



Balboa Park
Master Plan

Balboa Park Master Plan

Connecting Parks, People, and Places

SD City Planning

Balboa Park Committee Meeting
September 3, 2026

Why Balboa Park Matters

- The Cultural and Recreational **Heart** of San Diego
 - **World-Class** Institutions and Historic Landmarks
 - **Regional** Draw, **Neighborhood** Anchor
 - Foundational Civic and Ecological **Infrastructure**
 - A Living **Legacy** Stewarded by the Community
-



Why Update the Plan Now

- Last comprehensively adopted in **1989**
- Untapped **Recreational** Potential
- Preserving 100+ Year-Old **Cultural** Assets
- Long-Term **Economic** Sustainability
- A **Climate Resilient** Balboa Park
- Improved **access** for more park visitors



Balboa Park Master Plan

Provides the long-range policy framework for future planning and implementation

What the Master Plan Does

- ✓ Establishes a 30-year vision
- ✓ Identifies land uses
- ✓ Provides policy direction for future implementation
- ✓ Balances recreation, historical and cultural resources, habitat, and public access

What it Does Not Do

- ✗ Provide regulations
- ✗ Finalize project design
- ✗ Conduct technical studies & permitting
- ✗ Eliminate future public participation



From Long-Range Planning to Implementation





Meet the Team

City of San Diego
City Planning +
Parks & Recreation

WRT

Fehr & Peers

Project Lead

*Master Planning
+ Design*

Mobility + Access

For Our Discussion

What are we missing about why Balboa Park matters and why the plan needs to be updated?



What We Heard

- Engage with communities and committees **early in the planning process**
- Study why spaces in Balboa Park are **underutilized**
- Balboa Park is **not one park**, and its **edges** serve as community parks for the surrounding neighborhoods
- The **vision and guiding principles** should reinforce one another
- Building on What the Community Has Already Told Us - **Prioritization Framework**
 - The park serves **habitual local use**, not only occasional tourism
 - Most concerned about the **upkeep of buildings, mobility** and **public safety**
 - **Everyday experience** matters as much as big projects



What We Know – and What We Need to Understand Better...



Cultural Legacy



Community Hub



Landscape & Biodiversity



Aging Infrastructure



Challenging Topography



Active Landfills

For Our Discussion

Did we hear you correctly? What else should we understand as part of the Park's Existing Conditions?



What Will the Plan Address



**Balboa Park
as a Place**



**Balboa Park
as a Park**



**Access &
Connectivity**



**Facilities &
Infrastructure**

What Will the Plan Address



**Institutions &
Partnerships**



**Resilience &
Sustainability**



**Implementation,
Governance &
Investment**



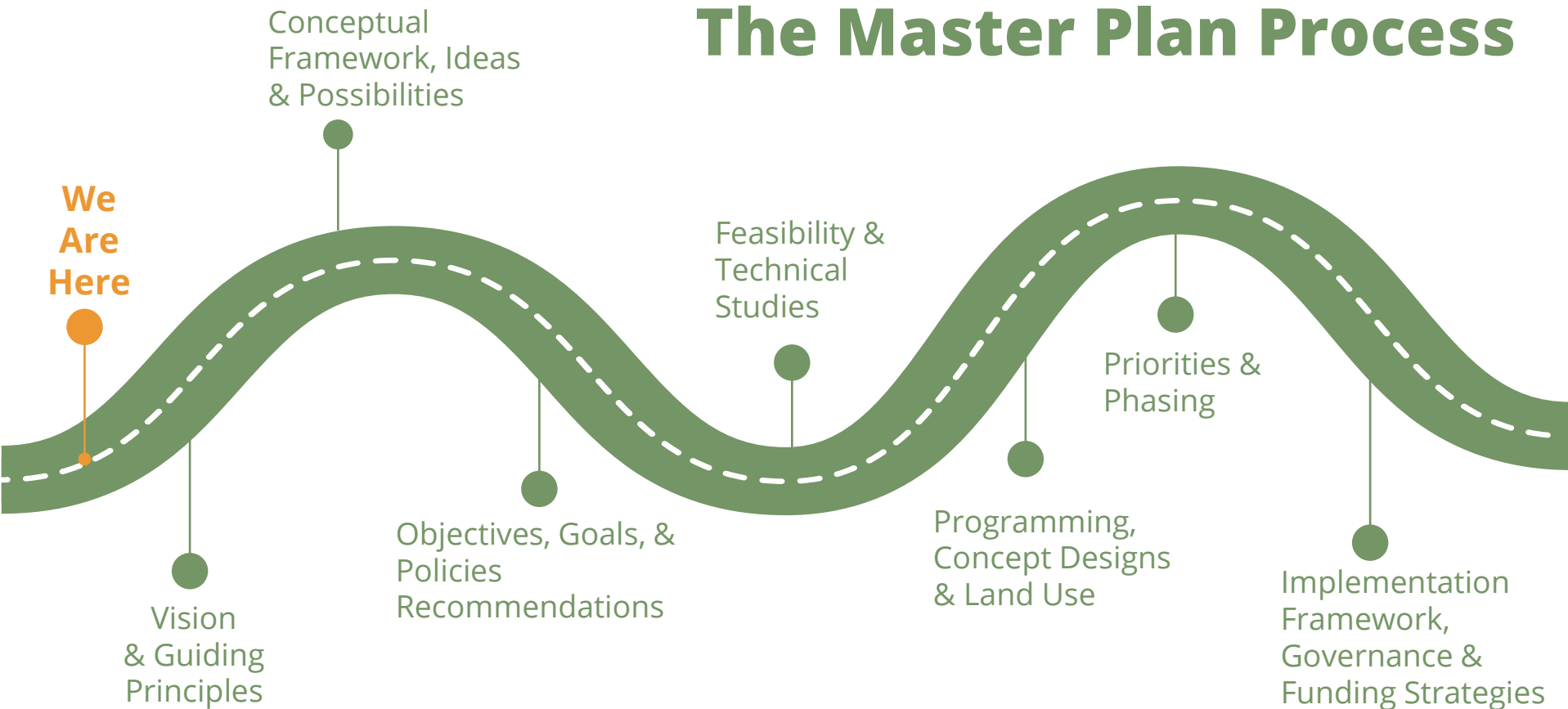
**Outcomes and
Measures of Success**

For Our Discussion

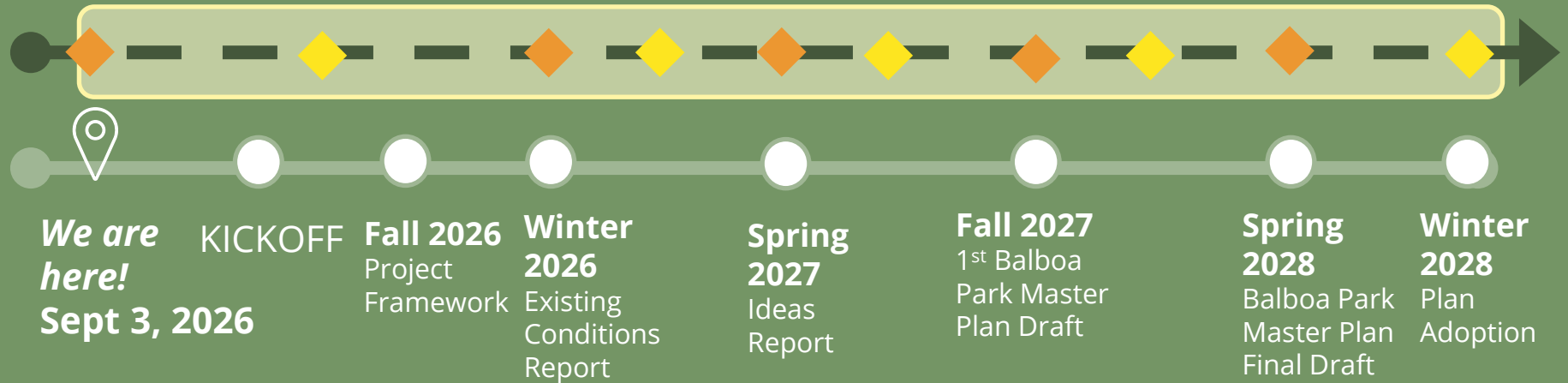
Are these the right areas for the Master Plan to focus on? What is missing?



The Master Plan Process



Tentative Schedule & Engagement



Public / Community Members = 

Focus Groups / Stakeholders = 

Balboa Park Committee Meetings = 



Vision to Action

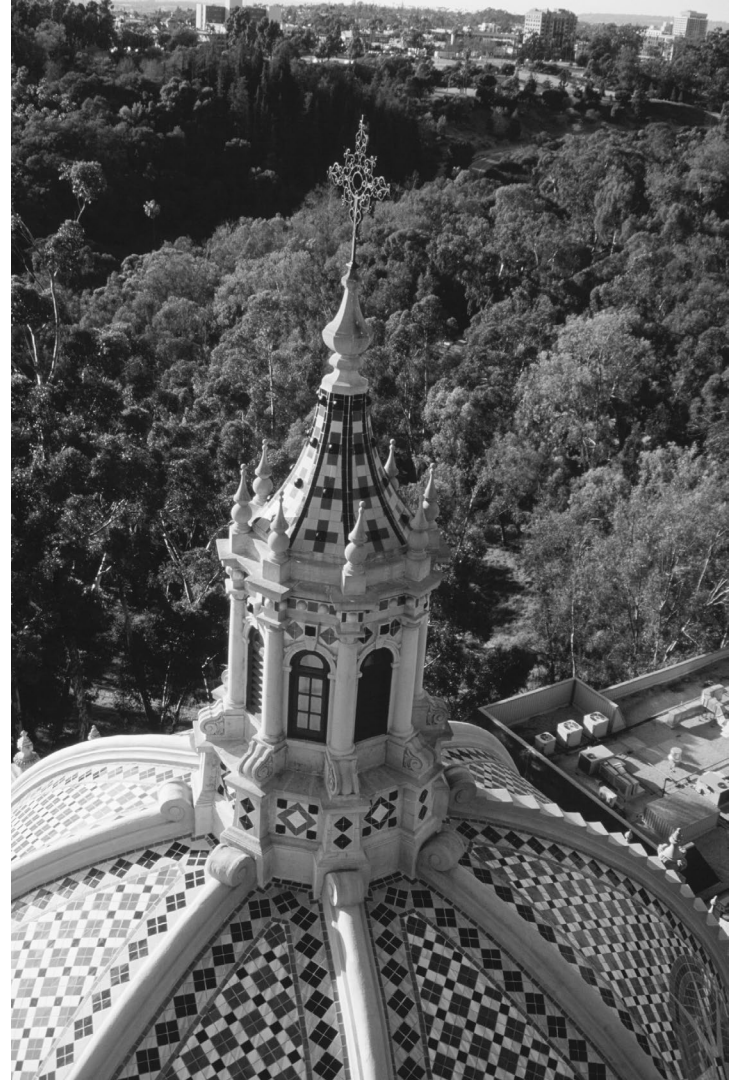
- **More than a vision document** — Connects the vision to specific, actionable next steps
- **Priorities and phasing** — Establishes priorities and how projects can be phased over time
- **Costs and funding opportunities** — Understanding of anticipated costs and potential funding sources.
- **Governance & partnerships** — Evaluates management, partnership, and leasehold approaches to support long-term implementation
- **Implementation pathway** — Practical approach for moving priorities from planning to implementation

How We Can Work Together

- **Master plan guidance** — Provide input, perspective, and knowledge of Balboa Park to help inform the Master Plan as it develops.
- **Forum for public input** — Create an opportunity for community members and stakeholders to share feedback, ideas, and concerns
- **Source of reliable public information** — Serves as a trusted resource for accurate, accessible, and up-to-date information
- **Connection to the broader community** — Help connect the planning process with stakeholders, organizations, professionals, and the public.

For Our Discussion

Does this approach reflect how you would like the Committee to be involved? What else would help us work effectively together throughout the process?



Draft Project Webpage

We've developed a draft project webpage as a starting point for sharing information and engaging the community

This is a starting point — we are looking for your input.

Today, we'd especially like your feedback on the draft vision and goals

- Project Overview
- Draft Vision and Goals
- Project Updates & Engagement

Balboa Park Master Plan



Translation and Interpretation Services

Servicios de Traducción e Interpretación

Mga Serbisyonang Pagsasalitang at Pagpakahulugan

翻譯和口譯服務

Các Dịch vụ Biên dịch và Phiên dịch

번역 및 통역 서비스



Balboa Park Initial Ideas Survey

Take the [Balboa Park Initial Ideas Survey](#). We want to understand how you use and enjoy Balboa Park, and what kinds of improvements would make the park even better. This survey is just the beginning of the community engagement process. There will be many more opportunities to share your ideas and help shape the future of Balboa Park throughout the process.

Connecting Parks, People and Places

Balboa Park is a 1,200-acre cultural and recreational destination that is home to museums, play areas, gardens, sports fields, schools, theaters and the renowned San Diego Zoo. This treasured park is located in the heart of the City's urban core and is enjoyed by surrounding residents and regional, national and international visitors. While this iconic park is near bus and trolley stations and the San Diego International Airport, it can still feel far away, and while beloved and enjoyed by so many, it still faces significant challenges with its aging infrastructure, visitor access and underused areas. Updating the Balboa Park Master Plan is an opportunity to come together with those who love the Park and those who have yet to experience it, to plan for the Park's welcoming, inclusive and sustainable future.



The Vision

Balboa Park Master Plan will plan for a regional park that improves local and regional recreational opportunities, protects historic resources, enhances access, expands trails, restores habitats and strengthens cultural and historical education for all San Diegans and visitors from across the region and world.

Balboa Park Master Plan Guiding Principles

Balboa Park is a beloved regional park enjoyed by a wide variety of community members, organizations and visitors. This includes the many organizations that call Balboa Park home - museums, cultural institutions, the San Diego Zoo and other park lessees - recreation groups, historic preservation groups, environmental conservation groups, and more than 14 million community members and visitors that enjoy the Park each year. The Balboa Park Master Plan will be community-centered, focused on those who have long enjoyed the Park and those who have yet to experience it. The following guiding principles are anticipated to drive Master Plan update.

World-Class Visitor Experience

Balboa Park will continue to support tourism while serving as an invaluable recreational resource and economic, cultural and educational hub for all San Diegans.

› [Read less](#)



Balboa Park is one of the City's most visited regional and national destinations. The Park welcomes approximately 14 million visitors annually to experience its historic charm, unique architecture, vibrant cultural institutions and diverse recreational offerings. A welcoming environment that connects parks, people and places through improved circulation, enriched park amenities, and strengthened access to the Park's diverse attractions contributes to this experience.

Recreation and Access for All

Updating the Balboa Park Master Plan provides an opportunity to overcome existing barriers that can limit equitable access to Balboa Park's recreational opportunities, particularly for adjacent neighborhoods and underserved communities.

› [Read less](#)



The Master Plan will examine the Park's topographic, infrastructure and east-west connectivity challenges, and provide strategies to address these obstacles. The Master Plan will identify improved ways to reach the Park, including ways to enjoy the Park by walking, rolling, biking, or taking transit. These strategies will strengthen Balboa Park as a destination with rich experiences that are welcoming for all San Diegans and visitors worldwide.

Historic and Cultural Importance

The Master Plan will embrace the historical and cultural importance of Balboa Park with the focus on thoughtful preservation, ensuring that updates respect and celebrate Balboa Park's historic significance and iconic architecture.

[Read less](#)



Balboa Park, originally developed for the 1915 Panama-California Exposition, features a National Historic Landmark District. National Historic Landmark designations are granted by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior and reserved for nationally significant resources in American history and culture. Many of the district's significant buildings and landscapes are over 110 years old and require significant maintenance and restoration.

Connected Park Communities

Updating the Balboa Park Master Plan will allow for the transformation of Balboa Park's car-centric infrastructure into a multimodal system that improves access to the park.

[Read less](#)



By reimagining pedestrian and bike networks, productively using underused land, expanding recreational amenities, and implementing climate-adapted infrastructure, the Master Plan presents an opportunity to accommodate more visitors while supporting the Park's role as a catalyst for sustainable development in surrounding communities.

Sustainability and Resilience

Updating the Balboa Park Master Plan is an opportunity to develop climate mitigation and adaptation strategies supporting the City's Climate Action Plan and Climate Resilient SD goals in the Park.

[➤ Read more](#)

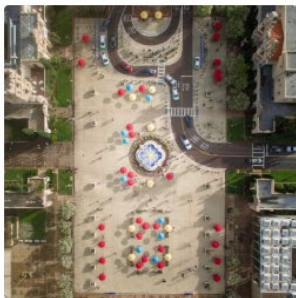


These strategies will include a framework for future green infrastructure and climate-resilient projects, urban greening, enhanced tree canopies and stormwater management. Nature-based solutions will be explored to mitigate urban heat, while also identifying potential cool zones and opportunities for urban forests and native plantings contributing to carbon sequestration and supporting biodiversity.

Economic Viability and Long-Term Financial Success

Economic viability for existing and future land uses is critical to the Park's long-term success.

[➤ Read less](#)



Economic feasibility for potential land uses will be a central focus of the planning effort, ensuring that this plan can be and is ready to be implemented. Land use scenarios will be evaluated to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the Park to address both current and future park needs.

Draft Survey

Purpose

- Gather input from the broader community
- Understand what people value about Balboa Park
- Identify key challenges and opportunities

Today, we are looking for your feedback:

- Are we asking the right questions?
- What, if anything, are we missing?





1. Which areas of Balboa Park are you most familiar with?

Select all that apply.

☐

Museum and cultural areas (Prado, museums, theaters)

☐

Sports and recreation areas (Morley Field, courts, fields, pool)

☐

Trails and natural areas

☐

Florida Canyon

☐

Event and large gathering areas (Spreckels Organ Pavilion, El Prado)

☐

I visit Balboa Park but am not familiar with specific areas

☐

Other

2. How often do you visit Balboa Park?

Select all that apply.

☐

Daily

☐

Weekly

☐

Monthly

☐

A few times a year

☐

Less than a few times a year

☐

Other

3. What activities do you typically do when visiting Balboa Park?

Select all that apply.

☐ Sports or fitness activities

☐ Walking, jogging, or hiking

☐ Visiting museums or cultural sites

☐ Attending performances, shows, or events

☐ Relaxing, picnicking, or spending time outdoors

☐ Dining or visiting restaurants/cafes

☐ Bringing children to play

☐ Meeting up with friends

☐ I have not yet visited Balboa Park

☐ Other

4. What physical improvements or spaces should the City prioritize in Balboa Park?

Please rank the following from highest to lowest priority, with 1 being highest priority. Click on one of the options, then move the blocks in the order you prefer



Park amenities (restrooms, shade, seating, drinking fountains)



Play and hangout spaces for children and teens (playgrounds, picnic areas, hangout spaces)



Gardens, trails, and natural areas



Flexible gathering spaces (open lawns, shaded plazas)



Upkeep and restoration of historic buildings



Cultural, educational, or interpretive spaces (art, exhibits, or installations) about the park's history



Café and dining options



New attractions (rides, interactive spaces, etc.)



Overnight lodging



Other

Reset

5. What types of activities or recreation would you like to see more of in Balboa Park?

Please rank the following from highest to lowest priority, with 1 being highest priority. Click on one of the options, then move the blocks in the order you prefer



Walking, jogging, and hiking opportunities



Nature-based activities and outdoor recreation (gardens, natural play, exploration areas)



Sports and fitness facilities (courts, fields, fitness stations)



Family-oriented recreation (playgrounds, splash pads, picnic areas, hangout spaces)



Dog parks



Cultural or educational programming (classes, workshops, guided tours)



Arts and performance space (outdoor stages, cultural events)



Adventure or unique experiences (adventure parks, climbing, bike track, water play, zip lines, rides, treetop activities)



Other

Reset

6. What would make pedestrian bridges and walkways feel more inviting and comfortable?

Please rank the following from highest to lowest priority, with 1 being highest priority. Click on one of the options, then move the blocks in the order you prefer



Better lighting



Improved safety features



Clear signage and wayfinding



Landscaping or visual enhancements



Shade or weather protection



Public art or interpretive features



Improved accessibility for people of all abilities



Restaurants, shops, cafes, things to do along the way



Other

Reset

7. Please describe any other ideas or improvements you would like the City to consider for Balboa Park.

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What Happens Next

TODAY

Committee Discussion

FALL 2026

Kick-Off
Project Framework

**WINTER
2026/SPRING 2027**

Existing Conditions Inventory + Analysis

ONGOING

Community + Stakeholder Engagement

We will return to the Committee as the work develops to share what we heard, how it informed the work, and seek feedback on the next phase.

Let's Discuss : The Master Plan

- *What are the **most important qualities** of Balboa Park that this planning effort must protect?*
- *What are the **biggest challenges** the master plan should address?*
- *What are the **most important opportunities** the master plan should explore?*

Let's Discuss : The Process

Planning-Level Existing Conditions

Did we capture the key issues correctly? What else should we make sure we understand as part of Existing Conditions?

Working with the Committee

Does the proposed approach reflect how you would like the Committee to be involved throughout the Master Plan process?

Stay Connected

Contact – PlanBalboaPark@sandiego.gov

Questions, comments, or additional feedback are welcome throughout the process.



Balboa Park

Master Plan