



FY2024



ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 2025



**PARKS &
RECREATION**

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A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Parks and Recreation Department had a remarkable fiscal year 2024, achieving significant milestones. Key accomplishments include the opening of a renewed half-mile trail loop in Pogonip's Sycamore Grove, securing \$1,000,000 in funding from the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act Grant Program, and completing three vegetation management projects along the Highway 9 corridor, Pogonip, Arana Gulch, and Moore Creek. The 43rd annual Clam Chowder Cook-Off raised a record \$133,000 for parks and recreation programs, and the Teen Center successfully reinstated the Summer Teen Intern Program, placing fourteen teens in internships across several departments.

Santa Cruz is home to world-class assets like the Santa Cruz Wharf, DeLaveaga Park's disc golf course, numerous dog parks, the longest-running public skatepark at Sgt. Derby Park, and historic venues like the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium and London Nelson Community Center.

The department's achievements reflect its commitment to enhancing the community's quality of life. As we look to the future, we are excited to continue building on this momentum, creating more opportunities for residents to connect with nature, engage in recreational activities, and enjoy the unique amenities that make Santa Cruz a special place to live.



TONY ELLIOT
DIRECTOR

NATIONAL RECREATION AND PARK ASSOCIATION

There are no communities that pride themselves on their quality of life, promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, or maintain that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources, without such communities having a robust, active system of parks and recreation programs for public use and enjoyment.



OUR SERVICES



MISSION

To provide quality public spaces and experiences that build a healthy community, foster equity, and better the environment.



VISION

We envision a thriving Parks & Recreation system that creates recreational and cultural opportunities, improves quality of life, and strengthens the health of the local environment and economy for all.



VALUES

The parks and recreation department is essential to the community. To that end, we commit to:

- ✓ transparent and honest communication as the foundation of great relationships.
- ✓ a spirit of equity, openness and innovation, welcoming differences and diversity.
- ✓ service to the community in a manner that is sustainable, safe, responsive and accessible to all.
- ✓ collaboration to achieve results that reflect our department vision, leveraging the strengths of the community.



2.7M

Annual visits to the
Santa Cruz Wharf and
Beaches



9,742

Street trees within the
City's urban forest



110,458

Participants in recreation
programs, classes and events



KEY PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Notable completions included Civic roof repairs (with new solar array), Harvey West Park ballfield lighting upgrades (with new solar array), and the new Beach Street restrooms.



COMMUNITY AND FACILITY UPGRADES

Projects enhanced neighborhood park walkways, improved railing safety at the Santa Cruz Municipal Wharf, and installed a new fence around the Harvey West Park Club/Scouthouse.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND FUNDING

Despite a pause on new General Fund investment, the department activated 14 new projects in FY2024, totaling \$1.7 million, by leveraging grants and the Park & Recreation Facilities Tax.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

ACHIEVEMENTS AND RESOURCEFUL INVESTMENTS

RECREATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

REGISTRATION AND CELEBRATIONS

AGE-FRIENDLY DESIGNATION - MASTER PLAN ON AGING

The City of Santa Cruz was approved as an official member of the AARP and World Health Organization Global Network of Age-Friendly Communities. This membership provides access to funding, resources, and tools to develop and implement an Age-Friendly Community Action Plan.

STATE OF THE YOUTH WELL-BEING REPORT

The City Council approved the final draft of the 2023 State of Child and Youth Well-Being report, which began in Parks & Recreation and was finalized by the City Manager's office. This report acknowledges the exceptional services provided by Parks & Recreation and aims to create a baseline to improve the City's services over time.



DAY ON THE BEACH

Friends of Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation (FOPAR) sponsored Day on the Beach for the first time, providing access to Cowell Beach. Shared Adventures hosts this annual event where over 300 people with special needs and their families enjoy adaptive sports like kayaking, canoeing, SCUBA diving, and beach wheelchair rides. With 250 volunteers setting up a 5,700 square foot platform for easy access, the event also features live music, entertainment, food, and sandcastle building.



50TH ANNUAL SANTA CRUZ FUNGUS FAIR

The London Nelson Community Center, Fungus Federation of Santa Cruz, and Santa Cruz Museum of Natural History hosted the 50th Santa Cruz Fungus Fair. The event included fungi exhibits, workshops, and activities for all ages. The Fungus Fair will continue its tradition in future years.



SISTER CITIES AND JAPANESE CULTURAL FAIR

We had another successful Japanese Cultural Fair in Mission Plaza Park. The fair featured a variety of performances, including traditional Japanese music, dance, and martial arts demonstrations. This year also marks the 50th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Santa Cruz and Shingu, Japan.



SUMMER TEEN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The Santa Cruz Teen Center proudly announces the successful Summer Teen Intern Program. Fourteen teens interned in departments like Public Works, Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Finance, contributing 1,582 hours of work. Impressively, seven interns were offered temporary positions after the program.

RECREATIONS HIGHLIGHTS

COMMUNITY MILESTONES

SYCAMORE GROVE

The department renewed half-mile trail loop in Pogonip's shaded Sycamore Grove area, just in time for the crisp Santa Cruz fall days. Over the summer months, the trail's construction re-established a section of the pathway outlined in the [Pogonip Master Plan](#).

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In partnership with the fire department, parks staff finished three vegetation management projects along Highway 9 corridor, Pogonip, Arana Gulch and Moore Creek via grants from CalFIRE and Coastal Conservancy. Additionally, a Community Wildfire Resiliency Plan is also being developed.

URBAN FORESTRY GRANT

The City was awarded a \$1,000,000 in funding through the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Inflation Reduction Act. The money will be used to maintain and plant trees and increase community engagement in urban forestry in the City's federally-designated opportunity zones,

SAN LORENZO PARK REDESIGN

The department is working on redesigning San Lorenzo Park. The city has hired Bionic Landscape, Inc., to conduct a needs assessment, engage the public, develop a vision, set goals and principles, create conceptual designs and alternatives, and prepare a conceptual master plan for future improvements and programs.



PARK HIGHLIGHTS

ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION AND CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENTS

BEACH ST. RESTROOM RENOVATION

CWS Construction Group completed renovating the Beach Street restroom in June 2024, with a total project cost of \$960,000. The project was funded largely by a Clean California Local Grant. Improvements include increased ADA accessibility, cleaner restrooms, new fixtures, site furnishings, and a mosaic mural by a local artist.

COWELL BEACH ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

In advance of Memorial Day weekend, the Wharf/Beach crew installed a new ramp and MobiMat (roll-out mat) on Cowell Beach as a pilot project to assess the durability and effectiveness of this new product in providing ADA access to the beach and ocean.

The Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department remains committed to enhancing the quality of life for all residents by providing exceptional parks, facilities, and recreational programs.

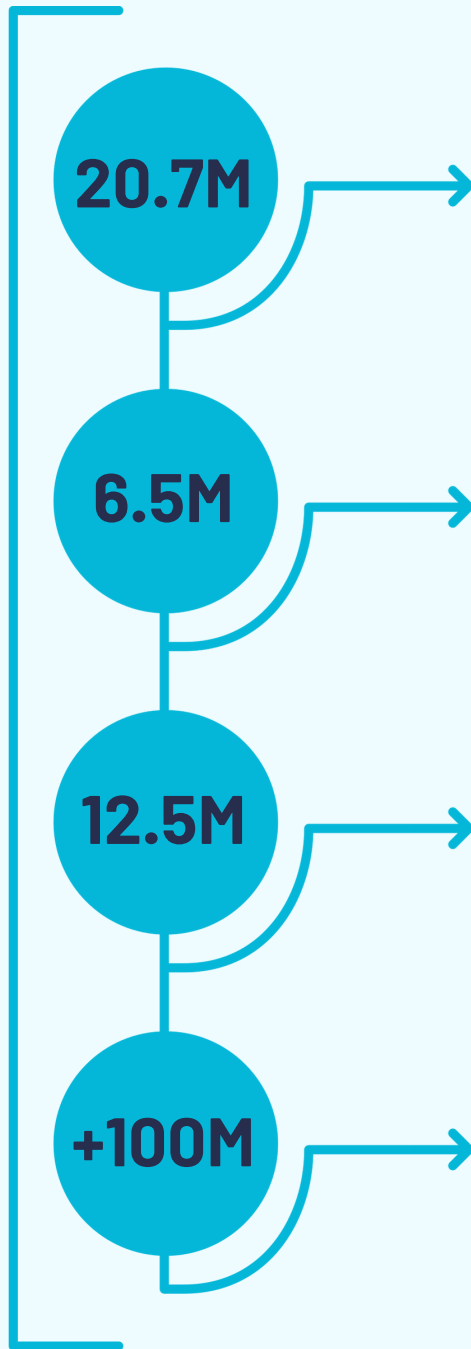


WEST CLIFF 50-YEAR VISION

The City of Santa Cruz has drafted a 50-year Community Vision for West Cliff focused on resilience and accessibility. Following severe storms in January 2023, the vision addresses issues like rising sea levels and extreme weather through community collaboration. Key aspects include promoting pedestrian and bicycle access, reducing hard armoring, implementing nature-based solutions, and maintaining park spaces. The goal is to enhance West Cliff's natural beauty while ensuring it remains resilient and accessible in the face of climate change.

PARK HIGHLIGHTS

FY2024 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS



EXPENDITURES

In FY2024, the Parks and Recreation budget was \$20.7M, including \$2.7M in Central Service allocations. This budget also increased three part-time positions to full-time and added a part-time Administrative Assistant from the City Manager's Office to assist with Civic Auditorium operations.

REVENUES

The Parks and Recreation department, primarily funded by General Fund sources, offset about one-third of its budget through program revenues, exceeding its FY2024 target by 10% with over \$6.5M in actual revenue generated.

COST RECOVERY

In FY2024, the Parks and Recreation department's revenue-to-operating expenditure ratio was 34%, exceeding the budgeted 33%, with a net General Fund impact of \$12.5M.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

While FY2024 saw a notable \$1.7M investment in CIP, historical investment remains low at 6% of total spending over the past decade, with deferred maintenance estimated at over \$100M, prompting a Facility Condition Assessment to guide future funding priorities.

CIP TOTAL (2011-2020)

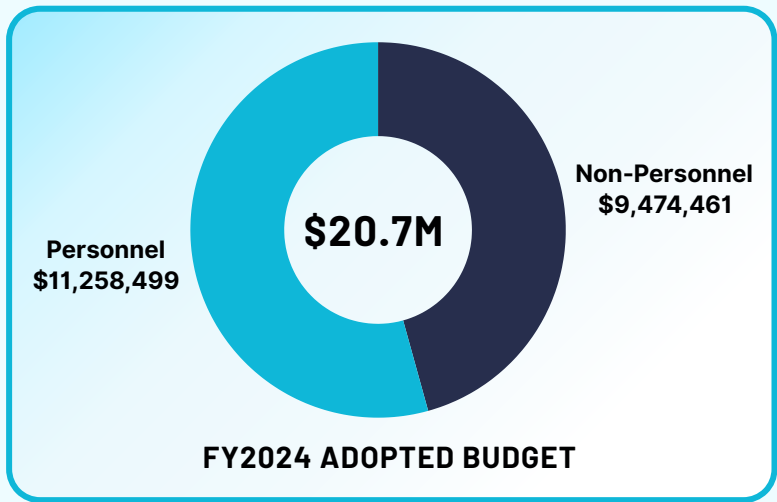
10-YEAR TOTAL	8,893,700
10-YEAR AVE	889,370

OPERATING TOTAL (2011-2020)

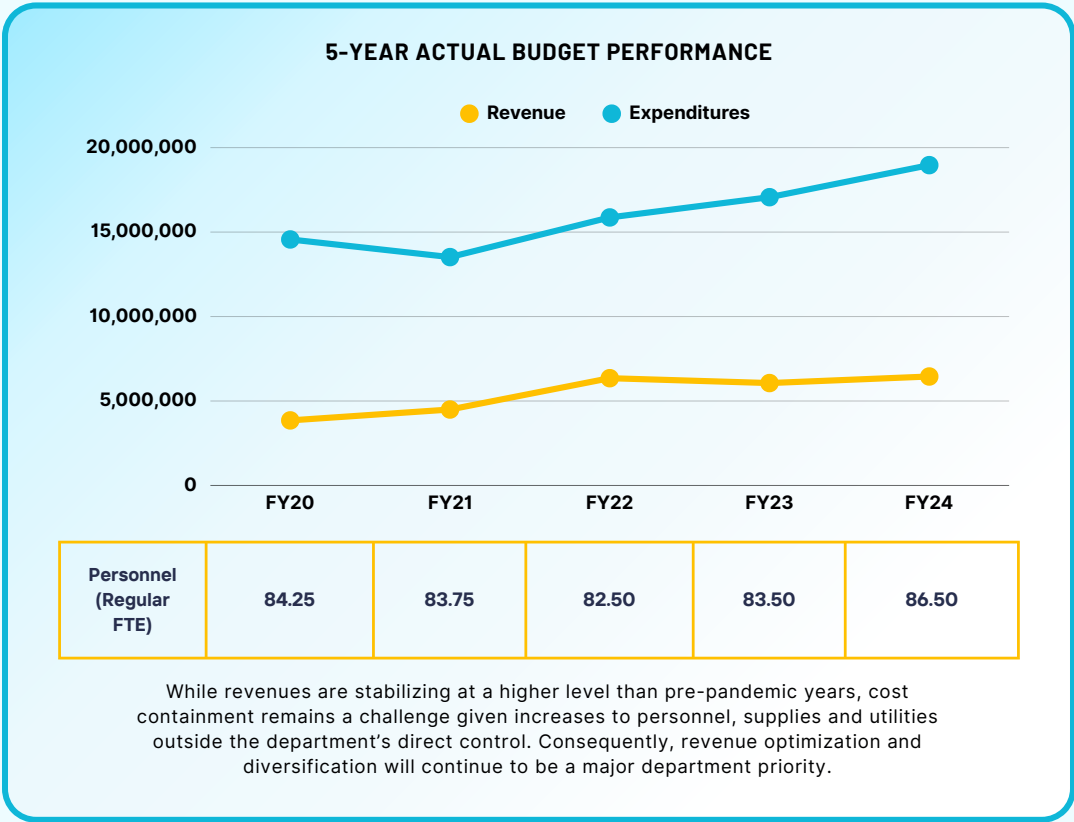
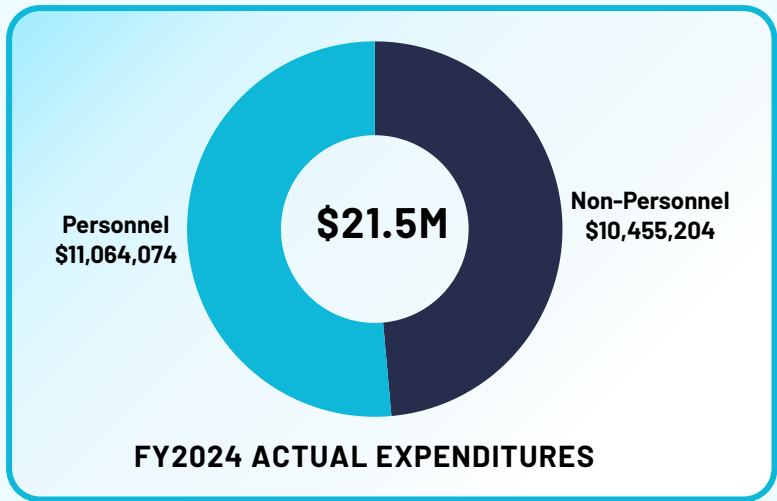
10-YEAR TOTAL	141,595,850
10-YEAR AVE	14,159,585

OPERATING TOTAL (2011-2020)

CIP%	6%
OPERATING %	94%
TOTAL	150,489,550
AVERAGE	15,048,955



The department leveraged added funds from FY2024 budget adjustments to end the fiscal year within budget. The margin of actuals versus adopted budget clearly demonstrates the department operates on the margin. Another strong year of revenue generation delivered a lower net impact to the General Fund than was projected in the adopted budget.



FY2025 GOALS

1

DESIGN EXCELLENCE

- Complete 5-10 active CIP projects
- Install new playgrounds at Sgt. Derby Park and Grant Park



2

PLAY, COMMUNITY HEALTH & INTERACTION

- Increase Activity Guide accessibility
- Expand senior programming to Market St. Senior Center
- Share findings from the Age-friendly designated survey results
- Increase teen trip offerings and re-establishment of noon-time programs at City middle schools
- Align class instructor proposals to mission, cost recovery targets and strategic goals
- Upgrade Civic Auditorium Assistive Listening System



3

STEWARDSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

- Partner on 2-3 water conservation projects in City parks
- Install LED lighting at the Civic Auditorium
- Complete installation of solar panels at Harvey West Park
- Update Approved Street Tree List to promote a diverse and resilient tree canopy
- Complete year one of USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry grant



4

SAFETY FIRST

- Complete a risk management plan and procedures document for the department in collaboration with the City's Risk and Safety Division
- Improve safety and access along Civic inner staircase
- Complete permanent repairs of 2023-2024 winter storm damage at end of Wharf
- End the fiscal year with zero major homelessness encampments in the parks and recreation system



5

CONNECTION & ACCESSIBILITY

- Completed department Facility Condition Assessment is informing city-wide ADA Transition Plan
- Initiate beach area accessibility pilots
- Maintain new segment of Rail Trail



6

PARTNERSHIPS

- Assist with rebuilding the Friends of Parks and Recreation Board and complete a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with updated strategic priorities
- Develop new MOU with the Museum of Natural History that incorporates their expansion plans



7

GOOD GOVERNANCE

- Implement new structure for Open Space Management
- Implement London Nelson Center business plan goals
- Make 2-3 recreation system improvements to reduce manual data entry, improve the user experience and reduce red tape
- Evaluate program cost-recovery targets based on financial sustainability metrics
- Increase ad revenue from the activity guide and collaborate on activity guide promotions



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Community partners play a crucial role in various initiatives. They collaborate with local organizations, contribute resources, and participate in events that promote cultural heritage and historical preservation. By working together, they help increase public awareness, enhance educational opportunities, and drive economic growth within the community through tourism and other activities. This includes:

- Increase community awareness and access to historic resources.
- Support local organizations.
- Foster cross-cultural understanding.
- Boost economic development and tourism.

Thank you to our current community partners. Your support strengthens our mission and enriches our community.

SANTA CRUZ MUSEUM OF NATUAL HISTORY
SANTA CRUZ ARCHERS
ARTS COUNCIL OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
MERCY HOUSING
BLACK HEALTH MATTERS
BLACK SURF CLUB
MONTEREY BAY SALMON AND TROUT PROJECT
MUSEUM OF ART & HISTORY
BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
NAACP
CABRILLO FESTIVAL
NUEVA VISTA
CITY OF SCOTTS VALLEY SENIOR CENTER
OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA
COASTAL WATERSHED COUNCIL
PONY/COLT LEAGUE
COMMUNITY BRIDGES
REGGIE STEPHENS FOUNDATION
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
SAN LORENZO PARK NEIGHBORS
COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION
SANTA CRUZ CITY SCHOOLS
COWELL WORKING GROUP
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
COMMISSION
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY YOUTH SOCCER CLUB
DELA UPPER PARK, INC.
SANTA CRUZ HOSTEL
DELAVEAGA DISC GOLF CLUB
SANTA CRUZ MOUNTAINS TRAIL STEWARDSHIP
DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
VOLUNTEER CENTER OF SANTA CRUZ

FRIENDS OF PARKS & RECREATION
SANTA CRUZ PICKLEBALL CLUB
SANTA CRUZ POP WARNER
SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARIES
FRIENDS OF THE SANTA CRUZ LIBRARY
SANTA CRUZ SHAKESPEARE
FUNGUS FEDERATION OF SANTA CRUZ
SANTA CRUZ SYMPHONY
GRANT PARK NEIGHBORS
SANTA CRUZ WOODIES
GREY BEARS
SAVE OUR SHORES
CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS OFFICE OF LOANS & GRANTS
GSL INC,
SAVE THE WAVES
HOMELESS GARDEN PROJECT
SEASIDE COMPANY
HOSPICE OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
SENIOR NETWORK SERVICE
SENIORS COUNCIL
JAPANESE CULTURAL FAIR COMMITTEE
GROUNDWELL COASTAL ECOLOGY
SURE THING PRODUCTIONS
KAISER PERMANENTE
SURFING CLUB PRESERVATION SOCIETY
LAND TRUST OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY
SANTA CRUZ LAWN BOWLS CLUB
UNIVERSITY BUSINESS PARK
LITTLE LEAGUE
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ
SENIOR CITIZENS' OPPORTUNITIES
CITYSERVE



1.0M

Grant funding secured
by department staff



6.5M

Revenue generated by Parks
& Recreation programs,
rentals, permits and fees



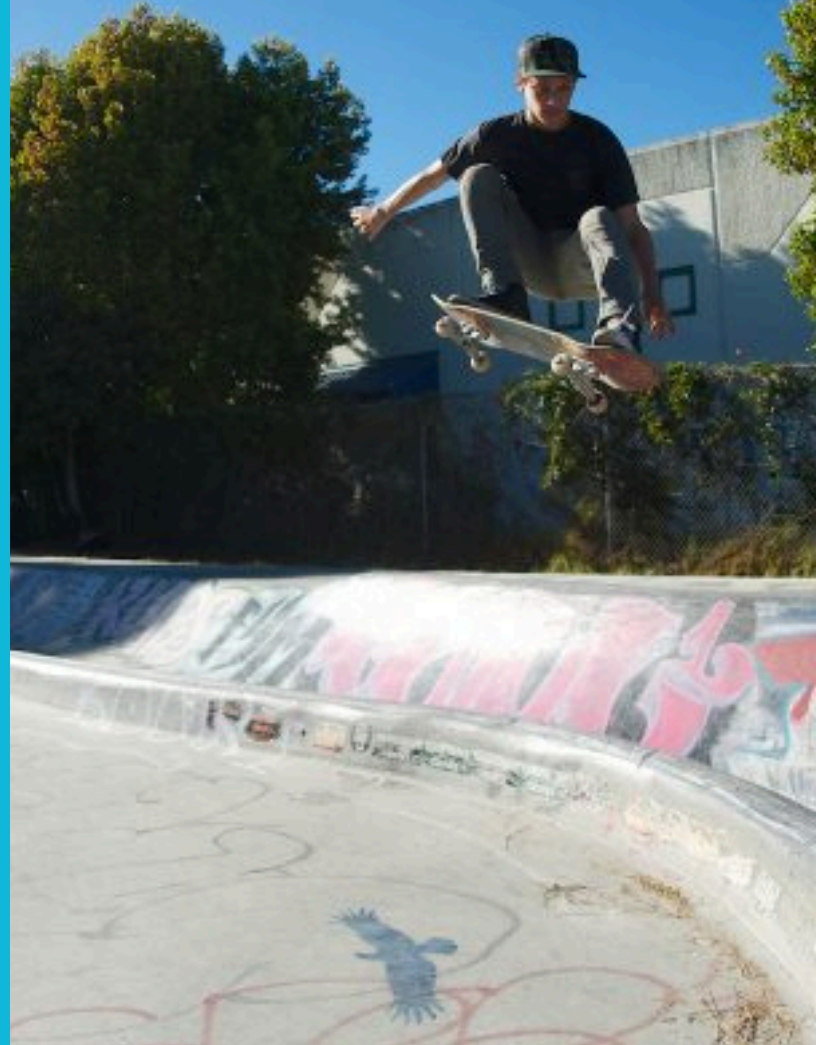
55%

Percentage of FOPAR Youth
Scholarship awarded to Medi-Cal
qualified youth, up from 35% in
FY 2023



1.3M

Pounds of trash and greenwaste
removed from parks, open spaces,
greenways and beaches by
maintenance workers in FY2024



For contact details and further information,
please visit: www.santacruzparksandrec.com