



# SACRAMENTO PARKS PLAN 2040

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For more than 175 years—from its initial John Sutter Jr. land grants in 1849—the City of Sacramento has built and maintained a robust system of parks, parkways, and open space that today comprises more than 4,300 acres.

Sacramento parks play a critical role in the life of the city. They provide safe and engaging places to play and relax, preserve natural habitats, protect greenspace along our rivers, and help mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. Our parks also support healthy communities through programs and amenities that encourage active recreation, celebrate cultural diversity, support youth development, and connect people to nature and to each other.

*Sacramento parks play a critical role in the life of the city.*

The Department of Youth, Parks, and Community Enrichment (YPCE) serves as steward of Sacramento's parks and open spaces. Dedicated to creating an integrated and accessible park and recreation system for all, YPCE seeks to address recent and historic challenges, from the COVID pandemic to systemic inequities affecting people of color and marginalized communities. In addition, the Department tracks evolving trends and shifting demographics that are changing how people use our parks.

## PARKS PLAN PURPOSE

**Parks Plan 2040** outlines a strategy for the future of Sacramento's park system. The plan is a result of a multi-year effort combining comprehensive community outreach with a thorough analysis of existing conditions. Parks Plan 2040 identifies community needs and priorities and establishes key directions to support the following goals over the next 20 years:

- Secure and sustain the assets, programs, staff, and resources needed to support equitable recreation benefits for all residents;
- Enhance parks, recreation, and youth development opportunities as our city diversifies and grows; and
- Address the increasing demand for parks and healthy lifestyles that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and post-pandemic years.

Parks Plan 2040 aligns with the City's 2040 General Plan Update as well as other essential planning initiatives including the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan, and the Urban Forest Plan.

**The City of Sacramento is well known for its diverse residential neighborhoods, bustling local economy, extensive park network, and robust tree canopy. It is understood across the City of Sacramento that parks, recreation assets and programs play a critical role in fostering livability while reflecting community identity, shaping new development, conserving greenspace, and supporting the recreation needs of youth and all residents.**





# COMMUNITY VOICES

Thousands of residents, interested persons, recreation and community groups, and city and community leaders shared their diverse insights into the needs, preferences, and priorities for Sacramento’s parks and recreation system.

The Parks Plan 2040 outreach effort cast a wide net, engaging as many people as possible while focusing on individual voices.

The engagement process combined traditional methods (surveys, focus groups, etc.) with unique activities like community pop-ups and art contests designed to engage Sacramento youth. Much of the outreach materials were offered in multiple languages to engage communities that are hard to reach, and activities were planned during times that were more convenient for residents and groups.

Given the Plan’s focus on improving park equity and access for underserved or under-resourced communities, it was critical that the outreach for the Plan solicit representative voices from those communities. To help reach broad and diverse audiences, over 100 local non-profits, community-based organizations, and advocacy groups partnered with Parks Plan 2040 on a variety of events, panels, and briefings.


As a result of the comprehensive outreach, community voices rang loud and clear, with thousands of residents sharing their opinions about Sacramento’s park system. Throughout the process, some common themes arose, which are shared on the next page.



**36 Submissions**  
Photo Contest



**46 Participants**  
Community Panels



**41 Submissions**  
Youth Drawing Activity



**388 Participants**  
Community Connections



**1,589 Respondents**  
Map-Based Online Survey



**61 Participants**  
Youth Art Expo and Contest



**24 Events**  
City Briefings, Presentations,  
Pop-Ups and Advisory Meetings



**600 Interviews**  
Parks Prioritization Survey

# MAJOR OUTREACH THEMES



**Park Safety, Condition, & Maintenance**  
Park safety, maintenance, and the condition of amenities and facilities contribute to parks that feel more comfortable, secure, and welcoming.



**Equitable Investment**  
Resources and investments are not equitably distributed across all of Sacramento City parks.



**Culturally Specific Public Spaces & Programming**  
Sacramento is a very diverse city, and residents want culturally specific public spaces and programming that celebrate diversity in the ways that people use, relate to, and value parks.



**Health & Wellness**  
Sacramento’s parks and programs contribute to physical health, mental health, and community wellbeing in many ways.



**Shared Responsibilities & Community Collaboration**  
Shared responsibilities and community collaboration are essential to cultivating a sense of pride and accountability for parks and open spaces.



**Youth Development & Leadership**  
Youth development and leadership gives children, youth, and young adults opportunities for new experiences, interactions, and personal growth.



**Accessibility & Access**  
People of all abilities, ages, and backgrounds should have access to city parks and programs to be able to take advantage of the benefits they offer.



**Connections to Nature, Places, & People**  
Connections to the natural environment, our neighborhoods, and community deepens our appreciation for the places where we live, work, and play.



**Communication & Information Sharing**  
Communications and information sharing ensure accountability and transparency when implementing the Parks Plan.



# PARK ACCESS AND EQUITY

The Parks Plan 2040 assessed the parks system based on specific factors related to community characteristics and park needs. To better understand disparities in park access, the Parks Plan included a spatial analysis of specific demographic characteristics and park distribution across the city and within Sacramento’s eight Council Districts.

## The Plan includes mapping analyses for the following information:

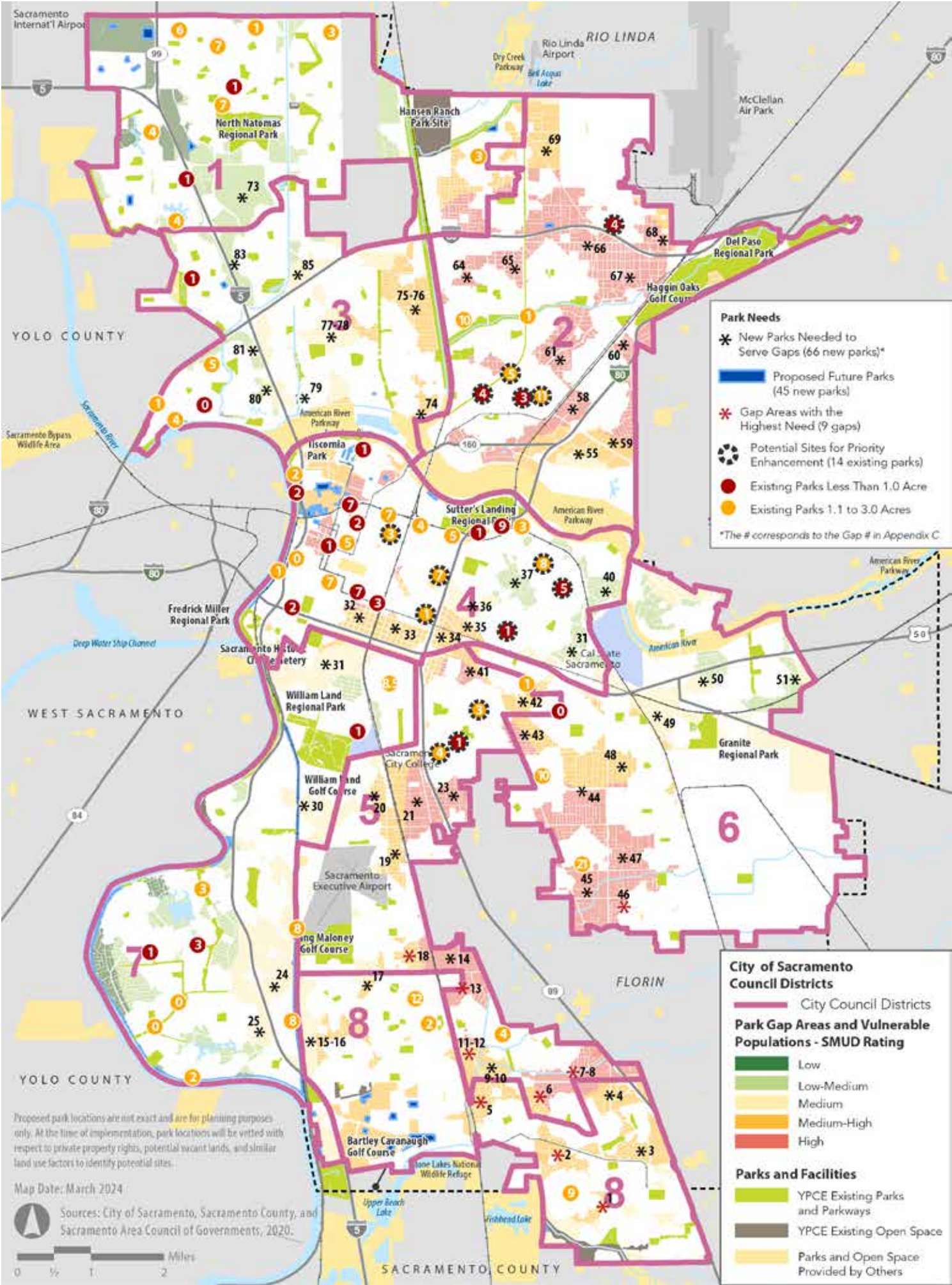
- Population density
- Non-White populations
- Vulnerable populations
- Crime in parks
- Homelessness in parks
- Existing park access and service gaps
- Future park access and service gaps
- Park service gaps in vulnerable areas
- Existing park size and development

## Closing the Gaps

The City of Sacramento’s park and recreation system is expansive, health-promoting, and reflective of the region’s natural features. According to the Trust for Public Land, 84% of Sacramentans have access to a park. However, there is an equity issue. Many residents in the most vulnerable areas do not have access to a nearby park, or their nearby park is small and sparsely developed. Few new parks are being planned to serve these residents. Instead, most future new parks are planned to serve new housing.

- Approximately 66 new parks are needed in existing neighborhoods that do not have a park within walking distance. Many of these are located in Sacramento’s most vulnerable and diverse communities, especially in Council Districts 2, 5, 6 and 8. These are noted with an asterisk on the map. No funding has been identified to meet these needs.

- A total of 45 additional future parks are planned to serve new housing when it is developed. Noted in blue on the map, these are primarily located in Districts 1, 4, and 8. The City relies on both the Quimby Ordinance and Park Impact Fees to acquire and develop these sites. However, the amount of developer-provided funding collected is not sufficient for full site development given current costs.
- Nine gap areas with the “highest need” are shown with a red asterisk on the map. These unserved residential areas are high density; they have a majority of residents who are considered vulnerable and racially diverse, and they do not have access to nearby public or private parks. These priority sites for park development are located mainly in Southern Sacramento in Districts 5, 6, and 8.
- Fourteen existing parks were noted for “priority enhancement” based on their small size, insufficient level of development, and lack of nearby parks. Shown with a ring around the red or orange dot that indicates the park size and number of existing amenities and facilities, these parks are located in Districts 2, 3, 4, and 5.
- Many additional existing parks, shown in red or orange circles on the map, were flagged for having less park acreage or fewer amenities than in more desirable multi-use neighborhood parks. This analysis does not account for parks with existing assets that are in poor condition or considered unsafe, which YPCE documents separately.
- The City wishes to provide all residents with walkable access to quality parks, because everyone deserves a great park. However, YPCE lacks sufficient funding for park development, asset repair and replacement, and park maintenance. Because of differences in park funding sources, this inequity and disparity in park access will increase—unless the City changes its investment strategy. The City must ensure that new development covers the costs of new parks. It must identify funding sources to address equity-based park needs and the ongoing maintenance of all parks.







# PARK SYSTEM NEEDS

Parks Plan 2040 included a level of service (LOS) analysis to measure the sufficiency, amount, and quality of services provided. LOS is frequently used as a standard to guide the provision of parks, facilities, programs, and maintenance. However, it must align with the availability of staffing, funding, and resources available to be achievable.

## Parkland Needs

Parks Plan 2040 evaluated the City’s ability to meet its adopted level of service standards for parkland. It identified more realistic standards for the future. Key takeaways include:

- Sacramento is not meeting its adopted standards for parkland, which are set much higher than feasible. However, the amount of parkland YPCE currently provides is on par with the median of large cities nationwide.
- The City has invested so much in parkland that it has lacked sufficient funds for park maintenance, asset replacement, park development, and programming.
- The Parks Plan proposes reducing the City’s parkland level of service standard to 8.5 acres per 1,000 residents. It does not advise selling existing parks; it means the City will invest less in new parkland as its population grows.
- A key change is that the Parks Plan recommends investing in more neighborhood parks and community parks to provide more equitable park benefits to all residents. To increase the City’s investment in neighborhood parks, a lesser focus on regional parks and open space is advised.
- In addressing needs for parkways and open space, YPCE will partner with other departments to provide shared use paths, and it will integrate natural areas into parks to support climate resilience and connections to nature.

## Recreation Facility Needs

Parks Plan 2040 identified new guidelines for recreation facilities—ranging from playground to community center and skateparks— by factoring in level of service, park design and development, comparisons to other communities, and specialized needs for accessibility, youth, and diverse cultures. These guidelines will help YPCE add new amenities and facilities to meet community needs.

## Specialized Facility Needs

Community members expressed a desire to have more recreation facilities and amenities that support needs relating to equity and accessibility, children and youth, and diverse communities and cultures. The Parks Plan identifies facility needs within the following categories:

### Accessibility, Equity, and Inclusion

ADA Accessible Facilities and Paths; All-Inclusive Playgrounds; Water Mister/Spray Areas; Dedicated vs. Drop-in Facilities; Lighting; Seating; Restrooms; Multi-use Recreation Centers; Senior Centers; and Small Footprint Facilities

### Youth and Children

Play; Sports; Challenge Features; Water Play; Learning; Social Spaces; Childcare and Teencare; and Nature Access

### Diverse Communities and Cultures

Cricket; Futsal; Bocce; Padel; Badminton; Sepak Takraw; Soccer; Tai Chi; Yoga; Chess, Kite Flying; Fishing; and Plant Harvesting

## Youth Programming Needs

Maintaining the strength and viability of YPCE’s youth programming is a key priority. YPCE programs will continue to support youth health, mental health, and wellbeing by encouraging fitness, fun, inclusiveness, skill development, team building, social opportunities, and community cohesion. The Parks Plan 2040 also identifies new services that can be expanded to support and empower Sacramento’s diverse and vulnerable youth.



## Maintenance and Asset Management Needs

YPCE is tasked with maintaining their parks and facilities to ensure clean, safe, attractive, and enjoyable recreational spaces. This includes the regular day-to-day care such as litter pickup, restroom cleaning and mowing, as well as the stewardship of natural areas. The Department also must repair and/or replace old and worn facilities at the end of their lifecycles. Due to a lack of funding, YPCE provides maintenance as the lowest acceptable level, and it severely delays “end-of-life” facility replacements. Parks Plan 2040 identifies the higher maintenance service levels and investment that residents desire to have safe, well-maintained, well-stewarded parks, facilities, and trails.

## Additional Program and Service Needs

YPCE provides camps, programs, activities, events, and social services to support youth wellbeing, lifelong recreation, enrichment, and community cohesiveness. The changing availability of facilities, new funding sources, and the evolution of City programming over time will affect needs for program management over the next 20 years.

The Parks Plan 2040 identifies additional maintenance, management, and staffing needs related to programs and major facilities such as community centers, sports fields, wading and swimming pools. It also identifies opportunities to expand mobile recreation programming, community events, nature-based programs, and cultural, health, and wellness programs.



# PARK PRIORITIZATION SURVEY FINDINGS

In addition to outreach methods that generated these major themes, the Parks Plan 2040 also conducted a statistically-representative Park Prioritization Survey. Highlights from the survey results include:



**96% agree**  
that parks provide crucial physical and mental health benefits.



**91% agree**  
that residents in older, lower-income communities should have access to the same quality and quantity of parks and recreation options as residents in newer areas.



**90% believe**  
that parks and recreation are important to overall quality of life.



**76% use parks**  
a few times a month or more.



**70% feel**  
that parks should be funded according to need.



**60% believe**  
that improving park safety is a high priority.

# YPCE VALUES & VISION



## VALUES

- |                  |                        |             |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| Enjoyment & Fun  | Safety                 | Stewardship |
| Customer Service | Excellence             | Innovation  |
| Collaboration    | Inclusiveness & Equity |             |



## VISION

Our beautiful parks and enriching programs create a thriving community with healthy, strong, and cohesive neighborhoods.







# HEALTH + EQUITABLE PARKS + ACCESS

## KEY DIRECTIONS



### HEALTH & WELLNESS

- Increase the number of spray areas across the city.
- Provide facilities, programs, and resources to support physical and mental health, fitness, and wellbeing.
- Support cultural identity and diversity.



### YOUTH WELLBEING

- Support Sacramento Children's Fund and implementation of the Five-Year Strategic Investment Plan.
- Develop and maintain recreation assets for children and youth ages 0-25 years. Expand challenge features.
- Provide a range of recreation and enrichment programs for toddlers, children, youth, tweens, teens, and young adults.
- Expand programs and services to support youth health, special needs, educational programs, childcare, youth development, workforce/ volunteer training, and family support.



### NATURE & TRAIL CONNECTIONS

- Collaborate to improve trail connections.
- Expand nature-based recreation facilities and programs.
- Designate natural areas for the purpose of protection and best practice maintenance planning.



### RESILIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY

- Promote urban cooling.
- Provide sustainable parks across the city.
- Mitigate climate impacts and enhance the ecological function of parks.



### YPCE LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION

- Define YPCE's role and expand its leadership in key City initiatives.
- Evaluate community centers leased to and operated by others in City parks.
- Expand connections and communication with School Districts, partners, facility operators, community leaders, and volunteers.



### PARK & PROGRAM INVESTMENT

- Right-size the park system and funding to support equitable investment.
- Update Quimby and Park Impact Fee requirements.
- Dedicate funding for park maintenance, operations, and asset repair or replacement.



### SAFETY & MAINTENANCE

- Adopt a new project prioritization tool and process.
- Ensure adequate maintenance funds, staffing, and resources are available for all parks.
- Continue YPCE's Parks Ranger Program and community safety initiatives.



### QUALITY PARKS AND PROGRAMS

- Adopt and implement the new park policies, guidelines, and standards.
- Develop minimum requirements for neighborhood parks.
- Target investment in "deficient" sites.
- Pursue accreditation by the NRPA Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) to demonstrate quality park and program management and services.



### EQUITABLE ACCESS

- Provide parks within walking distance of homes in new residential areas.
- Triage park development and services in existing unserved "gaps."
- Adopt a new project prioritization tool and process.
- Ensure universal access to parks for all abilities.
- Apply the SEED GIS Tool in scoring priority projects.



# A CALL FOR INVESTMENT

The Parks Plan 2040 provides new standards, guidelines, policies, and implementation actions to guide the City’s investment in parks, recreation facilities, programs and services. It offers a decision-making framework and five new tools that YPCE will use to immediately begin implementing key projects, programs, and park enhancements over the next five years:

- Park Development and Renovation Guidelines
- Capital and Maintenance Cost Assumptions
- Project Prioritization Tool
- Park Project Programming Guide (PPPG)  
Project Request Form
- Funding Sources

The community-driven, data-driven Parks Plan 2040 is the culmination of a dedicated collaborative effort among YPCE, other Departments, the Sacramento City Council, the Parks and Community Enrichment Commission, the Sacramento Youth Commission, and many community organizations and residents.

Parks Plan 2040 provides the directions needed to make meaningful investments in Sacramento’s parks, facilities, programs, and services. To meet these goals, Sacramento must dedicate the funding to make it happen—increased impact fees and maintenance and operations funding are critical to the success of the City’s park and recreation system.

**Parks Plan 2040 reflects the City’s desire to be responsive to community priorities, equitable in the provision of quality parks and programs, and sustainable in the management of City assets.**



**571**

**ATHLETICS / SPORTS FACILITIES**



**628**

**OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**



**77**

**INDOOR / SPECIALIZED FACILITIES**



**96**

**GARDENS / NATURAL FACILITIES**



**235**

**PARKS, PARKWAYS, & OPEN SPACE**



**4,329**

**PARK ACRES**



SACRAMENTO  
**PARKS  
PLAN**  
**2040**