



INTRODUCTION

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City of Encinitas Setting

The City of Encinitas is located in northern San Diego County and has a population of approximately 60,000 people. Incorporated in 1986, the City includes the communities of Cardiff-by-the-Sea, Old Encinitas, New Encinitas, Leucadia, & Olivenhain. The City is bound by the Pacific Ocean on the west, the Batiquitos Lagoon on the north, and the San Elijo Lagoon on the south. Escondido Creek, a major east-west drainage, traverses the southern boundary of the City and ultimately empties into the San Elijo Lagoon.

General Plan

The City's General Plan was adopted in 1989 and contains goals, policies and programs to guide development. In the Recreation Element of the General Plan a generalized trail system was provided as part of the Recreation Facilities Plan (Figure 4, Recreation Element of the General Plan). The Recreation Facilities Plan identified generalized routes for hiking, bicycling and pedestrian recreation as well as general standards for the trail system. However, the trails were not fully articulated due to the general nature of the document. In August of 1997, the City, recognizing the need to take the planning process one step further, began formulation of a more detailed plan for trails using the General Plan as a starting point. The following goals and policies set forth by the Circulation and Recreation Elements of the General Plan have been further developed in this Recreational Trails Master Plan:

Circulation Element

POLICY 4.4: Where possible, establish a separate system of hiking trails, bicycle paths and equestrian trails from which motorized vehicles shall be banned.

Recreation Element

POLICY 1.16: Future trails in addition to those planned for in this element may be added to the existing system to enhance the recreational opportunities of the City.

POLICY 2.2: Provide and maintain an inter-linking network of trails for horseback riding, hiking, and bicycling; minimizing the cost of the trail system by encouraging the use of drainage channels, flood plains, existing trails, public lands, excess street rights-of-way, and major utility rights-of-way.

The generalized trails defined in the Recreation Facilities Plan were analyzed as a first step in the planning process, followed by a comprehensive field analysis to identify new trail segments which could fill gaps that existed in the original plan and to expand and enrich the recreational opportunities of the trail system. This analysis also included trails requested for inclusion by members of the community.

The Recreational Trails Master Plan provides a comprehensive long range planning document that provides flexibility. Trail alignments and standards have been developed based on current information and known future conditions with the idea that as circumstances change, the plan can accommodate changing conditions and still remain effective. For instance, trail alignments on private parcels that have no current development plans have been designated based on existing topography and alignment of proposed streets. When development occurs in these areas, the City will work closely with the developer to adjust the alignment based on the proposed plans in order to maintain community character, meet the needs of the City's recreational users, avoid or minimize environmental impacts, and maintain the viability of the development project.

Unique Opportunity

The City of Encinitas has many unique aspects which enable the development of an exceptional trail system including:

- over 10 miles of existing City-maintained trails;
- approximately 5 miles of existing trails in the San Elijo Lagoon managed by the County of San Diego;
- over 17 miles of easements dedicated for trails that are pending implementation;
- numerous city parks, schools, beaches, and lagoons which provide natural destination points, staging areas and rest areas;
- adjacency to a well developed trail system in Rancho Santa Fe, which provides recreational opportunities and linkages to regional connections; and,
- a dedicated, well informed and highly organized group of trail activists who are

willing to devote their time and economic resources to preserving and enhancing current trails, and to developing and maintaining new trail opportunities.

Public Participation

To insure a high level of public participation in the planning process, two workshops were held to solicit citizen input. The workshops were well attended and provided valuable information to the design team in ascertaining the needs of the community. Agendas and summaries of comments received from these workshop sessions are contained in the Appendices.

In addition, the City Council formed a Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, consisting of two City Council members, two Planning Commissioners, and three Parks and Recreation Commissioners, who provided input and direction throughout the process. The advisory committee held over fourteen meetings, all of which were legally posted and open to the public. The first draft of the Recreational Trails Master Plan was also presented at public meetings of the Parks and Recreation and Planning Commissions for their review and input early on in the process. The first draft was also presented at two additional public workshops held in November 2000, which were advertised through a citywide public notice mailed to every residence in the City.

Finally, the final draft of the Recreational Trails Master Plan was reviewed in a public hearing of the Planning Commission held on November 15, 2001 and was considered at public hearings of the City Council on February 20 & March 18, 2002 and approved at a public hearing of the City Council on April 6, 2002. The California Coastal Commission certified the Plan on June 12, 2003.

As previously mentioned, the City of Encinitas is unique and highly enriched by the dedication of the trails activists in the community. The continued support of these concerned citizens will be crucial to ensuring the full implementation of the trail system. Although implementation of the full plan will take many years, its success will be determined by the level of participation and commitment carried by the citizenry, the City Council, and City staff.

Goals & Objectives

The following page contains the goals & objectives which were presented, discussed and modified during the first workshop. They represent the guiding direction for the planning of the trails system.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

City of Encinitas Recreational Trails Master Plan

1. Is aimed at a variety of recreational users and shall be designated as primarily a soft surface trail system, with hard surfacing where appropriate, providing recreational opportunities for hikers, bicyclists, and equestrians, while restricting motorized vehicles from trails.
2. Will provide for a loop trail system, where possible, with varying loop lengths within the system.
3. Will provide for diversity in trail experiences including variety in difficulty, terrain, environment and the exploration of interpretive opportunities.
4. Will link recreational opportunities within the City of Encinitas providing for connections between parks, open space, schools, community facilities, and trail systems in adjacent jurisdictions.
5. Will be designated with safety as a paramount concern and will:
 - minimize vehicular crossings,
 - maximize the separation between roads and trails (with plantings and distance)
 - maximize visibility and warning signage where interface between vehicles and the trail does occur, and
 - provide access for patrol, emergency vehicles and maintenance.
6. Will address issues of regular upkeep and patrol to insure trail safety and reduce exposure to liability to the City and adjacent landowners.
7. Will be signed with a system of easily recognized markers which will allow users to clearly recognize the trail system.
8. Will, whenever possible, be designated in locations that will provide the community with recreational trails, yet minimize the financial burden to the City of Encinitas through:
 - designations on private parcels where future development will implement the trail;
 - location of trails along existing paths, roads and utility easements; &
 - minimizing the need for property acquisition.
9. Will minimize impacts to adjacent landowners from trespass, loss of privacy, damage and property loss associated with the trail.
10. Will locate trails with environmental sensitivity to minimize the impact to the environment.