

Draft
Issue Paper on
Recreational Facilities

City of Calabasas General Plan Update



CITY *of* CALABASAS

Prepared by:

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
790 E. Santa Clara Street
Ventura, California 93001

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The purpose of this issue paper is to assess the need for additional recreational facilities, particularly sports venues, in Calabasas as well as how and where such facilities may be provided.

EXISTING FACILITIES

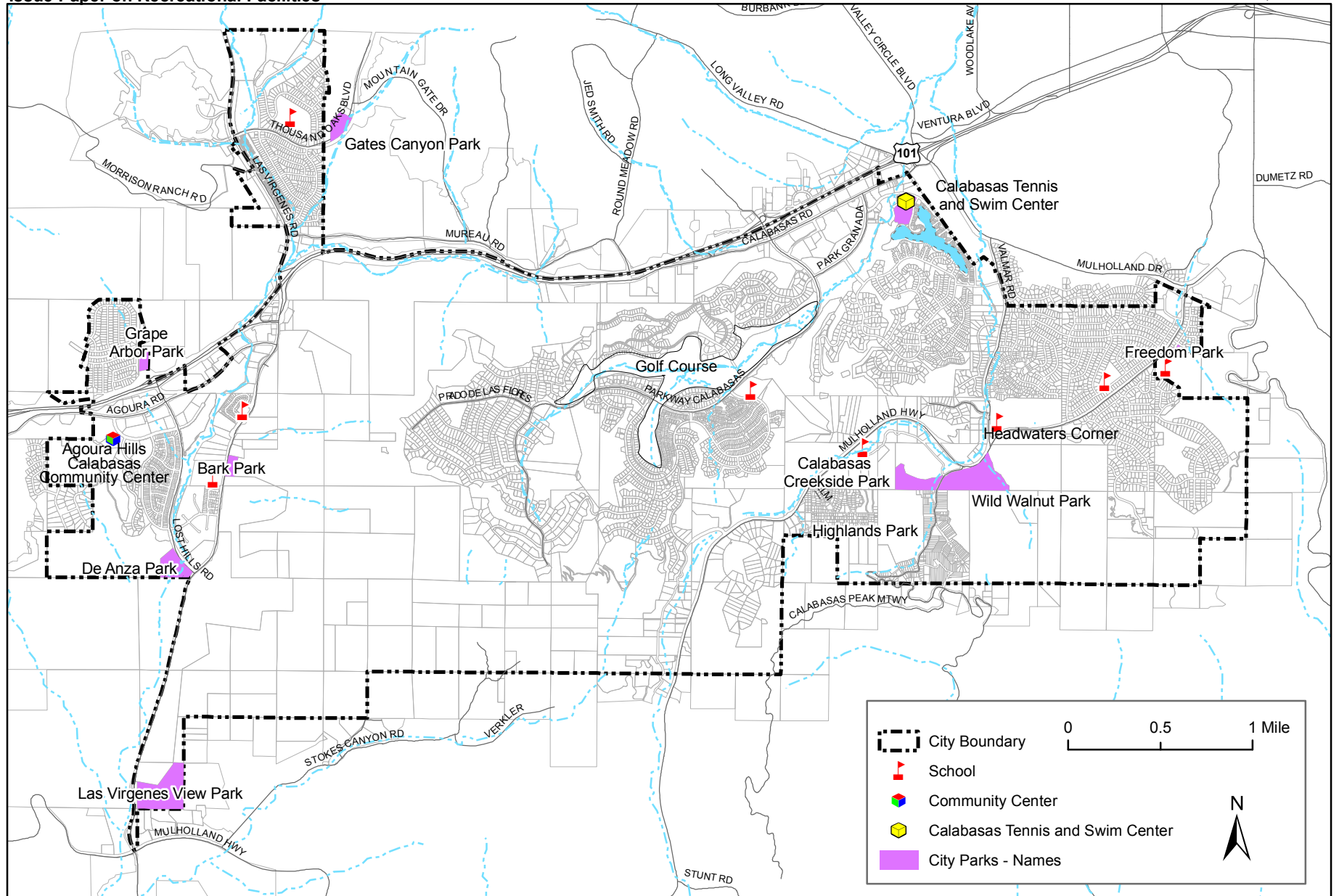
The City of Calabasas owns and operates 56.6 acres of developed park land. This includes two mini-parks, two neighborhood parks, one community park, five special use areas and one undesignated/ undeveloped park site. The City also owns close to 300 acres of natural open space. However, the City operates only three sports fields: two with multi-use backstops (De Anza and Creekside parks) and one youth baseball field (Grape Arbor Park). The City also has a joint use agreement with the Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD) that allows the use of some LVUSD facilities for City recreational programs.

Existing City park facilities are summarized in Tables 1 and 2. The locations of these existing facilities are shown on Figure 1. Existing City-owned and LVUSD facilities are described below.

Table 1: Summary of Existing City Park and Recreation Resources

Park Type	Total Acres
Mini-Parks	2.2
Neighborhood Parks	10.0
Community Parks	8.0
Special Use Areas	34.6
Undev / Undesignated	1.8
Total Acres	56.6

** Excludes open space areas as the focus of this issue paper is on active recreational facilities and sports venues.*



Source: City of Calabasas and Rincon Consultants, 2007.

Existing Recreational Facilities

Figure 1



**Table 2:
Summary of Parks and Recreational Areas By Type**

Park Areas	Total Acres	Comments
Mini Parks		
Freedom Park	1.7	Playground Only
Highlands Park	0.5	Playground Only
Sub Total	2.2	
Neighborhood Parks		
Gates Canyon Park	7.0	
Grape Arbor Park	3.0	
Sub Total	10.0	
Community Parks		
Juan Bautista de Anza Park	8.0	Outdoor Hockey Rink (In-line)
Sub Total	8.0	
Special Use Areas		
Community Center	4.5	Health memberships, shared use with Agoura Hills
Creekside Park	11.8	Multiple use: Recreation facilities in addition to day care operation during business hours
Calabasas Bark Park	0.8	Heavily used
Tennis & Swim Center	7.5	Health memberships
Wild Walnut Park	10.0	Passive use
Sub Total	34.6	
Undeveloped/Undesignated		
Las Virgenes/Lost Hills	1.8	Located at southwest corner of Las Virgenes Road and Lost Hills Road adjacent to De Anza Park
TOTAL	56.6	



City-Owned Facilities

Mini-Parks

Mini-parks, tot lots and children's playgrounds are small single purpose play lots designed for small children use. These parks would not be suitable for organized sports such as soccer and baseball.

The City currently operates two mini-parks - Freedom Park and Highlands Park. These two facilities provide a combined 2.2 acres. Freedom Park opened in 1994 and includes children's play area across 1.7 acres. Highlands Park is located at 23581 Summit Drive in the Calabasas Highlands community. The 0.5-acre park opened in 1997 and includes a children's play area.

Neighborhoods Parks

Neighborhood parks are a combination playground and open space area designed primarily for non-supervised, non-organized recreation activities. Facilities generally include a playground, picnic areas, trails, open grass areas for passive use, outdoor basketball courts, and multi-use sport fields for youth soccer and baseball.

The City currently operates two neighborhood parks with ten total acres. These include Gates Canyon Park (7 acres) and Grape Arbor Park (3 acres).

Gates Canyon Park is located at 25801 Thousand Oaks Blvd. and was acquired in 1993. The park includes picnic areas with barbeques, fitness course, children's play area that offers play activities and equipment that is accessible to disabled children (Brandon's Village), basketball court, tennis courts, and open grass area. Grape Arbor Park is located near the intersection of Canwood Street & Parkville Road in the Saratoga Hills Community. It includes a children's play area, ball field, basketball court, a picnic area and a sand volleyball court.

Community Parks

Community parks are designed for organized activities and sports although individual and family activities are also encouraged. Sports fields are typically a central focus.

The City currently operates one community park – the 8-acre Juan Bautista de Anza Park. De Anza Park is the location of the City's recreation division. It contains multiple picnic areas, children's playgrounds, basketball and roller hockey courts with lights, a small backstop for t-ball and coach pitch baseball, and conference and multi-purpose rooms.

Regional Parks

Calabasas does not operate any regional parks, which are usually large in size and focus on passive recreational uses. Calabasas' extensive open space area is well networked with trails and other recreation uses, thereby meeting similar demand to that satisfied by regional parks.



Special Use Areas

Special use areas are miscellaneous public recreation areas or land occupied by a specialized facility. They may include: community centers, golf courses, community gardens, single purpose sites for field sports and sites occupied by special recreation buildings.

The City currently operates 34.6 acres of special use areas. These include the Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center, Creekside Park, Calabasas Bark Park, Tennis & Swim Center, and Wild Walnut Park.

The Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center's 30,000 square foot facility features tournament-level basketball courts, a full-service fitness studio, a 35-foot realistic rock climbing wall, a multi-purpose activity room with a patio, a dance/exercise studio, and a large banquet hall for special events and rentals. The Community Center is jointly owned and operated by the neighboring cities of Agoura Hills and Calabasas. Residents of both communities can access and utilize the facilities. Creekside Park offers 2 multi-purpose rooms, a basketball court, a ball field and children's play area. The Calabasas Bark Park is small facility offering a place for Calabasas residents to bring their dogs in a safe, healthy environment. The Tennis & Swim Center includes a swimming lap pool, children's training pool, 15 hard courts & 1 clay tennis court, a weight room, cardio room, an aerobics room, meeting rooms, playground, locker rooms, saunas and a snack bar. The Wild Walnut Park is part of a project funded by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to strategically buy back, preserve, protect, restore, and enhance land to form an interlinking system of urban, rural and river parks, open space, trails, and wildlife habitats that are easily accessible to the general public.

LVUSD School Sites

Las Virgenes Unified School District (LVUSD) schools provide additional fields and other facilities for City residents. The City has a joint use agreement with the LVUSD that allows the use of school facilities for City recreational activities.

Table 3 lists the sport facilities LVUSD sites. The City has relied upon setting up joint use and special use agreements with LVUSD since incorporation in 1991. These agreements are a partnership where the City pays for upgraded fields and maintenance on those fields in exchange for public use outside of school hours. The relationship has been extremely beneficial for both the school district and the City. The Las Virgenes Unified School District indicates that the joint-use agreement has been a model relationship between schools and the City and encourages this relationship to grow further. Since land use for parks and sport fields in Calabasas is limited as a result of topography, further developing joint use agreements with LVUSD may be a cost effective way to meet the City's demand for additional recreational facilities.

Lupin Hill Elementary school is one example of the successful relationship between LVUSD school sites and the City. Lupin Hill is the home site to Agoura Pony Baseball League. The site has four total fields and accommodates all age divisions (5-15). The



Pony division (age 13-15) field could also accommodate adult baseball. The three other fields are smaller in design to accommodate youth baseball levels. The Agoura Pony Baseball League is the only organized baseball league offered to Calabasas residents outside of the City organized t-ball and coach-pitch leagues (youth ages 5-7). The school site facilities such as Lupin Hill also provide general recreation (non-organized) use outside of school hours. In light of the physical challenges the City faces in building new parks or special use recreation facilities, furthering agreements with LVUSD may offer the best solution to meeting recreation needs.

**Table 3:
Existing LVUSD Facilities in Calabasas Used for Non-School Recreational Activities**

School	Acres	Facility
Calabasas High School	40.0	Track, lighted football field, 8 tennis courts, 4 outdoor basketball courts, 1 outdoor pool (25 yd, 6 lane), 1 practice football/ soccer field, Overlaid fields: 2 baseball fields, 1 softball field, 1 soccer field – all unfenced and unlighted. Gymnasium with two full basketball courts and dance studio
Indian Hills High School	1.5	Turf playfield – not large enough to provide an athletic field
A.E. Wright Middle School	19.0	6 outdoor basketball courts, gymnasium with one full basketball court, and large grass areas (~6-8 acres)
Alice C. Stelle Middle School*	15.2	3 soccer fields overlaid on 3 multi-use backstop fields, 1 softball field, 8 outdoor basketball courts, gymnasium, multi-purpose room
Bay Laurel Elementary	8.0	1 soccer field, 1 youth baseball field
Chaparral Elementary	4.5	Open turf area, used as 1 soccer field
Lupin Hill Elementary	14.5	2 basketball courts, 4 baseball fields (3 youth, 1 adult), YMCA and Camp Calabasas on site
Round Meadow Elementary *	7.0	Youth baseball field overlaid on soccer field
TOTAL	109.7	

* These two schools are outside Calabasas city limits, but inside the City's planning area as depicted in the General Plan. For this reason, they are included in this table.



FACILITY NEEDS

Many different variables influence recreation demand. Community values, participation patterns, and willingness to pay for services vary widely from one community to another. Overstating the demand can result in the development of underutilized facilities. On the other hand, underestimating the needs can result in overused facilities and a lack of usable park land and open space.

Community Values

The 1995 General Plan includes the following objective relative to the provision of parks:

To enhance the livability of urban and rural areas by providing parks for urban residential neighborhoods, establishing a comprehensive trails system, and meeting the open space and recreational needs of Calabasas residents as outlined in the Conservation, environmental Design, and Open Space Element to:

- *Provide active parks at a minimum rate of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents*
- *Provide recreational programs to meet the changing needs of all segments of the community; and*
- *Establish and maintain a system of trails which provides recreational opportunities.*

The General Plan also includes the following policies to accomplish recreation needs of Calabasas residents:

- *Provide a wide range of recreational activities for children, adults, families, senior citizens, and area employees and businesses, along with adequate facilities to support those activities.*
- *Pursue establishment of joint use school/park facilities to provide land for active recreational opportunities for selected programs.*
- *Pursue programs to raise revenues from recreation facilities and activities, making them as financially self-sufficient as possible.*
- *Expand recreational facilities and activities only to the extent that there are adequate long-term revenues to support them.*

Participation Patterns

A February 2003 recreation survey was conducted to measure public attitudes, recreation interests and recreation participation characteristics. The survey results are in Table 4 and summarized below:



Table 4: Recreation Participation, 2002 Total

Event	# of Participants	Participant Days
<i>Parks</i>		
Basketball leagues	493	13,197
T-Ball /Coach pitch leagues	92	1,610
<i>Tennis & Swim Center</i>		
Swim lessons	1,100	11,000
Rec. swimming, nonmembers	NA	21,000
Swim Team	80	2,400
After school Tennis Program	40	7,200
Summer Youth Tennis Program	80	4,000
Private tennis lessons	NA	7,224
Personal training	NA	4,680
Fitness classes	NA	33,540
<i>Children/Youth Care</i>		
Klubhouse (daycare)	104	520
Enrichment (Lupin Elem.)	442	3,225
After school programs	242	5,178
Sports camps	40	197
Summer camps (non-sport)	1,116	5,700
<i>Recreation Classes</i>		
Tots	611	3,990
Youth	225	1,739
Teens	97	795
Teen volunteer programs	138	4,194
Tennis lessons (group)	234	1,924
Adults	157	1,301
<i>Cultural Arts</i>		
Orchestra (5 concerts)	250	1,000
<i>Special Events</i>		
"EGG"stravaganza	1,000	1,000
Arts & Crafts Festival	10,000	10,000
4th of July	3,000	3,000
Pumpkin Festival	20,000	20,000
Halloween Carnival	500	500
Snow, Snow, Snow	1,500	1,500
Total		171,610

Note: Participant day is defined as one person conducting one recreation activity in one day.

(Community Services website,

<http://www.cityofcalabasas.com/departments/community-services.html>)



Summary

- *When asked what the most needed facilities in Calabasas were, the three most frequently cited responses were sports fields, trails/paths, and open space.*
- *A majority (74.9%) of residents felt more Sports Fields for Soccer, Baseball, and Softball are needed in Calabasas. When asked who should be responsible for providing fields, more than 75% of respondents indicated either the City or a partnership between the City and the School District.*
- *There is relatively high participation in programs. Community-wide, 41.3% of the respondents indicated they have participated in recreation programs sponsored by the City of Calabasas within the past year.*
- *When asked to prioritize seven major projects, the three that were most favored were acquisition of open space, development of more trails, and a sports field complex.*
- *Participation in Calabasas is somewhat higher (about 8%) than communities of similar size and demographics (MIG, Inc. 2003).*

Standards recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association were used to quantify current and future needs (see Table 5 and 6). The existing ratio is the existing population divided by the number of facilities (e.g., fields, square feet, and miles). The recommended demand standard is the desired ratio of population to facilities based on the desired level of service. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) sets the recommended standard based on studies nationwide to give an accurate ratio between population and facilities (www.nrpa.org). By establishing a desired level of service and applying it to existing and future population, one can determine appropriate recommended demand and ultimately future needs. To determine the existing ratio for facilities, the population within the City was used, 23,652 based on 2007 California Department of Finance estimates (<http://www.dof.ca.gov>).

Table 5: Comparison of Recommended Sports Facility Standards to Current City Facilities

Recreation Area	Recommended Standard	Current Ratio in Calabasas
Baseball Fields	1 field per 3,400 people	1 field per 2,957 people
Softball Fields	1 field per 7,000 people	1 field per 7,884 people
Soccer Fields	1 field per 1,500 people	1 field per 2,957 people

** Recommended standard developed by National Recreation and Park Association. Original Analysis done by MIG, Inc., 2003 for Park and Recreation Master Plan. Updated by Rincon Consultants with current population estimates Department of Finance: (<http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/ReportsPapers/ReportsPapers.asp>)*



Table 6: City of Calabasas – Summary of Recreation Facility Needs Additional Need at Buildout

Area or Facility	Existing Inventory	Year 2007 Demand Pop. 23,652	Current Additional Need	Buildout Demand Pop. 27,200	Buildout Additional Need
Baseball Fields ¹	8	7	0	9	1
Softball Fields ¹	3	3	0	4	1
Soccer Fields	8	16	8	18	10

** This excludes multi-use backstops that, if upgraded, could satisfy a portion of the need.*

Analysis done by Rincon Consultants using current population estimate according to California Department of Finance estimates (<http://www.dof.ca.gov/HTML/DEMOGRAP/ReportsPapers/ReportsPapers.asp>).

Buildout demand was found using the estimated population for the year 2030 forecasted by Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Population Forecast (<http://www.scag.ca.gov/forecast/downloads/2004GF.xls>).

Original summary performed by MIG, Inc., 2003 for Park and Recreation Master Plan.

STRATEGY AND POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR NEW RECREATION FACILITIES

Based on the recommended standard, there is a shortage of sport fields in Calabasas, and soccer fields in particular are needed. Through surveys and multiple public meetings, residents have expressed a desire to see construction of a sports complex to meet these needs. One of the biggest challenges in attempting to meet sports field needs in Calabasas is the lack of relatively level land, and the lack of larger parcels of land. In addition, the City has a number of scenic areas and overlay zones that are not conducive to night-time lighting, which can help provide more game time when the number of fields is limited. Due to these challenges, it is unlikely the City will be able to meet field needs in the short-term by developing a sports complex. Even though demand within the City limits is not necessarily met, it is important to note that Calabasas is part of a larger region with many facilities a relatively short distance away. Neighboring communities such as Agoura Hills, Woodland Hills, Thousand Oaks and nearby Los Angeles County facilities are within easy driving distance of Calabasas and also offer a range of recreational facilities.

The strategies listed below address possible short- and long-term solutions to meeting the demand of sport facilities within the city of the Calabasas. In the short term, current facilities should be maintained and a number of fields could be added with proper planning. The long term may offer more solutions but the topographic conditions of Calabasas will continue to bring challenges in meeting the recreational needs of residents. Figure 2 shows the location of potential short and long term recreation facilities.



Potential Short-Term Strategies

- **LVUSD Facilities.** The City could continue to form joint use agreements with LVUSD. The construction and maintenance costs of building upgraded facilities on school sites is far less expensive than attempting to build new facilities on undeveloped land. In 2003, the City fronted LVUSD \$375,000 so that city programs and amateur sports groups like American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) could use sports fields at the campus during non-school hours (The Acorn, May 22, 2003). This is far less expensive in comparison to the annual expenditures at City owned parks such as De Anza Park and Creekside Park, which cost \$719,389 and \$583,065, respectively (Calabasas Park and Recreation Master Plan, 2003). Both the school district and the Community Services Department have indicated the success of the joint use agreements in the past and are willing to develop new agreements to upgrade and utilize school facilities. Lupin Hill Elementary School is an excellent example of the success of utilizing LVUSD sites to satisfy the recreation needs of Calabasas residents. This school is the current location of local baseball league, which incorporates all youth age divisions (Agoura Pony Baseball League, ages 5-15). The baseball fields at Lupin Hill provide the bulk of baseball field inventory in the City. Joint use agreements to utilize the gymnasiums at A.E Wright Middle School and Calabasas High School are currently being developed between the City and LVUSD (Jeff Rubin and Don Zimring). Use of these facilities, like other school district sites, would satisfy needs for both parties while being cost effective.

To satisfy the City's specific need of additional soccer fields, securing joint use agreements with LVUSD will be essential. Currently, the only 8 fields within City limits exist at LVUSD sites. The Community Services Department and LVUSD have established a thriving agreement at A.C Stelle Middle School that gives Calabasas residents access to 3 soccer fields outside of school hours. Bay Laurel, Chaparral and Round Meadow Elementary Schools each possess one soccer field that could be upgraded, maintained and utilized by the City. A.E Wright Middle School has ample field space that could possibly accommodate at least 2 soccer fields (~172,800 square feet) and potentially as many as 4 soccer fields (~345,600 square feet) if a joint use agreement were established specifically for field use. And finally, Calabasas high school has 2 soccer fields (one official and one practice field) that could be utilized by City residents outside of school hours. Setting up special use agreements with LVUSD is a simple yet invaluable approach to meeting sport facility demands within Calabasas. The City should continue to secure sites by maintaining the successful relationship with LVUSD in order to satisfy the recreation needs of Calabasas residents.

- **Partnership with neighbor communities.** The limitations of building adequate recreation facilities is a burden shared by Calabasas' neighbors such as Agoura Hills, Woodland Hills, Westlake Village and Hidden Hills. One solution is to engage in a joint partnership with neighboring communities to satisfy the recreation needs. The Agoura Hills/Calabasas Community Center is a remarkable illustration that demonstrates the success of joint



partnership recreation facilities. Working together, communities can share the burden of selecting a specific site, developing the plans, construction costs, and facility maintenance and management. It would be wise for the City to continue to engage in strategic planning with neighboring communities to solve the region's recreation needs.

- **Conversion of open green space at existing parks.** Both De Anza Park and Gates Canyon Park neighbor large amounts of open space utilized for passive use. Converting open green space from passive field use to active use could be an approach to meeting at least some of the City's sports field needs. Gates Canyon Park currently has open grass space but no active sports fields. The park neighbors a large open green space that is owned by Mountain View Estates but is currently unused¹. It may be in the City's best interest to establish a joint use agreement on the space, similar to those agreements established at LVUSD sites. The City could convert, develop, and maintain a minimal amount of the Mountain View property (~86400 – 172800 square feet) lying adjacent to Gates Canyon Park that would provide 1 to 2 additional soccer fields for Calabasas residents to enjoy.

Juan Bautista De Anza Park also neighbors open green space directly to the North-West and South-East of park boundaries. The Calabasas Community Services department has suggested the idea for further expansion of the park extending either North-West towards the intersection of Lost Hills Road and Calabasas Road or South-East towards the intersection of Lost Hills Road and Las Virgenes Road. In either direction, there is ample space to accommodate 2-3 soccer fields (~172800 – 259200 square feet) depending on specific park layout plans. Combined with the addition of sports fields at LVUSD sites through joint use agreements, converting open green space at either Gates Canyon Park or Juan Bautista De Anza Park would make significant steps towards to alleviating the City's need for additional soccer fields.

- **Conversion of open green space along Las Virgenes Road.** Three sites have been proposed as potential locations for sports fields along Las Virgenes Road. The Las Virgenes Municipal Water District owns two large parcels of land that are no longer utilized for plant operations. One site lies east of De Anza park, across Las Virgenes Road. The site is relatively flat and its size would be ideal to accommodate a minimum of four soccer fields (~345,600) and potentially as many as 8 fields (691,200 square feet). The Water District also owns another parcel north on Las Virgenes across from Indian Hills High School and adjacent to the Water District main plant. This site is smaller but could still accommodate at least 2 soccer fields (~172800 square feet). The area is along a hill slope and grading may be necessary to level the surface. The third site is a Basin farther north on the northeast corner of Las Virgenes and Thousand Oaks Boulevard. The Basin lies at the bottom of a hillside residential community. The site is just outside the City

¹ Interview with Jeff Rubin April 18, 2007.



boundary but could be incorporated within the General Plan. With successful development, including some grading to level the surface, the site could offer at least two additional soccer fields (~172800 square feet), possibly three fields (~259,200 square feet). The prospect of the City acquiring and utilizing any one of these three sites would be a tremendous opportunity to satisfy the demand for sport fields by Calabasas residents.

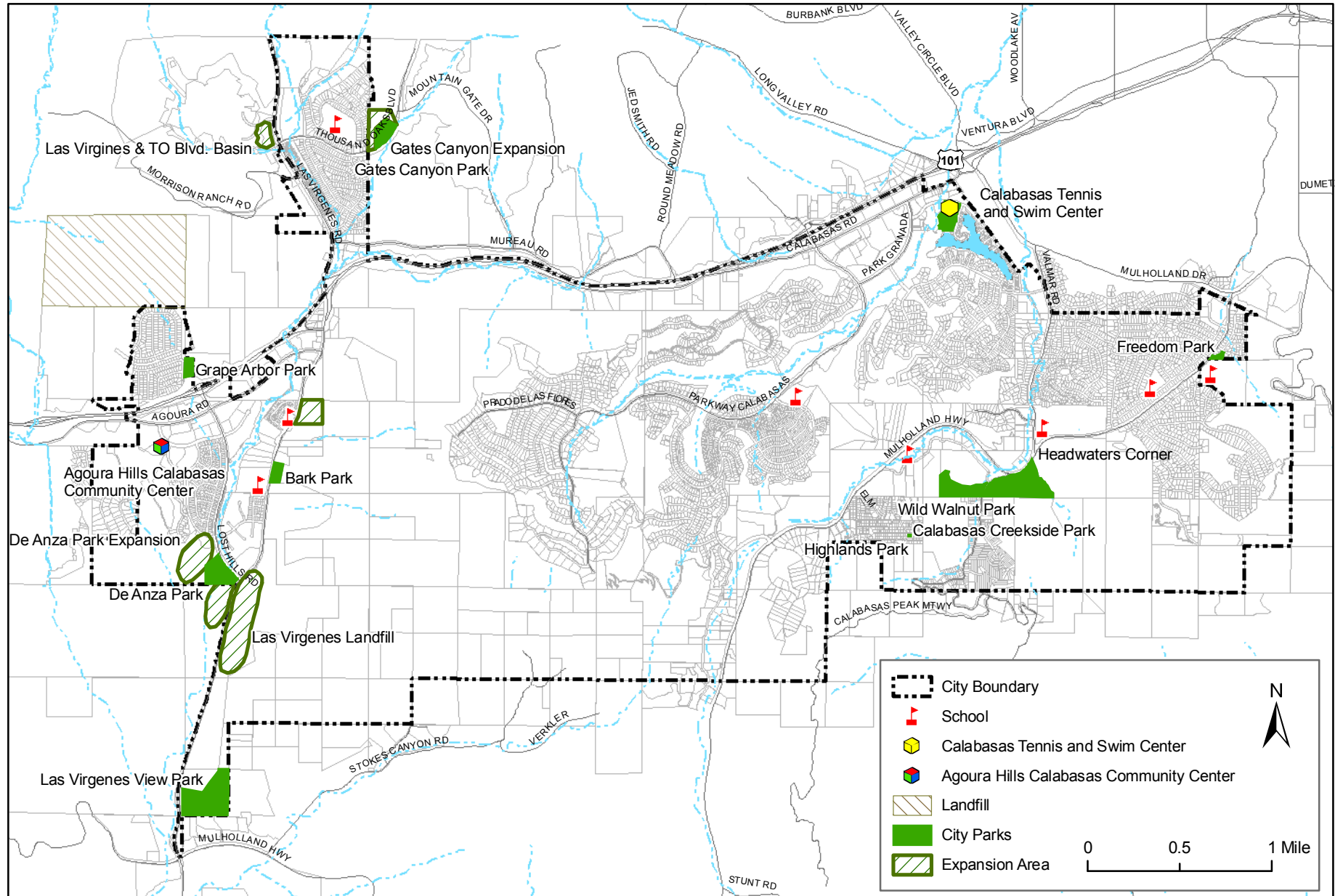
Potential Long-Term Strategies

- **Calabasas Landfill.** There are no topographically suitable locations for a large City-owned sports complex within the City limits. For future planning, the Calabasas Landfill offers the best opportunity for a large park and sports complex. The landfill is not scheduled for closure for 10 to 15 years and might not be usable for recreation purposes for many years after that. Closure plans utilizing environmental practices and technological standards would need to be implemented to eliminate the risk of hazard. The Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Integrated Waste Management Board would make the required assessment as to the adequacy of the plans. According to the California Integrated Waste Management Board, "Landfills can undergo significant post closure land uses (PCLU) once the final cover is installed and the landfill is certified as "closed." PCLUs can encompass uses from golf courses, recreational parks and habitat, to business parks, retail sites, and energy generation resources" (<http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/LeaCentral/Closure/PostClosure/default.htm>).

Despite the potential drawbacks of the landfill site, it is the only large site convenient to Calabasas that has the potential to be developed into an attractive sports complex. If properly planned a sports complex of this nature would adequately solve Calabasas' recreational needs. An attractive complex represents a prominent city land mark and could benefit local businesses who to the needs of visiting athletes and their families. The City could create a joint use agreement of this facility with neighboring communities such as Agoura Hills, Woodland Hills, Westlake or Los Angeles County in order to alleviate the costs of building and maintaining such a large facility.

WILLINGNESS TO PAY

Based on the high levels of participation in City Recreation Programs, it is anticipated that the Calabasas residents' willingness to pay for recreation is high. The cost of building and maintenance of new sports facilities could be expensive. These costs could be offset through a combination of mechanisms including: City budget allocated to park and recreation department, recreation user fee revenue, private and/or public donations, short term city-wide tax (if necessary), or bonds (if necessary). If the need for a sports facility in Calabasas is high, the benefits of meeting the values and goals of the community may outweigh the initial costs.



Source: City of Calabasas and Rincon Consultants, 2007.

Potential Recreational Facilities

Figure 2
 City of Calabasas



CITY of CALABASAS

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