



DATE: June 2, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

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FROM: Sofia Mangalam, Community Development Director
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DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT OF PARKS
AND OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS, REVIEW
OF ASSESSMENTS, AND POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council, by Minute Order, receive and accept: (1) an update on the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Element project status, (2) an update on the community feedback received so far, and (3) provide policy direction and comments on the Assessments that have been completed for updating the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Elements of the General Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On [March 20, 2025](#), the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee held a Joint Study Session to review the overview of the process for updating the two (2) Elements of the General Plan and the Community Engagement Plan (Attachment #6).

This staff report includes an update on the project status, feedback received thus far, and a discussion on current Assessments, including Community Assessment, Conservation and Open Space Assessment, and Parks and Recreation Assessment and associated policy considerations.

The Assessments, Conservation and Open Space, and Parks and Recreation, are organized around the two (2) major focuses of the elements: Parks and recreation, which focuses on how people interact with natural areas, and Open Space and Conservation, which focuses on the ecology and health of the natural environment itself. These Assessments will guide the strategies for updating the elements; specifically, the Parks and Recreation Assessment will inform the Parks and Open Space Element, while the Open Space and Conservation Assessment will inform both the Parks and Open Space and the Conservation Elements. The Assessments are organized differently from the elements to be able to focus on the human perspective and the natural perspective and better organize around the required topics that must be covered under SB 1425.

BACKGROUND

California law requires that General Plans be updated "periodically," however, except for the Housing Element, which needs to be updated every eight (8) years, there is no specific timeline requirement from the State to update a General Plan regularly. The State Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, LCI (previously known as the Office of Planning and Research or OPR) recommends comprehensively updating a General Plan every 10-15 years to reflect changes in community values, economic conditions, and emerging issues and challenges. The City's Safety Element was updated in August 2023, and the Housing Element 2023-31 was updated in March 2024.

In the 2021-2022 state legislative session, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1425](#) was passed and signed into law. This bill requires that the Open Space Element be updated by January 1, 2026, with expanded requirements, including considering climate resilience in coordination with the Safety Element. The bill also explicitly focuses on "rewilding opportunities," or creating and preserving open space networks to support biological and recreational uses.

[Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1889](#), signed into law on September 10, 2024, requires the Conservation Element to consider the effect of development within the jurisdiction on the movement of wildlife and habitat connectivity. The bill requires the Conservation Element, upon the next update of one or more elements on or after January 1, 2028, to, among other things, identify and analyze connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within the jurisdiction, identify and analyze existing or planned wildlife passage features, and consider the impacts of development and the barriers caused by development to wildlife, as defined, and habitat connectivity.

To ensure compliance with SB 1425 and AB 1889 requirements in a timely manner, the City entered into an agreement with Rincon Consultant, Inc., with WRT serving as their sub-consultant to update the Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element of the General Plan.

The process of updating the two (2) Elements includes the following four steps:

1. Existing Conditions Analysis – review of existing data and preparation of three (3) Assessments.

- a) Existing Plans, Regulations, Projects, Partnerships, and GIS Data: Policy and documents review to effectively inform policy. To review all the data, the consultant is using its Measure Analysis and Success Tracking (MAST) tool to evaluate the City's existing parks, open space, and conservation policies and programs by summarizing their success and identifying implementation hurdles. The MAST tool enables the consultant team to understand prior and ongoing City efforts related to the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element amendments, guiding the development of updated policies and programs. Status: ongoing.
- b) Community Assessment: An updated community profile studying current demographics and growth trends in Foster City that may inform the direction of the Parks and Open Space and Conservation elements. The profile incorporates data gathered as part of the Parks Master Plan, as well as other data sources and related previous efforts. Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.
- c) Park and Recreation Needs Assessment and Inventory: An assessment of the City's parks and recreation programs as part of the Parks Master Plan effort and integrates the information into the Elements Update and identifies key areas for policy direction. Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.
- d) Open Space and Conservation Assessment: An Open Space and Conservation Assessment to provide the inventory of Foster City's open spaces, biological resources, shoreline, and other natural resources using a variety of existing data sources, including desktop databases, literature reviews, previous local findings, and information provided through the first phase of community engagement. Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.

2. Research and Analysis

Financial Evaluation and Prioritization: Identifying funding priorities and strategies to include in the Elements update. It shall be noted that WRT is completing a financial evaluation as part of the Parks Master Plan. This information will be used in the Elements update. Status: Research and Analysis is in process.

3. Preparation and Adoption

a) Administrative Drafts

The consultant team will prepare administrative draft versions of the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements for City staff, the City's Committees, Planning Commission and City Council, and community review. The elements will conform to applicable provisions of State General Plan law. The policy document will be organized into elements containing an introduction; issues identification; goals, policies, and implementation plan.

b) Final Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements

4. Environmental Review/CEQA

The updates to the Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element update will undergo appropriate California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review prior to final adoption of the Elements.

Community Engagement During the Update Process

Community engagement will take place throughout the update process. Engagement to date has included three (3) public meetings conducted by staff and the consultant team, including:

- City Council regular meeting on March 17, 2025 ([link to the meeting](#))
- Joint Study Session between the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee on March 20, 2025 ([link to the meeting](#))
- Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee meeting on April 9, 2025 ([link to the meeting](#))

At these meetings, the consultant team provided an overview of the process for updating the Elements and discussed the Community Engagement Plan. The consultant team has compiled the notes/feedback from these public meetings (Attachment #5).

Staff met with the consultant team to discuss a coordinated community engagement approach that complements but does not duplicate the outreach conducted for the Parks Master Plan. The consultant team developed a strategic Community Engagement Plan that aligns with the Parks Master Plan's efforts while identifying opportunities for collaboration and shared outreach activities.

The goals for public participation are to:

- Clearly communicate that the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements are separate but connected components of a broader planning effort.

- Ensure community input is gathered across all related projects and thoughtfully incorporated into each one, with feedback appropriately reflected in the final documents.

Additional community engagement will take place in the coming months and will include a Community Priorities Survey, focus group meetings, community workshop, pop-up events, and study sessions to review the administrative drafts.

ANALYSIS

For the past few months, the consultant team has focused on “Existing Conditions Analysis” and prepared the following assessment documents:

1. Community Assessment (Attachment #2)

The Community Assessment analyzes Foster City’s demographics, growth patterns, and recreational needs to support updates to the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements of the City’s General Plan. It examines existing community demographics such as population, age, race, ethnicity, language, and household composition, along with projected growth to evaluate whether existing access and services align with community needs.

The assessment also maps the current parks and open space system, analyzing park service metrics across the City, identifying access disparities and how these disparities relate to racial, economic, and social factors. It incorporates urban tree canopy data to evaluate tree coverage and pinpoint coverage gaps. The assessment also evaluates climate impacts and adaptation needs for parks, recreational facilities, and community needs, referencing existing plans such as the Local Hazard Mitigation Plan and Climate Action Plan.

The Community Assessment will be used to inform updates to the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements of Foster City’s General Plan by identifying areas of needed expansion to serve existing and future communities, future climate considerations, and areas to enhance tree coverage. The insights will guide policy updates regarding future development, park planning, and resource allocation in the City.

The consultant team used the various resources to prepare this document, including Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis and Final Park Assessment Summary Report prepared for the Foster City Parks Master Plan.

Some of the key highlights of the Community Assessment are as follows:

- The City of Foster City has experienced growth between 2010 and 2024, increasing by 14.5 percent or approximately one (1) percent annually. By 2040,

the City's population is projected to be 39,070¹ residents, which is in alignment with the City's General Plan population projection of 39,070 in 2040.

- Outdoor recreational activities have been on the rise nationally over the last five (5) years. The same trend has been seen for residents in Foster City, with all outdoor recreational activities scoring higher than the national averages. According to the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis, walking for exercise is the activity with the highest expected participation both nationally and locally. Foster City scored a higher Market Potential Index (MPI) than what was scored nationally, indicating that the City should continue to bolster and provide resources for pedestrian uses. Given Foster City's lagoon and unique landscape along the bay, there is unsurprisingly a strong demand for all aquatic activities. The City scored higher than the national average for swimming and canoeing or kayaking and scored the same as the national average for saltwater fishing. Among all general sports analyzed in the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis, golf was the most popular sport to engage in locally. Tennis, basketball, baseball, pickleball, football, and softball all also scored higher than the national average.
- The City has an opportunity to expand their current recreational services primarily along the waterfront by providing more water sports courses. Given that boat activities are very popular, group canoe trips or stand-up paddle board lessons could be new programs the City provides. In addition, organizing local bird watching or other special-interest groups can encourage recreation and create social opportunities.
- The Parks Assessment Summary Report evaluated all park facilities within the city against the following four metrics: Access & Connectivity, Comfort & Sense of Safety, Functionality, and Condition. A rating scale of 1 to 10 was used for scoring each park against each quality.
 - For Access & Connectivity, the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that parks were rated on average as "good" with an average score of 6.9. The primary concerns regarding Access & Connectivity included variable path connectivity, difficulty finding the park, inconsistent signage, a well-connected bike and pedestrian system but lack of supportive amenities such as bike racks, and a lack of parking for the most frequented parks.
 - Foster City parks were rated as "good" for the Comfort & Sense of Safety Category, averaging a score of 6.7. Primary needs to improve Comfort & Sense of Safety include better access to shade, additional comfort amenities, noise mitigation for parks near major noise sources, such as major roadways and freeways, and lighting.

¹ The estimated population projections are from Plan Bay Area, which the adopted General Plan Land Use element and 6th Cycle Housing Element also utilize. Plan Bay Area estimates draw from the U.S. census data. These estimates are in line with the ESRI population projections prepared by WRT.

- Parks within Foster City were rated “good” for Functionality with an average score of 6.8 across the various park facilities. Key takeaways noted that the majority of parks within the City provide a variety of amenities, have functional layouts, include water-based landscapes and activities, and are compatible with surrounding land uses.
 - Parks within the City averaged highest for Condition, with a score of 7.4. In addition, the furnishings offered at each park are inconsistent and the conditions of the amenities offered also varied. the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that geese droppings have had a major impact on park cleanliness, impacting resident enjoyment of the facilities. While many of the parks have healthy vegetation, several parks have variable vegetation conditions with some parks hosting trees that are struggling to grow and other plants appeared withered or missing.
- Within Foster City, approximately 99 percent of residents live within a 10-minute walk to their nearest park or open space.
 - Foster City has a total 0.5 square miles of existing tree canopy, equivalent to roughly 21,044 trees, according to the [California Environmental Protection Agency’s Urban Heat Island Map](#), which shows data by Census Tract.
 - Foster City’s extensive waterfront, lagoon system, and vibrant network of parks are central to the community’s identity and quality of life. However, these spaces also face growing climate-related challenges, including future vulnerabilities from sea level rise, intensified storm events, extreme heat, and periodic air quality concerns. Certain parks, particularly those near the lagoon or shoreline, will require targeted adaptation measures to remain safe and enjoyable as climate conditions evolve.

2. Open Space and Conservation Assessment (Attachment #3)

The City of Foster City’s open space, natural resources, and conservation management are integral to the city’s environmental sustainability, climate resiliency, and quality of life. As an urbanized shoreline community distinguished by a unique network of parks, lagoons, and shoreline areas including the adjacent Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve, Foster City faces specific challenges and opportunities in preserving and enhancing its natural and recreational assets. This Open Space and Conservation Assessment evaluates existing parks, amenities, and recreational programs to highlight opportunities for enhancement and growth.

This assessment is based on a detailed review and analysis of existing data sources, relevant literature, and local findings. It inventories and evaluates key biological resources, identifies special status species and habitats, maps ecological reserves, and highlights opportunities for ecological restoration and habitat connectivity. Furthermore, the assessment examines open spaces such

as parks, lagoons, and shoreline areas, assessing their contributions to ecological health, recreation, community well-being, and climate resilience. It also identifies vulnerabilities and threats facing these spaces, particularly from flooding and sea-level rise. It also explores critical sustainability topics, including air quality, water quality, water supply, energy conservation, and renewable energy and identifies ongoing challenges and highlights opportunities for strengthening environmental resilience.

Natural Open Space

Key Issues

- Fragmentation of Open Spaces: While Foster City has parks, green spaces, and shoreline areas, many are fragmented, limiting their ecological and recreational benefits.
- Limited Rewilding and Naturalization: Many parks have been developed with ornamental landscaping over native vegetation, limiting ecological benefits; the forthcoming Parks Master Plan will outline park specific improvement recommendations to increase native plantings and habitat value.

Opportunities

- Enhancing Greenway Connectivity: Enhancing greenway connectivity could improve biodiversity corridors and recreational opportunities. Linking parks, wetlands, and the lagoon through green corridors by providing naturalization along the City's existing bike and walking paths, trails, and parks which can improve habitat continuity and increase public access to nature.
- Rewilding: Expanding rewilding efforts could enhance biodiversity, pollinator support, and climate resiliency.
- Nature-Based Shoreline Protection: Work with OneShoreline or other similar organizations to identify project opportunities for implementing living shorelines, tidal marsh restoration, and native coastal plantings can provide ecological benefits while strengthening flood resiliency.
- Regional Alignment: Build on existing coordination with OneShoreline, BCDC, and Bay Adapt by:
 - sharing lagoon water-level, pump-station, and groundwater data to feed OneShoreline's countywide flood-model updates.
 - pursuing joint grant applications (e.g., FEMA BRIC, State Coastal Conservancy) for living-shoreline pilot projects; and
 - integrating Bay Adapt's adaptive-pathways framework and BCDC's 100-foot integrated shoreline-protection zone into local development review.

Biological Resources

Key Issues

- **Habitat Loss and Urbanization:** Development has significantly reduced natural habitat availability, particularly along the shoreline and green spaces along the City's bike and footpath, limiting biodiversity.
- **Wetlands Conservation and Climate Vulnerability:** Wetlands provide critical ecosystem services, including carbon storage, flood protection, and habitat for migratory birds. However, their long-term resilience is threatened by climate change and sea level rise.
- **Barriers to Wildlife Movement:** Roads, urban infrastructure, and fragmented habitats restrict wildlife movement, impacting species that rely on connected landscapes. Encounters with wildlife happen when the wildlife does not have adequate habitat and/or the ability to move through an area without traversing human environments, so providing connectivity between habitats tends to reduce such conflicts.
- **Invasive Species Encroachment:** The proliferation of non-native plant and animal species threatens native biodiversity and reduces the ecological integrity of open spaces. Additionally, while Canada geese are not considered invasive or non-native, their rapid population expansion has caused concerns regarding water quality and co-habitation.

Opportunities

- **Wetland Restoration for Climate Resilience:** Expanding wetland conservation efforts along the Belmont Slough and City shoreline can enhance carbon sequestration, support biodiversity, and bolster flood protection.
- **Wildlife-Friendly Urban Design:** Integrating underpasses and vegetated buffers into planning efforts can reduce habitat fragmentation, particularly between the fragmented open spaces along the City's shoreline.
- **Community-Driven Habitat Conservation:** Public education and citizen science initiatives can foster environmental stewardship and biodiversity monitoring.
- **Urban Rewilding and Native Plant Landscaping:** Enhancing City parks and open spaces with native plants can improve habitat quality, reduce water usage, and support pollinators; the forthcoming Parks Master Plan will outline park-specific improvement recommendations to increase native plantings and habitat value.
- **Green Corridors Between Parks and Wetlands:** Connect parks along the bay, such as Baywinds, Shorebird, or Bayview Parks, and open spaces with greenways such as the areas along the shoreline and City bike path featuring native trees, shrubs, and grasses to provide habitat continuity.
- **Partnerships to Improve Connectivity:** Partner with conservation organizations, land trusts, and transportation agencies to implement connectivity designs and protect wildlife corridors. Collaborative efforts can lead to significant funding and support for conservation projects, particularly in protected areas like the adjacent Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve.
- **Rooftop Gardens and Vertical Green Spaces:** Encourage the addition of green roofs and living walls to increase biodiversity in urbanized areas.
- **"Green Streets" Initiatives:** Retrofit roadsides with native plants, rain gardens, and permeable surfaces to improve habitat connectivity and reduce stormwater runoff.

Water Resources

Key Issues

- Groundwater Rise and Infrastructure Risks: Climate change-induced rising groundwater levels could result in subsurface flooding and saltwater intrusion, affecting infrastructure and vegetation.
- Lagoon Water Quality Degradation: Persistent issues with algal blooms, excessive aquatic vegetation, and bacterial contamination in the lagoon compromise ecological health and recreational usability.
- Stormwater Pollution from Urban Runoff: Due to the built-out nature of the city, impervious surfaces contribute to runoff that carries pollutants into the lagoon and San Francisco Bay, negatively affecting water quality.
- Reliance on Imported Water Supplies: Foster City depends entirely on external water sources, making it vulnerable to regional droughts and water supply fluctuations.

Opportunities

- Improving Lagoon and Wetland Management: Adaptive management strategies such as enhanced water circulation, salinity monitoring, and habitat restoration can help maintain the lagoon's function as a stormwater basin and recreational resource.
- Stormwater Filtration through Green Infrastructure: Supporting the Public Works Green Infrastructure Plan and measures such as expansion of the use of bioswales, permeable pavement, and rain gardens can reduce runoff pollution and improve water quality in the lagoon and Bay.
- Strengthening Water Security Partnerships: Collaborating with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and OneShoreline can enhance long-term water resilience.
- Expanding Water Quality Monitoring: Increased monitoring of groundwater and stormwater impacts, including localized water quality testing of the bay near Foster City and monitoring saltwater intrusion, can provide data to inform future policy decisions and infrastructure investments.

Climate Resilience

Key Issues

- Sea Level Rise and Flooding Threats: Due to its proximity to the bay, Foster City is vulnerable to future sea level rise, storm surges, and groundwater rise. Consistent with Safety Element policies S3.4 b ("Maintain the City's levees and lagoon for flood protection pursuant to the Operation & Maintenance Manual and Lagoon Management Plan") and S6.1 ("Incorporate sea level rise considerations into development review and infrastructure planning"), the City recently invested \$90 million in levee reinforcements and upgrades. The City must continue levee/lagoon maintenance and embed any future sea level rise response strategies in all new and existing development projects.

- **Stormwater Drainage Limitations:** The City's flat topography and reliance on pumps for drainage mean heavy rainfall events, particularly those coinciding with high tides, could overwhelm stormwater systems.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** While Foster City benefits from a temperate coastal climate, the City's limited tree canopy (about seven percent) and large expanses of impervious surfaces can still contribute to higher localized temperatures. This can be a concern for local plant and animal life as well as outdoor workers, seniors, and other vulnerable populations who may experience greater heat exposure.
- **Shallow Groundwater Risks:** As sea levels rise, so will groundwater, threatening infrastructure and creating long-term maintenance concerns for underground utilities and green spaces.

Opportunities

- **Regional Adaptation Collaboration:** Work with local, regional, State, and federal partners (e.g., OneShoreline, San Mateo County, BCDP, FEMA) on climate resilience strategies, and regularly integrate findings from the San Mateo County Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment, and Foster City's Climate Action Plan into General Plan updates.
- **Urban Green Infrastructure Expansion:** Increasing tree canopy, green roofs, and permeable surfaces can mitigate heat island effects while enhancing stormwater retention.
- **Flood Protection Beyond Levees:** While the recent levee improvements protect against near-term sea level rise, additional strategies such as living shorelines, horizontal levees, and marsh restoration could provide long-term resilience benefits.
- **Localized Climate Risk Data Collection:** Partnering with research institutions and agencies to establish groundwater monitoring wells and high-resolution flood modeling can improve data-driven decision-making.

Air Quality

Key Issues

- **Traffic-Related Air Pollution:** Proximity to Highway 101 and 92 results in elevated levels of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5), impacting public health.
- **Wildfire Smoke Exposure:** Although Foster City has low wildfire risk, regional fires contribute to worsening air quality, leading to hazardous conditions and the need for designated clean-air refuges.
- **Gaps in Local Air Quality Monitoring:** Foster City lacks dedicated air monitoring stations, making it difficult to track localized pollution hotspots or accurately measure cumulative exposure impacts.

Opportunities

- Integrate Air Quality Considerations into Open Space Design: Expanding vegetated buffers along major roadways and increasing urban forestry can help filter pollutants and improve local air quality.
- Wildfire Smoke Mitigation Planning: Collaborating with Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and San Mateo County and local neighboring cities can enhance emergency response strategies and clean-air shelter access.
- Deploying Local Air Monitoring Sensors: Installing air quality sensors in high-traffic zones and near schools would improve pollution tracking and inform health policies.

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Key Issues

- Continued Dependence on Natural Gas: Despite the opportunity to use 100 percent carbon-free electricity for municipal buildings, residential and commercial sectors in Foster City still rely heavily on natural gas, slowing decarbonization efforts. The [2024 Climate Action Plan](#) (CAP), action E-W.2.2.1 (page 50 of the CAP) calls for adoption of amendments to the Foster City Building Code for Green Building, Energy and Plumbing during the Foster City Building Code 2025 cycle, including a two-way air conditioning ordinance.
- Slow Adoption of Solar Energy: Upfront costs and permitting barriers deter rooftop solar; two CAP actions, E-W.2.1.7 and E-W.2.1.8 (see Page 49 of the [CAP](#)), outline next steps for this issue. CAP action E-W.2.1.7 is to “Study opportunities and specific action steps to expand municipal rooftop solar and battery storage” and E-W.2.1.8 is to “Provide education and outreach to stakeholders, including businesses, residents, and contractors, on the benefits of pairing battery storage with solar PV systems at City information centers like permit counters.”
- Grid Resilience and Energy Storage Gaps: Limited incentives for battery storage; CAP action E-W.2.1.1 (see Page 49 of the [CAP](#)) calls for the City to “Provide financial incentives for solar PV and battery storage installations” to spur PV and battery installations and improve resilience.

Opportunities

- Expand Solar and Battery Storage in Public Spaces: Installing solar panels with battery backup in parks, parking lots, and municipal facilities can enhance energy resilience and reduce grid demand during peak hours.
- Promote Building Electrification and Efficiency Programs: Aligning with Peninsula Clean Energy’s (PCE) incentives and reach codes can accelerate residential and commercial transitions away from natural gas.
- Improve EV Charging and Micromobility Options in Open Spaces: Expanding EV charging infrastructure in parks and community centers supports clean transportation goals and enhances accessibility for residents and visitors. EV charging infrastructure, along with improving curb management to prioritize rideshare parking/loading zones, scooter and bike share docks, bike parking, and autonomous vehicle loading zones, is supported by Foster City’s CAP Measure T-L.3.1.7.

3. Parks and Recreation Assessment (Attachment #4)

Parks are a cornerstone of Foster City's quality of life. As a distinctive urban environment, Foster City offers a diverse range of park facilities and recreational programs that enhance residents' health, well-being, and cultural engagement. The Parks and Recreation Assessment provides an evaluation of existing parks, amenities, and recreation programs, identifying opportunities for enhancement and growth. The assessment presents the parks system in terms of park type and describes recreation amenities. It highlights unique assets such as the levee pedway and the lagoon. A key component of this initiative is the identification of community priorities, which have emerged through a public engagement and a Parks Master Plan Community Survey. The assessment compares Foster City's parks and programs with national standards, offering insights into areas for improvement and strategic development.

Foster City's Park System

Key Issues

- Facility and Amenity Enhancements: While Foster City is currently building a new Community Center that will augment indoor recreation opportunities, the City will still lack a gymnasium or a swimming pool.
- Lagoon Activation and Accessibility: Limited Lagoon Access. Foster City Lagoon is a unique and treasured asset, and one that several Foster City parks border. However, recreational use of the lagoon is currently limited by relatively limited public boat launch points and lagoon water quality concerns.

Opportunities

- Park Variety. Foster City has a balanced park system, with a mix of parks serving the whole community (community parks), parks serving neighborhoods and local areas (neighborhood and mini parks), and parks serving specific types of activities (special use parks).
- Park Accessibility. The City's parks are well-distributed, putting virtually all residents within a half-mile walk of a park—one of the gold standards of current park system planning. Furthermore, the concentration of community parks and indoor recreation facilities in central Foster City is particularly well-suited to the concentration of seniors.
- Park Land and Amenity Standards:
 - Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element Update and Parks Master Plan provide an opportunity to revisit its level of service standards to make sure they are calibrated to align with priorities. The current overall standard would require 40 acres of additional park and open space land, a target that is ambitious but may be achievable with targeted new open space opportunities.
 - The City can establish amenity level of service standards to align with the level of prioritization indicated by community engagement and the Parks Master Plan Community Survey. This may result in a focus on increasing the number

of dog parks and pickleball courts, while potentially holding steady or reducing under-used amenities.

- Recreation Facility Partnerships: The lack of a gymnasium available for community use may be addressed through partnership with the school district and/or the Peninsula Jewish Community Center (PJCC).
- Trail and Connectivity Improvements: There is an opportunity to augment the Levee Pedway with new paths and trails that connect through the City and between parks. Direction may be provided both from a recreation perspective, through the Open Space and Recreation Element/Parks Master Plan, and through an active transportation planning process.
- Lagoon Activation and Accessibility: The Lagoon is a very special amenity with unrealized potential. There is an opportunity to support more recreational experiences, through improved access to the water and experiences along the water (e.g. outdoor dining, promenades, relaxation spaces, destination amenities.)

Park Usage

Key Issues

- Comfort and Extended Use: Many parks in Foster City see their dwell times fall after dark, likely due to lack of lighting. Others may have lower usage during the day due to limited shade.
- Equity and Cultural Representation: Diverse communities may not feel represented in the availability of amenities offered in Foster City's parks. This is suggested by the relatively lower level of parks usage by Asian residents.

Opportunities

- Visitor Management and Revenue Opportunities: Parks that attract people from outside Foster City—Leo J. Ryan, Sea Cloud and Baywinds—may present opportunities for more attention to creating a positive experience, and greater leveraging of investment, such as through park user fees.
- Comfort and Extended Use: The addition of lighting in parks is likely to extend park use into the evening hours and provide good recreational value for residents. Similarly, more shade in parks will have the effect of bolstering their appeal on hot days, allowing people to still enjoy being outdoors.
- Equity and Cultural Representation: Foster City can work to improve accessibility and culturally relevant amenities and programming, recognizing the full diversity of its residents.

Site Assessment

Key Issues

- Connectivity and Accessibility: Foster City parks generally have successful access and connectivity characteristics. Areas of potential improvement include consistent signage, wayfinding in larger parks, greater visibility for some small parks, more bike racks, and potential resizing of parking.
- Comfort and Usability Enhancements:

- Some Foster City parks would benefit from additional shade around seating and active amenity areas, and more distribution of comfort amenities in parts of larger parks as well as in mini parks.
- Most Foster City parks offer a range of passive and active amenities, in a functional arrangement. Some parks, especially the smaller ones, are thin on amenities, and in general, parks would benefit from more unique recreational experiences and planting palettes.
- Sustainable Landscaping and Ecology:
 - Foster City's parks involve extensive water-loving landscapes and will need to be adapted for greater water conservation, especially areas that lack amenities.
 - Irrigation systems in some parks are in need of significant upgrades.
- Maintenance and Wildlife Management: While parks in Foster City are in good condition overall, geese are a significant issue, leaving droppings, and feathers and degrading water quality in the lagoon. Issues are highlighted in the Canada Goose Management Plan.

Opportunities

- Connectivity and Accessibility: Signage and wayfinding improvements can help knit together Foster City's larger parks and make some smaller parks more visible and accessible.
- Comfort and Usability Enhancements:
 - The strategic addition of shade, seating, lighting, restrooms, and bike racks will make Foster City's parks more comfortable and accessible and extend their hours of use.
 - Foster City can activate underutilized park spaces to meet the needs and interests of park users and create new and interesting park experiences.
- Sustainable Landscaping and Ecology:
 - Diversifying plantings will add character to parks in Foster City and also enable the City to maintain parks with lower water use.
 - Irrigation upgrades can be paired strategically with significant park enhancements.

Market Potential Index

Key Issues

- Recreation Trends Monitoring:
 - Foster City has a higher-than-average Market Potential Index (MPI) for nearly all of the general sports and fitness activities measured by ESRI. Foster City would be expected to have a high MPI for walking for exercise, weightlifting, swimming, jogging/running, yoga, aerobics, golf, tennis, and basketball. Hiking and road bicycling are also rated highly.
 - Changing trends in recreation will continue to present new challenges around delivering the facilities and services that residents demand.

Opportunities

- **Recreation Trends Monitoring:** As recreation trends continue to evolve, it will be important for Foster City to track these changes while administering programs and building new amenities.
- **Flexible Facility Planning:** Foster City should recognize the high potential demand for certain sports and fitness activities as it creates new opportunities in existing recreation facilities, fitness programs and health and wellness classes.

Policy Considerations

Staff and the consultant team have compiled policy considerations based on Open Space and Conservation Assessment and Parks and Recreation Assessment as follows (see Figures 1 and 2):

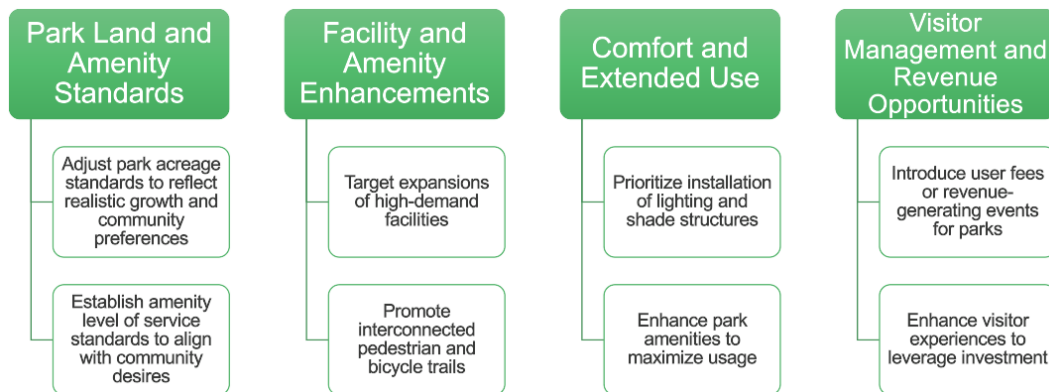


Fig 1: Policy Consideration: Parks and Recreation Assessment

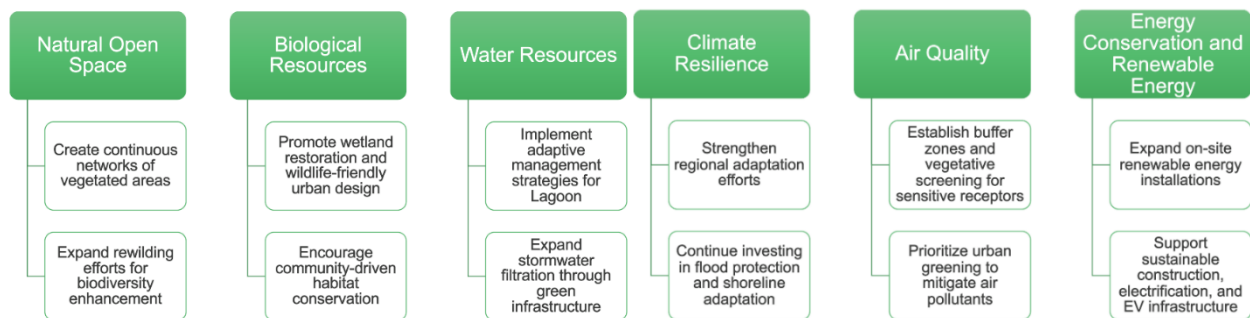


Fig 2: Policy Consideration: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

On May 15, 2025 a Joint Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee Study Session was held to provide (1) an update on the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Element project status, (2) an update on the feedback received so far, and (3) provide policy direction and comments on the existing Assessments that have been completed for updating the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan (similar report). Please see the [link](#) to the meeting on May 15, 2025.

At the meeting, staff requested feedback on policy considerations from the Planning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Committee. Below is a summary of the policy considerations and the feedback received during the meeting.

Parks and Recreation Assessment

1. Park Land and Amenity Standards

- Policy consideration on adjusting park acreage standards (5 acres per 1,000 residents) to reflect realistic growth and community preferences.

Feedback/comments:

- *There was support for revisiting park acreage based on growth; however, concerns were noted that some neighborhoods fall below the threshold.*

2. Facility and Amenity Enhancements

- Policy consideration on targeting expansions of high-demand facilities

Feedback/comments:

- *There was strong support for setting targets for amenities like dog parks, pickleball courts, and aquatics facilities.*
- *Multiple comments emphasized the importance of prioritizing aquatic and lagoon-related recreation.*
- *Gymnasiums and Swimming Pools: There was Interest in exploring partnerships (e.g., with PJCC) to expand access and affordability.*

3. Comfort and Extended Use

- Policy consideration on prioritizing the installation of lighting and shade structures

Feedback/comments:

- *There was support for adding lighting and large-canopy trees to increase park usability and comfort.*

4. Visitor Management and Revenue Opportunities

- Policy consideration on introducing user fees or revenue-generating events for parks for Non-Resident Users.

Feedback/comments:

- *There was interest in exploring options like parking fees at parks, with consideration for equity.*
- Policy consideration on enhancing visitor experiences to leverage investment.
Feedback/comments:
 - *Suggestions included involving local companies and multicultural organizations for funding and cultural programming.*
 - *Public Engagement - Pop-Ups: There was a request to expand pop-ups beyond Off the Grid/Farmers Market to large parks (e.g., Leo Ryan, Sea Cloud) for broader community input.*

Conservation and Open Space Assessment

1. Natural Open Space

- Policy consideration on creating continuous networks of vegetated areas and expanding rewilding efforts to enhance biodiversity.
Feedback/comments:
 - *There was support for enhancing linkages between natural areas and promoting native landscaping.*

2. Biological Resources

- Policy consideration on promoting wetland restoration and wildlife-friendly urban design.
Feedback/comments:
 - *There was a positive response to promoting wetland protection and regional collaboration.*
- Policy consideration: Encourage community-driven habitat conservation
Feedback/comments:
 - *Support was expressed for programs like citizen science and stewardship initiatives.*

3. Water Resource

- Policy consideration on implementing adaptive management strategies for the Lagoon.
Feedback/comments:
 - *Strong feedback on prioritizing lagoon water quality improvements—seen as vital to health, recreation, and property values.*
- Policy consideration on expanding stormwater filtration through green infrastructure.

Feedback/comments:

- *Support for bioswales, permeable surfaces, and groundwater adaptation strategies, call for regional planning and alternative water sources beyond SFPUC reliance, and suggestions to incentivize HOA-scale water recycling and reconsider utility pricing tiers to reward conservation.*

4. Energy & Climate

- Policy consideration on expanding on-site renewable energy installation and supporting sustainable construction, electrification, and EV infrastructure.

Feedback/comments:

- *Support for:*
 - *City-owned solar and battery projects*
 - *Public-private partnerships (e.g., with PCE, PG&E)*
 - *Exploring Municipal Utility for the City.*
- *Emphasis on large-scale planning to meet future electricity demands driven by EVs, home electrification, and Artificial Intelligence (AI). Concern was expressed over the inclusion of gas cooktops in decarb mandates; it was suggested to limit the policy to water heaters and furnaces.*
- *Calls for more public EV chargers, especially for renters.*
- *Suggestions to reach out to Tesla and Electrify America to improve infrastructure and maintenance.*
- *Emphasis on installing local air monitoring stations to accurately assess pollution.*
- *Interest in autonomous or on-demand shuttles for local transit, especially for seniors and students.*
- *Ideas to partner with local mobility companies to develop last-mile transit solutions.*

Next Steps

The City staff and the consultant team will also conduct community engagement activities in May and June, including a Community Priorities Survey, a public Community Workshop, a series of focus groups, and pop-up events throughout the City. The next series of public meetings will take place in August 2025.

California Environmental Quality Act

This agenda item, which is intended to provide a progress report to the City Council, is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code

Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a "project" that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

City Council Operations and Improved Community Engagement
Smart Planning, Development, and the Local Economy

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 – Presentation
- Attachment 2 – Community Assessment
- Attachment 3 – Open Space and Conservation Assessment
- Attachment 4 – Parks and Recreation Assessment
- Attachment 5 – Public Meeting Notes
- Attachment 6 – March 20, 2025, Study Session Meeting Minutes