

**6.3. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS FOR GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT OF  
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS**



DATE: March 17, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Stefan Chatwin, City Manager  
Marlene Subhashini, Assistant City Manager

FROM: Sofia Mangalam, Community Development Director  
Vanessa Brannon, Senior Management Analyst  
Nori Jabba, Housing Coordinator

DEPARTMENT: Community Development

SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS FOR GENERAL PLAN  
AMENDMENT OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE AND  
CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

---

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council, Minute Order, review and accept the report, including the overview of the process for updating the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan and Community Engagement Plan.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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.

In order to comply with SB 1425 and AB 1889 requirements in a timely manner, the City is updating two (2) Elements of the General Plan, including Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements.

This report provides an overview of the Elements, the process of updating them, and the plan to engage the Foster City community in shaping the outcomes of these required updates to the General Plan elements.

## **BACKGROUND**

[Foster City General Plan](#) and its Elements

Foster City's General Plan contains eight (8) elements that are published separately. Open Space and Conservation are mandatory elements of the General Plan, while Recreation is optional.

- [Land Use and Circulation Element](#) (amended 2013)
- [Housing Element](#) (adopted 2024)
- [Parks and Open Space Element](#)
- [Noise Element](#) (adopted 1993)
- [Safety Element](#) (adopted 2023)
- [Conservation Element](#) (adopted 2009)

On [October 7, 2024](#), the City Council approved the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Amendment to the Foster City General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and the General Plan Conservation Element. An RFP was issued on October 8, 2024.

Subsequently, on [December 2, 2024](#), the City Council awarded a Professional Services Agreement to Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) to provide professional planning and consultant support services for an Amendment of the Foster City General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation General Plan Element to comply with [SB1425](#) and [AB 1889](#).

## Regulatory Framework

- The LCI provides guidelines to ensure that general plans meet the statutory requirements. According to the LCI: *"While a general plan will contain the community vision for future growth, California law also requires each plan to address the mandated elements listed in Government Code section 65302. The mandatory elements for all jurisdictions are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety.."* (source: [LCI](#))
- SB 1425 requires all cities and counties to review and update their Open Space Elements by January 1, 2026. This update must include plans and an action program addressing key issues such as equitable access to open space, rewilding opportunities, climate resilience, and other co-benefits of open space while ensuring alignment with related elements, including the Safety Element and Environmental Justice policies. SB 1425 defines "rewilding opportunities" as efforts to preserve, enhance, and expand open space networks to support habitat, recreation, natural resources, and water management, among other uses. The legislation also emphasizes the establishment of plans to coordinate mitigation of the environmental impacts of new development.
- AB 1889, which goes into effect for updates made on or after January 1, 2028, requires cities and counties to address the impacts of development on wildlife movement and habitat connectivity within the Conservation Element. This includes identifying and analyzing wildlife passage features and ensuring that planned development does not compromise these features. The Conservation Element must incorporate strategies to maintain or enhance habitat connectivity and mitigate the barriers caused by urban development.
- On October 7, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Executive Order N-82-20, creating a California Biodiversity Collaborative and setting a goal of conserving at least 30% of the state's land and coastal waters by 2030 to combat the biodiversity and climate crisis.

## **Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element**

The Parks and Open Space Element, adopted in September 2009, integrates the preservation of parklands and open spaces in the City. The Parks and Open Space sections were combined, given the significant role parklands play in Foster City. For Foster City, the Parks and Open Space Element is the overarching framework for preserving green spaces, protecting the waterfront, and promoting environmental conservation and resiliency. It helps ensure residents enjoy a high quality of life while enhancing climate resilience and access.

Per LCI, an Open Space Element must contain an inventory of specified categories of

open space resources. The inventory should be reflected on maps, and policies must provide for conservation of such areas wherever possible.

#### Key Focus Areas of the Parks and Open Space Element:

- Outlines strategies for preserving, developing, and maintaining parks, recreation areas, and other open spaces
- Provides a framework for ensuring residents have access to quality outdoor space
- Includes an inventory of existing parks and open spaces and identifies broad strategies for improving facilities and access
- Measures addressing equitable access, climate resilience, and rewilding opportunities, as well as other co-benefits of open space per SB 1425 (NEW).

#### **Foster City's Conservation Element**

Initially part of the Parks, Open Space, and Conservation Element, the Conservation Element was originally adopted in May 2003 and was reprinted as a standalone element in September 2009. For Foster City, the Conservation Element is essential for protecting natural resources, managing sustainable growth, and addressing environmental challenges in order to ensure the city's long-term resilience and quality of life through effective conservation practices

#### Key Focus Areas of the Conservation Element:

- Guides the protection, management, and sustainable use of natural resources, including water, air, soil, and wildlife, to support environmental health and long-term community resilience.
- Outlines policies and strategies to conserve wildlife habitats, water resources, air quality, and other ecological features.
- May also address issues such as energy conservation, climate resilience, soil preservation, and the management of natural areas.
- (NEW) Measures to minimize impacts to wildlife connectivity and movement per AB 1889.
- Goals are aimed at balancing the need for growth with the preservation of the natural environment.

#### **Difference between Parks Master Plan and Parks and Open Space Element**

Staff would like to note that the City is also currently undertaking the Parks Master Plan Project (CIP 301-682).

Both the Parks Master Plan and the Parks and Open Space Element are long-range planning documents that are used to guide the development and management of parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities.

The Parks Master Plan is a standalone document that outlines specific projects, upgrades, and programming for parks and facilities. It serves as a strategic guide for park improvements and funding over a set period. In contrast, the Parks and Open Space Element is part of the city's General Plan, providing long-term goals, policies, and objectives for parks and open space and integrating these considerations into overall land use planning. While the Parks Master Plan is project-focused, the Parks and Open Space Element is policy-focused.

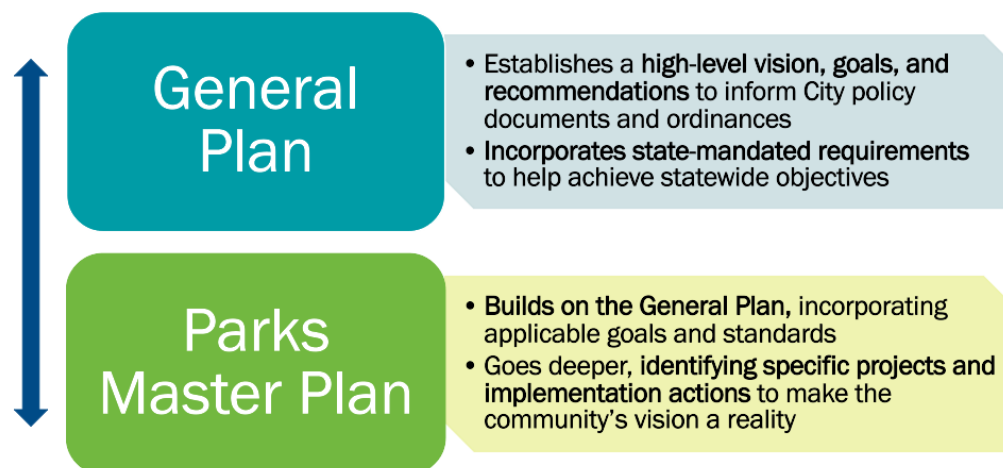


Fig 1. General Plan and Parks Master Plan (Source: Rincon)

## ANALYSIS

### The Update Process

As noted earlier, on December 2, 2024, the City Council awarded Rincon a Professional Services Agreement to provide professional planning and consultant support services for an Amendment of the Foster City General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation General Plan Element to comply with [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1425](#) and [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 1889](#).

It's worth noting that Rincon's sub-consultants are Wallace Roberts & Todd Design, LLC (WRT). WRT is the City's lead consultant for the Parks Master Plan Project. Having WRT as the sub-consultant will ensure alignment and reduce the potential for duplication of efforts.

The process of updating the Elements includes the following:

#### 1. Existing Conditions Analysis

a) Existing Plans, Regulations, Projects, Partnerships, and GIS Data:

Policy and document review is a substantial task that must be conducted intentionally and systematically to effectively inform policy. To address this, the consultant will use 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.

Figure 2 below indicates that the team will compile evaluation topics aligned with project goals, establish criteria for assessing existing plans and policies, and select plans for evaluation.



Fig 2. MAST tool process (Source: Rincon)

b) Community Assessment:

The team will produce 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 will incorporate data gathered as part of the Parks Master Plan, as well as other data sources and related previous efforts.

c) Park and Recreation Needs Assessment and Inventory:

The team will use the assessment of the City's parks and recreation programs as part of the Parks Master Plan effort and integrate the information into the Elements Update and identify key areas for policy direction.

d) Open Space and Conservation Assessment:

The team will develop an Open Space and Conservation Assessment that will provide the inventory Foster City's open spaces, biological resources, shoreline, and other natural resources. The consultant will use a variety of existing data sources, including desktop databases, literature reviews, previous local findings, and information provided through the first phase of community engagement, to develop the assessment efficiently.

## 2. Research and Analysis

a) Financial Evaluation and Prioritization

The team will identify 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 Elements update.

### 3. Preparation and Adoption

#### a) Administrative Drafts

The 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

#### Community Outreach and Engagement

On December 12, 2025, City staff met Rincon and WRT to discuss community engagement and outreach coordinated with and complementary to the Parks Master Plan engagement efforts. Rincon developed a strategic Engagement Plan that aligns with the Parks Master Plan engagement efforts but does not duplicate previous efforts and includes areas where the City can partner with Parks Master Plan engagement efforts.

The goals for public participation are as follows:

- Provide clear communication on the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements and frames it as a separate but connected project to the Parks Master Plan
- Allow for community input across projects that will be thoughtfully incorporated and reflected appropriately in each of the projects

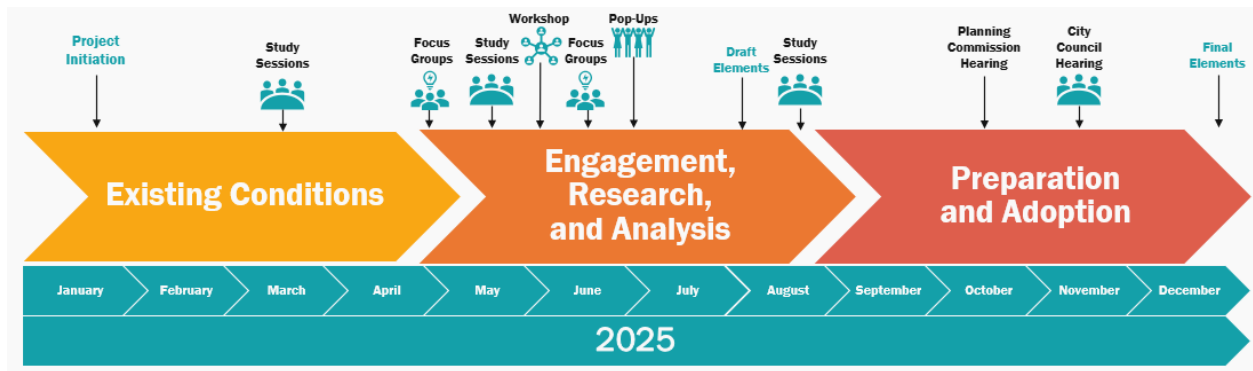
Table 1 includes the proposed engagement activities:

Engagement Activity	Engagement Objectives	Target Audience
<b>Community Priorities Survey</b>	Expand on WRT's previous survey to gain insight on conservation, open space, resiliency, and equitable access priorities.	All residents
<b>Focus Group Meetings</b>	Collect pointed information on the city's existing conditions and needs	Individual community groups or individuals with interests or expertise related to parks, open space, and conservation in Foster City
<b>Community Workshop</b>	Gain detailed insight into community priorities, needs, and challenges to parks and conservation.	All residents



<b>Pop-Up Events</b>	Allow for interactive, one-on-one input on policy recommendations for the Element Updates	Neighborhood-focused
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation Committee/ Planning Commission Joint Study Sessions</b>	<p>Study Session 1: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation</p> <p>Study Session 2: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments</p> <p>Study Session 3: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations</p> <p>Planning Commission Public Hearing: Hearing to recommend adoption by City Council</p>	<p>Parks &amp; Recreation Committee and Planning Commission</p> <p>All Residents</p>
<b>Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee Study Session</b>	<p>Study Session 1: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation</p> <p>Study Session 2: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments</p> <p>Study Session 3: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations</p>	<p>Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee</p> <p>All Residents</p>
<b>City Council</b>	<p>Study Session 1: Gather initial input on the issues, opportunities, and desired outcomes</p> <p>Study Session 2: Gain insight into initial key policy topics.</p> <p>Study Session 3: Present the draft Elements</p> <p>City Council Hearing: Hearing to adopt Elements</p>	City Council

The project timeline is on an expedited schedule due to SB1425 timeline of January 1, 2026, for the Parks Element.



See Attachment 2 for the timeline associated with specific tasks.

### California Environmental Quality Act

This agenda item which is intended to provide a progress report to the 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 – Timeline Associated with Specific Tasks



FOSTER CITY  
**PARKS & OPEN SPACE  
AND CONSERVATION  
ELEMENTS**

## City of Foster City

General Plan Parks and Open  
Space Element and General Plan  
Conservation Element

City Council Study Session #1

March 17, 2025





## Agenda

- Project Purpose
- Parks and Open Space Element Overview
- Conservation Element Overview
- Community Engagement Plan
- Update Process
- Schedule
- Next Steps
- Questions



# Project Purpose





## General Plan

### General Plan

- A General Plan is a long-term policy document that guides a community's growth and development
- A collection of goals and policies related to community life
- Used for the basis of land use decisions

### Required Elements



Land Use



Circulation  
(Transportation)



Housing



Conservation



Open Space



Noise



Safety



Environmental  
Justice\*



## Regulatory Framework

### SB 1425 and AB 1889

- SB 1425
  - Requires every city and county to review and update its local open-space plan by January 1, 2026
  - Updates must include: social, economic, and racial equity, climate resilience, rewilding opportunities

- AB 1889

- Requires the Conservation Element to consider the effect of development within the jurisdiction on the movement of wildlife and habitat connectivity

### Executive Order N-82-20

- Establishes the goal of protecting 30% of California's lands and waters by 2030
- Builds climate resilience, reduces risk from extreme climate events and contributes to the State's effort to combat climate change



## Goals of the Element Updates

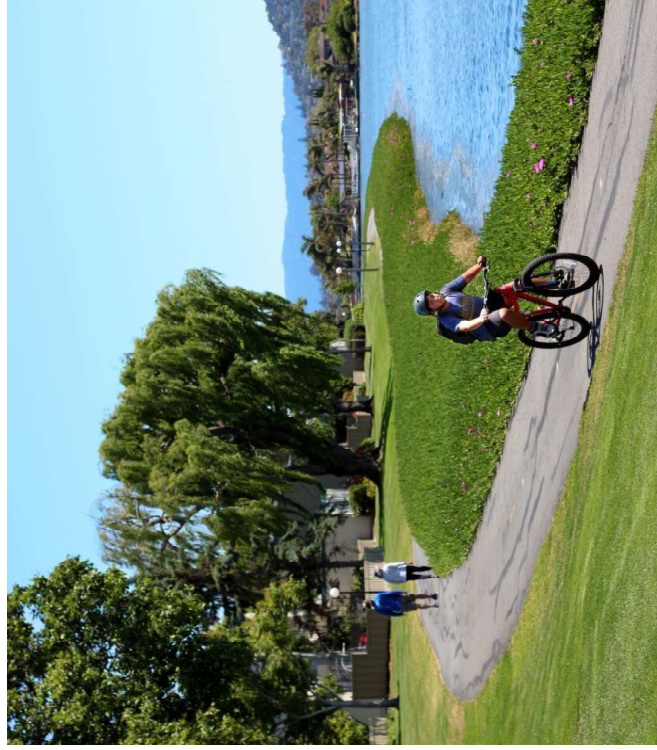
- Goals of the updated Elements
  - Comply with State requirements
  - Improve usability
  - Reflect trends in Foster City
  - Align with the Parks Master Plan and other City goals and vision
- The Elements will build off the work that's being done for the Parks Master Plan to maintain consistency and maximize efficiency







## Foster City Setting



- Foster City has 24 developed parks, and is currently developing a Parks Master Plan to understand priorities and provide policies and standards for improved operations, funding, and maintenance
- Open Space resources include the San Francisco bay, Belmont Slough, the Lagoon and canals, and Baywinds Park
- Natural resource considerations include water quality in the Lagoon, shoreline resources and resiliency, wildlife corridors and habitat, and access to parks and open space resources



# Parks and Open Space Element



## Parks Master Plan and Parks and Open Space Element

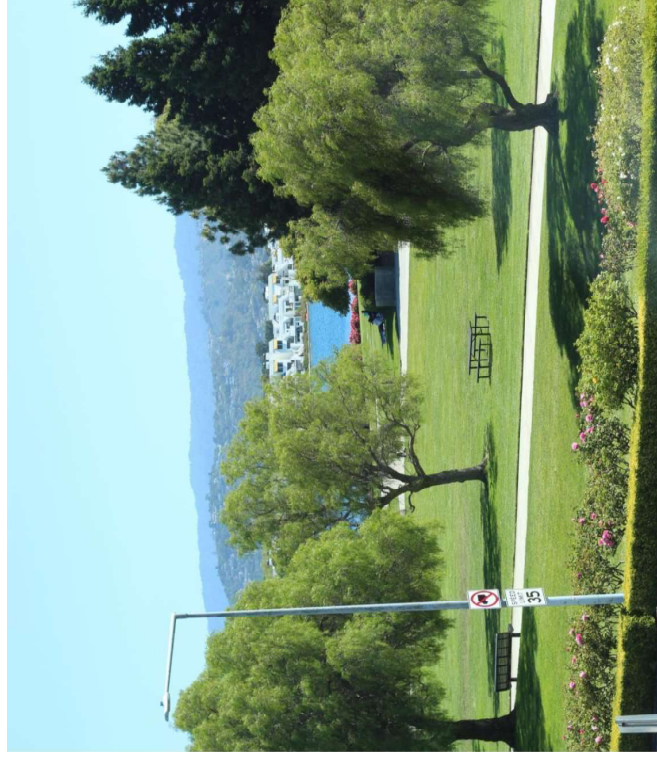






## Parks and Open Space Element

- Outlines strategies for preserving, developing, and maintaining parks, recreation areas, and other open spaces
- Provides a framework for ensuring residents have access to quality outdoor space
- Includes an inventory of existing parks and open spaces and identifies broad strategies for improving facilities and access
- (NEW) Measures addressing equitable access, climate resilience, and rewilding opportunities, as well as other co-benefits of open space per SB 1425





## Parks and Open Space Element

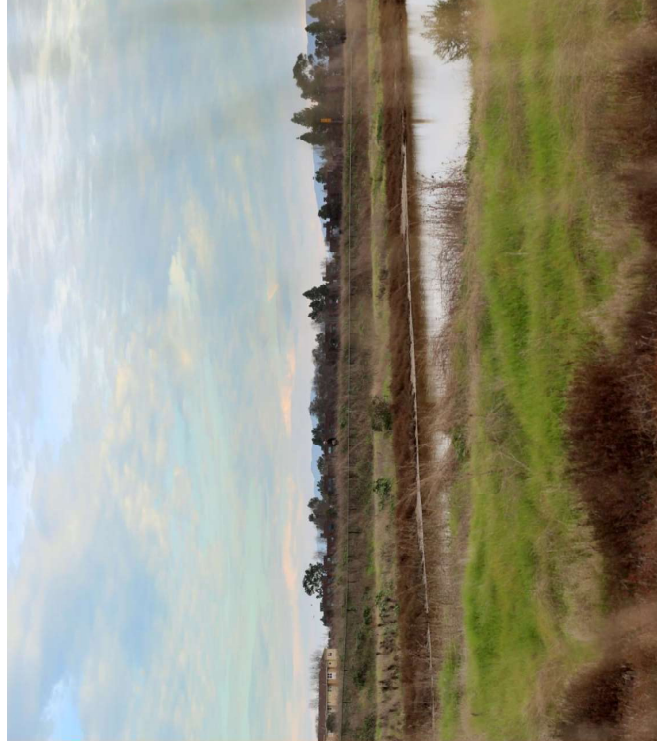
- Guides the development and preservation of parks, recreation, and open spaces for community and environmental benefit
- It includes goals, policies, and implementation strategies to address any gaps and guide environmental conservation, recreational programs, and accessibility
- Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element was last updated in September 2009
- For Foster City, the Parks and Open Space Element is the overarching framework for preserving green spaces, protecting the waterfront, and promoting environmental conservation and resiliency. It helps ensure residents enjoy a high quality of life while enhancing climate resilience and access



# Conservation Element



## Conservation Element



- Guides the protection, management, and sustainable use of natural resources, including water, air, soil, and wildlife, to support environmental health and long-term community resilience
- Outlines policies and strategies to conserve wildlife habitats, water resources, air quality, and other ecological features
- May also address issues such as energy conservation, climate resilience, soil preservation, and the management of natural areas
- (NEW) Measures to minimize impacts to wildlife connectivity and movement per AB 1889
- Goals are aimed at balancing the need for growth with the preservation of the natural environment





## Conservation Element

- Includes goals, policies, and strategies for protecting natural resources, managing land use in relation to the environment, preserving wildlife habitats, and conserving water and energy
- Foster City's Conservation Element was adopted in 2003 and reprinted in 2009
- For Foster City, the Conservation Element is essential for protecting natural resources, managing sustainable growth, and addressing environmental challenges in order to ensure the city's long-term resilience and quality of life through effective conservation practices



# Community Engagement Plan



## Community Outreach and Engagement

- The goals for public participation:
  - Provide clear communication on the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements and frames it as a separate, but connected, project to the Parks Master Plan
  - Allow for community input across projects that will be thoughtfully incorporated and reflected appropriately in each of the projects





## Community Engagement

Engagement Activity	Engagement Objectives	Target Audience
Community Priorities Survey	Expand on WRT's previous survey to gain insight on conservation, open space, resiliency, and equitable access priorities	All residents
Focus Group Meetings	Collect pointed information on the city's existing conditions and needs	Individual community groups or individuals with interests or expertise related to parks, open space, and conservation in Foster City
Community Workshop	Gain detailed insight on community priorities, needs, and challenges to parks and conservation	All residents
Pop-Up Events	Allow for interactive, one-on-one input on policy recommendations for the Element Updates	Neighborhood-focused



## Committee and Council Engagement

Engagement Activity	Engagement Objectives	Target Audience
Parks & Recreation Committee/ Planning Commission Joint Study Sessions	<p><u>Study Session 1</u>: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation</p> <p><u>Study Session 2</u>: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments</p> <p><u>Study Session 3</u>: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations</p> <p><u>Planning Commission Hearing</u>: Hearing to recommend adoption by City Council</p>	Parks & Recreation Committee and Planning Commission
Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee Study Session	<p><u>Study Session 1</u>: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation</p> <p><u>Study Session 2</u>: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments</p> <p><u>Study Session 3</u>: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations</p>	Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee
City Council	<p><u>Study Session 1</u>: Gather initial input on the issues, opportunities, and desired outcomes</p> <p><u>Study Session 2</u>: Gain insight into initial key policy topics</p> <p><u>Study Session 3</u>: Present the draft Elements</p> <p><u>City Council Hearing</u>: Hearing to adopt Elements</p>	City Council

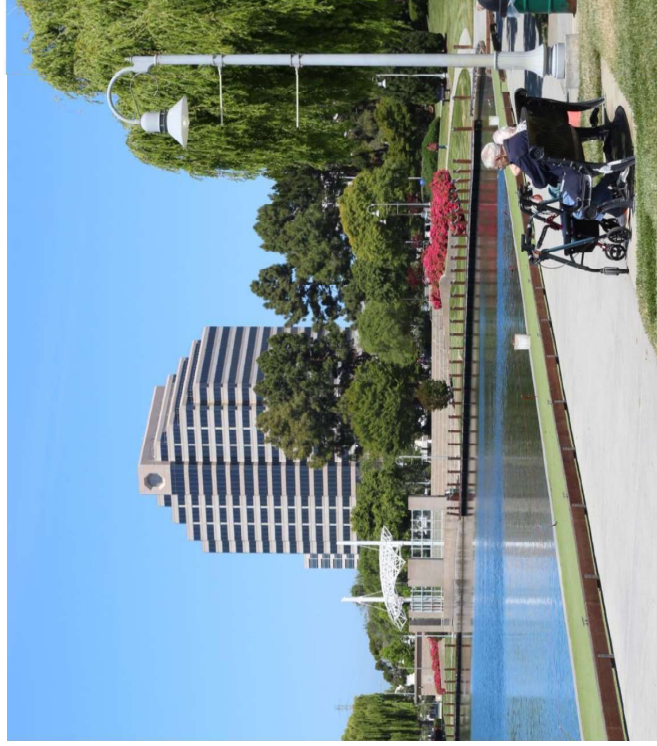


# Update Process





## Update Process



### Updating the elements will include:

Engagement with the community

Research on the condition of open space and natural resources today

Coordination with Parks and Recreation Department on information used for the Parks Master Plan

Identification of gaps, needs, and issues

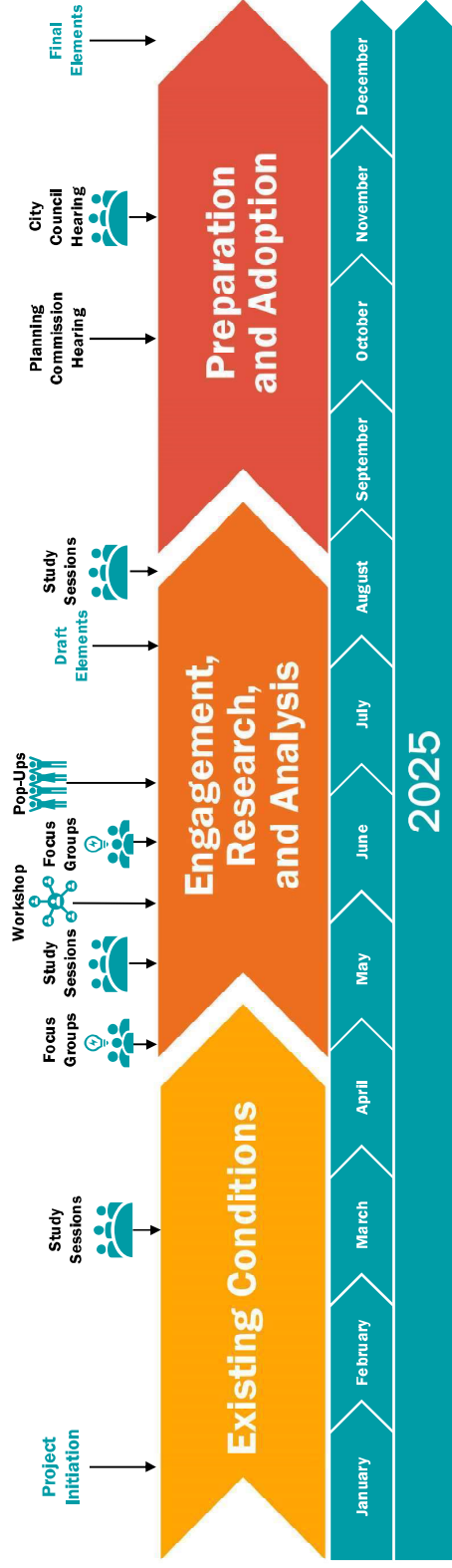
Updating strategies in the General Plan Parks and

Open Space Element and Conservation Element

Final Adoption



## Project Timeline







# Next Steps





## Next Steps

- Study Session #2 in May 2025 to gain insight on the initial key policy topics and findings from the following reports:
  - Community Assessment
  - Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Inventory
  - Open Space and Conservation Assessment and key takeaways
- Study Session #3 in August 2025 to gain input on Draft Elements



**Questions?**



## Conservation Element Discussion

- What issues regarding conservation and sustainability are most important to the future of Foster City?
- What barriers to improving conservation and sustainability exist currently?
- What do you imagine conservation and sustainability will look like in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

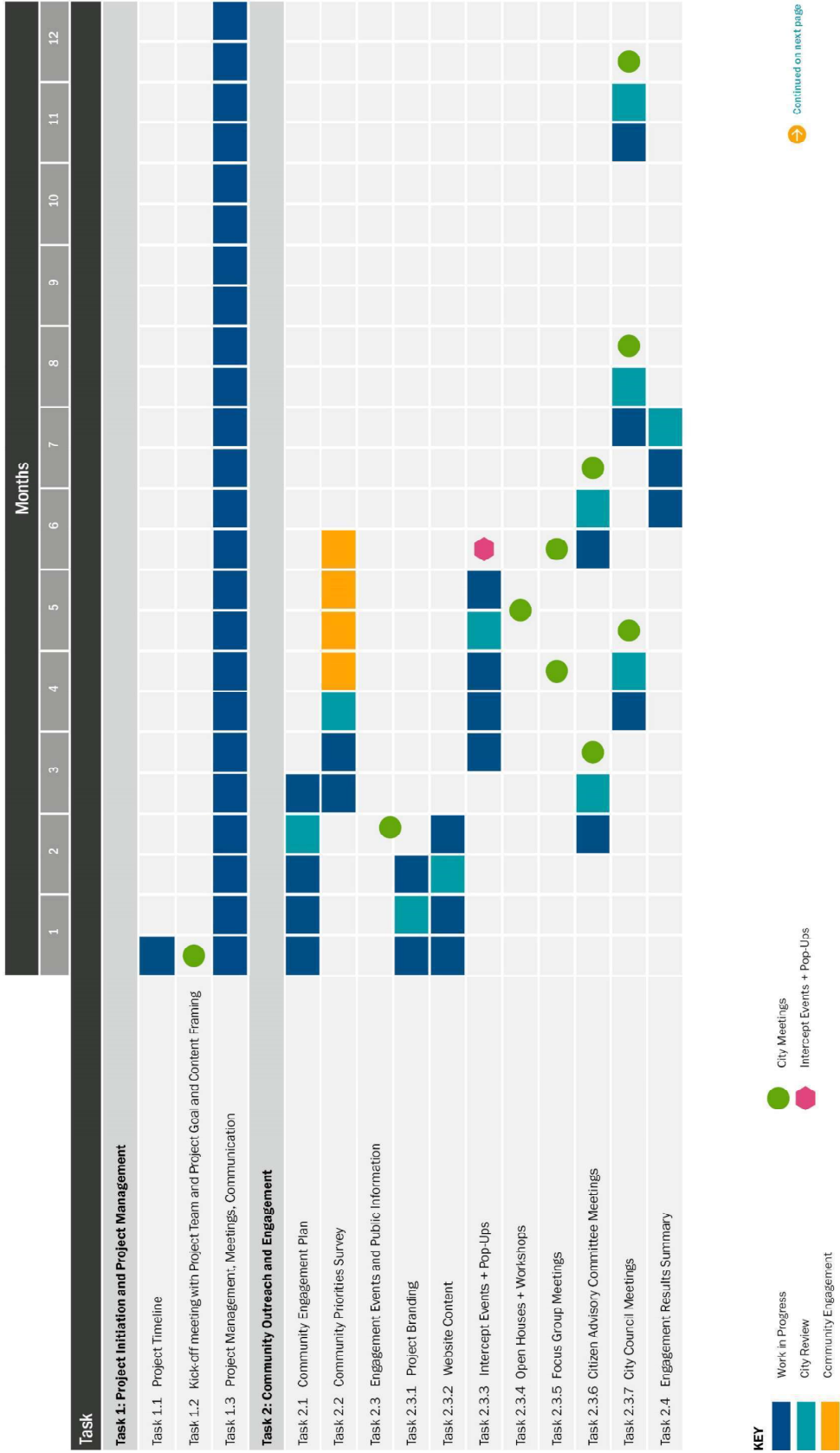


## Parks and Open Space Element Discussion

- What issues regarding parks and open space are most important to the future of Foster City?
- What barriers to improving parks and open space exist currently?
- How do you imagine parks and open space will look in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

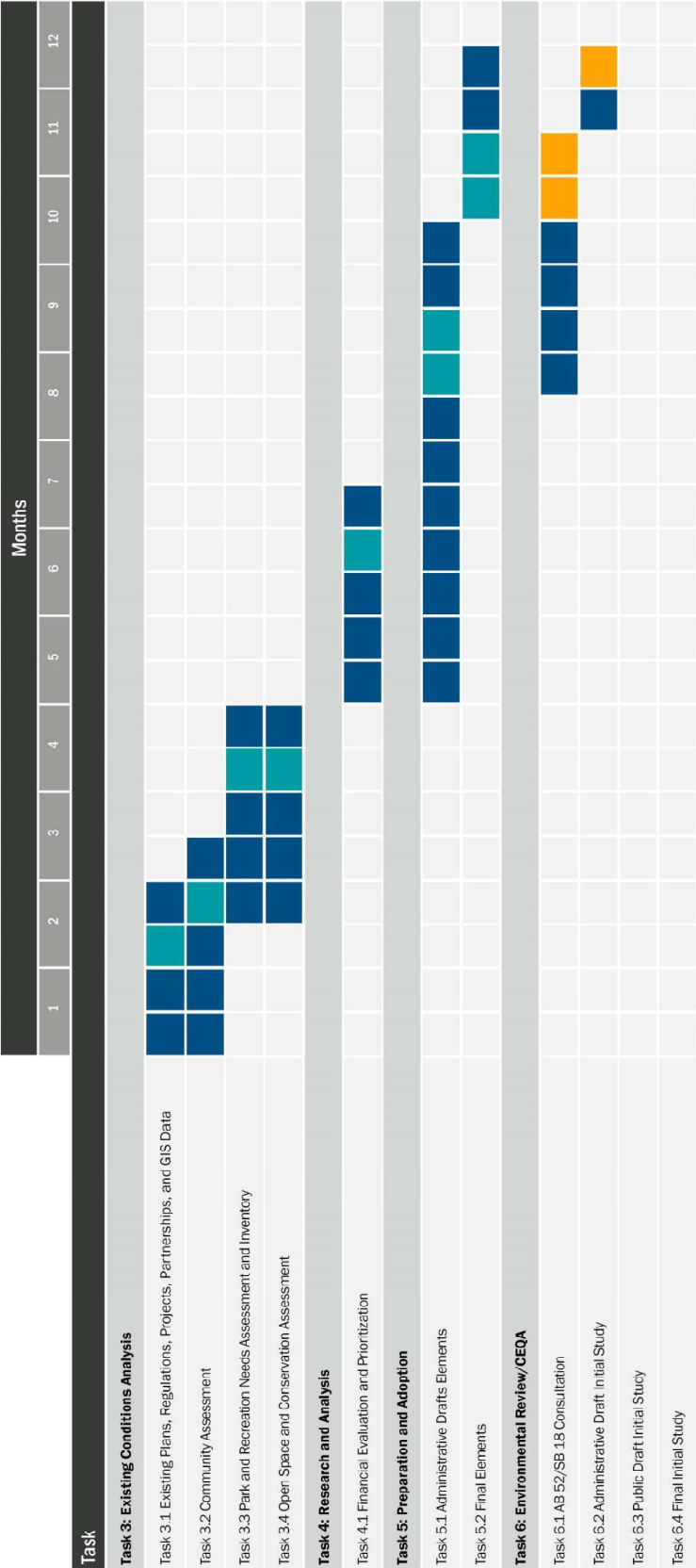


# Thank you!



Continued on next page

City of Foster City  
**Proposal for Amendment to Foster City's General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and the General Plan Conservation Element**



KEY

Work in Progress

City Review

Community Engagement

City Meetings

Intercept Events + Pop-Ups