

# Recreation Element

## PURPOSE

The Recreation Element addresses parks and recreation facilities, recreation programs, shared facilities, coastal recreation and support facilities, marine recreation and public access, and the provision of parklands and recreation programs. More specifically, the primary purpose of the Recreation Element is to provide parks and recreation facilities sufficient for the current and future residential, business, and visitor populations of Newport Beach.

## OVERVIEW

The Recreation Element addresses parks and recreation facilities, recreation programs, shared facilities, coastal recreation and support facilities, marine recreation and public access, and the provision of parklands and recreation programs. More specifically, the primary purpose of the Recreation Element is to ensure an appropriate balance between providing sufficient parks and recreation facilities and the current and future residential, business, and visitor populations of Newport Beach.

Recreational spaces and programs play an important role in the physical, mental, social, and environmental health of Newport Beach's residents. Newport Beach's landscape is made up of coastal, beach, tideland, reserve, and urban areas, creating an opportunity for a diverse range of parkland and recreation types.

The Recreation Element is coordinated with the Natural Resources; Harbor, Bay and Beaches; Safety; and Land Use Elements to support the preservation of open spaces, including beaches and the harbor as recreational spaces.

### [Parks and Recreation Overview](#)

The City of Newport Beach (City) has approximately 595 acres of land dedicated to parks and recreational facilities, including 344 acres of parks and 250 acres of recreational beaches. Additional recreational opportunities in the city include 66 acres of parks under school jurisdiction that are under a joint use agreement with the City and approximately 2,478 acres of land dedicated to open space and preservation, much of which offers recreational opportunities such as trails (See Figure X, Parks and Open Space).

The Newport Beach Municipal Code establishes a parkland dedication standard for new subdivisions of 5 acres of parkland for every 1,000 persons. The parkland dedication standard applies to recreational parks and excludes open space and preserves because open space is not always accessible, and its primary purpose is the preservation of open lands. If we apply this same standard citywide, Newport Beach has a surplus of parkland to meet the current and projected population. Based on the City's parkland standards and the 2023 population estimate of 82,627 people, the city needs at least 443 total acres of parkland to serve the population.

Given the city’s 344 acres of parks and recreational facilities (inclusive of playgrounds, picnic tables, sports fields and courts, passive parks, and community centers) and 250 acres of recreational beaches, there is a current surplus of 151 acres of parkland. In 2045, the total population is estimated to be 88,650 people, which would need to be served by approximately 443 acres of parkland.

For the purposes of planning parks in a manner that meets the geographic needs of residents, the City has divided Newport Beach into 12 park service areas in which the City administers parkland dedications and fees provided by residential development. When the City’s parkland standard of 5 acres per 1,000 residents is applied by service area, 8 of the 12 service areas are considered to be deficient in total park acreage to meet the projected population needs. A map of the public parks and recreational opportunities by service area is shown in Figure R-1, Public Parks and Recreation Opportunities by Service Area. As shown in Table 1 and further detailed in the Recreation Element Existing Conditions and Background Analysis, the park service areas that are anticipated to meet and exceed projected population parkland needs include West Newport, Balboa Peninsula, Eastbluff/Newport North, and Harbor View; all other service areas are not anticipated to meet the needs of the projected population. Figures X through X provide an overview of parks and open space for each park service area included in Table 1.

Table 1. 2045 Projected Park Need by Service Area

Park Service Area	2045 Projected Park Acreage Need	2024 Recreational Acreage (Parks and Beaches)	Deficit (-) or Excess (+) Acreage
West Newport	64.6	82.79	18.19
Balboa Peninsula	20.5	179.47	158.97
Newport Heights/ Upper Bay	69.6	54.18	-15.42
Santa Ana Heights	9	3.73	-5.27
Lower Bay	17	0.05	-16.95
Balboa Island	13.4	0.28	-13.12
Eastbluff/Newport North	36.4	66.6	30.2
Big Canyon Belcourt	17.9	--	-17.9
Newport Center	26.1	19.93	-6.17
Corona del Mar	42.2	33.31	-8.89
Harbor View	67.1	129.51	62.41
Newport Coast	59.5	25.17	-34.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>443.30</b>	<b>595.02</b>	<b>+151.72</b>

### Park Type Classifications

The types of parks in the city vary in size, communities served, and recreational opportunities offered. The specific park types are summarized below.

- **Community Park.** Community parks serve the entire city and are easily accessible via arterial roads. Community parks typically include community buildings, parking, swimming, facilities for picnicking, active sports, and other facilities that serve a larger population.

- **Mini Park.** Mini parks are smaller parks and have two general purposes. Most mini parks are typically less than 1 acre in size, serve a 0.25-mile radius, and are located within a neighborhood separate from major collector roads. Some mini parks serve the entire City of Newport Beach and are located as urban trailheads along major trails or streets.
- **Neighborhood Park.** Neighborhood parks serve all ages and are generally between 1 and 8 acres in size. They are located adjacent to public schools when possible. Neighborhood parks contain amenities such as turf areas, active sport fields and courts, community buildings, playground equipment, and picnic facilities. Some neighborhood parks may also include senior centers, youth centers, and aquatic facilities.
- **View Park.** View parks are smaller passive parks at significant vistas or viewpoints. They are often located on coastal bluffs and highlight ocean and bay views. Most view parks are between 0.5 and 3 acres in size and serve the entire City of Newport Beach. View park amenities include improved landscaping, walkways, and benches.
- **Open Space.** Open space includes passive and active open space areas that do not function as public spaces but do provide open space relief. Some open space areas are open to and accessible by the public.
- **Public Beach.** Public beaches serve a number of local and regional functions. In some neighborhoods, beaches function as neighborhood or community parks. Easy accessibility, a lack of entrance fees, and a lack of other available parks have contributed to this function. Public beaches all include sandy beach areas adjacent to the bay or ocean and may include active sport areas, snack bars, showers, drinking fountains, restrooms, walkways, docks, benches, shade trees, and parking areas. Active beach area acreage is measured 100 feet from the observed water edge into the water area based on the standard for shoreline swimming and previous observations from the Newport Beach Technical Report.
- **School.** Public schools are a part of the City of Newport Beach's recreation system because indoor facilities, field, and playground areas can serve the general public during weekends and after school.

The number of park types within a service area varies based on the nature of the physical geographic area; for example, a service area with a canyon or bay may have more view parks than a more urbanized and developed service area. Figure X below summarizes the number of park types throughout the city.

### Support Facilities

Many of the parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities in the city also provide support facilities. Support facilities such as restrooms, seating areas, and water fountains are crucial for enhancing accessibility, encouraging longer stays, and improving the overall experience of those visiting parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities. By providing adequate and well-maintained support facilities, the City contributes to cleaner and more-welcoming public spaces.

To further support the recreational needs of the community, there are a number of programs offered within Newport Beach that encourage the activation of public spaces by engaging residents and visitors alike. Some of the programs offered include arts, theater, and dance

classes; various sports; hiking and exploring nature; and special events such as movies in the park. Such programs offer structured opportunities for social and physical activity, encourage people to visit and interact with public spaces, and contribute to Newport Beach's culture.

For a full list of public parks and recreational facilities and a summary of the service areas, refer to the Recreation Element Existing Conditions and Background Analysis.

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# GOALS, POLICIES, ACTIONS

The Goals, Policies, and Actions support the purpose of the Recreation Element to ensure an appropriate balance between the provisions of sufficient parks and recreational facilities and the current and future residential, business, and visitor populations of Newport Beach. The Goals, Policies, and Actions are categorized into six topics, including Recreation Programs, New Parks, Maintenance and Improvements, Funding and Coordination, Beach and Recreation, and Support Facilities..

## Recreation Programs

Recreation programs enrich community members' lives by building social connections and providing opportunities for learning and physical activity. High-quality recreation programs that are tailored to the community's needs can foster an engaged and healthy community. Recreation programs vary based on the population they serve, such as children and adolescents, adults, and the older adult population. The older adult population is expected to double in size over the next 20 years, creating an increased demand for recreational activities and programming for older individuals. Additionally, Newport Beach's diverse landscapes provide unique programming opportunities that may be tailored to the natural environment and landscape.

### *Goal R-1: A community with high-quality recreation programs*

- Policy R-1.1: Establish and maintain high-quality events and programming for residents, prioritizing older adults and families with children. (Imp. 23.4)
- Policy R-1.2: Inform the community about upcoming events, new facilities and programs, and other pertinent parks and recreation news. (Imp. 29.1)
- Policy R-1.3: Coordinate with homeowners' associations to conduct City recreation programs on private parkland. (Imp. 23.3)
- Policy R-1.4: Provide programming and recreational activities compatible with the location and landscape. (Imp. 23.3)
- Policy R-1.5: Protect and enhance specific programs that use the harbor, bay, and ocean, such as the City's sailing program and junior lifeguard program. (Imp. 23.4, 21.4)

### *Goal R-2: Programs for older adults that benefit and are used by residents*

- Policy R-2.1: Form and maintain partnerships with relevant organizations, such as Friends of OASIS, and determine potential improvements for recreational programs targeted toward older adults to increase program participation. (Imp. 23.3)
- Policy R-2.2: Create adult programs that are self-sustaining in nature, covering all direct expenses and administrative overhead costs. (Imp. 23.4)
- Policy R-2.3: Increase program awareness among older adults. (Imp. 29.1)

## Parks and Playgrounds

Parks are a vital asset in any community, providing opportunities for refuge, recreation, and socialization while offering physical and mental health benefits. Increasing park access and

recreational opportunities throughout the community can ensure these benefits are available to residents of all ages and needs.

Most residents can walk to a park in 10 to 15 minutes, but the types of parks available vary due to Newport Beach's varying landscape. These variable landscapes provide unique recreational facilities for the community depending on the location of the park, such as access to walking trails or the beach in certain areas of the city. Because land for new parks in urbanized areas is also limited, the design of new parks should consider parks and recreational facilities that are needed in the respective service area. Additionally, new development should be paired with innovative park types to capitalize on limited land opportunities and promote equitable access to parks to improve the quality of life for residents.

Equally as important, the preservation and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities are essential for maintaining community access to recreational opportunities. Maintenance and needed upgrades to these facilities can help protect City investments while ensuring that residents have continued access to high-quality recreational facilities that meet changing needs.

As the environment changes and the population shifts, it is important that parks and recreational facilities continue meeting community needs and providing benefits to human health, well-being, and the environment. Finding opportunities to expand or adapt parks and recreational facilities to serve older adults and people with disabilities can help serve all residents now and in the future. Furthermore, designing parks and recreational facilities to be resilient to extreme heat, flooding, and wildfires can ensure these amenities continue to function despite environmental changes. This can include planning for cooling centers, which are free indoor air-conditioned locations where residents can keep cool when there are extreme heat weather conditions, or by using materials for parks, surfaces, or pathways that reflect more solar energy to reduce the amount of heat absorbed and radiated, referred to as cool pavement.

*Goal R-3: New parks and connections that increase resident access to recreation, parks, and open space opportunities*

- Policy R-3.1: Support innovative park types that encourage community gathering and integrate nature into the urban environment. This could include publicly accessible open spaces that create or enhance mobility connections, such as paseos, promenades, or small accessible spaces that offer refuge, such as courtyards, pocket parks, rooftop gardens, and other park types not identified in the park type classifications. (Imp. 23.2)
- Policy R-3.2: Support recreation needs of residents by service area by reviewing and possibly revising the methodology for determining park needs in each service area by considering existing park types, demographics, physical geography, and connectivity, including to nearby parks and open spaces as well as access across and between different service areas. (Imp. 23.1)

- Policy R-3.3: Evaluation of open space acreage and park type classification across the city to identify areas to prioritize for new parks and greenspace, tailored to community needs. (Imp. 23.1)
- Policy R-3.4: Consider establishing a parks master plan to comprehensively assess and plan for park needs across the city. (Imp. 23.1)
- Policy R-3.5: Evaluate potential development incentives for developers to contribute to new parks or improvements to existing parks in addition to the required park dedication and/or fees. (Imp. 23.5)
- Policy R-3.6: Support the increase of parkland through joint use agreements. (Imp. 14.2)
- Policy R-3.7: Develop new community parks near public facilities such as schools, libraries, or community centers to create hubs for community gathering. (Imp. 23.2)
- Policy R-3.8: Design public facilities to incorporate recreational elements, such as children's play areas, pocket parks, and usable public plazas. (Imp. 23.2)
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- Policy R-3.9: Support the assessment of the Park Dedications and Fees Ordinance to consider the benefit and feasibility of expanding the in lieu park fees to for-rent residential development. (Imp. 23.5)

*Goal R-4: Parks and recreation facilities that are preserved, upgraded, and well-maintained*

- Policy R-4.1: Conduct outreach at a neighborhood or district scale to identify desired improvements to parks and recreational facilities. (Imp. 23.3)
- Policy R-4.2: Prioritize park improvements based on identified needs, including shade structures, dog parks, and other improvements identified through community outreach. (Imp. 23.1)
- Policy R-4.3: Identify areas with lower-than-average park access or park scores to prioritize improvements by service area. (Imp. 23.1)
- Policy R-4.4: Continue funding park improvements through the Park Dedications and Fees Ordinance. (Imp. 23.5)
- Policy R-4.5: Ensure continued protection of public parkland for recreational uses. (Maintenance/Protection Program)
- Policy R-4.6: Prevent any net loss of parkland or open space. (Maintenance/Protection Program)
- Policy R-4.7: Preserve, where possible, natural watercourses or provide naturalized drainage channels within the city. Where feasible, implement restoration and rehabilitation opportunities. (Policy S-3.1.1)

*Goal R-5: Parks and recreational facilities that are adapted to meet a variety of needs for existing and future residents, including people with disabilities*

- Policy R-5.1: Enhance recreational facilities to ensure adequate capacity for future user demands and adapt to evolving services and facility needs. (Maintenance/Protection Program)

- Policy R-5.2: Develop design standards for parks that are adaptive to extreme heat (shade, seating, water fountains, etc.) (Maintenance/Protection Program, Imp. 23.2)
- Policy R-5.3: Retrofit existing facilities to ensure people with disabilities have adequate access. (Maintenance/Protection Program)
- Policy R-5.4: Develop design standards to ensure Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant accessibility at parks, piers, trails, and public viewing areas for people who require mobility aids. (Maintenance/Protection Program, Imp. 23.2)
- Policy R-5.5: Maintain flood management standards for development, public facilities, and infrastructure located within an officially designated 100-year floodplain. Ensure development is designed in a manner that does not negatively impede or redirect floodwaters or raise anticipated flood heights as identified in the Newport Beach Public Trust Lands Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment. (Policy S-3.1.3)
- Policy R-5.6: Improve cooling centers with resilience improvements like battery backup power and amenities that promote a sense of community and socialization. (Policy S-7.1.2)
- Policy R-5.7: Pilot a cool pavement program to implement materials that reduce the effects of extreme heat. (Policy S-7.1.1)
- Policy R-5.8: Evaluate tree canopy cover in parks and the public right-of-way, considering shade and priority active transportation corridors. (Policy S-7.1.5)

#### Funding and Partnerships

Coordination with internal departments and outside agencies and organizations creates opportunities to share resources, promotes effective communication, and can help facilitate the successful implementation of General Plan goals and policies. Moreover, coordination can increase the quality of and access to parks and open space through integrated strategies and efficient use of resources.

There are several open space areas, preserves, and beaches within the boundaries of the city and its sphere of influence that are managed by the County of Orange (County), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California Department of Parks and Recreation. Additionally, school facilities provide indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities in Newport Beach on approximately 66 acres of Newport-Mesa Unified School District land, which are available to the public under joint use agreements. These other types of recreational opportunities provide a significant resource for the community, and continued coordination with various City, County, and State departments and agencies ensures that these diverse recreational resources continue to serve the needs and enhance the quality of life for all residents of Newport Beach.

*Goal R-6: A city with established and well-maintained relationships to facilitate interagency and interorganizational coordination*

- Policy R-6.1: Maintain and expand existing joint use agreements with the Newport-Mesa Unified School District for use of school recreational facilities as public parks and to provide public access to play areas, pool facilities, gymnasiums, and sports fields. (Imp. 14.2)



- Policy R-6.2: Develop new, long-term, joint use agreements with other public and private agencies to expand the use of non-city recreational facilities/amenities and supplement the park and recreational needs of the community. (Imp. 14.2, 14.3, 14.8)
- Policy R-6.3: Continue collaborating with County and State agencies to maintain trails in public open space, such as Upper Newport Bay. (Imp. 14.3, 14.7, 14.8, 14.16)
- Policy R-6.4: Continue providing city facilities for City-operated recreational programs and other purposes. (Imp. 23.4)
- Policy R-6.5: Maintain the protection and enhancement of recreational activities and support facilities at county and state beaches and parks in cooperation with the State Department of Parks and Recreation, the State Department of Fish and Game, and County of Orange. (Imp. 14.3, 14.7, 14.8)
- Policy R-6.6: Coordinate with the Orange County Harbor, Beaches, and Parks Department to provide facilities in the harbor where appropriate and feasible. (Imp. 14.3, 21.2)
- Policy R-6.7: Encourage interagency coordination with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority and support planning efforts for the Frank and Joan Randall Preserve (formerly Banning Ranch). (Imp. 14.16)

### Beach Recreation

The city has approximately 250 acres of public beach recreation area, offering numerous opportunities for passive and active beach and coastal recreation. There are more than 8 miles of sandy beaches in Newport Beach that provide public facilities and opportunities for sunbathing, volleyball, swimming, surfing, windsurfing, and other recreational activities. Maintaining physical access points and supportive facilities and services can help protect continued public beach access. Additionally, Newport Beach offers a diversity of water use opportunities to support recreation on Newport Bay and the wider Pacific Ocean. The recreational and boating activities include but are not limited to sailing, motorized, and manually powered vessels. These water-dependent recreational and commercial activities and uses along the beaches and in Newport Bay are addressed in the Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element.

### *Goal R-7: A city that protects public beach access*

- Policy R-7.1: Ensure the preservation and enhancement of public beaches for public recreation. (Imp. 14.6, 14.8, LCP Program)
- Policy R-7.2: Conduct an assessment of at-risk beach access points to determine risk of damage or impairment from coastal hazards, including flooding and erosion. (LCP Program, Imp. 23.1)
- Policy R-7.3: Adapt infrastructure for beach access points to be resilient to coastal hazards. (LCP Program)
- Policy R-7.4: Maintain beach access points to continue providing adequate public access to the beach and coastal resources. (Imp. 23.1, LCP Program)
- Policy R-7.5: Identify appropriate sites for beach nourishment, living shoreline restoration, and built structures as part of a comprehensive sea-level-rise adaptation plan (LCP) (Policy NR-7.1.2)

- Policy R-7.6: Coordinate to ensure a high standard for the quality of sand used for beach nourishment to support recreation and minimize impacts to marine life. (Policy S-1.2.4)

### Support Facilities

Support facilities are an important aspect of providing parks and recreational spaces that are highly used and enjoyed by the community. Support facilities include, but are not limited to, restrooms, showers, lifeguard towers, parking, and staffing. Providing and maintaining facilities needed to support varying parks and recreation spaces in the city can help ensure parks and open spaces are enjoyed by the community and provide a high-quality level of service.

#### *Goal R-8: Adequate support facilities in parks and recreation facilities*

- Policy R-8.1: Provide support facilities and services needed to serve recreational uses in parks, beaches, the harbor, and other open space areas, and to protect public access and recreation in coastal areas for residents and tourists. (Imp. 21.2, 23.1, LCP Program)
- Policy R-8.2: Improve support facilities to ensure they are adaptable to changing needs, interests, and demographics. (Maintenance/Protection Program)