



Thursday, April 16, 2026
Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Advisory Board
06:00 PM - 09:00 PM

City Council Chamber, Room 201
222 West Hargett Street

NOTE TO DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING INDIVIDUALS

Assistive listening devices are available upon request. Interpreters for Deaf and Hard of Hearing persons are available. If needed, please provide a 48-hour notice by calling 919-996-3100 (voice) or 919-996-3107 (TDD).

A. Call to Order

Notice: This meeting is being recorded by video and audio means. These recordings will be posted on the City’s website for public viewing and listening. In-person attendees of the meeting will be included in this recording. By remaining in this meeting, in-person attendees agree that their images and/or voices may be included in these recordings.

Excused absences, as applicable

B. General Public Requests and Comments

We invite each person wishing to speak before the Parks, Recreation, and Greenway Advisory Board to stand at the podium, state your name and address, and make your statement. Your information will be received and either placed on the next agenda, forwarded to a subcommittee, forwarded to the Raleigh City Council, referred to the Raleigh Parks and Recreation Director, or received as information. (Please limit comments to 3 minutes)

C. Committee Report - Raleigh Youth Council

D. Presentations

D.1 DRAFT: Parks Plan Implementation Update

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Emma Liles & Lauryn Kabrich, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

Raleigh Parks staff will present an update on the implementation of the Raleigh Parks Plan, including annual and five-year goals structured around four health lenses.

E. Action Items

F. Approval of Meeting Minutes

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Draft Minutes from the February 19, 2026 and March 19, 2026 meeting are considered by the Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board for review and approval.

G. Director's Report

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Stephen C. Bentley, PRCR Director

H. Committee Reports - Standing Committees

H.1 Parks Committee

Bob Edgerton, Co-Chair
Carrie Hasbrouck, Co-Chair

H.2 Fred Fletcher Volunteer Committee

April Love, Chair

H.3 Greenways Committee

Jeff Havener, Chair

H.4 Sustainability, Wildlife and Urban Trees Committee

Kate Dixon, Chair

I. Committee Reports - Liaison Representatives

I.1 Arts Commission and Public Art & Design Board

Steve Brechbiel, Liaison

I.2 Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission

Liaison

I.3 Dix Leadership Committee

Chris Pereira, Chair Liaison

I.4 Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board

Jeff Havener, Liaison

I.5 PRGAB Work Plan Update

Iain Burnett, Liaison

I.6 PRCR Parks Bond Community Engagement Liaison Reports

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All Liaisons (CAG members) who have met and can provide an update to the full PRGAB.

J. Chair Report / Announcements

K. Board Comments or Topics for Discussion

L. Adjournment

Meeting: Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Advisory Board
Meeting Date: April 16, 2026
Staff Resource: Shawsheen Baker, TJ McCourt, Lauryn Kabrich

Agenda Title: Parks Plan Implementation Update

Agenda Item Description:

Emma Liles & Lauryn Kabrich, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources

Raleigh Parks staff will present an update on the implementation of the Raleigh Parks Plan, including annual and five-year goals structured around four health lenses.

Agenda Item Details:

Purpose

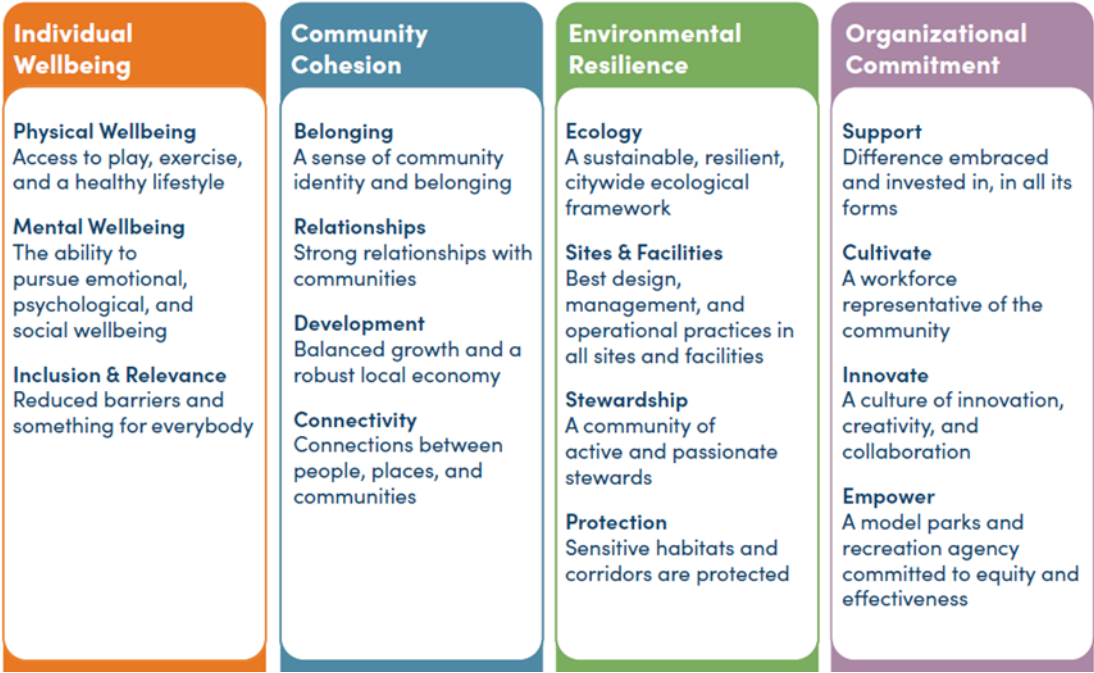
This presentation outlines the ongoing implementation of the Raleigh Parks Plan and sets the stage for the annual reporting process. Our focus will be on discussing the goals for Fiscal Year 2027, as well as the development of five-year goals for each action item identified in the Implementation Plan. This comprehensive approach supports ongoing accountability and transparency, ensuring that our progress is measured against both short-term and long-term benchmarks.

Background & Context

The Raleigh Parks Plan, adopted in 2024, is a community-driven roadmap designed to guide the development and stewardship of parks, greenways, and recreation facilities. The Implementation Plan, within the Raleigh Parks Plan, translates the vision into actionable steps using a structured, outcome-driven approach. All work and reporting are centered around four health lenses that inform priorities, outcomes, and actions:

HEALTH-FOCUSED FRAMEWORK

Four health lenses and fifteen health outcomes.



Attachments

This simple infographic explains the vision for the Raleigh Parks Plan, its overall structure, and the health-focused framework built around four core lenses: Individual Wellbeing, Community Cohesion, Environmental Resilience, and Organizational Commitment.

- The Raleigh Parks Plan: A Vision through 4 Health Lenses

This document includes the FY27 and five-year goals for each health lens:

- Parks Plan Implementation Goals

The Raleigh Parks Plan: A Vision Through Four Health Lenses

VISION & PLAN STRUCTURE

The guiding vision of Raleigh Parks remains: **“Bringing people to parks and parks to people.”** This vision isn’t just about creating parks; it’s about creating connections—between people, nature, and the vibrant culture of Raleigh. The vision is supported by eight guiding principles.

HEALTH-FOCUSED FRAMEWORK

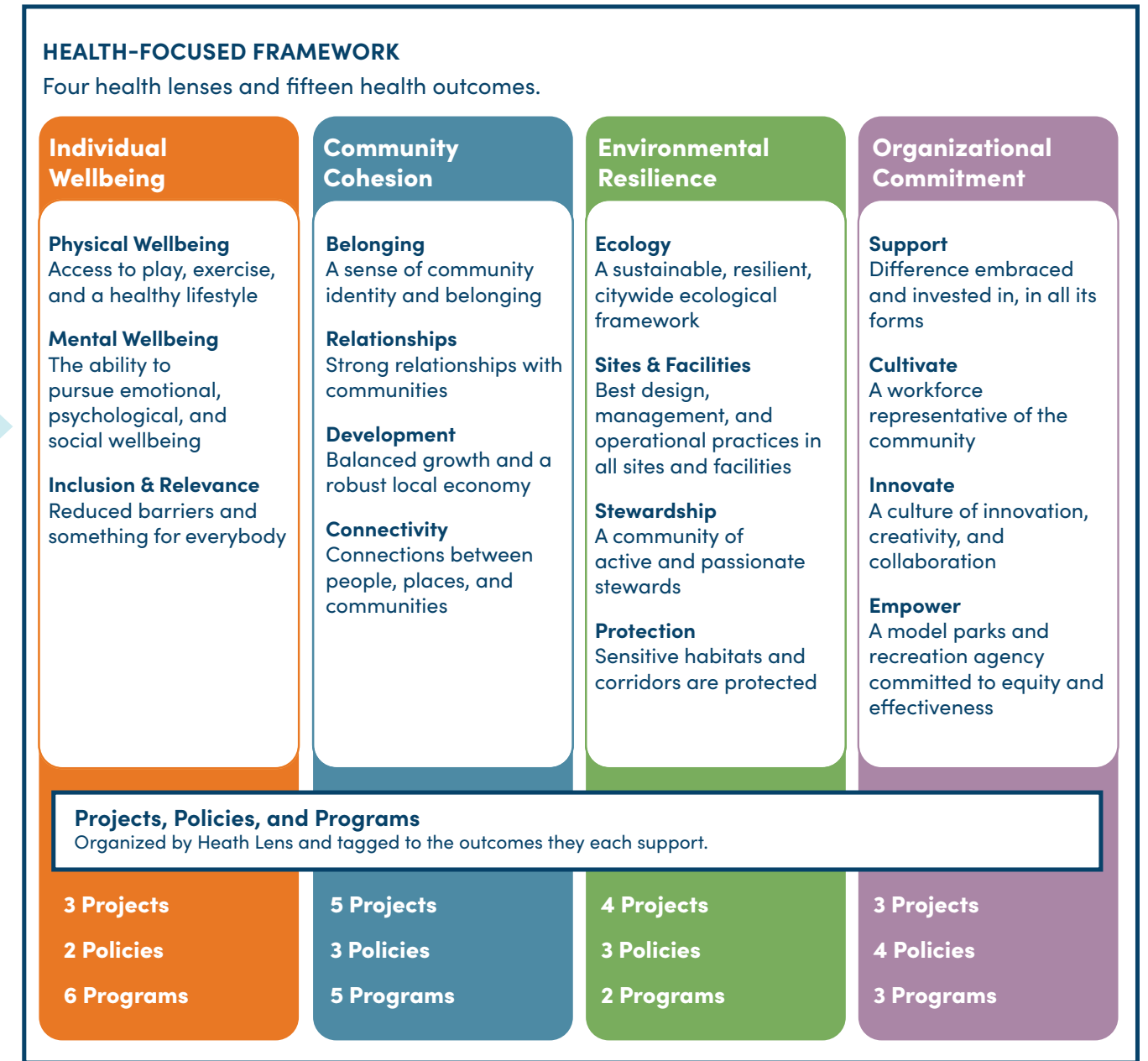
This plan is built around **four key health lenses** that reflect what the community values most in Raleigh’s parks. These lenses each represent a different perspective on the many ways that parks can improve the city, its communities, and everyone’s lives. Each lens includes several “outcomes”. These outcomes identify the desired result of the plan and its implementation.

PROJECTS, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

To guide implementation, each health lens has between nine and thirteen actions. These actions are organized into whether the action is a project (e.g., building a trail), policy (e.g., park facility reservation rules), or a program (e.g., expanding the number of in-park events).



Check out how the vision and guiding principles relate to the health-focused framework and projects, policies and programs, above and on the next page.



INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Physical Wellbeing: *Access to play, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Expand drop-in and open play availability, especially for athletics or sports-related uses.</p>	<p>Calculate open play opportunities using data, and collaborate with staff to understand current drop-in activities citywide.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a sustainable, citywide model for open and drop-in play that formalizes hours of play and geographic coverage, increases participation for target age groups, and uses participation data and feedback to refine scheduling, supervision, and safety. To inform future scheduling/future use. 2. Create a consistent calendar of accessible drop-in arts offerings across multiple centers, build partnerships with local artists, and track attendance and satisfaction to show growth and equity in arts access.
	<p>Promote, partner, and pilot programs for athletic field drop-in play, addressing staffing and liability needs, and specifically focusing on outreach to new users.</p>	
	<p>Study current drop-in programs including sensory-friendly events, gallery exhibits, and public art installation to inform future pilot open/drop-in arts and cultural activities.</p>	

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Physical Wellbeing: Access to play, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Create programs along greenway trails that better activate the greenway trails. Programs could include history, nature, or art-themed events that align with the Public Art Plan.</p>	<p>Evaluate programming at staffed centers along the greenway system, such as community centers, nature preserves, and art centers. Where capacity is revealed, expand/add programming and marketing/outreach efforts targeting greenway users.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Establish a greenway program schedule for evening, nature, history, and art events; standardize planning and staffing processes; and use marketing to increase awareness and use.2. Pilot scaled wheeled and active recreation activities on greenways, streamline interdepartmental permitting and logistics, expand partner-led programming, and track participation and user feedback.

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Physical Wellbeing: *Access to play, exercise, and a healthy lifestyle*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
Expand offerings for wheeled resources for all ages. This could include all-ages recreation and education facilities like skate parks, Traffic Gardens, pump tracks, natural surface trails for mountain biking, and bike repair stations.	Expand wheeled recreation through skateboarding, mountain biking, and youth learn-to-ride programs, supported by pop-up events and the Mountain Bike Trail Extension. Kick off the Skate and Wheeled Resources Master Plan.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Complete the Skate and Wheeled Recreation Master Plan.2. Ensure that physical wheeled opportunities are incorporated into upcoming COR Comprehensive Plan and future Bonds.3. Integrate wheeled features into park and greenway projects.4. Grow recurring pop-up and learn-to-ride programs with a goal to realize measurable increases in participation.

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Mental Wellbeing: *The ability to pursue emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Identify mental health “hubs” - or distributed clusters of resources - throughout city, expanding the pilot mental health programming already provided at Dix Park.</p>	<p>Inventory & track the expansion of mental health programming with staff trainings, mindfulness activities, and partnerships to support youth and community wellbeing.</p>	<p>Scale drop-in mental health and wellness programming at a Raleigh Parks pilot site, expand mindfulness and partner-led workshops, train staff in empathy and crisis prevention, and measure participation and wellbeing outcomes.</p>
<p>Expand shade citywide (trees/constructed shade) through the Street Tree Equity Project and through parks and facilities reinvestment projects.</p>	<p>Complete the Street Tree Equity Project.</p> <p>Advance canopy and shade efforts by reforesting FEMA lots, unifying maintenance standards, and completing a Level 1 arboretum.</p>	<p>Increase citywide shade by expanding tree plantings and constructed shade at priority sites, adopt formal shade policies for projects, and track equitable access to shade.</p>

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Inclusion & Relevance: *Reduced barriers and something for everybody*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Expand inclusive policies to support a full spectrum of users, including people who are neurodivergent, have visual impairments, physical disabilities, or language isolation.</p>	<p>Inventory, categorize, and map current program offerings to assess gaps in inclusive opportunities.</p> <p>Advance inclusive programming by supporting accommodations, integrating sensory elements, and training staff to further embed accessibility into program planning.</p>	<p>Inform, educate and increase staff awareness in disability culture and universal design, engage Raleigh Commission for Persons with Disabilities, embed accessibility standards across programs and projects, and increase inclusive and sensory-friendly offerings while tracking requests, participation, and feedback.</p>
	<p>Develop inclusive program design standards (including checklists, training tools, and accountability measures) and identify partners for disability awareness and cultural competency training.</p>	
	<p>Design accessibility advisory resources to guide future public art project design and outreach.</p>	

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Inclusion & Relevance: *Reduced barriers and something for everybody*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
Leverage partnerships and internal capacity to increase the number of free activities, programs, and events.	Standardize processes and tools for community partnerships and sponsorships to strengthen program delivery and fundraising capacity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Assess free activities across the city, using performance data to guide offerings in alignment with organizational goals. Secure sustainable sponsorships and partnerships to support delivery of these offerings while tracking attendance, satisfaction, and financial efficiency.2. The Raleigh Parks financial assistance program purpose is to ensure cost is not a barrier to participate in department programs and activities. Over the next five years, the Department will focus on the financial sustainability of the program through a combination of private donations, corporate sponsorships, and grants. Targeted fundraising initiatives will be utilized to support the program priorities identified by the assessment of current activities. Annual review of program performance will assess funding effectiveness, community impact, and equity outcomes. This will inform the department on the adjustments necessary to meet evolving program and service needs while maintaining financial sustainability.
	Inventory, categorize, and map current free program offerings.	

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Inclusion & Relevance: *Reduced barriers and something for everybody*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Strengthen Financial Assistance programs and funding to reduce barriers for households to participate in programs.</p>	<p>Inventory, categorize, and map current participants to assess gaps.</p> <p>Use public feedback to strengthen accessibility and fundraising strategies for Play It Forward and Give Play, expanding participation and long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Raise awareness of current offerings.</p>	<p>Remove cost barriers by providing flexible, needs-based assistance, streamlining applications, and aligning incentives and partnerships with program demand to increase participation among high-need households.</p>
<p>Expand active adult program offerings and craft a marketing strategy to more effectively reach seniors who are unaware of program availability.</p>	<p>Inventory and map existing programs to identify service gaps.</p> <p>Expand Active Adult offerings with a geographic equity focus</p> <p>Implement a targeted marketing strategy to reach new senior participants.</p>	<p>Broaden active adult program types across neighborhoods, strengthen partnerships with senior organizations, and implement coordinated marketing to grow participation, diversity of offerings, and retention.</p>

INDIVIDUAL WELLBEING

Inclusion & Relevance: *Reduced barriers and something for everybody*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Strive for building amenities beyond ADA-accessibility and universal design.</p>	<p>Install sensory elements at community centers and integrate SRIS in project planning to ensure accessibility is embedded in design.</p> <hr/> <p>Integrate accessibility into capital projects by identifying opportunities early, coordinating with advocates, and updating project tracking tools.</p>	<p>Adopt universal design guidelines and planning processes that embed sensory and cognitive accommodations into all capital and renovation projects; ensure early accessibility review and track facility upgrades, staff training, and user feedback.</p>
<p>Implement the Raleigh Parks Programming Assessment.</p>	<p>Create framework for implementing and operationalizing the 2024 Raleigh Recreation Assessment Final Report.</p>	<p>Satisfy CAPRA reporting requirements for the Raleigh Parks Programming Plan by publishing a report documenting successful implementation of the Raleigh Parks Programming Assessment.</p>

COMMUNITY COHESION

Belonging: A sense of community identity and belonging

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Integrate arts and culture in projects and programs.</p>	<p>Collaborate with community center staff to identify & inventory existing classes and programs that support "community culture".</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Five percent of all Community Center classes are "Culturally-Based" (either Arts, Historic, or Cultural Enrichment) and no Community Center has less than three percent of classes that are "Culturally-Based". 2. Historic Resources develops exhibits, co-created with community center staff and community members, to exist in their community center. 3. Established art "hubs" in Raleigh Parks facilities, outside of dedicated arts centers, where more than 50 percent of all Community Center classes and programs are Arts-based.
	<p>In preparation for FY28, highlight existing programs and/or locations believed to have the most "growth potential" (i.e., existing programs with the potential to increase the number of participants and/or locations with the potential to expand community culture classes/programming).</p>	
	<p>Partner with the Public Arts and HRM teams to co-create an exhibit for the City of Raleigh Museum that uplifts immigrant voices and experiences as part of the America250 initiative, drawing from the curriculum and materials used in the free English language classes.</p>	

COMMUNITY COHESION

<p>Expand community gardens, especially in neighborhoods with mixed use or high-density zoning or a food desert.</p>	<p>Inventory existing community gardens in Raleigh (both Raleigh Parks and external organizations). Complete a gap analysis, set goals, and develop a multi-phase roadmap for implementation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For each location identified in the FY27 gap analysis, develop a business plan that identifies the resources needed for implementation. Implementation will be prioritized based on community need, resources available through Raleigh Parks, and support provided by partner organizations. 2. Establish a training and education programming series about gardening, offered at every site with a community garden.
<p>Expand the Welcome to Raleigh Parks program, providing a landing resource for newcomers to the city.</p>	<p>Create an action plan for future Welcome to Raleigh Parks programs, including participant selection processes, retention mechanisms, and potential funding sources, based on evaluation of previous participant experience.</p>	<p>Establish a sustainable Welcome to Raleigh Parks program, consistent with the FY27 Action Plan.</p>

COMMUNITY COHESION

Relationships: *Strong relationships with communities*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Revisit policies for volunteer work to strengthen and expand volunteerism and community park stewardship.</p>	<p>Complete 5 policy reviews and update volunteer-related Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), in alignment with CAPRA requirements. Conduct national benchmarking and industry research to identify enhancements to volunteer policies and guidelines.</p> <p>Conduct a "Gap Analysis," identifying five areas of need where we have insufficient volunteer participation (e.g., community centers, cultural programs, etc.).</p>	<p>Increase volunteer participation in the five areas that were identified in the FY27 Gap Analysis.</p>
<p>Translate Raleigh Planning Academy to a Park-specific program that encourages community and department dialogue.</p>	<p>Determine purpose and vision for the "Park Planning Academy", including desired audience (e.g., if participation should be a pipeline for PRGAB, CAGs, and/or volunteers).</p>	<p>Launch the Raleigh Planning Academy; utilize community input and insights from the program in planning, programming, and policy decision; and utilize it as a pipeline for volunteering, marketing ambassadors, CAGs, Parks boards, and other engagement and partnerships.</p>

COMMUNITY COHESION

Partner to provide assistance to unhoused community members and persons experiencing mental health crises.	Provide Narcan and opioid response training to Raleigh Parks staff, as part of a broader effort to promote compassionate, trauma-informed care.	Raleigh Parks should have an active and defined role in helping reduce the number of unhoused community members and people experiencing mental health crises.
	Expand resources available to Raleigh Parks staff regarding working with homeless populations, including launching staff trainings and publishing a resource booklet for staff and public use.	
	Convene local stakeholders that provide support for the unhoused community for ongoing, recurring meetings to build networks and share resources.	

COMMUNITY COHESION

<p>Pilot marketing and communications programs with various workgroups to increase and inform relationships with the Raleigh community, especially those who do not participate in programs today.</p>	<p>Conduct a "Gap Analysis," identifying groups that are under-represented, under-enrolled, and under-informed of parks programming</p>	<p>Develop new strategies, techniques, and investments to reach groups identified in the FY27 Gap Analysis.</p>
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COMMUNITY COHESION

Development: *Balanced growth and a robust local economy*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Partner across departments to identify and establish policies that incentivize the creation of publicly accessible parks and greenways as part of the land development process.</p>	<p>Complete Phase 2 of Greenway UDO edits.</p> <p>Develop guidelines with the Urban Projects Group for the new TIG policy.</p>	<p>Ensure Raleigh's new Comprehensive Plan advances Raleigh Parks' goals of publicly accessible park spaces and integrates the Greenway Master Plan.</p>
<p>Provide revenue-generating services along greenways like food trucks and events that engage small and minority businesses.</p>	<p>Conduct a business analysis to evaluate the potential for the Lake Johnson Boathouse into a new concession opportunity, with a focus on small businesses.</p> <hr/> <p>Add 5 new locations to the Greenway Food Vendor Program by Spring 2027.</p>	<p>Support 20 established food vendor locations throughout the Raleigh park system and greenway network with 300+ rentals per year.</p>

COMMUNITY COHESION

Implement the next phases of the Dix Park Master Plan, and prioritize build-out of parks with multi-phase master plans and pre-development assessment plans.	Implement the 2026 items of the Dix Park Master Plan, including: West Campus demolition; demolition, stabilization, and utility decommission service contract; warehouse upfit; utility corridor design; Creek and Grove schematic design; bike and pedestrian projects; wayfinding plan; and adaptive reuse of Brown Building and Flowers Cottage.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initiate/complete all projects outlined from 2025-2030 in the 10-Year Implementation Plan for Dix Park.2. Utilize the Park Master Plan tracking tool to inform future bond project selection.
	Develop a framework for a centralized Park Master Plan tracking location, including built/unbuilt phases and equity scores, and update the Park Experience tracker to include elements from recent master plans.	

COMMUNITY COHESION

Connectivity: *Connections between people, places, and communities*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Expand the Neighborhood & Community Connections Program through capital improvement as well as public-private partnerships.</p>	<p>Advance design and permitting for the 4 current Neighborhood & Community Connections projects.</p>	<p>Determine existing gaps in greenway trail connectivity, via GIS mapping, to inform the next bond.</p>
	<p>Advance greenway trail-oriented design UDO text changes, focusing on connection to the greenway network.</p>	<p>Work with Urban Projects Group to utilize TIG for matching private developer contributions of greenway trail buildout and to more proactively purchase Easement Reservations with Facility Fee waivers.</p>
<p>Enhance design to activate the greenway and ensure it is welcoming to all visitors.</p>	<p>Develop wayfinding and signage action plan.</p> <p>Implement solar lighting pilot.</p> <p>Advance multi-use street side trail standard detail.</p>	<p>Complete replacement/installation of all signage included in the Capital Area Greenway System Wayfinding Plan.</p> <p>Advance solar lighting pilot.</p>

COMMUNITY COHESION

<p>Collaborate with other city departments and promote and incorporate greenway trails to support multimodal, active transportation.</p>	<p>Determine documentation available & documentation gaps, regarding current greenway trail maintenance obligations and connection identification.</p> <p>Advance 2022 Parks Bond projects focused on greenways (Big Branch Greenway Connector, Lake Lynn Trail Improvements, Marsh Creek Greenway Feasibility Study, Mine Creek Greenway Improvements, Neighborhood & Community Connections, Walnut Creek Greenway Improvements).</p> <p>Develop a standardized, thorough, and coordinated process (between PRCR-Planning, PRCR-Greenway Development, and PRCR-Greenway Maintenance) for reviewing Raleigh Water projects early in design and incorporated desired greenway improvements.</p> <p>Update "CONCRETE MULTI-USE STREET SIDE TRAIL" Standard Detail.</p>	<p>Strengthen collaboration with Raleigh Water, Raleigh Stormwater, and Raleigh Transportation, to co-fund, advance, and deliver projects. Track completed collaboration projects.</p>
<p>Advance innovative solutions to bring Park facilities within a 10-minute walk of more Raleigh residents.</p>	<p>Complete GIS modeling for full build-out walkable service areas, including HOA and WCPSS park data and greenway fee simple properties.</p>	<p>Increase percentage of Raleigh residents within a 10-minute walk of a park or green space by 10%, utilizing tools such as joint-use agreements with Wake County Schools, improved documentation of HOA park space, public-private partnerships, etc.</p> <p>Incorporate 10-Minute Walk Goal into upcoming COR Comprehensive Plan.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Ecology: *A sustainable, resilient, citywide ecological framework*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Expand natural areas and connected wildlife corridors through investments in existing Raleigh Parks properties, easements, and land acquisition opportunities.</p>	<p>Track and share progress on land acquisitions and greenway easements by setting clear annual measures, finalizing the park access story map with GIS, and working with partners like TPL to evaluate both current and future access across Raleigh.</p>	<p>Adopt a formal land acquisition and disposal policy, identify funding tools, and maintain GIS tracking to support strategic park, easement, and corridor investments.</p>
<p>Develop a City of Raleigh Natural Resources Strategic Plan that aligns with both the Comprehensive Plan and the Parks Plan Update and reflects external input.</p>	<p>Define the scope, partners, purpose, and outcomes for a Natural Resources Strategic Plan by identifying interdepartmental teams and external advocates, setting a timeline for drafting, identifying funding, and ensuring alignment with the Citywide GSI Plan, Citywide Strategic Plan and the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update.</p>	<p>Finalize and begin implementing the Natural Resources Strategic Plan, establish interdepartmental teams, set maintenance and restoration standards, and track metrics for ecological outcomes and partner engagement.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Sites & Facilities: *Best design, management, and operational practices in all sites and facilities*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
Use existing standards or create a new Raleigh Parks green building standard for all capital improvement projects and develop guidelines for eco-friendly operations in all facilities.	Promote sustainable landscaping by planting native and pollinator plantings, documenting eco-friendly maintenance practices, and highlighting program examples such as Leaf Out & fleet electrification.	Adopt a Raleigh Parks green building and operations standard, move pilots into broader practice, monitor performance of green technologies and native plantings, document maintenance and resource needs, and strengthen communications that highlight departmental successes.
Integrate green building practices into capital projects through EV charging, solar, and GSI installations, while developing SOPs to capture and standardize eco-friendly operations.		

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Sites & Facilities: *Best design, management, and operational practices in all sites and facilities*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Minimize environmental impacts, including to animal and plant habitats, for development and maintenance projects. Consider the tradeoffs to requiring the use of adaptive planting.</p>	<p>Advance native plant policies and material standards by formalizing guidance, and educating project managers on best-practice closeout procedures to support the proper removal of temporary materials.</p>	<p>Implement planting SOPs and site-specific native plant lists, integrate adaptive planting approaches, coordinate with Stormwater on sediment and erosion controls, and monitor habitat protection and contractor compliance.</p>
	<p>Finalize SOPs for planting and site improvements, publish a recommended plant list with site-specific guidance, and clarify how adaptive planting should be applied across PRCR sites.</p>	
	<p>Support invasive-species prevention by offering training for grounds staff on equipment-related best practices and piloting approaches that can guide future standards, and align municipal planting and maintenance standards with state and county regulations.</p>	
<p>Pilot green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) in parks with community centers and tie programming to those GSI investments.</p>	<p>Maintain Green Stormwater Infrastructure at priority parks and tie maintenance directly to design.</p>	<p>Scale GSI at priority parks, align maintenance with design, expand staff and volunteer training, and track device performance, volunteer hours, and related educational programs.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Stewardship: *A community of active and passionate stewards*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Increase environmental literacy and engagement in stewardship through strengthening program content connections to the Environmental Education continuum.</p>	<p>Develop a process to evaluate Raleigh Parks program content for alignment with Wake County and North Carolina environmental and science education standards, ensuring our offerings support school curricula and environmental literacy goals</p>	<p>Standardize departmental environmental education priorities and terminology, expand programs and volunteer workshops, and measure participation and learning outcomes.</p>
<p>Increase and actively steward Raleigh’s urban tree canopy through a combination of city-led efforts on public land as well as partnerships with community groups and private property owners.</p>	<p>Track and share outcomes of everyday forestry work (such as developer-planted street trees, established tree conservation areas, and urban forestry tree planting efforts) to demonstrate the long-term value of tree canopy and protection policies. Work with the Sustainability, Wildlife, and Urban Trees Committee to finalize the Leaf Out plan.</p>	<p>Implement the Leaf Out plan by expanding the city tree canopy through coordinated plantings, conservation areas, nursery expansion, and community partnerships, and by reporting progress through GIS layers and public story maps.</p>

ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE

Protection: *Sensitive habitats and corridors are protected*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Increase use of Protected Natural Area designation (or create new designation/definition) to support consideration of sensitive species and habitats in planning and design.</p>	<p>Convene staff and stakeholders to define Protected Natural Area criteria, continue GIS mapping, and start to develop recommendations for sensitive species and habitat consideration in planning and design.</p>	<p>Strengthen the City’s use of PNA designations by sharing criteria & data interdepartmentally, mapping priority areas to support planning/design projects and development review, and creating a shared GIS resource that informs early site assessments. Support long-term expansion of PNAs with the goal of identifying, mapping, and doubling designated areas by 2030 for review.</p>
	<p>Monitor and survey sites, recommend standard management approaches, and collaborate on GIS mapping of priority areas to support consistent documentation and planning coordination.</p>	
<p>Strengthen invasive species removal, especially in riparian corridors and in natural areas and parks with significant natural resources.</p>	<p>Sustain invasive species management and provide ongoing staff education on safe, effective control practices.</p>	<p>Strengthen invasive species management by increasing staffing, establishing a volunteer and internship task force, implementing Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) monitoring, standardizing site visits and staff training, and tracking reductions in invasive species, cost per acre, and long-term maintenance outcomes across natural areas and riparian corridors.</p>

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Support: *Difference embraced and invested in, in all its forms*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Collaborate with staff to update the Department's values using the Parks Plan Update as a guide.</p>	<p>Build awareness of new departmental values, via integration on the Raleigh Parks Hub Site and updating physical signage in public locations (i.e., Optimist Pool), as well as staff trainings and onboarding materials, community engagement, and incorporation into programming, policies, and customer-facing materials.</p>	<p>In 2031, revisit the departmental values and complete an update, if needed.</p>
<p>Create staff wellbeing programs for year-round support.</p>	<p>Create working definition of "wellbeing" and assess current staff wellbeing opportunities to measure their influence on employee satisfaction, retention, and the City's ability to attract talent.</p>	<p>The department will increase and strengthen its ability to attract, support, and retain a high-quality workforce by improving employee experience, enhancing professional growth opportunities, increasing wellness benefits, and fostering a positive workplace culture. These efforts will result in a higher staff retention ratio, reduced turnover rates, increased internal promotions, and improved employee satisfaction.</p>

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Cultivate: *A workforce representative of the community*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Expand part-time employee inclusion through cross training, committee engagement, and initiatives.</p>	<p>Launch the Permanent Part-Time Orientation Academy, executing 2+ orientations.</p>	<p>Raleigh Parks will strengthen support for part-time and permanent part-time employees by expanding growth and development opportunities, establishing a comprehensive orientation program, and improving access to training , communication, and career pathways. These efforts will enhance employee engagement, improve performance and create a more inclusive and supported workplace.</p>
	<p>Facilitate and promote opportunities for part-time staff to engage with the department, through participation in Raleigh Parks Shares, Raleigh Parks Cares, and the internship program.</p>	

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Innovate: A culture of innovation, creativity, and collaboration

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Achieve national accreditation (CAPRA) by upholding high standards in staff performance, customer service, and overall departmental excellence.</p>	<p>Prepare for the internal Fall 2026 CAPRA audit process.</p>	<p>Successfully achieve CAPRA Re-Accreditation in 2030, with on-time annual interim reporting.</p>
<p>Prioritize existing operation and maintenance reinvestment.</p>	<p>Launch initial training/coursework for "Budget Academy" for department staff.</p>	<p>Ensure all staff at the "supervisor" level, as well as other positions identified by department leadership, complete the Raleigh Parks Budget Academy, and increase staff involvement in the department's budgeting process.</p>
<p>Develop a process for using data to drive equitable budgeting for capital investment in Raleigh Parks.</p>	<p>Collaborate with other City of Raleigh departments and peer agencies to compare current reinvestment approaches.</p>	<p>The department will design and implement a data-driven decision-making process that ensures capital investments in parks are allocated equitably, transparently, and in line with the mission of the department and the community needs. The process will use demographic, environmental, infrastructure, and usage data to prioritize these investments and promote fair access to high-quality parks across the city.</p>

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Empower: *A model parks and recreation agency committed to equity and effectiveness*

Action	FY27 Goal(s)	Long-Term (5 year) Goal(s)
<p>Update Raleigh Parks' code of ethics.</p>	<p>Build awareness of new departmental code of ethics, via integration on the Raleigh Parks Hub Site, in the new employee handbook, and in departmental trainings.</p>	<p>Raleigh Parks staff are aware of the content of the Code of Ethics and utilize it in day-to-day work.</p>
<p>Expand sponsorship, partnership, and philanthropy opportunities, and fortify the department's reputation so that Raleigh Parks is a partner of choice for external agencies.</p>	<p>Implement Year 1 projects from the "Partnership & Sponsorship Strategic Plan 2025-2027", which includes: connecting with 5-10 leading businesses across the region who will provide funding to Raleigh Parks; make deeper connections with current partners who are engaged in volunteerism, community gardens, and health; and contact and build relationships with new contacts.</p>	<p>Over the next five years the PRCR Department will create a robust, mutually beneficial partnership program in which local businesses will invest in community wellbeing through sponsorships, partnerships and philanthropic initiatives. The city along with the business community will co-create economic growth, improve quality of life and enhance civic engagement. Have sponsors approach Raleigh Parks at a greater rate than Raleigh Parks approaches potential sponsors.</p> <p>Build a sustainable partnership with the City of Oaks Foundation to strengthen Raleigh's parks, programs, and cultural resources. Leverage the City of Oaks Foundation's consulting, fiscal sponsorship, and donor recruitment to expand funding, remove financial barriers, and deepen community connection.</p>

CITY OF RALEIGH

**Raleigh Parks, Recreation, & Greenway
Advisory Board**

February 19, 2026

https://youtu.be/F_KmccYJjsI

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OVERVIEW

The Parks, Recreation, and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) meeting opened with continued advocacy from the Southeast Raleigh tennis community regarding the Biltmore Hills Park expansion. Three public speakers urged the board to support rebuilding the existing eight courts alongside the construction of eight new ones, while a fourth speaker separately advocated for a permanent asphalt pump track in the Raleigh park system.

The board received a "What We Do" presentation from the Learning and Development Team, which showcased orientation programs, leadership development initiatives, and safety training across the department's nearly 500 full-time and thousands of seasonal employees. Staff also presented a request for board endorsement of a \$500,000 Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application for the Neuse River Park project, which the board approved unanimously.

A major portion of the meeting was devoted to the Leaf Out initiative, a strategic plan focused on the protection, expansion, and care of Raleigh's public tree canopy. Staff outlined seven key focus areas, including native plant lists for developers and residents, an internal policy limiting invasive species on city projects, and a goal of planting 24,000 trees by Raleigh's 240th anniversary in 2032. The board passed a resolution encouraging the City Council to include first-year funding for the 24,000-tree campaign.

Ken Hisler presented a partnership with the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) to develop athletic fields and infrastructure at Fred Fletcher Park, with construction funded by the school system. The project would add a lit girls' softball field, a regulation multi-purpose field, and a public restroom.

The Director's Report highlighted ongoing Dix Park campus demolition, record summer camp registration, and the upcoming "From Bond to Beyond" open house. The meeting concluded with a unanimous board motion requesting the city council review the Biltmore Hills project and consider revisions to include a rebuild of the existing courts and incorporation of a park structure for on-site staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Robert Braswell (Southeast Raleigh):** Spoke regarding the Biltmore Hills Park tennis courts.
 - He stated he lives at 1308 Foxrun Drive in Cedarwood Estates and has played tennis at Biltmore Hills for over 47 years.
 - He expressed concern that the planned addition of eight new courts does not address the condition of the existing lower eight courts, which have only received resurfacing throughout his time there.
 - He noted that his children played in the United junior tennis league at the facility and that the courts have served the community for decades. • He urged the board to support digging up and rebuilding the existing courts to bring them to the same standard as the new courts, noting it would enhance playability and quality of life in the community.

- **Sam Patterson (Raleigh resident):** Spoke in support of building a permanent pump track in the Raleigh park system.
 - He described a pump track as a loop track for bikes, skateboards, scooters, and rollerblades, where riders navigate rolling hills and banked turns using body movement to generate speed. He noted they build balance, coordination, strength, and confidence and are accessible to a wide range of ages and skill levels.
 - He emphasized that pump tracks grow with the rider, noting that a child on a balance bike can safely roll through the same features that a more advanced rider might use as a jump, and that a well-designed track does not need to change as skill levels improve.
 - He described pump tracks as inexpensive to build, relatively small, and requiring less management than a typical playground, while also providing a designated space for wheeled recreation that helps reduce riding in parking lots, plazas, and other unintended areas.
 - He cited Carrboro, Charlotte, Gastonia, Greenville, Boone, Swannanoa, Spindale, Wilmington, and Troy as North Carolina cities that have already invested in permanent pump tracks and similar wheeled sports facilities.
 - He acknowledged Raleigh's modular pump track installations as a strong proof of concept and argued the next step is a permanent asphalt facility that is durable, always available, and designed to serve the community long-term.
 - He asked whether the board has existing plans for a permanent pump track and, if not, encouraged the board to explore feasibility, potential sites, and funding options.
 - **Staff Response:** Ken Hisler noted the only pump track in a current master plan is at Barwell Road, which is not funded in the next five- to 10-year plans. Stephen Bentley added that a wheeled sports master plan is in development and will launch community engagement this summer, examining skating, biking, and related activities together, similar to the approach used for the aquatic study. The Chair encouraged Patterson to stay engaged as that process moves forward.

- **Nicole Sullivan (Biltmore Hills Tennis Community, Shaw University Tennis Program, Ebony Racquet Club):** Delivered an extensive statement on the Biltmore Hills tennis project.
 - She stated the community supports the project but does not support moving forward with a scope that falls short of what has been consistently requested, funded, and publicly promised.

- She outlined three core priorities the community has raised in every meeting with Parks and Recreation since 2017: (1) a public tennis destination with new courts comparable to Millbrook Exchange Park; (2) rebuilding, not resurfacing, the existing courts; and (3) on-site tennis staff with a dedicated office near the courts for safety, oversight, and management.
- She stated that for city staff to claim the community has not shared this input is "simply untrue."
- She described the existing eight courts as 40 to 50 years old with drainage failures, dead spots, and grading issues that resurfacing has not fixed despite multiple attempts. She characterized resurfacing as cosmetic rather than structural, noting the bottom courts were built on a buried stream and the foundation has likely eroded over 50 years.
- She warned that mixing brand-new courts with failing old courts will result in inconsistent play and will eliminate the possibility of hosting USA- or NCAA-sanctioned events.
- She raised public safety and liability concerns for a 16-court complex without staff presence, citing the current recreation center's lack of line of sight to the courts, standalone bathrooms, ball fields, and playground areas. She reported that players have experienced car break-ins, gunfire, loitering, indecent exposure, and medical emergencies, and noted an indecent exposure incident on the Biltmore Hills greenway that occurred the previous Monday.
- She raised transparency concerns regarding approximately \$1.85 million redirected from the abandoned Barwell Road tennis project to Biltmore Hills, noting the 2022 bond provided sufficient funding to complete the project fully. She questioned why the budget shows more than \$7.4 million available for constructing eight new courts, which amounts to more than \$900,000 per court.
- She framed the project as a matter of equity and legacy during Black History Month, noting Biltmore Hills is deeply rooted in Black tennis culture and will become the primary public tennis destination in Southeast Raleigh as courts are eliminated at other locations.
- She argued that completing all work during the approximately one-year construction closure would avoid far more expensive and disruptive work later, and would mean nothing else needs to be done at Biltmore Hills related to tennis for 25 years.
- She urged the city to pause, re-examine the project before construction, and amend the scope to rebuild all courts, provide on-site tennis staffing with a visible office, address safety, and be transparent about the budget.
- She referenced a comment by Stephen Bentley at the previous meeting questioning whether the advisory board had the "backbone" to recommend a pause on the multi-million-dollar

project, and expressed confidence that the board wants to see the best possible outcome for Biltmore Hills Park.

- **John Smith (Longtime Biltmore Hills player):** Spoke in support of the community's requests regarding the tennis courts.
 - He recalled that when Parks and Recreation first proposed the new tennis complex in March 2016, the stated plan was to build a modern, quality 16-court complex as a destination point for tennis in Southeast Raleigh, renovate the existing courts, and add additional space to the community center for tennis programming.
 - He noted that the project was delayed beginning in 2017 and was placed on hold multiple times. He stated the revised scope now includes only eight new courts, entrance accessibility, parking lot reconstruction, and stormwater management devices, with no provisions for addressing the existing courts.
 - He described the existing courts as over 50 years old with deterioration in surface structure and integrity, and argued that a 16-court complex should begin with 16 quality tennis courts as its foundation.

RALEIGH YOUTH COUNCIL REPORT

The Raleigh Youth Council liaison presented the committee report.

- On January 20, council members attended a comic book artist selection panel. Public Art has been tasked with creating a comic book version of the Raleigh Ready Guide, targeting a teen audience.
- The February 9 meeting focused on the importance of knowing Black history, featuring a guest speaker and Black history-themed Jeopardy games.
- Upcoming events include an egg hunt in partnership with community centers at Jaycee Community Center, and Buddy Basketball with Specialized Recreation and Inclusion Services (location to be determined).
- The council is co-hosting the 2026 State Youth Council Team Building and Leadership Conference with the Fuquay-Varina Teen Council the weekend of February 27 through March 1. Friday and Sunday sessions will be held at Tarboro Road Community Center, and Saturday will be held in Fuquay-Varina. The conference will include nine councils, 86 teens, and 22 advisers.

PRESENTATIONS

WHAT WE DO: LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Helene McCullough, Business Process Management Supervisor, introduced Dana Hariton, Program Supervisor for the Raleigh Parks Learning Team.

- The department has an employee base of approximately 488 full-time employees, 107 permanent part-time employees, and a large seasonal and temporary workforce. The Learning Team itself consists of two full-time employees, two permanent part-time, and one part-time employee, in addition to Hariton.
- An employee life cycle visual was presented to illustrate that careers in Parks are "circuitous" rather than linear, with opportunities for mobility, supervisor and leadership development, professional development aligned with city values and competencies, and multiple orientation programs.
 - **Orientation Academy:** A two-day program for full-time employees that includes trolley tours of parks and recreation facilities, presentations from leadership including Stephen Bentley, and cohort-building activities. Participants form lasting connections, with staff later recognizing one another in leadership programs. A permanent part-time orientation was launched at the end of 2025 and will continue expanding.
 - **Camp Training:** Approximately 400 seasonal hires receive one full day of training, offered in two sessions. The program creates a strong connection to the department, with many camp counselors returning as repeat seasonal employees.
 - **Pairing Program:** A four-month mentoring initiative launched in 2025, pairing "pathfinders" (new hires) with "navigators" (seasoned staff) to introduce the breadth and scope of the department.
 - **Raleigh Parks Leads:** A new six-month leadership development program meeting once per month for four hours, focused on competencies for current supervisors aspiring to lead at the organizational level. The program follows an industry framework of leading yourself, leading others, and leading the business. A capstone project is scheduled for April 2026, during which Mecklenburg County's leadership academy will visit and tour Raleigh's program.
 - **Raleigh Parks Innovates:** A seven-week program in partnership with the Office of Innovation and Strategy using human-centered design thinking to solve problems. The 2025 cycle focused on heat in urban parks, yielding prototype solutions such as increased shade requirements in design reviews and misting systems. The 2026 cycle is focused on

community cohesion, with listening sessions and community engagement beginning immediately. Staff noted they are working with strategic partners to secure funding for moving solutions past the prototyping stage.

- **Other Services:** The team manages the learning management system (Success Factors), automates curricula, runs reports, provides a dedicated instructional designer for proprietary courses (e.g., for fallen-tree response), runs an annual safety training program aligned with seasonal needs (CPR, heat, ladder safety), uses DART rates and workers' compensation data to target training priorities, hosts tours for other municipalities, and offers professional development scholarships for employees.
- Chris Pereira asked whether any ideas from the 2025 heat innovation cycle were implemented. Stephen Bentley confirmed that the first innovation cycle produced the Capitol Area Greenway Explorer app and the concept of glow-in-the-dark paint, and that the heat cycle has led to shade being prioritized in design reviews and some projects incorporating misters.
- Steve Brechbiel asked whether the Learning Team aligns with a larger city learning and development organization. Staff explained that peers with similar roles in different departments meet quarterly through a training liaison meeting to share resources and best practices. Larger departments such as Parks, Planning, and Public Utilities have their own dedicated teams, which also connect up to the larger city HR structure.
- Iain Burnett asked about compensation incentives for returning seasonal employees. Staff confirmed that lifeguards who return with additional certifications receive increased compensation, and camp counselors receive incremental pay increases as they return and advance to director roles.
- Douglas Johnston asked how topics for the innovation projects are developed. Stephen Bentley explained they are selected to address real departmental challenges and that the department also has a relationship with the UNC School of Government, sending staff to participate in programs there.
- Stephen McGuinness commended the Learning Team's partnership with health and wellness staff on QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training and overdose response training, noting these programs have been made available to park staff through Success Factors.

NEUSE RIVER PARK: PARTF GRANT APPLICATION

Tom Dawson, staff lead for the Neuse River Park project, presented a request for board endorsement of a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application.

- The grant request is for \$500,000 with a one-to-one match requirement, which is available from bond funding. The anticipated award announcement is August 2026, aligning with the schematic design process.
- The Neuse River Park master plan, developed approximately one year ago, envisions river access, boat launches, in-river play waves, overlooks, a shelter, restrooms, trails, parking, open space, a play area, bank enhancement, and the feasibility of a pump track.
- The PARTF proposal focuses specifically on the river area, including riverside environmental restoration features, accessibility and recreation features, a river overlook, and an ADA-accessible canoe launch positioned alongside the Neuse River Trail.
- Bank stabilization is a central component of the proposal, addressing erosion caused by high flow rates from the dam and by informal user-created trails. The approach will combine naturalistic boulders and native plantings to stabilize the banks while allowing public access to the water. Staff noted the river access component is considered highly competitive for the grant because of its uniqueness.
- The river overlooks will provide ADA-accessible opportunities for fishing, bird watching, and general enjoyment, while the improved river access point connects the greenway and blueways systems at this location.
- The ADA canoe launch involves engineering the correct slope and incorporating handbar grabs to allow users to transfer from the walking surface down a ramp into a boat, which Dawson acknowledged is a challenging design goal given the steep site.
- A construction manager at risk (CMAR) has been onboarded, which differs from a traditional design-bid-build approach by integrating the construction manager into the design period to vet designs, provide cost estimates, and plan the construction path earlier in the process.
- A consultant called Caliber, specializing in in-river treatments, is advising on the river restoration components. Landscape architects are separately working on shade trees and environmental restoration in the upland portions of the site.
- A board member asked about engaging property owners on the opposite bank of the river. Dawson noted that broader blueway planning addresses different landowners and their potential contributions, but schematic design is constrained to city property and Army Corps of Engineers property.
- **Timeline:**
 - May 2026: schematic design and cost review.

- August 2026: PARTF grant announcements.
 - Summer/fall 2026: continued design development, permitting, prioritization, and budget reconciliation.
 - Early 2027: design completion.
 - 2027–2028: bidding and construction.
- Motion to recommend supporting staff for the PARTF grant. The motion passed unanimously.

LEAF OUT INITIATIVE

Charles Craig, Assistant Director for Raleigh Parks & Natural Resources, presented the Leaf Out initiative with support from multiple staff members.

Overview and Scope

- Leaf Out is a strategic initiative focused on the protection, expansion, and care of Raleigh's public tree canopy on city-owned property. The initiative is structured around three goals visualized as a tree: roots (protection of existing trees and sensitive habitat), trunk (expanding the tree canopy through planting), and leaves (stewardship, education, and community engagement).
- The scope centers on three main areas: (1) city-owned property, with a focus on greenways and parks; (2) interdepartmental collaboration with Stormwater, Sustainability, Raleigh Water, and Transportation; and (3) a community-centered approach to engage residents.
- Craig emphasized the scope does not include regulatory or policy requirements for private land development.

Alignment with City Initiatives

- Leaf Out aligns with the city's comprehensive plan process, Reflecting Raleigh, and was developed in close collaboration with the Department of Planning and Development. Leaf Out was featured in the March 2025 State of the City address.
- The initiative also aligns with the Parks Plan adopted in December 2024.

Community Engagement

- Staff conducted extensive community outreach including surveys, in-person intercept events at multiple locations, newsletters, subscriber email lists, and social media. A survey map showed participation from zip codes across the entire City of Raleigh.

- In partnership with Reflecting Raleigh, staff hosted the Director of Trees Atlanta for an in-person discussion about the importance of trees and Atlanta's tree program, followed by Ask a Planner events throughout March 2025.

Seven Key Focus Areas

- **Initiative 1 – Eliminate Invasive Species on City Property:**
 - **Brian Smith**, Natural Resources Superintendent, presented an internal policy that has been developed and is being socialized through the city's approval process. The policy promotes native plantings and prohibits invasive plants on city development projects, setting a minimum goal of 50% native plantings with a target of 70%. Parks already meets the 70% threshold. The policy includes caveats for turf, water quality management, and other necessary carve-outs. A significant win was achieved with sericea lespedeza, an invasive species used for soil stabilization that is listed as a level-one invasive in the state design manual for sediment erosion control, providing traction to remove it from Raleigh Water easement planting mixes.
- **Initiative 2 – Development Plant List:**
 - **Zach Manor**, Raleigh Parks Urban Forester, presented a native trees and shrubs list being finalized by the Department of Planning and Development for developers to meet private property requirements under the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO). The list includes approximately 43 trees (a mix of evergreen, deciduous, large-maturing, and small-maturing) and approximately 50 shrubs. This is a non-regulatory resource designed to make it easier for developers to identify native species. The list was presented to the Sustainability, Wildlife, and Urban Trees (SWUT) Committee earlier in the year and is expected to be published within one to two months.
 - Manor also noted that a recent UDO amendment (Section 7.2.7.C.1.E) now prohibits invasive species from being planted to satisfy any landscaping or screening requirement, and prevents existing invasive species from being used to meet those requirements. The invasive species reference list is maintained by the NC State University Extension Plant Toolbox database.
- **Initiative 3 – Community/Resident Plant List:**
 - **Lauren Freudenberger**, City Horticulturist, is developing a public-facing native plant list for residents. The list will be approximately 95% native species and include canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, perennials, grasses, vines, sedges, and an invasive "do not plant" list sourced from the North Carolina Invasive Plant Council. To define "native," staff are using

state-native designation while providing distinct information about eco-regions to help residents make informed choices based on site conditions, climate change, and development context. Staff have engaged nursery vendors and distributors to ensure the green industry can accommodate demand, addressing barriers such as land availability, production time, cost, and container success rates.

- **Initiative 4 – Internal Best Practices for City Property:**
 - **Zach Manor** described a forthcoming internal document establishing best management practices for tree retention and planting on city development properties (parks, greenways, fire stations, etc.). This effort will launch in late spring or early summer 2026 after the invasive species policy clears internal approvals, with a draft targeted for fall. The document will address balancing preservation of existing trees with infrastructure needs such as sewer lines, baseball fields, and pools, while pursuing colocation and restoration where possible. Updates will be brought to the SWUT Committee throughout the process.
- **Initiative 5 – Leaf Out Landing Page:** A green landing page on RaleighNC.gov consolidating all departments' green initiatives and programs in one location, reducing the need for users to navigate between departments and preventing conflicting messaging.
- **Initiative 6 – Community Outreach and Partnerships:** Working with nonprofit partners, community groups, and through contracts, grants, events, tree giveaways, and plantings to engage the public.
- **Initiative 7 – 24,000 Trees by 2032:** A goal of planting 24,000 trees by Raleigh's 240th anniversary. A budget request has been submitted and is under consideration in the current budget process.

Q&A

- **Chris Pereira** asked why street trees were not mentioned, given their relevance to reducing urban heat islands and Vision Zero pedestrian safety goals. Staff explained that city council provided clear guidance that Leaf Out should be non-regulatory, and street trees typically involve regulatory mechanisms, utility conflicts, and North Carolina Department of Transportation right-of-way complexities. Staff noted Leaf Out's focus on backyard trees represents an area without a dedicated program and fills a gap, while street tree maintenance and planting will continue through existing programs.
- **Kate Dixon**, chair of the SWUT Committee, commended staff for the work accomplished and noted the committee considers it a model for the country. She emphasized that while two of the seven initiatives focus solely on city property (the internal policies), the other five have a broader public-facing vision, and encouraged staff to adjust the presentation messaging to avoid implying the initiative is limited to city property.

- **Linda Pearsall** echoed Dixon's comments, noting that the citizen engagement component is central to what city council members have expressed enthusiasm about, and supported Dixon's concept of a resolution.
- **Kara Strang** asked whether native planting recommendations could be included when developers interact with Parks through zoning-adjacent processes such as greenway connections. Staff clarified the board does not review zoning cases (city council does) but confirmed the adopted plant list documents will guide staff recommendations on all park plans and that staff can share the recommended list during any developer interaction.
- **Kara Strang** asked about connecting with local garden centers. Staff described an idea discussed that morning to create a form for garden center customers to request more obscure native species, allowing distributors to gauge demand and increase volume.
- **April Love** asked how schools could connect with Leaf Out, given many schools are adjacent to parks and some are designated environmental schools. Craig noted that nonprofit partners will be key to delivering education and outreach to schools, as the city cannot mandate participation from Wake County Public Schools but can provide educational support.
- **Bob Edgerton** requested that staff acquire a Bobcat skid loader with a 24-inch auger to support the 24,000-tree planting goal, rather than relying on volunteers with shovels. Staff confirmed the department already has such equipment.

Leaf Out Resolution

- **Kate Dixon** presented a draft resolution for the board's consideration:
 - "Whereas Raleigh is rapidly losing trees that are critical to cooling the city, cleaning the air, reducing flooding, protecting pedestrians by slowing traffic, providing habitat for wildlife, and providing natural beauty. Whereas the Leaf Out program envisions planting more trees on state, county, and city land, and encouraging residents to plant trees on their own properties. Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Parks, Recreation, and Greenways Advisory Board strongly encourages the city council to include first-year funding for a campaign to plant 24,000 new trees across the city in celebration of Raleigh's 240th anniversary in 2032."
- The phrase "and providing natural beauty" was added at a board member's suggestion after the initial reading.
- **Motion** to approve the resolution. **The motion passed unanimously.**

FRED FLETCHER PARK: WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM PARTNERSHIP

Ken Hisler presented on a joint development project between Raleigh Parks and the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) at Fred Fletcher Park.

Background

- The presentation was prompted by a visit from Broughton High School representatives several years ago, who raised the need for athletic space proximal to the school. Staff have been meeting with WCPSS for approximately two years to develop a mutually beneficial solution.
- Fred Fletcher Park has a complex property arrangement. The eastern portion (tennis courts) and central area are clearly owned by the city. The western portion contains three parcels bisected by a multi-purpose field, owned by two entities: one by the city alone, one by the Board of Education, and one jointly. The original 1990 development agreement was updated in 2013 with a joint use agreement.
- Broughton High School is landlocked and does not have a home field for its girls' softball team. The school currently plays home games at Oakwood Park and uses the Fletcher Park multi-purpose field for practice, band preseason drills, football, soccer, and lacrosse.

Proposed Concept

- **Lit Girls' Softball Field (Northwest Corner):** A regulation, fenced softball field with dugouts and lighting, funded by WCPSS. The field is oriented to direct play toward the park interior rather than toward adjacent residential and commercial properties. Lighting is not typical for WCPSS standards but was agreed upon to support city evening programming needs and to benefit the school's own early-season practice schedules.
- **Public Restroom:** Located just outside left field to meet WCPSS proximity requirements for spectator seating. Staff negotiated to push the restroom as far into the park as possible to also serve general park visitors. Fred Fletcher Park currently has no outdoor restroom despite hosting weddings, special events, yoga classes, and regular visitors.
- **Pedestrian Connection to Broughton High School:** A crosswalk connection across St. Mary's Street to leverage existing school parking, provide equipment storage access, and allow easy student-athlete access. This addresses the park's limited parking.
- **Regulation Multi-Purpose Field (Southern Portion):** The existing former softball field area will be reconfigured into a regulation-size multi-purpose field with natural grass and no lighting. This is

significant because the city has constructed only one regulation-size multi-purpose field in its entire park system (Buffalo Road Park) and converted one open space at Kiwanis Park to meet demand.

- **City-Funded Improvements:** Raleigh Parks will invest in upgrading the playground and relocating the picnic shelter uphill to improve connectivity, pedestrian circulation, and ADA accessibility within the park. • All field construction costs will be funded by WCPSS through the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) standards process.

Public Benefit

- The project leverages an existing relationship and advances needs of both organizations at no construction cost to the city for the fields and restroom.
- Downtown Raleigh is increasingly pressed for green space for active play. The city currently leases a field from the Raleigh Housing Authority on a year-by-year basis, creating potential for loss of that space to development.
- The regulation multi-purpose field could support programs including the Challenger Football program (currently held at Millbrook Park) and flag football, which has seen significant growth. The last athletic field built in the Raleigh park system was at Honeycutt Park in 2007.
- The lower field will be unlit and natural grass, intentionally balancing programming needs with neighborhood character.

Safety and Design Considerations

- Netting will be extended from the fence line near the restroom to address potential ball trajectory concerns, following the same approach used at Millbrook Park, Buffalo Road Park, and Walnut Creek.
- Lighting on the softball field will comply with UDO regulations for illumination timing and will use shielded, downcast fixtures with foot-candle assessments to prevent light spill into adjacent neighborhoods.

Q&A

- Kara Strang asked whether the public engagement process could change the current concept. Hisler confirmed it could, noting that engagement is conducted in partnership and that feedback may result in changes to orientation or configuration, though significant reconfiguration would be constrained by the site.
- Douglas Johnston asked about tree planting within the project scope. Hisler clarified there is very little vegetative impact in the current scope because it is not a full park project. Tree planting along

buffers could be pursued separately through a volunteer effort or future planning, potentially through the Leaf Out program or Trees Across Raleigh (a longstanding city tree-planting initiative). He noted the importance of being intentional about maintaining the park's existing character.

- Chris Periera asked about safety concerns with the restroom's proximity to the softball field. Hisler noted that design solutions such as extended netting (rather than fencing) will be used, consistent with approaches at other parks.

Timeline

- Late February 2026: Inform city council through the manager update process.
- Spring 2026: Public engagement.
- 2027: Amend the joint use agreement. City planning staff confirmed the project can proceed through permitting under the joint use agreement without requiring property transfer.
- 2028: Anticipated construction.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **Motion** to approve the January 2026 meeting minutes. **The motion passed unanimously.**

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Stephen Bentley presented the Director's Report.

- **Dix Park – Western Campus Demolition:** All state buildings on the western campus will be abated and demolished in 2026, returning the land to green space. The Flower Cottage will be retained. A \$3 million construction contract has been awarded for the work.
- **Dix Park Conservancy Agreement:** An updated agreement was presented to city council. The current Dix Park Leadership Committee will be reformed and reconstituted as the Dix Park Commission, with an additional community representative added. The relationship with the Parks Board is unchanged; the board still has an appointment to the commission.
- **Tucker House Lead Abatement:** A \$700,000 project to remove all lead paint and asbestos from the historic home.
- **Summer Camp Registration:** Out of approximately 15,000 available spots, nearly 10,000 campers were registered during the first three days of registration (Monday through Wednesday of that week).

- **Run for the Roses 5K:** The 45th annual event, one of the oldest 5Ks in the Triangle, was held at Walnut Creek Athletic Park. Every female finisher received a rose at the finish line in conjunction with Valentine's Day.
- **Black History Month:** Programming included events at Chavis Park on January 19 for MLK Day and February 7, as well as an upcoming event at Tarboro Road Community Center on Saturday.
- **Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve:** A new nature preserve map is now available online.
- **Raleigh Medal of Arts:** Nominations are open through the 30th.
- **Public Art:** A new installation by artist in residence Scott Hazard has been placed at Annie Louise Wilkerson Nature Preserve, overlooking a meadow.
- **Block Gallery Opening:** An art opening coincided with the quilters' convention at the convention center.
- **Fayetteville Street:** The department is leading a city effort to improve Fayetteville Street through enhanced plantings, visual public art, and activations, in collaboration with the Raleigh Planning Department.
- **Pullen Park:** The park has been partially closed and Lake Howell has been drained. The park reopens in April, and the new electric train is on-site. Pope House Museum reopens in May.
- **Top Greene Park:** The park will shut down in July for its bond project, a two-year undertaking.
- **Green Road Park:** Construction has been initiated on this park bond project.
- **"From Bond to Beyond" Open House:** Scheduled for March 26, 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the chapel. The event will celebrate all 22 bond projects that have been initiated, with updated designs, a DJ, and food.
- **"In Living Color" Exhibit:** An art exhibit at Dix Park will be up throughout February.
- **Job Fair:** Scheduled for March 19.
- **Nash Square Public Realm Study:** Bentley announced a study of Nash Square that will examine the tree canopy, walkways, and ADA compliance. Two park board members are needed to serve on a Community Advisory Group (CAG) for the project.
- **Biltmore Hills Master Plan Update / Cross Link Property:** The community requested that the city examine the Cross Link property adjacent to Biltmore Hills as part of a broader master plan update

for the park. Two park board members are needed for this project as well. Links to both project scopes are included in the Director's Report.

- The Chair indicated that a consolidated list of all volunteer needs from the meeting would be circulated.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Parks Committee

- The committee received an extensive presentation on the Forestville Road Park master plan. Key highlights included an interpretive loop trail integrated within the park, designed to accommodate different grading and surface materials and to appeal to users who prefer to measure their activity in loops. The committee also discussed the park's historic cabin, which has been determined to be too challenging and costly to fully refurbish. Instead, the cabin will be reinterpreted so that visitors can view different parts of the structure from various vantage points, with surrounding features highlighting the history of the site and its former residents.

Fred Fletcher Awards Committee

- The committee met at Kiwanis Park and finalized award winners (not yet publicly announced). The committee decided to offer two Outstanding Park Volunteer awards: one in horticulture and one in landscape. A nomination was also moved from the Financial Contributor category to the Award of Excellence category.
- **Key Dates:**
 - March 13 (4:00 to 6:00 p.m.): headshot photos for award winners and any interested board members. Formal invitations will be sent in April.
 - April 22: board members should have selected their presentation categories and contacted their assigned winners.
 - April 28: RSVP deadline.

Greenway Committee

- The committee reviewed the Leaf Out presentation and adopted its 2026 goals, two of which focus on greenway detours and closures, with the committee planning to leverage FRoG (Friends of the Raleigh Greenway) to supplement staff communications. A third major objective is to examine the collapse of bollards, which will be addressed at the March committee meeting.

Sustainability, Wildlife, and Urban Trees Committee

- The committee's primary work – the Leaf Out initiative – was presented to the full board during this meeting.
- The committee will not meet in March because the city council's regular meeting day falls on the primary election date. The city council meeting at which Leaf Out will be presented is scheduled for March 17 at 1:00 p.m. under the report and recommendation of the city manager. Committee members and supporters are encouraged to attend and wear green.

LIAISON REPORTS

Arts Commission (CORAC)

- Medal of Arts nominations are currently open. Steve Brechbiel has agreed to serve as the new Arts Commission liaison going forward.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC)

- CAMPO presented on the Triangle Bikeway, specifically the eastern section from the Morrisville area into Raleigh, extending to approximately the western edge of the NC State University campus. Discussion focused on maintaining the path at maximum width to accommodate multimodal activity without interference between users. The project has a long-term horizon of approximately 15 years.

Dix Park Leadership Committee

- The meeting was canceled due to ice. The committee is scheduled to meet the following week.

Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board

- Pullen Park reopens in April with the new electric train. Pope House Museum reopens in May. Top Greene Park will close in July for its two-year bond project.

2026 Environmental Awards

- One board representative is needed to serve on the Environmental Awards jury. The jury will meet Thursday, March 12, from 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. The application deadline has been extended.

Work Plan Committee

- Iain Burnett is seeking three to four volunteers, ideally a mix of new and established board members. The committee will receive the department's operational priorities from Stephen Bentley in March, then hold an in-person meeting to set focus areas. From there, the four standing committees will develop their own priority areas for the coming fiscal year. The time commitment is approximately two in-person meetings and some email correspondence. The goal is to complete the work plan by mid-May for presentation at the board retreat and approval in June.

Park Bond Engagement

- The Forestville Road Park CAG has completed its work and produced a comprehensive document (647 pages). The document will be reviewed again at the March 5 CAG meeting, with approval expected at that time. It will then be forwarded to the full board, which will determine how long to hold it before voting.

CHAIR REPORT

- The Chair announced plans for a board retreat in May, noting it will be a collaborative experience with staff focused on relationship-building, policy familiarity, and improved cooperation. Board members were asked to hold weekend dates in May.

OTHER BUSINESS

Biltmore Hills Motion

- **Iain Burnett** raised concerns about the direction of the Biltmore Hills Tennis Project, drawing on personal experience playing tennis in high school. He described the difference between schools with new courts and those with aging, cracked courts with drainage problems, noting that puddles on a court introduce an element of luck into the game where there should only be skill. He stated the current project trajectory would result in a complex with new, good courts alongside old, deteriorating ones.
 - He acknowledged the difficulty of revisiting a project already in design but noted it is not without precedent, citing a recent project where a city council member requested a water feature addition that increased the budget.
- **Motion** that the board request the City Council review the Biltmore Hills project in light of public feedback and consider a revision to the project plan that will include a rebuild of the existing courts and incorporation of a park structure for on-site staff. **The motion passed unanimously.**

- **Bob Edgerton** suggested the board retreat be held at Biltmore Hills Community Center to give board members an opportunity to visit the site firsthand.
- **April Love** supported the suggestion, noting she had raised the idea of a site visit at the previous meeting and emphasized the importance of the board seeing the facility in person, citing her own history as a camper, junior counselor, and director at Biltmore Hills and Tarboro Road.
- **Stephen Bentley** confirmed that site visits can be arranged in pairs (to avoid triggering public meeting requirements) and that the availability of the community center for the retreat would be explored.

Biltmore Hills Master Plan Clarification

- **Kara Strang** asked whether any decisions had been made regarding the Biltmore Hills project since the canceled January focus group meeting. **Stephen Bentley** clarified that the tennis project is an approved project currently in design and permitting, while the broader master plan update for the overall park (which includes the Cross Link property) is a separate effort. The January focus group meeting for the master plan was canceled due to weather.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.

CITY OF RALEIGH

**Raleigh Parks, Recreation, & Greenway
Advisory Board**

March 19, 2026

<https://youtu.be/ThL9ZM1lXdc>

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OVERVIEW

The Parks, Recreation, and Greenway Advisory Board (PRGAB) meeting opened with two public comments from the Southeast Raleigh tennis community thanking the board for its February vote on Biltmore Hills and raising continued concerns about next steps, transparency, and the community's vision for a first-rate tennis facility. Staff clarified that the City Council took no action on the matter at its most recent meeting and that guidance from the City Manager is pending.

The board received two presentations. Shawsheen Baker, Senior Engineering Supervisor for Raleigh Parks, presented on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project process, walking the board through project phases from preliminary research through construction, dedication, and long-term maintenance. The presentation included an overview of the city's public participation framework, cost estimation practices, construction manager at risk delivery, and the new "steady state" bond approach the City Council is adopting for future referendums.

Lauryn Kabrich presented the Forestville Road Park Master Plan, developed entirely in-house in nine months. She was joined by three Community Advisory Group (CAG) members – Andrew Stevenson, Mikayla Posey, and Roger Montague – who spoke to the site's history, community engagement process, and natural resources. The board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the master plan and forward it to City Council.

The Director's Report highlighted the Bailey Drive Gateway project at Walnut Creek Wetland Center, the City Council's endorsement of the Leaf Out resolution, the kickoff of public engagement for the Fred Fletcher Park / Wake County Public School System partnership, the LeadHERship conference hosted by Raleigh Parks, the 37th annual Black History Month program at Tarboro Road Community Center, and the Parks Bond and Beyond community open house scheduled for the following week. The meeting concluded with committee and liaison reports, an update on the bylaws review, work plan committee formation, and a discussion of eBike and eCycle use on natural surface trails and greenways.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Smith (Biltmore Hills resident and longtime tennis player): Spoke regarding the Biltmore Hills tennis complex.

- He provided historical context, noting that he played tennis at Biltmore Hills when the facility consisted of four red clay courts, which were later converted by the city to four hard courts and ultimately expanded to eight courts through community advocacy, a configuration that has remained for approximately 40 to 50 years.
- He thanked the board for listening to community concerns over the previous four to five months, for granting a vote on the issue, and for voting in February to forward the matter to the City Council for further consideration.
- He asked the board to identify next steps for moving the project forward and for building a facility the community can take pride in.
- He stated that when Raleigh voters approved nearly \$8 million in bond funding for the Biltmore Hills tennis center, they expected a first-rate facility, and that a third-rate facility would not reflect responsible stewardship of taxpayer and bond referendum funds.

Nicole Sullivan (Biltmore Hills Tennis Community): Spoke to follow up on the board's February vote and outline continued community concerns.

- She stated the community genuinely wants the project to move forward and has invested time and energy identifying outside expertise to support the planning process. She referenced two slide decks that had been circulated to the board covering tennis center options, landscape improvements, and a site stormwater assessment.
- She raised stormwater concerns regarding the topography of the site, noting that the lower courts sit at the bottom of a drainage path and that increasing impervious surface at the top of the site will likely worsen existing water issues affecting the lower courts.

- She stated the community's expectation, based on prior commitments, is that the facility would be comparable to Millbrook Exchange, and expressed concern that community input has not been meaningfully incorporated into the current scope.
- She noted that while focus groups and master plan meetings have been scheduled, the community is specifically requesting a dedicated meeting focused on the tennis center rather than broad master plan discussions, given the immediate funding and scope concerns.
- She raised transparency concerns regarding how the project will move forward and stated that, based on the current budget, adequate funding should be available to address the community's scope requests, including the stormwater and tennis needs the community has identified.
- She expressed concern that master planning cost estimates have not accounted for how rapidly the surrounding community has changed over the past 10 years and urged the city to address those changes in the planning process.

Staff Response: The Chair noted that a community focus group is scheduled at Biltmore Hills Community Center on April 6 at 4:00 p.m., but clarified that the focus group is specifically for master planning the Cross Link property and is not intended to address the tennis facility. Stephen Bentley advised that the City Council took no action on the Biltmore Hills matter at its Tuesday meeting and recommended that community members contact their district councilmember to continue engagement. The Chair acknowledged that the matter is now in the City Council's hands and expressed confidence that continued community engagement with councilmembers would result in a response.

RALEIGH YOUTH COUNCIL REPORT

Elsa Weiner, RYC Vice Chair, and Miles Frazier, RYC Chair, presented the committee report.

- **Past Community Service:** On March 11, the RYC partnered with Specialized Recreation and Inclusion Services and the Special Olympics to host Buddy Basketball at Chavis Park, combining shooting skills and a game format.
- **Past Meeting:** The March 9 meeting focused on resume building, with members working in groups to develop strong resumes based on their volunteer history and activities.

- **Upcoming Community Service:**
 - On March 26, RYC members will serve as ambassadors at the Lions Park Teen Egg Hunt (6:00 to 8:30 p.m.), promoting RYC and other teen program opportunities offered by the city.
 - On March 28, the RYC will host an egg hunt at Jaycee Park from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.
- **Past Conference:** The team building and leadership conference co-hosted with the Fuquay-Varina Teen Council was reported as a success, with attendance from Rocky Mount, Fayetteville, Cumberland, Hickory, Wilson, Winston-Salem, Salisbury, and Lake Norman, totaling 86 teens and 22 advisers.
- **Upcoming Conference:** The RYC will attend the State Youth Council Spring Convention the following month in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

PRESENTATIONS

PARKS CAPITAL PROJECT PROCESS

Shawsheen Baker, Senior Engineering Supervisor for Raleigh Parks, presented an overview of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) project process.

- **CIP Overview:** The Capital Improvement Program is a funding program supporting real or physical asset development and improvement for Raleigh Parks. Typical CIP project categories include system-wide planning, subsystem planning, new park and greenway trail implementation, major renovation and expansion, minor renovation and upgrades (primarily supported by penny tax revenue), and public art fabrication and implementation.
- **Project Process Overview:** The overall CIP project process progresses from preliminary research (reviewing the strategic plan, comprehensive plan, park system plan, and subsystem plans), through budget development, land or easement acquisition (where needed), master planning, schematic design, technical design, construction, and long-term maintenance. Staff noted the process is not strictly linear – for example, greenway easement and land acquisition sometimes does not occur until after schematic design is confirmed and the alignment is finalized.

- **Public Engagement Framework:** Two primary resources guide public engagement: the citywide Public Participation Playbook (a resource and reference guide) and the Public Participation Policy for Park Planning (an adopted City Council policy, jointly developed by staff and parks board members in 2020). Both documents are available on raleighnc.gov and reference the IAP2 spectrum of public participation, which includes inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The Community Advisory Group (CAG) approach used for bond projects falls under the "collaborate" level.
- **Pre-Planning Phase:** Before concept development begins, staff assemble a cross-departmental project team, conduct a situation assessment to understand the social and physical context of the project, establish scope, budget, and rough timeline, brainstorm the public engagement approach, and hire a consultant.
- **Design Phases:** Once the consultant is onboarded, the team develops alternative concepts for public review, advances the schematic design, conducts cost estimation and budget reconciliation, and presents the proposed schematic design to boards, commissions, and the City Council for approval. Schematic design represents approximately the first 20 to 25 percent of the overall design effort. Technical design follows, with milestone deliverables and reviews to ensure consistency with the approved concept and budget. At the 90 percent level, documents are submitted for permit review, and comments are incorporated into the final 100 percent construction documents for bidding.
- **Construction Documents:** Baker displayed examples of 100 percent construction documents from the 2014 Chavis Park Phase 1 development to illustrate that technical construction drawings are almost entirely black and white and substantially more detailed than schematic design drawings.
- **Bidding and Construction:** Projects over \$500,000 go through the City Council for project award and contract execution. For some bond projects, a construction manager at risk (CMAR) is brought on earlier in the process, though subcontractor work is still competitively bid. The main construction contract is typically executed at the end of the bidding process. Construction concludes with certificate of occupancy, substantial completion, punch list resolution, final completion, and dedication and opening.
- **Ongoing Communication:** During design and construction, staff maintain project web pages on raleighnc.gov, release newsletters and press releases, provide City Council updates, engage with CAGs, and install branded construction signage at project sites.

- **Bond Reporting Dashboard:** A new dedicated data reporting dashboard for the 2022 Park Bond is available on raleighnc.gov. The dashboard displays project location, description, a link back to the project website, projected versus actual cash flow, and three spend indicators showing bond-allocated budget, other funding sources, and total spending. Data is fed live from the city's financial and project management systems and refreshes nightly.
- **"From Bond to Beyond" Community Open House:** Scheduled for one week from the meeting date, the event will showcase all 2022 bond projects with project managers available to facilitate conversations.
- A board member asked whether Baker's design phase percentages referred to time, budget, or effort. Baker clarified they refer to design effort across the overall project process.
- **Bob Edgerton** raised concerns about cost escalation of approximately 15 percent per year across multiyear bond project life cycles and asked how staff account for inflation while remaining honest in early estimates.
 - Shawsheen Baker explained that cost estimates are conducted at schematic design (20 to 25 percent), design development (50 percent), and the 90 percent technical design level, and that estimates include contingency and escalation projected annually out to the anticipated construction date. For larger bond projects, a CMAR is brought on early to provide constructability checks and independent cost estimates, which are reconciled against consultant cost estimates at every milestone.
 - Stephen Bentley added that for the 2022 bond, staff brought on cost estimators and architects before the referendum to verify council project requests, which is why the final bond totaled approximately \$275 million rather than the earlier \$150 million estimate, because escalation through mid-construction was built in.
 - Stephen Bentley also explained the city is adopting a new "steady state" approach to bond referendums: rather than large referendums every eight to ten years, the City Council will pursue multidisciplinary referendums every four years (covering parks, housing, and transportation) without a tax increase. In between referendums, an advanced planning budget will allow staff to take priority projects through approximately 50 percent design and near-permitting so that construction can begin immediately after voter approval.

- Stephen Bentley noted the city is also beginning to explore design-build delivery, which the North Carolina legislature approved for municipalities in approximately 2013 or 2014. Design-build brings the architect and contractor on at the same time, allowing for parallel design and construction activities that compress project timelines and improve cost efficiency.
- **Iain Burnett** asked whether penny tax revenue allows the department to front-load future-year revenue. Staff clarified that penny tax funds are restricted to maintenance work (roof repairs, fence repairs, boardwalks, and similar).
- **Kate Dixon** asked whether future city bonds, including a possible affordable housing bond, would use the steady-state model. Staff confirmed the City Council is considering a fiscal year 2026 bond of approximately \$200 million (split between \$100 million for housing and \$100 million for transportation) with no tax increase, following the same steady-state concept.
- **Kate Dixon** asked why Raleigh has not historically used design-build delivery. Staff explained the approach was not legally available to North Carolina municipalities until relatively recently and that prior city construction leadership may have been more risk-averse. Staff noted that market conditions have since expanded and that all project delivery types are now on the table.
- **Kate Dixon** asked how staff verify that projects are being constructed to specification. Staff explained that construction oversight is a combination of staff, consultants, and sometimes third-party testing companies to confirm materials and installation meet specifications.
- **Doug Johnston** observed that the Leaf Out initiative will require continuous attention to tree planting opportunities across projects and noted that the Leaf Out work will establish a more thorough, citywide lens for identifying non-native and historically invasive species, with every city department required to follow Leaf Out guidance going forward.
- **Iain Burnett** asked whether the Parks Department encourages time capsules from local communities. Stephen Bentley noted that he is only aware of one, located in Nash Square, and added that a previous time capsule opening revealed water damage and deteriorated contents.

FORESTVILLE ROAD PARK MASTER PLAN

Lauren Kabrich presented the Forestville Road Park Master Plan. She acknowledged the Parks Planning Team and Kimberly Siran, Greenway Project Manager, who served as the landscape architect for the project, noting that this is the first master plan in some time to be completed entirely in-house, which allowed the process to be completed in nine months.

Community Advisory Group Presentations

Three CAG members – Andrew Stevenson, Mikayla Posey, and Roger Montague – joined the presentation.

- **Andrew Stevenson (Bryson Village resident):** Provided background on the site and surrounding context.
 - The property consists of approximately 25 acres in northeast Raleigh (District B), near the intersection of Buffalo Road and Forestville Road.
 - Nearby park resources include the Buffalo Road Aquatic Center (approximately two to three miles away), Horseshoe Farm Nature Preserve (approximately four miles away), and the Neuse River Greenway (approximately 1.5 miles away, though not easily accessible on foot due to I-540, the Neuse River, and a lack of sidewalks).
 - Approximately 1,800 new residential units are in development or in the planning and permitting phases around the park site, including apartments, single-family homes with ADUs, and townhomes.
 - Few of the surrounding neighborhoods other than Bryson Village currently have playgrounds, making the park a significant future resource for families with children.
- **Mikayla Posey (Bryson Village resident, CAG member):** Described the master planning process and community engagement.
 - The process included four phases: initial community input (ideation and dreaming), development of three alternative concepts with varying levels of intensity and amenity

combinations, consolidation into a single concept plan, and the current master plan adoption phase.

- Community engagement included CAG working meetings, three public meetings, three online surveys, a site visit, yard signs, flyers, and social media outreach through neighborhood Facebook groups and other channels.
- Over 450 direct participants contributed to the planning process.
- Posey emphasized the importance of the community engagement process and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate as a CAG member.
- **Roger Montague (CAG member, descendant of the original property owner):** Spoke to the site's unique history and natural resources.
 - Montague is the great-great-grandson of Kearney [phonetic] Church, who established the plantation that includes the Forestville Road Park property. His grandfather was the last person to farm the property, and his mother inherited the park parcel.
 - Montague's son, Preston Montague, was the artist in residence at Dix Park in 2025.
 - Montague donated five or six historic deeds – one dating back to 1836 – to the city's historic resources program, and referenced the minutes of the Wake Crossroads Baptist Church, which date back to 1789 and contain documentation of the family and property history.
 - He identified the property as extremely unique in Wake County for its combination of documented history and natural resources.
 - He praised the Parks staff for their professionalism and expressed that serving on the CAG was an absolute pleasure.
 - He highlighted the importance of preserving the mature pecan trees on the site, some of which may have diameters of four to five feet and are approximately 200 years old, as well as the forested resources that may be biologically unique due to their age and non-hybridized status.

- He emphasized the importance of protecting the stream that bisects the property, noting that the entire watershed is either developed or under development, making stormwater runoff and water quality management critical to the park's long-term function.
- He offered to personally lead board members on a site tour and indicated that he is currently working to locate the historic cotton gin on the property.

Master Plan Design Goals and Concept

Lauren Kabrich presented the design goals and concept plan.

- **Design Goals:** Honor history, foster community, conserve nature, and inspire play.
- **Site Organization:** The stream serves as a natural delineator. The east side of the park is designated as passive space with low-touch amenities, including a mixture of paved and natural surface trails with small pockets of amenity areas for picnics and respite. The west side of the park consolidates more active uses.
- **West Side Amenities:**
 - **Adventure Play Area:** A large play area designed with natural materials and a forested treehouse theme, reflecting the wooded character of the site.
 - **Pollinator Meadow:** Located in the one cleared area of the site (where old growth trees are absent), incorporating an amenity area for immersive experiences.
 - **Multi-Sport Court:** Specific uses to be determined during further engagement as the project advances into schematic design.
 - **Restroom Building and Picnic Shelter:** Co-located with the play area, incorporating a terrace plaza concept (modeled on Hill Street Park) to accommodate the grade change on site.
- **Historic Gathering Area (Northwest Corner):** Anchored by the historic pecan grove, this area will serve as a memorial and interpretive gathering space. It will honor the full breadth of the site's history, from indigenous use (evidenced by arrowheads found on site), through antebellum and plantation-era history, Wake County agrarian history, and present day. The area will include an art piece created

from repurposed materials from the historic log cabin found on the property by Montague's father in the early 1960s.

- **Trails:** The trail system is intentionally designed in loop configurations, with a mixture of paved and natural surface trails to accommodate both immersive natural experiences and accessibility for families with strollers, older visitors, and those needing more even surfaces. Trail design decisions were informed by community engagement feedback.
- **Greenway Connection:** The master plan designates a future small greenway corridor segment extending from the top of the site to connect the park to the broader greenway network, including a future pedestrian connection toward the Neuse River Trail. Pedestrian connections are also provided at multiple points around the park edges to serve surrounding and planned residential developments.
- **Sustainability:** The plan integrates green stormwater infrastructure (GSI), a pollinator meadow, and educational signage and interpretive art throughout the site.

Next Steps and Funding

- The master plan will be presented to the City Council the following month for formal adoption.
- Schematic design is anticipated to begin in earnest in early 2027. Advanced design, permitting, and construction timelines are to be determined based on funding availability.
- **Development Agreement Funding:** The project has \$600,000 available through a development agreement negotiated with an adjacent developer during rezoning. These funds will be used for site stabilization (including stabilizing the historic cabin, interim stormwater mitigation, and erosion control) and for advancing the project through schematic design and into construction drawings, positioning the project to move quickly when additional funding becomes available.

Q&A

- **Doug Johnston** asked whether the current project team would remain engaged through schematic design. Lauren Kabrich confirmed the core team would stay involved and that a consultant team would likely be brought on for more advanced engineering work due to capacity constraints. Community members will also remain engaged.

- **Kate Dixon** asked about the level of natural heritage inventory completed on the property. Lauren Kabrich responded that a full tree survey has been completed (identifying well over 1,400 trees), preliminary work has been done with the city's historic resources team and the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program, and an archaeological study was completed in 2011. Dixon suggested contacting the Wake County natural heritage inventory team (previously led by George Hess of NC State) as an additional resource, and staff confirmed that bioblitzes have been conducted at other properties including Neuse River Park.
- **Kate Dixon** asked how decisions are made about whether a trail should be paved. Lauren Kabrich explained that the decision is driven by community engagement, and that the Forestville Road Park plan reflects a blend of trail types to serve both those who prefer immersive natural surfaces and those who need accessible paved surfaces.
- **Linda Pearsall** commended Parks staff for their knowledge and commitment to protecting the site's resources during her participation in a recent site visit. She emphasized the importance of balancing public access to the pecan grove with protecting the trees from damage due to foot traffic and construction activity.
- **Steve Brechbiel** commended the Parks staff for the quality of the work and asked whether this project illustrates the new pre-planning approach that allows projects to advance toward shovel-ready status before funding is identified. Stephen Bentley confirmed that the developer contribution was opportunistic and that the approach represents a small-scale example of the citywide steady-state planning model.
- **Iain Burnett** noted that the plan's designation of a future greenway corridor to the Neuse River Trail is a subtle but important element of the project, establishing a future route that will benefit the surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Doug Johnston** identified two additional strengths of the project: the value of the developer contribution as a model for how stakeholder groups (such as FRoG) might focus their own contributions, and the opportunity to create visual connections to adjacent properties through the tree planting program, supporting habitat and natural beauty objectives.
- Motion to approve the Forestville Road Park Master Plan and forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council. The motion passed unanimously.

- Following the vote, Roger Montague returned to the podium to commend the Parks staff, noting his 40 years of federal government experience and stating that staff conducted every meeting professionally, provided excellent information, and that board members should feel proud of the staff's work.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Approval of the February meeting minutes was deferred to the April meeting, as the draft minutes had not been uploaded in time for review.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Stephen Bentley, Director of Raleigh Parks, presented the Director's Report.

- **Bailey Drive Gateway (Walnut Creek Wetland Center):** The multi-year project was officially bid and awarded at the first City Council meeting in March. The project will deliver a new pavilion, public art, and a connection to the school and the Rochester Heights historic neighborhood, addressing a long-standing access issue where residents had to either drive or walk around the park to enter. The project is a partnership with the Conservation Fund and the Transportation Department, with additional grant funding from the National Park Service.
- **Leaf Out Initiative:** Stephen congratulated the board on the City Council's endorsement of the Leaf Out resolution.
- **Biltmore Hills:** Stephen stated he is awaiting guidance from the City Manager on next steps for the project, as the City Council took no action at its Tuesday meeting. He expects feedback from the Manager and council in the near term.
- **Fred Fletcher Park / WCPSS Partnership:** Public engagement for the Fred Fletcher Park partnership with the Wake County Public School System has officially launched. Staff will present to the Hillsborough CAC the following week, and a public meeting will be held April 1 at Jaycee Park.
- **LeadHERship Conference:** Raleigh Parks hosted the LeadHERship conference through NC State, which focuses on women in the parks and recreation profession. Approximately 150 women from

across North Carolina attended, participating in motivational sessions and skills workshops. The conference was led by a former Raleigh Parks employee who is now a professor and speaker at UNC. Feedback has been positive enough that Raleigh may host the conference again in the future.

- **37th Annual Black History Month Program:** Held at Tarboro Road Community Center on February 21 and hosted by Octavia Rainey, the event drew more than 100 attendees. Speakers included Bentley and Congresswoman Deborah Ross. Rainey recognized Raleigh Parks staff, who have hosted and contributed to the program for 37 years.
- **Adapted Archery Program:** A new adapted archery program has been launched through Specialized Recreation and Inclusion Services.
- **Rowing Season:** Dates, times, and locations for the Lake Wheeler Open and the ACC championships will be distributed to the board along with parking passes.
- **Prescribed Burn Video:** A drone video of a recent prescribed burn at Annie Louise Wilkerson Nature Preserve has been posted to YouTube.
- **Parks Bond and Beyond Community Open House:** Scheduled for the following Thursday. Staff are partnering with the Transportation Department on a "Pedal to Parks" campaign for Bike Month in April.
- **USA Today Best Parks Poll:** Dix Park has been nominated for both "Number One Park" and "Number One Playground" in the USA Today poll. Board members were encouraged to vote.
- **PRGAB Retreat:** The retreat will be held the afternoon of May 29 and the morning of May 30 at Biltmore Hills Community Center. Topics will include the work plan, the City Manager's proposed budget, and the draft board engagement guide Iain Burnett has been developing. A community walk is planned for Saturday of that weekend.
- **Kate Dixon** noted that at the City Council meeting for the Leaf Out presentation, she understood there was a request for Bentley to return to the council at a future meeting to share additional information. Bentley confirmed that the City Manager will provide follow-up guidance and that Councilmember Branch indicated the council needs more information, but that no specific direction has been received yet.

- **Linda Pearsall** asked for an update on the Leaf Out resolution the board had forwarded. Bentley confirmed the City Council officially endorsed the resolution, which directs the City Manager to consider it during budget development. He encouraged board members to maintain communication with their council members regarding budget priorities during the April budget development period.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Parks Committee

- The Parks Committee's recent work was summarized in the full presentation of the Forestville Road Park Master Plan, which the full board received and approved during this meeting.

Greenway Committee

- The Greenway Committee report was included in the meeting agenda and not read aloud.

Sustainability, Wildlife, and Urban Trees Committee

- The SWUT Committee did not meet in March.
- **Kate Dixon** reported on the Leaf Out presentation to City Council, noting that significant community outreach resulted in a strong turnout of supporters wearing green for the meeting. Claude Albastian, a former Parks Board member, spoke during the public comment period in support of the 24,000-tree campaign and asked supporters in the audience to stand, resulting in approximately 40 people identifying themselves as attending in support of trees rather than solely for St. Patrick's Day.
- Charles Craig and Zach Manor presented Leaf Out to the City Council. Dixon, who spoke on behalf of the board, noted the council had extensive questions during the staff presentation and that she adjusted her prepared remarks accordingly.
- The City Council voted to adopt the board's resolution as its own, which Dixon interpreted as a strong signal to the City Manager regarding council priorities.

- Councilmember Megan Patton asked whether staff could begin thinking about an RFP for partnering nonprofits to accept whatever tree planting funding is allocated in the budget, to avoid losing the planting season.
- Patton also responded positively to Leaf Out's sixth focus area (strengthening community partnerships and relationships with nonprofits on trees and natural resources), which Dixon described as modeled in concept on the Arts Council funding approach, but suggested concentrating first on the 24,000-tree initiative (focus area seven) before expanding into that broader funding model.

Fred Fletcher Awards Committee

- No report.

LIAISON REPORTS

Arts Commission (CORAC)

- The Arts Commission is scheduled to meet the following week. Steve Brechbiel is the new board liaison and will attend.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC)

- BPAC did not meet due to weather cancellation.

Dix Park Leadership Committee

- The Dix Park Leadership Committee report was included in the meeting agenda and not read aloud.
- **Chris Pereira** asked whether the memorandum of understanding currently being revised between Raleigh Parks and the Dix Park Conservancy could incorporate tree protection provisions. Bentley clarified that tree protection will be addressed through the Leaf Out program rather than through the MOU, which focuses on operational responsibilities between the two entities. Bentley noted that Leaf Out will include stronger no-go zone and tree protection provisions in the festival and event permitting process, informed by lessons learned from events such as Dreamville in 2025. Pereira expressed

concern that festival season is approaching before the Leaf Out policy is fully developed; Bentley indicated he would confirm the timeline with Charles Craig and Zach Manor.

Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board

- The Historic Resources and Museum Advisory Board report was included in the meeting agenda and not read aloud.

Work Plan Committee

- **Iain Burnett** thanked Steve Brechbiel, Jeff Havener, Daniel, Douglas Johnston, and Stephen McGuinness for joining the 2026 Work Plan Committee. Burnett will schedule an initial meeting by the end of the month and will forward draft priorities from Bentley and the Parks Department to the standing committee chairs for discussion at their April meetings. The goal is to have the work plan completed by the May board retreat, with final approval in June.

CHAIR REPORT

- The Chair reminded the board that the retreat will be held May 29 and 30 at Biltmore Hills Community Center, and encouraged members to begin identifying topics they would like to explore in greater depth, including Biltmore Hills and other passion projects.
- The Chair congratulated Kate Dixon and the Sustainability, Wildlife, and Urban Trees Committee on the successful adoption of the Leaf Out resolution by the City Council, noting that the initiative originated as a board work plan item the prior year.

OTHER BUSINESS

PRGAB Bylaws Update

- The bylaws approved by the board have been submitted to the City Attorney's office and returned with no substantive changes. The bylaws will next go to Community Engagement and then to the City Council for final approval.

eBikes and eCycles on Trails and Greenways

- **Kate Dixon** raised concerns about the increasing use of heavier bikes, particularly eBikes, on natural surface trails at Windemere Beaver Dam Park. She noted that staff indicated there is currently no specific bike policy for natural surface trails and asked whether similar issues are occurring at other parks.
 - Stephen Bentley responded that feedback from staff primarily concerns eBike speed on greenways rather than wear and tear on natural surface trails, though similar discussions are ongoing regarding one-wheeled devices.
- **Chris Pereira** reported that Eastgate Park is experiencing issues with both eBikes and eCycles on informal paths, including the construction of unauthorized jumps. He noted that the broader issue extends to street takeovers by groups of riders on eBikes and eCycles in residential neighborhoods, which are difficult for Raleigh Police to enforce.
- **Daniel Gilligan** noted that the Greenway Committee has discussed eBikes every three to six months, highlighting the challenge posed by the multiple classifications of eBikes and the fact that Parks Department greenway speed limits are advisory rather than enforceable (Raleigh Police holds enforcement authority).
- Bentley added that some eBikes are now being sold without pedals, which technically removes them from the bicycle classification, and that the Raleigh Police Department is working to enforce pedal requirements for bikes operating on greenways.
- **Daniel Gilligan** offered to research how other cities are addressing eBike regulation on greenways and trails. Bentley noted that approaches vary widely nationally, with cities such as Boulder encouraging eBike use to reduce vehicle traffic while others pursue design-based mitigation strategies along long stretches of greenway. Spring "Share the Greenway" campaigns will continue to address user conflicts as trail use increases with warmer weather.
- **Bob Edgerton** reported that the trees planted at Mount Hope Cemetery three years ago are all doing well.

- The Chair closed the meeting by reminding members of the Parks Bond and Beyond community open house the following week (4:30 to 7:30 p.m.) at Dix Park.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned.

Director's Report

City Council Highlights

April 7, 2026, City Council Meeting

CONSENT ITEMS – Budget Amendment - Approved

Budget Amendment - Forest Ridge Park/Great Trails - Approved

The Great Trails State Program, established in 2023, provides funding for new or existing local trails that are recognized by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. The City was awarded \$350,000 for the Forest Ridge Park Mountain Bike Trail Extension project. This construction project will triple the length of existing City trails designed for mountain bikers, by adding 7.3 miles of trail tread. On August 8, 2024, the City's Grant Committee reviewed and authorized submission and applying for the Great Trails State Program Grant. A budget transfer/amendment is necessary in the amount of \$350,000 to accept the grant.

Authorize a budget amendment in the amount of \$350,000 to appropriate the grant funding. Authorize necessary budget transfers to provide for the required grant match

Budget Amendment - Contract Services - Fourth of July Event - Approved

In preparation for the America 250 celebration on July 4, 2026 at Dix Park, a budget amendment is necessary to appropriate additional funds to support the scope of the event. With the event returning to Dix Park, increased resources are required for programming, logistics, transportation, operations, and public safety. The overall budget increases are driven primarily by enhanced safety measures, transportation and parking needed to accommodate a large crowd, including event perimeter fencing and contractual site security. It is recommended that \$500,000 from FY25 General Fund capital reserves be recognized and appropriated to fund the additional contractual services required to support this event.

Authorize a budget amendment to appropriate \$500,000 in FY25 General Fund capital reserves to provide contractual services for the Fourth of July event at Dix Park.

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE CITY MANAGER

Dix Park Commission – Appointees

On January 20, 2026, the City Council authorized the City Manager to execute the third Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Dix Park Conservancy. Within the terms of the MOA is the recommendation to improve and rename the Dix Park Leadership Committee to a newly constituted "Dix Park Commission". The new commission has a total of three (3) appointees from the Mayor and City Council. It is anticipated the Commission will meet at least once a month; members will serve two-year terms with the ability for two renewals (total six-year appointment); the Commission is a public body following the North Carolina opening meeting requirements; a city appointee and Conservancy appointee will serve as Co-Chairs; and, no elected officials will serve, with the exception of the North Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture. During the meeting staff will request the Mayor and City Council appointments to the Dix Park Commission.

Based on the new MOA with the Dix Park Conservancy, three (3) appointments to the new Dix Park Commission are requested. This includes (1) appointment from the Mayor and two (2) appointments from the City Council.

Mayor's Appointee = Charles Meeker

City Council Appointees = Ashton Fisher and Christopher Moore

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF THE HISTORICAL RESOURCES AND MUSEUMS ADVISORY BOARD

Annual Report and FY27 Work Plan - Request from the Board to Revise the Board Name – Approved

The 2025 Annual Report and 2026-2027 Work Plan of the Historical Resources and Museums Advisory Board (HRMB) will be presented during the meeting and are included with the agenda materials. In addition, the HRMB voted in February 2025 to request that Council consider revising the name of the board, changing the word "Historical" to "Historic". An excerpt from the meeting minutes are included with the agenda materials. Should Council desire to endorse the name change, it would be appropriate to adopt a resolution; a draft resolution is included with the agenda materials.

Approve the annual work plan. If Council concurs with the request to revise the title of the HRMB, adopt the resolution.

NOMINATIONS

Parks, Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board - One Regular Vacancy. A resignation has been received from Jack Hilton.

Department Programs, Events and Announcements:

Business Process Management Division:

Here is the link to see upcoming volunteer events. This site is updated regularly and does not reflect private events we are running. It shows single-time events and ongoing opportunities we are actively recruiting for:

<https://raleighnc.gov/parks-volunteer>

To sign up for an event, click on the event they are interested in and it will take you to more information and you will be able to click to register. You will be asked to either create a CERVIS profile or sign into one they already created.

CERVIS even sends them our release form automatically now.

Recreation Division:

Project Update – Community Gardens:

- We are excited to take the next step to build our Community Gardens program. We hosted an open house at **Barwell Road Community Garden** on Saturday April 11 where guests could explore the garden, check out the plots, and even pre-select a favorite bed before our official garden rental system launches.

Youth Programs:

- Celebrating the historic Artemis II voyage, we took the opportunity to focus on space flight for our Track 2 participants. **Space Week** took off in a big way—literally! Participants launched their very own rockets using 2-liter bottles, vinegar, and baking soda. Watching them soar through the air made for a fun-filled day of hands-on learning and discovery.

Community Centers:

- We were all about celebrating the spring season as we hosted fourteen (14) different events between March 27 – April 4. Activities ranged from World Theatre Day at Lake Lynn, “Hopping Down the Bunny Trail at Marsh Creek and “Glowed Up Musical Egg-sploration” at John Chavis Memorial Park. Over the week of activities we had 2,500 join us to enjoy this wonderful time of year.
- The 2022 bond projects are going to make incredible impacts to the Method Road and Tarboro Road communities. We are already planning for how we will continue to serve the communities with programs and services while community center renovation projects are happening. In the Method community we will utilize the nearby Powell Drive Neighborhood Center. We are inviting the neighborhood to Join us for our inaugural **Powell Drive Community Day!** Friday April 17 and Saturday April 18. Friday night, we will host a meet and greet with Director Denise Hill and Assistant Director Jason Rodri where you can pick their brains about programs YOU want to see at Powell Drive. On Saturday, we will be going all out with inflatables, music, food trucks, a free-throw contest, and more! We will also have many City of Raleigh program area representatives with exciting opportunities to share.
 - Details:
 - Friday, April 17, 5 - 8 p.m.
 - Saturday, April 18, Noon - 4 p.m.
 - Cost: Free
 - Ages: All

Rowing Season *Reminder:

- This year Lake Wheeler will host both the Lake Wheeler invitational (LWI) and the ACC Women’s Rowing Championships.
 - The LWI will impact park operations beginning Wednesday April 22 – Saturday April 26. Race days are Friday & Saturday when we will have twenty (20) teams from across the country. Teams include: Duke (Hosting), UNC (Hosting), Alabama, Boston College, Clemson, Georgetown, George Washington, High Point, Kansas, Lehigh, Louisville, Miami, Navy, Old Dominion, Oklahoma, SMU, Tulsa, Villanova, UVA & West Virginia
 - The ACC Championships will impact park operations Beginning Wednesday May 13 – Saturday May 16. Race days are Friday and Saturday.
 - We will have parking and event access for members of the PRGAB. Please work with Giavonia if you plan to attend the upcoming Lake Wheeler Invitational

Parks and Natural Resources Division:**GSI Maintenance Team – One-Year Milestone**

The GSI Maintenance Team recently celebrated its one-year anniversary. Comprised of four staff members, the team is dedicated to maintaining green stormwater infrastructure with a focus on improving water quality, enhancing habitat, and supporting community engagement.

Over the past year, the team has demonstrated strong resource stewardship by repurposing a canopy and shipping container from the former West Street location for use at Dix Park. This effort resulted in cost savings while promoting efficient and sustainable use of existing assets.



Urban & Community Forestry Grant Award

The City of Raleigh has been awarded a \$1,000,000 Urban and Community Forestry grant through the NC Forest Service, funded by the Inflation Reduction Act. This funding will expand access to trees and the many environmental, social, and economic benefits they provide.

Urban trees play a critical role in cooling communities, improving mental health and wellbeing, increasing property values, and supporting environmental job creation. In Raleigh, 100% of the funding will be dedicated to tree planting and maintenance in areas of greatest need.

As part of this award, the City will conduct community outreach and education, as well as tree planting, pruning, and removal of hazardous trees along streets, in City parks, and across other City-owned properties within identified communities. This work will expand tree canopy, enhance public safety, improve tree health and resilience, reduce extreme heat, and strengthen stormwater management.

Resources Division:

Capital Planning

The Lassiter Mill Greenway received an additional \$3.5M in LAPP grant funding, for Locally Administered Projects Program through the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT). The construction contract award will be on the April 21st Council agenda.

Communications

- Prescribed Burn video highlight:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ofm8YLr_iJo&source_ve_path=NzY3NTg&embed_s_referring_euri=https%3A%2F%2Fraleighnc.gov%2F
- Preparing to launch a spring safety & etiquette greenway campaign mid-April called “Many Ways. One Greenway.”

Dix Park

- The Rocky Branch project received \$1,092,000 from Congresswoman Ross Community Project Fund.
- Work at Gipson Play Plaza to improve the sand bowl drainage begins the week of April 13th. This work is expected to take one week.
- The West campus demolition is underway.
- DHHS fully exits our campus the week of April 13th.

- The full calendar of spring programs and events is live: <https://dixpark.org/events>
- Dix Park was Highlighted in the NY Times, 36 Hours in Raleigh: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/03/26/travel/things-to-do-raleigh.html>

Arts

- The Arts Commission presented its Annual Arts Grants recommendations to City Council at the April budget work session, recommending \$1,955,803 in funding for 36 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations.
- *Air Chrysalis* installation opening at Walnut Creek Wetland Park (April 22) showcases a temporary public artwork made from reclaimed materials, created with community volunteers as part of the SEEK Raleigh program.
- *Continuum: Classical to Contemporary Islamic Art* on view at Block Gallery (April 8–June 26), with a public reception on April 22.
- Raleigh’s inaugural Poet Laureate Program is now open for applications through April 17, 2026, establishing a new citywide role focused on community engagement and creative programming.
- Raleigh Arts and United Arts Wake County are now accepting applications for the 2026-2027 Arts Learning Community for Universal Access. Raleigh and Wake County-based nonprofit arts and cultural organizations are encouraged to apply by Thursday, April 30 at 4 p.m.
- Artist opportunities are available for upcoming projects, including the 2027 Pullen Exhibition Program and GoRaleigh/GoWake Access Transit Facility public art.

HRM

- Pullen Amusements has partially reopened as the Lake Howell shoreline improvement project continues. Most attractions are open, though the lake area remains closed to visitors.
- Spring programs include Yoga in the Galleries at COR Museum, Mordecai’s Heirloom Plant Sale, World Cup viewing parties at Moore Square, and an exhibit opening at Top Greene.

Zoning Related Items:

Raleigh Parks participates in the review of all rezoning petitions filed with the City of Raleigh. We analyze whether a proposed rezoning is consistent with parks-related policies in the City of Raleigh [Comprehensive Plan](#) and provide feedback to help rezoning applicants, Planning Commission, and City Council understand how a proposed development may impact nearby parks, greenways, and natural resources.

Via the rezoning process, Park Planning staff often pursue public-private partnerships (P3) with developers to enhance our park system, by way of zoning conditions or development agreements. We leverage



partnerships to encourage additions to our greenway trails, parks, and public art, to improve the level of service for all park users and citizens of Raleigh.

Visit the [Parks Rezoning Cases spreadsheet](#) to see the current rezoning cases that Raleigh Parks has an interest in!

Note: Raleigh's [Rezoning Engagement Portal](#) at engage.raleighnc.gov/rezoning is the best location for more information on the rezoning process and more ways to get involved.

Board Retreat Dates May 29 (afternoon) and May 30th (morning)

2022 PRCR Bond Proposed Community Engagement							
	Level of Participation	PRGAB	City Council	PRGAB Representative	PRGAB Representative		Last Meeting Date
Greenway and Connection Projects							
Big Branch Greenway Connector	Involve	SD Recommend	Approval	Iain B.	Steve B.		11/18/25 Council approval of SD. Engagement complete
Lake Lynn Trail Loop	Inform	Update	Update				01/16/2025 - PRGAB approval of SD. Engagement complete
Lake Wheeler Road	Inform	Update	Update				Engagement Complete
Marsh Creek Greenway Feasibility	Involve	Update	Update	Rep needed	Rep needed		
Mine Creek Greenway Improvements	Consult	Update	Update	Jeff H.	Bob E.		10/07/25 Council approval of SD. Engagement complete
Neighborhood & Community Connect	Consult	SD Recommend	Approval	Chris P			11/4/25 Council Approval of SD. Engagment Complete
Smoky Hollow Park Implementation	Consult	SD Recommend	Approval	Chris P.	Carrie H.		Engagement Complete. Council Approval of SD
Walnut Creek Greenway Improvements	Involve	SD Recommend	Approval	Gregory E.	April L.		01/17/25 Council approval of SD. Engagement complete.
Park Site Projects							
Biltmore Hills Tennis	Consult	SD Recommend	Approval	Chris P.			10/01/24 - Council approval of SD. Engagement Complete
Dix Park: Play Plaza	Inform	Update	Update				Complete
Dix Park Phase 2 Design	Consult	Update	Approval	Bob E.	Carrie H.		
Erinsbrook Park Implementation	Consult	SD Approval	Update	Chris P.	Daniel G.		06/03/2025 Council approval of SD. Engagement Complete
Green Road Park Improvements	Involve	SD Approval	Update	Steve B.	Daniel G.		05/16/2024 PRGAB approval of SD. Engagement complete.

River Cane Wetland Park	Collaborate	SA & CAG Approval	Update	Jack H.	Daniel G.	CAG	5/6/2025 Council approval of SD
		MP & SD	Approval				
Neuse River Park	Collaborate	SA & CAG Approval	Update	Doug J.		CAG	02/10/26 - CAG and PARTF grant presentation
		MP & SD	Approval				
South Park Heritage Walk	Collaborate	SA & CAG Recommend	Approval				
		SD Recommend	Approval	Kara S.	Jeff H.	Joint CAG	11/4/25 Council Approval of SD. Engagement Complete.
Strickland and Leesville Rd Park	Inform	Update	Update	Chris P.	Jeff H.		02/15/2024 PRGAB approval of SD. Engagement complete
Park Building Projects							
Dix Park: Full Ops Building Upfit	N/A	Update	Update				
John Chavis Historic Park Phase 2	Collaborate	SA & CAG Recommend	Approval	Kara S.	Jeff H.	Joint CAG	12/03/2024 Council approval of SD. Engagement complete.
		SD Recommend	Approval				
Method Community Center	Involve	SD Recommend	Approval	Kate D.			11/09/24 - Council approval of SD Engagement Complete.
Sertoma Art Center	Involve	SD Recommend	Approval	Jeff H.	Iain B.		05/06/2025 Council approval SD. Engagement Complete.
John Top Greene Center	Collaborate	SA & CAG Recommend	Approval	Kara S.	Jeff H.	Joint CAG	12/03/2024 Council approval of SD. Engagement complete.
		SD Recommend	Approval				
Tarboro Community Center	Collaborate	SA & CAG Approval	Update	Kara S.	April L.	CAG	08/19/25 - Council approval of SD. Engagement Complete
		SD Recommend	Approval				

2022 PRCR Bond Proposed Community Engagement

Abbreviations:

CAG - Community Advisory Group MP - Master Plan

SA - Situation Assessment

SD - Schematic Design