



# *Popular Annual Financial Report*

FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2024

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

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# Report Overview

The fiscal year 2024 (FY24) Popular Annual Financial Report provides residents and other interested parties with a user-friendly overview of the City's financial results and is produced to increase transparency of the City's financial operations. The report includes long-term planning initiatives, accolades and other City demographics that may be of interest to readers. This report also highlights the overall financial position and trends of the City. The financial information presented within this report is obtained from the audited financial statements of the City's FY24 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), or formal financial annual report.

The Popular Annual Financial Report is not required to present the same level of detail as the ACFR and, therefore, may not fully conform to generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP). The FY24 ACFR was audited by Cherry Bekaert LLP and has received an unmodified or "clean" audit opinion. This report may be viewed on the City's website at [Annual Comprehensive Financial Report | Raleighnc.gov](https://www.Raleighnc.gov/Annual-Comprehensive-Financial-Report)

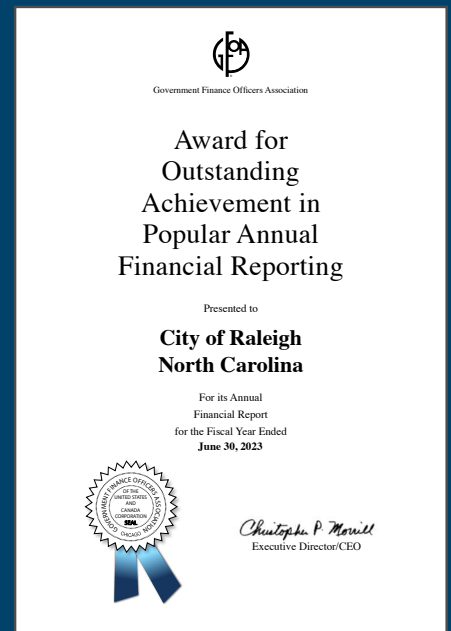
## About the Cover and Spotlight Article

Pictured on the front cover is the downtown Raleigh skyline with yellow daffodils blooming in the spring.

The City of Raleigh's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR) department strives to ensure parks, greenway and parks facilities are distributed equitably across the city for all residents to enjoy. PRCR manages over 200 parks featuring classes and programs, art centers, athletic facilities, community centers, lakes, dog parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, greenway trails and more. The horticulture program within PRCR operates a nursery and greenhouse and their primary focus is to promote sustainability by growing plants which are then transplanted throughout the city. The City's horticulture program is featured in our Spotlight article starting on page 16 of this report.

## GFOA Award

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) represents public finance officials throughout the United States and Canada, whose shared mission is to promote excellence in state and local government financial management. The City of Raleigh participates in the GFOA Award Program for Outstanding Achievement in Popular Annual Financial Reporting. The award shown is last year's report.



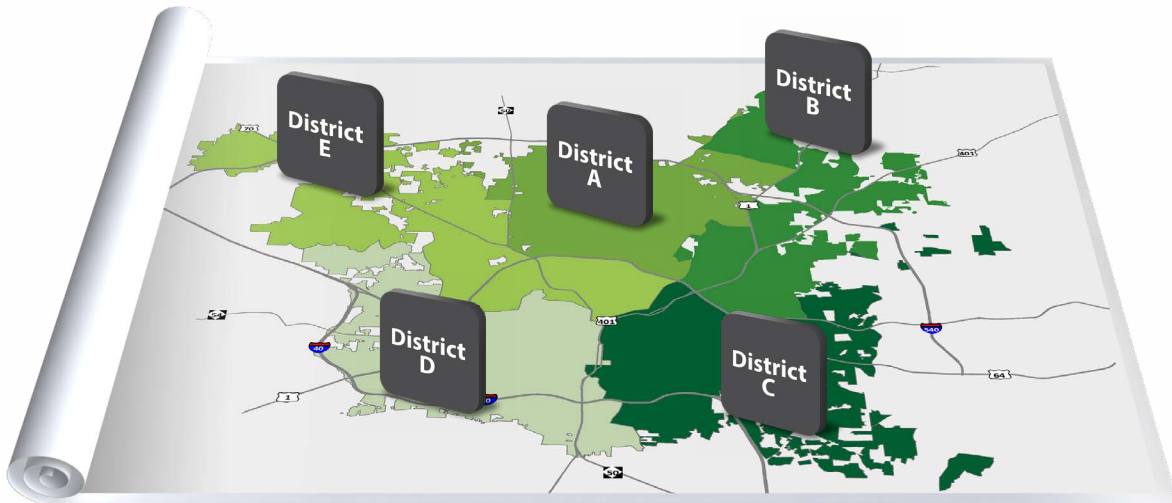
# Raleigh City Council | 2024



Bottom Row: **Stormie D. Forte, Mary Black, Mary-Ann Baldwin, Christina Jones, Jane Harrison**  
Top Row: **Jonathan Lambert-Melton, Megan Patton, Corey Branch**

**Mary-Ann Baldwin – MAYOR**  
**Mary Black – DISTRICT A**  
**Megan Patton – DISTRICT B**  
**Corey D. Branch – DISTRICT C**

**Jane Harrison – DISTRICT D**  
**Christina Jones – DISTRICT E**  
**Stormie D. Forte – AT LARGE**  
**Jonathan Lambert-Melton – AT LARGE**





"Connecting our Community reaffirms our strategic focus through continued investments"

## Leadership | From the City Manager

Dear Readers:

The City of Raleigh 2023-24 annual budget articulated the City's plan for operational efficiencies, sound fiscal stewardship, meaningful engagement, and equitable outcomes. The fiscal year budget theme – Connecting our Community - reaffirms our strategic focus through continued investments in a variety of critical areas including affordable housing, physical and technological infrastructure, programming that connects our community, and the organization's most valuable assets – our workforce.

Driven by a strong economy and an outstanding quality of life, Raleigh is consistently ranked among the nation's best places to live, work and play. In this report, you will find accolades and results, that reinforce Raleigh's continued resilience to ensure the needs of our community continue to be met.

The City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCR) department plays a leading role in determining the quality of life and character of Raleigh. The departments mission statement "Together we connect and enrich our community through exceptional experiences" and the vision "bringing people to parks and parks to people" demonstrate the core purpose and aspirations in providing leisure amenities in Raleigh. On Pages 16-23 of this year's Popular Annual Financial report, please read about the sustainable efforts the horticulture program of PRCR is undertaking to continue to make Raleigh greener and healthier.

I certainly hope that you enjoy and find useful the FY24 Popular Annual Financial Report.

Sincerely |  Marchell Adams-David | City Manager

# RALEIGH BY THE NUMBERS

**\$1.28 BILLION**

FY2024 Budget

**8,968**

Parks and Recreation Programs

**1,148**

Street Miles

**4,515**

Full-Time Employees

**2.1 MILLION**

attendees at Parks

**24,265 TONS**

of Recycles Collected

**540,606**

911 Calls

**51**

Park Community Centers

**831**

Convention Center  
Complex Events

**6**

Police Stations

**8**

Aquatic Facilities

**\*179,912**

Average Daily School  
Enrollment

**28**

Fire Stations

**2,529**

Miles of Water Mains

**\$122,300**

Median Family Income

**43.30 CENTS**

City Property Tax

**59.23 MILLION**

gallons average daily  
water usage

**173,029**

Permits Issued

**10,352**

Parks Acreage

**37,399**

Streetlights

\*Denotes Wake County figure

**The City of Raleigh** is the capital of North Carolina, home to several colleges and universities, with a vibrant performing arts community. Fueled by an impressive mix of education, ingenuity and collaboration, North Carolina's capital city has become an internationally recognized leader in life science and technology innovation. As the second-largest city in North Carolina, Raleigh continues to be one of the fastest growing cities in the country and is the 40th most populous in the United States. Driven by a strong economy and an outstanding quality of life, Raleigh is consistently ranked among the nation's best places to live and to operate a business.



# The City of Raleigh | Everyone's Household

The City of Raleigh is the level of government that touches the daily lives of residents the most. The City provides a full range of governmental services, including public safety, regulating quality of housing and construction, street maintenance, solid waste management, water and sewer services, providing public transit and parking options, maintaining parks and recreational facilities, and hosting convention and performing arts events. These services are provided to ensure Raleigh remains one of the top places to live, work and play in the United States. Over the last several decades, growth in Raleigh and the surrounding region has consistently and significantly outpaced the nation, further requiring the City to strategically invest in its financial sustainability well into the future. The City applies the same financial fundamentals to the management of the City's finances that apply to individual households. Highlighted below are a few of the ways the City's financial management practices continue to ensure a strong financial position.

## **Budget and planning**

Similar to many households, the City uses and balances an annual budget to ensure that it maintains a healthy financial position and uses its resources effectively. The City proactively and responsibly plans for its future financial needs in various ways, including relying on key financial policies and procedures, financial projections, a 5-year adopted capital improvement plan (CIP), long-term user fee studies and financial models. North Carolina law requires local governments to adopt a balanced budget each year. The City's annual budget process includes a review of current economic conditions to develop a fiscally sound funding plan that ensures revenues are sufficient to cover operational needs for each department. The proposed budget is presented in May to City Council, which adopts the final budget on or prior to the start of the fiscal year, which begins July 1.

The City's annual Operating and CIP budgets can be found on the City's website at [raleighnc.gov/services/grants-and-funding/current-city-budget](https://raleighnc.gov/services/grants-and-funding/current-city-budget).

## **Financial standards**

Comparable to a household's need to borrow for large purchases like a home or car, the City takes on moderate debt to provide necessary infrastructure which impact daily lives, examples include affordable housing investments, transportation and park projects. The City's credit rating from the three national credit rating agencies – Moody's, S&P Global and Fitch - are all AAA/Aaa. This represents the highest credit ratings available and provides an independent view of the City's overall financial well-being. The FY24 City debt portfolio and activities are highlighted on page 14 of this report.

## **Saving and investing for the future**

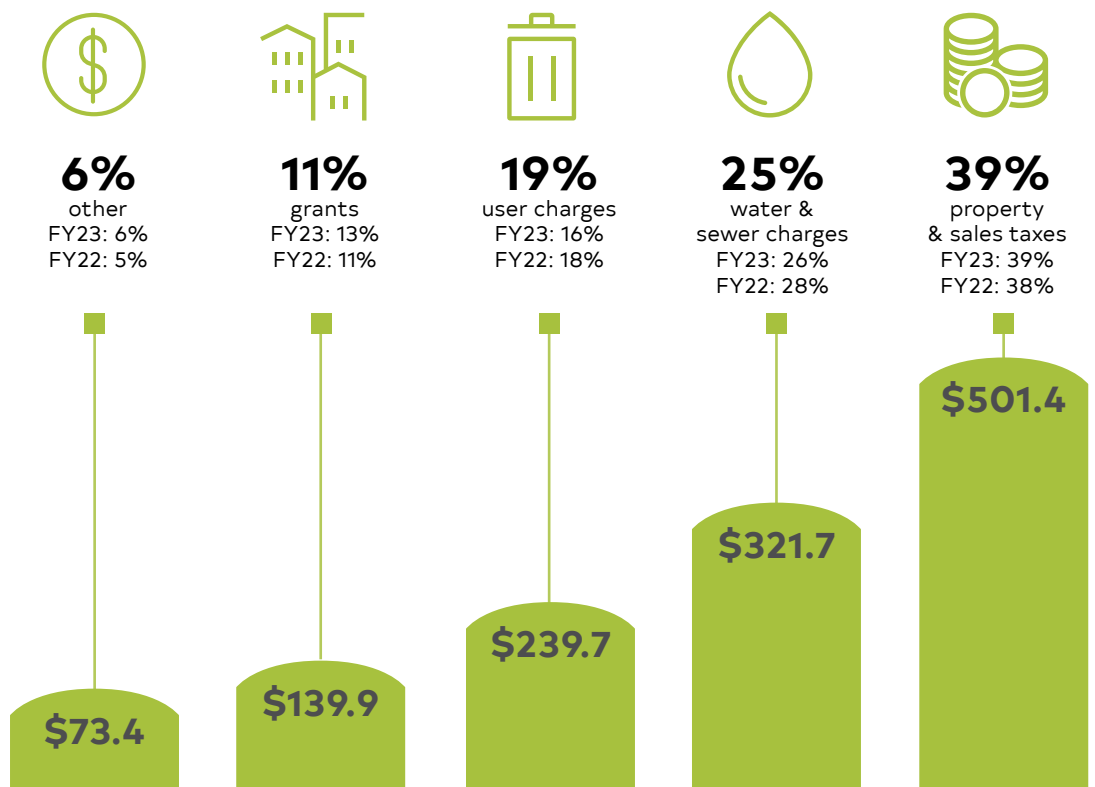
Saving for the future is an important aspect of the City's financial stewardship, similar to your own household budget planning. The City utilizes various policies and guidelines, models, and fiscal analyses that enable management to address short-term as well as plan for long-term financial needs. Collectively, these financial tools allow City Council and City Management to make informed decisions regarding future investments within our growing community, while also maintaining an adequate level of savings.

# Sources | City Funds

The City has various funding sources that provide for governmental (ex. public safety) and business-type activities (ex. water and sewer). The three-year trend illustrated below shows City funding sources remain relatively consistent from year to year as expected. The City's largest revenues are **property and sales taxes**. These tax collections predominately fund basic government services, including operations supporting public safety, public infrastructure, and leisure services. **Water and sewer charges** are the second largest category of revenues and reflect City Council approved rates for the regional utility system supported by long-term financial planning models. **User charges** capture a variety of City services, and fees are collected specifically from those who directly benefit and utilize these services. Examples include solid waste services fees, stormwater fees, development permitting activities, parks and recreation fees, convention center activities, and parking charges. The FY24 budget included an approved rate increase in user charges for water and sewer, solid waste services and stormwater to maintain service levels and support continued growing infrastructure needs. The user rates for operations which are managed like a business are predominately aligned to long-term planning models, ensuring the City can sustain existing service levels and pay for future capital infrastructure needs. The City also receives federal and state **grants**, as well as other funding allocations from external sources that support specific initiatives, such as road repairs, parks and recreation, affordable housing development projects and community outreach. **Other sources** include interest income and miscellaneous revenues.

## FISCAL YEAR 2024 (FY24) ADOPTED BUDGET

FY24 City-wide Adopted Operating and Capital budgets total \$1,276.1 million. The categories shown highlight the sources (revenues) and uses (expenses) as a percentage of the total. **Budget priorities for FY24** focused investments in **Connecting our Community**. A few key initiatives are included to the right:

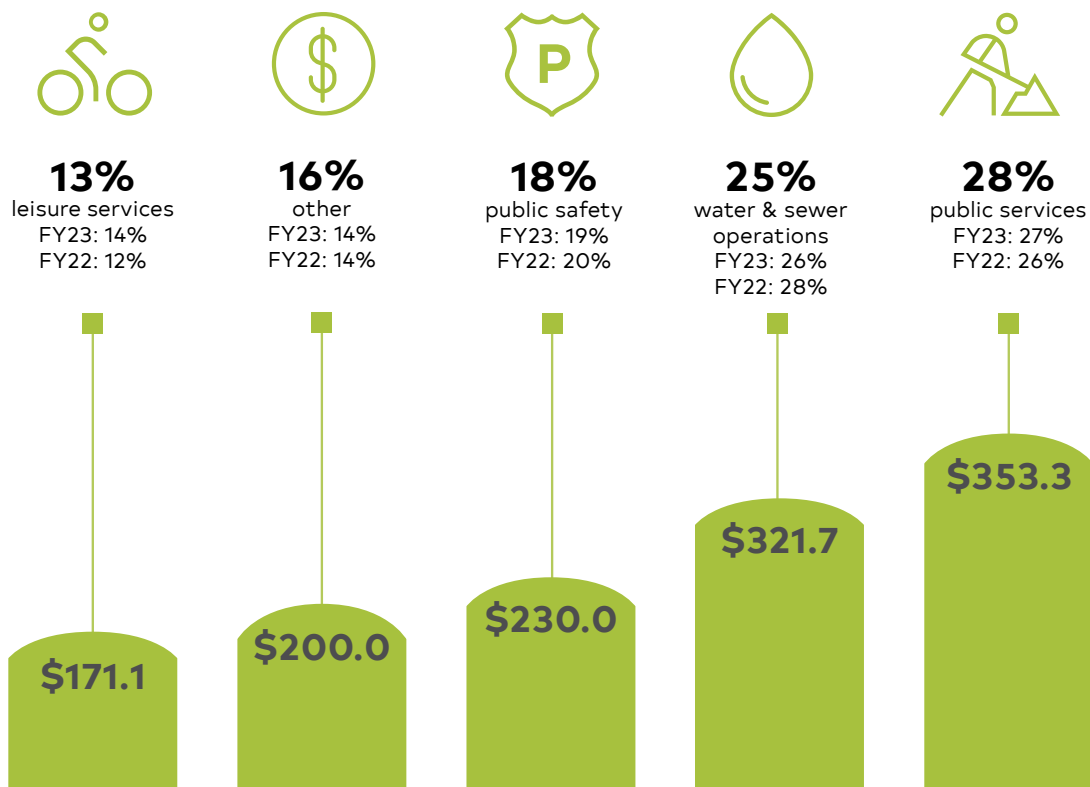




# Uses | City Funds

The City provides many services to residents and the three-year trend illustrated below displays how the City's uses of funds continues to remain relatively consistent from year to year as expected. **Public services** capture a wide variety of operations, including solid waste services, stormwater, development activities, parking and public transit. Funding associated with public services increased year over year, reflecting the City's continued FY24 strategic investment in capital improvements and infrastructure management. **Water and sewer operations** ensures a focus on providing clean drinking water and effective wastewater management services, which protect both the environment and public health. **Public safety** accounts for budgeted funding uses associated with fire, police and emergency communication operations, which are funded predominately by general tax revenues. The City's support of public safety initiatives provides for the continued safety of our growing service area and residents. **Leisure services** include parks, recreation and cultural resources, as well as the Convention Center Complex where residents and visitors enjoy amenities and cultural programs. Additional uses listed as **other** include internal service organizations such as information technology, finance, human resources, various housing assistance and other community initiatives.

- Committed to creating, preserving and encouraging the development of affordable housing within the city
- Improvements to bridges, roadways, traffic signals, streetlights, and sidewalks that will enhance mobility
- Critical investments in the City's technology infrastructure promoting flexibility and productivity for users and our employees
- Commitments to equity in access to retirement savings, an approval of an across-the-board three percent contribution to the City's 457 plan
- Dedicated operational increases related to the 2022 Parks and Recreational bond approved by Raleigh voters
- Equity resources will provide capacity building, training and facilitation development, and other support services that promote inclusion and address biases
- Investment in our employees in meaningful ways, reinforce the City's pledge to organizational excellence, and support strategies to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse and high-performing workforce



in millions

# FY24 | Governmental Activities

The Governmental activities section in the City's financial statements includes programs predominately supported by taxes, federal and state grants, and other general revenues. In comparison, the City's Business-type activities, described on page 12, are predominately funded by user charges. Governmental revenue sources are utilized for various community services, including public safety (ex. fire, police, and emergency communications); parks, recreation and cultural resources; infrastructure management; planning and neighborhoods; and general government administration. Governmental activities also include capital project activities which support infrastructure across the City.

## Balance sheet

Amounts in millions	FY24	FY23	Change
Assets	\$ 2,656	\$ 2,483	\$ 173
Deferred Outflows of Resources	141	149	(8)
Liabilities	(1,132)	(1,162)	30
Deferred Inflows of Resources	(45)	(48)	3
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 1,620</b>	<b>\$ 1,422</b>	<b>\$ 198</b>

A **balance sheet** provides a snapshot of what the City currently owns (assets) and owes (liabilities), as well as sources (deferred inflows) and uses (deferred outflows) that will be recognized in future years. **Net position** represents the City's investment in the assets it uses in providing services to its residents. Increases in net position serve as a useful indicator of the strength of the City's financial position.

Net position is a snapshot of the overall financial condition of the City and is comprised of capital assets, restricted funds for needs such as debt commitments, and the remaining is unrestricted and available to support ongoing operations. The majority (or 54%) of the City's \$1,620 million net position represents investments in capital assets, including land, buildings and other infrastructure that are used to provide services to residents. As shown in the tables, the City's change in net position increased by \$198 million. The City's continued investment in capital assets, continued growth in key revenues, and diligent monitoring of expenditures yielded positive fiscal impacts.

## Income statement

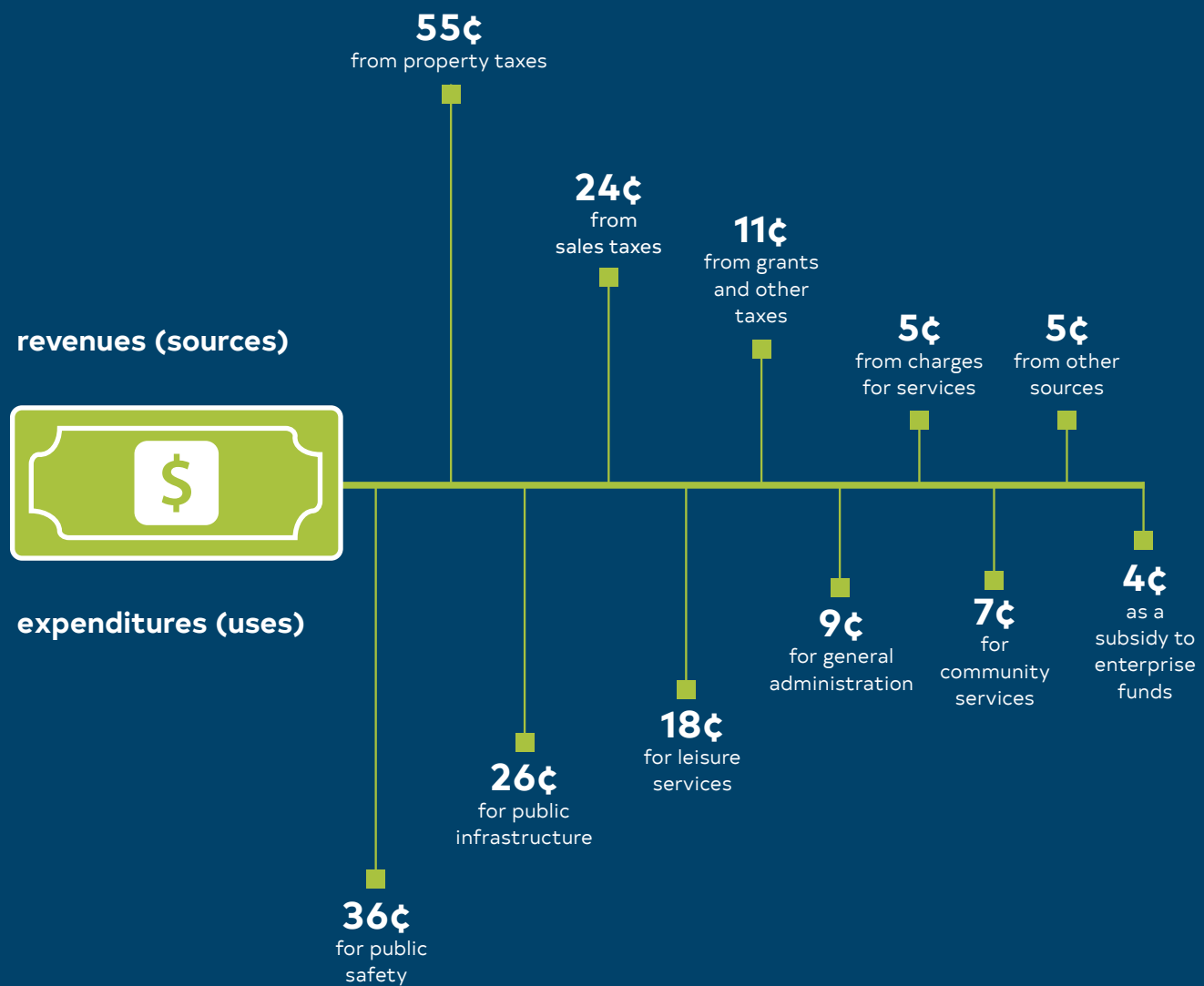
Amounts in millions	FY24	FY23	Change
Revenues	\$ 827	\$ 742	\$ 85
Expenses	(574)	(533)	(41)
Transfers In (Out)	(55)	(55)	0
<b>Change in Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 198</b>	<b>\$ 154</b>	<b>\$ 44</b>

An **income statement** provides a summary of amounts received (revenues) and amounts spent (expenses). The difference between revenues and expenses shows the City's **change in net position**. A positive change in net position indicates the City had enough revenues to cover its obligations and the ability to save for the future.

The FY24 revenue increase in the City's governmental activities was driven primarily by strong sales tax collections, property tax collections, development services user fees activity, and interest income that was positively impacted by the historically high interest rate environment. Current year expenses increased moderately and are in-line with management's expected annual operating increases. Transfers out remained the same from the prior year as the FY24 budget supported normal funding levels to the City's capital improvement program.

# FY24 | General Fund Operating Results

The General Fund is the City's main operating fund supporting key operations, such as public safety, public infrastructure, and leisure services. This page displays FY24 actual results in cents to provide an easy-to-understand illustration of General Fund revenue (sources) and expenditure (uses). **Property taxes** and **sales taxes** are the two largest sources of General Fund revenue which total 79 cents of every dollar received. **Public safety** (fire, police, and emergency communications) accounts for the largest area of General Fund spending at 36 cents, followed by **public infrastructure** (city planning, inspections, and transportation) at 26 cents and **leisure services** (parks, recreation and cultural resources) at 18 cents. The City's General Fund revenues and expenditures allocation is similar to the prior year with an increase in spending towards public infrastructure as a result of our growing city. The General Fund results met management expectations.



# FY24 | Business-Type Activities

Business-type activities include Raleigh Water, Convention Center Complex, Public Transit, Stormwater, Parking, and Solid Waste Services. These business-type operations are primarily funded by fees charged to customers who directly benefit from the services provided.

## Balance sheet

Amounts in millions	FY24	FY23	Change
Assets	\$ 3,641	\$ 3,393	\$ 248
Deferred Outflows of Resources	53	59	(6)
Liabilities	(1,394)	(1,373)	(21)
Deferred Inflows of Resources	(22)	(25)	3
<b>Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 2,278</b>	<b>\$ 2,054</b>	<b>\$ 224</b>

A **balance sheet** provides a snapshot of what the City currently owns (assets) and owes (liabilities), as well as sources (deferred inflows) and uses (deferred outflows) that will be recognized in future years. **Net position** represents the City's investment in the assets it uses in providing services to its residents. Increases in net position serve as a useful indicator of the strength of the City's financial position.

Net position is a snapshot of the overall financial condition of the City and is comprised of the investment in capital assets, while the remaining net position is unrestricted and available to support ongoing operations. The majority or 77% business-type net position represents investment in capital assets that are used to provide services to our residents. The largest examples of capital assets are water and sewer treatment plants and the supporting infrastructure pipelines. As shown in the tables, the City's change in net position for business-type activities increased by \$224 million. The City's continued investment in capital assets and ongoing operations yielded positive fiscal impacts.

## Income statement

Amounts in millions	FY24	FY23	Change
Revenues	\$ 581	\$ 484	\$ 97
Expenses	(412)	(388)	(24)
Transfers In (Out)	55	55	(0)
<b>Change in Net Position</b>	<b>\$ 224</b>	<b>\$ 151</b>	<b>\$ 73</b>

An **income statement** provides a summary of amounts received (revenues) and amounts spent (expenses). The difference between revenues and expenses shows the City's **change in net position**. A positive change in net position indicates the City had enough revenues to cover its obligations and the ability to save for the future.

The City experienced many positive trends and growth during FY24. The year over year revenue increase for the City's business-type activities was driven primarily by revenue growth in business-type activities associated with approved rate increases to support water and sewer, solid waste and stormwater operations. Expenses increased to maintain operations and meet service demands which met management expectations. City management will continue to monitor user charges leveraging financial projection models for long-term planning.

# FY24 | Capital Improvement Plan

The City utilizes a multi-year CIP as one element in the City's long-term planning process. The CIP outlines future investments needed for the growing community. Long-term studies as well as resident input are important aspects in identifying new projects and making informed decisions. The City process analyzes major facility, equipment and other infrastructure needs within the context of establishing priorities, estimating available fiscal resources, and phasing the development of funded projects over a 5-year horizon. The entire CIP process is completed in a strategic, thoughtful, and impactful way to maximize community growth and improve quality of life in alignment with the City Council's vision. Capital project initiatives generally include buildings, land, major technology projects, infrastructure and general improvements which allow the City to develop or expand services. The first year of the CIP is approved by City Council annually as part of the adopted budget.

The five-year adopted CIP plan can be found at: [Budget and Management Services | raleighnc.gov](https://raleighnc.gov/Budget-and-Management-Services)

During FY24, the City completed numerous projects outlined in the City's Capital Improvement Plan, including the following:

## **Raleigh Water and Stormwater Projects:**

- The Falls Lake Raw Water Intake rehabilitation replaced screens, valves, and controls to meet future infrastructure capacity demands. Rehabilitation was completed at the EM Johnson Water Treatment plant.
- Stormwater supported many initiatives including projects centered around reducing runoff, improving stream quality, and replaced aging stormwater pipes in several parks and extending runoff drainage into right of ways.

## **Other Infrastructure Projects:**

- Enterprise and governmental equipment acquisitions, including purchases of police and fire vehicles for the continuation of responsive public safety efforts.
- Transportation initiatives included the completion of a variety of projects including bikeways, sidewalks, neighborhood traffic management as well as traffic signal, bridge and street maintenance
- Transit continued efforts to construct the first bus rapid transit corridor along New Bern Avenue to deliver fast and efficient transit services to residents.
- The Convention Center Complex completed initiatives such as new cooling towers, interior LED signage, AV equipment upgrades, boiler upgrades to ensure facilities remain first in class.
- Affordable housing completed projects included Oak Forest Pointe, Thrive at South End and Primavera in supporting new units for seniors and to households earning at or below 40 percent of the area median income (AMI) to 80 percent AMI.
- A major park redevelopment was completed including an open-air pavilion, dog park and restroom and shelter enhancements at Baileywick Park. The Capital Area Greenway System completed several greenway connectors and an extension of the Crabtree Creek West trail.

In addition, the adopted FY24 CIP provided funding for new or continuing capital projects consistent with the City's strategic and comprehensive plans ranging from investments in capital maintenance and renovations, long-term public transit expansions, housing and community outreach, and other general public improvements.



# FY24 | Understanding City Debt

A priority of the City is to maintain long-term financial sustainability of operations. This strong commitment to future sustainability has resulted in the City maintaining Aaa ratings from Moody's Investors Service and AAA ratings from S&P Global and Fitch ratings, which are the the three top credit rating agencies. The ratings represent the highest rating available on both the general government and Raleigh Water debt portfolio. Raleigh is one of the few cities in the nation to have achieved these superior credit ratings, providing benefits such as obtaining the lowest interest rates for the City's debt portfolio.

The City maintains a healthy balance of debt to support general government activities, such as public safety facilities, streets, affordable housing, and park improvements, while also supporting capital infrastructure needs for business-type activities that provide services to residents and visitors. Given the capital intensive-nature of the business-type activities (pipes, pumps, and treatment plants), 50% of the City's total debt portfolio is repaid from business-type user charges. The remaining 50% of the City's debt portfolio supports governmental activities and is paid for by general governmental revenues.

### Governmental Activities

General governmental outstanding debt totals \$587.8 million, a decrease over prior year. The City has the ability from voter approved general obligation bonds to issue \$514.5 million for future debt needs that would support transportation, parks and recreation, and housing projects.

### FY24 New Debt

- The City continued its General Obligation Bond Anticipation Note (BAN) program which includes an \$85.0 million tax-exempt portion and a \$25.0 million taxable portion. The program allows for draws associated with voter-approved general obligation bonds for streets, parks and housing and \$52.1 million was outstanding at year end.
- A new \$100.0 million Limited Obligation BAN program was started in the spring of 2024. The program allows for draws associated with the City's new City Hall and public safety needs across the City. As of June 30, 2024, \$18.6 million was outstanding.

**9.3%** - FY24 actual debt payments compared to General Fund budget, which is similar to prior year. City policy allows for a maximum of 15.0%.

### Business-type activities

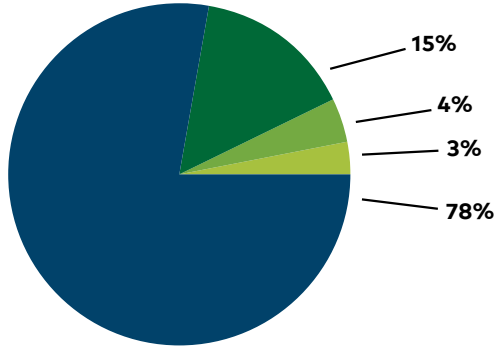
Most of the City debt is associated with enterprise funds, primarily Raleigh Water, with a significantly smaller portion for Convention Center Complex and Parking. Business-type outstanding debt totals \$1.1 billion, which is consistent with prior year.

### FY24 New Debt

- The City continued its \$215.0 million Revenue BAN program supporting water and sewer capital projects that started in the spring of 2023. The Revenue BAN program allows for draws to finance capital projects for the regional Raleigh Water enterprise operation and \$83.2 million was outstanding at year end.

### Debt management

The City's Finance department is dedicated to ensuring prudent debt management.



■ Raleigh Water      ■ Parking  
■ Convention Center Complex      ■ Other Enterprise Operations

More detailed debt schedules can be found in the FY24 ACFR.

# FY24 | Raleigh Accolades and Demographics



Raleigh continues to be ranked among the best places in the United States to live, work, and play. Below are a few accolades the City has received:

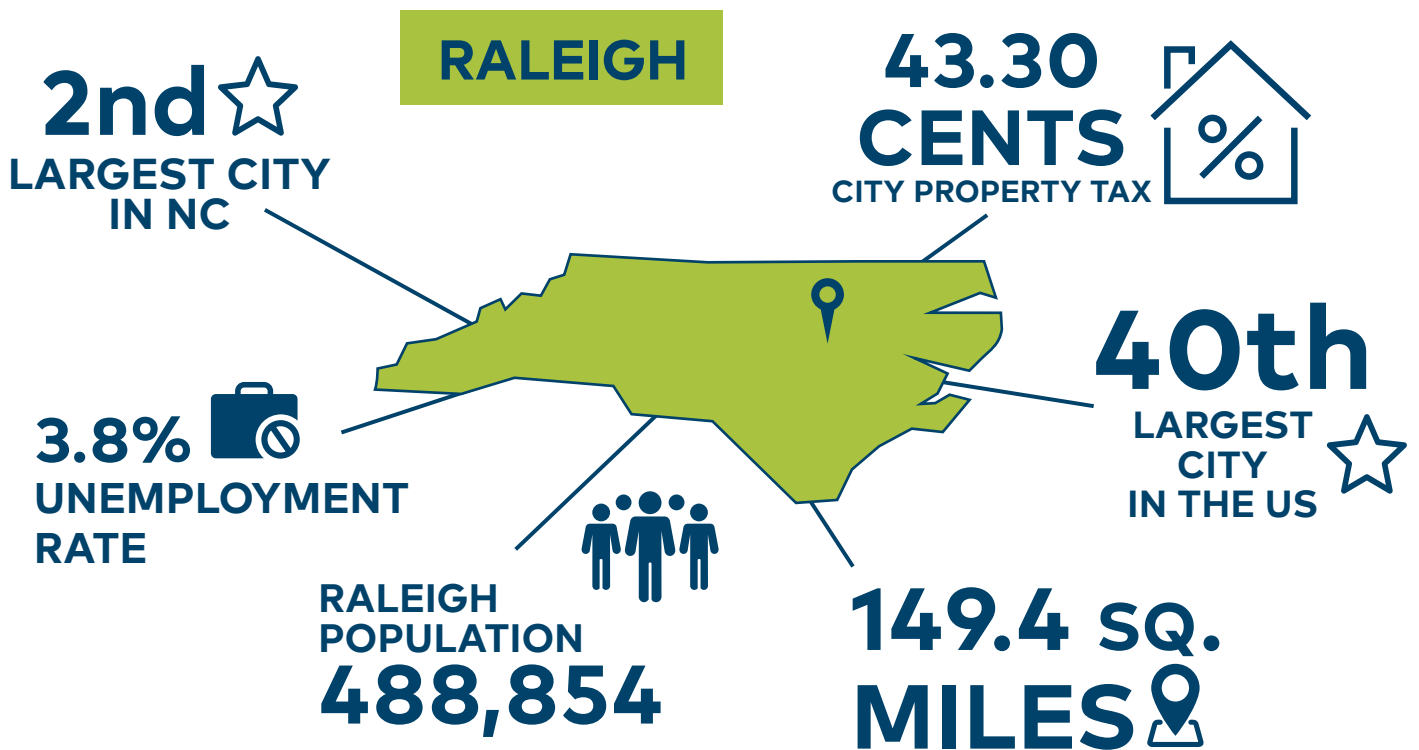
- 2nd in the Best Performing large city (February 2024, Milken Institute)
- 2nd in the Hottest Housing Market (February 2024, US News & World Report)
- One of the Best Cities for New jobs (January 2024, WalletHub)
- 5th Best City for Job Seekers in 2024 (December 2023, Indeed)
- 1st in Top Spot to Launch a Small Business (November 2023, LendingTree)

## Major Industries & Employers:

As the capital of the state, the City derives its economic profile from a diverse combination of business and employment centers, including Federal and State government, higher education, information technology, scientific research, healthcare, and retail trade. The nearby Research Triangle Park (RTP) was founded in 1959 for industrial, governmental, and scientific research and spans more than 7,000 acres in both Wake and Durham counties and sits between three Tier-1 research universities. Its primary objective is attracting related institutions to the area and is one the largest research parks in the US.

## The top ten employers within the City include:

- State of North Carolina
- Wake County Public School System
- Wake Med Health and Hospitals
- Food Lion
- North Carolina State University
- Target Stores
- UNC Rex Healthcare System
- Harris Teeter
- Wake County Government
- City of Raleigh



If you would like to read more about the City's accolades, please visit the City's website at [www.raleighnc.gov](http://www.raleighnc.gov).

# Spotlight On: Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources





# Horticulture Program

Imagine a city where layers of green infrastructure seamlessly mitigate urban heat and flooding, creating thriving habitats for wildlife and pollinators and a place for people in nature. Picture this city as a vibrant community where residents live in harmony with nature, reaping the health benefits and opportunities it provides. The City of Raleigh is committed to valuing nature as a source of inspiration and wonder and a solution to many of our environmental challenges. Inspired by the 1969 vision of "Raleigh, The Park with a City in It," the Raleigh Parks' Horticulture Program is dedicated to transforming this vision into reality - cultivating a greener, healthier, and more resilient future for all.

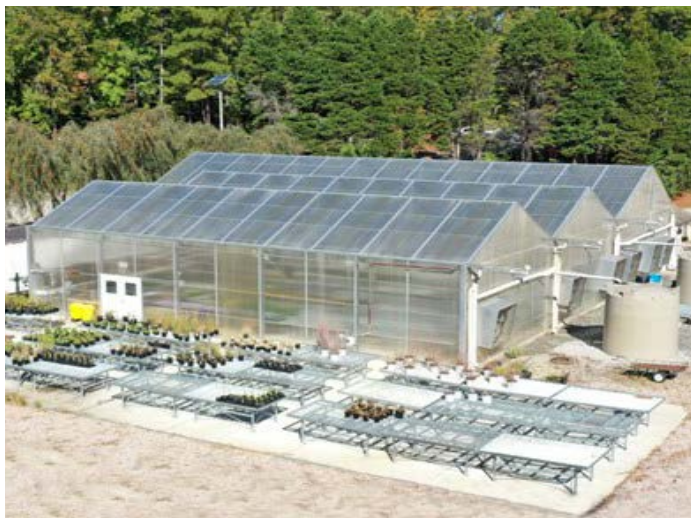
In 2024, however, Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources (PRCR)'s vision is to bring people to parks and parks to people. The City strives to ensure that parks and greenways comprise this valuable green infrastructure and are distributed equitably across the city. The Raleigh Park and Capital Area Greenway Trail system is expansive. It contains over 220 parks and 120 miles of greenway trails. That's 10,352 acres of green infrastructure to benefit all the residents of Raleigh!

The Horticulture program is a small operation within the Raleigh PRCR department but has a significant impact. With only two full-time and two part-time employees and an annual operating budget of \$375,000, the Horticulture program does the following:

- operates a 1.5-acre plant nursery and greenhouse,
- engages with the community through initiatives like Bee City USA, the Mordecai Plant Sale, and Earth Day,
- conducts staff development through training in industry best practices, licensing, and continuing education,
- and collaborates with other departments on new initiatives, such as Green Stormwater Infrastructure, pollinator gardens, and community gardens.

## Greenhouse and Nursery

The Horticulture program operates a 1.5-acre nursery and 5,750-square-foot greenhouse to grow plants to make the City of Raleigh greener. This state-of-the-art greenhouse facility was built in 2011 with a grant from the Office of Sustainability. It replaced an older dilapidated structure and is complete with a rainwater harvesting system, intelligent controls, and complex sensors. From this facility, the Horticulture program produces over 50,000 annual flowers, native perennials, shrubs, and trees each year. These plants go to the parks and greenway system and other collaborating partners.



## Annual Flowering Plants

In 2023, Raleigh Parks grew over 25,000 annual flowering plants at a cost of \$10,800. If these plants had been purchased from local nurseries, the City would have spent \$42,750. Growing them in-house saves \$31,950, or a quarter of the cost while making the city a greener, healthier, more vibrant place to live.

## Native Perennial plants

In 2024, Raleigh Parks gardeners are on track to plant over 10,000 native perennial plants in our parks and greenways grown from the greenhouse facility. Perennial plants are distinguished from annual flowers in that they are well suited to our environment, come back year after year, and provide valuable food and shelter for wildlife, including pollinating bees. Many plants can be grown from locally collected seeds. These plants are produced from the Park's greenhouses for just \$8,000 annually. If purchased locally, they would cost anywhere from \$3 to \$6 each at a total cost to the department of \$30,000 to \$60,000 each year! This cost savings enables the Parks department to do large-scale native perennial plantings, such as a Piedmont Prairie planting at Fred Fletcher Park, that would otherwise not be feasible. Additionally, volunteers pitch in to make large-scale plantings a reality. Last year, the Parks Department partnered with over 12,500 volunteers for 64,000 hours to enhance our parks. Efforts like this have leveraged over \$2 million of in-kind service last year.



## Community Engagement

The Horticulture program engages with the community through dozens of events each year, such as volunteerism, the Mordecai Plant Sale, Pollinator Week, and floral displays. These provide opportunities to communicate, educate, raise awareness, and collaborate with the broader community.

### Volunteerism

The Horticulture Program engages volunteers to accomplish its mission. Volunteers are crucial to the operation, washing pots, pruning plants, and cleaning the facilities. They build a sense of community and provide much-needed labor while saving money. Last year, the Horticulture Program partnered with over 175 volunteers for a total of 450 hours, bringing in almost \$14,000 in in-kind service.

One notable regular volunteer group is Learning Services. These are individuals with traumatic brain injuries and PTSD. They have worked at the greenhouse weekly to do essential services for over 18 years!



### Mordecai Plant Sale

In 2024, the Horticulture program grew 2,531 vegetable, herb, and ornamental plants for the annual Mordecai plant sale. This event, which has happened annually for 50 years at the Mordecai Historic Park, supports our Historical Resources and Museum Program.

The Horticulture program grew vegetable starts and other flowering plants for sale in our greenhouse facility for \$2,000. The sale raised \$6,567 for Historical Resources programming. If these starts were purchased at a local garden center, they would cost around \$5 each, or \$12,655. Raising the plants in-house saved \$10,655 and raised additional funds benefiting the Historical Resources program while enriching the community.



### Pollinator Week

During Pollinator Week in 2024, the Raleigh Parks Horticulture program grew and distributed over 700 pollinator plants to promote pollinator conservation. These plants were distributed to the public for free through PRCR's four Nature Centers, which include the following:

- Durant Nature Preserve,
- Annie Louise Wilkerson, MD Nature Preserve,
- Walnut Creek Wetland Park,
- Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve.





### Floral Display

One surprising way the Horticulture program engages with the community is to provide floral displays for public events, such as the Fred Fletcher Awards, Council Swearing-in Ceremonies, and other guest appearances. These displays are a unique way to highlight the City of Raleigh's unique horticultural history. Floral displays of this scale would ordinarily cost thousands of dollars but are provided for free by leveraging existing horticultural resources and talent.



## Staff Development and Training

Parks Maintenance staff attend national conferences and trainings each year to stay updated with industry standards. The Horticulture Program provides opportunities and coordinates for these staff to attend these events. In 2023, over sixty staff were sent to training to earn continuing education credits. Within the Parks Maintenance division are 52 Public Operator Pesticide License holders in Aquatic, Ornamentals and Turf, and Forestry.

Other conferences and trainings attended include the following:

- EWRI Operation and Maintenance of Stormwater Systems Conference – Austin, TX
- National Recreation and Parks Association Annual Conference – Dallas, TX
- NC Nursery and Landscape Association annual Green and Growing event – Greensboro, NC
- Lake Wheeler Turfgrass Field Day – Raleigh, NC
- JC Raulston Landscape Color and Professional Field Day – Raleigh, NC
- NC Invasive Plant Council's Annual Symposium – Chapel Hill, NC
- Pollinator Paradise Tour – Pittsboro, NC

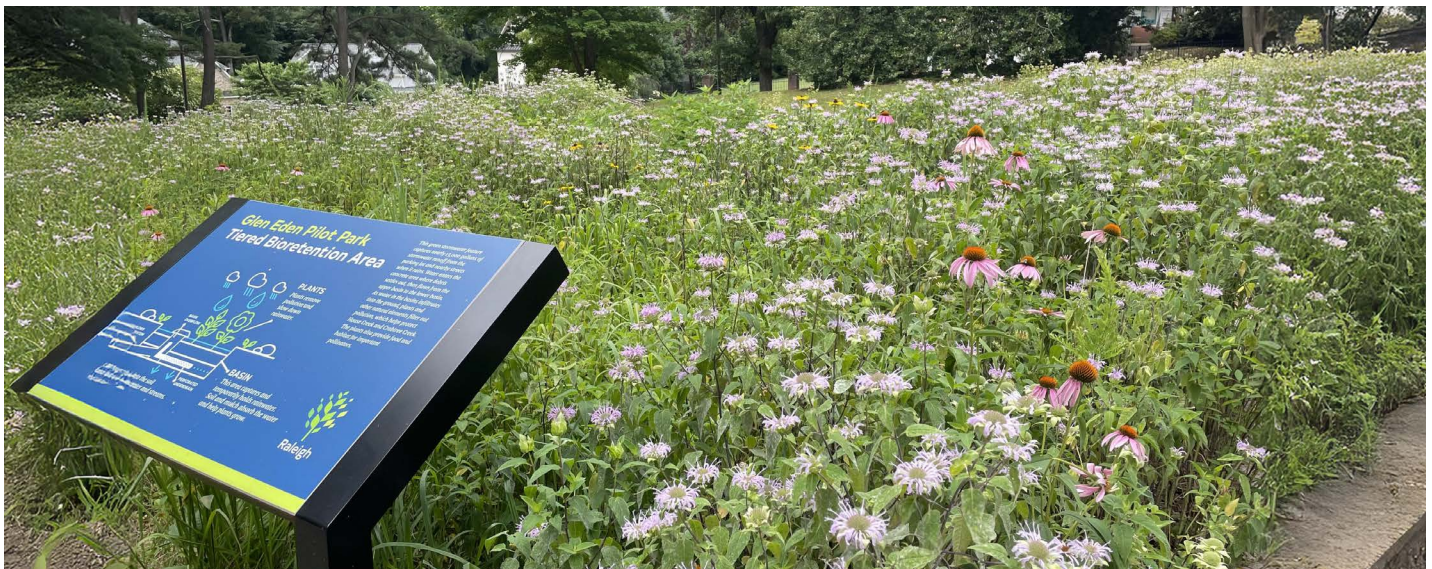
# Collaboration

One of the missions of the Horticulture Program is to engage with other City departments on new initiatives. The Horticulture program contributes valuable insights to these initiatives because of its unique position within the Parks Maintenance and Natural Resources division. Some notable collaborations include:

- Green Stormwater Infrastructure,
- Pollinator Gardens,
- And Community Gardens.

## Green Stormwater Infrastructure

Managed by Raleigh's Stormwater Program under Engineering Services, the Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) initiative aims to reduce stormwater's impact on local waterways, prevent flooding, improve water quality, and enhance urban green spaces. GSI is increasingly being adopted in cities worldwide as a more sustainable and cost-effective way to manage stormwater.



Green Stormwater Infrastructure is an approach to managing stormwater that mimics the natural water cycle. Instead of relying solely on traditional, often expensive, "gray" infrastructure like pipes and sewers, GSI uses natural processes and sustainable design to manage rainfall where it falls. Examples of Green Stormwater Infrastructure include:

- Rain Gardens
- Green Roofs
- Permeable Pavements
- Bioswales
- Tree Canopy
- Rainwater Harvesting

The Horticulture program supports the GSI initiative by providing consultation on planting, planting design, and landscape management. In addition, the Horticulture Program also grows plants for GSI projects across the city. The City of Raleigh owns and operates approximately 62 GSI sites. This collaboration between the Raleigh Stormwater

Program and the Raleigh Parks Horticulture Program won an award for Best Internal Collaboration from the City of Raleigh Office of Strategy and Innovation.



## Pollinator Gardens

Pollinator gardens are designed to attract and sustain diverse pollinators, including bees, butterflies, birds, and other beneficial insects. These gardens offer the vital resources—nectar, pollen, and safe habitats—needed for pollinators to thrive. Critical components of pollinator gardens include:

- Native Plants that provide a wide range of flowers that provide a continuous blooming season from spring to fall in different colors and shapes,
- Protection from harmful pesticides,
- Provision of habitat and shelter, such as nesting sites and water sources,
- And connecting habitats so that there is a more extensive greenspace network.

The Horticulture program supports pollinator gardens by serving as subject matter experts on designing and managing them. In addition, the program supplies plants for numerous pollinator gardens across the city. Raleigh Parks manages over 90 sites as pollinator habitats, has 32 registered Monarch Waystations, and has 11 acres of wildflower meadows. Many of these can be found on our greenways, Dorthea Dix Park, and other parks.



GSI and pollinator gardens contribute to a healthier, more resilient environment. They enhance urban green spaces, support biodiversity, improve water quality, mitigate climate change effects, and foster a deeper connection between people and nature. Their integration into urban planning and development is a holistic approach to creating sustainable and livable cities.



## Community Gardens

The Community Gardens initiative is an exciting interdepartmental collaboration with our community partner, the Inter-Faith Food Shuttle. This initiative aims to support the development of community gardens in the most vulnerable communities in the city. Though this initiative is in its infancy, the ground has already been broken at two locations - with three more on the horizon. The Horticulture program supports community gardens by serving as consultants to the projects and growing vegetable plants for transplanting. In 2023, the greenhouse grew just a handful of plants for the initiative but plans to expand the selection in the years ahead rapidly.

Community gardens have a significant positive impact on the environment, social well-being, and local economies. They are powerful tools for promoting environmental sustainability, enhancing social well-being, and supporting local economies. They contribute to building healthier, more resilient, and more connected communities.



## Conclusion

Although the Horticulture Program is a small operation within the Parks Maintenance and Natural Resources Division of PRCR, it has an outsized impact. By leveraging limited resources, the Horticulture program makes the City of Raleigh greener, more biodiverse, and more livable.

# Horticulture Program

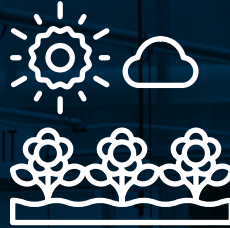
## by the Numbers

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**222 PARKS**

Managed by  
City of Raleigh



**10,352 ACRES**

Under Parks  
Management



**252 EMPLOYEES**

in Parks Maintenance  
and Natural Resources



**12,598**

**VOLUNTEERS**

Partnered Last Year



**64,049**

**VOLUNTEER**

Hours



**\$2,004,746**

**SERVICE VALUE**

In Total

- 
- **14,200** Bulbs Planted
  - **10,000+** additional Plants Planted
  - **538** Trees Planted
  - **9,410** Pots Filled
  - **6,642** Pots Washed
  - **47,713** pounds of Litter Removed
  - **42 Acres** of Invasive Plants Removed
  - **90 sites** managed as pollinator habitat
  - **32 Registered** Monarch Waystations
  - **11 Acres** of Wildflower Meadows
  - **62 GSI** sites

**CITY OF RALEIGH**

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