



Chapter 5: Parks and Open Space Element

Adopted November 3, 2025

Parks and Open Space Introduction



Boardwalk along the Foster City Lagoon near Leo J. Ryan Park, a central open space known for its scenic waterfront and community gathering areas Foster City, 2025.

Purpose

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 natural and 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 is organized into four primary sections: *Requirements*, *Background*, *Goals and Policies*, and *Implementation Programs*. The *Requirements* section outlines legal requirements for this element. The *Background* section provides existing conditions and key trends related to parks, open space, and recreation. The *Goals and Policies* section defines the City’s goals and policy direction for parks, open space, and recreation. The *Implementation Programs* section outlines specific actions the City will take to achieve the vision set by the Goals and Policies.

Clarification of Terminology

The Conservation Element and the Parks and Open Space Element both address land and resource stewardship in Foster City, but each with a distinct purpose and emphasis:



Park: A developed public space designed primarily for recreation and community use. Parks typically include landscaping and features such as play areas, sports courts, athletic fields, picnic facilities, or community centers. They provide opportunities for physical activity, social connection, and access to nature within the built environment.



Open Space: Land that remains largely undeveloped, often preserved for its scenic, ecological, or buffering functions. Open space may support passive recreation, such as trails and viewpoints, and also contribute to habitat value, stormwater management, and climate resilience. While not always actively used, open spaces help define the character and environmental function of the city.



Conservation: The active management and protection of natural resources—including water, air, soil, vegetation, habitat, and wildlife—throughout the entire city, across all land types. Conservation is not limited to specific areas; it is a citywide approach applied to parks, open spaces, developed areas, waterways, and infrastructure. It includes efforts to restore habitat, enhance biodiversity, improve ecosystem health, and ensure the sustainable use of environmental resources for future generations.

While these categories differ in focus, they are deeply interconnected. Open space and parks often serve as the physical setting where conservation strategies are implemented. For example, a park may include restored habitat, and an open space corridor may function as both a scenic buffer and a wildlife pathway. Conservation provides the guiding framework that weaves these uses together, ensuring Foster City's green spaces support not only recreation and beauty, but long-term ecological health and resilience.

Legal Requirements

The 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 the following:

California Government Code §65302(e) – Open Space Element Requirements

California Government Code §65302(e) requires all general plans to include an Open Space Element that addresses the long-term preservation of open space lands. This includes open space for natural resource protection, outdoor recreation, hazard mitigation (such as flood and fire zones), and the production of resources like agriculture. Additional considerations include open space that supports military readiness or protects tribal resources.

Quimby Act

Government Code §66477, known as the Quimby Act, allows cities and counties to require residential subdivisions to dedicate land or pay in-lieu fees for park and recreational purposes. These dedications or fees are then used to fund new park and open space development in consideration of population growth necessitating additional public open spaces.

Public Park Preservation Act

The Public Park Preservation Act (§5400–§5409) restricts the sale, lease, or disposal of public parkland unless a replacement of equivalent size and function is provided. This protects publicly accessible parks from being converted to non-recreational uses without due process and community benefit.

Senate Bill 1425 (2022) – Open-Space Element: Updates

Senate Bill (SB) 1425 added Government Code §65565.5 to require that the Open Space Element prioritize the multi-benefit use of open spaces, particularly in historically underserved communities. The law directs jurisdictions to include plans and an action program in any update to address access to open space for all residents in a manner that considers social, economic, and racial equity, correlated with the environmental justice policies in the general plan, address climate resilience strategies such as flood mitigation and cooling, and to address rewilding opportunities.

Assembly Bill 1889 (2024) – Conservation Element: Wildlife and Habitat Connectivity

AB 1889 amended Government Code §65302(d), requiring jurisdictions to identify and analyze wildlife connectivity and movement corridors, and consider the impact of development on species movement and ecological resilience. Any impacts and barriers to wildlife movement are then required to be avoided, minimized, or mitigated to the extent feasible. It encourages alignment with State and regional agencies, conservation goals, and efforts in developing wildlife and habitat connectivity strategies.

Regional and Local Planning

In addition to meeting State requirements, the Parks and Open Space Element must be aligned with regional priorities and local planning efforts. On the regional scale, open space planning is often coordinated through countywide or multi-jurisdictional strategies. For Foster City, relevant partners include OneShoreline, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC), and the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), each of which plays a role in guiding land use and resource conservation within the San Francisco Bay Area. These agencies provide policy guidance and mapping resources that help local governments identify priority areas for natural infrastructure, shoreline buffers, habitat corridors, and sea level rise adaptation.

At the local level, the Parks and Open Space Element provides the overarching vision implemented by Foster City's Parks Master Plan and Capital Improvement Program. These documents identify specific opportunities for acquiring, improving, and maintaining parks and recreational spaces in alignment with the vision of the Parks and Open Space Element. The Element also integrates the City's broader environmental goals, such as climate resilience, stormwater management, and habitat restoration by incorporating nature-based solutions and equitable access principles into the design and stewardship of

open spaces. The alignment between regional frameworks and local initiatives ensures that Foster City's open space planning supports both community priorities and broader environmental sustainability goals.

Several local and regional plans and programs provide additional guidance and are referenced throughout this Element. Brief descriptions are provided below to give context when these plans are mentioned.

- The **Parks Master Plan** was developed concurrently with this Element, the Parks Master Plan provides a detailed systemwide analysis of park conditions, recreational needs, and community priorities. It includes site-specific recommendations, amenity standards, and an implementation strategy to guide future investments.
- The City's **Capital Improvement Program (CIP)** identifies, prioritizes, and funds infrastructure projects, including park and open space improvements.
- The **Lagoon Management Plan** provides policies and actions for long-term stewardship of the City's lagoon system, including water quality monitoring, vegetation control, and public education. The Plan also addresses ecological concerns such as runoff, algal blooms, and wildlife impacts, ensuring the lagoon remains a safe, healthy, and enjoyable resource for recreation and habitat.
- The **Integrated Canada Goose Population Management Plan** establishes strategies for managing Canada goose populations in Foster City's parks and lagoon system to minimize impacts on water quality, vegetation, and recreational use. This plan complements the Lagoon Management Plan by addressing a major source of non-point pollution and nuisance conditions.
- The **Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan (2026)** will guide the creation of a connected network of trails and bikeways that link parks, open spaces, neighborhoods, and the Levee Pedway. The Plan will aim to support active transportation, recreation, and access to natural areas.

Relationship to the Foster City Parks Master Plan

The update to the Parks and Open Space Element was developed concurrently with the 2025 Parks Master Plan. These two documents are closely linked; the Parks and Open Space Element establishes a citywide vision and high-level framework to guide the planning, development, and stewardship of Foster City's parks, recreational facilities, and open space resources. As shown in Figure 1, the Parks Master Plan builds on this foundation with a more detailed assessment of community needs and priorities. The Parks Master Plan includes specific recommendations and an implementation strategy to help realize the City's long-term vision and ensure that parks and open spaces continue to support both ecological functions and community well-being.

Because these efforts were conducted in parallel, much of the detailed community engagement and needs assessment from the Parks Master Plan has been integrated into this Element, further strengthening its vision and policy framework for the future of parks and open space in Foster City.

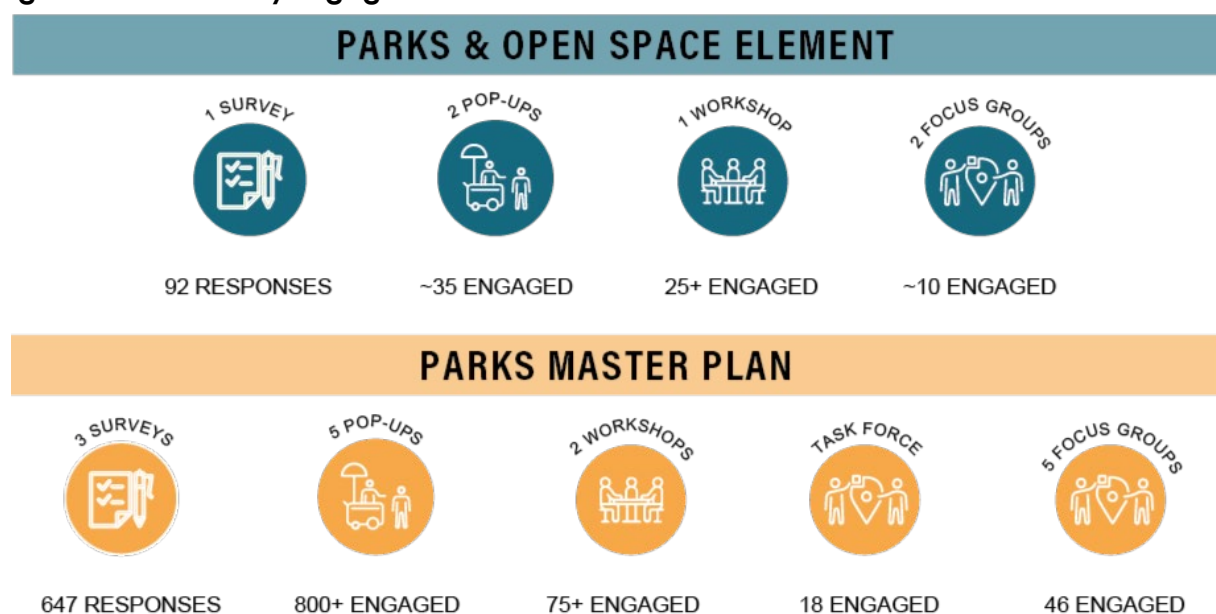
Figure 1 Relationship Between the Parks and Open Space Element and the Parks Master Plan



Background

The update process for the Parks and Open Space Element included a comprehensive assessment of existing conditions, featuring both a systemwide analysis that covered level of service, access, connectivity, usage, and amenities, as well as detailed evaluations of individual park sites. As shown in Figure 2, extensive community outreach was conducted in coordination with the Parks Master Plan, ensuring that the voices of residents and stakeholders guided the direction of both the Parks Master Plan and this Element. Together, the assessment and engagement serve as the foundation for the goals and policies of the Parks and Open Space Element.

Figure 2 Community Engagement Overview



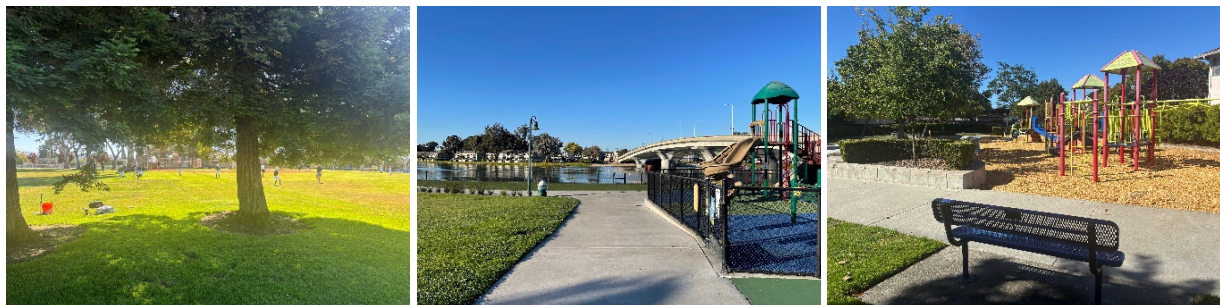
Parks and Open Space System

Parks

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 3, Foster City has approximately 113 acres of publicly accessible parks and open spaces that shape the city's recreational and ecological landscape. Many of these spaces are notable for features such as well-maintained landscaping, lagoon and bayfront views, shaded picnic areas, and family-friendly playgrounds that encourage regular use. The city is anchored by four large community parks, Leo J. Ryan Park, Sea Cloud Park, Boothbay Park, and Edgewater Park, which offer a wide range of amenities such as sports fields and courts, playgrounds, and group picnic areas that attract diverse users from across the community. Leo J. Ryan Park serves as a hub for major community events and is the site of Foster City's new community center. The center will offer flexible spaces and upgraded amenities to better serve residents' needs.

In addition to community parks, Foster City is home to a network of smaller neighborhood and mini parks nestled within residential areas. These parks provide everyday recreational opportunities and are

designed to meet the specific needs of nearby residents. The city also includes three special-use parks dedicated to unique recreational activities such as windsurfing and dog play.



Foster City's park system includes large community parks like Sea Cloud Park (left), popular neighborhood parks like Catamaran (middle) and mini parks that serve local needs, like Ketch Park (right).

Open Space

Foster City contains a diverse range of open spaces that enhance environmental quality and provide recreational and ecological value. In addition to the 24 parks, the city includes approximately 22 acres of publicly accessible open space along trails and 41 acres of open space with restricted access, much of which consists of sensitive habitat along the levee system and protected by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). Public access is generally discouraged as these areas consist of sensitive habitat along the levee pedway. 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. Natural areas like the Belmont Slough offer scenic trails and habitat for wildlife, and the city features the Foster City Lagoon, described further below. The lagoon primarily supports drainage and water-based recreation, and has some ecological value.

Water Bodies

The Foster City Lagoon is a major recreational feature and is central to the community's identity. The Lagoon covers approximately 218 acres, holding approximately 1,300 acre-feet of water, and winds through several neighborhoods in Foster City, fronting many of the City's parks and open spaces. Residents engage in water-based recreational activities such as kayaking, paddling, and boating, and the Lagoon is central to many Foster City community events. Water testing in the lagoon has detected avian DNA, and while the lagoon supports a large Canada Geese population, the results cannot be traced specifically to geese or to any single location. Nevertheless, the presence of Canada Geese contributes to ongoing challenges with cleanliness and maintenance. Outside of designated beach areas, water quality is generally similar to bay water.

Just as important, the San Francisco Bay creates an enhanced experience for people using the Levee Pedway and Bay-adjacent parks such as Baywinds, Gateshead, Shorebird, and Bridgeview. The San Francisco Bay is the largest estuary on the West Coast, supporting a rich diversity of wildlife and plant species. It provides critical habitat for migratory birds, fish nurseries, and endangered species such as the Ridgway's rail and salt marsh harvest mouse. The Bay also offers a wide range of recreational opportunities, including kayaking, sailing, birdwatching, and waterfront trails, making it a vital natural and cultural resource that connects communities to the region's environmental heritage while promoting outdoor access and stewardship.



The Foster City Lagoon (left and middle) and the San Francisco Bay are important recreational assets in the community.

Trails

Wrapping around the perimeter of Foster City’s waterfront edge is the Levee Pedway. This multi-use pathway is a segment of the San Francisco Bay Trail, and serves as a recreational asset for people walking, jogging, and biking. The trail runs past several parks and open spaces while also providing a continuous path without requiring on-street travel. In addition to the Levee Pedway, neighborhood trails provide local connections throughout Foster City. The Levee Pedway and other trails in Foster City are managed by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, which oversees maintenance and improvements to support safe, accessible routes for walking, biking, and recreation.



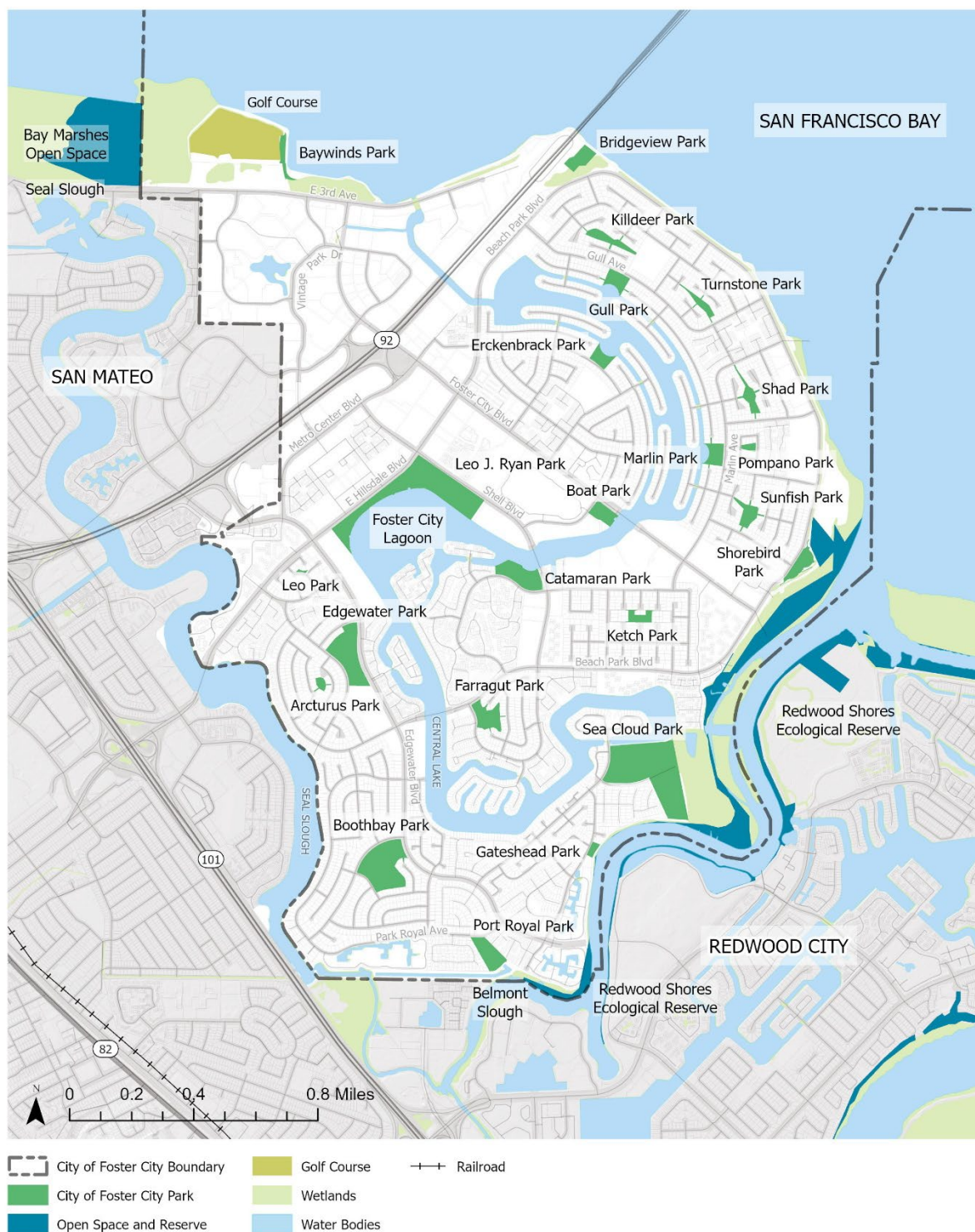
The Levee Pedway (left and middle) is a heavily-used regional route that is supported by the City’s local neighborhood trails (right, source: Google Streetview).

Table 1 Parks and Open Space Inventory

Park	Number	Acres	Major Amenities
Community Parks	4	64.7	
Boothbay		11.2	Playground, Ballfield, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Tennis Courts, Volleyball Court, Restroom, Picnic Shelter
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
Sea Cloud		24	Playground, Ballfields, Soccer/Multipurpose Fields, Restroom, Picnic Shelter
Neighborhood Parks	10	33.7	
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, Beach
Kildeer		2.4	Playground
Marlin		3.1	Playground, Restroom, Beach
Port Royal		4.0	Playground, Basketball Court, Soccer/Multipurpose Field, Restroom, Parking Lot
Shad		2.1	Playground, Basketball Court, Restroom
Shorebird		3.5	Restroom
Sunfish		2.4	Playground, Basketball Court
Mini Parks	8	7.5	
Arcturus		0.8	Playground
Gateshead		0.7	None
Ketch		1.6	Playground, Basketball Court
Leo		0.1	None
Pompano		0.5	None
Turnstone		1.5	Playground, Basketball Court
Town Center Park*		1.1	None
Pilgrim Triton*		1.2	Playground, Picnic Area
Special Use Parks	3	7.7	
Bridgeview		3.2	Restroom, Parking Lot
Baywinds		1.3	Restroom, Shower
Boat/Dog		3.2	Restroom, Boat Launch, Dog Park, Parking Lot
Subtotal, Parks	25	113.6	
Open Space		63	
Publicly Accessible Open Space		22	
Restricted Access Open Space		41	
Lagoon		218	

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

Source: City of Foster City 2025.

Figure 3 Foster City Parks & Open Spaces

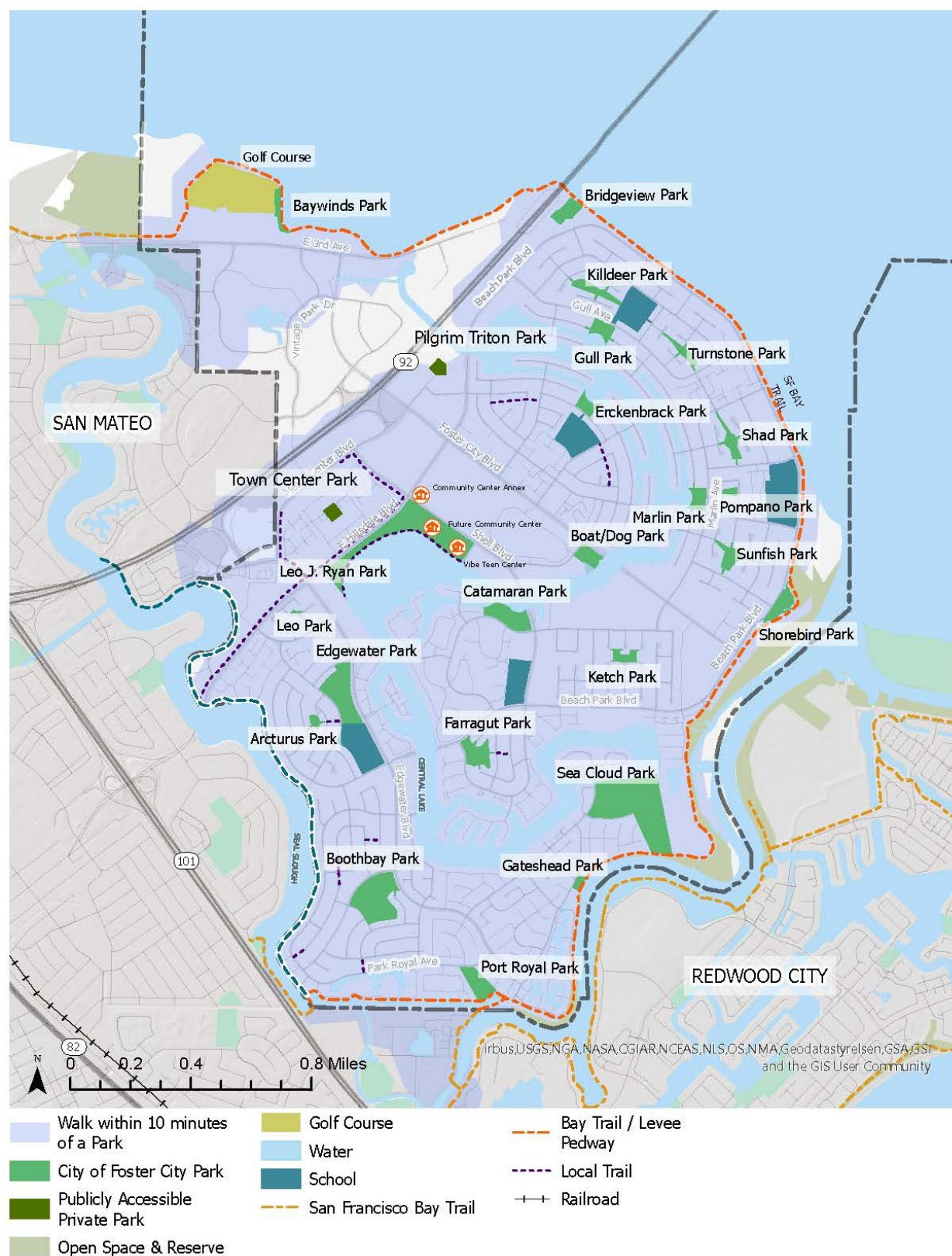
Data provided by City of Foster City, 2025;
CPAD, 2025.

Source: City of Foster City, County of San Mateo Open Data portal, 2024.

Park Access

As shown in Figure 4, all of Foster City's residential neighborhoods are within a 10-minute walk of a park, an aspirational standard that many cities struggle to achieve. While there are portions of the City that are beyond a 10-minute walk from a park, these are primarily employment areas.

Demographic patterns offer insight into how park access and recreational resources can best serve the community. In central Foster City, particularly along the Foster City Boulevard corridor, a larger population of older adults (65 and over) presents an opportunity to enhance amenities and programs that support seniors. Youth, by contrast, are more evenly spread throughout the city, although central neighborhoods overall tend to have the highest population density. Park access is generally well-distributed across all racial and income groups. While Foster City's population is predominantly Asian and/or White, there are no distinct clusters of culturally specific communities that would require targeted outreach or specialized facilities.

Figure 4 Foster City Park Walksheds

Park Acreage

Park acreage level of service (LOS) measures the availability of parks and recreational facilities relative to a community's population, helping promote equitable access and adequate resources. As shown in Table 2, Foster City currently offers 3.2 acres of developed park land per 1,000 residents, which is somewhat higher than the average of similar local communities. The Parks and Open Space Element recommends maintaining the existing developed parkland acreage of 113.6 acres. The City could explore adding additional parkland by exploring conversion of Sea Cloud II site, as discussed in detail below (*see Opportunity Sites*). It shall be noted that the LOS in 2040 with additional growth and without additional parkland would be 2.9.

As Foster City grows, the Parks and Open Space Element also recommends establishing an appropriate LOS balances future housing and community preference.

Table 2 Park Acreage Level of Service

	City Acres	Publicly Accessible Private Acres	Total Acres	Current Level of Service (LOS) (acres/1000 residents)	Local Average LOS ¹ (acres/1000 residents)
Parks	110.6	2.3	113.6	3.2	2.8
Open Space	22.0	0	22.0	0.6	NA
Grand Total	132.6	2.3	135.6	3.8	NA

Recreation Amenities

Table 3 summarizes the inventory of recreation amenities in Foster City's parks, indicates existing level of service for these amenities, and establishes recreation amenity standards based on local and national trends, as well as Foster City's unique needs. Foster City provides a high level of service for most major recreational amenities, particularly multi-use fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and playgrounds. By 2040, additional amenities needed to meet projected demand include at least four pickleball courts, one volleyball court, and four reservable picnic shelters. This analysis focuses on traditional park amenities commonly tracked by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). However, it does not capture other important community needs, such as trails, shade trees, walking paths within parks, community gardens, and more, which were highlighted through community engagement (*see Engagement Results for Parks and Open Space*).

Table 3 Park Recreation Amenity Level of Service

Amenity	Inventory	Current LOS (pop. per amenity)	Local Average LOS 1 (pop. per amenity)	National Average LOS (pop. per amenity) 2	Priority Investment Rating (PIR) ³	LOS Standard (pop. per amenity)	2040 Additional Amenities Needed
Diamond Field	10	3,500	4,878	3,007	Low	4,000	0
Soccer Multipurpose Field	12	2,917	8,212	3,333	Low	4,000	0
Basketball Court	8	4,376	7,294	7,501	Low	7,000	0
Tennis Court	13	2,693	6,151	5,461	Medium	4,000	0
Pickleball Court	6	5,834	9,124	7,737	Medium	4,000	4
Bocce Ball Court	4	8,751	N/A	N/A	Low	9,000	0
Volleyball Court	2	17,502	N/A	14,280	Medium	15,000	1
Dog Park	1	35,004	31,087	27,508	Medium	30,000	0
Playgrounds	15	2,334	3,973	3,105	Low	3,500	0
Reservable Picnic Tables	3	11,668	6,572	N/A	Medium/ High	6,000	4

1 Average level of service for comparable Bay Area communities (Belmont, Burlingame, Menlo Park, Millbrae, San Bruno, San Carlos, San Mateo, South San Francisco). Source: Parks Master Plan Benchmark Analysis.

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

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

Park Use

A park usage analysis was also conducted based on data from Placer.ai and revealed how amenities and user demographics influence visitation patterns, offering insights that can guide future planning, investment, and improvements in Foster City's parks.¹

Catering to Residents and Visitors

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

Extending Use

Lighting and shade play a role in shaping park usage patterns, both seasonally and throughout the day. Enhanced lighting can extend usability into evening hours while being designed to not disturb surrounding residential areas. Adding shade trees and structures could also improve comfort and attract

¹ PlacerAI is an analytics platform that leverages anonymous mobile location data to analyze how people move through and interact with different spaces.

more users during peak sunlight. These upgrades could also promote greater year-round accessibility and enjoyment of parks.

Understanding Park Users

Foster City's parks should reflect the diversity of the community and the varying ways residents engage with outdoor spaces. Young adults, Hispanic/Latino families, and households with lower to moderate incomes tend to use parks frequently, while seniors, middle-aged adults, and Asian residents, who make up the city's largest demographic group, appear less represented in park use.² These patterns point to opportunities to broaden the appeal of Foster City's parks by ensuring amenities remain affordable and accessible, offering culturally inclusive programs, improving language access, and enhancing park features that meet the needs of all residents.

Park Site Assessment



Foster City Parks are safe, well-maintained and have diverse recreational amenities, though key challenges include Geese habitation and lack of comfort amenities.

Foster City parks were evaluated for access, safety, functionality, and condition. Each park was considered from the perspective of strengths and areas for improvement. Stunning waterfront views at Leo J. Ryan Park and the variety of diverse activities at Sea Cloud Park make those parks attractive destinations for local and regional community members. The park system also faces challenges, including geese droppings particularly at parks with access to the lagoon, and a lack of signage and pathways at parks like Edgewater and Pompano parks. Strengths and challenges are summarized below.

² 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.

PARK ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Foster City parks were evaluated for access, safety, functionality, and condition. Using a qualitative approach tailored to the city, it identified strengths and areas for improvement.

STRENGTHS



Safe & Maintained Environments

Most parks are well-maintained, with minimal vandalism or safety concerns.



Diverse Activities in Large Parks

Large parks like Boothbay and Sea Cloud offer a variety of amenities.



Scenic Waterfront Locations

Parks like Leo J. Ryan and Marlin offer stunning views and access to the lagoon.

CHALLENGES



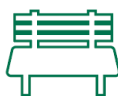
Cleanliness Issues

Waterfront parks, such as Marlin and Erckenbrack, are significantly impacted by goose droppings.



Lack of Signage & Pathways

Parks like Edgewater and Pompano are harder to navigate due to unclear signage and limited pathways.



Limited Comfort Amenities

Many parks lack sufficient shade, seating, and lighting.

Opportunity Sites

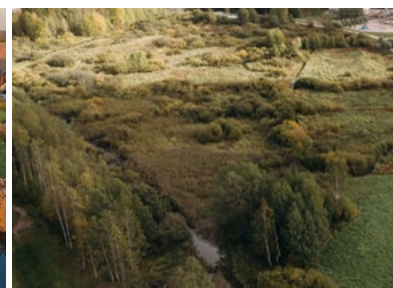
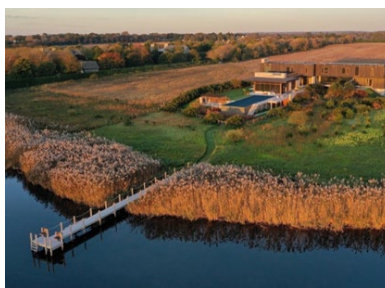
Foster City is a nearly built-out community with a well-distributed park system and relatively limited undeveloped open space areas. Foster City's greatest opportunities to expand recreation opportunities lie in enhancing existing parks and facilities. However, two key sites, Sea Cloud II and the Baywinds area, present unique opportunities to introduce new public open spaces that may both provide additional recreational value and also support multiple ecological and resiliency benefits.

Sea Cloud II Site

Adjacent to Sea Cloud Park lies a 21-acre, City-owned open space known as Sea Cloud II, shown in Figure 5. Designated by the Army Corps of Engineers as a dredge material deposit site in 2018, the area has since evolved into a seasonal retention basin and wetland, supporting a mix of natural and invasive vegetation. In recent years, protected bird species have been observed nesting on-site, highlighting the ecological significance of the area and the importance of thoughtful stewardship. Currently fenced off and inaccessible to the public, the site also lacks direct connectivity to Sea Cloud Park and the Bay Trail. With further study, community visioning, and targeted improvements, it has the potential to become a valuable ecological resource and a recreation asset.

Due to the potential presence of wetland and sensitive habitat areas on portions of the site, the scope of potential improvements is not yet fully known. Additional environmental analysis and close coordination with State and regional regulatory agencies will be necessary to clarify the site's constraints and opportunities. With that understanding, the City could develop a long-term vision that protects and enhances the site's natural features while improving connectivity to the Bay Trail and potentially introducing recreational amenities.

Figure 5 Sea Cloud II Site Opportunities



Inspirational images of habitat restoration and passive recreation including elevated boardwalk, wildlife viewing areas, and docks.

Baywinds Park

At just 1.3 acres, Baywinds Park is one of Foster City's smallest parks, tucked into the northwestern edge of the city along the Bay. The park is popular for windsurfing and attracts people from around the region for that activity. However, the surrounding properties include extensive wetlands, open space, and recreational assets, most notably the 25-acre Mariners Point Golf Center and Driving Range and approximately 25 acres of Caltrans-owned undeveloped land including wetlands. Together, these sites (shown in Figure 6) present a unique opportunity to create a more integrated, nature-focused recreation destination that could support habitat restoration, wildlife viewing, environmental education, picnicking, and other passive uses.

The Mariners Point Golf Center is a valued recreational amenity, currently leased by the City and the Estero Municipal Improvement District (EMID) to a private operator. While the long-term vision for the site has not yet been determined, its future use could significantly influence the area's recreational potential. If the golf course remains indefinitely, improvements could enhance connectivity with Baywinds Park and surrounding open space. If the site is ever repurposed, there may be an opportunity to expand parkland, restore natural habitat, or introduce other recreational facilities.

The Caltrans-owned parcels also represent a strategic opportunity. The City may pursue partnerships or acquisition opportunities that would support site improvements, habitat restoration, and expanded public access.

Figure 6 Baywinds Park Opportunities



Inspirational images of habitat restoration and passive recreation, including a board walk, nature center, and relaxation areas.

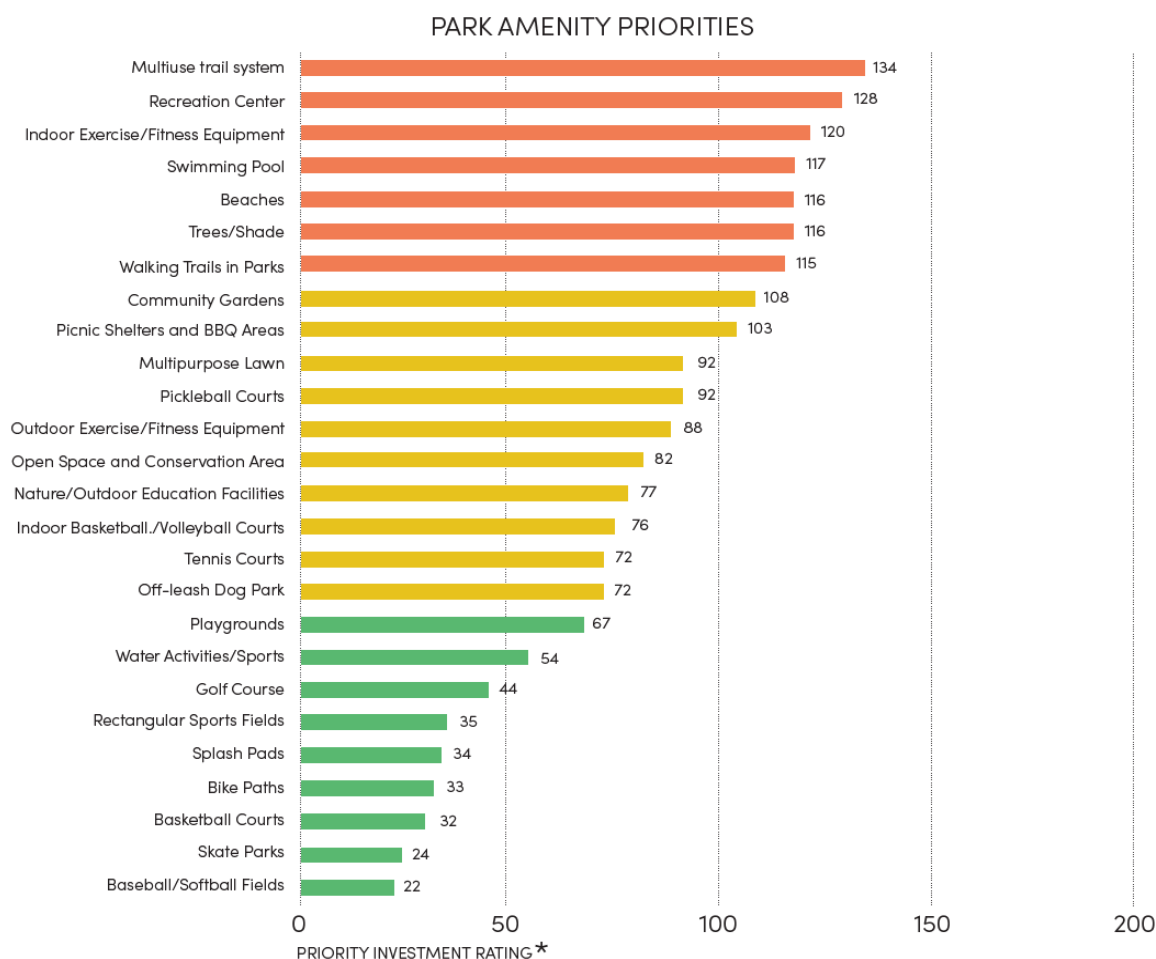
Engagement Results for Parks & Open Space

During the planning process, hundreds of residents shared their insights on the parks and open space system through a variety of engagement opportunities, including workshops, pop-up events, surveys, focus groups, and more. Key findings from these activities are summarized below.

Parks Master Plan Community Survey

A strong indicator of community preferences came from the Parks Master Plan Community Survey, conducted by ETC Institute in winter 2024–2025 through a mailed and online questionnaire sent to a random sample of Foster City households. With over 300 participants and a 95 percent confidence level, the survey results are considered reflective of the city’s population. The survey found that 85 percent of residents are satisfied or very satisfied with Foster City’s parks and recreation system—well above the national average of 62 percent. To identify resident priorities for recreation amenities and programming, ETC used its Priority Investment Rating (PIR) tool, which equally weighs the importance of a facility and the level of unmet need, as reported by survey respondents. As shown in Figure 7, top priorities identified include multi-use trails, a recreation center, indoor fitness equipment, a swimming pool, beaches, trees and shade, and walking trails in parks.

Figure 7 Foster City Park Amenity Priorities



Source: ETC Institute, 2025.

Community Engagement Takeaways

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



- Trails are highly valued, and residents greatly appreciate the Levee Pedway.
- Residents desire additional trails connecting neighborhoods, parks, and the Levee Pedway.
- Trail improvements are needed, including increased lighting, signage, and safety.

Beaches & Water Quality



- Issues with water quality and beach conditions deter recreational use.
- There are opportunities to activate the water through additional amenities, access points, and water-related programming.
- Community members have strong interest in activating the Lagoon's edges, especially through outdoor dining.

New Park Experiences



- Foster City has a great park system, with fantastic active recreation facilities.
- Residents would welcome new features to further activate and increase identity through new and unique experiences.
- There is demand for more passive spaces, such as walking paths, picnic areas, beaches, and natural open spaces.

Park Comfort



- Park users would benefit from more comfortable places to relax and walk through improved shade, pathways, and seating.
- Some highly visited parks need improved or expanded restrooms.

Indoor Recreation & Swimming



- Residents share a desire for fitness, senior, arts, and cultural programs, reinforcing the need for the new Community Center.
- Indoor fitness equipment and a swimming pool are community needs that are so far unmet with current plans.
- School joint-use agreements are essential for the community's access to gymnasiums.

Programming and Events

Programming and events are key elements of park facilities and open spaces in Foster City. Participation is reinforced by the settings themselves: waterfront views at Leo Ryan, shaded lawns at Boothbay, and playgrounds near picnic areas all create inviting environments for both organized programs and casual community use. The City offers a variety of programs and services that fall into the following core program areas:

- **Afterschool Programs:** Provide programming on elementary school campuses on early dismissal days.
- **Athletics:** Foster healthy lifestyles and promoting lifelong wellness throughout the community.
- **Camps:** Full-day camps for children ages 4 to 13.
- **Community Events:** Engage Foster City residents and visitors with free to low-cost events.
- **Lifelong Learning and Wellness:** Various classes offered year-round that provide opportunities for community engagement.
- **Reservations and Rentals:** Rentable rooms and park spaces that accommodate different types of events, meetings and parties.

Serving All Ages

The Foster City Parks and Recreation Department provides a balance of programs and services across all age segments. The Department should continue to provide programs across all age groups and reevaluate program offerings each year with the goal of keeping programs responsive to user needs. Table 4 provides a summary of the various recreational programs offered to different age groups within Foster City.

Table 4 Ages Served by Recreational Core Program Area

Core Program Area	Ages Served						
	Preschool (5 and under)	Elementary (6-12)	Teens (13-17)	Young Adult (18-34)	Adult (35-54)	Active Adult (55-64)	Senior (65+)
Afterschool Enrichment Program		X					
Athletics	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Events	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Facility & Park Rentals				X	X	X	X
Youth & Adult Contract Classes & Specialty Camps		X	X	X	X	X	X
Teen Afterschool Program			X				
Youth & Teen Camps	X	X	X				

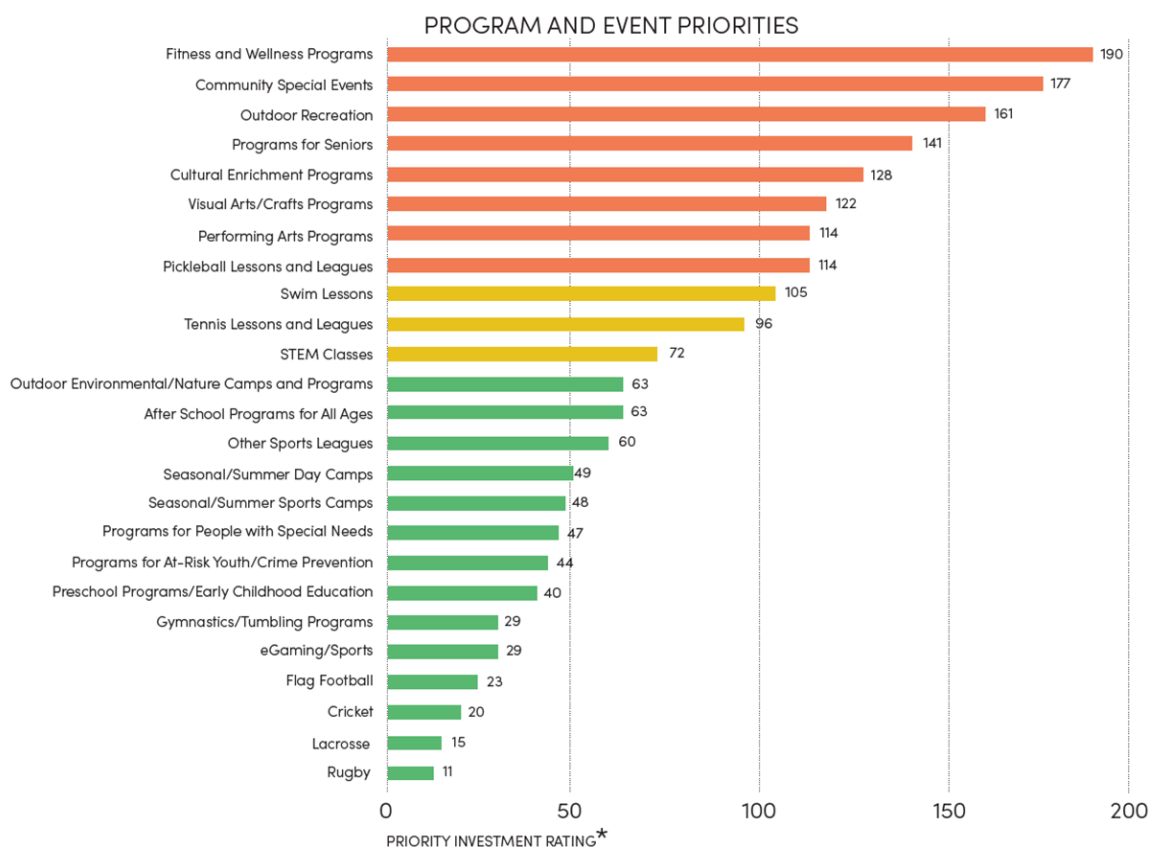
Source: Foster City Parks Master Plan Program and Services Assessment, PROS Consulting, 2025.

Engagement Results on Programming

The Parks Master Plan Community Survey sheds light on community interests and needs for programming and events:

- 46 percent of residents have participated in Foster City programs in the past 12 months, significantly more than the national average of 36 percent. By weighing the importance of a program and the level of unmet need, fitness/wellness programs, community special events, outdoor recreation, programs for seniors, cultural enrichment programs, visual arts/crafts programs, performing arts programs, and pickleball lessons and leagues emerged as top priorities for residents (*see Figure 8*).
- The biggest barrier to program participation was a lack of awareness, with 27 percent of residents indicating they did not know what was being offered. Other top barriers included inconvenient program times (23 percent) and being too busy or not interested in participating (15 percent).

Figure 8 Program and Event Priorities from the Statistically Valid Community Survey



Source: ETC Institute, 2025.

Operations and Maintenance

Maintenance is needed for many parks, facilities, and amenities to promote functionality, safety, and aesthetic appeal for Foster City residents.

Engagement Results on Maintenance

The community engagement process surfaced several key insights related to park operations and maintenance. Feedback from the survey and open-ended comments highlighted both areas of satisfaction and specific concerns that can help guide future improvements.

- **Physical Condition Generally Rated Well, But Gaps Remain.**
While 90 percent of residents rated park conditions as “excellent” or “good,” 9 percent rated them as only “fair” or “poor,” signaling pockets of maintenance issues that may be addressed through targeted interventions.
- **Restroom and Trail Maintenance Need Greater Emphasis.**
An Importance-Satisfaction (I-S) analysis identified paved path/trails, restrooms, and waterways/beaches as the top two priorities for maintenance. These areas had high importance but relatively lower satisfaction scores, indicating strong community demand for better upkeep.
- **Cleanliness and Environmental Conditions Are Concerns.**
Although not always formally listed, geese droppings were repeatedly mentioned in open-ended comments as a major deterrent to park use, suggesting the need for more proactive sanitation and environmental management as part of routine maintenance.

Maintenance Assessment

A Park Maintenance and Operations Assessment was conducted as part of the Foster City Parks Master Plan, analyzing current maintenance practices, staffing levels, service standards, and operational challenges across the city’s park system. The assessment evaluated how the City maintains its parks and open spaces and reviewed key functions such as turf management, irrigation, equipment upkeep, and trail maintenance.

Key challenges that came out of this assessment included:

- **Lack of a Formal Maintenance Management Plan**
While some standards exist, the City does not have a fully documented plan tracking work performance and outcomes by park.
- **No GIS-Based Asset Management System**
The absence of such a system limits the City’s ability to track maintenance needs, costs, and asset lifecycles efficiently.
- **Underfunding of Maintenance Operations**
Annual park maintenance funding falls short compared to the level needed for optimal service.
- **Well-Equipped but Needs Continued Investment**
The City currently has the necessary vehicles and equipment but must reinvest as the system grows to maintain service levels.

Open Space Value for Natural Resources

Foster City's open space network presents several meaningful opportunities for enhancing natural habitat and wildlife compatibility, including targeted rewilding that can enhance ecological integrity and restore natural processes across the urban landscape. Guided by the provisions of SB 1425, the City can pursue strategies that preserve, enhance, and expand habitat areas within and adjacent to developed zones. The City's open spaces are identified in Figure 9, below.

Belmont Slough, which forms a natural boundary between Foster City and Redwood Shores, is a prime opportunity area for rewilding. The surrounding wetlands provide vital habitat for shorebirds and native plant communities such as cordgrass and pickleweed. With portions of the shoreline under the management of the CDFW and others privately owned, there are opportunities for both targeted and coordinated restoration efforts such as marshland expansion, the creation of buffer zones using native vegetation, and formal habitat restoration plans that involve multiple local and regional agencies and funding sources.

Seal Slough, also known as Marina Lagoon, represents another opportunity to support habitat connectivity and ecological health. While much of the slough is managed by the City of San Mateo, Foster City shares responsibility for adjacent areas and could support and collaborate on restoration efforts. Strategies may include riparian plantings, removal of invasive species, and the establishment of small-scale wildlife corridors.

Beyond these tidal and riparian corridors, Foster City's urban parks and landscaped areas offer potential for small-scale rewilding. Parks such as Boothbay and Port Royal could be enhanced by replacing portions of ornamental lawns with native, drought-tolerant plants, introducing wildflower meadows, or establishing gardens focused on native species. Even highly engineered shoreline areas could benefit from nature-based enhancements, such as vegetated buffer strips and boardwalks that improve both habitat quality and public engagement with natural spaces. For additional information and policies on habitat and wildlife management and connectivity, please see the Conservation Element.

Figure 9 Publicly Accessible Open Space

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

Climate Resiliency

Foster City's open spaces also play a critical role in advancing the City's climate resiliency goals by serving as buffers against climate-related hazards and offering natural systems that help moderate environmental stressors. Coastal wetlands and shoreline open spaces, such as those near Belmont Slough and the Bay Trail, absorb floodwaters, reduce wave energy, and space for marsh migration and living-shoreline measures needed to accommodate sea level rise over time.

Mapping of sea level rise scenarios illustrates that while Foster City's upgraded levee provides critical protection against current coastal hazards, the community remains vulnerable to future conditions driven by climate change. Figure 10 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, portions of the shoreline, including parks, trails, and some low-lying residential areas (such as those along Beach Park Boulevard and the fringes of the central lagoon) could experience more frequent tidal flooding. Vulnerability increases further when considering the added impact of severe coastal storms or King Tide events on top of elevated sea levels. Figure 11 illustrates Foster City's present-day 100-year storm surge scenario, which in combination with sea level rise could exceed the capacity of existing flood protection. Such an event could affect residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, critical infrastructure, and transportation routes, including portions of Highway 101.

Preserving, enhancing, and restoring these areas with native vegetation and habitat restoration strengthens their ability to sequester and store carbon, filter pollutants, and reduce the impacts of storm surges on adjacent neighborhoods and critical infrastructure. Open spaces also bolster ecological resilience by preserving habitat for habitat corridors that allow species to migrate and adapt to rising temperatures and shifting ecosystems, countering regional habitat fragmentation in line with AB 1889.

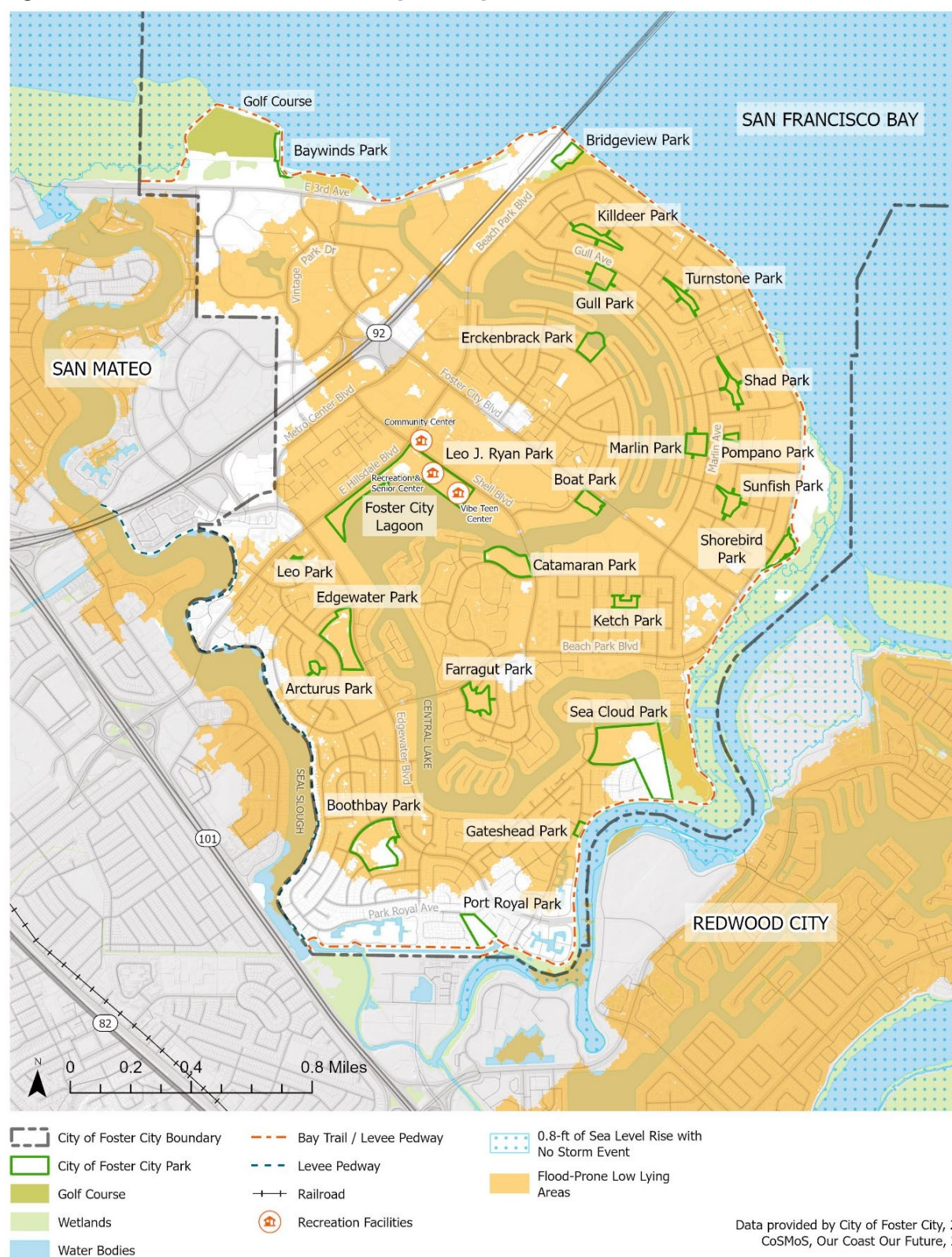
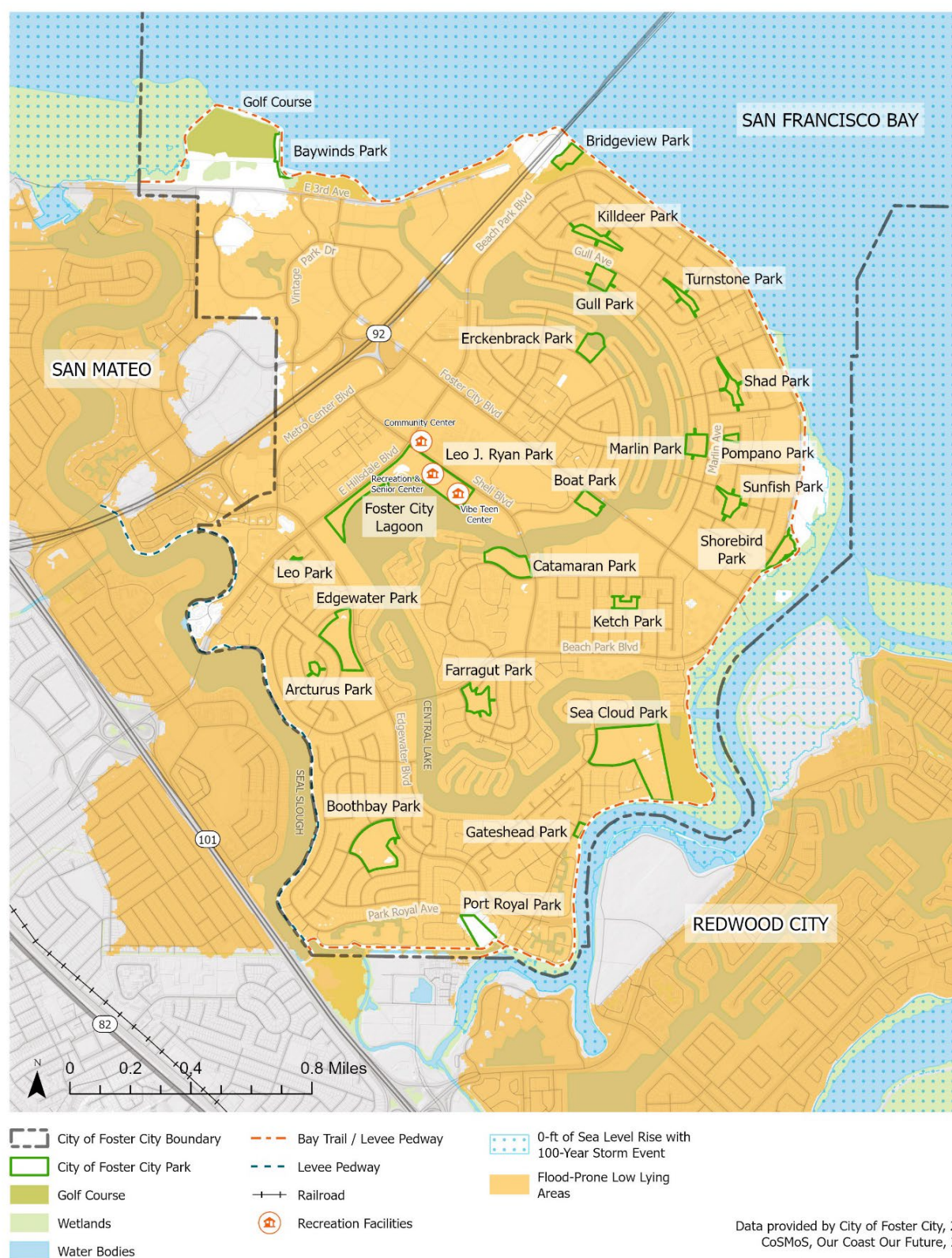
Figure 10 Sea Level Rise Inundation (0.8 feet)

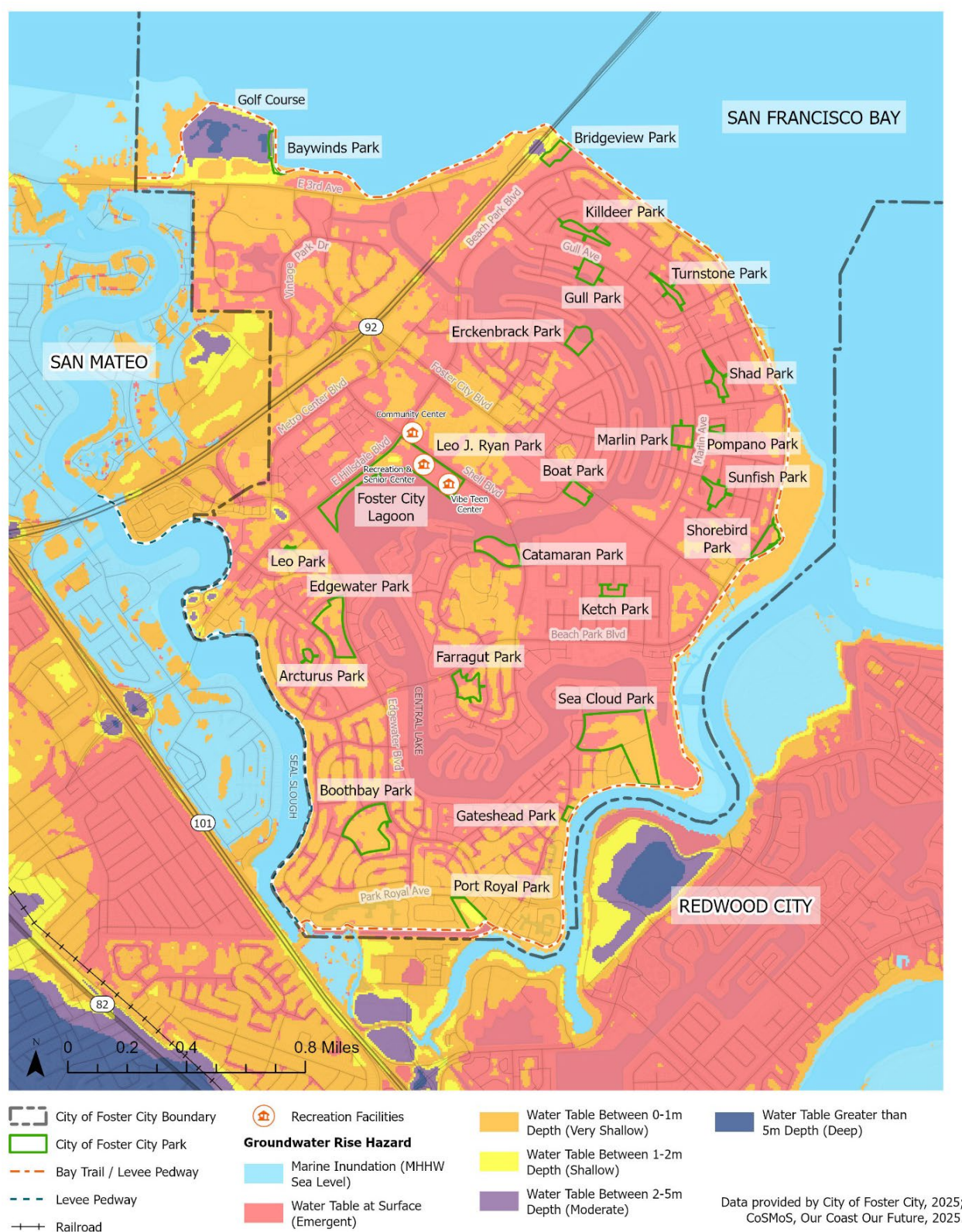
Figure 11 Present-Day (No Sea Level Rise) 100-Year Storm Inundation Risk



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. Figure 12 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.

To strengthen climate resilience and meet SB 1425 goals, Foster City should implement nature-based strategies, such as permeable surfaces, expanded tree canopy, and green stormwater infrastructure, to reduce heat, retain stormwater, and recharge shallow groundwater. For example, native plantings in shoreline parks and undeveloped parcels can strengthen soil stability, support pollinator populations, and reduce the need for irrigation. Meadow restoration and the creation of microhabitats within urban green spaces offer additional benefits by moderating temperatures and supporting localized ecosystems. As climate pressures intensify, integrating open space into the City's adaptation strategy is vital for ecological function and for protecting the public health and safety of residents. These spaces offer cooler environments during heat waves, areas for passive stormwater retention, and opportunities for environmental education that can foster long-term stewardship and community resilience.

Figure 12 Present Day (No Sea Level Rise) Groundwater Hazard



Goals and Policies

Parks and Recreation System

Goal POS-1 Foster City's parks and recreation system is vibrant, comfortable and responsive.

*Policy POS 1.1 **Vibrant and Unique Parks.** Aim for all Foster City parks to be vibrant and have a unique identity, incorporating in-demand and innovative features for evening activation.*

*Policy POS 1.2 **Comfortable Parks.** Support park comfort and appeal by adding or improving key features such as seating, lighting, shade, and restrooms.*

*Policy POS 1.3 **Community Needs.** Strive to make the parks and recreation system responsive to the recreation needs identified in the Parks Master Plan and through continued engagement.*

Goal POS-2 Foster City has a connected and accessible parks and recreation system.

*Policy POS 2.1 **Connected Trail System.** Create a citywide network of paths and trails for walking and biking that is safe and comfortable.*

*Policy POS 2.2 **Navigating Parks.** Promote easy access to and navigation within the City's parks, lagoon, and trails by installing wayfinding signage and creating plans for multi-modal access.*

*Policy POS 2.3 **Accessible & Inclusive.** Promote accessibility and inclusivity in park facilities and programs through universal design and diverse, community-responsive activities.*

Goal POS-3 The Foster City Lagoon is active and well-integrated with its surroundings.

*Policy POS 3.1 **Lagoon Access & Amenities.** Provide places and amenities to view, enjoy and access the Lagoon.*

Policy POS 3.2 **Waterfront Activation.** Increase Lagoon activation through programming and events, improved water quality, and increased water-front activity.

Programming and Events

Goal POS-4 Foster City has lively and inclusive events and programs.

Policy POS 4.1 **Programming.** Invest in high priority programs and services that bring residents together, serve all age groups, and are responsive to community needs and desires.

Policy POS 4.2 **Community Events.** Strengthen community events in Foster City by improving and expanding offerings and collaborating with other recreation providers.

Operations and Maintenance

Goal POS-5 Operational efficiency and economic feasibility are core to park and recreation management in Foster City.

Policy POS 5.1 **High Quality Maintenance.** Continue to support high-quality park and facility maintenance by focusing on key maintenance priorities and investing in maintenance staff, tools, and equipment.

Policy POS 5.2 **Funding Strategy.** Develop and implement a funding strategy to realize the City's vision for its parks and recreation system.

Policy POS 5.3 **Plan and Engage Proactively.** Promote long-term success through regular planning, transparent reporting, and ongoing community engagement.

Open Space Value for Natural Resources

Goal POS-6 Foster City's parks and open spaces support native biodiversity, climate resilience, and ecological function through targeted rewilding, habitat restoration, and nature-based solutions.

Policy POS 6.1 **Urban Rewilding.** Implement urban rewilding projects to reintroduce natural processes, restore natural ecosystems, and promote biodiversity.

Policy POS 6.2 **Habitat Linkages.** Prioritize rewilding in areas that enhance or create new habitat linkages and corridors for wildlife movement.)

Policy POS 6.3 **Resilient Landscaping.** Prioritize the use of native, drought-tolerant, and climate-resilient vegetation in existing parks and landscaped open

spaces to enhance habitat value, reduce water demand, and support pollinators.

Policy POS 6.4 **Ecologically Beneficial Features.** Integrate ecologically beneficial features, such as pollinator gardens, wildflower meadows, bioswales, and native plant corridors, into public parks, medians, and along trail networks.

Policy POS 6.5 **Community Participation.** Encourage inclusive community participation in habitat restoration through stewardship programs, youth engagement, and interpretive signage in rewilded open spaces.

Climate Resiliency

Goal POS-7 Foster City's open space network is adaptively managed to strengthen resilience to climate change impacts, including sea level rise, extreme heat, and flood risk.

Policy POS 7.1 **Multi-benefit Prioritization.** Prioritize the preservation and restoration of undeveloped open spaces and natural areas that provide multi-benefit climate services, including flood protection, carbon sequestration, heat reduction, and habitat connectivity, particularly in underserved areas.

Policy POS 7.2 **Climate Data Integration.** Integrate future climate scenarios, such as sea level rise, groundwater rise, and extreme heat, into open space design, planning, and management decisions to support ecological resilience, adaptive capacity, and equitable public access.

Policy POS 7.3 **Green Streets.** Encourage the use of "green streets" that incorporate native vegetation, permeable surfaces, and stormwater features to enhance habitat and reduce runoff.

Policy POS 7.4 **Green Infrastructure.** Support the development of rooftop gardens, vertical greenery, and other integrated green infrastructure that enhances biodiversity and reduces energy use.

Implementation Programs

Number	Program	Lead Department	Supporting Department(s)	Timeframe ¹	Implements Policy(ies)
POS-a	Enhance park activation and identity by reprogramming underutilized park spaces with in-demand or innovative park amenities/experiences, referencing the park-specific improvements identified in the Parks Master Plan.	Parks and Recreation		Ongoing	POS-1.1
POS-b	As part of future park improvement and maintenance projects, support the expansion of passive amenities such as walking trails, picnic areas, and natural open spaces.	Parks and Recreation	Public Works	Ongoing	POS-1.1
POS-c	As part of future park improvement and maintenance projects, seek opportunities to increase shade in parks by planting trees and/or constructing shade structures, particularly at playgrounds and picnic areas.	Parks and Recreation	Public Works	Ongoing	POS-1.2
POS-d	Add or improve seating, lighting, water fountains/refill stations, trash receptacles, restrooms, and bike racks to all parks where needed.	Parks and Recreation	Public Works	Long-term	POS-1.2
POS-e	Explore opportunities to expand access to indoor recreation and swimming facilities by pursuing or strengthening partnerships with San Mateo-Foster City School District and private recreation providers.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Ongoing	POS-1.3
POS-f	As Foster City grows, the City will continue to maintain the existing developed parkland of 113.6 acres in Foster City.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Long-term	POS-1.3
POS-g	Determine an appropriate LOS that balances future housing and community preference and make necessary edits to Chapter 16.36 Parks and Recreation Facilities of Foster City Municipal Code.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Mid-term	POS-1.3
POS-h	Conduct a study of open space opportunity areas to assess their environmental constraints and natural assets. Use these insights to create a master plan that balances ecological restoration with expanded recreational access and amenities.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Short-term	POS-1.3
POS-i	Explore opportunities for creating a network of paths and trails that connect existing city parks, trails, and community destinations. Work cross-departmentally to implement the Bike Pedestrian Master Plan 2026.	Public Works	Community Development/Parks and Recreation	Long-term	POS-2.1
POS-j	Consider additional improvements to the Levee Peway, including distance markers, signage, and lighting, to create comfortable conditions for all trail users.	Public Works	Parks and Recreation/Community Development	Long-term	POS-2.1

Number	Program	Lead Department	Supporting Department(s)	Timeframe ¹	Implements Policy(ies)
POS-k	Explore strategies for establishing clear and consistent signage across the park and recreation system.	Parks and Recreation		Long-term	POS-2.2
POS-l	Enhance ADA-compliant access at all parks.	Parks and Recreation	Public Works	Long-term	POS-2.3
POS-m	Promote cross-cultural and multi-generational programming and facilities, recognizing the full diversity of Foster City residents.	Parks and Recreation		Ongoing	POS-2.3
POS-n	Explore opportunities to enhance the integration of the design of lagoon-adjacent parks with the lagoon, providing places to view, enjoy, and access the water, including boat docking opportunities.	Parks and Recreation		Long-term	POS-3.1
POS-o	Collaborate across departments to continue to implement the Lagoon Water Quality Management Plan and Canada Goose Population Management Plan to improve cleanliness of lagoon-adjacent parks and lagoon water quality.	Public Works	Parks and Recreation	Mid-term	POS-3.2
POS-p	Support land use regulatory changes to encourage public access and activation along the lagoon as part of future development.	Community Development	Parks and Recreation	Mid-term	POS-3.2
POS-q	Continue to support the use of the lagoon for community events such as regattas, performances, etc.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Ongoing	POS-3.2
POS-r	Explore opportunities to activate recreational use of the lagoon.	Parks and Recreation		Mid-term	POS-3.2
POS-s	Pursue opportunities to expand high-demand recreational programs/events that serve residents of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds.	Parks and Recreation		Mid-term	POS-4.1
POS-t	Continue to support and expand special events that activate community parks in all seasons.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Ongoing	POS-4.2
POS-u	Complement and connect with other recreation providers and event sponsors, developing partnerships when advantageous.	Parks and Recreation		Ongoing	POS-4.2
POS-v	Encourage the dedication of staff resources to help identify and secure funding that supports park improvements, maintenance, and recreation programming and events.	Parks and Recreation		Ongoing	POS-5.3
POS-w	Continue to foster the provision of high-quality parks and recreation services through the strategic allocation of funds for recreation programming, park/facility maintenance, and lifecycle improvements to maintain consistent financial support for meeting accepted service levels.	Parks and Recreation		Ongoing	POS-5.3
POS-x	Promote the use of consistent community engagement practices, such as surveys, town halls, and focus groups, to continue to gather input on evolving recreational needs and preferences.	Parks and Recreation	Communications	Ongoing	POS-5.4

Number	Program	Lead Department	Supporting Department(s)	Timeframe ¹	Implements Policy(ies)
POS-y	Support the identification of at least one City park or trail-adjacent open space for pilot naturalization projects that include, but are not limited to, replacement of turf or ornamental plantings with native vegetation. Monitor for habitat use, water savings, and community reception.	Parks and Recreation		Mid-term	POS-6.1, POS-6.3
POS-z	Explore opportunities to map and identify areas within the City's parks and open spaces to naturalize with the aim of connecting natural areas with rewilded areas. Prioritize rewilding efforts in places where the clearest linkages for species movement between areas.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development	Long-term	POS-6.2
POS-aa	Seek opportunities to host seasonal events in collaboration with local schools, nonprofits, or native plant societies to involve residents in habitat restoration activities and promote awareness of urban ecology.	Parks and Recreation	Communications	Bi-Annual	POS-6.4
POS-bb	Actively seek State and federal funding opportunities that support land conservation, shoreline resilience, or wetland restoration, and coordinate with regional agencies for joint applications.	Parks and Recreation	Community Development/City Manager's Office	Ongoing	POS-7.1, POS-7.2
POS-cc	Pursue the development of a climate-resilient open space web viewer that overlays sea level rise projections, habitat corridors, and flood-prone areas and use as a tool for determining the highest impact naturalization and resilience-focused projects to prioritize.	Community Development	City Manager's Office	Long-term	POS-7.2
¹ Timeframes are categorized as short-term (1-5 years), mid-term (6-10 years), and long-term (10+ years). Programs that are on an ongoing or annual basis are identified as such.					