

## County Trails Program Objectives

### *A System of Interconnected and Continuous Regional and Community Trails*

The County Trails Program objective is to realize a system of interconnected and continuous regional and community trails for the County of San Diego. All trails will be planned to support the transportation, recreation, and health and welfare goals of the County. These goals are in keeping with the County's Strategic Plan while seeking opportunities to provide a wide variety of qualitative trail experiences. The County Trails Program focus is on identifying, implementing and maintaining a realistic and achievable trail system. The system should effectively meet the needs of County residents and consider both regional and community trails that offer walking, hiking, biking, and horseback riding opportunities.

Since the majority of existing trails are in the eastern portion of the County, more trails are

needed closer to population centers in the western portion of the County. These additional trails will provide more residents with convenient access to enjoy the recreation, health, and transportation benefits of trails. The following are key objectives that will help ensure the success of the County Trails Program:

- Local trails should be developed with community involvement and be formalized outside of the General Plan within an adopted Community Trails Master Plan.
- Adequate funding, management, and maintenance of trails should be established in order to provide an effective and enjoyable trail system that meets public needs and expectations.

- Trail planning efforts should include focused attention on new trail opportunities within parklands, open space preserves, and lands in the Multiple Species Conservation Program, where appropriate and consistent with habitat protection.
- On-going and continuing coordination among the three County departments to ensure the existing trail easements and access points are not lost through the development process.
- Management and maintenance of regional and community trails should include active support of local jurisdictions.

## 2.1 County Strategic Plan Initiatives

The County of San Diego has committed to a long-range Strategic Plan that includes an Environmental Initiative with a vision to preserve and enhance the natural environment and quality of life. The Strategic Plan outlines how the County will accomplish its mission, which is to serve the residents of San Diego County. Strategic planning assists in evaluating existing conditions, resources available, assessing the needs, challenges, and risks for the future. This planning effort directs the development of goals and action plans to meet the future needs in advance of their demand.

The Countywide Trail Goals and Policies are a step toward a trails program that will enhance

quality of life by providing riding and hiking trails in communities and for the region. The County’s Strategic Plan has identified three key “initiatives” or broad goals that help prioritize specific County efforts and programs. These initiative driven objectives are:

- *Kids*
- *The Environment*
- *Safe and Livable Communities*

and clearly integrated into the development of the County Trails Program. The benefits that trails provide to communities and the County have a direct correlation to these three goals and support the County Strategic Plan.

Kids

*“Improve opportunities for children”*



*San Dieguito/Elfin Forest Community Trail*

Trails improve opportunities for children:

- *Providing “quality time” with family in a safe and close to home environment*
- *Encouraging and facilitating opportunities for exercise*
- *Providing access to “outdoor” classrooms for learning and community service*
- *Creating positive life-long experiences*
- *Teaching respect and stewardship of the environment*

Many in the health community have begun promoting trails and other such facilities as one answer to the critical problems facing children—childhood obesity. Studies show that childhood health and behavior problems can lead to life-long consequences. Trails and pathways also are being incorporated into the Safe Routes to School programs, which help to encourage healthy exercise habits at an early age. It is obvious that trails and health communities will be working closely together in the coming years to increase opportunities for exercise through trail development and promotion.

In addition to the health benefits, trail corridors can become outdoor classrooms where children can observe and learn about their natural and cultural environment. Planned community trails will connect to local parks, open space areas, schools, libraries, and other public lands.

The Environment

***“Promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life and economic development”***



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*Roadrunner*

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Trails promote natural resource management strategies that ensure environmental preservation, quality of life, and economic development:

- *Providing a “buffer” between the built and natural environments*
- *Allowing passive recreational use and educational access to protected areas*
- *Increasing the value open space to the public by providing access*
- *Enhancing property values of communities by connecting them to open space areas*

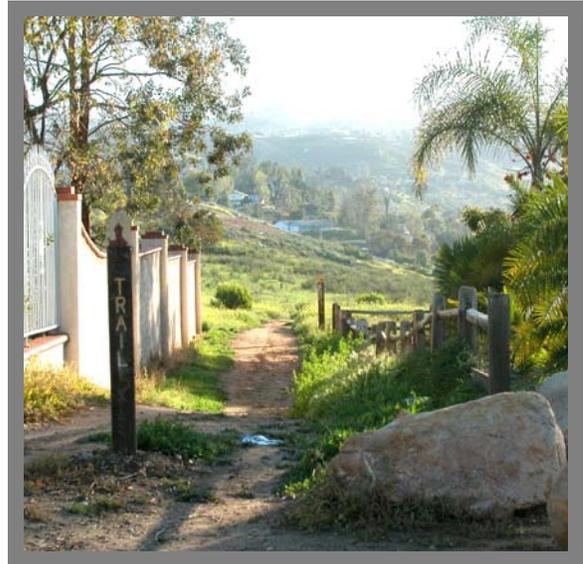
- *Providing an alternative mode of transportation*
- *Encouraging cleaner air by decreasing air pollution from automobiles*
- *Supporting communities and businesses through eco-tourism*
- *Preserving culturally and historically valuable areas*

Trails are an integral part of our natural environment and can be used as a tool for conservation. Trails assist with preserving important natural landscapes, providing necessary links between fragmented habitats and providing tremendous opportunities for protecting plant and animal species. Increased development has contributed to the creation of habitat “islands”—isolating wildlife, reducing their natural habitats and survival. Trails provide that important link between these island populations and habitats and increase the available land to many wildlife species

Trail corridors assist in providing natural buffer zones from pollution run-off and become important tools for improving water quality. They can also improve air quality by protecting the plants that naturally create oxygen and filter out air pollutants.

## Safe and Livable Communities

### **“Promote Safe and Livable Communities”**



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*Community Trail in Blossom Valley/Lakeside*

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Trails promote safe and livable communities by:

- *Providing convenient, safe, non-motorized travel throughout the community*
- *Reducing crime and illegal activity through regular use and visibility of users*
- *Connecting communities to parks, schools, shopping and other recreational facilities*
- *Providing affordable exercise and recreational opportunities within the community*
- *Encouraging opportunities to meet and interact with neighbors*
- *Providing emergency routes and fire breaks*

Trails can provide a sense of place and a source of community pride. When integrated with features such as historic sites, commercial or residential areas, and parks, they can improve the overall character of a community or the region. They provide community residents the opportunity to enjoy the diverse environments and the natural beauty of our County.

Several studies have been conducted that show the use of trails and their proximity to the users, that is close to where users live and work (community trails), appears to increase the rate of regular physical activity. Trails can help reduce physical and mental health risks by providing pleasant places to

exercise, which help control weight, blood pressure, and cholesterol levels, build strength and endurance, and help prevent depression. There is scientific evidence that supports providing convenient access to places for physical activity, such as trails connecting to parks or other recreational facilities, increases the level of physical activity in a community.

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*We do not want in the United States a nation of spectators. We want a nation of participants in the vigorous life.”*

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**President John F. Kennedy**

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County Trails Program Meeting County Strategic Goals			
Benefits Trails Provide	County Strategic Plan Initiatives		
	Kids	Environment	Safe and Livable Communities
Recreational	X	X	X
Economic	X	X	X
Educational	X	X	X
Environmental	X	X	X
Transportation	X	X	X
Historic	X	X	X
Access	X	X	X
Health	X	X	X
Quality of Life	X	X	X