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Your Parks and Recreation System

Did you know Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) stewards over 15% of the land called Portland?

- 7,890 acres of natural areas
- 137 playgrounds
- 158 miles of trails
- 19 splashpads
- 38 dog off-leash areas
- 11 indoor and outdoor pools
- 11 SUN Community Schools
- 30 Free Lunch + Play sites
- 14 community and art centers
- 154 developed parks
- 60 community gardens
- 227 outdoor courts
- 1.2 Million park trees
I’m excited to share Portland Parks & Recreation’s (PP&R) first Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland report. This document is the result of two years of community listening and learning. I am proud of the progress we are making to meet the demands of our changing city.

Simply put, Portlanders want to experience the following in and around our parks:

- Accessible, safe, clean, well-maintained public spaces
- Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience
- Learning, play, and discovery
- Mental, emotional, and physical wellness
- Community and civic connection
- Jobs that support growth and belonging

I am so thankful to the thousands of community volunteers and the many partners who have worked with PP&R to support community parks and programs.

PP&R is committed to providing equitable access to its parks, programs, and facilities—and the 2020 voter approved Parks Local Option Levy (Parks Levy) has significantly increased access and inclusivity.

While there is much to celebrate, many PP&R facilities are in danger of closing due to about $595 million of deferred maintenance. I am committed to exploring a better long-term dedicated source of funding for the City’s parks and recreation facilities.

Together, we will improve parks and recreation services for all people across Portland. Enjoy playing in your local parks!

Dan Ryan
Culture and Livability Commissioner

In 2020, PP&R reimagined the way we work. We put underserved communities at the center of our process and committed to an ongoing, iterative cycle of improvement that will transform the way we make decisions and get things done.

PP&R is committed to centering the people most impacted by inequities in Portland’s parks and recreation system, including Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, immigrants and refugees, LGBT2SQIA+ people, people with disabilities, youth, older adults, and people living with low incomes. We know that to create a healthy community, we must make sure that all people are served through Portland’s parks and recreation system.

We have included in this report:

- An overview of the work we’ve done with the community to refresh PP&R’s mission, vision, outcomes, values, and equity and anti-racism commitment
- How the community can engage in the parks and recreation system
- New organizational statements which will guide our work
- An assessment of how our work contributes to community outcomes and where there are disparities

Parks and recreation services are essential to making Portland a great place to live, work, and play. I’m immensely proud of the team of nearly 2,000 employees who serve the community every day.

Adena Long
Director, Portland Parks & Recreation
Listening & Learning in Action
Help Shape the Future
PP&R has been on a journey to renew and update its mission, vision, outcomes, values, and equity and anti-racism commitment.

Key themes/priorities we heard from community

Access to parks and programs

Community building

Safety

Welcoming spaces

Clean and well-maintained parks

Having a voice in setting the agenda

Prioritizing feedback from centered communities, we finalized our mission, vision, values, outcomes, and equity and anti-racism commitment.

Listening & Learning in Action

What do you need most from the parks and recreation system?

What outcomes and opportunities can PP&R create in our community?

What does an equitable parks and recreation system look like?

How might our stated mission and vision need to change?

What values or considerations should PP&R use when making decisions?

Community Feedback Sessions

- Community Engagement Liaison Services (CELS)
- Dawson Park
- Luuwit View Park
- Mt. Scott Park
- Latino Community Engagement
- Virtual Workshop

Tabling Events

- Black Swimming Initiative Event, Peninsula Park
- East Portland Arts Festival
- Good in the Hood
- PRIDE
- Summer Free For All, Brentwood Park
- Summer Free For All, Peninsula Park
- Sunday Parkways, Ventura Park

Groups Engaged

- African Family Holistic Health Organization
- East Portland Advisors
- Guerreras Latinas
- Home Forward
- Immigrant and Refugee Leaders
- Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Parks Board
- PP&R Staff
- Urban Forestry Commission

What do you value?

What do you like or not like about our proposed mission, vision, and outcome categories?

What do you think we are getting close to articulating the values for PP&R?

How close do you think we are to articulating the values for PP&R?

How well do you think PP&R is doing living these values today?

How effective is this statement in guiding PP&R in anti-racist actions?

What do you think of the draft options we tested with community members and listened to?

What do you think of the draft options we tested with community members and listened to?
Help Shape the Future

There are many ways for the community to engage in their parks and recreation system.

Join an Advisory Group

• Parks Board
  portland.gov/parks/portland-parks-board
• Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
• Urban Forestry Commission
  portland.gov/trees/ufc
• Budget Advisory Committee
  portland.gov/parks/budget
• Parks Levy Oversight Committee
  portland.gov/parks/ploc

Support Your Neighborhood Park

• Friends groups and volunteer events
  portland.gov/parks/volunteer

Flag an Issue

• PDX 311 – dial 311 or email
  311@portlandoregon.gov for help with any question or service (except emergencies - call 911)
• PDX Reporter – let us know if you see something broken or have a safety concern in your park
  pdxreporter.org
• Customer Service 503-823-PLAY
• Tree Emergency Line 503-823-TREE

Co-design Places and Programs

• Community gatherings and meetings for new parks, playgrounds, and capital projects
• Attend a community listening session
• Piloting and testing programs

Equitable Community Engagement

Community engagement is specifically focused on turning up the volume on input from centered communities: Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, immigrants and refugees, LGBT2SQI+A people, people with disabilities, youth, older adults, and people living with low income.

If you’d like to participate or receive additional information, email the community engagement team at parkscommunityengagement@portlandoregon.gov

Learn more about where your feedback goes on page 48
14 Mission, Vision, Outcomes
16 Values
18 Equity and Anti-Racism Commitment

Setting the Direction
Mission
Portland Parks & Recreation’s mission is to provide equitable access to welcoming places, programs, and services that improve community health and our environment.

Why renew our mission and vision?
PP&R’s mission and vision had become out of date and out of sync with the changing needs of our community. Together, with broad and deep community involvement, we co-created a fresh vision to guide our work.

Vision
We envision a parks and recreation system that is responsive to diverse and changing community needs, nurturing health and connection for all.

What we aim to achieve long term

Our ultimate goal or purpose

Accessible, safe, clean, well-maintained public spaces
Mental, emotional, and physical wellness
Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience
Community and civic connection
Learning, play, and discovery
Jobs that support growth and belonging
We Value

Our values guide how we act every day to achieve our mission and vision.

**Stewardship**
As caretakers of millions of trees and over 15% of the land called Portland, we protect and nurture healthy ecosystems for generations. We ensure spaces and services are resilient and responsive to a changing world.

**Accountability**
We listen to community priorities and communicate transparently. We set clear goals and take responsibility for our actions and results.

**Safety and Belonging**
We strive to make spaces safe, accessible, and welcoming for all people.

**Equity and Anti-Racism**
We work to acknowledge and abolish the harms of racism and oppression in the parks and recreation system.

**Connection**
The parks and recreation system connects people to places and each other. We build collaborative partnerships that energize our public spaces.
Equity and Anti-Racism Commitment

Our Commitment
We work to acknowledge and abolish the harms of racism and oppression in the parks and recreation system.

Why
We take accountability for our history of racism and unequal treatment of people – both community members and employees.

How
By centering the people most impacted by inequities, we build towards a more just and hopeful future for Portland.

We look at who benefits from the parks and recreation system today and prioritize addressing gaps experienced by Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, immigrants and refugees, people with disabilities, LGBT2SQIA+ people, youth, older adults, and people living with low income.

Action
Our community deserves a clear commitment to action and accountability for results.

WE WILL:
- Elevate the voices of communities and team members who have been most impacted by inequities
- Nurture a culture of belonging as we work together to eliminate the barriers and harm that we have caused
- Develop accessible, equitable, and inclusive policies, programs, and services
- Expand the diversity of our workforce
- Support and encourage individual learning, mutual respect, empathy, and care of ourselves and each other

Diving deeper into our Equity and Anti-Racism Commitment
We heard that our previous Equity Statement was too narrow and not actionable. Equity and anti-racism is front and center at PP&R, and you will see this commitment woven throughout this report.
Accountability in Action

This section takes an honest look at challenges faced and progress made. PP&R is building a framework that will allow us to see how our actions support outcomes in the community. We look forward to future community conversations about how we’re using resources to achieve community goals.

- Accessible, safe, clean, well-maintained public spaces
- Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience
- Learning, play, and discovery
- Mental, emotional, and physical wellness
- Community and civic connection
- Jobs that support growth and belonging
Accessible, safe, clean, well-maintained public spaces

What we’re striving for

People have a variety of parks and recreation experiences near where they live

Parks, natural areas, and facilities are clean and well maintained

People feel safe in parks, natural areas, and facilities

How we’re doing

Only 69.4% of East Portland households have 1/2 mile access to a park or natural area. Two parks currently under development, Mill and Parklane, will increase access to 71%. It’s estimated that it will take building 13 more parks and a nearly $300 million investment to close the gap so that East Portlanders benefit from walkability to a park on a level comparable to the citywide average.

PP&R has a major maintenance backlog list estimated to cost about $595 million. Without significant investment, one in five assets are projected to close in the next 15 years.

A 2017 survey showed that 30% of Portlanders felt safety was a barrier to visiting parks. Looking deeper, safety was a barrier for 37% of Portlanders of color and 45% of East Portlanders. PP&R is planning to conduct a community survey in 2023, and results may be worse, not better.

In FY21-22:

3,107,384 pounds of trash collected

68 new maintenance positions created

A deeper dive

While ADA barrier remediation is a challenge, PP&R has been improving play equity through the development of inclusive playgrounds, like the recent effort at Gabriel Park. Extensive community engagement helped make sure the design accommodates people of different abilities and developmental levels.

The PP&R Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition plan set a goal of remediating 17,008 identified barriers by FY35-36. It is estimated that a minimum investment of $130 million in funding is needed to meet the Plan’s remediation goals. The current annual funding allocation for this work is $1 million per year. At this level of investment, it is projected that the bureau will complete barrier remediation in FY82-83.

Parks, natural areas, and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities

People have the information they need to navigate their parks and recreation experience

Cost is not a barrier to enjoying PP&R programs and facilities

For years, Portlanders have said that prices of programs like swim lessons, day camps, and exercise classes are a barrier for participation. Remarkable progress has recently been made to reduce cost as a barrier to PP&R programs and facilities.

In FY21-22, Parks Levy funding and new discount programs allowed PP&R to provide:

$1.11 million in assistance to 7,984 people

24% of program participants accessed financial assistance

Free programs

Like Lifelong Recreation, Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation, Summer Free For All, SUN Community School programming, and teen programming

ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION
Creating Partnerships to Engage Community and Expand Park Access

In East Portland, only 69.4% of households are within 1/2 mile of a park or natural area, compared to an average of 85.2% citywide. PP&R wants to change that, and is committed to bringing community members into the decision-making process.

Division Midway Alliance (DMA) partnered with PP&R on a project to develop and expand Mill Park in East Portland. DMA’s Cultural Liaison Program brought community members who might not have otherwise participated into the park planning process. The Cultural Liaison Program employs cultural ambassadors, or people from a particular community who know the culture and language of the community they’re trying to reach.

This program was the main reason why PP&R was able to hear from such a diverse group of people about what the community wanted to see included in the Mill Park plan. Partnerships help build equity and inclusion into PP&R’s community engagement process and empower communities to feel welcome in the parks in their neighborhoods.

“If community engagement is done in the right way, the outcome will be better for everyone.”

Lisha Shrestha
Executive Director, Division Midway Alliance

Who can walk to a park?
This map shows 85.2% of Portland households are within 1/2 mile of a park or natural area.

- Portland Parks
- PP&R Developed Parks and Natural Areas Service Areas (1/2 Mile)
- Non-PP&R Developed Parks and Natural Areas Service Areas (1/2 Mile)
- Households Not Served by Park or Natural Area
- Non-residential Zoning

69.7% of Portland households are within 1/2 mile of a park with a fully operational playground.

71.9% of Portland households are within 3 miles of a full-service community center.
Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience

What we’re striving for

Tree canopy is expanding and equitably distributed

West of the Willamette River, Portlanders enjoy 56% tree canopy. Even without including Forest Park, tree canopy is 44%. East of the Willamette, where 80% of Portlanders live, tree canopy is 27%. This disparity affects the health and quality of life for Portlanders east of the river.

Responsible environmental practices support climate change resilience, clean air, clean water, reduced urban flooding, and extreme heat mitigation

Removing invasive species, such as ivy, from natural areas is critical. Ivy in Portland’s parks bothstrangles healthy plants and trees and acts as a ladder to the tree canopy in the event of a forest fire. Wildlife depends on native plants to thrive, and rivers and streams rely on healthy natural areas to keep water cool and clean. In addition to removing invasive species, PP&R is also focused on preserving tree health and growing its tree planting program.

How we’re doing

In FY21-22, PP&R planted 2,455 trees

- 60% of which were planted in priority neighborhoods

36

PP&R planted 1,726 trees through the Yard Tree Giveaway program.

A deeper dive

Nature across the city is cared for and kept healthy

PP&R has long been understaffed and unable to care properly for the nearly 8,000 acres of natural areas and 1.2 million park trees in the parks and recreation system. Parks Levy funding has allowed the bureau to hire additional staff and, for the first time, to fund positions to help proactively maintain trees in parks.

PP&R has a low carbon footprint

In 2007, Portland adopted the goal to cut carbon emissions for City operations by 53% by 2030. For PP&R, that means a goal of less than 5,000 metric tons of carbon emissions generated. In FY20-21, PP&R measured 6,720 metric tons of carbon emissions generated.

People maintain trees on their property and streets in ways that support the urban ecosystem

The health of Portland’s over 4 million trees relies on a partnership between the City and property owners. Under City Code, property owners are responsible for the trees on their property and adjacent parking strips. Many property owners find taking care of their trees to be a financial hardship, and conversations with the community show that some people don’t want trees on their property that they’re obligated to maintain. PP&R has piloted more affordable tree permits for communities experiencing financial hardships.

In response to COVID-19, PP&R piloted a new program which waived tree permits for low-income applicants. PP&R used the Portland Water Bureau’s bill discount program to determine waiver eligibility. The pilot was later expanded to include the waiver of Title 11 violation penalties and mitigation requirements. PP&R is hoping to make this program permanent in FY23-24.
Portland’s tree canopy coverage was estimated to be 29.8% in 2020. PP&R has a goal of 33.3% tree canopy coverage by 2030. Preserving existing trees and investing more in tree planting will help meet the City’s overall canopy goal and improve disparities.

Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience

This map shows afternoon UHI modeled raster surface from data collected on August 25, 2014, when the temperature exceeded the 90th percentage threshold. Heavily forested areas show a tendency towards cooler temperatures.

Urban Heat Coverage
Afternoon Temperature (F)
- High: 95°
- Low: 77°

Tree Canopy Coverage
- <10%
- 10% – 15%
- 15% – 20%
- 20% – 25%
- 25% – 33%
- > 33%

Data Driven Tree Planting

Oregon has been getting hotter for years, and Portland has been hit especially hard by rising temperatures. While the city has been heating up, community members are looking to PP&R wondering what the bureau is doing about climate change. “The role that Parks plays in Portland right now is having a real resurgence,” said Dr. Vivek Shandas, a professor at Portland State University who studies the impacts of climate change on cities. “What can we do with that?”

Dr. Shandas is right to ask that question, and with the heat expected to continue increasing, it’s more important than ever that PP&R think about ways to help Portland defend against the impacts of climate change. The health and distribution of Portland’s tree canopy is key.

Just two summers ago, 71 people died when a heat dome settled on Multnomah County, and the deaths didn’t fall equally across neighborhoods. According to Dr. Shandas, the hottest places in Portland are also the places where more people with lower incomes and people of color live.

If you look at a map of the hottest places in Portland, nearly all are east of the Willamette River. That’s why PP&R uses a data driven approach to determine priority neighborhoods for focusing tree planting, education, and outreach resources. Priority is determined by factors including where canopy levels are lowest, where resources for tree planting are needed most, and how to address existing inequities in urban canopy relative to race and income.

It’s going to take a lot more than planting trees to defend against the impacts of climate change, but making sure Portland’s tree canopy coverage is equitably distributed across the city has the potential to save lives.

“There’s a huge inequity in the distribution of green space. What we see is communities that live in neighborhoods that don’t have a lot of trees consistently have lower health measures, whether that’s mental health, whether that’s physical health.”

Dr. Vivek Shandas
Portland State University

“Healthy ecosystems and climate change resilience”

“Data Driven Tree Planting”

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Dr. Vivek Shandas
Portland State University
PP&R’s Lifelong Recreation programs provide access to recreational, educational, and wellness opportunities for adults aged 60 and older. Hundreds of programs are offered each year, including excursions and van trips, health and wellness, arts and crafts, music and dance, sports and fitness, hiking and walking, and more. Language access and cost have been barriers to participation, but Parks Levy investments in a new Access Pass for adults living with low income have increased participation. FY21-22 served 3,295 adults who registered for more than 5,800 Lifelong Recreation programs.

Adaptive and Inclusive Recreation (AIR)
AIR offers community-based recreation activities and leisure services specially designed for children, teens, and adults with disabilities. AIR had more than 2,750 registrations over the past two years and demand is growing. AIR includes excursion trips, outdoor programs, fitness classes, swimming, enrichment and arts classes, and camp programs. The addition of financial assistance such as the Access Pass has provided access to new participants and has increased activity offerings.

ADA Accommodations for Recreation Programs
In addition to the AIR program, PP&R’s Inclusion Services aims to provide every individual access to registered recreation classes and activities through individually developed ADA support plans.

Children and youth have safe, welcoming places and programs to learn, play, and discover
Youth programming is the cornerstone of PP&R’s recreation programs. COVID-19 limited attendance to recreation programs. Once restrictions were lifted, PP&R, like recreation organizations across the country, experienced staffing shortages at all levels. The desire for recreation programs and classes, especially swim lessons, exceeds current capacity.

19,560 swim lesson registrations
11,407 children registered for educational preschool, SUN Community Schools, community center after-school programs, and camps
2,664 people participated in nature camps, classes, and community programs
22,788 TeenForce passes scanned at community centers

To address staffing shortages, City Council approved higher wages for union represented PP&R lifeguards, swim instructors, counselors, attendants, seasonal maintenance workers, and customer service staff, bringing them to $18-21 per hour. Wages for inclusion assistants has been increased to $20-24 per hour to provide accommodation support for program participants. In addition to increased wages, PP&R offers the required lifeguard training free of charge and added a new position to support hiring lifeguards and swim instructors.
**TeenForce to the Rescue**

Ryan Fitzpatrick began his career with PP&R as a teenager. He took a break to try other jobs but came back when he realized nothing seemed to give him the same feeling his work at PP&R did.

Ryan works in Teen Services. Every day, he gets to see the impact programs like TeenForce have on the lives of Portland youth. TeenForce, which is free for youth between the ages of 10 and 20 years old, is focused on giving young people the programs they need to thrive: help with homework, drop-in sports, field trips, chess clubs, help with resumes, a fun and safe place to hang out with peers, and so much more.

“My favorite part of my job,” Ryan said, “is getting to see people engage in play and learning and seeing them grow and become successful.”

TeenForce also gives youth the chance to experience things outside of their typical daily routines. Two examples Ryan shared include going to the Oregon coast for the first time and presenting to City Council.

The parents of youth participants might appreciate the program just as much as their children do, if not more. It’s a wide-ranging program that, for some, also serves as an opportunity to land their first job. For parents, Ryan said, “knowing that there’s people who care, who know who their children are, who will connect with them and let them know what’s going on, it’s invaluable.”

**Goldenball Runs Deep**

What do former NBA Rookie of the Year Damon Stoudamire, two-time NBA All Star Terrell Brandon, three-time NBA champion A.C. Green, and former Golden Gloves champion Ed Marcell have in common?

“We all played for Portland Parks & Recreation’s Goldenball league,” said Ed.

When a sports program has been around for 86 years like Goldenball has, it’s bound to produce some incredible success stories – and not just on the court.

Ed, who is now a gym host for the league, is especially proud of the positive impact Goldenball has on building the character of the young people who participate in the league.

Goldenball encourages youth, regardless of ability, to learn the fundamentals of basketball, develop a sense of fair play, and experience the satisfaction of team play and cooperation. Above all, the goal is to have fun and enjoy playing.

Ed is such a believer in the positive impacts of PP&R’s sports programs that when his two sons were growing up, he enrolled them in the same Goldenball league he played in during the 1970s. And this past season, one of Ed’s sons, Ed Marcell, Jr., was a first-year coach in the league. Ed Jr. became a coach when his son,
People of all backgrounds, ages, and abilities are using the parks and recreation system.

The parks and recreation system positively impacts community health.

A thriving parks and recreation system provides access to nature and recreational opportunities that are key to the community’s overall health. Over 93% of U.S. adults responding to the June 2021 National Recreation Park Association poll indicated that their mental health was improved by services offered by local park agencies.

Past surveys and program attendance data show that Portland’s parks and recreation system is well-used by the community. The challenge is who has access and who feels welcome. PP&R looks forward to continuing to work with the community to ensure their parks and recreation system is accessible and welcoming for everyone living, working, and playing in Portland.

A deeper dive

Portland Community Gardens Program overview:

- 2,704 garden plots
- 2,000 people are on the waitlist for garden plots
- 24 languages spoken or signed by gardeners
- 30% of gardeners qualify for fee discounts
- 60 gardens
- 2+ years is the wait for a garden plot at many sites

Too many Portlanders struggle with food insecurity. For example, 56% of Portland Public School students qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Without meals at school, summer becomes the time when nearly 50,000 Portland children face hunger daily.

PP&R is an important resource for nutritious food.

- 173,197 free meals were served by PP&R in FY21-22
- 29,000 pounds of food from gardeners at 32 community gardens were donated to 24 food pantries through the Produce for People program

Community centers are a valuable part of the safety net during extreme weather events. For example, they provide cooling and warming areas during normal operating hours, and they also serve as overnight shelters. Turning community centers into temporary shelters can be the difference between life and death for the most vulnerable members of our community.

People can access fresh produce and nutritious food in parks, community gardens, and community centers.

Mental, emotional, and physical wellness
Free Lunch + Play

Free Lunch + Play offers accessible meal service and engaging activities at multiple parks throughout the city. In addition, Mobile Free Lunch + Play serves children and families at apartment complexes in neighborhoods where there might not be a park nearby.

During COVID-19, in addition to meals, PP&R started sending three vans out to Free Lunch + Play sites to provide free arts activities to kids all summer long. This program has now been made a permanent offering and will help get more arts programming to kids in their neighborhood parks.

The Fresh Food Market program provided over 35,000 pounds of fresh fruits, vegetables, and nutritious snacks to children and families.

PP&R’s Free Lunch + Play program coordinates an exciting program called the Fresh Food Market with partners like school districts, community-based organizations, Multnomah County Department of Human Services, and Portland Children’s Levy.

Last summer, a farmers market-like experience was created in Raymond Park near SE 118th and Raymond Street. This market, and two others like it, provided over 35,000 pounds of fresh fruit, vegetables, and nutritious snacks to children and families. This grant-driven partnership between PP&R, Portland Children’s Levy, Oregon Food Bank, and David Douglas School District provides Portland’s diverse communities with accessible services in their parks, in their neighborhoods, and for their families’ wellbeing.
People use PP&R places and programs to gather and connect

Community is involved in planning, designing, and determining what is in Portland’s parks and recreation system

In 2017, 94% of Portlanders surveyed said they visited a park or natural area at least once in the last 12 months. The parks and recreation system allowed people to connect outdoors during the pandemic. Even with limited program capacity and staffing, an estimated 874,780 people attended PP&R’s recreation programs in FY21-22. PP&R is striving to serve as many Portlanders as possible and to make sure that all community members feel welcome.

Community organizations and volunteers want to work with PP&R

Community volunteers donated more than 328,181 hours to the parks and recreation system, and more than 7,208 people volunteered in parks, natural areas, and trails. There is high demand to get involved, and PP&R has added new community outreach and partnership team members to expand volunteer opportunities.

Culturally specific organizations have affordable and accessible spaces for programming

PP&R has focused on increasing diversity in its Summer Free For All programming. In the summer of 2022, the bureau partnered with 1 World Chorus, the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community/Oke Kye, Albina Music Trust, Black Parent Initiative, Inc., Bollywood Dreams Entertainment, Chabad Young Professionals of Oregon, Espacio Flamenco, Gentrification is WEIRD!, Latino Network, Native American Youth and Family Center, Minority Retort, and Portland’s Creative Laureates. In addition, 10 out of 14 Summer Free For All food vendors and 32 out of 38 performing groups or artistic partners had representatives who are Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color.

PP&R supports a more equitable local economy by contracting with diverse, local businesses and organizations

While PP&R is working to measure how it supports a more equitable local economy overall, the bureau can report that for Parks Replacement Bond projects, 31% of the consultant contracts for professional or technical services and 40% of the construction contracts that have been completed or awarded are utilizing state-certified Disadvantaged, Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Emerging Small Businesses, Service Disabled Veterans Business Enterprise firms.

A deeper dive

People who live, work, and play in Portland have diverse wants and needs of their parks and recreation system. While PP&R has made progress centering underserved populations in recent years, it is a challenge to reach people who have not traditionally been involved in civic engagement.

Thank you for inviting me to participate. Having been an almost life-long user as a participant and part-time employee in Parks and having accessibility concerns, I was excited to help create new guiding statements that will open doors and opportunities to ALL residents and visitors of Portland. PP&R literally saved my life, and I’m happy to support our amazing parks and recreation system.”

Fern Wilgus
Portland Accessibility Advisory Committee member

For its recent work renewing and refreshing its mission, vision and values, PP&R recruited a co-design team that included community members representing centered communities. For more information on how to get involved with PP&R, see pages 10-11.
Building Capacity of Community Organizations

Pamela Slaughter grew up in Portland and spent a lot of time outside exploring her environment. “We’d go out into nature, but we were always the only Black people there,” Pam said. For the most part, she was able to enjoy the beauty nature had to offer in peace, but she also encountered racism on walks and hikes.

Her love of nature and her desire to create safe nature experiences for people who look like her led Pam to establish People of Color Outdoors (POCO), where she serves as Executive Director. POCO is a non-profit that provides Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color a safe and welcoming way to enjoy and learn about nature in Oregon.

Through POCO, Pam is making sure the next generation of youth of color experience the wonders of nature have to offer—running through parks full of hundred-year-old trees, hiding behind bushes and along creeks watching for wildlife, and admiring the beautiful flowers that bloom in spring.

PP&R’s Community Partnerships Program provides financial support to partner organizations like POCO that bring knowledge, expertise, resources, and a focused approach to serving culturally specific communities.

In FY21-22, PP&R granted $1.8 million directly to 13 partner organizations.

“We’re going to be able to host a lot more kids,” said Pam Slaughter (left), Executive Director of People of Color Outdoors. “We were only in the summer before. And now, because of this grant from PP&R, we had our first time inside this cottage at winter break. It was pretty cool.”
Jobs that support growth and belonging

What we’re striving for

PP&R staff reflect the diversity of our community

PP&R has increased its overall workforce diversity, but the bureau recognizes that there is still work to do to build a supportive and healthy workplace for all. Based on a 2022 employee survey, 22% of respondents who are Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color indicated they have been treated differently or unfairly by community members or other city staff based on their racial or ethnic identity (this data was not disaggregated due to small numbers of respondents in some racial groups).

PP&R operates in a fiscally sustainable way that prioritizes stability and predictability for delivery of services

PP&R’s primary challenges are the temporary nature of 1/3 of its operating funding that is being supported by the 5-year Parks Levy, and insufficient capital maintenance funding. Assets in poor and failing condition are resulting in unstable service delivery and facility closures. PP&R is continuing to explore funding options to address all of its funding needs and move closer to a position of financial sustainability and reliable, equitable services.

How we’re doing

PP&R staff have opportunities to grow in their career

Employee survey responses about being supported through professional development are lower for staff who work in parks, natural areas, maintenance facilities, or in recreation facilities (59%), compared to staff who work in office or telework (69%).

PP&R staff feel safe at work

Overall, PP&R staff surveyed in 2022 feel less safe than they did when surveyed in 2019. Staff who work in parks, natural areas, maintenance facilities, or in recreation facilities report feeling the least safe and the most impacted by problems in the community.

Did you know?

PP&R has nearly 2,000 seasonal, part-time, and full-time staff and is one of the city’s largest youth employers, providing a first employment opportunity and valuable job training skills for more than 1,400 young people each year.

A deeper dive

PP&R’s employee survey saw the biggest response disparities in staff who work in parks, natural areas, maintenance facilities, or in recreation facilities versus staff who work in the office or telework. The bureau acknowledges that new strategies are needed to make staff in parks and facilities feel connected, included, safe, and supported in their jobs.

Of staff surveyed who work in parks, natural areas, maintenance facilities, or in recreation facilities:

- 88% believe their job is impacted by vandalism, theft, or other property damage
- 78% feel they work in areas with people displaying erratic, violent, or illegal behavior that makes them feel unsafe
- 51% feel emotionally safe at work
- 49% feel physically safe at work

“[Our inclusivity values need to include more prioritization of providing a safe working environment for staff as well as a safe and welcoming environment for our community members. Aggressive, disruptive, abusive behavior from repeat offenders is, in my opinion, too often allowed to escalate at our sites and centers.”

PP&R Employee

Staff from all backgrounds feel connected to PP&R’s mission

Overall, including seasonal and casual employees, the PP&R workforce is currently 36% Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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</tr>
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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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</table>

Managers who are Black people, Indigenous people, or people of color increased from 11% to over 30%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more races</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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No one would have blamed Amira and Zoya if they spent their summer relaxing by the water or escaping the heat indoors, but they didn’t. Instead, they spent it getting their hands dirty caring for existing community gardens and helping build new ones.

Amira and Zoya are a part of the Community Gardens Crew, which is one of five crews in PP&R’s Youth Conservation Crew (YCC) program. YCC provides employment opportunities for a diverse population of Portland-area youth. Crews protect and restore Portland’s parks and natural areas while developing job skills and exploring environmental career paths. Each of the five crews has a different focus area, with Community Gardens Crew being a great fit for teens who are interested in growing food, gardening, construction, and food justice.

When asked why she felt community gardens are important, Zoya (left) noted that there are lots of people living with low incomes that rely on them. Amira (right) added that community gardens provide “clean, nice, green spaces for people to meet in their neighborhoods. Sometimes people have to go miles to experience that.”

The meaningful work YCC does is one example of why PP&R has a strong employee retention rate and why staff say they would recommend working at PP&R to a friend or family member.

“Keep our crew together,” Amira demanded with a smile on her face. “Everyone I’ve asked said they’re coming back,” added Zoya.

When asked why she felt community gardens are important, Zoya (left) noted that there are lots of people living with low incomes that rely on them. Amira (right) added that community gardens provide “clean, nice, green spaces for people to meet in their neighborhoods. Sometimes people have to go miles to experience that.”

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What’s Next

48  Sustained Focus on Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland
50  Thank You to Contributors
Sustained Focus on Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

In 2020, PP&R launched the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland (HPHP) initiative to completely reimagine the way we work. HPHP puts communities at the center and is transforming the way we make decisions and get work done.

On page 10 we highlighted what community engagement looks like today and how we're improving it.

We have overhauled tools and processes to ensure decisions are influenced by and aligned with the voice of centered communities. This effort will never end, but we expect to have implemented the core components of the Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland initiative by the end of 2024.

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<tr>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>ACTIONS</th>
<th>RESULTS</th>
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<td>Commitment</td>
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What Comes Next

PP&R is two years into this transformation and recognizes it will take time. In the next months and years, community members will see:

- More engagement with centered communities on both high-level priorities and specific collaboration opportunities

- “Closing the loop” conversations, where we follow up on questions or suggestions with specific information about the actions taken

- Better allocation of resources to reflect community priorities

- Clear links between investment and results

- More agile response to changing community needs
Thank you to all who have contributed to PP&R’s work to create a parks and recreation system that supports Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland (HPHP).

HPHP Community Listening & Learning Participants

African Family Holistic Health Organization
Community Engagement Liaison Services (CELS)
East Portland Advisors
Home Forward
Immigrant & Refugee Leaders
Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
Portland Parks Board
Slavic Community Engagement
Urban Forestry Commission

Community Members Who Participated At:
- Black Swimming Initiative Event, Peninsula Park
- Dawson Park
- East Portland Arts Festival
- Good in the Hood
- Luuwit View Park
- Mt. Scott Park
- PRIDE
- Summer Free For All, Brentwood Park
- Summer Free For All, Peninsula Park
- Summer Free For All, Ventura Park

HPHP Co-Design Teams and Community Members

Mission, Vision, Values, and Equity and Anti-Racism Commitment
- Bullock Clayton, LGBT2SQIA+ Community
- Jonathan Cruz, Indigenous Community
- Gregg Everhart, Urban Forestry Commission
- Jessica Green, Portland Parks Foundation
- Ariane Kimura, East Portland Community
- Fern Wilgus, Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Erin Zollenkopf, Portland Parks Board

Actions & Results
- Angeanne Brown, Urban Forestry Commission
- Erin Cooper, Indigenous Community
- Alan DeLaTorre, Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Adrienne Feldstein, Portland Parks Board
- Lex Jakusovszky, LGBT2SQIA+ Community
- Jeremy Robbins, Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Sabrina Wilson, The Rosewood Initiative, Portland Parks Board

Supports Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland (HPHP).

Thank you to all who have contributed to PP&R’s work to create a parks and recreation system that supports Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland (HPHP).

Projects and Programs

This list acknowledges groups and organizations that provided input for PP&R projects and programs from Spring of 2021 through Spring of 2023.

Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (IFCC)
- IFCC Community Advisory Committee
- Mill Park
- Division Midway Alliance
- Mill Park Elementary School
- Mill Park Neighborhood Association
- Mill Park Project Advisory Committee
- Parklane Park
- Centennial Community Association
- Guerrieras Latinas
- Oliver Middle School
- Oliver-Parklane community gardeners
- Parklane Elementary School
- Parklane Park Project Advisory Committee
- Rosewood Initiative

Wilkes Creek Headwaters
- Greening Wilkes:
  - Columbia Slough Watershed Council
  - Friends of Trees
  - Portland Audubon
  - Verde

South Park Blocks
- South Park Blocks Project Advisory Committee

A Park / Wilson Pool Renaming:
- A Park/Wilson Pool Naming Committee
- Native American Community Advisory Council (NACAC)

Metro Local Share Focus Groups
- Community Engagement Liaison Services (CELS): Russian, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Native communities
- Verde

Red Electric Trail (East of Alpenrose) Project
- Hayhurst Elementary School
- Hayhurst Neighborhood Association
- SW Trails PDX

North Portland Aquatic Center
- Black Parent Initiative
- Black Swimming Initiative
- Bow & Arrow Culture Club
- Cesar Chavez School PTA
- Home Forward (New Columbia and Tamarack)
- Kenton Neighborhood Association
- Native American Community Advisory Council (NACAC)
- Piedmont Neighborhood Association
- Portland Public Schools
- Portland Refugee Support Group
- Portland Timberfish
- Portsmouth Neighborhood Association
- Q Center
- Roosevelt High School
- “I Am” Program
- SUN Community Schools
- WaterStrong

Errol Heights Park Improvement Project
- Errol Heights Park Advisory Committee
- Woodstock Neighborhood Association

Recreation
- Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO)
- Black Parent Initiative
- Bow & Arrow Culture Club
- Catholic Charities
- Community Engagement Liaison Services (CELS): Spanish, Russian, Chinese, and Vietnamese communities
- Healthy Birth Initiatives
- Home Forward
- I Am More Project
- Iraqi Society of Oregon
- Multnomah County Library
- Multnomah Early Childhood Education
- Native American Community Advisory Council (NACAC)
- Neighborhood House
- Oregon Department of Human Services
- Portland Public Schools Head Start
- SUN Community Schools
- The Red Door Project
- Trash For Peace
- United Cerebral Palsy of Oregon
“Parks and recreation services are essential to making Portland a great place to live, work, and play. I’m proud of the nearly 2,000 committed employees who serve the community every day, and grateful for the people and organizations who support our work.”

Adena Long
Director, Portland Parks & Recreation