

## **RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE TOWARD BUILD-OUT**

The City realizes that residents will continue to gauge their quality of life by the variety of leisure activities available. The Recreation and Open Space Element responds to the City's growing demands for parks, recreation and open space as build-out approaches. The development and implementation of parks and recreation services are guided by input from Chandler citizens.

As Chandler's remaining vacant lands are converted to urban use, reservations for parks and open space are critical. Well-maintained parks contribute to community vitality through enhanced property values and attraction of desirable businesses and employers.

This Element combines two statutorily required Elements: Open Space and Recreation. It contains goals, objectives and strategies for the provision and management of open space, parks and recreation services.

### **GOAL: PROVIDE QUALITY PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES CONVENIENT TO ALL NEIGHBORHOODS THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE POPULATION.**

*Objective:* Provide at least one ten-acre neighborhood park within each residential square mile, where possible.

*Objective:* Provide a system of community parks with service radius of 2 miles or less that provide a diversified mix of amenities.

*Objective:* Develop comprehensive recreational resources to meet regional park needs.

### **GOAL: DEVELOP SPECIALTY PARKS AND FACILITIES THAT PROMOTE COMMUNITY HEALTH.**

*Objective:* Support established joint-use efforts that provide shared recreation center and specialty facilities.

*Objective:* Improve wellness for all residents through access to recreation programs.

*Objective:* Integrate additional shade into parks.

*Objective:* Complete necessary improvements/modifications to Chandler's existing aquatic facilities to insure health, safety and quality goals are met for desired programs and facilities.

### **GOAL: ADD FOCUS ON RENOVATION AND REDEVELOPMENT NEEDS.**

*Objective:* Renovate existing parks to ensure all residents have updated facilities.

*Objective:* Respond to changing demographics and user needs with appropriate improvements.

*Objective:* Coordinate park redevelopment projects with the implementation of the Downtown-South Arizona Avenue Corridor Area Plan.

*Objective:* Promote street landscaping, landscaped areas and useable retention facilities in redevelopment areas.

### **GOAL: COMPLETE INTERCONNECTED OPEN SPACE AND TRAILS NETWORKS.**

*Objective:* Construct needed linkages between facilities and neighborhoods.

*Objective:* Include connections to the regional open space and trail system.

## **Existing Conditions**

Each year the City prepares a five-year Capital Improvement Plan, including facilities for parks and recreation. Many of the facilities described herein are included in the Council-approved 2007-2012 Capital Improvement Plan. The Capital Improvement Plan, and hence the plans for parks and recreational programs, is updated annually to reflect demographic shifts, priority changes, budget projections and growth impacts.

The park facilities described below provide a snapshot of the City's existing park facilities and amenities. Figure 19 illustrates the location of parks, recreation facilities, paseos and open spaces.

Statistics show dramatic growth in parks use over the past twelve years. The developed park acres per 1,000 residents have averaged 3.79 acres over the past eight years. A majority of the large park acreage has yet to be developed, which will cause the park acres per 1,000 residents to increase. If the capital program is completed as planned it is estimated that there will be 5.11 acres per 1,000 residents when residential build-out occurs in 2012.

In addition, the Community Services Department operates: the Tumbleweed Recreation Center, a 62,000 square foot multi-generational facility that features a fitness center, indoor jogging track, group exercise studio, gymnasium, game room, art and ceramics studios, racquetball courts, teaching kitchen, room rentals, birthday party packages and more; the Veterans Oasis Environmental Education Center, a 10,000 square foot facility that has four classrooms, exhibit areas, a gift shop and staff offices; the Chandler Community Center, a 33,000 square foot facility providing classroom, activity and meeting room space; the Chandler Senior Center a 10,397 square foot facility geared to the needs of the senior population; and the 11,300 square foot Snedigar Recreation Center that includes multipurpose rooms and classrooms.

- **Neighborhood Parks**

The City's extensive system of neighborhood parks serves Chandler's neighborhoods with a variety of passive and active recreational facilities. Typical amenities included in neighborhood parks are lighted paths, playgrounds, sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, ramadas, open space and landscaping.

- **Community Parks**

A community park typically serves several neighborhoods located within approximately one to two miles of the park. Community parks provide more specialized and elaborate facilities such as lighted sports fields, group picnic pavilions, restrooms, play areas and fishing lakes. The Community Services Department has established a series of community park service zones as a means of assuring equitable distribution of community parks throughout the City.

Community parks are not a mere expenditure, but an investment in the future well-being of individuals and groups, as well as the continued viability of the neighborhoods in Chandler. Each year citizens make requests to the Community Services Department for improvements in many of the City's existing community parks. These requests are given to the Parks Division who prioritizes them on an annual basis and a development plan is prepared for that year. This allows the Parks Division the ability to provide the public an equitable distribution of

community park improvements throughout the City. These improvements include the renovation of playgrounds, the addition of shade structures, irrigation systems, park lighting, restrooms, parking lots and landscaping.

- **Satellite Recreation Centers**

The department currently has joint-use, school satellite recreation centers at Andersen Junior High, serving northwest Chandler, Willis Junior High, serving east/central Chandler, and San Tan K-8, serving south Chandler.

- **Regional Parks**

In addition to the development of neighborhood and community parks, there is a need to develop comprehensive recreational resources to meet the regional park needs of Chandler. Tumbleweed Regional Park and the Snedigar Sportsplex have been planned to fulfill those needs.

**Assets.** One of Chandler's strongest assets is its parks facilities and recreation programs. General Plan workshop participants confirmed pride in the City's efforts, ranking parks and recreation services highly.

*New Park Design and Development.* The development schedule for individual parks will be reviewed and prioritized on an annual basis based upon acquisition schedules, residential development in the park service area, community needs and ability to fund the maintenance.

- **Homestead North Park Development**

Funding is proposed for the development of the Homestead North Park site. This park site is 7.6 acres in size and is located in the square mile bordered by Chandler Boulevard, Pecos Road, McQueen Road and Cooper Road. This park will serve the neighborhood park needs for this square mile. It is also adjacent to the Paseo System along the Consolidated Canal and will offer amenities relating to the trail project as well.

- **Roadrunner Park Development**

Funding is included for the design and the development of the Roadrunner Park site. This park site is 10 acres in size and is located in the square mile bordered by Germann, Queen Creek, Gilbert Road and the Eastern Canal. This park will fulfill the neighborhood park needs for the square mile.

- **Homestead South Park Development**

This site is 10.9 acres in size and is located on the northeast corner of Pecos Road and the Consolidated Canal. This park will function as a buffer between the commercial development on Pecos and Cooper Roads and the Paseo System along the Consolidated Canal. The park will be designed and developed so that it has a direct relationship with the commercial development and the Paseo System.

- **Mesquite Groves Park**

In 2002, the City of Chandler purchased 100 acres on the northwest corner of Val Vista Drive and Riggs Road for the development of a future community park. Mesquite Groves Park has been planned for that location to meet the

recreational needs in this rapidly growing area of southeast Chandler. This project includes funding for the design and development of approximately 94 acres of the park. Funding has also been included for the construction of a satellite recreation center on this park site.

- **Tumbleweed Park Continued Development**

Tumbleweed Park is intended to serve the entire City. This 205 acre park located at McQueen and Germann Roads, when completed, will provide natural areas, specialized attractions and additional open space for recreation. To date, approximately 120 acres have been developed including a 15-court lighted tennis complex, site furnishings, park roads, parking, restrooms, ramadas, sidewalks, lighting, irrigation, landscaping and utilities. The overall master plan for the park includes a tennis complex, festival area, open space, parks/buildings and facilities maintenance service center, a multi-generational recreation center, train display area, Playtopia, a large playground area and other community recreational needs which involve large groups or require large areas of land.

- **Veterans Oasis Park**, located at the northeast corner of Chandler Heights and Lindsay Roads, covers 113 acres and features 4 ½ miles of trails, wildlife viewing areas, ramadas and picnic areas, a butterfly and hummingbird habitat, an outdoor amphitheatre, a unique learning-oriented playground, a learning center, and a 5-acre urban fishing lake.

*Joint-Use Partnerships.* The City has a long-standing joint-use partnership with Chandler Unified School District, which has allowed the use of school facilities for after school and summer recreation programming. The school district on the other hand has used City pools, parks and equipment. The City has installed lights on school fields to allow night use by youth sports organizations. This relationship has maximized the use of Chandler tax dollars.

**Challenges/Issues.** A range of challenges face the community in providing continued excellence in recreation facilities and programs. Aging facilities will require a shift in attention from development to renovation and maintenance. Additional support staff and resources will be needed to develop and maintain a computerized work management program to insure preventative maintenance activities take place as scheduled. The expense of maintaining facilities will escalate as facilities age. For example, mold remediation and equipment failure will pose budgetary challenges. Additional challenges include:

- Funding for operation and maintenance of existing facilities in light of the growth in usage of parks and facilities.
- Funding to complete the development of the park system.
- Enhancing promotional efforts and advertising strategies for better communication with users.
- Insuring priority status for citizens may require implementation of non-resident fees that could have a backlash due to sales tax based revenue sources.
- Proliferation of special interest groups and restrictions on available "public time" at parks and facilities.
- The lack of park and recreation resources compared to the rapid growth and expansion in southeast Chandler.

- Limited indoor activity space for high demand pre-school programs, primarily in southeast Chandler.
- Coordination of sports field space with the various organizations requesting field time.
- A demonstrated need for an additional 4-field softball complex.
- Younger, more active seniors will demand a different set of activities both in the senior center and at other facilities.

### **Neighborhood Park Acquisition**

The need for approximately 25 acres of parkland to be acquired for Neighborhood Park use has been identified providing for the acquisition of two ten-acre neighborhood parks and the acquisition of a five-acre addition to an existing park site.

Although satellite recreation centers have helped meet the indoor recreation demands, population increases and program growth has escalated the demand for additional centers similar to the Snedigar Recreation Center. The Snedigar Center initially consisted of 8,266 square feet. An additional 2,280 square feet of modular space was added to meet the recreation demands in the Ocotillo area. These centers can be expanded to meet growing needs.

Reductions in school funding have caused schools to look for alternative financial resources such as the development of sports camps and community school programs. These changes as well as the growth in the volume of recreation programs and uses have limited the availability of school gymnasium space for public recreation use.

**Opportunities.** A key element of the neighborhood park development program is citizen input during the design phase. Chandler prides itself on the park design process. Neighborhood meetings are held during the design phase of each project to gain citizen input into the design and amenities for the park or facility.

- Local High-Tech resources could provide opportunities for partnerships to put facilities on the cutting edge of service and connectivity.
- Increased collaboration among Recreation, Libraries, and Center for the Arts and Public History may yield enhanced services, increase accessibility to services and economies of scale.
- Partnerships with community groups/agencies to focus on wellness issues for all life stages, examples include childhood obesity and "nature deficit disorder."

Interrelated General Plan Elements include Public Services and Facilities, Land Use, Public Buildings, Neighborhood Planning, and Conservation and Environmental Planning.

### **Build-Out Policies**

Loss of open space is common among urbanizing communities, particularly as build-out approaches. As agricultural lands have been converted to residential neighborhoods and businesses, open areas are more likely to consist of parks, school grounds and drainage facilities.

Chandler has a history of being on the cutting edge of facility development, most recently with the addition of a skate park, a bike park, Tumbleweed Playtopia and

several state of the art aquatic facilities. With the approach of build-out, attention will be given to shifts in demographics, trends and interests of residents.

Build-out policies include:

- ◆ Support for the completion of an interconnected park and trails system.
- ◆ Maintain the high quality of services and facilities provided.
- ◆ Implement the Community Services 2004 Strategic Plan to maintain quality of life as build-out related changes occur.
- ◆ Utilize non-resident fees and priority registration, giving preference to Chandler residents over non-residents as the population grows and demands on facilities increase.
- ◆ Respond to unique demands created by the growing senior population.
- ◆ Support additional staff and budget resources that will be necessary to meet the needs of residents in maintaining the expected quality of life.

### **Implementation Recommendations**

Derived primarily from Community Services planning efforts with the Chandler Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, Goals and Objectives have been refined and subsequently translated into action-oriented recommendations. Continued planning, construction and renovation of parks and recreation facilities are ongoing City commitments during build-out.

**System Completion.** Implementation of the Capital Plan for needed facilities for Chandler will produce a geographically balanced system of parks and recreation resources to meet the recreational needs and desires of residents as build-out nears. Completion of important pathway linkages between facilities and neighborhoods enhances opportunities for all users while providing a healthy and sustainable alternative to automobile travel.

**Recommendation:** Prioritize, program and construct pathway and trail connections among public open spaces, parks and recreation facilities and neighborhoods, including connections to regional trails and open spaces.

**Maintenance and Renovation.** Build-out signals shifts in business as usual for Chandler and parks and recreation is no exception. New emphasis on renovating older facilities, retrofitting for a changing demographic, and commitment to extensive operation and maintenance costs is required.

**Recommendation:** Utilize trend analysis and user needs assessments to identify and program necessary renovation of facilities to meet changing demographics, interests and needs.

To maximize facility utilization, balance 'public time' at parks facilities with restricted use time for special groups.

Park renovation may coincide with other redevelopment efforts in the City. Coordination and cooperation with public- and privately-funded projects is an important opportunity to maximize resources and property target facility design.

**Recommendation:** Coordinate efforts with the Planning and Public Works Departments on the design and development of the South Washington Street Paseo project and other redevelopment-related projects.

Maximizing limited resources is essential and consideration of cost recovery programs is prudent for certain City services. To address non-resident use of recreation facilities and programs, non-resident fees are appropriate.

**Recommendation:** To insure space is available in programs and at facilities for Chandler residents, the department should implement non-resident fees and priority registration for residents wherever feasible.

**Expanded Facilities/Youth Fitness.** Construction of additional gymnasiums closely supports community recreation and fitness goals. Additions at the Snedigar Recreation Center, Shawnee Park and Mesquite Groves Park are recommended to enhance facilities across Chandler. The gymnasiums will allow staff to provide active indoor recreation programs for the youth in their respective parts of the City.

**Recommendation:** Construct gymnasiums to provide access to air-conditioned indoor facilities that are evenly distributed throughout the community. These facilities are key components in supporting year-round, childhood fitness through community recreation programs.

One of the major goals of the Community Services Department is to take a leadership role in addressing wellness for all Chandler residents, including the issue of childhood obesity.

The park planning staff has seen a rise in citizen expectations for sports and activities that fall outside of the department's traditional offerings. As an example, a cricket field is now under construction at the Snedigar Sportsplex and bocce courts are in the planning queue.

**Recommendation:** In response to citizen demand, additional sports fields at the Snedigar Sportsplex and a softball complex at Tumbleweed Park should be constructed.

**Implement Design Standards.** Usability of park facilities is enhanced by improved designs. The City has recently completed revised design standards for park improvements with provisions for adequate shade structures for playground equipment and park users.

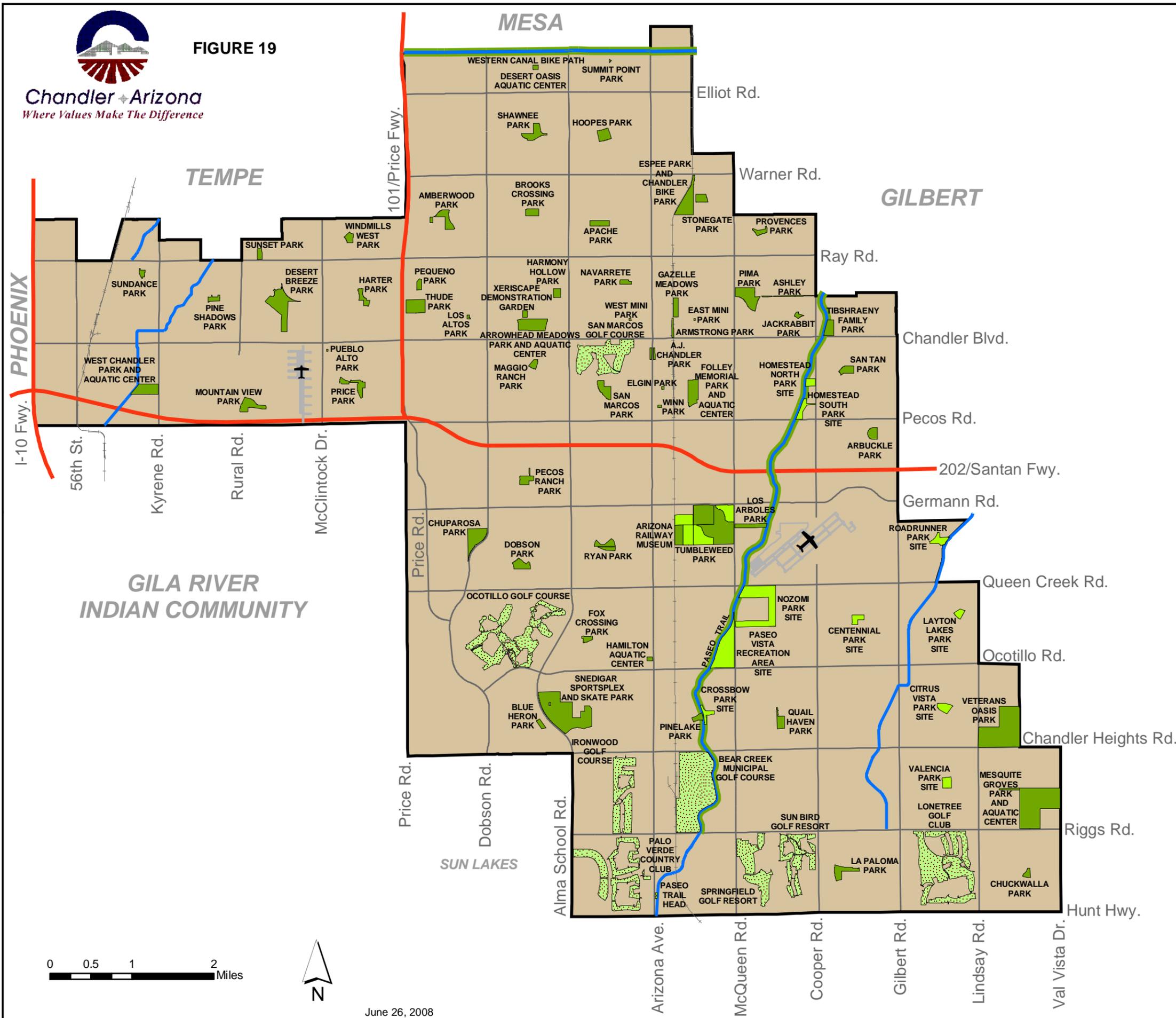
***Recommendation:*** Implement retrofits of existing facilities where additional shading needs are identified including shading of playground structures and the addition of shade structures along the Consolidated Canal Paseo.

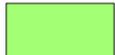


Chandler Arizona  
Where Values Make The Difference

FIGURE 19

# PARKS AND OPEN SPACE



-  EXISTING PARK
-  FUTURE PARK SITE
-  GOLF COURSE
-  RECREATIONAL TRAIL
-  CANALS

The Parks and Open Space Map shows Chandler's open space including parks, recreation facilities, canals, and golf courses. Private parks and retention areas such as those owned by Home Owner Associations are not represented on the map.

