



# RECREATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

## INTRODUCTION

This element provides the policy context for Merced County to achieve its vision for recreation opportunities and cultural resource protection. Recreation resources and facilities provide economic, health, and open space benefits to County residents while archeological and historical resources help preserve the unique character of Merced County. Goals and policies in this element are organized under the following headings:

- Parks and Recreation
- Cultural, Archeological, and Historical Resources

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Merced County contains several County, State, and Federal parks and recreation areas and public open space areas. There are approximately 114,000 acres of park and recreation facilities in the County that offer a variety of amenities such as picnicking, swimming, boating, hunting, bird watching, playgrounds, sports fields, and hiking. The policies in this section address park and recreation opportunities in Merced County.

<b>Goal RCR-1</b>	Preserve, enhance, expand, and manage Merced County’s diverse system of regional parks, trails, recreation areas, and natural resources for the enjoyment of present and future residents and park visitors. <i>[Source: New Goal, GPU Consultants]</i>
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### Policy RCR-1.1: Public Recreation Land Use (RDR/MPSP)

Encourage the continuation and expansion of existing public recreation land uses, including, but not limited to, public beaches, parks, recreation areas, wild areas, and trails. *[Source: Existing Merced County GP Policy OS.3.1]*

**Policy RCR-1.2: County Park Financing (FB)**

Require new County park locations and improvements to existing parks to be financed through the implementation of the Local Recreational Park Land Space and Fee Obligation Ordinance. *[Source: Existing GP Implementation LU.9.1]*

**Policy RCR-1.3: Neighborhood, Community, and Regional Parkland Standards (RDR)**

Encourage a minimum of three acres of neighborhood, community, or regional parkland per each 1,000 persons in the County by:

- a) Working with other agencies and private interests to provide for adequate neighborhood, community, and regional parkland and facilities;
- b) Actively participating in the planning of projects that have regional recreation benefits;
- c) Encouraging and supporting local agency efforts to achieve their objectives for providing local parkland. All local providers should seek to provide at least three acres of parkland for each 1,000 persons.
- d) Actively seeking available regional, State, and Federal grant funds for acquiring, developing, and maintaining regional parks; and
- e) Encouraging and supporting other public agencies and private groups in the development of recreation facilities that are consistent with the 2030 Merced County General Plan. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants; County Staff]*

**Policy RCR-1.4: Regional Recreation Facilities Master Plan (RDR/MPSP)**

Prepare and regularly update a Regional Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan that:

- a) Identifies opportunities for a wide variety of recreation activities, including public trails;
- b) Ensures that adequate local and regional park facilities are available to serve existing and future population;
- c) Prioritizes improvements to recreation sites based on their ability to accommodate multiple activities that best address the identified recreation needs of the community and take advantage of significant natural features that enhance the recreation experience;
- d) Requires recreation sites to be designed and developed in a manner that enhances natural features and recreational use, and minimizes environmental impacts to the site and adjacent lands;
- e) Considers the special needs of the elderly and the physically-impaired in the design and development of recreation facilities;
- f) Ensures adequate parking and non-vehicular access to recreation facilities;

- g) Encourages the development of transit services between recreation facilities and population centers;
- h) Expands existing park revenue, seeks new funding sources, and explores innovative funding arrangements for developing and maintaining County recreation facilities; and
- i) Supports facilities and activities that meet the needs of a culturally diverse population. *[Sources: Existing Merced County GP Policy OS.3.2, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-1.5: Local Park System (RDR)**

Require a system of local and neighborhood parks, and other recreation areas throughout the County that balance the importance of direct site access with management of sensitive wildlife resources. Require the master planning of new local and neighborhood parks to occur during the Community Plan preparation process.

*[Source: Existing Merced County GP Revised Policy OS.3.3; County Staff]*

**Policy RCR-1.6: Non-Recreational Land Use Buffers (RDR)**

Require buffering between non-recreational land uses and sensitive public recreation lands through site design and other techniques when the non-recreational land use may significantly impact recreational lands. *[Source: Existing GP Revised Policy OS.3.4]*

**Policy RCR-1.7: Agricultural Land Use Compatibility (RDR)**

Consider agriculture as a compatible land use and appropriate buffer for public and private recreation areas. *[Source: Existing GP Policy OS.3.13]*

**Policy RCR-1.8: Trails within Transmission Lines (RDR)**

Encourage the use of equestrian, bicycle, and pedestrian/hiking trails within existing energy, communication, transmission, and distribution easements. *[Source: Existing Merced County GP Policy OS.3.5]*

**Policy RCR-1.9: California Recreational Trail System Integration (RDR)**

Require that areas proposed for the California Recreational Trails System be reviewed during project proposals for consideration of easements and integration into County recreation facilities. *[Source: Existing Merced County GP Revised Policy OS.3.6]*

**Policy RCR-1.10: Trail Development (RDR)**

Develop pedestrian, bike, and/or equestrian trails along the Merced River. *[Source: New Policy, Merced County Phase II Community Workshop]*

**Policy RCR-1.11: Scenic Resource and Public Land Protection (RDR)**

Encourage the use of regional parks and open space areas as a mechanism to preserve the County's natural scenic beauty and protect land for public purposes. *[Sources: Existing Merced County GP Objective OS.3.C and revised Policy OS.3.8]*

**Policy RCR-1.12: Recreation Services (RDR/SO)**

Support recreation services to promote the full use of recreation facilities within their design capacity, and improve connections and access to a wide range of recreation

opportunities in order to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-1.13: Joint-Use Facilities in Parks (RDR/IGC)**

Require, where feasible, parks to be developed as joint-use facilities (e.g., stormwater facilities with ball fields) in order to provide more cost-efficient active parks. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-1.14: Community Oriented Neighborhood Parks (RDR)**

During the preparation of Community Plans and during the review of subdivision applications review process, ensure neighborhood parks are sited near activity centers such as schools, libraries, and community centers. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants; County Staff]*

## CULTURAL, ARCHEOLOGICAL, AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Merced County occupies an archeologically and historically rich part of the San Joaquin Valley. Archeological, historical, architectural, paleontological, and Native American cultural resources and values must be considered in all phases of planning and subsequent development projects, including design, permitting, construction, and long-term maintenance. It is essential that the public and project proponents be aware of cultural resources, as well as all the County, State, and Federal environmental laws and regulations that protect them. The policies in this section address the preservation of archeological and historic resources in Merced County.

**Goal RCR-2**

Protect and preserve the cultural, archeological, and historic resources of the County in order to maintain its unique character. *[Source: New Goal, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-2.1: Archeological Site and Artifact Protection (RDR)**

Require development projects that affect archeological sites and artifacts to avoid disturbance or damage to these sites. *[Source: Existing GP Policy OS.2.21]*

**Policy RCR-2.2: Historical Area Preservation (RDR)**

Support the preservation of historical structures and areas, particularly those listed on the National Registrar of Historic Places and California Registrar of Historic Places. *[Source: Merced County Phase II Community Workshop Summary, 2007].*

**Policy RCR-2.3: Architectural Character Preservation (RDR/IGC)**

Require that the original architectural character of significant State- and Federally-listed historic structures be maintained in compliance with preservation standards and regulations. *[Sources: Existing Merced County GP, Revised Policy OS.2.22; GPU Consultants; County Staff]*

**Policy ROS-2.4: Park and Open Space Historic Resource Preservation (RDR)**

Require the preservation of historic resources located in parks and publicly-owned open space areas. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-2.5: Human Remains Discovery (RDR)**

Require that, in the event of the discovery of human remains on any project construction site, all work in the vicinity of the find will cease and the County Coroner and Native American Heritage Commission will be notified. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants]*.

**Policy RCR-2.6: Historic Buildings and Areas (RDR)**

Identify and preserve buildings and areas with special and recognized historic, architectural, or aesthetic value during the Community Plan update process. New development should respect architecturally and historically significant buildings and areas. *[Source: New Policy; GPU Consultants; County Staff]*

**Policy RCR-2.7: Historic Preservation (RDR)**

Support the efforts of local preservation groups and community property owners to preserve or improve building facades and exteriors consistent with the historic and visual character of the specific building or area. *[Source: New Policy, GPU Consultants]*

**Policy RCR-2.8: Historical Preservation Area/Site Designations (RDR)**

Allow sites of historical and archeological significance to be designated as historical preservation areas or sites during the Community Planning process or on individual sites in rural areas. *[Source: New Policy, BOS/PC Study Session]*

## IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM

Recreation and Cultural Resources Element Implementation Program						
		2013-2013	2016-2020	2021-2030	Annual	Ongoing
<b>Program RCR-A: Regional Recreation Facilities Master Plan</b>						
Prepare, adopt, and regularly update a Regional Park and Recreation Facilities Master Plan. <i>[Source: New Program, GPU Consultants]</i>						
Implements Which Policy	RCR-1.4		✓			
Responsible Department	Public Works, Parks and Recreation Division					
Supporting Department	Planning and Community Development					