



LITTLE ROCK



Parks & Recreation

5-Year Strategic Plan

2025-2030

December 2024

Acknowledgements

It is with deep appreciation and gratitude that Little Rock Parks and Recreation acknowledges all of the people and organizations involved in the creation of the vision, mission, and strategic plan for this organization. Through several meetings, both internal and external, planning sessions, staff discussions and interactions with the citizens of Little Rock, this strategic plan has been developed. Without their invaluable input and support, this 2025-2030 Strategic Plan would not be possible. As with our previous plan, this strategic plan serves as a five-year guide and the department's efforts will focus on its intent and implementation

Mayor Frank D. Scott Jr.

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Acting City Manager Emily Jordan Cox

Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department

Director Leland Couch
501-371-4770 | lcouch@littlerock.gov

Administration, Deputy Director	Angela Nelson
Operations, Deputy Director	Justin Dorsey
Recreation Services, Deputy Director	Shawanda Craig
Data and Marketing	Brittany Nichols
Assistant to the Director	Mahoganey Burkhalter



FROM THE DESK OF
MAYOR FRANK SCOTT, JR.



February 16, 2025

Dear Friends and Neighbors

With 63 parks across Arkansas's capital city, Little Rock lives its motto as a "City in a Park."

Our Parks and Recreation Department leads the way in providing exceptional service to residents and guests as it curates exciting, positive experiences for all that improve Little Rock's quality of life and place.

Our parks and recreation system features activities and opportunities for everyone from the young to the young at heart. We boast state-of-the-art facilities and equipment and quality programming across the City, from historic MacArthur Park downtown to the newly-renovated Pankey Park in the northwest corner of Little Rock.

These amenities enhance the City and region, and they drive job creation and economic development. As we continue to grow and transform Little Rock, our Parks and Recreation Department is poised to attain greater success through its strategic plan.

This plan will outline how the Department will evolve over the next few years to continue meeting the community's needs and expectations. As City leaders, we will work to implement the goals and objectives outlined in the plan, prioritizing how we can enrich and enhance the lives of our residents and guests.

I appreciate our Parks and Recreation team members who serve our City with excellence and pride, and who will use this strategic plan as a road map for building a strong future and better quality of life and place in Little Rock.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank Scott, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mayor Frank Scott, Jr.
City of Little Rock



501.371.4510



FSCOTTJR@LITTLEROCK.GOV



"Therefore we are all, in some sense, mountaineers, and going to the mountains is going home."

JOHN MUIR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1 - PLANNING PROCESS

- 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- 8 REVIEW OF PAST PLANS
- 13 SYNERGIES ACROSS PLANS
- 14 CAPRA AND CORE VALUES

SECTION 2 - STRATEGIC GOALS

- 16 01 ENHANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE
- 18 02 FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY
- 20 03 CREATE INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE PARKS
- 22 04 EXPAND OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES
- 24 05 STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- 26 06 IMPROVE MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

SECTION 3 - IMPLEMENTATION & REPORTING

- 28 TIMELINE AND MILESTONES
- 32 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND REPORTING
- 34 BUDGETING CONSIDERATIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS
- 36 CONCLUSION
- 37 APPENDIX



Executive Summary

Little Rock Parks and Recreation is proud to present this 5-Year Strategic Plan, a comprehensive roadmap designed to enhance the quality of life for all residents and visitors.

This plan builds upon decades of thoughtful planning, incorporating insights from the 2001 and 2020 Master Plans, Youth Master Plan, Downtown Little Rock Master Plan, Complete Streets Master Plan, the Parks Sustainability Guidelines, and the 3-Year Age-Friendly Action Plan.

By aligning these foundational efforts with the latest CAPRA National Accreditation Standards and the City of Little Rock's Core Values, this strategic plan offers a forward-thinking, community-focused framework that ensures equity, innovation, and accountability remain at the heart of our work.

This plan is organized around five key goals: enhancing community health and quality of life, fostering environmental resilience, creating inclusive and accessible parks, expanding outdoor recreation opportunities, and strengthening partnerships and community engagement. Each goal is supported by actionable objectives and a detailed timeline, reflecting our commitment to transparency and measurable outcomes. Together, these efforts position Little Rock as a model city for sustainable, inclusive, and innovative park management, delivering exceptional service to every corner of our community.



Mission Statement

Little Rock Parks and Recreation is dedicated to encouraging healthy lifestyles by providing quality recreation opportunities and access to exceptional park experiences in an efficient and equitable manner.

Vision Statement

Creating a City in a Park through innovative recreational programming and vibrant park spaces which enhance the quality of life for all residents of Little Rock.

01

ENHANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Health and Well-Being
Community Support
Sustainability

02

FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Environmental Resilience
Sustainability

03

CREATE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PARKS

Equity
Transportation
Sustainability

04

EXPAND OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

Outdoor Recreation
Community Support
Sustainability

05

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Health and Well-Being
Community Support
Sustainability

06

IMPROVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Technology
Community Engagement
Accessibility



Review of Past Planning Efforts

Little Rock Parks and Recreation staff have thoroughly reviewed previous planning efforts to ensure that this strategic plan is built on a strong foundation. We examined the 2001 and 2020 Little Rock Parks and Recreation Master Plans to identify recurring themes and priorities and gather insights into our community's most explicit needs.

Major takeaways from both plans include:

Emphasis on Connectivity and Accessibility

Both master plans prioritize enhancing connectivity between parks, trails, and recreational facilities, ensuring equitable access for all residents and making everyone feel included in the community's development.

Focus on Youth and Community Engagement

Each plan underscores the importance of developing programs and facilities catering to youth and fostering community involvement.

Commitment to Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship

The plans advocate for sustainable practices in park development and maintenance, emphasizing preserving natural resources and promoting environmental education.

Infrastructure Modernization and Maintenance

A recurring theme is upgrading existing facilities and infrastructure to meet contemporary standards and community expectations.

Economic Development through Recreation

The plans recognize the role of parks and recreation in stimulating local economies by attracting tourism and hosting events.

"The master plan process has illustrated some big-picture possibilities..."

DIRECTOR LELAND COUCH
POWER UP LITTLE ROCK PANEL DISCUSSION, 2024

In addition to the recurring themes identified in the previous master plans, the following documents provide further insights that can enhance the 5-Year Strategic Plan for Little Rock Parks and Recreation and align with other City departments and planning efforts:

Parks Sustainability Guidelines

Sustainable Design and Operations: Promoting sustainable practices in park management, including using renewable energy, water conservation, and waste reduction initiatives.

Environmental Education: Engaging the community and staff in sustainability-focused education to increase awareness and promote green behaviors.

Climate Resilience: Enhancing park infrastructure to address climate-related risks, such as increased temperatures and flooding, while preserving biodiversity.

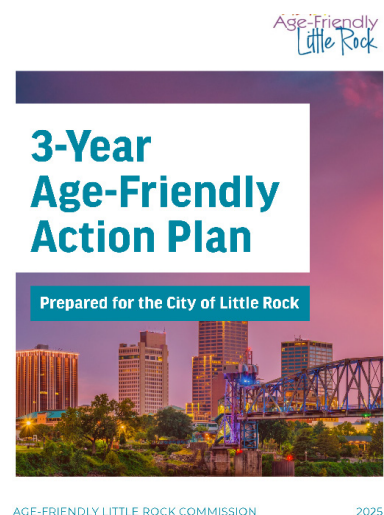


3-Year Age-Friendly Action Plan

Age-Friendly Infrastructure: Developing accessible facilities and safe transit options that enable residents 55+ to age in place and remain active.

Digital Equity and Inclusion: Bridging the digital divide by providing training, free internet access at facilities, and age-friendly communication tools to empower older adults.

Community Engagement for Older Adults: Creating opportunities for socialization, volunteerism, and active participation in decision-making processes to foster inclusion and empowerment.



Little Rock Complete Streets Bike Plan

Inclusive Transportation: The plan advocates for designing streets that accommodate all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders, ensuring safe and equitable access to parks and recreational facilities.

Sustainable Design: It emphasizes incorporating green infrastructure and sustainable practices in street design, which can be extended to developing and maintaining parks and recreational spaces.



Little Rock Youth Master Plan

Youth-Centric Programming: The plan emphasizes engaging youth through evidence-based academic, social, and cultural opportunities. It advocates for programs that empower youth to make informed choices leading to success in life.

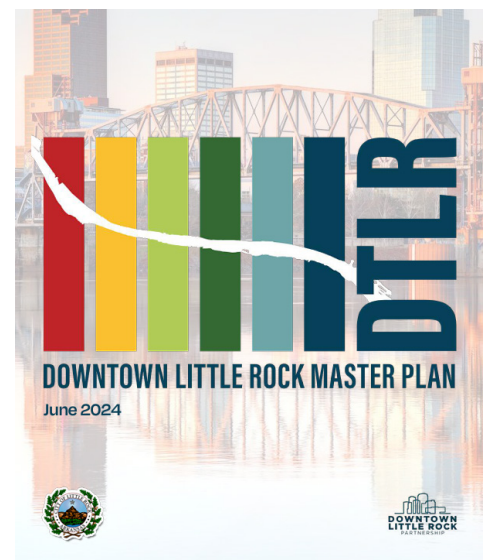
Community Engagement: It highlights the need to involve youth and their families in planning to ensure that services and programs align with their needs and aspirations.



Downtown Little Rock Master Plan

Urban Connectivity: The plan proposes enhancing connections between downtown neighborhoods and the Arkansas River through a robust network of trails and green streets, promoting accessibility and mobility.

Cultural Integration: It underscores the role of cultural institutions in catalyzing growth and placemaking, suggesting that parks and recreational spaces should integrate cultural elements to enrich community experiences.





Our parks are more than just spaces; they are connections—between neighborhoods, between people and nature, and between the past and future of our city.

Synergies Across Plans

The strength of this strategic plan lies in its ability to weave together the core themes identified across multiple guiding documents into a cohesive vision for the future of Little Rock Parks and Recreation. These synergies ensure that our approach not only addresses immediate needs but also anticipates future opportunities for growth and innovation. By aligning with principles of connectivity, health and wellness, environmental stewardship, equity, and community engagement, this plan establishes a framework for delivering high-quality services that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of Little Rock

CONNECTIVITY

Enhancing the accessibility and integration of parks, trails, and green spaces to improve mobility and inclusivity.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Implementing sustainability measures to protect green spaces, improve resource efficiency, and mitigate climate change.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Strengthening partnerships, fostering volunteerism, and prioritizing public input for decision-making.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Promoting physical and mental health through programs, nature-based recreation, and wellness partnerships.

EQUITY

Ensuring that all residents, regardless of geography, age, or socioeconomic status, can access high-quality recreational opportunities.

By embracing these interconnected themes, Little Rock Parks and Recreation creates a foundation for a vibrant and inclusive park system that serves all residents. This alignment allows us to maximize impact, leverage resources, and prioritize actions that resonate with the community's shared values. Together, these synergies set the stage for a dynamic future where parks and public spaces become a unifying force, fostering well-being, sustainability, and community pride across Little Rock.

Aligning CAPRA and Core Values

The Little Rock Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan is designed to align with the most recent 2024 CAPRA National Accreditation Standards Beta Test Version. CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) is the gold standard for achieving excellence in parks and recreation management. Key standards relevant to this strategic plan include:

Key CAPRA Standards recognized in this Strategic Plan:

Agency Planning

Developing a clear mission, vision, and action-oriented strategic plan that responds to community needs and anticipates trends.

Program and Service Management

Offering equitable, inclusive, and accessible programs that improve the quality of life for all residents.

Facility and Land Use Management

Implementing sustainable design, maintenance, and accessibility measures to preserve community assets and enhance usability.

Community Engagement and Advocacy

The department prioritizes resident input, volunteerism, and public outreach to ensure that its initiatives reflect the community's needs.

Evaluation and Performance Measurement

Creating mechanisms for transparent reporting, continuous improvement, and accountability.



City of Little Rock Core Values

The City's Core Values—Equity, Accountability, Innovation, People-Centered Service, Exceptional Service, and Professionalism—provide a lens through which every action and decision is prioritized. These values serve as guiding principles, enabling us to:

Equity: Focus resources on the most critical needs and underserved communities

Accountability: Ensure measurable, transparent outcomes

Innovation: Foster creative, forward-thinking solutions

People-Centered Service: Center our efforts on improving the lives of residents

Exceptional Service: Deliver high-quality facilities, programs, and experiences

Professionalism: Uphold ethical practices and leadership in all operations

This strategic plan integrates the CAPRA standards and the City's Core Values, providing a holistic framework that advances departmental goals and aims to achieve national recognition for operational excellence. Reviewing past planning documents, aligning strategically with other city initiatives, overlaying CAPRA standards, and applying the City's core values ensures that our approach is data-driven, equitable, and impactful. Together, these guiding elements allow us to prioritize action steps that meet the community's evolving needs while positioning Little Rock as a model for innovation, inclusion, and sustainability.

ENHANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

01

This goal focuses on improving physical and mental health outcomes by creating inclusive, accessible, and engaging recreational opportunities for all. The objectives under this goal aim to align with the City's core values of Equity, People-Centered Service, and Exceptional Service by ensuring all residents, regardless of background, can benefit from the programs and facilities provided. The department supports a healthier and more connected community by promoting wellness, mental health, and active lifestyles.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: IMPROVE ACCESS TO FITNESS AND WELLNESS RESOURCES

- a. Install or upgrade outdoor fitness equipment and walking trails in high-traffic parks.
- b. Partner with local health organizations to offer free wellness programs (e.g., yoga, tai chi, health screenings).
- c. Work with fitness facilities to accept Silver Sneakers as payment for membership fees.

OBJECTIVE 1.2: PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH NATURE-BASED ACTIVITIES

- a. Designate “quiet spaces” and nature retreats in larger parks for mindfulness walks and gardening.
- b. Train recreation staff on warning signs of mental distress and offer programs like nature therapy.
- c. Conduct community forums to educate older individuals and caretakers about mental health services and access.

OBJECTIVE 1.3: EXPAND RECREATIONAL SPORTS AND ACTIVE PLAY OPPORTUNITIES

- a. Host inclusive community sports leagues and tournaments for youth, adults, and individuals with disabilities.
- b. Ensure accessibility in recreational sports programming through adaptive equipment and universal design.
- c. Create centralized resources for wellness activities focusing on healthy aging.
- d. Promote urban agriculture, support community gardens, and provide environmental education.

FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN PARKS

02

Achieving environmental resilience involves integrating sustainability into every aspect of parks and recreation. This goal supports the City's Accountability and Innovation core values by implementing forward-thinking practices that conserve resources, reduce emissions, and enhance biodiversity. The department ensures residents and natural ecosystems have a healthier future by fostering sustainable operations and promoting environmental stewardship.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: IMPLEMENT SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES IN PARKS

- a. Transition to solar-powered lights and trial rainwater irrigation systems in parks.
- b. Institute recycling stations and composting programs at facilities.
- c. Adopt sustainable landscape practices to reduce operational carbon emissions and improve air and water quality.

OBJECTIVE 2.2: ENHANCE GREEN SPACES AND BIODIVERSITY IN PARKS

- a. Focus landscaping on native species to support pollinators and reduce water usage.
- b. Restore ecosystems, prioritizing degraded wetlands, woodlands, and prairies, with particular focus on areas with aging infrastructure and antiquated facilities.
- c. Manage the urban tree canopy, desirable plant communities, and wildlife habitats, while expanding "Grow Zones" to encourage healthy forests and watershed improvement.
- d. Work towards certifying parks and designated areas as Audubon bird habitats to further support biodiversity.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: ADAPT PARKS TO CLIMATE CHANGE

- a. Retrofit stormwater infrastructure to manage flooding and improve water quality.
- b. Increase tree canopies and shaded areas to mitigate heat in urban parks, with a goal of significantly expanding coverage citywide.
- c. Utilize community centers as activated hubs during extreme weather, such as cooling and warming centers, to support residents during critical times.

CREATE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PARKS

03

This goal ensures that every Little Rock resident has equitable access to parks and recreational services, reflecting the City's commitment to Equity and People-Centered values. The department fosters a welcoming environment for all ages, abilities, and backgrounds by addressing barriers to access and celebrating community diversity. By incorporating an equity review in collaboration with the City's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, this goal ensures that programming, outreach, and execution are designed to meet the needs of all residents. The objectives support inclusion through infrastructure improvements, diverse programming, and community-focused policies that strengthen connections between neighborhoods and parks.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: EXPAND PARK ACCESS IN UNDERSERVED NEIGHBORHOODS

- a. Address gaps in park access and prioritize projects in disadvantaged communities.
- b. Promote active transportation solutions, such as pedestrian pathways and bike trails, to improve park access for underserved areas.
- c. Improve pedestrian access by addressing sidewalk gaps and ensuring safe crossings to parks.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL USERS

- a. Conduct accessibility audits to eliminate barriers (e.g., ramps, accessible restrooms).
- b. Develop programming tailored to individuals with disabilities, including sensory-friendly events and adaptive sports programs.
- c. Advocate for age-friendly representatives (youth and seniors) on transportation and planning boards to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making.
- d. Incorporate community feedback to design programs and infrastructure that meet the accessibility needs of all residents.

OBJECTIVE 3.3: CELEBRATE COMMUNITY DIVERSITY

- a. Host cultural events and musical performances that reflect the diversity of Little Rock.
- b. Install multilingual signage and develop programming to serve non-English-speaking residents.
- c. Develop partnerships to promote cultural education programs and workshops, strengthening community connections and understanding.

EXPAND OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

04

Expanding outdoor recreation ensures residents enjoy diverse activities that promote active lifestyles and strengthen community bonds. This goal incorporates the City's Innovation and Exceptional Service values by creating modern, inclusive, and well-maintained outdoor spaces. Little Rock's parks will foster deeper connections between residents and the natural environment through improved infrastructure and programming.

OBJECTIVE 4.1: IMPROVE AND EXPAND TRAILS AND GREENWAYS

- a. Reduce gaps in regional trail networks and improve user safety with better connections and markings.
- b. Enhance trail surfaces and create sign standards to make walking, cycling, and running easier for new users and visitors.
- c. Conduct bike-ability studies from roadways to parks to address barriers.

OBJECTIVE 4.2: DIVERSIFY OUTDOOR RECREATION SPACES

- a. Introduce programming to activate spaces such as amphitheaters, ballfields, old golf courses, and nature playgrounds.
- b. Expand water-based recreation, such as canoe rentals and waterfront access.
- c. Develop accessible recreational features in all new construction and improvement projects.

OBJECTIVE 4.3: PROMOTE OUTDOOR EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- a. Offer programs on Leave No Trace principles, birdwatching, and wilderness skills.
- b. Organize community outdoor excursions and park clean-up events.
- c. Perform intentional outreach to connect youth with outdoor programming, summer programs, and employment opportunities.
- d. Create passive programming and nature education opportunities with signage installations.

STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

05

Building strong partnerships and fostering community engagement ensures that parks and recreation services reflect the diverse needs of Little Rock's residents. This goal reflects the City's Accountability, Equity, and Professionalism values by promoting transparency, collaboration, and shared decision-making. The department strengthens its role as a trusted community resource by engaging stakeholders and residents.

OBJECTIVE 5.1: BUILD COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- a. Partner with schools to activate underutilized recreational assets and create co-beneficial maintenance agreements.
- b. Work with local non-profits to pool resources for much-needed park improvements.
- c. Collaborate with housing, transit, and health agencies to address cross-sector needs.

OBJECTIVE 5.2: FOSTER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PARKS

- a. Hold regular community meetings and surveys to gather input on park programming and improvements.
- b. Create volunteer opportunities for park maintenance, tree planting, and event support.
- c. Host listening sessions and focus groups to ensure all residents' voices are heard in planning efforts.

OBJECTIVE 5.3: ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

- a. Develop a resource guide for programs and services targeting residents 15 and under and 55 and up.
- b. Collaborate with outside entities to offer digital literacy training and resources for older adults to improve access to online services.
- c. Use age-friendly, accessible, and bilingual communication best practices in outreach efforts.

OBJECTIVE 5.4: ADVANCE SUSTAINABILITY EDUCATION AND PRACTICES

- a. Educate staff, citizens, and visitors on the benefits of sustainable practices in parks and facilities.
- b. Connect event organizers with recycling and low-waste resources for events on parkland.

IMPROVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

06

Effective marketing and communication are essential for connecting with residents, increasing awareness of offerings, and fostering engagement with Little Rock's parks and recreation services. By embracing innovative technologies, streamlining digital platforms, and enhancing outreach strategies, this goal ensures the department remains accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the community's evolving needs. Partnerships with the City Communications Team will amplify capacity and broaden the reach of campaigns, while maintaining brand consistency and improving real-world visibility.

OBJECTIVE 6.1: UPDATE AND SIMPLIFY DIGITAL PLATFORMS

- a. Redesign and simplify the Little Rock Parks and Recreation website to improve user experience and accessibility
- b. Implement technologies that enhance communication, such as chatbots, AI-driven FAQs, and interactive features to better serve residents
- c. Address AI integration in the workplace to streamline operations and improve responsiveness.
- d. Set a goal for 15-20% annual growth in social media followers and engagement, tracking progress and adjusting strategies based on analytics.

OBJECTIVE 6.2: IMPLEMENT 2024 BRAND STANDARDS AND INCREASE CAPACITY

- a. Roll out the 2024 brand kit and standards across all communications to ensure consistency and professionalism.
- b. Partner with the City Communications Team to expand capacity for content creation, outreach, and public engagement.
- c. Develop multilingual and visually inclusive materials to better connect with diverse populations.

OBJECTIVE 6.3: ENHANCE REAL-WORLD AND COMMUNITY-BASED OUTREACH

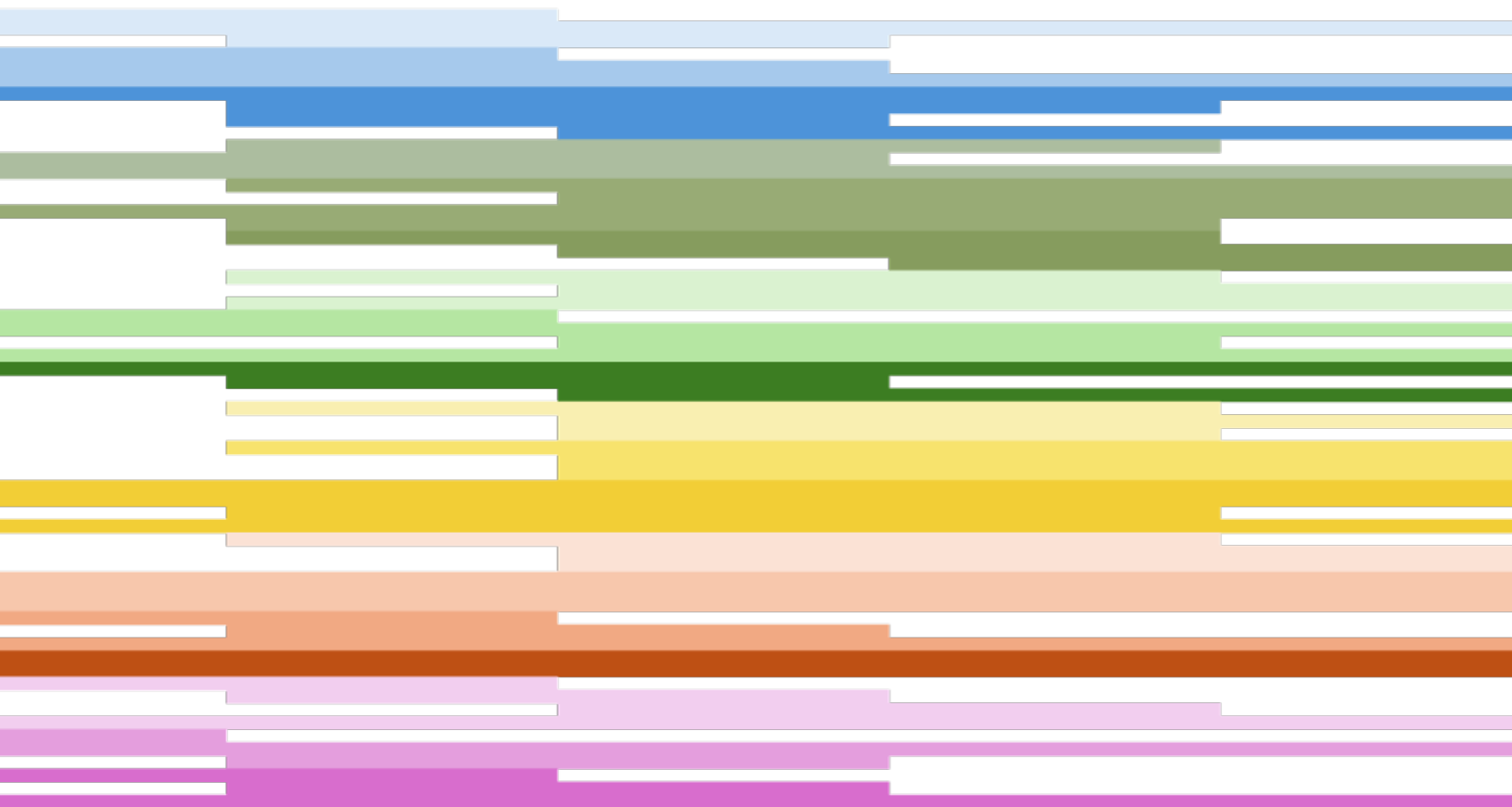
- a. Increase the diversity of communication channels by posting physical flyers and signs in parks, community centers, and public spaces.
- b. Collaborate with neighborhood associations and local businesses to distribute promotional materials and event information.
- c. Host workshops and information sessions to educate the public about park programs and services, fostering a stronger community connection.

Timelines & Milestones

The “Timelines & Milestones” chapter provides a comprehensive roadmap for implementing the strategic plan, ensuring clarity and accountability throughout each phase. Timelines establish when action items will be initiated and completed, allowing for efficient resource allocation and progress tracking. Milestones, tied to each action item, mark significant achievements and benchmarks, serving as indicators of success and momentum.

Accompanying visual timelines, created in Excel, provide an engaging representation of the planned progress, offering stakeholders a clear view of how objectives align with broader goals. These milestones not only celebrate key achievements but also reinforce the commitment of Little Rock Parks and Recreation to deliver impactful results that meet the evolving needs of our community. Together, the timelines and milestones ensure that every action is purposeful, measurable, and aligned with the City’s core values.

See Appendix for detailed timelines and milestones for each goal.





Year 1: Laying the Foundation

In the first year, the focus is on setting the groundwork for success by initiating foundational actions across all goals. Key efforts include:

WEBSITE REDESIGN: Begin overhauling the Parks and Recreation website to improve usability and accessibility (6.1.a).

BRAND ROLLOUT: Implement the 2024 brand standards across all communications to ensure consistency (6.2.a).

COMMUNITY OUTREACH: Launch diverse outreach initiatives, including hosting workshops, posting physical flyers, and engaging neighborhood associations to increase real-world visibility (6.3.a, 6.3.c).

HEALTH AND ACCESSIBILITY: Conduct accessibility audits and complete mental health first aid training for staff (3.2.a, 1.2.b).

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES: Begin installing solar-powered lights and rainwater irrigation systems in parks and expanding recycling programs (2.1.a, 2.1.b).

PROGRAMMING LAUNCH: Host sensory-friendly events and organize the first inclusive community sports tournament (3.2.b, 1.3.a).



Year 2: Expanding Access & Programs

The second year builds upon initial successes by expanding programmatic offerings and improving access to facilities:

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND GREEN SPACES: Initiate projects to connect underserved neighborhoods to parks with active transportation solutions and green spaces in affordable housing developments (3.1.b, 3.1.c).

EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVES: Launch Leave No Trace workshops and publish a guidebook of wellness activities and services for residents 55+ (4.3.a, 5.3.a).

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION: Implement chatbot technology and other interactive features to enhance digital platforms (6.1.b).

BIODIVERSITY AND LANDSCAPING: Complete native landscaping and biodiversity projects, including pilot efforts to support pollinators and designate Grow Zones (2.2.a, 2.2.c).



Year 3: Innovation & Engagement

The third year centers on innovation, technology, and deepening community engagement:

AI Integration: Begin using AI tools for workplace operations and communications (6.1.c).

Cultural Programs: Expand multilingual signage and develop cultural workshops to reflect the diversity of Little Rock (3.3.b, 3.3.d).

Green Job Opportunities: Introduce green job training programs to engage students and residents in sustainable careers (4.3.c).

Infrastructure Improvements: Retrofit stormwater infrastructure to improve flooding resilience and tree canopy expansion (2.3.a, 2.3.b).

Year 4: Measuring Success & Scaling Impact

Year four emphasizes evaluation, scaling successful initiatives, and completing major infrastructure projects:

Trail Network Completion: Address gaps in regional trail networks and improve signage along trails (4.1.a, 4.1.b).

Accessibility Enhancements: Expand adaptive equipment and inclusive programming based on feedback mechanisms (3.2.c, 3.2.d).

Sustainability Metrics: Collaborate with the Sustainability Commission to develop a metrics dashboard and expand recycling at city events (5.4.a, 5.4.c).

Year 5: Sustainability and Legacy

The final year focuses on creating a legacy of sustainability and long-term impact:

Audubon Certification: Certify a park as an Audubon bird habitat and complete major biodiversity goals (2.2.d).

Cooling and Warming Centers: Institutionalize community center use during extreme weather events (2.3.c).

Outreach Expansion: Secure significant growth in social media engagement and digital platform adoption (6.1.d).

Cross-Sector Collaboration: Finalize collaboration agreements for long-term partnerships in education, housing, and health (5.1.c).

Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are essential for measuring the success and impact of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan. These KPIs provide actionable metrics to evaluate progress toward achieving the outlined goals and objectives, ensuring alignment with the City's core values and CAPRA accreditation standards. By tracking these indicators, the department can assess community engagement, environmental impact, inclusivity, operational efficiency, and overall program effectiveness, fostering transparency and continuous improvement.

Health and Well-Being

% Percentage increase in community participation in fitness and wellness programs.

Number of mental health programs and participants annually.

% Percentage of parks equipped with outdoor fitness equipment and quiet spaces.

Environmental Resilience

Number of parks with native landscaping and certified bird or wildlife habitats.

% Percentage of facilities with recycling and composting programs.

% Increase in urban tree canopy coverage (e.g., percentage growth annually).

Equity and Accessibility

% Percentage of underserved neighborhoods with improved park access.

Number of accessibility audits conducted and barriers removed.

Number of new sensory-friendly events and inclusive programs offered.

Outdoor Recreation

% Miles of new trails and greenways developed or improved.

% Percentage increase in water-based and adventure recreation program participation.

Number of Leave No Trace workshops and participants annually.

Engagement and Partnerships

% Miles of new trails and greenways developed or improved.

% Percentage increase in water-based and adventure recreation program participation.

Number of Leave No Trace workshops and participants annually.

Marketing and Communications

% Percentage growth in social media followers and engagement annually.

Number of multilingual and visually inclusive communication materials produced.

Number of physical outreach campaigns (e.g., flyers, signs) completed annually.

Reporting

To ensure consistent and accurate tracking of progress, each division within the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Department will submit data monthly to the data coordinator. These submissions will include updates on all relevant KPIs, as well as any additional data required to evaluate strategic objectives. The data coordinator will compile and analyze this information to create actionable insights for leadership and stakeholders.

The department will also participate in the City's Data Governance Team meetings, held bi-monthly, to report on performance measures. These reports will include key updates on the KPIs outlined in this strategic plan, as well as the performance measures featured in the annual budget book. By aligning with citywide reporting protocols, the department ensures transparency and accountability at every level.

Additionally, the Parks Department will hold quarterly "Park Stat" meetings to review divisional performance, analyze data trends, and address challenges. These sessions will provide an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving and continuous improvement, ensuring the department remains on track to meet its strategic goals. Through these robust reporting practices, Little Rock Parks and Recreation demonstrates its commitment to measurable outcomes and community impact.

A spreadsheet has been developed to track the status of each action item within the strategic plan, using status indicators such as "Not Started," "Initiated," "In Progress," and "Complete." Assigned staff or the Parks Director will update the notes section every time the status changes, providing detailed context and ensuring accountability for each step. This tracking tool enhances the department's ability to monitor progress, identify potential roadblocks, and celebrate milestones effectively.



Monthly

Division Reports submitted to Data Coordinator

Bi-Monthly

Data Coordinator attends the Data Governance Cross-Departmental initiative

Quarterly

All division data and performance measures presented in internal meeting with staff

Budget Considerations

GENERAL FUND 2024

\$ 11,766,892

FY 2022 ACTUAL \$ 9,791,566

FY 2023 ADOPTED \$ 11,109,841

FY 2023 AMENDED \$ 10,751,798

GOLF FUND 2024

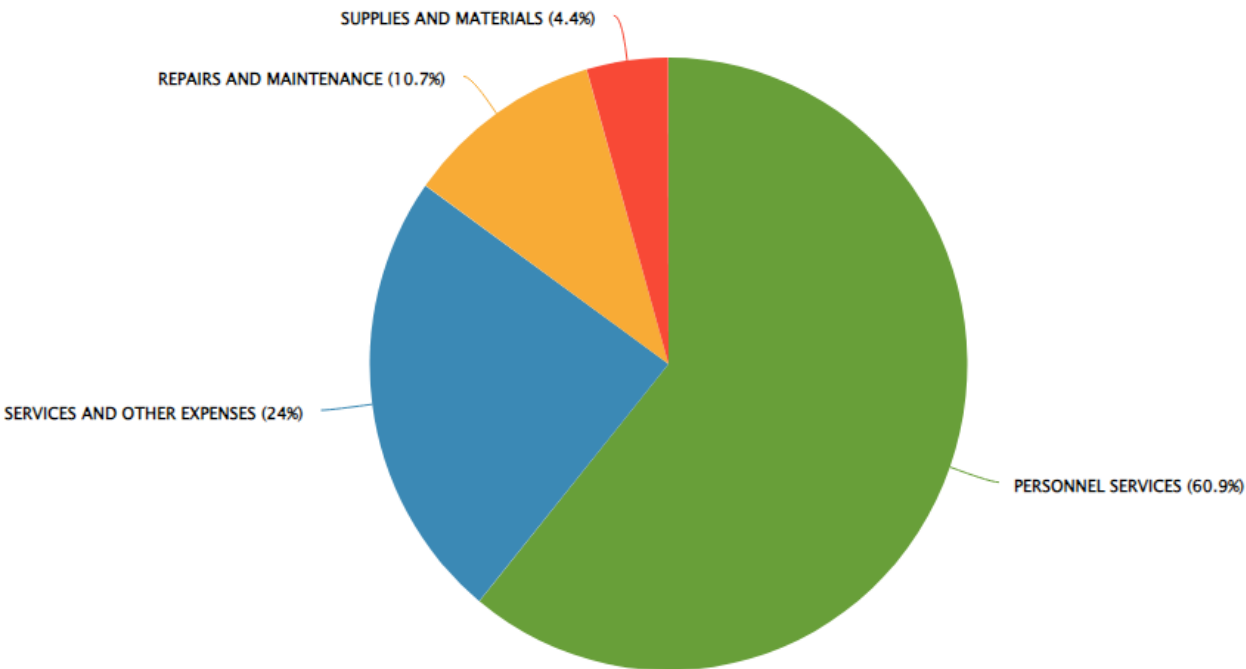
\$ 1,764,703

JIM DAILEY FUND 2024

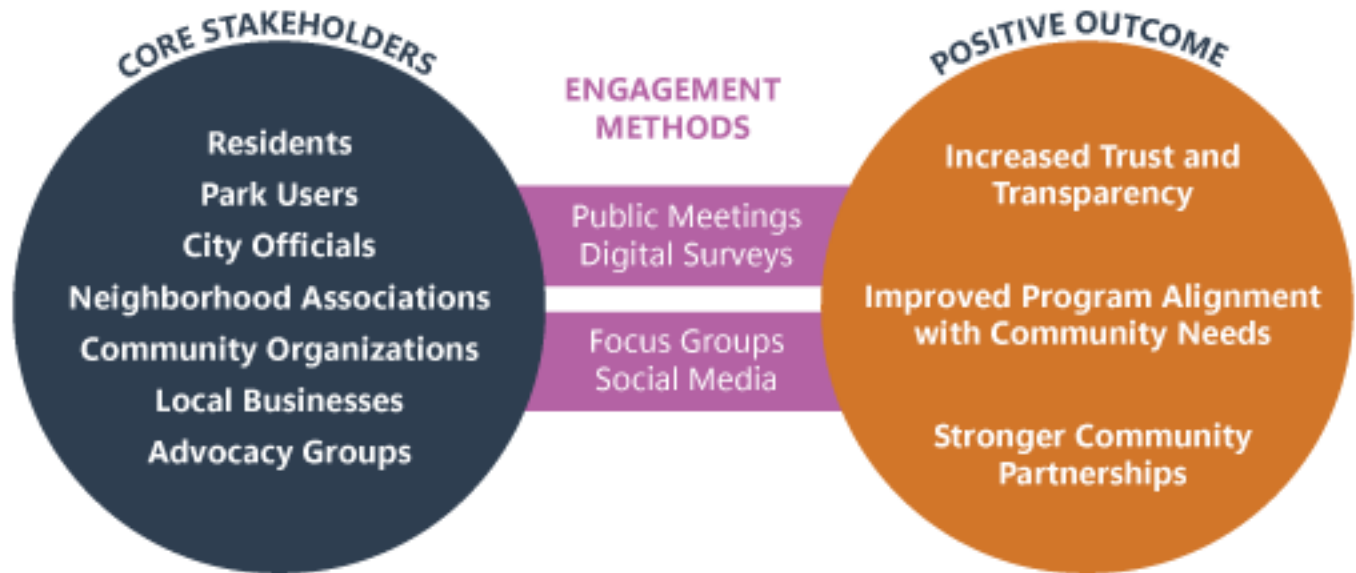
\$ 914,793

2023 VS 2024 PERCENT CHANGE

8.2%



Stakeholder Engagement



Engaging stakeholders is a cornerstone of the Little Rock Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan, ensuring transparency, collaboration, and community alignment. Stakeholders include residents, city officials, community organizations, local businesses, and park users who provide critical feedback and advocacy for the department’s initiatives. To foster meaningful engagement, the department employs multiple strategies such as public meetings, surveys, focus groups, and partnerships with key organizations.

Stakeholders are regularly invited to provide input on park designs, program development, and strategic priorities. The department also leverages digital platforms and social media to gather feedback and share updates, ensuring broad participation across diverse demographics. Collaborative efforts with the City Communications Team amplify outreach efforts, while ongoing reporting mechanisms like “Park Stat” meetings create transparency in decision-making processes. This inclusive approach ensures that every voice is heard, and that parks and programs reflect the needs and aspirations of the community.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Little Rock Parks and Recreation 2025-2030 Strategic Plan is dedicated to ensuring that all residents of the City of Little Rock experience exceptional quality of life through our parks and programs. We will achieve this through our strategic goals: enhancing community health and quality of life, fostering environmental resilience and sustainability, creating inclusive and accessible parks, expanding outdoor recreation opportunities, strengthening partnerships and community engagement, and improving marketing and communications.



For example, enhancing community health and quality of life will involve developing health-focused programs and activities that encourage active lifestyles. Fostering environmental resilience and sustainability will prioritize eco-friendly practices in park operations and maintenance. Creating inclusive and accessible parks aims to ensure that all residents, regardless of ability, can enjoy recreational spaces. Expanding outdoor recreation opportunities will focus on increasing the variety and availability of activities for all age groups. Strengthening partnerships and community engagement will enhance collaboration with local organizations and residents, ensuring that the community's voice shapes park initiatives. Lastly, improving marketing and communications will ensure that residents are aware of the programs and services available to them.

Key metrics will be systematically tracked and evaluated during our Park Stat quarterly meetings, ensuring transparency and ongoing improvement. We are committed to sharing progress with the Park Commission and the community, fostering a culture of accountability and dedication to our mission of enriching lives through recreation and green spaces.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Leland Couch", followed by a long horizontal line.

Leland Couch PLA, CPRP, CPSI
Director, Little Rock Parks and Recreation



Appendix

01. ENHANCE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

1.1 Improve Access to Fitness and Wellness Resources	
1.1.a	Install or upgrade outdoor fitness equipment and walking trails in high-traffic parks. Years 1-2
1.1.b	Partner with local health organizations to offer free wellness programs (e.g., yoga, tai chi, health screenings). Ongoing, Year 1 Launch
1.1.c	Work with fitness facilities to accept Silver Sneakers as payment for membership fees. Years 2-3
1.2 Promote Mental Health through Nature-Based Activities	
1.2.a	Designate "quiet spaces" and nature retreats in larger parks for mindfulness walks and gardening. Years 1-2
1.2.b	Train recreation staff on warning signs of mental distress and offer programs like nature therapy. Years 1-3
1.2.c	Conduct community forums to educate older individuals and caretakers about mental health services and access. Ongoing, Year 1 Launch
1.3 Expand Recreational Sports and Active Play Opportunities	
1.3.a	Host inclusive community sports leagues and tournaments for youth, adults, and individuals with disabilities. Ongoing, Year 1 Launch
1.3.b	Ensure accessibility in recreational sports programming through adaptive equipment and universal design. Years 2-4
1.3.c	Create centralized resources for wellness activities focusing on healthy aging. Years 2-3
1.3.d	Promote urban agriculture, support community gardens, and provide environmental education. Years 3-5

02. FOSTER ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY IN

2.1 Implement Sustainability Initiatives	
2.1.a	Transition to solar-powered lights and rainwater irrigation systems in parks.
2.1.b	Institute recycling stations and composting programs at facilities. Years 1-3
2.1.c	Adopt sustainable landscape practices to reduce operational carbon emissions and improve air and water quality. Ongoing, Year 1 Launch
2.2 Enhance Green Spaces and Biodiversity	
2.2.a	Focus landscaping on native species to support pollinators and reduce water usage. Years 2-5
2.2.b	Restore ecosystems, prioritizing degraded wetlands, woodlands, and prairies, with particular focus on areas with aging infrastructure and antiquated facilities. Years 3-5
2.2.c	Manage the urban tree canopy, desirable plant communities, and wildlife habitats, while expanding "Grow Zones" to encourage healthy forests and watershed improvement. Ongoing, Year 1 Launch
2.2.d	Work towards certifying parks and designated areas as Audubon bird habitats to further support biodiversity. Years 2-4
2.3 Adapt Parks to a Changing Climate	
2.3.a	Retrofit stormwater infrastructure to manage flooding and improve water quality. Years 2-4
2.3.b	Increase tree canopies and shaded areas to mitigate heat in urban parks, with a goal of significantly expanding coverage citywide. Years 3-5
2.3.c	Utilize community centers as activated hubs during extreme weather, such as cooling and warming centers, to support residents during critical times. Years 4-5

03. CREATE INCLUSIVE AND ACCESSIBLE PARKS

3.1 Expand Park Access in Underserved Neighborhoods

3.1.a Address gaps in park access and prioritize projects in disadvantaged communities.

Years 2-4

3.1.b Promote active transportation solutions, such as pedestrian pathways and bike trails, to improve park access for underserved areas.

Years 3-5

3.1.c Improve pedestrian access by addressing sidewalk gaps and ensuring safe crossings to parks.

Years 2-5

3.2 Ensure Accessibility for All Users

3.2.a Conduct accessibility audits to eliminate barriers (e.g., ramps, accessible restrooms).

Years 1-2

3.2.b Develop programming tailored to individuals with disabilities, including sensory-friendly events and adaptive sports programs.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

3.2.c Advocate for age-friendly representatives (youth and seniors) on transportation and planning boards to ensure diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making.

Years 3-4

3.2.d Incorporate community feedback to design programs and infrastructure that meet the accessibility needs of all residents.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

3.3 Celebrate Community Diversity

3.3.a Host cultural events and musical performances that reflect the diversity of Little Rock.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

3.3.b Install multilingual signage and develop programming to serve non-English-speaking residents.

Years 2-3

3.3.c Develop partnerships to promote cultural education programs and workshops, strengthening community connections and understanding.

Years 3-5

04. EXPAND OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Improve and Expand Trails and Greenways

4.1.a Reduce gaps in regional trail networks and improve user safety with better connections and markings.

Years 2-4

4.1.b Enhance trail surfaces and create sign standards to make walking, cycling, and running easier for new users and visitors.

Years 3-5

4.1.c Conduct bike-ability studies from roadways to parks to address barrier

Years 3-4

4.2 Diversify Outdoor Recreation Spaces

4.2.a Introduce programming to activate spaces such as amphitheaters, ballfields, old golf courses, and nature playground

Years 2-5

4.2.b Expand water-based recreation, such as canoe rentals and waterfront access.

Years 3-5

4.2.c Develop accessible recreational features in all new construction and improvement projects.

Years 3-5

4.3 Promote Outdoor Education and Engagement

4.3.a Offer programs on Leave No Trace principles, birdwatching, and wilderness skills.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

4.3.b Organize community outdoor excursions and park clean-up event.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

4.3.c Perform intentional outreach to connect youth with outdoor programming, summer programs, and employment opportunities.

Years 2-4

4.3.d Create passive programming and nature education opportunities with signage installation.

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

05. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGE

5.1 Build Collaborative Partnerships

5.1.a Partner with schools to activate underutilized recreational assets and create co-beneficial maintenance agreement

Years 2-4

5.1.b Work with local non-profits to pool resources for much-needed park improvement

Years 3-5

5.1.c Collaborate with housing, transit, and health agencies to address cross-sector needs

Years 3-5

5.2 Foster Community Involvement in Parks

5.2.a Hold regular community meetings and surveys to gather input on park programming and improve

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

5.2.b Create volunteer opportunities for park maintenance, tree planting, and event support

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

5.2.c Host listening sessions and focus groups to ensure all residents' voices are heard in planning effort

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

5.3 Enhance Communication and Awareness

5.3.a Develop a resource guide for programs and services targeting residents 15 and under and 55 and

Years 1-2

5.3.b Collaborate with outside entities to offer digital literacy training and resources for older adults to improve access to online services

Years 2-3

5.3.c Use age-friendly, accessible communication best practices in all outreach efforts

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

5.4 Advance Sustainability Education and Practices

5.4.a Educate staff, citizens, and visitors on the benefits of sustainable practices in parks and facilities

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

5.4.b Connect event organizers with recycling and low-waste resources for events on parkland

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

06. IMPROVE MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION

6.1 Update and Simplify Digital Platforms

6.1.a Redesign and simplify the Little Rock Parks and Recreation website to improve user experience and accessibility

Years 1-2

6.1.b Implement technologies that enhance communication, such as chatbots, AI-driven FAQs, and interactive features to better serve residents

Years 2-3

6.1.c Address AI integration in the workplace to streamline operations and improve responsiveness

Years 3-4

6.1.d Set a goal for 15-20% annual growth in social media followers and engagement, tracking progress and adjusting strategies based on analysis

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

6.2 Implement 2024 Brand Standards and Increase Capacity

6.2.a Roll out the 2024 brand kit and standards across all communications to ensure consistency and professionalism

Year 1

6.2.b Partner with the City Communications Team to expand capacity for content creation, outreach, and public engagement

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

6.2.c Develop multilingual and visually inclusive materials to better connect with diverse population

Years 2-3

6.3 Enhance Real-World and Community-Based Outreach

6.3.a Increase the diversity of communication channels by posting physical flyers and signs in parks, community centers, and public space

Years 1-2

6.3.b Collaborate with neighborhood associations and local businesses to distribute promotional materials and event information

Years 2-3

6.3.c Host workshops and information sessions to educate the public about park programs and services, fostering a stronger community connection

Ongoing, Year 1 Launch

- 1.1.a: Conduct site assessment and gather community input for fitness upgrades.
- 1.1.b: Launch first wellness program partnership with local health organizations.
- 1.1.c: Implement Silver Sneakers partnership with local fitness centers.

- 1.2.a: Designate and develop first 'quiet space' in a major park.
- 1.2.b: Complete staff training in mental health first aid.
- 1.2.c: Host inaugural community mental health forum.

- 1.3.a: Organize first inclusive community sports tournament.
- 1.3.b: Procure and install adaptive equipment for sports programs.
- 1.3.c: Publish a centralized resource for wellness activities.
- 1.3.d: Launch urban agriculture pilot project in community garden.

- 2.1.a: Install solar-powered lights and rainwater irrigation systems in a park.
- 2.1.b: Expand recycling programs to 50% of park facilities.
- 2.1.c: Implement new sustainable landscape practices in a flagship park.

- 2.2.a: Complete native landscaping pilot project to support pollinators.
- 2.2.b: Restore at least 5 acres of degraded wetlands.
- 2.2.c: Designate and maintain 10 'Grow Zones' for biodiversity.
- 2.2.d: Certify one park as an Audubon bird habitat.

- 2.3.a: Complete stormwater infrastructure retrofitting in a flood-prone area.
- 2.3.b: Increase tree canopy in urban parks by 20% in a targeted zone.
- 2.3.c: Launch community cooling/warming center activation program.

- 3.1.a: Complete park development in an underserved community.
- 3.1.b: Implement active transportation routes to connect a major park.
- 3.1.c: Partner with BikePed LR to do a high-visibility pedestrian crossing to a park.
- 3.1.d: Conduct pedestrian safety improvements near park entrances.

- 3.2.a: Complete accessibility audits of 50% of park facilities.
- 3.2.b: Host the first sensory-friendly event in a community center.
- 3.2.c: Secure age-friendly representation on a planning committee.
- 3.2.d: Implement feedback mechanism for accessible program design.

- 3.3.a: Host a multicultural festival in partnership with local organizations.
- 3.3.b: Install multilingual signage in 25% of park facilities.
- 3.3.c: Certify 5 local businesses through the Age-Friendly Business Initiative.
- 3.3.d: Develop a cultural workshop series in collaboration with diverse communities.

- 4.1.a: Complete a regional trail network connection project.
- 4.1.b: Install improved signage along 10 miles of trails.
- 4.1.c: Conduct walkability audit for 5 key bridges or overpasses.

- 4.2.a: Open a new multi-use facility for adventure-based recreation.
- 4.2.b: Launch water-based recreation rentals in one major park.
- 4.2.c: Develop accessible recreational areas in affordable housing developments.

- 4.3.a: Organize first Leave No Trace workshop for the public.
- 4.3.b: Hold a community outdoor cleanup and restoration event.
- 4.3.c: Launch green job training outreach for students.

- 5.1.a: Establish outdoor education programming in partnership with schools.
- 5.1.b: Form a new partnership with a local nonprofit for park development.
- 5.1.c: Secure cross-sector collaboration agreement for shared initiatives.

- 5.2.a: Host a community engagement session to gather input on new park projects.
- 5.2.b: Create a volunteer program for park maintenance.
- 5.2.c: Launch listening sessions tailored to older adults.

- 5.3.a: Publish a guidebook of programs and services for residents 55+.
- 5.3.b: Offer digital literacy training sessions in community centers.
- 5.3.c: Adopt age-friendly communication standards across outreach platforms.

- 5.4.a: Collaborate with the Sustainability Commission to develop a metrics dashboard.
- 5.4.b: Host staff workshops on sustainability best practices.
- 5.4.c: Expand recycling and waste reduction efforts at city-sponsored events.

- 6.1.a: Launch redesigned website with improved user experience.
- 6.1.b: Integrate chatbot technology into online platforms.
- 6.1.c: Adopt AI-driven tools to enhance operational efficiency.
- 6.1.d: Achieve 15% growth in social media engagement metrics.

- 6.2.a: Roll out brand standards across all communications channels.
- 6.2.b: Initiate partnership with the City Communications Team for enhanced outreach.
- 6.2.c: Develop multilingual materials to support diverse populations.

- 6.3.a: Increase visibility of parks with flyers and signage in key areas.
- 6.3.b: Collaborate with local organizations for distribution of park information.
- 6.3.c: Host public workshops to promote park programs and offerings.

