



COUNCIL REPORT

DATE: May 26, 2026
CATEGORY: Unfinished Business
DEPT.: Community Services
TITLE: **Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan Adoption**

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (Attachment 1 to the Council report).

BACKGROUND

On [November 17, 2025](#), the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) reviewed the draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (Plan) and provided feedback to inform revisions. Feedback from the PRC and the public focused on strengthening the clarity, organization, and usability of the Plan. Key themes included improving the connection between community input, analysis, and action items; increasing emphasis on trees, biodiversity, and safe access to parks and trails; and expanding Planning Area-based analysis, including consideration of future growth and progress toward the City's park land goal. Feedback also highlighted the need to refine the terminology, better articulate funding and staffing considerations, expand the assessment of school fields, and shift toward a more distribution-based approach to evaluating parks and amenities. Staff incorporated these themes into a comprehensive revision of the draft Plan, which was presented to the City Council on January 27, 2026 (see Attachment 2 – November 2025 PRC and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions).

On [January 27, 2026](#), the City Council held a Study Session to review the updated draft Plan and provide policy direction. Council's discussion was focused on three main questions as to whether: (1) the Plan accurately reflects the City's existing parks and recreation system; (2) the proposed Vision, Goals, and Strategies appropriately guide the future of parks and recreation; and (3) the Action Plan priorities and timelines match Council's expectations.

Councilmembers gave positive feedback about the overall draft Plan and also provided the following direction:

- Establish a new goal focused on biodiversity and natural park design elements and incorporate the importance of parks as part of the natural environment throughout the Plan;

- Refine and strengthen the vision statement;
- Allocate trail acreage by Planning Area;
- Add an Action Item regarding learn-to-swim opportunities;
- Explore opportunities to work with “friends of parks” groups; and
- Add a review of POPA standards.

Staff revised the Plan to incorporate the Council’s feedback as summarized in Attachment 3 and described in more detail below.

New Biodiversity Goal and Integration of Natural Park Design

In response to community input and City Council direction, the Plan has been updated to include a new goal focused on promoting biodiversity, habitat protection, and natural elements within the City’s parks, open spaces, and trail corridors. Two supporting strategies were created to guide implementation and align with the City’s Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan, which is scheduled for Council review and adoption in June 2026. Existing biodiversity-related actions were reorganized under the new goal and strategies.

The new goal and strategies are as follows:

Goal 2: Advance biodiversity, habitat protection, and natural elements as essential components of a resilient and inclusive park and open space system.

1. Strengthen ecological function and habitat value within parks, open spaces, and trail corridors in alignment with the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan.
2. Integrate long-term biodiversity stewardship into park planning, design, and asset management, guided by the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan.

Along with setting a specific goal, the Plan improves how natural park design is integrated through the Park Design Guidelines. Revisions focus on native planting, expanding the tree canopy, increasing habitat value, supporting pollinators with landscaping, and designing for climate resilience. The design guidelines for each park type now include a “Biodiversity Anchor” to guide the inclusion of natural elements suited to park size, function, and context. These updates promote a balanced approach to park planning—supporting active recreation while also providing more opportunities for nature-based and restorative outdoor experiences.

Trail Corridor Acreage Reallocation and Planning Area Level of Service Updates

Historically, all 52.17 acres of trail corridor acres associated with Stevens Creek and Permanente Creek Trails have been designated to the North Bayshore Planning Area due to their connection to Shoreline at Mountain View. Following the Council’s direction on January 27, 2026, the updated Plan revises this by assigning trail corridor acreage to the Planning Area where each trail segment is physically located. This change decreases the total parks and trail acreage in the North Bayshore Planning Area by 34.05 acres and increases the parks and trail acreage in five of the other nine Planning Areas: Whisman (+14.09 acres), Stierlin (+2.27 acres), Central (+5.42 acres), Grant (+11.55 acres), and Rengstorff (+0.78 acres). This method recognizes that trails function as linear open space assets, offering local access and mobility between parks, neighborhoods, and other key destinations, as well as recreation opportunities and connections to nature that benefit multiple Planning Areas throughout the city.

As shown in Table 1 below, the revision to the Planning Area Level of Service updated the park acreage totals for each Planning Area, increasing acres per 1,000 residents for the five Planning Areas with trail corridors.

Due to the new methodology, the number of Planning Areas below the focus threshold changed from five Planning Areas with less than 1.5 acres per 1,000 residents to six Planning Areas with less than 2 acres per 1,000 residents. The five Planning Areas with the lowest park access remain the same (Rengstorff, Thompson, Sylvan-Dale, Stierlin, and Central). Additionally, the San Antonio Planning Area has been added to the list of areas below the focus threshold. Four Planning Areas now exceed 3 acres per 1,000 residents, with Grant and Whisman joining North Bayshore and Miramonte in this group. The Plan was revised to include this new threshold and to emphasize that efforts to expand park acreage should target Planning Areas with less than 2 acres per 1,000 residents.

Table 1: Level of Service by Planning Area

| Planning Area | Park Acres* | Trail Acres** | Total Park and Trail Acres | 2020 Population | Park Acres per 1,000 Residents | Trail Acres per 1,000 Residents | Total Acres per 1,000 Residents |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| North Bayshore | 178.76 acres | 18.12 acres | 196.88 acres | 988 | 180.93 acres | 18.34 acres | 199.27 acres |
| Miramonte | 55.45 acres | 0 acres | 55.45 acres | 11,087 | 5.00 acres | 0 acres | 5.00 acres |
| Grant | 14.09 acres | 11.55 acres | 25.64 acres | 5,931 | 2.38 acres ¹ | 1.95 acres | 4.32 acres |
| Whisman | 17.29 acres | 14.03 acres | 31.32 acres | 9,982 | 1.73 acres | 1.41 acres | 3.14 acres |
| San Antonio | 26.56 acres | 0 acres | 26.56 acres | 14,752 | 1.80 acres | 0 acres | 1.80 acres |
| Central | 16.17 acres | 5.42 acres | 21.59 acres | 12,391 | 1.30 acres | 0.44 acres | 1.74 acres |
| Stierlin | 14.21 acres | 2.27 acres | 16.48 acres | 9,979 | 1.42 acres | 0.23 acres | 1.65 acres |
| Sylvan-Dale | 9.96 acres | 0 acres | 9.96 acres | 7,778 | 1.28 acres | 0 acres | 1.28 acres |
| Thompson | 2.93 acres | 0 acres | 2.93 acres | 2,671 | 1.10 acres | 0 acres | 1.10 acres |
| Rengstorff | 2.92 acres | 0.78 acres | 3.70 acres | 6,817 | 0.43 acres | 0.11 acres | 0.54 acres |
| Citywide | 338.34 acres | 52.17 acres | 390.51 acres | 82,376 | 4.12 acres | 0.63 acres | 4.74 acres |
| Citywide w/o North Bayshore | 159.58 acres | 34.05 acres | 193.63 acres | 81,388 | 1.96 acres | 0.42 acres | 2.38 acres |

* Calculated acreage includes City-owned parks, adjusted acreage for joint-use school fields, and publicly accessible portions of Shoreline at Mountain View. Figures reflect acreage used in the Level of Service analysis.

** Trail corridor acreage is allocated to the Planning Area in which each segment is physically located, as noted above.

Note: The Park Acres per 1,000 residents value for the Grant Planning Area has been corrected in this version of the Plan. A previous draft contained an error in this calculation.

Additionally, reallocating trail corridor acreage required updating citywide acreage gap calculations and related cost estimates to meet the City’s goal of 3 acres per 1,000 residents. The previous draft noted that the City had an estimated shortfall of 87 acres when excluding the North Bayshore Planning Area. Now that trail corridor acres have been distributed across the Planning Areas they traverse, this shortfall has decreased to 53.5 acres.

To address this revised shortfall, the cost is approximately \$722 million, compared to the \$1.2 billion previously noted. These updates enhance transparency and improve the accuracy of the Planning Area inventory of parks and open space, while still providing an analytical basis to guide future park acquisitions and investments in the Planning Areas with the least park access.

Updated Vision Statement

During the discussion of the draft Vision, Goals, and Strategies, the City Council expressed interest in refining the vision statement to emphasize nature as the primary purpose of parks. Councilmembers noted that although parks offer valued programs, events, and amenities, their primary role is to provide meaningful outdoor experiences connected to nature. The discussion reflected broader community feedback, highlighting pride in Mountain View’s parks and acknowledging their importance as essential public infrastructure that must be maintained and adapted to meet evolving community needs and population growth.

The updated Vision Statement is as follows:

Mountain View is an inclusive and resilient community where a rich network of parks, natural open spaces, and recreation opportunities builds community, enhances physical and emotional well-being, and inspires care for our natural environment.

Refinements and Additions to the Action Plan

In response to feedback received during the City Council review process, staff made several specific updates to the Action Plan. These include adding two new Action Items—one focused on expanding access to Learn-to-Swim opportunities and the other on inclusive improvements in existing parks, in line with the City’s forthcoming Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan—as well as refining three existing actions related to exploring “Friends of Parks” groups and reviewing potential updates to POPA standards as part of an update to Chapter 41.

New Action Items

Two new Action Items have been added to the Plan in response to City Council's direction and community feedback.

- Continue to Expand Learn-to-Swim Opportunities (Action 3.1.7) – This action reinforces the City’s commitment to youth water safety and equitable access to aquatics programming, increasing the number of Recreation-related actions from eight to nine.
- Incorporate Inclusive Improvements in Existing Parks (Action 1.2.9) – This action directs staff to identify opportunities to integrate inclusive design enhancements into existing parks, guided by the City’s ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.

Refinements to Existing Action Items

Three existing actions were updated to incorporate further guidance from the Council:

- Exploration of “Friends of Parks”-Type Groups: For both Actions 3.2.1 and 5.1.7, a milestone was added to evaluate opportunities for community-based support models within the City Council Work Plan project to develop a volunteer framework, as well as through the evaluation of establishing a nonprofit foundation to support City parks and recreation programs.
- Review of POPA Standards – Action 5.1.2 was updated to incorporate a review of Privately Owned Publicly Accessible (POPA) standards as part of the review and update to Chapter 41 of the City Code, Park Land Dedication or Fees in Lieu Thereof.

In total, the Action Plan now contains 52 actions to support the five goals and 10 strategies outlined in the Plan.

PRC Recommendation to Adopt the Plan

On March 17, 2026, the PRC reviewed the updated draft Plan, incorporating community input and the Council’s direction from the January 27, 2026, Study Session. The PRC expressed general support for the Plan and the revisions made in response to prior Commission, City Council, and community input, including the strengthened emphasis on biodiversity elevated as a goal, the refined vision statement, Planning Area-based analysis, and improved organization and clarity.

Commissioners acknowledged the significant amount of work completed in updating the Plan. Commissioners noted that the Plan aligns well with the City’s goals and reflects meaningful incorporation of community input, resulting in a Plan that the City can be proud of.

The Commission also highlighted the Plan’s comprehensive assessment of parks and recreation programs, improvements to the Level of Service analysis and maps, and a more intuitive overall structure. The Action Plan was well received, particularly the expanded number of action items, updated implementation timelines, the addition of milestones, and a commitment to ongoing tracking and annual reporting to the Commission.

In addition to this overall support, the PRC provided targeted feedback to further refine the plan:

- Define underserved Planning Areas using a combination of three factors: (1) acres of park land per 1,000 residents, (2) access to parks within a 10-minute walk, and (3) reliance on school fields to meet recreational needs;
- Prioritize the expansion of parks and open spaces in underserved Planning Areas;

- Acknowledge that achieving the citywide Level of Service goal of 3 acres per 1,000 residents is not currently feasible in every Planning Area;
- Prioritize locally native species for trees and landscaping in parks and open spaces;
- Identify incremental, near-term opportunities to expand native planting and tree canopy in all City parks; and
- Elevate the role of trees and biodiversity in park design.

A summary of the overall feedback themes and revisions made in the Plan is included in Attachment 4, March 2026 PRC and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions, and is discussed further below.

The PRC and public commenters also expressed concerns about whether there would be sufficient funding and staff capacity to implement the Plan. They asked for more detailed information about the costs and funding sources for all of the actions in the Plan. In particular, Commissioners wanted to know which action items are currently fully funded, partially funded, or unfunded. Staff acknowledged these concerns and noted that the Plan’s cost estimates are planning-level and intended to provide general order-of-magnitude guidance, and that future funding availability cannot be predicted at this time.

Staff also noted that several funding strategies are under consideration by the City, including a potential revenue measure and an updated Nexus Study, which will help inform future funding capacity. **Notably, without significant funding from a revenue measure, it will be difficult to achieve some of the ambitious strategies included in the Plan.** To provide greater transparency, staff will include updates on funding availability and progress toward securing and appropriating funds for specific Action Plan items as part of the Plan’s annual review and reporting process.

Following the discussion at the meeting, the PRC made a recommendation to the City Council to adopt the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, incorporating into the Plan ways to prioritize expansion of parks and open spaces to underserved areas of the city, taking into account dependence on school fields and 10-minute walking distance, in addition to looking at acres per thousand. The recommendation also includes identifying opportunities and implementing near-term improvements to benefit all parks and open spaces with an emphasis on planting native canopy trees and landscaping consistent with the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan.

ANALYSIS

Defining and Prioritizing Underserved Planning Areas

During the March 17, 2026 PRC meeting, Commissioners underscored the need to clearly define what constitutes an “underserved” Planning Area. In particular, the Commission noted that

relying solely on the traditional Level of Service metric of 3 acres per 1,000 residents does not fully capture how residents experience access to parks and open space. Commissioners also recognized that achieving this standard is not currently feasible in every Planning Area due to constraints such as limited land availability, high land costs, and the built-out nature of the community. As a result, the PRC emphasized the need to consider additional factors, including whether residents can reasonably walk to a park and the extent to which some Planning Areas rely on school fields to meet recreational needs.

In response, the Plan establishes a more comprehensive, equity-focused framework for identifying underserved Planning Areas. The Plan defines underserved Planning Areas using three factors: (1) park acres per 1,000 residents, (2) access to parks within a 10-minute walk, and (3) reliance on school fields. This multi-factor approach provides a more accurate, nuanced understanding of how well the park system serves residents across the city, particularly in areas where reliance on school fields may suggest adequate service under traditional metrics but could result in reduced access if those fields were unavailable. The Plan also notes that achieving the citywide Level of Service goal of 3 acres per 1,000 residents in every Planning Area is not currently feasible.

Consistent with this approach, the Plan prioritizes expanding parks and open spaces in underserved Planning Areas. This prioritization is embedded in the Plan's implementation strategy and will guide decisions on land acquisition, park development, and capital investment over time. While opportunities to develop new parks are often constrained by land availability and funding, this approach ensures that when opportunities arise, they are evaluated through the lens focused on Planning Areas with the greatest need.

Native Planting, Tree Canopy, and Near-Term Park Improvements

The Plan places strong emphasis on integrating California native, regional native, and near-native species into park design, while balancing climate resilience and urban conditions. The Plan also emphasizes elevating the role of trees and landscaping as essential components of Mountain View's parks and open spaces. This reflects feedback from the community and the PRC expressing a strong interest in prioritizing locally native planting and expanding tree canopy across the system. For the purposes of the Plan, "locally native" is defined as California native, regional native, and near-native species, consistent with the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan. This clarification ensures a common understanding of plant selection and aligns the language between the two plans.

The Plan further recognizes trees as critical infrastructure in parks and open spaces, delivering a wide range of benefits, including shade, cooling, urban heat reduction, habitat support, stormwater management, and overall climate resilience. The Plan also clarifies that while shade structures may be appropriate in certain contexts, shade should be prioritized through tree canopy wherever feasible, while recognizing site-specific ecological conditions and constraints.

In addition, the Plan amplifies the role of biodiversity in park design, integrating natural elements and habitat features to support a more connected ecological network as part of the City's broader biodiversity framework.

These priorities are embedded throughout the Plan's design guidelines, action items, and performance metrics, and closely align with the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan. The Plan also emphasizes near-term, incremental opportunities to expand native planting and tree canopy across all parks, recognizing that these improvements can be implemented more quickly and broadly than large-scale capital projects. These improvements are identified as a key immediate priority and offer an opportunity to deliver visible, system-wide benefits while longer-term park development efforts take more time to move forward. Collectively, this approach supports a more sustainable, resilient, and ecologically connected park system while advancing the City's biodiversity goals.

Additional Targeted Refinements

In addition to the key themes discussed above, the Plan includes several targeted refinements in response to community and PRC feedback. These updates include adding a reference to the City's forthcoming Dark Skies Ordinance for park design guidelines associated with lighting. The Plan also incorporates the Recreation Swim program within the existing Action item for expanding Learn-to-Swim programs.

A detailed summary of feedback themes and corresponding revisions is provided in Attachment 4.

Next Steps

Staff will begin implementing the Strategic Plan immediately following adoption, with a focus on advancing near-term "Immediate" (0–2-year) action items while also initiating foundational steps and milestones to support Short-, Mid-, and Long-Term actions. Early efforts will include coordinating across departments, aligning work plans and resources, and identifying opportunities to integrate Plan actions into existing and upcoming projects. Concurrently, staff will establish baseline data for each performance metric identified in the Plan. Developing these baseline measurements will be a critical first step to enable meaningful tracking of progress over time and to inform future decision-making, ensuring that annual reporting reflects measurable outcomes and trends.

After one full year of implementation, and annually thereafter, staff will create and update a publicly accessible dashboard to monitor progress on action items and related performance metrics. Staff will conduct community outreach in multiple languages to raise awareness about the dashboard and the City's progress on the Plan. Additionally, staff will submit an annual

progress report to both the PRC and City Council, summarizing implementation status, key achievements, and any recommended adjustments to timelines or priorities.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Strategic Plan provides planning-level cost estimates intended to illustrate the scale of investment needed to expand, maintain, and enhance Mountain View's parks and recreation system over time. Existing funding sources—including the General Fund, Capital Improvement Program (CIP), Park Land Dedication and in-lieu fees, and limited reserve funds—support ongoing operations and incremental capital improvements, but are insufficient to address the significant unmet park and recreation needs identified in the Plan, particularly in underserved Planning Areas.

Consistent with Council direction to allocate trail corridor acreage proportionally by Planning Area, rather than attributing all trail acreage to North Bayshore, the current park land shortfall outside of North Bayshore is estimated at approximately 53.5 acres.

Based on current market conditions, land acquisition costs are estimated at approximately \$10 million per acre, with an additional cost of \$3 million to \$6 million per acre for park design and construction. Using an average total cost of approximately \$13.5 million per acre for acquisition and development, the estimated current funding need associated with the identified park land shortfall is approximately \$722 million. The total investment needed is significant and surpasses what current funding sources can provide. Funding from a revenue measure will be necessary to achieve the bold initiatives included in the Plan.

Looking ahead, the Housing Element projects a 2040 population of approximately 148,200 residents. Although approximately 11.24 acres of park land have already been acquired or dedicated for future development, the projected park land shortfall is expected to increase over time absent additional investment. Addressing future park and recreation needs will require sustained, long-term funding commitments over multiple planning and budget cycles.

In addition to new park acquisition and development, substantial reinvestment in existing parks will also be necessary. Renovation of a typical five-acre neighborhood park is estimated to cost approximately \$6 million to 8 million, depending on the scope of improvements and amenities provided, while larger-scale renovations may cost approximately \$15 million.

The updated Action Plan includes 52 actions encompassing new park development, improvements to existing parks, biodiversity and habitat initiatives, lifecycle updates, inclusive and accessibility enhancements, expanded aquatics access, and staffing and operational capacity upgrades. While some actions may be implemented through existing resources or phased through the annual budget and CIP processes, many actions will require new or expanded funding sources.

The Plan highlights various supplemental funding strategies that could provide additional financial support; however, no single funding source would be sufficient to address the full scope of identified needs. Accordingly, consistent with the FY 2025-27 Council Work Plan, the City is exploring the potential for a voter-approved revenue measure for the 2026 General Election. Such a measure could provide a significant long-term funding source to advance major park acquisition, development, and reinvestment projects identified in the Strategic Plan.

LEVINE ACT

California Government Code Section 84308 (also known as the Levine Act) prohibits city officials from participating in any proceeding involving a “license, permit, or other entitlement for use” if the official has received a campaign contribution exceeding \$500 from a party, participant, or agent of a party or participant within the last 12 months. The Levine Act is intended to prevent financial influence on decisions that affect specific, identifiable persons or participants. For more information see the Fair Political Practices Commission website: www.fppc.ca.gov/learn/pay-to-play-limits-and-prohibitions.html

Please see below for information about whether the recommended action for this agenda item is subject to or exempt from the Levine Act.

EXEMPT FROM THE LEVINE ACT

General policy and legislative actions

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide other feedback for the final Plan.
2. Do not adopt the Plan.
3. Provide other direction.

PUBLIC NOTICING

In addition to the standard agenda posting, the notice for this meeting was posted to the City website and project website, ImagineMVParks.com. Staff sent a notice to all neighborhood associations and registrants from recreation programs from 2020 to the present. Notice has been provided to City stakeholders, including, but not limited to, City-recognized youth sports organizations, Mountain View Masters, Los Altos Mountain View Aquatics Club, Mountain View Tennis Academy, Mountain View Tennis Club, Mountain View Pickleball Club, Mountain View Los Altos Community Services Agency, Mountain View Whisman School District, Los Altos School District, Mountain View Los Altos Union High School District, Soil + Water, Friends of Mountain View Parks, Greenspaces MV, Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance, Canopy, and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

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- Attachments:
1. Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan
 2. November 2025 PRC and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions
 3. January 2026 Council and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions
 4. March 2026 PRC and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions