



DATE: March 3, 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 the general update on the Parks Master Plan Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Foster City Parks Master Plan Project (CIP 301-682) began in December 2023 and is a comprehensive effort to guide future development and improvements of the City's Park facilities and programs.

On December 18, 2023, the City Council approved a Request for Proposal/Qualifications (RFP/Q) for professional planning services, leading to the selection of Wallace Roberts & Todd Design, LLC (WRT) as the project consultant in May 2024. WRT's role includes preparing the Master Plan, conducting a Park Needs Assessment, managing public engagement processes, and producing the final Plan for public distribution and implementation.

The project began in August 2024 with the approval of a Public Participation Plan, designed to engage a broad spectrum of community members and stakeholders. A variety of engagement strategies have been executed, including the creation of a project

website, public banners, flyers, signage, and multiple pop-up events at highly attended community gatherings and special events. These efforts have encouraged substantial participation, with residents sharing feedback on park amenities and their vision for the future of Foster City parks.

A Parks Master Plan Task Force was established, with the first meeting held on October 29, 2024. A total of four Focus Group sessions were held from October-November 2024. WRT also conducted a comprehensive Park Needs Assessment, evaluating the current condition and functionality of Foster City's parks. The findings reveal that most parks are performing well, particularly in terms of connectivity, safety, and overall conditions. These results, combined with community feedback, will inform the next phase of the project which will focus on the development of park improvement recommendations for the Parks Master Plan.

This report provides an update on the progress of the project, highlighting key milestones and the ongoing efforts to engage the community in shaping the future of Foster City's parks and recreational facilities.

BACKGROUND

On December 18, 2023, the City Council approved the RFP/Q for professional services to develop a new Parks Master Plan. The RFP/Q was issued on January 4, 2024. On May 6, 2024, the Council awarded a contract to WRT for planning and consultancy support. The scope includes master plan preparation, inventory and assessment, public involvement, collaboration with staff, and the creation of a public distribution document.

On July 22, 2024, WRT and City staff outlined the community engagement strategy, including task forces, stakeholder meetings, a project website, and surveys. A Public Participation Plan was drafted and accepted by the City Council on August 19, 2024, via Minute Order No. 1990.

Phase I of the 18-month project, focusing on the Public Participation Plan and Needs Assessment, began immediately after approval: 1) Parks Master Plan Task Force Meeting # 1 was held on October 29 at the Community Center; 2) Stakeholder and pop-up meetings were held in October and November; 3) The project website was created www.fostercity.org/parksmasterplan; 4) Banners were posted at all City parks with a QR code link to project webpage for park patrons to scan the code and provide their input on a specific park.

At the City Council meeting of November 18, 2024, staff provided the first City Council update on the project, which included information on the project initiation phase, summary of community engagement efforts to date, results of the parks inventory and existing conditions assessment, and preliminary parks needs assessment.

ANALYSIS

The Parks Master Plan project has reached a key milestone with the completion of the needs assessment phase. The following is an overview of the public engagement efforts, and the community feedback received to date on the project. The information gathered from this phase will help inform the Parks Master Plan recommendations which will be presented to the City Council at a future project update for their input and direction.

Public Engagement

A crucial component of a Parks Master Plan is a public engagement strategy that prioritizes inclusion, equity, and diversity involves a deep understanding of the unique characteristics, needs, and goals of the local community. To this end, extensive outreach efforts were undertaken to involve a broad and diverse array of participants.

- **Popup Events:** A total of 7 popup events were held from August to October. These were scheduled around other City events and programs with historically large attendance, such as Summer Days and Soccer Season Opening Day, in the hopes of maximizing participation. Attendance estimates for each event are below:
 1. Foster City Summer Days: August 16, Leo J. Ryan Park (200 participants)
 2. AYSO Soccer Opening Day: September 7, Sea Cloud Park (35 participants)
 3. Fall Movie Night: September 13, Leo J. Ryan Park (250 participants)
 4. Off the Grid: September 25, Senior Wing parking lot (50 participants)
 5. 55+ Club Meeting: October 3, Community Center (30 participants)
 6. Off the Grid: October 24, Senior Wing parking lot (45 participants)
 7. Halloween Festival, October 26, Leo J. Ryan Park (250 participants)
- **Park-Specific Comments:** Signs were posted with QR codes in parks soliciting park-specific feedback. Two hundred and sixty-five (265) comments received October 2024 - January 2025. Leo J. Ryan received the most feedback in the survey with the majority of comments received being positive.

Respondents provided feedback on various Foster City parks, highlighting overall satisfaction with the park system. Commonly mentioned qualities include:

- **Well-Maintained Parks:** Appreciation for cleanliness, landscaping, and upkeep.
- **Scenic Beauty:** Noted for greenery, waterfront views, and open spaces.
- **Diverse Amenities:** Features such as playgrounds, sports courts, picnic areas, dog-friendly spaces, and walking paths.
- **Community-Friendly Spaces:** Popular for family gatherings, sports, and leisure.
- **Dog-Friendly Features:** Off-leash areas, waste stations, and dog-friendly paths.

While most feedback was positive, some challenges were also noted such as the on-going negative geese impacts and some requests for comfort amenities such as more lighting, restrooms, and additional seating in parks.

- **Parks Needs Assessment:** In August 2024, WRT conducted a qualitative assessment of Foster City parks to gauge their alignment with residents' needs and identify areas for improvement. The evaluation covered criteria such as access, safety, functionality, and condition, using a weighted 1-10 rating scale. Most parks, including benchmark Leo J. Ryan Park, scored well, indicating overall high quality. However, the assessment highlighted the need for better path connectivity, lighting, additional shade and seating, and sustainable landscaping to improve accessibility, comfort, and functionality. Specific recommendations include intensifying maintenance and addressing geese impacts, especially in water-adjacent parks. Parks like Leo J. Ryan, Port Royal, Catamaran, and Ketch excelled, whereas Bridgeview, Pompano, and Baywinds lagged, identifying them for future upgrades.

Statistically Valid Survey: A mailed survey was sent to a random sample of Foster City residents in December 2024, achieving a statistically representative sample of Foster City's population. A statistically valid survey was conducted by ETC Institute, a sub-consultant to WRT and a member of the project team. The survey was distributed through mail and online to a random sample of households throughout Foster City. The City received approximately 300 responses from the survey. The survey focused on various park-related topics: facilities and program use, the benefits, importance, and improvements to parks and recreation in Foster City, and facility/amenity needs and priorities. The survey results were compared with the national average for each category. When asked about their satisfaction with the City's parks and recreation offerings, 85% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the overall condition of the park and recreation facilities. The results of the survey are included as an attachment to the staff report with highlights to be presented to the City Council with slide deck presentation also attached to the report.

- **Public Workshops:** A public workshop was held at the Vibe Teen Center on January 22, 2025, and via an online survey to more deeply understand community needs. Over forty Foster City residents participated in person with 76 people participating via the online survey. Key outcomes of importance to the community included:
 - Improving sports facilities
 - Improving water quality
 - Diversifying programs and events
 - Trail connectivity
 - Amenity improvements such as additional restrooms, better lighting, shaded seating, and improved play areas for kids

- **Task Force Meeting #2:** The second task force meeting was held on February 19, 2025. There were 15 attendees, including staff. WRT presented an existing park conditions report and the public engagement results to date. The group also helped develop the project goals and look at potential park improvement ideas and opportunities. Attendees were asked to focus on park-specific opportunities such as Foster City’s trail system and developing goals for the parks system as a whole.
- **Draft Engagement Summary Report:** The public engagement efforts have been compiled and synthesized to identify key community needs that will be foundational during the recommendations phase of the project.
- **Draft Vision & Goals:** Initial vision statement and goals have been drafted that reflect the information gleaned from the community engagement process and existing conditions analysis

Next Steps

1. City to host Community Workshop #2 in May 2025 for feedback on proposed recommendations.
2. Finalize existing conditions analysis.
3. Analyze public engagement results.
4. Develop draft goals & recommendations.
5. Four (3) additional task force meetings.
6. City Council Updates.

California Environmental Quality Act

This agenda item which is intended to provide a progress report to the Council on the Park Master Plan is not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21000, et seq. and the CEQA Guidelines (14 Cal. Code Regs. §§ 15000 et. seq.), including without limitation, Public Resources Code section 21065 and California Code of Regulations 15378 as this is not a "project" that may cause a direct, or reasonably foreseeable indirect, physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

CITY COUNCIL VISION, MISSION, AND VALUE/PRIORITY AREA

City Council Operations and Improved Community Engagement
Facilities and Infrastructure

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Needs Assessment Survey Findings
Attachment 2 – Task Force Presentation #2