

# Annual Report 2021/2022



## Measure M: Your Sales Tax in Action

Cloverdale  
Cotati  
Healdsburg

Petaluma  
Rohnert Park  
Santa Rosa  
Sebastopol

Sonoma  
Windsor  
Sonoma County

▲ Caminitos Al Parque introduces Spanish-speaking families to the wonders of nature.



# Navigating Toward a Sustainable Future



This annual report reflects on a year still navigating the pandemic while also moving rapidly towards a new normal. Sonoma County Regional Parks, together with our city parks partners, are leveraging Parks for All/ Measure M funds to grow the park system, expand programs and engage our communities.

At Regional Parks, we've enhanced programs to introduce and support new individuals and families discovering parks and outdoor recreation skills:

- Caminitos Al Parque introduces low-income, Spanish-speaking families to the wonders of nature through an innovative, hands-on educational park experience that promotes literacy and nutrition.
- Our Career Pathways Youth Crew, a paid opportunity, helps 18- to 24-year-olds develop job skills under the stewardship of Regional Parks field staff.
- YES! Parks (Youth Exploring Sonoma) connects underserved young people (ages 13-18) to parks with programs introducing them to the coast, river and mountains in separate programs. Each offers a variety of outings that focus on ecology, local history and culture through recreation, education, art, career exploration and stewardship activities.

We are also ramping up to better meet the needs of our parks that were nearly loved to death during the height of the pandemic. Here at Regional

Parks, we, along with Sonoma County Tourism, have launched a robust partnership with Leave No Trace, a national organization specializing in helping park visitors know what to bring and what not to bring to parks, and how to appropriately behave in parks to keep them clean and welcoming. We also launched a Russian River Shuttle to reduce the number of cars vying for limited parking at the river parks in the peak summer season.

Our collective ability to properly steward parklands with restoration projects, fuels work, wildlife monitoring and careful grazing is made possible with measure M funds. Whether you are hiking at Taylor Mountain Regional Park and Open Space Preserve near Santa Rosa, or along the coast at Gualala Point, you are seeing investments in the natural capital of the county.

We are grateful that voters value the parks in Sonoma County and, with grants and working with community and industry partners, we are committed to matching every dollar at least one to one, sometimes as much as tenfold! The pressures on parks are enormous and the needs are many, but by leveraging these funds we can tackle many of our key challenges.

Thank you for investing in the parks, our communities and yourself. We wish you all the best and hope that your year is filled with many park gatherings and adventures.

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

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

# Thank You, Sonoma County, for Supporting Your Parks



I am proud of the collaboration between county and city parks organizations to leverage Parks for All/Measure M funds to improve and expand our region's parks and to enhance visitors' experiences in our natural spaces while also addressing long-overdue maintenance projects.

When our parks are strong and thriving, we all benefit: We have green spaces to explore, local neighborhood parks to play in and fresh air to breathe.

This year, there has been a focus on climate resiliency. We are adapting rapidly by stewarding our park lands with conservation-based grazing, tending our woodlands to make our forests more resilient to fire and building climate-adaptive park infrastructure to better withstand extreme weather.

Equity, too, has been a main focus of this collaboration. Programs that help historically underserved populations venture out into nature, out on the water and up high on the ridges are being expanded and strengthened.

Most importantly, Sonoma County Regional Parks and the city parks departments are investing in the mental, emotional and physical health of all of us who call this place home. Resilience is what this is all about, and I hope you'll join me in appreciating how far these tax dollars are going to improve our quality of life.

Sincerely,  
James Gore, Chair of the Board of Supervisors



▲ Families enjoy a sunny day in the park at a Caminitos Al Parque event.

## Measure M Citizens Oversight Committee

John Mills  
Karen Collins  
Rhonda M. Ahanotu  
Meredith Rennie  
Maria Membrilla  
Dan Condron  
Carol Eber

## 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 determines how best to prioritize the allocated funding, and a citizen oversight committee ensures the funding is spent as intended.

In fiscal year 2021/22, the total tax revenue was \$15.5 million. *(continues)*



# Revenue and Expenditures by Category

Total 2021/22 Measure M revenue generated for Sonoma County Regional Parks and Sonoma County Cities was \$15.5 million and distributed as shown here.

## REGIONAL PARKS

	Maintenance, Safety, Recreation	Improve Access	Natural Resources	Cities
Beginning Balance	\$1,130,108	\$2,269,480	\$1,763,482	\$6,170,961
Revenue	\$3,876,127	\$3,628,054	\$2,837,324	\$5,163,562
Expenditures	\$4,192,985	\$3,753,505	\$2,320,305	\$2,108,744
Available Balance for Future Years	\$813,249	\$2,144,029	\$2,280,501	\$9,225,779

## REGIONAL PARKS

### Maintenance, Safety, Recreation

\$3,876,127

\$4,192,985

### Improve Access

\$3,628,054

\$3,753,505

### Natural Resources

\$2,837,324

\$2,320,305

### Cities

\$5,163,562

\$2,108,744

Measure M funding can carry over and accrue in savings to be invested in park projects in future years. In some cases, expenditures exceed revenues in 2021/22 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:

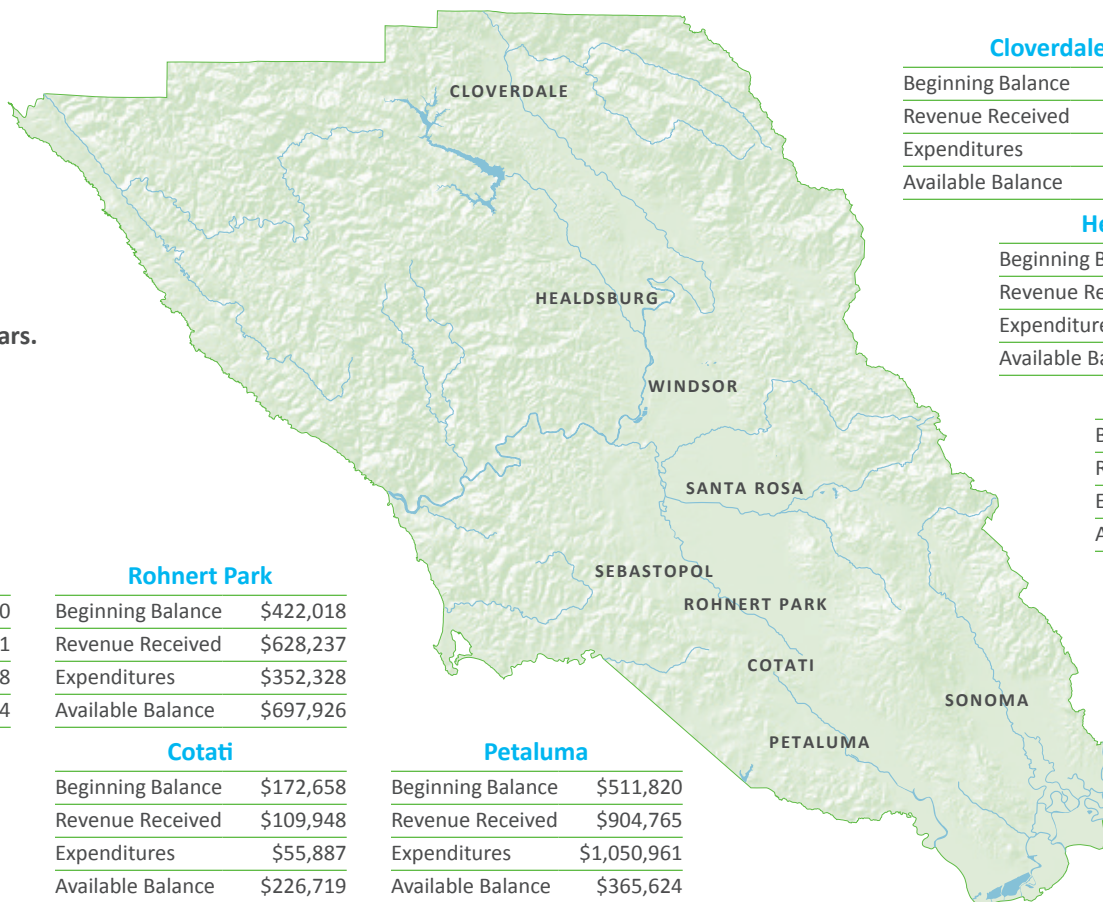
- Invest in maintenance of parks, trails, signs, buildings and other infrastructure
- Improve playgrounds, sports fields, restrooms, picnic areas and visitor centers
- Improve park access by extending or building trails, bike paths, coastal trails and river trails
- Reduce wildfire risks through vegetation 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 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	\$79,823
Revenue Received	\$134,653
Expenditures	\$37,821
Available Balance	\$176,655

### Healdsburg

Beginning Balance	\$40,049
Revenue Received	\$173,974
Expenditures	\$0
Available Balance	\$214,631

### Windsor

Beginning Balance	\$562,575
Revenue Received	\$402,848
Expenditures	\$149,109
Available Balance	\$816,314

### Santa Rosa

Beginning Balance	\$3,683,568
Revenue Received	\$2,516,080
Expenditures	\$393,203
Available Balance	\$5,806,445

### Sonoma

Beginning Balance	\$206,736
Revenue Received	\$161,059
Expenditures	\$36,477
Available Balance	\$331,317

### Sebastopol

Saldo Inicial	\$137,510
Revenue Received	\$112,891
Expenditures	\$32,958
Available Balance	\$217,444

### Rohnert Park

Beginning Balance	\$422,018
Revenue Received	\$628,237
Expenditures	\$352,328
Available Balance	\$697,926

### Cotati

Beginning Balance	\$172,658
Revenue Received	\$109,948
Expenditures	\$55,887
Available Balance	\$226,719

### Petaluma

Beginning Balance	\$511,820
Revenue Received	\$904,765
Expenditures	\$1,050,961
Available Balance	\$365,624

## 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	326,077
Volunteers	3,763
Community Gardens	20

# Sonoma County Regional Parks



Piles of cleared plant material from Foothill Regional Park were burned.

## Shaded fuel breaks improve forest health

In fiscal year 2021/22, Regional Parks created nearly 90 acres of shaded fuel breaks across Shiloh Ranch, North Sonoma Mountain, Foothill and Gualala Point regional parks.

Unlike a fire break, where all vegetation is removed leaving only bare soil, a shaded fuel break removes the understory but retains larger trees to provide shade

and wildlife habitat. The shade, in turn, limits the growth of annual vegetation like grasses and retains moisture in the soil keeping the area cooler and wetter.

The cleared plant material can be chipped or gathered into piles for burning. More than 200 piles were burned in the fiscal year. Projects like this improve forest health and make them more resilient to wildfire.

## Bilingual staff, new programs reach Spanish-speaking communities

Regional Parks hired two bilingual Community Engagement program specialists in fiscal year 2021/22, in its ongoing effort to make parks and nature more accessible and welcoming for Spanish-speaking families.

The team, in collaboration with Community Action Partnership's Pasitos playgroups, won national accolades for the Caminitos Al Parque program, which introduces Spanish-speaking families to the wonders of nature through an innovative, hands-on educational park experience that promotes literacy and socio-emotional well-being. Regional Parks staff led this innovative in-the-field experience in Spanish.

Caminitos joins other Spanish and bilingual offerings. Vamos a Nadar provides free swim lessons for low-income children and bilingual water safety instruction for parents.



Bilingual and Spanish-only programs create welcoming avenue for families to enjoy the parks.

## 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



For the Nuestros Parques program, Regional Parks works with community partners to develop customized, health-focused outings, from hikes to kayaking to crabbing.

YES! (Youth Exploring Sonoma) Parks has expanded its offerings. Conceived as YES! Coast to introduce underserved young teens to the Sonoma Coast, the program now offers YES! River, a summer program that connects youth to the county's rivers and teaches kayaking, and YES! Mountain, which introduces youth to hiking and backpacking. The entire YES! Parks program has service and volunteer projects built into each program's multi-month curriculum.



Youth Crew members learn how to weld and are earning a certificate in the craft.

## Youth Crew builds career path

Regional Parks continues to build its Youth Crew ranks by creating a career pathway for 18- to 24-year-olds.

Participants earn a competitive starting wage while developing stewardship, maintenance, construction and basic job skills in a supportive team environment. Crew members explore career opportunities, build their social and professional networks and participate in educational and recreational activities.

Three program graduates were hired as park employees in fiscal year 2021/22. Also, five members of the Youth Crew learned MIG welding skills, under the instruction of the Sonoma County Probation Camp. Crew members are working toward earning a certificate in welding.

## Improvements enhance infrastructure, stewardship

Regional Parks enhanced visitors' experiences by providing new and improved trails and facilities, new access to the Russian River and a fresh look at how the public can be better stewards of parklands.

In fiscal year 2021/22, Parks made significant investments to Helen Putnam Regional Park, in Petaluma. Work included improving infrastructure and accessibility throughout the park as well as opening a new trail and parking lot. Redesigned trails, native landscaping and new signs were just a few of the projects that refreshed this community gem.

A new boat launch in Guerneville River Park has already proven popular with boaters, anglers and other river recreation enthusiasts. The new launch, designed for canoes, kayaks, stand-up paddle boards and other non-motorized watercraft, is part of Regional Parks' effort to improve



A new non-motorized boat launch at Guerneville River Park is a popular with kayakers.

# Sonoma County Regional Parks



Russian River access and recreation opportunities. Enhancements include ADA-accessible trails, family picnic sites, a small group picnic site and replanting native riparian habitat.

Regional Parks entered a multi-year partnership with Sonoma County Tourism and the national organization Leave No Trace to empower visitors and residents to take actions to be good stewards of Sonoma County’s natural resources. Regional Parks also helped form a stewardship initiative with Marin and Mendocino counties to offer coordinated Leave No Trace messaging and education along the counties’ coastlines.



Rangers test out e-bikes as a climate-friendly patrol option.

## Rangers, Maintenance teams spark interest in electric tools

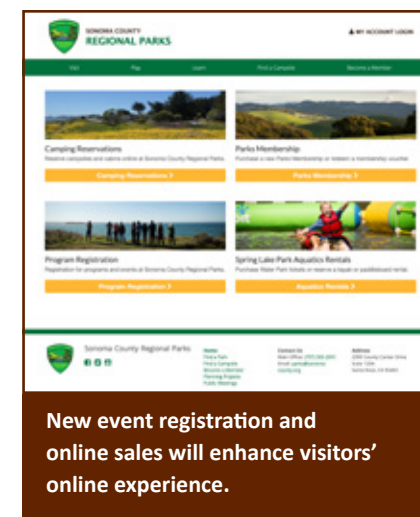
Aligning with the Regional Parks’ and Sonoma County’s goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, Parks’ rangers and maintenance staff have sparked an interest in climate change by going electric.

Rangers tested e-bikes in select regional parks, as part of a larger enhanced reimagining of park patrol and climate-friendly transportation across the department. These e-bikes are capable of hours of power-assisted pedaling on paved roads, beaches and even some trails.

The Maintenance team purchased an electric utility terrain vehicle, as well as solar-powered generators and batteries and a slew of all-electric tools. The tools were distributed throughout the parks, saving both staff time and gasoline emissions to retrieve tools for a job — a step in the right direction toward the goal of lowering Regional Parks’ carbon footprint. And the utility vehicle and e-tools are much quieter while in use, a boon for the public and the wildlife.

## Online customer experience improved

Regional Parks, in fiscal year 2021/22, added new online sales and event registration options for park visitors. Participants in guided hikes and other outings can now easily register online at Regional Parks’ website. Visitors to the Spring Lake Water Park also can now buy tickets online in advance, guaranteeing their admission to the popular attraction. And parks members now have an improved online platform for buying or renewing annual memberships. These improvements complement recently completed upgrades to the online camping reservation system — all intended to enhance the customers’ online experience.





# City Parks Across Sonoma County



## Cloverdale

Cloverdale used close to \$38,000 of Measure M funds in fiscal year 2021/22 on a variety of projects. The team worked to mitigate fire risk and improve trail conditions in Porterfield Creek Open Space Preserve, the city's largest recreational area. The community uses this park in so many ways, from academic enrichment through school field trips as well as nature walks for the local Del Webb retirement community. Outdoor enthusiasts in Cloverdale appreciate being able to enjoy walking, hiking and biking the trails that are a few minutes away from their doorstep.



Cloverdale's Porter Creek Open Space Preserve receives some much-needed trail maintenance.

Also, damaged and failing play structures in the park system's playgrounds were refurbished, repaired and new play equipment was added, providing a safe place for children to play. Work included installing several cubic yards of playground-certified woodchips at the Furber Park playground.

The city also worked to reduce the risk of fire, while encouraging the health of native plant and animal species. Vegetation management is currently in its third phase and will continue annually.

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



## Cotati

Cotati spent nearly \$56,000 in Measure M funds on an ongoing project to update and revitalize Kotate Park, which had the oldest and most outdated playground equipment in the city's park system when the project started. The city is constructing two play areas (one for children 2 to 5 years old and another for 6-to 12-year-olds) and will build Cotati's first outdoor fitness area to promote active lifestyles for adults.



Cotati's Kotate Park will receive facelift and new playground equipment next year.

Additionally, a covered group picnic area will be added, which offers community members an affordable place to gather for events such as birthday parties, baby showers and other small events. A restroom facility and drinking fountains will also be added, allowing park goers to stay longer because they have access to a safe and clean place for diaper changing or restroom use. New amenities that weren't in the original scope have been added. This project is now expected to be completed by the end of summer 2023. Beyond people living in the immediate neighborhood, the project is expected to bring more people to explore the beautifully updated Kotate Park.

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



# City Parks Across Sonoma County



This rendering shows Healdsburg's Fitch Mountain access improvement plan, which was finalized in 2021/22.

## Healdsburg

Healdsburg is combining its fiscal year 2021/22 and fiscal year 2022/23 Measure M funds with other state and city funding to complete the Fitch Mountain Access Improvement Project. This project will create sustainable pedestrian and bike access to the Fitch Mountain Park and Open Space Preserve, add trailhead amenities including restrooms and parking, and improve the Villa Dog Park. Work is anticipated to begin

in the fall of 2022 and be completed in summer of 2023. No Measure M funds were spent in fiscal year 2021/22.

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



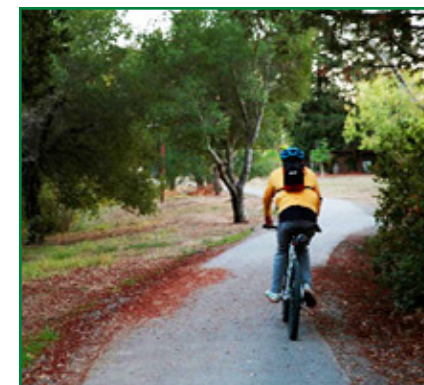
## Petaluma

Petaluma invested approximately \$325,700 of Measure M funds in fiscal year 2021/22 completing the Westridge Park pathway reconstruction project. There were parts of the trail with crumbled asphalt, root intrusion, and

uneven surfaces. Hazardous for users, especially those with mobility issues, the improved multi-use pathway offers the community a relatively flat trail to encourage biking and walking. Access to relatively flat recreational pathways is rare in Petaluma's westside neighborhoods and completing this project was critical in connecting the parks other amenities which include a community garden, a playground, a multi-use lawn area, mature shade trees and riparian habitat.

Petaluma invested nearly \$196,000 in hiring one full-time and two seasonal maintenance workers. This amplified park and trail maintenance, mowing and mulching frequency, irrigation repairs, playground improvements, debris removal and tree care throughout the city's 47 active parks.

Additional improvements, totaling more than \$68,000, included the resurfacing of basketball and sport courts at La Tercera and Bond parks; increasing playground wood chips in these parks: Arroyo, Del Oro, Fox Hollow, La Tercera, Leghorns, Lucchesi, Mannion Knolls, and McDowell; and replacing failing pavers with an expanded and reinforced concrete pathway creating greater access for pedestrian and bicyclist use near Spyglass Drive and Ely Boulevard.



A cyclist enjoys Westridge Pathway in Petaluma, shown after an extensive reconstruction.

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

# City Parks Across Sonoma County



## Rohnert Park

In fiscal year 2021/22, a total of \$196,000 in Measure M funding financed the addition of two full-time employees, one in parks maintenance and one in recreation. When parks are well maintained, they are used more. This provides residents access to nature, open space and free recreational amenities such as playgrounds, sports fields and courts. Adding staff to facilitate recreation programming provides the community with low-cost options for extracurricular activities that enhance social, emotional and physical well-being.



Rohnert Park residents and visitors enjoy the Halloween carnival in 2021.

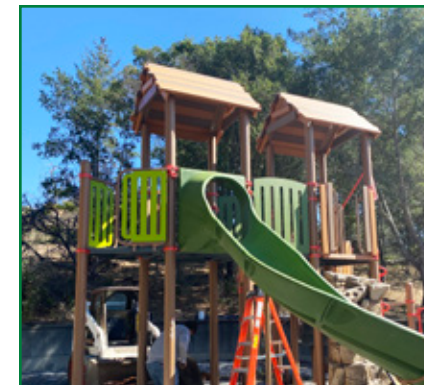
In addition, \$120,000 of Measure M funds in fiscal year 2021/22 were used to provide free community events, including the Halloween Carnival, Summer Kick-Off Brunch & BBQ and the RP Jubilee. Around 10,000 members of the community enjoyed these memorable events. The RP Jubilee was the first Independence Celebration offered by the city in well over a decade. This significant event came just six months after residents went to the polls and voted to ban safe and sane fireworks in Rohnert Park. Both staffing and community events will continue to be funded through Measure M in the years ahead.

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



## Santa Rosa

Santa Rosa's city council approved an updated Measure M expenditure plan that includes spending priorities. The expenditure plan identifies three avenues of funding: 50% for capital improvement projects, 40% for maintenance improvements and 10% for recreational program enhancements. The updated plan includes adding a staff member to manage future projects and organize Measure M funding documentation.



New playground equipment will be installed in Santa Rosa's Fir Ridge Park.

Measure M funding supports recovery projects for parks that were damaged in wildfires. These projects will rebuild and restore six parks, including projects already under construction in Fountaingrove and Coffey Park. It will also address 13 acres of roadway landscaping, including replacing a fire-damaged irrigation system and planting fire-resistant vegetation. Park and open space amenities will be restored, including installing new play structures at Fir Ridge Park and a new trail system at Rincon Ridge Open Space.

Santa Rosa's robust parks volunteer program got a boost with Measure M funds with the purchase of a new equipment trailer. The trailer is the focal point of volunteer events including the popular Park-a-Month program.

# City Parks Across Sonoma County



The trailer wrap is branded Measure M – Parks for All and is kept stocked with all the necessary items to supply volunteers with the tools and materials they need.

Using the recently developed Parks Condition Assessment and Prioritization Plan, staff evaluated all Santa Rosa parks based on condition, recreation programming, play value and accessibility. City parks were ranked, creating a priority list of all parks, playgrounds, ballfields, sport courts and other amenities. This plan will be used by the city when developing the fiscal year 2022/23 capital expenditure plan.



## Sebastopol

In Sebastopol, nearly \$5,900 of Measure M funds was used to replace and maintain large heritage trees. The work included preserving existing trees, planting additional trees along some streets and replacing trees lost through disease or storm damage. This project will continue to be an ongoing Measure M expenditure at this funding level, which is about 5% of Sebastopol's annual allotment.

Also, a conceptual design was the next step in “naturalizing” Sebastopol's Calder Creek, a part of the Ives Park master plan, which was approved in 2013. Some \$20,000 in Measure M funds was spent in fiscal year 2021/22 on this project. The city engaged a local nonprofit organization and a Switzer Environmental fellow to help envision how the creek would look and act



Sebastopol's Calder Creek will soon have a more natural look.

through the park and beyond. A critical hydrology study was done to ensure the new alignment will still be viable during storms and that it would improve flooding conditions in the watershed. Staff will continue working with the public to envision the next steps. They will also work with the California Urban Stream Partnership (CUSP) to identify funding opportunities to amplify the \$50,000 in Measure M funds that will be used for fiscal year 2022/23 to continue this work.

The ongoing Ives Park pathway replacement project, used \$1,955 in Measure M funds during fiscal year 2021/22. The main pathway throughout this centrally located park is degraded and in need of replacement. The project will remove excess asphalt, replace the deteriorated pathway and make it ADA accessible. Prop 68 State Park funds will also be leveraged for this project. The replacement will be done in phases, with the first phase focusing on adding an ADA pathway to the picnic area (which has new ADA tables in place) and replacing degraded pathways in the southwest area of the park. While originally planned for 2021/22, this first phase of the project was put on hold, pending the Calder Creek Naturalization concept to make sure the pathway was aligned with the creek redesign.

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



# City Parks Across Sonoma County



## Sonoma

Sonoma used more than \$36,400 in Measure M funds for a variety of projects in the Montini Open Space Preserve. Vegetation management included removing invasive plants and restoring native plants, as well as reducing fire fuel in this 98-acre preserve situated a few blocks from the historic Sonoma Plaza. The city will be applying the reserves to a future Measure M project that will enhance Depot Park with a restorative center, which will include water bottle filling stations, signage incorporating walking/hiking and biking maps, upgrading the restrooms, new landscaping (bioretention area), bike parking and trash and recycling containers.



Vegetation management in Sonoma's Montini Open Space Preserve includes targeted grazing.

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



## Windsor

The town of Windsor addressed several projects, using Measure M funds during the 2021/22 fiscal year. The shade structure at Hiram Lewis Park covers a picnic area that is heavily used throughout the year.

The wooden arbor slats had deteriorated beyond repair. Staff determined a steel replacement would offer the best aesthetic appeal and durability, while requiring low ongoing maintenance. It was completed in the spring of 2022.

Focusing on emergency preparedness, Windsor used funds to install a generator transfer switch at the Windsor Senior Recreation Center, which already serves the community in myriad ways. Installing the switch at the center allows it to become a cooling and/or resource center for residents during an emergency. The town rents a generator annually from June through November for these purposes.

A new dog park wows Windsor residents and their furry friends. Located in a large, shady portion of the Keiser Park Oak Grove, the project broke ground in spring of 2022 and celebrated its grand opening in September. It was a (dog) treat to use Measure M monies for this project.

With Measure M funds, Windsor can offer more scholarships for youth sports activities, youth day camps, senior classes and access to the Senior Recreation Center swimming pool programs.

Funds have also allowed the town to hire an additional parks maintenance team member, which will increase the service levels within the park system

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



Windsor's popular Hiram Lewis Park picnic area has a new, durable arbor.



▲ An aerial shot of the Pacific Coast and the Wright Hill parklands.

