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Report: City needs more parks

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Watsonville has less than half as many parks as it should, according to a recently released city document, which recommends, among other things, the creation of another park the size of Ramsay Park.

The city's "Parks and Open Space Master Plan" also recommends further development of school grounds for recreational use, creation of a number of smaller parks, a citywide trail system, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and improvements to existing parks.

The draft plan will be discussed Nov. 18 in a joint session of the City Council and the Recreation and Parks Commission. It is intended to provide a blueprint for the city's parks and recreational

'The City should begin now to plan for another Ramsay Park.'

-Parks Master Plan

needs for the next 20 years.

The city has 17 parks, which range in size from the tiny Memorial Park at Main Street and Freedom Boulevard to Pinto Lake and Ramsay parks, for a total of 67 acres.

That isn't nearly enough, according to the report. City and national standards call for 5 park acres per 1,000 residents. Watsonville, which has a population of 31,099, has a ratio of 2.16 acres per 1,000 residents, less than half of what it should be.

To come up to standards, the

city would have to acquire another 88 acres. But the need will continue to grow as the population increases. The city is expected to have 38,000 people by 2005 and 44,500 in 2015. If the city wants to meet its standards, it will have to have acquired 123 acres by 2005 and 156 by 2015.

The city is also somewhat behind in the provision of recreational facilities for its residents, the report said. Just to meet current needs, it will have to develop four more baseball/softball fields, three more soccer fields and a

swimming pool.

The plan makes a number of recommendations for increasing park acreage and recreational facilities. One is the acquisition and development of another "community park" of 20 acres or more.

"The City should begin now to plan for another Ramsay Park," the report said. It suggests several sites, including a 100-acre parcel within the city limits to the west of Highway 1. If that entire parcel is purchased, a municipal golf course could also be built, the report said.

Other sites include the St. Francis School site; 39 acres of land adjacent of Atkinson Lane; the Manabe property, between Watsonville Slough and the railroad tracks; and the Buena Vista area. Some of the proposed sites are in

See PARKS page 9 ▶

symptoms in the
ple and delay death in patients
with the full-fledged disease.

finally develop AIDS, doctors
said.

PARKS

▶ From Page 1

the county and would have to be annexed.

The report also recommends more joint-use and joint-development projects with the Pajaro Valley Unified School District. The district and the city already have several such agreements, which allow the residents to use school facilities when school is not in session.

Some of the proposals include the development of 10 acres around Rolling Hills Middle School, which could become three softball fields, two soccer fields and a track; and the area around H.A. Hyde Elementary School, which could accommodate a baseball/softball field, two soccer fields and a track; MacQuiddy Elementary School, which is improving its grounds and play equipment, could become a joint-use neighborhood park.

Neighborhood park sites suggested by the report include the corner of Kearney and Rodriguez streets, a parcel in the Atkinson Lane area and land west of Main Street between Front Street and the river.

Protection and enhancement of the city's sloughs, creeks and river

is also called for in the plan. The plan recommends the adoption of an "environmental resources ordinance," which would revise current requirements regarding setbacks, defining sensitive habitats and providing safeguards. The ordinance could also establish guidelines for restoration and enhancement. The report also calls for long-range management plans for those areas to be carried out between the Recreation and Parks Department and the state Department of Fish and Game.

The plan sets up three phases for accomplishing its goals. It estimates the total cost of the recommended projects over the 20 year period to be \$10,630,000. The first phase - work that would be done within one to five years - would cost about \$3,800,00.

Funding sources for the projects include some already in place, such as park dedication and in-lieu fees paid by developers, the parks and recreation facilities tax on new construction, redevelopment money, the school district and the county (for joint projects), the assessment district set up by the city in the form of the Landscape and Lighting Act, user fees, concessions and various grants. Other ideas, such as general obligation bonds, corporate sponsorship and help from non-profits and private agencies, are also suggested.