

RECREATION & PARKS COMMISSION

FY'25 ANNUAL REPORT



It is important to remember and consider the value and impact Recreation and Park services have on their communities. This annual report identifies the need and importance of providing opportunities for activity and connections.

The benefits are endless in terms of health and wellness, safe social spaces, and education in our community.

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Message from the Director

As we reflect on the past year, I'm proud to share that our Recreation and Parks Department has made tremendous strides in advancing our mission to serve every member of our community with inclusive, innovative, and efficient services.

♣ **Park Inclusion & Accessibility** One of our most impactful achievements has been the expansion of access walks to several of our main parks. These new pathways not only enhance mobility and safety but also open up opportunities for all residents to enjoy our green spaces. Our staff has been hard at work developing fresh programming and activities tailored to these newly accessible areas, ensuring that every corner of our parks can be a place for connection, recreation, and joy.

Efficiency Through Innovation We've continued to invest in research and technology to improve operational efficiency. A standout addition this year was the purchase of a robotic paint machine, which has significantly elevated the quality of our field markings while saving countless hours of staff labor. This advancement has also enabled us to better support our co-sponsored youth sports groups with more consistent and timely field preparation.

฿ **Fiscal Responsibility & Stewardship** This year marked our strongest budget season in the past three years—a testament to the diligence and stewardship of our dedicated staff. Weekly staff meetings focused on budget oversight and strategic planning have helped us maximize resources while maintaining high-quality services.

→💻 **Modernizing Service Delivery** We've embraced digital transformation by enhancing our communication channels and payment systems. Residents now benefit from timely updates via social media, our website, and can conveniently make payments online using credit cards. These improvements have streamlined our operations and made it easier than ever for the community to engage with us.

♫ **Community Engagement on the Rise** Perhaps most exciting is the surge in participation at our community events. From seasonal festivals to special event gatherings, we've seen a remarkable increase in attendance and enthusiasm. This growth reflects the strong bonds we're building and the trust our community places in us.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to fostering inclusive spaces, embracing innovation, and deepening our connection with the community. Thank you for your continued support and partnership in making our parks and programs a source of pride for all.

Department Overview:

Commission Members

Chairman: Ed Murphy

Vice Chair: Melissa Chiappone

Tim Burrows
 Rich Ericson
 Robert Kyne
 Traci Santos
 Nan Scheiber
 Megan Sheehan
 Taylor Stino

Staff Organizational Structure

Director: Ryan McNamara
Asst. Director: Tim Cieplik
Program Coordinator: Nolan Clack
Office Coordinator: Eileen Sullivan
Receptionist/Clerk: Hilary Willard
Foreman: Josh Therrien
Maintainers:
 Chad Adams
 Nick Cancelmo
 Corey Gladue
 Scott Olson
 Todd Robbins
 Jordan Silvestri

Mission

Programs will be offered for all ages and interests giving each individual the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities. Through these activities, participants will be able to make constructive use of leisure time and contribute to positive physical and mental health, and good sportsmanship.

Vision

Well maintained parks, public spaces, and various nature areas provide opportunities for residents to maintain active, healthy lifestyles; while appreciating our community's natural resources and preserving them for future generations.

		FY'24		FY'25	
REVENUES		\$341,698		\$345,550	
	Cash	\$125,655	37%	\$58,187	17%
	Check	\$66,875	20%	\$73,178	21%
	Credit	\$149,618	43%	\$214,185	62%

	Special Revenue Balance	\$70,000		\$72,813	
Beach Sticker Sales					
	Resident (1,528)	\$38,207		\$44,494	2,948
	Non-Resident (440)	\$55,000		\$75,845	458
	WPD Wellness Program	\$1,175		\$0	
	NR-FT Town/BOE staff	\$250		\$721	
	Senior (PAID)	\$5,910		\$6,380	
	Veteran (FREE)	69		156	
Gatehouse Sales		\$102,149		\$33,052	
ENROLLMENTS		1,516		2,519	
	Female	955	63%	1,757	70%
	Male	561	37%	760	30%
	Non-Resident	121	8%	250	10%
	Resident	1,395	92%	2,269	90%
Program Efficiency					
	Offered	152		173	
	Administered	129		163	
	Run Rate%	85%		94%	
Community Center Attendance		15,431		22,388	
Social Media	Reach	102,900		124,500	
	Interactions	12,100		11,200	
Concert Attendance		12,900	8	14,475	8
MAINTENANCE HOURS					
	BOE	2,750		2,830	
	TOWN	8,711		10,376	
		17% loss of manpower		19% loss of manpower	
Wood Orders					
	Deliveries	49		69	
	Residences	32		38	
Athletic Field/Facility Permits		1,489		2,584	

Special Events and Programs

The Town of Waterford Recreation and Parks Department continues to build on the momentum of last year's successes, expanding our reach and deepening our impact across the community. With a focus on innovation, inclusion, and wellness, we've introduced new programming, strengthened partnerships, and made strategic strides toward long-term sustainability.

Expanding Programming & Community Engagement

This year saw the launch of our **Nature Walks & Talks** series, offering residents guided experiences through Waterford's natural spaces. These programs have been met with enthusiastic participation and have helped foster environmental awareness and appreciation for our local ecosystems.

Our **community program survey** continues to be a valuable tool for shaping our offerings. Feedback from residents has led to the development of new classes and events that reflect the evolving interests of our community.

Sponsorship Growth & Budget Relief

We've made significant progress in securing **local sponsorships**, which have helped offset programming costs and reduce the financial burden on both the department and participants. These partnerships have allowed us to maintain high-quality programming while remaining fiscally responsible.

School-Based Health & Activity Initiatives

In response to the growing need for accessible after-school activities, we're planning to expanded our presence in **elementary and secondary schools**. New health and activity programs will be introduced to fill the gap left by reduced intramural offerings. These initiatives promote physical wellness, social connection, and positive role modeling—especially through collaborations with WHS student-athletes and leaders. Our continued partnership with Waterford High School, following the CIAC's 2024 changes, enabled over **265 student-athletes** to participate in structured off-season training. This initiative generated more than **5,600 hours of skill development and fitness**, reinforcing our commitment to athletic excellence and youth development.

Adaptive & Inclusive Programming

We remain dedicated to expanding **adaptive programming**, inspired by the global growth of unified sports. While space and scheduling remain challenges, we are actively working to create inclusive opportunities that meet the diverse needs of our community.

Events, Branding & Visibility

Our updated **departmental logo** and refreshed branding continue to resonate with residents. Concerts, parades, and special events have showcased our new signage and marketing materials, reinforcing the department's growth and visibility.

We are also encouraging greater participation in **Town-wide events**, including parades and concerts, and are exploring ways to better integrate youth programs, such as Scout troops/youth sport organizations/and transition groups "Cool Beans" into these celebrations.

A listing of our community offerings in FY'25 that we supported or hosted:

January:	Yearly event planning and New Years pop up
February:	Sweethearts Dance/Valentine themed event
March:	Easter Egg Hunt – pictures with Easter Bunny
April:	Earth Day awareness and BioBlitz

	Farmers Market Outdoor
May:	Water Safety Awareness
	Memorial Day Ceremony
	Farmers Market Outdoor
June:	Summer Concert Series (2 concerts at WBP)
	Farmers Market Outdoor
	Eagle Scout project: Beach Toy Boxes at WBP
July:	Summer Concert Series (4 concerts at WBP)
	Farmers Market Outdoor
August:	Summer Concert Series (3-4 concerts at WBP)
	Farmers Market Outdoor
	Waterford Day Parade – Unity In The Community
	Save The River Save The Hills Regatta
September:	Farmers Market Outdoor
October:	Farmers Market Outdoor
	Safe Futures Walk
	Harvest Festival
	Trunk or Treat
	Addy's Run
	Terri Brodeur Cancer Awareness Walk
November:	Veterans Day Ceremony
	Stuff the Bus and Food deliveries for Senior & Youth/Family Services
	Farmers Market Indoor
	Lions Craft Fair
December:	Winter tree lightings at Jordan and Quaker Hill Greens
	Pearl Harbor Day Road Race
	Bright Lights Spirited Nights competition
	Farmers Market Indoor

Maintenance

Personnel & Leadership

The continued evolution of leadership within the Maintenance Division has yielded measurable improvements in efficiency, morale, and service delivery. Under the guidance of new supervisory staff, we've implemented **enhanced training protocols**, streamlined **communication systems**, and fostered a culture of **collaboration and accountability**. Staff are now more empowered to share ideas, troubleshoot challenges, and take ownership of their roles—resulting in faster response times and more consistent upkeep across all Town properties.

As infrastructure expands and responsibilities grow, the division remains committed to **staff development** and **cross-training**, ensuring coverage and flexibility across a wide range of tasks—from athletic field prep to trail restoration.

Equipment & Technology Integration

We continue to invest in **cutting-edge equipment** that reduces labor hours and improves precision:

- The **SWOZI Robo-painter** has become a cornerstone of our field operations. We are actively collecting data on **paint usage, time savings, and labor efficiency**, with early results showing significant reductions in manual workload.
- Our fleet of **Ventrac multi-use vehicles** has expanded, allowing for seamless transitions between mowing, aerating, snow removal, and trail grooming. The versatility of these attachments has proven invaluable in managing diverse terrain and seasonal needs.
- We are actively exploring **smart lighting/locking systems, GPS-enabled usage tracking**, and continued exploration of **battery-powered and robotic landscaping tools** to further reduce fuel consumption and improve sustainability.

Seasonal Responsibilities & Expanded Activities

This year brought increased demand and visibility across several key sites:

- **Arnie Holms Jr. Park** saw expanded programming and foot traffic, requiring elevated maintenance attention, especially around walking paths and garden beds.
- **Sutera and Greco fields** were added to our regular rotation, with a focus on mowing assistance and initial field paint layouts.
- **Town Hall Basketball Courts** received enhanced service, including **debris removal, water management**, and surface inspections.
- **Athletic fields and beaches** continue to grow in use and complexity, requiring coordinated scheduling and proactive turf care to meet community expectations.

We've also begun integrating **native plantings** and **low-maintenance landscaping** in select areas to reduce long-term upkeep and support pollinator habitats, **garden management, trail upkeep**, and **landscape restoration**.

Facility & Park Project Updates

Civic Triangle

Arnie Holms Jr Boardwalk: Opened park in August 2024. Awaiting full approvals for landscaping ownership. Cost savings for arborvitae plantings and installed yard drain/meter pit for streetscape sod and tree irrigation. Activity and event planning underway.

Nevins Cottage: A new 501c3 has been formed to preserve and repurpose the use of the building for the community. Discussions are beginning on the interior design and layout to become a resource for the community.

Jordan Park House: The park continues to bustle with more activities and a very active Historical Society. Considerations for building repairs, accessibility, and the parking lot are being reviewed.

Community Center – The potential ownership of current LEARN space next door may become available in 2025/2026 when the transfer to the Southwest School property is scheduled. Community Center Garden installation completed with fencing, gate, and planter beds.

Public Safety - Building entrance garden bed improvements, supplied support for trench and conduit @ EMS for new electronic sign

Library – Extended pollinator garden to wrap around front of building

Waterford Beach Park

- A new policy implemented to improve safety and protect assets (grinder pump issues for overuse, etc.)
- Speed bump installation and signage
- Facility updates under review and design with engineer and P&Z
- Wood Program - Alternative heating for seniors and qualified residents

Leary Park

- Began court replacement, accessibility pathways, and park design.
- Performed emergency repair of water line with Utility Department – Thank you Utilities!
- Phase II will address drainage and emergency access to lower fields

Stenger Farm Park

- Plan received from Haley & Ward for handicapped parking spaces and access walk/landing to each portion of dog park entrance. Awaiting funding opportunities.
- Extended fire breaks around park
- Dog park fencing and paver landing repairs
- Installed new benches

Old Barry Farm

- Completed Eagle Scout project by Henry Roenke. Trail mapping and signage throughout trails.

Pleasure Beach

- Boardwalk plans – Bid process overbid. Awaiting additional funding for project.
- PW assisted staff for entrance access improvements
- Lifeguard chair for staff re-built

BOE Properties

Clark Lane Middle School: Plan development for growth removal along hillside and re-planting

Great Neck Elementary: Awaiting completed project from coordinating study on backfield issues

Oswegatchie Elementary: New landscaping for the front of the main building entrance, replaced backboards and rims at playground court

Quaker Hill School and Hoelck Park: major ballfield renovations, demo and install new water meter pit, remove/replaced old scoreboard with new scoreboard donated by Ryan Marshall Foundation.

Waterford High School: assisted garden club, performed major renovation in tandem with contracted laser grade service and sodding--pitching mounds, dugout drainage, and on deck areas

Financial Overview

Over the year the department converted operational improvements into stronger budgetary performance while continuing to invest in capital projects and service enhancements.

Key Fiscal Effects from Operational Changes

- **Staffing and payroll rebalancing** — Closing critical vacancies has reduced emergency outsourcing and overtime, shifting some previously contracted costs into recurring payroll lines and producing more predictable expenses and improved program continuity.
- **Electrification and lower maintenance demand** — Pilot electric mowers and utility vehicles, plus lower-maintenance material choices in projects, are beginning to reduce fuel consumption and service hours; early indicators point to lower fuels and lubricants spend versus historical burn rates.
- **Communications and earned revenue** — A structured social media and public information approach has increased program visibility and participation, supporting higher earned revenue for fee-based programs and events and improving cost recovery on promotional spend.

Revenue, Expense, and Budget Management Actions

- **Realign near-term appropriations** — Continue monitoring lines with high encumbrances (maintenance of property and program-related POs) and consider targeted realignments proactively during the budget cycle.
- **Capture electrification savings** — Track monthly fuel and maintenance expense variances to quantify savings from electrification pilots; if sustained, establish a fleet replacement plan to accelerate further low-maintenance equipment purchases.
- **Leverage grants and partnerships** — Prioritize applying for grants and pursuing public-private partnerships to cover a larger share of capital costs (special events, equipment, etc). Successful grant awards will reduce pressure on the General Fund appropriation and preserve operating dollars for programs and maintenance.
- **Measure communications ROI** — Implement formal tracking for social media campaigns to connect outreach activity with program registrations and revenue; use conversion metrics to guide modest increases in advertising that demonstrably drive participation and volunteerism.

The department's improved staffing levels, measured electrification investments, and a more active public communications program have strengthened operational resilience and given the department levers to better manage both operating and capital budgets. By continuing disciplined budget monitoring, capturing operational savings, and aggressively pursuing external funding, Recreation & Parks can advance the priority projects and programs while maintaining high-quality core services and long-term fiscal sustainability.

Approved Operating Budget (last 10 years)

❖	2016	\$1,380,554
❖	2017	\$1,375,909
❖	2018	\$1,461,426
❖	2019	\$1,412,921
❖	2020	\$1,519,608
❖	2021	\$1,511,615
❖	2022	\$1,450,159
❖	2023	\$1,452,431
❖	2024	\$1,409,665
❖	2025	\$1,485,080

Achievements:

1. Enhanced Accessibility and Recreation:
 - o *New Walkways and Boardwalks:* The new walkway at Waterford Beach Park, the boardwalk at Arnie Holms Jr. Park, and the walkway at Pleasure Beach have improved accessibility and provided more recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.
 - o *Court Resurfacing:* Planning and executing projects at Town Hall basketball courts and Leary Park basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts to renovate with post-tension concrete. Access walks installed from parking lot to new amenities. Developing plans for continued access walks and drainage to the lower portion of the park.
 - o Completion of Town Hall Basketball court renovations. \$249,000 Capital project completed.
2. Established a growing relationship with the Waterford Land Trust. Trail marking coordination and future collaboration on trail development are being discussed. This year Recreation and Park helped host the Waterford Land Trust's 50th anniversary on the Jordan Green.
3. Staff continues to create and add events contributing towards increased participation and attendance numbers. The staggering of major events throughout the year, combined with mini pop up events and activities has really blossomed for the department. Please see section E (Special Events) on page 6 and 7 for a listing of events held or supported.
4. The successful management and execution of the newly created (FY23) Special revenue account has provided the same level (and more) with less subsidization of residents.
5. Eagle Scout Projects:
 - o Barry Farm trail ID completed (Roenke)
 - o Park bat houses in progress (Laffey)
 - o AHJ three (3) accessible picnic tables completed (Seltzer)
6. Bench Dedications and updated Bench/Tree memorial policies:
 - o Arrangements for Allan bench at WBP tree line
 - o Two bench requests for front of Community Center

Challenges & Strategic Growth Response

Annual challenges in Recreation and Parks remain multifaceted, requiring ongoing creativity, collaboration, and resourcefulness. Over the past year, the department has made meaningful strides in addressing several persistent issues while laying the groundwork for sustainable growth.

Time Constraints & Task Complexity

Challenge: High phone call volume and overlapping responsibilities strained administrative efficiency.

Response:

- Implemented a **direct call routing system** to reduce front desk congestion and improve response times.
- Introduced **task management tracking** to streamline project tracking and reduce duplication of effort.

Staffing & Budget Constraints

Challenge: Limited staffing and rising personnel costs restricted growth. **Response:**

- Secured **new sponsorships and partnerships** to offset program costs and reduce budget strain.
- Advocated for **regional wage discussions** to remain competitive in hiring.
- Reallocated internal resources to prioritize **high-impact programs** and essential services.

Inflation & Cost Increases

Challenge: Rising costs for utilities, equipment, and maintenance. **Response:**

- Invested in **energy-efficient equipment** and **preventative maintenance schedules** to reduce long-term costs.
- Continued to expand the use of **multi-purpose vehicles and smart technology** to reduce labor hours.

Policy & Procedure Updates

Challenge: New BOE usage rules and Youth Sport Council protocols required adaptation. **Response:**

- Developed **clear scheduling guidelines** for BOE morning use and coordinated with school staff.
- Formalized **Youth Sport Council procedures** for codes of conduct and social media guidelines.
- Continued development and update of all policies, procedures, while using National Accreditation Guidelines.

Indoor Space Demand

Challenge: Overcrowding and increased demand for pickleball, youth sport programs, and fitness programs. **Response:**

- Expanded **programming hours** for pickleball use within the Community Center.
- Improving communications with volunteers for schedules and creative use.
- Partnered with schools and other facilities to **extend usable space** for programming.

Communication & Promotion

Challenge: Inconsistent social media presence limited outreach and engagement. **Response:**

- Designated staff to manage digital platforms.
- Launched a **content calendar** to ensure regular updates and seasonal promotions.
- Balanced traditional outreach (flyers, signage) with **targeted digital campaigns**.

New Projects & Maintenance

Challenge: Increased traffic and reduced contractual work required more internal maintenance scheduling. **Response:**

- Evolving **routine maintenance calendar** captures locations and hours of workers as well as special event and town requests.
- Prioritized **low-maintenance landscaping and native plantings** to reduce future upkeep.

Future Plans and Goals

Over the past year the Recreation and Parks Department made measurable progress on operational capacity, facility projects, community outreach, and long-term sustainability. We closed key staffing gaps that improved service delivery and program continuity, advanced electrification and equipment strategies that reduce maintenance burden and operating costs, and grew our public engagement through a more structured social media and information program. These gains position the department to effectively operate while exploring new funding and partnership opportunities to sustain future investments.

Organizational Capacity and Operation Plans

- **Staffing and Service Improvements** — We recently filled several critical vacancies across maintenance, programming, and event operations, which are expected to produce immediate, organic growth in daily capacity. Increased staffing will reduce backlogs for routine repairs, expand program offerings, and allow more consistent on-site supervision during events and high-use periods.
- **Electrification and Low-Maintenance Investments** — Continued progress toward electrification of select maintenance equipment and small vehicles has begun to reduce fuel costs and time-intensive servicing demands. Pilot purchases and trials of electric mowers and utility vehicles are being reviewed for opportunities to lower maintenance hours and simplify daily upkeep.

Community Engagement and Communications

- **Social Media and Public Information** — We're implementing a structured social media strategy focused on timely program announcements, project updates, safety notices, and engagement-driven content. Analytics show higher reach and improved attendance at events and programs, along with increased public awareness of facility closures and maintenance schedules.
- **Public Outreach and Participation** — Staff held targeted outreach at events and online to solicit resident input on playground activity, facility usage, accessibility needs, and programming surveys. Greater visibility has led to stronger volunteer interest and community support for capital improvements.

Project Updates and Near-Term Priorities

- **Townwide Playground Improvements** — Design and procurement phases advanced at Leary Park and Waterford Beach Park. Vendor proposals were evaluated and prioritized with an emphasis on inclusive play, durable low-maintenance surfacing, and equipment that supports ADA access. With improved staffing, onsite inspections and phased construction planning are on track to limit service disruptions.
- **Waterford Beach Park Concert Staging** — We assessed portable and modular stage options and completed pilot logistics for a portable system that balances cost, storage needs, accessibility, and event flexibility. Next steps include identifying a funding pathway for either a long-term portable inventory or a permanent multipurpose staging element.
- **Civic Triangle Phase II** — Softball field fencing review, lighting upgrades and accessibility improvements to design once maintenance shop arrangements are decided. A temporary maintenance workspace plan will be needed to accommodate staff during renovations while the WBP garage expansion scope is finalized.
- **Leary Park Access and Drainage Improvements** — Vendor solicitation resulted in concept plans emphasizing accessible routes, dedicated handicap parking, and improved drainage to the lower fields. Plan to be reviewed and cost analysis before going out to bid.

Funding, Partnerships, and Next Steps

- **Public-Private Partnerships and Grants** — With demonstrated operational improvements and clearer project scopes, we will pursue targeted grant applications and cultivate public-private partnerships to accelerate internal projects and special event/park purchases.
- **Maintenance Demand Reduction Strategy** — Continue to prioritize electrification pilots, select low-maintenance materials in capital work, and formalize preventive maintenance schedules to further reduce labor intensity and lifecycle costs.
- **Communications and Engagement Plan** — Expand the social media calendar into a seasonal communications plan that aligns announcements with construction phases, volunteer opportunities, and grant milestones to maximize transparency and community participation.

Over the last year the department converted staffing improvements into tangible service gains, advanced sustainable and low-maintenance solutions, and strengthened public communication channels. These developments reduce operational strain and create momentum for completing playground upgrades, event infrastructure, and Civic Triangle improvements. By combining strategic funding efforts, continued electrification, and proactive community engagement, the Recreation and Parks Department will maintain high-quality services while delivering long-term value to residents.

Acknowledgments:

We extend our deepest gratitude to the many Town of Waterford departments, community partners, and volunteers whose collaboration made this year's programs and projects possible. Special thanks to the First Selectman's office for its steadfast leadership and to Human Resources for prompt and professional on-boarding that helped us close critical staffing gaps. We are especially grateful to volunteers Ann Nolan and Sheila Cash for their tireless service, and to Bert for the timely production of printed materials that keep our operations running smoothly. Thank you to Dominion for continued support of our athletic fields at GWR, and to the Gardiner Family Foundation for generous donations and the beautiful new pavilion that will serve our community for years to come.

This year's successes also reflect close coordination with Planning, Utilities, Public Works, Human & Youth Services, Finance, Fire Services (Fire Police and Fire Marshal), the Police Department, the Library, and the Board of Education—whose loan of portable staging and trade support was invaluable. We appreciate the contributions of the Historical Society, Eagle Scout and Girl Scout project teams, event participants, and the countless volunteers who staffed concerts, the Easter Egg Hunt, Harvest Festival, Tree Lightings, the Pearl Harbor Road Race, the Town Parade, Veterans and Memorial Day events, and other community activities.

To everyone who donated time, expertise, funding, and goodwill: thank you. Your partnership, creativity, and generous spirit are the foundation of our department's progress and the reason Waterford's parks and programs continue to thrive.

Supporting Data:

The impact that Waterford Recreation and Parks has on its residents goes even further to meet the standard of benefits. Waterford is blessed with beach waterfront, acres of open space and developed

parks/trails, athletic facilities (including pool opportunities), and a Community Center. These are ideal amenities for many individuals and families looking to find permanent residency.

Our department is committed to establishing best practices to provide acceptance, accessibility, and a “belonging” to our Town and activities. In doing so, we review national trends and all opportunities that should be provided to residents.

NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks and Recreation Builds Community

More than 2 in 3 U.S. adults (67%) **highly value** local community activities, such as festivals, holiday events, fairs and farmers markets.



Most park and recreation agencies (91%) offer themed special events, and 22 percent manage farmers markets, according to the 2025 NRPA Agency Performance Review (nrpa.org/APR).

Each month through a poll of 1,000 U.S. residents focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com).

Visit nrpa.org/ParkPulse for more information.

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NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks and Recreation Promotes Physical and Mental Health

U.S. adults report that their healthcare providers recommend a variety of activities to support physical and mental health, including making healthy eating choices (65%) and moving your body daily (59%). Nearly one in three healthcare providers recommend spending time in nature, practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques, and engaging in creative activities.



Park and recreation agencies provide myriad programming options that support these goals, including farmers markets, sports and fitness programming, yoga, forest bathing, arts and crafts, music lessons, and more.

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- Eighty-six percent of U.S. adults have had a healthcare provider recommend non-medication methods for improving physical and/or mental health
- Parents, Gen Zers and millennials are most likely to have healthcare providers recommend park and recreation-related activities like spending time in nature or engaging in creative activities.
- Nearly 60 percent of U.S. adults have had their healthcare provider recommend moving their body daily.
- One in three U.S. adults have had their healthcare provider suggest practicing mindfulness and relaxation techniques and/or engaging in creative activities such as painting, writing or playing music.

NRPA PARK PULSE

People Visit Parks and Recreation for Myriad Reasons

More than half of U.S. adults visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities to:



Gen Zers (73%) visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities to exercise or be physically fit.
Parents (69%) visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities to be with family or friends.

The NRPA 2024 Annual Engagement With Parks Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 1,000 nationally representative Americans, ages 18+, between June 24th and July 7th, 2024, using an email invitation and an online survey.

Visit nrpa.org/ParkPulse for more information.



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- Being with friends and family is the number one reason people go to their local parks
- Going to the park to exercise and taking a break from day-to-day stress tie as the second highest reason people go to their local parks
- Seventy-three percent of Gen Zers visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities to exercise or be physically fit
- Sixty-nine percent of parents visit their local parks and/or recreation facilities to be with friends or family

NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks and Recreation Serves Millions of People

82% of U.S. adults — the equivalent of more than **276 million people** — visited a local park or recreation facility at least once within the past year.



Gen Zers (96%), millennials (94%) and parents (94%) were among those most likely to have visited a local park or recreation facility within the past year, according to NRPA's *2024 Engagement With Parks Report* (nrpa.org/Engagement).

The NRPA 2024 Annual Engagement With Parks Survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com) among 1,000 nationally representative Americans, ages 18+, between June 21st and July 7th, 2024, using an email invitation and an online survey.

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NATIONAL RECREATION
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- More than 276 million people in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility last year.
- Ninety-six percent of Gen Xers and 94 percent of millennials visited a local park or recreation facility last year.
- Of those surveyed, parents (94 percent) are more likely than nonparents (77 percent) to have visited a local park or recreation facility last year.
- People living within walking distance of a park or recreation facility (86 percent) are much more likely to have visited one of these areas within that past year compared to those not living within walking distance (68 percent).

NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks and Recreation Is Supported by Data

93% of U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency collecting data from monitoring systems — like cameras, counters and patrons' cellphones — to use for specific reasons, including:



As an essential community service, collecting data is critical for park and recreation agencies to best understand and respond to the specific needs of their community members.

Each month, through a poll of 1,000 U.S. residents focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com).

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- Ninety-three percent of U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency collecting data from monitoring systems — like cameras, counters and/or visitors' cellphones.
- Nearly two in three (62 percent) U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency collecting data from monitoring systems to prevent and lower crime in park and recreation spaces
- More than half (52 percent) U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency collecting data from monitoring systems to understand how people are using park and recreation spaces
- Fifty-four percent of Gen Zers and 51 percent of millennials support their local park and recreation agency collecting data from monitoring systems to improve access to parks for all community members recreation spaces