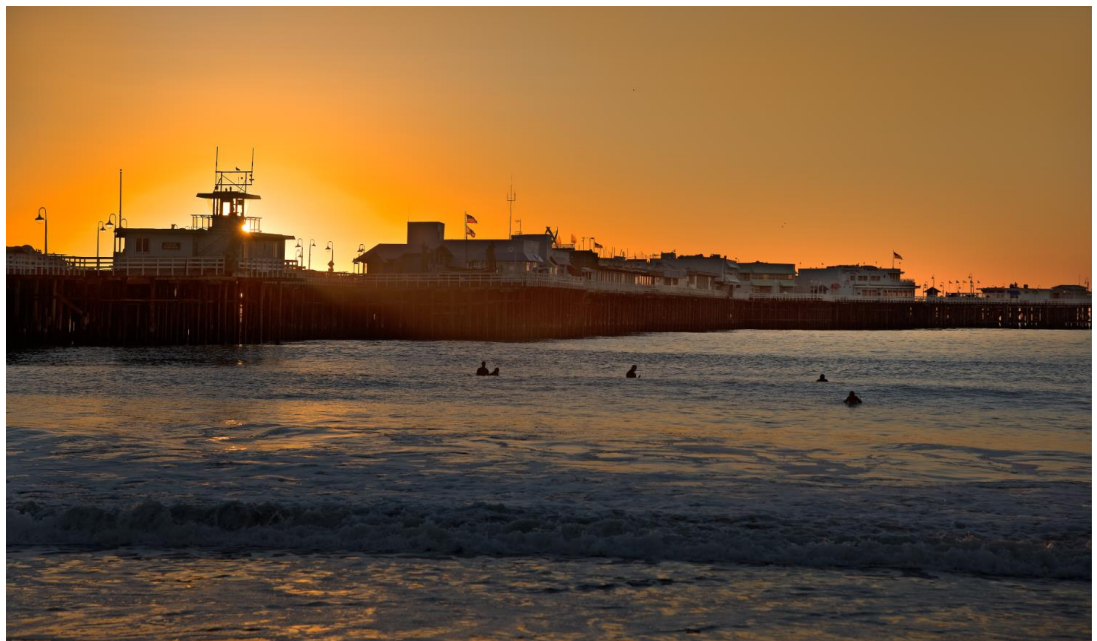


PARKS & RECREATION



January 2021

2020 Annual Report: Perseverance

The purpose of this document is to present a snapshot of progress for the 2020 fiscal year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) and to lay out goals for the current 2021 fiscal year.

Parks & Recreation

2020 ANNUAL REPORT: PERSEVERANCE

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

2020 presented our world, nation, and community with enormous challenges. The City of Santa Cruz and the Parks & Recreation Department are no exception. Although we have sustained some scars, Parks & Recreation accomplished remarkable things as a department this year. The Beach Management Plan was adopted and significant progress was made toward approval of the Parks Master Plan and Wharf Master Plan. The Activity Guide is now available in Spanish for the first time and has been digitized to have greater reach. Our Virtual Programming platform has connected thousands of seniors during a time where community engagement has been nearly impossible. The golf course had its best summer in 20 years. We completed plantings of 500 trees and an inventory of over 20,000 City trees. And much more!

I am proud of this department, and have been reminded this year how resilient, high-achieving and service-minded Parks & Recreation is especially in the face of trying times. 2021 may not be easy. But we are stronger. As we look ahead, we acknowledge that we do our best when we are engaged with the community. Investment into critical resources, partnerships, and outside support for Parks & Recreation will be essential to continue success and advancement of our mission and goals. Parks & Recreation is a conduit for economic recovery, the green economy, for health, and social equity. We invite you to join us as a funding partner, a volunteer, or as an advocate.

On behalf of the Parks & Recreation Department, it is our honor and privilege to serve Santa Cruz. Thank you for your support!



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MISSION, VISION & VALUES

Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks and recreation are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community, ensuring the health of families and youth, and contributing to the economic and environmental well-being of a community and region.

Our diverse portfolio of recreation programs along with a robust, world-class system of parks, beaches, open spaces and urban forest allow the department to contribute to the vitality and health of our community, provide numerous popular tourist destinations, attract new businesses, and serve as environmental stewards of a vast and stunning array of natural resources.

The following mission, vision and accompanying values guide our work in service to the City of Santa Cruz community:

Mission

Providing environments, experiences and programs that enrich the lives of residents and build a healthy community

Vision

Parks and recreation are providing essential support to the health and quality of life of the Santa Cruz community.

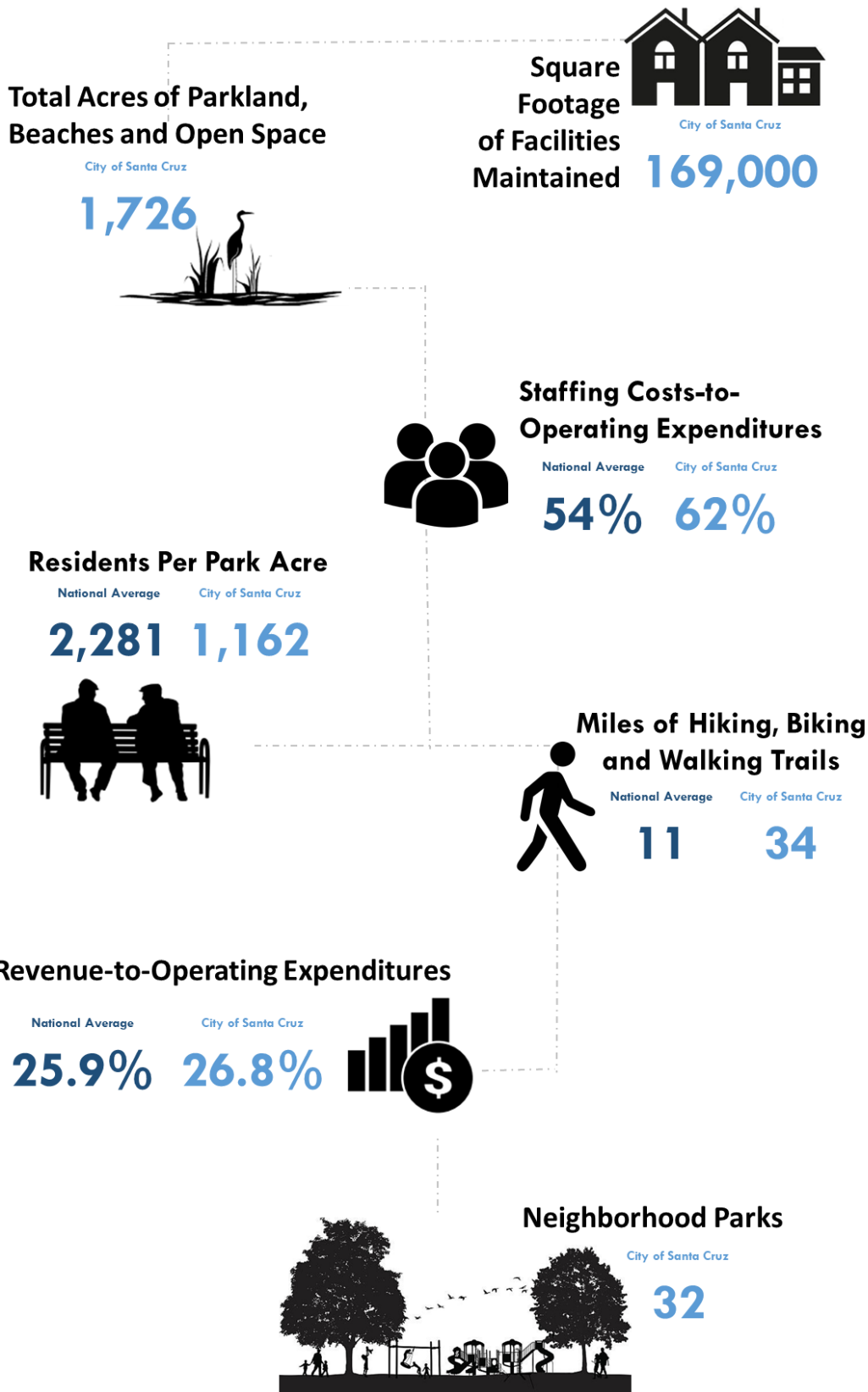
Values

We will treat others with respect and will strive to keep an open mind. We will be responsible for assuring a work environment where staff and public feel comfortable and secure. We will draw on our courage, strength and personal integrity to uphold these department values while in service to this community.

LOOKING FORWARD

As our department looks to the future, we aim to ensure that the foundation laid by our mission, vision and values aligns well with the needs of our community and the goals of our City Council and City Manager.

HOW WE STACK UP



National Averages from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA); City of Santa Cruz Statistics based on FY2019 numbers.

SPOTLIGHT: STAFF AND PUBLIC SAFETY

People seek out our spaces and programs because they provide comfortable, safe and secure opportunities to connect with the natural environment, recreate, and interact with others. The 2030 Parks Master Plan states, “the heritage of the parks system reflects a community that deeply cares about providing and preserving the quality and diversity of the recreational, natural, and urban environments.”

In FY20, Parks and Recreation employees, volunteers and users faced increasing safety risks from behaviors that also threaten the environmental health of our parks and open spaces. Some Parks and Recreation users, along with department employees, have been subjected to rude, sometimes violent or other types of inappropriate behavior, as well as syringe litter, human waste and other indecencies. Among the Master Plan’s overarching goals, the following are especially relevant:

1. “provide ample, accessible, safe, and well-maintained parks, open space, and active recreation facilities” and;
2. “provide well-managed clean, and convenient public access to open space lands and coastline”

The current conditions across several City parks and open spaces are in conflict with these Parks Master Plan goals, and impact staff and public safety. A number of steps were taken in FY20 to help address these challenges, including the transition to a new cell phone carrier to improve reception and communications in more remote areas of the parks and recreation system; dialogue with Police Department leadership to improve alignment and communication regarding enforcement of urgent actions; testing of incident tracking for improved understanding of issue trends and location hot spots; and safety recommendations for staff uniforms.

Further, a subcommittee of the Parks and Recreation Commission convened to document the unsafe conditions and behaviors; determine whether there are additional measures or policy/protocols changes that would improve safety; and identify resources needed to carry out those measures or changes. Here are key recommendations from the Commission:

- Clarify the role of department personnel in responding to and resolving safety challenges, and provide needed training to resolve low-level threats and identify environmental challenges.
- Address regulatory and operational uncertainty regarding City camping ordinances and interpretation of court decisions related to encampments.
- Improve alignment with Police Department on safety and enforcement priorities through continued dialogue and better department incident tracking, and
- Consider new recommendations from frontline staff and the Parks & Recreation Commission.



FY2020 GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Environmental Sustainability

Managing over 1,700 acres of urban forest, parks, beaches, open spaces and greenways, the Parks & Recreation Department is working to build a healthy, more resilient future for the Santa Cruz community. With our local partners, we are helping to adapt to a changing climate by: implementing multi-benefit green infrastructure solutions that improve water quality, lessen urban heat island effect and clean the air; creating habitats for pollinators and other wildlife; fostering respect and stewardship of our natural resources; connecting people with the life-enhancing benefits of the outdoors; responding to climate-related disasters with essential services, like emergency shelters; and reducing the environmental footprint of our operations.

Cowell Beach Exits “Beach Bummer List” for First Time in Ten Years



Great things are possible when our community comes together. Launched in 2014, the Cowell’s Working Group convened representatives from the City, Santa Cruz County, Save The Waves, Sierra Club and Surfrider Foundation to study and develop recommendations to improve the water quality at Cowell Beach.

To support the effort, the Parks & Recreation wharf crew installed bird screening to reduce pigeons roosting and defecating under the Wharf. When paired with consistent cleaning practices at the Neary Lagoon outlet and Cowell’s Beach vault, plus improved Main Beach management practices, the bacteria count was radically reduced. Offering uncharacteristically good news in 2020, Heal the Bay officially removed Cowell Beach from its “Beach Bummer List” in July, rewarding years of collaboration and science-based management efforts.

TESTIMONIAL

“After steps were taken to ward off birds roosting in the area, the number of water quality samples exceeding state standards dropped by over 50 percent indicating that we were on the right track.”- Nik Strong-Cvetich, Save The Waves Executive Director & facilitator of Cowell’s Working Group

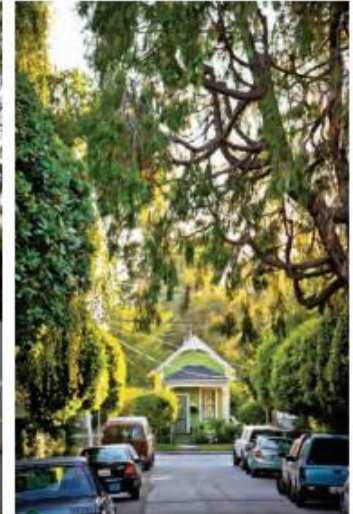


Urban Forest Plantings and Inventory on City Lands and Right-of-Ways Completed

Trees are the building blocks of our "urban forests," the living, breathing, life-sustaining part of our city environment. As natural forests are eliminated globally, local management of urban forests to limit the impacts of climate change become more critical.

Trees beautify our parks, shade our neighborhoods, and enhance our city sidewalks, but they also do much more. Trees build healthy communities by:

- Supporting biodiversity by providing food and habitat for flora and fauna;
- Decreasing energy consumption by shading nearby buildings and pavement;
- Reducing air pollution by removing carbon emissions, smoke and particulates from the air;
- Reducing ocean pollution by capturing stormwater run-off and recharging groundwater aquifers;



Community Partners on this project include: Monterey Bay Master Gardeners • Ecology Action • Coastal Watershed Council • Santa Cruz Sunrise Rotary • Kirby Preparatory School • Santa Cruz Shakespeare PG&E • UC Santa Cruz Natural Reserves • Sierra Club • Cabrillo Horticulture Department

And sometimes they simply provide a much-needed place of solace in any urban center.

Leveraging \$366,289 from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, Urban Forester Leslie Keedy - in partnership with City Sustainability Manager Tiffany Wise-West - completed the planting of 500 additional trees and inventory of over 20,000 on City land and right-of ways with support from numerous community partners and volunteers. The tree data collected will assist in identifying future tree planting sites and effective urban forest management.

FACT

500 mature trees can sequester over 1,300 metric tons of CO₂, the equivalent of taking 283 passenger vehicles off the road.



Community Safety & Well Being

Shedding an even bigger light on the essential role of local parks and recreation, the COVID-19 pandemic has helped emphasize the importance of parks, beaches, trails and greenways to the physical and mental health of our community. Park and recreation staff mobilized to keep as many services, programs and amenities open as was permissible. During the strictest weeks of the Santa Cruz County COVID lockdown, people flooded into City of Santa Cruz open spaces, parks and beaches. Monitoring of pedestrian traffic on the West Cliff Drive at times showed a usage increase of 75 percent compared to prior years. Even when parks and amenities were closed, people continued to use them. Community reliance and use of our parks, beaches and trails as safe spaces during the pandemic has validated the essential role they play in maintaining Santa Cruz community well-being. Further, staff delivered vital services and programs to support the community, such as offering space for meals-to-go programs servicing the most vulnerable populations, virtual programming for isolated seniors and essential worker childcare.

City of Santa Cruz Leads the Way with Virtual Recreation

The challenge of continuing to provide programming to the community as the early spring shelter-in-place when into effect was met with creativity by the City of Santa Cruz Recreation Team. Staff incubated and launched a Virtual Recreation site for the public in one week, representing a tremendous pivot under the most challenging of circumstances. A mere seven days after going live to the public, the virtual recreation web page was among the City’s most visited webpages with nearly 1,200 unique page views. After six weeks, over 1,000 seniors had participated in some form of new virtual programming.

The site quickly became a model for other recreation agencies, and offers a wide range of activities, including live zoom classes for seniors, a virtual downtown tree walk with our Urban Forester, and numerous social media activities.



TESTIMONIAL

“My partner and I have a weekly date to do Senior Yoga together. We never miss a week! It couldn't be any more convenient to do it on Zoom, rain or shine. We both are so impressed with the quality of the teachers. Thank you!” – Glenn and Jill

Essential Child Care Provided to Working Families



In early spring, staff launched an essential worker child care program to help maintain continuity for basic community services.

Building on the lessons learned from early spring, the Youth Programs team completely retooled their template of a “normal” Summer Camp program to something that would work within the COVID context. Staff were able to hold two three-week sessions, accommodating nearly 150 children. Reworking program logistics and ensuring the highest safety standards could be met, staff were trained in new health and safety protocols due to COVID, such as health screenings including temperature checks, social distancing requirements and cleaning/disinfecting procedures. Participants for each session were divided into six camps of twelve campers to meet the stable group requirements in the Public Health Order. The kids were thrilled to get out and play, and exhausted parents were given some relief and peace of mind.

TESTIMONIAL

“Thank you and all of Park’s staff for the wonderful care and support you’ve provided my family these past two months – the boys are going to miss it!” – Chris Coburn, City of Santa Cruz Water Department

Reliable and Forward-Looking Infrastructure and Facilities

Parks and Recreation defines essential infrastructure as the spaces, facilities and built environment features, such as parks, trails, open spaces and pools, that are absolutely necessary to maintain the health and well-being of the public. A city survey conducted in 2020 found that residents, businesses and students listed parks, beaches and open space maintenance as a top priority for the City of Santa Cruz behind emergency services and affordable housing. With a system that extends over 1,700 acres, occupies 169,000 ft² of facility space and includes the longest wooden wharf on the West Coast, the department must concern itself not only with programs but also with maintenance, accessibility, security and public safety, and environmental stewardship.

FACT: Nationally, 83 percent of U.S. adults agree that visiting their local parks, trails and open spaces have been essential for their mental and physical well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Managing such a large and diverse portfolio with so many different goals in mind is a challenge in any environment, but it is especially difficult at a time of fiscal constraints. A typical cost-saving strategy is to defer maintenance on existing facilities. Currently, the department has tens of millions of dollars in deferred maintenance. An effective cost-cutting strategy in the short run, in the long run deferring maintenance can undermine a department's ability to deliver services and actually compound problems by making them more expensive to fix. While important maintenance and improvement projects were successfully completed this year, the department is unable to make necessary large system investments without a new and extensive influx of CIP-directed resources.

Completed Key Improvements to Park Amenities Totalling Over \$300,000

With the final quarter of 2020 subsumed by the COVID-19 pandemic, capital improvement successes came in just a nine month timeframe this year. Before the pandemic ground construction work to a halt, the department was able to complete a new retaining wall for the Cliff Street Walkway, replace the coping at our state-of-the-art Ken Wormhoudt Skate Park, install a brand new playground at one of our most active community parks, Harvey West Park, and deploy four new ramps at Depot Bike Park. The projects represented over \$300,000 of investment in our park system and its amenities.



Engaged and Informed Community

The Parks and Recreation Department works diligently to ensure residents of the City of Santa Cruz have access to and feel welcome in the places, programs and facilities that contribute their well-being and that of our community. Equitable and inclusive community engagement is central to this vision and is fundamental to establishing quality parks that meet the needs of all people.

Friends Group Awards Over \$15,000 in Scholarships to Local Youth

With the support of our Friends of Parks & Recreation Group (FOPAR), 68 scholarships, totaling over \$15,000, were awarded to local youth for participation in recreation program activities in fiscal year 2020. In March, scholarship support shifted to assist local families financially impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with scholarships for essential worker child care and summer camps.



Park Adopters Contribute Over 2,700 Volunteer Hours to Help Maintain Beloved Areas

Volunteering allows people to work together to solve issues their community is facing, forge new social bonds and create social cohesion. Not only that, but the work volunteers accomplish can foster resiliency in a multitude of ways, including environmental, health and social impacts. In calendar year 2019, the department benefited from over 2,700 volunteer hours via the Park Adoption Program. Arrangements with Giro, Specialized and Mountain Bikers of Santa Cruz County are helping to maintain specific multi-use trails across our vast open space system. Volunteer work along the San Lorenzo River and within Laurel Park are also helping to expand the department's capacity at a critical time when hiring freezes and furloughs are stretching existing park maintenance resources to their limit. With additional park adoptions nearly approved, we hope FY21 will see even greater volunteer support across our system.



ADDITIONAL FY2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Environmental Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secured California Coastal Commission (CCC) approval for the City of Santa Cruz Beach Management Plan, continuing a long tradition of working with the CCC to protect and enhance the City of Santa Cruz coast and ocean for present and future generations.• With city officials and community support, celebrated the opening of the Neary Lagoon Wildlife Refuge Pollinator Garden, which features native plants suited to pollinators along with new interpretive signs to help communicate the unique partnership between plants and pollinators.• Completed the draft Parks Master Plan Environmental Impact Review (EIR) and submitted for public review• Planned a cost-neutral reorganization of the Parks Division to focus teams on functional areas to take effect in FY21• Began implementation of the Golf Course Operations Plan, which included working with the course operator to re-open the on-site restaurant. Even with operational closures early in the pandemic, the DeLaveaga Golf Course exceeded the FY20 adopted revenue budget by over \$167,000.
Community Safety and Well Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improved emergency access to and made progress in Pogonip fire risk reduction• Secured state grant funding through the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) to complete the evaluation of soil contamination in Pogonip.• Worked with partners at the Police Department to develop and implement Neighborhood Policing in city parklands• Completed an incident tracking exercise to improve staff and public safety in our facilities and park spaces; engaged the Parks & Recreation Commission on the topic, leading to the creation of the Commission's Staff Safety Subcommittee.• Provided the following support to social service organizations that serve the most vulnerable populations in our community:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Discounted meeting and rental space for groups like Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, County Office of Education Alternative Programming, Meals on Wheels○ Space for the Association of Faith Communities (AFC) shower trailer, as well as the Salvation Army evening meal program, at Harvey West Park and Depot Park○ Community meals for at-risk youth, such as the Teen Center Thanksgiving Dinner, and regular seniors group lunches• Supported city pandemic response by maintaining public hygiene stations for at-risk populations through the early phases of the pandemic• Developed a new department COVID-19 status webpage to help the public understand which park system amenities were open and closed in response to county and state health orders. Carried out associated noticing to keep pace with the rapidly changing and dynamic nature of the pandemic.• To educate visitors on specific COVID-19 mask and social distancing County Health Orders, created a Beach Host program to share guidance with beach visitors.
Reliable, Forward-Looking Infrastructure and Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Began implementation of two additional state-funded grants – Neary Lagoon boardwalk replacement and development of the Pogonip Nature Loop.• Initiated and secured resources to implement Wharf railing safety upgrades
Engaged and Informed Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expanded July Is Parks Make Life Better month to include collaborative Family Fun Day event at Harvey West Park with County of Santa Cruz and City of Watsonville Parks and Recreation• Offered online Parks and Recreation Activity Guide in both English and Spanish for the Winter-Spring and Summer 2020 sessions.• In coordination with 10 community partners, engaged more than 250 volunteers in tree planting under the Cal Fire grant.

FY2021 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Safe Parks and Facilities for All

- Engage key stakeholders in devising an effective response to mitigate the impacts of serious code violations in our parks, beaches and open spaces
- Complete the smart phone transition to improve coverage and signal reception in critical areas of the parks system
- Transition incident tracking to new system
- Update safety training program for front-line Parks employees

During COVID-19, Core Amenities and Services Provided through Adaptive Management

- Implement new best management practices to safely reopen playgrounds
- Support the city in disaster response and recovery
- Align youth and adult sports and league programming with new state guidance
- Continue development of new Virtual Program offerings

Effective Department Operations and Communications

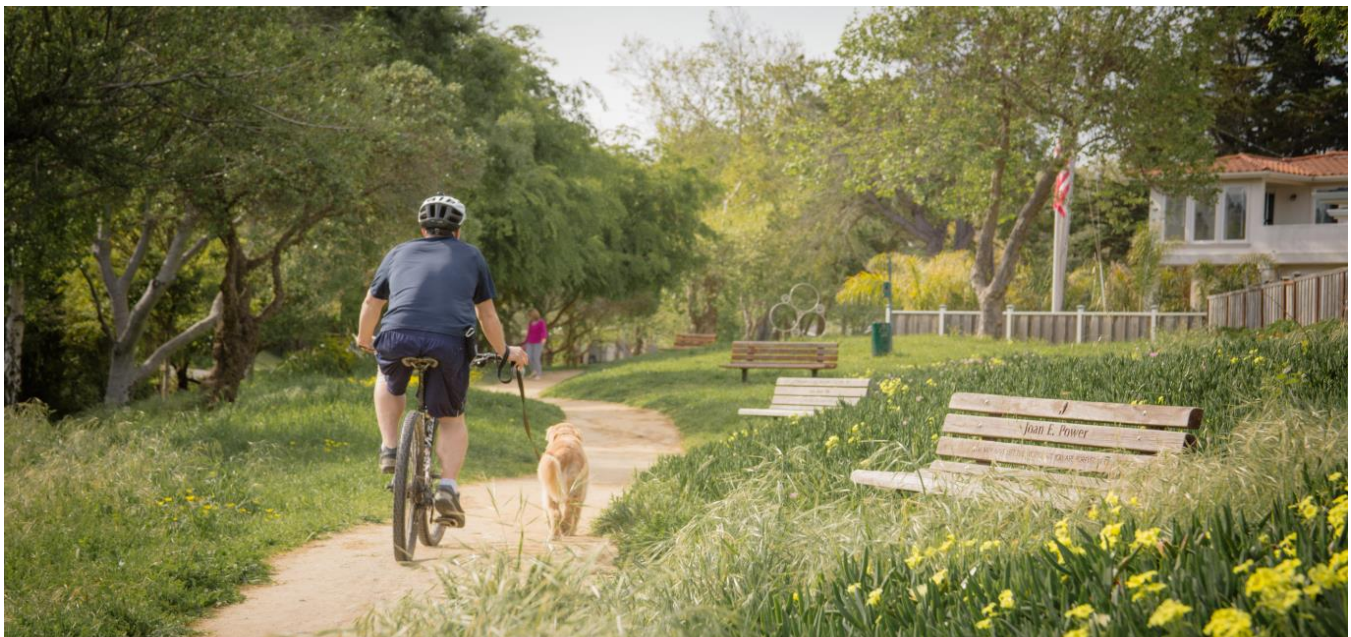
- Maximize use of resources through new divisional Service Delivery Adjustments
- Complete the Recreation & Leisure study and begin implementing recommendations
- Complete a FY20 Annual Report and FY21 Real-time Strategic Plan
- Improve department web presence along with online service delivery for classes and all categories of department permits

Cost Recovery through Partnerships and New Revenues

- Develop and implement new revenue policy
- Implement Golf Course Operations Plan to close revenue gap
- Develop a sponsorships program/process
- Apply for and secure new grant funding
- Increase number of park adoptions

Community, Environment and Fiscal Sustainability through Forward-Looking and Resilient Planning

- Finalize and get approval for Parks Master Plan
- Get approval for the Wharf Master Plan and EIR; Secure necessary federal, state permits for ongoing maintenance work at Wharf
- Complete Pool Feasibility Study to determine plan for expanded operations
- Complete Master Street Tree Plan
- Advance approved CIP and grant-funded projects and identify FY2022 CIP priorities

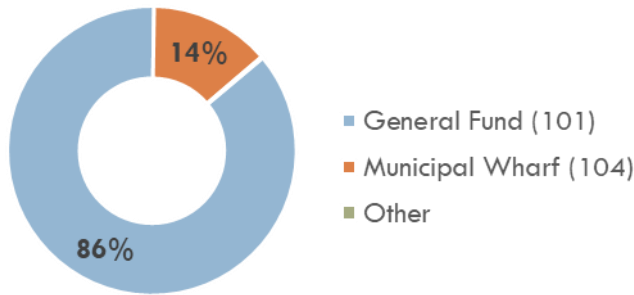


DOLLARS & CENTS: DEPARTMENT FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Budget Breakdown

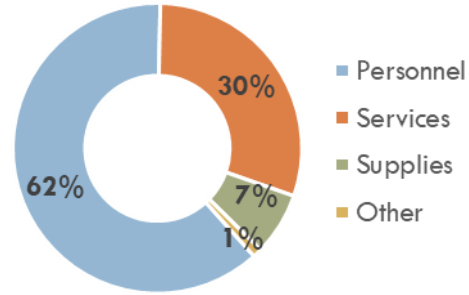
As the City’s main operating fund, the General Fund (GF), also called Fund 101, is the primary fund source for Parks and Recreation. To provide readers with a more comprehensive picture of the department budget, three additional funds besides Fund 101 are included in the expenditure numbers below (See Figure 1). In FY20, the department budget was just over \$17 million (17,135,818), and personnel costs making up 62 percent of that amount (See Figure 2).

FIGURE 1. FY20 Adopted Budget Expenditures by Fund



* Other includes the Civic Equipment Fund and the Street Tree Fund.

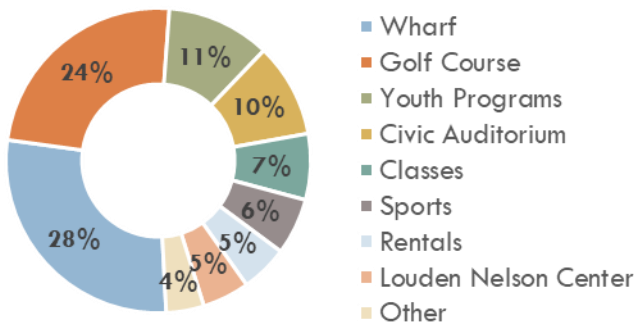
FIGURE 2. FY20 Adopted Budget Expenditures by Cost Category



* Other includes misc. services and supplies.

GF revenue sources include property taxes, sales & use tax, transient occupancy tax (TOT), fees, permits, and other charges as well as many other miscellaneous revenue. In FY20, nearly \$5 million (\$4,963,250) in budgeted GF revenues were associated with department activities (See Figure 3). The net General Fund impact of the department’s FY20 Adopted budget was just over \$12 million (12,172,568). This resulting subsidy is resourced through other GF revenues, such as property and sales taxes.

FIGURE 3. FY20 Adopted Budget Revenues by Parks and Recreation Functional Area



Cost Recovery

A key metric for the Parks and Recreation Department is our revenue-to-operating expenditure ratio. In FY20, the budgeted ratio was 29 percent, higher than the national average of 25.8 and the department’s FY19 ratio. With the resulting reductions to department revenues and expenditures from the COVID-19 pandemic, the actual FY20 ratio is expected to be closer to 13.6 percent. However, under normal operating conditions, the department tends to over-perform the budgeted ratio through increased revenues or expenditures savings or both.

Moving forward, the department will develop a stronger focus on cost recovery. To support efforts to apply General Fund subsidies toward the most essential services and programs, the department will utilize a newly developed department revenue policy. The policy offers both a framework and guiding principles for adjusting cost recovery targets for different department functional areas. This will be critical as the department works to both recover from the budgetary impacts of COVID-19 and increase its long-term fiscal sustainability.

Operational Budget (FY2020)

Division	Adopted Expenditure Budget	Adopted Revenue Budget	Non-General Fund FTE	General Fund FTE
Parks	\$11,490,506	\$2,625,650	2.88	58.00
Recreation	\$3,932,740	\$2,075,600	0.0	17.25
Administration	\$1,712,572	\$262,000	0.0	9.00
Total	\$17,135,818	\$4,963,250	2.88	84.25

Public Assets

Community Facilities	8
Auditoriums	2
Community Centers	2
Museums	2
Senior Centers	2
Parks	49
Neighborhood Parks	32
Community/Regional Parks	6
Disc Golf Course	2
Ballfields (baseball, soccer, softball)	12
Basketball Courts	5.5
Beaches	4
Bike Park /Pump Tracks	4
Bocce Ball Courts	5
Community Gardens	5
Community Garden Plots	115
Dog Parks	8
Exercise Courses	6
Golf Courses (Public)	1
Horseshoe Pits	4
Lawn Bowling Greens	1
Open Spaces	7
Park Playgrounds	21
Pickle Ball Courts	10
Reservable Picnic Areas	16
Reservable Sports Fields	11
Skate Parks	3
Swimming Pools	1
Table Tennis	3
Tennis Courts	6
Volleyball Courts (sand)	21
Wharf	1

City Workload Indicators

Indicator	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19
Participants in programs, classes & events	127,000	119,000	119,000	137,268
Facility, field, court & picnic areas reservations	6,331	3,284	6,445	6,900
Sq. footage of facilities maintained/operated	169,000			
Tons of general refuse/green waste removed	146/84	216/178	240/117	201/126*
New, Emerging Indicators:				
Percent change in number of permits issued by type				
Percent change in labor hours for maintenance of parks and open space				
Percent change in labor hours for maintenance of recreation facilities				
Number of reservation hours / Percent of reservable hours utilized				

Staffing

Employee Type	Total
Full-Time	77.00
Part-Time	7.25

Department Footprint

Total Acres of Parkland	1,726
Neighborhood Parkland	49
Community/Regional Parkland	332
Open Spaces	1,315
Beaches	33
Total Sq. Ft. of Facilities Maintained	169,000

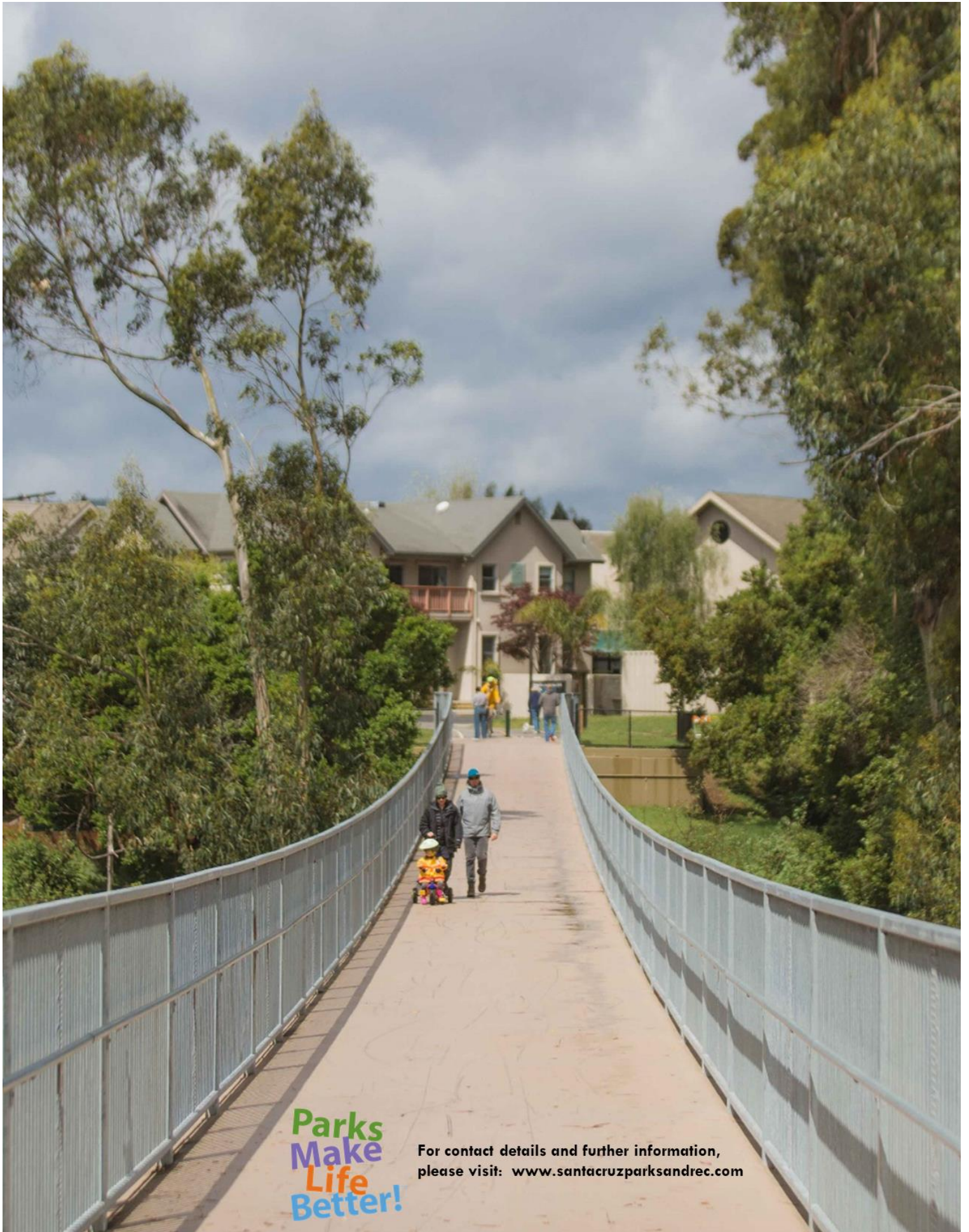
Trail Network

Total Mileage of Urban Trails	21.05
Paved	11.75
Non-Paved	9.3
Estimated Mileage of Hiking Trails	13.88

Community Health (FY2019)

Total Participants	Participants
Summer Camps / Junior Guards	1,829
Adult Sports Leagues	6,396
Classes	15,093
Community Events	113,950

Fast facts are intended to provide public data updated once per year. Data is accurate as of July 1, 2019 and reflective of the adopted budget.



**Parks
Make
Life
Better!**

For contact details and further information,
please visit: www.santacruzparksandrec.com