

# Live Oak among hardest hit by county's park shortage

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Santa Cruz County is short on parks. The areas of Live Oak, Carbonera and San Lorenzo Valley now suffer most from this shortage.

But tens of millions of dollars will be needed to prevent the shortage from worsening throughout Santa Cruz County as growth continues, planners say.

County supervisors have asked members of the planning, and parks and recreation departments to address the problem threatening outdoor recreation.

The resulting "Urban Parks Master Plan" made its debut in draft form last night at a meeting of the county Parks and Recreation Commission. It shows "where we are and where we need to go," Don Lauritson, planner, said.

The county general plan calls for a set amount of certain types of park land for every

1,000 residents. It requires three acres of neighborhood parkland lying within a half-mile of homes, and one to 2.5 acres of community parkland lying within a 10-minute drive of homes, for every 1,000 people.

According to the report, Aptos and Soquel currently have 3.1 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents. Pajaro Valley has 3.7 acres per 1,000 residents. But, the high ratios include all all schools, Cabrillo College and some beaches, Lauritson said.

Live Oak, Carbonera, and San Lorenzo Valley have lower ratios of parkland. Live Oak, for example, has 2.3 acres of parkland for every 1,000 residents, and this includes eight acres of beaches as park, Lauritson said.

The draft assesses current and future need for parks, and shows all the parks, both existing and potential, needed to meet those needs. The draft plan proposes buying and

improving more than about 280 acres of parkland at a cost of at least \$40 million.

"We might have a real hard time meeting our standard," Lauritson said. "We're trying to make a practical plan we think we can meet. Some people might think it's a dangerous plan because there's no safety valve. We've counted every bit of acreage out there."

The draft would revise what lands are set aside as park on the county's general plan. It also suggests a change in policy by asking that some beaches be counted as parks and by aiming for the minimum general plan requirements for community parks. The draft also eliminates the concept of "mini-parks," proposing instead to enlarge existing parks or build three-to-six acre parks, instead. A smaller number of larger parks would be cheaper to run than more numerous tiny parks. Ben

Angove, parks and recreation department director, said.

Members of the parks and recreation commission made few comments on the detailed plan. They said they needed time to digest the information and decided to hold another study session on the plan Nov. 12.

The commission also decided to hold two public hearings on the plan, one in December and one in January.

Once the commission approves the plan, it will go to the Planning Commission, then to the Board of Supervisors for approval. The process, which could eventually lead to changes in the general plan, will continue until spring.

Angove said he expects the plan to stir two types of controversy. Property owners may cry "not in my back yard" if their land is slated for a park, Angove said.

Some people may question the cost of meeting the county's

requirements for parks. These critics may ask the supervisors to lower the standards.

That, said Angove, would be a mistake.

"I think the park standards we have are good. I think they're appropriate," Angove said. "We have an active community here. Our climate lends itself to that. That's why people come here. I think we have an obligation to meet that need."