

## **Section Four**

### **4.0 RECREATION PROGRAMS**

In striving to attain its purpose of developing and implementing quality, value-based programs that encourage healthy lifestyles and celebrate the community's diversity, the City of Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department provides a vast array of recreation, social, and cultural programs and events for all segments of the Santa Clarita community. This section analyzes the programs and services, and includes a review the current level of recreation program and services offered by the Department. Based on qualitative and quantitative data collected during the Master Plan process and the review and analysis of current programs, there are no significant gaps in programming. Staff has responded well to meeting the diverse program interests of the community. However, it is timely to review programs offerings; eliminate any duplication, focus on core program, and strengthen existing program offerings to respond to changing demographics and recreation preferences. As the community demographics are constantly changing, ensuring programs are convenient and affordable for residents will demand staff's continual attention and resources.

#### **4.1 Recreation Benefits**

In addition to residents having access to recreation facilities, trails, and open spaces, the availability of a wide-range of recreation programs and leisure opportunities is a major component to the quality of life in any community. Recreation programs benefit individuals, families, businesses, neighborhoods and households of all ages, income levels, cultures and abilities, by creating environments that engage people in positive activities. Recreation programs and services that are developed, designed, and delivered effectively can provide the following benefits:

- Create a unique sense of place
- Promote healthy lifestyles
- Advance lifelong learning
- Provide for safety and security
- Foster youth development
- Create strong families
- Strengthen cultural unity
- Promote economic vitality
- Protect and steward the environment
- Create fun and celebration

Recreation pursuits range from organized activities such as sports, classes, youth activities, family programming, and community events to more passive endeavors such as picnics, hiking, cycling, and walking. Effective recreation programs promote the positive use of leisure time and a lifelong commitment to a healthy lifestyle, personal development, and a strong community.

Through the community outreach effort, Santa Clarita residents identified their priorities for recreation programs and facilities that support the quality of life in Santa Clarita, including:

- Opportunities to enhance physical fitness, health, and well-being;
- Opportunities to gather and socialize with others;
- Opportunities for hobby, self-improvement, or career development;
- Opportunities to give back to the community through volunteer work.

## **4.2 Existing Recreation Programs**

### **Existing Programs and Services**

The City of Santa Clarita is committed to the delivery of quality, affordable and accessible recreation programs. In FY 2005-06 the Department served over 569,500 participants in award-winning programs and activities. Of those participating, 46% were non-residents based on RecWare registration data. A summary of the Program Inventory and participation levels is presented below in Exhibit 4.2-1. The highest participation level is in programs for youth (grades K-5) and teens (grades 6-12), especially in youth sports and aquatics. There is also a high level of participation in child development programs for children under 5 years old. Santa Clarita was recently recognized by America's Promise as one of "100 Best Communities for Young People".

**Exhibit 4.2-1: Santa Clarita Recreation Services Inventory**

Activity	Frequency				Time			Age Group					* 2006 Attendances
	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall	Occasional	Day	Evening	5 & under	K-6	Teen	Adult	65 & Over	
Adult Sports													5,178
Aquatics													185,401
C.E.R.T.													966
Child Development													17,844
Contract Classes													112,004
Cowboy Festival													6,055
Day Camps													14,032
Excursions													201
Daddy Daughter Dance													174
Tennis													15,534
Youth Sports													212,182
<b>Total</b>													<b>569,571</b>

\* This figure indicates the number of registrants/participants multiplied by the number of classes or events held.

Participation Data was not available for Volunteerism, Older Adult Activities, Community Services, Arts and Events, and Special Events.

In the City's 2004-2007 Community Strategic Plan, Cultural Arts, Youth Activities, and Public Safety (which included teen behavior) were among the top ten issues identified in a comprehensive community input process. The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services has been responsive in addressing these issues and to implementing many of the suggestions for programs and services put forth by its residents. In general, the types of recreation programs and activities offered by the City of Santa Clarita are determined through customer interest; input from local users, residents and employees; and input from the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission.

**Other Service Providers**

The City is not the only community service provider meeting the various needs of Santa Clarita. The Department frequently works in collaboration with other agencies and organizations to deliver services, and should expand this effort in the future. A listing of key community service providers - both current and potential - is included in Exhibit 4.2-2 below. In an era of tight

fiscal resources, it is paramount that public, non-profit, and private businesses work collaboratively to maximize existing resources to deliver public services. The Arts Alliance, a coalition of local community arts organizations and the non-profit Santa Clarita Valley Committee on Aging are two key partners working with the City in providing a wide range of cultural arts and older adult activities, respectively.

**Exhibit 4.2-2: Existing and Potential Service Partners**

<i>Table 4.2-2 Existing and Potential Service Partners</i>	
<b><i>Cultural Arts Partners</i></b>	
Arts Advisory Committee	Arts Alliance (over 20 arts organizations)
Redevelopment Committee	Old Town Newhall Association
College of the Canyons	California Institute of the Arts
The Masters College	Visions in Progress Youth Advisory Committee
Local School Districts	Local Parent Teacher Associations
Human Relations Forum	Local Faith-Based Organizations
Santa Clarita Valley Libraries	Santa Clarita Valley Boys and Girls Club
Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society	County of Los Angeles
Chamber of Commerce	Social/Fraternal Organizations
SCV Tourism Bureau	Performing Tree
<b><i>Special Needs Population Partners</i></b>	
Carousel Ranch and Heads-Up Therapy with Horses	L.A. County Department of Children and Family Services
Santa Clarita Valley Special Olympics	Autism Organization
<b><i>Older Adult Program Partners</i></b>	
SC Committee on Aging	Dial-a-Ride
Santa Clarita Adult Day Health Center	Senior Center of Santa Clarita Valley
AARP	SCV Food Pantry
L.A. County Health Services/Nursing Home	Alzheimer's National Association
	L.A. County Elder Abuse Hotline
<b><i>Youth and Teens Program Partners</i></b>	
Local School Districts	Local Faith-Based Organizations
Mountasia	Santa Clarita Public Access Channel
Local Parent Teacher Associations	Santa Clarita Boys and Girls Club
Local Boys and Girl Scouts	Chamber of Commerce
SCV YMCA	Santa Clarita Valley libraries
SCV Youth Project	Valencia Town Center
SC Volunteer Resource Center	ACTION
Magic Mountain	County of Los Angeles
City of Santa Clarita Student Employment Program	Betty Ferguson Foundation

California Youth Chess League	Hart District Regional Occupational Program
SCV School and Business Alliance	Arts Alliance
Santa Clarita Scholarship Program	AYSO Soccer
SCVAA Youth Sports	Back Country Horsemen of CA
Equestrian Trails International	Center for Adolescent Health
GLADD	Canyon Country Little League
School to Career Program	Positive Coaching Alliance
VIP Youth Advisory Committee	Homeowners Associations
Child Care Resource Center	Family Day Care Association of the SCV
Santa Clarita Child and Family Center	KIDZ Love Soccer
Young Champions, Inc.	
<i>Public Safety/Teen Concerns Partners</i>	
CERT	Neighborhood Watch Groups
Homeowners Associations and Neighborhoods	Faith-Based Organizations
Parent Teacher Associations	Saugus Action Committee
Canyon County Advisory Group	Volunteers on Patrol
Anti-Gang Task Force	L. A. County Sheriff's Office
School Districts	Visions in Progress
Human Relations Forum	Blue Ribbon Task Force

The Department, together with parents, young people, business leaders, faith-based organizations and law enforcement developed a Youth Strategic Plan in 1996 that addressed at-risk youth challenges such as lack of job training and limited transportation. The Plan resulted in a variety of new services and programs. The Department also actively collaborates with the Boys and Girls Club, schools and the Sheriff's Department to provide services for youth and teens. The City is also addressing the obesity issue among youth and adults through multi-disciplinary health partnerships with employers, health care providers, schools, public health organizations, and private fitness providers.

There are several recreation-oriented businesses that offer instructional classes for a variety of interests in City and community facilities. For example, the City partners with Musical Stepping Stones in offering pre-school, youth music, and sign language classes; and Kidz Love Soccer for soccer clinics. These are excellent examples of public/private partnerships to maximize resources and service to the public.

A wide variety of experiences and opportunities are available to the community through the programs and services provided by the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Community Services.

The City's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services provides recreation activities and programs at 14 City facilities, which include:

- Bouquet Canyon Park
- Canyon Country Park
- Central Park
- City Hall
- Community Center
- North Oaks Park
- Newhall Park
- Newhall Community Center
- Old Orchard Park
- Santa Clarita Park
- Santa Clarita Sports Complex and Aquatic Center
- Valencia Glen Park
- Valencia Heritage Park
- Valencia Meadows Park

Schools utilized for programming activities include:

- Arroyo Seco Junior High School
- Golden Valley High School
- James Foster Elementary School
- La Mesa Junior High School
- North Park Elementary School
- Placerita Junior High School
- Rancho Pico Junior High School
- Rio Norte Junior High School
- Santa Clarita Community College District facilities
- Saugus High School
- Sierra Vista Junior High School
- Valencia High School
- West Ranch High School
- Canyon High School
- William S. Hart High School

Businesses contracted for delivery of various activities in their locations of business include Santa Clarita Lanes, Santa Clarita Karate, ATA Black Belt Academy, GymcheerUSA, Fun & Fit Gymnastic Center, Wallers' GymJam Academy, Shin's Antigravity Sports, Gymboree, Picasso Playmates, Sign, Sign and Play, Vibe Performing Arts Center, Valencia Lanes, STAR Dance

Center, Vista Valencia Golf Course, New World Dance, Ice Station Valencia, Santa Clarita Athletic Club, and T.K. Tae Kwan Do.

### **4.3 Program Needs Assessment**

In the Master Plan process, a variety of methods and processes were utilized in obtaining public input. The data derived from the public input process was the foundation upon which the program analysis and recommendations were developed. Those methods included:

- **Community Outreach:** Information gathered from Santa Clarita residents and stakeholders through a variety of methods including: a series of three (3) workshops; workshop participant questionnaires; two (2) focus groups; and fourteen (14) stakeholder interviews.
- **Community-Wide Telephone Survey:** The community-wide random sample survey provides current, statistically valid information specific to Santa Clarita that provides detailed information of the types of recreation facilities and programs most often utilized by Santa Clarita's residents.

In addition to the community outreach effort, the current and future demographic composition of the City was analyzed. Demographic trends were obtained through a variety of resources that included national, state, regional and local demographics. Emerging and future population trends and their implications for parks and recreation for the Santa Clarita community were evaluated.

The evaluation of programs is intended to help focus the strategic direction for community services in the future. The focus of the program analysis is to identify service needs related to recreation interests. These interests may be accommodated in public facilities such as libraries, community centers, schools, public parks, or other centers. This prioritization of needs in this way helps facilitate park planning as program needs drive what improvements are needed. Program and space needs are interconnected and interdependent.

Exhibit 4.3-1 is a listing of all of the program needs identified in the extensive community process.

Exhibit 4.3-1: Program Needs Summary

Exhibit 4.3-1  Santa Clarita Program Needs Summary	NEEDS IDENTIFICATION TOOLS							Total
	Quantitative (2X)	Qualitative (1X)						
	Community-Wide Telephone Survey	Workshop #1 - 6/11/07	Workshop Participant Questionnaires	Stakeholder Interviews	Workshop #3 - 11/28/07	Community Leader Focus Group	City Staff Focus Group	
Identified Need								
Adult Ballroom Dance								1
Aerobics/Spinning/Fitness								3
Archery								1
<b>Arts or Crafts Programs/Education</b>								6
At-Risk Youth Programs								3
Baseball								1
Bicycling								1
BMX Programs								2
Cooking Classes/Instruction								2
Dance Instruction								2
Excursions								1
Family-Based Programs, e.g. Day Care								2
Festivals/Community Celebrations								3
Fly Fishing								2
Golf Instruction/Programs								1
Health and Wellness Programs								2
History/Heritage Tours/Lectures								1
Hobbies/Self-Imp/Career Dev.								2
Intergenerational Programs/Mentoring								2
Intern Programs in Parks								1
Martial Arts								2
Movies/Theatre in Parks								1
Nature Education Programs								2
Non-Traditional Programming								2
Obesity Prevention								2
On-Line Classes for Older Adults								1
Outdoor Concerts								2
Outdoor/Adventure Programs								3
Passive Activities (walking/bird watching)								2
PM Youth Classes for Working Parents								1
Preschool Programs								2
Public Art								1
Senior Programs								3
Soccer								3
Social Activities								1
<b>Special Needs Programs</b>								4
Sports								3
Swimming/Aquatics								3
<b>Teen Programs (15-20 years)</b>								7
Tennis Instruction/Programs								1
Volunteer Programs								1
Water Polo								1
Young Adult/Adult Programs								3
Youth Intramural Sports Leagues								1
<b>Youth Programs</b>								7
Youth Sports Training								1

The programs and/or services with a higher priority of need were identified in four or more of the assessment processes. The highest priority recreation program needs in Santa Clarita are:

- Youth Programs
- Teen Programs (15-20 years)
- Arts or Crafts Programs/Instruction
- Special Needs Programs

In addition to these needs, health and fitness activities, such as aerobics classes, health and wellness programs, obesity prevention activities, and sports and aquatics were seen as important. Opportunities for hiking and outdoor adventures that promote health and fitness exist in the City's extensive trail and open space network, which includes 342 acres of developed parks, 37 miles of existing trails, and approximately 3,000 acres of open space. Programs for the older adult population and community wide festivals and events also were identified as important needs during the assessment process. There is also a need to provide unstructured play and social gathering opportunities for youth.

The top three of the needs identified in this community process were also part of the top ten issues identified in the City's 2004-07 Community Strategic Plan, indicating continued interest in the expansion of these program areas. The top three needs identified in the current community process are Youth Programs, Teen Programs (15-20 Years) and Arts or Crafts Programs/Education.

## **4.4 Program Recommendations**

The following program recommendations address the top program needs based on the assessment process. These may address needs of a specific age group or the community in general. There may be some overlap or interdependency among the recommended actions. There is also a relationship between program needs and park and facility needs discussed in other sections of the Master Plan.

### **Youth Programs**

The Department has built on its past success as one of the **100 Best Communities** for youth by expanding the Department's role in addressing the broader issues of youth development by partnering with schools, law enforcement, and other community agencies in a multi-disciplinary approach to improve youth resiliency, self-esteem, and family relationships. Opportunities exist to further expand on this success.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Maintain cooperative efforts with youth sports organizations, e.g., the Positive Coaching Alliance, to provide safe and accessible programs that develop sports skills, good sportsmanship, and provide youth experiences in organized sports.
- Continue to provide the support needed for the 10-14 year age group by offering an array of programs and services that include tutoring, mentoring, non-sports activities, and volunteer opportunities.
- Through the Anti-Gang Task Force, Santa Clarita Valley Youth Project, Santa Clarita Sheriff's Substation, public health, social service and non-profit agencies, continue to offer prevention and education programs like Character Counts that serve at-risk youth and their families.
- Address the needs of multi-generational families and develop workshops, counseling, and educational programs that assist the children, parents, and grandparents in accessing resources and developing life skills.
- Provide indoor and outdoor spaces for supervised but unstructured free play for youth.
- Continue financial assistance support for youth who cannot afford program fees.
- Expand preschool programming with an emphasis on social skills, the arts, environmental education, experiences, and physical fitness.
- Continue to partner with the education community in developing an anti-bullying/positive race relations program for implementation in schools and the community.
- Provide more ongoing child development programs that develop preschoolers socially and physically, preparing them in concert with educational goals of the local schools.
- Integrate youth development strategies into the development, design, and delivery of youth programs and services.
- Expand youth programs and services with an emphasis on the following activities:
  - Aquatics experiences and lessons
  - Recreational sports
  - Academic and homework assistance
  - Arts activities
  - Activities on school sites
  - Technology-based programs and services e.g. on-line classes, Wii
  - Out of school care and/or activities (Out of school care includes those times that school is not in session including before and after school as well as spring, winter, and summer breaks)
  - Environmental education
  - Civic engagement and volunteerism

- Physical fitness, nutritional education
- Interactive family programming, including intergenerational programs
- Explore, expand, and establish opportunities for youth to participate in the ongoing identification, development, and delivery of programs, services, and events.
- Continue to collaborate in the delivery of programs and services for youth including special interest class instructors, private agencies, and non-profit organizations.
- Work with private providers and others to expand licensed childcare opportunities, particularly for infants.
- Develop special events for the youth including the continuation and expansion of teen dances.
- Explore and work with other youth in this age group to program where middle and high school teens like to connect to friends such as neighborhood retail centers, movie theatres, bowling alleys, etc.
- Promote mentoring and volunteer programs that provide opportunities for youth mentoring youth, business mentoring youth, seniors mentoring youth, and youth connecting with seniors.
- Explore opportunities to expand excursion programs that provide for highly interactive experiences for youth.
- For middle and high school youth, consider “non-traditional” activities such as those mentioned in community process (e.g. BMX, and others such as kayaking, mountain climbing, snowboarding, surfing, laser tag, paintball, etc).

## **Teen Programs (15-20 years)**

This age group is considered still at risk and one of the most important age groups to address in terms of programming and services, promoting healthy lifestyles, and positive experiences that create lifelong skills and leisure pursuits. Visions in Progress is the City of Santa Clarita’s Youth Advisory Committee. This committee allows youth the opportunity to contribute their ideas, opinions, and recommendations for solutions on City activities, projects, issues, and decisions relating to the teens of the City of Santa Clarita. Emphasis will be primarily on academic support, health and wellness, mentoring with an emphasis on college, career and job preparation, as well as civic and volunteer involvement.

**Recommended Actions:**

- Through the VIP Youth Advisory Committee, Anti-Gang Task Force, Santa Clarita Valley Youth Project, Santa Clarita Sheriff's Substation, public health, social service, and non-profit agencies, continue to offer prevention and education programs like Character Counts that serve at-risk youth and their families.
- Expand programming to provide targeted volunteer opportunities for this age group to support their efforts in preparing for college entry requirements.
- Strengthen the existing youth employment program that promotes skills in searching and maintaining employment. Program would promote academic success for long-term career and/or employment planning as well as working closely with the business and educational community partnering for the long-term success of youth.
- Explore and work with other youth in this age group to program where middle and high school teens like to connect to friends such as neighborhood retail centers, movie theatres, bowling alleys, etc.
- Promote mentoring and volunteer programs that provide opportunities for youth to impact positive social change, mentor youth, business mentoring youth, seniors mentoring youth, and youth mentoring seniors.
- Create a clean and wholesome teen gathering place.
- Consider "non-traditional" or "alternative" activities that are of interest to this age group, such as BMX programs identified in the community process and such activities as kayaking, mountain climbing, and tournaments (snowboarding, surfing, laser tag, paintball, etc.).
- Provide classes and programs at convenient times and locations for older teens that may only have free time evenings and weekends.
- Develop special events for this age group including the continuation and expansion of teen dances.
- Explore opportunities to expand excursion programs that provide for highly interactive experiences for youth.
- Explore, expand, and establish opportunities for youth to participate in the ongoing identification, development, and delivery of programs, services, and events.
- Create and/or utilize technology-based programs and services (e.g. on-line classes).

## **Arts or Crafts Programs/Education**

Working in collaboration with the Arts Alliance, other community organizations and private providers, a wide variety of arts and crafts activities for all age groups is currently offered by the Department. The community process, however, indicated a continued interest in the expansion of these programs. Interest in cultural arts events and activities that provide entertainment such as concerts and theatre productions as well as those that develop skills in dancing, drama, music, and the arts will continue to grow as residents of all ages and ethnicities seek these opportunities close to home.

### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Continue to address outstanding action steps identified in the City's 2005 Strategic Plan Update.
- Increase promotion to attract and build audiences for theatrical performance and experiences.
- Foster cultural unity through cooperative programs and events that celebrate the community's cultural heritage, character, and spirit.
- Showcase different cultures in special event programming to enhance cultural understanding and unity.
- Expand cultural events and creative experiences for all ages through community partnerships with the Arts Alliance, the College of the Canyons, merchants, businesses, Chamber of Commerce, and other community organizations.
- Install marquee signs in parks to promote arts events.
- Encourage the preservation and restoration of historic structures to create community pride and a sense of history for Santa Clarita.
- Draw on local community resources such as the Santa Clarita Historical Society, local architecture, and historical societies to assist with historic restoration projects and programs.
- In partnership with local school districts and the Santa Clarita Historical Society, expand interpretive outreach programs about Santa Clarita's history and agriculture. Programs should be developed to follow the California Science and History-Social Science curriculum framework and content standards.
- Continue to produce arts and cultural events that improve the quality of life for residents, such as the Cowboy Festival, Concerts in the Park, and the Fine Crafts Fairs.

## **Special Needs/Developmentally Disabled Programs**

Santa Clarita's special needs population includes the physically and developmentally disabled and the frail elderly. This population benefits both from therapeutic recreation, social, and educational programs as well as from ensuring that all programs offered by the Department are made as accessible and safe as possible. A need for additional outreach to the disabled, collaborative efforts with other providers, and expanded therapeutic programs and services was noted in the community process.

### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Continue to support Santa Clarita Valley Special Olympics in providing an array of training opportunities and competition for the Santa Clarita disabled population.
- Outreach to the disabled population and agencies that serve this population to determine recreation, social, and educational needs and desired programs.
- Based on the outreach results, develop/implement more adaptive programming (e.g. wheelchair basketball, equestrian programs).
- Ensure that all Department programming is safe and accessible by the special needs community and meets ADA standards to the extent possible.
- Consider formation of a disabled residents committee to advise the Department on issues of concern to the disabled community.
- Expand transportation alternatives for residents unable to drive to activities and programs.
- Explore opportunities for passive recreation at parks and recreation sites to meet the needs of the disabled population.
- Develop programs in natural, outdoor settings that are wheelchair accessible that offer opportunities for inclusion, socialization, and intergenerational programming, e.g. gardening, fishing.

## **Festivals/Community Events**

Community events and festivals that bridge the community and bring people together for recreation, cultural expression, and entertainment are some of the Department's most popular programs. These events unite the community, and build community identity and vitality. Venues such as an amphitheatre and the Santa Clarita Performing Arts Center located at the College of the Canyons has the potential of becoming the heart of the City and destination venues for visitors. The public outreach process indicated that residents consider these events a very high priority and are interested in expanding events.

***Recommended Actions:***

- Expand community and population specific special events that create a solid sense of community and foster family connectedness.
- Offer movies/theatre in the parks.
- Consider an intergenerational health and wellness event, with an emphasis on physical activities and nutritional education.
- Explore opportunities to expand environmental education events for families, as well as middle and high school youth.
- Target events for middle school separate from high school.
- Develop a multi-cultural event that highlights the customs of various cultures and ethnicities.
- Continue to build on the success of the Cowboy Festival, City Marathon, and other special events.

## **Health and Fitness Programs**

The focus on health and wellness has become a national interest for all ages. As boomers age, they anticipate living a longer and healthier life and look for opportunities that support this goal. Obesity issues for both youth and adults challenge the Department to continue to foster physical and mental health and wellness through active and passive recreation activity, and to assume a leadership role in educating the public about how to achieve health and wellness.

***Recommended Actions:***

- Develop and continue existing multi-disciplinary health partnerships with schools, local hospitals, and health care providers, private health clubs, and other agencies to bring public information and educational programs that prevent obesity and successfully promote physical activity across entire communities.
- Regularly and succinctly articulate to the public and policy makers the health and wellness outcomes of Department programs and facilities.
- Collaborate with local school districts to ensure state standards for physical education are implemented and supplement school programs with physical activity and skill development in recreation offerings.
- Provide healthy snacks that meet state nutritional standards in the Department-sponsored programs, day camps, special events, and vending machines.
- Incorporate healthy eating and exercising habits into after-school recreation programs and camps for young children that model healthy living.
- Address the needs of an aging population by encouraging participation in physical activity with an emphasis on the gentler aerobic activities.

- Encourage bicycle safety and use as an alternative to automobile travel and provide secure bicycle and pedestrian access to schools and parks.
- Expand physical fitness and all other health and wellness activities, threading these themes throughout other programs such as community events, hiking, dancing, etc.
- Market recreation as essential to healthy lifestyles for all ages and educate consumers about disease prevention and wellness programs accessible to them.
- Continue the City Marathon and other events that promote health and fitness.
- Provide outdoor skills training, and adventures that encourage individuals and families to hike, rock climb, camp, and in other ways enjoy the outdoors.
- Develop drop-in, fitness opportunities for individuals and groups set in a natural environment in parks or along trails.

## **Older Adult Programs**

Currently, Santa Clarita seniors are served by the non-profit Santa Clarita Committee on Aging (Santa Clarita Senior Center). Approximately 6,000 adults over 65 years of age participate in a variety of recreational and social activities provided by the Senior Center and various community organizations. The City currently contributes some funding for the Center's activities. Population trends indicate that although Santa Clarita is a community of many young families and adults, there is a growing population of older adults. All demographic reports for the region and state indicate this number will greatly increase with the aging of baby boomers. Although not specifically identified as a high priority through the public outreach process, the need to provide safe and accessible programs to all Santa Clarita population segments was a common theme, and with the expected growth of this population, the Department should be prepared to take a more active role in providing programs and services to meet the needs of this group. Input from the community process indicated a need for decentralized older adult programs, an additional older adult center, and expanded outreach to the underserved.

### ***Recommended Actions:***

- Work closely with the Senior Center to provide a comprehensive older adult services program area that includes recreational, educational, and socially targeted activities.
- Decentralize older adult services and programs.
- Develop marketing strategy and programs that include more active recreational activities for the growing population of "baby boomer"

seniors or “young old” who are interested in health and fitness activities and social connectedness. Specific program areas could include:

- a. Aquatics
  - b. Older adult sports – e.g. bocce ball, lawn bowling
  - c. Health and wellness
  - d. Social clubs
  - e. Physical fitness – Tai Chi, hiking
  - f. Computer education
  - g. Specialized, lifelong learning opportunities including on-line classes
  - h. Environmental education and awareness
- When possible, search out and create collaborative relationships to establish partnerships in the development of the older adult services delivery system.
  - Continue funding Senior Center recreational and social programs.
  - Assist in expanding transportation alternatives for the non-driver.

## **4.5 Program Recommendations Summary**

The Department is challenged to keep up with the growing population and the public’s demand for diverse recreation programs. The demand increases on many fronts from different age segments and demographic groups. Santa Clarita’s median age is 33.6 years but the older adult population will continue to grow as “baby boomers” age. Even though there is some leveling off and decline in school enrollment, there is a large school age population. Service for youth will remain a priority in the city as evidenced by from the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in the Master Plan process. Many of the program recommendations listed will require new or improved parks and facilities to address program needs.

There is a consistent demand for **convenient, accessible, and equitably distributed** recreation programs throughout the City to serve busy, commuting, and two-income households. The scarcity of time and traffic congestion precipitates the need for recreation close to home and transportation alternatives to access programs. The interest in a community center or facility to serve older adults and youth in Canyon Country is an example of the community’s preference.

There is a keen interest in **cultural arts programs and events** that provide entertainment such as concerts and theatre productions as well as those that develop skills in dancing, drama, music, and the arts. This interest will continue to grow as residents of all ages and ethnicities seek these opportunities close to home. Cultural events increase cultural understanding and connect disparate communities. Increased promotion to attract and build audiences for theatrical performance and experiences will be needed.

The Department can build on its past successes and **sustain both active and passive recreation programs for youth and teens**. Continuity in programs for before and after school care as well as active sports and fitness, outdoor activity and arts education will remain a priority. Time for non-structured play for younger children is also needed. Teens (15-20) have an interest in a clean and wholesome social gathering place.

Collaboration with other providers to **expand therapeutic recreation programs and ensure accessibility to facilities** is a priority.

The Department has a solid foundation to build on and is well-positioned to improve its programs; as it moves forward to implement the Master Plan and achieve its vision encouraging healthy lifestyles and celebrating the community's diversity.