing to the County’s economy.”
    - » Policy COS 6.1: “Work with the Calaveras County Parks & Recreation Committee, community organizations and special districts to develop park and active recreation facilities, striving to provide a minimum of 3 acres of local park land for every 1,000 County residents. (IM COS-7A, COS-7B, COS-7C and COS-7G)”
    - » Policy COS 6.2: “Establish recreational facility development standards for new development. (IM COS-7A)”
    - » Policy COS 6.3: “Pursue partnerships with public and private entities that make the most of limited funding, share maintenance costs, provide important linkages between recreational facilities and generally expand the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities countrywide. (IM COS-7D)”
    - » Policy COS 6.4: “Facilitate the provision of and access to local and regional trail systems. (IM COS-7E and COS-7F)”
    - » Policy COS 6.5: “Design recreational facilities to minimize ongoing maintenance costs and reduce potential environmental impacts. (IM COS-7H)”
    - » Policy COS 6.6: “Consider the environmental sensitivity as well as the efficacy of the sites chosen for new recreation facilities. Whenever feasible, sites that will result in the least environmental impacts shall be selected for placement of new recreation facilities.”
  - Measure: COS-5M: Interim GHG Reduction Measures
    - » Until such time as a GHG Reduction Plan is adopted, the County shall apply the following measures to residential projects requiring discretionary approval and subject to CEQA review and to all new County construction projects:
      - Where feasible, residential subdivisions shall include parks and open spaces with landscaping and/or native vegetation capable of carbon sequestration.
      - Where residential subdivisions are located within walking distance of facilities such as schools, parks, banks, grocery stores and restaurants, they shall be designed to include pedestrian access to such facilities to the extent practicable.
      - Where feasible, residential subdivisions shall be designed to encourage alternate forms of transportation, including but not limited to sidewalks, trail systems, bike paths, and other measures connecting to existing development.
      - New and renovated County facilities shall be designed to exceed the requirements of the currently adopted California State Energy and Green Building Codes at the time of project approval. Buildings shall be a minimum of 5% more efficient than required and shall eliminate the use of fossil fuels to the extent feasible.
  - Measure: COS-7A: Recreational Facilities
    - » Revise Calaveras Code Chapter 16.24 to reflect a minimum standard of 3 acres of park and recreational facilities per 1,000 residents. If a higher level of parkland to residents ratio exists, a higher standard, not to exceed 5 acres per 1,000 residents, will be considered, as provided in Section 66477 of the Government Code.
  - Measure: COS-7D: Coordinated Recreation and Parks Planning
    - » Pursue partnerships and develop mutually beneficial recreation planning efforts with schools, utility agencies, community groups, Angels Camp, state and federal agencies, private, non-profit agencies, agritourism activities on private land, and others to promote shared use, expand the variety and quantity of available facilities, and to distribute costs and manpower to acquire, construct, and maintain facilities. Link or incorporate recreational facilities from other entities with County facilities whenever feasible.
  - Measure: COS-7F: Corridor Plans
    - » Participate in comprehensive and regional highway, roadway, creek, river and other corridor

planning efforts in cooperation with neighboring jurisdictions to identify opportunities for creating new and integrating existing recreational facilities and achieving other General Plan goals and policies (e.g., facilitating economic development, conserving scenic vistas, preserving water quality).

- Measure: COS-7G: Recreation Facility Inventory
  - » Maintain an inventory of existing recreational facilities.
- Measure: COS-7H: Recreation Master Plan
  - » Adopt a recreation master plan.
- Measure: COS-7I: Parks and Recreation Funding
  - » Pursue funding and support efforts to provide funding for local community parks, recreation facilities, and trail facilities using available funding sources.

The following items from the Public Facilities Element have been identified as having a particular impact upon future development of parks and recreation programming within the County:

- Measure: PF-1D: Facilities Joint Use and Facility Co-Location
  - » Cooperate with facility and service providers to facilitate co-location of parks, schools, police, fire, libraries, community centers, and other community facilities to support community interaction, enhance neighborhood identity, support joint use, and leverage resources. The County shall consider the environmental benefits of facilitating joint use.
- Measure: PF-6A: Safety Design
  - » Identify and adopt guidelines for the design of multi-family, commercial, industrial, business park, and community center land uses that discourage crime, minimize hiding places, and encourage residents and visitors to occupy common and public areas to promote a sense of community while also reducing crime (e.g., landscaping that maintains a line of sight to parking, building entrances, recreation areas, walkways and other public use areas; incorporating SafeScape planning and design techniques; lighting guidelines, and application of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design).

Community plans have long been a component of the County's General Plan. In the Community Planning Element, plan policies related to parks and recreation programs are addressed by communities. Each community in the County has developed its own vision and policies are developed accordingly. Below are items in relation to parks and recreation under each of the 10 communities:

1. Glencoe Community
  - » CPG1.2: "Support commercial recreation development in the area such as stables, outfitters, etc."
  - » CPG 2.2: "Encourage creation of a local park to serve the Glencoe area."
2. Mokelumne Hill Community
  - » CPMH 1.1: "Provide for orderly growth in a manner that retains the small town character, historical, and cultural assets and protects the community's scenic, recreational, agricultural, and natural resources."
  - » CPMH 3.1: "Pursue opportunities to expand the existing offering of park and recreational facilities."
3. Mountain Ranch Community
  - » CPMR 1.6: "The existing park shall remain at least as big as it is at the current time, and the public buildings in the park area should remain for public use."
4. Paloma Community
  - » CPPA 1.3: "Agriculture, mining, and other working lands, open spaces, and recreational

uses are appropriate in the area around Paloma.”

5. Rail Road Flat Community
  - » CPRF 1.2: “Support the establishment or re-establishment of a public park in or near the community.”
  - » CPRF 2.1: “Develop walking paths throughout the town center that maintain the rural atmosphere. Develop hiking, bicycling, and equestrian trails for low intensity recreational use with property owner consent.”
6. Rancho Calaveras/Jenny Lind Community
  - » CPRC 2.1: “Encourage the preservation and development of practical pedestrian/equestrian easements throughout the Rancho Calaveras Community Plan area by identifying and supporting those easements which are physically practical and which provide reasonable access to and from streets and roads.”
7. San Andreas Community
  - » CPSA 4.1: “Work with the San Andreas Recreation and Park District to provide sufficient park and recreation facilities to meet the needs of the community by pursuing funding opportunities, including state and federal grants, development fees, and other funding sources.”
8. Sheep Ranch Community
  - » CPSR 2.1: “Support the development of an open-space park within the town center of Sheep Ranch as a keystone in preserving the town’s rural nature.”
9. Valley Springs Community
  - » CPVS 1.4: “Encourage parking areas to be located behind buildings where practicable to hide them from view along SR 12 and SR 26. Parking areas should be generously landscaped to screen from view when adjacent to residential uses, and to provide shade for cars, making the area more attractive to visitors and customers. (LU-4A and LU-4D)”
  - » CPVS 3.2: “Encourage co-operation and networking with the Valley Springs business community and recreation businesses to develop and promote the Tri-Dam (New Hogan, Pardee, and Camanche) area and the expansion of the recreational industry and identify unique natural resources and cultural or historic features within the Valley Springs Community Plan boundaries. (LU-5F, COS-7C and COS-7D)”
  - » CPVS 3.3: “Support existing, and encourage new, visitor and local-serving tourism and outdoor recreation businesses; educational, professional, and medical institutions; and new service commercial and light industrial businesses.”
  - » CPVS 3.4: “Support the use of public, federal, state, and water district/utility trail and parks, used by schools, clubs, organizations, tourists, and local citizens for walking, hiking, biking, and equestrian attractions. (COS-7C and COS-7D)”
  - » CPVS 4.1: “Support development of additional parks, trails, and recreational facilities for children, youth, vulnerable populations, and adults to safely and efficiently engage in both organized and spontaneous activities. (COS-7A, COS-7B and COS-7I)”
  - » CPVS 4.2: “Encourage the creation and expansion of greenway and park spaces for recreational and trail use utilizing the Cosgrove Creek and Spring Valley Creek riparian corridors, wetlands, and flood areas. (COS-7E and COS-7F)”
  - » CPVS 5.1: “Encourage limiting development on steep hillsides and hilltops to protect natural resources and scenic views that frame the area. (COS-6B)”
  - » CPVS 5.2: “Encourage public awareness of certain features of the unique natural resources identified as California physical, cultural, and historic features within the Valley Springs Community Area boundaries. (COS-6A)”
  - » CPVS 5.3: “Encourage preservation, where practicable, of a number of healthy, well-scattered oak trees, of varying stages of maturity, in development design to maintain a natural rural character. (LU-4C and COS-4D)”

10. Wilseyville Community

- » CPWV 1.5: “Support development of and access to regional open space, park, and recreation facilities, including Schaads Reservoir and Camp Lodestar, to encourage tourism and social capital.”

**Copperopolis Community Area 2025**

The [Copperopolis Community Area](#) was recently adopted by the County and this planning document outlines goals and policies for the Copperopolis community. Relevant goals and policies for the following categories include:

1. Conservation and Open Space/Recreation

- » CPC 3.1: “Support development of a high-quality system of recreational facilities enhancing the quality of life and health of residents and visitors and contributing to the community’s economy,

2. Public Facilities

- » CPC 5.2: Cooperate with school districts and park providers to develop adequate school sites and parks to support the population of Copperopolis.
- » CPCP 5.4: Support development of a multi-purpose community center with sports facilities, a playground, a dog park, a smoke-free and cooling shelter, senior citizen activities and swimming.
- » CPC 5.5: Cooperate with Tri-Dam to develop equitable public access to Lake Tulloch for motorized and non-motorized uses.





Photo: Murphys Community  
Park in Murphys, CA

# CHAPTER 3

## BEST PRACTICES





# BEST PRACTICES

This chapter is intended to provide a snapshot of current best practices in parks and recreation planning. A review of standards and trends related to safety and security and economic sustainability will create a framework to guide the recommendations of this plan.

## TRENDS IN PARKS AND RECREATION

At the heart of current best practices in parks and recreation planning lies the goal of maximizing opportunities to engage users in creative forms of exercise. Increasing parks and recreation opportunities for people can help improve health and fitness, enhance overall quality of life, and support strong communities. There has also been a resurgence in health and wellness, including physical and mental health, leading to initiatives to better meet the evolving needs of communities. Research from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the Outdoor Foundation, and Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) is presented to understand national and state trends in parks and recreation.

It is important to note that national trends are presented in this chapter to offer insight about how people currently engage with parks and recreation, along with how “typical” parks and recreation agencies operate, on a national scale. Because Calaveras County has unique demographics, operations, and needs, the data provided in this chapter is meant to provide a general understanding and information about the state of the parks and recreation industry. Understanding national trends and how people connect with parks and recreation across the United States can be useful in identifying general parks and recreation usage, along with anticipating future needs.

### 2023 NRPA Reports

The NRPA's [Engagement with Parks Report](#) and [Agency Performance Review](#) are annual summary reports of nationwide survey findings. Both reports comprehensively evaluate parks and recreation nationwide, offering key insights into current trends in parks and recreation. The first report gathers input from 1,000 U.S. adults ages 18 and older about their perceptions of parks and recreation, as well as their recreational habits from the past year. The second report gathers insights on characteristics of parks and recreation agencies nationwide and how they operate. The NRPA's evolution from standards to metrics acknowledges the diversity among agencies, recognizing their unique communities with distinct needs, resources, opportunities, and challenges that shape their park and recreation offerings.

### Engagement with Parks Report 2023

The [Engagement with Parks Report 2023](#) presents findings from a survey conducted by Wakefield Research, a U.S. based market research firm, between May 16 and May 28, 2023. The objective was to gain insights into how Americans connect with parks and recreation nationwide. The research surveyed 1,000 adults across the country, with a margin of error of +/-3.1 percent at a 95% confidence level.

### Key Findings - Uses and Activities

The findings from the survey form the basis for the [Engagement with Parks Report](#). The survey revealed that 84% of respondents visited a park and/or recreation facility at least once within the past 12 months ending in May 2023. The percentage of people who visited a park/recreation facility at least once changes to 62% if the time frame is shortened to one month before the survey.

To analyze park visits by demographics, the survey categorized respondents into groups based on household status, age, lifestyle, accessibility to parks, race, and political views, among others. The report suggests that Parents, those identifying as very active, and Millennials are the top three largest populations who visited a local park/recreation facility within the past three months. In terms of frequency, Baby Boomers, White individuals, and Millennials are the top three population groups who visit recreation facilities the most.

Among those who visited a park/recreation facility during the past survey year, 66% visited a local park, playgrounds, dog parks, or other local open spaces; 47% used a hiking/biking/walking trail; and 30% played basketball, golf, tennis, or other sports with family/friends. Other favorite park and recreation activities include using the swimming/aquatic center, local recreation center/senior center, and children participating in out-of-school time programs.

People visit parks and recreation facilities for various reasons. Most respondents claimed that they visit parks and recreation facilities to be with family or friends (50%), to take a break from day-to-day stresses (47%), to exercise/be physically fit (46%), or to be closer to nature (46%). Less common reasons include experiencing excitement/adventure (26%) and connecting with members of the community (23%).

### *Key Findings – Views and Opinions*

In general, respondents held positive views about parks and recreational facilities. Many perceive these spaces as easily accessible, safe, welcoming, and inclusive, catering to people of all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities, gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations. Despite the overall positive feedback, respondents also shared instances of unpleasant experiences or identified barriers that hinder their engagement with parks and recreational programs. These frequently cited obstacles include:

- Concerns about personal safety at the park and recreation facility;
- Concerns about personal safety when traveling to / from the park and recreation facility;
- High costs and / or fees<sup>1</sup>;
- Lack of quality facilities near the respondent's home;
- Unaware of the location / offerings; and
- Offering at local parks and / or recreation facilities do not match interests, etc.

The Three Pillars concept of Conservation, Equity, and Health and Wellness was created by the NRPA to summarize the broad impact of programs, offerings, and benefits provided by park and recreation professionals and agencies nationwide. The majority of respondents agree that these Three Pillars are important to them. Among the three, Health and Wellness has the highest approval rate, with 45% considering it “extremely” important and 34% “very” important. This is followed by Conservation (37% and 35%, respectively) and Equity (34% and 33%).

Respondents agreed that Parks and Recreation are crucial local government services, ranking them as highly as other major local government services. Additionally, 88% of respondents believe it is important for local agencies to engage directly with the public to ensure recreational programs and park amenities meet the needs and desires of the community.

When asked about prioritizing additional investments to enhance park and recreation infrastructure and programming, 43% of respondents chose to improve outdoor facilities, followed by indoor facilities (35%), making existing facilities more accessible (32%), increasing youth sports

<sup>1</sup> NRPA did not provide further clarification on fees. It is assumed that these may be fees associated to participation in parks and recreation, such as program fees, membership fees, rental fees, and parking fees.

opportunities (29%), and increasing resources and access to food and nutrition programs (28%).

### **Agency Performance Review 2023**

The [Agency Performance Review 2023](#) provides a collection of park and recreation-related benchmarks and insights about the state of the park and recreation industry. It presents data from over 1,000 unique park and recreation agencies across the United States as reported between 2020 and 2022. The report highlights characteristics for America's local public park agencies on categories such as park facilities, programming, responsibilities of agencies, staffing, and budget. Data is presented using medians by jurisdiction population or population density.

#### **Park Facilities**

For agencies serving jurisdictions between 20,000 and 49,999 residents, there is one park for every 2,014 residents. There is a median parkland area of 11.3 acres for every 1,000 residents for agencies with populations between 20,000 and 49,999.

Most agencies provide a combination of parks and recreation facilities. The study stated that “at least half of agencies have basketball courts, diamond fields for baseball and/or softball, tennis courts, multi purposed and/or youth soccer rectangular fields, dog parks, community gardens and outdoor swimming pools.”<sup>2</sup> In jurisdictions serving populations between 20,000 to 49,999, playgrounds, youth soccer fields, and youth baseball fields are the most common amenities. These facilities serve a median number of 3,028, 4,947, and 5,033 residents, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

The study found that 84% of park and recreation agencies have non-park facilities such as trails, greenways, or blueways as part of their outdoor infrastructure. The number of these non-park facilities largely depends on the geographic location of the agency—county-based agencies typically have approximately 36 miles of trails while city agencies have much fewer trails.

Indoor park and recreation facilities typically include Recreation Centers, Community Centers, Senior Centers, Performance Amphitheatres, Nature Centers, Aquatics Centers, Stadiums, Teen Centers, Indoor Ice Rinks, and Arenas. More than half of the agencies own recreation centers and/or community centers.

#### **Park Programs**

Programming plays a crucial role in fostering engagement with parks and recreation. According to the study, registration fees for special programming emerge as the primary source of non-tax revenue for most agencies. These agencies typically offer a diverse range of park and recreation activities, with the most common ones including Themed Special Events, Social Recreation Events, Team Sports, Fitness Enhancement Classes, Health and Wellness Education, and Individual Sports.

To cater to various demographics, including children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, 86% of agencies in the 20,000 to 49,999 population range offer Summer Camps; 77% provide Specific Senior Programs; 61% offer Teen Programs, and 55% provide Programs for People with Disabilities.

2 National Recreation and Park Association. 2023 Agency Performance Review, 8.

3 National Recreation and Park Association. 2023 Agency Performance Review, 9.

## **Outdoor Participation Trends Report 2023**

The Outdoor Industry Association has been studying outdoor participation trends for the last 15 years. The executive summary of the [2023 Outdoor Participation Trends Report](#) is reviewed to gain insights into the trends in participants in outdoor activities. Key findings of the study revealed that the participant base in outdoor recreation grew in 2022, even though the number of outings per participant declined. Furthermore, there was increased diversity among participants in 2022. Camping, fishing, sport climbing, and skateboarding were among the categories that experienced the most significant growth in 2022.

### **Demographics**

The study found that recreational participants are becoming more diverse. The conclusion is drawn based on the rise of percentage of Hispanic, Black, and LGBTQIA+ outdoor participants, more diverse new and young participants, and more seniors, along with other evidence. Also, senior participation rate has reached a record high of 35% in 2022 and is still rising.<sup>4</sup>

### **Most Popular Outdoor Activity**

Trends in outdoor activities in 2022 show that hiking is the most popular activity, followed by running, bicycling, fishing, and camping. Notably, camping as a large outdoor category had the second highest growth rate in the past three years at 29.1% per year. Other categories that experienced a high annual growth rate include snowshoeing (20.7%), skiing (8.5%), bicycling BMX (8.3%), boardsailing / windsurfing (7.3%), and scuba diving (7.3%).

### **Number of Outings per Participant**

While the total number of participants increased in 2022, the average number of outings per participant declined for the first time since the pandemic. Compared to 10 years ago, the average number of outings per participant is 71.8, decreased by 12.8, from 84.6 recorded in 2013. The study also sees a decline in outings for families with children.

## **State of the Industry Report 2023**

The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) is a trade association representing leading manufacturers, retailers, and marketers in the sports and fitness industry. Every year, the SFIA conducts a study titled, [State of the Industry Report](#), to give a yearly projection of the health of the industry, which includes research on national participation rate of different sports by categories.

In 2022, the research team surveyed 18,000 participants online who are aged six and above across the country. The overall sports participation has slightly increased from 76.3% in 2021 to 77.6% in 2022. This is the fifth consecutive year where there has been a rise in total participation since 2017. About 236.9 millions of Americans aged six and above are considered physically active.<sup>5</sup>

### **Sports / Activities**

In 2022, the most participated sports / activities are hiking, treadmill, free weights, and running, excluding walking to fitness. Golf has the most growth in the past year (9.7%), followed by tennis (4.3%), and camping (4.0%). In contrast, participation in bodyweight exercise decreased by 2.6% in 2022.

During the past three years, pickleball gained the most growth. Pickleball has experienced a three-year change of 158.6%, followed by alpine touring (91.3%), and off-course golf (56.9%). The other sports / activities that have a three-year change of over 20% include winter fat biking,

<sup>4</sup> Outdoor Industry Association. 2023 Outdoor Participation Trends Report. Executive Summary, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Sports & Fitness Industry Association. 2023 State of the Industry Report, 11.

snowboard touring, skateboarding, tennis, camping, surfing, birdwatching more than ¼ mile from home/vehicle, trail running, and golf.

### Income and Participation

Generally, people with higher income levels are more likely to participate in sports and outdoor activities. In 2022, participation rate in all income levels increased. People with the least income (under \$25k) had a participation rate of 60.6%, while people with most income (over \$100k) had a participation rate of 86.4%. Regardless of income level, fitness and outdoor sports remain most popular. Winter sports are the least participated sports, mostly likely due to the seasonal limitations imposed by colder weather and the need for specific equipment or facilities, which may not be as accessible or affordable for everyone. Populations with higher income are almost three times more likely to participate in winter sports.

### **Summary of National Trends**

Based on national trends, many people value parks and recreation and go to parks and participate in sports and recreational activities for various reasons. Participants are becoming more diverse, and there is also an increasing interest in nontraditional sports, including sport climbing. Traditional sports remain popular, along with passive recreational activities, such as hiking and walking. Those who participate in recreation are becoming more diverse, with senior participants experiencing the most rise in growth. While participation rates increased in 2022, the number of outings per participant has declined for the first time since the pandemic.

In 2022, hiking has been the most popular recreational activity on a national level, along with pickleball. It is also clear that people engage in a variety of recreational activities, especially when they have nearby access to parks and recreational facilities. With a vast amount of parks and recreational opportunities in Calaveras County, understanding how the community currently engage with parks and recreation will be important to determine park planning and recreational programming goals. Key findings and insights from the public outreach process will be presented on what some of these needs and aspirations are in “Chapter 5: Needs Assessment.”

Parks play a vital role in a community. Every community member should feel included and safe in park and recreation spaces. Striving to improve experiences and addressing concerns can help ensure parks and recreation are accessed by all members of the community. Prioritizing investments in parks and recreation including maintaining and improving parks, having dedicated staff, and pursuing funding opportunities are key for parks and recreation agencies to maintain offerings and services.

Many agencies provide recreational facilities, such as playgrounds, sports fields, and dog parks, and provide diverse recreational programs. These programs cater to different age groups, such as youth and seniors, as well as persons with disabilities. Understanding individual community needs can help parks and recreation agency determine the types of programs to offer.

# BEST PRACTICES IN PARKS AND RECREATION

## ***Safety and Security***

Safety is one of the most important factors to consider when people engage in parks and recreation activities. The International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association (ICA) leads the international movement to reduce and prevent crime through urban design called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).<sup>6</sup> CPTED is a set of principles and strategies focused on designing the built environment to reduce opportunities for crime and enhance the quality of life for a community. The primary goal is to create spaces that are safe, welcoming, and encourage positive social interactions.

ICA published a number of Standards, Guidelines, Guidebooks, Handbooks, and Policies. The Guidelines for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design is a document that intends to promote common understandings “in the field of security, law enforcement and related risks, and their preventive measures, through environmental design and management.” CPTED encompasses a set of deliberate design strategies that are derived from five core principles.

## ***Natural Surveillance***

Natural surveillance, a fundamental principle of the First Generation CPTED, operates on the premise that potential perpetrators are deterred from committing crimes when there’s a perceived risk of being observed. This principle emphasizes the importance of creating environments where visibility is maximized, promoting a “see and be seen” culture. In the context of park and recreational planning and design, this means orienting building fronts and entrances toward areas of high activity, ensuring pedestrian routes offer unobstructed lines of sight to key activity areas and entry points. Additionally, installing consistent park lighting helps to eliminate dark spots where individuals might conceal themselves, thus enhancing safety and enhancing the overall outdoor experience. Motion-sensing lighting systems can further augment this surveillance strategy.

## ***Natural Access Control***

The CPTED principle of natural access control promotes innovative strategies like pathway design, landscaping, topography, signage, and other elements to guide and regulate movement within the park. This approach favors organic circulation management over conventional methods like fences or barriers. Several natural access control strategies are listed below.

- Avoid the use of barbed wire fencing where at all possible or other materials that have negative perceptions.
- Utilize clear, consistent colors and language on signage to reinforce cohesion and sense of space. Hours of operations, regulations, and emergency contact information should be clearly identified at parks and amenities.
- Select a low growing plant palette, keep a clear 2’–6’ visual range to allow for increased surveillance and reduce the perception of danger. Groundcovers and shrubs would ideally be kept to under 36” and tree species selected should be high branching.

## ***Territorial Reinforcement***

The CPTED principle of territorial reinforcement emphasizes fostering a sense of ownership among community members and empowering them to invest in their public spaces. This involves designing spaces that are reflective of the community’s identity and values, thereby instilling a sense of pride. Strategies of territorial reinforcement include the following:

- Consider the use of consistent pavement, landscape materials, public art, or signage to delineate public space.

6 International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association. A Brief History of the ICA.



- Incorporate opportunities for community participation in the design of new parks. Designing the park around a common theme or tying it back to the site history are some examples of building community identity and building ownership of space.
- Support the formation of community service groups and “adopt-a-park” maintenance programs or involve the youth at a young age.

### **Activity Support**

The activity support principle in CPTED focuses on encouraging and facilitating positive and legitimate uses of public spaces. It involves designing environments that promote active and vibrant social interactions, recreation, and community engagement. By fostering a sense of ownership and regular use of these spaces by law-abiding individuals, the activity support principle aims to deter criminal behavior. In parks and recreational planning, the principle could be implemented by designing spaces that attract and accommodate a diverse range of activities and users. This can include features such as playgrounds, sports fields, picnic areas, walking trails, and community gathering spaces. By providing a variety of amenities and programming options, parks become more appealing destinations for residents and visitors alike, increasing their usage and overall visibility.

### **Maintenance**

The maintenance principle emphasizes the importance of ongoing upkeep and management of the built environment to prevent the deterioration of safety measures and the emergence of conducive conditions for crime.

The “broken window” theory posits that inadequately maintained areas tend to attract additional vandalism and criminal activity because they convey a sense of neglect and abandonment. Conversely, well-kept spaces signal human activity, ongoing surveillance, and community investment, potentially dissuading criminals and troublemakers from targeting the area. Examples of maintenance techniques are shared below.

- Maintenance priorities should address litter clean-up and graffiti removal first.
- Regular repairs of site amenities such as benches, picnic tables, playground equipment, or trash cans should be performed.
- Regularly monitor and maintain park landscape. Ensure trees and shrubs maintain safe visual line-of sight throughout the park.
- Develop outcome-based maintenance standards for landscape and facility maintenance. Ensure there are consistent maintenance standards in effect that are inspected on a regular basis to measure compliance.

### **Environmental Sustainability**

Sustainability has garnered public interest in the United States since the enactment of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. While economic development and social equity hold equal importance alongside environmental protection, the term “sustainability” in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan primarily pertains to environmental sustainability.

Planning and designing for sustainability in parks and recreation facilities should adopt a holistic approach, with a focus on Green Buildings, Water Management, Stormwater Management, and Wildlife Habitats and Biodiversity. Moreover, numerous modern concepts that prioritize economic vitality or social equity may have positive effects on the environment, and urban agriculture is one such concept.

## **Green Buildings**

Parks and recreation facilities typically have fewer building structures compared to other public facilities, with considerable variation in types and sizes. Depending on the park type and site conditions, building structures in parks may encompass restrooms, shade structures, playgrounds, splash pads, sports fields, swimming pools, ticket booths, amphitheaters, and bridges. In contrast, other recreation facilities such as recreation centers, senior centers, or aquatic centers are generally designed as standalone buildings. Regardless of their type and size, park and recreation facilities can be constructed with a focus on minimizing environmental impact and enhancing overall efficiency through a variety of design, construction, and operational practices. Best practices to promote green buildings in parks include:

- Integration of energy-efficient technologies, such as light emitting diode (LED) lighting, energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and advanced insulation, reduces overall energy consumption;
- Incorporation of renewable energy sources, such as solar panels and wind turbines, allows buildings to generate their own clean energy, reducing reliance on traditional power grids;
- Installation of water-saving fixtures, rainwater harvesting system, and efficient irrigation practices;
- Designing for reduced waste generation during construction;
- Use of eco-friendly materials to promote sustainable sourcing; and
- Development of green roofs and green walls.

## **Water Management**

Water management in parks and recreation facilities involves the planning, conservation, and sustainable use of water resources to ensure the efficient operation of the space while minimizing environmental impact. Sustainable water management can be achieved by implementing the following strategies:

- Implementing efficient irrigation systems such as using high efficiency heads and rain/weather/soil sensors;
- Designing and maintaining landscapes with drought-resistant plants to reduce water consumption and promote water conservation;
- Installing rainwater harvesting systems to collect and store rainwater for later use in irrigation or other non-potable applications within the park;
- Implementing water recycling systems, where applicable, to treat and reuse wastewater for irrigation or non-potable purposes, reducing the demand on freshwater sources;
- Installing water-efficient fixtures in park facilities, including restrooms and water fountains, to minimize water waste and promote responsible water use; and
- Conducting regular maintenance of water infrastructure, including checking for leaks, repairing faulty equipment, and ensuring the efficient operation of irrigation systems.

## **Stormwater Management**

Stormwater management in parks and recreation facilities involves strategies and practices to control, mitigate, and utilize stormwater runoff in a sustainable and environmentally friendly manner. Proper stormwater management helps prevent erosion, protects water quality, and enhances the overall health of ecosystems within and around these areas. Below are key components of stormwater management in parks and recreation facilities:

- Installation of proper Best Management Practices (BMPs) to slow down, filter, or reduce the amount of runoff, and to treat sediments and pollutants;

- Implementation of Low Impact Design (LID) strategies; and
- Using permeable materials for walkways and other surfaces to allow rainwater to infiltrate the soil rather than runoff, helping to recharge groundwater and reduce stormwater runoff.

### ***Wildlife Habitats and Biodiversity***

Parks play a crucial role in providing essential habitats for various wildlife species. Parks and wildlife habitats are symbiotic, with parks serving as essential areas for habitat conservation, biodiversity support, and the promotion of coexistence between humans and wildlife. Effective management and planning are crucial to maintaining this delicate balance. Best practices of thoughtful parks and recreation facilities planning include:

- Designated areas within parks as wildlife reserves or sanctuaries as necessary to protect natural habitats;
- Plant native vegetation to restore and enhance natural habitats. Native plants provide essential food and shelter for wildlife;
- Preserve ecosystems such as wetlands, meadows, and forests;
- Recognize and protect existing wildlife corridors/greenways, establish new corridors/greenways to allow for safe migration of wildlife; manage invasive species; and
- Develop educational programs to connect people with wildlife and promote conservation.

### ***Quimby Act***

The Quimby Act, formally known as the Quimby Act for Park and Recreational Purposes (California Government Code Sections 66477-66477.7), gives cities and counties in the state of California the ability to establish land dedication ordinances to ensure that when new residential developments are created, adequate park and recreational spaces are also provided to serve the needs of the growing population. The goal is to enhance the quality of life in communities by providing residents with access to parks and recreational areas, promoting physical activity, and contributing to the overall well-being of the community. This act reflects a broader commitment to urban and environmental planning to balance residential development with the provision of open spaces for public use.

The Quimby Act allows the County to require 3 acres of park land per 1,000 residents to be dedicated. This dedication is for the establishment of either a neighborhood or community park, ensuring the development of sufficient open space alongside new housing or subdivisions. Only the acreage of existing neighborhood and community parks can be dedicated under the Quimby Act. If a community already exceeds the requirement, the dedication requirement can be adjusted up to 5 acres of park land per 1,000 residents.

The specific amenity requirements and design standards for these parks vary and are contingent on the governing agency. It's crucial to emphasize that the requirement for 5 acres per 1,000 population is not the maximum level of service allowed but rather the maximum park acreage that developers may be required to dedicate under the Quimby Act. Refer to the Funding Mechanism's section in "Chapter 6: Recommendations" for more information regarding Quimby Act and development related fees.

### ***Economic Drivers***

Calaveras County is endowed with abundant natural resources that drive year-round tourism. The economic importance of these resources has long been acknowledged, as they attract tourists, leading to increased municipal revenue through sales tax benefits and boosting surrounding property values. Well-maintained parks and recreation programs not only appeal to potential home buyers but also play a vital role in retaining current homeowners.







Photo: Ball fields at Alex Quiñones Community Park in San Andreas, CA

# CHAPTER 4

## INVENTORY





# INVENTORY

Calaveras County has a rich array of parks and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with. With a wide range of local, state, and federal, and public and privately owned park and recreational facilities, the community can enjoy various recreational activities, such as hike on a regional trail, bike in the wilderness, or play at a local neighborhood playground. The combined mixture of rural atmosphere, open space, natural landscapes, scenic vistas, and suburban development spanning over 600,000 acres provides a unique setting for diverse recreational experiences.

This chapter is intended to provide a snapshot of County-owned parks and facilities. There are non-County-owned parks, facilities, and school sites that provide diverse and essential recreation opportunities for many Calaveras residents. Several of them have been included as part of the County's park system and are presented in this chapter. This effort aligns with the County's General Plan, where the County may foster partnerships with third-party organizations to better meet community needs (COS 6.1 and COS 6.3). "Chapter 6: Recommendations" will provide recommendations on how the County can continue to support third-party organizations who manage non-County-owned parks, facilities, and programs.

## COUNTY PARKS AND FACILITIES

### *Existing County-Owned Parks and Facilities*

An in-depth inventory of six County-owned parks and facilities was performed in November 2023 and April 2024. A matrix detailing the different amenities at each park can be found in "Appendix A: Park Sites." While there are numerous open space and recreation opportunities within the County, there are only six County-owned parks and facilities dispersed throughout the county. These parks and facilities are located in three Districts. Local organizations and community groups currently operate and manage County-owned parks and facilities. There are also additional County-owned recreational facilities that are not operated by the County. One of which is the West Point Community Hall. The County has made investments in these facilities through the Facilities Department and other means of support.

**TABLE 4.1 EXISTING COUNTY-OWNED PARKS**

PARK NAME	PARK TYPOLOGY	MANAGING AGENCY	DISTRICT NUMBER	ACREAGE
Alex Quiñones/San Andreas Community Park	Community Park	San Andreas Recreation and Park District (SARPD)	District 2	25.55
Friedberger Park	Pocket Park	San Andreas Recreation and Park District (SARPD)	District 1	0.05
Mountain Ranch Community Park	Community Park	Mountain Ranch Community Club	District 2	4.7
Murphys Community Park	Community Park	Murphy's Community Club (MCC)	District 3	1.09
Nielsen Park	Pocket Park	San Andreas Recreation and Park District (SARPD)	District 1	0.65
Rail Road Flat - Community Center	Community Park	Blue Mountain Community Renewal Council (BMCRC)	District 2	2.85
<b>TOTAL PARK ACRES</b>				<b>34.84</b>

The County invests time and effort to maintain its facilities, working alongside third-party organizations. Additionally, staff from the County's Facilities Department does perform some park maintenance and provides some oversight for park projects.

Parks of different sizes can accommodate different recreation amenities and facilities, allowing visitors various passive and active recreation opportunities. Diversifying parks allows a wider range of users and groups to utilize the space. While the County General Plan does not specifically state park typologies, the six County parks can be classified under two typologies: community park and pocket park. The definitions of the park typologies are detailed later in this chapter.

### **Existing Non-County-Owned Public Parks and School Facilities**

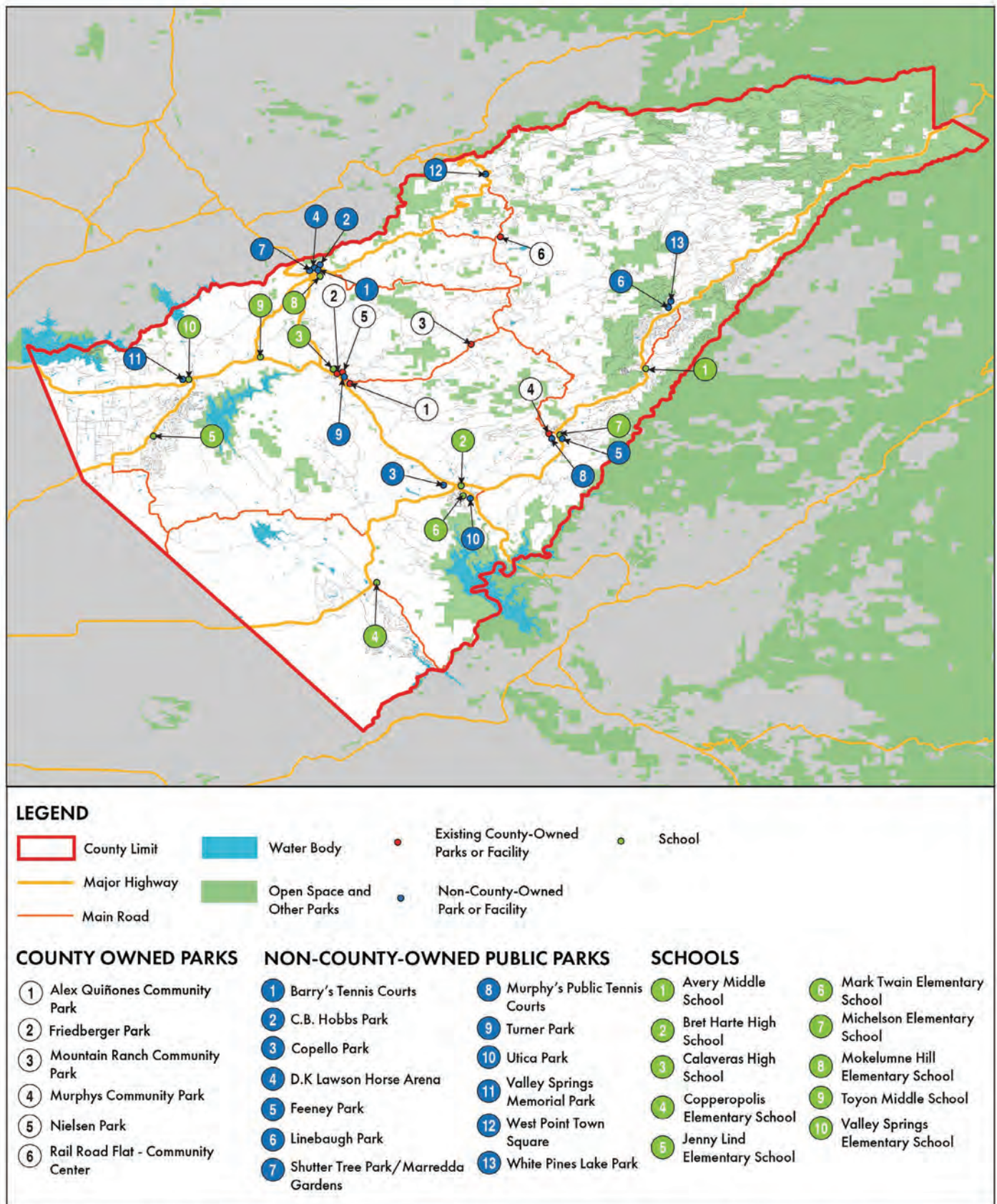
Many Calaveras residents currently enjoy a diverse array of recreational opportunities at non-County-owned parks and facilities. Non-County-owned public parks, managing agency or jurisdiction, park area, and District number are listed in the following table. It is important to note that not all non-County-owned parks and facilities are included in this table. A total of 14 non-County-owned public parks and facilities are presented in Table 4.2. Ten joint-use school facilities are listed in Table 4.3. These parks and recreational facilities are shown in Figure 4.1.

These non-county-owned parks are open to the public, and school facilities are open to the public during designated, non-school hours. Many of these parks and facilities provide core recreational opportunities for many Calaveras residents and are important assets to the County's park system. These partnerships are key to providing recreation in the County.

**TABLE 4.2 NON-COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES**

<b>PARK OR RECREATIONAL FACILITY NAME</b>	<b>PARK TYPOLOGY</b>	<b>JURISDICTION/AGENCY</b>	<b>DISTRICT NUMBER</b>	<b>ACREAGE</b>
Barry's Tennis Courts	Pocket Park	Mokelumne Hill Veteran District	2	2.9
C.B. Hobbs Park	Community Park	Mokelumne Hill Veteran District	2	10.61
Copello Park	Community Park	Angels-Murphys-Arnold Boosters Club (AMA Youth Sports)	4	8.69
DK Lawson Horse Arena	Community Park	Mokelumne Hill Veteran District	2	2.58
Feeney Park	Community Park	Feeney Park Foundation	3	5.7
Linebaugh Park	Community Park	Vallecito Union School District	3	5.44
Marredda Gardens	Pocket Park	Mokelumne Hill Veteran District	2	-
Murphy's Public Tennis Courts	Pocket Park	Ebbetts Pass Veterans Memorial District	3	3.09
Shutter Tree	Pocket Park	Mokelumne Hill Veteran District	2	0.49
Turner Park	Pocket Park	San Andreas Recreation & Parks District	1	1.68
Utica Park	Community Park	City of Angels Camp	4	2.63
Valley Springs Memorial Park	Community Park	Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial District	1	24.13
West Point Town Square	Pocket Park	Under Construction	2	0.34
White Pines Lake Park	Community Park	Calaveras County Water District	3	89.92
<b>TOTAL NON-COUNTY-OWNED PUBLIC PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES ACRES</b>				<b>158.2</b>

**FIGURE 4.1 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS AND FACILITIES MAP**



Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.

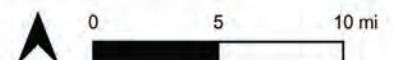




TABLE 4.3 SCHOOL FACILITIES			
PARK OR RECREATIONAL FACILITY NAME	JURISDICTION/AGENCY	DISTRICT NUMBER	ACREAGE
Avery Middle School	Vallecito Union School District	3	38.62
Bret Harte High School	Bret Harte Union High School District	3	17.44
Calaveras High School	Calaveras Unified School District	2	59.96
Copperopolis Elementary School	Calaveras Unified School District	4	6.85
Jenny Lind Elementary School	Calaveras Unified School District	5	20
Mark Twain Elementary School	Mark Twain Union Elementary School District	3	9.74
Michelson Elementary School	Vallecito Union School District	3	13.93
Mokelumne Hill Elementary School	Calaveras Unified School District	2	12.02
Toyon Middle School	Calaveras Unified School District	1	50.82
Valley Springs Elementary School	Calaveras Unified School District	1	4.34
TOTAL SCHOOL ACRES			233.72

There is a total of 30 parks in the County's park system, which includes several County-owned and non-County-owned parks, facilities, and schools. The park acreage totals to 426.76 acres.

TABLE 4.4 TOTAL PARK ACREAGE	
EXISTING PARK OR FACILITY TYPE	ACREAGE
County-owned Parks	34.84
Non-County-owned Public Parks and Facilities	158.2
School Facilities	233.72
<b>TOTAL PARK ACRES</b>	<b>426.76</b>

### **Level of Service**

Level of Service (LOS) is a widely adopted evaluation metric developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) used to evaluate park type and acreage within park and recreation agencies. The definition of Level of Service (LOS) is the ratio representing the minimum amount of open space and parkland needed to meet the recreation demands of the community, based on population size. This metric allows agencies a way to understand how well their existing park system is meeting the needs of its community and to make informed decisions regarding what should be prioritized.

LOS standards are created and approved by the governing agency and are tailored to individual communities to best meet community needs. Policy COS 6.1 from the Conservation and Open Space Element in the 2019 General Plan identifies the County's Level of Service standard. This policy states for Calaveras County to work with the County Parks and Recreation Commission, community organizations, and special districts to develop park and active recreation facilities, striving to provide a minimum of 3 acres of all available park land for every 1,000 County residents. The plan itself does not further assign park typology requirements for the 3 acres per 1,000 County residents. Of note, the 3 acres are intended to include active and developed parkland, such as parks with playgrounds and ball fields.



For simplicity, data used for LOS calculations will be based on 2020 U.S. Census data. The acreage of park land per 1,000 residents is used to determine current Level of Service and Level of Service Goals for Calaveras County. Using the 2020 population of 45,292, the County currently exceeds the current LOS standard and has a LOS of 9.42 acres of park land for every 1,000 residents (U.S. Census). The park acreage includes County-owned parks, non-County-owned parks and facilities, and school facilities.

Based on the Demographics section in “Chapter 2: Context,” it is projected that the Calaveras County population will decline. The park acres needed to meet 2030 LOS Goals may be less than the park acres needed to meet 2020 LOS Goals.

**TABLE 4.5 CALAVERAS COUNTY LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS AND GOALS**

CURRENT LEVEL OF SERVICE					2030 LEVEL OF SERVICE GOALS	
LOS (Standard Acres Per 1,000 Residents)	Current LOS Ratio Per 1,000 County Residents	Park Acres (As Inventoried)	2020 Population	Park Acres Needed to Meet 2020 LOS Goals (Per General Plan)	2030 Population <sup>1</sup>	Park Acres Needed to Meet 2030 LOS Goals
3	9.42	426.76	45,292	135.88	43,735	131.21

While the County currently meets the LOS standard and it is anticipated that the County will continue to meet the LOS standard in 2030, this does not indicate that there are no gaps or deficiencies in the County’s park system. It is important to note that meeting the standard of acreage does not factor in other aspects of a parks system. Also, the type of amenities and their availability (e.g., limited use of school facilities) are not considered in the LOS standard.

“Chapter 5: Needs Assessment” will highlight needs and aspirations from both the community and County staff provided through interviews, community outreach meetings, and an online survey. A mapping analysis will also be performed to better understand current areas of service and to identify gaps in service.

## PARK TYPOLOGY

### *Community Parks*

Community parks typically serve larger populations of the community. They draw visitors more than a half-mile distance and provide a greater number of amenities/facilities than neighborhood or pocket parks. The amenities include at minimum those found at neighborhood parks plus additional features such as tennis courts, bocce courts, aquatic facilities, community centers, multiple play fields that allow for competitions, dog parks, skate parks, and more.

Community parks offer a diverse range of active and passive recreational opportunities and attract all age groups from youth soccer players to young adult pop-up volleyball players. These parks are typically 15 to 20 acres in size and are often designed for a one-mile radius of service, serving multiple neighborhoods. They can be accessible by multiple modes of transportation such as walking, biking, and driving, and are often connected to public transportation. While many of the County-owned parks do not meet the size requirements of a typical community park, the amenities and programs held at these parks align with the standards of a community park. The

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. 2020 and 2010 Census Demographic and Housing Characteristics File (DHC).

County owns four community parks: Alex Quiñones Community Park, Rail Road Flat Community Center, Mountain Ranch Community Park, and Murphys Community Park.

Alex Quiñones Community Park is a County-owned park and is managed by San Andreas Recreation Park District (SARPD) and mainly consists of ball fields. At the time of writing, a joint-use agreement exists with the Calaveras Unified School District to use the main ball fields during Calaveras High School's baseball season. In addition to ball fields, the park includes a disc golf course, a playground, a restroom, and a concessions stand. In 2021, the County was awarded \$70,000 of Prop 68 grant money to make improvements at Alex Quiñones Community Park. Improvements from the grant money include replacing ball field fencing, installing a pickleball court, upgrading playground equipment, and adding shade sails over dugouts. All are County-owned recreational facilities. Construction was completed in mid-November of 2023.

Mountain Ranch Community Park is County-owned and community operated by Mountain Ranch Community Club (MRCC). The park consists of a ball field, group picnic areas with barbeque, a basketball court, and a dated playground. A multi-use trail runs along the park and is also the only park in the County with a dedicated dog park. Community activities at the park include Easter egg hunts, Music in the Park concert series, and a Christmas Parade and Santa event. There is the Mountain Ranch Youth Alliance and Resource Center at the park that is leased to Mountain Ranch Youth Alliance.

Even though Murphys Community Park does not meet the typical community park acreage size, it is considered a community park due to its amenities. The park is maintained by Murphy's Community Club, and the park has several large picnic areas, a gazebo, concessions, a restroom, stream access, connection to a walking trail, bocce courts, horseshoe pits, and playgrounds. Community events are often hosted at Murphys Community Park.

Rail Road Flat Community Center is considered a Community Park because there is an adjacent ball park, a playground, picnic areas, and a basketball court. Rail Road Flat Community Center is a small park nestled in the small community of Rail Road Flat. This is the only facility within the community, and it shares land with a recreation hall and library. The park is leased to Blue Mountain Community Renewal Council. County-owned recreational facilities include a playground, basketball court, ball field, and open field for soccer.

### **Pocket Parks**

Pocket parks are the smallest type of parks designed for special purposes with limited activity use. They often provide only passive recreation opportunities and serve a concentrated population or specific age group. Pocket parks are intended to be accessed by walking or non-motorized forms of transportation but may allow for parking facilities like Nielsen Park does. These are designed for a quarter- to half-mile radius of service and are often less than an acre in size.

There are two pocket parks owned by the County. Nielsen Park and Friedberger Park are leased to San Andreas Recreation and Park District. Maintenance of Nielsen Park is performed by Rotary Club volunteers, at the time of writing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

## CURRENT RECREATIONAL PROGRAMS AND MARKETING

In Calaveras, recreational programs are run by local groups and organizations and are hosted at County-owned parks. Residents can enjoy a variety of recreational experiences, including youth sports, open public swim, and special local events at both county-owned and non-county-owned parks and recreational facilities.

Currently, there are several ways for the community to learn more about County's parks and recreation. One is through the Parks and Recreation [website](#). There is also a Facebook page managed by the Calaveras County Parks and Recreation Commission. Local groups and organizations often engage the community through various marketing efforts such as social media, physical flyers, surveys, and in-person conversations at community events.

Community members may engage with the County to relay their aspirations and needs by reaching out to their District Parks and Recreation Commissioner. Commissioners then share issues and insights from the community to the County's Economic & Community Development Director, who acts as a liaison between the County and the community. The Economic & Community Development Director then shares this information with the County's Board of Supervisors, who can make decisions regarding planning, funding, and development opportunities throughout the County. The public can also share their feedback by sending an email on the Parks and Recreation website.

Parks and Recreation Commission meetings are open to the public, and meeting minutes are posted online. The County uses a general County Facebook page, YouTube, and Public Access TV (PATV) to share County information and public meetings, including updates regarding parks and recreation.

### ***Current Rental Facilities Fees and Park Projects***

#### **Rental Facilities Fees**

There are several facilities available for rent at County-owned parks. Since County-owned parks and facilities are leased to local groups, the local groups charge the public for these rentals. These funds are used for Maintenance and Operations for each park. Ball fields can be reserved at Alex Quiñones Park for \$50 a day per field. Murphys Community Park has several picnic areas for rent, including a gazebo and group barbeque. In addition, the entire park may be rented out for larger group events.

#### **Park Projects**

The County has invested in several park improvements, which includes projects that were funded by the Proposition 68 grant. Park improvement projects include:

- Proposition 68 - ADA Restrooms at Feeney Park
- Proposition 68 - Kitchen, Room, Beam Replacement, and more at Rail Road Flat Community Center
- Facilities - Park Maintenance and Similar Projects
- Mountain Ranch Community Park Projects
- Tree Removal at Friedberger Park

As mentioned earlier, construction has been completed at Alex Quiñones Community Park for improvements funded by the Proposition 68 grant. A new playground and a pickleball court have been installed.

Various other improvements at other parks have been made through third-party organizations. Plans are slowly taking shape for a park in West Point—now named West Point Town Square—through the efforts of a group of local residents and the nonprofit Blue Mountain Theater, which bought the property outright for \$43,000 in October 2023. Vicki Snead-Hinkell, the director of the theater and president of the park committee, was one of a group of Main Street business owners and neighbors who first discussed the possibility of a park last summer.

West Point Town Square is located at the corner of Main Street and Pine Street in West Point. Private donations to purchase the property helped kick-start the project. Fundraising for this project is still active and ongoing with a GoFundMe campaign. The park will be developed in phases, where building utility infrastructure would be focused on first. Initial programming ideas for the park include picnic areas, a stage, a play area, a gazebo, and a water feature.

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will consider other park improvement projects that may be needed and provide additional, general recommendations to prioritize existing improvements at County-owned parks. Specific recommendations to improve non-County-owned parks and school facilities will not be provided. Rather, recommendations on strategies for the County to continue to support third-party organizations in providing recreational offerings will be presented. Non-County-owned parks and facilities managed by others may also require improvements. These partners may reach out to the County to determine needs.





Photo: Playground at Rail Road Flat Community Park in Rail Road Flat, CA

# CHAPTER 5

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT





# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Community feedback is an integral part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan because findings from the public outreach process help inform park planning recommendations. Understanding the needs, interests, and aspirations of the community can provide insight on where efforts and investments regarding parks and recreation can be placed. This chapter will describe the methodology utilized and results derived from the community engagement process. A needs assessment of community input results and a maps of current service areas will also be provided.

A diverse and substantial public engagement process was conducted to receive as much community input as possible, due to the large scale of the County. This included:

- Statistically valid survey
- Five in-person individual interviews with the Board of Supervisors
- One Parks and Recreation Commission meeting
- Four focus group meetings
- Five in-person public meetings, one in each district
- Interactive and analog polling
- Open house conversations and notes on poster boards

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

## PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

### *Supervisor Interviews*

In January 2024, five in-person individual stakeholder interviews were performed. Each District Supervisor was interviewed and asked specific questions about parks and recreation. These questions were intended to assess community needs within their district, along with their input on general parks and recreation needs for the County as a whole. Through this, needs specific to each district were identified. The plan for outreach meetings was presented and feedback was gathered about the planned outreach process.



Key information provided by the supervisors included potential community members to invite to focus group meetings, as well as specific needs at the parks in each District. A few supervisors suggested goals for venues to consider for economic development in Calaveras County, including a regional sports park in Valley Springs, potentially on CCWD land, and an Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) park near the landfill. Maintenance concerns for all parks were discussed. There was also mention of a need for daycare and youth programs.

### *Parks and Recreation Commission Meeting*

A meeting was held on February 16, 2024, with the Parks and Recreation Commission, where the outreach plan was presented and feedback was gathered.

## ***Community Meetings***

In April 2024, five in-person community meetings and four focus group meetings were held throughout the County. The community meetings were advertised through flyers and mailers directly sent to residence. A dedicated County website page provided information on community meeting dates and times, along with a link to an online survey. Several local online news articles also helped spread the word. Park and Recreation Commissioners were asked to share community meeting dates and times with their constituents.

These public meetings were intended to engage with the Calaveras community and to better understand the community's interests and thoughts regarding the County's parks and recreational facilities. The public meetings included a formal presentation and an open house walk through. Interactive polling were woven into the presentation to keep participants engaged and to gather additional community input. The walk-through provided opportunities to engage community members one on one and for them to post feedback on interactive boards.

Every community meeting was held in each District and was open to all residents in the County to add flexibility. The community meetings all started at 5:30 PM on a weekday evening. The public meetings were also recorded live on the County's Public Access TV (PATV). The dates and locations were:

- Meeting #1: Wednesday, April 3rd, 2024, at Calaveras County Firehouse (District 5)
- Meeting #2: Thursday, April 4th, 2024, at Governor Mansion (District 4)
- Meeting #3: Thursday, April 11th, 2024, at West Point Community Hall (District 2)
- Meeting #4: Wednesday, April 17th, 2024, at Native Sons Hall (District 3)
- Meeting #5: Thursday, April 18th, 2024, at Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial (District 1)

## ***Focus Group Meetings***

Four focus group meetings were hybrid meetings, where invited community members from local stakeholder groups had the option to join the meetings in-person or online to share their thoughts in an allotted time slot. People had the opportunity to join virtually on Zoom Cloud Meetings for added flexibility. Group discussions were also held to engage with attendees and to better understand their input.

Members from the following groups attended, as well as invited individuals:

- Angels-Murphys-Arnold (AMA) Boosters Club
- Blue Mountain Renewal Council (BMRC)
- Bret Hart Union School District
- Feeney Park Foundation
- Mark Twain Elementary School
- Mountain Ranch Community Club
- Tri-Dam Public Land
- U.S. Forest Service
- West Point Lions Club

County staff, members from the Board of Supervisors, and Parks and Recreation Commissioners attended both the community and focus group meetings.

### ***Statistically Valid Survey***

From late March to end of April 2024, an online survey was made available to the public in order to assess the community's perception and experience regarding the County's parks and recreation system. Physical copies of the survey were distributed at the community meetings. The survey link was posted on the County's dedicated website page and advertised similarly at the community meetings. There was a total of 496 respondents. The rate of participation leads to a 95% level of confidence. The survey had a total of 27 questions and used a variety of evaluation measurements, including multiple choice, free response, and importance/satisfaction ranking questions.

Survey questions were developed to:

- 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 County parks and recreation resources.
- Assess future needs and priorities for park facilities and recreation programs.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: KEY FINDINGS**

### ***Stakeholder Interview Findings***

Key themes were revealed from the individual stakeholder interviews and are generalized below. The summary combines recurring responses from more than one District Supervisor, but they may not reflect the views of all District Supervisors. Also, it is important to note that because community demographics vary between Districts, the community needs for every District may be different and individualistic. Parks in the summary include both County-owned and non-County-owned parks, unless otherwise specified.



- The need for more parks and/or park amenities in general, along with the issues and difficulty of maintaining existing parks.
- The need to draw visitors into the County, such as a regional park or facility, which can help with economic growth.
- Popular recreation activities include soccer and baseball/softball.
- Senior programs and areas for seniors to safely recreate were also mentioned.
- Dog parks and walking paths were also mentioned often.
- The need for a designated Parks and Recreation staff position.

### ***Community Meeting Findings***

Over the course of 10 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 members, families, members from various organizations, and longtime residents of Calaveras County.

Interactive polling was conducted at the first two community meetings to engage with attendees. 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 the types of park amenities they would like to see more of.

- Top activities include walking, baseball, picnicking, and going to a dog park. The results generally show attendees engage in a variety of activities at a park.
- The top sports courts or fields desired are basketball, pickleball, and soccer fields.
- The top park amenities desired are shade or a shade structure, dog park, and restrooms.

**FIGURE 5.1 INTERACTIVE POLLING RESULTS**



Interactive boards were provided for attendees to add their input to questions. Inputs gathered are summarized below:

- The top recreational opportunities attendees would like to see are skateboard/roller park, soccer, dog parks, playgrounds, and pump track.
- Top recreation programs attendees would like to see are programs for kids, sporting activities, and senior programs.
- Murphys Community Park and Alex Quiñones Community Park are the most visited parks.
- Splash pads was a top park amenity attendees would like to see at County's parks.
- Attendees visited a variety of non-County-owned parks, including Feeney Park and White Pines Park.

The public engagement process provided the opportunity for the Calaveras community to share their input regarding parks and recreation in-person. The number of attendees at community meetings ranged from 10 people to over 30 people. Key insights were revealed from the public meetings and are listed below:

- There are many local organizations and nonprofit groups that are actively involved in serving their community by providing recreational activities and programs on public or private parks and facilities. Some have existing partnerships with public agencies or jurisdictions to share parks and recreational facilities.
  - » Funding for up-keeping operations and maintenance is a top concern for many of these organizations, including school districts, especially when serving thousands of users. Since many of them are volunteer-run and funded by donations, funding has been a major concern to support the recreational activities and programs that many members of the community engage in.



- » Some groups have sought grant funding and have been able to receive funding but are unable to continue the project. This is due to either lack of having available funding upfront for improvements or lack of grant writing experience to define a proper scope of work.
- » Most are open to pursuing public-private partnerships with the County.
- Historic preservation and Native American history are important to many attendees.
- Recreational facilities and community gathering spaces are highly desired amenities.
- Because there is only one or a few core amenities that exist in the county, many users utilize these parks and facilities frequently, which causes wear and tear quickly. This includes one aquatic center at Bret Harte School Union High School District serving the entire county.
- There are many core recreational activities and programs, including cheerleading, that are run by volunteer groups and funded by donations.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

Based on the participation rate, the sample size is representative of the Calaveras County population and opinions from this sample size can be useful in determining overall perceptions and aspirations regarding parks and recreation in Calaveras County. The information collected included demographic data, frequency of visits and participation at parks and programs, concerns, areas of priority, and a series of importance and satisfaction questions. It is important to note that while 496 surveys were received, not all surveys were completed in their entirety.

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.

The survey consisted of several free responses for people to add additional input that may not have been addressed in the other questions. Refer to “Appendix B: Public Outreach Results” for detailed and summarized responses.



Community meeting - District 5



Community meeting - District 2

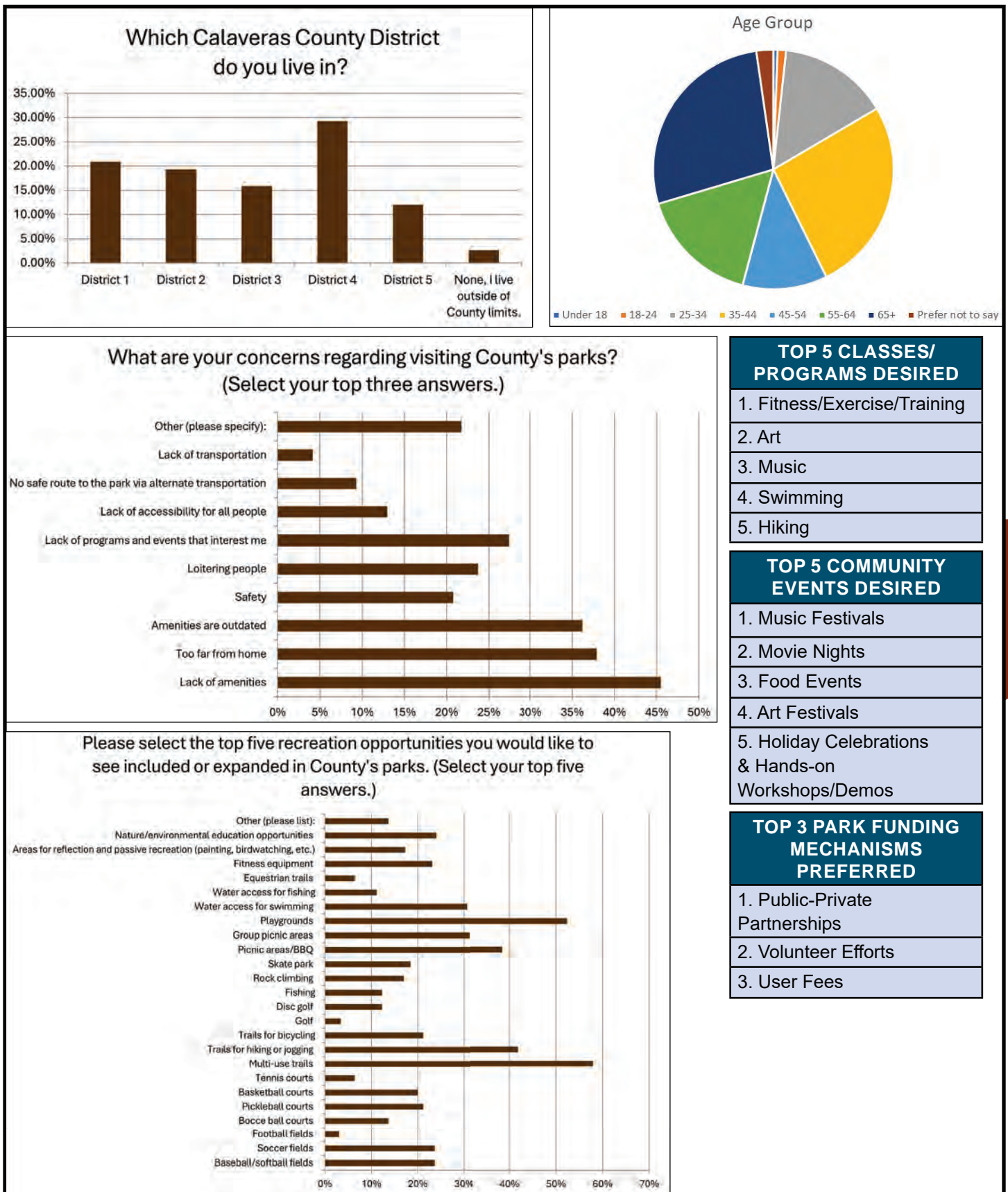


Community meeting - District 1

## ***Key Insights From Survey***

- Murphys Community Park is the top visited park from respondents.
- Respondents tend to visit County parks on a weekly (30.7%) or seasonal (27.7%) basis.
- County parks are an important asset to respondents. 88.1% feel it is very important for County parks to be available for public use.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents visit non-County-owned parks (81.2%).
- Non-county-owned parks respondents visit include:
  - » Calaveras Big Trees State Park
  - » Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial Park/Parks and schools in Valley Springs
  - » Turner Park/Parks in San Andreas
  - » Feeney Park
  - » New Hogan Lake
  - » White Pines Park
  - » New Melones Lake
  - » Shutter Tree Park/Parks in Mokelumne Hill
  - » Utica Park/Tryon Park/Parks in Angels Camp
- The top three reasons for visiting non-county-owned parks are the availability of recreational activities and programs, closer proximity or lack of a County park or park in the area, and walking/hiking opportunities.
- Top three concerns regarding visiting County parks in order from first to third are lack of amenities, parks are too far from home, and amenities are outdated.
- Top five recreation opportunities respondents would like to see included or expanded in the County are:
  1. Multi-use trails
  2. Playgrounds
  3. Trails for hiking and jogging
  4. Picnic areas/BBQ
  5. Group picnic areas
- In general, respondents would like to see more special events offered.
- Top three improvements or facilities respondents would like to see are:
  1. More indoor facilities
  2. Facilities for use by groups (for weddings, parties, family reunions)
  3. Special event facilities (for large events like fairs, swap meets, concerts)
- Top five methods the County can improve the park system include:
  1. Improve existing parks in general
  2. Incorporate inclusive play areas for children of all abilities
  3. Improve bike/pedestrian circulation between neighborhoods
  4. Provide more passive recreation opportunities (Walking trails, seating areas, game tables, etc.)
  5. Improve existing playgrounds
- Respondents prefer to stay up-to-date with County parks and recreation news and information through online recreation/information guides (56.5%), Facebook (55.3%), and the County website (53.3%).
- When it comes to recreation programs, respondents would like to see more programs geared toward these age groups: teen/tweens (49.7%), multigenerational (46.4%), and seniors (36.4%).

**FIGURE 5.2 PUBLIC SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS**





**FIGURE 5.3 TOP REASONS FOR VISITING NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS**



**TABLE 5.1 TOP REASONS FOR VISITING NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS**

	<b>#1</b>	<b>#2</b>	<b>#3</b>
<b>ALL</b>	Availability of recreational activities and programs	Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area	Walking/hiking opportunities (including trails)
<b>DISTRICT #1</b>	Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area	Has playgrounds or kid-friendly spaces	Availability of recreational activities and programs
<b>DISTRICT #2</b>	Availability of recreational activities and programs	Socializing/event opportunities	Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area
<b>DISTRICT #3</b>	Availability of recreational activities and programs	Socializing/event opportunities and walking/hiking opportunities (including trails)	Has a dog park or dog-friendly spaces
<b>DISTRICT #4</b>	Availability of recreational activities and programs	Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area and walking/hiking opportunities (including trails)	Has a dog park or dog-friendly spaces
<b>DISTRICT #5</b>	Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area	Has playgrounds or kid-friendly spaces	Safer

Recurring themes from the open response regarding the top reasons respondents visited non-county-owned parks were compiled into the following 12 categories:

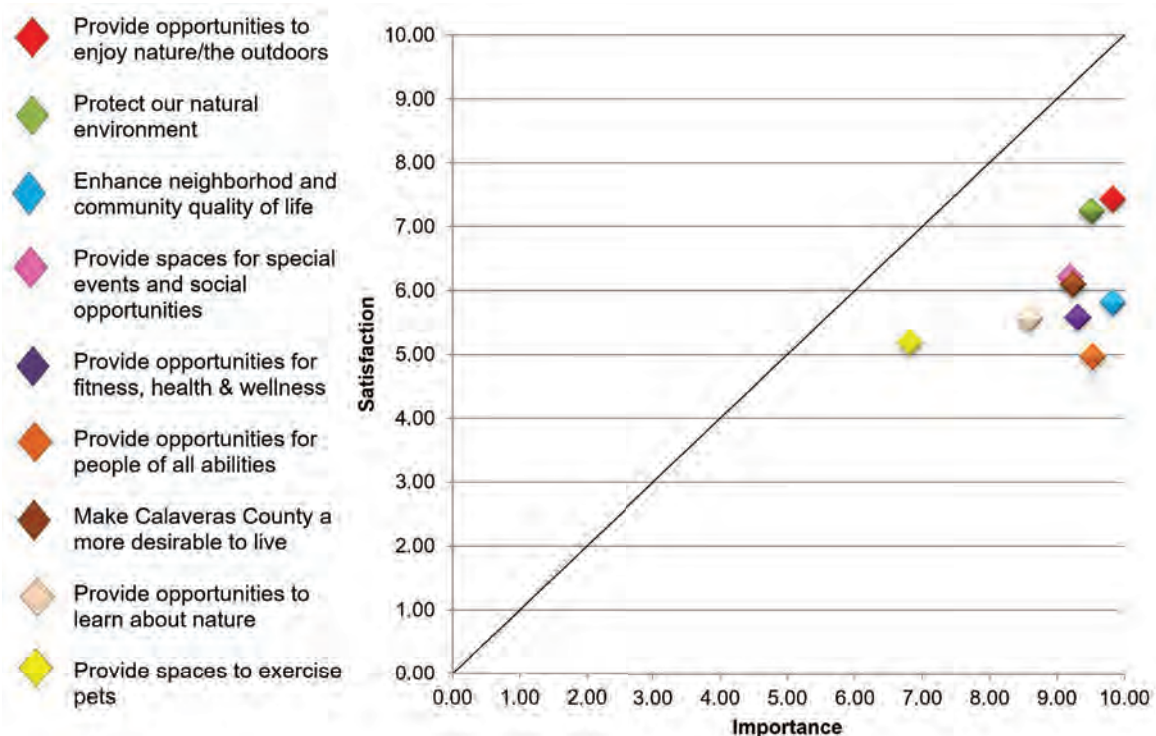
- Walking/hiking opportunities (including trails)
- Better maintained
- Value nature and scenic resources
- Has playgrounds or kid-friendly spaces
- Safer
- Better park amenities
- Has a dog park or dog-friendly spaces
- Enjoys a variety of recreational opportunities/parks
- Closer proximity or lack of County park or more parks in the area
- Availability of recreational activities and programs (e.g., youth sports, disc golf, picnicking)
- Socializing/event opportunities (including sports games)
- Availability of facilities (sports fields/courts or centers)



### Importance VS. Satisfaction

The public survey included a set of importance and satisfaction questions that asked participants to rank importance of a list of values associated with parks and recreation programs and then to rank their satisfaction with the same items. A direct comparison of these two question types reveals areas of opportunity for items that are ranked high on the importance scale but low on the satisfaction scale. The combined results show areas where the County may have already adequately fulfilled the needs of the community and areas where there is opportunity for improvement. These opportunity areas are intended to be a tool to help guide the County's prioritization of funding.

**FIGURE 5.4 IMPORTANCE VS. SATISFACTION:  
BENEFITS OF PARKS & OPEN SPACE**



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The comprehensive input received during the community outreach process from the community, stakeholder groups, and District Supervisors provided a better understanding about how the community connects with parks and recreation in the County. The Needs Assessment section is an assessment of all community feedback throughout the public outreach process, which will help identify several opportunities for improvements that will be presented in the recommendations chapter.

### **Park Access**

A common sentiment from the community is the preference to seek recreational opportunities at non-County-owned parks and facilities that are close by. While there are many parks and open spaces for the community to access, there is a need for additional developed public parks throughout the County, especially in populated communities, such as Copperopolis and Arnold. County residents who live in farther and in less populated communities have limited access to a wide range of recreational programs and opportunities than those who live in more populated communities.

As is common in most rural communities, access to local, developed parks remain limited, even though about a quarter of the total acreage is owned by other jurisdictions and there are many non-County-owned parks that are available to residents. Access to parks should be convenient, safe, and affordable, and many parks in the County are generally accessible mainly by car, due to limited alternative transportation options. Also, the locations of existing County parks currently cater to specific communities, including Rail Road Flat and Mountain Ranch.

### **Improvements and Maintenance at Parks**

In general, the Calaveras community enjoys parks and recreational opportunities in the county. Many value the natural beauty of the county and protecting its natural resources and history. About 63% of survey respondents are satisfied with County parks.

Based on the community outreach process, many expressed the need for improvements to include additional features and park amenities, as well as regular maintenance at County parks. Many feel that existing park amenities are not sufficient in quantity or quality and recreational opportunities remain limited in these spaces.

Below is a summarized list of amenities commonly expressed by the community:

- Diversify park amenities to include dog parks, splash pads, skate park, and shade structures
- Incorporate modern and inclusive playground equipment
- Provide designated outdoor community gathering spaces
- Incorporate walking paths and trails
- Improve to existing site furnishings, including restrooms and signage
- Increase quantity of sports fields and picnic areas
- Provide a recreational indoor facility

Respondents also perceived that there is a lack of maintenance at County parks and site furnishings are outdated. Safety was also a concern by respondents, including playground safety and inaccessible paths. Recommendations on how the County can improve maintenance practices for their leased agencies are presented in the next chapter.

### ***Desire to Improve Parks and Recreation Structure***

A strong sentiment expressed by County staff is to improve the County's current Parks and Recreation structure. The recommendations chapter will provide potential organizational structures for the County to consider.

### ***Public Awareness about the County's Parks and Recreation Process***

During the outreach process, many Calaveras residents shared that they were unaware there was an official process to share their feedback regarding parks and recreation in the County. There are multiple ways the County has in place for the public to share their feedback, such as sending an email from the County's dedicated Parks and Recreation website or reach out to the Commissioners or the County's Economic & Community Development Director. Increasing awareness about this process to the public can provide a clear path for the community to communicate needs to the County.

### ***Funding for Parks***

Funding for parks was strongly expressed by the community throughout the community outreach process. This was a sentiment not only for County parks, but for non-County-owned parks and facilities, because many of them support core recreational programs and provide basic park amenities for the community, particularly in areas that do not have a County park.

### ***Recreation Programs***

There are two key insights from the community outreach process related to recreation programs that are shared below.

#### **Maintain Core and Create Diverse Recreational Activities**

Recreational programs activities remain limited or too far to participate. Currently in Calaveras, local organizations, often volunteer-run and non-profit, provide recreation programs and activities for their community, particularly for youth and teen/tween groups. Many of these are core recreation programs, including youth athletic sports and little league baseball. Also, because only a few core recreation programs and facilities exist in the entire county, this leads to thousands of people using facilities, which require more frequent maintenance. Funding for constant maintenance becomes strained and unsustainable.

The community has expressed a strong desire to keep these core programs running in a sustainable manner. The County is committed in providing continuous support and investments for their County-owned parks and to these local organizations. Recommendations on ways the County can continue to provide assistance are discussed in the next chapter. These include forming new partnerships that can provide additional recreational opportunities and providing assistance in pursuing grants.

Based on the survey, top recreational programs and activities respondents would like include:

- Fitness/Exercise/Training (47%), Art (43%), and Music (36%)
- Music Festivals (65%), Movie Nights (59%), and Food Events (59%)

In general, recreational programs and facilities the community would like to see offered by the County include:

- Sports programs and facilities, such as baseball and soccer
- Swim programs and activities
- Community events
- Organized activities and clubs in general

### **Programs for Different Age Groups**

A strong desire from the community is to have recreational programs and activities for various age groups, such as teens/tweens, multigenerational groups, and seniors. Currently, there are limited recreational programs and activities targeted for different age groups. In particular, there are limited senior programs that currently exist in the County and, with an anticipated aging population, this will be a growing need to be fulfilled.

## **PARK DISTRIBUTION AND SERVICE**

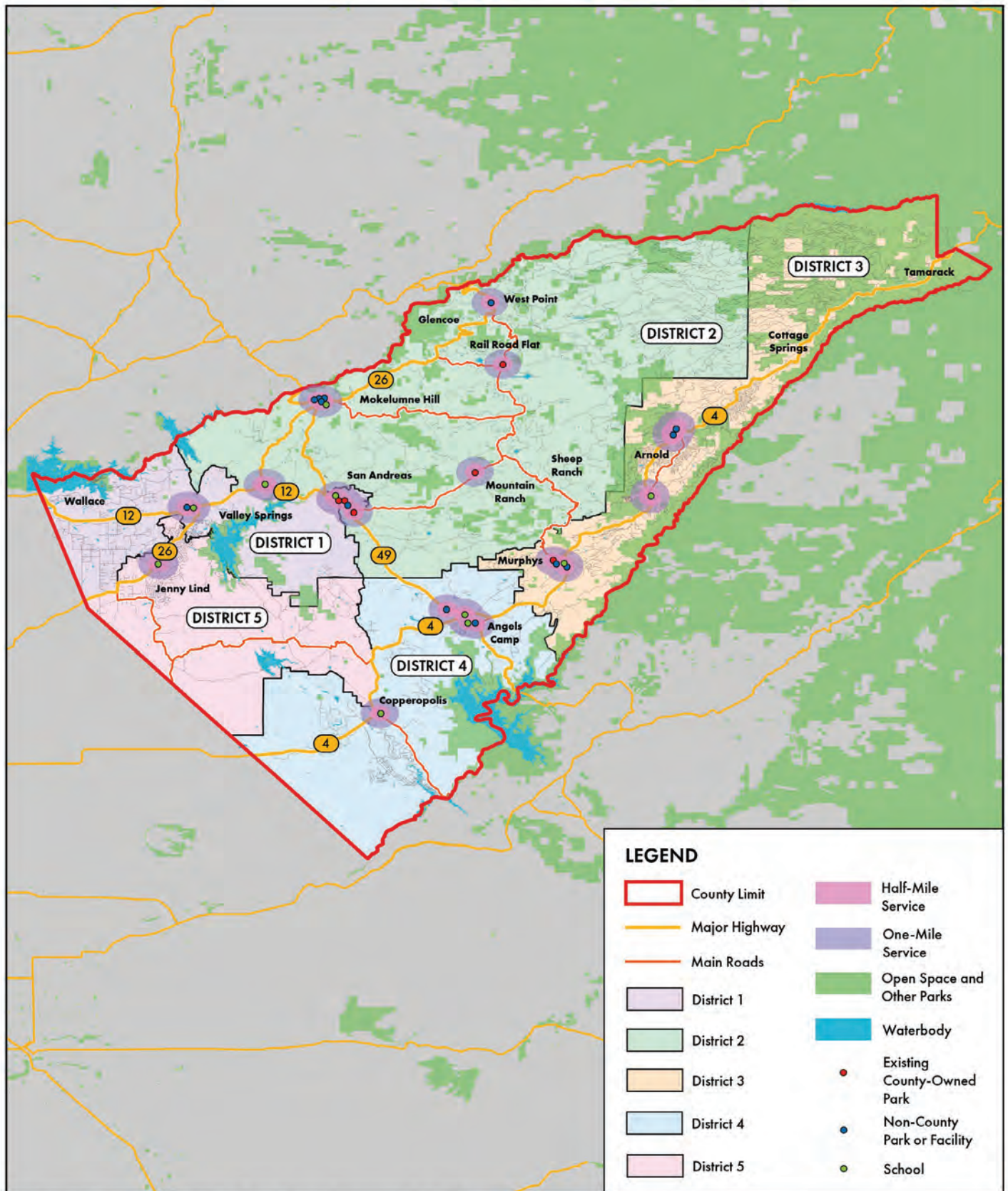
The current distribution and service of the six County-owned parks and the 24 non-County-owned parks, facilities, and schools sites are displayed in Figure 5.5. Both half-mile and one-mile service areas are also displayed to understand how walkable and accessible these parks and facilities are in their immediate communities. Enlargements of each District are shown in Figures 5.6 to 5.9.

Due to the rural nature of Calaveras County, it is not possible for developed public parks to be easily accessed in a 10-minute walk or about a half-mile distance. Therefore, Figure 5.10 shows a 14-mile service area of County-owned parks for vehicle travel. This metric is based on the average distance per trip in a low-density rural areas based on data derived from the Federal Highway Administration's National Household Travel Survey. The 14-mile service encompasses a majority of Calaveras County, with gaps on the eastern and western ends of Calaveras County.

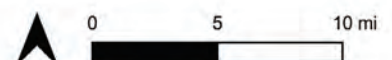
It is important to note that the maps do not include all non-County-owned parks and facilities. These maps are meant to understand the current distribution of County-owned parks and several non-County-owned parks and facilities that have been counted as part of the County's park system. The mapping information can help guide on where the County can concentrate planning efforts and new park development, depending on funding, resources, community needs, and partnerships with local organizations.



**FIGURE 5.5 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE MAP**

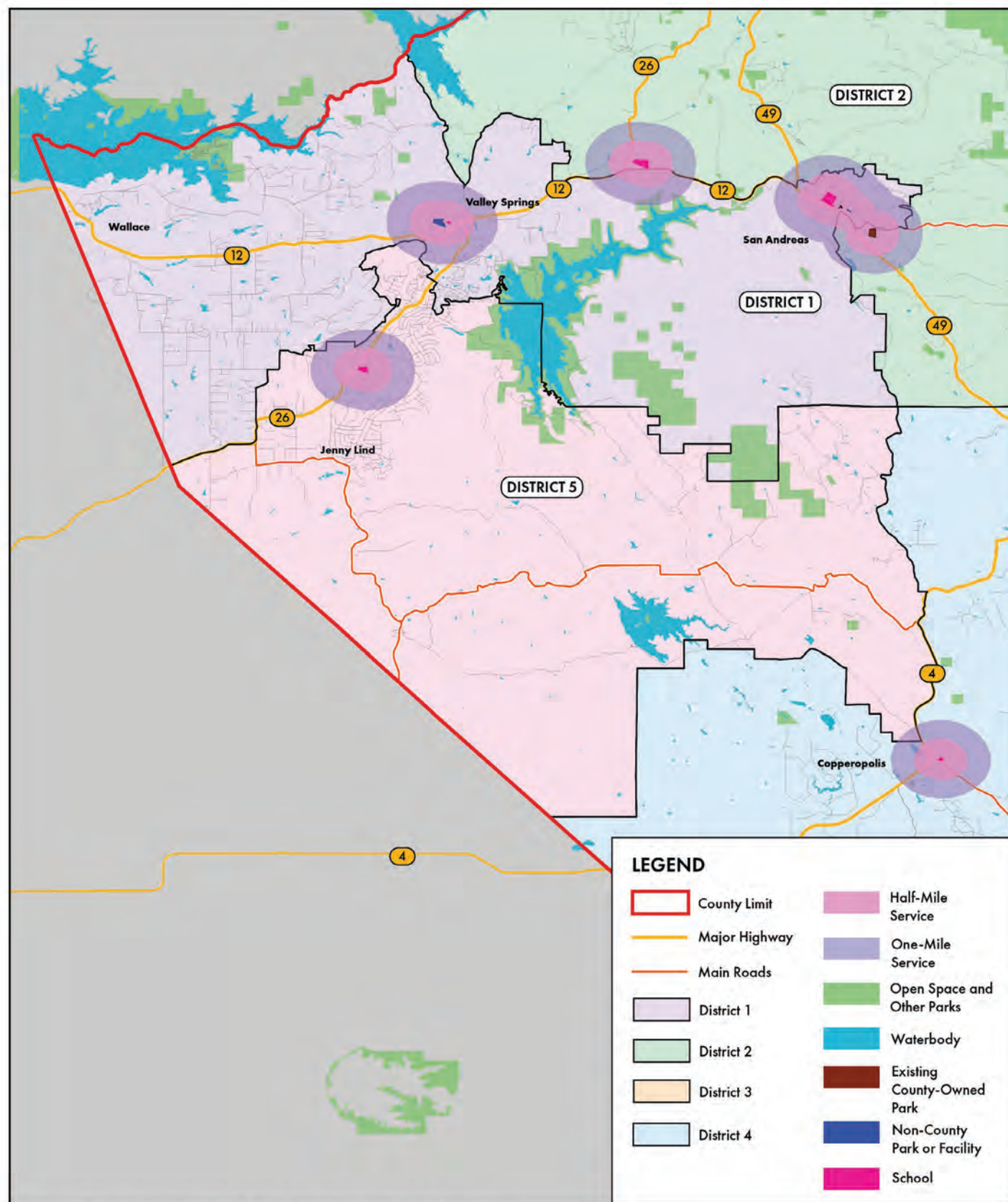


Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.

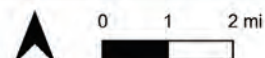




**FIGURE 5.6 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE -  
DISTRICT 1 & 5 ENLARGEMENT MAP**

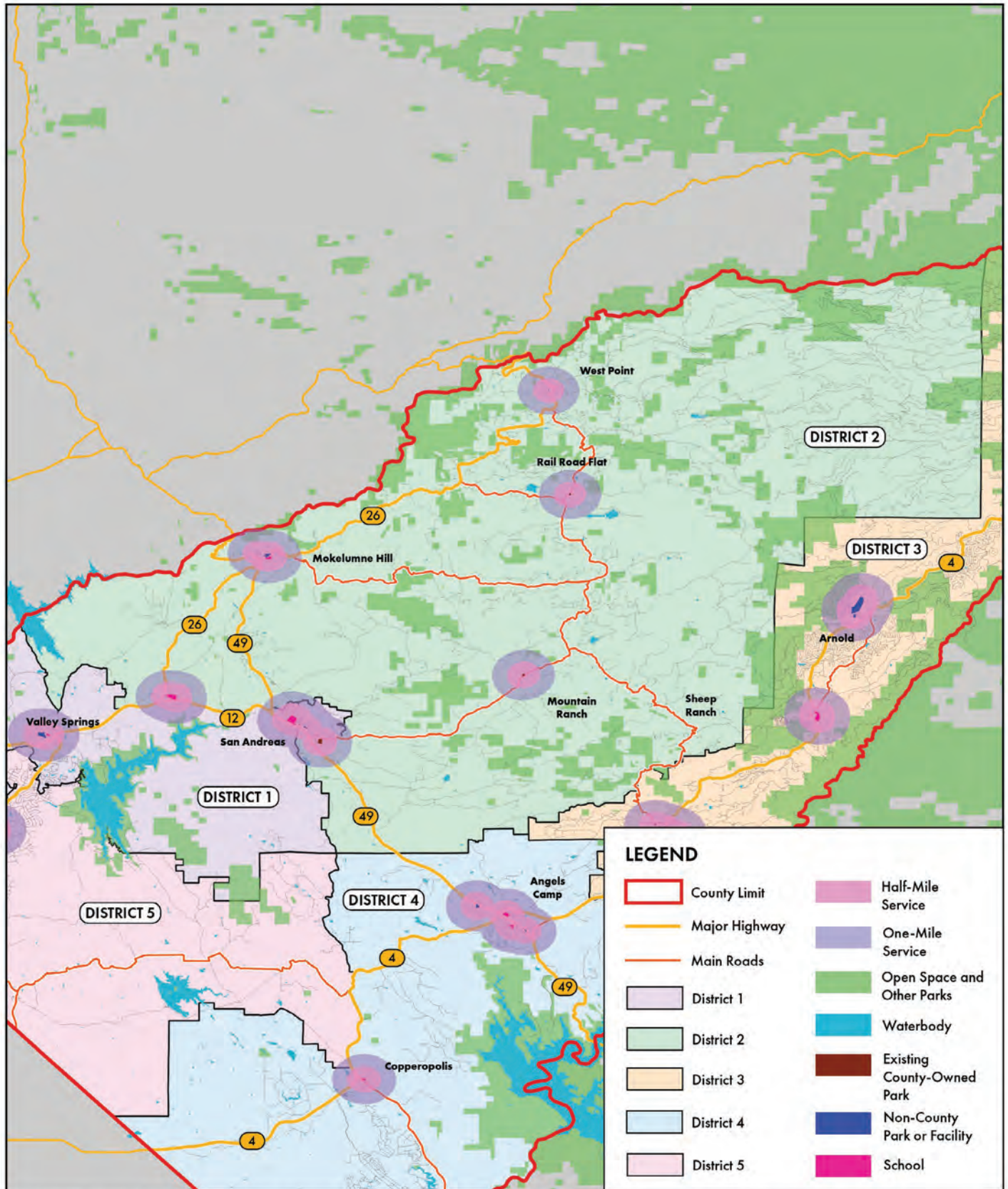


Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.





**FIGURE 5.7 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE - DISTRICT 2 ENLARGEMENT MAP**



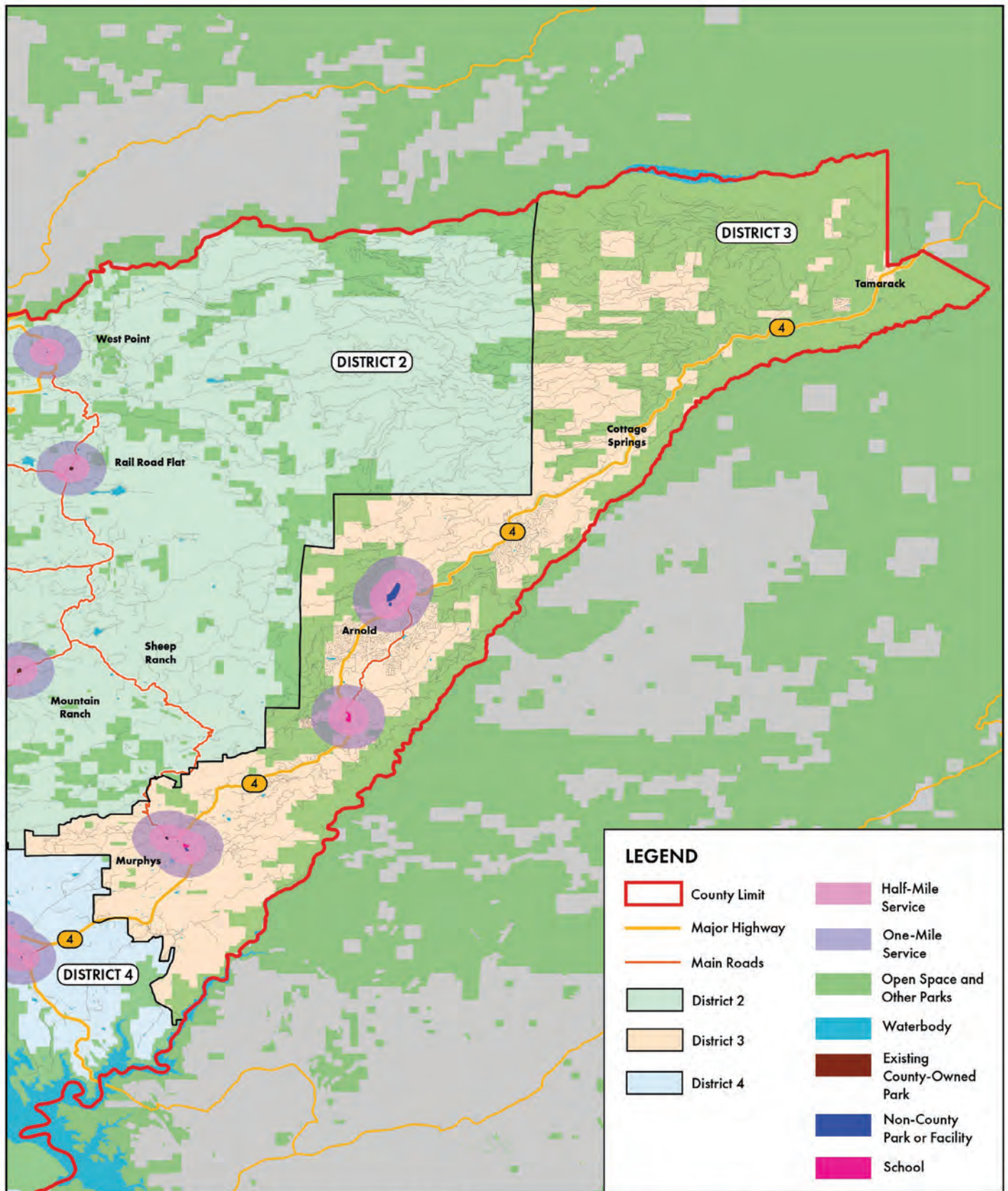
Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.



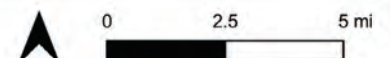
0 2.5 5 mi



**FIGURE 5.8 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE - DISTRICT 3 ENLARGEMENT MAP**

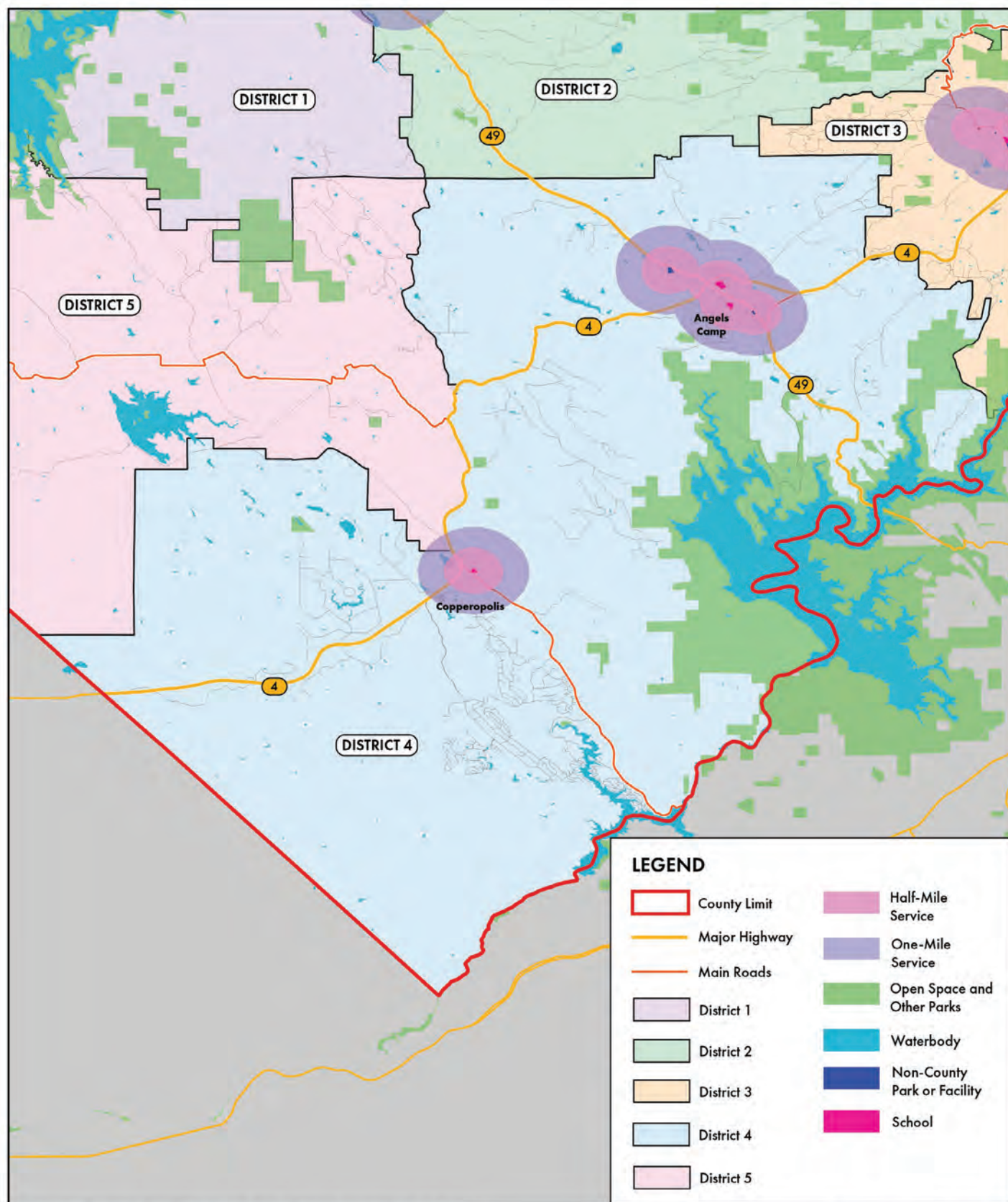


Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.





**FIGURE 5.9 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE - DISTRICT 4 ENLARGEMENT MAP**

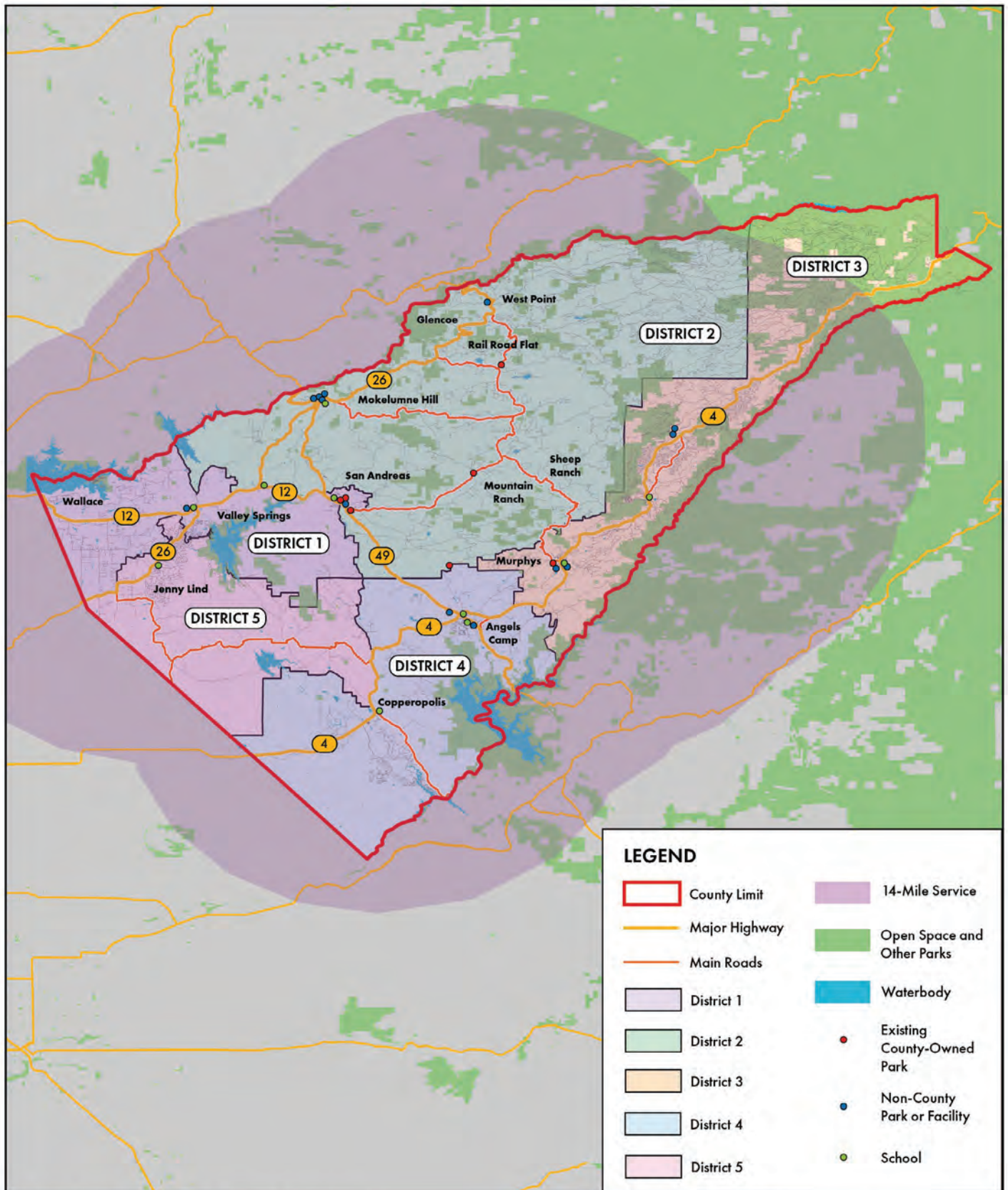


Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County and Parks for California.

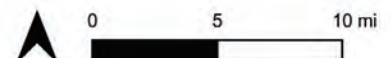




**FIGURE 5.10 CALAVERAS COUNTY EXISTING PARKS BY VEHICLE TRIPS OVER DISTRICT SERVICE MAP**



Map Source: This map is based on GIS data from Calaveras County.





## HOW CALAVERAS COUNTY COMPARES TO NATIONAL TRENDS

The following comparisons are meant to provide insight on where Calaveras County stands with similar sized populations on a national scale. They do not factor in other aspects, such as income and department structure.

### ***Engagement with Parks Report 2023***

The following assesses how Calaveras County compares to national trends of how people engage in parks and recreation using the Engagement with Parks Report 2023 by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA).

#### **Uses and Activities**

Based on the national report, those who visited a park/recreation facility during the past survey year tend to visit a developed park with playgrounds and dog parks, use a hiking/biking/walking trail, and/or played a sport such as basketball, golf, tennis, with family/friends. Similar to Calaveras residents, most respondents enjoy trails and opportunities for hiking, walking, and biking. Many also value park amenities, such as playgrounds and sports fields. Multi-use trails and playgrounds were the top cited opportunities Calaveras respondents would like to see more of.

#### **Park and Recreation Improvements**

Approximately a third of respondents from the national report would like for agencies to prioritize in making existing facilities more accessible. While accessibility was not a key theme from the Parks and Recreation Master Plan survey, about one-third of survey respondents would like to incorporate inclusive play areas for children of all abilities.

Additionally, about 30% of national survey respondents chose to increase youth sports opportunities. Compared to the Calaveras County survey results, about 50% of respondents desired for teen/tweens programs, followed by 46% of respondents desiring multigenerational programs.

### ***Agency Performance Review 2023***

The following assesses how Calaveras County compares to national trends regarding the state of the park and recreation industry based on NRPA's Agency Performance Review 2023 report.

#### **Number of Park Facilities**

In terms of the number of park facilities, Calaveras County exceeds the national trend for agencies serving jurisdictions between 20,000 and 49,999. On average, there is one park for every 2,014 residents, which means roughly 23 parks for a population of 45,000 people. Calaveras County has a total of 30 parks and facilities, when including County-owned parks, several non-County-owned public parks and facilities, and school facilities.

#### **Recreation Programs**

A majority of agencies serving a population of 20,000 to 49,999 provide recreation programs to various age groups. Currently, third-party organizations, park districts, and school districts provide recreation programs to Calaveras residents.

## SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In general, many Calaveras residents enjoy visiting local parks, engage in various recreational activities, and value nature and the unique scenic resources throughout the region. There is a strong sense of community, and this is reflected through the community's dedicated efforts in providing core recreation programs, sports fields, and public parks that are often volunteer-run by non-profit organizations.

Funding for both County-owned and non-County-owned parks, schools, and facilities has been a significant concern expressed by the community. There is also a pressing demand for additional parks, park amenities and facilities, sports fields, and core and diverse recreation programs for different users in the county. Also, County staff has expressed a strong desire to improve their current parks and recreation organizational structure.

Gathering meaningful community input is key in understanding how the community currently engages in parks and recreation in Calaveras County. The public outreach process has provided key insights and perspectives from various members of the community, County staff, and local organizations that will help inform recommendations in the next chapter. A list of recommended priorities of focus will be provided for the County to consider, along with a framework to help implement those recommendations. Also, a park scoring table will be presented to help guide the County on where to prioritize park improvement efforts for County-owned parks over the next five to ten years. A financial action plan, including funding mechanisms to help support third-party organizations, will also be provided.





Photo: Playground at Alex Quiñones Community Park in San Andreas, CA

# CHAPTER 6

## RECOMMENDATIONS





# RECOMMENDATIONS

Best practices and national trends findings, site inventory observations, community outreach results, and needs assessment will guide the recommendations for how Calaveras County can prioritize park planning efforts for the next five to ten years. While ADA specific recommendations are not provided, general recommendations will be provided based on visual assessments during site inventory of non-compliant features.

As indicated from the public outreach process, several key themes of needs included the following:

- Improvements to park access
- Improvements and maintenance at parks
- Desire to improve the County's current Parks and Recreation organizational structure
- Public awareness about the County's Parks and Recreation process
- Funding for programs and maintain and diversify recreation programs

This chapter will provide recommendations on the potential ways to improve current park facilities and programs. The first section will present general park recommendations, recommended priorities of focus, recommendations for individual County-owned parks, and recreational programming recommendations. A park scoring metric for existing County-owned parks will also be presented. A financial action plan and an implementation framework will then be provided.

## GENERAL PARK RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Inclusion and Accessibility at Parks*

There is an increasing sentiment across the nation for inclusion in public spaces and making spaces accessible and welcoming for all, regardless of age, background, ability, or gender. The Calaveras community shares this sentiment, since 77% of respondents regarded providing recreation opportunities for all abilities as "very important." When funding is available to improve existing parks, Calaveras County should consider incorporating inclusive site furnishings, accessible pathways, and inclusive play elements into these improvements. Many vendors are also integrating inclusivity in their products, so there will be greater opportunities to include cost-effective, inclusive features as they are becoming more mainstream and prevalent.

Park amenities, such as picnic tables, benches, and drinking fountains, should meet the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Parking spaces and accessible pathways to ADA-compliant park amenities should also be considered in the park design. At a minimum, there should be an accessible path of travel to each of the following features: ADA picnic table, ADA bench, bi-level drinking fountain, trash and recycling receptacles, a restroom, and any on-site building that is open to the public. While the minimum acceptable width of an accessible path is four feet, it is ideal for the path to be six feet or wider, to accommodate two-way pedestrian traffic and allow more room for access.

Inclusion is not only limited to ability but also age groups. Multigenerational play activities that involve all generations, including an adult, a senior, or a caregiver, are also increasing in popularity. Play does not have to be limited to children but can also extend to the whole family and different generations. This may include fitness equipment, musical equipment, play equipment, and recreational games, such as football, game tables, and table tennis. Low impact sports that include pickleball courts and bocce ball courts can also be considered. This reinforces the concept that everyone has the opportunity to play together and to engage in activities that allow for group socialization and bonding with one another.

When playgrounds are inclusive, there are more opportunities for children and families that may be typically marginalized to play with kids of normal abilities. Beyond meeting ADA standards, it is imperative for agencies, including Calaveras County, to create spaces and provide recreation activities that exceed ADA requirements, paving the way for inclusion and accessibility at parks. Tailoring play equipment that not only supports child development but also accommodates children with different developmental needs can benefit overall community health and minds. There are many factors to consider when discussing inclusion in play spaces. The next section, *Playgrounds and Equipment*, provides recommendations pertaining to inclusivity in playgrounds.

### ***Playgrounds and Equipment***

Playgrounds are important pieces of any park, and respondents shared a common sentiment for more playgrounds and kid-friendly spaces. With the exception of the newly installed play equipment at Alex Quiñones Community Park, the play equipment at the other County-owned parks remain worn out and outdated. Most of the play equipment is nearing the end of its lifespan and may not meet the latest Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) or American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards. Also, none of the play equipment is inclusive.

As discussed in the previous section, inclusivity at playgrounds must also be incorporated into the design decisions. About 27% of respondents would like improvements to existing playgrounds, and 32% would like to incorporate inclusive play areas for children of all abilities. Upgrading play equipment with more modern and inclusive features can provide enhanced play value and can encourage imaginative play, exploration, and social interaction among kids of all abilities. Playgrounds should incorporate inclusive play elements if possible and maximize the number of inclusive play elements if budget and space allows.

A truly inclusive play area does not only mean to be accessible, but also age and developmentally appropriate and stimulating to the senses. It is recommended for Calaveras County to ensure play equipment addresses different levels of difficulty and engage in diverse sensory skills as much as possible. The eight senses are sight, smell, touch, sound, taste, interoception, vestibular, and proprioception. Because play is critical for a child's development and social skills, it is also important to provide both easy and challenging components that allows children to independently choose an activity. In addition, separation between age groups and providing age appropriate play equipment in designated spaces are key to ensuring kids are playing with equipment that are appropriate for their age.

While engineered wood fiber (EWF) playground safety surfacing is ADA compliant, using solid playground surfacing such as pour-in-place rubber surfacing or synthetic turf is much more accessible and wheel-friendly. Rubberized safety surfacing tends to be more durable and lower maintenance. When possible and funding is available, it is ideal to use solid playground surfacing over EWF surfacing.

Providing site amenities at playgrounds is also important to consider. Adequate seating, preferably under shade, for parents, grandparents, caregivers, and chaperones will encourage park users to stay longer at playgrounds. It is also a best practice and development standard to provide shade over play equipment because they provide refuge during hot periods. Shade at play structures can not only reduce UV exposure, but also lower playground maintenance and repair costs as well as reduce the heat of the play equipment. If budget and resources allow, inclusive play equipment, shade structures, and solid playground surfacing are amenities to consider at new playgrounds.

## Amenities

While the County makes efforts to improve and maintain their parks where feasible and when budget is available, many of the existing amenities at County-owned parks are outdated and are not tailored to the current desires of the community. As funding is available and where needed, it is recommended for Calaveras County to modernize and update site furnishings, including benches, picnic tables, drinking fountains, and trash and recycling receptacles. This also extends to playground equipment, where possible, in order to ensure playground areas are safe and up to current safety standards. Incorporating these types of upgrades, beyond the typical repairs, can improve long-term maintenance efficiency. Meaningful, user-friendly upgrades will also reinforce community identity and provide an opportunity to add play value to a playground through design.

Beyond providing basic site amenities at parks, it is recommended for Calaveras County to continue providing a variety of amenities based on community needs and interests. The new pickleball court at Alex Quiñones Community Park is a start. Other amenities to consider are dog parks, multi-use trails, water access for swimming, sports fields and courts, and picnic areas. There is also a desire for an indoor facility for recreational activities and dedicated areas for special events and community gatherings. These can be attained through continuously pursuing grant funding and/or through new partnerships, which is discussed further in this chapter.

## Park Maintenance Standards

Park maintenance standards are important because this ensures maintenance staff keeps parks clean and tidy to a specific and consistent standard throughout a park system. It is recommended that an outcome-based park maintenance standards are carefully established for the County's parks and facilities in which operators are required to meet. Outlining specific and required park maintenance practices can help parks be maintained at a proper level of maintenance. This can be developed in the future once there is available funding and the prioritization of needs is clearly defined. Calaveras County may utilize these park maintenance standards for their facilities and inspect against them on an annual basis or have them be developed by the operator that maintains the parks or facility and provide them to the County. It is important to have established standards of maintenance in place in order to minimize liability.

## RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES OF FOCUS

As indicated in the Needs Assessment chapter, County staff has shared a common sentiment for an improved parks and recreation structure. Below are five potential organizational structures for the County to consider moving forward:

### Pursue a Partnership with a Park Agency

With funding available, the County can potentially consider joining an existing park agency, especially with Amador County Recreation Agency (ACRA), an established agency in an adjacent county, for recreation programs. Established in 2003 as a Joint Exercise Powers Authority (JPA), ACRA operates like a parks district and has become a primary public recreation provider in Amador County, serving about 35,000 to 40,000 participants annually.<sup>1</sup>

ACRA already has established recreational programs and facilities operations, along with sustainable planning and financing. ACRA provides diverse programs to youth, adults, and seniors and actively curates programs based on evolving recreation trends and residents' interests on a seasonal and yearly basis. Recreational programs include day camps, afternoon programs, and art classes. These align with the types of desired recreational opportunities that were highlighted by the Calaveras community and survey respondents during the outreach process.

<sup>1</sup> Amador County Recreation Agency. (2016). Park and Recreation Master Plan.

ACRA also has existing partnerships with the local school district, sports organizations, and private groups to complement and fulfill the recreation needs of Amador residents. At the time of writing this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, ACRA has also expressed interest in partnering with Calaveras County. With this option, the current Economic & Community Development Director may provide needed oversight.

### **Development of One or More Park Districts in the County**

The County can also consider developing one or more special park districts that cater to specific Districts and their local communities. The County may authorize the creation of one or multiple special park districts, each to be governed by a board, who are elected by members within their District. The board may consist of park advocates, community advocates, public officials, volunteers, and taxpayers. They can join together to manage park and recreation related issues, along with helping facilitate funding for County-owned and non-County-owned parks, along with recreational programs, in their District. The County's Economic & Community Development Director can continue to oversee parks and recreation activities in the County, while also receiving regular updates from these special park districts. Park Districts may be developed based on specific needs and funding in district areas within the County such as western districts and eastern, more rural districts.

### **Development of a County-wide, Joint Park Agency**

Leading a Joint Powers Authority Agreements (JPA) county-wide park agency may also be considered. A JPA occurs when individual agencies within the county, such as Calaveras County, park districts, school districts, and City of Angels Camp, can join together to plan, finance, and operate recreational programs and facilities. Park operations and maintenance for County-owned parks may still be managed by third-party organizations. This option can also consider including the Calaveras County's Parks and Recreation Commission as the oversight agency.

An advantage to this option is that the County can maintain collaborative partnerships with other governmental jurisdictions to provide high-quality recreational programming on a regional level. Recreational activities and programs at public parks, facilities, and schools in the county will be centralized and provided by JPA. Recreational offerings can expand, become diverse, and attract different user groups as the JPA secures funding overtime. Potential funding mechanisms and a financial action plan are presented later in this chapter.

While the JPA will be a separate agency from local organizations and non-profit groups that provide recreational programs and park facilities, the JPA may consider a collaborative effort and agreement to provide financial assistance or park maintenance support to these third-party groups who currently provide key recreational activities to many Calaveras residents.

### **Development of a County Parks and Recreation Manager Position**

If funding becomes available and more stable, a long-term planning goal that the County may consider is to develop a dedicated Parks and Recreation Manager position. To help kickstart the role, the person may initially be the Economic & Community Development Director. This person should be someone who is already familiar with the County's parks and recreation process. As resources and funding become available, the role can be filled by another County staff.

### **Development of a County Parks and Recreation Department**

When funding is available to fully support a full department, the County may choose to transition to management, operations, and programming through the development of a parks and recreation department in their County government. This can be phased and start with the County's dedicated parks and recreation staff who manages community needs and issues regarding parks and



recreation in the County. This position can start to develop recreational programming and County events, which can still be managed and hosted by other local groups and community members.

A potential option is to combine the Parks department with library services to co-lead services. One advantage of this option is the use of buildings in all Districts. Hiring volunteers and interns to support a parks and recreation role can be considered. As staffing grows, the parks and recreation department can evolve and be essential in managing budgets and funding for park development and improvement projects, providing recreation programming and services, addressing community needs, and supporting partnerships with third-party organizations.

### ***Strengthen Community Partnerships to Improve Recreational Programs and Services***

A recommendation for the County is to strengthen community partnerships and to strategically build partnerships with organizations that align with the County's budget and resources, while also help meet the recreational needs of the Calaveras community. This may initially involve collaborating with leasing agencies who manage County-owned parks to see how the County can continue to feasibly support them in providing recreational programs and events.

The County may also consider building partnerships with local, volunteer-run organizations, especially those who provide core park amenities and recreational opportunities at non-County-owned parks and facilities. The County can provide support, where budget and resources allow and where feasible, to assist these local groups, especially for funding. The County can help facilitate applications for grant funding for specific improvements at non-County-owned parks and facilities.

### ***Explore Options to Develop a Regional Sports Facility***

Calaveras County would benefit in the development of a regional sports facility, which has been suggested by Board members as a goal that could be an economic driver for the County. The County may partner with a non-profit or for-profit organization that has the capability to develop the site and manage the operations. It is recommended that the County reach out to potential partners to develop at least one regional sports facility to host large sporting events and tournaments, along with providing recreational amenities and space for programs and events on a regular basis. A regional sports facility can also support Calaveras' economy and tourism and serve as an attraction for visitors.

The location of the regional sports facility should be ideally located at a populated area in the county such as Valley Springs in District 1. This District has an extreme need for parks, especially sports fields and courts. Located on the west side, it would be an attraction for visitors traveling from communities on the west side of the state and the Highway 5 corridor. The County might consider studying this option when funds become available and/or partnering with schools on a bond measure.

### ***Increase Public Awareness of the County's Parks and Recreation Process***

During the outreach process, a recurring theme from the community was the perceived lack of an official process to receive or relay their needs and concerns regarding parks and recreation to the County. Currently, the County has an Economic & Community Development Director, who is the designated Parks and Recreation person to contact. The public can also reach out to their District Commissioners or send an email listed on the Parks and Recreation website.

To help increase public awareness about how the community can provide feedback, the County may provide detailed information on the Parks and Recreation website or ensuring County staff and partners reiterate the process when the community is interested in providing feedback. To help streamline and track requests, the County may also consider setting up an online form where members of the public can submit feedback.

## PARK SCORING, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLEMENTATION

### **Park Scoring**

A scoring framework has been developed to provide guidance on where the County can prioritize improvements and funding for County-owned parks. While all parks require maintenance and can be invested in, there are some parks in the system that the County can focus on prioritizing, based on a park's current use and value. This can maximize a park's usage and resources, especially if it is a park that the community frequently enjoys visiting.

The park scoring framework uses different metrics to develop a score for each park. The County's demographics, public input results, observations from site investigations, and mapping data are factored into the creation of these metrics. In general, this scoring framework is not intended to rank the parks, but rather, help identify and determine where to prioritize park improvements.

The next section describes six metrics that were used in the scoring framework. Each metric is assigned a maximum number of points that can be received. Point values are determined based on the amount of value or recreation opportunity a park currently has. Each park is evaluated based on these six metrics. Each metric's total point value is added, then averaged to determine each park's individual park score. See "Appendix A: Park Sites" for a detailed park scoring table for each County-owned park.

Three metrics—population density, quantity of amenities, and condition of amenities—carry greater weight and are assigned higher point values. The categories, Quantity of Amenities and Condition of Amenities, are weighted because they identify the amount of opportunities for improvement. Table 6.1 shows the park scores for County-owned parks. The park scoring scale is from 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest. It is important to note that a higher score means greater needs of improvements. Only County-owned parks are scored and non-County-owned parks, facilities, and schools are excluded from scoring.

TABLE 6.1 PARK SCORES OF COUNTY-OWNED PARKS	
SCORE	COUNTY-OWNED PARK
6.3	Alex Quiñones Community Park
3.7	Murphys Community Park
3.5	Rail Road Flat Community Center
3.3	Nielsen Park
2.5	Mountain Ranch Community Park
2.0	Friedberger Park

## **Park Scoring Metrics**

### **1. Population Density (10-point scale)<sup>1</sup>**

The population density metric takes into consideration the number of residents serviced by the park. A park located in a denser neighborhood serves more people, bringing more value to the community. Therefore, these parks will be assigned higher points. Parks in less dense neighborhoods serve fewer people and would be assigned fewer points.

### **2. Programming & Community Activation (None = 0, Yes = 5 points)**

Programming measures the number of programmed elements at a park that draw groups of people together. This includes recreational programs held at a park, rentable sports fields/courts for recreational play, and event spaces for public gatherings. Parks that accommodate more programs attract more people and tend to be highly used. Parks capable of hosting larger social/community events are also highly valuable. These events foster community identity and social connections. Parks with programmed elements are given 5 points.

### **3. Quantity of Amenities (10-point scale)**

This metric quantifies the number of park amenities as inventoried. Amenities 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.

### **4. Condition of Amenities (10-point scale)**

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. This category qualifies the condition of amenities and places parks that have park amenities in poor, unusable conditions to a higher priority for improvements. Parks that have amenities in good or fair condition are less prioritized.

### **5. Revenue Generators (5 points)**

The programming metric measures the number of programmed elements at a park that draw groups of people together. This includes rent-able facilities, such as fields and picnic areas. Each type of program is given one point. Parks with rent-able facilities have the potential to attract more users, therefore holding greater park value.

### **6. Connectivity (None = 0, Yes = 5 points)**

The connectivity metric looks at social places within a park's half-mile vicinity that would attract users to the park. These would include schools, churches, multi-use spaces, shopping malls, etc. Parks located in areas with more social opportunities tend to have a higher number of users. While it is important to continuously maintain parks, parks with a higher number of users generally lead to more worn amenities due to increase usage.

1

Population density is based on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data from Parks for California.

## ***Individual Park Recommendations***

Using findings from the site inventory, recommendations for park improvements have been developed for each County-owned park. General conditions of each County-owned park are also provided, along with recent upgrades and improvements that have been performed. Photos, park typology, and park acreage are also provided for each County-owned park.

Individual park recommendations are listed for ways the County can potentially improve safety and access in their parks, along with upgrades that can provide new recreational opportunities or meet best practice standards. Implementing these suggestions can help improve a park's score, including these two metrics: Quantity of Amenities and Condition of Amenities. Potential funding sources for park improvements are described in the Financial Action Plan section.





## RAIL ROAD FLAT COMMUNITY CENTER

**COMMUNITY PARK**

**2.5 ACRES**

Condition:

- Generally fair condition with some areas in decline
- Access to playground is unclear

Recommendations:

- Review accessible path of travel to play area and update to meet code if required
- Upgrade play areas with inclusive play equipment
- Update sports field/court equipment
- Provide additional seating
- Install lighting to prolong use of park
- Repair cracks in asphalt surfacing
- Provide accessible path of travel from parking lot to park



## NIELSEN PARK

**POCKET PARK**

**0.65 ACRES**

Condition:

- Generally good condition
- New picnic tables installed

Recommendations:

- Repair cracks in asphalt and ensure path of travel through park meets ADA requirements
- Re-stripe parking lot stalls. Consider adding ADA stalls
- Consider installing warning/safety signs along the creek



## MOUNTAIN RANCH PARK

COMMUNITY PARK

4.7 ACRES

Condition:

- Generally fair condition with some areas in decline
- Play equipment dated and worn

Recommendations:

- Install lighting to prolong use of park
- Re-stripe parking lot stalls
- Provide accessible path of travel to picnic tables
- Update worn-out play equipment
- Include inclusive site furnishings



## MURPHYS COMMUNITY PARK

COMMUNITY PARK

1.09 ACRES

Condition:

- Overall fair condition with some areas in decline
- Park is highly utilized

Recommendations:

- Upgrade play areas with inclusive play equipment and provide an accessible path of travel
- Update and include inclusive site furnishings
- Potential to provide educational opportunities along the creek



## ALEX QUIÑONES COMMUNITY PARK

COMMUNITY PARK

22.55 ACRES

Condition:

- Generally good condition
- New play area, pickleball court, and shade sails
- Fields are well maintained

Recommendations:

- Repair cracked parking lot asphalt and re-stripe parking stalls
- Provide paved parking lot at lower fields
- Provide additional seating and tables
- Include inclusive site furnishings



## FRIEDBERGER PARK

POCKET PARK

0.05 ACRES

Condition:

- Overall in good condition
- No site amenities available

Recommendation:

- Provide seating

## ***Implementation: Annual Park Scoring Evaluation***

As the County implements actions, the County can perform an annual or bi-annual assessment of the park planning progress and outcomes. The County can also consider keeping the Parks and Recreation Master Plan up-to-date with these reports in supplemental appendices. This is meant to track the progress of park improvements as they are being implemented, so the Parks and Recreation Master Plan can continuously be referred to and updated in real time. The supplemental appendices and updates to the Parks and Recreation Master Plan on a regular basis will lead to making the Master Plan an active, living document. The constant reference to this Parks and Recreation Master Plan for guidance on planning decisions regarding parks and recreation will also contribute to making the Master Plan active.

The park scoring table in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan captures the current state of park priorities for improvements based on six metrics. 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. Using the park scoring table, the County can re-evaluate the scores on an annual basis and update the metric data as improvement projects are completed throughout the year.

As implementation proceeds, the numeric value for each metric may change, which will impact the overall park score for an individual park. As the County makes upgrades, improvements, or additions to a park, this will change a park's score, and the park's ranking will shift down. For instance, if the County starts to prioritize park improvements at Murphys Community Park and implemented changes, the park score will change, and it will shift down in ranking. Based on budget, current priorities, and other factors, the County can then decide to continue park improvements at Murphys Community Park or to prioritize park improvements at other parks.



## RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recreation programs are a key resource for the Calaveras community to engage with parks and recreation. There is a very strong desire and interest for a variety of recreation programs and events from the community, which has been highlighted during the public outreach process. The top five recreation programs survey respondents desired are Fitness/Exercise/Training, Art, Music, Swimming, and Hiking. Survey respondents also indicated a strong desire for diversity of programs for different age groups, along with the desire for local community events.

Since there are youth sports programs already provided and established by local organizations, the County may consider partnering with other organizations who provide recreation programs for various age groups, including seniors and adults. The County may also find ways to support current and new partnerships in developing community and special events, since these were also desired.

A key piece in providing recreation programs and activities is for the County to take initiative and to remain committed in this effort. This can be in the form of working with local community groups and key leaders to maintain quality recreational offerings.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Quality parks and recreation contribute to vibrant and healthy communities. With this in mind, the effort to prioritize park system improvements can contribute to the holistic goal in making parks and recreation accessible and safe for all users. General park improvements to consider are incorporating inclusive elements, including site furnishings and play equipment, and ADA-compliant upgrades. The County can also consider developing park maintenance standards for third-party operators so all County-owned parks are maintained to a proper standard. Individual park improvements may occur according to the park scores, where funding and resources allow.

The County may first focus on pursuing a different organizational structure, based on available budget and resources. It is also recommended that the County strengthen and build collaborative relationships with local organizations and schools can also ensure quality recreation programs and activities remain available to the community. Increasing public awareness of how the community can provide feedback related to parks and recreation can help improve the process.

This establishment period will be a critical phase and will set the foundation for how the County can manage parks and recreation now and the long-term future. The implementation section in this chapter will provide a framework on how the County can implement these recommendations.

# FINANCIAL ACTION PLAN

## *Potential Funding Mechanisms for Calaveras County*

### Background

The County currently makes fiscal and operational efforts in the construction and maintenance of park and recreation facilities, where budget and resources allow. The public outreach process has highlighted a growing need by the community for the County to help provide additional support and resources, especially financial support for local organizations to perform park improvements.

While it is anticipated that outside entities will continue to operate park facilities, the region's need for sustainable park and recreational amenities will require efforts by the County, where feasible, to facilitate applications for grant opportunities, to identify and secure additional funding sources over time, and become more involved in park facility construction, operation, and maintenance. This section lists potential funding mechanisms and recommends a three-phased approach to secure funding.

### Funding Park Improvements Requires a Phased Approach

Calaveras County's efforts to strategically plan for park improvements will require a phased approach so that current funding gaps can be addressed over time.

### Phase 1

#### **Existing Funding Efforts**

During the first phase, the most immediate needs for maintenance and repair of existing park infrastructure will be addressed. Prior to 2024, park maintenance was funded on an ad hoc/as needed basis from several sources such as maintenance budgets and other sources, but not closely tracked. As indicated in "Chapter 2: Context," the Board of Supervisors have not committed to a specific budget to Parks and Recreation. Additional funding will be necessary to adequately address Phase 1 maintenance needs.

#### **Allocation of Transient Occupancy Tax Revenue**

During the current fiscal year, there is \$250,000 in transient occupancy tax (TOT) funding (also known as the "hotel tax" or tax vacation rentals must charge their guests and remit the revenue to jurisdictions that have such a levy). This funding may be allocated for park repairs, and if this funding source continues in successive years, this will substantially augment ongoing maintenance efforts.

## Phase 2

### **Other Revenue Sources**

During this phase, other sources of revenue will be evaluated to determine what can realistically be pursued given limited County resources.

### Special Tax Revenue

A special tax is any tax imposed for a specific purpose such as Parcel Taxes, Benefit Assessments, and Community Facilities Taxes. With the exception of benefit assessments<sup>1</sup>, the voter approval threshold requirement to adopt a special tax is a two-thirds majority, which is significantly higher than the simple majority required for general taxes and therefore more challenging to pass. Table 6.2 provides brief descriptions of special taxes.

TABLE 6.2 EXAMPLES OF SPECIAL TAXES
<b><u>Parcel Taxes</u></b> A parcel tax is a tax levied on parcels of property that can be used for any purpose. Use of revenue generated is restricted to services specified on the ballot measure. Ordinances adopting parcel taxes commonly identify them as an excise tax based on the availability or use of governmental services and/or facilities.
<b><u>Benefit Assessments</u></b> Benefit assessments are charges levied on real property to pay for public improvements or services in a defined district (which can encompass the entire boundary of a county or jurisdiction within a county) according to the special benefit each parcel receives. Benefit assessments are imposed as pay-as-you-go financing or to provide bonded indebtedness for large capital construction projects. Examples include districts for landscaping or street lighting and major street/sidewalk improvements. Within the district boundary, only the defined special benefits are assessable.
<b><u>Community Facilities Tax<sup>2</sup></u></b> Adoption of a community facilities tax enables the establishment of a community facilities district (CFD) to debt finance the purchase, construction, improvement, expansion, or rehabilitation of public capital facilities and related services. Authorized facilities include park, recreation, and open space; school sites and buildings; libraries; childcare; street improvements; and parking. Authorized services include public safety-related programs; recreation programs; library; and operation/maintenance of parks, open space, museums, and other cultural programs.

### Park Dedication/In-lieu (Quimby Act) Fees

California Government Code [Section 66475 et. seq.](#) allows cities to establish requirements for new residential subdivisions to dedicate land, or pay an in-lieu fee, for parks and open space. Use of the fee revenue is restricted to the development of new parks or to make improvements to existing parks and not for ongoing maintenance.

Although the County currently has an ordinance for collecting Quimby Act fees (Code of Ordinances Title 16, Chapter 16.24 Park and Recreation Facilities, Dedication, Fees), there is little development that the fees would be collected for. However, this remains a viable source of revenue should developments be planned in the future.

1 Benefit Assessments do not require a two-thirds majority vote. Rather, establishment of a Benefit Assessment District requires a majority vote of property owners within the defined area.

2 Debt financing associated with community facilities districts or other instruments such as general obligation bonds must be evaluated in accordance with the County's debt management policy.

### Grant Funding

Calaveras County currently has one part-time grant writer on staff. The [Office of Grants and Local Services \(OGALS\)](#) of the California Department of Parks and Recreation provides information on funding opportunities. OGALS administers annual Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) funds from the National Parks Service, the Habitat Conservation Fund, and the Recreational Trails Program. In addition to state and federal sources, private foundations, large corporations, and nonprofit organizations offer grant funding opportunities for specific park projects.

Should the County allocate staffing or consulting resources in the short- or longer-term, such funding could be leveraged to assist in identifying and applying for grants. However, in general, grant funds are limited and usually allocated on a competitive basis or in small annual amounts, which presents challenges for capital improvement planning. Grant awards often come with reporting requirements and matching funds, which also must be considered when applying. As an additional step, the County could subscribe to [GrantStation](#) to monitor grant opportunities.

### Corporate and Community Partnerships

Many local governments adopt policies to facilitate corporate and community partnerships to raise funds for park and recreational community programs, events, and facilities. Such policies may include the establishment of special revenue funds to account for donations. Key examples of such partnerships are briefly described in Table 6.3 below.

TABLE 6.3 EXAMPLES OF CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS <sup>3</sup>
<b><u>Joint Use Agreements</u></b> Partnerships with other government or nonprofit organizations can be considered to jointly fund park projects. Given that there are several Districts operating and managing parks and recreational facilities in the County, joint use agreements can be explored and implemented to maximize limited resources and promote inter-agency collaboration for community benefit.
<b><u>Donor Campaigns</u></b> Both residents and the business community recognize how park and recreational facilities and programs impact a community's vibrance and quality of life and are often willing to help fund such efforts. Donor campaigns can be used to seek such support whether it pertains to large/high-profile projects of countywide import that require major corporate funding or location specific amenities where community members may be willing to conduct fundraising or donate their time to provide or maintain an amenity in their neighborhood.
<b><u>Crowdfunding</u></b> Crowdfunding is an internet-based resource that allows a large number of people to contribute funds to a specific project or program via an online platform. This funding mechanism represents an opportunity for the County to evaluate on a pilot basis for supporting small projects, although some jurisdictions are evaluating the application of crowdfunding to large infrastructure projects. Examples of crowdfunding aggregators include <a href="#">Indiegogo</a> , <a href="#">Mightycause</a> , and <a href="#">Infrashares</a> (specific to large scale infrastructure).
<b><u>Public-Private Partnerships</u></b> Public-private partnerships (PPP or P3) involve collaboration between a government entity and a private company to finance, build, and/or operate infrastructure projects. Funding a project in this fashion can facilitate its efficient completion or make it possible in the first place. For parks and recreation, P3s can also involve outsourcing. The <a href="#">National Recreation and Park Association</a> is a good resource for information on P3 models.

3 Each of these examples requires underlying policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors before opportunities can be pursued.



**Corporate Sponsorships**

Some agencies seek corporate partnerships to sponsor park and recreational programs, events, and facilities. Some examples include art and wine festivals and parades. A common type of sponsorship used to help fund public facilities includes the purchase of naming rights for a defined period such as the life of an asset.

**Private Foundations/Gifts/Trusts**

Some government entities pursue planned giving strategies to raise funds from tax exempt, nonprofit organizations established with private donations associated specific activities or causes. Private trusts are typically set up with high net-worth individuals who wish to leave a portion of their wealth particular park and recreation amenities, facilities, or programs in a jurisdiction. This potential funding mechanism is interrelated with establishing a park foundation.

**Phase 3****Parks and Recreation Organizational Structure**

Calaveras County currently does not have an administrative/operational organization structure, i.e., a Parks and Recreation Department or Division, for constructing, operating, and maintaining park and recreational facilities.

As funding mechanisms are defined and implemented and park infrastructure needs are more clearly defined over a longer-term planning horizon, consideration should be given to developing an administrative and operational infrastructure to ensure growing park and recreational needs are sustainably addressed.

Discussions are underway among County leaders on how best to address future organizational needs, i.e., whether to create a Parks and Recreation Department or to locate a structure in another department. One common local government model that may have applicability for Calaveras County is to leverage the community library system to facilitate recreational programs and opportunities. For Calaveras, such a partnership should be explored, as it would take advantage of an existing organizational structure that can be adapted and patterned after successful models.

**IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**

This implementation framework presents an implementation table that features a list of potential organizational structures for the County to consider. Some are short-term goals and others, if pursued, will likely take time to build. It is important to note that conditions may change over the next 10 years, and it may necessitate modifications to the implementation actions. Changes in department structure, population, and recreational interests can alter needs and priorities. To stay committed in providing quality recreational opportunities, the County can improve and refine implementation approaches. The implementation actions are flexible in nature and can be adjusted and improved upon based on current conditions.

## Implementation Table

The table below can be used as a guide by Calaveras County to implement the recommended actions shared earlier in this chapter.

TABLE 6.4 RECOMMENDED PRIORITIES IMPLEMENTATION TABLE			
OPTION	DESCRIPTION	TIME FRAME	COSTS
<b>Current process with an Economic &amp; Community Development Manager and Parks and Recreation Commission</b>	This option indicates no change to the current parks and recreation process in the County.	Immediate	\$
<b>Join ACRA or Develop Park Districts</b>	This implementation involves the development of one or multiple park districts, based on District area. This may also involve a collaboration with other local established Districts, such as ACRA.	Short-term goal	\$\$
<b>Joint Powers Authority (JPA)</b>	This implementation involves the development of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), which is a collaboration that may include the County, cities, and school districts.	Long-range goal	\$\$
<b>Parks and Recreation Manager</b>	This implementation involves the placement of an official Parks and Recreation manager in the County, where funding and economic growth allows. This may begin with one existing staff to facilitate and manage Parks and Recreation services.	Long-range goal	\$\$
<b>Full Parks and Recreation Department</b>	This implementation involves the development of a full Parks and Recreation department in the County, where funding and economic growth allows. This involves creating a growing staff of various levels in the department and maintaining the department long-term.	Long-range goal	\$\$\$

## CONCLUSION

Good parks can enhance the quality of life for the community. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is intended to identify the current status of the County's park system and provide recommendations to help strategically guide the County on ways to strengthen their current parks system. To meet the recreational needs and aspirations of the community for the next 5 to 10 years, it is key for the County to remain committed in park planning efforts in order to ensure parks and recreation can be experienced by everyone in the community.

The unique natural, historical, and scenic resources in the region, along with the opportunities for diverse recreational experiences, are valued by many Calaveras residents. The current parks and recreation system in Calaveras County continues to be an important asset to the community and, based on the community feedback, there is a strong desire for more opportunities to engage with parks and recreation.

The outreach process has also highlighted the community's dedicated efforts in providing core recreation programs, sports fields, and public parks through volunteers and non-profit organizations. In addition to County-owned parks, there are existing non-County-owned parks and facilities, including schools, that many residents rely on to engage in parks and recreation, especially for youth.

The outcome of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan is an active, living document where the County can track, record, and review parks and facility improvements on an annual basis to help ensure improvements are being implemented through multi-year planning of capital investments. This will also help fulfill community needs, along with changing interests and growth, that are anticipated to happen in years to come. It is anticipated that with the guidance of this Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Calaveras County will continue to improve their parks and recreation system in a way where many Calaveras residents will enjoy for years to come.

## REFERENCES

Amador County Recreation Agency. (2016). Park and Recreation Master Plan. <https://amadorrec.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Parks-and-recreation-master-plan.pdf>

Bedsworth, Louise, Dan Cayan, Guido Franco, Leah Fisher, Sonya Ziaja. (California Governor's Office of Planning and Research, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, California Energy Commission, California Public Utilities Commission). (2018). Statewide Summary Report. California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. Publication number: SUMCCCA4-2018-013. [https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Statewide\\_Reports-SUM-CCCA4-2018-013\\_Statewide\\_Summary\\_Report\\_ADA.pdf](https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-11/Statewide_Reports-SUM-CCCA4-2018-013_Statewide_Summary_Report_ADA.pdf)

Calaveras Council of Governments. (2017). Calaveras County Regional Transportation Plan RTP Update. <https://calacog.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2017-Regional-Transportation-Plan-RTP-Update.pdf>

Calaveras County. (2019). General Plan. <https://planning.calaverasgov.us/General-Plan>

Calaveras County. (n.d.). Calaveras County Budgets. <https://administration.calaverasgov.us/Budgets/Calaveras-County-Budgets>

Calaveras County GIS Department. (n.d.). <https://opendata-calaveras-gis.opendata.arcgis.com/>

Calaveras Winegrape Alliance. <https://www.calaveraswines.org/>

California Department of Finance. (n.d.). P-1: State Population Projects. (2020–2060). P-1A Total Population for California. <https://dof.ca.gov/forecasting/demographics/projections/>

California Department of Parks and Recreation. (n.d.). Park Access Tool. [https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/downloads/ParkAccess\\_Shapefiles.zip](https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/downloads/ParkAccess_Shapefiles.zip)

California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. (2022). SB 535 Disadvantaged Communities. <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>

Griffith, G.E., Omernik, J.M., Smith, D.W., Cook, T.D., Tallyn, E., Moseley, K., and Johnson, C.B., 2016, Ecoregions of California (poster): U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 2016–1021, with map, scale 1:1,100,000, <http://dx.doi.org/10.3133/ofr20161021>.

Hipple, Steven. (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). 2015. People who are not in the labor force: why aren't they working?. *Beyond The Numbers*. 4(15), 1–19. <https://www.bls.gov/opub/btn/volume-4/pdf/people-who-are-not-in-the-labor-force-why-arent-they-working.pdf>

International Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design Association. (n.d.). A Brief History of the ICA. <https://www.cpted.net/A-brief-history>

National Recreation and Park Association. (2023). Engagement with Parks Report. <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/257fe28053c6420786927fcffc2f9996/2023-engagement-report.pdf>

National Recreation and Park Association. (2023). NRPA Agency Performance Review. <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/3ae6ba685dbf47a1b537af2f15c615d9/2023-agency-performance-review.pdf>



Outdoor Industry Association. (2023). Outdoor Participation Trends Report. Executive Summary.  
[https://www.outdoorsmen.com/images/2023\\_OIA\\_Participation\\_Report.pdf](https://www.outdoorsmen.com/images/2023_OIA_Participation_Report.pdf)

Parks for California. (2020). Park Access Tool, GIS Data.  
<https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/parkaccess/>

Sports & Fitness Industry Association. (2023). State of the Industry Report.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). ECN Core Statistics Summary.

U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). <https://data.census.gov/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2023). USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, Northern California.  
<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

U.S. Geological Survey, Ecoregions of California Open File Report 2016-1021.  
<https://pubs.usgs.gov/publication/ofr20161021>

Visit California. (2022). The Economic Impact of Travel in California.





Photo: Bocce ball courts  
at Murphys Community  
Park in Murphys, CA

# APPENDIX A

## PARK SITES





# PARK SITES MATRIX

PARK SITES AND FACILITIES																																					
	Type	Size (Acres)	Amphitheater	Auditorium/Stage	Barbecue Facilities	Baseball Field	Basketball Court (Indoor or Outdoor)	Bike Racks	Bocce Ball Court	Children's Play Equipment	Community Garden	Community Hall	Children's Swings	Concessions or Kitchen	Disc Golf	Dog Park	Drinking Fountains	Fitness Equipment	Horse Arena	Horseshoe Area	Indoor Activities	Meeting Rooms	Off-leash Dog Site	Passive Area/Open Space Area	Pet Waste Station	Pickleball Courts	Picnic Area	Restrooms	Shade Shelter/Gazebo/Covered Area	Soccer Field	Softball Field	Swimming Pool	Tennis Courts	Trail Access	Large Gathering Space Parking (Excludes Street Parking)	Skate Park	
COUNTY-OWNED PARKS																																					
Alex Quiñones Community Park	CP	25.55																																			
Mountain Ranch Community Park	CP	4.7																																			
Murphys Community Park	CP	1.09																																			
Rail Road Flat - Community Center	CP	2.85																																			
Friedberger Park	PP	0.05																																			
Nielsen Park	PP	0.65																																			
Total		34.89																																			
NON-COUNTY-OWNED PARKS AND FACILITIES*																																					
Barry's Tennis Courts	PP	2.9																																			
C.B. Hobbs Park	CP	10.61																																			
Copello Park	CP	8.69																																			
DK Lawson Horse Arena	CP	2.58																																			
Feeney Park	CP	5.7																																			
Linebaugh Park	CP	5.44																																			
Marredda Gardens	PP																																				
Murphy's Public Tennis Courts	PP	3.09																																			
Shutter Tree	PP	.49																																			
Turner Park	PP	1.68																																			
Utica Park	CP	2.63																																			
Valley Springs Memorial Park	CP	24.13																																			
West PointTown Square	PP	0.34																																			
White Pines Lake Park	CP	89.92																																			
Total		158.2																																			
PUBLIC SCHOOLS*																																					
Avery Middle School	S	38.62																																			
Bret Harte High School	S	17.44																																			
Calaveras High School	S	59.96																																			
Copperopolis Elementary School	S	6.85																																			
Jenny Lind Elementary School	S	20.00																																			
Mark Twain Elementary School	S	9.74																																			
Michelson Elementary School	S	13.93																																			
Mokelumne Hill Elementary School	S	12.02																																			
Toyon Middle School	S	50.82																																			
Valley Springs Elementary School	S	4.34																																			
Total		233.72																																			

CP = Community Park

\*This information has been provided by County staff.

PP = Pocket Park

S = School

# PARK SCORING TABLE

## CALAVERAS COUNTY PARK SCORING

PARK SITE			METRIC #1		METRIC #2		METRIC #3			METRIC #4		METRIC #5		METRIC #6		PARK SCORE
Typology	Ranking	Park Name	Population Density Per Square Mile	Population Points (10)	Programming	Programming Points (5)	Quantity of Amenities	Weighted Score	Quantity of Amenities Points (10)	Condition of Amenities	Condition of Amenities Points (10)	Revenue Generators	Revenue Generators Points (10)	Connectivity	Connectivity (5)	TOTAL
CP	1	Alex Quiñones Community Park	432	10	5	5	7	2	9	3	8	3	6	0	0	6.3
CP	5	Mountain Ranch Community Park	28	1	5	5	44	10	1	3	8	0	0	0	0	2.5
CP	2	Murphys Community Park	28	1	5	5	47	10	1	2	5	5	10	5	5	3.7
CP	3	Rail Road Flat Community Center	6	1	0	0	4	1	10	4	10	0	0	5	5	3.5
PP	6	Friedberger Park	71	2	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	0	0	5	5	2.0
PP	4	Nielsen Park	432	10	0	0	4	1	10	0	0	0	0	5	5	3.3





Photo: Art feature at Mountain Ranch Community Park in Mountain Ranch, CA

# APPENDIX B

## PUBLIC OUTREACH RESULTS



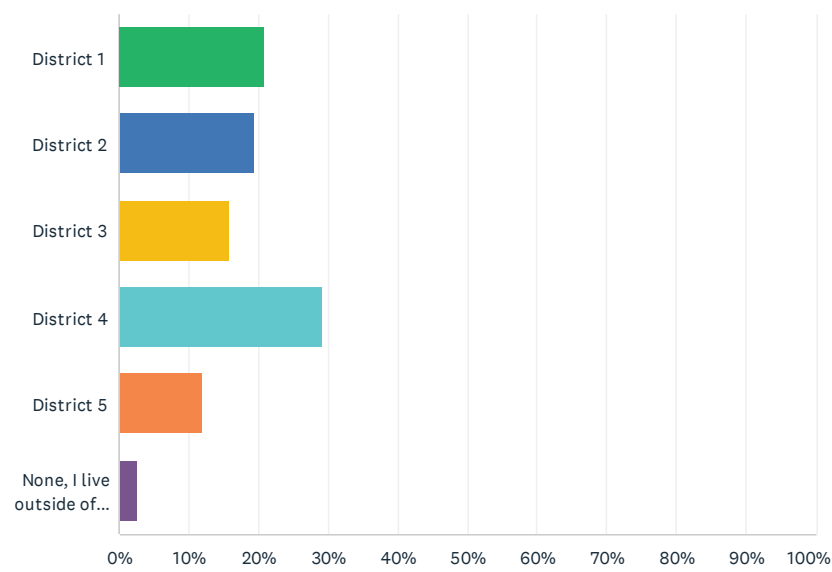


# APPENDIX B: SURVEY RESULTS

Calaveras Parks Master Plan Community Survey

## Q1 Which Calaveras County District do you live in?

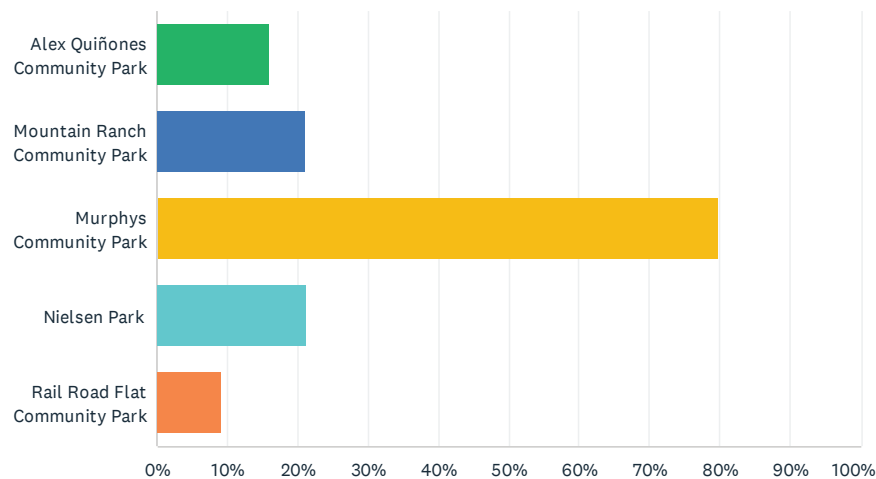
Answered: 492 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
District 1	20.93%	103
District 2	19.31%	95
District 3	15.85%	78
District 4	29.27%	144
District 5	11.99%	59
None, I live outside of County limits.	2.64%	13
TOTAL		492

Q2 The County owns five parks. Which of the County's recreation parks and/or facilities have you visited in the past year? (Choose all that you have visited in the past year.)

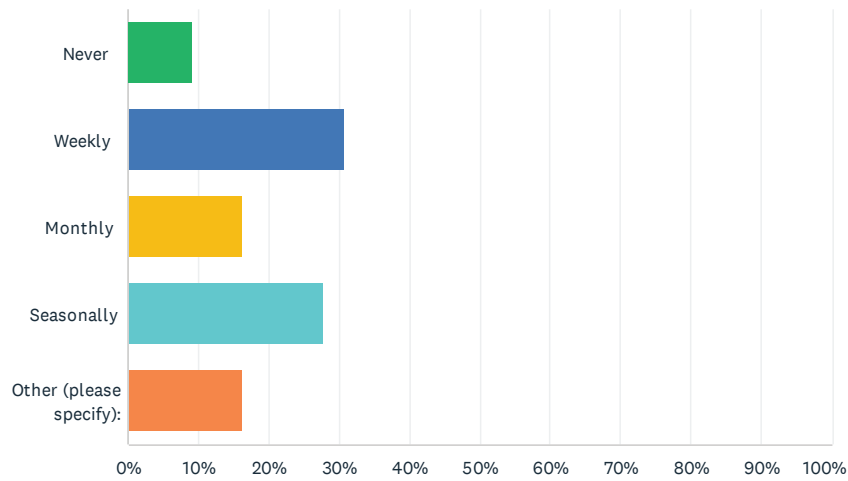
Answered: 374    Skipped: 122



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Alex Quiñones Community Park	16.04%	60
Mountain Ranch Community Park	21.12%	79
Murphys Community Park	79.68%	298
Nielsen Park	21.39%	80
Rail Road Flat Community Park	9.09%	34
Total Respondents: 374		

### Q3 How often do you visit a County park? (Choose one.)

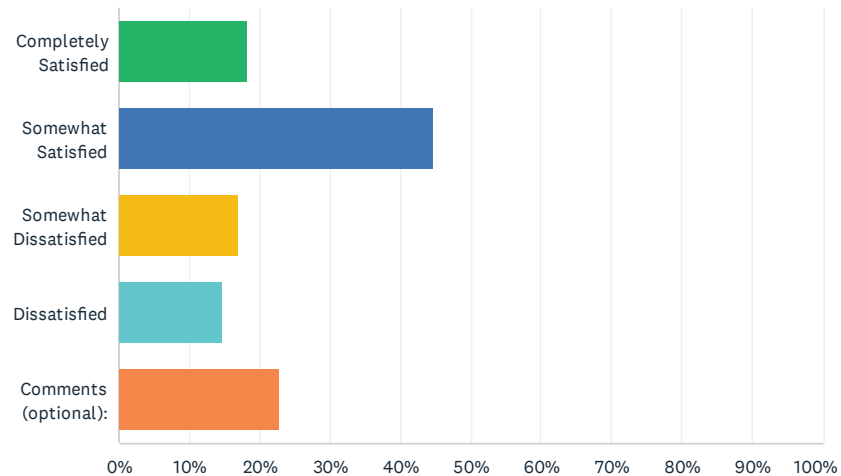
Answered: 462 Skipped: 34



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Never	9.09%	42
Weekly	30.74%	142
Monthly	16.23%	75
Seasonally	27.71%	128
Other (please specify):	16.23%	75
TOTAL		462

## Q4 Please rate your overall satisfaction with County parks listed in Question 2.

Answered: 424 Skipped: 72

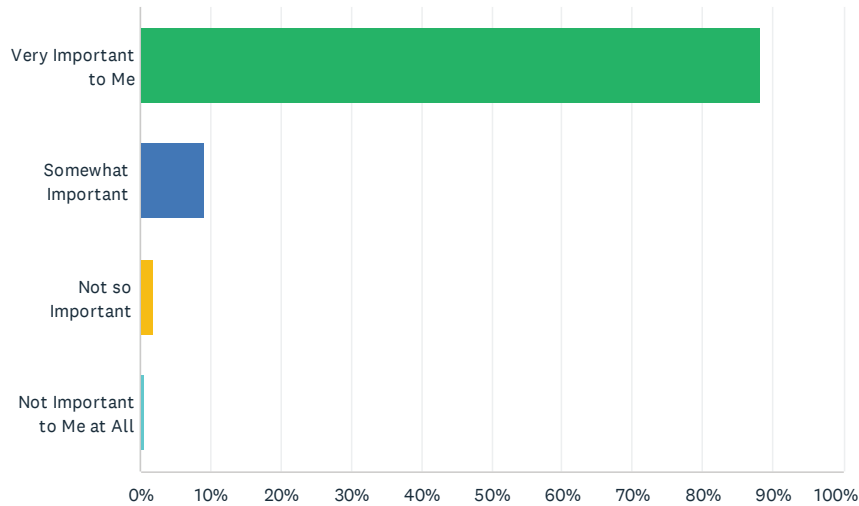


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Completely Satisfied	18.40%	78
Somewhat Satisfied	44.81%	190
Somewhat Dissatisfied	16.98%	72
Dissatisfied	14.62%	62
Comments (optional):	22.88%	97
Total Respondents: 424		



## Q5 How important is it for you to have County parks available for public use?

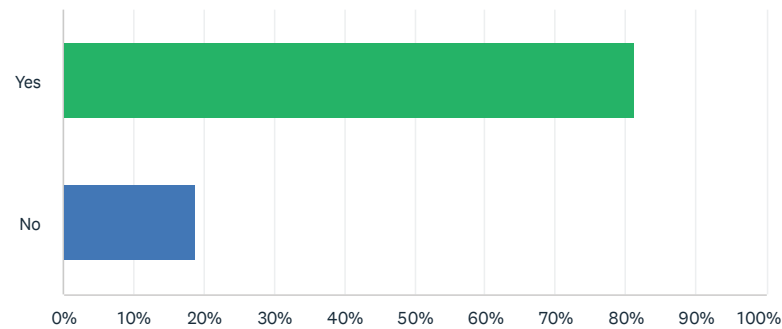
Answered: 448 Skipped: 48



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Important to Me	88.17%	395
Somewhat Important	9.15%	41
Not so Important	2.01%	9
Not Important to Me at All	0.67%	3
TOTAL		448

Q6 Do you visit non-County parks in the County?

Answered: 448 Skipped: 48



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	81.25%	364
No	18.75%	84
TOTAL		448

Q7 If you answered yes to Question 6, please list the non-County parks or facilities you have visited in the past year.

Answered: 313 Skipped: 183

Key Response Themes	Response Count
Feeney Park	92
White Pines Park	75
New Hogan Lake	67
Calaveras Big Trees State Park	41
Utica Park/Tryon Park/Parks in Angels Camp	37
Shutter Tree Park/Parks in Mokelumne Hill	28
Turner Park/Parks in San Andreas	27
Jenny Lind Veterans Memorial Park/Parks and Schools in Valley Springs	26
New Melones Lake	14
Lake Camanche	5
C.B. Hobbs Fields	2

Q8 If you answered yes to Question 6, please list your reason(s) for visiting non-County parks or facilities.

Answered: 303 Skipped: 193

Key Response Themes	Response Count
Availability of recreational activities and programs (e.g. youth sports, disc golf, picnicking)	99
Closer proximity/lack of County park or more parks in area	94
Walking/hiking opportunities (including trails)	40
Socializing/event opportunities (including sports games)	36
Has a dog park or dog friendly spaces	30
Value nature and scenic resources	28
Has playgrounds or kid-friendly spaces	26
Availability of facilities (sports fields/courts or centers)	23
Better park amenities	14
Enjoys a variety of recreational opportunities/parks	14
Better maintained	13
Safer	10

## Q9 How IMPORTANT are each of the following to you?

Answered: 409 Skipped: 87

	VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	LESS IMPORTANT	NOT IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/the outdoors.	89.19% 363	9.09% 37	1.47% 6	0.25% 1	407	3.87
Provide opportunities for fitness, health & wellness.	70.44% 286	22.66% 92	5.91% 24	0.99% 4	406	3.63
Enhances neighborhood and community quality of life.	86.76% 354	11.52% 47	1.23% 5	0.49% 2	408	3.85
Provide spaces to exercise pets.	46.67% 189	21.48% 87	20.25% 82	11.60% 47	405	3.03
Protect our natural environment.	73.51% 297	21.53% 87	3.47% 14	1.49% 6	404	3.67
Provide recreation opportunities for people of all abilities.	76.85% 312	18.47% 75	3.94% 16	0.74% 3	406	3.71
Provide spaces for special events and social opportunities.	69.85% 285	22.06% 90	5.39% 22	2.70% 11	408	3.59
Provide opportunities to learn about nature.	54.57% 221	31.36% 127	11.85% 48	2.22% 9	405	3.38
Make Calaveras County a more desirable place to live.	77.34% 314	15.02% 61	4.93% 20	2.71% 11	406	3.67



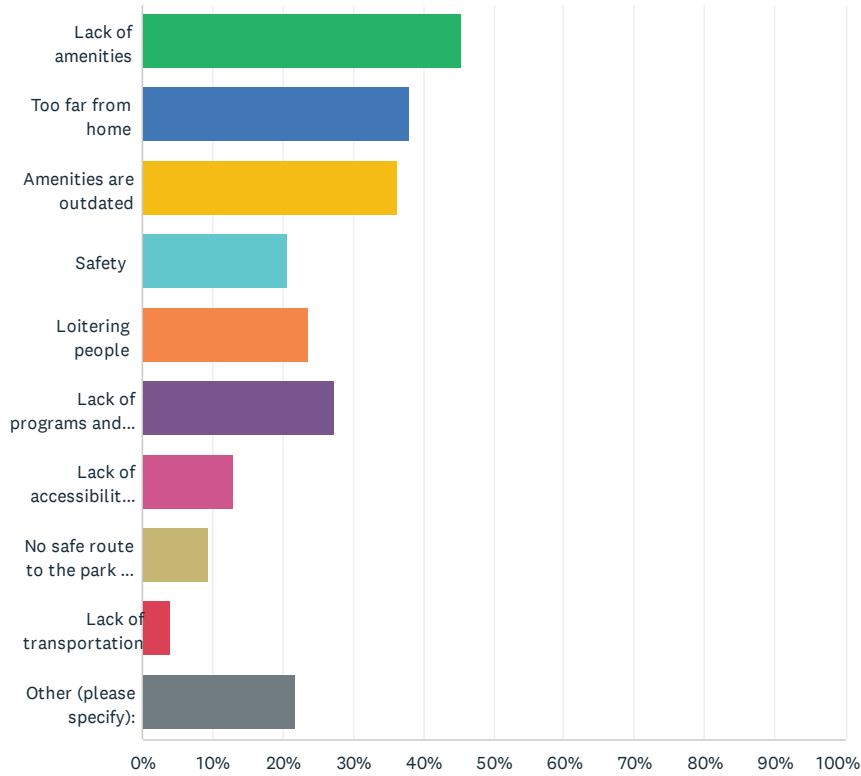
**Q10 How SATISFIED are you with the following? For additional responses, please fill in "Other" at the bottom.**

Answered: 399 Skipped: 97

	COMPLETELY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/the outdoors.	17.42% 69	56.82% 225	16.67% 66	9.09% 36	396	2.83
Provide opportunities for fitness, health & wellness.	12.02% 47	43.73% 171	30.69% 120	13.55% 53	391	2.54
Enhances neighborhood and community quality of life.	17.26% 68	40.86% 161	27.41% 108	14.47% 57	394	2.61
Provide spaces to exercise pets.	17.02% 65	34.82% 133	26.70% 102	21.47% 82	382	2.47
Protect our natural environment.	17.27% 67	55.15% 214	20.10% 78	7.47% 29	388	2.82
Provide recreation opportunities for people of all abilities.	13.30% 52	36.32% 142	30.69% 120	19.69% 77	391	2.43
Provide spaces for special events and social opportunities.	18.07% 71	44.02% 173	22.39% 88	15.52% 61	393	2.65
Provide opportunities to learn about nature.	12.08% 47	43.44% 169	32.13% 125	12.34% 48	389	2.55
Make Calaveras County a more desirable place to live.	17.10% 66	43.78% 169	24.09% 93	15.03% 58	386	2.63

## Q11 What are your concerns regarding visiting County's parks? (Select your top three answers.)

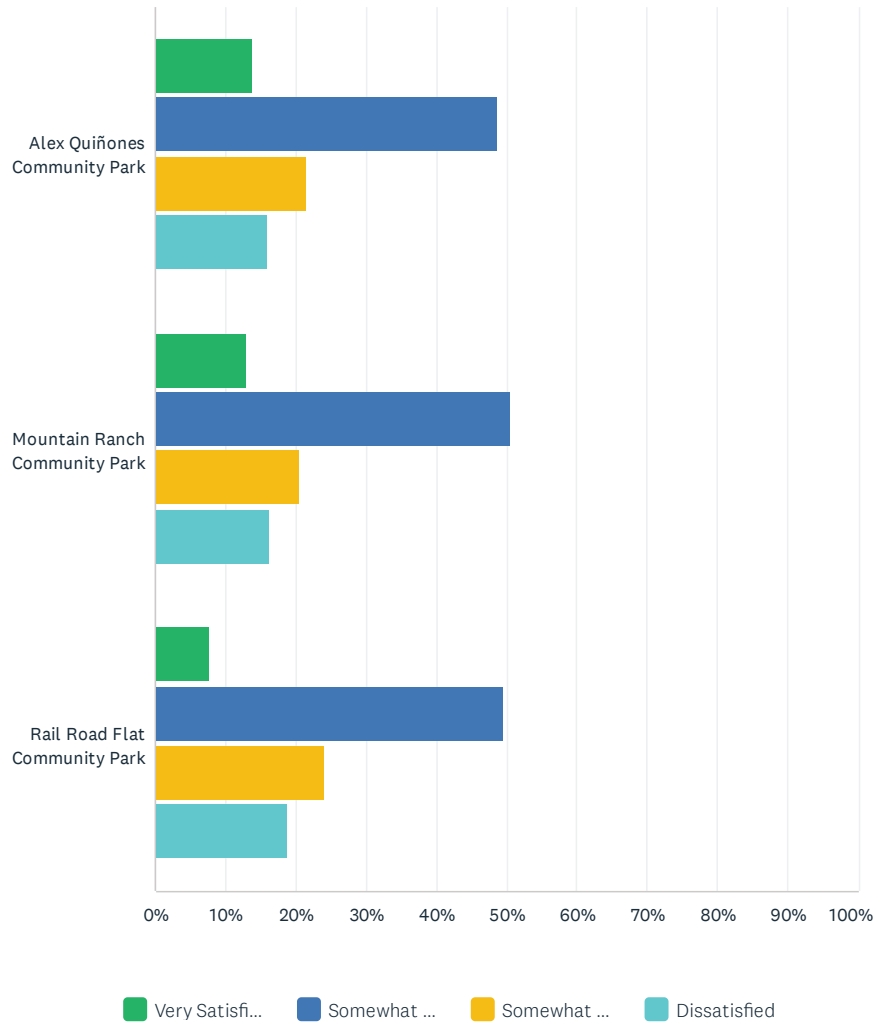
Answered: 409 Skipped: 87



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lack of amenities	45.48%	186
Too far from home	37.90%	155
Amenities are outdated	36.19%	148
Safety	20.78%	85
Loitering people	23.72%	97
Lack of programs and events that interest me	27.38%	112
Lack of accessibility for all people	12.96%	53
No safe route to the park via alternate transportation	9.29%	38
Lack of transportation	4.16%	17
Other (please specify):	21.76%	89
Total Respondents: 409		

## Q12 Please rate your overall satisfaction with the number of County sports fields.

Answered: 207 Skipped: 289



	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Alex Quiñones Community Park	13.85% 27	48.72% 95	21.54% 42	15.90% 31	195	2.61
Mountain Ranch Community Park	12.90% 24	50.54% 94	20.43% 38	16.13% 30	186	2.60
Rail Road Flat Community Park	7.65% 13	49.41% 84	24.12% 41	18.82% 32	170	2.46

Q13 There are many recreation facilities in the County including water bodies, sports fields and courts, picnic areas, playgrounds, off-road vehicle areas, water access points, walking/hiking trails, etc. What do you like most about recreation facilities in the County?

Answered: 249 Skipped: 247

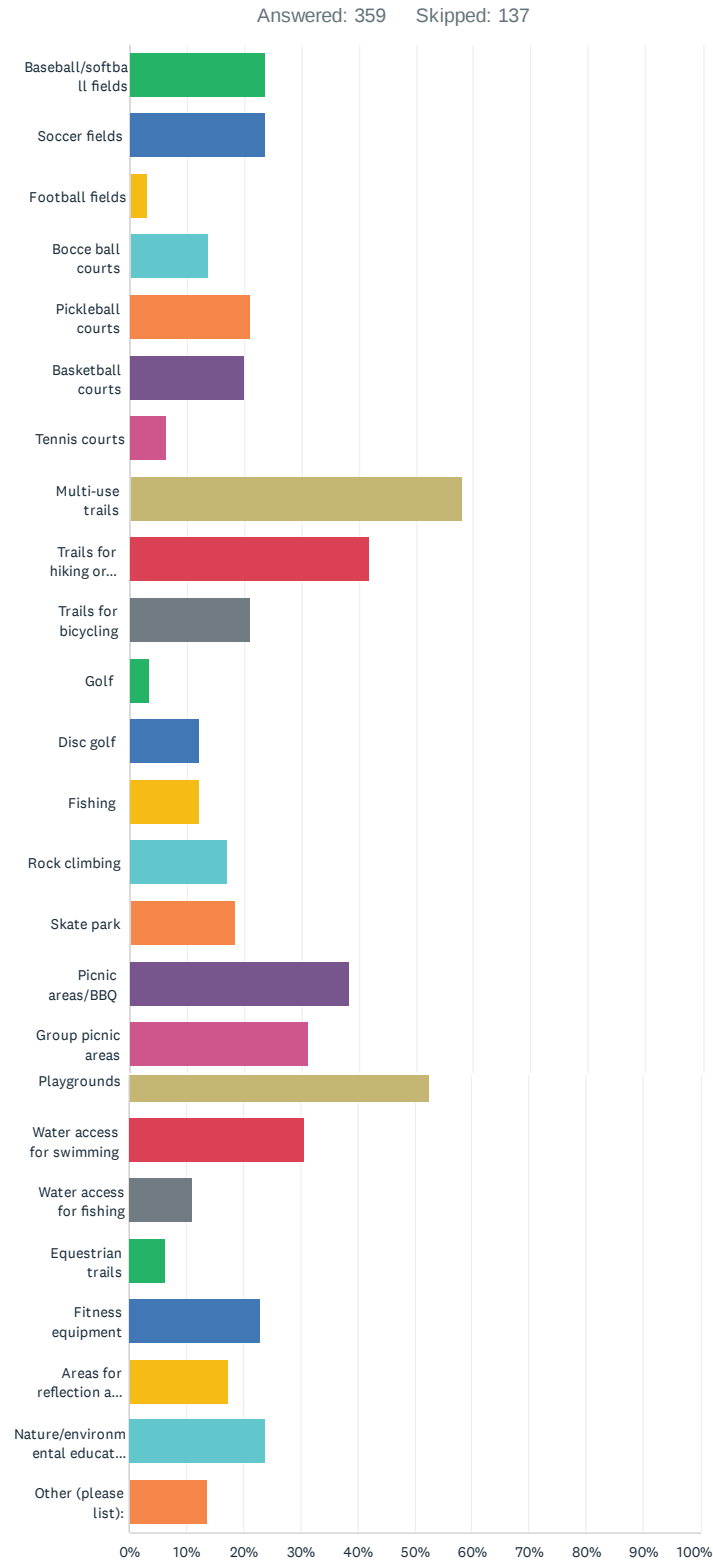
Key Response Themes	Response Count
Trails and opportunities for hiking, walking, and biking	76
Nature and beauty	56
Water access and water sports	45
Park amenities - picnic areas, areas for pets, restrooms, playgrounds	37
Variety of options	23
Park access - availability, free, and close proximity	22
Sports field	14
Park maintenance - appreciation of volunteers, well-maintained, clean	12
Place for social gathering	10

Q14 What do you dislike most about recreation facilities in the County? (All, including water bodies, sports fields and courts, playgrounds, off-road vehicle areas, parks, water access points, walking/hiking trails, etc.)

























Answered: 262 Skipped: 234

Key Response Themes	Response Count
Lack of amenities and diversity of amenities (e.g., dog parks, playgrounds, trash receptacles, skate park/pump track, etc.)	35
Lack of maintenance and outdated facilities	32
Lack of quantity of parks and good quality parks	27
Lack of trails for walking/hiking/biking and paved trails	22
Lack of splash pad/water park and water access	21
Lack of sports facilities (e.g., fields) and courts (e.g., tennis and pickleball)	21
Lack of organized recreation and kid/family-friendly activities	19
Litter	15
Safety concerns	14
It's too far	14
Lack of support for park improvements, maintenance, and funding	12
It's too crowded	11
Lack of access to safe, clean, and open restrooms	5
Lack of accessibility and equitable access to parks	5
Lack of central facility or gathering space for events	5
Too much reliance on volunteers for park support and maintenance	5
Lack of information about parks and recreational opportunities	5
It's too expensive (e.g., cost to travel to a park and entry fees)	3
Lack of indoor recreation	2

Q15 Please select the top five recreation opportunities you would like to see included or expanded in County's parks. (Select your top five answers.)

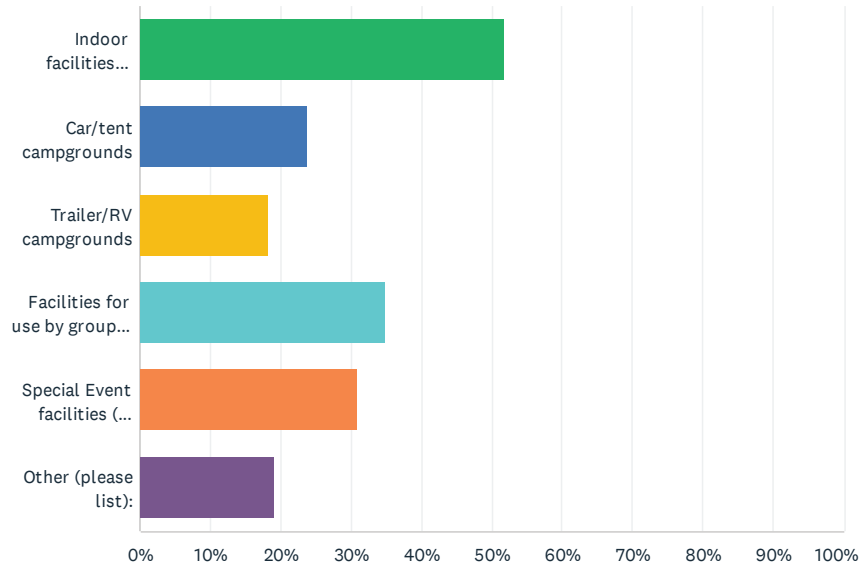









ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
 Baseball/softball fields	23.68%	85
 Soccer fields	23.68%	85
 Football fields	3.06%	11
 Bocce ball courts	13.65%	49
 Pickleball courts	21.17%	76
 Basketball courts	20.06%	72
 Tennis courts	6.41%	23
 Multi-use trails	57.94%	208
 Trails for hiking or jogging	41.78%	150
 Trails for bicycling	21.17%	76
 Golf	3.34%	12
 Disc golf	12.26%	44
 Fishing	12.26%	44
 Rock climbing	16.99%	61
 Skate park	18.38%	66
 Picnic areas/BBQ	38.44%	138
 Group picnic areas	31.20%	112
 Playgrounds	52.37%	188
 Water access for swimming	30.64%	110
 Water access for fishing	11.14%	40
 Equestrian trails	6.41%	23
 Fitness equipment	23.12%	83
 Areas for reflection and passive recreation (painting, birdwatching, etc.)	17.27%	62
 Nature/environmental education opportunities	23.96%	86
Other (please list):	13.65%	49

## Q16 What type of improvements or new facilities would you like to see from the County? (Select your top two answers.)

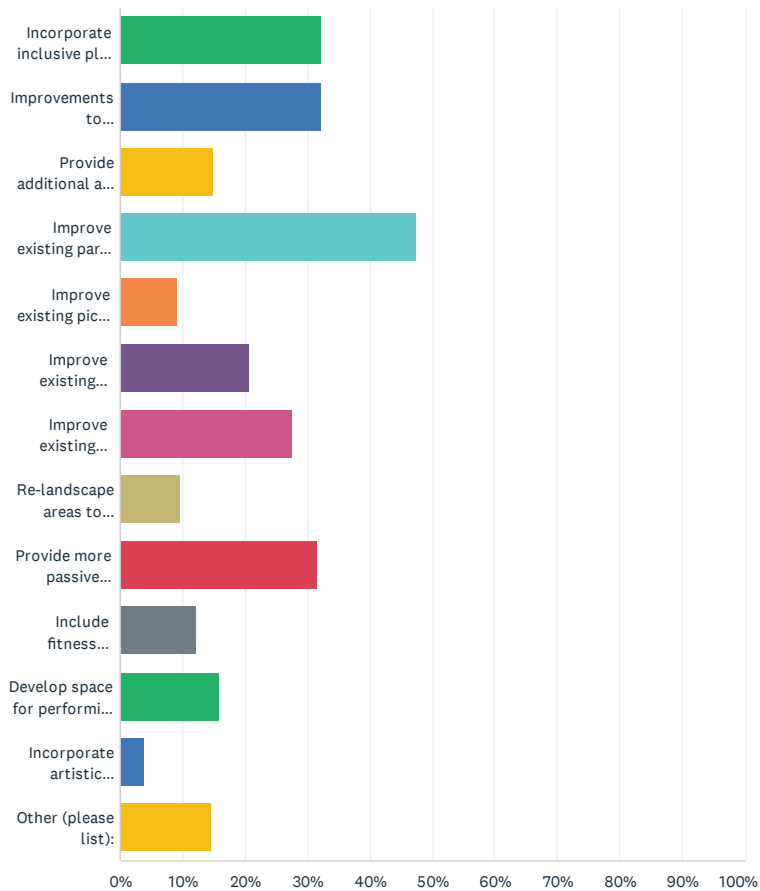
Answered: 317 Skipped: 179



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
 Indoor facilities (gyms, dance studios, recreation room, etc.)	51.74%	164
 Car/tent campgrounds	23.97%	76
 Trailer/RV campgrounds	18.30%	58
 Facilities for use by groups (for weddings, parties, family reunions, etc.)	35.02%	111
 Special Event facilities (for large events like fairs, swap meets, concerts, etc.)	30.91%	98
Other (please list):	19.24%	61
Total Respondents: 317		

## Q17 How can the County make our parks even better? Please select the top three improvements you would like the County to prioritize.

Answered: 361 Skipped: 135



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Incorporate inclusive play areas for children of all abilities	32.13%	116
Improvements to bike/pedestrian circulation between neighborhoods and parks	32.13%	116
Provide additional and updated tables or benches	14.96%	54
Improve existing parks in general	47.37%	171
Improve existing picnic facilities	9.14%	33
Improve existing athletic fields	20.78%	75
Improve existing playgrounds	27.42%	99
Re-landscape areas to include more native or low water use plants	9.70%	35
Provide more passive recreation opportunities (walking trails, seating areas, game tables, etc.)	31.58%	114
Include fitness equipment at parks	12.19%	44
Develop space for performing arts and theatre events	15.79%	57
Incorporate artistic elements	3.88%	14
Other (please list):	14.40%	52
Total Respondents: 361		

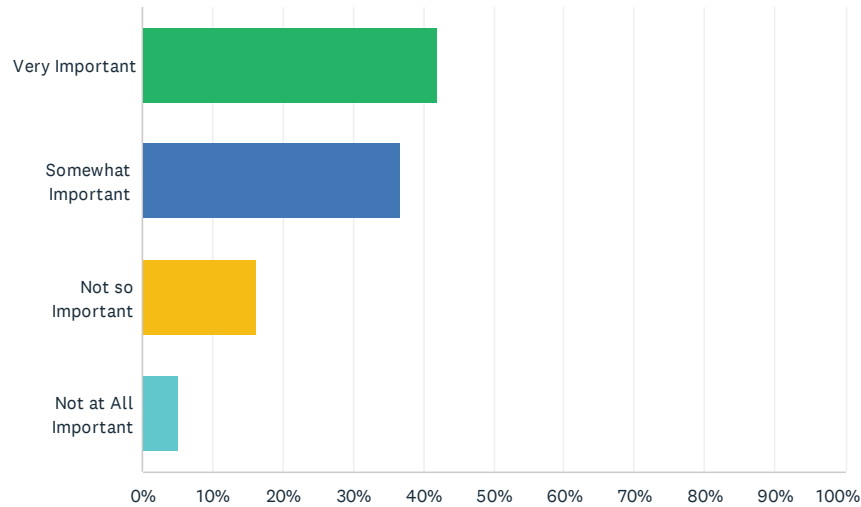
Q18 Are there environmental concerns that you feel that the County should take into consideration in the development and improvement of County parks?

Answered: 127 Skipped: 369

Key Response Themes	Response Count
Importance of the natural environment and habitats and preserving nature	20
Importance of vegetation, drought-tolerant plants, and trees	19
Litter and pollution concerns	13
Water conservation	13
Need for trash receptacles, pet waste stations, and recycling	9
Preservation of history	5
Erosion & flood control	3
Importance of sustainability	2
Wildfire safety	2

## Q19 How important is it to you for the County to offer special events for the public?

Answered: 352 Skipped: 144

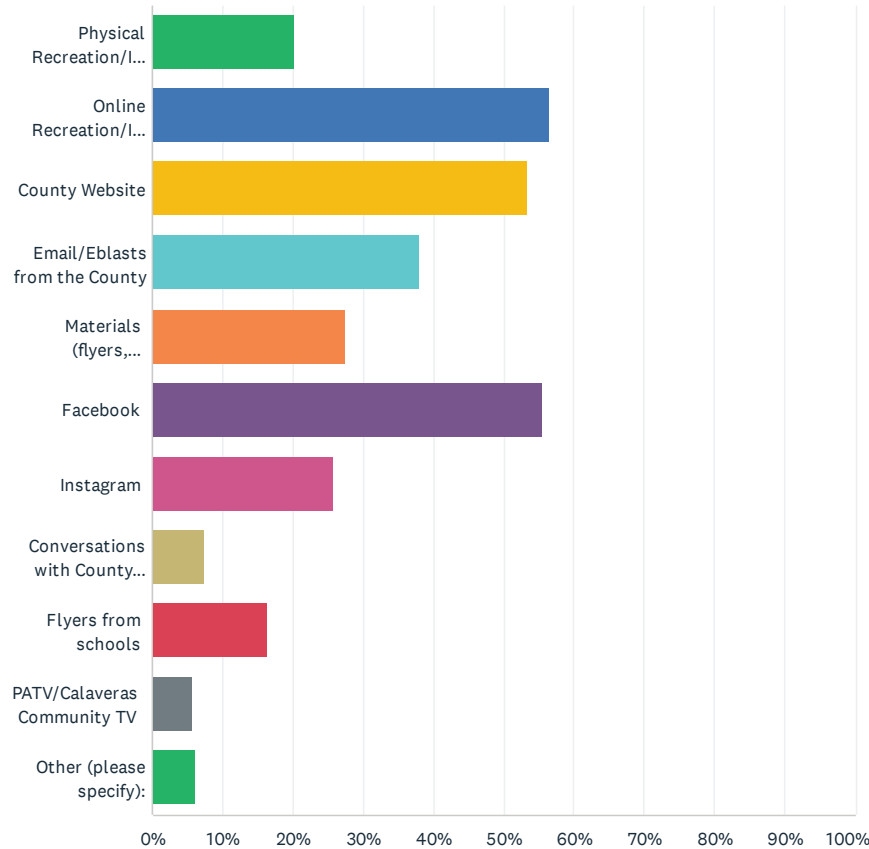


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Important	42.05%	148
Somewhat Important	36.65%	129
Not so Important	16.19%	57
Not at All Important	5.11%	18
TOTAL		352



## Q20 How do you want to stay up to date with what's going on with parks and recreation in the County? (Select all that apply.)

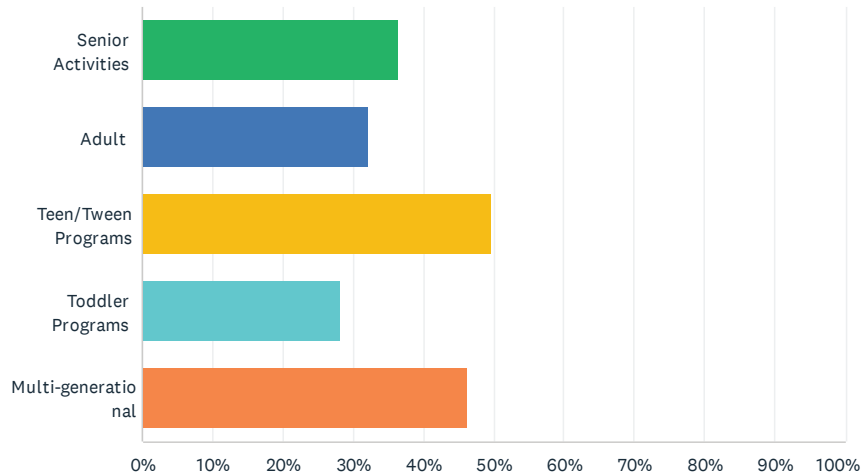
Answered: 345 Skipped: 151



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Physical Recreation/Information Guide	20.29%	70
Online Recreation/Information Guide	56.52%	195
County Website	53.33%	184
Email/Eblasts from the County	37.97%	131
Materials (flyers, banners, or posters) at parks and facilities	27.54%	95
Facebook	55.36%	191
Instagram	25.80%	89
Conversations with County staff	7.54%	26
Flyers from schools	16.52%	57
PATV/Calaveras Community TV	5.80%	20
Other (please specify):	6.09%	21
Total Respondents: 345		

Q21 I would like to see classes/programs for these age groups offered.  
(Select your top two answers.)

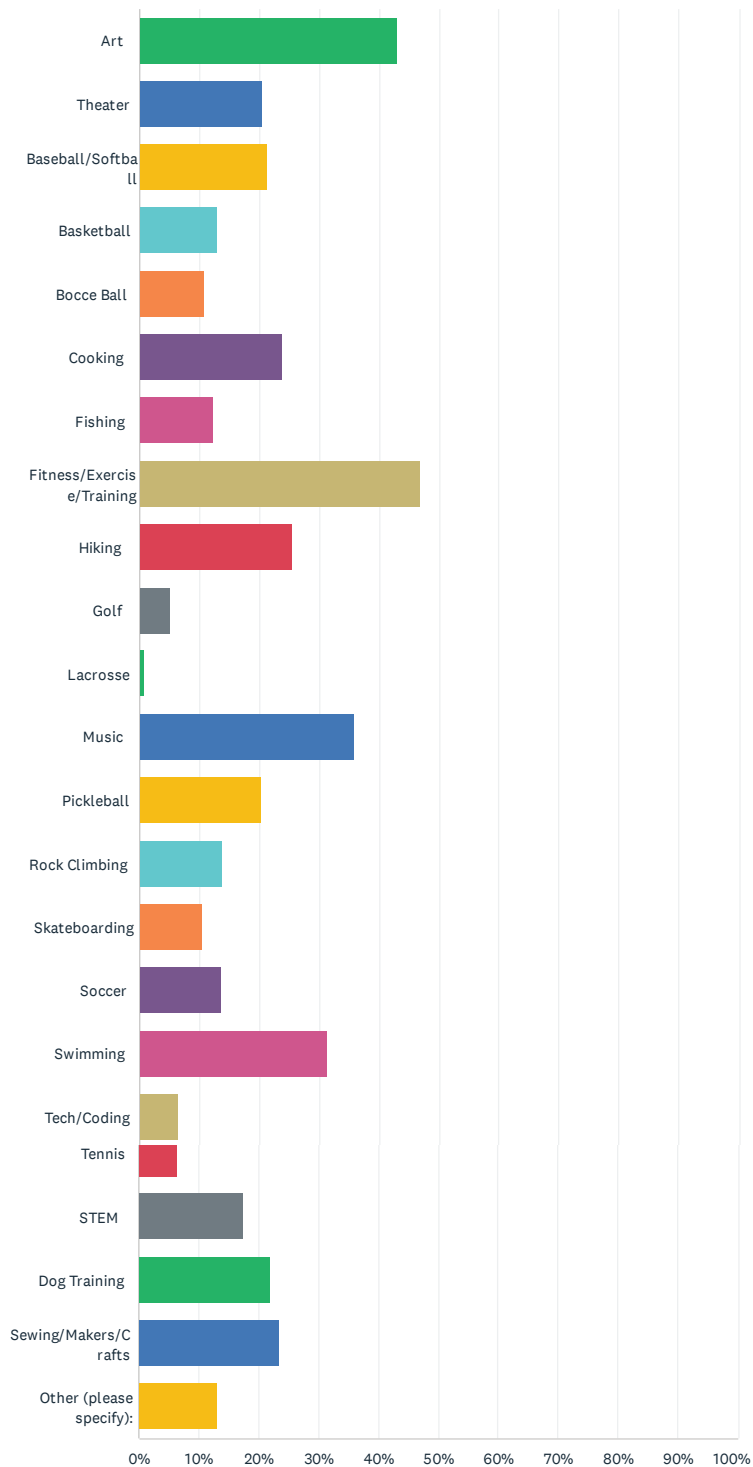
Answered: 330 Skipped: 166



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Senior Activities	36.36%	120
Adult	32.12%	106
Teen/Tween Programs	49.70%	164
Toddler Programs	28.18%	93
Multi-generational	46.36%	153
Total Respondents: 330		

## Q22 I would like to see these classes/programs offered. (Select your top five answers.)

Answered: 332 Skipped: 164



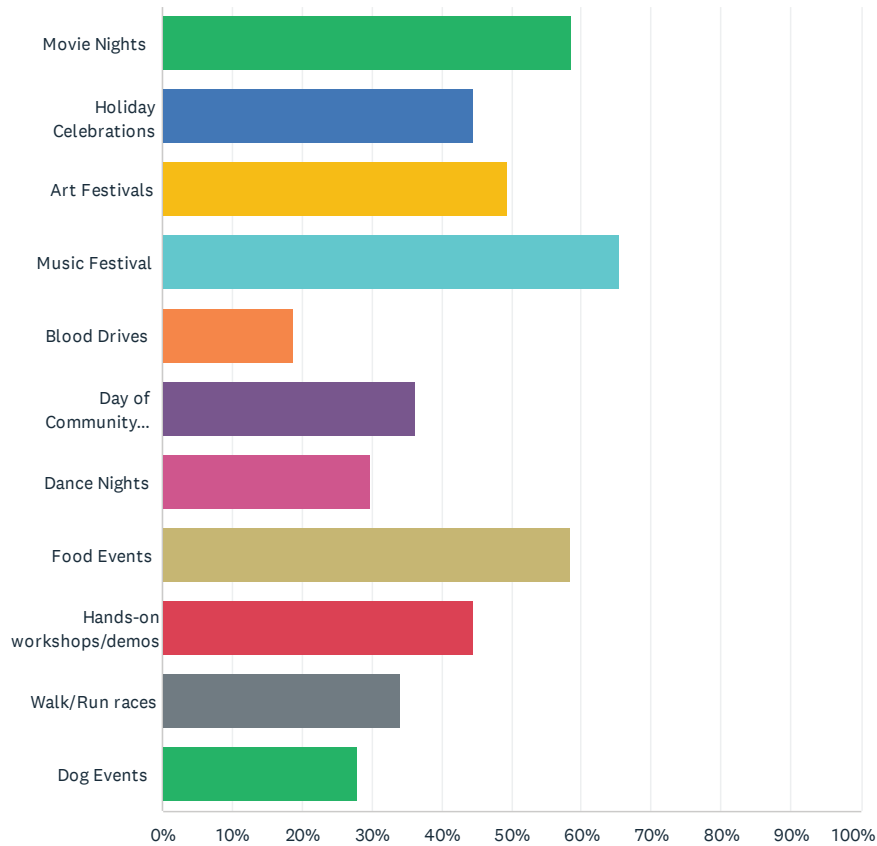
## Q22 I would like to see these classes/programs offered. (Select your top five answers.)

Answered: 332 Skipped: 164

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Art	43.07%	143
Theater	20.48%	68
Baseball/Softball	21.39%	71
Basketball	12.95%	43
Bocce Ball	10.84%	36
Cooking	23.80%	79
Fishing	12.35%	41
Fitness/Exercise/Training	46.99%	156
Hiking	25.60%	85
Golf	5.12%	17
Lacrosse	0.90%	3
Music	35.84%	119
Pickleball	20.18%	67
Rock Climbing	13.86%	46
Skateboarding	10.54%	35
Soccer	13.55%	45
Swimming	31.33%	104
Tech/Coding	6.33%	21
Tennis	6.33%	21
STEM	17.47%	58
Dog Training	21.99%	73
Sewing/Makers/Crafts	23.49%	78
Other (please specify):	13.25%	44
Total Respondents: 332		

## Q23 What kind of community events would you like to see?

Answered: 332 Skipped: 164

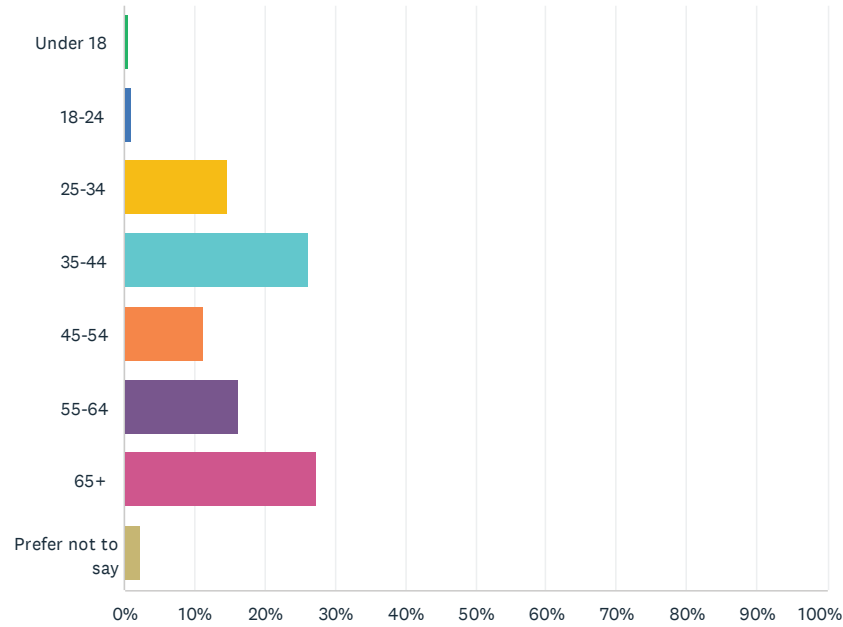


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Movie Nights	58.73%	195
Holiday Celebrations	44.58%	148
Art Festivals	49.40%	164
Music Festival	65.36%	217
Blood Drives	18.67%	62
Day of Community Service	36.14%	120
Dance Nights	29.82%	99
Food Events	58.43%	194
Hands-on workshops/demos	44.58%	148
Walk/Run races	34.04%	113
Dog Events	28.01%	93
Total Respondents: 332		



## Q24 Which age group do you identify with?

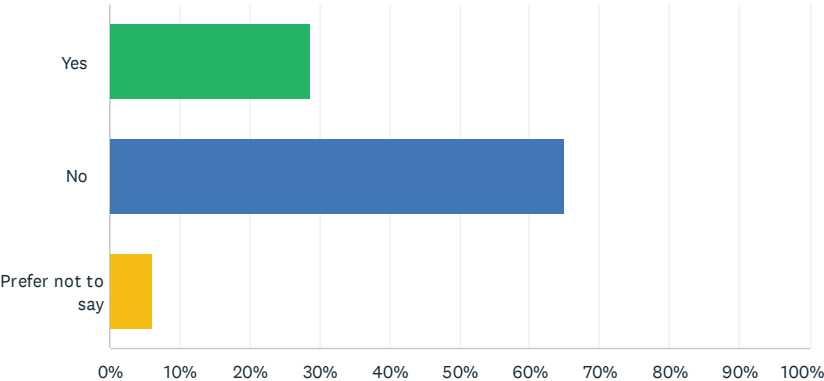
Answered: 351 Skipped: 145



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Under 18	0.57%	2
18-24	1.14%	4
25-34	14.81%	52
35-44	26.21%	92
45-54	11.40%	40
55-64	16.24%	57
65+	27.35%	96
Prefer not to say	2.28%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>351</b>

# Q25 Are you a member of a group that provides recreation services or programs?

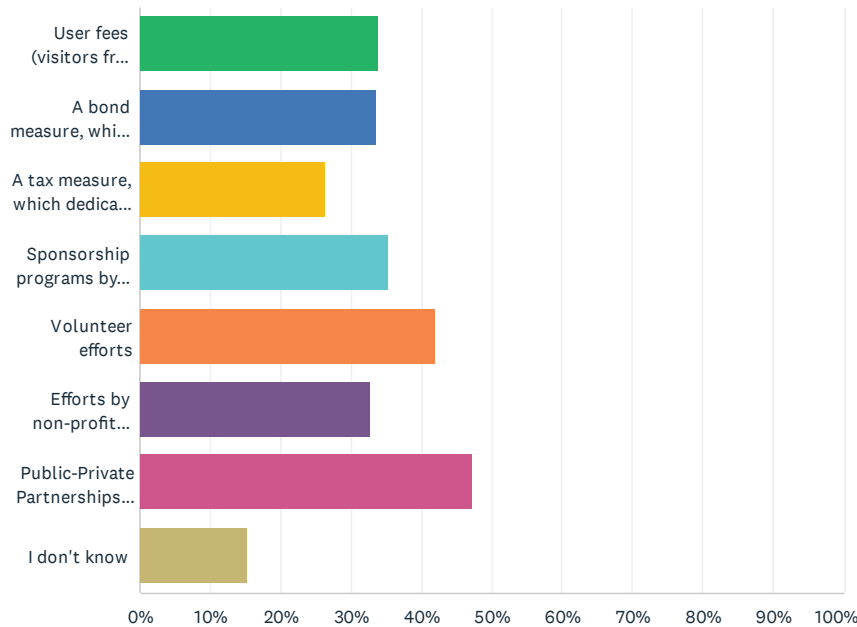
Answered: 351 Skipped: 145



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	28.77%	101
No	64.96%	228
Prefer not to say	6.27%	22
TOTAL		351

**Q26 In the future, how would you want to see park maintenance, programs, and new parks and facilities get funded? (Select your top three answers.)**

Answered: 347 Skipped: 149



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
User fees (visitors from out of county pay more than Calaveras County residents)	34.01%	118
A bond measure, which dedicates money to build new things	33.72%	117
A tax measure, which dedicates money for parks maintenance costs	26.51%	92
Sponsorship programs by local businesses	35.45%	123
Volunteer efforts	42.07%	146
Efforts by non-profit groups	32.85%	114
Public-Private Partnerships, where private firms partner with the public agency to invest in a project, and where both partners share responsibilities for maintenance and benefits from fees, etc.	47.26%	164
I don't know	15.27%	53
Total Respondents: 347		

Q27 If there are any additional comments you would like us to know, please provide them here.

Answered: 96 Skipped: 400

Key Response Themes	Response Count
More park support for both County and non-County parks (e.g., funding), including improvements and maintenance	22
Funding mechanisms other than increasing taxes (e.g., user fees and grants)	12
Desire for new park amenities, such as splash pad and sports facilities	10
Desire for recreational programs	8
Desire for a parks agency and/or develop private-public partnerships	5
Desire for new County parks in area that lacks one	5
More diverse park facilities	4
Too much reliance on volunteers	4
Desire for an indoor facility	3
Lighting improvements	3
Support for improvements that protect the natural environment	2
Support for parcel tax	2

