

RECREATION DIVISION

RECREATION PROGRAM PLAN



Reviewed Annually: Mrs. Kathleen O'Connor

Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

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Kathleen O'Connor
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1. History & Mission Introduction

A year after Westchester Parks came into being in 1922, recreation began. On May 24, 1923, a county director of recreation was appointed and she immediately began organizing playgrounds, hikes with the Westchester Trails Association, story hours and "Play Days" in which thousands of children participated in a variety of games at the only developed park the county had at the time.

With the success of recreation programming in 1923, a ground breaking Recreation Commission was formed. Its development was announced in a *New York Times* article on January 27, 1924. The article, entitled, "Five Women to Teach a County to Play," detailed how the Westchester County Recreation Commission was charged with creating recreation centers, amusement places and places for public entertainment. It was felt that Westchester residents had forgotten how to play during modern times and the commission was going to teach people to enjoy themselves again. They also wanted to establish children's playgrounds in congested areas. The commission believed that if recreation was available, "there would be less need for hospitals, poorhouses, reformatories and penitentiaries." The result of all this would "be fewer gangs, gangsters, and wayward boys and girls." With children having access to recreation, it would make them "future worthwhile citizens." The Recreation Commission became the first such commission in the state and only the second in the country at the time. The commission continued to innovate and developed such programs as "Camp Mommy" which gave single moms a parenting break at Croton Point Park. Realizing the need for an indoor space for activities, they built the County Center and established the Art Workshop in its basement that taught arts and crafts.

After 38 years and due to changes in the way county government operated, what had been the Westchester County Recreation Commission was merged with the Westchester Park Commission on Jan. 1, 1962 to become the present day Westchester Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation. Today, Westchester County PRC continues the innovative traditions of the Recreation Commission.

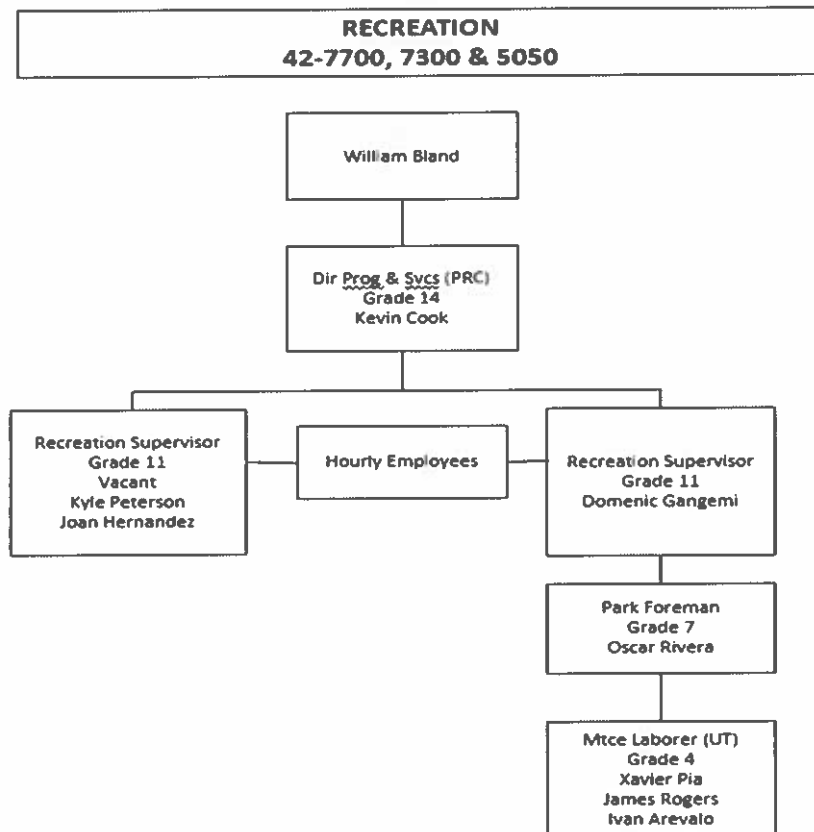
Westchester County PRC - Recreation Mission

To provide the best and most innovative leisure programs and services for the diverse populations of Westchester County, while complementing and supplementing those of local municipal recreation departments and avoiding duplication of their programs and services through program analysis, citizen input, program development and program innovation.

CAPRA Accreditation

This accreditation provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park, recreation and conservation agencies throughout the United States by providing agencies with a management system of best practices. CAPRA is the only national certification of park, recreation and conservation agencies and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community. Achieving CAPRA is the best way to demonstrate that the agency and the staff provides the community the highest level of service.

Staff Organizational Chart



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2. Community Planning & Development

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION OF PLAY, RECREATION AND LEISURE:

In the planning process, the fundamentals of play, recreation, and leisure must be considered to determine how the program is evaluated and what patrons should expect from the experience. When planning or evaluating new programs, directors and supervisors survey the interest and feedback of the public, by attending meetings and conducting surveys to determine program satisfaction, success, and visibility. These measures allow the public to communicate specifically what, when and how their recreation needs are best served by our division.

A. Foundations of Play

NRPA defined “play” as spontaneous and creative activity or expression. Play is an important facet of PRC planning efforts. It is self-chosen and self-directed. This is a sample of the types of play that PRC offers:

- Hiking trails
- Biking trails
- Picnic areas
- Pools and beaches
- Golf courses
- Gardens
- Horse trails
- Green spaces

These opportunities allow participants to use their imaginations, have freedom and choice, to learn, grow and obtain an appreciation for areas made available to them, and potentially want to preserve and protect those areas.

Foundations of Recreation

NRPA defines “recreation” as an activity in which a person engages for a positive purposeful end. Recreation for PRC means a program that has a specific date, time and location. Examples of recreation programs include:

- Movie nights
- Family fun days
- Concert series
- Senior Citizen events
- Fitness

- Heritage Festivals

Foundations of Leisure

NRPA defines leisure as activities that are considered free, unoccupied time during which a person may indulge in recreation. Like play and recreation, leisure opportunities are available to participate in recreational activities that are unstructured, on the community's time, at their own pace, at their own "leisure." Examples of PRC's leisure activities are:

- Dinosaur Garden at Lasdon Park
- North/South County Trailway
- Hiking trails at Nature Center
- Kayaking – Croton Point
- Fitness loop at Kensico Dam

These are recreation activities that aren't programmed, as in there is no start and finish time, other than a facilities opening or closing time, or a schedule to follow. Some fall into one or more categories. Special events, festivals, concerts, and others have a time and place, but people are free to participate on their own schedules and how they choose.

B. Organizational philosophy, mission & vision, and goals and objectives

PRC Mission Statement

To create life-enriching experiences at safe, clean, and affordable parks and preserve our natural resources through responsible leadership.

PRC Vision Statement

Continuing the tradition begun in 1922 of providing the best parks, recreation facilities, programs and services while providing stewardship for our parkland and protecting its natural resources for the people of Westchester County.

Recreation Division Goals & Objectives

Goal 1: Attract and retain an effective and energetic workforce

Objectives:

- Foster a culture of trust.
- Create an environment that encourages staff to share innovative ideas and recognize each other's contributions.
- Provide desired technology and tools that support excellence and innovation.

- Foster teamwork with our internal divisions (marketing, finance, parks) through including them in communications and attendance at our Recreation Division staff meetings.
- Encourage flexible schedules that allow employees to enjoy healthy and balanced lifestyle choices.
- Celebrate recognized staff and their achievements

Goal 2: Provide excellent programs and services to meet community needs

Objectives:

- Using the Westchester County recent recreation survey, identify and respond to survey results covering a wide variety of programming for people of all ages, abilities and interests.
- Develop an annual programs and services plan that is responsive to changing demographics and supports accreditation standards.
- Create new partnerships/collaborations with other agencies, organizations, or individuals and evaluate current partnerships.
- Create systems and capacity to ensure successful program planning, coordination and evaluation.
- Ensure program procedures include guidelines on safe interactions with the public.
- Address programming needs of historically underserved communities

Goal 3: Improvements to Kensico Dam Park

Objectives:

- Increase budget funding to improve appearance and safety of the park and equipment
- Improve staff training in parks related responsibilities; pruning, snow removal, small equipment maintenance and building cleaning.
- Develop plan for new passive sitting area using current under-utilized grass area.
- Continue to monitor progress of capital project of new maintenance building.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Population

Westchester County, New York's estimated 2020 population is 965,385 with a growth rate of - 0.07% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. Westchester County, New York is the 8th largest county in New York.

Income

Medium Household Income - \$99,489

Medium individual income - \$57,952

Persons in poverty – 7.6%

Based on the latest census information (Quick Census Facts), Westchester County is considered more diverse than it was in 2010. The Hispanic/Latino population increased 3.9% from 2010 and 65 and older increased 17.9% from 2010.

Demographics

White population – 52.2%

Black/Africa American – 16.7%

Hispanic/Latino – 25.9%

Am. Indian & Alaska Native – 1%

Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander – 0.1%

Veterans - 27,000

People with disabilities under 65 – 5.89%

C. Constituent interests and desired needs

How PRC determines constituent needs:

PRC incorporates community input as an integral part of the planning process. The input comes from the public and citizen groups in a variety of ways such as holding community meetings, and conferring with Friends groups on a regular basis throughout the planning process.

Westchester County Resident Recreation Preference Survey Results 2022

Westchester County Parks conducted its first comprehensive resident recreation preference user survey since 2008. The County commissioned WBA Research, Lanham, Maryland in 2022 to conduct an updated survey in an effort to respond accordingly and help guide the department in strategic planning, future investment, maintenance and improvements to its parks. The survey also obtained information from residents regarding their use of County facilities, what they think of those facilities, and how more residents can be attracted to use County recreational facilities.

Quantitative Methodology

- Conducted July 3 through October 3, 2022.
- 15,000 random addresses equally weighted/sampled and defined by zip code for the southern, central and northern regions.
- Letter included a link for on-line survey or telephone, followed up by calls from WBA.
- 792 completed surveys.
- 95% confident level (+/- 3.5%)

The provided full survey contains complete detail and data. Below are some key findings.

Park Usage

- Increased usage of Parks across the board when compared to 2008.
- 94% have visited at least one County Park in the past 12 months.

(Top Four: Kensico Dam Plaza, Bronx River Reservation, Saxon Woods & Glen Island Parks).

- 84% have visited at least one County Recreation Facility in the past 12 months.
(Top Three: Playland Park, County Center, Muscoot Farm).
- 88% use walking, hiking and biking trails.
- 54% use nature trails and centers.

Park Benefits

- 97% agree County Parks improve physical health and fitness.
- 96% parks preserve open space and environment.
- 95% agree parks make Westchester a more desirable place to live.
- 95% agree parks improve mental health and reduce stress.
- 91% have positive impressions of the physical conditions of parks (84% in 2008).
- 80% are satisfied with overall value of County Parks (67% in 2008).

Park Investment (allocation of funds)

- 75% Improve and maintain existing parks
- 61% new trails and pathways
- 56% Water-based recreation (swimming, boating)
- 52% Open Space
- 43% County Center

Needs Assessment (sampling of needs being met)

- 89% Walking, Hiking, Biking being met (76% in 2008)
- 84% Nature Trails and Nature Centers (67% in 2008)
- 77% Golf Courses (69% in 2008)
- 76% Picnic Areas (73% in 2008)
- 73% Playgrounds (62% in 2008)
- 45% Cricket Pitch (n/a 2008)
- 39% Cross Country Skiing (29% in 2008)
- 38% Overnight Camping (30% in 2008)
- 35% Outdoor Ice Skating Areas (30% in 2008)
- 26% Pickle Ball Courts (n/a in 2008)

County Center Reopening – (what should return or new)

- 76% Concerts
- 56% Family Entertainment
- 44% Recreational Events
- 41% Professional Sporting events
- 33% Trade Shows

Covid Park Usage

- 43% of residents increased usage
- 37% plan to maintain increased usage (North 41%; Central 43%; South 30%)

On-Line Surveys

By soliciting e-mail addresses from program attendees and park visitors, the department also conducts surveys to determine customer response to particular programs and services. Some surveys are created by using QR codes, which people can fill out in real time.

Emails and Correspondence

Users are encouraged to comment about any aspect of PRC through parksinfo@westchestergov.com, our customer comment line. Our customer service representative handles the comments, sends responses and tracks all of them for analysis. The public frequently mails correspondence that is also used to determine trends and quality of service. This is our primary vehicle for getting feedback from the public.

Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

Comments posted on social media about programs and services provide immediate responses from the public.

D. Creation of constituent-centered culture

Meeting with Community Groups

For the development of our facility improvements projects and recreational programs, this is accomplished by holding community meetings, and conferring with Friends groups on a regular basis throughout the planning process.

Office of the County Executive

The County Executive and his staff encourage the public to get in touch with him via the telephone, Facebook or Twitter. Any comments referring to parks and recreation are sent to PRC for review and response.

To better serve constituents, PRC must be aware of community interests, attitudes, behaviors, income, age, family composition, and educational needs. Constituent needs combined with historical demand and emerging trends are also used to determine program offerings.

E. Experiences desirable for clientele

All the programs, events, opportunities and facilities that PRC offers are designed to promote desirable experiences for everyone. Staff plan from perspective of clients with the goal that how they receive information, registration and participation will create a customer for life. Access and inclusion for everyone is a priority and efforts are made to accommodate everyone. When planning, the recreational benefits are emphasized prior to any implementation.

F. Community Opportunities

Westchester County PRC provides opportunities for the community (County of Westchester) to come together for a common purpose and provides a unique opportunity for its residents from young to old that they would likely never get to experience elsewhere.

- MS Walk
- Salute to Seniors
- Cultural Heritage Festivals
- Kensico Music Festival
- Burger Bash
- Wine and Food Festival
- Disabled Picnic
- Summer Concerts
- Outdoor Movies
- White Out Dinner
- Bicycle Sundays
- Fitness in the Parks
- Pickleball Tournament
- High School Basketball Tournament
- Summer Camps
- Golf Camps
- Cornhole Tournament

3. Program Development & Benefits

Program participants are involved in the development of the Department's programs and services in many ways. Some are described below.

Westchester County Parks Board

Members of the Parks Board are appointed by the County Executive and are approved by the Westchester County Board of Legislators (BOL). They serve an advisory role to the Department's Commissioner and in a policy-making role in relation to the approval of program policies and fees. Their monthly meetings are open to the public. The Parks Board also establishes subcommittees to concentrate on a specific activity or program, i.e. golf. The members of the Board are advocates for the park system and adept at gathering feedback on the wants and needs of the public.

Board of Legislators Government Operations Committee

The Board of Legislators Government Operations Committee meets regularly to discuss PRC and other department issues brought to their attention by the Parks Commissioner and constituents, and items of their own concern. Members of the PRC professional staff are invited to attend these committee meetings when specific park issues are on the agenda.

Friends Groups

PRC works with a number of Friends groups who offer an interest in the department as a whole or in a specific facility. Members of these organizations offer great assistance in the development of programs. The Westchester Parks Foundation, Friends of Muscoot Farm, Bronx River Parkway Reservation Conservancy, Garth Woods Conservancy, and the Friends of Lasdon Parks and Arboretum are some of these organizations.

Special Groups

PRC works with groups who have a specific interest involving our parks. These include groups such as the Louis A. Brennan Lower Hudson Chapter of the New York State Archaeological Association and the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC). Members focus on the conservation of county resources; natural, historic, and archaeological. Several Audubon society's work with the curators of our nature centers drawing participants on birdwatches and walks in our parks.

Volunteers

Community volunteers are utilized in our parks in a variety of capacities, most notably groups and organizations who participate in the annual Pitch In for Parks spring clean-up day each year. PRC also serves as a conduit for numerous Eagle Scout and gold award projects. A full-time employee of the Westchester Parks Foundation is the director of volunteers.

Social Media

The public provides instant comments on programs they have attended through comments on Facebook and Twitter.

Desired experiences for participants

All the programs, events, opportunities and facilities that PRC offers are designed to promote desirable experiences for everyone. Staff plan from perspective of clients with the goal that how they receive information, registration and participation will create a customer for life. Access and inclusion for everyone is a priority and efforts are made to accommodate everyone. When planning, the recreational benefits are emphasized prior to any implementation.

Participant Benefits

Individual Benefits – the positive personal experiences the participants receive through participation:

- Psychological Well-being
- Personal Development
- Increase Health
- Sense of Accomplishment
- Reduction in Stress
- Personal Appreciation

Personal benefits are really endless, and more importantly participation outside in nature increases those benefits even more. Whether it be a senior citizen refining fine motor skills while participating in fitness, a family taking a walk on a trail, or a mountain biker training their body and mind while getting great exercise and fresh air. Recreation programs are very important to the health and wellness of individuals.

Community Benefits

When recreational and leisure opportunities are available, the community benefits by building stronger families, supporting youth and seniors and by creating stronger connections to neighborhoods by creating pride. Involving the community and all the program partners creates a sense of ownership which encourages more of the public to get involved, healthy and working together.

Economic Benefits

When the parks system was first developed in the early 1920s, one of the economic benefits was that there was huge increase in land values. Today, not only do land values continue to increase, but programs generate revenue and events create tourist dollars. The impact of this is that Westchester County Parks generates about \$183 million in revenue a year. In addition, park needs for programs, events and ongoing maintenance provide job opportunities for full-time, hourly and seasonal employees.

Environmental Benefits

Part of the PRC mission is to have safe and clean parks as well as preserve natural resources. PRC strives to involve citizens in outdoor activities to promote personal well-being and

environmental health. PRC programs strive to create greater awareness, knowledge, and value in protecting the environment and ecological importance as continued development and other environmental pressures increase. PRC is dedicated to preserving greenspaces and sustainable best practices.

Program Design

When planning new programs, Recreation staff first survey the interest and feedback of the community by attending various meetings, hosting visioning sessions, and distributing program evaluations to determine program satisfaction, success, and visibility. These measures allow the community to communicate specifically what, when, and how their recreation needs are best served by the agency.

Program Data

Self-analysis within the Department

- Cognition program and service determinants
- Cognition of current leisure trends
The Covid-19 crisis helped put a major focus on health with people taking better care of their own well-being. One of the trends is that people are spending more time outdoors. Outdoor activities like hiking, running, and cycling have increased in popularity. Also, more people are not only looking to exercise more but benefit from being out in nature.
- Cognition of behavior domains: physical skills, interests, and intellectual skills
- Content of program
- Determining who the audience will be
- Cost of program
- Check for budgetary allotment
- Estimated revenue tally (fee or no fee)
- Anticipated attendance figures
- Determine possible inter-departmental program
- Determine possible sponsorship opportunities
- Determine possible Inter-Municipal Agreement (IMA)
- Determine possible cooperative agreement
- Determine possible volunteer participation
- Fill out a Program and Service Determinants form

Analysis from Outside the Department

- Cognition of community inventory
- Residents' Recreation Survey

- Feedback from Social Media
- Inventory of the community so as not to duplicate programs offered by local municipalities
- Determining the appropriateness of the venue

Scope of New Program

Once the internal and external analyses have been reviewed, the scope of the program must be determined in light of the following points:

- Balance between structured vs. unstructured activity
- Balance between passive vs. active recreation opportunity
- How the program will be administered: self-directed, leader-directed, facilitator-directed

Once the internal and external analysis is completed, and the scope of the program has been determined, the program is then developed, scheduled and presented.

4. Program Design & Opportunities

Self-Directed Programs and Services

Westchester County PRC offers numerous different types of self-directed recreation opportunities that one can participate in without any type of leadership or instruction. For most of these programs pre-sign up is not required and anyone can drop in and enjoy the parks and facilities. Quality service and cost effectiveness are key factors in determining the types of programs offered. The following are examples of self-directed recreation opportunities that PRC offers to its residents:

Hiking Trails

Biking Trails

Golf Courses

Parks

Pitch in for Parks

Boat Launches

Pickleball Courts

Basketball Courts

Special Events

Aquatics – Pools & Beaches

Playgrounds

Playing Fields

Senior Programs

Leader-Directed Programs and Services

PRC offers traditionally structured leadership programs. While these types of programs are more typically provided by municipal recreation agencies, PRC supplements local services, conscious to avoid duplication of services. Leaders teach these skilled-based programs offered by the division. The following are examples of leader-directed recreation opportunities that PRC offers to its residents:

Camps- Golf, Basketball, Baseball, Ecology, Farming, Music

Fitness Programs (yoga, Zumba, walking, circuit training)

Fit Mobile

Tournaments – pickle ball, cornhole, basketball

Learn to swim for youth and adults

Facilitated Programs and Services

PRC is able to expand our program offerings by partnering with various external organizations and community groups by providing staff assistance and / or facility use as well as publicizing their programs in the PRC calendar of events on our website. These partnerships help meet the needs of the public and bring together a variety of groups for a common cause. The following are examples of facilitated recreation opportunities:

Cultural Heritage Celebrations

Westchester Young Marines

Northeast Special Recreation

Department of Senior Services

Westchester Street Rod Association Car & Truck Show

Simon Properties Mall Walks

Westchester County Police Night Out

MS Walk

American Heart Association Walk

Signature Society White Out

Sikhs of Westchester

Westchester Magazine

Cooperative Programming

PRC strives to make opportunities available to everyone, however at times the department seeks out sponsorships. Throughout the year Businesses and individuals respond in a variety of ways, from donating financial assistance for programs or pitching in for parks. PRC partners with various organizations to provide supplemental programming at our parks and facilities. PRC offers programs, events and provides opportunities that are not normally available through local municipalities within Westchester County. Below are some examples of cooperative programming:

Westchester Parks Foundation

Sharc Creative

Robison Oil

Captain Lawrence

NY Presbyterian Hospital

White Plains Hospital

Con Edison

WHUD Radio

Putnam Northern Westchester BOCES

North East Westchester Special Recreation

Miracle League

Program Objectives

PRC serves a diverse audience with a range of experience, a variety of ethnicities, age groups, and socio-economic levels, our program schedule is extensive. Objectives are reviewed after each program and evaluated yearly by the Recreation division to assess the value of each program to its targeted constituency. Factors such as the scope of recreation staff involvement and attendance are chief determining factors as to whether the program will be repeated. An example of this for our new Pickleball courts at Tibbetss Brook Park:

Goal: To grow the game of Pickleball for all ages, levels and abilities by creating and cultivating an environment that promotes health, social interaction, good sportsmanship and fun by providing continuing skill and mentoring programs to enhance organized recreational and competitive play.

Objective:

- 1) Offer tournament play to attract all levels of participation
- 2) Have a local pickleball instructor offer pickleball lessons (open, semi-private or private lessons)
- 3) Offer a women's only, mix doubles and open play, for intermediate and advanced players.

Scope of Program Opportunities

In keeping with our mission of offering the most feasible number of programs to the widest audience: our audience comes from all socioeconomic levels, racial and ethnic backgrounds, ages and genders. In our effort to not duplicate programs, facilities or services offered by local municipalities, we provide programs that are larger in scope and serve a greater number of constituents.

5. Inclusion

Westchester County Parks utilizes the resources of the County Planning Department and the Department of Social Services in order to reach underserved populations. The Planning Department produces maps that identify such populations as Hispanic, non-white, and mixed races, and population density, population by city or town, and snapshots of a particular town or village including poverty level. The Department of Social Services identifies underserved populations with the Department of Social Services and the Westchester Park Foundation.

Camp Morty: Westchester Parks Foundation, in partnership with the Westchester County Parks Department, the Department of Social Services, and the Department of Community Mental Health, operates Camp Morty, a sleep-away camp. Campers come from foster care, live in homeless shelters, in child protective services, or otherwise receive services from Westchester County DSS to be eligible for Camp Morty. Camp Morty operates at no cost to participating families.

Camp Morty offers a quality outdoor residential camp experience for children residing in underserved communities in Westchester County. Our philosophy is to provide each camper with a unique opportunity for personal development, working with others and building confidence to succeed. Our number one goal is to create an exciting, fun-filled environment where children can feel safe, and where they can learn to educate the mind, body and spirit. We teach skills in a gentle, supportive way, and emphasize values such as concern for others, cooperation, sportsmanship and environmental awareness.

In the summer of 2023, Camp Merriwood opened and will serve 200 underserved teenagers. The camp will offer leadership workshops, mentoring, and professional development weekly service projects.

Trails Without Limits: PRC also in conjunction with the Westchester Parks Foundation created the Trails Without Limits program allows individuals living with cerebral palsy, spinal cord injury, amputation, paraplegia, are elderly, or have other disabilities the opportunity to immerse themselves in Westchester County Parks by using an All-Terrain Trackchair.

Bee-Line Bus: In 2022, to help underserved families, the County Executive waved the fees to enter county beaches and pools for the summer. In addition, fees on the Bee-Line bus system were also eliminated for the summer helping to create more access at county parks. The program continued in the summer of 2023.

Additionally, Westchester County Parks & Recreation offers free programs and special events.

Examples are:

Park and Read (English & Spanish)

Cultural Heritage Celebrations

Summer Concert Series

Screening Under the Stars

Fitness programs in the Parks

Mall Walks

Bike Sundays

July 3rd Fireworks and Music Show

6. Marketing & Communication

Westchester County Parks recently conducted its first comprehensive resident recreation preference user survey since 2008. The County commissioned WBA Research, Lanham, Maryland in 2022 to conduct an updated survey in an effort to respond accordingly and help guide the department in strategic planning, future investment, maintenance and improvements to its parks. The survey also obtained information from residents regarding their use of County facilities, what they think of those facilities, and how more residents can be attracted to use County recreational facilities.

The goal of Westchester County PRC to continually educate the residents of our county regarding the physical, social and mental health benefits of leisure play and exercise is achieved through county wide surveys like the one mentioned above, strategic planning by staff and marketing and promotional initiatives including but not limited to the resources discussed below.

Strategic Staff Planning: The County Parks staff frequently put together scheduled and impromptu planning meetings, attend local professional organization meetings and state & national conferences. The staff is continuing to learn how to inform the public of the recreational opportunities that are offered by the department and County Park facilities.

County Wide Programs & Special Events: At most of our programs and events, an information booth/table is set up to educate the public about all County Parks offering, which included providing marketing material about our upcoming programs, park facilities and our trails & bike paths. These programs and events allow the department staff to personally promote the department to residents and non-residents who may not be aware of the numerous recreational and wellness opportunities that our department has to offer.

Marketing Communication: The County Parks Department Marketing Division relies heavily on the use of social media, department website, media relations and email to educate and communicate with residents regarding the numerous recreational programming and facilities.

Our staff regularly communicates news, events, programs and services information through email marketing as part of a digital marketing plan. Our subscriber database of over 40,000 people get up to date information in real time right to their smart phones or desktop. Communications include but is not limited to newsletters, customer surveys, upcoming program/events information and special promotions.

Department Website: Our Marketing Division staff is dedicated to keeping the website up to date with the latest offerings. Our website <https://parks.westchestergov.com/> provides information regarding how to access and utilize the facilities and locate information about our programs and services that are offered.

Social Media: The Marketing Department promotes department leisure programs and facilities using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok, LinkedIn, Threads and YouTube. These platforms are utilized to post photos and videos to motivate residents to attend events, register for programs, visit our facilities, promote our Department and target new residents. One of the greatest benefits of marketing through social media is that it helps

you cut marketing costs without sacrificing results. With so many consumers using social media every day, this presents a great opportunity for County Parks to reach their online audience.

Rexpo: Westchester County Parks plans to hold a recreation exposition – REXPO – on Saturday, April 5, 2025, at the Westchester County Center in White Plains from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Exhibits, demonstrations and interactive displays showcasing the many diverse recreation opportunities available throughout Westchester County Parks will be presented for the public. We are anticipating attendance of 3,000 – 5,000 Westchester residents. Each county park facility and location – such as Muscoot Farm, County Golf Courses, County Nature Centers, Pools & Beaches and Recreation events and programs- will be represented.

7. Wellness Education

PRC strives to educate its residents concerning the benefits of pursuing and maintaining personal health and wellness and specific programs are designed to enable residents to pursue healthy and active lifestyles. PRC believes that our facilities are the best gyms that our constituents can have and we encourage them to make use of them to achieve health and wellness in a variety of ways. Programs that promote health and wellness in the county include but are not limited to the following:

Muscoot Farm

Muscoot Farm was originally a gentleman's farm owned by the Hopkins family and used as their summer estate and dairy farm from 1880 to 1924. In 1924 the family moved to the farm year-round and continued the dairy business until 1967 when Westchester County acquired the property. In 2016 Muscoot was re-named in memory of Alfred B. DelBello, who served as Westchester County Executive from 1974 to 1983, and who played an integral role in preserving the park as an interactive farm during his tenure.

Today, Muscoot Farm provides an educative experience for visitors through our historic buildings, home to goats, sheep, cattle, horses, donkeys, and a wide variety of poultry animals, public programming, and events year-round made possible by the Friends of Muscoot Farm, a non-profit organization run entirely on donations from the public.

Programs at Muscoot:

Farmers Market

PRC Farmers Market provides Westchester County residents and non-residents with a healthy food environment. It is a place where farmers and neighbors come together to educate each other about nutrition, cooking, and farming. With abundant produce, our farmers market help increase fruit and vegetable consumption. The Muscoot Farm Farmers Market is every Sunday from 9:30 AM until 2:30 PM from April until November.

Sample of vendors include:

Bear Mountain Coffee Roasters

Bella's Bake Shop

Bombay Chutney Company

Bongo and Capacci Pasta

Broken Bow Brewery

CM Cookies

Collier's Candle Company

Early Learners Program

Westchester County children ages three-and-a-half to five can participate in Muscoot Farm's Early Learners Program that will focus on a free play approach to learning. The program will utilize the farm and natural areas allowing students to develop mentally, socially and physically through exploration, free play, themed activities, crafts, baking, science, art and more!

Morning Farming Chores

The Morning Farm Chores program offers an inside look into what it takes to be a farmer at Muscoot Farm. Participants will have the opportunity to feed and care for our animals while learning about their diets, maintaining their environments, and how we monitor the health of our livestock and poultry.

Hilltop Hanover Farm

Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center is dedicated to the development and advancement of sustainable agriculture, environmental stewardship, community education, and accessible food systems for all.

In 2011, the non-profit organization The Friends of Hilltop Hanover Farm and Environmental Center, Inc. a 501 (c) (3) was established. Today the Friends conduct the farming and educational programming, in a cooperative public-private partnership with the County of Westchester.

Today the farm is a regional education center that offers programs on healthy and sustainable food production and teaches skills for small-scale suburban and urban farming techniques, illustrating sustainable living practices for the region and local communities.

The farm features demonstration models for backyard farming, rainwater harvesting, composting, and greenroof technology. Visitors can hike the farm's 3.5 miles of woodland trails, picnic on the farm grounds, purchase a CSA share, or produce from our Farm Stand or at U-Pick during the growing season, or attend any of our numerous classes and lectures. Hilltop Hanover Farm offers tours, classes and field trips to school groups, garden clubs, and scout troops.

A minimum 10% of produce grown is donated to food pantries and soup kitchens.

Community Farm to Table

Experience your food like never before, from source to belly, as we take you through the organic growing process, harvest ingredients together, and prepare a seasonal meal in our farm kitchen. Engage with the roots of the emerging local food movement, learn the relationship between real food and lifelong nutrition and health, and discuss the impacts of sustainable and organic practices. Meet our farmers and growers, ask questions, and enjoy the best of the seasonal produce the farm has to offer!

Native Plant Program

Our native plant program seeks to deliver all these benefits by collecting seed native to our specific ecoregion, cleaning and propagating that seed in founders plots, and producing plants for land conservation and restoration. We make both seeds and plants available for sale and donation to municipalities, schools, garden clubs, nurseries and individuals to achieve the greatest impact possible.

Salute to Seniors

Salute to Seniors is a celebration of the seniors in our community, and includes something for everyone. Plan an outing to attend the event, spend the day, have complimentary lunch and enjoy all the attractions. Be sure to bring a friend, family member, or caregiver, and be prepared to enjoy the day. It is sponsored by the Westchester Public/Private Partnership for Aging Services (WPPP), Department of Senior Programs and Services, Westchester Parks, Recreation and Conservation, and the Department of Public Works and Transportation.

The Business Expo is always a favorite. More than 50 vendors at each location with products and services for seniors and caregivers, as well as representatives from County and State agencies, will be on hand to talk with salute-goers and answer their questions. View new services and sample new products.

The Nutrition, Health and Wellness Table celebrates a World of Flavors as part of the National Nutrition Month theme. Seniors can stop by for various nutrition education literature, new recipe ideas, and a mini nutrition screening. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are available for addressing nutrition related health concerns and sharing information about the Senior Nutrition Congregate Dining and Home Delivered Meals programs in Westchester.

Telehealth Intervention Programs for Seniors (TIPS) is featured at Salute to Senior. TIPS is the high-tech meets high touch approach to remote patient monitoring. Seniors can have their vitals taken and receive a gift.

Next Stage Network Planning Initiative is designed to help Seniors take an active role in planning their future. Seniors can take the Next Stage Planning Survey; take action towards aging successfully; and receive valuable information and resources to achieve their goals as they age.

Living the Later Years Newsletter is printed and mailed to over 130,000 older adult households in Westchester County and is designed to inform them and their caregivers about available services, programs and events of interest. Seniors can pick up a past issue of the newsletter and/or sign up to receive future issues at Salute.

Seniors ride free on Bee-Line Buses May 10, 17 and 24! All routes excluding Para-Transit service.

Mall Walks

The Mall Walking Club meets every Tuesdays and Fridays, from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. at The Westchester in White Plains. It's a great way to enjoy the benefits of walking, no matter what the weather outdoors. To join, sign up at the horse fountain on retail level 2 (located between Crate & Barrel and Urban Outfitters) on Tuesday and Friday mornings during the program.

Admission and parking* are free for all registered members of the mall walk program.

*Registered Mall Walkers enjoy free parking from 8 a.m. - noon on Tuesdays and 8 a.m. - 11 a.m. on Fridays.

Fitness Equipment at Tibbetts Brook Park

To help combat obesity, a new fitness area at Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers was opened on Dec. 14, 2021. Made possible by a donation from Kohl's, Blythedale Children's Hospital's Eat Well, Be Well program and Greenfield in partnership with PRC, The Westchester County Department of Health, and the Westchester County Department of Public Works and Transportation, the new fitness area features seven pieces of equipment that can be used by 16 people at a time for an outdoor circuit training experience.

Fit Mobile

We believe that a lifelong commitment to fitness begins at an early age, so during July and August, the Fit-Mobile, a fitness center on wheels, teaches kids how to be active and have fun as it visits camps and playgrounds in underserved areas throughout the county.

8. Code of Conduct & Concussion Protocol

THE PRC SPECTATOR CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Demonstrate a high degree of sportsmanship.
2. Show team support by making only positive comments.
3. Show respect for the judgment of coaches, officials, and referees.
4. Acknowledge fields, courts and equipment as the players' domain during contests.
5. Monitor the safety of children in the bleachers and stands.
6. Respect the law such as smoke-free and substance -free environment.
7. Spectators will respect all officials, supervisors and site personnel.
8. There will be no ringing of bells, sounding of horns, or other noise makers.
9. Use of foul, derogatory or abusive language towards any other person will result in removal from the event.
10. The throwing of debris, confetti, or other objects from the stands is prohibited.
11. Exceptions to this behavior will lead to ejection from the event.

The Spectator Code of Conduct should be communicated by mail or email to our recreation officials, coaches and participants.

In addition to the code, the following is read by the Public Address Announcer before every game at the County Center:

"IT IS OUR OBJECTIVE TO HAVE THIS GAME CONTESTED IN THE MOST SPORTSMANLIKE ATMOSPHERE POSSIBLE. THE GAME OFFICIALS WILL TOLERATE ABSOLUTELY NO UNSPORTSMANLIKE CONDUCT FROM PLAYERS OR COACHES AND THUS WE ASK YOU THE FANS TO HELP US REACH OUR OBJECTIVE BY CONDUCTING YOURSELVES IN A SPORTSMANLIKE AND RESPECTFUL MANNER. ANYONE USING FOUL, DEROGATORY, OR ABUSIVE LANGUAGE TOWARDS ANY OTHER PERSON WILL BE SUBJECT TO REMOVAL FROM THE COUNTY CENTER. IN ADDITION, PLEASE REFRAIN FROM USING ARTIFICIAL NOISEMAKERS, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO AIRHORNS, BELLS, WHISTLES AND THUNDERSTICKS. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION AND ENJOY THE GAME."

PRC Participant Behavior Code of Conduct

All participants are expected to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. The following guidelines have been developed to help make programs safe and enjoyable for all participants. Additional rules may be developed for specific programs as deemed necessary by staff.

All participants shall:

1. Show respect to all participants, staff, and volunteers. Participants should follow program rules and take direction from staff.
2. Refrain from using abusive or foul language.
3. Refrain from threatening or causing bodily harm to self, other participants, and/or staff.
4. Show respect for equipment, supplies, and facilities.
5. Not possess any weapons, except in instances where equipment is needed for participation in program, such as trapshooting and archery.
6. Uphold the rules, regulations, and policies of the Department of Parks, Recreation & Conservation.

Failure to follow the Westchester County Behavior Code of Conduct may result in removal of the participant from the program.

Concussion Protocol

PRC maintains a Concussion Protocol Policy and provides an on-site Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) or Ambulance for all our Recreational Division events. In the event that someone is suffering concussion symptoms he or she will be brought to appropriate medical staff.

9. Conclusion

Westchester County Parks and Recreation programming and facilities provide a number of benefits to our community, which help strengthen families, build healthy communities and improve the quality of life for Westchester County residents.

Below are eight key marketing messages taken from the book *Benefits of Leisure* by Brown, Perry J., Driver, B. L.

Recreation is Essential to Personal Health

- Recreation helps people live longer
- Recreation prolongs independent living for seniors – keeping seniors vital and involved in community life
- Recreation and fitness significantly reduces the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Recreation and fitness combat osteoporosis
- Recreation and fitness combat diabetes
- Recreation and fitness help in preventing specific types of cancers – particularly in the colon, breast and lungs
- Recreation and fitness help prevent and rehabilitate back problems
- Recreation and arts/culture contribute to mental health
- Recreation and arts/culture enhance overall health and well-being
- Recreation is a proven therapeutic tool – helping to restore physical, mental and social capacities and abilities

Recreation is Key to Balanced Human Development

- Recreation is essential to the development of our children and youth:
We learn motor skills (physical) through play and sports
We learn social skills through play and sports
We learn creativity through play and arts/cultural activities
We develop intellectual capacities and concepts through play – as well as many other life skills
- Recreation provides the opportunity for adults to develop their full and holistic potential
- Recreation and adult leisure learning provide exceptional opportunities

Recreation is Essential to Quality of Life

- Recreation and arts/culture build self-esteem and positive self-image
- Recreation and arts/culture enhance life satisfaction levels
- Recreation and arts/culture enhance perceived quality of life – for individuals, families and communities

- Recreation, sports and arts/culture nurtures growth, acquisition of life skills and independent living for those with a disability

Recreation Reduces Self-Destructive and Anti-Social Behavior

- Recreation, sports and arts/culture reduce self-destructive behavior and negative activity in youth – an antidote to smoking, substance abuse, suicide and depression
- Recreation and arts/culture can reduce crime
- Recreation and arts/culture can reduce racism – building understanding between diverse cultures
- Recreation reduces isolation, loneliness and alienation

Recreation Builds Strong Families and Healthy Communities

- Families that play together, stay together
- Recreation provides safe developmental opportunities for the latch-key child
- Recreation, sports and arts/culture produce leaders who serve their communities in many ways
- Recreation, sports and arts/culture build social skills and stimulate participation in community life
- Recreation is often the catalyst that builds strong, self-sufficient communities (i.e. sport groups, arts guilds)
- Arts/culture helps people understand their neighbors, their history and their environment
- Recreation and arts/culture build pride in a community

Recreation Reduces Health Care, Social Service and Police/Justice Costs

- Fitness and well-being reduce both the incidence and severity of illness and disability – lowering healthcare costs
- Recreation supports families – reducing costs of social service intervention and foster care
- Recreation reduces crime and social dysfunction – reducing police, justice and incarceration costs

Recreation and Parks are Significant Economic Generators

- Recreation and fitness improve work performance – increase productivity, decrease absenteeism, decrease staff turnover and reduce “on the job” accidents
- Recreation and arts/culture attract businesses to the community – prime economic development and relocation magnets
- Recreation, sports and arts/culture draw tourism – the third largest and one of the fastest growing industries in the world
- Recreation, fitness, sports and arts/culture are significant economic generators on their own – providing many jobs

- Small investments in recreation, sports and arts/culture often yield large economic returns – money generated by events, capital development and providing ongoing services is spent several times in the community

Parks, Open Space and Natural Areas are Essential to Ecological Survival

- Green space protects habitats, biodiversity and ecological integrity
- Green spaces improve air quality – removing carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide and other pollutants from the air
- Outdoor recreation is one of the best approaches to environmental education – a key to long-term sustainability
- Protecting land from development (keeping it as open space) mitigates against potential environmental disasters (flooding, slip zone, aquifer depletion)
- Trail and pathway systems save energy and protect air quality by encouraging non-motorized transportation
- Arts/culture is one of the best ways to express the spirituality of the land, thereby encouraging stewardship ethics

As Westchester County demographics and recreational needs change; county parks, open space, facilities and programming opportunities need to be evaluated on a regular basis. Our Recreation Plan will be reviewed and updated on annual basis and will serve as the division's guide to ensure the leisure needs of County residents are being met, goals and objectives are being strived towards and future visions are being established.