



March 15, 2026

To: Mountain View Parks and Recreation Commission

Subject: Comments on Draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan Update

Dear Chair Davis and Members of the Parks and Recreation Commission,

On behalf of the Santa Clara Valley Bird Alliance and GreenSpacesMV, thank you to staff for the thoughtful work reflected in the Draft Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. We especially appreciate the Plan's recognition that parks are not only recreational spaces but also important ecological assets. As the Plan notes, parks "serve as essential public infrastructure that supports biodiversity, climate resilience, and environmental stewardship." (p. 9).

We also want to thank staff for elevating biodiversity to a core goal of the parks system. The Plan's goal to "advance biodiversity, habitat protection, and natural elements as essential components of a resilient and inclusive park and open space system" is an important step toward aligning planning efforts and integrating biodiversity into city parks. (p. 15).

To help ensure these commitments translate into meaningful outcomes, we offer a few suggestions:

- The Plan should more clearly call for locally native planting in park design and renovation. The Plan highlights community interest in "tree canopy, native planting, and biodiversity" (p. 10), but the guidance would be stronger if it explicitly prioritized locally native species appropriate to the Santa Clara Valley. Locally native plants support far more insects, birds, and other wildlife than non-native species and are essential for achieving the biodiversity goals outlined in this Plan.
- The Plan could also more clearly recognize the role of parks as part of a connected habitat network. While the document acknowledges that parks support biodiversity and habitat, small urban parks function best ecologically when they are connected through green corridors such as creeks, trails, and street tree networks. Explicitly recognizing habitat connectivity would help ensure that future park design and improvements contribute to a citywide ecological network.
- The Plan references naturalized habitat areas and pollinator gardens as potential park elements. As these features are implemented, it would be helpful to include guidance on protecting and managing habitat areas within parks so they function ecologically while coexisting with

recreation. Simple strategies such as buffers, signage, and seasonal protections can allow habitat areas to support wildlife while remaining compatible with public use.

- The Plan discusses where lighting may be added for safety and recreation, but it would also be helpful to recognize that some areas of parks should remain unlit. As the City advances its biodiversity goals, guidance identifying where dark areas should be preserved—such as along creek corridors and habitat areas—would help reduce impacts on wildlife.
- The Strategic Plan would benefit from a clear annual public reporting process. Because the Plan includes performance metrics intended to track progress (p. 16), we recommend scheduling a yearly review before the Parks and Recreation Commission, with the report transmitted to the City Council. This will help ensure transparency and allow the community to track progress toward the Plan's goals.
- While the Plan proposes prioritizing improvements in specific parks, we encourage the City to also pursue a citywide strategy of incremental improvements, including expanded native planting and increased tree canopy across parks each year. This approach would ensure that all neighborhoods see steady improvements, even when larger capital projects occur on a longer schedule.
- The Plan justifiably treats tree canopy as an amenity, but it is important to recognize that trees also function as essential ecological infrastructure. Urban canopy provides habitat, cooling, stormwater benefits, and climate resilience, and the Plan would be stronger if it consistently recognized canopy in this broader role.
- The Plan notes that additional staff capacity may be needed in areas including biodiversity expertise (p. 11). We encourage the City to clarify how this expertise will be incorporated and whether the process will include transparency and opportunities for public input.

Overall, we appreciate the direction of this Strategic Plan and the City's commitment to integrating biodiversity into its parks system. With stronger language on locally native planting, regular public reporting, and clear integration of biodiversity expertise, the Plan can become an effective tool for strengthening both recreation and ecological health in Mountain View.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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