

REGIONAL PARKS FOUNDATION

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2030



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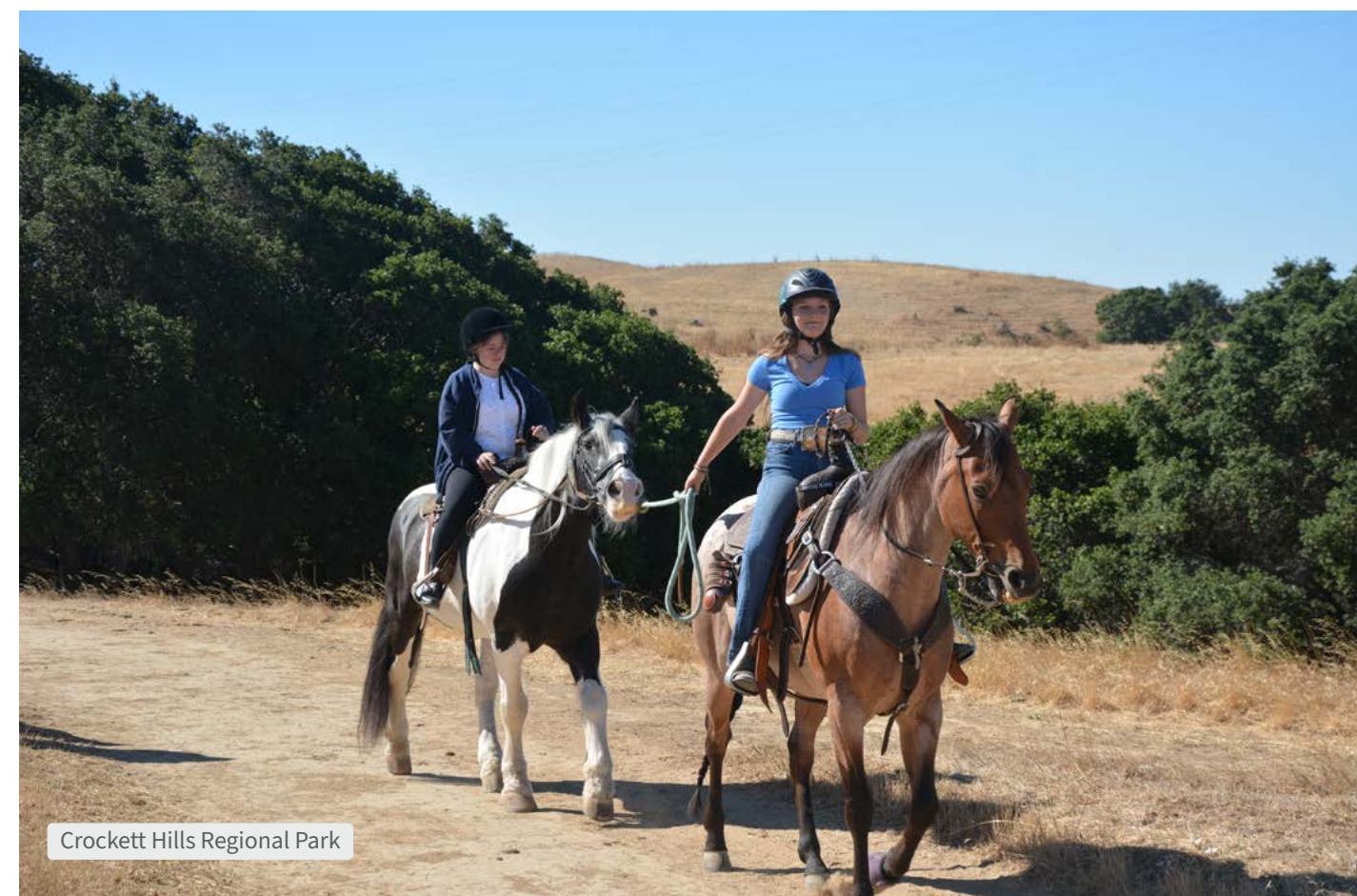
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Our Story

The Regional Parks Foundation (the Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization governed by an independent board of directors. We maintain a close partnership with the East Bay Regional Park District (the District), formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding that articulates our shared vision and complementary roles.

The Foundation's role is clear: We build community support for East Bay Regional Parks. We fund projects and acquisitions that enhance the visitor experience, support programs that increase equitable access, invest in stewardship initiatives that protect natural resources, and catalyze innovative pilots that test new approaches to serving our communities. In doing so, we help ensure the District can deliver on its mission while building a broad base of community support and engagement.



The East Bay Regional Park District is the largest regional park system in the country: 73 parks spanning more than 126,000 acres, 1330 miles of trails, and 55 miles of shoreline, offering countless opportunities for recreation, education, conservation, and connection to nature. For over 55 years, the Regional Parks Foundation has served as the philanthropic partner of the East Bay Regional Park District, raising funds to enhance and expand these beloved public spaces.

Now, the Foundation faces a defining moment. As the District evolves to meet growing demands and changing community needs, the Foundation must similarly transform to fulfill its potential as a powerful philanthropic partner. This strategic plan emerges from extensive analysis, stakeholder engagement, and collaborative planning conducted from 2024 to 2026 by the Foundation's board, staff, and District leadership, supported by Potrero Group's strategic planning expertise and park partnership experience.

The Case for Change

For years, the Foundation operated with significant operational dependencies on the District, sharing staff, systems, and infrastructure. While this model provided important efficiencies during the Foundation’s development, it also constrained the organization’s ability to grow its fundraising capacity, respond nimbly to opportunities, and focus squarely on its philanthropic mission.

Our transition to operational independence represents more than an administrative restructuring; it is a strategic imperative. By establishing our own systems, hiring dedicated development staff, and centering our activities on philanthropic capacity building and community activation, we create the conditions for transformational growth in our ability to support the parks.

Planning Process

Three years ago, the Regional Parks Foundation and East Bay Regional Park District began exploring opportunities to deepen and strengthen their partnership. The Foundation board revisited its organizational vision and conducted a membership study, beginning a process to transform the Foundation’s operating model and invest in its capacity.

Vision Setting & Membership Study

2023-2024

2024-2025

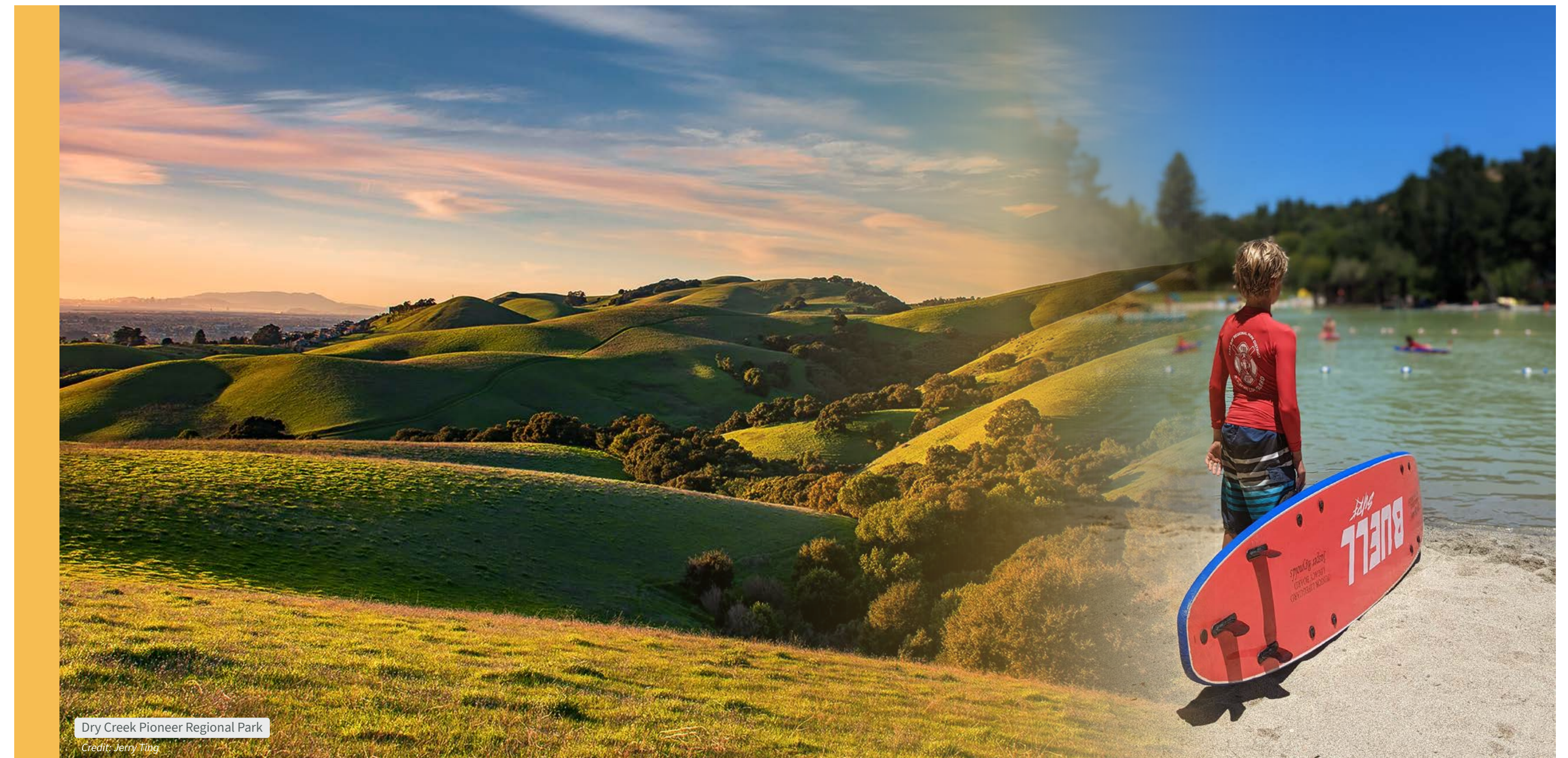
EBRPD Partnership Model

Business Model Scenarios

2025

2025-2026

Strategic Planning



This strategic plan represents the culmination of an iterative two-year planning process that included:



Interviews, surveys, and focus groups with board members, District leadership, donors, and community partners



Environmental scanning and benchmarking against peer park conservancies and foundations



Multiple Strategic Plan Working Group sessions to develop and refine strategic priorities



A day-long Strategic Plan Working Group retreat in January 2026 focused on mission, vision, values, and strategic focus areas



Additional business planning to ensure financial sustainability and operational viability

The result is a plan that is both ambitious and achievable, grounded in realistic assessments of our capacity while maintaining the bold vision necessary to transform the Foundation's impact.



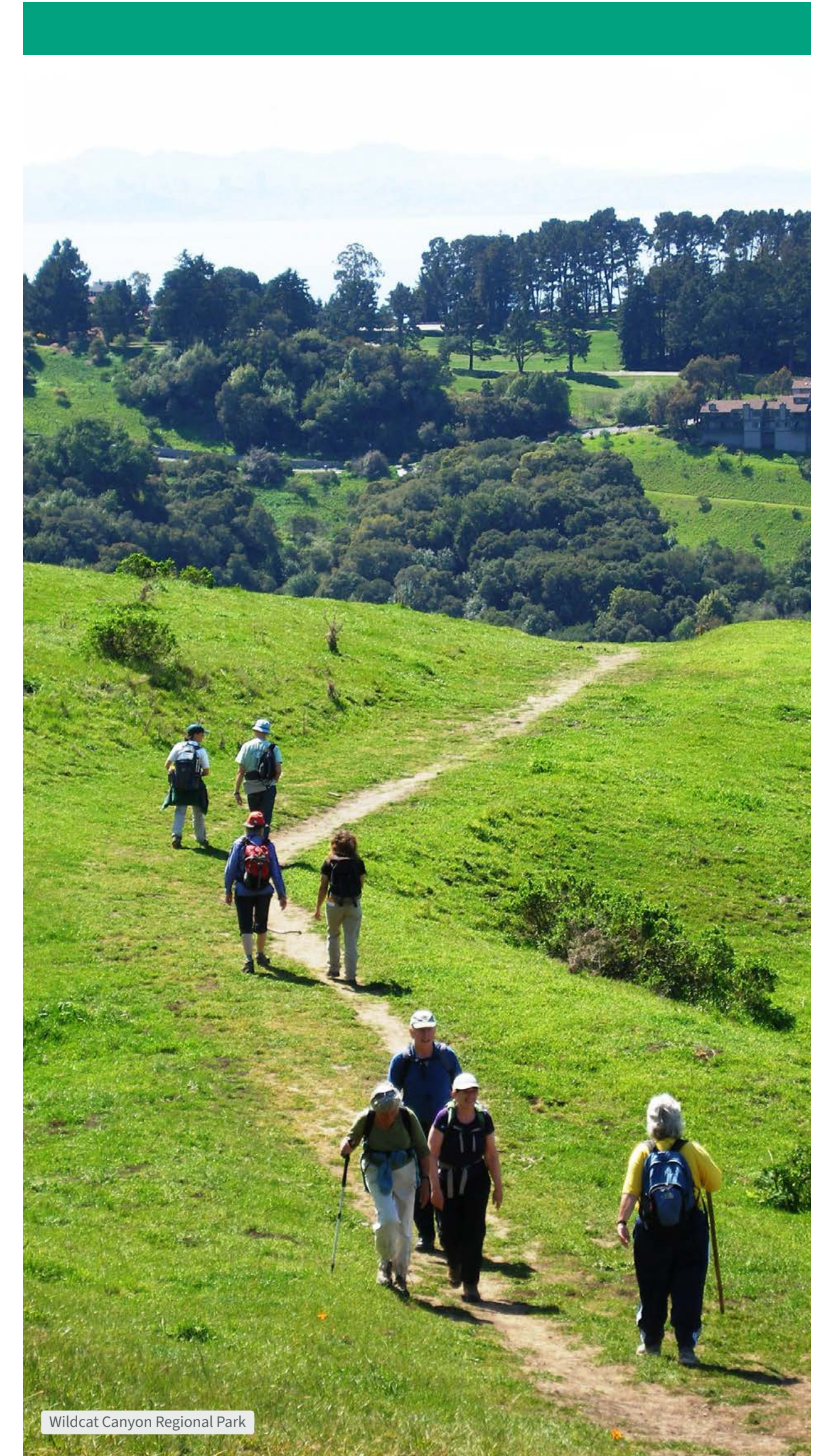
Our Mission

The Regional Parks Foundation builds strong community support for East Bay Regional Parks for the enjoyment of all, forever.

As the Foundation steps into a new era, we are embracing a more welcoming and inspiring mission statement that reflects our dual focus on philanthropy and constituency building.

The Foundation doesn't simply raise money, we cultivate a community of ambassadors who are invested in the long-term health and vitality of these parks. By strong community support, we mean both financial contributions and active engagement, recognizing that sustained philanthropic commitment grows from genuine connection to place and purpose.

The emphasis on stewardship for future generations underscores our role as park champions in perpetuity. The parks we support today must remain vibrant, accessible to all, and well maintained for those who will enjoy them decades from now. This long-term perspective guides our priorities and investment decisions.





Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park

Credit: Santos y Seguros

Our Values

The Foundation has identified a focused set of values that will clarify our commitments and guide our decision-making. These values will inform how we operate both internally and externally:



We champion access for all. We advance equity, openness, and safety so every community feels welcome and included in our parks.



We build trusted relationships. We act with integrity and respect diverse points of view to strengthen collaboration with the East Bay Regional Park District, our partners, and our communities.



We put nature first. We use resources thoughtfully and responsibly to honor the natural environment and fulfill our commitments to the parks and communities we serve.



We stay flexible and creative. We welcome new ideas and embrace learning and adaptation to meet the evolving needs of our parks and communities.

Our Approach

The way we fulfill our mission is straightforward but powerful. When we...



Build robust philanthropic capacity through dedicated staff, effective systems, and strategic donor cultivation, and we...



Activate a broad base of supporters who are emotionally connected to these parks and invested in their future, and we...



Strategically invest in visible, high-priority projects and programs that demonstrate tangible impact and inspire community pride...

... we act as a highly effective and strategic partner to our world-class park system, ensuring East Bay Regional Parks remain accessible, vibrant, and well stewarded for all communities, now and in the future.



These approaches are deeply interconnected, and progress in one area enables and reinforces progress in the others.



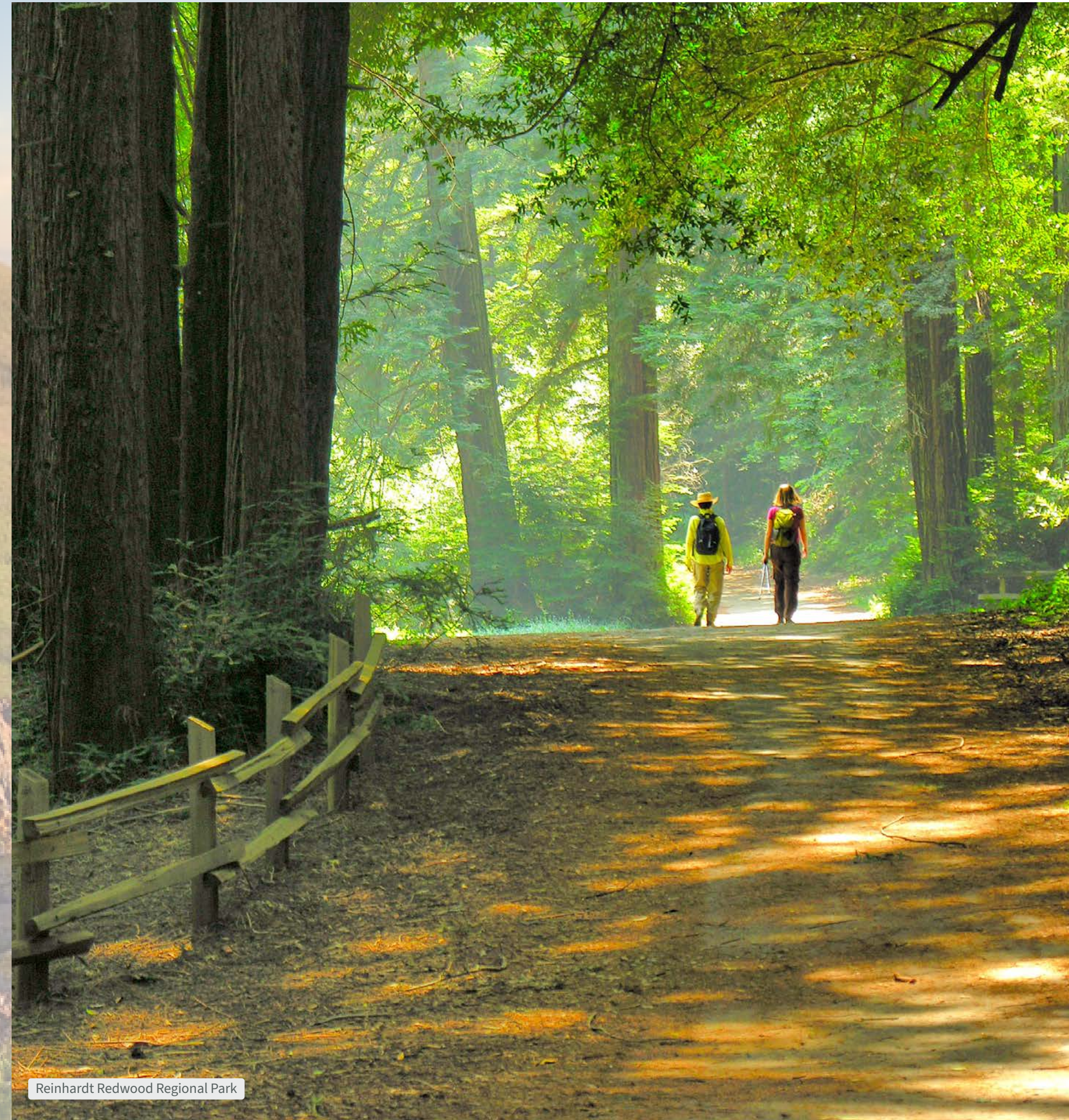
Building fundraising capacity requires effective organizational systems and generates resources that can be invested in community activation.



Activating a broad base of supporters creates the constituency engagement that drives increased philanthropic support to make an impact in our parks.



Strategically investing in visible high-priority projects and programs creates the track record that enables both fundraising growth and community engagement, demonstrating our ability to achieve even more ambitious goals in the future.



Reinhardt Redwood Regional Park



Success requires balanced attention to all three. We cannot simply build infrastructure without demonstrating impact, nor can we pursue ambitious programs without the organizational capacity to manage them effectively. This plan articulates specific strategies and milestones within each pillar while maintaining awareness of how they reinforce each other.



Our Strategy

2026–2030

Over the next five years, we will make strategic investments in our capacity, pursue ambitious achievements, and explore opportunities for expansion in the key areas of our mission.

Strategic Pillars

BUILD FUNDRAISING CAPACITY



- Invest in operational independence
- Invest in our fundraising capabilities
- Invest in understanding our philanthropic potential
- Redesign our membership model and expand our fundraising programs
- Explore our capacity for capital campaigns

ACTIVATE OUR COMMUNITY



- Invest in our brand and marketing strategy
- Launch our new membership program and grow our community
- Increase our community presence and awareness
- Explore merchandise expressing park pride

DEEPEN OUR IMPACT



- Invest in program staff
- Expand our offerings to community partners and constituencies
- Increase support for projects and programs that strategically advance shared priorities
- Explore our role in regional conservation efforts

Planning for the Future: Looking Beyond 2030

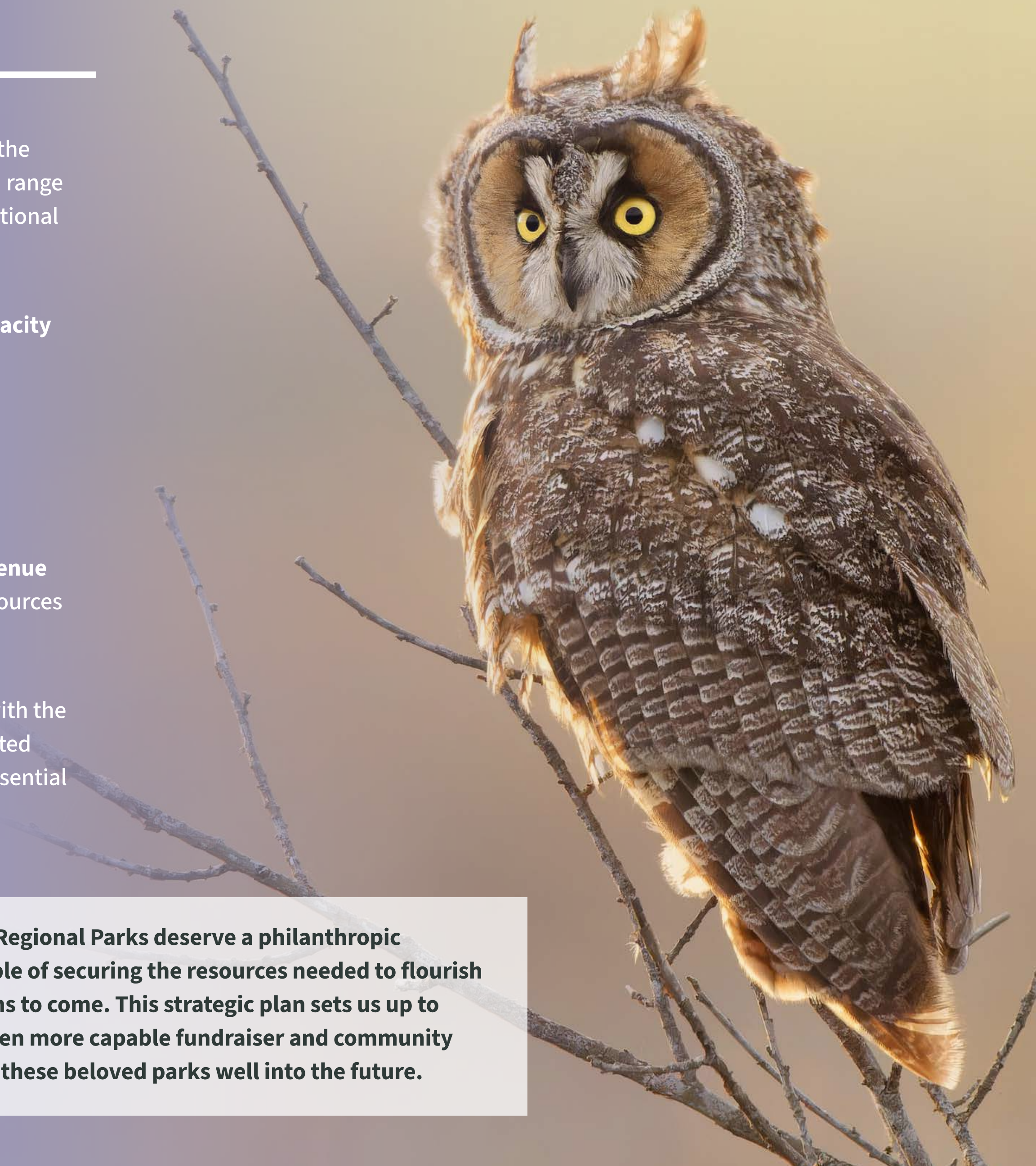
We are positioning ourselves to become a sophisticated park partner that is capable of multimillion-dollar campaigns, and a powerful convener and constituency builder for our regional parks.

This five-year plan is just the beginning. If executed well, by 2030 the Foundation will be positioned to take on even more ambitious goals in the decade that follows:



- * Major capital campaigns in the \$5–\$30 million range for transformational projects
- * Expanded capacity to fund major stewardship initiatives
- * Consistent unrestricted operating revenue from diverse sources
- * Even stronger partnership with the District as trusted advisor and essential resource

The East Bay Regional Parks deserve a philanthropic partner capable of securing the resources needed to flourish for generations to come. This strategic plan sets us up to become an even more capable fundraiser and community champion for these beloved parks well into the future.





STRATEGIC PILLAR

Build Fundraising Capacity

The Regional Parks Foundation's ability to fulfill its mission depends on growing and diversifying the resources it can bring to bear on behalf of East Bay Regional Parks. Over the next five years, the Foundation will significantly expand its fundraising capacity across membership, annual giving, major gifts, corporate partnerships, grants, and capital support, enabling more strategic investment in priority District needs. Rather than relying primarily on membership revenue, the Foundation will build a diversified portfolio of giving channels, each with its own cultivation pathway and growth trajectory.

Strategies

1. **Invest in operational independence.** To become the most robust fundraising partner we can be, it is imperative that the Foundation establish full operational independence from the District with the internal systems and infrastructure necessary to function as a standalone nonprofit. This includes standing up independent HR and payroll functions, transitioning to the Foundation's own IT systems and web presence, and building financial management and reporting capacity. The Foundation will also transition its membership program from one centered on parking pass administration toward a more philanthropic model where all members are engaged with escalating levels of engagement and recognition. These changes will allow us to act nimbly, make strategic staffing and technology decisions aligned with our distinct mission, and build the organizational identity necessary to succeed as a sophisticated fundraiser. This work requires a clear transition plan developed in coordination with the District, a compelling brand and case for support, and a grantmaking strategy aligned with shared priorities—all of which are in process.

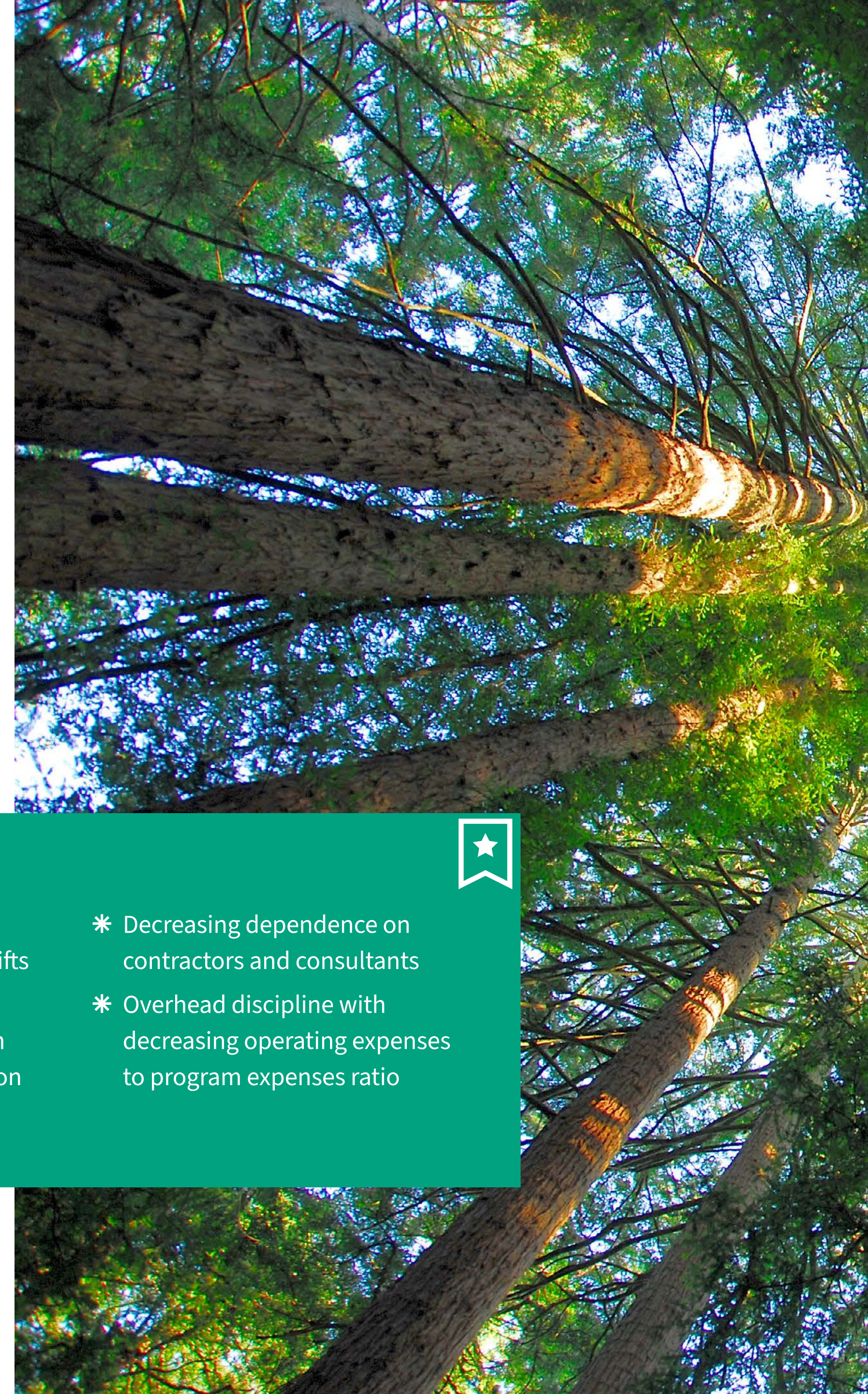
- 2. Invest in our fundraising capabilities.** Professional development capacity is essential to every goal in this plan. The Foundation will hire a Director of Advancement to guide overarching fundraising strategy, supported by a Development Associate. The Foundation will also build board fundraising capacity through training and direct engagement, ensuring that staff and board work together as a cohesive development team.
- 3. Invest in understanding our philanthropic potential.** The Foundation will deepen its knowledge of current and prospective supporters through wealth screening, member research, and improved data practices. This understanding will support a more personalized approach to cultivation and stewardship, including donor events, tailored communications, and giving pathways matched to donor interests and capacity.
- 4. Redesign our membership model and expand our fundraising programs.** With added capacity and a better understanding of our opportunities, the Foundation will redesign its membership program. All donors to the Foundation will be considered members, with escalating levels of benefits and engagement. To support member growth and retention, we will reinvigorate existing fundraising programs and launch several new strategies diversifying our fundraising efforts and our revenue: employing new digital strategies to help grow our monthly and mid-level giving, exploring in-park donation stations, and piloting earned revenue from

retail merchandising, among others. The Foundation will continue planned giving education with associated fundraising goals, and launch a corporate partnerships program including employer match expansion and corporate volunteer engagement.

- 5. Explore our capacity for capital campaigns.** As the Foundation builds its development infrastructure and donor relationships, it will lay the groundwork for future capital campaign readiness. Near-term priorities include identifying early capital project opportunities that demonstrate impact and reinvigorating our grant pipeline. These efforts will build the track record and donor confidence necessary to support larger campaign asks over time (e.g., Tilden Environmental Education Center).

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- * Overall revenue growth and diversification by source
- * Unrestricted revenue growth supporting increased capacity
- * Member acquisition, retention, and lapsed member reactivation
- * Growth in mid-level giving (\$1,000–\$9,999) and major gifts (\$10,000+)
- * Increasing staff capacity with high satisfaction and retention
- * Decreasing dependence on contractors and consultants
- * Overhead discipline with decreasing operating expenses to program expenses ratio





STRATEGIC PILLAR

Activate Our Community

RPF's long-term success depends on building a broad, engaged community that feels connected to and invested in East Bay Regional Parks. Over the next five years, we will strengthen our role as the primary conduit between the community and the parks, building public awareness, deepening engagement, and creating clear pathways for people to connect with, support, and advocate for the parks.

1

Strategies

1. **Invest in our brand and marketing strategy.** This work begins with a comprehensive rebrand refreshing RPF's visual identity, messaging, and public narrative to clearly communicate the Foundation's role and create an emotional connection with the communities it serves. The rebrand will be supported by a co-branding agreement with the District and will underpin all engagement and fundraising efforts going forward. The Foundation will also develop and deepen its social media and media relations strategy to grow its reach across the East Bay, and build messaging platforms to activate members on key issues and campaigns.
2. **Launch our new membership program and grow our community.** The Foundation's redesigned member experience will position members not only as donors, but also as park ambassadors—advocates, volunteers, and community voices—not just parking pass holders. The Foundation will increase points of connection and engagement with members, including launching a park

ambassador program that engages members as volunteer leaders. We will actively seek new perspectives and underrepresented voices as we grow our community. We will also develop interest-based and park-specific affinity groups, creating multiple entry points for community members to connect with the parks in ways that reflect their interests.

3. **Increase our community presence and awareness.** The Foundation will expand community engagement events, volunteer-led nature walks, bioblitzes, and behind-the-scenes park experiences. In partnership with the District, the Foundation will communicate its brand at the parks, increase its presence as a community partner and sponsor of local events, market to user group-specific and park-specific audiences, expand transportation sponsorships and other access initiatives, and support voter education on park-related ballot measures when appropriate. Over time, staff capacity for engagement and programming will grow, potentially including a Program Director and a Program Manager.

4. **Explore merchandise expressing park pride.** As brand guidelines are established, the Foundation will explore a line of park-related merchandise that serves as both a revenue stream and a community-building tool—a visible expression of support that builds awareness and affinity for East Bay Regional Parks.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS



- * Brand awareness and recognition
- * Social media reach and engagement
- * Number of community touchpoints, events, and volunteer activities
- * Sponsorships of community events and regional convenings
- * Community participation in Foundation-supported programs and events
- * Park merchandise development and sales





STRATEGIC PILLAR

Deepen Our Impact

As the Foundation matures, there is an emerging opportunity to expand our role beyond fundraising and community engagement, strategically investing in projects and partnerships that demonstrate tangible impact and position the Foundation as an essential partner in the broader park ecosystem. Over the next five years, we will grow our capacity to support high-priority District projects, programs, and acquisitions; expand our offerings to community partners; and begin to explore a convening role among organizations working to increase access to and engagement with East Bay Regional Parks.

Some elements of this pillar are well defined, others are exploratory. The Foundation will invest in learning, relationship building, and selective pilots alongside more concrete programmatic commitments, building our understanding of where we can add the most value over time.

Strategies

1. **Invest in program staff.** As the Foundation's fundraising capacity grows, the Foundation will invest in dedicated program staff to manage community partnerships, capital project support, and grantmaking. Over time, this may include a Program Director responsible for managing the Foundation's portfolio of mission-fulfilling activities and ensuring alignment with District priorities. Program capacity is essential to moving from ad hoc project support toward a more strategic, sustained approach to impact.

2. **Expand our offerings to community partners and constituencies.** RPF will explore community grantmaking as a vehicle for channeling resources to community-based organizations aligned with shared priorities around access, stewardship, and engagement—drawing on the practices of comparable organizations such as Park Pride (Atlanta) and Seattle Parks Foundation. The Foundation will also serve as a connector between the District and grassroots organizations seeking to engage with Regional Parks, and will share best practices across parks-focused nonprofits through informal gatherings or forums. Existing commitments such as the Botanical Garden partnership and East Contra Costa County Habitat Conservancy investment management will be maintained and strengthened.
3. **Increase support for projects and programs that strategically advance shared priorities.** Early strategic wins are essential to proving the Foundation’s capabilities, growing its reputation, and avoiding the transactional dynamic that can limit a nonprofit partner’s long-term success. The Foundation will work closely with the District to identify a focused number of opportunities supporting shared priorities and common goals that are achievable,

fundable, and have high visibility—creating tangible evidence of the Foundation’s effectiveness and building donor confidence for larger future commitments. These may include capital projects, stewardship projects, youth development programs, park access initiatives, land acquisitions, or other emerging opportunities.

4. **Explore our role in regional conservation efforts.** The Foundation will take a learn-first approach to its potential convening role, increasing its presence at regional tables such as the East Bay Stewardship Network, building relationships with nonprofit leaders, educators, and recreation providers, and working with peers in the region to identify where the Foundation’s unique position creates opportunities to catalyze collaboration. Early measures will be qualitative: increased presence and recognition among conservation and recreation peers, clarity on the Foundation’s potential role, and the quality of new organizational relationships.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

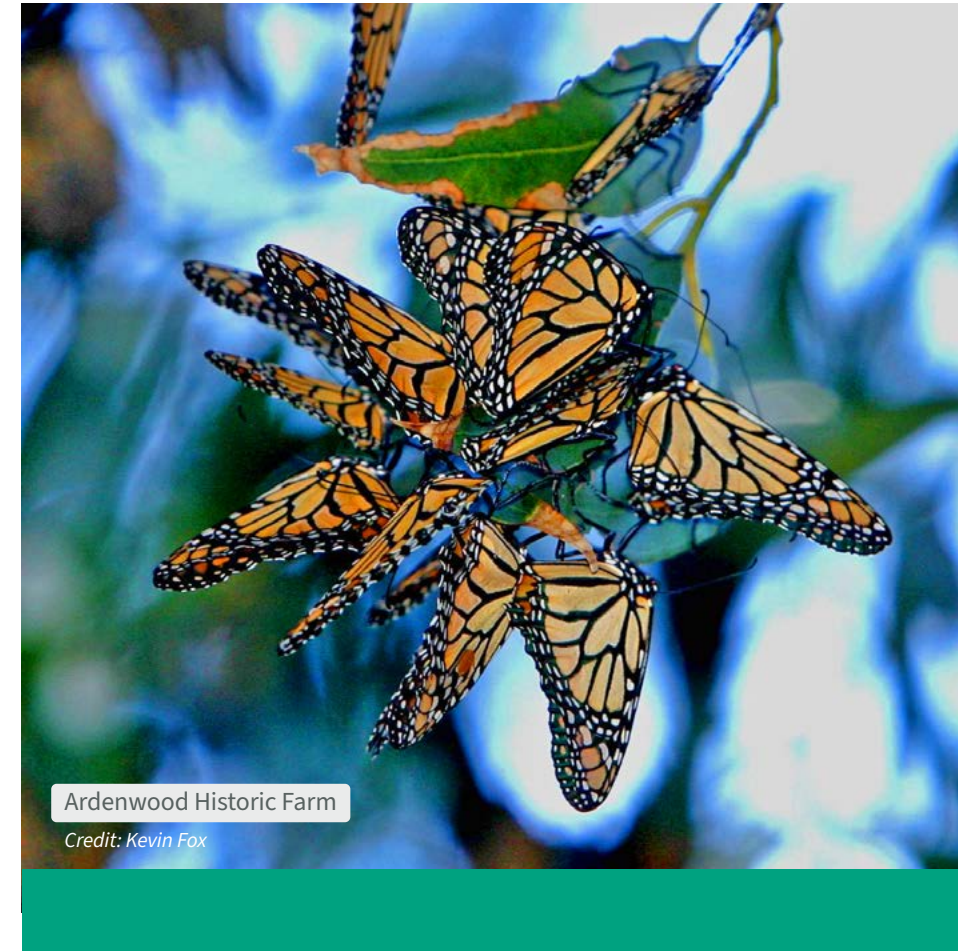


- * Cumulative and annual philanthropic impact on East Bay Regional Parks
- * Increasing program spending to operating budget ratio
- * Portfolio of projects (number and scope) across impact areas
- * Number of community partners supported
- * Qualitative and quantitative outcome and impact evaluation of programs
- * Qualitative feedback on partner satisfaction, collaboration effectiveness, and outcomes
- * Increased presence and recognition at regional convenings
- * Clarity on the Foundation’s convening role and number of new organizational relationships

The Trail Ahead

The Regional Parks Foundation stands at the threshold of an exciting and consequential chapter. The vision articulated in this strategic plan is ambitious: growing our revenue several-fold, building sophisticated development capacity, establishing operational independence, potentially executing our first capital campaigns, and positioning ourselves as an essential philanthropic partner to the District. Achieving this vision will require sustained commitment, disciplined execution, patience through the inevitable challenges, and flexibility to adapt as circumstances evolve.

But this vision is also achievable. The fundamental ingredients for success are present: extraordinary parks that inspire deep public affection, a Bay Area community with demonstrated capacity for significant park philanthropy, a District partner committed to our success, a board willing to invest in our growth, and a clear strategic framework to guide our work.



Critical Success Factors

SEVERAL FACTORS WILL BE ESSENTIAL TO OUR SUCCESS:

Board Commitment and Leadership:

The board must provide both fiduciary oversight and active engagement in fundraising, particularly in making and soliciting major gifts. Board giving should model the level of commitment we ask of others.

Partnership with the District:

Our relationship with the District must be characterized by clear communication, aligned priorities, and mutual respect. Regular communication and coordination will help navigate the inevitable complexities that arise.

Staff Excellence:

Hiring and retaining talented development professionals will be essential. We must offer competitive compensation, professional development opportunities, and an environment where talented people can thrive.

Donor Stewardship:

Excellent stewardship—timely acknowledgment, meaningful engagement, transparent reporting, genuine gratitude—will drive retention and future giving.

Operational Excellence:

As we build infrastructure and systems, we must maintain high standards of organizational management, financial controls, and compliance. Professional operations build donor confidence.

Strategic Discipline:

We will face many opportunities and requests. Maintaining focus on our strategic priorities, saying no to good ideas that don't serve our core mission, and pacing our growth appropriately will be essential.

Flexibility and Learning:

Not everything will go as planned. We must remain flexible, learn from experience, and adjust our approaches based on results.



A Call to Action

This strategic plan is not just a document—it is a call to action for everyone connected to the Regional Parks Foundation.

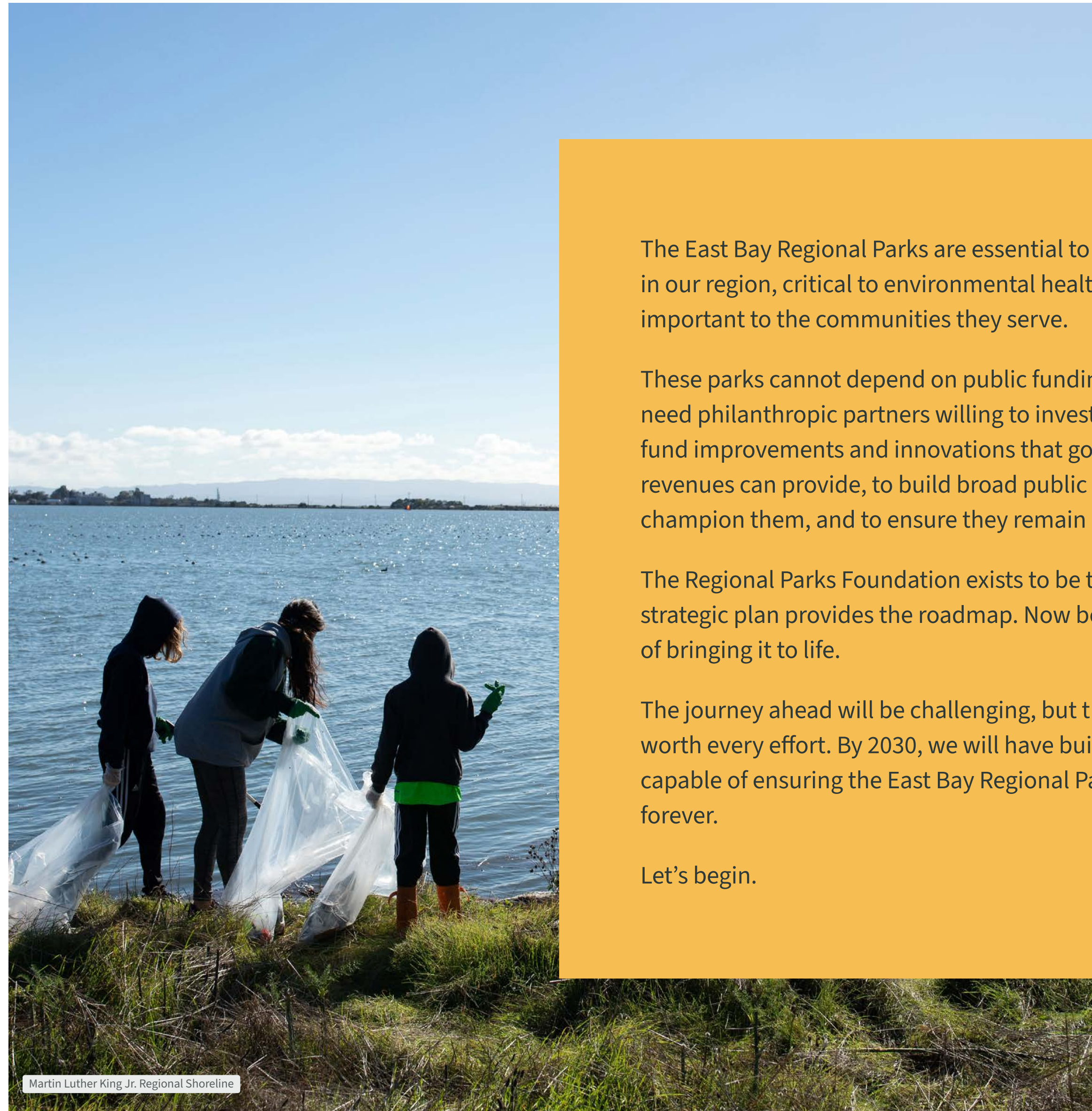
To our board members: Your leadership, generosity, and networks are essential. We ask you to make the Foundation a philanthropic priority, to open doors and make introductions, to personally solicit gifts, and to hold us accountable for results.

To our staff: We ask you to bring your very best—creativity, persistence, professionalism, and passion—to this work every day. You are building something extraordinary.

To the District leadership and staff: We ask for your continued partnership, clear communication about priorities and opportunities, patience as we build capacity, and trust in our commitment to your success.

To our current and future member supporters: We ask you to invest not just in specific projects, but in building the Foundation’s capacity to be a transformational partner for these parks. Your gifts to the annual fund, your leadership in capital campaigns, your patience as we grow—all are essential.

To the broader community: We ask you to champion these parks, to use them, to introduce others to them, to advocate for them, and to invest in ensuring they remain accessible and vibrant for future generations.



Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline

The East Bay Regional Parks are essential to the quality of life in our region, critical to environmental health, and profoundly important to the communities they serve.

These parks cannot depend on public funding alone. They need philanthropic partners willing to invest in their future, to fund improvements and innovations that go beyond what tax revenues can provide, to build broad public constituencies that champion them, and to ensure they remain accessible to all.

The Regional Parks Foundation exists to be that partner. This strategic plan provides the roadmap. Now begins the hard work of bringing it to life.

The journey ahead will be challenging, but the destination is worth every effort. By 2030, we will have built an institution capable of ensuring the East Bay Regional Parks thrive for all, forever.

Let’s begin.



In partnership with

