



Raleigh
Parks

2021
2022
Raleigh Parks
Annual Report

**Together we connect and
enrich our community through
exceptional experiences.**

Letter

from the Interim Director



We are pleased to present you with the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department's 2021-2022 Annual Report.

We all faced a challenging year managing our lives through this pandemic. As COVID-19 slowly relinquished its hold, the community returned to their park system seeking opportunities to relax, refresh, and revive. This year stretched and stressed us, but we remained committed to providing our residents with the best experiences possible.

Guided by our values of integrity, accountability, honesty, team-oriented, fun, and leadership, we hold steadfast to our mission of connecting and enriching our community through exceptional experiences. We are committed to maintaining our parks and facilities in a clean and safe manner, preserving and protecting our natural environment, authentically stewarding and sharing Raleigh's story, supporting each resident to lead the creative life they envision, and providing the highest quality recreation opportunities for residents of every age and ability.

In closing, we would like to sincerely thank the City Council and the Raleigh community, whose continued and unwavering support make this work possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Payne'.

Scott Payne, Interim Director



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Park and Greenway Projects

Raleigh has a broad array of parks, fields, courts, play areas, pools, centers, greenways, and more. Each of these requires routine inspections and improvements to maintain safe and welcoming experiences for our visitors. After identifying the growing inventory of capital maintenance needs for its park system, the Raleigh City Council approved the "**Penny for Parks Program**" as a part of the fiscal year 2022 annual budget. The one cent property tax increase will provide approximately \$7.8M each year to support the maintenance of our park system. The Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department is committed to equitably improving our system using these new funds.

*Penny for
Parks Capital
Maintenance*

Approved



Pullen Arts Center



Pullen Arts Center re-opened in September 2021. This project included a 50 percent expansion of Pullen Arts Center and a renewal of the North Pullen Park campus. The renewal addressed the need for additional accessible parking, and formed a better connection between Theatre in the Park, Pullen Arts Center, and the Gregg Museum. The expansion of the art center added enlarged studio and class opportunities, including dedicated space for young artists and expanded ceramic, metals, printmaking, and painting studios for artists of all abilities.

Park and Greenway Projects (cont.)

Futsal

Conversions

The first City of Raleigh futsal pitch was constructed at Peach Road Park in partnership with the US Soccer Foundation, The Bucy Foundation, and NC Courage. This marks the beginning of a long-term, private-public relationship to bring futsal events and a new active sports activity to the Raleigh Parks system. The futsal pitch is a modular system complete with lighting, fencing, goals, benches, and ADA-compliant access. The new pitch will help the community bring people together for teamwork, active play, and physical fitness in a safe environment.



As the popularity of pickleball increased in Raleigh and the surrounding region, the demand for courts increased as well. Raleigh Parks sought creative ways to meet those needs, and tennis court conversions proved a successful solution. In August 2021, through the generous donation of Marilyn Sorin, two tennis courts at North Hills Park were resurfaced and converted into six pickleball courts. In addition, six existing pickleball courts at Method Park were resurfaced.

New
Pickleball
Courts

Park and Greenway Projects (cont.)

Following the adoption of the **Brentwood Park Master Plan** in 2018, the updated park opened to the public in May 2022. Improvements include a new playground, a water mist play feature, a comfort station, a picnic shelter, a reconfigured and resurfaced parking lot, and a sidewalk from Brentwood Road into the park.

Brentwood

Park Opening



Phase One implementation of the Wooten Meadow Park adopted Master Plan was completed. This joint project between Raleigh Parks and Raleigh Stormwater features constructed wetlands, a daylighted stream, trails, an open play area, a new parking lot, and extensive native plantings.

Wooten Meadow Park

Project

Park and Greenway Projects (cont.)

In April 2022, we celebrated the renaming of LeVelle Moton Park, formerly known as Lane Street Park, in honor of local philanthropist, athlete, and college basketball coach LeVelle Moton, who frequented the park in his childhood. A bust at the park's gate, designed in partnership with Raleigh Arts by local artist Stephen Hayes, commemorates Coach Moton's dedication to the community.

LeVelle Moton Park



Park and Greenway Projects (cont.)



Davie Street Park's old playground equipment had reached the end of its operational lifespan. The new playground features upgraded rubber safety surfacing and equipment suitable for toddlers up to age 12. The community selected the play equipment, style, and color scheme, featuring opportunities for sliding, climbing, and other activities to engage children of all ability levels.

The new playground at Jaycee Park opened ahead of schedule in May 2021. The old playground was in dire need of upgrades to meet current needs and guidelines. The new playground features rubberized safety surfacing and play zones for children ages 2-5 and 5-12. Children able to climb up the tall tower are rewarded with a long slide down. Unique swing options, a rope climber, a sprint track, shade canopies, and perimeter fencing add the finishing touches to this exciting playground.

The new playground at Worthdale Park provides additional play structures and an easy to maintain rubber safety surface. The park's playground has a separate structure appropriate for those ages 2-5 and the larger net climber and slide platforms for those ages five and up. The equipment for the playground was selected to maximize play opportunities for patrons of all abilities, with elements prioritized for both the ground level and for climbing. A new ADA-compliant path completes a continuous paved connection between the playground and the parking lot as part of this project.

Kingwood Forest Park's new playground replaces old play equipment that was beyond its operational lifespan and hidden from view from the park's edges. The new playground design features a separate structure appropriate for those ages 2-5 and a larger net climber and slide platform structure for ages five and up. The playground was relocated to an area easily visible from the street to enhance safety. As part of this project, a new ADA-compliant path connects the playground to the Evers Drive sidewalk, improving accessibility for all amenities in the park.



Playgrounds

Park and Greenway Projects (cont.)

In January 2020, we began a two-year process to update the Capital Area Greenway Master Plan, the first update to the plan since 1989. City Council adopted the updated plan in April 2022. The plan addresses the needs of a growing community with equitable access, recreational and active transportation opportunities, connections to transit, and more through strategic and thoughtful recommendations. The plan includes recommendations for prioritizing conservation efforts, maintenance and reinvestments, new trail construction, improved connectivity, trail security, trail amenity implementation, more collaboration and partnerships with internal and external partners, and updates to the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

Implementation of the plan will be a phased approach, with the first set of recommendations initiated through a **100-Day Action Plan**. The 100-Day Action Plan consists of momentum building and low-cost action items from the plan recommendations. It includes the following: prioritizing reinvestment of existing trails while strategically building new trails, promotion of trail safety, exploration of a neighborhood trail request program, UDO updates to address developer built trails and greenway dedication requirements, exploration of opportunities to expand conservation efforts, and exploration of partnerships opportunities with non-profit and private organizations. These are crucial first steps to realizing the community's vision for the Capital Area Greenway system.

We have been improving trail safety by adding lighting to all greenway underpasses, adding pavement markings along sections of the trail to separate users, improving directional signage, promoting greenway user safety through an etiquette campaign, and continuing to provide greenway detour and closure information. Raleigh Parks will continue implementing the 100-Day Action Plan, followed by recommendations that will carry work through 2027.

Greenway Master Plan **Adopted**

Programs and Initiatives

The Produce Project

Created with the mindset of providing fresh food to individuals and families who are food insecure, we began a partnership with The Produce Project in December 2021. The Produce Project offers a fresh produce pick-up service, and extra food is donated to local non-profit organizations. A "share" of fresh produce can be purchased for \$18/week, and Raleigh Parks provides additional pick-up sites to make the program more accessible. Since December 2021, 691 shares have been sold, and 4,493 pounds of fresh produce have been donated.

Invasive Species Program



A third of Raleigh's remaining tree canopy is on Raleigh Parks property, and the Parks Maintenance Division is responsible for managing those assets for our community. Invasive species overwhelm our native habitats and diminish our forests, preventing natural regeneration. Raleigh Parks staff use GIS technology to assess, track, and prioritize management and control efforts. The invasive species program works tirelessly to manage the threat of non-native invasive plants throughout our 10,000 acres of parks and greenways. The invasive species program trained and directed 999 volunteers over 900 hours of service. The value of this volunteer time equates to nearly \$26,000 and 62,000 hours of staff time. We are dedicated to delivering a resilient forest to all of Raleigh's citizens, ensuring that everyone, regardless of income, has access to quality habitat in their neighborhood park or greenway.

Programs and Initiatives (cont.)

Youth Conservation Corps

PRYCC

Partnership Raleigh Youth Conservation Corps (PRYCC) is a collaboration between Raleigh Parks and Raleigh Housing and Neighborhoods. The program employs youth ages 16-18 for about ten weeks to work on land management tasks for the seven parks in the Natural Resources division. While performing tasks that benefit our nature parks and preserves, participants can also develop new skills, engage with natural resources and conservation professionals, and prepare for future careers in the field. Projects completed by the 2021 PRYCC team include, but are not limited to, removing several invasive plant species, building and maintaining trails, and removing litter from parks and waterways.

CCNC

In partnership with Raleigh Parks, Dix Park Conservancy, and Conservation Legacy, Dix Park hosted two **Conservation Corps North Carolina (CCNC)** youth crews in the summer of 2021. This program gave local teens the unique opportunity to work on conservation-based projects in an urban park setting. Crews had educational opportunities and mentor sessions. Four weeks of skill building work resulted in the removal of 14,000 pounds of invasive plants; the building of a 1/4-mile trail; the restoration of historic cemetery markers, the construction of 50+ pieces of park furniture, amenities, and hammocks; and the maintenance of many acres of green space at Dix Park!



Programs and Initiatives (cont.)

Biophilic *Cities*

The City of Raleigh celebrated its acceptance into the Biophilic Cities Network during the Earth Day event on April 22, 2022. Biophilic Cities Network is comprised of 26 cities from around the globe dedicated to improving the connection between residents and urban nature. Biophilic cities focus on protecting and celebrating nature and recognize the importance of access to nature as an element of a meaningful urban life. Raleigh was accepted into the network because of its demonstrated commitment to conserving and protecting its environmental resources through best practices in cutting-edge conservation and stewardship, land use, infrastructure, and building technologies. The City of Raleigh remains committed to encouraging a diverse, vibrant built environment that preserves and protects the community's natural resources, strives for environmental equity and justice, and encourages sustainable growth that complements existing development.



Greenway

Wildflower/Conservation Mowing Program

Greenway maintenance staff seeded 17 annual color beds, totaling four acres, and is establishing 26 Conservation Mowing Areas along the Capital Area Greenway System. These wild areas and areas intentionally seeded with wildflowers provide rich floral displays throughout the seasons and promote native flowers and grasses throughout the trail system. These natural areas are mowed annually as opposed to a four-week cycle. The greenway wildflower and conservation mowing program increases wildlife habitat, protects native pollinators, improves water quality, reduces air pollution, and provides more opportunities to experience nature while on the trails.

Programs and Initiatives (cont.)

Pollinator *Week*

In March 2021, Raleigh Mayor Mary-Ann Baldwin signed the National Wildlife Federation's Mayor's Monarch Pledge, committing the City to promote and protect the valuable ecosystem services provided by all pollinators, including bees, beetles, birds, bats, and butterflies. We continue to preserve healthy forests that are habitats for many pollinators through invasive species control and stewardship. Our trained gardeners plant hundreds of gardens supporting pollinators throughout the city, even in some densely urban areas. We have 27 registered Monarch Waystations throughout the city as of June 2022. Raleigh Parks also produces over 500 native milkweed plants each year to distribute throughout the park system. We celebrate National Pollinator Week by acknowledging the declining pollinator population, offering pollinator education, raising awareness, and providing resources to help this population thrive. Our schedule of events includes everything from an organized pollinator and wildflower walk to free pollinator plant giveaways.



Dix Park

Gipson Play Plaza will be a place like no other where imagination and inspiration abound. Inviting the community from near and far to climb, slide, and swing, gather to grill, stroll through gardens, or pull up a rocking chair on the porch of a rehabilitated historic house. There will be something for everyone to enjoy and explore. At 18 acres, this first major project in the implementation of the park's Master Plan will welcome our community in from across the street, throughout Raleigh, and beyond. The Gipson Play Plaza is made possible by a generous \$10 million gift from Pat and Tom Gipson. Groundbreaking is planned for summer 2022.



Wings of the City



In October 2022, Dix Park welcomed its first international art exhibition, **Wings of the City**, created by world-renowned Mexican artist Jorge Marín. The traveling collection of nine bronze sculptures features larger-than-life figures – some winged and poised to take flight, others delicately balanced in acrobatic poses. The public art exhibit was on display for six months, ending in April 2022, fostering and celebrating cultural connections throughout our community. Wings of the City exhibition in Raleigh was made possible through a partnership between the City of Raleigh, the Consulate General of Mexico in Raleigh, the Jorge Marín Foundation, and the Dix Park Conservancy.



Dix Park (cont.)



Pop-Up Museum

Hundreds of community members visited Dix Park's first **Pop-Up Museum** over the winter, interacting with two inspiring history exhibits: From Plantation to Park, presenting the layered history of Dix Hill, and We Built This, a showcase of Black architects and builders in North Carolina. The exhibits were presented in partnership with Preservation North Carolina, the City of Raleigh Museum, and Dix Park Conservancy.

Dreamville Festival

North Carolina-native, Grammy Award-winning, and multi-platinum hip-hop artist J. Cole's **Dreamville Festival** returned to Dix Park - expanding to two days - in April 2021. Daily crowds of 40,000 fans from throughout the state and across the country gathered on the Big Field to enjoy music, art, and community. According to the Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitor's Bureau report, Dreamville Festival generated over \$6.7 million in economic impact on Wake County.



Inter-Tribal

Pow Wow

Dix Park hosted an *Inter-Tribal Pow Wow*, celebrating the legacy and culture of Indigenous communities living in North Carolina. This event was planned in partnership with Indigenous community organizers, the Triangle Native American Society, NC Museum of History, City of Raleigh Museum, Dix Park Conservancy, and the Consulate General of Mexico in Raleigh. The greater community experienced a day of competition, tribal dancing, drum groups, vendors, and food from Native communities across the state. Tribal citizens from all eight recognized tribes in North Carolina were in attendance.



City of Oaks *Foundation*

Through collaboration with the City of Oaks Foundation, our department has helped the community come back together, enjoying multi-generational social and cultural events, getting children outdoors and active, and improving our great system of parks, greenways, and nature preserves.

The demand for our outdoor summer camps and nature programs increased as parents sought active social opportunities for their children. Through the Give Play program and the financial assistance of the City of Oaks Foundation, almost one hundred under-resourced children in our community, including youth experiencing homelessness, were able to enjoy one of our incredible camp offerings. Local foundations and businesses were eager to partner with the Foundation to restore this critical service.

The Foundation also worked with the department to integrate the new Joslin Garden into our parks system. This 4.3-acre natural wonder in the heart of Raleigh is now open to the public for regular business hours and special events. Visitors enjoy the Garden's woods, streams, trails, and a diverse collection of native and exotic plants, arranged in formal and informal styles. Maintained by new Program Coordinator Helen Yoest, our department works to honor the legacy of the Joslin family, who made their property a gift to be enjoyed by the public for generations to come.

In addition to the beautiful landscapes, Joslin Garden also features the historic Joslin House, where several charitable events were hosted by the Foundation, raising money for improvements to the garden and the department's financial assistance programs, like Give Play. Egg hunts, Mother's Day teas, and various art programs provided Raleigh citizens with much-needed social outlets while raising money for a good cause.

Through the work of the Foundation to help facilitate private gifts, a generous donor funded the renovation of an under-utilized tennis court into a popular new pickleball court. Similar private gifts have benefited arts programs and funded specific park improvements. Through this partnership, the Foundation has provided the department with over \$40,000 for teen programs and summer youth employment, \$25,000 for park improvements, and over \$15,000 for other youth development programs like the Neighborhood Ecology Corps. It also partnered with the department to recruit dozens of volunteers for maintenance projects in Raleigh's parks and Joslin Garden.

Working together with the City of Oaks Foundation, Raleigh Parks helps maintain a great outdoors for a great Raleigh!





The Numbers

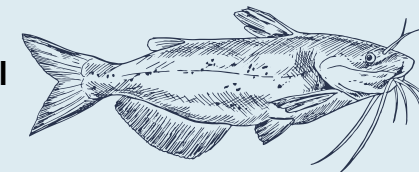
5%
Business Services
\$2,941,676



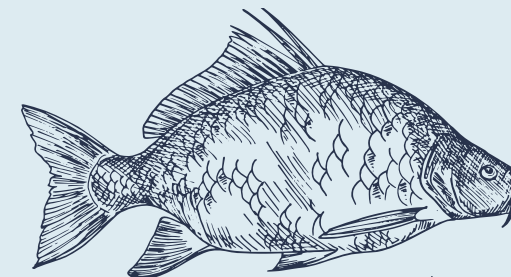
6%
**Park Development
& Communications**
\$3,555,655



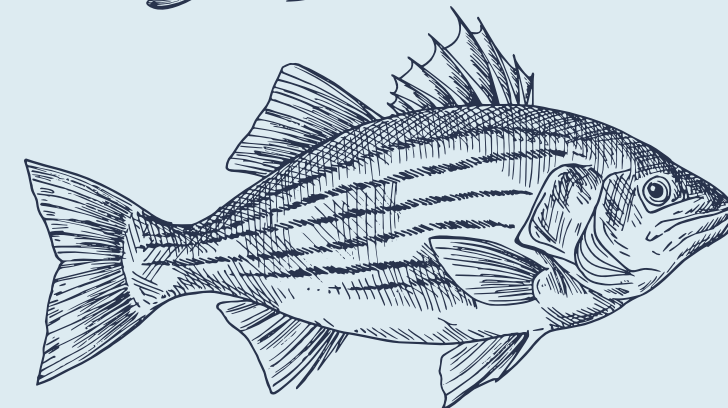
18%
**Natural & Cultural
Resources**
\$10,438,317



33%
**Parks/Grounds
Maintenance**
\$18,946,772



38%
Recreation
\$21,594,830



The PRCR Department's 2021-2022 operating budget is **\$57.4M**.

The Department's Capital Improvement Budget for FY22 is **\$9.7M**.

In continuing effort to reduce financial barriers and ensure that no one is denied the benefits of public recreation due to the inability to pay, our Financial Assistance program provided more than \$130,000 in assistance to 409 families, for a total of 657 individuals this past year.

Keeping *in Touch*

Get Social with Raleigh Parks

Get Social with Raleigh Parks: the department embraces social media to keep members of the community engaged and to help us stay informed about what matters to them. We look at social media as a customer service tool, allowing us to interact with citizens, receive feedback, and share information.

Our online social media community has grown to **52,598**.

19,026 Twitter followers

17,000 Facebook followers

443 Pinterest followers

629 YouTube subscribers

15,500 Instagram followers

Join the conversation

Have a question about the parks? **Ask us.**

Have a shoutout about something fun in the parks? **Tell us.**

 Facebook.com/raleighparks

 Twitter.com/raleighparks

 Instagram.com/raleighparks

 Pinterest.com/raleighparks

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Boards *and Commissions*





Raleigh
Parks