



# Memorandum

**TO:** NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Jon Cicirelli

**SUBJECT:** CITYWIDE SUSTAINABLE PARK  
MAINTENANCE REPORT

**DATE:** January 23, 2023

Approved

Date

2/1/23

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Accept a status report on citywide sustainable park maintenance, including current service levels and areas of improvement.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

Parks play an essential role in the lives of San José residents and vitality of neighborhoods, and the maintenance of parks allows residents to safely enjoy City parks. This report provides the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee with updates on park maintenance operations, including 2022 Park Condition Assessment (PCA) results reflecting park maintenance efforts in 2021-2022.

The 2021-2022 year was the first full year of park maintenance operations since the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services established new Park Maintenance Standards and a new PCA process in the spring and summer of 2021. The citywide average PCA score of 85 percent, as measured in August and September 2022, was down slightly from 87 percent measured in fall 2021. Staff attributes the slight decrease in the citywide average PCA score to persistently high vacancy rates in park maintenance positions in 2021-2022, resulting in many temporary assignments and instability in operations as employees shifted frequently.

To improve park conditions, as measured against defined Park Maintenance Standards, the Department is implementing strategies including incorporating the City's Resilience Corps program into park maintenance teams to prepare participants to become City employees, reorganizing certain park maintenance operations into centralized teams, and utilizing a health equity lens to deploy centralized resources. The Department's workforce has a passion for providing parks that offer all residents of San José opportunities to create lifelong memories. Staff has confronted many challenges in the past year and turned them into opportunities for a better park system in the future.

## **BACKGROUND**

Ask almost anyone and they will be able to tell you their favorite memory of being in a park. Whether that is a fond memory of playing on a playground, attending a family picnic, or reaching a fitness goal, parks offer something for everyone to enjoy. According to the National Recreation and Park Association, ninety-three percent of U.S. adults say a summer activity at a park brings back happy memories.<sup>1</sup>

A park in a community is invaluable to residents. In densely populated areas, a neighborhood or regional park may be one of the only options for residents to enjoy nature, be active or socialize with friends and family. In addition to the variety of amenities they offer, parks benefit communities by:

- Contributing to community identity;
- Providing active and passive recreational opportunities;
- Being inclusive to all ages, backgrounds, and abilities in a community;
- Contributing to the mental and physical health and wellness of a community;
- Creating valuable green space;
- Offering volunteer service opportunities; and
- Making economic impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to being beneficial to humans, parks are also beneficial to native plants and animals. City parks make important environmental contributions, from sequestering carbon with trees and shrubs to reducing stormwater runoff and providing flood control capacity. In cities, parks are an effective area to encourage native flora and fauna to grow, and a well-maintained green space will make the area more inviting and safer for wildlife.

The City of San José's park system includes 210 parks spanning more than 3,600 acres of developed and undeveloped land, as well as 63 miles of trails, dozens of civic grounds, gardens, lakes, sports facilities, a farm, and an amusement park and accredited zoo. San José parks remain a key contributor to the livability of the City, and as such are integral in the success of three major strategies in the City's Envision 2040 General Plan (Major Strategy #7 - Measurable Sustainability / Environmental Stewardship; Major Strategy #10 - Life Amidst Abundant Natural Resources; and Major Strategy #11 - Design for a Healthful Community) and of strategies to unlock the potential of Natural and Working Lands to improve the health of the climate and the community in pursuit of Climate Smart San José.

The stewardship of the City's park system lies with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services, which is guided by the principles of ActivateSJ, the Department's 20-year strategic plan, as approved by the City Council in December 2019, including Stewardship, Nature, Equity and Access, Identity, and Public Life. The Department's Parks Division maintains and operates the City's parks with a 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget of about \$33 million

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/summer-means-happy-memories/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/9833/636656974699330000>

for park maintenance. The budget includes 197 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff in park maintenance classifications ranging from Maintenance Assistant to Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Supervisor, who work 365 days a year towards a goal of safe and clean parks, with support from contractors, partners, and volunteers.

Park maintenance activities include:

- Grounds maintenance such as turf maintenance, tree maintenance, and landscaping;
- Custodial and janitorial services, including litter and refuse collection;
- Landscape rehabilitation;
- Repairs to equipment, such as irrigation systems and playgrounds; and
- Special event services, including preparation, event set-up, tear-down and clean-up.

### **Defining Standards and Measuring Performance**

With the significant role parks play in community wellbeing, it is important that they are maintained at the same, high level that allows residents to enjoy them for whatever recreational use they choose regardless of location.

In April 2021, the Department approved [Park Maintenance Standards](#) to clearly define the condition at which park amenities are expected to be maintained.<sup>3</sup> The full Park Maintenance Standards, included as Attachment A, define 20 categories of park features and their desired condition. Figure 1 provides an example of how one category, natural turf, is evaluated in eight different ways to cover discrete aspects of a feature. Having measurable standards allows the Department to train staff for proper care and to better identify deficiencies and make appropriate corrections. Staff intends to periodically review Park Maintenance Standards and add standards for additional park features and amenities, such as trails, bioswales, and lakes, in coming years.

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<sup>3</sup> Park Maintenance Standards can be found here: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=81364>.

<b>6.17 Turf (Natural Turf Only)</b>	
<b>6.17.1</b>	Cleanliness: Turf is free of litter. The standard allows for no more than 10 pieces of trash per acre. Turf is free of organic debris that impedes mowing. The standard allows for no more than 10 pieces of debris per acre. Unsafe litter is not acceptable.
<b>6.17.2</b>	Color: 80% of turf area is green.
<b>6.17.3</b>	Weeds: Weed levels are below 20% of total turf area.
<b>6.17.4</b>	Density: 80% of turf area is free of bare spots.
<b>6.17.5</b>	Drainage: 80% of turf area is free of standing water two days after rain or two hours after irrigation.
<b>6.17.6</b>	Edging: 80% of edges are clearly defined and have less than four (4) inches of growth over adjoining landscape.
<b>6.17.7</b>	Mowing: Turf is mowed and kept at a uniform height of less than ankle height or 4.5-5 inches.
<b>6.17.8</b>	Holes and Pests: Noticeable from a ten (10) foot distance, turf is free of visible holes greater than 2-3 inches in diameter and/or depth. Note: Holes greater than 2-3 inches (in diameter and/or depth) that are observed during the inspection process should be reported so they can be filled. The standard is not met if multiple holes and/or mounds caused by any animal (e.g., gophers, moles) impede park users from walking or jogging, even if holes are less than 2-3 inches in diameter and/or depth.

*Figure 1. Park Maintenance Standard for Turf.*

Staff is responsible for ensuring that these standards are being met, which is evaluated each year when the Department conducts its annual Park Condition Assessment (PCA) process. Completing PCAs allows staff to systematically observe and document trends in the wear and tear of amenities, and to make course corrections as needed, at individual parks or system-wide. During the PCA process, teams of parks maintenance staff visit each park to inspect and rate park amenities based on how their condition measures against Park Maintenance Standards. They use a GIS-enabled rating tool that has geocoded maps of each park's amenities and allows staff to document notes and photos on the spot. Amenity scores are based on whether the amenity passes or fails the Park Maintenance Standard. Different amenities have different standards to meet. For example, as seen in Figure 1, the park amenity "Turf (Natural Turf Only)" has eight Park Maintenance Standards. A park with turf that meets five standards and fails three standards will receive a 62 percent score for "Turf." A park's overall PCA score is a composite of the amenity scores it receives. A park that receives a 100 percent score will have met every standard, and all scores less than 100 percent reflect that at least one standard has not been met.

It should be noted that the PCAs are a point-in-time evaluation of various park features. Compiled in the summer/fall, staff's PCA scores reflect the previous fiscal year's level of service (i.e., PCAs record the condition of a park in summer/fall of 2022, which is primarily the result of

the service a park received during 2021-2022), but also reflect contemporary circumstances. For instance, if a park's maintenance crew has several absences in the week of its assessment, that park is more likely to fail cleanliness standards. In that way, park conditions can vary based on the time of the year, events in parks, weather, and staffing levels and absences.

## **ANALYSIS**

### ***Current (2022) PCA Results and Findings***

Based on the 2022 Park Condition Assessment, the City's parks received an average score of 85 percent. This overall average was 2 percentage points lower than the 2021 citywide average of 87 percent. Results from the 2021 and 2022 PCA processes are not comparable to results from past years, which had different evaluation criteria that pre-dated the approval of Park Maintenance Standards in April 2021. The updated PCA process developed for 2021, based on the new standards, also sought to remove rater subjectivity and replace it with specific and actionable results that identify whether a park amenity passed or failed for each standard.

Figure 2 shows the percent of developed park acres by PCA score. In 2022, 59 percent of developed park acreage scored 80 percent or better, down from 71 percent of developed acreage in 2021, meaning 12 percent more park acres had a PCA score of less than 80 in 2022.

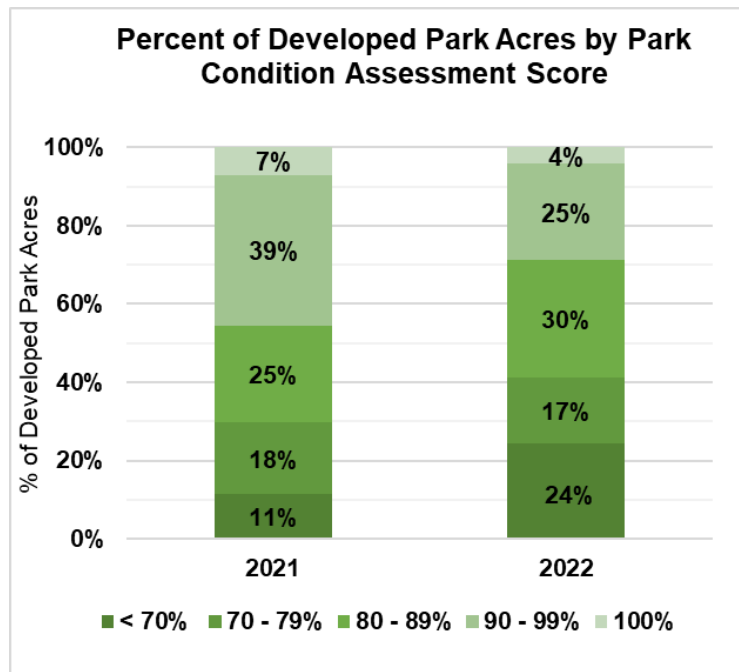


Figure 2. Percent of Developed Park Acres by PCA for 2021 and 2022

Attachment B provides the 2022 (current) and 2021 (past year) PCA score for each park and civic ground and Attachment C includes other disaggregation and analyses of PCA results

including an overall distribution of PCA results, average results by Council District, average results by amenity type, and more. Notable findings from these analyses include:

- 44 percent of parks and civic grounds, by count, received a PCA score between 90-100 percent, including 27 parks with 100 percent PCA scores, and 74 percent of parks received a PCA score of at least 80 percent. The percent of parks scoring at least 80 percent being higher than the percent of park acreage scoring the same, shown in Figure 2, means larger parks scored lower, generally, than smaller parks.
- Parks maintained by the Department's landscape contractor received an average PCA score of 90 percent, compared to 82 percent for parks maintained by City staff, which reflects the smaller size, fewer amenities and relatively simpler maintenance needed by the small parks found in the contract.
- Parks in Council District 5 had the lowest average PCA score among Council Districts at 81 percent, down from 82 percent in 2021.
- Six types of amenities had an average PCA across the City of 80 percent or less: sports fields (72 percent), drinking fountains (75 percent), natural turf (75 percent), restrooms (77 percent), skate parks (78 percent) and dog parks (80 percent). The three lowest scoring amenities have been consistently low scoring for several years, and are the focus of specialized efforts such as the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and Turf Team and Parks Rehabilitation Strike Team.

### **Public Feedback on Park Conditions**

In addition to PCAs conducted by staff, the Department also released a survey to the public to secure direct feedback on the perceived quality and safety of parks. Between January 1, 2022 and August 7, 2022, 738 park users responded to the survey. Staff surveyed the public at two Viva CalleSJ events during that time and conducted additional outreach efforts at parks, sending an email to a park advocates group, and by leaving postcards with survey access instructions at community centers.

Survey respondents rated the quality of 12 different categories on a 5-point scale, from 1, Very Poor, to 5, Very Good, and rated their perception of safety at the park they visit most also on a 5-point scale. The survey also asked a variety of demographic questions such as age, race, gender identity, disability status, number living in household, frequency of park visits, and Council District. Twenty-five percent of respondents reported living in Council District 3. Across all Council Districts, the highest rated park categories were Trees (3.94), Walkways/Paths (3.91), and Playgrounds (3.71). The lowest rated park categories were Restrooms (2.87), Weeds (3.24), and Trash/Litter (3.35).

Data from this public facing survey complement and provide additional context to staff's PCA results while giving staff opportunities to engage and communicate with park users. Discussion on future iterations of the survey have included adding a menu to select a specific park, asking about overall impressions of the park, and allowing for written feedback.

### ***Internal and External Resources for Meeting Standards***

Caring for San José's more-than 200 parks and 63 miles of trails to meet the Department's Park Maintenance Standards takes a team effort. This team is made of six Park Districts, specialized teams, contractors and vendors, partnerships, and support from the Volunteer Management Unit. Each of these team members brings something unique and valuable to park maintenance.

Day-to-day park maintenance is the responsibility of Park Districts. Each of these districts split the inventory of parks into routes. Each park on a route is serviced two to three times per week depending on its size, type, and number of amenities and the park's usage. Staff from Park Districts complete regular health and safety checks, pick up litter, change out trash liners, blow walkways, and complete scheduled seasonal maintenance on landscaping.

To realize efficiencies and support the Park Districts, the Department has created and centralized specialized teams. These include the IPM/Turf Team, which became ongoing in the 2022-2023 Adopted Budget. This team is responsible for large-scale rodent abatement efforts and for addressing turf-related items including turf renovations, aeration, fertilization, and pesticide applications. This team works closely with the newly formed Centralized Mowing Team. The Centralized Mowing Team was created to ensure mowing could continue citywide despite equipment failures and staff shortages, which often left Park Districts unable to mow for weeks at a time despite mitigation efforts such as having rental agreements for mowers in the event of equipment failure. The Parks Rehabilitation Strike Team is responsible for minor park improvements including replacement of benches, picnic tables, drinking fountains and bleachers. This team works closely with the newly Centralized Repair Worker Team that is responsible for park repairs including playgrounds, fences, and major irrigation issues which occur in parks.

In addition to City staff, the Department also utilizes contractors in areas where it is more efficient to do so. These include a landscape contractor who maintains all parks two acres or less as well as civic grounds, a custodial contractor to open, close, and clean park restrooms, and specialty contractors to assist staff with large-scale tree care and weed abatement.

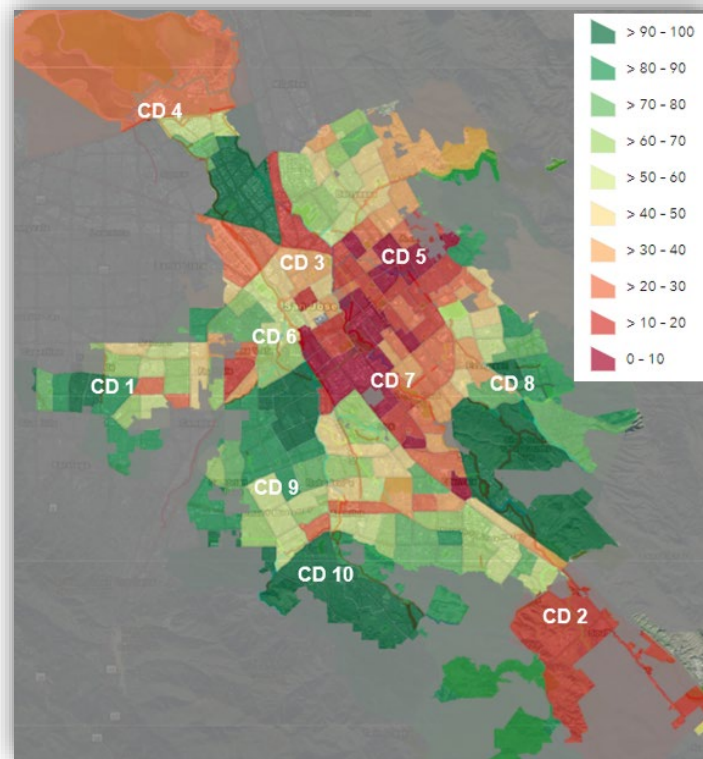
The Department also believes strongly in the value of partnerships and currently utilizes them internally and externally. Some of these partners include the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy that helps maintain the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens, and the Resilience Corps that assists with environmental stewardship goals including invasive species management, care for bioretention areas, and fuel load reduction. The Department similarly works with internal partners including the Department of Transportation on management of the parks tree canopy and Public Works Department on fleet and facility matters.

The Department also supports partnerships with community members through the Volunteer Management Unit. The unit works directly with parks maintenance to support efforts to improve PCA scores with volunteer service days, especially in areas of the City with lower Healthy Places Index percentiles. Currently, 75 parks have been adopted in the Adopt-A-Park program.



### *Utilizing Health Equity Indicators in Decision Making*

Once all PCA data collection has been completed, staff integrates a health equity indicator to set priorities for improvements. In creating corrective work plans, the Department utilizes [Healthy Places Index \(HPI\)](#) percentiles to seek equity in prioritizing the areas of the City that may most rely on the green space that City parks provide.<sup>4</sup> HPI is comprised of social condition domains – education, job opportunities, clean air and water, and other indicators that are positively associated with life expectancy at birth. An HPI percentile is a Census tract-level ranking for the City of San José, where a higher percentile indicates more healthy community conditions. HPI 3.0 captures updated data from the 2020 Census, which is mapped by Census tract in Figure 3. Figure 4 shows average HPI percentile and PCA score by Council District.



*Figure 3. Map of City neighborhoods with corresponding HPI percentiles*

<sup>4</sup> The Healthy Places Index can be found here: <https://www.healthyplacesindex.org/>.



Council District	Avg. HPI Percentile	Avg. Overall PCA
1	66.51	86%
2	55.42	84%
3	28.47	84%
4	53.45	86%
5	14.96	81%
6	66.17	89%
7	25.71	84%
8	54.83	87%
9	64.91	88%
10	76.33	88%

*Figure 4. Average HPI and PCA Score per Council District in 2022*

As an example for how these indicators are used to establish work plans, if two parks both fail in the area of natural turf, and one park is in an area with an HPI percentile of 65 and the other is in an area with an HPI percentile of 50, staff is expected to prioritize improvements in the area with the lower HPI percentile. With the combined PCA and HPI data in hand, staff analyzes the information to assess whether the failure is localized or if there are trends within a specific amenity or region of the City. Parks Managers meet with each of their Park Districts to come up with work plans to address localized issues or work with specialized teams such as the IPM and Turf Team or Parks Rehabilitation Strike Team to address citywide trends of low-scoring amenities such as sports fields, natural turf, and drinking fountains. Parks with low PCA scores in areas with low HPI percentiles are the focus for staff unless immediate health and safety concerns need to be addressed. Staff evaluates any amenity receiving a score of 25 percent or lower for potential health and safety concerns.

An analysis of 2021 and 2022 PCA scores for the 11 parks with the lowest PCA scores (70 percent and below) in low HPI areas (50<sup>th</sup> percentile and below) found that all these parks saw improvements in the following areas:

#### *Infrastructure*

- Benches: two parks increased scores by 33 percent or greater;
- Courts: two parks increased scores by 33 percent or greater;
- Drinking Fountains: five parks increased scores by 50 percent or greater; and
- Parking Lots: eight parks increased scores by 67 percent or greater.

#### *Irrigation*

- Water Management: three parks increased scores from 0 to 100 percent.

#### *Turf/Trees/Developed and Undeveloped Land*

- Turf: three parks had score improvements between 25 and 100 percent;
- Trees: nine parks increased scores by 33 percent or greater;
- Developed Land: four parks had score improvements between 20 and 60 percent; and
- Undeveloped Land: three parks increased scores from 50 to 100 percent.

All 11 of these parks had an increase in their PCA score year-over-year, to some degree, as shown in Figure 5.

Park Name	PCA 2021	PCA 2022	PCA Increase	HPI 3.0
Mayfair Park	0.40	0.77	0.37	2.30
Selma Olinder Park	0.47	0.49	0.02	5.00
LoBue Park	0.67	0.78	0.11	9.20
Nancy Lane Plaza	0.52	0.64	0.12	9.60
Esther Medina Park	0.64	0.94	0.30	13.30
Seven Trees CC	0.62	0.78	0.16	14.70
Educational Branch Library	0.69	0.70	0.01	24.40
Overfelt Gardens	0.54	0.59	0.05	24.40
Northwood Park	0.67	0.87	0.20	34.50
Erikson Park	0.64	0.89	0.25	47.00
Penitencia Creek Park & Berryessa CC	0.67	0.88	0.21	48.30

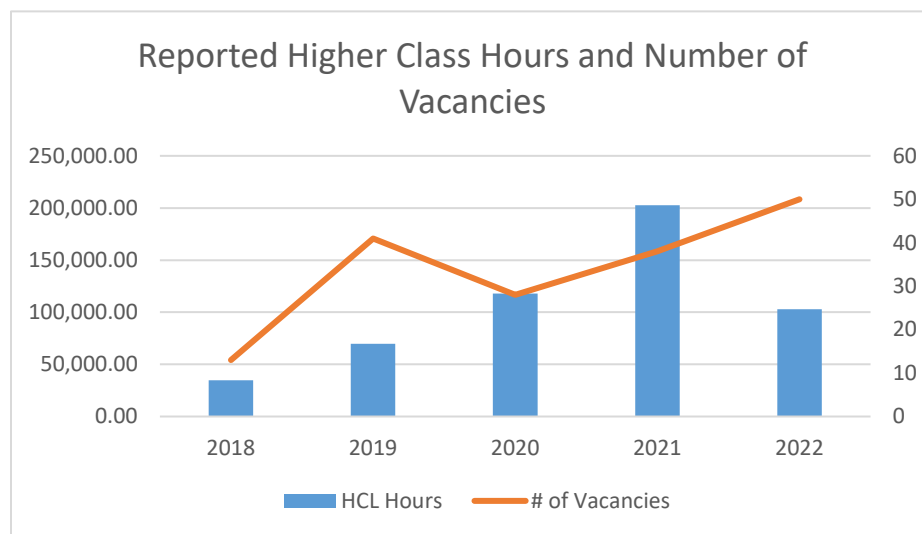
Figure 5. Parks in the 50<sup>th</sup> or below HPI percentile and with 2021 PCA scores of 70% or lower

## Challenges and Opportunities Confronting Park Maintenance

### Vacancies and Hiring

Over the past year, the Department has experienced challenges and achieved successes in the realm of park maintenance, with staffing at the forefront. In June 2022, 23 percent of full-time park maintenance positions were vacant, which was four percentage points higher than the 19 percent vacancy rate reported in February 2022. After newly-funded positions in the 2022-2023 Adopted Operating Budget were added in July, the park maintenance vacancy rate peaked at 30 percent.

These consistently high vacancy rates left many Park Districts understaffed or with multiple positions being filled with interim staff who had limited experience in the position. Interim positions are a temporary solution, often lasting only six months, at which time staff transition back to their permanent classification or may be offered another interim opportunity in another location. In Fiscal Year 2021-2022, 32 percent of park maintenance staff held an interim position at least one time, leaving their permanent position temporarily vacant. Vacancies and interim assignments (Higher Class Hours) are illustrated in Figure 6 below. It is notable that, in 2022, the Department had higher vacancy rates and lower higher-class hours. Front-line staff suggest that the bench of employees who could take an interim assignment has grown thin, and some employees who previously volunteered are no longer volunteering due to burnout, resulting in true vacancies and service impacts.



*Figure 6. Number of Vacancies and Reported Higher Class Hours in Park Maintenance*

Persistent vacancies impact staff morale, and in August 2022, the Department prioritized hiring park maintenance staff and began a six-month hiring process of recruiting and onboarding all levels of the maintenance series from Part-Time Maintenance Assistants to Parks, Recreation, and Facilities Supervisors. The Department expects these recruitments to be completed with new staff onboarded in spring 2023 and anticipates filling upwards of 50 vacant positions. Having permanent staff will enable the park maintenance teams to focus on completing their daily duties as opposed to frequently trying to fill positions with interim assignments that, in the end, disrupt services across more teams.

Filling 50 vacant positions will require a significant influx of new City employees as many seasoned staff promote within the organization. To help fill the need for new employees, the Department is expanding its partnership with the Resilience Corps. In August 2021, the City launched the Environmental Pathway of the Resilience Corps program in collaboration with the San José Conservation Corps as a lead partner and with other like-minded community organizations. This program seeks to support unemployed and underemployed young adults through employment and work experience opportunities that focus on natural resource management.<sup>5</sup> Environmental stewardship and park maintenance projects include invasive species removal, bioswale rehabilitation, tree planting and care, fuel load reduction, brush clearing, trail patrol and maintenance, irrigation installation, fence construction, and more. The program, including a second iteration funded by a CaliforniansForAll grant from the State of California, has had 166 participants to date, of which 74 percent have completed the program and found employment or are pursuing higher education.

To mitigate the impacts of current vacancies and build a pipeline of future City park maintenance employees, staff has created an “externship” model where Resilience Corps participants stay in

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/your-government/departments-offices/parks-recreation-neighborhood-services/resilience-corps>

the program while working directly in Park Districts to gain valuable experience in City service. In September 2022, 12 participants joined Park Districts as externs, followed by another 17 in December 2022. The externs have already gained valuable experience working in the Park Districts and at facilities like Emma Prusch Farm Park and Happy Hollow Park & Zoo. These externs have been an asset to the teams, providing extra assistance when vacancy rates remain high. The externs have entered this part of the Resilience Corps program with a foundational knowledge base of park maintenance gained by working under the supervision of the San José Conservation Corps that has enabled them to augment City teams with minimal training. The Department plans to recruit for Full-Time Maintenance Assistants in winter 2023, in time for the externs completing their City externship to consider applying for permanent roles, and looks forward to welcoming future cohorts of externs over the next 18 months of the Resilience Corps program, building a pipeline and pool of trained candidates that can fill future vacancies.

### **Drought and Aging Irrigation Infrastructure**

Amid a state-wide drought, in June 2021 the Santa Clara Valley Water District (Valley Water) mandated a 15 percent reduction in water usage compared to 2019, which created pressures on the City's park system. Staff's approach to achieving water conservation focuses on effective water management. That water management is challenged by aging irrigation infrastructure across the park system reaching its lifespan and requiring additional care to remain functional. Between 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, nearly 19,000 hours of park maintenance staff time was spent on irrigation repairs. Aging infrastructure contributes to lower PCA amenity scores for natural turf, playgrounds, bleachers, benches, and picnic tables, as the City's infrastructure backlog for parks, pools, and open spaces was an estimated \$284.9 million in 2022.

To support water conservation efforts in light of aging irrigation infrastructure, staff has continued installation of smart irrigation controllers, flow sensors, and master valves. Over the last four years, and at an approximate cost to date of \$1.25 million, staff has installed, retrofitted, or upgraded the following smart irrigation components:

- 212 smart irrigation controllers have been installed or improved in parks enabling a high degree of control over water usage, for a total of 279 in the park system. Staff plans to install another 4 in 2023.
- 160 smart flow sensors and master valves have been installed, enabling staff to detect leaks and shut off water systems to prevent unnecessary water loss, for a total of 248 in the park system. Staff plans to install another 5 smart flow sensors and master valves in 2023.

These upgrades allow for offsite management of the Department's entire irrigation infrastructure via computer or smart phone, leading to tangible time savings. Centrally-controlled irrigation helps ensure all irrigation clocks are set at correct watering levels to reduce under- and over-watering. This smart irrigation system also provides alerts in real-time of mainline breaks, water theft, or any situation that causes water use to deviate from preset parameters, which has mitigated water waste and unnecessary spending over the past year. In 2021-2022, the

Department achieved a 13 percent reduction in water use compared to the 2019 baseline and is trending towards further water savings so far in 2022-2023. The ability to tightly manage water usage enabled the Department to reduce its annual water budget by \$1.25 million in the 2020-2021 Adopted Operating Budget as part of budget balancing efforts at the start of the pandemic.

## **Trail Safety**

Trails are an important part of the City's park system as they provide for off-street active transportation, encourage community members to engage in healthy activity, and provide opportunities to connect with nature. While the Department does not currently conduct a maintenance-oriented PCA for trails, it conducts an annual Trail Count that assesses the number of trail users and surveys users about their experience. The 2022 Trail Count provided insight into perceived safety, maintenance, and conditions of the trail system. As in recent years, there was a decrease in transportation users, but an increase in community members accessing the trail network for health reasons.

To enhance the feeling of safety for trail users and help them enjoy the time they spend there, the Department has partnered with the San José Police Department and San José Conservation Corps and begun a major project to protect trails from unauthorized vehicle access. The Police Department, in partnership with Valley Water, began bike patrols along Coyote Creek Trail in late 2021. Concurrently, the Department partnered with the San José Conservation Corps to create a Trail Safety Pilot that deploys corps members on trails to observe and report conditions to appropriate organizations and address light landscaping and maintenance, including litter. Multiple respondents to the survey conducted as part of the 2022 Trail Count reported seeing the San José Conservation Corps and an increase in trail maintenance over the past year, and positively mentioned the Trail Safety Pilot, stating that the presence of the Police Department and corps members has increased their feelings of safety on the Coyote Creek Trail.

The City is also seeking to expand the Police Department Trail Program, in partnership with Valley Water, to the Guadalupe River Trail. From the recent trail count, usage of the Guadalupe River Trail has decreased 48 percent since 2019, with users citing feeling unsafe as encampments established and grew near the trail and as unauthorized vehicles began driving on the trail. Feedback for improvement includes cleaning trails of debris and litter along the trail and in the waterways, with over 17 percent of respondents citing litter as a negative impact.

The Department is also planning to install bollards and gates at several key access points in Guadalupe River Park & Gardens from Hedding to Coleman in early 2023 to protect the trail from unauthorized vehicles and limit encampments to the extent possible. There are additional deterrent strategies including boulders and fencing planned along the Guadalupe River Trail, Coyote Creek Trail, Los Gatos Creek Trail, and Three Creeks Trail.

### **CLIMATE SMART SAN JOSÉ**

The recommendation in this memorandum aligns with one or more Climate Smart San José energy, water, or mobility goals.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

The Department will submit an annual report in the winter of 2024 evaluating 2022-2023 program highlights and challenges, including 2023 PCA results.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum was coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City's website for the February 9, 2023 Neighborhood Services and Education Committee meeting.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

This memorandum will be heard at the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on February 1, 2022, and Commission feedback will be provided to the Committee.

### **CEQA**

Not a Project, File No. PP17-009, Staff Reports, Assessments, Annual Reports, and Informational Memos that involve no approvals of any City action.

January 23, 2023

**Subject: Citywide Sustainable Park Maintenance Report**

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## **PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy.

/s/

JON CICIRELLI  
Director of Parks, Recreation  
and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Avi Yotam, Deputy Director of Parks, at  
[avi.yotam@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:avi.yotam@sanjoseca.gov).

Attachment A: Park Maintenance Standards can be found online at

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=81364>

Attachment B: 2022 Park Condition Assessment Scores by Park and Civic Ground

Attachment C: 2022 Park Condition Assessment Analyses