



DATE: September 2, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

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

SUBJECT: OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT PARKS AND OPEN SPACE
ELEMENT AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council, by Minute Order, receive an overview of the draft (1) Parks and Open Space Element, and (2) Conservation Element, of the General Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the 2021-2022 state legislative session, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 1425](#) was passed and signed into law. This bill requires the General Plan Open Space Element to be updated by January 1, 2026, with expanded requirements, including consideration of 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 General Plan 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 began work on updating the two (2) Elements, including the Parks and Open Space Element, and Conservation Element.

Since the start of the process, there have been two (2) reports to the City Council, including:

- [March 17, 2025](#): To provide an overview of the process for updating two (2) Elements of the General Plan and the Community Engagement Plan.
- [June 2, 2025](#): An update on the project status, a discussion on the assessments, including Community Assessment, Conservation and Open Space Assessment, and Parks and Recreation Assessment, and associated policy considerations for the two (2) Elements.

This third and final report aims to provide an overview of the draft Elements and an opportunity to provide comments to staff and consultants to guide the Final Draft of the (1) Parks and Open Space Element, and (2) Conservation Element, of the General Plan for adoption.

BACKGROUND

While a general plan contains the community vision for future growth, California law also requires each general plan to address the mandated elements listed in Government Code section 65302. The mandatory elements for all jurisdictions are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety.

Foster City's general plan consists of the following Elements:

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

General Plan Updates

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

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

ANALYSIS

In order to comply with the adoption timeline established by SB 1425 and AB 1889, on October 7, 2024, the City Council approved the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) for an Amendment to the Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element of the Foster City General Plan. Subsequently, on December 2, 2024, the City Council awarded a Professional Services Agreement to Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) to provide professional planning and consultant support services for an Amendment of the Foster City General Plan Parks and Open Space Element and the Conservation Element.

Over the last few months, the consultant completed a review of existing conditions, evaluated existing parks, open space, and conservation policies and programs, summarized their success and identified their implementation hurdles, engaged the community in a variety of ways, prepared and prepared draft of the Elements. See Fig. 1 for the project timeline associated with these two (2) Elements.

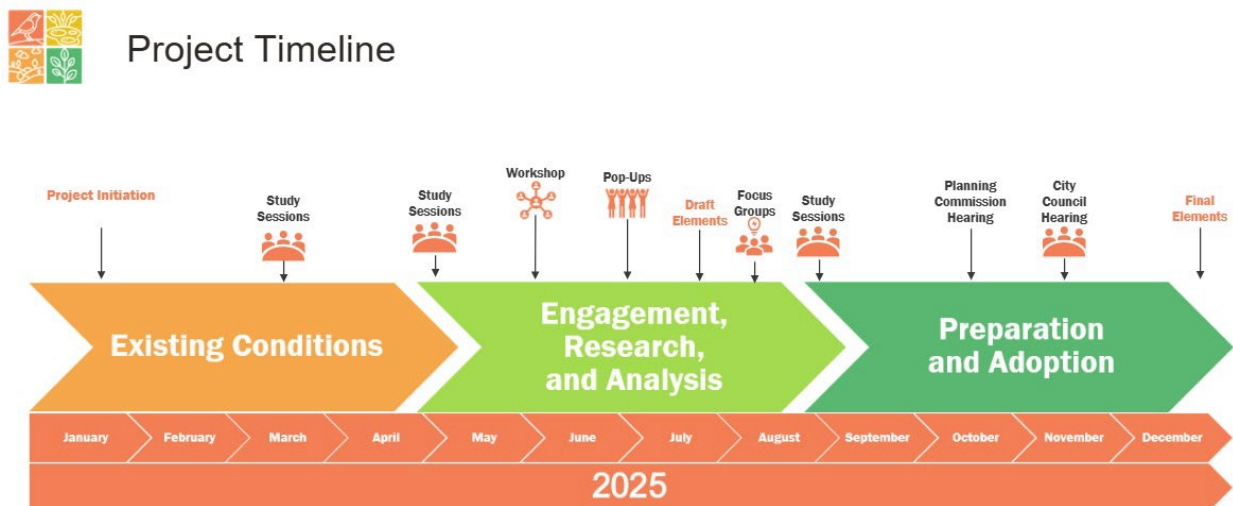


Fig 1: Project timeline

Community Engagement has been a critical part of the process. At the beginning of the process, the consultant developed a strategic Engagement Plan that aligns with the Parks Master Plan engagement efforts but does not duplicate previous efforts and includes areas where the City can partner with the Parks Master Plan engagement efforts.

The goals for public participation were/are as follows:

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

Table 1 outlines the various ways the community was engaged in the process.

Engagement Activity	Engagement Objectives	Target Audience	Date (2025)	Attendees/ Responses
Community Priorities Survey	Expand into WRT's previous survey to gain insight on conservation, open space, resiliency, and equitable access priorities.	All residents	One (1) survey	92
Focus Group Meetings	Collect pointed information on the city's existing conditions and needs	Individual community groups or individuals with interests or expertise related to parks, open space, and conservation in Foster City.	Two (2) Mtgs: Aug 11 & Aug 13	10 groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster City Little League • Bocce Ball community • Cycling community • Peninsula Youth Soccer • CSAC • Rotary • Boating community • Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter • Sustainable San Mateo County
Community Workshop	Gain detailed insight into community priorities, needs, and challenges to parks and conservation.	All residents	One (1) workshop with Parks Master Plan	25+
Pop-Up Events	Allow for interactive, one-on-one input on policy recommendations for the Element Updates	Neighborhood-focused	Two (2) events: June 14 (Farmers Market) & June 25 (Off-street)	35+

Parks & Recreation Committee/ Planning Commission Joint Study Sessions	Study Session 1: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation.	Parks & Recreation Committee and Planning Commission; All Residents	Mar 20	
	Study Session 2: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments		May 15	
	Study Session 3: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations		Aug 14	
	Planning Commission Public Hearing: Hearing to recommend adoption by City Council		TBD	
Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee Study Sessions	Study Session 1: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation.	Citizen Sustainability Advisory Committee; All Residents	Apr 9	
	Study Session 2: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations		Aug 13	
City Council	Report 1: Introduce the Project and Engagement Plan; discuss the city's future for parks, open space, and conservation	City Council; All Residents	Mar 17	
	Report 2: Receive feedback on existing conditions assessments		Jun 2	

	Report 3: Receive input on drafted Elements and recommendations		Sep 2	
	City Council Hearing: Hearing to adopt both Elements		TBD	

OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT ELEMENTS

Parks and Open Space Element (Attachment 1)

The Parks and Open Space Element fulfills the State’s requirements for an Open Space Element while also establishing Foster City’s vision to how its recreational areas, including parks, natural open space, facilities, and recreation programs, are developed, maintained, and enriched.

The Parks and Open Space Element leverages the City’s parks and open space areas as a vital framework for community wellbeing and natural stewardship. It guides the use of parks and open spaces for recreation, social connection, and enrichment, and plays a role in building resilience to natural hazards such as flooding and extreme heat. By weaving these aspects together, the City can enhance livability for all residents and foster deeper relationships with Foster City’s natural environment. This Element focuses on the parks and recreation System, programming and events, operation and maintenance, open space value for natural resources and climate resiliency.

This Parks and Open Space Element is organized into four (4) primary sections:

1. **Requirements:** The draft Parks and Open Space Element of the General Plan is guided by state law, regional plans, and local priorities that collectively aim to preserve natural resources, promote ecological health, and support the sustainable management of environmental systems. Key statutes and policies include California Government Code §65302(e), Quimby Act, Public Park Preservation Act, Senate Bill (SB) 1425, Assembly Bill (AB) 1889 and Regional (OneShoreline, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission, and the Association of Bay Area Governments) and Local Planning (Parks Master Plan and Capital Improvement Program).
2. **Background:** The update process for the draft Parks and Open Space Element included a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions, featuring both a

systemwide analysis that covered the level of service, access, connectivity, usage, and amenities, as well as detailed evaluations of individual park sites. The section includes a discussion on Parks, Open Space, Water Bodies, Trails, Park Access, Park Acreage, Recreation Amenities, Park use, Park Site Assessment and Opportunity Sites. The sections also detail out the results of the community engagement.

3. **Goals and Policies:** The Goals and Policies section defines the City's goals and policy direction in the categories of: Parks and Recreation system, Programming and Events, Operations and Maintenance, Open Space Value for Natural Resources, and Climate Resiliency. There are seven (7) goals and 22 policies included in this section.
4. **Implementation Programs.** The Implementation Programs section outlines 28 specific programs that the City will take to achieve the vision set by the Goals and Policies section above. Each program has been identified with a lead department, supporting department, and includes specific timeframe for implementation.

Please refer to Attachment 1 for the draft Parks and Open Space Element.

Conservation Element (Attachment 2)

The Conservation Element fulfills the State's requirements for a Conservation Element and articulates Foster City's long-term vision for conserving and managing its natural and cultural resources. Within this, it emphasizes environmental sustainability, community well-being, and climate resilience as central to the City's management of natural resources.

This Element outlines the city's environmental setting, highlights unique local resources, and establishes goals, policies, and implementation actions to support their protection, restoration, and sustainable use. It guides stewardship of wildlife and habitat, the urban forest, surface and groundwater, and historic, cultural, and tribal resources. It also supports efforts to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in alignment with state mandates.

This Element focuses on biological resources, water resources, air quality, energy resources, resilience and adaptation.

Similar to the Parks and Open Space Element, it is organized into four (4) primary sections:

1. **Requirements:** The Conservation Element of the General Plan is guided by State law, regional plans, and local priorities that collectively aim to preserve natural resources, support ecological health, and support the sustainable management of environmental systems. Key statutes and policies include California Government Code §65302(d), California Air Resources Board (CARB) and Bay Area Air Quality

Management District (BAAQMD) Guidance, SB 1425, AB 1889, and Regional (Regional Water Quality Control Board Basin Plans, San Mateo County Sustainable Streets and Green Infrastructure Plan, OneShoreline) and Local Planning.

2. **Background:** The process for updating the Conservation Element included a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions; evaluating the city's natural resources, habitat areas, water and air quality, and energy infrastructure; and identifying opportunities to enhance ecological health and climate resilience. In addition, the analysis evaluated future considerations on sea level rise, groundwater rise, extreme heat, and air quality, and highlighted opportunities to enhance biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and equitable access to green space.

The section includes discussion on biological resources, including wildlife connectivity, coastal resources, climate considerations; water resources, including water quality, water supply, climate considerations; air quality; and energy resources. The section also notes results of the community engagement in detail.

3. **Goals and Policies:** The Goals and Policies section defines the City's goals and policy direction. Overall, there are nine (9) goals and 38 policies.
4. **Implementation Programs.** The Implementation Programs section outlines specific actions the City will take to achieve the vision set by the Goals and Policies section above. Each program has been identified with a lead department, supporting department, and includes specific timeframe for implementation. There are 23 implementation programs.

Please refer to Attachment 2 for the draft Conservation Element.

To solicit feedback from the community on the draft Elements, staff have undertaken the following:

- Posting on the [homepage](#) and the [website](#): Aug 8 – Sep 2, 2025
- Focus group meetings: Aug 11 and 13, 2025.
- Presentation to the CSAC: [Aug 13, 2025](#).
- Joint Special Meeting of Planning Commission and Parks & Recreation Committee: [Aug 14, 2025](#)
- Electronic Marquee Sign in Leo Ryan Park
- Newsletter: [Aug 14](#) and Aug 28, 2025
- Table at Summer Days: Aug 16, 2025
- Promotion on social media beginning on Aug 15 and continuing through Sept 2

Based on the feedback, the consultant will make any necessary edits and prepare the Final Draft Elements.

Staff has summarized the feedback from the focus groups and the Planning Commission in Attachment 3.

Next Steps

The Final Draft Elements will then be presented to the Planning Commission during a public hearing tentatively in October, where they will make a recommendation to the City Council regarding the final adoption of these Elements. Subsequently, these Elements will be presented to the City Council in a public hearing for final adoption.

California Environmental Quality Act

This agenda item 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 – Draft Parks and Open Space Element
Attachment 2 – Draft Conservation Element
Attachment 3 – Feedback on draft Elements