

**City of Sacramento Parks and Community Enrichment Commission (PCEC);
and Parks Plan 2040**

Parks Plan 2040

Updating 2005-2010 Sacramento Parks and Recreation Master Plan

https://www.cityofsacramento.gov/content/dam/portal/ypce/Parks/ppds/Sacramento_Parks_Plan_DRAFT_03082024-WEB.pdf

TJV COMMENT: The attached document entitled “*Campaign for Protecting Natural Areas in the City of Sacramento*” is incorporated here by reference; and it proposes a definition for Natural Areas that should be incorporated into the definitions at Appendix A, and within the aforementioned Figures. There are numerous examples of commendable natural area programs across cities of the Western United States, and the City of Sacramento could use them as models for establishing a Natural Areas Program tailored to the unique and vibrant natural features, cultures, and ethnicities of the City. Doing so would provide the implementing mechanism for Parks Plan 2040, and thread together environmental elements of the City’s newly approved General Plan, Climate Action & Adaptation Plan, the California Biodiversity Initiative, and the California 30×30 Initiative.}

Campaign for Protecting Natural Areas in the City of Sacramento (2023)

<https://www.ecosacramento.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2024/01/2024-01-Jan-22-ECOS-Campaign-for-Protecting-Natural-Areas-in-the-City-of-Sacramento.pdf>

PowerPoint presentation delivered to the Parks and Community Enrichment Commission (PCEC) on 09/07/23 (presentation begins at minute 1:04:45)

<https://sacramento.granicus.com/player/clip/5667>

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APPENDIX D POLICIES...4: MAINTENANCE & STEWARDSHIP

p. D-59 to D-60 Natural Resource Stewardship & Management

(4.4) Protect and integrate natural resources in parks through effective planning, training, and management.

(a) Update and regularly maintain a comprehensive inventory of all park trees and natural resources.

(b) Evaluate the development of a natural resource maintenance and management plan for YPCE parks, parkways, and open space.

(c) Support development of integrated management plans for water corridors that meet multiple goals such as natural resource protection, sustainability, security, flood control, and maintenance.

(d) Manage parklands and waterways in accordance with established regulatory mandates and management guidelines, while considering issues such as public access, maintenance levels and costs, revenue generation potential, and aesthetic enhancement of the community.

(e) When designing parks, plan for trees and other natural resources as a part of park infrastructure.

(f) Train staff in best practices for tree canopy and natural resource maintenance, keeping a certified arborist on staff.

(g) Utilize Integrated Pest Management (IPM) protocols such as composting, natural mulching, and intelligent companion planting to minimize chemical use in controlling insects, plant diseases, weeds, and other pests.

(4.5) Enhance the tree canopy within City parks, parkways, and open space...

(d) Provide forested parkway corridors to facilitate adaptation and migration of native tree species and wildlife. (UFP);

(4.6) Steward the tree canopy and natural resources in parks, parkways, and open space to support community safety, aesthetics, habitat, and ecological functions...

(e.) Evaluate the establishment of a natural areas program as per the ECOS Campaign.

TJV COMMENT: The environmental community applauds the inclusion of Key Direction 7 in Parks Plan 2040, and the stewardship and financial investment goals itemized in Appendix D (4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 6.4, and 6.6). Now, the City needs to create a strategy for implementing Key Direction 7. The Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) has urged the City to designate a network of natural areas across the eight Council Districts, and to establish a Natural Areas Program to administer the natural areas network.

Element 4.4 (a) is one of the single most important elements of Park Plan 2040 as the City has never done a comprehensive inventory of aquatic and terrestrial habitats. Del Paso Regional Park encompasses up to 50 acres of seasonal wetlands (vernal pools that have been scraped and plowed) that have never been surveyed, documented, nor effectively managed. The inventory should be positioned as the first step toward designating new Natural Areas within the City. Parks Plan 2040 fails propose any new Natural Area designations even though hundreds of acres of habitat suitable for Natural Area designation are already owned by the City.

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*p. 154-155 **Nature Access** ...Sacramento can continue integrating features such as urban river access, urban group camps, nature trails in urban open space, community gardens, and interpretive signage explaining pollinator patches, bioswales, wildlife viewing options, etc. It may designate "naturehood" parks, where children and youth can walk to sites that include more accessible natural areas than manicured park spaces, where they can dig holes, pick plants, catch bugs, climb trees, play in dry-creek channels, and engage in similar activities that are typically discouraged in manicured parks.*

*p. 190-191 **KEY DIRECTION 6: FOSTER NATURE AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS** Expand nature-based recreation facilities and programs...YPCE will inventory and evaluate natural resources to determine where it is appropriate to improve 1) river access; 2) nature exploration in parks; 3) nature interpretation without damaging sensitive natural areas; 4) environmental education programming; and 5) environmental stewardship.*

TJV COMMENT: Parks Plan 2040 needs to add opportunities and programs for nature appreciation, study, environmental education, restoration ecology, land stewardship similar to those offered by other municipalities and NGOs. The City of Sacramento could and should be the Central Valley’s leader in conserving and stewarding municipal natural areas.

Mid-peninsula Open Space District

<https://www.openspace.org/where-to-go/what-to-do>
<https://www.openspace.org/where-to-go/kids-education>

East Bay Regional Park District

<https://www.ebparks.org/visit>
<https://www.ebparks.org/things-to-do>

Center for Land-Based Learning

<https://landbasedlearning.org/slews.php>
<https://landbasedlearning.org/watersheds.php>

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*p. D-65 to D-66 **APPENDIX D POLICIES...6: FINANCIAL INVESTMENT***

***(6.4)** Strategically fund land dedication, acquisition, development, maintenance, operations, and programming for new parks.*

***(a)** Develop funding and financing strategies to meet Department service level standards for park acquisition, development, capital improvements, programming, staffing, maintenance, operations, safety, rehabilitation of parks, facilities, trails, parkways, and open space areas.*

***(6.6)** Invest in regional parks to support specialized recreation opportunities, protect unique cultural and natural resources, and attract visitors from throughout the city and beyond.*

(a) Pursue dedicated and consistent funding for regionally serving parks and amenities, including regional parks, open space, and parkways.

Diverse Financing and Funding Resources

6.13. Diversify and improve funding and resources to enhance parks, facilities, programs, and services, including acquisition, development, maintenance, programming, and asset management/reinvestment.

TJV COMMENT: PCEC and the City Council should explore ways to secure new sources of revenue that are dedicated to the acquisition, operation, and stewardship of parklands. The City of Sacramento should adapt the financing mechanisms already in use elsewhere to create a robust municipal park system for Sacramento that includes a Natural Areas Program.

Examples of Ballot Measures Designed to Protect and Restore Natural Areas

City of Fort Collins

<https://www.fcgov.com/naturalareas/aboutus>

City of Greeley

<https://greeleygov.com/docs/default-source/natural-areas/get-outdoors-greeley-strategic-plan---02-02-21.pdf>

City of Oakland (Measure DD)

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/measure-dd%23::~:~:text=In%25202002,%2520Oakland%2520voters%2520passed,Oakland's%2520creeks,%2520waterfront%2520and%2520Estuary.>

County of Sonoma (Measure M)

<https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/learn/funding#:~:text=Measure%20M%20is%20supporting%20long,funds%20are%20used%20as%20intended.>

East Bay Regional Park District (Measure FF)

<https://www.ebparks.org/government-affairs/measures/ff>

Mid-peninsula Open Space District (Parcel Tax)

<https://www.openspace.org/what-we-do/projects/measure-aa>

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**P. 191 KEY DIRECTION 7: INCORPORATE RESILIENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY
PROVIDE SUSTAINABLE PARKS ACROSS THE CITY**

Mitigate climate impacts and enhance the ecological function of parks... YPCE should support community aesthetics, conserve natural resources, and invest in green infrastructure with appropriate plantings, efficient irrigation, and species protection. This includes incorporating into new and renovated parks native plantings, a sustainable tree canopy, low-maintenance landscaping...

P. 55 CLIMATE RESILIENCY

...cities are incorporating water-wise, drought-tolerant, and native plants into landscape designs, lessening harmful biological agents from the use of pesticides/herbicides, and co-locating flood water storing facilities within parks...Further strategies include tree canopies to decrease urban heat island effects.

P. 56 URBAN GREENING

To address this, cities and citizen groups are embarking on greening initiatives such as planting more trees for better shade coverage, installing water-based play features, planting drought-tolerant and native species.

TJV COMMENT: Protect and Steward Wild Oaks: There are thousands of wild native oak seedlings and saplings growing in City Parks that have withstood natural selection pressures, e.g., drought, heat, and disease; and could contribute greatly to climate protection, urban shading and cooling, and the conservation of biodiversity. Further, these wild trees require no irrigation and only minimal maintenance requirements. They are “free trees” that offer immense benefits and ecological value. And yet the City has no program nor practices in place to conserve and steward these wild oak seedlings and saplings. They are treated as expendable vegetation, and are routinely mowed-over, string-trimmed, plowed, and/or doused with herbicides. The City should welcome, value, and protect this gift from nature.

The 'messy' alternative to tree-planting

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210524-the-reason-wild-forests-beat-plantations>

Ban Rodenticides: The PCEC and City Council must prohibit the application of rodenticides within and around waterbodies and designated Natural Areas. As recently as 2019, a “pest” contractor hired by the lessee for Haggin Oaks Golf Course placed numerous rodenticide boxes within the Arcade Creek Natural Area bordering the fairways. This is potential poisoning of wildlife is relevant because this was the same place where the last burrowing owl colony within Del Paso Regional Park was destroyed by rodenticide placement in the late 1970s-early 1980s. In this most recent incident, CDFW asked the City and the lessee to remove the rodenticide from the Park, and YPCE Director Lara ordered the removal of the rodenticide boxes. The City should institute and require non-toxic pest control programs at parks that do not maim or kill species that are

susceptible to poisoning, e.g., California scrub jays , bobcats, coyotes, foxes, hawks, owls, Western bluebirds, and Yellow-billed magpies.

A Place Called Hope

<https://www.aplacecalledhoperaptors.com/alternatives-to-rodenticides/#:~:text=ALTERNATIVE%20SOLUTIONS&text=Snap%20traps%2C%20zap%20traps%2C%20live,inflicting%20upon%20non%2Dtargeted%20victims.>

Raptors are the Solution

<https://raptorsarethesolution.org>

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p. 190-191 **KEY DIRECTION 6: FOSTER NATURE AND TRAIL CONNECTIONS**

Collaborate to improve trail connections.

YPCE will proceed with the development of planned future parkways, especially where these provide access to rivers, connect missing trail links, and provide access to new parks and neighborhoods.

p. 178-179 **2040 VISION**

*Through its continued progress toward Sacramento s 2045 climate neutrality goal, the city will also achieve other, interconnected goals: healthy, climate-safe homes, **green spaces and tree canopy for all**, an efficient zero-emissions transportation system, clean air, and a thriving, sustainable economy...Sacramento will continue to **celebrate its cultural and ethnic diversity and will foster the arts, protect historic, cultural, and natural resources, and cultivate its extensive urban forest, parks and riverways.***

P. 35 *Ecotherapy and Park Rx” programs are inspiring doctors to prescribe spending time in parks as a medicinal remedy to certain ailments.*

P. 39 *Another offered activity is the Sacramento Landscape and Learning (L&L) Program, which is a paid work experience for youth aged 14-17 who are interested in park operations, landscape design, environmental management, and green space maintenance. Participants learn skills including teamwork, communication, planning, and landscape operations.*

P. 45 **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

As the impacts of climate change continue to mount, the risks associated with environmental vulnerability have become more pronounced and are anticipated to further disrupt socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Parks and open spaces provide ecosystem services that mitigate climate impacts and pollution, as well

as provide settings for people to interact with each other and engage in physical activity in a natural environment, which promotes health and wellbeing.

p. 60 **PARK ASSETS AND SERVICES**

They provide environmental benefits including biodiversity, water management, beautification, and improved air quality.

P. D-68 **(6.17)** *Recognize the City's urban forest, rivers, creeks, and parkways as unique attractors for economic development and investment.*

p. 120-121 **VULNERABLE POPULATIONS**

Council District 2, in the northern part of the city, is host to a large and highly vulnerable area, where the SMUD ratings for the entire district are medium or higher. District 2 has evidence of pollution, socioeconomic barriers, and poor health indicators. It also has multiple "Disadvantaged Community" areas as designated by CalEPA's CalEnviroScreen Assessment Tool.

P. 128-129 **EXISTING PARK ACCESS AND SERVICE GAPS**

Barriers to access, such as major roads and interstates, railroads, rivers and drainage canals, and private property, must also be factored in.

APPENDIX E: PARK DEVELOPMENT AND RENOVATION GUIDELINES

p. E-72 **Acquisition and Site Selection**

A.) Adhere to best practices when selecting sites (or accepting land dedications) for new parks.

(vi.) Development Suitability: Avoid park sites with extensive or excessive slopes, swales, drainage courses, creeks, wetlands/biological habitat, and similar landscapes, if these prevent recreation uses. Allow natural areas for passive recreation and natural resource protection as defined within the requirements for each park type.

MITIGATE CLIMATE IMPACTS AND ENHANCE THE ECOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF PARKS...*The Parks Plan advises conserving and protecting the open space the city has now by integrating and restoring natural areas in parks for their recreational and ecological benefits. As the climate continues to change, YPCE should design and restore parks to support stormwater drainage, flood control, air and water quality, pollution reduction, carbon sequestration, pollinator health, wildlife habitat, and similar environmental and ecological outcomes.*

TJV COMMENT: Figures 2-2, 2-3, 3-5 need to add a different shade to the maps and legend identifying the areas that have been designated as "Natural Areas" and/or "Natural Habitat". These maps and the reference to "other open space" (p. 66) reflect the low priority Park planners and administrators actually place on the protection and stewardship of natural habitat.

The term "Open Space" is a catchall designation where the City makes no distinction between the character and function of lands that are modified, paved, or turfed for active recreation, and those lands and waters that are protected from development and sale, and stewarded as habitat for native plants and wildlife. Perhaps that's the reason designated Natural Areas as Reichmuth and Chorley parks were blithely converted to disc golf courses.

Regardless of habitat alteration and ongoing disturbance to native plants and wildlife, the City continues to consider these parcels as green and generic Open Space, and therefore over-estimates the level of protection afforded natural resources.

The City has historically treated natural habitat as an expendable element of the Park System. That’s why Parks Plan 2040 needs to elevate the importance of natural habitat to a level at least commensurate with lands designated for active recreation, and the City needs to establish a Natural Areas Program for the stewardship of land, water, and biodiversity.}

With 100-acres of designated Natural Areas within Del Paso Regional Park, and an additional 100-acres suitable for Natural Areas designation, the Park would be a perfect venue for Nature & Interpretive Programs. And yet, the City has never taken advantage of the “wildlands” to engage vulnerable and underserved communities in District 2. An “Arcade Creek Parkway” concept should be included in Parks Plan 2040 to establish a trail system spanning the eastern end of Del Paso Regional Park (at the intersection of Auburn Blvd. and Winding Way), through Haggin Oaks Golf Course, through the barrier at Roseville Road, and westward to the confluence Arcade Creek and Steelhead Creek (and the Walt Ueda Parkway).

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p.54 ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION

These sites, however, present unique opportunities for acquiring large tracts of land to remediate and reclaim as public open space.

The greening of these sites yields a multitude of public benefits, including mitigating air pollution with new plantings, improving stormwater capacity with designated retention zones and directional flows, and reducing urban heat island effects by planting trees and removing impermeable surfaces.

p. 130-131 FUTURE PARK ACCESS AND SERVICE GAPS

P. 132-133 PARK SERVICE GAPS IN VULNERABLE AREAS

p. D-43 to D-44 Park Space Protection (1.19) Ensure the City’s code prevents a net loss of park land to other uses.

TJV COMMENT: Parks Plan 2040 should include a process for siting new disc golf courses, BMX pump tracks, and other highly intensive recreational pursuits on “Brownfields” parcels that are thoroughly cleaned-up and transitioned to parks. The City should engage with disc golfers and mountain bikers to design these new courses with all the desirable challenges, and partner with tree-planting organizations to landscape and beautify these plots. Once these new intensive recreational assets are constructed and dedicated, a process should begin to decommission the

courses and/or tracks that were built within Reichmuth and Chorley parks. The damage to habitat should be repaired, and the YPCE Department should redouble efforts to steward these habitats for the sake of nature appreciation, scientific study, and “Parks Rx” activities.

At the same time, the PCEC and the City Council should formally prohibit the future conversion of designated Natural Areas into intensive recreational facilities that displace native plants, animals, and ecosystem functions. Further, PCEC and the City Council should prohibit sale of parklands for commercial development as previously done at Del Paso Regional Park in 2011. Proposals remain on the books from 2009 and 2014 to sell or give away acreage at Del Paso Regional Park for commercial development.

Deletion of Property from Master Lease Program (2011)

[sale of public parkland at Del Paso to Mel Rapton, Chrysler, Clean Channel]

https://www.advocatesforardenarcade.com/files/4e422059d/04-Deletion_of_Property_PDF-1718_KB.pdf

DRAFT HAGGIN OAKS AREA BACKGROUND REPORT (2009)

https://saccreeks.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/HagginOaksBackgroundReport_Draft11-10-09.pdf

Proposal to Convey Del Paso Parkland to SIBA for Development (2014)

http://sacramento.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=22&clip_id=3537&meta_id=428497

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Partnerships and Collaboration

5.11 *Collaborate with residents, partners, sponsors, City departments, community-based organizations, and other entities to increase Department influence, support, and quality of services.*

(a) *Develop a comprehensive partnership policy to guide protocols for establishing park and recreation partnerships with public, private, and non-profit entities.*

TJV COMMENT: The City should explore partnerships with local and regional land trusts (including tribal land trusts), the Lower American River Conservancy, and the Delta Conservancy so that conservation easements can be conveyed to NGOs and/or the State on City lands designated as Natural Areas. The entities accepting the conservation easements (development rights) for these parcels would require stewardship endowments for the permanent monitoring and maintenance of the lands and waters, and this could draw additional investment into the City to manage the Natural Areas. Further, joint field exercises involving

scientists and land managers from the City, the land trusts, and or the State would provide important training opportunities and durable relationships for the perpetual protection of plant communities, waterbodies, and wildlife populations.

<https://sacramentovalleyconservancy.org/our-mission/>
<https://www.wildlifeheritage.org>
<https://wcb.ca.gov/Programs/Lower-American-River>
<https://deltaconservancy.ca.gov/grant-program/>
