

# Annual Report

## 2022 – 2023



### Measure M: Your Sales Tax in Action

- |            |              |               |
|------------|--------------|---------------|
| Cloverdale | Petaluma     | Sonoma        |
| Cotati     | Rohnert Park | Windsor       |
| Healdsburg | Santa Rosa   | Sonoma County |
|            | Sebastopol   |               |

▲ Kids, grown ups and staff enjoy a sunny day at a Caminitos Al Parque event at Crane Creek Regional Park.





# Reinvesting for the future



We're delighted to share this year's Parks for All/Measure M annual report. Our local parks and open spaces are not simply patches of green, they are essential lifelines providing spaces for recreation, relaxation and community engagement.

In this past year, local park agencies have been on a transformative journey reinvesting in existing parks, stewarding the open spaces near our communities and expanding access with a keen focus on being more equitable and inclusive.

## **Reinvesting in parks: Cultivating spaces of joy and togetherness**

Numerous parks across Sonoma County have been revitalized with updated playgrounds, sports facilities, signage and other long-overdue maintenance. These investments are revitalizing many existing parks as vibrant hubs that cater to the diverse needs of the community. We have listened to your feedback, making improvements that ensure everyone, regardless of age or ability, can enjoy the beauty of nature nearby in their own neighborhood.

*“To provide transparency and ensure fiscal accountability.”*

## **Taking care of land: Preserving nature for future generations**

Our commitment to environmental conservation goes beyond the visible with an ongoing expansion of land management activities that reduce future wildfire risks, preserve fish and wildlife habitats and conserve natural areas for future generations. Collaborations and consultations with local tribes are increasingly a part of the decision-making process, as is including traditional ecological knowledge in many public open spaces. Through meticulous land stewardship and conservation efforts, we are ensuring that our parks remain a source of enrichment for generations to come.

## **Equity and inclusion: Our guiding stars**

Parks are the heartbeat of our community. They are places where friendships are forged, families gather and dreams take flight. Unfortunately, for far too long, not everyone has had an equal opportunity to enjoy these benefits. Our local park agencies are working to break down barriers and make our parks truly welcoming to all.

Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in our vision of “Parks for All” in Sonoma County. This annual report is not only a compilation of facts and figures, it's also a testament to the collective efforts across our cities and county to make our parks better for the communities we serve.

In gratitude,  
Bert Whitaker, Director  
Melanie Parker, Deputy Director  
Sonoma County Regional Parks

# Thank you, Sonoma County, for supporting your parks



In Sonoma County, we value our incredible natural surroundings and being connected with an abundance of opportunities to get outside to recreate and refresh our bodies and minds. Thanks to the significant support from voters, those opportunities are rapidly expanding.

Parks for All/Measure M, a one-eighth-cent sales tax approved in 2018 to invest into parks countywide, has forged meaningful collaborations between Sonoma County and all nine cities. Two thirds of the measure's revenues support the county's regional parks with one third being distributed to the cities to support parks and recreation. So, wherever you go to relax or play in Sonoma County, you'll find the benefits of Measure M and its partnerships.

The power of this collaboration goes beyond conventional boundaries and offers massive benefits to the community. Aging parks are being redeveloped. New open spaces are being acquired and new trails are being built. New programs are connecting youth and families with the outdoors. This successful partnership has enabled the county and cities to attract additional funding through state, federal and private grants to improve park facilities, programs and natural resources.

Just a few examples of your tax dollars in action include fuels management and playground improvements in Cloverdale; court resurfacing in

Petaluma; rebuilding fire-damaged parks in Santa Rosa; and expanding accessibility and inclusivity in county parks. Read about these and more in this report.

Parks equity is a priority for all park organizations in Sonoma County, with emphasis on increasing park access for seniors, low-income residents, underserved communities, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ park visitors. Tailored programs, targeted memberships and an investment in staff that reflect our county's diversity are paid for through Parks for All/Measure M funds.

Parks for All/Measure M helps us get closer to these goals every day, and we thank Sonoma County's voters for their participation in this incredibly productive collaboration.

See you at the parks!

Chris Coursey, Chair of the Board of Supervisors



Enjoying nature at Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.

## Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee

Christopher Borr  
Carol Eber  
Leslie A. Graves  
Justin Lindenberg  
John Mills  
Meredith Rennie

## About Measure M

Sonoma County voters in 2018 overwhelmingly approved Measure M, a one-eighth-cent sales tax to support county and city parks for 10 years. Two-thirds of the funds go to Sonoma County for its regional parks and one-third is divided among the cities, according to population size.

The measure's expenditure plan outlines appropriate uses for the revenue. The county

and cities each determine how best to prioritize the allocated funding, and a citizen oversight committee ensures the funding is spent as intended.

In fiscal year 2022/23, the total tax revenue was \$15,907,552. (continues)





# Revenue and expenditures by category

Total 2022/23 Measure M revenue generated for Sonoma County Regional Parks and Sonoma County Cities was \$15,907,552 and distributed as shown here.

## REGIONAL PARKS

	Maintenance, Safety, Recreation	Improve Access	Natural Resources	Cities
Beginning Balance	\$1,168,598	\$1,807,185	\$1,739,637	\$8,946,010
Revenue	\$4,020,409	\$3,817,895	\$2,995,812	\$5,299,259
Expenditures	\$4,565,647	\$4,036,816	\$2,356,775	\$3,257,845
Available Balance for Future Years	\$623,360	\$1,588,264	\$2,378,674	\$10,987,424

## REGIONAL PARKS

### Maintenance, Safety, Recreation

\$4,020,409

\$4,565,647

### Improve Access

\$3,817,895

\$4,036,816

### Natural Resources

\$2,995,812

\$2,356,775

### Cities

\$5,299,259

\$3,257,845

Measure M funding can carry over and accrue in savings to be invested in park projects in future years. In some cases, expenditures exceeded revenues in 2022/23 due to those accrued savings being used from a prior year.

■ Revenue  
■ Expenditures

## About Measure M (continued)

The cities and county can use Measure M revenue to:

- Invest in maintenance of parks, trails, signs, buildings and other infrastructure
- Improve playgrounds, sports fields, restrooms, picnic areas and visitor centers
- Improve park access by extending or building trails, bike paths, coastal trails and river trails

- Reduce wildfire risks through vegetation management
- Open new parkland to the public
- Protect natural resources, including waterways and wildlife habitat
- Offer recreation, education and health programs in parks

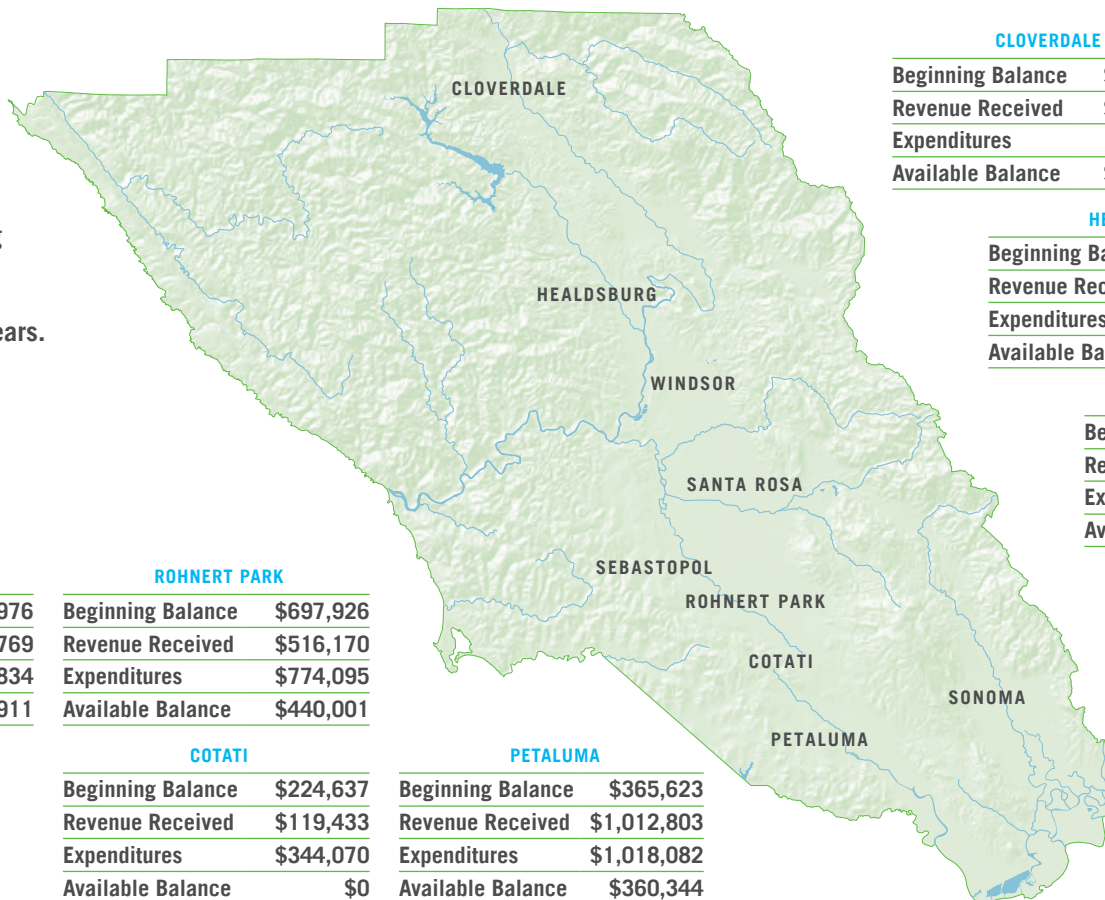
This report offers an accounting of how the county and cities spent these dollars and where they are accruing savings for future projects.





# Revenue and expenditures by category and city

This graphic presents the Measure M funding available to each incorporated jurisdiction within Sonoma County. Fund balances remaining may be used to accrue savings to be invested in park projects in future years.



### CLOVERDALE

Beginning Balance	\$176,754
Revenue Received	\$136,519
Expenditures	\$64,091
Available Balance	\$249,182

### HEALDSBURG

Beginning Balance	\$214,631
Revenue Received	\$172,539
Expenditures	\$151,016
Available Balance	\$236,154

### WINDSOR

Beginning Balance	\$914,701
Revenue Received	\$392,477
Expenditures	\$584,330
Available Balance	\$722,848

### SANTA ROSA

Beginning Balance	\$5,806,445
Revenue Received	\$2,675,067
Expenditures	\$212,631
Available Balance	\$8,268,881

### SONOMA

Beginning Balance	\$331,317
Revenue Received	\$161,483
Expenditures	\$56,697
Available Balance	\$436,103

### SEBASTOPOL

Beginning Balance	\$213,976
Revenue Received	\$112,769
Expenditures	\$52,834
Available Balance	\$273,911

### ROHNERT PARK

Beginning Balance	\$697,926
Revenue Received	\$516,170
Expenditures	\$774,095
Available Balance	\$440,001

### COTATI

Beginning Balance	\$224,637
Revenue Received	\$119,433
Expenditures	\$344,070
Available Balance	\$0

### PETALUMA

Beginning Balance	\$365,623
Revenue Received	\$1,012,803
Expenditures	\$1,018,082
Available Balance	\$360,344

## At a Glance

Your city and regional parks protect and maintain a variety of landscapes and facilities and connect communities to services and programs.

Miles of Trails	276
Campsites	200
Regional Parks Acres	15,506

Regional Parks	58
City Parks	242
Playgrounds	205
Programs	3,111

Participants	327,992
Volunteers	4,063
Community Gardens	20



# Sonoma County Regional Parks



Nubia Padilla is Regional Parks' accessibility and inclusivity manager.

## Regional Parks adds accessibility, inclusivity manager

Nubia Padilla joined the Sonoma County Regional Parks department in January 2023 as its accessibility and inclusivity manager, the first position of its kind within a Sonoma County department.

The innovative role aligns well with the Regional Parks department's commitment to ensuring that all Sonoma County residents enjoy

equal access to the benefits that the parks provide the community.

“My work focuses on answering this question: How do my actions, my work and my relationships support others' sense of belonging?” Padilla said.

Born and raised in the highlands of Colombia, Padilla earned a bachelor's degree in industrial engineering at the National University in Colombia and a master's degree in psychology organization development from Sonoma State University. Padilla has been a resident of Sonoma County for 25 years,

where she and her husband raised their family. Since immigrating to the U.S., she's developed and managed local and statewide programs and initiatives for diverse and underserved communities.

## Spring Lake shines for 50th anniversary

An improved trail, refreshed picnic area and campgrounds, a new café and other upgrades were part of this year's 50th anniversary celebration at Spring Lake Regional Park, one of Sonoma County's most popular parks.

Generations of Sonoma County residents and visitors have made lasting memories fishing, boating, picnicking, hiking, biking, horseback riding and camping at Spring Lake over the past five decades.

The water at the center of the 320-acre park is actually a flood-control reservoir built by the Sonoma County Water Agency from 1961 to 1964. Development as a recreational park began in 1973, *(continued)*



Tranquil view of Spring Lake Regional Park.

## Regional Parks Funding and Supporting Organizations

Regional Parks achieves its Measure M goals by leveraging partnerships with a variety of organizations including the following:

Cal Fire, California Coastal Conservancy, California Conservation Corps, California Department of Boating & Waterways, California State Parks, Catholic Charities, Community Action Partnership, Corben Glazier, Falk Land and Livestock, Federated Indians of the Graton Rancheria,

H & L Mohring & Sons, Habitat Conservation Fund, Kashia Band of Pomo, Laguna Foundation, Landpaths, Marin Sonoma Weed Management Area, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Pepperwood Preserve, Point Blue Conservation, Redwood Empire Food Bank, Redwood Trails Alliance, Ron and Thomas Crane, Roseland School District, Santa Rosa City School District, Sonoma Ag + Open Space, Sonoma County Ag

Commissioner, Sonoma County Library, Sonoma County Office of Education, Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation, Sonoma Ecology Center, Sonoma Land Trust, Sonoma Mountain Institute, Sonoma Valley Athletic Corps, Sonoma Valley Wildlands Collaborative, UC Davis Marine Lab, Ward Ranch Livestock

# Sonoma County Regional Parks



(*Spring Lake continued*) with the water agency owning the land and Sonoma County Regional Parks managing the park.

This year's upgrades include the Sonoma Burger Shack (a lakeside eatery); new tables, barbecue grills and food lockers in the group picnic areas and all campsites; redesigned hands-on activities at the Environmental Discovery Center; and an abundance of fresh asphalt, paint, signage and other improvements.



New sports fields at Maxwell Farms.

## Maxwell Farms upgrades

Sonoma Valley's Maxwell Farms Regional Park now features all-weather baseball and soccer fields, with new restrooms, expanded parking (including improved ADA accessibility), lighting upgrades and new picnic areas.

This well-used and loved 85-acre regional park welcomed approximately 163,000 visitors in the most recent annual count.

The recent construction work is part of the first phase of the 85-acre park's master plan, developed with extensive input from the community. The Board of Supervisors has approved a total of \$7.2 million for renovations and improvements to the 35-year-old park.

The recent changes are designed to enhance the park-user experience while also significantly reducing maintenance requirements, streamlining operations and minimizing water usage, mowing and overall maintenance efforts.

## Training, collaboration, prescribed burns aimed at cutting fire risk

Regional Parks used advanced training, collaboration with others and carefully planned fires to reduce the risk of future wildfire, promote biodiversity and control invasive species.

Prescribed burns deliberately use fire in an area to reduce fuel loads, and ARE carried out under specific weather and fuel-moisture conditions called a "prescription."

Five Parks' staff members took part in TREX (TRaining EXchange), which brings together fire professionals, land managers and volunteer burners to learn about prescribed burns in different ecosystems, share skills and network. The training was organized by Audubon Canyon Ranch's Fire Forward program. Two parks staff members also participated in Fire Forward's Fire Fellowship, to become even more qualified and, eventually, California state certified "burn bosses."  
(*continued*)



A prescribed fire at Shiloh Ranch Regional Park.



# Sonoma County Regional Parks



*(Prescribed burns continued)* Regional Parks collaborated with the Fire Forward program for a prescribed burn at Shiloh Ranch Regional Park in June, and partnered with the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for a prescribed fire in Tolay Lake Regional Park in July.

## Restoring Hood Mountain's 'pygmy forest'

A joint effort by the nonprofit Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation and Regional Parks is working to restore the unique pygmy cypress forest at Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.



Harvesting Sargent cypress seeds at Hood Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve.

This unique serpentine rock-based habitat supports some of Sonoma County's rarest and most unique plant species, including the native Sargent's cypress trees (the stars of the pygmy forest). This ecosystem was burned in the 2017 Nuns Fire, and then again in the 2020 Glass Fire, which left only a few trees still standing. Fortunately seeds that had been collected from the charred trees in 2017 could be used to jump-start the next generation.

The well-equipped Laguna Foundation nursery grew more than 800 baby Sargent's cypress trees, as well as hundreds of

native manzanita, ceanothus, monardella (or "coyote mint"), yarrow and grasses. Seeds and nursery-grown plants are controlling erosion, stabilizing soils, and re-establishing trees in a forest repeatedly impacted by wildfire.

## The signs they are a-changing

New monument signs grace the two entrances to Spring Lake Regional Park, some of the first visible displays of Regional Parks' new sign standards.

The standards were developed by a cross-divisional sign committee, with the goal of creating a consistent look and brand throughout the Regional Parks system.

"It's so immensely gratifying to see the concepts developed during our sign committee meetings come to life as actual real-world signs in the ground," said Brian Michelsen, Regional Parks marketing specialist. "They are beautiful."

As part of its 50th anniversary celebrations, Spring Lake Regional Park was selected to be one of the first parks to roll out these new designs. In addition to the entrance signs, new signage will be installed throughout the park by the end of 2023.



A Regional Parks crew installs a new sign at Spring Lake Regional Park.



# City parks across Sonoma County



## Cloverdale

Cloverdale divided its \$64,000 fiscal year 2022/23 Park for All/Measure M funds, using \$32,000 to subsidize the cost of adding a third member to its park maintenance staff, with the remaining \$32,000 spent on critical park maintenance projects. This lets the city meet its ongoing maintenance needs, which will continue into the future, benefitting the entire community.

Adding a third staff member helped the crew provide safe and inviting recreation areas with better responses to maintenance issues, including providing park and landscape services throughout the city. This helped them meet the expanded maintenance required to support the recently added public restrooms in Park Plaza, new pickleball courts at Furber Court and new basketball courts at City Park.



Kids play soccer at the refurbished Furber Park in Cloverdale.

Critical maintenance projects paid for with 2022/23 Park for All/Measure M money included repairing damaged and failing play structures in Vintage Meadows Neighborhood Park, Furber Park and Clark Park, as well as three phases of vegetation management to mitigate fire risks in the 350-acre Porterfield Creek Open Space.

[cloverdale.net](http://cloverdale.net)



## Cotati

The city of Cotati used its 2022/23 Park for All/Measure M funds to complete its \$344,000 Kotate Park Revitalization Project.

The multi-year project, which was completed in September 2023, replaced Cotati's oldest and most outdated playground equipment for both the 2-5 and 6-12 age ranges. It also brought Cotati its first outdoor exercise equipment, creating a healthy option for parents already at the park with their children and for people wanting to go to the park for the sole purpose of being active.



Kotate Park revitalization project wrapped up in Cotati.

The project also added a covered picnic area, offering an affordable place for community members to gather for events such as birthday parties, baby showers or other small gatherings. A restroom and drinking fountains were also added, with a safe and clean place for diaper changing or restroom use. Park usage has increased, and the upgrades have helped Kotate Park jump from neighborhood park to community park level.

[cotaticity.org](http://cotaticity.org)





# City parks across Sonoma County



## Healdsburg

Healdsburg is combining \$200,000 of its fiscal year 2021/22 and fiscal year 2022/23 Parks for All/Measure M funds with other state and city funding to complete the Fitch Mountain Access Improvement Project.



A new bridge spans a seasonal creek in Healdsburg's Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space.

Construction started in summer 2023 and will continue through spring 2024.

This project will provide sustainable trail access from Villa Chanticleer's lower parking lot to the existing fire access road in Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve. A new bridge system will cross the seasonal stream and repairs will be made to an actively eroding gully. Accessibility will be improved with a low-gradient trail and a reconstructed Villa Dog Park, both with ADA-compliant access.

[healdsburg.gov](https://healdsburg.gov)



## Petaluma

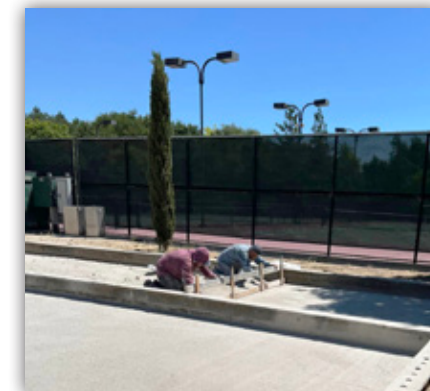
In fiscal year 2022/23, Parks for All/Measure M monies continued to be an essential tool in funding critical improvement projects and enhanced maintenance services throughout Petaluma. Some \$175,000 went toward designs for park pathway improvements at McDowell, La Tercera and McNear parks, which will be put out to bid for construction in winter 2023.

Measure M funds—\$100,000—were leveraged with Prop 68 grant funding to kickstart the design process for the revitalization of Kenilworth Park, a historic site in the heart of Petaluma.

Petaluma spent \$50,000 of its Measure M allotment to improve and resurface several sport courts around the city, including those at Bond, La Tercera, Oak Hill and Leghorns parks, which has the city's only dedicated bocce courts.

Stronger water conservation measures and more efficient use of water resources were addressed with much-needed updates to irrigation controllers throughout the parks. Grant Park received a full playground replacement and ADA pathway improvements to ensure safe and reliable access for all to enjoy new play spaces.

[cityofpetaluma.org](https://cityofpetaluma.org)



Bocce ball courts were resurfaced in Petaluma's Leghorns Park.



# City parks across Sonoma County



## Rohnert Park

Rohnert Park used its fiscal year 2022/23 Parks for All/Measure M monies to fund crucial steps in revising its Parks and Recreation Master Plan and to continue repairing or replacing its aging park benches and shade structures.

To better meet the needs of its growing population, Rohnert Park is in the process of redoing its outdated Parks and Recreation Master Plan, which was created in 2008 and last updated in 2016. The plan is the guiding document for preserving and enhancing the city's parks and recreation system.



Many of Rohnert Park's picnic tables and park benches were replaced and repaired.

As part of the revision process, Measure M money was used to create a statistically accurate survey of the community, as well as an in-person community outreach meeting. The project is expected to be completed early in 2024.

Many of the city's park benches and shade structures were aged and worn. Measure M funds allowed Rohnert Park to repair and replace them, providing more places to sit and creating a more inviting and accessible park experience. This is an ongoing project, with park benches and shade structures being upgraded citywide over time.

[rpcity.org](http://rpcity.org)



## Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa used its fiscal year 2022/23 Parks for All/Measure M funds for a variety of purposes. As part of an ongoing effort to enhance both the aesthetics and safety for many play areas, \$22,000 paid for installing engineered wood fiber surfacing material at various playgrounds.



Santa Rosa's Park a Month volunteers spruce up Julliard Park.

A total of \$168,000 let park planning staff facilitate various renovation and improvement projects at Finley Aquatic Center, MLK Jr Neighborhood Park, Dutch Flohr Neighborhood Park, and the tennis courts in Howarth Park and Galvin Community Park.

The city also used \$12,200 for new park maintenance tools and supplies, improving its ongoing park maintenance activities in all parks, and providing tools and supplies for Parks a Month, its monthly volunteer park clean-up activities. Another \$2,200 was used to develop Santa Rosa's Adopt-a-Park program, including installing signs in various sites, and \$7,700 to complete a report assessing the condition of the city's parks. The report provides a valuable tool that helps the parks department prioritize its projects.

[srcity.org](http://srcity.org)





# City parks across Sonoma County



AmeriCorps Trail was extended in Sebastopol.

## Sebastopol

In the 2021/22 fiscal year, the city used Measure M money for design and engineering for a project replacing the Ives Park Main Pathway. The first phase of the project was completed in fall 2023. Measure M funds will also serve as the local match for the second phase of that pathway project. Ives Park was established in 1941 and is Sebastopol's oldest park.

It offers a public swimming pool, baseball field, playground, theater stage, grassy fields and picnic areas, and includes a portion of Calder Creek.

Measure M funds are also supplementing the AmeriCorps Trail extension from the Sebastopol Community Center to Sebastopol Avenue (Highway 12) on the west side of the Laguna de Santa Rosa. The unpaved, seasonally used dirt trail was modestly improved by AmeriCorps service members in 2007, and the current project will repair and extend the trail. The work is expected to be done in late spring 2024.

[ci.sebastopol.ca.us](http://ci.sebastopol.ca.us)



## Sonoma

The city of Sonoma allocated its 2022/23 Parks for All/Measure M funds for two projects, with \$49,000 going to complete its plans and specifications for future renovations and upgrades in Depot Park, and \$6,000 for work in the 98-acre Montini Open Space Preserve a few blocks northwest of the plaza.

Depot Park is a historic train park located just north of the downtown Sonoma Plaza Park. The recently completed plan for the park calls for a state-of-the-art bioretention feature that will use innovative techniques for natural water filtration and drainage in the park, as well as improved restrooms and a new water fountain.

Work in the Montini Preserve focused on comprehensive vegetation management, including removing invasive plants and restoring native flora. Special efforts were made to cut fire risks by removing excess fire fuel throughout the expansive preserve.

[sonomacity.org](http://sonomacity.org)



Sonoma's Depot Park will be getting innovative additions



# City parks across Sonoma County



## Windsor

Multiple projects in Windsor were paid for through its fiscal year 2022/23 Parks for All/Measure M fund. A total of \$78,000 continued to fund a full-time park maintenance employee. The new position is focused on the ongoing need for weed abatement and vegetation fuel management.

Another \$29,500 subsidized the cost to install seven pieces of outdoor fitness equipment in Starr Creek Park. The town got the equipment through a grant in 2016, but it sat in storage until 2022 because of insufficient funds to pay for installation. Measure M funding bridged the financial gap. The equipment is now installed in the park next to Windsor High School, and in addition to community members, the school's students and athletic teams are able to use the fitness equipment.

Bids for a major overhaul at the Windsor Senior Recreation Center came in dramatically higher than budgeted, and \$336,000 in Measure M funds were used to close the gap and complete the project. The renovated facility opened in April 2023, with three new outdoor restroom and shower rooms at the pool, renovated internal restrooms, a new lobby and coffee lounge, two new staff offices, and new paint and flooring throughout.

With the senior recreation center under construction, activities for seniors moved off-site to the town's Bluebird Center facility and \$50,000 was used to grade the gravel driveway and install new base rock and aggregate to make it safe for use by seniors in the winter months. With the senior center reopened, the Town of Windsor Preschool program moved to the Bluebird facility, so the benefits of the site renovations continue.

And a total of \$45,000 was used for a joint project by the town and Windsor Unified School District to create a new pathway in Sutton Park, improving bike and pedestrian safety in this high-traffic area.



Outdoor fitness equipment was installed in Windsor's Starr Creek Park.

[townofwindsor.com](http://townofwindsor.com)





▲ Spring Lake Regional Park turns 50! Enjoy an improved trail, updated picnic and campground amenities, and other upgrades as we commemorate the 50th anniversary of one of Sonoma County's most popular parks.

[SoCoParks.org/ParksForAll](http://SoCoParks.org/ParksForAll) | 707-565-2041

