

*Santa Clara
County Parks*

**2018
Strategic
Plan**



SANTA CLARA™
COUNTY PARKS

**OUR
PARKS
OUR
FUTURE**

May 2018



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Hikers on Hotel Trail
Joseph D. Grant County Park

Introduction

A. Introduction and Purpose

Deep green forests and golden hillsides, trails and parks that beckon both retreat and adventure, and the awareness of being within a valley that leads the world in innovation and industry: this is Santa Clara County. Here, nature stands strong alongside a thriving culture of commerce and technology. Santa Clara County's parklands and undeveloped open spaces, as well as the trails that connect urban areas to wilder places, are profound assets for residents and visitors alike. For the County and greater region, these resources bring definition to the regional landscape, capture imaginations with their grand vistas, and provide rich grounds for a wide range of outdoor experiences; all while supporting diverse habitat and providing vital environmental services, including resilience in the face of a changing climate.

The County's regional parks showcase an elegant balance between resource protection and public access that the County of Santa Clara's Parks and Recreation Department (Department/County Parks) has nourished and grown since 1956. For over six decades, the Department has managed this impressive network of public parkland and sought to be responsive to public expectations; regarding the role of parks in public health, shifts in recreation demand, and the importance of protecting natural resources. The Department has remained both dependable and flexible amidst changes in the County's demographics, the environment, recreation trends, and land management practices, as well as changes in the funding resources available to assist the Department in delivery of its Mission.

Since the adoption of the first Strategic Plan in 2003 (2003 Strategic Plan), the Department has achieved most of the goals it set forth. Recognizing the ongoing growth of the County's population, changing recreation demands, as well as new opportunities to help address pressing issues such as climate change and public health, the Department initiated a strategic planning process to update the 2003 Strategic Plan. The resulting 2018 Strategic Plan confirms components of the 2003 document that remain pertinent, defines a new Vision, and establishes priorities and strategies for ensuring that the regional park system of Santa Clara County continues to be an essential contributor to County residents' quality of life.¹

¹ County Parks Department Strategic Plan 2003





The basic purposes of this Strategic Plan are:

- To identify and prioritize present day and anticipated future outdoor recreation values and needs.
- To ensure that the Department’s Mission and guiding Vision remain relevant.
- To provide for great customer experiences.
- To foster a nimble learning organization with engaged and empowered employees.
- To make progress towards a fiscally sustainable future.

B. The “Why”

This section provides a brief overview of the Department’s history, Mission, and role in providing regional parks and open space. Additionally, it summarizes the Department’s role as a partner to other agencies and the relationship of the Strategic Plan to other guiding documents.

Department Background

The Department was established by the County in 1956 to manage existing parks and expand the park network. In the early 1960s, a vision for a “necklace of parks” was put into place to guide the work of the Department. Under this vision, purchasing new land and expanding the regional parks and trails network was the focus, particularly along the hillsides that frame the valley and the creeks that pass through the valley floor in the County’s urban service areas. These expansion efforts were accelerated by Santa Clara County voters when they approved the 1972 Park Charter Fund, providing a secure funding source for growing and improving the park system.²

The development of the 2003 Strategic Plan helped to further define the role and purpose of the Department, brought new emphasis to maintenance and enhancement of existing parks, and broadened the vision of an emerald necklace to that of a “web” that would extend and connect even more extensively into the valley floor. Of key importance to this effort was the establishment of the Department Mission statement, a statement that continues to guide the Department, in part through this Strategic Plan:

The Mission of Santa Clara County Parks is to provide, protect and preserve regional parklands for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations.

² Charter of the County of Santa Clara 1972

Guided by this Mission and supported by the Park Charter Fund, the Department has established a world-class regional park system of 28 parks comprising over 52,000 acres. The Park Charter was renewed by voters in 2016, as amended by the County Board of Supervisors (Board), for another 15 years, providing funding for new acquisition as well as for needed improvements and upgrades guided by this document. Key dates in Department history are summarized in Figure 1-1.

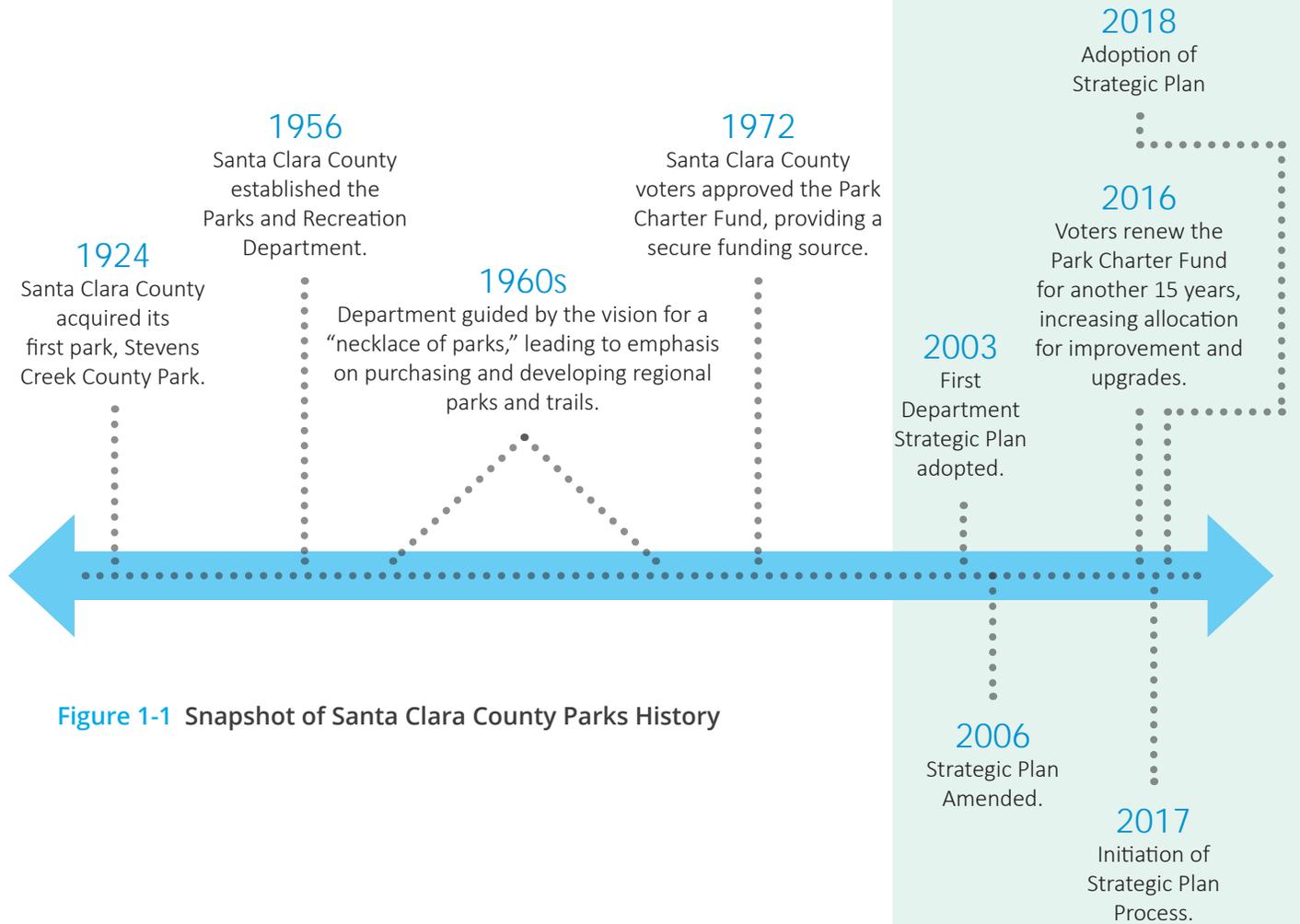


Figure 1-1 Snapshot of Santa Clara County Parks History



"One swallow does not make a summer, but one skein of geese, cleaving the murk of March thaw, is the Spring."

- Aldo Leopold

Partner Agencies

The extensive network of parks, trails, and open space in Santa Clara County extends beyond the jurisdiction of the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department. A variety of government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private entities provide resource preservation and management and/or recreational opportunities within and connecting to Santa Clara County. The Department collaborates with many of these agencies, at times taking a leadership role facilitating regional habitat connectivity, provision of recreational facilities, services, and support of public health, while at other times playing a secondary role to one of these partners. As such, strategies and priorities identified within this Strategic Plan consider the Department's relationship to its partner agencies and the unique mission of each entity. Partner agencies include other County departments, local cities, California State Parks, and several key public land management agencies. More detail about some of the key agencies offering opportunities that are either complementary or directly connected to the Department follows:

- **Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Open Space Authority)** is a public, independent special district whose mission is to "conserve the natural environment, support agriculture, and connect people to nature, by protecting open spaces, natural areas, and working farms and ranches for future generations." The Open Space Authority's work emphasizes resource preservation and enhancement and provides opportunities for passive recreation within the County.
- **Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD)** manages the supply of clean, safe water, flood protection, and stewardship of streams for Santa Clara County. SCVWD works to enhance, protect, and restore creeks and riparian resources. Through partnerships with cities and the Department, SCVWD also provides recreational opportunities at many of its reservoirs and along over 70 miles of creekside trails.

- **Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen)** is a public, independent special district that preserves public land and manages open space preserves in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. Its purpose is to create a regional greenbelt of unspoiled public open space lands to permanently protect the area’s natural resources and to provide for public use and enjoyment.
- **Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency (Habitat Agency)** plays a major role in implementing the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan (Habitat Plan) which covers about two-thirds of Santa Clara County. The Habitat Plan protects endangered and threatened species and their habitats, while streamlining State and Federal permitting for public and private projects.
- **Cities** The fifteen cities within Santa Clara County play a significant role in serving local park and recreation needs. Among them, the City of San José, the largest city in the County, owns and operates nearly 200 local, community, and regional parks. Because approximately 93 percent³ of County residents also live within an incorporated city, consideration of city park and recreation departments is key to understanding the role the Department should play in providing park and recreation services that serve urban areas.



Guiding Documents

The Strategic Plan is one of the many documents that directs the planning for, and management of, the County’s regional parks and trails. Other County documents that guide the Department are described below and include the Santa Clara County General Plan, Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan, Park Charter Amendment, Parkland Acquisition Plan, and Countywide Trails Master Plan Update. This Strategic Plan is informed by these documents and, in many cases, provides specific tools to implement the visions and policies included in these guiding documents. In addition, there are several vision and policy documents prepared by other agencies that inform regional goals and strategies related to parks, trails and open space.

The County’s relevant guiding documents are described below as they relate to this Strategic Plan, followed by a brief overview of other relevant documents.

Santa Clara County General Plan

The Santa Clara County General Plan was adopted on December 20, 1994, and includes a Parks and Recreation Element, a Health Element, and a Transportation Element that parallel the goals of this Strategic Plan. The Parks and Recreation Element defines the differences between public regional parks and neighborhood, community, and citywide parks. Importantly, it emphasizes that the public regional parks and recreational facilities of the County Parks Department are those of Countywide Significance both in urban and rural areas and are the responsibility of the County government. The County’s General Plan provides policies and broad implementation statements to guide development of the County’s regional park and trail network, while the Strategic Plan provides a more focused guide for the Department.⁴

³ County of Santa Clara, Department of Planning and Development 2017

⁴ County of Santa Clara General Plan 1994



Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan

The Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan (Habitat Plan) provides a framework for promoting the protection and recovery of natural resources while streamlining the permitting process for planned development, infrastructure, and maintenance activities. The Habitat Plan allows for recreational use of areas considered part of the Reserve System, a 46,920-acre area identified by the Agency for acquisition, restoration, and protection. The Habitat Plan allows “Local Partners” including the County of Santa Clara, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, and the cities of Gilroy, Morgan Hill, and San José to receive endangered species permits for activities and projects they conduct. Rather than permitting and mitigating individual projects, the Habitat Plan evaluates natural resource impacts and mitigation requirements comprehensively in a way that is more efficient and effective for at-risk species and their essential habitats. The Habitat Plan limits development in areas identified as part of the Reserve System. The Department’s land acquisition program plays an important role in satisfying the County’s land acquisition requirements as a Local Partner of the Habitat Plan.⁵

Santa Clara County Park Charter Amendment

Since its establishment in 1972, the Park Charter Fund has provided a stable funding source for the Department and enabled the creation of a world class regional park system. The Park Charter Fund is a provision in the County’s Charter that sets aside a portion of property tax revenue exclusively for County park purposes. Within this set-aside, funds are distributed between three categories: acquisition, capital improvement, and “unrestricted.”

The Park Charter Fund has been renewed seven times since its first approval and its funding distribution has been adjusted over the years. As the park system has grown, the allocation of funds has shifted from acquisition and expanding the park system to build-out of the existing park system and its amenities to supporting operations and maintenance, and finally, to developing and rehabilitating park amenities and infrastructure. This Strategic Plan offers recommendations to guide the Department in making more informed decisions about project priorities and investment of these funds.

⁵ Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2003

Santa Clara County Parkland Acquisition Plan

In 1993, a set of acquisition criteria was developed to help guide choices about which parklands to purchase. The Department completed a Parkland Acquisition Plan Update (Acquisition Plan) in 2012. The Acquisition Plan provides a decision model and priority criteria to inform the Department in acquiring land. In approving the Acquisition Plan, the Board of Supervisors reaffirmed long-standing policy direction to focus acquisition efforts and funds on regionally significant parkland and trail corridors. The Board also asked the Department to enhance partnerships with local cities and other agencies to offer a variety of outdoor recreation opportunities that respond to the needs of a growing and sometimes underserved urban population.⁶

The Acquisition Plan highlights the role that trails provide as both outdoor recreation opportunities in and of themselves and access for urban populations to regional parks.



Countywide Trails Master Plan Update

The Santa Clara County Trails Master Plan Advisory Committee developed the Countywide Trails Master Plan Update (CWTMP) in 1995. The CWTMP affects a trails route map and policies for a countywide system that has been part of the County's General Plan since 1980. The CWTMP presents an overarching vision for trail development throughout the County, including a network of trails that connects cities, regional open space resources, and unincorporated urban pockets of the County to create one contiguous network. Elements of the CWTMP are included in the County's General Plan and are also reflected in this Strategic Plan.⁷

Plans Led by Other Agencies

- **Midpen Vision Plan.** Developed with extensive public input, the Midpen Vision Plan (Vision Plan) assesses and prioritizes key opportunities for conservation within the San Francisco Peninsula, San Mateo coast, and the South Bay, including the western portion of Santa Clara County. The Vision Plan identifies numerous priority action projects and regional trail connections within Santa Clara County with implementation for those actions led by Midpen.⁸
- **Santa Clara Valley Greenprint.** Developed by the Open Space Authority in 2014, the Santa Clara Valley Greenprint (Valley Greenprint) guides the Authority's stewardship and land protection efforts. A key component of the Valley Greenprint is the identification of ten priority areas for conservation within Santa Clara Valley, referred to as Conservation Focus Areas. These are "the most important landscapes for the protection of natural resources, working lands, and livable communities throughout the Open Space Authority's jurisdiction." The Valley Greenprint emphasizes the importance of partnerships, especially related to projects in urban areas.⁹

⁶ County Parks Department Parkland Acquisition Plan Update 2012

⁷ Countywide Trails Master Plan Update 1995

⁸ Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District Vision Plan 2012

⁹ Santa Clara Valley Greenprint 2014



- **Plan Bay Area 2040.** Developed by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), Plan Bay Area 2040 identifies Priority Conservation Areas that help guide development in the nine-county region. Priority Conservation Areas are open spaces that provide agricultural, natural resource, scenic, recreational, and/or ecological values and ecosystem functions that are protected from the pressure of urban development or other factors.¹⁰

C. Planning Process

The 2018 Strategic Plan process was initiated in 2016. The section below describes the key phases of the planning process, the advisory groups that provided input and guidance, and public and staff engagement that were conducted by the County Parks Department.

Planning Phases

As shown in Figure 1-2, the planning process included five distinct phases:

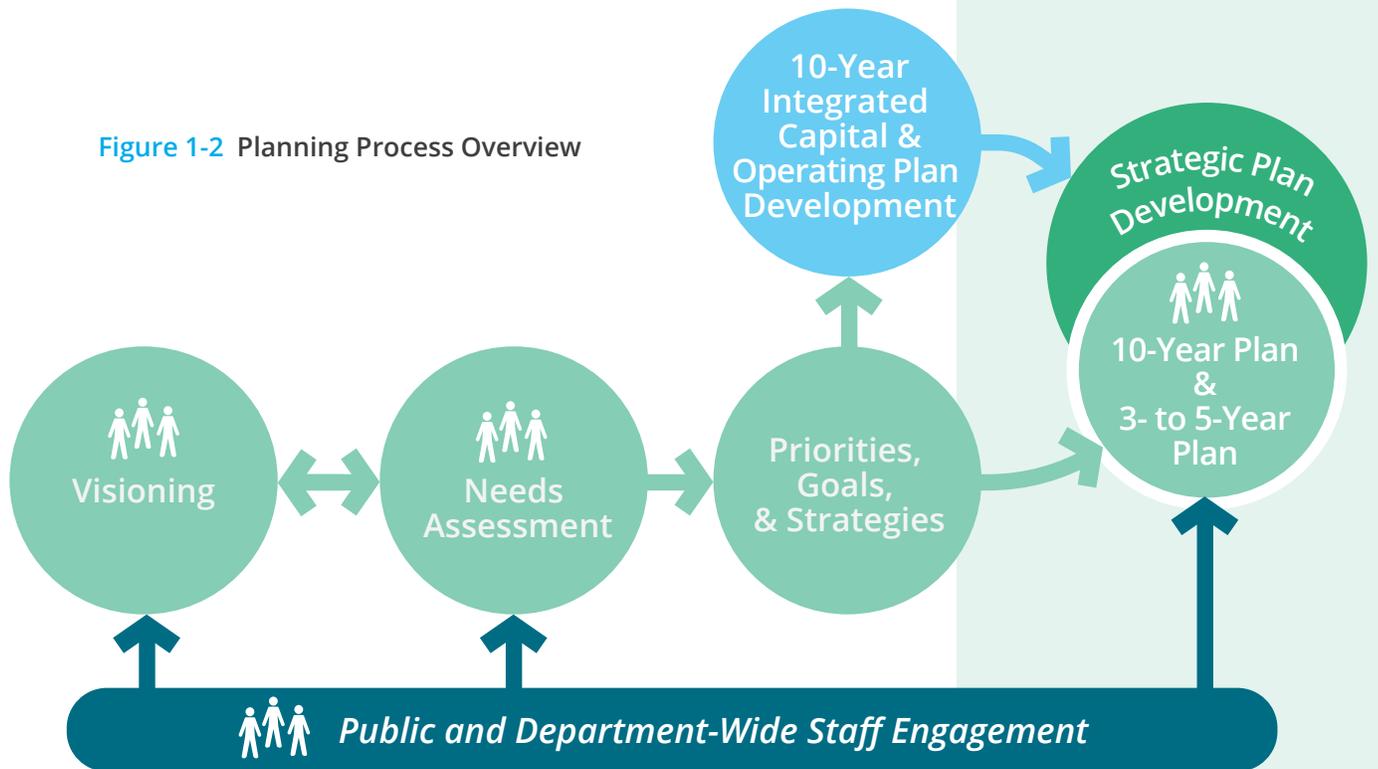
1. **Visioning:** This initial phase focused on the Department Mission and Vision statements. Visioning activities and associated public and staff input led to the confirmation of the existing Mission statement and the development of a draft revised Vision statement and vision elements. The draft Vision statement informed subsequent phases of the planning process and was refined based on the outcomes of the needs assessment, ultimately resulting in the final revised Vision.
2. **Needs Assessment:** This phase helped establish the understanding of current conditions and trends within the Department, the County at large, and the fields of parks and recreation and open space preservation. With the goal of determining current and anticipated future demand, an inventory and assessment of internal resources, services, and facilities was carried out. In addition, trends in population demographics and recreation demand were analyzed and input received from a broad spectrum of the public and County Parks staff.
3. **Priorities, Goals, and Strategies:** In this phase, the Strategic Plan Project Team worked toward developing priorities, goals, and strategies in response to the outcomes of the needs assessment. Draft priorities, goals, and strategies were presented to Technical Advisory Groups for review and comment, and the statements refined for incorporation into this Plan document. Related actions and practices were also compiled during this phase.
4. **Fiscal Planning and Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP) Development:** In parallel to the three phases described above, another important focus of the planning process included developing a new approach and tools to improve the Department's ability to perform long-range fiscal planning, including integrating capital and operations costs. The recommended process and tools

¹⁰ Plan Bay Area 2040, 2017

that resulted from this effort, which additionally incorporated the priorities identified during Step 3, resulted in a 10-year vision for the Departments capital projects, called the ICOP.

- 5. Strategic Plan Document Development:** Building on the phases described above, the development of this final plan entailed distilling key analysis and outcomes into a concise document that includes a revised Vision statement, and focused long-range (10-year) and near-term (3- to 5-year) strategies, actions, and practices to guide Department decision-making and plan implementation.

Figure 1-2 Planning Process Overview





"The Eyes of the Future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time."

- Terry Tempest Williams, Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert

Public Outreach and Engagement

Community input was crucial to the direction of the Strategic Plan. Three methods of outreach were deployed to solicit input for the 2018 Strategic Plan, from April 2017 to May 2017: (1) an online engagement activity, (2) public outreach at a number of public events, and (3) a public workshop. These methods were selected with the intent of soliciting input from a broader portion of County residents than typically participate in traditional public workshops and meetings. The Department promoted public participation through social media, email blasts, and by contacting partner organizations to assist in promoting participation. Preexisting public events with considerable regional draw were targeted for soliciting input, including the Morgan Hill Farmers' Market, SoFa Street Fair, Martial Cottle Spring Festival, Mountain View Art à la Carte Festival, Berryessa Art Festival, and the Bay Area Open Space Conference.

In addition to the outreach efforts described above, the Department included questions relevant to the Strategic Plan in a park satisfaction telephone survey of Santa Clara County voters conducted by EMC Research in Spring 2017. The purpose of this biannual survey is to track data over time, providing insight into trends and satisfaction.

A total of 1,860 responses were collected through the public outreach efforts: 229 from the online survey, 1,031 from the outreach events and workshops, and 600 from the telephone survey. Outreach questions asked people about what parks they used most or least frequently, their satisfaction with facilities and services, recommendations for improvement, knowledge of the Department and parks, and the priorities they have for the County park system.

Advisory Groups

The Strategic Plan process was led by a Project Team composed of Department staff and was guided by a Steering Committee, multiple Technical Advisory Committees, and input from the County's Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and Housing, Land Use, Environment and Transportation (HLUET) Committee. The role of each of these groups is outlined below.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee was composed of the three Department directors. The Steering Committee met throughout the planning phases and provided guidance on deliverables, outreach efforts, and the overall planning process.



Technical Advisory Committees

To ensure an inclusive and informed planning process, technical advisory committees (TACs) were formed to assist and provide input throughout the planning process. Two members from the PRC attended the TAC meetings. TAC meetings were strategically planned to coincide with key deliverables, outreach efforts, and other meetings as appropriate.

One County TAC included representatives from other County departments, another consisted of members from regional partner agencies, and others were compiled from key internal staff and other experts. The Partner Agency TAC included members and leaders of partnering agencies, with the intent of taking a focused look at land connectivity, ensuring development of a regionally consistent plan. Agencies and organizations that participated in the Partner Agency TAC included Midpen, Open Space Authority, SCVWD, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Peninsula Open Space Trust, and the Habitat Agency.



Parks and Recreation Commission

The Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) was established in 1955 to advise the Board of Supervisors on the planning, maintenance, development, and operation of all the County's parks and recreational facilities. In addition to having PRC members on the TACs, the Department provided updates to the PRC throughout the planning process.

Housing, Land Use, Environment, and Transportation Committee (HLUET)

HLUET is a policy committee of the Board of Supervisors that focuses on long-range and strategic planning in the areas of land use, environment, and transportation. HLUET reviews issues and budget recommendations as they affect the Department of Parks and Recreation and other County departments. Updates were presented to HLUET at key phases of the planning process.

Staff Engagement

Comprehensive engagement of all Department staff was identified as critical to the success of the Strategic Plan and to setting the stage for "a nimble learning organization with engaged and empowered employees."¹¹ In addition to proactive involvement of staff on advisory committees, the Project Team met with staff representatives from various divisions throughout the planning process and conducted three Department-wide surveys in which all staff were encouraged to participate. The first survey solicited staff feedback on the long-range vision, the second survey solicited input on Department operations as well as staff perception of public needs, and the third survey asked staff about their motivation in working for the Department. Two staff workshops were held in the fall of 2017 to help identify appropriate strategies and actions in response to outcomes of the needs assessment.

¹¹ Statement by Jeffrey V. Smith, County CEO Vision Elements.[PLACEHOLDER. NEED CORRECT REFERENCE)

D. Navigating the Strategic Plan

The first three chapters of the Strategic Plan establish, and provide context for, the Department's long-range vision. These chapters provide an overview of the Department's resources and role in the provision of regional parks and recreation, identify the status of the Department's resources and the needs of the County's population, and define a Vision, goals, strategies, and actions for meeting this need. Chapter 4 provides specific information about the fiscal planning necessary to carry out the recommended actions and major projects, and Chapter 5 offers a time-based Action Plan for implementing this vision. A brief description of each chapter is provided below.

- 1. Introduction:** Describes the background and context for the 2018 Strategic Plan.
- 2. Needs Assessment:** Provides an overview of the methodology and outcomes of the needs assessment. The analysis focuses on the relationship between existing facilities and services with consideration of recreation trends as well as current and anticipated future customer needs.
- 3. From Vision to Action:** Presents the revised Department Vision statement and Vision elements, and defines priorities, goals, strategies, actions, and practices for implementing this Vision.
- 4. Fiscal Planning for a Sustainable Future:** Provides an overview of improvements to the Department's capital planning approach and charts the course for implementing the 10-year Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP). This chapter provides recommendations that will facilitate informed, holistic fiscal decision-making.
- 5. Action Plan:** Provides initial priorities and actions for implementing the Strategic Plan. Focusing on the next three to five years, this Action Plan provides an overview of key near-term projects, definitions of capital funding groups (Capital Programs), and also recommends timing and project team makeup for all action items.



Cottonwood Lake
Hellyer County Park

Needs Assessment

A. Purpose

Understanding what resources residents and visitors need and want from the County's regional park system is important to ensure that the Department's work is meeting those expectations. In development of this Strategic Plan, the Department undertook a process to assess the "needs" of Santa Clara County with the word "need" being understood to include desires, expectations, and dependencies. This chapter presents the implications of that work for the County's regional park system. It will inform and improve decision making regarding which types of facilities should be planned or improved and where they should go, what kinds of interpretive and recreational programming should be provided, how existing facilities should be maintained, and how the Department should prioritize tasks and projects so that resources (funding and staffing) may be applied fairly and wisely. At a basic level, the concept of need should serve as an indicator to maximize return on public investment.

Process / Methodology

The Department undertook a focused inventory and assessment of park and recreation trends, department facilities and amenities, County demographics, resource management, and related needs with the goal of identifying key themes that should inform goals, strategies, and actions in coming years. This needs assessment was built on a variety of information sources, including demographic and spatial data, community and staff outreach, County documents, and regional, state, and national reports. It addresses these topics:

- Parklands, Trails, and Facilities
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Natural Resources
- Demographics
- Outreach and Market Trends

The key outcomes of this assessment, along with the findings and themes that emerged within each category, are summarized below. Additional background information regarding the process undertaken to gather and evaluate the needs assessment information, and further discussion of the key outcomes, findings, and themes are presented in Appendix A, Needs Assessment.

2



B. Parklands, Trails, and Facilities

The needs assessment included an inventory of parkland, trails, and facilities owned and maintained by the Department. Review and analysis of that data led to the following themes:

- **County Parks is, and will continue to be, a regional leader in open space access and preservation as well as outdoor recreation.** Santa Clara County's regional park system, shown in Figure 2-1, includes 28 regional parks totaling 52,200 acres. The Department manages approximately 27% of all publicly-accessible open space in the County. The park system offers a unique collection of traditional park facilities as well as specialty recreation facilities and is estimated to receive more than three million visitors annually. As shown in Figure 2-2, the vast majority of County residents (90%) live within five miles (or a 10 to 15-minute drive) of a County park. It is also interesting to note that approximately 13% reside within two miles and may access a County park by biking approximately 10 minutes or jogging approximately 20 minutes. 99% of County residents live within 10 miles of a County park.¹
- **County Parks should stay well-informed regarding trends in trail use and sustainable trail maintenance and design for the benefit of users and resources alike.** To meet the public's wide range of expectations for quality recreational experiences, County Parks has a high percentage of multi-use park trails available for all park users. The Department maintains approximately 340 miles of trails within park boundaries, of which about half are multi-use shared trails that serve multiple trail user types including equestrians, hikers, and bikers. 20% of trails currently allow hikers only and 23% are for hikers and equestrians only. At present, there are no bike-only trails in the system. Multi-use trails are the Department standard as these trails serve the widest array of users.
- **Significant gaps remain in the Countywide [regional] trail system, and County Parks plays a critical role in advocacy, oversight, and facilitation of gap closures.** One of the Department's central responsibilities is the oversight of the Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan Update (CWTMP) (1995). Per the Santa Clara Countywide Trails Prioritization and Gaps Analysis (2015), 316 miles of single-use or multi-use trails have been completed out of the original 795 miles identified in the CWTMP. 479 miles of trails remain totally or partially incomplete.² High priority trails identified in the CWTMP are shown in Figure 2-3.

1 United States Census Bureau 2010

2 Countywide Trails Prioritization and Gaps Analysis 2015

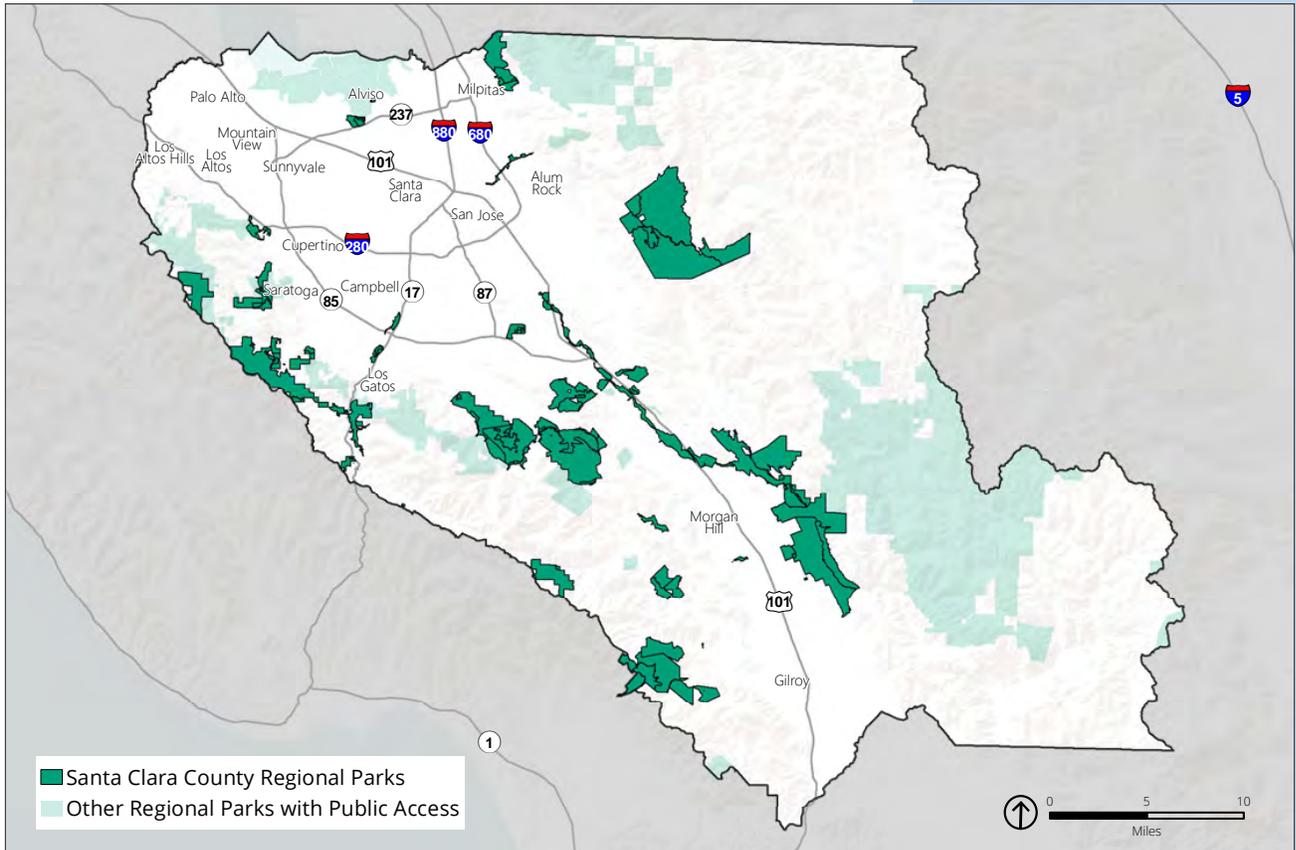


Figure 2-1 County Parks System

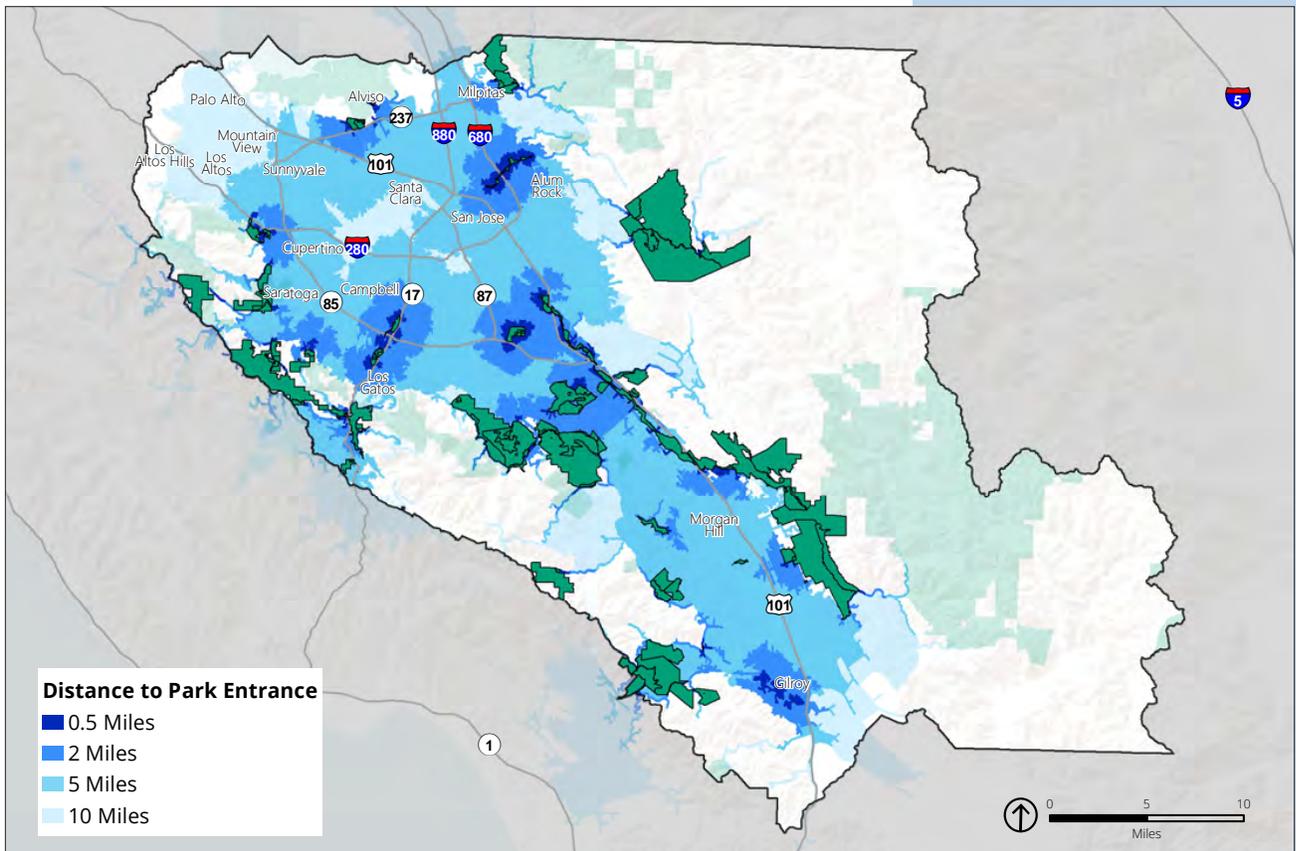


Figure 2-2 Access to County Parks

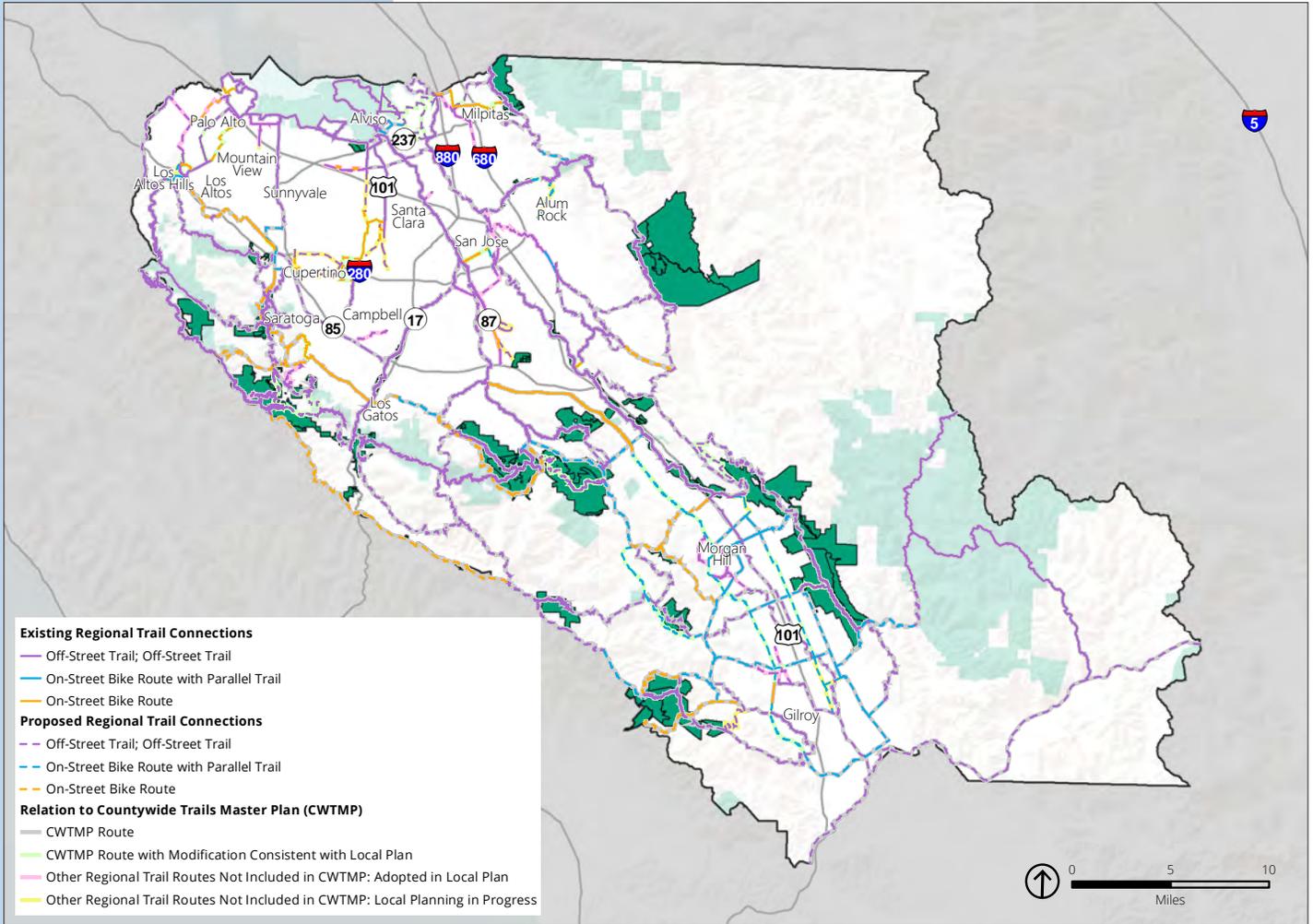


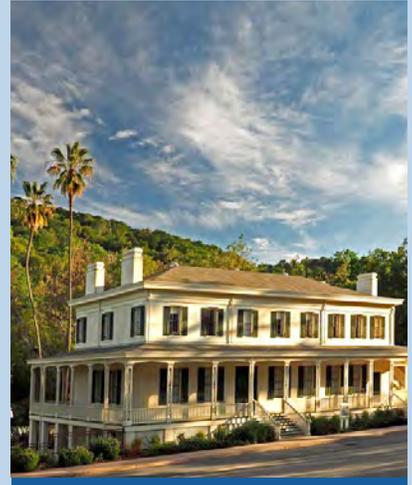
Figure 2-3 High Priority Trails Identified in Countywide Trails Master Plan

■ **County Parks’ interpretive and recreation events and programs serve significant numbers of people.** This programming should continue and, as it has in the past, incorporate modern interpretive themes. In 2016, the Department served nearly 150,000 visitors through programs and special events, ranging from the seasonal Fantasy of Lights at Vasona Lake County Park, Day on the Bay at Alviso Marina County Park, Spring and Harvest Festivals at Martial Cottle Park, to various Junior Ranger, interpretation, and recreation programs.

C. Historic and Cultural Resources

The Department has long been committed to cultural and historic resource management, defined by the Countywide Significance Criteria, as outlined in the 2003 Strategic Plan as including resources associated with architecture, events, or persons that have made a significant contribution to the broad archaeological or historic patterns of North America, California, the Central California Region, or Santa Clara County. Key findings and themes that emerged from the analysis of historic and cultural resources include:

- **County Parks will continue to play an important role in protecting and interpreting the region's history.** There are 34 historic and/or culturally significant resource sites documented in the Department's official Geographic Information System (GIS) database. These include major facilities such as the Casa Grande-Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum and smaller sites as in the case of the Henry Miller House ruins at Mount Madonna County Park.
- **Undiscovered historic or cultural resources are likely to exist in County Parks.** Careful consideration must be given to both their protection and cost as well as coordination with stakeholders. There is a high potential for many additional sites to be found throughout the system, varying from small historic markers and archaeological points to evidence of Native American activity to remnants of structures or buildings. In its oversight role, County Parks has the potential to protect, preserve, restore, interpret, or allow arrested decay or benign neglect of resources. County Parks is committed to ensuring coordination with the Native American community on sites significant to their history.
- **Restoration or preservation of historic and cultural resource sites, particularly sizable features such as building complexes or large structures, must be carefully prioritized due to their cost-intensive nature.** Efforts to preserve or restore these major features can run into the millions of dollars and require extensive staff efforts to plan, design, improve, and/or maintain. Grants, partnerships, and other funding means are available in some cases but given the quantity of sites located within County parks, the Department must plan historic and cultural resource projects with caution.





D. Natural Resources

As the population of Santa Clara County continues to grow and climate change impacts become more obvious, vital ecological resources, including clean water and interconnected wildlife habitats, will be increasingly threatened. While the County at large will work to manage new development while accommodating the expanding population, the Department must continue to lead the way in land conservation and protection of natural resources. Open space lands and natural systems that surround urban parts of the County will sustain residents with fresh drinking water, clean air, and protect against the earth's rising temperatures. The continued presence of sensitive plant and animal species in these wild places will serve as evidence that the County's ecological infrastructure remains in place and that the Department is responsibly stewarding the most precious commodity: nature.

The needs assessment sought to capture a "snapshot" view of the current conditions for natural resources in the park system. The intent was to note what species and habitats are present, highlight their dependencies, and note contemporary practices in the field of open space preservation in the region. Themes that emerged include:

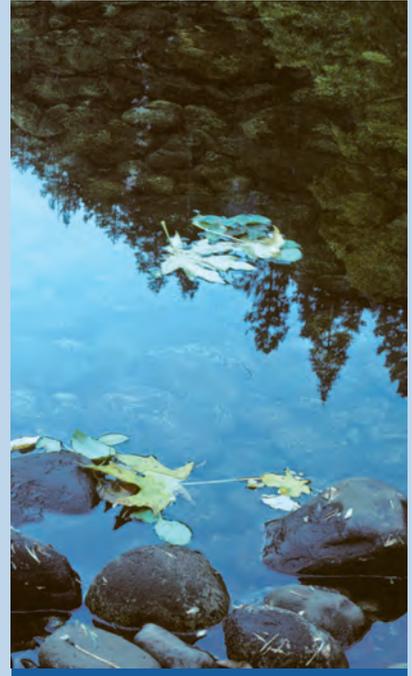
- **County Parks' commitment to highly informed and skilled natural resource protection is, and will continue to be, critically important to the County's overall ecological health.** From the conifer forests of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the marshlands of San Francisco Bay to the oak woodlands of the Diablo Mountain Range, climate, geography, and topography make Santa Clara County one of the most biologically diverse places in California. The County's variety of delicately connected ecosystems provide habitat for a wide range of species, including many that are special-status and threatened³. As many as 147 special-status plant and animal species occur or have the potential to occur in County parks.⁴
- **Protected lands are threatened by the urban setting, development, public access, and climate change, and County Parks must continue to stay alert and responsive in the face of these threats.** As urbanization and development expand their reach, wildlife become increasingly reliant on protected lands and corridors to ensure that they can move across the landscape. Even within areas protected from development, human activity (including recreation) can disrupt the behaviors of animal species and cause general physical destruction. Climate change is projected to produce additional threats, including rising sea levels and associated flooding, unreliable rainfall patterns and periods of drought, air quality decline, and a greater risk of wildfire. The Department is responding to these threats by acquiring open space land, building people's awareness of the importance of natural systems, participating in Countywide efforts led by the Office of Sustainability, remaining committed to protection of natural resources, and by partnering with collaborating agencies and organizations.

³ California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2018

⁴ California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2018

- **Partnerships are, and will continue to be, a vital part of resource management.** Land management and protection practices increasingly rely on collaboration between multiple organizations and with the community. Partnerships increase the chances for success by helping County Parks leverage the strengths of partners to fill gaps in capacity, reach a wider audience, and share information and data. Regional landscape-level resource management in particular requires effective partnerships in order to be successful, as the natural environment does not adhere to jurisdictional boundaries.
- **Natural resource management throughout the Bay Area, including within County Parks' practices, is moving in the direction of regional landscape-level natural resource protection and adaptive management.** As the population of the Bay Area continues to grow, organizations like County Parks are increasingly partnering with one another to manage natural resources within the context of their larger, interconnected ecosystems. County Parks' participation in the Habitat Plan is one such example. The Bay Area's many educational institutions and conservation-focused organizations and initiatives provide ample information for use in regional landscape-level and adaptive management. Adaptive resource management is a method that uses monitoring, data, and other information to study the effectiveness of a current approach and identify changes that (ideally) lead to a more successful outcome.⁵
- **As the role and importance of 'ecosystem services' becomes accepted beyond the field of parks and open space preservation, County Parks can utilize this concept to express how the park system adds to the health of the broader community.** The protection of the natural environment and healthy, thriving ecosystems provide benefits to the greater community, a function referred to as ecosystem services. Some examples include contributions to clean drinking water, sequestration of carbon, increased decomposition of pollutants, and the natural pollination critical to crops and other plants.

5 Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2013



E. County Demographics

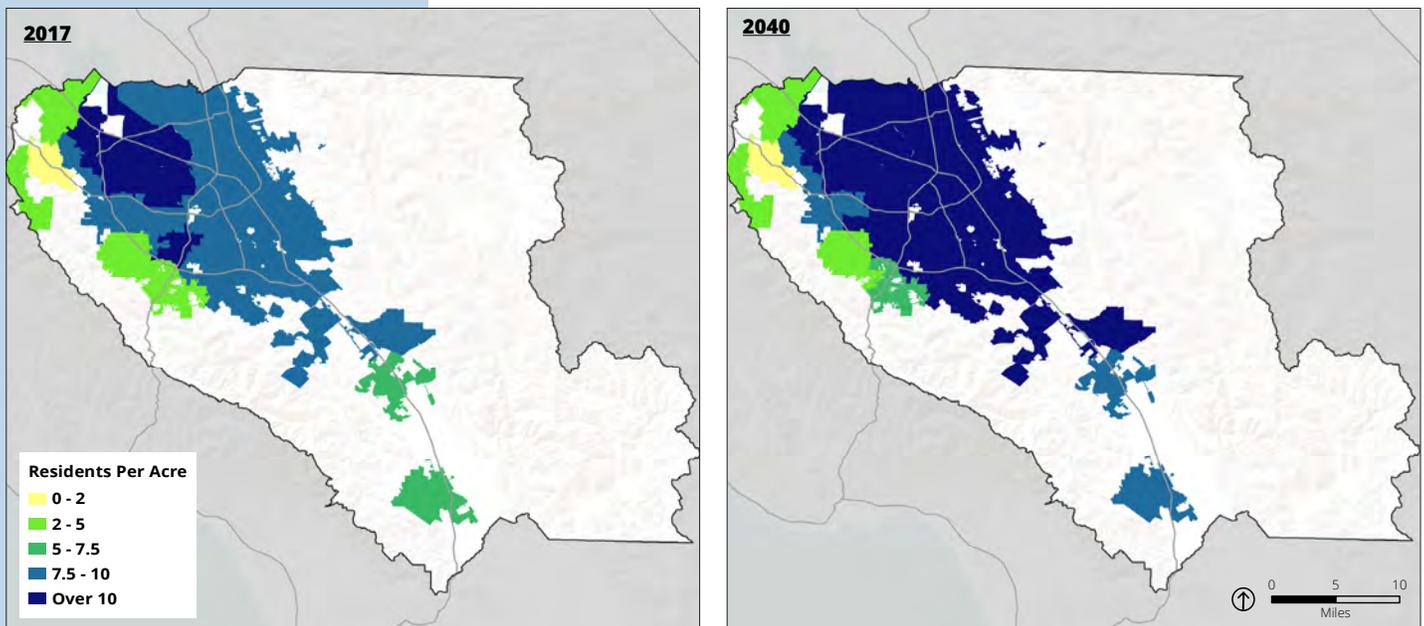
The needs assessment analyzed existing and projected demographics for Santa Clara County to see how the growing population and changing demographics relate to park and recreation demand.⁶ Key findings and themes are summarized below. These findings also informed the Outreach and Market Trends section that follows.

- **In response to growing population density, facilitating equitable and alternative access to parks will continue to be a focus for County Parks.** While the population is most concentrated in San Jose and in the north, south County will see an increase as shown in Figure 2-4. People in highly dense urban areas may face many obstacles in reaching outlying areas and parks.
- **With additional study, County Parks has the opportunity to target its services to specific customer demographics, as informed by location and park use.** Ethnic distribution in the County is not geographically equal, and it is not clear whether certain parks are visited more often by one ethnic group over another. Similarly, some recreational facilities may draw specific users or groups from greater distances, regardless of which park is closer to them. Current data shows that a larger portion of north County is Asian, and south County Hispanic/Latino, and that a greater portion of residents over the age of 65 live in cities on the west side of the County. Recent park intercept surveys at County parks generally reflect the mosaic of the overall County, but more could be done to address specific communities' needs and desires.



6 United States Census Bureau 2010, 2015

Figure 2-4 Existing and Projected Population Density of County



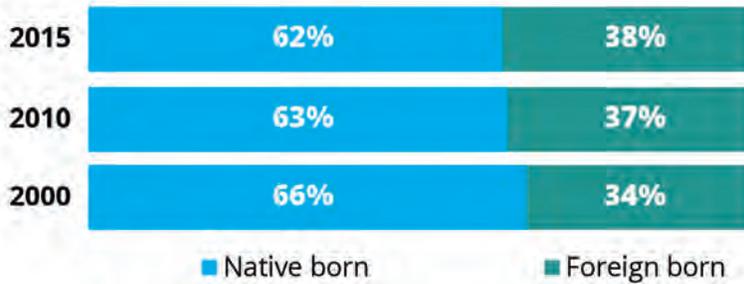
Source: California Department of Finance, 2018.

- **The role of County Parks in improving human health has the potential to expand, particularly through collaboration with health-focused partners.** While the County population is generally healthy in comparison to state and national trends, certain illnesses and conditions remain an issue. Health status is linked to economic status, ethnicity, and education.⁷
- **County Parks will need to do further research to identify specific ways to best respond to the recreation and open space needs of an increasingly diverse population.** According to demographic research, the County has a relatively healthy, educated, diverse, and aging population. An increasing portion is foreign-born. Different racial and ethnic groups use parks and open space differently. All of these demographic-related findings have potential implications for County Parks, but additional study will be needed. Figures 2-5 and 2-6 show the increasing diversity in Santa Clara County.



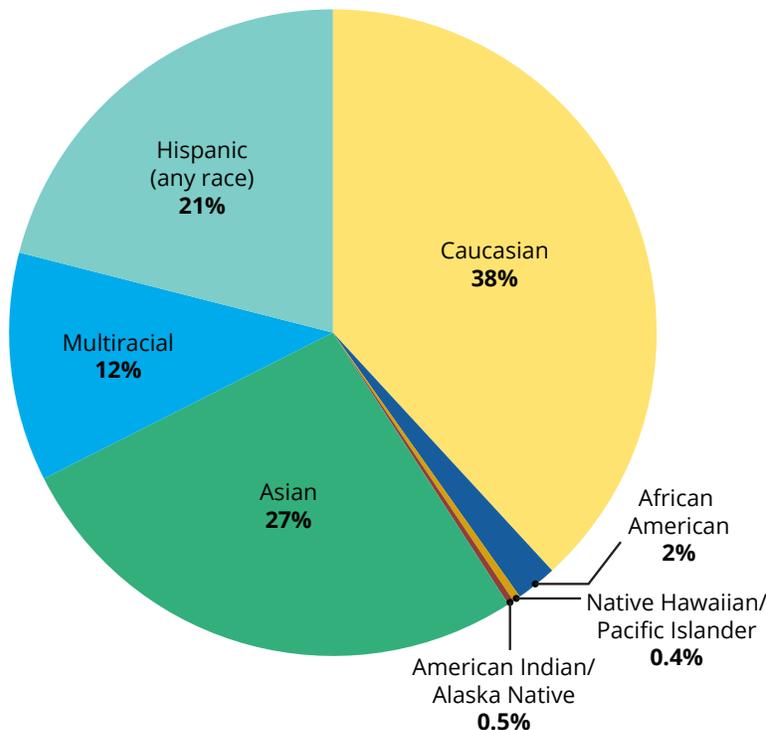
7 County of Santa Clara. (2013). Community Health Existing Conditions Report.

Figure 2-5 Percent of Foreign Born Residents in Santa Clara County



Source: U.S. Census 2000, 2010, 2015 American Community Survey.

Figure 2-6 Ethnicity Composition



Source: U.S. Census 2015 American Community Survey.



F. Outreach and Market Trends

County Parks has long enjoyed a positive relationship with County residents, receiving favorable ratings in various satisfaction and user surveys over the years and having the Park Charter Fund renewed seven times by voters. The Department is committed to ongoing study and adaptation to understand and serve the specific needs of its customers, including people who have not yet discovered the benefits of parks. Thus, public outreach for this Strategic Plan sought to meet people on their “home turf.” The approach included building an interactive website accessible from any computer or mobile device and “tabling” at a number of events that draw large crowds from throughout the County. Additionally, a variety of sources that track outdoor recreation usage trends were also consulted. The key findings and themes summarized below represent a broad cross-section of the population, and provide the Department with recommendations for small, achievable adjustments as well as opportunities for additional study and research. More detail regarding public and staff input, and market trends, is described in Appendix A.

- **County Parks’ goals should be reflective of the fact that there is growing attention to the importance of natural resource protection.** Natural resource preservation and healthy ecosystems surfaced as high priorities in results of all outreach efforts, including prioritization activities and in comments received on specific parks.
- **The Department’s support of traditional park uses should remain a focus, as these are still the most common reasons people visit a County park.** Major use activities have stayed generally consistent since the 2003 Strategic Plan, with primary uses being those that fall in the “core” or “traditional” category, such as trail use (walking, hiking, and running), picnicking, and camping. Both road and mountain bicycling continue to remain popular. Although ‘Opportunities to stay physically active and healthy’ was not identified as a high priority by any of the outreach efforts, this topic may be viewed as inherent to use of County parks. A list of priorities identified during outreach efforts is listed in Figure 2-7.
- **Provision for other uses should also continue, but additional focused study regarding where and when to provide facilities should inform this work.** Consistent with state and national trends, Santa Clara County parks have experienced steady demand for specialized recreation opportunities including off-leash dog parks, disc golf, kayaking, etc.

Figure 2-7 Identified Priorities

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PRIORITY RANK	EVENT & WORKSHOP PRIORITY RANK	PRIORITIES
1*	1	Maintain and expand parks, trails, and facilities
2	2	Natural resource preservation, including habitat and water quality
3	5	Healthy ecosystems and lessening the impacts of climate change
4	4	Regional trail connections for recreation and as alternative to driving
5	3	Add new parks, trails, and facilities
6	8	Improve access to parks for everyone
7	7	Protect cultural and historic sites and buildings
8	6	More recreational and educational services and programs
9	9	Opportunities to stay physically active and healthy
10	10	Technology to enhance the park visitor experience

* "Maintaining existing parks, trails and facilities" and "Expanding" were two different priorities in the online engagement prioritization activity, and were combined for ease of comparison with the events and workshops survey results.

- County Parks will need to respond to some customers' desire to utilize technology in association with their visit to a county park, while honoring others' desire to escape it.** Technology can additionally benefit the organization in improving efficiency in various ways. Although "Technology to expand the park visitor experience" was the lowest priority among survey respondents, this topic may still be important to enhancing visitor experience in coming years. Desire for connectivity is consistent with national trends and has been requested during intercept surveys of County park visitors. It should be noted that connectivity also relates to the topics of access to parks and public safety.
- Use of rideshare services to access County parks will need to be considered in relation to park planning and policy in the years to come.** The advent of transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft, which are especially prevalent in the Bay Area, creates a new way to access County parks, particularly where public transit access is limited.
- The existing overall management and maintenance of County parks is well-received by the community and the Department should continue to uphold this positive relationship.** Results from all outreach efforts show highly positive views of County parks. Although staff input indicated that there is a high need for facility upgrades, public input showed that maintenance of existing parks and facilities is a higher priority than the addition of new facilities. Clean, safe restrooms continue to be a high priority for the public, consistent with research across the state and nationwide.





Swanson Creek
Uvas Canyon County Park

From Vision to Action

A. Introduction

The County of Santa Clara's regional park system is an essential contributor to the quality of life County residents currently enjoy and will expect in coming decades. However, as shown in the needs assessment outcomes, the County's population, use trends, economic climate, and other factors are shifting and in turn the Department will need to shift accordingly. To help meet public expectation and continue to contribute vibrant, thriving parklands that support the health of people and natural resources alike, the Department revisited the goals and strategies of the previous decade and identified key changes and updates that were needed.

This chapter presents the Department's updated Vision, Vision elements, goals, and strategies. It additionally identifies specific actions and practices to be carried out in the day-to-day work of staff. This chapter is intended to provide clear guidance for all staff divisions within the Department as well as to present the Department's direction and general workplan to the public, County decision makers, and partner agencies. Ideally, the revised Vision, goals, and strategies offer a stable foundation upon which the Department will operate, while also supporting innovation, flexibility, and informed problem solving in response to unpredictable changes in conditions.

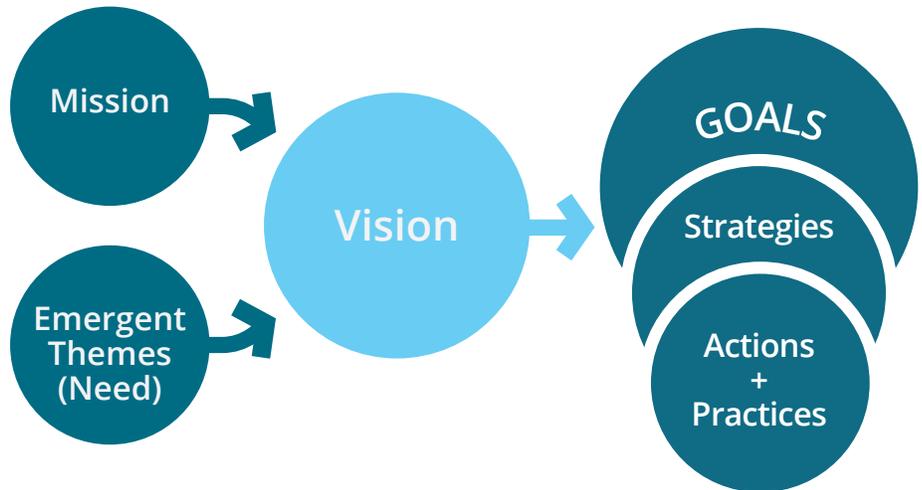
A number of notable themes emerged from the needs assessment and are described in detail in Chapter 2. These emergent themes informed the update of the Department's Vision statement as well as its supporting Vision elements. The resulting Vision elements touch on technology, climate change, natural, cultural, and historic resource management, recreational uses, customer diversity, access equity, fiscal sustainability, human health, and public safety. The relationship between the Vision, these themes, and key components of this Strategic Plan is illustrated in Figure 3-1.

3





Figure 3-1 Key Components of Planning Framework



B. Mission

The Department's Mission Statement articulates the role and purpose of the Department. Affirmed in 2003 during the Strategic Plan development, the Mission is still relevant today.

To provide, protect and preserve regional parklands for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations.

C. Vision and Vision Elements

The Vision paints a picture of the desired future for the regional park system, providing inspiration as well as a foundation for strategies, actions, and general practices. While the Mission reflects the role and purpose of the County Parks Department, the Vision ensures that it is relevant and forward thinking in the context of the County's current and future outdoor recreation needs. The updated Vision is as follows:

We create and manage a sustainable, vibrant system of regional parks and trails where exceptional visitor experiences enrich the human spirit and offer all people the opportunity to connect with the County's protected natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources, consistent with responsible resource stewardship.

Vision Elements

The Department's Vision is supported by the following elements that, when taken as a whole, provide a panorama of what the future of regional parks in Santa Clara County should be.



Interconnected and Inclusive

The County's regional parks, trails, and natural areas form an interconnected "Emerald Web" that preserves contiguous wildlife habitat and critical linkages and offers equitable access to people throughout the County.



Enriched Visitor Experience

County Parks acquires parkland and provides high quality facilities and programs that offer an enjoyable, safe, and educational visitor experience.



Resource Stewardship

Natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources are acquired, protected, and enhanced in balance with the provision of public access and outdoor experiences. County Parks' land management practices promote healthy ecosystems that strengthen the region's resilience to climate change and address special status species and habitat needs.



Human Health

The County's regional park system provides opportunities to engage in outdoor recreation in a natural environment that enhances physical health, reduces stress, and renews the human spirit.



Operational Excellence

By actively embracing innovation, fiscal responsibility, employee engagement, adaptive management practices, and collaboration with partners, County Parks serves as a model of excellence in customer service, resource protection, and park management.





*"Those who
contemplate the
beauty of the earth
find reserves of
strength that will
endure as long as
life lasts."*

- Rachel Carson

D. Goals, Strategies, Actions, and Practices

Nine strategic goals were identified during the planning process. Together these goals provide a comprehensive ideal for management of the Department and the stewardship of the natural, cultural, and historic resources under its care. Collectively, the nine goal statements express a desired overarching management approach and reinforce the Department's commitment to the Vision and principles outlined above.

An overview of the strategic goals that together will lead to realization of the Vision is provided in Figure 3-2, followed by a detailed discussion of each goal and associated strategies, actions, and practices. Icons representing the Vision elements identify which elements are most applicable to each goal.

The goals and strategies directly inform the Department's decision making, operations, and short- and long-term actions and practices, including the Integrated Capital and Operations Plan and the 3-5 year Action Plan presented in chapters 4 and 5.

For the purposes of this Plan, the Department defines strategic goal, strategy, action, and practice as the following:

- **Strategic Goal:** An overarching aim or desired result.
- **Strategy:** A plan of action or policy designed to achieve an overarching aim.
- **Action:** A finite step, project, or process to achieve an aim (generally time-based).
- **Practice:** A repeated or ongoing performance of an activity, method, or convention (generally not time-based).

Figure 3-2 Strategic Goals

GOAL #1: Protect Natural Resources in the Context of the Greater Region

In cooperation with regional partners, take a systematic landscape-level approach to natural resource management and land acquisition, including working to ensure the viability of critical habitat linkages. Advance awareness of ecosystem services provided by protected landscapes, including providing clean water, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change.

GOAL #2: Meet the Needs of a Diverse Customer Base

Improve Departmental understanding of the preferences, desires, and needs of the County's diverse range of regional park and trail users, and utilize that understanding to provide more relevant communications, services, and facilities, and to increase community engagement.

GOAL #3: Manage the Parks System in a Fiscally Sustainable Manner

Improve Departmental efficiency, seek additional funding resources, and make informed and intentional investments in acquisitions, built infrastructure, and programs, to ensure the Department's ability to operate the system sustainably for generations to come.

GOAL #4: Balance the Role of Technology

Better leverage technology to enhance the visitor experience, expand educational and interpretive opportunities, increase communications, and streamline operations. Simultaneously, create balance by honoring the Department's traditional role of providing a place to escape the pressures of daily life, and offer opportunities to "unplug" for those that seek respite.

GOAL #5: Elevate the Role of Parks in Improving Human Health

Enhance the Department's contributions to human health through provision of regional recreational facilities, services, and programming that encourage physical activity and mental wellbeing.

GOAL #6: Provide Exceptionally Safe, Welcoming, and Well-Maintained Parks and Trails

Uphold an exemplary standard of service in protection and safety of the public, maintenance of facilities, provision of visitor services, park trail development, and delivery of recreational and interpretive features and programming.

GOAL #7: Prioritize Core Outdoor Recreational Uses

Throughout the system, prioritize facilities and services that support core regional park uses such as trail use, camping, picnicking, boating, and fishing. Concurrently accommodate specialty uses that demonstrate regional draw and long-term popularity, where appropriate.

GOAL #8: Demonstrate Leadership in Regional Trail Development and the Provision of Equitable Access

Lead advocacy for the build-out of the Countywide trails network with a primary focus on closing high-priority gaps and improving connectivity through underserved areas.
Advocate for public transit, bicycle, and other non-motorized or clean air vehicular access to parks in accordance with County Health Element HE-E.10 and 11.

GOAL #9: Conserve, Protect and Interpret Regionally Significant Historical and Cultural Resources

Conserve and protect regionally significant cultural and historic resources, and balance public access and interpretation with preservation and fiscal constraints.

Interconnected
and Inclusive



Resource
Stewardship



GOAL #1: Protect Natural Resources in the Context of the Greater Region

In cooperation with regional partners, take a systematic landscape-level approach to natural resource management and land acquisition, including working to ensure the viability of important habitat linkages. Advance awareness of ecosystem services provided by protected landscapes, including providing clean water, carbon sequestration, and resilience to climate change.

Areas of connected habitat are important to the ecological health and climate resiliency of the region. For County Parks, a cooperative management approach – working together with partners – is best for managing natural resources. This approach enables greater impact in improving ecosystem health, reducing the likelihood of catastrophic fires, improving water quality, and protecting wildlife connectivity. The ability to effectively plan and address these issues that transcend jurisdictional and geographic boundaries is a greater need than any one agency or organization can meet alone.

The impacts of climate change, and the public's awareness of the topic in general, are increasing as is a general understanding of the benefits that protected natural landscapes provide. Beyond climate resilience, the protected lands and trails managed by the Department bolster the health of the region in a variety of other ways; generally defined as the provision of ecosystem services. Some examples include contributions to clean water, clean air, carbon sequestration, and other environmental preservation goals. In short, the Department plays a vital role as a resource management agency.

Strategy 1.1: Leverage partner resources and maintain or expand complementary efforts to benefit natural resources. More actively participate in regional efforts to unify and prioritize natural resource management actions, and where appropriate, take a leadership role.

Actions

- Formalize the Partnership Program, including the establishment of a new policy, partner category definitions, agreement examples, etc.
- Define the strategic need(s) for, and support the formation of, multi-agency collaborative(s). Opportunities for collaboration include: standardizing best practices and management actions, leveraging management and acquisition resources, sharing information and data, and setting shared measurable goals and targets.

Practices

- Continue to collaborate with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency in implementing the Habitat Plan and managing the resulting reserve system. Leverage shared land acquisition strategies and management practices to achieve complementary goals of landscape linkage protection and enhanced visitor access to parkland.¹
- Continue to coordinate and collaborate with regional partners on site-level resource management efforts (e.g., prescribed fires, grazing management).
- Continue to acquire land and trail routes in accordance with the priorities, policy considerations, and criteria established in the Acquisition Plan.²



Strategy 1.2: Prioritize land acquisition, planning, and management according to scientific evidence and data about important habitat and connecting ecological systems, in balance with recreational access.

Practices

- Utilize internal and regional partner data to identify areas of critical linkages. Educate appropriate staff, public, and partners, including lessees and permittees, about best management practices for habitat protection and management.
- Work directly with others to protect priority habitat linkages through land acquisition, management actions, and/or advocacy within identified priority areas.



Strategy 1.3: Transition the Department's Natural Resource Management (NRM) practices to a greater focus on regional-level management, habitat enhancement, and restoration work, while collaboratively engaging the community and staff to achieve this goal.

Actions

- Create Department-wide NRM guidelines that identify a systematic approach to resource enhancement projects, including best management practices (BMP) and engagement of the community the Department serves.

Practices

- Monitor for "overburden" of natural areas due to public access. Periodically allow certain highly trafficked recreational amenities (e.g., popular campground sections, highly used trails, etc.) to recover as needed to allow soils, vegetation, and/or trees to recover from intensive use.
- Ensure that departmental practices minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plant species, protect water resources, and promote carbon and pollutant sequestration.

1 Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2013

2 County Parks Department Parkland Acquisition Plan Update 2012



Strategy 1.4: Continue to plan for and manage parkland according to the Department’s existing standards for environmental quality and adaptive management.

Actions

- Prepare and carry out approved NRM and Grazing Management Plans to better manage natural resources, including annual grasslands and serpentine habitats, oak woodlands, forests, and aquatic habitats. Plans should be consistent with the goals, objectives, and strategies of the Habitat Plan, and updated as necessary.³
- Develop, prioritize, and implement environmental remediation actions to address and protect parklands from further environmental degradation (e.g., toxic mitigation, dumps, and abandoned wells).

Practices

- Evaluate current and planned trails, infrastructure, and facilities to assess their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.

Strategy 1.5: Support County-wide efforts to address sustainability, greenhouse gas reduction, improved carbon sequestration, resilience to climate change, and other related themes. Lead by example on environmental issues such as protection of local watersheds and healthy soils.

Practices

- Ensure departmental alignment with the Silicon Valley 2.0 Project, and work with the Office of Sustainability to understand potential impacts on the natural environment and strategies to mitigate or adapt to anticipated changes.⁴
- Work with partner agencies and organizations to align strategies and objectives on a regional landscape-level.

Strategy 1.6: Improve interpretation and general communication about the Department’s work on environmental issues, including climate change and ecosystem services.

Actions

- Update the NRM program webpage and general communications about natural resource protection and management actions. Include actions that can be taken by the community, including citizen science and stewardship activities such as “bio blitzes.”

Practices

- Offer more programming and physical interpretive features related to natural resource protection and climate issues. Where possible, work with partner agencies, educators, volunteers, and local artists.

³ Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2013

⁴ Silicon Valley 2.0 Project: Climate Adaptation and Resiliency 2018

GOAL #2: Meet the Needs of a Diverse Customer Base

Improve departmental understanding of the preferences, desires, and needs of the County's diverse range of regional park and trail users, and utilize that understanding to provide more relevant communications, services, and facilities, and to increase community engagement.

The cultural and ethnic diversity of the County population is increasing, a significant percent of whom are foreign-born or have limited English language proficiency. The population overall is aging. Distribution of various sub-groups is not geographically equal. Cultural, economic, socio-economic, and language barriers limit some users from fully enjoying parks and programs. Information gathered during the needs assessment showed that academic studies exploring the disparate preferences of user groups are readily available, but additional research and analysis will be needed to identify specific implications for the Department.^{5,6}

Although the park system enjoys positive user response in general, a deeper understanding of the County's diverse population will better inform park improvement and development projects and help identify changes to existing facilities that would have the greatest impact in serving user groups.

Strategy 2.1: Increase departmental understanding of the preferences and needs of park customers through data collection, research, and partnerships with key community liaisons.

Actions

- Carry out a comprehensive study that examines the County's diverse population, user preferences and needs, and the implications for regional parks and trails.
- Create tools for staff to better collate and analyze data from multiple sources to inform decision making.
- Link a satisfaction and use survey to the Department's reservations system to capture information from current park users and improve the Department's understanding of customer use patterns and preferences.

Practices

- Continue to perform routine study of public opinion and needs through surveys, focus groups, and other methods on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- Work with partners who are focused on equity-related issues, such as those that advocate on behalf of underserved communities, to ensure they are included in park planning efforts.

5 United States Census Bureau 2010

6 United States Census Bureau 2015



Interconnected and Inclusive



Enriched Visitor Experience



Human Health



Strategy 2.2: Improve communications, services, and facilities to better serve the County's diverse population, in alignment with County Health Element policy HE-E.16.⁷

Actions

- Update the Department's public website, signage, email notifications, social media sites, and mobile services to better address the needs of a diverse audience.
- Implement Department-wide cultural competency training to inform and improve both internal and external customer service.

Practices

- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns while also protecting resources. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.
- Offer departmental and park-specific communications in multiple languages, mediums, and formats.
- Offer more multi-lingual interpretive and recreation programming opportunities.

Strategy 2.3: Seek to recruit staff that reflect the diversity of County residents.

Practices

- Increase advertisement of available positions in culturally-specific publications and share with various culturally-based community groups. Attend career fairs targeted at diverse audiences. Coordinate with high schools, trade schools, and colleges within the County.
- Foster educational opportunities, including internship programs, that reach individuals in all communities and encourage an interest in science, park and natural resource planning and management, and other park-related studies.

Strategy 2.4: Improve accessibility for residents of all ages and abilities.

Actions

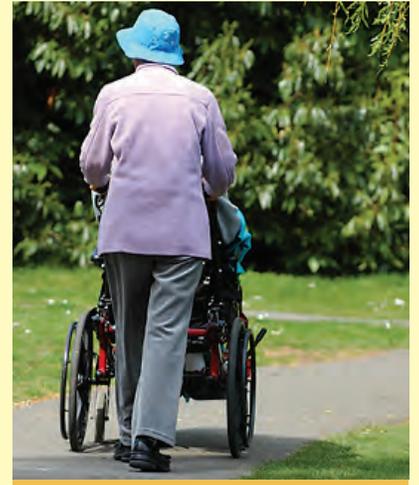
- Plan and implement the recommendations of the Department-wide accessibility plan to better serve all customers.
- Offer an event planning guide, for both public and internal use, that describes how to enhance accessibility.
- Make trail assessments and descriptions publicly available, so that users can easily understand trail level of difficulty and plan their visit accordingly.

⁷ Santa Clara County General Plan: County Health Element 2015



Practices

- Increase the number of “easy” loop trails available near staging areas, including some that are fully accessible. Promote use of these trails to target users.
- Assure that all Department communication materials (print and web formats) reflect accessibility guidelines for the visually impaired.
- Continue to apply trail layout, design, and construction standards that meet accessibility guidelines.





GOAL #3: Manage the Park System in a Fiscally Sustainable Manner

Improve departmental efficiency, seek additional funding resources, and make informed and intentional investments in acquisitions, built infrastructure, and programs to ensure the sustainable operation of the system for generations to come.

The Park Charter Fund provides a relatively stable source of funding for the County Parks Department. Over time the allocation of funds has shifted away from acquisition and towards development and rehabilitation of existing park amenities and infrastructure. Despite this relatively stable funding mechanism, the Department's new comprehensive financial forecasting model, known as the Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP) (see Chapter 4 for more information) has identified more than a \$150 million gap in funding for capital projects and operations over the next ten years.

Given these fiscal realities, the Department is faced with difficult decisions between three major project categories: sustaining and rehabilitating aging infrastructure (sustain), updating or enhancing existing visitor amenities (enhance), and opening new parklands not yet accessible to the public (expand).

The age of the County park system, and the importance of maintaining facilities in order to avoid loss of their use, makes it conceivable that all available funding could be spent on maintenance. However, given identified outdoor recreation needs and the Countywide vision for fiscal sustainability, the Department proposes to prioritize maintenance and rehabilitation of existing park facilities while also constructing a limited number of new features. At the same time, the Department would seek to open parklands that have not previously been accessible to the public, prioritizing only those that can be operated economically over time. This would occur within the projected Department budget, through partnerships, and through other funding methods such as grants, donations, or sponsorships. As additional funding sources are identified, the Department will revisit this approach in coming budget cycles and updates to the Strategic Action Plan.

Strategy 3.1: Prioritize sustaining existing park facilities and structures, particularly utility infrastructure such as water systems, septic systems, roads, etc., before making large expenditures on new facilities. Long-term maintenance and replacement planning should identify a lifecycle for each asset, be focused on planned, preventative maintenance rather than reactive, and use financial projections to guide project scope, schedule, and budget decisions.

Actions

- Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic, and comprehensive utility infrastructure maintenance and replacement plan.

- Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic, and comprehensive **facility** infrastructure maintenance and replacement plan.
- Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic, and comprehensive **equipment** replacement plan.

Strategy 3.2: Improve project scoping, early planning, programming, and consideration of acquisition, operational, and maintenance costs and impacts to better inform prioritization and decision making. Generally, work to improve cost-recovery Department-wide.

Actions

- Create a Department-specific cost-estimating handbook to improve project scoping and in turn to improve overall fiscal planning.

Practices

- Enhance capital improvement planning by adding operational programming and maintenance cost considerations in the Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP).



Strategy 3.3: Leverage staff talent and partner resources to improve efficiency and enhance service delivery.

Actions

- Create a comprehensive internal training program that supports Department staff in professional career- and job-related development.

Practices

- On an ad-hoc basis, work with partners to better leverage data, staff efforts, information, and communication channels for greater efficiency.
- Increase the use of volunteers to supplement the work of staff.
- Enhance collaboration with existing and new land use and program partners (licensees, lessees, and others providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.



Strategy 3.4: Enhance revenues and cost recovery ratios.

Actions

- Create a financial model for each park and subsequently for each program area, including evaluation of current and target cost recovery ratios.
- Adjust fees and expand differential pricing within market constraints to meet cost recovery targets.
- Work with the Board of Supervisors to consider bringing a measure to supplement Parks funding to the voters.

Enriched Visitor Experience



Human Health



GOAL #4: Balance the Role of Technology

Better leverage technology to enhance the visitor experience, expand educational and interpretive opportunities, increase communications, and streamline operations. Simultaneously, create balance by honoring the Department's traditional role of providing a place to escape the pressures of daily life and offer opportunities to "unplug" for those that seek respite.

Technology is pervasive in society today and that reality is unlikely to change in coming decades. It has become commonplace to use technology to learn and interact with the world, including within County parks and the Department at large. In the form of applications, general connectivity, smartphones, and other smart devices, technology can improve the Department's operational and communications efficiency. Connectivity (Wi-Fi and cellular signal) is increasingly expected by park users to provide access to the internet and social media, and access to web- or app-based information while in a park can provide visitors with the power to self-educate, self-guide, and self-assist. Improved technology also has the potential to advance regional safety and emergency response times.

However, County parks have traditionally been a place to escape from the fast pace of life in Silicon Valley. While the ability to remain connected is valued by many of today's park visitors, technology must not overwhelm the parks or overshadow the natural environment that facilitates much of the regional park experience.

Strategy 4.1: Enhance network connectivity throughout the system.

Action

- Complete network upgrades to provide high speed data connectivity to park facilities and add Wi-Fi to key park sites such as visitor centers, park offices, kiosks, drop-off and pick-up areas (to facilitate using rideshare services), campgrounds, and high-use core park areas. Publicize or otherwise clearly sign areas where Wi-Fi is available.

Strategy 4.2: Leverage technology to facilitate the connection between park visitors and resources, and to generally advance communication, interpretation, education, awareness, and the safety of the public.

Actions

- Complete the transition to enterprise GIS to allow the Department to share data more directly and easily with both internal and external stakeholders, including both partner agencies and the public.



Practices

- Invent or leverage existing apps or other technology-based tools to improve park and trail wayfinding, share natural and cultural resource information, and encourage “citizen science” and other forms of interactive engagement with the public (such as reporting maintenance needs and other tracking and reporting).
- Expand coordination with partners on app-, web-, and social media-based messaging and communication.
- Use social media, especially those with translation capabilities, to provide information, particularly regarding programs, management practices, etc. to diverse populations.

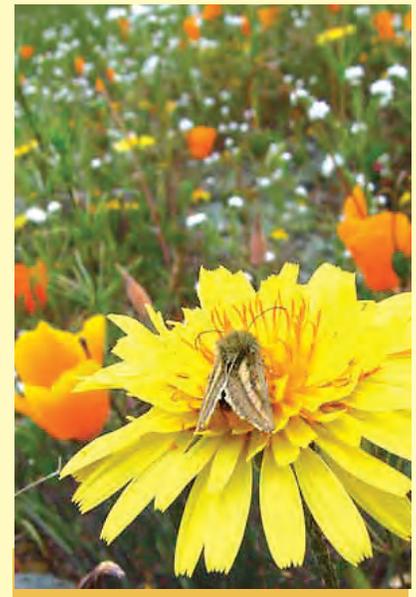
Strategy 4.3: Utilize technology to streamline internal processes, including those related to customer service, project planning, and delivery.

Actions

- Create tools for staff to better collate and analyze data from multiple sources to inform decision making.
- Carry out the departmental transition from server-based electronic file storage to cloud-based.

Practices

- Acquire and utilize appropriate software products to better track, organize, coordinate, and manage departmental projects and efforts.
- Utilize software systems and other contemporary technological solutions to gather data and inform staff allocation.



Enriched Visitor Experience



Resource Stewardship



Human Health



"Spending time outdoors at once heals and enlightens the body, the mind and the spirit. Experiencing parks and the nature they preserve is an essential prescription for personal and community health. Parks make lives better."

*- Dr. Sara Cody,
County Health Officer*

GOAL #5: Elevate the Role of Parks in Improving Human Health

Enhance the Department's contributions to human health through provision of regional recreational facilities, services, and programs that encourage physical activity and mental well-being.

The Department's regional recreational facilities are a major contributor to improved human health in Santa Clara County. Many publications, including the County's own Health Element of the General Plan highlight the importance of physical activity and time in the outdoors as beneficial to overall health and a sense of well-being. Researchers find that physical activity reduces the risk of disease, depression, Type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart attack, and other common medical conditions, and helps control weight and increase bone density. With increasing rates of sedentary jobs and growing commutes, access to outdoor spaces to exercise is even more important now than in the past. In coming years, the Department will work to ensure that internal efforts are in close alignment with County General Plan policies, and that partnerships that fulfill this goal are strengthened.

Strategy 5.1: Better prioritize, document, articulate, and emphasize the connection between parks and human health, and work with partners around this topic.

Practices

- Build and expand upon existing departmental efforts to collaborate and coordinate with the County Health Department, healthcare providers, and local, state, and federal health agencies, so that resources might be better shared and communication about parks, trails, and human health expanded.
- Increase the number of exercise-related programs and facilities offered by the Department in alignment with County Health Policy HE-E.6.⁸

⁸ Santa Clara County General Plan: County Health Element 2015

GOAL #6: Provide Exceptionally Safe, Welcoming, and Well-Maintained Parks and Park Trails

Uphold an exemplary standard of service in protection and safety of the public, maintenance of facilities, provision of visitor services, park trail development, and delivery of recreational and interpretive features and programming.

The Department has a proud history of being an organization that stresses serving its public; a sentiment that continues today and that will echo into the years to come. The primary purpose of this goal is to elevate the pursuit of true excellence in public service and provide a quality visitor experience. All Department staff play a crucial role in bringing this goal to fruition. Staff roles include but are not limited to: uniformed front-line rangers who strengthen the visitor perception of a safe and welcoming environment; skilled maintenance staff who repair, enhance, and renew picnic pavilions, parking lots, buildings, and other structures; knowledgeable interpreters who offer friendly and innovative educational programs; and planners who engage the public in envisioning the future of individual parks and trails. In the next decade, the Department will uphold this high standard of service by emphasizing data-driven decision making, staff access to continuing education and training, and innovations that facilitate customer service and the regional park experience.

Strategy 6.1: Provide exceptional customer experiences by maintaining a safe environment as well as rapidly and professionally responding to emergencies and crime.

Actions

- Execute regular updates of the Park Ranger Field Training Manual.
- Deliver educational programs that provide information about how to use parks safely and how to best access and utilize services provided by the Department (e.g., *Basics of Boating Safety and Preparing for a Safe Hike*).

Practices

- Use data and analytical tools to make informed, proactive decisions addressing safety and emergency response.
- Continue to maintain staff proficiencies in Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Unarmed Defensive Techniques (UDT), Automatic External Defibrillation (AED), First Response (including CPR), Wildland Firefighting, Boating Accident Investigation, Boating Under the Influence, Crisis Intervention, etc.
- Continue to provide and maintain emergency response equipment, including mobile radios/phones, laptops, patrol boats, AEDs, off road motorcycles/vehicles, trail bikes, patrol vehicles, fire pumper units, and other miscellaneous items.



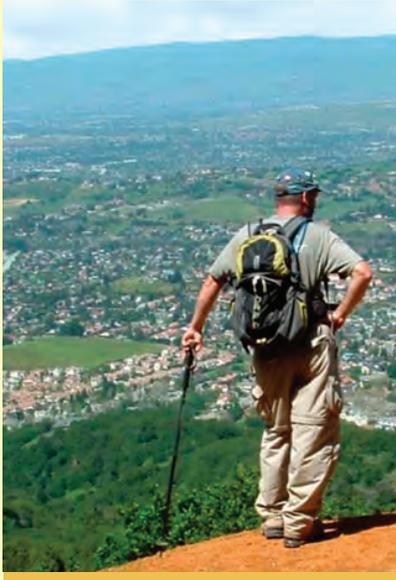
Enriched Visitor Experience



Human Health



Operational Excellence



Strategy 6.2: Provide exceptional trail experiences by proactively designing, reconstructing, improving, and building new park trails that seek to highlight the user's interaction with the landscape and that accommodate many user types.

Actions

- Develop a Department-wide roads and trails best practices resource list focused on minimizing recreational impacts to natural landscapes and habitat linkages. Include a trail construction strategy that seeks to improve safety and enhance all visitor experiences on multi-use trails.
- Implement existing trail master plans and produce new trail plans for lands that have been acquired by the Department but have no existing public access (e.g., Sulphur Springs Ranch property at Grant County Park, Coyote Highlands / Coyote Canyon properties).

Practices

- Increase development of new multi-use trails and reconstruction of existing trails to better accommodate all users.
- Periodically, evaluate trails for universal access (UTAP) and high efficiency access (HETAP) in order to provide information about trail conditions to users and potential users, and to maintain compliance with accessibility laws and standards.
- Increase the number of "easy" or fully accessible loop trails available near staging areas. Promote use of these trails to target users.
- Increase the use of Trail Watch volunteers to monitor trails and report on trail conditions and utilize that information to provide information to park visitors.

Strategy 6.3: Provide exceptional visitor experiences by encouraging a culture of excellent customer service and offering innovative and engaging visitor services and interpretive programming.

Actions

- Update the 2002 Interpretation and Recreation Services Guidelines to better reflect the Strategic Plan Vision and ensure that best practices and programming reflect the Vision's elements.
- Refresh existing and design new visitor centers and kiosks that provide hands-on, onsite educational opportunities to park visitors.
- Utilize data and other industry information to create a strategic approach to engaging the public and encouraging park visitation. Incorporate both traditional and innovative non-traditional methods (e.g., arts-related programs, park-specific special events, and 'tabling' at events led by others).



Practices

- Expand and enhance interpretive activities in the parks through engagement and coordination with volunteers and various community partners (libraries, schools, etc.).
- Continue to provide customer service training to all staff and volunteers that interact with the visiting public.
- Maintain staff certification(s) from professional education and interpretation organizations, including the National Association for Interpretation and the National Recreation and Park Association.

Strategy 6.4: To enhance both customer service and experience, prioritize the improvement of existing park resources and features that are already well-loved and well-used as well as those that fill a need or gap.

Actions

- Create Department-wide guidelines for maintenance of developed landscapes to include: strategies for assessing landscaped areas within parks; identification of enhancement opportunities; increased planting of site-appropriate and drought-tolerant species; improved maintenance of trees, shrubs, and other vegetation; and sustainable turf management and reduction.
- Update the Department-wide sign manual and implement guidelines to improve wayfinding, information, and the overall park user experience.

Practices

- Continue to measure and monitor park usage through the use of trail and vehicle counters.
- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess how they serve visitor needs and use patterns while also protecting resources.
- Enhance collaboration with partners (licensees, lessees, other agencies providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.



Strategy 6.5: Continue to carry out major planning and implementation projects to meet public need and protect resources in contemporary and relevant ways.

Actions

- Improve the transition planning process for management of newly acquired properties to address operations, access, and basic facility and natural resource documentation. Information collected within these plans should be used to inform other future planning processes for the property.

Practices

- Plan and implement major park and trail projects as outlined in the ICOP (see page 66 & 67).
- In the execution of all departmental planning processes, ensure: consideration of regional connectivity, needs, and capacities; alignment with design, construction, resource protection, programming, and operational needs; consideration of long-term physical and fiscal sustainability; and the ability to implement recommendations or designs within a reasonable timeframe.
- Conduct planning processes that proactively engage the public and stakeholders but are streamlined and result in timely decision making and delivery of planned recommendations.

GOAL #7: Prioritize Core Outdoor Recreational Uses

Throughout the system, prioritize facilities and services that support core regional park uses such as trail use, camping, picnicking, boating, and fishing. Concurrently accommodate specialty uses that demonstrate regional draw and long-term popularity, where appropriate.

Traditional or core park uses are important because they reflect the majority of use in regional parks. Most people who visit a County park are there to hike, bike, jog, picnic, camp, be near water, or simply to enjoy the natural setting. Other specialty uses, however, should also be appropriately accommodated. Some prime examples include: off-leash dog walking; off-highway vehicle use; skeet, trap, and target shooting; and hang gliding. Given the fiscal realities of the Department's future as outlined in Goal 3, difficult decisions must be made about the allocation of funding when it comes to the limited number of new facilities that can be developed. While core uses will continue to be given priority, specialty uses that have proven consistent, long-term popularity, and that draw a regional audience, will also be a focus for the Department in coming years.

The ways in which traditional park facilities are used, particularly campgrounds and picnic areas, are also changing. Examples related to camping include: family group camping where small groups of campers desire to have their own tent or trailer site, but also to be near each other and gather in a central space for meals and socializing; or self-organizing "mini-groups" who wish to use multiple contiguous campsites for the same time period.

Strategy 7.1: Accommodate the growing trend of social and group uses, particularly in camping, picnicking, programming, and organized events.

Actions

- Improve information and reservation resources related to group use of park amenities with the intent of better dispersing customers to locations that are most appropriate for the desired group use or experience.
- Create a Department-wide strategy including ways to expand outreach in planning efforts and for adapting, adding, and expanding existing facilities to serve contemporary trends of group use.

Strategy 7.2: Provide specialty amenities to accommodate activities that have proven to have long-term popularity and that are, to the extent possible, fiscally sustainable.



Enriched Visitor Experience



Actions

- As needed to more systematically respond to requests to expand recreational uses such as off-leash dog play and mountain biking, carry out County-wide feasibility studies to: identify appropriate locations and distribution of facilities; consider fiscal sustainability of the specific use; and identify a systematic implementation and development plan, including the operation, maintenance, and opening of these amenities.
- With the intent of better assessing potential concession and/or partnership opportunities, issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to solicit proposals from outside organizations and agencies interested in providing services for specialty uses.

Practices

- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns while also protecting resources. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.
- Enhance collaboration with existing and new land use and program partners (licensees, lessees, and others providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.

GOAL #8: Demonstrate Leadership in Regional Trail Development and the Provision of Equitable Access

- a) Lead advocacy for the build-out of the Countywide trails network with a primary focus on closing high-priority gaps and improving connectivity through underserved areas.*
- b) Advocate for public transit, bicycle, and other non-motorized or clean air vehicular access to parks in accordance with County Health Element HE-E.10 and 11.⁹*

This goal emphasizes the role of the Department in advancing regional trails and equitable connections to County parks. The Department, in its oversight of the Countywide Trails Master Plan, should work with partner agencies to understand and overcome barriers to completing the build-out of the regional trail network. Regional trails often serve as linear urban green space and as linkages for wildlife. Additionally, while there is currently a lack of public transit access to County parks, as the population grows it will be important to find additional ways for people in urban areas to reach County parks without driving a car. Increased accessibility via transit can offer affordable transportation for lower income families, new immigrants, older adults, and youth.

Strategy 8.1: Improve partner relationships; particularly in the areas of planning and acquiring key corridors; with cities, private sector entities, and others with interest in the regional trails network in alignment with County Health Element HE-E.10 and HE-E.11 Transit Access.

Actions

- Carry out the Countywide Trails planning and implementation strategy including meeting regularly with key partners (public and private agencies) and potentially establishing an annual trails summit.

Practices

- Internally and with partners, share the Department's system for identifying trail gap closure priorities.
- Ensure that in setting gap closure priorities, key employment centers and other regional destinations are considered, and that the Department engages the community in identifying primary barriers to entry and potential solutions.
- Participate more actively in the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) decision making processes and establish a regular working meeting to coordinate efforts around public transit access to parks and trails.

⁹ Santa Clara County General Plan: County Health Element 2015



Interconnected and Inclusive



Human Health



Strategy 8.2: Prioritize equitable access in park and trail master planning.

Actions

- Address equitable access at the park level through various planning and implementation processes.

Practices

- Work with equity focused partners to ensure they are included in park planning efforts.
- Look for opportunities to add shuttle stops and/or rideshare pick-up and drop-off areas and staging areas for alternative methods of transportation in master plans and site plans.

Strategy 8.3: Proactively facilitate new programs that help visitors get to parks while minimizing the number of individual vehicle trips.

Actions

- Develop an alternative transportation access plan, potentially including bus shuttles, enhanced bicycle access, bike share, ride share, etc. Explore grant funding and potential partnerships with appropriate non-profit organizations, public entities, and private companies.

GOAL #9: Conserve, Protect, and Interpret Regionally Significant Historic and Cultural Resources

Conserve and protect regionally significant cultural and historic resources, and balance public access and interpretation with preservation and fiscal constraints.

Learning about and valuing the history and culture of the County is facilitated by visiting regionally significant cultural and historic sites found within County parks. One role of the Department is to preserve these historic features and provide opportunities for County residents and visitors to make meaningful connections to that history. Preservation and interpretation of historic and cultural sites is one of the most resource-intensive tasks of County Parks. The Department would be well served to highlight the definition of 'significant' in this context, and to prioritize protection and management of those resources in coordination with the County Planning Office and Historical Heritage Commission, which oversee the County's Heritage Resource Inventory (the local registry).

Strategy 9.1: Ensure the Department is consistent in collaboratively implementing cultural and historic resource protection.

Practices

- Heighten staff awareness of the importance of historic and cultural resource protection, in part through the update of the Interpretation and Recreation Services Guidelines.
- Expand the Department's system for documenting historic and cultural resources (e.g., GIS layers, park maps, collections, inventory at park visitor centers).
- Continue to design exhibits, programs, and media that feature significant historic and cultural resources (e.g., school programs, history tours, interpretive exhibits, print and web media, etc.).

Strategy 9.2: Protect and interpret historic and cultural resources in an efficient manner.

Actions

- Develop a systematic approach to providing site security and maintaining defensible space around historic resources.

Practices

- Improve coordination, communication, and information sharing with partner agencies with similar or shared goals around historic and cultural resources to best leverage resources and maintain/expand complementary efforts.
- Coordinate historic/cultural resource protection projects with



Enriched Visitor Experience



Resource Stewardship



Operational Excellence



natural resource projects to improve efficiency.

- Develop efficient means of contracting routine maintenance work; consider partnering with trade apprentice and trade union training programs and local schools.

Strategy 9.3: Protect and interpret significant County historic and cultural sites and resources.

Actions

- Ensure protection and interpretive programming are integrated within planning processes, where historic or cultural resources reside within a park unit (e.g., Martial Cottle Park, Joseph D. Grant historic building complex, Santa Teresa Bernal Ranch, historic and cultural features at Sanborn County Park).

E. Priority Setting

Updated criteria for prioritizing projects during review of the Department's overall work plan and budget process will further help to ensure that the Vision, Vision elements, and goals are realized. Based on the process to develop this Strategic Plan, the updated prioritization criteria are organized into six categories: need/urgency, project status, visitor experience, stewardship, fiscal sustainability, and operational benefit. In addition to the prioritization criteria, projects are considered by the Department with attention to balanced distribution in relation to geography, focus area, and whether the project would sustain, enhance, or expand resources. The updated priority setting criteria are below. More information about the full project ranking, prioritization, and sorting process can be found in Chapter 4.

Need / Urgency

- **Health and Safety Need:** Vital for the protection of the public or park employees (for example, removal of dead or diseased trees).
- **Existing or New Regulation:** Mandatory for meeting current or pending regulatory requirements (for example, rerouting an old trail that is now within endangered species habitat).
- **Natural Event Response:** Response to a natural event or disaster (for example, road or trail repairs due to flooding or a landslide).
- **Loss of Use / Need for Timely Action:** Prevents an existing park, facility, or amenity from deteriorating to the point of non-use or closure; prevents negative impact to other related projects or facilities.

Project Status

- **Staffing Adequate / Planned:** Personnel are in place to execute the project work, including operation and maintenance of the facility, where applicable.
- **Project Groundwork Complete:** Has complete planning, design, environmental review documentation, permits, or other prerequisites already fulfilled.
- **Project Closure / In Process:** Is part of a greater scope or is critically linked to another project that has existing funding and is underway.
- **Time on List:** Has been reviewed as part of process more than three (3) times previously.





Visitor Experience (Public Benefit)

- **Access / Emerald Web:** Opens or plans for opening property to public access, improves a trail and/or transportation linkage, or is a targeted acquisition that: closes a key gap between parks or trails, expands a park boundary, improves access from urban core areas, or provides a new access point.
- **Quality Facilities, Amenities, and Services:** Improves or enhances visitor experience and enjoyment and seeks a new level of excellence than previously provided.
- **Relevant Facility, Program, or Need:** Fulfills visitor need either by supporting a core use or a specialty use that has proven regional draw and long-term popularity (for example, yurts, fly-casting ponds, off highway vehicle (OHV) opportunity, remote control (RC) aircraft, etc.).
- **Technology / Connectivity:** Enhances or expands access or use of technology and adapts to changing connectivity habits (for example, providing free Wi-Fi in parks and visitor centers).
- **Human Health Benefits:** Contributes to the physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of park visitors and the greater community.

Stewardship (Environmental/Cultural Benefit)

- **Expand Emerald Web / Wildlife Corridors:** Increases land area or otherwise adds to the protection of a key ecosystem or natural habitat or provides linkages for movement of wildlife.
- **Protects Natural / Ecological Resources:** Protects, preserves, or conserves natural, ecological, and/or scenic resources.
- **Enhances Natural / Ecological Resources:** Restores or improves natural, ecological, and/or scenic resources.
- **Protects Cultural / Historic Resources:** Protects, preserves, or conserves culturally and/or historically significant resources.
- **Enhances Cultural / Historic Resources:** Restores or improves culturally or historically significant resources.

Fiscal Sustainability

- **Partnership Existing or Potential:** Potentially or inherently leverages financial and human capital of private organizations, other government agencies, or local community and volunteer groups.
- **Revenue Generation:** Provides net income, maximizes revenues, and increases cost recovery.
- **Prevents Financial Loss:** Prevents or avoids a loss of funding, forfeiture of grants, or becoming ineligible for future funding (for example, project is part of a grant timeline).
- **Grant Potential:** High likelihood to benefit from known grant funding sources.
- **Smart Financial Decision:** Realizes a high gain with minimal input.

Operational Benefit

- **Operational Sustainability:** Takes into account and does not overcommit current staffing capacity and other operational resources.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Streamlines or increases the effectiveness of operational processes, procedures, facilities, or systems.
- **Innovation:** Utilizes new, modern, or forward-thinking technology, concepts, or solutions.
- **Employee Engagement / Support:** Fosters and encourages employee participation, communication, and interaction; aids staff in their ability to execute day-to-day tasks.



Heron Trail
Joseph D. Grant County Park

Fiscal Planning for a Sustainable Future

A. Financial Foundation of the System

Santa Clara County first began purchasing parkland for the protection of natural resources and the enjoyment of the public in the 1920's. Portions of what are now Stevens Creek County Park and Mount Madonna County Park were the first Santa Clara County parklands, but the Department of Parks and Recreation was not established until 1956. At that time, the Vision for the Department was to manage the existing parks and to expand the County's park network. In the early 1960s, a vision for a "necklace of parks" was put into place to guide expansion. Guided by this vision, the Department focused on purchasing new land and expanding the regional parks and trails network, particularly along the hillsides that frame the valley, and along the creeks that pass through the valley floor in the County's urban areas. These efforts were accelerated by Santa Clara County voters when they approved the 1972 Park Charter Fund amendment, providing a relatively stable funding source for expanding and improving the park system.¹

Park Charter Fund – allocations and changes over time

The Park Charter Fund is a provision in the County's Charter that sets aside a portion of property tax revenue exclusively for County Park purposes. The Park Charter allocates percentages of the overall fund toward different goals of the Department. Typically, those percentages have been broken up between three major categories: acquisition, capital improvement, and "unrestricted" use, which today primarily supports ongoing operations.

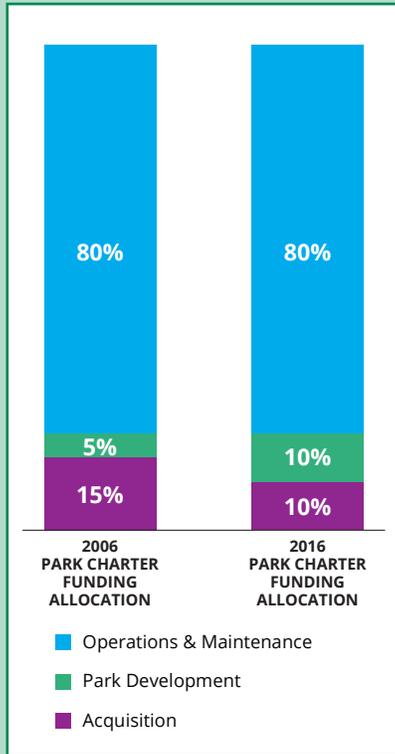
At its inception, the Park Charter Fund was established at 10 cents per \$100 of assessed value and set aside a larger percentage of revenue for land acquisition in keeping with the vision of the "necklace of parks" concept and the need for expansion. Renewed seven times since that first approval, however, the allocation of funding has shifted over time. Early changes to the allocation model moved financial resources

¹ Charter of the County of Santa Clara 1972



4

Figure 4-1 Park Charter Allocation Funding



toward development and enhancement of the growing system, while more recently the focus has shifted to the upkeep of an aging system, as illustrated in Figure 4-1.

In 2016, with over 78% voting in favor, the most recent renewal sets aside 1.5 cents per \$100 of assessed value and dedicates 10% for acquisition, 10% for capital improvements, and 80% is unrestricted. The goals in making these latest changes were to better address the maintenance needs of the now 60+ year-old park system, to slow the pace of acquiring additional land, and to account for increasing operating costs.

Despite the modest increase and change in allocation of the 2016 Park Charter authorization, work carried out during development of this Strategic Plan showed that the resources of the Park Charter Fund are not sufficient to develop, maintain, and operate the 52,000-acre regional park system over the long term. Thus, this Strategic Plan’s recommendations are based on tough decisions that prioritize the limited resources. Further discussion of how this Strategic Plan sought to understand and address the challenge of funding County Parks in the long term is outlined in Section B of this chapter.

An Aging System

In 1927, the County acquired the land that today comprises Mount Madonna County Park. In the years that immediately followed, facilities to support public access were constructed, including roads, parking lots, buildings, and utility systems, including water and electric. Today, more than 80 years since some of those amenities were first developed, the need for renovation, rehabilitation, and in some cases complete replacement, is urgent. Similar challenges exist across the system, especially at the Department’s oldest parks. For example, challenges seen in the aged water system at Mount Madonna are mirrored in the systems at Joseph D. Grant, Sanborn, and other county parks. The need to renovate these strained visitor amenities and infrastructure is at its highest point in the system’s history.

Reduced Need for Land Acquisition

Since the Park Charter Fund’s establishment, an increasing number of public and private organizations have contributed to park and open space land preservation in the Bay Area, making County Parks’ original emphasis on acquisition less pressing. In 1993, for example, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority was created to preserve open space and agricultural and natural resources on the east side of the County, and it currently owns approximately 22,000 acres. Henry Coe State Park, established in 1959 by the State of California, today encompasses over 87,000 acres. The Nature Conservancy, a national land conservation nonprofit with a strong local component, holds easements over more than 29,000 acres in Santa Clara County. Additionally, the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan is on track to add 50,000 acres of easement-protected lands by 2030.² With more regional partners available for collaboration on acquisition and preservation of open space land

² Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2013

than ever before, County Parks can focus more of its efforts toward sustaining existing park facilities and adapting them to respond to current needs of the County's diverse and growing population.

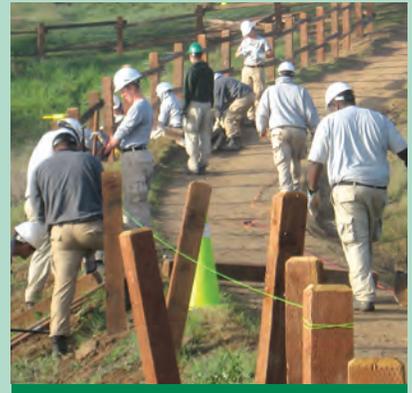
The Park Charter Fund currently allocates 10% of its revenues for acquisition. These funds will enable the Department to continue to make key acquisitions as in the example of the Coyote Highlands – Coyote Canyon property purchase in 2016 which was one of the increasingly rare opportunities to acquire large parcels in the County. This particular acquisition created a logical tie between Anderson Lake and Coyote Lake – Harvey Bear Ranch county parks and regional connections to Henry Coe State Park (owned by California State Parks) and Pallasou Ridge (owned by Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority); creating a protected landscape of over 100,000 acres.

Rising Capital Costs

Over the years, capital costs were often considered in isolation from other costs to the Department. Estimates were rough, and at the master planning level it was difficult to predict future growth in time and material costs. Historically, the facilities approved in park master plans, while admirable and exciting to accomplish, have exceeded the financing that is readily available through the Park Charter Fund in any given year. In some cases, grant funding or other partnership funding has been used for key projects to complement County funding. However, most of the time, the need for park infrastructure enhancements and new facilities have been addressed by simply deferring projects into the future.

Growing Operational Costs

Typically, the County Parks budget operates as a stand-alone fund, living within the means of the Park Charter Fund and revenues from operations and leases. This creates a relatively stable fiscal environment. However, historically, the property tax revenues that feed the Park Charter Fund have grown at an average rate of about 5% per year, while the cost of salaries, benefits, materials, and supplies have risen at an average annual rate of approximately 4%. This accelerating cost of operations means that the Department must take a very conservative approach to managing its annual budget and maintaining a “cushion” between operating costs and available revenues. This “cushion” provides a hedge in times of economic downturn and offers a source of funds that can, when necessary, be used as one-time funding toward unforeseen capital projects and equipment. The fiscal year 2018 budget reserves \$2.5 million of operating budget capacity to support the future growth of the park system.





B. Responding to the Needs

As described in Section A, the current Park Charter Fund allocates funding resources towards facility improvement projects, sustaining the system, and operations and maintenance more than previous iterations. This allocation is appropriate, given estimates that over the next 15 years Santa Clara County will add 300,000 more people, equivalent in population to two Sunnyvales.³ These new County residents will be living in increasingly dense communities and will need ready access to parks, recreation, and open space. The 2003 Strategic Plan reflected a similar change in the context in which the Department worked. It helped to refine the role and purpose of the Department, bringing new emphasis to maintenance and enhancement of existing parks, and broadening the Vision of an emerald necklace to that of a “web” that would extend and connect even more extensively into the valley floor via an expanded regional trails network. County Parks must continue to expand on the tenets brought forward in that Plan, and work to address the coming demand revealed during this 2018 Plan’s development.

Today, the Santa Clara County park system is comprised of 28 parks covering 52,200 acres of land including redwood forests, lakes, oak woodlands, rangelands, and parks like Vasona, Hellyer, and Martial Cottle county parks located in urban areas. According to findings from this Strategic Plan’s needs assessment, Santa Clara County is defined by a rapidly growing diverse, aging, and urbanizing population that highly values parks and open space. This 2018 Strategic Plan further defines the role of County Parks as a parks department of the 21st Century. The goals, strategies, and actions recommend that the Department ensures that existing infrastructure is safe, park access is equitable, and that investments are focused on serving the diverse needs of residents today and into the future. They also highlight the need for the Department to continue facilitation of the Countywide Trails Master Plan Update, partnering with others in managing natural resources at the regional landscape-level, and increasing the Department’s focus on responding to climate change.

³ United States Census Bureau 2015



C. Developing A New Model

Although the Department has long maintained a five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), in practice the capital budget was considered primarily in the context of the upcoming fiscal year without addressing anticipated impacts to the operating budget. An example that illustrates this issue well arose when, in 2012, the Department began construction of Martial Cottle Park, the first major new park in decades. At the time, there was no operational estimate tied to the project in the CIP, and as a result operating funds were not available to support the fifteen new staff positions the Master Plan identified as necessary. The recovery of the real estate market, and the associated increase in assessed property values were eventually sufficient to provide minimum staffing for maintenance and operation of Martial Cottle Park. However, it was evident that a new approach to long-term financial forecasting and planning was needed to avoid future scenarios where capital projects might overwhelm operating capacity. The result is a ten-year financial plan that integrates capital with operating forecasts, termed the Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP).

Improving Cost Projections

The ICOP, as it currently stands, is a result of a development process that began with reviewing and combining existing County Parks CIP and project lists into a single united list. Project titles were clarified, and project information and cost projections made more detailed and brought up to date. Projections were expanded to include operational and staffing costs. In addition, more logical project groupings were created as outlined below.

Logical Project Groupings

Within the ICOP, clear project categories are presented that include:

- **Capital Programs:** reoccurring investments over time that help enhance and sustain the system (e.g., Paving Management);
- **Planning and Implementation Projects:** various planning and development efforts at a single park (e.g., Mount Madonna Planning and Implementation); and
- **Stand-alone Projects:** “one-time” projects to address a single need or issue (e.g., Dyer House Renovation).

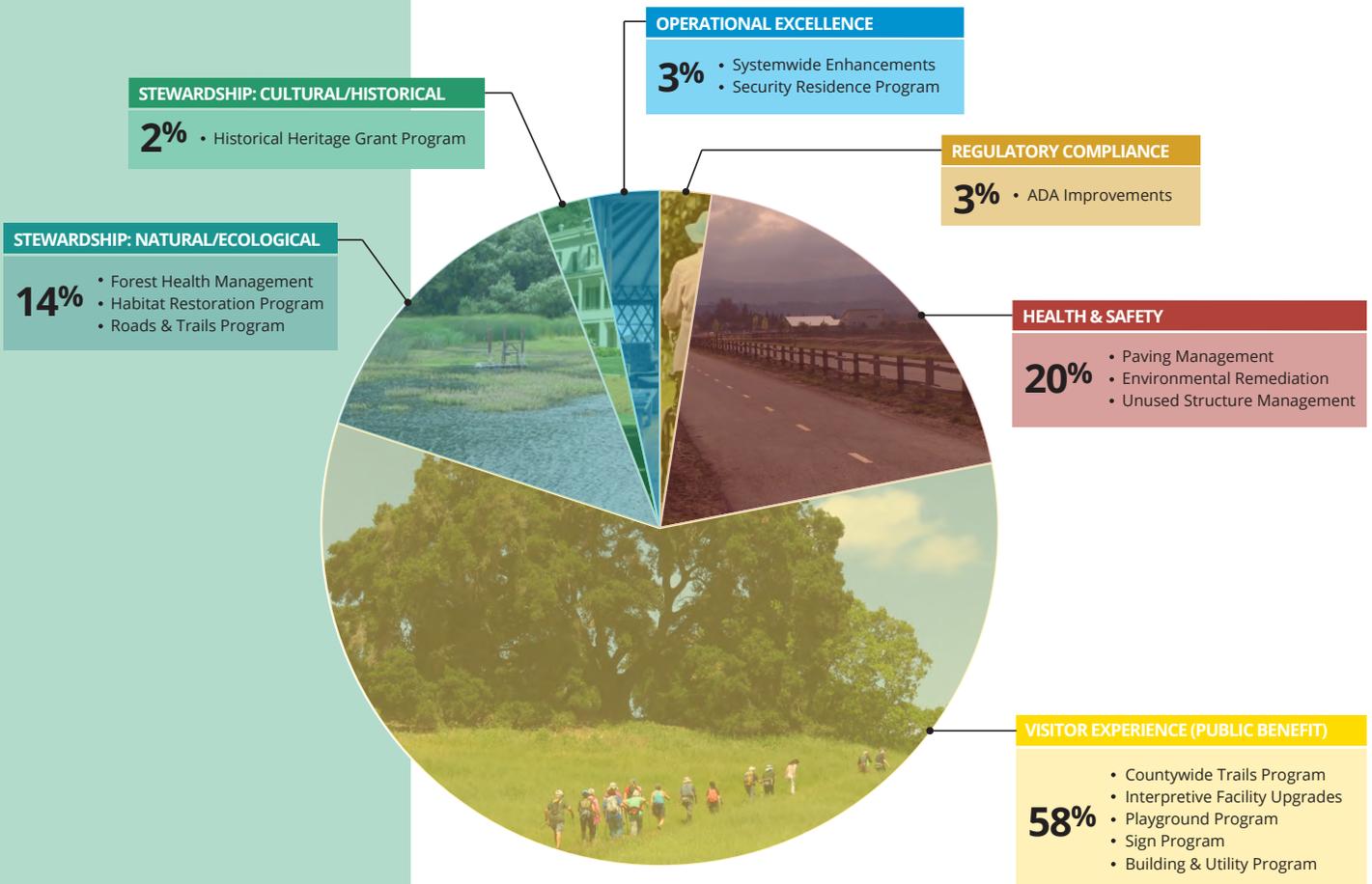




Representative projects within each category include, but are not limited to:

- **Capital Programs:** Building and infrastructure, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements, systemwide amenity enhancements, unused structures, visitor center improvements, natural resource restoration and enhancements, Countywide Trails Master Plan Update implementation, roads and trails improvements, park residence, and playground programs. The Capital Programs and budget allocations are shown in Figure 4-2.
- **Planning & Implementation Projects:** Almaden Quicksilver, Joseph D. Grant, Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch, Ed Levin, Hellyer, Coyote Creek Parkway, Mount Madonna, Calero, Stevens Creek and Upper Stevens Creek, and Sanborn county parks as well as systemwide landscapes. (Not all are funded and/or not all aspects of the plans are funded.)
- **Stand-alone Projects:** The following represent some of the fiscal year 2019 items: construct an access trail from Circle Parking lot to Raintree Group Area and Youth Science Institute facilities at Vasona Lake County Park, Grant Historic Building Renovation and Protection, and Dyer House Renovation and Protection at Sanborn County Park. (Projects may be added annually to meet identified need.)

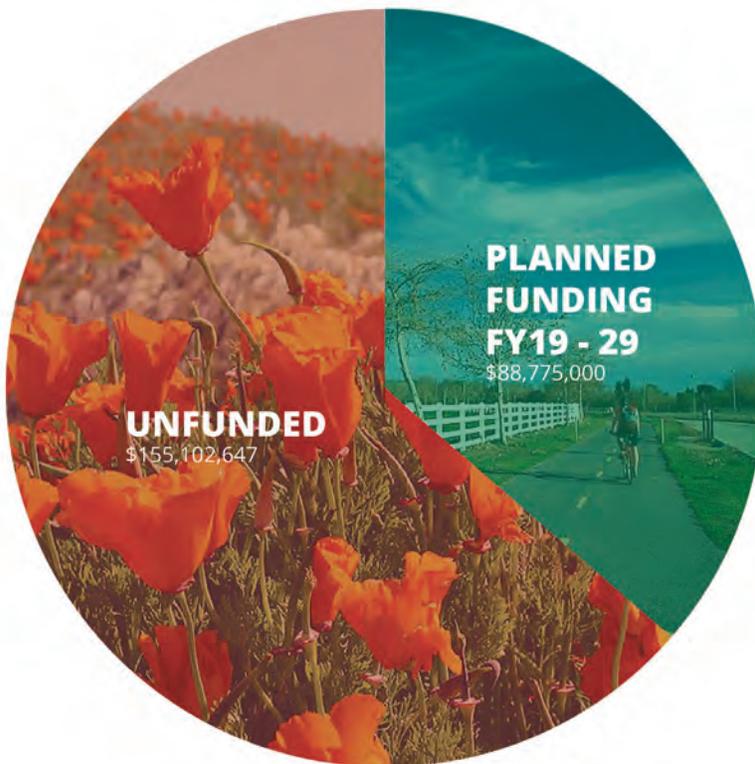
Figure 4-2 Capital Program Budget Allocations



Need Exceeds Available Funding

The ICOP showed that the total projected cost to complete all projects on the list was approximately \$240 million over ten years. Projections from the Chief Financial Officer put expected revenue from the Park Charter Fund and other sources at \$90 million, revealing an approximately \$155 million shortfall (see Figure 4-3.)

Figure 4-3 Planned Funding vs. Unfunded Projects



To prioritize projects and schedule them over time, while respecting the needs assessment outcomes and the expected budget shortfall, the Priority-Setting Criteria described in Chapter 3 were applied, giving each project an overall initial “score.” Projects were then sorted using “sorting tools”. The process, illustrated in Figure 4-4, includes three “sorting tools” that are further described on page 65.

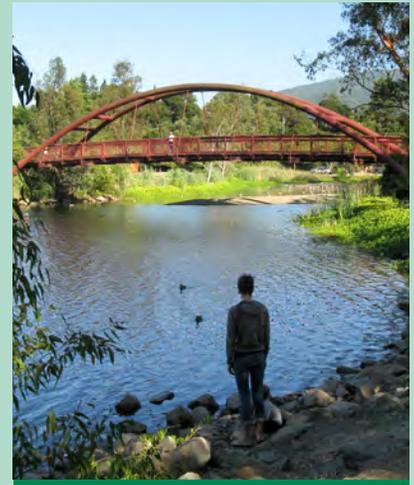
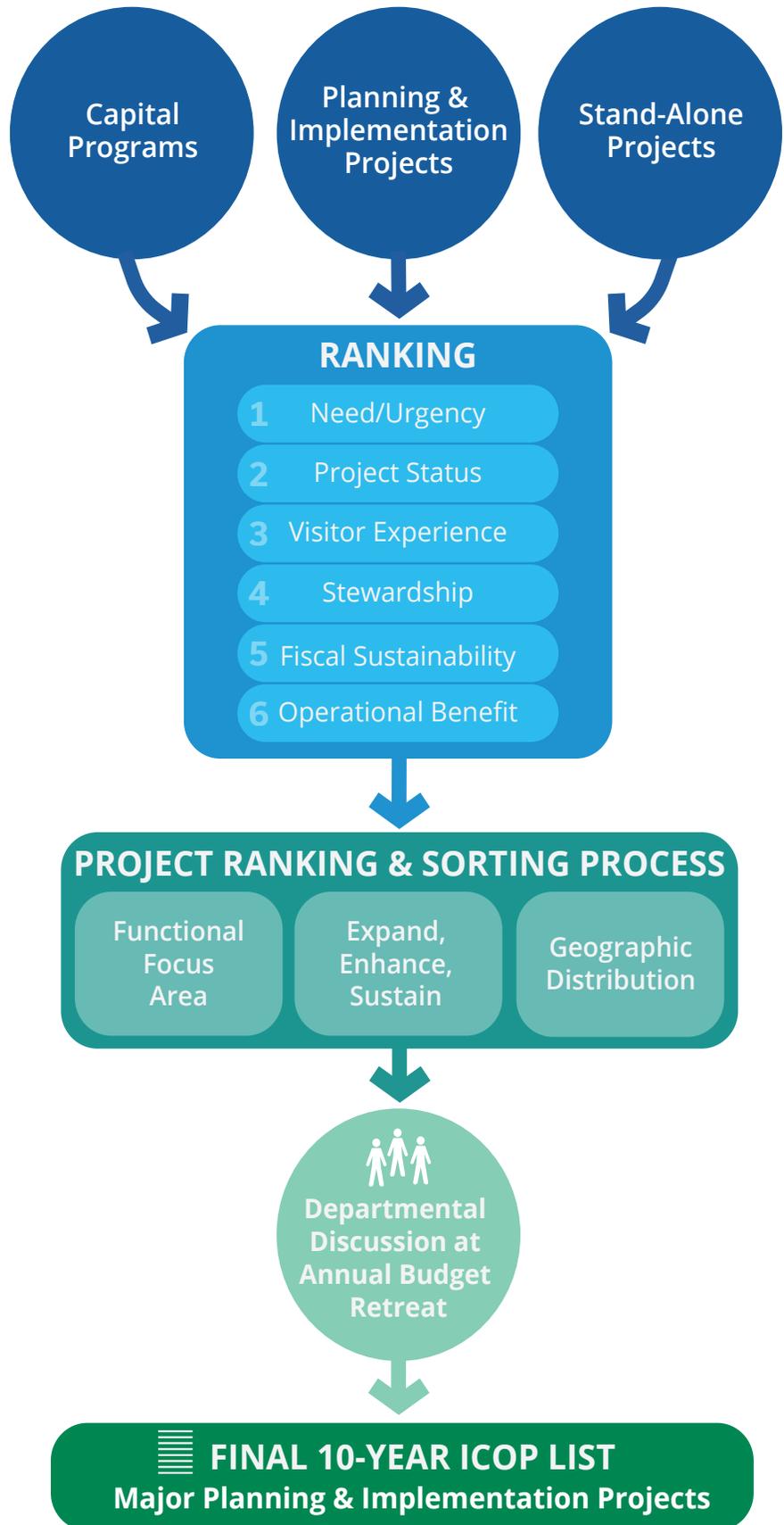


Figure 4-4 Project Ranking & Sorting Process



Project Ranking & Sorting Process

1. Functional Focus Areas

- Visitor Experience
- Stewardship of Natural and Ecological Resources
- Stewardship of Historic and Cultural Resources
- Health and Safety
- Operational Excellence
- Regulatory Compliance

2. Geographic Distribution

- Where the project is located geographically in the County.

3. Expand, Enhance, Sustain

- **Expand:** expand capacity, develop new facilities, and/or open park areas currently closed to the public (e.g., Sulphur Springs Ranch, Joseph D. Grant County Park; Rancho San Vicente, Calero County Park, etc.).
- **Enhance:** update park facilities to meet the needs of current and future users.
- **Sustain:** projects and programs that contribute to the public's high priority according to the needs assessment, maintaining and rehabilitating the aging park system and facilities.

The combination of the above tools helped the Department develop the final 10-year ICOP Major Planning & Implementation Projects, presented on the following pages and shown in Figure 4-5. The Capital Projects, Capital Program Areas, and Stand-alone Projects are planned with the intent of living within the projected Park Charter Fund and other Department revenue sources.

This Strategic Plan and associated ICOP recommends priorities and attempts to balance the competing needs of renovating aging infrastructure, updating amenities to meet current and future visitor needs, and opening over 10,000 acres of County parkland to public use.

The ICOP assumes the Department will live within its existing resources while attempting to balance the competing needs of renovating aging infrastructure, updating facilities to meet current and future visitor needs, and opening over 10,000 acres of County parkland to public use, within the context of inadequate funding. (See Chapter 5 for a full list of projects.) In recommending the projects in the 10-year ICOP, the Department prioritized capital investments in maintenance of critical infrastructure, modest updates to highly used facilities, and places where minimal improvement would open new areas to public use. Another common quality of the projects that were prioritized is that they represent those with smaller operating budget impacts. The Department expects that as projects move further along in planning and design, costs will change, and priorities will shift. However, the ICOP should allow the Department to keep the long-term financial view at the fore, create balance in project benefits, and help streamline the project delivery process.

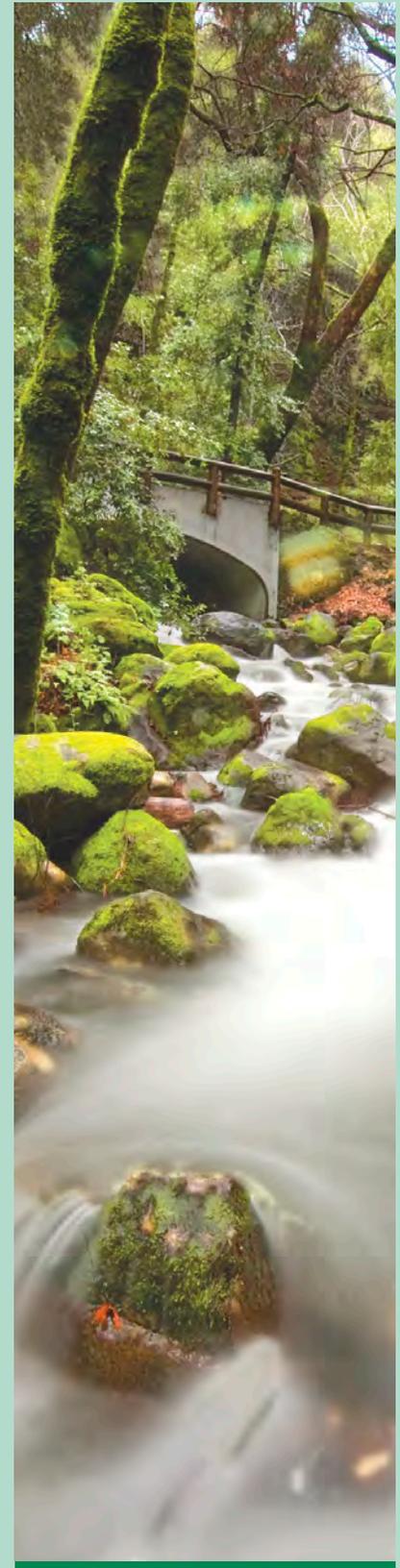


Figure 4-5 10-Year ICOP Timeline: Major Planning & Implementation Projects



2024

2025

2026

2027

2028

2029



■ indicates periods of no funding available.



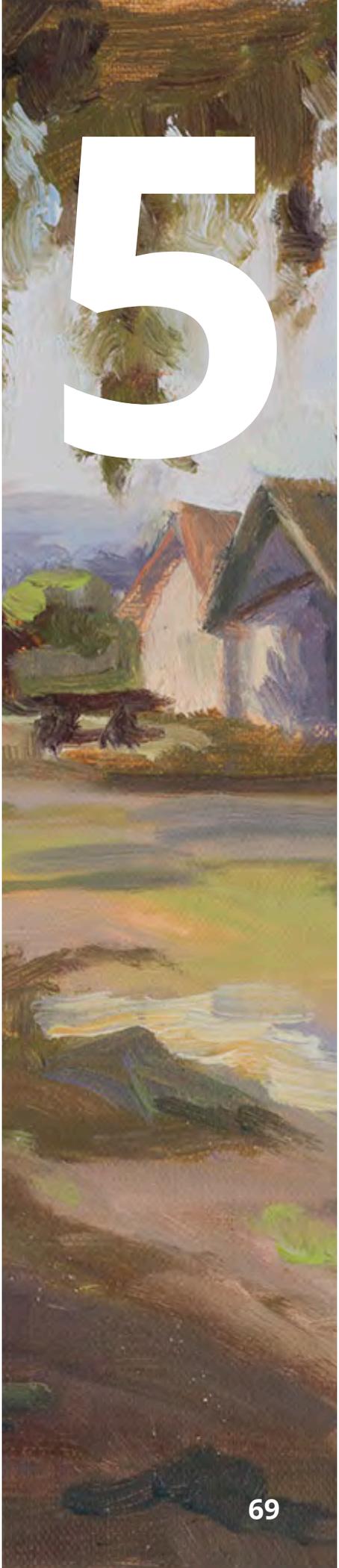
Mine Trail
Santa Teresa County Park

Action Plan

The Strategic Plan will guide Department long-term decision making, beginning with implementation of the five-year Action Plan provided in this chapter. The Action Plan identifies specific tasks and projects (actions) and the internal Department work groups (Program Areas) that are responsible for leading and supporting completion of each action. Specific timeframes are provided for the execution of each action. Specific timeframes for the actions identified for the period beyond the initial five years will be identified as part of the Action Plan review and update process.

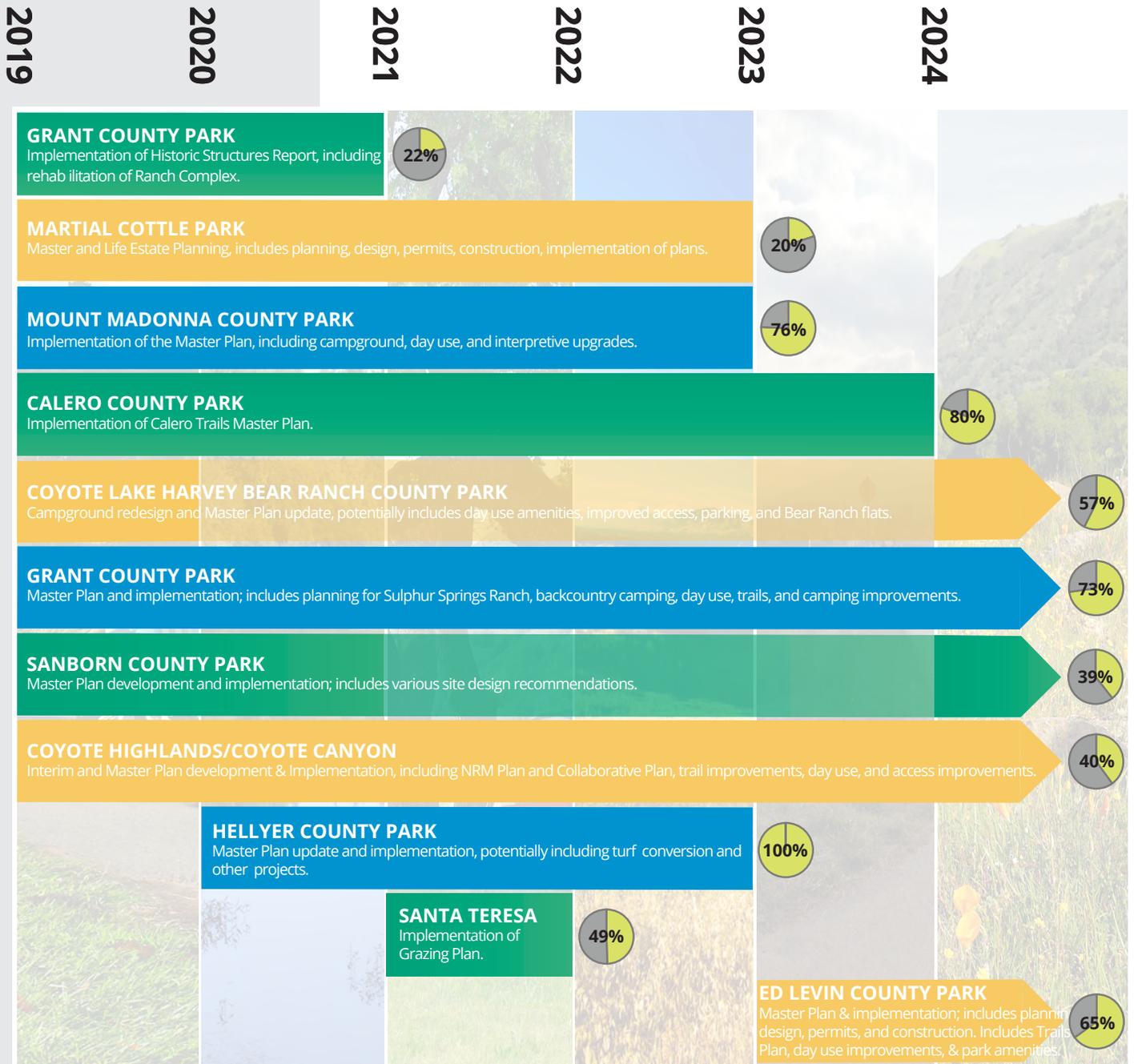
The Action Plan is organized chronologically based on the schedule for initiating each action item. Action items include those identified in support of goals and strategies (refer to Chapter 3) as well as capital improvement projects that were identified and planned using the prioritization tools embedded in the ICOP. As discussed in Chapter 4, prioritized capital investments include maintenance of critical infrastructure, modest updates to highly used facilities, and places where minimal improvement would open new areas to public use.

Figure 5-1 illustrates the major capital projects slated for the next five years. Following that figure, a set of project factsheets further details the vision for each of those projects. The full Action Plan matrix makes up the remainder of this chapter.



5

Figure 5-1 5-Year ICOP Timeline



#% indicates percent of project that has been funded.

Dark tones indicate active funding period.

Faded tones indicate that funding is not required.

Joseph D. Grant County Park

Historic Building Restoration



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Sustain

Distribution: Region 2

Rehabilitate and stabilize the Grant Ranch main house to expand interpretation of the site's history.



Year

1	2	3	4	5
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 = Planned funding

Martial Cottle Park

Planning and Implementation

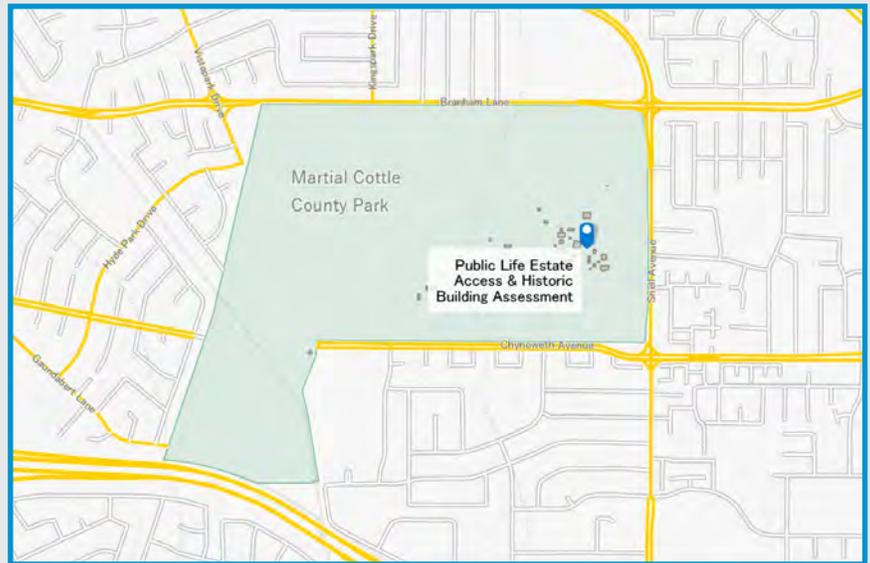


Focus: Cultural/Historic

Project Role: New/Sustain

Distribution: Region

Complete the remaining projects outlined in the Martial Cottle Park Master Plan. Plan public access and interpretation of the Martial Cottle Life Estate Property including evaluation of the historic nature of the site's buildings.



Year

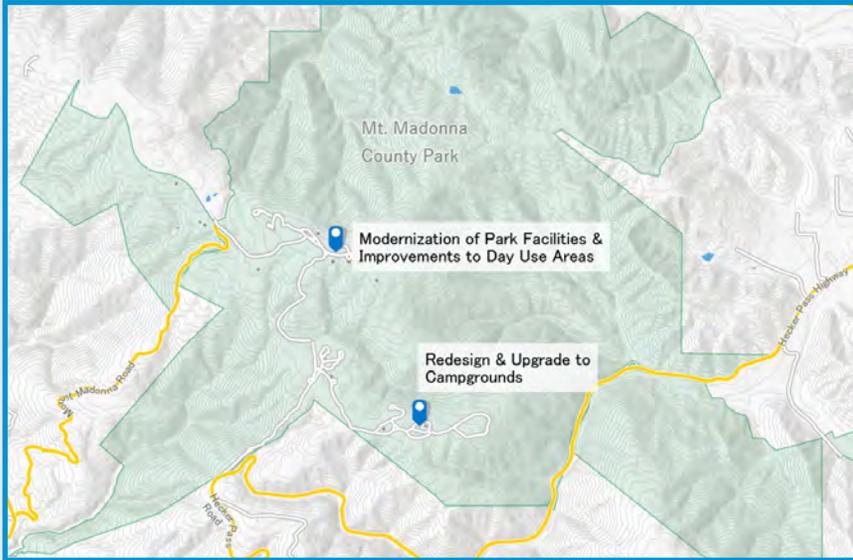
1	2	3	4	5
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SANTA CLARA
COUNTY PARKS

OUR
PARKS
OUR
FUTURE

Mount Madonna County Park Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance

Distribution: Region 3

Carry out recommendations made by the 2017 Mount Madonna Master Plan. Enhance existing utilities for more modern functionality, and redesign and upgrade the park campgrounds and day use areas for the enjoyment and education of visitors, while ensuring protection of natural resources.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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SANTA CLARA
COUNTY PARKS

OUR
PARKS
OUR
FUTURE

Calero County Park Trail Master Plan Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance

Distribution: Region 1

Improve and enhance current trails and construct those proposed in the Calero and Rancho San Vicente Trail Master Plan to expand multi-use trail access for the enjoyment of all park visitors.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Joseph D. Grant County Park Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance

Distribution: Region 2

Plan and open the Sulphur Springs Ranch area of the park and add backcountry camping. Expand the park's multi-use trail network, and enhance day use facilities, access and staging areas. Plan for long-term protection of natural resources and enrollment of a portion of the park according to the Habitat Plan.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Coyote Lake Harvey Bear Ranch Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

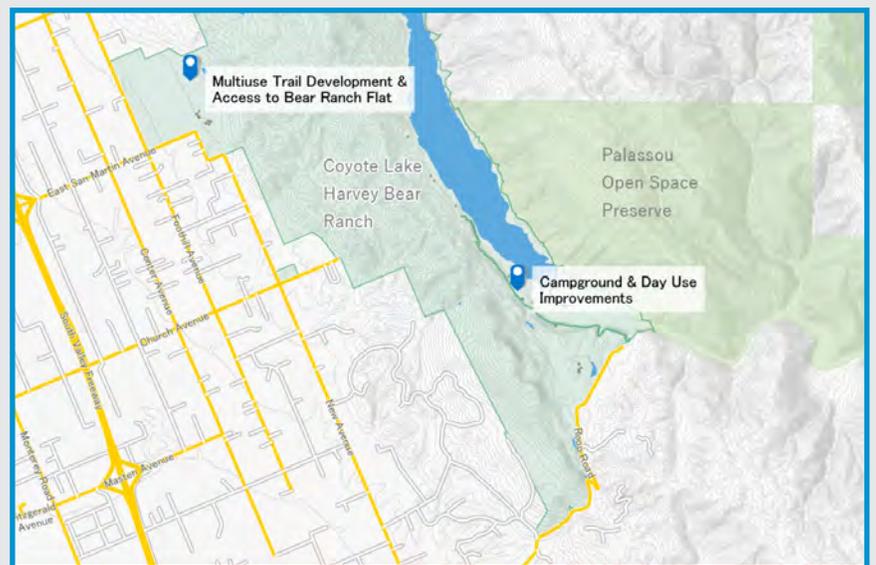
Project Role: New

Distribution: Region 3

Plan and carry out campground enhancements and expansions and improve group picnic sites and other visitor facilities. Construct more multi-use trails, to accommodate a variety of trail users, and plan the Bear Ranch flat area including new access and day-use facilities and interpretive features.

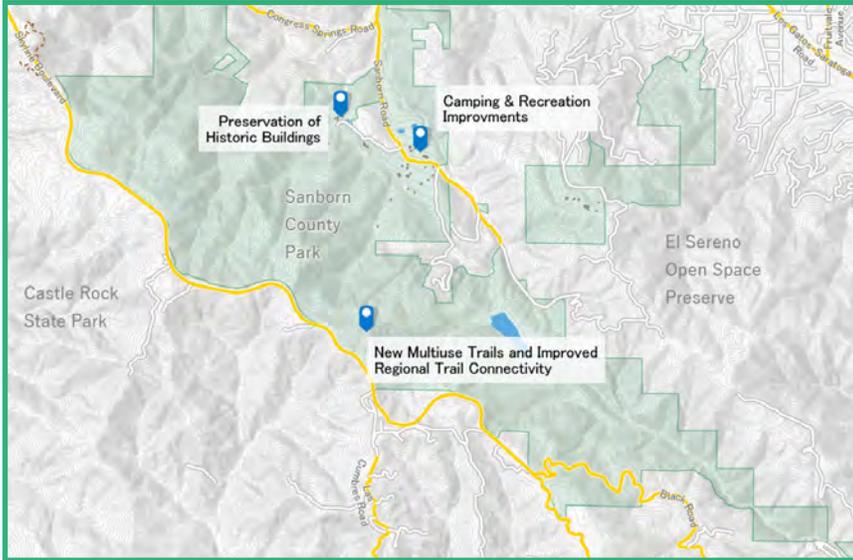
Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Sanborn County Park Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance
Distribution: Region 1

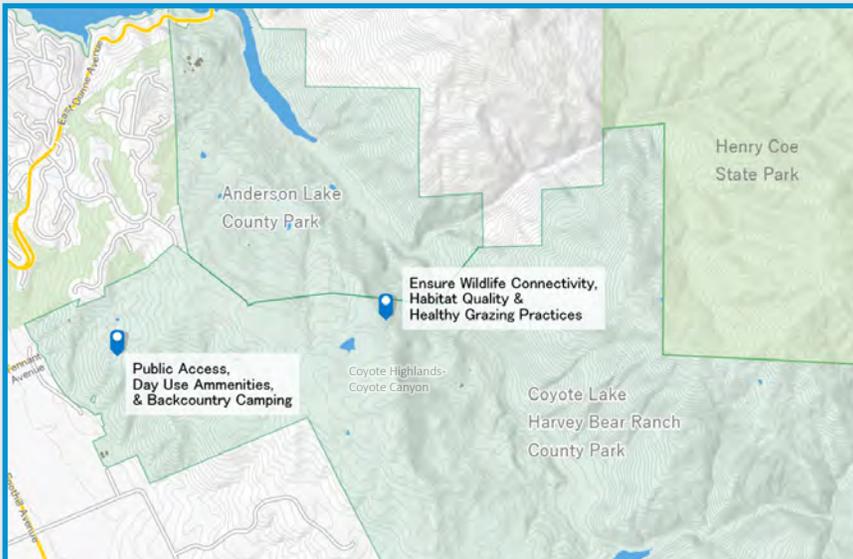
Construct new multi-use trails according to the approved Trail Master Plan, and work with partners to complete regional trail connections to Saratoga and beyond. Enhance key sites as outlined in the Sanborn Master Plan, including modernizing camping facilities and adding more opportunities for family recreation and learning. Ensure protection or preservation of historic buildings.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Coyote Highlands - Coyote Canyon Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance/New
Distribution: Region 3

Develop public access and preserve wildlife connectivity. Ensure sustainable natural resource management (including grazing). In later phases, plan and construct regional trail connections and visitor facilities and carry out various resource enhancement projects.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Santa Teresa County Park Grazing Plan



Focus: Stewardship
(Natural/Ecological)

Project Role: Sustain

Distribution: Region 2

Carry out the existing grazing plan to improve and enhance grass- and shrubland habitat as well as minimize potential for wildfire. Ensure consistency with the goals and objectives set by the Habitat Plan.



Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Hellyer County Park Planning and Implementation

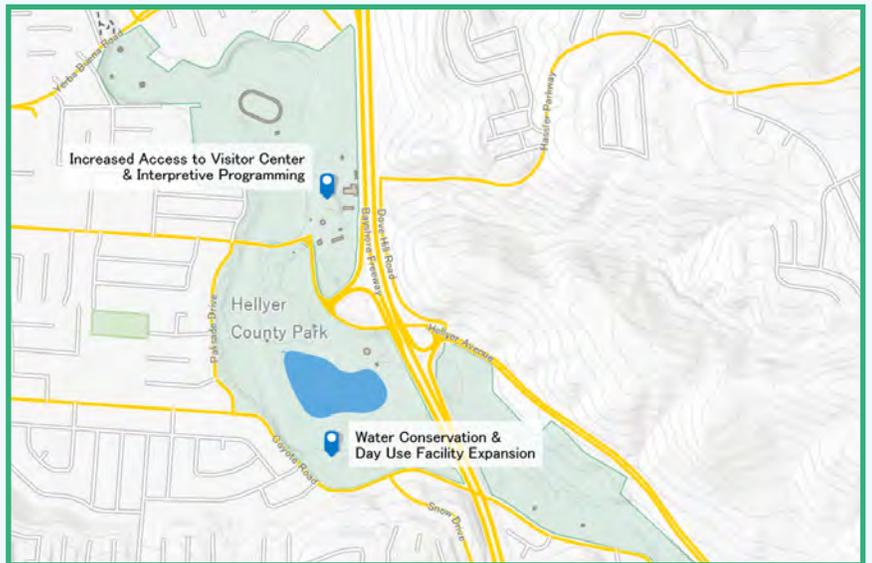


Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

Project Role: Enhance

Distribution: Region 2

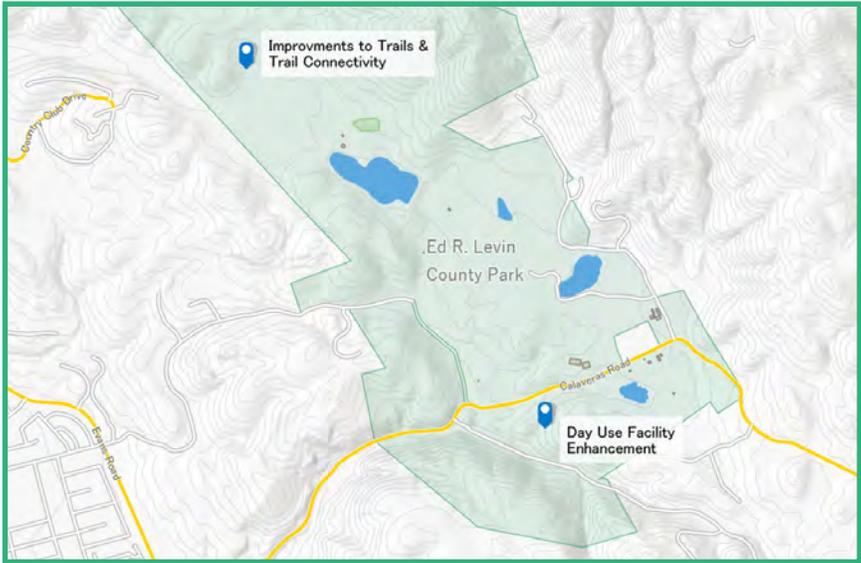
Convert turf areas to native or low water-use plantings and expand day use facilities including group picnic sites. Improve access and circulation, and protection of the Coyote Creek corridor. Improve connection to the visitor center so that interpretive programming is more accessible to all visitors.



Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Ed Levin County Park Planning and Implementation



Focus: Visitor Experience
(Public Benefit)

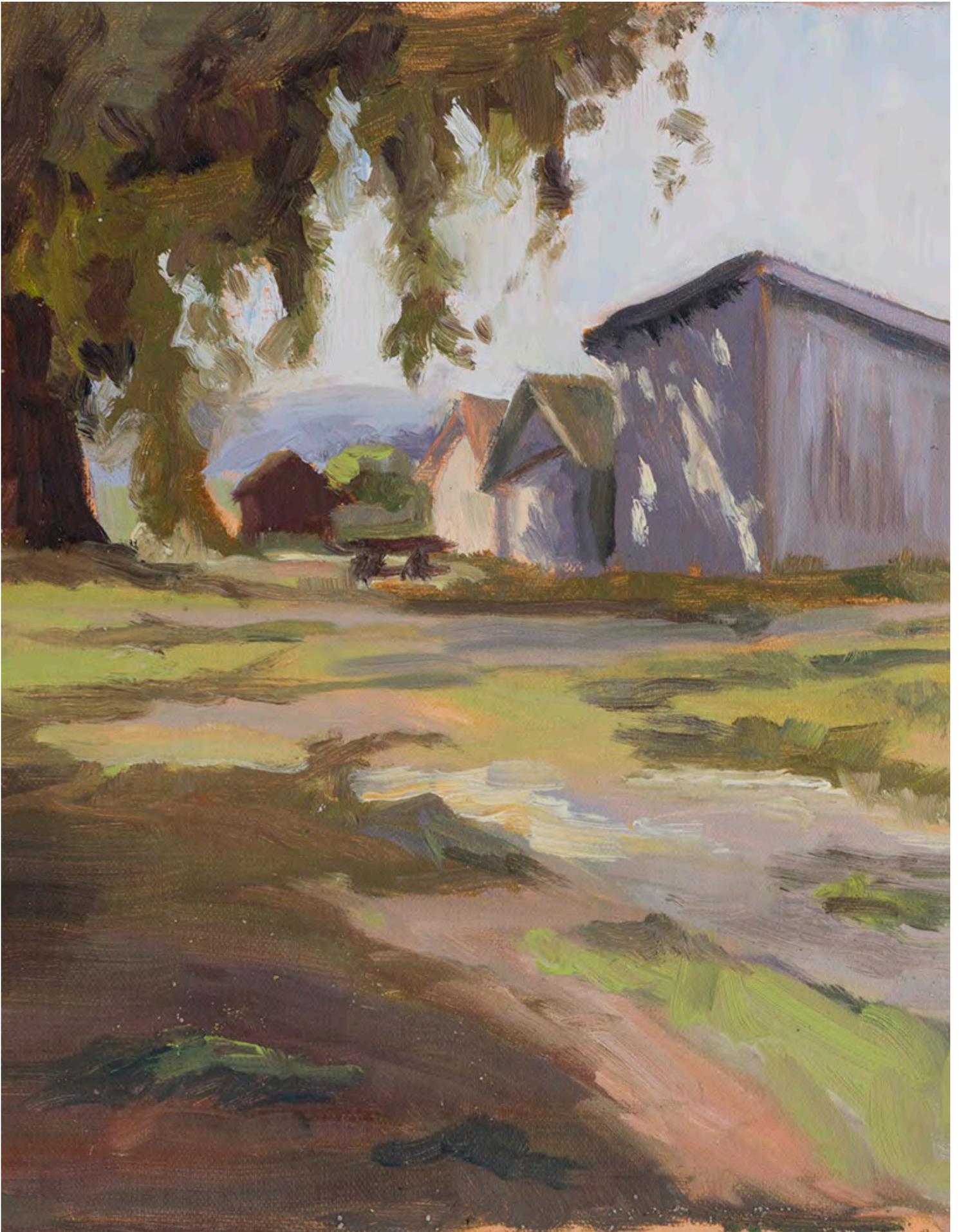
Project Role: Enhance

Distribution: Region 2

Plan and carry out trail improvements, including regional connections, and expand or enhance day-use facilities to better serve all park users. Improvements may include a playground, picnic facilities, and other specialty sites.

Year

1	2	3	4	5
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Action Plan

NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
1	Execute regular updates of the Park Ranger Field Training Manual.	6	1
2	Update the department-wide sign manual and implement guidelines to improve wayfinding, information, and the overall park user experience.	6	4
3	Carry out the Departmental transition from server-based electronic file storage to cloud-based.	4	3
4	<p>Coyote Lake Planning & Implementation Near-term work would improve group camping and the existing campground at the park as well as potentially address additional day-use options. Future efforts may involve an update of the existing Master Plan; including planning, design, permits, construction, and implementation. This future work would potentially address the park office, group picnic sites, restrooms, and Bear Ranich flats (staging area / event center), and newly acquired properties.</p>	ICOP	
5	Complete the transition to enterprise GIS to allow the Department to share data more directly and easily with both internal and external stakeholders, including both partner agencies and the public.	4	2
6	<p>Vasona Modular Improve and expand the existing Vasona Ranger office, visitor center, and associated buildings in order to better serve park visitors and support staff.</p>	ICOP	

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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Program Areas Key	
IT	Information Technology
I/R	Interpretation and Recreation
OPS	Operations
PM	Park Maintenance
CS	Construction Services
P/G	Planning and GIS
PI	Public Information
GT	Grants
CBS	Customer and Business Services
FISC	Fiscal
RE	Real Estate
PRD	Partnerships and Resource Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
TRA	Training
EXE/SPEC	Executive Team / Special Project

◆ Lead Role

• Support Role

ICOP Projects

Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
7	Dyer House - Sanborn Improve the historic Dyer House to serve as the Park Visitor Center and staff office to better serve park visitors, and support staff and partners.	ICOP	
8	Create a Department-specific cost-estimating handbook to improve project scoping and in turn to improve overall fiscal planning.	3	2
9	Create a comprehensive internal training program that supports Department staff in professional career- and job- related development.	3	3
10	Grant Historic Building Restoration Implement the Joseph D. Grant Historic Structures Report (HSR), including repair, rehabilitation and maintenance of the Grant Ranch House Complex (Ranch Complex).	ICOP	
11	Formalize the Partnership Program including the establishment of a new policy, partner category definitions, agreement examples, etc.	1,3	1,3
12	Adjust fees and expand differential pricing within market constraints to meet cost recovery targets.	3	4
13	Update the 2002 Interpretation and Recreation Services Guidelines to better reflect the Strategic Plan Vision and ensure that best practices and programming reflect the Vision's Elements.	1,6,9	6,3,1
14	Create a financial model for each park and subsequently for each program area, including evaluation of current and target cost recovery ratios.	3	4
15	Work with the Board of Supervisors to consider bringing a measure to supplement Parks funding to the voters.	3	4
16	Storm Damage 2017 Complete various repair projects related to Winter 2016/17 storms.	ICOP	
17	Vasona Trail/Ramp & Parking (Circle Parking to Raintree/YSI) Construct an ADA-compliant access to connect nearby parking areas to the buildings that house the Youth Science Institute with the goal of improving accessibility for parents and students of YSI programming.	ICOP	

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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◆ Lead Role

■ ICOP Projects

• Support Role

■ Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
18	Admin Office Replacement Plan for and renovate the existing or construct a new Administration headquarters with the intent of better accommodating the existing Administrative Staff as well as planning for future growth.	ICOP	
19	Develop a Department-wide roads and trails best practices resource list focused on minimizing recreational impacts to natural landscapes and habitat linkages. Include a trail construction strategy that seeks to improve safety and enhance all visitor experiences on multi-use trails.	6	2
20	Implement department-wide cultural competency training to inform and improve both internal and external customer service.	2	2
21	Improve the transition planning process for management of newly acquired properties to address operations, access, and basic facility and natural resource documentation. Information collected within these plans should be used to inform other future planning processes for the property.	6	5
22	Create Department-wide guidelines for maintenance of developed landscapes to include: strategies for assessing landscaped areas within parks; identification of enhancement opportunities; increased planting of site-appropriate and drought-tolerant species; improved maintenance of trees, shrubs and other vegetation; and sustainable turf management and reduction	6	4
23	Coyote Highlands / Coyote Canyon Planning and Implementation Carry out any necessary planning and Implementation including that necessary to establish public access in the very near-term. Will eventually include overall planning, design, permits, construction, implementation. Will include a natural resources management plan and grazing plan. May also include development of a partnership collaborative plan, Master Plan and Trails Plan.	ICOP	
24	Complete network upgrades to provide high speed data connectivity to park facilities and add Wi-Fi to key park sites such as visitor centers, park offices, kiosks, drop-off and pick-up areas (to facilitate using rideshare services), campgrounds, and high-use core park areas. Publicize or otherwise clearly sign areas where Wi-Fi is available.	4	1

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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✓	✓	✓	✓			◆		•	•												•

- ◆ Lead Role
- Support Role
- ICOP Projects
- Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
25	<p>Mount Madonna Planning & Implementation Carry out the recommendations of the existing approved Master Plan including site planning, design, permits, construction, and implementation. Complete the Mount Madonna Forest Health Management Plan. Future work may address trails, utility upgrades, a visitor center or similar interpretive facility, and future planning efforts for the Arata Garcia property.</p>	ICOP	
26	<p>Martial Cottle Planning & Implementation Continue to carry out implementation of the existing Martial Cottle Park Master Plan. Develop a plan for the Life Estate area including planning, design, permits, construction, and implementation.</p>	ICOP	
27	<p>As needed to more systematically respond to specialty recreational uses such as off-leash dog play and mountain biking, carry out County-wide feasibility studies to: identify appropriate locations and distribution of facilities; consider fiscal sustainability of the specific use; and identify a systematic implementation and development plan, including the operation, maintenance, and opening of these amenities.</p>	7	2
28	<p>Calero & RSV Trail MP Implementation Implement the exiting Trails Master Plan including trail construction projects and any additional planning, design, permits, construction; final details of the Rancho San Vicente Staging Area; and enrollment of land into the Valley Habitat Plan.</p>	ICOP	
29	<p>Sanborn Planning & Implementation Includes finalization of the park Master Plan and implementation of its recommendations including any additional planning, design, permits, and construction. Potentially involves recommendations or improvements of the Christensen property, Welch Hurst House, and the former Christmas Tree Farm site.</p>	ICOP	
30	<p>Ensure protection and interpretation programming are integrated within planning processes, where historic or cultural resources reside within a park unit (e.g., Martial Cottle Park, Joseph D. Grant historic building complex, Santa Teresa Bernal Ranch, historic and cultural features at Sanborn County Park).</p>	9	3

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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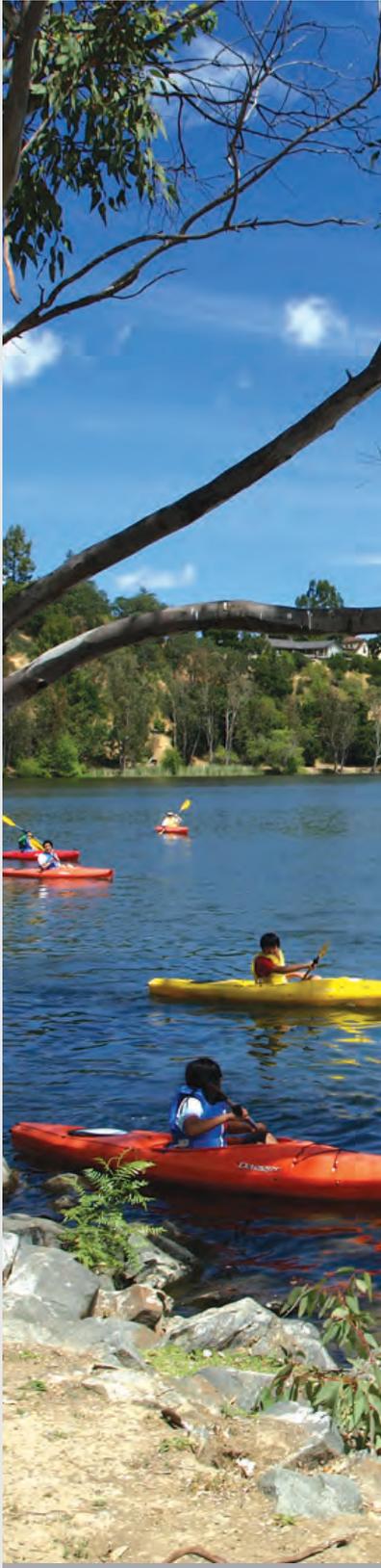
-  Lead Role
-  ICOP Projects
-  Support Role
-  Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
31	Implement existing trail master plans and produce new trail plans for lands that have been acquired by the Department but have no existing public access (e.g., Sulphur Springs Ranch property at Grant County Park, Coyote Highlands / Coyote Canyon properties).	6	2
32	Refresh existing, and design new, visitor centers and kiosks that provide hands-on, onsite educational opportunities to park visitors.	6	3
33	Address equitable access at the park level through various planning and implementation processes.	8	2
34	Plan and implement major park and trail projects as outlined in the 10-year Major Project Timeline and the ICOP (see pages 66 & 67).	6	5
35	Prepare and carry out approved Natural Resource Management and Grazing Management Plans to better manage natural resources, including annual grasslands and serpentine habitats, oak woodlands, forests, and aquatic habitats. Plans should be consistent with the goals, objectives and strategies of the Valley Habitat Plan, and updated as necessary.	1	4
36	Grant Planning & Implementation Carry out necessary planning including potentially a Master Plan Amendment to address backcountry camping and / or opening of the Sulphur Springs Ranch property. Additional work may include various design, permits, construction, projects, as well as development of a Trails Plan, Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plan and enrollment of some area(s) into the Valley Habitat Plan.	ICOP	
37	Utilize data and other industry information to create a strategic approach to engaging the public and encouraging park visitation. Incorporate both traditional and innovative non-traditional methods (e.g., arts-related programs, park-specific special events, and ‘tabling’ at events led by others).	6	3
38	Carry out a comprehensive study that examines the County’s diverse population, user preferences and needs, and the implications for regional parks and trails.	2	1
39	Update the NRM program webpage and general communications about natural resource protection and management actions. Include actions that can be taken by the community, including citizen science activities such as “bio blitzes”.	1	6

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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-  Lead Role
-  ICOP Projects
-  Support Role
-  Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
40	Define the strategic need(s) for, and support the formation of, multi-agency collaborative(s). Opportunities for collaboration include: standardizing best practices and management actions, leveraging management and acquisition resources, sharing information and data, and setting shared measurable goals and targets.	1	1
41	Almaden Quicksilver Environmental Remediation Address environmental remediation issues at Almaden Quicksilver including, potentially, total maximum daily load (TMDL), toxic mitigation, remediation for Calcine Roads, Jacques Gulch and Senador Mines.	ICOP	
42	Update the Department’s public website, signage, email notifications, social media sites, and mobile services to better address the needs of a diverse audience.	2	2
43	Hellyer Planning & Implementation Carry out a Master Plan update and its implementation; including planning, design, permits, construction and implementation. Work may include a new park office, visitor center, parkway lake opening, removal of La Raza group area, water reduction program for all turf areas, and turf conversion areas and any natural resource issues necessary.	ICOP	
44	Develop, prioritize and implement environmental remediation actions to address and protect parklands from further environmental degradation (e.g., toxic mitigation, dumps, and abandoned wells).	1	4
45	Create a Department-wide strategy including ways to expand outreach in planning efforts used for adapting, adding, and expanding existing facilities to serve contemporary trends of group use.	7	1
46	Carry out the Countywide Trails planning and implementation strategy including meeting regularly with key partners (public and private agencies) and potentially establishing an annual trails summit.	8	1
47	Plan and implement the recommendations of the Department-wide accessibility plan to better serve all customers.	2	4

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY														
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC
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- ◆ Lead Role
- Support Role
- ICOP Projects
- Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
48	Santa Teresa Grazing Plan Implementation Carry out the approved Grazing Management Plan including improving cattle grazing infrastructure to better manage natural resources, including annual grasslands and serpentine areas. The Plan is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Habitat Plan.	ICOP	
49	Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic and comprehensive <u>utility</u> infrastructure maintenance and replacement plan.	3	1
50	Develop a systematic approach to providing site security and maintaining defensible space around historic resources.	9	2
51	Create tools for staff to better collate and analyze data from multiple sources to inform decision making.	2,4	1,3
52	Link a satisfaction and use survey to the Department's reservations system to capture information from current park users and improve the Department's understanding of customer use patterns and preferences.	2	1
53	Create Department-wide NRM guidelines that identify a systematic approach to resource enhancement projects, including best practices and engagement of the community the Department serves.	1	3
54	Make trail assessments and descriptions publicly available, so that users can easily understand trail level of difficulty and plan their visit accordingly.	2	4
55	Deliver education programs that provide information about how to use parks safely and best access and utilize services provided by the department (e.g., <i>Basics of Boating Safety</i> and <i>Preparing for a Safe Hike</i>).	6	1
56	Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic and comprehensive <u>facility</u> infrastructure maintenance and replacement plan.	3	1
57	Develop and maintain a transparent, systematic and comprehensive <u>equipment</u> replacement plan.	3	1
58	Improve information and reservation resources related to group use of park amenities with the intent of better dispersing customers to locations that are most appropriate for the desired group use or experience.	7	1

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
		✓						•											◆		
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-  Lead Role
-  ICOP Projects
-  Support Role
-  Strategic Plan Actions



NO. OVERALL	ACTION	GOAL	STRATEGY
59	Offer an event planning guide, for both public and internal use, that describes how to enhance accessibility.	2	4
60	Develop an alternative transportation access plan, potentially including bus shuttles, enhanced bicycle access, bike share, ride share, etc. Explore grant funding and potential partnerships with appropriate non-profit organizations, public entities, and private companies.	8	3
61	With the intent of better assessing potential concession and/or partnership opportunities, issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit proposals from outside organizations and agencies interested in providing services for specialty uses.	7	2
62	Ed Levin Planning & Implementation Address any need for park master, site, trail or resource planning and future implementation; including planning, design, permits, construction, and opening to the public.	ICOP	
63	Coyote Creek Planning & Implementation Implementation of the Integrated Master Plan for Coyote Creek to improve visitor experience and environmental stewardship. Site planning and implementation would include design, permits, construction and may include the Perry's Hill site, Baily Road low-flow bridge and other features. Would also involve various trail reroutes according to the Master Plan.	ICOP	
64	Almaden Quicksilver Planning & Implementation Implementation, design, and construction of various proposed Master Plan projects.	ICOP	
65	Santa Teresa Bernal Ranch Planning & Implementation Planning and Implementation of the Santa Teresa Historic Site Plan including Curie Drive. Involves additional planning, environmental review, design, permits, construction, and implementation.	ICOP	
66	Strategic Plan Update Update the Parks Department Strategic Plan to chart the course for the Department's next 10-20 years.	ICOP	

YEAR						PROGRAM AREA RESPONSIBILITY															
1	2	3	4	5	6-10	IT	I/R	OPS	PM	CS	P/G	PI	GT	CBS	FISC	RE	PRD	NRM	TRA	EXE/SPEC	
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-  Lead Role
-  ICOP Projects
-  Support Role
-  Strategic Plan Actions



Hidden Springs Trail
Coyote Peak, Santa Teresa County Park

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Bernal Ranch, East Barn (before reconstruction)
Santa Teresa County Park

Appendix A. Needs Assessment

The following section summarizes the existing conditions inventory completed in 2017-2018 as part of the Needs Assessment by County Parks as part of the initial phase of the Strategic Plan process.

A. Parklands, Trails, and Facilities

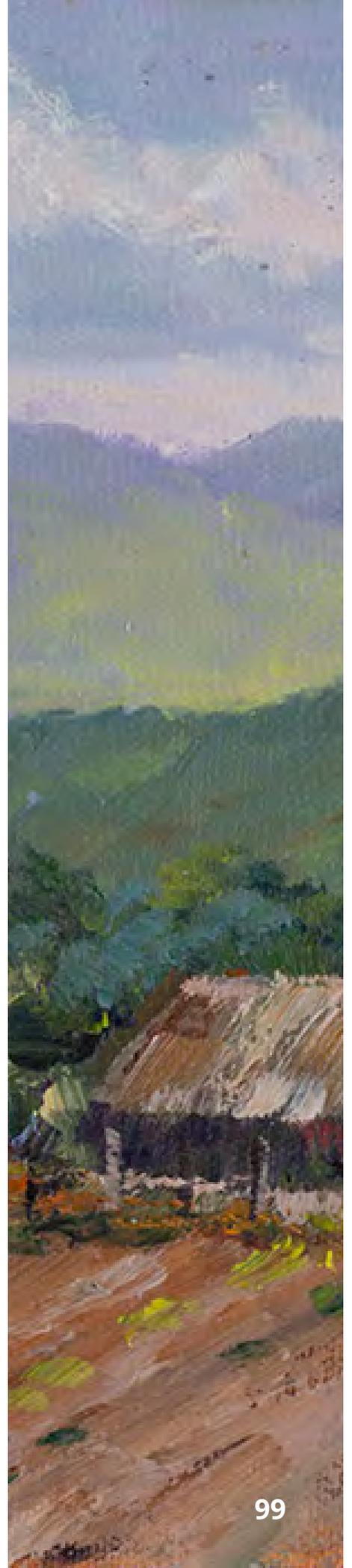
The following is a snapshot of the current inventory of parkland, trails, and facilities owned and maintained by the Department.

Parks and acreage

As of 2018, the Santa Clara County Parks system includes 28 regional parks totaling over 52,000 acres of lands owned by County Parks (shown in Figure 1.) The County Parks Department manages approximately 27% of all publicly-accessible open space in the County.

Amenities and Facilities

The park system offers a unique collection of traditional park facilities including picnic areas, campgrounds, and multi-use trails, as well as specialty recreation facilities, such as archery ranges, disc golf courses, off-leash dog parks, and more. An abbreviated list of amenities is shown in Table 1. There are two parks dedicated entirely to a single type of use: Field Sports Park and Metcalf Motorcycle County Park.



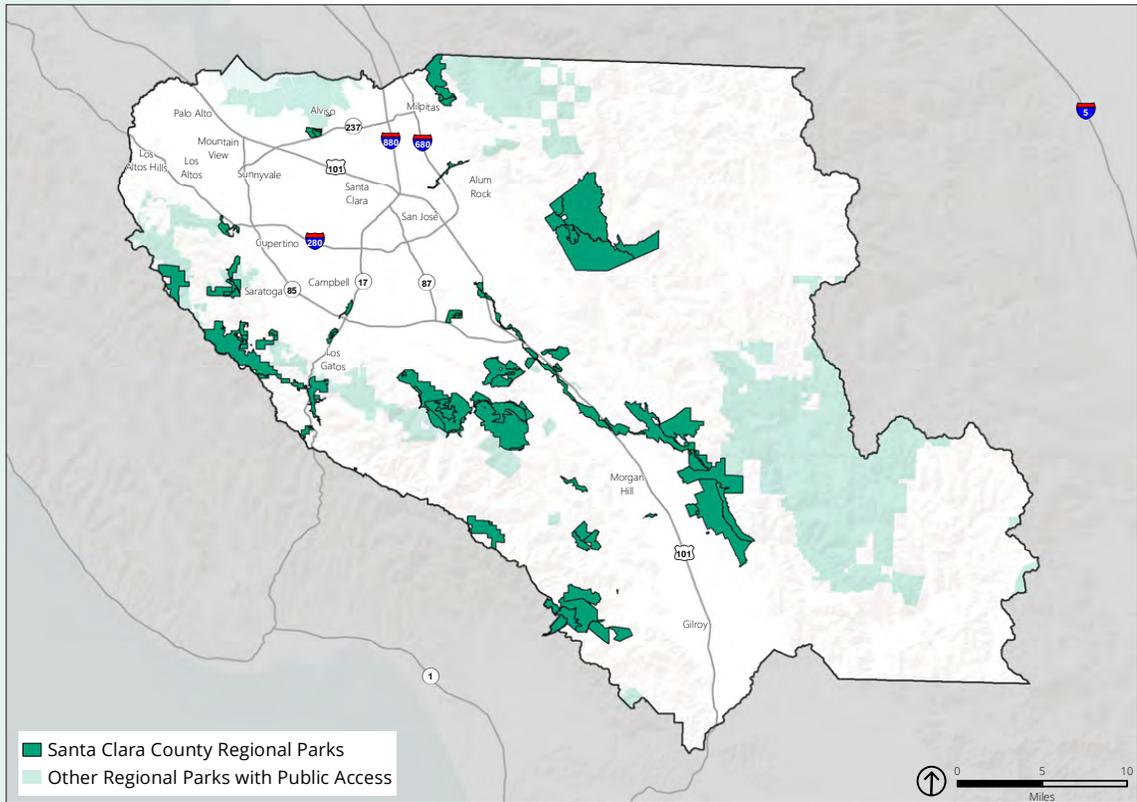


Figure A-1 Santa Clara County Parks System

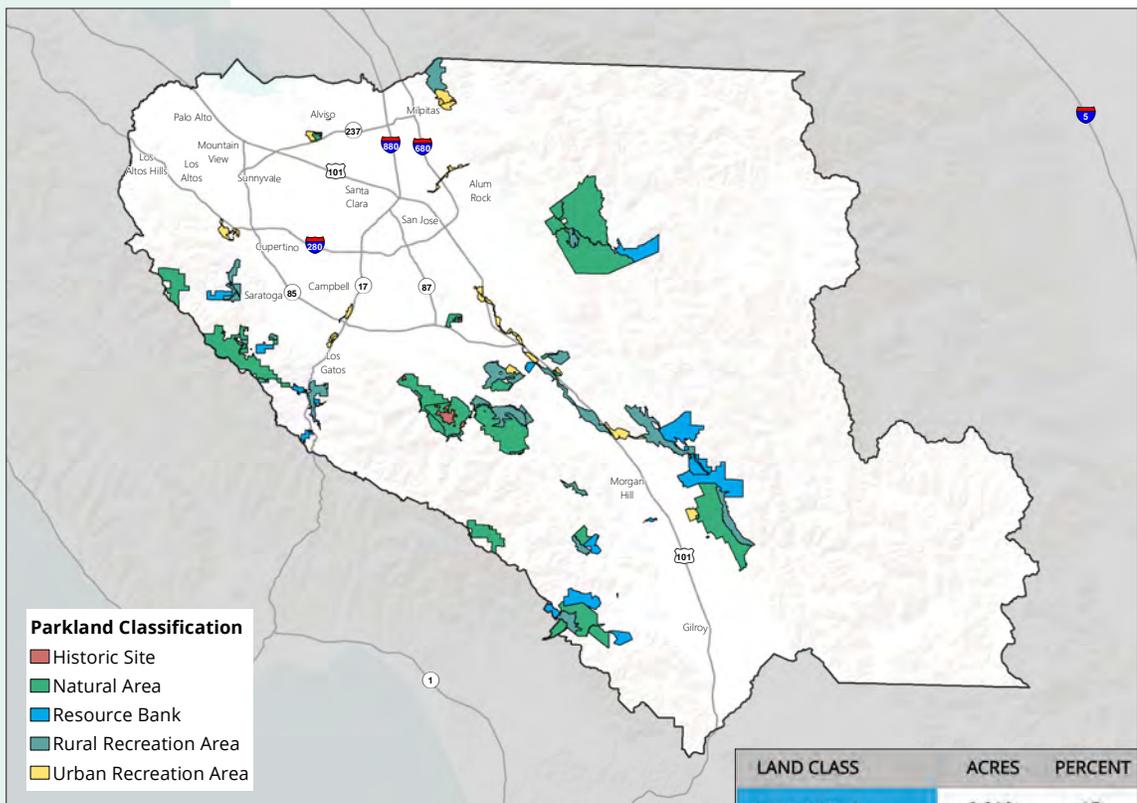


Figure A-2 Santa Clara County Parkland Classifications

Table A-1 Santa Clara County Parks Amenities

AMENITY TYPE	AMENITY	NUMBER OF AMENITIES
STANDARD PARK AMENITIES	Equestrian Staging Areas	2
	Boat Launch Ramps	5
	Playgrounds	5
	Visitor Centers	6
	Amphitheaters	10
	Group Campsites	11
	Campgrounds	12
	Historic Points of Interest	34
	Parking areas	36
	Reservable Group Picnic Sites	46
	Picnic Areas	48
	Restrooms	80
SPECIALTY AMENITIES	Art & Culture Center	1
	Fly Casting Ponds	1
	Hang Glider Area	1
	Model Aircraft Field	1
	Motorcycle Park	1
	Rifle and Pistol Range	1
	Trap and Skeet Range	1
	Velodrome	1
	Disc Golf Courses	2
	Golf Course	2
	Archery Ranges	3
	Dog Parks	3
CAMPING AMENITIES	Yurts	5
	Group Campsites	11
	RV Camp Sites	62
	Tent Camp Sites	240

Overall, the park system is estimated to receive more than three million visitors annually.

Parkland Classifications

A classification system for the 52,081 acres owned by Santa Clara County Parks was developed during the 2003 Strategic Plan process. The system divides parkland into five distinct classifications, which is depicted in Figure 2. The classifications and their definitions are as follows:

The below are the abbreviated definition for the Parkland Classifications:

- **Historic Site:** Managed for historic resource protection. Possesses elements of Countywide Significance in history, archaeology, or culture.
- **Urban Recreation Area:** Setting generally appears natural in character, developed for high impact public use.
- **Resource Banks:** Area intended for eventual public access – temporary categorization only.
- **Rural Recreation Area:** Generally undeveloped lands that are natural in character and encompass a variety of habitat types. Moderate – high impact public use.
- **Natural Area:** Area that is essentially undeveloped and is generally

managed for habitat value and environmental protection. Low intensity, dispersed recreation only.

Countywide Trails

One of the central responsibilities of Santa Clara County Parks is the oversight of the Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Master Plan Update (CWTMP) (1995); the trails identified in the CWTMP are shown in Figure 3. Trails throughout the county are classified as either single use or multi-use trails. For instance, a single use trail is designed and maintained for hiking only, while a multi-use trail is designed for hiking, horseback riding, and off-road cycling. Per the Santa Clara County Countywide Trails Prioritization and Gaps Analysis (2015), 316 miles of single use or multi-use trails have been completed out of the original 795 miles identified in the CWTMP. Four hundred seventy-nine miles of trails remain totally or partially incomplete. The completion status of the trails are shown in Figure 4.

Internal Park Trails

The Department maintains approximately 340 miles of internal, natural surface trails (i.e., trails within park boundaries), of which approximately half are multi-use (shared trails that accommodate multiple trail users, such as equestrians, hikers, and mountain bikers). The Department's trails standards are established so the trails are sustainable over the long-term, require low maintenance, allow for safe public access (recently moving toward multi-use trails to meet the diverse trail needs of the public, while reducing or managing the impacts of constructed trails), protect the natural and cultural resources and meets the recreational needs, and provides quality recreational experiences, of diverse park users. Trails are park amenities similar to restrooms, campsites, parking lots, etc. and are developed to provide access to the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of a park and to enhance the park visitor's enjoyment of those resources. Figure 5 depicts the various internal trail types.

Interpretive and Recreational Programming and Events

In 2016, the Department served nearly 150,000 visitors through programs and special events. These events range from the seasonal Fantasy of Lights at Vasona Lake County Park, Day on the Bay at Alviso Marina County Park, Spring and Harvest Festivals at Martial Cottle Park, Star Party at Joseph D. Grant County Park, and various Junior Ranger and interpretation programs.

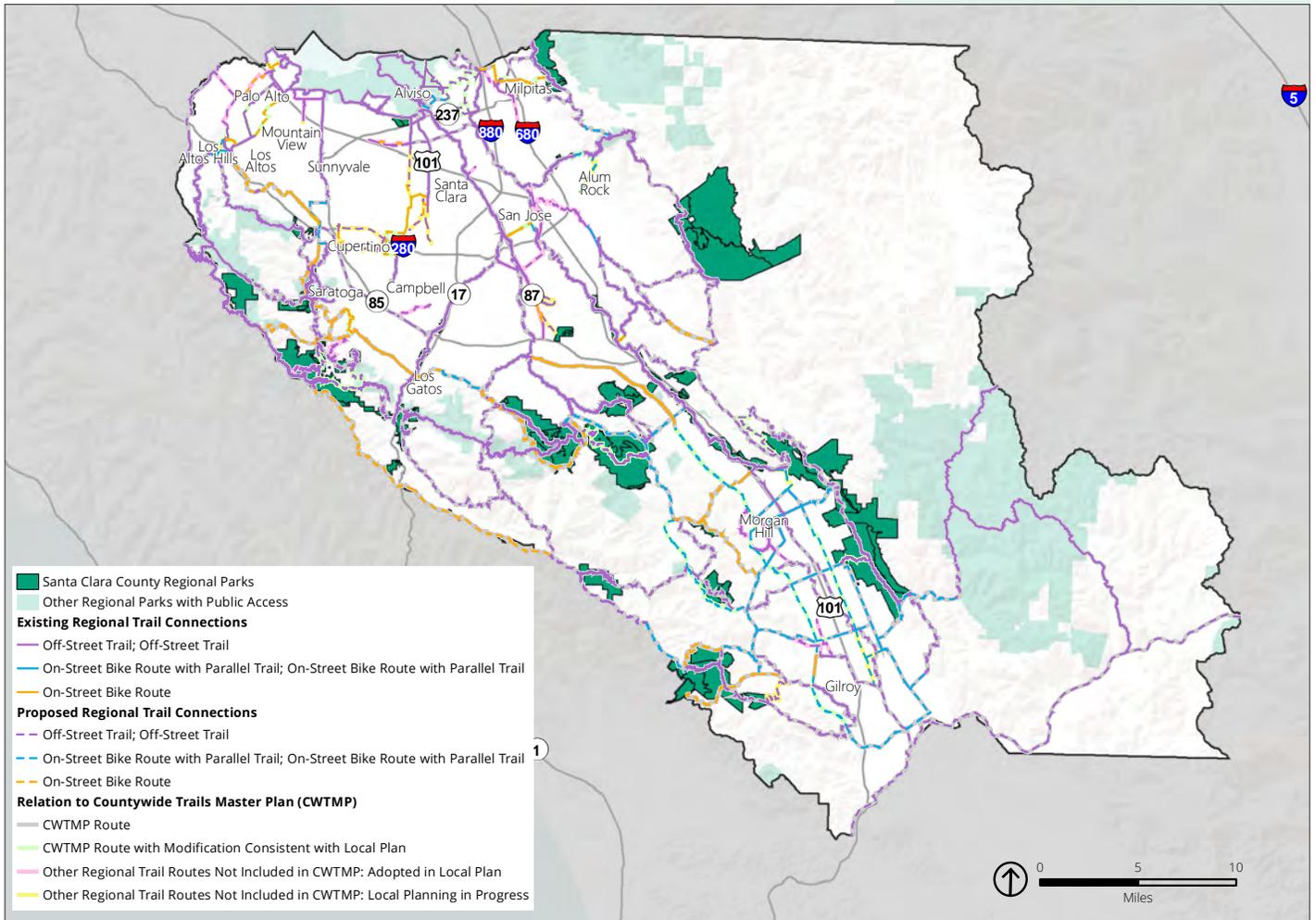


Figure A-3 High Priority Trails as Identified in the Countywide Trails Master Plan

Figure A-4 Status of Countywide Trails in Miles

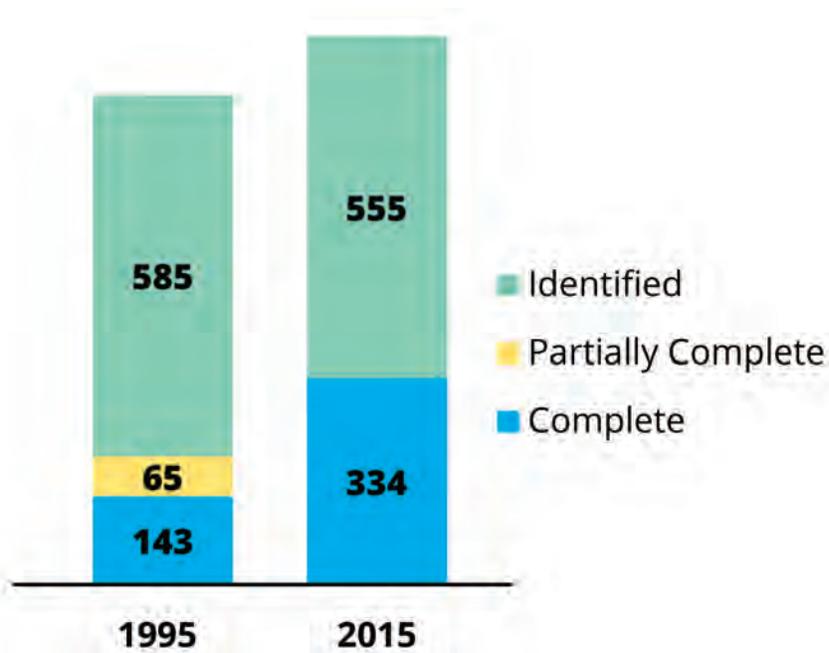


Figure A-5 Park Trails Within County Parks

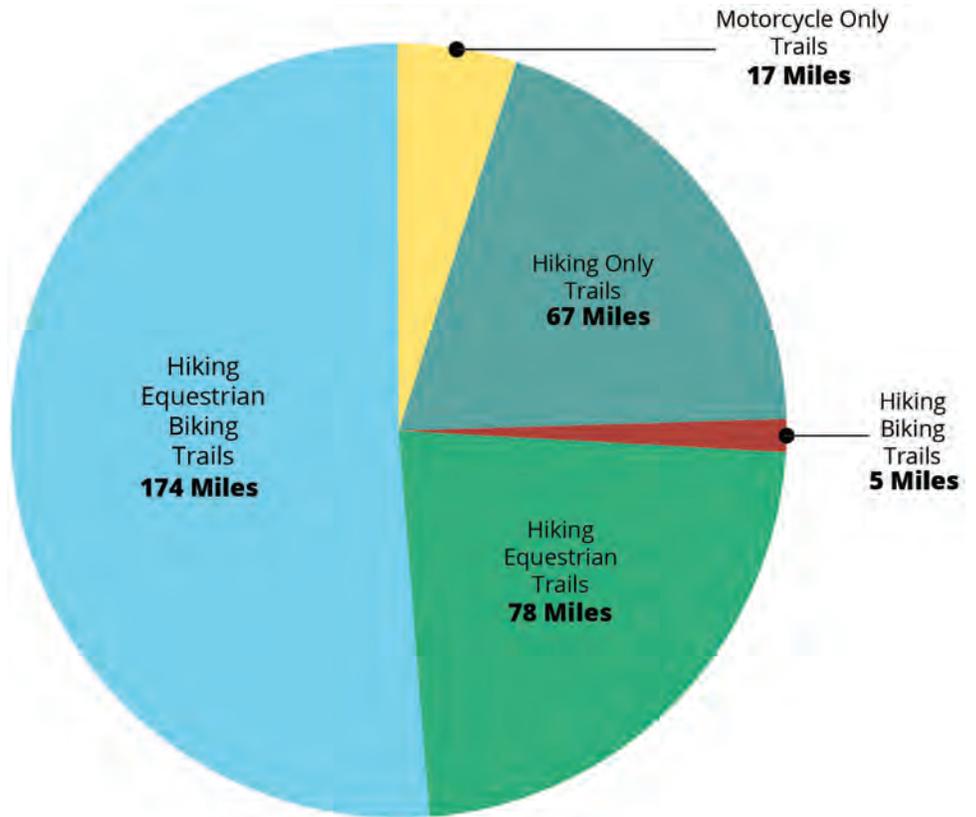


Table A-2 Park Access

DISTANCE FROM A COUNTY PARK	DISTANCE & MODE OF ACCESS	DURATION OF TRAVEL	PORTION OF POPULATION WITHIN DISTANCE
10 miles	A longer distance appropriate for distance cyclists and cars.	Approx. 20-30 min drive	99% (100% in dev. areas)
5 miles	A longer distance, appropriate for fitness cyclists, possibly equestrians. More commonly a driving distance.	Approx. 10-15 min drive	90%
2 miles	A medium distance good for cyclists, runners, and other fitness-oriented park users as well as equestrians.	Approx. 10 min biking, 20 min jogging pace	13%
½ mile	A short-distance trip. Typical for walking, jogging, short bicycle ride.	Approx. 10 min walking	3%

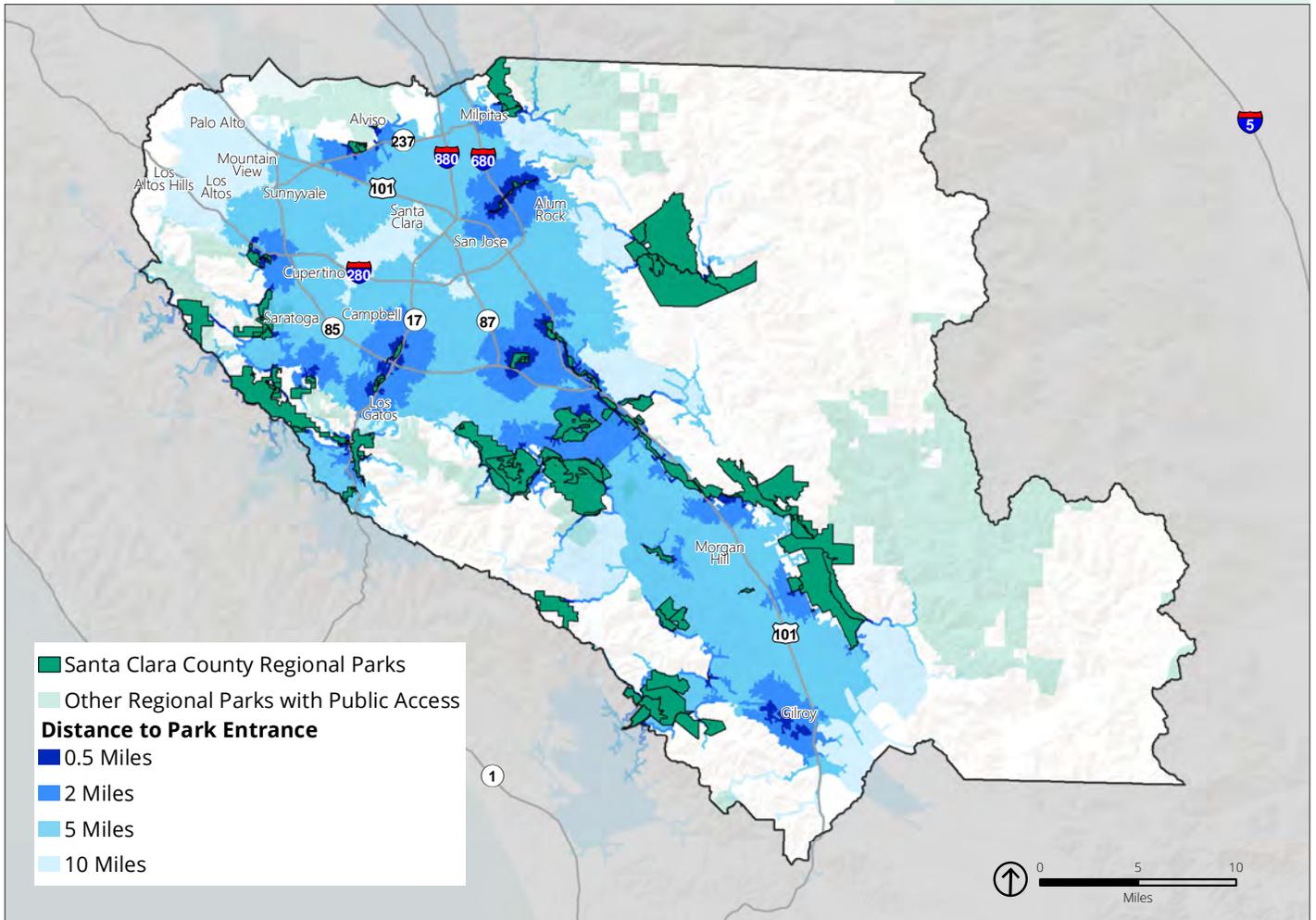


Figure A-6 Access to Santa Clara County Parks

Access to Parks

While only three percent of the county’s population resides within a half mile or ten-minute walk from a county park, approximately thirteen percent reside within two miles. These residents can access a county park by biking approximately ten minutes or jogging approximately 20 minutes. Ninety percent of county residents live within five miles or a ten to fifteen-minute drive, and ninety-nine percent of county residents live within ten miles of a county park. Table 2 lists the various distances used to define park access. Figure 6 maps the areas that have county parks access.

Approximately 42% of county residents live within a quarter mile from public transit that accesses a county park. Transit access varies, with the most accessibility to parks in an urban setting, such as Los Gatos Creek, Vasona Lake, Martial Cottle, Hellyer, and others.

B. Historic and Cultural Resources

Santa Clara County Parks are home to a variety of sites of regional historic interest. There are 34 in the County's official Geographic Information System (GIS) database, although there is potential for many additional smaller sites to exist, undiscovered, throughout the system. Sites vary from small historic markers to buildings or complexes, from archaeological points to sites hidden alongside a remote wooded trail or located along a well-known roadway, as in the case of the Casa Grande -Almaden Quicksilver Mining Museum. Other regionally-significant cultural or historic sites include:

- Bernal-Gulnac-Joice Ranch, Santa Teresa County Park
- Chitactac Adams – Native American site
- Joseph D. Grant Ranch Complex
- Martial Cottle Park

In its oversight role, County Parks has the potential to pursue any combination of the following levels of management of historic and cultural resources:

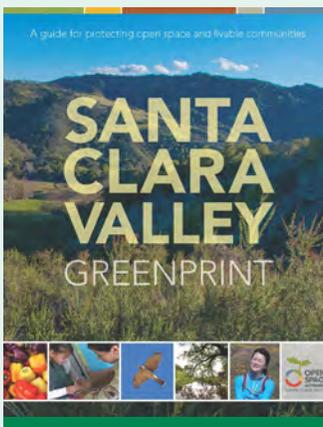
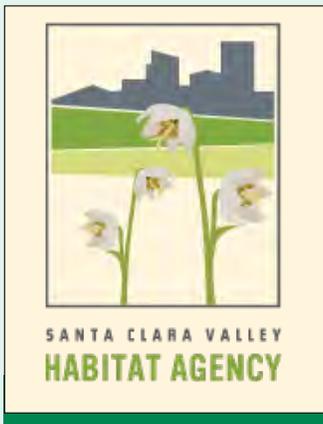
- **Protect:** Keep safe or shield in effort to maintain existing integrity
- **Preserve:** Maintain or sustain free from deterioration
- **Restore:** Return to former or original condition
- **Interpret:** To explain, describe the meaning, or disperse information
- **Allow arrested decay:** Protect only to the extent that features decline or deteriorate naturally

C. Natural Resources

Santa Clara County Parks has contributed to much of the exceptional work related to natural communities, land conservation and stewardship, critical species, and critical corridors in Santa Clara County that has been carried out by partner agencies in the region. As such, much of the following sections draw on data and information from the OSA *Valley Greenprint*, *Midpen Vision Plan*, the Bay Area Open Space Council's *Conservation Lands Network*, the Santa Clara County Habitat Conservancy's *Valley Habitat Plan*, Santa Clara County Parks data, and other related documents.

They include the following:

- Key species and habitat types
- Dependencies and threats
- Industry and regional trends
- Partnerships



Key Species and Habitat Types

The location of the County plays a key role in the broad spectrum of natural community types found here as well as their capacity to support a tremendous diversity of flora and fauna. As many as 147 special-status plant and animal species occur or have the potential to occur in the many natural communities / landcover types that occur in County parks. A *land cover type* is defined as the dominant character of the land surface discernible from aerial photographs, as determined by vegetation, water, or human uses. Land cover types are the most widely used units of measurement in analyzing ecosystem function, habitat diversity, natural communities, wetlands and streams, and covered species habitat. The seven regional landcover types found in Santa Clara County parks are:

- Grassland
- Chaparral and coastal scrub
- Oak forest or woodland
- Riparian forest and scrub riparian
- Conifer forest or woodland
- Wetland
- Open water

Indicators of a Healthy System

Biodiversity is the variety of plant and animal species present within a specific habitat or ecosystem. In most ecosystems, including many in Santa Clara County, it is a critical indicator of health. The existence of a wide array of species, especially rare, threatened, and endangered species, speaks to the number of dependencies that are likely being met within that system. Lack of invasive species, adequate fresh, clean water, presence of clean air, healthy soils, and other conditions are also indicators of a healthy natural system, and in many cases, of the level of awareness, responsibility, and protection of the human community beyond it.

There are 18 listed and non-listed species that are covered by the Habitat Plan and found in County Parks: Bay Checkerspot Butterfly, California Tiger Salamander, California Red-Legged Frog, Western Pond Turtle, Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog, Western Burrowing Owl, Least Bell's Vireo, Tricolored Blackbird, San Joaquin Kit Fox, Serpentine Plants (Tiburon Indian Paintbrush, Coyote Ceanothus, Santa Clara Valley Dudleya, Fragrant Fritillary, Most Beautiful Jewelflower, Metcalf Canyon Jewelflower, Smooth Lessingia, Mt. Hamilton Thistle), and Non-Serpentine Plants (Loma Prieta Hoita). There are also a number of other special-status species that are not covered by the Habitat Plan but are considered whenever the Department undertakes a project within a County park. The Department also considers impacts to all nesting birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, all fully protected species under the California Fish and Game Code, and special plants cited by the California Native Plant Society.

Dependencies & Threats

Protected Corridors and Interconnected Habitat

Prior to human development, wildlife could move freely across the landscape, searching for places and resources that fulfilled their various basic needs: food, water, shelter, community, mates, etc. However, as the human population increases and development spreads, those once large swaths of undisturbed landscape become fragmented, and wildlife are either trapped within so-called habitat “islands” or forced to find whatever small connections remain in order to move from one area to another. Thus, as urbanization and development expand their reach, wildlife become increasingly reliant on protected corridors to ensure their ability to move from resource to resource. Depending on the species,¹ requirements vary from regional (millions of acres) to local (ten to thousands of acres) to highly localized (10 to several thousand acres) (Conservation Lands Network 2011)¹. Figure 7 shows protected lands and critical linkages for wildlife in the county and region.

Beyond protected corridors, many species rely on very specific habitat conditions to survive. These special habitat types often have limited distribution or have become rare as a result of habitat fragmentation. The specific focus areas and critical habitats that County Parks prioritizes are as follows:

- Coastal redwood forest protection
- Sea level rise impacts to shoreline marsh and upland areas
- Groundwater protection through recharge/infiltration
- Riparian habitat restoration to improve steelhead movement
- Forest health management to allow natural succession in wooded areas
- Grassland and oak woodland management through grazing to control wildfire and invasive species

¹ Conservation Lands Network 2011

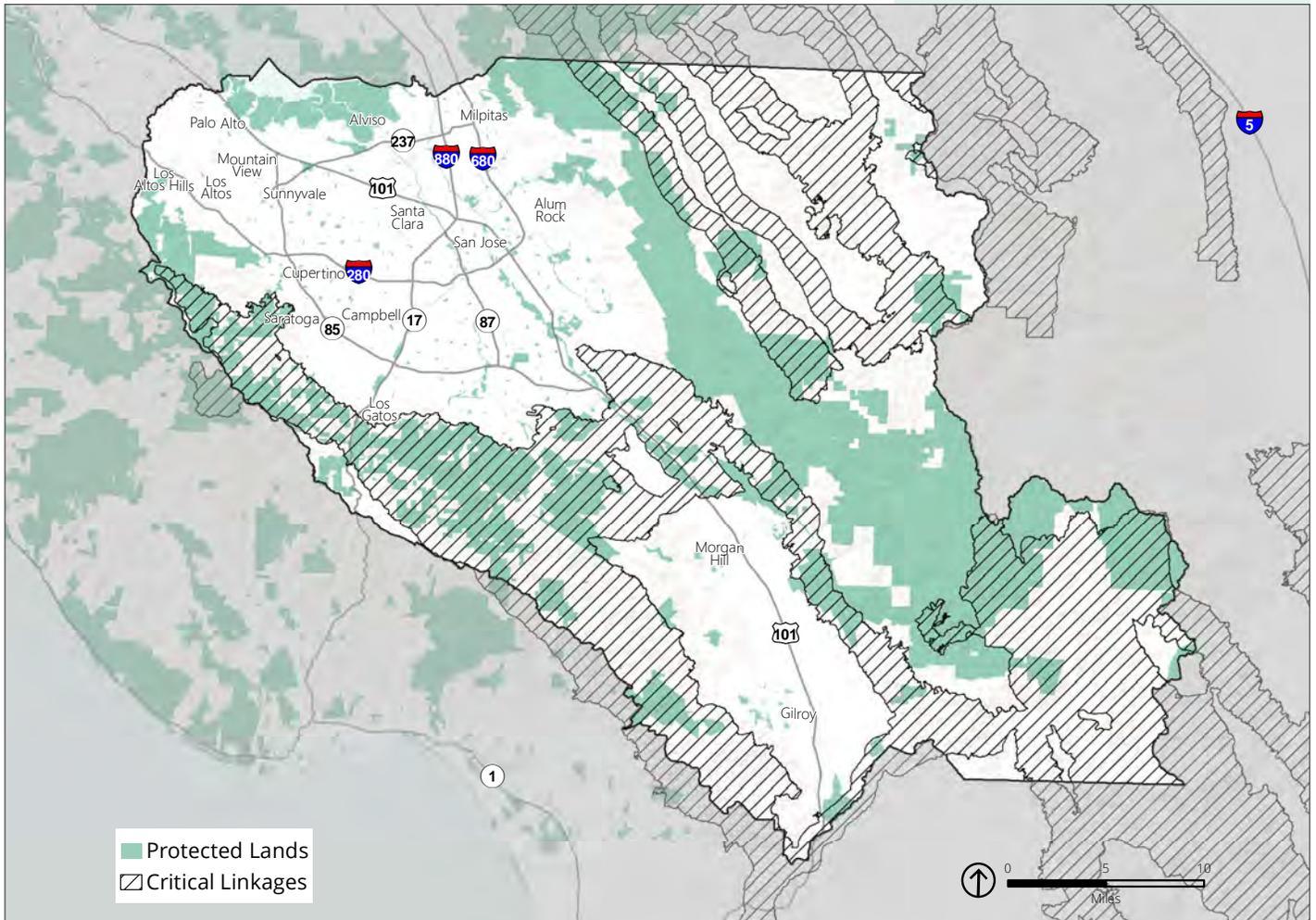


Figure A-7 Regional Parks and Critical Linkages

Access Management

Highly sensitive plants and animals may require less human access to ensure the long-term success of the species. The presence of humans can disrupt the behaviors of animal species, and access can also harm certain plants by introducing invasive species, disturbing soils, and causing general physical destruction. In some cases, habitat protection goals are dependent on human awareness of the importance of natural systems. County Parks plays a critical role in this area, where park planning and design, interpretive programs, informational signage, and strategic ranger enforcement can help educate and reduce impacts from people as the Department strives to achieve public access while protecting and preserving the natural environment.

Development and the Urban Setting

As described at the outset of this chapter, development encroachment and urbanization create some of the greatest challenges to healthy natural communities in the region. As the population increases, more places must be found to house people, and pressure grows to develop outlying areas, resulting in habitat fragmentation and disruption of wildlife movement corridors. Even when development does not “sprawl”

into the physical spaces occupied by nature, it can still be threatened by urbanization's residual effects. Growing cities' impacts reach beyond their boundaries via invasive weeds and animals, creating infestations and spreading disease. More vehicles and consumption of fossil fuels, as well as other byproducts of industry, contribute pollutants into the air, resulting in changed weather patterns, added soil pollutants that promote (or prefer) annual non-native vegetation over native species, and other negative effects. The growing population means increased wildfire potential, degradation of water quality, and an increased demand for recreational use of open spaces. These negative impacts have led the Department to shift toward a regional landscape-level management approach to work with partners (including non-profit and governmental agencies, etc.) to address these regional impacts. Additionally, increased recreational demand may lead to further degradation of open spaces and parklands, as well as increased potential for infestation and spread of disease, non-native vegetation, altering of habitats and soils, and a need for the Department to shift toward engagement and education of park visitors to reduce those impacts and build support of open space and parklands.

Climate Change

The health of people, wildlife, ecosystems, and limited natural resources are all reliant on consistency in the climate, which evidence shows is a luxury no longer enjoyed in coming years. Even conservative estimates place temperature increases between three (3) and ten (10) degrees Fahrenheit (PRBO Conservation Science 2011) by the middle of the twentieth century; a change that promises to have profound effects.² Beyond the risk of rising sea levels and associated flooding, changes in weather are also likely to cause other water-related problems, including altered rainfall patterns that will result in changed plant and animal habitat zones, extreme weather events causing surges in local creeks and other waterways that cause flooding and habitat loss, and periods of drought that studies suggest will gradually increase, leaving the region with needs exceeding available water supplies by 2035 (SPUR 2013a).³ Other impacts of climate change will likely include air quality degradation and increased risk of wildfire. The Department's role in increased education and in addressing regional impacts through partnerships and collaborations with external agencies should increase to address these regional impacts. The Department's acquisition, management, and interpretation of parklands and open space can have an impact on these regional issues.

2 PRBO Conservation Science 2011

3 SPUR 2013

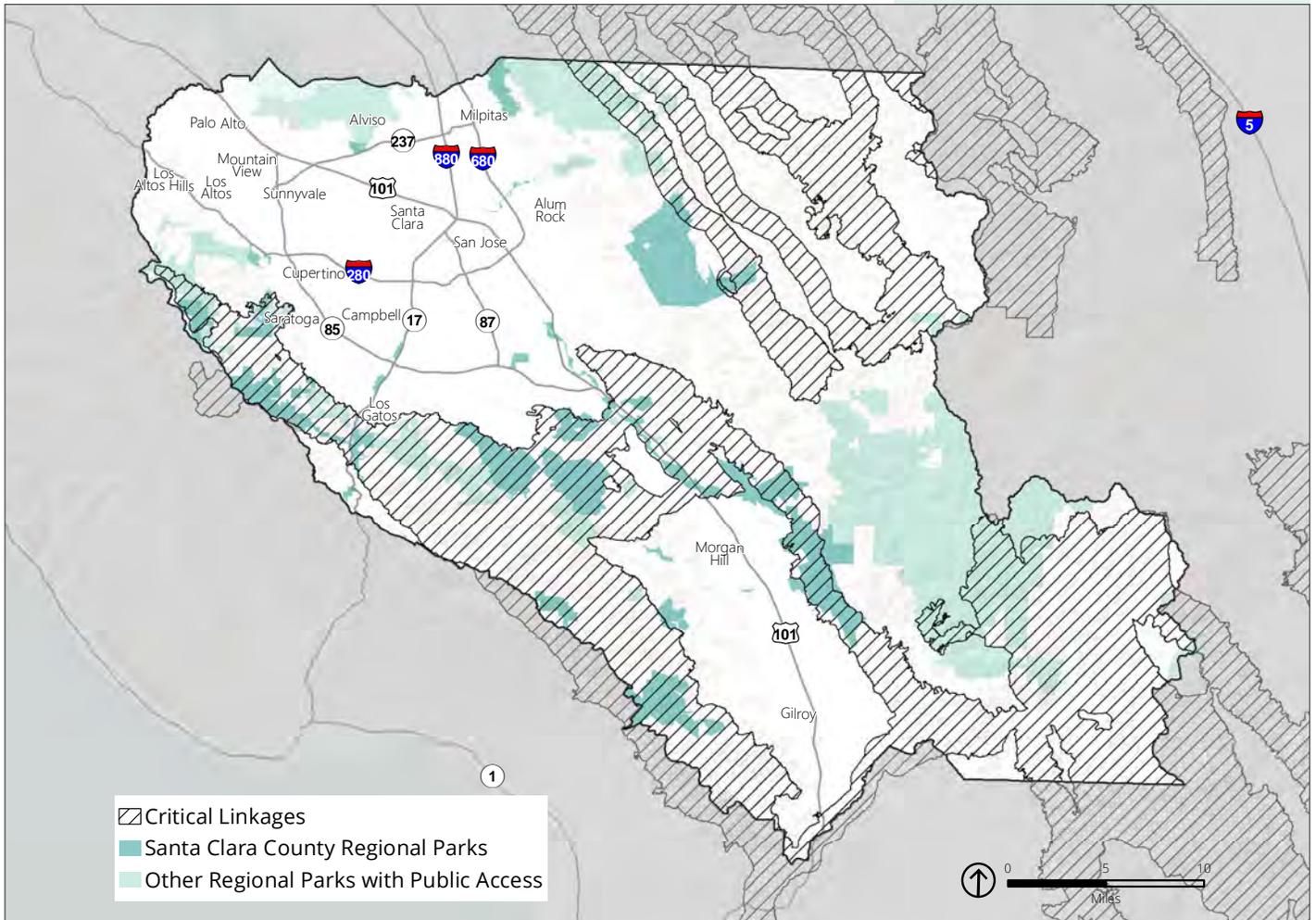


Figure A-8 Regional Parks and Critical Linkages

Industry and Regional Trends

Regional Landscape-level Management

As the economy and industry in the Bay Area continue to grow, pressure to accommodate the burgeoning population regularly puts development and open space protection at odds. Increasingly, organizations like County Parks are partnering with one another and working to protect critical landscape corridors on which wildlife rely. Additionally, a greater focus has been placed on the need for coordination across agencies that own and manage adjacent lands, to ensure that management practices are not only compatible but wherever possible, are coordinated and leverage shared goals in order to be optimally effective. This approach is often referred to as “landscape- or regional-level management.”

One exceptional effort in the area of landscape level management is the Conservation Lands Network (CLN), an initiative of the Bay Area Open Space Council. The Department is an active member in this initiative, as well as associated initiatives such as Critical Linkages, as the intent of the CLN was to identify vital wildlife corridors in the nine Bay Area

counties plus Santa Cruz, San Benito, Monterey, Mendocino, and Lake counties. The results offer a detailed analysis and identify high-priority areas where maintenance or restoration of ecological connectivity is most critical for sustaining wildlife diversity and movement. These efforts have also provided analysis and recommendations that have influenced the Department's land management activities and acquisition strategies. Critical linkages within Santa Clara County are shown in Figure 8.

Adaptive Resource Management

While efforts such as the CLN and the Critical Linkages Report identify land areas that are important for protection, other efforts focus on data gathering and monitoring of existing protected areas and their functionality. "Adaptive resource management" is another land management approach in the field of open space conservation. Adaptive resource management aims to improve outcomes over time by using system monitoring and other available data to inform management practices. Under this definition, adaptive resource management is a tool both for change and for learning. Given the Bay Area's high number of educational institutions and conservation-focused organizations and initiatives, ample information is available for use in adaptive resource management practices at County Parks in the years to come. The Department works collaboratively with these institutions, using parklands as research areas as well as working collaboratively with partner agencies so information regarding impacts, as well as success, can be shared. These collaborations help engage the community and provide understanding and opportunity to park users.

Ecosystem Services

The term "ecosystem services" has been coined to label the important benefits that healthy natural systems offer the overall region, many of which stretch far beyond the boundaries of protected lands. Clean air and water, reduced risk of flooding, improved carbon sequestration, erosion control, and improved resilience to climate change can all be considered ecosystem services. Various local initiatives, including Healthy Lands & Healthy Economies, organized by OSA and Santa Cruz and Sonoma counties, and the East Bay Regional Park District's report *Quantifying our Quality of Life* help spotlight this "natural capital," and attempt to assign it an economic value. According to the *Healthy Lands & Healthy Economies* report, for example, the protected lands and services provided by County Parks and others in Santa Clara County represent an estimated dollar value to the County between \$1.6 and \$3.9 billion dollars per year (Batker et al. 2014).⁴ In coming years, County Parks is moving toward a more data-driven natural resource program, and could play a greater role in initiatives like these, and participation may assist the Department in identifying more unconventional strategic funding and investment partnerships outside of those developed in the past.

4 Batker et al 2014

Partnerships

As described in several sections above, land management and protection practices are increasingly reliant on collaboration between multiple organizations as well as with the community. These partnerships increase the chances for success, and not only help entities like County Parks leverage the strengths of partners to fill in gaps in capacity, but also provide for a more meaningful management purpose as the natural environment does not adhere to jurisdictional boundaries as agencies typically do. Modern technology makes data and information sharing easier and faster, and broadens opportunities for communication, including chances to meet virtually rather than expend fossil fuels travelling to meetings in person. Partnerships in the modern world are no longer a goal or a vision as described in the 2003 Strategic Plan, they are a necessary tool in the implementation of optimally effective regional landscape -level management. They inform the protection of critical landscape linkages, provide data, information, and talent sharing to achieve shared goals.

Key partners of Santa Clara County Parks include:

- SCVWD
- Midpen
- OSA
- Valley Habitat Conservancy
- CDFW
- USFWS
- POST

Useful reports and documents include:

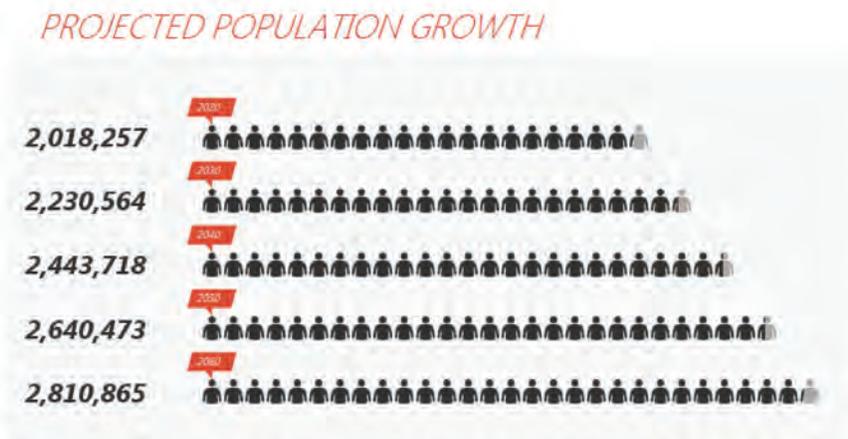
- The *Habitat Plan* offers a program for the protection of natural resources, in particular the rarest plant and animal species in the County, while streamlining the permitting process for development projects. The conservation strategy calls for the protection of nearly 34,000 acres over the next 40 years via an open space reserve system.
- Plan Bay Area (identifies Priority Conservation Areas)
- Golden Lands, Golden Opportunity
- Critical Linkages Report
- CLN Upland Habitat Goals Reports 1 & 2

D. County Demographics

With 15 cities and a current population of almost two million, Santa Clara County is the Bay Area's most populated county. The population is projected to increase to around 2.5 million by 2040, growing at a faster rate than the State and all other counties in the region. Population density is also projected to increase; while the majority of developed portions of the county currently hover under 9.7 residents per acre, that number will likely jump to 13.6 residents per acre by 2040. With increasing density and overall population, pressure on nearby natural resources, including those housed within County parks, will also grow. Population growth is shown in Figure 9 and mapped for geographic context in Figure 10.

While the County's population is expanding overall, so too is its diversity. Compared to others in the State, Santa Clara County is a very diverse county, with Hispanic/Latino, Asian, and White racial categories making up the largest segments of the population. Figures 11 and 12 show the ethnic composition of Santa Clara County and California, respectively. Within those major groups, however, the Asian population is also very diverse within itself, including a distribution from those of Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Filipino, and Chinese descent making up most of that group. The Hispanic/Latino population, by comparison, is comprised primarily of those of Mexican descent. Racial and ethnic distribution in the County is not geographically equal. While southern portions of the County, including the cities of Morgan Hill and Gilroy, see higher numbers of Hispanic and Latino residents, Milpitas and other cities in the north have a much higher Asian population (as shown in Figures 13 and 14.) Throughout much of the County, Caucasians are in the minority, with the exception of the western cities, such as Los Gatos. In keeping with this trend towards increasing diversity, recent data also shows that an increasing portion of the population was born outside the United States (depicted in Figure 15); currently that number stands at nearly 38%.

Figure A-9 Estimated Population Growth



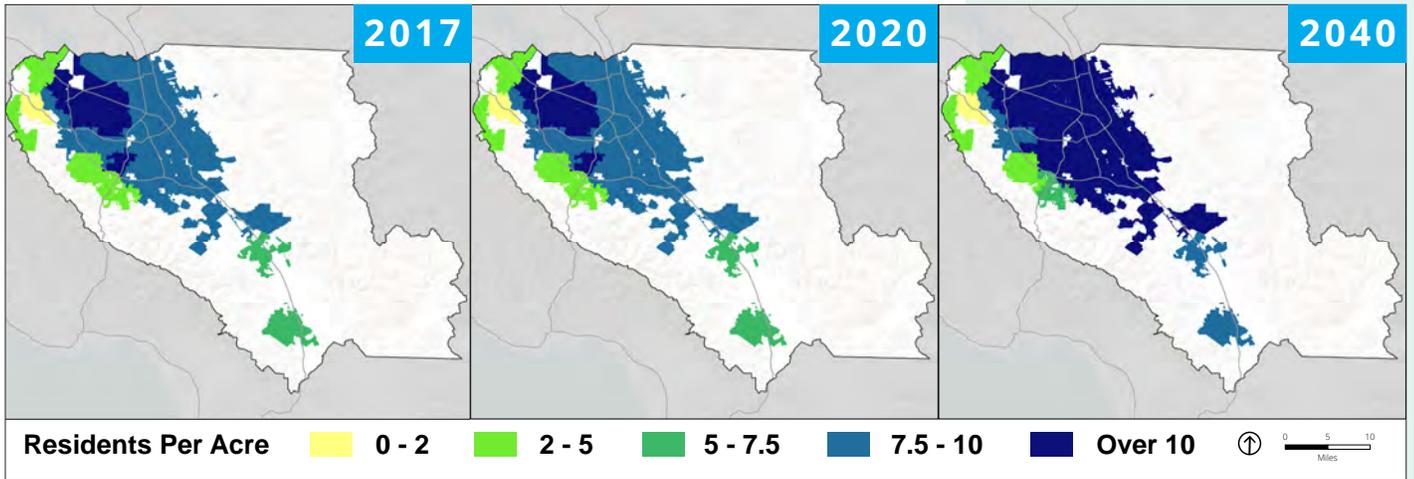


Figure A-10 Estimated Geographic Population Growth

Figure A-11 Ethnicity Composition of Santa Clara County

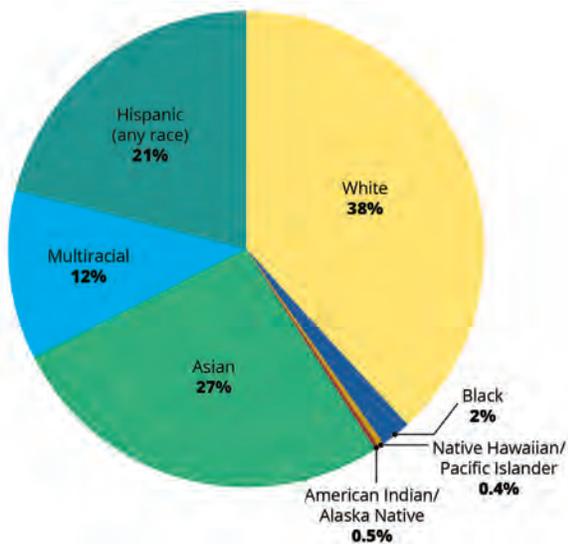
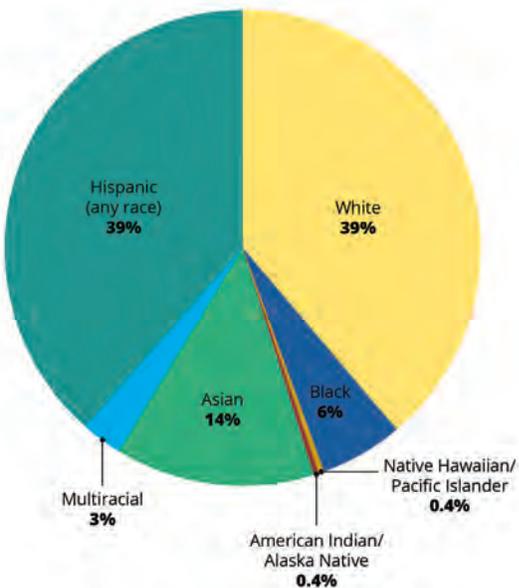


Figure A-12 Ethnicity Composition of California



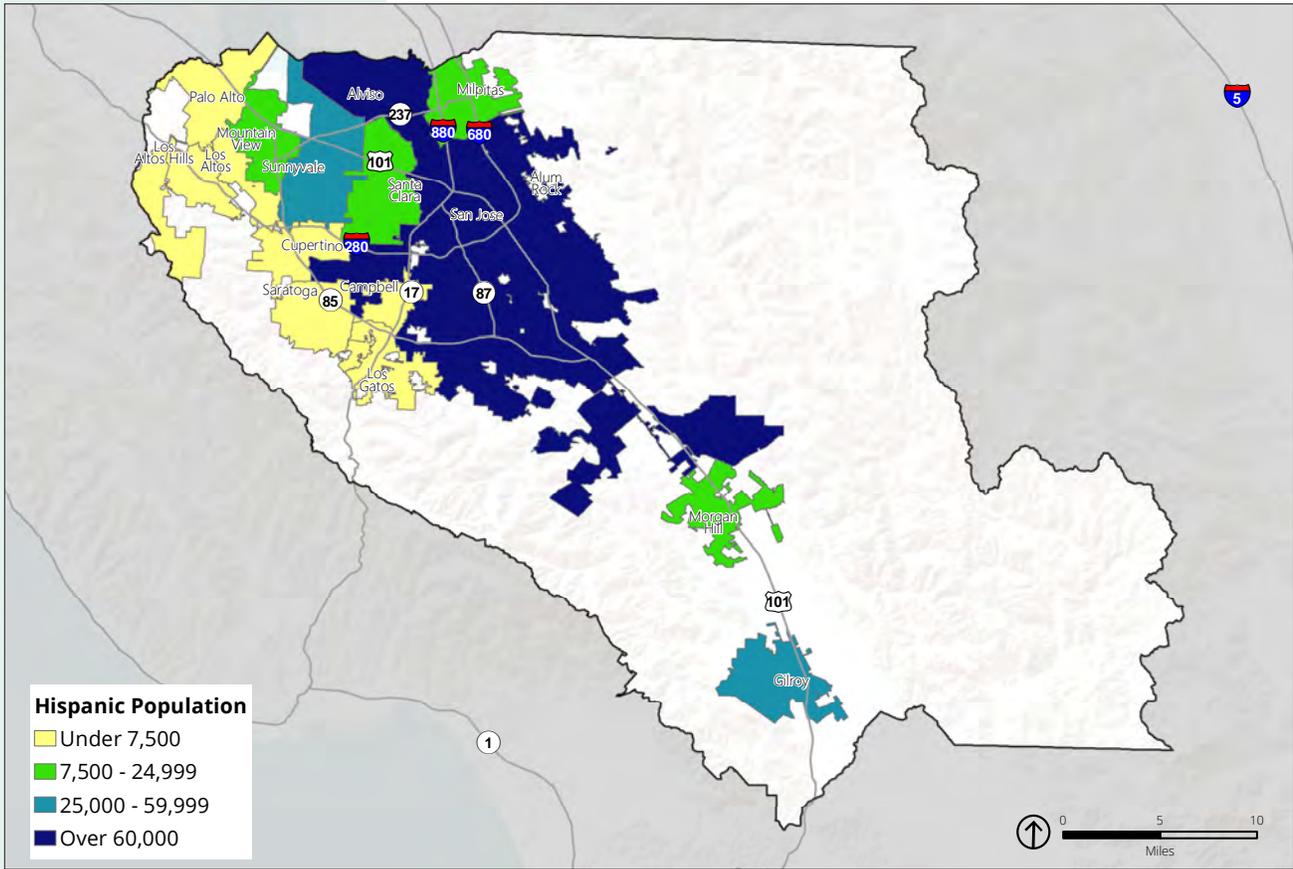


Figure A-13 Map of Hispanic/Latino Population Distribution

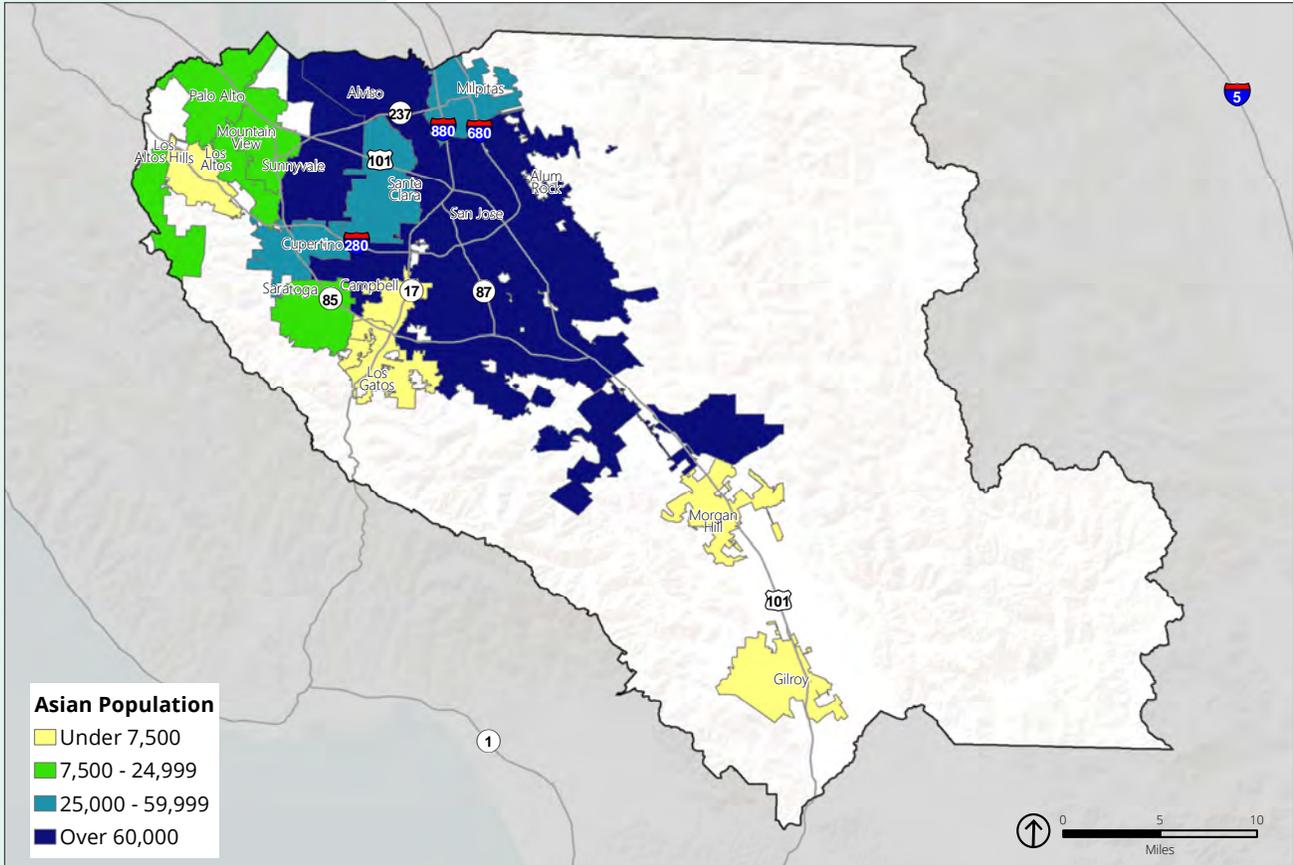
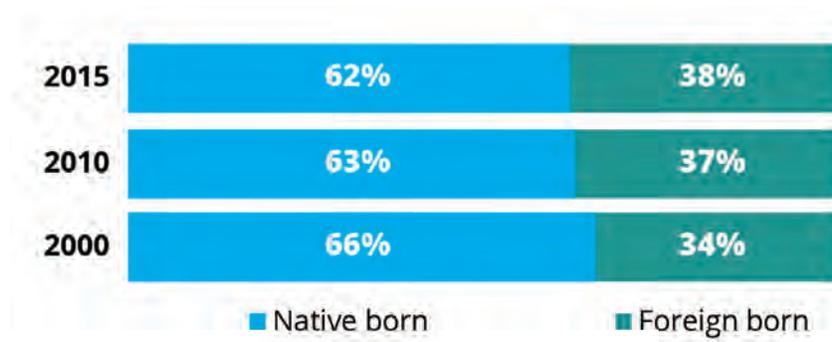


Figure A-14 Map of Asian Population Distribution

Figure A-15 Foreign Born vs Native Born



There are several other key factors regarding the evolving population of Santa Clara County that are of interest to the Parks Department. Interestingly for a regional park agency, the demographics of a city where a park is located may not be represented by park users, as the park may be a regional attractant drawing park users from throughout the region. As medical care and access to it improve, the population of the County is aging. By 2030, more than 1 in 4 residents will be over the age of 65, according to the Health Element of the General Plan.⁵ Educational attainment in the County is high by comparison to the State, likely due to the high number of tech sector jobs offered in Silicon Valley, but pockets of very low rates of education remain, particularly in the densest urban areas. Lastly, while Santa Clara County enjoys a generally healthier population than the State, cancer and heart disease remain the leading causes of death, and high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, and obesity continue to affect many adults and children.

5 County of Santa Clara 2013

E. Outreach and Market Trends

Information gathered regarding public and staff input as well as market trends used to inform the Needs Assessment are summarized below.

Public Input Resulting from Strategic Plan Outreach

Online Activities

An online engagement tool (see: interactive website) was open for participation during the months of April and May of 2017. It offered two activities. The first was a prioritization activity related to the Department Vision, and the second activity featured an interactive map of the County Parks system on which participants could rate and comment on places they have visited and offer feedback and ideas.

Within the prioritization exercise, the maintenance and expansion of parks, trails, and facilities as well as natural resource preservation were identified as the highest priorities. Other high priorities included healthy ecosystems and regional trail connections. "Technology to enhance the park visitor experience" was ranked as the lowest priority, with substantially fewer votes than the next lowest priority which was "opportunities to stay physical active and healthy."

In regard to the interactive mapping activity, the parks that received the greatest number of comments were Almaden Quicksilver County Park, Coyote Lake-Harvey Bear Ranch County Park, and Joseph D. Grant County Park. The majority of ratings were "exceptional" and "good," and only three parks received ratings of "poor." Positive comments indicated satisfaction with trails, facilities, and open space. However, suggestions for improvements that would enhance park experience included better parking, more restrooms, signage, and crowd management.

Negative comments suggested the need for additional mountain bike access, a better campground reservation system, and general maintenance of park facilities and cleanliness. "Poor" ratings for Almaden Quicksilver were all based on lack of convenient mountain

bike access.

In-Person Outreach (Events and Workshop)

Seven in-person outreach efforts were conducted between April and May 2017. This section provides an overview of participation and outcomes.

Outreach efforts included tabling at pre-established community events and a workshop conducted on May 3, 2017, prior to a Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. County Parks selected events based on anticipated volume of participants as well as location with the goal of dispersing events throughout the County and reaching both park users and non-park users, in exchange for the more traditional public meeting model in which many of the same interested users participate at every event. Events attended include:

- Morgan Hill Farmers' Market – Saturday, April 15, 2017
- SoFA Street Fair – Sunday, April 23, 2017
- Martial Cottle Spring Festival – Saturday, May 6, 2017
- Mountain View Art-A-la-Carte – Sunday, May 7, 2017
- Berryessa Art Festival – Saturday, May 13, 2017
- Bay Area Open Space Council – Thursday, May 18, 2017

These in-person outreach efforts together had the greatest level of participation during the Strategic Plan outreach process, collecting responses from 1,031 participants. Mirroring the online activities, in-person activities included a prioritization activity and mapping activity. Table 3 compares cumulative results for online and in-person outreach. As shown in Table 3, high and low priorities are almost identical for the two methods.

Participants were also invited to identify “other priorities”. The most frequently identified “other” priorities included:

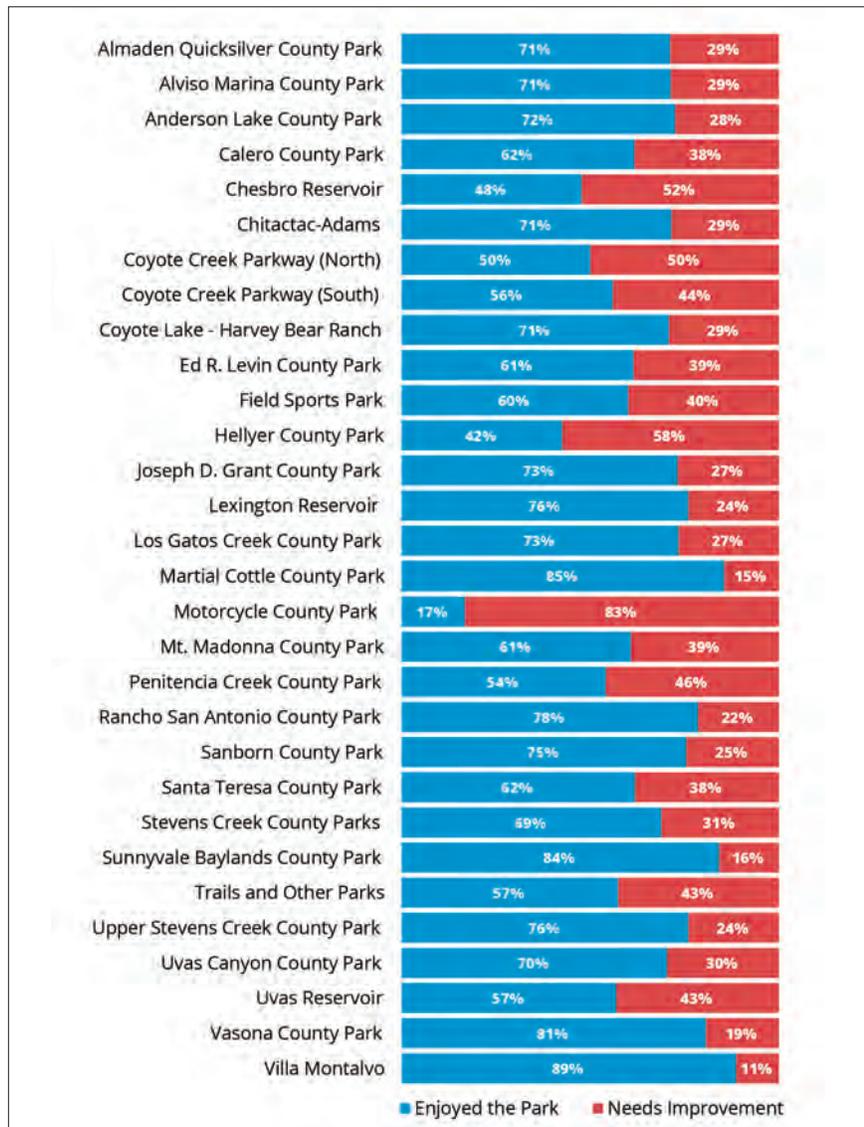
- Dog-friendly parks (off-leash trails, dog parks, etc.)
- More/less expensive parking
- More recreational facilities/activities (swimming, boating, fishing, disc golf, etc.)

In the second activity, participants were asked: “Let us know what parks you enjoy the most and where you envision a change.” In general, participants identified more parks that they enjoyed than parks where they envisioned a change. Comments indicated satisfaction with trails, parks, and open space, as well as demand for additional trails and facilities. Comments also indicated the need for better maintenance (e.g. trails, cleanliness, etc.), as well as expanded or new facilities. The most frequently mentioned facilities and amenities included signage, safety elements on trails through urban areas, parking, boating on lakes or reservoirs, trails (including bike trails), picnic areas, and camping. There were also several inquiries about new park and trail openings. Figure 16 summarizes cumulative results for online and in-person outreach.

Table A-3 Cumulative Priority Rankings

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PRIORITY RANK	EVENT & WORKSHOP PRIORITY RANK	PRIORITIES
1*	1	Maintain and expand parks, trails, and facilities
2	2	Natural resource preservation, including habitat and water quality
3	5	Healthy ecosystems and lessening the impacts of climate change
4	4	Regional trail connections for recreation and as alternative to driving
5	3	Add new parks, trails, and facilities
6	8	Improve access to parks for everyone
7	7	Protect cultural and historic sites and buildings
8	6	More recreational and educational services and programs
9	9	Opportunities to stay physically active and healthy
10	10	Technology to enhance the park visitor experience

Figure A-16 Cumulative Park-Specific Comments



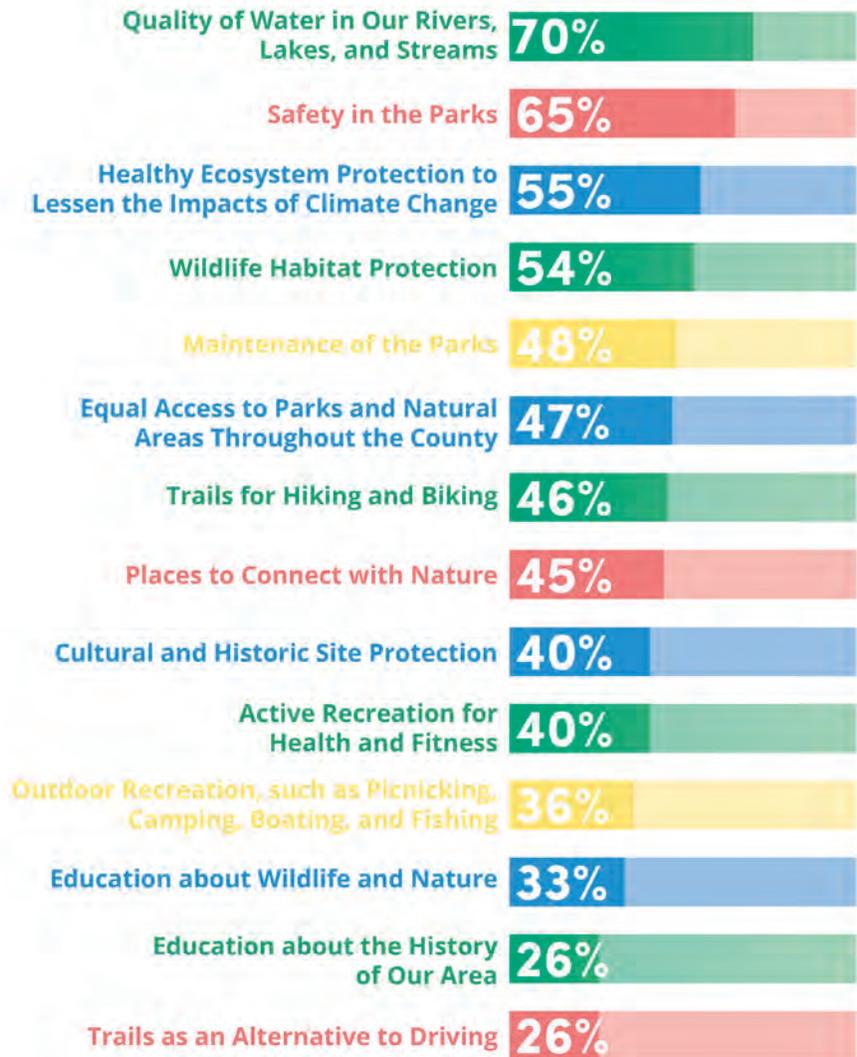
Telephone Survey of Voters

A telephone survey of voters in Santa Clara County was conducted for County Parks by EMC Research in April 2017. The survey was both part of a larger ongoing effort by County Parks to track satisfaction with, and support of, the Department's work, as well as a tool for gathering input related to the Strategic Plan. An overview of respondents and key findings is provided below.

As part of the survey, EMC Research assessed how Santa Clara County valued existing services provided in Santa Clara County Parks as a part of their most recent telephone survey conducted in April 2017. Figure 17 shows the prioritization of services which residents felt were most important. The majority of surveyed residents indicated that protecting natural resources such as wildlife habitat, healthy ecosystems, and water quality is extremely important.

Input received as a result of the telephone survey indicated that Santa Clara County voters have very positive views of their County parks. A majority report that they use the parks and are happy with their visits; they give the Department positive ratings on its core responsibilities, and voters almost unanimously agree that County parks, facilities, and programs make the area a more desirable place to live. Additionally, respondents prioritized the maintenance and improvement of existing County park facilities over expanding them, mirroring outcomes of the other Strategic Plan outreach efforts. Other input included the strong valuation of visitor safety, along with water, ecosystem, and habitat protection. Analysis of response patterns indicated that bolstering public awareness of the Department's dual role in water, ecosystem, and habitat protection, and providing recreational opportunities is likely to benefit the organization's connection with its customers in coming years.

Figure A-17 Most Important Existing Santa Clara County Park Services



Staff Perception of Visitor Preferences

As part of Strategic Plan planning process, staff surveys were conducted in January and March of 2017. The surveys solicited input on the existing Mission Statement and the draft Vision, perceived customer preferences and needs, employee satisfaction, recommendations for improved departmental efficiency, and input on existing departmental processes. According to staff observation and experience, the five facilities most used by the public are restrooms, multi-use trails, individual picnic sites, reservable group picnic sites, and tent campsites. Figure 18 shows the ranking of existing facility use from the staff perspective. Facilities with the lowest reported use included hang glider facilities, RC model airfields, equestrian facilities, and yurts.

Improvements to existing facilities that would most improve the visitors' experience, according to park staff, included the themes of updating facilities to modern standards and adding facilities to meet the demand of a growing population. The need to increase staffing to support growing visitor needs was also identified. Specific facilities identified for improvement included:

- **Restrooms.** Both maintenance of existing and need for additional facilities.
- **Trails and wayfinding.** Development of additional trails and expanding the effort to maintain existing trails and access points.
- **Signage and Maps.** Provide more and better signage and maps, including bilingual (Spanish) signage.
- **Park buildings.** Remodel or restore park buildings, including offices, historic buildings, and visitor centers.
- **Camping facilities.** More campsites, improvements to the reservation system, and additional facilities, such as camp stores, to improve the camping experience. A lesser percent of respondents identified cabins as a preferable alternative to yurts.

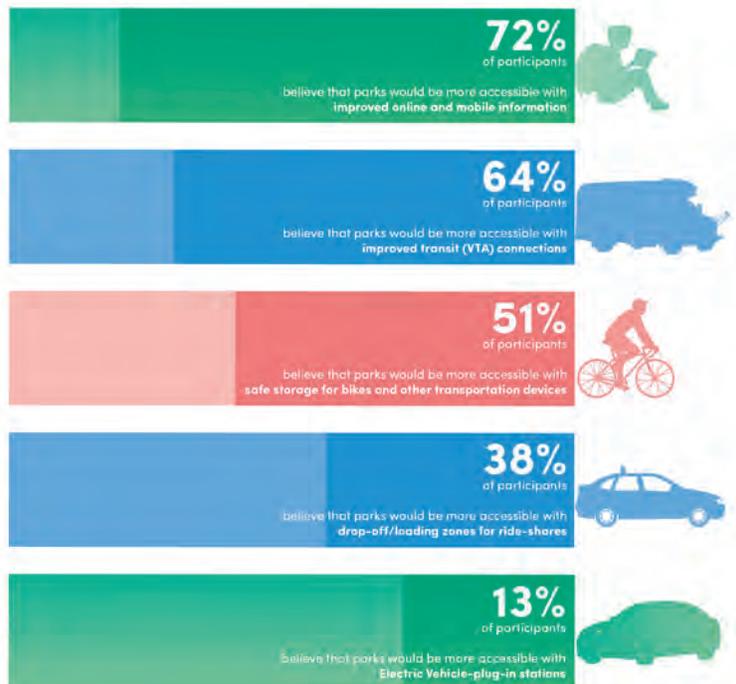
Other new amenities staff identified to improve customer experience and increase visitation included swimming facilities, expanded mountain bike access and experiences, Wi-Fi access, adventure courses, ziplines, more variety in camping facilities (equestrian, back country, "glamping", and RV), more use-specific trails (e.g. mountain-bike only, hiker only), shaded group picnic sites, fitness courses, interactive playgrounds, off-leash dog parks, community event spaces, snack bars, radio-control car course, wildlife camera streaming, and cell towers (the latter of which emphasize the importance of Wi-Fi).

County staff were also asked about ways in which to improve access to County parks. When asked about this topic, a majority of participants identified enhanced online and mobile information, and transit (specifically VTA) connections. Over half of the survey participants agreed that safe storage for bikes and other transportation devices would improve access. Survey participants were less optimistic about the potential for drop-off/loading zones for ride-shares and electric vehicle plug-in stations to make parks easier to access. Several

Figure A-18 Staff Ranking of Facility Use



Figure A-19 Staff Input: Improvements to Park Access



participants identified other options, including removal or lessening of parking fees, adding park shuttles, and improving directional street signs and wayfinding. The staff input for improvements to park access is summarized in Figure 19.

Trends and Market demand

Top Outdoor Recreation Activities

On a national scale, demand for the types of outdoor recreation provided by regional parks has remained remarkably stable in the last decade. According to the Outdoor Foundation's 2016 report on Outdoor Recreation Participation, more than 142 million Americans, or 48.4 percent of the U.S. population, participated in an outdoor activity such as running, jogging, fishing, biking, camping, and hiking at least once in the prior year. The total number of outings has remained within 10 to 12 billion per year over the last decade, reflecting participation rates ranging from 48 to 50 percent of all Americans (Figure 20).⁶

Figure 21 illustrates the five most popular outdoor activities, as measured by the percentage of people over age 6 in the U.S. who participated at all in each activity, based on the Outdoor Foundation's report. The importance of trails, walking paths, and connectivity in parks can be seen in the demand for opportunities for running, hiking, and biking. It is also useful to consider the frequency in which people engage in each activity. Figure 21 additionally illustrates frequency of participation and the number of outings per year.

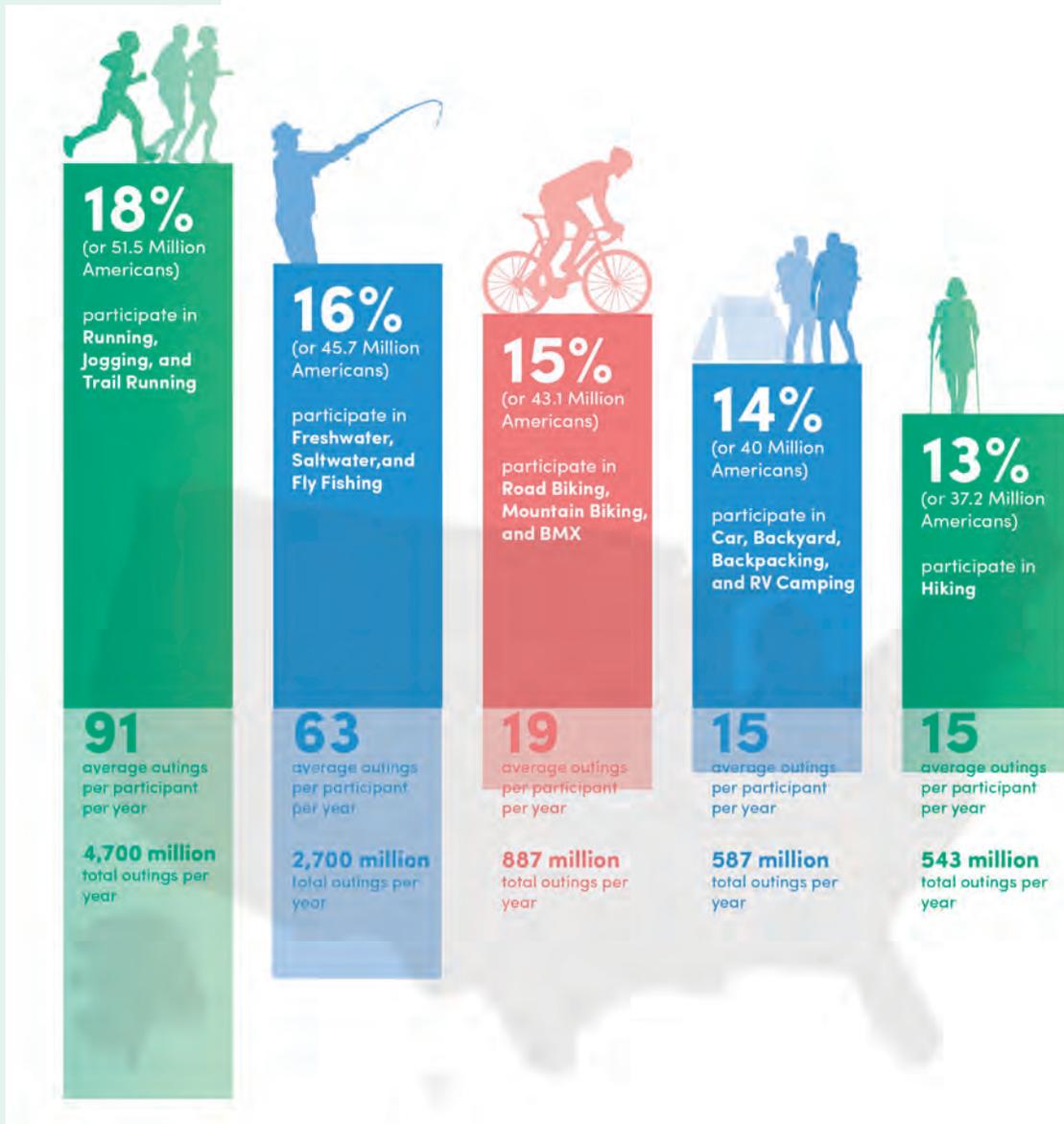
Perhaps more specifically relevant to trends in Santa Clara County,

6 The Outdoor Foundation 2016

Figure A-20 Nationwide Trends

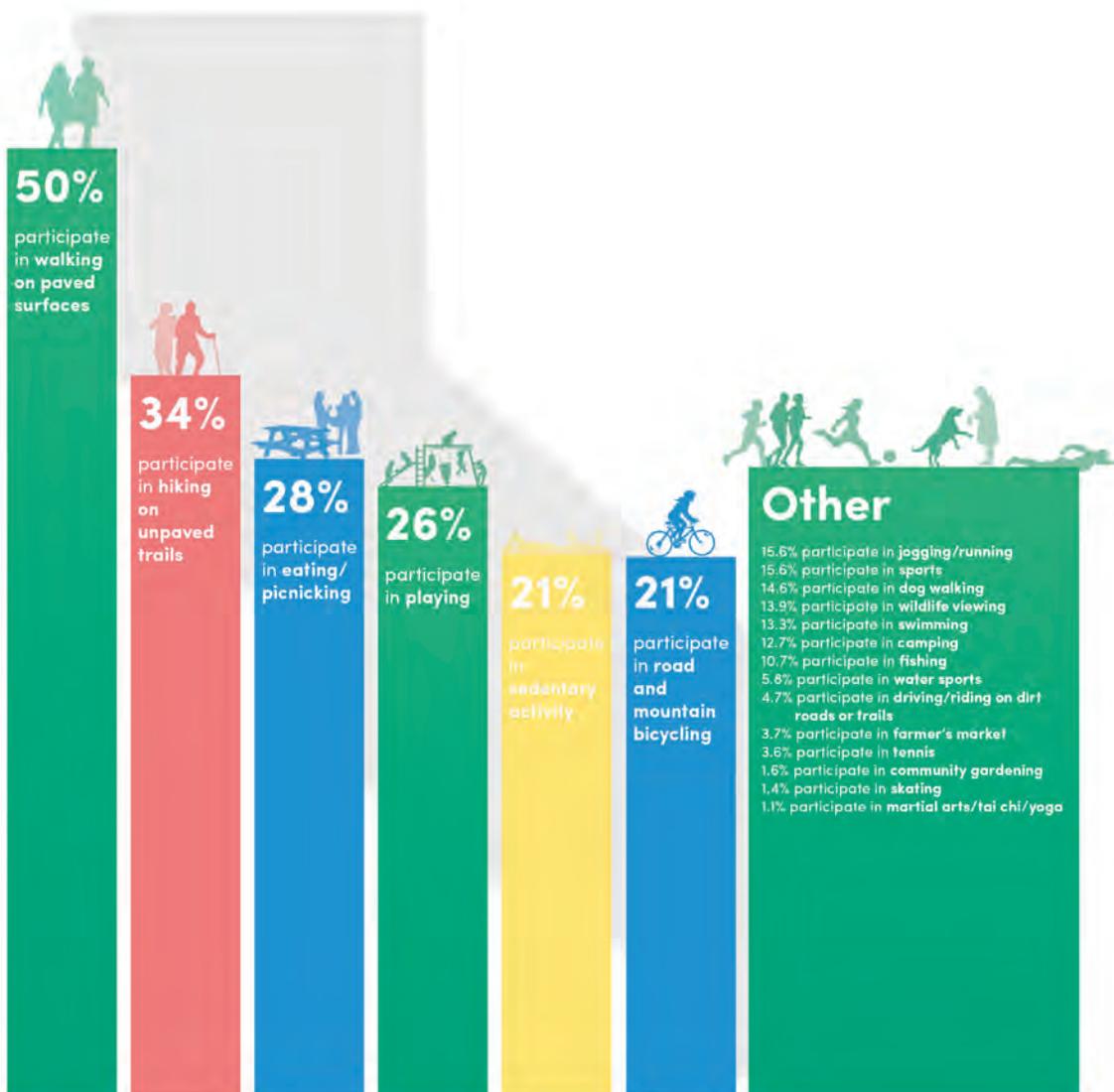


Figure A-21 Annual National Participation Rates in Outdoor Recreation



California State Parks performed a statewide survey of outdoor recreation in 2014 that documented high rates of outdoor activity, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area. Figure 22 illustrates common responses when adults were asked to identify the outdoor activities in which they participate most. Like national trends, the most popular responses included walking, hiking, picnicking, and other traditional or core uses. California State Parks also engaged young adults through a related online survey. In a notable contrast to the adult responses, young adults identified specialized recreation activities, such as mountain biking, horseback riding, and backpacking as the most popular among their age group.

Figure A-22 Activity Types



Spot intercept surveys performed by EMC Research in Santa Clara County parks in 2014 shows consistency with state and national trends. When visitors were asked what brought them to the park that day, 55 percent said they came to hike and walk. Picnicking and generally enjoying the outdoors was the second most popular category, followed by spending time in social pursuits. While these surveys may not have captured a full array of park users (mountain bikers and trail runners, for example, may not have been present in the areas of the parks where surveys were deployed), available information suggests that major use activities have stayed generally consistent since the 2003 Strategic Plan. In recreation needs assessments conducted for the County over the last two decades, walking has consistently ranked the highest in terms of participation. Bicycling has continued to increase in popularity. Other notable trends pertinent to Santa Clara County parks include:

- Use of paved and unpaved trails and scenic and wildlife viewing areas is greater in this region than others in the state.

- Camping trends over the last ten years have moved toward more social group camping, and camping facilities that feature extra amenities.
- Though not ranked high in terms of total population use, horseback riding has been, and continues to be, a strongly supported activity in Santa Clara County.

Latent demand exists for:

- Picnicking in picnic areas (with tables, fire pits, or grills)
- Walking for fitness or pleasure on paved surfaces
- Camping in developed sites with facilities such as toilets and tables (not including backpacking)
- Day hiking on unpaved trails
- Beach activities (swimming, sunbathing, surf play, wading, playing on beach)

Also consistent with national trends and as seen in the public and staff outreach processes for the Strategic Plan, Santa Clara County parks experience high demand for specialized recreation opportunities. Specialized recreation opportunities could complement traditional or core outdoor recreation demands and are dependent on open space areas and settings not available in city parks. In response to the question: “is there anything you would like to have in the park that is not currently available,” respondents mentioned a wide array of specialty services and facilities, many of which matched the items named by County Parks staff. A brief list of items identified is shown in Figure 23.

Lastly, motivations behind participation in outdoor recreation are often difficult to discern. As part of their national study, the Outdoor Foundation asked participants to indicate their motivations for visiting parks and other outdoor settings. These results, shown in Figure 24, give some clues that may relate to local use in Santa Clara County. Results indicated that the most common motivations were physical activity and fitness, social gathering, mental well-being, and opportunities to experience nature.

Figure A-23 Requested Specialized Recreation Opportunities

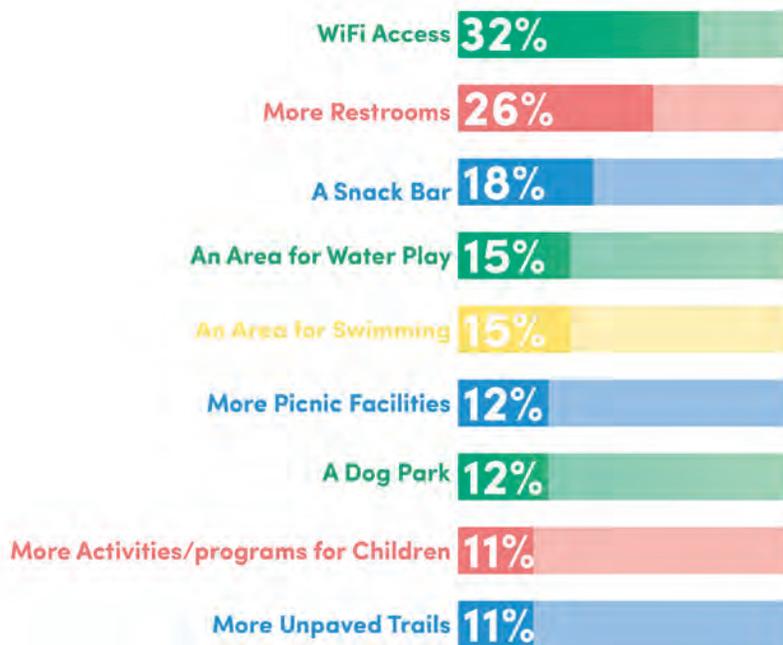
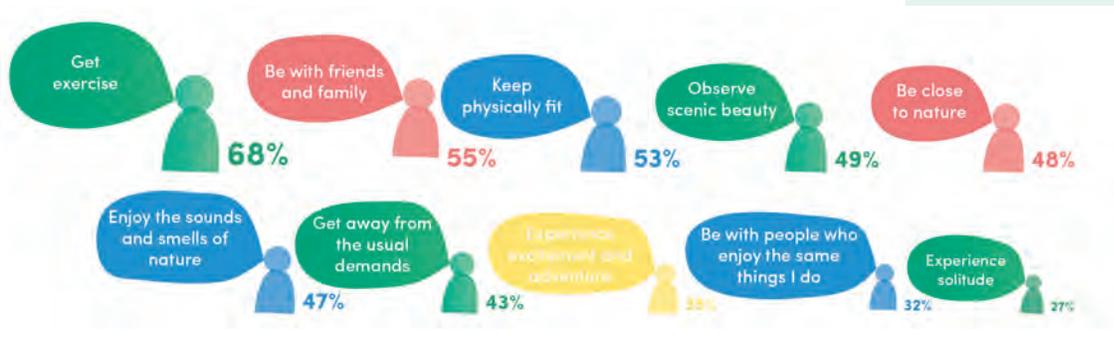


Figure A-24 Motivations for visiting Parks



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Washburn Barn
Joseph D. Grant County Park

Appendix B.

Master Practices

List

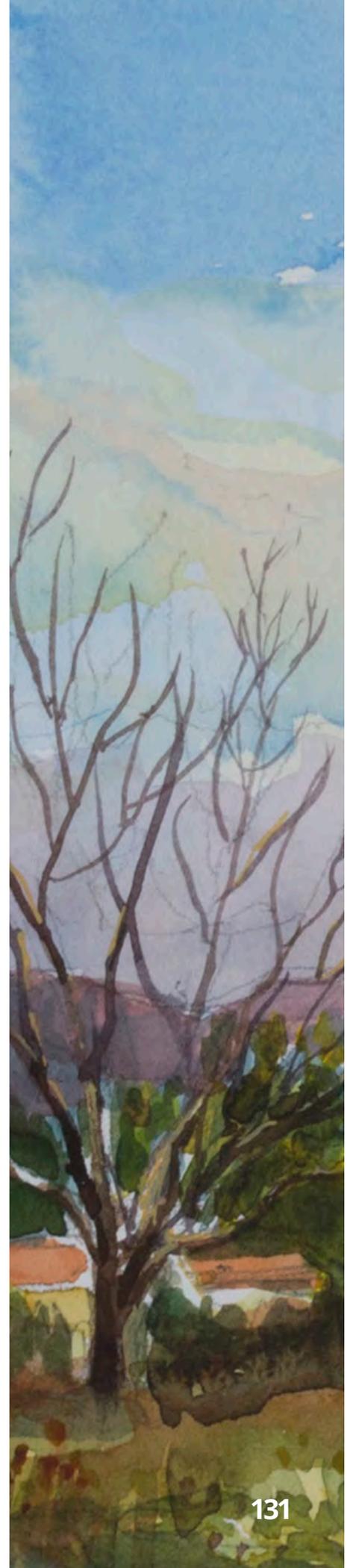
GOAL #1: Protect Natural Resources in the Context of the Greater Region

Practices

- Continue to collaborate with the Santa Clara Valley Habitat Agency in implementing the Habitat Plan and managing the resulting reserve system. Leverage shared land acquisition strategies and management practices to achieve complementary goals of landscape linkage protection and enhanced visitor access to parkland.¹
- Continue to coordinate and collaborate with regional partners on site-level resource management efforts (e.g., prescribed fires, grazing management).
- Continue to acquire land and trail routes in accordance with the priorities, policy considerations, and criteria established in the Acquisition Plan.²
- Utilize internal and regional partner data to identify areas of critical linkages. Educate appropriate staff, public, and partners, including lessees and permittees, about best management practices for habitat protection and management.
- Work directly with others to protect priority habitat linkages through land acquisition, management actions, and/or advocacy within identified priority areas.
- Monitor for “overburden” of natural areas due to public access. Periodically allow certain highly trafficked recreational amenities (e.g., popular campground sections, highly used trails) to recover as needed to allow soils, vegetation, and/or trees to recover from intensive use.
- Ensure that departmental practices minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plant species, protect water resources, and promote carbon and pollutant sequestration.
- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess

1 Santa Clara Valley Habitat Plan 2013

2 County Parks Department Parkland Acquisition Plan Update 2012



their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.

- Ensure departmental alignment with the Silicon Valley 2.0 Project, and work with the Office of Sustainability to include impacts on the natural environment and strategies to mitigate or adapt to anticipated changes.³
- Work with partner agencies and organizations to align strategies and objectives on a regional landscape level.
- Offer more programming and physical interpretive features related to natural resource protection and climate issues. Where possible, work with partner agencies, volunteers, and local artists.

GOAL #2: Meet the Needs of a Diverse Customer Base

Practices

- Continue to perform routine study of public opinion and needs through surveys, focus groups, and other methods on an annual or bi-annual basis.
- Work with partners who are focused on equity-related issues, such as those that advocate on behalf of underserved communities, to ensure they are included in park planning efforts.
- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns while also protecting resources. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.
- Offer departmental and park-specific communications in multiple languages, mediums, and formats.
- Offer more multi-lingual interpretive and recreation programming opportunities.
- Increase advertisement of available positions in culturally-specific publications and share with various culturally-based community groups. Attend career fairs targeted at diverse audiences. Coordinate with high schools, trade schools, and colleges within the County.
- Foster educational opportunities, including internship programs, that reach individuals in all communities and encourage an interest in science, park and natural resource planning and management, and other park-related studies.
- Increase the number of “easy” loop trails available near staging areas, including some that are fully accessible. Promote use of these trails to target users.

³ Silicon Valley 2.0 Project: Climate Adaptation and Resiliency 2018

- Assure that all Department communication materials (print and web formats) reflect accessibility guidelines for the visually impaired.
- Continue to apply trail layout, design, and construction standards that meet accessibility guidelines.

GOAL #3: Manage the Park System in a Fiscally Sustainable Manner

Practices

- Enhance capital improvement planning by adding operational programming and maintenance cost considerations in the Integrated Capital and Operating Plan (ICOP).
- On an ad-hoc basis, work with partners to better leverage data, staff efforts, information, and communication channels for greater efficiency.
- Increase the use of volunteers to supplement the work of staff.
- Enhance collaboration with existing and new land use and program partners (licensees, lessees, and others providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.

GOAL #4: Balance the Role of Technology

Practices

- Invent or leverage existing apps or other technology-based tools to improve park and trail wayfinding, share natural and cultural resource information, and encourage “citizen science” and other forms of interactive engagement with the public (such as reporting maintenance needs and other tracking and reporting).
- Expand coordination with partners on app-, web-, and social media-based messaging and communication.
- Use social media, especially those with translation capabilities, to provide information, particularly regarding programs, management practices, etc. to diverse populations.
- Acquire and utilize appropriate software products to better track, organize, coordinate, and manage departmental projects and efforts.
- Utilize software systems and other contemporary technological solutions to gather data and inform staff allocation.

GOAL #5: Elevate the Role of Parks in Improving Human Health

Practices

- Build and expand upon existing departmental efforts to collaborate and coordinate with the County Health Department, healthcare providers, and local, state, and federal health agencies, so that resources might be better shared and communication about parks, trails, and human health expanded.
- Increase the number of exercise-related programs and facilities offered by the Parks Department in alignment with County Health Policy HE-E.6.⁴

GOAL #6: Provide Exceptionally Safe, Welcoming, and Well-Maintained Parks and Park Trails

Practices

- Use data and analytical tools to make informed, proactive decisions addressing safety and emergency response.
- Continue to maintain staff proficiencies in Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Automatic External Defibrillation (AED), First Response (including CPR), Wildland Firefighting, Boating Accident Investigation, Boating Under the Influence, Crisis Intervention, etc.
- Continue to provide and maintain emergency response equipment, including mobile radios/phones, laptops, patrol boats, AEDs, off road motorcycles/vehicles, trail bikes, patrol vehicles, fire pumper units, and other miscellaneous items.
- Increase development of new multi-use trails and reconstruction of existing trails to better accommodate all users.
- Periodically, evaluate trails for universal access (UTAP) and high efficiency access (HETAP) in order to provide information about trail conditions to users and potential users, and to maintain compliance with accessibility laws and standards.
- Increase the number of “easy” or fully accessible loop trails available near staging areas. Promote use of these trails to target users.
- Increase the use of Trail Watch volunteers to monitor trails and report on trail conditions and utilize that information to provide information to park visitors.
- Expand and enhance interpretive activities in the parks through engagement and coordination with volunteers and various community partners (libraries, schools, etc.).

⁴ Santa Clara County General Plan: County Health Element 2015

- Continue to provide customer service training to all staff and volunteers that interact with the visiting public.
- Maintain staff certification(s) from professional education and interpretation organizations, including the National Association for Interpretation and the National Recreation and Park Association.
- Continue to measure and monitor park usage through the use of trail and vehicle counters.
- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess how they serve visitor needs and use patterns while also protecting resources.
- Enhance collaboration with partners (licensees, lessees, other agencies providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.
- Plan and implement major park and trail projects as outlined in the ICOP (see page XX).
- In the execution of all departmental planning processes, ensure: consideration of regional connectivity, needs, and capacities; alignment with design, construction, resource protection, programming, and operational needs; consideration of long-term physical and fiscal sustainability; and the ability to implement recommendations or designs within a reasonable timeframe.
- Conduct planning processes that proactively engage the public and stakeholders but are streamlined and result in timely decision making and delivery of planned recommendations.

GOAL #7: Prioritize Core Outdoor Recreational Uses

Practices

- Evaluate current and planned infrastructure and facilities to assess their alignment with visitor demographics and use patterns while also protecting resources. Seek solutions that meet both recreational use and resource protection goals.
- Enhance collaboration with existing and new land use and program partners (licensees, lessees, and others providing park and recreational programs/amenities) to maximize park visitor experiences.

GOAL #8: Demonstrate Leadership in Regional Trail Development and the Provision of Equitable Access

Practices

- Internally and with partners, share the Department's system for identifying trail gap closure priorities.
- Ensure that in setting gap closure priorities, key employment centers, and other regional destinations are considered, and that the Department engages the community in identifying primary barriers to entry and potential solutions.
- Participate more actively in the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) decision making processes and establish a regular working meeting to coordinate efforts around public transit access to parks and trails.
- Work with equity focused partners to ensure they are included in park planning efforts.
- Look for opportunities to add shuttle stops and/or rideshare pick-up and drop-off areas and staging areas for alternative methods of transportation in master plans and site plans.

GOAL #9: Conserve, Protect, and Interpret Regionally Significant Historic and Cultural Resources

Practices

- Heighten staff awareness of the importance of historic and cultural resource protection, in part through the update of the Interpretation and Recreation Services Guidelines.
- Expand the Department's system for documenting historic and cultural resources (e.g., GIS layers, park maps, collections, inventory at park visitor centers).
- Continue to design exhibits, programs, and media that feature significant historic and cultural resources (e.g., school programs, history tours, interpretive exhibits, print and web media, etc.).
- Improve coordination, communication, and information sharing with partner agencies with similar or shared goals around historic and cultural resources to best leverage resources and maintain/expand complementary efforts.
- Coordinate historic/cultural resource protection projects with natural resource projects to improve efficiency.
- Develop efficient means of contracting routine maintenance work; consider partnering with trade apprentice and trade union training programs and local schools.



Alviso Marina County Park

Acknowledgements

The following individuals participated in stakeholder interviews, project-related meetings, email exchanges, attended one or more technical workshops, or otherwise supported development of the Strategic Plan. The Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department wishes to thank them for their participation and to acknowledge that inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement of Parks Department findings.

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With Special Thanks to

Kevin, Odin and Carver Thomson

Kathy and Leroy Thomson

Frances and Bob Rivoire

Photographs by Ron Horii

Front Cover: Flowers and tree on hill, Rancho San Vicente, Calero County Park

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