

3.4 PARKS, OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS ELEMENT

3.4.1 GOALS

1. Improve the Community's livability, aesthetics and desirability through active and passive "green" space.
2. Provide a wide variety of organized recreation opportunities for residents of all ages.

3.4.2 PURPOSE

The Parks, Open Space and Trails Element focuses on providing passive and active open space areas for recreation opportunities, a sense of openness and to improve the aesthetics of the community. This element identifies existing and proposed parks, open spaces and trails that have enhanced and will further improve the City's livability.

3.4.3 EXISTING CHARACTER

Eloy's residents place a high value on parks and open space. Additional parks, open space and trails will be necessary, both from a community aesthetics and livability standpoint and to satisfy the objectives of the General Plan. Surrounding open vistas, native desert and mountains provide a scenic backdrop for the City and its residents.

While Eloy has grown slowly over the past five years, the population increase has not created the need for additional park land or open space for its citizens. The City of Eloy owns and maintains 12 park facilities and two community centers comprising nearly 22 acres as shown below and illustrated on Map P-1, Parks and Service Area Map.

TABLE P.1, Existing Parks

Park Type/Name	Facilities	Acreage	Service Area Radius
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Mini-Park			
Anita Park	Picnic Area and playground equipment.	0.50	0.25
Chamber Park	Grass area	0.10	0.25
Maddux Park	Grass area and picnic area.	0.25	0.25
Toltec Park	Picnic area, playground and half-court basketball.	0.50	0.25
Toltec Senior Community Park	Picnic and grass area.	0.90	0.25
Veteran's Heritage Park	Seating area, gathering area	0.23	0.50
Subtotal		2.48	
Neighborhood Park			
Central (Main Street) Park	Grass field, park benches, and gazebo.	1.32	0.50
Jones Park	Ball field, concession stands, basketball court, swings, playground, picnic area, swimming pool, skate park and restrooms	4.55	0.50
North Toltec Park	Picnic area, grass area, swings, playground and half-court basketball.	0.77	0.50
Shumway (North) Park	Baseball field, concessions stands, tennis court, playground, picnic area, restrooms and basketball court.	7.42	0.50
Troy Thomas/Trekell Park	Grass area, playground, picnic area, swings and basketball court.	3.50	0.50
Sunland Visitors Center Park	Ramadas, passive area, path	1.70	0.50
Subtotal		19.26	

Total		21.74	
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Source: City of Eloy, January 2020

The existing inventory of parks is limited to Mini Parks and Neighborhood Parks-none more than five acres in size. There are not any community (more than 15 acres) or district (more than 50 acres) level parks located in the City. However, an approximate 14 acre private Community Park is located in Robson Ranch to serve the recreation needs of its residents. The park includes tennis courts, pickle ball courts, pools, indoor workout facilities, softball field and dog park.

In addition, the City also owns several parcels within the City, which are currently vacant and identified for park uses. These parcels total 17.85 acres, are identified on the Parks and Service Area Map and consist of the following:

- Northwest Corner of Houser and Tumbleweed Roads 14.78 acres
- Sunland Visitors Center Park 1.74 acres
- Northwest Corner of Adams St. and Phoenix
- Northeast Corner of 13th Street and Myers Blvd. 0.22 acre
- Southwest Corner of Navajo Circle and Apache Dr. 0.55 acre
- Southeast Corner of Navajo Circle and Apache Dr. 0.56 acre

The City of Eloy is providing public park space at a gross ratio of 1.25 acres per 1,000 persons. National standards recommend 3.0 acres per 1,000 persons, but the City has reduced it to 2.0 acres per 1,000 persons. These standards also recommend the same ratio for open space that exists for parks. While many similar size (in terms of population) communities not only achieve these national standards, several exhibit a much higher ratio of parks and open space per population than the City of Eloy, as illustrated below.

Table P.2 Existing Parks Comparison

Community	Existing Population (2019)	Park Acreage	Park Acreage per 1,000 population
Eloy	17,412 (10,612*)	21.74	1.25 (2.05**)
Coolidge	12,187	50.6	4.10
Chino Valley	11,705	38.65	3.30
Somerton	15,759	13.8	0.88

Source: Community General Plans, July 2019

* Net population total, based on reduction of prison population and Robson Ranch.

**Based on non-incarcerated population

(Information obtained from each communities respective General Plan)

The Grande Valley Ranch (currently closed) and Robson Ranch Golf Courses both total approximately 175 acres. The Tierra Grande Golf Course is located in the planning area and includes approximately 63 acres. All three golf courses are privately owned and operated. They are, however, all open to the public.

The City's Community Services Department also is responsible for the development of youth, adult and senior activities and offers a robust program offering including after school, youth athletics, teen activities, senior programs, special interest classes, family activities, community events and aquatics.

In the recent past, the City of Eloy has annexed a large area into its jurisdiction and has approved numerous large scale master plans. The low level of existing service for both park and open space acreage may be enhanced by requiring the provision and possible dedication of new parks and open space areas when such areas are considered for preliminary platting. The Parks, Open Space and Trails Element provides a basis for the City to quantify criteria by which development proposals may be considered in order to satisfy the City's adopted service levels for park, open space and recreation facilities.

3.4.4 DISCUSSION

To date, the City of Eloy has not adopted Park and Open Space standards. However, assuming that the City adopts a standard of two acres per 1,000 population, a total of 17 acres of developed park acreage should be provided based on a net year 2019 population of 8,712 residents (17,412-6,800 for prison population-1,900 for Robson Ranch). A total of 17 acres of open space should also be provided. The current increase in population to a gross total of nearly 17,500 people has been due in part to the increase in prison and retail hiring, which increases the local population. Subtracting the prison population and Robson Ranch population allows for an accurate determination of acreage need for Public Park and open space activities.

Currently, the City meets this goal for its net existing population by a total of four acres. By the year 2025, Eloy is forecast to contain an estimated gross population of 31,400 people (net population estimated at 19,900), which will require a total of 40 acres of City parks and an equal amount of open space. If this population threshold is met, the development of 19 acres of additional park land will need to occur.

Pinal County prepared and adopted an Open Space and Trails Master Plan in 2007 for the entire County. The Master Plan includes maps detailing conceptual locations for

trails, open space, and areas of historical and social resources that are recommended to be preserved. The proposed regional park (located in the Picacho Mountains) and trails, as they relate to the City of Eloy, and other components of historical and social importance within the City and Planning Area are incorporated into this element.

Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Facilities

In addition to the public parks administered by the City, the Eloy Planning Area also contains several regional level park facilities. These include the Ironwood Forest National Monument, Picacho Peak State Park, Casa Grande Mountain Natural Resource and Trail Park and Picacho Reservoir as shown on Map P-2, Parks, Open Space and Trails map.

Ironwood Forest National Monument

A portion of the Ironwood Forest National Monument is located within two areas of the Eloy Planning Area. One area consisting of 30.3 square miles is located in the southwestern portion of the Planning Area. Another area consisting of 9.2 square miles is located in the southern portion of the Planning Area. The Ironwood Forest National Monument is an approximate 129,000-acre area established by a Presidential Proclamation on June 8, 2000, to protect objects of ecological and cultural resource interest in their Sonoran Desert environment. The landscape of the Ironwood Forest National Monument exhibits rich, drought-adapted vegetation of the Sonoran Desert. Extensive stands of Ironwood, Palo Verde, and Saguaro are prevalent throughout the Monument.

The Monument also includes rugged mountain ranges, including the Sawtooth Mountains to the west and the Silver Bell Mountains to the south. The Monument contains objects of scientific biological, geological, and archeological interest throughout its desert environment.

Picacho Peak State Park

Picacho Peak State Park was identified for acquisition by the Arizona State Parks Board in 1958. Over the next 10 years, multiple feasibility studies were conducted and development plans created. Finally, in 1968, the State Park was officially opened to the public, when the Arizona Legislature granted approval. In 1970, the State legislature authorized the purchase of an additional 2,760 acres from the Bureau of Land

Management (BLM) to be added to the park. The park now consists of 3,469 acres of land.

Picacho Peak has been used in the past as a landmark due to its unique shape, as recorded in the 1700's as part of the Anza Trail. In 1848, the Mormon Battalion constructed a wagon road through the Pass. Picacho Peak is also the site of a Civil War battle; the largest within Arizona (see Section 1.2).

Casa Grande Mountain Park

Much of the Casa Grande Mountains is owned by the City of Casa Grande and incorporates an approximately 1,025 acre area devoted to trails and outdoor recreation. Currently, there is a proposal to include another area as joint-use. The Federal Government (Specifically the Arizona Army National Guard) owns an 800-acre parcel of land on the west side of the mountain and is used for training purposes. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management also owns a parcel approximately 80-acres in size. The City of Casa Grande is working to acquire, through transfer, the BLM parcel, and has extended an offer of "Joint-Use" with the Army who responded favorably. Parcels of land on the east side of the mountain are made up, largely, by private land holdings.

Picacho Reservoir

The Picacho Reservoir lies outside of the planning area to the northeast. In addition to its function as a potential reservoir, it serves as a primary habitat for nesting waterfowl in the winter. The reservoir is known as a Blue Heron rookery and is a stopover site for migratory birds, including the Glossy Ibis and Pelican.

Proposed Park and Recreation Facilities

Irrigation Canal Trail System

The Central Arizona Project (CAP) Canal, CAP-Central Main Canal, Santa Rosa Canal, and Florence-Casa Grande Canal are canals that traverse the planning area, providing water to primarily irrigate agricultural crops in the Santa Cruz Valley. The CAP transports Colorado River water east more than 300 miles to serve the agricultural, municipal and industrial and Native American users. The Bureau of Reclamation committed (during the canal planning process) to maintaining a 20-foot recreation corridor on the downstream side of the Canal. The intent is to use the corridor for a ten-foot wide, paved non-motorized path that provides connectivity to both Maricopa and Pima Counties. The Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District (CAIDD) canal rights-of way provide two wide, level strips of land, which could be suitable for multi-use trails (walking, bicycling,

and/or equestrian). However, discussions with the irrigation districts would need to take place.

The Santa Rosa Canal as a multi-use trail could provide the greatest impact for a connected non-vehicular circulation system because of its passage through the inhabited and near term growth areas of Eloy. As conversion of land from agriculture to urban land use continues, the canal corridor will become more valuable as a recreation amenity. The Parks and Open Space Plan identifies not only the Santa Rosa but also the Florence- Casa Grande, CAP Central Main and Central Arizona Project canals for inclusion within a linked multi-use trail system.

Communication with representatives of the CAP and CAIDD as well as other affected landowners will be necessary to implement the proposed trail system and should be initiated by the City.

Proposed Regional Park

The Pinal County Open Space and Trails Master Plan identified a proposed regional park to be located within an irregular outlined area within and north of the Picacho Mountains. Even though the majority of the proposed regional park is located outside the City of Eloy's Planning Area, it is important to identify it and show how the trail networks provide non-vehicular connectivity. The proposed park includes a total of approximately 50,700 acres and is primarily owned by the Arizona State Land Department, with portions also held by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). It also is intending to connect with the northern boundary (across Interstate 10) of Picacho Peak State Park and provide passive oriented recreational activities that balance natural resource conservation with a natural environment experience for users.

Multi-Use Urban Trail System

The street, utility, and railroad rights-of-way provide opportunities to add multi-use trails serving walking, bicycling, and equestrian modes of transportation. The potential locations for multi-use trails include Frontier Street (south side), Sunshine Boulevard (west side), Toltec Highway (east side), Estrella Road (east side), Shedd Road (south side) Lamb Road (west side), Henness Road (west side), Harmon Road (south side) and Santa Cruz River (south of Harmon Road) with specific design standards to be determined as a component of a future Parks, Open Space and Trails Master Plan. In addition, the El Paso Natural Gas pipeline that passes through the City from northwest to

southeast is also identified for a multi-use trail, extending from Houser Road to the Casa Grande Canal.

Growth Area Park Development

As new development occurs-particularly residential, each section of land (640 acres) will be required to collectively provide the recommended level of service for improved park land. The land requirement will be determined based on the anticipated population of the area, which is based on the residential density and the mix of uses.

Downtown Mini-Parks and Plazas

The revitalization of Eloy's Downtown provides an opportunity to incorporate additional Mini-Parks. These are small parks and plazas, typically less than an acre, that serve as gathering places and rest stops for shoppers. Vacant parcels that are strategically located (i.e. proposed 13th Street Park) to provide proximate access for residents, workers and visitors should be sought for land lease or purchase.

Eloy Municipal Airport/Private Managed Skydive Facility

The extensively used and nationally/internationally recognized Skydive Arizona facility, located at the airport, is extensively used throughout the year by a range of novice and experienced skydiving enthusiasts. As such, the significant airplane takeoffs and approaches on a daily basis fill the air above the City with parachutists, adding to the reputation of the City for this recreational activity. This activity also necessitates the presence of numerous drop zones in and around the airport that provide landing areas for the skydivers. The intent of this designation is to acknowledge the value that this activity provides from both an active recreational pursuit and a viable economic development component (tourism).

Ironwood Forest Trailhead and Campground

The Parks, Open Space and Trails Map identifies the opportunity to site three trailhead and campgrounds adjacent to the portion of the Ironwood Forest National Monument located southwest and south of the City. Providing additional supportive access and amenities enhances visitation to this significant open space resource.

The regional and local open spaces, parks, and trails identified above establish a broad-based recreation system for the City of Eloy. The incremental development of these

facilities will allow Eloy to meet the recommended park standards, and enhance access to open space and recreation pursuits consistent with the objectives of this Element.

3.4.5 OBJECTIVES

Objectives provide the City with direction for planning, reviewing, siting and designing future parks and open space acreage, and facilities. Specific objectives include:

1. Develop a plan for a connected system of open space areas that protect and conserve natural, physical, cultural, and social resources.
2. Develop a multi-use trail system that provides connectivity throughout the city, to recreational areas, parks, and coordinates with County trails within the Planning Area.
3. Develop community parks within the City that provide a balance of passive and active recreational opportunities for City residents and visitors.
4. Research and develop park, open space and trail standards for residential and non-residential developments.
5. Research, draft and adopt park and open space policies to require open space and recreation area developments and/or dedications from developers, and to assist in preserving natural and social resources.