



Park and Recreation Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS **DATE: JULY 21, 2025**

FROM: PARKS, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: JULY IS “PARK AND RECREATION” MONTH; “BUILD TOGETHER, PLAY TOGETHER” CAMPAIGN, DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS; AND RECOGNITION OF 2024 EMPLOYEES OF THE YEAR

ISSUES:

Presentation of programs and services of the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department highlighting how “Parks Make Life Better” and the National Recreation and Parks Association July campaign “Build Together, Play Together” video, and recognition of the 2024 Employees of the Year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Park and Recreation Commission:

1. Receive report on department highlights;
2. Receive video presentation of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department “Build Together, Play Together” campaign; and,
3. Recognize the Department’s 2024 Employees of the Year.

BACKGROUND:

The National Recreation and Parks Association’s (NRPA) “Build Together, Play Together” campaign celebrates the many ways park and recreation professionals across the country foster a sense of belonging in their community by providing welcoming and inclusive programs, essential services for all ages and abilities, and safe, accessible spaces to build meaningful connection.

On July 10, 2018, the City of Riverside’s Council adopted the Proclamation to support Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department (PRCSD) by declaring July as “Park and Recreation” month. Since then, the PRCSD has continued to provide an array of programs and services to enhance the lives of the residents of Riverside and align itself with NRPA’s mission. A dedicated staff prides themselves on providing high-quality services to the community with award-winning programs and activities for residents of all ages and interests in a variety of safe and attractive parks, landscapes, and facilities; from maintenance, park renovations and

construction projects; to special events, athletics, social services, cultural arts, school aged programs, the summer food lunch program and much more. The primary objective of PRCSD is to provide the community with resources, safe places to relax, adequately maintained facilities, physical activity and to have fun. With the collaboration of community groups, local businesses and non-profit organizations, staff and volunteers ensure that “Parks Make Life Better.”

DISCUSSION:

To support the NRPA campaign and July as the Park and Recreation month, PRCSD will offer programming and events themed to “Build Together, Play Together”, such as the Summer Concerts in the Park, 4th of July Fireworks Spectacular, Summer Splash, STAR and STEM Day Camps, swim lessons, senior trips and tours, youth sports, recreation swim, and community park pop-up activities through the Rec-2-Go mobile.

According to NRPA’s 2024 Engagement with Parks report, people place a high value on the programs and services that park and recreation agencies deliver to their local communities every day and strongly support their mission. Facts state that:

1. More than 276 million people in the United States visited a local park or recreation facility at least once during the past year.
2. Seven in 10 (73%) U.S. residents have at least one local park, playground, open space, or recreation center within walking distance of their homes.
3. 86% of U.S. adults seek high-quality parks and recreation when choosing a place to live.
4. 91% of U.S. adults agree it is vital for local park and recreation agencies to engage with every member of their community to ensure offerings meet their needs.
5. 97% of visitors report some feelings of inclusion or belonging at their local park and recreation spaces.

The mission of PRCSD is to provide innovative recreational experiences and social enrichment opportunities to address the changing needs of the people of all ages and cultures, in a variety of safe and attractive parks, trails, landscapes, and facilities. The City of Riverside values and understands community needs and has already invested into these spaces. The award-winning Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department prudently maintains over 3,400 acres 68 developed and natural parks with 14 community centers, 1 nature center and 7 pools. The facilities offer an assortment of amenities for all ages and interests. The Department’s Recreation Division provides high quality programming, events, and extended learning opportunities throughout the community. The Department’s Parks Division performs daily landscape maintenance at the parks, hosts volunteer events (including tree plantings and park clean-ups), oversees park improvement projects, and maintains the quality of the community centers and facilities.

The Department also provides the Special Transportation Program which offers transportation services to senior and disabled residents within city limits. This year marked over 50 years of service, and to honor the community’s continued support, we hosted a series of special free ride days as a gesture of appreciation for their ongoing commitment to utilizing these essential services. Additionally, the Arts & Cultural Affairs Division was officially added to the Department’s portfolio, with a focus on promoting artistic expression, preserving cultural heritage, and fostering

community engagement throughout the city. They provide support to over 100 special events throughout the City of Riverside.

The Planning Division led more than 50 projects and continues to actively monitor them through completion. Highlights include the renovation of the pool deck at Shamel Pool, playground resurfacing, installation of new playground equipment, the addition of nine pickleball courts at Arlington Park, wayfinding signage, dredging of the lake at Fairmount Park and many others.

The Department recognizes the efforts of committed staff who produce quality programming and events and maintain quality park facilities and would like to recognize the 2024 PRCSD Employees of the Year: Recreation Services Coordinator Marnie Smith, Park Maintenance Worker Anthony Barnhill, and Senior Project Manager Gema Ramirez. The Department would like to thank them for their passion and dedication to the Department and residents.

The presentation video highlights the department's "Build Together, Play Together" campaign and how it aligns with the City of Riverside Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The "Build Together, Play Together" campaign contributes to **Strategic Priority 1 – Arts, Culture and Recreation**, and the following goals:

Goal 1.1 - Strengthen Riverside's portfolio of arts, culture, recreation, senior, and lifelong learning programs and amenities through expanded community partnerships, shared use opportunities, and fund development.

Goal 1.2 - Enhance equitable access to arts, culture and recreational service offerings and facilities.

Goal 1.3 - Improve parks, recreational amenities, open space, and trail development, and fulfill critical lifecycle and facility maintenance needs.

Goal 1.4 - Prioritize safety at parks, trails, arts, cultural and recreational facilities.

This action aligns with each of the Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Activities and programs offered through PRCSD serve a variety of special interests, benefit the City's diverse populations, and result in greater public good.
2. **Equity** – The PRCSD activities support the City's racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, identity, geographic, and other attributes of diversity and is committed to advancing the fairness of treatment, recognition of rights, and equitable distribution of services to ensure every member of the community has equal access to share the benefits of community progress.
3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – PRCSD continues to work with non-profit and community groups to offer low to no cost programs and activities. In addition, PRCSD continues to seek grants and sponsorships to offset the cost of city programming.
4. **Innovation** – The PRCSD staff continue to research and recommend new and innovative programming throughout all age groups.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – PRCSD is committed to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future and ensuring the City's capacity to persevere, adapt and grow during good and difficult times alike.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Jessica Ochoa, Recreation Superintendent
Approved by:	Pamela M. Galera, Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director
Attachment:	Presentation Video