2025 Annual Report

Department of PARKS & REC Columbus, IN













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From the Director's Desk

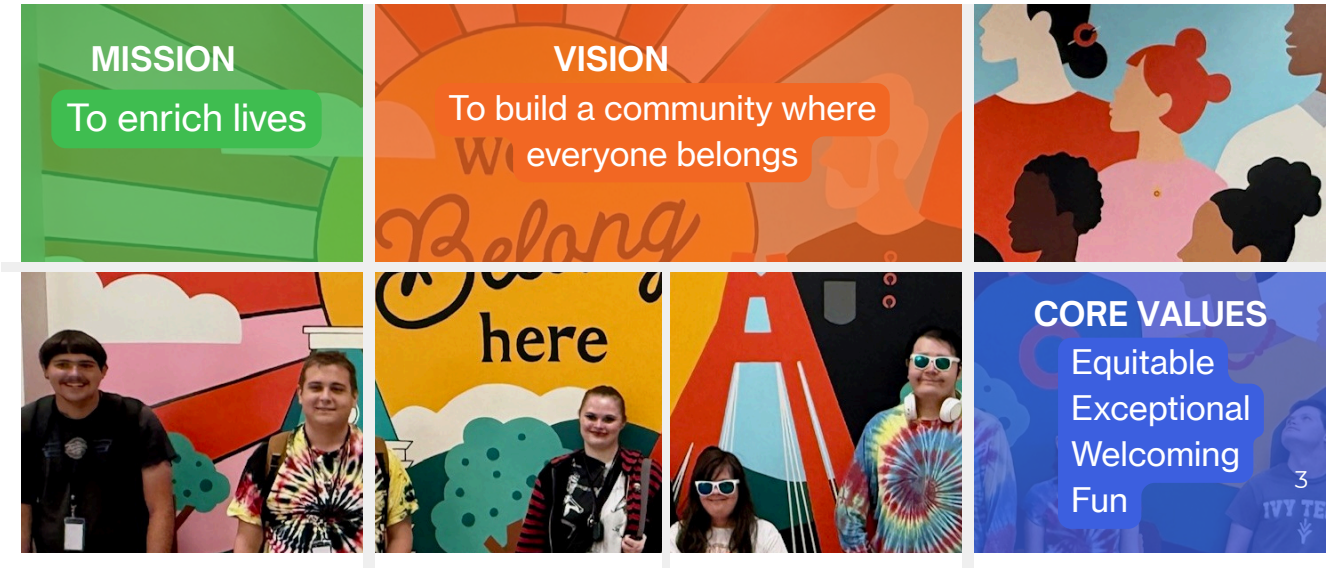
The Columbus Parks and Recreation Department is proud to present our 2025 Annual Report.



As Columbus Parks and Recreation enters this next chapter, this annual report reflects a year of transition, momentum, and intentional foundation building. Our department continues to balance the stewardship of beloved legacy parks and programs with the activation and integration of transformative community assets such as NexusPark, while simultaneously strengthening the internal systems, partnerships, leadership, and service delivery. Throughout the year, our focus has remained on operational excellence and community centered decision making, ensuring that growth is both sustainable and aligned with the needs and values of Columbus. At the heart of our progress is a dedicated team of professionals whose commitment to service, collaboration, and continuous improvement shapes every experience we deliver. In 2025, we placed a deliberate emphasis on organizational clarity, staff development, and fiscal responsibility, and will continue to do so as we head into 2026. The pages that follow highlight not only what was accomplished, but how these efforts position Columbus Parks and Recreation for long-term impact through thoughtful planning, strong partnerships, and a continued commitment to serving our community with purpose and care.

Nikki Murphy

Director, Columbus Parks and Recreation



Staff

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Nikki Murphy 812-376-2680

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Jacob Hendricks 812-376-2697

Associate Director of Sports
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Shannon Lacey 812-376-2669

The Commons Manager
Shanda Sasse 812-376-2656

Fieldhouse Sports Manager
Martavius Mims 812-348-2427

Fieldhouse Sports & Event Coordinator
Francys King 812-669-5318

Fitness, Health & Wellness Manager
Open 812-669-5304

Golf Pro, Manager
Keith VanDeventer 812-376-2684

Hamilton Community Center & Ice Arena Manager
Jessica Pevlor 812-376-2588

Marketing Manager
Beth Hughes 812-376-2696

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Taylor Henson 812-348-2421

Park Operations Facilities Supervisor
Stephanie Heck 812-376-2689

Park Operations Maintenance Supervisor
Danny Brown 812-375-2761

Park Operations NexusPark Maintenance Supervisor
Simon Mellencamp 812-669-5314

Project & Resource Development Manager
Celeste Reynolds 812-376-2759

Recreation & Columbus Gymnastics Center Program Manager
Open 812-376-2685

Sports Programs Manager
Seth Rice 812-376-2658

Sports Coordinator
Collin Lollar 812-376-2741

Parks and Recreation Board
David Bush, Miriam Portaluppi, Chaz Smith, Brian Wilson, and Frank Miller, City Council Liaison

Park Board Meetings
Held the second Thursday of each month, 4pm at City Hall, unless stated otherwise.

2025 Park Board Dates:

- January 9
- February 13
- March 13
- April 10
- May 8
- June 12
- July 10
- August 5 - Special Meeting
- August 14
- September 11
- October 9
- November 13
- December 11

Program Areas

Fieldhouse at NexusPark

Tournaments and Events

Sports tourism continued to generate significant economic activity in 2025, contributing an estimated $4.5 million in direct spending for the City of Columbus. The Circle K Fieldhouse hosted a broad range of events, including youth baseball and softball, football, wrestling, cheer and dance, taekwondo, jiu-jitsu, and other competitive activities. Two of the largest events of the year were the 2025 Folkstyle State Championship, which brought more than 2,600 wrestlers and over 6,000 spectators, and the War of the Roses Tournament, which welcomed 2,130 wrestlers and more than 4,000 spectators.

Internal and External Partnerships

The fieldhouse continued to support a diverse group of user organizations, including Columbus Express Soccer Club (CESC), Indiana University Columbus (IUC), and Select Athletics. IUC Men's and Women's Basketball, along with Cheer and Dance, utilized the facility for practices, and the basketball teams hosted their home games on site. Two additional user groups—Triple Play Baseball and Lady Blackout Basketball—joined the facility in 2025, further expanding utilization.

In 2026, the fieldhouse will serve as the home venue for IUC Men's and Women's Soccer, hosting both practices and home competitions. The facility also welcomed the Cincinnati Reds Camp for the second consecutive year, serving 102 participants, with the camp scheduled to return in 2026.

Programs

Recreation programming at the fieldhouse expanded in 2025 with the introduction of new offerings designed to increase community access and serve a wider range of ages and interests. New programs included a youth kickball league, adult soccer, and adult kickball. Pickleball participation also grew through additional clinic sessions offered in partnership with the Columbus Pickleball Club.

Program expansion will continue in 2026 with the planned introduction of youth basketball and youth volleyball, further strengthening the fieldhouse's role as a year-round recreation hub for the community.







Sports Teams and Leagues

Economic Impact

Sports tourism continued to serve as a significant economic driver for the City of Columbus in 2025. Tournaments hosted across youth baseball, youth and adult softball, and soccer generated an estimated $3.2 million in direct spending. Lincoln Park and Clifty Park hosted four state-level tournaments featuring a combined 340 teams, with all events scheduled to return in 2026. Columbus is also slated to host the USSSA Fastpitch Nationals in 2026, marking the event's first return to the community in more than six years.



Internal and External Partnerships

The Sports Division continued to strengthen relationships with key user groups, including Columbus Express Soccer Club (CESC), Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, and Indiana University Columbus. CESC hosted its third annual Columbus Cup Tournament, welcoming 80 teams from across the Midwest and generating more than $470,000 in economic impact. The tournament provided a competitive experience for local athletes and is expected to return in 2026.



Recreational Sports

Recreational sports programming remained strong through continued partnerships that expanded the range of activities available to the community. The youth flag football league, introduced in 2022, continued its upward trajectory, growing from 124 participants in its inaugural year to 200 participants in 2025. The youth soccer league also maintained high engagement, serving more than 2,000 participants annually across the spring and fall seasons for the third consecutive year. These programs reflect sustained community interest and the department's commitment to providing accessible, high-quality recreational opportunities.







Donner Aquatic Center

Donner Aquatic Center welcomed 23,922 public swim participants in 2025, with an additional 8,901 individuals taking advantage of the daily free swim hour. The swim lesson program served 972 participants, and the annual Jaime Miller Swim Meet brought 630 swimmers to the facility over three days. Donner also supported Columbus Fire Department training activities, including Swift Water Rescue and confined-space exercises.

Hamilton Community Center & Ice Arena

Hamilton Community Center and Ice Arena experienced a productive year marked by increased room rentals, expanded partnerships, and major facility improvements. The Indiana Sentinels professional hockey team established Hamilton as their home rink, averaging 663 attendees per game. The facility also hosted its first speed skating race and continued its tradition of community events, including the annual Teen New Year's Party.

The 2025 State Figure Skating Competition brought more than 200 skaters to Columbus, generating an estimated $113,164 in direct local spending. Major capital improvements included the installation of a new chiller system and progress on locker room renovations.







Golf Courses

The City's golf courses had a strong year, surpassing $550,000 in revenue for the second time in three years. Youth development remained a priority through the First Tee and Junior Golf programs, both of which saw high participation. The City Open returned to Greenbelt, with local golfer Luke VanDeventer earning his second consecutive win.

Planning continued for future facility improvements, including clubhouse upgrades, cart wash pads, and expanded pro shop merchandise. In 2026, the Par 3 course will continue serving middle school golf programs, while Greenbelt will host Columbus East High School's boys and girls teams.

People Trails and Volunteers

Volunteer engagement remained strong through the Bartholomew County Blazing Stars CISMA, which hosted 15 Weed Wrangles involving 304 volunteers contributing 906 hours. Additional environmental stewardship efforts included drone-assisted herbicide application at Pollinator Park to address invasive species. The Johnathan Moore Pike People Trail received resurfacing and updated wayfinding to improve user experience.







Fitness, Health, and Wellness

AEI Fitness Center

The AEI Fitness Center completed its second year at NexusPark with significant updates to its membership model, pricing structure, and group fitness offerings. The introduction of the Everyday Access Plan provided members with daily access to group fitness classes at a simplified price point, replacing the previous tiered structure. Billing cycles were aligned with membership months to improve clarity and customer experience.

Program expansion included advanced functional fitness and mobility-focused classes, complementing the center's foundational programming. A major milestone was the new partnership with IU Columbus Athletics, designating AEI as the Official Strength and Conditioning Facility for multiple collegiate sports teams. This partnership strengthened the center's reputation and expanded its role in regional athletic development.

Teaching Kitchen

The Teaching Kitchen advanced its operational planning in preparation for a 2026 public launch. In collaboration with CRH's Healthy Communities initiative, the Steering Team developed a business plan, drafted staffing structures, and explored sustainable funding models. The Teaching Kitchen supported several community health programs throughout the year and clarified its role as an educational facility focused on wellness, skill-building, and community partnerships.

Recreation and Special Events

Recreation programming continued to offer a wide range of free, low-cost, and fee-based activities for all ages. Disc golf participation remained strong, with more than 15,000 estimated hours of play at the Donner course and expanded indoor offerings at NexusPark.

The Come Out and Play program provided free supervised summer recreation for area youth, including transportation, meals, field trips, and enrichment activities. The Parks Bucks program continued teaching financial literacy through positive behavior incentives, supported by generous donations that supplied school-ready items for participants.

Youth day camps, adult classes, and family programs all saw strong participation, with major events such as Santa at The Commons and Halloween Fall Fest drawing more than 1,000 attendees each.













Columbus Farmers Market

The Columbus Farmers Market continued to serve as a signature community gathering space and a point of pride for the City. Operating for 20 weeks each summer at City Hall, the market provided a welcoming environment for residents to purchase locally sourced produce, support small businesses, and enjoy weekly entertainment and social connection.

The market reached full vendor capacity with 116 full-time and part-time vendors and drew an estimated 2,500 visitors each week. The Power of Produce (POP) program again played a significant role in youth engagement, with approximately 2,500 participants receiving produce vouchers and educational materials throughout the season. The market's success reflects strong collaboration across city departments, community partners, and dedicated volunteers.







Columbus Gymnastics Center

The Columbus Gymnastics Center experienced another year of sustained growth, driven by enhanced instructional quality, improved customer service, and a highly engaged staff team. Enrollment increased across all levels, supported by strong retention among new families and a welcoming environment that prioritizes relationship-building.

High demand for birthday party rentals led to expanded weekend availability, with both Saturday and Sunday reservations booking months in advance. Program development continued with the introduction of cheer classes, which were met with strong participation. Facility improvements—including new flooring and reconfigured beam areas—expanded usable space and improved safety, enabling additional programming and more efficient class flow.

The Commons

The Commons remained an active community hub in 2025, hosting 443 nonprofit meetings and events and welcoming approximately 48,000 guests. The facility continued to balance free, ticketed, and private events, and the 2027 booking window opened on December 1.

All four tenant spaces were fully occupied, with Winnie Tea Bar and new ownership at Orangeleaf opening in May. Blacksheep also completed enhancements to its outdoor patio area.

Facility improvements included repairs to the NanaWall glass system, Chaos I sculpture, sewer infrastructure, and catering hallway flooring. A new lighting console was added to the A/V room, and bird netting was installed at the loading dock. HVAC assessment continued as part of the Building Utilization Study.

The Commons hosted a Bourbon & Brass Quintet concert during Parks and Recreation Month and partnered with the Marketing team and artist Abigail Flout to launch Drawn Together, a traveling community art project.

Holiday programming included a free Santa Meet & Greet and a fundraiser Festival of Lights parade viewing event in conjunction with the Columbus Park Foundation, along with a wreath-making contest and seasonal social media engagement.

Art and Exhibit Displays

- The Commons showcased a variety of rotating exhibits, including:
- The Pillars of African American Labor
- “Design an Ad” entries from Schmitt Elementary
- Bloomscape by Turtles Flowers
- Exhibit Columbus STEM displays by BCSC students
- COSCO’s 90th anniversary exhibit
- Fall Downtown Story Walk featuring Bob the Vampire Snail
- Downtown Windows That Wow: Office Seascape
- Ofrendas display for Día de los Muertos









The Columbus Park Foundation

The Columbus Park Foundation supports the Columbus Parks and Recreation Department to keep programs, parks, facilities, trails, and playgrounds free and low-cost to our community. The Foundation provides scholarships to children in our community to participate in Parks and Recreation programming, supports and sponsors programs to make them affordable, and helps maintain amenities.

Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship Program: The Chuck Wilt Youth Scholarship program provides every qualifying child $200 a year to participate in programs, giving every kid the chance to have fun. In 2025, the Columbus Park Foundation approved over $25,000 in scholarships to our community.

Sponsored Programs: The Columbus Park Foundation sponsored and supported Parks and Recreation programming to make it accessible to everyone in our community. The Foundation sponsored programs like Movie in the Parks and Santa at The Commons to make sure our community is able to enjoy diverse activities. The Foundation also earmarked over $60,000 to support Parks and Recreation programming.

2025 marked the 100th anniversary of the Donner Park Shelter House and The Columbus Park Foundation hosted a Centennial Variety Spectacular celebration.

The Columbus Park Foundation





$698K
NexusPark Pledges Received

$116K
Donations

$44K
Sponsorships

$25K
Grants

Marketing

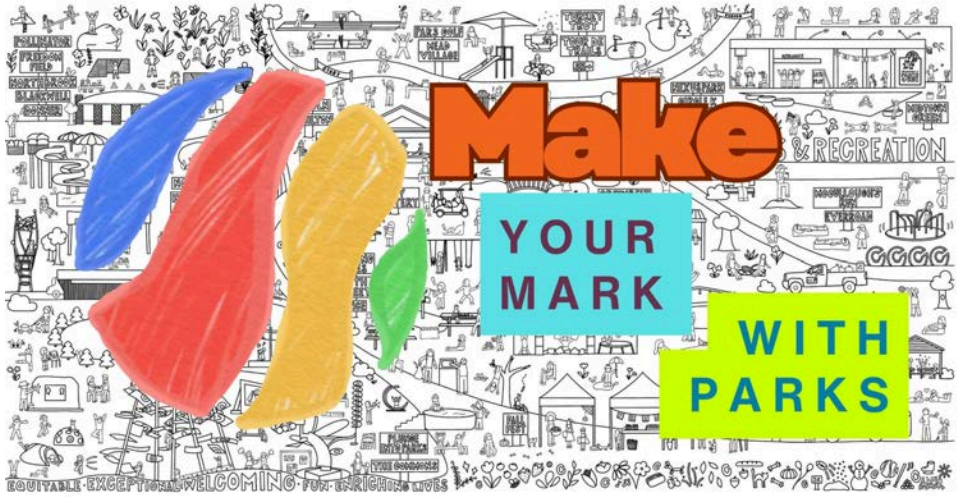
In 2025, the Marketing Department focused on strengthening communication, improving digital platforms, and expanding community engagement. The weekly email newsletter was simplified for clarity and continued to reach more than 5,500 subscribers with open rates consistently meeting industry benchmarks. A shift toward quality-focused social media content resulted in higher engagement and steady follower growth, even as total posting volume decreased. Marketing added a “We Caught You Smiling” section to the Sunday Funday newsletter that supports community engagement.

Major digital improvements included redesigned websites for Columbus Parks and Recreation and the Circle K Fieldhouse, as well as a fully updated Fun Guide.

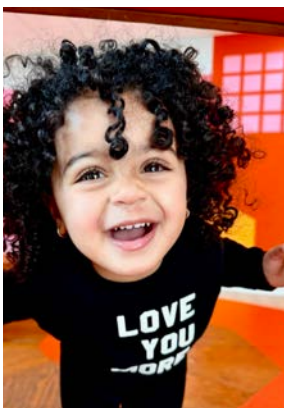
Community outreach expanded through partnerships, event participation, and the launch of Drawn Together, a traveling community art mural developed with AbFlo Creative and supported by the Columbus Park Foundation. Marketing also strengthened internal communication by establishing a cross-functional communications team and preparing for the department’s first internal newsletter.

Overall, 2025 marked significant progress in digital engagement, brand visibility, and communication practices, positioning the department for continued growth in 2026.













Park Operations

Park Operations supported a wide range of facilities and outdoor spaces, managing daily maintenance, event support, capital projects, and weather-related needs. The opening of Midtown Green was a major highlight, showcasing the department's craftsmanship and commitment to high-quality public spaces.

Athletics & Hamilton

Key accomplishments included the introduction of Turf Tank robots for efficient field marking, installation of new chillers at Hamilton Center, improved ice quality through consistent resurfacing, and strong staff performance despite ongoing staffing shortages.

NexusPark

The team completed punch-list items from Phase 1B, advanced Phase 1C campus work, maintained HVAC systems, resurfaced basketball courts, and addressed warranty repairs. Ongoing care for Midtown Green ensured the new outdoor space remained clean and welcoming.

Maintenance and Grounds

Major projects included resurfacing and restriping courts, completing the Mill Race playground redesign, repairing trail infrastructure, and installing memorial benches along the People Trail system.

The Commons

The Commons supported 443 nonprofit meetings and events, welcomed new tenants, and completed several facility improvements, including repairs to the NanaWall system, Chaos I sculpture, sewer infrastructure, and flooring. Community engagement initiatives included concerts and the traveling "Drawn Together" art project.

Foundation for Youth

Improvements included new artwork installations, upgraded security systems, enhanced dining furniture, and repairs to athletic equipment.

Donner Center

Staff maintained the facility in a clean and functional condition while awaiting future planning and master-planning efforts.





2025 Financial Overview

Columbus Parks and Recreation operates through four key funds that allow us to deliver exceptional programs, maintain beautiful green spaces, and provide top-notch facilities for our community and visitors:

- Parks General Fund
- Parks Non-Reverting Fund
- The Commons Non-Reverting Fund
- NexusPark Fieldhouse Non-Reverting Fund

These funds ensure we can offer year-round programming for all ages, host community events, maintain our People Trails, and preserve the parks and facilities that make Columbus a great place to live and visit.

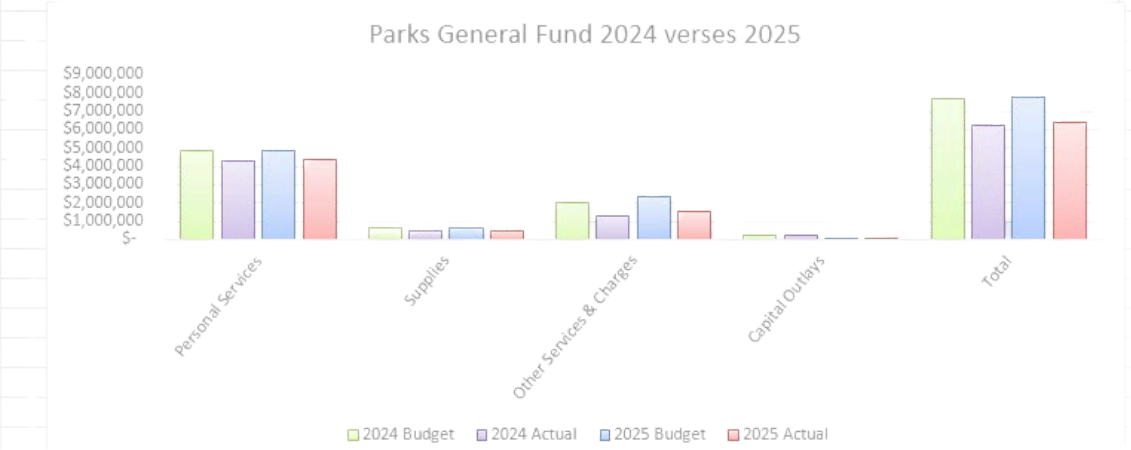
2025 Capital Projects

REMAINING BALANCE ON ARCHITECTURE	$38,494.38
DONOR RECOGNITION SIGNS	$9,458.75
DONOR RECOGNITION SIGNS	$21,275.15
FENCING VARIOUS LOCATIONS	$7,575.42
MAINT BLDG OVERLAY/SEAL COAT	$5,450.00
OVERLAY/SEAL COAT MCCULLOUGHS RUN	$49,400.00
PEOPLE TRAIL SEAL MAINTENANCE	$19,050.00
HOT WATER HEATERS @FFY	$5,200.00
HOT WATER HEATERS @ DONNER	$6,200.00
HOT WATER HEATERS	$15,743.60
WATER FOUNTAINS INSTALLATION & REPLACEMENT @FFY	$27,500.00
CITY PORTION OF PAINTER USA	$27,055.00
REMAINING BALANCE ON CONTRACT	$662,105.00
REMAINING BALANCE ON CONTRACT	$56,573.86
TECH SERVICES	$153,902.75
6 ROOFTOP UNITS	$117,900.00
RESURFACE & STRIPING	$42,088.52
PLAYGROUND	$266,397.34
FFY HVAC SYSTEM	$115,000.00
GREENBELT IRRIGATION	$23,859.00
WELL HEAD@GREENBELT	$23,812.00
MILL RACE PARK GLASS BLOCK REPAIR	$19,723.12
GYMNASTICS EQUIPMENT/MATS	$679.00
HAMILTON, LINCOLN & HAWCREEK PARK	$44,632.50
PEOPLE TRAIL REPAIRS	$7,955.00
PARKSIDE ELEMENTARY	$2,500.00
REPAIRS TO FENCE AT PARKSIDE	$3,000.00
LINCOLN PARK CONCRETE REPAIRS	$15,000.00
WATER FOUNTAINS	$29,100.00
HCC CHILLER & PLANT LOCKER ROOM	$137,772.73
HAMILTON HVAC	$44,475.30
WORKMAN, SAND PRO, & TRIM MOWER	$3,143.26
REPAIR AND/OR REPLACE DAMAGED/WOR	$14,142.00
LINCOLN PARK SIDEWALK REPAIR	$28,083.00
NEXUS PARK	$37,422.50
NEXUS PARK	$135,432.07
REMAINING BALANCE ON CONTRACT	$551,738.21
HAMILTON HVAC	$213,845.97
	$2,982,685.43

Parks General Fund

- 2025 Budget: $7,802,706
- Primary Revenue Source: Local tax dollars (property tax, excise tax, financial institution tax, and commercial vehicle excise tax)
- Purpose: Supports salaries, services, supplies, and maintenance for a parks system valued at over $100 million in assets.

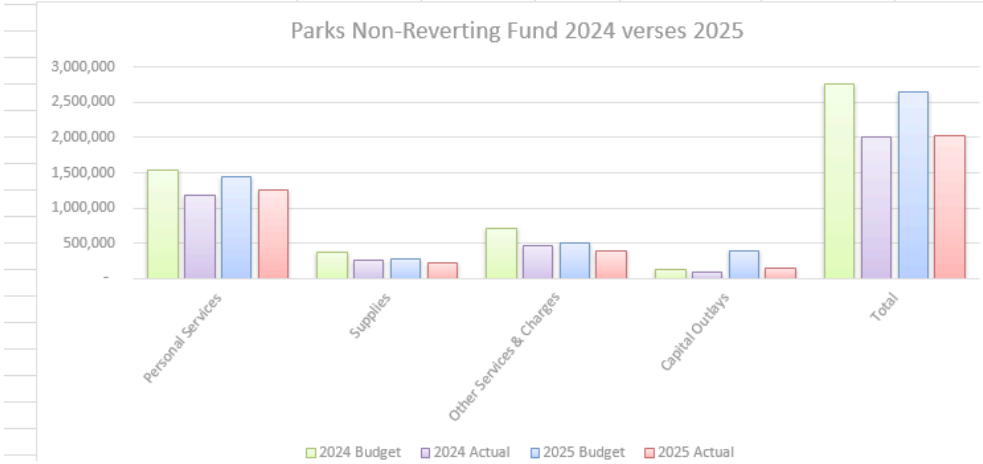
Parks General Fund	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2024 Percent Spent	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	2025 Percent Spent
Personal Services	$ 4,831,493	$ 4,270,927	88%	$ 4,861,280	$ 4,382,591	90%
Supplies	$ 635,420	$ 501,099	79%	$ 601,138	$ 438,059	73%
Other Services & Charges	$ 2,029,826	$ 1,245,932	61%	$ 2,325,288	$ 1,542,967	66%
Capital Outlays	$ 239,712	$ 239,278	100%	$ 15,000	$ 3,798	25%
Total	**7,736,451**	**6,257,236**	**81%**	**$ 7,802,706**	**$ 6,367,415**	**82%**



Parks Non-Reverting Fund

- 2025 Budget: $2,642,318
- Revenue Source: User fees from programs and activities such as:
  - Ice rink admissions and concessions
  - Facility rentals
  - Golf fees
  - Program and class registrations

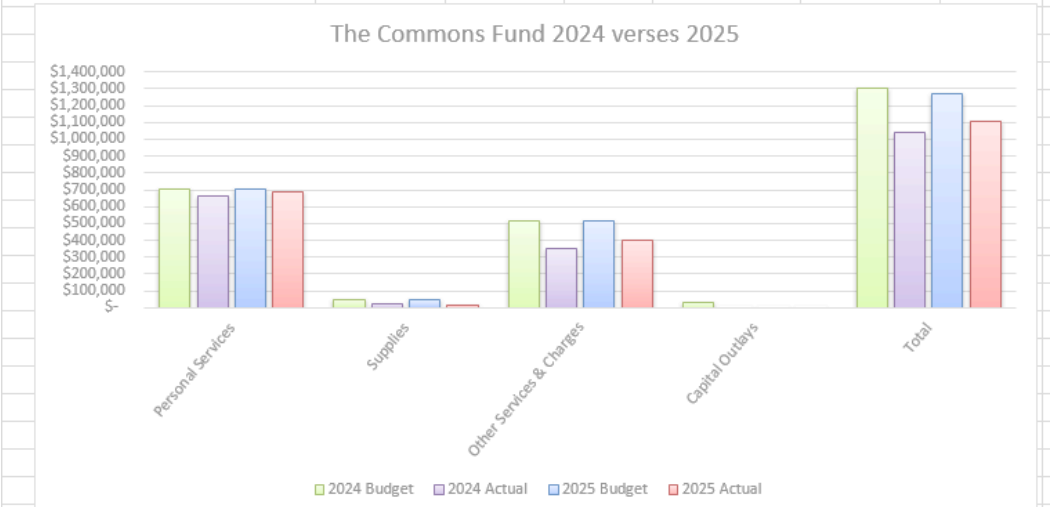
Parks Non-Reverting Fund	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2024 Percent Spent	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	2025 Percent Spent
Personal Services	1,541,912	$ 1,189,560	77%	$ 1,449,741	$ 1,252,558	86%
Supplies	367,701	$ 251,399	68%	$ 282,133	$ 229,498	81%
Other Services & Charges	715,869	$ 460,101	64%	$ 509,544	$ 395,487	78%
Capital Outlays	137,000	$ 98,900	72%	$ 400,900	$ 142,579	36%
Total	**2,762,482**	**1,999,960**	**72%**	**$ 2,642,318**	**$ 2,020,121**	**76%**



The Commons Non-Reverting Fund

- 2025 Budget: $1,268,018
- Purpose: Dedicated to operating and maintaining The Commons facility.
- Funding: Economic development income tax distribution and user fees from rentals.
- Note: Any remaining funds roll over for future capital and operational needs—helping reduce the burden on taxpayers.

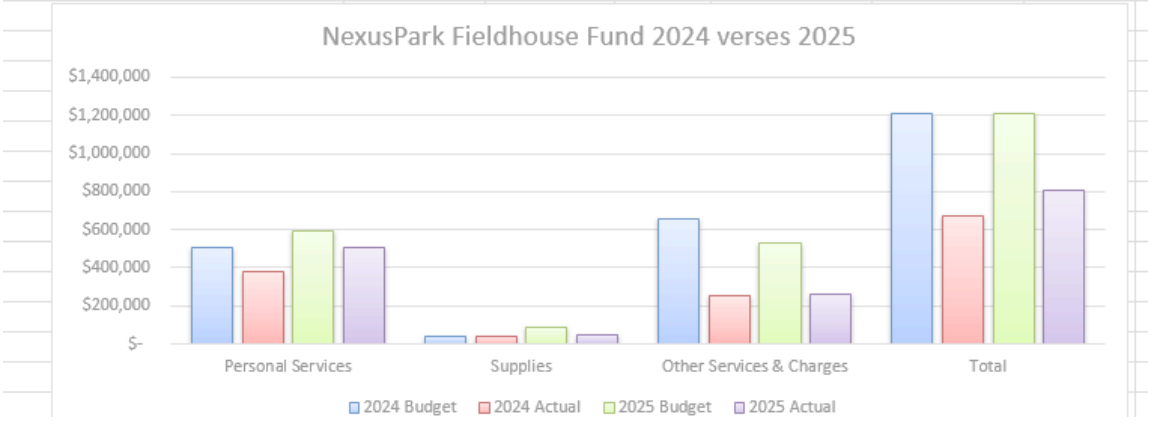
Parks Commons Fund	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2024 Percent Spent	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	2025 Percent Spent
Personal Services	$ 702,150	$ 664,748	95%	$ 702,575	$ 688,606	98%
Supplies	$ 50,479	$ 24,263	48%	$ 47,804	$ 15,614	33%
Other Services & Charges	$ 516,628	$ 353,570	68%	$ 517,639	$ 403,306	78%
Capital Outlays	$ 30,000	$ -	0%	$ -	$ -	0%
Total	**$ 1,299,257**	**$ 1,042,581**	**80%**	**$ 1,268,018**	**$ 1,107,526**	**87%**



NexusPark Fieldhouse Non-Reverting Fund

- 2025 Budget: $1,208,923
- Purpose: Supports operations and upkeep of the new NexusPark Fieldhouse.
- Funding: Includes a $300,000 city contribution as the Fieldhouse moves toward self-sustainability.
- Like The Commons: Surplus funds remain for future needs.

Parks NexusPark Fieldhouse Fund	2024 Budget	2024 Actual	2024 Percent Spent	2025 Budget	2025 Actual	2025 Percent Spent
Personal Services	$ 508,642	$ 379,882	75%	$ 595,512	$ 502,885	84%
Supplies	$ 43,600	$ 38,761		$ 85,292	$ 45,886	54%
Other Services & Charges	$ 656,681	$ 251,074		$ 528,119	$ 260,505	49%
Total	**$ 1,208,923**	**$ 669,717**	**55%**	**$ 1,208,923**	**$ 809,276**	**67%**



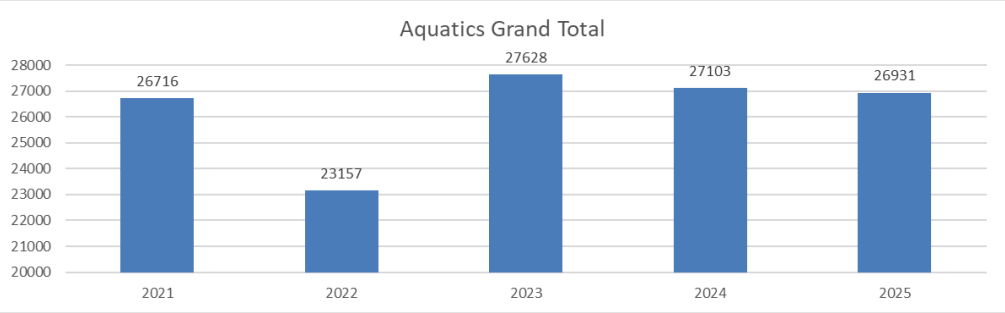
2025 Year-End Highlights

- General Fund: Increased ending cash balance by $1,435,064, thanks to careful spending and vacant positions as we prepare for our 2026 Master Plans.
- Non-Reverting Fund: Cash balance grew by $79,269, with revenues exceeding expenditures across all divisions.
- Commons Fund: Ending cash balance decreased by $112,997, primarily due to vacant tenant space—now fully leased, setting the stage for stronger revenue in 2026.
- NexusPark Fieldhouse Fund: Cash balance increased by $97,058, supported by city contributions and rental income.

Looking Ahead: With strategic planning and strong fiscal management, we're positioned to continue enhancing our parks, facilities, and programs for the entire Columbus community.

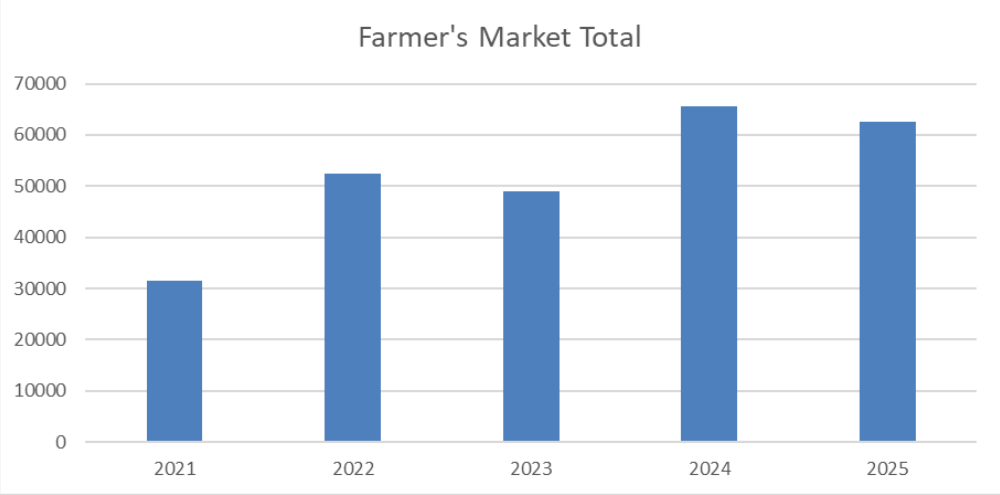
Participation Numbers

Aquatics



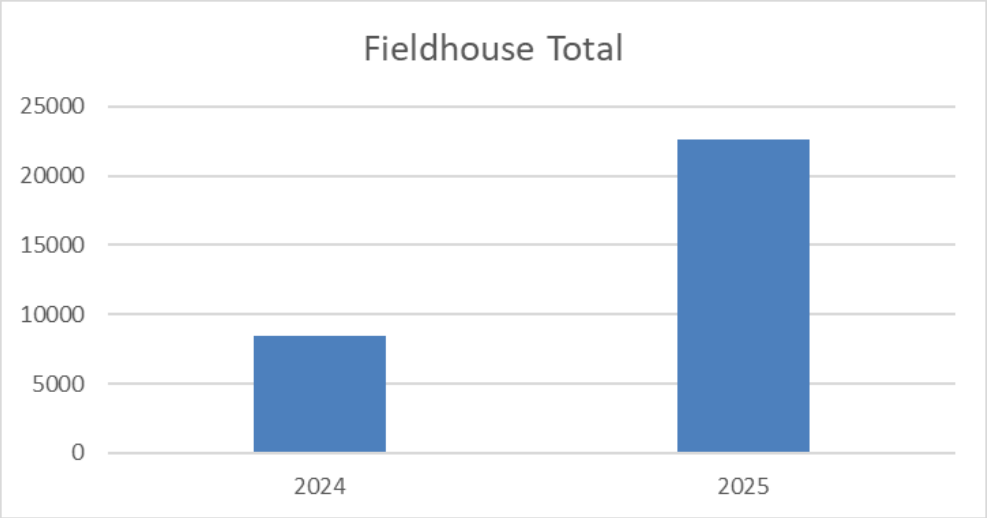
Includes park program, drop-in, and rental participants.

Farmer's Market



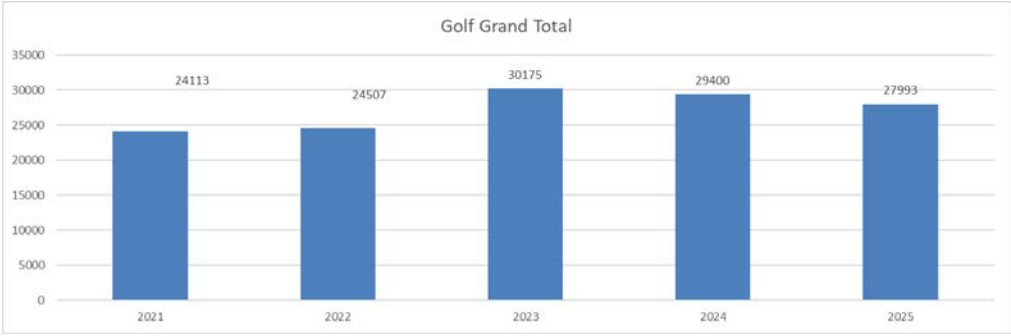
Estimated number of vendors, power of produce participants, and shoppers.

Fieldhouse at NexusPark



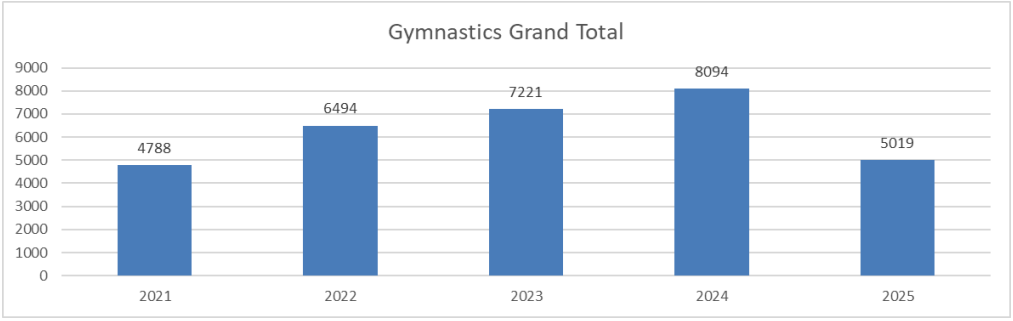
Includes camp, league, drop-in, rental, user group, tournament, and special event participants.

Golf



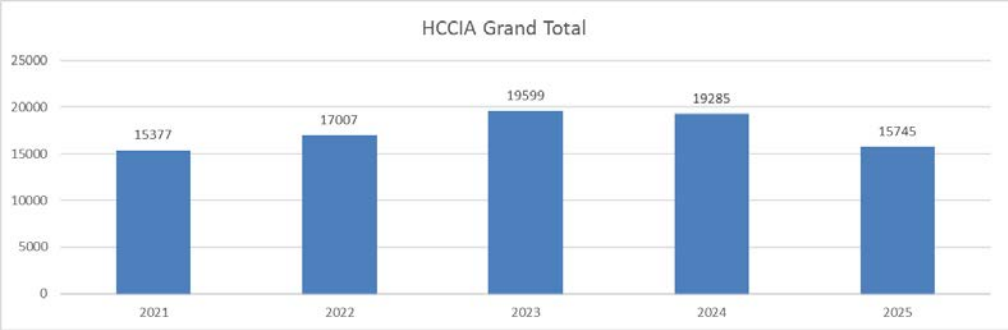
Includes camp, outing, program, league, and tournament participants.

Gymnastics



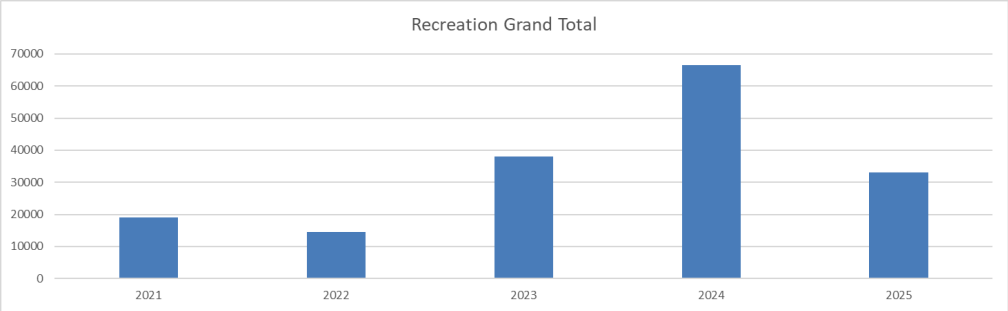
Includes park program, camp, and drop-in participants.

Hamilton Community Center & Ice Arena



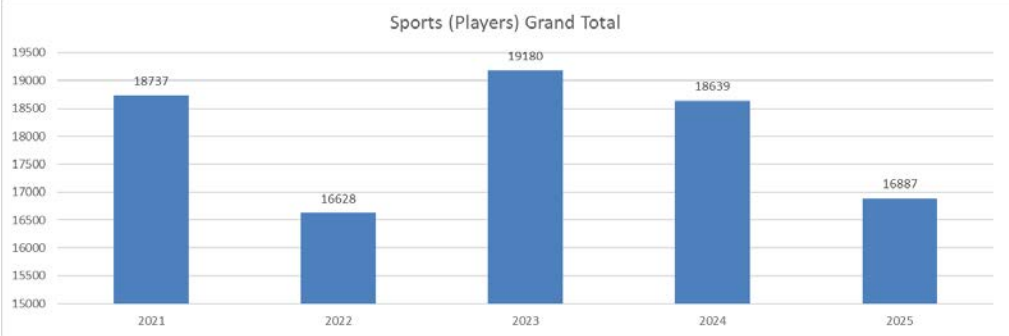
Includes park program, special event, and league particpants.

Recreation



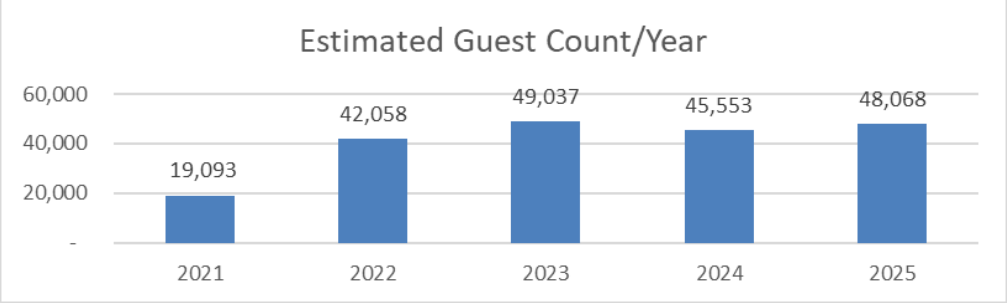
Includes partnership event, free activity, park program, and special event, participants.

Sports



Includes outdoor park program, rental, user group, tournament, and league participants.

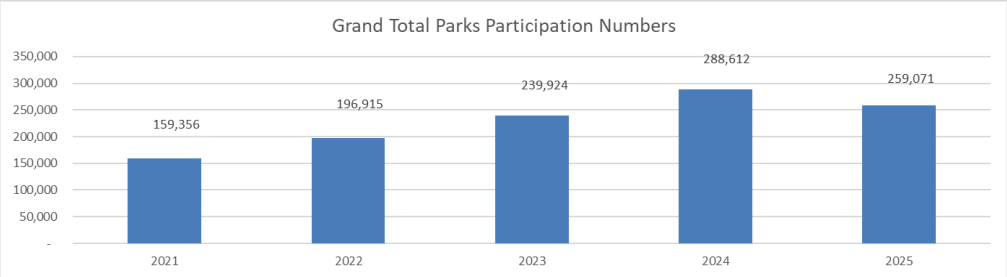
The Commons



Includes private, free, and ticketed event participants.

Participation Numbers, continued

Grand Total Parks Participation Numbers



Total participants in 2026, across all programs and facilities.

This report reflects the department's work and progress throughout 2025 and serves as a reference for ongoing planning and community engagement.