

Chapter Eight
PARKS & RECREATION

General Plan for the City of Bishop
Chapter Eight - Parks & Recreation

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PARKS & RECREATION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Summary

The availability of recreational opportunities in and around the City of Bishop are one of the greatest assets to the community. Recreation, tourism, and leisure activities are an integral part of the Bishop experience and are an important part of life for most people. Much of the industry that resides in the Bishop area is focused on serving the recreational needs of residents and visitors. A large part of Bishop's recreation demand is for activities such as walking, horseback riding, field sports, swimming, and court sports. Such activities require large open space areas and/or special facilities.

B. Background

Parks standards within local jurisdictions are usually established through an acreage requirement per 1,000 residents. The Subdivision Map Act and the Quimby Act (Section 66477 of the Government Code) relating to parkland dedication sets a criteria of 3 acres per 1,000 residents, although a more generally accepted ratio is 5 acres per 1,000 residents. By either standard, the City of Bishop is well ahead of the basic parkland requirements. The Bishop City Park, comprising approximately 53 acres is of sufficient size to meet these standards. However, many of the facilities are in need of expansion and upgrades. The establishment of neighborhood parks in undeveloped areas of the City can also provide additional recreational amenities geared more specifically for local residents.

C. Purpose

The Parks and Recreation Element has been prepared to identify existing parks and recreational resources serving the City, suggest ways in which additional recreational needs can be satisfied, and guide the acquisition and development of future parks and recreational areas. Goals, policies, and actions contained in this element are intended to help the City prioritize its expenditures on park facilities to achieve a system that best meets the recreational needs of the community.

D. Authorization

Although the Parks and Recreation Element is discretionary, Section 65303(a) of the California Government Code states that the City's General Plan may include a recreation element showing a comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation, including, when practical,

locations and proposed development of natural reservations, parks, parkways, beaches, playgrounds, recreational gardens, and other recreation areas.

The element also has been prepared in accordance with Section 66477 which authorizes a city to require the dedication of land or payment of fees in lieu thereof, or a combination of both, for neighborhood and community parks for recreational purposes as a condition to the approval of a tentative map, based on certain conditions as delineated in the code.

II. SUMMARY OF ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

A. Issues

- Is the Bishop City Park of sufficient size and capabilities to meet the long term recreational needs of the Bishop community?
- Will the addition of the proposed Community Center provide the amenities necessary in meeting the City's recreational and civic needs?
- Are parks and/or parks facilities needed in other areas of the City to better serve the residential neighborhoods?
- How can the City pay for facilities improvements, additions, and upgrades to improve the quality of the recreational environment in Bishop?

B. Opportunities

- The 53 acre Bishop City Park is of sufficient acreage to meet the standards established by the Quimby Act.
- A portion of the Bishop City Park is undeveloped, allowing for the addition of needed facilities.
- The 1984 Annexation provided open space areas in the northwest portion of the City that could be used for neighborhood parks as that area develops.
- The Fairgrounds provide year-round capability for special recreational events.
- Bishop Creek can provide a unique recreational opportunity for residents and visitors if properly incorporated into the parks system.

C. Constraints

- The Bishop City Park is located on the east side of Highway 395, somewhat isolated from the predominant residential neighborhoods of Bishop.
- Many of the parks facilities are in need of significant repair or improvement in order to adequately serve residents and visitors.

- The cost of upgrading existing facilities and development of new facilities is expensive, requiring strict budgetary consideration.
- The availability of land for development of new parks is limited, privately controlled, and expensive.

III. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Bishop City Park contains approximately 53 acres, of which 35 acres is developed. The remaining 18 acres is allocated for expansion purposes. With Bishop's existing population level of approximately 3,500 residents, there is ample acreage to meet accepted standards. However, since the park is used heavily by tourists and residents of the unincorporated areas surrounding the City, it is reaching its carrying capacity. Other recreational areas are available to residents, but are located outside of the City limits, including the Bishop Motorcycle Park, Bishop Gun Range, Bishop Model Airplane Field, Bishop Golf Course, Bishop Equestrian Area, Laws Railroad Museum, Millpond Recreation Area, and the Owens River Recreational Area.

A. Bishop City Park

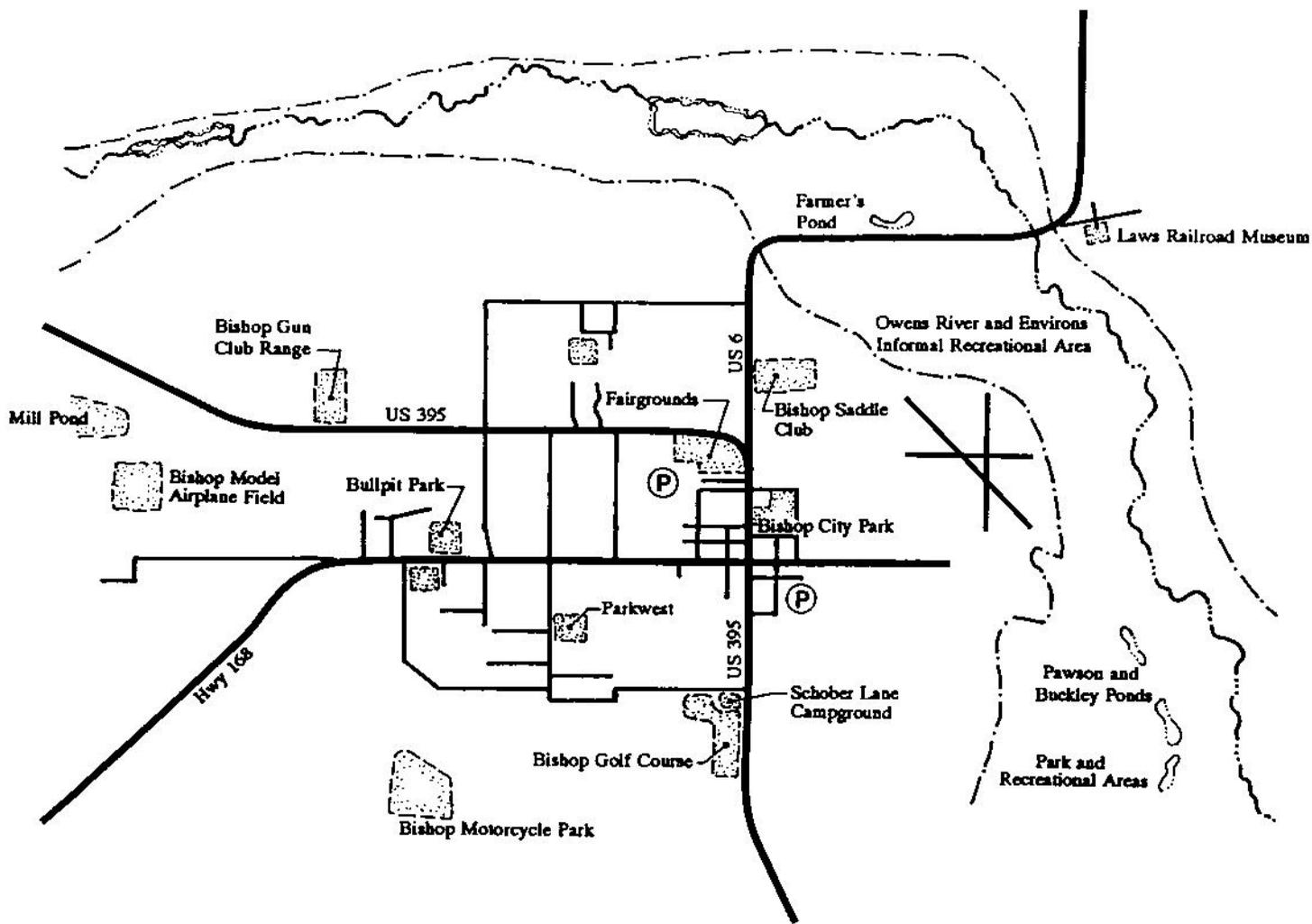
The Bishop City Park serves thousands of Bishop area residents, as well as many thousands of visitors to the area.

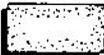
The Chamber of Commerce has recorded over 40,000 visits annually at their office in the park. In addition, 500 youth baseball/softball participants, 500 adult softball players, 450 soccer players, 150 swim team members, 20,000 pool visits, and untold numbers of art show spectators, picnickers, band concert goers, and tennis players are well served by the facilities provided.

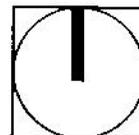
As with all facilities, there are numerous areas and pieces of equipment that need attention. Most of these are taken care of on an ongoing basis with annual operating funds and park staff maintenance. However, over longer periods of time equipment wears out, entire areas and facilities no longer function properly, and use patterns of people change.

The goal of the Parks Commission is to encourage City Council to continue providing the existing high quality of facilities and services while planning to meet the future needs of residents and visitors.

Parks and Recreational Areas



-  Proposed Neighborhood Parks
-  Existing Recreation Facilities



B. Assessment of Existing Facilities

1. Playground Areas

All old play equipment within the park has recently been removed and to date the majority of the equipment has been replaced. Further replacements are accounted for in the current budget. This equipment is placed into two major areas, around the pool facility, and near the back picnic area. The major users are both local and visitors.

2. Restrooms

There is one full time year-round facility in the front of the park. Restrooms also are located near athletic fields 2 and 3, in the pool facility, and at the Chamber of Commerce. New Chamber of Commerce restrooms will meet public access standards. Only the restrooms in the front of the park are open year-round daily and meet public access standards. The Senior Citizen facility has restrooms which are not made available to the general public. There is a major problem due to lack of restrooms near the lower tennis courts and Field 4.

3. Aquatic Facility

A new 8-lane, 25 yard competition/community pool, children's wading pool, and 109' water slide were opened in June 1992. This combination of new pool and renovated bathhouse will meet the aquatic recreation needs well into the future. Primary uses are for community Red Cross instruction classes, open recreational swimming, swim team, and visitors.

The new slide may provide a significant boost in interest from visitors and teens. These are two groups previously less involved.

4. Tennis Courts

There are eight tennis courts, four lighted in the middle of the park and four unlighted in the northeastern section of the park. Six of the eight courts are currently constructed of asphaltic concrete, consequently all having a significant amount of cracking. Two new courts are now in place that are built with concrete. The lighting system on the four upper courts is four years old. Although asphalt courts are the most common and have playability advantages over concrete, their life expectancy is only 12 years. The cracks on the courts require repair at least twice annually. Major users are the Tennis Club, Bishop High School, and a new youth program. While the number of public courts per capita is higher than in most areas, the demand for court space in Spring, Summer and Fall exceeds availability.

5. Athletic Fields

There are four athletic fields, two of which are lighted. The lights on field 1 are two to three years old, the lights of field 2 are 15 to 20 years old. Three of the fields are large enough to be used for both softball/baseball and soccer. The irrigation systems on fields 2, 3, and 4 all need some renovation. The turf areas should be renovated on field 1 due to subsidence and compaction from overuse. Major users are Little Leagues, Bishop and

Mammoth High Schools, adult softball leagues, youth soccer, and a new girls softball league. The demand is currently outstripping the availability. In addition, the youth organizations are facing pressure to expand due to the significant increase in school age children.

6. Picnic Areas

There is a formal picnic shelter in the rear of the park. The shelter is normally booked for weekend use in the spring and summer. The demand for the shelter currently exceeds the availability. There is a substantial lack of benches for park users. However, the portable benches are convenient for community activities but their wood construction makes them vulnerable to deterioration due to constant exposure to irrigation systems and winter weathering.

7. Signs

The Parks Commission recently completed a sign program which provides a complete package of ordinances and rules included on uniform point-of-entry signs.

8. Landscaping

Many of the mature trees in the park are varieties which are susceptible to diseases. Of particular concern are the elms and honey locust, both of which dominate the front and middle sections of the park. The City Council has initiated a tree planting program which will help diversify the tree stock and meet future needs. Modification of the Chamber of Commerce facility has added some spring, summer, and fall color which is easier to maintain.

C. Other Recreational Resources

Recreational resources located outside of the current City limits also offer a diverse range of activities enjoyed by residents and visitors. These resources, both publicly and privately operated, help reduce the burden on Bishop City Park to provide the entire spectrum of recreational activities. These resources include:

- **Fairgrounds** located on Sierra Highway and Main Street provides recreational and cultural events year-round, including Mule Days, concerts, and other special events.
- **Bishop Golf Course** (18 holes) located south of the City on Highway 395.
- **Laws Railroad Museum** located on U.S. 6 northeast of the City.
- **Owens River Recreational Area** located north and east of the City.
- **Mill Pond Recreational Area** located on DWP land consists of 200 acres (40 acres are developed) and is operated by the Inyo County Park and Recreation Department.
- **Bishop Equestrian Area**
- **Bishop Model Airplane Field** located west of the City adjacent to Mill Pond.

- **Bishop Gun Range** located northwest of the City
- **Bishop Motorcycle Park** located southwest of the City

The Owens River Recreational Area and its environs comprise about 10,000 acres and offers fishing, hunting and recreational opportunities related to the Owens River. Being almost exclusively DWP leased lands, area includes lands on either side of the Owens River, including the Buckley-Rawson Ponds and areas north of the Airport. The Department of Fish and Game's Brown Trout Management area is the only area specifically "managed" for recreation related purposes.

D. Bikeways and Recreational Trails System

The Circulation Element contains a proposed Bikeway and Recreational Trails System. The analysis noted that despite favorable conditions, (ie. flat grades, relatively good climate and an outdoor oriented population) there are few facilities for bicycles. As a result the Plan contains a Bikeway System which includes approximately 53 miles of bike paths to be developed linking the major residential, commercial, institutional and recreational areas within the City and surrounding area. The system relies on shared motor vehicle rights-of-way for implementation.

The Circulation Element also includes a Recreational Trails System designed to meet the needs of horseriders, long distance joggers, hikers and other pedestrians. The proposed recreational trails system takes advantage of the many canals, transmission lines, ranches and other roads found in the area. The system links all residential areas with the equestrian area, Fairgrounds, Mill Pond, City Park, Owens River and other areas of interest.

IV. PARKS & RECREATION TRAILS SYSTEM

A. Parks Facilities

1. Bishop City Park

The existing park facilities at Bishop City Park are in need of significant improvement to meet the requirements of residents and visitors. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan identifies a program for the upgrade and expansion of the facilities contained therein. Improvements and renovations are planned for playgrounds, restrooms, benches, walkways, horseshoe pits, and athletic facilities. New facilities are planned as well, including a community center complex, restrooms, an event board, group picnic facilities, and tennis courts.

These improvements and additions, once completed should significantly improve the characteristics of City Park. Utilization of the entire 53 acres is important in providing for the overall recreational needs of Bishop residents and visitors. The Community Center alone, will provide year-round recreational opportunities, as well as offer conference facilities and meeting rooms.

2. Neighborhood Parks

The previous General Plan identified the need for the location of neighborhood parks in the northwest and southeast portions of Bishop. These parks were intended to be incorporated as part of new development in these expansion areas. The neighborhood parks are recommended to be 2.0 to 2.5 acres each, serving a population level of approximately 1,000 residents. It is important that a Parks Master Plan be adopted to specify the location and size of these neighborhood parks in order to assure that the City will be adequately providing recreational and open space areas for its residents.

3. Private Recreational Areas

Private recreation areas in and around the City offer the widest range of recreational opportunities that exist in Inyo County. The City should continue to encourage their development, improvement, and expansion to meet the growing need for such facilities. Cooperation by the Chamber of Commerce, the Visitors Bureau, and the City itself is important in assuring that private recreational areas are well utilized. Special events, tournaments, and other promotions should be encouraged.

V. GOALS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

The following goals, policies, and actions are intended to guide the City's decisionmakers in determining how to adequately serve the recreational needs of Bishop's current and future residents.

A. Goals

- To increase outdoor recreational opportunities and recreational use of the area's vast open space resources.
- To prevent the degradation of the City's and area's recreational resources.
- To upgrade the existing facilities in Bishop City Park to reflect the current demand for recreational activities.
- To assure that neighborhood parks are incorporated into the planning of the undeveloped portions of the City.

B. Policies

- The City shall require the incorporation of parks facilities, or fees in lieu, into the development of the recently annexed portions of the City.
- The City shall require the incorporation of bikeways and recreational trails into new developments to correspond to the facilities identified in the Circulation Element.
- The City will work closely with the Parks Commission to assure that adequate parks facilities are provided and maintained to the highest possible standards.

- The City shall encourage the continuation and enhancement of the role of the Chamber of Commerce, whose primary purpose is to coordinate and market visitor programs that exist within the City and the surrounding area.
- The City shall cooperate with Inyo County, State, and Federal agencies to assure that regional parks and recreational facilities are provided and maintained in the Bishop area.
- The City shall prioritize the development of the Community Center which will provide a variety of functions for both residents and visitors of Bishop.

C. Actions

- Authorize the Parks Commission to amend the parks and recreation master plan to include Bishop City Park and two neighborhood parks located in the City.

Responsible Agency: Planning Commission, City Council, Parks Commission

- Organize a Visitors/Tourist Bureau to actively market the tourist industry and recreational opportunities within the City and surrounding area.

Responsible Agency: City of Bishop, Chamber of Commerce, general public

- Implement proposed facility improvements to Bishop City Park as presented in the Parks and Recreation Master Plan of 1990.

Responsible Agency: City of Bishop, Parks Commission