



## Public Spaces Commission

Community Forum

### AGENDA

*(to be held both at the physical and virtual locations below)*

**Ukiah Valley Conference Center ♦ 200 South School Street ♦ Ukiah, CA 95482**

**To participate or view the virtual meeting, go to the following link:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81764322746>

March 11, 2025 - 5:30 PM

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1. **ROLL CALL**

2. **INTRODUCTIONS**

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

3.a. Approval of the Minutes for the January 14, 2025, Regular Meeting.

***Recommended Action: Approve the minutes of January 14, 2025, regular meeting.***

Attachments:

1. 3a 2025-01-14 Minutes

4. **AUDIENCE COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

The Public Spaces Commission (PSC) welcomes input from the audience that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the PSC. In order for everyone to be heard, please limit your comments to three (3) minutes per person and not more than (10) minutes per subject. The Brown Act regulations do not allow action to be taken on audience comments.

5. **STAFF MEMBER PRESENTATIONS / REPORTS**

5.a. Community Services Director Report

***Recommended Action: Receive report.***

Attachments: None

6. **COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

7. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

7.a. Review of Final Draft of the 2025 City of Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis.

***Recommended Action: Provide comment on the 2025 Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis.***

Attachments:

1. Gap Analysis DRAFT\_3\_5\_25

8. **NEW BUSINESS**

- 8.a. Receive Report and Provide Comment on the Possible Creation of a City Park on Norgard Lane.  
**Recommended Action: Receive report and provide comment on the topic of a new park at the end of Norgard Lane.**  
Attachments:  
1. Project Concept Map

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

Please be advised that the City needs to be notified 72 hours in advance of a meeting if any specific accommodations or interpreter services are needed in order for you to attend. The City complies with ADA requirements and will attempt to reasonably accommodate individuals with disabilities upon request. Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the Public Spaces Commission after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection at the front counter at the Ukiah Civic Center, 300 Seminary Avenue, Ukiah, CA 95482 during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.



**Public Spaces Commission**  
 Regular Meeting  
**MINUTES**

**City of Ukiah Annex ♦ 411 West Clay Street ♦ Ukiah, CA 95482**  
 Virtual Meeting Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81764322746>

**January 14, 2025 - 5:30 PM**

**1. ROLL CALL**

Public Spaces Commission met at a Regular Meeting on January 14, 2025, having been legally noticed on January 10, 2025. The meeting was held virtually at the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81764322746> and in person at the Civic Center Annex at 411 W. Clay St., Ukiah, CA 95482. Commissioner Scriven called the meeting to order at 5:37 p.m. **Commissioners Present:** Steven Ratley, Chrystal Thurman, and Joe Scriven. **Commissioners Absent by Prearrangement:** Megan Parker and Elora Babbini. **Staff Present:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director and Araceli Sandoval, Deputy City Clerk.

**2. INTRODUCTIONS**

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**a. Approval of the Minutes for the November 12, 2024, Community Forum.**

*Scriven/Ratley to approve the Minutes of November 12, 2024, a Community Forum, as submitted. Motion **carried** by the following roll call vote: AYES: Ratley, Thurman, and Scriven. NOES: None. ABSENT: Babbini and Parker. ABSTAIN: None.*

**4. AUDIENCE COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

The Public Spaces Commission (PSC) welcomes input from the audience that is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the PSC. In order for everyone to be heard, please limit your comments to three (3) minutes per person and not more the (10) minutes per subject. The Brown Act regulations do not allow action to be taken on audience comments.

**5. STAFF MEMBER PRESENTATIONS/REPORTS**

**a. Update on Observatory Park Landscaping**

Presenter: Neil Davis, Community Services Director.

*Report was received.*

*Commission Consensus to hear item 8b out of order.*

**6. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

**7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**a. Creation of a New Friends of Ukiah Parks Group**

Presenter: Neil Davis, Community Services Director.

*Report was received.*

**8. NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Review of Final Draft of the 2025 City of Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis.**

**Presenter:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director.

*Comments provided to Staff.*

**b. Discussion of the Western Hills Watershed Protection Area's Potential as a Community Forest.**

**Presenter:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director.

**Public Comment:** John Rogers.

*Commission Consensus for Staff to bring item back at the next meeting.*

**c. Review, Update as Necessary, and Approve a 2025 Community Outreach Plan and Schedule.**

**Presenter:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director.

*Commission consensus Recommend the City Council approve the 2025 Community Outreach Plan and Schedule.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

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Araceli Sandoval, Public Spaces Commission Clerk



## AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Community Services Director Report

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Services      **PREPARED BY:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None

**Summary:** Community Services Director to provide a report.

**Background:** Director's Reports are verbal reports given by the Community Services Director on the status of Parks and/ or Recreation projects. Updates may include, but are not limited to, City Council activity updates, grant applications, maintenance projects, recreation activities of note, and Grace Hudson Museum or Ukiah Valley Conference Center updates.

**Discussion:** This report is expected to provide updates in the following areas:

- Recruitment of a new Parks Superintendent to oversee the Parks and Streets departments as a newly combined department under Public Works.
- Update on City annexation efforts.
- Grant applications for the acquisition of additional western hills properties.
- Volunteer Coordinator hired.
- Earth Day activities (4/19) and Community Yard Sale (Monthly through summer).

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**Recommended Action:** Recieve report.



## AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Review of Final Draft of the 2025 City of Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis.

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Services      **PREPARED BY:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Gap Analysis DRAFT\_3\_5\_25

**Summary:** Commissioners are provided with a draft of the Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis for comment.

**Background:** The City of Ukiah's 2040 General Plan's section 5.10 (Implementation Programs; page 5-16) identifies the need for a Parks Gap Analysis. Section 5.10 B (Parks Gap Analysis) states, "The City shall prepare a parks gap analysis identifying areas of the city underserved by parks and recreation facilities access. The analysis shall, at a minimum, establish equitable access standards, including the minimum distance between parks, every residence, and potential funding mechanisms." The complete 2040 General Plan can be found at [chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cityofukiah.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Ukiah-2040-General-Plan\\_reduced.pdf](chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://cityofukiah.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Ukiah-2040-General-Plan_reduced.pdf)

Staff have presented this subject to the PSC at the May 14, 2024, and July 9, 2024, meetings. At the November 2024 meeting Jen Dalton of Kitchen Table Consulting facilitated the PSC in providing input to the analysis. An initial draft Gap Analysis document (Attachment 1) was presented to the PSC on January 14th, 2025. PSC members requested additional time to review the document so it is being returned for comment on this agenda.

**Discussion:** Executive Summary of the 2025 Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis:

*Ukiah is located at the base of the Ukiah Valley and approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco. The natural landscape includes forested hillsides, the Russian River, and valley flatlands. With both City of Ukiah and County administrative offices within the city, Ukiah boasts many public sector employment opportunities, particularly in education and social services. While Mendocino County collectively is rural in nature, the City of Ukiah is an urban center. Ukiah is recognized as a micropolitan area core with the primary commute flow within the "large urban cluster." A secondary commute flow leaves Ukiah to access a larger urban area. However, most of the commute and service flow from around the Ukiah Valley is to the City of Ukiah. While the median household income in Ukiah is modest compared to California averages, there are wide swaths of the community that are rated as "Disadvantaged" or "Severely Disadvantaged."*

*The City of Ukiah's boundaries have remained essentially unchanged for decades. Growth adjacent but outside City limits has created a population concentration this report refers to as the Greater Ukiah Node that extends beyond the City limits. For many local people everything within this node is considered "Ukiah." Outside the Greater Ukiah Node an additional five population centers, or "nodes," are within short driving distance and have many of the characteristics and act as suburbs to the micropolitan Greater Ukiah Node. For this report the nodes have been designated as Talmage/Nob Hill, Vichy Springs, El Dorado/Deerwood, Eastside Calpella/Lake Mendocino, and Calpella. The populations of these nodes range from 312 to 1,912.*

*The Local Area Formation Commission has mapped the Sphere of Influence and Area of Interest for the Ukiah Valley and this report evaluated park and recreational opportunities between and among these zones.*

*The City of Ukiah has over twenty designated parks. This report establishes a goal of providing a park within a half mile of all residents. While all parks have benefits, some parks such as pocket parks and specialty parks lack wide appeal or use, and therefore will not meet the needs of the general public. The Greater Ukiah Node includes nine parks that are large enough and include a sufficient variety of features to meet the park needs of all who live within a half mile. These nine parks are well distributed and ensure that the vast majority of residents living inside the city limits are within a half mile of a significant park. A notable exception is the Wagenseller neighborhood.*

*Outside the City limits but within the Greater Ukiah Node to both the north and south of the city limits are areas underserved by parks. A new park on the north side of the node and one large and two small parks are likely needed to meet the needs of those residents.*

*Outside the Greater Ukiah Node there are few park and recreation opportunities. However, total population and population densities in these areas are too low to provide an economy of scale to allow for park and recreation opportunities. Citizens who opt to live in sparsely populated areas are prioritizing dark skies, low crime rates, inexpensive real estate, and light traffic over public services. Attempting to provide urban services to these areas is not financially feasible.*

*On the other hand, the City's recreation department already provides services to residents living within the Area of Interest and beyond with many of these residents traveling to Ukiah to utilize both parks and recreation opportunities.*

*Community input for this report included bilingual online and in-person questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and a series of facilitated focus groups. The focus groups included stakeholders representing Alex Rorabaugh Recreation Center, business community members, a real estate group, climate action and healthy communities, LatinX, County of Mendocino employees, competitive sports enthusiasts, Ukiah Unified School District, and elected officials. The same focus group questions were presented to the Public Spaces Commission (PSC) and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI).*

*Community engagement was designed to elicit information in line with the reports nine designated park goals. The goals address Quantity, Quality and Diversity of features, Accessibility, Commitment, Community and Social Capital, Climate Readiness, Native American Co-Stewardship, Homelessness, and Gentrification.*

*On-site staff assessments of the parks concurred with community input in determining the parks to be well maintained and in overall good shape. The one exception was the County managed Low Gap Park. While residents desire a greater diversity of park features, they also expressed overall satisfaction with existing park diversity of features. Desirable park features that are not represented in City parks include dog parks, pickleball, courts, skating venues, neighborhood basketball courts, river access, shade, and cooling or misting stations.*

*The City of Ukiah's budget for parks is adequate to maintain current facilities but expanding or improving the system of parks will require additional funds. The recreation team is doing more than other similar size municipalities and already serves the entire Area of Interest.*

*While homelessness is an issue throughout the city, it is not created or solved with parks. Nevertheless, the impact of homelessness on parks is felt by the community and feelings of insecurity and unsanitariness decrease the use and enjoyment of parks. Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the efforts of the City to keep parks clean and safe while also acknowledging the ongoing challenge and negative impact of the issue. Gentrification can become an issue when parks in low-income areas are improved. Coordination and planning between the Community Services and Community Development departments can help address the issue of gentrification before it becomes an issue.*

*Climate change will have a disproportionately large impact on cities and Ukiah will be no exception. Parks*

*provide an opportunity to help mitigate climate change and help residents adapt to the impacts of climate change. Existing parks will need to be adapted as possible and new parks should be designed to maximize permeable surfaces, provide flood control elements, sequester carbon with trees and plants, provide nature-based elements to help children develop an ecological awareness, and to provide a refuge from heat. Open spaces should be managed to balance the need for maximizing carbon sequestration while being fire resilient.*

*A continuous improvement process should be implemented with a strong commitment to community engagement. The National Park and Recreation Association survey should be completed periodically to track progress and compare levels of service to similar sized municipalities. Community engagement should include efforts to assure parks and recreation services are diverse, equitable, and inclusive and should aim for Native American co-stewardship as possible.*

*Should the City annex all or part of the Sphere of Influence prior to 2040 there will be both challenge and opportunity. Addressing the substantial deferred maintenance at Low Gap Park, updating the Municipal Pool, and creating new parks to serve residents on the north and south end of the Greater Ukiah node will be expensive. However, the City's large park staff is much better equipped to address the issues at Low Gap Park than is the minimally staffed County of Mendocino. As the City's recreation team is already providing services to the entire Area of Interest, additional staff and resources would not be needed. Further, the City's Community Services team and grant writers from the Community Development team will be available to seek grant funding and explore opportunities for fundraising and the possibility of a parks district.*

Staff seek comment and suggestions for edits on this draft analysis.

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**Recommended Action:** Provide comment on the 2025 Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis.



## City of Ukiah Park Gap Analysis 2025

**February 2025**

**Adopted Some Date, 2025**



# Parks Gap Analysis 2025

## A Commitment of the Public Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure Element of the 2040 General Plan

### 5.10 Implementation Programs; B. Parks Gap Analysis

“The City shall prepare a parks gap analysis identifying areas of the city underserved by parks and recreation facilities access. The analysis shall, at a minimum, establish equitable access standards, including the minimum distance between parks every residence, and potential funding mechanisms.”

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## Introduction

The City of Ukiah is committed to fostering a healthy and vibrant Ukiah Valley. The City Council's Strategic plan speaks to "enhancing our neighborhoods," and "developing quality infrastructure." The City's 2040 General plan and the Ukiah Valley Area Plan (2011) identify the importance of parks, recreational facilities and trails for residents and visitors, while the City's Climate Initiatives speak to maintaining wild lands and protecting parks and recreation. Further, the City's Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan emphasizes the need for connectivity and the Equity Action Plan asserts the City's commitment to diversity and equity. All these diverse plans converge in support of a built environment that relies on parks and trails to achieve the overarching goal of creating a healthy and vibrant quality of life for all who live in and visit the City of Ukiah.

The City's 2040 General Plan specifically sets an action step of performing a parks gap analysis to help the City achieve these goals. City of Ukiah staff began the analysis in the Spring of 2024 with an extensive literature review. The literature review helped inform the creation of draft level of service measures, goals, and processes for conducting the analysis.

It is hoped this analysis can assist in identifying necessary improvements to existing infrastructure as well as places where new parks may be required, while assessing the City's ability to provide equitable park and recreation services to the City's present and future residents within existing city limits and beyond to potential areas of annexation.

## Executive Summary

Ukiah is located at the base of the Ukiah valley and approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco. The natural landscape includes forested hillsides, the Russian river, and valley flatlands. With both City of Ukiah and County administrative offices within the city, Ukiah boasts many public sector employment opportunities, particularly in education and social services. While Mendocino County collectively is rural in nature, the City of Ukiah is an urban center. Ukiah is recognized as a *micropolitan* area core with the primary commute flow within the "large urban cluster." A secondary commute flow leaves Ukiah to access a larger urban area. However, most of the commute and service flow from around the Ukiah Valley is to the City of Ukiah. While the median household income in Ukiah is modest compared to California averages, there are wide swaths of the community that are rated as "Disadvantaged" or "Severely Disadvantaged."

The City of Ukiah's boundaries have remained essentially unchanged for decades. Growth adjacent but outside city limits has created a population concentration this report refers to as the *Greater Ukiah Node* that extends beyond the city limits. For many local people everything within this node is considered "Ukiah." Outside the Greater Ukiah Node an additional five population centers, or "nodes," are within short driving distance and have many of the characteristics and act as suburbs to the micropolitan Greater Ukiah Node. For this report the nodes have been designated as Talmage/Knob Hill, Vichy Springs, Eldorado/Deerwood, Eastside Calpella/Lake Mendocino, and Calpella. The Greater Ukiah node is home to 21,201 residents while the "suburban nodes have populations ranging from 312 to 1,912.

The Local Area Formation Commission has mapped the *Sphere of Influence* and *Area of Interest* for the Ukiah Valley and this report evaluated park and recreational opportunities between and among these zones.

The City of Ukiah has over twenty designated parks. This report establishes a goal of providing a park within a half mile of all residents. While all parks have benefits, some parks such as *pocket parks* and *specialty parks* lack wide appeal or use, and therefore will not meet the needs of the general public. The Greater Ukiah node includes nine parks that are large enough and include a sufficient variety of *features* to meet the park needs of all who live within a half mile. These nine parks are well distributed and ensure that the vast majority of residents living inside the city limits are within a half mile of a significant park. A notable exception is the Wagenseller neighborhood.

Outside the city limits but within the Greater Ukiah Node to both the north and south of the city limits are areas underserved by parks. A new park on the north side of the node and one large and two small parks are likely needed to meet the needs of those residents.

Outside the Greater Ukiah Node there are few park and recreation opportunities. However, total population and population densities in these areas are too low to provide an economy of scale to allow for park and recreation opportunities, as managed by the City of Ukiah. However, these rural areas often have proximity to County, State or Federal or acquirable lands that may serve as regional parks. Additionally, these community members will still rely on the City for recreational programming and other community related services or events. Citizens who opt to live in sparsely populated areas are prioritizing dark skies, low crime rates, inexpensive real estate, and low traffic volumes over public services. Attempting to provide urban services to these areas is not financially feasible.

On the other hand, the City's recreation department already provides services to residents living within the Area of Interest and beyond with many of these residents traveling to Ukiah to utilize both parks and recreation opportunities.

Community input for this report included bilingual online and in-person questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and a series of facilitated focus groups. The focus groups included stakeholders representing Alex Rorabaugh Recreation Center, business community members, a real estate group, climate action and healthy communities, LatinX, County of Mendocino employees, competitive sports enthusiasts, Ukiah Unified School District, and elected officials. The same focus group questions were presented to the Public Spaces Commission (PSC) and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI).

Community engagement was designed to elicit information in line with the report's eight designated park goals. The goals address Quantity, Quality and Diversity of features, Accessibility, Commitment, Community and Social Capital, Climate Readiness, Native American Co-Stewardship, and Homelessness.

On-site staff assessments of the parks concurred with community input in determining the parks to be well maintained and in overall good shape. The one exception was the County managed Low Gap Park. While residents desire a greater diversity of park features, they also expressed overall satisfaction with existing park diversity of features. Desirable park features that are not represented

in city parks include dog parks, pickleball, courts, skating venues, neighborhood basketball courts, river access, shade, and cooling or misting stations.

The City of Ukiah's budget for parks is adequate to maintain current facilities but expanding or improving the system of parks will require additional funds. The recreation team is doing more than other similar size municipalities and already serves the entire Area of Interest.

While homelessness is an issue throughout the city, it is not created or solved with parks. Nevertheless, the impact of homelessness on parks is felt by the community and feelings of insecurity and unsanitariness decrease the use and enjoyment of parks. Most respondents expressed satisfaction with the efforts of the City to keep parks clean and safe while also acknowledging the ongoing challenge and negative impact of the issue. *Gentrification* can become an issue when parks in low-income areas are improved. Coordination and planning between the Community Services and Community Development departments can help address the issue of gentrification before it becomes an issue.

Climate change will have a disproportionately large impact on cities and Ukiah will be no exception. Parks provide an opportunity to help mitigate climate change and help residents adapt to the impacts of climate change. Existing parks will need to be adapted as possible and new parks should be designed to maximize permeable surfaces, provide flood control elements, sequester carbon with trees and plants, provide nature-based elements to help children develop an ecological awareness, and to provide a refuge from heat. Open spaces should be managed to balance the need for maximizing carbon sequestration while being fire resilient.

A continuous improvement process should be implemented with a strong commitment to community engagement. The City of Ukiah completed the 2024 National Park and Recreation Association survey. This survey should be completed periodically to track progress and compare levels of service to similar sized municipalities. Community engagement should include efforts to assure parks and recreation services are diverse, equitable, and inclusive and should aim for Native American co-stewardship as possible.

Should the City annex all or part of the Sphere of Influence prior to 2040 there will be both challenge and opportunity. Creating new parks to serve residents on the north and south end of the Greater Ukiah node, updating the Municipal Pool, and working with the County to address the substantial deferred maintenance at Low Gap Park, will be expensive. However, the City's large park staff is much better equipped to address the issues at Low Gap Park than is the minimally staffed County of Mendocino. As the City's recreation team is already providing services to the entire Area of Interest, additional staff and recreational resources would not be needed. Further, the City's Community Services team and grant writers from the Community Development team will be available to seek grant funding and explore opportunities for fundraising and the possibility of a parks district.

## Glossary of Terms

**Accessibility** – Is the measure of the number of residents who live within a half mile of a park combined with the degree to which parks are connected to allow for free movement between parks, facilities, and neighborhoods, particularly for non-motorized transportation.

**Area of Interest** - An Area of Interest is a geographic area beyond the sphere of influence in which land use decisions or other governmental actions of one local agency (the "Acting Agency") impact directly or indirectly upon another local agency (the "Interested Agency"). For example, approval of a housing project developed to urban densities on septic tanks outside the city limits of a city and its sphere of influence may result in the city being forced subsequently to extend sewer services to the area to deal with septic failures and improve city roads that provide access to the development. The City of Ukiah in such a situation would be the Interested Agency with appropriate reason to request special consideration from the Acting Agency in considering projects adjacent to the city.

**Connectivity** - The extent to which a landscape facilitates or impedes the movement of living things between patches.

**Commitment** - Is a measure of resources that are devoted to building and maintaining a parks system.

**Climate Readiness** - Targeted action to preserve and improve our region's economy, infrastructure, and resources while safeguarding our community members' health, safety, and quality of life in the face of climate change.

**First Tier Facility/Park** – A first tier facility or park is open all day every day and free to the public.

**Feature(s)** – A feature is a park amenity such as a playground, ball court or field, trail, BBQ area or picnic table, shade structure, etc.

**Gentrification** - The process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, leading to the displacement of current inhabitants in the process.

**Level of Service** - The measure of how we are performing per area of service (Park or Recreation)

**Micropolitan** - A population area that includes a city with 10,000 to 50,000 residents and its surrounding communities such as Ukiah.

**Open Space** - An undeveloped or minimally developed large area conserved for habitat and general conservation value.

**Park** – A park is outdoors, is a named destination, is publicly accessible and advertised, encourages informal public use, and encourages socializing, play or exercise, or an opportunity to enjoy nature.

- **Pocket Park** - Very small park, may have a bench.
- **Neighborhood Park** – Often includes a playground and park area generally for non-organized activities. May include a restroom.

- **Community Park** - Designed for organized activity with users traveling from some distance often including parking, sports fields and restrooms.
- **Regional Park** - Larger park which may be more isolated from population nodes. May be limited to trails and outdoor recreation, but may have additional facilities.
- **Special Use Park** - Specialized use recreational areas, usually single use, such as dog parks and skate parks that do not fit another category.
- **Linear Park** - A park along a travel corridor, generally narrow and long.
- **School “Park”** - School-owned facilities with limited availability. The City of Ukiah has a Facility Use Agreement that allows for bilateral shared use of facilities between the City and Ukiah Unified School District (UUSD). School recreation areas act as a second-tier parks during non -school hours. Their primary purpose is student education. Recreation that does not interfere with the education mandate is allowed on school grounds.

**Park Pressure** - Park pressure analyses park size in relation to population density and quantifies how population density affects parks.

**Population Nodes** - Outside the city limits, but within the Sphere of influence and the Area of Interest there are six areas of population concentration. These unnamed population concentrations will be referred to as population “nodes” for this report.

**Railbank** - A voluntary agreement between a railroad company and a trail sponsor to use an out-of-service rail corridor as a trail. The goal is to preserve the corridor for possible future rail use while allowing for alternative trail use in the meantime.

**Recreation Facility** – A facility (as opposed to a “feature”) provides an *indoors location*, is a named destination, is publicly accessible and advertised, encourages informal public use, and encourages socializing, play or exercise, or an opportunity to learn about nature. The equivalent of a park, but indoors.

**Rural** – An area with a low population density and lots of open space.

**Special District** - A special district is a local government that provides specific services to a community within defined boundaries. Special districts are separate from cities, counties, and school districts. They are autonomous entities but are overseen by the state government. Special districts are accountable to the voters or landowners they serve.

**Suburban** - A place with a mix of residential and commercial development located on the outskirts of a city with most residents traveling to a city to shop and work.

**Second Tier Recreational Facility or Park** – A second tier recreational facility or park is open for limited hours or fee based thereby making it inaccessible to a percentage of the public.

**Social Capital** - The networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively.

**Sphere of Influence** - The Mendocino County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) establishes the Sphere of Influence (SOI), which defines the probable 20-year growth physical boundary and service area of a local agency. An SOI typically includes both incorporated and

unincorporated areas within which the City will have primary responsibility for the provision of public facilities and services. The City's Sphere of Influence was most recently updated in 2022.

**Urban** - A city or town with a high population density and many buildings.

## **The Ukiah Valley Demographics History and Character**

Ukiah is located at the base of the Ukiah valley and approximately 100 miles north of San Francisco. The natural landscape includes forested hillsides, the Russian river, and valley flatlands. The Pomo lived in much of what is now Mendocino County and primarily lived in small groups which relied on hunting, fishing, and foraging. In 1859, Ukiah was designated the seat of Mendocino County and was incorporated in 1876. The name “Ukiah” draws from the history of the Pomo people as Ukiah is an anglicized version of the Pomo word yokaya, meaning “deep valley.”

Ukiah’s prime soils and climate supported farming and agricultural opportunities, which became a dominant economic driver during the early settlement period of the city. The dominant crop grown during this time was hops. The city experienced rapid growth post 1920, especially after World War II. The population growth coincided with the growth of the logging industry in California’s northern coasts. This further increased growth in the region and created additional employment opportunities.

In 2025, Ukiah is still the county seat and largest city in Mendocino County with approximately 16,296 residents. With both City of Ukiah and County administrative offices within the city, Ukiah boasts many public sector employment opportunities, particularly in education, government, and social services. Outside the public sector, the city is known for strong retail and service industries and a bustling tourism industry catering to travelers and adventurers looking to explore the Ukiah Valley.

### **Regional Setting**

The Ukiah Valley is approximately nine miles long, running north to south, comprising more than 40,000 acres along U.S. Route 101. The Russian River follows the valley, winding through agricultural lands just outside of Ukiah to the east. The valley is approximately 630 feet in elevation, with the hills of the Mendocino and Mayacamas ranges that flank the valley reaching up to 3,000 feet in elevation. Located 45 miles north of Healdsburg and 155 miles south of Eureka, the City of Ukiah spans more than 3,000 acres (4.6 square miles). It functions as a center for commerce, recreation, medical and social services, and cultural events. The nearest major city to Ukiah is Santa Rosa, a city of 175,000, which is located approximately 60 miles to the south. Larger urban centers including San Francisco and Sacramento are approximately 100 miles to the south and southeast. Ukiah’s relative isolation from major population centers increases its importance as a regional center. Closer to Ukiah, there are several small unincorporated communities in the Ukiah Valley, as well as in the neighboring Redwood Valley to the north.

While Mendocino County collectively is rural in nature, the City of Ukiah is an urban center. The USDA Rural-Urban Commuting Area Code lists Ukiah as a micropolitan area core with the primary commute flow within the “large urban cluster.” A secondary commute flow leaves Ukiah to access a larger urban area. However, most of the commute and service flow from around the Ukiah Valley is to the City of Ukiah.

### **Economic Demographics:**

The Ukiah Valley economy is primarily driven by agriculture, government services, retail, and tourism. The surrounding region is renowned for its wine production, particularly organic vineyards, and other forms of sustainable agriculture, including the cultivation of cannabis, which has become increasingly regulated and economically significant. Small businesses and local services dominate the economy, with healthcare, education, and government being major employers. The city has also seen growing interest in sustainable practices and green technology industries. While the median household income in Ukiah is modest compared to California averages, there are wide swaths of the community that are rated as “Disadvantaged” or ‘Severely Disadvantaged” by the *California State Parks Statewide Parks Program Community FactFinder* ([https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities/.](https://www.parksforcalifornia.org/communities/)) These disparities are reflected in the distribution and quality of regional parks and recreational opportunities.

Senate Bill (SB) 244 (Wolk), approved by Governor Brown in October 2011, requires cities to identify and describe disadvantaged unincorporated communities (DUCs) within or near its boundaries. The intention of this legislation is to address the complex legal, financial, and political barriers that contribute to regional inequity and associated infrastructure deficits. State law further requires the identification and analysis of DUCs as part of municipal service reviews (MSRs), annexation requests, and sphere of influence (SOI) updates undertaken by Local Agency Formation Commissions (LAFCos). The City identified five (5) DUCs, as part of its 2022 MSR, including:

- 1) Ukiah SXSW
- 2) Norgard Lane
- 3) Empire Gardens
- 4) Talmage
- 5) The Forks

### **Cultural Demographics:**

Culturally, Ukiah reflects a mix of influences from its Native American roots, Hispanic heritage, and the area's countercultural movements. The city is known for embracing sustainable living, environmentalism, and progressive values. It's also home to a vibrant arts scene, with local artists, musicians, and cultural festivals playing a significant role in the community. The nearby City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, one of the largest Buddhist communities in the Western Hemisphere, adds to the city's diverse cultural fabric, fostering interfaith understanding and cultural exchange.

### **Ethnic Demographics:**

Ukiah's population is diverse, with a significant Hispanic/Latino community, comprising 35-40% of the population. This reflects broader demographic trends in California, especially in agricultural regions. The city is also home to Native American communities, particularly those from the Pomo tribe, who have a longstanding historical connection to the area. Additionally, Ukiah has a small but growing Asian population, thanks in part to the presence of the Buddhist community. The remainder of the population is primarily White, with smaller percentages of African Americans and other ethnic groups.

## **Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis Planning Boundaries**

This Gap Analysis will compare Level of Service between various areas of the Ukiah Valley (Map 1). The outer limits of the study are outlined by the Local Area Formation Commission's (LAFCo) map of the City of Ukiah's Area of Interest. The level of service in this area will be compared to the Sphere of Influence, the city limits, and a half dozen population nodes. The population nodes were identified by city staff for this report. All other areas are consistent with the City of Ukiah's General Plan 2040 and LAFCo documents.

### **City Limits**

The boundary that includes all land that has been incorporated into a city. Ukiah has land use authority over all land within its city limits. Ukiah encompasses approximately 4,300 acres.

### **Sphere of Influence**

The Mendocino County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) establishes the Sphere of Influence (SOI), which defines the probable 20-year growth physical boundary and service area of a local agency. An SOI typically includes both incorporated and unincorporated areas within which the City will have primary responsibility for the provision of public facilities and services. The City's Sphere of Influence was most recently updated in 2022.

### **Area of Interest**

An Area of Interest is a geographic area beyond the SOI in which land use decisions or other governmental actions of one local agency (the "Acting Agency") impact directly or indirectly upon another local agency (the "Interested Agency"). For example, the location of a new school or residential development within the City's area of interest could alter the types of recreational facilities needed or provided by the City. A new high school may create demand for additional sports fields, gymnasiums, or aquatic facilities, which could place added pressure on city-operated parks and recreation programs, whereas a new senior development would create different improvements almost entirely. The City, in this situation, may request coordination to ensure that the housing development aligns with local recreation planning and that necessary infrastructure improvements are addressed through partnerships, conditions of approval, or funding agreements.

### **Population Nodes**

Outside the city limits, but within the Sphere of Influence and the Area of Interest there are six areas of population concentration (Map 2). These unnamed population concentrations will be referred to as population "nodes" for this report. The first node ("Greater Ukiah") includes the City of Ukiah and an area to the north and south with existing contiguous areas of housing and associated development similar to the concentration inside the city limits. The Greater Ukiah Area node excludes undeveloped areas inside the city limits, and includes areas of population concentration outside the city Limits. This node is believed to represent what the average person thinks of as "Ukiah" irrespective of the defined city limits. The Greater Ukiah Node therefore includes fewer acres and more population than is included in the existing city limits and has nearly double the population density. This is the area of population that is actually served by the Parks and Recreation

teams. For example, the Ukiah Municipal Airport and wastewater treatment center do not use Park and Recreation services so are not included in calculations.

The other five identified population nodes are seen in Map 2 and include 1) Talmage/Nob Hill, 2) Vichy Springs, 3) El Dorado / Deerwood, 4) Eastside Calpella /Lake Mendocino, and 5) Calpella.

The Greater Ukiah node is, and for the foreseeable future, will be the urban center of the Ukiah Valley. The other five nodes are effectively suburbs of Ukiah. Were the City to annex the entire Area of Interest, the City would include within its city limits an urban center, five suburbs, and surrounding rural areas. The ability for the City to provide park and recreation needs will differ for these different settings. Urban, suburban, and rural areas will each provide their own unique benefits to residents, but park and recreation opportunities will be greater in the urban population center.

## Level of Service Measures

The “level of service” is the measure of how we are performing per area of service. These measures were identified based on a literature review and rely heavily on National Recreation and Park Association documents<sup>11,19,26</sup>. These measures are supported by the American Planning Association’s *PAS MEMO “Alternatives for Determining Parks and Recreation Level of Service”*<sup>3</sup> Additional measures were added based on PolicyLink’s document “*Advancing Park Equity in California*”<sup>15</sup>, and *Tools for Equitable Park Planning Design: Digital Workflows to Enhance Park Access and Quality*<sup>30</sup>.

For this analysis levels of service include Quantity of Parks, Quality & Diversity of Parks, Accessibility, Commitment, Community and Social Capital, Climate Readiness, Native American Co-Stewardship, and Addressing Homelessness.

### Quantity of Parks

The first measure relates to the quantity of Parks. For this report, quantity of parks is measured as “Acres of Parkland per 1000 residents,” “Total Parks per 1000”, and “Facilities per 1000 residents.” Assuring adequate park space requires more than simply providing a high total acreage. The parks must be distributed equitably while providing a diversity of park types and experiences.

“Although increasing parkland space is encouraged, there are situations where available land is sparse and the parks that are available may be unevenly distributed, resulting in areas where park space is unavailable within a convenient travel distance. Park access and quality is not a quick or easy matter to resolve as it requires intimate understanding of a park system, its users, the operational and programmatic elements, and various other factors and needs which may result in unbalanced access and quality. One universal guideline is to provide equal access, park amenities, and quality of experience throughout a community as effectively as possible, while allowing parks to serve as a green infrastructure buffer for climate change where applicable.”

*Tools for Equitable Park Planning and Design: Digital Workflows to Enhance Park Access and Quality*<sup>30</sup>

Providing an adequate quantity of parks is key to maintaining a comfortable park pressure (avoiding crowding). Park pressure increases with the number of users per acre. When parks become too crowded, they are no longer enjoyable for the user and some amenities may be effectively rendered unavailable. An adequate quantity of parks is necessary to assure the total acreage is distributed equitably while also providing a diversity of park experiences. Observational surveys of City of Ukiah’s parks suggest existing parks are not currently over pressured.

Facilities provide indoor experiences. In Ukiah’s hot climate, exacerbated by climate change, having adequate facilities is essential. This was confirmed in this report’s focus groups with participants stating they need more indoor opportunities during inclement weather.

## Quality and Diversity of Parks

Quality of parks is a more subjective measure and was assessed with field visits and evaluations by City of Ukiah Community Services staff. Additionally, through online surveys and focus groups the community was asked to discuss their impressions of park quality. Ideally a parks system will be diverse with various sizes, features, and intents. The largest parks in this system (Low Gap Park and Riverside Park) are predominantly open space providing hiking and nature experiences. The smallest parks also have value.

## Accessibility

The primary measure of Accessibility is the number of residents who live within a half mile of a park. “A growing number of studies have found that people who live in close proximity to parks or other green spaces experience lower levels of stress and are less likely to experience depression and other mental health problems.”<sup>14</sup>

*“Nationwide nearly one in three people do not have a park or natural area within 10 minutes of their home.”<sup>10</sup>*

However, accessibility also requires connectivity. Parks that are connected allow for free movement between parks, facilities, and neighborhoods, particularly for non-motorized transportation. These connections should be treated as linear parks and when possible, should provide landscaping, shade, and places to rest.

## Commitment

Commitment is a measure of resources that are devoted to building and maintaining a parks system. It has been said, “if you want to know an organization’s priorities, don’t look at their stated goals, look at their budget.” Providing quality park and recreation resources to the community require a commitment to funding the efforts. Measuring commitment can be done by evaluating 1) the number of full-time equivalent staff provided per capita, and 2) the operating expenditure per capita. These figures can be used as a comparison to other communities as well as to track the trend of funding over time.

## Community and Social Capital

Community and Social Capital are seen in the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Community Capital is evidenced by mutually respectful relationships, connectedness and trustworthiness among people. Often volunteerism, voting rates, and emergency response are seen as evidence of healthy social capital in a community. Further, the 2011 Ukiah Valley Area Plan (UVAP) goal PR-1 references the need for “recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education” and PR-3 references the need to “promote a greater sense of community through events, gathering places, and shared facilities.” These UVAP goals have been included as goals 5.1 and 5.2 in this study.

This subjective measure was addressed via survey and focus group questions. The survey asked respondents to agree or disagree with the two following questions:

- 1) “I feel like Ukiah Valley Parks provide as sense of place and history.”
- 2) “I feel like parks in the Ukiah Valley are safe enough for me to comfortably use.”

Focus groups were asked “Do you think our parks are promoting a sense of community?” and “How could they do that better?”

### **Climate Readiness**

The City of Ukiah’s 2040 General plan addresses climate change in the Environment and Sustainability Element and the Safety Element. Safety Element SAF – 2 is “to create a more resilient community that is prepared for, responsive to, and recoverable from hazards created or made worse by climate change.” Climate change induced fire, flooding, and heat island effects and will have the greatest impact on cities and population centers. City and regional parks can provide both a refuge and a buffer to these impacts. A Trust for Public Land Study of over 14,000 cities found that areas of cities and towns “within a 10-minute walk of a park are as much as 6 degrees cooler than areas beyond that range .”<sup>10</sup>

*“Climate change is bearing down on the world faster than scientists predicted, making life in cities especially challenging. Densely built environments, dominated by concrete and pavement, absorb and hold heat longer than natural landscapes. They are also more prone to flooding as extreme precipitation dumps so-called rain bombs on urban areas that become inundated with dangerous—even lethal—amounts of stormwater”<sup>10</sup>*

Planting trees is an obvious intervention, but parks can also help as a defensible space in the slowing of wildfire spread and can provide swales and ponds to help absorb storm water runoff. The inclusion of splash pads, shade, and keeping parks open during cooler evening can create areas of refuge during extreme heat.

Incorporating active mobility design elements, such as installation of bike racks and co-locating bus stops at parks, can help reduce the city’s carbon footprint, whereas planting trees and installing shade structures, misting/cooling stations, drinking fountains, and splash pads will help the community adapt to a warming climate.

For local parks, applying these principles ensures that recreational access, habitat conservation, and wildfire prevention strategies align with long-term ecological sustainability. This approach also guides decision-making on forest restoration, habitat protection, and climate adaptation in publicly managed open spaces.

With each park project, the City should evaluate options in light of the Forest Management principles of resistance, resilience, and transition. <sup>4</sup>

### **Native American Co-Stewardship**

The 2011 Ukiah Valley Area Plan’s (UVAP) section 10 relates to Historical and Archeological Preservation. This analysis will adopt the UVAP goal “to protect Native American cultural and archeological resources.” However, as the Native American community embodies a living culture

represented by sovereign nations, simply protecting artifacts and historic sites is only the first step. Indigenous voices are increasingly acknowledged as a vital source of time-tested land management practices. Further, current cultural needs of Native American park users need to be considered in parks and recreation planning.

### **Addressing Homelessness and Gentrification**

Homelessness and gentrification both provide challenges related to income inequality and both need to be addressed to assure the City of Ukiah maintains safe, healthy, and equitable parks. While parks neither create nor cure homelessness, the presence of the homeless can present both real and perceived health, safety, and security concerns. Tracking the presence and effects of the homeless in parks will assist in finding the best ways to mitigate impacts.

Gentrification is the process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, typically displacing current inhabitants in the process. To date the City of Ukiah has not seen neighborhood improvements cause gentrification. However, the risk of gentrification is real, particularly on the south end of the Greater Ukiah node should new parks be built and housing pressures create a market transition.

## Park and Recreation Goals

Park services, like all other City of Ukiah services, should be subject to some kind of continuous improvement process. Ideally a circular process should be initiated that involves planning, design, implementation, and evaluation; evaluation then leads to a new planning phase and renews the cycle. Setting goals is a critically important part of this continuous improvement process. These goals provide a target to aim for, and a benchmark to measure improvement. In developing goals for this report, a review of the City of Ukiah's 2040 general plan, the Ukiah Valley Area Plan (2011), and a robust literature review led to the formation of eight broad goals for Ukiah Parks. These eight goals are then broken down into a total of thirty sub-goals.

The Goals identified in this plan align with the plan's Levels of Service. Additionally, both the public survey and the focus group questions were written to reflect these common themes.

The goals assess the quantity and quality of parks as well as accessibility. In this context "accessibility" is not an ADA term but the very specific measure of population within a half mile of the park. "Commitment" is a measure of resources that are devoted to building and maintaining a parks system. Goal five, "Community and Social Capital," evaluates if the parks are addressing the community's need for recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education. Climate readiness is addressed with goal six and goal seven addresses Native American Co-stewardship. Additionally goal eight assesses the concerns of homelessness.

### Goals (coordinated with Level of Service Measures)

#### 1 **Quantity**

- 1.1 Assure a minimum of 3 acres of parks per 1000 residents (CA Parks and Rec recommendation) in all areas with a population density greater than 5 people per acre within any area with a minimum of 2500 residents.
- 1.2 Evaluate "park pressure" through periodic user experience surveys and location analytics platforms.

#### 2 **Quality and Diversity of Features**

- 2.1 Maintain and enhance the area's natural resources by balancing protection, conservation, replenishment, and sustainable use. (UVAP Goal 9OC-1)
- 2.2 Conserve Open Space, hillsides, and indigenous habitats for the enjoyment of future generations. (UVAP Goal 9OC-2)
- 2.3 Preserve historical buildings and spaces that create a sense of place. (UVAP Goal 10 HA-1)
- 2.4 Work with other entities to ensure there are a variety of parks, recreational facilities, and points of river access. (UVAP Goal PR-2)
- 2.5 Consider resources like the Magical Bridge Foundation in developing new more accessible low-barrier parks.

### **3 Accessibility**

- 3.1 Assure there is a first-tier park within a half mile of all residents living inside an area with a population node greater than one thousand residents with a density greater than 5 residents per acre.
- 3.2 Support the development and access to second tier recreational opportunities in identified population nodes.
- 3.3 Create connections between parks, facilities and neighborhoods to maximize ease of access, encourage neighbor interactions, and encourage non-motorized transportation.
- 3.4 Treat connectors as Linear Parks and provide landscaping to make the connections appealing locations as part of the park's infrastructure.

### **4 Commitment**

- 4.1 Complete a National Parks and Recreation Association survey at least once every ten years and improve area's competitiveness with other municipalities in terms of staffing and committed funding.
- 4.2 Maintain a minimum of 1 Recreation staff for every 1500 residents.
- 4.3 Identify and create the funding mechanisms necessary to sustain maintenance and service obligations.
- 4.4 Reinforce partnerships and opportunities with the UUSD and County to ensure efficiencies across programming, facilities and open-space.

### **5 Community and Social Capital**

- 5.1 Meet the community's need for recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education. (UVAP Goal PR-1)
- 5.2 Promote a greater sense of community through events, gathering places, and shared facilities. (UVAP Goal PR-3)
- 5.3 Utilize best practices in new park development including utilizing the CA State Parks "*Designing Parks Using Community-Based Planning Methods*" or similar with an emphasis on inclusive practices.
- 5.4 Prioritize funding projects that increase park access for low-income communities and communities of color in terms of park proximity and the quantity of parks space available per person.

### **6 Climate Readiness**

- 6.1 Assure all parks are accessible for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- 6.2 Work with Mendocino Transit authority to improve bus access to parks.
- 6.3 Assure parks have tree canopy or other shade structures commensurate with the size and intent of the park.
- 6.4 Apply strategies of Resistance, Resilience and Transition into maintenance and preservation of local or regional parks.
- 6.5 Explore opportunities to include cooling, misting or similar stations in parks.
- 6.6 Convert all parks irrigation to achieve 100% compliance with the City's Water Efficient Landscaping Ordinance, and reduce the use of unnecessary turf as encouraged by State law.

**7 Native American Co-Stewardship**

- 7.1 Protect Native American cultural and archaeological resources. (UVAP Goal 10 HA-2)
- 7.2 Explore options for increasing engagement and developing co-stewardship or co-management opportunities in parks.
- 7.3 Include and compensate indigenous people for their time and expertise during planning.

**8 Addressing Homelessness**

- 8.1 Continue to work with Mendocino County HHSA and Sheriff to compassionately assure the health, safety, and security of parks.
- 8.2 Utilize the Mendocino County HHSA Homeless Encampment Coordination Protocol to manage collaboration between organizations and provide compassionate approach to homelessness in parks.
- 8.3 Convene a minimum one meeting per year with HHSA to discuss management of Homelessness in Parks.

## Current State

### Ukiah City Limits and the Greater Ukiah Population Node

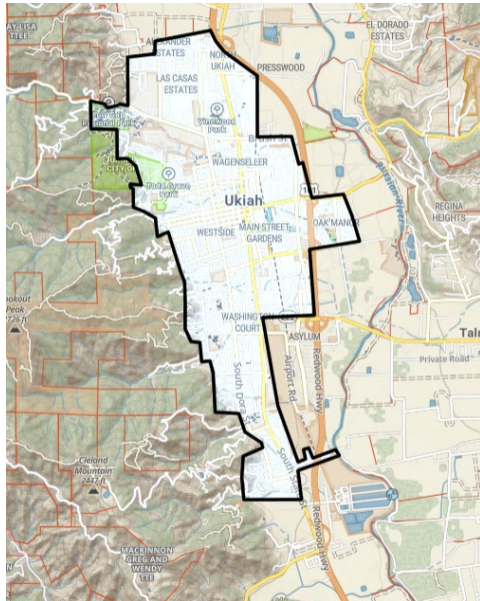


Figure 1 - Greater Ukiah Node

The Greater Ukiah node (Figure 1) includes the city and the populated area to the north and south of the current city limits. The node includes the area where people predominantly live and excludes the airport and areas that are principally industrial or open, undeveloped space. The intent is to assess “living space,” or the area where people go about their activities of daily living and to accurately capture real-world, experienced population density and park coverage.

#### Quantity and Accessibility of Parks in the Greater Ukiah Node (Goal 1 and 3)

There are twenty-one designated parks inside Ukiah city limits that host over 600,000 park visits per year. Todd Grove Park is the most heavily visited with 175,000 visits. The City’s parks include small pocket parks, specialty parks, linear parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, and a regional park. While all these parks provide value, some are

either too small or too specialized to completely serve the park needs of those living within a half mile. Excluding the small or specialized parks, the Greater Ukiah node has nine neighborhood, community, and regional parks that are well distributed allowing the vast majority of residents to live within a half mile of a significant park (Map 3). The Wagenseller neighborhood is a notable exception. Additionally, a few underserved pockets exist that are within a half mile of a park “as the crow flies” but more than a half mile by surface street route.

Outside the city limits but within the Greater Ukiah population node there are underserved areas both to the north and the south of the City. North of Empire Drive is primarily underserved (no park within a half mile) as well as a few isolated areas to the south of Empire Drive that are farther than a half mile by actual surface street routes. Figure 2 shows the half mile radii from Vinewood and Low

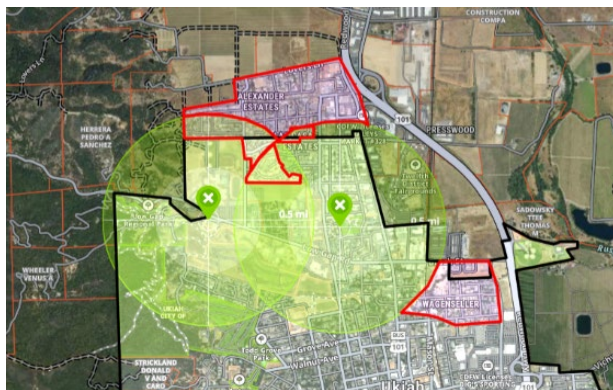


Figure 2 - Underserved Areas on North End of Greater Ukiah Node in Red

Gap parks showing the areas outlined in red to be more than a half mile away from a park. The Wagenseller neighborhood, also underserved and outlined in red, is shown on the east side of the map.

There are no first-tier parks to the south of current city limits including the densely populated, low-income area inside the Greater Ukiah node (Map 2). Second tier options for residents in this area include Grace Hudson Elementary School and the Ukiah Athletic Club.

The City of Ukiah has established goals for assuring an adequate number of parks. The goals for the number of parks only apply to areas with a population density of greater than 5 residents per acre. The Greater Ukiah node has a population density of 8.6 residents per acre and the City of Ukiah has a population density of 5.3 residents per acre. There are sixteen parks in the City of Ukiah with a total of 152 acres. Consistent with State of California standards, Goal 1.1 establishes a minimum standard of 3 acres of parks per thousand residents. According to David Barth<sup>2</sup> “there are no LOS standards for recreation facilities in the U.S., and the number of facilities needed can vary widely due to a number of variables between communities.” Rather than establishing a minimum quantity of “parks” the City’s focus is on assuring an adequate diversity of features in the park system while simultaneously assuring all residents are living within a half mile of a park.

With the vast majority of Ukiah residents living within a half mile of a park and with over 9 acres of parks per 1000 residents the City is meeting Goal 1. However, to meet this goal for the Greater Ukiah node at least one park will need to be added on the north end of the node, and one large, or two small parks will need to be added on the south end of the node.

### **Quality and Diversity of Parks in the Greater Ukiah Node (Goal 2)**

The quality and diversity of existing parks was determined through staff onsite evaluations, surveys, and focus groups. Surveys, focus groups, and on-site evaluations all support the conclusion that the parks are in good shape and well maintained. The playground and group BBQ area at Todd Grove Park were both replaced in 2024. While Todd Grove Park is well maintained, the municipal pool is aging and requires frequent maintenance. The eighty-year-old facility has a wading pool that is closed, a solar water heater that is non-functioning, and a variety of features that have been removed as irreparable or obsolete. The City’s Community Services team is working on a stand-alone Municipal Pool review and feasibility study aimed at outlining the best approach to address the many issues. Replacement of the municipal pools is a likely conclusion.

In the last ten years a steady effort from both City and grant funding has seen significant capital improvements at Vinewood, Oak Manor, and Observatory parks as well as the Skate Park. Monthly inspections of play structures by certified inspectors assure minor problems are found and corrected quickly. Parks staff consistently keeps up with routine maintenance including mowing and leaf blowing and respond to the ongoing instances of graffiti and vandalism. It’s important to note, that while graffiti, vandalism, and litter can be found around town, City crews respond quickly to these issues in our parks. Similarly, City crews respond quickly to issues that arise related to the activities of the homeless. The City has policies in place to ensure compassionate interactions with those experiencing homelessness, but camping and littering are not tolerated in City parks.

The sole exception to the conclusion of well-maintained parks is at the County managed and maintained Low Gap Park. Low Gap Park has a significant amount of deferred maintenance, has had to remove features that were failing to the point of being dangerous, and has additional features that arguably should be removed for safety reasons. The paths need repair, and the disc golf course use is taking a toll on the surrounding plant life with many of the trees suffering and at risk of death. The public restroom utilizes a fifty-year-old septic system. Remnants of the out-of-use caretaker’s site remain in place, and there are significant drainage issues at the dog park. Additionally, the entrance to the park does not meet the standards of the Americans with

Disabilities Act (ADA). Furthermore, the bridge that allows access to most of the park likely needs replacement rather than repair. Low Gap Park is a popular community asset that suffers from a combination of heavy use and insufficient maintenance.

<b>Park Type Distribution</b>
<b>Regional Parks</b>
Low Gap Park
Mill Creek Park
Riverside Park
Lake Mendocino
<b>Community Park</b>
Todd Grove Park
Oak Manor Park
<b>Neighborhood Park</b>
Observatory Park
McGarvey Park
Orchard Park
Ukiah Civic Center
Vinewood Park
<b>Pocket Park</b>
Gardner Park
Railroad Depot Park
<b>Special Use Park</b>
Alex Rorabaugh Center
Giorno Park/Anton Stadium
Grace Hudson Museum
Ukiah Skate Park
Ukiah Sports Complex

Table 1 Ukiah Park Distribution

Ideally a parks system will be diverse with various sizes, features, and park styles<sup>9</sup>. Not all parks can have all things, so the required diversity of park features need to be dispersed throughout the system. The parks system needs a variety of park sizes, with all community desired features represented somewhere in the system (Table 1). Not all users are looking for the same experience. As such the system of parks needs to include locations for boisterous children as well as opportunities for resting seniors. The largest parks in this system (Low Gap and Riverside) are predominantly open space, providing hiking and nature experiences. In addition to open space and trails, Low Gap Park provides a wide variety of features including disc golf, archery, a fitness course, a dog park, picnic areas, creek access, tennis courts and a playground. These regional parks provide numerous recreation opportunities for residents as well as drawing tourism and visitors from the far reaches of the County.

The smallest parks also have value. For example, the tiny Gardner Park is nestled under Redwoods along a sidewalk next to a parking lot. Though few will go out of their way to go to the park, it provides a bench on which to rest in the shade during a walk, and a picnic table for a quiet place for a lunch break close to downtown.

Community and Neighborhood parks provide a wide variety of opportunities for those living within a half mile of the park but will also attract residents from around the city. Both Todd Grove and Oak Manor have reservable picnic areas that are in frequent use by residents for parties, celebrations, and get-togethers. Todd Grove Park is also the home to the popular Sundays in the Park concert series, as well as the Community Yard Sale, the Kids Triathlon, and many more community building events.

Seven of the city parks include playgrounds, fields, and structures desired by children and their parents while Observatory, Riverside, and McGarvey Parks all provide more restful experiences.

Community input provided a long list of desired but unavailable park features. The only dog park in the Greater Ukiah node is at Low Gap Park. This is likely the most mentioned, clearly necessary addition immediately needed for our parks system. Other features that were unearthed during community input included, pickleball courts, places to roller skate, river access, volleyball, and indoor facilities and splash pads. These unavailable features offer the opportunity to improve the diversity of city parks and should be considered for inclusion in the establishment of new parks.

Goal 2.1 and 2.2 both speak to the importance of preserving natural resources and open space. With Low Gap Park, Riverside Park, and the City’s newly acquired but not yet open to the public Western Hills Watershed Protection Area the city is clearly meeting these goals. Goal 2.3 addresses the need to preserve historic spaces and is met with the historic gate and wall at Todd Grove Park and the many historic features at Observatory Park. Goal 2.4 is the most subjective of the Quality and Diversity goals. Focus group comments indicated that the community is happy with the diversity of park features while also wanting more. The lack of dog parks, pickleball courts, and river access suggest there is more to be done in this area. Additionally, the need for climate adaptation suggests a need for more opportunities to cool off such as splash pads and misting stations.

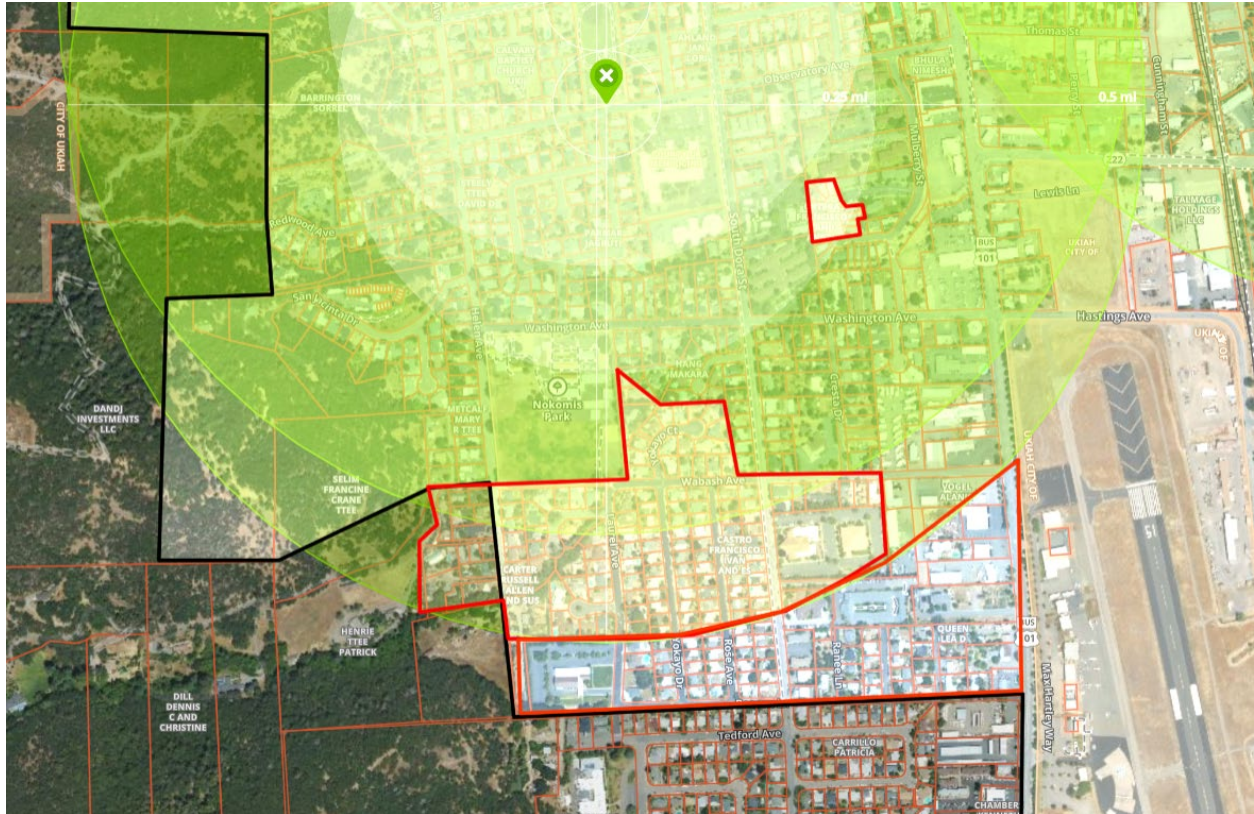


Figure 3 Observatory Park half mile radius in green. Underserved area inside city limits in red.

### Park Accessibility in the Greater Ukiah Node (Goal 3)

As discussed in the Quantity of Parks section, the vast majority of Ukiah residents live within a half mile of a park (Goal 3.1). The Wagenseller neighborhood is the most notable exception. Surface transportation routes create a few additional small, underserved areas. For the Greater Ukiah node additional parks are needed to both the north and the south. Additionally, in both the city limits and the Greater Ukiah node improved connectivity (Goal 3.3) and landscaping improvements in those corridors (Goal 3.4) will enhance the park system and community quality of life.

### Commitment in the Greater Ukiah Node (Goal 4)

Commitment is a measure of resources that are devoted to building and maintaining a parks system. The City Parks team has a \$1.884 million dollar budget with most of the money going to

support a maintenance staff of eleven full-time equivalent employees. The Parks team works under the direction of the Director of Community Services and with the advice of the City Council appointed Public Spaces Commission. The Parks team works collaboratively and partners daily with the five-member recreation staff. The Parks Superintendent and the Parks Lead Worker manage the day-to-day activities of the team. Although the maintenance work is shared by all, workers tend to specialize in either hardscape or landscape maintenance.

Goal 4.1 suggests the need to participate in the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) survey at least once every ten years. The City has for the first time filled out this survey as a part of this analysis but results have not yet been received from the NPRA.

Compared to neighboring municipalities, the City of Ukiah (COU) has a strong commitment to parks. Neither the City of Willits, Fort Bragg, or the County of Mendocino have a parks division. For these municipalities parks are maintained by some form of general services department.

### **Community and Social Capital in the Greater Ukiah Node (Goal 5)**

Social Capital is defined as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular society, enabling that society to function effectively. Parks should help meet the community's need for recreation, cultural resources, and on-going education (Goal 5.1). Additionally, parks should promote a greater sense of community through events, gathering places, and shared facilities<sup>9</sup>(Goal 5.2). Community input is the primary way to assess how well this is being achieved. Over seventy-five percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I feel like Ukiah Valley Parks provide a sense of place and history." Focus group participants also generally stated a positive impression of the park's role in building community and social capital. Most responses referred to recreation programs, particularly the Sundays in the Park concert series and community yard sales, but also went on to include murals, community gardens, and "connectivity" as important infrastructure elements to increase community and social capital. Connectivity is addressed as goal 3.2 in this plan identifying the need to "create connections between parks, facilities and neighborhoods to maximize ease of access, encourage neighbor interactions, and encourage non-motorized transportation." As addressed in the Climate Readiness section of this report, bike and pedestrian infrastructure around the parks is good. Nevertheless, there is a clear benefit to adding additional connectivity to the parks system.

The City of Ukiah has created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to help monitor Goal 5.4; "Prioritize funding projects that increase park access for low-income communities and communities of color in terms of park proximity and the quantity of parks space available per person." The City is pursuing options to create a park in the underserved, low-income Wagenseller neighborhood. Further, a park planning process is scheduled for July of 2025 to seek community input on a proposed park at the end of Norgard Lane, which also falls into the underserved, low-income category.

### **Climate Readiness (Goal 6)**

Transportation is a primary contributor to climate change<sup>6</sup>. Goal 6.1 and 6.2 suggest a need to reduce climate impact by encouraging the use of bicycles, walking, and public transportation (alternative transportation). The first-tier parks within the Area of Interest were evaluated for

alternative transportation infrastructure. A four-point scale was used with one point apiece given for 1) complete sidewalks within a half mile, 2) bike lane access to the park, 3) public transportation stop within one quarter of a mile, and 4) low traffic volume. The results (Table 2) show the most significant Greater Ukiah node parks score a three or four with good to excellent options for alternative transportation.

The need for refuge in the form of shade from trees or other shade structures is identified in goal 6.3. Some parks (Todd Grove and McGarvey) are almost entirely shaded while others have little shade (Ukiah Sports Complex) or no shade (Great Redwood Trail). The lack of shade on the Great Redwood Trail needs to be addressed and tree planting has begun. All other parks have reasonable amounts of shade.

Goal 6.4 speaks to the need to apply strategies of Resistance, Resilience and Transition<sup>4</sup> into maintenance and preservation of local or regional parks. A more detailed discussion of this approach is covered in the “Next Steps” section on page 37

Goals 6.5 suggesting the importance of cooling stations with splash pads and misting stations is not being met. Similarly, water reduction measures spelled out in goal 6.6 require investment.

Backstrom<sup>2</sup> et al identified a need to reconsider how playgrounds are designed, approved, and built. The consensus of subject matter experts asserted a need to utilize more permeable “nature-based” playgrounds and play structures. This approach can add shade, retain water, and help to create “ecological affiliation” in children.

### **Native American Co-Stewardship (Goal 7)**

The Ukiah Valley is the ancestral land and current home of Northern Pomo and other displaced tribes. In November of 2021, President Biden announced the Tribal Homelands Initiative. One of the key components of the Initiative is ensuring that “Tribal governments play an integral role in decision making related to the management of Federal lands and waters through consultation, capacity building, and other means consistent with applicable authorities.”<sup>6</sup> Ukiah City Council’s Strategic Plan Priority 1 is to “enhance our neighborhoods” and speaks to the importance of creating vibrant “community spaces that reflect the diversity of our cultures.” Doing so requires developing strong collaborative working relationships with sovereign tribal governments.

This report has identified three aspirational goals for this area. Goal 7.1 is to protect cultural resources. This goal is being met primarily through California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance. Goal 7.2 is to explore options for increasing engagement and developing co-stewardship or co-management opportunities in parks. The City has not yet effectively engaged the Native American community in the management of parks. The City’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is a partner in this effort and the City will continue to work on this goal. The City complies with all CEQA requirements including the identification and protection of cultural resources during all CEQA triggering projects. Goal 7.3 is to include and compensate indigenous people for their time and expertise during planning demonstrating another area where the City can improve.

### **Addressing Homelessness (Goal 8)**

The City of Ukiah has policies and practices in place to help mitigate the impacts of homelessness. The City's position is that Parks and Recreation infrastructure and programs neither create nor solve homelessness. The presence of people lingering, sleeping, or setting up "camp" in a park detracts from the experience of most users<sup>1</sup>. Not all litter and graffiti are created by the homeless, but much of it can be attributed to their use of the park spaces. City staff are trained to treat all members of the public with decorum, compassion, and respect. When it feels safe to do so, staff will ask people to clean up their trash and remind them there is no camping in city parks. In accord with goals 8.1 and 8.2 city staff operate under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County to address encampments. The MOU requires seventy-two-hour notice be given before disbanding and cleaning up an encampment. Any materials collected, no matter the item or condition, is placed in storage for ninety (90) days and is made available to property owners who feel their possessions were lost during a cleanup.

The impacts of homelessness have the greatest impact on the urban center of Ukiah. Homeless activity is greatest in public spaces along creeks, and in parks and along trails. Outside city limits the areas of greatest impact are along the abandoned railroad corridor at locations where it nears services, and at Lake Mendocino's campgrounds. The City of Ukiah's parks and streets crews monitor and maintain the sections of developed Great Redwood Trail. The City, in collaboration with the Great Redwood Trail Agency, has the capacity to manage and mitigate the impacts of homelessness within the city limits and the Greater Ukiah node.

The creation of new or improved parks in poor neighborhoods poses the risk of gentrification<sup>11</sup>. Gentrification is the process whereby the character of a poor urban area is changed by wealthier people moving in, improving housing, and attracting new businesses, leading to the displacement of current inhabitants in the process. The potential for gentrification is greatest on the south end of the Greater Ukiah node. Meeting the community needs in this area will require adding parks. Unfortunately, few best practice park and recreation solutions for this problem have been identified. It may be that the best approaches to gentrification will be found in the Community Development and Housing arenas specifically by increasing housing stock.

### **Great Redwood Trail**

The conversion of the old railroad corridor to a multi-use path has been established as a legislative priority by the State Legislature. The legislature created the Great Redwood Trail Agency (GRTA) tasked with building the new Great Redwood Trail (GRT) in 2021. The future GRT will bisect the Area of Interest for a total of eleven and a half miles with approximately ten miles in the Sphere of Influence. Currently approximately two miles of the trail has been built inside the city limits with an additional two miles slated to be built by the end of 2025. The Great Redwood Trail has tremendous unmet recreation potential. However, the GRTA has not yet completed the process of railbanking the rail line. Railbanking will allow the removal of the unused rails and ties and allow for a relatively inexpensive conversion to trail. Without railbanking the trail must be built alongside the rails at a much greater, potentially prohibitive cost.

The City has begun the process of adding landscaping to the existing trail to create a linear park. The trail will provide recreational opportunities for hikers, bicyclists, skaters, and nature lovers. The 100-foot-wide corridor is wide enough to allow additional features including small playgrounds, fitness courses, and other park features but the City awaits railbanking to allow complete property

access. The GRT will provide recreational benefit to residents in the Lake Mendocino and Calpella nodes and act as a regional park serving the entire Area of Interest.

## Area of Interest Outside the City Limits and the Greater Ukiah Node

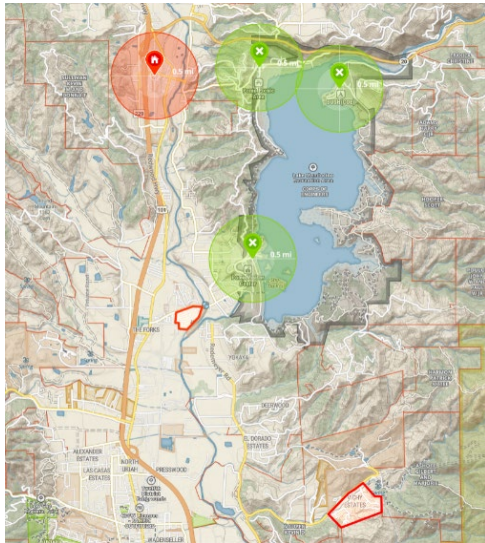


Figure 4 Outside the Greater Ukiah node: First Tier locations in green. Second Tier locations in red.

The evaluation of the current state of parks within the City of Ukiah’s Area of Interest reflects the input of GIS review, on site evaluations, focus group surveys, one-on-one interviews, and community surveys. Outside the Greater Ukiah node, but within the Area of Interest there are three first tier park entrances at Lake Mendocino. Outside the Greater Ukiah node, these are the only first tier parks (Figure 4). While Lake Mendocino serves well as a regional park, very few people live within half a mile of the park entrances. Neither Mill Creek Park nor Cow Mountain have trail heads inside the City’s Area of Interest. However, like Lake Mendocino, they serve the Ukiah Valley as regional parks and provide valuable outdoor opportunities to residents as well as economic benefit through tourism.

Outside the Greater Ukiah node there are two significant second tier homeowner association (HOA) parks, three trailer park association parks, and one Ukiah Unified School District school (Calpella Elementary). There are also a few private (second tier) recreational areas including the Rifle and Pistol Club and the Vichy Springs Resort in the Vichy Hills node, while the Deerwood/ El Dorado Node includes a pool and tennis courts at the Ukiah Bible Church.

The Vichy Hills HOA park serves the vast majority of the residents in the Vichy Hills node well. It includes a 7.5-acre greenway and a 9.6-acre open space area with a trail. While these areas do not include any play equipment or other features, with over 17 acres of open space they provide an affordable approach to serve the five hundred and seventeen residents living in this rural/suburban setting.

The West Fork Estates subdivision’s HOA park includes a small area of turf, suitable for a game of “catch,” a small play structure, and bocce courts. The HOA comprises approximately 130 homes but is not open to the majority of the 1,912 people living in the Eastside Calpella/Lake Mendocino node. Each of the three trailer parks in this node provide small parks that meet the minimum requirements for park access to those residents.

Calpella Elementary School provides after hours recreational access to the 312 residents in the Calpella Node.

Overall, outside the city limits park and recreation opportunities are very limited. Goal 1.1 and 1.2 establish a threshold density of five people per acre combined with a minimum population over

which the City expects to provide parks. The Vichy Springs node with a population density of 4.5 people per acre is the most densely populated area outside the city limits. By contrast, the Greater Ukiah population node has nearly twice that density providing a much greater economy of scale to support parks and recreation. The population density threshold of five per acre excludes the requirement of providing parks and facilities beyond the limits of the Greater Ukiah node. However, park and recreation services inside the urban Greater Ukiah node need to be adequate to serve all the residents living within the Area of Interest. Further, as outlined in Goal 1.3, the urban parks need adequate resources to not become over “pressured.” Currently the parks in the Greater Ukiah node are meeting the needs of the surrounding area without experiencing the “pressure” of overuse.

In selecting a place to live residents can choose locations that best meet their needs. Residents who choose to live in rural or lightly populated areas reap the benefits of dark skies, remote neighbors, lower land costs, and more natural home settings. Those benefits, however, come at the cost of substantially reduced park and recreation opportunities. New housing developments could increase the population and density of an identified node to a point where the City would work to provide new parks, but with the exception of the Greater Ukiah node, none of the outlying nodes currently provide adequate density or an economy of scale to merit the development of a new park.

## Recreation Services

The mission of the recreation team is to fill recreation gaps that are not met by for-profit, or non-profit organizations, but are desired by the public. In some cases, such as the municipal pool at Todd Grove Park, the recreation team provides a low-cost alternative to otherwise expensive recreational needs.

The City of Ukiah (COU) boasts a five-member recreation team providing a robust and varied slate of recreation opportunities. The Gap Analysis survey and recreation sign up lists confirm the recreation team currently serves the entire Area of Interest and beyond. While the majority of people signing up for recreation activities and attending COU recreation sponsored events are from the Greater Ukiah Node, the services are also used by many from the Area of Interest.

The COU recreation team organizes team-sports leagues, swimming lessons, an after-school program, a summer school program, an intramural elementary school sports program, and a multitude of classes. Additionally, the team partners with Ukiah Unified School District (UUSD) to organize games and practices at Anton Stadium.

Adult team sports include softball, volleyball, and basketball. Youth team sports cover the same sports plus flag football. Cumulatively, there are year-round team sports opportunities for residents of the Ukiah valley. The recreation team hires umpires and referees and oversees the work of the volunteer coaches for all the teams. Ukiah’s Sports Complex hosted nearly seventy-three thousand visits in the last year. Over 150 coaches and volunteers are employed by the recreation team to support team sports services. At this time adult and youth soccer leagues are provided by local non-profit organizations and therefore not conducted by the COU Recreation.

### Major Annual Events

- All American Picnic
- Community Yard Sale
- Dias De Los Muertos
- Earth Day
- Friday Night Grinds
- Grasshopper Gravel Bike Race
- Holiday Ice Rink
- Hometown Holidays
- Kids Triathlon
- Let it Glow Festival
- Light Parade
- Moonlight Movies
- Pumpkin Fest
- Sundays in the Park

In addition to sports, the recreation team puts on multiple large events throughout the year. The largest events are the Sundays in the Park Series (six concerts per summer with close to 26,000 attendees) and the Pumpkin Fest. The Ice Rink and Hometown Holidays are now drawing over 10,000 visitors per year and the 2024 Light Parade attracted over 6,000 attendees.

City sponsored classes are held year-round linking teachers to students interested in music, art, health & fitness, aquatics, dance, pets, and children’s activities.

The recreation team publicizes these activities primarily through social media and contact lists. Participants can review and sign up for leagues and classes through the online “Rec Desk” portal. The Rec Desk portal includes a contact list of over 8,000 potential participants and 85 instructors and coaches.

## Community Input Overview

Community input for this report included a survey (online and paper, English and Spanish), focus groups, tabling events, one-on-one meetings, and discussions with the Public Spaces Commission (PSC) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI).

Community input began with the project design being discussed with the Public Spaces Commission (PSC) at its May 14th, 2024, and July 9th, 2024, meetings.

Community input solicitations were designed to be in alignment with the Goals and identified Levels of Service. The survey was designed using the Survey Monkey application and included twenty questions. Surveys were publicized via a press release, and social media outreach. Additionally, the surveys were promoted and available via “tabling” events at two Sundays in the Park and the Pumpkinfest. A total of 283 surveys were completed.

One-on-one meetings were held with representatives from the Bureau of Land Management (Cow Mountain) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (Lake Mendocino). Although there is no public access to BLM property within the area of interest, input from BLM was requested as they provide a significant recreational opportunity in the region and additional access points could bring the recreation area into the area of interest.

A total of 10 stakeholder focus groups were convened. The focus group design, recruitment, and facilitation were done in collaboration with facilitator Jen Dalton of Kitchen Table Consulting. The focus groups included stakeholders representing Alex Rorabaugh Recreation Center, business community members, a real estate group, climate action and healthy communities, LatinX, County of Mendocino employees, competitive sports enthusiasts, Ukiah Unified School District, and elected officials. The same focus group questions were presented to the Public Spaces Commission (PSC) and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (DEI).

On September 10th, 2024 the PSC Community Forum included a facilitated discussion using the Focus Group questions. This publicly noticed and publicized meeting was offered both in person and remotely and had an attendance of 15 and included Spanish language translation.

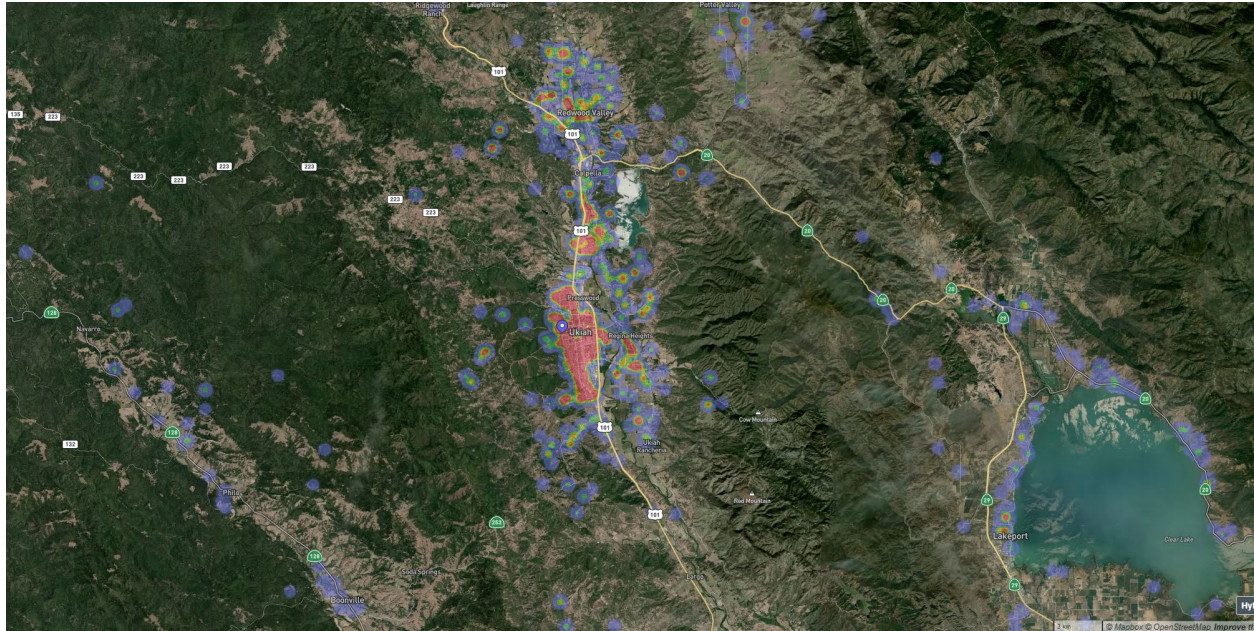
The DEI Commission provided input at their regularly scheduled and publicly noticed October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, meeting.

## Community Input Summation

### Focus Groups

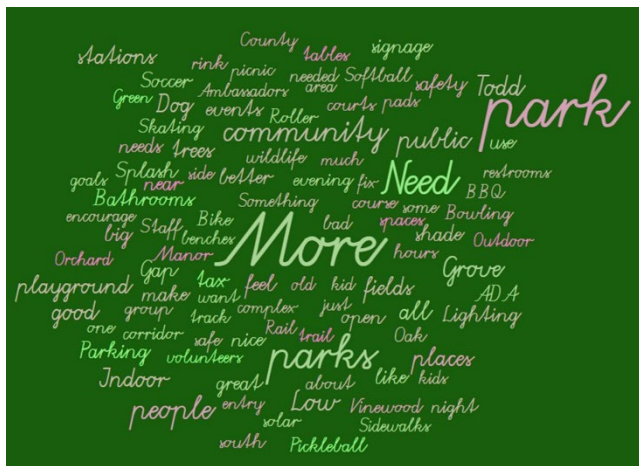
Universally, stakeholders expressed appreciation for the opportunity to provide input. When asked about the quantity of parks, an immediate request for more parks was frequently expressed. This likely has more to do with the popularity of parks rather than a true need for more parks. When asked for more detail on the need for “more parks” it often emerged that it was more specifically a greater diversity of park features that was of interest. On further questioning, most groups saw a true need for more parks on the south side of Ukiah outside current city limits. The need for parks in the Wagenseller area was also noted by many focus group members. The quantity of parks question preceded the diversity of *features* question about parks so both questions elicited lists of desired

but unavailable features including dog parks, skating surfaces, pickleball courts, soccer areas, and indoor facilities. The need for river access, restrooms, and ADA features were less commonly noted needs.



Heat Map Showing Origins of Attendees for Sunday in the Park Performance June 30, 2024

Questions regarding the quality of parks were generally quite positive with many avowing to the cleanliness and tidiness of the parks. New facilities at Todd Grove Park were praised, and while the aging of facilities was noted, most participants seemed to feel they were not yet past their reasonable life span. Low Gap Park was a notable exception that was frequently called out as having dilapidated features, many of which are seen as deteriorated to the point of being unusable.



To explore issues of *community and social capital* focus group members were asked “Do you think our parks are promoting a sense of community? How could they do that better?” The answers tended to feature recreation programs as opposed to parks infrastructure. However, community gardens, murals, and connectivity along the Great Redwood Trail were all mentioned as important infrastructure for building community. The LatinX group expressed a need for a public square or a place for people to walk and mingle as a park-like feature that would be culturally appropriate and desired. The old Montgomery Ward storefront next to the Alex Rorabaugh Center site was specifically mentioned as having potential for this feature. Previous discussions with the LatinX community also suggest a strong desire for family gathering areas.

Focus group participants were asked about their perception of *Safety* in the parks; “Do you think our parks feel welcoming to you? Do you feel safe in parks?” Generally, participants spoke to feeling safe during daylight hours. This was biased by gender with one participant stating, “sure, I feel safe, but I’m six foot four.” The Great Redwood Trail and Low Gap Park were spoken of as parks that feel less safe, but this too was by no means universal. Most comments regarding perceived danger focused on a general discomfort with homeless or people under the influence with little concern expressed about robbery, violence, or gangs. Some participants expressed surprise that others did not feel safe. It also should be noted that a number of parents qualified their positive statements of perceived safety with the qualifier “but I don’t want my child to be there alone.” Restrooms were called out as a potentially unsafe place and a need for single stall, individual restrooms were desired to avoid being trapped in an enclosed place with a potential assailant. One group suggested the need for a greater police presence only to be countered with “not everyone feels safer with the police.” The presence of park staff, rangers, or park “ambassadors” was seen as a good option for increasing perceived safety. Improved lighting was also mentioned as a means to improve safety.

It should be noted that the facilitators generally steered the conversation away from homelessness. The facilitators took the position that homelessness is a separate issue that effects all public spaces and that parks “neither create nor solve homelessness.” The issue of homelessness did come up at all the focus group meetings and while no one was prohibited from speaking about it, most participants seemed to agree it is a subject that requires its own separate discussion and its own separate solution. There was no dispute, and this report acknowledges that homelessness negatively impacts the perception of safety and park cleanliness thereby decreasing user enjoyment of parks.

The final focus group question was *“Lack of funding is a barrier. Many communities set up special districts or pass bond measures to pay for parks. Do you think that might be a good option for here?”* Few participants categorically ruled out assessing additional taxes to support parks. However, many felt that “now is not a good time” and a lack of trust that additional taxes would not be diverted away from parks for other uses. Many participants expressed a willingness to pay additional taxes if they could be assured the money would be exclusively earmarked for parks and recreation. The Real Estate Focus group expressed the most resistance to new taxes with concern that property owners pay an unfair share of taxes. The use of fundraisers, grants, and donations were suggested by virtually all groups. There was little or no discussion of Public / Private partnerships or “pay for play” options.

### **One-on-One Meetings**

One-on-one meetings were set up with Poppy Burkhead from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) at Lake Mendocino and Shane Garside of BLM. Staff met with Lake Mendocino’s Operations Project Manager Poppy Burkhead on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Lake Mendocino offers many recreational opportunities including two camping areas, boat-in camping, approximately 15 miles of hiking and biking trails, two disc golf courses and multiple playgrounds. Some of the trails are in the 700-acre wilderness area, where native wildlife can be viewed. There are five large day-use areas with covered picnic shelters and barbeques. For on-the-water recreation, there is boating,

swimming and water skiing. Fishing for large and small mouth bass, stripers, crappie, blue gill and three varieties of catfish is a popular activity.

In recent years the lake level has become more variable with extended periods of low water level due to drought. During these periods of low water, fishing and boating become unavailable. Additionally, efforts to assure adequate water flow to the Russian River has led to storing greater amounts of water creating periods of flooding. Flooding submerged the boat launch areas and the access road to the largest area of campgrounds leading to the majority of their campsites being closed. Fishing, boating, swimming, and camping have all been significantly curtailed due to the unpredictability of the lake level. The USACE has entered a partnership with the Greater Ukiah Business and Tourism Alliance (GUBTA) to explore options for improving recreational opportunities at the Lake.

While Lake Mendocino provides regional park opportunities in the City of Ukiah's Area of Interest, very few residents live within walking distance of the park's features. The USACE is interested in installing a "destination playground" in the hopes that it will draw tourists to the park. Although a large playground for 5-12 year-olds would have appeal to local families as a regional destination, it does not meet the community need for "accessible" (within a half mile) parks.

A one-on-one meeting with Assistant Field Manager Shane Garfield of the BLM was convened on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Although there is no public access to BLM property within the area of interest, input from BLM was requested as they provide a significant recreational opportunity in the region.

Cow Mountain provides over 50,000 acres of open space. The North Cow Mountain Recreation (non-motorized) Area is located within the Mayacamas Mountains, east of the City of Ukiah and west of the City of Lakeport, in Northwestern California. The recreation management area consists of approximately 26,000 acres of public land that is managed for non-motorized use. The recreation area boasts almost 30 miles of hiking, biking, and equestrian trails. South Cow Mountain is contiguous and located immediately to the south. South Cow Mountain is open to motorized vehicles and boasts over 90 miles of trails and roads.

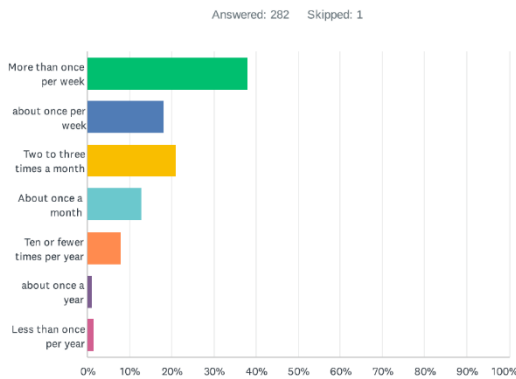
The western boundary of North Cow Mountain is within the City of Ukiah's Area of Interest, but no trailheads are within the Area of Interest. Further, the only legal shooting range on Cow Mountain is in the middle of the non-motorized area. Unregulated, illegal shooting is rampant and a serious deterrent to users from the Ukiah Valley. The lack of a convenient trailhead and overly steep trails further reduce the recreational appeal of the trails. Mr. Garfield acknowledged these issues and stated that moving the shooting range is not an option, and staffing for enforcement is extremely limited. The benefits of establishing a trailhead on the west side of the property were discussed.

## Surveys and Tabling



A 20-question survey was developed using the online Survey Monkey application. The questions were designed to align with this project’s Levels of Service and Goals. The survey was available in English and Spanish and advertised via a press release, on social media, and via tabling events. Over 300 surveys were completed. The surveys were available at tabling events as well, and participants were encouraged to discuss the questions and parks in general in one-on-one interactions.

Q2 How often do you go to Ukiah Valley area parks?



The majority of respondents (76%) live in the greater Ukiah Valley node and are frequent users of the parks. Generally speaking, the more often people used parks, the more likely they were to fill out the survey, a bias that should be considered. Over forty percent felt we need more parks, but in the comments section there were many statements like “we could always use more parks.” Some respondents also noted that having well dispersed parks is as important as having more parks. Seventy percent of respondents expressed that the parks are clean and well

maintained with only thirteen percent disagreeing with that. The question regarding park cleanliness specifically stated “other than homelessness” do you feel the parks are clean and well maintained. Many respondents used the comment areas in the survey to bemoan the negative impact of people experiencing homelessness. For the authors of the survey, it was important to try to separate the success of the City in routine maintenance of the park as opposed to the issues related to mitigating the impact of homelessness. Survey responses did seem to indicate that the Parks maintenance team is doing a good job with routine maintenance.

The survey indicated that for the majority of users, park use is a social activity. Less than one in five respondents reported “always” or “usually” going to the park alone. This is contrasted with over sixty percent stating they “always” or “usually” go with “my family or a larger group of friends” and forty-three percent “always” or “usually” going with one or more friends. This suggests a potential need for more facilities to support group use.

The survey indicated that the parks are not overcrowded, and the available space is adequate to meet community needs. Additionally, sixty percent of respondents feel the parks provide a “sense of place and history.” Thirty percent had no opinion on this question, leaving less than ten percent who disagreed.

Seventy-one percent of respondents stated they feel the parks are safe enough to use. Less than fifteen percent disagreed. However, when asked about specific parks, only forty-three percent stated they feel safe in all the parks. A third of respondents do not feel the Great Redwood Trail is safe, while more than seventeen percent deem Riverside Park, Oak Manor Park, and Low Gap Park unsafe.

Understanding the recreational interests of users will help City of Ukiah staff to plan for and provide the appropriate park features and recreational programs. The survey asked participants to cite their top three recreational interests. "Trail Use" and "Picnic/Relax/Hangout" both were cited by fifty-seven percent of respondents. These were followed by "River Access" (31%) and swimming (28%) as the most popular activities. All the rest of the options were selected by five to fifteen percent of participants. Interestingly, this included pickleball with only twelve percent choosing it as one of their top three activities. These results suggest strong community interest in nature-based outdoor recreation.

Approximately two thirds reported taking recreation department classes and activities in the last "few years" while ninety percent stated they would take a class if the time and activity suited them. Not surprisingly, there was significant interest in most of the recreation options provided. Similarly interest in team or competitive sports was spread fairly evenly across the options provided.

Fifty-one percent of respondents agreed or strongly stated support for a potential tax to pay for parks and recreation support. An additional twenty-five percent of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with only thirteen percent disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The self-selection of the survey no doubt biased the results with a high percentage of frequent park users more likely to support a parks tax than might the general population.

The survey was also skewed with women twice as likely to participate as men. Three quarters of respondents were well distributed by age between thirty and sixty or older. Nineteen percent were under thirty and a small percentage declined to state. Despite efforts at engagement, only thirteen percent of respondents identified as Hispanic and three quarters as White/Caucasian.

#### **A small sampling of typical survey comments:**

*"I think a hard-packed sand (or something non-slippery like that) walking trail just inside the stone wall at Todd Grove Park would be a welcomed improvement. It would be a mostly shaded area for walking at any time of the day especially in the summer. Maybe other parks would like to have such a feature also."*

*"I think it would be awesome if lights could be installed (where possible) to illuminate grass areas and basketball courts for after work recreation during the winter. I would support special district taxes to support these improvements"*

*"The south end of town could use another park. Also, easier/more access to rivers would be amazing."*

*"The south side of Ukiah deserves more park access, the areas of the Ukiah valley with the highest percentage of Latino residents have the lowest access to safe parks/recreation activities."*

*"I would really like the city to expand the riverside park to make use of the river there for more swim activities.....even to create a large beach area. It seems a shame that we don't have access to the Russian River for families in the summer."*

## Next Steps – Case Studies

The City of Ukiah’s existing parks largely meet community needs for those living within the city limits. However, survey and focus group input suggest residents would like both more parks and additional features like dog parks, pickleball courts, and lighting. Further, the areas immediately to the north and south of the city are underserved. Beyond the Greater Ukiah node, population densities are too low to support park development. Many of these areas may be relatively close to current or future open spaces, but otherwise, these residents will need to travel to a park in the Greater Ukiah node.

This section will discuss opportunities to expand the City’s park system to meet current and future needs. Table 4 provides a Capital Improvement Project list of potential acquisitions and park feature improvements or additions associated with this section’s recommendations.

### **Connectivity**

Each individual park offers a different set of recreational opportunities and ideally, a system of parks will provide all the varied opportunities a community desires. A parks system with good connectivity will ensure that the sum of recreational opportunities is greater than its parts. By allowing users to combine experiences and transform travel to, from, and between parks from a task to part of the experience increases the overall impact of the park system.

**Great Redwood Trail** - Linear parks provide the most obvious example of enhancing parks through connectivity. The Great Redwood Trail (GRT) will one day span from the south end to the north end of the Area of Interest. In addition to serving as a recreational space it will serve as a transportation corridor. The completed path will double as an alternative transportation “arterial” or major route. The trail is currently open to the public from Commerce Drive to Brush Street and construction is under way to extend to the southern city limit with a grand opening planned for Fall of 2025. The Ukiah section of the GRT lacks landscaping, shade, and amenities. The City of Ukiah’s GRT Master plan (2020) provides guidance for the addition of park features along the trail. The City is currently working with the Great Redwood Trail Agency to create new sites to access the trail.

**Orr Creek Greenway** – The Ukiah Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan (2015) and the Low Gap Park Trail Plan (2016) describe the benefits of creating a multi-use path along Orr Creek from Low Gap Park to the Russian River (Figure 5). This path would cross the GRT and add an east-west arterial corridor for bicyclists and pedestrians in addition to the north-south GRT arterial. This path would connect the recreational opportunities at Low Gap Park, Ukiah High, Pomolita Middle School, and the Ukiah Sports Complex.

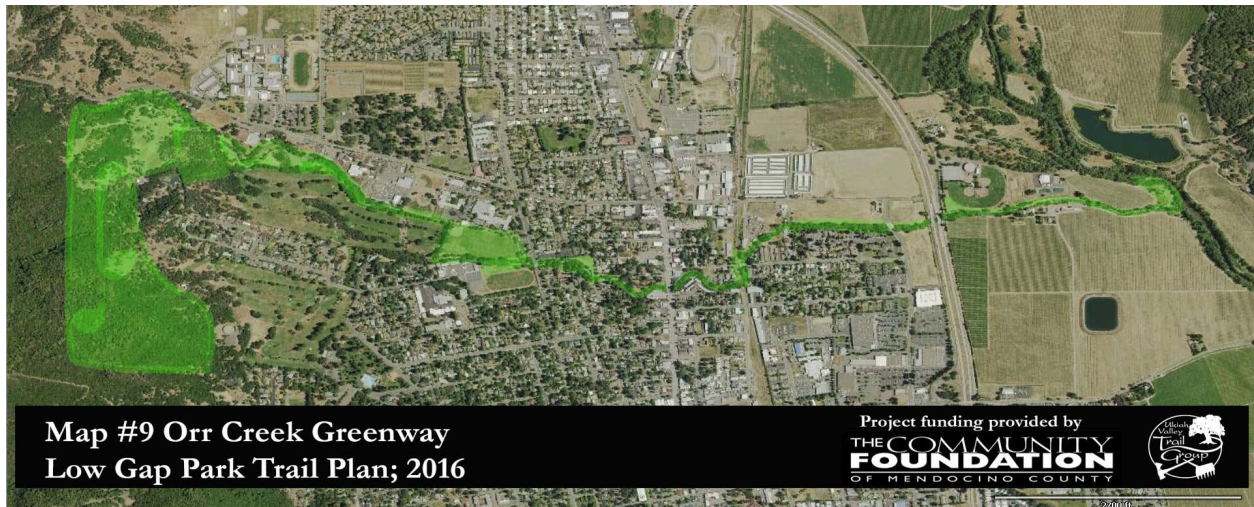


Figure 5 Orr Creek Greenway

**Park Development Opportunities North Ukiah**

The north end of the Greater Ukiah node is underserved by parks. A park located in the vicinity of the west end of Lover’s Lane could provide most of the underserved area in Figure 6 with access to a park. Alternatively, a park on Ford Road would provide good access to about half the homes in the underserved area. New housing developments on the north end of the node would require the addition of parks.

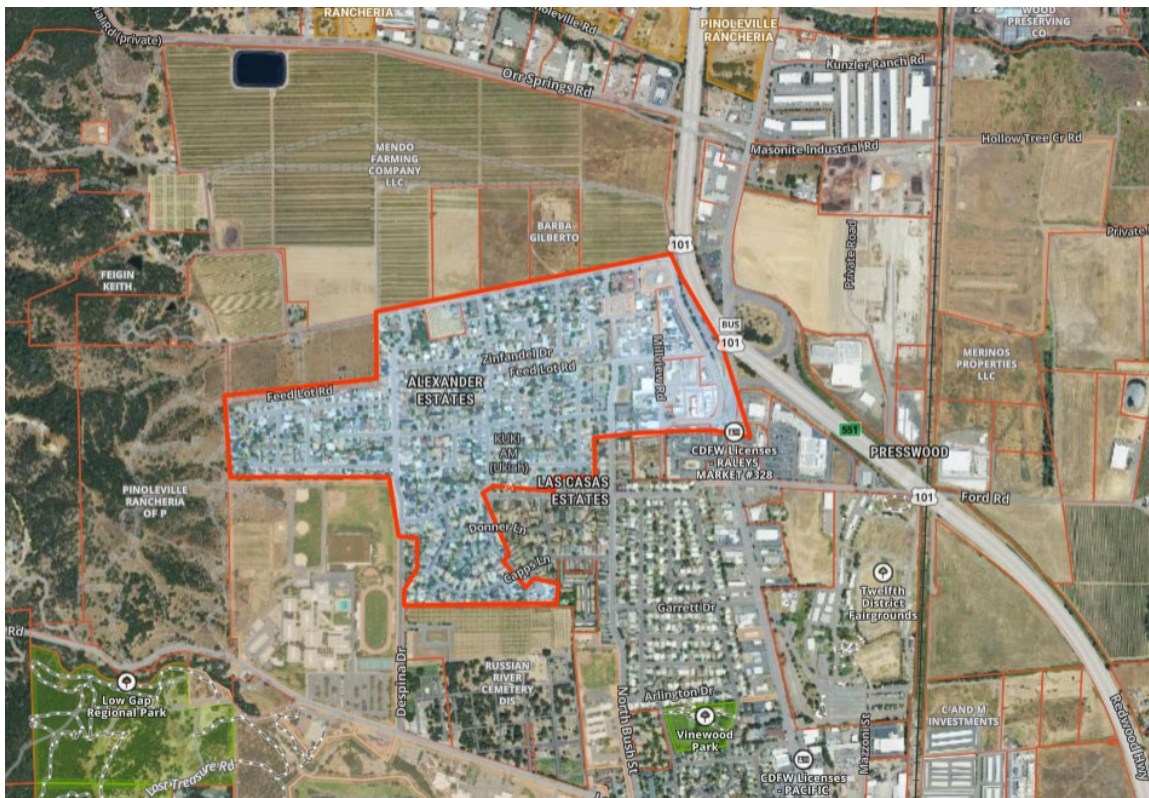


Figure 6– Homes on the north end of the Greater Ukiah node **greater than a half mile from a park** outlined in red.

**South Ukiah** – The south side of the Greater Ukiah node has a relatively high population density with most of the residents in a severely disadvantaged community (CA State Parks Fact Finder). Assuring all residents in the area live within a half mile of a park and have a diversity of park features will likely require the creation of three new parks. Schools on the south end of town may provide opportunities as well as other under utilized properties. Further, a strong argument can be made that to achieve equity, one of the parks should be a large community park reminiscent of Todd Grove Park. The City owns property on the end of Norgard Lane which could potentially be developed as a park. Additionally, the proposed Bella Vista development on the south end of the Greater Ukiah node may present an opportunity for the third park in the area (Figure 7).

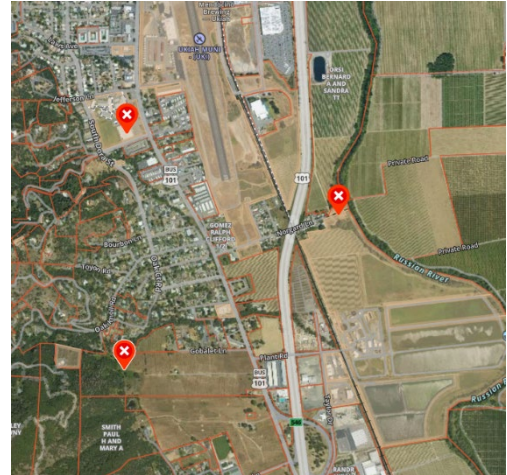


Figure 7 Potential South Side Park Locations

### **Wagenseller Neighborhood Park Opportunities**

There are five identified but unsecured options for meeting the park needs of the Wagenseller neighborhood, all with pros and cons. In no order of importance or feasibility, the first option would be to develop a section of the Great Redwood Trail (GRT) sufficiently to meet community needs. This option cannot happen until the GRT is “railbanked” and there is no identified timeline for this to occur. However, once railbanked this would provide an affordable and suitable option. The second option would be to create an underpass or overpass across highway 101 to allow access to the Ukiah Sports Complex. A few additional features would allow this park to transition from a special use park to a neighborhood park. However, the financial and bureaucratic hurdles to this option are very high. The third option would be to build a new park in the Brush Street triangle. Should this area be developed, the inclusion of a park could be a condition of development. The fourth option is to acquire property from the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. However, it is unknown if the church has any interest in selling. The fifth option would be to create a public-private partnership with the Rural Community Housing District to open and improve their grounds for public use to meet the neighborhood’s needs.

### **Open Space Opportunities**

Results of this study’s survey showed a strong predilection for trails and outdoor, passive use recreation like hiking and nature viewing. Preservation of open space presents a number of associated co-benefits including watershed protection, carbon sequestration, and improvements to air quality. Recreation benefits are enjoyed by residents who recreate in the area while the economic benefits of increased tourism extend to the entire community. Open space preservation that is opened to public recreation would generally create a designation of regional park.

### **Western Hills Open Space**

The City of Ukiah has acquired over 700 acres of open space now named the Western Hills Watershed Protection Area (WHWPA). A management plan was adopted by the City Council in 2024. The management plan defines the western hills as ranging from the valley floor to the ridge near “lookout peak” and from highway 253 north to Low Gap Road. Although the City has only acquired 700 acres, there is recreational and environmental benefit to preserving the entire area. Linking the WHWPA via trail to Low Gap Park would greatly extend the ease of access to the area and the hills to the west of Lovers Lane would be a natural extension to be added to the area if feasible.

### **Landfill Site Open Space**

The City also owns approximately 170 acres of undeveloped oak woodland immediately to the north of the old landfill at the end of Vichy Hills Drive. This area has potential as an open space “trail” park.

### **Cow Mountain Open Space Access**

The hills to the east of the Ukiah Valley also hold potential for open space preservation. The western edge of the BLM’s Cow Mountain recreation area extends close to four miles and holds a host of opportunities for land acquisitions or public access easements to extend land preservation and open space recreation from Cow Mountain to the valley floor.

### **River Access Opportunities**

The Russian River bisects the Sphere of Influence and skirts the east side of the City of Ukiah. Traditionally, the river was freely accessed by residents for recreation. However, over the last two to three decades, private property owners have been increasingly unwilling to allow free access across their properties for public river access. River access is available at Riverside Park and limited access at the Vichy Springs Bridge – Fishing Area.

Riverside Park allows river access but lacks infrastructure to ease entry. River levels vary greatly and the best spots for accessing the river flood most years. The post flood detritus limits use and raises a challenge for any riverside improvements. Further, the presence of illegal encampments discourages use. Few people take advantage of the access points at this time.

The County-owned “Vichy Springs Bridge – Fishing Area” is a 2.7-acre parcel located directly under the Perkins Street overpass bridging the Russian River, and allows access to the west bank of the river. The property was acquired in a settlement agreement in 1991, following negotiations over rights-of-way for a new bridge and approach routes on East Perkins Street at the Russian River

### **WHWPA Vision Statement**

Creating an Open Space Preserve, Balancing Resource Management, Fire Risk Abatement, and Public Engagement

Our vision for the WHWPA is to establish an Open Space Preserve that harmoniously integrates resource management, fire risk abatement, and public access for healthy outdoor recreation. We aspire to protect native plants and wildlife communities, prevent erosion, and maintain water quality. Simultaneously, we aim to engage the public in citizen science, education, and passive recreation while ensuring the protection of historical resources and providing essential infrastructure for the benefit of our community.

crossing. The settlement terms allowed the County to own and maintain limited access to the area but prohibited any recreational development. The Vichy Springs Bridge is intended only for day use fishing access.

Should the City develop the Norgard Lane property as a park it would be possible for people to enter the river at Riverside Park and float to a take-out spot at Norgard Lane. Improved signage, strict enforcement of no-camping regulations, and prompt post flood clean-ups would make river access more tenable.

### **Unmet Park Feature Needs**

Community input and staff evaluations identified a variety of park features that are not currently available in the Ukiah Valley. Dog parks are arguably the single most important missing park feature. The high percentage of dog owners combined with a paucity of dog run areas or parks leads to the unsanctioned use of City parks as de facto dog parks. The unsanctioned “off-leash” use of areas does not serve dogs or their owners well and leads to conflict with other users.

The need for pickleball and skating areas both received the support of vocal and organized proponents. However, the results of community input suggest these are not the most popular activities. This should not dismiss the need of the features, but should be considered when prioritizing limited funding.

Trail use was the most popularly desired activity identified in the survey and efforts are underway to expand the trail system. The next most desired activity was “picnicking and hanging out.” The rentable group picnic areas are frequently reserved, suggesting a need for more group areas, particularly those that provide shade.

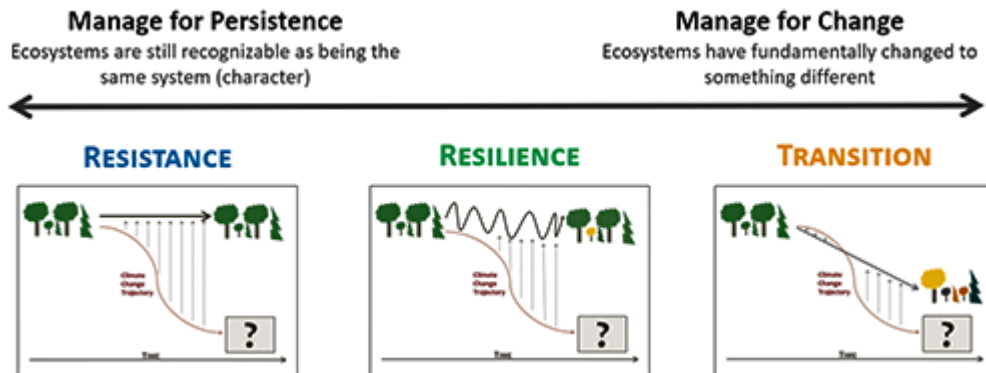
New parks, and improvements to existing parks, should be pursued with a strong consideration of the impacts of climate change. Shade and permeable surfaces should be included whenever feasible, particularly for play areas. The lack of shade on the Ukiah section of the Great Redwood Trail substantially decreases the number of users while missing an opportunity for carbon sequestration. Additionally, the provision of lights at parks can allow for expanded hours and use during the relative cool of mornings and evenings. Indoor facilities are desired but exceedingly expensive. An emphasis should be placed on finding or acquiring small areas for additional neighborhood basketball hoops and multi-use soccer courts.

Low Gap Park is in desperate need of maintenance. The County of Mendocino conducted a Parks Needs Assessment in two phases in 2020 and 2022<sup>4</sup>. The authors calculated a need for over a million dollars in maintenance simply to address the park’s health and safety concerns. They calculated a need for an additional fifty thousand dollars to allow for “minimum function”, and another five-hundred thousand dollars for “future improvements.”

Finally, the City of Ukiah’s municipal pool has aged to a point that maintenance is verging on unfeasible and unaffordable. Modern pool design also provides a wide range of advantages unavailable with the existing facility. Even without the pressure of climate change, a high quality and affordable municipal pool is an essential component of a complete park system in the Ukiah Valley. Planning and preparation to provide a modern pool facility should be undertaken as soon as possible.

## Preparing for Climate Change

The forest management framework<sup>5</sup>—focusing on resistance, resilience, and transition, as shown in the figure/image below—can be applied across all elements of a parks system and play a key role in guiding investments and resource allocation for City Parks, particularly those vulnerable to natural hazards such as flooding, fire, and landslides:



This framework for forest management—focusing on **resistance, resilience, and transition**—applies directly to the management of **local and regional parks** that include natural areas, trails, and forested open spaces. Key applications include:

1. **Resistance:** If maintaining current park conditions is the goal, management would focus on reducing tree density to lower fire risk, controlling invasive species, and maintaining existing recreational and ecological functions. This would help parks resist climate-driven changes, but ongoing intervention would be required to preserve these conditions.
2. **Resilience:** This approach recognizes that disturbances (wildfires, droughts, pest infestations) are inevitable. Parks would be managed to withstand and recover from these impacts, possibly by maintaining mature, seed-producing trees, promoting species diversity, and allowing some natural disturbances (like controlled burns) to occur to enhance ecosystem health.
3. **Transition:** If change is expected to alter the forest structure of parklands, proactive management would involve gradual shifts in species composition and habitat structure. This could mean replacing water-dependent species with drought-tolerant trees, creating more open-canopy conditions, or introducing plant communities that can better handle future conditions. It could also mean reducing recreational activities or access with a focus on preservation of this area for other needs.

For local parks, applying these principles ensures that recreational access, habitat conservation, and wildfire prevention strategies align with long-term ecological sustainability. This approach also guides decision-making on forest restoration, habitat protection, and climate adaptation in publicly managed open spaces.

## Funding

Funding for acquisition and development of current and future parks can come from donations, fundraising, sponsorships, grants, or taxes. Successfully funding all the desired projects will likely rely on all these funding sources. Donors do not typically give to municipalities. However, supporting non-profits can be a valuable partner in helping the City of Ukiah fund projects. City parks currently benefit from the support of the Ukiah Valley Trail Group, the Sanhedrin Chapter of the Native Plant Society, Ukiah Little League, the Rusty Bowl BMX, Ukiah Lion's Football and Cheer, and the Alex Rorabaugh Recreation Center. These groups tend to have their own agendas and solicit funds or contribute in-kind labor to meet their own priorities. These groups should be supported, thanked, and encouraged as they provide tremendous benefit to the city. The UVTG, Rusty Bowl, and Ukiah Little League all provide park features that would otherwise be unmet. The city would benefit from a non-profit with a mission to provide general support for parks or a non-profit focused on one or more of the City's priority park projects. The Public Spaces Commission could potentially foment the creation of a non-profit to support parks.

The City leans heavily on sponsorships to fund events. Utilizing sponsors to support park infrastructure, however, requires much larger contributions and therefore is more challenging. Soliciting sponsors for individual features at a park may be a fruitful approach. The cost of installing a new playground, dog park features, or a single trail could be offered at a level in line with the cost of the feature. Should the opportunity arise to create a new park, a donor/sponsor may be willing to contribute enough to merit an offer of naming rights. Additionally, this kind of sponsorship could be used as a required match in a grant application.

A wide variety of grants are available to support the creation and development of parks, but the competition is fierce. The City has made a commitment to this revenue stream by hiring a Grant Manager who works full-time pursuing and assisting other staff in their pursuit of grants. Over a half million dollars in grants have been used in city parks in the last three years. City staff are well aware of available grant opportunities and also make a practice of searching for new grant opportunities.

The final funding opportunity comes through the assessment of taxes. Park maintenance and incremental improvements are funded by the City's general fund. Most significant additions, feature replacements, and improvements rely on grant funding. Additional assessments could be used to finance bond measures or provide ongoing funding specifically for parks. Many communities establish special park districts to obtain needed park funding.

Special Districts are authorized and created by the Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCo) and are set up to cover a specific mapped area. A special park district could be set up to cover the Sphere of Influence, the Area of Interest, or some other customized area. Property taxes are the most common item taxed, but sales taxes or luxury taxes among others are options. Setting up a special park district does not require an election, but taxing the residents of the district would.

## Conclusions

On-site staff assessments of the parks concurred with community input in determining the Greater Ukiah Node parks to be well maintained and in overall good shape. The one exception was the County managed Low Gap Park. While residents desire a greater diversity of park features, they also expressed overall satisfaction with the existing park diversity of features. Some desirable park features that are not represented in City parks include dog parks, pickleball, courts, skating venues, neighborhood basketball courts, and multiple river access points. The majority of people living in the city limits live within a half mile of a first tier, community, neighborhood, or regional park. Staffing for the parks is adequate to maintain existing facilities. Additional funding will be needed to expand, create new, or improve existing parks.

While few parks exist outside the Greater Ukiah Node, the total population and population densities do not support the creation of new parks. Residents choosing to live in rural areas and lightly populated nodes should not expect the City of Ukiah to attempt to provide parks in their vicinity even should the area be annexed into the city limits. The City can, however, work to expand the amount and access to open space. Trails and passive recreation provide an affordable and popular park and recreation opportunity. The Russian River also provides a valuable opportunity to affordably improve Ukiah Valley recreation.

Should annexation occur to the boundary of the Greater Ukiah node, or to include the entire Sphere of Influence, it will not make a significant difference in current park needs. In either case population densities should support the maintenance of new parks on the north and south side of the current city limits. However, the capital investment required to acquire the land and build the parks will require grant funding, fund-raising, and, or the creation of a parks district.

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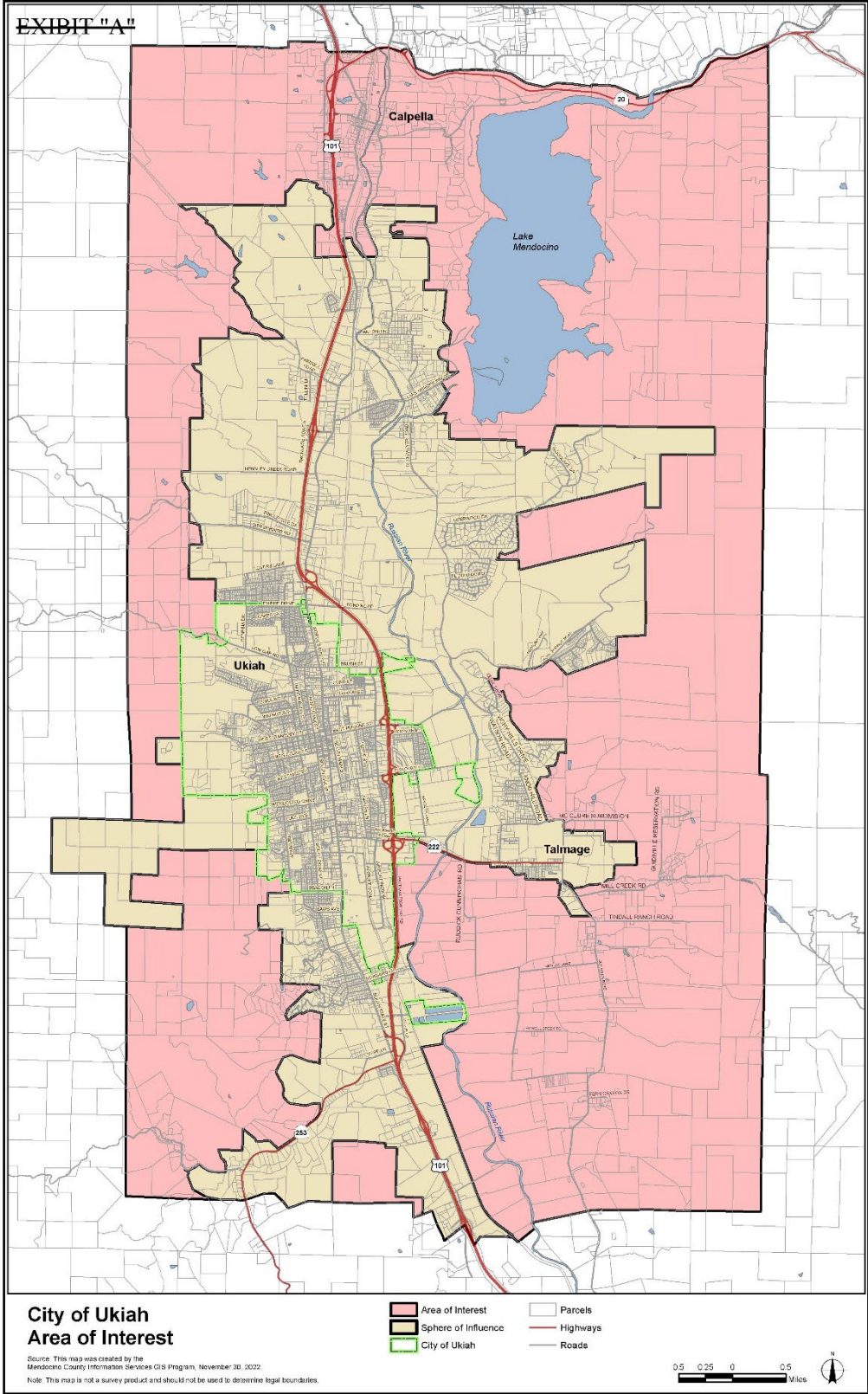
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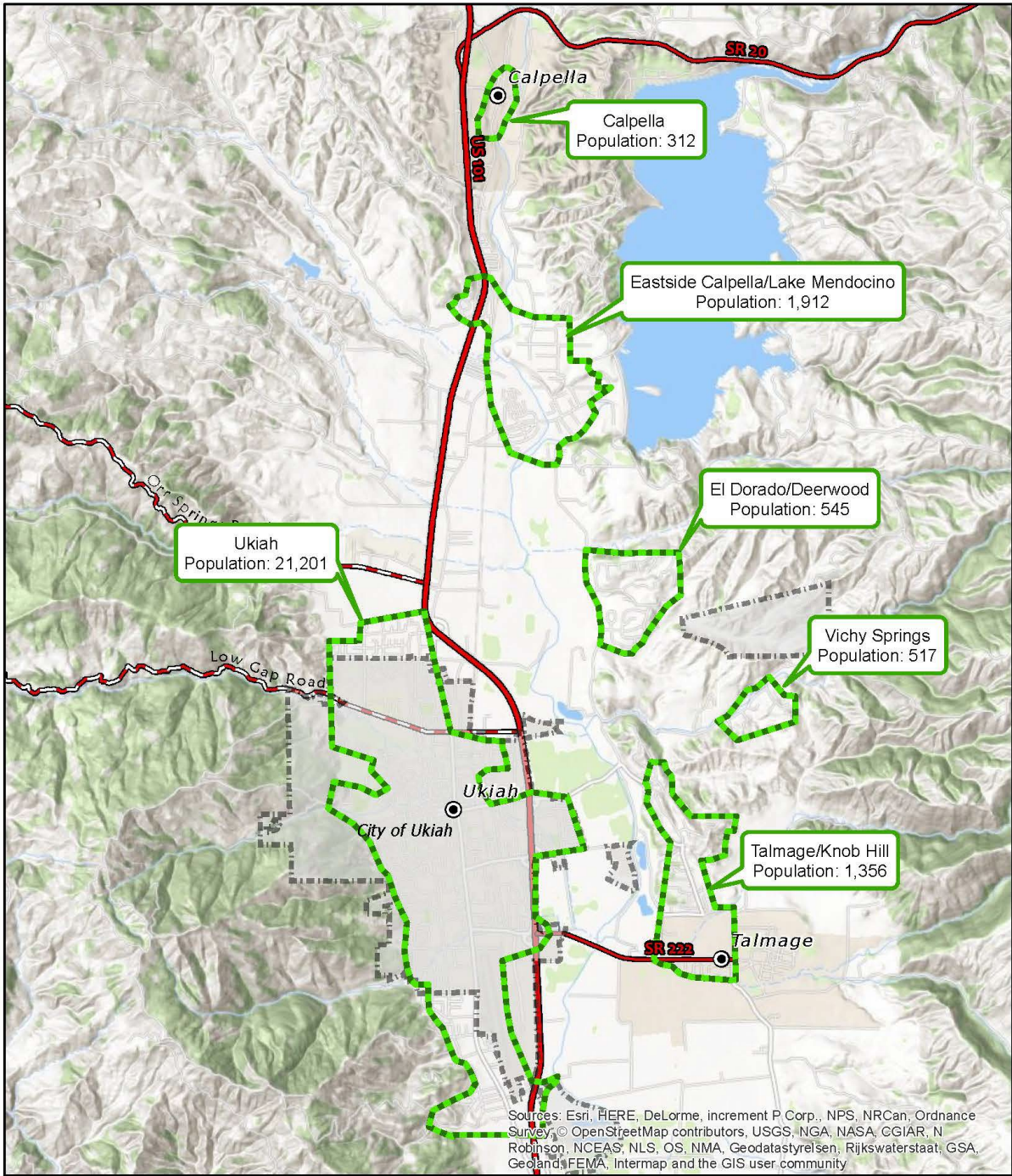
# Maps



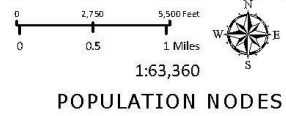
**EXHIBIT "A"**



**Map 1 -City of Ukiah Area of Interest and Sphere of Influence**

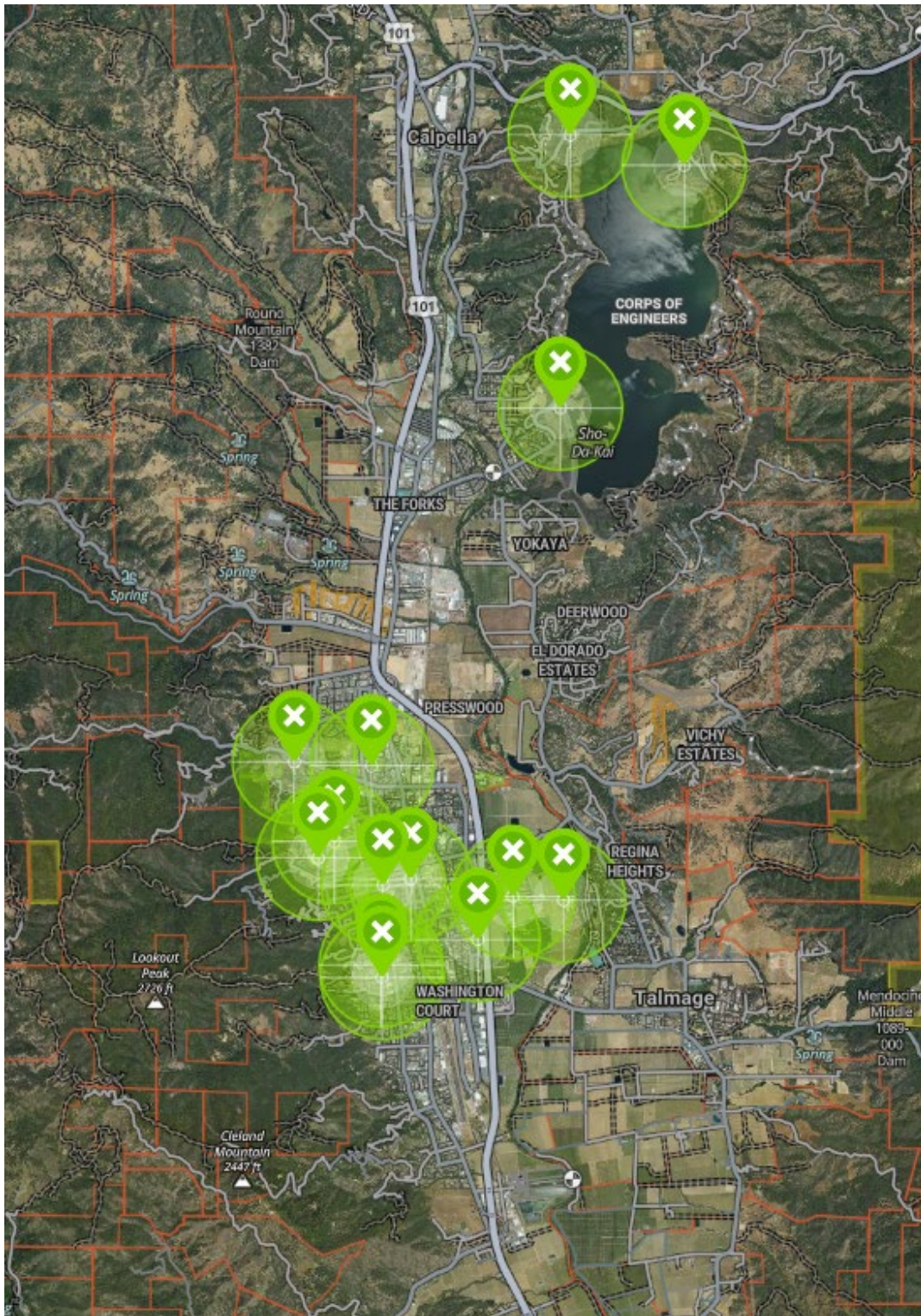


- Major Towns & Places
- ▬ Major Roads
- ▬ City Limits
- ▬ Population\_Nodes
- ▬ Highways



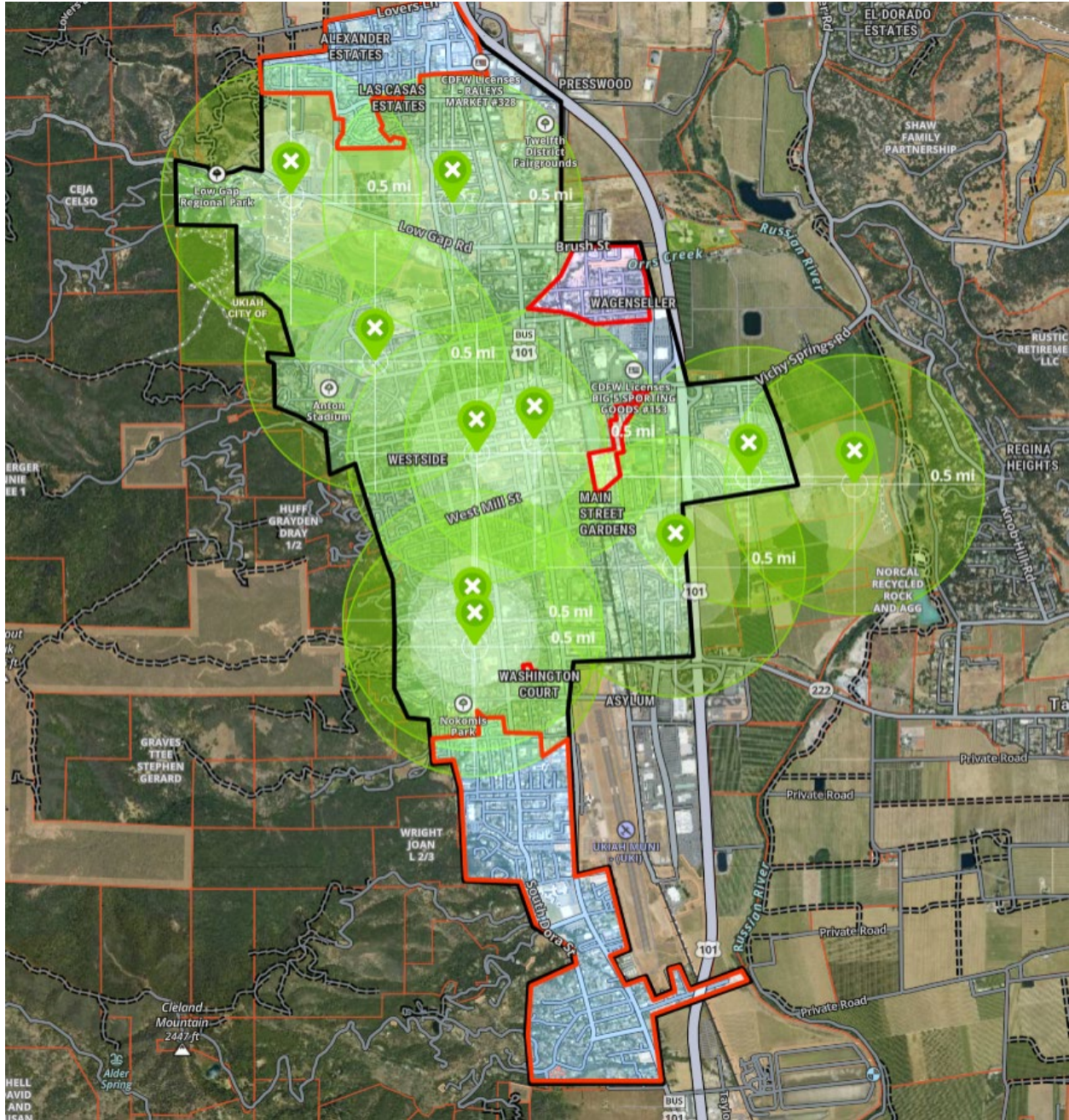
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**Map 2 – Population nodes with populations.**



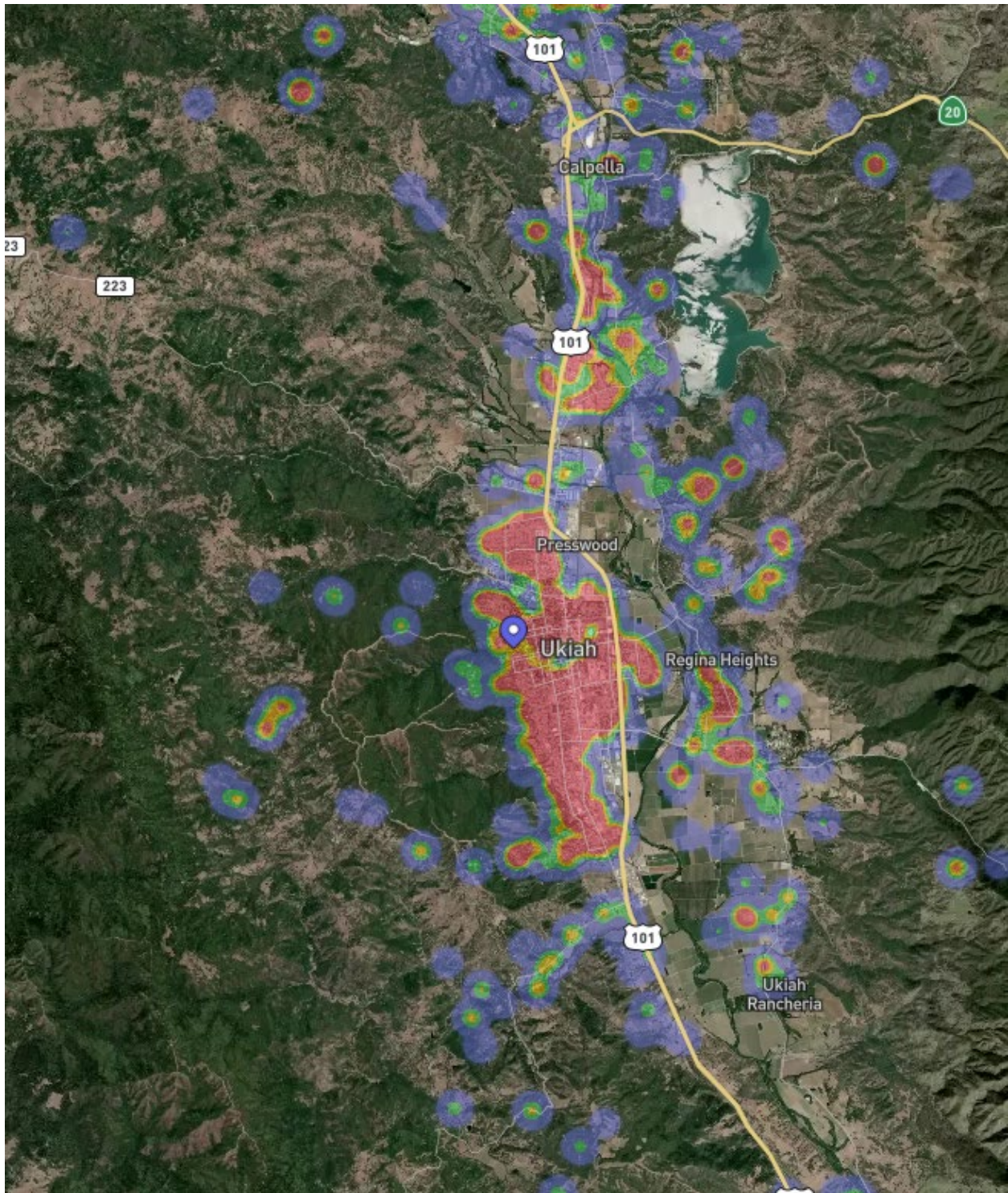
**Map 3; First Tier, Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Park Locations and half mile radii.**

Alex R. Thomas Plaza, Low Gap Park, McGarvey Park, Oak Manor Park, Observatory Park, Riverside Park, Todd Grove Park, Vinewood Park, and Lake Mendocino gateways.



**Map 4 – Parks in Relation to Greater Ukiah Node**

- Green – Parks and half mile radii
- Black – Greater Ukiah Node
- Red – Area Underserved by Parks



**Map 5 – Heat Map of Todd Grove Park User Origins.**

Heat map of Todd Grove Park visitor originations demonstrating the usage of City parks from throughout the Area of Interest and beyond.

## Tables

<i>Pocket Park</i>	<i>PP</i>	<i>Very small park, may have a bench.</i>
<i>Mini Park</i>	<i>MP</i>	Small, single-purpose improved area generally equipped for use by small children. Usually less than one acre.
<i>Neighborhood Park</i>	<i>NP</i>	Combined playground and park area generally for non-organized activities. May include a restroom.
<i>Community Park</i>	<i>CP</i>	Designed for organized activity with users traveling from some distance. Includes parking, sports fields and restrooms.
<i>Special Use Park</i>	<i>SUP</i>	Specialized use recreational areas that do not fit another category, such as dog parks and skate parks.
<i>Linear Park</i>	<i>LP</i>	A park along a travel corridor, generally narrow and long.
<i>School Park</i>	<i>SP</i>	School-owned facilities with limited availability. Only active sport and recreational use areas contribute to school park acreage in this assessment.
<i>Regional Park</i>	<i>RP</i>	Larger park which may be more isolated from population nodes. May be limited to trails and outdoor recreation, but may have additional facilities.
<i>Open Space</i>	<i>OS</i>	<i>An undeveloped or minimally developed large area conserved for habitat and general conservation value. May include trails.</i>

**Table 1- Park Category Descriptions**

Park	Area (City vs SOI)	Park Type	Acreage	Quality of 1/2 mile walkability (1-5)	less than 1/4 mile from bus stop
Alex R. Thomas Plaza	City	CP	>1 Acre	3	X
Alex Rorabaugh Center & Fields (County) - UUSD	SOI	SP,SUP	±10 Acres	2	X
City Rail Trail	City	LP	± 3 miles	4	X
Gardner Park	City	PP	>1	3	X
Giorno Park/Anton Stadium	City	SUP	12	3	X
Grace Hudson Museum	City	SUP	>1 Acre	4	X
Low Gap Park (County & City)/City View Trail	City	RP	±80 Acres	4	X
McGarvey Park	City	NP	>1 Acre	4	X
Oak Manor Park	City	CP	>1 Acre	4	X
Observatory Park	City	NP,CP	2.5 Acres	4	X
Orchard Park	City	MP	>1 acre	2	X
Orr Creek Greenway at Oak and Commons	City	LP	±3 Acres	4	X
Riverside Park	City	RP	38 Acres	1	
Railroad Depot Park	City	PP	>1 Acre	2	X
Seminary Avenue	City	N/A	0.22 Miles	3	X
Todd Gove Park & Municipal Pool	City	CP	8.6 Acres	3	X
Ukiah Civic Center	City	NP	2.5 Acres	3	X
Ukiah Skate Park	City	SUP	>1 Acre	4	X
Ukiah Sports Complex	City	SUP	10.3 Acres	0	
Vinewood Park	City	NP	4.7 Acres	2	
Western Hills - Open Space Acquisition	City	OS ?	± 639 Acre	1	
Watershed Park	City	OS ?	>1 Acre	1	X
Vichy Springs Fishing Area (County Park)	SOI	SUP		1	
Landfill Site ( not developed or open)	SOI		283	1	
Norgard Property (not developed or open)	SOI		2.4	1	
Mill Creek Park (Outside SOI)	SOI	RP	424	0/1	
Cow Mountain ( No access in SOI)	SOI	RP	25000	0	
Lake Mendocino	SOI	RP	3165	1	

**Alternative Transportation Infrastructure for Parks in Area of Interest**

**1 point for each**

- Compete sidewalks in half mile
- Bike lane access to park
- MTA stop within 1/4 mile
- low traffic volume

**Table 2 Bike, Pedestrian, and Bus Accessibility of Parks.**

Parks	Park Type	Acreage	Open Area	Playground or Skate Park	Picnic Tables and Benches	Barbecues	Reservable Group Picnic Area	Tennis Courts	Basketball Courts	Covered Gazebo/Shelter	Softball/Baseball Diamonds	Multipurpose Meeting Rooms	Wetland/Resource Protection	Concert Area/Amphitheater	Restrooms	Community Garden	Camping	Trail(s)
Alex R. Thomas Plaza	Plaza	>1 Acre			X										X			
Alex Rorabaugh Center & Fields (County) - UIUSD	SP,SUP	#10 Ac	X	X					X			X			X			
Great Redwood Trail	LP	# 3 mil														X		X
Gardner Park	PP	>1			X													
Giorno Park/Anton Stadium	SUP	12	X								X							
Grace Hudson Museum	SUP	>1 Acre	X		X							X			X			
Low Gap Park (County & City)/City View Trail	RP	#80 Ac	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X			X
McGarvey Park	NP	>1 Acre			X													
Oak Manor Park	CP	>1 Acre	X	X	X	X	X	X							X			
Observatory Park	NP_CP	2.5 Acr	X													X		
Orchard Park	NP	>1 acre	X	X	X													
Orr Creek Greenway at Oak and Commons	LP	#3 Acre														X		X
Riverside Park	RP	38 Acre	X		X								X					X
Railroad Depot Park	PP	>1 Acre																
Seminary Avenue	N/A	0.22 Miles																
Todd Gove Park & Municipal Pool	CP	8.6 Acr	X	X	X	X	X							X	X			
Ukiah Civic Center	NP	2.5 Acres										X			X			
Ukiah Skate Park	SUP	>1 Acre			X										X			
Ukiah Sports Complex	SUP	10.3 Ac	X	X	X						X				X			
Vinewood Park	NP	4.7 Acr	X	X	X	X	X		X						X			
Western Hills - Open Space Acquisition	OS ?	# 639 A	X															
Watershed Park	OS ?	>1 Acre	X															
Vichy Springs Fishing Area (County Park)	SUP		X										X					
Landfill Site (not developed or open)		283																
Norgard Property (not developed or open)		2.4																
Mill Creek Park (Outside SOI)	RP	424	X	X	X	X	X		X						X			X
Cow Mountain (No access in SOI)	RP	25000	X															X
Lake Mendocino	RP	3165	X	X	X	X	X		X									X

Table 3 - First Tier Parks and Features. Parks used to determine accessibility in green.

Future Park Needs and Capital Improvement Projects		Cost Estimate	
Location	Features	Low	High
Cooper Lane Connection	Connecting Path	\$ 100,000	\$ 200,000
Cow Mountain Open Space Access	Acquisition	\$ 1,000,000	\$ 2,000,000
	Trail Construction	\$ 200,000	\$ 500,000
Dog Park	Undetermined location	\$ 100,000	\$ 500,000
Great Redwood Trail Current Footprint	Landscaping and Benches	\$ 25,000	\$ 50,000
GRT (Post Rail Bank) Amenities	Landscaping and Benches	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000
	Shade Structures and Trees	\$ 50,000	\$ 150,000
	Community Event Space	\$ 150,000	\$ 400,000
	Pollinator and Native Plant Garden	\$ 25,000	\$ 100,000
	Public Art and Murals	\$ 40,000	\$ 200,000
	Restrooms and Trailheads	\$ 150,000	\$ 400,000
	Playgrounds, Parcourse	\$ 100,000	\$ 250,000
Landfill Trails	Trail Construction	\$ 300,000	\$ 1,000,000
<b>Low Gap Park*</b>			
	<b>Health and Safety</b>	<b>\$ 1,095,000</b>	<b>\$ 142,350</b>
	Minimum Function	\$ 52,500	\$ 68,250
	Future Improvements	\$ 513,000	\$ 666,900
<b>Montgomery Wards Park</b>	<b>Acquisition (~2.6 acres)</b>	<b>\$ 300,000</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>
	<b>Demolition</b>	<b>\$ 300,000</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>
	<b>Park Installation</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,500,000</b>
<b>Norgard Lane Park</b>	<b>Park Installation</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,500,000</b>
<b>Northside Park</b>	<b>Acquisition</b>	<b>\$ 500,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,500,000</b>
	<b>Park Installation</b>	<b>\$ 300,000</b>	<b>\$ 1,000,000</b>
Orr Creek Greenway	Trail Construction West Section	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 3,000,000
	Freeway Over/Under pass	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 5,000,000
	Trail Construction East Section	\$ 150,000	\$ 250,000
Pickleball court		\$ 200,000	\$ 500,000
Russian River Access	Boat Ramps	\$ 25,000	\$ 150,000
<b>Todd Grove Municipal Pool</b>	<b>Pool Reconstruction</b>	<b>\$ 8,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 13,000,000</b>
Small Park Southside	Acquisition	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,500,000
	Construction	\$ 350,000	\$ 1,000,000
Wagenseller Park	RCHD Partnership	\$ 350,000	\$ 500,000
	Acquisition	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,000,000
	Park Installation	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000
Water Treatment Plant Trails	Trail Construction	\$ 30,000	\$ 50,000
Westen Hills Trails	Trail Construction	\$ 500,000	\$ 2,000,000

**Table 4 – Capital Improvement Estimates (bold denote priority projects). \* Costs from Mendocino County Parks Needs Assessment**



## AGENDA SUMMARY REPORT

**SUBJECT:** Receive Report and Provide Comment on the Possible Creation of a City Park on Norgard Lane.

**DEPARTMENT:** Community Services      **PREPARED BY:** Neil Davis, Community Services Director

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Project Concept Map

**Summary:**

**Background:** The 2025 Ukiah Parks Gap Analysis confirmed the need for additional park access on the south end of Ukiah. Additionally, the Analysis established a goal of ensuring every resident lives within a half mile of a park. The City owns property in a Disadvantaged Unincorporated Community (DUC) just outside current City limits at the end of Norgard Lane. The City's recent Parks Gap Analysis identified this area as underserved by parks.

**Discussion:** A park in this location would improve the quality of life of residents, provide a second river access location in the Ukiah valley, provide a resting place along the GRT, and provide a loop path option for GRT users. The addition of a second river access location offers the opportunity for residents to float or kayak along the river, an opportunity that is not currently available. The site includes an old barn that could be refurbished for some kind of park use as may be determined by community input and park planning. The 2.8 acre site is adjacent to the City's Waste Water Treatment Facility (WWTF) providing an opportunity to include a 1.3 mile walking path along the river that will connect back to GRT providing a walking loop (Attachment 1). Additionally, the WWTF is a popular area for birders and improved bird watching amenities could become part of the plan.

Next steps for developing the area as a park might include 1) a community engagement process, 2) a park plan, 3) initial soil sampling and pre-environmental site assessment, and 4) plans to refurbish the barn. Staff have been in contact with the CA Coastal Conservancy (CA CC) to discuss grant funding for this process. If the CA CC recommends the City apply for funds, Staff will apply for funds with an expectation that the planning process could begin in the fall. If CA CC Staff do not recommend the planning project for funding, Staff will begin the planning process this summer utilizing City Staff. Staff have contacted and been given assurance of support for the planning process from Ukiah Vecinos en Accion, the Blue Zone, and North Coast Opportunities.

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**Recommended Action:** Receive report and provide comment on the topic of a new park at the end of Norgard Lane.

# Project Concept Map



Park location and GRT in yellow with proposed walking path route in Red