

CHAPTER 2

LAS CRUCES PARKS SYSTEM

LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN



Baseball fields in the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex.

SECTION 1:

DEFINING PARK SPACE

The City of Las Cruces' municipal parks and recreation system is comprised of over 94 parks, open spaces, and facilities of varying scale that serve the residents of Las Cruces and the greater Mesilla Valley region. As with most communities, Las Cruces' varying park types are principally classified according to their size and geographic service area.

The standard framework defining parks by a "classification" of size and service area originated as a series of guidelines established within the National Recreation and Parks Association's (NRPA) Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Greenway Guidelines (formerly the "Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines"). Over the years, these industry-accepted guidelines served a useful purpose of setting a baseline national standard for parks and recreation areas, particularly as it relates to establishing a ratio of population to acres within specific park systems.

Today, it is more widely recognized that every jurisdiction is unique and adherence to an "across-the-board" national standard may not result in a park system that is appropriately tailored to respond to the specific needs of each unique community.

National guidelines were also created during a time of greater emphasis on active recreation pursuits revolving around organized athletics and structured play areas. Today, there is greater recognition that active recreation facilities cater only to limited community-wide needs. Public recreation providers are now diversifying their park space and facility portfolios to include a greater selection of parks, trails, and open spaces that cater to the passive enjoyment of one's environment and to resource conservation. In many cases, designated public space catering both to active and passive interests is now being programmed on the same property. In this regard, it is important to start evaluating how individual parks are programmed to serve a series of different recreational and non-recreational activities.

This Plan establishes a dual framework for understanding the existing and future composition of the Las Cruces parks and recreation system. For purposes of establishing the City's parkland level of service metrics, each park property must be categorized according to a standardized **park classification** hierarchy (e.g., regional park, civic space, etc.). In addition, the Plan describes how identified community needs can influence **park programming** decisions that result in a mix of recreational, social, and natural spaces that can serve a greater cross-section of Las Cruces' population.

PARKS CLASSIFICATIONS

Municipal park systems include multiple park types to serve different geographic service areas, purposes, and intended users. Understanding the distinct characteristics of different park types assists a community in identifying system gaps and overlaps in the municipal park system, and determining whether the distribution of existing facilities meets the current park, recreation, and open space needs of the City.

Building from standard industry practices, this Plan classifies Las Cruces' parkland within four broad park classifications - each containing several types of park:

- **Regional Parks.** *Includes recreation areas that are typically located within a one to two hour driving radius to the areas that they serve. Parks in this category can serve many communities and may include the following: metropolitan, county, and state parks; and, accessible national monuments, parks, and recreation areas.*
- **Local Parks.** *Includes parks that are usually integrated as a component of the neighborhoods, subdivisions, or developments which they are intended to serve. This category includes: pocket parks, neighborhood parks, and community parks.*
- **Civic Parks.** *Includes formal areas principally reserved for public gathering, civic events, and community reflection. Often less than three acres in size, this category includes: greens, squares, plazas, and parkways.*
- **Special Use Parks.** *May be either local or regional in scale and can be defined in some unique way due to their physical features or the types of facilities offered. This category may include: special interest parks, linear parks, natural areas/open space, and athletic complexes.*

Many of the park types referenced within the classifications listed in this section are described in greater detail on pages 33 through 41. **This Plan describes only those park types that are currently found within the Las Cruces municipal parks and recreation system.** Descriptions are intended as a general guide only.



Art installations such as those found within Albert Johnson Memorial Park reflect the civic nature of the space.

REGIONAL PARKS

With the intention of serving the entire city and beyond, a regional park often becomes the premier park in an area due to its broad range of facilities and activities. These parks often include regionally significant natural resources, or alternatively incorporate event space or other competitive venues such as sports complexes or aquatic centers. Over time the term "regional park" has come to be viewed as synonymous with a "metropolitan park."

- **General Characteristics.** *These parks are frequently planned to accommodate large numbers of visitors for events such as fairs, festivals, and exhibitions. Regional parks should be located near highways or major arterial roadways to provide easy access from different parts of the city.*
- **Service Area.** *Up to a 50-mile radius, depending on site features.*
- **Size.** *Depending on the purpose and character of the site, regional parks can vary in size from less than 10 acres to several thousand acres.*



LOCAL PARKS

COMMUNITY PARKS

Community parks provide facilities for structured recreational activities which may include facilities such as athletic fields and sport courts, swimming pools, hike and bike trails, or exercise stations. These parks serve a group of neighborhoods or a portion of a city, and may therefore be accessed by nearby residents through walking or biking, but are also structured to accommodate motor vehicle traffic.

Community parks may serve as a venue for community festivals or competitions and often include open space for unstructured recreation and natural areas.

- **General Characteristics.** *These parks should be located near a major thoroughfare to provide easy access from different parts of the city. Vegetative buffering may be required to minimize the impact of light and sound pollution on adjacent residential areas.*
- **Service Area.** *Primarily serves a one to two-mile radius, but some facilities may be intended for persons throughout a community.*
- **Size.** *May vary between 10 to 50 acres. Should be large enough to accommodate a variety of facilities while leaving sufficient space for unstructured recreation, natural areas, and possible expansion.*

Athletic fields for organized competitions may be appropriate in regional and community parks, but the scale of facilities should vary in consideration of traffic, noise, and lighting impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

REGIONAL / COMMUNITY PARK DESIGN BASICS

The large scale and service area of regional and community parks can present challenges with the efficient planning and programming of park space, and with the mitigation of potential impacts to those residing in close proximity. This section presents a few basic programming and design principles for regional and community parks intended for active recreation use. This section is not comprehensive, and the manner in which these principles may be applied to parkland in Las Cruces will vary on a case-by-case basis.

Facilities. Common recreational and accessory facilities in a regional and community park include:

- Play equipment with adequate safety surfacing;
- Open and manicured play areas;
- Jogging, bicycle, or nature trails;
- Athletic fields or sport courts, suitable for organized and competitive events;
- Indoor recreation facilities (if appropriate);
- Picnic areas and pavilion(s);
- Restrooms;
- Sufficient off-street parking based on facilities provided and size of park;
- Lighting for evening use; and,
- Other facilities as needed which can take advantage of unique site characteristics.

Many of the items listed above may be augmented or replaced by other facilities that cater to special interests, or that otherwise enable the City to address community-wide recreational, social, or environmental programming needs.

Space Programming. Within regional and community parks, it is desirable to delineate the manner in which park space is programmed identifying between specific activity zones and areas which are intended to be retained in a largely natural state (see "Park Programming," page 42).

Well defined zones of activity provide visual transitions between spaces intended for active and passive (low-impact) use. Paved trails should connect these various areas, while also providing walking, jogging, and bicycling loops for recreational use.

Location. The interaction between a regional or community park and surrounding areas is crucial to the quality of the park experience. It is important that a community park is bordered by roadways, drainage ways, or other natural areas where possible (although adjacency of community parks to residential areas on some sides is also encouraged).

When development does border the park, edge treatments will differ based on land use and intensity. If development is residential, fencing between homes and the park should be transparent. If the development is industrial in nature or otherwise aesthetically unpleasing, significant buffering should be installed to soften edges including a mix of fencing, trees, and shrubs.

Good Neighbor. Active recreational parks of a regional or community scale can sometimes be the source of nuisances if near residential neighborhoods. Bright lighting at night, excessive noise from cheering spectators, or the overflow of parking onto neighborhood streets can all become major issues. Some basic design and operating principles are encouraged:

- **Vehicular Access.** Parking areas, including access points, should be designed so that they are not in close proximity to adjacent housing. Vehicular access should be provided only from major thoroughfares.
- **Noise.** Operating hours should be limited. Large event venues and multi-day tournaments that attract non-residents should be programmed only in those parks that are located away from established neighborhoods.
- **Lighting.** Potential light intrusion from evening events may be mitigated with buffering and through the use of the latest technology (see **Chapter 4**, page 185).

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Neighborhood parks are the "backbone" of most municipal park systems, providing active and passive recreational opportunities within walking distance of neighborhoods. Proximity to residential areas creates accessible and family-friendly destinations. Common amenities may include, but are not limited to: playground equipment, picnic areas, park benches, walking trails, open play areas, and occasionally, sport courts or athletic fields.

- **General Characteristics.** *Neighborhood parks should be evenly distributed throughout residential areas of the city, and be centrally located within neighborhoods to provide safe and easy access for bicyclists and pedestrians.*
- **Service Area.** *Adjacent residential areas within a 1/4 to 1/2 mile "walkshed", determined by the availability of a defined walking route free of obstructions. Service areas extend across major thoroughfares only where defined crosswalks can provide access at intersections or at other roadway crossings via traffic control devices.*
- **Size.** *Typically three to 10 acres, although sizes may vary beyond this range depending on physical conditions and the availability of land.*

Neighborhood and pocket park facilities such as playscapes and sitting areas are simple investments that can meet the most basic recreational needs of families with small children. These essential park system "building blocks" must be augmented by well-spaced community parks that provide recreational opportunities for additional user groups.

POCKET PARKS

Pocket parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities for concentrated populations within immediate walking distance. These parks serve a similar purpose as neighborhood parks, but their smaller size limits the type of facilities that may be incorporated into the space. Small landscaped areas and lawns may be accompanied by sitting areas, gazebos, playscapes, or facilities of similar scale.

- **General Characteristics.** *Pocket parks should be located in close proximity to residences. This park type should be provided in addition to, not in lieu of, a neighborhood scale park.*
- **Service Area.** *Directly adjacent residential areas no further than a 1/4 mile "walkshed", determined by the availability of a defined walking path that is free of obstructions. Service areas do not typically include residential areas separated from the park by a major thoroughfare.*
- **Size.** *Typically 1/4 to one acre in size. Smaller public pocket parks are highly discouraged.*



NEIGHBORHOOD / POCKET PARK DESIGN BASICS

Within most communities it is the neighborhood park or pocket park that provides much of the population with its first experiences and memories of public recreation and open space. Both park types are often embedded within neighborhoods, providing safe and immediate access for nearby families. The small scale of both park types and their central location in a community's residential areas requires careful design and programming consideration to ensure that they retain long-term value.

This section presents a few basic programming and design principles for regional and community parks intended for active recreation use. This section is not comprehensive and the manner in which these principles may be applied to parkland in Las Cruces will vary on a case-by-case basis.

Facilities. *Common recreational and accessory facilities in a neighborhood and pocket park include:*

- *Play equipment with adequate safety surfacing;*
- *Open and manicured play areas;*
- *Jogging, bicycle, or nature trails;*
- *Multi-purpose sport field (neighborhood park only) or sport court, suitable for random activity;*
- *Picnic areas, shaded pavilions, and gazebos;*
- *Security lighting; and,*
- *Other facilities as needed which can take advantage of unique site characteristics.*

Many of the items listed above may be augmented or replaced by other facilities of a limited scale that cater to special interests.

Space Programming. *Neighborhood parks should be programmed with recreational space (e.g., playgrounds, pavilions, basketball courts, etc.) clustered into an “active zone” within the park. These areas should be located along accessible park edges, and accessorized with seating and shade to be hospitable year round.*

Pocket parks may not be of sufficient size to incorporate recreational facilities. Programming emphasis should focus on quality social spaces for sitting or gathering, with small manicured areas for informal play. Pocket parks may also be programmed with a special feature catering to a specific interest group.

Location. *The manner in which neighborhood and pocket parks integrate with surrounding land uses (e.g., residences, a school, an arroyo or other open space, etc.) is crucial to the quality of experience within the park. When a street borders the park, houses across the street should face the park space. When houses must back up to a park, fencing should be transparent to allow a softer transition between both spaces (with the added benefit of providing informal surveillance). When a park is constructed adjacent to a school, ensure that the two sites interact. Work with school districts to accommodate paved walkway connections between the school and the park.*

The value of pocket parks may be increased significantly if located in areas of frequent bicycling and walking activity. Pocket parks that serve as trailheads enjoy particularly frequent visitation.

Good Neighbor. *Neighborhood and pocket parks are intended for the enjoyment of surrounding residents. Except for recreation facilities catering to niche interests, facilities that regularly attract visitors outside of the intended service area are discouraged. Restrooms and off-street parking should be omitted from most neighborhood and pocket park design. Likewise, night-time use should be discouraged and lighting should be used only for security purposes.*

CIVIC PARKS

Principally located within historic city centers, or dense urban environments, civic parks can serve as a community's "front porch," providing critical space for public gathering, civic or other events, or community recreation. Civic parks are defined primarily by social space and are not typically programmed for active recreation. Civic parks also define highly urban environments, providing important focal points within areas of dense development.

The size and service area of civic parks will vary according to their specific functions.

GREENS

Greens are large lawns characterized by landscaping and trees planted in strong geometric fashion. Greens provide small amounts of space for unprogrammed recreation and may contain architectural structures such as gazebos, arbors, or pavilions, and pedestrian elements such as benches and seat walls.

SQUARES

Found at significant junctions and nodes, squares may provide programmed space for organized and unstructured recreation. Additionally, these spaces are often utilized for activities such as open air markets, concerts, or even civil assemblies. Unlike greens, squares are typically fronted by roadways. Surrounding buildings may be used for civic purposes, but may also consist of other mixed land uses. Similar to greens, squares may contain lawns, trees, landscaping, architectural, and pedestrian elements.

Although identified on the town's original plats in the colonial Spanish tradition as a "plaza," Klein Park assumes the design characteristics of a town square.

PLAZAS

Plazas may be found in civic, commercial, or even residential settings as dominant, celebrated intersections or peaceful neighborhood gathering spaces. Plazas are noticeably associated with building frontages and primarily consist of hard surface materials such as pavers. Landscaping and trees are optional, but when present provide shade or aesthetic function.

PARKWAYS

Parkways are aesthetically landscaped areas adjacent to or integrated within the street system. Parkway enhancements on prominent streets are used to bolster community image. These areas may be developed to incorporate seating elements, walking paths, and gathering areas. Parkway treatments are typically located in excess street right-of-way or parallel greenways.





Civic parks include downtown's Plaza de Las Cruces (top left) and recently revitalized paseos (bottom left). Veterans Memorial Park provides space for quiet reflection (above), but also includes design features for larger events and activities. Although classified as a "community park" Veterans Memorial Park is also programmed in a manner that is similar to a civic park. See page 42 regarding park space programming.

PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance of cemeteries, public street rights-of-way, alleys, and other miscellaneous "landscaped areas." These areas are not included in the Plan's inventory of public park space.





The Las Cruces archery range is a special interest facility co-located on the City landfill (referred to in this Plan as "City Complex").

SPECIAL USE PARKS

Special use parks accommodate unique recreational activities or specialized interests. Because the facility needs for each activity are distinct, a special use park usually provides only one or a few activities. Examples of some of the recreational needs that may be exclusively served by a special use park include (but are not limited to): athletic complexes, swimming pool/aquatic centers, skate parks, shooting ranges, dog parks, golf courses, natural areas/open space, linear parks/greenways, and multi-use trails.

The size and service area of special use parks will vary according to their specific functions. Although any of the facilities listed above may be provided within a stand-alone purpose-built park space, municipalities will commonly co-locate such facilities within larger community, metropolitan, or regional parks. Some types of special use parks are described in more detail on pages 39 through 41.

SPECIAL INTEREST PARKS

Parks designed and built to serve a unique or niche use such as a skate park, dog park, or other special recreational need. Prominent special use parks in Las Cruces include the Bunkerfeld Trail Shooting Range, and the archery range and RC airplane park at City Complex.



The Lush and Lean Demonstration Garden on Spruce Avenue is a special use park that serves a public education purpose.

ATHLETIC COMPLEXES

Athletic complexes provide groupings of sports fields or sport courts for organized play in an area that can accommodate the traffic and noise that a large number of users can generate. Athletic complexes typically include sufficient fields so that leagues can congregate at one facility for competitive play and not be dispersed among different locations across the community. Evening activities at athletic complexes necessitate high-intensive lighting that can be a nuisance when the complex is located too close to residential areas.

Athletic complexes may also incorporate indoor facilities including gymnasiums, recreation centers and aquatic centers.

NATURAL AREA/OPEN SPACE

Land left largely in a natural state to provide wildlife habitat, food control, and places for passive recreation. These parks can vary greatly in size depending on the resources available, but are meant to have a city-wide service radius.

Programmed in a manner to limit disturbance of the landscape, natural areas and open spaces are largely self-maintaining. Maintenance is generally not a significant factor - other than to check for hazards or invasive plant species. Besides recreational and aesthetic opportunities afforded by natural areas, such areas have huge economic value to society in terms of ecological services provided - functions such as water and air purification, carbon sequestration, food control, pollination, air cooling, which can positively affect human health and well being.



Athletic complexes typically support court sports (top) and field sports, but can also include indoor recreation venues. Athletic complexes vary in size, but larger or "premiere" facilities intended to serve not just local league play but also year-round select tournaments should be located in areas that minimize direct traffic, noise, and lighting impacts on nearby residential areas.

LINEAR PARKS

Linear parks generally follow natural or man-made corridors such as creeks, abandoned railroad right-of-ways, drainage corridors, or utility easements. Properly developed to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle travel, linear parks may link other parks, as well as schools, neighborhoods, civic buildings, and other major destinations. Linear parks (or 'greenway' corridors) often serve concurrently as a natural area or open space.



MULTI-USE TRAILS

Multi-use trail networks provide active and passive recreation as well as connections between recreational areas, and parks, schools, and other community destinations. Commonly referred to in the active transportation world as 'shared use paths,' a well-designed multi-use trail system should serve both recreation and transportation needs.

Multi-use trail facilities and corridors may be located within linear parks, public rights-of-way, or easements. Because of its intended dual recreation and transportation function, the multi-use trail network is distinct from casual walking paths, hiking trails, and/or single-track biking trails that are intended for the enjoyment of users with a fixed location.



The City's multi-use trail network increases park accessibility and connectivity between community destinations. The multi-use trail network is maintained by the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department and includes trail segments within linear parks, easements, and public rights-of-way (left). The walking paths contained within a fixed location (above) and not intended to serve dual recreation and transportation functions are not considered part of the City's multi-use trail system.

PARK PROGRAMMING

While park classification provides appropriate context regarding property distribution and level of service, it provides less guidance on how a property should be programmed to serve different functions and users. In this regard, understanding how different parks are (or may be) programmed provides a clearer connection between public needs and expectations and, accordingly, how the municipal parks and recreation system should grow and change over time.

The absence of clarity in how a community intends to program park space to meet various community functions and recreational needs over time can suggest indecisiveness. Likewise, it decreases residents' confidence in the type of recreational amenities that the City intends to provide in the future, and what the long-term character of undeveloped and developed park space will be. (For example, a sports park with tall lighting systems has a different impact on surrounding neighborhoods than a nature preserve.)

Municipalities are taking an increasingly proactive approach in identifying how park space is, or will be, programmed. Some properties may serve a single function while others may serve multiple uses.

Figure 2.1, Park Programming Categories (facing page) identifies the three general park programming categories: **recreational**, **social**, and **natural** space.

In addition to the three park programming categories, some park space may remain unprogrammed for an indefinite period of time. During this period, it is essential for park providers to be transparent about how it intends to program the space. Absent such acknowledgment, residents can develop a false expectation that the space is being reserved long-term for open space and/or resource conservation purposes.

Figure 2.2, Park Space Programming by Park Classification (facing page) compares the general suitability of the three park programming categories within municipal parkland by park classification.

The pavilion in La Buena Vida Park is surrounded by over 8 acres of 'natural space.' Does this represent an unprogrammed condition, or a long-term commitment to the retention of most park acreage as natural space? Municipalities should clarify their intentions as close to parkland acquisition as possible.

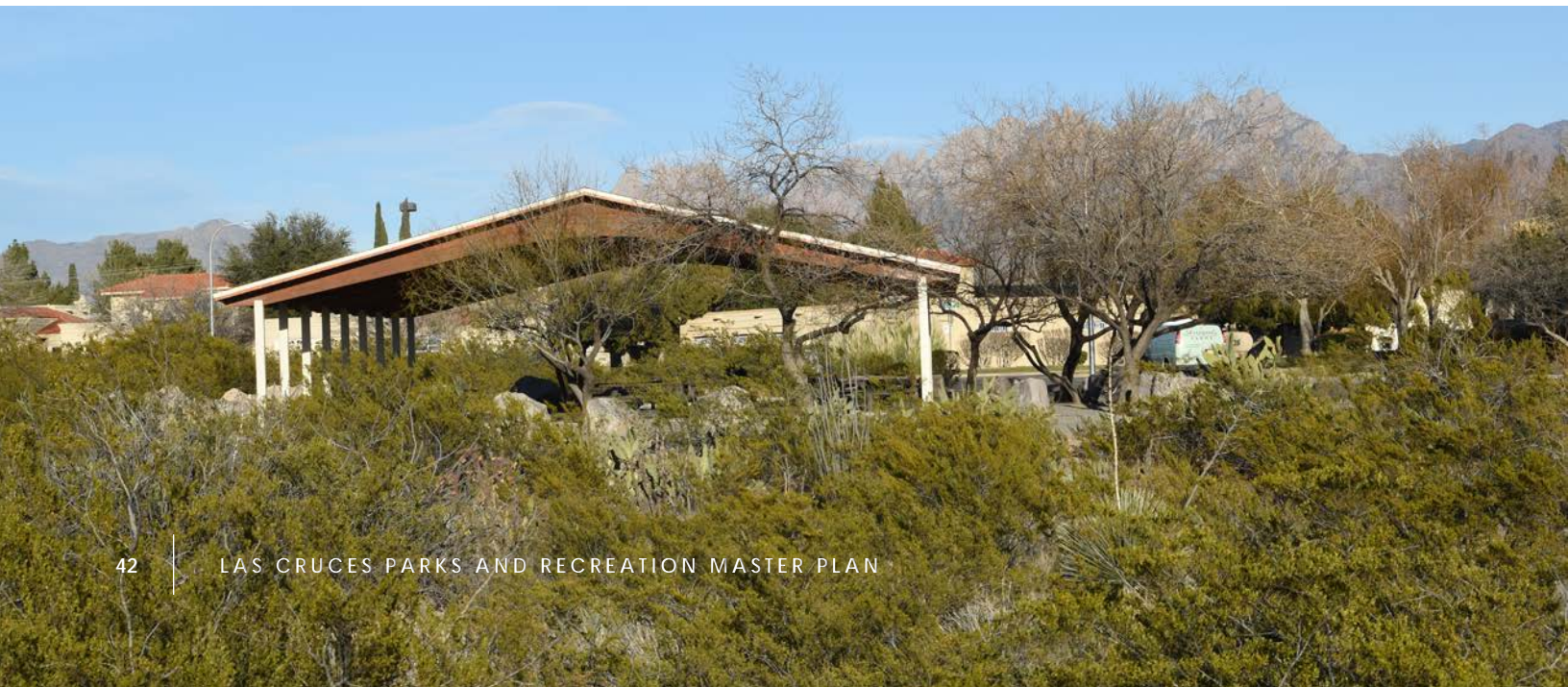


FIGURE 2.1, PARK PROGRAMMING CATEGORIES


















RECREATIONAL	SOCIAL	NATURAL
		
<p>RECREATIONAL SPACE SUPPORTS A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES FROM INFORMAL PLAY TO ACTIVE COMPETITION. RECREATIONAL SPACE MAY INCORPORATE FORMAL AMENITIES SUCH AS PLAYSCAPES, SPORTS COURTS AND ATHLETIC FIELDS, POOLS, SPLASH PADS, SKATE PARKS, AND OTHER FACILITIES; AND, FACILITIES FOR CASUAL RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES (E.G., CANOE/KAYAK LAUNCHES, DISC GOLF, FISHING PIERS, MULTI-USE TRAILS, ETC.).</p>	<p>SOCIAL SPACES SERVE AS PLACES FOR PUBLIC GATHERING IN EITHER AN INFORMAL OR FORMAL SETTING. SOCIAL SPACES SUCH AS SQUARES, PLAZAS, AND GREENS MAY BE CIVIC IN NATURE. THE SCALE OF SOME SOCIAL SPACE FACILITIES SUCH AS AMPHITHEATERS, ARENAS, AND STADIUMS MAY FACILITATE LARGE-SCALE COMMUNITY-WIDE ACTIVITIES. OTHER SOCIAL SPACES SUPPORT LESS FORMAL SOCIAL INTERACTION (E.G. PICNICKING AND SEATING AREAS, COMMUNITY GARDENS, MEMORIALS, ETC.)</p>	<p>NATURAL SPACES EMPHASIZE RESOURCE CONSERVATION (E.G., FLOODPLAIN/DRAINAGE, MATURE TREE CANOPY, AND STREAM/WETLAND PROTECTION) HABITAT PRESERVATION, AND/OR WILD LAND RESTORATION. NATURAL AREAS MAY SERVE AS OUTDOOR 'CLASSROOMS' AND SUPPORT LOW IMPACT PASSIVE RECREATION ACTIVITIES (E.G., BIRD WATCHING, HIKING, AND BIKING TRAILS, ETC.). FACILITY DEVELOPMENT IS MINIMIZED IN NATURAL SPACES.</p>

FIGURE 2.2, PARK SPACE PROGRAMMING BY PARK CLASSIFICATION

		PARK CLASSIFICATION						
		Pocket Park	Neighborhood Park	Community Park	Regional Park	Civic Park	Natural Area Open Space	Linear Park Trail
PARK (SPACE) PROGRAM	Recreational							
	Social							
	Natural							

SECTION 2:

LAS CRUCES PARKS SYSTEM

PARK ADMINISTRATION

Our Mission:

The mission of the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department, "The Fun Experts," is to provide dynamic customer-focused services to residents and visitors so they can experience a diverse, vibrant, prosperous, active, engaged, connected, happy, and inclusive community.

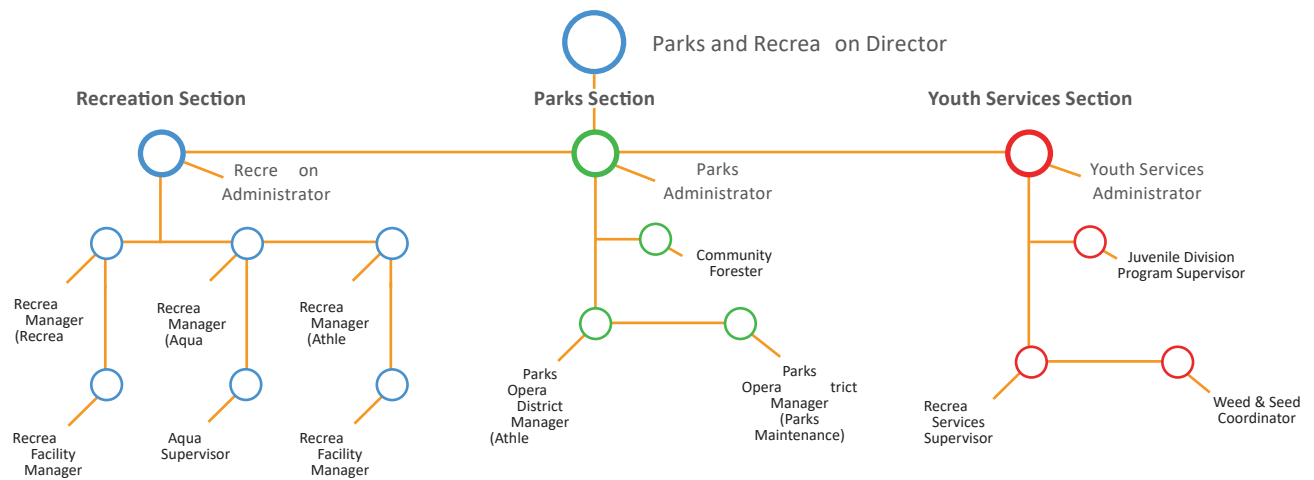
Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department Mission Statement (2019)

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department is the municipal department responsible for providing recreational facilities, services, and programs to the residents of Las Cruces and visitors to the city. Although the department's designation as "The Fun Experts" clearly articulates its principal role as a recreational services provider, it must balance these activities with a secondary role of city-wide landscape maintenance including responsibility for medians, rights-of-way, alleys, municipal grounds, miscellaneous 'landscaped areas,' and several playing fields for the Las Cruces School District.

The City parks department was formed more than 50 years ago as a division of the Public Services Department (Recreation Services was a function of the Facilities Department). Under a 2009 City reorganization, the Parks and Recreation Department was merged into a single and independent department.

Figure 2.3, Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department Organizational Chart (facing page) illustrates an abbreviated version of the department's organizational structure. The chart illustrates an organizational structure comprised of three sections: a Parks Section, Recreation Section, and Youth Services Section.

The following section describes the general structure and duties of each of the Department's divisions, including a description of management positions (see **Figure 2.4, Parks and Recreation Department Management Team**, page 46).

FIGURE 2.3, LAS CRUCES PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART (ABBREVIATED)¹

DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE

An abbreviated Parks and Recreation organizational chart is presented in **Figure 2.3** above. The figure reflects the Department's FY 2017-2018 structure.¹

ADMINISTRATION

The Parks and Recreation Department is managed by a Director who oversees the operations of the Department's three sections, and retains direct oversight responsibility of nine administrative staff members. The Recreation Administrator, Parks Administrator, and Youth Services Administrator report directly to the Parks and Recreation Director.

YOUTH SERVICES SECTION

The Youth Services section provides activities for at-risk youth. Forty-nine section full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff direct after school, youth citizenship, mentoring programs, and other similar services.

PARKS SECTION

The Parks section is responsible for the grounds maintenance of 1,537.5 acres of parks and trails. The section also performs basic facility maintenance but major projects are handled by the Facilities Management section of the City's Public Works Department. The Parks section is also responsible for the maintenance of 147.68 acres of landscaped areas, medians, and rights-of-way throughout the city. In 2019, the Parks section employed a staff of 62.

RECREATION SECTION

The Recreation section oversees all recreational programming provided by the City including athletics, aquatics, and general programs. The Recreation section's 99 full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff manage program development, scheduling, fees, staffing, advertisement, and associated vendor services.

¹ Changes to the Parks and Recreation organizational structure for FY 2018-19 were anticipated during Plan preparation. These pending organizational changes were considered as part of the operational analysis in Chapter 3, Needs Assessment.

FIGURE 2.4, PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

POSITION	DESCRIPTION	PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED
ADMINISTRATION		
DIRECTOR	Individual responsible for the direction and operation of the entire Parks and Recreation Department; Collaborates with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to improve departmental service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plans, organizes, and coordinates all programs, roles and activities
RECREATION SECTION		
RECREATION ADMINISTRATOR	Manages, implements, coordinate, and directs programming, operations, and staff of the Recreation and/or Youth Services Sections to assure programs are delivered in a safe effective manner and align with the City's strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After-school Program Juvenile Citation Program Safe Haven Weed & Seed Summer Recreation Youth Employment
RECREATION PROGRAM MANAGER	Manages staff and coordinates the activities of recreational facilities, related programs, and activities to meet strategic objectives and comply with applicable standards, laws, policies, and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aquatics Adult Programs Youth Programs Adaptive Sports Fitness Teen Programs
RECREATION FACILITIES MANAGER	Manages staff and coordinates the activities of a recreation facility, associated programs, and activities to assure safety of participants and compliance with applicable standards, laws, policies, and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Aquatic Center Meerscheidt Center Recreation Centers Fitness Facilities
AQUATICS SUPERVISOR	Supervises aquatics staff and coordinates the activities of the City swimming pools recreation and aquatics programs and facilities, and assures aquatics programs are delivered in a safe manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fitness/Exercise Swim Sessions Supervised Lap Swim Pool Child Watch Swim Lessons
PARKS SECTION		
PARKS ADMINISTRATOR	Plans implement and direct the maintenance and repair of parks, recreation, facilities, medians, landscaped right of way and public grounds, minor construction projects and maintenance operations in order to provide safe, playable, and aesthetically pleasing parks, open space, and recreation areas within the City.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park Facilities Trail Facilities Athletic Fields Community Wellness
COMMUNITY FORESTER	Plans, develops, implements, and oversees City-wide forestry and horticultural programs, activities, and operations to achieve strategic objectives and ensure compliance with applicable standards, laws, policies, and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teen Connection After-school Program Summer Program
PARKS OPERATION DISTRICT MANAGER	Plans, organizes and supervises the activities and staff involved in the maintenance and operations of City parks, at Right-of-way landscaping, and construction projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Park Facilities Park Maintenance
YOUTH SERVICES SECTION		
YOUTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATOR	Manages, implements, coordinate, and directs programming, operations, and staff of the Recreation and/or Youth Services Sections to assure programs are delivered in a safe effective manner and align with the City's strategic objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> After-school Program Juvenile Citation Program Safe Haven Weed & Seed Summer Recreation Youth Employment
JUVENILE DIVISION PROGRAM SUPERVISOR	Develops and administers Juvenile Diversion Programs to divert at-risk youth and youth offenders throughout the City from the criminal justice system and provide alternative intervention initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Juvenile Citation Program Community Service Mentoring Parent/Youth Session
RECREATIONAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR	Plans, manages, schedules, and coordinates a variety of recreation, sports, and wellness programs and activities for participants of all ages and skill levels to meet established objectives and comply with applicable standards, laws, policies, and regulations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athletic Leagues Exercise Classes Home-school PE After-school programs
WEED & SEED COORDINATOR	Develops and administers the Weed & Seed Program for the Las Cruces Police Department to provide youth recreation & education, neighborhood revitalization, and crime reduction activities in at-risk neighborhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weed and Seed Program Youth Programs

FIGURE 2.5, COMPARISON COMMUNITIES, RESOURCES (2018)

COMMUNITY	PARK ACRES/ 1000 RESIDENTS	BUDGET PER CAPITA ¹
COLLEGE STATION, TX	1.32	\$56.69
LUBBOCK, TX	3.00	\$44.79
PROVO, UT	2.20	\$47.88
PUEBLO, CO	0.61	\$50.79
RIO RANCHO, NM	1.03	\$71.21
YUMA, AZ	1.09	\$182.05
LAS CRUCES, NM	1.54	\$127.85

Source: NRPA Park Metrics and municipal plans.
1. Cumulative budget (2018)

DEPARTMENT RESOURCES

Upon completion of the 2012 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Impact Fee Study, the Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department's overall budget was approximately \$9.3 million dollars. The 2012 budget included funds for 217 full-time, part-time, and seasonal positions - roughly equal to 2.14 staff or every 1000 residents. The 2017-2018 adopted parks and recreation budget contained an approximate \$13 million and funds 219 staff equivalent positions and equates to 1.5 staff or every 1000 residents, a noticeable reduction in staff.

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department was the caretaker of 680 acres of parkland and recreational facilities according to the 2012 Parks and Recreation Master Plan and Impact Fee Study (page 18). Based on staffing, as discussed above, there was a ratio of 1 staff member to 3.13 acres of parkland in 2012. The addition of 857.5 acres of parkland and reduction of staff since 2012 has increased the staff to parkland acreage to 10.18 acres per staff member.

FIGURE 2.6, BENCHMARK COMMUNITIES, RESOURCES (2018)

COMMUNITY	PARK ACRES/ 1000 RESIDENTS	BUDGET PER CAPITA ¹
BROKEN ARROW, OK	0.76	\$20.14
FLAGSTAFF, AZ	0.68	\$106.67
FORT COLLINS, CO	0.95	\$107.37
PLANO, TX	3.88	\$107.43
ROUND ROCK, TX	2.27	\$94.63
TUSCON, AZ	2.66	\$71.82
LAS CRUCES, NM	1.54	\$127.85

Source: NRPA Park Metrics and municipal plans.
1. Cumulative budget (2018)

Figure 2.5, Comparison Communities, Resources (2018) and **Figure 2.6, Benchmark Communities, Resources (2018)** compare the parkland acreage responsibilities and overall budgets of PRMP assessment communities to Las Cruces. **Figure 2.5** suggests that Las Cruces provides 1.54 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. This is second only to Lubbock, Texas which provides three acres per 1,000 residents. Pueblo, Colorado provides the lowest parkland acreage per resident and has a budget per capita. In relation to benchmark communities, **Figure 2.6** suggests that Las Cruces provides the highest budget per capita in comparison to the listed cities but ranks fourth in the amount of park acreage provided per 1000 residents.

Detailed staffing information was readily available for four assessment communities. On average, the four communities provide 1.02 parks and recreation employees (FTE) per 1,000 residents and 0.06 operations and maintenance (O&M) employees per parkland acres. The comparable ratio of O&M employees to acres is higher than Las Cruces, but figures do not consider whether comparable departments are also responsible for other public properties such as alleys, parkways, and medians.)



CITY PARTNERS

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department works in conjunction with several other city departments to ensure that recreational facilities and services offered by the City are provided in an efficient manner. Key department partnerships include:

- **Police Department.** *The Las Cruces Police Department provides security services for Parks and Recreation Department special events. This includes traffic control and security services related to the event. The City does not operate a separate security division for parks and other municipal properties.*
- **Public Works (Facilities Management).** *The Facilities Management section assists the Parks and Recreation Department with facility maintenance throughout the park system. Facilities Management is responsible for all major construction and renovation projects involving park buildings and structures.*
- **Public Works (Streets and Traffic Operations).** *The Streets and Traffic Operations section collaborates with the Parks and Recreation Department to operate the Weed It program for the City of Las Cruces.*

The Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the maintenance of public street rights-of-way, alleys, and other miscellaneous "landscaped areas" accounting for a significant portion of the Parks Division Budget. As City beautification efforts continue on major roadways such as Lohman Avenue (above), demands on the department's non-recreational services will increase.

The pavilion at R.L. Young Park (below). Responsibility for major parks construction and renovation projects is the responsibility of the Facilities Management section of the Public Works Department.



PARK FACILITY INVENTORY

Determining the degree to which the City's park system meets the needs and preferences of residents requires a detailed understanding of the quantity and distribution of park property, recreation facilities, and recreational programs owned and maintained by the City. Maintaining and evaluating a current inventory of park system assets helps to define the effort and cost needed for system-wide operations and maintenance and is a key component of the park planning process.

SYSTEM-WIDE PARKLAND INVENTORY

Figure 2.7, Existing City Parks (2019), shows that as of 2019 the City owns and operates 94 parks exceeding 1,537 acres. The City's total park land acreage equals roughly 0.02 acres of parkland per person and suggests a significant increase in municipal park property since the completion of the last park plan in 2012. A detailed inventory of municipal parks by classification/type and other major recreational amenities is provided on pages 50 through 72. Cemeteries are also maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department, but are not included in the City's parkland inventory.

INTERPRETING THE PARK FACILITY INVENTORY

The following should be considered when reviewing the park facility inventory maps and tables presented in this Plan:

- Many parks have been reclassified and may differ from 2012 designations;
- New park classifications have been added; and,
- Some park properties previously listed in the 2012 park master plan have been consolidated.

It is particularly important to note that the park facility inventories listed in the 2019 Las Cruces Parks and Recreation Impact Fee Study will differ from those contained in this Plan. Although inventories in the Impact Fee Study are derived directly from this Plan, the Study considers only the 'active use areas' of those properties and facilities for purposes of impact fee calculations. For instance, although the Buller Field Trail Shopping Range encompasses over 480 acres, only 88 acres is actively used and maintained on a daily basis.

FIGURE 2.7, EXISTING CITY PARKS (2019)

PARK CLASSIFICATION/TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF PARKS	TOTAL ACRES ¹
REGIONAL PARKS	1	84.8
COMMUNITY PARKS	11	147.4
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS	37	108.9
POCKET PARKS	23	13.2
SPECIAL USE PARKS/FACILITIES	5	533.5
CIVIC PARKS	1	0.7
NATURAL AREAS/OPEN SPACE	1	644.1
LINEAR PARKS/(MULTI-USE) TRAILS ²	15	4.8
TOTAL NUMBER OF PARKS: 94		TOTAL ACRES: 1,537.5

1. Does not include rights-of-way or other non-recreational property maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department.

2. Linear Park/(Multi-use) Trail classification acreage includes only fee simple property ownership and excludes easements and rights-of-way.

REGIONAL PARKS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

84.8
ACRESFIGURE 2.8, REGIONAL PARKS, EXISTING (2019) ¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
1	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX ²	1600 E HADLEY AVE	84.8
			TOTAL ACRES: 84.8

1. Also see Map 2.1, Regional and Community Parks, page 52

2. Hadley Avenue Recreation 'Complex' is comprised of multiple special use facilities including: Jim Harty Field, Las Cruces BMX Track, Las Cruces Dog Park, Las Cruces Regional Aquatic Center, Las Cruces Skate Park, MAAG Park, Matt Youngblood Horseshoe Courts, Meerscheidt Recreation Center, Meerscheidt Volleyball Courts, Provencio-Van Dame Soccer Center Complex, Raymond M. Paz Complex, RC Track, Ronald D. Galla T-Ball Complex, Sammy Burke Youth Boxing Center, Soldados Multipurpose Complex, and Unidad Park.

The combined facilities of the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex represent the only regional park in Las Cruces. A 'park complex' is an unofficial term used in this Plan to describe a park that contains one or more special use or athletic facilities, while the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex represents an unofficial moniker describing the combined recreational facilities located adjacent to or in the vicinity of a Hadley Avenue.

The Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex is over 84 acres and makes up over five percent of the City's parkland. It is located near the center of the City and consists of 16 separate facilities including:

- Jim Harty Field;
- Las Cruces BMX Track;
- Las Cruces Dog Park;
- Las Cruces Regional Aquatic Center;
- Las Cruces Skate Park;
- MAAG Park;
- Matt Youngblood Horseshoe Courts;



Unidad Park is a beloved community asset located in the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex.

- Meerscheidt Recreation Center;
- Meerscheidt Volleyball Courts;
- Provencio-Van Dame Soccer Center Complex;
- Raymond M. Paz Complex;
- RC Track;
- Ronald D. Galla T-Ball Complex;
- Sammy Burke Youth Boxing Center;
- Soldados Multipurpose Complex; and
- Unidad Park.

COMMUNITY PARKS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

147.4

ACRES

FIGURE 2.9, COMMUNITY PARKS, EXISTING (2019) ¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
1	APODACA PARK	801 E. MADRID AVE.	24.5
2	BURN LAKE	1855 AMADO AVE	12.8
3	DESERT TRAILS	3492 SONORA SPRINGS BLVD	34.0
4	EAST MESA	4851 PORTER DR	5.4
5	LA LLORONA PARK	3499 W. PICACHO AVE.	5.0
6	LAS CRUCES LIONS PARK	701 W. PICACHO AVE.	7.7
7	LEGENDS WEST PARK	1120 N. MOTEL BLVD.	11.3
8	MESILLA PARK	304 BELL AVE.	4.4
9	METRO VERDE SPLASH PAD PARK	7125 METRO PARK ST.	2.9
10	R.L. YOUNG PARK	860 S. WALNUT ST.	21.5
11	VALLEY VIEW PARK	750 S. ESPINA ST.	9.0
12	VETERAN'S MEMORIAL PARK	2651-B ROADRUNNER PKWY.	9.0
			TOTAL ACRES: 147.4

1. Also see Map 2.1, *Regional and Community Parks*, page 51

There are currently 12 community parks in Las Cruces totaling over 147 acres. Community parks comprise over nine percent of the City's total parkland.

Although most of the City's community parks are predominantly programmed for recreational use, some parks such as Desert Trails retain large areas of natural space, while others such as Veterans Memorial Park are reserved for significant areas of social space related to the many monuments contained on the property. Some of the City's community parks are smaller than community park size recommendations. Many of these variations from standard guidelines reflect special facilities such as recreation centers or athletic complexes that are located on the properties.



R.L. Young Park features two amphitheaters, three pavilions, picnic areas, playgrounds, and two tennis courts.

MAP 2.1, REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY PARKS

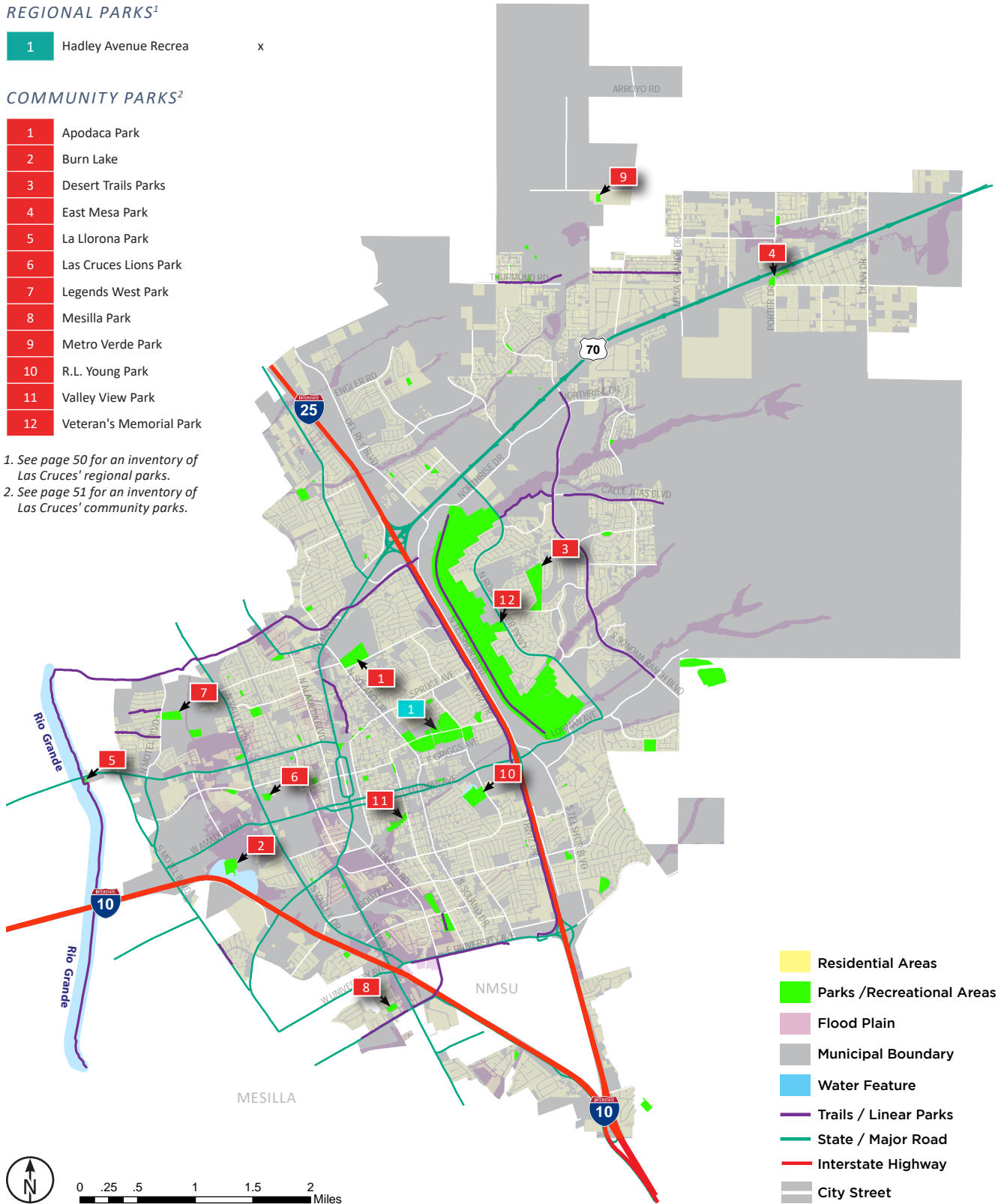
REGIONAL PARKS¹

1	Hadley Avenue Recrea	x
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COMMUNITY PARKS²

1	Apodaca Park
2	Burn Lake
3	Desert Trails Parks
4	East Mesa Park
5	La Llorona Park
6	Las Cruces Lions Park
7	Legends West Park
8	Mesilla Park
9	Metro Verde Park
10	R.L. Young Park
11	Valley View Park
12	Veteran's Memorial Park

1. See page 50 for an inventory of Las Cruces' regional parks.
2. See page 51 for an inventory of Las Cruces' community parks.



NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

108.9

ACRES

FIGURE 2.10, NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS, EXISTING (2019) ¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
1	ALBERT JOHNSON MEMORIAL PARK	800 N MAIN ST	1.9
2	BRANIGAN PARK	1255 HAYNER AVE	4.3
3	CAMELOT GARDENS PARK	1801 WINSOR PLACE	1.2
4	CAMUNEZ PARK	915 N VALLEY DR	2.4
5	CANDLELIGHT KNOLLS PARK	1505 CANDLELIGHT DR	0.3
6	COLLEGE MANOR PARK	401 YALE DR	2.1
7	COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES PARK	2800 SPITZ ST	2.1
8	EL CARDON PARK	1050 N MESQUITE ST	0.8
9	EL ENCANTO PARQUITE	410 AVENIDA DE MESILLA	0.5
10	FOUR HILLS PARK	2395 SUNRIDGE DR	1.9
11	FRENGER PARK	800 PARKVIEW DR	9.9
12	GUS VLACHAKIS PARK	2800 E MISSOURI AVE	3.3
13	HERMOSA HEIGHTS PARK	1600 E AMADOR AVE	1.1
14	KLEIN PARK	438 E ORGAN AVE	1.7
15	LA BUENA VIDA PARK	3300 BUENA VIDA CIR	8.7
16	LAS COLINAS ARROYO PARK	3401 LAS COLINAS DR	1.3
17	METRO VERDE SCULPTURE PARK	3675 THURMOND RD	1.7
18	NORTH LAS CRUCES PARK	1001 VALLEY VIEW AVE	8.2
19	NORTHPOINTE PARK	3559 NORTHPOINTE DR	1.0
20	NORTHRIDGE PARK	3245 WESTRIDGE RD	1.0
21	PARKHILL ESTATES PARK	4623 MOUNTAIN TOP DR	2.2
22	PASEO DE OÑATE PARK	4571 PASEO DE OÑATE	10.0
23	PIONEER WOMAN'S PARK	500 W LAS CRUCES AVE	2.1
24	PONDEROSA PARK	1505 BRANDING IRON CIR	0.7
25	SAGECREST PARK	489 N ROADRUNNER PKWY	2.1
26	SALOPEK / STULL PARK	464 SALOPEK BLVD	2.2
27	SAM GRAFT PARK	4230 SEDONA HILLS PKWY	2.5
28	SAN JOSE PARK	101 N ESPINA ST	1.8
29	SPRUCE ROW PAVILION	1050 N TORNILLO ST	0.1
30	SUNRISE TERRACE PARK	1800 SUMMER AVE	4.3
31	SUNSET HILLS PARK	3333 LUNARIDGE ST	1.4
32	TELLBROOK PARK	4290 WINCHESTER RD	5.7
33	TONY GOMEZ PARK	881 E FARNEY LN	11.7
34	VALLE VERDE PARK	1721 W HADLEY AVE	2.8
35	VILLA ENCANTADA PARK	1236 BIRCH DR	1.7
36	VISTA DE LA MONTANA PARK	5700 PORTER DR	2.1
			TOTAL ACRES: 108.9

1. Also see Map 2.2, Neighborhood Parks, page 5

There are currently 36 neighborhood parks in the City of Las Cruces, totaling 108.9 acres and consisting of over seven percent of municipal park land.

Most neighborhood parks are clearly designed to serve the immediate recreational needs of surrounding residents. Other neighborhood parks, such as Klein Park, contain facilities that encourage social interaction through structured events and activities. Some park properties, such as Sagecrest Park, also serve as trailheads to the City's expanding multi-use trail network.



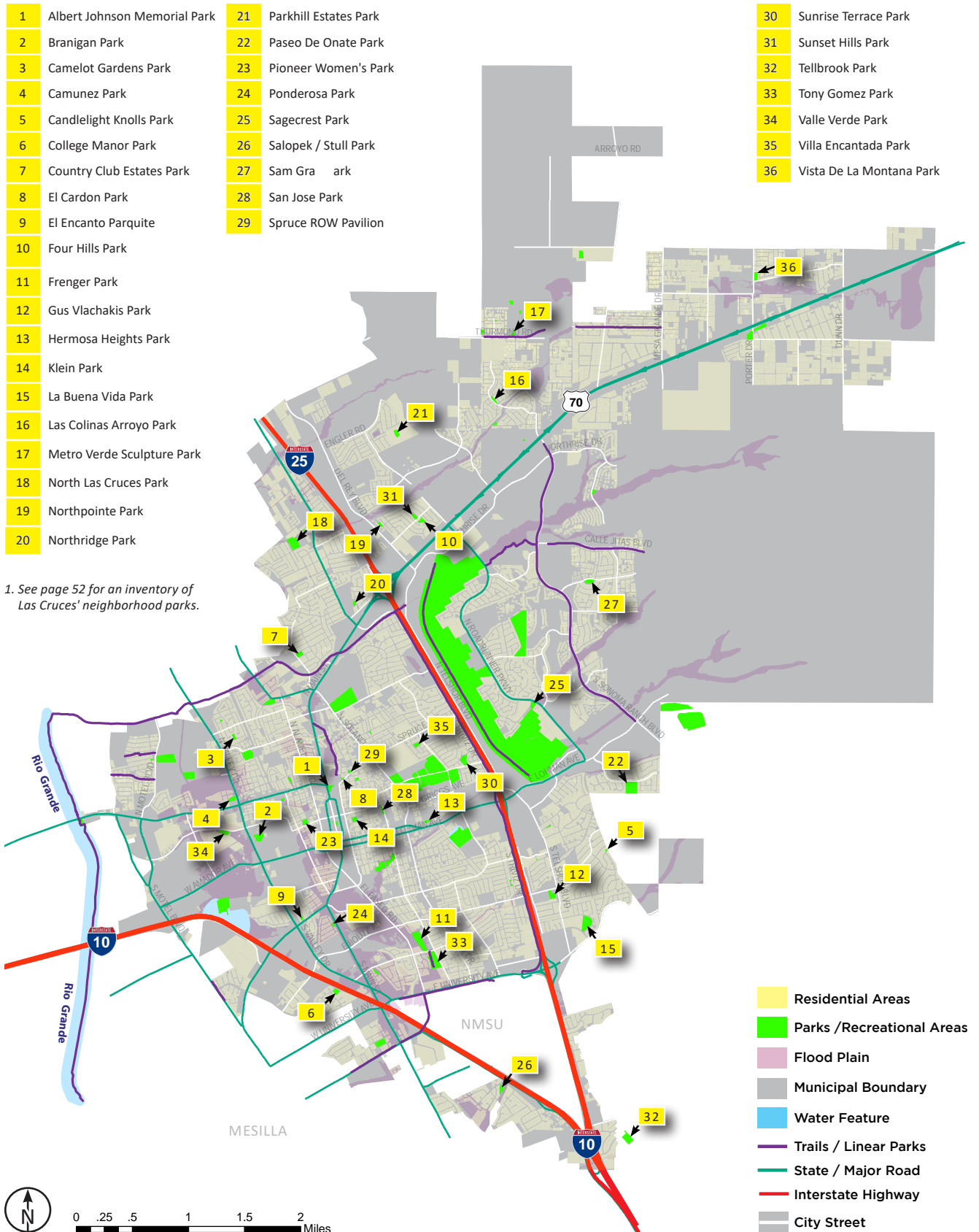
Tony Gomez Park contains a community garden, multi-purpose field, pavilions, and trails.



Parkhill Estates Park features three pavilions. The presence of shade structures increases the utility of the neighborhood by providing a comfortable location from which parents can watch their children play.



El Encanto Parquite is located in southwestern Las Cruces and contains a basketball court and playground.

MAP 2.2, NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS¹

POCKET PARKS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

13.2

ACRES

FIGURE 2.11, POCKET PARKS, EXISTING (2019)¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
1	A. FIELDER MEMORIAL SAFE HAVEN (WEED & SEED)	906 N TORNILLO ST	0.7
2	CALLE ABUELO PARK	4380 CALLE ABUELO	1.1
3	CAMELOT GARDENS MINI-PARK	2044 CAMELOT DR	0.4
4	EAST CAMBRIDGE MINI-PARK	120 E CAMBRIDGE DR	0.1
5	ENTRADA DEL SOL PARK	711 E HADLEY AVE	0.1
6	HESS TERRACE MINI-PARK	500 W PICACHO AVE	0.9
7	HIGHLAND PARK	4201 EMERALD ST	0.2
8	HILLRISE MINI-PARK	2619 HILLRISE DR	0.1
9	JARDIN DE ESPERANZA	341 E PICACHO AVE	0.1
10	JARDIN DE MESQUITE	1039 N TORNILLO ST	0.1
11	JASON JIRON PARK	355 THREE CROSSES AVE	3.5
12	LA FONDA MINI-PARK	1502 LA FONDA DR	0.6
13	LAS COLINAS MINI-PARK	3731 JADE AVE	0.7
14	LEGENDS WEST TODDLER PARK	1402 TINGLEY DR	0.4
15	MAJESTIC TERRACE MINI-PARK	2946 MAJESTIC TERRACE DR	0.4
16	MESA HEIGHTS PARK	1022 ASH AVE	0.3
17	METRO VERDE #1 PARK	6013 ATLAS ST	0.7
18	METRO VERDE #2 PARK	6054 VOYAGER ST	0.3
19	METRO VERDE DESERT PARK	3800 SANTA MINERVA AVE	0.6
20	MISSION MINI-PARK	1603 S MAIN ST	0.2
21	RIO BRAVO MINI-PARK	950 RIO BRAVO WAY	0.3
22	ROSE VILLAGE PARK	245 BEX CT	1.1
23	WEST GALLAGHER MINI-PARK	137 W GALLAGHER AVE	0.1
			TOTAL ACRES: 13.2

1. Also see Map 2.3, Pocket Park, page 58

There are currently 23 pocket parks in the City of Las Cruces, totaling 13.2 acres and consisting of less than one percent of all municipal park land.

Highland Park, shown below, is a pocket park that is located directly north of Highland Elementary School. From the school, there is a path that leads directly to this park. The accessibility of this park from the school provides a place for parents and caretakers to wait for their children after school. The park contains a pavilion and picnic tables. Other pocket parks in the City's inventory provide little apparent recreational benefit, but nonetheless represent important community landmarks.

The utility of Highland Park is significantly increased due to its proximity to the recreation facilities at Highland Elementary School (background).



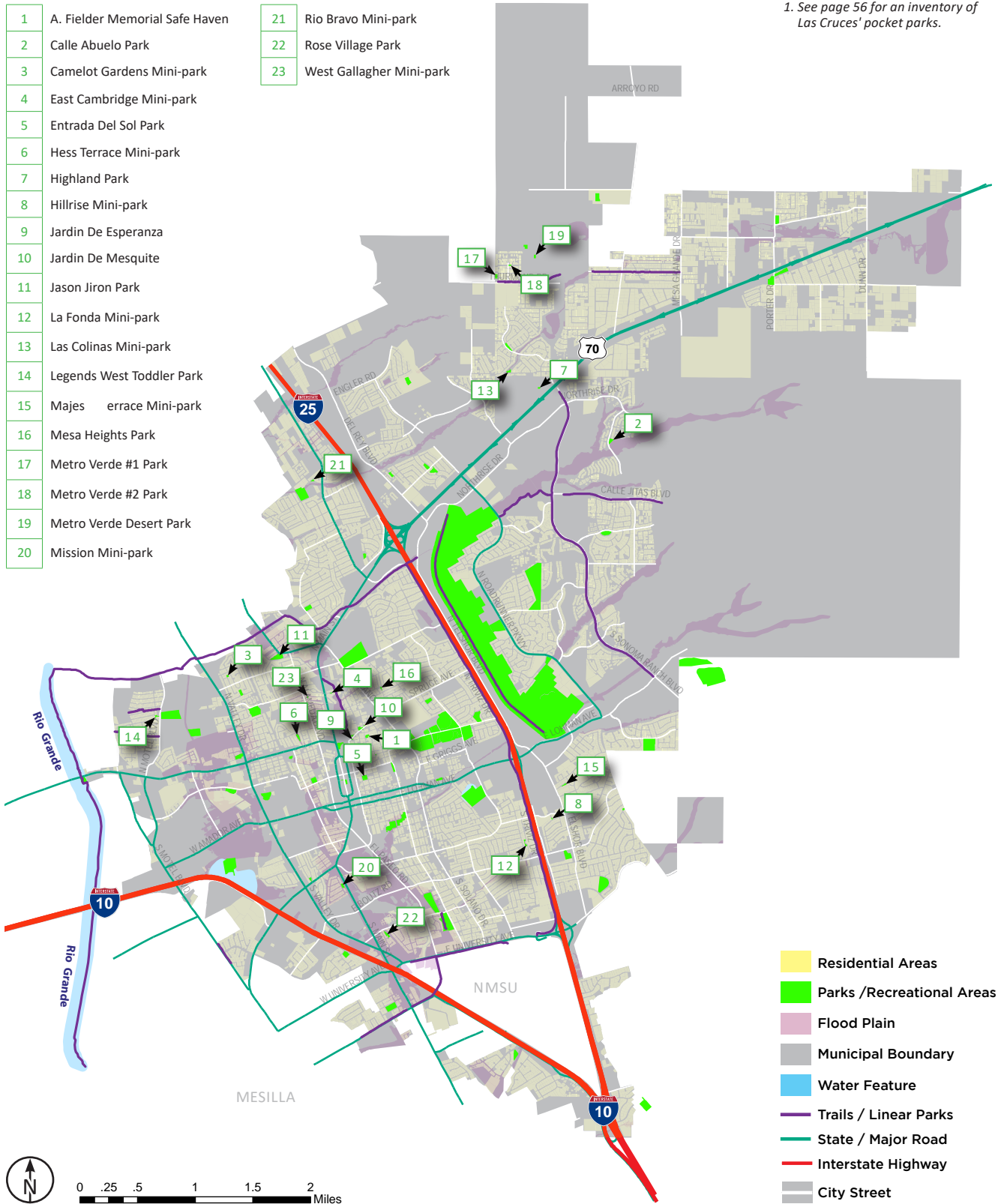
The Entrada del Sol Park serves as a prominent gateway feature to the Mesquite Historic District, but otherwise provides little incentive for active use or visitation.



MAP 2.3, POCKET PARKS¹

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| 1 | A. Fielder Memorial Safe Haven | 21 | Rio Bravo Mini-park |
| 2 | Calle Abuelo Park | 22 | Rose Village Park |
| 3 | Camelot Gardens Mini-park | 23 | West Gallagher Mini-park |
| 4 | East Cambridge Mini-park | | |
| 5 | Entrada Del Sol Park | | |
| 6 | Hess Terrace Mini-park | | |
| 7 | Highland Park | | |
| 8 | Hillrise Mini-park | | |
| 9 | Jardin De Esperanza | | |
| 10 | Jardin De Mesquite | | |
| 11 | Jason Jiron Park | | |
| 12 | La Fonda Mini-park | | |
| 13 | Las Colinas Mini-park | | |
| 14 | Legends West Toddler Park | | |
| 15 | Majes terrace Mini-park | | |
| 16 | Mesa Heights Park | | |
| 17 | Metro Verde #1 Park | | |
| 18 | Metro Verde #2 Park | | |
| 19 | Metro Verde Desert Park | | |
| 20 | Mission Mini-park | | |

1. See page 56 for an inventory of Las Cruces' pocket parks.



SPECIAL USE PARK/FACILITIES

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

533.5
ACRES

FIGURE 2.12, SPECIAL USE PARK/FACILITIES, EXISTING (2019)¹

PARK		LOCATION	
NUMBER ¹	NAME	ADDRESS	PARK COMPLEX
1	APODACA GIRL SCOUT PARK	1101 E MADRID AVE	APODACA PARK
2	ARCHERY RANGE ²	535 S SONOMA RANCH BLVD	CITY COMPLEX
3	BUTTERFIELD TRAIL SHOOTING RANGE ²	13500 FRONTAGE RD	N/A
4	EAST MESA BATAAN MEMORIAL POOL	6151 REYNOLDS DR	EAST MESA
5	EMMA B. HESKE GARDEN	975 S MESQUITE ST	VALLEY VIEW PARK
6	HIGH NOON SOCCER COMPLEX - FIELDS ²³	15 BRUINS LN	N/A
7	LAS CRUCES BMX TRACK	145 N WALNUT ST	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
8	LAS CRUCES DOG PARK	430 N HEMOSA ST	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
9	LAS CRUCES REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTER	1401 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
10	LAS CRUCES SKATE PARK	151 N WALNUT ST	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
11	LUSH & LEAN DEMONSTRATION GARDEN ²	401 SPRUCE AVE	N/A
12	MATT YOUNGBLOOD HORSESHOE COURTS	1801 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
13	MEERSCHIEDT VOLLEYBALL COURTS	1600 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
14	METRO VERDE SOCCER PARK ²	3770 SIENNA AVE	N/A
15	MUNSON COMMUNITY GARDEN	975 S MESQUITE ST	VALLEY VIEW PARK
16	RC AIRPLANE PARK	545 S SONOMA RANCH BLVD	CITY COMPLEX
17	RC TRACK	1600 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
18	SAGE CAFÉ COMMUNITY GARDEN	5110 PORTER DR	EAST MESA
19	SAGE CAFÉ - LANDSCAPE	N/A	DOWNTOWN
20	SAMMY BURKE YOUTH BOXING CENTER	700 N SOLANO DR	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX

1. Also see Map 2.4, Special Use park/facilities, civic space, and Natural Area/Open Space, page 63.

2. Special use park/facility acreage limited to identified properties. Most park complex acreage included in regional and community park totals.

3. Owned by Las Cruces ISD, but maintained by the City of Las Cruces.



The Las Cruces Regional Aquatic Center (top) offers several types of pools, exercise equipment, and classes. The Las Cruces Skate Park (bottom left) is almost 36,000 square feet and is located in the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex. Emma B. Heske Garden (bottom right) is located in Valley View Park and features sustainable landscape design practices.

Unlike other types of parks, special use parks/facilities are designed for specific recreational activities. Although special use facilities may be located on 'stand-alone' park properties most such facilities in Las Cruces have been incorporated into a large park (referred to in this Plan as a park 'complex').

Figure 2.12 (page 59) lists 20 special use facilities in the Las Cruces parks system and identifies the park complexes within which they are located (if applicable).

Special use parks are an important part in the recreational environment of Las Cruces and offer many opportunities for outdoor enjoyment. Some of the prominent special use parks in Las Cruces include the Archery Range, Butterfield Trail Shooting Range, East Mesa Bataan Memorial Pool, and RC Airplane Park. The 'active use areas' intended for the general public on many of these properties is often much smaller than the overall property acreage.

CIVIC PARKS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

0.7
ACRESFIGURE 2.13, CIVIC PARKS, EXISTING (2019)¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
1	DOWNTOWN	100 N MAIN	0.7
			TOTAL ACRES: 0.7

1. Also see Map 2.4, Special Use park/facilities, civic space, and Natural Area/Open Space, page 63.

The Plaza de Las Cruces is located on the northeast corner of North Main Street and East Griggs Avenue and is the City's newest event space - designed to activate downtown. The plaza contains a large stage for performances and events, multiple seating area, and a splash pad. Downtown is further activated by recent improvements to downtown paseos, including La Placita.

The City's historic squares - including Klein Park and Pioneer Womens Park - meet the definition of 'civic park' but are categorized elsewhere in this Plan. Other parks such as the Albert Johnson Memorial Park and Veterans Memorial Park are programmed to include substantial amounts of social space for civic purposes but are likewise inventoried in other parkland categories.



Plaza de Las Cruces (left) features a stage as well as a public gathering space. La Placita (top) provides a connection for pedestrians between North Water and Main Street.

NATURAL AREA/OPEN SPACE

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

644.1

ACRES

FIGURE 2.14, NATURAL AREA/OPEN SPACE, EXISTING (2019)¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK	ADDRESS	ACRES
	NAME		
3	LAS CRUCES DAM	3011 E LOHMAN AVE	644.1
			TOTAL ACRES: 644.1

1. See Map 2.4, Special Use park/facilities, civic space, and Natural Area/Open Space, page 63.



The Las Cruces Dam is comprised of open space and wetlands. Although containing a substantial trail system, only a small portion of the property is considered an 'active use area' for purposes of maintenance.

Natural area/open space is a new parkland classification being incorporated into the Las Cruces parks and recreation system. There is currently one municipal park property in Las Cruces that is categorized as a natural area. The Las Cruces Dam property totals 644.1 acres, or almost 42 percent of the City's parkland. The property accounts for most of the City's parkland acreage that was added to the municipal park system between 2012 and 2019, and only a small portion of it has been improved for recreational activity.

Desert Trails Park, La Buena Vida Park, and Paseo de Oñate Park contain significant areas of parkland programmed as natural space, but programming may change in the future for portions of these park properties.

MAP 2.4, SPECIAL USE PARK/FACILITIES, CIVIC SPACE, AND NATURAL AREA/OPEN SPACE

SPECIAL USE PARK/FACILITIES¹

1	e
2	City Complex
3	High Noon Soccer Complex - Fields 11-12
4	Lush & Lean Demonstration
5	Metro Verde Soccer Park

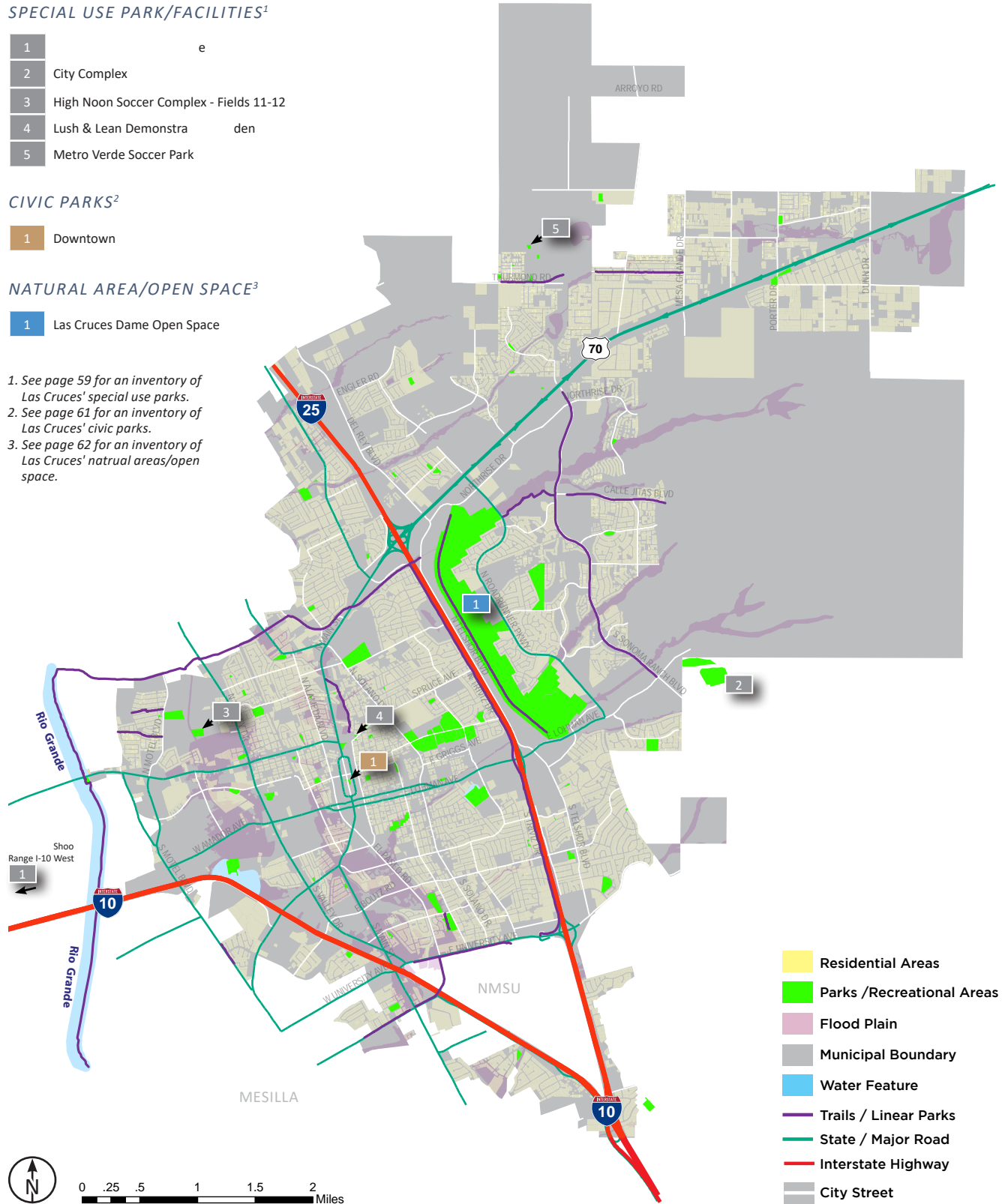
CIVIC PARKS²

1 Downtown

NATURAL AREA/OPEN SPACE³

1 Las Cruces Dame Open Space

1. See page 59 for an inventory of Las Cruces' special use parks.
2. See page 61 for an inventory of Las Cruces' civic parks.
3. See page 62 for an inventory of Las Cruces' natural areas/open space.



LINEAR PARK/(MULTI-USE) TRAILS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

27.6

MILES

FIGURE 2.15, LINEAR PARK/(MULTI-USE) TRAIL, EXISTING (2019)¹

NUMBER ¹	PARK / (MULTI-USE) TRAIL	ADDRESS	TRAIL LENGTH (MILES)
	NAME		
1	ALAMEDA ARROYO TRAIL	ROADRUNNER PKWY TO SONOMA RANCH BLVD	0.7
2	CALLE JITAS TRAIL	DONA ANA COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO PRADO DEL SOL AVE	1.1
3	LA LLORONA PARK RIVER WALK-NORTH	ALONG THE RIO GRANDE TO LA LLORONA PARK	1.4
4	LA LLORONA PARK RIVER WALK-SOUTH	FROM LA LLORONA PARK ALONG THE RIO GRANDE	3.2
5	LAS CRUCES DAM TRAILS	3011 E LOHMAN AVE	2.6
6	LEGENDS WEST TRAILS ²	MAGALENA DR TO MOTEL BLVD AND ROADRUNNER LN TO MOTEL BLVD	1.2
7	METRO VERDE/ENGLER MULTI USE PATH	ATLAS TO SONOMA RANCH BLVD	0.7
8	OUTFALL CHANNEL MULTI-USE PATH	RIO GRANDE TO N TELSHOR BLVD	4.4
9	SONOMA RANCH MULTI-USE TRAIL	BATAAN MEMORIAL TO E LOHMAN AVE	3.6
10	TIERRA VERDE TRAIL	MESILLA LATERAL TO LAGUNA DR	0.3
11	TRIVIZ MULTI-PURPOSE PATH	OUTLET CHANNEL TRAIL TO E UNIVERSITY AVE	4.5
12	TWIN PARKS (TRAIL)	5045 ENGLER RD	0.9
13	UNION MULTI-USE PATH	APPLE CROSS PL TO LAS CRUCES CONVENTION CENTER	1.3
14	UNIVERSITY MULTI USE PATH	E COLLEGE AVE TO JORDAN RD	1.1
15	WILLOUGHBY TRAIL	N MAIN ST TO LAS CRUCES POLICE DEPARTMENT	0.7
			TOTAL ACRES: 27.6

1. Also see Map 2.5, Linear Park/Trail, page 66.

2. By definition, Legends Trail West is the only true 'linear park' in the Las Cruces parks system - accounting for 4.8 acres of land.



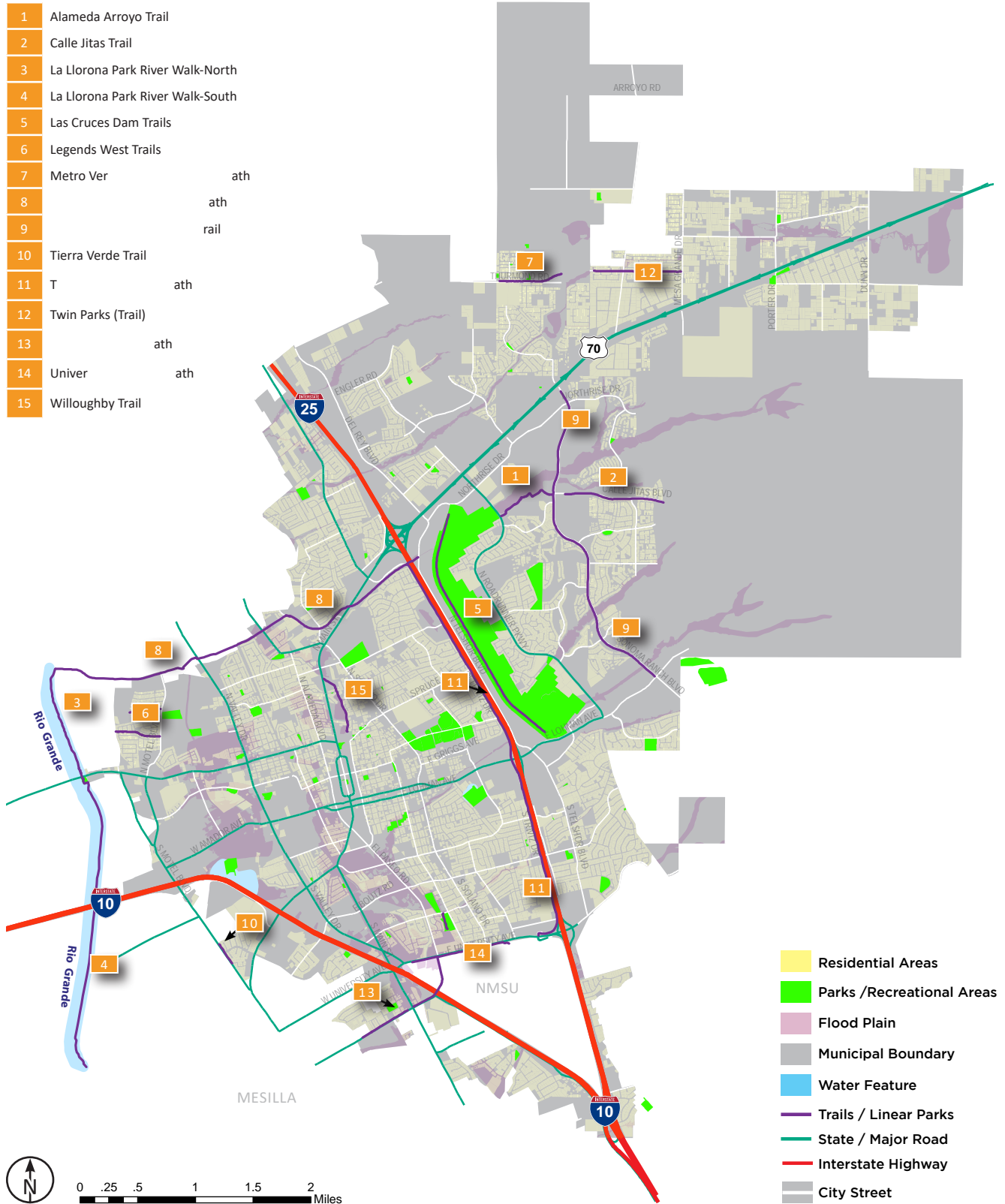
The Legends West Trail system (above) includes the only linear park in the City's current municipal park inventory. In contrast, the Twin Parks Trail (below) is located completely within the Engler Road right-of-way, which may be more accurately described as a parkway.

Mul -use trails are an integral component of the City's active transportation network, and a growing component of the municipal park system - in terms of both linear mileage and popularity. Most of the City's mul -use trails (or 'shared use paths') are located in a large park property, a public street right-of-way, or easement. The City's recently adopted active transportation plan advocates for a significant expansion of the municipal and regional mul -use trail network.

The only municipal park currently meeting the definition of a linear park is a City-owned property associated with the Legends West Trails. The City of Las Cruces retains fee-simple ownership of this elongated property exclusive of any adjacent municipally-owned public street rights-of-way.



Although this plan groups linear parks and mul -use trails into a single park classification, it is important to note that these park system elements are not synonymous. There are two fundamental distinctions: **A)** A mul -use trail is actually a facility and not a park type; and, **B)** A linear park or greenway may or may not incorporate mul -use trails.

MAP 2.5, LINEAR PARKS/(MULTI-USE) TRAILS¹

ATHLETIC FIELDS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

FIGURE 2.16, ATHLETIC FIELDS, EXISTING (2019)

FACILITY	LOCATION	CITY PARK	LIGHTED BASEBALL FIELDS	UNLIGHTED BASEBALL FIELDS	UNLIGHTED MULTI-PURPOSE FIELDS	LIGHTED SOCCER FIELDS	UNLIGHTED SOCCER FIELDS	LIGHTED T-BALL FIELDS
APODACA BALL FIELDS	1101 E MADRID AVE	APODACA PARK	2					
(ATHLETIC FIELD) BRANIGAN PARK ¹	1255 HAYNER AVE	BRANIGAN PARK	1					
BURN LAKE - SOCCER FIELDS	1855 AMADO AVE	BURN LAKE				3		
(ATHLETIC FIELD) COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES PARK ¹	2800 SPITZ ST	COUNTRY CLUB ESTATES PARK					1	
(ATHLETIC FIELD) HENRY BENAVIDEZ COMMUNITY CENTER ¹	1045 MCCLURE RD	HENRY BENAVIDEZ COMM. CENTER		1	2			
HIGH NOON SOCCER COMPLEX - FIELDS	15 BRUINS LN	N/A			2			
(ATHLETIC FIELD) JASON JIRON PARK ¹	355 THREE CROSSES AVE	JASON JIRON PARK			1			
JIM HARTY FIELD	1840 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY PARK	3					
(ATHLETIC FIELD) LEGENDS WEST PARK ¹	1120 N MOTEL BLVD	LEGENDS WEST PARK			1			
MAAG PARK	1700 E HADLEY ST	HADLEY PARK	4					
(ATHLETIC FIELD) METRO VERDE SOCCER PARK ¹	3770 SIENNA AVE	METRO VERDE SOCCER PARK			1			
PROVENCIO-VAN DAME SOCCER CENTER COMPLEX	1700 E HADLEY ST	HADLEY PARK			1			
RAYMOND M. PAZ COMPLEX	1875 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY PARK	4					
RONALD D. GALLA T-BALL COMPLEX	1601 E HADLEY AVE	HADLEY PARK						4
SOLDADOS MULTIPURPOSE COMPLEX	190 N WALNUT ST	HADLEY PARK			1			
(ATHLETIC FIELD) TONY GOMEZ PARK ¹	881 E FARNEY LN	TONY GOMEZ PARK			1			
(ATHLETIC FIELD) VALLEY VIEW PARK ¹	750 S ESPINA ST	VALLEY VIEW PARK			1			
			14	1	11	3	1	4

1. Open and manicured park space that may be utilized for some organized athletic activities subject to Parks and Recreation Department policy.



The Jim Harty Fields (top) are located in Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex and features three lighted baseball fields for organized league play. Tony Gomez Park (bottom) is located on the south side of Las Cruces and includes one unlighted multi-purpose field cross-purposed with a storm water detention area. The facilities in each image accommodate a different level of structured or unstructured play that is appropriate for the type of parks in which they are located.

The City of Las Cruces municipal park system includes 34 total athletic fields, including 2 fields for night time use. Seventeen of the City's total athletic fields are located within the Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex, the City's only regional park. Lighted and unlighted field distribution in Las Cruces is depicted on page 129 (**Chapter 3**) as part of this Plan's needs assessment.

The City's consolidation of most lighted athletic fields which are purpose-built for competitive play into a few locations is consistent with recommended industry standards. Likewise, the corresponding distribution of unlighted multi-purpose fields for informal play at various community park and neighborhood park locations provides for localized recreational needs.

RECREATION CENTERS

LAS CRUCES PARK SYSTEM INVENTORY (2019)

FIGURE 2.17, RECREATION CENTERS, EXISTING (2019)

FACILITY	ADDRESS
EAST MESA COMMUNITY CENTER	5589 PORTER DR
FRANK O'BRIEN PAPER COMMUNITY CENTER	304 BELL AVE
HENRY BENAVIDEZ COMMUNITY CENTER	1045 MCCLURE RD
MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	1600 E HADLEY AVE
MUNSON SENIOR RECREATION CENTER	975 S MESQUITE ST



Munson Senior Recreation Center (below) offers programs and activities geared toward seniors. Frank O'Brien Papen Community Center (above) offers fitness activities for adults of all age groups.



Recreation centers offer an assortment of indoor activities for adults and children of all ages. Depending on the arrangement of space and the availability of gymnasiums, municipal recreation centers may offer both athletic and non-athletic programming.

Las Cruces operates five recreation and community centers. An overview of recreational programming offered at each location is provided on page 74 (Figure 2.20).

AQUATIC FACILITIES

Las Cruces continues to expand its offering of aquatic facilities and programs in response to the local climate, community expectations, and to remain competitive with other communities in terms of quality of life metrics. These facilities however are expensive to maintain. **Figure 2.18, Aquatic Facilities**, lists the name and location of the four pools that are offered in the City.

The Las Cruces Regional Aquatic Center is an indoor facility open year-round. Swimming and aquatic fitness classes are offered in the facility, but the second story also contains cardio machines, strength training equipment, indoor cycling, and a large fitness classroom. Aquatic amenities within the center include:

- Two lap Lanes;
- Baby activity pool;
- Lagoon pool-water slide area;
- Warm water pool (with handicap entry);
- Upstairs fitness facility;
- Locker rentals;
- Showers and towel rentals; and,
- Family cabana lockers.

A 50-meter competition pool is also planned for the Aquatic Center, and will be located under a shade structure on the grounds of the facility.

In addition to the regional aquatic center, the East Mesa Bataan Memorial Pool is located in northeast Las Cruces. In addition, Frenger Park contains one indoor pool that offers lap swimming. Frenger Park serves the south side of the City.

FIGURE 2.18, AQUATIC FACILITIES

NAME	LOCATION
LAS CRUCES REGIONAL AQUATIC CENTER	HADLEY AVENUE RECREATION COMPLEX
EAST MESA BATAAN MEMORIAL POOL	EAST MESA
LIONS' PARK POOL	LAS CRUCES LIONS' PARK
FRENGER POOL	FRENGER PARK



The Las Cruces Regional Aquatic Center is located in Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex and features a variety of swimming amenities.

Although not included in **Figure 2.18**, the City continues to expand access to aquatic amenities through the addition of adding splash pads to some of its existing parkland inventory. The City's current aquatic offerings are also augmented by the availability of the NMSU Aquatic Center for students, staff, and faculty.

ADDITIONAL RECREATION FACILITIES



Metro Verde Splash Pad Park is a community park that contains playgrounds for children of all ages.

The City offers a diverse selection of recreation facilities distributed throughout the municipal park system. Beyond those facilities highlighted on preceding pages (athletic fields, aquatic facilities), the most common and recognizable recreation facilities include playgrounds and sport courts. This section broadly discusses both facility types, and highlights some other unique facilities offered within the Las Cruces parks and recreation system. A detailed table of all recreation facilities in the municipal park system is located in **Appendix C**.

FIGURE 3.19, PARK FACILITIES

TYPE OF FACILITY	NUMBER OF FACILITIES
PLAYGROUNDS	95
SPORTS COURTS	60
SPECIAL FACILITIES (AMPHITHEATER/STAGE, ARCHERY, BMX, COMMUNITY GARDEN, DISC GOLF, DOG PARK, SHOOTING SPORTS, SPLASH PARK, SKATE PARK)	35

PLAYGROUNDS

Playgrounds are an important part of a child's development. Although playscapes provide obvious opportunities for physical activity, playgrounds also promote the development of social skill by offering a structured and shared gathering space.

In Las Cruces, there are over 95 playgrounds in City-owned parks. R.L. Young Park contains eight playgrounds, the largest concentration in the City. Each playground is designed to accommodate a different age group, featuring multiple amenities such as swings, slides, and climbing areas. One of the playgrounds at this park is an 'inclusive playground' which is designed for children of all abilities.

Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex offers seven playgrounds, five of which are located in Unidad Park. The playground at Unidad Park is comprised of a large wood play structure. The park also contains an adobe house play area and a tire swing.

SPORTS COURTS

Sports courts in Las Cruces include courts for basketball, tennis, volleyball, pickleball, and racquetball. In total, there are 60 sports courts in Las Cruces. The greatest concentration of courts in the City is at Las Cruces Lions Park where there are 16 total courts. This includes 12 tennis courts and four racquetball courts. In addition, Apodaca Park contains 10 sports courts including eight pickleball courts, one tennis court, and one volleyball court. Lastly, Hadley Avenue Recreation Complex contains eight sports courts including two basketball courts and six volleyball courts.

SPECIAL INTEREST FACILITIES

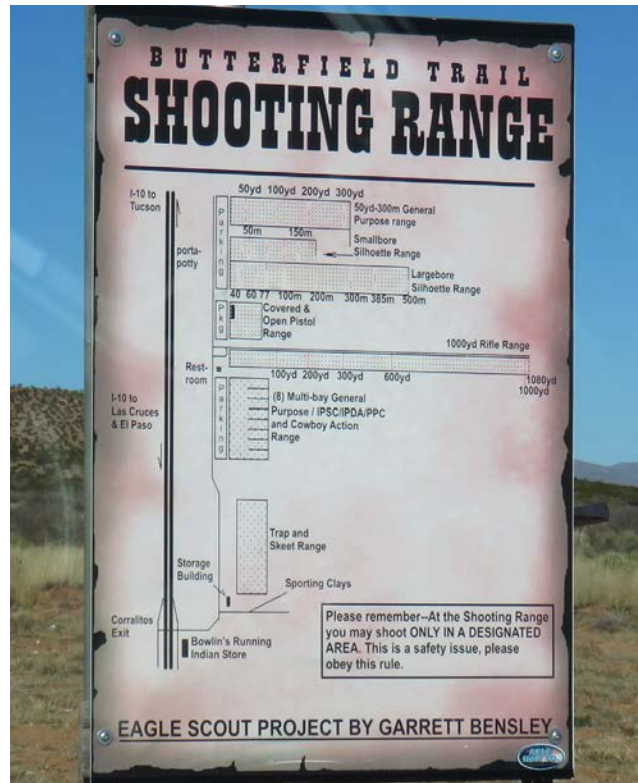
Special interest facilities can set a municipal parks and recreation system apart from other communities by offering unique amenities that are not common in the surrounding region. Some of the special interest facilities that are offered by the City of Las Cruces, but are not common features of most municipal park systems include:

- Archery range;
- BMX track;
- RC airplane field;
- RC Track; and,
- Shooting range.

The Butterfield Trail Shooting Range is a particularly expansive facility not offered by most municipal parks and recreation departments. The shooting range contains multi-purpose bays, a pistol range with covered shooting stations, and rifle range extending out to 1,000 yards.



Las Cruces Lions Park contains 12 tennis courts. Some tennis courts in other locations have been converted to accommodate pickleball.



The Butterfield Trail Shooting Range is a substantial tract of land west of Las Cruces that offers facilities for various shooting sports.

RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

The Parks and Recreation Department's Recreation section encourages community members to be active by providing a substantial offering of athletic and non-athletic programs and activities. Municipal programming may be categorized according to the following program types and user groups:

- Youth;
- Adult;
- Fitness classes/series;
- Miscellaneous training/lessons;
- Camps/lessons;
- Senior programs;
- Keep Las Cruces Beautiful program;
- Juvenile Citation Program; and,
- After School Program (Kindergarten through 5th grade).

Recreational program offerings have changed significantly since 2013. **Figure 2.20, Recreational Program Offerings (2013-2017)** (page 74), provides a sample of some of the different recreational programs that are offered by the City. **Appendix D**, contains a more detailed list of recreational program offerings.

Figure 2.20 indicates that participation in some programs has increased significantly over the five-year period measured. For instance, Youth 4th Grade Basketball enrollment has increased by 165 percent over the past five years (from 72 students in 2013 to 191 students in 2017). Coach Pitch for 3rd and 4th graders and Youth Basketball for 3rd graders programs have also seen substantial growth in enrollment, growing about 52 and 53 percent respectively.

Although enrollment in many programs has increased, attendance in some classes has declined. For instance, enrollment in Lil Hoopsters for 1st and 2nd graders has decreased by 69 percent since 2013. In addition, Women's Basketball Open for 18 years old and older, has decreased by 50 percent in the last five years.

NON-RECREATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Non-Recreational programs are offered by cities to allow residents social opportunities to learn a new hobby or take part in an enjoyable activity. Non-Recreational programs that are offered by the City of Las Cruces include the following:

- Make It and Take It class;
- Messy Masterpieces;
- Hands On Discoveries class;
- Mommy and Me classes;
- Mentoring classes;
- After school programs; and,
- Parents Night Out.

SENIOR PROGRAMS

Seniors are typically extremely involved in recreation programs. Senior Programs oversees senior events and services and is located in the Quality of Life Department. One example of a senior program that is offered by the City is Zumba Gold. This fitness class is offered at Munson Senior Recreation Center.

A detailed table of all recreational programs offered by the City of Las Cruces, including attendance rates and fees, is located in **Appendix D**.

FIGURE 2.20, RECREATIONAL PROGRAM OFFERINGS (2013-2017)¹

PROGRAM TYPE	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% CHANGE (2013-2017)
COACH PITCH 3RD/4TH GRADE	48	96	96	40	73	52%
LIL HOOPSTERS 1ST/2ND	312	168	120	121	96	-69%
LIL HOOPSTERS PREK	72	72	72	74	72	0%
YOUTH BASKETBALL 3RD GRADE	96	120	120	72	147	53%
YOUTH BASKETBALL 4TH GRADE	72	72	144	233	191	165%
YOUTH BASKETBALL 5TH GRADE	120	120	96	215	206	72%
YOUTH BASKETBALL MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS	120	72	80	74	109	-9%
YOUTH BASKETBALL MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS	72	96	40	40	81	13%
BRONZE CO-ED SAND VOLLEYBALL	106	100	100	120	160	51%
MEN'S BASKETBALL 29+ (TEAMS)	100	110	60	80	70	-30%
MEN'S BASKETBALL 39+ (TEAMS)	50	50	40	30	30	-40%
MEN'S BASKETBALL OPEN 18+ (TEAMS)	100	80	80	70	80	-20%
SILVER CO-ED SAND VOLLEYBALL	106	120	140	120	120	13%
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL OPEN 18+ (TEAMS)	60	60	60	60	30	-50%
LIBBY THE GREEN DOG PRESENTATIONS	1100	1100	1100	1100	1100	0%
JUVENILE CITATION PROGRAM - CHOICES SESSIONS	545	564	498	381	460	-16%
JUVENILE CITATION PROGRAM - PARENT/YOUTH SESSION	445	480	400	300	405	-9%
JUVENILE CITATION PROGRAM - COMMUNITY SERVICE	505	495	410	295	400	-21%
JUVENILE CITATION PROGRAM - INTAKE SESSIONS	551	575	505	400	480	-13%
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM KINDERGARDEN - 5TH GRADE	10860	10860	10860	10860	10860	0%

Source: City of Las Cruces, Parks and Recreation

1. Abbreviated table illustrating most programs with five-year attendance records. Detailed table of all programs located in Appendix D.

For youth offenders who commit a crime, minor offense, or status crime, the Juvenile Citation Program provides suitable public service outlets to rehabilitate juvenile offenders. Source: <http://www.las-cruces.org/departments/parks-and-recreation/youth-services/juvenile-citation-program>



EVENTS

The City's Parks and Recreation Department administers multiple special events in parks and within other locations on an annual basis. These events are widely attended both by city residents and visitors. Special event programs contribute to the quality of life in Las Cruces and are a component of the City's overall economic development efforts.

Similar to recreation programs, participation in City-sponsored or administered special events has been subject to substantial increases since 2013. Since 2016, participation in the City's Annual Christmas Tree Lighting has increased by 33 percent (see **Figure 2.21, City-Sponsored Special Event Estimated Attendance: 2013 - 2017**).

The special event that has seen the single largest increase in attendance within the past five years is the Fourth of July Electric Light Parade, which grew 112 percent between 2013 and 2017. The Great Pumpkin Candy Drop grew moderately since 2013 (38%) while participation in the Fourth of July celebration, Music in the Park, and Kids Expo has remained roughly consistent in the last five years.



The Fourth of July Electric Light Parade features floats decorated with electric lights.

Source: http://www.google.com/searchsafe=strict&biw=1920&bih=963&tbs=isz%3A&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=OoCbXNmXJ5CJwTHrJlIDg&q=4th+of+july+electric+light+parade+las+cruces&oq=4th+of+july+electric+light+parade+las+cruces&gs_l=im

FIGURE 2.21, CITY-SPONSORED SPECIAL EVENT ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE: 2013 - 2017

EVENT / ESTIMATED # OF PEOPLE IN ATTENDANCE	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	% CHANGE (2013-2017)
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	2,000	33%
FOURTH OF JULY	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	0%
MUSIC IN THE PARK	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	0%
GREAT PUMPKIN CANDY DROP	4,000	4,800	5,200	5,500	5,500	38%
4TH OF JULY ELECTRIC LIGHT PARADE	3,300	3,300	3,300	3,300	7,000	112%
MOVIES IN THE PARK	3,600	3,840	4,080	4,560	4,800	33%
MAYOR'S JAZZ FEST	1,100	1,200	1,300	1,300	1,300	18%
KIDS EXPO	120	120	120	120	120	0%
ESTIMATED TOTAL ATTENDANCE	30,620	31,760	32,500	33,280	37,720	23%

Source: City of Las Cruces, Parks and Recreation

SECTION 3:

RECREATIONAL PARTNERS, PROGRAMS, AND PROPERTIES

Although the City of Las Cruces is the principal provider of public parks and recreation facilities within the Mesilla Valley, it is not the sole provider, nor the only vendor of recreational programs. Other public and private entities provide recreational opportunities for the residents of Las Cruces and greater Mesilla Valley - often in partnership with the City of Las Cruces.

RECREATION PARTNERS

LAS CRUCES PUBLIC SCHOOLS

There are 34 public elementary, junior, and senior high schools currently located in Las Cruces - a few of which are near City parks. School-park adjacency presents opportunities for school system and municipal park linkages. In particular, accessibility to recreation facilities on school grounds by the general public may be permitted when school is not in session, subject to suitable maintenance, security, and liability agreements.

The City of Las Cruces and Las Cruces Public Schools are already expanding their recreational and social partnerships through the Community School program. The Community Schools partnership is discussed in more detail on page 79.

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The United State Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management oversees the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument which provides outdoor recreation opportunities within four areas of significant prehistoric, historic, geologic, and biologic interest surrounding Las Cruces. Included within the National Monument is the region's most iconic natural feature - the Needles of the Organ Mountain Range.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

The Las Cruces parks and recreation system is a critical component of the City's contributions toward the creation of a "healthy community" as presented in Comprehensive Plan 2040. The relationship of public parks and the promotion of community health and well-being is acknowledged in this Plan as one (1) of the six (6) essential benefits of a vibrant parks and recreation system (see page 5). The City of Las Cruces has several policies in place that link the use and enjoyment of municipal park space to healthy lifestyle choices. The following information was provided by the Parks and Recreation Department in response to health policy questions measured by the NRPA:

- **Does the City have a policy that bans the use of tobacco products in City parks and at City facilities and grounds?** No smoking is permitted within 50 feet of City facilities.
- **Does the City have a policy that allows the consumption of alcohol by legal-aged adults on municipal premises?** No alcohol is allowed on City premises, unless permitted with an event.
- **Does the City sell alcoholic beverages to legal-aged adults on municipal premises?** Case-by-case basis. If permitted, and allowed at certain events, alcohol will only be sold to legal-aged adults.
- **Does the City provide healthy food options at concession stands?** Healthy options are requested as part of vendor contracts.
- **Does the City provide healthy food options at vending machines?** All vending machines at City facilities include healthy options.



FIGURE 2.22, LAS CRUCES RECREATION PARTNERS

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM TYPE	TARGET AGE	LOCATION	TIME OF YEAR
DREAM LEAGUE BASEBALL	BASEBALL	12 & UNDER	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	FALL
DREAM LEAGUE SOCCER	SOCCER	12 & UNDER	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	FALL
LAS CRUCES YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE	SOCCER	12 & UNDER	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	WINTER
LAS CRUCES YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE	SOCCER	12 & UNDER	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	WINTER
LAS CRUCES YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE	SOCCER	12 & UNDER AND AGE 13 - 18	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	SUMMER
MESILLA VALLEY SOCCER LEAGUE	SOCCER	ADULT	HIGH NOON SOCCER COMPLEX	SUMMER & FALL
LAS CRUCES YOUTH SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION	SOFTBALL	YOUTH	MEERSCHIEDT RECREATION CENTER	SUMMER
ROOKIE YOUTH RUGBY	RUGBY	YOUTH AND SENIOR	OFF-SITE	YEAR ROUND
LAS CRUCES RUNNING CLUB	RUNNING	YOUTH	OFF-SITE	YEAR ROUND
BANTAM WEIGHT SPORTS ASSOC.	WEIGHT LIFTING	YOUTH	OFF-SITE	YEAR ROUND
CROSSROADS CITY ROLLER DERBY	ROLLER DERBY	ADULT	OFF-SITE	YEAR ROUND
LAS CRUCES TENNIS PLAYERS ASSOCIATION	TENNIS	YOUTH, ADULT, SENIOR	LION'S PARK	YEAR ROUND

Source: City of Las Cruces, Parks and Recreation

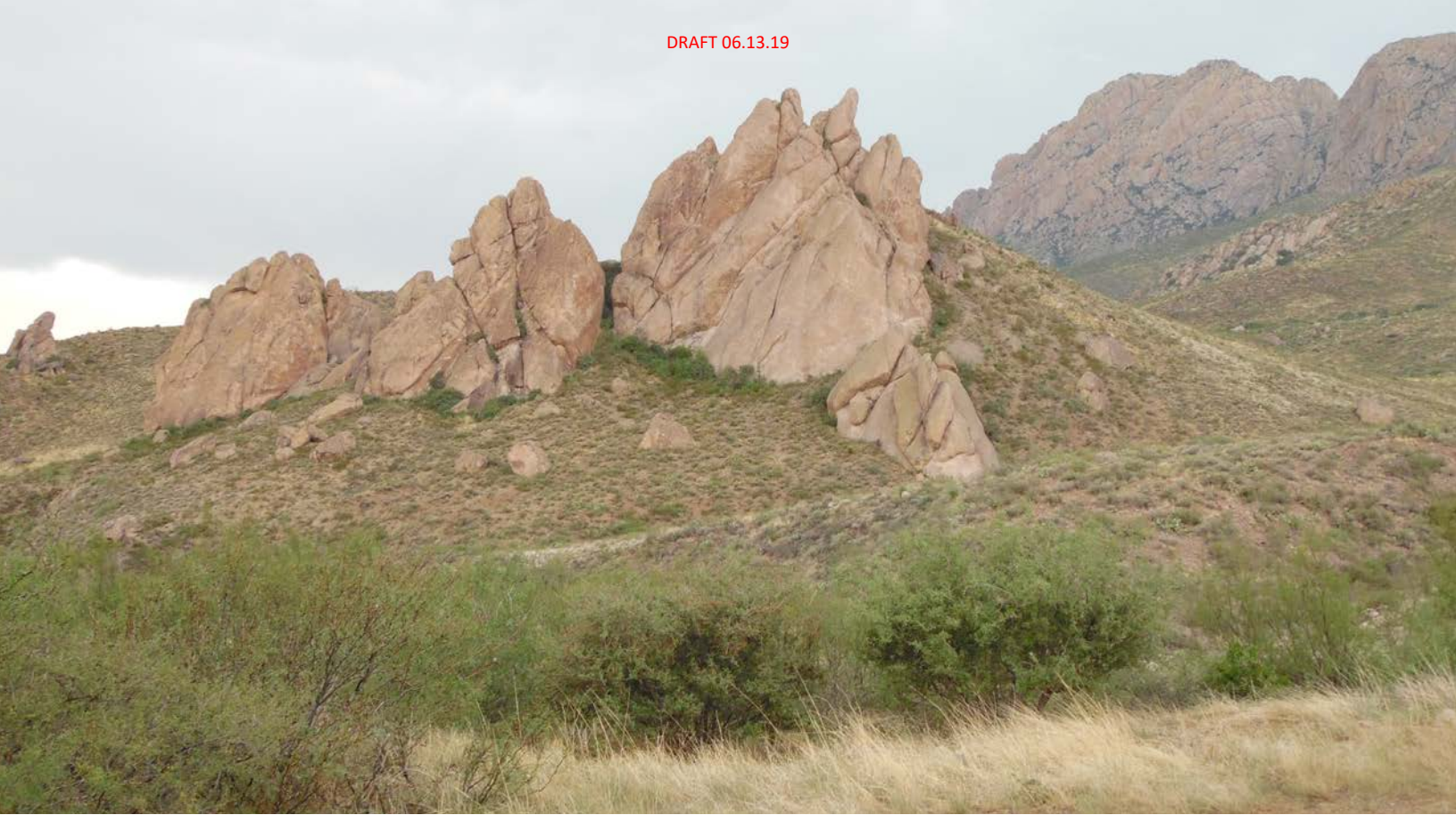
Although the National Monument is located outside of the City municipal limits, its extensive system of pedestrian, equestrian, and mountain bike trails; and rock climbing routes, has increased Las Cruces' profile as an outdoor destination. The proximity of the Monument's units to the municipal limits has also raised interest in creating trail linkages from the city.

NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY

Residents in the City utilize recreation facilities at New Mexico State University (NMSU) or attend sporting, performing arts, and visual arts events offered in University venues. Students, staff, faculty, and alumni are also eligible to participate in the AggieFit program which provides access to NMSU's Activity Center, Aquatic Center, Corbett Fitness Center, South Campus Fitness Center, golf course, and driving range.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

City park properties and facilities host a significant number of community organizations that provide recreational programming. Many of these key providers - and their associated recreational services - are identified in **Figure 2.22, Las Cruces Recreation Partners**.



The effort to establish the Organ Mountains-Desert Peaks National Monument has raised public awareness of the value of incorporating natural areas and open space into the community's park inventory.

RECREATIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCATES

In addition to the recreational program providers listed in **Figure 2.22**, other recreation service providers and advocacy organizations operate in Las Cruces to promote specific recreational interests that align with the mission of the City's Parks and Recreation Department. Prominent examples include:

- *Tree Stewards;*
- *Keep Las Cruces Beautiful;*
- *Adopt A Spot;*
- *Friends of the Organ Mountain-Desert Peaks;*
- *Southern New Mexico Trail Alliance;*
- *Boy Scouts of America;*
- *Paso del Norte Health Foundation;*
- *Veterans Advisory Board; and*
- *The Bridge of Southern New Mexico.*

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

OPEN SPACES

One of the most important and iconic open spaces in the region surrounding Las Cruces is the Organ Mountains - Desert Peaks National Monument. This open space preserves the viewshed of the Organ Mountains, which can be seen from many locations throughout the City of Las Cruces. In many of the existing parks in the system, the mountains are also within view. As development gradually advances from the city up the lower slopes of the Organ Mountain Range, residents have begun expressing concern about preserving viewsheds to this defining community feature.

Much of the land between Las Cruces and the Monument (in all directions) remains under the stewardship of the Bureau of Land Management. Given the recent efforts that were made to ensure establishment of the Monument residents have become increasingly aware that there is a direct linkage between open space preservation and public park systems - whether national or municipal.

PRIVATE FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Municipal land development codes often augment the provision of public park space with requirements for private common areas in high-density residential developments such as apartment or townhouse complexes. These requirements typically include minimum facility and amenity provisions, often with requirements for items such as:

- Pools;
- Trails;
- Playgrounds;
- Pavilions; and,
- Open space;
- Golf courses.

A more recent trend has also seen land development codes require public gathering spaces and amenities in association with shopping centers and office parks that exceed certain size thresholds. The provision of social space within these types of developments has grown in part due to the recognition by public agencies and private developers of the role these developments now play in the everyday lives of auto-dependent residents (a role traditionally filled by the downtown or "Main Street.")



A private amenities center serving tenants of an office park. This center offers patio seating, picnic facilities, shade structures, fans, gas grills, bocce ball, and a basketball court. The space may be reserved for events and use of the grills, but is otherwise accessible to all tenants.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The City of Las Cruces and Las Cruces Public Schools have recently partnered to establish the area's first Community School. A Community School is a school that hosts local community services. The first Community School in Las Cruces was established in January 2017 at Lynn Middle School through efforts by the surrounding community, local agencies, and other prospective partners.

Through the Community School partnership, the Lynn Middle School teachers' lounge was converted into a health center, becoming the first middle school in the City with a school-based health center.

The Ben Archer Health Center sponsored and constructed the center. The room also features computers for the students and their families to explore and apply for employment. This program increases graduation rates because students become more interested in attending school.



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