

## 2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The needs assessment identifies how the Grass Valley parks and recreation system can be improved to meet the needs of its residents. This Master Plan looks first at existing recreational resources and their condition, and then compares the existing resources to community needs based on newly developed facility standards. Chapter 2 includes the following sections:

- **Recreation Resources:** Descriptions of the City's park and recreation resources.
- **Recreation Inventory and Evaluation:** Assessment of recreational facilities and programs.
- **Standards:** Establishment of park and recreational facility standards for Grass Valley.
- **Community Needs Assessment:** Assessment of future park and recreation needs, based on community input and comparison of existing facilities against standards.

### RECREATION RESOURCES

Parks and recreation systems are comprised of a number of different types of resources, facilities, and programs, including the following. See [Table 3](#) for detailed parkland matrix definitions. Park types within the City of Grass Valley may include:

- *Urban Plaza:* Publicly owned and used spaces that act as civic and neighborhood activity focal points.
- *Pocket Park:* Local park within biking and walking distance of users, can be co-located with elementary school.
- *Neighborhood Park:* Local park within biking and walking distance of users, can be co-located with elementary school.
- *Community Park:* Park that provides active and passive recreational opportunities for all city and regional residents, and accommodates large group activities. Regional parks often include key natural resources such as lakes, streams, or other attractions.
- *Trails:* A 4- to 6-foot, soft-surfaced pedestrian path separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier. Its route may be aligned with or independent of a street right-of-way.
- *Multi-Use Trail:* An 8- to 10-foot wide, hard-surfaced path separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier. Its route may be aligned with or independent of the street right-of-way, and is often located along greenways.

City-owned and operated parks are not the only recreation resource available to residents. The community also utilizes school facilities (e.g., ball fields, gymnasiums), and privately operated recreation facilities (e.g., country clubs, athletic clubs), and the Empire State Mine. City-owned park facilities should complement those resources provided through other agencies.

### RECREATION INVENTORY AND EVALUATION

#### Recreation Facilities

The Public Works Department conducted an inventory of the City's parks system in January 1999. Additionally, the planning team made site visits to identify recreational and open space opportunities within Grass Valley and surrounding areas contiguous with the City limits. Existing conditions were documented, and possible new components or reuses were considered for the sites.

The current parks and recreation system is comprised of approximately 108 acres of City park lands, and no formalized trails. The Empire Mine State Park, with 884 acres of open space and 8 miles of trails, is within the Planning Area. Local schools within the Planning Area provide approximately 24 acres of recreational space, including athletic fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, and gymnasiums. City facilities include 2 baseball fields, 2 softball fields, 3 outdoor basketball courts, 4 tennis courts, 1 volleyball court and a swimming pool.

Figure 1 shows the location of existing developed parks and undeveloped park sites in Grass Valley and adjacent areas. There are six developed parks (Glenn Jones, Elizabeth Daniels, Dow Alexander, Minnie,

Condon, and Memorial), two undeveloped park sites (Mulcahy and Morgan Ranch), a state park (Empire Mine), and school sites with recreational resources within city limits (Hennessy), and in the Planning Area (Scotten, Lyman Gilmore, Nevada Union High School, and Sierra College). Additionally, there are several privately owned athletic clubs, and a privately operated driving range, golf course, and country club.

Table 4 summarizes the findings of the facilities inventory.

**Table 4: Summary of Grass Valley Parks and Facilities – Built and Unbuilt**

City Facilities	Total Facility Acreage	Summary Description and Possible Improvements
<b>Urban Parks, Pocket Parks</b>		
Dow Alexander	0.25	Pocket park for young children and neighborhood use. Upgrade play equipment, improve landscaping and accessibility, add restroom.
Elisabeth Daniels	0.16	Renovate site as urban plaza with benches, paving, art, modified restroom facility, kiosk, food vendors, access through plaza, stage area, two story building at end of park with retail on first floor, community organization on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor.
Glenn Jones	2	Provide footpath along park edge/creek-side; continue current use and image.
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>		
Minnie	2	Close Butler Street; provide trail link to Condon; upgrade play equipment; install sidewalk around perimeter; enlarge grassy area.
Morgan Ranch (unbuilt)	4	Develop as passive recreation park with limited lawn, natural areas and trails (keep majority of trees); provide picnic tables, benches.
<b>Community Parks</b>		
Memorial	7.6	Upgrade/refurbish pool facility; improve parking and drop-off area; upgrade play lot; refurbish Scout Lodge; develop Memorial Trail; add tennis court; install sidewalks around perimeter.
Mulcahy (unbuilt)	12.9	Soccer park with parking, restroom, trails, passive recreation, picnic, and play areas.
<b>Regional Parks</b>		
Condon	80	Improve visual entry into park; provide more parking; provide 2 <sup>nd</sup> entry; provide additional play field; connect to Minnie Park with trail and landscaping; implement habitat management plan; formalize trail system linking park to school and surrounding neighborhood.
Trails (unbuilt)	0	Develop regional trail system linking key features: Wolf Creek, parks, schools, Nevada County trail system. Develop Historic Downtown Walk. Develop city trail system to link Grass Valley with future developments – Loma Rica, North Star, Glenbrook, Kenny Ranch, Bear River Mill.

Unincorporated areas that will be annexed in the near future also include parks and open space resources. Table 5 describes those resources.

**Table 5: Planned Recreation Facilities**

<b>Annexation</b>	<b>Total Area</b>	<b>Parks/Open Space Area</b>	<b>Possible Key Features</b>
Loma Rica Ranch	452+ acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 165 acres open space</li> <li>▪ 50 acres recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lake MacBoyle</li> <li>▪ Active Recreation</li> <li>▪ Trails</li> <li>▪ Equestrian Trail</li> <li>▪ Music in the Mountains</li> </ul>
North Star	760.46 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 175 acres open space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community Center (3-5 acres)</li> <li>▪ Julia Morgan House</li> <li>▪ Park Sites</li> <li>▪ Schools (13+ acres)</li> </ul>
Kenny Ranch	363.76 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 95.4 acres open space</li> <li>▪ 8 acres recreation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trails</li> <li>▪ Wildflower preserve</li> </ul>
Glenbrook	400 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ 4 acres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lake Olympia</li> <li>▪ Trails</li> <li>▪ Park</li> </ul>
Bear River Mill	70 acres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To be determined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To be determined</li> </ul>

**Note:** The acreages listed in Table 5 reflect those proposed under the current Development Agreements. These figures may need to be revised as the developments proceed to ensure that the City meets the facility standards stated in this Master Plan.

**Recreation Programs**

Grass Valley has a number of local non-profit organizations that provide organized activities for the community, filling an important recreation need. These resources are a valuable component of Grass Valley’s parks and recreation system. The non-profit organizations operate under Memoranda of Understanding (MOU’s) with the City, currently a fairly informal process. Appendix A lists the various providers of recreation programs.

Organized activities provided through these organizations include:

- Swimming
- Slow-pitch softball
- Baseball
- Adult softball
- Football
- Soccer
- Tennis
- Basketball
- Bocce ball
- Skateboard park
- Scouts
- Senior Center activities

The City has recently hired a Recreation Coordinator. This staff position will coordinate facility use and programming, administer use agreements, collect statistics on the number of users, and serve as the contact person for discussions on park use, condition, and recreation programs offered. As the recreational demands increase, the coordinator will have a critical role in maximizing existing park resources and guiding future expansion of parks and recreation services.

## PARK AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY STANDARDS

The availability of park and recreation facilities and their ability to meet the recreational needs of the community is usually measured by facility standards. These standards are expressed quantitatively by the number of facilities needed to serve a certain number of residents (Eg., 5-8 acres of community parks per 1,000 population, 1 baseball field for every 5,000 population, etc).

Grass Valley's uniqueness makes it difficult to set facility standards. Communities as small as Grass Valley generally do not develop park and recreation master plans, and generally do not set facility standards for their communities. In addition, Nevada County also lacks both a county-wide recreation plan and any form of recreational facility standards. As a result, there are no statistics or plans available for comparably sized communities that could be used as a baseline. The planning team instead used a selection of northern California cities that have excelled in planning and providing for the park and recreational needs of their citizens. A comparison of park acreage and recreational facility standards for these communities is shown in Table 6.

This Master Plan sets park and facility standards for Grass Valley as shown in Table 7. The standards are set using an average of the standards from example communities. The NRPA park and facility standards were also considered. By setting these standards, the City is committing to ensuring that these resources are provided to meet the needs of the growing community. These standards may be adjusted in the future to account for changing recreational preferences and needs.

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### Recreation Facilities

During community meetings, residents indicated a preference for the development of the following facilities:

- Baseball – adults, kids
- Softball – adults, kids
- Soccer – large fields, adult championship size
- Tennis courts
- Better pool facilities
- Year round pool/indoor pool
- Gym
- Multi-generational facility
- Lighting for athletic fields
- Safe trails, bikeways to get to schools, parks, and for recreation
- Parking

**Table 7: Park standards for Grass Valley**

Park Type	Standard (acres/1,000 pop)
Urban Plaza	No Standard
Pocket Parks	.25 - .5 acres per 1,000
Neighborhood Park	1-2 acres per 1,000
Community Park	5-8 acres per 1,000
Regional Park	5-10 acres per 1,000
Trails	1 system per region
Multi-Use Bicycle/ Pedestrian Path	1 system per region

Recreation Facility	Standard (per population)
Baseball Fields	1 per 4,800
Softball Fields	1 per 4,800
Soccer Fields	1 per 4,100
Football Fields	1 per 15,000
Outdoor Basketball	1 per 5,600
Tennis Courts	1 per 2,400
Volleyball	1 per 7,900
Swimming Pools	21,100
Gym	31,100

Tables 8 and 9 compare current park and recreation facilities to facility standards to determine the number and type of new facilities needed to meet current demand (16,000 population) as well as

anticipated demand over the next twenty years (24,000 population). [Table 8](#) determines the need for new parks and [Table 9](#) determines the need for recreation facilities.

### **Recreation Programs**

The Grass Valley community is an active one. Recreation programs are currently being developed and administered by private organizations to meet the needs of community members of all ages. This relieves the City of organizing and delivering these programs to the community. This arrangement is working well at this time. The City can continue to provide both indoor and outdoor space, and maintenance of the facilities for the recreation programs, while private organizations organize and administer the programs. A detailed listing of the recreation program providers is included in Appendix A. The City has hired a Recreation Coordinator who may develop and administer recreation programs as demand increases.

Major findings relating to recreation programs include the following:

- The softball, baseball, and swimming organizations report that they are not able to enroll all those who want to participate due to facility limitations.
- Gymnasiums associated with public schools and private sport centers are generally not available for City programming. School facilities are not available while school is in session and have limited access outside of school hours. Private facilities have an obligation to their membership and may not be available for City recreational programs.
- Some of the programming issues can be improved by more efficient scheduling of field and court space, thereby accommodating the number of potential players.
- Programs and facilities are needed that appeal to the growing senior population. This includes a year-round swimming facility and a central location for senior and multi-generational activities.
- The Memorial Park Swimming Pool is not large enough to serve demand and has limited operation during the winter due to climactic conditions. A large indoor swimming pool would provide recreational swimming programs year-round for a wide range of users.
- Programs and facilities are needed that appeal to Grass Valley's growing seniors population. The current senior center has limited hours of operation and is subject to a lease agreement.
- A community center with a gymnasium/auditorium, and indoor swimming pool, and meeting space for seniors programs would serve as a year-round, multi-generational recreation center for Grass Valley. By developing a facility with these components, the City may realize a savings in construction and management costs.

### **SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS**

For many of the active sports programs there is an adequate amount of existing field space. Field space can be used more efficiently by coordinating scheduling and field maintenance. Having lighted fields can also extend playing time and, therefore, ease scheduling constraints. However, there are concerns that need to be weighed against the extended playtime lighted fields offer. It must be determined whether or not it is possible to install lights at existing fields, and how to mitigate any light pollution (i.e., providing shrouded lamps). Additionally, electricity costs must be included in the City's budget analysis.

User groups can continue to contribute to the maintenance of the facilities they use. However, responsibilities and maintenance standards need to be clearly defined in Memoranda of Understanding and followed. Joint-use agreements can be established with school districts, clearly delineating the standards of maintenance and installation, and general responsibilities.

Through joint-use agreements and Memorandums of Understanding, the City of Grass Valley can reduce some of its need to acquire more active recreational park land, and minimize increases in park maintenance staffing levels.

There are two museums in Grass Valley, the Pelton Mining Museum at Glenn Jones Park and the Video Museum at Memorial Park. Two other organizations would like to secure a location for the display of historical carriages and historic fire engines. These played an important role in Grass Valley's history. At

this time, there is no City-owned property that can house these historic vehicles. These museums offer a passive recreational venue both for residents and tourists. They are a source of community pride and they provide opportunities for volunteerism.

An increase in the active, senior population is placing demands on the programs and facilities that exist now, and this demand will continue to increase. The Senior Center has outgrown its current space at the Nevada County Fairgrounds and its lease expires in 2006. During the community workshops, the senior community expressed its desire to be part of a multi-generational community center. The senior community has formed a group that is investigating both site and funding sources to that end. The City and County should be involved in the development, construction, and programming of a multi-generational community center. This is an opportunity for the City and county to partner with non-profit organizations to bring about this long-term goal. The implementation of these facilities will place the city at a higher level of recreational involvement than they are now. As the population increases, it will not be possible to meet the user demand through schools and Memorial Park facilities.

As the hub of Western Nevada County, the City of Grass Valley serves a population far greater than its own. At this time, there is no arrangement with Nevada County for financial reimbursement for use by county residents of City facilities and programs. With the addition of a recreational coordinator, Grass Valley can compile user statistics, facility demand, maintenance costs, and other data. Grass Valley and Nevada County Planning Departments can then enter into an informed discussion of revenue sharing.