

COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PARKS AND RECREATION



2024 • 2030



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The County of San Luis Obispo, California’s Parks and Recreation Department (Department) is undergoing a large amount of transition. In July 2023, the Department hired BerryDunn to facilitate the update of a five-year Strategic Plan, with a focus on operations, management strategies, evaluation opportunities, staffing, and planning priorities. While the goal is to look at this system with a critical eye, it should be noted that the Department is highly regarded and successfully operates a wide variety of parks, campgrounds, facilities, golf courses, swimming pools, lakes, beaches, trails, and other amenities.

This project is intentionally operationally focused, with extensive staff, Department, and County leadership input, review of existing documents and processes, along with review of all findings and priority visioning for a resulting general Strategic Plan to help guide priority next steps from 2024 to 2030. While the project did not include specific public input at this time, the project did always consider goals for best public representation as possible to represent equitable and diverse services for County residents across all geographic areas and Districts. The Strategic Plan was presented for review at a public Parks and Recreation Commission meeting and reviewed for adoption by all County Board of Supervisors.

Meetings and discussions were held with:

- County Board of Supervisors and Parks and Recreation Commission
- Department Leadership / Project Team
- All four Parks and Recreation Districts – Huasna, Salinas, Mesa, and Pecho
- Golf team members from Chalk Mountain, Morro Bay, and Dairy Creek
- Administration and Planning team members
- All Rangers, Staff, Superintendents, and Supervisors as available

The overall schedule for this Strategic Planning process and task phases included:



Department Profile

The Department provides recreation opportunities for the County's almost 290,000 residents (2023) over approximately 3,600 square miles. The Department provides a large variety of services, from boating and fishing, camping, picnics, trails, swimming pools, golf, and more. The Department is responsible for many locations, services, facilities, and opportunities for County residents' recreational needs.

The County Board of Supervisors oversees the Department The Parks and Recreation Commission, assisted by engagement with the Trails Advisory Committee and the Golf Advisory Committee, advises the County Board of Supervisors on Department issues. The Bicycle

Advisory Committee advises the County Board of Supervisors on bicycle issues including class I bicycle facilities the Department manages.

The Park Planning Division is responsible for the planning, design, and construction of the Department's facility projects. This includes new park and trail projects as well as renovations and upgrades to existing facilities, from developing Park Master Plans, and Trail Feasibility Studies, conducting environmental review, and securing permits, to obtaining grant funding and overseeing project construction.

All four regions of services were represented, as shown in a map created for the 2006 Parks and Recreation Element of the County General Plan.

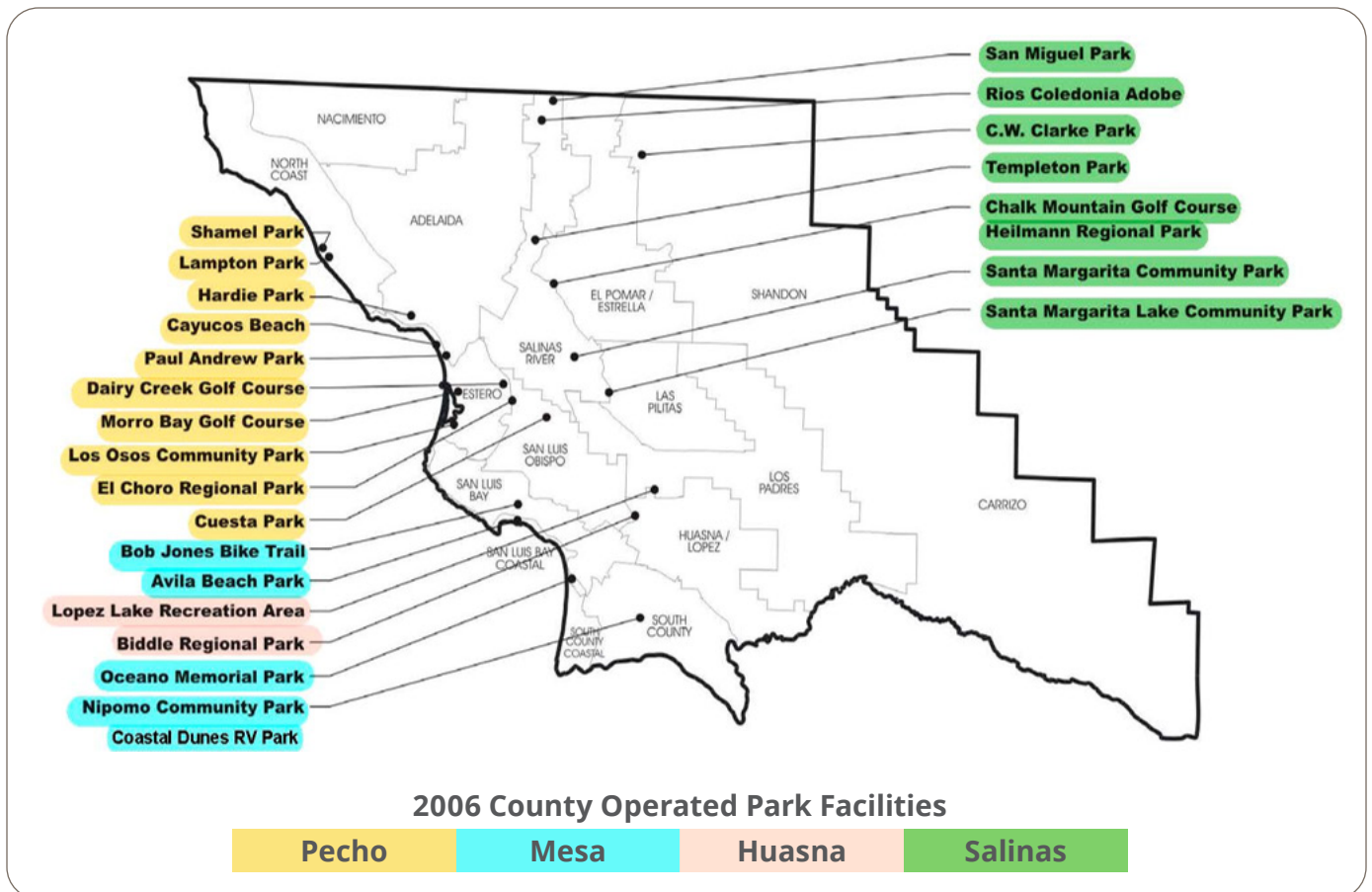


Figure 1: County-Operated Park Facilities from the 2006 Comprehensive Plan

Note: Additional properties have been added since 2006 that are not shown on this map.

Previous and Related Planning Projects and Resources

The County and Department have undergone significant growth. A variety of key plans and planning elements have been completed that were reviewed and integrated where applicable with this planning process. A summary of key recent guiding plans include:

- 2006 Parks and Recreation Element of the County General Plan (the last time this element was updated in the County General Plan).
- 2015 Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan – primarily completed by in-house staff (did not include public engagement) and adopted by the Board of Supervisors in December 2015. Department staff revised this plan in 2018.
- Parks and Recreation Department Cost Recovery Methodology Final Report (completed in July 2018 and adopted by the County Board of Supervisors on July 17, 2018).
- 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Annual Report Presentation – Presented by Departmental staff leadership to the Board of Supervisors.
- Various organizational charts, program and facility planning documents, publicly available online information, budgets, and miscellaneous resources.

Key Aspects Affecting Departmental Growth, Services, and Need for Planning

The County staff reported strong challenges related to growth in use and deferred maintenance (aging and disrepair) of many parks and facilities. A variety of contributing factors are detailed in later sections, but key reasons for strategic planning now include:

- No update to the County Parks and Recreation Element has occurred since 2006, and the last Strategic Plan update was completed in 2018 (six years ago).
- The visitation to County Parks and Recreation facilities (for documented visits) has increased 123% from almost 1.3 million to almost 2.9 million visitors per year.
- The acres of parkland the County manages has increased by 416 acres.
- The Department has added a wide variety of programs, duties, and responsibilities and had only increased the number of Park Rangers by one.

Since the 2018 Needs Assessment and Recreation and Leisure Trends Analysis, no County resident input beyond program/facility user satisfaction surveying has been formally included in any recent planning efforts, so there is little information available related to what current non-users of the system may need or support.

Needs Identified in the 2023 Parks and Recreation Commission Annual Report

In a report to the County Board of Supervisors, the Parks and Recreation Commission noted that a key issue was that staff have been continually asked to do more with less. Key aspects now needing to be addressed include:

- Doing More With Less
- Doing more within existing resources
- Increased population
- Increased demand for services
- Increased acreage to manage
- New facilities to operate
- Deferred maintenance – a long list of unfunded needed repairs

2008

- 1,283,215 visitors
- 13,214 acres of park land
- 35 Park Rangers

2022

- 2,856,363 visitors
- 13,630 acres of park land
- 36 Park Rangers

Figure 2: Change in Visits, Acres, and Number of Park Rangers – 2008 to 2022



Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan

The County has had a Parks and Recreation Element as a component of the County's General Plan since 1968. In 1993, the Board of Supervisors authorized combining the former Recreation Element, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (1988), and the Trails Plan (1991) into a comprehensive Parks and Recreation Element (PRE), which was finalized in 2006. The PRE establishes goals, policies, and implementation measures for management, renovation, and expansion of existing, and development of new, parks and recreation facilities in order to meet existing and projected needs and to assure an equitable distribution of parks throughout the County.

The purpose of the PRE is to:

- Provide policy guidance regarding the provision of park and recreation services
- Document the County's existing park and recreation resources
- Facilitate the evaluation of park and recreation needs, including those resources outside the County's management during the land use decision process



MISSION

The mission of the Parks and Recreation Department is to ensure diversified opportunities for recreation and the personal enrichment of the County's residents and visitors while protecting its natural, cultural, and historical resources.



VISION

The County Department of Parks and Recreation aspires to provide the following:

- A quality park, recreation, and natural area system
- An equitable distribution of parks and recreation lands and services
- Parks and recreation opportunities for all age groups and physical capabilities
- A system of parks, recreation, and natural areas consistent with the community's existing and future needs
- Protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources within new and existing parks and natural areas
- A viable park, recreation, and natural area funding source that provides for community needs

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COMMUNITY PROFILE

As part of the Strategic Plan, summary key demographics were compiled. Specific demographic community profile elements that appear to be affecting service are shown in Figure 3. Key Demographics. Summary factors affecting service include:

- 2023 population was 286,261 with a current growth rate of less than 1%; 2010 population was 269,637 with a growth of 6.17%. Overall population is lower for youth and higher for ages 65 and over.
- This is the 24th-largest county in California, out of 58.
- Almost a quarter of the population is Hispanic or Latino in heritage with a high number of Spanish speakers.
- The population is highly educated, with over 95% having computers in the home.

The median home values and average rent rates are higher than that of other areas of CA and the USA overall, and average income is also higher. There appear to be some opportunities for revenue growth and positive economic impact relative to parks and recreation services.



Key Demographics	County	USA
Age under 18	21.3%	27.3%
19 to 64	56.4%	55.4%
65 and over	22.3%	17.3%
Hispanic or Latino	24.1%	19.1%
White alone (not Hispanic or Latino)	67.1%	58.9%
Other origin (or two or more races)	8.8%	22.0%
Owner-occupied housing units	62.4%	64.6%
Median value of owner-occupied housing units – 2021	\$630,000	\$244,900
Median gross rent (non-owned) – 2021	\$1,654	\$1,163
Median household income – 2021	\$82,514	\$69,021
People in poverty	13.1%	11.5%
Households with a computer	95.6%	93.1%
Percent with a disability	7.8%	8.7%

Figure 3: Key Demographics of the County

Source: <https://www.census.gov/>

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IDENTIFYING FINDINGS AND KEY ISSUES

This project included a variety of input and engagement with meetings held with staff at all levels, County and Departmental leadership, the Board of Supervisors, and the Parks and Recreation Commission. In summary, in addition to the ongoing Project Management meetings, the engagement for this plan included 115 points of staff and leadership involvement during the initial Information Gathering and Findings/Visioning meetings.

In addition, the Draft Plan was presented to all staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission (with Board of Supervisors and the public invited to attend) on January 25, 2024, and then adopted by the Board of Supervisors..

STAFF AND LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Attendance for Information Gathering meetings on Nov. 1 – 2, 2023

- 54 in group meetings
- 5 individual meetings

Attendance for Information Gathering meetings on Nov. 27 – 28, 2023

- 49 in group meetings
- 4 individual meetings
- 3 Online individual meetings



Department Strengths – What Should We Be Celebrating?

All staff and leadership participants were invited to share thoughts on what is currently working well, as identified in the following aggregated (non-prioritized) summary:

- There appears to be great camaraderie within staff and caring team members.
- There have been a lot of good new hires in recent years.
- Staff are generally passionate about the work they do, and with the strong growth, they have been very resourceful in how they get additional duties completed. They are often proud of being able to be generalists who can handle a variety of duties, especially at the Ranger levels.
- Staff have become good (maybe too good) at operating with minimal staffing.
- They handle variety every day. There are various roles to fulfill and many opportunities to do new things.
- There is an openness of leadership to listen and try to improve things.
- The staff are busier than ever – adding facilities and lands, acreages, resource/habitat protection, and recreation programs.
- One benefit of working often in unincorporated areas is that the public often perceive that County front-line staff “are the government” in representation. This allows opportunities to positively portray the County overall and provide good customer service.
- Overall, there are good-quality golf courses, trails, and a variety of parks/nature opportunities available.
- We have learned from the pandemic how much these services mean to people. It is clear now for most that these are very important and appreciated services from the County.



Department Challenges – What Needs to Be Fixed?

Staff and decision-makers also shared thoughts on what is currently not working well, as identified in the following aggregated (non-prioritized) summary:

- While the County has geographic information services available for mapping and parcel identification, the Department needs better mapping and geographic information systems (GIS) available on a component basis for management, website updates, and ways to communicate with public.
- Marketing resources are needed across the system, especially for golf and recreation programs/events – social media, web, coordinated signage, kiosks.
- Golf seems to be somewhat managed separately – need stronger integration as part of a Recreation division with shared communications and resources.
- 2018 cost recovery work still seems mostly valid, but it was not implemented, is not tracked for evaluation, and there is not a deep understanding of how to use that information for better revenue generation, resource allocation, and scholarships.
- Updating workforce hiring and program representation to reflect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the County is extremely important.
- Everyone wants resources – there is no general Master Plan to guide who receives them or when.
- Greater consistency is needed in dealing with concessionaires and volunteers, including procurement, onboarding, training, and evaluation.
- Expense budgets and cost recovery goals are not in sync, and most staff are not involved with consistent mechanisms for implementation.
- A registration software update is strongly needed to allow more friendly internal and external systems for public and evaluation capabilities.
- Adequate funding for needs across the system, especially maintenance, is lacking.
- Water scarcity is problematic and need for additional resiliency planning is needed.
- This is a maturing system with strong needs for good integrated systems planning (master planning, asset planning, coordination of systems, and evaluation tools) to help determine needs, demands, allocation of resources, and return on investments (ROI).
- Use of lands, lakes, facilities, and campgrounds has strongly increased, including added required boat inspections, maintenance, and safety issues.
- Adequate staffing to meet demand is challenging, especially at campgrounds, lakes, and pools.
- The County is heavily relying on volunteers and park hosts and newly trained seasonal staff to get work done, especially in Huasna and Salinas Districts. Relying on seasonal staff does not work anymore – cannot hire and train enough qualified people.

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ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Additional countywide and departmental analyses have been conducted that have helped inform this Strategic Plan.

Countywide Employee Needs

In 2023, the County hired the Center for Organizational Effectiveness to conduct an overall Employee Engagement Survey of all 3,064 County employees. Thirty-four out of 184 invited Parks and Recreation Department employees responded; some interesting collaborating data was found. Overall, as

shown in Figure 4: County-Needed Work Environment and Resources, from the Employee Engagement Survey, the top three work environment resources needed are additional staffing, more training resources, and upgraded field equipment.

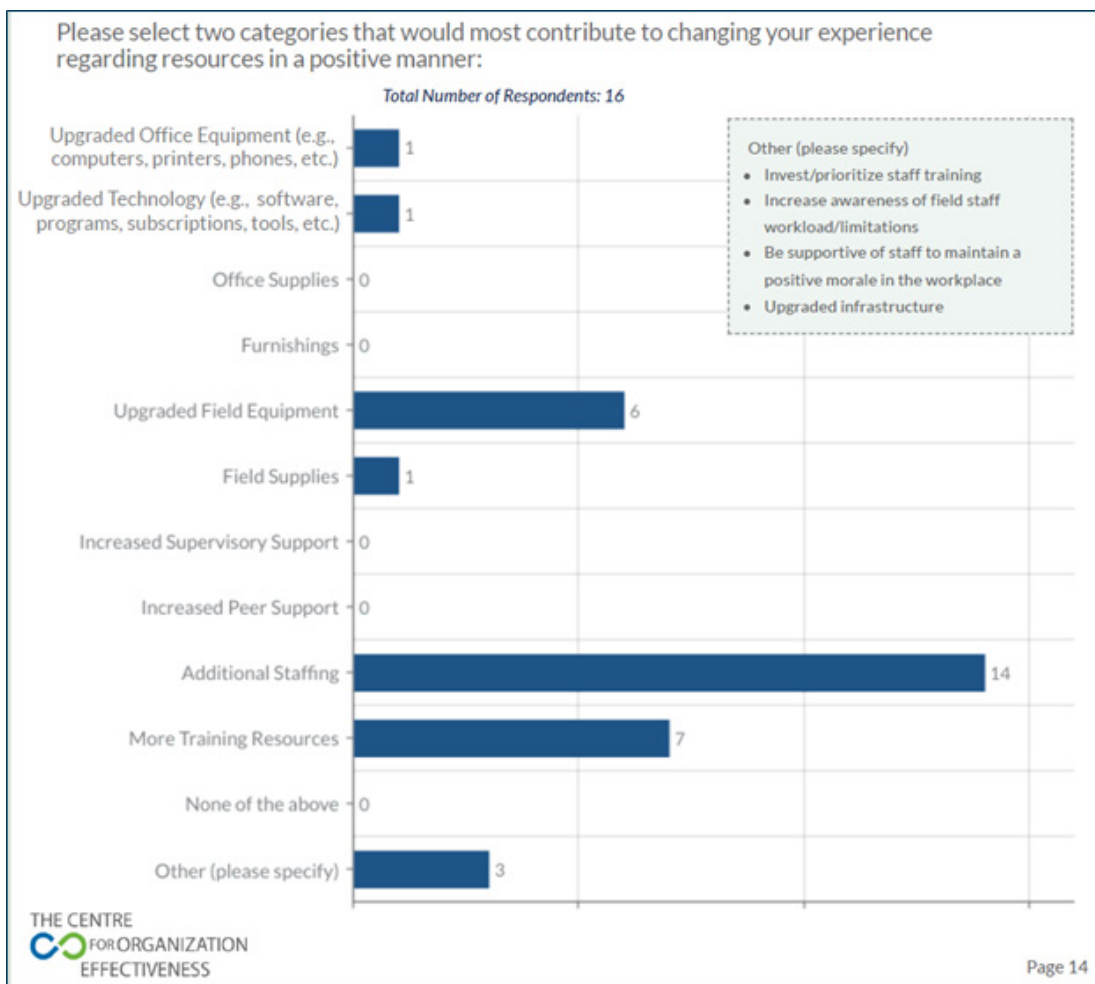


Figure 4: County-Needed Work Environment and Resources

Staff Recruitment, Hiring, Training, and Retention

Even as demand and appreciation increase for public parks and recreation offerings, across California and the nation, the Department is experiencing a shortage of qualified parks and recreation professionals available to fill open positions. A variety of factors contribute to this, but leading the reasons is the changing wage structures, professional lifestyle considerations, and cost of living challenges, especially in San Luis Obispo, CA. Seasonal youth used to be widely available, but now it is often seen as more financially desirable to work at a coffee shop or fast-food venue than to be a parks worker or lifeguard. Often youth entering the workforce do not understand that this can be a viable long-term career, and many public leaders do not understand the amount of education and experience it takes to run and manage the diverse offerings of public parks and recreation agencies and facilities.

The result of this for the County is that all Districts report challenges with hiring and retaining enough qualified staff to run and manage the parks, facilities, and programs offered. Staff report that a large amount of time is spent trying to hire and train seasonal staff, and often they are not coming back in future seasons, primarily due to wages or other perceived benefits from other fields. Volunteers (often not trained well enough) are relied upon heavily, and recruitment and training guidelines for new staff and/or volunteers are not centralized.

The Department strategically has a variety of options available to address these challenges:

- After a systemwide departmental Master Plan with sub-area Needs Assessments are completed, District Management plans can delve deeper into the actual needs for programs and facilities and conduct an Operational Audit to reevaluate current staffing positions, roles, and volunteer positions.
- Wage structures will likely need to be increased to attract and retain good entry-level employees, especially with minimum wages increasing.
- A focused, centralized workforce development coordinator with understanding of parks and recreation professional needs could help coordinate recruitment, hiring, and training of seasonal and entry-level staff. This would provide greater consistency in training, knowledge, and competencies across the Department. This position could also coordinate Volunteer Management, Training, and Recognition, with a focus on Park Hosts and other key volunteers.
- The Department would be well-served to implement a skills and competency inventory as part of District Management and Operational Plans. This could help identify where specific skills are available, rather than having to duplicate skillsets or hiring for lack thereof.
- The Department could increase partnerships with universities for seasonal staff, volunteers, and potentially interns. Cal-Poly has similar programs that could be better partnered for the County. This again should include a centralized workforce development coordinator rather than sporadic contacts from various parks.

Partnerships – Contractor, Sponsor, and Vendor Management

The County has a variety of partners, vendors, sponsors, and contractors that help perform a lot of the services needed. The finding related to this is that the County is running very lean. These support individuals and organizations are incredibly important to providing the services for the County parks and recreation facilities, golf, and parks offerings.

The key finding related to strategic planning is that while most partnerships appear to be working well overall, much discrepancy exists in terms of oversight, contractual agreements, and evaluation. Each district and division handles them slightly differently. Some are formalized with specific agreements and regular meetings, while others have been “grandfathered” in with a “handshake” type agreement. No centralized tracking or oversight systems are in place. Some challenges exist with performance for various services, and some staff are better than others at follow-up and evaluation. Some partners and vendors likely recognize that they may get a “better deal” working for some Districts over others. The County could be well-served to centralize general oversight of these services, with a repository and guidelines for agreements that are consistent across the County.

Suggestions could be that as part of the Master Planning effort, a full inventory of these types of agreements and a central list of partners, sponsors, contractors, and vendors be created to assess how and where these services are being utilized. This can be quantified and explored further through the next step of the District Management and Operational Plans, with general oversight and tracking handled at a centralized County level for all parks and recreation services.

Cost Recovery and Resource Allocation Planning

Funding availability has been and is a strong challenge in the County, leading to lack of resources for growing staff and unfilled needs for additional operating and maintenance allocations for parks and recreation. In 2005, the County of San Luis Obispo Grand Jury issued a report titled “Out on a Dead Limb” that raised concerns about the long-term financial health of the County’s park system, considering insufficient maintenance funding and increasing deferred maintenance. A Blue-Ribbon Task Force reviewed the report and recommended establishing an independent Parks and Recreation Department to address the issues raised by the Grand Jury. Nine years after the report, the County established an independent Parks and Recreation Department.

In 2018 the Department undertook a Cost Recovery Methodology Study, recognizing that the underlying funding structure of the Department remained unsustainable, relying primarily on fees and deferring maintenance to balance budgets without considering needed services and/or General Fund support. The Department recognized the need to define a cost recovery policy moving forward to manage its service profile and establish more transparency and credibility with the community and elected officials. A process was completed to identify and evolve a long-term strategy, structure, and system to provide for fiscal health and sustainability, and is responsive to the community. Goals were to:

- Develop a sustainable and justifiable philosophy, supporting policy, and cost model for calculating fees.
- Provide a tool/system to recalibrate existing parks and recreation fees based on the resulting parks and recreation philosophy.
- Define a cost recovery philosophy for the County Board of Supervisors to adopt.

The Cost Recovery project began in January 2018 and concluded with final recommendations presented to the Board of Supervisors in July. The Department hosted a series of sessions to gather input from staff, the Parks and Recreation Commissioners, stakeholders, and the public, allowing the Department to understand which programs and services were considered to have mostly community benefits, which had mostly individual benefits, and which provide a balance of benefits. The sessions also allowed participants to better understand their fellow participants' perspectives, and tiers and categories for services and cost recovery goals were identified. However, shortly thereafter the County administration and leadership changed significantly, and the recommendations were not implemented for the Department.

Regional parks and Community parks now have different revenue goals for each, and the golf courses are set up as Enterprise Funds with full cost recovery expectations. This system appears to still be challenging, as sufficient funding is not available from revenue to provide the services that the County residents appear to desire in a park system. In addition, various necessary aspects of having an equitable parks system available to all segments of the public are missing in these classifications. Various components within those parks do not always fit within a Regional category of parks (higher revenue expectations) or Community category (lower revenue expectations).

Cost Recovery is a complex subject. It represents a decision to generate revenues by charging fees, or other types of revenue, for some or all programs and services relative

to the total operational costs to provide them. Cost recovery does not imply that the target is total recovery of the cost; however, a target is established according to a variety of considerations and may range from 0% to more than 100% of direct costs.

The national average (NRPA Park Metrics) of cost recovery for full parks and recreation systems is 27% for all services, meaning that typically public departments nationwide are subsidized by 63%. It is very rare that public parks and recreation systems can be financially profitable (if they were, they would likely be offered privately). However, some categories of service can provide revenue to help offset those categories that need subsidy for the public good. Typically, systems with higher recreation focus that charge fees have higher levels of cost recovery, and those systems with available open free parks and natural areas have lower levels of cost recovery.

In 2018, the overall Department cost recovery was 63%, significantly higher than national averages. At this time, cost recovery reports for the County parks and recreation system are not fully tracked or available, but it is reported that neither the golf nor regional parks categories as currently tracked are fully meeting stated 100% cost recovery goals for those classifications as identified. The 2018 recommended categories for services and cost recovery goals are outlined as shown in Figure 5.

The categories of service and tiering identified in the 2018 Pyramid Methodology appear to be still generally valid today. A separate Pyramid of categories was identified for Golf.

The County has an opportunity to reexamine that work and move forward with implementation of full cost recovery guidelines and a policy that could likely help refine appropriate revenue expectations and achievable financial outcomes now. It may make sense to combine Golf as a primary recreation program into the same Pyramid. If the current regional and community classifications are kept, it would be prudent to evaluate a tiered resident/non-resident fee structure that allows reduced fees for neighboring residents while visitors pay full fees. Full implementation of this methodology could help increase revenue

equitably across the system, provide additional direction to staff on pricing, and yet recognize that it is appropriate to have some programs and services subsidized within Golf and Regional parks. Within a specific Management Plan, each District and Program Division (Golf, Aquatics, Events, Rentals, etc.) could adjust their revenue goals based on realistic market and tourism opportunities, available facilities, and local community demographic needs. Additional justification and findings can be examined during a full system needs assessment/Master Plan.

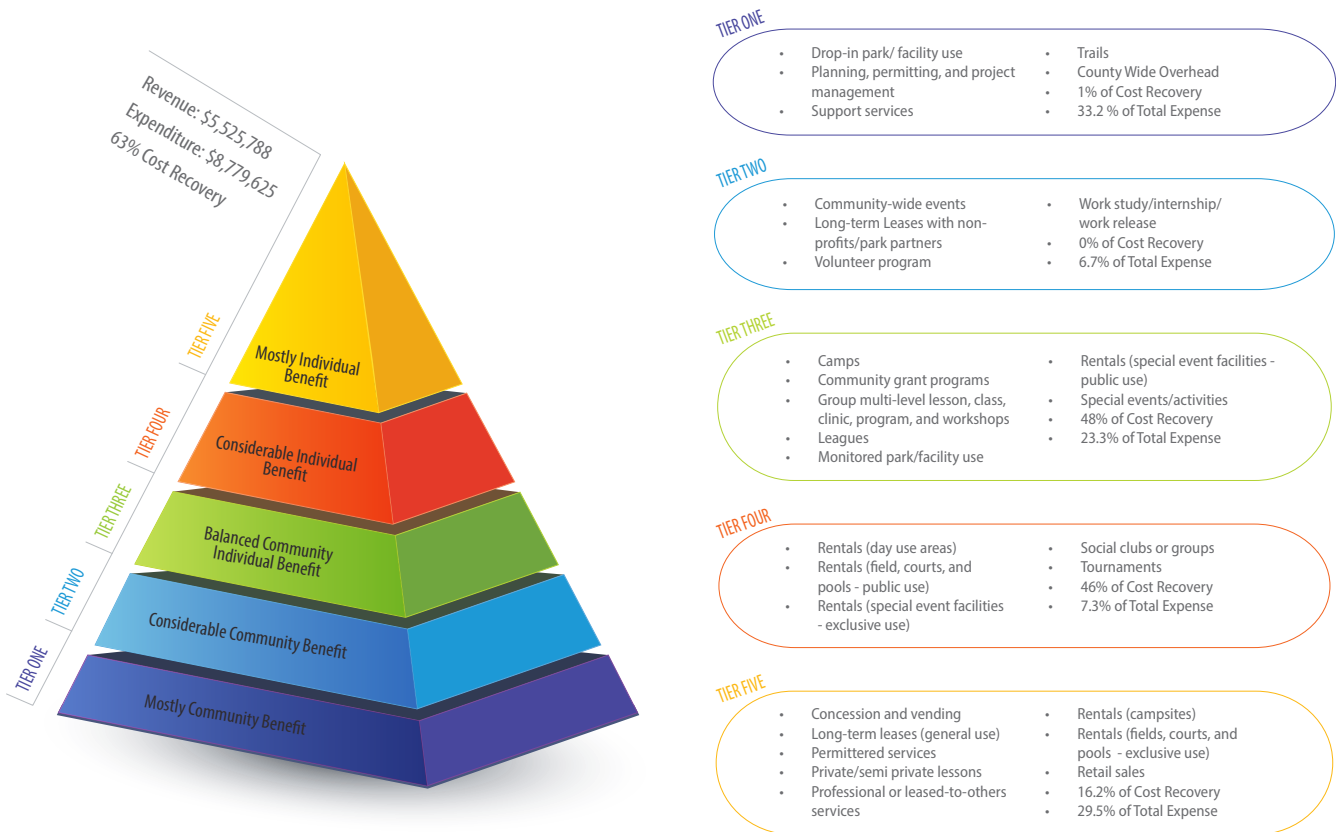


Figure 5: 2018 Cost Recovery Goals for County Parks and Recreation



Additional Funding Strategies

The reality is that the County is still financially very challenged, and while the need for additional resources appears to be great, significant cuts in funding are still likely. Park amenities are aging and becoming unsafe in some situations. Deferred maintenance has become unmanageable in some parks and campgrounds, and the quality of various sites is less than ideal. Staffing levels likely need to be addressed with higher wages and reduced workloads to manage staffing and enhance hiring and retention.

The good news is that the County is rich in land resources and has a very desirable quality of life, potential economic and tourism opportunities, and many residents with the ability to pay for the services they need (while providing appropriate funding and scholarship mechanisms so that under-resourced residents are not priced out). There is strong support and demand (many sites are “over-loved”), and

anecdotally there appears to be additional opportunities for increased willingness to pay.

However, a key finding in this Strategic Plan is that there has not been a full countywide needs and demand assessment (beyond the 2018 Recreation and Leisure Trends Analysis done by staff) completed in over 20 years, so there is no current way to provide recommendations on what residents really want or will support now with tax- or fee-based funding.

Additionally, various funding mechanisms are being used in California and around the country, but additional information will be needed before those selected mechanisms can be justified for recommendation. A departmental systemwide Master Plan with a needs assessment, component-based inventory and level of service analysis, demand analysis, program, and financial analysis appears to be warranted.



Marketing and Communications

Input from staff and a review of the County's website and promotional materials indicate that there could be a benefit from having additional centralized and focused marketing for parks, recreation, and golf. Note, at this time, since demand is so high at many of the parks and campgrounds, the focus of this may be less on creating visibility and more on helping with education, capacity management, and helping to spread use across the systems that have so many "loved to death" areas. With a strong cost recovery and equitable fee system in place, the County can focus on increasing revenues where appropriate from those with the ability to pay, and letting lower-resourced populations know where they can participate in free or reduced-fee areas to still satisfy their need for use of parks, recreation, and golf offerings.

Currently, while there is marketing support from the County's Public Information Specialist, District staff are supplementing their own social media and additional marketing for programs, and park management as needed. This has led to inconsistent levels of marketing capacity in different Districts, dependent on staff skill levels, desire, and knowledge on top of their other job duties.

BENEFITS CAN BE SEEN FROM:

Improving availability of public parks', facilities', and program locations' maps and website descriptions across the system. While the County has geographic information services available for mapping and parcel identification, the Department needs better mapping and GIS available on a component basis for management, website updates, and ways to communicate with public. While the website has a map available for selecting individual sites, if a visitor comes to the County or a resident looking for a program just wants to know where something like swimming or beach access may be available, currently they have to click on individual sites to see what is there. An updated countywide trails map is needed that indicates the opportunities for alternative transportation, loop trails, and walks for both residents and visitors.

Social media should be centrally managed for consistency, and increased to help educate and inform the public. An experienced Social Media Coordinator could help build a cohesive County brand, along with helping identify opportunities and where overuse may be occurring, guiding people to places, and spreading out use. Currently the public is doing this, but not in an always desirable way.

The registration software and integrated website needs to be easier to use, navigate, and track visitors and residents.

5

CREATING A RESILIENT COMMUNITY IN THE COUNTY THROUGH PARKS AND RECREATION PLANNING

The Role of Public Parks and Recreation in Preventive Health – Modifiable Health Factors

Research has shown that public parks and recreation systems can promote integration of proven preventive health factors (also known as social determinants of health in the public health realm) that have been shown through research to be modifiable by parks and recreation agencies. These typically include physical activity, nutrition, social and parental engagement, transportation, access to facilities and nature, safety and perception of safety, and reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.

These factors can be evaluated and prioritized in conjunction with current program offerings and component-based inventory and findings through a departmental Master Plan and/or District-specific management and program planning. These aspects can be crucial for strategically positioning the Department for additional partnerships, funding, identity, and public support. The following pages outline the factors. Figure 6 provides a summary graphic for how these factors and various actors (partners, other providers, etc.) interact in the County to improve the overall system.

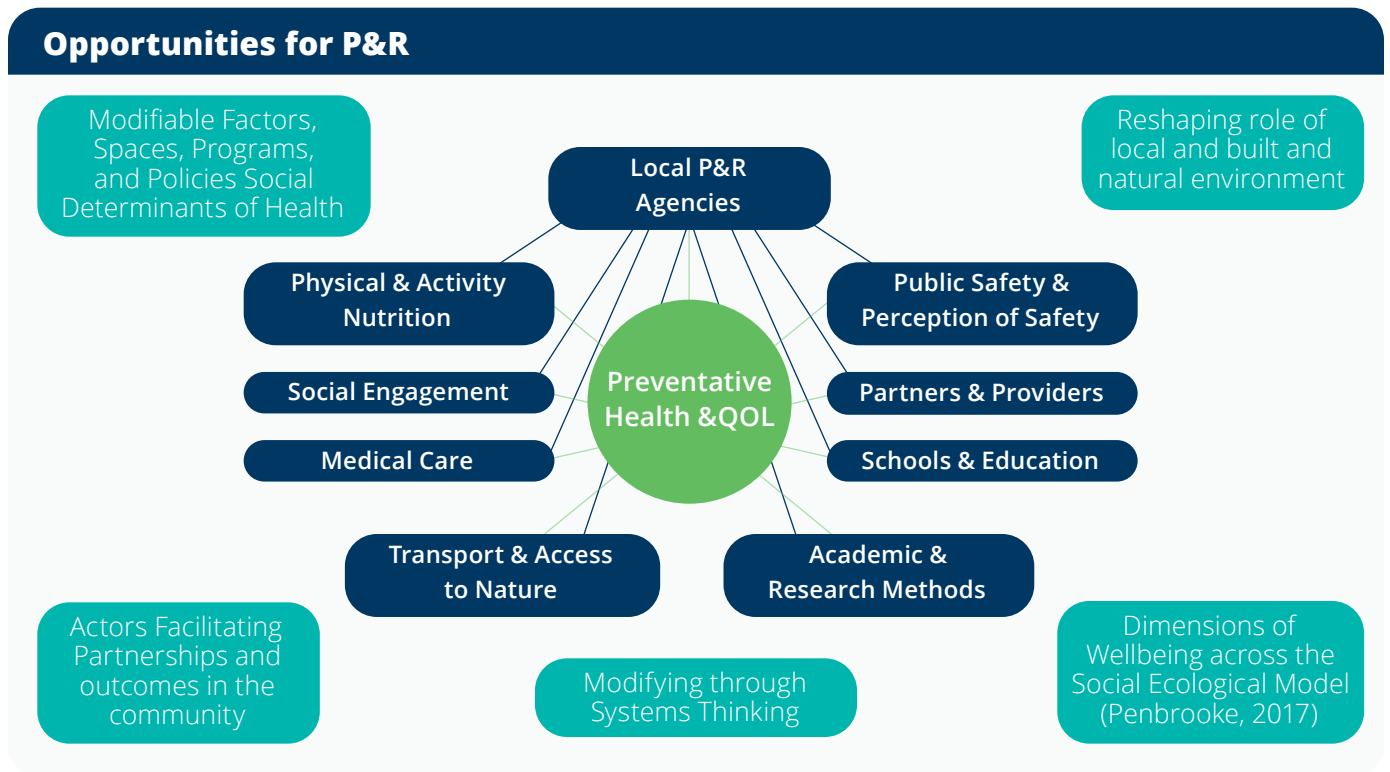


Figure 6: Opportunities to Improve Preventive Health Through Systems Planning

Physical Activity

The County has many opportunities to increase physical activity for residents. This can be done through a variety of actions, such as providing more programs, more places to be active, education, and other offerings. Below are some potential indicators for increasing physical activity. The County is blessed with numerous outdoor areas and trails that can help.

TYPICAL INDICATORS:

- Availability of assets/programs
- Quality of natural and built environment
- Varied physical demands of programs/services
- Application of evidence-based standards and practices by staff
- Marketing and promotion of increased physical capacity and availability

Nutrition

The County can help address availability and education related to good nutrition. Nutritional factors include a balanced intake of foods that provide the necessary daily nutrients for an active lifestyle and that are culturally relevant. Some common potential indicators that can be made through parks and recreation follow. The Department may not consider itself a primary nutrition provider, but it can modify preventive health greatly through education on the front line for youth and adults, providing locations for healthy food availability, and modeling through healthy in-house guidelines for snacks, concessions, and meals provided, especially in programs.

TYPICAL INDICATORS:

- Availability of healthy food and vending/concessionaire guidelines
- Information, education, and training
- Healthy food/drink options
- Collaboration with local restaurants or meal sites
- Community gardens

Social Interaction and Engagement

Social engagement has become imperative. Parks and recreation provide places and programs that can affect a variety of potential indicators to address social interaction and engagement. This factor may be even more important coming out of the pandemic, due to the need for social distancing and isolation, which caused mental health issues for many.

Social engagement can also be focused on not only peer to peer interactions, but also parental and family engagement. Social engagement includes positive social relations and role modeling with peers and adults in various settings, along with engaging in social discourse and developing and maintaining friendships with others.

TYPICAL INDICATORS:

- Efforts to prevent bullying and hazing
- Non-competitive organized activity options
- Establish practices of social inclusiveness
- Positive social environment
- Relevancy of programs/services to residents



Safety and Perception of Safety

If people do not feel safe, they will not use facilities or participate. When safety is a concern, actual crime rates can be addressed separately. This can usually be done in conjunction with public safety officers (police) and/or implementing media campaigns that highlight positive actions and actual crime rates (when low). Across the country, public agencies are implementing community police partnerships with parks and recreation departments to help establish positive preventive relationships. The community input in the County indicated that Park Rangers are often seen a law enforcement, especially in unincorporated areas of the County. The Department is also a key partner in helping to manage opportunities and management for non-sanctioned uses of lands and helping unhoused populations.

TYPICAL INDICATORS:

- Crime rate at or near assets/ programs
- Parent/children perception of safety level
- Prevention practices of direct and affiliated service providers
- Safety inspection and risk management
- Staff supervision and surveillance efforts

Transportation and Access to Facilities and Nature

If residents cannot get to something, they cannot use it. Indicators related to transportation and access can be evaluated relative to location of components within the County parks and recreation system. For example, while walking access to a nearby component may be high, it may not be high to a person's most desired component, or available at the right times of day for a resident. This may be correlated to the factor of Perception of Safety, where geographically there is access available, but a barrier can exist, or the perception may be that it is not safe to walk or bike there.

Each park and natural area will need to be evaluated in planning for improvements. Transportation services can include various modes of traditional and alternative transportation for individuals or groups, including vehicles offered by public, private, or family members. Well-planned County regional trails can be used for getting residents to and from a program, event, or activity; for physical activity; or potentially to get to work or other needs.

TYPICAL INDICATORS:

- Accessibility, availability, and interconnectivity of public and alternative transportation
- Cost of services
- Convenience
- Consumer knowledge of public transportation services
- Utilization rates



Prevention of Stress/Mental Health Challenges, Alcohol and Drug Abuse

Public policies can address how people can learn coping strategies from parks and recreation for managing stress, and minimize negative health behaviors such as tobacco use and alcohol overconsumption. Public parks and recreation agencies may also be able to play a positive role in addressing addictions, such as smoking, vaping, and alcohol overconsumption, especially among youth.

In the United States, more than 1,200 municipalities and counties now have smoke-free parks. Because addressing tobacco is typically a community-wide policy for public facilities, the County has a tobacco-free policy that applies to parks and spaces.

On a societal scale, reduction of alcohol and other addictive drug consumption in communities is warranted as a preventive public health goal. Agencies may offer alcohol

education to the public through programs and special events. By using systems approaches and working with other actors within the community system, the County can play an important front-line role in education and social connections that are vital in preventing and treating substance addictions.

The Department has an opportunity to address alternative activities and education regarding drug and alcohol use, along with smoking. Comments during staff discussions suggested beliefs that parks and recreation can provide positive engagement and activities that help connect people and provide alternatives for stress reduction and positive coping mechanisms in the County. These beliefs have been enhanced during the pandemic as the public often realized how important parks and recreation services are to their quality of life.

How Parks and Recreation Helps During Natural Disasters and Extreme Weather Events

The County is being affected by potentials for natural disasters, major storms, climate change, and public health challenges, like the pandemic, drug and alcohol overuse, and increasing unhoused populations. Parks and recreation can play a strong role in creating a more resilient community, especially since the Department manages many public spaces for stormwater management, sheltering during extreme events, managing greenspace for carbon sequestration, and providing social engagement that helps with community and individual stress reduction.

Extreme weather events are becoming far too common around the world, whether they are floods, tornadoes, wildfires, or other types of disaster. The services the Department provides for the County and residents are essential during these types of events, and preparedness is crucial.

During a disaster, typically the parks and facilities are safe public places that residents can go. Parks and greenways also can perform key remediation aspects for stormwater or treefall removal needs. Following a disaster, the opening or re-opening of community trails, parks, and facilities, and recreation programs plays an extremely important role in recovery of a community. As seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, quite often the more stressed or overwhelmed an individual is, the more parks and recreation services are needed.

Disasters can be vivid reminders of how vulnerable community health can be. The social ties that develop through community change efforts improve health outcomes and are critical for surviving and recovering from tragedies that may occur in the County. Too often the under-resourced populations are most affected. Programs and services can signify to residents impacted by a disaster event that very important “return to normalcy” and provide a place for stress reduction and community connections. Parks and recreation services are so vital to the mental, physical, and environmental health of the community that if the County is not prepared for disaster, the community is not prepared.

Results have shown that parks and recreation are often a key player in stormwater management, erosion controls, wildlife habitat, and barriers for wildfires. Mitigation of climate change and the resultant potential natural disasters, soil erosion, and other actions help leverage actions, minimize financial impacts, and help prepare. Mitigation of climate change and the resultant potential natural disasters, soil erosion, and other actions help leverage actions, minimize financial impacts, and can help the County be ready.

The following list outlines key factors for preparedness and response:

PREPARE– BEFORE AN EVENT:	RESPOND– DURING AN EVENT:	RECOVER– THE REBUILD TO NORMALCY AFTER A DISASTER EVENT:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect ahead – Identify and connect with the right partners and staff in advance. • Update Inventory – Ensure the County’s Component-Based Digital Asset Inventory is current in GIS. Having a complete digital inventory of every component the County owns and manages can help get federal funding, insurance dollars, and grants to rebuild. • Land and Lease Records – Know where the records are located and have redundancy in case files are destroyed. • Have a General Security Plan and Emergency Risk Management and Communications Plans – Make sure that staff know who is to work during an event, how to contact each other, and how to cover for personal needs. • Ready Care and Shelter Plans – Often Parks and Recreation facilities and gyms become shelter locations. Ensure that recreation facilities are ready to shelter hundreds of displaced families. • Training – Becoming aware, learning how to work with other regional and federal agencies, and knowing roles can be crucial to the next phase – response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) protocols. • Mutual aid – Have agreements with other agencies so they can help and reciprocate as needed. • Shelter management – Determine who is running shelters and programs. • Asset management – Determine who is evaluating parks, trails, and facilities. • Align with FEMA and Red Cross – In larger events, these federal agencies will respond, but staff will need to be ready to work with them quickly. 	<p>The best way to recover is to proactively plan so that County parks and facilities are designed and updated to weather disasters. When building or updating assets and programs, the County should incorporate disaster and resiliency planning as much as possible in advance to help mobilize, get funding to rebuild, and help the community return to normal.</p>

Parks Can Create Resilience From Climate and Weather Pattern Changes

As climate change and urbanization continue to put pressure on communities outside of extreme disasters, parks can help as one key solution. As communities like the County grow and densify, they are naturally building hotter environments. Research shows that parks can mitigate the increases in heat and excess carbon through stronger greenspaces and stormwater management.

An additional recent research article in National Geographic featuring work by Trust for Public Land and others indicates that heat nearly always aligned with the densest urban areas. Large parks can help cool communities, and trees are key aspects; however, it is more than just shade trees that help fight climate change. Parks can help mitigate areal flooding, capture excess carbon, and foster a stronger sense of community among those who will be affected by extreme weather and the changes it can bring.

As the County grows, it is important to enact guidelines for appropriate public land dedications, especially for new developments and in the County's role as an "overlay system" working with the various municipalities. This will help ensure that the County can continue to provide green space as additional areas develop or densify, and provide adequate tree canopy, areas for stormwater management, and places for the community to connect and restore.

"Biodiversity, recreational and cultural co-benefits that make green space such an important element of a healthy, liveable city. In other words, green spaces aren't just pleasant places for a family picnic. They are a vital part of an ecosystem, and a key to making cities liveable as the climate changes."

– The Conversation, published on March 15, 2023

Stormwater and Golf Course Water Management Challenges

From taking out irrigated turf to upgrading irrigation systems and computer technology, golf courses are constantly focused on water. As droughts in California deepen, the County golf course managers are aware that golf management always requires strong focus on appropriate water usage. With golf courses using between 750,000 and one million gallons of water a day, golf managers know they need to both reduce water usage and reinforce the benefits of that usage.

El Chorro Regional Park and Dairy Creek Golf Course are part of federal land that was once part of the National Guard. The County developed Dairy Creek Golf Course within El Chorro Regional Park. The 720-acre parcel of land has had water limitations, and the park does not contain alluvial soils suitable for holding ground water. Golf staff have been exploring options for many years and have provided a variety of options for leadership consideration. In 2017, the Board of Supervisors chose the option to reduce Dairy Creek Golf Course to nine holes and implement the Board-approved Park Programming Plan based upon public input. The Board agreed to provide limited financial assistance and also removed "potentially potable" (surface and reservoir) water sources from Parks' list of alternatives for irrigation water sources. With this direction, Parks set to work to bring golf into parks and parks into golf by developing and re-branding the Dairy Creek Golf Course to attract the non-golfing public to this facility. The plan has been successful and increased usage and revenues. However, reclaimed water production has now been reduced to a level that will no longer be able to provide deliveries to El Chorro Regional Park. At this point, the park has few water options available other than rainwater.

Golf staff have been working on a variety of options that need further evaluation and implementation, including potential negotiations with other entities that may require additional funding for purchase or sharing of water resources. It is beyond the scope of this Strategic Plan to make recommendations on the best strategies for golf now, but focus on water availability, exploration of potential management methods, and plans for long-term outcomes utilizing less water are crucial as additional strategic efforts to allow these facilities to continue operation. Golf needs to be considered one of the County's primary divisions, with integrated levels of cost recovery and resource allocation and marketing support.

Other western USA and California golf systems are also experiencing similar water challenges. The County could be well-served to look at the innovative course management and layout strategies being implemented in Colorado, Arizona, and Nevada. This may require changing to a different type of course than traditional golf (such as a natural links course) and could be seen as a model in California for dealing with these types of tough issues. With increased positive marketing and communications, and Golf programs targeted to new and emerging markets/demographics as part of an overall Recreation marketing focus, these changes could be positioned as a positive opportunity with increased revenue and community benefit, rather than just a reactive challenge that will likely not go away any time soon.



6

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

As part of the Findings and Visioning phases of this planning process, staff and leadership reviewed a detailed spreadsheet called the Key Issues Analysis Matrix provided as a staff resource document. This analysis matrix included themed summary sections of findings from the project, along with categories for how they were most identified, noted in Figure 7 in columns labeled Staff and Leadership Input, Organizational Assessment & Data Analysis, and Consultant Observation. These findings were discussed during the staff and leadership meetings with a goal of confirming and starting to prioritize potential recommendations.



2023 Data Source	Data Source	DRAFT Key Issues Analysis	
 <p>Key Findings - Rating Scale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a - priority b - opportunity to improve c - minor or future issue <p>blank means the issue didn't come up or wasn't addressed</p>	Staff and Leadership Input Org Assessment & Data Consultant Observation	 <p>Preliminary Recommendations</p>	
Agency Branding, Communication, and Online Connection with the Community			
Increase social media presence, marketing channels, and positive storytelling	a	a	Dedicated P&R Marketing/Social Media staff with annual Marketing Workplan
Create 5 year Marketing Plan with annual goals and objectives	b	a	Create plan with the dedicated staff person with County marketing
Integrate system to include cohesive marketing for all properties, programs, and golf	a	a	Included in organized role of P&R Marketing person with staff/rangers
Update website and online mapping/trails app	b	b	Make it easier to find facilities, programs, and trails on a mapping function
Update registration software to improve customer service, streamline camping and activity registration, reduce staff time, and improve evaluation opportunities	a	a	New vendor to increase ease of registration for all offerings and evaluation capabilities
Create cohesive signage and identity plan for all properties	b	b	Create list of all new signs needed with annual update plan with cohesive branding - needs can be identified during updated parks inventories in GIS and facilities condition assessments
Increase Efficiency and Identify Funding Priorities Through Updated Planning Processes			
Increase planning capacity for Department	a	a	Fill second planning position as Senior Planner/Special Projects, Development, and Evaluation Manager
Conduct a comprehensive department-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan	b	a	Hire a consultant to conduct a system-wide professional master plan including needs assessment, LOS, and operational analysis every five years
Update the County General Plan P&R Element	a	a	Include in Master Plan Deliverables
Complete a full component-based inventory and level of service analysis in GIS	b	a	Include in Master Plan Tasks and Deliverables
Complete a system-wide P&R Community Resident Needs Assessment	a	a	Include in Master Plan Tasks and Deliverables
Create Management, Staffing, and Operational Plans for each District	a	a	Create management plan, operational, and staffing plan specific to each District based on identified needs from System Master Plan and unique District holdings

Figure 7: Sample of the Key Issues Analysis Matrix – Reviewed as a Staff Resource

The following section outlines the summary themes and recommendations identified. The following Section 7 Goals and Action Plan provides a summary Action Plan with a general suggested implementation timeline and financial implications.

1. Improve Agency Branding, Communications, and Online Connections with the Community and Visitors

The Department needs to increase communications and marketing to the public and visitors. This will help celebrate, educate, and inform the public, and spread out use for facilities and parks that are “over-loved.” The Parks and Recreation (P&R) Department has an opportunity to leverage strong demand and support from the public and create a culture that celebrates and highlights the abundance of natural and recreational resources and high quality of life available in the County.

Storytelling, increased social media, cohesive signage, and easier-to-find information will also likely help increase public support and potential willingness to pay for additional services as residents become aware of all that is provided to them. Visitors can help support services through increased revenue, if they know where services are offered.

The Department provides important natural resource and resiliency services for the County. Services often include fire protection, storm and domestic water management, positive economic opportunities, and care for wildlife, invasive species, and other areas. Highlighting these stories that can help celebrate effective use of public funding.

Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase social media presence, marketing channels, and positive storytelling. • Need to create a five-year Marketing Plan with annual goals and objectives. • Integrate system to include cohesive marketing for all properties, programs, and golf. • Need to update website and online mapping/trails app so residents and visitors can better find what they are looking for and to help spread out service capacity. • Update registration software to improve customer service, streamline camping and activity registration, reduce staff time, and improve evaluation opportunities. • Create cohesive signage and identity plan for all properties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a dedicated centralized P&R Marketing/ social media and Communications Team with annual Marketing Workplan. • Create plan with the dedicated team with County marketing staff. • Include in organized role of P&R Marketing and Communications Team with staff/ rangers. • Make it easier to find facilities, programs, and trails on a mapping function and types of parks/facilities and services. • Select a new vendor to increase ease of registration for all offerings and evaluation capabilities. • Create list of all new signs needed with annual update plan with cohesive branding – needs can be identified during updated parks inventories in GIS and facilities condition assessments.



2. Increase Efficiency and Identify Funding Priorities Through Updated Planning and Resource Allocation Processes

The Department is maturing and needs to have stronger plans in place that will help the County leadership make justified decisions with strong, justifiable data and evaluation. The following recommendations include best planning practices for agencies serving similar populations and are in alignment with the National Recreation and Parks Association Council on Accreditation for Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) Standards for professional agency management. The Department is not yet ready for CAPRA Accreditation, but these recommendations can help improve management practices and prepare for future accreditation in five to ten years, if desired.

Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a full component-based inventory and level of service analysis for all county-owned and managed parks and facilities in GIS. • Complete a systemwide P&R Community Resident Needs Assessment, including a statistically valid survey of County residents. • Create Management, Staffing, and Operational Plans for each District after the systemwide Master Plan is complete. • Revisit implementation and categorization of the 2018 Cost Recovery Planning Efforts. Switch to resource allocation focus, with review of offerings for community and regional parks, and recreation program areas. • Update language for new lands acquisitions to always include Operations and Management (O&M) funding allocations. • Revisit use and awareness of different funding structures for each Division (parks, golf, pools, events, classes, etc.). • Need to increase allocation of resources to address deferred maintenance and identified asset inventory needs. • Increase planning capacity for the Department. • Complete a comprehensive departmental system-wide Parks and Recreation Master Plan. • Update the County General Plan P&R Element. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill the second planning position as Senior Planner/Special Projects, Development, and Evaluation Manager. • Hire a consultant to conduct a systemwide professional Master Plan, including needs assessment, LOS, and operational analysis, updated every five years. • Update the County General Plan P&R element concurrently with Five-Year Master Plan Tasks and deliverables. • Include a component-based Inventory and Level of Service Analysis in GIS in the departmental Master Plan tasks and deliverables. • Include a Countywide Needs Assessment and Survey in the Master Plan tasks and deliverables. • Create Management, Staffing, and Operational Plans specific to each District based on identified needs from the systemwide Master Plan and unique District holdings. • Review, update, and implement the Cost Recovery Guidelines identified in 2018, including Golf as a Recreation program area. • Update language in County Development Code and on any acquisition request to add additional O&M funding. • Review all program areas to revisit individual program categories for specific cost recovery goals. • As part of Master Plan and District Plans, prioritize annual budget allocations for capital and operational budgets.

3. Sustain a High-Performing Departmental Team

The Department has and continues to need operational and organizational adjustments to allocate staffing resources for the best use. Currently it is difficult to identify recommended staffing resource allocations as they are inconsistent across Districts. After a systemwide Master Plan is complete, the District Management and Operational Plans recommended in Theme Two should include close focus of staffing needs at a District level.

In addition, there appear to be opportunities for better centralization of recruitment, hiring, training, evaluation, recognition, and retention efforts for Department staff and volunteers. There is a strong need for improved technology and document management resources. Figure 8 identifies a current updated Organizational Chart. Going forward, it will be important to focus on consistency for function, skills, experience, and competencies needed from staff at different levels rather than individual names for positions.

Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and update staffing and operational ratios for each District. • Increase training opportunities and resources for new staff and volunteers, and for ongoing improvements. • Centralize and update volunteer recruitment and training materials for ParkHosts and volunteers. • Fill currently open positions as soon as possible. Work with local partners (Cal-Poly, schools, etc.) to identify entry-level staff, interns, and seasonals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a District Management and Operational Plan, that includes assessment of District staffing workloads and training needs. • Centralize and update available training, technology, and document management resources for staff and volunteers. • Create designated Volunteer Management function to work with District Supervisors for standardized recruitment, job descriptions, evaluation, and recognition across Department. • Recruit and hire qualified staff to fill currently identified open positions.

4. Deliver a Full and Diverse Range of Parks and Recreation Amenities and Services

Needs and Findings	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need component-based inventory and levels of service analysis to determine gaps. • Need a County-wide complete Trails Master Plan. • Add facilities based on demand throughout County. • Add additional revenue-focused amenities and rental facilities. • Highlight interpretive and conservation programs to increase environmental stewardship. • Formalize collaborative programming offerings with schools to increase youth involvement/awareness. • Increase recreation program offerings and create a Recreation Program Plan to help evolve to a mature and diverse services system. • Reevaluate enterprise-fund holdings to also increase community-benefit offerings, grow golf-related entry-level programs, highlight courses as community offerings, and connect golf staff with overall departmental marketing, staff integration, and communications, and perceived value. • Continue to convert Golf to “water-wise” and “links-style” courses over time. • Assign dedicated staff to oversee Aquatics as a specialized program area working across Districts. • Assign dedicated staff time to Events/ Rentals/ Partners/Sponsors/and Concessionaires management as program area. • Embrace the opportunity to be seen and known as a key asset to improving health and resiliency within the County, implementing planning elements related to physical activity, nutrition, social engagement, transportation and access, safety, and reduction of drug, alcohol abuse, and homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete component-based inventory as part of Master Plan process. Align with Asset Management planning. • Complete Trails Plan as part of Countywide Master Plan. • Prioritize new facilities and proposed locations based on Master Plan findings. • Use the Master Plan process to identify additional opportunities for revenue. Any revenue-producing facility should have an Operational Pro Forma completed prior to construction and updated every five years. • Increase ranger capacity and assignments to deliver interpretive programs in each District. • Assign school liaisons for each District and Regional Park for quarterly and annual program planning. • Create a Recreation Program Plan based on Community Needs Assessment and Master Plan to increase diversity and revenue. • Better integrate Golf as a primary recreation program division. • Assess Golf for water and greens efficiencies. • Centralize Aquatics as a divisional program area. • Centralize Events/Rentals/Partners/ Sponsors and Vendors management as a program area working with Districts. • Integrate attention to identifying the County as a Healthy Community contributor and resiliency partner in all planning, programming, and capital improvements.

5. Partnerships and Sponsorships

The Department has strong opportunities to improve relationships and potential revenues/ cost savings through centralized management of outside partners. To help with this, policies should be created to help oversee these aspects, with guidelines conveyed to all staff and interested parties. The Department should centralize general oversight of partnerships, sponsorships, contractors, and vendor services, with a repository and guidelines for agreements that are consistent across the County.

Specific tasks should include:

- During the master planning process, create an inventory of all partners, sponsors, contractors, and vendors and their services provided.
- Inventory all agreements and guidelines in place at a District level during the creation of District Management and Operational Plans.
- Create County leadership-approved guidelines and policies with templates and specified approval levels and review timelines for all Partnerships, Sponsors, and other contractual relationships.
- Implement updates to written and formal agreements each year as the various agreements and needs are up for renewal, to be in line with the updated guidelines. Have a competitive process with outlined requirements for all partners and contractors so there is no appearance of favoritism. Have specified review timelines and evaluation factors known in advance to outline expectations and corrections for performance.



Summary of Key Elements Needed to Strategically Move Forward

As the prior section indicates, implementation of some key Department and District plans over the next few years will go a long way to helping the County strategically move forward now in identifying needs, priorities, and funding opportunities. The Department is at a critical stage change in its evolution, size, and maturity level. These primary planning and management tools can help centralize, organize, and bring the Department to a more highly functioning level.

1. DEPARTMENTAL-LEVEL SYSTEMWIDE MASTER PLAN

The primary management tool that is missing for the County is a current systemwide departmental Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This plan, if professionally facilitated by a consultant, would take approximately 12 – 15 months for completion and likely cost between \$150,000 and \$175,000 with all inclusions needed. Unless qualified staff can be identified with time available in-house, this plan should probably be competitively bid to major experienced parks and recreation consulting firms.



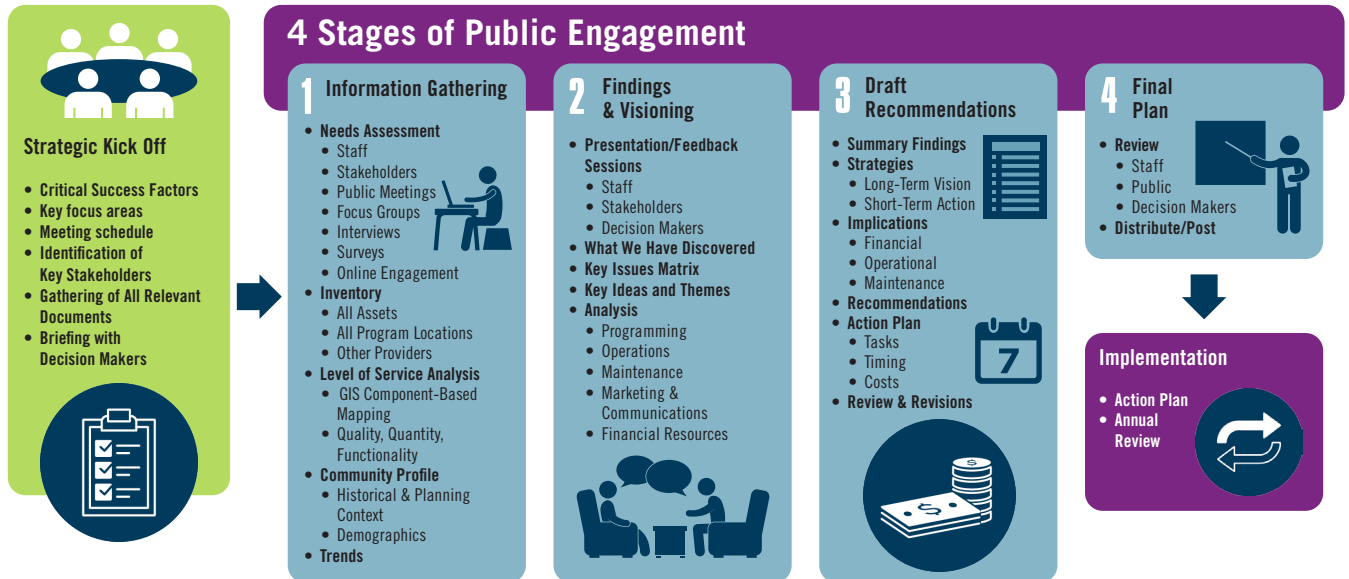
THE PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE:

- ✓ Initial project planning and scheduling.
- ✓ Comprehensive public engagement and needs assessment, including a statistically valid random survey of County residents, an online engagement platform, public meetings, focus groups, individual key stakeholder interviews, and staff involvement, with sub-analysis by district.
- ✓ A component-based inventory and level of service analysis, using geographic information systems (GIS) in ArcGIS® to align with the County's current parcel-based GIS system. This should include inventory, location, and qualitative functionality assessment for all components the County owns and manages, along with identification of key alternative providers (municipalities, private, and non-profit). This work can revisit whether the current regional/ community park classifications are still valid once component-based analysis is implemented.
- ✓ Assessment of management, marketing, and financial elements at a systems level, further exploring the strategic goals identified in this plan.
- ✓ Creation of a Countywide Trails Master Plan.
- ✓ Identification of key findings and visioning aspects.
- ✓ Creation of a well-written and presented draft and final plan to help guide the County for the next 5 years for operational aspects and 10 years for capital aspects, and a 20-year vision. A section should be formatted to update the County Parks and Recreation Element of the County General Plan.

Figure 9 provides a sample graphic of the typical phases of a professional systemwide Parks and Recreation Master Plan. This plan should be completed so as to meet the required evidence for a departmental Master

Plan, needs assessment, assets inventory, and capital and trails plans for CAPRA evidence, should the County decide to pursue that type of accreditation.

Key Elements of a Community Parks and Recreation Strategic/Master Plan



Typically our Strategic/Master Plans include a 5-year focus on operations, 10-year focus on capital, and 20 year strategic vision. Other elements and tools are added as needed for a community-specific plan.

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Figure 9: Sample Systemwide Master Plan Inclusions for Parks and Recreation

The Department has experienced significant deferred maintenance funding challenges for many years that is strongly affecting service delivery and quality. The recommended Master Plan and the current Facility Assessment Plan should prioritize validating and addressing deferred maintenance needs prior to adding new elements to the system.



2. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT, OPERATIONS, AND STAFFING PLANS

Once the Master Plan is complete, each District should complete a five-year management plan based on the levels of service analysis, needs, and demands identified in the Master Plan. This plan should look more deeply at management, operations, capital needs, and staffing for each District. If desired, these can include a Recreation Program Plan, Maintenance Plan, and Marketing/Communications Plan, or they can be done separately. These should also include inventory of all partners, vendors, volunteers, and related agreements in place. These plans can be completed in-house or with consultant assistance. They should contribute directly to County annual capital improvement plans, budgeting, and workplans for staff, and inform centralized functions.

3. UPDATED COST RECOVERY AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Good work was done on these aspects in 2018. That work should be revisited, updated, and implemented. Golf should be included as a primary, integrated, recreation program area. This work can also help further examine whether the current regional/community park and enterprise fund classifications are still valid, or if a program category-based system may provide greater opportunities for equitable service provision and revenue capacity.

Additional suggested planning elements and tasks are identified in Section 7.0 Goals and Action Plan.

7

GOALS AND ACTION PLAN

The following section identifies the goals from Section 6.0 and adds potential timing and financial implications where known to provide a summary Action Plan. Note that almost all of these recommendations are planning or operational in nature. New capital needs (aside

from strongly needed deferred maintenance) appear to be lower priority at this point until a systemwide Needs assessment, Master Plan, and District-specific Management Plans are completed (Years 1 to 3) to identify and justify new capital expenditures.

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing (Years)	Funding
1. Agency Branding, Communications, and Online Connections		
Create a dedicated centralized P&R Marketing/social media and Communications Team	1 & 2 – ongoing	Staff time
Create Marketing Workplan	2 and annually	Staff time
Include an organized centralized role of P&R Marketing and Communications Team with staff/rangers	1 and ongoing	Staff time
Make it easier to find facilities, programs, trail, and services	1 & 2 – ongoing	Staff time
Select a new registration software vendor	1 and ongoing	Cost of software and annual fees
Create signage and cohesive branding	2	Staff time and signage costs
2. Increase Efficiency and Identify Funding Priorities Through Updated Planning		
Fill the second planning position	1 – immediate	Staff time and salary
Hire a consultant to conduct a systemwide professional Master Plan, and then update every five years	1 – 2	~ \$150K
Update the County General Plan P&R element concurrently with Five-Year Master Plan	1 – 2	Include in Master Plan
Include a component-based inventory and level of service analysis in the Master Plan	1 – 2	Include in Master Plan

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing (Years)	Funding
2. Increase Efficiency and Identify Funding Priorities Through Updated Planning		
Include Countywide Needs Assessment Survey	1 – 2	Include in Master Plan
Create a management plan for each District	3 – after Master Plan	Staff time or consultant
Review, update, and implement Cost Recovery Guidelines identified in 2018, including Golf as a Recreation program area	2 – after needs assessment	Staff time or consultant
Update language in County Development Code and on any acquisition request to add additional O&M funding	Immediate	Staff time
Review all program areas to revisit individual program categories for specific cost recovery goals	Annually	Staff time
As part of Master Plan and District Plans, prioritize annual budget allocations for capital and operational budgets	Annually	Staff time
3. Sustain a High-Performing Departmental Team		
Include assessment of staffing workloads in District Management Plan	2	Staff time or consultant
Centralize and update available training, technology, and document management resources for staff and volunteers	1	Staff time
Create designated Volunteer Management function to work with District	1	Staff time
Recruit and hire qualified staff to fill currently identified open positions – based on District Plans	1 and ongoing	Staff time
4. Deliver a Full Range of Parks and Recreation Amenities and Services		
Complete component-based inventory as part of Master Plan process	1 & 2	Include in Master Plan
Complete Trails Plan as part of Countywide Master Plan	1 & 2	Include in Master Plan
Prioritize new facilities and proposed locations based on Master Plan findings	1 & 2	Include in Master Plan

Themes and Summary Recommendations	Timing (Years)	Funding
4. Deliver a Full Range of Parks and Recreation Amenities and Services		
Identify additional opportunities for revenue. Any revenue-producing facility should have an Operational Pro Forma completed prior to construction and updated every five years	2 and annually	Include in Master Plan and annually (staff time)
Increase ranger capacity and assignments to deliver interpretive programs in each District	2 and annually	Include in District and program plans (staff time)
Assign school liaisons for each District and Regional Park for quarterly and annual program planning	2 – 3	Include in District Plans
Create a Recreation Program Plan to increase diversity and revenue	2 – 3	Include in District Plans
Better integrate Golf as a primary Recreation program division	1 and ongoing	Staff time
Assess Golf for potential water and greens efficiencies	1 and ongoing	Staff time
Centralize Aquatics as a divisional program area	1 and ongoing	Staff time
Centralize events/rentals/partners/sponsors and vendors management as a Divisional program area working with Districts	1 and ongoing	Staff time
Integrate attention to identifying the County as a healthy community contributor and resiliency partner in all planning, programming, and capital improvements	1 and ongoing	Staff time and part of all plans
5. Partnerships and Sponsorships		
Create a centralized inventory of all partners, sponsors, contractors, and vendors	1 – 3	Include in Master Plan
Inventory all agreements and guidelines in place	2 – 3	Include in District Plans
Create centralized partnership, sponsorship, and vendor policies	2 – 3	Staff time
Implement updates to all written and formal agreements	Immediate and ongoing	Staff time



STRATEGIC PLAN FOR PARKS AND RECREATION COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA