

**DATE:** January 27, 2026

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council

**FROM:** Kristine Crosby, Assistant Community Services Director  
John R. Marchant, Community Services Director  
Audrey Seymour, Assistant City Manager

**VIA:** Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

**TITLE:** Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – Draft Review



## STUDY SESSION MEMO

### PURPOSE

Review and provide feedback on the draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (Attachment 1).

### BACKGROUND

The City of Mountain View has a long-standing commitment to providing high-quality parks, open spaces, recreation programs, and community services that enhance residents' quality of life. Mountain View's parks and recreation system includes 46 City parks and school fields maintained and programmed by the City, two trail corridors, and a wide range of community facilities, such as a community center, senior center, teen center, two aquatics complexes, two historic sites, and a regional performing arts center.

The City offers over 1,800 recreation classes, camps, and activities year-round, with participation steadily increasing and reaching a record high of 13,000 enrollments in 2025. Additionally, the City produces more than 80 special events each year, strengthening community connections and civic pride through arts, culture, and recreation. Together, these spaces and programs create opportunities for recreation, enrichment, and cultural engagement for residents across the City, while also attracting visitors from throughout the region.

In the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of parks and open spaces has become even more evident. When many indoor spaces were closed, parks became vital community assets — places where residents could safely gather, exercise, and find comfort in nature. Families visited parks to enjoy the fresh air, individuals relied on trails and green spaces for wellness and stress relief, and neighborhoods rediscovered nearby parks as essential extensions of their homes. This shared experience strengthened the community's appreciation for what parks and recreation offer — not just benefits for individual health but also opportunities for social connection and resilience. As a result, both the community and the City have renewed their commitment to maintaining and expanding parks and recreation facilities, emphasizing the importance of ensuring every resident has access to welcoming, high-quality parks and recreation opportunities.

## **Plan History and Direction**

Mountain View's commitment to providing quality parks, facilities, and programs is rooted in a long history of thoughtful planning and investment. The following overview highlights the foundational plans that shaped today's system and set the stage for the development of the 2026 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan.

The City's first Recreation Plan was adopted in 2008 as a companion to the Parks and Open Space Plan (POSP), which was initially adopted in 1992. Together, these plans guided the City's investment in recreation programs, facilities, and park development. The plans included priorities such as expanding park access, improving facility quality, and enhancing community recreation opportunities. Both plans have now reached their planning horizon, with the POSP last updated in 2014 and the Recreation Plan reaching the end of its term in 2018. Appendix A of the draft Plan shows progress made since the City adopted the 2014 POSP.

Recognizing the need for a modern, integrated framework to guide future decisions, the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan or Plan) was initiated as a Fiscal Year 2021–22 Capital Improvement Project (Project 22-37). The Plan was identified as a priority under the City Council's Strategic Priority of Livability and Quality of Life and was reaffirmed in the Council's Fiscal Year 2023–25 Strategic Work Plan. Additionally, the City's 2023–2031 Housing Element outlines a two-step approach to reviewing the City's Park Land Dedication Ordinance, which includes completing a Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan to address anticipated open space needs and develop long-term funding strategies.

The planning process began in late 2022 with input from the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) and City Council on the scope of work for developing the Strategic Plan. Following Council authorization in April 2023, the City engaged Next Practice Partners, LLC to implement this scope and help develop the Strategic Plan. The project team, comprising City staff and consultants, conducted an 11-month community engagement effort from August 2023 to July 2024. Since August 2024, the team has focused on technical analysis, including a thorough Level of Service analysis, inventorying, re-measuring, and evaluating all City parks and recreation facilities and programs, and translating the findings into goals, strategies, and action items for a 10- to 15-year Strategic Plan.

## **Strategic Plan Purpose and Key Components**

**The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan establishes a unified vision and clear direction for how Mountain View will sustain and enhance its parks, open spaces, and recreation system over the next decade.** Rooted in community values, the Plan serves as a practical roadmap for decision-making, investment, resource allocation, and the exploration of new funding sources. It is designed to guide the continued evolution of the City's parks and recreation system in response to community needs, emerging trends, and best practices in the field.

Developed through broad public engagement, the Plan reflects the priorities and aspirations of Mountain View residents and provides a framework for balancing growth, equity, environmental stewardship, and financial sustainability. Above all, it is intended to be a **living, actionable plan**—one that fosters continual improvement and innovation while staying true to the Community Services Department's mission to *build community and enrich lives*.

Key components of the draft Plan include:

- **Community Profile and Needs Assessment** – A review of demographic trends, recreation participation, and community feedback.
- **Inventory and Analysis** – Evaluation of existing parks, facilities, and programs to identify system strengths, gaps, and opportunities.
- **Vision, Goals, and Strategies** – A framework that articulates the City's long-term direction for parks, recreation, and community services.
- **Funding and Implementation** – An overview of potential funding mechanisms, along with a phased **Action Plan** to guide immediate, short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities.
- **Performance Metrics** – Measures to track progress and ensure accountability over time.

### **Project Delays**

When the plan development began, staff expected it to take 18 months from project start to plan adoption, with an expected completion date in December 2024. However, several factors extended the timeline, including additional public meetings and an extended community engagement phase to ensure wide participation. The statistically valid survey was also delayed by two months to be launched after the 2023 holiday season, which in turn pushed back other outreach and analysis tasks.

Significant time was also required to verify and recalculate existing park acreage. This task involved collaboration among multiple departments and the creation of new Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data to support the Level of Service analysis. Although this work extended the timeline, it provided a more accurate and reliable foundation for the Plan's findings and recommendations.

Since the public input phase ended, City staff have dedicated considerable effort to ensure the Plan accurately represents Mountain View's specific needs and values. While a consultant helped with technical analysis and national context, the priorities and actions are based on community input and staff expertise, including input from multiple departments as outlined below. This deliberate, hands-on approach, combined with the consultants' work, ensures that the Strategic Plan is not a generic framework but a highly tailored roadmap aligned with Mountain View's needs, opportunities, and long-term vision.

## **Plan Development Process**

The development of the Strategic Plan has been a collaborative, Citywide effort led by the Community Services Department with support from multiple departments, including Community Development, Public Works, the City Manager's Office, Finance and Administrative Services, and Information Technology. While the City engaged a consultant to support technical analysis and facilitation, City staff played a central role in drafting and refining the draft Plan to reflect Mountain View's unique context, policies, and operational realities. Each department contributed to data collection, analysis, and review to validate that the Plan reflects a comprehensive understanding of Mountain View's parks, facilities, and recreation system. The Plan underwent several rounds of interdepartmental review to confirm accuracy, strengthen coordination, and align recommendations with broader City goals and policies. The timeline below summarizes key phases of the planning process, from community engagement and assessments to technical analysis and action plan development.

### **Community Engagement**

The community engagement phase formed the foundation of the Plan and included a mix of digital and in-person outreach. Over the 11-month period, the City conducted a variety of input activities, including:

- A project website to share information and solicit feedback, achieving 854 engagements on the website's "Idea Board;"
- Six public input meetings with interpretation available in Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian, with 280 people in attendance;
- Eight focus group meetings with stakeholders, including two meetings in Spanish and Mandarin with 70 people in attendance;
- Four Community Services Department All-Hands staff meetings with a focus on the Plan;
- Three pop-ups at Celebrate Shoreline (October 2024), Monster Bash (October 2024), and the Community Tree Lighting Celebration (December 2024) with over 150 engagements per event, for a total of over 450 engagements;
- A statistically reliable, representative survey and companion community survey with over 1,800 responses collectively; and
- Four Parks and Recreation Commission meetings held at key milestones to inform the Plan development, including early discussions on priorities, review of park and program assessment and community input findings, and feedback on the draft Level of Service framework.

**In total, approximately 3,200 engagements occurred over this period.** Through this process, residents shared their thoughts on the City's strengths and opportunities for parks and recreation offerings, as well as top-priority outcomes that they would like the Plan to address. This feedback shaped the Plan's focus areas and informed the development of goals, strategies, and action items.

### **Program Assessment**

The project team conducted a comprehensive assessment of the City's recreation programs to better understand their alignment with community needs, participation trends, and organizational priorities. The process began with a detailed review of existing program data, registration reports, and fee structures to establish a baseline of current offerings. Staff then organized all programs into Core Program Areas and evaluated each area using standardized criteria, including age groups served, participation trends, cost recovery, and program lifecycle.

To provide additional context, Mountain View's program data was then compared with national averages and trends observed in other parks and recreation agencies. This comparison helped identify strengths, service gaps, and opportunities for program growth, which informed the recommendations for recreation programming in the Plan.

### **Operational Assessment**

The City conducted a comprehensive Operational Assessment of the Community Services Department to better understand how internal systems, staffing structures, and workflows support service delivery. Recognizing that the Department's ability to deliver high-quality programs and facilities depends on effective internal operations, the assessment examined organizational alignment, workload distribution, procedures, staffing models, and technology use across divisions. The project team also reviewed key City Council policies and municipal code provisions to identify potential barriers or redundancies.

In addition to the above analysis, the process included staff meetings and focused listening sessions with employees at all levels. These discussions provided valuable insights into daily operations, interdepartmental coordination, and ways to enhance communication, resource management, and overall efficiency.

The assessment examined key areas, including staff capacity, resource allocation for park maintenance and recreation programs, coordination of grants and sponsorships, and succession planning. It also assessed the availability of critical interdepartmental support roles, especially Public Works project management staff and transportation planning and engineering staff that support park development and access. Additionally, the assessment identified opportunities to enhance capacity for advancing biodiversity initiatives across the park system. The findings, summarized in the Discussion section below, establish a foundation for future organizational improvements and continued excellence in service delivery.

## Parks Assessment

The project team conducted a thorough on-site assessment of all City-owned and maintained parks and trails to document existing conditions and identify opportunities for improvement. The evaluation covered 43 sites, including Shoreline Park, five Community Parks, eight Neighborhood Parks, 20 Mini Parks, and two trail corridors, including Stevens Creek Trail and Permanente Creek Trail. Evelyn Park was not included, as it had not yet opened at the time of the assessment.

The team also reviewed 11 school fields accessible through the City's Joint Use Agreement with the Mountain View Whisman School District (MVWSD) to understand the role of these sites within the broader park system. Although detailed site assessments were not conducted for the school fields, the review noted general conditions and amenities.

Each City park and trail was evaluated using consistent criteria—access and connectivity, condition, functionality, and sense of safety and comfort. The draft Plan further details the assessment process, including the methodology used to score each park in each category and the overall takeaways. The findings revealed systemwide patterns and opportunities that shaped the Level of Service analysis and guided development of the Plan's recommendations. A subsequent park-by-park workshop with City staff further refined priorities by distinguishing between sites suitable for targeted updates and those requiring more significant park enhancements, helping to align future capital improvement planning.

## Level of Service (LOS)

Following the completion of the community engagement and assessment phases, the project team conducted a comprehensive Level of Service analysis to evaluate the quantity, accessibility, and geographic distribution of parkland and recreation facilities. This process began in mid-2024 and involved inventorying all City-owned and maintained parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities; verifying and recalculating acreage using updated GIS mapping; categorizing parks by type; and analyzing how parks, trails, and amenities are distributed across the City's ten Planning Areas to identify gaps, concentrations, and access patterns.

The process required close collaboration among staff from the Community Services, Public Works, and Information Technology Departments to ensure accuracy and consistency. Particular attention was given to remeasuring park acreage and adjusting the calculation of how the acreage of school fields and Shoreline at Mountain View should be counted toward the LOS. This reflected the community's feedback and staff's evolving thinking about considering the extent to which these sites are accessible to the public. Staff analyzed public access hours for each site, developed proportional acreage factors for the school fields, and proposed a standardized approach for counting accessible portions of Shoreline Park.

Staff presented the draft LOS to the PRC on [March 12, 2025](#) for review and discussion, including the proposed methods for calculating school fields and Shoreline at Mountain View. Feedback received at that meeting helped refine the LOS framework and confirm its alignment with

community expectations. The finalized LOS now serves as an analytical tool for the Plan, informing how parkland, facilities, and amenities are evaluated and understood across the city. The analysis provides a framework for examining access and distribution by Planning Area and helps inform future planning, investment, and prioritization decisions. Key findings and implications from this analysis are further elaborated in the Discussion section of this report.

### **Vision, Values, Goals, Strategies, and Action Plan Development**

Building on extensive community engagement and technical assessments, the project team started shaping the guiding framework for the Strategic Plan in late 2024. Using insights from surveys, pop-up events, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, project website feedback, and park and program assessments, the team identified recurring themes and priorities that guided the development of the Plan's vision, values, goals, and strategies. During this phase, the Community Services Department also developed a new mission statement to better reflect its commitment to inclusion, connection, and enrichment for all residents.

Through a series of collaborative workshops with staff, the project team refined the Plan's core goals and strategies to be actionable, measurable, and aligned with community expectations. These goals and strategies served as the framework for developing the draft Action Plan, which outlines clear areas of focus, policy updates, staffing considerations, and implementation steps to advance the Plan's vision.

### **Relationship to Other City Plans**

The Strategic Plan complements and aligns with several related City planning efforts currently in progress. It specifically references the draft **Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan**, which outlines strategies to enhance biodiversity, expand the urban tree canopy, and foster a deeper connection between people and nature. The Strategic Plan supports these objectives by pinpointing opportunities within parks and open spaces to enhance biodiverse landscaping and tree canopy.

The Plan will also align with the forthcoming **Active Transportation Plan**, which will guide policies and projects aimed at improving walking and biking throughout the City. Additionally, the plan references the City's **Vision Zero Action Plan/Local Road Safety Plan** to emphasize the importance of safe and accessible routes to parks, trails, and recreation facilities, particularly along high-traffic corridors and key neighborhood connections.

### **Park and Recreation Commission Review and Public Feedback**

On [November 17, 2025](#), the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) reviewed the draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan and provided feedback to inform refinements to the draft Plan. This was the first opportunity for both the public and the PRC to review the draft. The draft Plan was posted on the project website on November 3, 2025, and the public was encouraged to submit comments through the website until December 14, 2025. Additionally, staff received

public comments on the draft Plan by email, meetings with community members, and at the PRC meeting.

Feedback from the public and the PRC emphasized the need to strengthen the clarity, structure, and usability of the Plan. Main themes included the need for clearer connections between community input, analysis, and the resulting action items; increased emphasis on trees, vegetation, native planting, biodiversity, and safe access to parks and trails; and more detailed analysis using the City's Planning Areas, including considerations of future growth and its impact on the park system and the ability to make progress toward the goal of three acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Additional feedback identified opportunities to refine terminology and emphasis to better reflect community perspectives, improve the overall Plan organization, more clearly address the funding and staffing resources required for implementation, expand the assessment of school fields, and shift from prescriptive service benchmarks to a distribution-based approach that views parks and amenities by Planning Area.

Staff carefully considered all feedback received and conducted a thorough review and revision of the draft Plan to incorporate the themes into the new draft Plan now being presented to the City Council (see Attachment 2 – PRC and Community Feedback – Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions).

## **DISCUSSION**

The following discussion summarizes the key findings from the Plan development stages described above and highlights the main focus areas, goals, strategies, and action items. It also incorporates feedback received from the public and the PRC.

### **Community Input Key Findings**

Community feedback served as the foundation of the Strategic Plan, providing a clear picture of what Mountain View residents value today and what they hope to see in the future. **With over 3,200 engagements, the feedback revealed a deep appreciation for the City's well-maintained parks, welcoming facilities, and the wide range of recreation programs and events that bring people together.** Residents consistently described the City's parks and recreation system as one of Mountain View's greatest strengths, emphasizing the quality of its parks, the diversity of its programs, and the strong sense of connection created through events and engagement.

**At the same time, residents identified opportunities to enhance and expand the system in ways that respond to evolving needs and future growth.** Many called for additional parkland, improvements to aging infrastructure, and investments in sustainability, such as biodiverse landscaping, tree planting, and energy-efficient features. Interest also emerged around specific amenities, including public restrooms, sports fields and courts, dog parks, shade, and skate/bike parks. Residents also expressed interest in expanding fitness, wellness, and social programming for adults (18+) and older adults (55+), highlighting the importance of lifelong recreation opportunities.

Beyond the formal engagement process for this Strategic Plan, City staff continued to receive feedback through ongoing projects, public meetings, and direct communication with community members. Recent discussions surrounding pickleball expansion and the potential use of a small portion of Cuesta Annex open space have included a high level of civic engagement and reflect the passion residents bring to local issues. While viewpoints may represent special interests, they also highlight the diversity of perspectives and depth of engagement that shape decision-making. Importantly, strong feedback from nearby residents and the broader community underscores a desire to preserve Cuesta Annex as a natural, peaceful open space—a sentiment that speaks to the community's deep connection to its environment.

These insights, both from the Strategic Plan engagement and other ongoing conversations, demonstrate the City's broad and nuanced understanding of community priorities. This understanding has guided the development of the Plan's vision, goals, and actions. Public input highlights are included in Chapter 4 of the Plan. Full details of the engagement process and results from each engagement activity are provided in Appendix C.

### **Program Assessment Findings**

The Recreation Program Assessment in Chapter 5, Section 1 offers a comprehensive examination of how the City's recreation programs align with community needs, market trends, and operational capacity. **Overall, Mountain View's program portfolio demonstrates a strong balance between community-oriented offerings and revenue-generating opportunities, reflecting the City's commitment to both accessibility and fiscal responsibility.** Approximately one-third (33%) of programs provide a broad community benefit, while 25% offer a blend of community and individual benefit – an area that presents opportunity for growth through partnerships, program design, or marketing strategies. Revenue-generating programs account for roughly 30% of the portfolio, which is slightly higher than average, primarily due to vendor-led activities. These programs support cost-recovery goals, while the City's financial assistance program balances continued access and affordability for residents.

A program lifecycle analysis indicates that Mountain View maintains a healthy balance of innovation and stability in its recreation offerings. Nearly one-third (29%) of programs are new or expanding, indicating a steady responsiveness to evolving interests, while two-thirds (66%) are stable and well-established, exceeding the national average for program retention. **This balance underscores the City's ability to maintain quality, trusted programs while continuing to pilot new opportunities. However, the continued introduction of new programs will require careful assessment of staff and funding capacity to sustain quality and avoid overextension of City resources.**

These findings illustrate a recreation system that is both resilient and adaptive, striking a balance between tradition and innovation to meet the community's evolving needs. However, as program offerings continue to grow and diversify, maintaining quality, consistency, and equitable access will depend increasingly on the Department's internal capacity and operational structure. The following section delves further into this by examining organizational systems, staffing, and

workflows to identify opportunities to enhance efficiency, support staff, and ensure the City is well-positioned to deliver high-quality services in the future.

### **Operational Assessment Findings**

The Operational Assessment in Chapter 5, Section 2 of the Strategic Plan identifies opportunities to enhance the Community Services Department's organizational capacity, internal systems, and policy framework, thereby providing improved, sustainable support for the City's expanding parks and recreation services. Over the past decade, Mountain View's park system has expanded through new park developments, major upgrades, and the addition of more maintenance-intensive amenities. Although staffing resources have increased incrementally through yearly budget adjustments and operational efficiencies, staffing capacity has not kept pace with the rising scale, complexity, and usage of parks. Consequently, the draft Plan focuses on aligning staffing and operational capacity with the evolving park system to ensure long-term service quality and successful Plan implementation. While the Plan highlights specific staffing considerations, a more thorough review of the Department's organizational structure—including workload distribution and division alignment—would help ensure that staffing, resources, and operational priorities remain balanced as service demands increase.

**The assessment also highlights several areas where targeted staff capacity could enhance the implementation of park system goals, such as developing new parks and ensuring safe access to parks.** These include establishing clearer staffing standards for park maintenance through a field services audit to better align staffing levels with park size, type, and use intensity; expanding Public Works project management capacity to support new park development and larger-scale improvement projects; and strengthening transportation planning and engineering support to promote safe pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, especially where access is limited by major roads or incomplete networks. The draft Plan also emphasizes the need for specialized expertise to advance biodiversity and urban forest goals, ensuring that guidance from the City's Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan is consistently incorporated into park planning, capital projects, and maintenance practices through coordinated, cross-departmental efforts.

**In addition to staffing and operational capacity, the assessment identified several City Council policies and City Code ordinances that should be updated to reflect current community expectations and operational realities.** Updating policies such as H-5 (Facility Use), H-7 (Athletic Field Use), and J-2 (Cost Recovery) would improve fairness, consistency, and transparency across user groups, aligning fee structures with the City's broader goals of equity and sustainability. Similarly, upcoming efforts to refine the parkland dedication and in-lieu fee structure will help ensure that future development contributes appropriately to the park system. Additionally, reviewing the City's financial assistance program will support affordability and access as central elements of the Department's mission.

**Operationally, the assessment identified opportunities to improve efficiency by clarifying staffing standards for park maintenance and enhancing support for the Recreation Division.** Establishing centralized roles or small teams for functions such as marketing and

communications, special event coordination, and grants and sponsorships would streamline operations, reduce duplication, and strengthen cross-divisional coordination. Continued investments in workforce development, succession planning, and volunteer engagement will help sustain the City's high standard of service delivery and position the Department for long-term success.

**These operational findings underscore that successful implementation of the Strategic Plan will depend not only on policy direction and capital investment, but also on aligning staffing capacity, organizational structure, and cross-departmental resources to support delivery over time.**

### **Park Assessment Findings and Design Guidelines**

As mentioned in the Background section of this memorandum, each park was assessed using a standardized scoring system that measured condition, functionality, accessibility, and overall user experience. This analysis, described in Chapter 5, Section 3 of the draft Plan, helped pinpoint areas where updates or improvements are most needed to maintain quality and safety across the system. In addition to individual park scores, the project team developed guidelines, outlined in Chapter 6, to support informed park design decisions when prioritizing reinvestment and incorporating biodiversity into park planning. This approach balances the need to address deferred maintenance with opportunities to expand and modernize amenities, enhance inclusivity, and reflect community preferences gathered through public input.

The Park Assessment established a strategic framework for maintaining and enhancing Mountain View's parks, focusing on access and connectivity, condition, functionality, and safety and comfort. **The findings emphasize the importance of creating a cohesive park system with consistent design standards, signage, and wayfinding elements, while allowing each park to express a unique character that reflects its setting and community use.** By promoting thoughtful design, durable materials, biodiverse tree canopy and vegetation, and clear points of entry, the City can strengthen both the functionality and visual appeal of its parks. Expanding amenities that serve multiple age groups and activity levels—along with inclusive play spaces and natural play features—will ensure that each park continues to meet diverse community needs and encourage multi-generational use.

**Additionally, the assessment emphasizes the importance of integrating sustainability and accessibility principles into park planning and operations.** Strengthening biodiversity through native and drought-tolerant landscaping, habitat restoration, and ecological connectivity supports the City's environmental goals and builds long-term resilience. Comfort and safety are equally critical and could be achieved through strategic placement of seating, shade, lighting, and restrooms to enhance usability and visibility for all users. Collectively, these recommendations provide a clear framework for future park design, enhancements, and upgrades, supporting Mountain View's park system in remaining welcoming, inclusive, and adaptable to changing community needs.

### **Park Acreage and Future Growth Considerations**

As discussed in Chapter 5, Section 4, the City currently provides approximately 4.40 acres of developed parkland per 1,000 residents citywide, exceeding the long-standing citywide goal of 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents. **While this reflects a healthy overall level of service, a closer examination of park acreage by Planning Area reveals important disparities in how park land is distributed across the City.** Throughout and prior to the planning process, residents consistently expressed a desire for more parks in neighborhoods with limited access to open space, such as the Monta Loma, Terra Bella, and Rex-Manor neighborhoods.

**Analysis of park acreage and access by Planning Area shows that, despite generally strong citywide access to parks, several Planning Areas, including Rengstorff, Thompson, Central, Stierlin, and Sylvan-Dale, fall well below the goal of 3.0 acres per 1,000 people. The Monta Loma neighborhood falls within the Thompson Planning Area; the Terra Bella and Rex Manor neighborhoods are in the Stierlin Planning Area.** The Plan identifies these areas as the City's highest priorities for new park acquisition, expansion, and reinvestment, particularly where factors such as higher residential density, limited land availability, or transportation barriers constrain access to parks and open space. Appendix G of the Plan provides additional context, including profiles of the Planning Areas and details on the distribution of parks and amenities by Planning Area. This distribution by Planning Area approach replaces the use of prescriptive benchmarks and equity maps that had been included in the former draft Plan.

This analysis underscores that the City's primary challenge is not the total amount of parkland, but how that land, and its associated amenities, is distributed and accessed across Planning Areas. These findings directly inform the Plan's identified parkland focus areas and help guide future investment decisions.

**Looking ahead, ongoing land-use and housing policy initiatives, driven in large part by state legislation, are expected to increase demand for parks and recreation amenities in several Planning Areas over time.** These include implementation of the City's Housing Element, updates to the R3 (Multiple-Family Residential) Zoning District, planned development under the East Whisman Precise Plan, and recent State housing laws such as Senate Bill 79, which allows for higher-density residential development near major transit stops. Collectively, these policies are anticipated to result in higher residential intensities—particularly in the San Antonio, Central, Stierlin, and Whisman Planning Areas—with more modest growth potential in Thompson and increased demand in Sylvan-Dale and Rengstorff due to zoning changes. While Planning Area-specific population projections are not available, the analysis highlights where future growth pressures are most likely to affect park access and recreational needs.

At the citywide level, population growth will affect overall park acreage and the Level of Service over time. The City's adopted Housing Element projects a 2040 population of approximately 148,200, reflecting planned housing growth beyond baseline demographic estimates. Under this scenario, even with the addition of currently owned but undeveloped park land, the citywide park Level of Service would decline as population increases, underscoring the importance of

strategic planning for future park acquisition, expansion, and enhancement. These findings reinforce the need to proactively consider how parkland and amenities are distributed across Planning Areas most likely to see future growth, rather than relying solely on existing conditions.

Meeting the community's expectations while responding to anticipated growth will require sustained investment and thoughtful prioritization. Using this Plan, the City can make informed decisions that improve equity, enhance park quality, and ensure the parks and recreation system continues to serve residents effectively over time.

### **Framework for Prioritizing New Park Planning and Improvements**

In Chapter 7, the draft Plan introduces a framework for prioritizing park planning and improvements that is grounded in community input, systemwide analysis, and long-term implementation considerations. This framework has been updated since the November 3, 2025, draft of the Plan to more accurately reflect the importance of new park development. **The framework includes three categories of park investment: development of new parks, enhancement of existing parks, and updates to existing parks.** Each category reflects a different scale of investment, planning horizon, and operational impact. Most of the recommendations identified through this framework are not currently part of the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), but are intended to inform future planning, budgeting, and funding decisions.

#### **Develop New Parks**

As noted above, the Plan prioritizes Planning Areas with the greatest need for additional parkland, including Rengstorff, Thompson, Stierlin, Central, and Sylvan-Dale. In parallel with identifying future opportunities, the City has proactively pursued park expansion over the past three years through property acquisitions and dedications for future park development. Collectively, these efforts have resulted in the purchase or dedication of seven sites, totaling approximately 11.24 acres of parkland, which are currently under construction, in design, or anticipated for future design. Five of these sites will add new parkland within the Stierlin, Thompson, and Central Planning Areas.

In addition to new acquisitions, the Plan identifies City-owned parcels maintained by the Community Services Department that exceed 0.50 acres and could be repurposed or improved as mini or special-use parks. Three of these parcels are located within the Central and Grant Planning Areas, presenting near-term opportunities to expand public access to open space where traditional park acquisition may be limited.

#### **Enhance Existing Parks**

Based on park assessment scores and staff experience managing the park system, the Plan identifies several parks as candidates for targeted enhancements, including Chetwood, Klein, Bubb, and Cuesta Park. These enhancement opportunities may include upgrades to park amenities, selective facility or amenity redesigns, or the introduction of new park amenities,

along with the necessary ongoing maintenance and lifecycle replacement. Specific improvements would be further defined through future design processes, informed by community input and feasibility considerations.

Of the parks identified, Cuesta Park has two scheduled CIP projects to advance park improvements, including new elements, pathway renovation, playground replacement, and landscape improvements, as well as a separate CIP to complete a full rehabilitation of the Cuesta Tennis Center Pro Shop.

### **Update Existing Parks**

All parks require ongoing lifecycle improvements to remain safe, functional, and well-maintained. Many parks identified for updates primarily require routine lifecycle replacements and limited small-scale amenity additions, with improvements anticipated within a 6- to 10-year or 11- to 15-year timeframe. A smaller number of parks include elements that would benefit from earlier replacement within the next five years, including Sylvan, Cooper, Whisman, San Veron, Rex-Manor, Thaddeus, and Varsity Parks.

### **Systemwide Amenities**

In addition to park-specific improvements, community input consistently emphasized the importance of system-wide amenities that enhance usability and accessibility across the entire park system. Citywide priorities such as additional sports fields and courts, shade, public restrooms, dog parks, adult fitness zones, and expanded biodiversity were frequently mentioned by residents. These amenities can be integrated into both new park development and improvements to existing parks, with specific features and locations determined through future design processes informed by community input and neighborhood context.

This framework provides a clear, flexible approach to guiding future park planning and investment by distinguishing among system expansion, targeted enhancements, and essential lifecycle updates. By grounding priorities in community input, park condition assessments, and Planning Area-based analysis, the Plan establishes a transparent structure to help the City balance near-term reinvestment needs with long-term growth objectives. While many of the identified actions extend beyond the current CIP, this framework is intended to inform future budgeting, funding strategies, and policy discussion as the City continues to strengthen and expand its park system.

**Question No. 1: Does Council agree that the draft plan provides an accurate picture of Mountain View's parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation programs? Is anything missing or not clearly shown?**

## **Vision, Values, Goals, and Strategies**

The Plan establishes a unified framework to guide investment, operations, and decision-making over the next decade. The Plan defines a **vision** of:

A vibrant, inclusive and sustainable community where accessible parks, open spaces, and recreation opportunities inspire connection, well-being, and stewardship for generations to come.

The five core **values** of the Plan are:

Inclusion

Future Focus

Collaboration

Stewardship

Quality

The Plan's four strategic **goals** focus on:

1. Expand and enhance safe, equitable and convenient access to parks, open spaces and trails;

2. Increase community participation;

3. Foster a positive staff culture and ensure well-maintained operations; and

4. Develop new funding sources and strengthen existing financial strategies to support a sustainable parks and recreation system.

To achieve these goals, the Plan identifies a set of **strategies** that translate the City's values into clear direction across all parts of the system:

## Parks, Trails, and Open Space

- Provide connected and inclusive access to parks and trails through land acquisition, development of new parks, and alignment with the Vision Zero Action Plan/Local Road Safety Plan and Active Transportation Plan.
- Provide park improvements and amenities that reflect community needs and address needed updates.
- Promote biodiversity, environmental resilience and long-term sustainability in the City's parks through increased tree canopy, planting of native species, and alignment with the Biodiversity and Urban Forest Plan.

## Recreation Programs and Facilities

- Deliver inclusive program offerings that serve diverse community needs.
- Expand partnerships for program delivery, awareness and use.

## Operations and Maintenance

- Build organizational capacity and a future-ready workforce to sustain high-quality parks and recreation services.
- Enhance preventative and responsive maintenance practices.

## Funding and Marketing

- Diversify and expand revenue streams.
- Share meaningful stories to maximize community engagement and connections.

## **Question No. 2: Does Council agree that the draft Vision, Goals, and Strategies reflect what the City should focus on for the future of parks and recreation, or does Council have any changes?**

### **Action Plan, Performance Metrics, and Tracking Progress**

The strategies outlined above form the foundation of the Action Plan presented in Chapter 8 of the draft Plan. The **Action Plan includes 50 specific, trackable actions** designed to implement the Plan's vision over the next 10-15 years. These actions were developed through a comprehensive review of community input gathered through multiple engagement methods, systemwide assessments and analysis, and the experience and expertise of City staff responsible for planning, delivering, and maintaining Mountain View's parks and recreation programs as outlined in Chapters 4 through 7 of the draft Plan.

Actions related to recreation programs and operations reflect targeted opportunities for improvement within an overall system that is performing well and meeting community needs. Actions related to park expansion and improvements are informed by Planning Area-based analysis of park access and amenity distribution, as well as a framework that calls for developing new parks, and enhancing or updating existing parks. While many of the recommended actions are not currently included in the City's Capital Improvement Program, they are intended to guide future planning, budgeting, and funding discussions. Each action identifies a planning-level cost

range, implementation timeline, and anticipated milestones, and is supported by prioritization criteria outlined in Chapter 8.

To measure progress toward the Plan's vision, a set of 10 performance metrics translates the goals and strategies into measurable outcomes. These indicators track systemwide progress in key areas, including park access and connectivity, recreation participation, sustainability and biodiversity, workforce development, partnerships, and financial stewardship. These metrics provide a data-driven framework for accountability and transparency, with each measure tied to related action items, identified data sources, and a defined tracking frequency.

**Recognizing the long-term horizon of the Strategic Plan, the draft Plan also acknowledges that changing conditions may affect the City's ability to implement specific action items as envisioned.** Potential risks include higher-than-anticipated population growth driven by housing policy and state mandates, evolving regulatory requirements that may affect park funding, escalating capital and operational costs, competition for limited Capital Improvement Program resources, and unforeseen events such as natural disasters or public health emergencies. Additional uncertainties include shifts in community recreation preferences over time and potential changes in access to school fields that currently support park access and programming in several Planning Areas. To address these uncertainties, the Action Plan is designed to be adaptive, with clearly defined action items, milestones, and performance metrics that allow the City to monitor progress, reassess priorities, and make adjustments as conditions change.

Progress on both Action Items and Performance Metrics will be shared through a public-facing dashboard and annual reports to the Parks and Recreation Commission and City Council. This approach enables the City to monitor implementation, assess outcomes, and adjust priorities as conditions evolve or new needs arise. Community members will also be invited to provide feedback throughout the Plan's lifecycle, ensuring that their lived experiences continue to inform implementation.

**A comprehensive update to the Strategic Plan is recommended to begin in 2036, approximately 10 years after adoption.** This update will document achievements realized through this plan, re-evaluate existing conditions and levels of service, confirm that the City's parks, facilities, and recreation programs continue to reflect the community's evolving needs and priorities, and set priorities and actions for the next 10 years.

**Question No. 3: When looking at the Action Plan, are there any actions that should be added, removed, explained better, or moved up or down in the timeline?**

#### **Fiscal Impact and the Cost of Implementing the Action Plan**

The Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, Project 22-37, is funded with a total of \$750,000; \$150,000 from the Shoreline Regional Park Community Fund and \$600,000 from the General

Non-Operating Fund. No additional appropriation is being requested at this time to complete the development and adoption of the Plan.

The Strategic Plan provides planning-level cost estimates to illustrate the scale of investment required to expand, maintain, and enhance Mountain View's parks and recreation system over time. While the City's current 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, they are not sufficient to address the magnitude of unmet park needs identified through this Plan, particularly in Planning Areas with lower access to parks.

**At a citywide level, Mountain View currently exceeds the 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents goal; however, when park access is examined by Planning Area, the City faces an estimated shortfall of approximately 87 acres today, excluding North Bayshore.** Looking ahead, the Housing Element projects a 2040 population of approximately 148,200 residents. Under this growth scenario, and even accounting for the 11.24 acres of parkland already acquired or dedicated for future development, the estimated parkland shortfall would increase substantially over time if additional investments are not made.

At current market conditions, land acquisition averages approximately \$10 million per acre, with an additional \$3–\$6 million per acre for park design and construction. **Using an average cost of \$13.5 million per acre for park acquisition and development, addressing today's estimated shortfall would cost approximately \$1.2 billion, while fully addressing projected future needs would require multiple billions of dollars over the long term.** These figures demonstrate that closing the parkland gap is not feasible within a single 10–15 year planning cycle and will require sustained, long-term investment.

Even reinvestment in existing parks carries significant cost. Updating a five-acre neighborhood park typically costs \$6–8 million, depending on scope and amenities, while more substantial park enhancements are estimated at \$15 million for a five-acre park.

The Action Plan includes 50 actions spanning new park development, enhancements to existing parks, lifecycle updates, and improvements to staffing and operational capacity. While some actions can be implemented within existing resources or phased through the annual budget and CIP process, others will require new or enhanced funding sources.

The draft Plan identifies a range of supplemental funding strategies that may provide incremental support; however, none are sufficient on their own to address the scale of need. As such, the City is evaluating the feasibility of a voter-approved revenue measure for the 2026 General Election, consistent with the FY 2025–27 Council Work Plan. While no decisions have been made, if supported by the community, a revenue measure represents one of the few tools capable of providing the level of capital funding necessary to advance the City's significant infrastructure needs, including major park acquisition, development, and reinvestment efforts identified in the Strategic Plan.

## **QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL**

Staff seeks City Council input on the following questions:

**Question No. 1:** Does Council agree that the draft plan provides an accurate picture of Mountain View's parks, trails, open spaces, and recreation programs? Is anything missing or not clearly shown?

**Question No. 2:** Does Council agree that the draft Vision, Goals, and Strategies reflect what the City should focus on for the future of parks and recreation, or does Council have any changes?

**Question No. 3:** When looking at the Action Plan, are there any actions that should be added, removed, explained better, or moved up or down in the timeline?

## **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](http://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

## **NEXT STEPS**

Following the Study Session, City staff will incorporate feedback received from the City Council to prepare a refined draft of the Plan. The updated draft plan is anticipated to return to the Parks and Recreation Commission for review in March 2026, followed by City Council consideration and adoption in May 2026.

## **Nexus Study Update**

In addition to the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, the City is developing a “Parks and Recreation Impact Fee Study” (nexus study) to update the fees associated with new residential development.

A nexus study provides the legal and technical foundation for determining a fair and proportionate parkland fee. As new housing is constructed and the population grows, additional demand is placed on the City’s parks, trails, and recreational facilities. The study evaluates the number of new residents expected from future development, identifies the additional parkland and facilities required to maintain the City’s adopted service standards, and estimates the associated costs. Based on this analysis, the study establishes a fee structure that ensures new development contributes its fair share toward maintaining high-quality parks and recreation opportunities for the entire community.

The findings of the nexus study may have implications for the Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. Historically, the City’s parkland fee has been calculated based on a goal of three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, consistent with the Quimby Act. However, the City’s Housing Element has recommended reducing the development fees on residential housing to ensure the feasibility of delivering new housing to the community. The recommended fee will balance these goals and City Council will adopt a new fee structure as part of this Nexus Study process. The study may recommend updates to the fee program, including a broader calculation of a new fee based on the Mitigation Fee Act framework.

The parkland nexus study is scheduled for Council Finance Committee review on January 21, 2026, and based on Committee input and direction, a future date for City Council to review and act will be scheduled. As the study is finalized and adopted, corresponding updates may be incorporated into the draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan following completion of the nexus study.

## **CONCLUSION**

The draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan translates extensive community input and technical analysis into a clear, actionable roadmap for the next 10-15 years in Mountain View. The Strategic Plan outlines priorities for new park development, reinvesting in existing parks through targeted, updated enhancements, and promoting continued innovation in recreation programs. The Plan is guided by measurable outcomes and an implementation framework that can adapt as community needs evolve.

A key focus of the Plan is expanding the park system by adding new parks in park-deficient Planning Areas, specifically Central, Rengstorff, Stierlin, Sylvan-Dale, and Thompson, with particular attention to neighborhoods such as Monta Loma, Terra Bella, and Rex-Manor. Addressing these gaps is essential to providing residents with equitable access to high-quality parks.

The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan will require a sustained organizational and financial commitment. The Plan provides a framework to clarify where resources are most needed for park expansion and improvement and underscores that new park development will require significant additional funding, including the exploration of a revenue measure. Performance metrics, annual reporting, and a public-facing dashboard will support accountability and transparency as the City works to achieve the community's long-term vision for parks and recreation.

### **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](http://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.

Attachments:

- 1. [Draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan](#)
- 2. PRC and Community Feedback - Summary of Feedback Themes and Plan Revisions