



P&CS Monthly Commission Report

Parks & Community Services Director

Contents

- Mission, Goals, and Priorities
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Mission, Goals, and Priorities

- **GOAL 1: Leadership**
 - *Increase youth & adult leadership in the field of Parks & Community Services*
- **GOAL 2: Field & Facility Management**
 - *Increase utility, reduce cost, and maintain the highest value of services offered through facilities*
- **GOAL 3: Recreational Opportunities**
 - *Offer youth & adult sports and outdoor recreation programs that meet community needs*
- **GOAL 4: Cost Reductions or Revenue Increases**
 - *Increase sustainability of summer programs, leisure classes, and the Zoo through partnerships*
- **GOAL 5: Quality of Life**
 - *Increase the utility of parks, open space, and playgrounds through coordinated improvements*

Staffing





Capital Improvement Projects

Joe Herb Sport Complex- \$1.1 Million- added another \$380,000
Merced Regional Sports Complex- \$11 Million
Merced Applegate Zoo- \$1.8 Million
General Vang Pao Park (phase 1)- \$1.2 Million
Move P&CS to Senior Community Center- \$130,000, in planning
McNamara Soccer Fields- \$1.4 Million (not acquired)



Joe Herb Sports Complex

Complex renovations will focus on infield and outfield grounds, irrigation, pathways, lighting, and restroom/concessions and shade.

- In preliminary planning now with HUD Staff
- Engineering/design
- Bid
- Construction





Merced Regional Sports Complex- Full build-out site plan



Merced Applegate Zoo





City of Merced - Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan

COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE

September 10, 2025
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

The City of Merced invites residents to a community open house to learn about the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Master Plan. Come hear project updates, share your ideas, and provide feedback to help shape the future of Merced's parks and public spaces. Your input will play a vital role in guiding the next steps of this important community plan.

Merced Senior Community Center - 755 W. 15th Street, Merced, CA 95340

Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan (PROS)

The Parks, Rec. & Open Space Master Plan was an 18 month initiative to analyze current programs, conditions, and SOP's and revise, delete or add in consideration of the future in Merced

Introduction *Master Plan Mission*

“Play on Purpose”

At the core...



Purposeful play fosters well-being, strengthens community bonds, and encourages lifelong engagement in recreation.

Who it’s for...



Each park, trail, and facility is designed to meet the unique needs of our community, inspire purposeful play, and foster lasting connections.



Our foundational pillars...



Thoughtful Design

Recreation spaces are intentionally designed to be accessible, sustainable, and built to serve the community for years to come.



Play for Everyone

Parks bring people together, creating inclusive spaces where all ages and abilities can connect and enjoy.



Community & Connection

Recreation fosters social connections, well-being, and active lifestyles, strengthening communities in the process.

500+

Total Engagement Touchpoints



**Your parks,
your voices.**

1392

Total Comments Received



200+

Community Open House Attendees



The Process Engagement

Staff & Council Planning Sessions

15 staff and City Council members participated

Separate planning sessions were held to learn about the planning process as well as undergo a series of analyses and concentrated discussions on their perspectives about the Department.

Community Focus Group Meetings

100 individuals representing five different groups

Five community focus groups of select stakeholders gathered for concentrated discussions on their perspectives about the Department through a series of structured questions.

Community Survey

124 responses

A seven question survey was made available for residents to share their opinions on usage, thoughts, and perceptions of the Department's parks, facilities, programs and services.

Community Open House

200+ residents attended

This gathering included general information about the PROS Master Plan process and asked attendees to provide input on their preferences on park and facility amenities and concepts.

Pop Up Engagements

500+ engagement touchpoints

To meet residents where they are, five pop up opportunities were held at various locations throughout Merced. The effort asked respondents to share their preferred new park amenities.



2026-2030 PROS MASTER PLAN

Plan Pillars



Infrastructure & Maintenance



Community Connection



Safety & Inclusion



Resources & Stewardship

The four Plan Pillars are:

- **Infrastructure & Maintenance** represents the existing and future physical environments.
- **Connected Community** represents the importance of being informed by residents as the Department provides them with services.
- **Safety & Inclusion** represents providing welcoming, inclusive, and safe services for all.
- **Resources & Stewardship** represents the importance of the strategic use of human and financial resources.

Throughout the rest of this section of the PROS Master Plan, each Plan Pillar will be overviewed and examined before the plan's subsequent recommended actions are identified and reviewed.

Plan Pillars *Infrastructure & Maintenance*

Strategic and sustainable management of a park and recreation system's maintenance and infrastructure, though a challenge, is an absolute necessity for both the organization and the community. By prioritizing its current and future infrastructure and maintenance needs, the Department can deliver exceptional places and spaces for Merced's residents today and tomorrow.

By identifying it as a PROS Master Plan Pillar, the Department commits to providing safe, functional, and sustainable spaces and places through the appropriate maintenance, repair, and improvements of the physical assets of its parks, trails, open spaces, and facilities.

Recommended actions resulting from the process (included on the following pages as well as in the Department's Strategic Action Plan) intend to influence the following intended outcomes.

- **Quality places and spaces:** The Department will prioritize providing clean, well maintained, and accessible infrastructure in its parks, trails, and facilities.
- **Staff and community pride:** By prioritizing infrastructure and maintenance, Department staff will provide spaces and places that they will value taking care of while then becoming highly-cherished places and spaces by the community that will increase the Department image.
- **High levels of service:** Deliver responsive, reliable, and customer-focused services that consistently meet established standards and provide a positive experience for all park users.
- **Future needs:** The Department will continue to responsibly evaluate future opportunities that align with current gaps and imbalances to ensure infrastructure meets community needs.



Plan Pillars *Infrastructure & Maintenance*

Recommended Actions

- **1.1: Conduct a comprehensive Park and Facility Asset Inventory Report.**
A comprehensive Park and Facility Asset Inventory of all the City's parks will both identify the immediate needs and priority order for upgrades as well as support the overall findings of the PROS Master Plan.
- **1.2: Enhance the existing aging park amenities with modern amenities.**
Utilizing the findings from Action 1.1, the Department can utilize those recommendations to begin replacing the aging assets with modern upgrades. Addressing these deficiencies prevents further deterioration, protects the City's existing investments, and ensures safe experiences for users. Examples of enhancements may include playground renovations compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act standards, updating existing aquatic features to combat heat, replacing lighting at outdoor sports facilities, and resurface and restripe courts.
- **1.3: Develop a comprehensive maintenance management plan.**
Establishing relevant guidelines and standards, by way of a Department Maintenance Management Plan, will help ensure the upkeep of the Department's facilities, parks, trails, and open spaces. Considerations of the Maintenance Management Plan include responsibilities and expectations, impacts to existing staffing, and determination of additional staff.
- **1.4: Establish a trail maintenance program.**
To encourage usage, the Department should establish a trail maintenance program. Considerations of the trail maintenance program include developing a comprehensive Trail Inventory Assessment Plan to evaluate, define, and track trail maintenance priorities, and developing trail design guidelines to enhance trail amenities (e.g., signage, lighting, maintenance).
- **1.5: Design walkable and bike-friendly streets throughout the City for safe and equitable access to parks and facilities.**
Based on the Access LOS, accessibility could be more equitably distributed throughout the City, especially north-to-south access and for the residential areas in north and central Merced. Examples of efforts may include design and installation of additional bike access to connect to parks located in the south of Merced, enhance existing trails by adding appropriate signage and markings to educate users and encourage use for non-motorized and motorized wheeled devices, and consider Complete Streets policies to support the implementation of appropriate bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and placemaking elements that increase access to parks, facilities, and trails.

Plan Pillars *Infrastructure & Maintenance*

➤ **1.6: Incorporate the most needed park amenities into future parks.**

The Amenity LOS comparative analysis identified several park amenities that the City will not meet the needs the future population unless it addresses them in future park development. The future park inventory report recommends prioritization of the following amenities: playgrounds (special focus on tot lots for ages 2-5), restrooms for community parks and highly-activated neighborhood parks, splashpads, picnic areas, volleyball courts, tennis courts, futsal, and walking paths with fitness equipment.

➤ **1.7: Evaluate the feasibility of an indoor multi-generational recreational facility at Merced Regional Sports Complex.**

With the need to relocate indoor programming space and to address amenity gaps in South Merced, the addition of an indoor multi-generational recreational facility at Merced Regional Sports Complex is worth considering. Exploring feasibility helps the City understand planning, costs, and community benefits so decisions about the potential project are grounded in need, equity, and long-term value.

➤ **1.8: Position Merced Regional Sports Complex as a revenue-generating regional asset.**

To avoid new ongoing operational and maintenance obligations, the complex should be governed by a business plan that treats it as an enterprise operation. By partnering with an experienced sports operator through a long-term lease, the City can benefit from high-quality programming, cost recovery and regional economic activity, while prioritizing benefits and access for Merced residents.

➤ **1.9 Evaluate and create implementation plans for current recreation facilities.**

Establish a structured, phased approach to assess, maintain, and reinvest in existing facilities to ensure safe, functional, and financially responsible use of assets over time.

Plan Pillars *Community Connection*

Community Connection is a foundational pillar of the PROS Master Plan. Throughout the planning process, the warmth and care of Merced’s residents were evident. Hundreds of community members of all ages and abilities participated by listening, sharing ideas, and expressing a desire to support one another. Seniors spoke about opportunities for youth and families, and young people stepped forward to advocate for parks that serve everyone. The spirit of shared responsibility and pride in community was unmistakable.

Merced values being outdoors, gathering in walkable parks and trails, and staying connected across neighborhoods and generations. These shared spaces strengthen relationships and contribute to a healthy, thriving city. This pillar reflects the belief that caring for places and caring for people go hand in hand and that everyone has a role in building a vibrant future for Merced.

Recommended actions resulting from the process (included on the following pages as well as in the Department’s Strategic Action Plan) intend to influence the following intended outcomes.

- **Engaged community:** The Department will continue its commitment to build relationships, strengthening connections, and fostering trust across the entire Merced community, enhancing buy-in and reinforcing Merced as a city people are proud to call home.
- **Enhanced understanding:** The Department will provide comprehensive communication and marketing efforts so that all community members are informed about Department services.
- **Increased participation:** The Department will continue to design and deliver essential, engaging, and in-demand programs, classes, and events that are of high value to the community to lead to increased activation, satisfaction, and overall participation.
- **Strategic and effective partnerships and relationships:** The Department will enhance current partnership opportunities as well as build relationships with other community organizations and groups to increase overall reach and to collectively meet community needs.



Plan Pillars *Community Connection*

Recommended Actions

- **2.1: Enhance internal and external communication about Department services.**
Optimizing communications and marketing efforts to reach all residents is an ongoing area of improvement for any agency. By improving efforts to inform, educate, and market to residents can increase overall awareness, participation in programs and services, and even buy-in of Department initiatives. Examples of efforts the Department could consider include expanding features of the Merced Connect App (e.g., reporting capabilities) and create a consistent strategy for all residents.
- **2.2: Coordinate open communication efforts among City departments and pertinent regional, state, and federal agencies to enhance multimodal planning efforts.**
Encouraging collaboration, both internally within City departments and externally among various agencies, will ensure that connectivity and multimodal planning efforts are coordinated across all organizational stakeholders. Doing so can align investments and decision-making so that improvements collectively support mobility and access goals. Specific initiatives may include enhancing freeway and railroad crossings with State agencies, exploring non-motorized transportation opportunities to meet the City's Sustainable Development Goals, collaborate with the University of California-Merced to expand multi-modal transportation, and coordinate with the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) to connect transit stations to bicycle paths via on-street infrastructure.
- **2.3: Evaluate existing partner agreements.**
The Department's current partnerships with local community organizations, such as the MCSD and MUHSD, have enabled the parties to work collaboratively to enhance leisure and recreational opportunities for Merced residents. These agreements should continue to be evaluated annually with reviews of the scope and management of the relationship, roles and responsibilities, milestones, terms, and financial arrangements, including reciprocity.
- **2.4: Explore public-private partnerships to advance indoor recreation facility development, strategic relocations, and parkland acquisition.**
As Merced continues to grow, meeting demand for indoor recreation space and strategically located parkland will require creative approaches beyond traditional public funding. The Department should proactively explore partnerships with private businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and community-based entities to identify shared-use facilities, co-located developments, relocation opportunities, and joint acquisition strategies.

Plan Pillars *Community Connection*

- **2.5: Strengthen and clarify the long-term operational model for youth center facilities to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery.**
The Department should evaluate and define a sustainable operational strategy for youth centers, beginning with the McCombs Youth Center as the primary facility. In the near term, the Department currently operates approximately 600 hours annually at McCombs, with the Boys & Girls Club (BGC) utilizing the facility for the remainder of the year. This shared-use model should be reviewed to clarify roles, responsibilities, scheduling, and long-term expectations. The Department may also consider supporting BGC in securing a permanent location—potentially at Alfaretta Park—while evaluating future indoor recreation opportunities at the Merced Regional Sports Complex. Establishing a clear operational and partnership framework will help ensure youth services remain stable, accessible, and aligned with community needs.
- **2.6: Strengthen relationships, partnerships and coordinated recreation service planning with community-based organizations.**
Merced benefits from a strong network of community groups, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and volunteer-led associations that actively provide leisure and enrichment opportunities throughout the City. The Department should intentionally collaborate with these groups to align programming, share facilities, coordinate schedules, and identify service gaps. By formalizing partnership agreements and engaging in joint recreation planning, the Department can expand activity offerings, reduce duplication of effort, and help manage staffing and financial obligations while still meeting community needs. A coordinated approach will enhance community connection, leverage local capacity, and ensure recreation services are delivered efficiently and responsively.
- **2.7: Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for recreation program operations.**
Designing SOPs will bring consistency, clarity, and accountability to the planning and operations of the Department’s recreation programs. The structure of the SOPs provide best practices that will guide staff to carry out efficient, effective, and repeatable processes that are mission-aligned and responsive to community needs.
- **2.8: Strengthen coordination with Merced County to address impacts related to unhoused individuals and behavioral health transitions within the City.**
As the City of Merced hosts many Merced County services for individuals experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, and addiction, there are direct impacts on City parks and public spaces. Individuals often exit County facilities and remain within City limits, increasing service and safety demands. The City should pursue a coordinated strategy with the County focused on improved transition planning, shared data, collaborative funding, and clearer roles and responsibilities. A unified approach can better balance public safety, compassionate response, and long-term community stability.

Plan Pillars *Community Connection*

➤ **2.9: Implement an Adopt-a-Park / Friends-of-the-Park program.**

The development of an Adopt-a-Park or Friends-of-the-Parks program will help the Department establish a structured, community-driven model for volunteerism and park stewardship. Designated service days, such as “Clean-Up Day,” create predictable opportunities for residents, businesses, and civic groups to contribute to park beautification and maintenance.

➤ **2.10: Focus service provision efforts on enhancing current program offerings and addressing high-need gaps.**

In order to not overload an already busy small workforce of staff, the Department should primarily focus on delivering the current services they offer and the co-hosted programs they help support. Along with Action 2.7, staff can work towards more the goal of improving the management of these programs and maximizing their impact on the community. However, the Department needs to still stay attuned to the high-need service gaps of the community and should be evaluated and carefully considered. One specific high-need service gap the Department may consider addressing are increasing family programming options.

➤ **2.11: Maintain an understanding of local public health indicators.**

Maintaining an understanding of local public health indicators is essential for the Department to effectively respond to community health needs and enhance residents' overall well-being. Public health indicators provide valuable insights into the state of health in Merced, influencing decisions on recreation service development and facility enhancements. By staying informed, the Department will continue to play a critical role in promoting healthy lifestyles and contributing to community resilience.

Plan Pillars *Safety & Inclusivity*

Providing safe and inclusive programs, parks, and facilities is fundamental to the Department's mission. Safety is not only about physical conditions, but also about how people feel when they enter a park, participate in a program, or gather in a public space. When residents experience environments that are welcoming, well-managed, and thoughtfully designed, they are more likely to participate, explore, and connect with others.

Inclusion strengthens that foundation. Parks and recreation services should reflect the diversity of the community and ensure that all residents, regardless of age, ability, background, or circumstance and feel valued and represented. Welcoming services and public spaces foster belonging, encourages shared experiences, and supports overall health and well-being. A safe and inclusive system invites participation and reinforces that everyone has a place in Merced's public spaces.

Recommended actions resulting from the process (included on the following pages as well as in the Department's Strategic Action Plan) intend to influence the following intended outcomes.

- **Perceived safety:** The Department will prioritize design, maintenance, staffing presence, and communication practices that foster a visible sense of safety and comfort in parks, facilities, and programs.
- **Inclusive access and engagement:** The Department will ensure that services, programs, and facilities are accessible, culturally responsive, and reflective of the community's diversity, enabling broad participation across all populations.
- **Belonging and cultural celebration:** The Department will create opportunities that celebrate cultural differences and shared experiences, fostering a sense of belonging and encouraging meaningful connection across generations and neighborhoods.



Plan Pillars *Safety & Inclusivity*

Recommended Actions

- **3.1: Enhance current and future parks and facilities with sustainable design that encourages safety and creates accessibility for users of all ages and abilities.**
By addressing and improving various barriers to entry of parks, facilities, and open spaces, the Department can create a more welcoming environment for users. Examples of tasks include activating the perimeter of these amenities (e.g., landscaping, increased visibility/sightlines, public art, seating) and overall compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- **3.2: Increase security measures in parks.**
Efforts to improve both the real and perceived safety throughout the City's park system in regards to the unhoused population will positively impact usage. Enhanced efforts to park security through measures such as increased patrol surveillance and protocols, lighting, security cameras, blue light emergency phone towers, etc. can help deter unwanted activity and support safe use of amenities for all users.
- **3.3: Improve safety and perceptions of safety in parks, trails, and open spaces through increased visible presence and coordinated community-based safety efforts.**
To support safe and welcoming public spaces, the City should explore establishing a dedicated park ranger program and/or partnering with Merced Police Department cadets and trained civilian staff to provide a consistent, visible presence during peak use times. This approach may include uniformed park rangers, cadet patrols, and other designated "safety adults" focused on education, visibility, conflict de-escalation, and connection to services rather than enforcement alone. Implemented as a community-wide initiative, increased presence can deter inappropriate behavior, improve response to issues, and help residents feel more comfortable using parks and trails, while reinforcing shared responsibility for safe, inclusive public spaces.
- **3.4: Strengthen coordinated efforts that help individuals experiencing unhoused transition to stable housing.**
The City should partner with service providers and Merced County agencies to improve outreach, referrals, and connections to housing and supportive services. By focusing on coordinated systems that move individuals toward stability, rather than temporary displacement, the City can reduce impacts in parks while supporting long-term, compassionate solutions.

Plan Pillars *Safety & Inclusivity*

➤ **3.5: Reduce cultural and language barriers to ensure equitable access to parks and recreation services.**

Merced is a culturally diverse community with many languages spoken. To better serve all residents, the Department should consider taking many proactive approaches such as translating key communications into Spanish and Hmong, engaging trusted “Wisdom Holders” as volunteer ambassadors, clearly identifying staff and volunteers who speak multiple languages at events and programs, and providing staff training on culturally responsiveness.

Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

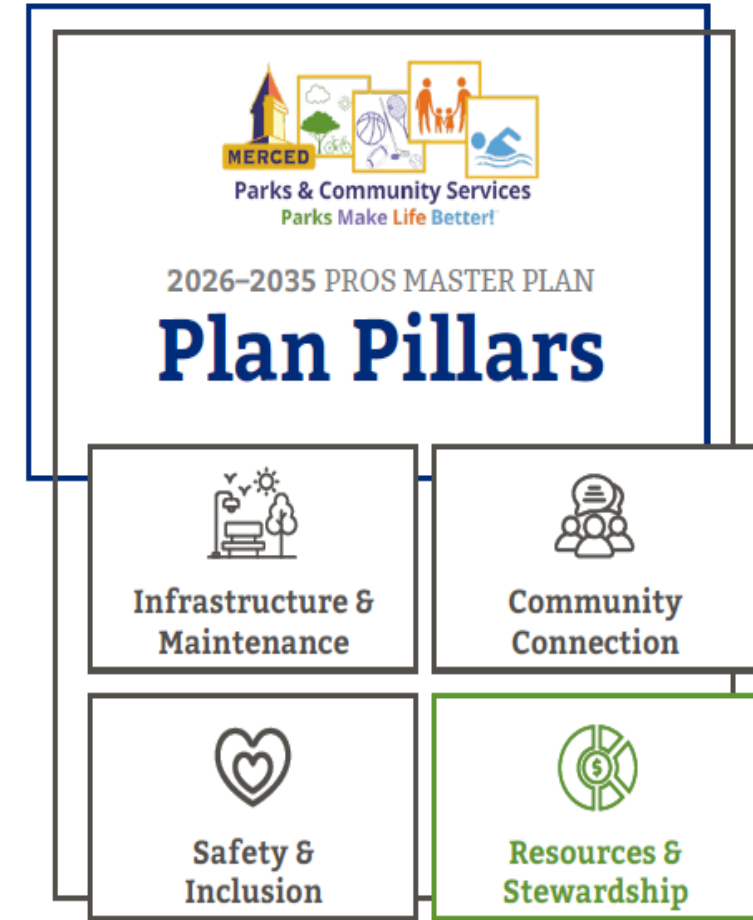
Competent management of an organization’s various resources – from its people to finances – is of utmost importance. And with public park and recreation agencies, being good stewards of each, on behalf of its residents, is even more essential. The Department is committed to using its resources wisely and planning strategically to ensure the long-term sustainability of all facets of its system.

The Resources & Stewardship Plan Pillar of the PROS Master Plan focuses on:

- **People & Organization:** The growth, development, retention, and satisfaction of its people who function as one Department under the highest operational standards.
- **Financial:** Using taxpayer dollars strategically to ensure short and long-term sustainability.

Recommended actions resulting from the process (included on the following pages as well as in the Department’s Strategic Action Plan) intend to influence the following intended outcomes.

- **Sustainable and scalable service delivery:** The Department will prioritize services from parks and facilities to programs that can be responsibly sustained at a high level of quality, while ensuring systems and investments are scalable to meet changing community needs.
- **Strong organizational infrastructure:** The Department will formalize operational systems, staffing structures, training, and professional development practices to improve performance, increase job satisfaction, and strengthen long-term organizational capacity.
- **Equitable and responsible resource allocation:** The Department will continue building on fiscally responsible practices to ensure financial and staff resources are used efficiently, transparently, and equitably to benefit the entire community.
- **Strategic funding and partnerships:** By pursuing diversified funding strategies and collaborative partnerships that align with long-term priorities, leverage outside resources where appropriate, and position the City for sustainable investment and responsible growth.



Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

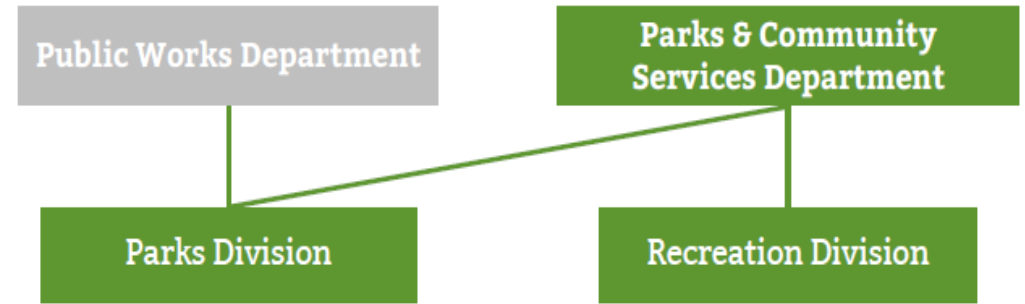
People & Organization

The Parks & Community Services Department consists of two divisions (i.e., Parks Division and Recreation Division) that currently operates out of two separate departments; the Parks Division operates out of the Public Works Department, and the Recreation Division operates out of the Parks & Community Services Department. This means that while the Parks & Community Services Department is considered one entity for both public purposes and for the purposes of the PROS Master Plan efforts, there are technically cross-departmental support to sustain daily operations.

While staff within both divisions are dedicated, capable, and committed to serving the community, they are operating at capacity. As service expectations grow and long-term infrastructure, operational, and community needs become more complex, meeting the level of quality residents desire and expect may require strengthening technical expertise, clarifying roles, and addressing potential gaps. To perform at the highest level and sustain long-term success, staff must operate under a unified vision with shared priorities and coordinated decision-making across divisions. Continued collaboration will be essential to ensuring consistency in service philosophy, operational standards, and quality expectations.

To continue serving the Department's mission with the highest standards for operations, maintenance, programming, and engagement, additional investment in resources are needed. This includes implementing various administrative policies and plans, technological training, professional certifications/expertise, establishing standards in employee development, and communication standards. Addressing these areas will help ensure the Department establish their foundational practices. And as the community changes and grows, staff will encounter new expectations, new service needs, and expanded responsibilities. Providing staff with the tools, training, and support to succeed not only strengthens day-to-day operations, but it also positions the Department to embrace new opportunities with confidence.

Figure 8: Organizational Chart



Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

Financial Sustainability Strategy

Financial stewardship lays the groundwork for a stable, trusted, and resilient park and recreation system. For Merced, embracing this challenge meant extending beyond traditional master planning efforts by engaging in a financial sustainability strategy process.

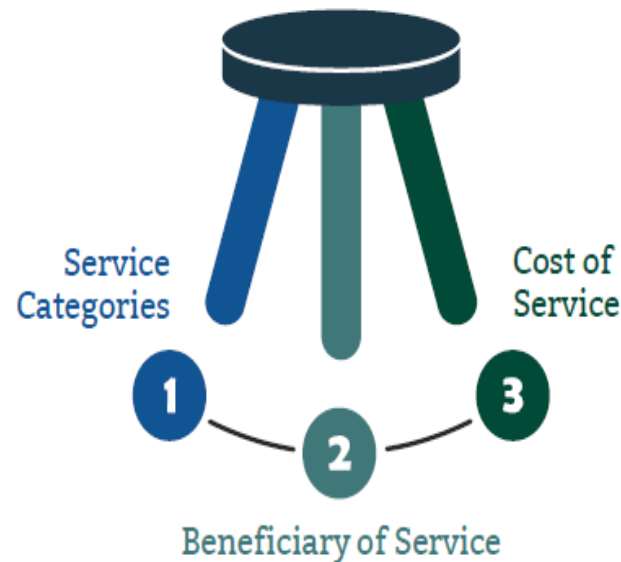
The Department elected to integrate its master planning efforts with evaluating its costs of doing business so that there was a solid understanding of how taxpayer resources are currently being utilized so that future financial decision making continues to be as informed as possible.

Designing Merced's Cost Recovery Strategy

The Financial Sustainability Three-legged Stool illustration builds on the philosophy of 110%'s Parks and Reconomics© - how parks and recreation organizations manage their finite financial resources.

The Department embraced this philosophy and the exercise of creating their Cost Recovery Strategy for its parks and recreation services by following these principal steps (as illustrated in the graphic to the right).

Figure 10: Tax Use/Revenue Enhancement Philosophy



Overview & Philosophy

Why is it important?

High-performing park and recreation agencies seek out and embrace responsible financial and service management practices. They actively understand the cost of doing business, identify cost savings, divest of services that do not align with mission or waste resources, and generate revenues when appropriate to reinvest in important and often underfunded services, maintain infrastructure, and relieve pressure on taxpayer resources. Ultimately, they possess a financial sustainability philosophy that provides a foundation from which all investment and spending decisions, and funding strategies are built.

Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

Recommended Actions

- **4.1: Update the Cost Recovery Strategy.**
The Cost Recovery Strategy conducted as part of the PROS Master Plan process should be reviewed annually, and subsidy (tax dollar) investment goals should be analyzed and updated at least every two to three years or more frequently as necessary.
- **4.2: Conduct annual cost-of-service analysis updates.**
Conducting regular cost-of-service analysis updates will provide a clear understanding of the costs of delivering services and operating and maintaining parks and facilities. This data and information will position the Department to set informed pricing, align resources with community priorities, and make decisions grounded in transparency and fiscal responsibility.
- **4.3: Evaluate long-term partnership and governance options to ensure the future feasibility of Applegate Park Zoo.**
Given the financial and operational demands of Applegate Park Zoo, the City should evaluate long-term partnership and governance models to determine the most sustainable path forward. This review should explore affiliations with nonprofit operators or regional systems, assess standards associated with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, and consider potential collaboration with larger institutions such as the Fresno Chaffee Zoo or the Sacramento Zoo. Accreditation benchmarks should serve as a baseline for expected costs and care standards. Ultimately, the City must decide whether to reinvest under its current structure or pursue an alternative model aligned with fiscal realities and community priorities.
- **4.4: Establish a long-term Cost Recovery Strategy for Applegate Park Zoo as a pseudo-enterprise operation.**
The Applegate Park Zoo should implement a 5–15 year Cost Recovery Strategy, operating similarly to a pseudo-enterprise fund with defined revenue targets, expense tracking, and reinvestment plans. A focused business plan should prioritize earned revenue through admissions, retail expansion, branded merchandise, food and beverage sales, improved point-of-sale systems, sponsorships, a “Friends of the Zoo” program, and animal adoption initiatives. By strengthening revenue drivers and reinvesting in visitor experience, the Zoo can reduce General Fund reliance while improving operational stability and service quality.

Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

- **4.5: Evaluate and update Developer Impact Fee (DIF) practices and policies to ensure adequate, equitable, and financially responsible funding for future parks and recreation facilities.**

As Merced continues to grow, it is critical that DIFs accurately reflect the true cost of land acquisition, design, construction, and long-term infrastructure needs. This action calls for a comprehensive review of the City's current DIF structure, assumptions, fee calculations, and nexus documentation to ensure alignment with current construction and design costs, inflationary pressures, and updated park standards. The assessment should also examine policies regarding land dedication in lieu of fees, particularly in light of the City's current financial conditions and long-term maintenance capacity. Clear criteria and updated fee structures will help ensure that growth pays its proportionate share, reduce unfunded liabilities, and position the City to develop new parks and facilities in a way that is fiscally sustainable and operationally realistic.

- **4.6: Pursue and secure funding to advance the design, construction and maintenance of previously identified by currently unfunded park projects.**

The City of Merced has identified four priority park sites (i.e., General Van Pao Park, Charles Ogletree Park, Lester K. Yoshida Park, and Alfarata Park) that currently lack secured funding for their design and construction phases. Advancing these projects will require a coordinated funding strategy that may include development impact fees, grants, state and federal funding programs, partnerships, philanthropy, and potential voter-approved revenue measures. This action emphasizes proactive grant readiness, updated cost estimates, clear phasing plans, and alignment with broader City priorities to improve competitiveness for external funding. By intentionally pursuing diverse and sustainable funding sources, the City can move these long-planned parks from concept to reality, expand equitable access to recreation and green space, and demonstrate responsible stewardship of community growth.

- **4.7: Establish clear standards for the type, quality, and functional characteristics of parkland to be dedicated and accepted by the City of Merced.**

As Merced continues to grow, it is essential that park land dedication aligns with long-term community needs, operational capacity and fiscal responsibility. This action calls for the development of objective criteria that define what constitutes acceptable park land. Consider factors such as size, configuration, accessibility, visibility, environmental suitability, adjacent to neighborhoods, connectivity to trails and schools and long-term maintenance implications.

Plan Pillars *Resources & Stewardship*

➤ **4.8: Create position-specific and parks and recreation-centric professional development plans.**

Position-specific professional development plans will help ensure that every staff member has the skills, training, and tools needed to perform their duties effectively and grow as parks and recreation professionals. These plans provide clarity around expectations as well as opportunities and relevant organizations providing services. Implementing these plans will support high-quality service delivery and strengthen the Department's overall capacity.

➤ **4.9: Expand training and enhance the use of the Recreation Management Software System (RMSS).**

While the Department currently utilizes RecTrac for the management and registration of its recreation services, further developing the practices of the RMSS will better streamline registration, facility reservations, point-of-sale transactions, and customer communication. Improving practices will improve staff efficiency, enhance data accuracy, expand reporting capabilities, and provide a more seamless, user-friendly experience for residents.

➤ **4.10: Strengthen interdepartmental collaboration to improve operational efficiency and enhance service quality for Merced residents.**

Delivering high-quality parks and recreation services requires coordination across departments, including Public Works, Planning, Finance, Police, and City Administration. This action supports the development of clearer communication channels, shared planning processes, aligned capital improvement priorities, and coordinated maintenance and service delivery standards. By working more intentionally across departments, the City can reduce duplication of effort, improve response times, better align staffing and budget resources, and create more seamless experiences for residents.

Programming

Youth Basketball is in Season Concludes next Week

- We served over 380 youth each week
- Had to use schools, churches
 - Creates sustainability and consistency issues for programming

Merced Applegate Zoo

- Concluded first MCOE tour for Weaver School District
 - 20 students each day for 5 days in a row
 - STEAM focused projects & curriculum
 - Three more tours scheduled



Special Events

Junior Giants Opening Day- First Pitch

- Wed, June 24th 5:30pm

General Vang Pao Park Ribbon Cutting

- Saturday, June 27th @ 10:00am

Bob Hart Square SuperMrket Night Market

- Saturday, June 27th @ 4:40pm-9:00pm





Thank you

Christopher Jensen

