



Chapter 3 - Parks, Recreation, & Open Space

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3.1 Introduction

As evident in both the General Plan and social fabric of the community, Chico's residents place great value in parks, recreation, and outdoor experiences. Valley's Edge promotes Chico's active outdoor lifestyle by dedicating nearly 700-acres for recreation uses and open space.

This Chapter summarizes applicable General Plan directives which have informed the design of the planning area. The City's acreage standards for park and greenways are also described. Passive open space elements such as the Regional Park, linear parks, and creekside greenways are presented, as well as discussion and concept illustrations of park and recreational elements, including the community park, neighborhood parks, mini-parks, and special use parks. Lastly, discussion is provided on the ownership and management of the various parks, recreational and public use land and facilities.

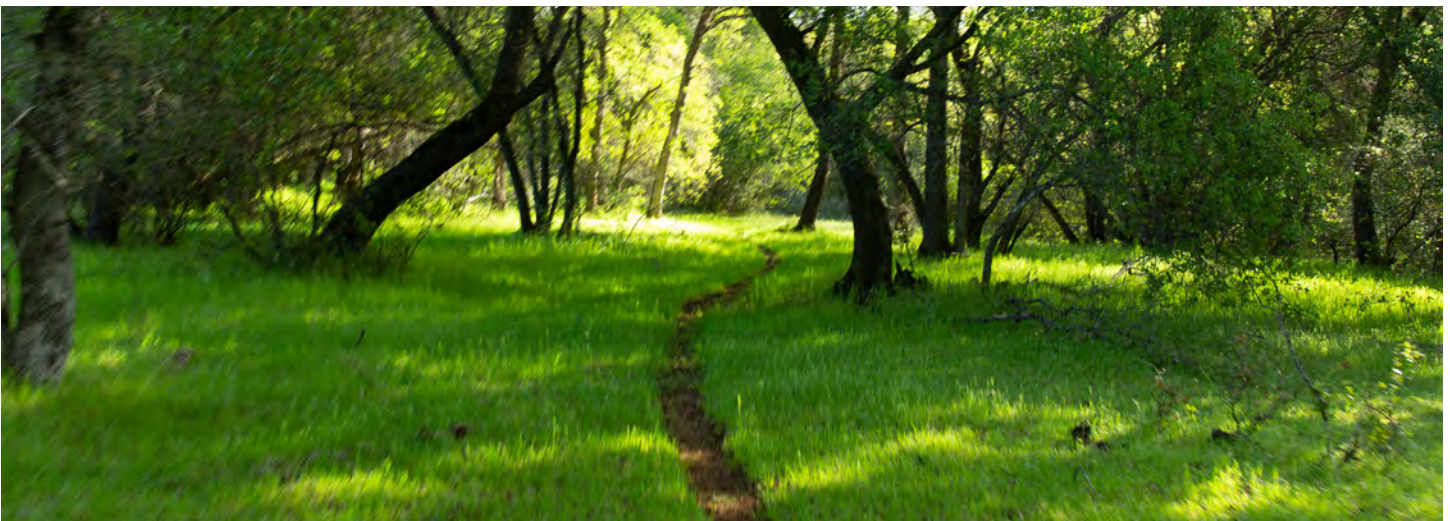


3.2 Valley's Edge Parks, Recreation, & Open Space

Valley's Edge represents a unique area of Chico where parks, trails, and interactions with nature play a heightened role promoting physical, social, and environmental health. Open space in Valley's Edge serves many interests and purposes; Figure 3-1: Park Plan identifies park spaces within the Valley's Edge Specific Plan (VESP) area and Figure 3-2 illustrates more detail for the proposed parks, open space, and recreation uses in the western corridor of the planning area.

From a sustainability perspective, the open space land use designation protects Oak Woodlands, preserves sensitive habitat, safeguards natural drainages, facilitates wildlife movement, and establishes a permanent urban growth buffer. From a cultural perspective, open space protects resources such as pioneer era rock walls, the old Doe Mill Wagon Road, and other areas of cultural sensitivity. From a societal perspective, open space provides buffers to ameliorate visual impacts, while parks and trails offer a wealth of benefits from outdoor recreation and exercise, to areas for socializing and enhanced quality of life for people of all ages and abilities. From a child's perspective, parks are where friends and memories are made.

Table 3.1 Park & Open Space Elements	
Regional Park	371.2 acres
Linear Parks, Creekside Greenways & Open Space Corridors	178.6 acres
Community Park	36.4 acres
Neighborhood Parks (Homestead Park, Child's Meadows and Pioneer Park)	16.0 acres
Mini-Parks & Tot Lots	2.9 acres
Big Meadows	17.8 acres
Village Core Park	3.16 acres
Senior Parks	2.9 acres
Environmental Preserves	46.3 acres
Total	675.26 acres



Open space designation accounts for societal, cultural, and ecological benefits.

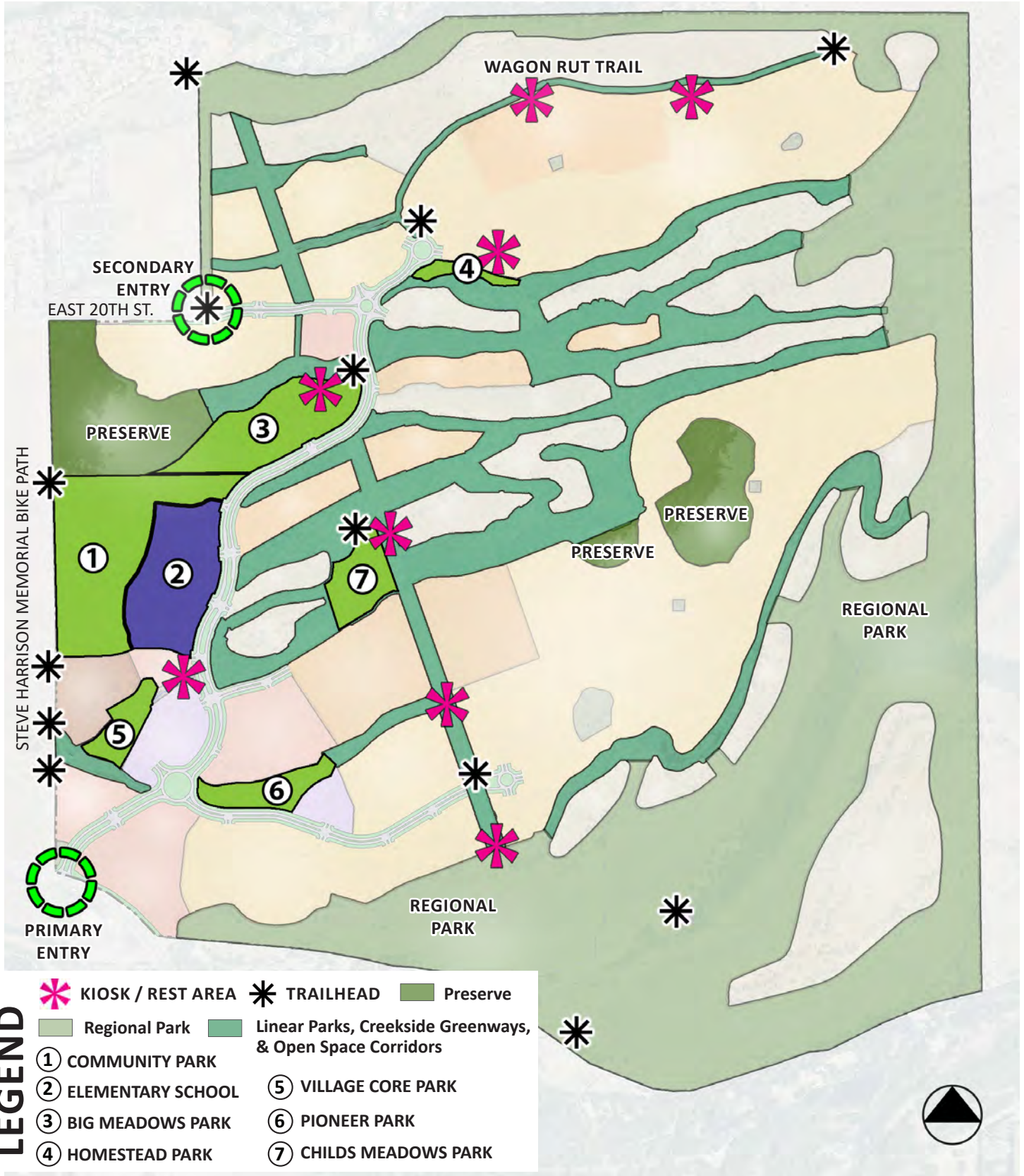


Figure 3-1: Park Plan



Figure 3-2: Western Corridor Planned Park, Open Space, and Recreation Uses



3.2.1 Chico General Plan Park & Greenway Standards

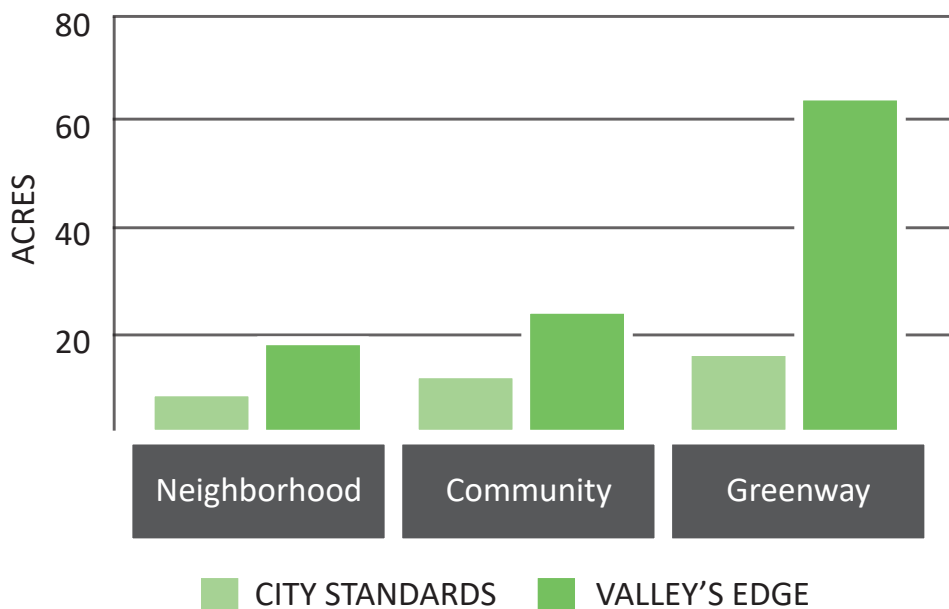
The Chico Area Recreation and Park District (CARD) and the City's General Plan provides the following acreage standards for parks and open space greenways:

- 1.5 acres of neighborhood parks per 1,000 residents (CARD standard)
- 2.5 acres of community parks per 1,000 residents (CARD standard)
- 2.5 acres of greenways per 1,000 residents (General Plan standard)

The Valley's Edge scale and vision represents a unique opportunity to double the City's designated acreage for parks, recreation, and open space within areas of the City suitable for accommodating Chico's planned growth. Refer to the Park Standards table below and Table 3.1. The Valley's Edge land use plan designates roughly 675 acres for parks, open space, and public uses. As of 2021, the City's inventory of parkland (excluding only natural areas of Bidwell Park) totals 668 acres.

Valley's Edge, comprising less than 4% of the General Plan's build-out population, delivers much-needed park space in this portion of the City, which is currently under served, especially with regard to community parks with play fields. The excess recreational capacity created by the various park areas within Valley's Edge will provide opportunities for current and future residents.

PARK STANDARDS





3.2.2 The Regional Park

With its diverse topography, the VESP's approximately 370 acre regional park is intended to provide recreational opportunities similar to those found in Upper Bidwell Park. The Regional Park comprises an expansive buffer along the planning area's northern, eastern, and southern boundaries. Recreational uses may include wildlife observation, mountain biking, hiking, trail running, disc golf, horseback riding and other active activities, all of which promote physical fitness.

The Valley's Edge Regional Park would also serve public interests such as conservation of Oak Woodlands, preserving Upper Comanche Creek, retaining the rural visual characteristics of Butte Creek Canyon and Stilson Canyon, and establishing a permanent barrier to eastward urban expansion. Further, the Regional Park would support wildland fire suppression efforts by providing multiple access points for emergency responders and acting as a buffer where vegetation management treatments can be applied to minimize fire hazards along the wildland-urban interface.

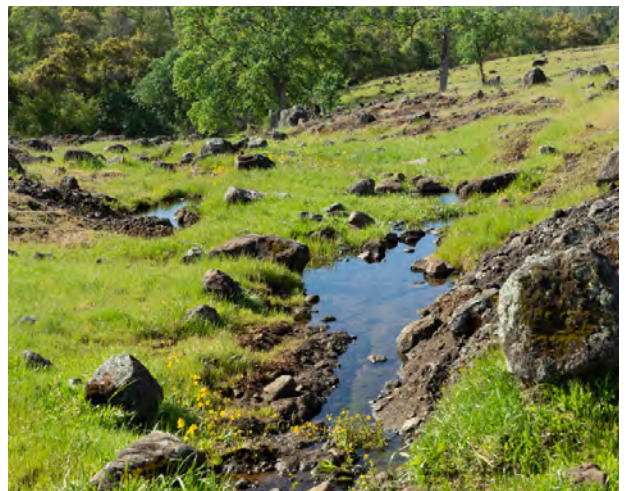
The eventual elimination of cattle grazing coupled with enhanced on-site water retention as well as native and micro-climate appropriate plantings is expected to increase biodiversity and the number of oak trees over time.

Trailheads from open space corridors and along internal roadways will provide frequent and convenient connections to the Regional Park for pedestrians and bicyclists. The abundance of trails in Valley's Edge will require ongoing management to foster both rewarding user experiences and responsible environmental stewardship. The proposed trail system is further discussed in Chapter 5: Circulation & Trails.

To create opportunities for use and enjoyment for the general public, the applicant will make an offer to dedicate the Regional Park to the City of Chico. Until such time as the dedication of land is accepted, the park will be owned and managed by the Valley's Edge Homeowners Association (HOA), accessible to residents, as well as non-residents registered with the HOA.

"Open space areas will provide a buffer along the entire Stilson Canyon rim to the north and along Honey Run Road to the south, and will establish a permanent buffer against foothill encroachment to the east"

- CHICO GENERAL PLAN APPENDIX
C -DOE MILL/HONEY RUN SPECIAL
PLANNING AREA



The Plan protects the rural visual character of creeks within the Valley's Edge Regional Park.



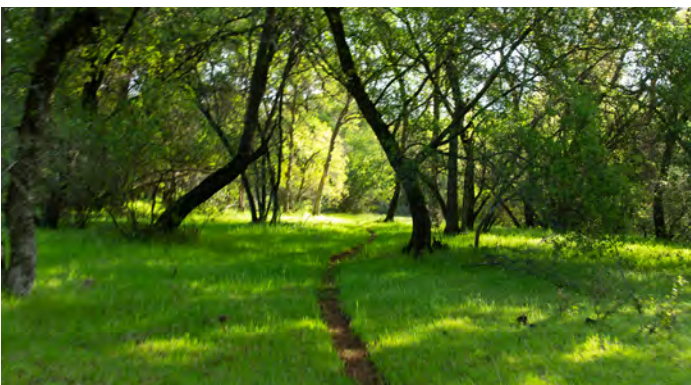
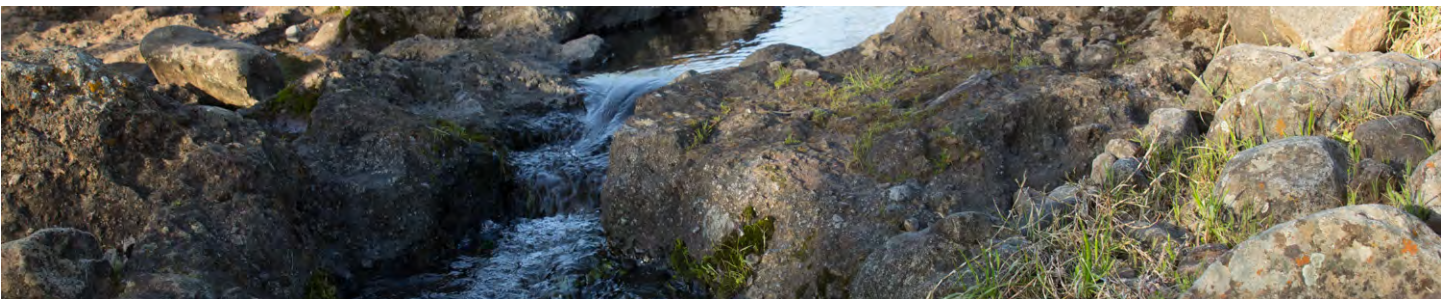
3.2.3 Linear Parks, Creekside Greenways & Open Space Corridors

The VESP's linear parks and creekside greenway concepts respond to the General Plan's (GP) direction to preserve natural areas that are either unsuitable or inappropriate for development. In Valley's Edge, these open space elements are characterized by bands of Oak Woodlands, meandering swales, rock outcroppings, ridgelines, and seasonal creek corridors traversing east-west through the planning area.

Open space corridors also establish an internal framework for the VESP's bicycle and pedestrian trail system (Figure 5-2), connecting the existing Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path on the planning area's western boundary to the Regional Park along the planning area's eastern boundary. The proposed Silverado Trail, a meandering Class I Path running north-south fashion, bisects a series of east to west trails, creating crisscross patterns which add variety, interest, and connectivity to the overall trail system.

Trails infused with "play pockets" will create diverse and playful experiences, motivating children, parents, and friends to connect outdoors and engage in healthy activities together. Trailway elements may also include creekside viewing areas, shaded rest areas, view overlooks, picnic tables, exercise apparatuses, interpretive and way-finding kiosks, and other low impact improvements.

Beyond conservation and recreation, open space corridors will soften and visually enhance the planning area edges. Designated Valley Open Space (V-OS) on the Land Use Plan (Figure 4-1 in Chapter 4), these open space elements represent approximately 180 acres of the Valley's Edge open space framework.



Rock outcroppings, seasonal creeks, meandering swales, and Oak Woodlands are some of the natural components characterizing Valley's Edge open space.



3.2.4 Community Park & Elementary School Site

The expectation for a community park in the Valley's Edge planning area is identified in Appendix C of the General Plan, as well as the Chico Area Recreation District's (CARD) 2008 Plan, which was updated in 2019. The potential for an elementary school site within the planning area is also described in the General Plan. The General Plan also encourages cooperative use of the public park and Chico Unified School District (CUSD) facilities.

The VESP's public land use descriptions and illustrations represent a vision informed by collaboration with CARD and CUSD. This process optimizes circulation for bicycles, pedestrians, vehicles, and buses (Figure 3-3).

Placement of public facilities and other parkland along the planning area's western edge enables the foreground viewshed to be dominated by natural landscapes and play fields. Positioning these elements between the main collector road and the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path promotes non-motorized access and visitation.

Preliminary elements and features for the community park facilities include:

- Class I bicycle facilities and trailheads with a loop trail;
- Multi-use soccer fields (standard turf with sideline seating);
- Concession stand and restrooms with large group picnic area;
- Community center with a gymnasium;
- Large themed spray grounds with supporting turf;
- Dog park with obstacle course, shade elements, and seating;
- Court play area;
- Adventure playground with interactive obstacles; and/or
- Overlooks and large and small group picnic areas.



"The community park will be designed and programmed with the Chico Area Recreation and Park District to include a variety of recreational amenities."

- GP APPENDIX C -DOE MILL/HONEY RUN SPECIAL PLANNING AREA

The community park (approximately 36 acres) and elementary school site (approximately 14 acres) are designated Open Space (V-OS) and Public Quasi-Public (PQ) on the Land Use Plan (Figure 4-1 in Chapter 4). These facilities will be owned, designed, constructed, and managed by CARD and CUSD respectively.

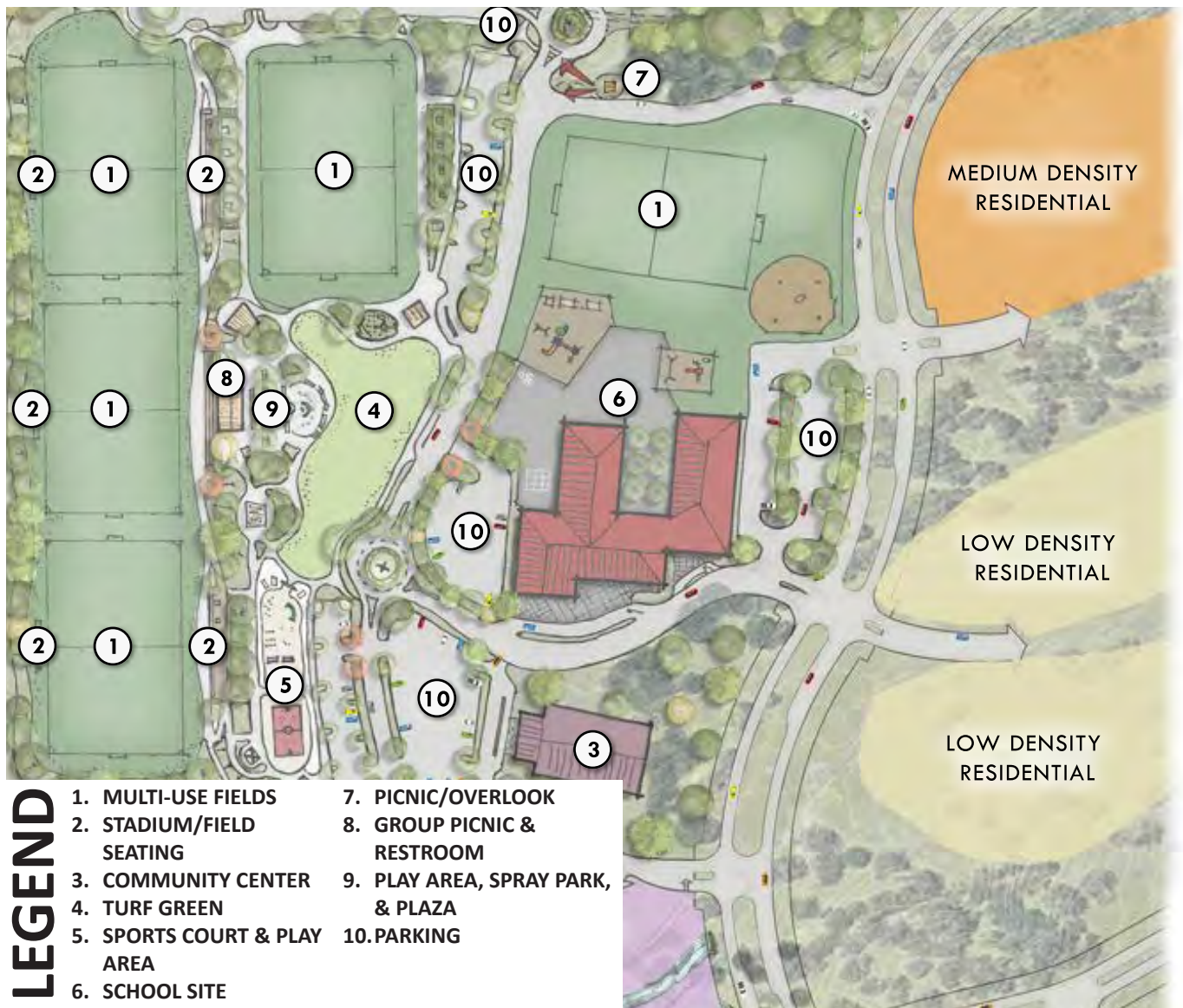


Figure 3-3: Community Park & Elementary School





3.2.5 Neighborhood Parks

As a complement to organized recreation in the community park and outdoor adventures in the Regional Park, neighborhood parks in Valley's Edge will promote passive play, exercise, social gatherings, and family get-togethers for people of all ages and abilities. The neighborhood parks in the Multi-Generational Neighborhoods of the Valley's Edge planning area include Homestead Park and Child's Meadows Park, as well as Pioneer Park in proximity to the Village Core and Senior Neighborhoods.

Embracing the belief that play and interaction with nature is transformative for all ages and user types, all three neighborhood parks are embedded within the larger open space framework. The importance of creating universally designed play environments and fitness equipment that increase the ability and option to play and be active for people of diverse abilities is exemplified by the range of parks and open spaces in Valley's Edge. Positioning active neighborhood parks within passive open space corridors will enable users to enter the trail system anywhere in the planning area and safely walk or bike to them without traveling on a street. Neighborhood park locations also draw on opportunities for natural shade, proximity to seasonal creeks, and street and trail network connectivity.

Valley's Edge neighborhood parks will be designed to create multi-generational outdoor play environments and experiences that address the physical and social inclusion of people of all ages and abilities. Playground equipment and other hardscape features will be designed in a manner which complements natural landscapes. Outdoor adult fitness equipment will be located within sight lines of playgrounds, promoting active behavior in adult family members, increasing the time spent at the playground and outdoors, and promoting the importance of lifelong fitness to all.

Common neighborhood park features and facilities may include:

- Outdoor Adult Fitness Equipment
- Class I Path Connections
- Inter-Generational Play & Fitness Stations
- Rock Wall Entries
- Bike Racks
- Drinking Fountain(s)
- Terrain Slides and Adventure Play
- Horseshoes, Cornhole, and Bocce
- Children's Play Area
- Picnic Areas
- Wayfinding Kiosks
- Re-purposed Oak Log Benches
- Trash & Recycle Bins
- Interpretive & Educational Panels
- Natural and Inclusive Play Areas
- Mini-Sports Court

The following neighborhood park illustrations, while conceptual in terms of design, are meant to convey the proximity, scale, and core functions of the neighborhood parks planned within Valley's Edge.



HOMESTEAD PARK

Approximately one acre, Homestead Park (refer to Figure 3-4) is located along the extension of East 20th Street, bordering the north roundabout. Its namesake pays tribute to the original homestead of Chico pioneers and ranchers, James and Malinda Stevens. Homestead Park runs alongside the Class I path and Oak Woodland corridor at roughly the mid-point between the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path to the west, and the Regional Park to the east.

The upper portion of the park is planned for playgrounds, picnic areas, turf areas and multi-purpose hard courts. The lower portions of the park slope down through the woodlands, creating ideal opportunities for integrated play structures such as terrain slides. Surrounding land uses are open space and low density residential. Homestead Park will serve as a convenient play area for residents living in and around the northern edge of the planning area.

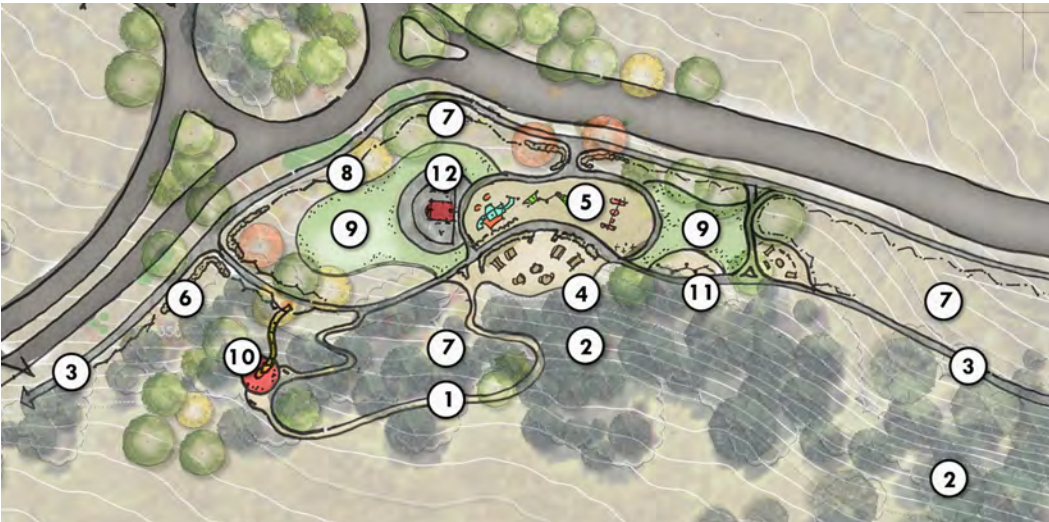




Proposed Homestead Park Birdseye



Proposed Elements



- LEGEND**
- 1. CLASS I PATH
 - 2. DENSE TREE AND FOLIAGE
 - 3. CONCRETE PATH
 - 4. PICNIC AREA
 - 5. PLAYGROUND
 - 6. ROCK WALLS
 - 7. NATURAL PLANTING AREA
 - 8. SPLIT RAIL FENCE
 - 9. TURF AREA
 - 10. ON GRADE SLIDE
 - 11. WORKOUT AREAS
 - 12. 1/2 BASKETBALL COURT

Figure 3-4: Homestead Park Proposed Plan View



CHILD'S MEADOWS PARK



Existing setting at the proposed Child's Meadows Park location

Approximately seven acres, Child's Meadows Park (refer to Figure 3-5) is located in the gentle valley leading east from the Village Core, community park, and elementary school, at roughly the planning area's mid-point. Informational kiosks along the Silverado Trail will describe and illustrate the history of pioneer-era rock walls bordering the park's eastern edge, while directional signage will point trail users to destinations and points of interest throughout the planning area.

Nestled within a creekside corridor, inclusive multi-generational features and other recreational elements will intermingle with natural landscapes under the shade of large oak trees. Rest and day-picnic areas overlooking the seasonal creek will create places for social gatherings and birthday parties, while the multi-purpose hard court will serve host to casual play and pick-up games. Surrounding land uses include open space, low, and medium density residential uses.



Proposed Child's Meadows Park



Proposed Child's Meadow Park Birdseye

LEGEND

1. TURF AREA
2. WALKING PATH
3. ROCK WALL (EXISTING)
4. PICNIC AREA
5. PLAYGROUND
6. ROCK WALLS
7. NATURAL PLANTING AREA
8. SPLIT RAIL FENCE MEADOW
9. TURF AREA
10. ON GRADE SLIDE
11. WORKOUT AREA
12. 1/2 BASKETBALL COURT

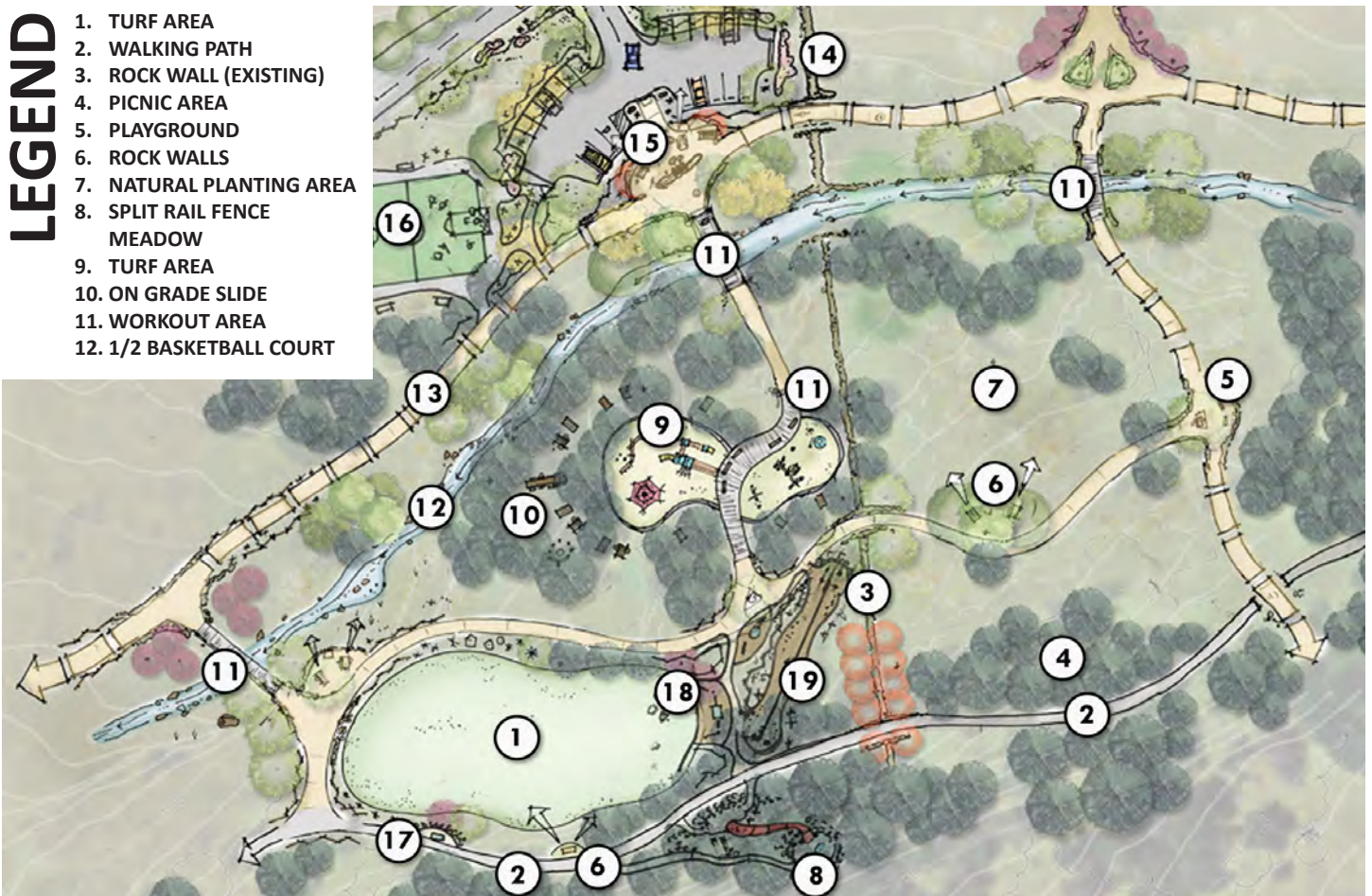


Figure 3-5: Child's Meadow Park Proposed Plan View



PIONEER PARK



Conceptual Rendering of Pioneer Park

Approximately six and half acres, Pioneer Park (refer to Figure 3-6) is adjacent to the main roundabout off the Skyway entry and extends roughly 400 yards east through an oak-laden creekside greenway. Winter rains activate the southerly drainage, which flows over a lava-rock waterfall that continues alongside a Class I path leading from the Senior clubhouse to the Village Core. Surrounding land uses include commercial areas along the park's northern boundary, with low density residential areas in the east and south.

Situated between the Multi-Generational and Senior Neighborhoods, Pioneer Park will be an ideal gathering place for inter- generational mingling, picnics and play structures. Proximity to commercial and employment areas, the park creates opportunities for mid-day exercise and re-connecting with nature.



Conceptual Rendering of Pioneer Park



Proposed Pioneer Park Birdseye

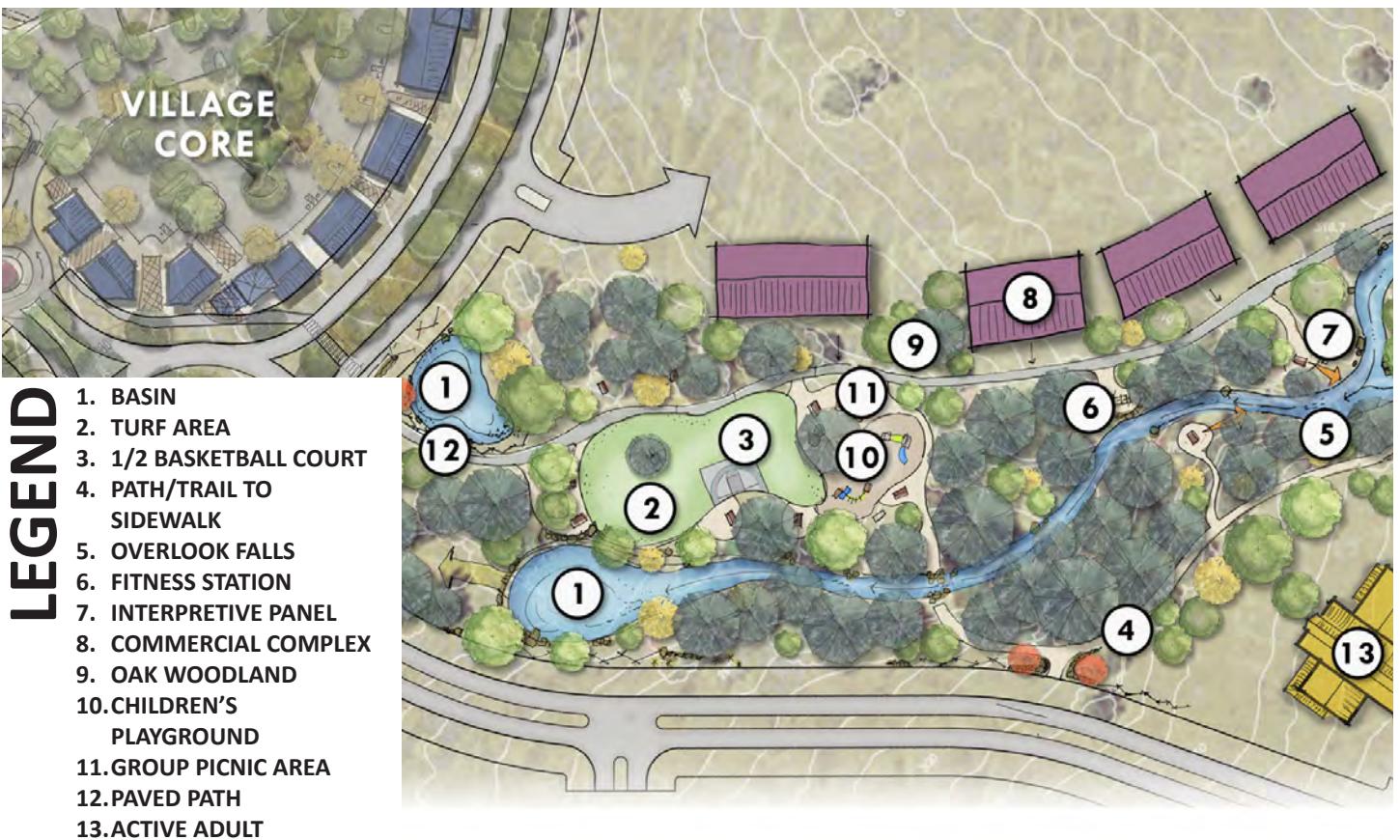


Figure 3-6: Pioneer Park Proposed Plan View



3.2.6 Special Purpose Parks

Special Purpose Parks refers to those facilities providing a focused amenity such as lake features, or serve a particular demographic such as “tot lots” for young children, or outdoor adult fitness parks for adults and seniors.

MINI-PARKS AND TOT LOTS

Mini-parks and tot-lots are typically 0.25-acres or less, catering to brief visitations and casual play. These parks are designed and developed at the subdivision level to serve immediate surrounding neighborhoods. Park amenities generally include small turf areas with shade trees, fitness and play structures, bench seating, play sculptures, and shade structures. The VESP Land Use Plan (Figure 4-1) illustrates conceptual locations for mini-parks, the final locations will be determined at the subdivision design stage.

BIG MEADOWS PARK

Big Meadows Park is located immediately north of the community park, near the western planning area boundary. Its namesake pays humble tribute to the Northwest Maidu’s historical and cultural connection to the land beneath what today is known as Lake Almanor. Big Meadows Park is a preferred location for monumentation honoring the Mechoopda Tribe’s history and heritage in Chico and easterly foothills.



Tot lot play structure

To westerly neighbors and travelers along the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path, Big Meadows is among the more visible areas of the planning area. Its open space designation serves to preserve and soften foreground views. The flat topography also provides an opportunity to emulate a cherished element of Upper Bidwell Park, Horseshoe Lake. Connectivity to the Class I trail network both on- and off-site provides safe and convenient bike and pedestrian access. Proximity to the Community Park and elementary school creates opportunities for joint use of complimentary facilities.

Preliminary design concepts for Big Meadows Park (Figure 3-7) include lake features and open grassland, Class I paths, bike racks, viewing and fishing stations, picnic tables, shaded rest areas, restrooms, parking areas, adventure play areas, and interpretive signage. In addition to outdoor recreation, water elements become welcome environments for abundant floating aquatic plants and a wide range of wildlife.

To the extent feasible, the lake features will provide a source of water for wildland fire suppression, and retention of storm water to satisfy State-mandated Low Impact Development (LID) standards and other water quality requirements. Big Meadows would be designed and built by the Developer, and owned and maintained by the HOA.

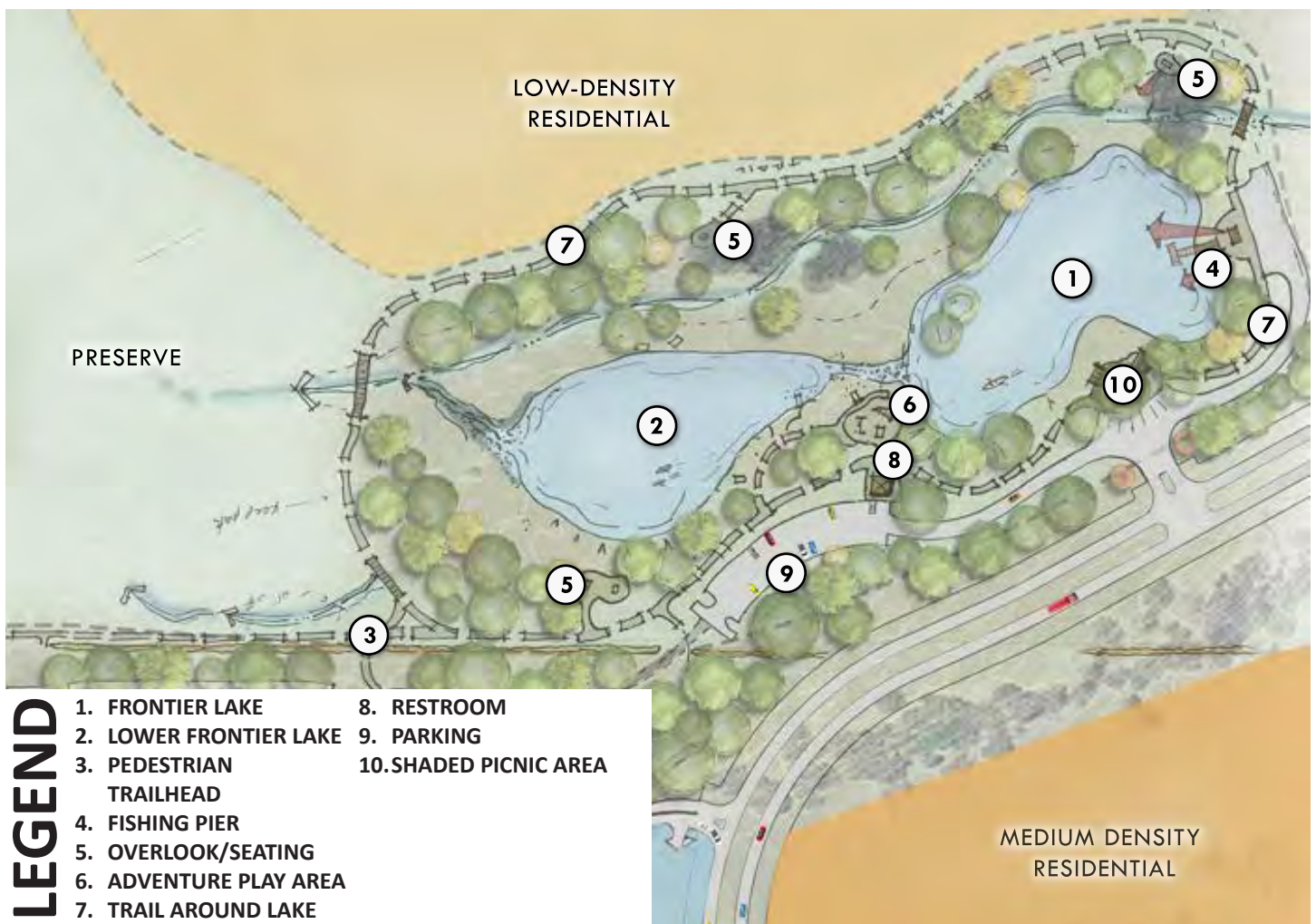


Figure 3-7: Big Meadows Park



VILLAGE CORE PARK



Surrounded by oak trees and framed by heritage rock walls at the confluence of two seasonal creeks, the approximately four-acre Village Core Park represents the Valley's Edge vibrant social core. A turf terraced gathering space with accompanied bandstand, visible from the patios of nearby cafés and eateries, will be suitable for farmers markets, art exhibits, craft shows, and other community events.

Immediately north and across the creek from the gathering space, a large community garden is planned to occupy what generations ago served as rock walled sheep corrals. The gardens will be owned by the HOA, and available to the planning area's residents, grocers, and restaurateurs. Adjacent to the community garden under the shade of majestic oaks, another rock wall corral defines the boundaries of a large picnic area.

Village Core Park will connect to the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path and the greater Valley's Edge trail network. Refer to Figure 3-8 for a conceptual plan view of the Village Core Park.



Proposed restaurant entry within the Village Core



Village Core bandstand area

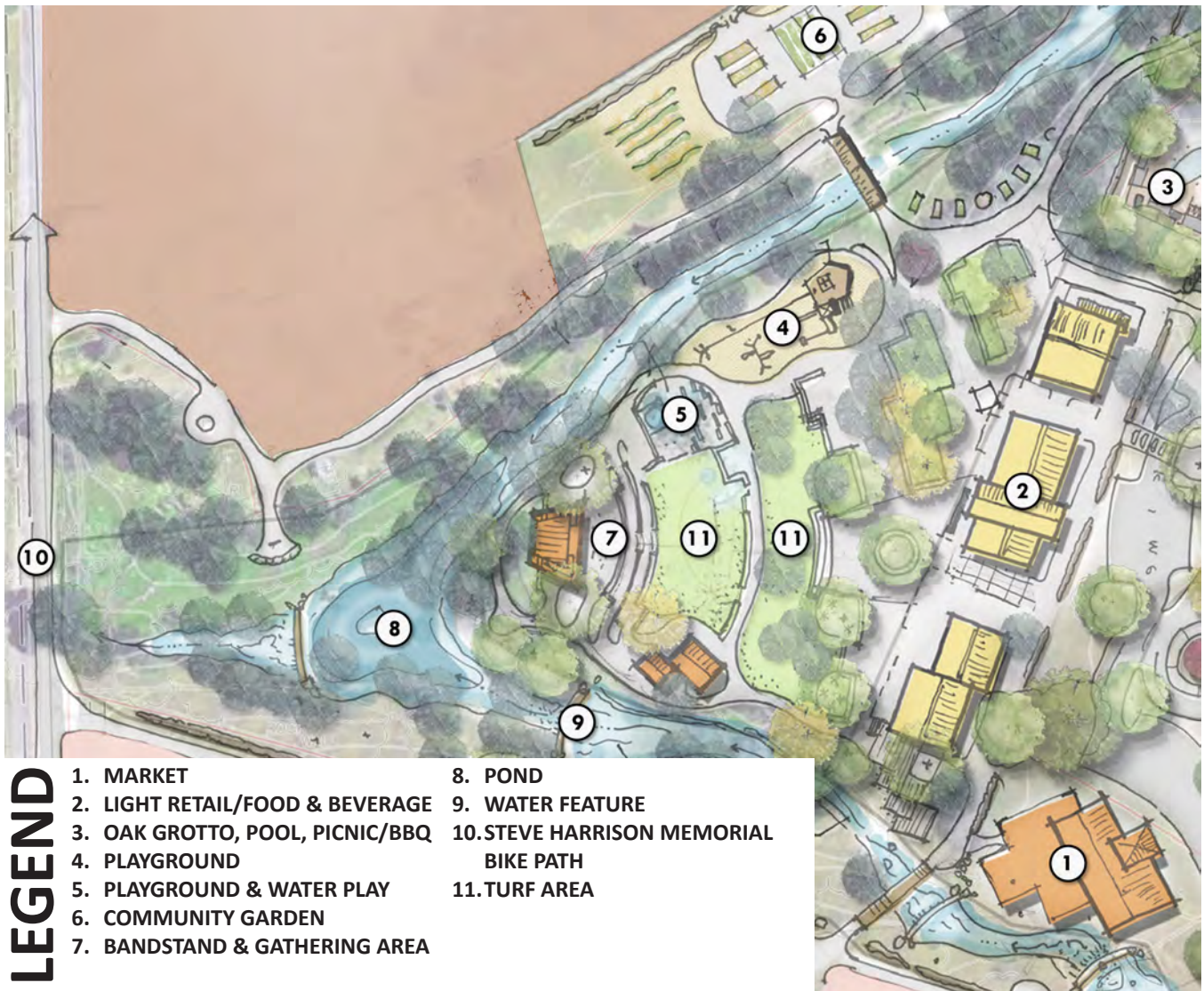


Figure 3-8: Village Core Park



Proposed restaurant featuring outdoor bar and seating



SENIOR PARKS

Within the Senior Neighborhoods dedicated park amenities will provide residents, guests, and visitors opportunities for social gathering, exercise, organized recreation, quiet relaxation, and other outdoor, experiences or activities.

Class I bike and walking trails will promote exercise, foster greater age-diversity in social and recreational settings, and connect the Senior Neighborhoods to gathering places in and around the vibrant heart of Valley's Edge. Among other neighborhood functions, Pioneer Park serves as the open space bridge between the Village Core and the Senior clubhouse.

The VESP Park Plan (Figure 3-1) illustrates a conceptual location for mid-sized park situated on a slightly elevated mound clustered with oak trees. Conceptual locations for two mini-parks are also identified. The ultimate location and design of parks within the Senior Neighborhoods would occur at the subdivision design stage.

3.2.7 Environmental Preserves

The VESP's approach to protection of wetland resources and endangered species is avoidance by design. Roughly 26-acres of the VESP area around jurisdictional wetland features and approximately 20 acres around areas known to support occurrences of Butte County Meadowfoam (BCM) will be set-aside for conservation and resource protection (refer to Figure 3-1). It is anticipated that these areas set aside for resource conservation will be owned by the HOA and managed by a qualified land trust.

***"SPECIAL CONSIDERATION
WILL BE GIVEN TO PROTECTING
AND PRESERVING SENSITIVE
HABITATS, INCLUDING THE
MANY EPHEMERAL STREAMS
THAT DRAIN THE SITE, AS WELL
AS THE WETLAND AREAS ON THE
WESTERN EDGE."***

***- GP APPENDIX C -DOE MILL/
HONEY RUN SPECIAL PLANNING
AREA***



3.3 Rock Walls

Conducted field surveys between 2009 and 2019 identified 34 hand-lain, stacked rocks walls ranging from 65 lineal feet to over 8,300 linear feet throughout the VESP area. These rock walls have historical importance in that they were constructed in the 19th Century as livestock barriers or enclosures as well as property boundaries. Refer to the Valley's Edge Rock Wall Supplement (Appendix D) for a more detailed description and inventory of the on-site rock walls.

As emphasized in Chapter 2, the planning and design of the planning area was based around key principles that will safeguard notable and cultural elements, including the rock walls.

The following measures are being taken to ensure the rock walls will be protected:

- Orienting rock walls towards the public realm;
- Creating monumentation along key vantage points where the prominence of rock walls can be highlighted to inform visitors and residence of their local significance, and the stewardship necessary for their preservation;
- Incorporating rock wall elements into streetscapes and landscape architecture;
- Documenting the condition of preserved rock walls through routine inspection and conduct necessary repairs through the use of native materials and original construction design; and
- Retaining all surface rocks on-site, along with a storage yard to enable builders and residents to collect material for re-use within the VESP area.

Figure 3-9 identifies existing rock wall openings utilized to accommodate future roads and/or trails, along with new potential passage locations. Figure 3-9 is not intended to be prescriptive, but rather an illustrative example of where existing rock wall opening segments may, where practicable, accommodate passage with minimal disruption. Refinements to the locations and proposed openings is expected, and shall be determined concurrent with the infrastructure design abutting the respective wall section(s).



The Teaching Wall

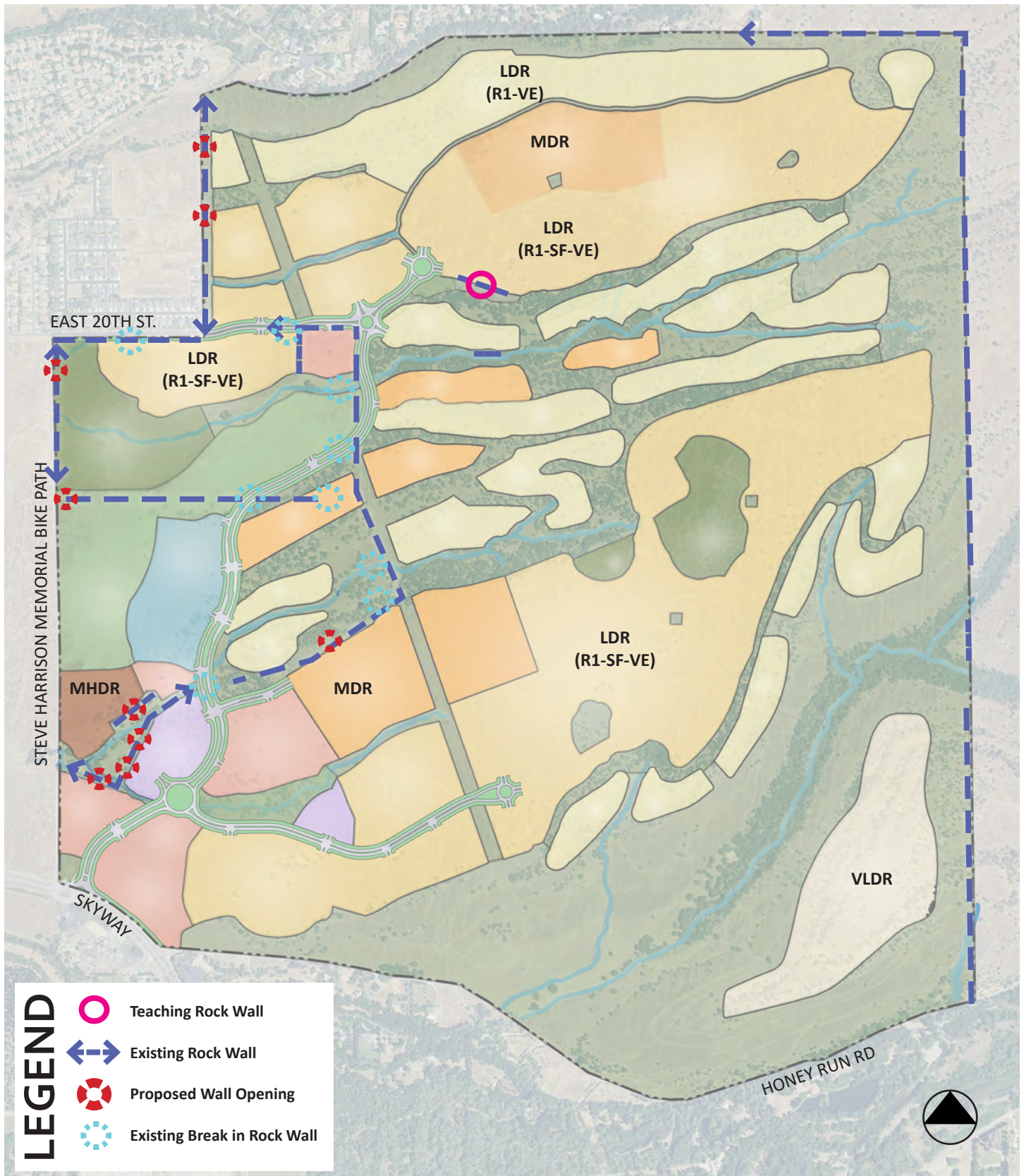


Figure 3-9: Rock Wall Reference Map



3.4 Valley's Edge Trail System

The trail system established by the Trail Master Plan (Figure 5-2) in the Valley's Edge planning area will promote Chico's active lifestyle, from all-weather Class I paths accommodating bicyclists, pedestrians, joggers, and baby strollers to multi-purpose enhanced trails and nature trails serving mountain bikers, hikers, equestrians, bird watchers, and other outdoor adventurers. Refer to Chapter 5: Circulation & Trails for descriptions of the proposed trail system. The vision of a fully connected planning area, and the commitment to construct Chico's largest and most interconnected trails system are both meaningful and purposeful steps towards a healthier community, including lessening automobile reliance.

The VESP's extensive trail network requires an ongoing management effort. The Trail Plan network planning, design, construction, maintenance, and management will be administered by the Valley's Edge Trails Management Committee (TMC), as further discussed in Chapter 5: Circulation & Trails.

In part, the VESP's approach to trail management is intended to avert some of the environmental damage that has occurred in the Upper Bidwell Park over the years, elevating the quality of trail experiences, while at the same time being economically sustainable.

3.5 Maintenance and Management

3.5.1 Public/Quasi Public Agencies

The community park and elementary school site would be owned, improved and managed by Chico Area Recreation District and Chico Unified School District, respectively.

3.5.2 Homeowners Association

Creekside greenways, linear parks, neighborhood parks, and special use parks will be owned and maintained by the Valley's Edge Homeowners Association (HOA). Environmental preserve(s) will be owned and maintained by the HOA, or qualified land trust. As neighborhoods are developed, green spaces within that neighborhood will be connected and merged with abutting open space corridors and dedicated to the HOA for management and maintenance.

Where park or recreational elements are intended for the exclusive use of residents within common interest subdivisions such as a condominium or planned unit development, ownership and maintenance would rest with that neighborhood's HOA, referred to as Sub-HOA(s). Within the Age Restricted (refer to Figure 4-8: Senior Neighborhoods) portion of the planning area, one or more Sub-HOA's may be formed to manage parks and facilities serving exclusively the senior communities' residents and guests.

To broaden public opportunities for use and enjoyment, the Regional Park would be offered for dedication to the City of Chico. Unless and until such time as the dedication of land is accepted, the Regional Park will be owned, maintained, and managed by the Valley's Edge HOA, during which period access would be open to planning area residents and guests, as well as non-resident members registered with the Valley's Edge HOA.



3.6 Oak Woodland Mitigation and Management Plan

The VESP area predominantly encompasses Blue Oak, which are apparent in the creekside greenways and open space corridors that traverse east-west across the site, as well as isolated oak trees throughout the VESP area in both open space and development areas. The VESP area integrates an Oak Woodland Mitigation and Management Plan, which states the comprehensive goals and implementation measures for the protection of on-site Oak Woodland habitat throughout the VESP area. The VESP's organization of density and land use promotes conservation of native oak trees through open space, thoughtful street design, and intensity of development. Where oak trees are within developed areas, the VESP adopts core principles and actions from the City's Adopted Tree Preservation Regulations (City of Chico Municipal Code Section 16.66). Refer to the Valley's Edge Oak Woodland Mitigation and Management

