

# 5

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND SCHOOLS

*The Parks, Open Space, and Schools Element sets forth policy guidance for a broad spectrum of open spaces and community facilities in Fresno. These spaces will provide areas appropriate for agricultural or resource production and conservation; parks and open spaces for recreation; areas for protection of natural resources; and school sites which support neighborhood identity and cohesion. A key need addressed in the element is the shortage of parks and recreation space, particularly in established areas of the city, and a lack of access to these facilities for all Fresnoans. This element aims to provide those special places that support a sense of community and are vital to creating a livable and sustainable Fresno.*

## 5.1 CONTEXT

Open space is one of the seven general plan elements required by California's Planning and Zoning Law, Government Code section 65302(e). While a city is required to address the mandatory seven topics or elements, State law allows a general plan format that best fits the unique circumstances of the city. The City of Fresno has chosen to combine the required components of a local open space plan within the larger context of a Parks, Open Space, and Schools Element because of the close relation that these topics have to one another in Fresno.

### Relationship to General Plan Goals

The objectives and policies in the Parks, Open Space, and Schools Element support the following General Plan goals:

6. Protect, preserve, and enhance natural, historic, and cultural resources.  
*Emphasize the continued protection of important natural, historic and cultural resources in the future development of Fresno. This includes both designated historic structures and neighborhoods, but also "urban artifacts" and neighborhoods that create the character of Fresno.*
7. Provide for a diversity of districts, neighborhoods, housing types (including affordable housing), residential densities, job opportunities, recreation, open space, and educational venues that appeal to a broad range of people throughout the city.
8. Develop Complete Neighborhoods and districts with an efficient and diverse mix of residential densities, building types, and affordability which are designed to be healthy, attractive, and centered by schools, parks, and public and commercial services to provide a sense of place and that provide as many services as possible within walking distance.  
*Intentionally plan for Complete Neighborhoods as an outcome, and not a collection of subdivisions which do not result in Complete Neighborhoods.*
9. Promote a city of healthy communities and improve quality of life in established neighborhoods.  
*Emphasize supporting established neighborhoods in Fresno with safe, well maintained, and accessible streets, public utilities, education and job training, proximity to jobs, retail services, healthy food, health care, affordable housing, youth development opportunities, open space and parks, transportation options, and opportunities for home grown businesses.*

12. Resolve existing public infrastructure and service deficiencies, make full use of existing infrastructure, and invest in improvements to increase competitiveness and promote economic growth.

*Emphasize the fair and necessary costs of maintaining sustainable water, sewer, streets, and other public infrastructure and service systems in rates, fees, financing and public investments to implement the General Plan. Adequately address accumulated deferred maintenance, aging infrastructure, risks to service continuity, desired standards of service to meet quality-of-life goals, and required infrastructure to support growth, economic competitiveness and business development.*

13. Emphasize the City as a role model for good growth management planning, efficient processing and permit streamlining, effective urban development policies, environmental quality, and a strong economy. Work collaboratively with other jurisdictions and institutions to further these values throughout the region.

*Positively influence the same attributes in other jurisdictions of the San Joaquin Valley –and thus the potential for regional sustainability - and improve the standing and credibility of the City to pursue appropriate State, LAFCO, and other regional policies that would curb sprawl and prevent new unincorporated community development which compete with and threaten the success of sustainable policies and development practices in Fresno.*

14. Provide a network of safe well-maintained parks, open spaces, athletic facilities, and walking and biking trails connecting the city's districts and neighborhoods to attract and retain a broad range of individuals, benefit the health of residents, and provide the level of public amenities required to encourage and support development of higher density urban living and transit use.

Sufficient parks and recreation spaces are also needed in support of the higher residential densities associated with the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridors and Activity Centers and in the new Complete Neighborhoods planned for Fresno and addressed in the Urban Form, Land Use and Design Element. Parks, open spaces, and schools also critical to residents' physical activity levels are central to the public health strategy, as discussed in the Healthy Communities element.

### Of Special Note, Parks Master Plan Update on December 14, 2017

On December 14, 2017, the City of Fresno adopted the Fresno Parks Master Plan (PMP) which was an update to the previously adopted 1989 Parks Master Plan. In comparison to this chapter of the General Plan, the Fresno Parks Master provides updated data and system overview, revised park classifications, additional goals, recommendations and

strategies, and new design guidelines that support and enhance the objectives and policies found in this chapter. As a result, policy POSS-1-a has been revised and the PMP park classifications are to take precedence over the park classifications in this chapter which means that the goal of 2 acres/1,000 residences is to be achieved through Regional Parks, Open Space/Natural Areas, and Special Use Parks/Facilities.

## 5.2 PARKS AND RECREATION

Parks, natural open spaces, and greenways are an important component to urban form, and they provide both recreational and aesthetic assets that contribute to the creation of a desirable visual character. The City has devoted substantial resources over the past several decades to provide parks and greenways, including the adoption of an Urban Growth Management (UGM) policy that helped establish a park impact development fee in 1976. In 2008, the City Council approved the UGM Impact Fee and Reimbursement policy. Additionally, other agencies and entities, such as school districts, the Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control District (FMFCD), the San Joaquin River and Parkway Conservation Trust, and the San Joaquin River Conservancy, have made significant contributions to the provision of recreational and natural areas. Despite these efforts, Fresno, in 2012 and 2013 was ranked last out of the 40 and then 50 largest U.S. cities, respectively, for ParkScore, a measure that takes into account public open space acreage, services, investment, and access.<sup>1</sup> City Staff, through diligent efforts, increased the City's ParkScore by 6.5 points from 2012 to 2013, and additional programs such as the City's Residential Guidelines for Open Space have increased the amount of recreational open space within the Planning Area without adding costs to the General Fund.

This General Plan affirms Fresno's commitment to creating and maintaining a park system that meets residents' recreational needs, maximizes landscapes endowed by the natural environment, contributes to Fresno's quality of life, and supports urban living. Adoption of this element will guide the subsequent planning and implementation of the City's parks and open space program.

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<sup>1</sup> "ParkScore Index." Trust for Public Land. <<http://parkscore.tpl.org/city.php?city=Fresno>>.



*Parks provide a variety of important social, environmental, and health benefits for the Fresno community, and the City has devoted substantial resources over the past several decades to provide and improve parks and greenways.*

## Park Classifications

The City provides Fresno residents with several types of parks and facilities.<sup>2</sup> Parks are defined as land owned, leased, or provided to the City and used for public recreational purposes. In addition, several FMFCD storm water detention basins also serve as passive and active parks (from April to November); and, there are joint use planning and operation of school district playgrounds and athletic facilities for public recreation. In addition to the public parks discussed here, there are many private parks and public lands that provide similar services such as along the San Joaquin River.<sup>3</sup> Park types in the General Plan are classified as follows and summarized in Table 5-1:

- **Pocket Park.** A park up to 0.5 to 2.0 acres in size, which is intended to serve the needs of a smaller, specific neighborhood located within a half-mile radius of the pocket park. Pocket Parks should include amenities to draw neighbors to the park such as a tot lot, picnic bench, or shade structure. New Pocket Parks developed

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<sup>2</sup> General Plan park standards and types may differ from PARCS Department operational classifications for existing facilities with various passive and active recreational facilities and features.

<sup>3</sup> The banks of the San Joaquin River are under the jurisdiction of the State Lands Commission and open to the public for recreational use.

within new subdivisions are maintained as part of a Home Owners Association (HOA) or Community Facilities District (CFD). Fresno currently is served by 93 pocket parks.

- **Neighborhood Park.** A park of more than 2 and up to 10 acres in size, which provides basic recreational activities for neighborhoods located generally within a one-mile radius. There are two types of Neighborhood Parks, active and passive. These parks contribute to neighborhood identity and accommodate a range of facilities, such as play fields and courts, children's play structures, picnic tables, restrooms, and may include a small center with a multi-purpose room, but also passive recreational features such as walking trails, community gardens, or nature areas. Fresno has 62 neighborhood parks.
- **Community Park.** A park of more than 10 and up to 40 acres in size (typically at least 20 acres), which helps define a community or district and is intended to serve the more active recreational needs of persons who live or work up to a two to four-mile radius. These parks typically include facilities such as lighted sport fields and a community center building with a gym, meeting rooms, and restrooms. Other features may include swimming pools, tennis courts, concession stands, community defining public art, courtyard or plaza. Fresno has 13 community parks.
- **Regional Park.** A large park of more than 40 acres in size, which is meant to serve a large number of residents across a broad area of the city, or around 100,000 residents. Regional parks typically include community park features that allow for a variety of sports and active recreation. Some are large enough to enable Fresno to host local and regional tournaments or events that bring revenue to the City and local businesses in the form of additional patrons and tax revenue generated. Regional parks also provide unique public facilities, such as the Shinzen Japanese Garden, the Chaffee Zoological Gardens, or natural areas with hiking trails, fishing opportunities, and access to the San Joaquin River. Parks that provide unique opportunities, such as river access, have been categorized as a regional park, even though they are less than 40 acres in size. Fresno presently has three City owned regional parks: Woodward, Roeding, and the Regional Sports Complex; and two regional parks owned by other public entities, Camp Pashayan (San Joaquin River Conservancy), and Clovis North High School play fields and facilities (Clovis Unified School District).
- **Trail/Greenway/Parkway.** A network of linear open spaces of varying size, typically intended to accommodate walking and bicycling opportunities for leisure, exercise and commuting purposes. These parkways typically include paved surfaces for bicyclists and walkers, and in appropriate locations may include equestrian trails. Fresno has 19 paths and trails, which are planned to be expanded and eventually form a substantial portion of the Valley Arboretum. Fresno's trail network is described in the Transportation and Mobility Element.

TABLE 5-1: DESIRABLE PARK FACILITY STANDARDS

Park Type	Typical Size	Service Area
Pocket	0.5 to 2 acres	Up to ½ mile
Neighborhood	2.01 to 10 acres	Up to 1 mile radius
Community	10.01 to 40 acres	Up to 4 mile radius
Regional	More than 40 acres <sup>1</sup>	100K residents
Trail/Greenway/Parkway	Varies	Entire city

<sup>1</sup> Some parks with less than 40 acres may be classified as Regional if they provide a unique opportunity such as river access.

Source: City of Fresno.

The function and desirability of smaller open spaces, such as pocket parks, has been an ongoing issue for the City. These smaller spaces are often popular with residential developers because of their appeal to homeowners, and they may be the most realistic option to correct deficiencies within already-developed areas. However, the smaller size and scattered location of these sites had tended to increase maintenance costs, pose potential supervision and attractive nuisance challenges, and limit the range of recreational amenities and services that can be offered. In the past, the City has even occasionally decommissioned a pocket park for these or similar reasons. Requiring new pocket parks to have secure maintenance funds through an HOA or CFD provides three benefits: set maintenance funding for each pocket park; local control of the park; and does not add additional burden to the City's PARCS Department maintenance program, allowing them to focus on the City's neighborhood, community, and regional parks. This change in how pocket parks are managed, and including amenities that attract local residents, has made them an attractive option to increase recreational space in the city with minimal to no impact on PARCS resources.

### Existing Parks and Recreation Facilities

The City maintains approximately 1,617 acres of open space, nearly 230,000 square feet of building space dedicated to recreational/educational purposes distributed among 104 sites. Other facilities include 9 community pools, 4 splash parks, 518 picnic tables, 153 barbeque grills, 3 amphitheaters, 54 baseball/softball fields, 53 football/soccer fields, 40 basketball courts, 11 volleyball courts, 40 tennis courts, 7 skate parks, and 5 dog parks. The park system also provides and maintains 115 acres of paths and trails for pedestrians and bicyclists.

The FMFCD and the City partner in the use of portions of storm water detention basins as park and open space features. These include trees and turf for passive recreation and play equipment or sports fields where flood control design parameters allow. There are currently 16 basins, totaling over 143 acres, which are open to the public from April to November, when they are not in use for stormwater detention. These basins are often designed with two floor levels. The upper floor is available for recreational uses during the dry weather seasons, while the lower level may be used for ground water recharge purposes and to accommodate rainwater runoff from smaller

storm events. The adaptation of stormwater detention basins for park use must be carefully balanced with the critical need to use these facilities to perform groundwater recharge.

## Park Demand and Proposed Park Land

The City's 2025 General Plan standard called for at least 3.0 acres of parkland to be provided per 1,000 residents (comprised of 0.75 acres neighborhood parks, 0.25 acres community parks, 2.0 acres regional parks). This standard is among the lowest in the Central Valley, where many cities have a standard of 4.0 or 5.0 acres per 1,000 residents. Under the Quimby Act, California State law sets a generally applicable standard of 3.0 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents as the maximum that can typically be required by a city or county as a condition of approval of a residential subdivision. However, a city or county can exceed this limitation and require dedication and improvement of parkland up to a ratio of 5.0 acres per 1,000 residents if it can be demonstrated that the developed portion of the community meets or exceeds the higher standard. The Quimby Act limits do not preclude a city from establishing a higher parkland standard, just the amount that can be charged to a new residential development.

The current citywide park fee is based upon a ratio of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents; this was established under the City's previous Urban Growth Management Program and 1989 Master Plan for Parks and Recreation. This 3.0 acre parkland standard was maintained through the adoption of the 2025 Fresno General Plan, the subsequent Park Facilities Impact Fee & Parkland Dedication Study, and the adoption of the citywide Park Facilities Fee ordinance. In addition to public parks, the Park Facilities Impact Fee study also identified and examined additional open spaces that are publicly owned but have limited access, recreation, or leisure uses, such as golf courses, school playgrounds, or sports fields.

Citywide, Fresno has a current supply of 3.28 acres of City Park Space per 1,000 residents, which exceeds the City's minimum standard by 0.28 acre. Including All Park Space in the City's SOI increases that ratio to 4.65 acres per 1,000 residents.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>4</sup> For this General Plan, Park categories include All Park Space within the City's SOI: parks owned and maintained by an HOA that are publicly accessible (no gate), public golf courses, SJRC parkland open to the public and directly accessible from the City; pocket parks maintained through Community Facility Districts (CFD); ponding basins with park improvements (excludes fenced-off flood areas); Clovis and Central Unified School District playgrounds, Fresno Unified's Burroughs Elementary and Yosemite Middle School (grass fields and courts, Kindergarten play areas, and parking areas only). City Park Space excludes golf courses and school lands because of their use limitations and where the City lacks jurisdiction over the park.



breakdown of these figures is shown in Table 5-2. The difference is due to the inclusion of the City's two golf courses and school playgrounds and play fields. Since school district policies are not within the City's control, those lands have been excluded from the City's inventory. Nevertheless, Clovis and Central Unified's policies for open playgrounds provide a very significant amount of recreational area for residents in those school districts. Including Fresno Unified's Burroughs Elementary and Yosemite Middle School open space, city schools provide over 450 acres of recreational land. This could be greatly increased with the inclusion of additional Fresno Unified School facilities located in the central areas of the city, areas severely lacking in available park space.

Although overall the City exceeds the minimum standard of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents, the provision of parkland is uneven across the city. The inclusion of open campus schools as parkland increases the disparity of park space in the established neighborhoods north and south of Shaw Avenue. Newer neighborhoods with larger amounts of parkland increase the citywide average and obscure the parkland deficiencies of many Fresno neighborhoods. In particular, many of the central neighborhoods in Fresno lack convenient access to parkland and fall well below the 3.0 acre standard, as shown in Table 5-3 and Figure POSS-1. The discrepancy between developments north and south of Shaw Avenue also demonstrates the effectiveness of park and open space fees and other policies in providing park space to the residents of newer residential developments as compared to past policies, although the city as a whole still remains well below other similar-sized cities.

**TABLE 5-2: CITY PARK SPACE AND RATIO PER 1,000 RESIDENTS BY PARK CATEGORY**

Park Category	City Park Space <sup>1</sup>			All Park Space in SOI <sup>2</sup>		
	Acres	Number of Parks	Acres per 1,000 Residents <sup>3</sup>	Acres	Number of Parks	Acres per 1,000 Residents <sup>3</sup>
Community	198.32 <sup>4</sup>	13	0.40	557.69	33	1.13
Neighborhood	372.45 <sup>5</sup>	62	0.75	401.57	66	0.81
Pocket	61.57 <sup>4</sup>	93	0.12	61.57	93	0.12
Trail-Greenway-Parkway	115.19 <sup>4</sup>	19	0.23	115.19	19	0.23
Regional	877.05	5	1.77	940.11	6	1.90
Golf				223.62	2	0.45
Total	1,624.58	192	3.28	2,299.75	219	4.65

1. City Park Space includes parks owned and/or maintained by the City or parks where there is little likelihood that the use or access will change. City Park Space does not include lands controlled by other jurisdictions where policy changes could limit or eliminate those lands from use as parkland, such as school district properties. Parks under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin River Conservancy currently open directly to city residents (Camp Pashayan, Jensen River Ranch) and Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control Basins improved for park use are included. Golf courses are not included because their use is limited to golf.
2. In addition, mutual-use agreements with schools provide 451.54 acres of Regional, Neighborhood, and Community Park space for Fresnoans, which is not included in the total acres of City Park Space. Golf courses provide an additional 223.62 acres of open space.
3. Based on 2010 city population of 495,000.
4. Homeowners Associations account for 9.17 acres of the Pocket parks, 4.10 acres of Trail-Greenway-Parkway, and 7.74 acres of the Neighborhood parks under the City Park Space.
5. Ponding basins comprise 74.46 acres of the Neighborhood parks and 57.76 acres of the Community Parks under the City Park Space.

Source: City of Fresno.

**TABLE 5-3: PARK ACREAGE IN DEVELOPMENT AREAS**

Area	Population <sup>2</sup>	City Park Space <sup>1</sup>		Pocket/Neighborhood/ Community Parks	
		Total Acres	Acres per 1,000 Residents <sup>2</sup>	Total Acres	Acres per 1,000 Residents <sup>2</sup>
Downtown Planning Area	65,509	235.84	3.60	72.91	1.11
Established Neighborhoods South of Shaw	238,116	242.73	1.02	231.78	0.97
Established Neighborhoods North of Shaw	165,534	764.43	4.62	194.96	1.18
Combined Development Areas NW <sup>3</sup>	47,122	43.56	0.92	42.30	0.90
DA-1 South	15,056	296.55	19.70	48.92	3.25
Combined Development Areas East <sup>4</sup>	15,385	21.25	1.38	21.25	1.38
South Industrial Area	11,316	20.23	1.79	20.23	1.79
<b>Total</b>	<b>558,038</b>	<b>1,625</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>1.13</b>
Using 2010 City Population	495,000	1,625	3.28	632	1.28

1. City Park Space includes parks owned and/or maintained by the City or parks where there is little likelihood that the use or access will change. City Park Space does not include lands controlled by other jurisdictions where policy changes could limit or eliminate those lands from use as parkland, such as school district properties. Parks under the jurisdiction of the San Joaquin River Conservancy currently open directly to city residents (Camp Pashayan, Jensen River Ranch) and Fresno Metropolitan Flood Control Basins improved for park use are included. Golf courses are not included because their use is limited to golf.
2. Based on Census Tract population totals that include population outside the 2010 City SOI and Planning Area.
3. Includes West Development areas north of SR 180 (DA-1 North, DA-4 West).
4. Includes East Development areas (DA-2 North & South, DA-3, DA-4 East).

5. Includes East Development areas (DA-2 North & South, DA-3, DA-4 East).

Source: City of Fresno.

In Fresno, the neighborhood and community, and pocket parks are the backbone of the urban park system. They are large enough for play fields and programmed activities and may include sport courts and community centers. They provide open and accessible active and passive open space to neighborhoods, typically within walking or biking distance of many residences. Given the important role these facilities play in Fresno's communities, it is appropriate for the City to achieve 3.0 acres of neighborhood, community, and pocket parks per 1,000 residents.

In Fresno, regional park facilities include trails, paths, and greenways that provide linear connections through and between communities. In addition, regional park facilities include an amphitheater, zoo, a regional sports park, and river access. These facilities provide walking and biking connectivity for the larger community, as well as spaces for leisurely enjoyment of the surrounding neighborhoods. Regional parks provide active and passive recreation and leisure activities at a larger scale, and it is appropriate for the City to continue to provide them at a ratio of 2 acres per 1,000 residents, the standard from the City's 2025 General Plan.

To meet the standard of 3.0 acres of neighborhood, community, and pocket parks per 1,000 residents, a total of 2,313 acres of new parks will be needed to serve the estimated 771,000 residents in the city at General Plan Horizon. To achieve parity with other Valley cities, the City would need to increase the parkland ratio standard to 5.0 acres per 1,000 residents, and the City would need an additional 3,855 acres of parks from all categories. The overall ratio for parkland under this General Plan is 5 acres per 1,000 residents of which 3 acres per 1,000 residents is for Community, Neighborhood, and Pocket Parks.

As shown in Table 5-4, the established neighborhoods south of Shaw and the south industrial area have a deficit of 984 acres in City park space. Using provisions in the Quimby Act, which apply to new residential subdivisions, the City could provide an additional 1,275 acres of parkland and accomplish the overall City goal of providing parkland at a similar rate as other Valley cities. However, State laws concerning parkland dedication and fee limitations require that the open space facilities be proximate to the developments generating these fee revenues. The existing deficit of pocket, neighborhood, and community parks within the established neighborhoods south of Shaw, including the South Industrial Area, may not be considered proximate to developing areas. Thus, additional funding is needed to provide parks in these areas with deficits to equitably distribute the City's parks and open space among all Fresnoans. Recent revisions to the Quimby Act through AB 1359 (2013) allows fees, paid pursuant to the act, to be used in a neighborhood other than the neighborhood being developed if specific conditions can be met. This may allow some flexibility but will not resolve the ongoing issue of limited park space in established neighborhoods.

A number of approaches will be pursued to meet both future and existing needs for parks:

- Focus funding efforts on increasing the number of Neighborhood and Community Parks, especially within the areas south of Shaw Avenue;
- Increasing the City's standard to 3.0 acres of usable parkland per 1,000 residents for combined Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community parks while striving for 5.0 acres or more of usable parkland per 1,000 residents for total City Park Space for the SOI;
- Seek dedicated funding sources for parkland acquisition, improvement, and ongoing maintenance costs, in both growth areas and established neighborhoods;
- Strategically locate neighborhood and community parks along BRT corridors, in Activity Centers, and in established neighborhoods to support urban densities;
- Allow flexibility in siting and sizing neighborhood parks;
- Identify the sites of future regional parks, 40 to 100 acres in size, in the City's Development Areas;
- Continue to evaluate and update the City's Citywide Park Fee as applied to new residential development to assure priority park areas are acquired in existing and new residential neighborhoods;
- Identify underutilized and vacant land within the city that can be acquired and developed as parks to meet the needs of existing residents and cure deficiencies in established neighborhoods;
- Secure more joint use facilities, particularly with public schools;
- Pursue joint use facilities with Police and Fire when siting new parks or police/fire stations. These joint facilities will provide added security for the parks and provide greater opportunity for police and fire personnel to interact with the public and neighborhood children;
- Add security measures to parks to protect facilities and patrons;
- Identify opportunities to provide cultural parks consistent with the neighborhood;
- Develop parks that meet specialized needs, such as certain sports activities or recreational facilities not provided elsewhere in the city;
- Encourage development of recreation facilities that are open to the public and free of charge such as trails, greenways, and drainage basins developed with the intent of being predominantly used as a park; and
- Use low-impact design and landscaping strategies, including use of climatized and drought-resistant plants, for new and existing parks to minimize water demand

and increase capacity for passive water storage and conservation that also provides scenic and recreational opportunities for users.



*The General Plan aims to provide more neighborhood, community, and pocket parks, such as the skate park pictured above, throughout the city to improve access to parks, open spaces, and recreational areas for all Fresnoans.*

### Planned Parks, Trails and Open Space

The General Plan proposes over 1,100 acres of land for new City parks by the General Plan 2035 build-out stage for development in the Fresno SOI. All new development will include neighborhood, community, trails, and regional scale parks, where feasible, meeting a minimum combined standard of three acres per 1,000 new residents for Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community Parks.<sup>5</sup> Other funding sources will be sought for the additional two acres per 1,000 residents for Regional Parks, trails, and greenways. These parks are not all mapped on the Figure LU-1: Land Use Diagram, but will be identified through subsequent implementation planning after adoption of this General Plan. Implementation and ongoing maintenance of all park facilities will require new sources of dedicated ongoing revenue.

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<sup>5</sup> See Figure MT-2: Paths and Trails in Chapter 4, Mobility and Transportation.

Park maintenance in Development Areas can be funded with CFDs or landscaping and lighting districts. A new funding source for citywide parks maintenance may be needed, as discussed in the Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability Element. Figure POSS-1: Parks and Open Space, shows the location of the major new parks that are proposed. These include regional parks with some neighborhood and community parks sited in key locations such as in Activity Centers or infill locations. San Joaquin River Parkway paths and trail access points are shown in Figure POSS-2.

**Inspiration Park.** Set on eight acres near Polk and Gettysburg Avenues, Inspiration Park (formerly referred to as Universally Accessible Park) will provide a Miracle League special-needs baseball field with special-needs designed children play areas, along with a sensory garden and wall, wheelchair accessible dog park, and rubberized basketball court in addition to other features.



## Chapter 5: Parks, Open Space, and Schools

**TABLE 5-4: EXISTING CITY PARK SPACE AND POCKET/NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY PARK SPACE NEEDS BASED ON 5 ACRES AND 3 ACRES PER 1,000 RESIDENTS RATIOS**

Area	City Park Space			Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community Park		
	Existing Park Acres	Target Park Acres to Reach Ratio of 5 acres per 1,000 Residents	Acres Needed to Reach 5 Acres per 1,000 Residents Ratio	Existing Park Acres	Target Park Acres to Reach Ratio of 3 acres per 1,000 Residents	Acres Needed to Reach Ratio of 3 acres per 1,000 Residents
Downtown (DNCP)	235.84	327.55	91.70	72.91	196.53	123.62
Established Neighborhoods South of Shaw	242.73	1190.58	947.85	231.78	714.35	482.57
Established Neighborhoods North of Shaw	764.43	827.67	63.24	194.96	496.60	301.65
Combined DA Northwest	43.56	235.61	192.05	42.30	141.37	99.06
Combined DA Southwest	296.55	75.28	-221.27	48.92	45.17	-3.76
Combined DA East	21.25	76.93	55.68	21.25	46.16	24.91
South Industrial Area	20.23	56.58	36.35	20.23	33.95	13.72
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,625</b>	<b>2,725</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>1,635</b>	<b>1,003</b>

1. Total based on 2010 SOI population of 545,000, Area ratios based on Census Tract populations within each area. City Park Space includes Regional, Trails, Neighborhood, Pocket, and Community Parks not including school properties.

Source: City of Fresno.



As summarized in Table 5-5, the amount of new parkland expected under the General Plan Horizon (2035) is around 1,100 acres of new parkland. It is both mapped and assumed to be provided by new development and added on infill sites in established neighborhoods.

**TABLE 5-5: TOTAL EXISTING AND FUTURE PARK NEEDS SCENARIOS**

Park Space Categories	Based on 2010 Population <sup>1</sup>	Based on Additional Future Population at General Plan Horizon	Total
All City Park Spaces at Ratio of 5 Acres per 1,000 Residents	2,725	1,130	3,855
Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community Parks at Ratio of 3 Acres per 1,000 Residents	1,635	678	2,313

1. Based on Table 5-4 SOI Population and Acreage Need at 3 and 5 acres per 1,000 residents.

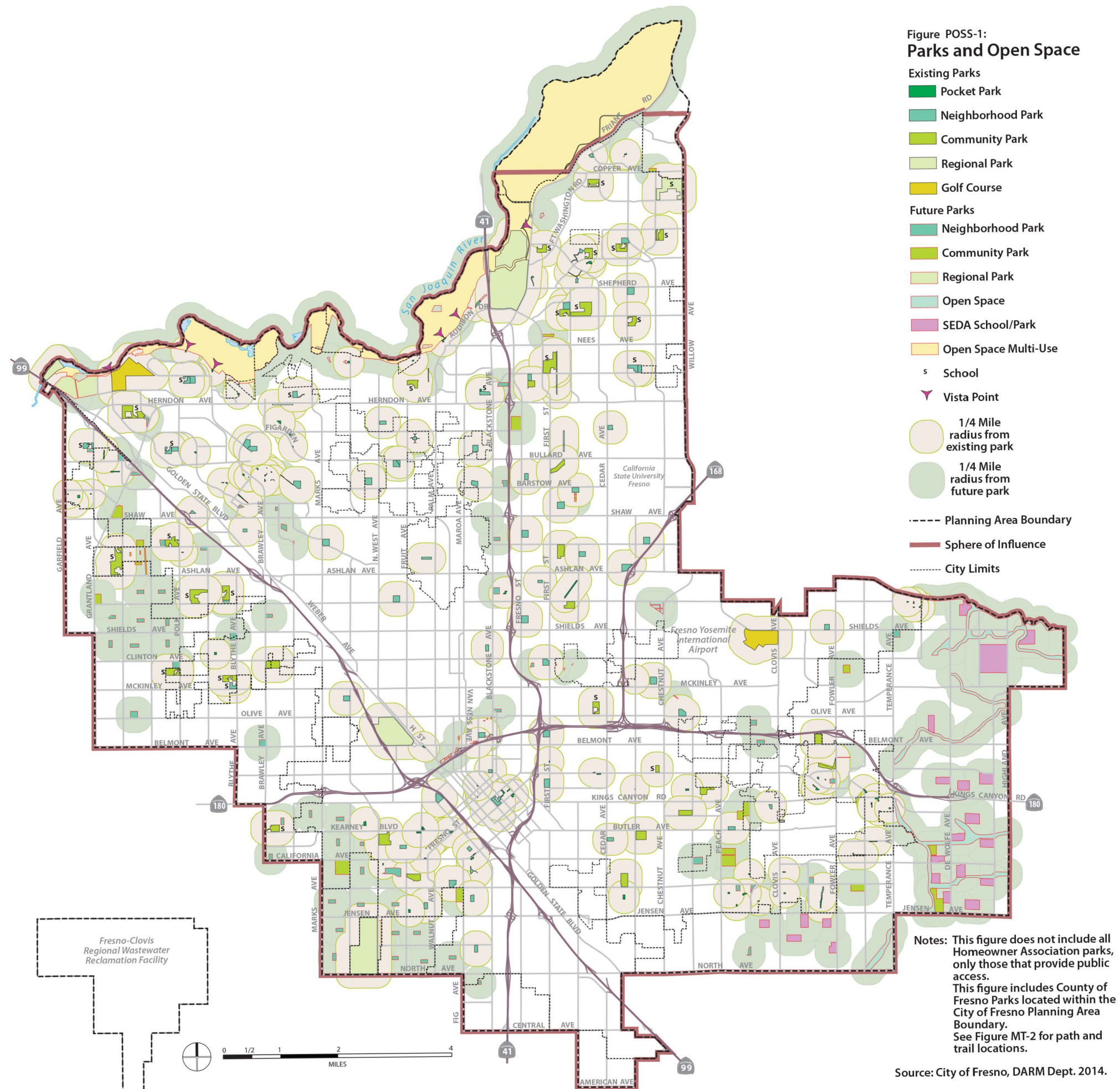
Source: City of Fresno.

Subsequent implementation planning for parks following the General Plan adoption will be designed as a guiding blueprint for the City Council, City administration, and the public. It will strive to ensure the cohesive development of a parks and open space system that upholds the standards and goals set forth in the General Plan, and include a range of programs for all ages, interests, and neighborhoods. It will also help determine which parks and recreation facilities will be shared with school programs.

### 5.3 OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN

Fresno's Open Space Action Plan consists of the objectives, and policies presented in this element. These include policy direction for specific actions and programs which the City Council intends to pursue to implement the ideas for open space systems contained in this element. Additional detail on how the action plan will be implemented is in the Implementation Element, in the Table 12-1, "Summary of Implementation Actions for Plan Policies". Taken together, these initiatives specifically respond to and are consistent with the Government Code's requirements for an Open Space Action Plan that is to include "specific programs which the legislative body intends to pursue in implementing its open space plan" (Government Code Section 65564).

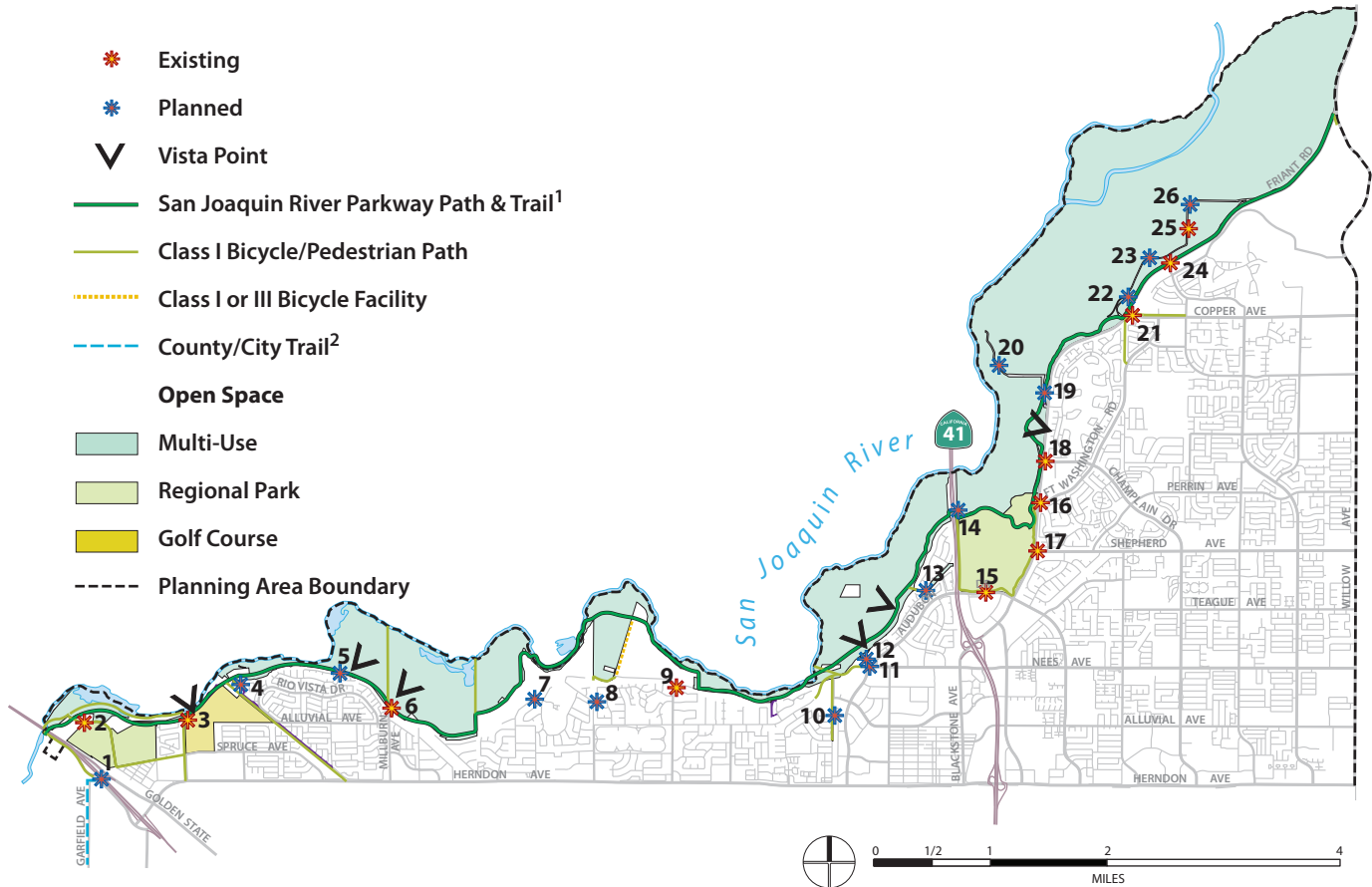




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**Figure POSS-2:  
San Joaquin River Parkway  
Path & Trail Access Points**

### Access Points:



- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Pedestrian Access   | 14. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 2. Multi-Modal Access with Parking                                     | 15. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 3. Multi-Modal Access with Parking                                     | 16. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 4. Multi-Modal Access with Parking                                     | 17. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access   |
| 5. Pedestrian, Bicycle, Management, and Emergency Access               | 18. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access   |
| 6. Existing Golf Course Access, Future Multi-Modal Access with Parking | 19. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 7. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access                                       | 20. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 8. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access                                       | 21. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 9. Existing Scout Island Access, Future Pedestrian and Bicycle Access  | 22. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 10. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access                                      | 23. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 11. Existing Parking, Planned Pedestrian Access                        | 24. Pedestrian and Bicycle Access   |
| 12. Multi-Modal Access with Parking                                    | 25. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |
| 13. Pedestrian, Bicycle, Management, and Emergency Access              | 26. Multi-Modal Access with Parking |

1. Conceptual alignment of proposed path and trail. All planned Parkway access and projects, their features, uses, and locations, are subject to the acquisition of lands and/or easements from willing sellers, and project-specific, site-specific environmental review.
2. Conceptual alignment, subject to City/County cooperative planning adoption, and implementation. City preferred location depicted.

Source: City of Fresno, DARM Dept 2013 Base Map  
San Joaquin River Conservancy, 2013 Access Points.

## OBJECTIVE

### POSS-1

Provide an expanded, high quality and diversified park system, allowing for varied recreational opportunities for the entire Fresno community.

*Commentary: The park system will be comprehensive; include greenways, trails and open space; allow for athletic, leisure and mobility opportunities; support planned land use intensities and patterns and buffers along transportation corridors; and accommodate groundwater and other resource management objectives.*

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

### POSS-1-a

**Parkland standard.** Implement a standard of at least three acres of public parkland per 1,000 residents for Pocket, Neighborhood, and Community parks throughout the city, while striving for five acres per 1,000 residents for all parks throughout the city, subject to identifying additional funding for Regional Parks, Open Space/Natural Areas, and Special Use Parks/Facilities.

### POSS-1-b

**Parks Implementation Planning.** Conduct ongoing planning to implement park policies established in this General Plan and continue to strive for well-maintained and fully accessible playgrounds, with accessible amenities, throughout the city.

- Keep an up-to-date inventory of existing and planned parks, including locations mapped on the Parks and Open Space Diagram;
- Plan for acquiring new parkland designated in the General Plan, as shown in Figure POSS-1;
- Establish a standard protocol for working with new development to arrange for parkland acquisition and dedication;
- Establish a protocol for working with established neighborhoods to provide needed parks, including the fostering of neighborhood and district associations to help plan, acquire, improve and care for public parks, and coordinating new City service facilities to provide new open space;
- Establish detailed design, construction, and maintenance standards;
- Prepare an assessment of the recreation needs of existing and future residents;

- Create an action plan defining priorities, timeframes, and responsibilities;
- Adopt and implement a comprehensive financing strategy for land acquisition, park development, operations, and maintenance;
- Identify opportunities for using existing or planned park space as passive stormwater storage, treatment, and conservation areas that also provide scenic and/or recreational opportunities;
- Identify opportunities for siting and using existing or planned park space as passive “purple pipe” waste water storage, treatment, and conservation areas that also provide scenic and/or recreational opportunities; and
- Update the Parks Master Plan.

**POSS-I-c**

**Public Input in Park Planning.** Continue to provide opportunities for public participation in the planning and development of park facilities and in creation of social, cultural, and recreational activities in the community.

**POSS-I-d**

**Additional parkland in certain areas.** Strive to obtain additional parkland of sufficient size to adequately serve underserved neighborhood areas and along BRT corridors in support of new and intense residential and mixed use infill development.

- Identify, where appropriate, joint use opportunities in siting parks with other City service facility needs.

**POSS-I-e**

**Criteria for Parks in Development Areas.** Continue to use park size and service area criteria for siting new parks and planning for parks in Development Areas:

Park Type	Size Range (Acreage)	Population Served	Service Area Radius
Neighborhood	2.01 to 10	10,000 - 15,000	Up to 1 mile
Community	10.01 to 40	50,000 - 80,000	Up to 4 miles
Regional	More than 40 <sup>1</sup>	100,000	100,000 residents

<sup>1</sup> Or when amenities provide regional service.

**POSS-I-f**

**Parks and Open Space Diagram.** Require parks to be sited and sized as shown on the Parks and Open Space Diagram (Figure POSS-1) of the General Plan, subject to the following:

- All new park designations carry dual land use designations, so that if a park is not needed, private development consistent with



zoning and development standards may be approved. (See Figure LU-2: Dual Designation Diagram in the Urban Form, Land Use, and Design Element);

- Revised and/or additional park sites will be identified through subsequent implementation and planning in established neighborhoods and Development Areas;
- Locations for future park sites as shown on Figure POSS-1 are schematic to the extent that park sites may be relocated as necessity and opportunity dictate, and a General Plan amendment is not required if the park continues to serve the target areas as determined by the Planning Director; and
- A park may be located on any suitable land in the general vicinity of the sites depicted. However, the zoning of potential park sites must be made consistent with the General Plan.

#### POSS-1-g

**Regional Urban Forest.** Maintain and implement incrementally, through new development projects, additions to Fresno's urban forest to delineate corridors and the boundaries of urban areas, and to provide tree canopy for bike lanes, sidewalks, parking lots, and trails.

### OBJECTIVE

#### POSS-2

Ensure that adequate land, in appropriate locations, is designated and acquired for park and recreation uses in infill and growth areas.

### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

#### POSS-2-a

Identify opportunities to site, develop and co-locate Fire and Police stations with needed parks and open space as joint-use facilities.

- Capital Improvement Plans should be updated to reflect this policy.

*Commentary: Co-location of public safety with parks provides added security for the park and creates an opportunity for public safety personnel to interact with the neighborhood.*

#### POSS-2-b

**Park and Recreation Priorities.** Use the following priorities and guidelines in acquiring and developing parks and recreation facilities:

- Acquire and develop neighborhood park space in existing developed neighborhoods that are deficient of such space and in

areas along BRT corridors that are designated as priorities for encouraging new mixed-use transit-oriented development;

- Provide accessible recreation facilities in established neighborhoods with emphasis on those neighborhoods currently underserved by recreation facilities;

*Commentary: As funding permits, the City will strive to make all recreation facilities universally accessible for all residents. Guidelines should also consider the provision for universally accessible facilities in established neighborhoods.*

- Improve established neighborhood parks with emphasis on those neighborhoods with the greatest need;
- Acquire and develop neighborhood and community parks in new Development Areas;
- Recognize community parks as a special need in areas that lack these facilities or are planned for transit supportive urban densities, and explore all potential sources of revenue to secure and develop appropriate sites including joint use facilities;
- Develop new special purpose parks, such as outdoor gym equipment, natural resource based trail parks, equestrian centers, dog parks, and amphitheaters, as well as alternative recreation facilities, such as community recreation centers, passive wildlife observation park, cultural heritage and diversity park, military veterans memorial park, and universal access open space park; and
- Acquire and develop park and open space in established neighborhoods and Development Areas, prioritizing existing neighborhoods with the greatest deficiencies, so that all residents have access to park or open space within one-half mile of their residence. Develop these facilities to be fully accessible to individuals with disabilities as required by law.

**POSS-2-c**

**Review of Development Applications.** Coordinate review of all development applications (i.e., site plans, conditional use permits, and subdivision maps) in order to implement the parks and open space standards of this Plan.

- Assure the provision of adequate active and passive open spaces and facilities as appropriate within residential subdivisions through Development Code requirements for mandatory dedication and improvement of land and/or development fees.

***Commentary:** Revisions to the Quimby Act by AB 1359, allows fees paid pursuant to the act to be used in a neighborhood other than the neighborhood being developed if specific conditions can be met.*

- Require the provision of appropriate outdoor living areas or private open space in multi-family residential developments not subject to the Subdivision Map Act.
- Request open space easements where feasible and warranted to secure appropriate public use of sensitive areas with scenic or recreation values, and for buffering space for sensitive areas.
- Require provision of appropriate open space areas in private projects, in the form of trails, enhanced landscaped setbacks, parks, and water features.
- Evaluate the merits of establishing a development bonus entitlement program in which development incentives (i.e., bonus densities, bonus floor area square footage) are provided for contributions to public recreational facilities on-site or in the vicinity of the development project.

**POSS-2-d**

**Recreation Opportunities near Freeway Corridors.** Negotiate with Caltrans, other public agencies, and private property owners to develop remnant parcels along freeway corridors for appropriate recreational uses.

**POSS-2-e**

**Open Space Dedication for Residential Development.** Ensure new residential developments provide adequate land for parks, open space, landscaping, and trails through the dedication of land or otherwise providing for Pocket Parks, planned trails, and other recreational space, maintained by an HOA, CFD, or other such entity.

***Commentary:** Thresholds for this requirement will be established when the Development Code is adopted.*

**POSS-2-f**

**Freeway Landscaping.** Support the expansion of the State Route 99 Beautification Association to the Fresno County Highway Beautification Association with related updates and implementation of the master landscape plans for each freeway.



## OBJECTIVE

**POSS-3** Ensure that park and recreational facilities make the most efficient use of land; that they are designed and managed to provide for the entire Fresno community; and that they represent positive examples of design and energy conservation.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**POSS-3-a** **Centralized Park Locations.** Site parks central and accessible to the population served, while preserving the integrity of the surrounding neighborhood.

**POSS-3-b** **Park Location and Walking Distance.** Site Pocket and Neighborhood Parks within a half-mile walking distance of new residential development.

**POSS-3-c** **Link Parks with Walkways.** Link public open space to adjacent, schools, and residential uses and Activity Centers through a series of landscaped linear walkways and bikeways that enhance and encourage pedestrian use.

**POSS-3-d** **Sidewalks to Connect Neighborhoods.** Sidewalks should be designed for internal neighborhood circulation, and to connect neighborhoods to other residential areas, parks, community trails, shopping, and major streets.

**POSS-3-e** **Minimum Park Size for Active Recreation.** Minimize City acquisition or acceptance of dedication of park sites less than two acres in size for active recreational uses, except where maintenance costs are secured through a CFD, HOA, or other such mechanism.

**POSS-3-f** **Park Design Guidelines.** Create, maintain, and apply park design guidelines, with provisions for appropriate amenities for each park type, which may include:

- Minimum and maximum shade.
- Protections from shading by adjacent buildings.
- Accessibility to persons with disabilities.
- Street trees and landscaped median strips in adjacent arterial roads.
- Art and points of attraction.

- Landscape and hardscape features.
- Street furniture, signage, and lighting.
- Food sales and entertainment.
- Restroom facilities, play structures, and picnic shelters.
- Landscape design synthesis with input from civil engineers and hydrologists, educators and daycare providers, fitness trainers and coaches, police officers and experts in crime prevention through environmental design, as appropriate.
- Solar panels, new LED lighting, and water efficiency improvements. Sports field areas designed to allow periodic changes in field locations to minimize wear areas and provide sufficient fields to host regional, state, or national tournaments.
- Using topography to create interesting and visually appealing spaces and forms.
- Use of waterways as a key design influence, a focus of restoration, and an opportunity to provide for public enjoyment of views.
- Reflecting the agricultural and horticultural heritage of the site or area.
- Connecting with surrounding areas in a way that encourages expanded pedestrian activity.
- Creating individual places within a park that respond to the needs of a broad range of park users, from youth to the elderly.
- Creating places of delight that engage the senses.
- Creating places that engage the mind, by treating park features as opportunities for interpretation and questioning.
- Using sustainable design practices, and highlighting these as opportunities for learning.

#### POSS-3-g

**Park Security and Design.** Promote safety, attractiveness, and compatibility between parks and adjacent residential areas through design, maintenance, and enforcement of park regulations

- Require the installation of security lighting for parking, points of access, and building areas at all public recreation and park sites.
- Keep neighborhood eyes on parks to increase security.

#### POSS-3-h

**Coordination with School Districts.** Continue to coordinate with school districts to explore opportunities for joint use of both outdoor

and indoor recreation facilities, such as playgrounds, play fields, and gymnasiums, for City recreation programs.

**POSS-3-i**      **Joint Use with Drainage Facilities.** Continue to seek joint use agreements for use of FMFCD stormwater drainage facilities.

*Commentary: Proposals to use ponding basins (or parts of ponding basins) for recreation will need to be approved by the Department of Public Utilities to ensure minimal loss of capacity for groundwater recharge.*

#### OBJECTIVE

**POSS-4**      Pursue sufficient and dedicated funding for parks acquisition, operations, and maintenance.

#### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**POSS-4-a**      **Supplemental Revenue.** Seek revenue sources to supplement General Fund support for basic park maintenance and basic recreational services.

**POSS-4-b**      **Operation and Maintenance Financing.** Continue to require new residential development to form lighting and landscaping maintenance districts or community facility districts or ensure other means of financing to pay for park operations and maintenance.

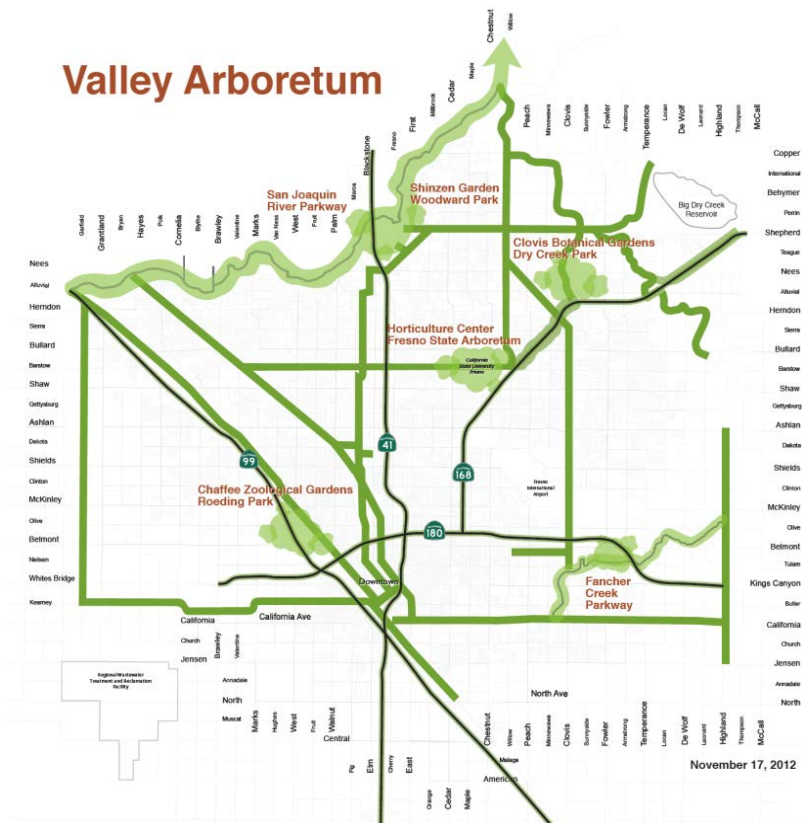
**POSS-4-c**      **Improvements in Established Neighborhoods.** Seek agreements with formal neighborhood associations and institutions for improvements and ongoing maintenance of parks in established neighborhoods.

**POSS-4-d**      **Maintain Adopt-A-Park Program.** Continue promoting the City's *Adopt-A-Park* program that utilizes partnerships with local organizations to preserve, beautify and maintain Fresno's neighborhood parks.

## 5.4 VALLEY ARBORETUM

The concept of a Valley Arboretum was introduced by the Tree Fresno organization in 2012. An arboretum is defined as a place where trees, shrubs, and plants are grown in order to be observed scientifically and/or seen by the public for educational and ornamental purposes. The Tree Fresno organization presented the City with a description of 14 arboretum segments and a preliminary diagram, shown below, connecting these segments through Fresno and into adjoining parts of Fresno County

and Clovis. Their vision is to establish a signature amenity for the region: a system of linear parks, like the Sugar Pine Trail, with different development standards, to improve Fresno's quality-of-life and ParkScore and help make the region more investment-worthy to families and businesses.



The vision of the Valley Arboretum<sup>6</sup> is to establish a link between the “botanical brothers” in the region: the Fresno State campus arboretum and horticulture center, the Clovis Botanical Gardens at Dry Creek Park, the Shinzen Garden at Woodward Park, and the Chaffee Zoological Gardens at Roeding Park with a potential expansion to include Kearney Park, Avocado Park, Lost Lake Park, and other trails in the four county region.

In concept, a Valley Arboretum complements and enhances a number of goals, objectives and policies in this General Plan: expanding Fresno’s urban forest; reducing

<sup>6</sup> Diagram as presented to the City by Tree Fresno.

heat island effect; establishing green streets, Complete Streets, and Complete Neighborhoods; beautifying trails; connecting a network of paths with parks, greenways and parkways as well as neighborhoods and Activity Centers for recreation and transportation purposes; and increasing the attractiveness of the city to existing and potential residents, visitors, employers and employees.

Some of the items that need analysis prior to City consideration include the following:

- Segment locations and possible alternatives may be reviewed by City Departments, neighboring jurisdictions, local agencies and organizations, universities, school districts, and the public.
- The proposed Greenbelt Trails located along the periphery of Fresno's SOI may not be as functional as alternative routes located in closer proximity to more populated areas of the city. The Valley Arboretum could provide much needed open space to communities that are underserved by parks and open space.
- Additional routes may be needed in the older parts of the city that have a fair amount of pedestrian activity and would benefit from an improved street experience. Some of the Valley Arboretum could be located in such a way as to provide a sense of place in smaller segments to enhance potential main streets in Fresno.
- Some segments of the concept Arboretum may need to be adjusted to accommodate other community needs.
- Substituting some or all major street segments for local street segments may be advantageous. Relocating segments of the Valley Arboretum along local streets could provide a more enjoyable experience for recreational walkers and cyclists, while reserving major streets for transportation and commuter oriented cyclists.
- The Valley Arboretum design needs to be further clarified to guarantee that there are neither conflicts with nor opportunities taken away from cyclists that have been represented in the General Plan.
- Representation of the Valley Arboretum design diversity and street cross sections for the various conditions found throughout the many segments identified and for those that may be proposed through a vetting process need to be shown. Street crossing design, safety features and the interface with abutting residential and commercial properties will also vary. The range in overall widths; the type and location of trees and other landscaping; landscaping buffer widths; trail width, location and type; and educational amenities and gateway locations need to be determined.

## 5.5 OPEN SPACE AND BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Overall, there are more than 4,000 acres of existing open space in the Planning Area. Open space is distinguished here from parkland as discussed above. More than half of the existing open space, including private golf courses and parks in gated communities, is not accessible to the general public. Ponding/recharge basins, owned by the FMFCD, account for 1,273 acres; all serve as ponding basins for storm drainage while some also act as year-round groundwater recharge basins.

Six types of open space land are defined by the Government Code for General Plan purposes:

- **Open space for public health and safety**, including but not limited to, areas which require special management or regulation because of hazardous or special conditions such as earthquake fault zones, unstable soil areas, flood plains, watersheds, areas presenting high fire risks, areas required for the protection of water quality and water reservoirs and areas required for the protection and enhancement of air quality.
- **Open space for the preservation of natural resources**, including but not limited to, areas required for the preservation of plant and animal life, including habitat for fish and wildlife species; areas required for ecologic and other scientific study purposes; rivers, streams, bays and estuaries; and coastal beaches, lakeshores, banks of rivers and streams, and watershed lands.
- **Open space used for the managed production of resources**, including but not limited to, forest lands, rangeland, agricultural lands and areas of economic importance for the production of food or fiber; areas required for recharge of groundwater basins; bays, estuaries, marshes, rivers and streams which are important for the management of commercial fisheries; and areas containing major mineral deposits, including those in short supply.
- **Open space for outdoor recreation**, including but not limited to, areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value; areas particularly suited for park and recreation purposes, including access to lakeshores, beaches, and rivers and streams; and areas which serve as links between major recreation and open space reservations, including utility easements, banks of rivers and streams, trails, and scenic highway corridors.
- **Open space in support of the mission of military installations** that comprises of areas adjacent to military installations, military training routes, and underlying restricted airspace that can provide additional buffer zones to military activities and complement the resource values of the military lands.
- **Open space for the protection of places, features, and objects** for the preservation of Native American artifacts, sites and remains.

Central California is a unique biological enclave, with a rich diversity of flora and fauna. This region's climate, soils, hydrology, and geographic isolation fostered resident species found nowhere else on earth. Through agriculture, rural residential and urban development, these species and their habitats are being diminished and marginalized. In collaboration with federal, State, and local flood control and natural resource agencies, the City is striving to protect native plants by providing greater setbacks near sensitive environments; however, continued urbanization may reduce these species' opportunities.

### Special Status Species

The Planning Area includes a variety of rare plants and wildlife species, particularly along the San Joaquin River, which provides a concentrated riparian plant and animal sanctuary. This area of natural habitat is recognized as unique and scenic given its topographic variation in the characteristically flat San Joaquin Valley. It is a sensitive environment hosting a diversity of wildlife, fish, and plant species, and it contains the last remnants of a true riparian environment, due to the year-round presence of flowing water, which supports aquatic life. This riparian community provides nesting and roosting sites for raptors, herons, egrets, and other bird species (resident and migratory). It also contains special status species, such as the Valley Elderberry Long Horn Beetle (potential to be de-listed), as well as non-special status vegetation, such as cottonwood and willow trees. In short, this segment of the river provides habitat diversity of great value to wildlife.

Aside from the San Joaquin River, there are several canals that traverse the Planning Area that provide opportunities for both vegetation and wildlife; however, such opportunities are limited.

#### OBJECTIVE

- POSS-5** Provide for long-term preservation, enhancement, and enjoyment of plant, wildlife, and aquatic habitat.

#### IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- POSS-5-a** **Habitat Area Acquisition.** Support federal, State, and local programs to acquire significant habitat areas for permanent protection and/or conjunctive educational and recreational use.
- POSS-5-b** **Habitat Conservation Plans.** Participate in cooperative, multi-jurisdictional approaches for area-wide habitat conservation plans to preserve and protect rare, threatened, and endangered species.

**POSS-5-c**      **Buffers for Natural Areas.** Require development projects, where appropriate and warranted, to incorporate natural features (such as ponds, hedgerows, and wooded strips) to serve as buffers for adjacent natural areas with high ecological value.

**POSS-5-d**      **Guidelines for Habitat Conservation.** Establish guidelines for habitat conservation and mitigation programs, including:

- Protocols for the evaluation of a site's environmental setting and proposed design and operating parameters of proposed mitigation measures.
- Methodology for the analysis depiction of land to be acquired or set aside for mitigation activities.
- Parameters for specification of the types and sources of plant material used for any re-vegetation, irrigation requirements, and post-planting maintenance and other operational measures to ensure successful mitigation.
- Monitoring at an appropriate frequency by qualified personnel and reporting of data collected to permitting agencies.

**POSS-5-e**      Pursue development of conjunctive habitat and recreational trail uses in flood control and drainage projects.

*Commentary: Establishment of wildlife and aquatic habitat is unsuitable along primary conveyance systems to existing and future water treatment facilities. Certain waterways may be excluded from habitat development for this reason.*

**POSS-5-f**      **Regional Mitigation and Habitat Restoration.** Coordinate habitat restoration programs with responsible agencies to take advantage of opportunities for a coordinated regional mitigation program.

**POSS-5-g**      **Assistance in Valley Arboretum Master Planning.** Assist community organizations that have raised grant funds to pursue the preparation of a Valley Arboretum Master Plan and Implementation Program, including funding, to be coordinated with community groups, as well as related plans and policies for established neighborhoods and other areas with park deficiencies.

*Commentary: It is anticipated that when completed, the Valley Arboretum Master Plan will be presented to the City Council for consideration as an amendment to the General Plan. See discussion at the end of this Element, Section 5.4 Valley Arboretum.*



## OBJECTIVE

- POSS-6** Maintain and restore, where feasible, the ecological values of the San Joaquin River corridor.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- POSS-6-a** **San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan.** Support the San Joaquin River Conservancy in its efforts to update the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan by working with the other jurisdictions and the River Conservancy to create a comprehensive and feasible plan for preservation, conservation, and Parkway development.

- POSS-6-b** **Effects of Stormwater Discharge.** Support efforts to identify and mitigate cumulative adverse effects on aquatic life from stormwater discharge to the San Joaquin River.

- Avoid discharge of runoff from urban uses to the San Joaquin River or other riparian corridors.
- Approve development on sites having drainage (directly or indirectly) to the San Joaquin River or other riparian areas only upon a finding that adequate measures for preventing pollution of natural bodies of water from their runoff will be implemented.
- Periodically monitor water quality and sediments near drainage outfalls to riparian areas. Institute remedial measures promptly if unacceptable levels of contaminant(s) occur.

## OBJECTIVE

- POSS-7** Support the San Joaquin River Conservancy in its collaborative, multiagency efforts to develop the San Joaquin River Parkway.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- POSS-7-a** **Preserve Wildlife Corridors.** Acquire and expand natural reserves and wildlife corridors through purchase, easements, mitigation for proposed activities, or other mutually satisfactory transactions.

- POSS-7-b** **Wildlife Corridor along San Joaquin River.** Create a wildlife corridor to provide continuous open space land and water areas parallel to the San Joaquin River within the jurisdiction of the City.

- Preserve a minimum width of 200 feet of riparian vegetation on both sides of the river.

- Require the corridor to be wider when possible and/or necessary to protect additional areas of native plants and critical habitat (such as wildlife breeding areas). Re-establishment of a 200-foot or wider band of native plants is recommended in areas where 200 feet of riparian vegetation no longer exists along the river bank, to the maximum extent feasible from topologic and hydrologic standpoints.
- Allow exceptions where the minimum-width corridor is infeasible due to topography, hydrology, or other constraints. An offsetting expansion may be approved in those instances on the opposite side of the river. Incorporate the bluff face into the wildlife corridor where steep bluffs drop directly into or close to the river.

#### POSS-7-c

**Monitoring River Corridor Conditions.** Undertake periodic monitoring to determine the status of conditions and mitigation measures required for projects within, and in the vicinity of, the river corridor.

- Pursue a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other agreement so that the San Joaquin River Conservancy can perform, or participate in, this monitoring program in order to furnish additional expertise, provide for cost efficiency, and to ensure consistency throughout the river corridor.
- Based on information obtained from monitoring, modifications in special permits, reclamation plans, and other documents, operating parameters for uses may be necessary to insure human health and safety and the well-being of riparian plants and wildlife.

#### POSS-7-d

**Buffer Zones near Intensive Uses.** Protect natural reserve areas and wildlife corridor areas in the San Joaquin River corridor whenever more intensive human uses exist or are proposed on adjacent lands. Use buffer zones to allow multiple uses on parts of the parkway while still protecting wildlife and native plants.

- Require studies of appropriate buffer widths to be approved by State and federal wildlife agencies before variances from standard buffer zone widths are granted.
- Maintain natural riparian buffer zones with appropriate native plants (seed material and cuttings locally derived).
- Incorporate open space uses such as pasture, low-intensity agricultural activities, and the “rough” or marginal areas of golf

courses, into buffer zones when they constitute an improvement in habitat over a previous use or degraded area. Evaluate and address the potential impacts of construction, cultural, and operational practices (such as grading, number of livestock per acre, lighting, and use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers) before these uses are approved for buffering.

- For nearby areas of the San Joaquin River corridor outside of the exclusive jurisdiction of the City, support efforts to work with other jurisdictions to achieve this policy.

**POSS-7-e**

**Natural Habitats and Historic Resources.** Continue to protect and enhance the San Joaquin River Parkway environs' unique and irreplaceable natural habitats and historic resources (including archaeological sites). Continue to maintain standards to protect public health, and provide for development of substantial recreational opportunities for all segments of the community by preserving open space on the bluffs and riverbottom while allowing appropriate recreational development respectful of private property rights.

- In conjunction with other land use jurisdictions along the river corridor, determine whether to create a new or modified open space zone district applicable to the San Joaquin riverbottom environs, with provisions that would allow and support the multiple open space uses consistent with the multi-use open space plan designation in this area, and to minimize or prohibit new residential construction.
- Require existing undeveloped areas of the riverbottom to remain non-urbanized and establish controls to preserve and enhance the remaining riparian areas and minimize or prohibit new residential uses.

**POSS-7-f**

**River Bluffs.** Preserve the river bluffs as a unique geological feature in the San Joaquin Valley by maintaining and enforcing the requirements of the "BP" Bluff Preservation Overlay Zone District, maintaining the bluff area setback for buildings, structures, decks, pools and spas (which may be above or below grade), fencing, and steps, and maintaining designated vista points.

- Strive to assure that development of the parkway and other uses within the San Joaquin riverbottom environs are consistent with the mineral resources conservation zones; honor flood, environmental, recreational and aesthetic issues; protect natural

habitats and historic resources; and consider adjacent property owners.

- Take an active role in establishing park entrances. Provide all gates, trails and roads adequate access by emergency vehicles such as fire trucks, police cars, and ambulances.
- For safety reasons, access may be limited to points that have controlled access gates. Cooperation of private parties having legal control of riverbottom access shall be sought in this effort.
- Continue to work toward the adoption of official plan lines for new segments of the San Joaquin River Trails and actively pursue completion of these segments to ensure that adequate and appropriate public access to the San Joaquin River and the Parkway is provided.
- Refer to Policy NS-2-d (Chapter 9, Noise and Safety) for additional information for sites within the BP Overlay District.

#### **POSS-7-g**

**San Joaquin River Parkway - River West Fresno Project Area.** Support the extension of the Lewis Eaton Trail into the River West Fresno Project Area consistent with the San Joaquin River Parkway Master Plan and the following criteria:

- Public access into the River View Drive Area/Neighborhoods should be limited to cyclists and pedestrians with the exception of public safety, circulation, and/or other governmental/support service provider vehicles.

***Commentary:** Limitations on vehicular access through the River View Drive Area/Neighborhoods are not intended to restrict vehicular access to the neighborhoods themselves. Public right-of-way held by the City for public street purposes will remain accessible to the public consistent with the requirements of the California Vehicle Code.*

- Proposed public parking facilities should be designed in order to accommodate as many vehicles as possible.
- Additional public parking should be located under and/or adjacent to the old San Joaquin Bridge and State Route 41 corridor.
- The feasibility of additional public parking and equestrian trailer parking near Spano Park should be considered and fully evaluated.

- The location of public parking should not conflict with other recommendations in this policy.
- The trail alignment should, at the greatest extent possible, be located along and/or near the river for maximum public enjoyment, view and access to the river by all users, and to allow for the best possible fire and public safety buffer for adjacent property owners while also taking into consideration environmental impacts, design and maintenance costs, historical and required water flows and flooding, and/or other events that result in increases to water levels.
- Full development or public access should be avoided until adequate and sustainable funding needed to support annual operations and maintenance has been identified.
- The San Joaquin River Bluff and Protection Ordinance should be implemented prior to the completion of the project.

**POSS-7-h**

**Interlink City and San Joaquin River Parkway Trail Networks.** Strive to connect the parkway trail network to other trails in the vicinity, in order to create a community and regional trail system that offers a variety of different route combinations and enhances public access to the parkway.

**POSS-7-i**

**Public Access to San Joaquin River Parkway Trail Networks.** Strive to provide public access to the parkway from public streets, roads, and rights-of-way immediately adjacent to parkway properties, facilities, and trails such as those proposed in Figure POSS-2: San Joaquin River Parkway Path and Trail Access Points, Figure MT-2: Paths and Trails, as well as several public right-of-way alignments identified in Figure MT-1: Major Street Circulation Diagram, which could serve as public access points for vehicles, bicycles, equestrians and/or pedestrians:

1. Herndon and Parkway Avenues: pedestrian access
2. Weber Avenue: multi-modal access with parking
3. Riverside Avenue: multi-modal access with parking
4. Santa Fe and Bluff Avenues: multi-modal access with parking
5. Polk Avenue: pedestrian, bicycle, management, and emergency access
6. Milburn Avenue: existing golf course access and future multi-modal access with parking
7. Valentine Avenue: pedestrian and bicycle access

8. Marks Avenue: pedestrian and bicycle access
9. Van Ness Boulevard: existing Scout Island access, future pedestrian and bicycle access
10. Harrison Avenue: pedestrian and bicycle access
11. Palm and Nees Avenues: multi-modal access with parking
12. Palm Avenue: existing parking and planned pedestrian access
13. Riverview and Bluff Avenue: pedestrian, bicycle, management, and emergency access
14. Perrin Alignment at State Route 41: multi-modal access with parking
15. Woodward Park Audubon Avenue Entrance: multi-modal access with parking
16. Woodward Park Friant Road Entrance: multi-modal access with parking
17. Shepherd Avenue and Friant Road: pedestrian and bicycle access
18. Champlain Avenue and Friant Road: pedestrian and bicycle access
19. Rice Road: multi-modal access with parking
20. Lanes Road: multi-modal access with parking
21. Copper Avenue and Friant Road: multi-modal access with parking
22. Old Friant Road: multi-modal access with parking
23. Old Friant Road: multi-modal access with parking
24. Old Friant Road and Copper River Drive: pedestrian and bicycle access
25. Old Friant Road at River Center: multi-modal access with parking
26. Old Friant Road: multi-modal access with parking

## 5.6 SCHOOLS

Schools often act as focal points for neighborhoods and can serve as gathering places and provide open space and recreation opportunities. The City does not operate any of the public schools in Fresno, but it does maintain a collaborative relationship with the school districts, reviewing and approving sites through the subdivision process to ensure that they are consistent with and supportive of the General Plan. The City can also make land use and urban form choices that enhance the role of school facilities in the community.

## Existing Public Schools

Fresno is served by several school districts, and the school boundaries do not mirror the city limits. The City coordinates land use plans and subdivision approvals with local districts and cooperates with them to ensure that school fees are collected prior to the issuance of building permits. However, substantial population growth, changing demographic characteristics, and funding constraints have made it difficult for school districts to meet growing student capacity demands.

Most of the city is served by the Fresno Unified School District (FUSD), the fourth largest school district in the state, operating 95 schools with an enrollment of 70,704 students. FUSD adopted a District Facilities Master Plan in 2009 to revise and improve feeder patterns, adjust school boundaries to balance enrollment, improve building and site conditions, reduce the use of portable classrooms, and build new classrooms and facilities where needed. In accordance with the Master Plan, the District constructed a new middle school in southwest Fresno (Rutherford B. Gaston Sr.), which opened in 2014. The District Facilities Master Plan also calls for a new high school in the southeast area of the District, which would help accommodate new growth and help lessen overcrowding at existing high schools.



*While the City does not operate any of the schools in Fresno, it works closely with the local school districts to coordinate land use plans and subdivision approvals.  
Photo Courtesy of Karana Hattersley-Drayton.*

Clovis Unified School District (CUSD) currently serves areas in Fresno north of Herndon Avenue and east of FYI Airport, and it will serve areas in the Southeast Development Area generally north of the Tulare Avenue alignment. It is the second largest school district in the city serving 40,677 students in 43 schools with

approximately 40 percent of students in CUSD being Fresno residents. CUSD has one educational complex in Fresno that houses a middle and a high school. CUSD is in the early planning stages of its newest educational complex in the northern portion of SEDA.

Central Unified School District (Central USD) serves the northwestern and west portions of the city serving 14,547 students in 19 schools, and it will serve most of the new development in the Development Areas west of State Route 99. Fueled by residential construction in these areas since 2000, Central USD has experienced an influx of students and as a consequence they have constructed new schools. Fortunately, the Central area contains large parcels of undeveloped land that provide the district flexibility when identifying new school sites.

Sanger Unified School District (Sanger USD) serves the southeast portion of the city serving 10,917 students in 20 schools, and at a 7.8 percent increase in enrollment over 5 years has experienced comparable growth to Central USD and slightly lower than Clovis USD at 8.4 percent. As Fresno experiences new development in the eastern fringe, student populations will undoubtedly increase. High school students living in Fresno and within the Sanger USD currently attend Sanger High School located several miles to the east of Fresno. A new Sanger Unified High School and Middle School are planned in the vicinity of a new Sanger Elementary School north of Jensen and west of Temperance Avenue.

The southwest portion of the city was served by the West Fresno School District, which contains an elementary school and a middle school. In July 2011, West Fresno USD merged into and became a part of the Washington Unified School District that serves 2,560 students in 4 schools. A large portion of the area south of Church Avenue in southwest Fresno is now within the Washington Unified School District.

Combined, the public school districts have the capacity to serve 144,000 school aged children between the grades of K-12, and private schools can serve another 4,200 students. With 136,000 students currently in the public school districts, there remains space for up to 8,000 additional students. Clovis, Fresno, Central and Sanger USDs are planning new schools to increase student capacities as they plan for future growth in the Fresno Planning Area.

## Future Schools

Development under the General Plan by 2035 is expected to result in around 35,000 new school-aged students who would require another 28 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 4 high schools. The actual school need will depend on the location and phasing of new development, the capacity of existing schools, other growth within



school districts outside of Fresno, and demographic shifts within existing residential neighborhoods.

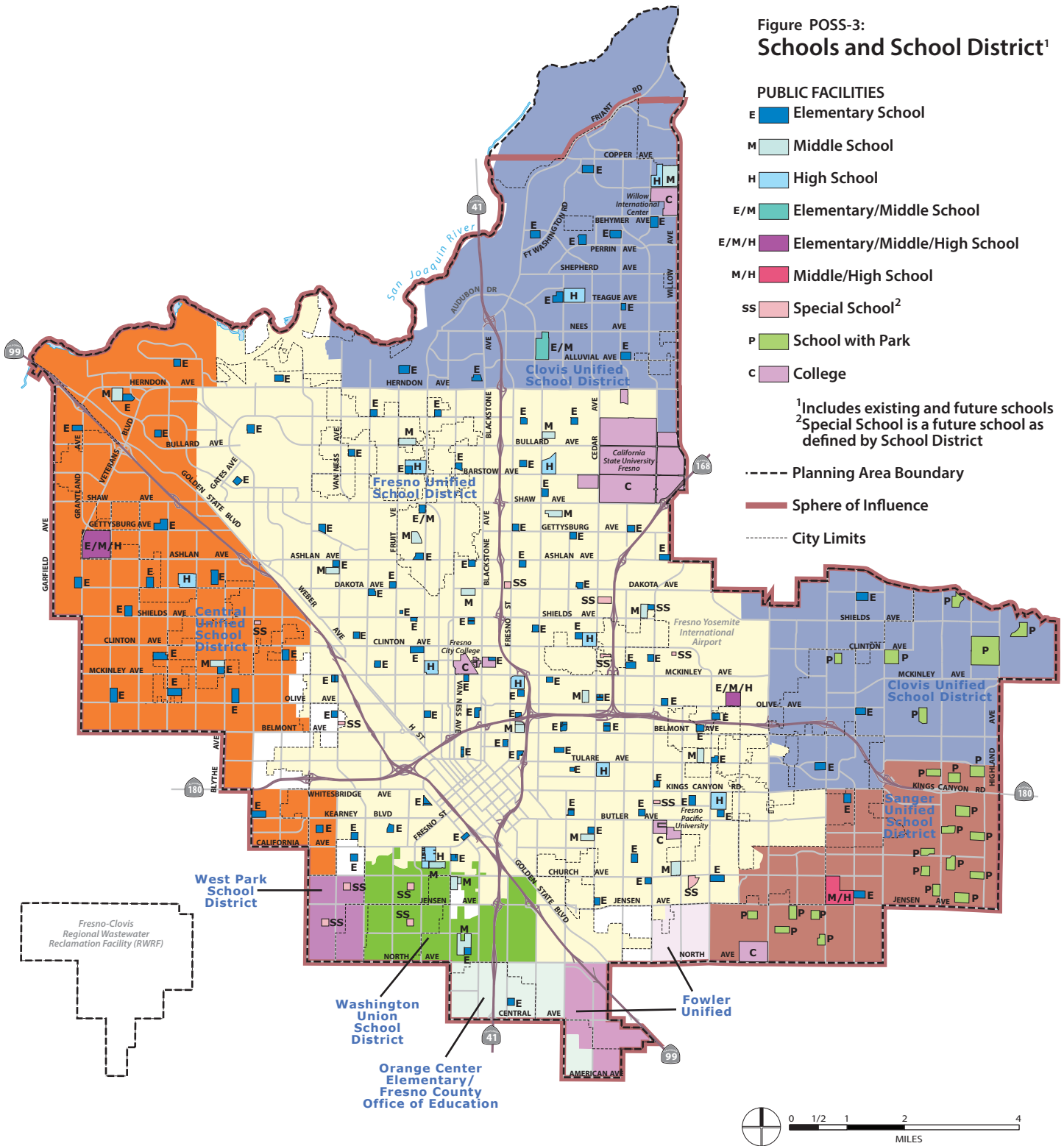
The City is aware of several planned or proposed school sites and has designated these on Figure LU-1: Land Use Diagram, and Figure POSS-3: Schools and School Districts Diagram. Otherwise, future school facilities are permitted in a variety of land use and zoning districts. The State's school facility size and service area characteristics will aid preparing master plans for Development Areas, supporting districts' needs.

### Higher Education

Fresno is home to a major four-year public university, California State University, Fresno, commonly known as Fresno State. It is located in the northeastern area of the city. Fresno State is one of the largest and best known of the 23 CSU campuses. It has one of the five public agricultural colleges in the state and maintains research farms within the city limits. Fresno State is largely a commuter campus, with relatively few students living on campus. The university is surrounded by urbanized land, generally low density residential neighborhoods; there are concentrations of apartment complexes west and south of the campus, as well as in the new Campus Pointe development on campus. The residential uses surrounding the university limit its potential for expansion and for the adjacent development of complementary uses, such as research and development, retail, and student housing.

Fresno is also home to Fresno Pacific University (FPU), the Central Valley's only accredited Christian university; San Joaquin Valley College; Heald College; UCSF Fresno Center for Medical Education and Research; UEL College; and other professional and technical training centers. Another key institution for higher education and training is the State Center Community College District (SCCCD), which operates Fresno City College in the center of the city and offers associates degrees and vocational training, as well as the Willow International College Center, a satellite campus on the northeastern edge of the city. The District is planning to add a satellite campus focused on vocational training in the southeastern corner of the city in SEDA.

Figure POSS-3:  
Schools and School District<sup>1</sup>



Source: City of Fresno, 2014

## OBJECTIVE

**POSS-8** Work cooperatively with school districts to find appropriate locations for schools to meet the needs of students and neighborhoods.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

**POSS-8-a** **Support School Districts' Programs.** Support strategies and programs of school districts and the Fresno County Office of Education to provide access to and use of the highest quality educational programs and support services.

**POSS-8-b** **Appropriate School Locations.** Support school locations that facilitate safe and convenient access by pedestrian and bicycle routes, are compatible with surrounding land uses, and contribute to a positive neighborhood identity and Complete Neighborhoods. Commit to the following:

- Work with representatives of public and private schools during the preparation and amendment of plans and the processing of development proposals to ensure that General Plan policies are implemented.
- Require school districts to provide necessary street improvements, pedestrian facilities, public facilities, and public services at each new school site as authorized by law.
- Continue to designate known school sites on the Land Use Diagram (Figure LU-1), and in community plans, Specific Plans, and other plans compatible with the locational criteria of each school district, and to facilitate safe and convenient walking and biking to schools in neighborhoods.
- Meet regularly with school district staff and trustees to provide ongoing communication and coordination of plans, projects, and priorities.
- Collaborate with school districts to plan and implement new school sites in a manner that supports and reinforces objectives to develop walkable Complete Neighborhoods.

**POSS-8-c** **Park and School Site Coordination.** Pursue the cooperative development and use of school sites with adjacent neighborhood parks for both school activities and non-school related recreational activities.

## OBJECTIVE

- POSS-9** Work with California State University, Fresno, and other institutions of higher learning in Fresno, to enhance the City's workforce, job creation, and economic development, as well as its image and desirability as a place to live.

## IMPLEMENTING POLICIES

- POSS-9-a** **Economic Potential of Institutions of Higher Education in Fresno.** Seek to leverage the human capital, research pursuits, and economic potential of California State University, Fresno (Fresno State), and all of Fresno's institutions of higher education, whenever possible in economic development and land use decisions.

- POSS-9-b** **Regular Coordination with Institutions of Higher Education in Fresno.** Encourage regular meetings with Fresno State, FPU and SCCC leadership, including the Facilities Planning and Housing divisions.

- POSS-9-c** **University Neighborhood Planning.** Partner with Fresno State, FPU and SCCC leadership to find funding for, develop, and implement a Specific Plan for the neighborhoods around the primary campuses of these and other higher education institutions in Fresno.

***Commentary:** Using Fresno State as an example, the Specific Plans will focus on updating land use designations, zoning, and infrastructure investments along Cedar Avenue, Shaw Avenue, and other city/school interface zones. The plan also will provide a framework for coordinating jointly beneficial actions, such as development of a research park near the campus and enhanced bus service connections.*