



Memorandum

TO: NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES AND
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

FROM: Jon Cicirelli

SUBJECT: Citywide Sustainable Park
Maintenance Annual Report

DATE: January 26, 2026

Approved

Date

2/5/2026

RECOMMENDATION

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

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

This report provides the Neighborhood Services and Education Committee with an update on park maintenance accomplishments and challenges, as well as the 2025 annual Park Condition Assessment scores.

Based on 2025 scores, the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department will use the higher-level standards in future assessments to better support data-informed decisions on maintenance priorities and resource allocation.

BACKGROUND

The City of San José first introduced Park Maintenance Standards in 1992 to establish a consistent, measurable framework for maintaining neighborhood and regional parks. These standards became the foundation of the City's Sustainable Park Maintenance Program, guiding how park resources are prioritized and managed across the system.

The standards were updated in 2021 following recommendations from the 2020 Parks Maintenance Audit¹, which emphasized the need for clearer benchmarks, consistent documentation, and equitable service delivery across all neighborhoods.

The updated standards promote equity by ensuring that every park, regardless of size, location, or neighborhood demographics, receives the same defined level of service.

¹ 2020 Parks Maintenance Audit: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=63071>

This approach supports the City's commitment to providing all residents with safe, attractive, and functional public spaces while making the most efficient use of limited resources.

Each year, the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department (PRNS) conducts a Park Condition Assessment (PCA) for each park to measure performance against the established maintenance standards. Based on the results, PRNS utilizes California Healthy Places Index² (HPI) scores for each park to prioritize PCA-indicated improvements, ensuring that data and equity principles guide maintenance and investment decisions.

An exact assessment of park conditions is challenging, as park quality is influenced by a complex mix of ongoing maintenance needs, necessary capital improvements (both short-term and long-term), and community perceptions of what they value most in their parks. The PCA scores may not always align with what a park visitor sees or feels, as they are based on measurable physical maintenance conditions rather than the age of park amenities or personal or cultural priorities. A complete understanding of a park's overall condition requires combining PCA data with public input and an inventory of each site's capital infrastructure to create a more comprehensive view of needs and opportunities.

The current maintenance standards reflect what PRNS is resourced to achieve, rather than representing perfection. As a result, some parks with relatively high scores may not necessarily meet public expectations. To further evaluate performance and better align with community expectations, the Department conducted a higher-standards PCA (Attachment A) this year in addition to the traditional assessment (Attachment B). The difference between the traditional and higher-standards assessment is meant to illustrate the resource gap in park maintenance—the difference between the service level the current General Fund budget can support, and the conditions residents expect and deserve. In 2025-2026, the General Fund budget for park maintenance is \$23 million for 183 full-time equivalent (FTE) park maintenance employees and \$15 million for water, contractors, vehicles and equipment, and supplies and materials

ANALYSIS

Maintaining and improving the condition of parks and trails is a primary goal of ActivateSJ, the Department's Strategic Plan³. Stewardship (i.e., the responsibility to take care of what we have and invest for the future) emerged as the community's top priority during the ActivateSJ community engagement process in 2018 through 2019. This priority remains true today. However, the City's resources to maintain parks have

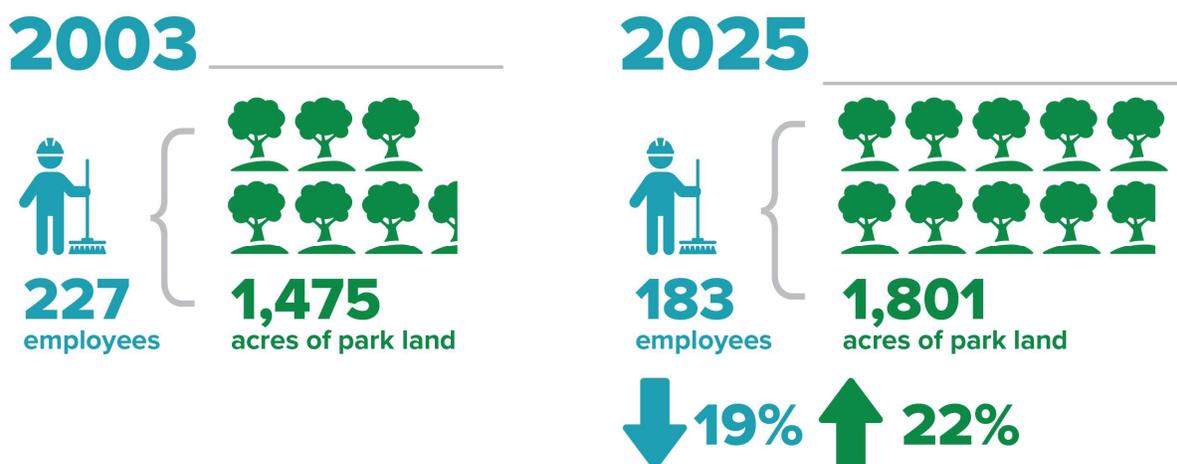
² California Healthy Places Index: <https://www.healthyplacesindex.org/>

³ ActivateSJ Strategic Plan: <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/43503/637178743945470000>

significantly declined since the early 2000s, despite an increase in the amount of parkland that needs care.

At its peak in 2003, there were 227 FTEs in key maintenance classifications responsible for maintaining 1,475 developed acres of parkland. By 2025, staffing has dropped to 183 FTEs, while the amount of developed parkland has grown to 1,801 acres—a 19% reduction in staffing alongside a 22% increase in acreage. (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Reduction in Maintenance Staffing Since 2003



Staffing deficits are increasingly strained by a growing deferred maintenance backlog, as aging park infrastructure experiences higher rates of failure that demands staff time to repair. In 2024, the deferred maintenance backlog was estimated to exceed \$550 million⁴ for parks and recreation facilities, with an update expected in Spring 2026. As infrastructure continues to age, limited day-to-day maintenance capacity is increasingly consumed by reactive work instead of preventative care. For example, in fiscal year 2024-2025, staff spent 35% more time repairing irrigation systems than in the prior year. This is time that could have been spent on other care in parks if irrigation systems were not past their lifespan. When day-to-day maintenance resources are insufficient, important routine tasks such as aerating and fertilizing natural turf are delayed or deprioritized, which is what happened due to past budget reductions. Over time, smaller, manageable issues escalate into more complex and costly projects, increasing the long-term cost of improving the park system.

To help bridge this gap, the Department has brought on contractors to provide the equivalent of 12 FTEs in custodial services for restrooms and to maintain 150 acres of pocket parks. While these contracts offer necessary support, they still leave a 14%

⁴ Status Report on Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Backlog, Transportation and Environment Committee, April 8, 2024: <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12828173&GUID=D9051F3C-D031-4CAA-8F10-40C0865FD545>

reduction in staffing alongside the increase in acreage over the last two decades. In addition, contracts require adequate, sustained funding to keep pace with park needs and community expectations.

Maintaining San José's parks is further complicated by challenges such as increased usage, homeless encampments, and vandalism that includes graffiti, illegal dumping, and destruction of property. High-demand parks experience significant wear and tear, while encampments create additional maintenance needs beyond typical park use. Vandalism also diverts resources, requiring frequent repeated repairs to restrooms, playgrounds, turf and other amenities. Additionally, unpermitted park events (50 recorded instances in 2024-2025) contribute to increased trash and damage to park infrastructure, adding to the strain on maintenance efforts. The Department is also responsible for maintaining almost 1,500 acres of undeveloped parkland and open space to reduce blight and wildfire risks, further straining limited resources. These challenges make meeting the community's expectations for safe and clean parks even more difficult.

To accurately assess the staffing needed to maintain San José's parks, staff regularly attend the California Parks and Recreation Society's Maintenance Management School. This week-long training teaches participants how to develop a maintenance management plan by identifying the resources required for effective park upkeep. In 2023-2024, as part of the Information Technology Department's Data Upskilling program, staff applied their training from Maintenance Management School to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the Department's resource needs using GIS software. This analysis mapped out all park amenities, ground cover, and corresponding square footage. Each amenity was further broken down into specific maintenance tasks—for example, maintaining a picnic table area involves litter pickup, blowing, weed abatement, and general repairs. By incorporating California Parks and Recreation Society productivity time standards and PRNS time trials, staff were able to quantify the time required to maintain each amenity effectively.

Based on this analysis, staff determined that PRNS was about 100 FTE short of the staffing needed to provide adequate maintenance services.

This gap not only affects current park conditions but also limits the City's ability to slow the growing deferred maintenance backlog. Without sufficient resources for consistent and preventative maintenance, the backlog will continue to expand, placing additional strain on future budgets and capital programs.

Despite these resource challenges, the Department remains committed to sustainable park stewardship, using data-driven planning and community collaboration to ensure that residents have access to clean, safe, and well-maintained parks as much as possible.

Park Condition Assessments

The annual PCA provides data on park conditions and guides resource allocation. In 2025, the Department conducted two park condition assessments: a higher-standards PCA (Attachment A), which measures conditions against an ideal benchmark (i.e., what the community expects), and the traditional assessment (Attachment B), which reflects the service levels the Department is currently resourced to meet through park maintenance employees and contractors. While each park receives a defined level of service, equity is prioritized through the California Healthy Places Index (HPI), which focuses additional resources on neighborhoods with the greatest need.

The traditional assessment and new higher-standards assessment were completed simultaneously at each park to ensure consistent and comparable data. By evaluating both levels concurrently, the Department can more clearly identify gaps between what it is resourced to deliver today and what the community expects for its park system.

Figure 2 below provides an example of the difference in maintenance expectations in the traditional assessment compared to the higher standards assessment. A full review can be found in Attachments A and B.

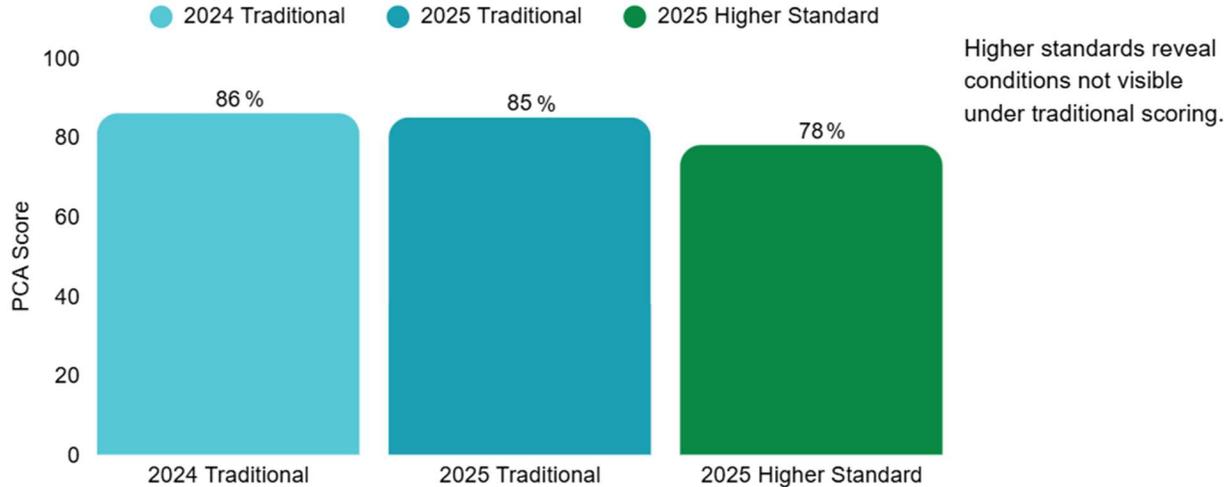
Figure 2. Comparison of Natural Turf Standards for Traditional Assessment and Higher-Level Assessment.

Traditional Assessment
6.16 Turf (natural turf only)
6.16.1 Cleanliness: Turf is free of litter. The standard allows for no more than ten pieces of trash per acre. Turf is free of organic debris that impedes mowing. The standard allows for no more than ten pieces of debris per acre. Unsafe litter is not acceptable.
6.16.2 Color: 80% of turf area is green.
6.16.3 Weeds: Weed levels are below 20% of total turf area.
6.16.4 Density: 80% of turf area is free of bare spots.
6.16.5 Drainage: 80% of turf area is free of standing water two days after rain or two hours after irrigation.
6.16.6 Edging: 80% of edges are clearly defined and have less than six inches of growth over adjoining landscape.
6.16.7 Mowing: Turf is mowed and kept at a uniform height of less than ankle height or 4.5-5 inches.
Higher Standards Assessment
6.16 Turf (natural turf only)
6.16.1 Cleanliness: Turf is free of litter. The standard allows for no more than five pieces of trash per acre. Turf is free of organic debris that impedes mowing. The standard allows for no more than five pieces of debris per acre. Unsafe litter is not acceptable.
6.16.2 Color: 95% of turf area is green.
6.16.3 Weeds: Weed levels are below 5% of total turf area.
6.16.4 Density: 95% of turf area is free of bare spots.
6.16.5 Drainage: 95% of turf area is free of standing water two days after rain or two hours after irrigation.
6.16.6 Edging: 95% of edges are clearly defined and have less than six inches of growth over adjoining landscape.
6.16.7 Mowing: Turf is mowed and kept at a uniform height of less than ankle height or 4.5-5 inches.

The 2025 PCA findings below reflect not only aging infrastructure and increasing usage, but also the limits of current maintenance resources, even as staff continue to deploy efficiency strategies such as route optimization, volunteer support, interns, and contracted services. While these strategies will help with closing the gap, the scale of reduced maintenance positions alongside expanded parkland (Figure 1), requires increased and reliable investment. While valuable, especially for fostering community engagement and pride, volunteers and interns are not a suitable substitute for consistent funding and dedicated staff, which are necessary to ensure continuity, accountability, and high-quality maintenance.

In 2025, parks achieved an average score of 85% on the traditional assessment and 78% on the higher-standards assessment. The traditional score in 2025 decreased from 86% in 2024. See Figure 3 below.

Figure 3. Average PCA Score for Parks



Civic grounds (the landscaping surrounding community centers, government grounds, libraries, and historical sites), by contrast, saw a small improvement. In 2025, civic grounds averaged 92% on the traditional assessment (compared to 91% in 2024) and 85% on the higher-standards assessment. See Figure 4 below.

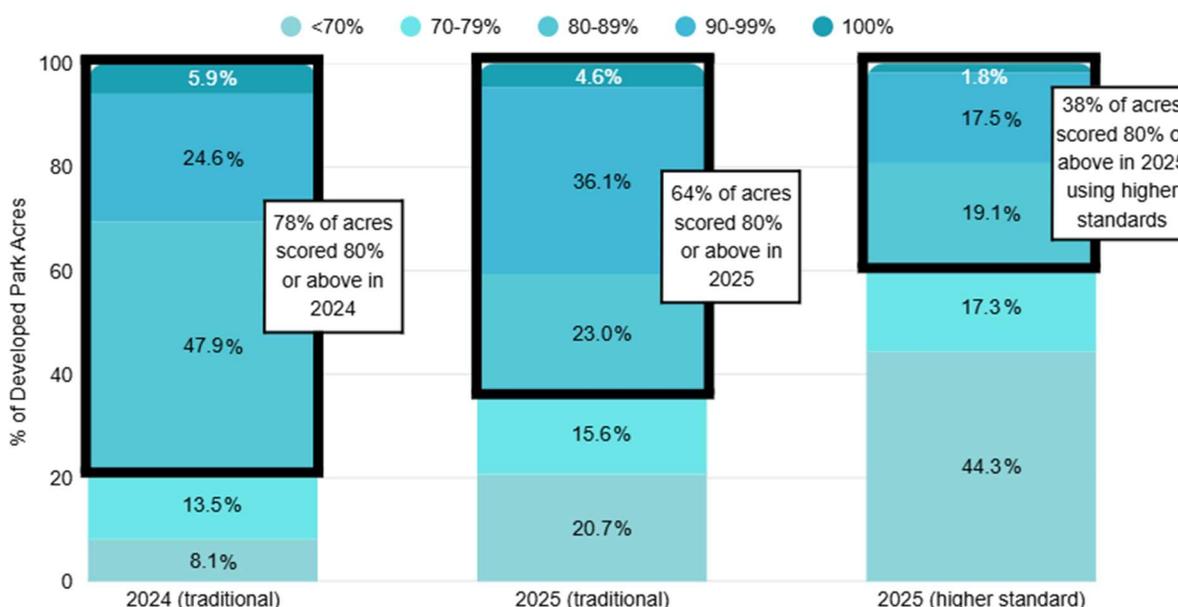
Figure 4. Average PCA Score for Civic Grounds



Overall scores for developed acres of parkland declined from 2024 to 2025 when looking at how many acres met an 80% benchmark, especially when higher standards

were applied. See Figure 5 below. While fewer acres met the 80% threshold in 2025, a larger share scored very high in the 90-99% range (24.6% in 2024 vs. 36.1% in 2025). At the same time, applying stricter standards reveals that nearly half (44.3%) fall below 70%. While it is positive that a larger share of park acreage scored in the 90-99% range compared to last year using the traditional standards, citywide park acreage scores are not meeting standards, and an even larger share are not meeting the stricter standards that align with the community’s expectations.

Figure 5. Overall PCA Scores for Developed Acres of Parkland



Scores for individual parks can be found in Attachment C, and category scores and other metrics are detailed in Attachment D. Minor revisions were made to the 2024 scores and averages following the retroactive inclusion of 0% scores for Columbus Park and Smythe Field, which were not included in the original 2024 PCA scores because the parks were closed but have been added back to reflect their state of disrepair.

Results varied across most Council Districts, remaining relatively consistent from 2024 to 2025, while a few experienced more notable shifts. Districts 5, 6, 9, and 10 showed stable or improved traditional scores, while District 8 saw the most significant decline from 83% in 2024 to 75% in 2025.

The 2025 higher-standards assessment produced lower scores across all districts from 69% (District 4) to 88% (District 10). District 4 had the lowest average on the higher standards assessment, but not the traditional assessment. This suggests that parks

meet most baseline maintenance standards but fall short when assessed against higher standards.

Table 1. Average PCA Score by Council District for Parks

Council District	2024	2025	
	Traditional	Traditional	Higher Standards
1	87%	83%	78%
2	89%	83%	75%
3	89%	87%	76%
4	85%	84%	69%
5	88%	89%	79%
6	79%	86%	80%
7	88%	87%	78%
8	83%	75%	71%
9	88%	88%	83%
10	84%	90%	88%

When comparing park condition scores across neighborhoods with different Healthy Places Index (HPI) scores, differences in park conditions become more apparent when higher assessment standards are applied. Under traditional standards, many parks meet the minimum threshold of 80%. As a result, average scores under traditional standards appear similar across HPI percentiles. See Table 2 below.

When higher standards are applied, those same parks are more likely to fall below the threshold, whereas parks in higher-HPI areas are more likely to continue meeting it. This pattern indicates that while traditional standards can confirm whether a park meets a basic level of condition, higher standards provide a clearer picture of where conditions are weaker and where additional resources are needed. In lower-HPI areas, this difference highlights that parks may be meeting minimum expectations but are not achieving the higher-quality experiences found in many higher-HPI neighborhoods.

Based on this finding, among others, the Department will only use higher-level standards in future assessments to better identify gaps and guide resources where they are needed most.

The Department has used HPI data for years to guide prioritization, resource allocation, and long-term planning, and based on these findings, HPI data will be further integrated into maintenance planning by reassessing current districting, service routes, and staffing in the coming year. This strengthened approach will help design maintenance routes that better meet needs and achieve more equitable park experiences across the city.

Table 2. Average PCA Score by HPI Percentile

Parks and Civic Grounds	2024	2025	
	Traditional	Traditional	Higher Standards
9.9% or less	90%	88%	79%
10-19.9%	83%	85%	72%
20-29.9%	88%	86%	78%
30-39.9%	85%	85%	74%
40-49.9%	89%	86%	79%
50-59.9%	82%	82%	79%
60-69.9%	89%	91%	85%
70-79.9%	85%	86%	80%
80-89.9%	89%	89%	84%
90-99.9%	88%	88%	81%

Finding Efficiencies and Leveraging Resources

Below is a summary of the Department’s efforts to supplement park maintenance and stretch resources. In addition, PRNS is also updating park districts and refining service routes to better align resources, close operational gaps, and complement existing maintenance strategies.

- **Contractors:** Contractors extend the City’s capacity by handling specialized tasks, including restroom cleaning, landscape maintenance for smaller parks, and large-scale tree care and weed abatement. These resources allow City staff to focus on broader maintenance and improvement efforts. However, despite the use of contractors, existing resources remain insufficient to meet current systemwide needs, particularly for proactive structural pruning of trees and comprehensive wildfire fuel reduction. These gaps limit the Department’s ability to fully mitigate wildfire risk, reduce long-term tree failures, and maintain parks at desired service levels.
- **Resilience Corps:** The San Jose Conservation Corps empowers young adults through paid job training, education, and mentorship while they improve the community by working on environmental, public works, and beautification projects across the city. The Department partners with the Conservation Corps to implement the Resilience Corps Program, which plays a vital role in supporting

park and trail maintenance across the city. Over the past year, Resilience Corpsmembers contributed nearly 90,000 hours of work while completing 77 projects throughout the City, improving our communities' climate resilience through activities like fire-fuel reduction, invasive species removal, and bioswale maintenance. Since 2021, over 300 participants have graduated from the Resilience Corps program, with 90% identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and 92% reporting facing two or more barriers to employment. Additionally, over 100 participants have participated in the Resilience Corps Internship program, where they are placed directly within City of San José work crews to set them up for successful careers in environmental stewardship or public service in the areas of park and trail maintenance, wildfire prevention, habitat restoration, watershed protection, tree planting, and other conservation projects. In the past two years, more than 40 of these graduates have been hired into full-time and part-time positions within the City of San José and continue to promote internally. The Resilience Corps Internship Program continues to provide a pipeline for qualified candidates to continue their careers in environmental stewardship while filling positions with high vacancy and turnover rates, such as Maintenance Assistant.

- *Graffiti Removal Pilot:* In partnership with the Department's Community Services Division BeautifySJ program, a graffiti removal contractor is now making regular, proactive visits at highly tagged parks to remove graffiti. Rather than City park maintenance staff spending time painting or power-washing tags or spending 2-3 minutes reporting each individual tag for removal, contractors can identify and address graffiti as they encounter it during these visits. At parks with more than 20 tags, the time saved quickly adds up, allowing staff to focus on other critical maintenance needs. Given that graffiti is a top community concern, this pilot program is expected to reduce graffiti-related issues and improve the overall park experience for residents. The Department is evaluating further efficiencies between park maintenance and BeautifySJ as part of planning for the 2026-2027 budget.
- *Volunteers:* Volunteer events are a cornerstone of park stewardship, providing critical capacity for park maintenance while deepening community ownership of parks and public spaces. A substantial portion of volunteer events take place in lower-HPI neighborhoods, reflecting the Department's commitment to support areas with fewer resources. During 2024-25 Q3 and Q4, 64% of events were held in parks located in lower 50th percentile neighborhoods, and 81% in lower 60th percentile neighborhoods. In total, volunteers contributed 47,340 hours through one-day events and Adopt-a-Park. This is the equivalent of 22.75 full-time staff hours taking care of routine maintenance tasks such as litter and weed

removal. While volunteers provide critical supplemental support and significantly enhance the City's maintenance capacity, they cannot substitute for full-time employees, as volunteer work is limited in scope, tools, training, and the types of tasks that can be safely and effectively performed.

Capital Infrastructure Assessments

While day-to-day park maintenance focuses on immediate needs such as cleanliness, turf care, and safety, larger infrastructure improvements, like playground replacements, restroom renovations, and athletic court rehabilitations, are managed through the Department's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Division. To guide long-term investments, the CIP Division conducts a separate assessment process that evaluates the physical state of park amenities and informs repairs, rehabilitation, and replacement cycles.

The CIP assessments do not measure cleanliness, graffiti, or routine upkeep. Instead, they focus on infrastructure disrepair, decay, and deterioration, using a standardized four-tier rating system with the following categories: Unacceptable, Poor, Fair, and Good. These datasets are essential for capital budget planning and staff workplans, just as PCAs are critical for prioritizing day-to-day maintenance. Together, these two assessments provide complementary perspectives: one lens captures how parks function on a daily basis, while the other evaluates the long-term health and usability of park infrastructure. For example, a CIP assessment of an artificial turf field examines surface integrity, wear, and lifespan to determine replacement timing, while the PCA considers cleanliness, drainage, and graffiti to guide routine upkeep.

Because these datasets address distinct yet interconnected questions, viewing them in isolation yields an incomplete picture of park conditions. Capital infrastructure data are currently used to prioritize limited resources for repairs and renovations and have been collected incrementally over several years, primarily during the winter, when construction is constrained by weather. Since 2020, the CIP Division has made significant progress in assessing a growing number of amenities, including playgrounds, sports courts, exercise equipment, parking lots, shade canopies, artificial turf, trails, and restrooms.

This data-driven approach has already helped advance major capital improvements in the park system, including:

- 45 pickleball courts renovated;
- 42 tennis courts renovated;
- 31 pieces of exercise equipment replaced or rehabilitated;
- 29 playgrounds replaced or rehabilitated;

- 25.5 basketball courts renovated;
- 23.5 miles of trail rehabilitated;
- 6 parking lots resurfaced;
- 4 park restrooms renovated;
- 2 artificial turf soccer field replacements;
- 2 artificial turf dog park renovations;
- 1 futsal court renovated; and
- 1 tetherball renovated

In the past year, this assessment program has expanded to include new amenities, such as shade canopies and park restrooms, and will continue to evolve to address more complex infrastructure like irrigation systems, park amphitheaters, and stages.

Although this work is in its early stages, the Department ultimately envisions using capital condition data alongside maintenance PCAs to inform a more comprehensive, transparent understanding of park needs. In the future, reporting these datasets together will better reflect the full picture of park conditions, support clearer prioritization of investments, and strengthen long-term planning. Over time, this integrated approach will also inform updates to the parks-specific deferred maintenance and infrastructure backlog and align with condition assessments for community centers, aquatic facilities, and other park buildings in partnership with the Department of Public Works.

In coordination with the Department of Public Works, PRNS will refine the approach used to quantify the deferred maintenance and infrastructure backlog for park grounds and amenities, with the goal of improving clarity around identified needs and associated costs. Currently, the backlog for parks and recreation facilities is estimated to exceed \$550 million⁵, with an update expected at City Council in Spring 2026. The work to refine this estimate for parks will build on existing processes and is expected to be reflected in the next Citywide Sustainable Park Maintenance Annual Report.

Community Perception of Parks

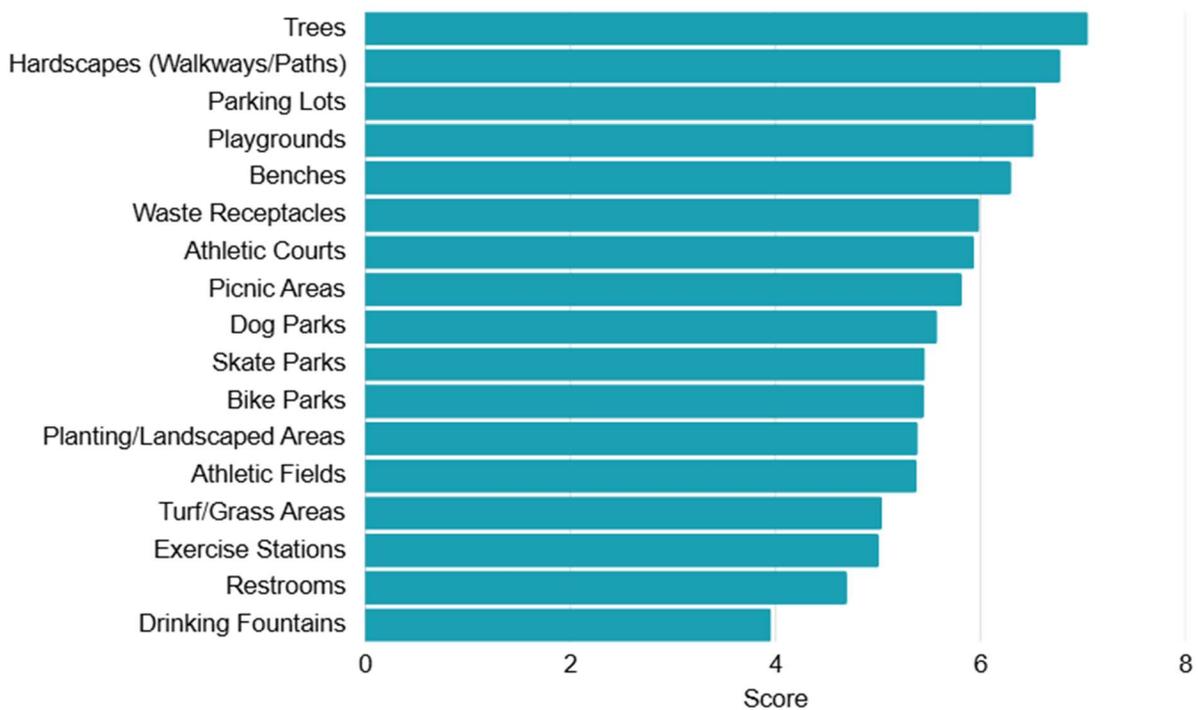
Over the years, the Department has supplemented PCA scores by gathering community input through voluntary surveys. This year, the Department also conducted a statistically valid survey on park concerns from over 1,000 San José residents and reviewed results of the annual and biannual surveys conducted by the City Manager's Office and City Auditor. Altogether, this data shows a decline in public perception of parks since 2010, particularly regarding maintenance—underscoring the importance of pairing condition

⁵ Status Report on Deferred Maintenance and Infrastructure Backlog, Transportation and Environment Committee, April 8, 2024: <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=12828173&GUID=D9051F3C-D031-4CAA-8F10-40C0865FD545>

data with lived community experience to guide decisions and investments of the Department’s limited resources. Below are summaries from each survey.

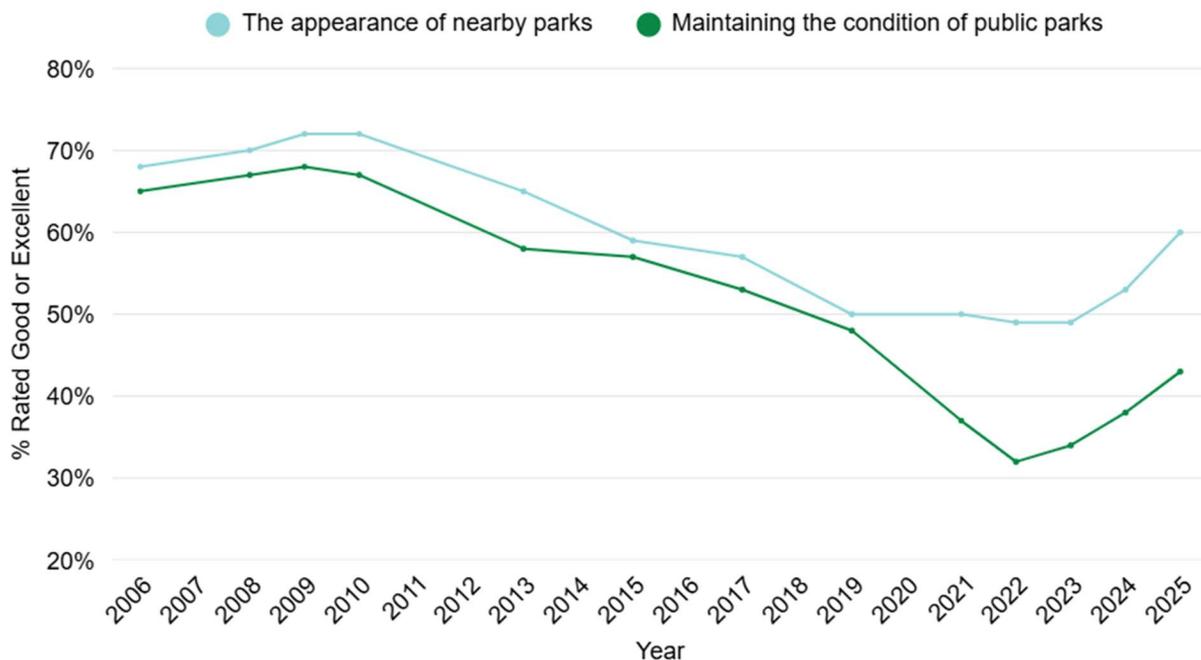
- *Park User Survey:* The Department conducts an annual voluntary park user survey to complement the staff-collected PCAs by capturing how residents experience park quality, safety, and maintenance. In 2025, 320 park users rated conditions across 17 categories, with trees, hardscapes, and parking lots receiving the highest scores, and drinking fountains, restrooms, and exercise stations receiving the lowest. These results generally align with PCAs, though differences highlight how limited maintenance resources require prioritization that can meet technical standards while falling short of community expectations. Open-ended responses emphasized deteriorating turf, restroom conditions, and cleanliness as barriers to park use, with some residents reporting reduced or discontinued visits. Together, the feedback shows that sustained resource constraints affect park conditions and public confidence and use of parks. The survey was advertised by posting signs in parks (Attachment E), Neighborhood Associations emails, Citywide Sports and Community Garden newsletters, and at Community Centers.

Figure 6. 2025 Park User Survey



- City Manager’s Survey:* The Department reviewed long-running data from the City Manager’s Community Satisfaction Survey, which includes questions about parks. The surveys show a sustained decline in public perception of park appearance and maintenance since 2010. Following the Dot Com Bust and the Great Recession, many City departments, including PRNS, experienced significant staffing reductions and shortages. Survey ratings reached their lowest levels around 2020-2022, when Covid-19 pandemic restrictions limited some park maintenance activities and 35% of park maintenance positions became vacant, and only partially recovered since. In 2025, the park maintenance vacancy rate was just 9%. While recent improvements may reflect staffing recovery and targeted investments such as BeautifySJ, 2025 ratings remain below mid-2000s levels. Overall, the survey results reinforce that long-term resource constraints and cleanliness challenges have significantly shaped public confidence in San José parks.

Figure 7. City Manager’s Community Satisfaction Survey (2006-2025)



- Statistically Valid Voter Survey:* In partnership with the City Manager’s Office, the Department conducted a statistically valid survey of more than 1,000 San José voters in September 2025 to better understand park usage and perceptions of maintenance, and inform messaging for a public education campaign ahead of a

potential 2026 ballot measure. The survey shows that most voters visit parks at least a few times per month and view them as a valuable public resource. At the same time, more than one in ten voters immediately associated parks with needing better maintenance when asked to use a word or phrase to describe parks. Voters identified keeping parks clean (i.e., cleaning up trash, illegal dumping, and graffiti), maintaining restrooms, and removing weeds that increase wildfire risk as top priorities—areas where satisfaction is low. The findings highlight a clear gap between public expectations and current park conditions and provide guidance for prioritizing maintenance and current and future investments.

Moving Forward

San José's park system is facing a widening gap between community expectations and the resources available to meet them. As staffing levels have declined and park acreage, usage, and complexity have increased, the Department is working to stretch limited capacity through contractors, volunteers, data-driven planning, and operational efficiencies. PCAs remain a critical tool, but the analysis in this memorandum makes clear that maintenance conditions alone do not fully capture how well a park serves its community—or how residents experience their parks day-to-day.

Traditional PCAs assess whether parks meet defined maintenance standards, while higher-standards assessments reveal the widening gap between defined service levels and community expectations. Capital infrastructure assessments add another essential dimension by evaluating the condition and lifespan of park amenities. Community surveys further underscore that residents' perceptions are shaped not only by cleanliness and upkeep, but also by the presence, condition, and safety of amenities, as well as broader issues such as vandalism and overall sense of welcome.

Taken together, these findings highlight the limitations of evaluating park conditions through siloed metrics. A park may score well in PCAs but still feel inadequate to users due to aging amenities, safety concerns, or a lack of features. Conversely, infrastructure investments may not deliver their full value if ongoing maintenance capacity is insufficient. To reflect these realities more accurately, the Department intends to move toward a more holistic way of measuring park quality through a new Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

The new Parks and Recreation Master Plan, expected to be finalized in 2028, will help the Department better communicate the true state of San José's parks to City Council and the public, guide more strategic investments, and align limited resources with the outcomes residents care about most.

COORDINATION

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

/s/
JON CICIRELLI
Director of Parks, Recreation
and Neighborhood Services

For questions, please contact Avi Yotam, Deputy Director, at avi.yotam@sanjoseca.gov or (408) 535-3573.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Park Maintenance Standards – Higher Standards 2025
- B. Traditional Park Maintenance Standards
- C. 2025 Park Condition Assessment Scores by Park and Civic Ground
- D. 2025 Park Condition Assessment Analyses
- E. Park User Survey Flyer 2025