



# Open Space Element

Adopted April 17, 2018  
Resolution No. 2018-15

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# MONROVIA OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

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# OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

## Purpose

The Open Space Element is a component of the City of Monrovia General Plan.

Government Code Section 65563 requires that general plans include an Open Space Element for the "comprehensive and long-range preservation and conservation of open space land within its jurisdiction." Open space is a broad term that can refer to many different land uses and types of land; however, in a general plan, open space lands are defined in Government Code Section 65560(b) as lands for:

- The preservation of natural resources;
- The managed production of resources;
- Outdoor recreation;
- Public health and safety;
- Support of the mission of military installations; or,
- Protection of cultural resources.

This Element addresses multi-use parks and open spaces for aesthetic benefits, buffering for public health and safety, preservation of natural resources and recreation. The primary purpose of this Element is to establish the goals and policies that guide the continual preservation of Monrovia's existing open spaces and ensure that opportunities for both active and passive recreation is available throughout the City in its parks and recreation facilities.

The Open Space Element creates a vision for an innovative, inclusive and interconnected system of parks and open spaces and is consistent with the City's Land Use Element, Circulation, Housing, Safety and Conservation Elements with its mutually reinforcing policies for ensuring a healthy and livable community.

In conjunction with this Open Space Element, the Hillside Wilderness Preserve Resource Management Plan (RMP) and the Parks Master Plan (PMP) contain the implementation plans for the Element. Specifically, the RMP serves as a guide for the long term strategies and tools to protect and preserve the natural, cultural and visual resources of Monrovia's Hillside Wilderness Preserve (HWP). The PMP provides the more specific goals and actions for the implementation of Monrovia's interconnected system of parks and open spaces to promote outdoor recreation, health and environmental stewardship as integral elements of a livable community. The Parks Master Plan is the enabling guide for City elected and appointed officials, management and staff when making decisions or taking actions regarding planning, acquiring, developing or implementing parks, natural areas, trails or recreational facilities.



## Introduction

Monrovia is a small Southern Californian city of about 37,000 residents. It is nestled into the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, with easy access to the urban amenities of the Los Angeles metropolitan area and the natural beauty of the Angeles National Forest. The community's historic downtown and attractive neighborhoods afford a small-town feel for local residents, while its high tech industries provide well-paying local jobs.

Located just twenty miles northeast of Los Angeles and 8 miles east of the City of Pasadena, Monrovia residents have nearby access to a wide variety of employment, social and recreational opportunities. The city is bordered by the Angeles National Forest to the north and a number of other small cities, including Arcadia, Bradbury and Duarte - to the east and west and a community known as Mayflower Village within the unincorporated area of Los Angeles County to the south. The city benefits from easy freeway and transit access – Interstate I-210 provides ready access to neighboring communities and the Metro Gold Line - Monrovia Station provides commuter rail service connections to Pasadena and Los Angeles.

The City of Monrovia has long recognized the value of open space protection and natural resource conservation and has continually taken proactive steps to identify and preserve open space, both through regulation and acquisition. Starting in 1913, as Monrovia dedicated Canyon Park, an 80-acre hillside area for protected wilderness and passive recreation. As early as 1958, the Zoning Ordinance included open space preservation through the creation of a Watershed designation. Subsequent updates to the City's land use policies continued to identify these lands adding significantly to the quality of life of Monrovians.

At the culmination of a decade long hillside planning process, in 2000, Monrovia citizens approved new general plan and open space zoning classifications: "Hillside Wilderness Preserve (HWP)" and "Hillside Recreation (HR)". Additionally, a parcel tax and special tax were implemented for funding acquisition of these lands for permanent open space, as well as revenues for future maintenance of the open space. In the first decade of the new century, Monrovia significantly increased its inventory of open space through the purchase of over 600 acres of undeveloped hillside land. Public participation in the open space planning process continued with the adoption of Resource Management Plan (RMP) in 2012. Today, the Hillside Wilderness Preserve, Canyon Park and approximately 3,400 acres of the Angeles National Forest comprise a significant open space resource within the city limits and serve to protect forest, water, soil and wildlife resources within those public lands.

In addition to its regional open space, the City of Monrovia provides over 113 acres of public parkland and recreation facilities distributed among nine park sites. This system of parks supports a range of active and passive recreation experiences.

Monrovia is preparing for continued growth tied to localized residential infill and redevelopment following the completion of the Metro Gold Line. As the City grows, ongoing investments in parks and recreation will be necessary to meet the needs of the community, support youth development, provide options for residents to lead healthy, active lives and foster greater social and community connections.



# Facility Inventory

Parks and natural areas are the foundation of a healthy park and recreation system. Monrovia’s parks provide residents with a diverse array of active and passive recreational amenities and options. These lands are a place to come together with family and friends, to exercise and play, to learn and explore, and to engage with the City’s landscape, history and culture. Open space for outdoor recreation accommodates the public’s leisure time, relaxation, exercise and play. With local residential growth and development, the amount of land needed for various types of recreational activities will increase. With increased public use and anticipated aging, Monrovia anticipates continued investment in care, renovation, and improvement of existing park and recreation infrastructure to stay current with the community’s need for safe, healthy recreation and open space opportunities.

The park and natural areas inventory identifies the recreational assets within Monrovia. The City provides over 113 acres of public parkland distributed among nine park sites, which includes the 80-acre Canyon Park. Additionally, the City owns and manages the Hillside Wilderness Preserve, totaling over 1,416 acres of conserved natural area. The following tables summarize the current parkland inventory in Monrovia.

Figure OS-1. Existing Parklands Inventory with Facilities: City-owned Parks & Natural Areas

			Recreation Amenities						Site Amenities									
			Playgrounds	Paved Courts: Basketball	Paved Courts: Tennis	Baseball / Softball Fields	Pathways / Trails	Skate Park	Other Rec Element	Site Furnishings	Lighting	Signage	Parking Areas (incl on-street)	Public Art	Restrooms	Picnic Shelters	Turf / Open Lawn Areas	Natural Areas
<b>PARKLANDS</b>																		
<b>NATURAL AREAS</b>																		
Canyon Park	1200 N. Canyon Blvd.	80.00					●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		●	
Hillside Wilderness Preserve		1,336				●					●	●					●	
<b>POCKET PARKS</b>																		
Evergreen Plaza	1508 S. California Avenue	0.78						●	●	●		●						
<b>NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS</b>																		
Julian Fisher Park	915 S. California Avenue	1.20	●	●			●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●		
Kiwanis Park at Grand Avenue	340 N. Grand Avenue	3.50	●					●	●	●	●	●					●	
Lucinda Garcia Park	502 W. Olive Avenue	1.70	●				●		●	●	●	●					●	
Rotary Park	401 S. California Avenue	0.92	●						●	●	●	●					●	
Station Square	1629 S. Myrtle Avenue	1.70	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	
<b>COMMUNITY PARKS</b>																		
Library Park	321 S. Myrtle Avenue	4.60	●				●	●	●	●	●	●	●				●	
Recreation Park	620 S. Shamrock Avenue	18.90	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●	●	●		

Note: Canyon Park is identified as a Community Park in the Park Master Plan based on the number and type of amenities. However, for the purposes of the Open Space Element and parkland standards, it is not classified as an “urban park”.



## HILLSIDE WILDERNESS PRESERVE

Monrovia has been a leader in managing and protecting its hillside natural areas, and the City adopted the Hillside Wilderness Preserve (HWP) and Hillside Recreation (HR) zones and the Resource Management Plan (RMP) in 2012 to guide policies on the preservation and usage of the hillside resource areas. The RMP seeks to balance the needs for habitat conservation and ecological function with the desires and pressures of public recreational use. The RMP defines the management direction for trail connections, uses, access and wayfinding in a manner that protects habitat and the natural landscape. In 2016, the City opened over 4.5 miles of Hillside Wilderness Preserve trails providing passive recreational opportunities for the community. There are four access points to the Hillside Wilderness Preserve trail system. The Hillside Wilderness Preserve entails 1,416 acres of city-owned land referred to as “Hillside Wilderness Preserve” and “Hillside Recreation”.

The Open Space Element recommends the implementation of the RMP as the specific conservation plan for the hillside, including Canyon Park.

## CANYON PARK

Surrounded by the Hillside Wilderness Preserve and Angeles National Forest, Canyon Park’s 80 acres represents a significant piece of the Hillside Recreation area. (Trask Boy Scouts Camp is also part of the Hillside Recreation area.) Canyon Park provides an easily accessible natural recreation experience for Monrovia residents, while balancing the needs of resource conservation. Canyon Park is designated as a public wilderness park with a primary focus on passive recreation uses on trails, picnicking, and environmental education. The Park contains 22 acres of developed facilities that include parking areas, restrooms, picnic areas, a nature center and other use areas to accommodate public passive recreation uses. The Park’s stated mission takes a three-pronged approach toward preservation, education and recreation. Management seeks to preserve the land “in its natural state in order that the public will have an opportunity to experience the beauty and solitude of nature”. Operations actively work “to foster an appreciation, understanding and respect for nature through education” and the infrastructure of trails and amenities help to “provide a safe, attractive, and peaceful recreation environment compatible with the natural area.” Providing the public with opportunities to interact with the natural environment and have a safe, enjoyable recreation experience are primary management objectives according to the RMP.

## ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST

The City of Monrovia’s northern boundaries extend into the public lands of the Angeles National Forest. The Forest lands comprise more than 700,000 acres north of the Los Angeles metropolitan area. The Angeles National Forest is an urban National Forest in the center of an ever-changing population and provides a wide range of recreation opportunities to visitors from around the world. These important recreation areas provide a place for surrounding



communities to experience solitude, quiet and enjoy unique recreation opportunities. The Angeles National Forest manages the habitats, flora and fauna ecosystems, and watersheds. Some of the rivers with watersheds within its boundaries provide valuable non-groundwater recharge water for Southern California. The existing protected and restored native vegetation absorbs and slows surface runoff of rainwater to minimize severe floods and landslides in adjacent communities, including Monrovia. At the present, there are three privately-owned properties within the Angeles National Forest and also within Monrovia's corporate boundary. Jurisdictional authority over privately held properties within the national forest resides with the City of Monrovia, not the U.S. Forest Service.

Monrovia's Hillside Wilderness Preserve abuts the Angeles National Forest. Canyon Park's Waterfall Trail leads into Forest lands to the destination waterfall at trail end. The Sawpit Fire Road leads to the Ben Overturff Trailhead providing hiking and backpacking access to other trails within the Forest.

## TRAILS

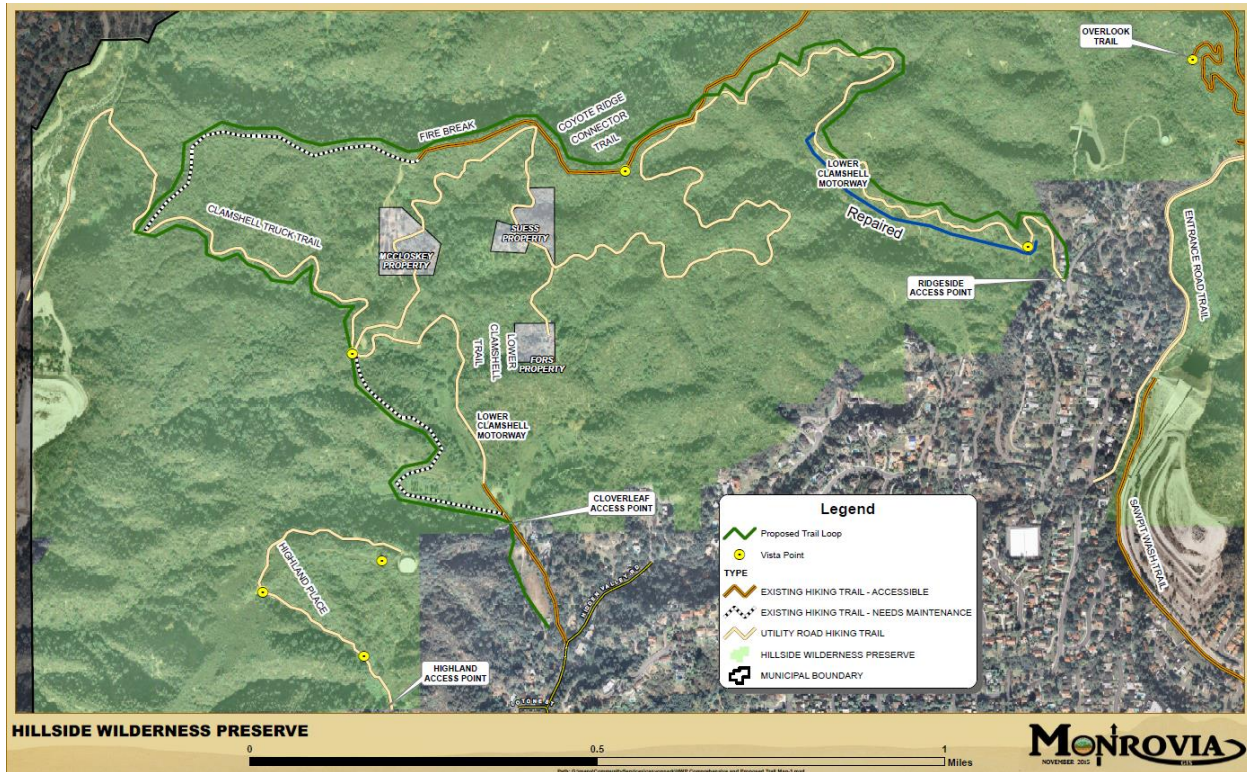
The variety of trail opportunities in Monrovia range from natural surface hiking trails in Canyon Park and adjoining preserved public lands to paved internal park paths that connect recreational amenities. An extensive system of hiking trails exist within the Hillside Wilderness Preserve (HWP) with some connections into the Angeles National Forest. Proposed future connections to link to adjoining trails and public lands are addressed in the HWP Resource Management Plan.

Monrovia also supports connecting trails through the community such as the Fountain to the Falls Trail which may use a combination of facilities such as sidewalks and park trails to lead pedestrians from Library Park to Canyon Park.





Figure OS-2. Existing Trail System: Monrovia Hillside Wilderness Preserve.



## Parkland Classifications

Parkland is classified to assist in planning for the community’s recreational needs. The Monrovia park system is composed of a hierarchy of various park types, each offering recreation and/or natural area opportunities. Separately, each park type may serve only one function, but collectively the system will serve the full range of community needs. Classifying parkland by function allows the City to evaluate its needs and to plan for an efficient, cost effective and usable park system that minimizes conflicts between park users and adjacent uses. The classification characteristics are meant as general guidelines addressing the intended size and use of each park type. The following four classifications are in effect in Monrovia and are defined as follows.

- Community Parks
- Neighborhood Parks
- Pocket Parks
- Natural Areas

### *Community Parks*

Community parks are large sites developed for organized play, contain a wide array of facilities and, as a result, appeal to a more diverse group of users. They are planned to provide active and structured recreation opportunities, as well as passive and non-



organized opportunities for individual and family activities. Community parks are generally 10 to 40 acres in size and serve residents within a 2-mile drive, walk or bike ride from the site. In areas without neighborhood parks, community parks can also serve as local neighborhood parks. In general, community park facilities are designed for organized or intensive recreational activities and sports, although passive components such as pathways, picnic areas and natural areas are highly encouraged and complementary to active use facilities. Developed community parks typically include amenities such as sport courts (basketball, tennis), covered activity areas, soccer and/or baseball fields and bike and pedestrian trails. Since community parks serve a larger area and offer more facilities than neighborhood parks, parking and restroom facilities always recommended.

### *Neighborhood Parks*

Neighborhood parks generally are considered the basic unit of traditional park systems. They are small parks designed for unstructured, non-organized play and limited active and passive recreation. They may range from 0.5 to 5 acres in size, depending on a variety of factors including neighborhood need, physical location and opportunity. To accommodate a typically desired amount of recreational amenities and open areas a minimum size of 1.5 acres is recommended, if possible. Neighborhood parks are intended to serve residential areas within close proximity (up to ½-mile walking or biking distance) of the park and should be geographically distributed throughout the community.

Access to neighborhood parks is mostly pedestrian, and park siting and design should ensure pedestrians do not have to cross a major street or other barrier to get to the site, unless safe crossings are provided. Neighborhood parks should be located along road frontages to improve visual access and community awareness of the sites. Connecting and frontage streets should include sidewalks or other safe pedestrian access. Additionally, street plans should encourage maximum connectivity and public access to park sites.

Generally, developed neighborhood parks typically include amenities such as pedestrian paths, picnic tables, benches, play equipment, open field area for informal play, sport courts or multi-purpose paved areas and landscaping. When neighborhood parks are designed in conjunction with school sites, these sites typically include multi-use sport fields. Restrooms and parking are generally provided.

### *Pocket Parks*

Pocket parks are small parks that provide limited opportunities for active play and passive recreation. They are generally less than 0.5 acres in size and provide modest recreational amenity to residents within a ¼-mile walking distance. Due to their small size, pocket parks should be considered where appropriate on a case-by-case basis.



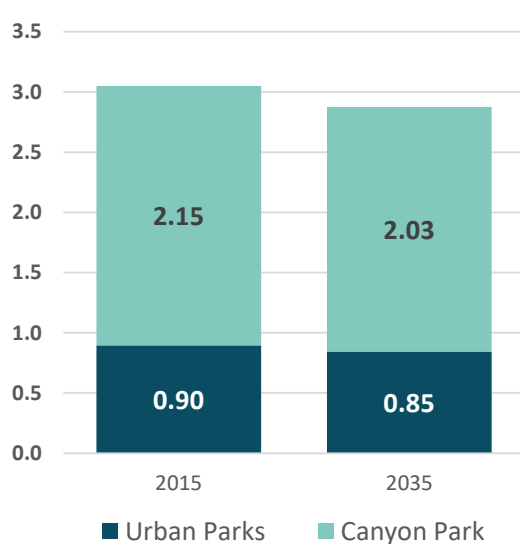
## Natural Areas

Natural areas are conservation lands primarily left in a natural state with recreation use as a secondary objective. These conserved open spaces are usually owned or managed by a governmental agency and may or may not have public access. Natural areas may provide trail corridors, and offer low-impact or passive activities, such as walking or nature observation, where appropriate. Minimal recreational amenities such as environmental interpretive exhibits, picnic areas, restrooms and trailhead parking may be provided to support outdoor recreation activities and conservation education.

## Standards

Park standards are the adopted guidelines or benchmarks the City is trying to attain with their parks system. A City's approach to park standards reflects their commitment to provision of recreation and open space for the benefit of a healthy and vibrant community. Any adoption of specific park standards based on acreage, density or facility types must be consistent with both the General Plan and the Parks Master Plan. The scope of the Open Space Element is very broad and includes open space with varying degrees of use intensity, whereas the Park Master Plan focuses on city parks and the Resource Management Plan establishes the long range plan for Monrovia's Hillside Wilderness Preserve. The Park Master Plan includes a level of service (LOS) review and will contain a Monrovia-specific acreage standard for urban parks.

Monrovia currently owns and manages 33.3 acres of developed city parks, 80 acres of natural area in Canyon Park and an additional 1,336 acres of wilderness in the Hillside Wilderness Preserve. City parks provide readily accessible open space and recreation facilities for the community. Canyon Park contains 22 acres of developed area and is an important contributor to recreational amenities and enhances the range of outdoor recreation opportunities through its trail system and environment education facilities and programs.



At 33.3 acres, Monrovia currently provides 0.90 acres per 1,000 people through its city (urban) parks, excluding Canyon Park and the rest of the Hillside Wilderness Preserve. Adding the recreational value of 80-acre Canyon Park and its proximity to the urban population, Monrovia provides 3.05 acres per 1,000 people of public parkland in its park and open space system. Based on the existing park inventory and projected increase in population, that ratio is expected to decrease to 0.85 acres (urban parks) and 2.03 acres (including Canyon Park) by the year 2015

Figure OS-3. Monrovia Provision of Parkland Acreage for City Parks and Canyon Park



In total, Monrovia has approximately 4,850 acres of open space within its corporate boundary. The acreage includes urban parks, Canyon Park, the HWP and the portion of the Angeles National Forest that is within the city limits. This equates to approximately 131 acres of open space per 1,000 residents.

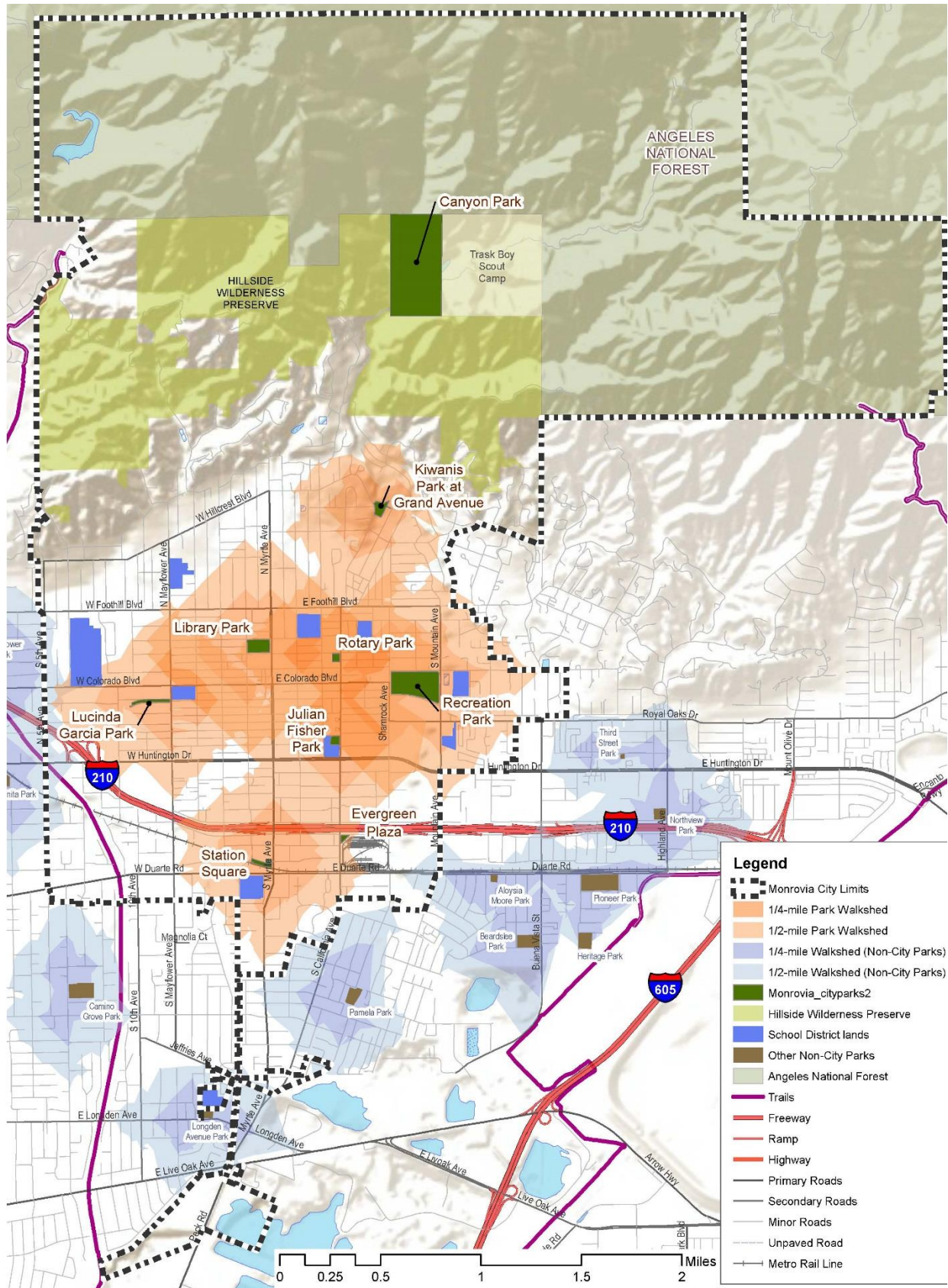
In an effort to maintain the existing level of service provided by the city's current inventory of parks, additional acreage will need to be acquired or secured as the population grows into the future. Independent of specific numeric standards, a status quo approach to parkland service provision indicates that an additional 6.8 acres of parkland will be needed by 2035 to serve that population at the current level of service. However, based on the estimated cost to implement the proposed capital facilities plan contained in the PMP, the City's limited resources would be better served at this time on improving and maintaining Monrovia's existing parks.

Equity in the distribution and location of parks throughout the community is an essential component of a fair and accessible park system. A gap analysis of the park system (Figure OS-4) was conducted to examine and assess the current distribution of parks throughout the city to guide where acquisition efforts should be directed. This geographic assessment helps identify potential acquisition areas for future parks for inclusion in the Capital Facilities Plan component. These acquisition targets represent a long-term vision for improving parkland distribution throughout Monrovia.

The Element also recognizes that the need for future recreation facilities must consider the citizen input received during this planning process. Residents were particularly interested in the availability of trails and active use parks and amenities (e.g., sport fields, dog parks, splash pads, picnic shelters, pump tracks, etc.) within a reasonable distance from their homes.



Figure OS-4. Gap Analysis Map for Urban Parks



## Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies support the City's vision and planning for its parks and open space system.

### ENCOURAGE CONNECTEDNESS

**Goal 1: Expand the physical and social connections linking the City together and bridging to its neighbors.**

*Policy 1.1: Encourage and support active and ongoing participation by diverse community members in the planning and decision-making for parks and recreational opportunities.*

*Policy 1.2: Develop a network of shared-use recreational, pedestrian and bicycle trails to enable connections within parks and between parks, neighborhoods, public amenities and regional trail corridors, to include washes.*

*Policy 1.3: Promote walking and biking connections throughout the Station Square area with integrated public spaces and direct links to the public transportation network.*

*Policy 1.4: Design and construct trails to serve a variety of users at varying skill levels.*

*Policy 1.5: Support the implementation of alternative transportation choices.*

*Policy 1.6: Develop additional non-motorized trails outside of parks to meet a targeted walkability score and promote Monrovia as a "walkable city" such that pedestrian- and bicycle-oriented corridors link community destinations and enable safe, convenient non-motorized choices.*

### SECURE LANDS FOR THE FUTURE

**Goal 2: Provide a comprehensive system of parks, open space and recreation facilities that serves current and future needs.**

*Policy 2.1 Continue to maintain and improve a high standard of operations and management for both quantity and quality of park facilities to serve the community and stay current with changing recreational trends.*

*Policy 2.2 Acquire additional parklands when feasible to equitably provide access to all residents by seeking additional park facilities in the proximity of underserved neighborhoods and/or high-density developments.*



## CREATE GREAT PARKS & PUBLIC SPACES

**Goal 3: Ensure Monrovia’s parks and open spaces meet local needs for active and passive recreation, enhance the environmental and visual quality of the community, and healthy living.**

*Policy 3.1 Design and develop park sites and facilities to maximize recreational value and experience, while minimizing maintenance and operational costs and negative environmental and community impacts.*

*Policy 3.2 Reduce barriers to participation and improve safety to provide universal access to facilities and programs. Implement an ADA Transition Plan to inform, guide and prioritize the removal of existing barriers.*

*Policy 3.3 Establish and operate specialized recreational facilities (e.g. sport facilities, off leash dog areas, skateparks, community gardens) to respond to identified public needs, as appropriate.*

*Policy 3.4 Conserve significant natural areas to meet habitat and hillside protection needs and to provide opportunities for residents to recreate and connect with nature, as appropriate.*

## FOSTER A HEALTHY, ACTIVE COMMUNITY

**Goal 4: Monrovia’s parks, recreation facilities and community programming bring residents together, encourage and amplify healthy lifestyles, and foster community pride, identity and livability.**

*Policy 4.1 Provide or partner for programming and services that support recreation and learning for target populations, including youth, teens, adults and older adults.*

*Policy 4.2 Maintain and enhance the Monrovia Community Center to provide recreational opportunities, community services and opportunities for residents to connect, learn and play.*

*Policy 4.3 Identify opportunities to create public gathering spaces that enable residents of all ages to connect with each other.*

*Policy 4.4 Seek opportunities to support and expand heritage facilities that provide historic identity and sense of place to Monrovia.*

*Policy 4.5 Reflect the City’s identity by incorporating art, history and culture into the park and recreation system.*



## ENSURE SOUND MANAGEMENT & MAINTENANCE

**Goal 5: Allocate available resources and seek out additional funding to upgrade and maintain Monrovia’s existing parkland and open space infrastructure needs to maintain and expand recreational opportunities for residents.**

*Policy 5.1 Actively manage Monrovia’s park and recreation assets through a regular schedule of maintenance and capital renewal efforts to optimize use, reduce unplanned reactive maintenance and protect public investment.*

*Policy 5.2 Pursue and maintain effective partnerships with governmental agencies and private and non-profit organizations to plan and provide recreation activities and facilities in an effort to maximize opportunities for public recreation.*

*Policy 5.3 Use traditional and new funding sources to adequately and cost-effectively maintain and enhance the quality of Monrovia’s park and recreation system and to acquire land for future park expansion.*

*Policy 5.4 Continue to provide stewardship of the Hillside Wilderness Preserve and Hillside Recreation Area through the implementation of the HWP Resource Management Plan (RMP).*

*Policy 5.5 Continue to implement the strategies of the Parks Master Plan (PMP) and amend/update the Open Space Element and the PMP as needed to reflect community growth and changing needs.*

*Policy 5.6 Prepare and update the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) annually to reflect the recreational needs of the community and the accomplishments of the CFP.*

## Implementation Tools

The recommendations to enhance and improve park services may trigger the need for funding beyond current allocations and for additional staffing, operations and maintenance responsibilities. Additional resources will be needed to leverage, supplement and support the implementation of proposed policies, programs and projects. The following implementation strategies are presented to offer near-term direction to realize these projects.

### Volunteer & Community-based Action

Volunteers and community groups already contribute to the improvement of park and recreation services in Monrovia. Volunteer projects include support for events, invasive plant removal and tree planting, among others. Monrovia should maintain and update a revolving list of potential small works or volunteer-appropriate projects for the website, while also reaching out to the high schools to encourage student projects. While supporting organized groups and community-minded individuals continues to add value to the Monrovia parks and recreation





system, volunteer coordination requires a substantial amount of staff time, and additional resources may be necessary to more fully take advantage of the community's willingness to support park and recreation efforts.

### Local Funding

Depending upon the interest of City leadership and that of the public, a short-term bond or levy could be pursued to finance certain projects from this Plan and be structured to maximize voter support to include parkland development, trail development and/or general park element upgrades. This will require additional review for the compilation of a specific funding package, along with an assessment of potential revenue, political willingness and potential voter support.

### Grants & Appropriations

Several state and federal grant programs are available on a competitive basis, including California State Parks, LWCF and FAST-Act. Pursuing grants is not a panacea for park system funding, since grants are both competitive and often require a significant percentage of local funds to match the request to the granting agency, which depending on the grant program can be as much as 50% of the total project budget. Monrovia should continue to leverage its local resources to the greatest extent by pursuing grants independently and in cooperation with other local partners. Appropriations from state or federal sources, though rare, can supplement projects with partial funding. State and federal funding allocations are particularly relevant on regional transportation projects, and the likelihood for appropriations could be increased if multiple partners are collaborating on projects.

### Parkland Donations & Dedications

Parkland donations from private individuals or conservation organizations could occur to complement the acquisition of park and open space lands across the City. Gift deeds or bequests from philanthropic-minded landowners could allow for lands to come into City ownership upon the death of the owner or as a tax-deductible charitable donation. Parkland dedication and/or an in lieu fee by a developer could occur in exchange for Park impact fees or as part of a planned development where public open space is a key design for the layout and marketing of a new residential project. Any potential dedication must be vetted by the Department to ensure that such land is located in an area of need or can expand an existing City property.

### Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships are increasingly necessary for local agencies to leverage their limited resources in providing park and recreation services to the community. Corporate sponsorships, health organization grants, conservation stewardship programs and non-profit organizations are just a few examples of partnerships where collaboration provides value to both partners. The City has existing partners and should continue to explore additional and expanded partnerships to help implement these Plan recommendations.

