

# Attention Employers!



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## El Dorado study urges sharing of park sites

**By Cathy Locke -- Bee Staff Writer - (Published August 8, 2004)**

A study of parks and recreation services in western El Dorado County cites a need for more cooperation among the county, community services districts and schools to meet the demands of a growing region.

The study was prepared by the El Dorado Local Agency Formation Commission, the agency that oversees governmental reorganizations, and a draft of the report was reviewed by commission members July 28.

LAFCO did the study, or service review, as a prerequisite to updating spheres of influence, the potential service areas of governmental agencies, Roseanne Chamberlain, the commission's executive director, said.

In its initial study, LAFCO focused on four community services districts - El Dorado Hills, Cameron Park, Holiday Lake and Springfield Meadows - in the county's fast-growing western region.

But the discussion among service providers and LAFCO members spotlighted needs countywide.

Collaborative efforts and sharing of facilities are "absolutely critical to meeting the backlog of recreational needs," said Bob Smart, a member of the El Dorado County Parks and Recreation Commission.

His comment was echoed by representatives of the El Dorado Hills and Cameron Park community services districts.

In El Dorado Hills, Planning Director Dianna Hillyer reported, the district expects to develop 29 acres of new parks this fiscal year. The district also is building a teen center and skate park, but Hillyer said, "We never have enough parks and sport fields."

The population the district serves has risen from 22,204 in 2001 to 30,319 in January of this year, and it is expected to increase to approximately 70,000 by 2015, she said.

"Some population segments will tell you they're not getting everything they want," Hillyer said.

Although Cameron Park, with a population of about 17,000, is nearly built out, recreation district officials said they are feeling the effects of growth on the community's borders. General Manager Michelle Place said the district suffers from a critical shortage of facilities for recreational programs, a problem a community center could help alleviate.

Recent community workshops have resulted in a conceptual design for a center that would be built on district-owned property next to the Cameron Park Library. Place said a bond measure to fund the project likely will go to voters in March 2005.

The two smaller community services districts included in the review do not offer recreation programs, but both have facilities that could help meet area needs, according to the report.

The Holiday Park district serves an estimated 136 residents south of Mother Lode Drive and east of French Creek in the Shingle Springs area. The district maintains a 30-acre lake, dam and a .9-mile trail around the lake.

Although use of the lake currently is restricted to Holiday Park homeowners, the report says it could serve as a community recreation area for residents of Shingle Springs south of Highway 50. Such a move could help relieve some of the pressure on the Cameron Park district to serve nonresidents.

Similarly, the report notes that the El Dorado Hills Community Services District has expressed interest in using neighborhood parks in the nearby Springfield Meadows district for recreational programs.

The Springfield Meadows Community Services District serves the Shadow Hills Estates, Springfield Meadows and Stonebriar subdivisions south of Highway 50, north of White Rock Road and adjacent to the Sacramento County border. It is expected to have a population of nearly 1,000 when newly built homes are occupied.

Cameron Park and El Dorado Hills officials noted that many nonresidents use their services. Wayne Lowery, general manager of the El Dorado Hills Community Services District, said the district charges nonresidents an additional \$5 fee for most recreational programs, but fees don't cover capital improvements and maintenance costs.

Consequently, residents of the community services districts subsidize nonresident use.

Smart and Lowery also said they would like to see more school facilities available for public use during evenings and weekends.

Lowery said his district has sought to use school ball fields for sports activities but that the fields often are poorly maintained. "We may have to look at helping them maintain them," he said.

Smart also urged LAFCO to study the needs of areas that are not part of community services districts, such as the communities of El Dorado and Diamond Springs. Growth is occurring in those once-rural areas, and residents require more urban services. Most currently use Placerville's recreational programs and facilities, he said, noting that it was appropriate that El Dorado County contributed funds to reconstruct the city's swimming pool.

Smart said he fears that El Dorado is becoming a county of haves and have-nots. "The people on the lower part of the hill are ending up with more goodies than the people on the upper part of the hill have," he said.

A better definition is needed of the types of facilities and services various governmental agencies - cities, community services districts or the county - should provide, Smart said.

"One of the purposes of the service review is to 'daylight' some of these issues," Chamberlain said, adding that presentations similar to that provided to LAFCO could be made to the Board of Supervisors and school districts.

The report, titled "The Service Review of West County Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Related Services," is available on LAFCO's Web site at [co.el-dorado.ca.us/lafco/#sr](http://co.el-dorado.ca.us/lafco/#sr).

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#### About the Writer

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