



Parks & Recreation System Master Plan



RECREATION PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND ANALYSIS

Cupertino residents enjoy an exceptional quality of life, a fact recognized by *Money Magazine* when it placed Cupertino on its list of America’s Best Places to Live. The Recreation and Community Services Department is instrumental in shaping the quality of life through the provision of recreation programs, activities, facilities, parks and events.

This document provides an overview of the City’s existing recreation services. Cupertino’s recreation services include recreation programming, events, organized activities, facility rentals, and reservations and permitting to support facility use that occurs in City parks or joint-use sites. This memo describes Cupertino’s recreation services to provide a baseline for recommendations to enhance programming services to better meet the needs of Cupertino residents. It highlights preliminary findings from an evaluation of recreation program services and support services. The document includes three appendices:

- Appendix A presents an overview of the Department’s existing programs and events, documenting current participation and facility trends.
- Appendix B introduces a different framework for discussing programming, focusing on program service areas and support services to help identify programming opportunities.
- Appendix C provides an overview of other recreation providers in Cupertino, including those that partner with the City.



Tennis camps, classes, lessons and drop-in play are a popular program among users of all ages. These players are active at Cupertino’s Sports Center.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Several sources of data were evaluated in this report. City staff provided recreation participation data for the period of September 2016 through September 2017. Staff also identified recreation trends and patterns in the use of existing City facilities. These data were compared to background information including Recreation Offerings Brochures, Recreation & Community Services budgets, Annual Event Reports, Summer Concert Series List, Quarterly Reports, Recreation & Community Services Department Annual Reports, Senior Center Reports, Teen Center Survey, and Division Manager’s reports. Interviews, meetings and workshops with City staff helped provide information and context for findings from other sources.

In reviewing and discussing the recreation data presented in this report, the following should be noted:

- **Data Limitations:** Data are not available for all programs or all facilities. Data are not available for usage resulting from season passes for Blackberry Farm Pool, Senior Center drop-in participants, nor for programs by others at City facilities, such as Historical Society visitors and Farmer’s Market visitors.
- **Data Categorization:** Data for similar activities or the same location may be presented in more than one category, due to how participation is tracked. For example, “Sports Center” figures include member classes held at the Sports Center, but not registered classes held there, which are shown in the appropriate Classes & Programs category instead.
- **Data Counts:** Participation is currently tracked in different ways depending on the activity. Therefore the counts are not measured using a consistent methodology. The data refer to a mix of the following:
 - The estimated numbers of people attending a one-time activity (based on permitting and other estimates);
 - The numbers of people registered for a class or activity that may meet multiple times in a season;
 - The numbers of participants in individual sports leagues that use city fields;
 - The numbers of teams (and estimated number of participants on each team) using city fields;
 - The rounds of golf and foot golf played;
 - Numbers of paid entries to a facility.

The City of Cupertino tracks program data in several categories:

- Rentals
- Events
- Athletic groups
- Sports Center
- Golf Course
- After-school enrichment
- Camps
- Youth classes & programs
- Teen classes & programs
- Adult classes & programs
- Senior Center
- McClellan Ranch/nature programs

Note that in terms of counts, the data do not reflect the numbers of “occasions” when parks and facilities are used. Some counts refer to individual uses and some refer to multiple site visits by one participant.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

City Program Participation

The City of Cupertino served more than 347,000 participants between September 2016 and September 2017. Table 1 summarizes available City data on recreation program participants (see Appendix A for details). The summary makes it clear that the City currently does not have a comprehensive framework to categorize, measure, evaluate and plan programs and events, nor does it have methods to track participation that are consistent across a range of activities. However, data highlight interesting patterns in current programming participation:

- Provision of Recreation Facilities, Fields and Pools (Providing Places to Gather and Play):** While the City provides a variety of programs and events, it serves the most people through its facility reservations, rentals and drop-in swimming rather than through organized, staff-led activities, classes and events. The City reports over 2,100 rentals serving an estimated 155,800 people and over 21,000 pool users at Blackberry Farm in the 12-month period. Rental opportunities include indoor meeting rooms and spaces such as at the Quinlan Community Center, Monta Vista Recreation Center and Creekside Park Building. It includes outdoors venues such as picnic areas. The majority of rental use occurred at 2 sites, Community Hall and Quinlan Community Center, which accounted for over 1,000 rentals and over 87,000 estimated users. Pool use includes drop-in visitors and pool parties at Blackberry Farm (but not class participants for swimming or aquatics, which are shown with Classes data). These data do not include sports field reservations and use by leagues, which accounts for another over 5,000 participants. These numbers also do not include parks reserved through permitting for special events, which are described below.
- Special Events (Connecting the Community):** Special events and festivals also attract large numbers of participants. Most of these events are hosted by other entities in City parks and facilities, while some are coordinated by the City. These include the popular outdoor concerts, movies and Shakespeare in the Park, as well as fun runs, community events and celebrations such as the Holiday Tree Lighting program, 4th of July, and the Wildlife & Harvest Day celebration. Of the estimated approximately 60,000 people participating in events, about 40,000 attended events at Memorial Park. That site is critical to hosting large community-wide events in Cupertino.
- Athletics, Sports and Fitness Programs (Fostering Active, Healthy individuals):** As noted in City data, the Sports Center and Golf Course are the third and fourth top service areas in terms of numbers of people served. With over 34,000 sports center member visits for fitness classes alone and over 25,500 golf rounds respectively, the City devotes substantial resources towards meeting sport and fitness needs. These numbers do not include people participating in registered classes at the Sports Center, which are included in Classes data and categorized by age group, nor does it include court usage by members, clubs or leagues.
- Lifelong Learning & Enrichment (Enriching Lives through Recreation and Education):** Other types of age-specific programs and staff-led activities account for an important component of the City's program and recreation services. These categories include all other types of programs, including areas of emphasis such as education, enrichment, environmental education, nature interpretation, youth and teen development and empowerment, senior services, and programs for diverse cultures. However, it is important to note that classes, camps, and other "registered" activities are counted by quantity of registrations. For example, a participant that signs up for

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an 8- or 12-week registered fitness class at Quinlan Center or the Senior Center will count as “1”. A Sports Center member that attended 8 different Zumba classes for members counts as 8 in the data provided. This methodology under-represents registered activities and classes, relative to picnic reservations, golf, drop-in swimming, special events and other activities where each “person-visit” is counted individually.

TABLE 1: PARTICIPATION IN CITY PROGRAMS (BASED ON AVAILABLE DATA, ROUNDED TO THE NEAREST HUNDRED)

CITY-IDENTIFIED SERVICE AREA	ESTIMATED PARTICIPANTS	DATA INCLUDED
Rentals	155,800	Facility reservations and rentals
Drop-in Swimming	21,100	Swimming at Blackberry Farm, excl. season passes
Events	59,700	Events hosted by the city or other groups in city parks and facilities (including Senior Center events)
Sports Center	36,200	Membership classes/activities at the Sports Center (excludes registered classes)
Sports Center membership		Total number of memberships for the year is 1,980. Sports Center Tennis Club membership is currently 380.
Golf Course	25,600	Rounds of golf or foot golf
Youth Classes/Programs	9,900	Registered classes of all types, including aquatics and sports
Teen Classes/Programs	7,100	Registered and drop-in teen activities of all types
Adult Classes/Programs	2,000	Registered classes of all types, excluding senior classes
Senior Center	6,000	Senior Center classes, drop-in classes, volunteer programs, and field trips
Athletic Groups	5,100	Participants in sports leagues that use city fields or joint use fields
Youth Camps	5,000	Youth camps of all types, including sports, arts, nature, etc. Also includes Extended Care.
Youth Afterschool Enrichment	300	Classes currently held at five elementary schools (261 participants = actual qty.)
McClellan Ranch	13,700	Activities at McClellan Ranch, excluding classes & camps
Totals	347,500	

Note: These estimates are derived from data from September 2016 through September 2017. See Appendix A for details. Data counts represent a mix of visits, registered participants, facility users, estimated use, and other counts.



Recreation opportunities encompass a wide range of activities across all age groups, including environmental education and interpretation.

Rethinking the Provision of Program Services

To improve analysis and decision-making for recreation programs and events, there is an opportunity to identify and separate program service areas from other support services, distinguishing the programs that are “provided” by the City, versus those where the city provides a facility for reservation or use. Support services, which help ensure the success of the City’s program service areas, include administrative efforts to develop, coordinate and facilitate park use and program participation. For example, a staff-led dance class at the Quinlan Community Center (QCC) would be considered an arts and culture program, while processing the reservation of a QCC meeting room is a support service.

Program Service Areas

Based on the evaluation of what the City currently offers residents, nine existing program service areas were identified. Program service areas can be summarized as noted below. Programming opportunities for each of these service areas are described in Appendix B.

- **Arts & Culture:** Includes classes, camps, programs, etc. relating to fine, visual, performing and cultural arts.
- **Aquatics:** Includes all aquatics and swimming programs and services.
- **Child, Youth and Teen Development & Leadership:** Includes programs from preschool through college preparation that focus on child and youth learning and development, afterschool enrichment, and youth and teen empowerment.
- **Events and Festivals:** Includes all events, fairs, festivals, races and community-scale activities provided by the City.
- **Golf:** includes all golf and golf-related programs and services.
- **Environmental Education/Nature Programs:** Includes opportunities to learn about, appreciate, restore, interpret and interact with the natural environment through classes, camps, volunteer opportunities, etc.
- **Lifelong Learning & Enrichment:** Includes opportunities for skill development and personal enrichment for recreation and leisure in a non-academic context.

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- **Seniors/Older Adult Programs:** Includes all programs, activities and services designed and offered exclusively for seniors and older adults, whether at the Senior Center or other facilities.
- **Sports, Fitness and Exercise:** Includes organized athletic leagues, sport-focused camps, sports or fitness classes, and open gyms/facilities/courts, except those relating to golf, aquatics or seniors.

In addition to these areas, community feedback to date suggests separate consideration of the following program service areas:

- **Therapeutic Recreation:** Includes classes, activities and events specifically for people with disabilities, people of varied abilities or people with special needs.
- **Culturally Diverse Programming:** Includes programs targeted to the City’s racial, ethnic and cultural demographics, responsive to the interests and language needs of specific populations.
- **Play and Outdoor Recreation:** Includes less structured but organized play opportunities at indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as outdoor programming and activation in parks and related public spaces.

Opportunities for Facility Expansion to Increase Programming Options

Many of the City’s recreation facilities are running at or beyond intended capacity. Quinlan Community Center, for example, is home to many of the City’s programs and support services, since the Department staff offices are located there as well. Space there is at a premium and there is little opportunity to expand offerings. The Senior Center and Sports Center are also reported to be at capacity, given the current size and configurations of these facilities. The provision of new recreation facilities—such as a performing and fine arts center, a year-round aquatic facility or even smaller facilities such as a bike skills course—offer potential for expanding recreation programs and events. If major facilities are built, the City will need to make a dramatic investment in recreation programming to operate these sites and generate revenue to help offset operations costs.

Opportunities to Offer Programs in Additional Locations

Even without new or expanded facilities, there are many opportunities to expand programs and events in Cupertino by better utilizing existing facilities and park spaces and thinking differently about the services provided. For example, most events and programs are congregated in a few locations rather than spread out across the community. Existing programs favor dedicated indoor spaces—such as the Senior Center, Teen Center and Sports Center—when there are many opportunities to provide more and/or a greater variety of programs outdoors, including neighborhood-scale activities in parks.



Small neighborhood parks, like Franco Park shown here, are one type of park that could be activated through neighborhood-scale outdoor recreation programs.



Memorial Park is Cupertino's most frequent site for events and festivals, which tend to be popular among residents.

Current Trends in Program Services

The City also has an opportunity to increase programming options by considering new recreation trends. Mobile recreation programs, pop-up activities and portable amenities such as stages and climbing walls would allow the City to provide programs throughout the community in a cost-effective way. Diversified play programs and increased outdoor recreation could bring more leisure activities and social opportunities to parks, resulting in benefits such as increased stress reduction and social cohesiveness. New trends in providing multi-purpose, flexible facilities suggest a variety of uses for traditional golf course facilities and existing sports courts that may be considered over time. Even opportunities to get seniors outdoors—through programs such as metal detecting, kite flying, garden parties and socials, and lawn/patio bowling--represent a new way to think about programs beyond the confines of existing facilities and spaces.

Support Service Areas

The following support services are prerequisites to offering recreation programs, and are necessary to ensure programming excellence:

- **Adaptive/Inclusive Recreation Accommodations:** Includes outreach and efforts to make accommodations as requested in other types of programs, events and activities to ensure these are accessible for people with disabilities.
- **Communication, Branding and Marketing:** Includes the Department's efforts to advertise its programs and communicate effectively about recreation options.
- **Community Outreach/Neighborhood Services:** includes efforts to connect neighbors, increase neighborhood communication and safety, and prepare residents for emergencies.
- **Customer Service:** Includes registration, connections to social services, etc.
- **Park and Facility Reservations, Rentals and Permits:** Includes the administration of applications, permitting and scheduling for park and facility rentals and reservations (e.g., meeting rooms, picnic spaces, community garden plots, sports fields, and recreation facilities for use by other leagues, clubs, groups, organizations or individuals).
- **Park and Facility Maintenance:** Includes landscaping and infrastructure maintenance, janitorial services, equipment repair, natural resource stewardship and similar services to ensure the cleanliness, safety and usability of parks.
- **Partnership and Volunteer Coordination:** Includes the recruitment and management of partnership and volunteer opportunities.

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- **Program management and administration:** Includes program planning and decision-making, cost recovery, fee methodology development, staff policies and procedures, staff management and training and other necessary administrative tasks.

Program Provision through Partnerships

Current program services rely in part on partnerships between the City and other entities. Existing partners include social, cultural, civic and environmental organizations, school districts, De Anza College, the County, athletic organizations and private/commercial providers. A more complete overview of City partners is found in Appendix C. As noted by City staff, partnerships can create challenges in operations and facility capacity, but they also provide residents with access to significantly more program services than the City alone could deliver. New or enhanced partnerships might also provide more opportunities for residents. For example, the success of the Afterschool Enrichment program, a collaboration with the Cupertino Union School District, could be scaled to more schools and/or for more hours.



The City's collaboration with local partners enhances the program services offered at McClellan Ranch.

Recreation Programs Evaluation and Planning

To make effective decisions about the types of programs and services to provide, the City needs a framework in place to identify (1) what programs and services are offered, (2) the quality and effectiveness of existing programs (3) the community's needs and desires for programs, (4) the resources available to provide programs, (5) the opportunities, challenges and constraints affecting program provision, and (6) ways to measure success. The Master Plan can provide direction for this type of program management and decision-making based on the community's vision and goals for parks and recreation. It should include recommendations and identify ways to more effectively track program participation and other metrics through which programs may be evaluated to determine where adjustments are needed.