



September 2022

Interpretive Strategic Plan

San Mateo County Parks

CONSERVATION BY DESIGN

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Executive Summary

PROJECT CONTEXT

Located in the midst of the diverse natural and cultural communities of the San Francisco Bay Area, the San Mateo County Parks Department has undertaken an interpretive planning process to determine the most effective ways to engage a wide variety of audiences. The resulting document is a reflection of an extensive community engagement process that included meetings and workshops with more than two dozen organizations and a community survey that yielded nearly 1,200 responses.

PURPOSE OF THE INTERPRETIVE PLAN

The San Mateo County Parks Department has prepared this Interpretive Strategic Plan to provide direction in developing and implementing interpretive products, programs, and messaging that meets the needs and desires of the public, including increasing equitable access to parks and diversifying park visitation.

The interpretive theme structure set forth in this plan establishes the main messages we want visitors to absorb. The significant stories that convey these ideas may differ from one park to another, but collectively support the overarching themes in ways that are relevant to park visitors.

WHAT IS INTERPRETATION?

According to the National Association for Interpretation, the professional organization for the field, interpretation is “a purposeful approach to communication that facilitates meaningful, relevant, and inclusive experiences that deepen understanding, broaden perspectives, and inspire engagement with the world around us.”

GOALS FOR INTERPRETATION

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 1: Increase public knowledge and appreciation of the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the San Mateo County Parks system.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 2: Increase understanding of the dynamic relationship between humans and the environment, and the impacts of human activity, including climate change, on the highly sensitive natural and cultural resources of the San Mateo County Parks system.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 3: Develop and strengthen support for the conservation, management, restoration, and stewardship of San Mateo County Parks, including the protection and restoration of biodiversity, native habitats, wildlife corridors, watersheds, and cultural resources.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 4: Increase public awareness of and appreciation for the significance of the San Francisco Peninsula to Native American cultures over time.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 5: Promote community equity by uplifting the voices, perspectives, and stories of underrepresented populations told at County Parks and implement strategies that will increase the diversity of park visitors and ensure San Mateo County Parks are welcoming to all people.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 6: Provide an improved visitor experience by strengthening the bonds between San Mateo County residents and visitors and the natural and cultural resources that surround them.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 7: Promote respect by strengthening stewardship values and increasing compliance with etiquette guidelines and regulations.

Executive Summary

INTERPRETIVE THEME STRUCTURE FOR SAN MATEO COUNTY PARKS

The following central theme and sub-themes, which were developed through the interpretive planning process, will guide all San Mateo County Parks interpretation. The complete thematic structure appears in the body of the interpretive plan document.

Central Theme

San Mateo County Parks are inclusive places where all people are welcomed to connect with each other and the history of this region, engage with the natural world around them, and find inspiration for the legacy they will leave for the future.

Sub-Themes and Storylines

1. The San Francisco Peninsula is a confluence of cultures through time.
2. The varied topography and resulting microclimates of the San Francisco Peninsula support diverse biological communities that grow ever threatened from the impacts of climate change.
3. People and nature have impacts on and are supported by the other.
4. San Mateo County Parks are places for exploration, conservation, and learning opportunities for all people.

THE PLAN PROVIDES

- Rationale for the development of interpretive products and programs
- Suggested themes and storylines for interpretation
- Interpretive program and project recommendations for the Parks Department

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Input from the community engagement process yielded many excellent ideas and suggestions, including the need to enhance and increase interpretation related to indigenous people in ways that are respectful and inclusive. Many partners requested increased opportunities for collaboration both with the Parks Department and with other partners and expressed the need to educate the public about the impacts of climate change on the land.

As the planning team reviewed and synthesized this input, several major categories of suggestions emerged as crucially important. While the specifics varied, most stakeholders/partners wanted recommendations in these areas:

1. Equitable Access, Expanded Uses, and Public Outreach
2. Partnerships
3. Interpretive Media
4. Organizational Capacity
5. Professional Standards & Training
6. Education

Review of existing conditions related to interpretation throughout County Parks highlights in-progress efforts to address conditions in the above categories. The recommendations included herein aim to continue this progress and inspire an energetic, enthusiastic, forward-looking and contemporary blueprint for County Park interpretation in the decade to come.

Introduction

PURPOSE & NEED FOR INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Parks Department highly values practices and programs that prioritize equity and seek to make County Parks places for all visitors to experience and enjoy the outdoors. Accessibility—whether physical, financial, linguistic, cultural, or otherwise—is understood to be a factor affecting visitation at County Parks.

In 2018, the Parks Department developed the I.D.E.A. Initiative to increase inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility at San Mateo County Parks. The goal of the I.D.E.A. Initiative is to demonstrate this commitment through five strategies—outreach, events, education, access and staff—to enhance the visitor experience for all and reach disadvantaged communities. See Appendix B for an outline of all I.D.E.A. Initiative accomplishments to date.

About the I.D.E.A. Initiative

The Parks Department has accomplished much of what the Initiative set out to do in each strategy area, such as building supportive and collaborative partnerships with community groups and organizations, adding variety to interpretive programming by creating more multicultural events, hiring bilingual interns, increasing access to Flood Park through removing parking fees and other important work. For a more detailed look at what the Parks Department has accomplished with the I.D.E.A Initiative as of September 2022, see the I.D.E.A Initiative Accomplishments Table in Appendix B.



Through the years, community-based organizations and Parks Department partners have played a critical role in assisting with and delivering public-facing services. Community-based organizations and County partners offer support to San Mateo County's diverse communities, working in partnership with the Parks Department to provide quality programming for their respective communities. In addition, County partners assist with visitor services, education, and interpretation which enhances the visitor experience at County Parks. As the Parks Department considers how to continue facilitating visitor access to the County's network of park properties and associated resources, it will factor in how visitor communication and interpretive products and programs can best support the mission of the Parks Department and ensure visitor satisfaction.

The purpose of this interpretive planning process and the resulting document is to assess interpretive needs related to County Parks, inventory existing offerings, identify challenges and opportunities facing the Parks Department's Interpretive Program, and provide recommendations for ongoing and future interpretive media¹ (products and programs). In short, it helps guide staff in deciding what to interpret within each park unit, with whom, to whom, when and by what means.

This plan is a guide for decision-making about interpretive products and programs at County Park properties, including priorities for interpretive messaging, funding, and implementation. This document identifies overarching goals as identified by the public and partners and a thematic message structure for interpretation that applies across all park properties.

¹ Interpretive media are the communication methods used to convey the interpretive themes to target audiences in ways that support interpretive goals and objectives. These methods include, but are not limited to: wayside panels and other graphic signage, interior and exterior exhibits, social media postings, brochures and other publications, websites, mobile applications, audiovisual programs, special events, demonstrations and docent-led activities, including guided hikes and walks.

Introduction

This interpretive planning process provides an opportunity for the Parks Department to have a “big picture” understanding of its many diverse natural, cultural, and historic assets and the stories that visitors want to hear about those assets. This process supports an ongoing effort to formalize the Parks Department’s Interpretive Program, adhere to professional standards and guidelines in the field of interpretation, and demonstrate the value of interpretation to the Parks Department and County as a whole.

This Interpretive Strategic Plan demonstrates that the County Parks Department has a wealth of interpretive assets. The development of interpretive products and programs related to these assets will increase visitors’ enjoyment of County Parks, as well as increase their understanding of the Parks Department’s mission, its policies and management priorities, and the importance of acquiring and maintaining parklands.

SCOPE OF THE PLAN

The Recommendations section contains broad-level recommendations for interpretation across the Parks Department’s Interpretive Program.

Future planning efforts will apply the overarching goals and themes contained herein to park-specific planning that considers each park’s unique features and relationship to the larger theme structure so that interpretation is both site-specific and theme-based, and each park is tied to its sense of place in the larger whole.

Subsequent park-specific Interpretive Planning Frameworks will suggest criteria for prioritizing the phasing, selection and type of projects for implementation at individual parks. With training and feedback from an independent planner, department staff will continue to develop park-specific Interpretive Planning Frameworks for all of the County Park units. Projects should only move forward in the evaluation and funding process

What is Visitor Satisfaction?

Defining visitor satisfaction and how to measure it continues to be a subject of much study and debate—consider the very existence of the professional journal “Annals of Leisure Research.”

Generally speaking, however, visitor satisfaction is recognized as a psychological state that can be assessed after an individual has experienced a destination. Polling visitors directly about their expectations, experience and resulting mental and/or emotional perception of a destination such as a park reveals much information helpful for park managers.

We have attempted to gauge visitor satisfaction of San Mateo County Parks for this planning process through a community survey (described in further detail in the Understanding Our Audiences section of this document), using factors such as frequency of visitation, reasons for visiting, whether or not a visitor feels welcome and safe, barriers to visitation and desired improvements/amenities. For more information and a summary of the results of this effort, please refer to Appendix C.

if they have demonstrated how they will help address the goals and interpretive themes set forth in this plan.

Introduction

THE INTERPRETIVE PLANNING PROCESS

The County has commissioned the consulting firm Conservation By Design, Inc. (CBD) to conduct an interpretive planning process and develop recommendations that will guide the implementation of interpretation at County Parks.

The interpretive planning process began in April 2021 with a review of background information, including existing management plans for the Department and individual parks, as well as natural and cultural resource summaries and reports. Representatives from consulting firm Conservation By Design participated in numerous online meetings with Parks Department staff and conducted an extensive public outreach effort anchored by group input sessions and interviews with individuals representing 29 partner organizations (see list on page 8). The community engagement effort also included an online-based survey in three languages (English, Spanish and Simplified Chinese)—with a total of 1,178 responses. Through the efforts of community partner CARON, paper-based Spanish language surveys were distributed to community members with little to no internet access. Conservation By Design also spent time assessing local conditions at a representative sampling of individual parks. To view the findings and feedback from individual and partner organization input sessions, see the companion document “Summary of Community Partner and Stakeholder Input Sessions” (Conservation By Design, 2022). See the Community Survey Report in Appendix C for a detailed look at the results of the community survey.

How Does Interpretation Differ From Environmental Education?

Environmental education is typically a curriculum-based approach used with students to attain one or more specific goals. Interpretation is different from environmental education per se, in that interpretation is often defined as being “informal instruction” with participants that choose to be involved. Environmental education is more “formal instruction,” either in a classroom or in the field, but with captive participants. Both have underlying structure—environmental education has learning and content standards; interpretation is guided by themes, goals and objectives.

Introduction

This document captures the analysis undertaken during the interpretive planning process and findings related to the desired visitor experience. It takes into account the natural, cultural, and historical significance of County-owned parklands, along with the Parks Department's priorities, to provide a roadmap for cost-effective, visitor-relevant and theme-driven interpretation that adds value to the quality of the visitor experience at San Mateo County Parks.

The process of interpretive planning holds the visitor experience central, considering the following questions:

- Why would a person want to visit a County Park?
- Can visitors find the parks?
- What's the first impression?
- Where/how can visitors get information about a park and its key messages?
- What are those key messages?
- Can visitors find their way around?
- What will visitors want to do, feel, learn and experience during their visit; and what does the County hope they will know, feel, and do, etc.?
- How can the County meet the interpretive goals identified herein in the most cost-effective manner, considering long-term costs, visitor trends and sustainable values?

Partner Organizations Interviewed

- Ayudando Latinos A Soñar (ALAS)
- Brown Girl Surf
- California Academy of Sciences
- Community Alliance to Revitalize Our Neighborhood (CARON)
- CuriOdyssey
- Friends of San Pedro Valley Park
- Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks
- Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
- Latino Outdoors
- Nuestra Casa
- Outdoor Afro
- Puente de la Costa Sur
- Ramaytush Ohlone
- San Bruno Mountain Watch
- San Mateo County Aging & Adult Services
- San Mateo County Arts Commission
- San Mateo County Chief Equity Officer
- San Mateo County Commission on Disabilities
- San Mateo County Health
- San Mateo County Historical Association
- San Mateo County Libraries
- San Mateo County Office of Education
- San Mateo County Parks Foundation
- San Mateo County Sheriff's Activities League
- San Mateo County Parks Staff
- San Mateo County Youth Commission
- Sequoia Audubon Society
- Siena Youth Center

About the County Parks Department

BACKGROUND

Conservation and land stewardship marked the beginning of the San Mateo County Parks system. Memorial County Park was dedicated as the first County Park in 1924 and the department has grown to steward over 16,000 acres in 24 County Parks, historic sites and reserves with 190 miles of trails that include three regional trails.

The County Parks system is expansive, allowing visitors to choose from a wide range of outdoor activities across multiple unique park settings. An extensive array of interpretive and educational activities are available to the public via volunteer docents, Friends groups and partners, interns, interpretive staff, and park rangers—some activities occur within parks, while others happen off-site, such as in classrooms and through online platforms.

Based on infrared counters on trails and at car entrances, the San Mateo County Parks Department estimates that 2.53 million visitors were present in the San Mateo County Parks System between July 2020 and June 2021. An average of all park monthly data between 2006 and 2021 suggests that park use has increased exponentially since data collection began.¹

Visitor use is highly seasonal. The winter season—November through February—sees the lowest numbers, with visitation peaking during mid-summer.

As a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic, elevated park usage was observed at San Mateo County Parks; it is anticipated that elevated levels of park visitors will sustain in the coming years.



¹ See Figure 1 in Appendix C.

About the County Parks Department

AN OVERVIEW OF COUNTY NATURAL RESOURCES

While much of San Mateo County has been converted into residential development (particularly in the northern and eastern parts of the County), there have been significant efforts at land conservation. Across the Bay Area, San Mateo County is second only to Marin County in the amount of land protected, with 42% of the land in San Mateo County in some form of protection.² This amount of locally-protected land surpasses the national effort to “achieve the goal of conserving at least 30 percent of our lands and waters by 2030.”³

San Mateo County Parks are scattered throughout the San Francisco Peninsula and while they share a general natural history, they also contain rare habitats such as coastal salt marsh, serpentine grassland, coastal prairie, maritime chaparral, and intertidal.

The combination of microclimates, unique soils, and topographical variation make the San Francisco Peninsula and San Mateo County Parks rich in plant and animal diversity. Microclimate conditions such as high rainfall and foggy conditions on the western slopes create an ideal coastal redwood habitat, while the more arid eastern slopes provide habitat for mixed evergreen forests, oak woodlands, and grasslands. Chaparral scrub exists on both slopes, but species composition varies on the western and eastern slopes due to average rainfall.

Due to its location at the edge of two tectonic plates, geologic complexity in the bedrock and soils of the San Francisco Peninsula creates conditions in which uniquely adapted and endemic plants and animal species thrive.

² Sustainable San Mateo, 2011

³ Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad, January 27, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/27/executive-order-on-tackling-the-climate-crisis-at-home-and-abroad/>

RESOURCE ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Species Protection

Despite the high percentage of protected land, numerous rare species are threatened by habitat destruction and other environmental pressures, putting them at risk of becoming extinct within the County.⁴ More than 100 unique species—sensitive, locally rare or protected—are found in County Parks.⁵

Further, there are 97 threatened plants found within San Mateo County that are on the California Rare Plant list—a joint effort by the California Native Plant Society and the state’s California Natural Diversity Database. Of these plants, 22 are officially listed as threatened or endangered under state or federal endangered species legislation.

As of the writing of this report, there are also 48 animals found within San Mateo County that are closely monitored due to being threatened or rare. Of these animals, 25 are either officially listed as threatened or as endangered under state or federal endangered species legislation. One such species, the Mission blue butterfly, is found in San Bruno Mountain State and County Park. Many County Parks provide protected habitats for threatened and endangered species such as the San Francisco garter snake and California red-legged frog.

The County has taken an active stance in preserving, protecting, and restoring threatened and rare species and their habitats. The Natural Resource Management (NRM) program of the Parks Department manages the land, water, soil, plant and animal resources within the park system, using scientific ecological principles and techniques to achieve healthy, diverse ecosystems. NRM has a number of ongoing projects designed to

⁴ San Mateo Resource Conservation District, 2021

⁵ San Mateo County Parks Department, 2013, p 34

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protect these species and their habitats.⁶ The “Friends of” groups and the Interpretive Program of the Parks Department have an important part in the success of natural resource efforts when both are included in conservation projects.

Climate Change

Climate change is impacting the Bay Area⁷, and some County Parks are already experiencing the effects of climate change. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve’s tide pool ecology is already experiencing the effects of climate change due to ocean warming⁸, while parks with oak woodlands are facing challenges from severe drought conditions. As stated in “California’s Fourth Climate Change Assessment: Bay Area Region Report,” increased heat, drought and wildfire frequency will result in species vulnerability and decline, with some plant and animal species experiencing mass displacement as their habitats change. Rising sea levels will change sensitive mudflat and marsh habitat around the San Francisco Bay, an already scarce resource.⁹

Wildland Fires

As the climate changes, fire activity is increasing. Fire is a natural phenomenon that California vegetation has adapted to through the centuries, but fires are now occurring at frequencies and intensities that are much higher than normal with more acreage impacted.¹⁰ Population growth

6 These conservation activities range from conducting habitat enhancement for multiple protected butterfly species at San Bruno Mountain, restoring populations of coast yellow leptosiphon, invasive plant removal at Pillar Point and vegetation management in the face of a warming and drier climate resulting in more frequent and severe wildfires.

7 The Bay Area average annual maximum temperature increased by 1.7°F (0.95 °C) from 1950 to 2005 and this trend is expected to continue impacting inland areas more than the coast.

8 From “San Mateo County Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, Asset Vulnerability Profile: Fitzgerald Marine Reserve,” 2018

9 Ackerly et al., 2018

10 One study predicts that increases in temperature by the 2050s will cause the annual mean area burned in the western United States to increase by 54% (Spracklen et al. 2009).



Coast Yellow Leptosiphon is quite rare and it is protected at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. (Bob Patterson, CA Native Plant Society)



Federally Endangered Mission Blue Butterfly (Sarah Swenty/USFWS)

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and urbanization pushing into undeveloped areas increase fires since most are of human origin.

San Mateo County Park's Forest Health and Community Safety Initiative, and Wildfire Fuel Management Program, focus on fuel reduction and forest health projects throughout the County Parks system including areas within the wildland-urban interface. The initiative includes 32 projects totaling approximately 1,820 acres over five years, with an estimated cost over \$18 million to implement and maintain these project areas. The project benefits include providing access throughout parks for emergency personnel responding to an incident, creating areas that can be used to conduct fire containment and suppression activities, reducing ladder fuels and the probability of a ground fire becoming a canopy fire, reducing canopy density, reducing invasive species cover and density, promoting native vegetation regeneration, slowing the rate of spread should a fire occur, and improving and protecting critical evacuation routes for residents.

Sea-Level Rise

San Mateo County is already exposed to present-day flooding. When large rain events coincide with high tide conditions, flooding disrupts communities throughout the county. County agencies, partners, and organizations are working in collaboration to assess, understand, and mitigate sea-level rise before it increases in severity. Coastside parks—such as Coyote Point Recreation Area, Tunitas Creek Beach, Mirada Surf, and Fitzgerald Marine Reserve—are the most vulnerable to rising sea levels. The Coyote Point Sea-Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment¹¹ shows that significant portions of Coyote Point parkland are low-lying and vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Park areas that are expected to be most impacted by flooding include Coyote Point Recreation Area (except the Knoll which is high ground), sections of Coyote Point Marina, and adjacent mudflats and marshlands.

¹¹ From "Coyote Point Sea-Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment," 2019

Despite being protected by shoreline levees and other coastal protection efforts such as the Eastern Promenade project designed to mitigate sea level rise, there is still a risk of flood exposure. At Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, sea-level rise could result in loss of biodiversity and diminish the populations of protected species due to permanent inundation and bluff erosion. Sensitive restoration areas such as San Vicente Creek are prone to flooding, as seen by the damage caused to this site by the king tides in 2016.¹² Flooding, inundation and erosion are serious effects of sea-level rise that both of these parks face, as well as Tunitas Creek Beach and Mirada Surf West.

Pollution Issues

Water pollution is a serious problem in the Bay Area, with concentrations of toxic substances such as pesticides, mercury and other metals exceeding state water quality standards. Beaches are impaired due to sewage spills and old sewage infrastructure.¹³ High bacteria counts at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve have caused occasional beach closures.

The Bay Area does not meet all federal pollution control requirements. Parts of the Bay Area Peninsula generally have good air quality due to proximity to the coast and Bay. However, in recent years some parks have faced temporary closures due to high air quality index (AQI) levels from California wildfires. Since air pollution is a known health issue for people, it is safe to infer it is for animals and plants as well.¹⁴

¹² From San Mateo County Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment, Asset Vulnerability Profile: Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, 2018

¹³ USEPA: San Francisco Bay Delta, 2021

¹⁴ Air pollution also impacts plants as evidenced by pine tree die-offs at smog level in surrounding LA basin mountains. The Bay Checkerspot Butterfly disappeared from the Edgewood Preserve, in part, due to nitrogen oxide and ammonia vehicle tailpipe emissions from I-280 which fertilized non-native vegetation in competition with the butterflies' host plant.

About the County Parks Department

ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL RESOURCES

San Mateo County's history is a collection of distinct cultures connected through time, place, and memory.

What is now known as San Mateo County has been home to humans for thousands of years. Evidence of human habitation in the area starts between 5,500 to 8,000 years ago based on dating of a crescent-shaped stone scraper found within Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in 1994.¹⁵

The original inhabitants of what is now the San Francisco Peninsula are the Ohlone peoples. Prior to Spanish and European colonization, the Ohlone lived throughout the area in seasonally migrant groups with distinct languages. Twelve San Mateo County Parks contain archeological evidence of the Peninsula's original inhabitants—Cowell-Purisima Trail, Coyote Point Recreation Area, Crystal Springs Regional Trail, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Huddart Park, Junipero Serra Park, Memorial Park, San Bruno Mountain, San Pedro Valley Park, Sanchez Adobe Historical Site, Tunitas Creek Beach, and Wunderlich Park.

The arrival of the Spanish under Gaspar de Portolá in 1769 and Juan Bautista De Anza in 1775 and 1776 brought devastation and hardship to the Ohlone. Disease from the Spanish and the establishment of the mission system disrupted the lives of the Ohlone peoples, with many lives lost to illness and conflict. California's Native American tribes were forcibly removed from their homelands and enslaved at the missions. After the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, the Gold Rush in 1849 and California's statehood in 1850, the remaining bands of Native Americans

faced overt discrimination, forced removal to alternative sites and state-sponsored violence.¹⁶

Spanish settlers and later Mexican families crafted their lives on the Peninsula during the early California period. Some families were granted the right to build ranchos, or large homesteads and settlements, where agriculture was a part of daily life. This agricultural legacy continues in the present in the form of San Mateo County's agricultural economy. Evidence of Spanish and Mexican settlement has been documented at Sanchez Adobe Historical Site.

In the 253 years since Gaspar de Portolá and the Spanish arrived, most of the Peninsula and surrounding mountains have been deeply altered by activities of colonization and settlement. Rivers as far as Hetch Hetchy Valley in what is now Yosemite National Park were dammed and the water redirected to what is now the Bay Area.¹⁷ Old-growth Douglas-fir and coastal redwood forests densely covered the Santa Cruz mountains until the logging industry—and over 50 mills in the region—damaged the landscape.¹⁸

Through time, relationships with land and culture have changed. Interest in recreation and concern for protecting the region's beautiful natural and cultural resources has increased in the last century. Six County Park properties—Huddart, Wunderlich, Memorial, Pescadero Creek and Sam McDonald Parks, along with segments of the Crystal Springs Regional Trail—were once logging sites. Now, these and other County Parks are preserved for the benefit of all County Park visitors in the present and in the future.

¹⁵ National Park Service & Postel, 2010

¹⁶ History.com, 2019

¹⁷ From interpretive panels located at Crystal Springs Regional Trail

¹⁸ Brown 1966; Stanger 1967

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Today, County Parks are evidence of San Mateo County's culturally diverse origins, imbued with historical attitudes of conservation and care for the natural world. For more information regarding the cultural and historical significance of County Parks and trails, see Appendix G.

In 2019, the State of California issued an official apology to Native Americans, recognizing "instances of violence, mistreatment and neglect inflicted on California Native Americans." A Truth and Hearing Council was created, providing California Native Americans an official space to share their historical perspective. San Mateo County Parks Department honors the history of its properties and has a Land Acknowledgement on its website that states parklands are "located on the ancestral homeland of the Ohlone peoples".



This map depicts the linguistic territories of the Ohlone within the geographical region of what is now called San Mateo County. Courtesy image.

Understanding Our Audiences

Effective interpretation is enjoyable and relevant to visitors' lives. In order to provide experiences that are enjoyed by our visitors, we must first begin to understand their needs, expectations, knowledge base and values. Understanding what motivates visitors to come to parks and to seek out interpretation will enable us to develop the best strategies and methodologies for reaching our audience.

VISITOR MOTIVATIONS

San Mateo County Parks are meaningful and significant places in the lives of County residents and regional tourists. Parks provide opportunities for people to identify with natural surroundings and feel a sense of belonging through their experiences with the natural world.

Visitor experiences are dependent on visitors' mindsets, motivations and identity-related needs. According to research from Goodwin Simon Strategic Research and *Wonder: Strategies for Good*, visitors decide to visit natural places to satisfy both mental and emotional connections, or "heartwired" connections, negotiating these among their interests, values, beliefs and life experiences. How these factors interact inform visitor behaviors and attitudes about nature.

Of the six "heartwired" mindsets identified in the research, four relate directly to County Park audiences—the All Senses mindset, the Amazing Wildlife mindset, the Feeling-At-Peace mindset and the Family Traditions mindset. These mindsets align with author and visitor experience researcher John H. Falk's five primary audience types: Experience Seekers, Explorers, Professionals/Hobbyists, Facilitators and Rechargers.

Consider the following characterizations of visitor motivations:

Heart-Wired Visitor Mindsets	Falk's Visitor Motivation Types
All Senses Mindset Value multi-sensory experiences and are attracted to areas where they can use their bodily perceptions to connect with their surroundings	Experience Seeker Motivated by sensory experiences Example: Recreationists and tourists
Amazing Wildlife Mindset Value a sense of wonder and possess deep, meaningful connections to living things; motivated by the chance to see unique wildlife	Explorers Motivated by curiosity and discovery Example: Children
Family Traditions Mindset Value family bonding and opportunities to create long-lasting memories	Facilitators Motivated by social meaning and a desire to meet the needs of others Example: Parent(s) with children
Feel-at-Peace Mindset Value wellness and opportunities to relax and transcend the everyday stresses of life	Rechargers Motivated by opportunities to rejuvenate outdoors Example: Solo hikers and/or meditators
	Professionals/Hobbyists Motivated by their interest and knowledge of a subject Example: Birders, naturalists or nature photographers seeking to capture photos of wildlife.

Understanding Our Audiences

Mindsets and Motivations Aligned

Experience Seekers visit parks to collect experiences and may be recreationists like mountain bikers or regional tourists seeking a fun weekend day trip. All Senses visitors may enter parks to hike, mountain bike, walk, run, kayak, fish, camp or pursue other recreation opportunities.

Explorers are motivated by curiosity and discovery like Amazing Wildlife visitors. People with this mindset are often naturalists, birdwatchers or nature novices hoping to engage with the local ecology present in parks. With curious minds and interests in plants and animals, children are often Explorers and Amazing Wildlife visitors; however people of any age can be found within these categories.

As attentive caretakers, Facilitators are motivated by social meaning like Family Traditions visitors. Family Traditions visitors arrive at parks to have picnics or parties, to celebrate birthdays, holidays and ceremonies or to recreate together as a group while Facilitators participate in activities that everyone in their group can enjoy.

Rechargers are motivated by opportunities to rejuvenate in the outdoors like Feel-At-Peace visitors. A Recharger/Feel-At-Peace visitor might be a solo hiker or a meditator, arriving at parks to meander at their leisure, contemplating personal and spiritual aspects of their lives.

As psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined in 1954, people need to have their basic needs met—food, water, safety and security—before they can attend to personal growth or take in new information.

VISITOR NEEDS AND EXPECTATIONS

When planning and designing visitor experiences, it's important to remember that visitors need to know where they are and what's expected of them. As psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined in 1954, people need to have their basic needs met—food, water, safety and security—before they can attend to personal growth or take in new information.

Restrooms, wayfinding/orientation and etiquette all play into creating an environment where visitors are relaxed and able to receive information. Visitors need to feel welcomed, comfortable and be clear about how they should interact with any of the park sites. Any facilities that are open to the public must be well-maintained, sanitary, and safe to ensure that these facilities are accessible and support community equity.

Understanding Our Audiences

SAN MATEO COUNTY DEMOGRAPHICS

As of 2020, San Mateo County is home to 764,442 people. Since the year 2010, the county has experienced a growth rate of 6.4%.

San Mateo County is much more diverse than the country as a whole—it is home to a higher percentage of Asian residents (30.6% compared to the national average of 5.9%) and Latinx persons (24.0% compared to 18.4% nationwide) and a lower percentage of Black persons (2.8%). Those that are White alone (not Latinx) represent 38.7% of the County's population, in contrast with the national average of 60.1%.

The median home value in San Mateo County is \$1,163,100, compared with the national average of \$229,800. The median annual household income for the county \$128,091—essentially double the national average of \$64,994.

Many San Mateo County residents are highly educated, with 51% of residents 25 years and older holding a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to the national average of 32.1%).

CURRENT VISITATION PATTERNS

The most recent visitor study—Visitor Use/Non-Use Parks Study—was conducted in 2015 by San Francisco State University. At that time, the study found that park users are often white, middle-aged, highly educated, and more financially affluent. Researchers conducting this study found that the demographics of those who did not visit parks were primarily Latinx, younger (25 years or younger) as well as older (over 65 years), lower-income and less educated. Limitations that may adversely impact access include not having enough time, difficulty accessing a personal vehicle and/or public transportation, language barriers, concerns for personal safety and lack of information regarding recreational opportunities and rules.

In the summer of 2021, Conservation By Design, in collaboration with the San Mateo County Parks Department, developed the San Mateo County Parks Department Community Survey (available in English, Spanish and Simplified Chinese) to learn more about current park visitation rates as well as the interests and motivations of park users. Through a combination of digital distribution channels and in person paper surveys in select communities, this survey received 1,178 responses¹. The findings of the survey are consistent with SFSU's 2015 study, confirming that visitors to County Parks are most often 34- to 65-years-old, able-bodied, highly educated, and white.

Common motivations for entering parks include spending time in nature, spending time with family and friends, exercising, maintaining psychological/mental health and camping. County Park properties attract nature enthusiasts, families, social and community groups, people seeking to emotionally and physically recharge, as well as campers. Activities with a response rate of less than 10 percent include volunteering, horseback riding and watersports.

EXISTING AUDIENCES

Current park visitors are students (as part of school groups/field trips), exercise and wellness enthusiasts, equestrians, water sports recreators, campers, mountain bikers, hikers, dog walkers, picnic-goers, families with children, birdwatchers, and nature lovers, Park Rx program patients, special events attendees, volunteers and docents, community groups, and Friends group members.

¹ The survey was sent out digitally to the Department's mailing list, which includes park visitors who have made prior reservations, a large proportion of which were for camping at Memorial Park.

Understanding Our Audiences

Three main types of activities that park visitors choose to participate in are physical activities, social gatherings, and hobbies.

No matter their social status or economic background, visitors arrive at parks to connect to nature, people, and experiences that interest and inspire them. While there are some types of visitors that visit parks more often than others, some don't visit parks at all—these individuals are considered potential visitors. According to data from the Community Survey, barriers to park visitation include, but are not limited to, visitors not having enough time to visit (29 percent), parking availability (22 percent), along with several other factors. See the Community Survey Summary in Appendix C for more information.

TARGET AUDIENCES FOR INTERPRETATION

San Mateo County Parks Department welcomes all park audiences to County Parks, with the intention of doing so in ways that best support them and their communities. Diverse identities within current and potential County Park audiences must be considered to appeal to a wide range of visitors of various backgrounds and ages—each with different reasons and expectations for visiting.

When connecting with potential park audiences, it is important to remember that each visitor and community comes with unique life experiences, cultures and interests that guide how they engage with parks and interpret park resources. Visitor interests and motivations, spoken languages and cultural traditions, and the amount of time they have to visit and interact with parks are necessary audience characteristics to keep in mind when creating interpretive products and programs.

The most effective interpretive products are those that are tailored for a specific audience. **Although County Parks will offer interpretation to all visitors, several groups have been identified by the Department and stakeholders as important audiences to elevate and develop specific media for.** Interpretive media should be shaped to address their interests and needs. Visitors may fall into more than one of the following categories.

Understanding Our Audiences

Members of and Community-Based Organizations Serving Disadvantaged Communities

Pursuant to the Department's 2015-2016 Visitor Use/Non-use Study, the average surveyed park visitor was 50 years old, formally educated, and affluent. Three-quarters of surveyed visitors were white, and English was the most spoken language at home. Recognizing that surveyed visitors to San Mateo County Parks were not representative of the County's population, the Department is committed to engaging with residents of disadvantaged communities. As used throughout this plan, the term disadvantaged communities includes, but is not limited to, geographic communities that have been underserved, communities of color that have suffered greatest from inequities, and members of the disability community. Studies have shown that separation from nature can be detrimental to human development, health, and well-being, and that regular contact with nature contributes to good physical and mental health. Ensuring members of disadvantaged communities are able to experience these benefits and enjoy the wonders of the natural world is core to this Interpretive Strategic Plan and a priority for the Department. For this reason, the Department is committed to engaging with residents of and community-based organizations serving disadvantaged communities throughout the County.

Community-based organizations² and the residents who receive their services could be thoughtfully engaged through the continuation of meaningful, long-term relationships that seek to uplift and listen to the voices of community members impacted by inequities and initiatives such as the I.D.E.A. Initiative (see Appendix B for a list of I.D.E.A. Initiative accomplishments). From input gathered from the Summer 2021 Stakeholder Input Sessions, several representatives of CBOs expressed that an

information gap persists between disadvantaged communities and the Parks Department. This can be addressed in a variety of ways, such as creating multi-lingual communication materials in multiple formats (i.e. analog, digital, in-person), utilizing the skills of bilingual staff members, and gathering and integrating community feedback, to name a few. In addition, cultivating partnerships with passionate leaders who are deeply embedded in their communities and who know the needs of their neighbors and community members is another way to receive input that is accurate and relevant. This will help increase the capacity of the Parks Department to respond to the needs and interests of community members impacted by inequities and related community-based organizations.

Facilitating Interests: Disabled Persons and Caretakers

As indicated in the San Mateo County Parks Community Survey, people with disabilities have not been regular park visitors. This audience segment is made up of individuals with diverse interests and needs. Some may be curious about wildlife or interested in pursuing hobbies at parks. Some desire social interactions through group hikes, celebrations or picnics, while others seek rejuvenation and meditative activities. These potential visitors also include their caretakers or facilitators of activities for the individuals in their care. To reach these audiences, communicating with the San Mateo County Commission on Disabilities and Aging & Adult Services (AAS) Department may be a way to understand what these visitors need in terms of accommodation, programming and transportation.

² See page 8 of this document for a list of community-based organizations that provided feedback about the Parks Department's interpretive efforts during the interpretive planning process

Understanding Our Audiences

Exploring and Discovering: School-aged Children and Teens

Children and teens are important potential park visitors, each with different developmental needs and interests. Children have immense imagination and curiosity, using their physical senses to have fun exploring the natural world. Teenagers often have their eyes and attention fixated on their devices, needing breaks from technology. Yet both kids and teens need places to spend their time safely and responsibly. If parents are unable to accompany children and teens to parks due to time constraints or other obligations then strengthening relationships with schools, museums and summer camps present opportunities to bring children and students into County Parks. Further needs for engagement could be met through encouraging teens to volunteer with parks-related groups such as the County Parks Friends groups, increasing age diversity among volunteers. The Parks Department's volunteer program offers volunteer experiences for children accompanied by adults and teens registered by their parent or guardian. Continuing partnerships with local schools and educational entities such as CuriOdyssey and California Academy of Sciences will strengthen interest in County Parks as places of fun and learning for youth.³

³ A number of effective youth conservation work programs are hosted by local, state, and federal governments around the country (Jefferson County Open Space, City of Seattle, City of Portland, as just a few examples). Modeled after the success of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the Great Depression, these programs all feature compensation and training as important elements.

Why Interpret?

Interpretation is purposeful and mission-based. It offers experience-based learning opportunities that increase awareness, build personal connections with a place and its resources, and foster stewardship behaviors.

Information alone, however, doesn't inspire these changes. Merely understanding a topic isn't enough. To be effective, new information must spark insights and connections that are directly relevant to a visitor's life, interests and values. Interpretation addresses both the intellectual and emotional realms of the visitor.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Extensive department planning, with much community input, occurred in 2008 and again in 2013. The most recent strategic plan for the County Park system (2013) included an online survey with about 2,000 respondents.¹ Survey respondents suggested four (4) priorities for the County Park system:

- Recreation Opportunities
- Environmental Protection Programs
- Interpretive and Education Programs
- Volunteer Programs and Community Engagement

In its strategic plan, the San Mateo County Parks Department established the following mission and vision to guide the Department's efforts and priorities:

Mission

Through stewardship, San Mateo County Parks preserves our County's natural and cultural treasures, and provides safe, accessible parks, recreation and learning opportunities to enhance the community's quality of life.

Our Vision

- Provide a unique system of natural parks and programs, a broad spectrum of recreational facilities and opportunities that accommodate people of all abilities, varying needs and unique interests.
- Enhance the stewardship of natural resources by developing science-based resource management programs to protect, revitalize and restore the ecosystems indigenous to our park lands.
- Provide interpretive and educational programs that instill knowledge, appreciation and stewardship for our rich and diverse natural, historical and cultural resources.
- Create living partnerships with park users and the community to realize our vision and ensure that all County residents and decision-makers participate in and support the preservation and enhancement of San Mateo County Park lands.

WHAT INTERPRETIVE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES DO

Interpretive goals and objectives provide guidelines for developing interpretive products and services. They also provide metrics with which to evaluate their effectiveness. They address both the values guiding the interpretation and the impacts that interpretation can have on target audiences.

Recommendations in this interpretive plan are guided by the interpretive goals and objectives established during the planning process and address a variety of interpretive techniques and delivery systems to meet the needs of different audiences.

¹ San Mateo County Parks Department, 2013

Why Interpret?

GOALS FOR INTERPRETATION

To ensure that interpretation serves the interests of park visitors and the San Mateo County Parks Department, stakeholders conceptualized the following goals for interpretation and the visitor experience through an extensive community engagement process conducted virtually in Summer 2021.²

These goals are applicable to all County Park properties.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 1: Increase public knowledge and appreciation of the natural, cultural and recreational resources of the San Mateo County Parks system.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 2: Increase understanding of the dynamic relationship between humans and the environment, and the impacts of human activity, including climate change, on the highly sensitive natural and cultural resources of the San Mateo County Parks system.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 3: Develop and strengthen support for the conservation, management, restoration, and stewardship of San Mateo County Parks, including the protection and restoration of biodiversity, native habitats, wildlife corridors, watersheds, and cultural resources.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 4: Increase public awareness of and appreciation for the significance of the San Francisco Peninsula to Native American cultures over time.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 5: Promote community equity by uplifting the voices, perspectives, and stories of underrepresented populations told at County Parks and implement strategies that will increase the diversity of park visitors and ensure San Mateo County Parks are welcoming to all people.

² For a summary of the stakeholder engagement process and key findings, see the companion document "Summary of Community Partner and Stakeholder Input Sessions" (Conservation By Design, 2022).

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 6: Provide an improved visitor experience by strengthening the bonds between San Mateo County residents and visitors and the natural and cultural resources that surround them.

INTERPRETIVE GOAL 7: Promote respect by strengthening stewardship values and increasing compliance with etiquette guidelines and regulations.

DEVELOPING LOCATION-SPECIFIC VISITOR OBJECTIVES

To chart progress toward these goals, visitor objectives specific to each park will be included in each park's specific interpretive planning framework, which will be prepared upon adoption of this strategic plan. These goals and objectives together comprise important metrics that can and should guide the development of interpretive plans, products, and programming and keep project management on track.

Success upon implementation, as evidenced by these metrics, can be determined through evaluation. Evaluation strategies might include observation and visitor surveys.

Visitor objectives are more specific than goals and, to the extent possible, are measurable. They spell out what we want visitors to know, feel, and do as a result of visiting a particular park property. Objectives provide details about how goals will be accomplished and can be developed to a variety of levels. In this planning process, we emphasize qualitative objectives, revealing abstract and intangible values.

Interpretive Themes

Picture the County Park properties in San Mateo County as embodying a compelling story, and the process of interpretation as a storytelling art. Because interpretation is purposeful, we set interpretive goals to describe what we want these stories to do—both for the resource and the visitor. Visitor objectives help us translate the larger, more abstract goals into what we want visitors to know, feel and do as a result of their experience.

Themes are where the art comes in. They are the core messages behind a story's facts. Their job is to highlight the deeper meanings of heritage resources¹, helping the visitor not only understand their importance, but see themselves as part of their ongoing story. A well-thought-out thematic structure, therefore, forms a unifying foundation for successful interpretation.

A good interpretive theme is expressed in a single, powerful sentence that contains only one idea—an idea that weaves the tangible aspects of the resource (the facts) with their intangible meaning(s). Themes are compelling and memorable. However, a theme isn't necessarily repeated verbatim in any particular story; instead, it forms the framework around which a story is built. Think of a theme as the "take-away" that you want visitors to remember, absorb, care about and incorporate—not only into their knowledge base, but their lives. Themes answer the all-important question, "So what?" or "Why would our visitors want to know this—why would they care?"

A landscape as vast and varied as the San Francisco Peninsula holds many stories², creating the opportunity to develop several strong themes. As varied as they are, though, these themes are organized into a unified

¹ Heritage resources include but are not limited to cultural resources such as places, landscapes, objects, artifacts, and oral histories and natural resources such as legacy trees.

² It is the intention of the County that stories related to tribal histories in San Mateo County are best told by tribal members. Indigenous history and archaeological evidence are topics that the County will include in interpretive products and programs throughout the County, as appropriate at each of the various park properties.

message hierarchy that works as a system: one central, overarching theme capturing the significance of County parklands as a whole, and three to five supporting sub-themes. Sub-themes are just like themes—single, compelling statements of meaning—but their job is to expand on and illustrate the central theme by organizing the area's storylines into meaningful categories. We limit sub-themes to no more than five because of the way the human mind uses memory and assigns meaning.

Every story told on behalf of San Mateo County Park properties, therefore, can stand alone yet can (and should) illustrate one or more sub-themes. This is how interpretation works its magic. By framing all stories around a thematic structure, every interpretive experience in the County will, in the visitor's mind, connect to a growing and very personal understanding of—and appreciation for—this special place. Over time, each linked experience builds toward a stewardship ethic for the resource, respect for the County's mission, and advocacy for County Parks in general.



San Mateo County Parks Department

Interpretive Themes

The central theme and sub-themes developed for this plan apply across the entire inventory of County Park properties (and perhaps beyond). As park-specific interpretive planning frameworks are developed, location-specific storylines will tier to the following sub-themes.

Central Theme

San Mateo County Parks are inclusive places where all people are welcomed to connect with each other and the history of this region, engage with the natural world around them, and find inspiration for the legacy they will leave for the future.

Sub-Themes and Storylines

1. The San Francisco Peninsula is a confluence of cultures through time.
 - a. Archaeological resources found in the San Mateo County Park system provide clues to what life was like for the Ohlone people who lived on what is now County parklands as early as 8,000 years ago.
 - b. Spanish exploration and missions had a devastating impact on the Ohlone people.
 - c. Evidence of historic ranching, logging, and agricultural efforts can be seen throughout San Mateo County today.
 - d. The landscapes of San Mateo County continue to be important to diverse descendants of the Ohlone alive today.
 - e. Prehistoric, historic, and sacred sites and artifacts are fragile, historically and culturally significant, irreplaceable and worthy of our respect and protection.
 - f. The human communities of the Bay Area continue to reflect a rich tapestry of diversity.
2. The varied topography and resulting microclimates of the San Francisco Peninsula support diverse biological communities that grow ever threatened from the impacts of climate change.
 - a. Geological processes formed much of the terrain we see in and around the peninsula. Erosion continues to shape the landscape today.
 - b. The region's natural landscapes and waterways provide essential habitat and a migration corridor for a wide variety of plant and wildlife species of regional, national and international significance.
 - c. Every species has a niche and is adapted to its local environment.
 - d. Climate change, including specific weather events like heat waves and drought, causes shifts in plant and animal communities—affecting species distribution, abundance and diversity—with cascading effects.
 - e. San Mateo County Parks are part of key watersheds on both sides of the Santa Cruz Mountains, providing drinking water for people and wildlife, recharging groundwater and nourishing habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species.
3. People and nature have impacts on and are supported by the other.
 - a. We continue to gain knowledge about and respect for the interconnectedness of our natural and human communities.
 - b. Human activities introduce species that disrupt the natural balance of plant and animal interactions.
 - c. Through active stewardship and habitat restoration efforts, we ensure that the ecosystems and species of San Mateo County are resilient in times of stress and change.

Interpretive Themes

d. Fire is a natural part of peninsula ecosystems and efforts such as fuel reduction are an important tool in mitigating the loss of habitat and property damage from human development in these fire-prone areas.

e. We reduce our impacts by making ecologically sound lifestyle choices that have impacts on the natural world near and far.

f. County Parks are an important link in the regional network of natural areas where visitors seek out the restorative qualities of time in nature, including physical health and mental well-being.

4. San Mateo County Parks are places for exploration, conservation, and learning opportunities for all people.

a. People today value County Parks for natural open spaces, scenic vistas, recreation, and continued traditional use by native peoples.

b. Recreation opportunities at park properties promote exploration, learning, stewardship, and reflection.

c. Each visitor holds the responsibility for respecting rules and demonstrating appropriate behavior.



San Mateo County Parks Department

Existing Conditions

The following is a breakdown of existing conditions and analysis of interpretive products, programs and facilities offered by the San Mateo County Parks Department and by closely associated groups that are interpretive partners. It is divided into on-site (occurring at park properties) and offsite (whether at another location or by non-location-specific means); the Covid-19 pandemic has created a few hybrid on and off-site interpretive initiatives.

PARTNERSHIPS

Much of the interpretation for County Parks is done through what we are referring to as Interpretive Partners. Interpretive Partners are a critical piece of all interpretation in the County Park system and are usually volunteer-led and focused on interpretive activities and preservation of one specific park. Interpretive Partners include the “Friends of” groups, the San Mateo County Historical Association and the San Mateo County Parks Foundation, which supplies funds for both facility and interpretive program improvements.

What we call Community Partners are those groups—some county-led, some non-profit agency-led—which have valuable connections to disadvantaged communities. Community Partners create informal interpretive activities focused on the needs of their group members. They are not

tied to a specific County Park and will also use non-park sites. The following discussion of on-site and off-site interpretation at County Parks focuses on County and Interpretive Partner efforts. Community Partner activities are discussed later in this report.

Efforts to provide relevant, high-quality interpretation and programming to the public could not be done without collaboration from the San Mateo County Parks Foundation, Friends groups, County commissions, and offices and community service organizations serving San Mateo County residents. Partnerships with the following organizations were previously established and topics of how County Parks and these organizations can continue to work together in the future were discussed during stakeholder meetings that occurred throughout the summer of 2021. For more information on partner organizations, see the companion document “Summary of Community Partner and Stakeholder Input Sessions” (Conservation By Design, 2022).

San Mateo County Parks Foundation

San Mateo County Parks Foundation is a fundraising group whose mission is to inspire people to care for, learn about and enjoy San Mateo County Parks. Established in 1998, the Foundation provides crucial financial support for recreational, environmental and educational

programs and projects of the San Mateo County Parks Department.

Friends Groups

Friends Groups are foundational to the proper functioning of park operations, contributing their time, energy, and resources to support the Parks Department and serve the public with interpretation efforts as well as restoring, preserving, and protecting park resources. Friends groups staff visitor centers, run docent and volunteer training programs, facilitate school field trips and summer camps, provide environmental education, interpret parks’ natural and cultural history, lead hikes, conduct trail maintenance, publish newsletters, award scholarships to local schools and youth impacted by inequities, and promote parks and park activities through social media and their supporter databases.

San Mateo County Parks has five (5) active Friends Groups:

- Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
- Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve
- Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks
- Friends of San Pedro Valley
- San Bruno Mountain Watch¹

¹ Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve, Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve and San Bruno Mountain Watch were born out of community activism efforts to preserve their respective park lands, protecting these places from development and contributing to endangered species protection.

Existing Conditions

Visitor Services Groups

Additional groups associated with San Mateo County Parks Department provide necessary visitor services to the public. These groups include:

- Trail Patrol
- Horse Patrol
- Devils Slide Trail Ambassadors

County Libraries

Libraries serve the public in immeasurable ways, offering safe and welcoming spaces for all residents to explore various types of books and media. Partnering with County libraries broadens networks for marketing, community outreach and volunteer engagement. The Department continues to partner with libraries to offer Read With a Ranger and other in-person and virtual activities, including a series of outdoor recreation-themed backpacks available for checkout.² City of San Bruno Public Library also has annual park passes.

Organizations and Offices of the County

San Mateo County has dedicated staff and stakeholders who work by way of various commissions, offices, associations and programs to offer necessary services to San Mateo County

² City libraries also operate at multiple locations throughout the county and represent possible partnership opportunities. For the purposes of this report, only County library representatives were interviewed.

residents. Issue areas and organizations include:

- Services for Immigrant Communities—CARON (formerly UNIDOS), founded by San Mateo County Sheriff's Office
- Supporting the Arts—San Mateo County Arts Commission
- Services for Older and Dependent Adults—Aging & Adult Services Office
- Services for Residents with Disabilities—Commission on Disabilities
- Advocating for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion—County Equity Officer
- Preserving the County's History—San Mateo County Historical Association (SMCHA)
- Environmental Education—San Mateo County Office of Education
- Health—San Mateo County Health and the San Mateo County Parks Foundation partner to run the Parks Rx Program
- Youth Activities and Leadership—San Mateo County Sheriff's Activities League (SAL) and San Mateo County Youth Commission, an advisory commission to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Community-Based Organizations

San Mateo County is replete with non-profit organizations and associations that serve disadvantaged communities across the County.

Partnerships with the following community-based organizations help the Parks Department understand the needs of potential audiences and underrepresented communities to bridge diversity, equity and inclusion in park visitation.

Service Providers for Latinx Communities

Ayudando Latinos A Soñar (ALAS), Nuestra Casa, Puente de la Costa Sur, Siena Youth Center, Casa Circulo Cultural and Familias Unidas provide support and community care services to Latinx and undocumented communities through housing assistance, educational resources, health and wellness services, leadership development, community-driven advocacy and afterschool services for youth.

Outdoor Recreation for Underrepresented Communities

Brown Girl Surf, Latino Outdoors SF Bay Area and Outdoor Afro represent the interests of the marginalized voices of people of color, increasing diversity and equity in the outdoors through groups, classes and programs.

Resource-Based Organizations

Staffed by their own volunteers and employees, CuriOdyssey (formerly the Coyote Point Museum) is open Wednesday through Sunday and requires an entrance fee to the museum as well as the Coyote Point Recreation Area. Approximately

Existing Conditions

200,000 visitors come annually to see natural history, science and animal exhibits geared toward younger audiences. In addition, they offer summer camps for youth and classroom programs, as well as a wide variety of special events.

The California Academy of Sciences, too, offers science education to children in San Mateo County and the Bay Area. Sequoia Audubon Society advocates for land and wildlife conservation and utilizes County park properties as places for education and research related to birds. LIMPETS conducts studies at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve in association with the Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. In addition, the California Native Plant Society, San Francisco Mycological Society and iNaturalist help with BioBlitz events.

Association of Ramaytush Ohlone

Association of Ramaytush Ohlone are a Native American tribe indigenous to what is now called San Mateo County. The Association represents the interests of Ramaytush Ohlone in the San Francisco Peninsula, providing research, consultation, and education to ensure accuracy in culture and history, ecological restoration, and community service.

PRE-VISIT

Visitors obtain information about County Parks from a variety of sources, including the park website, multiple social media channels, partner organizations, event advertisements, newsletter, newspapers, and other websites, among other sources.

INTERPRETIVE FACILITIES

Visitor Centers/Museums

San Mateo County owns a number of buildings used as visitor centers or museums and is usually involved in any major maintenance or renovation. However, each Interpretive Partner has a different arrangement with the County and often general upkeep is done by the building users. The Memorial Park Visitor Center is open to the public but generally not staffed; the remainder are staffed by Interpretive Partners.

- Memorial Park Visitor Center is operated on weekends chiefly during the camping season, April to October. This building is unstaffed and has a Ranger office and a one-room museum that includes natural and cultural history exhibits.
- Staffed by Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve trained hosts, Edgewood Park's Bill and Jean Lane Education Center is operated on weekends. The modern environmentally



San Mateo County Parks Foundation



Friends of Huddart & Wunderlich Parks

Existing Conditions

- friendly building “is a portal for school children, nature seekers, and park visitors to understand and explore Edgewood’s rare and interesting life forms, fascinating soils, and mosaic of plant communities and wildlife habitats.” (friendsofedgeswood.org)
- Staffed by Friends of San Pedro Valley docents, the San Pedro Valley Visitor Center is open on weekends and holidays with a small library, bookstore, and exhibits showing San Pedro Valley’s ecosystems, plants and animals. (friendsofsanpedrovalleypark.org)
 - Staffed by Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve docents, the Fitzgerald Marine Reserve Visitor Center is open when docents are present. Exhibits, and a video screen, occur on the outside walls of the building and can be seen when the park is open. The interior of the visitor center is limited in size—featuring exhibits, specimens and relevant field guides. (fitzgeraldreserve.org)
 - Folger Stable Historic Site (Wunderlich Park) offers private tours led by docents from the Friends of Huddart and Wunderlich Parks and school tours led by the San Mateo County Historical Association (SMCHA). The original Carriage Room within the main stable is a museum showcasing interpretation of the local lumbering, farming and the great

estate era. The Carriage Room museum is open to the public on weekend afternoons. (huddartwunderlichfriends.org)

- Staffed by docents from the SMCHA, the Sanchez Adobe Historic Site focuses on museum exhibits exploring the Ohlone, Spanish, and Mexican history of California. The site is open Tuesday through Thursday, as well as weekend afternoons. School tours are common and must be booked well in advance. (historysmc.org)
- Staffed by docents from SMCHA, the Woodside Store is an original 1880s country store that supported the area’s redwood logging industry. The site is open Tuesday through Thursday, as well as weekend afternoons. School tours are common and must be booked well in advance.

INTERPRETIVE MEDIA

Digital Media

Digital technology plays a critical role in how current and potential park visitors access information. Visitors require information about parks such as orientation/wayfinding, rules and regulations, ADA accessibility and news/advisories to prepare for their visit and feel safe and at ease once they arrive. Digital media is a useful tool for connecting with park audiences virtually, with the

potential to interpret County Parks resources to a vast amount of people. To meet visitor needs for information and interpretation of park resources, the Parks Department uses the San Mateo County Parks website, downloadable content and social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok and YouTube) to broadcast information and connect with a wide range of visitors.

County Parks Website

According to the San Mateo County Parks Community Survey, 73 percent of survey respondents use the San Mateo County Parks website as a primary resource for receiving information and park updates. The County Parks website hosts a wealth of information pertaining to County Parks news and advisories, experiential activities for children and the general public, things to do at County Parks, the work of the Parks Department and partner agencies, and ways that the public can get involved. All of the information provided on the website can be translated into several languages with the click of a button.

The Parks Department website (www.smcgov.org/parks) showcases essential information that Parks visitors need to plan for their visit: a list of County Parks, trails, and facilities; news and advisories; safety and visit preparation information; rules and regulations; and a contact portal. The County Parks home page lists all of the County Parks with

Existing Conditions

embedded links where more information can be found about each park. Most parks have digital images of the park and a downloadable park map and park brochures, familiarizing visitors with the park before they visit. Some park pages feature video content.

Visitors usually know the type of activities they plan on participating in before they arrive at a park. Clear and concise information about what activities are permitted at parks, upcoming events, student programs (including a Virtual School Program), digital interpretation and information about park passes is found under the “Things To Do” tab. Reservation information consists of a reservation portal and an explanation of fees and charges. Reservable facilities are found under the “Reservations” tab.

Descriptions of the work of the Parks Department includes an Indigenous Peoples’ Land Acknowledgement statement, information about the Parks Commission and Natural Resource Management division; current projects; Measure K-funded projects; committees and boards; partners and collaborations; and information about the Sign Shop are located under the tab titled “Our Work.” Some visitors may be inclined to seek out ways to connect more deeply with parks through volunteering, donating and/or participating in commemorative programs or

exploring career opportunities with the Parks Department. Links to volunteer information, donations, career opportunities and a visitor survey are found under the “Get Involved” tab.

The County Parks website presents almost all of the essential information that visitors need for an ideal park visit. Some park audiences may not have the access or ability to visit a County Park in person and may utilize virtual interpretation to experience County Parks.

Virtual Programs

In recent years, some in-person programs and interpretive efforts have pivoted to online platforms. Moving interpretation to a virtual means offers an adaptive edge for moving forward in a technology-driven world, while reaching more diverse audiences in terms of age, income and geographic location.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, San Mateo County Parks created “Zoom Into Nature,” a webpage that hosts educational videos, programs and online resources to enhance the virtual visitor experience at County Parks. Virtual interpretation benefits one of the parks’ most curious visitors—children.

Social Media

Social media is an effective contact point for engaging and connecting with younger park audiences. These platforms offer opportunities to post photos, videos, audio, links to parks-related information, and platforms to offer personal interpretation and to communicate directly with park audiences.

The Parks Department has an active presence on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, consistently posting multiple times a week and in accordance with the County’s Social Media Policy. Content shared across these four social media platforms includes natural and cultural history of County Parks; national days and holidays; updates on events, volunteer opportunities, and park/trail closures; Live storytelling sessions for children; and descriptions and images of County Parks and trails.

Wayside Exhibits

Wayside interpretive panels currently appear throughout the County Park system. Refer to forthcoming park-specific interpretive planning frameworks for details.

Trailhead Kiosks

All County Parks have a standardized welcome kiosk with orientation panels that state the name of the park, describe natural features and activities, and include a map.

Existing Conditions

Publications

A number of print publications are available to the visitor. Park brochures generally include a map of the park and trails, a brief description of natural features and activities and necessary regulatory and contact information. Most parks have brochures—available in English and Spanish; two parks also have either Tagalog or Simplified Chinese versions.

Several parks have self-guided tour brochures available online and on-site in both English and Spanish.

Take A Hike Program

One of the Department's most popular and long-standing programs, Take A Hike, offers a monthly staff-led hike for participants in different parks throughout the system in warm-weather months. The program is part of the County's Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative designed to encourage familiarity with County Parks and inspire repeat use.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department created the Take a Hike Challenge which suggested routes for visitors to explore on their own.

Junior Ranger Program

The Junior Ranger program offers monthly staff-led nature-based activities for youth ages 7-12 and their families in warm-weather months.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Department created the Junior Ranger Challenge which provided a downloadable collection of nature-based activities families could explore on their own.

Community Garden

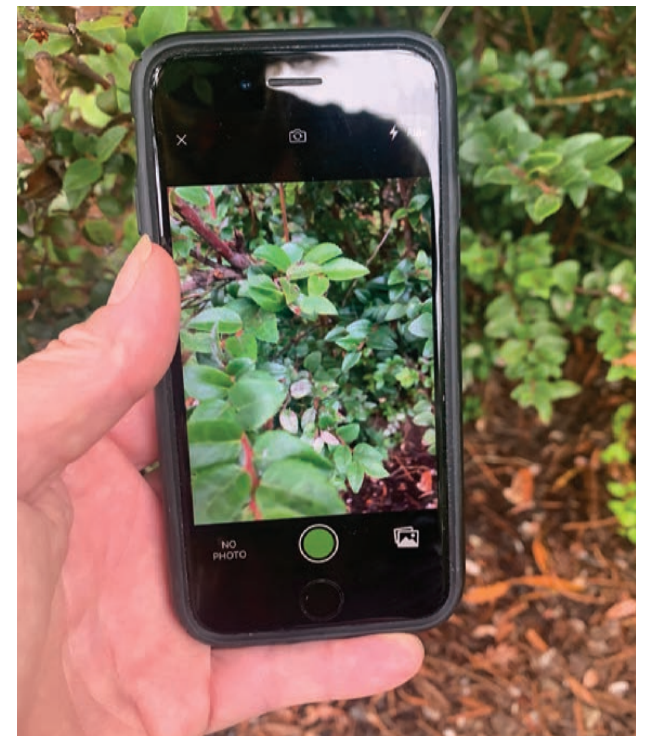
The Friendship Park Community Garden consists of 31 garden plots available for community adoption. Monthly bilingual programs provide gardeners with guidance and support. The Parks Department is the lead agency and works in partnership with San Mateo County Health and the San Mateo County Office of Sustainability.

Community Science

BioBlitz is an example of a community science event conducted in partnership with several resource-based organizations where people of all ages discover how many species they can find and record with the iNaturalist smartphone app. The Parks Department usually hosts two BioBlitzes a year, with a rotating park location.



Conservation By Design



San Mateo County Parks Department

Existing Conditions

iNaturalist is a free app that encourages the public to enjoy the outdoors through community science, observing nature in one’s yard and neighborhood, or in a San Mateo County Park, and sharing it with others.

OuterSpatial

OuterSpatial is a mobile app platform that visitors use to access content provided by public land management agencies. The Parks Department uses OuterSpatial to share interpretive media and wayfinding information for the County Parks system. The app provides easily accessible information that visitors use to plan their visit and locate parking, restrooms, drinking water, picnic areas and other amenities, as well as receive updates about hazards and closures.

Personal Services Programs

Guided Educational Programs

In-person and virtual classroom programs are offered to local schools on a variety of topics. Areas of emphasis have included ecological concepts and human history, tied to state learning standards. Staff also respond to specific teacher-requests.

Guided Interpretive Programs

Guided programs are offered both individually by Department staff and partners, as well as collaboratively between the various organizations.

- County-Led
The Department provides a variety of interpretive programs throughout the park system, including interpretive talks and walks as availability and circumstances permit.

- Partner-Led
Volunteer groups focused on one park (Friends groups) conduct the bulk of the interpretive activities within County Parks. Each group has their own website, social media accounts and budgets. Some have full-time or part-time paid staff. These groups are 501(c)3 non-profits and function autonomously, but cooperatively, with the County Parks Department. During interviews

Partner-Led Guided Interpretive Programs

Interpretive Partner (# of Docents)	Major Interpretive Activities
Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve (50-60 docents)	Visitor education and docent-led tours, Junior Explorer Program, and Trail Ambassadors. Operate the Bill and Jean Lane Education Center. Execute habitat restoration activities.
Friends of Huddart/Wunderlich (1 paid staff and 50 docents)	Huddart Park: Nature Hikes and habitat restoration Wunderlich Park: Meet a Mini (horse), school field trips, Folger Stable Carriage Room Museum.
Friends of Fitzgerald Marine Reserve (65+ docents)	Programs include docent-led school field trips, roving docents during low tides and a week-long summer Junior Naturalist day camp.
San Bruno Mountain Watch (2 paid staff and numerous volunteers)	Programs include community-based ecological restoration projects, hikes for the community during wildflower season and field trips for students of all ages involving art, writing and service learning.
Friends of San Pedro Valley (20 docents)	Docents staff the Visitor Center, run a Trailside Store, maintain the trails and Native Plant Garden, and offer monthly natural history lectures and volunteer opportunities such as trail work and habitat restoration.

Existing Conditions

with leaders of each Friends group about their activities, they revealed themselves to be uniformly passionate about preservation of their park and interpreting its natural and cultural resources to its visitors. Docent numbers shown in the table on page 31 are approximate, varying seasonally and from year to year.

Special Events

The Parks Department and various Interpretive and Community Partner organizations collaboratively support a number of special events, such as Dia de los Muertos, Kite Festival, Movies in the Park, Family Nature Day (in collaboration with POST) and the ParkRx Community Nature Days. These events are held in park locations and planned with assistance from Department staff.³ Interpretive and Community Partners promote their events and Department staff assist with promotion via the Parks Department website and social media accounts.



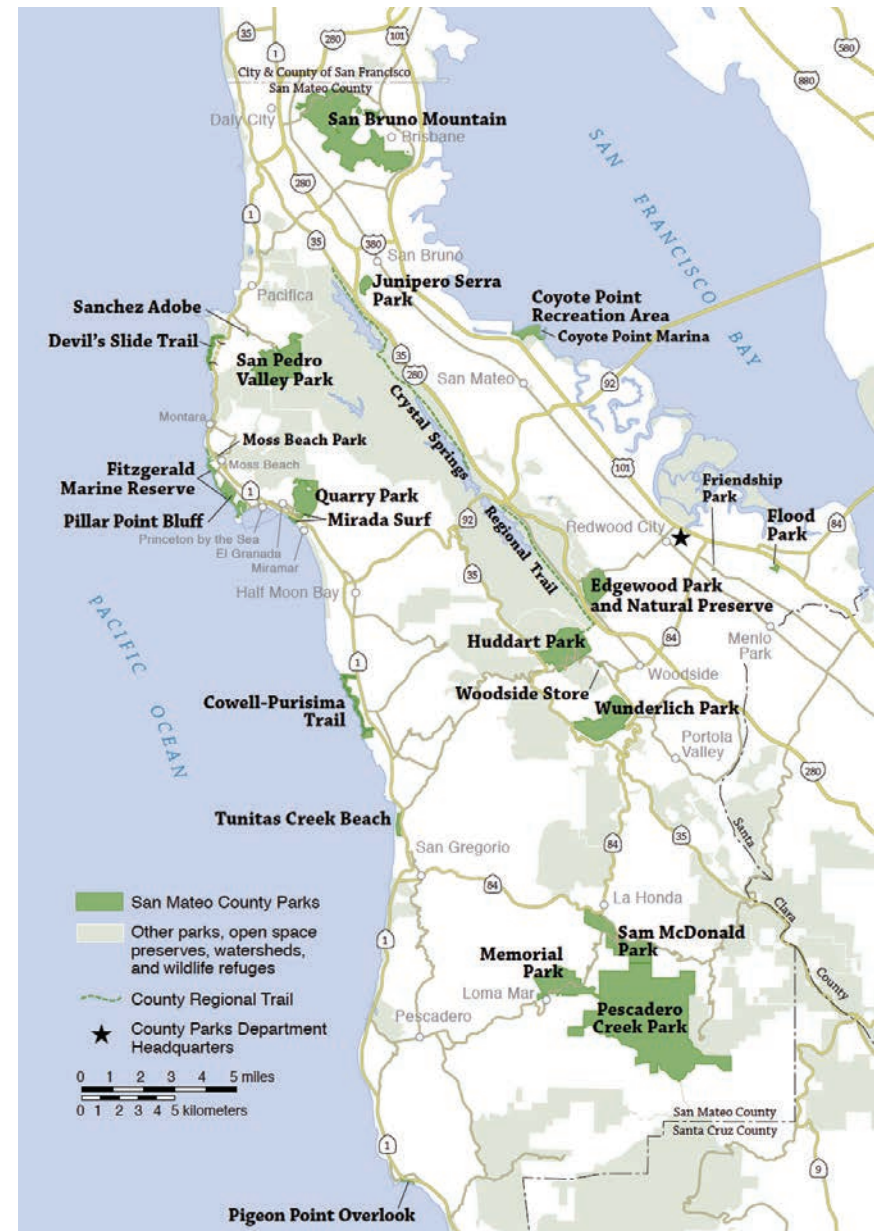
³ In 2019, the Department's Interpretive Program hosted more than 150 events, serving over 7,000 attendees.

All images courtesy of San Mateo County Parks Department

The Visitor Experience in Context

San Mateo County Parks operate within a sea of other regional, city, state and federal protected areas—most concentrated west of I-280. A look at the County Parks map at right shows many County Parks are located adjacent to other protected areas or are close neighbors. Because there is so much protected land, residents of San Mateo County and others in the Peninsula have a wide choice of areas to visit.

The following review of other interpretive opportunities that County Park visitors may be exposed to is helpful in determining how to best plan for County Park interpretation. Some of these other protected areas are very similar to those in County Parks and interpretive subjects would also be similar. Yet, interpretive activities at some of the County Parks could be quite unique: San Bruno Mountain State and County Park, Fitzgerald Marine Reserve, Edgewood Park & Natural Preserve, and the two historical sites. Knowing what County Park visitors are offered elsewhere can lead Department staff and/or partners to offer unique interpretive activities that are not duplicated in timing or content in the park a mile away.



The Visitor Experience in Context

OTHER INTERPRETIVE PROVIDERS ON THE SAN FRANCISCO PENINSULA

Peninsula Open Space Trust (POST) protects 80,000 acres throughout the Peninsula in redwoods, along the coast, and the Bay. It has interpretive walks for the public and “curated” walks for donor members. A guided hike at Pillar Point Bluff intersects with County Parks. POST also has lectures, blogs, a magazine and interpretive trail signage.

Mid-peninsula Regional Open Space District (Midpen) protects 65,000 acres throughout the Peninsula located west of I-280 and is mostly coastal chaparral and redwood/Douglas-fir forest. It has the David C. Daniels Nature Center at Skyline Ridge Open Space Preserve and a working homestead and educational center located in Santa Clara County’s Rancho San Antonio County Park and Open Space Preserve. Midpen offers interpretive walks and brochures for the public, OuterSpatial guided trail outings, downloadable Nature Tours for certain trails and in several languages and interpretive signage.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) protects numerous properties west of I-280. The Phleger Estate adjoins Huddart Park, and Sweeney Ridge is seen from the Crystal Springs Regional

Trail. GGNRA has a Scenic and Recreational Easement on the entire watershed owned by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. The Crystal Springs brochure mentions hikes led by GGNRA at Sweeney Point. GGNRA offers downloadable Junior Ranger books for specific areas. Most interpretive opportunities are online at this point in the pandemic.

California State Parks administers Coastside State Beaches (SB) and State Parks (SP) that dot the westside of San Mateo County. The Coastside State Parks Association has docents at Ano Nuevo SP, Half Moon Bay SB, Pescadero Marsh Natural Preserve and the Pigeon Point Light Station with volunteer activities at other sites.

- Portola Redwoods SP features a short nature trail and a visitor center with natural and cultural history exhibits. Interpretive programs are conducted during the summer and on some weekends. This state park is located adjacent to Pescadero Creek County Park.
- Butano SP is a 4,600-acre redwood park featuring guided nature walks and weekend campfire programs.
- Big Basin SP is California’s oldest state park. Big Basin consists of more than 18,000 acres of old growth and recovering redwood forest. Almost all of it (97%) was burnt in a 2020 summer fire. The entire park is currently

undergoing a complete remodel that will include a new visitor center.

Santa Clara County Parks (CP) has interpretive walks and talks for the public and for classrooms. Their Junior Ranger program is now online and they have a number of live and YouTube programs on various topics.

- Rancho San Antonio CP is managed by MROSD. Interpretive offerings are included on the Preserve Inventory for Rancho San Antonio Preserve.
- Almaden Quicksilver CP has broad natural diversity and is a 4,152 acres landmark of California history. During early spring, the park offers one of the most spectacular wildflower displays in the region. Remnants of the mining era also offer an exciting look into the mining operations of the latter part of the 19th century.
- Lexington Reservoir CP is a 941-acre park and reservoir available for shore-line fishing. It is part of the Bay Area Ridge Trail. An interpretive panel about mountain lions is located at the boundary of this County Park and St. Joseph’s Hill Preserve (MROSD).
- Sanborn County Park is a heavily wooded park of over 3,688 acres nestled in the Santa Cruz Mountains between Saratoga and Skyline Boulevard. This mountain park of redwoods

The Visitor Experience in Context

and tanbark oak offers hiking, camping, RV camping and picnicking opportunities year-round.

Others in Interpretation

The Sempervirens Fund and the Save the Redwoods League, both known for buying redwood forest for protection, both had interpretive walks and talks pre-pandemic. Sempervirens Fund uses the All Trails app to deliver route information to visitors. Save the Redwoods League has innovative science-based activities for middle and senior high students and redwood curriculum for younger students. Neighboring Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority provides environmental education and interpretive programming.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed through an iterative process based on input from stakeholders, the Parks Department, and the consulting team and are meant to focus short-term efforts to improve the visitor experience at San Mateo County Parks.

Studies have shown that separation from nature can be detrimental to human development, health, and well-being, and that regular contact with nature contributes to good physical and mental health. Ensuring members of disadvantaged communities are able to experience these benefits and enjoy the wonders of the natural world is core to this Interpretive Strategic Plan and a priority for the Department. As used throughout this plan, the term disadvantaged communities includes, but is not limited to, geographic communities that have been underserved, communities of color that have suffered greatest from inequities, and members of the disability community.

1. Equitable Access, Expanded Uses, and Public Outreach

A. Develop a comprehensive outreach and marketing strategy to target key groups, including youth, seniors, families, disabled persons, and disadvantaged communities

- i. Diversify marketing strategies to reach more current and potential park visitors through posting flyers in both virtual and non-virtual formats
- ii. Leverage the power of word-of-mouth advertising and stewardship by developing a program of volunteer community ambassadors who work to increase visitation to County Parks and model responsible recreation to the community¹

B. Continue to build meaningful relationships with disadvantaged communities and community-based organizations serving those communities

¹ See an example of this type of program here: <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/2744/Park-Ambassador>

i. Invite existing and potential partner community-based organizations to periodic open houses at various County Parks (including Flood, Coyote Point, San Bruno Mountain, and Quarry Park, at minimum) as a means of outreach and brainstorming to meet the needs of disadvantaged communities and increase access to County Parks, allowing us to form deeper relationships.

ii. Consider working with the San Mateo County Parks Foundation to develop a listserv intended to increase communication and coordination with community-based organizations committed to partnering with the Department on events, programming, and services.

iii. Support park visitation by disadvantaged communities and low-income visitors as well as those without a personal vehicle through partnering with local public transportation systems and special access programs in partnership with various community-based organizations. Consider access tools such as:

- a. Free park passes available for “check-out” at County libraries
- b. Free park passes for children/families
- c. Discount program for rideshares to the County’s busiest parks and trailheads²
- d. A program to offer free vehicle access to low income families or sale of annual passes at a heavily discounted rate

C. Ensure teen volunteer/internship program/opportunities in interpretation and community outreach

D. Continue supporting user-friendly digital navigation data sharing/platforms to support visitor wayfinding and promote feelings of safety and orientation for park visitors

² See an example of this type of program here: <https://www.jeffco.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1826>

Recommendations

i. Promote preferred/supported platforms (ex. OuterSpatial) wherever possible (at trailheads, on website, via social media, etc).³ If the Department is putting resources into adding content, let visitors know.

E. Set aside park facilities for families and other groups that are new to outdoor recreation for a reduced or no cost.

F. In partnership with other agencies and/or community-based organizations, increase the frequency of community events, including events that commemorate and acknowledge diverse cultural customs and traditions and get people outside. Events will be theme-based⁴ and promote a sense of welcoming, belonging and participation among park visitors, County residents and disadvantaged communities. Consider possibilities such as:

- i. Food truck events paired with interpretive programming (highlight culinary experiences that relates to cultural traditions found in the Bay Area)
- ii. Music events paired with interpretive programming (rock bands would be accompanied by geology-focused demonstrations/programing, for example, or “music in the mountains”/“forest music” to be accompanied by forest bathing and musicians stationed at various stops along a trail)
- iii. Flashlight tours of historic sites (held in December)
- iv. Hidden history tours (highlighting underrepresented histories and voices)
- v. Take a Hike events (including on accessible trails—Crystal Springs and Coastal or Bay trails)
- vi. Stewardship hikes that show how the Department conducts restoration projects as well as the purpose and benefits of these projects

³ Include logos and blurbs for all current platforms.

⁴ Thematic events incorporate storylines (through programming, social media, and physical collateral) that tie in to the overall interpretive theme structure. See examples above.

vii. Fire fuel reduction hikes that show the scope, process, and completion of fuel reduction projects, with a focus on protecting sensitive resources and project benefits

viii. Family Picnic Days (transport families, provide food, and conduct activities)

ix. Junior Ranger programs and environmental education programs for children and adults

x. Bark Ranger event (dog-focused festival—vendors, workshops on how to recreate responsibly with dogs, which parks are open to dog access; consider partnering with other local land management agencies)

xi. Outfitter festival (gear swap, learn to set up a tent, classes teaching outdoor cooking, etc)

xii. Photography workshops

xiii. Plein air painting workshops

xiv. Fiber arts workshops and events (could tie in to agricultural history, rich tapestry of diversity)

xv. Kite festival (could incorporate science interpretation related to wind and weather)

G. Collect, analyze and implement visitor feedback regarding park visitation and visitor experiences

i. Periodically⁵ reevaluate park visitation to understand how visitor needs and trends have changed through interpretive related surveys

ii. Continue using an online feedback form that is automatically sent to registered participants via email or text after an activity has ended, or through a QR code that can be accessed on site

⁵ Consider a broader visitor experience/interpretive program survey every 2-3 years

Recommendations

- iii. Gather visitor/community feedback regularly via focus groups, formal and informal community forums and conducting community surveys
- iv. Use visitor feedback to inform interpretive products and programs at County Parks.

2. Partnerships

- A. Formalize partnerships and promote department-wide consistency through standards and regular evaluation
 - i. Create written agreements with all partners that address roles and responsibilities of both parties (including financial contributions), goals for the partnership, milestones, and the schedule for evaluation and subsequent goal setting and allows for individuals and organizations to be compensated for their services.
 - ii. Increase communication among Friends groups through the creation of a regularly scheduled forum (possibly in the form of quarterly meetings) where accomplishments, ideas, lessons learned, problems and solutions can be shared, fostering an improved sense of connection between the Friends groups.
- B. Pursue opportunities for relevant, thematic joint programming with local partners such as the Commission on Disabilities, Aging and Adult Services, County Youth Commission, municipal parks & recreation departments, among others
- C. Consider more strategic use of partnerships and contracts to better address diversity goals (e.g., a multi-year funding contract to support one or more local community-based organizations in carrying out specific County Park-related activities)

- i. Explore programs that offer special access and/or targeted transportation solutions to parks (similar to the Parks Rx program and Parks Foundation bus funding initiatives)

D. Support the efforts of agencies, non-profit organizations and other community advocates to promote social and community wellness in ways that support the Department's mission and goals for interpretation

3. Interpretive Media

- A. Feature voices, perspectives, public art⁶, images and stories reflective of disadvantaged communities in all communication products
 - i. Reflect the diversity of surrounding communities by offering orientation, interpretation and/or educational information in the languages used locally
 - ii. Develop multilingual programs and materials in keeping with San Mateo County policy
 - iii. Include Indigenous land acknowledgement statements and opportunities for indigenous people to share their stories in County Parks whenever possible

Wayside (exterior) Exhibits and Kiosks

- B. Develop a Department-wide sign plan that inventories existing conditions, identifies gaps, prioritizes recommendations and establishes design guidelines⁷
- C. Provide clear and effective orientation and wayfinding signage using universal symbols and positive, action-oriented language⁸

⁶ Including possibilities such as Utility Box Art: <https://www.redwoodcity.org/departments/parks-recreation-and-community-services/public-art/utility-box-art>

⁷ Design guidelines will establish a consistent look and feel across all County Park properties, while highlighting each park's unique identity, both in graphic design and material choices, as well as sign support structures.

⁸ "Pick up trash" vs. "Don't litter," for example

Recommendations

D. Provide theme-based interpretive signage

- i. Align interpretive panel content with the themes and subthemes as outlined in the Interpretive Strategic Plan and Park-Specific Interpretive Planning Frameworks for each park and trail managed by the County

Interior Exhibits

E. Assess the condition of any interior exhibits as part of park-specific interpretive planning frameworks, and schedule for updates and improvements as appropriate

- i. New exhibits should be accessible, hands-on, interactive, and invite audience participation whenever possible. Where content is digital, it should be available in multiple languages.
- ii. Exhibits emphasize natural and cultural diversity of local communities
- iii. Partner to plan, develop, and implement new exhibits

F. Digitize collections, as appropriate⁹

G. Highlight personal, relatable stories featuring people of color and Indigenous communities that promote feelings of inclusivity and greater appreciation for cultural diversity

Personal Programming

H. Increase theme-based formal interpretive programming and roving interpretation during high-use times at County Parks¹⁰

⁹ Consider partnering with a university to accomplish this

¹⁰ Consider acquiring and outfitting a van or other vehicle as an interpretive resource for roving interpretation efforts

Digital Media

I. Promote and expand virtual interpretive programming

- i. Expand content available through existing digital visitor engagement tools (including the Department's website and OuterSpatial, amongst others)
- ii. Consider creating one or more augmented reality (e.g. Timelooper) or other technologically appropriate tours (e.g. Story Map¹¹) of historic areas with adequate historic photos
- iii. Create interactive panoramic images of important resources and/or viewpoints as opportunities arise. These images should be annotated with notable features and accessible from the Department website, at minimum.

J. Create a series of short, friendly overview videos for each park ("What You Need to Know About XYZ Park") that play in the parks on repeat

Social Media

K. Continue to emphasize maintenance of social media accounts

L. Consider partnering with community-based organizations and other local land management agencies on social media campaigns that cross promote each other's parks and preserves

M. Feature regular takeovers by Natural Resource Management staff to provide insight/background information on management projects and restoration efforts

N. Showcase Department staff, partners and volunteers who are working to create the visitor experience

¹¹ This platform could also be used to demonstrate ecological processes and stories related to natural significance (e.g. change in habitat range), as it allows the integration of maps with images, video and other digital content in a compelling way.

Recommendations

O. Consider implementing periodic or regular trivia-style or other audience-participation posts that invite visitors to correctly identify a species or location

P. Continue inviting visitors to contribute their own photos and videos

Q. Regularly feature content related to responsible recreation and outdoor etiquette

Print Publications

R. Continue updating brochures and park maps, as needed¹²

4. Organizational Capacity

A. Develop a cadre of interpretive rangers able to confidently and professionally interact with visitors in a theme-driven way

i. Consider offering a pay incentive for Department staff who take on interpretive duties after completing the training and certification process

B. Rename the “Interpretive Program” of the Parks Department to avoid confusion (with renaming of other focus areas as well to ensure consistency).

C. Leverage regional networking with other land management agencies such as State Parks, Sempervirens Fund, Save the Redwoods League, and POST

D. Continue updating Quarterly and Annual reports, as needed

5. Professional Standards & Training

A. Establish interpretive training opportunities and standards for all interested staff and volunteers who have visitor contact

i. Promote adherence to professional interpretive standards

ii. Ensure training addresses cultural competency

iii. Provide regular opportunities for training in interpretive principles and techniques and facilitated dialogue, as well as professional development related to communication and natural and cultural resource issues

iv. Promote interpretive guide training and certification

v. Create an interpreter’s toolkit with a quick reference guide to County Parks interpretive themes, goals and objectives; basic factual information about the specific park; partner contacts; reference lists; images of park features; and the Interpretive Plan

vi. Conduct regularly scheduled, periodic evaluation of all interpreters interacting with the public on behalf of County Parks

a. Develop minimum performance standards for the Interpretive program; ensure sufficient practice and coaching time during initial and ongoing training.

vii. Develop a robust, thematically-oriented activity planning form as a tool for interpreters, and train them in its use.

viii. Monitor the interpreter program performance via a multi-prong approach: participant feedback, self-evaluation processes, and periodic staff observation; adjust or supplement training and provide feedback as needed. Consider the benefits of providing ongoing support and coaching through a peer mentorship program.

6. Education

A. In partnership with the Office of Education, leverage educational programming to better meet the needs of students, teachers and families

i. Host periodic listening sessions with local educators to learn more about how the Parks Department can help enhance education efforts

ii. Host professional development sessions for educators

¹² Develop and distribute quarterly and annual reports for the Department, as well.

Recommendations

iii. Consider creating a summer Teacher-in-Parks program that offers a stipend to an educator in exchange for educational program development (such as curriculum development, outreach, virtual program development, or other capacity-building activities)

B. Ensure education programming correlates with California learning standards

C. Continue to support educational programming for schools and community groups, including the availability of pre-trip and post-trip resources and activities

D. Develop new educational programming

Next Steps

Additional Planning

- Develop more detailed and individual interpretive assessments and strategic plans for each park and trail located in the County (in collaboration with Friends groups, where appropriate).

Implementation

This implementation chart is designed to help the San Mateo County Parks Department set priorities and develop strategies to design and implement programs that achieve the goals herein over the next seven to ten years.

Given the difficulties of predicting funding resources, it is understood that implementing these recommendations will be a gradual process, and that park decision makers will need to reevaluate and make adjustments in the plan periodically as circumstances change. This is as it should be: at its best, an interpretive plan is a flexible, living document that inspires, rather than locks in, the Department's continuing step-by-step progress toward realizing its interpretive goals.

Priorities for implementation reflect a combination of factors:

- An equity-based focus
- Existing infrastructure/organizational capacity
- Building relationships with partners now to better reach other goals in future years
- Building infrastructure and capacity now to be better positioned to implement recommendations

Staff time is estimated in ranges of hours, as follows:

- H = 0-19 hrs
- HH = 20-79 hrs
- HHH = 80-200 hrs
- HHHH = >200 hrs/ongoing/hard to quantify

The **funding column** provides a rough estimate of the relative costs of each recommendation, which are denoted as follows:

- \$ = <\$5,000 per year or per project
- \$\$ = \$5,000 to \$25,000
- \$\$\$ = \$25,000 to \$50,000
- \$\$\$\$ = >\$50,000 (usually capital projects such as facilities construction or remodeling, exhibit installations, visitor transportation vehicles, or other costly items or projects)

The **timeline** reflects three categories of when the effort will commence and all activities should continue on an ongoing basis provided that desired targets and outcomes are achieved. Based on interpretive division performance measures, all efforts will be evaluated and adapted as needed.

- Short-term recommendations are proposed for action within the next one to two years.
- Mid-term recommendations are proposed for action within the next three to five years.
- Long-term recommendations are proposed for action within six years or more.

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
1. Equitable Access, Expanded Uses, and Public Outreach								
A. Develop a comprehensive outreach and marketing strategy to target key groups	Communications		HHHH	SS		X		
i. Diversify marketing strategies to reach more current and potential park visitors		X	H	S		X		
ii. Developing a program of volunteer community ambassadors	Volunteer coordinator		HHHH	S				X
B. Continue to build meaningful relationships with disadvantaged communities throughout the county impacted by inequities and community-based organizations	Parks Foundation, CBOs, SMC Libraries, SMC Health	X				X		
i. Invite existing and potential partner community-based organizations to periodic open houses	Parks Foundation, CBOs, Friends groups	X	HHH if one per month	S	SS	X		
ii. Develop a listserv intended to increase communication and coordination with community-based organizations	Parks Foundation, CBOs, SMC Libraries, etc.		H			X		
iii. Support park visitation by disadvantaged communities and low-income visitors	Parks Foundation, SMCL, SamTrans, CBOs, SMC Health, CalFresh				SS	X		
C. Ensure teen volunteer/internship program/opportunities in interpretation and community outreach		X	H				X	
D. Continue supporting user-friendly digital navigation data sharing/platforms			H			X		
i. Promote preferred/supported platforms	Parks Foundation		HHH		SS		X	

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
E. Set aside some campsites for families and other groups that are new to camping	Parks Foundation, CBOs, Friends groups		HHH ¹		SS		X	
F. Increase the frequency of community events								
i. Food truck events paired with interpretive programming	Parks Foundation		HH ²	SS				X
ii. Music events paired with interpretive programming	Parks Foundation, CBOs, Friends groups		HHHH ³	SSS				X
iii. Flashlight tours of historic sites	SMCHA		H/ program				X	
iv. Hidden history tours	SMCHA	X	H/ program				X	
v. Take a Hike events	Parks Foundation, Kaiser, SMCMVCD	X	HHH (4 ppl x 50 hrs)	\$		X		
vi. Stewardship hikes	NRM Staff		H/ program			X		
vii. Fire fuel reduction hikes	NRM Staff	X	H/ program			X		
viii. Family Picnic Days	Parks Foundation, CBOs, Friends groups	X	see 1Bi		SS	X		
ix. Junior Ranger and EE programs	Friends groups	X	HHH ⁴	\$		X		
x. Bark Ranger event	Parks Foundation, CBOs		HH	\$				X
xi. Outfitter festival	Parks Foundation, CBOs		HH ⁵	\$	\$			X

1 Assuming 3 camp trips/year: 5 meetings to coordinate and plan (5 hrs x 2 staff) = 10 hrs; 1 meeting per program to prep the group (3 hrs x 2 staff) = 6 hrs; 1 hike with group at park (4 hours x 3 staff) = 12 hrs—28 hrs each trip x 3 trips = 84 hrs

2 Per event: 36 hrs—2 coordination meetings=2 hrs x 3 staff = 6 hrs—Event: 5 hrs x 6 staff = 30 hrs

3 Hard to estimate, need to hire external event planner to implement

4 Junior Ranger: 1 program per month with 2 hrs prep and 4 hrs staffed with 3 staff; EE programs: 2 hrs prep and 4 hrs staffed with 2 staff, on an as-needed basis

5 Assuming one 4 hr event with set up clean up (6 hrs x 6 staff) = 36 hours, 2 Coordination meetings = 2 X 4 staff = 8 hrs—44 hrs

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
xii. Photography workshops			H/ program					X
xiii. Plein air painting workshops			H/ program					X
xiv. Fiber arts workshops and events			H/ program					X
xv. Kite festival	Parks Foundation, CBOs, Friends groups		HH ⁶	SS	SS	X		
G. Collect, analyze and implement visitor feedback regarding park visitation and visitor experiences		X				X		
i. Periodically reevaluate park visitation	Might involve external contract depending on scale	X						X
ii. Continue using an online feedback form		X	H			X		
iii. Gather visitor/community feedback regularly	Parks Foundation, CBOs	X		S	S		X	
iv. Use visitor feedback to inform interpretive products and programs			H			X		

⁶ 6 coordination meetings (6 hrs x 3 staff = 18 hours) + Event: 9 hrs x 6 staff = 54 hrs—Per event=72 hrs

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
2. Partnerships								
A. Formalize partnerships	Friends groups		HH				X	
i. Create written agreements with all partners	Friends groups		HH				X	
ii. Increase communication among Friends	Friends groups		HH				X	
B. Pursue opportunities for joint programming with local partners	Partners listed		HHH	\$	\$			X
C. Utilize partnerships and contracts to better address diversity goals	Partners incl. Latino Outdoors, Parks Foundation		HHH	\$\$	\$\$	X		
i. Offer special access and/or targeted transportation solutions to parks	Parks Foundation, Contracted consultant		HH				X	
F. Support other agencies, organizations, and advocates in efforts that align	CBOs, other agencies and departments	X	HH ⁷	\$		X		
3. Interpretive Media								
A. Feature voices, perspectives, public art, images and stories reflective of disadvantaged communities in all communication products								
i. Offer orientation, interpretation and/or educational information in the languages used locally	None	X		\$\$		X		
ii. Develop multilingual programs and materials	None	X	HHHH ⁸	\$		X		
iii. Include Indigenous land acknowledgement statements	Indigenous tribes	X	H	\$		X		

⁷ Not to exceed 80 hrs per year

⁸ Assuming one hike or program a month—4 hrs staffing event with 3 employees; 2 hrs coordination for event 2 employees; 20 hrs for program development and creation for 1 employee=36 hrs/month = 432 hrs per year

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
Wayside (exterior) Exhibits and Kiosks								
B. Develop a Department-wide sign plan	Contracted consultant		HH	\$\$		X		
C. Provide clear and effective orientation and wayfinding signage using universal symbols and positive, action-oriented language	None	X	HHHH	\$\$		X		
D. Provide theme-based interpretive signage	None		HH per panel ⁹	\$ ea		X		
Interior Exhibits								
E. Assess the condition of any interior exhibits, schedule for updates and replacement	Contracted consultant		HHH	\$\$\$		X		X
F. Digitize collections, as appropriate	University intern and/or volunteer			\$				X
G. Highlight stories featuring people of color and Indigenous communities	Indigenous tribes		HH	\$\$		X		
Personal Programming								
H. Increase theme-based formal interpretive programming and roving interpretation	Friends groups	X	HHHH	\$	SSSS ¹⁰			X
Digital Media								
I. Promote and expand virtual interpretive programming	Parks Foundation	X	HH		\$	X		
i. Expand content available through existing digital visitor engagement tools	Parks Foundation	X	HH		\$	X		
ii. Create one or more augmented reality or other technologically appropriate tours	Contracted consultant		HH	\$\$				X

⁹ 50 hrs per panel—Research/Content: 20 hours; Layout/Design: 8 hours; Edits: 6 hours; Manufacture: 10 hours; Installation: 6 hours

¹⁰ This includes acquisition and development of a vehicle outfitted for roving interpretation

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
iii. Create interactive panoramic images	Contracted consultant		HH	\$\$				X
J. Create a series of videos for each park			HHHH	\$		X		
Social Media								
K. Maintain social media accounts	None	X	HHHH	\$		X		
L. Partnering with CBOs and other agencies to cross promote each other's parks and preserves	CBOs and other agencies		HH				X	
M. Feature regular takeovers by Natural Resource Management staff	NRM staff		HH				X	
N. Showcase Department staff, partners and volunteers	Friends groups, Dept. staff	X	HH			X		
O. Implement audience-participation posts	None	X	H				X	
P. Invite visitors to contribute content	None		HH				X	
Q. Feature content related to responsible recreation and outdoor etiquette	None	X	HH			X		
Print Publications								
R. Continue updating brochures and park maps	None	X	HH			X		
4. Organizational Capacity								
A. Develop a cadre of interpretive rangers	None		HHH	\$			X	
B. Rename the "Interpretive Program" of the Parks Department	None		H			X		
C. Leverage regional networking with other land management agencies	Other local land management agencies	X	H				X	
D. Continue updating Quarterly and Annual reports	None	X	H			X		

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
5. Professional Standards & Training								
A. Establish interpretive training opportunities and standards	Friends groups		HHH	\$			X	
i. Promote professional interpretive standards	Friends groups		H				X	
ii. Ensure training addresses cultural competency	Dept. staff, Friends groups, Contracted consultant		H	\$\$			X	
iii. Provide regular opportunities for training	Dept. staff, Friends groups	X	HH	\$		X		
iv. Promote interpretive guide training and certification	Dept. staff, Friends groups		HHH	\$			X	
a. Offer a pay incentive			H	\$		X		
v. Create an interpreter's toolkit	Contracted consultant		HH	\$\$			X	
vi. Conduct regularly scheduled, periodic evaluation of all interpreters	Dept. staff, Friends groups		HHH				X	
a. Develop minimum performance standards; ensure practice and coaching	Dept. staff, Friends groups		HHH				X	
vii. Develop a robust, thematically-oriented activity planning form	None		H				X	
viii. Monitor the interpreter program performance	Dept. staff, Friends groups		HHH				X	

Recommendations	Who's Involved?	Under-way?	Budget			Timeline		
			Staff time (hours per year)	Dept. funding	Outside funding	Short-term (1-2 years)	Mid-term (3-5 years)	Long-term (6+ years)
6. Education								
A. Leverage educational programming								
i. Host periodic listening sessions	SMCOE, CBELP group		HH					X
ii. Host professional development sessions for educators	SMCOE, Parks Foundation, School district(s)		HH		S			X
iii. Create a summer Teacher-in-Parks program	SMCOE		HH	SSS				X
B. Ensure education programming correlates with state learning standards	None	X	HH			X		
C. Continue to support educational programs for schools/community groups	Parks Foundation, Friends groups, OOC, SMCOE, SMC Libraries	X	HHHH ¹¹	S	SS	X		
D. Develop new educational programming	SMCOE	X	HHH	S			X	

¹¹ Classroom Programs: 128 hrs + 64 hrs coordination X 1 staff = 192 hrs; Libraries/Community Groups: 3 x 24 programs x 3 staff = 216 hrs—408 hrs for both

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Appendix B—I.D.E.A. Initiative Accomplishments

I.D.E.A. Initiative Goal	Accomplishment as of September 2022
<p>Outreach Promote San Mateo County Parks by using multiple social media platforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube, and TikTok • Broadcasted weekly Facebook live programs through much of 2020 • Built relationships with community groups and organizations: CARON, SMC Sheriff’s Activities League, Park Rx Program, PUENTE, EPA Farmer’s Market; Pescadero Farmer’s Market, Familias Unidas-Redwood City, and Casa Circulo Cultural • Produced multi-lingual brochures—all in Spanish, three in Simplified Chinese and three in Tagalog • Implemented universal symbols on signage
<p>Events Host a variety of events that celebrate the diverse communities, interests and cultures in San Mateo County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created variety in events: Dia de los Muertos, Kite Festival, Take A Hike, Hikes for specific groups, Movies/Art in the Parks, Community Gardener programs, webinars for senior living facilities
<p>Environmental Education Engage youth in science-based learning and connect them with the outdoors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiated Title 1 school programming with at least 40% low-income students (mostly over Zoom in 2020) • Removed fees for tour reservations at Fitzgerald Marine Reserve • Engaged 40 kids in Summer 2021 through the Junior Ranger Program (SAL) • Conducted 12 STEAM-based library programs about engineering
<p>Access Make parks more accessible to all County residents by removing cost, transportation and physical barriers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park Foundation Funded Title 1 school field trip bus transportation • Strengthened Pacifica Library partnership, offering annual passes and backpacks for check-out, and expanded to San Bruno Library in 2022 • Expanded the Park Rx Program, offering free day passes and transportation (Park Foundation Funded) • Removed Flood Park vehicle entry fees • Created free park entry days (Opt Outside; National Public Lands Day) • Currently upgrading facilities and infrastructure for ADA compliance (2022)
<p>Staff Develop a park staff that is culturally aware and represents the diversity of the County</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported staff diversity through bilingual pay, PUENTE park aide, and hiring bi-lingual interns • Formed the Parks Equity Team with quarterly meetings • Parks Dept.’s HR is currently working on County-wide equity trainings for staff

Appendix C—Community Survey Summary

Introduction

County Parks are places where visitors reconnect to themselves and their communities in scenic, natural landscapes. The San Mateo County Parks Department seeks to create and maintain the parks as places that welcome a diverse range of visitors—advocating for diversity, equity and inclusion in County Parks visitation.

To better understand the interests and needs of a diverse range of visitors, as well as the barriers to park visitation they face, the San Mateo County Parks Department commissioned consulting interpretive planning firm Conservation By Design to create the San Mateo County Parks Community Survey as part of the 2021 department-wide interpretive planning process. The following is an analysis



and discussion of the results of this survey, separated into three sections: Demographics, Visitor Experience and Going Forward.

Please note that additional community outreach efforts included planning workshops and interviews with a number of community-based organizations. The findings from those efforts are NOT included in this survey summary and instead appear in a companion document “Summary of Community Partner and Stakeholder Input Sessions” (Conservation By Design, 2022).

San Mateo County Parks Community Survey

San Mateo County Parks is developing a strategic plan to provide outdoor recreation programs and amenities that meet the interests of the communities we serve. We would like to hear about your experience at our parks and trails. If you haven't visited a San Mateo County park, we'd like to hear from you too! We'd like your feedback on whether you feel welcome at parks and trails and how we might be able to improve your experience as a visitor. We'd also like to know what, if any, barriers exist that prevent you from visiting our parks and trails. Your responses will be used to inform future park planning and programming decisions. We'd love to hear from you!

The survey will take approximately 8-10 minutes to complete, and all survey responses will be anonymous.



San Mateo County Parks Department

About the Survey

A 19-question survey was created using Survey Monkey and included multiple-choice and free-response answers to gauge public interest and to identify needs and areas of improvement, and to gather feedback directly from San Mateo County's communities.

The survey was released through the mailing lists of participating partner organizations, printed on paper for those without computer or smartphone access, and translated from English into Spanish and Simplified Chinese to reach those in non-English speaking communities. The survey was also promoted via social media and emailed to subscribers of the Department's Email Newsblast list, which includes all County employees and all individuals who have made reservations at County Parks in the last five years. The results from these surveys were then merged to create a snapshot of who current County Parks visitors are, what they enjoy about County Parks, and what priorities the Parks Department should focus on to improve the visitor experience. The survey was open from July to September 2021, accumulating a total of 1,178 participants.

Results and Discussion

The survey results are organized by section with headings that correspond to the original question asked. Brief, qualitative descriptions of the findings are offered with charts and figures to illustrate the quantitative results. Some percentages were rounded to the nearest tenth for the sake of clarity. The intention of the discussion is not to prescribe meaning but to showcase visitor feedback, attitudes and experiences at County Parks and to highlight key findings.

Fig. 1.1 Common Zip Codes of Respondents

Ranking	Zip Code	City
1	94025	Menlo Park, West Menlo Park, North Fair Oaks
2	94019	Half Moon Bay, Moss Beach, Miramar, Tunitas, Lobitos
3	94403	San Mateo
4	94044	Pacifica, Belmont, Foster City
5	94062	Woodside, Redwood City, Emerald Hills, La Honda, Kings Mountain, Grabtown
6	94063	Redwood City, North Fair Oaks
7	94061	Redwood City, Woodside
8	94070	San Carlos, Redwood City
9	94010	Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo
10	94002	Belmont

Fig. 1.2 Age of Respondents

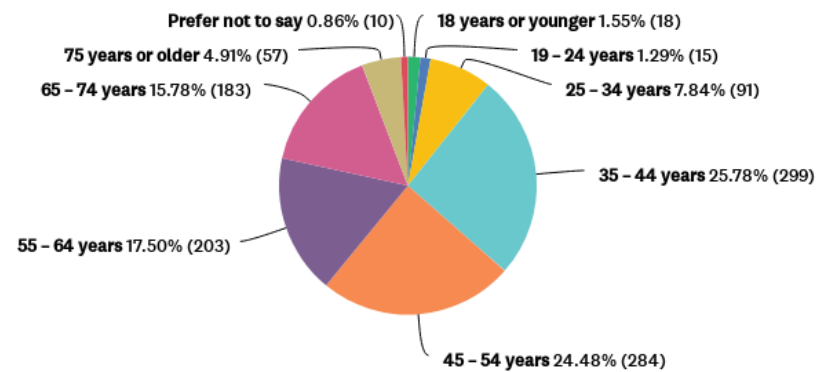
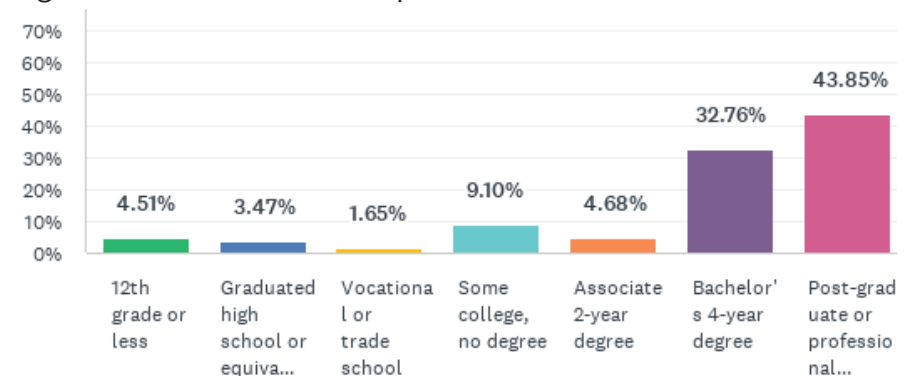


Fig. 1.3 Education Level of Respondents



Section 1: Demographics

Responses collected from 1,178 participants indicate that a majority of survey respondents reside in San Mateo County. The chart to the right shows the top ten most-common zip codes among survey respondents. Most respondents were between 35-44 and 45-54 years of age (26 percent and 24 percent respectively). Among the least represented age groups in this survey include those ages 19-24 years (1.3 percent), 18 years or younger (2 percent), 25-34 years (7.8 percent) and 75 years or older (4.9 percent).

Of those surveyed, most park visitors are highly educated or have completed some form of higher education. Nearly 44 percent of respondents had completed a postgraduate or professional degree, followed by 33 percent who have obtained a Bachelor's/4-year degree.

Sixty-four percent of survey participants identify as white, confirming the data within San Francisco State University's 2015 Park User/Non-User Study which states that most park visitors are white. The second most common racial/ethnic identity among survey participants is Latinx at 15.3 percent, followed closely by Asian/South Asian or Asian American participants at 15.2 percent.

Survey respondents tended to be women, as almost twice as many women (62 percent) responded to the survey than men (34 percent). Non-binary people were the least represented group in the survey, with less than 1 percent of respondents identifying as non-binary (0.77 percent).

To determine the percent of people with disabilities who visit County Parks, survey respondents were asked if they identified as a person who lives with a disability or has accessibility needs. A large majority of survey respondents (90.7 percent) disclosed that they do not live with a disability. About 6 percent of those surveyed disclosing that they do live with a disability.

Fig. 1.4 Race & Ethnicity of Respondents

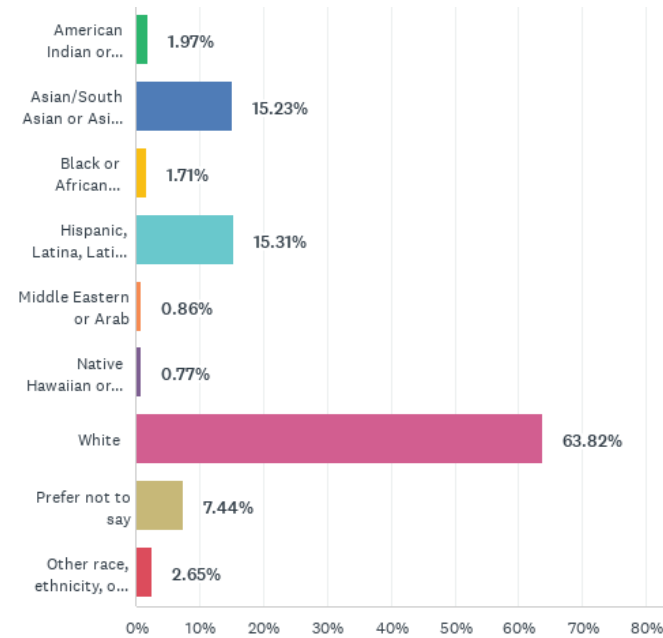
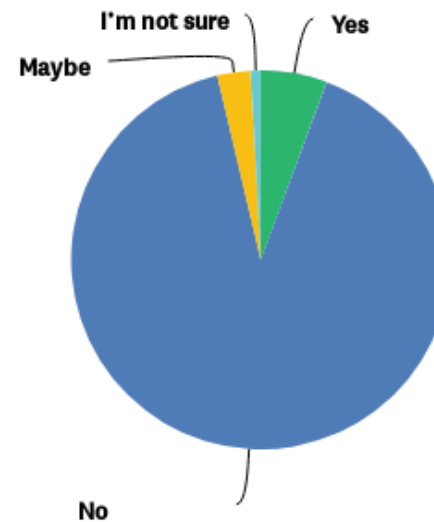


Fig. 1.5 Disability Status of Respondents



Section 2: Visitor Experience

Ideal visitor experiences can only occur when the needs of park visitors are being met and physical and/or perceived barriers that prevent park access are acknowledged and addressed. The questions in [Section 2: Visitor Experience](#) were used to understand why people visit County Parks and/or what barriers prevent them from visiting.

Park & Trail Visitation Rates

When asked how often they visit parks, about 28 percent of survey participants responded that they visit monthly, while about 20 percent visit parks rarely. Some visit only for special occasions (14 percent), and still others visit parks once a week (16 percent) or 2-3 times a week (13 percent). While many survey respondents visit parks at the same rate as they did prior to the Covid-19 pandemic (27.4%), about 13 percent of respondents say they visit parks significantly more, and about 21 percent visit somewhat more.

Overall, visitation of San Mateo County Parks varies widely across the county. Parks in more rural settings, those with expansive views of grassland, forest, bay or ocean ecosystems, and those with a wide range of recreation opportunities appear to be the most popular destinations among survey participants.

Fig. 2.1 Perceived Impact of Covid-19 on Visitation Rates

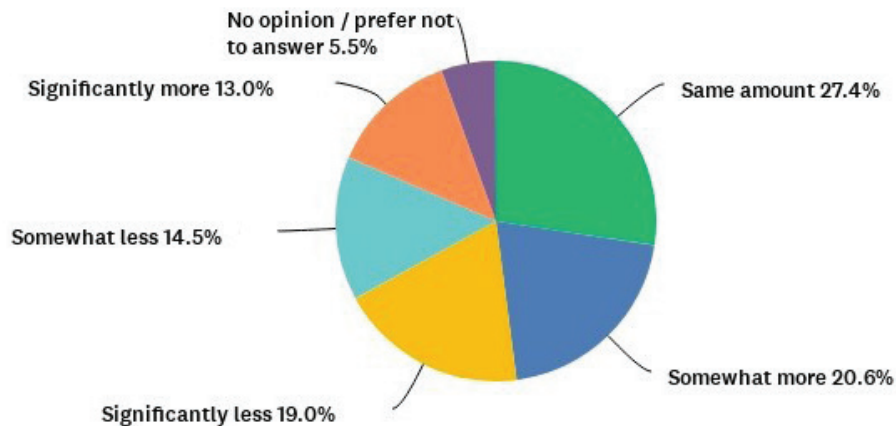
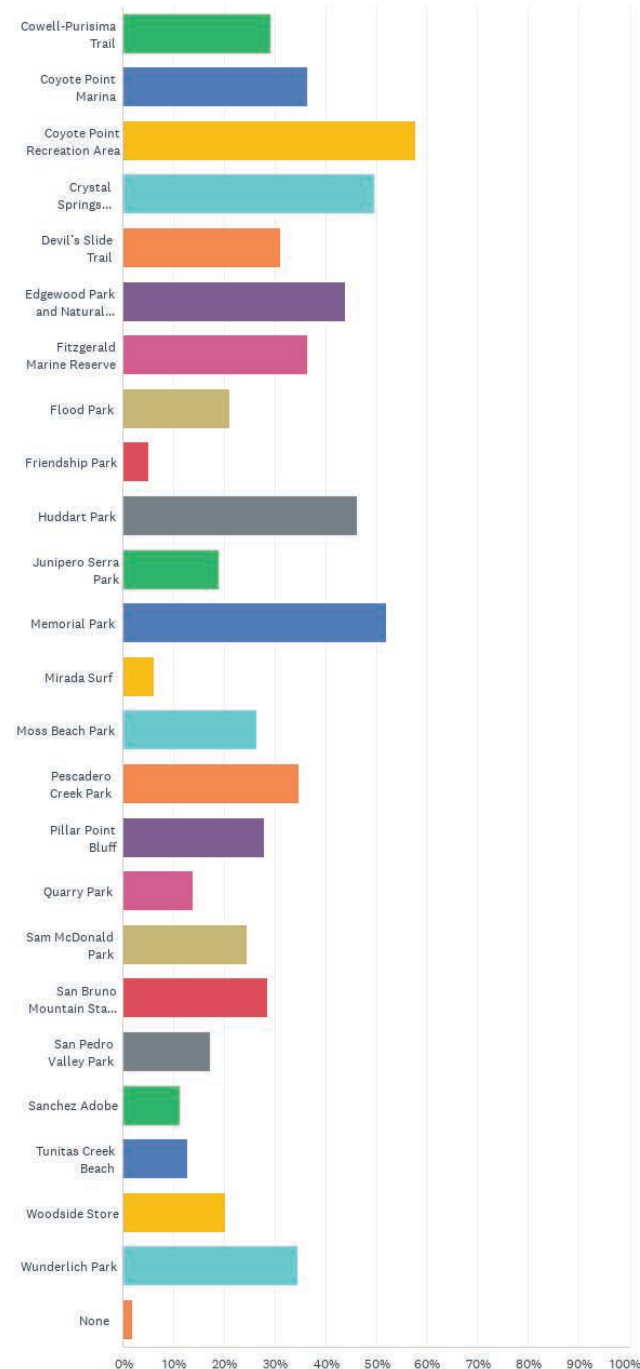


Fig. 2.2 Visitation Rates at County Parks and Trails



Of the 24 County Park and Trail units, the top 5 most visited by survey respondents are:

- Coyote Point Recreation Area (59.51%)
- Memorial Park (53.30%)
- Crystal Springs Regional Trail (51.98%)
- Edgewood Park and Natural Preserve (45.39%)
- Huddart Park (48.12%)

The parks that receive less than 10% of survey participant's visitation are Friendship Park (4.6 percent) and Mirada Surf (6.5 percent). Figure 2.2 on the following page depicts percentages for park visitation for each park and trail managed by the County.

Primary Reasons for Visiting

The most popular activities that survey respondents engage with at County Parks are time in nature (72 percent), time with family and friends (61 percent), jogging, walking, exercise (60.4 percent), psychological /

Fig. 2.3 Primary Reasons for Visiting County Parks and Trails

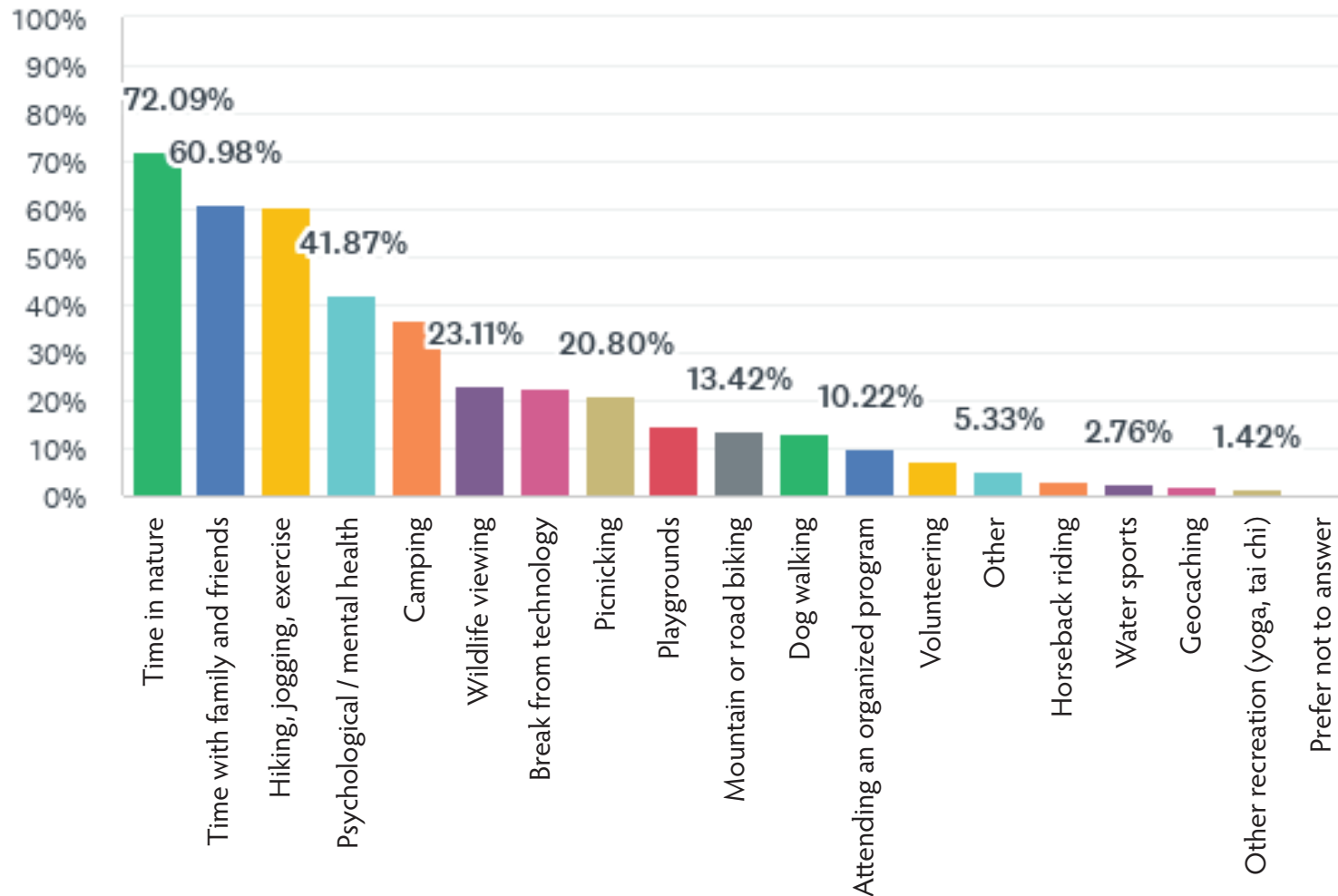
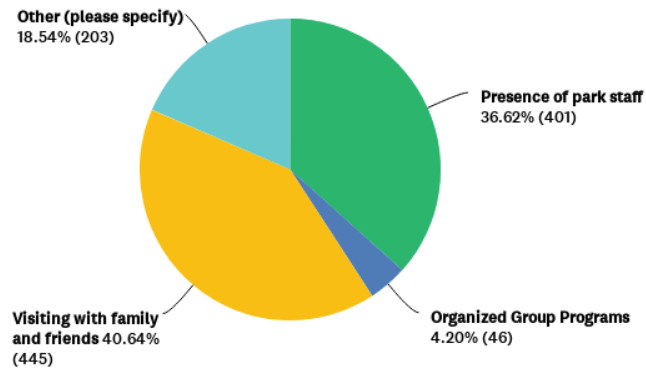


Fig. 2.4 What Factors Contribute to Visitors' Sense of Safety at County Parks and Trails



mental health (41.8 percent) and camping (36.6 percent). Excluding “other” recreation and those who preferred not to answer, the three less-popular activities among survey respondents visitors is horseback riding (3.38 percent), water sports (2.76 percent) and geocaching (1.96 percent).

On Feeling Safe and Welcome

San Mateo County Parks are places where most visitors feel a sense of safety. Almost all survey respondents (94.68%) stated that they feel safe at San Mateo County Parks, with 5.3 percent reporting that they do not feel safe.

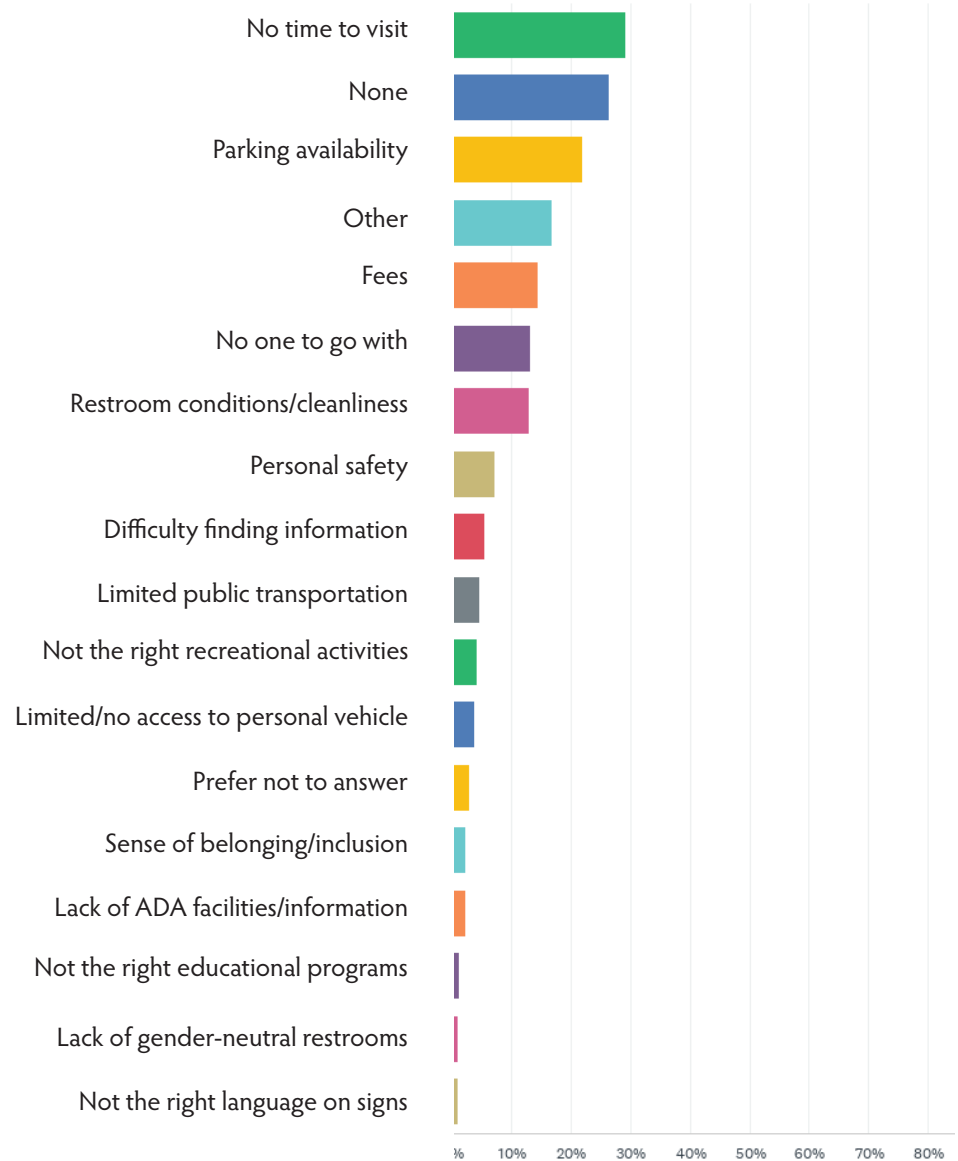
According to survey respondents, visiting with family and friends and the presence of park staff contribute to their sense of safety. Well-maintained trails, park cleanliness and familiarity are other factors that some participants reported as supporting their sense of wellbeing.

Barriers to Park Access

A considerable portion respondents expressed no barriers to park access (26.5%). The most common barriers expressed by survey participants are having no time to visit¹ (about 29%) and issues related to parking availability (about 22%). Of the written responses to this question, the issue of whether dogs were allowed within parks or not was prominent, with many voicing

¹ It is unclear from participants' responses whether people do not have the time to go to the park, or that they do not want to spend their free time going to the park.

Fig. 2.5 Barriers to Park Access

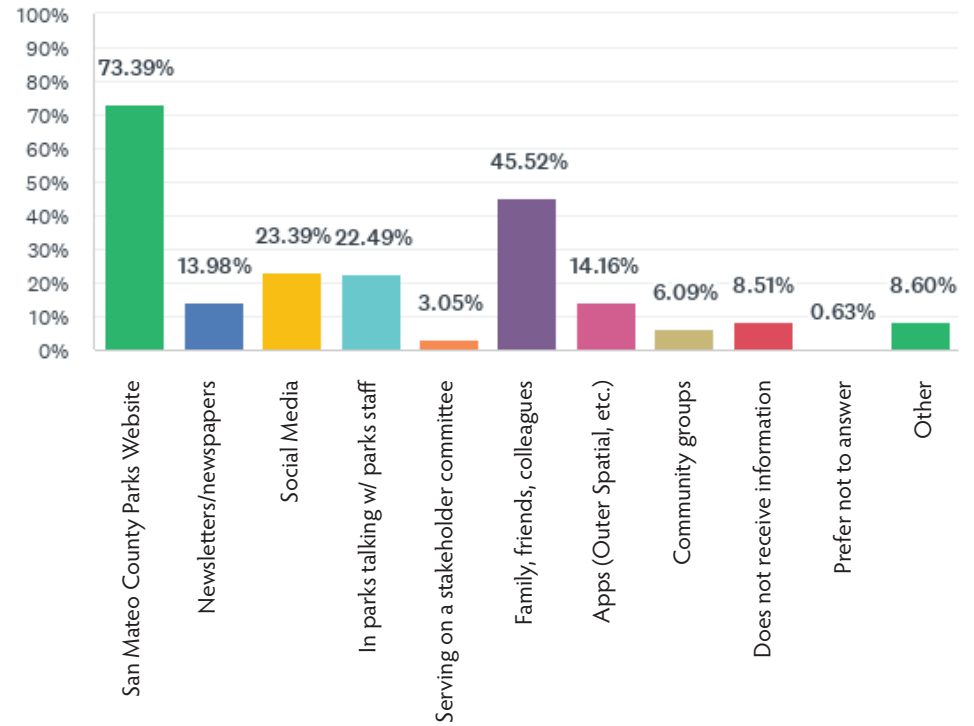


that not permitting dogs at parks was a barrier. Others reported that not having enough mountain biking trails was another concern, as well as adverse effects from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Finding County Park Information

Of those who currently receive information about County Parks, survey respondents seek information from two primary sources—the San Mateo County Parks website (73.4%) and from friends, family or colleagues (45.5%). Additionally, some respondents utilized social media to locate information (23.4%), whereas others sought out information through visiting parks in-person and/or talking with park employees (22.49%).

Fig. 2.6 Sources of Information About County Parks



Section 3: Going Forward

The San Mateo County Parks Department seeks to ensure that County Parks are safe and welcoming places for all visitors —regardless of age, race or ethnicity, zip code, income, sexual orientation, gender, level of education, religious affiliation or ability. To move forward in developing interpretation, education and infrastructure that best suits the needs of visitors, we asked survey participants for feedback and suggestions to help improve the visitor experience.

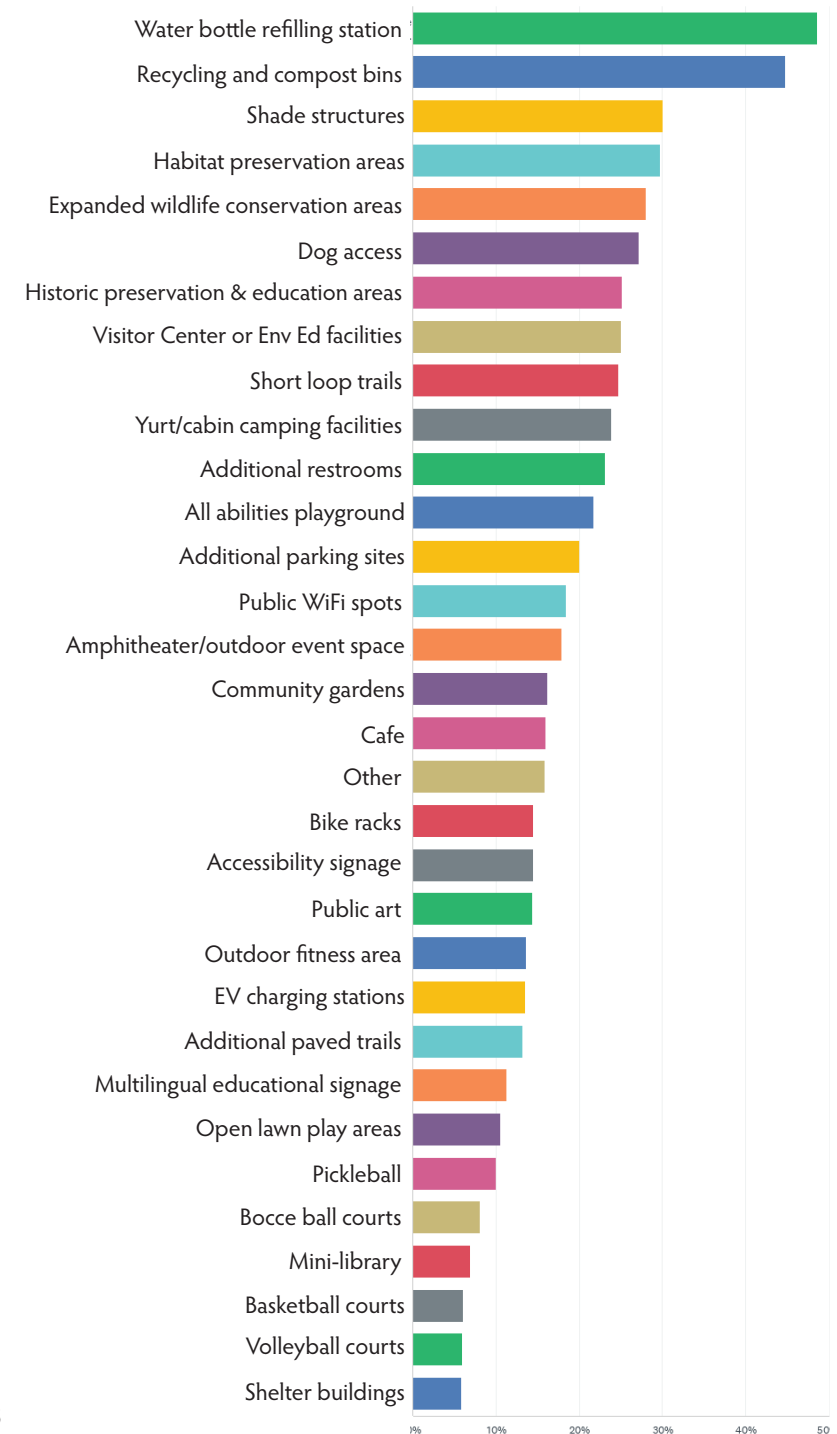
Prioritizing Visitor Interests and Needs

To gather feedback about how the San Mateo County Parks Department can best manage time and resources for public benefit, survey respondents were asked to rank what issues and services they would like the Parks Department to prioritize. In order of highest to lowest priority, survey data revealed the following order of importance:

- Environmental stewardship / conservation
- Trail maintenance
- Ensuring equitable access to parks
- Dedication to the health, wellbeing and safety of visitors
- Environmental education
- Community engagement / events
- Signage
- Fuel reduction
- Other

When asked how the Parks Department can improve the visitor experience, many participants answered that adding water bottle refilling stations / multi-use water fountains and recycling and compost bins would improve their experiences at County Parks. See Figure 3.1 at right for a list of additional amenities survey participants identified as being needed.

Fig. 3.1 Amenities Needed at County Parks and Trails

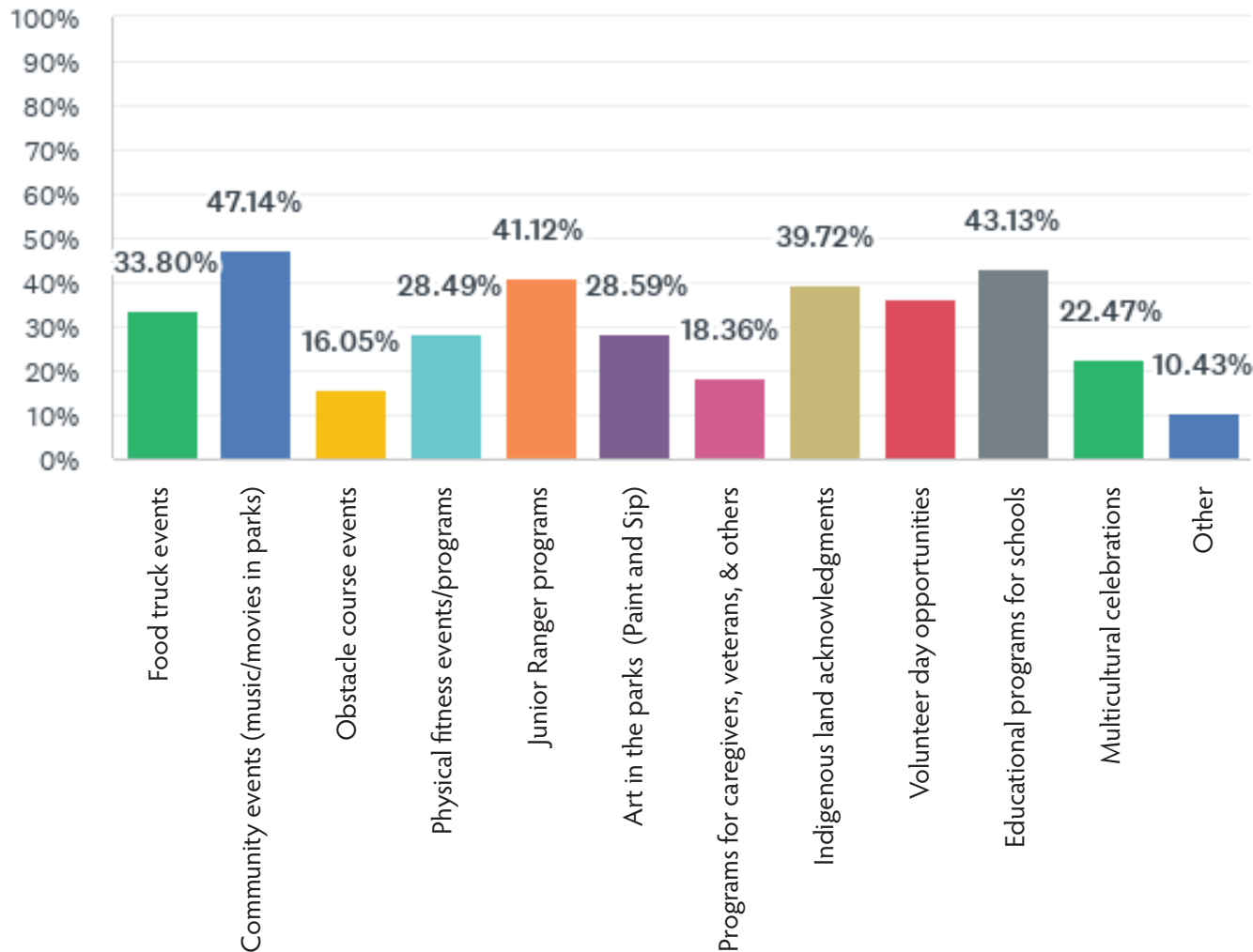


Improving the Visitor Experience

In terms of wanted programs and events, most of the multiple choice options received high percentages, indicating the survey respondents' desire for more park programs and events. The most requested programs and events are community events, educational programs for schools and community groups and Junior Ranger programs. Among survey participants

who identified as Latinx, community events and food truck events were among the most popular responses. Figure 3.2 illustrates an overview of programs and events survey respondents would like to see at County Parks.

Fig. 3.2 Desired Programs and Events at County Parks and Trails



Visitor Feedback

Overall, many respondents expressed their approval for how the Parks Department is managing County Parks and were grateful for the chance to offer their input on how to make their experience better. In total, 554 visitors discussed ways that the Parks Department can improve efforts to engage communities—identifying areas of improvement for communication, marketing, outreach and more. The following issue categories highlight the most predominant visitor comments and concerns.

Communication

Many, if not most, survey respondents want to be more actively engaged with parks. Numerous visitor responses requested increased communication between the Parks Department and the community. Some survey respondents would like the Parks Department to inform their communities on news, events and information related to County Parks, and to have this information available digitally. The most frequently suggested digital mediums to increase access to information are social media posts (Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and weekly email notifications. Some comments specifically addressed improving marketing of County Parks and park events.

Community Outreach

Alongside requests for more communication are requests for more community outreach. Comments related to this issue include outreach to local schools to reach school-aged children. Similarly, respondents expressed a desire for more community events—particularly more environmental programs for both children and adults.

Maintenance of Trails and Facilities

At least two responses requested that the Parks Department teach the public about outdoor ethics, such as Leave No Trace principles. Concern about littering, trail maintenance and keeping restroom facilities clean were prominent answers. Of comments regarding facility maintenance, requests to address the issue of unclean restrooms were among the most common.

Recreation

San Mateo County Parks offer many opportunities to recreate. In this survey, responses for pickleball, mountain biking and camping are the most referenced activities. Pickleball was mentioned in twenty comments, with pickleball players requesting that pickleball courts be built in County Parks, such as Flood Park. Comments from mountain bikers indicate a need for more mountain biking trails and/or more accommodations for mountain bikers. Campers voiced that they would like to see improvements to the online campsite reservation process and increased sanitation and cleanliness of campsite restrooms.

Dog Access

About 20 responses request that the Parks Department allow dogs (leashed and/or off-leash) at County Parks. Survey respondents' perceptions of whether or not dogs should be allowed access at County Parks was mixed—most who responded to this issue would like dog access, with less than 5 respondents requesting no dog access.

Ranger Presence

For some, the presence of park rangers invite feelings of personal safety. Some survey participants want the Parks Department to hire more staff to enforce park rules and maintain trails and facilities. At least two comments call for hiring more people of color for ranger positions to represent the diverse communities of San Mateo County. The need for bilingual staff was also noted.

Parking and Fees

Two parks-related issues well-known to the Parks Department and San Mateo County communities are parking and fees for parking/park entry. At least 12 respondents asked for parking issues to be addressed, stating that the lack of parking prevents their visit. Eight comments requested that the cost to enter parks be re-evaluated, with some survey participants advocating for free or reduced fees.

ADA Accessibility

More than a dozen respondents requested ADA accessibility at parks. Some respondents advocated for more ADA-accessible trails, restrooms, benches and other amenities. At least 2 comments come from senior park visitors, who asked that the Parks Department be more responsive to the needs of seniors, who also benefit from ADA accessibility at parks.

Conclusion

As places of reconnection that promote personal and community wellbeing for residents of San Mateo County and the surrounding area, it is important to understand current County Park visitors and patterns of visitation to ensure that the needs of diverse audiences are understood and addressed. The San Mateo County Parks Community Survey was created to gather community feedback to help the Parks Department move forward to better serve all current and potential County Parks visitors and create more meaningful and relevant interpretive products and programs.

Most survey respondents were between 35-44 and 45-54 years of age, white, highly educated, and able-bodied. Park visitation rates show that many survey respondents have visited County Parks the same amount since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, regularly arriving monthly. Among individual parks, visitation rates from survey participants vary considerably, with Coyote Point Recreation Area as the most-visited park. Time in nature is a primary motivation for visiting, as well as time with family and friends and jogging/walking/exercise.

County Parks are places of safety for many, with a vast majority of survey participants feeling safe at County Parks and citing the presence of park rangers as contributing to these feelings. Factors that present a barrier to many survey respondents are having little time to visit parks and issues with parking availability. Most respondents frequently find information about County Parks on the San Mateo County Parks website, as well as from friends, family or colleagues.

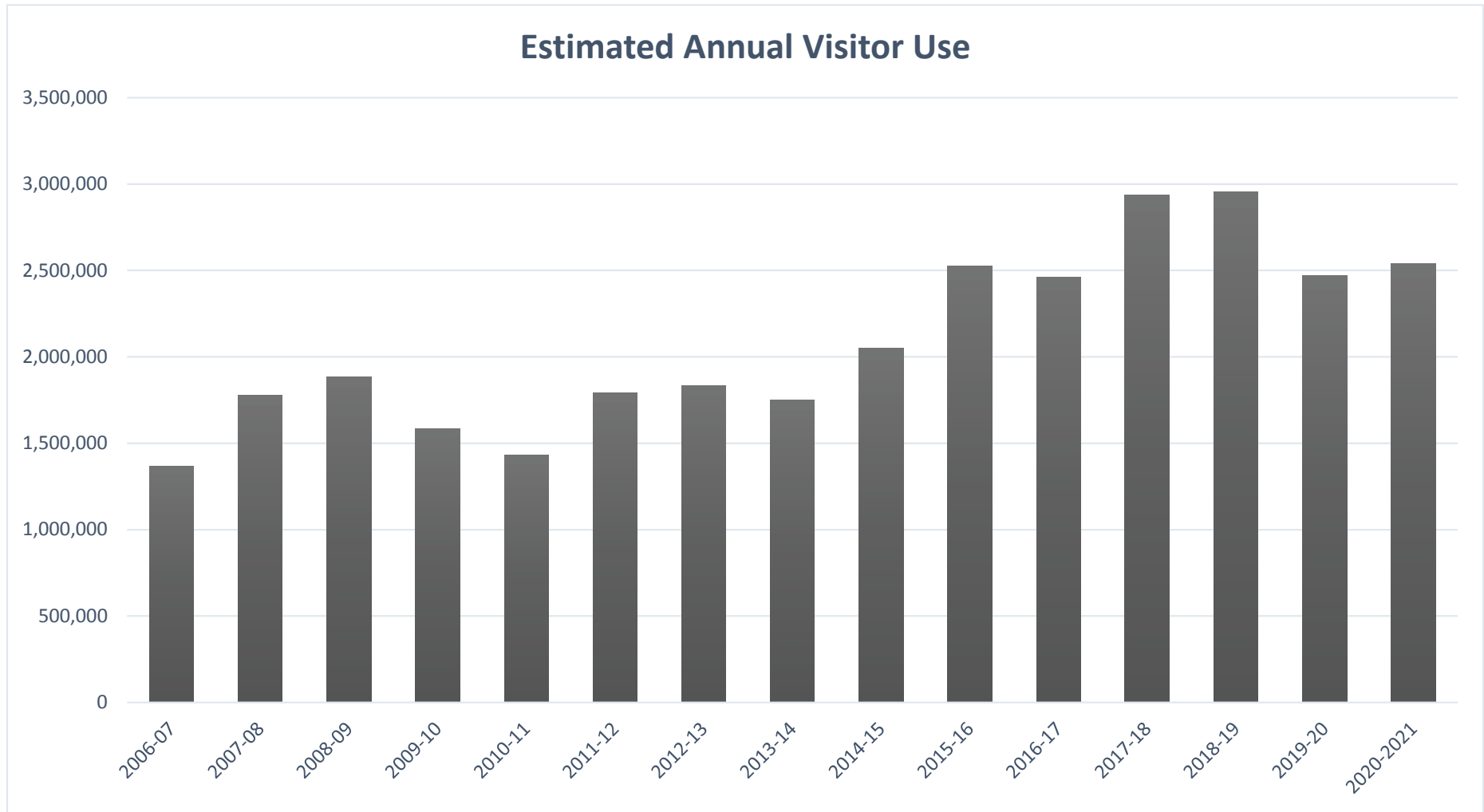
Survey respondents provided useful and insightful feedback on how the Parks Department can better prioritize visitor needs and interests to improve the visitor experience. In terms of amenities, many survey participants would like to see the addition of water bottle refilling stations and/or multi-use water fountains and recycling/compost bins. For programming and events, respondents would like to see more community events and events for schools and community groups.

Generally, many respondents approve of how the Parks Department manages County Parks and expressed interest in participating in more surveys, desiring future opportunities to provide their input. Further, the data indicates that survey respondents want to be more involved with County Parks by receiving more communication. These interested survey respondents advise the Parks Department to increase marketing, community outreach, and engagement efforts.

Parks Department leaders and ranger staff are encouraged to continue studying the unique needs and characteristics of a diverse array of park visitors, taking steps to build and re-evaluate current efforts to center diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives to improve the visitor experience for everyone.

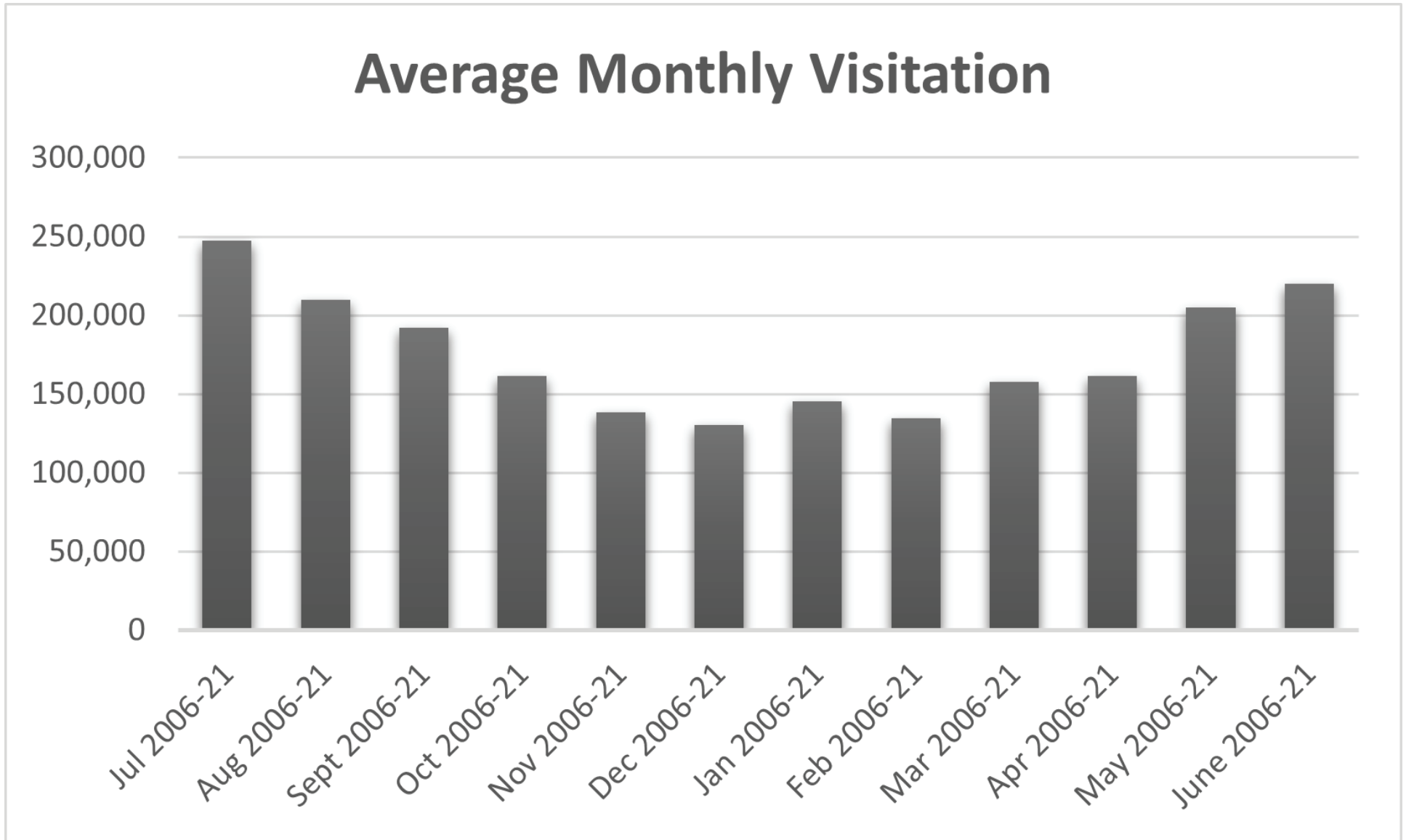
Appendix D—County Parks Visitation Data

Figure 1. County Parks Visitation Data from 2006-2021. Estimated Annual Visitor Use in San Mateo County Parks from Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2020-21. Data by San Mateo County Parks, graph CBD.




Note the decreases between Fiscal Years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 due to pandemic-related closures and construction/restoration projects.

Figure 2. County Parks Monthly Visitor Use Data (July-June). Estimated Monthly Average Visitor Use in San Mateo County Parks from Fiscal Year 2006-07 to 2020-21. Data by San Mateo County Parks, graph CBD.



Appendix E—Recreation Amenities Overview

	Hike, Ride, & Explore						Picnic		Camp					Play			Learn					
	Hiking	Bicycling	Horseback riding	Nature trails	All-access trails	Dogs allowed on leash	Drop-in	Reserved / Group	Car / Tent / Trailer	RV (no hookups)	Group	Youth group	Hike-in	Hiker's Hut, horse camp	Playground	Tennis	Volleyball, horseshoes	Swimming	Windsurfing, boating	Educational programs	Community garden	Visitor center
Cowell-Purisima	●	●			●																	
Coyote Point & Marina	●	●			●	●	●	●		●					●		●	●	●	●		
Crystal Springs Regional Trail	●	●	●		●		●															
Devil's Slide Trail	●	●	●	●	●	●																
Edgewood Park & Preserve	●		●				●													●		●
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve	●			●																●		●
Flood Park	●	●			●		●	●							●	●	●					
Friendship Park							●								●						●	
Huddart Park	●		●	●	●		●	●		●	●				●		●					
Junipero Serra Park	●			●		●	●	●			●				●		●					
Memorial Park	●			●	●		●	●	●	●	●						●			●		●
Mirada Surf	●						●															
Moss Beach Park							●							●								
Pescadero Creek Park	●	●	●									●										
Pillar Point Bluff	●	●	●	●		●																
Quarry Park	●		●			●	●	●						●								
Sam McDonald Park	●		●				●				●		●									
San Bruno Mountain	●	●	●				●				●											
San Pedro Valley Park	●	●	●	●	●		●	●			●									●		●
Sanchez Adobe Historic Site																				●		
Woodside Store Historic Site																				●		
Wunderlich Park	●		●				●													●		

Appendix F—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Case Study Key Points

The following case study key points summarize exemplary community engagement and outreach efforts of other land management agencies in the U.S. to increase community engagement in parks planning. The original purpose of this research was to investigate how other land management agencies have collaborated with communities to make parks more diverse, inclusive, equitable, and accessible and to be used as a tool for reference or inspiration.

It is important to keep in mind that the planning process for San Mateo County Parks took place over a period of approximately eighteen months and resulted in several iterations of the planning document. This research was done as part of an initial review process at the early stages of the project, in advance of the CBO Input Sessions that took place in the summer of 2021. Further, the list of case studies provided below is not exhaustive and the key points are not provided as recommendations for the San Mateo County Parks Department.

Dedicated Community Engagement Staff

Park District of Oak Park, Chicago, Illinois
Case Study Title: Perspectives from a Community Outreach Coordinator
Contributing author: Cate Reading, Community Outreach Coordinator

Key Points

- Park District of Oak Park identified the need for a dedicated Community Outreach staff person
- Began search by looking at current staff, gauging self-identified interest in the position and internal feedback through surveys.
- Current Community Outreach Coordinator was chosen for their heavy involvement in the community as well as a member of the Park District Citizens Committee and as an employee of the Park District.
- Communication and building trust among public agencies, communities and organizations is an essential part of this job.
- The intent of this multifaceted position is to create a sense of belonging among community members, increasing community engagement

in planning, implementation and evaluation of park planning initiatives for the wellbeing of families and communities.

Establishing an Advisory Council

City of Covington Parks and Recreation, Covington, Kentucky
Case Study Title: Community-led Park Advisory Groups
Contributing author: Rosie Santos, Parks and Recreation Manager

Key Points

- City put out a request for people to join an 11-person park advisory group to objectively analyze city parks and prioritize redevelopment projects. Group members serve three-year terms and are recruited based on their experience in at least one of the following areas: Agriculture, trees, horticulture and/or trails, Youth and family interests like pools, playgrounds, sports or recreation, etc.
- Park advisory group forms neighborhood stakeholder groups with trusted community members and offers incentives for participation

- The benefit: increased buy-in and trust in city park redevelopment projects

Building Trust With Communities and Meeting Communities Where They Are

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Case Study Title: Building Trust with Communities

Contributing authors: Erin Tobin, Community Engagement Manager, and Susan Rademacher, Parks Curator

Key Points

- Promotes public involvement in planning, designing, building and caring for parks. As the organization matured and gained trust, it has been increasingly invited to work in neighborhood-scale parks
- Parks Conservancy hosted a series of community meetings to develop a scope for park improvements and to help shape the design.
- Project team attended pre-scheduled community meetings and hosted more intimate “living room conversations” at community members’ homes, engaging people that could not attend the regularly scheduled meetings.
- Community expressed concern about funding. The Conservancy deeply listened to these concerns to better understand their

perspectives and identifying a key issue of lack of jobs available in the community.

- Committed to finding solutions for the community throughout the entire project, while not overpromising too much.
- Parks Conservancy further demonstrated their mutual dedication to community engagement by embarking on a five-month “Parks Listening Tour”, to share new data and parks conditions throughout the entire city of Pittsburgh.
- The information gathered was used to develop an equitable investment strategy to guide future investments made in Pittsburgh’s parks (2019).

Community Engagement Strategies: Using a Mixed Methods Approach

Los Angeles County Parks and Recreation

Case Study Title: Gathering Data to Make the Case

Contributing authors: Norma E. Garcia and Clement Lau, County of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. Paul Simon and Jean Armbruster, County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health

Key Points

- This case study is highly exemplary. LADPR underwent a massive scale community engagement initiative that was required in

a short time frame, while engaging all of Los Angeles County.

- Primary goal: to engage the public, cities and neighborhoods, community-based organizations (CBOs) and other stakeholders to express the need for parks and recreational facilities and determine the potential costs.
- Needs Assessment began November 2015 when the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors directed \$3.5 million to the County Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) to bring its 10 million+ residents together to complete the Needs Assessment. Needed to be completed in 14 months.
- Community-based organizations (CBOs) were important in reaching the community and building rapport with community members.
- Outlined what meetings would look like and what accommodations would be made, such as providing food, childcare, transportation and translation.
- Needs Assessment was finished ahead of schedule and its findings were so compelling that the Board of Supervisors decided to put a parks funding measure, Measure A, on the ballot in November 2016. Measure A was passed with 75% voter support.

City Parks Alliance Case Studies

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and City of Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh: Parks For All

Publication Title: Equitable Parks: Case Studies + Recommendations

Source: City Parks Alliance (2020)

Key Points

- In 2016, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy devised a new strategic plan with four initiatives, one of which was equity.
- In 2018, the Conservancy and the City of Pittsburgh committed to initiatives that would improve the quality of every city park in the long term, using data-driven methodologies that would instruct equitable investments for park projects throughout the city.
- Investment strategy: extensive community engagement process, reaching 10,000 residents and collecting feedback and data.
- Capital project schedule was based on the scores for two categories: park need score and community need score.
- November 2019, voters passed a parks tax referendum to generate \$10 million annually providing the baseline funding.
- Tracking progress: updating the park need and community need rating system annually.

- Keys to success: accurate and relevant data; educating city leaders, community members, and conservancy and city staff at all levels; and gaining buy-in from citizens and mayors.

Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB)

Minneapolis: Community Outreach Department and 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan

Publication Title: Equitable Parks: Case Studies + Recommendations

Source: City Parks Alliance (2020)

Key Points

- 2011: Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) created the Community Outreach Department to lead efforts to meet the needs of under-served communities
- From 2011-2016, MPRB commenced work on 17 initiatives in order to connect with and serve the diverse neighborhoods in Minneapolis.
- 2016, enacted concurrent 20-Year Neighborhood Park Plan ordinances to ensure equitable funding for all parks.
- "MPRB is an independently elected, semi-autonomous body responsible for governing, maintaining, and developing the Minneapolis Park System."
- Looked at community characteristics (racially concentrated areas of poverty, population

density, youth population, and crimes against person) and park characteristics (park asset condition, park asset lifespan and proportionality of park capital investment).

- "Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board spent 5-6 years actively engaging in equity work, educating park board elected officials and city residents on the data that had been collected..."
- Potential obstacles: community will, political will, and making sure people understand that equitable funding needs to be addressed.

Works Cited

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- Ruehl, E. (2020, February 4). Pittsburgh: Parks for All. City Parks Alliance. <https://cityparksalliance.org/resource/pittsburgh-parks-for-all/>

Appendix G—County Parks and Trails with Cultural and Historical Significance

Park	Native American Heritage	Spanish/Mexican Heritage	20th and 21st Century	Source
Cowell-Purissima Trail	Ssaliame (Cotegen) village site	California Landmark 22: Portolá Expedition Camp; Rancho Canada Verde y Arroyo de la Purissima	Purissima Ghost Town; Ocean Shore Railroad; Henry Dobbel—business man that helped fund/support the town of Purissima; Henry Cowell & Family	County History Book; Ohlone-Portola Heritage Trail Feasibility Study, 2019; https://parks.smcgov.org/cowell-purissima-trail
Coyote Point Recreation Area and Marina	Oldest remains of an Ohlone person found here (1987); shell middens and one burial	Rancho San Mateo; Lieutenant Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza	1850—purchased by the Howard Family, built a bath house and pool on the beach and a pier for lumber loading; 1860—Chinese Fishing Village Site; Wharf and pier to receive shipments late 1800's; Site for San Mateo Junior College; Shark Derbies in Marina; nearby to SFO; Pacific City Amusement Park, Merchant Marine Cadet School	http://www.npshistory.com/publications/goga/hrs-san-mateo.pdf ; https://historysmc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/La-Peninsula-Chinese-Summer-2015.pdf ; Amphion Environmental, 2008
Crystal Springs Regional Trail	Village sites exist	California Historical Landmark #27; Buri Buri, Feliz, and Canada-Raymundo Ranchos; Portola expedition campsites; the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail	Stagecoach route; Leander Sawyer operated a stop for Stagecoach riders near Jepson Laurel tree; Spring Valley Water Co.; Hetch Hetchy Dam and Crystal Springs Reservoir— San Francisco area water	https://parks.smcgov.org/crystal-springs-regional-trail ; National Park Service & Postel, 2010; Skapyak, 2017
Edgewood Park & Natural Preserve	----	Rancho Canada-Raymundo	Early Landowners John Isaac and Henry Finkler (climate studies of area); purchased as a project site for a community college, and later a golf course, but neither occurred; became the only Natural Preserve in County in 1993	Environmental Services Agency of the Parks and Recreation Division of San Mateo County, 1997

Park	Native American Heritage	Spanish/Mexican Heritage	20th and 21st Century	Source
Fitzgerald Marine Reserve	Middens and Chagunte (Chiguan) village site; scraper is oldest evidence of human habitation in county	Rancho Palomares; Portola Expedition camped on bluff	Wienke Family (Moss Beach Hotel); Charles Nye and the Reef's Restaurant; nearby Ocean Shore Railroad station; in 1969 became a designated Reserve; in 2008 became a Marine Protected Area; Japanese Americans farmed the lands in the 1930s until they were forcibly removed during Japanese-Internment; Moss Beach Distillery—Built by Frank Torres in 1927; Smith-Dolger homesite	https://halfmoonbaymemories.com/category/charlie-nye/ Brady/LSA Planners and Landscape Architects, 2002
Flood Park	----	Rancho Las Pulgas	WPA work; historic adobe style structures; notable swimming pool location; James Flood of Comstock fame	Parks and Recreation Division of San Mateo County, 1983
Huddart Park	Lamchin local tribe of Ohlone, 4 village sites, Phleger estate had midden and 15 mortars found	Rancho Canada-Raymundo, Jon Coppinger	Used as a boy scout camp early on; James Huddart; James Greer; SMC park since 1944; logging	Harris Design et al., 2006
Junipero Serra Park	Shell middens "once existed"	Rancho Buri Buri	Former owner Darius Odgen Mills of Comstock fortune	EDAW Inc. & Harvey-Stanley Associates, 1981
Memorial Park	----	----	Logging; WPA camp; WWI memorial; used as a boy scout camp early on	https://parks.smcgov.org/memorial-park-history
Mirada Surf Park	----	Rancho Vasquez	Ocean Shore Railroad	https://parks.smcgov.org/mirada-surf-history
Pescadero Creek Park	Pomponio—Yukot speaking man who escaped the mission system and became a resistance fighter/hid out at the headwaters of Pomponio Creeks/captured and executed by the Spanish in 1824	----	Logging, Sawmills, and Shingle Mills; Camp Pomponio (Boy Scouts) turned to Sheriff's Honor Camp; Christian Iverson—first European settler in this area (1860s); Lumberman William Page—built page mill road; Blomquist Brothers; Haskin Brothers; John Tuffley; Moore, Fisher and Troupe Sawmill—on Tarwater Loop Trail; Mrs. A.E. England of San Francisco—life long supporter of the Scouts, owned 160 acres of land along Pescadero Creek; Oil industry	Sasake Walker Roberts Inc., 1975; https://www.hmdb.org/map.asp?markers=52221,2350,126672,2625,41493,58977,12539,92653,67516 ; https://lahonda.typepad.com/files/lahonda_part6.pdf

Park	Native American Heritage	Spanish/Mexican Heritage	20th and 21st Century	Source
Quarry Park	----	Vasquez and Corral de Tierra Ranchos	A recreation area for the community of El Granada designed by Daniel H. Burnham; Wicklow Property; Josefina Guerrero-Palomares—inherited land grant that is now El Granada 1880s; 1994, purchased by Mike O'Neill to preserve landscape; Quarry floor provided rock to build Highway 1 and the Half Moon Bay airport	https://parks.smcgov.org/quarry-park
Sam McDonald Park	----	----	Landowner Stanford legend Sam McDonald and Towne Ranch; Heritage Grove; Jane Rodgers and family preserved the redwoods in Heritage Grove until 1966 when the property was sold to the Holmes Lumber Company; Grace Anne Radwell and David Smith (La Honda citizens) led fundraising campaign to save grove from logging.	https://parks.smcgov.org/sam-mcdonald-park
San Bruno Mountain State and County Park	Ohlone shellmounds found on southeastern side; Obsidian, cracked rocks, knives, beads, quartz-crystals drills Seasonal Village Site until missionaries came	Rancho Guadalupe la Visitacion y Rodeo Viejo; Captain Bruno Heceta explored the western side of the bay in 1775 and he named Mount San Bruno after his patron saint, Saint Bruno the Confessor. The city was named after the mountain	Charles Crocker (Crocker Land Company)—planned to develop the mountain into housing; First Habitat Conservation Plan (1982); Signaling operation site (WWII); Nike Radar Missile site (Cold War); cattle grazing in the 1880s; first european landowners on San Bruno Mountain—Jacob Lesse, an Ohio Trader, Wife: Rosalia Vallejo—sister of Mariano Vallejo, the Californio General; environmental activism	Unknown Author, No Title Page, 2001

Park	Native American Heritage	Spanish/Mexican Heritage	20th and 21st Century	Source
San Pedro Valley Park	Ohlone actively burned the landscape to control growth of trees and coastal scrub and promote native grasses	Gaspar de Portola camp site; Rancho San Pedro	Trout Farm (John and Mary Gay), commercial farming (Artichokes and pumpkins), The Weilers, NCCWD, Christine Case-Skyline bio professor who spearheaded cleaning and restoring the creek.	EDAW Inc., 1975; https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5c259a66c-258b4e0933f6ff9/t/5ce-c58e2eb39313d13bb96a5/1558993130124/Culp+History+of+San+Pedro+Valley.pdf
Sanchez Adobe Historical Site	Pruristac (Aramai) village site	Rancho San Pedro; California Historical Landmark #391; Sanchez Adobe home of Francisco Sanchez; Mission outpost	Historical Site and Museum; Ray Higgins; Baroness Marguerite Kirkpatrick; Hotel San Pedro (1880-1920s); National Register of Historic Places	Architectural Resources Group, 2007
Tunitas Creek Beach	Torose (Cotegen) village site; State Historic Site #375	Gaspar de Portola—1839 map named it Arroyo de las Tunitas after the cactus fruit found near lower creek; Rancho San Gregorio	Gordon's Chute, Sybil Easterday—An artist who lived at the mouth of Tunitas Creek, Ocean Shore Railroad, Grafton Tyler Brown—Did the lithographic print of Gordon's Chute as well as other paintings and prints of the San Mateo Coast, One of the first African American painter to make the West his subject	http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21520 ; https://halfmoonbaymemories.com/category/gordons-chute/
Woodside Store	----	Rancho Canada-Raymundo	Logging; Historical Site and Museum; First store on the peninsula; Stagecoach stop; Robert O. Tripp, Mathias Parkhurst and Mr. Ellis	https://parks.smcgov.org/woodside-store
Wunderlich Park	High use by Native Americans	Rancho Canada-Raymundo; Lieutenant Colonel Juan Bautista de Anza; Portola expedition campsite	Logging; Hazel Wood Farm; Ice House; Folger Stable Historic Site; Charles Brown 1840s—"Mountain House Ranch"; Martin Wunderlich—acquired park in 1956 from Folger Family; Atari founder Nolan Bushnell then bought the mansion and estate	Harris Design et al., 2006