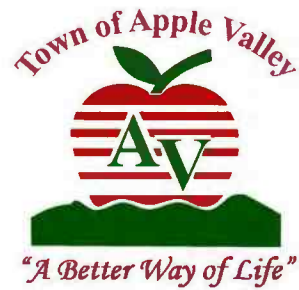


apple valley



parks and recreation master plan



PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Final Plan

May 2013

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Town of Apple Valley greatly appreciates the efforts of community members, Town staff, officials and professionals who contributed to this planning effort. Your interest and support will continue to foster the success of our park and recreation system.

TOWN COUNCIL

Curt Emick, Mayor
Art Bishop, Mayor Pro Tem
Barb Stanton, Councilmember
Scott Nassif, Councilmember
Larry Cusack, Councilmember

PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

Donald Tatera, Chairman
Jiles Smith, Vice-Chairman
Mike Hinkle, Commissioner
Mike Martin, Commissioner
Richard Cambridge, Commissioner

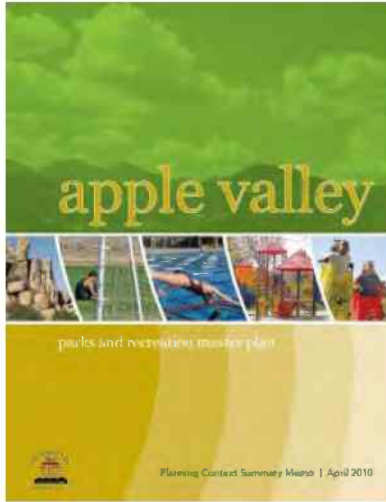
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TOWN MANAGER

Frank Robinson

Executive Summary



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2010, the Town of Apple Valley began updating its *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* to obtain community-supported directions for developing a sustainable system of parks, recreation facilities, programs and community events. More than 900 residents participated in the planning effort, sharing their priorities for parks and recreation and their vision for the future. The planning process included a technical analysis of parks, facilities, operations and services, as well as a GIS assessment of community needs.

The result is a 20-year master plan, which:

- Presents the community's long-range vision and goals for parks and recreation;
- Describes current and future recreation needs, as well as community preferences for parks, recreation facilities, programs, and events;
- Identifies policies, strategies and the level of investment that would be needed to sustain and improve parks and recreation services in alignment with the Town's vision; and
- Provides conservative, short- and long-term strategies for the Parks and Recreation Department to use in making decisions about managing, maintaining, and improving the Town's parks and recreation system.

THE VISION FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Throughout Apple Valley's history, Town leaders and residents have promoted Apple Valley as a healthy and attractive community with a unique landscape, a pleasant climate and a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities. Parks and recreation have been integral elements of the community's heritage and vision for the future. As a result, the Town has worked for years to expand and enhance parks and recreation to support "A Better Way of Life." This transition began in earnest when the Town took over the Apple Valley Recreation and Park District and continues today.

Transition from a Park District

Since 1947, parks and recreation services had been provided by the Apple Valley Recreation and Park District (the District). Funded through a property tax, this District served all residents within its boundaries, an area approximately twice as large as the town. In 2001, the Town of Apple Valley petitioned to dissolve the District in an effort to improve recreation services for its residents.

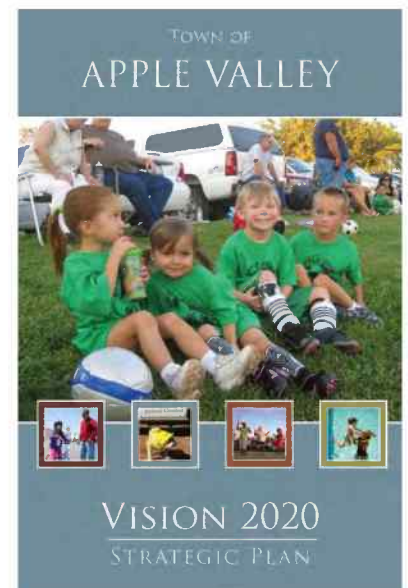
As set forth in a resolution by the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCO), the Town of Apple Valley absorbed the District's park properties and property tax revenues to be able to **"simplify, improve, enhance and expand the park and recreational services"** for Town residents. In addition, the Town agreed to use a portion of the property tax allotment to provide the "current level and range of services" to former District residents who lived outside of town boundaries.

Since the LAFCO dissolution, the Town of Apple Valley has allocated approximately \$500,000 annually from the Town's General Fund to improve and enhance parks, recreation facilities, programs, events and services for residents as planned. This investment helped the Town proceed with projects such as the development of Civic Center Park, which attracts people from around the area with high quality facilities, community events and programs.

Transition to a Premier Destination

The same vision that prompted a higher level of investment in parks and recreation service over the last ten years was defined more formally in Apple Valley's Vision 2020 Strategic Plan. Adopted in 2009, the Strategic Plan called out the Town's goal to provide "ample parkland and diverse recreation opportunities." It noted objectives to "expand and enhance" parks and recreation, and to "expand and enhance" signature events to position Apple Valley as the High Desert's premier destination.

These goals and objectives were cross-checked through public outreach as part of the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* update, which began in 2010. A variety of public efforts were planned to collect feedback from a broad spectrum of the community. Through stakeholder interviews, focus group meetings, youth and adult questionnaires, intercept events and a community visioning workshop, participants identified their vision and priorities for the future.





Through community feedback, this vision emerged:

We envision an interconnected and sustainable system of safe, attractive parks, premier recreation facilities, and diverse special events and programs that preserve our community's character, support our health and economy, foster opportunities for all ages, and promote "A Better Way of Life."

IMPACT OF THE RECESSION

Much has changed since the beginning of this planning process. While the community's vision has remained the same, an extended economic recession has affected funding for park and recreation operations and capital projects. Most notably, funds associated with the property tax base—which the Town took over from the Park District—are considerably less because of a decrease in property values. Also, the Town realized that it could not continue to use General Fund Reserves to cover the cost of the enhanced services it wanted to provide. As of Fiscal Year 12/13, this has created a negative fund balance of more than \$5.5 million.

In July 2011, Council established the Parks and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee to evaluate potential cost savings and service efficiencies to address the funding deficit. The Committee developed several short-term recommendations that were implemented in FY 2012/13, such as closing Cramer Family Park and increasing programming fees by ten percent. At the same time, the Parks and Recreation Department also decreased its spending on park maintenance, deferred needed repairs and improvements, postponed planned equipment purchases, and cut other services where feasible to operate on a reduced budget. If the situation continues, the park system will slowly deteriorate and the recreation system will not be able to meet current demands for recreation opportunities—let alone grow in the future. There are already signs of stress at parks and facilities as routine maintenance is reduced and deferred.



Prompted by the economic recession, Apple Valley also revised its Vision 2020 Strategic Plan in 2012. Parks and Recreation still remains in the top eight priorities of the Town. However, revised park and recreation objectives focus on maintaining current programs and facilities, seeking partnerships, and identifying and securing funding for parks, recreation facilities, programs and events.

THE FUNDING QUESTION

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* is a 20-year plan to guide future decision and services. It recognizes that short term service cuts and efficiencies are needed to address decreased funding levels during the recession. However, the plan also raises questions about how the Town will meet the future needs of the community.

The planning process has affirmed the vision held by the community: one of improved parks, engaging community events and celebrations, increased recreation to support health and wellness, a greater variety of opportunities for people of all ages, safe and inviting places to play, programs to bring families closer together, and enhanced recreation experiences for all residents in Apple Valley to support a better way of life.

However, this leads to the biggest question of all: where does the money come from to provide enhanced and expanded services? In November 2011, community priorities were tested in a statistically-representative, random sample Parks and Recreation Implementation Survey. The survey was designed to test public priorities, including where services could be cut



and where additional investment is needed. The survey also tested support for a variety of potential funding mechanisms.

Survey results suggested that a majority of residents were willing to support increasing fees to support priority services. These included facility use fees, non-resident fees, commercial impact fees, and to a lesser extent, fees for programs, classes, and sports leagues. Slightly less than half residents showed support for increasing the sales tax by one-half or one-quarter percent (46-47%). This level of support is high, considering respondents were not given any information about why additional funding was needed.

The results of the Implementation Survey suggest that residents may be willing to consider additional fees, funding mechanisms, and realigned services to be able to support priority projects and services. As noted in the survey, these were not big ticket items such as a new community center. Instead, the following projects and services were rated as medium and high priorities by the percentage of respondents noted in parenthesis:

- Continuing to adequately maintain and repair parks and recreation facilities (96%);
- Maintaining the number and variety of recreation programs and classes for youth (87%);
- Adding or improving restrooms at existing parks where needed (85%);
- Upgrading or replacing worn-out recreation and playground equipment (83%); and
- Continuing to provide a variety of special community events such as movies in the park, concerts, and festivals (82%).

THE IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH

To be able to respond to these community priorities, the Parks and Recreation Department, Town Council and the Parks and Recreation Commission together are striving to find ways to most efficiently and effectively increase the investment in parks and recreation. As noted in this plan, these efforts may include:

- Updating Quimby requirements to match the existing park land inventory;
- Developing a formal cost recovery policy for programs, events, and services;

-
- Involving partners, sponsors, stakeholders, and local businesses in collaborative efforts to support parks, recreation, health and wellness;
 - Identifying an appropriate level of General Fund investment as proposed by the Parks & Recreation Commission and Ad Hoc Committee; and
 - Identifying community-supported capital and operations funding, such as a ¼ cent sales tax, impact fees, landscape maintenance districts, etc.

These funding mechanisms, as well as the priority projects they may help fund, are noted in the final chapter of this plan.

THE PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

implementing the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will require the coordinated efforts of Town leaders, residents, stakeholders, businesses and staff—everyone in the Apple Valley community—working together to achieve their vision for the future. Community support will be needed if the Town is to provide *a better way to play*.

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* updates the 2004 *Master Plan of Park and Recreation Services*. It is compliant with the 2009 *Apple Valley General Plan* and incorporates the goals outlined in the Town’s *Vision 2020 Strategic Plan*, including the 2009 plan and the 2012 update.

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* contains seven chapters:

- *Chapter 1: Our Town* introduces the plan and the planning process in the context of the Town’s long-term recreation heritage;
- *Chapter 2: Our Vision* describes the Town’s core values, vision, mission and goals for parks and recreation;
- *Chapter 3: Our Needs* provides an overview of existing parks, facilities, and programs and identifies current and future community needs;
- *Chapter 4: Our Future System* describes the proposed park and recreation system, including recommended policies for park and facility development, programming, maintenance, funding, partnerships, marketing, and customer service;
- *Chapter 5: Our High Desert Destinations* presents specific recommendations for each existing and proposed park;
- *Chapter 6: Our Investment* describes the funding situation and the level of investment that is needed to achieve the community’s vision; and



-
- *Chapter 7: A Better Way to Play* proposes future investment strategies for meeting priority community needs.

Six appendices provide critical background information:

- *Appendix A* presents the Town's park and facility inventory by classification, including an inventory of recreation facilities owned by the School District that support local use;
- *Appendix B* summarizes all public outreach activities conducted during the planning process, as well as key findings;
- *Appendix C* introduces new park design and development guidelines by park classification to enhance the quality of park development;
- *Appendix D* presents a capital and operations cost model that calculates capital, maintenance, and reinvestment costs for all recommended projects;
- *Appendix E* provides a list of potential capital and operations funding sources; and
- *Appendix F* presents the findings of the Parks & Recreation Implementation Survey.

The master plan provides guidance for the short and long term for enhancing and expanding parks and recreation services.





Chapter I: Our Town

Our Town of Apple Valley



CHAPTER 1: OUR TOWN

The Town of Apple Valley is an oasis in the High Desert, known for its dramatic landscapes, exquisite sunsets, and strong sense of community. The place that Roy Rodgers once called home has grown. Apple Valley now has more than 70,000 residents, and the Happy Trails Highway is a four-lane expressway. Instead of riding off into the sunset, residents are more likely to spend evenings enjoying an outdoor concert or a game of kickball. Even with these changes, Apple Valley continues to offer a better way of life, and parks and recreation are an integral part of that vision.



A BETTER WAY OF LIFE

For years, residents have been attracted to Apple Valley. In 1893, this area was promoted as the “Gateway to the Golden Land of Opportunity.” By the mid 1940’s, it was actively developed as a recreational resort and retirement community. The Apple Valley Inn and Apple Valley Golf Course were built during this time, and in the 1960s, Roy Rodgers and Dale Evans retired here. From their home next to the golf course, the “King of the Cowboys” and “Queen of the West” enjoyed Apple Valley’s equestrian trails, expansive vistas, outdoor recreation opportunities, and healthful desert air.



Today, Apple Valley continues to celebrate this heritage. Since its incorporation in 1988, the Town has championed the qualities of Apple Valley that support its success as a healthy and attractive community. The *Vision 2020 Strategic Plan* calls out its goal of providing ample and diverse recreation opportunities and high-quality community events, as part of the Town’s effort of becoming the premier destination of the High Desert.

From its *Healthy Apple Valley Initiative* to its mission to provide *A Better Way of Life*, Apple Valley has steadily worked to preserve and support parks and recreation, including the recreation amenities and landscapes that have attracted people for decades. For example, the Town recently acquired the Apple Valley Golf Course. It built a new Conference Center, so that its civic center now includes Town Hall, library, recreation center and community park. A destination playground was added to Civic Center

Park, where an aquatic center, amphitheater, and outdoor event space attract residents and visitors with variety of special events, festivals and programs.

OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Clean air, open space, and a strong sense of community allow Apple Valley to support residents who are seeking a better way of life. However, the Town is at a crossroads. While the community continues to grow and facilities continue to age, economic challenges have decreased the funding available for parks, recreation, and other essential services. With a declining budget, the Town is searching for new ways to support community facilities and special events that draw residents together and promote the spirit of Apple Valley.

Funding is needed to restore aging facilities, such as the James Woody Community Center. More programming space is needed to support the sports, recreation classes, special events and equestrian programs desired by the community. If Apple Valley wants to become the premier destination of the High Desert, Town leaders and community members together must decide how best to invest in parks and recreation services in the short and long term.

In July 2011, a Parks and Recreation Ad Hoc Committee was established to evaluate possible options to minimize the gap in parks and recreation funding. The Committee met on four occasions to develop recommendations that could be implemented in upcoming years. These remedies are needed to be able to maintain existing assets in a cost-effective, sustainable way. They are important short-term elements of a longer-term vision to continue to enhance parks and recreation opportunities in Apple Valley.

In both the short and long term, the Town needs a strong vision and practical set of recommendations to determine how best to allocate funding for parks and community services. In this context, the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* is a roadmap that will provide guidance on the steps needed over the next 20 years and beyond to maintain the legacy of the past and achieve the community's vision for the future.



Community Vision



*Community Needs for
Parks, Facilities,
& Programs*



*Community Assets
& Resources*



*Implementation &
Funding*



*Plan to
Achieve this
Vision*



OUR PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* presents strategies and actions for the Town of Apple Valley to continue to support high-quality parks and recreation opportunities now and in the future. This plan:

- Presents the community's vision and goals for parks and recreation;
- Describes current and future needs, as well as community preferences for parks, recreation facilities, programs, events, and trails;
- Identifies policies, implementation strategies and an investment program to enhance and sustain parks and recreation services as integral elements of a livable community; and
- Provides conservative, short and long-term directions for the Parks and Recreation Department to rely on during these difficult economic times and when the economy rebounds in the future.

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* updates the 2004 *Master Plan of Park and Recreation Services*. It is compliant with the 2009 *Apple Valley General Plan* and incorporates the goals outlined in the Town's *Vision 2020 Strategic Plan*, including the 2009 adopted plan and the 2012 update.

PLANNING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* was developed through the active participation of many residents, interest groups, stakeholders, Town staff and members of the Parks & Recreation Commission and Town Council. These individuals and groups provided feedback through a variety of meetings, intercept events, interviews, surveys, questionnaires and workshops. These diverse outreach activities were designed to collect feedback from as many people as possible, including different demographic and interest groups. More than 900 people participated in developing this plan, as noted in Table 1.

As a result, this *Master Plan* reflects the many different priorities and preferences of the Apple Valley community. It's designed to be flexible to be able to respond to changing community needs as Apple Valley evolves. It is also designed to give Town staff and leaders the information and tools they need for good decision-making.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* contains seven chapters and six appendices. The chapters introduce the plan, describe the Town's vision and goals for parks and recreation services, identify community needs, describe policies for the future, present specific recommendations and guidelines for parks and recreation facilities, and propose investment options for meeting community needs.

The appendices provide critical background information for the planning process, such as the park and facility inventory, public involvement findings, park design and development guidelines, capital and operations costs, a list of potential funding sources and implementation survey results.

Also, the Plan is built on a foundation of several interim reports, which are available under a separate cover:

- Planning Context Summary Memo (May 2010);
- Existing Recreation Resources Summary Memo (August 2010);
- Questionnaire Summary Memo (August 2010);
- Community Needs Assessment (February 2011); and
- Implementation Survey Report (January 2012).

Table 1: Community Participation

Activity	#
Adult Questionnaire	287
Youth Questionnaire	37
Focus Groups	26
Intercepts Events	102
Stakeholder Interviews	5
Visioning Workshop	22
Implementation Survey	400
Staff Team	5
Park & Recreation Commission	10 +
Town Council	7 +
Total	901 +

*Additional residents and staff provided comments at Commission and Council meetings.

This Plan represents a commitment to our Town, our vision for the future, and our desire to enhance Apple Valley through people, parks, and programs.



Chapter 2: Our Vision

Our Vision for the Future

CHAPTER 2: OUR VISION

The values and the community aspirations for the Town of Apple Valley are the guiding forces for the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. Through public involvement, a Community Visioning Workshop, and meetings with the Parks and Recreation Commission, these values and aspirations were identified and integrated into a strategic planning framework. The framework includes four key elements (Figure 1):

- Core Values
- Vision
- Mission
- Goals

These elements are consistent with the Apple Valley's *Vision 2020 Strategic Plan*. The Strategic Plan contains similar core values and strategies to enhance Town services. The implementation of the *Parks and Recreation Master Plan* will help achieve many of the Town's goals, including those related to parks and recreation, sustainability, community enhancement, public safety, economic development, and premier destination.

CORE VALUES

Core values are the shared beliefs and qualities treasured by the community. These values guide the recreation services provided by the Town. Through public involvement activities and a Visioning Workshop, residents identified the following core values for parks and recreation:

- *Excellence*: We value high quality parks, recreation facilities and programs and will strive for excellence in all recreation services.
- *Teamwork*: We value the power of teamwork and the ability to work cooperatively at all levels to achieve our common vision.
- *Connectivity*: We value an interconnected community, enhanced by a network of parks and trails that provide access to our natural environment and key destinations in Town.

