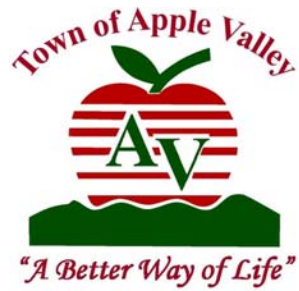


apple valley



parks and recreation master plan





PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Planning Context Summary Memo (Final)

May 2010

Prepared by:



MIG, Inc.
815 SW 2nd Avenue, Suite 200
Portland, Oregon 97204
503.297.1005
www.migcom.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
PLANNING AREA	2
Physical Characteristics	
Development Patterns	
DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS	8
Current Population	
Age	
Ethnicity	
Family Household Type	
Income/Poverty	
Population Growth	
Recreation Implications	
PAST PLANNING EFFORTS	13
Key Findings	
PLANNING DIRECTIONS	17
Strengths of the Park System	
Challenges and Issues	
Anticipated Planning Directions	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	24

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Planning Process

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Existing Parks and Recreation Resources

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Developed vs. Vacant Land Uses

Table 2: Population 2000-2008

Table 3: Age Distribution 2009

Table 4: Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-2012

Table 5: Income Level, 2009

Table 6: Population 2009-2014

PLANNING CONTEXT

In February 2010, the Town of Apple Valley began updating its Parks and Recreation Master Plan to obtain community supported directions for developing a diverse and integrated park and recreation system. This Plan will create a vision for a sustainable, interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, open space and trails that responds to community needs. These are integral elements of a livable community.

As part of this planning effort, the Planning Context Memo describes the key factors and issues that will play a role in park system development. More specifically, this document:

- Describes the planning area;
- Reviews demographic trends that affect the provision of parks and recreation opportunities;
- Reviews past planning efforts and discusses their implications for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan; and
- Discusses strengths and challenges for the current park system, along with the anticipated planning directions that will provide guidance for the Town to respond to these issues.

This information provides a foundation for the analysis of the existing park system and assessment of community needs, which will be the next steps in the planning process (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Planning Process

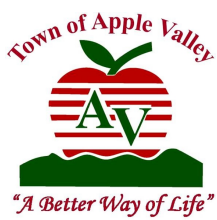
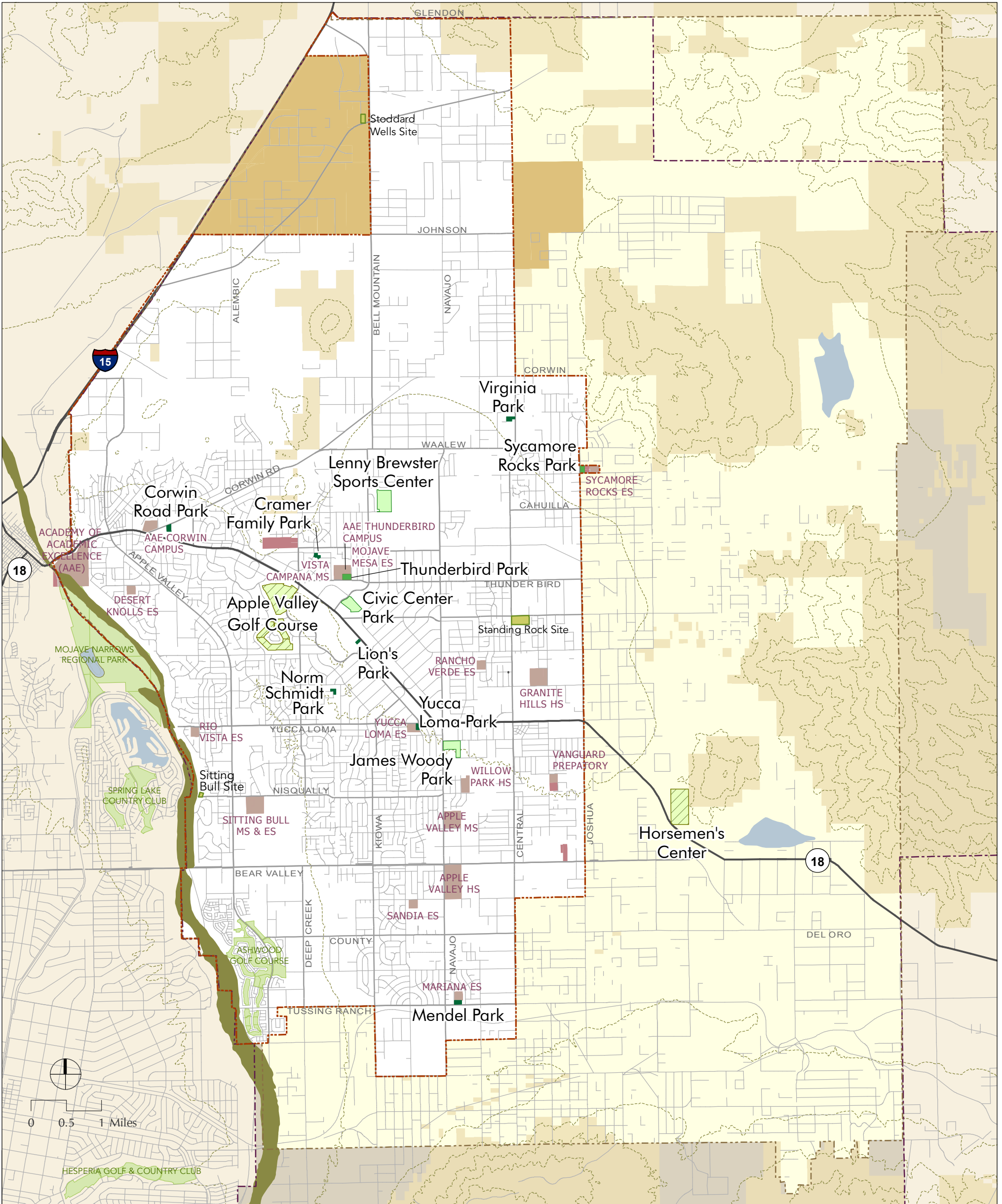


PLANNING AREA

The planning area for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan includes all areas currently served by the Town of Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department. These boundaries are based on the boundaries served by the former Apple Valley Recreation and Park District. As illustrated in Map 1, the area served by the Parks and Recreation Department is approximately twice the size of current Town boundaries, but smaller than the Sphere of Influence. These different planning boundaries are described below.

- ***Town of Apple Valley:*** The Town of Apple Valley is located in San Bernardino County, in the High Desert area known as Victor Valley. With an area of 78 square miles within its incorporated boundaries, the Town is situated just east of the City of Victorville and northeast of Hesperia, creating a potential overlap in service areas.
- ***Sphere of Influence:*** Apple Valley’s Sphere of Influence is considered to be the Town’s ultimate long-term growth and service area. This area encompasses 192 square miles of land, and is nearly double the size of the Town. Apple Valley’s Sphere of Influence encompasses lands to the east and south of Town boundaries.
- ***Annexation Areas:*** The Town of Apple Valley has identified two proposed annexation areas. The first is known as the “Golden Triangle,” and includes 2,775 acres. It is located on the northwestern corner of town, bounded by Interstate 15 on the west, Morro Road on the north, Dale Evans Parkway on the east, and Johnson Road on the south. The second, smaller annexation area consists of 809 acres, located on the east side of Central Road and the south side of Quarry Road. This area was proposed for annexation as an extension of the North Apple Valley Industrial Specific Plan. Both areas were proposed for annexation concurrent with the 2009 General Plan.
- ***Former Apple Valley Recreation and Park District:*** In 2001, the Town of Apple Valley took responsibility for the operations of the Apple Valley Recreation and Park District (AVRPD). As part of the agreement with the Local Area Formation Commission, the Town is required—at a minimum—to continue to provide the existing level of service to those areas previously served by the AVRPD. The boundaries of this area include the town and both annexation areas, as well as additional land to the south and east. This area covers approximately 166.2 square miles. These service boundaries will serve as the planning area for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.





Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Prepared 5.13.2010

Map 1: Existing Parks & Recreation Resources

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Special Use
- Undeveloped
- Other Resources
- General Plan Annexation
- Public Schools
- Other School District Property

- Streets
- Major Roads
- Freeway/Highway
- 100' Contours
- Mojave River
- Water Feature
- BLM Lands
- Town Limits
- Park District
- Sphere of Influence



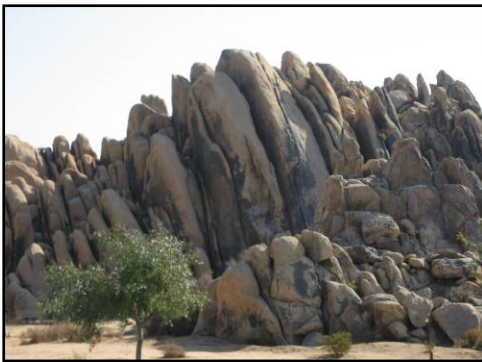
Data Source: Town of Apple Valley, CaSIL & USGS
NAD1983 StatePlane California V FIPS 0405 Feet

Physical Characteristics

Physical characteristics of the planning area, such its location, transportation network, climate, topography and natural resources create opportunities and constraints for the provision of park and recreation services.

Location and Transportation

Apple Valley is strategically located 95 miles northeast of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, 140 miles north of San Diego, and 185 miles south of Las Vegas. Interstate 15 defines the northwest boundary of the Town, connecting it to Barstow about 29 miles to the north and San Bernardino about 28 miles to the south. With a northwest/southeast orientation, Highway 18 bisects the town, creating a significant barrier for equestrian, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic (unless at stoplight crossings). However, this roadway connects Apple Valley to the City of Victorville, immediately west of Apple Valley, and the City of Hesperia to the southwest. The Apple Valley Airport is a public airfield located about 3 miles north of town.



Climate

In the High Desert of Victor Valley, Apple Valley experiences an average of 350 days of sunshine per year. The warmest month is July with an average maximum temperature of 99 degrees

Fahrenheit, while the coldest month of the year is December with an average minimum temperature of 30 degrees Fahrenheit. In general, winter temperatures range from the low 20s to 70s, and summer temperatures range from the low 40s to 110 degrees. Temperature variations between night and day tend to be relatively extreme during summer (38 degrees temperature difference), with hot days and cooler nights.

The annual average precipitation at Apple Valley is 4.44 Inches. Rainfall is fairly evenly distributed throughout the year. The wettest month of the year is March with an average rainfall of 1.06 inches. Prevailing winds range from 5-10 knots per hour from the south/southwest to the northeast.

Shade, wind, irrigation, water costs, dust, and landscaping are factors that must be addressed in parks in this type of climate. Outdoor evening programs in the summer, such as movies and concerts in the park, can take advantage of the evening cooling.

Topography and Natural Resources

Apple Valley is located near the southern edge of the Mojave Desert. The geographical diversity of the high desert area is unique, with dry lakes (playas), alkali seeps, lava flow sites, sand dunes, and isolated desert mountain ranges. The elevation of Apple Valley is approximately 2,900 feet above sea level. Map 1 notes the Town's topography in 100 foot contours, which highlight

several ridges, knobs, and knolls in and at the edge of town. These include the Granite and Fairview Mountains in the eastern portion of the District, plus Bell Mountain, Cathedral Hill, and other knolls inside town. This topography creates barriers for roads and park access, but provides scenic backdrops for park and facilities in Apple Valley.

Not surprisingly, only 0.4% of the surface area of the town is water, including the Jess Ranch Lakes in southwestern Apple Valley. While the western Town boundary is formed by the Mojave River, the river flows underground for most of its course. However, the Mojave River Narrows in between Victorville and Apple Valley is one of the rare places where water is commonly seen above ground. Rock formations there force the groundwater above the surface, which produces a stable desert riparian habitat. Part of this area is preserved by the County Mojave Narrows Regional Park.

Development Patterns

The development patterns and characteristics of the planning area help indicate both the location and type of parks, facilities, and programming that will be needed in Apple Valley. These include factors such as land use and zoning, anticipated development for residential, commercial and industrial areas, the amount of vacant lands, and even specific plans for defined areas in Town, such as residential (equestrian) estates. These development factors are noted briefly in this section.



Land Use

The Land Use Element of the 2009 General Plan establishes the vision of Apple Valley for its long-term development. The Town has carefully reviewed development patterns, and made changes where it felt that the historic pattern may need redirection. The land use types in Apple Valley are all related to a single, over-arching concept: Apple Valley's quality of life is tied to its rural character, and this character is to be preserved and protected for the long term health of the community. In Apple Valley, "rural" means unscarred mountains and vistas of desert valleys, equestrian neighborhoods with large lots, an extensive multi-use trail system, and landscaping consistent with the desert environment.

Zoning in Apple Valley helps support this vision. For example, the land use designation Estate Residential $\frac{3}{4}$ (R-E; 1 dwelling unit per 0.75 to 1.0 net acre) is specifically designed for animal keeping. Centralized stables, corrals, show rings and similar facilities are encouraged in new development in these zones. The Equestrian Neighborhood, complete with bridle easements and conceptual Lifeline Trails, will provide access to these areas. As per zoning

requirements, multi-use trails will be integrated into all new projects in this designation.

If the Town were divide roughly into thirds north to south, an overview of the zoning pattern would include:

- ***Northern Apple Valley:*** While currently much of the land in northern Apple Valley is underdeveloped or vacant, this area is zoned primarily for commercial uses along I-15, along with planned industrial areas and other planned uses as defined by specific site plans. Some low density residential and estate residential uses are mixed in.
- ***Middle Apple Valley:*** The middle section of town has more mixed uses than the two other areas. There are a variety of commercial uses along Highway 18, plus planned commercial areas along the proposed High Desert Corridor bypass. The area has a concentration of very low density residential in the mid-eastern section, a large estate residential area on both sides of Highway 18, and single family residential and other uses.
- ***Southern Apple Valley:*** The southern portion of town is primarily zoned single family residential, with low density residential, estate residential, and some medium density residential mixed in. The area has definite commercial corridors along Highway 18 and Bear Valley Road. A Specific Plan has been created for the southwest portion of town.

Built vs. Vacant Lands

Over 58% of the planned uses noted above have not been realized. Only 41.8% of the Town is currently developed. Table 1 notes the amounts of developed and undeveloped acreage in Apple Valley. As the Town continues to develop, it will be critical to acquire and preserve parks and open space.

Build-out Projections

The planned land uses noted in the General Plan create a long-term potential for up to 60,877 housing units. Based on 2008 average household size, these units could support a build-out population of 185,858 people (compared to 74,266 people currently). The Land Use Map further establishes approximately 4,800 acres of commercial land, which has a potential to generate some 51,685,000 square feet of commercial space. There is also a potential for 58,630,000 square feet of industrial space, mostly to be located in the North Apple Valley Industrial Specific Plan area. This Land Use Element includes 3,069 acres of Open Space and 481 acres of Public Facilities, which include schools, parks, fire stations and government buildings.

Table 1: Developed vs. Vacant Land Uses
Town Limits, 2008

Land Use Designation	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres	Total Acres
Residential Uses ¹	15,263	19,291	34,554
Commercial Uses	797	2,996	3,793
Industrial Uses	21	624	645
Public Facility	330	132	462
Open Space ²	291	2,796	3,087
Mineral Resources	129	323	452
Street Rights-of-Way	2,771	1,183	3,954
TOTAL	19,602	27,345	46,947

¹ Specific Plan and Mixed Used acreage is counted under residential in the 2009 General Plan.

² Open space includes knolls and mountains, the Mojave River, lands owned by Town, County, State and federal agencies for recreation or conservation, including golf courses.

Specific Plans

Specific Plans have been adopted by the Town Council for a number of projects. Although existing Specific Plans are primarily residential in nature, a notable exception is the North Apple Valley Industrial Specific Plan, which governs land uses for a 5,100 acre area in the North Apple Valley area. Specific Plans can be prepared for any land-use type. For Specific Plans consisting of single family residential development, the average density of the Specific Plan cannot exceed two units per acre. The average density can include Open Space and Parklands.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Population growth is the key component of increasing demands for parks and recreation. Additionally, demographic characteristics can influence recreational interests and levels of participation. For example, age and income affect an individual’s ability to participate in recreational activities. To a lesser extent, employment, education, and ethnicity play a role.

The population data available for the Apple Valley area is based on Town boundaries. At this point, no estimates are available for the entire planning area.



Current Population

The current population of the Town of Apple Valley is 74,266 people (based on 2009 estimates).¹ This represents an increase of just over 20,000 people since the year 2000. Table 2 illustrates the Town’s population growth between 2000 and 2008. During this eight-year period, the Town’s population growth rate of 29.2% was well above the San Bernardino County rate of 20%.² However, after steady growth up until 2007, the population decreased in 2008.²

Table 2: Population 2000-2008
Town of Apple Valley

Year	Population	Annual Growth Rate
2000	54,239	–
2001	55,475	2.3
2002	57,197	3.1
2003	59,803	3.3
2004	61,494	4.1
2005	63,761	3.7
2006	67,362	5.6
2007	70,160	4.2
2008	70,092	-0.1
AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE		3.28

Source: SCAG and AV Market Analysis.

Age

Age distribution is often used to determine a community’s need for various recreation opportunities. Table 3 notes the general age distribution for the current population in Apple Valley. This age breakdown can help predict recreation participation patterns. In general, youth tend to participate in recreation activities more frequently than any other age group. Generally speaking, youth also favor more active and competitive activities, such as traditional sports (e.g., basketball, baseball, and soccer) and extreme sports (e.g., mountain biking, skateboarding, rock climbing). As people age, their participation in active or competitive recreation typically decreases. However, new trends show that seniors are staying active longer. Many older adults and seniors continue to participate in recreation as they age to promote health and

¹ Data for this demographic profile were obtained from the 2000 U.S. Census, the 2009 SCAG Profile of the Town of Apple Valley, the 2009 General Plan, and the 2010 Apple Valley Market Profile.

² The 2009 data is from a different source. It is unclear if the increase from 2008 to 2009 is a caused by a variation in projection techniques.

wellness, to stay socially connected, and to engage in life-long learning. Intergenerational activities and family-oriented activities also appeal to residents in communities with a balanced age distribution.

Table 3: Age Distribution 2009
Town of Apple Valley

Age Group	Total	% in 2009
Under 5	5,614	7.56%
5-17	15,301	20.6%
18-24	7,808	10.52%
25-34	10,001	13.47%
35-54	17,555	23.63%
55-74	13,147	17.70%
75 and over	4,840	6.52%%
TOTAL	74,266	100%

Source: U.S. Census, American Fact Finder 2006-2008 estimates; Claritas Pop-Facts: Demographic Snapshot Report

According to information provided by the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), between 2000 and 2012 the population will be dominated by two age groups: middle age (35-54 years) and school age populations (5 to 20 years old). These two groups will account nearly half of the total population. During this same period, aging baby boomers (55 to 64 years old) are projected to increase to almost 11 percent, and younger workers (21-34 years old) are expected to increase to almost 20 percent. Those younger than five years old represent the only age group not projected to increase significantly during this period.

Ethnicity

Culture and ethnicity often play a role in the recreation preferences and level of participation in various activities. This could increase the demand for certain types of recreation facilities and programs. As noted in Table 4, the Town of Apple Valley is gradually becoming more ethnically diverse. The non-Hispanic White population is the dominant majority, but its share of the population has been declining, while other minorities, especially the Hispanic and African-American populations are increasing.

Hispanics constitute the fastest growing ethnic group in the town, which is in line with national trends that suggest that Hispanic and Latino populations will continue to grow more rapidly than other ethnic groups in the next 20 years. Survey results in other communities suggest that Hispanic groups have higher rates of participation in youth and adult soccer, and they typically prefer family events and social opportunities, including cultural markets and celebrations.

Table 4: Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-2012
Town of Apple Valley

Ethnicity	2000	2007	2012
White (non-Hispanic)	67.7%	59.9%	52.6%
Hispanic	18.6%	23.7%	28.8%
Black	7.6%	9.4%	10.7%
Asian	2.2%	2.5%	2.8%
American Indian	0.70%	0.61%	0.56%
All Other	3.3%	3.9%	4.5%

Source: Southern California Association of Governments, Profile of the Town of Apple Valley, May 2009.

Family Household Type

As suggested by the population distribution in Apple Valley, the number of families in Apple Valley is significant. Household data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2006-2008 American Community Survey noted that 74% of households were families, with an average of 3.5 people per family. This data will be considered with public feedback to determine if there is a need for parks and facilities that can serve multiple ages simultaneously.

Income/Poverty

In recreation planning, trends show that people with more disposable income tend to be more active and participate in more expensive types of leisure activities, such as golfing and organized sports. On the other hand, many low-income families take advantage of free or low-cost recreation options, such as opportunities to play in parks. However, parents in low-income positions may also spend more of their time at work, leaving less time for recreational pursuits. Table 5 notes income levels in Apple Valley.

Table 5: Income Level, 2009
Town of Apple Valley

Income	Total	Distribution
Under \$35,000	8,480	33.8%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	3,695	14.7%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	4,793	19.1%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	3,246	12.9%
Over \$100,000	4,874	19.4%

Source: SCAG, Profile of Town of Apple Valley, May 2009.

In Apple Valley, there is a mix of low income and much wealthier residents. The median household income in 2009 was \$51,927, and the average was \$66,959. However, the average 2009 per capita income was only \$22,848.

According to 2006-2008 American Community Survey (conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau):

- 14.5% of all Apple Valley families have income below the poverty level.
- Over 40% of single female parent families are below the poverty level.

Due to financial constraints, Apple Valley may need to evaluate whether its pricing policy makes recreation activities reasonably affordable and accessible. Also, especially during difficult economic times, a community’s average annual income can be considered as a factor in predicting residents’ willingness to pay for park and recreation services and improvements. Both of these factors should be considered in determining what kinds and how many facilities and programs can be provided in Apple Valley.

Population Growth

Population estimates for the Town of Apple Valley are based on a 5-year planning horizon. As this point, no 20-year forecast is available. However, as indicated in Table 5, the Town is anticipated to continue to grow at a slightly slower annual rate (3.12%) than it has in the last eight years (3.28%).

Table 6: Population 2009-2014
Town of Apple Valley

Year	Population	Annual Growth Rate
2009	74,266	-
2014	85,843	3.12%

Source: SCAG and AV Market Analysis.

Recreation Implications

Demographic and land use trends in Apple Valley may have the following implications for the provision of parks, facilities, and programs:

- **Population Growth:** Based on past population growth rates in Apple Valley, it is anticipated that more parks and recreation services will be needed to serve a growing population. Good projections will help forecast the rate of this growth, given the current economic slowdown that is affecting communities throughout California and across the nation.
- **Specific Community Needs:** Without data on population growth by area, the Town’s land use element and area specific plan can be used to identify needs in geographic areas as the Town’s population grows. Residential estates and other unique neighborhoods may require specialized parks, facilities and trails to serve residents in those areas, because of different

expectations for development. These may include enhanced accessibility, trail connectivity, and in the case of equestrian neighborhoods, equestrian facilities.

- **Family Services:** The dominance of middle age (35-54 years) and school age (5 to 20 years old) populations in Apple Valley suggests a need for family activities, as well as organized activities for both of these age groups. Special events and festivals, such as the Sunset Concert Series, 5 and 10K races, fireworks, golf tournaments, etc., helps support family entertainment and also enhance the community.
- **Cultural Outreach/Programming:** Hispanics represent the fastest growing ethnic group, and are expected to encompass nearly 30% of the



Town's population by 2012. Special efforts should be made to market and appeal to this demographic, including providing dual-language materials and specialty integrated programming. Outreach to various cultural groups will be an important component of the planning process.

- **Programming Costs/Affordability:** Especially during the economic recession, the Town of Apple Valley will have to carefully weigh the benefits of increasing cost recovery with the community's need

for low cost services. A cost recovery and scholarship strategy will help determine an appropriate fee structure and pricing policy for activities and events. Identifying the community's willingness to pay for new park and recreation development will also be important in this planning effort.

- **In Town/Out of Town Opportunities:** The lack of demographic and planning information for the part of the planning area beyond Town boundaries will create a challenge in assessing needs. The Plan should consider ways to link opportunities and resources inside and outside of Town. For example, multi-purpose trails connecting the planning area may be one way to make town opportunities more accessible residents in other parts of the planning area. It will also allow Town residents to take advantage of unique opportunities in other parts of the planning area.

PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

The Town of Apple Valley has undertaken a variety of planning efforts that will have an influence on the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. As pertinent background to the planning process, these plans are briefly described below:

- **Apple Valley General Plan (2009):** The community's demand for recreation opportunities was evaluated, including public preferences for parks and facilities, recreation participation, and applicable trends in the provision of recreation services.

- **Master Plan of Park and Recreation Services (2004):** This master plan is an update of the 1996 Master Plan prepared by the Apple Valley Recreation and Park District. The purpose of the plan is to provide direction towards the continued development and management of park and recreation facilities in Apple Valley. While most recommendations are geared toward a 5-year planning horizon, some recommendations were more suitable for the long term (10-15 years).
- **Vision 2020 Strategic Plan (2009):** The Town celebrated 20 years of incorporation by creating a new strategic plan as a guiding framework for future operations. Building off of the vision and mission of the Town, the strategic plan outlines the programs and actions that must occur in order to realize this vision for the future.
- **State of the Town (2009):** A brief assessment of current operations was presented by the Town, providing an overview of highlights and needs in certain areas. For example, in parks and recreation, this document calls attention to increases in the number of rounds of golf played at the recently-acquired County Club, plus the role of special events in enhancing the community.
- **Market Profile (2009):** The Town's website provides a market profile of Apple Valley, including a demographic overview, description of educational resources, healthcare services, employment and labor statistics, a list of major employers, events and festivals, a description of the North Apple Valley Industrial Specific Plan, as well as information on traffic, transportation and other topics.
- **Resident Satisfaction Survey (2009):** The purpose of the survey was to provide the Town with a statistically valid measure of residents' satisfaction, priorities and concerns as they relate to services and facilities provided by the Town. These survey results can be used to make strategic decisions regarding service improvements, performance tracking, budgeting, policy, and planning.
- **Noise Element Update (2008):** This report presents the technical analysis used to develop the Town of Apple Valley General Plan Noise Element. The major sources of community noise in the Town of Apple Valley are transportation noise associated with vehicle traffic on the I-15 Freeway, Highway 18, major Town streets, aircraft over flights and rail operations from the two railroads in Town. The noise element identifies noise sensitive land uses and noise sources, and defines areas of noise impact for the purpose of developing programs to insure that the residents of the community will be protected from excessive noise intrusion.



- ***Circulation Element Traffic Study (2008):*** Several modes of transportation were evaluated to update the General Plan, including public transportation routes, truck routes, bikeways, and recreational trails. Section 5.4 addresses bicycle facilities, including off-street bicycle routes. Section 5.5 includes the recreation trails plan, which consists of multi-use and equestrian use “Lifeline Trails” and equestrian bridle easements.
- ***Multi-use and Equestrian Trails Standards (2005):*** This report notes adopted, enforceable equestrian-friendly standards for the future development of all zoning designated for equine and livestock use and sheltering. These include Very Low Density Residential, Low Density Residential, Residential Agriculture, Residential Estate, and Residential Equestrian.

Key Findings

There are many findings in these plans that will be relevant to the Parks and Recreation Master Planning process. A few key points are highlighted below:

- ***Core Values:*** The Town has defined six core values: zoning integrity, customer service, public safety, partnerships, fiscal responsibility and power of team.
- ***Strategic Goals:*** The Town has set strategic goals in ten key areas. Goal areas affecting the provision of parks and programs include Parks and Recreation, Community Enhancement, Premier Destination, and Sustainability. Many of these goals have elements that will be reflected in park and recreation planning, such as expanding youth, senior, and equestrian recreation programs, providing for open space preservation and management, expanding signature community events, and exploring the possibility of moving the County Fairgrounds to Apple Valley.
- ***Declining Budget:*** The Town is projecting a ten percent decline in revenues this year, leading it to reduce or postpone non-critical expenditures. However, with a relatively recent retail boom (development occurring since 2005), a reduction in sales tax revenue will not hit Apple Valley as hard as some other municipalities.
- ***Satisfaction Levels:*** Seventy percent (70%) of respondents to the 2009 Survey indicated that they or someone in their household had visited an Apple Valley park or recreation facility in the past year. A high percentage of residents rated Apple Valley parks and recreation facilities as excellent or good in the following areas: appearance and cleanliness (73%), quality of amenities and facilities (62%), and safety (62%).

- **Program/Event Participation:** Approximately one-third (31%) of Apple Valley households had participated in a recreational program offered by the Town during the past year. Almost half (46%) of households surveyed had attended at least one community event sponsored by the Town of Apple Valley in the last year.
- **Desired Events:** Among the 25% of respondents who expressed an interest in the Town providing additional community events, 7% mentioned concerts or music events, 4% sporting events, 3% programs for young children, and 3% mentioned activities for teenagers.
- **Relative Importance of Parks and Recreation:** Residents were asked to rate the importance of 14 specific services provided by the Town of Apple Valley. Overall, Apple Valley residents rated maintaining local streets and roads as the most important (93% extremely or very important), followed by providing police services (92%), and preparing the Town for emergencies (87%). At the other end of the spectrum, providing special community events, such as the Freedom Festival and Sunset Concert Series (41%), providing animal control services (62%), and providing a variety of recreation programs (66%) were viewed as comparatively less important.
- **Desired Town Improvements:** The top improvements desired by Town residents include: managing traffic congestion, attracting new businesses and jobs to the area/economic development, maintaining local streets and roads, managing growth, and improving public safety.
- **Equestrian Trails Standards:** The Equestrian Advisory Committee believes that the Town should encourage and promote the equestrian lifestyle to equestrians and non-equestrians alike. Providing easily-accessible and maintained trails may stimulate equestrian use within the Town as a recreational activity. Active equestrian associations and horse owners can promote special events, recreation, community participation and community safety.
- **Park Standards:** The Park and Recreation Element of the General Plan presents a classification system for parkland, an inventory of existing parks, park standards by type, a description of potential funding mechanisms, a framework for trails, pathways and bikeways, and the goals, policies and programs to achieve the desired park system. The General Plan notes that Apple Valley is exceeding NRPA standards of 5 acres per 1,000. However, new parks will be needed to keep pace with community growth.



- **Park Needs:** In 2004, the Town was deficient on park land to provide the minimum of 3 acres per 1,000 noted in the Quimby Act. The previous Park and Recreation Master Plan divided the Town into 10 Recreational Service Areas (RSAs). Future neighborhood and community park sites were identified in each RSA, based on the inventory of existing park sites as well as current and anticipated residential expansion.
- **Apple Valley County Club:** The Town of Apple Valley is currently considering the purchase of the Country Club and golf course, since current owners could no longer afford to operate this facility. If this plan goes forward, it will be important to develop the County Club as a self-sustaining facility. Although costly to operate, the course saw a 67% increase in rounds of golf played last year. The facility is also open for meetings, weddings, and other public gatherings.



PLANNING DIRECTIONS

Based on the review of background documents, a park tour and meeting with key staff, an analysis of the strengths and challenges of Apple Valley’s park and recreation system is presented below. This analysis is used to create a list of preliminary planning directions, which will provide guidance for the development of the Park and Recreation Master Plan. This list of planning directions will be discussed by staff and Advisory Committee members to ensure that basic issues and concerns will be addressed in the Plan.

Strengths of the Park System

- **Parks and Recreation Facilities:** Resident satisfaction surveys and the General Plan description of parks and facilities suggest that the Town of Apple Valley provides many high-quality parks and facilities, including the new aquatic center and amphitheater at Civic Center Park, the newly-acquired County Club, and neighborhood parks such as Corwin Park. The green grass and well-maintained facilities are like oases in the High Desert.
- **Recreation Programs:** The Town provides a number of high-quality recreation programs for residents and non-residents in the Apple Valley area. Due to their success, recreation programming is provided at full capacity. In FY09, over 55,000 participants were served by aquatics, programs/classes, after school activities, adult and youth sports, golf, facility rentals, and other events and programs.
- **Special Events:** In collaboration with the Apple Valley Public Information Office, the Town hosts a variety of special events and festivals that serve the community and draw people to Apple Valley. While Civic Center Park is becoming the Town’s premier event venue, events and programs are offered in various locations around Town to encourage

participation from diverse parts of the community.

- **Data Tracking:** From preliminary information gathered for this project, the Town recognizes the importance of good data tracking to measure the efficiency and success of recreation services. The Town is particularly strong in the collection of participation data as well as maintenance work.
- **Maintenance:** The parks and facilities in Town are well-maintained. While a lack of funding is clearly affecting the condition of amenities and facilities at some sites, there is a level of attention and detail for parks that suggests good stewardship.
- **Staffing and Organization:** In 2001, the Town of Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department began a transition when it took over District responsibilities for parks, facilities, and programs. At that time, the Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Divisions were all included in one Parks and Recreation Department. However, in the summer of 2007, the Parks Division came under the umbrella of the Public Services Department, and the Recreation and Facilities Divisions became part of a realigned Community Services Division. In the summer of 2009, Parks (maintenance and development) merged with Recreation and Facilities, to once again form one cohesive department led by a single director. This merger appears to have been quite effective in terms of providing high-quality customer service, leadership in parks and recreation, and an efficient allocation of resources. This organizational shift strengthens the Town's ability to provide quality parks, facilities, and services.

Challenges and Issues

- **Funding:** Throughout many California communities and even nationwide, the current economic climate has created a funding shortage for parks and recreation. As the Town of Apple Valley looks for ways to reduce General Fund spending, it has questioned its ability to “subsidize” park development, facility maintenance, capital improvements, and operations. Funding cuts for parks and recreation are occurring as the Town is bringing new parks and facilities online and as the local population continues to grow. These funding cuts will make it increasingly difficult for the Department to provide services. It also creates a need for the Town to determine how much it can invest in parks and recreation to achieve its vision for the future.
- **Demand:** More people are taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department. These include the free options such as playing on playgrounds, having family picnics, attending concerts, and playing pick-up basketball, which have become more popular during the recession. But they also include a higher use of fee-based services in lieu of more expensive vacations and recreation

activities. Especially in growing communities, the demand on parks, facilities and programs is increasing. This creates a challenge in providing enough parks, facilities, programs, and events to keep up with the increasing demand.

- ***Deteriorating Facilities.*** While Apple Valley has some new park facilities, it also has several aging amenities and facilities in poor condition. For example, the James Woody community center was built nearly 60 years ago to serve a population of 7,000. The play equipment at Thunderbird Park is old and shows signs of deterioration. High demand, aging facilities, and a decreasing maintenance budget will contribute to the speed at which facilities need renovation, repair, or replacement. Currently, the Town does not have a replacement schedule or funds set aside to replace deteriorating facilities.
- ***Level of Service:*** To date, the Town has done well to maximize efficiencies and continue providing good service. However, a combination of decreasing funds, increasing demand and aging and deteriorating facilities seriously threatens the provision of park facilities in the future. The Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department cannot continue to maintain this level of service indefinitely, unless the Town is willing to invest more in its parks.
- ***Maintenance Equipment:*** Although the level of maintenance staffing appears to be sufficient at this time, more maintenance equipment is needed to perform the services required to care for the park system and set up for events. This includes large equipment such as a six-foot tiller, Dakota spreader, landscape tractor, carts, infield groomer, skip loader, backhoe 5-yard dump truck and lift truck. Additionally, the Department is lacking vehicle and maintenance replacement funding sources.
- ***Department Identity:*** Since the Town accepted responsibility for parks and recreation services from the AVRPD in 2001, the Department's responsibilities have been divided between different departments and managers. The recent realignment of the Parks Division with the Recreation and Facilities Divisions will afford the Parks and Recreation Department the opportunity to handle all of its responsibilities under one umbrella and develop a uniform program and park system identity that can be recognized by Town leadership, the Apple Valley community and the surrounding region.
- ***Perceived Safety:*** As noted in the 2009 Resident Satisfaction Survey, safety is a concern in many areas of Town. Safety concerns have been raised in parks such as Mountain Vista Park and James Woody Park, based on real incidences and perceptions of unsafe conditions. Many parks and facilities are entirely fenced, allowing gates to be closed from dusk to dawn. While this may help prevent vandalism, graffiti and broken equipment is

still a costly concern for the Department. For FY09, there were 26 acts of vandalism and 13 of graffiti that needed to be addressed.

- **Traffic Congestion/Roadways:** According to the 2009 Resident Satisfaction Survey, a top concern in the community is traffic congestion and the quality of roadways. The community has grown faster than its ability to develop and maintain roadways and bikeways to serve the community. For example, Otoe Road ends just beyond the entrance of the Lenny Brewster Sports Center, affecting park access. Many existing roads do not have bike lanes or sidewalks, limiting active, non-motorized transportation in Apple Valley. Currently, only two bridges cross the Mojave River into Victorville, making Highway 18 and Bear Valley Road important, but busy, traffic corridors. In the long term, a third bridge is planned at Yucca Loma, and a new High Desert Corridor is planned, which will affect transportation patterns and park access in Apple Valley.
- **Trails/Pathways:** While the Town of Apple Valley has extensive plans for Lifeline multi-purpose trails through Town, few have been developed. A notable exception is the short, off-street path adjacent to Apple Valley Road near Sitting Bull Road. However, this paved path along a busy roadway does not appear to be equestrian friendly. Generally speaking, most multi-purpose trails in other communities tend to be ADA accessible, hard-surfaced paths designed to support walking, biking, scooters, skating, wheelchairs, etc. On the other hand, trails designed for jogging, nature interpretation, and equestrian use are more frequently soft surfaced. This plan will need to consider trail function and use in proposing multi-purpose trail development, as well as residents' tendency to drive to parks and other locations.
- **Neighborhood and Community Cohesion:** Apple Valley is diverse culturally and economically, creating different expectations for park services in various neighborhoods and across the community. The Parks and Recreation Master Plan will take into account this diversity of needs, which vary geographically in Apple Valley. Varying needs and expectations will affect many things, including park development and distribution, the community's willingness and ability to pay for parks and services, cost recovery strategies, and recreation programming needs.
- **Services for the Planning Area:** While the Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department now serves areas inside and outside of town, it focuses most of its operations within the Town boundaries. The population outside of town is more dispersed and less dense than in town, creating different needs for this area.
- **New Facilities:** The Town will need to ensure a successful transition of space and functions as several new facilities open, including the Town Hall Annex (affecting Recreation Center Space), a new maintenance hub

(affecting current equipment storage and offices at the Community Center), a water reclamation plant (affecting Lenny Brewster Sports Center), and Animal Control Center (affecting maintenance loads for Parks Staff). This will create opportunities for improved facility design at several facilities to improve their usable space.

- ***Park Level of Service:*** Large lot sizes, low-density residential areas, and a high percentage of vacant lands makes Apple Valley different from many other park planning areas. In general, the Town does not strive to provide parks within walking or biking distance of most residents. Driving to parks is considered the norm, meaning that parks tend to be larger with a concentration of facilities as well as green turf areas.
- ***Open Space/Cultural Resource Preservation:*** Due to large lot sizes, low-density residential areas, and a high percentage of vacant lands, the Town also has not focused resources on open space preservation and does not maintain any natural areas as part of its inventory. In general, the Department is not aware of any natural, cultural or historical resources in Town where preservation would be a priority.
- ***County Club Golf Course:*** The Apple Valley County Club is the closest thing to an iconic structure in Apple Valley. However, maintaining and operating a municipal golf course in the High Desert will provide many challenges. High water costs, aging facilities, and competition from several other area courses will make it difficult if not impossible to operate the golf course on a break-even basis. Still, the County Club offers facility space for rental and events such as weddings and reunions. The Town must consider the extent to which it is willing to subsidize the golf course as it creates a management and cost recovery strategy for the future.
- ***Programming and Event Expansion:*** The Town provides many quality recreation programs and events for the community and would like to expand these as the community continues to grow. For the most part, however, the Town is at capacity in its provision of recreation programs, and it lacks the facilities needed to expand. Staff already noticed a shortage in gymnasium space, sport practice fields, classrooms, and specialized recreation space. A new community center, specialized indoor and outdoor facility space and shared facilities with the School District are all most likely needed to support additional programs.
- ***Support Amenities and Facilities:*** Many facilities in Apple Valley Parks lack the support amenities needed for high-capacity use. For example, there is insufficient shade and seating at the aquatic center, and the facility lacks concessions typical at similar sites. The same is true for the adjacent amphitheater at Civic Center Park, which also lacks public restroom facilities to support events. The arena at the Horseman's Center is not equipped with stalls, stables, announcer's booth, seating or restrooms to

support rodeos at that site. Similarly, the Lenny Brewster Sports Center and James Woody Community Park lack restroom capacity, parking, and storage space to support a high level of use.

- ***Diverse Amenities and Facilities:*** Apple Valley needs a variety of park and recreation facilities to support diverse opportunities for recreation. These include active and passive use facilities. Currently, most playgrounds in Town are similar in style, and the Town lacks a “destination playground” or thematic playground to draw interest. (The frog playground at Corwin Park is the most unique.) Few neighborhood parks provide active use amenities, such as basketball courts, tennis courts, and skate spots. Trail opportunities, such as the perimeter trail at Lenny Brewster Sports Center, are lacking within many parks. Dog parks, water play areas, and other elements could be added to provide additional recreation opportunities.
- ***High Desert Destination:*** The Town Manager, Council members, and other leaders are successfully promoting Apple Valley as a “destination venue.” However, the Town has not indentified a clear role for Parks and Recreation to play in this promotion. For example, Civic Center Park is being developed as festival and event space for the Town. Currently, it lacks restrooms, concessions, sufficient parking, and convenient access (especially with the addition of the Town Hall Annex) to support events. On the other hand, there are plans to add a dog park to this site, which will not support the park’s function as a festival/event site. A destination playground would be a good fit for this site, although the playground area infrastructure was designed for smaller equipment. The lack of restrooms and other basic park infrastructure, combined with the lack of hotels in Apple Valley, make luring events like a national BMX race a challenge. However, the Parks and Recreation Department has still been able to hold large tournaments and events, and could continue to capitalize on these efforts.

Anticipated Planning Directions

Given these strengths, issues, and challenges for the Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department, it is anticipated that the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will address the community’s need for:

- Ample, integrated parks and open spaces in Town based on current and future development patterns;
- Strategic planning for parks and services inside and outside of town (within the entire planning area) that reflect different expectations and levels of development;
- Diverse recreation opportunities, including expanded events and programs, plus a greater variety of recreation facilities in Town;

- A new, larger community center with specialized space for a variety of activities and programs;
- Equestrian trails and multi-use trails (both hard and soft surfaced) primarily to support recreation. (It is anticipated that bikeways and other non-motorized transportation elements will be considered as a lower priority);
- Sufficient support amenities, such as restrooms, parking, storage, benches, signage, bike racks, etc.;
- A successful transition of space and maintenance workload as several new facilities open;
- Programs, events, facilities and partnerships to support individual and community health and wellness;
- Development of strong partnerships and volunteer programs to meet a variety of needs and make the most efficient use of funding;
- Revenue-generating facilities and events to reinvest funds in parks and recreation, plus to support the development of Apple Valley as a thriving economy/regional destination;
- Diverse funding sources to broaden the Town’s capacity to develop and expand parks, facilities, and programs, plus renovate or replace aging facilities and equipment;
- Policies and guidelines for the consistent design, development, renovation, and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities;
- The continued transition of the Parks and Recreation Department and park system from District design and management to an organization and system that supports the Town’s vision for the future;
- A brand for Apple Valley Parks and Recreation, recognizing their role in creating a better way of life.

The Apple Valley Parks and Recreation Department clearly has a number of strengths that will allow its parks, facilities, programs and events to become more visible community assets. As the Town of Apple Valley promises “A Better Way of Life,” the Parks and Recreation Master Plan will convey the message that “Parks Make Life Better.” This CPRS brand, along with a benefits-based approach to providing parks and recreation services, will help create a strong identity for the park system. It will solidify the Department’s role in supporting the Town in becoming a destination community in the High Desert.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AMEC Earth & Environment, Inc. Appendix B: Town of Apple Valley, General Plan Update, Biological Resources Report. November 21, 2007(revised November 19, 2007. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- CRM Tech. Appendix C: Cultural Resource Technical Report, Town of Apple Valley General Plan Update. September 21, 2007. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- CRM Tech. Appendix I: Paleontological Resources Technical Report. Nov 1 2007. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) Regional Council. Profile of the Town of Apple Valley. May 2009. San Bernardino County:SCAG Regional Council District 65.
- Terra Nova Planning and Research. Appendix A: Initial Study, Notice of Preparation (NOP) and Responses to NOP. September 17, 2008. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- Terra Nova Planning and Research, Inc. Appendix G: Air Quality Demand and Tables. January 2009. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- Terra Nova Planning and Research, Inc. Appendix H. Greenhouse Gasses Tables. November 2008. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley General Plan and Annexations 2008-001 and 2008-02/Environmental Impact Report Technical Appendices.
- Town of Apple Valley. General Plan. 2009. Terra Nova/Town of Apple Valley.
- Town of Apple Valley. Market Profile. 2010. Town of Apple Valley: http://www.applevalley.org/pgs/market_profile.asp

Town of Apple Valley. Vision 2020 Strategic Plan. May 2009. Apple Valley, CA: Town of Apple Valley.

Urban Crossroads. Seismic, Geo & Flooding Report. September 18, 2009.

Urban Crossroads. Technical Study Report. December 30 (revised), 2008.
Town of Apple Valley General Plan Noise Element Update. Town of Apple Valley, California.

Urban Crossroads. Traffic Circulation Report. November 24, 2008. Town of Apple Valley General Plan, Circulation Element Traffic Study. Town of Apple Valley, California.