

Section One

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Update (Master Plan) is based on the vision that parks, recreation facilities, programs, trails, and open space are important resources within the City of Santa Clarita. Across the nation, organizations such as the California Park and Recreation Society describe the many important ways recreation facilities and programming can help in creating healthy lifestyles and livable communities, including:

- Strengthen community identity and sense of place
- Protect important places (environmentally, historically, aesthetically)
- Foster human development and education
- Support economic activity
- Increase cultural unity
- Promote health and wellness through physical activity
- Provide civic and social meeting places
- Strengthen families
- Increase vitality and distinctiveness of individual neighborhoods

A park or a recreation facility means different things to different people. To some residents, parks are active sports fields; others have images of passive open spaces where one can walk, rest, and enjoy nature. Still others may envision parks as places for community gatherings and events. Indeed, parks and recreation facilities are used for all of these purposes and more. A diverse, vital recreation system is therefore necessary in sustaining Santa Clarita's visionary course.

Continuing the community-driven consensus process used in the successful development of previous parks as well as this Master Plan will be an important aspect of the successful evolution of Santa Clarita's park system. Parks and recreation as the "client" and ultimately the end-user should maintain their critical role in the park development process. The Parks Planning Section within the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department is critical to the successful design and development of parks that meet the needs of the community and fulfill the expectations of the citizens of Santa Clarita.

Key questions discussed in this Master Plan include: What parks, recreational facilities, and programs does Santa Clarita have? Who uses Santa Clarita parks, facilities, and programs? What role do parks, facilities, open space, and recreation programs have in the lives of residents? What types of parks, facilities, and programs does the Santa Clarita Valley need and which are the most important? What changes should be made to existing parks and facilities? Where will new parks, facilities, and programs be placed and how will they be funded and maintained?

1.1 Purpose of the Master Plan

The purpose of this Master Plan is to provide a realistic guide for the creative, orderly development and management of parks, recreation facilities and programs for the City, now and into the future. The Master Plan is an implementation tool of the General Plan, providing strategies for addressing the General Plan's Vision Statement, as well as goals and policies based on current analysis and community input.

Over the years, the City of Santa Clarita has actively undertaken a variety of planning efforts pertaining to individual Park Master Plans, Land Use studies, and Specific Plans. The Master Plan builds on many of these previous planning efforts and obtains new community input that has resulted in providing an up-to-date understanding of current and future recreation needs and opportunities specific to Santa Clarita.

This report is intended to be a flexible document, presenting findings and recommendations that will be evaluated, validated, and/or modified periodically as the City responds to unforeseen opportunities and constraints as well as changes in residents' needs and demands. It is anticipated that Master Plan recommendations will be considered on an annual basis in the context of other City priorities and, through incorporation into the City budget, so that recreation projects can begin the process of implementation.

It should be noted that this Master Plan includes a section on open space (Section 6) that summarizes various recent open space studies the City has undertaken. There is a strong connection between open space and recreation in Santa Clarita and Section 6 reflects the multiple roles of natural open space, from recreation to preservation of natural, visual, and cultural resources. Natural open space is also strongly connected to community identity in many ways, including as reinforcement of the areas "western" or early days heritage.

This report updates the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan adopted by the City Council in 1995.

1.2 Approach and Document Organization

The Master Plan document is organized into the following sections:

Section One: Introduction

This section summarizes the Master Plan's purpose and process. The current demographic composition of Santa Clarita and implications of recreation trends is briefly outlined. A list of related documents that were reviewed as part of the Master Plan is identified.

Section Two: Existing Recreation Resources

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

Section Three: Recreation Facility Needs Assessment

Section Three provides a detailed assessment of the recreation facility needs of the Santa Clarita community. Data from the community was obtained to develop an understanding of the demand for a variety of facilities. Both qualitative and quantitative information sources are discussed. The assessment utilizes the following needs identification tools:

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

Community Telephone Survey: The phone survey provides current, statistically valid information specific to Santa Clarita that gives detailed information for the types of recreation facilities most often utilized by Santa Clarita residents. A total of 550 randomly selected, geographically distributed households in and adjacent to the City of Santa Clarita were interviewed.

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

Service Area Analysis: An evaluation of how parks and recreation facilities are distributed throughout residential areas in Santa Clarita

Acreage Analysis: An evaluation of parkland acreage needs in the City based on established standards and on identified need for specific recreation facilities such as sports fields or courts

Program Needs Analysis: Evaluation of recreation program needs (Section Four) that generates facility needs.

Trends and Implications Report: A review of current literature and studies on state and national, social and recreational trends and patterns, and discussion of potential impacts on recreation in the City of Santa Clarita.

Section Four: Recreation Programs

Section Four provides an inventory of City recreation programs and services and a discussion of other recreation programs and services open to the public through private and non-profit providers. Using similar needs identification tools and prioritization processes as those outlined in detail in Section Three (for facilities), program needs are discussed and prioritized. Recommendations are provided that address identified programming needs.

Section Five: Recreation Facility Recommendations

Section Five provides recommendations with respect to existing and proposed parks, unimproved parkland, and joint use and collaborative or partnering opportunities. Recommendations are intended to address the recreation facility and program needs identified in Sections Three and Four and are the result of existing inventory, analysis of demand, community input, and consideration of established goals and policies.

Section Six: Open Space

Natural open space and trails plans, maps, and work plans are discussed in the context of existing and proposed recreation facilities. A “big picture” concept of a system of trails and open spaces is described.

Section Seven: Funding and Implementation

Sources for funding capital costs, as well as operations and maintenance costs, are identified, and current funding strategies are briefly discussed. Capital costs are assigned to the proposed recommendations discussed in Section Five and suggested funding sources are identified to assist the City in implementing the proposed Master Plan recommendations.

Appendix (separate document)

The Appendix contains many of the full original reports (trends analysis, demand and needs analysis, etc.) summarized in the Master Plan.

1.3 Context

Santa Clarita is a unique City recognized for its open space, diverse housing options, neighborhood orientation, and economic opportunities. The desirability of the area, coupled with the position of the City near population centers, has resulted in rapid growth and development over the last decade, spurring renewed planning efforts.

The City's General Plan, first adopted in 1991 following the City's incorporation in 1987, establishes a vision for the City that is well on its way to fulfillment. In 2000, the County of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Clarita established that the Santa Clarita Valley should be planned and developed on a regional basis, using a consistent set of guiding principles, goals, policies, and standards (General Plan Technical Background Report). The two agencies together are creating a joint General Plan named *One Valley One Vision* (OVOV) which unifies planning efforts for the communities of Santa Clarita and surrounding unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. This new planning effort, still underway, encompasses a larger planning area than did the previous General Plan. The planning area for this Master Plan is consistent with City boundaries (See Exhibit 1.3-1 Land Use), with consideration given to the wider planning area of the joint General Plan.

Physical Setting

Santa Clarita is a picturesque community of approximately 177,000¹ persons located at the junction of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, within the Santa Clara River watershed.

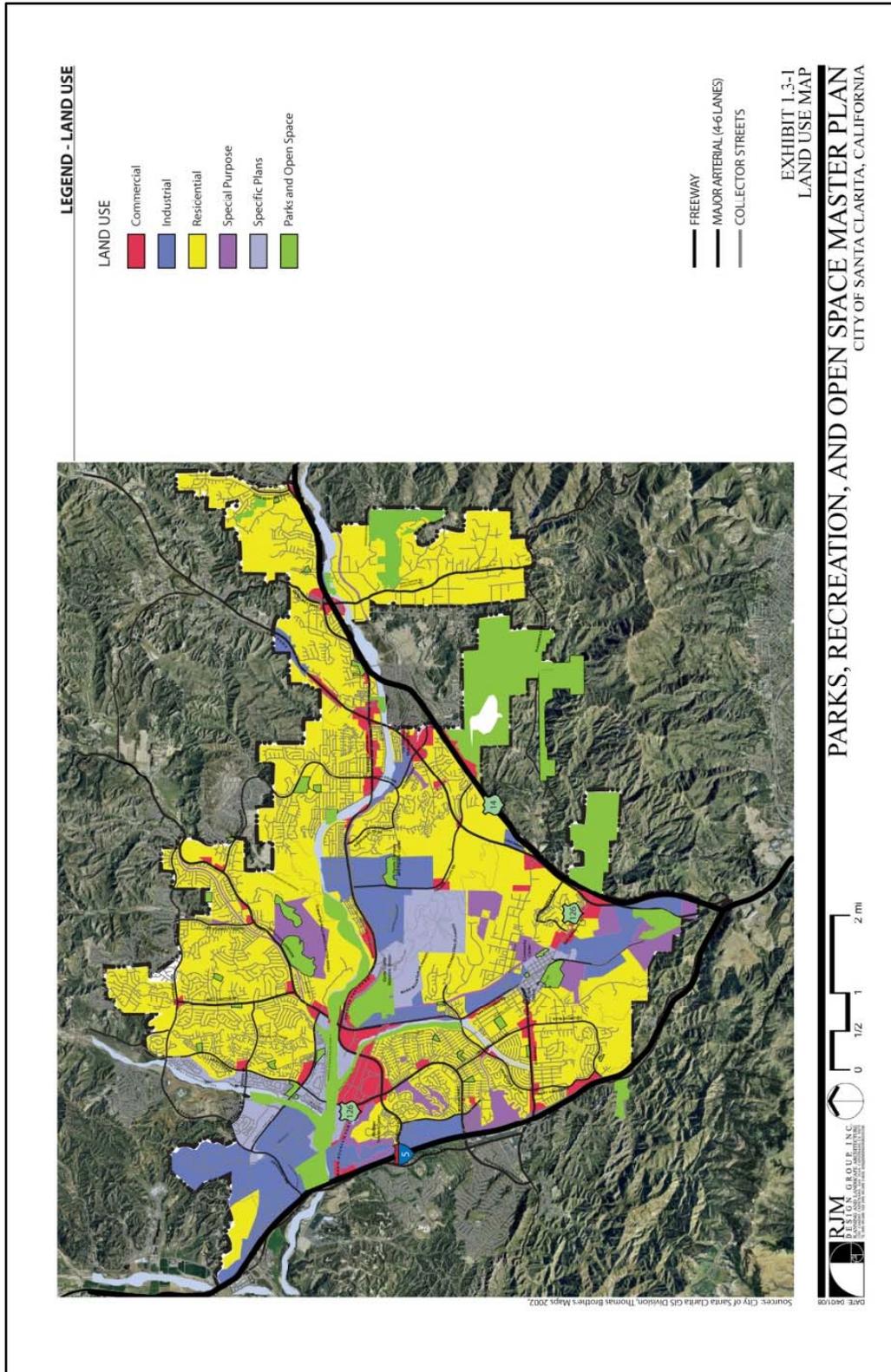
Within Santa Clarita, several significant natural and man-made features help shape neighborhoods and provide both opportunities and constraints with respect to parks, recreation, circulation, and community life. These include:

- Angeles National Forest
- Santa Susanna, San Gabriel, Sierra Pelona, and Del Sur mountain areas
- Santa Clara River corridor
- Prominent ridgelines
- Significant freeways such as the Interstate 5 Freeway and SR-14
- Canyons
- Scenic roadways

Varied topography and the preservation of hillsides, ridgelines, and open space provide many walking, hiking, equestrian, and cycling opportunities and contribute strongly to community identity and is a reminder of Santa Clarita's heritage.

¹ *State of California, Department of Finance estimate.*

Exhibit 1.3-1 City of Santa Clarita Land Use Map



History

The Santa Clarita Valley has a very interesting and rich cultural history that paints a picture of change over the last 9,000 years which includes the earliest Native American settlers, Spanish ranchos, discovery of gold in 1842, oil exploration, flooding, railroad expansion, the movie industry, and land booms.

Extensive preserved open space in and around Santa Clarita is a reminder of the early days in the Valley. Not only are there areas of special historical significance, but the ridgelines, drainage courses, and view sheds recall the landscape as seen by Native Americans and early Euro-American visitors. Beginning in 1769, when Gaspar de Portola was the first to write about the Santa Clarita region, there have been many significant events that have shaped the physical and economic evolution of the area, including:

- The discovery of gold in Placerita Canyon in 1842;
- The upper Santa Clarita Valley was the location of the first oil drilling in California following the discovery of oil seeps in Pico Canyon in 1865;
- Development of oil fields and the construction of lines for the Southern Pacific Railroad created an oil boom in the 1870's. Chevron Oil got its start as the Pioneer Oil Refinery at an open space site currently owned by the City;
- The failure of the St. Francis Dam in 1928 that caused hundreds of deaths and the destruction of many homes and orchards;
- The Fremont Pass, located near the current SR-14 and the Sierra Highway, was used by the Butterfield Overland Stage and by military units for access through the mountains. In 1863, General Beale cut a 90' deep passageway through the pass to improve the roadway and collected a toll along this vital route for 22 years, until the route was no longer needed. Today, "Beale's Cut" is part of open space owned by the City;
- Henry Mayo Newhall acquired almost all of the old Rancho San Francisco in 1873;
- The Valley was the scene of many Hollywood movie sets, including the "Tom Mix Cottages" in Newhall. Heritage Junction, on San Fernando Road, has been set aside for the preservation of historic structures;
- The OVOV Technical Background Report identifies several historic sites within the Valley, including: one listed on the National Register of Historic Places, eight listed as California Registered Historic Landmarks, and four as State Points of Historic Interest. Additionally, there are 69 identified archaeological sites within 1/4 mile of the Santa Clara River.

Demographic Context and Recreation Trends

Understanding the demographic context of Santa Clarita is an important component of recreation facility and program planning. Demographic characteristics such as age, presence of children, ethnicity, and income have been demonstrated in past research to have a relationship to recreation patterns and program needs. For these reasons, an overview of changes and emerging trends of the resident population is important as the community plans its preferred future. A complete demographic analysis is included in the Appendix.

The varying rates of participation in recreation activities by the various demographic segments of the population are taken into account when preparing the demand and needs projections. Santa Clarita has an above average proportion of population under 18 years of age which is reflected in the relatively large proportion of households with children. This together with an above average homeownership rate, high home values, rents, and income levels is indicative of an active community and defines the demand profile for the various types of City recreation facilities.

Santa Clarita is a City with potential growth of about 60,000 residents within the City limits until the time build-out is reached. The area surrounding the present City is expected to experience much higher growth. The demographic profile of the City has remained fairly stable over the past seventeen (17) years and indications are that this will continue. It is expected that Santa Clarita will experience a slowly increasing ethnic diversity. Household sizes increased somewhat between 1990 and 2007, and projections indicate that this trend has reached a peak and household size may decline slightly in the future. Household income levels are above average and are expected to remain so in the future.

1.4 Relationship to Other Documents

As described previously, the Master Plan is drawn directly from the comprehensive set of objectives and policies within the approved General Plan. In addition to the General Plan, there are a number of other existing documents and plans that relate to the Master Plan and influence its direction. Each of these documents and plans are briefly discussed below, along with a description of its relationship to the Master Plan.

The City of Santa Clarita General Plan

Each City in California is required by State law to adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan for its own physical development. The General Plan includes mandatory elements including land use, circulation and transportation, housing, conservation, noise, safety, and open space. California State law requires that the day-to-day decisions of a City should follow logically from, and be consistent with, the General Plan. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a planning tool that provides a coordinated program of recreational facility development and

management carrying out the goals and policies of the General Plan. The current adopted version of the General Plan was created in 1991.

One Valley One Vision Valleywide General Plan

One Valley One Vision is a current joint effort between the County of Los Angeles, the City of Santa Clarita and Valley residents and businesses to create a single vision and guidelines for the future growth of the Valley and the preservation of natural resources. The result will be a General Plan document and Environmental Impact Report for a planning area that includes the City as well as other areas such as Stevenson Ranch, Castaic, Val Verde, Agua Dulce, and the future Newhall Ranch. Implementation of the future General Plan will be administered by both the City and the County for lands within their respective jurisdictions. The General Plan, in Phase IV of its development at the time of this report, will be based on Vision and Guiding Principles and on the Technical Background Report.

Phase I Discovery. Workshops, Forums, and Public Outreach

Phase II Vision and Guiding Principles. A vision statement and a set of 36 guiding principles were developed from extensive public feedback efforts early in the General Plan process. These general goals will influence both the General Plan and this Master Plan.

Phase III Technical Background Report. Phase III of the General Plan effort established a database of existing Valley features important in development of the land use map and associated policies. This Master Plan will use the Technical Background Report as an information resource.

City of Santa Clarita Cultural Arts Master Plan

The Cultural Arts Master Plan, Phase I and II, was developed in 1997 and 1998. The Cultural Arts Master Plan identifies needs for cultural facilities; makes recommendations for satisfying those needs; and discusses creation of a local arts agency to support, promote, and develop arts and culture in the community. Top facility needs include: 1) a performing and visual arts center with a 1,000-seat theater, a 3,000 square-foot visual arts gallery, and 2) an outdoor amphitheater that accommodates 500-1,000 people in fixed seating with additional lawn seating that could allow for an audience of 2,500 total persons. The Cultural Arts Master Plan provides detailed suggestions on the architectural and site components of these facilities. This Master Plan addresses these suggestions in Section Five, Recommendations.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a civil rights law, which is intended to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities. Included in this law are provisions governing employment, communication, transportation, design, services,

and physical accessibility. Existing recreation facilities, new facilities, and recreation services are affected. The City continues to address the requirements of this law.

California Health and Safety Code

Section 115725 requires that a safety inspection program be conducted on all playgrounds by a National Playground Safety Institute Certified Playground Safety Inspector. Section 115730 of the Code also requires that agencies upgrade playgrounds by replacement or improvement to meet current regulations. City staff reviews equipment for safety as part of normal maintenance operations.

City of Santa Clarita Development Code/Zoning Ordinance and Map

The Development Code/Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map are the primary implementation tools of the City's Land Use Element, describing specific types of land use, use intensity, and development standards. The Master Plan is consistent with the Development Code/Zoning Ordinance and Map.

Future Development Plans/Tract Maps/Specific Plans

Future development will shape several areas in the City. In general, future development plans provide detailed information with respect to land use patterns and intensity, development standards, and treatment of natural resources within the area.

The process of developing these plans will likely affect the availability and management of new parks, open space, and trails. This Master Plan identifies general needs for facilities in new development areas of the City. Planning and design of these facilities is not covered in this Master Plan.

The Technical Background Report provides detailed information on future development projects and specific plan areas, summarized below:

Golden Valley Ranch. Nine-hundred acres (900 AC) of open space and an elementary school will be part of this 1,259-acre project.

Gate King Industrial Park. This 584-acre site will accommodate mostly industrial uses but also includes 273 acres of open space and four miles of trails (15-year development agreement).

Showcase. Open space lots and an 11.95-acre park are part of this 89.93-acre residential project.

Lyon Canyon Ranch. A specific plan has been developed for this 263-acre site that includes residential uses, an 11.93-acre elementary school, a park site, and 129 acres of open space.

Riverpark. The Santa Clara River runs through this 664-acre residential project. A 29-acre park and preservation of 300-acres of natural river bottom are included.

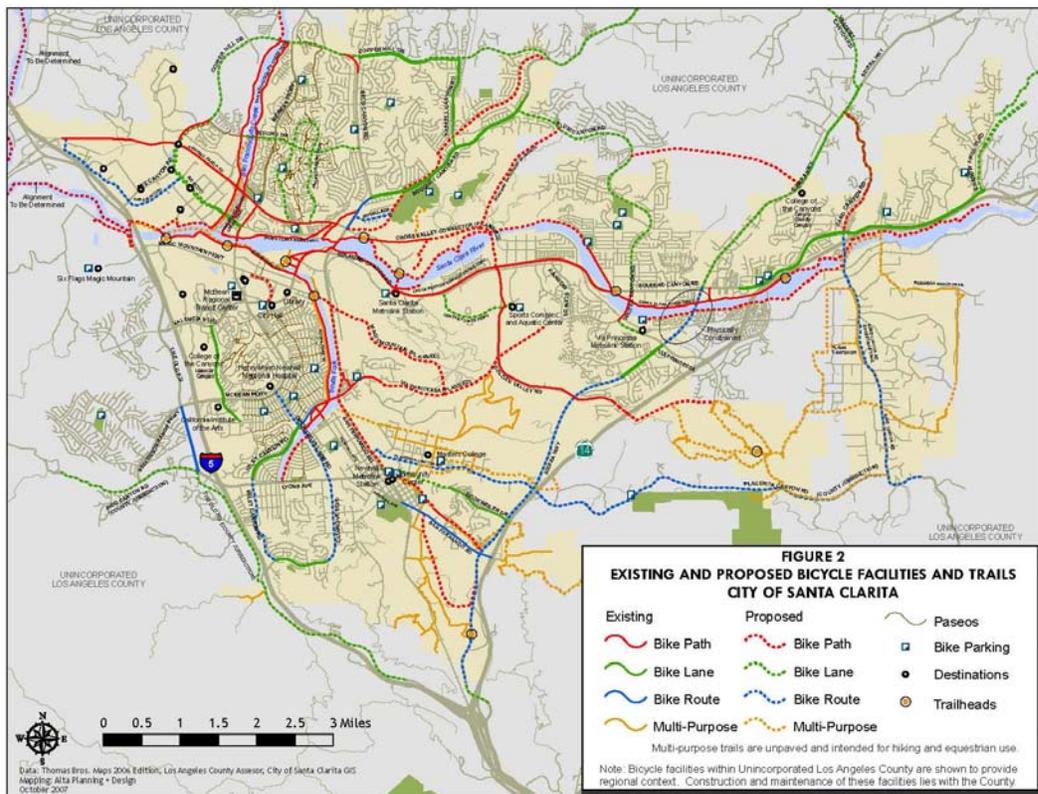
The Villages at Mid-Town. Owned by Sun Cal/Cherokee. This mixed-use project will include 406.95 acres of open space and 41.75 acres of recreational uses.

City of Santa Clarita Non-Motorized Transportation Plan

In June of 2008, the City adopted a Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. It is a comprehensive document that will guide the future development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, paseos, and trails within the City. With extensive input from the community, the Plan focuses on trail facilities, planning and policies related to bicycling and walking, non-motorized connections to transit, programs, and safe routes to schools that together form the basis of an overall non-motorized transportation network. Both on-street and off-street facilities are addressed.

Existing and proposed trails are shown in relation to open space and parkland, illustrating a strong connection between the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan report. Exhibit 1.4-1 is from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and illustrates the existing and proposed bicycle facilities and trail connections.

Exhibit 1.4-1 Existing and Proposed Bicycle Facilities and Trails Map



The following are the trail classifications from the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan:

CLASS I - Bike Path

Provides a completely separated right of way for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians with cross-flow traffic minimized. The trails are marked and landscaped. Fencing encourages use of designated access points.

CLASS II - Bike Lane

Provides a striped lane for one-way bike travel on a street or highway. Bike lanes are marked with signs and pavement striping.

CLASS III - Bike Route

Provides for shared use with pedestrian or motor vehicle traffic. Bike routes are marked with signs.

MULTI-USE

Located primarily in rural areas, these trails are unpaved and are available for equestrian, hiking, and mountain bike use. Trails are marked with lodge pole fencing.

In 2006, the County of Los Angeles adopted the Santa Clarita and Antelope Valley Trails Plan showing the desired trail connections within the unincorporated areas. The plan, prepared with input from the Santa Clarita Valley Trails Advisory Committee, identifies key points of connection between the City, County and Federal trail systems. The plan also incorporates the regional trails identified in the City's 1991 General Plan.

Together, these documents reflect the desired trail system within the City and the unincorporated territory of the Santa Clarita Valley.

City of Santa Clarita Open Space Acquisition Plan

The Open Space Acquisition Plan was developed by the City in 2002, serving as a tool to help maximize the preservation of open space. As indicated in the plan, the document strives to:

- Assist in the creation of a green belt surrounding the City
- Provide a framework for the City to evaluate, acquire, and maintain the most beneficial parcels
- Allow the City to maximize the expenditure of funds by targeting parcels that present the greatest economic, strategic, and natural resource value
- Create and enhance partnerships between the City and other agencies
- Provide an objective, systematic format for evaluating property
- Promote, protect, and preserve open space within the City to enhance overall quality of life
- Enhance the City's ability to secure grant funding

This document will be used as a resource for open space discussions in Section Six.

Open Space Preservation District

The City's preservation district is designed to preserve natural land from development, create more parks, and protect biological and geological resources. The District will also assist in completing the greenbelt buffer of open space around the City of Santa Clarita. Established in 2007 by a vote of property owners, the District provides a mechanism to assess properties a fee for open space purposes. Aspects of the District include:

- The benefit area includes lands within a 3 mile radius of City boundaries;
- At least 90% of future open space purchased will be preserved for natural open space; no more than 10% can be used for active, improved parkland;
- The District is expected to generate an additional \$1.5 million annually for acquisition; and
- The assessment is proposed to be in place for 30 years.

Park, Recreation, and Open Space Maintenance Standards and Practices

Park maintenance standards and practices for the City of Santa Clarita were reviewed as part of the Master Plan effort. The full report is included in the Appendix and generally describes maintenance practices as exemplary although offering some suggestions for improvement. These suggestions do not result in capital improvement projects that would otherwise be reflected in Section Five, Recommendations, of this report.

The California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights

The Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, offered by the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, lists fundamental experiences every child would benefit from experiencing before entering high school. The recommendations address recent concerns about youth detachment from outdoor activities, lack of physical exercise, and increased health risks. The State of California and the City of Santa Clarita are among the agencies and organizations that have endorsed or adopted (Santa Clarita City Council adopted on 5/27/08) the document (see <http://www.calroundtable.org/cobor.htm>). Every child should have the opportunity to:

- Discover California's Past
- Splash in the water
- Play in a safe place
- Camp under the stars
- Explore nature

- Learn to swim
- Play on a team
- Follow a trail
- Catch a fish
- Celebrate their heritage

In Santa Clarita or nearby, there are many opportunities to experience the activities on the list and the City continues to explore new options for furthering its commitment. In particular, the Pioneer/Chevron site, Beale's cut, and the Door of the Old Road (Elsmere Canyon) could become more effective historic resources and interpretive opportunities in the future.

1.5 Key Issues

Based on the needs assessment process and on information from the community strategic plan process, a set of key issues has been identified to guide the process of developing the Master Plan recommendations. Key issues include:

- New Open Space acquisition
- New trails to connect existing trail network
- Provision of Sports Facilities appropriate to the current and future population, to include:
 - Indoor basketball courts
 - Soccer fields
 - Tennis courts
 - Baseball fields
 - Softball fields
- Provision of parkland acreage quantities consistent with the City standard of 5 acres per thousand, with appropriate distribution
- Provision of appropriate number of community centers in appropriate locations
- Non-resident use of City facilities