



SANTA CLARA PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

PRESENTATION OF THE DRAFT PLAN

MARCH 2026



PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

The **Parks & Recreation Master Plan** is presented to the Commission to:

- Review the proposed **standards and long-term goals**;
- Consider whether the Plan appropriately **reflects community priorities and system needs**;
- Adopt a resolution recommending that the **City Council** approve the Plan.



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REALIZING OUR VISION



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Introduction & Executive Summary



WHY A PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN?

- This Master Plan presents a comprehensive, **long-term vision** for the City's park, recreation and open space network.
- It will serve as a tool for:
 - Understanding **community need**
 - Setting **priorities**
 - Directing **funding resources**



THE PROCESS

- The planning effort launched in Fall 2023 and progressed through five key phases.
- Community members gave feedback at community engagement events around Santa Clara and online throughout the process—in total over 1,800 Santa Clarans were engaged!

5

POP UPS

3

SURVEYS

1,800 +
PEOPLE ENGAGED!

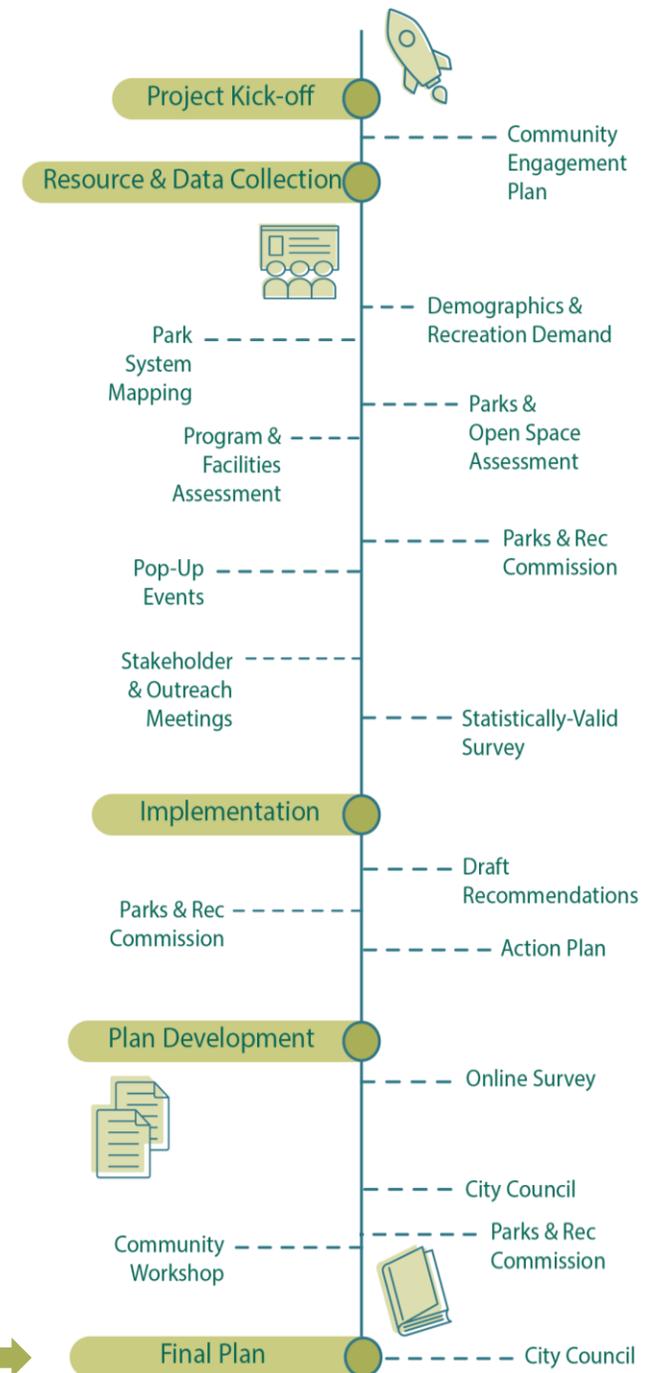
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FOCUS GROUPS

1

WORKSHOP

WE ARE HERE! 





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Santa Clara Today

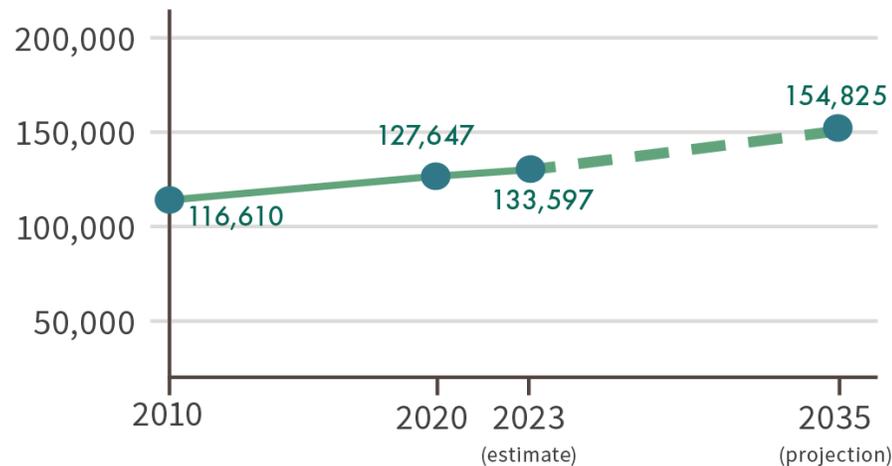


DEMOGRAPHICS

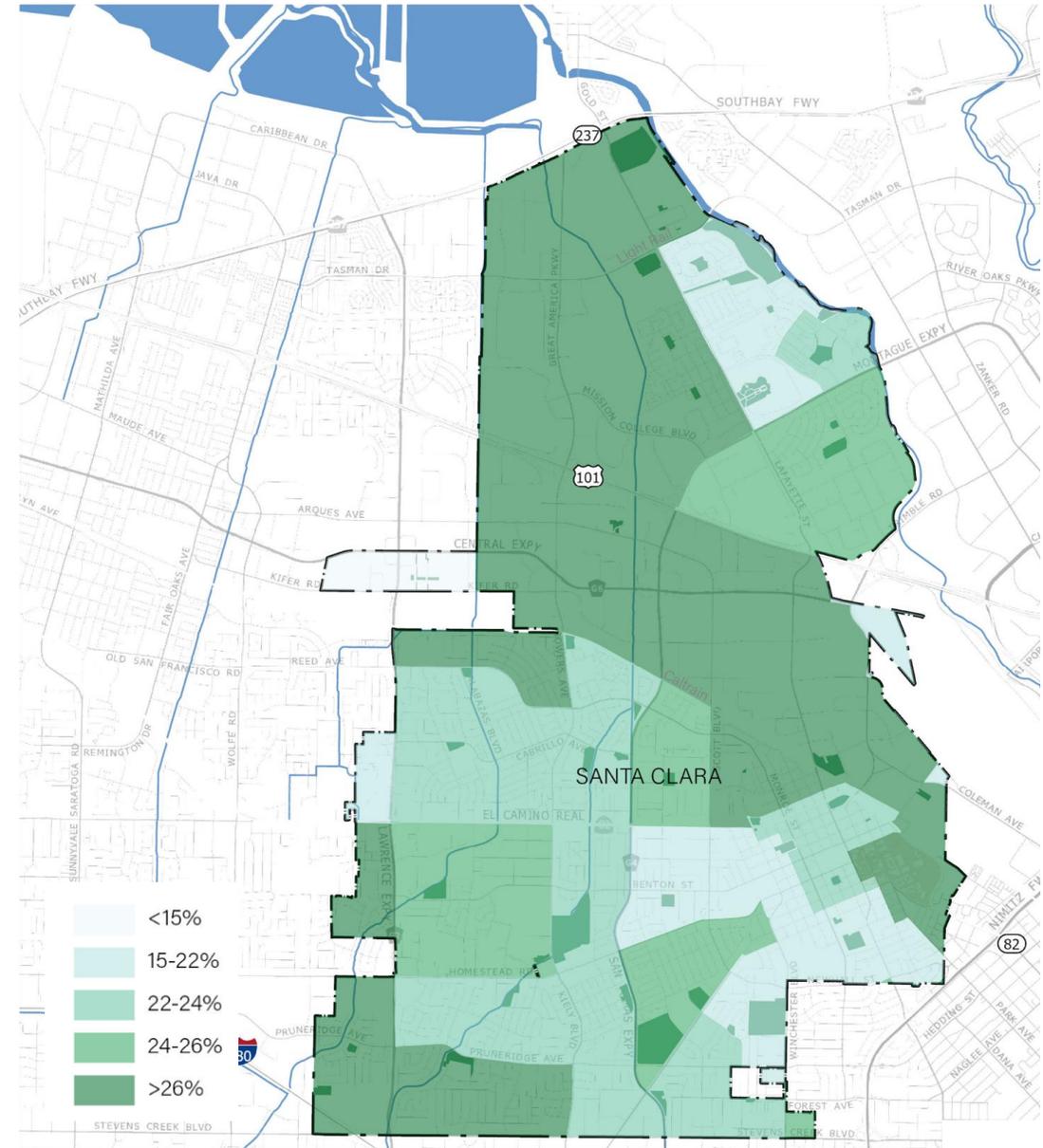
- **Population growth heightens the need for strategic investment** in parks and recreation so facilities keep pace with evolving community needs.
- **Santa Clara's population is aging modestly**, mirroring national trends, with age distribution expected to remain largely stable over the next 15 years.
- **Santa Clara has grown significantly more diverse**, with the Asian population now the largest racial group at 49%.

FIGURE 2.1 | Population Growth

Source: US Census 2010, US Census 2020, Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) 2023



Percent Youth (<18) Population



SANTA CLARA'S PARKS & RECREATION SYSTEM

308

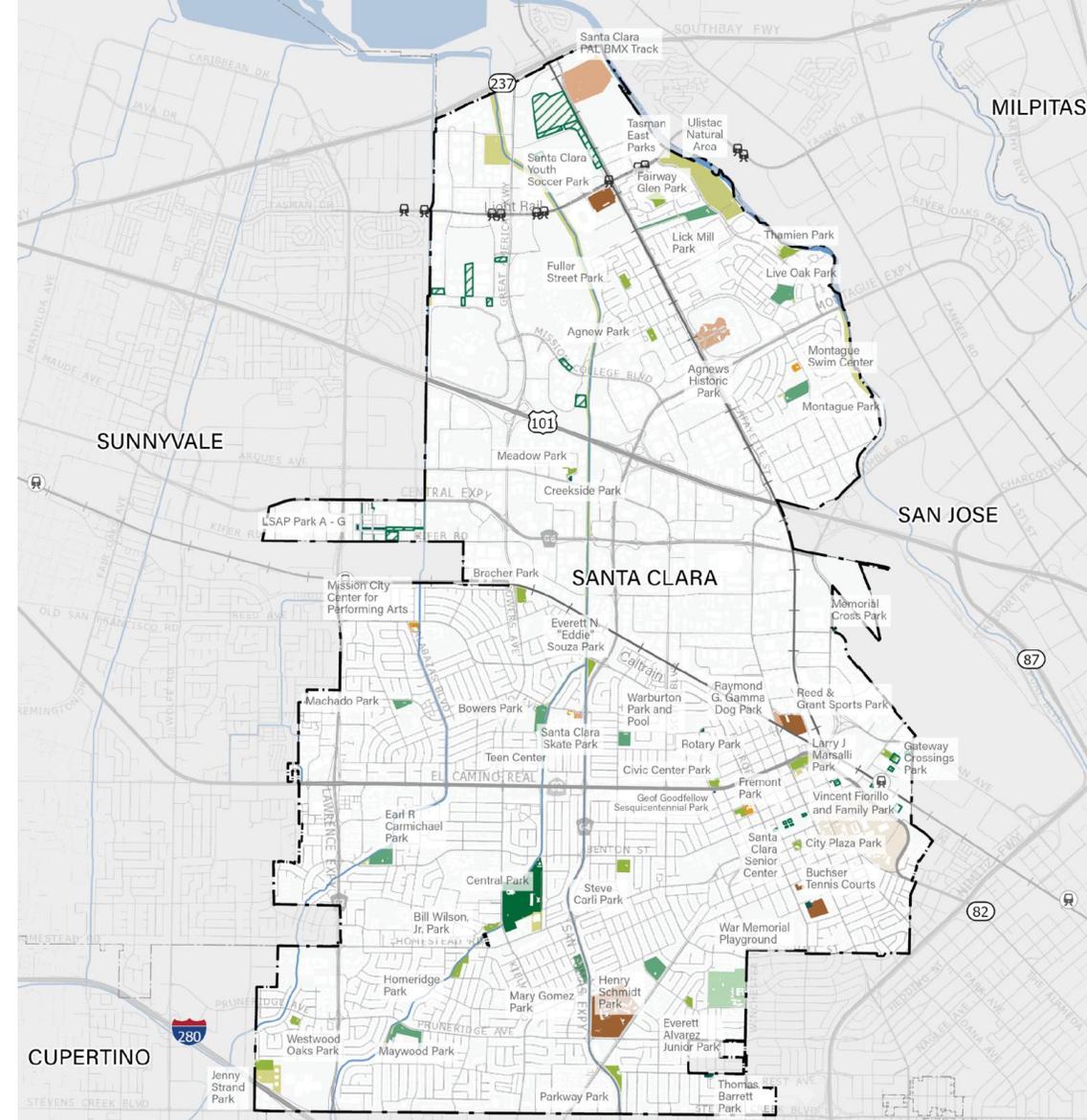
Acres of Parkland

5

Community Centers

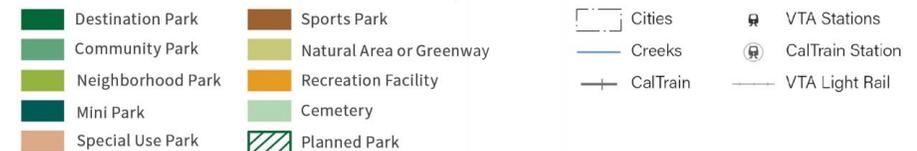
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Regional Trail Corridors



Source: City of Santa Clara and WRT, 2024

0 0.1 0.3 0.5 Miles



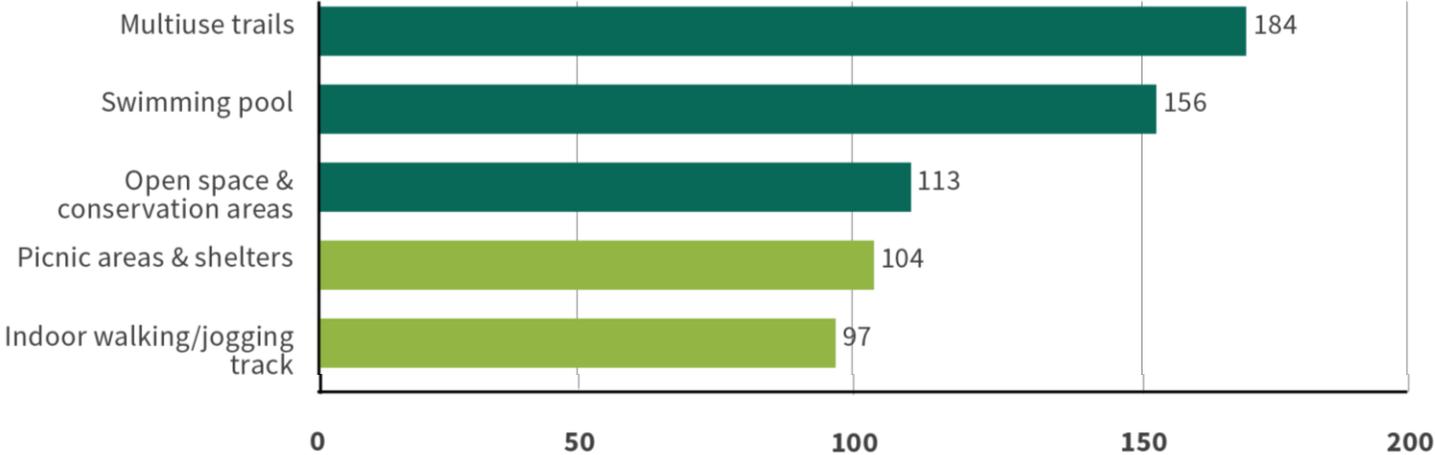


Vision & Priorities

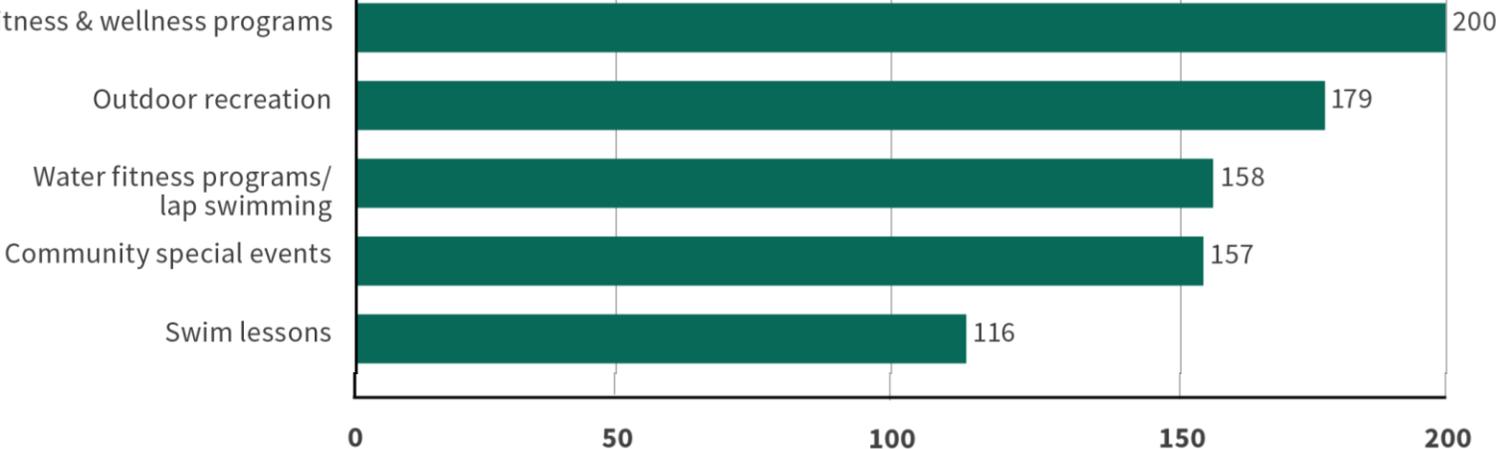


RECREATION PRIORITIES

Top 5 Priorities for Facilities/Amenities



Top 5 Priorities for Programs/Activities



PRIORITY INVESTMENT RANKING = IMPORTANCE + UNMET NEED

- HIGH PRIORITY (110+)
- MEDIUM PRIORITY (70-109)
- LOW PRIORITY (69 or less)

Note: These tables are showing the top five priorities for each category. See plan for full lists.

GUIDING THEMES



PATHS & TRAILS

Walking and other forms of exercise are fundamental recreational activities in Santa Clara. **Walking loops within parks** and **connected trail systems** are key priorities.



MAINTENANCE & AGING INFRASTRUCTURE

Funding for maintenance and **lifecycle improvements** or replacements has not kept up with needs and has led to deteriorating park and facility conditions.



AQUATICS

Aquatic facilities, water fitness, swimming lessons, and **aquatics programs** and programs are **high priorities** for community members. Aging infrastructure and design limitations create aquatic program challenges.



PROGRAM PRIORITIES

Fitness and wellness programs, **outdoor recreation** programs, and programs **servicing all community members,** are top priorities.



INDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES

An **indoor track, a community center, indoor basketball courts, and indoor volleyball courts** all ranked relatively high on the survey. An indoor sports/gymnasium facility could address this demand.



SPORTS COURTS

Additional outdoor sport court facilities, particularly **multiuse** and **pickleball** courts, are highly desired.



OPEN SPACE & CONSERVATION AREAS

Green spaces and **conservation areas** are important to the community. Parks and open spaces can provide **recreation, health and wellness** opportunities, and **environmental benefits.**



PARK COMFORT

Well-maintained **restrooms, trees, shade, seating, and picnic areas** will make parks more comfortable and desirable for the community.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Residents place a high value on **community events** that highlight Santa Clara park **spaces, culture, and unique character.**



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Goals, Objectives & Recommendations



OUR GOALS



1

Provide **parkland** to meet community needs and ensure that existing and new parks provide recreational value and are inclusive, safe, and accessible for people of all ages and abilities.



2

Provide **indoor recreation facilities** to meet current and future community recreation needs.



3

Improve functionality of **aquatic facilities** to meet community demand and increase accessibility.



4

Create **paths and trails** to enhance connectivity to existing parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities, while supporting recreational walking opportunities.



5

Incorporate **environmental resiliency** into all parks and green spaces with native and climate-ready plants, conservation, and other similar strategies to maximize ecological benefits.



6

Maintain parks and recreation facilities by implementing capital improvement and replacement programs, best management practices, safety and accessibility standards, and adequate staffing and funding.

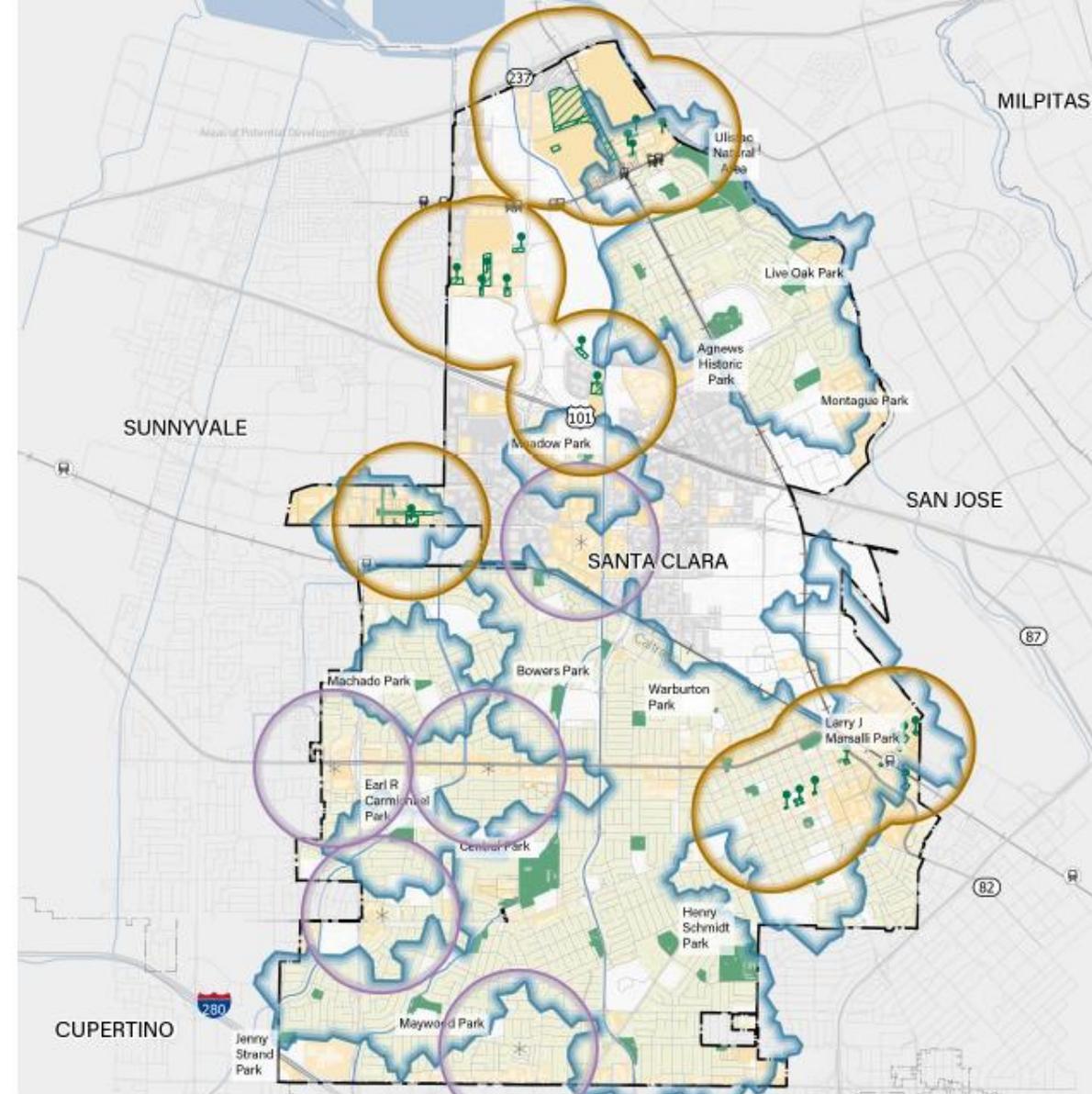


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Provide offerings for all ages and abilities and address unmet **program and event** needs.

PARK ACCESS

- **Access gaps:** Several neighborhoods lack parks within a **10-minute walk**, particularly in older areas and growth corridors.
- **Planned Parks & Partnership:** Combining planned parks and partnership with the school districts and/or HOAs sites can significantly improve access.



Source: City of Santa Clara, General Plan, Specific Plans



PARK ACREAGE LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

- **Current LOS: 2.3 acres/1,000 residents**
- **LOS goal: 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents**, resulting in a projected **86-acre shortfall by 2035**. This goal was developed in response to following key factors:
 - **Meeting community access and amenity needs:** Adding new park acreage in underserved areas of Santa Clara would improve access and contribute to an increased level of service.
 - **Lower provision compared to peer communities:** The current LOS of 2.3 acres per 1,000 residents is generally lower than national and local metrics, though direct comparisons are challenging.
 - **Opportunities for Joint-Use:** Incorporating school sites as joint-use facilities could provide **up to 152 acres**, which would exceed the acreage needed to achieve 3.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

TOTAL PARK & OPEN SPACE ACRES (CITY & OTHERS)	EXISTING LEVEL OF SERVICE (ACRES/1000 RESIDENTS)	LEVEL OF SERVICE GOAL (ACRES/1000 RESIDENTS)	2035 ACREAGE NEEDED (PARK OR JOINT-USE)	PLANNED ACRES (AS PART OF PLANNED DEVELOPMENT)	ADDITIONAL ACRES NEEDED (IN ADDITION TO PLANNED ACRES)	EXISTING SCHOOL ACRES (GROUNDS WITH POTENTIAL FOR JOINT-USE)
308.3*	2.3	3.0	156.2	70.2	86.0	152

PARK AMENITY LEVEL OF SERVICE

RECREATION AMENITY	CITY INVENTORY	CURRENT LOS <i>(pop. / amenity)</i>	NATIONAL AVERAGE LOS ¹ <i>(pop. / amenity)</i>	PRIORITY INVEST RATING ²	SERVICE STANDARD <i>(pop. / amenity)</i>	ADDITIONAL AMENITIES NEEDED IN 2035	SCHOOL SITES INVENTORY
Diamond Field	6	22,822	6,821	Low	13,500	5	15
Multiuse Field	15	9,120	18,595	Low	9,000	2	19
Cricket Field	0	0	NA	Medium	10,000	2	2
Basketball Court	19	7,207	9,742	Low	100,000	0	16
Pickleball Court	6	22,822	19,882	Medium	8,500	12	0
Dedicated Tennis Court	35	3,912	8,587	Low	4,000	3	22
Dog Park	7	19,561	76,509	Medium	20,000	1	0
Splash Pad	0	0	61,418	Low	75,000	2	0
Playground	33	4,149	5,000	Low	4,250	2	14
Reservable Picnic Area	9	15,215	NA	Medium	9,000	8	0

¹ For agencies serving communities of between 100,000 and 250,000 residents. Source: National Recreation and Park Association, 2024.

² Based on Statistically-Valid Survey conducted for Santa Clara Parks & Recreation Master Plan, 2024

PARK TYPE STANDARDS

PARK TYPE	ACTIVE-USE AMENITY	SPECIAL RECREATION AMENITY	PLAYGROUND	WALKING LOOP	OPEN LAWN	PICNIC AREAS	COMFORT AMENITIES	RESTROOM	ON-SITE PARKING
DESTINATION PARKS Acres: 20+ acres Use Duration: 1 to 4 hours	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
COMMUNITY PARKS Acres: 5 to 20 acres Use Duration: 1 to 3 hours	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS Acres: 1 to 5 acres Use Duration: 1 to 2 hours	•		•	•	•	•	•		
MINI PARKS & PLAZAS Acres: 0.5 to 1 acre Use Duration: 30 minutes to 1 hour			•				•		
SPECIAL USE PARKS Acres: Variable Use Duration: Variable		•					•		•
SPORTS PARKS Acres: 10 to 55 acres Use Duration: 1 to 4 hours	•			•			•	•	•
NATURAL AREAS & GREENWAYS Acres: 20+ acres Use Duration: 30 minutes to 3 hours							•		

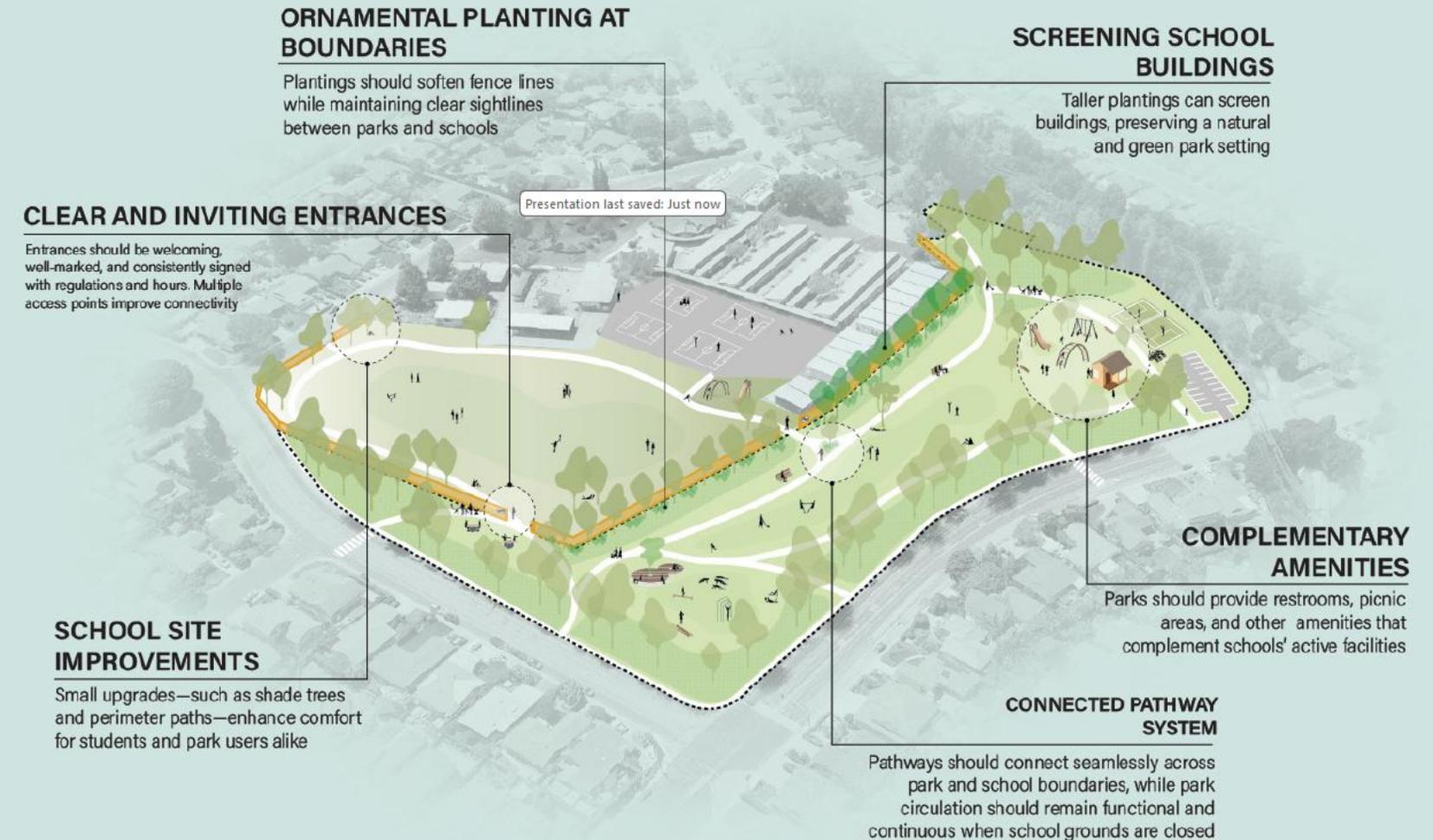
• = Required

SCHOOLS & JOINT-USE SITES

School grounds are a key opportunity to meet the recreational needs in Santa Clara.

- Joint use of **~152 acres of school grounds**—fields, courts, and play areas—expands recreation without acquiring new land.
- Clear access, fencing, and hours—paired with good site design and amenities—create **welcoming and functional joint-use sites**.

FIGURE 4.4 | Design Guidelines for Successful Park-School Adjacency



IDENTIFIED PARK IMPROVEMENTS

- Complete park **walking loops**
- **Repurpose underused areas** for needed recreation amenities
- Additional **seating, restrooms, trash receptacles,** and **shade**
- Improved informational, educational, and wayfinding **signage**
- Additional or more diverse **vegetation and plantings**
- **Screening** from major streets or noise-producing uses
- Improved vehicular and bicycle **parking**



INDOOR FACILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

Existing Facilities

- Santa Clara has **5 key indoor recreation facilities** (see table).
- There are also **9 smaller reservable park buildings** (with one additional planned) that help meet facility needs;

Indoor Facility Needs

- In 2025, Santa Clara had **0.67 square feet of indoor recreation facilities per resident**, which is slightly below the national average of 0.75 SF.
- **Indoor track, community center, and indoor basketball/volleyball courts** all ranked as high priorities in the statistically valid survey.
- Many **existing facilities** have aged infrastructure and need **repair and refurbishment**.

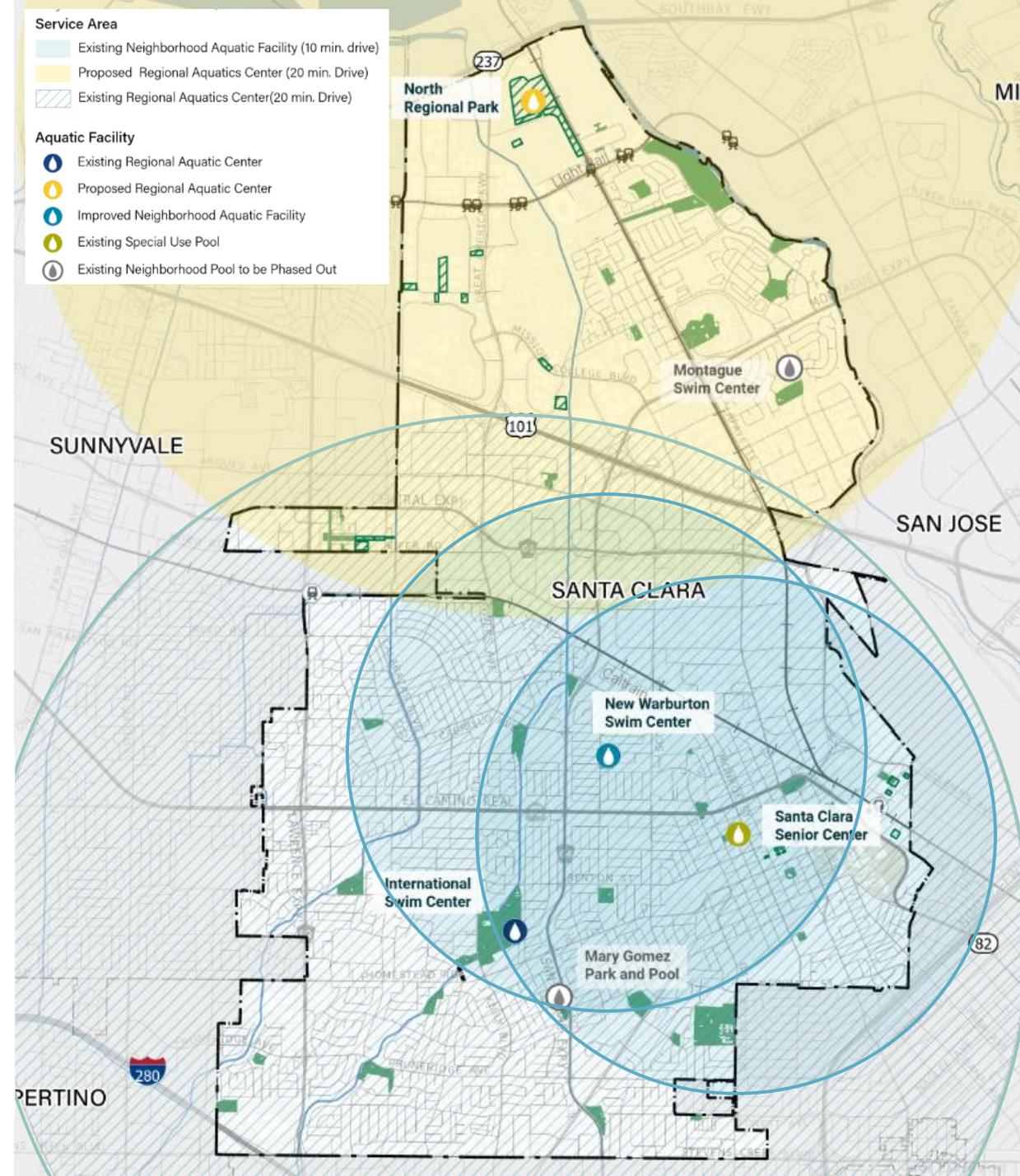
Recommendations for Key Indoor Facilities

EXISTING FACILITIES	EXISTING SQ FT	ADDED SQ FT	REMODEL	EXPAND	NEW
Community/Recreation Center	29,630	10,000	✓	✓	
Reed & Grant Facility	3,800	-			
Youth Soccer Park	7,000	-	✓		
Senior Center	45,000	-	✓		
Total SQ FT	85,430	10,000			
EXISTING SPECIAL USE FACILITIES					
Youth & Teen Center	7,535	-	✓		
PROPOSED FACILITIES					
<i>Proposed</i> North Santa Clara Library & Rec Center		21,620			✓
<i>Proposed</i> Recreation Facility w/ Gymnasium		40,000 - 60,000			✓
Total SQ FT		61,620-81,620			

AQUATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop an Aquatic Strategy Considering:

- **Improved ISC:** Improve existing facilities with all necessary maintenance issues and upgrades addressed.
- **New Warburton Aquatic Facility:** Reimagined as a family-friendly aquatic facility with a consolidate pool and other aquatic elements, such as water play features.
- **New North Aquatic Center:** Envisioned to have 2 recreation pools and potentially include elements like splash pads and water play features.
- **Existing Senior Center Pools:** Existing aquatic facilities would remain as is with any necessary maintenance issues and upgrades addressed.
- **Phase-Out Montague and Mary Gomez Pools:** Reevaluate these sites and consider phasing them out.



PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Increase Participation:** Create strategies to expand participation from all geographical areas.
- **Expand Programs:** Prioritize high-demand offerings and reduce low-interest programs, ensuring resources are focused where they will have the greatest impact.
- **Program Evaluation Tools:** Pre- and post-program tools should be developed and utilized to evaluate program quality and success.
- **Time Offerings of Programs:** Survey residents to determine the best time offerings and adjust accordingly.
- **Increasing Quality and Value:** Survey current participants to identify why quality and value scores fall below national benchmarks and take action to improve them.
- **Marketing:** Develop a formal marketing program that aligns with how residents would like to receive information.
- **Partnerships:** Develop and implement a formal partnership policy to guide updates to existing agreements.



MAINTENANCE & SUSTAINABILITY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Community-Aligned Work Plans:** Align maintenance activities with both community satisfaction and priority.
- **Asset Management:** Implement a system to track maintenance, prevent breakdowns, and capture actual costs of work performed.
- **Data Mobility:** Provide staff with mobile tools to access and update maintenance information in the field
- **Asset Lifecycle Tracking:** Monitor work performed on any asset throughout its lifecycle.
- **Minimize Unproductive Time:** Analyze worker time for efficiency, including travel and idle time.
- **Equipment Investment:** Invest in new equipment as the park system grows.
- **Cost-Reduction Strategies:** Lower expenditures through volunteer programs and operational partnerships.
- **Construction Project Oversight:** Hire project managers to manage bond-funded and ongoing lifecycle replacement projects.
- **Staffing Evaluation:** Assess hiring and retention practices and implement improvements to strengthen the workforce.



MAGICAL BRIDGE PLAYGROUND, CENTRAL PARK | SANTA CLARA, CA

Realizing Our Vision



ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan prioritizes recommendations, estimates costs, and provides a phased roadmap for implementation.

Key Ongoing Projects (1-11+ years)

- Establish a clear **vision, plan, develop and operate 35-acre new park** in north Santa Clara.
- **Improve existing parks** through continued implementation of the Kitchell Report and increasing park comfort through increased shade, seating, and other amenities.
- **Plant trees** to provide shade in existing parks
- Develop and operate **planned Citywide trail network**.
- Obtain land for **86 acres of additional parkland** through **acquisition, future development, or joint-use agreements**, prioritizing park access gaps.
- Develop **community partnerships** to support programs & events.

Key Short-Term Projects (1-5 years)

- Complete **planned ISC improvements**.
- Develop an **aquatics strategy** for the future.
- Implement **high-priority program** needs (fitness, outdoor recreation, swim lessons, etc.). *
- Provide **deficient high-priority amenities** in new parks, existing parks, or through joint-use agreements. *
- Reevaluate and **establish sustainable funding sources for maintenance, operations, and lifecycle improvements** to address deferred maintenance.

* *Project spans two phases*

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan prioritizes recommendations, estimates costs, and provides a phased roadmap for implementation.

Key Mid-Term Projects (6-10 years)

- Provide **deficient high-priority amenities** in new parks, existing parks, or through joint-use agreements.*
- Implement **high-priority program** needs (fitness, outdoor recreation, swim lessons, etc.).*
- **Remodel the Senior Center**
- **Remodel/expand the Community Recreation Center***
- Construct the proposed **North Santa Clara Library/Recreation Center.***
- Construct the **proposed recreation center with gymnasium.***

Key Long-Term Projects (11+ years)

- **Remodel/expand Community Recreation Center***
- Construct proposed **North Santa Clara Library/Recreation Center.***
- Construct **proposed recreation center with gymnasium.***
- **Develop and operate 86 acres of additional parkland,** prioritizing park access gaps.

* *Project spans two phases*

COSTS

- **Planning-Level Estimates:** Order-of-magnitude ranges for both capital investment and annual operating cost increases.
- **High-Cost Categories:**
 - **New Park Acquisition:** \$194–\$259M (~30% of total)
 - **New Park Development:** \$165–\$241M
 - **Indoor Recreation Facilities:** \$152–\$192M
 - **Improving Existing Parks:** \$43–63M
 - **Aquatic Improvements:** \$25–\$46M
 - **Citywide Trails:** \$39–\$50M
- **Reduced Costs Through Partnerships:** Joint-use agreements and developer contributions can significantly offset City costs
- **2024 Bond Funding:** A portion of these costs are already planned to be covered by 2024 bond funds.

Estimated Cost Per Phase

Short-Term (1-5 years):

- Estimated Capital Cost: \$185M-260M
- Estimated Annual Operational Cost: \$650K-1.2M

Mid-Term (6-10 years):

- Estimated Capital Cost: \$248M-327M
- Estimated Annual Operational Cost: \$1.2M-2.0M

Long Term (11+ years):

- Estimated Capital Cost: \$185M-263M
- Estimated Annual Operational Cost: \$2.2M-4.1M

FUNDING STRATEGY

Current Funding Mechanisms

- General Fund
- Quimby Act Fees
- Park Mitigation Fee Act (MFA)
- Capital Projects Reserve
- Bonds

Current & Potential Funding Sources

- **Tax Support**
 - Property Taxes*
 - Sales or Hospitality Taxes
 - Special Districts
- **Development**
 - Parkland Dedication and Impact Fees*
- **Grants**
 - Federal Programs*
 - State Programs*
 - Regional & County Opportunities*
 - Local Utilities & Rebates*
- **User Fees**
 - Recreation Service Fees*
 - Ticket Sales & Admissions*
 - Special Use Permits*
 - Reservations & Equipment Rental*
- **External Partnerships & Community Support**
 - Corporate Sponsorships
 - Partnerships & Agreements*
 - Private Donations & Friends Groups
 - Volunteerism
- **Franchises & Licenses**
 - Naming Rights
 - Utility Easements

** Indicates strategies used by the City to fund parks and recreation in recent years.*

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