



CHAPTER 6

Conservation, Open Space, and Recreation Element





CONSERVATION, OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Conservation, Open Space and Recreation Element provides the policy framework for the development, management, and preservation of San Mateo’s natural and recreational resources.

San Mateo is home to a variety of natural resources, open spaces, and parks and recreational facilities that are cherished by the San Mateo community. The city’s air quality and open spaces, creeks, and wetlands provide habitats for plants and animals, natural infrastructure that supports resilience, and access to nature that offers social, physical, and mental health benefits. The City’s system of parks and recreation programs and facilities promotes a healthy and active lifestyle and lifelong learning.

The Conservation, Open Space and Recreation Element combines the State-mandated elements for Open Space and Conservation given the interrelatedness of the two. It contains the following topics:

- Natural Resources
- Access to Nature and Preservation of Open Space
- Creeks and Riparian Areas
- Air Quality
- Parks and Recreation



RELEVANCE TO GENERAL PLAN THEMES



Sustainability in this Element:

- Protects the City's natural resources from development, including wetlands, riparian habitats, and other sensitive natural communities.
- Manages public access to the City's natural resources to balance connections to nature and disturbance to habitats.
- Affirms that all San Mateo residents should be able to breathe safe, clean air.
- Guides park and recreation management using environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable practices.



Environmental Justice in this Element:

- Prioritizes preservation, restoration, rewilding, and enhancement of natural landscapes in or near equity priority communities.
- Establishes mitigation requirements for construction activities or new developments that could be a source of toxic air contaminants (TACs).
- Prioritizes rehabilitation of parks and recreation facilities in equity priority communities.



Community Engagement in this Element:

- Fosters appreciation and awareness for natural conservation opportunities through enhanced programs and public outreach.
- Cultivates opportunities for community engagement through the City's park and recreation programs.
- Provides experiences for all community members, including children, youth, and aging adults to promote personal enrichment and lifelong learning.





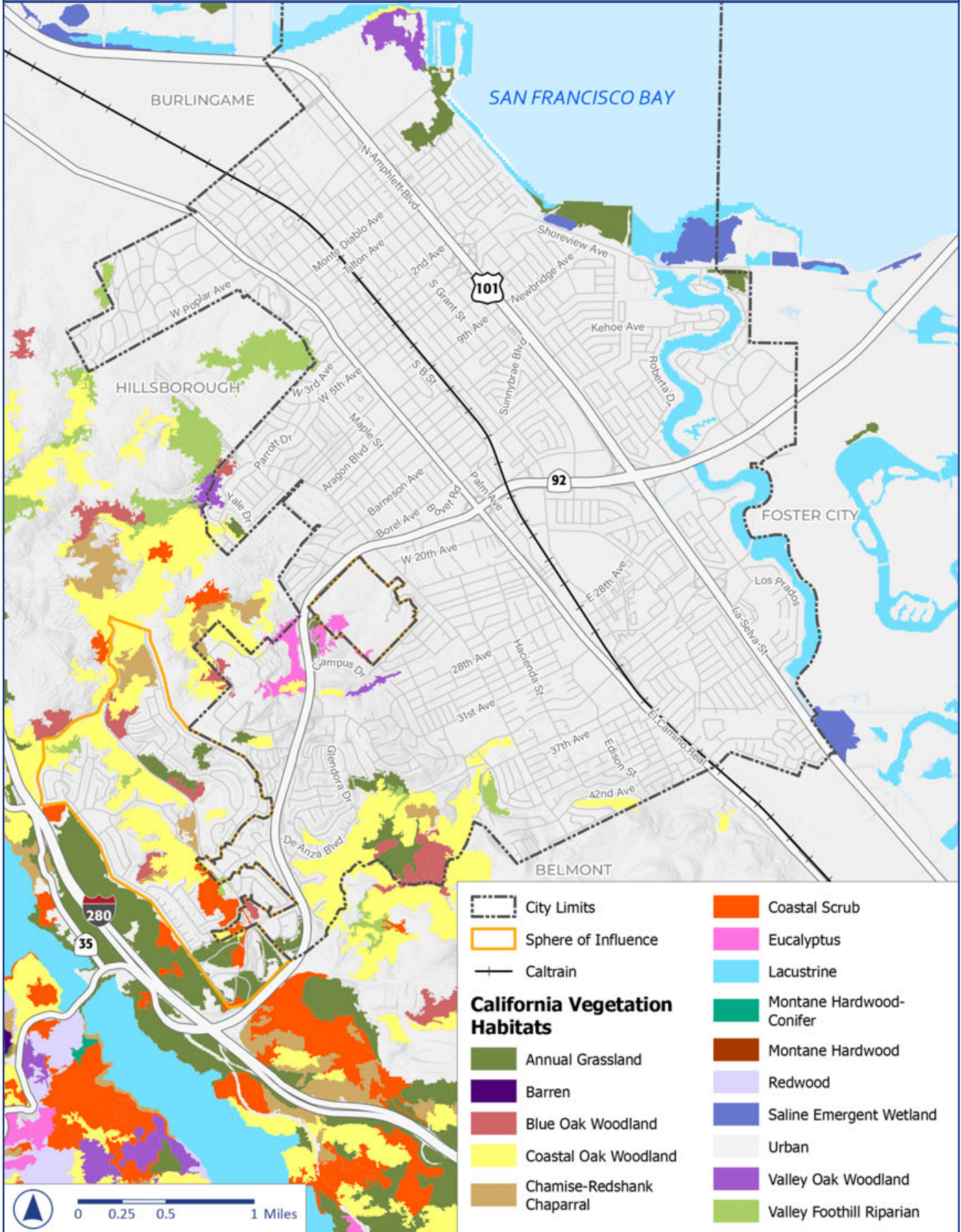
NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources are abundant in and around San Mateo. These diverse open spaces comprise an integrated natural network supporting the city's livability and resiliency and are important recreational and scenic resources highly valued by the community. The City's natural environment is part of the broader San Francisco Bay Area ecosystem. The San Francisco Bay and Delta form the largest estuary on the Pacific Coast, encompassing approximately 1,600 square miles of waterways and is the outlet for over 40 percent of California's fresh water. The marshes and mudflats of the San Francisco Bay provide important feeding and roosting habitat for migrating waterfowl along the Pacific Flyway.

Natural features that define San Mateo's local setting include the city's three-mile length of shoreline and marshes along the San Francisco Bay, Coyote Point County Park, the Marina Lagoon, San Mateo Creek, and a number of smaller creeks, Sugarloaf Mountain, and hillsides to the west. These natural areas host biological communities that are home to many plant and animal habitats and serve as wildlife corridors. Riparian and wetland habitats in and around San Mateo are recognized and protected sensitive habitats under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). Figure COS-1 shows the sensitive vegetation habitats within San Mateo.

This section provides policy direction for protecting and enhancing the City's natural resources. Goals and policies focused on preserving and enhancing San Mateo's natural setting, minimizing the impact of hillside development, and protecting and improving the city's urban tree canopy can be found in the Community Design and Historic Resources Element.

Figure COS-1 Vegetation Habitats



Source: USDA, 2013; ESRI, 2022; PlaceWorks, 2023.

Note: This map is included for informational purposes and is not adopted as part of this General Plan.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL COS-1 Protect and enhance the City’s natural resource areas that provide plant and animal habitat and benefit human and ecological health and resilience.

POLICIES



Policy COS 1.1 Sensitive Natural Communities. Protect riparian habitat and other sensitive natural communities. When an opportunity arises, restore natural resources, including wetlands.



Policy COS 1.2 Interjurisdictional Coordination. Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and regional, State, and federal agencies to protect critical wildlife habitat, including by participating in comprehensive habitat management programs.



Policy COS 1.3 Site Evaluations. Require independent professional evaluation of sites for any public or private development within known or potential habitat of species designated by State and federal agencies as rare, threatened, or endangered.

The site evaluation shall determine the presence/absence of these special-status plant and animal species on the site. The surveys associated with the evaluation shall be conducted for proper identification of the species. The evaluation shall consider the potential for significant impacts on special-status plant and animal species and shall include feasible mitigation measures to mitigate such impacts to the satisfaction of the City and appropriate governmental agencies (e.g., US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Wildlife). The City shall require adequate mitigation measures for ensuring the protection of sensitive resources and achieving “no net loss” of sensitive habitat acreage, values, and functions.

In lieu of the site evaluation, presence of special-status plant and animal species may be assumed, and the City may require “no net loss” mitigation of sensitive habitat acreage be applied to the satisfaction of the City and appropriate governmental agencies.

Policy COS 1.4 Avoidance of Nesting Birds. Disturbance of active native bird nests shall be avoided when required by State and federal regulations. For new development sites where nesting native birds may be present, vegetation clearing and construction must be initiated outside the bird nesting season (March 1 through August 31) or preconstruction surveys be conducted by a qualified biologist in advance of any disturbance. If active nests are encountered, appropriate buffer zones shall be established based on recommendations by the qualified biologist and remain in place until any young birds have successfully left the nest.

Policy COS 1.5 Surveys for Sensitive Natural Communities. Require that sites with suitable natural habitat, including creek corridors through urbanized areas, be surveyed for the presence or absence of sensitive natural communities prior to development approval. Such surveys shall be conducted by a qualified biologist and occur prior to development-related vegetation removal or other habitat modifications.

Policy COS 1.6 Surveys for Regulated Waters. Require that sites with suitable natural habitat, including creek corridors through urbanized areas, be surveyed for the presence or absence of regulated waters prior to development approval. Such surveys shall be conducted by a qualified wetland specialist and occur prior to development-related vegetation removal or other habitat modifications.

Policy COS 1.7 Surveys for Wildlife Movement Corridors. Require that sites with suitable natural habitat, including creek corridors through urbanized areas, be surveyed for the presence or absence of important wildlife corridors prior to development approval. Such surveys should be conducted by a qualified biologist and occur prior to development-related vegetation removal or other habitat modifications.



Policy COS 1.8 Development Near Wetlands or Water. Avoid wetlands development where feasible (as defined under California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] Guidelines, Section 15364). Restrict or modify proposed development in areas that contain wetlands or waters to ensure the continued health and survival of special-status species and sensitive habitat areas. Development projects shall be designed to avoid impacts on sensitive resources, or to adequately mitigate impacts by providing on-site or off-site replacement at a higher ratio. Project design modification should include adequate avoidance measures, such as the use of setbacks, buffers, and water quality, drainage-control features, or other measures to ensure that no net loss of wetland acreage, function, water quality protection, and habitat value occurs. This may include the use of setbacks, buffers, and water quality, drainage-control features, or other measures to maintain existing habitat and hydrologic functions of retained wetlands and waters of the US.



Policy COS 1.9 Wetland Development Mitigation. If an applicant has demonstrated that wetlands avoidance is not feasible, provide replacement habitat on-site through restoration and/or habitat creation to ensure no net loss of wetland acreage, function, water quality protection, and habitat value. Allow restoration of wetlands off-site only when an applicant has demonstrated that on-site restoration is not feasible. Off-site wetland mitigation should consist of the same habitat type as the wetland area that would be lost.

Policy COS 1.10 Wetland Access Design. Design public access to avoid or minimize disturbance to sensitive resources, including necessary setback/buffer areas, while facilitating public use, enjoyment, and appreciation of wetlands.

Policy COS 1.11 Marina Lagoon Island. Maintain Marina Lagoon Island as a bird nesting and breeding site.

Policy COS 1.12 Reduced Risk of Bird Collision. Require that taller structures be designed to minimize the potential risk of bird collisions using input from the latest bird-safe design guidelines and best management practice strategies to reduce bird strikes.

ACTION

Action COS 1.13 Environmental Review. Review the environmental documents for projects adjacent to City boundaries regarding impacts and mitigation to species and habitat.

ACCESS TO NATURE AND PRESERVATION OF OPEN SPACE

Spending time in nature is known to have positive social, physical, and mental health benefits. Ensuring that the City’s natural resources, including open space areas, are accessible is critical for maintaining the quality of life in San Mateo for city residents and visitors. Preserving open space is also essential for maintaining the uniqueness of San Mateo and the ecological health of its environment.

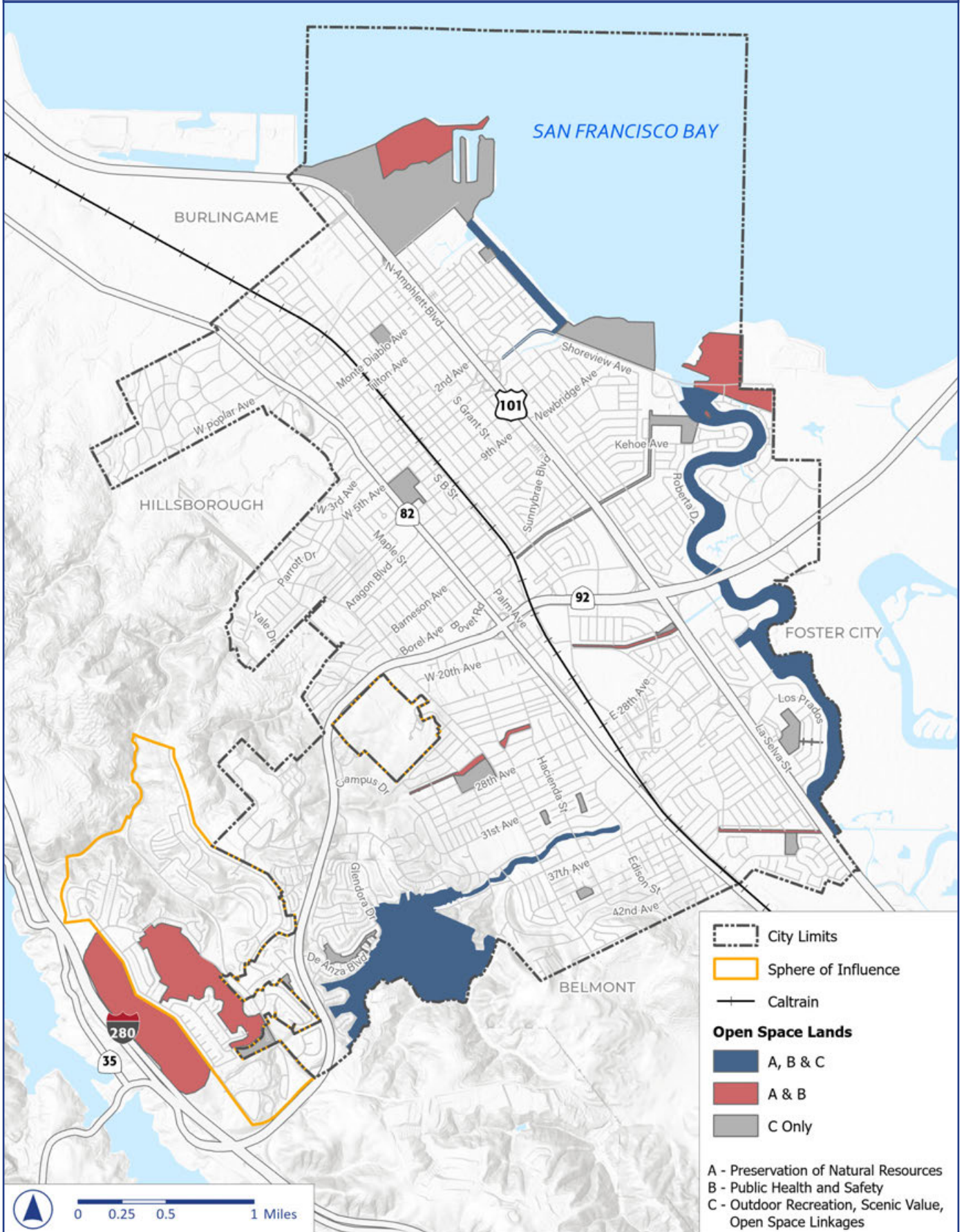
Figure COS-2 illustrates the type and nature of open space land in the City of San Mateo as defined by State law. “Open space land” is any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open-space use, as defined in this section, and that is designated on a local, regional, or State open-space plan as any of the following:



- **Open Space for Natural Resources.** This includes areas required for plant and animal habitat or for ecological and scientific study. In San Mateo, these open spaces include areas such as the Bay Marshes, creeks, private open spaces, and Sugarloaf Mountain.
- **Open Space for Outdoor Recreation.** This includes parks and areas of scenic and cultural value, stream banks, trails, and other links between open spaces. In San Mateo, these open spaces include Marina Lagoon, Seal Point, Sugarloaf Mountain, designated private land **reserves**, and a variety of park sites.
- **Open Space for Public Health and Safety.** This includes areas that require special management because of hazardous conditions, such as unstable soils, fire risk, fault zones, or flooding. In San Mateo, these open spaces include portions of the shoreline, Sugarloaf Mountain, and San Mateo Creek.
- **Open Space for Tribal Resources.** This includes protected tribal resources as described in Sections 5097.9 and 5097.993 of the Public Resources Code, which includes Native American historic, cultural, or sacred sites. San Mateo does not have any protected open space tribal resource areas, but it is possible that tribal resources may exist in open spaces.
- **Open Space for Managed Production of Resources.** This includes forest and agricultural lands, water bodies important to the management of commercial fisheries, and mineral deposits. San Mateo does not have any such areas.
- **Open Space for Military Support.** This includes areas in support of military installations, such as areas adjacent to military installations, military training routes, and underlying restricted airspace. San Mateo does not include any open space areas for military support.

This section provides policy direction for access to nature and the preservation of open space. Goals and policies focused on access to parks, recreation, and facilities can be found under Goals COS-5 and COS-6 of this element.

Figure COS-2 Open Space Lands



Source: ESRI, 2022; City of San Mateo Parks and Recreation, 2023; PlaceWorks, 2023.
 Note: This map is included for informational purposes and is not adopted as part of this General Plan.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL COS-2 Ensure that current and future generations will enjoy the environmental, social, health, and economic benefits derived from access to our urban forest, parks, and open spaces.

POLICIES



Policy COS 2.1 Preservation of Open Space. Preserve, protect, and enhance open space areas in San Mateo that provide health benefits and access to nature for all residents.



Policy COS 2.2 Sustainable Access. Continue to design and manage public access to the City's natural resources, including open space areas, in a way that promotes public health and connection to nature while avoiding or minimizing disturbance and sustaining these resources into the future.



Policy COS 2.3 Equitable Conservation. Prioritize preservation, restoration, re-wilding, and enhancement of natural landscapes in or near underserved communities for their role in improving air quality and community health.



Policy COS 2.4 Shoreline Interpretive Opportunities. Promote public awareness of the value and care of the shoreline for habitat values, water quality, and safety through on-site interpretive programs or outdoor displays that are in character with the adjacent open spaces.

Policy COS 2.5 Marina Lagoon and Shoreline Public Access. New development having frontage on Marina Lagoon shall provide and retain public access to provide a connection to the Marina Lagoon.



Policy COS 2.6 Sugarloaf Mountain Management. Improve, maintain, and manage the natural qualities and habitat of Sugarloaf Mountain and Laurelwood Park, including management of public access, study, recreation, and wildland fire hazards.



Policy COS 2.7 Sugarloaf Mountain Interpretive Opportunities. Promote public awareness of the value and care of Sugarloaf Mountain through on-site interpretive programs or displays that are in character with the open space, consistent with the adopted management plan.

ACTIONS

Action COS 2.8 Improvements to Bayfront Nature Area. Review plans for the remaining uncompleted portions of Shoreline Park, including the Bayfront Nature Area, Bay Marshes, and J. Hart Clinton Drive to ensure they reflect current environmental and programmatic needs.

Action COS 2.9 Volunteer Program. Focus volunteer resources on restoring native habitat around the city, especially in the creeks, where feasible.



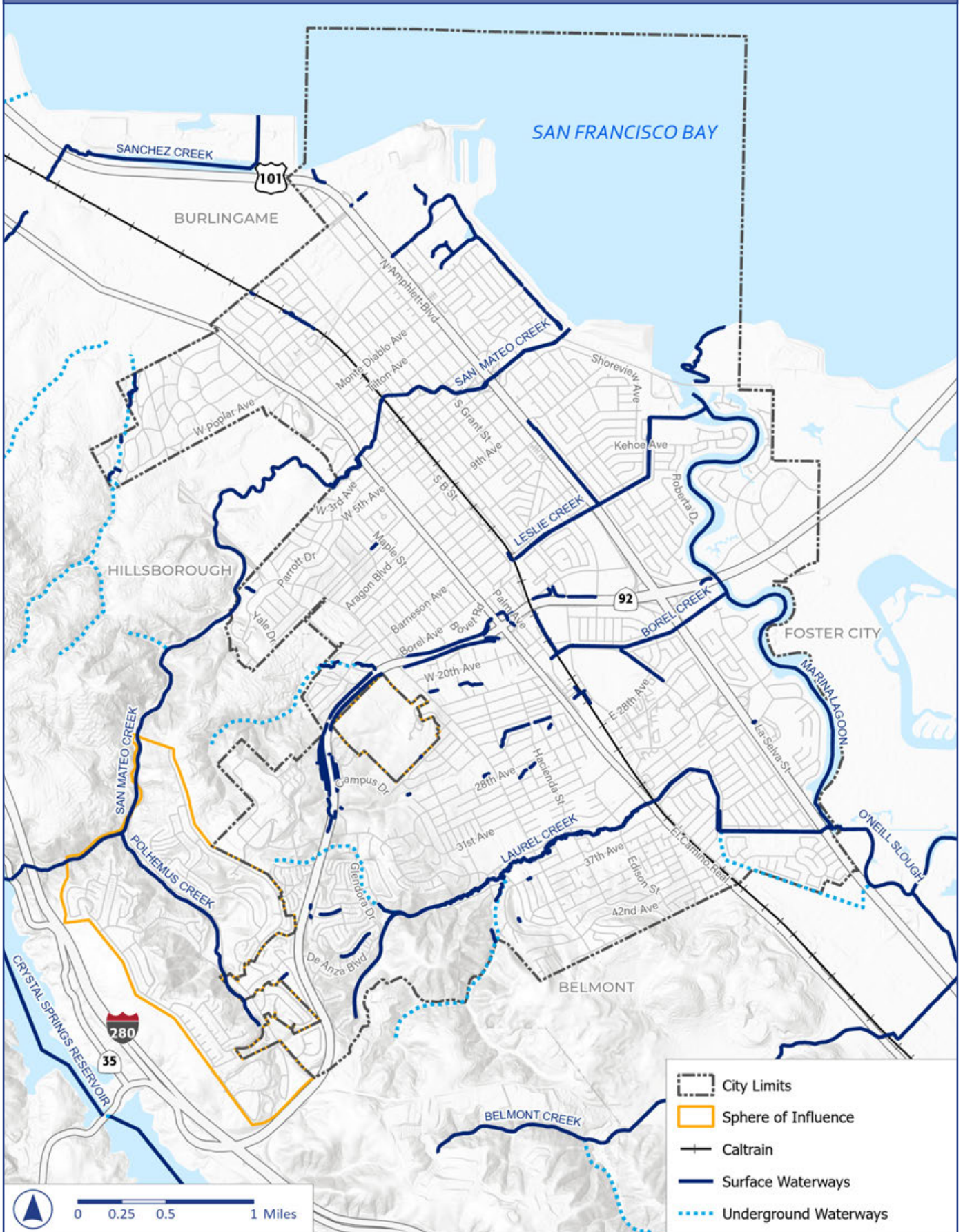
CREEKS AND RIPARIAN AREAS

San Mateo has many waterways and riparian areas that offer immense biological benefits. They provide valuable natural habitats for wildlife and fauna, are a part of the city's hydrologic system, and serve as groundwater recharge areas and wildlife corridors. Some of the city's prominent waterways include the Marina Lagoon (formally Seal Slough), San Mateo Creek, Polhemus Creek, and Laurel Creek. Other waterways in the city include Leslie Creek, Borel Creek, and the Marina Lagoon. Figure COS-3 shows waterways in San Mateo, including underground waterways.

While the creeks and riparian areas serve important ecological functions, they are also susceptible to stormwater runoff and pollution. The City strives to protect and improve the system of creeks so wildlife habitats can continue to thrive, current and future generations can continue to enjoy them, and the city's hydrologic system is more resilient to flooding and sea level rise.

This section provides policy direction for protecting and enhancing creeks. Goals and policies focused on water supply, flood-control infrastructure, and creekside development requirements can be found in the Public Services and Facilities Element, and policies and actions to protect against flooding and sea level rise are in the Safety Element.

Figure COS-3 Waterways



Source: USGS and City of San Mateo Public Works; ESRI, 2022; PlaceWorks, 2023.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL COS-3 Protect and improve San Mateo’s creeks as valuable habitat and components of human and environmental health.

POLICIES



Policy COS 3.1 Aesthetic and Habitat Values – Public Creeks. Preserve and enhance the aesthetic and habitat values of creeks, such as San Mateo, Laurel, and Beresford Creeks, and other City-owned channels in all activities affecting these creeks, including revegetation, rewilding, erosion control, and adequate setbacks for structures.



Policy COS 3.2 Aesthetic and Habitat Values – Private Creeks. Encourage preservation and enhance the aesthetic and habitat values of privately owned sections of all other creeks and channels.

Policy COS 3.3 Groundwater Protection. Support the County of San Mateo’s efforts to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater resources in the city.



Policy COS 3.4 Groundwater Infiltration. Protect existing open spaces, natural habitat, floodplains, and wetland areas that allow for percolation and infiltration of stormwater runoff to slow and reduce the flow of runoff and improve water quality and identify areas to protect when considering new development.



Policy COS 3.5 Preservation of Beneficial Uses. Manage Marina Lagoon to balance and enhance its beneficial uses. Manage other water bodies to allow for limited nearby recreation, such as picnicking, hiking, boating, sightseeing, and interpretive study.



AIR QUALITY

Clean and safe air is essential to the health of everyone in San Mateo. While San Mateo benefits from fresh air that blows in from the bay and the Pacific Ocean, air quality remains a concern due to the serious and lifelong health impacts of exposure to air pollution. “Mobile sources,” including cars and trucks along US Highway 101 and State Route 92, are a significant source of air pollution in San Mateo. While San Mateo and its neighbors do not include much heavy industry, smaller “stationary sources,” like gas stations and dry cleaners, also emit pollutants. Finally, natural sources, such as windblown dust and wildfire smoke from other parts of the state, can have drastic effects on air quality in San Mateo.

San Mateo neighborhoods do not have equal access to safe and clean air. For example, neighborhoods along US Highway 101, and around the US Highway 101 and State Route 92 interchange, are exposed to significantly more pollutants, including particulate matter (PM), carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NOx), and benzene, than neighborhoods in the hills or along the bay. These pollutants, emitted by engines in cars, trucks, buses, and other heavy equipment, are particularly harmful because they are breathed deep into our lungs, and are known to increase cancer risk, asthma attacks, and chronic heart and lung disease. Improving air quality and health outcomes in equity priority communities is a theme throughout this General Plan.

This section provides policy direction on improving air quality throughout San Mateo. Some of the policies support mitigation measures focused on lessening air quality impacts, as identified in the General Plan 2040 Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Those policies that also serve as mitigation for air quality impacts are detailed, specific, and quantitative to meet the requirements of State environmental law.

Goals, policies, and actions focused on equity priority communities can be found throughout the General Plan. The Land Use Element also includes goals and policies on environmental justice under Goal LU-8.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL COS-4 All San Mateo residents should have the ability to breathe safe, clean air.

POLICIES



Policy COS 4.1 Air Quality Thresholds. Use thresholds of significance that match or are more stringent than the air quality thresholds of significance identified in the current Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) Air Quality Guidelines when evaluating air quality impacts of projects.



Policy COS 4.2 Health Risk Assessment. Require new development not exempt from CEQA that includes sensitive receptors to prepare Health Risk Assessments. Identify appropriate mitigation, based on the findings of the Health Risk Assessment, to reduce health risks from major sources of toxic air pollution, such as high-volume roadways, stationary sources, permitted sources from BAAQMD, and warehousing.



Policy COS 4.3 BAAQMD Planning for Healthy Places. Require new development to adhere to BAAQMD's Planning for Healthy Places guidance when warranted by local conditions.



Policy COS 4.4 Activity Near Sensitive Receptors. Comply with State regulations that prohibit nonessential idling of vehicles near sensitive receptors, such as the requirements outlined in Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).



Policy COS 4.5 Odors. When proposed development generating odors is proposed near residences or sensitive receptors, either adequate buffer distances shall be provided (based on recommendations and requirements of the California Air Resources Board [CARB] and BAAQMD), or filters or other equipment/solutions shall be provided to reduce the potential exposure to acceptable levels. Potential mitigation associated with this policy requirement will be coordinated with any required permit conditions from BAAQMD.

When new residential or other sensitive receptors are proposed near existing sources of odors, either adequate buffer distances shall be provided (based on recommendations and requirements of CARB and BAAQMD), or filters or other equipment/solutions shall be provided to reduce the potential exposure to acceptable levels.



Policy COS 4.6 Toxic Air Contaminants. Require that when new development that would be a source of toxic air contaminants (TACs) is proposed near residences or sensitive receptors, either adequate buffer distances shall be provided (based on recommendations and requirements of CARB and BAAQMD), or filters or other equipment/solutions shall be provided to reduce the potential exposure to acceptable levels.

When new residential or other sensitive receptors are proposed near existing sources of TACs, either adequate buffer distances shall be provided (based on recommendations and requirements of CARB and BAAQMD), or filters or other equipment/solutions shall be provided to the source to reduce the potential exposure to acceptable levels.



Policy COS 4.7 Air Quality Construction Impacts. Require new construction and grading activities to mitigate air quality impacts generated during construction activities in compliance with BAAQMD's regulations and guidelines on construction activity impacts.



Policy COS 4.8 Truck Facilities. Require new development, when applicable, to provide adequate truck parking loading space, and generators for refrigerated trucks to prevent idling during truck operation.



Policy COS 4.9 Air Pollution Exposure. For new development that is located within 1,000 feet from US Highway 101 and State Route 92, require installation of enhanced ventilation systems and other strategies to protect people from respiratory, heart, and other health effects associated with breathing polluted air in both indoor and outdoor spaces.

ACTIONS



Action COS 4.10 Air Quality Improvement. Support and partner with Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) in monitoring, education, permitting, enforcement, grants programs, or other efforts to improve air quality issues and health outcomes for all.

Action COS 4.11 Clean Air Refuges. Develop and implement a plan to provide clean air refuges during times when outdoor air quality is unhealthy. Explore the feasibility of participating in State grant programs to fund retrofits of ventilation systems at public buildings to provide refuge for residents during periods of unhealthy air quality caused by excessive smoke from wildfires.

Action COS 4.12 Outdoor Air Quality Mitigation. Explore the feasibility of funding and installing pollutant screening solutions, such as walls and dense vegetation, to address outdoor air quality in residential areas located within 1,000 feet from US Highway 101 and State Route 92.

PARKS AND RECREATION

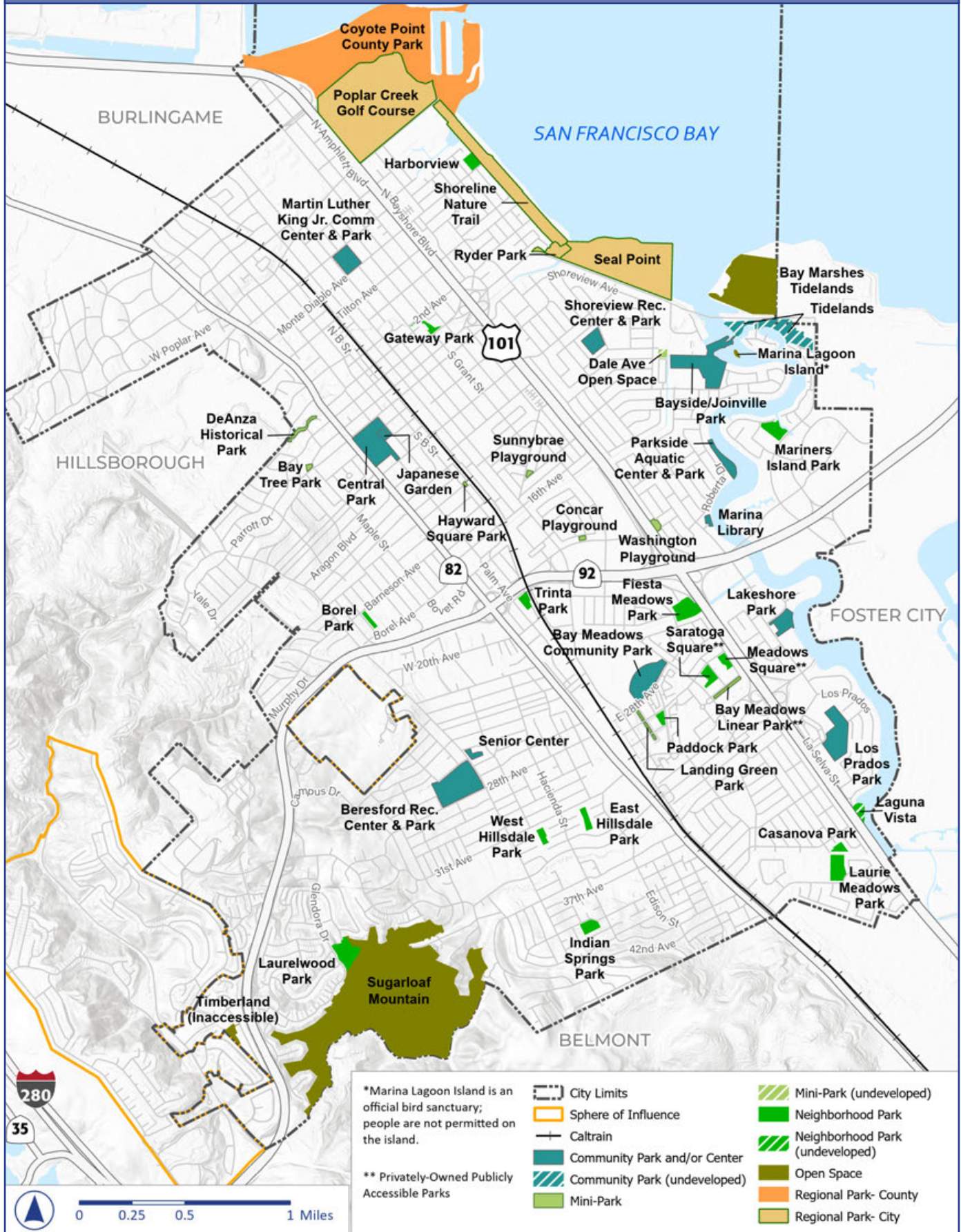
The City of San Mateo has a variety of parks and recreational facilities that provide community members with access to nature, encourage healthy lifestyles, and support a mixture of active and passive recreation opportunities. The City's park system includes more than a dozen neighborhood parks, nine community parks, six recreation/community centers, two pools, the Shoreline regional park system, several small "mini" parks, and an estuary lagoon for boating. Within the City Limits, the County of San Mateo owns and operates the 155-acre Coyote Point Recreation Area. Combined, the San Mateo community has access to approximately 795 acres of parks and open space, or 7.36 acres per every 1,000 residents. Figure COS-4 depicts the location of the parks and open spaces within San Mateo and Figure COS-5 shows a one-third-mile radius around each park and open space area. As shown in Figure COS-4, Marina Lagoon Island is a bird breeding and nesting site, which means people are not permitted on the island.

San Mateo offers many recreation facilities and programs for its members, guided by the Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan. The City's facilities include six recreation/community centers, two pools, and the 18-hole Poplar Creek Golf Course. People of all ages participate in the City's extensive menu of community activities, which includes youth and family aquatics, children's summer camps, adult fitness programs, teen programs, and interactive classes for older adults and seniors. Throughout the year, the City hosts special community events to foster community engagement and provide family friendly fun for San Mateo residents.

This section provides policy direction for parks, recreational programs, and facilities in San Mateo. Goals and policies focused on access to nature and the preservation of open space can be found under Goal COS-2 of this element. Goals and policies focused on public services and facilities that serve the needs of seniors and other City services are addressed in the Public Services and Facilities Element. Expectations for the integration of parks and open spaces into new development can be found in the Land Use Element.



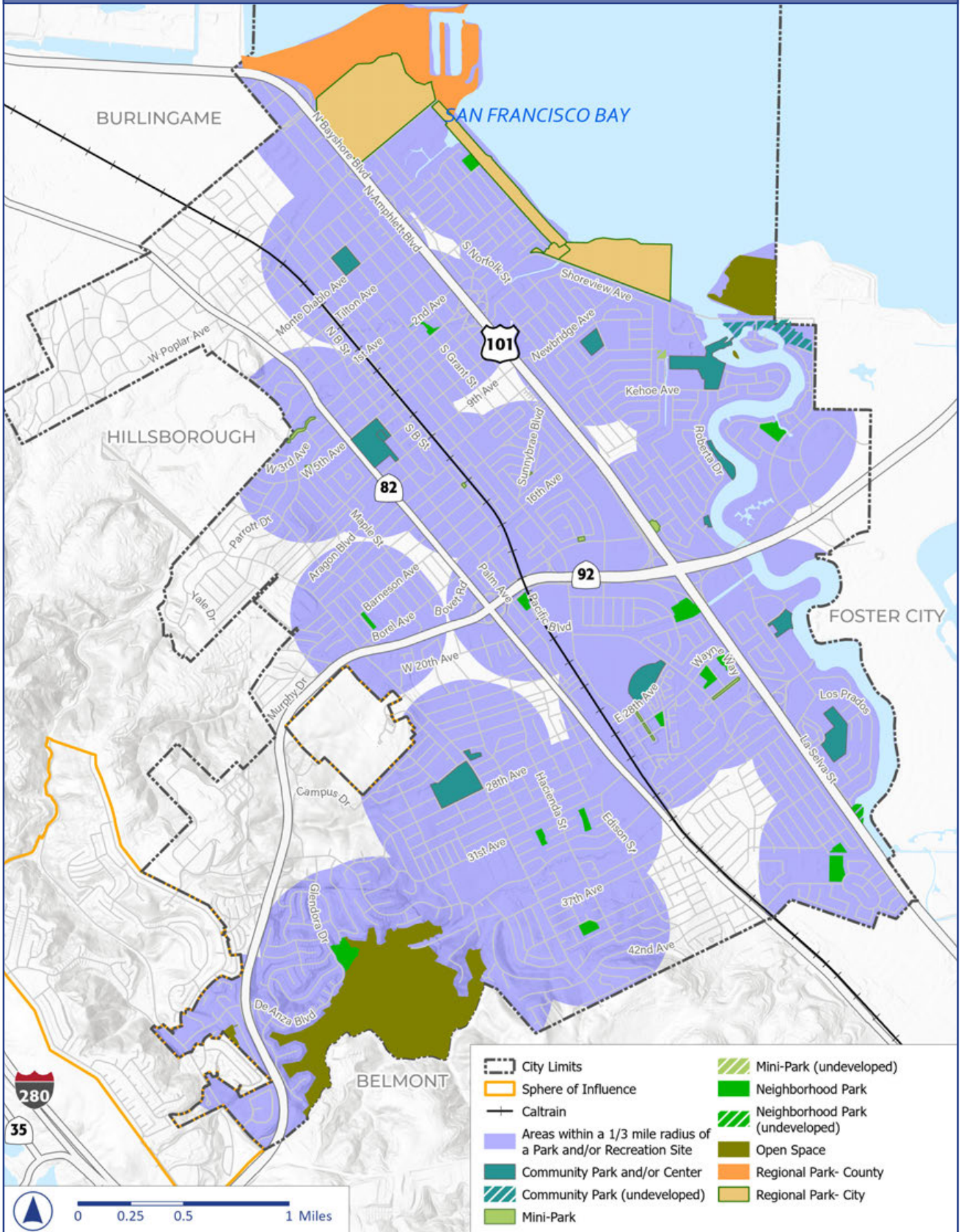
Figure COS-4 Public Parks and Recreation Sites



Source: ESRI, 2022; PlaceWorks, 2023.

Note: This map is included for informational purposes and is not adopted as part of this General Plan.

Figure COS-5 Public Parks and Recreation Sites Service Radius



Source: ESRI, 2022; PlaceWorks, 2023.

Note: This map is included for informational purposes and is not adopted as part of this General Plan.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

GOAL COS-5 Provide a comprehensive system of park and recreation programs and facilities based on the needs of the city’s residents to encourage healthy lifestyles and ensure access for all.

POLICIES

Policy COS 5.1 Active and Healthy Lifestyles. Maintain and expand programs that promote active and healthy lifestyles and incorporate health and wellness practices into everyday life, such as healthy eating and nutrition education programs, water safety and swim programs, walking and bicycling as a mode of healthy transportation, and youth fitness activities.



Policy COS 5.2 Creating Community. Cultivate opportunities to come together as a community, celebrate our heritage, cultures, and milestones through cultural and entertainment events and have social supports available, which are key to creating a sense of community and building community resilience.



Policy COS 5.3 Creative Outlets. Provide skill development, cultural, and performance opportunities within each of the major art forms with an emphasis on promoting lifelong enjoyment to nurture creative discovery.

Policy COS 5.4 Enrichment and Lifelong Learning. Provide a wide array of enriching and lifelong learning opportunities that provide mental stimulation, self-improvement, exploration, educational opportunities, and skills that can be applied at home or business.



Policy COS 5.5 Parks as Learning Environments. Enhance the role of parks as learning environments by providing interpretive opportunities to community organizations and at City-operated facilities to increase public awareness of their unique cultural, historical, and environmental characteristics.



Policy COS 5.6 Child and Youth Development. Provide preschool through teenage youth with a variety of experiences that nurture individuality, spark imagination, promote health, increase safety, encourage active recreation, and build the skills needed to ensure success in the next stage of development.



Policy COS 5.7 Aging Adults. Promote policies, programs, services, and public infrastructure improvements through either direct City provision or through collaborative partnerships with other agencies to ensure that older adults can age in place while feeling valued and supported.



Policy COS 5.8 Community-Led Activity Initiatives. Work with local community groups and San Mateo County Health to initiate walking, hiking, cycling, and other recreation clubs and activities to increase participation, safety, and social cohesion.



Policy COS 5.9 Conservation and Nature Awareness. Increase public awareness of the importance of and appreciation for conservation opportunities and the value of connecting children to nature with enhanced programs and public outreach.

Policy COS 5.10 Community Gardens. Support community gardens on sites with quasi-public uses and on publicly owned land, such as City parks or facilities, or as part of new private development, where feasible and appropriate.



Policy COS 5.11 Central Park. Promote Central Park's character as the City's signature park and community gathering place.

GOAL COS-6 Provide equitable and convenient access to parks, recreational programs, and facilities so that all residents experience the physical and mental health benefits of parks and open space.

POLICIES



Policy COS 6.1 Accessible Facilities. Continue to provide general park facilities that are free and open to the public, except for reservations of specific facilities by groups or individuals, or for facilities that traditionally charge fees (e.g., Golf Course, Marina Lagoon boat access). Address the lack of access to recreational facilities for neighborhoods east of El Camino Real, especially east of US Highway 101.

Policy COS 6.2 Recreation Fee Assistance. Continue to provide program fee assistance to qualifying families and older adults consistent with the Park and Recreation Commission-endorsed administrative policy for fee assistance.

Policy COS 6.3 Privately Owned Public Spaces. Require privately owned publicly accessible open space to be designed in a way that is welcoming for all, including public access signage and minimal physical or visual barriers, to ensure that the space is open and available to the community.

Policy COS 6.4 Equitable Access Analysis. When developing park master plans, include an equitable access analysis to identify deficiencies and potential solutions to address deficiencies found in the analysis.

ACTIONS



Action COS 6.5 Comprehensive Park Access Analysis. Conduct a comprehensive park accessibility gap analysis to address equitable park access, with an emphasis on neighborhoods east of El Camino Real and east of US Highway 101.

Action COS 6.6 Customer Service. Adopt policies and practices that create satisfied customers and develop life-long relationships with our users.

Action COS 6.7 Inclusion and Accessibility. Create policies, programs, and facility designs that are age-integrated, inclusive, respectful, and supportive for all members of the community. Expand cultural awareness and appreciation through culturally relevant programs and special events.

Action COS 6.8 Privately Owned Public Spaces Inventory. Develop and maintain a list of all publicly accessible private open space in the city.



Action COS 6.9 Resident Input. Solicit a broad spectrum of resident input for major park improvements or park master plans. Conduct multilingual and culturally sensitive outreach to ensure all voices are included in park planning efforts and that San Mateo's parks reflect the diversity of the community.



Action COS 6.10 Public Information. Communicate through diverse channels and in multiple languages the benefits and value park and recreation services bring in making San Mateo a more livable, economically viable, and socially responsible community.

Action COS 6.11 Technology Innovation. Identify and incorporate technology innovations as an ongoing strategy to better serve the public, e.g., virtual trail maps, digitalized park signage, virtual programming.

GOAL COS-7 Provide the appropriate mix of parks and facilities that balances the needs of active and passive facilities, allows formal and informal uses, is accessible for all residents, and meets existing and future recreation needs.

POLICIES

Policy COS 7.1 Facility Standards. Use the Park and Recreation Facility Standards to assess the adequacy of existing facilities; to design, develop, and redevelop sites; and to acquire or accept new sites.

Policy COS 7.2 Acreage Standards. Acquire or accept for dedication two acres of neighborhood and community parks per 1,000 residents.

Policy COS 7.3 Walkable Parks and Amenities. Provide accessible public parks or other recreational opportunities that are within approximately one-third of a mile (a 15-minute walk) of residents without travel over significant barriers. Ideally, one or more of the following amenities should be available: multipurpose turf area, children's play area with preschool and youth apparatus, seating areas, picnic areas, a multiuse court, and an opportunity for passive enjoyment of an aesthetically landscaped space.

Policy COS 7.4 Passive Recreation. Support efforts to create a passive recreation system that connects parks and nodes in the city to increase connectivity on select public rights-of-way for pedestrians.

Policy COS 7.5 Active-Use Facilities. Provide sufficient active-use facilities to support current needs and future trends, including, but not limited to, multiuse athletic turf areas; court games; action sports, e.g., bicycling; and a system of pedestrian and bicycle trails that will provide interconnectivity between parks.

Policy COS 7.6 Master Planning. Continue to prepare and maintain master plans for all undeveloped parks and for those parks over two acres prior to development or major redevelopment. Allow interim uses if such uses will not adversely impact or limit potential permanent uses.

Policy COS 7.7 Rehabilitation or Purchase of School Sites. Consider contributions towards rehabilitation or the purchase of recreational facilities on surplus school sites based on an evaluation of their value as community recreation resources.

ACTIONS

Action COS 7.8 Regional Facilities. Explore the feasibility of developing regional recreational and sports complexes with neighboring cities.

Action COS 7.9 Bay Meadows Community Park. Complete the master planning for Bay Meadows Community Park to reflect its value as a city-wide asset that can address one or more identified facility deficiencies.

GOAL COS-8 Plan and develop well-designed parks and recreation facilities compatible with surrounding uses that promote accessibility, efficient use, and practical maintenance.

POLICIES



Policy COS 8.1 Rehabilitation Priorities. Prioritize parks and recreation facilities projects that rehabilitate facilities that have become or will become costly to maintain, only marginally usable, meet the highest community needs, provide significant benefits in relation to costs, or are in equity priority communities.

Policy COS 8.2 Park Preservation. Preserve existing parklands, open spaces, and the golf course for open space, habitat, and recreational use.

Policy COS 8.3 Shared Use. Encourage schools to make their facilities available for City and community-sponsored activities to the greatest extent possible and encourage school agencies to adopt reasonable user fees and operating practices that allow improved community access.

Policy COS 8.4 Optimum Cost-Effectiveness. Proactively maintain and upgrade park infrastructure to optimize its cost-effectiveness and value in meeting community recreation needs.



Policy COS 8.5 Sustainability Practices. Operate park and recreation facilities using environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable management and operating practices that proactively reverse the impacts of climate change or better prepare for its effects.

Policy COS 8.6 Maintenance Standards. Maintain the park system by a set of maintenance standards that reflects community values; maintains, promotes, and optimizes positive use; reduces wildfire risk; and ensures that equipment and facilities are maintained in a safe condition.



Policy COS 8.7 Environmentally Sound Park Operations. Use native and drought-tolerant plant species, efficient irrigation systems, reclaimed water, and sustainable management practices. Expand efforts to improve recycling opportunities in all parks and implement trash-reduction measures, especially during large community events.

Policy COS 8.8 San Mateo City Parks and Recreation Foundation. Continue to support the San Mateo City Parks and Recreation Foundation efforts to expand non-City resource opportunities, such as funding and volunteers, in support of park development, improvements, and maintenance.

ACTIONS

Action COS 8.9 Recreation Facility Infrastructure. Implement the highest-priority improvements identified from the Recreation Facilities Master Plan with special focus on improvements that address safety and accessibility, geographic equity, childcare, aquatics, and multigenerational programming.

Action COS 8.10 Design Principles and Park Image. Establish design principles for all new or renovated parks to maximize productivity, efficiency, and community value, including adding the potential for flexible use for emergency shelters and disaster response. Develop an image plan that includes the effective use of signage, color, lighting, and plant material that meets both aesthetic and maintenance needs.

Action COS 8.11 Maximized Park Assets. Review and update the Asset Management Plan to identify the highest and best use of undeveloped parcels or underutilized areas within existing parks to ensure they are best positioned to meet current and future needs.

Action COS 8.12 Strategic Community Partnerships. Develop and maintain positive partnership relations with schools, businesses, community groups, and civic organizations for park access, maintenance, and enhancement to maximize resources, eliminate duplication of effort, and reach common goals.



Action COS 8.13 Neighborhood-Supported Projects. Increase efforts to seek neighborhood support for enhancement and beautification projects as the City's fiscal resources become constrained. Prioritize enhancement and beautification efforts in equity priority communities.

Action COS 8.14 School Facility Access. Partner with local school districts to explore ways to expand public access to school facilities, including gymnasiums and swimming pools.



GOAL COS-9 Provide stable and adequate operational and capital funding for the parks and recreation system.

POLICIES

- Policy COS 9.1 Program Fees and Cost Recovery.** Maintain and periodically update program fees to recover costs.
- Policy COS 9.2 Maintenance and Operating Costs.** Consider long-term maintenance and operating costs in acquisition, development, and redevelopment decisions.
- Policy COS 9.3 Park Equipment and Maintenance.** Phase out the use of gas-powered equipment and increase the use of more environmentally friendly fertilization options in City parks and facilities over time.
- Policy COS 9.4 Parks and Facilities in Major Projects.** Factor park and facility maintenance and operating costs into park master plans or major facility upgrades.
- Policy COS 9.5 Development Fees.** Assess appropriate fees and taxes to ensure that new development contributes proportional funding to compensate for its impacts on recreation facilities and services.
- Policy COS 9.6 Cooperative Service Delivery.** Use opportunities for cooperative acquisition, development, operation, and programming with private organizations or other public agencies that will provide more effective or efficient service delivery.

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