

9. Consider approval of the Proposed 2025-26 Budget for Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services, including any supplemental materials, and take related actions, as outlined in the referenced budget documents, and as recommended by the County Executive Officer ()



County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors

Agenda Item Submittal

From: Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services

Subject: Proposed 2025-26 Budget for Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services

Meeting Date: June 4, 2025

Formal Title: Consider approval of the Proposed 2025-26 Budget for Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services, including any supplemental materials, and take related actions, as outlined in the referenced budget documents, and as recommended by the County Executive Officer

Recommended Action

Approve the Proposed 2025-26 Budget for Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services, including any supplemental materials, as provided in the referenced budget documents:

- [Proposed Budget](#)
- [Fixed Assets](#)
- [Continuing Agreements List](#)
- [Unified Fee Schedule](#)

Executive Summary

The Proposed 2025-26 Budget for the Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services supports four divisions: Parks Operations, Cultural Services, Art in Public Places, and County Service Area 11, with funded staffing of 55.0 funded full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.

Discussion

The mission of the Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services (Parks) is to provide safe, well-designed and maintained parks and a wide variety of recreational and cultural opportunities for our diverse community. Department and division operational objectives are shown in the Proposed 2025-26 Budget document and 2025-27 Operational Plan. Both are available online at: www.SCCVision.us

The Parks Proposed Budget includes a negotiated salary and benefit increase as well as a change in facility charges to properly reflect the cost of facility services and utilities. The budget also includes \$5,114,356 that provides funding for eight capital projects. These projects can be reviewed in the in the [2025-30 Capital Improvement Plan \(CIP\)](#).

The budget excludes three state grants (Sea Level Rise grant, Greyhound Accommodations grant, and Non-Infrastructure Programming grant for Rail Trail), resulting in a decrease of \$2,472,988 in intergovernmental revenues and a corresponding decrease of \$2,377,958 in services and supplies. Any unused balances will roll over to the next fiscal year through concluding budget actions.

The budget reflects important service changes, including additional extra help staffing in Parks Maintenance and Aquatics, along with increased revenue from new rentals, expanded aquatics programs, and contributions from external agencies. Additional changes include rising liability insurance, utilities, and vegetation management costs.

Funded staffing of 55.0 FTE positions is status quo for 2025-26.

Budgeted funding will continue to support ongoing staff work, including ongoing efforts to provide access to well-maintained parks, as well as outdoor, recreational, and cultural services that support a healthy community. It also demonstrates continued efforts to improve the health and resilience of the natural environment.

Over the next fiscal year, Parks will be focused primarily on implementation of the recently passed Measure Q, ongoing climate change mitigation and vegetation management efforts, refinement and localization of equity metrics, and continued planning and development of the Rail Trail.

The Parks Proposed Budget reallocates several positions within the Recreation division, as well as absorbs the Recreation division into the Parks Operations division, with no impact on overall costs, to better match services.

Financial Impact

The Parks Proposed Budget includes \$17,975,463 in expenditures offset by \$8,370,450 in revenues, \$6,614,251 in General Fund contribution, a District Sales Tax contribution in the amount of \$2,000,000, and Other Fund contributions of 990,762. This reflects a total expenditure decrease of \$1,002,883 or 5.3% from the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Adopted Budget.

Strategic Initiatives

Equity Framework - Plans, Policies & Budgets, Leadership, Operations & Services
Operational Plan - Dynamic Economy, Operational Excellence

Submitted By:

Jeff Gaffney, Director of Parks, Open Space and Cultural Services

Recommended By:

Carlos J. Palacios, County Executive Officer

Artificial Intelligence Acknowledgment:

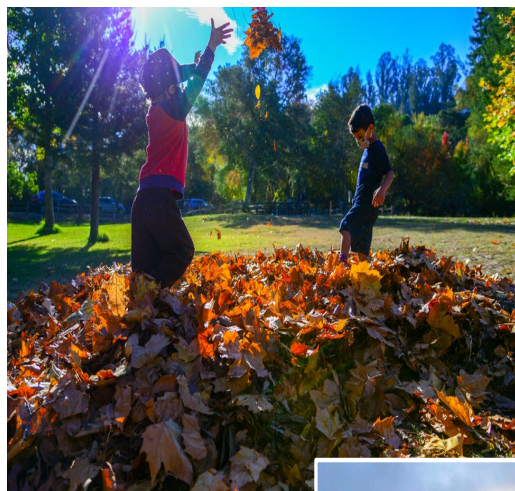
Artificial Intelligence (AI) did not significantly contribute to the development of this agenda item.



2025-26 Requested Budget

Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services

Jeff Gaffney, Director
Rebecca Hurley, Deputy Director



Presentation Overview



Our Mission



How We are Organized



Budget Overview



Fiscal & Staffing Details



Federal/State Risks & Emerging Issues



Request & Questions

Our Mission is to...

provide safe, well-designed and maintained parks, and a variety of recreational and cultural opportunities for our diverse community

PARKS STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1: Great Facilities

Goal 2: Strong Organization

Goal 3: Awesome Programs

Goal 4: Effective Stewardship

Goal 5: Equity



Our Vision is to...

Create a healthy and vibrant county where everyone can be active, explore, learn, play and connect and where our diverse natural and cultural resources are celebrated and protected for generations to come



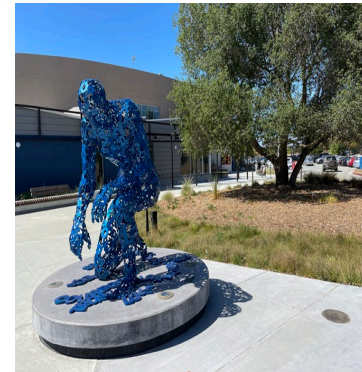
Department Services



ADMINISTRATION



MAINTENANCE
& FACILITIES



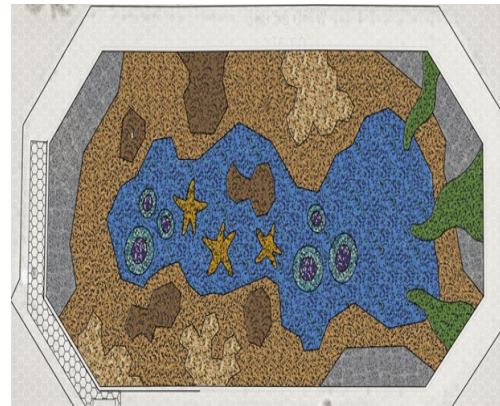
ARTS & CULTURE



RECREATION



AQUATICS

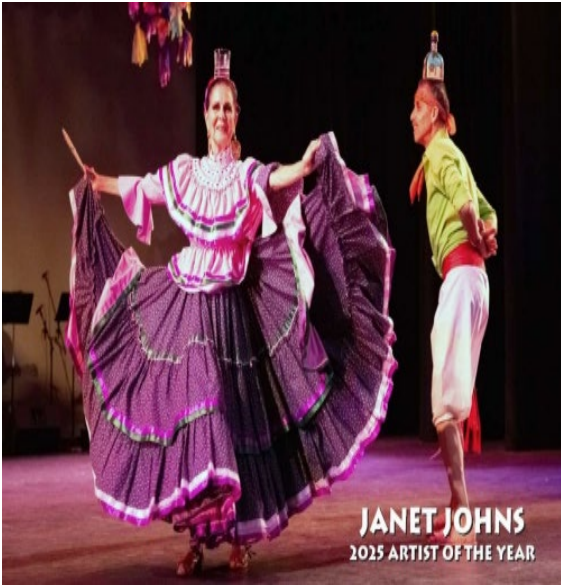


PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT



COMMUNITY
OPPORTUNITIES –
VOLUNTEERS

Achievements



2025 Artist of the Year



Winter Wonderland



Community Grants



Outdoor Education



Skills of Life Cafe



Aquatics Programs

Achievements

Floral Park Playground



Natural Resource Management



Brommer Park Renovations



Hidden Beach Restroom



Freedom Lake Restoration

Achievements



Volunteer Program

1,009 Volunteers

11,850 Volunteer Hours

\$457,529 in Volunteer Value

Major Budget Changes – Expenses

	Amount	Title of change
↑	\$ 485,700	Utilities expenses
↑	\$ 263,440	Extra-Help staffing
↑	\$ 287,203	Property / Liability insurance expenses
↑	\$ 195,000	Vegetation management expenses
↑	\$ 309,096	ISD and GSD charges and services
↓	\$ 1,512,958	Grant-funded expenses excluded (will be re-budgeted)



Major Budget Changes – Revenues

	Amount	Title of change
↑	\$ 115,000	Expanded facility rental offerings revenues
↑	\$ 125,000	Lode Street / Moran Lake maintenance revenues
↑	\$ 168,000	Expanded aquatics programs revenues
↑	\$ 97,000	Live Oak Library Annex / custodial services revenue
↓	\$ 1,607,988	State grant revenues excluded (will be re-budgeted)

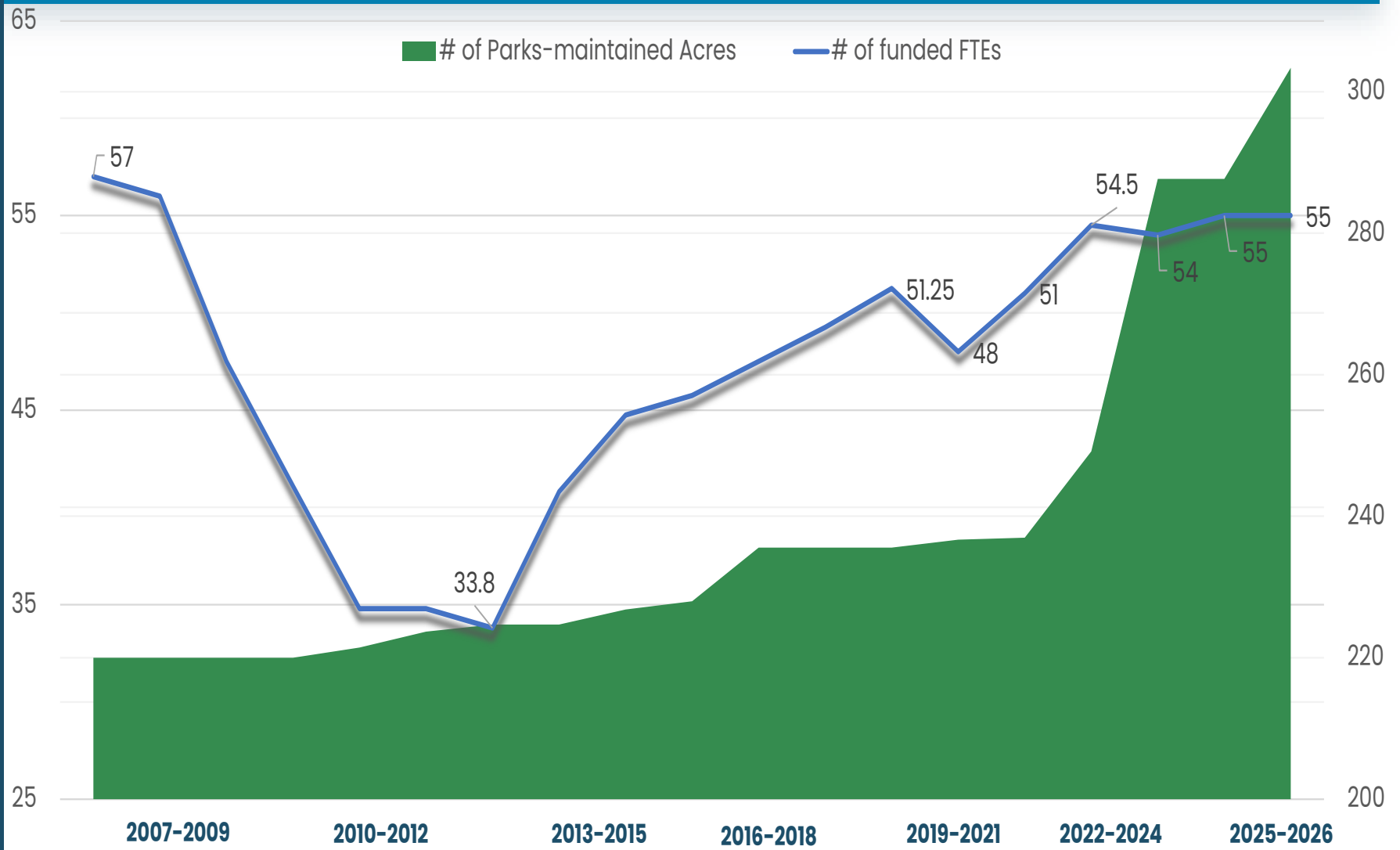


Summary of Proposed Budget

	2024-25 Adopted	2025-26 Proposed	Amount of Change	Percent Change
Revenues	\$9,487,332	\$8,370,450	(\$1,116,882)	-11.8%
Expenses	\$18,978,346	\$17,975,463	(\$1,002,883)	-5.3%
District Sales Tax Contribution <small>Measure K</small>	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,000,000	100%
General Fund Contribution	\$7,413,475	\$6,614,251	(\$799,224)	-10.8%
Other Fund Contribution	\$1,077,539	\$990,762	(\$86,777)	-8.1%
Funded Staffing	55	55	0.00	0%



Parks Acreage & Staffing Trends



Upcoming Projects

Freedom Lake
Biotic Studies
Invasives
Removal



Waterslide
Project



Sea Level Rise
Feasibility Study



North Coast
Signage

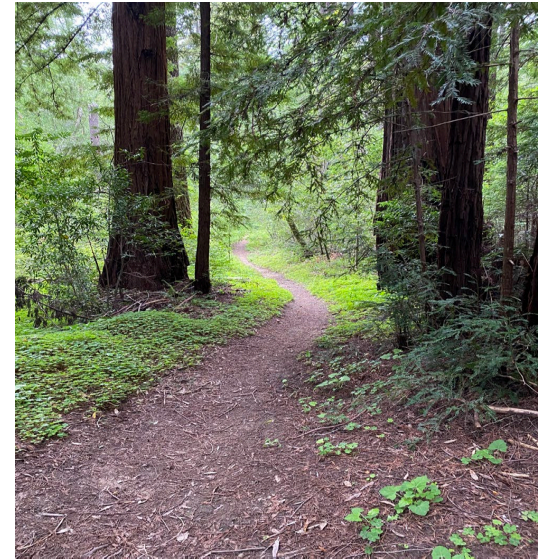


Upcoming Projects

Pinto Lake
County
Skatepark



Miller Property
Improvements



Mesa
Renovations



South County
Park Master
Plan/
Interim Access



State & Federal Funding Risks



- Reduced public funding for schools and school-adjacent programming which Parks currently provides.
- Rec scholarships and free programming reduced, primarily to low-income residents who depend on these services for recreation, education, and wellness.
- Health and human services agencies will cut programs promoting physical activity, nutrition, and mental health.
- AmeriCorps: Critical environmental stewardship and vegetation management throughout the county will no longer occur.

Emerging Issues

- Vegetation management and increased liability
- Increased cost of utilities
- Competition for grant funds
- Need to increase Parks Measure F
- Direct impacts of climate change
- Measure Q implementation



Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services

Approve the Proposed Budget for the Parks Department which includes

- Revenues of \$8,370,450
- Expenses of \$17,975,463
- General Fund Contribution of \$6,614,251
- District Sales Tax Contribution of \$2,000,000
- Other Funds Contribution of \$990,762
- Staffing of 55.00 funded FTEs





Questions

