



## Department Description

Columbus Recreation and Parks Department's (CRPD) mission is to connect the people of our community through the power of nature, wellness, and creativity. The department's vision is a socially equitable city. With this mission and vision, CRPD's programs and services are critical in ensuring Columbus remains America's Opportunity City.

CRPD's catalog of programming is extensive and caters to residents of all ages, interests, and abilities. Programming includes summer camps, therapeutic recreational activities, youth and adult athletic activities, fitness classes, educational gardens, swimming and watercraft instruction, art classes, nutritional programming, and youth and family development services. The department offers a wide range of structured recreational opportunities and aims to be equitable and open for all.

The Columbus **Aquatics Center** offers an indoor place to swim, providing lessons, aerobics classes, diving and stroke clinics, and open swim sessions. In the summer, the department operates eight conveniently located outdoor pools, three spray grounds, and three splash pads and interactive fountains.

CRPD operates five **athletic complexes** throughout Columbus, which include high school regulation-sized basketball and volleyball courts. Additionally, the department owns and operates 33 Community Centers and Specialty Facilities, including the **Fran Ryan Center**, the **Priscilla R. Tyson Cultural Arts Center**, the **Espy Adaptive Sports Complex (formerly the Franklin Park Adventure Center)**, and the **McKnight Outdoor Education Center**. The department operates six public **golf courses**, which provide residents of any skill level with the opportunity to play and improve their game.

## Department Mission

We connect the people of our community through the power of nature, wellness, and creativity.

## Budget Summary

Fund	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Proposed
Operation and Extension Fund	69,658,813	77,617,388	79,635,596	79,257,388
<b>Department Total</b>	<b>\$ 69,658,813</b>	<b>\$ 77,617,388</b>	<b>\$ 79,635,596</b>	<b>\$ 79,257,388</b>

## Recreation and Parks

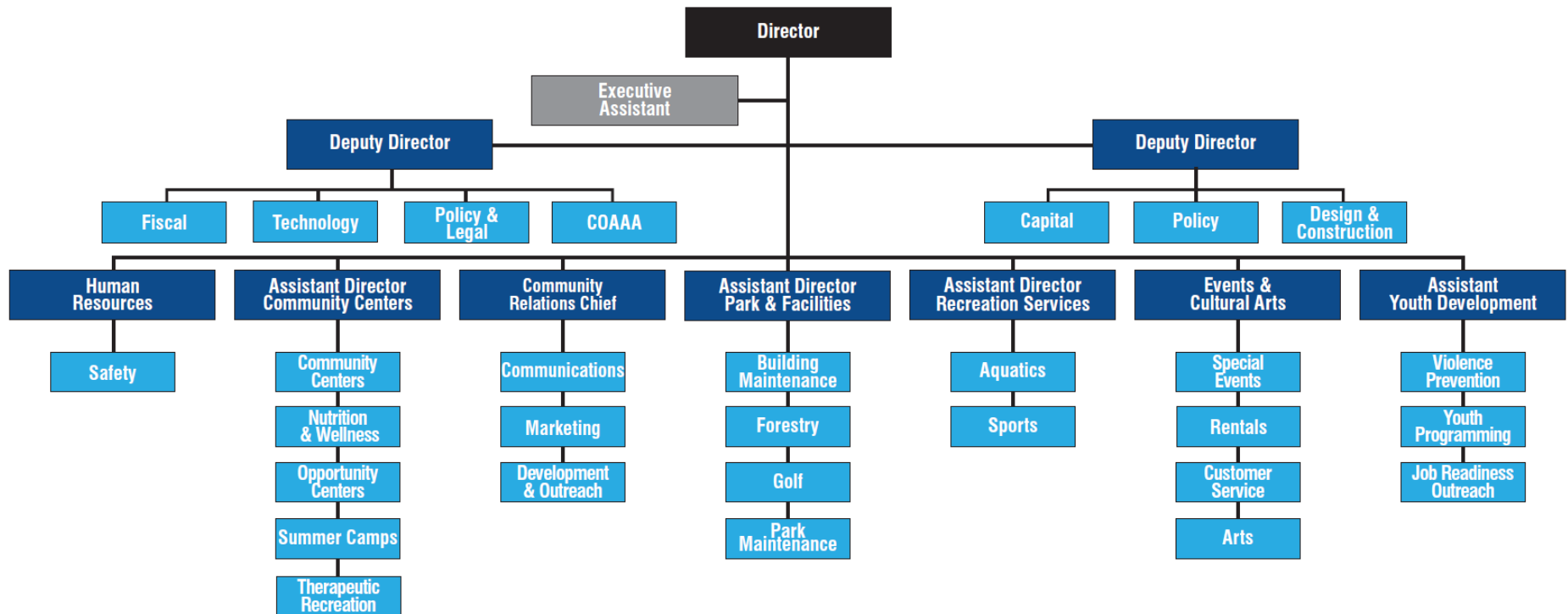
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As stewards of the land, CRPD invests heavily in conserving the community's natural environment. In 2024, the department planted 4,900 street and park trees and planted 1,000 native plants. The department manages almost 15,000 acres of parkland; 25 nature preserves and 36 pollinator gardens.

CRPD is committed to embedding recreation and leisure space in Columbus neighborhoods and adding to residents' quality of life. The department serves roughly 1.9 million residents throughout central Ohio and relies on the support of nearly 17,000 volunteers. As the largest summer food provider in the State of Ohio, the department provided over 207,000 summer meals to kids under the age of 18 in 2024. Lastly, the department is committed to serving as an important resource for reducing crime and violence between young adults (ages 14-23) through proven prevention and intervention strategies via the **APPS Job Readiness** program.



# Recreation and Parks



## 2026 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

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### SAFETY

Expand programs and places that foster wellness and promote movement and fitness for full and healthy lives.

Address health vulnerabilities and disparities by connecting people to resources.

Increase the variety of youth and adult sports opportunities.

Prioritize creation of social bonds to support mental and emotional wellbeing.

Develop space for adaptive and therapeutic recreation programs.

Explore partnerships that promote community safety.



### PROSPERITY

Improve ecological health and biodiversity as a legacy investment in people and land.

Grow our urban forest and expand the functional benefits of natural environmental systems.

Connect people to nature and its benefits through programming, education and access to high-quality natural areas.

Encourage community stewardship with resources and partnerships for volunteerism. Take collaborative regional action to create a more resilient central Ohio.

Celebrate what it means to be a “rec and parks kid” for a lifetime.



### OPERATIONS

Make parks, trails, and recreation facilities welcoming and safe spaces for connecting.

Uplift community champions, who are embedded in our neighborhoods.

Address physical and cultural barriers to use, design for inclusion.

Respectfully address conflicts in park use while promoting enjoyment for all.

Center cultural experiences, joyful moments, and belonging through community-inspired design, diverse programming, and neighborhood initiatives.

Develop places and programs that inspire discovery and wonder. Bring unique opportunities for adventure into every community.

Lead the way for innovation and excellence in operations and managing growth. Operate with foresight to prepare for future generations. Advance the use of technology to make systems more efficient, transparent, and sustainable.

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## **MOBILITY**

Create a world-class network of greenway trails and waterways that support wellness, recreation, and mobility for a growing city.

Grow recreation opportunities on the water. Prioritize and preserve habitat quality and connectivity. Make connecting to recreation and parks an easy and enjoyable experience.

## **2026 BUDGET NOTES**

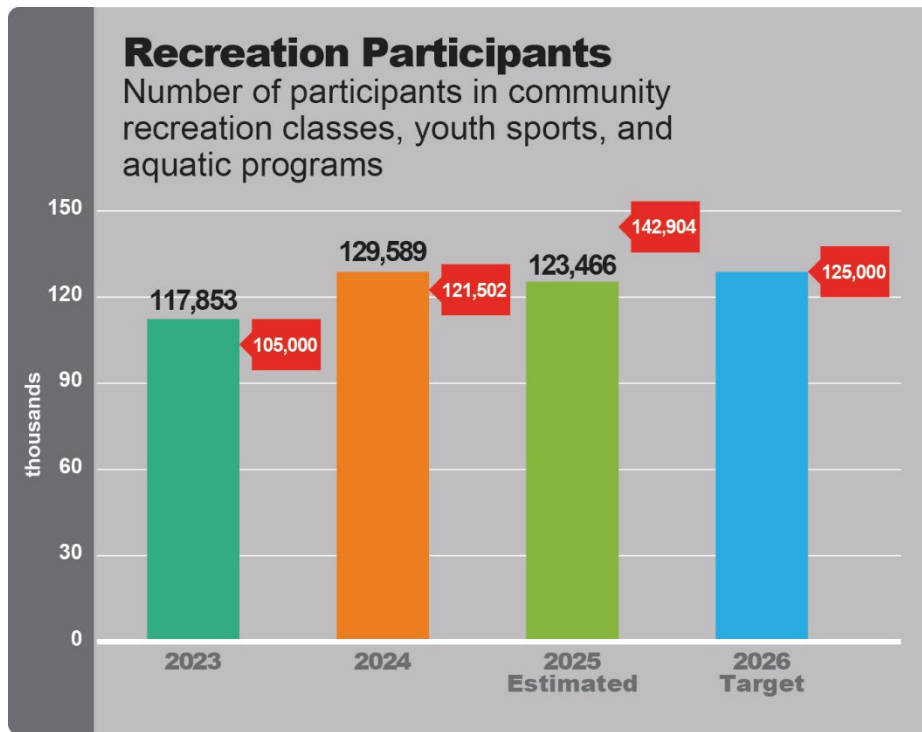
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The Recreation and Parks Department provides many different programs, opportunities, and outdoor spaces that are important to the residents of the City of Columbus. Some of the highlighted programs, opportunities, spaces, and items of importance are as follows:

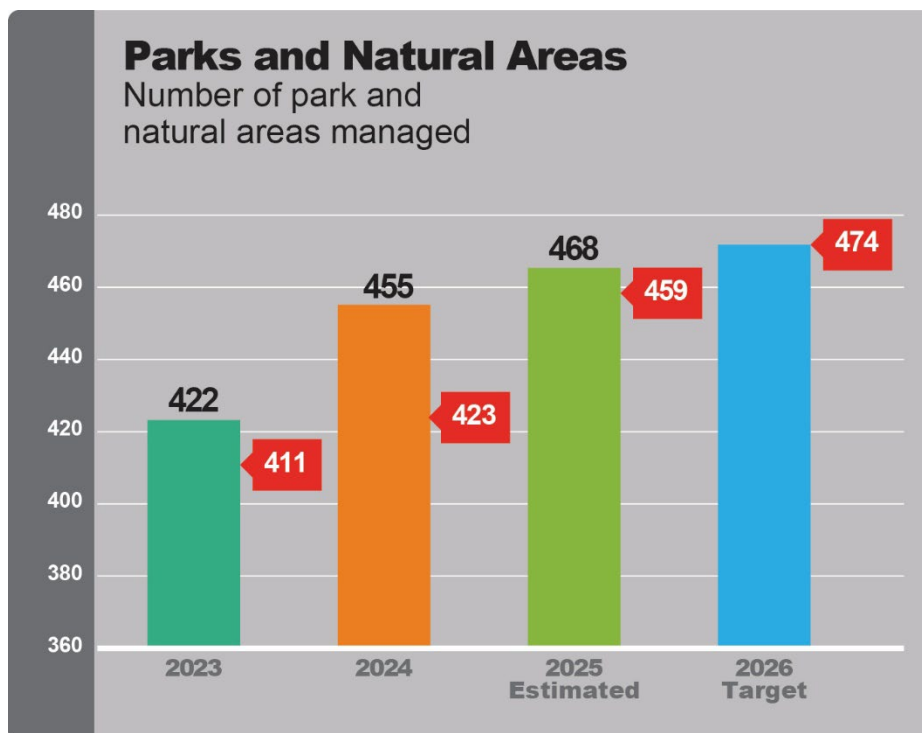
- Total funding for the APPS program is \$2,857,333 in 2026. This program enriches the lives of youth and young adults ages 14 to 23 by connecting them to services and programs focused on building life skills, character development, jobs, postsecondary education, and other components.
  - Outdoor Recreation's goal is to introduce all Columbus neighborhoods to boating, fishing, archery, hiking, and exploring the natural world. \$625,714 will be directed to this program in 2026.
  - The department anticipates continuing to implement opportunities for the community to celebrate, network, and enjoy the uplifting and diverse events offered by the city. In 2026, support for the city's signature special events will include the Jazz and Rib Fest, CBUS Soul Fest, and Winterfest.
  - Funding for the Forestry Program which includes the Urban Forestry Master Plan is \$4,353,143. This includes funding for staff to assist with pruning, and removals as well as nursery support staff to address pre- and post-planting requirements.
  - Franklin Park Conservatory will receive \$350,000 and the King Arts complex will receive \$125,000 in continued city support in 2026.
  - Summer Youth Programming is funded at \$3,500,000 in 2026.
  - Funding of \$665,685 is included for the Conservation program, in 2026, to protect and conserve natural resources.
  - The Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging (COAAA) was reorganized into a stand-alone agency outside of the purview of the Department of Recreation and Parks.
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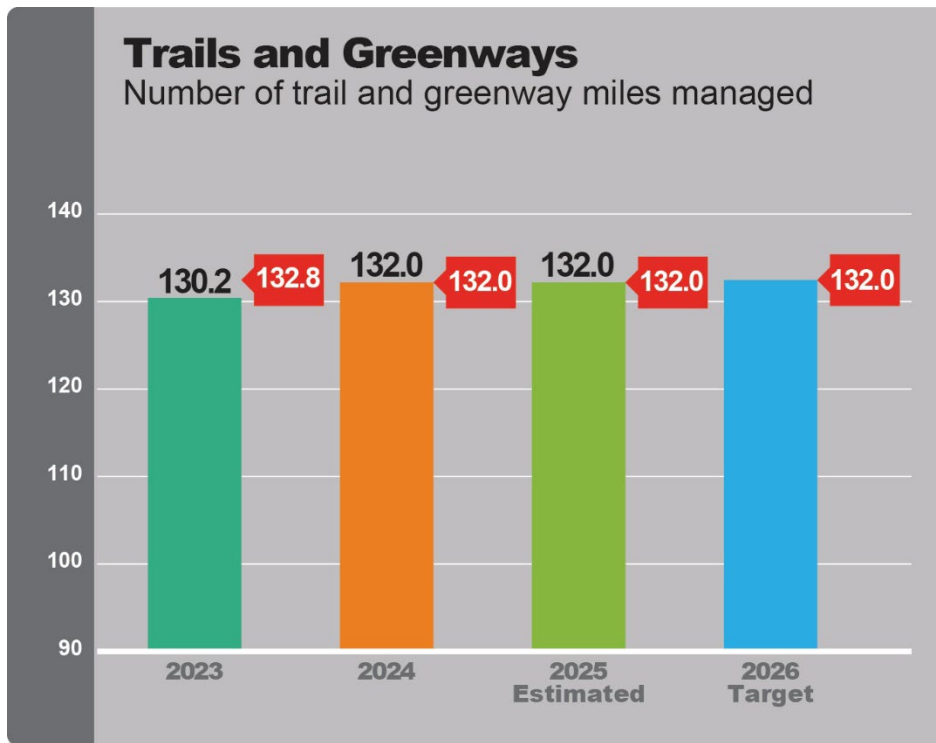
## PERFORMANCE MEASURES



Excellence in programming and service delivery is one of five strategic objectives of Recreation and Park's Department. The department prioritizes participation growth through inclusive programming, data-driven decisions, and increased partnership between divisions and external partners.



Parks are one of many precious community assets. The number of parks and natural areas managed has continued to grow, reflecting the city's commitment to conservation, health and wellness, and serves as an important metric for the department's success.



Trails and greenway miles are measured as a direct fulfillment of the department's mission. The department is charged with planning, constructing, and repairing greenways and neighborhood connectors throughout the city. The increase in miles reflects annual mileage constructed. Low-mileage years indicate investments in many smaller east-west, neighborhood, and downtown connectors to the regional trail system as well as investments in the acquisition, engineering, and design phases of trail projects.

Division	2023 Actual	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2025 Projected	2026 Proposed
<b>Administration</b>					
Operation and Extension Fund					
Personnel	\$ 48,066,530	\$ 52,668,433	\$ 53,825,719	\$ 58,583,617	\$ 55,345,174
Materials & Supplies	3,252,383	3,865,890	4,514,519	3,828,910	3,641,560
Services	14,941,981	16,334,389	16,815,419	16,398,514	16,207,204
Other	2,865,431	4,563,249	4,297,450	4,347,370	4,063,450
Capital	-	2,937	-	-	-
Transfers	532,489	182,489	182,489	182,489	-
Administration Subtotal	69,658,813	77,617,388	79,635,596	83,340,900	79,257,388
<b>Department Total</b>	<b>\$ 69,658,813</b>	<b>\$ 77,617,388</b>	<b>\$ 79,635,596</b>	<b>\$ 83,340,900</b>	<b>\$ 79,257,388</b>

Fund	2023 Actual		2024 Actual		2025 Budget		2026 Proposed	
	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT
<b>Operation and Extension Fund</b>								
Administration	383	1,008	426	1,214	455	1,706	447	1,735
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>1,008</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>1,214</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>1,706</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>1,735</b>

## Recreation and Parks

Operating Budget by Program					
Program	2025 Budget	2025 FTEs	2026 Proposed	2026 FTEs	
Administration	\$ 5,573,172	10	\$ 6,621,309	15	
Fiscal	2,377,391	20	2,214,725	18	
Human Resources	1,496,710	11	1,420,694	10	
Internal Services	6,435,329	0	6,424,717	0	
Summer Youth Programming	3,500,000	0	3,500,000	0	
Aquatics	3,298,080	7	3,035,817	6	
APPS	3,196,765	16	2,857,333	14	
Building and Facility Maintenance	4,075,315	30	4,145,061	29	
Communications and Development	1,784,333	11	1,596,976	11	
Forestry	4,219,516	49	4,353,143	45	
Miscellaneous Programs	1,440,000	0	-	0	
Park Maintenance	7,917,494	67	7,433,106	61	
Design and Construction	562,302	13	291,359	11	
Special Events	3,139,371	12	2,217,806	7	
Sports	3,875,191	21	4,779,414	27	
Food and Nutrition*	283,560	2	-	0	
Warehouse	670,891	3	599,525	3	
Outdoor Recreation	659,295	3	625,714	4	
Cultural Arts	1,528,407	5	2,041,153	8	
Permits and Rental Services	1,570,118	13	1,604,071	12	
Capital Kids**	53,450	0	35,890	0	
COAAA	182,489	0	-	0	
Community Recreation	9,847,164	106	11,233,449	98	
Therapeutic Recreation	1,158,475	6	868,443	5	
Golf	4,989,105	26	5,022,058	25	
Health and Wellness	205,835	1	478,901	3	
Capital and Strategic Planning	942,139	7	599,225	6	
Youth Sports	1,121,486	7	995,529	6	
Camps	1,476,745	1	1,191,885	2	
Conservation	753,568	5	665,685	5	
Intervention	457,040	3	1,707,980	16	
Technology	844,860	0	696,420	0	
<b>Department Total</b>	<b>\$79,635,596</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>\$79,257,388</b>	<b>447</b>	

\* Food and Nutrition budget is combined with Health and Wellness for 2026.

\*\* Capital Kids' personnel expenditures were moved to Community Recreation programming in 2025.

\*\*\* The Urban Forestry Master Plan budget was combined with the Forestry Program in 2025.

For additional financial information related to the Department of Recreation and Parks, please refer to the recreation and parks operation and extension fund contained within the Special Revenue Funds section.



# 2026 PROGRAM GUIDE

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## **ADMINISTRATION**

To provide management and support through the office of the director for training, marketing, grants, and City of Columbus initiatives.

## **FISCAL**

To oversee the department's operating budget, process all invoices, coordinate telephone and wireless devices, post bids through vendor services, handle legislated contracts and service agreements, and administer grant funding, the capital improvements budget, and the special and permanent improvement funds.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

To provide basic services in the areas of recruiting, hiring, payroll, benefits, contract administration, grievance resolution, disciplinary action, training, and employment law compliance.

## **INTERNAL SERVICES**

To account for the internal service charges of the department necessary to maintain operations.

## **SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMMING**

Community Relations oversees the City's process for awarding more than \$4 million in funding to support youth who face systemic barriers and inequities, including those disproportionately affected by crime, violence, and related challenges. Grants are awarded to 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that provide enriching summer programs for youth ages 5–18, expanding the department's ability to connect young people with safe, supportive, and engaging opportunities.

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### **AQUATICS**

To provide access for all to drowning prevention programs, youth competitive swimming and diving and necessary community spaces for safe gathering and cooling. This occurs across one year-round indoor facility, eight outdoor swimming pools and four interactive spray grounds.

### **APPS (YOUTH DEVELOPMENT)**

To form a comprehensive outreach initiative serving young people across central Ohio. Participants take part in enrichment activities and special events while those near adulthood gain practical workforce experiences, training, and development. Together, these efforts create pathways to education, skilled trades, and meaningful employment.

### **BUILDING AND FACILITY MAINTENANCE**

To maintain, repair, improve, and create the infrastructure needed to connect the people of our community.

### **COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT (COMMUNITY RELATIONS)**

To connect the recreation and parks department with the community by creating opportunities that increase funding support (Development), engagement (Marketing), and awareness (Communications).

### **FORESTRY**

To manage the health and safety of the city's trees, which includes the planting, pruning, and removal of trees on city property and rights-of-way while using the Urban Forestry Master Plan to prioritize, preserve and grow the city's tree canopy.

### **MISCELLANEOUS PROGRAMS**

To support various community agencies

### **PARK MAINTENANCE**

To regularly provide professional grounds and facilities maintenance services to the department's park properties, including mowing, raking, trimming, mulching, repairing playground equipment, installing public docks, and refurbishing park benches, tables, fences and signs.

**DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION**

To provide quality, functional, and sustainable infrastructure that connects our communities to the power of nature, wellness, and creativity. We do this by providing design and construction services for active capital improvement projects.

**SPECIAL EVENTS**

To coordinate high-quality, free, cultural opportunities in the form of concerts, festivals and events for the community.

**SPORTS**

To offer, manage, develop, and enhance adult sports leagues and tournaments held at athletic facilities across the City of Columbus. To maintain & service designated CRPD Prime Sports Parks and Athletic Complexes. To collect, approve, and manage the permitting process for our park spaces and athletic complexes.

**FOOD AND NUTRITION**

To provide free, nutritionally balanced breakfasts, lunches and snacks in the summer with the support of local partner organizations

**WAREHOUSE**

To oversee the storage and handling of goods and materials for the department as well as inventory control.

**OUTDOOR RECREATION**

To foster appreciation for nature through providing education, access, and experiences outdoors.

**CULTURAL ARTS**

To offer visual arts classes and experiences taught by professional artists. To utilize art to engage with individuals over 50 allowing for expression, comradery and healthy lifestyle choices. To offer facilities and performing arts opportunities for youth and adults seeking to express their creativity.

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### **PERMITS AND RENTAL SERVICES**

To provide guidance, support and City permits to community organizations that coordinate special events, concerts, festivals, parades and races on public property, as well as affordable rental spaces and facilities which promote opportunities for the community to gather, celebrate and connect while making special memories.

### **CAPITAL KIDS (AFTER SCHOOL REC CLUB)**

To provide a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for youth during out-of-school hours. Designed for elementary and middle school students, the Afterschool Rec Club focuses on academic support, homework help, and structured recreation. Through engaging activities that promote physical fitness, creativity, and social development, the ARC helps student build confidence, strengthen skills, and stay connected to their communities in a positive and nurturing setting.

### **COAAA**

Columbus agency providing a wide range of free to low-cost services to seniors

### **COMMUNITY RECREATION (COMMUNITY CENTERS)**

To serve as vital hubs for connection, learning and recreation across the City of Columbus. Each center offers a wide range of programs and services for residents of all ages, including fitness and wellness classes, arts and cultural activities, senior services, and community events. These centers are designed to be welcoming, inclusive spaces that strengthen neighborhoods, promote healthy lifestyles, and provide resident with opportunities to grow, play, and engage with one another.

### **THERAPEUTIC RECREATION**

To provide adaptive and inclusive programming tailored to differently abled individuals. Services include adaptive fitness, inclusive summer camps, adaptive sports clubs, and one-on-one support via credentialed therapeutic recreation professionals who coordinate accommodations through an inclusion support request system.

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**GOLF**

To connect people through golf by providing excellent services and playing surfaces for golfers of all skill levels, while demonstrating environmental responsibility, programming for all ages, and competitive pricing.

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS (HEALTH AND NUTRITION)**

To promote the well-being of residents through equitable access to nutritious meals, wellness education, and community support services. This team manages vital programs such as the summer food program, afterschool meals, and senior nutrition services, ensuring that children, familiars, and older adults receive healthy food year-round. In collaboration with local partners, this subdivision also leads efforts to address food insecurity – through a mobile produce market – to empower residents with tools to make informed, healthy lifestyle choices.

**CAPITAL AND STRATEGIC PLANNING**

To direct the department's Capital Improvement Program and ensure that funds are effectively sourced and allocated to balance the priorities of acquiring and preserving open green space and natural areas, managing natural resources, creating connectivity through an expanding network of multi-use trails, and developing and maintaining quality parks, public spaces, and recreational facilities throughout the city. To define department priorities, develop strategies that guide implementation, support the creation of department policy, protocol, and best management practices, and align resources to the department's mission and strategic objectives.

**YOUTH SPORTS**

To offer youth sports programming for ages 4 to 18 at our community and opportunity centers.

**CAMPS (SUMMER CAMPS)**

To offer citywide themed camps for youth ages 6 to 12, with week-long sessions hosted at various community centers and outdoor recreation facilities. Activities span arts & crafts, sports, science learning, and nature exploration, with inclusion support available to campers who are differently abled.

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### **CONSERVATION**

To guide the department's conservation initiatives and goals by protecting and conserving natural resources through evidence-based recommendations. The Conservation Team prioritizes equity, access, adventure and education to connect the people of our community with nature

### **INTERVENTION (COMMUNITY INTERVENTION)**

To implement violence prevention programs.

### **TECHNOLOGY**

To provide management and oversight of all technology-related purchases and contracts throughout the department.

