



DATE: September 15, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

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

FROM: Derek Schweigart, Parks and Recreation Director
Frank Fanara, Parks Manager

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation

SUBJECT: PARKS MASTER PLAN GENERAL PROJECT UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council, by Minute Order, receive and accept this status update on the Parks System Master Plan (PSMP), and provide general policy direction on the preliminary plan guidelines, policies, and parks system recommendations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks System Master Plan (CIP 301-682) is a citywide strategic effort launched in late 2023 to guide future planning, development, and reinvestment in Foster City's parks and recreation system. Since the last Council update in March 2025, the project has advanced into the plan development phase, with completion of the Needs Assessment, draft vision and goal statements, and preliminary recommendations on park amenities, programs, connectivity, sustainability, and operations. Community engagement continues to play a central role in shaping priorities and identifying system needs.

Over the next several months, the project will enter its final development phase. Next steps include convening additional Task Force meetings, finalizing draft plan content with project phasing and cost considerations, conducting internal staff review of the Administrative Draft, and presenting the full Draft Plan to City Council for consideration

in Winter 2025/26. Staff will continue to engage the community and Task Force throughout this stage to ensure the plan reflects Foster City's vision and values.

BACKGROUND

Foster City's parks and recreation system plays a vital role in shaping community identity, promoting health and wellness, and enhancing the quality of life of its residents and visitors. In late 2023, the City launched the PSMP to modernize the park system and plan for future needs. This plan builds on past efforts and aligns with the Parks, Open Space, and Conservation Elements of the City's General Plan Update.

On December 18, 2023, the City Council authorized the release of a Request for Proposals/Qualifications (RFP/Q) to find a consultant to lead the development of a comprehensive, community-driven, and sustainable PSMP.

After receiving several strong proposals in early 2024, the City selected Wallace Roberts & Todd Design, LLC (WRT) based on their experience, qualifications, and proposed approach. On May 6, 2024, City Council approved a professional services agreement with WRT. Their scope of work includes assessing existing park conditions, engaging the public, developing policies and improvement strategies, and preparing a final, actionable plan.

One of WRT's first deliverables was the development and execution of a robust Public Participation Plan, outlining a multi-phase strategy to gather inclusive community input through workshops, focus groups, surveys, pop-up intercept events, stakeholder interviews, task force and digital tools. The City Council formally accepted this plan on August 19, 2024, launching Phase I of the project.

The PSMP is designed to guide decision-making for the next 10–20 years. Key focus areas include:

- Park access, equity, and inclusiveness
- Program offerings and scheduling
- Trail connectivity and mobility
- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience
- Maintenance and operational efficiency
- Funding strategies and cost recovery
- Capital improvement planning

It also identifies opportunities for acquiring new parkland, enhancing existing spaces, and reprogramming underutilized areas. The PSMP will help guide capital investments, support grant applications, and coordinate planning across City departments—all while adapting to community growth needs and demographic changes.

Staff worked closely with WRT to ensure the plan reflects Foster City's strategic goals and operations. The PSMP will also support state planning compliance and help meet regional environmental and climate targets.

ANALYSIS

The PSMP has been shaped through a collaborative, inclusive process—combining public input, technical analysis, and long-term planning. Each step, from assessing park conditions to identifying future needs, has helped shape a clear, strategic vision for Foster City's parks and recreation system.

Public Engagement

Community input has been central to the plan. Outreach was designed to reach a broad cross-section of residents and included:

- Pop-up events at major community gatherings (*800+ engaged*)
- Focus groups with youth, seniors, and underrepresented groups (*38 engaged*)
- In-person public workshops (*71 engaged*)
- Online surveys and 1 statistically valid mailed survey (*844 responses*)
- Over 265 park-specific comments via signage prompts
- Ongoing guidance from the Parks Master Plan Task Force (*18 engaged*)

This feedback directly informed the vision, goals, and policy recommendations in the plan.

Parks Assessment

In late 2024, WRT conducted a full evaluation of existing parks, looking at access, safety, conditions, comfort, amenities, and environmental features. While many parks are well-used and maintained, several system-wide needs emerged:

- More shaded seating and lighting
- Improved ADA access and pedestrian connectivity
- Expanded programming for all age groups
- Solutions to address geese impacts and lagoon water quality issues

These findings, combined with community feedback, form the basis of the plan's draft recommendations.

Parks Level of Service (LOS)

The plan includes a system-wide analysis of park acreage and amenities, measured against local needs and national standards. Currently, Foster City provides 3.2 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents, which is considered strong compared to neighboring benchmark cities and given current space constraints. However, to keep pace with

population growth through 2040, an additional 12.9 acres of new parkland would need to be identified to keep pace with growth.

Additionally, the Plan identifies gaps in certain high-demand amenities based on community input, including:

- Four (4) pickleball courts
- One (1) volleyball court
- Four (4) reservable group picnic areas

Filling these gaps is essential to ensuring equitable access to recreational opportunities.

Guidelines, Policies & Actions

The PSMP is guided by six (6) core principles that reflect community values and analysis of current conditions. These guidelines reflect the values and priorities expressed by the community and provide a framework for decision-making moving forward.

Each guideline is supported by specific policies and actions that translate the community's vision into practical steps, ensuring Foster City's parks and recreation system continues to evolve in a way that is equitable, resilient, and responsive to future needs.

Guidelines 1 – 6:

1. Foster City's parks and recreation system is vibrant, comfortable and responsive.
2. Foster City has a connected and accessible parks and recreation system.
3. The Lagoon and Bay are integrated within the community and City's park system.
4. Foster City has lively and inclusive events and programs.
5. Foster City's parks and programs are environmentally sustainable.
6. Operational efficiency and economic feasibility are core to park and recreation management in Foster City.

Park-Specific Recommendations

Improvement recommendations have been identified for all parks in Foster City, guided by the plan's overarching goals, policies, and actions. For five (5) major parks—Leo J. Ryan, Boothbay, Edgewater, Sea Cloud, and Gull—the plan includes conceptual design illustrations showing opportunities to improve access, recreation, and amenities (Attachment 1). For all other parks, the plan outlines high-level recommendations to guide future upgrades and investments (Attachment 1).

Prioritization and Implementation

A key objective of the PSMP is to ensure that recommendations are actionable and financially feasible. The City and WRT have developed a prioritization and phasing framework to guide implementation over time. Each improvement is scored using criteria such as level of community benefit, feasibility, cost, and alignment with City priorities. Potential improvements were categorized as either a (P) Program/Policy, (C) Capital Improvement, or (S) Straightforward project based on the project's complexity. Once order of magnitude costs are established for each improvement, each will be categorized with a range of dollar amounts depending on cost estimates. Prioritization criteria include the following:

Community Priority

Alignment with community engagement findings

Resolves Deficiency

Deficient amenity, accommodates future growth (Level of Service)

Equity

Increased access, underserved demographic, disinvested site, etc.

Functionality, Condition, & Safety

Address critical infrastructure issue, supports park function, supports geese management, etc.

Environmental Sustainability

Water conservation/quality, biodiversity, wildlife movement, climate resilience, etc.

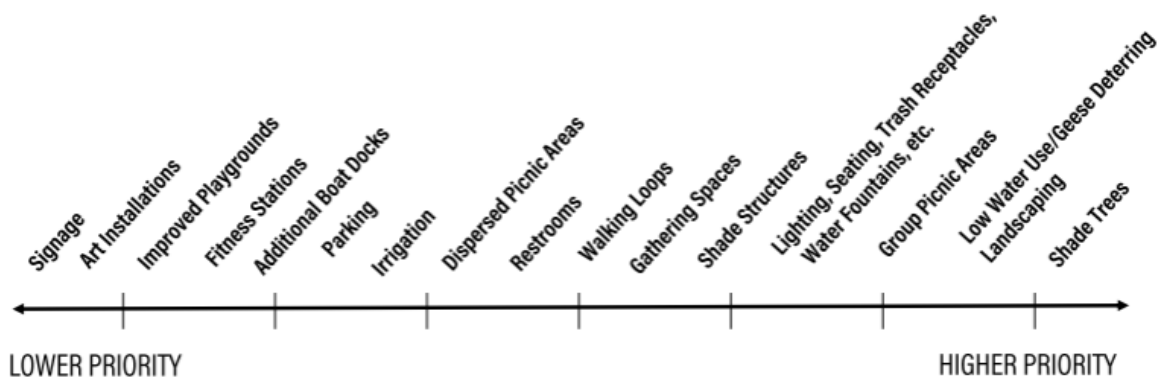
Operational Efficiency & Sustainability

Reduces operating costs, increases cost recovery, sustains investments/infrastructure, etc.

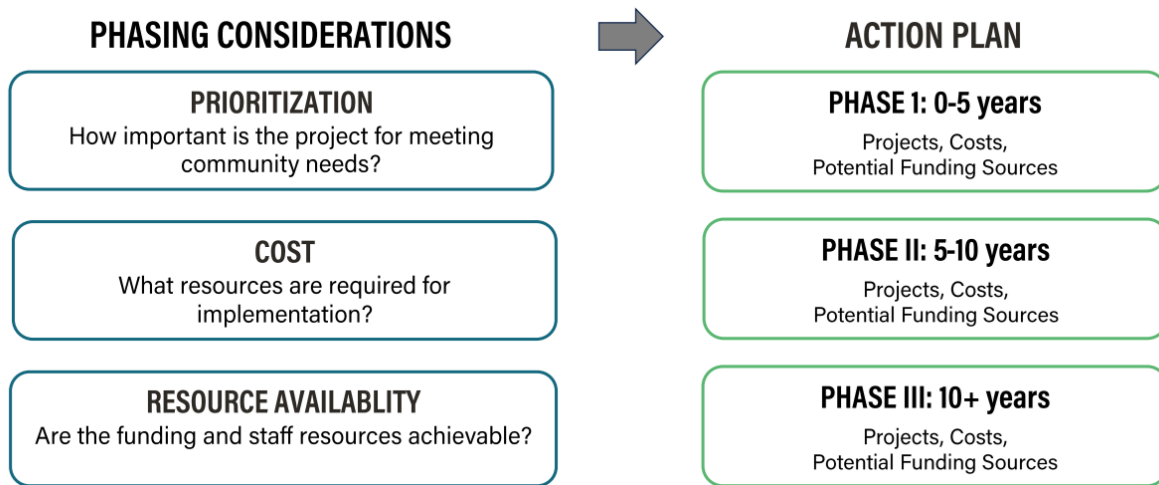
Feasibility

Affordability, funding availability, partnership potential, staff capacity, etc.

PRELIMINARY PRIORITIZATION RESULTS



Phasing



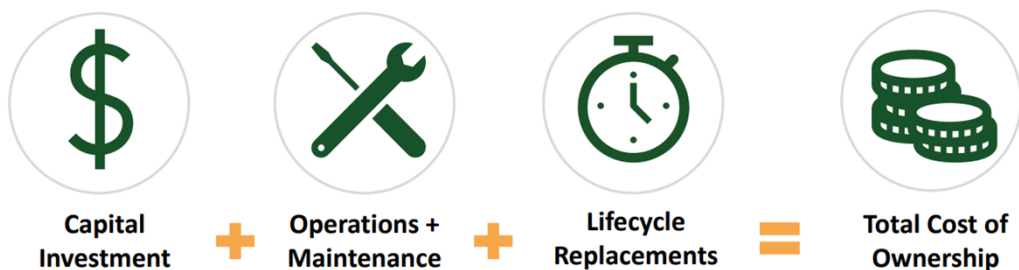
Funding Strategies

This structure supports transparent, equitable, and adaptable decision-making. The plan also explores a range of funding strategies, including but not limited to:

- Park Impact Fees
- General Fund contributions
- Grants
- Cost recovery policies

To ensure long-term sustainability, a Total Cost of Ownership model is being used to assess the full lifecycle costs of maintenance and operations. The preliminary model is shown below and will be presented to Council in a future update.

TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP



Plan Development Progress

Since early 2025, the project team has been synthesizing the Needs Assessment results, community input, and policy analysis into draft recommendations and guiding principles. Staff and WRT are currently refining these elements and drafting the full Plan.

Work is also underway to finalize implementation strategies, including funding options, prioritization, and maintenance planning.

Next Steps

In the coming months, the project will move into its final development phase:

- Continue Task Force meetings
- Finalize draft content, including phasing and cost estimates
- Conduct internal staff review of the Administrative Draft
- Present the Draft Plan to City Council for adoption (expected Winter 2025/26)

Community engagement will continue throughout to ensure the final plan reflects Foster City's values and vision for the future.

Staff and WRT are seeking City Council direction and input on the following:

1. **Guidelines, Policies & Actions:**
 - Do you support the Guidelines, Policies & Actions?
 - Would you make any changes?
2. **System-Wide Recommendations:**
 - Do you agree with the system-wide recommendations for park acreage and amenities?
 - What do you think about the identified opportunities for park and open space expansion at Sea Cloud II and Baywinds?
3. **Site-Specific Recommendations:**
 - Do you support the proposed improvements?
 - Are there any you'd like to discuss further?
4. **Prioritization:**
 - What do you think about the criteria?
 - Should they be weighted? If so, does the taskforce-based weighting make sense?

California Environmental Quality Act

This agenda item which is intended to provide a progress report to the Council is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section

21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a "project" that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

Facilities and Infrastructure

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Foster City Parks Master Plan Presentation