



September 9, 2021

TO: Mayor Ted Wheeler  
Commissioner Carmen Rubio  
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty  
Commissioner Mingus Mapps  
Commissioner Dan Ryan  
Jessica Kinard, Director, City Budget Office

FROM: Adena Long, Director, Portland Parks & Recreation



RE: 2021 Fall Budget Monitoring Process

Portland Parks & Recreation's (PP&R) Fall BMP proposal includes resources from the Parks Local Option Levy (Parks Levy) that voters passed in November 2020. PP&R is excited about the community's investment in their parks and recreation system, and we are humbled by their trust in PP&R.

With general funds, earned revenue, and Parks Levy resources, PP&R is committed to providing all Portlanders with a healthy, welcoming, and accessible parks and recreation system. Voters overwhelmingly approved the Parks Levy so that PP&R could provide:

- Recreation for All – increasing access to recreation services.
- Protect and Grow Nature – maintaining parks, improving the health of natural areas, and increasing tree planting and care for Portland's tree canopy and the benefits it provides.
- Community Partnerships – building strong community partnerships and increasing engagement with culturally-specific and community-based organizations so PP&R understands how to meet the needs of underserved communities.

The Parks Levy is estimated to generate an average of \$48 million per year over the next five years. Traditionally, Parks Levy resources would not have become available to the bureau until November 2021, but to help meet the promise of restoring recreation for Summer 2021, in February, City Council approved an interfund loan and supplemental budget to provide early access to revenues.

**Administration**

1120 SW 5th Avenue, Suite 858  
Portland, Oregon 97204  
503-823-PLAY (7529) | Fax 503-823-6007

**PORTLANDPARKS.ORG**  
Commissioner Carmen Rubio  
Director Adena Long



Among many other things, those resources allowed PP&R to hire over 1,000 seasonal employees to help deliver a COVID-19 responsive summer program that included over 7,000 swim lessons, summer camps for over 1,800 children, nutritious lunches served at over 30 sites, and fitness in the park classes to over 2,400 Portlanders. The bureau also doubled Nature Day Camp participation and doubled the number of young Portlanders participating in the Youth Conservation Crew who learned how to plant trees, restore landscapes, and build trails while gaining valuable work experience.

The community has told PP&R for years that the cost of participating in programs is a barrier for many underserved groups, and with Park Levy resources, the bureau was able to pilot a “Pay What You Can” pricing model for summer 2021. PP&R was also able to strengthen partnerships with community partners to encourage Portlanders who have not participated with the bureau in the past to register for programming and to apply for full-time and seasonal jobs. Early Parks Levy funds were also invested in the organizational infrastructure necessary to deliver full Parks Levy operations to the community.

PP&R will collect and analyze the data from our summer programming and use the findings and ongoing community engagement to inform future efforts as we center Black people, Indigenous people, People of Color, people living with disabilities, families earning low incomes, and other underserved communities in our decision-making.

Under the leadership of Parks Commissioner Carmen Rubio, I'm proud to share the next phase of the Parks Levy, a request of \$13.7 million in annual spending and an additional \$18.9 million in one-time investments over the next several years.

This request includes the addition of 90.5 permanent positions to better deliver more equitable parks and recreation services to the community, including:

- 41.5 positions to increase the daily care and maintenance of Portlanders' parks and natural areas. This means scaling up day-to-day care and maintenance operations like picking up garbage, removing invasive species, and caring for plants so that all Portlanders feel welcome and safe in their parks.
- 23 positions to ensure PP&R is even more responsive to tree emergencies, to equitably increase Portland's urban canopy, to improve service and outcomes for tree regulatory functions, and – for the first time ever – make resources available to proactively care for and maintain park trees.

- PP&R will also create an Indigenous / Native Coordinator position to lead the dialogue around land use practice and policy of harvesting, pest management, salmon-safe activities, planning projects and capital project design review. This position will play a key role in providing opportunities for the Indigenous community to connect with parks and nature across the portfolio of Portland Parks & Recreation. In addition, this position will help coordinate land acknowledgement implementation, tribal work plan management with the Office of Government Relations, park (re)naming and community outreach and engagement for parks programs and services.
- Based on past input from the Native Gathering Garden Program Steering Committee, PP&R will create a Community Gardens position to provide culturally informed site maintenance and community engagement support at the Native Gathering Garden at Cully Park.
- 20 positions, primarily in Professional Repair and Maintenance Services, to care for the community's built assets in its parks and recreation system including: playgrounds, picnic shelters, restrooms, community centers, and so much more. This request also includes a new Carpenter dedicated solely to removing ADA barriers throughout the parks system and a new apprentice program for our trades positions to help grow skills in our community and diversify our workforce.
- PP&R's security program will convert two limited-term positions to regular full-time roles to support Park Rangers.
- The Equity & Inclusion team will add an ADA Coordinator to provide consistent guidance on disability and accessibility for bureau staff and community members to improve access and ensure regulatory compliance.
- PP&R will also add three positions to develop the capacity to deliver on an enhanced mission of access and equity in Recreation Services.
- Finally, PP&R will invest an additional \$4.2 million in recreation services to continue reducing cost as a barrier for program participants while alleviating the pressure to earn revenues so staff can focus on delivering a public service. This investment comes on top of a reduced revenue target in the Adopted Budget, bringing the total target down by over \$10 million in FY 2021-22. This will increase access for underserved community members to benefit from things like life-saving swim lessons, after-school programs for youth, and exercise programming to improve Portlanders' physical and mental health.

These investments will support the bureau to achieve the goals of the Parks Levy while also helping PP&R deliver a welcoming and equitable parks and recreation system that our community needs. I am very proud of how the bureau has continued to respond to crises in our community like COVID-19, wildfires, and extreme heat while remaining laser-focused on ramping up for the full operations of the Parks Levy.

To achieve, maintain, and sustain equitable services and programs over the long-term, PP&R will continue its Sustainable Future work. The Parks Levy is the first step as the bureau works to identify options to address the parks system's growing deferred maintenance gap, as well park, recreation, and tree canopy service gaps. I look forward to working with City Council to achieve this long-term vision.