

# PAYSON GENERAL PLAN UPDATE 2014-2024

## DRAFT CHAPTER V – PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

*Prepared for:*

*Town of Payson, Arizona*



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## 5 PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

*Expand recreational opportunities through a variety of programming and facility improvements*

### 5.1 OVERVIEW

#### Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Vision

Payson is an attractive and desirable place to live; it is situated at the base of the Mogollon Rim, and is known as one of the most scenic areas in the state. Many opportunities are available for citizens and visitors to experience Arizona's history through Payson's landscapes and cultural settings. The quality of life and economic well-being in Town is linked to its abundant outdoor resources. Population growth and increased development is in part due to the popularity of Payson's location and amenities. The Town of Payson is committed to providing a high standard of living by protecting its natural resources and open space, hosting regional recreation activities, and offering enhanced walking, hiking, and biking opportunities in parks, neighborhoods, and commercial areas. The Jewel of Payson's Parks, Recreation, and Tourism amenities is Green Valley Park, which provides three lakes (13 acres), 17 acres of grass, beautiful landscaping, and abundant amenities, and was designed with the dual purpose of providing passive recreation space and managing water resources.

Public investments that will compliment private development include developing an interconnected network of pedestrian and bicycle multi-use trails between adjacent neighborhoods and commercial districts.

Recreational opportunities are vital to the health and well-being of Payson's citizens. Town of Payson will provide recreational programs designed to teach new skills, improve physical health, and celebrate the arts, in high quality facilities.

Town of Payson will continue to be the "Event Capital of Arizona" by hosting community events and activities in addition to the annual parades, the Mountain High Games, Northern Gila County Fair, and the classic car display, August Doins, held in Payson since 1884.

The careful planning and conservation of natural and historic resources, provision of recreational opportunities, and holistic development of mixed-use residential and commercial areas, with interconnected trails and open space, will enable Payson to reach its full potential in providing the highest quality of life for its citizens.

#### Existing Conditions

Protected green space within the incorporated municipal boundary of Payson includes over 100 acres of Town-owned land, and nearly 4,000 acres of U.S. Forest Service, Tonto National Forest lands. These lands are accessible, protected, and connected to varying degrees.

Throughout the General Plan process, the community made clear its support for parks, open space, and recreation access within Town. Stakeholders expressed interest in developing a more complete inventory, which would include a system of green connections (trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes) to facilitate pedestrian and cyclist circulation within Town. Linking parks, trails, and recreational amenities to one another will foster a sense of community, and increase opportunities for residents

and visitors to enjoy the natural environment. A Town-wide wayfinding system will welcome visitors at the Town trailheads and gateways and direct individuals to in-Town amenities and services.

**Figure 24: Town of Payson Open Space Inventory**

Park Type	Acres	Ownership	Level of Protection	Recreation Fields	Playgrounds
Regional	36	Federal	High	No	No
Community	113	Town	High	Yes	Yes
Neighborhood	0	Town	High	No	No
Mini-Park	0.2	Town	High	No	Yes
Trails	>26 miles	Federal	High	No	No

Source: Town of Payson, Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department

## Open Space

The Town of Payson began defining, identifying, and tracking “open space” within the area for inclusion in the 2003 General Plan Update. The Town’s location within vast U.S. Forest Service land has inhibited the identification and creation of additional open space.

### Open space, as outlined in the Land Use Element, includes:

*“areas that are to be precluded from development except for recreational facilities or nature preserves. Open space areas should be left in a natural state for scenic purposes due to topographic or drainage constraints or the need to provide buffers between potentially incompatible land uses. A linked open space system should be created through the preservation of unique topography, public utility easements, arterial corridors, and other regional linkages that exist in the planning area.”*

As discussed in the Environmental Planning Element, open space areas can be publicly or privately owned and maintained. These areas can be parcels of land or water that are managed to conserve plant or animal life, provide access to outdoor recreation, protection of archaeological or cultural amenities, characterized by moderate to severe slopes, or for the protection of the public health and safety (e.g., floodplains). Open space within Payson includes retention/detention areas, floodways and floodplains, as well as U.S. Forest Service lands. State Trust lands or privately held lands identified as open space may be developed at a **minimum** one dwelling unit per acre per the State of Arizona, Growing Smarter legislation.

Open space that serves as green infrastructure, or an interconnected network of green spaces, has many benefits to the community including to:

- Protect water quality;
- Provide recreation areas;
- Conserve native ecosystems;
- Provide habitat areas and corridors;
- Ensure water supply quality and quantity;
- Enhance community appearance; and
- Promote ecological diversity.



## 5.2 PARKLAND AND AMENITIES

### Park Classifications

The Town of Payson classifies parks using criteria developed by National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) as a guide. As part of the General Plan process, the Town is classifying a fifth park type based on the guidelines for area, service radii, and recreational facilities. A *District Park* is a defined space where structured, active recreational activities such as organized sports take place.

#### Regional Park

Regional parks typically provide a wide variety of activities for the greater community, as well as presenting opportunities for nontraditional recreation. These parks are often funded, developed, or operated to serve demand generated by multiple jurisdictions. Nature and community centers, festival grounds, extensive trail systems, and water activities are features that can typically be found in regional parks. To accommodate their unique amenities, regional parks typically span a minimum of 100 acres and have a service radius of approximately 25 miles. The typical acreage/population ratio for regional parks is five acres per 1,000 persons, or 76 acres for Town of Payson. At 35 acres, the Payson Event Center serves as an undersized regional park.

#### District Park

District parks serve a wide variety of community interests and include intensely developed areas for active recreation, as well as supporting infrastructure. Typical active recreational amenities include playgrounds, athletic fields (e.g. soccer, baseball, softball, multiuse), tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts, and trails. Typical infrastructure may include restrooms, concession stands, benches, picnic areas, shelters, and parking areas. Access to district parks should be multimodal and along or near a major road. District parks are a minimum of 50 acres in size and have a service radius of approximately five miles. A typical acreage/population ratio for district parks is four acres per 1,000 persons. Rumsey Park, historically recognized by the Town as a Community Park, serves as a district park for the community, offering over 80 acres of developed parkland.

#### Community Park

Community parks in small towns generally serve the entire community, or in larger towns several neighborhoods. Typically, they provide active recreation facilities and act as oversized neighborhood parks. Typical recreational amenities found in community parks are similar to those provided in district parks. Amenities more often found in traditional community parks include horseshoes, recreation centers, and other facilities unique to the community. Community parks are usually a minimum of 20 acres in size and have a service radius of approximately one mile. Access to a community park should be multimodal and along or near a major road. A typical acreage/population ratio for community parks is five acres per 1,000 persons. Green Valley Park and a portion of the U.S. Forest Service's Base for Exchange property along State Road 260 has been identified for community parkland development, as necessitated by future development.

#### Neighborhood Park

Neighborhood parks are located within walking distance of adjacent neighborhoods and serve the neighborhoods' specific recreational interests. A neighborhood park usually does not provide parking or restrooms, but may offer such facilities, depending on service level demand. Typical neighborhood park amenities include playgrounds, shelters, trails, and multipurpose fields. School parks may

function as neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks span a minimum of five acres and have a service radius of one-half mile. A typical acreage/population ratio for neighborhood parks is two acres per 1,000 persons. The Town of Payson will continue to work with residential developers to provide neighborhood parkland for the community.

### **Mini-Park**

Mini-parks of one acre or less in size are designed for use by local residents for passive recreation activities. No support amenities such as parking or restrooms are provided, although often water fountains and safety lights are provided. In addition, a small play unit, benches, and possibly a picnic shelter may be found at these facilities. They typically serve a one-quarter-mile area radius or less. Mini-Parks will accompany the multi-use greenway system proposed to link neighborhoods of Town.

### **Existing Parks**

The Town of Payson has several park facilities that serve the residents and surrounding communities. The following is an inventory of the existing park facilities.

#### **Rumsey Park**

This 82-acre community park contains a swimming pool, two synthetic fields, three ball fields, picnic facilities and ramadas, basketball and volleyball courts, play areas, restrooms, a dog park, skateboard park, and four tennis courts. Included within the park boundary is the Payson public library. The park is located in the northwest quadrant of the Payson planning area and is accessible from McLane Road.

#### **Green Valley Park**

This 30-acre community park contains three man-made lakes, ramadas, boat docks, restrooms, a performing arts stage, war memorial, walking paths, and significant open space. It is located in the southwest portion of the community and is adjacent to the Green Valley Redevelopment Area. The park also includes the Rim Country Historical Museum.



#### **Mustang Park**

This mini-park of less than one-acre contains a multi-purpose court with basketball hoop, playground, and picnic facilities and serves the immediate neighborhood. Mustang Park is located on the northwest corner of Roundup Road and Mustang Circle in the Payson Ranchos subdivision.

#### **History Park**

This park will be constructed at the intersection of McLane Road and West Main Street on a one-quarter-acre parcel. Information regarding the history of Payson will be displayed under a covered walkway, and a small amphitheater will be provided.

#### **Goat Camp Ruins**

This is a ten-acre parcel located on the north side of North Tyler Parkway. The site contains Indian ruins dating back 700 years. The Town intends to develop an interpretive park on this site.

### Observation Park

This one-quarter-acre park provides an area to watch planes take off and land at the Payson Municipal Airport. Some picnic facilities are available as well as paved parking.

## 5.3 OPEN SPACE

There are additional designated spaces that supplement the Town’s official park system, but are not maintained by the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department. They are Town Hall Park, Fly-In Campground, and Houston Mesa Horse Camp.

### Town Hall Picnic Area

The area, which is adjacent to the Town Hall complex, and is less than one acre, provides picnic facilities and open space with mature trees for shade. It is located at the southeast corner of Malibu Drive, along Beeline Highway.

### Fly-In Campground

The Fly-In Campground located at the Payson Municipal Airport was developed with a grant from the Arizona Department of Transportation. The purpose of the facility is to promote tourism by encouraging pilots to fly into Payson and utilize the camping facilities.

### Houston Mesa Campgrounds

In 1996, the U.S. Forest Service established Payson’s first public campsite and trailhead area located near Houston Mesa Road. The Houston Mesa Campgrounds has capacity for 30 family campsites and two large group sites with equestrian accommodations. The Houston Mesa site can accommodate up to an additional 75 campsites.



### Forest Service Campgrounds

The 75-unit campground is located one and a half miles north of the junction of Beeline Highway and State Road 260. It provides shower facilities, flush toilets, a dump station and water.

### Payson Archaeological Society Museum

Located on West Main Street in the Woman’s Club building, the museum includes a gallery and gift shop. The formal museum installation presents artifacts of the Rim Country.

## 5.4 MULTI-MODAL TRAILS

### Trail Classifications

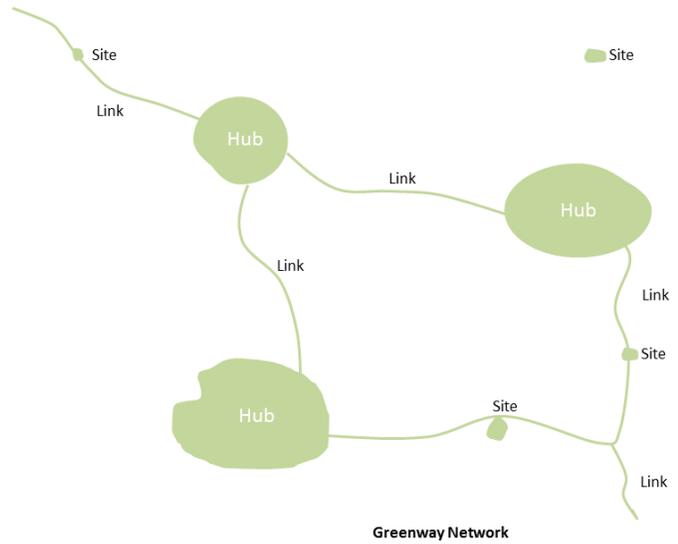
Existing trails within Town of Payson can be described as follows:

#### Regional

The Town of Payson, through its rural trails, has direct access to some of the most pristine and elaborate regional trails systems in the Southwest. The trails include the Arizona Trail, the Highline Trail, and Hellsgate Wilderness Trail systems. The regional trail systems that are accessible from Payson trails encompass trail distances of tens, and in the case of the Arizona Trail, hundreds of miles in length.

## Rural

The rural area trails and access points that fall within the incorporated boundary of Payson are a primary focus of this Element. These existing and proposed trails and trail access points (see Map 6), situated around the perimeter of Town, act as green infrastructure hubs and links and provide vital public connections to the surrounding Tonto National Forest as well as nearby regional trail systems.



## Urban

Except for a limited urban pathway running north/south along McLane Road, no established urban trails exist for pedestrian or other non-motorized traffic. An established urban pedestrian and bicycle circulation network is desired by the community.

### Payson Area Trail System

The [Payson Area Trail System \(PATS\)](#) is a greenway network designed to provide in Town connections of sidewalks, on-road bike lanes, and off-road trails to promote non-motorized circulation around the Town, and to connect trail access points at the edges of Town to each other and to amenities within the Town's core. The PATS plan will build-off of investments already made in Town and in Tonto National Forest, to build trails, define trailheads, and install wayfinding indicators to create a multi-modal network. The PATS will connect transportation infrastructure with off-road trails and sidewalks to welcome visitors at trailheads and offer an alternative to vehicular circulation in Payson. See Figure 25 for a list of existing trails in Tonto National Forest with access points in the Town. Additional information regarding the Payson Area Trail System, including a map, is provided on the Town of Payson website.

Figure 25: Tonto National Forest PATS Trails Sections

Trail Section	Miles	Difficulty	Location
American Gulch - North	0.4	Easy	From the Graff Trailhead on USFS Road 508 until fence line
American Gulch - South	1.1	Moderate	North on USFS Road 475 until proposed connector route
Boulders Loop	2.4	Moderate	Located 3.8 miles down Granite Dells Road (USFS#435)
Cypress	2	Moderate	2.0 miles down Granite Dells Road from Highway 260
Rodeo Grounds Trail - Peach Loop	1.5	Moderate	Near the Peach Orchard trailhead
Rodeo Grounds Trail - Peach Orchard	2.2	Moderate	Starts near the Payson Golf Course
Houston	4.2	Moderate	Main access is approximately 1 mile east of Highway 87 on Houston Mesa Road
Houston Loop	3.6	Moderate	Access the Houston Loop from the Chaparral Ranch Trail Access or Mayfield Canyon Road
Monument Peak Loop	3	Easy	East on Granite Dells Road for 3.3 miles
Round Valley	4.5	Variable	Two access points: south of the Sonic on the Tonto Apache Reservation and south off of Phoenix Street
<b>24.9 Total Miles</b>			

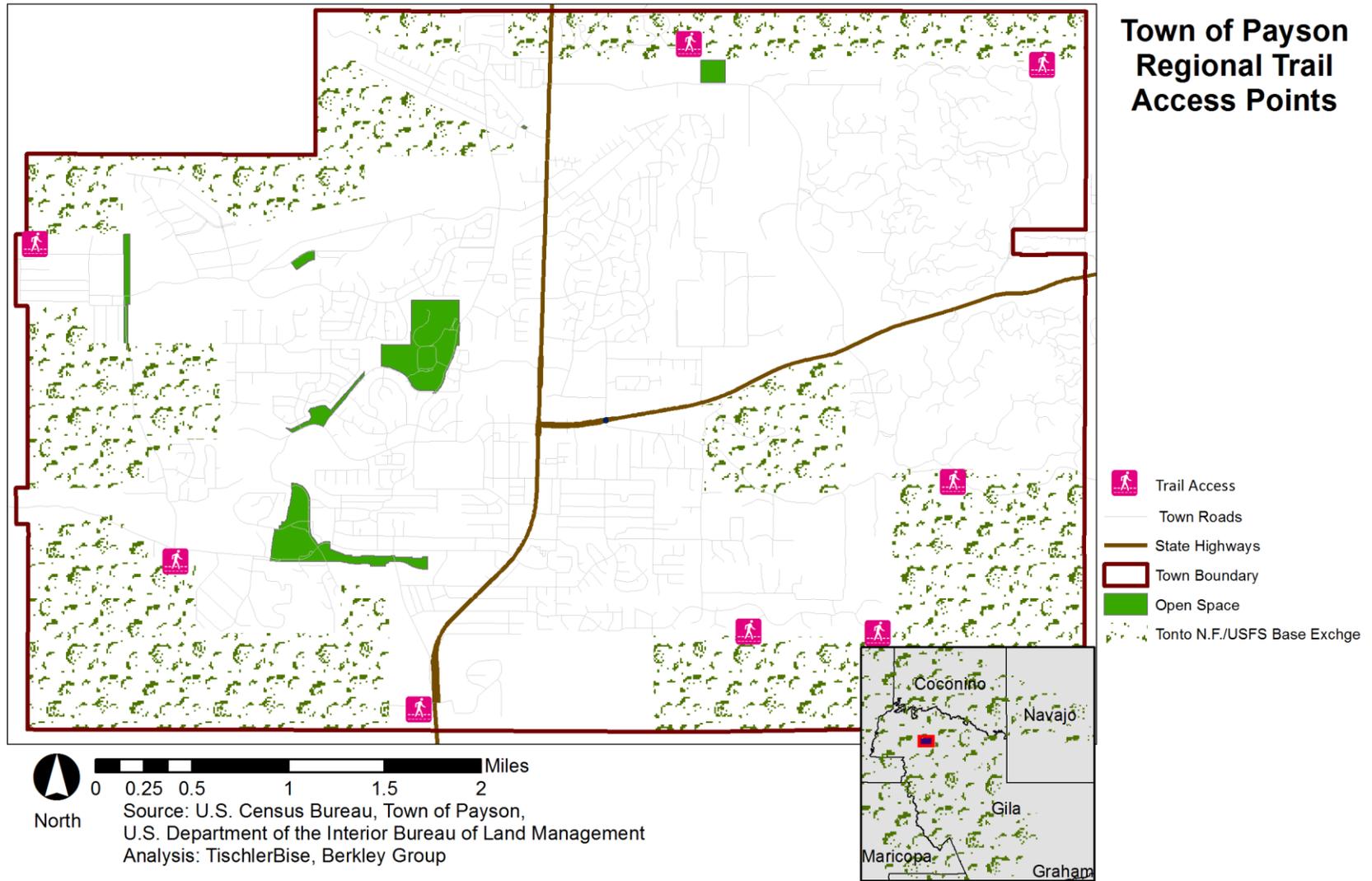
Source: Town of Payson, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism. Retrieved April 2013 from:  
<http://www.paysonrimcountry.com/MountainRecreation/HikingTrails/PaysonAreaTrailsSystem.aspx>

### Existing Trails and Trailheads

Trail use is a major recreation activity in the Town of Payson. There are eight regional trail access points within the Town. Trail access points are a defined clearing, natural or maintained, where one can safely enter a trail. The site may or may not provide amenities beyond trail access. Trailheads are access points for trails specifically designed to provide information and usually amenities. They may include amenities like designated space for parking, restrooms, water fountains, wayfinding maps and information, or other visitor facilities.

Preservation of individual trails and trail access points is contingent on their location on private, public, or Reservation property. The majority of existing trails with access within Town of Payson lay on U.S. Forest Service property and some undeveloped private property. The importance of an accurate trail inventory is to ensure the preservation of trail access (the ability to enter the trail without obstruction by built facilities or restricted private property) and the creation of future trailhead areas as part of a Town-wide wayfinding system.

Map 6: Regional Trail Access Points in Town of Payson



## 5.5 CRITICAL ISSUES

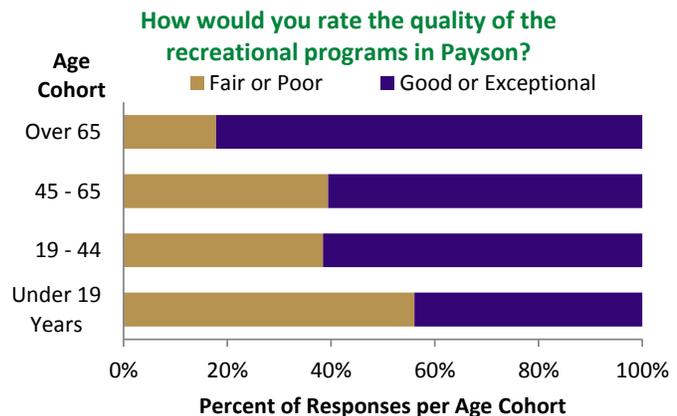
- 5.5.1 Establish adequate funding for parks and recreation development and maintenance to preserve or enhance existing levels of service
- 5.5.2 Prioritize community versus neighborhood parks
- 5.5.3 Increase affordability and access of recreational programs for youth
- 5.5.4 Enhance the existing trail network to be more connected and comprehensive
- 5.5.5 Complete the U.S. Forest Service land exchange
- 5.5.6 Better utilize Tonto National Forest
- 5.5.7 Maintain and strengthen working partnerships with federal management of U.S. Forest Service lands

### Discussion

The annual Town of Payson Capital Improvement Program identifies numerous Parks & Recreation projects approved for funding. The Town is committed to providing high quality parkland, recreational facilities, and multi-modal trails. Projects identified in the Capital Improvement Program are prioritized to address the *Critical Issues* identified by the Payson Community through the General Plan process. In addition to general fund revenue sources, Payson actively seeks external grant funds, and collaborates with the private sector to increase parks and recreational facilities. Residential developers are encouraged to provide neighborhood parks and sidewalks.

Maintaining a modern, first-class parks system and providing for more year-round programming indoors will require significant and ongoing Town funds and a strong commitment by the community.

The General Plan process reinforced the importance the Community places on high quality parks and recreational facilities. The existing facilities were recognized during the community workshops as supporting a high quality of life. Desired facilities were identified as offering potential to increase Payson’s sense of place and attractiveness to visitors. The Community survey asked respondents to rate the quality of the recreational programs in Payson. Ratings collected, in combination with information gathered during community workshops, illuminate a desire by stakeholders to increase indoor, year-round recreational facilities. The Town of Payson is committed to providing high quality programming year-round and will actively pursue increasing space necessary to provide desired programming.



Source: Town of Payson. (2012). Payson Community

Payson has tremendous resources at its disposal. The combination of these resources and community interest makes Payson an ideal location to implement an extensive trail, sidewalk, and bike lane system to connect current and future development in Town.

## Town of Payson Future Parks and Recreational Demand

The following two tables (Figure 26 and Figure 27) present expected demand for parkland and amenities based on population projections for the Town. Guidelines and projected needs listed in Figure 26 and Figure 27 serve as a guide for future parks and recreational facility development; they will inform a more specific Parks & Recreation Master Plan to be crafted and adopted by the Town.

**Figure 26: Parkland Guidelines**

Parkland by Type	Guidelines for			Projected Acres Need [1]	
	Acres per 1,000 Population		Existing Parkland	In 2014	In 2030
	National	Town of Payson		(est. pop 15,300)	(est. pop 18,600)
Regional Park	Variable	5ac	36 ac	76.5 ac	93 ac
District Park	5-10 ac	4ac	0 ac [2]	61.2 ac	74.4 ac
Community Park	5-8 ac	5ac	113 ac	76.5 ac	93 ac
Neighborhood Park	1-2 ac	2ac	0 ac	30.6 ac	37.2 ac
Mini Park	0.25-0.5 ac	0.25	0.2 ac	3.825 ac	4.65 ac

[1] Project facility needs are based on the Town's existing Parks Master Plan and current NRPA Guidelines.

[2] Rumsey Park is 82 acres and functions like a District Park for classification purposes.

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association. (1995). Analysis by: The Berkley Group

**Figure 27: Park Facility Guidelines**

Facility Type	Guidelines for		Existing Public Facilities	Projected Facility Need [1]	
	Population per Unit			In 2014	In 2030
	National	Town of Payson		(est. pop 15,300)	(est. pop 18,600)
Playgrounds	2,000	2,000	2	8	9
Tennis Courts	2,000	2,000	4	8	9
Soccer Fields	4,000	4,000	2	4	5
Baseball Youth Fields	6,000	2,000	-	8	9
Softball Fields	5,000	2,000	5	8	9
Multi-Purpose Fields	10,000	5,000	-	3	4
Volleyball Courts	3,000	3,000	2	5	6
Community Center	N/A	20,000	0	1	1
Picnic Shelters	2,000	2,000	10	8	9
Swimming Pools	20,000	10,000	1	1	2
Trails (mile/1000)	2,000	1,000	>26 miles	15 miles	19 miles
Basketball Courts	5,000	5,000	1.5	3	4

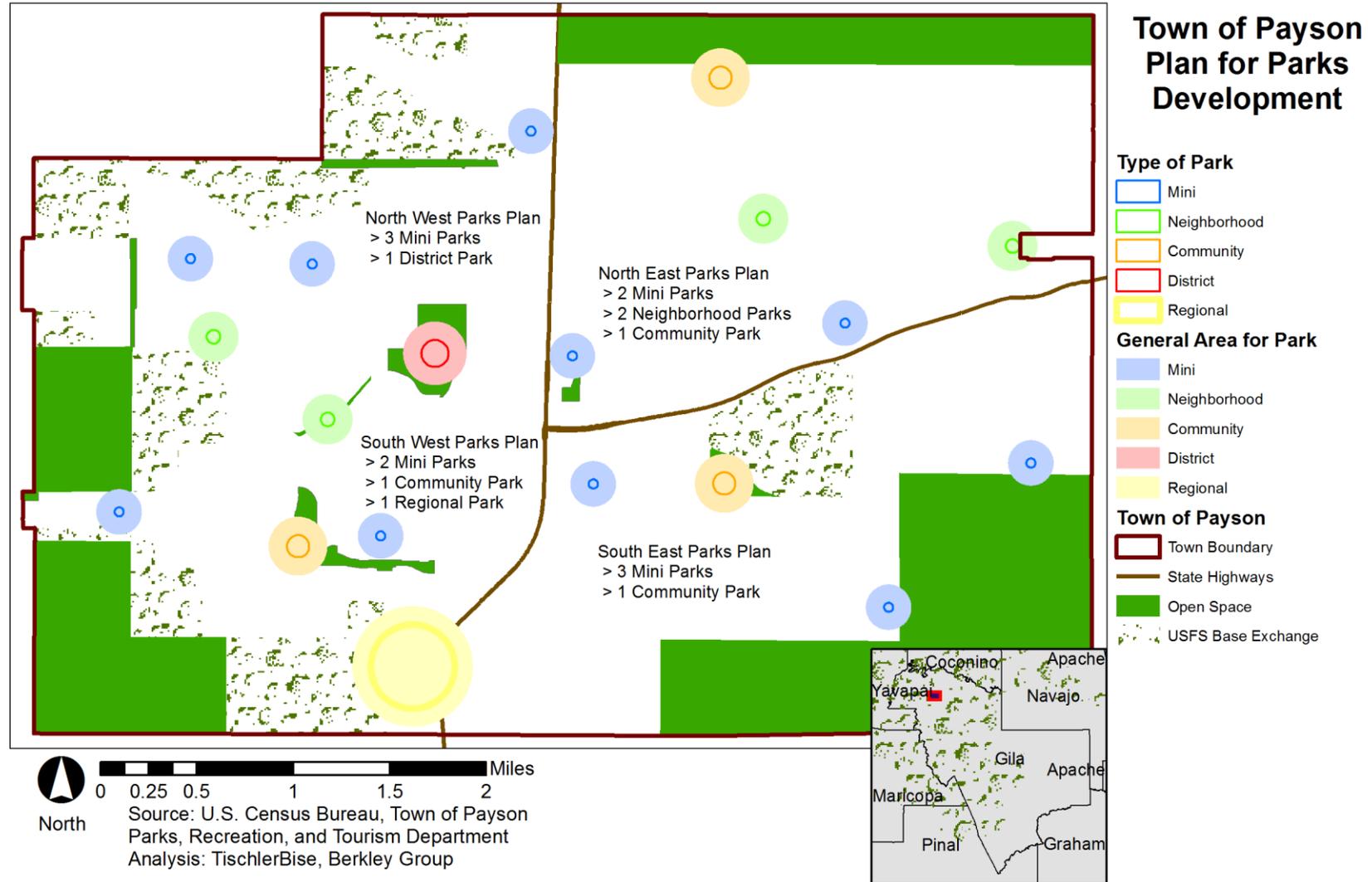
[1] Project facility needs are based on the Town's existing Parks Master Plan and current NRPA Guidelines.

Source: National Recreation and Parks Association. (1995). Analysis by: The Berkley Group

## Parks Development Plan

As development continues in Town, additional parks will follow. Identified on Map 7 are 19 general areas where future parkland might be developed, as demand dictates. The inner outlined circle of each general area is a scaled area equal to the acreage guidelines put forth for each type of park.

Map 7: Parks Development Plan



### Recreation Priorities

In 2013, the Town Parks and Recreation Commission developed a prioritized list of recreation projects to be considered for funding. The Commission developed the priorities listed in

Figure 28 using a ranking system with six criteria:

1. High revenue potential;
2. High usage potential;
3. Completes an existing project;
4. Enhances existing facility vitality;
5. Provides a new benefit that doesn't currently exist in the community; and
6. Enhances public safety.

**Figure 28: Recreation Improvement Priorities, Costs, and Benefits**

PRIORITY	PROJECT	COST ESTIMATE	BENEFIT
1	Parks Master Plan	\$130,000	High
2	Kiwanis East & West Ball Field Lighting	\$500,000	High
3	Rumsey Park - Multi Purpose Building/Youth Center	\$1,500,000	High
4	Rumsey South Soccer Field Turf Replacement	\$350,000	High
5	Event Center Master Plan/Improvements	\$4,020,000	High
6	Rumsey Park Pedestrian Circulation Plan & Implementation	\$400,000	Medium
6	Rumsey Park Restrooms & Maintenance Building	\$145,000	Medium
7	ADA Playground Surfacing (Rumsey & Green Valley Parks)	\$24,000	Medium
7	Payson Trail System Signs	\$85,000	Low
8	Rumsey Park Drainage (Planning & Development)	\$150,000	Medium
8	Rumsey Park Outdoor Basketball Court Reconstruction	\$40,000	Medium
8	Amphitheater Lighting	\$150,000	Low
9	Rumsey Playground Enhancement/rocks and ropes course	\$150,000	Medium
9	Land Purchase/Park Development (Neighborhood & Mini Parks)	\$1,000,000	Low
10	Rumsey Park Ramada Replacements	\$150,000	High
10	Trails Master Plan	\$120,000	Medium
10	PATS Continuation (\$125,000+ annually)	\$1,275,000	Medium
11	Green Valley Park Ramada Improvements/Expansion	\$75,000	High
11	Taylor Pool Re-roof and Exterior Paint	\$12,000	High
12	Green Valley Park Maintenance Building	\$400,000	Low
<b>Total Cost Estimate</b>		<b>\$10,676,000</b>	

Source: Town of Payson, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

## 5.6 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### 5.6.1 Develop, adopt, and implement a Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Master Plan

- 5.6.1.1 Ensure adequate east-side park land
- 5.6.1.2 Identify locations for passive recreational activities (e.g., hiking, biking, and other individual-oriented activities)
- 5.6.1.3 Identify locations for active recreational activities (e.g., basketball, baseball, soccer, and other team-oriented activities)
- 5.6.1.4 Plan appropriate facilities for both indoor and outdoor programs and activities

### 5.6.2 Provide a year-round, multi-use recreation facility

- 5.6.2.1 Develop greater variety of youth programs
- 5.6.2.2 Provide affordable programs to low and moderate income families
- 5.6.2.3 Expand the amount of programs for all user groups

### 5.6.3 Ensure adequate park land to serve residential development

- 5.6.3.1 Negotiate greater residential density in exchange for neighborhood parkland

### 5.6.4 Design and implement a wayfinding system that enhances tourism

- 5.6.4.1 Develop sign standards

### 5.6.5 Actively recruit recreational tourism

- 5.6.5.1 Work with state athletic associations to draw regional and state tournaments to Payson
- 5.6.5.2 Continue to build on Payson's strong rodeo and events reputation

### 5.6.6 Integrate the development of multipurpose trails in conjunction with the transportation/circulation system

- 5.6.6.1 Develop a trails master plan to plan and finance an integrated trail network
- 5.6.6.2 Incorporate trail elements of the transportation plan into the Parks Master Plan

### 5.6.7 Work with federal partners for the protection and continued use of National Forest land

- 5.6.7.1 Preserve trail access to regional points of interest
- 5.6.7.2 More effectively promote trail access points for public use
- 5.6.7.3 Establish protection areas for natural resources and watersheds