

Parks and Recreation

Strategic Plan 2023-2025

Creating a vibrant future



About This Document

The 2023-2025 Strategic Plan is a three-year roadmap describing strategic priorities for the Santa Cruz Parks and Recreation Department. The plan provides clear milestones, which have been distilled from the Strategic Themes as set forth by the 2030 Parks Master Plan. The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to take the broad Strategic Themes and focus them into actionable and measurable milestones for the Department over a three-year period. The Strategic Themes as outlined in the Parks Master Plan include:

- Design Excellence
- Play, Community Health and Interaction
- Stewardship and Sustainability
- Safety First*
- Accessible and Connected Community
- Partnerships
- Good Governance

* Staff and public safety emerged in 2020-2022 as a critical issue facing Parks and Recreation. This was specifically added to the Strategic Themes and included in the Strategic Plan's milestones as a critical component to ultimately delivering upon the department's mission and vision.

While the Parks Master Plan is an essential guiding document, Parks and Recreation is also guided by a variety of other plans including, but not limited to the City of Santa Cruz General Plan, the 2030 Climate Action Plan, the City's strategic and work plans, and Department-specific plans such as the Recreation and Leisure Study, Pogonip Master Plan, Beach Management Plan, and more. The 2023-2025 Strategic Plan milestones also include elements from these, and other, City plans in order to focus the totality of goals and objectives into a strategic and focused plan for the department.

The milestones outlined in the Strategic Plan provide strategic direction for the department over this three-year period. In practice, each division within Parks and Recreation will draft and compile its annual goals and workplans in the context of the City's annual budget process. The budget process typically begins in the winter and continues to final budget adoption in June of each year. The annual goals and workplans shall align with the Strategic Themes and ultimately will serve toward implementing the milestones presented in the Strategic Plan.

This Strategic Plan is intended to be measurable. The milestones are framed in a manner to be quantified or qualified so that the department can report on progress and measure success. Specifically, the milestones in the plan will be measured and reported on through the department's Annual Report, which is released in the spring each year prior to budget adoption. The divisional goals and workplans will be measured and reported on through the annual budget process.

Many documents, plans, and goals contribute to the outlook and direction for Parks and Recreation. That work has been shaped by input and feedback from the community, department advisory bodies, partners and city council. The Strategic Plan is a synthesis of many guiding documents and a reflection of the critical needs facing the department. This plan offers a strategic roadmap to focus the department's work and ultimately deliver its mission and vision for Santa Cruz.



mission

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



vision

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

Parks and Recreation 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.



Strategic Themes



2025 Milestones

DESIGN EXCELLENCE

- Clear, comprehensive Capital Improvement Program (CIP) plan is in place to address significant system deferred maintenance
- An improved standard of care in parks has been defined and implemented



PLAY, COMMUNITY HEALTH & INTERACTION

- An equity framework has been developed to evaluate department programs and services
- The department has completed a community needs assessment and has adopted a framework and schedule for reassessing community needs on a regular basis



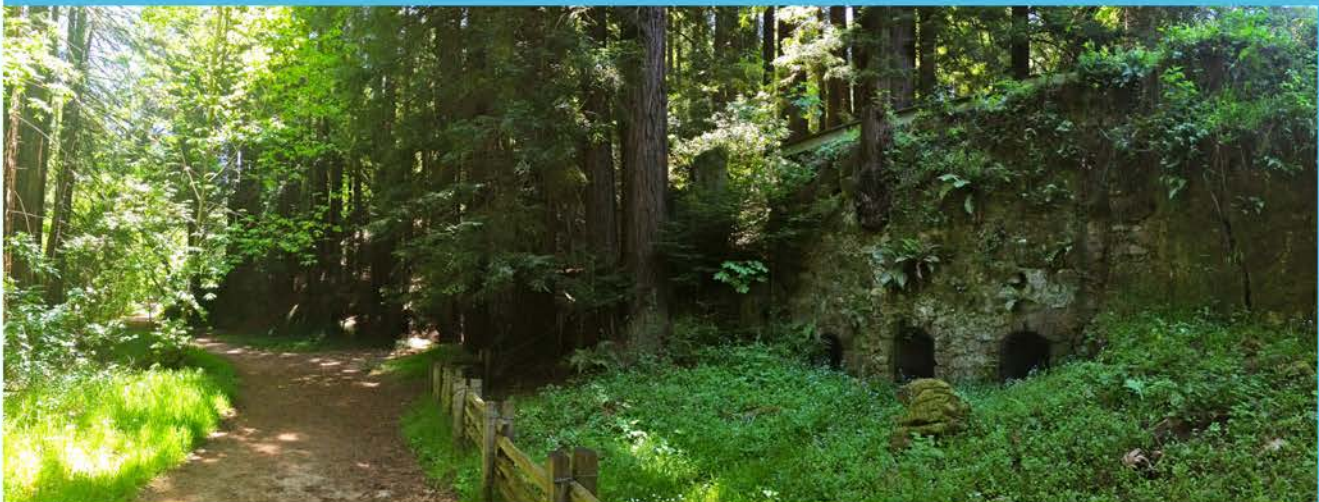
STEWARDSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

- Key aspects of Street Tree Master Plan have been implemented
- A sustainable water solution has been identified for the department and strategies to deliver the solution are being resourced and implemented
- Open Space management has been improved



SAFETY FIRST

- A homelessness solution that provides alternative shelter to parks and recreation facilities is being implemented by the Homelessness Response Team and City Manager's Office and is showing evidence of issue improvement
- Updated Emergency Preparedness Plans are in place for the department and its major facilities
- Staff feel safer at work and the department is seeing a reduced number of safety incidents
- A sufficient parks enforcement solution is being implemented and is showing evidence of improved rule compliance



2025 Milestones

CONNECTION & ACCESSIBILITY

- Park & Recreation history and equity lens developed for key park/facility areas
- ADA transition plan is updated and includes a phased approach for implementing improvements



PARTNERSHIPS

- Clear and fruitful partner agreements are in place that articulate partner responsibilities, mutual benefits and measures of success
- A thriving Friends/Foundation Group is aligned with department priorities and delivering on shared fundraising targets without department operational support



GOOD GOVERNANCE

- Staff feel confident in their training & development
- A clear communications plan is contributing to a community that understands the department's mission and essential value
- Department culture is positive: employee appreciation and succession planning programs are in place
- A grant strategy has been developed to address critical needs
- A parks and recreation-specific ballot measure(s) – CIP bond measure / dedicated operational parcel tax – has been approved by voters
- Key procedures have reduced red tape for the public
- Clear program operational/ business plans are in place to guide program evolution and cost recovery
- Department is nationally accredited via the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), demonstrating that the department is providing the community with the highest level of service.



Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Design Excellence

FY2025 MILESTONES

- Clear, comprehensive Capital Improvement Program (CIP) plan is in place to address significant system deferred maintenance
- An improved standard of care in parks has been defined and implemented

FY2024 GOALS

- Complete a system-wide assessment of aging facilities and deferred maintenance needs to better inform department CIP priorities and funding options
- Complete San Lorenzo Park conceptual redesign process
- Research replacement of Civic Auditorium ceiling tiles
- Upgrade, modernize outdoor stage in Laurel Park

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Completed over 5 CIP projects, including renovation of the south half of Garfield Park, including installation of new playground, site furnishings, pathways, and landscaping (Prop 68 Per Capita Grant); Completed installation of floating boardwalk at Neary Lagoon (OGALS grant); and resurfacing of sports courts at University Terrace and Grant Park
- Collaborated with Economic Development, Public Works, and Planning staff to finalize the Downtown Site Furnishing Standards
- With community input, completed conceptual design for San Lorenzo Park



Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Play, Community Health & Interaction

FY2025 MILESTONES

- An equity framework has been developed to evaluate department programs and services
- The department has completed a community needs assessment and has adopted a framework and schedule for reassessing community needs on a regular basis

FY2024 GOALS

- Continue to activate Wharf with new events, activities
- Complete a scholarship program for non-residents
- Increase programming and events for diverse and multi-cultural communities
- Refurbish displays at Surf Museum
- Launch Winter and Spring Break JG program
- Audit, update LNCC web information for greater appeal, inclusivity and equity
- Create and implement Civic Ticket Access program
- Implement more accessible and user-friendly scholarship application process
- Translate all high-use public forms to Spanish and ASL
- Continue to develop intergenerational programs to combat isolation and loneliness
- Promote County Master Plan on Ageing survey

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Brought renewed Wharf activity with the return of Woodies on the Wharf, repair and activation of the Commons stage and bocce court, and new Winter on the Wharf event
- Sent resolution for Master Plan on Aging to City Council (pending)
- Removed gender-based rules in Adult Sports Co-Recreation leagues
- Launched new Junior Guard Headquarters in Depot Freight Building to expand program
- Created drop-in Senior Bocce program at the Wharf
- Created intergenerational Rock Painting Class as part of the Kindness Rock Garden Project
- Restored the Teen Internship Program
- Continued afternoon enrichment program with city schools
- Expanded Juneteenth celebration to include parade and expanded food vendors
- Returned the Community Center to pre-pandemic operating hours
- Completed new administrative policy for Laurel Park, including the addition of performance fees
- Created additional Adult Sports to provide more options for the community



Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Stewardship & Sustainability

FY2025 MILESTONES

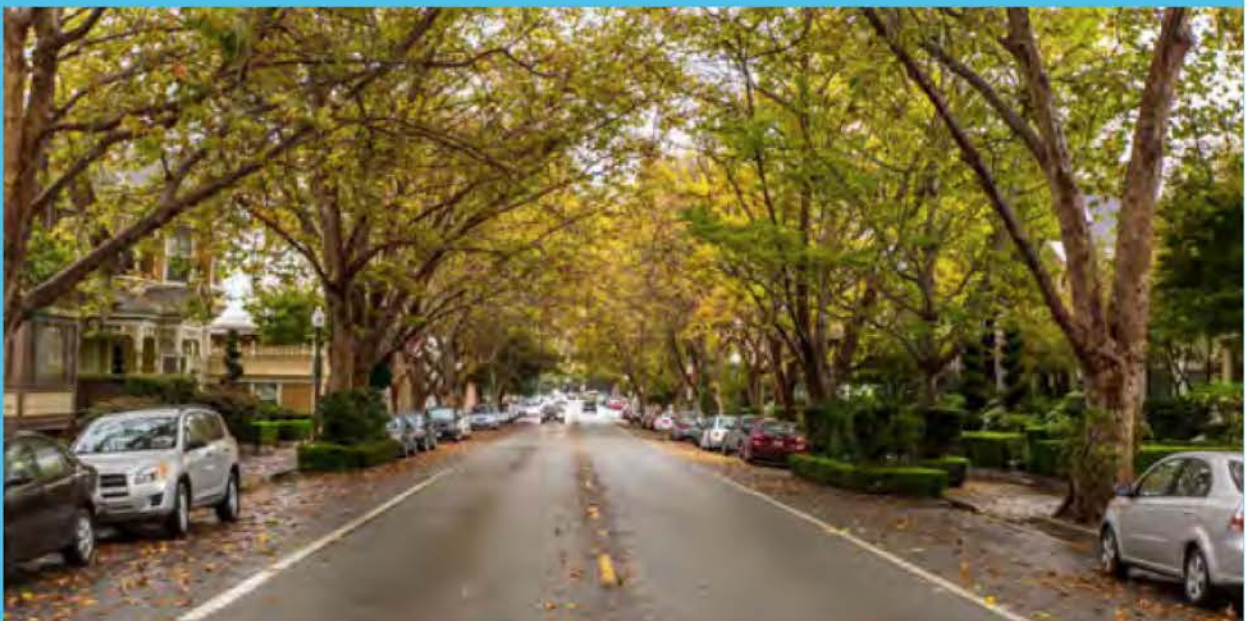
- Key aspects of Street Tree Master Plan have been implemented
- A sustainable water solution has been identified for the department and strategies to deliver the solution are being resourced and implemented
- Open Space management has been improved

FY2024 GOALS

- Update approved street tree list to promote a diverse and resilient tree canopy
- Collaborate with Public Works to install new solar panels and ballfield lighting at Harvey West Park and solar panels on the roof of the Civic Auditorium
- Continue installation of LED lighting at Civic Auditorium

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Collaborated with homelessness response team on encampment cleanup in parks, beaches, open spaces, and greenways.
- Cleaned up debris on Main and Cowell Beaches from historic winter storms
- With support from Public Works, new efficient water heaters were installed throughout parks and recreation facilities
- Completed federally funded study of Santa Cruz tarplant seed germination and outplanting methods in collaboration with consultants and UC Santa Cruz.
- Secured over \$317,000 from the Department of Toxic Substance Control to assist in the remediation of the Lower Meadow in Pogonip
- Installed new, energy efficient deli cases at the Civic Auditorium
- Collaborated with Planning to create objective standards to ensure the planting of street trees in development projects
- Received Carbon Fund Grants to purchase additional LED lights for the Civic Auditorium and electric landscaping tools for Neighborhood Parks



Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Safety First

FY2025 MILESTONES

- A homelessness solution that provides alternative shelter to parks and recreation facilities is being implemented by the Homelessness Response Team and City Manager's Office and is showing evidence of issue improvement
- Updated Emergency Preparedness Plans are in place for the department and its major facilities
- Staff feel safer at work and the department is seeing a reduced number of safety incidents
- A sufficient parks enforcement solution is being implemented and is showing evidence of improved rule compliance

FY2024 GOALS

- Install physical security measures at Parks, facilities, offices to reduce theft and vandalism and improve staff and program safety
- Continue de-escalation and general staff safety training
- Improve tracking of staff training and develop training calendar according to specific position needs
- Complete replacement of perimeter net and fence at Golf Course Driving Range
- Collaborate with Public Works and Economic Development to implement the Downtown Site Furnishing Standards and renovate the medians on lower Pacific Avenue.

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Assisted with management and closure of Benchlands camp; made repairs and improvements and collaborated with community to reopen upper San Lorenzo Park to public use
- Conducted formal trainings on de-escalation, blood-borne pathogens and homeless camp cleanup; continued team- and season-specific topics safety talks
- Collaborated with homelessness response team and Santa Cruz County to set up emergency winter shelters at the Civic Auditorium and Depot Freight Building. This helped provide 106 individuals with a place to sleep overnight for several days as well as providing food and supplies for to at least an additional 100 individuals
- Made safety improvements to the Administration building, including safety coatings for all first-floor windows, repaving of building parking lot and gate access allowing all building staff emergency egress through back parking lot
- Updated Civic Auditorium filtration system to meet current CDC standards
- Completed site-specific Emergency Preparedness Plans

Connection & Accessibility

FY2025 MILESTONES

- Park & Recreation history and equity lens developed for key park/facility areas
- ADA transition plan is updated and includes a phased approach for implementing improvements

FY2024 GOALS

- Implement safety improvements at Civic Auditorium
- Complete Market Street Center ADA improvements

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Secured over \$320,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding for ADA improvements to the Civic Auditorium

Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Partnerships

FY2025 MILESTONES

- Clear and fruitful partner agreements are in place that articulate partner responsibilities, mutual benefits and measures of success
- A thriving Friends/Foundation Group is aligned with department priorities and delivering on shared fundraising targets without department operational support

FY2024 GOALS

- Finalize new MOUs with three key operating partners
- Complete a department Sponsorship program
- Engage MAH on London Nelson historical memorial updates
- Increase engagement with the Youth Action Network

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Completed Surf School RFP
- Completed MOUs with Friends of Parks and Recreation (FOPAR) and Thrive by Three for FY23 Children's Fund allocations
- Developed three strategic priorities with FOPAR to focus support efforts
- Leveraged relationships with Santa Cruz City Schools and PTOs to expand recreation programming scholarship opportunities and reduced tuition for low-income, vulnerable youth
- Partnered with Booking Protect to offer optional ticket insurance to Civic patrons
- Worked with partners to restore the full menu of senior services that had been paused in response to COVID-19 pandemic



Appendix A. Strategic Alignment

Good Governance

FY2025 MILESTONES

- Staff feel confident in their training & development
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- Department culture is positive: employee appreciation and succession planning programs are in place
- A grant strategy has been developed to address critical needs
- A parks and recreation-specific ballot measure(s) – CIP bond measure / dedicated operational parcel tax – has been approved by voters
- Key procedures have reduced red tape for the public
- Clear program operational/ business plans are in place to guide program evolution and cost recovery
- Department is nationally accredited via the Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA), demonstrating that the department is providing the community with the highest level of service.

FY2024 GOALS

- Develop onboarding toolkit for the Department
- Department strategic communication plan is driving quarterly communication outputs and outcomes in collaboration with City Communications Manager
- Engage in and support city-wide process improvement and planning efforts
- Secure 2-3 new grants to support open space stewardship, water conservation and facility safety, totaling at least \$500K
- Ongoing Customer Satisfaction Surveys have led to two-three website and/or process improvements
- Sports Field costing analysis is informing fee updates and redesign planning
- RecTrac system improvements and trainings are enabling the department to better leverage system data in decision making
- Increase program and facility accessibility, attendance and rentals by evaluating community survey feedback
- Golf Course Operation Plan is updated
- Civic Business Plan is being implemented and venue achieves FY24 cost recovery target
- Create London Nelson Auditorium business plan
- CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) accreditation roadmap developed and demonstrated progress being made

FY2023 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Completed 5-YR business plan for the Civic Auditorium to improve cost recovery of the venue by 45 percent
- With the onboarding of the Special Events Coordinator, streamlined and strengthened existing event permitting processes
- Updated youth sports organization fees
- Updated in-lieu fees for heritage trees and created a new in-lieu fee for Street Trees to support the development of the Santa Cruz urban forest
- Made inflationary adjustments to most Parks & Recreation Fees
- Completed the FY22 Annual report and FY2023-2025 Strategic Plan
- Worked with City Clerk and City Manager's Office to launch the Children's Fund Oversight Committee