8.3. Progress Report for General Plan Amendment of Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements
a) Staff Report
b) Action - By Minute Order, Receive and Accept Report and Provide Policy Direction

DATE: June 2, 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
Nori Jabba, Housing Coordinator
Vanessa Brannon, Senior Management Analyst

DEPARTMENT: Community Development

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

RECOMMENDATION

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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

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

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

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

   a) Existing Plans, Regulations, Projects, Partnerships, and GIS Data: Policy and documents review to effectively inform policy. To review all the data, the consultant is using its Measure Analysis and Success Tracking (MAST) tool to evaluate the City's existing parks, open space, and conservation policies and programs by summarizing their success and identifying implementation hurdles. The MAST tool enables the consultant team to understand prior and ongoing City efforts related to the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element amendments, guiding the development of updated policies and programs. *Status: ongoing.*

   b) Community Assessment: An updated community profile studying current demographics and growth trends in Foster City that may inform the direction of the Parks and Open Space and Conservation elements. The profile incorporates data gathered as part of the Parks Master Plan, as well as other data sources and related previous efforts. *Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.*

   c) Park and Recreation Needs Assessment and Inventory: An assessment of the City's parks and recreation programs as part of the Parks Master Plan effort and integrates the information into the Elements Update and identifies key areas for policy direction. *Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.*

   d) Open Space and Conservation Assessment: An Open Space and Conservation Assessment to provide the inventory of Foster City's open spaces, biological resources, shoreline, and other natural resources using a variety of existing data sources, including desktop databases, literature reviews, previous local findings, and information provided through the first phase of community engagement. *Status: in process. Study Sessions for the Planning Commission, City Council, Parks and Recreation Committee, and the Citizens Sustainability Advisory Committee are to be held in May/June 2025.*

2. Research and Analysis

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

3. Preparation and Adoption

a) Administrative Drafts

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

b) Final Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements

4. Environmental Review/CEQA

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

Community Engagement During the Update Process

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

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

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

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

The goals for public participation are to:

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

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

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

ANALYSIS

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

1. Community Assessment (Attachment #2)

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

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

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

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

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

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

the City's population is projected to be 39,070[1] residents, which is in alignment with the City's General Plan population projection of 39,070 in 2040.

- Outdoor recreational activities have been on the rise nationally over the last five (5) years. The same trend has been seen for residents in Foster City, with all outdoor recreational activities scoring higher than the national averages. According to the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis, walking for exercise is the activity with the highest expected participation both nationally and locally. Foster City scored a higher Market Potential Index (MPI) than what was scored nationally, indicating that the City should continue to bolster and provide resources for pedestrian uses. Given Foster City's lagoon and unique landscape along the bay, there is unsurprisingly a strong demand for all aquatic activities. The City scored higher than the national average for swimming and canoeing or kayaking and scored the same as the national average for saltwater fishing. Among all general sports analyzed in the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis, golf was the most popular sport to engage in locally. Tennis, basketball, baseball, pickleball, football, and softball all also scored higher than the national average.

- The City has an opportunity to expand their current recreational services primarily along the waterfront by providing more water sports courses. Given that boat activities are very popular, group canoe trips or stand-up paddle board lessons could be new programs the City provides. In addition, organizing local bird watching or other special-interest groups can encourage recreation and create social opportunities.

- The Parks Assessment Summary Report evaluated all park facilities within the city against the following four metrics: Access & Connectivity, Comfort & Sense of Safety, Functionality, and Condition. A rating scale of 1 to 10 was used for scoring each park against each quality.
    - For Access & Connectivity, the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that parks were rated on average as "good" with an average score of 6.9. The primary concerns regarding Access & Connectivity included variable path connectivity, difficulty finding the park, inconsistent signage, a well-connected bike and pedestrian system but lack of supportive amenities such as bike racks, and a lack of parking for the most frequented parks.
    - Foster City parks were rated as "good" for the Comfort & Sense of Safety Category, averaging a score of 6.7. Primary needs to improve Comfort & Sense of Safety include better access to shade, additional comfort amenities, noise mitigation for parks near major noise sources, such as major roadways and freeways, and lighting.

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

- Parks within Foster City were rated “good” for Functionality with an average score of 6.8 across the various park facilities. Key takeaways noted that the majority of parks within the City provide a variety of amenities, have functional layouts, include water-based landscapes and activities, and are compatible with surrounding land uses.
- Parks within the City averaged highest for Condition, with a score of 7.4. In addition, the furnishings offered at each park are inconsistent and the conditions of the amenities offered also varied. the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that geese droppings have had a major impact on park cleanliness, impacting resident enjoyment of the facilities. While many of the parks have healthy vegetation, several parks have variable vegetation conditions with some parks hosting trees that are struggling to grow and other plants appeared withered or missing.

- Within Foster City, approximately 99 percent of residents live within a 10-minute walk to their nearest park or open space.

- Foster City has a total 0.5 square miles of existing tree canopy, equivalent to roughly 21,044 trees, according to the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Urban Heat Island Map, which shows data by Census Tract.

- Foster City’s extensive waterfront, lagoon system, and vibrant network of parks are central to the community’s identity and quality of life. However, these spaces also face growing climate-related challenges, including future vulnerabilities from sea level rise, intensified storm events, extreme heat, and periodic air quality concerns. Certain parks, particularly those near the lagoon or shoreline, will require targeted adaptation measures to remain safe and enjoyable as climate conditions evolve.

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

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

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

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

Natural Open Space

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Biological Resources

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Water Resources

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Climate Resilience

Key Issues

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

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

Opportunities

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

<u>Air Quality</u>

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

3. Parks and Recreation Assessment (Attachment #4)

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

<u>Foster City's Park System</u>

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

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

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

Park Usage

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Site Assessment

Key Issues

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

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

Opportunities

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

<u>Market Potential Index</u>

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

Policy Considerations

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

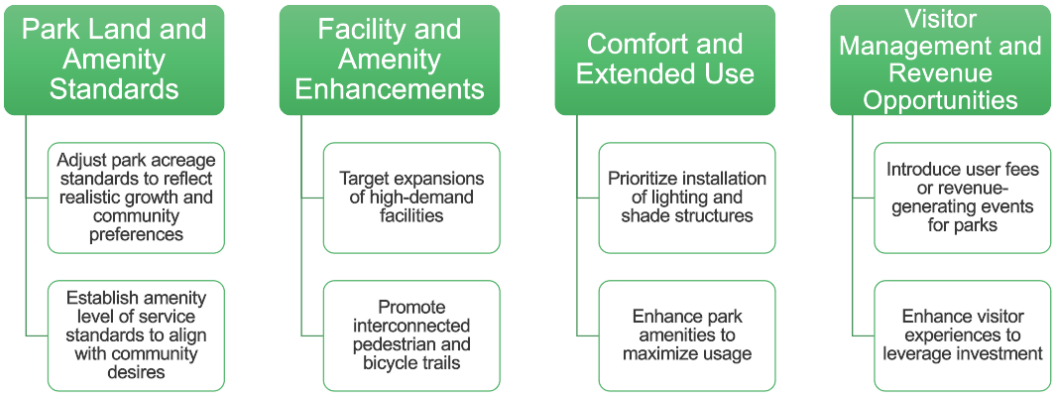


Fig 1: Policy Consideration: Parks and Recreation Assessment

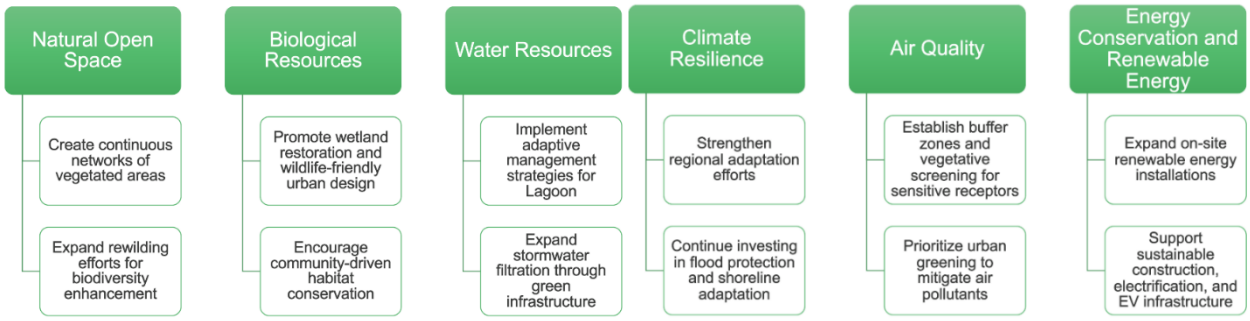


Fig 2: Policy Consideration: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

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

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

Parks and Recreation Assessment

1. **Park Land and Amenity Standards**

- Policy consideration on adjusting park acreage standards (5 acres per 1,000 residents) to reflect realistic growth and community preferences.
  Feedback/comments:
    - *There was support for revisiting park acreage based on growth; however, concerns were noted that some neighborhoods fall below the threshold.*

2. **Facility and Amenity Enhancements**

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

3. **Comfort and Extended Use**

- Policy consideration on prioritizing the installation of lighting and shade structures
  Feedback/comments:
    - *There was support for adding lighting and large-canopy trees to increase park usability and comfort.*

4. **Visitor Management and Revenue Opportunities**

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

- *There was interest in exploring options like parking fees at parks, with consideration for equity.*

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

<u>Conservation and Open Space Assessment</u>

1. **Natural Open Space**

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

2. **Biological Resources**

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

3. **Water Resource**

- Policy consideration on *i*mplementing adaptive management strategies for the Lagoon.
  Feedback/comments:
  - *Strong feedback on prioritizing lagoon water quality improvements—seen as vital to health, recreation, and property values.*

- Policy consideration on expanding stormwater filtration through green infrastructure.

Feedback/comments:

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

4. Energy & Climate

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

Next Steps

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

California Environmental Quality Act

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

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

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

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

ATTACHMENTS:

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

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 Meeting #2

June 2, 2025

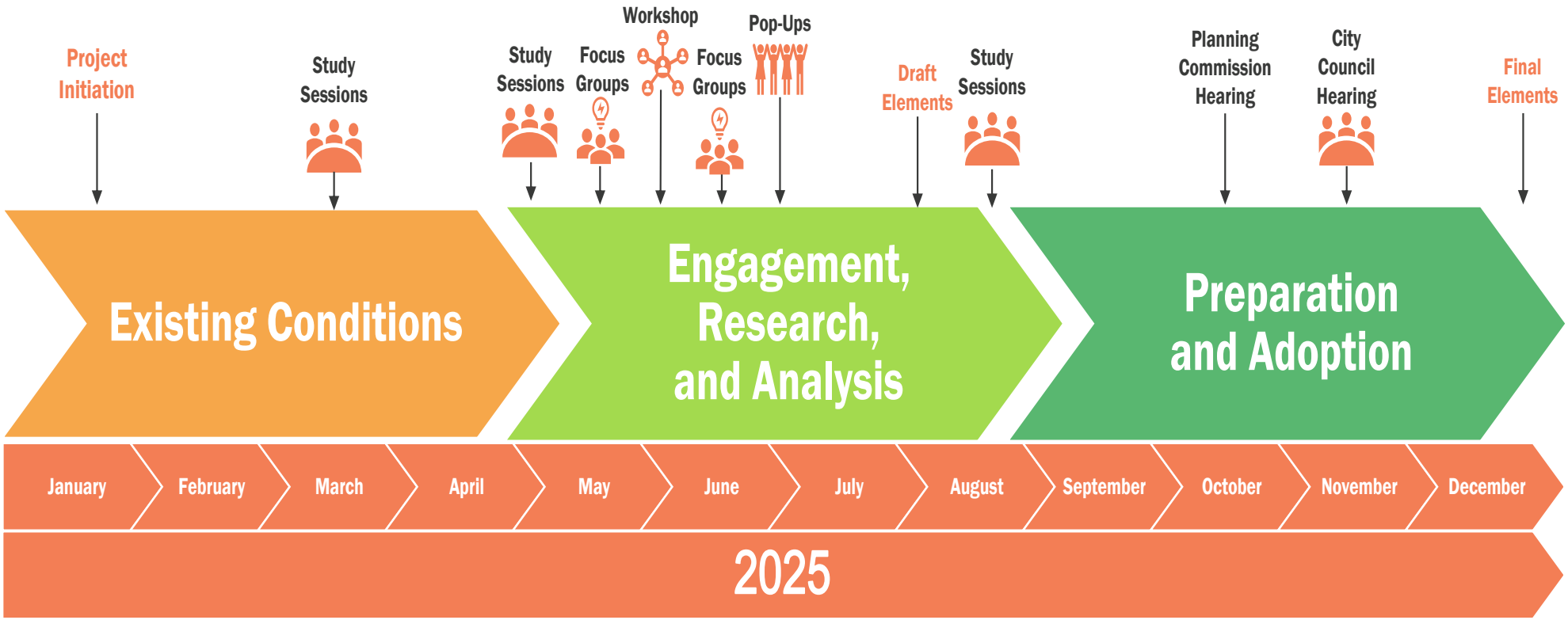
Agenda

- Project Updates
- Assessment Overview
- Key Findings
- Policy Considerations
- Next Steps

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

Project Updates

Project Timeline



Parks and Recreation Assessment

- Evaluates the current state of Foster City's parks, amenities, and recreation programs to identify areas for improvement and growth
- Discusses key issues such as park accessibility, usage patterns, and site conditions
- Provides opportunities for enhancement and policy considerations to improve the quality and accessibility of parks and recreational services

Conservation and Open Space Assessment

- Assesses Foster City's natural open spaces, biological resources, water resources, climate resilience, air quality, and energy conservation to guide policy development and enhance environmental sustainability
- Highlights key issues related to habitat loss, water quality, climate vulnerabilities, and energy use
- Offers strategic opportunities and policy recommendations to improve environmental sustainability and resilience

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

Key Findings

Key Findings: Parks and Recreation Assessment

Park Accessibility and Equity

- Demographic patterns suggest a need for senior serving recreational resources
- Park access is generally equitable across racial and income groups

Park Usage

- Some parks are currently underused relative to some of the larger parks in the City

Key Findings: Parks and Recreation Assessment

Site Assessment

- Parks vary in access, functionality, and condition
- Geese impact park cleanliness, especially at lagoon adjacent parks

Market Potential Index

- High demand for sports and fitness activities like golf, tennis, walking, and cycling
- Trends align with national recreation patterns

Key Findings: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

Natural Open Space

- Fragmentation of open spaces limits ecological and recreational benefits
- Limited rewilding and naturalization efforts (SB 1425)

Biological Resources

- Habitat loss due to urbanization
- Wetlands conservation threatened by climate change
- Barriers to wildlife movement and invasive species encroachment

Key Findings: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

Water Resources

- Lagoon water quality issues
- Stormwater pollution from urban runoff

Climate Resilience

- Future vulnerability to sea level rise and flooding
- Urban heat island effect
- Rising groundwater levels and infrastructure risks

Key Findings: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

Air Quality

- Traffic-related air pollution
- Wildfire smoke exposure
- Gaps in local air quality monitoring

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

- Dependence on natural gas
- Slow adoption of solar energy
- Grid resilience and energy storage gaps

Assessment Findings Feedback

Do these findings reflect your knowledge of the city?

Did we miss any important information or findings?

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

Policy Considerations

Policy Consideration: Parks and Recreation Assessment

Park Land and Amenity Standards

- Adjust park acreage standards to reflect realistic growth and community preferences
- Establish amenity level of service standards to align with community desires

Facility and Amenity Enhancements

- Target expansions of high-demand facilities
- Promote interconnected pedestrian and bicycle trails

Comfort and Extended Use

- Prioritize installation of lighting and shade structures
- Enhance park amenities to maximize usage

Visitor Management and Revenue Opportunities

- Introduce user fees or revenue-generating events for parks
- Enhance visitor experiences to leverage investment

Policy Consideration: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

Natural Open Space

- Create continuous networks of vegetated areas
- Expand rewilding efforts for biodiversity enhancement

Biological Resources

- Promote wetland restoration and wildlife-friendly urban design
- Encourage community-driven habitat conservation

Water Resources

- Implement adaptive management strategies for Lagoon
- Expand stormwater filtration through green infrastructure

Policy Consideration: Conservation and Open Space Assessment

Climate Resilience

- Strengthen regional adaptation efforts
- Continue investing in flood protection and shoreline adaptation

Air Quality

- Establish buffer zones and vegetative screening for sensitive receptors
- Prioritize urban greening to mitigate air pollutants

Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

- Expand on-site renewable energy installations
- Support sustainable construction, electrification, and EV infrastructure

Policy Considerations Feedback

Do these strategies seem both effective and feasible?

Are there potential policy solutions that should be added?

Do you have thoughts on how these policy could be implemented?

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

Next Steps

Next Steps

- First round of community engagement in May and June
  - Community Priorities Survey
    Community Workshop
  - Focus Groups
  - Pop-Up Events
- Study Session #3 in August

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

Thank you!

General Plan Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements

Community Assessment

prepared by

City of Foster City
Community Development Department
610 Foster City Boulevard
Foster City, California 94404
Contact: Vanessa Brannon, Senior Management Analyst

prepared with the assistance of

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
66 Franklin Street, Suite 200
Oakland, California 94607

February 2025

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FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS
OUR PARKS, OUR FUTURE

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Figures

1 Introduction

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

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

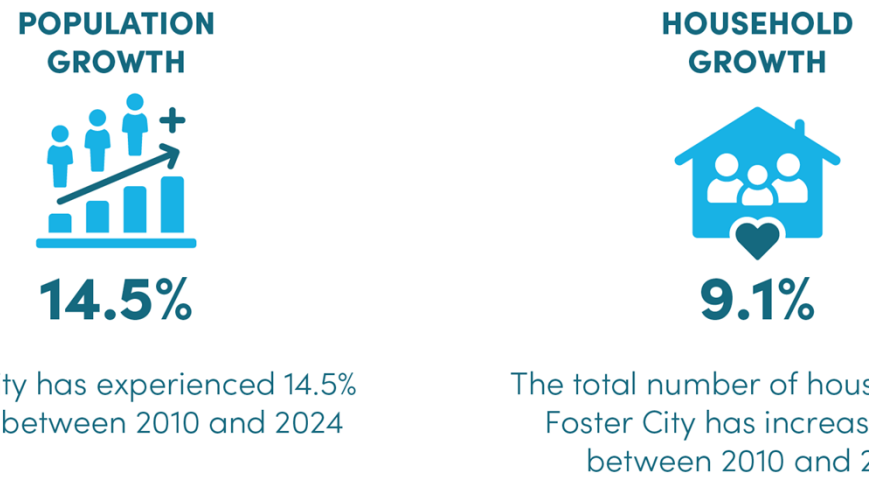
The Community Assessment will be used to inform updates to the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Elements of Foster City's General Plan by identifying areas of needed expansion to serve existing and future communities, future climate considerations, and areas to enhance tree coverage. The insights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

2 Community Assessment

2.1 Foster City Demographics

2.1.1 Population

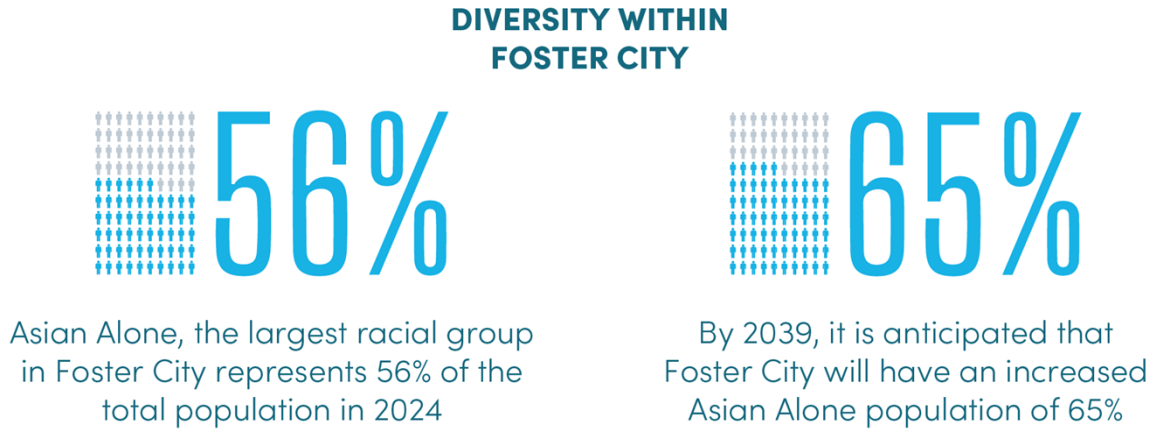
The City of Foster City (Foster City) has experienced growth between 2010 and 2024, increasing by 14.5 percent or approximately 1 percent annually (WRT 2024a). This is greater than the national growth rate of 0.81 percent annually between 2010 and 2024 (WRT 2024a). This is also greater than the state's growth rate at approximately 0.58 percent per year between 2010 and 2020 (Public Policy Institute of California 2024). The total number of households has only increased 9.1 percent over this 14-year period. Foster City has a slightly larger household size at 2.6 people per household compared to the U.S. at 2.55 people per household (WRT 2024a).



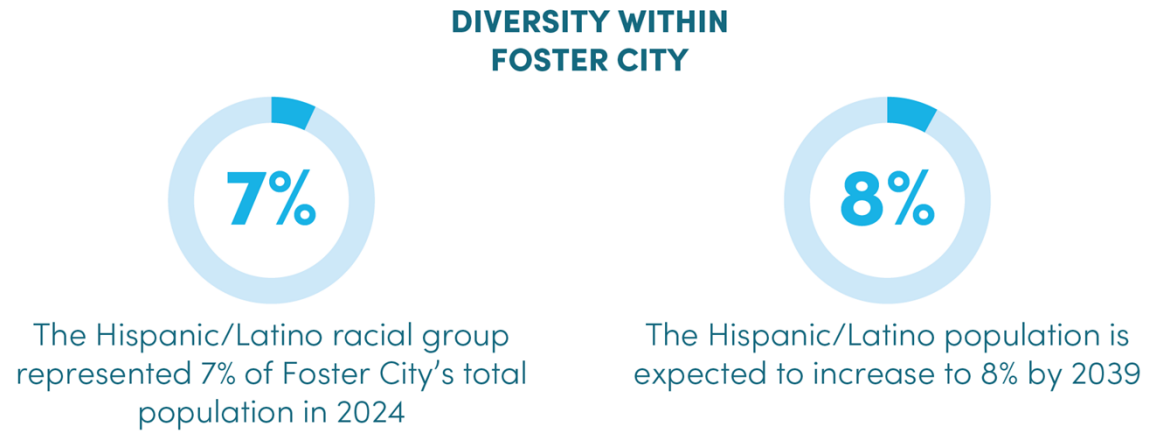
The current population is estimated to be 35,004 people living in 13,104 households. By 2040, the City's population is projected to be 39,070 residents living within 15,110 households (ABAG 2018). This is in alignment with the City's General Plan population projection of 39,070 in 2040 (Foster City 2023).

2.1.2 Race and Ethnicity

Foster City is a diverse community. Diversity within the city has also increased between 2010 and 2024. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the largest racial group within the city is Asian Alone, representing 56 percent of the total population in 2024 while White Alone represents 30 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). By 2039, it's anticipated that Foster City will have an increased Asian Alone population of 65 percent (WRT 2024a).



The Hispanic/Latino population was unchanged between 2010 and 2024 representing 7 percent of the City's total population (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). This is far below the national average of 19 percent and state average of approximately 40 percent (U.S. Census Bureau 2024). The Hispanic/Latino population is expected to increase only slightly to 8 percent by 2039 (WRT 2024a).

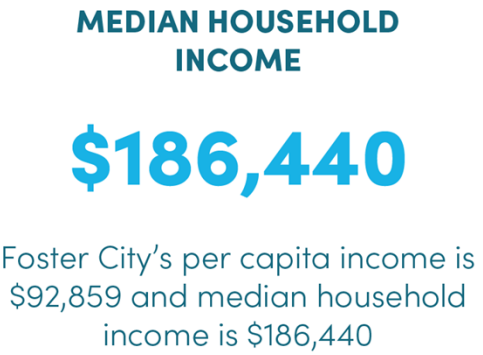


2.1.3 Age Designations

Age within the City has remained relatively balanced between 2010 and 2024. The largest age segment is the 35-54 segment at 34 percent of the population (WRT 2024a). In 2024, the median age in Foster City was 40.3, which is slightly older than the national median age of 39.3 years (WRT 2024a).

Over the next 15 years it is anticipated that the age distribution in the city will continue to be balanced. The city will age slightly as the 75 years and older segment is expected to increase by 2 percent (WRT 2024a). However, the 18-34 segment is projected to decrease by approximately 5 percent. All other major segments will be relatively unchanged or decrease slightly (WRT 2024a).

2.1.4 Households and Income



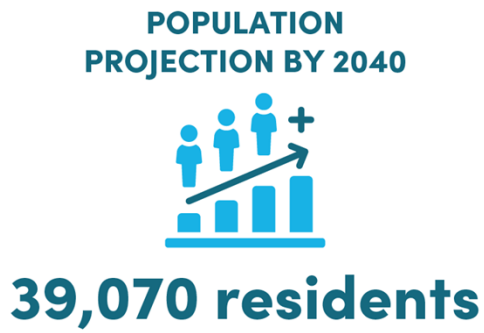
The per capita income is the average income per person in the city, calculated by dividing the total income of the population by its total number of people. The median household income is the halfway point of all household incomes in the city, meaning half of households earn more and half earn less than the median income. The City's per capita income is $92,859 and median household income is $186,440, both of which are greater than the national averages and the regional averages for San Mateo and San Francisco counties (WRT 2024a). Approximately 4.6 percent of the City's population live below the poverty line, lower than the national average of 11.1 percent and state average of 12 percent in 2023 (U.S. Census Bureau 2023a, 2023b, 2023c).

2.2 Recent and Future Growth

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) is responsible for forecasting changes to the Bay Area population and economy, with the most recent projections presented in Plan Bay Area 2050. While Plan Bay Area 2050 does not have projections for Foster City specifically, the population of San Mateo County was 265,000 in 2015. By 2050, San Mateo County will grow by 48 percent reaching 394,000 people (ABAG 2021).

Jobs are expected to experience growth of 29 percent within the county between 2015 and 2050, increasing from 393,000 jobs to 507,000 jobs (ABAG 2021). According to Plan Bay Area 2050, housing levels within Super District 6, which includes Foster City, will increase 39 percent between 2015 and 2050, increasing from 87,000 households to 121,000 households (ABAG 2021).

The most recent projections completed at the city-level were done as a part of ABAG's Plan Bay Area 2040. According to Plan Bay Area 2040, Foster City's population was 32,945 in 2015 and projected to grow to 39,070 by 2040 (ABAG 2018). The number of households in Foster City are anticipated to grow from 12,365 to 15,110 between 2015 and 2040 (ABAG 2018). However, the number of individuals per household is expected to slightly decrease from 2.66 in 2015 to 2.58 in 2040 (ABAG 2018). In 2015, it was estimated that Foster City was home to 21,345 jobs. Jobs are expected to increase to 27,250 by 2040 (ABAG 2018).



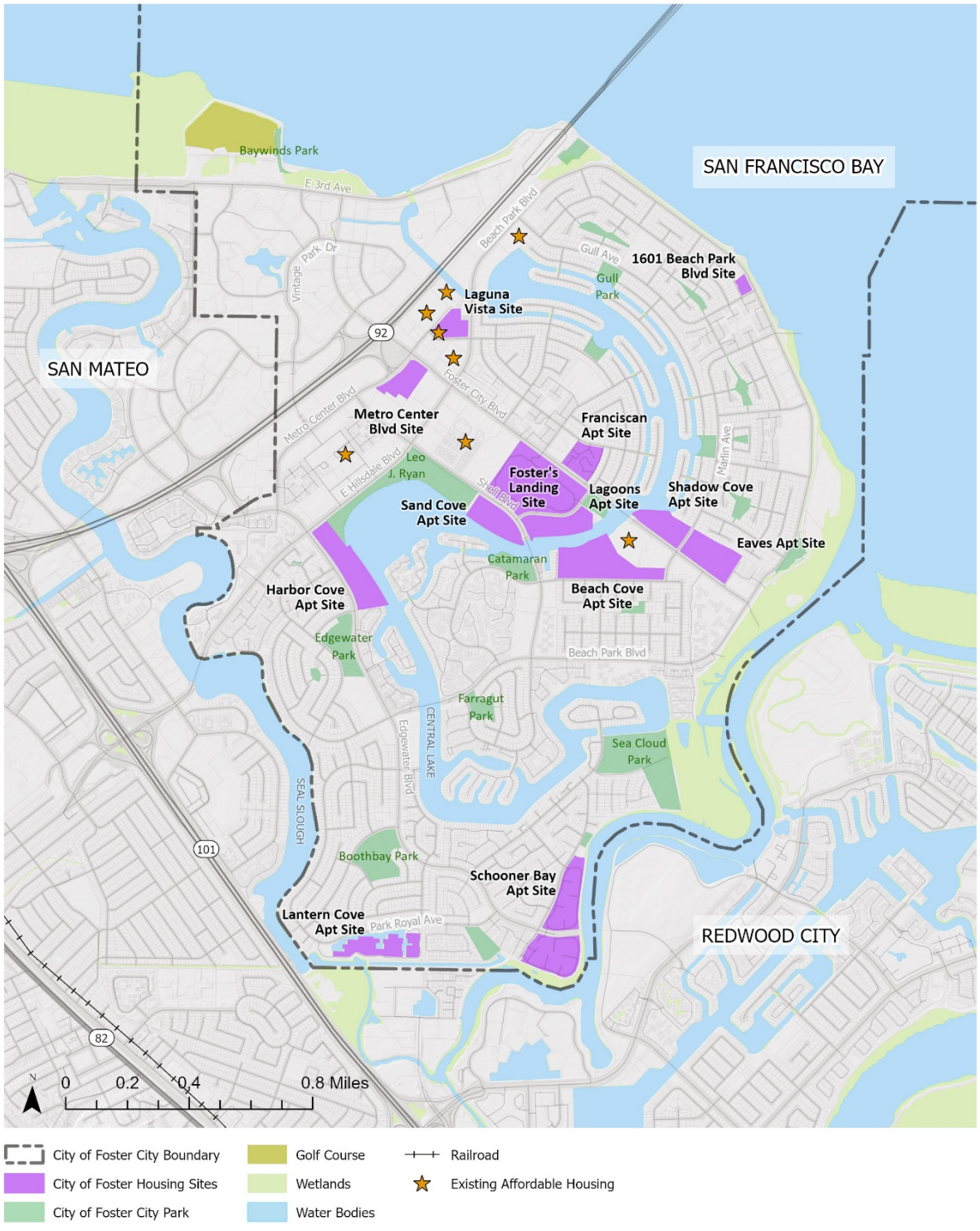
2.2.1 Areas of Planned Growth

According to the City's Housing Element, there were several sites selected for residential development or redevelopment to meet the City's Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The strategy used to fulfill the RHNA in the Housing Element included implementation of pipeline projects, updating zoning to allow mixed-use in areas previously designated for commercial uses and rezone non-residential sites to residential sites, the identification of a new site, and carrying over sites from the 5th Cycle Housing Element. In total, there are 13 sites identified in the Housing Element with the potential for new residential development (Foster City 2023). These sites are shown in Figure 1. As the city's population continues to grow and new residential development is built in these areas, there could be an increased need for additional parks and open space to serve that population and ensure that existing facilities are aligned with additional needs.

There are several projects that are currently under review, approved, or under construction that may have an impact on the use or availability of parks and open space in the city. These include:

- The Foster City Recreation Center Rebuild Project is currently being constructed. The project involves the demolition of the existing 32,000-square-foot recreation center and construction a new Foster City Recreation Center in approximately the same location (Foster City 2025a). The new recreation center building will be two stories and a maximum of approximately 40 feet in height and approximately 40,000 square feet in size. The proposed project will also include improvements to Leo J. Ryan Park consisting of new outdoor gathering spaces, new landscaping, and restriped parking lots.
- The Redevelopment of Lantern Cove Apartments which would add 420 new dwelling units and 518 new parking spaces on a 16.8-acre site known as Lantern Cove Apartments (Foster City 2025a).

Figure 1 Housing Element Sites Inventory Map



24-16899 EPS Community Assessment
Fig X Sites Inventory

2.3 Recreational Services

2.3.1 Recreation Trends

It is important to understand the local and national participation trends in recreational activities. Understanding these trends allows the City to assess demands and fill gaps in service to meet future needs. Trends data for the city were obtained from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), and Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI). All trend data is based on current and/or historical participation rates, statistically valid survey results, or NRPA Park Metrics. ESRI's 2024 Sports and Leisure Market Potential (MPI) Data measures the demand for recreational activities as well as expected consumer attitudes towards these activities by Foster City residents. Activities with MPI numbers greater than the national average are significant because they indicate that Foster City residents will likely take part in offerings if the city or surrounding communities provided these activities.

Outdoor recreational activities have been on the rise nationally over the last five years. The same trend has been seen for residents in Foster City, with all outdoor recreational activities scoring higher than the national averages. According to the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis, walking for exercise is the activity with the highest expected participation both nationally and locally. Foster City scored a higher MPI than what was scored nationally, indicating that the City should continue to bolster and provide resources for pedestrian uses. Given Foster City's lagoon and unique landscape along the coast, there is unsurprisingly a strong demand for all aquatic activities. The city scored higher than the national average for swimming and canoeing or kayaking and scored the same as the national average for saltwater fishing (WRT 2024a). Among all general sports analyzed in the Demographic and Recreation Trend Analysis golf was the most popular sport to engage in locally. Tennis, basketball, baseball, pickleball, football, and softball all also scored higher than the national average (WRT 2024a).

2.3.2 Existing Recreation Programs

Foster City has a variety of existing recreational programs for residents of all ages. Senior programs include table tennis and line dancing. Kids and teens have the greatest amount of existing programming, including basketball, flag football, soccer, tennis, pickleball, various dance classes, track & field, and karate. Similarly, programs for adults include pickleball, tennis, low-impact fitness classes, various dance classes, karate, kobojutsu, volleyball, ping pong, wrestling, softball, and bocce ball (Foster City 2025b).

The city has an opportunity to expand their current recreational services primarily along the waterfront by providing more water sports courses. Given that boat activities are very popular, group canoe trips or standup paddle board lessons could be new programs the city provides. In addition, organizing local bird watching or other special-interest groups can encourage recreation and create social opportunities.

2.4 Park and Open Space Services

Foster City is known to have a dense park system. Generally, parks are lush, safe, quiet, and well-used. While most parks offer typical amenities such as playgrounds, sports courts, and picnic areas, many of the City's parks are also designed and located to facilitate water-based activities such as kayaking, boating, and windsurfing.

Parks within the city are defined as follows:

- **Community Parks** are large parks (10 to 30 acres) that provide a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities that service a substantial portion of the city.
- **Neighborhood Parks** are medium sized parks (2 to 10 acres) that provide a small range of amenities that meet the daily recreational needs for one or more neighborhoods.
- **Mini Parks** are small parks (less than 2 acres) that provide basic recreational amenities for nearby residents in a specific neighborhood or subdivision.
- **Special Use Parks** are designed around specialized uses which serve a specific recreational need or population group.

Table 1 includes all park names, their types, and acreages of each within the city.

Table 1 Foster City Parks

Park Name	Park Type	Park Acres
Boothbay	Community	11.2
Edgewater Park	Community	8.5
Leo J. Ryan	Community	20.7
Sea Cloud Park	Community	23.9
Catamaran Park	Neighborhood	5.9
Erckenbrack Park	Neighborhood	3.5
Farragut Park	Neighborhood	3.8
Gull Park	Neighborhood	3.1
Marlin Park	Neighborhood	3.1
Port Royal	Neighborhood	3.9
Shorebird Park	Neighborhood	3.5

Arcturus Park	Mini	0.8
Gateshead	Mini	0.1
Ketch Park	Mini	1.6
Killdeer Park	Mini	2.4
Leo Park	Mini	0.02
Pompano Park	Mini	0.6
Shad Park	Mini	2.2
Sunfish Park	Mini	2.4
Turnstone Park	Mini	1.5
Baywinds Park	Special Use	1.3
Boat Park*	Special Use	1.6
Bridgeview Park	Special Use	3.2
Dog Park*	Special Use	1.6
Total		**108.82**

*Boat Park and Dog Park are considered two separate Foster City parks. However, since they are part of one cohesive site, they were assessed together.
Source: WRT 2024b.

The Parks Assessment Summary Report evaluated all park facilities within the city against the following four metrics:

- **Access & Connectivity** refers to the general accessibility of amenities for users of all abilities. This includes factors such as signage, internal/external path connectivity, safe pedestrian crossings, parking and more.
- **Comfort & Sense of Safety** refers to the presence or absence of comfort amenities such as seating, shade, drinking fountains, and restrooms. It also assesses criteria that affect the feeling of safety within a park, such as unobstructed sightlines, signs of vandalism, and lighting.
- **Functionality** refers to how well the park functions for serving recreational needs. It includes criteria such as the presence and arrangement of amenities, appropriateness of vegetation, and compatibility with neighboring land uses.
- **Condition** refers to the physical condition of park assets and amenities and identifies signs of deferred maintenance.

A rating scale of 1 to 10 was used for scoring each park against each quality. Scores below 4 points were rated as "poor," those scored 4.1 to 6 points were rated as "fair," those scored 6.1 to 8 points were rated as "good," and those with a score of 8.1 or above were rated as "great." For a full analysis, including individual scores across categories for all park facilities, please refer to the Parks Assessment Summary Report (2024b) completed by WRT. Figure 2 shows the overall scores given to each of the city's parks.

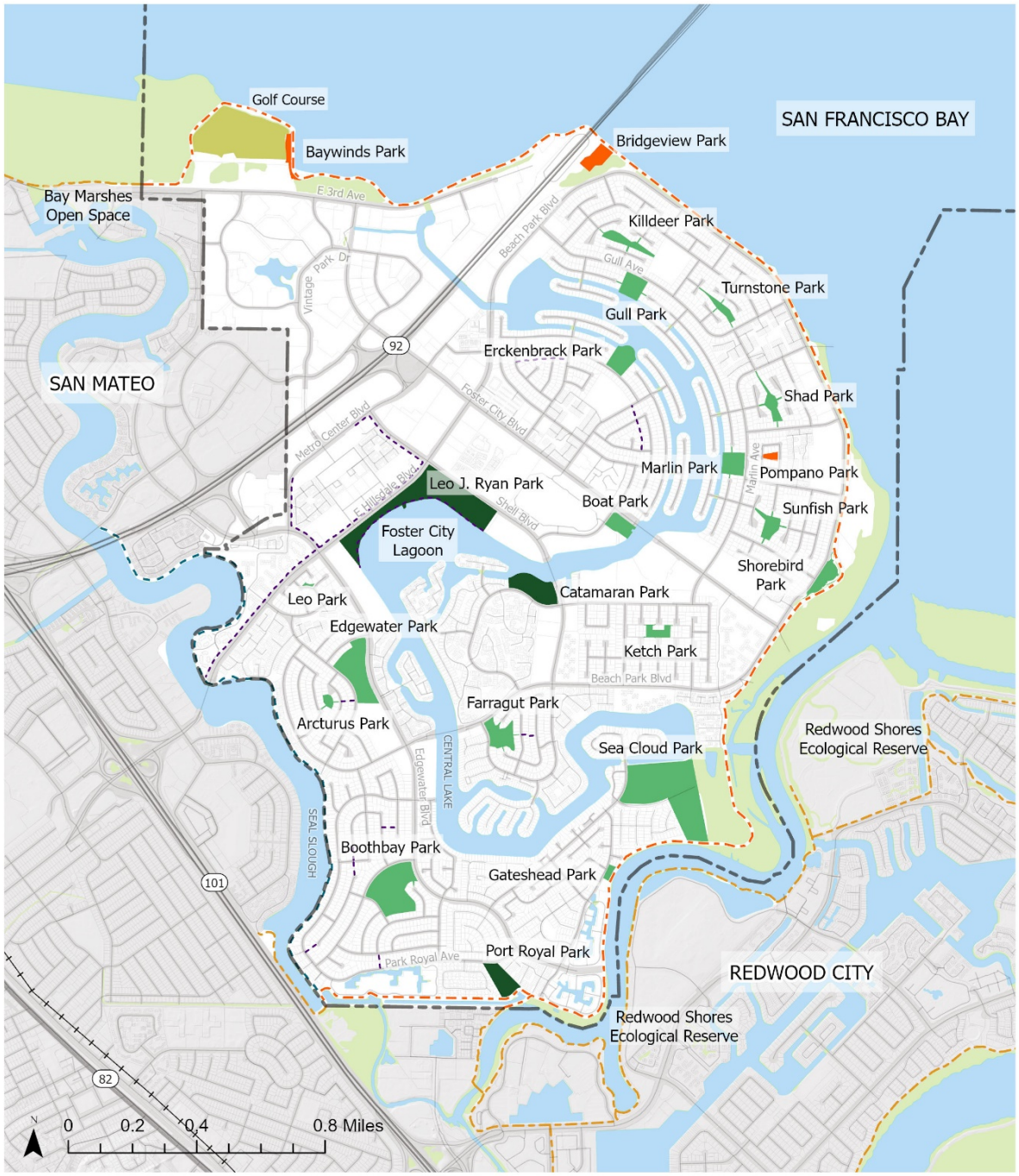
For Access & Connectivity, the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that parks were rated on average as "good" with an average score of 6.9 (WRT 2024b). Parks with the highest scores for Access & Connectivity include Leo J. Ryan, Shorebird Park, and Gateshead Park, while the lowest scores were for Pompano Park and Edgewater Park. The primary concerns regarding Access & Connectivity included variable path connectivity, difficulty finding the park, inconsistent signage, a well-connected bike and pedestrian system but lack of supportive amenities such as bike racks, and a lack of parking for the most frequented parks.

Foster City parks were rated as "good" for the Comfort & Sense of Safety Category, averaging a score of 6.7 (WRT 2024b). On average, the City's Community and Neighborhood parks scored higher than the City's Mini and Special Use parks. The highest scoring parks include Catamaran Park, Leo J. Ryan, and Port Royal, and the lowest scoring parks include Pompano Park, Bridgeview Park, and Baywinds Park. Primary needs to improve Comfort & Sense of Safety include better access to shade, additional comfort amenities, noise mitigation for parks near major noise sources, and lighting.

Parks within Foster City were rated "good" for Functionality with an average score of 6.8 across the various park facilities (WRT 2024b). High scoring parks, such as Port Royal, Ketch Park, and Sea Cloud Park, have a variety of amenities. The lowest scoring parks include Pompano Park and Bridgeview Park which both were rated "poor" for Functionality, scoring below 4 points. Key takeaways noted that the majority of parks within the city provide a variety of amenities, have functional layouts, include water-based landscapes and activities, and are compatible with surrounding land uses.

Parks within the city averaged highest for Condition, with a score of 7.4 (WRT 2024b). Unlike the other categories, the City's Mini park Condition scores were the highest. In addition, the variance in scores was minimal with all parks scoring 6 points or higher. While scores were high, the Parks Assessment Summary Report notes that geese droppings have had a major impact on park cleanliness, impacting resident enjoyment of the facilities. As of December 2024, Foster City has adopted and begun implementation of the City's Adaptive Canada Goose Management Plan. The plan aims to reduce the goose population within the city and improve the cleanliness of parks and the waterfront through nesting management, habitat modification, and goose removal (City of Foster City 2022). In addition, the furnishings offered at each park are inconsistent and the conditions of the amenities offered also varied. While many of the parks have healthy vegetation, several parks have variable vegetation conditions with some parks hosting trees that are struggling to grow and other plants appeared withered or missing.

Figure 2 Combined Park Assessment Scores



2.5 Existing Access to Parks and Open Space

The availability of greenspace (parks, fields, open space) in proximity to housing can create opportunities for physical activity and social interaction. The California Department of Parks and Recreation (CDPR) measures park access and park proximity. When it comes to park access, the CDPR defines "critically underserved" communities as those communities having a ratio of less than three acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Three acres per 1,000 residents is a State recognized park standard established by California State Parks to measure park access. As shown in Figure 3, there are several areas within Foster City, primarily in the northern and central portions, that have access to less than three acres of park space per 1,000 residents (CDPR 2020).

The Trust for Public Land also evaluates jurisdictions within California based on the ability for residents to access a park within a 10-minute walking distance. Within Foster City, approximately 99 percent of residents live within a 10-minute walk to their nearest park or open space (Trust for Public Lands 2023). This metric is similar regardless of racial group, age group, or income as demonstrated in Figure 4. In addition, the Trust for Public Lands has identified areas where gaps exist.

Table 2 Walking Distance Availability by Demographic

Demographic	People within 10-Minute Walk (Percentage)
Race/Ethnicity	
White[1]	99
Black[1]	99
Native American[1]	97
Asian[1]	99
Pacific Islander[1]	98
Other Race[1]	99
Two or More Races[1]	99
Hispanic	99
Age	
Youth (<20)	99
Adults (20-64)	99
Seniors (>64)	98
Income	
Low Income (<75 % MAI[2])	98
Moderate Income (75%-125% MAI)	99
High Income (>125% MAI)	99

[1]Excludes those that report Hispanic origin, which is captured separately from race by the U.S. Census.
[2]MAI = Median Area Income, which is the median income of the urban area analyzed (Foster City).
Source: Trust for Public Lands 2023.

Figure 3 Park Acreage Available per 1,000 Residents

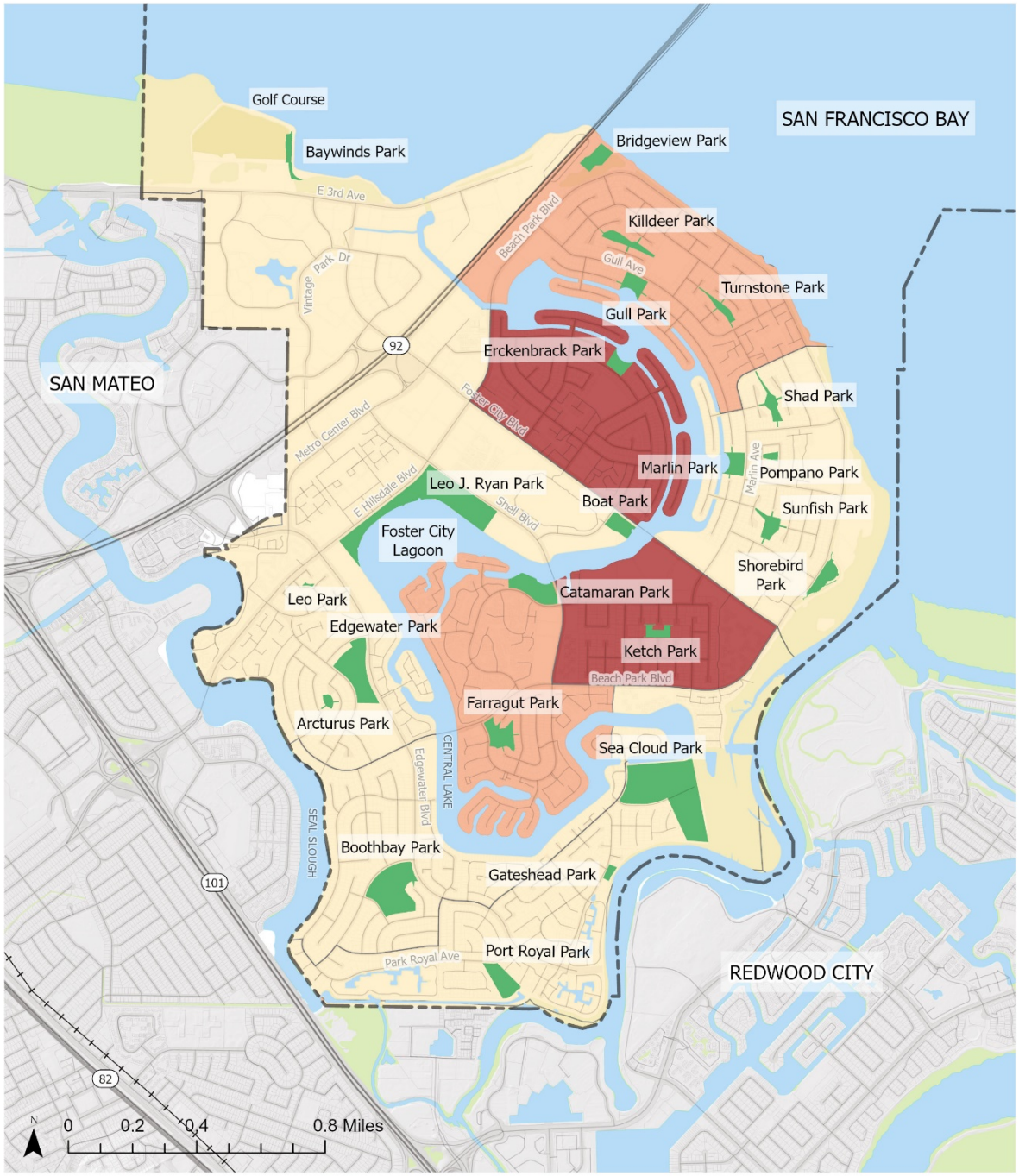
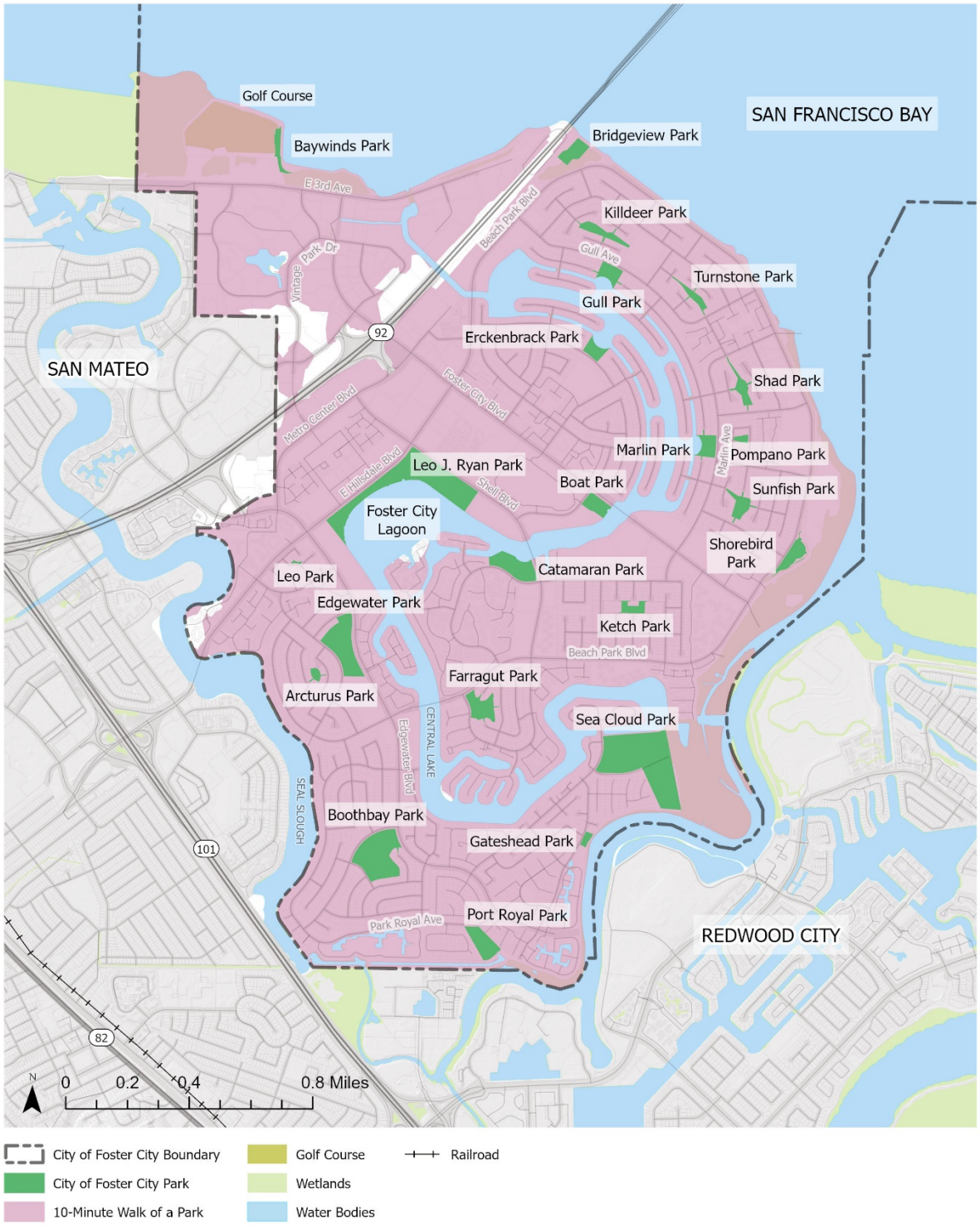


Figure 4 10-Minute Walk Service Area



24-16899 EPS Community Assessment
Fig X Park Walking Accessibility

2.6 Urban Tree Canopy

Foster City has a total 0.5 square miles of existing tree canopy, equivalent to roughly 21,044 trees. According to Tree Equity Score data, the city's 21 census tract block groups achieve a combined Tree Equity Score of 86 out of 100. Expanding the urban canopy by 0.7 square miles (an estimated 31,354 additional trees) and maintaining the existing canopy would bring every urban neighborhood in Foster City to a Tree Equity Score of 100 (Tree Equity Score 2025).

A major driver of Foster City's relatively high Tree Equity Score is the presence of more than 2,000 trees across the City's parks and recreation areas, representing over 80 different species. The most common species include Monterey Pine (361 trees), Narrow-Leafed Ash (177), Sugar Gum (87), River Red Gum (83), Italian Alder (91), and White Alder (121). Sea Cloud Park stands out for having one of the largest concentrations of trees—over 600—while smaller neighborhood parks each add incremental canopy coverage throughout the community (City of Foster City 2021). This diversity and distribution help bolster tree canopy where it might otherwise be sparse, ensuring that most neighborhoods enjoy significant tree cover.

Table 3 Foster City Parks Tree Inventory

Park Name	Number of Trees
Arcturus Park	8
Boothbay Park	182
Catamaran Park	68
Corporation Yard	38
Civic Center Complex	57
Edgewater Park	122
Erckenbrack Park	26
Farragut Park	82
Gateshead Park	18
Ketch Park	62
Killdeer Park	43
Library-Comm. Ctr.	164
Marlin Park	22
Pompano Park	8
Port Royal Park	138
Recreation Center	95
Ryan Park	215
Sea Cloud Park	606
Shad Park	28
Sunfish Park	8
Turnstone Park	28

Source: City of Foster City 2021

Even if Foster City's main parks already have solid canopy coverage, parks along "edge" zones—where neighborhoods transition into commercial areas—can be priority sites for additional planting. As Foster City updates any Parks and Recreation Master Plans or undertakes new capital

projects, weaving tree planting and canopy expansion into those designs—especially in border zones or areas near major roads—will help maintain equitable tree coverage in the long term. Increasing tree canopy shade coverage around seating and active amenity areas will provide a more comfortable experience for residents and visitors and will become increasingly important as extreme heat impacts amplify over time as climate change progresses.

2.7 Climate Adaptation and Resilience

Foster City's extensive waterfront, lagoon system, and vibrant network of parks are central to the community's identity and quality of life. However, these spaces also face growing climate-related challenges, including sea level rise, intensified storm events, extreme heat, and periodic air quality concerns. Certain parks—particularly those near the lagoon or shoreline—will require targeted adaptation measures to remain safe and enjoyable as climate conditions evolve.

Table 4 provides an overview of climate-related risks present at each of Foster City's parks and recreation spaces.

Table 4 Climate-Related Risk Overview Across Foster City Parks

Park Name	Coastal Flooding & Storm Surge	Dam Failure Inundation	Groundwater Rise	Liquefaction Susceptibility
Arcturus Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Baywinds Park	Yes	Partial	Moderate; Water Table Between 2-5m Depth (Moderate)	Very High
Boat Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Boothbay Park	Yes	Yes	High; Water Table Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Bridgeview Park	Yes	Partial	High; Water Table Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Catamaran Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Edgewater Park	Yes	Yes	High; Water Table Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Erckenbrack Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Farragut Park	Yes	Yes	High; Water Table Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Gateshead Park	Yes	No	High/Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent) and Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Gull Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Ketch Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Killdeer Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Leo Park	Yes	Yes	High; Water Table Between 0-	Very High

Park Name	Coastal Flooding & Storm Surge	Dam Failure Inundation	Groundwater Rise	Liquefaction Susceptibility
			1m Depth (Very Shallow)	
Leo J. Ryan Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Marlin Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Pompano Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Sea Cloud Park	Yes	Partial	High/Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent) and Between 0-1m Depth (Very Shallow)	Very High
Shad Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Shorebird Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Sunfish Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Turnstone Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Pompano Park	Yes	Yes	Very High; Water Table at Surface (Emergent)	Very High
Port Royal Park	Yes	No	High; Water Table Between 1-2m Depth (Shallow)	Very High

Sources: Coastal Flooding and Storm Surge: Point Blue Conservation Science and U.S. Geological Survey. Our Coast Our Future (OCOF). Web application, Petaluma, California. www.ourcoastourfuture.org (accessed January 2025).

Dam Failure Inundation: Foster City, City of. 2023. Safety Element Update. August 21, 2023. Foster City, California.

Groundwater Rise: Point Blue Conservation Science and U.S. Geological Survey. Our Coast Our Future (OCOF). Web application, Petaluma, California. www.ourcoastourfuture.org (accessed January 2025).

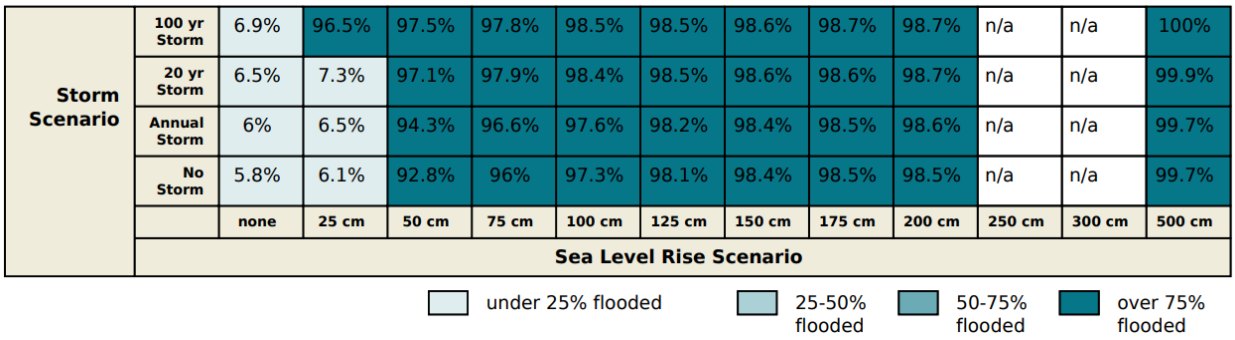
Liquefaction: Foster City, City of. 2023. Safety Element Update. August 21, 2023. Foster City, California.

2.7.1 Addressing Sea Level Rise and Flooding

While the City's existing levee system generally meets federal requirements, some low-lying park areas may still experience intermittent tidal or storm surge flooding under extreme conditions. It is important to note that many regional sea level rise projections do not yet account for Foster City's Levee Improvement Project, which is designed to reduce near-term to mid-century flood risks (City of Foster City 2021). By 2050, sea levels in the Bay Area could increase by 11 to 24 inches, depending on the emissions scenario, and by 2100, projections range from 1.7 feet (20 inches) to over 3 feet (36 inches) (County of San Mateo 2021).

Community parks like Sea Cloud and Leo J. Ryan already sit near the lagoon and Bay shoreline. In more severe sea level rise scenarios, these large multi-amenity parks may see temporary closures of ballfields, picnic areas, or water-based recreation zones if levees are overtopped. Parks such as Marlin, Erckenbrack, and Boat/Dog Park have direct or near-direct water access, making them vulnerable to rising tides and saltwater intrusion. Facilities like boat launches and dog runs could require periodic relocation or floodproofing. Parks currently outside FEMA Special Flood Hazard Areas could, over time, be reclassified as high-risk or adapted to include formalized stormwater detention functions if sea level rise outpaces levee improvements.

Figure 5 Projected Percent Area Flooded for Foster City



Values indicate the percentage of Foster City's area flooded under various storm and sea level rise scenarios, as modeled by the Our Coast, Our Future Sea Level Rise and Scenario Report (January 13, 2025). Note: these projections do not account for the Levee Improvement Project.

2.7.1.1 Levee Improvement Project

Foster City's Levee Improvement Project is central to mitigating sea level rise impacts along roughly eight miles of shoreline. Recent enhancements raised and fortified the levee system to protect parks, trails, and community facilities from a 100-year storm event plus anticipated mid-century sea level rise. Improvements include earthen levees, hybrid sheet piles, and concrete flood walls, elevating the levee by up to 6 feet overall and sitting 2.5 to 3.5 feet above the walking surface in most segments (City of Foster City 2021). Although these upgrades substantially reduce near-term flood risk, higher-end sea level rise scenarios—over 3 feet by 2100—may necessitate additional reinforcement or future levee height increases (California Sea Level Rise Guidance 2024, San Mateo County 2021).

A levee's performance relies on regular inspections, repairs, and incremental upgrades. Without adequate funding or political support, deferred maintenance can undermine flood protection, impacting popular community parks like Boothbay or Edgewater. Additionally, access roads serving these waterfront parks could become impassable during extreme high tides. By planning for future improvements—such as higher freeboard, pump stations, and nature-based solutions—Foster City can continue to reduce flood risks as climate projections evolve.

Furthermore, extreme events, such as strong storm surges coinciding with high tides, could still generate water levels exceeding design capacities. Parks with lagoon beaches (e.g., Marlin, Gull, Erckenbrack) and shoreline segments (e.g., Shorebird, Baywinds) may face erosion from wave action and higher tides, despite levee protection. If updated data show faster sea level rise, the City may need to raise or retrofit the levee sooner than planned to protect high-use parks like Sea Cloud and Leo J. Ryan—both critical for large events and community sports.

2.7.1.2 Groundwater and Saltwater Intrusion

As sea levels rise in San Francisco Bay, shallow groundwater underneath low-lying coastal communities will also rise. As sea levels increase, pressure on coastal aquifers can force groundwater upward, even when levees protect against direct coastal flooding. In a low-lying community like Foster City—much of which was built on reclaimed land—this phenomenon can cause water to percolate toward the surface in places that were previously dry (City of Foster City 2023). Rising groundwater increases liquefication hazards in response to earthquakes, particularly in former open water, mudflat, marsh, and floodplain areas that have been filled for development. This is especially relevant in filled or former marshland areas supporting many of Foster City's smaller "mini parks" (e.g., Arcturus, Pompano, Leo) and in lagoon-adjacent neighborhood parks (San Mateo County 2021). Rising groundwater can damage footpaths, sports

courts, and playground equipment from below, particularly in older parks with less modern drainage (e.g., Erckenbrack, Marlin, Gull). If tide gates and drainage pipes fail or age, saltwater can corrode infrastructure in parks such as Boat/Dog Park or Leo J. Ryan, where water-based recreation is a key feature.

2.7.1.3 Additional Flooding Impacts

Frequent or prolonged flooding degrades turf-grass, landscaping, and hardscapes, causing more frequent park closures. Saltwater intrusion can further weaken playground equipment, restrooms, and other park infrastructure, leading to higher maintenance and repair costs. Rising sea levels also accelerate shoreline erosion, threatening natural buffers and exposing boardwalks, picnic areas, and wildlife habitats to wave action. In turn, coastal wetlands and lagoon habitats that once served as flood buffers may diminish, adding further risk to adjacent parklands.

2.7.1.4 Flood Mitigation Strategies and Coordination

As these impacts intensify, Foster City will need to continue exploring a range of adaptation strategies—including levee reinforcement, nature-based solutions like marsh restoration, and periodic relocation of vulnerable facilities—to sustain its waterfront parks. Future park and trail enhancements should align with levee upgrades and integrate living shorelines or wetland restoration where feasible. This approach combines flood protection with ecological benefits, buffering park infrastructure while enhancing habitat. Collaboration with partners like the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District is critical to securing resources and expertise for enduring, resilient designs. By proactively addressing sea level rise in planning and maintenance, Foster City can preserve safe, enjoyable, and sustainable outdoor spaces for all.

2.7.2 Preparing for Extreme Heat and Drought

Historically, the Bay Area has experienced only three to five days above 90°F each year. However, projections indicate that by mid-century (2035–2064), Foster City could see up to 15 Extreme Heat Days annually under a high-emissions scenario—a two- to threefold increase (see Table 5 and Figure 6). Extreme Heat Days refers to the number of days in a year when daily maximum temperature is above a threshold temperature of 92.9 °F. While maritime cooling may temper some impacts, average summer maximum temperatures could still rise by 4 to 5°F by 2100 (Cal-Adapt 2025). Rising temperatures can strain both park resources and the wellbeing of residents who rely on outdoor recreation. Prolonged high temperatures may limit the comfortable use of playgrounds, sports fields, and walking trails, particularly during peak afternoon hours.

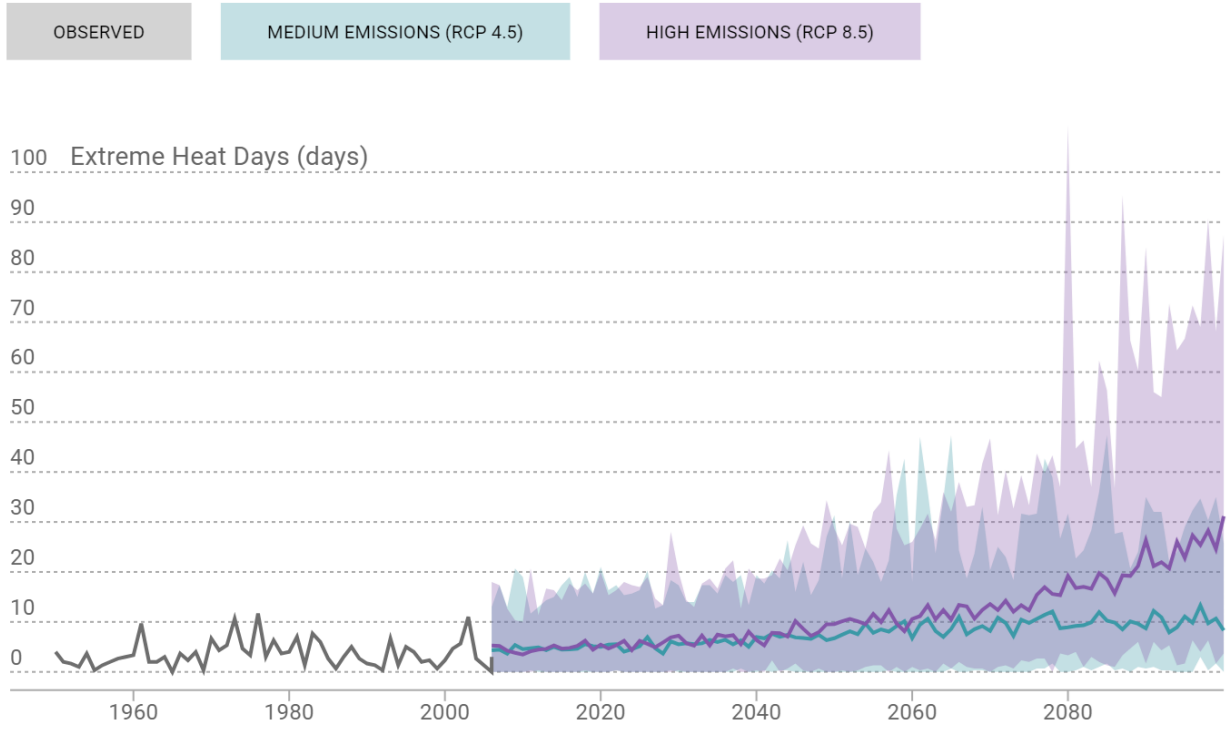
Heavily used sports parks like Sea Cloud (eight ballfields), Boothbay (ballfield and basketball court), and Edgewater (multiple courts and fields) face increased irrigation needs (City of Foster City 2024). Heat stress could shorten playing hours and raise maintenance costs. Smaller parks like Gateshead, Leo, and Pompano have fewer mature trees and limited seating, making them less comfortable during high-heat days (City of Foster City 2021). During droughts, these areas could see browning turf or temporary field closures. Drought conditions that often accompany heat waves further stress park landscapes, as plantings and athletic fields become more susceptible to damage when water is restricted. This is particularly relevant when drought conditions coincide with heat waves, straining irrigation supplies.

Table 5 Snapshot of Extreme Heat Days for Three 30-Year Time Periods

		30yr Average	30yr Range
Baseline (1961-1990)			
MODELED HISTORICAL	-	3 days	2 - 4 days
Mid-Century (2035-2064)			
MEDIUM EMISSIONS (RCP 4.5)	+4 days	7 days	4 - 12 days
HIGH EMISSIONS (RCP 8.5)	+6 days	9 days	5 - 15 days
End-Century (2070-2099)			
MEDIUM EMISSIONS (RCP 4.5)	+7 days	10 days	6 - 18 days
HIGH EMISSIONS (RCP 8.5)	+16 days	19 days	10 - 43 days

Compiled from LOCA downscaled climate projections for California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment (Pierce et al., 2018; Livneh et al., 2015).

Figure 6 Most Likely Outcome and Range of Future Projections of Extreme Heat Days



Data derived from 32 LOCA downscaled climate projections generated to support California's Fourth Climate Change Assessment. Details are described in Pierce et al., 2018. Observed historical data derived from Gridded Observed Meteorological Data. Details are described in Livneh et al., 2015. Data presented are aggregated over all LOCA grid cells that intersect Foster City boundary. Threshold temperature for a location is defined as the 98th percentile value of historical daily maximum/minimum temperatures (from 1961–1990, between April and October) observed at that location.

In response, Foster City's park system can adopt strategies to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat and drought. One key strategy recommended by Foster City's Climate Action Plan 2024 Update is to expand shade and cooling features, including tree canopies, shade structures, and water amenities (e.g., splash pads and community pools) in areas with high foot traffic and play

spaces (e.g., Leo J. Ryan, Catamaran, Sea Cloud) (City of Foster City 2024). Selecting drought-tolerant shade trees can be especially effective for long-term cooling, water conservation, and landscape resilience. Species such as Holly Oak, Italian Stone Pine, Chinese Elm, Carob Tree, and Chinese Pistache are known for providing dense shade while requiring less water once established. Additional varieties like Mayten or Aleppo Pine can thrive in low-water conditions but may need more frequent monitoring for limb drop or invasive characteristics (Arbor Day Foundation 2025).

The City should continue to upgrade irrigation systems to optimize water use, prioritizing these resilient, low-water species wherever possible and exploring non-potable water sources. This is especially vital for large sports fields in Sea Cloud and Boothbay. Where feasible, parks can be designed or retrofitted with permeable surfaces, bioswales, and rain gardens that capture and reuse stormwater—particularly in areas prone to flooding or heavy runoff (e.g., Port Royal, Edgewater). Creating or designating existing indoor recreation spaces as cooling centers during heat events will also be crucial to ensure that residents have safe, climate-controlled environments available. Through these combined efforts, Foster City can protect community health, conserve water resources, and uphold the vitality of its parks in the face of hotter, drier conditions.

2.7.3 Mitigating Air Quality Impacts

Rising temperatures and regional wildfire activity have led to periodic air quality challenges in Foster City. Smoke and particulate matter from neighboring or distant fires can drift in, impacting park visitors and staff. Meanwhile, higher temperatures can boost ozone formation, especially in the summer. Parks hosting large gatherings (e.g., Leo J. Ryan for festivals, Sea Cloud for sports tournaments) may need to cancel or postpone events on days with unhealthy air quality. Existing indoor facilities, such as community centers at Leo J. Ryan or those adjacent to Sea Cloud, can serve as respite locations.

To address these evolving risks, Foster City's park system can implement practical measures to protect public health and maintain recreational opportunities. Clean-air shelters or "respite" locations within existing indoor facilities, such as community centers, can offer temporary relief when outdoor air quality is unsafe. Expansion of the urban tree canopy in strategic locations will also help filter pollutants while providing shade against the heat. Public messaging and real-time alerts can guide visitors to safe recreation options and suggest protective behaviors (e.g., wearing masks during severe smoke events or shifting activities indoors). By proactively planning for and responding to air quality impacts, Foster City can help ensure that residents continue to enjoy parks and open spaces—even as climate-related challenges intensify.

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General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element

Open Space and Conservation Assessment

prepared for

City of Foster City
Community Development Department
610 Foster City Boulevard
Foster City, California 94404
Contact: Vanessa Brannon, Senior Management Analyst

prepared with the assistance of

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
66 Franklin Street, Suite 200
Oakland, California 94607

March 2025

FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

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Figures

1 Introduction

The City of Foster City's (City) open space, natural resources, and conservation management are integral to the city's environmental sustainability, climate resilience, and quality of life. As an urbanized shoreline community distinguished by a unique network of parks, lagoons, and shoreline areas including the adjacent Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve, Foster City faces specific challenges and opportunities in preserving and enhancing its natural and recreational assets. This Open Space and Conservation Assessment evaluates existing parks, amenities, and recreational programs to highlight opportunities for enhancement and growth. Serving as an essential resource, it guides policy development and identifies multi-benefit opportunities aligned with the Parks Master Plan, ultimately informing the update to the Parks and Open Space Element.

This assessment is based on a detailed review and analysis of existing data sources, relevant literature, and local findings. It inventories and evaluates key biological resources, identifies special status species and habitats, maps ecological reserves, and highlights opportunities for ecological restoration and habitat connectivity. Furthermore, the assessment examines open spaces such as parks, lagoons, and shoreline areas, assessing their contributions to ecological health, recreation, community well-being, and climate resilience. It also identifies vulnerabilities and threats facing these spaces, particularly from flooding and sea-level rise.

Beyond biological and shoreline resources, the assessment explores critical sustainability topics, including air quality, water quality, water supply, energy conservation, and renewable energy. By evaluating existing conditions and regulatory compliance, it identifies ongoing challenges and highlights opportunities for strengthening environmental resilience.

Through this synthesis of current conditions, regulatory contexts, and identification of key data gaps, the assessment outlines strategic priorities and essential policy considerations. These insights are intended to guide General Plan policy development, positioning Foster City to sustainably manage and protect its natural assets, bolster community resilience, and maximize multi-benefit environmental and social outcomes for present and future generations.

2 Regulatory Triggers

The following California regulations mandate an update to the Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element. A full regulatory setting is provided in the Appendix.

Senate Bill 1425 Open-space element: updates

Senate Bill (SB) 1425 requires that every city and county review and update its local open space plan by January 1, 2026.[1] The bill requires the local open space plan to include plans and an action program that address specified issues, including climate resilience, equitable access, and rewilding opportunities, correlated with the Safety Element, Environmental Justice Element, and Land Use Element respectively. The requirements set forth in SB 1425 may be best met by pursuing policies that promote multi-benefit approaches.

Fundamental to the multiple benefits of open space is the provision of natural areas that provide human and ecological benefits through habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics. In the context of climate change, open space provides a form of natural infrastructure, for which a definition is provided in Gov. Code § 65302(g)(4)(C)(v). Natural infrastructure utilizes natural ecological systems or processes to reduce vulnerability to climate change related hazards, or other related climate change effects, while increasing the long-term adaptive capacity of natural areas by perpetuating or restoring ecosystem services.

Assembly Bill 1889 Conservation element: wildlife and habitat connectivity

Assembly Bill (AB) 1889, known as the Room to Roam Act, requires the Conservation Element of a city's general plan to include an identification and analysis of connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within its jurisdiction by January 1, 2028.[2] It further requires an assessment of existing or planned wildlife passage features, such as wildlife crossings or underpasses, to ensure planned developments do not comprise these critical habitats or wildlife movement corridors.

Specifically, the bill directs local governments to consider the impacts of existing and future development on wildlife connectivity, emphasizing the importance of protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors, particularly in response to the challenges posed by climate change and habitat fragmentation. Local jurisdictions are required to:

- Identify connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas.
- Inventory and analyze existing or planned wildlife passage features, aligning efforts with state-level connectivity assessments and plans.
- Evaluate how development may create barriers to wildlife movement.
- Develop strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to wildlife connectivity from land-use decisions.
- Explore opportunities to remediate existing barriers and restore degraded habitats, integrating best available science and datasets from regional habitat connectivity assessments, wildlife movement studies, and other relevant resources.

[1] Stern. 2022. Senate Bill No. 1425. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB1425 (accessed March 2025).
[2] Friedman. 2024. Assembly Bill No. 1889. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240AB1889 (accessed March 2025).

3 Data Gaps and Limitations

This assessment draws on a diverse set of data sources, including local documents such as Foster City's Climate Action Plan and Lagoon Management Plan, regional datasets like those from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and San Mateo County, and statewide resources such as the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) and State Water Resources Control Board. Despite the breadth of data utilized, several key data gaps and limitations emerged during the preparation of this assessment. Some of these gaps can be addressed within the context of updating the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan, while others require broader, long-term efforts beyond the scope of this study. The following subsections identify key data gaps within each topic area, along with recommendations for improving future data collection, analysis, and policy development. These recommendations are intended to illustrate potential methods for obtaining additional information that could strengthen this report's findings. However, it is recognized that the City may face constraints in time, staffing, or funding that limit its ability to pursue these efforts in the near term. As such, the recommendations are not presented as immediate action items, but rather as context for what could be pursued to develop a more comprehensive understanding of Foster City’s natural resources.

3.1 Natural Open Space Inventory

Identified Gaps and Limitations

- **Community Usage Data:** While there is information on park access available, there is limited data specific to open spaces throughout the city. Often the data available to evaluate park access includes urban parks alone or urban parks and open space together. Isolated information on open space access is more challenging to identify.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Implement user surveys or data collection mechanisms, such as park attendance counters, to gather information on park utilization, demographics of visitors, and patterns of use.

3.2 Biological Resources

Identified Gaps and Limitations

- **Wildlife Presence Data:** Although State and federal resources provide data on the recorded occurrences of various species, there is a lack of recently collected information regarding the current presence of some of the rarer species.
- **Wildlife Movement Data:** Data is available on the presence of certain species, but there is insufficient information regarding their specific movement patterns, migration corridors, and population sizes within Foster City.
- **Wildlife Corridor Information:** Due to the difficulty in finding information on the city's existing wildlife movement infrastructure, the analysis on the adequacy of this infrastructure is limited.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Involve local communities and stakeholders in wildlife monitoring efforts. Their knowledge and participation can enhance data collection and ensure the success of conservation initiatives.
- Identify and map key wildlife movement corridors through field studies. This involves tracking migration patterns and identifying critical areas where wildlife is likely to move. Field studies can provide valuable data on habitat use and connectivity.
- Work with partners and subject matter experts to perform more frequent and detailed biodiversity assessments in marine and coastal environments to track trends in key species and assess ecosystem resilience.
- Work with partners and subject matter experts to establish key performance indicators related to biodiversity, habitat quality, and ecosystem health to track progress and adjust strategies accordingly.
- Consider additional methods to gather data for future natural resource planning efforts, such as camera trapping, integrating data from other sources such as roadkill surveys and habitat suitability models, and/or advanced analytical tools such as spatial capture-recapture models.

3.3 Water Resources

Identified Gaps and Limitations

- **Impacts of Bay-Delta Plan Amendments:** The projections regarding water supply availability under the Bay-Delta Plan Amendment reflect a worst-case scenario but do not account for the implementation of the San Francisco Public Utilities District's Alternative Water Supply Program or a Voluntary Agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board. There is uncertainty regarding the actual impacts of these policies.
- **Future Projections for Multiple Dry Years:** Projections of water supply and demand for multiple dry years are based on the assumption of significant supply shortfalls. These projections may change with improved regional coordination and better data about supply reliability. However, the exact magnitude of these shortfalls and the effectiveness of mitigation measures remain uncertain.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Establish a shallow-groundwater monitoring program with EMID to install dedicated wells for sampling water levels and chloride/bromide concentrations. Although Foster City already sits below sea level, rising Bay water can push salty groundwater farther inland and upward, increasing corrosion risks for buried utilities and affecting landscape irrigation quality; tracking these trends will inform future infrastructure design and maintenance..
- Refine projections and assess water supply availability in cooperation with San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, especially considering the possibility of a Voluntary Agreement and the Alternative Water Supply Program. This would provide more accurate estimates of water supply reliability in both normal and dry years.
- Work with the Estero Municipal Improvement District to update the Urban Water Management Plan periodically to reflect new data and regional water supply reliability projections. Models could incorporate different future climate scenarios and their specific impacts on water supply availability.

3.4 Climate Resilience

Identified Data Gaps and Limitations

- **Groundwater Rise Projections:** While sea level rise and coastal flooding hazards are well-documented, data on shallow groundwater rise and its interactions with infrastructure, soil stability, and stormwater systems are limited.
- **Localized Flood Modeling:** Current flood mapping primarily focuses on large-scale regional models (e.g., CoSMoS). More localized, high-resolution flood modeling is needed to assess inland ponding risks, stormwater drainage capacity, and the potential for compound flooding events.
- **Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Strategies:** While the City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) outlines adaptation priorities, there is limited site-specific analysis on the role of nature-based solutions such as marsh expansion, permeable surfaces, or urban forestry for flood mitigation and cooling.
- **Heat Vulnerability Mapping:** While regional climate models predict increasing extreme heat days, Foster City's neighborhood-level vulnerability assessments (e.g., tree canopy gaps, heat mapping for specific streets) remain incomplete.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Collaborate with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and regional water agencies to integrate shallow groundwater rise projections into future hazard planning.
- Develop a localized stormwater and flood risk model in partnership with regional hydrologists to evaluate drainage vulnerabilities and compound flood risks.
- Expand partnerships with OneShoreline, San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), and BayAdapt to conduct feasibility studies on nature-based adaptation, particularly for shoreline resilience and water retention strategies.
- Work with a regional agency, an academic partner, or an external consultant to complete a high-resolution urban heat assessment, such as NOAA's CAPA *HeatWatch* campaign or comparable remote-sensing/ground-sensor study, so the City can pinpoint priority streets and neighborhoods for cooling interventions (tree planting, cool paving, shade structures).
- Foster City is exploring a citywide tree canopy study. Completing that inventory would close a key portion of the neighborhood level data gap by quantifying shade coverage and pinpointing streets or blocks with the greatest canopy deficits. To create a fully robust heat vulnerability assessment, the canopy study would best be paired with (1) high resolution surface temperature or satellite heat mapping and (2) sociodemographic data that highlight concentrations of heat sensitive populations. Together, these layers would identify priority areas for tree planting and other cooling interventions (e.g., cool pavements, shade structures).

3.5 Air Quality

Identified Data Gaps and Limitations

- **Limited Localized Air Monitoring:** Foster City does not have dedicated long-term air monitoring stations; instead, it relies on nearby stations (e.g., Redwood City, San Mateo), which may not fully capture localized conditions near highways, industrial zones, or major pollution sources.

- **Insufficient Data on Indoor Air Quality Impacts:** While outdoor air pollution (e.g., wildfire smoke, vehicle emissions) is a known concern, there is little available data on indoor air quality trends, particularly in vulnerable buildings such as schools and senior centers.
- **Cumulative Exposure Assessments:** While individual sources of air pollution (traffic, industry, airport) are recognized, a cumulative exposure analysis integrating multiple pollutants is lacking.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Work with BAAQMD or secure AB 617 Community Air Grants to co-fund and install additional air quality sensors (such as PurpleAir) in Foster City, particularly in high-traffic and high-exposure areas (e.g., near Highway 101, community centers).
- Contract a qualified HVAC/industrial-hygiene consultant to measure particulate filtration performance during wildfire-smoke events at the Recreation Center, Library, and Senior Center and to prepare a phased list of ventilation upgrades.
- With consultant or academic support, develop a cumulative exposure risk map that overlays pollution sources, population vulnerabilities, and health indicators to pinpoint “high-impact” blocks for land use or mitigation action.

3.6 Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Identified Data Gaps and Limitations

- **Limited Granular Energy Consumption Data:** Current energy usage statistics rely on aggregate data from Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) and Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE), which do not provide detailed insights at the neighborhood or building level.
- **Lack of Data on Energy Efficiency Potential:** While the Climate Action Plan outlines energy reduction targets, data on energy efficiency potential across building types (e.g., how much energy could be saved through retrofits) is incomplete.
- **Grid Resilience and Energy Storage Planning:** There is limited publicly available data on the resilience of the local grid to power disruptions, renewable energy storage capacity, and microgrid feasibility for Foster City.

Recommendations to Address Gaps

- Build upon the municipal and commercial energy audits completed during the Climate Action Plan process by:
  - refreshing the audits every 5 years (or when major building system replacements are planned) to capture new efficiency and electrification incentives;
  - adding any facilities or large private buildings that were not examined in the original study (e.g., newer retail/office developments); and
  - translating audit recommendations into a prioritized retrofit action list with cost, payback, and potential Greenhouse Gas (GHG)-reduction estimates, suitable for grant or rebate applications.
- Coordinate with PCE on phased grid resilience studies, exploring the following:
  - Work with PCE and the City’s Building Maintenance Division to scope battery-storage retrofits at critical facilities (e.g., the Civic Center, Fire Stations, the Senior Center) to maintain essential services during outages.

- With Engineering as lead and consultant support, evaluate a microgrid serving the Civic Center / Recreation Center complex; include capital-improvement-program (CIP) cost ranges, payback, and funding options.
- If the facility-scale projects prove cost-effective, expand the study to identify neighborhood or private-sector sites (business parks, multifamily complexes) that could host microgrids, leveraging PCE or state resilience grants.

4 Natural Open Space

4.1 Open Space Inventory

The City of Foster City offers an extensive array of open spaces and recreational facilities, enhancing the quality of life for its residents and visitors. In addition to the city's 24 parks (see the Parks and Recreation Assessment), Foster City provides approximately 22 acres of publicly accessible open space, primarily along the city's bike and pedestrian trails, and 41 acres of open space with restricted access. Much of the restricted access open space is either protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or privately owned and operated, and public access is generally discouraged as these areas consist of sensitive habitat along the levee pedway. Additionally, Foster City maintains a 218-acre man-made lagoon system, designed for both drainage and recreational purposes. This lagoon offers opportunities for various water activities, including kayaking, paddle boating and windsurfing. In addition, the city contains natural preservation areas such as the Belmont Slough, a protected region that serves as a vital estuarine environment supporting diverse wildlife and offering scenic trails for public enjoyment.

Figure 1 shows all parks and open spaces within the City of Foster City. Figure 2 identifies publicly accessible open space within and directly adjacent to the city.

Figure 1 Parks and Open Space in Foster City

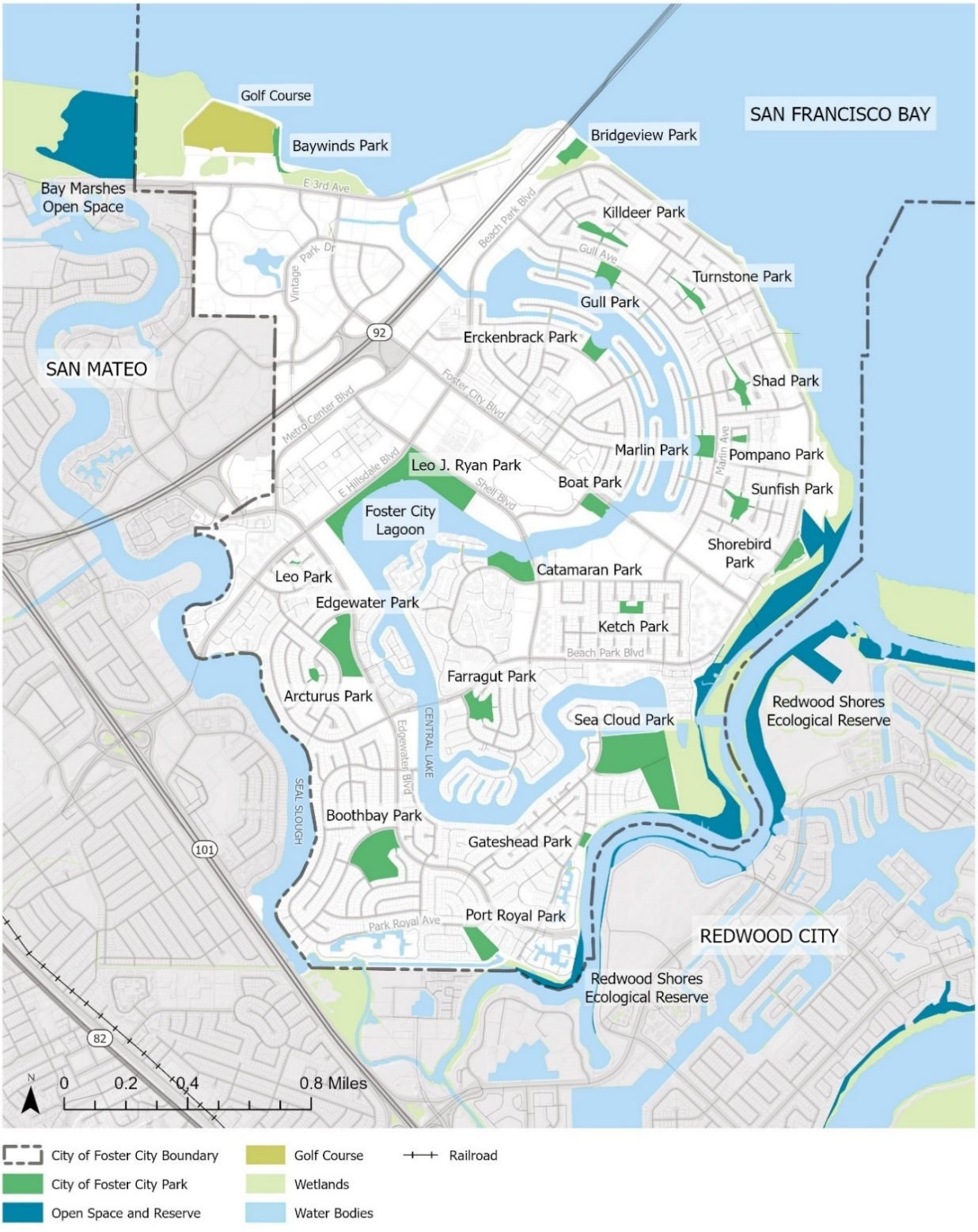
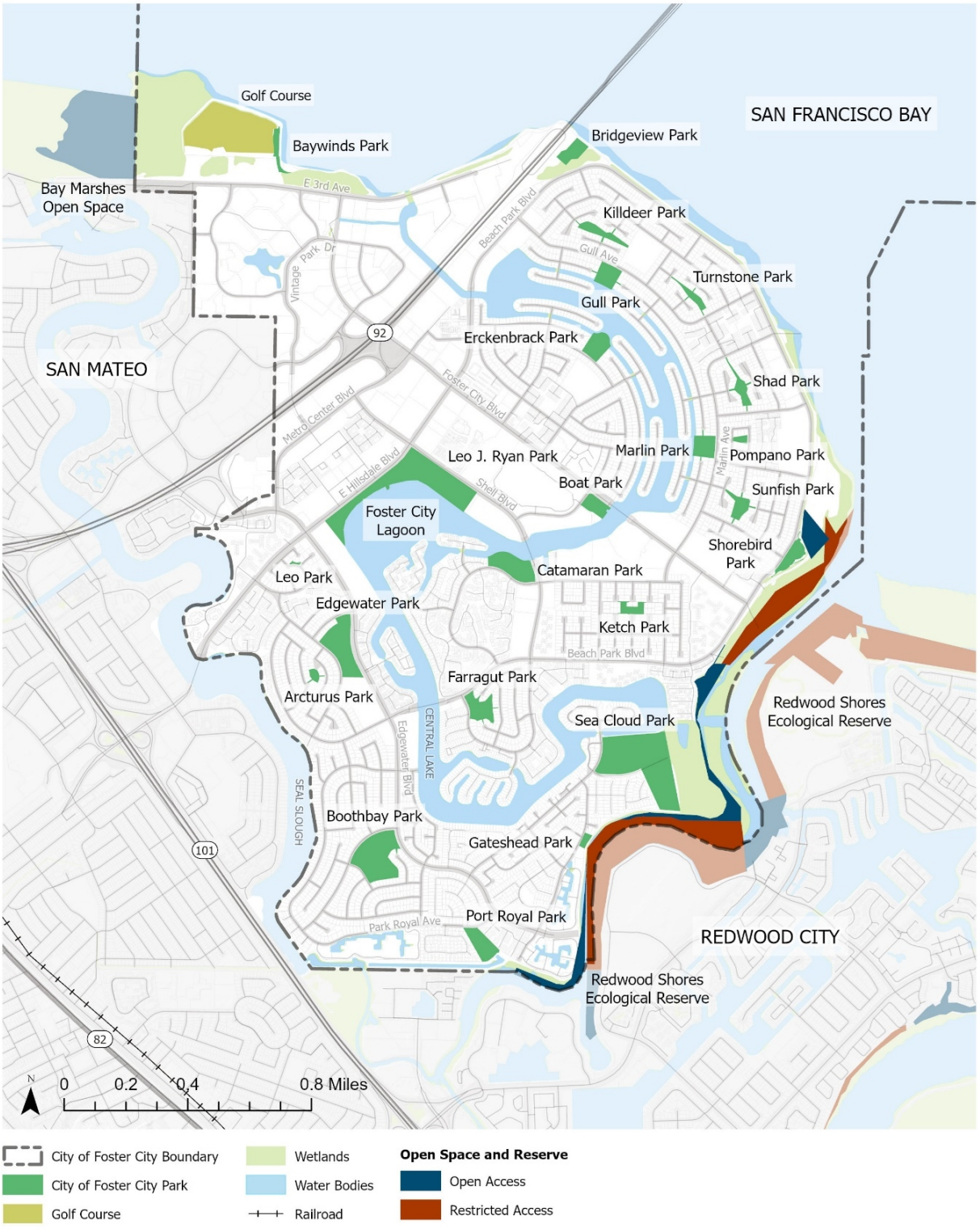


Figure 2 Public and Private Accessible Open Space in Foster City



Data provided by City of Foster City, 2025; CPAD, 2023.

4.2 Open Space Access

4.2.1 Regulatory Considerations

SB 1425 is a California law aimed at promoting climate resilience, biodiversity, and equitable access to natural resources through sustainable land use planning. It encourages local governments to integrate nature-based solutions and prioritize open space preservation, particularly in underserved communities. In Foster City, SB 1425 supports efforts to enhance equitable access to parks, shorelines, and recreational areas by ensuring that all residents, regardless of socioeconomic background, can enjoy accessible natural spaces, which includes open space on land and water.

Access to parks and open space is discussed in the Parks and Recreation Assessment.

4.3 Rewilding Potential

4.3.1 Regulatory Considerations

SB 1425 also requires a city or county consider opportunities for rewilding as part of the Open Space Element, in correlation with the Land Use Element. Per Gov. Code § Section 65565.5 (b)(1), rewilding opportunities may include but are not limited to:

- Opportunities to preserve, enhance, and expand an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics.
- Establishing a natural communities conservation plan to provide for coordinated mitigation of the impacts of new development.

4.3.2 Expansion and Rewilding Opportunities

There are several existing areas near or within close proximity to the City that could be expanded, further naturalized, or provided with improved protections.

Belmont Slough

Belmont Slough borders Foster City to the east and south, separating it from Redwood Shores. The surrounding wetlands, characterized by cordgrass and pickleweed, serve as feeding grounds for various shorebirds. It acts as a natural boundary between Foster City and Redwood Shores. The shorelines along the Belmont Slough are protected as a part of the Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve. The CDFW oversees the ecological health and wildlife protection in the area.[3] However, some of the area is also privately owned and managed. Both the private and public parcels along the Belmont Slough could be improved through naturalization. The City of Foster City is responsible for maintaining the adjacent trails and stormwater facilities. Strategies that could be used to protect and enhance this area include:

- **Wetlands Expansion:** Work with the CDFW, BCDC, OneShoreline and private landowners to identify areas where marshlands can be restored or expanded, such as converting low-lying or underutilized land into tidal marshes.

[3] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025a. Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve. https://wildlife.ca.gov/Lands/Places-to-Visit/Redwood-Shores-ER#10597124-history (accessed March 2025).

- **Buffer Zones:** As a part of capital improvement projects along the levee, create buffer strips with native grasses and shrubs along the inboard side of the levee to improve habitat quality and reduce runoff pollution.
- **Habitat Restoration:** Collaborate with the regulatory agencies (e.g., CDFW, BCDC), restoration ecologists, private landowners, and other stakeholders to plant native vegetation that supports bird species and promotes fish spawning. Develop a detailed restoration plan with a clear timeline and secure funding from grants, government programs, and private donations to cover costs for materials, labor, equipment, and maintenance.
- **Public Access Improvements:** Develop boardwalk trails or observation decks that allow residents to enjoy the natural spaces with minimal disruption to local wildlife.

Seal Slough

Seal Slough, also known as Marina Lagoon, is a tidal channel running through San Mateo and Foster City. The surrounding marshes are productive brackish wetlands dominated by cordgrass, supporting a mix of saltwater and freshwater habitats. The area has been partially developed, and some marshes have been lost to urbanization. While the Seal Slough is largely managed by the City of San Mateo, there are opportunities for collaboration to naturalize the area. The City of San Mateo has included the Seal Slough as an ongoing focus of wetland restoration projects aimed at enhancing wildlife habitats. These efforts include creating a scenic paved path along the slough's east bank, providing recreational opportunities for the community. Some strategies to naturalize the areas within Foster City include:

- **Riparian[4] Habitat Restoration:** Collaborate with the City of San Mateo on establishing plans to remove invasive species and replant native vegetation along the banks to stabilize the shoreline and enhance biodiversity.
- **Wildlife Corridors:** Establish small pocket habitats along the slough to allow species movement and work with the City of San Mateo to do the same on the side of the slough shared by the city.
- **Stormwater Management Improvements:** Use bioswales, native rain gardens, and other green infrastructure when planning projects near the slough to filter runoff before it reaches the waterway.

Urban Green Spaces

Foster City has parks and open spaces, such as Boothbay Park and Port Royal Park, primarily designed for recreational use. Although expanding these existing park spaces may be challenging, several strategies could be implemented to naturalize some areas:

- **Native Plant Landscapes:** Replace ornamental lawns with drought-tolerant, pollinator-friendly plants to reduce water usage and increase habitat diversity.
- **Small Space Rewilding:** Convert sections of parks into wildflower meadows or mini-wetlands, especially in areas that line the city’s existing coastal wetlands.
- **Community Gardens and Native Plant Education:** Provide public spaces where residents can grow native plants and learn about local ecology.
- **Green Infrastructure for Climate Resilience:** Add tree canopies and permeable surfaces to reduce heat islands and stormwater runoff.

[4] Riparian areas are plant communities contiguous to and affected by surface and subsurface hydrologic features of perennial or intermittent lotic and lentic water bodies (rivers, streams, lakes, or drainage ways). Riparian areas are usually transitional between wetland and upland.

Shoreline Areas

Foster City's shoreline along the San Francisco Bay is largely shaped by levees, bulkheads, and flood control structures, which have historically been engineered for storm protection and land stability. While effective for flood prevention, these hardened structures reduce habitat availability for shorebirds, fish, and marine organisms. Restoring and naturalizing portions of the shoreline can provide ecological, recreational, and climate resilience benefits while maintaining necessary flood protection.

While the shoreline areas are within the city, strategies and policies relating to shoreline management must be aligned with the goals of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). BCDC oversees any construction or modification along the Bay shoreline, ensuring it meets environmental standards and provides public access. The commission also plays a vital role in protecting sensitive habitats, promoting habitat restoration, and guiding the city's response to challenges such as sea-level rise and storm surges. Foster City must comply with BCDC's permitting process for coastal infrastructure projects, and the commission collaborates with local authorities on long-term planning efforts to ensure sustainable, climate-resilient development along the coast. In addition to BCDC, some areas, such as the open space near the Belmont Slough, is privately owned and protected by the CDFW.

Some strategies to consider include:

- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Work with property owners along the shoreline to integrate native shoreline plantings.

In addition, the City can consider integrating with existing large-scale open space and conservation programs in the region, such as OneShoreline. The San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District operates OneShoreline, working with jurisdictions within San Mateo County to identify opportunities to improve the shorelines and prevent harm from future sea level rise. By collaborating, the City of Foster City and OneShoreline can plan and implement projects that address sea level rise, flooding, and coastal erosion, thereby improving the city's resiliency and enhancing the quality of wildlife habitat simultaneously.

5 Biological Resources

5.1 Biological Resources

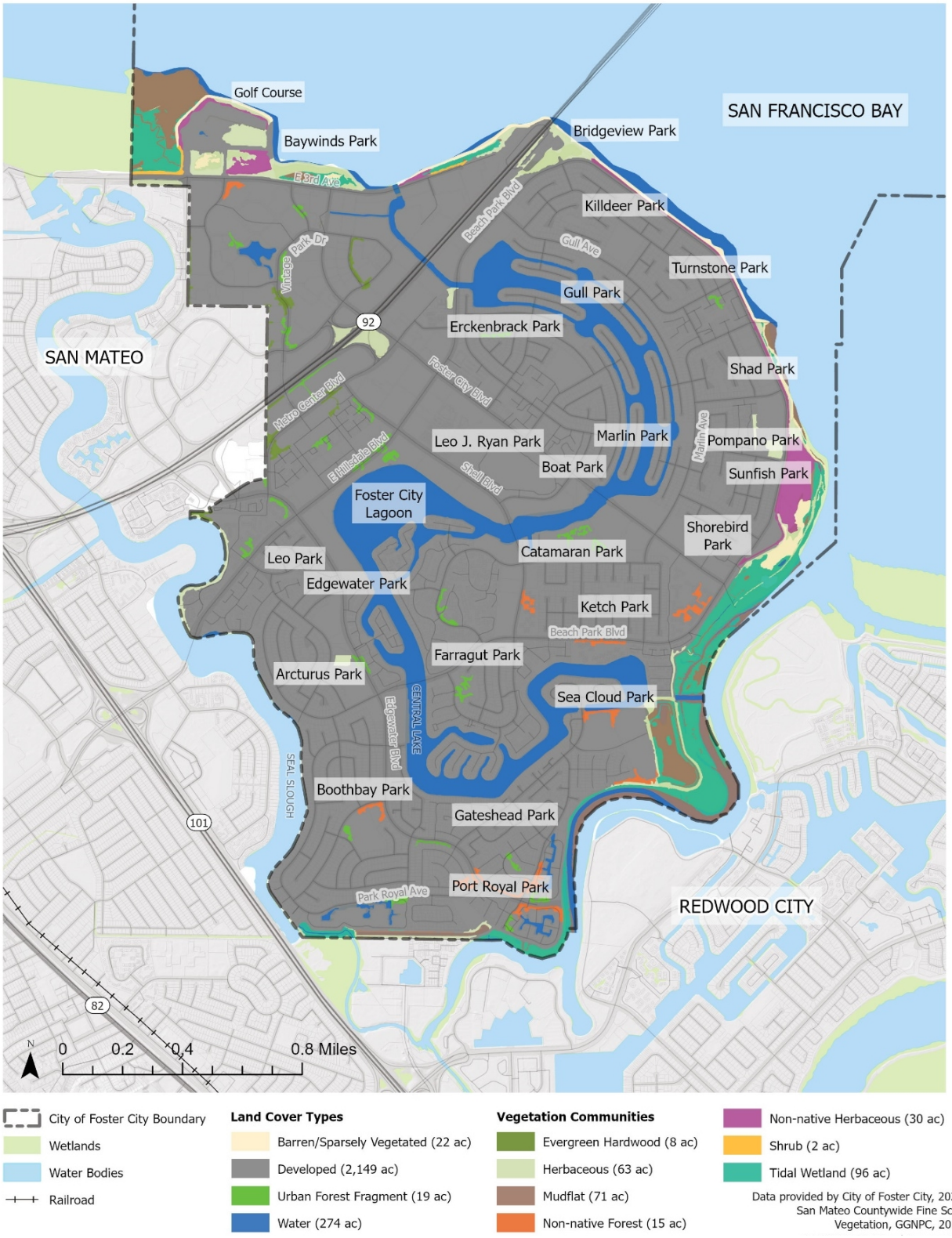
5.1.1 Vegetation and Land Cover

In 2022, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, a non-profit support partner to the National Park Service (NPS) Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA), completed a fine-scale vegetation map that details vegetation communities and agricultural land cover types, including forests, grasslands, riparian vegetation, wetlands, and croplands.[5] Most of the city contains developed land according to this mapping. The city has approximately 2,149 acres of developed land, 19 acres of fragmented urban forest, 22 acres of bare or sparsely vegetated areas, and 274 acres of water, primarily consisting of the Foster City Lagoon that runs centrally through the city (Figure 3). Descriptions of each vegetative community found within Foster City are as follows:[5]

- **Tidal Wetland (96 acres).** Salt marsh areas dominated by salt-tolerant wetland species.
- **Mudflat (71 acres).** Areas in the intertidal zone that are unvegetated and exposed during low tide.
- **Herbaceous (63 acres).** Areas where herbaceous vegetation (i.e., vegetation consists of plants with non-woody stems, such as grasses, flowers, and herbs) is at least 10 percent absolute cover; absolute tree and shrub cover is less than 10 percent.
- **Non-native Herbaceous (30 acres).** Areas where non-native herbaceous vegetation is at least 10 percent absolute cover; non-native herbaceous species dominate the herbaceous stratum; absolute tree and shrub cover is less than 10 percent.
- **Non-native Forest (15 acres).** Areas where trees are at least 10 percent absolute cover; tree cover dominated by ornamental non-native species (above 50 percent relative tree cover).
- **Evergreen Hardwood (8 acres).** Areas where trees are at least 10 percent absolute cover; fine scale map class is a non-riparian[6] evergreen hardwood type (e.g., oaks, madrone, tanoak).
- **Shrub (2 acres).** Areas where native woody shrubs are at least 10 percent absolute cover; absolute tree cover is less than 10 percent.

[5] Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. 2022. San Mateo Countywide Fine Scale Vegetation Map Final Report. https://tukmangeospatial.egnyte.com/dl/9AdMcciYe9 (accessed March 2025).
[6] A non-riparian area refers to land that does not border a river, stream, or other water body.

Figure 3 Vegetation and Land Cover is Foster City



5.1.2 Foster City Wildlife

The city is bordered by the San Francisco Bay to the north and east and supports coastal wetlands and riparian habitat along the coastline; however urbanization has substantially reduced the abundance and diversity of biological resources in Foster City. The largest collection of publicly owned natural habitat in the city includes the parks, the lagoon that runs centrally through the city, and the Belmont Slough, which borders the city to the east and southeast.

The parks and waterways attract migratory and resident birds, offering food and protection from land predators. Species such as herons and egrets are commonly observed, especially in areas like the Belmont Slough and the nearby Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve. These regions provide feeding grounds for shorebirds and nesting habitats for song sparrows and Canada geese. Mammals are common in the city, with residents often spotting raccoons, skunks, squirrels, opossums, and sometimes even coyotes looking for food and shelter in residential and commercial areas.

The city's marshlands and sloughs, such as Belmont Slough and Seal Slough, support a variety of aquatic and semi-aquatic species. These habitats are characterized by stands of cordgrass and pickleweed, which provide feeding areas for rails, herons, and other shorebirds. The mudflats adjacent to these sloughs serve as foraging grounds for numerous species, contributing to the area's ecological diversity.

Special Status Species

Special status species are those plants and animals that fall under one of the following categories:

- Listed, proposed for listing, or candidates for listing as Threatened or Endangered by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) under the Federal Endangered Species Act[7,8]
- Those considered “Species of Concern” by the USFWS[7, 8]
- Those listed or candidates for listing as Rare, Threatened, or Endangered by the CDFW under the California Endangered Species Act[7, 8]
- Animals designated as “Fully Protected” by the California Fish and Game Code[7, 8]
- Animals listed as “Species of Special Concern” by the CDFW[8]
- CDFW Special Plants, specifically those with California Rare Plant Ranks of 1B, 2, 3, and 4 in the California Native Plant Society’s Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California.[9]

The CDFW California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB) captures information about California’s most imperiled plants, animals, and natural communities. It serves as a statewide inventory of the status and locations of species. There are 21 wildlife, six plants, and one natural

[7] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025b. State and Federally Listed, Endangered, Threatened, and Rare Plants of California. https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=109390&inline (accessed March 2025).
[8] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025c. State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California. https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=109405&inline (accessed March 2025).
[9] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025d. Special Vascular Plants, Brophytes, and Lichens List. https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=109383&inline (accessed March 2025).

community with recorded occurrences within one mile of the City of Foster City.[10] The listing status and presumed presence is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1 Wildlife and Status in Foster City

CNDBB Name	Presence[1, 2, 3]	Federal List Status	California List Status
Animals			
Alameda song sparrow *(Melospiza melodia pusillula)*	Presumed extant	None	None
American peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)*	Presumed extant	Delisted	Delisted
Burrowing owl *(Athene cunicularia)*	Presumed extant	None	Candidate Endangered
California black rail *(Laterallus jamaicensis coturniculus)*	Presumed extant	None	Threatened
California least tern *(Sternula antillarum browni)*	Presumed extant	Endangered	Endangered
California ridgeway's rail *(Rallus obsoletus obsoletus)*	Presumed extant	Endangered	Endangered
Double-crested cormorant *(Nannopterum auritum)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Green sturgeon *(Acipenser medirostris)*	Presumed extant	Threatened	None
Hoary bat *(Lasiurus cinereus)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Longfin smelt *(Spirinchus thaleichthys)*	Presumed extant	Endangered	Threatened
Myrtle's silverspot butterfly *(Speyeria zerene myrtleae)*	Extirpated	Endangered	None
Northern harrier *(Circus hudsonius)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Pacific walker *(Pomatiopsis californica)*	Possibly extirpated	None	None
Pallid bat *(Antrozous pallidus)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Ricksecker's water scavenger beetle *(Hydrochara ricksecker)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Salt-marsh harvest mouse *(Reithrodontomys raviventris)*	Presumed extant	Endangered	Endangered
San Francisco gartersnake *(Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia)*	Presumed extant	Endangered	Endangered

[10] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025e. California Natural Diversity Database. California Natural Diversity Database (accessed March 2025).

CNDBB Name	Presence[1, 2, 3]	Federal List Status	California List Status
Santa Cruz kangaroo rat *(Dipodomys venustus venustus)*	Possibly extirpated	None	None
Short-eared owl *(Asio flammeus)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Western bumble bee *(Bombus occidentalis)*	Presumed extant	None	Candidate Endangered
Western snowy plover *(Charadrius nivosus nivosus)*	Presumed extant	Threatened	None
Plants			
Arcuate bushmallow *(Malacothamnus arcuatus var. arcuatus)*	Extirpated	None	None
Franciscan onion *(Allium peninsulare var. franciscanum)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Hillsborough chocolate lily *(Fritillaria biflora var. ineziana)*	Presumed extant	None	None
Point Reyes salty bird's-beak *(Chloropyron maritimum ssp. Palustre)*	Possibly extirpated	None	None
Saline clover *(Trifolium hydrophilum)*	Presumed extant	None	None
San Francisco owl's-clover *(Triphysaria floribunda)*	Extirpated	None	None
Natural Communities			
Northern Coastal Salt Marsh *(Spartina alterniflora)*	Presumed extant	None	None

[1] Presumed extant = An occurrence is presumed to still be in existence until evidence to the contrary is received by the CNDDB.

[2] Possibly Extirpated = Evidence of habitat destruction or population extirpation has been received by the CNDDB for this site, but questions remain as to whether the element still exists.

[3] Extirpated = Species has not been seen for many years or habitat has been destroyed at the site.

Source: California Department of Fish and Wildlife 2025e.

Nesting Birds

While common birds are not designated as special status species, destruction of the eggs, nests, and nestlings of any bird (except English sparrows and European starlings) is prohibited by federal and state law. Sections 3503 and 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code prohibit the taking of specific birds, their nests, eggs, or any portion thereof during the nesting season. Section 3503.5 of the California Fish and Game Code specifically protects birds of prey and their nests and eggs against take, possession, or destruction. Section 3513 of the California Fish and Game Code incorporates restrictions imposed by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act with respect to migratory birds, prohibiting the take or possession of any migratory nongame bird. Disturbance that causes nest abandonment and/or loss of reproductive effort is considered "take" by CDFW.

Canada geese are prevalent, especially around the city's lagoons and parks. Their increasing population has led to concerns about water pollution and public health, prompting discussions about management strategies. American crows have also become very common in Foster City.[11] Common waterfowl include mallards, which are frequently seen in the city's lagoons and ponds, as well as great blue herons and snowy egrets.[11] American coots are also a frequently sighted in freshwater habitats.

The city is home to several birds of prey, including red-tailed hawks and American kestrels. Northern mockingbirds and California towhees are often found foraging on the ground. Anna's hummingbirds are present year-round, and black phoebes are often seen hunting insects near water bodies. The surrounding salt marshes, featuring stands of cordgrass and pickleweed, serve as critical feeding areas for these birds.

Urban Wildlife

Foster City hosts a variety of urban wildlife species that have adapted to its suburban and shoreline environments. The area is home to coyotes, raccoons, skunks, squirrels, rats, and opossums.[12] As noted above, crows, geese, and various waterfowl are often commonly sighted within the city or along its shores.

Aquatic Wildlife

The waters and tidal sloughs, such as Belmont Slough and Seal Slough, provide habitat for fish, invertebrates, birds, and marine mammals. Among the fish species commonly found in the area are leopard sharks, bat rays, striped bass, topsmelt, longjaw mudsuckers, northern anchovies, staghorn sculpins, and spiny dogfish.[13,14] These species thrive in the bay's brackish waters and mudflats, which serve as important feeding and breeding grounds. Invertebrates are also abundant, including Dungeness crabs, bay shrimp, ghost shrimp, mud crabs, and Pacific oysters, all of which contribute to the bay's rich ecosystem.[13]

Birds that depend on marine life are frequently spotted in the area, with notable species including the endangered California clapper rail, snowy egrets, great blue herons, willets, western sandpipers, and Forster's terns. These birds rely on the mudflats and shallow waters to forage for small fish and invertebrates. Occasionally, marine mammals such as harbor seals and California sea lions can be seen near the bay, though they are not as common within Foster City's waterways.[14] Other important species in the ecosystem include Pacific herring, a vital food source for many predators, and bay pipefish, a relative of the seahorse that thrives among eelgrass beds.

5.2 Wildlife Connectivity

5.2.1 Connection to AB 1889

Assembly Bill 1889 (AB 1889), enacted in September 2024, mandates that California cities and counties incorporate considerations of wildlife movement and habitat connectivity into their general plans' conservation elements. This legislation requires local governments to assess

[11] Foster City, City of. 2025a. Wild Birds in Foster City. https://www.fostercity.org/community/page/wild-birds-foster-city (accessed March 2025).
[12] San Mateo County Vector Control District. 2025. Wildlife Identification & Info. https://www.smcmvcd.org/wildlife-identification-info (accessed March 2025).
[13] San Francisco Bay Wildlife. 2025. Fish of San Francisco Bay Area. https://www.sfbaywildlife.info/species/fish (accessed March 2025).
[14] San Francisco Bay Water Trail. 2025. Bay Wildlife. https://sfbaywatertrail.org/explore-the-bay/bay-wildlife/ (accessed March 2025).

how development impacts natural habitats and to implement measures that facilitate the free movement of wildlife, thereby promoting biodiversity and ecological health.

In the context of Foster City, AB 1889 necessitates identification and evaluation of wildlife corridors within the city, identifying how future development may impact these movement corridors, and exploring opportunities to improve or add wildlife movement corridors where feasible. Aligning with AB 1889, Foster City could consider integrated strategies that enhance habitat connectivity within these open spaces, such as creating green corridors, preserving natural landscapes, and designing infrastructure that accommodates wildlife movement.

Implementing the directives of AB 1889 not only ensures Foster City complies with state law but will also bolsters Foster City's commitment to environmental sustainability. Thoughtfully planned land use and open spaces with wildlife connectivity in mind can contribute to regional conservation efforts, support biodiversity, and provide residents with the benefits of a thriving natural environment.

5.2.2 Wildlife Movement Corridors

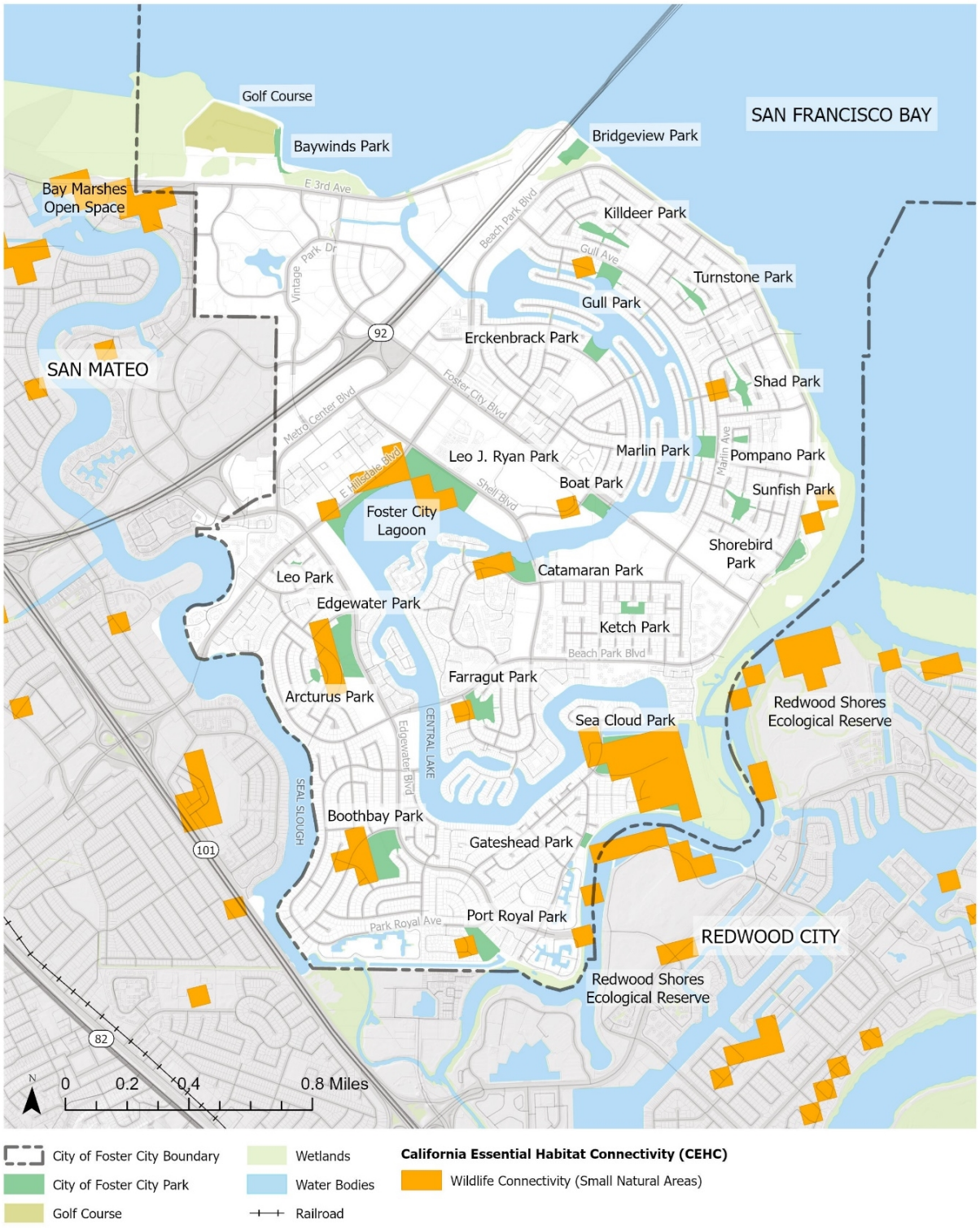
Wildlife movement corridors, or habitat linkages, are generally defined as connections between habitat patches that enable physical and genetic exchange among otherwise isolated animal populations. Such linkages can be locally significant, providing connections between foraging, breeding, or denning sites, or they may support broader, regional wildlife movements. Habitat linkages might function as migration corridors, allowing periodic, seasonal movements of a species, or serve as dispersal routes used primarily by younger animals seeking new habitats. Together, interconnected habitat linkages form wildlife corridor networks. Within Foster City, several small natural landscape blocks exist, primarily where green spaces have been established.[15] However, many of these spaces are designed primarily as urban parks or programmed recreational areas, limiting their current habitat potential due to factors such as managed landscaping, limited native vegetation, and frequent human activity.

Wildlife movement and habitat fragmentation are important issues in assessing impacts to wildlife. Habitat fragmentation occurs when a proposed action results in a single, unified habitat area being divided into two or more areas in such a way that the division isolates the two new areas from each other. Habitat isolation happens when wildlife can't move easily between different areas of their habitat or between different types of habitats. This often occurs when development, like scattered housing in a "checkerboard" pattern, breaks up natural spaces. Habitat fragmentation also can occur when a portion of one or more habitats is converted into another habitat.

In Foster City, local wildlife movement may occur along watercourses, like the lagoon, although such movement would likely be limited given the channelized nature of much of the lagoon and its urban surroundings. Limited wildlife movement could also occur along uninterrupted areas of shoreline in the city. However, because much of Foster City is either urban or suburban, wildlife corridors and nursery sites are not present in much of the city. Figure 4 depicts areas of Foster City with the potential to provide native biodiversity and ecological connectivity, as determined through the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project.

[15] California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2025f. Natural Areas Small- California Essential Habitat Connectivity (CEHC) [ds1073]. https://data-cdfw.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/CDFW::natural-areas-small-california-essential-habitat-connectivity-cehc-ds1073/about (accessed March 2025).

Figure 4 Wildlife Connectivity Areas in Foster City



Data provided by City of Foster City, 2025; Caltrans and CDFG, 2025.

5.2.3 Barriers to Connectivity

Foster City is largely suburban and urban, with limited natural habitat for wildlife. Built on reclaimed marshland, the city relies on levees for flood control, which disrupts natural tidal flows and wildlife migration. Once part of a vast marshland network supporting diverse species, urbanization has significantly reduced these habitats, and hard infrastructure along the shoreline further limits coastal feeding and breeding areas for shoreline species. Development has fragmented the remaining natural areas, but urban species like coyotes, raccoons, squirrels, sparrows, and rats still navigate the city. In addition, habitat fragmentation makes it more challenging for the city's coastal species to settle, limiting nesting areas, breeding grounds, and access to food. Major roads and highways, including Highway 92 and the San Mateo Bridge, also create physical barriers that restrict wildlife movement and increase the risk of vehicle collisions.

Human activity also disincentivizes wildlife movement throughout and surrounding the city. Activities such as boating, kayaking, and heavy foot traffic in parks can disturb sensitive species, particularly shorebirds and aquatic wildlife. Artificial lighting and noise from residential and commercial areas can disrupt nocturnal wildlife behavior and migration patterns. Additionally, runoff from roads, lawns, and industrial areas can degrade water quality, impacting aquatic ecosystems and species dependent on these environments.

5.2.4 Impacts of Planned Development

Planned urban development in areas like Foster City can significantly impact wildlife connectivity by further fragmenting habitats and creating barriers to animal movement. Infrastructure such as roads, buildings, and fences can disrupt natural corridors, hindering species' ability to access resources, find mates, and maintain genetic diversity. Planned development in Foster City has historically involved significant land reclamation and urbanization efforts, notably the transformation of wetlands into residential and commercial areas. This process has led to habitat loss and fragmentation, impacting local wildlife connectivity.

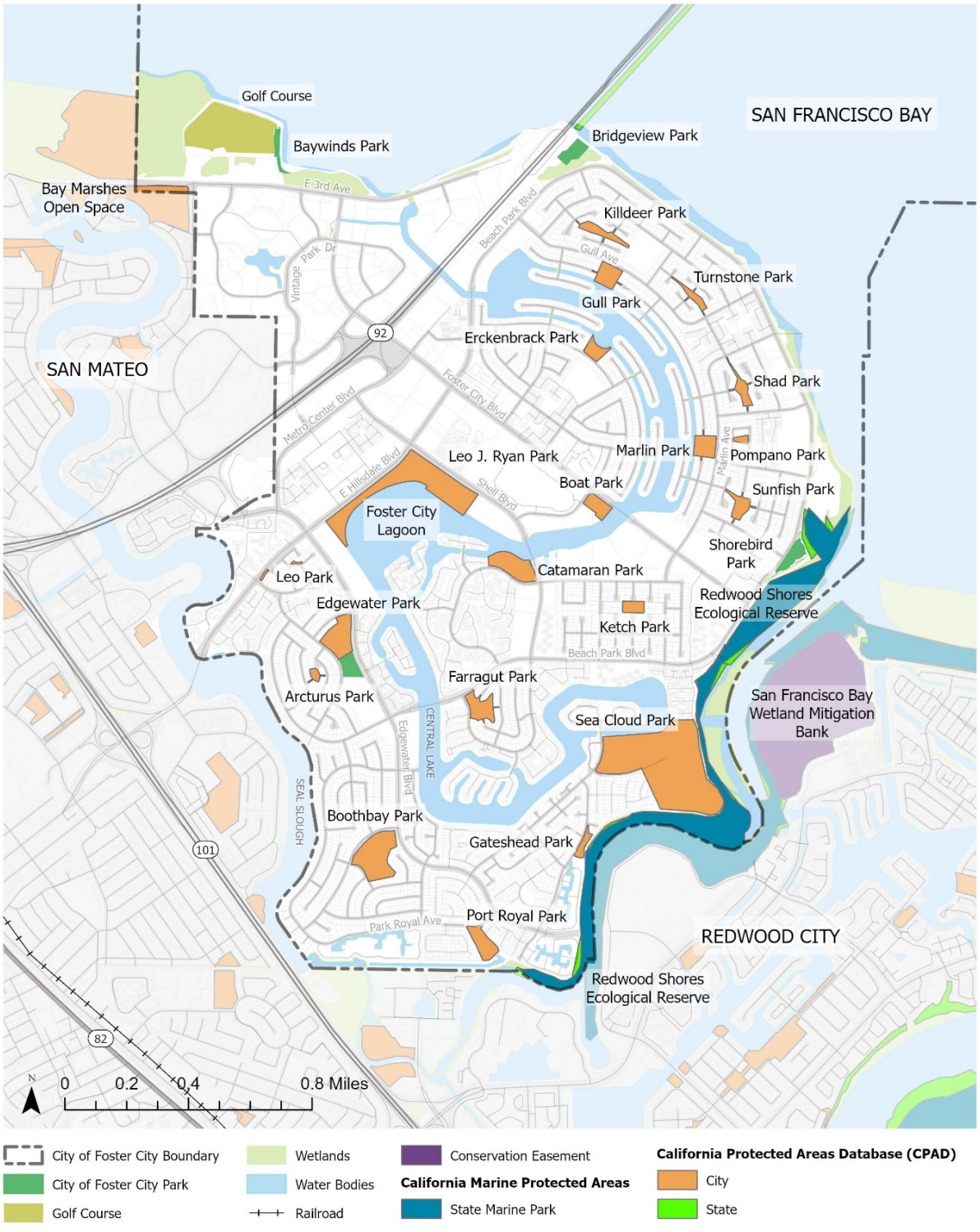
5.3 Coastal Resources

5.3.1 Coastal Habitats and Protected Areas

Foster City contains one California Marine Protected Area, the Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve, which includes parts of the Belmont Slough, the northwestern edge of Redwood City, and Bair Island. The property was acquired as a result of a land exchange agreement with the State Lands Commission and Mobil Oil Corporation specifically due to the land's wildlife value. The area was designated as an ecological reserve by the Fish and Game Commission in 1976.[3] The 268-acre Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve is a salt marsh consisting of stands of cord grass and pickleweed on the marsh side of the levee.[3] Vegetation on the levees consists of gum plant and other upland plant types. The gum plant is preferred nesting habitat for the Bay salt marsh song sparrow.[3] The marsh area also provides feeding areas for rails and herons. The adjacent exposed mud flats provide foraging areas for a wide variety of shorebirds.[3]

The Redwood Shores Ecological Reserve and other protected areas within and adjacent to the city, such as parks within the city and the Bay Marshes Open Space adjacent to the northern edge of the city, are identified on Figure 5.

Figure 5 Protected Areas in Foster City



Data provided by City of Foster City, 2025; CDFW, 2019; CCED, 2021; CPAD, 2023.

5.3.2 Wetlands

The marine habitat bordering Foster City is part of the San Francisco Bay Estuary, a vital ecosystem characterized by salt marshes, tidal flats, and mudflats. The city is surrounded by estuarine and marine wetlands.[16] The wetlands surrounding Foster City primarily consist of saltwater and brackish marshes along the eastern edge of the city, near the San Francisco Bay. These areas are part of the larger San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, providing essential habitat for various species of birds, fish, and other wildlife, particularly migratory birds that use the wetlands as feeding and resting areas during migration.[17]

Many of the wetlands in Foster City were filled for urban development, but remnants of tidal and mudflat marshes exist, especially around the Bair Island area to the north and the Shorebird Park near the southern boundary. These wetlands help filter pollutants, control flooding, and support a diverse ecosystem. Sea-level rise due to climate change threatens these ecosystems, prompting a need for local initiatives to improve the shoreline.

5.3.3 Rewilding Marine Habitats

Rewilding and habitat connectivity are essential concepts for marine habitats, as they help restore ecological functions and improve biodiversity in degraded coastal and ocean environments. Rewilding in marine ecosystems involves restoring natural processes by allowing seagrass beds, kelp forests, and oyster reefs to recover without excessive human interference. These habitats serve as crucial nurseries, feeding grounds, and shelters for a wide variety of marine species, including fish, invertebrates, and marine mammals.

Habitat connectivity in marine environments like the San Francisco Bay ensures that species can migrate, reproduce, and maintain healthy populations by linking different ecosystems, including estuaries, wetlands, and open water habitats. Maintaining connectivity is particularly important for species with complex life cycles, like fish that rely on both coastal wetlands and open oceans at different stages of development. Human activities such as coastal development, pollution, and habitat destruction can disrupt these connections, leading to population declines and ecosystem imbalances. By implementing marine protected areas, restoring degraded habitats, and reducing human impacts, rewilding efforts can help reconnect fragmented marine ecosystems and enhance their resilience to climate change and other environmental stressors.

5.3.4 Alignment with Regional Efforts

Foster City can enhance wildlife connectivity by aligning its initiatives with OneShoreline's regional strategies. OneShoreline, the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District, emphasizes integrated approaches to address environmental challenges. By collaborating with OneShoreline, Foster City can participate in projects that not only mitigate flooding and sea-level rise but also restore natural habitats, thereby improving wildlife corridors. Additionally, adopting OneShoreline's planning policy guidance can help Foster City incorporate wildlife connectivity considerations into its urban development plans. This alignment ensures that infrastructure projects support ecological networks, facilitating the movement and health of local wildlife populations. Through such coordination, Foster City can contribute to a cohesive regional effort to bolster biodiversity and environmental resilience. Key policies from

[16] United States Fish and Wildlife Service. 2025a.National Wetlands Inventory. https://fwsprimary.wim.usgs.gov/wetlands/apps/wetlands-mapper/ (accessed March 2025).
[17] United States Fish and Wildlife Service. 2025b. Don Edwards Sann Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge. https://www.fws.gov/refuge/don-edwards-san-francisco-bay?utm_source=chatgpt.com (accessed March 2025).

OneShoreline's Planning Policy Guidance, adopted in 2024, that Foster City could consider aligning with include[18]:

Goal CR 5: Prioritize and Support Natural Infrastructure and Habitats

A. **Natural Infrastructure in Shoreline Protection.** Prioritize the use of Natural Infrastructure, including the protection, restoration, and expansion of existing coastal habitats, consistent with the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element habitat conservation policies. Shoreline infrastructure projects should evaluate the use or restoration of natural features and ecosystem processes – such as tidal marshes, eelgrass, mudflats, beaches, and oyster reefs – and incorporate these features to the greatest extent feasible to conserve ecosystem values and functions, which benefit people and wildlife.
B. **Shoreline Barrier Location.** Require that shoreline barriers are sited as landward as possible within the Buffer Zone to provide as much space as possible for rising Bay water levels, incorporation of natural elements, sensitive habitats, and future Bayland-upland transition zone habitat migration.
C. **Future Conditions Protection for Ecological Assets.** Protect critical existing ecological assets from future conditions brought on by climate change by accounting for these assets in land use planning and shoreline infrastructure project development. This includes protecting sensitive habitats within buffer zones adjacent to planned shoreline infrastructure projects, as well as planning for and accommodate upland migration of habitats vulnerable to sea level rise.
D. **Intertidal and Subtidal Habitat Conservation and Restoration.** Promote the conservation, restoration, and enhancement of intertidal and subtidal habitats, which can help reduce impacts on shoreline infrastructure.

5.4 Existing Plans and Programs

Foster City Climate Action Plan

Foster City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) is a strategic framework aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting energy efficiency, and enhancing climate resilience. The plan includes initiatives such as expanding renewable energy, improving transportation sustainability, increasing urban tree canopy, and preparing for sea-level rise. Through these efforts, Foster City seeks to create a more sustainable and environmentally responsible community while aligning with state and regional climate goals.

Canada Goose Adaptive Management Plan

Foster City's Integrated Canada Goose Adaptive Management Plan aims to address public health hazards and quality-of-life issues arising from the growing Canada Goose population. The plan emphasizes non-lethal strategies such as habitat modification, hazing techniques, and landscape alterations to deter geese from congregating in public parks. Approved by the City Council in December 2024, the plan is set for pilot implementation in early 2025, focusing on select parks to evaluate the effectiveness of these humane management methods.

[18] San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District. 2023. Planning Policy Guidance to Protect and Enhance Bay Shoreline Areas of San Mateo County. https://oneshoreline.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/OneShoreline-Planning-Policy-Guidance-Final-June-21-2023-For-Web.pdf (accessed March 2025).

5.5 Climate Considerations

Climate change is expected to further challenge wildlife movement corridors in Foster City by altering habitat conditions and increasing barriers to movement. Rising temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns may impact the availability of food and water sources, forcing wildlife to adjust their movement patterns. Additionally, sea level rise could inundate low-lying coastal areas and wetlands, reducing habitat connectivity along the shoreline. Urbanization has already fragmented natural habitats, and climate change may exacerbate these impacts by making it more difficult for species to disperse, migrate, or find suitable breeding grounds.

Green spaces, such as parks and vegetated corridors along the lagoon and coastline, can serve as refuges and pathways for wildlife. Enhancing and preserving these spaces through climate-adaptive landscaping, native plant restoration, and habitat-friendly infrastructure can help maintain biodiversity and support species resilience. Implementing measures such as wildlife-friendly culverts, expanded green buffers, and coordinated regional conservation efforts can further mitigate the impacts of climate change on wildlife movement in Foster City.

Wetlands surrounding Foster City serve as vital carbon sinks, sequestering carbon dioxide through sediment accumulation and plant growth, which helps mitigate climate change.[19] However, rising sea levels, increased storm intensity, and saltwater intrusion threaten the stability and functionality of these ecosystems. As tidal marshes become submerged, their ability to capture and store carbon diminishes, potentially turning them into sources of greenhouse gas emissions rather than sinks.[19] Additionally, shifts in salinity and sediment availability may alter wetland composition, affecting species that rely on brackish environments.[20] While wetlands have some natural capacity to adapt by migrating inland, urban development constrains this movement. Protecting and restoring these habitats, through sediment augmentation, marsh restoration, and nature-based adaptation strategies will be essential to maintaining their role in flood protection, water filtration, biodiversity support, and long-term carbon sequestration.

5.6 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to protect and enhance the city's biological resources through updates to Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan. It should be noted that any adopted habitat restoration, vegetation, or other landscaping policies contained within the Parks and Open Space Element or Conservation Element will be consistent with the strategies and initiatives contained within the City's Park Master Plan and Canada Goose Population Management Plan. The policy considerations are as follows:

1. **Habitat Preservation and Restoration**
    - The City's shorelines are a valuable resource that provides natural habitat to various species. Policies should aim to protect and enhance existing natural habitats such as tidal wetlands, mudflats, and urban forests to support local wildlife.
    - To improve connectivity between existing parks and natural areas, expand and connect green spaces to create wildlife corridors, particularly around Belmont Slough and Foster City Lagoon.

[19] National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. 2025. Coastal Blue Carbon. https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/ecosystems/coastal-blue-carbon/ (accessed March 2025).
[20] Herbert et al. 2015. A global perspective on wetland salinization: ecological consequences of a growing threat to freshwater wetlands. https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1890/ES14-00534.1 (accessed March 2025).

- Many of the city's natural areas are overgrown with non-native species or are empty dirt lots, especially around the perimeter of the city along the coastal trails. There is potential for many of these areas to be naturalized.
- Integrating native vegetation into public parks and open spaces can support local wildlife, provide opportunities for species establishment and movement, and improve the shoreline aesthetics.
- Reestablishing native species and naturalizing open parcels in the city will require establishing processes that improve the maintenance and care for these areas in the future.
- To encourage public stewardship and protection of the existing and future naturalized areas, develop interpretive signage and educational programs about local wildlife and habitat conservation in parks and open spaces.

2. Wildlife Connectivity and Protection

- Foster City has limited wildlife connectivity and a highly urbanized environment. Restoring natural habitat in strategically identified developed areas can provide greater wildlife movement.
- Given the urbanized and disjointed nature of the existing open space and green areas, incorporating wildlife-friendly infrastructure, such as underpasses or vegetated buffers, could reduce habitat fragmentation and provide safer routes for wildlife movement.
- There is currently a gap in data regarding the city's existing wildlife movement infrastructure. Assessing barriers to wildlife movement caused by roads, levees, and infrastructure, and exploring mitigation strategies such as crossings or buffer zones should be implemented for the safety and benefit of both people and migratory species.
- Foster City is not currently a part of the OneShoreline program. However, given the city's goals of reducing flooding and improving habitat resilience, there is an opportunity to enhance wildlife connectivity and resilience by aligning its policies with OneShoreline's efforts.

3. Conservation-Focused Land Use Planning

- To naturalize more urbanized areas, implement "green streets" initiatives that incorporate native vegetation, permeable surfaces, and rain gardens to enhance habitat connectivity.
- Since the city has limited space to build out new green spaces, the city could encourage the development of rooftop gardens, vertical green spaces, and urban greening (including urban forestry) projects to provide habitat for pollinators and bird species.

4. Climate Resilience and Adaptation

- Naturalizing the coastal areas will need to consider the existing levee and flooding infrastructure. The City could incorporate climate considerations into conservation planning to ensure habitat resilience in the face of sea-level rise and extreme weather events.
- Implement policies that utilize nature-based solutions, such as wetland restoration, to enhance flood protection while benefiting wildlife.

5. Public Awareness and Collaboration

- To encourage public stewardship of natural spaces, develop community engagement programs that educate residents about urban wildlife, habitat conservation, and responsible coexistence.
- Partner with regional agencies, such as OneShoreline, to implement wildlife-friendly flood protection and resilience strategies.

6 Water Resources

6.1 Watershed and Waterways

6.1.1 Surface Water

Foster City contains several surface water bodies, most of which are part of an engineered system designed to accommodate stormwater storage before it is pumped to the Bay, but also to provide recreational opportunities and enhance the city's shoreline aesthetics.

Foster City boasts an expansive network of artificial lagoons interconnected by a series of canals. These lagoons provide valuable recreational opportunities, including boating, while also serving as essential habitats for local wildlife and works as a storm drainage retention basin. Although artificially created and maintained, the lagoons are connected both to one another and to the larger San Francisco Bay. However, they remain distinct entities and are not directly considered part of the Bay.

Situated along the eastern shoreline of San Francisco Bay, Foster City benefits from the Bay's significant influence on local water features, particularly through tidal interactions affecting the lagoons. Despite the city's proximity to this major surface water source, Foster City's drinking water needs are predominantly met through imported surface water supplies rather than direct reliance on the Bay itself.

Foster City's sole source of potable water is from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission system, which includes water from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission water supply infrastructure also manages local surface water sources, although the city's artificial lagoons and the San Francisco Bay itself are not used for potable water.

6.1.2 Groundwater

The region largely draws water from the Santa Clara Valley – San Mateo Plan Groundwater Subbasin, which is a major source of groundwater for the region.[21] This basin extends across parts of San Mateo and Santa Clara counties reaching from approximately the City of San Mateo on the north, to approximately the County boundary at San Francisquito Creek on the south.[22] The groundwater basin is part of the larger San Francisco Bay Groundwater Subbasin, which serves as a critical water source for local municipalities.

While Foster City itself solely relies on imported surface water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission system, the groundwater basin still plays a role in regional water availability.[23] San Mateo County does not have a water management agency like other counties within the state so detailed use data of groundwater is not available. Considering the well types present within the county, it is likely that many of the active wells are used for public and private emergency backup drinking water supply and irrigation.[22]

[21] California Department of Water Resources. 2025. Critically Overdrafted Basins. https://water.ca.gov/Programs/Groundwater-Management/Bulletin-118/Critically-Overdrafted-Basins (accessed March 2025).
[22] San Mateo County Sustainability Department. 2025. Groundwater. https://www.smcsustainability.org/water/groundwater/ (accessed March 2025).
[23] Foster City, City of. 2021. 2020 Urban Water Management Plan for Estero Municipal Improvement District. https://www.fostercity.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public_works/page/32041/final_draft_2020_emid_uwmp_wappendices.pdf (accessed March 2025).

Climate Considerations

Climate change and projected sea level rise are anticipated to increase groundwater levels in Foster City due to its low elevation and permeable fill-based foundation. Rising groundwater levels may lead to greater risks of subsurface flooding and saltwater intrusion, potentially affecting underground infrastructure, groundwater quality, and vegetation health in parks and open spaces. Although Foster City relies primarily on imported surface water, shifts in regional precipitation patterns and prolonged droughts could heighten the importance of local groundwater resources as supplemental or emergency supplies. Proactively monitoring groundwater conditions and integrating adaptive management strategies into future plans will be critical to mitigate climate-related groundwater impacts.

6.1.3 Lagoon

Foster City's lagoon is a man-made estuary that divides the city, extending from north to south. Its surface area is approximately 212 acres and the volume of water at the summer operation level is up to approximately 1,300 acre-feet.[24] The main channel ranges in width from approximately 200 feet along most of its length to over 1,000 feet at the lake near East Hillsdale Boulevard.[24] After dredging in 2004, the average depth is six feet at summer water level (Foster City 2022).[24]

The lagoon is a central component of Foster City's stormwater infrastructure, acting as a detention basin that captures runoff from an approximately 2,300-acre watershed. Stormwater is temporarily stored in the lagoon and later pumped out to San Francisco Bay when tides subside, preventing flooding during periods of heavy rainfall or high tides.[24] This approach helps regulate floodwater volume, thus protecting adjacent neighborhoods and infrastructure.

The City operates and maintains the lagoon system. Components of the system include an intake structure at the south end (Belmont Slough) and a drainage pumping station at the north end (San Francisco Bay along East Third Avenue).[24] The primary function of the lagoon is to be a storm drainage detention basin for the city.[24] The water in the lagoon is derived from the San Francisco Bay through the Belmont Slough watershed via Belmont Slough intake structure, and storm water runoff from the City's watershed. The lagoon receives runoff from a watershed of approximately 2,313 acres.[24] Natural open spaces, particularly the tidal wetlands in Belmont Slough and shoreline parks, provide additional flood mitigation benefits by absorbing and dissipating wave energy and reducing storm surge impacts. These wetlands function as natural barriers, decreasing the velocity and volume of floodwaters before they reach inland areas.

The secondary function of the lagoon is recreational use. The lagoon has about 16.5 miles of shoreline, much of which is made up of residences and developments.[24] Interspersed among the developments are several small parks, many of which have a community beach, picnic areas, lawn, and other amenities. These parks and their amenities make the lagoon the aesthetic and recreational centerpiece of the City. The lagoon also has two public boat launch ramps, as well as hundreds of private boat docks and launching ramps.

Climate Considerations

Foster City's lagoon plays a crucial role in stormwater management and recreation, but climate change presents challenges to its long-term stability. Rising sea levels and increased storm intensity could impact the lagoon's drainage capacity, especially during high tides when outflow to the Bay is restricted. Additionally, higher temperatures may lead to increased water

[24] Foster City, City of. 2022. Foster City Lagoon Management Plan. 2022_foster_city_lagoon_management_revised_2-23-23.pdf (accessed March 2025).

evaporation, potentially altering salinity levels and promoting harmful algal blooms, which could degrade water quality and aquatic habitats. Changes in precipitation patterns may also affect the balance of freshwater inputs, influencing the lagoon's ability to function as a stormwater detention basin. Given these risks, adaptive management strategies such as enhancing water circulation, monitoring salinity and temperature fluctuations, and integrating climate-responsive infrastructure, will be essential to maintaining the lagoon's role in flood control, water quality protection, and recreation in the face of climate change.

6.2 Water Quality

6.2.1 Water Quality Standards

Potable Water Quality

The Estero Municipal Improvement District purchases treated water from the San Francisco Water Department and distributes it to Foster City and parts of City of San Mateo. The Estero Municipal Improvement District monitors water quality to ensure that it meets state and federal drinking water quality standards. According to the most recent water quality report, Estero Municipal Improvement District met or exceeded all primary drinking water standards set by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the State Water Resources Control Board's Division of Drinking Water.[25]

All drinking water standards are set by the USEPA under the authorization of the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act of 1974. In California, the State Water Resources Control Board, Division of Drinking Water can either adopt the USEPA standards or set more stringent standards, which are then codified in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations. There are two general types of drinking water standards:[25]

- **Primary Maximum Contaminant Levels** are health protective standards and are established using a very conservative risk-based approach for each constituent that takes into potential health effects, detectability and treatability, and costs of treatment. Public water systems may not serve water that exceeds primary maximum contaminant levels for any constituent.
- **Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels** are based on the aesthetic qualities of the water such as taste, odor, color, and certain mineral content, and are considered limits for constituents that may affect consumer acceptance of the water.

As previously discussed, all of Estero Municipal Improvement District's potable water is supplied by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission regional water system from the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is considered a very high-quality water source due to low total dissolved solid concentrations and other factors. Additional water supplies from the Alameda and Peninsula sources come from areas with restricted access to protect the source water quality.

To meet drinking water standards for consumption, all surface water supplies including the upcountry non-Hetch Hetchy sources undergo treatment by the regional water system before it is delivered.[25] Water from Hetch Hetchy Reservoir is exempt from federal and State filtration requirements but receives the following treatment: disinfection using ultraviolet light and chlorine, pH adjustment for optimum corrosion control, fluoridation for dental health protection,

[25] Foster City, City of. 2023. City of Foster City Estero Municipal Improvement District 2023 Water Quality Report. https://www.fostercity.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/public_works/page/3941/ccr2023_final_report.pdf (accessed March 2025).

and chloramination for maintaining disinfectant residual and minimizing the formation of regulated disinfection byproducts.[25] Water from local Bay Area reservoirs in Alameda County and upcountry non-Hetch Hetchy sources is delivered to Sunol Valley Water Treatment Plant; whereas water from local reservoirs in San Mateo County is delivered to Harry Tracy Water Treatment Plant.[25] Water treatment at these plants consists of filtration, disinfection, fluoridation, optimum corrosion control, and taste and odor removal.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Water Quality Division regularly collects and tests water samples from reservoirs and designated sampling points throughout the regional water system to ensure that the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's water meets or exceeds federal and state drinking water standards. In 2022, the Water Quality Division conducted more than 48,320 drinking water tests in the sources and transmission systems.[25] This is in addition to the extensive treatment process control monitoring performed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's certified operators and online instruments. The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission also has online instruments providing continuous water quality monitoring at numerous locations. As of 2022, potable water within Foster City and the Estero Municipal Improvement District system are within all State and federal water quality standards, and within the thresholds for all non-regulated water quality parameters.[25]

Given the Estero Municipal Improvement District's and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's proactive monitoring and management of water quality, water quality is not expected to impact the reliability of Estero Municipal Improvement District's available supplies within the planning horizon (i.e., through 2045).

Lagoon Water Quality

Lagoon water quality in Foster City has become a notable concern, particularly during summer months when elevated bacteria levels have led to occasional beach closures, affecting public health and recreational use. In 2019, the State Water Resources Control Board established water quality standards for enterococci bacteria, which indicate potential health risks for recreational water contact. Foster City's lagoon beaches – Erckenbrack Park, Gull Park, and Marlin Park – were identified among the West Coast beaches with the poorest water quality, based on monitoring of fecal indicator bacteria, including enterococci, total coliform, and E. coli. Specifically, during monitoring from March to August 2021, enterococci bacteria levels exceeded state water quality standards in approximately 25 percent of the samples taken. The primary suspected source of this bacterial contamination is animal waste, notably from waterfowl like Canada geese, exacerbated by direct runoff into the lagoon from residential landscaping and stormwater drainage.[24]

To address this issue, Foster City has implemented a comprehensive Lagoon Management Plan (July 2022), which emphasizes regular monitoring, integrated pest management, and proactive maintenance activities. Recommended practices include routine visual inspections, monthly sampling for enterococci, and public education initiatives to discourage activities that increase nutrient and bacterial loading, such as over-fertilization, improper disposal of yard debris, and the feeding of wildlife. Additionally, strategic measures such as increased water circulation, targeted public education, and improved waste management practices are being considered to mitigate bacterial levels and safeguard recreational use and public health.[24]

Coastal Water Quality

The San Francisco Bay has extensive water quality testing and standards enforced by various agencies to protect the ecosystem and public health, including monitoring for pathogens, pollutants, and contaminants, with requirements for specific cleanup levels. The organizations

responsible for maintaining and monitoring the San Francisco Bay include the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, the East Bay Regional Parks District, and the San Francisco Parks District.

The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board is the primary regulatory agency responsible for monitoring and managing water quality in San Francisco Bay. As part of the California State Water Resources Control Board system, the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board sets water quality standards and issues permits to manage pollution sources, ensuring that the Bay's water quality meets state and federal guidelines. The San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board conducts regular water quality monitoring through its own programs, such as the Bay Area Monitoring and Modeling Program, and also oversees and partners with local agencies to monitor water quality.

6.2.2 Regional Coordination

The City of Foster City collaborates with several agencies to maintain and enhance water quality. The Estero Municipal Improvement District, which serves Foster City, purchases treated water from the San Francisco Water Department and distributes it locally. Estero Municipal Improvement District monitors water quality to ensure compliance with state and federal drinking water standards.[26]

Regionally, Foster City participates in the San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program, a collaborative initiative among San Mateo County municipalities aimed at preventing water pollution and ensuring compliance with stormwater regulations.[23] The city also aligns with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, which enforces water quality regulations and issues permits for stormwater and wastewater discharges.[23]

Additionally, Foster City adheres to the guidelines set by the California State Water Resources Control Board, which oversees statewide water quality policies and enforcement. The city also collaborates with the Bay Area Municipal Stormwater Collaborative, formerly known as the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association, focusing on regional stormwater management and pollution reduction efforts.[23]

Coordination with these agencies involves compliance with regulatory permits, regular water quality monitoring and reporting, public education initiatives, infrastructure maintenance, participation in interagency meetings, and enforcement actions to address any violations. These collaborative efforts ensure that Foster City effectively manages and protects its water resources.

6.2.3 Known Concerns

Surface Water

Warmer temperatures could lead to less oxygen in streams. In lakes and reservoirs, warmer weather can make the water separate into layers for longer periods. This causes the bottom layer to lose oxygen, leading to conditions where algae can grow rapidly.[23] Less rain overall could mean pollutants become more concentrated in streams, especially during droughts or when occasional heavy rains wash contaminants into the water.[23] More wildfires and intense storms could make water cloudy with dirt and debris, which makes it harder to treat for safe drinking.

[26] Foster City, City of. 2025b. Water Quality. https://www.fostercity.org/publicworks/page/water-quality?utm_ (accessed March 2025).

Groundwater

Sea-level rise could result in increases in chlorides and bromide for some coastal groundwater basins in the Region. Water quality changes in imported water used for recharge could also impact groundwater quality.[23]

Lagoon

Aquatic Vegetation

The Foster City Lagoon experiences three primary water quality challenges: excessive aquatic vegetation growth, algal blooms, and elevated levels of fecal indicator bacteria.[24] A significant contributor to vegetation issues is widgeongrass, a native perennial submerged plant commonly found in brackish or saltwater environments. While widgeongrass provides important habitat for fish and a food source for migratory waterfowl, its overgrowth can negatively impact lagoon conditions by harboring fecal indicator bacteria, obstructing water flow, and impeding lagoon flushing and stormwater drainage. Overgrown widgeongrass also limits recreational activities and aesthetic enjoyment of the lagoon.[24]

Algae

In mid-summer filamentous algae blooms become noticeable along the shallow areas of the lagoon. These mats become dislodged, float to the surface, and begin to decay. Decaying algae mats also produce noxious odors as hydrogen sulfide.[24] Overgrowth and decay can also discourage recreational activities on the lagoon.[24]

Fecal Indicator Bacteria

Enterococci levels within the lagoon have been consistently above the water quality objectives set by the State Water Resources Control Board. There are no obvious seasonal patterns in the City and County datasets. Field observations of potential bacteria sources, such as the presence of dogs, people, wildlife and there feces were made, but there is no apparent connection between the number of wildlife and feces observed and the concentrations of enterococci.

San Francisco Bay

Throughout the San Francisco Bay, state Water Quality Standards are exceeded for pesticides, invasive species, mercury and other metals and toxic substances.[27] However, many of the beaches that border the San Francisco Bay are impaired due to unacceptable levels of bacteria caused by sewage spills and aging sewage infrastructure.[27] In addition, the San Francisco Bay has experienced multiple algal blooms in recent years which impact recreational use of the Bay.

Mercury is also one of the most significant water quality issues in San Francisco Bay. The Bay is impaired due to high mercury concentrations, primarily due to historical industrial practices, urban runoff, and atmospheric deposition. Similar to the Foster City Lagoon, the San Francisco Bay also faces issues pertaining to high levels of fecal indicator bacteria.

[27] United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2025. What Are Challenges. https://www.epa.gov/sfbay-delta/what-are-challenges (accessed March 2025).

6.2.4 Existing Plans and Programs

San Francisco Bay Basin Water Quality Control Plan

The Basin Plan, developed by the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, is a document that establishes water quality standards for surface waters within the Bay Area region. The plan provides policies, guidelines, and regulatory measures to maintain and improve water quality.

Foster City General Plan

Foster City's General Plan includes specific goals and policies related to water quality and sustainability. It outlines the city's approach to preserving water resources, preventing contamination, and managing both surface and groundwater.

OneShoreline: San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District

OneShoreline is a countywide initiative designed to address sea level rise and flooding through integrated planning and infrastructure development. It involves planning efforts to protect the region's coastlines, including water quality improvements as part of flood management and resilience projects. OneShoreline's work in improving water quality along the Bay shoreline aligns with the city's efforts to maintain the ecological health of the San Francisco Bay and surrounding marshes.

Urban Water Management Plan

Estero Municipal Improvement District's Urban Water Management Plan outlines the district's approach to maintaining or improving water quality within its distribution system. This includes monitoring water quality at various points, such as the source water, treatment facilities, and final distribution points. The Urban Water Management Plan ensures that the water provided to customers meets state and federal water quality standards.

Lagoon Management Plan

The Foster City Lagoon Management Plan focuses on improving water quality through pollution control, regular monitoring, habitat restoration, invasive species management, public access regulation, water circulation enhancements, and ongoing maintenance. These strategies collectively ensure that the lagoon remains a clean and safe environment for both wildlife and recreational users.

6.3 Water Supply

6.3.1 Water Supply Sources

The City of Foster City is within the Estero Municipal Improvement District. The Estero Municipal Improvement District's sole source of potable water is purchased water from the City and County of San Francisco's Regional Water System, operated by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.[23] Approximately 85 percent of the water supply to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission regional water system originates in the Hetch Hetchy watershed, located in Yosemite National Park, and flows down the Tuolumne River into the Hetch Hetchy Reservoir. Water from the Hetch Hetchy watershed is managed through the Hetch Hetchy Water and Power Project. The remaining 15 percent of the water supply to the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission regional water system originates locally in the Alameda and

Peninsula watersheds and is stored in six different reservoirs in Alameda and San Mateo Counties.[23] To date, Estero Municipal Improvement District has not utilized groundwater as a potable water source and does not expect to utilize groundwater as a regular potable water source in the future.[23]

6.3.2 Water Supply Projections

Foster City's dependence on imported water makes it vulnerable to supply fluctuations during drought periods. Historical droughts, such as the 2012–2016 event, resulted in mandatory water use reductions and conservation efforts. Given that climate change is expected to increase drought severity and reduce Sierra Nevada snowpack, Foster City will need to continue proactive water management strategies to maintain long-term water security.

The following tables compare Estero Municipal Improvement District's projected water demands with the Estero Municipal Improvement District's projected water supply availability during normal, single dry, and multiple dry years to assess the reliability of Estero Municipal Improvement District's water supplies.

Table 2 shows the projected supply and demand totals for a normal year. Estero Municipal Improvement District is expected to have adequate water supplies during normal years to meet its projected demands through 2045.

Table 2 Normal Year Supply and Demand Comparison

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Supply Totals	2,154	2,154	2,154	2,154	2,154
Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
Difference	539	508	473	431	349

[1]Volumes are in units of mega gallons (MG).
[2]Volumes are rounded to the nearest MG and may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Foster City 2021.

The reliability of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission regional water system supply is anticipated to vary greatly in different year types. Estero Municipal Improvement District has relied on the supply reliability estimates provided by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission for the regional water system and the drought allocation structure provided by San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency to estimate available regional water system supplies in dry year types through 2045. Table 3 shows the projected supply and demand totals for a single dry year.

Table 3 Single Dry Year Supply and Demand Comparison

	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
Supply Totals	1,033	1,049	1,067	1,093	984
Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
Difference	-582	-597	-613	-630	-821

[1]Volumes are in units of MG.
[2]Volumes are rounded to the nearest MG and may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Foster City 2021.

Based on the supply reliability estimates and allocation structure provided by San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency, Table 4 shows the projected supply and demand totals for multiple dry year periods extending five years.

Table 4 Multiple Dry Years Supply and Demand Comparison

		2025	2030	2035	2040	2045
First Year	Supply Totals	1,033	1,049	1,067	1,093	984
	Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
	Difference	-582	-597	-614	-630	-821
Second Year	Supply Totals	885	900	915	938	984
	Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
	Difference	-730	-746	-766	-785	-821
Third Year	Supply Totals	885	900	915	938	984
	Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
	Difference	-730	-746	-766	-785	-821
Fourth Year	Supply Totals	885	900	915	827	836
	Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
	Difference	-730	-746	-766	-896	-969
Fifth Year	Supply Totals	885	900	838	827	836
	Demand Totals	1,615	1,646	1,681	1,723	1,805
	Difference	-730	-746	-843	-896	-969

[1]Volumes are in units of MG.
[2]Volumes are rounded to the nearest MG and may not sum due to rounding.
Source: Foster City 2021.

As shown in the above tables, significant water supply shortfalls are currently projected in future single and multiple dry years, directly because of the Bay-Delta Plan Amendment implementation. However, numerous uncertainties remain in the implementation of the Bay-Delta Plan Amendment. The water supply projections presented above represent a worst-case scenario in which the Bay-Delta Plan Amendment is implemented without the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and the State Water Resources Control Board reaching a Voluntary Agreement and do not account for implementation of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Alternative Water Supply Program, described in more detail below. Under this supply scenario, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission appears not to be able to meet its contractual obligations (i.e., Level of Service goals) and Estero Municipal Improvement District's forecasted demands during droughts.

As such, in addition to evaluating local options to increase supply reliability, Estero Municipal Improvement District has placed high priority on working with Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency and San Francisco Public Utilities Commission in the upcoming years to better refine the estimates of regional water supply reliability and may amend the Urban Water Management Plan when new information becomes available. Although there remains significant uncertainty in future supply availability, Estero Municipal Improvement District, San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency have developed strategies and actions to address the projected dry year supply shortfalls. These efforts are discussed in the following sections.

6.3.3 Regional Coordination

The Estero Municipal Improvement District participates in regional water resources planning initiatives as a member of the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency, which represents the 26 member agencies that purchase wholesale water supplies from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency's role in the development of the 2020 Urban Water Management Plan updates is to work with its member agencies and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to seek consistency among Urban Water Management Plan documents. The City and the Estero Municipal Improvement District Board of Directors adopted a Water Neutrality Ordinance to implement water reduction regulations for applicable future and new developments to ensure that new development does not adversely affect the City's water supply.[28] The Ordinance applies to any new project in the Estero Municipal Improvement District service area that needs a new water connection or will use more water than the current allotment. Such projects must fully offset their added demand – through water-efficiency, conservation, or retrofit measures – so that overall district water use does not increase.[28]

Additionally, Foster City works with the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District (OneShoreline) to address climate change impacts such as sea-level rise and flooding, which affect water infrastructure and supply. OneShoreline partners with the County of San Mateo and the twenty cities and towns within the County, all of which are contributing start-up funding to the District.[29] OneShoreline also collaborates with Foster City and other local jurisdictions to develop and implement strategies addressing climate change impacts.

The city also coordinates with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board to ensure compliance with water quality standards and participates in regional water conservation programs.

6.3.4 Known Concerns

Surface Water

Although projections indicate relatively small changes in total annual precipitation for the region, climate models suggest a shift in precipitation timing, with decreased rainfall in the spring and more intense storms in winter months.[23] These shifts could increase flooding risks and affect stormwater management and infrastructure.

Imported Water

Imported water from the Sierra Nevada and Delta diversions provides approximately 66 percent of the region's water supply. General availability concerns are exacerbated by climate change and potentially reduce the reliability of imported water supplies.[23] Climate impacts such as reduced snowpack in the Sierra Nevada's could decrease the volume and reliability of water deliveries from the Hetch Hetchy system, increasing the importance of water conservation and alternative water source development for Foster City.

[28] Foster City, City of. 2025c. Water Neutrality Guidebook. https://www.fostercity.org/commdev/page/water-neutrality-guidebook (acessed April 2025).
[29] OneShoreline. 2025. Partners. https://oneshoreline.org/partners/ (accessed April 2025).

Groundwater

Currently, Foster City does not utilize groundwater as a potable water source and does not anticipate doing so in the foreseeable future (Estero Municipal Improvement District 2020 Urban Water Management Plan). However, changes in local hydrology and sea level rise could affect the broader groundwater basin on the Peninsula. Reduced natural recharge due to changes in precipitation patterns, increased evaporative losses, and warmer winters may alter groundwater availability regionally. Sea-level rise could also cause saltwater intrusion into coastal aquifers, complicating potential future uses or emergency backup scenarios. Additionally, if imported water availability diminishes significantly, other communities in the region might increase groundwater extraction, potentially affecting groundwater levels and quality in the broader regional groundwater basin.[23]

6.3.5 Existing Plans and Programs

Urban Water Management Plan

The Estero Municipal Improvement District, which provides water services to Foster City, develops an Urban Water Management Plan every five years as required by the California Department of Water Resources. This plan assesses long-term water supply and demand, conservation efforts, and strategies for maintaining reliability, especially during drought conditions.

Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency Long-Term Reliable Water Supply Strategy

This regional plan helps ensure a stable water supply for Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency's 26 member agencies, including Foster City, by addressing supply diversification, conservation programs, and climate adaptation.

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Water Supply Agreement

This agreement governs the purchase and delivery of water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System to Foster City via the Estero Municipal Improvement District.

San Francisco Water System Improvement Program

A long-term infrastructure investment plan designed to upgrade and modernize the Hetch Hetchy Regional Water System, providing increased seismic reliability and water security for customers, including Foster City.

6.4 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to maintain water quality and supply through updates to Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan:

1. **Water Resource Management and Quality**
    - Policies should address climate change-related water quality risks, including rising temperatures, algal blooms, and increased turbidity.

2. Lagoon and Stormwater Management

- Policies should support proactive maintenance, timed replacement of aging infrastructure, enhanced water circulation, and pollution control programs to maintain the lagoon's ecological and recreational value.
- Foster City's participation in regional water quality initiatives, such as the San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program, should be expanded to address stormwater runoff concerns.

3. Regional Coordination and Compliance

- Continue collaborating with agencies such as the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board, the State Water Resources Control Board, and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to ensure compliance with evolving water quality standards.
- Regular monitoring and reporting on water quality conditions should be incorporated into city planning to maintain regulatory compliance and public transparency.
- Continued enforcement of the San Francisco Bay Basin Water Quality Control Plan and Foster City's General Plan policies will be critical to safeguarding water resources.

4. Water Supply Reliability and Planning

- Since Foster City relies entirely on imported water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission Regional Water System, collaborate with the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission on water saving strategies to prepare for times of low water availability.
- Encourage the Estero Municipal Improvement District to explore alternative supply sources and refine reliability estimates.
- In 2023, the Estero Municipal Water District and City of Foster City adopted a Water Neutrality Ordinance that requires new developments, redevelopments, and changes within the Estero Municipal Water District service area to offset increased water demands through water efficiency, conservation, and retrofit measures.

7 Climate Resilience

7.1 Overview of Climate Resilience in Foster City

Climate resilience refers to a community's capacity to anticipate, prepare for, recover from, and adapt to climate-related impacts. While climate change considerations are integrated and discussed holistically throughout this assessment – spanning biological resources, water resources, energy conservation, and air quality – the purpose of this section is to describe climate impacts most directly correlated with the Safety Element of the General Plan, particularly hazards related to flooding, extreme weather events, sea level rise, and heat vulnerability that have not been detailed elsewhere. For Foster City, a community originally constructed on reclaimed marshland, resilience holds particular importance due to its unique geography and low elevation – approximately seven feet above sea level. Foster City's safety and daily function depend heavily on an engineered system of levees and seawalls designed to mitigate tidal flooding and protect the city from inundation.[30] This low elevation significantly increases the city's exposure to climate-related hazards, including sea level rise, coastal flooding, storm surges, and rising groundwater tables. Climate change projections indicate that the Bay Area could experience sea level rise between one and three feet by mid-century, and possibly up to six to ten feet by the end of the century under high-emission scenarios.[31] Such projections underscore the vulnerability of Foster City's critical infrastructure, residential neighborhoods, and recreational open spaces situated along its shoreline.

Foster City has already experienced direct climate impacts, such as drought conditions, increased heatwaves, and severe storm events that periodically stress the community's infrastructure and natural resources. Recent assessments underscore these vulnerabilities and reinforce that climate change is an immediate and intensifying threat to local quality of life.[32]

This section assesses how Foster City's parks, open spaces, and natural features contribute to the city's climate resilience. Open spaces, including parks, wetlands, and shoreline buffers, provide essential functions such as flood risk mitigation, heat reduction, stormwater management, and habitat protection – services critical to adapting to and mitigating climate hazards. This analysis also identifies key areas most vulnerable to climate-related hazards, providing the basis for policy considerations that Foster City will integrate into updates of the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan.

7.2 Current Role of Open Space in Resilience

7.2.1 Stormwater Management and Flood Mitigation

The Foster City Lagoon is a central component of this stormwater infrastructure, acting as a detention basin that captures runoff from an approximately 2,300-acre watershed. Stormwater is temporarily stored in the lagoon and later pumped out to San Francisco Bay when tides

[30] Foster City, City of. 2024. Climate Action Plan Update. https://sustainable.fostercity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/FosterCityCAP_2024_Update_Final_021225_small.pdf (accessed March 2025).
[31] San Francisco Bay Conservation & Development Commission. 2021. San Francisco Bay Plan Climate Change Policy Guidance. https://www.bcdc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/354/2023/09/San-Francisco-Bay-Plan-Climate-Change-Policy-Guidance.pdf (accessed April 2025).
[32] County of San Mateo. 2021. Multijurisdictional Local Hazard Mitigation Plan. Volume 2 – Planning Partner Annexes. https://coastsidewater.org/reports_and_studies/San-Mateo-County-Multijurisdictional-Local-Hazard-Mitigation-Plan-Volume-2.pdf (accessed April 2025).

subside, preventing flooding during periods of heavy rainfall or high tides.[24] This approach helps regulate floodwater volume, thus protecting adjacent neighborhoods and infrastructure.

Natural open spaces, particularly the tidal wetlands in Belmont Slough and shoreline parks along San Francisco Bay, provide additional flood mitigation benefits by absorbing and dissipating wave energy and reducing storm surge impacts. These wetlands function as natural barriers, decreasing the velocity and volume of floodwaters before they reach inland areas.

Foster City's stormwater management capacity faces challenges with projected sea level rise. Rising sea levels will elevate groundwater tables, increasing subsurface flooding risk and potentially impairing stormwater infrastructure capacity.[32] Groundwater rise may lead to increased waterlogging, reduced soil stability, and potential saltwater intrusion into soils, particularly near shoreline areas. Such groundwater rise could reduce the effectiveness of open spaces designed to absorb stormwater runoff. As sea level rise continues, the City will increasingly rely on its network of open spaces – parks, wetlands, and shoreline buffers – to mitigate flood hazards. By proactively maintaining and enhancing these natural and engineered systems, Foster City can bolster its resilience against future flood events.

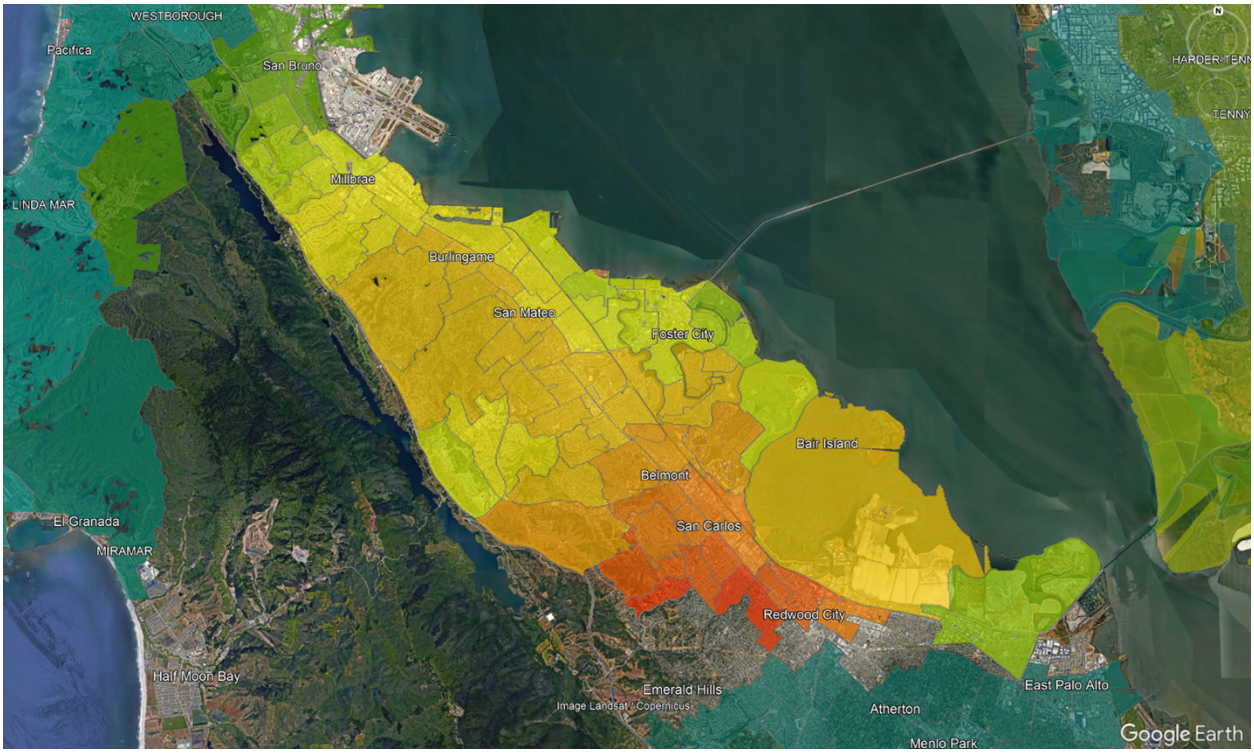
7.2.2 Urban Heat Island Reduction

Trees and green spaces are critical components in reducing urban heat islands, a phenomenon where densely developed urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures than surrounding regions due to heat retention by built surfaces. Currently, Foster City’s tree canopy covers approximately seven percent of its total land area, which is comparatively low and leaves many neighborhoods exposed to higher temperatures and associated health risks during heat events.[30]

The Urban Heat Island Index (UHII) is a metric that quantifies urban heat intensity as the accumulation of temperature differences (in degree-hours per day) between an urban area and a nearby rural reference. Foster City’s UHII values range from 46 to 85°F across the city’s census tracts, which is roughly half the intensity seen in hotter nearby cities like San Carlos and Redwood City, which have UHII’s of approximately 120°F. Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of urban heat island intensity in the region, with cooler areas shown in green and the most intense heat zones in red to white.[33] These data indicate that while Foster City does experience an urban heat island effect, its intensity is moderate relative to some neighboring communities, likely due to coastal breezes.

[33] California Environmental Protection Agency. 2025. https://calepa.ca.gov/2022/01/31/individual-maps-and-data-files/ (accessed April 2025).

Figure 6 Regional Urban Heat Island Index



Existing parks and green spaces serve as important “cool islands,” offering localized cooling through shade and evapotranspiration. These natural areas help moderate ambient air temperatures and provide relief during extreme heat days, particularly benefiting vulnerable populations such as children, seniors, and individuals with chronic health conditions. Recognizing this benefit, Foster City’s Climate Action Plan (CAP) prioritizes expanding urban forestry by increasing tree plantings in parks, along city streets, and in new developments. Many of the parks with the highest UHII values host full-size athletic fields surfaced in synthetic turf, which inherently limits on-field tree planting. As the City systematically converts these fields from rubber to natural infill, surface temperatures are expected to decline. Complementary cooling strategies should focus on perimeter and spectator areas rather than the active play zones:

Table 5 Key Mitigation Opportunities for Parks with Elevated Urban Heat Island Index

Part (elevated UHII)	Key Heat-Mitigation Opportunities
Sea Could Park	Perimeter shade trees; shade sails over bleachers; cool-roof concessions.
Boothbay Park	Add tree rows along walkways & parking; replace adjacent hardscape with permeable pavers; integrate bioswales.
Catamaran Park	Plant lagoon-edge trees for prevailing-wind shade; install picnic-area shade structures.
Ketch Park	Expand street-tree canopy on perimeter streets; pilot cool-pavement coating on surrounding paths.
Farragut Park	Increase understory planting around courts; retrofit benches with integrated shade canopies.
Port Royal Park	Focus on parking-lot trees and vegetated medians; evaluate turf-infill replacement timeline.

Enhancing shade at park edges, installing shade sails, upgrading to cool or permeable paving, and continuing synthetic-turf infill improvements will reduce ambient and surface temperatures, improve air quality, and bolster community resilience – without compromising the playability of sports fields.

7.3 Areas Vulnerable to Climate-Related Hazards

7.3.1 Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding

Sea level rise (SLR) represents one of the most significant climate-related threats to Foster City due to its low-lying elevation and location along the San Francisco Bay shoreline. Regional climate projections anticipate approximately one foot of SLR by 2050, with potential increases ranging from three to six-and-a-half feet by 2100 under mid-to-high emissions scenarios. In extreme projections, SLR could approach ten feet by the end of the century.[31,34,35] Foster City's vulnerability is heightened by its geography, as approximately 99 percent of its population resides within areas projected to be impacted by future SLR.[30]

Mapping of SLR scenarios illustrates significant vulnerability for Foster City's shoreline and inland neighborhoods. Figure 7 shows a mid-century scenario of approximately 0.8 feet of SLR (about the increase expected during typical daily high tides by 2050, absent any storms). Under this scenario, many shoreline parks, shoreline trails, and low-lying residential areas (for example, neighborhoods along Beach Park Boulevard and the fringes of the central lagoon) could face regular inundation during high tides. This highlights the city's critical long-term vulnerability even during calm conditions, without additional protective measures.

The potential flood extent expands considerably when factoring in severe coastal storms or King Tide events on top of elevated sea levels. Figure 8 illustrates Foster City's present-day 100-year storm surge scenario, depicting extensive flooding that surpasses existing levee protections and penetrates deeply into the city's interior. Such flooding could affect significant residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, critical infrastructure, and transportation routes, including portions of Highway 101. Coupled SLR scenarios with 100-year storm impacts were not evaluated for this assessment, but Foster City should anticipate future extreme events could have devastating consequences when storm surge and SLR join forces mid to late century.

[34] United States Geological Survey (USGS). 2025. Coastal Storm Modeling System (CoSMoS v2). https://ourcoastourfuture.org/hazard-map/ (accessed March 2025).
[35] Barnard, P.L., Erikson, L.H., Foxgrover, A.C., Finzi Hart, J.A., Limber, P., O'Neill, A.C., van Ormondt, M., Vitousek, S., Wood, N., Hayden, M.K., and Jones, J.M., 2019. Dynamic flood modeling essential to assess the coastal impacts of climate change. http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41598-019-40742-z (accessed February 2025).

Figure 7 Sea Level Rise Inundation (0.8 feet)

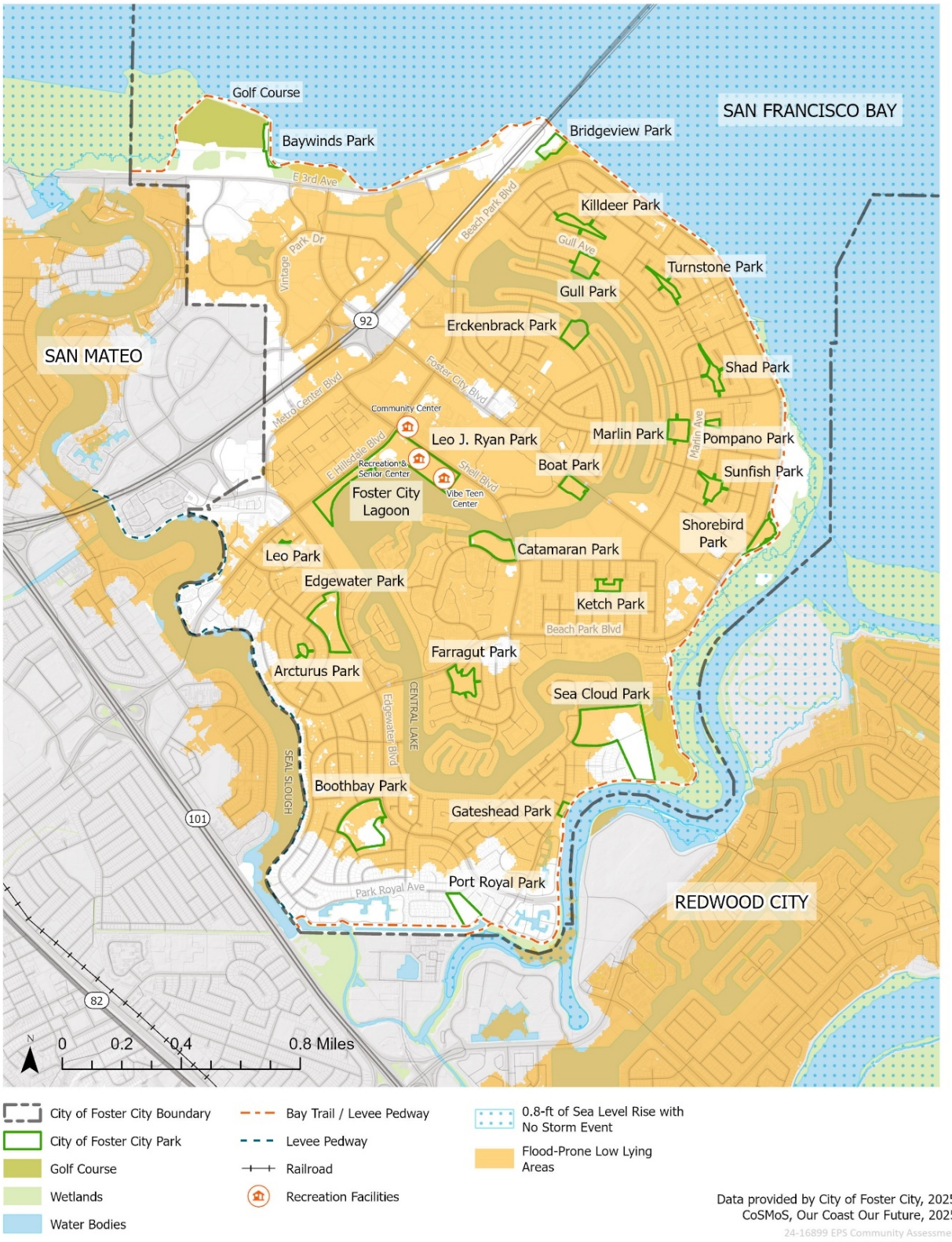


Figure 8 Present-Day (No SLR) 100-Year Storm Inundation Risk

Foster City's recent Levee Improvements Project has substantially mitigated near-term coastal flood risks by upgrading the city's levees to withstand projected Bay water levels through at least 2050, significantly reducing current vulnerability.[32] However, under longer-term scenarios beyond mid-century, additional levee enhancements, seawalls, or nature-based solutions (such as horizontal levees, marsh restoration, or expanded shoreline buffers) will likely become essential to maintaining resilience. Such strategies could provide ecological benefits while helping protect against higher tides and stronger storms.

In summary, Foster City's shoreline – encompassing critical open spaces such as tidal wetlands, the Levee Pedway, and numerous parks – is highly vulnerable to coastal flooding driven by SLR and storm surges. Continued investment in shoreline adaptation and infrastructure improvements, alongside proactive land-use planning, will be crucial in safeguarding the community against these evolving risks.

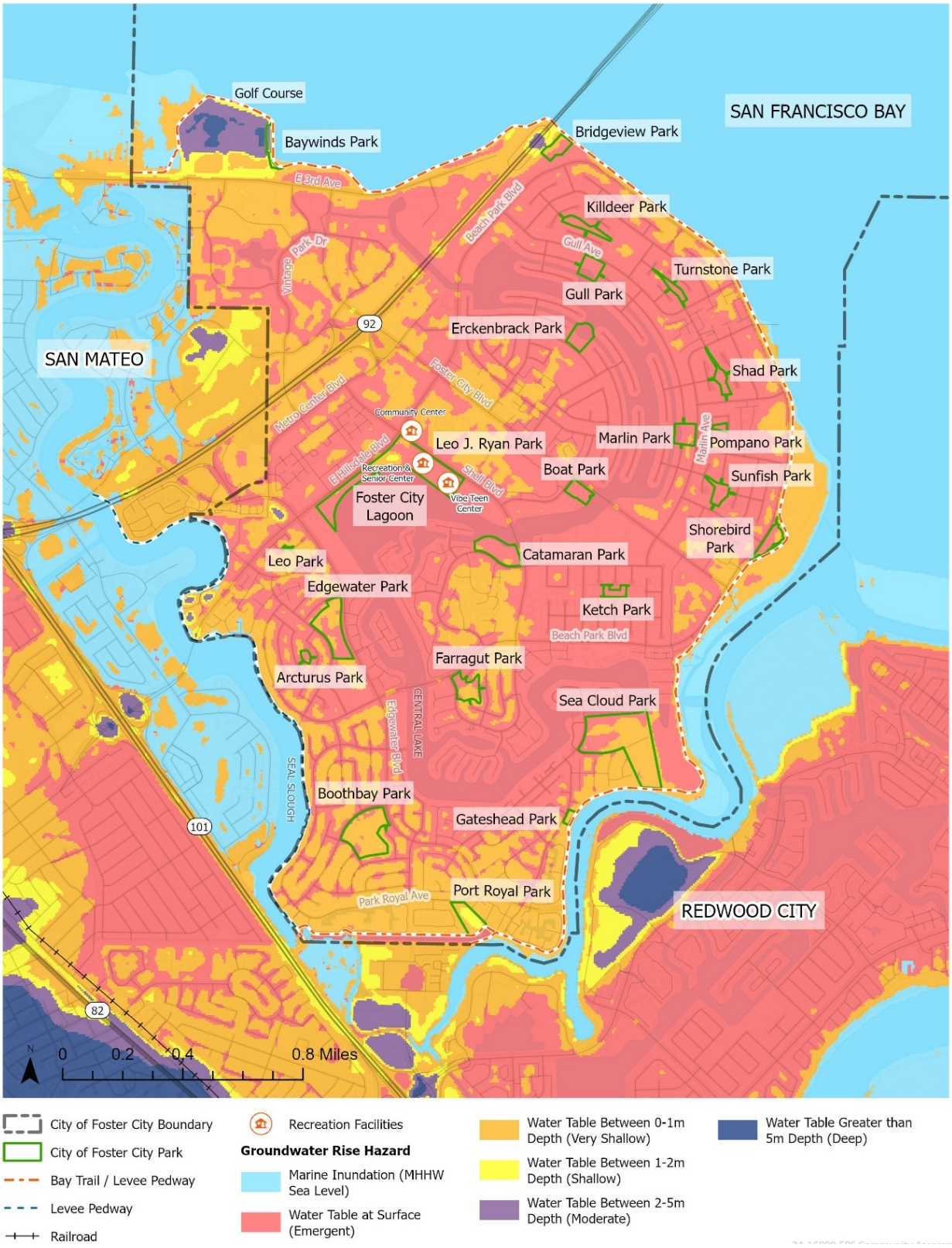
7.3.2 Inland Flooding and Groundwater Rise

Inland flooding in Foster City can result from heavy rainfall, high tides, or a combination of both. Given the city's flat topography and low elevation, intense rain events that coincide with high Bay water levels can severely strain stormwater drainage systems. Foster City relies on an interconnected network of storm drains, pumps, tide gates, and the central lagoon to manage stormwater runoff. However, these facilities can become overwhelmed during severe storms, causing localized flooding, especially around lagoon-adjacent neighborhoods and lower-lying roadway underpasses.

Another emerging concern is groundwater rise. As sea level rises, the water table in Foster City will rise as well, since the city is built on permeable fill and former marsh and the water table will rise as sea level rises. Rising groundwater can lead to flooding from below, even if surface levees hold back the Bay from direct coastal inundation. Essentially, the battle against coastal flooding isn't only above ground at the levee – it's also below ground, where rising groundwater could emerge at or inundate the surface and cause flooding. Sea level rise-induced groundwater rise could affect open spaces by waterlogging soils and damaging root systems, so the City is studying how to improve park drainage and use salt-tolerant plant species in vulnerable areas (as noted in the Foster City Parks and Recreation maintenance plans). Figure 9 displays a groundwater rise hazard map for Foster City, highlighting areas particularly susceptible to groundwater rise, particularly the shoreline zones and lands around the lagoon. In these areas, the water table will likely eventually breach the surface or infiltrate underground infrastructure, causing flooding of housing foundations, road base materials, or within storm sewers. Groundwater rise could also induce soil instability or mobilize pollutants in soils. San Mateo County's Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan recognizes rising groundwater and saltwater intrusion as linked hazards accompanying sea level rise.

To address inland flooding, Foster City continues to invest in its stormwater system (pump upgrades, tide gates, and green infrastructure). The combination of heavier downpours projected with climate change and higher baseline Bay levels means interior drainage will need to be more effective and consistently maintained to prevent floods. By preserving and expanding open spaces that can hold or absorb runoff (parks, swales, retention basins) and by planning for rising groundwater impacts, the city can reduce the risk of disruptive inland flooding. Continuous monitoring and adaptive management of both the levee and the internal drainage network will be vital as climate conditions evolve.

Figure 9 Present-Day (No SLR) Groundwater Hazard



7.3.3 Extreme Heat Events

Although Foster City benefits from moderating coastal breezes, it is increasingly susceptible to extreme heat events due to climate change. Historically, the city has experienced an average of four extreme heat days per year (temperatures exceeding 93°F), but projections suggest this could increase to 11-19 days annually by 2100.[30] These hotter temperatures pose health risks, increase energy demands, and can stress infrastructure.

The urban heat island effect intensifies heat impacts, especially in areas dominated by pavement, buildings, and sparse vegetation, such as commercial zones and large parking lots. Foster City currently has limited tree canopy coverage (about seven percent), exacerbating heat exposure in neighborhoods lacking shade. Conversely, areas with greater tree coverage, such as parks or landscaped residential zones, provide critical cooling through shade and evapotranspiration.

Populations most vulnerable to extreme heat include seniors, young children, and individuals with chronic health conditions, particularly those residing in buildings without adequate cooling systems. The City's forthcoming Parks Master Plan will guide targeted urban-greening actions such as expanded tree planting in parks, streetscapes, and heat-burdened neighborhoods to mitigate these heat impacts and boost community resilience.

7.3.4 Water Supply Stress

Foster City relies entirely on imported water from the Estero Municipal Improvement District, which sources its potable water from the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission's Hetch Hetchy system (Sierra Nevada snowmelt). This dependence on external water supplies makes the city vulnerable to regional drought conditions and water supply reductions. During past droughts, including the 2012-2016 event, Foster City implemented water use restrictions and conservation programs to manage shortages.

As climate change continues to intensify drought frequency and severity, Foster City will need to strengthen its water conservation efforts, increase efficiency measures, and enhance long-term planning to ensure a stable water supply. The City's CAP outlines strategies to reduce reliance on potable water for irrigation through drought-tolerant landscaping and smart irrigation systems. Additional details on Foster City's water supply reliability and drought resilience planning can be found in Section 7.3: Water Supply.

7.4 Existing City Programs and Initiatives

Foster City has proactively implemented several resilience-focused initiatives that leverage open spaces and natural resources to mitigate climate-related risks:

- **Levee Improvements Project:** This major infrastructure project, funded by a voter-approved $90 million bond (Measure P, 2018), strengthened Foster City's approximately 8-mile perimeter levee system.[36] Completed upgrades provide robust protection against projected sea level rise and coastal flooding through at least 2050. The project also incorporated enhancements such as rebuilding sections of the San Francisco Bay Trail and introducing nature-based elements – such as improved vegetative buffers and landscaping – to increase shoreline resilience and ecological function.[32]

[36] City of Foster City. 2018. Measure P. https://www.fostercity.org/cityclerk/page/measure-p (accessed April 2025).

- **Green Infrastructure Initiatives:** Guided by regulatory frameworks established by municipal codes and state ordinances and in alignment with its Climate Action Plan, Foster City has been actively converting park and public landscaping to drought-tolerant, low-water-use designs.[30] Additional measures include installing bioswales and permeable paving in parks and open spaces, which enhance stormwater infiltration, improve water quality, and reduce irrigation demands. The updated CAP specifically emphasizes climate adaptation strategies, including expanding the city's urban tree canopy to mitigate heat islands, promoting cool roofs and shading structures, and protecting critical community infrastructure.
- **Regional Collaboration:** Foster City engages extensively with regional agencies and partnerships to bolster climate resilience. Notably, the city collaborates with the San Mateo County Flood and Sea Level Rise Resiliency District (OneShoreline) on multi-jurisdictional flood protection and sea level rise adaptation planning. Furthermore, Foster City actively aligns local efforts with the regional BayAdapt/BCDC "One Bay" vision, which encourages collaborative, nature-based shoreline adaptation measures across the Bay Area.[31]
- **New Foster City Community Center** (approved & under construction) – This two-story, ~40,000 square foot build will replace the 1974 Recreation Center. The building will be all-electric, solar-ready, and targeting at least LEED-Silver (option for Gold/net-zero), incorporate Bay-Friendly landscaping, permeable plaza paving, and additional shade trees, and create new outdoor gathering spaces in Leo J. Ryan Park – expanding tree-canopy coverage while showcasing low-carbon civic design.[37]

Through these proactive measures – strengthening levees, adopting green infrastructure, safeguarding wetlands, and expanding urban forestry – Foster City integrates ecosystem-based approaches into its resilience strategies. Continuing these programs and embedding them into updated Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element policies will further enhance the city's long-term resilience to climate-related impacts.

7.5 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to enhance climate resilience through updates to Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan:

1. **Informing the General Plan Updates**
    - Integrate climate vulnerability findings into General Plan policies, explicitly prioritizing levee improvements, flood control infrastructure, wetland conservation, and open space buffers.
    - Align with the Safety Element policies in accordance with SB 1425 and the San Mateo County Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
2. **Enhancing Open Space for Climate Resilience**
    - Adopt policies promoting the expansion and restoration of wetlands, creation of living shorelines, and conversion of underutilized parcels into green infrastructure for natural flood mitigation.

[37] Foster City, City of. 2024. Foster City Moves Ahead with Plan to Rebuild Recreation Center. https://www.fostercity.org/community/page/foster-city-moves-ahead-plan-rebuild-recreation-center (accessed April 2025).

- Support habitat conservation and restoration initiatives that enhance biodiversity and provide co-benefits for climate adaptation.

3. Flood Protection and Shoreline Adaptation

- Continue investing in levee improvements and pursue nature-based solutions, such as horizontal levees and marsh restoration, leveraging state and federal funding opportunities.
- Strengthen regional collaboration with entities like OneShoreline and BayAdapt for coordinated, multi-jurisdictional shoreline adaptation.

4. Improving Water Supply Reliability

- Promote water conservation measures, recycled water usage, and stormwater capture systems within city parks and landscaped open spaces.
- Ensure consistency between the General Plan and Urban Water Management Plan (UWMP), emphasizing drought preparedness and long-term water resource management.

5. Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

- Encourage the integration of renewable energy systems, such as solar installations on park facilities, and implement energy-efficient lighting and infrastructure within parks and open spaces.
- Reinforce alignment with CAP objectives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and enhance community resilience.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Adaptive Management

- Develop policies establishing ongoing monitoring, data collection, and evaluation frameworks to track climate impacts and the performance of open spaces in mitigating climate hazards.
- Create decision-making mechanisms within the General Plan to periodically incorporate new climate data and regulatory changes, ensuring policies remain adaptive and responsive.

7. Carbon Sequestration Opportunities

- Identify opportunities for tree planting, wetland restoration, and marsh expansion projects within open spaces, capturing carbon while simultaneously providing flood protection, habitat enhancement, and recreational benefits.
- Promote community-based urban forestry and greenbelt programs as a key climate mitigation strategy integrated into local resilience efforts.

8 Air Quality

8.1 Air Quality

Foster City generally experiences good air quality throughout the year; however, local conditions are periodically influenced by regional pollution sources and episodic events such as wildfire smoke and traffic emissions. This section examines existing air quality conditions, outlines Foster City's compliance with state and federal air quality standards, and identifies key pollution sources affecting the community. Additionally, it highlights how parks, open spaces, and strategic urban forestry planning can play essential roles in reducing air pollution, mitigating health risks, and enhancing ecological resilience. The assessment also reviews existing city programs designed to maintain and improve air quality, providing a foundation for integrating air quality improvements into upcoming updates to the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan.

8.2 Regional Air Quality

Foster City is located within the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin, regulated by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) for adherence to state and federal air quality standards. At the state level, the California Air Resources Board (CARB) designates attainment or nonattainment for criteria pollutants, including ozone (O_3), particulate matter (PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$), and nitrogen dioxide (NO_2). Meanwhile, at the federal level, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) sets the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for these pollutants, evaluating whether air basins meet or exceed threshold levels.

While the Bay Area generally meets most air quality standards, it currently holds non-attainment status for ground-level O_3 and $PM_{2.5}$ – pollutants contributing to smog and harmful smoke – due to periodic exceedances of established health thresholds.[38] These regional non-attainment designations apply to Foster City and surrounding mid-Peninsula communities. However, local air monitoring stations in nearby San Mateo and Redwood City report relatively fewer exceedance days compared to more inland regions, indicating comparatively better local air quality conditions influenced by coastal breezes. [31,32]

Despite these favorable conditions, episodic air quality degradation occurs due to major emission sources such as Highways 101 and 92, aircraft activity from San Francisco International Airport, and seasonal wildfire smoke. The latter is of particular concern, as wildfire-driven $PM_{2.5}$ pollution has led to temporary hazardous air quality conditions in recent years. In response, BAAQMD issues "Spare the Air" alerts to encourage residents to limit outdoor exposure and reduce emissions from vehicles, fireplaces, and other sources.[30]

8.3 Known Concerns

Traffic Emissions

Vehicle traffic on Highways 101 and 92 significantly contributes to local air pollutants, particularly nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$). Transportation accounts for 57 percent of Foster City’s greenhouse gas emissions, directly correlating to elevated

[38] Foster City, City of. 2024. Climate Action Plan Update Initial Study – Negative Declaration. https://sustainable.fostercity.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/24_11_01_CAP_InitialStudyChecklist-1.pdf (accessed March 2025).

concentrations of local air pollutants.[30] Open spaces and vegetative buffers along roadways help mitigate exposure by capturing airborne particulates and filtering pollutants, thus reducing potential health impacts in nearby neighborhoods.

Wildfire Smoke

Although Foster City itself has minimal wildfire risk, transported smoke from wildfires elsewhere in California frequently degrades local air quality. Elevated $PM_{2.5}$ levels pose particular health risks to vulnerable populations, including children, seniors, and individuals with respiratory conditions. Recent wildfire events, such as the widespread smoke in 2020, caused sustained "unhealthy" air quality conditions in San Mateo County.[31] Providing community clean-air refuges, such as indoor facilities near parks, can mitigate impacts during wildfire smoke episodes.

Commercial and Institutional Emissions

Foster City hosts primarily commercial, institutional, and office land uses, which, while not heavy industrial sources, include localized emissions such as those from emergency backup generators and heating systems.[32] Integrating urban greenways and landscaping around these commercial areas can further absorb pollutants and support air quality improvements.

Airport Proximity

Foster City's proximity to San Francisco International Airport introduces occasional localized air quality impacts from aircraft operations. While emissions are dispersed by prevailing winds, occasional impacts from aircraft pollutants occur, particularly in northern neighborhoods nearest the airport approach corridors.

Cumulative Effects on Public Health

Individuals with asthma, cardiovascular conditions, or other underlying health vulnerabilities can be disproportionately affected by ozone and $PM_{2.5}$ exceedances. Periodic poor air quality episodes underscore the need for consistent public health measures, such as indoor air filtration and timely public alerts.[30] Accessible open spaces with thoughtful design (e.g., trees for shade, lower-exposure areas away from roadways) can support public health and offer safe outdoor activities even on moderate air-quality days.

In summary, the existing air quality conditions in Foster City are relatively clean on typical days (with pollution levels usually in the "Good" AQI category), but the city is periodically affected by smog and soot from heavy traffic and regional wildfires.

8.4 Existing Plans and Programs

Foster City actively participates in local and regional initiatives to improve air quality, reduce pollution, and protect public health. Existing programs and collaborative efforts include:

Regional Collaboration with BAAQMD

- Foster City actively works with BAAQMD to implement regional air quality programs, including permitting and enforcement of stationary emission sources, and the regional "Spare the Air" alert system.[30]
- BAAQMD provides grant opportunities for municipalities to invest in clean vehicle fleets and infrastructure.[31]

Climate Action Plan (CAP) Initiatives

- The Foster City CAP prioritizes transportation emissions reductions, addressing the largest regional source of ozone precursors and particulate matter. Key actions include expanding electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, incentivizing transit use and ridesharing, and promoting active transportation to lower vehicle miles traveled.[30]
- Greenway expansions, bicycle-pedestrian paths through parks, and improved trail linkages support both GHG reduction and better air quality.

Wildfire Smoke Response

- Foster City coordinates with San Mateo County to develop and update emergency response protocols for wildfire smoke. These efforts include timely dissemination of air quality alerts, establishing clean-air refuges in community centers or other public buildings near parks, and public education on protective measures like the use of N95 masks during wildfire smoke events.[32]
- Incorporating “clean-air zones” in or adjacent to large parks or community centers, where outdoor canopies or semi-enclosed spaces can help protect against smoke.

Land Use and Zoning

- Through the ongoing updates to its General Plan, Foster City incorporates zoning and land-use strategies designed to mitigate air quality impacts, such as thoughtful land use planning to avoid conflicts of incompatible uses, and environmental review and mitigation of significant impacts. The City also guides the establishment of vegetated buffers along high-traffic corridors and creating landscaped green spaces near sensitive receptors (schools, senior facilities, residential developments). These open spaces and green infrastructure elements capture pollutants, reduce local exposure, and simultaneously offer aesthetic and ecological benefits.
- Encouraging new or enhanced open spaces near high-volume roads to serve as vegetated buffers would offer both aesthetic and air quality benefits.

8.5 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight opportunities to improve air quality and public health through updates to Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element of the General Plan:

1. **Regional Air Quality Alignment**
    - Foster City is located within the San Francisco Bay Area Air Basin and must comply with air quality standards set by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and California Air Resources Board (CARB).
    - Policies should integrate regional air quality goals and aligning land use and development decisions with BAAQMD's thresholds for construction and operational emissions.

2. **Air Quality and Land Use Planning**
    - Consider establishing buffer zones or vegetative screening requirements for sensitive receptors, such as schools, childcare centers, and senior living facilities, situated near highways or major traffic routes.

- Major roadways and transportation corridors generate pollution that can affect nearby residents and park users.
- Policies should explore strategies to mitigate exposure to transportation-related air pollutants, including requirements for high-efficiency filtration in buildings near high-traffic areas and the strategic placement of vegetation buffers where appropriate.
- Policies should balance air quality mitigation measures with smart growth planning principles, ensuring that streetscapes remain walkable and economically vibrant while incorporating targeted urban greening strategies, such as shade trees, vegetated setbacks, and green roofs.

3. **Green Infrastructure and Urban Greening**
   - Urban greening, including tree planting and vegetated buffers, can help reduce air pollutants and mitigate urban heat, though its effectiveness depends on location, species selection, and overall design.
   - Pursue a Tree City USA designation and adopt a City tree-ordinance/permit process that governs planting, maintenance, and removal; pair this program with targeted canopy expansion (street trees, park edges, bioswales) near major roadways and sensitive receptors to improve air quality and public health.
   - Parks and open spaces should be designed to maximize co-benefits, integrating air quality improvements with climate adaptation strategies.
4. **Transportation and Mobility Improvements**
   - Transportation-related emissions are the largest source of air pollution in Foster City.
   - Policies should prioritize expansion of Electric Vehicle (EV) infrastructure at public facilities and parks, as well as enhancing regional connectivity for pedestrians and cyclists to reduce reliance on personal vehicles.
5. **Wildfire Smoke Preparedness and Adaptation**
   - Climate change is increasing the frequency of severe wildfire smoke events, temporarily degrading air quality in Foster City.
   - Policies should consider designating park facilities and community centers as "clean-air refuges" during wildfire smoke events, and equipping them with adequate air filtration and ventilation systems.
6. **Community Engagement and Education**
   - Public awareness plays a critical role in air quality improvements.
   - Policies should integrate air quality education into park programming, interpretive signage, and public outreach campaigns.
   - Foster City should continue collaborating with BAAQMD on public education efforts, including promoting the "Spare the Air" program and encouraging pollution-reducing behaviors.

9 Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

9.1 Existing Energy Usage Data

Energy use in Foster City consists primarily of electricity and natural gas consumption across residential, commercial, and municipal sectors. According to the latest Foster City GHG Emissions Inventory (2019):

- Nonresidential (commercial and institutional) energy use accounts for approximately 28 percent of the city's total GHG emissions.
- Residential energy use contributes roughly 14 percent of the city's total GHG emissions.[30]

Overall, energy consumption from buildings comprises approximately 42 percent of the city's total GHG emissions, with electricity use accounting for seven percent and natural gas and multiple fuels contributing 35 percent. Transportation is the largest emissions source, responsible for 57 percent of total emissions, primarily from local roads and state highways (49 percent) and off-road equipment (8 percent). Other sectors contribute smaller shares, including solid waste disposal (1 percent), wastewater treatment (<1 percent), and water use (<1 percent). This emissions breakdown by sector highlights the need for decarbonization in both the built environment and transportation sector as key strategies in Foster City's climate efforts.[30]

Foster City has made significant progress toward decarbonization by sourcing 100 percent carbon-free electricity for municipal operations through Peninsula Clean Energy's (PCE's) ECO100 program. ECO100 provides electricity from 100 percent renewable sources and is Green-e® Energy certified.[39] Although the electricity grid blends energy from various sources, customers influence the overall mix by opting into programs like ECO100, which increases demand for renewables and prompts PCE to procure more clean energy on their behalf, supporting a cleaner grid.

PCE's default offering, ECOplus, currently supplies electricity that is 50 percent renewable and 100 percent carbon-free. PCE plans to transition ECOplus to 100 percent renewable electricity by 2025, effectively aligning it with ECO100. Automatic enrollment in ECOplus is enabled under California's AB 117, which authorizes Community Choice Aggregation (CCA) programs and requires that customers be automatically enrolled unless they choose to opt out.

Despite these advancements in electricity sourcing, natural gas consumption remains a significant contributor to Foster City's greenhouse gas emissions, particularly from space heating, water heating, and cooking in homes and businesses. The City's CAP emphasizes building electrification as a key strategy to further reduce emissions and support long-term sustainability goals.

Municipal energy usage predominantly occurs in buildings, parks, community facilities, and outdoor lighting. Continuing the shift toward renewable electricity, improving energy efficiency, and reducing natural gas usage across sectors remain critical focus areas for Foster City's sustainability and energy conservation goals.

[39] Peninsula Clean Energy. 2025. ECO100 is Green-e Energy certified. https://www.peninsulacleanenergy.com/residential/rates-billing/upgrade-renewable/ (accessed April 2025).

9.2 Energy Conservation/Renewable Energy Goals

Foster City's Climate Action Plan identifies specific targets and strategies to reduce energy-related greenhouse gas emissions and increase reliance on renewable energy sources.[30] Key goals include:

1. **Reduce Energy Consumption**
   - Decrease residential and commercial energy usage by 10 to 15 percent through efficiency measures, building retrofits (LED lighting, HVAC improvements), and increased adoption of energy-efficient appliances.
   - Transition buildings from natural gas to all-electric systems for space heating, water heating, and cooking.
2. **Increase Renewable Energy Use:**
   - Maintain 100 percent renewable electricity for all municipal accounts through PCE's ECO100 program and use that leadership to promote broader community enrollment.
   - Encourage residents and businesses to opt into ECO100 or install onsite solar photovoltaic (PV) systems.
3. **Support Decentralized Renewable Energy Systems**
   - Implement PV and battery projects at cost-effective municipal sites – currently the Library/Community Center and the new Recreation/Community Center – while encouraging private solar (rooftop and parking-canopy) installations city-wide.
   - Integrate battery storage solutions to enhance community resilience during energy disruptions and peak demand periods.
4. **Manage Peak Demand and Grid Resilience**
   - Increase community engagement in demand-response programs, incentivizing reduced energy consumption during peak usage periods.
   - Advocate for smart-grid technologies and real-time energy management systems to stabilize the grid and improve reliability.

These goals align closely with Foster City's overarching GHG reduction targets, specifically addressing the community's objective to reduce energy-related emissions by 42 percent below 2005 levels by 2030.[30] By incorporating these strategies into the Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element updates, Foster City will reinforce its commitment to sustainable growth, climate resilience, and long-term environmental stewardship.

9.3 Existing Plans and Programs

1. **Peninsula Clean Energy (PCE)**
   - Foster City participates in Peninsula Clean Energy, a Community Choice Aggregation program providing clean electricity at competitive rates. Municipal operations currently utilize the ECO100 option (100 percent renewable), while residents and businesses can voluntarily opt into ECO100 for carbon-free electricity.

2. **Climate Action Plan (CAP) Implementation**
    - The City's CAP outlines a variety of incentives and programs aimed at reducing energy use. These include rebates for energy efficiency retrofits, incentives supporting electrification of existing buildings, free or subsidized home energy assessments, and educational initiatives promoting sustainable energy behaviors.
3. **Green Building Reach Codes**
    - Draft reach-code concepts now under City review would mandate all-electric construction and EV-ready infrastructure for most new buildings, while encouraging rooftop PV, LEED / CalGreen-Tier 1 performance, and other low-carbon features. Until the ordinance is adopted, these measures remain voluntary but are promoted through design guidance and permit incentives.
4. **Municipal Energy Efficiency Upgrades**
    - The City actively implements energy efficiency improvements, such as transitioning public facilities, parks, and streetlights to LED lighting, upgrading HVAC systems, and expanding on-site solar energy generation. Notable recent projects include installation of solar canopies at the Library/Community Center parking area and comprehensive LED retrofits throughout parks and streetlights.
5. **Public-Private Partnerships**
    - Foster City collaborates with local businesses and private developers to integrate clean energy technologies and sustainable design principles into new developments. These partnerships support the City's energy conservation goals by encouraging decentralized renewable energy systems and energy-efficient building designs in commercial and mixed-use projects.

Collectively, these existing plans and programs demonstrate Foster City's ongoing commitment to energy conservation, renewable energy integration, and GHG reduction, providing a foundation for future policies within the General Plan updates.

9.4 Policy Considerations

The following considerations highlight strategic opportunities to integrate energy conservation and renewable energy into Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element, supporting the City's broader climate resilience and emissions-reduction objectives:

1. **Energy Efficiency in Park Facilities**
    - Parks, ECO100-powered community centers, and other public spaces can further cut energy use through efficiency upgrades (e.g., LED fixtures, motion sensors, timers) while also reducing light pollution.
    - Policies should support the installation of energy-efficient fixtures (such as LED lighting with motion sensors or timers) in park buildings, pathways, restrooms, and sports facilities to minimize electricity use and reduce light pollution.
    - Solar-powered lighting systems should be encouraged in locations where traditional electrical grid connections are limited or costly.

2. **On-Site Renewable Energy**
   - Prioritize PV installations at municipal sites confirmed cost-effective by the feasibility study (Library/Community Center and the forthcoming Recreation/Community Center) and encourage rooftop or parking-canopy solar on private and institutional properties city-wide.
   - Policies should explore opportunities for installing PV systems on city-owned structures, maintenance buildings, and parking lots, including solar canopy installations.
   - Battery storage systems could be piloted to support emergency preparedness and grid resilience.
3. **EV Charging Infrastructure in Public Spaces**
   - Public spaces play a critical role in supporting EV adoption. Policies should encourage the integration of EV charging stations in municipal and park facility upgrades, community centers, and public parking areas.
   - Partnerships with private entities could help fund and maintain EV infrastructure, ensuring accessibility for both residents and park users.
4. **Sustainable Construction and Electrification**
   - Future municipal facility construction and renovations provide an opportunity to implement sustainable building practices.
   - Policies should promote all-electric systems in new and renovated park facilities, aligning with Foster City's Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals.
   - The use of sustainable, low-carbon building materials should be prioritized to reduce lifecycle emissions.
5. **Community Engagement and Education**
   - Public awareness and education are essential for fostering a culture of energy conservation.
   - Policies could utilize parks, open spaces, community centers, libraries, city halls, and schools for public demonstrations, workshops, and educational events focused on energy efficiency, renewable energy benefits, and sustainable living practices (e.g., solar installation demonstrations, "talks under solar canopies").
   - Policies should support workshops, demonstrations, and interpretive signage in parks and public spaces to highlight renewable energy installations, energy efficiency, and sustainable living practices.
6. **Synergies with Climate Resilience Initiatives**
   - Renewable energy and energy conservation efforts can complement broader climate resilience initiatives.
   - Policies should explore opportunities to integrate renewable energy and energy conservation measures into green infrastructure projects, such as co-locating solar arrays with stormwater management features like bioswales or permeable pavements.
   - Smart irrigation and renewable-powered water management systems could be incorporated into parks and landscaped areas to reduce water and energy use while lowering maintenance costs.

10 Key Issues and Opportunities Summary

Foster City's open space and conservation challenges are shaped by urban development, climate change, and regional environmental pressures. This section identifies key issues across six thematic areas – Natural Open Space, Biological Resources, Water Resources, Climate Resilience, Air Quality, and Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy – and outlines opportunities for policy updates and strategic initiatives to enhance sustainability and resilience.

10.1 Natural Open Space

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

10.2 Biological Resources

Key Issues

- **Habitat Loss and Urbanization:** Development has significantly reduced natural habitat availability, particularly along the shoreline and green spaces along the city's bike and footpath, limiting biodiversity.

- **Wetlands Conservation and Climate Vulnerability:** Wetlands provide critical ecosystem services, including carbon storage, flood protection, and habitat for migratory birds. However, their long-term resilience is threatened by climate change and sea level rise.
- **Barriers to Wildlife Movement:** Roads, urban infrastructure, and fragmented habitats restrict wildlife movement, impacting species that rely on connected landscapes.
- **Invasive Species Encroachment:** The proliferation of non-native plant and animal species, threatens native biodiversity and reduces the ecological integrity of open spaces. Additionally, while Canada geese are not considered invasive or non-native, their rapid population expansion has caused concerns regarding water quality and co-habitation.

Opportunities

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

10.3 Water Resources

Key Issues

- **Groundwater Rise and Infrastructure Risks:** Climate change-induced rising groundwater levels could result in subsurface flooding and saltwater intrusion, affecting infrastructure and vegetation.
- **Lagoon Water Quality Degradation:** Persistent issues with algal blooms, excessive aquatic vegetation, and bacterial contamination in the lagoon compromise ecological health and recreational usability.

- **Stormwater Pollution from Urban Runoff:** Due to the built-out nature of the city, impervious surfaces contribute to runoff that carries pollutants into the lagoon and San Francisco Bay, negatively affecting water quality.
- **Reliance on Imported Water Supplies:** Foster City depends entirely on external water sources, making it vulnerable to regional droughts and water supply fluctuations.

Opportunities

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

10.4 Climate Resilience

Key Issues

- **Sea Level Rise and Flooding Threats:** Foster City is highly vulnerable to sea-level rise, storm surges, and groundwater rise. Consistent with Safety-Element policies S-3.4 b ("Maintain the City's levees and lagoon for flood protection pursuant to the Operation & Maintenance Manual and Lagoon Management Plan") and S-6.1 ("Incorporate sea-level-rise considerations into development review and infrastructure planning"), the City must continue levee/lagoon maintenance and embed sea-level-rise response strategies in all new and existing development projects.
- **Stormwater Drainage Limitations:** The city's flat topography and reliance on pumps for drainage mean heavy rainfall events, particularly those coinciding with high tides, could overwhelm stormwater systems.
- **Urban Heat Island Effect:** While Foster City benefits from a temperate coastal climate, the city's limited tree canopy (about seven percent) and large expanses of impervious surfaces can still contribute to higher localized temperatures. This can be a concern for local plant and animal life as well as outdoor workers, seniors, and other vulnerable populations who may experience greater heat exposure.
- **Shallow Groundwater Risks:** As sea levels rise, so will groundwater, threatening infrastructure and creating long-term maintenance concerns for underground utilities and green spaces.

Opportunities

- **Regional Adaptation Collaboration:** Work with local, regional, State, and federal partners (e.g., OneShoreline, San Mateo County, BCDC, FEMA) on climate-resilience strategies, and regularly integrate findings from the San Mateo County Sea-Level-Rise Vulnerability

Assessment, Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, Climate-Change Vulnerability Assessment, and Foster City's Climate Action Plan into General-Plan updates.

- **Urban Green Infrastructure Expansion:** Increasing tree canopy, green roofs, and permeable surfaces can mitigate heat island effects while enhancing stormwater retention.
- **Flood Protection Beyond Levees:** While the recent levee improvements protect against near-term sea level rise, additional strategies such as living shorelines, horizontal levees, and marsh restoration could provide long-term resilience benefits.
- **Localized Climate Risk Data Collection:** Partnering with research institutions and agencies to establish groundwater monitoring wells and high-resolution flood modeling can improve data-driven decision-making.

10.5 Air Quality

Key Issues

- **Traffic-Related Air Pollution:** Proximity to Highway 101 and 92 results in elevated levels of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), impacting public health.
- **Wildfire Smoke Exposure:** Although Foster City has low wildfire risk, regional fires contribute to worsening air quality, leading to hazardous conditions and the need for designated clean-air refuges.
- **Gaps in Local Air Quality Monitoring:** Foster City lacks dedicated air monitoring stations, making it difficult to track localized pollution hotspots or accurately measure cumulative exposure impacts.

Opportunities

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

10.6 Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy

Key Issues

- **Continued Dependence on Natural Gas:** Despite 100 percent carbon-free electricity for municipal buildings, the residential and commercial sectors still rely heavily on natural gas, slowing decarbonization efforts. CAP action E-W.2.2.1 (2025 Building-Code amendments and two-way AC ordinance) targets accelerated electrification.
- **Slow Adoption of Solar Energy:** Up-front costs and permitting barriers deter rooftop solar; CAP actions E-W.2.1.7 (study municipal rooftop solar + battery) and E-W.2.1.8 (public outreach on pairing PV with storage) outline next steps.
- **Grid Resilience and Energy Storage Gaps:** Limited incentives for behind-the-meter storage; CAP action E-W.2.1.1 provides for financial incentives to spur PV + battery installations and improve resilience.

Opportunities

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

11 Appendices

11.1 Appendix A: Regulatory Context

11.1.1 Natural Open Space

Government Code Section 65560

Government Code Section 65560 defines open space land and requires cities and counties to include open space elements in their general plans to protect natural resources, scenic beauty, and recreational areas.[40]

Assembly Bill 2278 Natural resources: biodiversity and conservation report

Assembly Bill 2278 (Kalra 2022) directs California's Natural Resources Agency to prioritize specific actions toward achieving the state's goal of conserving at least 30 percent of California's lands and coastal waters by 2030 ("30x30"). The bill requires annual progress reporting to the Legislature, emphasizing equity, tribal engagement, regional collaboration, and improved public access to conserved lands and coastal resources.[41]

Natural Community Conservation Planning Act

The California Fish and Game Code Sections 2780-2799.6 establishes the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act. This act is a statewide conservation program that aims to protect natural habitats and biodiversity while allowing for sustainable economic development. Unlike traditional conservation efforts that focus on individual species, the Natural Community Conservation Planning Act takes an ecosystem-based approach, improving the long-term protection of entire natural communities and the species that depend on them.[42]

11.1.2 Biological Resources

Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) protects federally listed wildlife species from harm or take, which is broadly defined as "to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, collect, or attempt to engage in any such conduct." United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) have jurisdiction over federally listed, threatened, and endangered species under the FESA. Candidate species are not legally protected under the FESA but may become listed in the near future and are often included in their review of a project.

[40] California Government Code. Section 65560 10.5. Open-Space Lands [65560 - 65570]. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&sectionNum=65560. (accessed April 2025).
[41] Kalra, Ash. 2022. Assembly Bill 2278: 30x30 Biodiversity and Conservation. https://a25.asmdc.org/sites/a25.asmdc.org/files/2022-04/AB%202278%20-30x30%20Reporting.pdf (accessed March 2025).
[42] California Fish and Game. 2021. California Fish and Game Code Sections 2780-2799.6. https://nrm.dfg.ca.gov/FileHandler.ashx?DocumentID=178840&inline (accessed April 2025).

California Endangered Species Act

The California Endangered Species Act (CESA) requires the protection of species that are listed as endangered or threatened within the state. It mandates that state agencies and private entities avoid actions that may harm these species or their habitats and requires the development of recovery plans. CESA also provides a process for the listing of species and the designation of critical habitats in need of protection.

Native Plant Protection Act

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) has authority to administer the Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA; California Fish and Game Commission [CFGC] Section 1900 et seq.). The NPPA requires the CDFW establish criteria for determining if a species, subspecies, or variety of native plant is endangered or rare, and prohibits the take of listed plant species.

Fully Protected Species Laws and Avian Protection Laws

The Fully Protected Species Laws and Avian Protection Laws in California are designed to safeguard wildlife, particularly vulnerable and endangered bird species. The CDFW oversees these regulations, ensuring compliance with California Fish and Game Code Sections 3511, 4700, 5050, and 5515, which prohibit the taking or possession of fully protected species, including several bird species. Additionally, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, enforced by the USFWS, provide federal protections against hunting, disturbance, or habitat destruction. The primary purpose of these laws is to prevent species extinction, conserve habitats, and mitigate human impacts on bird populations, ensuring ecological balance and biodiversity conservation.

Bay Plan

The Bay Plan is a long-term coastal management strategy developed by the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). Its primary purpose is to regulate development along the Bay shoreline, protect and restore wetlands, address sea-level rise, and ensure public access to the shoreline. The plan establishes policies on land use, water quality, and climate adaptation to balance environmental conservation with sustainable urban development. By guiding regional decision-making, the Bay Plan helps maintain the ecological health and resilience of the San Francisco Bay Area while accommodating responsible economic growth.

11.1.3 Water Resources

Clean Water Act

The Clean Water Act (CWA) aims to restore and maintain the integrity of U.S. waters by preventing pollution, providing regulations for wastewater discharges, and supporting the protection of water quality. It mandates that states set water quality standards, and it authorizes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enforce regulations to reduce pollution and protect aquatic ecosystems.

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (Porter-Cologne Act) is the principal law governing water quality regulation in California. It establishes a comprehensive program to

protect water quality and the beneficial uses of water. The Porter-Cologne Act applies to surface waters, wetlands, and groundwater and to both point and nonpoint sources of pollution.

11.1.4 Air Quality

Clean Air Act

The Clean Air Act (CAA) was enacted in 1970 and amended in 1977 and 1990 [42 United States Code (USC) 7401] for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the quality of the nation's air resources to benefit public health, welfare, and productivity. The United States EPA developed primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) in 1971 to achieve the purposes of Section 109 of the CAA [42 USC 7409].

California Clean Air Act

The California Clean Air Act (CCAA) was enacted in 1988 (California Health & Safety Code (H&SC) Section 39000 et seq.). Under the CCAA, the State has developed the California Ambient Air Quality Standards (CAAQS), which are generally more stringent than the NAAQS. In addition to the federal criteria pollutants, the CAAQS also specify standards for visibility-reducing particles, sulfates, hydrogen sulfide, and vinyl chloride. Similar to the federal CAA, the CCAA classifies specific geographic areas as either "attainment" or "nonattainment" areas for each pollutant, based on the comparison of measured data within the CAAQS.

California Code of Regulations

The California Code of Regulations is the official compilation and publication of the regulations adopted, amended, or repealed by State agencies pursuant to the Administrative Procedure Act. They are compiled into Titles and organized into Divisions containing the regulations of State agencies. The following California Code of Regulations would be applicable to the General Plan Update:

- **Engine Idling.** In accordance with Section 2485 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations, the idling of all diesel-fueled commercial vehicles (weighing over 10,000 pounds) during construction shall be limited to five minutes at any location.
- **Emission Standards.** In accordance with Section 93115 of Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations, operation of any stationary, diesel-fueled, compression-ignition engines shall meet specified fuel and fuel additive requirements and emission standards.

11.1.5 Climate Resilience

Senate Bill 272 Sea level rise: planning and adaptation

Senate Bill 272 (Laird, 2023) requires local governments within the coastal zone or within the jurisdiction of the BCDC to develop and adopt comprehensive sea level rise plans by January 1, 2034. These plans, subject to approval by either the California Coastal Commission (CCC) or BCDC, will help local governments address and mitigate sea level rise impacts, with approved jurisdictions prioritized for future state adaptation funding.[43]

[43] Senator John Laird of the 17th State Senate District. 2023. Governor Newsom Signs Legislation to Build Coastal Resiliency and Support Coastal Communities. https://sd17.senate.ca.gov/news/governor-newsom-signs-legislation-build-coastal-resiliency-and-support-coastal-communities (accessed March 2025).

Assembly Bill 975 Environmental protection: California Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Leadership and Coordination Act of 2019

Senate Bill 975 (Calderon, 2019) established the California Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Leadership and Coordination Act, requiring California's Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) to coordinate state climate resilience and adaptation efforts with other governments and regional entities. This coordination includes sharing best practices, promoting resilience of coastal habitats, and conducting quantified risk assessments to prioritize climate adaptation actions.[44]

Assembly Bill 1384 Resiliency Through Adaptation, Economic Vitality, and Equity Act of 2022.

Assembly Bill 1384 (Gabriel, 2022), the Resiliency Through Adaptation, Economic Vitality, and Equity Act, updates California's climate adaptation strategy, emphasizing equitable adaptation and resilience. The bill mandates that state agencies identify vulnerabilities in communities disproportionately impacted by climate change, prioritize equity in public expenditures, and establish clear metrics to track progress toward climate resilience.[45]

Senate Bill 905 Carbon sequestration: Carbon Capture, Removal, Utilization, and Storage Program.

Senate Bill 905 (Caballero, 2022) establishes the Carbon Capture, Removal, Utilization, and Storage (CCRUS) Program, overseen by the California Air Resources Board, to support and regulate technologies for capturing and storing carbon dioxide emissions. The bill requires comprehensive safety standards, environmental monitoring, unified permitting, and public transparency measures to ensure these projects reduce greenhouse gases without negatively impacting local communities or ecosystems.[46]

Assembly Bill 2251 Urban Forestry: statewide strategic plan.

Assembly Bill 2251 (Calderon, 2022) directs the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to develop a statewide strategic plan to increase urban tree canopy cover by 10 percent by 2035, with a focus on disadvantaged and low-canopy communities. The plan, due by June 30, 2025, will outline state and local policies, regional targets, maintenance strategies, and resources needed to support sustainable urban forestry expansion.[47]

[44] Calderon, Lisa. 2019. AB 975, as amended, Calderon. Environmental protection: California Coastal Resilience and Adaptation Leadership and Coordination Act of 2019. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB975 (accessed March 2025).
[45] Gabriel, Jesse. 2022. AB 1384, Resiliency Though Adaptation, Economic Vitality, and Equity Act of 2022. https://legiscan.com/CA/text/AB1384/id/2606950 (accessed March 2025).
[46] Cabarello, Anna. 2022. SB 905, Carbon sequestration: Carbon Capture, Removal, Utilization, and Storage Program. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB905 (accessed March 2025).
[47] Calderon, Lisa. 2022. AB 2251, Urban forestry: statewide strategic plan. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB2251 (accessed March 2025).

11.2 Appendix B: Definitions

Term	Definition
Algal Blooms	Certain environmental conditions in water bodies can intensify algae growth, causing algal blooms. Blooms with the potential to harm human health or aquatic ecosystems are referred to as Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). HABs can produce toxins that present a risk to people, animals, aquatic ecosystems, the economy, drinking water supplies, property values, commercial and industrial fishing, and recreational activities like swimming (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency).
Aquifer	A water-bearing layer of rock or sediment that is capable of yielding useable amounts of water. Drinking water and irrigation wells draw water from the underlying aquifer (U.S. Department of Toxic Substances Control).
Biodiversity	The variety of living organisms (plants, animals, fungi, microorganisms) and ecosystems, reflecting the health and complexity of an environment (California Public Resources Code §711.2).
Biological Resources	Plants, animals, habitats, ecosystems, and related ecological processes that provide environmental, economic, recreational, and cultural value.
Bioswales	Landscape elements designed to collect, filter, and convey stormwater runoff through vegetation, soils, and other materials to improve water quality and reduce flooding.
Cumulative Impact or Exposure	The term cumulative impact is used in several ways: as the effect of exposure to more than one compound; as the effect of exposure to emissions from more than one facility; the combined effects of a facility and surrounding facilities or projects on the environment; or some combination of these (U.S. Department of Toxic Substances Control).
Ecosystem Services	Benefits humans obtain from functioning ecosystems, including clean air and water, climate regulation, flood control, food production, recreation, and cultural values.
Energy Conservation and Renewable Energy	Strategies to reduce overall energy use through efficiency and the adoption of energy sources such as solar, wind, and geothermal that replenish naturally and have minimal environmental impact.
Environmental Justice	Under State law, environmental justice means the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. (Gov. Code, § 65040.12, subd. (e)).
Equitable Access	Equitable access refers to the fair distribution of resources, opportunities, and services, ensuring that all individuals have the ability to obtain what they need to achieve their potential.
Estuary	A coastal waterbody where freshwater from rivers and streams mixes with saltwater from the ocean, creating productive, biodiverse habitats.
Flood Mitigation	Actions and strategies aimed at reducing flood risk and impacts, such as building levees, preserving floodplains, enhancing stormwater management, or restoring wetlands.
Green Corridor	A continuous network of vegetated areas linking natural habitats and ecosystems, facilitating wildlife movement and providing ecological and recreational benefits.
Green Infrastructure	Ecological systems and engineered landscape features (e.g., rain gardens, green roofs, permeable pavement, bioswales) used to manage stormwater, improve air quality, and enhance resilience.
Grid Resilience	The ability of the electrical power system to withstand, recover from, and adapt to disruptions, minimizing impacts from power outages and emergencies.
Groundwater	Water beneath the earth's surface that flows through soil and rock openings, aquifers, and often serves as a primary source of drinking water (U.S. Department of Toxic Substances Control).

Term	Definition
Habitat Fragmentation	Division of large, continuous habitats into smaller, isolated patches, often due to human activities, negatively impacting wildlife movement and biodiversity.
Habitat Restoration	Efforts to rehabilitate ecosystems by reestablishing native vegetation, repairing degraded habitats, and restoring ecological functions.
Invasive Species	Non-native species introduced into ecosystems that rapidly proliferate and negatively impact native biodiversity, habitats, or ecosystem function.
King Tide	Exceptionally high tide events caused by the alignment of the earth, moon, and sun, providing a glimpse of future sea level rise impacts.
Lagoon	A shallow, enclosed or partially enclosed coastal waterbody separated from the ocean by a barrier, often influenced by tidal flows and freshwater inputs.
Living Shoreline	A coastal management approach that integrates native vegetation, natural habitats, and engineered elements to stabilize shorelines, protect against erosion, and support ecological functions.
Microgrid	A small-scale electrical system that can operate independently or connected to the main power grid, typically powered by renewable energy and energy storage systems to improve resilience.
Native Vegetation	Plants naturally occurring in a specific region or ecosystem without human introduction, adapted to local environmental conditions and providing critical ecological benefits.
Natural Community Conservation Plan	A California-based conservation program designed to protect entire ecosystems while accommodating compatible land use activities, focusing on long-term habitat conservation.
Natural Open Space	Land preserved or maintained in a predominantly natural state, providing ecological, recreational, and aesthetic value, typically minimally developed and managed.
Nature-Based Solutions	Strategies inspired by natural ecosystems that address environmental challenges (such as flooding, heat, or erosion) by preserving, restoring, or mimicking natural processes.
Nursery Site	Habitat areas providing critical protection, food, and shelter needed by juvenile animals, especially marine species and migratory birds, during early developmental stages.
Open Space	Per Gov. Code § 65560(b) and Gov. Code § 5097.9, any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to open space use. Such uses can encompass preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, public health and safety, military installations, and protection of places, features, and objectives, with the latter specifically referring to Native American historical, cultural, and sacred sites.
Permeable Pavement	Pavement materials designed to allow rainwater to infiltrate through the surface, reducing runoff and helping recharge groundwater.
Potable Water	Water safe and suitable for human consumption, meeting established health standards.
Protected and Special Status Species	Plants or animals designated under federal, State, or local regulations as endangered, threatened, rare, or otherwise vulnerable, requiring special conservation measures.
Protected Area	Clearly defined geographical spaces recognized and managed to conserve ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural or cultural resources.
Publicly Accessible	Land, facilities, or resources that are available and open for public use and enjoyment without unnecessary barriers or restrictions.
Recreational Facilities	Built or natural spaces designed for public recreation and leisure activities, such as parks, playgrounds, trails, sports fields, and picnic areas.
Recreational Opportunities	Activities or resources available to the public that provide enjoyment, exercise, social interaction, and opportunities to experience nature.

Term	Definition
Resilience	Per the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation's 2017 https://opr.ca.gov/planning/general-plan/guidelines.htmland California's Fifth National Climate Assessment (2023) Appendix 5 Glossary, resilience is defined as the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, the capacity for self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change. Resilience is the ability to prepare for threats and hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from adverse conditions and disruptions. More specifically, ***climate resilience*** is the capacity of interconnected social, economic, and ecological systems to cope with a climate change event, trend, or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure.
Rewilding	Per Gov. Code § Section 65565.5 (b)(1), rewilding is defined as opportunities to preserve, enhance, and expand an integrated network of open space to support beneficial uses, such as habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics. Rewilding is a conservation strategy that aims to restore the natural processes of an ecosystem and increase biodiversity. It involves reducing or stopping human activity and reintroducing plant and animal species, especially keystone species. Rewilding can also involve connecting protected areas through corridors.
Runoff Pollution	Contamination of water bodies caused by stormwater flowing over impervious surfaces, picking up pollutants such as oil, chemicals, nutrients, and sediment.
Saltwater Intrusion	The movement of saltwater into freshwater aquifers or surface water bodies, typically caused by groundwater pumping, sea-level rise, or reduced freshwater recharge.
Sea Level Rise	The increase in global ocean levels resulting primarily from melting glaciers, ice caps, and thermal expansion due to global warming.
Shoreline	The boundary where land meets a body of water, including beaches, marshes, and rocky coasts.
Stormwater Detention Basin	Engineered structures designed to temporarily capture and hold stormwater runoff, releasing it slowly to reduce flooding and erosion risks.
Stormwater Management	Practices and infrastructure designed to reduce or manage the volume, quality, and impacts of stormwater runoff.
Stormwater Runoff	Rainwater or melted snow that flows over land and impervious surfaces without infiltration, often carrying pollutants to water bodies.
Surface Water	Water that collects and flows on the earth's surface, such as rivers, lakes, streams, ponds, reservoirs, and wetlands.
Tidal Marsh	A coastal ecosystem regularly inundated by tidal waters, supporting specialized plant and animal species adapted to brackish conditions.
Underpasses/Wildlife Bridges	Engineered structures designed to allow wildlife to safely cross roads and other barriers, reducing collisions and supporting habitat connectivity.
Urbanization	The development and expansion of urban areas resulting from population growth, land conversion, and increased built infrastructure.
Urban Heat Island Effect	The phenomenon where urban areas experience higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to extensive impervious surfaces, limited vegetation, and human activities.
Urban Park	A managed open space within a city, providing recreational opportunities, green spaces, and social gathering areas for community members.
Urban Forestry	Management of trees and green spaces within urban settings to enhance environmental, social, and economic benefits.
Urban Wildlife	Wild animals that inhabit urban environments, adapting to urbanized landscapes and interactions with human populations.

Term	Definition
Water Supply	Sources of water available for community use, including potable water for drinking, agriculture, industry, and ecological needs.
Water Quality	The chemical, physical, and biological characteristics of water, indicating its suitability for human and ecological use.
Water Resources	All sources of water – including surface water, groundwater, and stormwater – that support environmental, human, and economic needs.
Wetlands	Areas inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater, characterized by hydric soils and specialized vegetation, providing critical habitat and ecosystem services.
Wildlife Connectivity	The degree to which habitats and landscapes allow wildlife movement and gene flow, supporting biodiversity, ecological integrity, and species adaptation to environmental changes.

General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Element

Parks and Recreation Assessment

prepared for

City of Foster City
Community Development Department
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prepared with the assistance of

WRT, LLC
120 2nd Street, 3rd Floor
San Francisco, California, 94105

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
66 Franklin Street, Suite 200
Oakland, California 94607

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FOSTER CITY
PARKS & OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENTS

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1 Introduction

Parks are a cornerstone of Foster City's quality of life. As a distinctive urban environment, Foster City offers a diverse range of park facilities and recreational programs that enhance residents' health, well-being, and cultural engagement. This Parks and Recreation Assessment provides an evaluation of existing parks, amenities, and recreation programs, identifying opportunities for enhancement and growth. This document serves as a foundational tool to support policy development and identify multi-benefit opportunities in coordination with the Parks Master Plan for the update to the Parks and Open Space and Conservation Element.

The Parks Master Plan is a coordinated effort between the Foster City Parks and Recreation Department and WRT to assess current conditions of the city's park system and propose strategic recommendations tailored to the park system's needs.[1] The planning process for the Parks Master Plan begun in summer of 2024, and is scheduled to finish in the Summer of 2025. This assessment relies heavily on data and insights from the Parks Master Plan process, which includes valuable information about Foster City's park system.

This assessment presents the parks system in terms of park type and describes recreation amenities. It highlights unique assets such as the levee pedway and the lagoon. A key component of this initiative is the identification of community priorities, which have emerged through a public engagement and a Parks Master Plan Community Survey. The assessment compares Foster City's parks and programs with national standards, offering insights into areas for improvement and strategic development.

By presenting a detailed overview of Foster City's parks and recreation landscape, the assessment will be the foundation for policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality and accessibility of these essential services. These recommendations support the city's ongoing commitment to meeting the recreational needs of its residents while aligning with the objectives outlined in the Parks and Open Space Element of the General Plan.

[1] Foster City Parks Master Plan | Foster City California

2 Regulatory Triggers

The following California regulations mandate an update to the Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element. A full regulatory setting is provided in the Open Space and Conservation Assessment.

Senate Bill 1425 Open-space element: updates

Senate Bill (SB) 1425 (Stern 2022) requires that every city and county review and update its local open space plan by January 1, 2026. The bill requires the local open space plan to include plans and an action program that address specified issues, including climate resilience, equitable access, and rewilding opportunities, correlated with the Safety Element, Environmental Justice Element, and Land Use Element respectively. The requirements set forth in SB 1425 may be best met by pursuing policies that promote multi-benefit approaches.

Fundamental to the multiple benefits of open space is the provision of natural areas that provide human and ecological benefits through habitat, recreation, natural resources, historic and tribal resources, water management, and aesthetics. In the context of climate change, open space provides a form of natural infrastructure, for which a definition is provided in Gov. Code § 65302(g)(4)(C)(v). Natural infrastructure utilizes natural ecological systems or processes to reduce vulnerability to climate change related hazards, or other related climate change effects, while increasing the long-term adaptive capacity of natural areas by perpetuating or restoring ecosystem services.

Assembly Bill 1889 Conservation element: wildlife and habitat connectivity

Assembly Bill (AB) 1889, known as the Room to Roam Act (Friedman 2024), requires the Conservation Element of a city's general plan to include an identification and analysis of connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas within its jurisdiction by January 1, 2028. It further requires an assessment of existing or planned wildlife passage features, such as wildlife crossings or underpasses, to ensure planned developments do not comprise these critical habitats or wildlife movement corridors.

Specifically, the bill directs local governments to consider the impacts of existing and future development on wildlife connectivity, emphasizing the importance of protecting and enhancing wildlife corridors, particularly in response to the challenges posed by climate change and habitat fragmentation. Local jurisdictions are required to:

- Identify connectivity areas, permeability, and natural landscape areas.
- Inventory and analyze existing or planned wildlife passage features, aligning efforts with state-level connectivity assessments and plans.
- Evaluate how development may create barriers to wildlife movement.
- Develop strategies to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts to wildlife connectivity from land-use decisions.
- Explore opportunities to remediate existing barriers and restore degraded habitats, integrating best available science and datasets from regional habitat connectivity assessments, wildlife movement studies, and other relevant resources.

3 Foster City's Parks System

Foster City originated as a master-planned community on the edge of the San Francisco Bay. As shown in Figure 1, a lagoon winds through the city and connects all the city's neighborhoods. Foster City has 155.8 acres of parks and open space. At the heart of the city is Leo J Ryan Park, which borders the lagoon and lies along Hillsdale Boulevard, one of the city's main arteries. The park also contains two of Foster City's primary recreation facilities – the currently-under construction Community Center and the Vibe Teen Center. Sea Cloud Park is located to the south closer to the Bay's edge and is Foster City's largest park and the location of many of its soccer, baseball and softball fields. Smaller parks are distributed throughout the neighborhoods, placing all residents within a half mile walk of a park. Lining the edge of the city is the Levee Pedway, an integral part of the San Francisco Bay Trail. The Levee Pedway allows residents to walk, bike, and jog along the city's edge and take in scenic views of the bay.

3.1 Park Classification

Foster City's park system consists of five park types, as outlined in Table 1. **Community parks** offer a wide range of active and passive recreational opportunities that serve a substantial part of the city; the four parks in this category account for the largest portion of the city's park land. **Neighborhood parks** provide a smaller range of amenities tailored to the daily recreational needs of one or more neighborhoods; these parks make up about one-third of the city's parks acreage. **Mini parks**, which occupy the least acreage, offer basic recreational amenities for residents within a specific neighborhood. **Special-use parks** are designed for specific recreational purposes or population groups; in Foster City: Boat/Dog, Baywinds and Bridgeview parks fall into this category. Trails and pathways also comprise a significant portion of Foster City's Park system, with the Levee Pedway making up a substantial share of this acreage.

Foster City also has several privately owned parks and recreation facilities. Though not detailed in this assessment, these facilities also help meet residents' recreational needs. Private parks that have been officially designated as publicly accessible, such as Town Center and Triton Parks, have been included (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

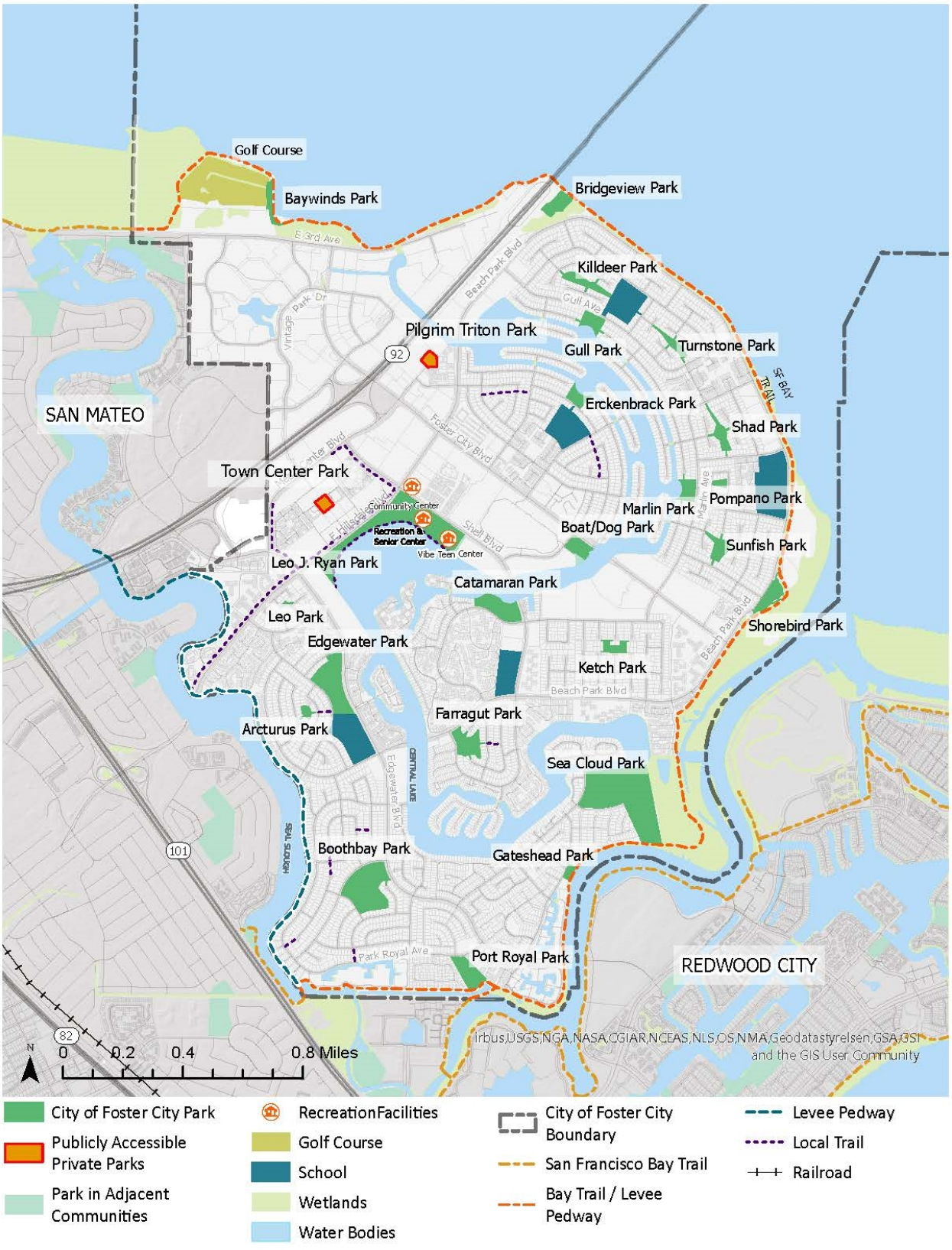
Table 1 Foster City Parks by Type

Park Type	Number	Acres	Amenities
Community Parks	**4**	**64.7**	
Boothbay		11.2	Playground, Ballfield, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Tennis Courts, Volleyball Court, Restroom, Picnic Shelter, BBQ
Edgewater		8.5	Playground, Ballfield, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Tennis Courts, Restroom, Picnic Shelter
Leo J Ryan		20.7	Basketball Court, Pickleball Courts, Bocce Ball Courts, Tennis Courts, Beach, Boat Launch, Parking Lot
Sea Cloud		24	Playground, Ballfields, Soccer/Multipurpose Fields, Restroom, Picnic Shelter

Park Type	Number	Acres	Amenities
Neighborhood Parks	**10**	**34.9**	
Catamaran		5.9	Playground, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Tennis Court, Volleyball Courts, Restroom
Erckenbrack		3.5	Playground, Restroom, Beach
Farragut		3.9	Playground, Restroom
Gull		3.1	Playground, Restroom
Kildeer		2.4	Playground
Marlin		3.1	Playground, Restroom
Port Royal		4.0	Playground, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Restroom, Parking Lot
Pilgrim Triton*		1.2	Playground, Picnic Area
Shad		2.1	Playground, Basketball Court, Restroom
Shorebird		3.5	Restroom
Sunfish		2.4	Playground, Basketball Court,
Mini Parks	**6**	**5.7**	
Arcturus		0.75	Playground
Gateshead		0.1	None
Ketch		1.6	Playground, Basketball Court
Leo		0.015	None
Pompano		0.5	None
Turnstone		1.5	Playground, Basketball Court,
Town Center Park*		1.1	None
Special Use Parks	**3**	**7.7**	
Bridgeview		3.2	Restroom, Parking Lot
Baywinds		1.3	Restroom, Shower, BBQ
Boat/Dog		3.2	Restroom, Boat Launch, Dog Park, Parking Lot
Subtotal, Parks	***23***	***112.9***	
Trails and Pathways	**6**	**45.2**	
Levee Pedway		43.3	
Arcturus		0.09	
Constitution (North)		0.17	
Constitution (South)		0.7	
Pilgrim (East)		0.19	Sandbox
Pilgrim (West)		0.73	
Total	**29**	**158.1**	

*Pilgrim Triton and Town Center Park are private parks, but are publicly accessible

Figure 1 Parks and Open Space in Foster City



3.2 Park Amenities

Foster City's parks provide numerous recreation amenities. The amenities with the highest quantity are playgrounds, tennis courts, soccer/multipurpose fields, and ballfields, showing how Foster City provides ample opportunity for sports and fitness within its parks. There are relatively fewer picnic shelters and barbeque spots, and one dog run. Because of the lagoon, Foster City has four beaches and two boat launches as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2 Foster City Park Amenities

Amenity	Number
Sports Fields and Courts	
Ballfields	10
Soccer/Multipurpose Fields	12
Basketball Courts	8
Pickleball Courts	6
Bocce Ball Courts	4
Volleyball Courts	2
Tennis Courts	13
Playgrounds and Passive Use Amenities	
Playgrounds	16
Picnic Shelters	4
Barbecues	2
Beaches	3
Special Features	
Boat Launch	2
Dog Run	1
Community Garden	1

3.3 Indoor Recreation Facilities

Foster City's indoor recreation facilities serve as community gathering spaces and provide a wide range of activities that serve all demographic groups, including kids and seniors. The facilities also provide spaces that can be rented by residents for birthday parties, meetings, and other special events.

3.3.1 William E. Walker Recreation Center and Future Facility

Located within Leo J. Ryan Park, the William E. Walker Recreation Center was demolished in late 2024 to make way for a new facility. The future community center will expand event space and create more opportunities for Foster City residents. The new facility will include dedicated rooms for seniors, a space for preschool, art studios, and fitness rooms. The new facility will also incorporate sustainable design strategies related to water efficiency, energy conservation,

and waste management, achieving a LEED Silver certification.[2] The project is expected to be complete by the summer of 2026. Foster City Community Center

Located across Shell Boulevard from Leo J. Ryan Park is the Foster City Community Center. There are four spaces residents can rent for parties, large meetings, training classes, and more. These spaces range in size. Additionally, there is an outdoor patio on the second floor of the building, and an outdoor garden facing Shell Boulevard.

3.3.2 The Vibe Teen Center

Like the future recreation center, the Vibe Teen Center is also located within Leo J Ryan Park and is meant to primarily serve youth in Foster City. The facility offers a multipurpose room, kitchen, patio, and game room. In addition to serving as a meeting place for residents, the city organized drop-in and after-school programs at the Vibe Teen Center.

3.4 Paths and Trails

3.4.1 Levee Pedway

The Levee Pedway is one of the most significant features of Foster City's park system, forming a key segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail. As shown in Figure 1, this 8-mile paved path follows the shoreline along the city's outer edge, accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, rollerbladers, scooters, and strollers. Offering scenic views of the San Francisco Bay, the pedway runs past Baywinds Park, Bridgeview Park, Shorebird Park, Gateshead Park, Sea Cloud Park, and Port Royal Park. The route provides a continuous path without requiring on-street travel. While much of the pedway overlaps with the Bay Trail, a segment of the trail runs alongside Seal Slough and terminates in San Mateo City limits, allowing users to navigate much of the city. Further development of the trail within San Mateo would establish a complete trial loop around the City.

3.4.2 Neighborhood Trails

Given Foster City's compact size, its network of neighborhood trails plays a crucial role in serving residents' open space and recreational needs. According to the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, a multi-use trail system for walking, biking, and jogging is the top investment priority for residents[3]. Ranked as the most important facility in the survey, 81% of respondents expressed a need for these trails, making them the highest-priority amenity. Beyond recreation, these neighborhood trails provide safe connections for children traveling to school, easy access between parks, and a sustainable, pedestrian-friendly way to navigate the city.

[2] Recreation Center Rebuild Project, City Council Presentation, September 2023. URL: https://www.fostercity.org/parksrec/project/recreation-center-rebuild-project-cip-301-678
[3] Parks Master Plan Community Survey

Photo #1: The Levee Pedway, as seen from Gateshead Park. Source: WRT

3.5 Foster City Lagoon

The lagoon is a defining feature of Foster City. The lagoon spans five miles and offers residents water-based recreational opportunities such as kayaking and paddling. Residents appreciate how the lagoon complements Foster City's parks, particularly Leo J. Ryan Park. As reported in Section 8.1 Community Priorities, waterfront parks and programming emerged as a popular activation opportunity, with strong resident support for opportunities such as waterfront dining, park-lagoon interactions, and floating art installations. Concerns about water quality have made some residents hesitant about recreational activities on the lagoon. Many expressed a strong interest in improving water quality for swimming and some were open to reconfiguring the lagoon edge. Residents emphasized the importance of creating safe and engaging ways to interact with the lagoon.

3.6 Park Walksheds

Walkable access to parks and open spaces is essential for promoting physical activity, fostering community interaction, and supporting overall well-being. Having a park within a 10-minute walk is generally considered the national gold standard by well-known organizations such as the Trust for Public Land, which uses walkable access as a key metric to rank city's by park access.[4]. As shown in Figure 2, all of Foster City's residential neighborhoods are within a 10-minute walk of a park – a feat that many communities struggle to achieve.

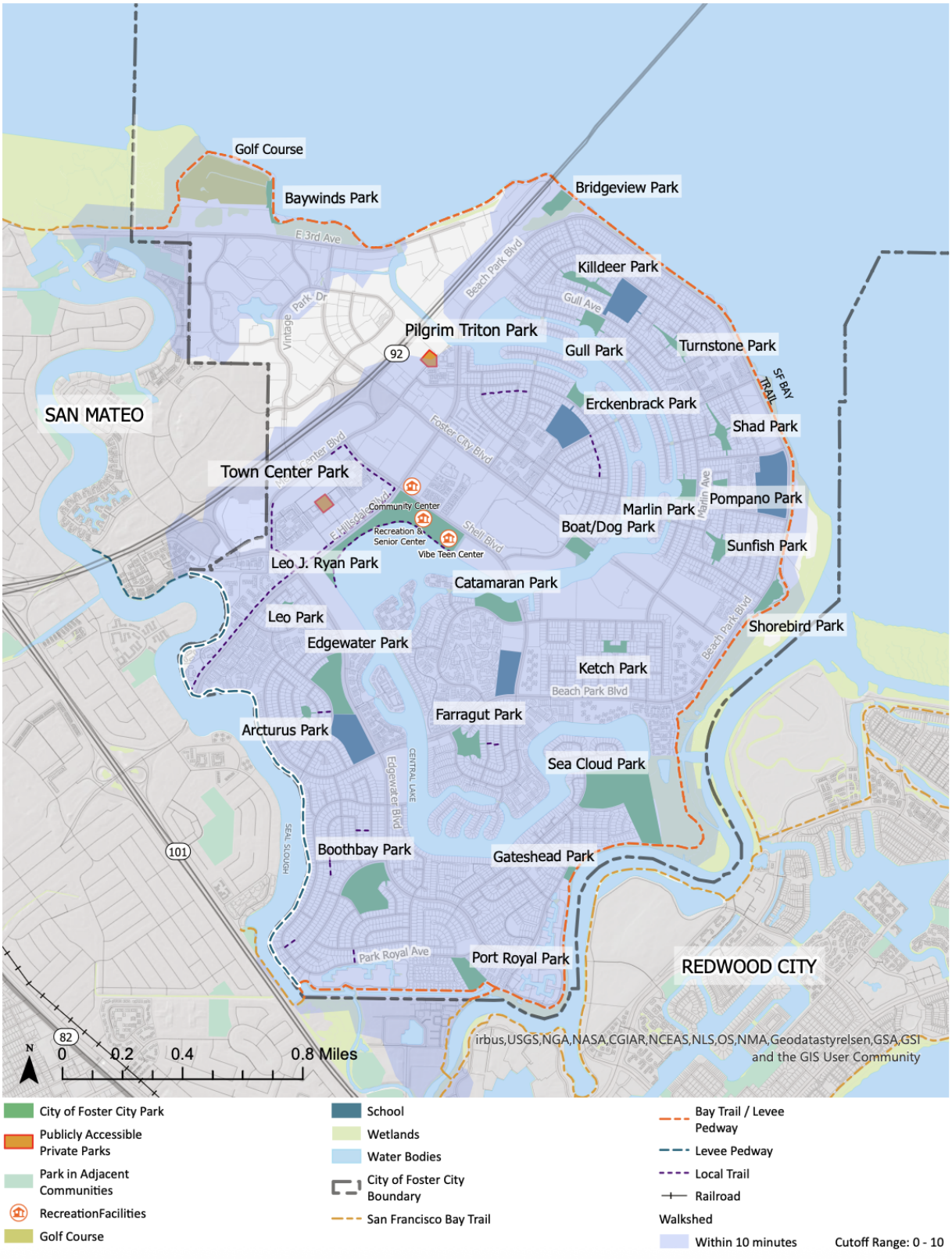
[4] Trust for Public Land Park Equity Scoring: Understanding A City's Parkscore: Trust for Public Land

3.7 Park Access and Equity

All neighborhoods in Foster City have access to parks. However, there are notable demographic patterns in Foster City that should be taken into account when considering future park development. As shown in Figure 3, there is a concentration of people 65 and over in central Foster City neighborhoods, generally along the Foster City Boulevard corridor. This suggests an opportunity to focus senior-serving recreational resources in this area. The central location of the existing and future Community Centers supports this. Leo J. Ryan, Catamaran, Ketch, Port Royal and Edgewater parks are also in close proximity to where many seniors live, including Metro Center Senior Apartments and Alma Point Senior Apartments. Youth appear to be more evenly distributed in Foster City, though overall the central neighborhoods have a higher density of people (of all ages).

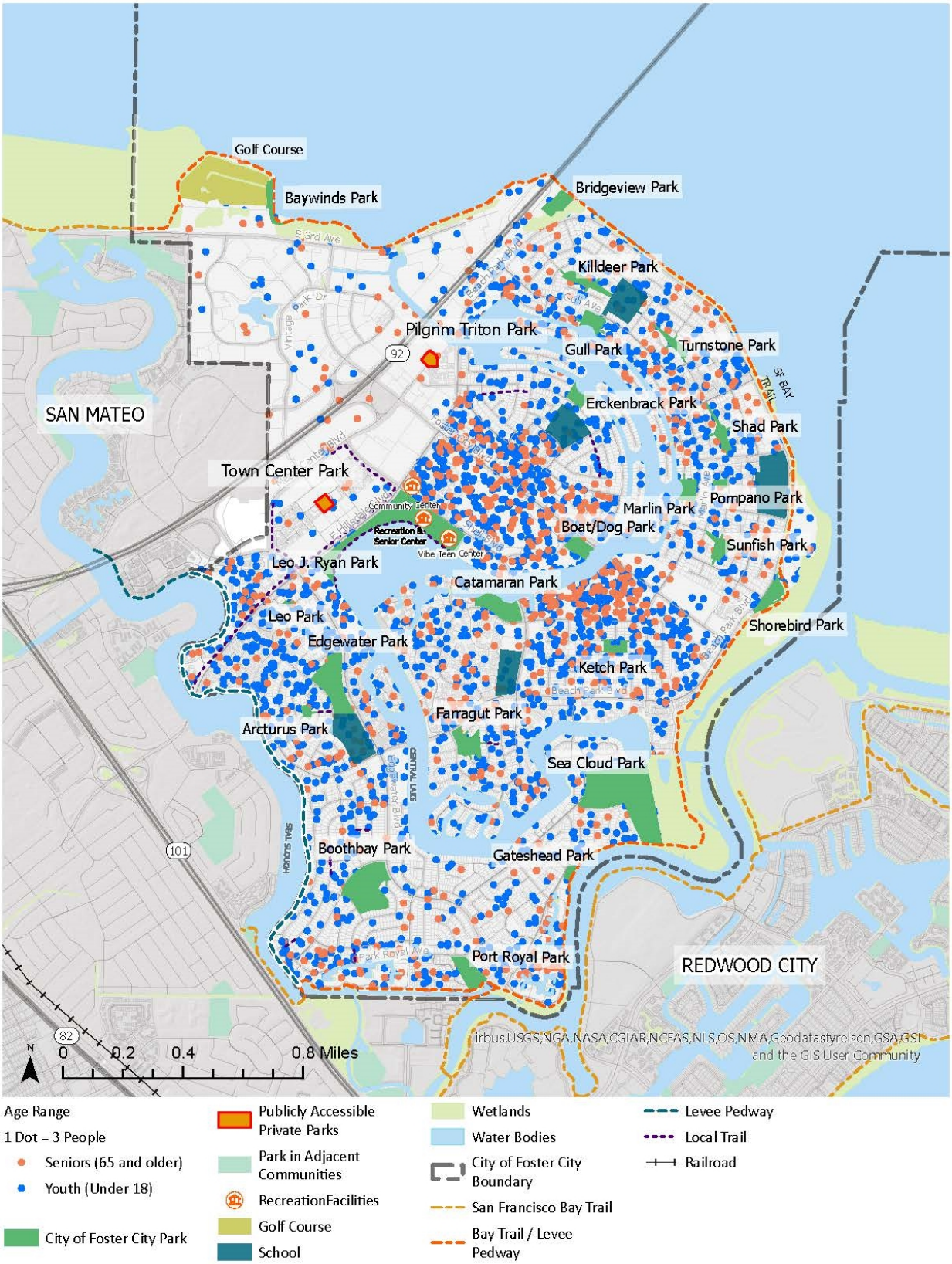
As shown in Figure 4, parks are generally accessible to residents across different racial and income groups. While most residents in Foster City are Asian and/or White, there are no areas with culturally specific communities. As shown in Figure 5, household income does not appear to influence spatial access to parks in Foster City, with most residents enjoying sufficient park access regardless of income.

Figure 2 10-Minute Walkshed in Foster City



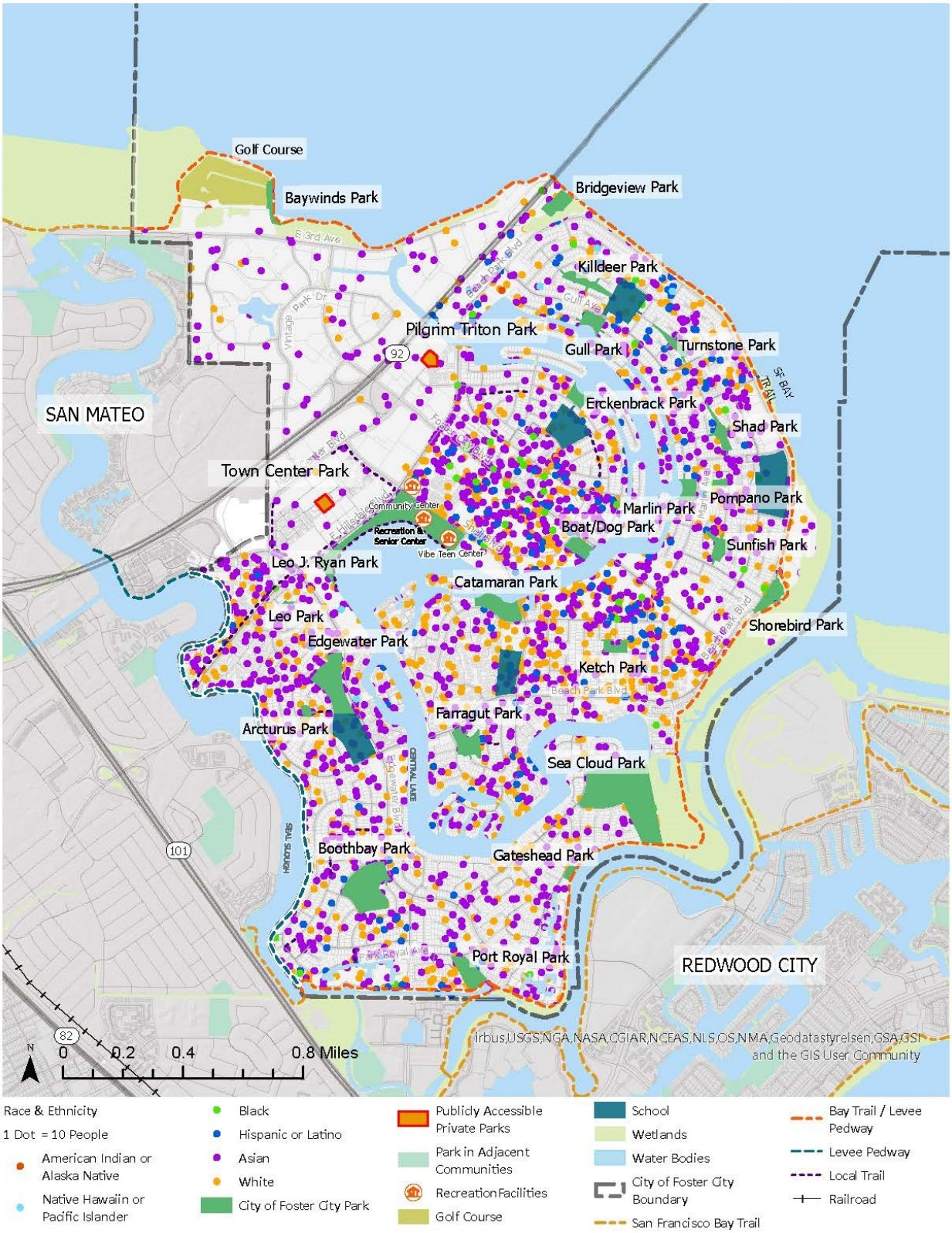
Source: WRT

Figure 3 Foster City Youth and Senior Population



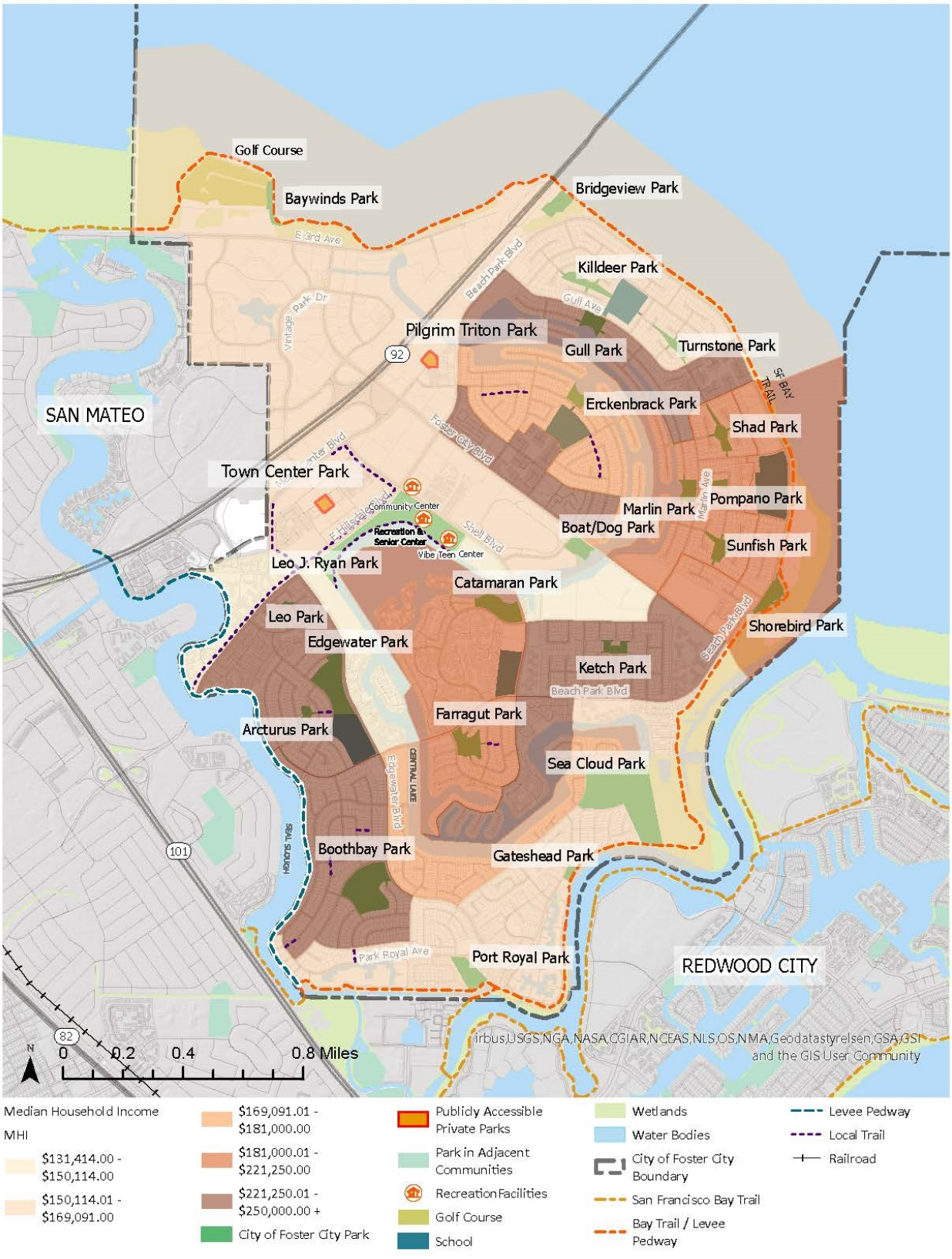
Source: American Community Survey, 2023 5-Year Estimates

Figure 4 Race & Ethnicity in Foster City



Source: American Community Survey, 2023 5-Year Estimates

Figure 5 Median Household Income in Foster City



Source: American Community Survey, 2023 5-Year Estimates

3.8 Level of Service

3.8.1 Acreage Level of Service

Park level of service (LOS) measures the availability and quality of parks and recreational facilities relative to a community's population, ensuring equitable access and adequate resources. As shown in Table 3, Foster City's approximately 158 acres of parks, open space, and trails provide a level of 4.5 acres per 1,000 residents. When considering developed parkland only, Foster City's current inventory equates to 3.2 acres per 1,000 residents. As shown in Table 4, Foster City offers a relatively high level of service in terms of developed land per resident.

The Foster City General Plan 2009 establishes a goal of 5 acres per 1,000 residents, including all types of parks and open spaces. Foster City anticipates adding 1,896 homes as part of their RHNA target, which will result in its population growing from 35,004 today to 39,070 by 2040 [5]. To meet the General Plan standard, Foster City would need an additional 40 acres of park and open space by 2040. The Parks and Open Space and Conservation Element and Parks Master Plan process gives the City an opportunity to revisit its level of service standard. Given the high level of satisfaction in Foster City's parks and recreation and the limited availability of land, it may be appropriate to establish a standard for parks at the current level of service (3.2 acres per 1,000) and an overall parks and open space standard of 5 acres of 1,000.

Table 3 Acreage of Level of Service

Parks	2024 Inventory	Service Levels		2024 Needs	2040 Needs
	Area (acres)	Current Service Level (acres/1,000 residents)	Service Level Standard (acres/1,000 residents)	Additional Acreage Needed in 2024	Additional Acreage Needed in 2040
Parkland*		3.2	NA	NA	NA
Parkland & Open Space (Pedway, Walkways, Public OS)	158.1	4.5	5.00	19	40

*Includes city-owned and publicly accessible private parkland

Table 4 Neighboring City Level of Service

City	Population	Total Developed Acres per 1,000 Residents
City of Foster City	**35,004**	**3.16**
City of Belmont	28,307	3.99
City of Burlingame	32,121	2.91
City of Menlo Park	35,258	1.54
City of San Bruno	43,440	1.59
City of San Mateo	107,227	1.94

[5] Foster City Housing Element 2022. URL: https://www.fostercity.org/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/3431/foster_city_he_rev_3.20.2024.pdf

3.9 Park Amenity Level of Service

Like park acreage level of service, standards can also be applied to individual park amenities. Table 5 details the Foster City population per typical park amenity. These values can then be compared to the averages for comparably sized communities. These averages along with clear understanding of community priorities set the groundwork establishing amenity standards that are responsive to community needs.

As shown in Table 4, Foster City generally exceeds national service levels for park amenities, particularly for tennis, pickleball, playgrounds, soccer fields, basketball courts, and diamond fields. This abundance has led to most of these amenities having low Priority Investment Ratings (PIRs)[2] in the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, suggesting demand for additional of these amenities is low. In contrast, volleyball courts and the dog park fall below national service standards but are viewed as medium PIRs, suggesting a need for future investment.

The Parks Master Plan provides an opportunity to set specific targets for each of these amenities (and others), to help shape future investment in parks.

Table 5 Park Amenity Level of Service

Recreation Component	Foster City Inventory	Current Level of Service			Average Level of Service[1]			Priority Investment Rating
Outdoor Recreation Amenities								
Diamond Field	10	1	Field Per	3,500	1	Field Per	3,007	Low
Soccer/ Multipurpose Field	12	1	Field Per	2,917	1	Field Per	3,333	Low
Basketball Court	8	1	Court Per	4,376	1	Field Per	7,501	Low
Tennis Court	13	1	Court Per	2,693	1	Court Per	5,461	Medium
Pickleball Courts	6	1	Court Per	5,834	1	Court Per	7,737	Medium
Bocce Ball Court	4	1	Court Per	8,751	1	Court Per	N/A	Low
Volleyball Court	4	1	Court Per	17,502	1	Court Per	14,280	Medium
Dog Park	1	1	Site Per	35,004	1	Site Per	27,508	Medium
Playgrounds	16	1	Site Per	2,188	1	Site Per	3,105	Low

1 For agencies serving communities of between 20,000 and 49,999 residents. Source: National Recreation and Park Association, 2024.

2 Source: Parks Master Plan Community Survey, 2024. Priority Investment Rating is an index score based on residents' level of unmet need and level of importance for each amenity.

3.10 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to enhance the availability, distribution, and quality of Foster City's parks:

1. Park Land and Amenity Standards
    - Through the Parks and Open Space Element update, the City can revisit and recalibrate park acreage standards to reflect realistic growth and community preferences.

- Overall, Foster City provides approximately 3.2 acres of park land per 1,000 residents—or 4.5 acres, if paths and trails and open spaces (in particular, the Levee Pedway) are accounted for. This falls slightly short of the current General Plan standard of 5.0 acres per 1,000 residents. Policies can include methods to feasibly add additional acres of parks and open spaces to meet the decided-upon General Plan standard.
- Policies that establish an amenity level of service would help align prioritization of amenities with indicated community desires.

2. Facility and Amenity Enhancements
   - Foster City could consider targeted expansions of high-demand facilities, including additional dog parks and sports courts.
3. Trail and Connectivity Improvements
   - The City may consider promoting policies that support the development and enhancement of interconnected pedestrian and bicycle trails linking parks, neighborhoods, and the Levee Pedway.
   - Policies should highlight and enhance access to and experiences on the Lagoon.

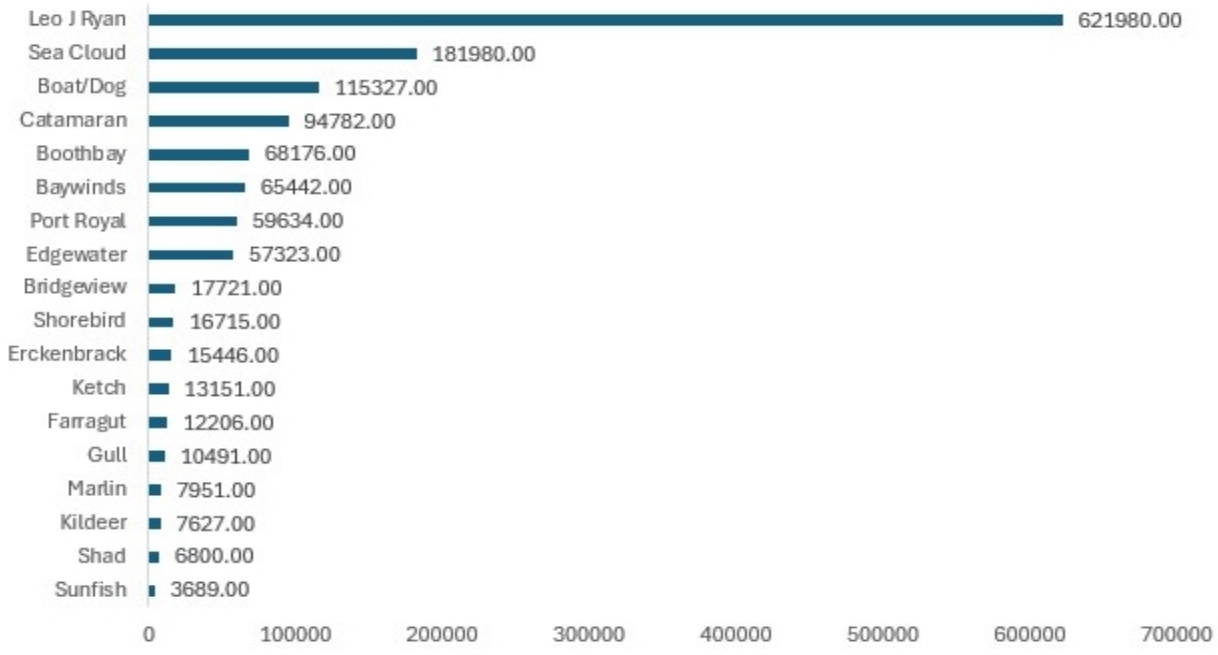
4 Park Usage

Park usage metrics provide insights into visitation patterns, including visitor numbers, visit frequency, and average dwell time. This data was collected in 2024 using Placer.ai, an analytics platform that leverages anonymous mobile location data to analyze how people move through and interact with different spaces.[6] By examining how Foster City's parks are used, insights emerge that can inform future planning and improvements. Findings are summarized below with further detail available in the *Foster City Parks Usage Analysis*.

4.1 Well-Used and Under-Used Parks

High visitation, frequent use, and extended dwell times may be seen as indicators of parks that people prefer, making them valuable models for success. In Foster City, community parks on average saw many more annual visits than other types of parks; per square foot, special use parks saw the highest visitation. Leo J. Ryan Park had the highest number of annual visits at 621,923, which is nearly 500,000 more visits than the second highest park visitation count. This is likely attributed to its many successful community events throughout the year at Leo J. Ryan Park. Sea Cloud Park, which had 181,980 visits, hosts Foster City's active sports users. In contrast, less-used parks—especially when compared to parks of similar size and context—may merit more attention. Among community parks, Boothbay and Edgewater parks saw relatively low visitor levels per square foot at 68,176 visits and 57,323 visits respectively. Among neighborhood parks, Catamaran and Port Royal parks received a high number of visits per square foot, owing in part to the sports fields there, while Farragut, Gull, Killdeer, Marlin, Shad, and Sunfish saw quite low levels of use.

Figure 6 Annual Number of Visitors by Park *(Oct 2023 – 2024)*



Source: Placer.ai

[6] Location Intelligence & Foot Traffic Data Software – Placer.ai

4.1.1 Catering to Residents, Capitalizing on Visitors

Foster City parks primarily cater to residents. However, parks like Baywinds Park and Leo J. Ryan Park, which attract significant non-resident visitation, provide opportunities for cost recovery through user fees, equipment rentals, or other strategies. Other parks with desirable recreation amenities, like Sea Cloud, may have potential to be leveraged for more cost recovery.

4.2 Extending Use

Lighting and shade play a crucial role in shaping park usage patterns, both seasonally and throughout the day. Parks with higher lighting scores in the site assessment (see next section) experience increased visitor activity during evening hours, with a noticeable peak around 5-8 PM. Enhanced lighting can extend usability into evening hours, while adding shade trees and structures could improve comfort and attract more users during peak sunlight. These upgrades could also promote greater year-round accessibility and enjoyment of park spaces.

4.2.1 Understanding Park Users

Demographic analysis highlights the importance of tailoring Foster City's parks to the diversity of its residents. Young adults and Hispanic/Latino and low to moderate-income households show strong park engagement, while seniors, middle-aged adults, and Asian residents—despite being the city's largest demographic group— may be underrepresented. It should be noted that visitor demographic data is inferred based on a visitor's census block group, providing insights into the demographic composition of neighborhoods rather than the specific traits of individual users. These trends underscore the need to maintain affordable, accessible amenities while expanding culturally relevant programming, improving language accessibility, and enhancing facilities to attract underrepresented groups.

4.3 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to optimize park utilization, enhance comfort, and ensure equitable access and representation:

1. Comfort and Extended Use
    - Foster City's parks vary widely in use, from the highly used Leo J. Ryan, Sea Cloud, Catamaran and Port Royal parks to the relatively less-used Edgewater, Farragut, Killdeer, Shad, and Sunfish parks. Policies can propose amenities or enhancements to maximize the use of existing park spaces and encourage use in under-utilized parks.
    - To increase park usage in the evening, the City could prioritize installation of lighting to extend park usability into evening hours.
    - To boost park usage during the day, the City could incorporate shade structures or plant trees with large canopies strategically to enhance daytime comfort.
2. Visitor Management and Revenue Opportunities
    - Management strategies could be developed for parks attracting visitors from outside Foster City, including improved user experiences and the potential introduction of user fees or revenue-generating events.

3. Equity and Cultural Representation
    - Policies could be developed to gain insights from underrepresented groups on what amenities and programming would reflect and support the cultural diversity of Foster City residents.

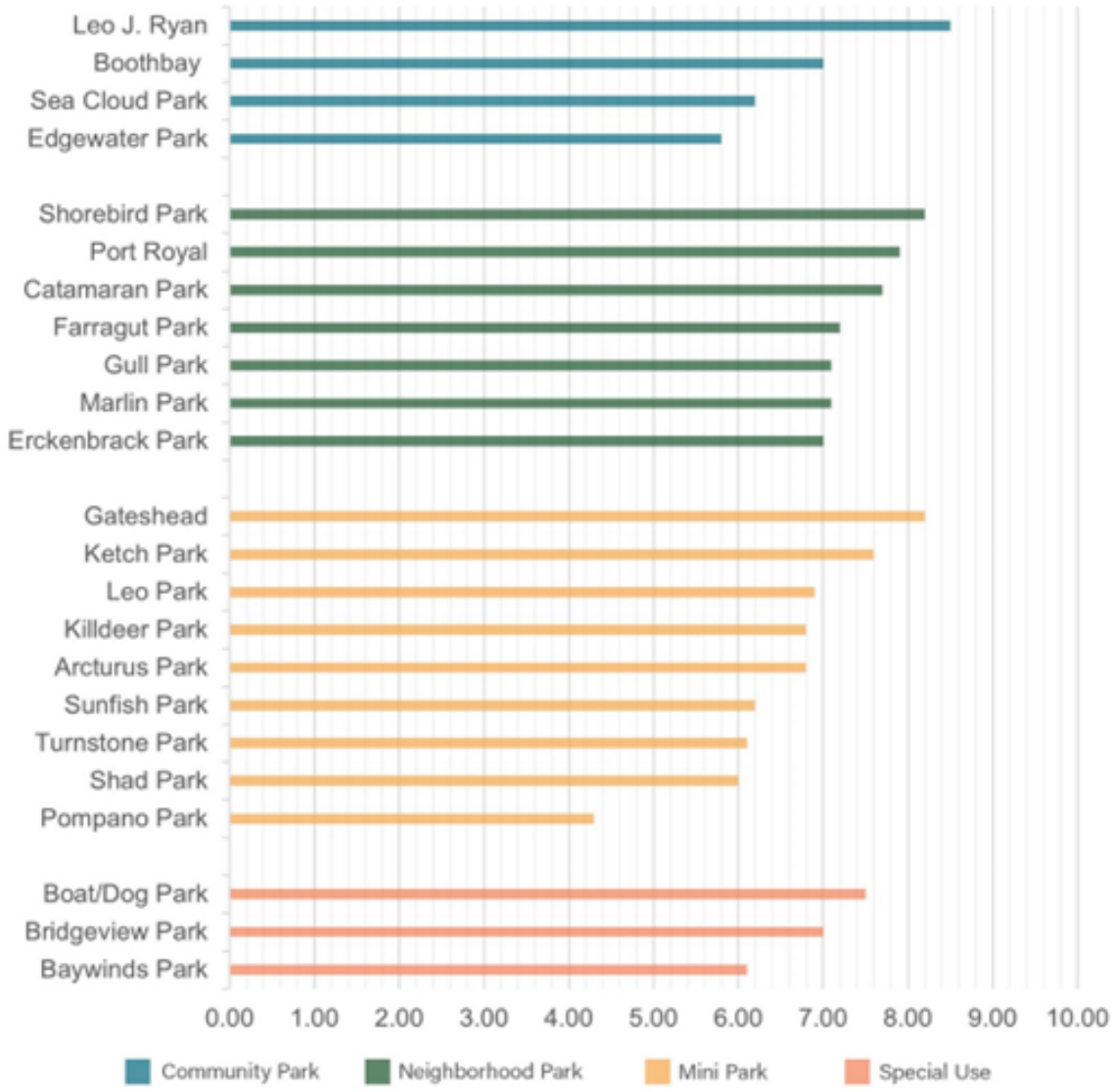
5 Site Assessment

An on-the-ground assessment of each park site was conducted to better understand how Foster City's parks are serving residents in their current condition. WRT evaluated Foster City's parks using an array of criteria, organized into four categories: access and connectivity; comfort and sense of safety; functionality; and condition.

5.1 Access & Connectivity

Access & Connectivity refers to the opportunity to access amenities for users of all abilities. It includes factors such as signage, internal/external path connectivity, safe pedestrian crossings, parking, and more. The highest scoring parks included Leo J. Ryan, Shorebird, and Gateshead, which generally have great internal and external path connectivity. Parks such as Pompano, Baywinds, Turnstone, Shad, and Edgewater scored lower in this category particularly due to their lack of internal pathways, signage and clear edge permeability. Some parks are more visible, while others are located away from roadways and thoroughfares, making them hard to find and access. Not all parks have the same signage. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity rated highly, but there is a general lack of bike amenities, such as bike racks. There is sufficient parking at most parks, but additional parking could be added in parks where large events are hosted.

Figure 7 Park Accessibility and Connectivity Scores

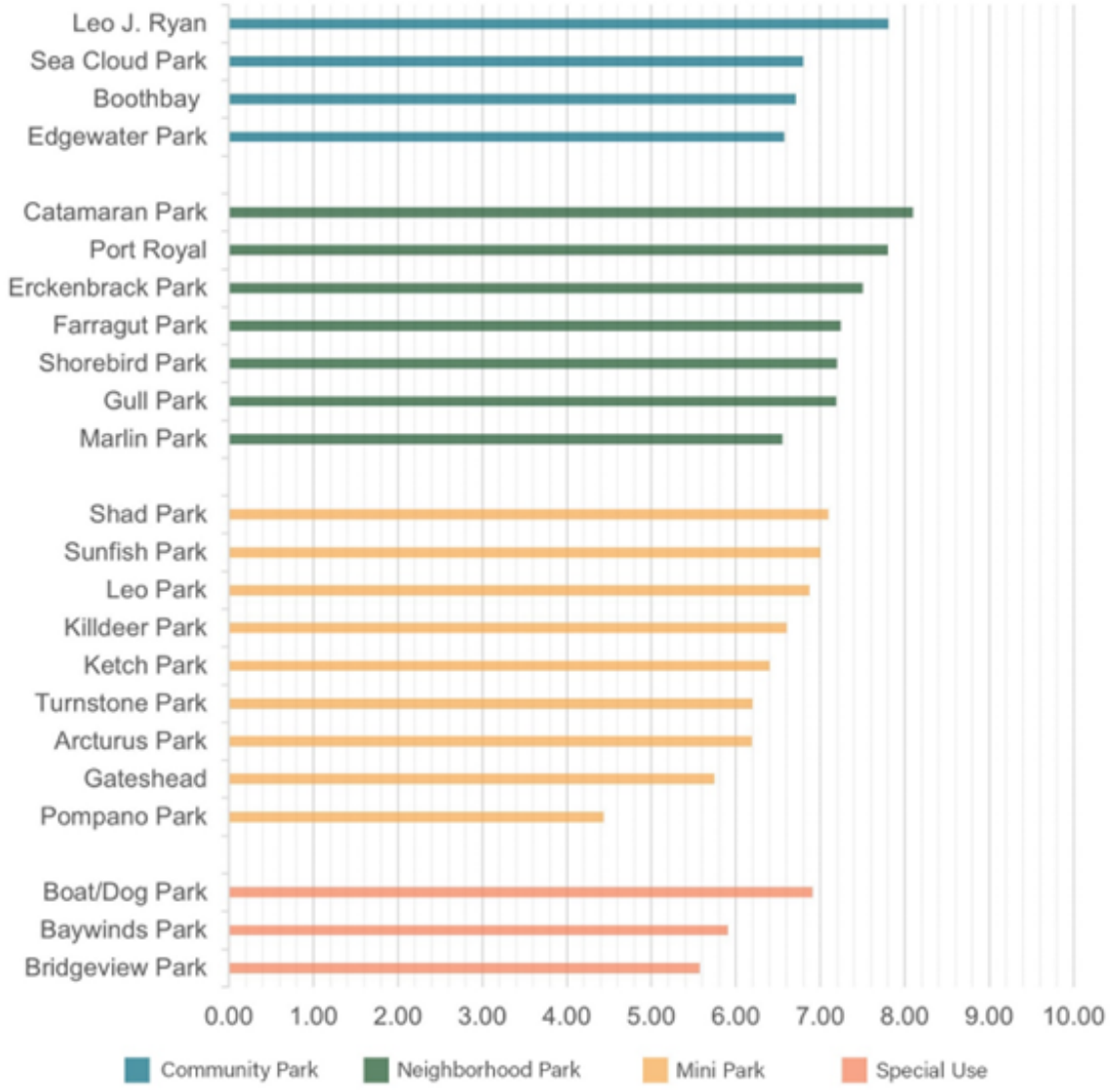


Source: WRT

5.2 Comfort & Sense of Safety

Comfort and sense of safety refer to the presence or absence of comfort amenities such as seating, shade, drinking fountains, and restrooms. This category also includes criteria that affect the feeling of safety within a park, such as unobstructed sightlines, signs of vandalism, and lighting. The City's community and neighborhood parks scored better in this category compared to the mini and special use parks, which tended to have fewer amenities. While most parks are well shaded, there is more shade needed around seating and active amenity areas. Although larger parks had more amenities, many of these were clustered together, leaving areas of the park lacking in shade or places to sit. There is an opportunity to install plantings and offset sidewalks next to busy roads to mitigate noise where it's necessary at parks next to roads. Lighting is inconsistent, with some parks having pathway and sports field/court lighting, and others not.

Figure 8 Park Comfort & Safety Scores

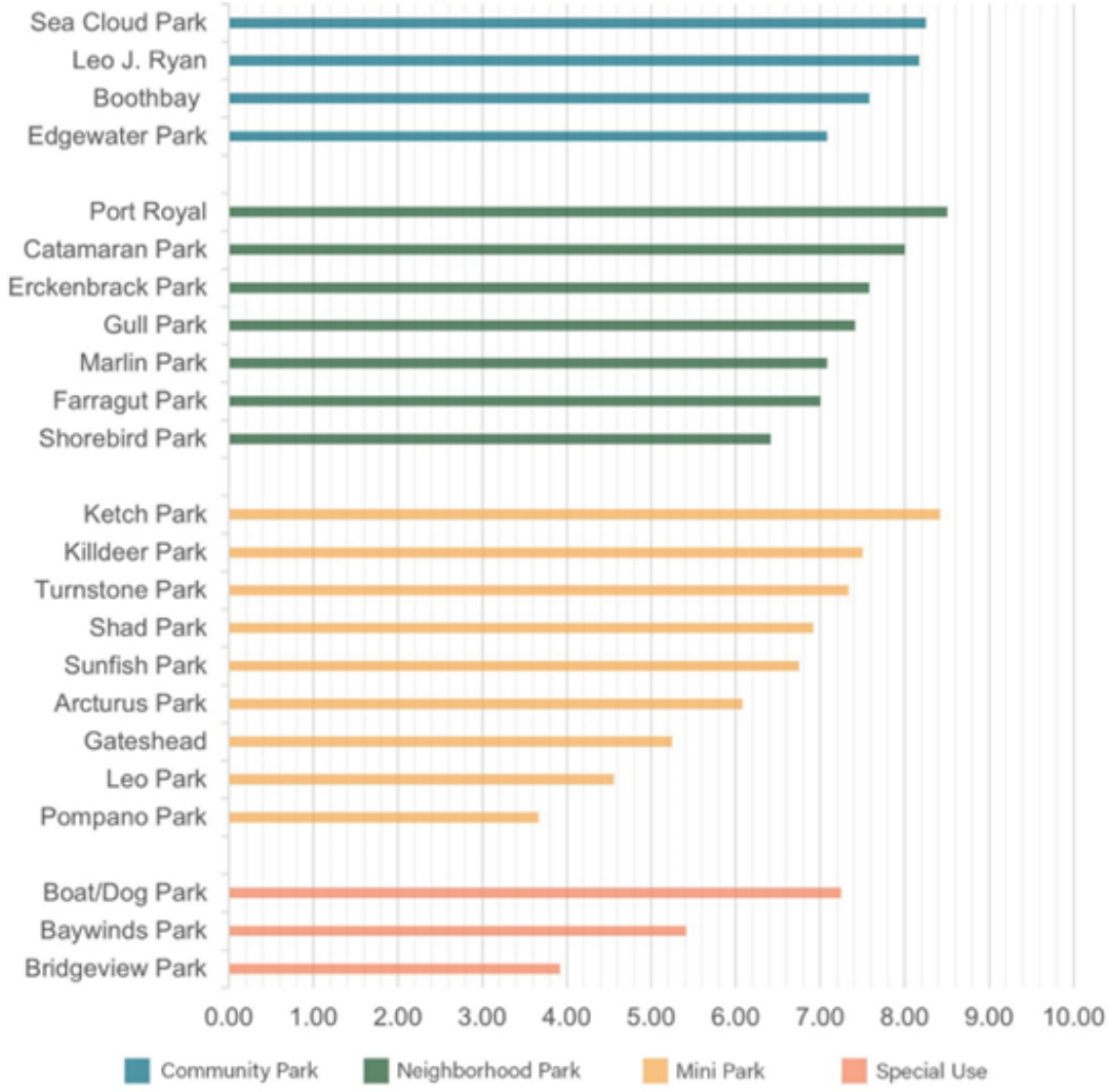


Source: WRT

5.3 Functionality

Functionality refers to how well the park "works" in providing recreation, a respite, and a setting for community life. It includes criteria such as the diversity and arrangement of amenities, appropriateness of vegetation, and compatibility with neighboring land uses. High scoring parks tend to have a variety of amenities (such as Port Royal, Sea Cloud, Leo J. Ryan, Catamaran, and Ketch). Parks with limited amenities scored lower, including Pompano, Leo, and Bridgeview Park. There are a variety of landscapes throughout the park system. There are water-intensive trees throughout the park system, and turf fields are common. There are few parks with distinct, identity-creating planting areas. Meanwhile, the low-water, low-maintenance planting at Shorebird Park may be a model for other sites. Many parks are in quiet residential areas, and fencing and planting provides additional privacy for nearby homes.

Figure 9 Functionality Scores

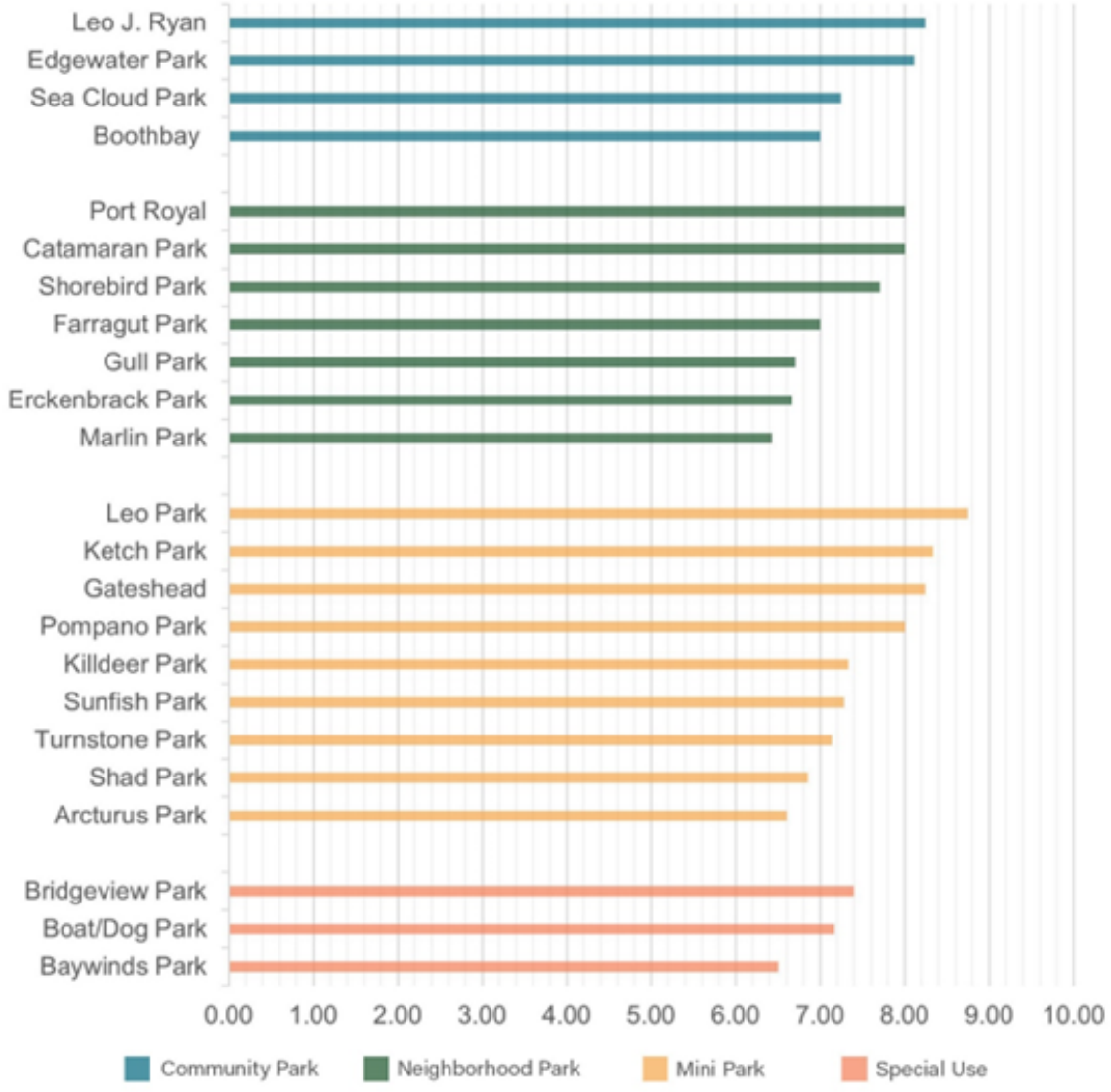


Source: WRT

5.4 Condition

Condition refers to the physical condition of park assets and amenities. The City's mini parks scored the highest in this category. Geese present a significant impact on parks in Foster City; their droppings and feathers diminish the overall cleanliness, especially at sites like Erckenbrack, Gull, and Marlin Park, where there are beaches on the lagoon. Otherwise, sports fields, site furnishings, and playgrounds are generally in good condition. Some furnishings are damaged at specific parks, like Baywinds, Ketch and Shad, and Erckenbrack.

Figure 10 Park Condition Scores



Source: WRT

Photo #5: *Many park amenities are in good condition, especially at Mini parks, as seen here at Ketch Park.* Source: WRT

5.5 Overall

Foster City has a high-quality park system overall, with targeted enhancements needed to elevate park access, experience, functionality and condition. In terms of access, additional signage, improved visibility, and path connectivity are needed at specific parks. Lighting, insufficient shade, restrooms, and seating make comfort and safety challenging in some of Foster City's smaller parks. Parks like Leo J. Ryan offer a diverse range of amenities and well-placed features, but some smaller parks lack sufficient amenities. Enhancing Park amenities and adopting more low-water-use planting areas would improve the overall functionality of the park system. The condition of Foster City parks is generally high, but the presence of geese and some variability in the condition of playgrounds and sports fields need to be addressed.

5.6 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to address park design, infrastructure, and ecological sustainability:

1. Connectivity and Accessibility
    - Implementing unified signage and wayfinding systems in larger parks could increase visibility and support navigability of smaller parks.
    - The City should consider expanding bicycle infrastructure, including additional bike racks and facilities.
2. Connectivity and Accessibility
    - Strategically incorporating amenities such as shade, seating, restrooms, lighting, and water fountains could improve user comfort and park usability.

3. Sustainable Landscaping and Ecology
    - Diversifying plantings could enhance aesthetic value, reduce water usage, and create unique park experiences.
    - The City should integrate drought-tolerant landscaping and water-conserving irrigation systems in park renovation projects.
4. Maintenance and Wildlife Management
    - The City should continue monitoring and improving upon comprehensive management strategies addressing geese populations and their impacts on park conditions and lagoon water quality, as specified in the Geese Management Plan.[7]

[7] Foster City Geese Management Plan: foster_city_goose_management_final_draft.pdf

6 Market Potential Index

The analysis also provides insight into the demand for recreation activities as well as expected consumer attitudes towards these activities by Foster City residents. To better understand demand, ESRI, a spatial analytics company that uses datapoints to visualize, analyze, and interpret geographic data, utilized the Sports and Leisure Market Potential (MPI) tool. ESRI estimates market potential by analyzing consumer survey data and grouping people into segments. They calculate how likely each segment is to use a product or service and apply those rates to local households. Combining these numbers across all segments gives the expected number of consumers in an area. Once this is complete, they compare local usage to national usage to create a Market Potential Index, showing how demand in one area compares to the national average. Higher MPI scores suggest high demand, while lower scores indicate either low interest or limited access. This data, combined with other planning insights—such as demographics, community input, and current park facilities—helps determine the appropriate level of park space and amenities.

Foster City is evaluated in four categories: general sports, fitness, outdoor recreation, and commercial recreation.

- ***General Sports***: Foster City shows higher sports participation rates than the national average in most categories, especially in Golf and Tennis.
- ***Fitness***: The city surpasses national averages in many fitness activities, with the most notable gaps seen in Walking for Exercise, Weightlifting, and Pilates.
- ***Outdoor Recreation***: Participation is generally higher in Foster City for more active outdoor pursuits, particularly Hiking and Road Bicycling.
- ***Commercial Recreation***: Foster City residents engage more in dining out, cultural activities, and photography, suggesting a preference for social and artistic experiences over electronic gaming.
- ***Overall Participation***: Across all categories, Foster City generally ranks average to above average, reflecting strong participation when opportunities are available.

When analyzing Foster City's MPI, it is critical to note that Foster City's participation estimates are not restricted to the city's boundaries. That is, the MPI may consider participation estimates of neighboring communities.

6.1 Recreation Trends

There are notable trends occurring in Foster City that align closely with national trends. Pickleball continues to be the fastest growing sport in America. Total participation for fitness, team, outdoor, racquet, water and winter sports are higher than their pre-pandemic participation rates. Walking is the most popular recreational activity nationwide. Additionally, participation in commercial recreation has risen across the country, including activities such as dining out, attending sporting events, visiting art galleries and museums, and enjoying live theater performances. Given Foster City's demographic trends and MPI, we expect Foster City's recreation trends to closely follow national trends.

6.2 Policy Considerations

The following policy considerations highlight strategic opportunities to proactively respond to evolving community interests and recreation trends:

1. Recreation Trends Monitoring
    - The City may consider adopting a formal process to regularly monitor recreation trends and demographic changes, positioning program and facility offerings to remain responsive to community demand.
2. Targeted Program Development
    - Market potential data could be leveraged to guide investment in high-demand recreation activities such as walking paths, fitness programming, swimming, yoga, tennis, pickleball, basketball, hiking, and cycling.
3. Flexible Facility Planning
    - Policies can be developed to promote flexibility in facility design and programming, enabling adaptive responses to emerging recreation trends and community priorities.

7 Community Priorities

As part of the Foster City Master Plan development, several public engagement and outreach efforts were conducted as follows:

- Pop-up Events: 800+ engaged
- Public Workshop: 132 engaged
- Community Survey: 310 responses
- Park Improvement Questionnaire: 265 comments
- Focus Group Meetings: 38 Engaged
- Project Website: 1,600+ views

What emerged from public outreach and engagement further illuminates the existing condition of Foster City parks and recreation programs, and what improvements can be made.

7.1 Community Outreach Events

7.1.1 Pop-Up Events

The pop-ups involved a booth and simple engagement activities with City staff and consultants at key community events. At the pop-ups, the planning team set up poster boards and invited community members to answer key questions about what park users would like to see in their parks, such as amenities, facility improvements, and activation and programming. There were 7 pop up events and over 800 people were engaged.

Photo #7: *Pop-Up events provided park users an opportunity to engage with the planning process in an informal and relaxed environment.* Source: WRT

7.1.2 Task Force Meeting

The City established a task force to help guide the Parks Master Plan process. The Task Force is made up of Foster City residents who applied and were selected to represent a broad cross-section of community interests and knowledge. The goal of the Task Force is to strategize to inform an inclusive engagement process, identify facility and programmatic opportunities, and develop a vision for what Foster City parks and recreation should look like in the future. As summarized below, the first Task Force meeting was held in October 2024 at the Foster City Community Center, where members discussed the current state of Foster City's parks and recreation, opportunities for updating and expanding parks, and a vision Foster City's parks and recreation system.

Photo #8: *At the Task Force meetings, stakeholders with varying knowledge and expertise offer targeted feedback about specific opportunities for different parks across Foster City*. Source: WRT

7.1.3 Public Workshop

A public workshop was held on January 22, 2025 to engage with the community on analysis findings, to gain a deeper understanding of the City's parks and recreation needs, and to share information about the planning process, including project updates, scope, and timeline. Additional comments were solicited via an online survey and through the Parks and Recreation Committee Meeting in February 2025.

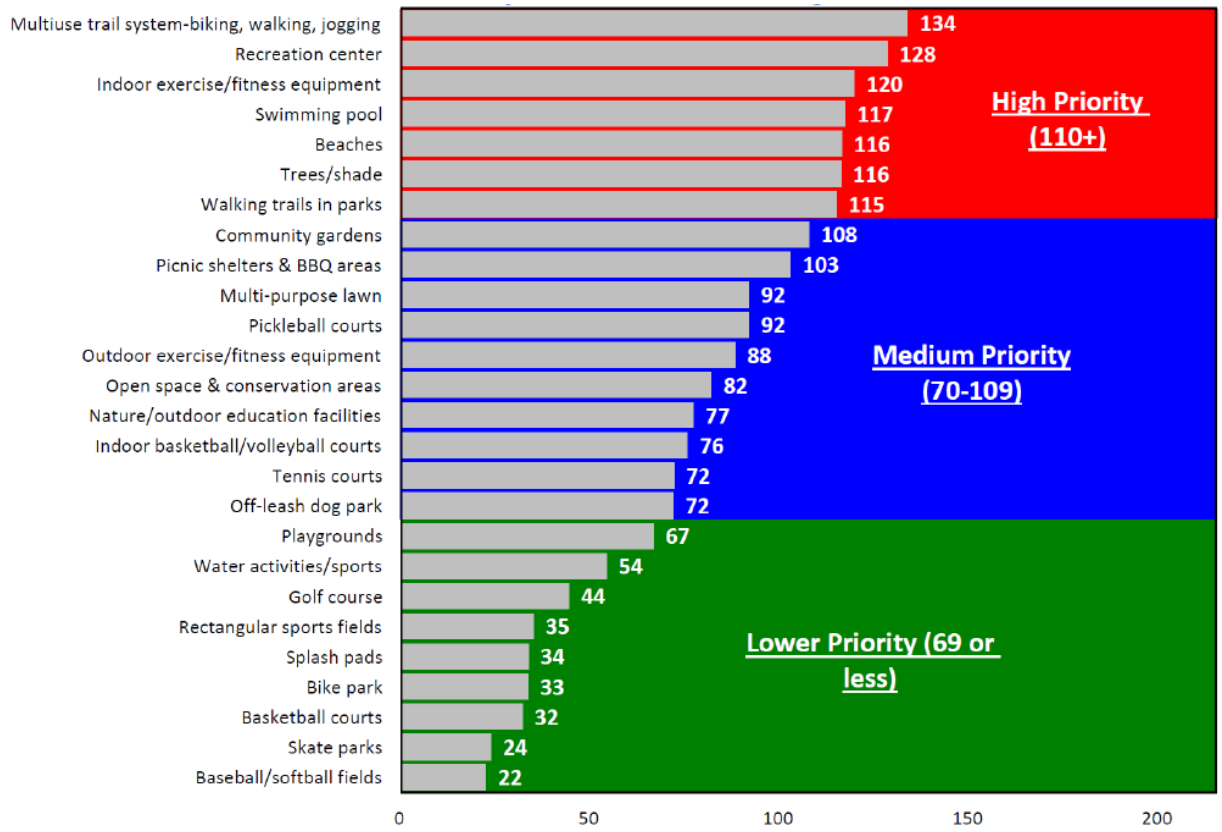
Photos #9: *The workshop provides Foster City residents with an opportunity to meet their neighbors and discuss various challenges and opportunities related to their parks and recreation programs.*
Source: WRT

7.2 Parks Master Plan Community Survey

A Parks Master Plan Community Survey was administered by ETC Institute. The survey was distributed through mail and online to a random sample of households throughout Foster City during the winter of 2024-2025. Foster City residents were surveyed on various park-related topics: facilities and program use, the benefits, importance, and improvements to parks and recreation in Foster City, and facility/amenity needs and priorities. The survey results were compared with the national average for each category. The overall results of the over 300 residents which achieved a 95% confidence level show that the results are reflective of the City's overall population. According to the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, 85% of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with the City's parks and recreation system, which is significantly higher than the national average (62%).

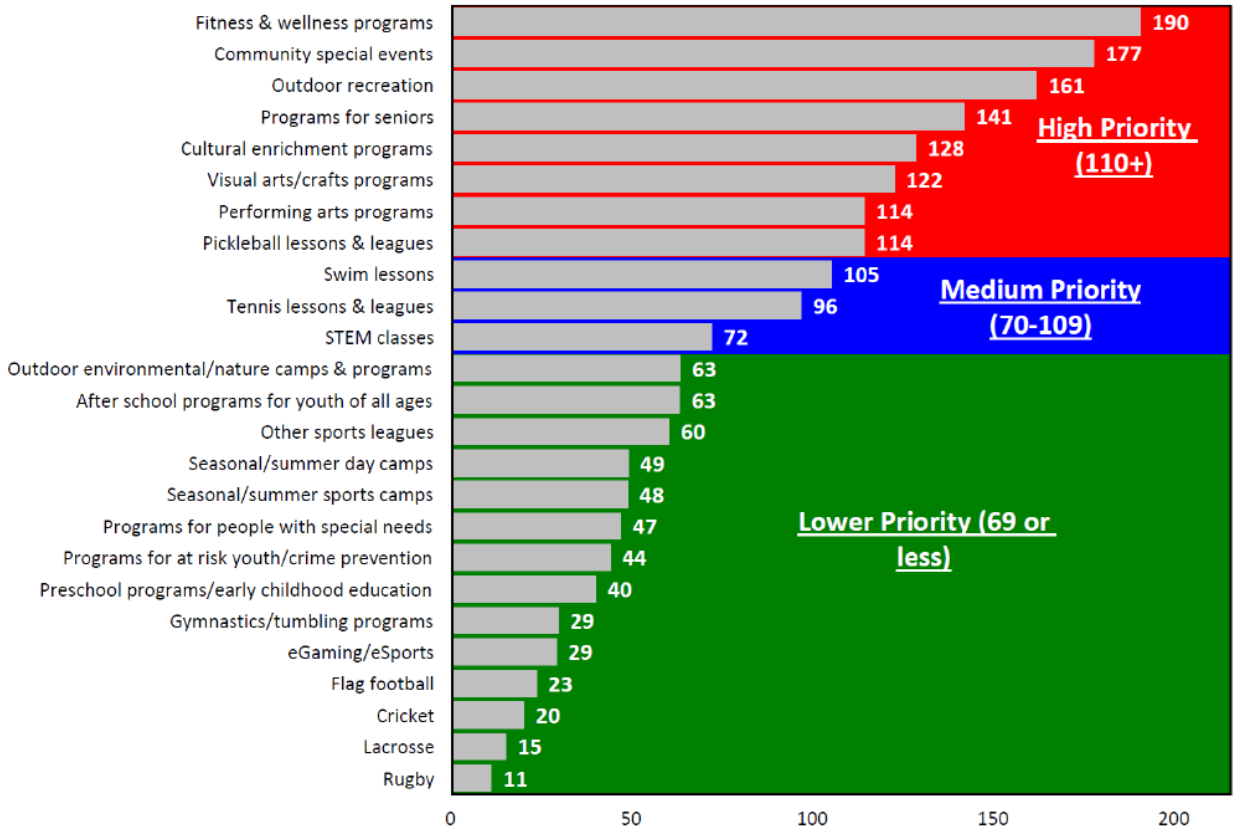
To define what facilities and programs were a priority for Foster City residents, ETC used its Priority Investment Rating (PIR) tool. The PIR equally weighs (1) the importance that residents place on facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facilities.

Figure 11 Priority Index Rating for Facilities/Amenities



As shown on Figure 11, multiuse trails, a recreation center, indoor exercise/fitness equipment, a swimming pool, beaches, trees and shade, and walking trails in parks are top resident priorities. Medium priority facilities/amenities include community gardens, picnic shelters and BBQ areas, multipurpose lawns, pickleball courts, and open space and conservation areas. The lower priority items include facilities that serve less traditional sports, such as a golf course, a bike park, baseball fields, and a skate park.

Figure 12 Priority Index Rating for Programs/Activities



As indicated in Figure 12, top resident priorities for programs and events include fitness/wellness programs, community special events, outdoor recreation, programs for seniors, cultural enrichment programs, visual arts & crafts programs, performing arts programs, and pickleball lessons & leagues. There were three medium priority programs, which were swim lessons, tennis lessons, and STEM classes. The lower priority programs ranged from less traditional sport programs such as rugby, lacrosse, and cricket to nature camps, after school programs and seasonal day camps.

7.3 Community Engagement Takeaways and Policy Considerations

Overall, hundreds of engaged residents have shed light on the aspects of the parks and recreation system that should be improved, added, or prioritized. Key themes emerged from the outreach and engagement process:

Trails & Connectivity

Multi-use trails are the highest priority need according to the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, indicating a desire for additional trail connections throughout the city. In engagement activities, many residents mentioned wanting additional walking loops in parks, and impr oved signage and lighting. One of the more important elements that could be improved is identifying clear guidelines for trail users and installing clear markings to guide pathway users and mitigate safety hazards.

Beaches & Water Quality

Foster City's access to the Lagoon and San Francisco Bay is unique. However, residents indicated several improvements needed to make both waterbodies true recreational assets. The water quality keeps residents away from recreating on the lagoon, and several residents mentioned eliminating the beaches entirely and replacing them with docks for boat access. Otherwise, the lagoon makes Foster City unique and creating opportunities to bring residents closer to the water, such as waterfront dining and public art, is an important next step.

Park Amenities

There is a desire for additional park amenities, particularly passive facilities used to walk, picnic, or relax. Amenities to each of these activities could include trails, gardens, and picnic shelters. As identified earlier, the need for active park amenities, such as playgrounds and sports courts and fields, is being met compared to passive park amenities. But, given the popularity of sports and fitness classes, new and improved courts could be added.

Park Comfort

The community expressed a desire for increased park comfort, through additional shade, restrooms, seating, lighting and more. Many residents expressed how certain parks have unplanned green space, and there is an opportunity to activate those parks with seating and lighting.

Community Events and Programs

There is a strong need for additional programs and events in Foster City. Community events were highlighted by Foster City residents, such as outdoor markets that promote diversity and inclusion or seasonal markets around holidays. Other events included performing arts shows and holiday parades. Additionally, community programs that promote fitness and outdoor recreation is a high priority need, as well ensuring there are ample programs for kids and seniors.

Indoor Recreation and Swimming

Throughout the community engagement process, particularly in the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, there was a demonstrated need for additional indoor recreation facilities and a swimming pool. Without improved water quality in the lagoon, a swimming pool is a high priority for residents. However, if the lagoon's entryways and water quality can be improved, the lagoon could serve as an asset to serve multiple activities.

8 Key Issues and Opportunities Summary

Foster City has a dynamic park and open space network. With 24 parks, several miles of multi-use paths, a lagoon, recreation facilities, and a diverse range of programs and services, Foster City's parks are a key part of supporting livability and creating a healthy atmosphere in the city. In its current state, Foster City parks and open space are set up for success in the future, and there are actionable goals that will help sustain success into the future. This section highlights key issues and opportunities to address community priorities and changing trends.

Figure 13 Focus Area and Opportunities

8.1 Foster City's Park System

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

- **Park Variety.** Foster City has a balanced park system, with a mix of parks serving the whole community (community parks), parks serving neighborhoods and local areas (neighborhood and mini parks), and parks serving specific types of activities (special use parks).
- **Park Accessibility.** The City's parks are well-distributed, putting virtually all residents with a half-mile walk of a park—one of the gold standards of current park system planning. Furthermore, the concentration of community parks and indoor recreation facilities in central Foster City is particularly well-suited to the concentration of seniors.
- Park Land and Amenity Standards:
    - Foster City's Parks and Open Space Element update and parks master plan provide an opportunity to revisit its level of service standards to make sure they are calibrated to align with priorities. The current overall standard would require 40 acres of additional park and open space land—a target that is ambitious but may be achievable with targeted new open space opportunities.
    - The City can establish amenity level of service standards to align with the level of prioritization indicated by community engagement and the Parks Master Plan Community Survey. This may result in a focus on increasing the number of dog parks and pickleball courts, while potentially holding steady or reducing the number of diamond fields and certain other amenities.
- **Recreation Facility Partnerships:** The lack of a gymnasium available for community use may be addressed through partnership with the school district and/or the Peninsula Jewish Community Center (PJCC).
- **Trail and Connectivity Improvements:** There is an opportunity to augment the Levee Pedway with new paths and trails that connect through the city and between parks. Direction may be provided both from a recreation perspective, through the Open Space and Recreation Element/Parks Master Plan, and through an active transportation planning process.
- **Lagoon Activation and Accessibility:** The Lagoon is a very special amenity with unrealized potential. There is an opportunity to support more recreational experiences, through improved access to the water and experiences along the water (e.g. outdoor dining, promenades, relaxation spaces, destination amenities.)

8.2 Park Usage

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

8.3 Site Assessment

Key Issues

- **Connectivity and Accessibility:** Foster City parks generally have successful access and connectivity characteristics. Areas of potential improvement include consistent signage, wayfinding in larger parks, greater visibility for some small parks, more bike racks, and potential resizing of parking.
- Comfort and Usability Enhancements:
    - Some Foster City parks would benefit from additional shade around seating and active amenity areas, and more distribution of comfort amenities in parts of larger parks as well as in mini parks.
    - Most Foster City parks offer a range of passive and active amenities, in a functional arrangement. Some parks, especially the smaller ones, are thin on amenities, and in general, parks would benefit from more unique recreational experiences and planting palettes.
- Sustainable Landscaping and Ecology:
    - Foster City's parks involve extensive water-loving landscapes and will need to be adapted for greater water conservation, especially areas that lack amenities.
    - Irrigation systems in some parks are in need of significant upgrades.

- **Maintenance and Wildlife Management:** While parks in Foster City are in good condition overall, geese are a significant issue, leaving droppings, and feathers and degrading water quality in the lagoon. Issues are highlighted in the Geese Management Plan.[8]

Opportunities

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

8.4 Market Potential Index

Key Issues

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

Opportunities

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

[8] Foster City Geese Management Plan: foster_city_goose_management_final_draft.pdf

8.5 Community Priorities

Key Issues

- Priority Amenity Investments:
  - Multi-use trails are the highest priority need according to the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, indicating a desire for additional trail connections throughout the city. Additionally, residents expressed a need for trail lighting, signage, and safety improvements. Foster City's access to the Lagoon and San Francisco Bay is unique. However, residents indicated several improvements needed to make both waterbodies true recreational assets. Key needs include improved water quality, increased boat access, and waterfront amenities. There is a desire for additional park amenities, particularly passive facilities used to walk, picnic, or relax. In general, the need for active park amenities, such as playgrounds and sports courts and fields, is being met compared to passive park amenities. The community expressed a desire for increased park comfort, through additional shade, restrooms, seating, lighting and more.
  - Throughout the community engagement process, particularly in the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, there was a demonstrated need for additional indoor recreation facilities and a swimming pool.
- **Program Expansion and Community Events:** There is a strong need for additional programs and events in Foster City, particularly ones that promote fitness and outdoor recreation. Additional senior programming was also indicated as a high priority need.

Opportunities

- **Priority Amenity Investments:** Invest in improving high priority amenities that are important to park users and serve the needs of residents, the highest priority facilities being multiuse pathways for walking, biking, and jogging, recreation Center, fitness courts and stations, swimming pool, lagoon entry points, and shade areas.
- **Program Expansion and Community Events:** Invest in expanding high priority programs and services that bring residents together, reach a large swath of age groups, and are seasonally sustainable such as fitness and wellness programs, community special events, outdoor recreation, arts programs, and sport tournaments
- **Enhanced Trails and Connectivity:** Create and expand trails that connect neighborhoods and park spaces together, create more space for residents to walk, and connect to the Levee Pedway and San Francisco Bay Trail.
- **Lagoon Recreational Enhancements:** Re-imagine the lagoon entry points beyond their traditional layout and consider changing the beaches by the lagoon to docks at appropriate locations.

Rincon Consultants, Inc.
180 North Ashwood Avenue
Ventura, California 93003
805-644-4455

April 9, 2025
Project No: 24-16899

Vanessa Brannon
City of Foster City
610 Foster City Boulevard
Foster City, CA 94404
Via email: vbrannon@fostercity.org

Subject: Foster City Parks and Open Space Element and Conservation Elements Update
March Study Session Notes

City Council Study Session #1

Date: March 17, 2025

Councilmember Written Questions

1. How are these elements being aligned with the other GP elements?
   The project scope includes a review and assessment of alignment across all General Plan elements. We began with a thorough review of relevant City and regional policies and programs to ensure consistency and coordination.
2. Question on data sources
   A wide variety of sources are being used, including State and local agency data, GIS tools, City-specific assessments, and more.
3. What specific methods will be used to engage residents that may not be as engaged in civic/govt topics but are personas we want to reach?
   - *Surveys available at multiple pop-up events, in both written and digital formats*
   - *Pop-ups are designed to engage people at already-occurring events or popular spaces, catching those who do not typically come to workshops or public meetings*
   - *Outreach through City communication channels such as the website and social media*
   - *Mailers could be discussed if the City has the capacity*
   - *Translation services were not originally budgeted, but accommodations can be considered as specific needs arise*
4. Are there mapped potential or known wildlife corridors, or will that come from this update?
   We are referencing the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Project map (commissioned by CDFW and CalTrans). The Element will identify current data gaps and suggest actions to improve data availability in the future.
5. What are the growth projections used?
   We are using projections from Plan Bay Area 2040, consistent with those used in the Housing Element.

Additional Notes from Council Discussion

- Noted item on the agenda: water conservation challenge

- Wastewater plant expansion: a joint project with the City of San Mateo, designed to support recycled water use for irrigation and landscaping
- Development of guidelines for a water neutrality growth ordinance for new development
- Suggested community engagement partners include Rotary Club, the Chamber of Commerce, and the senior community
- Community Ambassadors program could serve as a focus group mechanism

Planning Commission Study Session #1
Date: March 20, 2025
Commissioner Questions

1. **Regarding the 30% goal by the State of California to conserve 30% of land and coastal waters by 2030… what percentage does Foster City currently have in this category?**
   The 30x30 goal is a statewide initiative and does not assign specific targets to individual jurisdictions. However, Foster City's preserved areas, such as Belmont Slough, would contribute to this broader goal.
2. **Can the same land be used to meet open space and conservation elements?**
   Yes. Lands contributing to the 30x30 effort can also be counted toward the Open Space and Conservation Element goals for providing outdoor recreation. Foster City currently provides 4.45 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, with a target of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. This target will be reassessed in the Parks Master Plan and General Plan Elements.
3. **How is the levee land looked at? Seems like open space, conservation, recreation and safety.**
   Yes, many areas in the city serve multiple purposes. These lands will be assessed for their co-benefits across different Element goals.
4. **Regarding the Conservation Element… what area does Foster City currently have and what percentage of Foster City does that equal?**
   The Conservation Element evaluates the City's natural resources broadly and develops strategies to maintain their quality. Quantitative assessments are in progress.
5. **How is Foster City doing regarding recycling in relation to the Conservation Element?**
   Waste management and recycling goals can be incorporated into the Element if the City desires.
6. **What is Foster City's water allotment and what percentage of it does the City use?**
   We are reviewing multi-year water supply and demand data. A specific response was provided by Sofia.

7–9. **Status questions regarding:**

- *Water line from Redwood City/Belmont*
- *Third 4-million-gallon water storage tank*
- *Reclaimed water ("purple pipe") infrastructure*

Responses to these questions were provided by Sofia during the meeting.

10. Should we review the 1992 Lagoon Management Plan?
    Yes, this and other adopted City plans are being reviewed for relevant policies and potential alignment with the General Plan update.

General Comments and Discussion Themes

- Energy Conservation:
  - PG&E was noted as a barrier due to slow timelines and additional upgrade requirements
  - Consideration of microgrids and local resilience solutions
- Parks and Recreation:
  - Parks serve as regional attractors, despite originally being designed for neighborhood use
  - Foster City lacks school properties that often double as parkland in other communities—suggested revisiting the original Master Plan to address this
  - Consider offering differentiated amenities by park to enhance citywide access
  - Suggestion to explore corporate sponsorships for park enhancements
- Conservation and Sustainability:
  - Levee provides protection for Foster City, but adjacent jurisdictions without levees may pose risks—need to evaluate cross-jurisdictional implications
  - Discussion of compliance with solar energy mandates
  - Identified barriers include state mandates on water usage, plant types, and lawn restrictions, which may require community education and support for smooth transitions
- Visioning and Long-Term Planning (10–20 years):
  - Optimism for tech breakthroughs in energy and water, with Foster City well-positioned to benefit
  - Ongoing tension between growth pressures and sustainability goals
  - Parks and open space goals should focus on access, shade, biodiversity (e.g., increasing tree cover and species diversity), and use efficiency
  - Specific interest in enhancing the lagoon's ecological function and recreational use
  - Pilot community garden program opening April 1, with potential for expansion
- Notable Park and Land Use Concerns:
  - Bridgeview Park noted for low perceived use—suggested alternative uses
  - Sunfitch Park identified as lacking shade
  - Lagoon-front properties noted as underutilized or blighted—suggested open space improvements as revitalization strategy
  - Preservation and enhancement of lagoon areas are key priorities, especially given commercial and recreational access

Citizen's Sustainability Advisory Committee (CSAC)
Questions and Comments for Study Session #1 Presentation

April 9, 2025

Questions:

Q: The project seems to focus on Air Quality and Water Quality, but what about light pollution, which can disrupt birds and wildlife? A more visible night sky can aid wildlife.

A: It's currently not in the project plan.

Comments

What issues regarding conservation and sustainability are most important to the future of Foster City?

- Electrification and decarbonization
- Climate change
- Leo Ryan Park used to have to look more beautiful, natural, wild, and attract many butterflies –natural habitat is lost
- Concern about the use of pesticides
- More butterflies, more natural things, and more trees
- In comparison to the City of Portland, which looks much more green and natural
- Foster City should become a green city
- The new Foster City School was an example of no trees, no green spaces
- Unfortunately, the soil in Foster City is not amenable to trees and cannot take root because of the salt water and the water table
- Finding trees that can grow in Foster City is a challenge, other than Palm Trees, which provide no shade
- Better understanding of our environment to see what plants and trees can work in Foster City - the shelf life of trees in Foster City is much shorter
- We lost trees in Catamaran Park due to rot
- Increase the walkability around the City and make it safer and more appealing to walk instead of driving
- With rewilding, what does it mean if something is already developed? Can it be changed to a wildlife or a natural habitat or something – like the Lucky's store that recently left Foster City (Understanding that it's private property

What barriers to improving conservation and sustainability currently exist?

- Responsibility for improving the City's natural habitat – residents need more connection to the City

- A leaky pipe at Catamaran Park was left unreported – the City needs to advertise Foster City Access more
- Financial constraints to making improvements

What do you imagine conservation and sustainability will look like in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

- Would like to get back to the original vision that Fosters had.
- Urging more green spaces on private land
- More solar
- Regional connectivity will help us in the future

What issues regarding parks and open space are the most important to the future of Foster City?

- Increasing accessibility to the Parks and open spaces
- That's good, enhancing accessibility.
- Is there a Park Square footage per resident goal we can aim for?
- Urging private landowners to convert unused concrete spaces into green spaces
- We need more natural flowers in the City, but it can increase water usage

What barriers to improving parks and open space currently exist?

- Again, financial constraints
- Apathy and no consequences to the problems facing the City, like Climate Change

How do you imagine parks and open spaces will look in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

- More plants, more butterflies
- Fining people who litter or don't recycle
- Placement of all three garbage bins (Trash, Recycling, and Compost) in the parks with instructions on how to recycle and why
- Updating the Parks for accessibility

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
FOSTER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION AND
JOINT STUDY SESSION BETWEEN THE PLANNING COMMISSION
AND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

Council Chambers – 620 Foster City Boulevard – Foster City

M I N U T E S

March 20, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

   At 7:00 p.m. by Chair Haddad

2. PLANNING COMMISSION ROLL CALL

   Present: **Commissioners Jagtiani, Kenkre, Pedro, Stoveland and Chair Haddad**

   Staff Present: **Sofia Mangalam, Community Development Director; Kevin McGill, Assistant Planner; Nori Jabba, Housing Coordinator; Della Acosta, Consultant Planner; Denise Bazzano, Assistant City Attorney**

3. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

   1. None

4. CONSENT CALENDAR

   1. None

5. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING

   1. None

6. NEW PUBLIC HEARING

   1. A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO APPROVE USE PERMIT REQUEST TO ALLOW A HEALTH SCIENCE UNIVERSITY USE AS A UNIQUE USE WITHIN AN EXISTING OFFICE BUILDING LOCATED AT 989 E. HILLSDALE BOULEVARD IN THE TOWN CENTER NEIGHBORHOOD AND FINDING THE PROJECT EXEMPT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIORMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) UNDER CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15301 (EXISTING FACILITIES) – APN: 094-522-170

      ACTION: Motion by Commissioner Jagtiani, seconded by Commissioner Pedro, to adopt Resolution No. P-4-25 Approving UP2024-0037 subject to the conditions of approval in Exhibit A, passed 5-0-0-0.

7. OLD BUSINESS

1. None

8. NEW BUSINESS

1. None

9. STUDY SESSION

Community Development Director Mangalam recessed the meeting into a joint study session between the Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Committee.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE ROLL CALL

Present: **Committee Members Baer, Bindal, Corpuz, Fong, and Ryzak.**

Absent: **Committee Member Duncan and Chair Tiwari**

1. THE CITY OF FOSTER CITY IS IN THE PROCESS OF UPDATING THE TWO REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF THE GENERAL PLAN, INCLUDING (1) PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT; AND (2) CONSERVATION ELEMENT. THE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT ADDRESSES THE PRESERVATION OF PARKS AND OPEN SPACE IN FOSTER CITY, WHILE THE CONSERVATION ELEMENT ADDRESSES THE PRESERVATION OF CONSERVATION OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN FOSTER CITY.

   THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY SESSION IS TO PROVIDE THE PLANNING COMMISSION, PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE AND THE PUBLIC AN OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS FOR UPDATING THE PARKS AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN.

   Planning Commissioners had the following discussion:

   Commissioner Kenkre asked if the Conservation Element will address the Geese Population Control Plan.

   Consultant Planner Acosta stated that they are in the process of reviewing the plans and how to incorporate the strategies into the General Plan.

   Commissioner Pedro clarified that in order to meet the Executive Order, is it 30% of land and 30% of water, or is it 30% of land and water.

   Consultant Planner Acosta confirmed that it is 30% of land and water.

   Commissioner Pedro asked if the same land can be used to meet both Open Space and Conservation Element.

   Consultant Planner Acosta confirmed.

Commissioner Pedro asked if the levee falls under Open Space Conservation, Recreation, or Safety.

Consultant Planner Acosta stated that part of the update is to look at the multi-beneficial uses and co-benefits of everything.

Commissioner Pedro proposed identifying the percentage of open space and conservation Foster City currently has in the analysis.

Consultant Planner Acosta explained that conservation does not break down into percentages and rather investigate strategies to do better from the baseline. She identified that 'conserving' are things like air quality and water quality.

Commissioner Pedro cited the conservation element and asked if recycling efforts would be included.

Consultant Planner Acosta replied that it can be included.

Commissioner Pedro referenced Foster City's allotment for drinking water and inquired about the percentage of use.

Community Development Director Mangalam reported that Estero Municipal Improvement District (EMID) has a supply guarantee of 5.9 MGD and, per the 2022-23 numbers, Foster City is currently using 3.6-3.7 MGD.

Commissioner Pedro requested a status update on the potential additional water supply that will come from the Redwood City/Belmont area that was referenced in the report.

Community Development Director Mangalam stated that there are currently two emergency connections from the California Water Service and will have to confer with Public Works for an answer.

Commissioner Pedro cited the report, where it indicated two (2) four-million-gallon water storage tanks and a possibility for a third and asked for an update on the third water tank.

Community Development Director Mangalam reported that EMID has four water storage tanks currently.

Commissioner Pedro requested the status on examining reclaimed water or purple pipe for irrigation purposes, which Redwood City had similarly done.

Community Development Director Mangalam referenced the 15-year CIP project that is related to recycled water connection.

Commissioner Pedro identified that the Lagoon Management Plan mentioned in the report is from 1992 and asked if it will be revised.

Community Development Director Mangalam informed that there is a 2022 Foster City Lagoon Management Plan.

Commissioner Stoveland asked if wildlife corridors are only for endangered species or for all species.

Consultant Planner Acosta stated that the law does not specify; however, their team is working with LCI, the State agency responsible for overseeing the General Plan guidelines, to review the technical analysis on that law and to provide a clearer definition for the next study session.

Commissioner Jagtiani raised concerns regarding the delays homeowners face when converting to high-efficiency systems due to PG&E's slow response rate. He questioned if the city would have to step in to expedite that process.

Consultant Planner Acosta indicated that the newly adopted Climate Action Plan addresses these energy conservation topics. She furthered that the data and strategies they have will be in alignment to that plan.

Chair Haddad inquired if the golf course would be part of the study.

Consultant Planner Acosta reported that the golf course is being counted as a publicly accessible open space.

Committee Member Corpuz asked for clarification on the scope of what has been learned about the lagoon water quality and what measures will be implemented to ensure safer and cleaner water.

Consultant Planner Acosta noted that they have been provided with water quality testing of the lagoon that will allow them to evaluate if there's additional recommendations on top of the existing strategies in place.

Committee Member Corpuz inquired about the inclusion of the regionality of Foster City parks, the impact on attracting visitors, and the implications to economic development within the scope of the Parks and Open Space Element.

Consultant Planner Acosta stated that they are looking into park access and will evaluate and review strategies regarding the balance of local and regional use.

Committee Member Baer recommended looking into the original element of the Master Plan and raised concerns about Foster City being taxed for facilities that are not being fulfilled. He referenced the 54-acre plan that consisted of a high school, recreational facilities, and indoor facilities and was to be developed with mostly open space but was abandoned after Proposition 13.

Committee Member Bindal requested a status on the Foster City's current progress toward meeting the statewide goals, like '30 by 2030.'

Consultant Planner Acosta noted that the 30 by 30 goal is a statewide initiative and has been making great progress. She mentioned that in order to meet other mandates, they are focusing on modernization and cited SB 1425 and AB 1889 which is related to open space, climate, resiliency, and wildlife connectivity.

Commissioner Pedro inquired about Foster City's allocation of the San Francisco Bay in regard to open space.

Consultant Planner Acosta clarified that Foster City's allocation is the shoreline and the access to the bay. There will be additional research on marine life in the bay adjacent to the shoreline.

Commissioner Jagtiani suggested a more creative approach to park planning that focuses on serving different needs for different members of the community. He expressed a barrier to infrastructure improvements is the cost and mentioned the possibility of working with the larger companies within Foster City to sponsor the developments.

Summary of staff questions:

What issues regarding conservation and sustainability are most important to the future of Foster City?

Commissioner Pedro stated that water resources are an important part of the conservation element and are important for future planning, building and parks maintenance. He furthered that with 60% reuse of the current water allotment, there is still room for growth.

Committee Member Ryzak referred Foster City's levee and how surrounding cities are not similarly protected. She raised concerns that this may lead to potential impacts and downfalls of reaching conservation goals.

Consultant Planner Acosta stated that the levee data is incorporated into the analysis, including sea level rise, tidal flooding, and groundwater rise and will continue to look at data on those impacts.

Commissioner Jagtiani referenced the net neutrality clause stated on every project brought to Planning Commission. He reiterated his prior comments on State mandates of high-efficiency systems and the need to address how Foster City will comply.

Committee Member Baer identified Sea Cloud Phase 2 as part of the Development Plan for recreation; however, CEQA and other agencies prevented Foster City from developing those areas. He asked if this example fits into the current topic.

Consultant Planner Acosta stated that she is unfamiliar with Sea Cloud Phase 2 but will do further research.

What barriers to improving conservation and sustainability exist currently?

Commissioner Pedro stated that energy conservation can be included in this element. He suggested a microgrid, similar to that of Palo Alto, to allow Foster City to be self-sustainable and provided examples like solar power and wind power.

Commissioner Stoveland inquired if the energy conservation topics will be discussed with the Sustainability Committee as well.

Consultant Planner Acosta confirmed.

What do you imagine conservation and sustainability will look like in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

Commissioner Pedro stated he looks forward to the future and that Foster City has the right things in place, such as great staff, strong elected officials, and an active and involved community. He provided the levee as an example of investing in the future, as far as conservation and sustainability. He furthered that Foster City will have major breakthroughs in renewable energy and water.

Committee Member Ryzak raised concerns on the requirement for growth and balancing it alongside conservation and sustainability.

What issues regarding parks and open space are most important to the future of Foster City?

Commissioner Jagtiani encouraged using the parks more efficiently and effectively, to meet the needs of all members of the community.

Commissioner Stoveland indicated that many parks are in the center of residential neighborhoods and to ensure the right use of the park depending on location.

Commissioner Kenkre stated that he would like to see usage of each park and referenced Bridgeview Park being utilized more for parking for the levee trail.

Committee Member Corpuz highlighted the importance of responsibly acting on key important issues of safety, sustainability, and functionality. He provided an example of Foster City beaches and their water quality as well as the water and recreational uses of the lagoon on a regional level.

Commissioner Pedro concurred that lagoon conservation is important. He added that retail is attached to the lagoon and could play a role in one of the issues regarding waterways and lagoons.

What barriers to improving parks and open space exist currently?

Commissioner Ryzak identified State Mandates on water usage and plant varietals to be a barrier to improving the parks. She stated that as the new Parks Master Plan is implemented, creating a smooth transition and communication with the community is of importance.

How do you imagine parks and open space will look in Foster City over the next 10 to 20 years?

Commissioner Kenkre raised concerns about the lack of wildlife in Leo J. Ryan Park, such as birds and butterflies, sans geese.

Committee Member Corpuz stated that he imagines more trees, shade, and open spaces. He indicated a challenge to be the current use and zoning, such as waterfront properties, but can be further enhanced by the economic development from the Parks and Open Space Element.

Commissioner Stoveland concurred and added that his neighboring community members have expressed a desire for more trees in Sunfish Park.

10. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REPORT

    1. None

11. STATEMENTS AND REQUESTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

    1. Commissioner Stoveland thanked staff for the reports.

    2. Commissioner Jagtiani thanked staff for the reports and reminded everyone that Saturday is Holi.

    3. Commissioner Kenkre stated he had nothing to report.

    4. Commissioner Pedro thanked staff and the Parks and Recreations Committee for their attendance and stated that he's looking forward to the process.

    5. Chair Haddad thanked staff for the report and for the Parks and Recreation Committee for attending their meeting.

12. ADJOURNMENT

    Adjourned at 8:12 p.m. to a Regular Meeting, April 3, 2025, Council Chambers, 620 Foster City Boulevard, Foster City, California.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Planning Commission of the City of Foster City at a Regular Meeting thereof held on April 3, 2025 by the following vote:

AYES, COMMISSIONERS: Jagtiani, Kenkre, Pedro, Stoveland and Chair Haddad

NOES, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSTAIN, COMMISSIONERS:

ABSENT, COMMISSIONERS:

Nicolas Haddad
Nicolas Haddad (Apr 7, 2025 20:31 PDT)

NICOLAS HADDAD, CHAIR

ATTEST:

Sofia Mangalam

SOFIA MANGALAM, SECRETARY