



PARKS & RECREATION FOR ALL



CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION

10-year Comprehensive Plan
Summer 2023 Final Executive Summary

Parks and Recreation For All!

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission ('CCPRC') is a "Special Purpose District", originally established by the South Carolina State Legislature in 1968. CCPRC's primary function is to create and operate countywide parks and recreational programming, and provide technical assistance to other park and recreation agencies and community groups. The range of experiences and places offered within the CCPRC system make it one of the most diverse and innovative park and recreation agencies in South Carolina.

"Parks and Recreation For All!" (PARFA) is CCPRC's comprehensive plan for parks, recreation, open spaces, facilities, and trails. This plan, developed every ten years, is the guiding document for CCPRC's park system planning in Charleston County, and identifies opportunities for facility, program, and organizational enhancements, as the agency continues to uphold its stellar reputation among residents. The PARFA Plan was informed by a collaborative process with CCPRC staff, residents, and other stakeholders.

Plan Process

TIMELINE AND SCHEDULE:

This plan was conducted in four phases beginning in November 2021, with the initial kick-off meeting in December 2021. The process included CCPRC Staff meetings and CCPRC Commission meetings, Steering Committee meetings, a Public Workshop series, extensive Community Surveys, and both Internal and External Focus Groups.

THIS PLAN HELPS CCPRC TO:

- Understand existing agency resources and assets.
- Gather community and staff input about needs for programs, parks/facilities, and services.
- Establish goals and priorities for programs, parks/facilities, and services.
- Recommend strategies to accomplish those goals.

FOCUS AREAS

The PARFA plan process was guided by five focus areas. The process used these focus areas to provide a thoughtful approach for understanding, analysis, visioning, and the creation of system-wide goals and strategies which benefit and respond to the needs of all.

- **Access:** Our parks provide high quality experiences to all.
- **Relevancy:** Our parks reflect our changing and growing communities.
- **Resilience:** Our parks celebrate and respond to our dynamic environment.
- **Connectivity:** Our parks connect our communities to nature and to each other.
- **Organizational Health:** Our parks commission is dedicated to providing exceptional performance in service of our communities.

Plan Engagement

ENGAGEMENT + OUTREACH GOALS

The primary goal of engagement for the PARFA plan was to facilitate a truly inclusive and community-driven planning and decision-making process that cultivates a shared vision for the future of CCPRC.

The approach focused on four key goals:

- Broad, Diverse Input
- Education and Inspiration
- Keep it Fun!
- Grow Stewardship

While feedback varied across geographic regions, common themes among county stakeholders emerged. Among residents and staff there is an immense pride in the high quality offerings provided by CCPRC. Residents shared a desire for connections between parks and within parks, and more access to water-based amenities (pools, paddling, kayaking, etc.) and swimming programs. And for residents with limited access to parks, there was excitement for offering innovative and creative community-focused programs and spaces close-by.



Community-led Conversations



Public Workshops



Pop-up Events



Online surveys



Statistically valid surveys



PARFA Webpage visits

Vision

The vision of this plan, "Parks and Recreation For All!", is for CCPRC to *grow and innovate*, alongside changing community needs. The organization will continue to *sustain* its mission, core services, and beloved spaces as we continue to *advocate* for a connected and resilient county park system that is equitable for all.



Reinforce



Grow



Partner

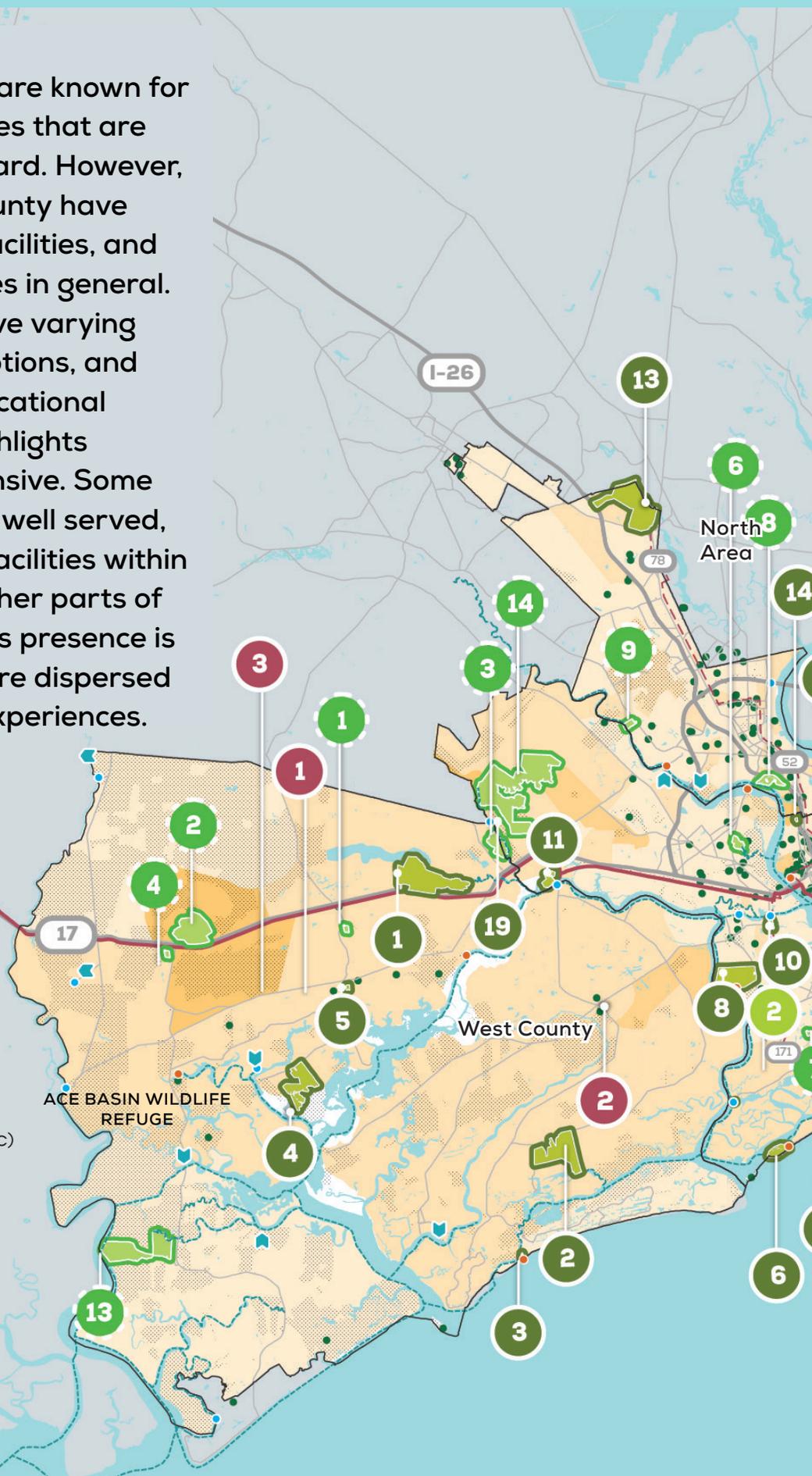
CCPRC parks and facilities are known for having high quality amenities that are maintained to a high standard. However, communities across the County have varying access to CCPRC facilities, and park and recreation facilities in general. These communities also have varying access to transportation options, and wealth generation and educational opportunities. This map highlights that CCPRC's reach is extensive. Some communities are extremely well served, and have multiple CCPRC facilities within proximity to residents. In other parts of Charleston County, CCPRC's presence is strong, but facilities are more dispersed and provide varying user experiences.

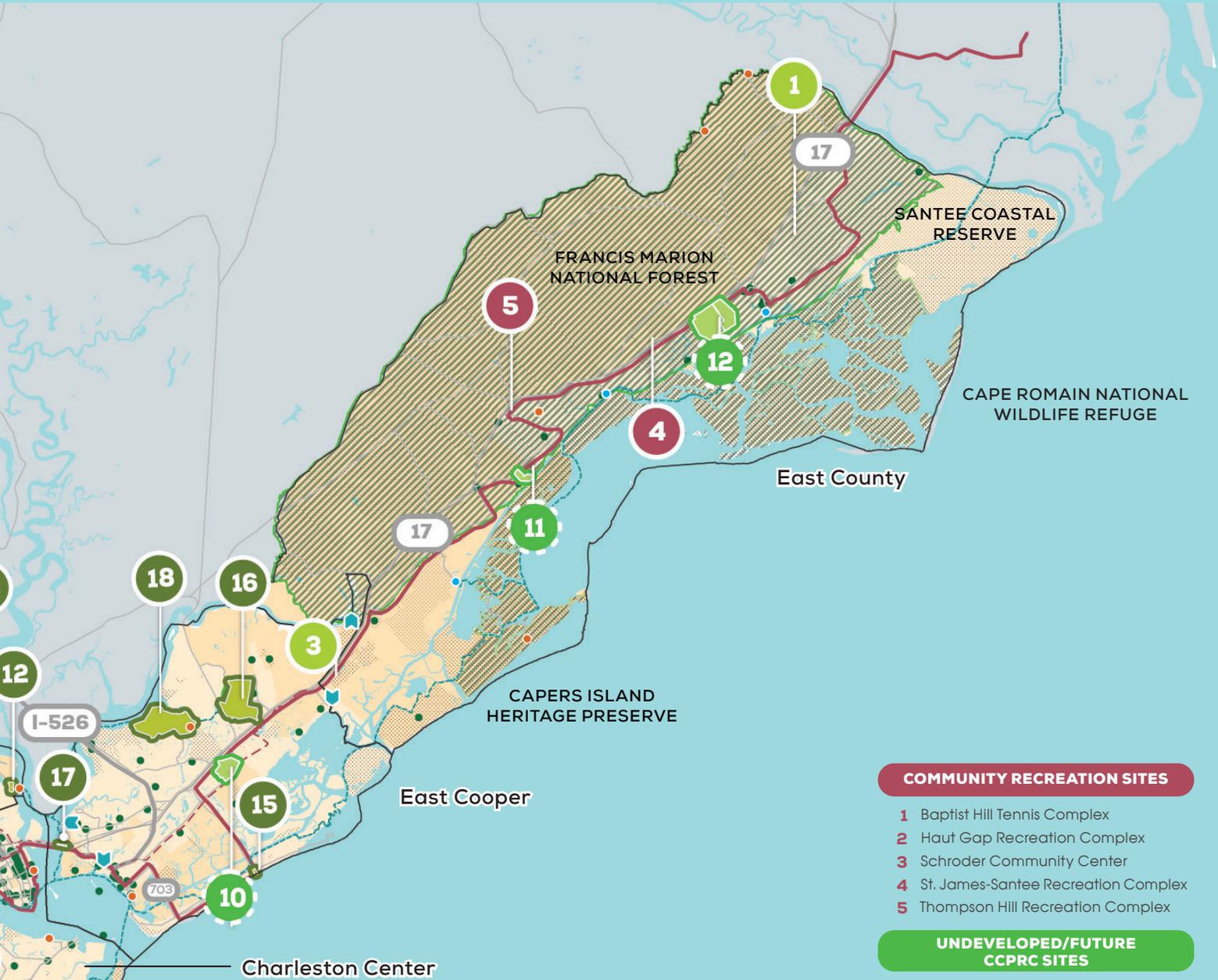
Legend

-  Community Recreation Site
-  Existing CCPRC Parks and Facilities (Open to the Public)
-  Undeveloped/Future CCPRC Sites (Not open to the Public)
-  East Coast Greenway
-  Local Greenways/Trails
-  Water Trails
-  Boat Landings (free, open to public)
-  Paddlecraft Launches
-  Municipal Parks and Facilities
-  Protected Lands
-  2040 Population Growth - Highest
-  2040 Population Growth - Lowest



Sources: BCD COG, 2022, 2023; CCPRC, 2015, 2016, 2022, 2023; Charleston County, 2022; ESRI, 2022; The Nature Conservancy, 2022; USFS, 2012; USFWS, 2012





Charleston Center

EXISTING PARKS & FACILITIES

- 1 Caw Caw Interpretive Center
- 2 Johns Island County Park
- 3 Kiawah Beachwalker County Park
- 4 Meggett County Park
- 5 West County Aquatic Center
- 6 Folly Beach County Park
- 7 Folly Beach Fishing Pier
- 8 James Island County Park
- 9 Lighthouse Inlet Heritage Preserve
- 10 McLeod Plantation Historic Site
- 11 Stono River County Park
- 12 Cooper River County Park and Marina
- 13 North Charleston Wannamaker County Park
- 14 SK8 Charleston
- 15 Isle of Palms County Park
- 16 Laurel Hill County Park
- 17 Mount Pleasant Pier
- 18 Palmetto Islands County Park
- 19 The Lake House at Bulow

BOAT LANDINGS

- 1 Sol Legare Boat Landing
- 2 Folly River Boat Landing
- 3 Martins Boat Landing
- 4 Penny Creek Boat Landing
- 5 Toogoodoo Boat Landing
- 6 Dawhoo Boat Landing
- 7 Steamboat Boat Landing
- 8 Cherry Point Boat Landing
- 9 John P. Limehouse Boat Landing
- 10 Bulow Boat Landing
- 11 Pierpont Boat Landing
- 12 W.O. Thomas Jr. Boat Landing
- 13 Riverland Terrace Boat Landing
- 14 Wappoo Cut Boat Landing
- 15 Remley's Point Boat Landing
- 16 Shem Creek Boat Landing
- 17 Gadsonville Boat Landing
- 18 Paradise Boat Landing
- 19 Willtown Bluff Boat Landing

COMMUNITY RECREATION SITES

- 1 Baptist Hill Tennis Complex
- 2 Haut Gap Recreation Complex
- 3 Schroder Community Center
- 4 St. James-Santee Recreation Complex
- 5 Thompson Hill Recreation Complex

UNDEVELOPED/FUTURE CCPRC SITES

- 1 Ravenel Property
- 2 Spring Grove Property
- 3 Rantowles Creek Islands
- 4 Willtown Community Center
- 5 East Arctic Avenue Property
- 6 Old Towne Creek Property
- 7 Secessionville Property
- 8 Ashley River Property
- 9 Dorchester Road Property
- 10 Rifle Range Road Property
- 11 Awendaw Property
- 12 McClellanville Property
- 13 Edisto Island Property
- 14 Bulow Property

CCPRC SMALL GRANT SITES*

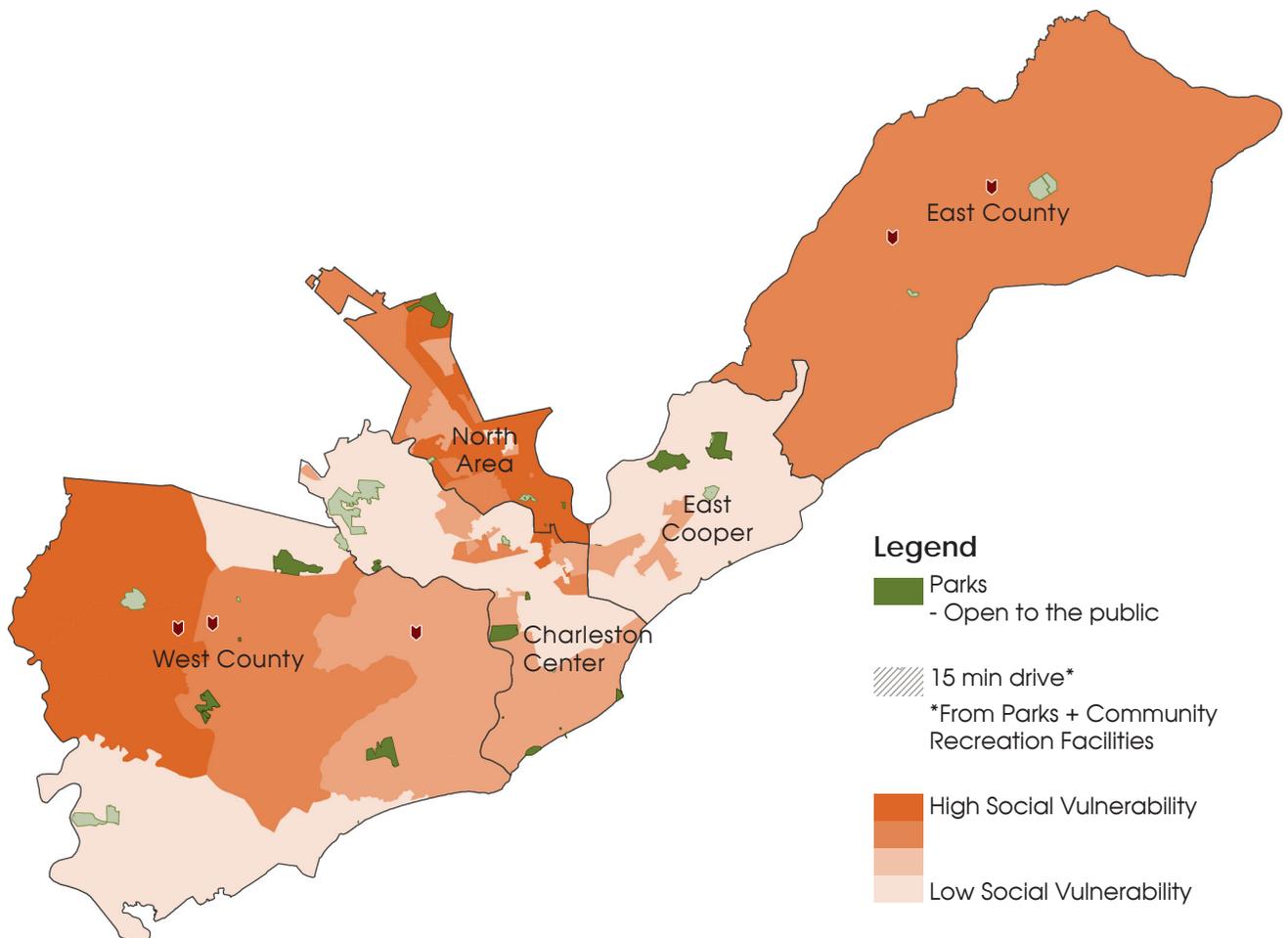
- 1 South Santee Community Center
- 2 Sol Legare Community Center
- 3 Ten Mile Community Center

*CCPRC-supported development of small recreation sites in unincorporated Charleston County, primarily utilizing SCPRT-administered Park and Recreation Development (PAR) funds.

Access for All

CCPRC has acquired approximately 11,000 acres of parks and recreation facilities across the county, about 6,000 acres of which are open to the public. The size of this system nearly doubled with the purchase of additional properties mostly prior to the 2013 PROST Plan, adding nearly 5,000 additional acres. This increase in acreage was aligned with CCPRC's land acquisition goals that were established after CCPRC conducted an open space analysis in 2002. This open space analysis compared the population projections for the year 2015 to the National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) recommended acreage standards for parkland.

The map below highlights access to all CCPRC-owned or managed park and community recreation facilities. The addition of future parks on currently undeveloped property would expand access in West and East County, however there are still gaps in areas that are difficult to access based on the unique geography of the County and its waterways. In its next ten years, when planning for access improvements (either through facility or program improvements or expansion), CCPRC must continue to balance services provided with its financial and operational capacity.



Source: CDC Social Vulnerability Index

Census Diversity Index*

	2010	2020	
SOUTH CAROLINA	51%	54.6%	↑3.6%
CHARLESTON COUNTY	52.5%	52.6%	↑0.1%

*The Diversity Index indicates the probability that two people chosen at random will be from different racial and ethnic groups.

BIPOC Population (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color)		
Black or African American alone	22.5%	-7%
Hispanic or Latino	7.2%	+1.8%
Two or More Races	3.3%	+2.0%
Asian Alone	1.8%	+0.5%



The largest age group in Charleston County is age **30-34** at **8.4%** of the total population.

Our parks provide high quality experiences to all.

- Strategy #1: Continue efforts to close identified gaps in service to deliver high quality services to all areas of the county.
- Strategy #2: Maintain and strengthen partnerships to improve access to park and recreation facilities and recreation programs.
- Strategy #3: Expand access opportunities for underserved population groups.
- Strategy #4: Continue emphasizing the broad range of financial assistance options and the ways people can access them.
- Strategy #5: Increase awareness and visibility to residents by expanding data-driven strategic media engagement and messaging to under-reached groups.
- Strategy #6: Expand access to water-based activities for all residents.

Strengthening Community Access



Communities with the highest social vulnerability and limited park access are in West County and East County. These communities depend on community recreation programs, like those provided at the Schroder-Blaney Community Center and St. James-Santee Recreation Complex.

Staying Relevant

Charleston County has been growing faster than projected. Retirees are flocking to the area for the warm weather and access to beaches. Working adults are moving here for jobs in growing sectors. These changes to the character of the county are also indicating evolving desires for different expectations of recreation and open space use.

There is a desire for more variety in what CCPRC offers, including more interest in programs and activities that appeal to various age groups. At the same time, the mission of CCPRC is to improve the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs, and services. Since "quality of life" can mean many things to many different people; CCPRC does its best adapt to changing trends in facilities and programs, while reinforcing tried-and-true customer favorites. In many cases, CCPRC may choose to explore partnership opportunities with other local/state entities, to ensure public recreation desires are being



Our parks reflect our changing & growing communities.

**"Would like to see a multi-use facility for cultural, recreational, and event uses that can serve teens, kids with special needs, and seniors."
- Baptist Hill Middle/High School
Community-Led Conversation**

**"Recreational activities are a much needed community asset in rural areas. If CCPRC expands more in these areas, it should continue to provide active [and not just passive] recreation options."
- Wando Mount Pleasant
Library Workshop**



- Strategy #1: Provide unique and complementary programs and facilities countywide.
- Strategy #2: Offer and introduce programs and amenities aligned with community desires and population trends.
- Strategy #3: Reach all communities through broad, creative and inclusive communication methods.
- Strategy #4: Develop a consistent feedback loop to reinforce relationships and trust with County residents.
- Strategy #5: Adapt CCPRC's park/facility planning and development process to capture broad stakeholder input, maintain project awareness, and reinforce CCPRC's identity.
- Strategy #6: Communicate with municipalities as needed about national and local trends in programming, events, and facility development.

Changing with a Growing and Diversifying Place



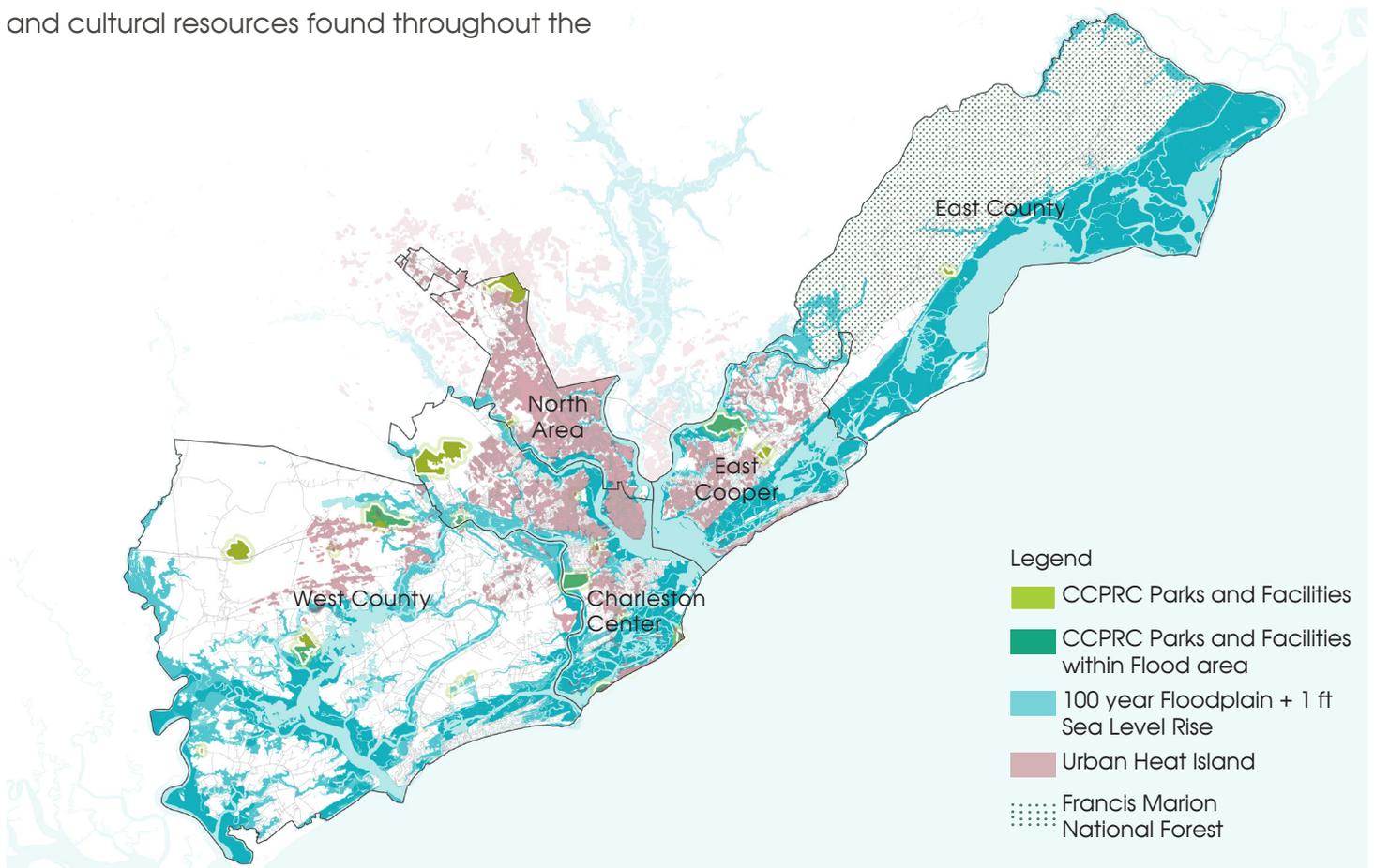
There are opportunities for CCPRC to continue investment in therapeutic recreation, which provides specialized and inclusive programs for individuals of all abilities. CCPRC should also continue investing in outdoor recreation, which provides nature-based programs and other non-traditional outdoor activities, like the Adaptive Archery Program shown above.

Staying Resilient

One of the prime responsibilities of CCPRC is the development of a countywide park system with parks of a general size and scope that would not be developed by other municipalities and public service districts. Parks in the system emphasize passive and active activities, outdoor recreation, environmental and cultural education, and water and public beach access. CCPRC offers a variety of programs and events throughout the park system, either utilizing or centered-around its managed facilities and landscapes. It is important for CCPRC to be planning for the next fifty to one hundred years to enable the park system to adapt, change, celebrate, and respond to our dynamic environment.

CCPRC is committed to protecting the natural and cultural resources found throughout the

park system. CCPRC's diverse landholdings represent some of the highest quality publicly-owned natural landscapes and cultural heritage sites in Charleston County. As the County becomes even more vulnerable to flooding and storm events, increasingly hot days, as well as an expanding population and increasing development, it will become even more important for CCPRC to continue being good stewards of natural and cultural resources. Additionally, it is important that CCPRC continue to strengthen its interpretive programming to ensure that generations of Charleston County residents can understand and appreciate these ecologically- and historically-significant landscapes.



Flood risk and urban heat island. Source: FEMA Flood Hazard Layer.

Our parks celebrate & respond to our dynamic environment.

- Strategy #1: Use the park/facility planning/design process to identify opportunities to strengthen CCPRC's resiliency.
- Strategy #2: Expand maintenance and building standards to factor in all aspects of long-term sustainability and resilience.
- Strategy #3: Expand the role of parks to provide heat relief, support water and air quality, and mitigate flood risks for residents.
- Strategy #4: Continue to build on and communicate CCPRC's cultural, natural, and historical stewardship initiatives.
- Strategy #5: Continue to partner with resource management agencies and professionals to effectively manage invasive species and stay up to date on sustainable and resilient management practices.
- Strategy #6: Continue to demonstrate leadership in management and interpretation of natural and cultural resources.

A strong system, leading resilience



Already leading in the areas of natural and cultural resource interpretation, CCPRC has the opportunity to be a leader in providing resilience education to county residents in parks and facilities. As highlighted in the image above, CCPRC adapted to COVID by recording educational programming in parks and bringing outdoor education virtually to the classroom and into homes.

Making Connections

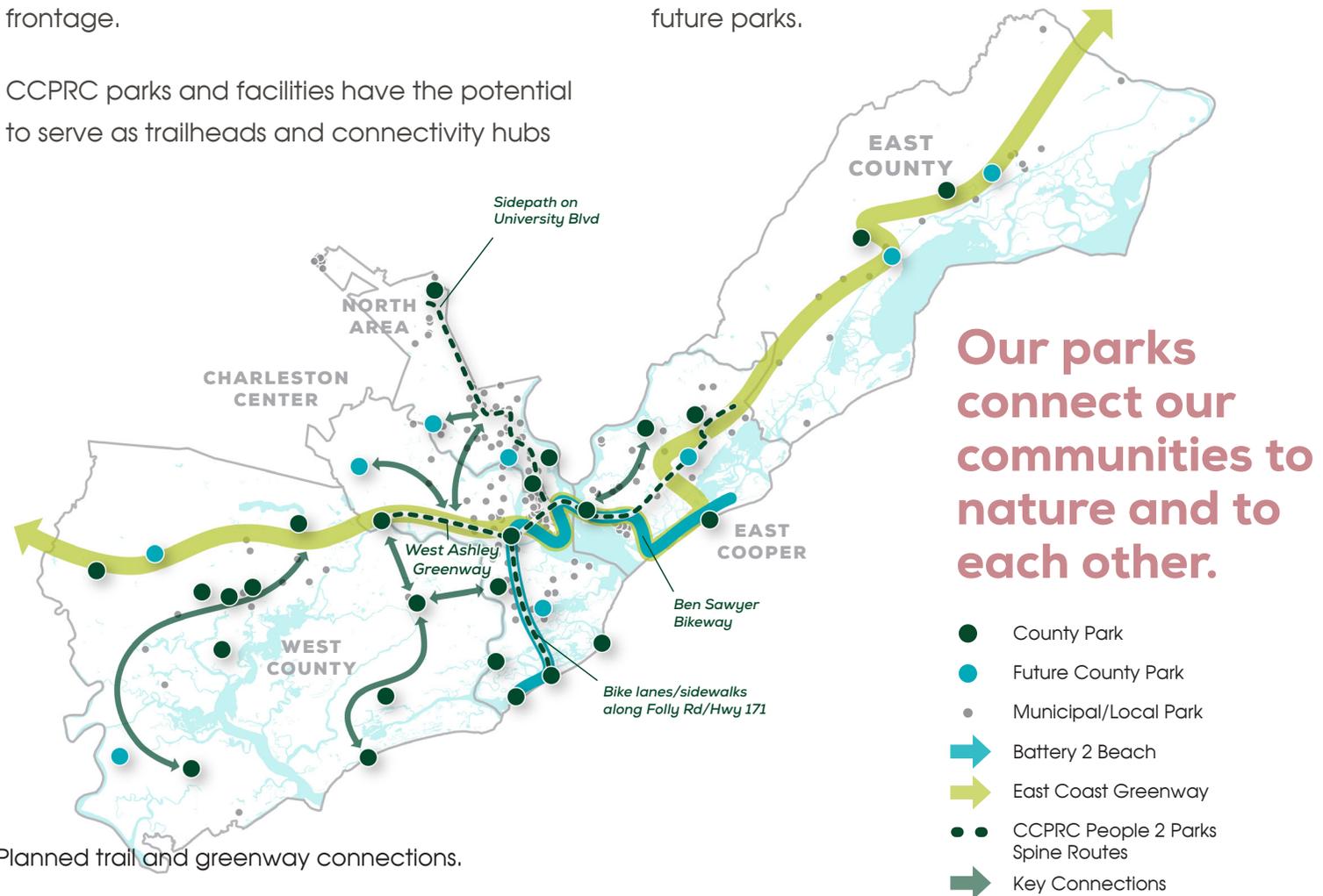
CCPRC has opportunities to improve connectivity within its parks as well as beyond its borders. Within parks, there are clear opportunities for improving connections, such as through wayfinding or consistent branding.

CCPRC parks act as destinations, but reaching parks by walking and biking is currently challenging. Overall, the existing county-wide road infrastructure network lacks bike facilities, sidewalks, and transit connections to parks, and some of the existing connections do not serve people of all ages and abilities. While CCPRC designs, funds, and advocates-for infrastructure and facilities which directly or indirectly connect people to CCPRC parks/facilities, its influence is limited beyond CCPRC property and road frontage.

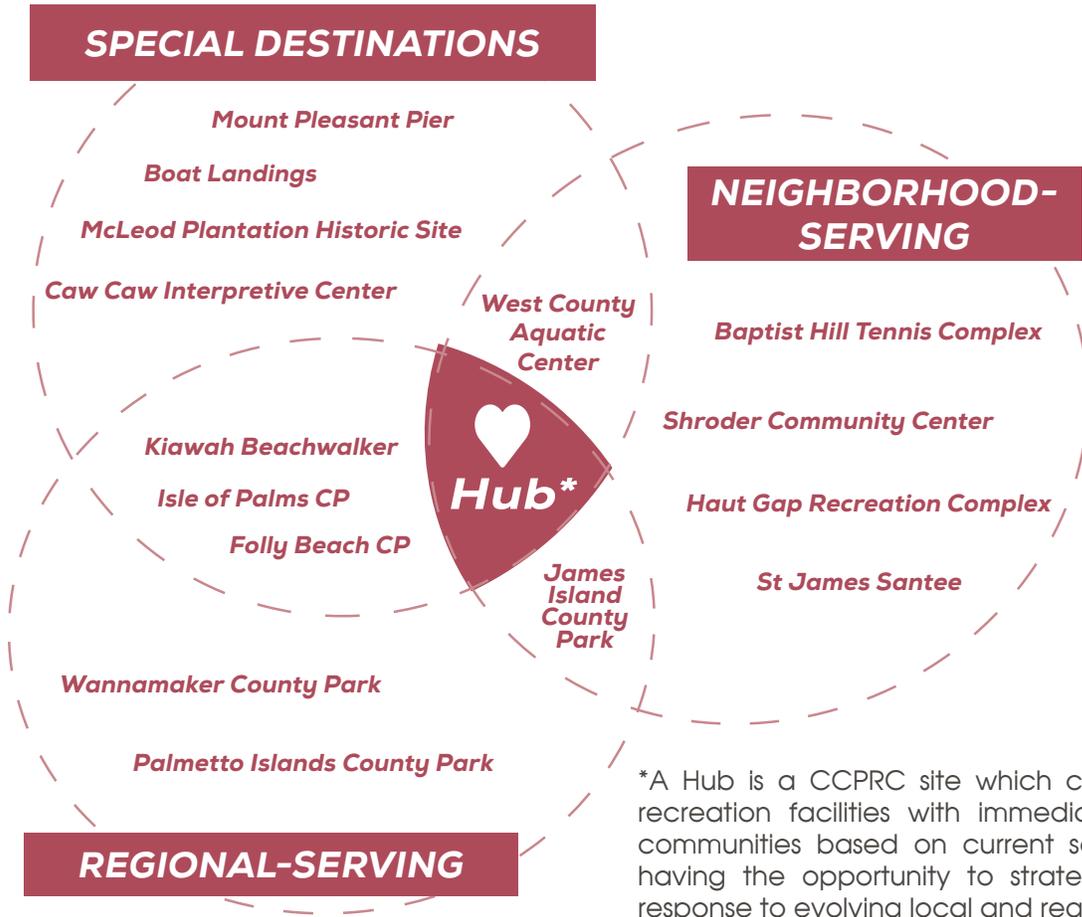
CCPRC parks and facilities have the potential to serve as trailheads and connectivity hubs

within the county-wide transportation system; for this reason, CCPRC has an important role to play as an advocate and champion for park connectivity in regional planning efforts. Providing multimodal connections between parks and nearby neighborhoods creates a more equitable parks system by offering low-cost transportation options for people to reach parks near them.

CCPRC regularly coordinates with Charleston County and other entities on bike/pedestrian and road improvement projects that serve to benefit CCPRC and its patrons. By emphasizing the importance of connectivity, this plan has tremendous opportunities to close gaps and ensure safe, equitable access to existing and future parks.



Planned trail and greenway connections.



Improve multi-modal access to parks



CCPRC parks act as destinations, but reaching parks by walking and biking is currently challenging. Residents expressed a strong interest in walking and biking in the County. Several planning processes have resulted in recommendations to improve the multimodal transportation network in Charleston County.

- Strategy #1: Continue to plan, establish, and maintain quality trails within parks.
- Strategy #2: Expand, strengthen, and clarify physical connections within parks.
- Strategy #3: Advocate to improve access to parks from neighborhoods and population centers.
- Strategy #4: Advocate for local multimodal connections between parks and destinations, as well as for large, regional walking and biking routes.

Optimizing Operations

Since the 2013 PROST plan, CCPRC has worked to build awareness about the agency throughout the county; meeting the recreational needs of residents by expanding services and programs – while all while being fiscally responsible. It is no small feat that CCPRC recently received re-accreditation under CAPRA with a perfect score and was awarded by the NRPA for the organization’s innovative approach to expanding resources to provide access to all residents.

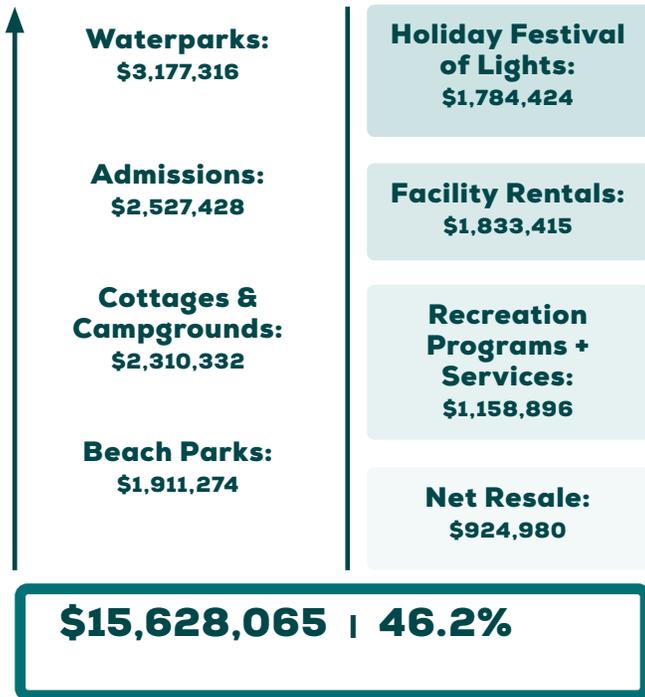
To fund maintenance and improvements to the system, staffing, and operations, CCPRC primarily utilizes the following funding sources:

- Tax millage is received from the Charleston County Treasurer’s office. Millage is the tax rate applied to South Carolina real estate and personal property which is expressed in mills, or millage rate. The amount of revenue changes as the value of property changes.
- Miscellaneous Revenue includes categories such as grants, donations, reimbursements, sale of assets and interest earned.
- Fees and Charges are made up of all revenues collected for agency programs and services.
- Bond Proceeds are received from issued General Obligation Bonds and fund major capital projects.
- Transfers from other funds include funding from the General Agency Fund to the Capital Improvement Projects Fund to self-fund Capital Projects, and from CCPRC’s Foundation Fund to the General Agency Fund to fund activities and programs.

Our parks commission is dedicated to providing exceptional performance in service of our communities.

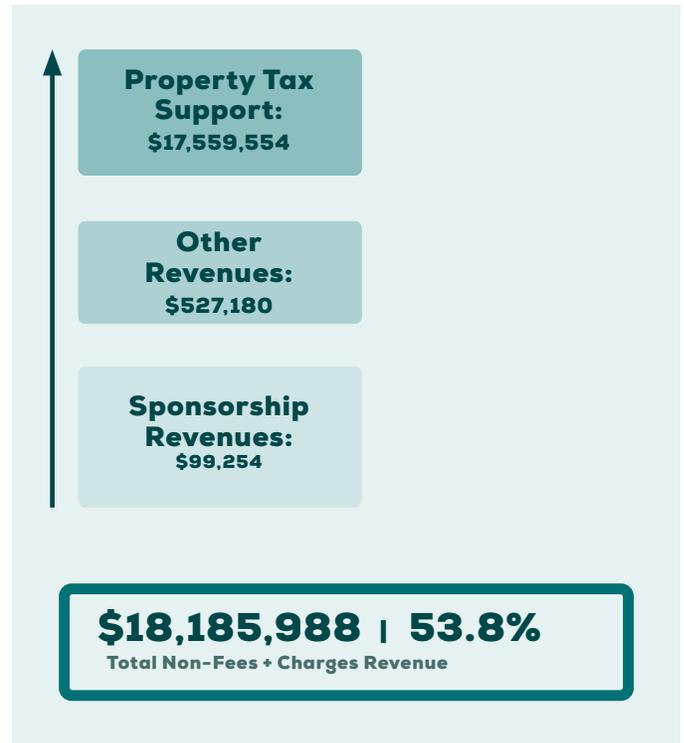
Average Annual Fees + Charges Revenues

FY 2018-2022



Average Annual Non-Fees + Charges Revenues

FY 2018-2022



- Strategy #1: Build a talent acquisition and retention approach that reflects the Charleston County’s diverse and unique perspectives and experiences.
- Strategy #2: Continue to invest in employees’ professional growth and qualifications as a critical facet of the organization.
- Strategy #3: Continue balancing financial resources to provide recurring investment in operations, maintenance, programming, facility rehabilitation, and capital investments throughout CCPRC’s service area.
- Strategy #4: Continue to leverage the role of the Parks Foundation and other creative funding sources.

Innovative Approach for All



Part-time employees are critical to the success of CCPRC. Over the next decade, as the population of the County continues to increase alongside demand, it will be even more important for CCPRC to find ways to further attract and retain staff, especially those individuals who wish to learn and grow professionally with the organization.

PARKS AND RECREATION FOR ALL!

Acknowledgments

CCPRC COMMISSION

Current Commissioners

EDUARDO CURRY	Commission Chair
BRAD TAGGART	Vice Chair
MICHELLE BRANDT	Secretary-Treasurer
DEVON ANDREWS	Commissioner
COLLIN BRUNER	Commissioner
LISA S. KING	Commissioner
MATTESE LECQUE	Commissioner

Former Commissioners

DALE AREN	Former Commissioner
TEDDY MANOS	Former Commissioner

PARFA CONSULTANT TEAM

Agency Landscape + Planning (Lead Consultant)

Berry Dunn (Recreation + Finance)

ALTA Planning (Connectivity)

Community Solutions Consulting (Community Engagement)

