

CHAPTER 7



PARKS, RECREATION,
AND OPEN SPACE

7.1 OVERVIEW

Recreation and open space are critical components of any community's quality of life. Providing healthy parks is fundamental to many aspects of community prosperity, including: improving public physical and mental health; promoting community revitalization; improving economic health and vitality; creating a strong sense of community; supporting social cohesion; and improving groundwater quality and reducing public costs for stormwater management.

During the community outreach phase of the development of this plan, the need for additional park and recreational facilities was identified as a high priority—in particular, the need for active recreational facilities was highlighted. However, there is little park space available in the area today and the opportunities for the City to acquire property to create new parks is limited. The only existing park within South Centre City is the Felicita Mini-Park. Westside Park, which is located on the west side of South Spruce Street between West 3rd Avenue and West 5th Avenue, is adjacent to South Centre City.



7.2 RECREATIONAL NETWORK

This interconnected recreational network proposes to directly link all the South Centre City districts via existing and proposed pedestrian, bicycle, and multi-use paths to local and regional parks, including Felicita Mini-Park, Grape Day Park, and Kit Carson Park, which residents in the area reported using. The network is also designed to link other cultural, recreational and transportation amenities near South Centre City, such as the Center for the Arts, the Escondido Transit Center, bus stops, and commercial centers and corridors within the area. As gaps in the larger pedestrian and bicycle networks within South Centre City are completed, this strategy has the added benefit of enhancing active, non-motorized mobility options and promoting the City's Complete Streets goals for people to commute to work and school, run daily errands, and socialize.



7.2.1 Elements of the Recreational and Open Space Network

7.2.1.1 Land Use and New Development.

People do not just congregate, recreate, or simply enjoy the outdoors in parkland designated for recreation purposes, they use town squares, plazas, and numerous other areas that are both publicly and privately owned. A residential, commercial, or mixed-used facility providing daily or regularly scheduled recreation oriented activities help provide residents, businesses, and other community members access to recreation. Activities take place predominately outdoors or within outdoor structures. New development will also provide opportunities to connect land use activities with nature, with nature woven through integrated into the site development in the form of playgrounds, playfields, and programmed open areas and other green areas.

7.2.1.2 Application Submittal.

Another foundational element of the recreational network is the parkland that is connected by the non-motorized network. The General Plan acknowledges the constraints of acquiring and developing parks in urban and smart growth areas, like South Centre City, by focusing on developing recreational amenities that are more responsive to their established settings, including urban parks (less than two acres), linear parks, shaded urban trails, exercise courses, parklets, mini-parks, and other similar types of parkland. Not only does the recreational network link existing parks and cultural venues, it proposes to reimagine Felicita Mini-Park and add a linear park within South Centre City (discussed next(below)).

7.2.1.3 Pine Street Pathway.

A Concept for Change presented in this Specific Plan is the creation of the Pine Street Pathway, which combines the elements of an urban linear park, a shared-use trail for pedestrians and bicyclists, a sustainable greenway, and a venue for public art into an exciting recreational and non-motorized mobility feature for both South Centre City and the greater community. The public right-of-way between Centre City Parkway and Pine Street as well as a portion of the Pine Street right-of-way provide an untapped resource to create a shared-use trail in the South Centre City area, while also preserving right-of-way for a potential future SPRINTER connection from the Escondido Transit Center to locations to the south.

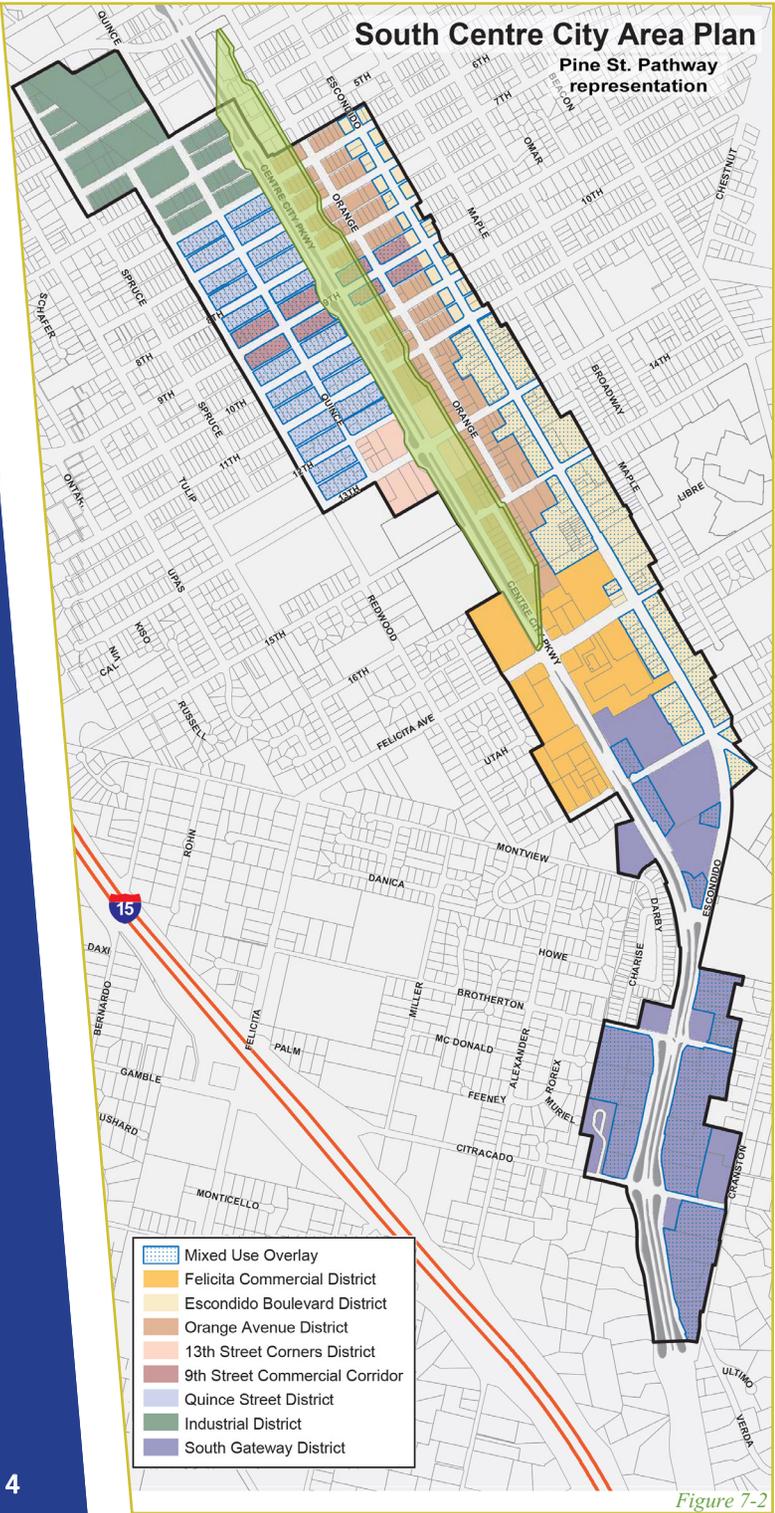


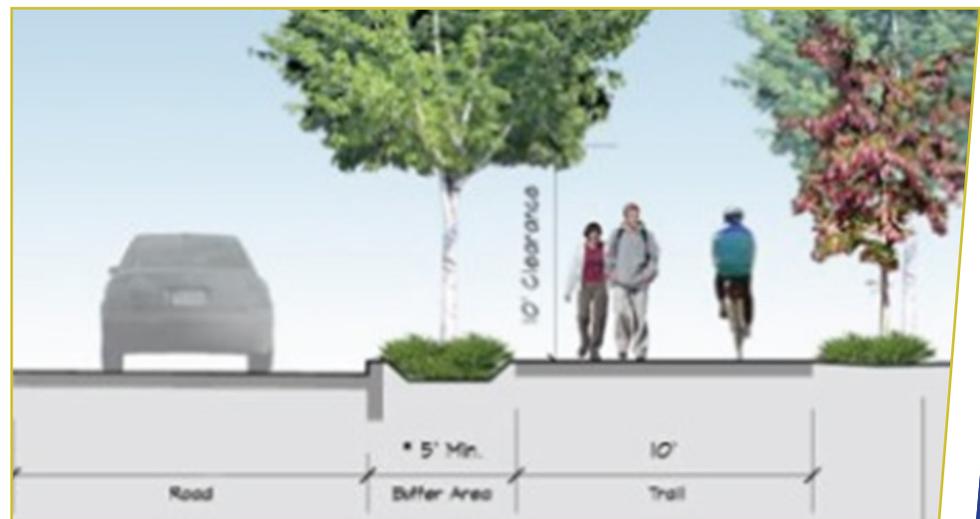
Figure 7-2

As seen on Figure 7-2, the 1.3-mile long Pine Street Pathway will extend through the West Mercado, Quince Street, 9th Avenue Overlay, 13th Avenue Corners, and Felicita Commercial Districts, linking neighborhoods, parks, schools, shopping areas and services, places of worship, transit facilities, and other destinations. As envisioned, the Pine Street Pathway will parallel Centre City Parkway on the west side, starting on the south side of West Valley Parkway at the northern end of Pine Street and ending at the intersection of Centre City Parkway and West Felicita Avenue. The configuration of the right-of-way changes at the Green Crest Mobile Home Park; therefore, additional study will be required



to determine how and where the multi-use path will transition into pedestrian and bicycle paths.

Figure 7-1 shows a concept of how the pathway could be designed, given the right-of-way present and the intent to maintain access for residents and public safety vehicles, and retain some parking along Pine Street. A detailed plan will be required, similar to that prepared for the Escondido Creek Trail Master Plan Report. Such a plan also would include safety and mobility features, such as special treatments at crosswalks at Centre City Parkway and cross streets, lighting, fencing to separate trail users from Centre City Parkway, etc.



As a shared-use trail,

Pine Street Pathway will be a vital link in Escondido’s interconnected pedestrian and bicycle system by accommodating both pedestrians and bicyclists in one facility. This is especially critical in the western portion of South Centre City, as Centre City Parkway does not have sidewalks. With the large volume of traffic and high vehicular speed on Centre City Parkway, Pine Street Pathway’s separation from Center City Parkway will provide a safer and more enjoyable walking experience. Although there is currently a Class 2 bicycle lane along Centre City Parkway, the Pine Street Pathway provides an additional bicycle facility that is separated from the traffic on Centre City Parkway for people who desire a more leisurely cycling option, such as families with children, and is not intended to be used by high-speed recreational cyclists and commuters.



As a linear park,

The 1.3-mile Pine Street Pathway will incorporate features such as benches and tables at key locations along the path for places to relax, socialize and exercise. An exciting feature of Pine Street Pathway is its emphasis on active recreation. In addition to the recreational benefits the trail provides, Pine Street Pathway will include a parcours that will run the length of the pathway. Parcours provide exercise equipment at a series of stations—each station provides the apparatus and instructions for the specified exercise for participants of all fitness levels and ages. The length of the Pine Street Pathway could accommodate up to 20 stations or groups of stations, depending on site constraints. Users of the parcours along Pine Street Pathway will be able to walk, jog, or cycle from station to station to complete their desired level of workout. This plan proposes to incorporate one parcours station with multiple pieces of equipment in Felicita Mini-Park (see Section 7.2.1.5), while optional parklets and mini-parks also could include parcours stations (see Section 7.2.1.6); this emphasizes the goal of integrating active recreational spaces in the South Centre City area and the City. The Pine Street Pathway also provides a linear open space of trees and native plants that will serve as a buffer between Centre City Parkway and trail users, as well as the adjacent neighborhoods to the west. The Pathway will function as green infrastructure to sustainably manage stormwater runoff; and provide natural habitats.

As a venue for public art,

The Pine Street Pathway will significantly expand opportunities for the community to experience and interact with public art in an “up close and personal” way. Incorporating interactive public art along the Pine Street Pathway will highlight the users’ experience of the path while enhancing community identity and pride. A wide range of art installations is envisioned, such as traditional sculpture, kinetic wind sculptures, and murals—even benches, trash receptacles, bicycle racks, light poles, and wayfinding signage can become works of art. Some of the art installations could depict Escondido’s history and/or reflect the identity of each District through which the pathway passes. The community should be encouraged to participate in all facets of developing and implementing the public art program along the Pathway, especially those to live and work in the area, as well as students of nearby schools.





7.2.1.4 Felicity Mini-Park

Felicity Mini-Park is located at the northwest corner of Felicity Avenue and South Escondido Boulevard. This 0.2-acre park, which currently includes landscaping and benches, is underutilized. The plan envisions activating Felicity Mini-Park by reimagining its use as a parcourse station with multiple pieces of equipment. Additional amenities could include shade trees, benches, and public art. This strategy, along with effective wayfinding, would extend the length of the parcourse on the Pine Street Pathway (described earlier) and would enhance the recreational linkage across Centre City Parkway.

7.2.1.5. Parklets

A parklet is a small segment of public right-of-way that is converted to a pedestrian space for public use by installing temporary, removable structures, such as benches, tables, potted plants, and bike racks. Parklets typically utilize one or more on-street parking spaces that are adjacent to the sidewalk. They can be places to sit and relax, enjoy a cup of coffee, or could even include another parcourse station on the recreational network.



7.2.2 Green Infrastructure

Another key feature of the recreational network is that it identifies parks, open space, and trails as “green infrastructure” by incorporating sustainable features, such as vegetated swales, rain gardens, and permeable paving. These features help manage stormwater runoff, reduce flooding, recharge groundwater, reduce water pollution and improve the quality of streams such as the Escondido Creek, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. See Chapter 8 for more information.

7.2.3 Safety.

To enhance the use and experience by the community, safety considerations must be integral components in the design and maintenance of the recreational network. Adequate lighting, visibility, and proper maintenance will encourage active use of the Pine Street Pathway, Felicity Mini-Park, and the pedestrian and bicycle paths; in turn, the presence of users functions as a deterrent to crime.

A robust wayfinding program also enhances safety for users. A wayfinding program designed especially for the recreational network is proposed, with signage that both directs people to the network as well as signage along the network. Interesting and memorable techniques, such as placing special markers within pavement and designing the signage to function as public art should be considered. The wayfinding program should be coordinated with streetscape elements for each of the Districts to enhance community identity.



7.2.4 Augmented Reality Gaming

Augmented reality gaming using smart phones, such as Pokémon GO, is an exciting phenomenon that is getting people of all ages outside walking, interacting, exploring their communities, and activating public spaces and places that they might not have frequented otherwise. The City and businesses can encourage the community benefits of these real-world games by actively participating in the games (e.g., using Pokémon GO “lure modules”) providing extra trash receptacles in high-activity places, and ensuring safety features are adequate.



