

MERCED COUNTY UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY PLAN POLICY DISCUSSION PAPER

Parks and Recreation

For CPAC Discussion: May 24, 2001 Meeting

I. INTRODUCTION

Issue: Providing a range of appropriate and quality parks and recreation facilities for residents within the University Community. This section deals specifically with the Parks and Recreation facilities and programs within the planned-for University Community. Development of regional park facilities (including Lake Yosemite Park) and the relationship between those facilities and the University Community are discussed separately in this document.

II. BACKGROUND

Two existing recreation facilities are located on or directly adjacent to the UCP Planning Area. One site, the Merced Hills Golf Course, will be removed and replaced with the UC Campus and portions of the University Community. Lake Yosemite Park, located in-between the UCP Area and Lake Yosemite, is an existing important recreational resource. Policies and Plans associated with the future development of this recreational resource are addressed separately in Section III of this document.

The County General Plan provides an inventory of recreational opportunities in the County and concludes “the shortage of recreational facilities today is not so much in the quantity of land available, but in the access to available and suitable recreation lands.” Many of the existing recreational lands within the County are for passive recreational use, and are not convenient to the majority of residents within the County due to distance or accessibility. This is also true for the Planning Area.

Existing County General Plan policy with respect to Parks and Recreation facilities includes statements as follows:

- Protect and integrate natural elements into the development process.
- Provide additional regional as well as neighborhood parks in order to provide adequate recreational opportunities for residents both within towns as well as rural areas.
- Look for dual-use opportunities at schools sites in order to provide additional recreational opportunities.
- Look for dual-use opportunities at drainage basin sites in order to provide additional recreational opportunities.

- Expand existing and create new trail systems in both urban and rural areas in the County.
- Promote private recreational facilities, such as golf courses and hunting clubs as they provide a significant, positive economic impact.
- Provide special care to the siting and operational characteristics of recreational operations (both private and public) to ensure that they do not occur at the expense of sensitive, rare, or endangered plant and wildlife habitats or productive agricultural areas.

III. GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 1: HIGH QUALITY COMMUNITY PARKS FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Objective: Establish neighborhood and community park facilities to meet the needs of university community residents

Policy 1: Provide a minimum number of acres of parkland consisting of a mix of mini parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, and public gathering type spaces (“village green”) in order to maintain a standard of 5 acres per 1000 residents. Actual park acreage will vary based on total population of the University Community.

Policy 2: Require that all subsequent Specific Plans incorporate a comprehensive parks and recreation component that:

- Develops service standards, park types, and appropriate programming for park facilities based on demand assessments and community input.
- Identifies mini, neighborhood, and community park sites in accordance with service standards.
- Integrates neighborhood parks with neighborhood centers and schools.
- Links park facilities through an integrated trail network.
- Defines programming needs for park sites consistent with demographic trends in the University Community.
- Creates and adopts a special assessment district to assure that parks and recreation facilities and programs are adequately

equipped, staffed, and maintained and able to meet the needs of the University Community.

Policy 3: Require the dedication of neighborhood and community park sites in future phases of development, before the new population to be served by the parks exist.

Policy 4: Require that planned sites for park facilities be developed as part of an interconnected open space system.

Policy 5: Require that neighborhood and community parks are sited, programmed, and developed in an environmentally sensitive fashion that is consistent with overarching principles of the University Community development.

Policy 6: Provide park facilities programmed with active recreational facilities, including athletic facilities, such as multi-purpose fields, ball fields, multi-purpose courts, and other facilities oriented towards youth leagues and team sports in order that the existing highest recreational need in the Community is addressed.

Objective: Establish open space and park facilities alongside and integrated with development

Policy 7: Require that multi-family residential developments of five or more units provide recreational or open space facilities onsite. (Add text re: fees contribution?)

Policy 8: Require that large-scale commercial developments, such as the proposed town centers or village centers, provide recreational or open space facilities onsite.

Policy 9: Encourage industrial and business parks to incorporate employee recreational facilities within those areas.

GOAL 2: HIGH QUALITY PASSIVE AND NATURAL OPEN SPACES FOR COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Objective: Establish a system of greenways/conservation corridors

Policy 1: Create a system of connected open space and recreation areas, utilizing trails.

Objective: Protect and preserve natural resources through designated passive open space areas.

Policy 2: Develop open space corridor areas alongside watercourses and valued natural resource areas.

Policy 3: Provide open space buffer zones areas sensitive natural resource areas and urban development.

GOAL 3: A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM OF PUBLIC PATHWAYS AND BIKEWAYS

Objective: Create a trail system that provides residents with safe, useable, and attractive bicycle and pedestrian trails.

Policy 1: Require that a comprehensive network of pedestrian paths be established linking each portion of the University Community, including the town center, the UC, neighborhood centers, commercial centers, schools, and parks.

Policy 2: Require each phase of new development in the University Community connect with and expand upon existing trail facilities.

Policy 3: Encourage infrastructure rights-of-way or easements to be designed and developed to accommodate trails where feasible and where compatible with the intended primary use.

Policy 4: Encourage the development of trail facilities in greenway or conservation corridor areas.

Policy 5: Require new that new trail facilities provide connect with existing and planned regional trail facilities.

GOAL 4: DUAL USE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARKLAND

Objective: Create opportunities to use parkland for dual purposes

Policy 1: Require the siting of park facilities adjacent to school facilities.

Policy 2: Require use agreements between school jurisdiction and park jurisdictions, including time and nature of use for recreation facilities.

Policy 3: Design storm drainage basins to accommodate both passive and active recreational uses during the dry periods.

Policy 4: Develop passive recreational facilities in natural resource conservation areas, e.g., nature interpretation, bird watching information, and similar amenities.

Policy 5: Integrate community facilities, such as community centers, auditoriums, day care centers, seniors facilities, and other uses into park facilities.

Policy 6: Encourage opportunities for shared use recreation facilities with adjacent planned-for UC facilities (Refer to Area-plan policy).

GOAL 5: ADDRESS RECREATIONAL NEEDS OF ALL COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

Objective: Meet recreation Needs for the range of residents in the University Community.

Policy 1: Conduct a detailed recreation demand analysis in order to match park siting and program characteristics with community need.

Policy 2: Create park facilities programmed with facilities for all age groups, including children and youth, teens, university students, and adults.