

A photograph of a modern park at dusk. A wide, light-colored paved path curves through the scene. To the left of the path is a landscaped area with various plants, including tall grasses, green shrubs, and purple flowers. In the background, a colorful playground structure with blue and pink panels is visible. Two people are walking on the path, their figures slightly blurred, suggesting movement. The overall atmosphere is serene and well-maintained.

**THIS IS A RECORDED WEBINAR,
WATCH NOW**

Let's Create a Park!

PLANNING A CREATIVE FUNDING STRATEGY



CENTER FOR CREATIVE
LAND RECYCLING
RECLAIM. CONNECT. TRANSFORM.

Let's Create a Park!

**PLANNING A CREATIVE FUNDING STRATEGY
FOR SUCCESSFUL PARK DEVELOPMENT**

Let's Create a Park!



CENTER FOR CREATIVE
LAND RECYCLING

RECLAIM.CONNECT.TRANSFORM.



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Our Speakers



Madison Merrill
WRT
*Associate | Landscape
Planner*



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WRT
*Principal | Landscape
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Michael Williams
HARD
Trails Program Manager



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CCLR
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CENTER FOR CREATIVE LAND RECYCLING

RECLAIM . CONNECT . TRANSFORM .

CCLR's mission is to promote the sustainable, equitable and responsible reuse of underutilized and environmentally impacted properties.

We educate, advocate, assist, and convene stakeholders to revitalize communities through land recycling.

U.S. EPA's Technical Assistance to Brownfield Communities (TAB) provider in EPA R9 (Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, and Pacific Islands) and R10 (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)

Parks & Open Space Initiative Timeline

- 2023 – CCLR awarded **US Bank** grant to develop the Parks & Open Space Initiative
- CCLR **reviews over 30+ park projects** in vulnerable Californian communities
- CCLR conducts one-on-one **conversations with 8 communities**
- 2024 – **US Bank renews CCLR's grant** with renewed deliverables & goals
- CCLR teams up with **WRT** to begin development of the **Park Funding Framework** (June 2025)
- WRT, CCLR, and TPL present at **CPRS** (March 2025)
- Formation of the **Community Advisory Board** (3 rounds of review)
- Publication of **Let's Create a Park** (May 2025)
- Today's Webinar
- ↓ Future Park Development Programming

Learning Objectives

AGENDA

Introduction

Park Overview

How to Build a Creative Funding Strategy

- Step 1. Understand
- Step 2. Identify Sources
- Step 3. Sequence & Stack
- Step 4. Secure
- Step 5. Manage

Case Studies

- Mariposa Creek Parkway
- San Lorenzo Creekway
- Carol Pereira Park

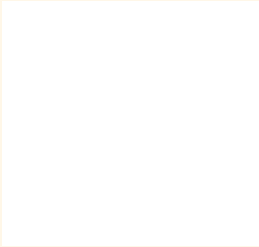
Q&A



Gain insight into the **importance and challenges** of park development



Learn how to **sequence and stack funding sources** across park development phases



Become familiar with the **five phases of park development** outlined in “Let’s Create a Park”



Leave prepared to **adapt these lessons** to your own local projects and partnerships

Agenda & Applications

Introduction

Park Overview

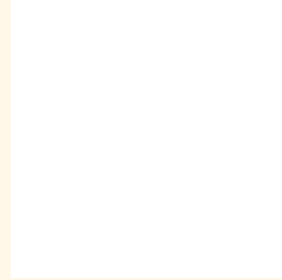
How to Build a Creative Funding Strategy

- Step 1. Understand
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Q&A



A **planning tool** (to organize vision, cost, and priorities)



A **funding roadmap** (to layer and sequence opportunities)



A **teaching tool** (to bring community groups and partners along)



A **confidence booster** (so leaders don't feel overwhelmed and alone in the process)

The Value of Parks & Recreation



Improving Community Health



Bringing Community Together

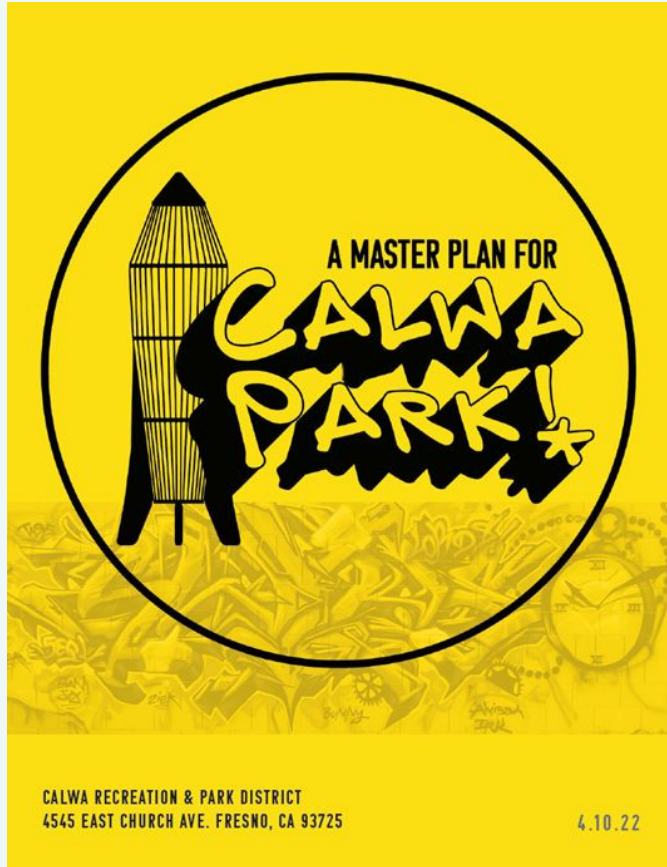


Enhancing the Local Economy



Protecting Natural Resources

The inspiring story of Calwa's rocket launch!



The Park Development Process



Acquire & Assess:

Secure and assess the site for park development



Engage & Design:

Create a vision plan informed by community input/needs



Detail & Build:

Develop construction documents and build according to Master Plan vision



Maintain & Operate:

Conduct long-term care and enhancement



The Challenge

A Need for Parks

- Lack of access to parks
- Poor condition parks
- Climate change and heat
- Public health and wellness
- Open space and biodiversity



Limited Resources

- Park development is expensive
- Parks vs. other infrastructure (roads, utilities, etc.)
- Ongoing O&M



A Need for a Creative Funding Strategy

CCLR, in partnership with WRT, developed this guide to help communities successfully implement park projects through a creative funding strategy.

What is a Creative Funding Strategy?

A Creative Funding Strategy strategically applies **multiple funding sources** at **different phases** of the project, reducing the need to rely on a sole source.



East 14th Street Park

Hayward, CA

HARD transformed a 1.7-acre vacant lot into a vibrant community park with play areas, recreation zones, walking paths, and gathering spaces.

Funding Sources:

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** – \$3M (Design + Construction)
- **CA Dept. of Toxic Substances Control Grant** – \$883,914 (Site Remediation & Cleanup)



How to Build a Creative Funding Strategy



Step 1: Understand

what's required to build a park, including the development process, your site, your community, and your vision



Step 2: Identify

funding sources that match your project's characteristics



Step 3: Sequence & Stack

applicable funding sources into a comprehensive Creative Funding Strategy



Step 4: Secure

the identified funding opportunities

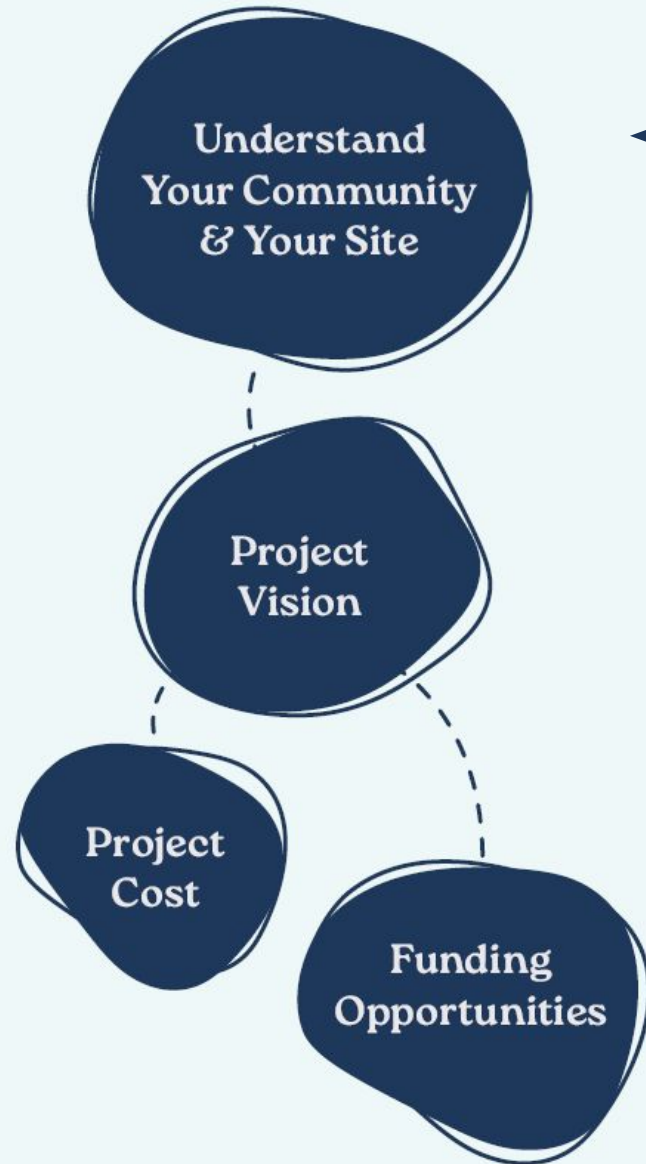


Step 5: Manage

to ensure your project/organization meets all funding requirements



Step #1: Understand



← The foundation of a successful project

Understand your Site

- **Size & Scope:**
- **Site Characteristics:** topography, access, utility service, vegetation, soil composition, etc.
- **Special Contexts:** critical habitat, contaminated soils, climate impacts, cultural resources, etc.

Understand your Community

- **Demographics:** age, income, race/ethnicity, etc.
- **Community Engagement:** what are resident's needs?
- **Your Organization & Leadership:** what are the communities priorities?
- **Your Partners:** Are there other organizations interested in supporting the project?

All these factors should inform you project's design and approach to funding

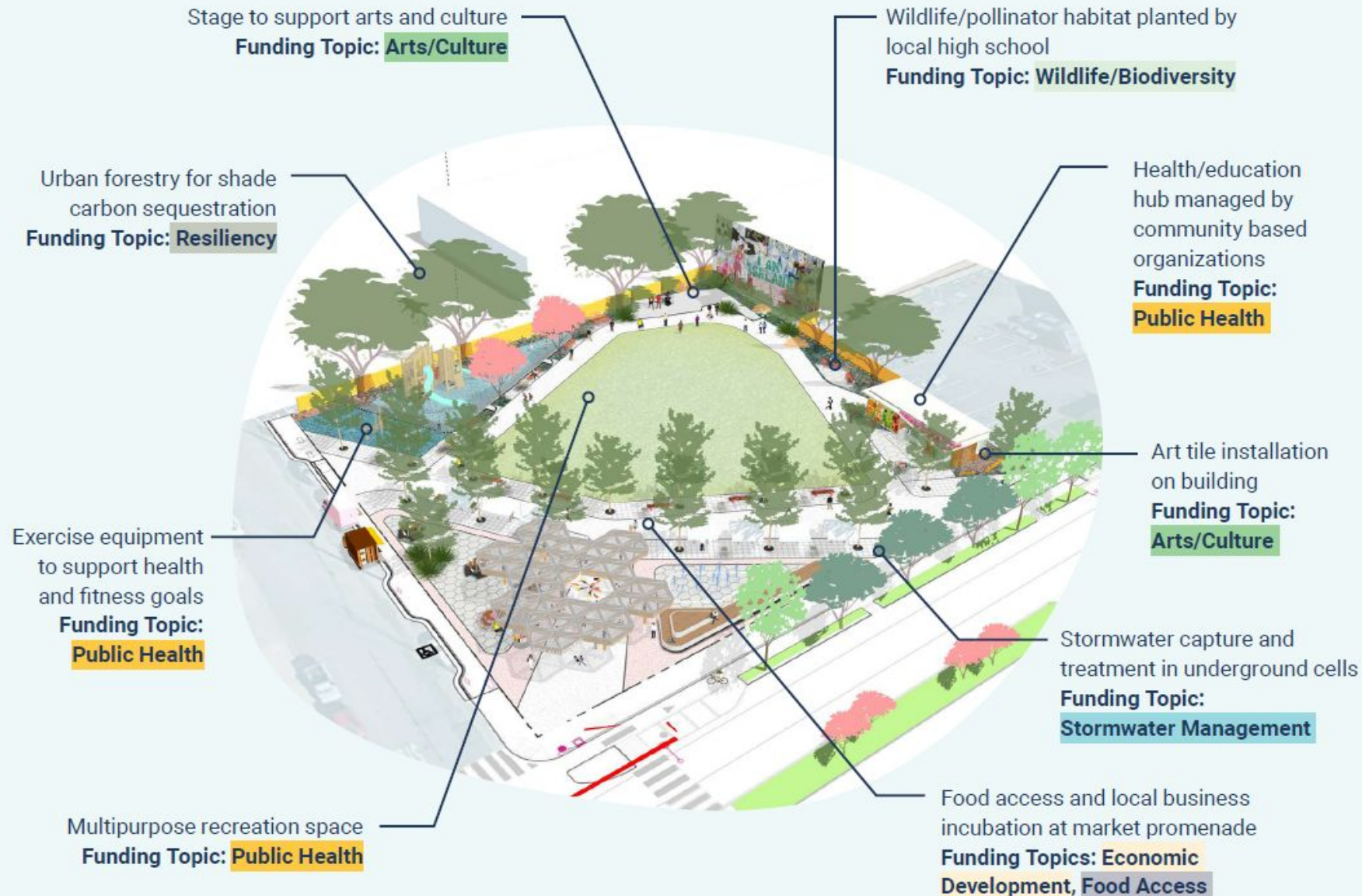
Developing a Project Vision



Vision for Ashland Zocalo Park



Connecting Your Vision to Funding



Step 1: Understand

what's required to build a park, including the development process, your site, your community, and your vision



Step 2: Identify

funding sources that match your project's characteristics

Step 2: Identify Sources

Municipal Funding Tools

- General Funds
- Development Fees/Dedications
- Bonds
- Special Taxes/Assessments
- User Fees
- Private Partnerships / Donations

Grant Funding Opportunities

- Federal
- State
- Private

** A good mix of both municipal and grant funding sources is often key to success*

See the guide for links to helpful funding databases and resources



www.cclr.org/cclr-news/you-need-a-creative-parks-funding-strategy

Some Key Resources Include:

- [Local Agency Strategies for Funding Parks](#)
- [Grants.gov](#)
- [Equitable Park Funding Hub – City Parks Alliance](#)
- Your State's Grant Database

A Few Relevant Grant Opportunities

Federal

- **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF):** Supports acquisition and development of parkland; administered by each state through its own process.
- **Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP):** An LWCF program focused on economically disadvantaged urban areas;
- **Recreational Trails Program (RTP):** Funds maintenance and improvements to recreational trails and related facilities; state-administered and match required.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:** administered by HUD and distributed to local governments, offers flexible funding for park acquisition and construction in low-to-moderate-income areas.
- **USDOT BUILD/RAISE Grants:** Transportation-focused funding that can support trails, complete streets, and active transportation connections to parks.

State

(dependent on your location, here's some key California opportunities)

- **Statewide Park Program (SPP):** Funds new or renovated parks in underserved areas. \$188M (2025–26)
- **Outdoor Equity Program (OEP):** Expands access and outdoor leadership for low-income communities. ~\$57M to date
- **Caltrans' ATP:** funds ~\$568 million per cycle for projects that boost walking, biking, and park access statewide.
- **Proposition 68:** \$4 B bond for parks, climate, and water projects statewide. Majority of funds have been encumbered but some opportunities remain
- **Arts in Parks:** Supports public art and cultural programming in parks. ~\$6–8M (2024–26)
- **CAL FIRE Grants:** Tree planting, wildfire resilience, and urban forestry. \$80–100M/yr

Funding a Project's Lifecycle

LIFECYCLE PHASE	DESCRIPTION	TYPICAL COSTS	COMMON FUNDING SOURCES
	Site analysis, engagement, planning, design, and construction.	Feasibility studies, outreach, conceptual design, construction documentation, permitting, construction.	General funds, grants, bonds, mitigation funds, private donors.
	Ongoing park management, activation, and routine upkeep.	Staffing, utilities, programming, insurance, equipment.	General funds, user fees, special service districts, local partnerships, volunteers.
	Upgrades or redevelopment as facilities and amenities age.	Major repairs, replacements, redesigns.	General funds, improvement levies, revitalization grants.

Measure P

Fresno, CA

Voter-approved funding measure with a **$\frac{3}{8}$ -cent sales tax dedicated to parks, trails, arts, and recreation.**

- Raises an estimated **\$38M each year**
- Prioritizes **highest-need neighborhoods** and **park maintenance**.
- Derived from the City's **2050 Parks Master Plan**



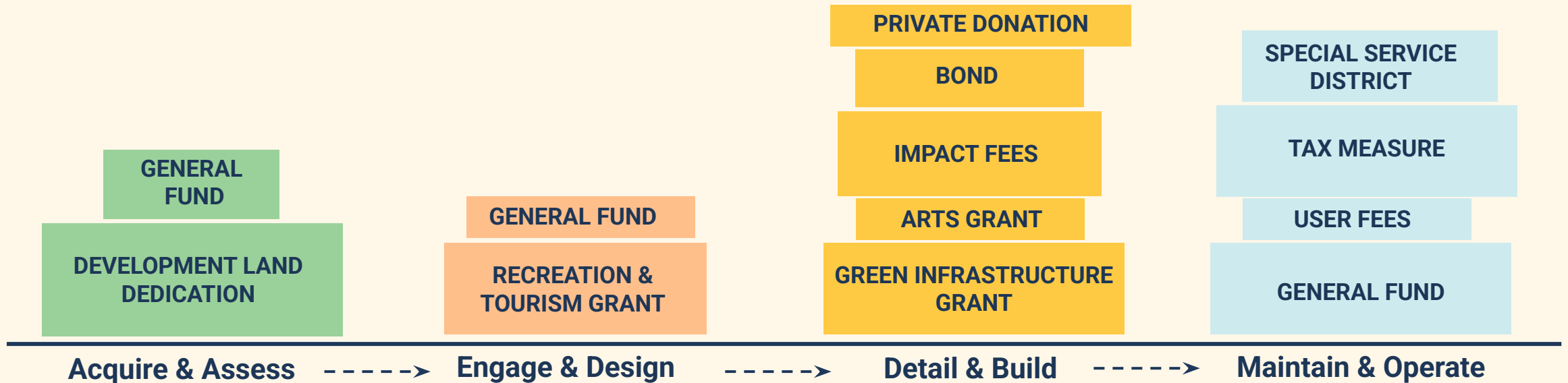
Mary Ella Brown Community Center transformation

Step 3: Sequence & Stack

Strategically plan for **multiple funding sources** at **different phases** of the project

Key Considerations

- Grant Matching
- Back-up Options
- Timing



Step 4: Secure

Securing funding, whether is be grants, bonds, donations, etc. – requires focus and strategy.



FDR Park – Philadelphia, PA

Tips for Success

- **Highlight Community Impact** – Use data, input, and testimonials to show how your project meets local needs and benefits the broader community.
- **Present a Clear Plan** – Define goals, timelines, and realistic budgets, including long-term maintenance and operations.
- **Build Partnerships** – Include letters of support and note collaborations or in-kind contributions to show strong community backing.
- **Use Data + Visuals** – Add maps, site plans, and photos to communicate scope, need, and impact effectively.
- **Leverage Resources** – Explore technical assistance and support offered by funding agencies

Step 5: Manage

Securing funds is only the beginning—effective **funding management** ensures compliance, accountability, and project success.

Key Responsibilities After Funding Is Awarded:

- **Compliance:** Meet all terms, timelines, and reporting requirements.
- **Financial Oversight:** Track budgets, monitor spending, and ensure transparency.
- **Reporting:** Submit timely progress, financial, and final reports with accurate records.
- **Communication:** Maintain coordination with funders and internal teams.



Important Note:

Steps 3 (Sequence & Stack), 4 (Secure), and 5 (Manage) **happen simultaneously**. You will be applying for funding at different, overlapping times.

Case Study: Mariposa Creek Parkway

Mariposa County, CA

The Mariposa Creek Parkway is a community-driven project to expand trails, restore native habitat, and add gathering spaces and interpretive features along the creek, improving recreation and access while preserving ecological integrity.



Case Study: Mariposa Creek Parkway

Mariposa County, CA

**Caltrans Sustainable
Transportation Program**
\$200,000
for Active Transportation

Sierra Nevada
\$496,800
for Recreation & Tourism

CA Conservancy Urban Greening Program
\$911,850
for Green Infrastructure

**PG&E Resilience Hub
Program**
\$25,000
for Resiliency

**CA Conservancy Environ.
Enhancement & Mitigation Program**
\$429,330
for Ecological Restoration

Caltrans Active Transportation Program
\$4,000,000
for Active Transportation



Case Study: Mariposa Creek Parkway

Mariposa County, CA

Art Along the Parkway

- **Murals** recently installed depicting animals and plants found near Mariposa Creek. Funded through **Caltrans Clean CA** grant program.
- The Mariposa Arts Council also received an **Arts in California Parks** grant to plan and implement and **artistic-in-residency program** for the Mariposa Creek Parkway

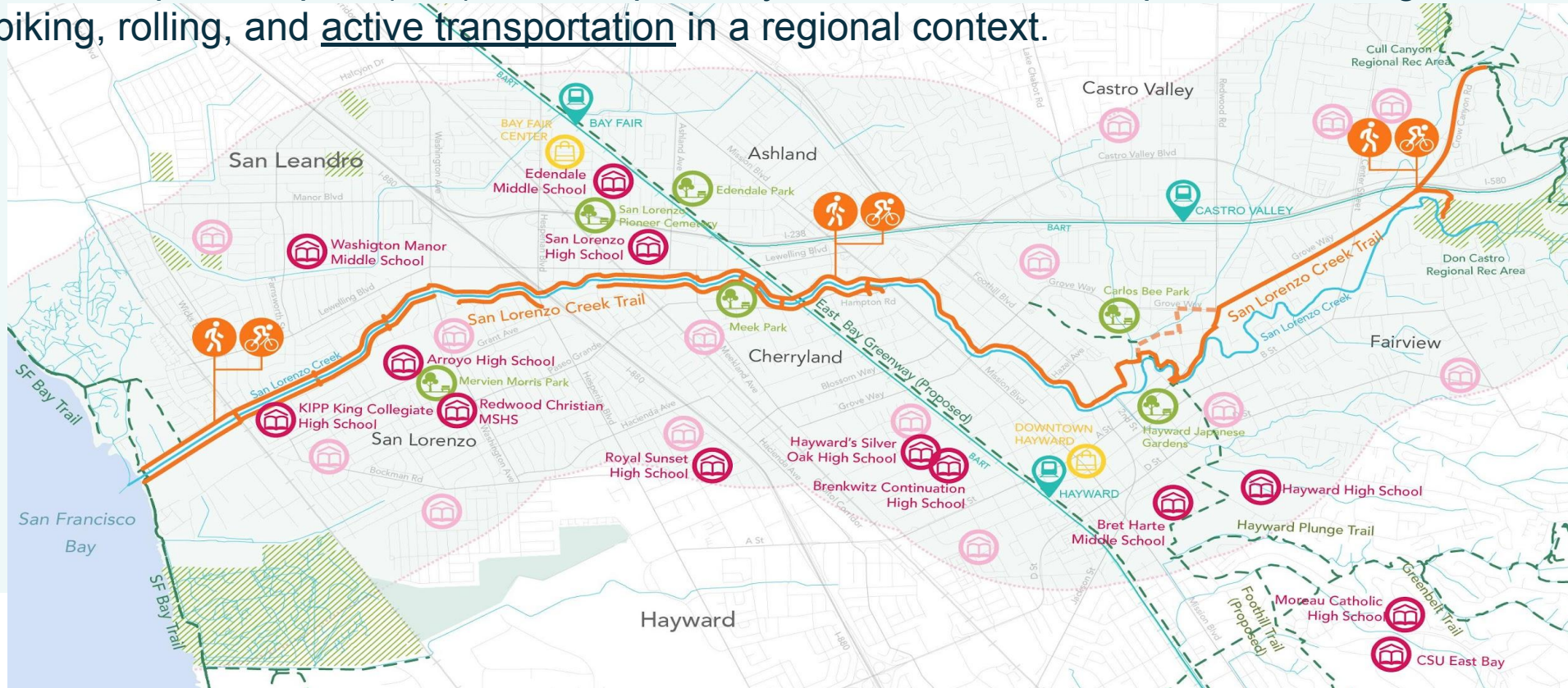


Grant-funded Murals in Mariposa

Case Study: San Lorenzo Creekway

Alameda County, CA

The San Lorenzo Creekway is a joint-agency project between HARD, Alameda County Public Works, and the Flood Control District. By utilizing the County's maintenance road alongside the channelized portions and expanding connectivity, the Creekway can provide up to ten-plus (10+) miles of primarily Class 1 shared-use path for walking, biking, rolling, and active transportation in a regional context.



Case Study: San Lorenzo Creekway

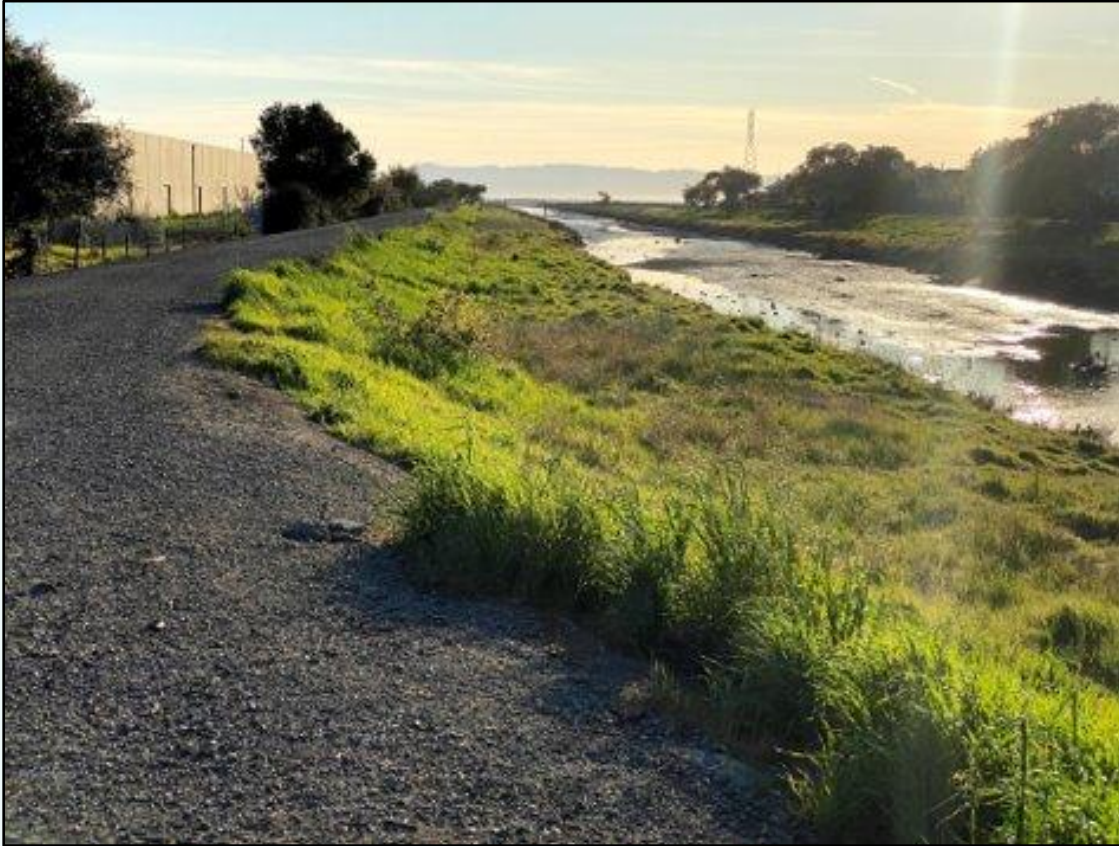
Alameda County, CA



Case Study: San Lorenzo Creekway

Alameda County, CA

Existing Conditions



Case Study: San Lorenzo Creekway

Alameda County, CA

HARD Matching Funds

\$3,000,000+ HARD Bond
\$3,000,000 Pub/Pvt Dev
\$3,000,000+ Ongoing

MTC One Bay Area Grant

\$10,000,000
for Resiliency

Caltrans Active Transportation Program

\$17,000,000
for Active Transportation, focused
on Disadvantaged Communities

Partners

	Trail Development	Maintenance + Safety	Education	Ecological Restoration	Social Services
HARD	 				
City of Hayward	 				
Alameda County	 				
Alameda County Flood Control District					
School Districts					
Social Service Providers					
Developers and HOAs	 				
Local Community Groups	 				
Advocacy Groups	 				

Case Study: Carol Pereira Park

Hayward, CA

Project Timeline



Community Feedback

- Preserve **nature and protect wildlife**
- Provide a **safe creek crossing**
- Provide desirable amenities, including plenty of **seating and resting places**
- Prioritize **park maintenance** to ensure it remains safe and clean
- Create **interactive space for students and community engagement**

Case Study: Carol Pereira Park

Hayward, CA

Park Design



CA Per Capita Program

\$177,000 (50% match)
for Acquisition

CA Parks Bond Act

\$555,000 (50% match)
for Acquisition

CA Habitat Conservation Fund

\$597,000 (50% match)
for Development

Land Water Conservation Fund

\$1,300,000 (50% match)
for Development

Check Out the Full Resource!



For any questions, please contact CCLR:

- sarah.fingerhood@cclr.org
- Or sign up for a Technical Assistance Intake Meeting via [Calendly](#)

Scan the QR Code to view the Document:



www.cclr.org/cclr-news/you-need-a-creative-parks-funding-strategy