

2025 - 2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK
& RECREATION COMMISSION

CHARLESTONCOUNTYPARKS.COM

Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share the Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. This plan outlines many of the goals, actions, and steps we hope to achieve over the next five years. It will serve as a road map that will help us to fulfill our mission of improving the quality of life in Charleston County by offering a diverse system of park facilities, programs, and services.

The development of this strategic plan is based on information gathered from our comprehensive plan titled Parks and Recreation For All 2033 (PARFA) that was completed in 2023, along with insights from our commissioners, staff, community leaders, and residents. This plan also builds upon our foundational elements that include our mission, vision, and core values.

At the heart of this plan is our commitment to creating inclusive, resilient, and relevant spaces where every Charleston County resident and our visitors can thrive, connect with nature, and enjoy recreational activities that promote health and well-being. We have strategically crafted goals, actions, and steps to address current and future challenges and opportunities, ensuring that our parks remain beloved gathering places for generations to come.

Thank you for your continued partnership and enthusiasm for Charleston County Park & Recreation Commission, I hope to see you in the parks soon.

Warmly,



Kevin Bowie
Executive Director



Executive Director, Kevin Bowie

INTRODUCTION

The 10-year Comprehensive Plan: Parks & Recreation For All 2033 included specific recommendations to best serve our community that were categorized into five focus areas that are: Access, Connectivity, Resilience, Relevancy, and Organizational Health. For the 5-Year Strategic Plan, these recommendations have been developed into six goals, followed by actions and steps that can be accomplished in this first 5-year strategic planning period. These actions and steps apply approaches that reinforce current accomplishments, grow & innovate for the future, and advocate & partner to allow for measured progress as the plan is implemented.

In addition, this plan has been developed to reinforce our Agency's organizational strategic alignment. It utilizes our mission, vision, and core values as a foundation and builds upon the insights gathered from the PARFA plan. This 5-year Strategic Plan will then be used to guide the Capital Improvement Plan and Annual Division Objectives to ensure unification and incorporation of the plan into all levels of the Agency's initiatives.



KEY/LEGEND

PARFA FOCUS AREA:



ACCESS

Our parks provide high-quality experiences to all



CONNECTIVITY

Our parks connect our communities to nature and to each other



RESILIENCE

Our parks celebrate and respond to our dynamic environment



RELEVANCY

Our parks reflect our changing and growing communities



ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Our parks are dedicated to providing exceptional performance in service of our communities

APPROACHES TO IMPLEMENTATION:



REINFORCE & SUSTAIN

Continues the work CCPRC already does well and is core to our mission of improving the quality of life for Charleston County residents



GROW & INNOVATE

Identifies actions that align with changing community needs and explores opportunities to expand or develop creative ways to meet these needs sustainably and for the future



ADVOCATE & PARTNER

Strengthens our outreach by advocating for community access as well as developing mission-aligned partnerships



GOAL: Expand Access to All

ACTION:

Connect people to parks via new facilities, renovations/innovations and creating flexible spaces

- STEP:** Update Mount Pleasant Palmetto Islands master plan
- STEP:** Update James Island County Park master plan
- STEP:** Complete initial phase of Cooper River County Park construction
- STEP:** Open Old Towne Creek County Park
- STEP:** Open Edisto Island Youth & Community Recreation Area in partnership with the Edisto Youth Recreation organization
- STEP:** Plan new facilities to support the expansion of trails and improvement of programs and services including summer camps

ACTION:

Increase community access through strategic property acquisition

- STEP:** Acquire property and plan for the East County Aquatic Center
- STEP:** Study opportunities for the development of operating hubs in both the East and West Counties
- STEP:** Explore opportunities to acquire properties that meet our community's needs

ACTION:

Create, improve, and expand infrastructure for water access

- STEP:** Seek opportunities to expand water access including boat landings and water views
- STEP:** Investigate paddle share opportunities at new and existing facilities
- STEP:** Develop blue trails between parks and other facilities

ACTION:

Offer and introduce recreation programs that align with community needs and interests

- STEP:** Standardize camp operations throughout the County
- STEP:** Expand programming and events in underserved areas
- STEP:** Expand inclusive programming, events, and services

ACTION:

Advance improvements in accessibility and ADA compliance

- STEP:** Prioritize funding and resources to continue the implementation of the ADA Transition Plan
- STEP:** Implement and expand initiatives for accessibility and inclusion

ACTION:

Leverage the Charleston County Parks Foundation to increase access for underserved populations

- STEP:** Provide financial support to qualified groups and individuals
- STEP:** Further develop the Foundation board and donor base





GOAL: Align with Partners

ACTION:

Leverage future grants to enhance parks and spaces

STEP: Identify and solicit significant grants to support CCPRC projects

STEP: Work with community groups to improve and develop facilities

ACTION:

Partner with government and private institutions for expertise and resources

STEP: Work with resource management agencies and professionals to manage invasive species

STEP: Leverage partnerships to stay current on sustainable and resilient management practices

ACTION:

Advocate for connectivity between our parks and community

STEP: Advocate for and support public and alternate transportation to our parks

STEP: Advocate for and support planning for pedestrian/bicycle trails that provide connections from neighborhoods to our parks

ACTION:

Expand programs, services and access by leveraging partnerships

STEP: Build opportunities with municipal and other governmental partners

STEP: Partner with mission-aligned not-for-profits and organizations





GOAL: Engage with Our Community

ACTION:

Reach communities through creative and inclusive communication tactics

STEP: Explore new strategies to connect with existing and new customers including enhanced data collection and interpretation

STEP: Provide updates to our community on projects under development and celebrate new openings and acquisitions

STEP: Enhance communications strategies to be more inclusive

STEP: Work with our partners to communicate traffic mitigation efforts at heavily used facilities and popular events

STEP: Expand the Community Relations Bureau

STEP: Activate the Community Enrichment Core Value Committee

STEP: Launch Active's Captivate application

STEP: Promote Charleston County Parks Foundation access opportunities to relevant communities

STEP: Deploy technology to rural locations to make program registration more accessible

ACTION:

Provide opportunities for the public to let us know their wants and needs

STEP: Utilize public surveys to learn how we can best serve our communities

STEP: Promote public engagement during the facility and park planning process

STEP: Engage with descendants from culturally significant sites

STEP: Establish and maintain relationships with neighboring communities

STEP: Develop a digital method for the public to report conditions and experiences in parks, boat landings, trails etc.

ACTION:

Create volunteer programs to support specific projects

STEP: Expand current programs such as trail volunteers, invasive species control and planting volunteers

ACTION:

Reimagine existing park maps and wayfinding to be more inclusive, consistent and visitor friendly





GOAL: Emphasize Natural and Cultural Resources

ACTION: ✓ 🔄

Measure the natural capital value of CCPRC park land

- STEP:** Educate our community on the natural capital value of CCPRC land (wetlands, shade, stormwater management, carbon sequestration and more)

ACTION: ✓ 🔄

Use the park planning process to strengthen CCPRC's resiliency and sustainability

- STEP:** Develop new facilities that are sensitive to and compatible with the land's historical, natural and cultural resources
- STEP:** Reinforce design and building standards that improve long-term sustainability and resilience

ACTION: ✓ 🔄

Manage and interpret our Natural & Cultural resources

- STEP:** Update the agency-wide Natural Resource Plan
- STEP:** Update the Cultural Resource Management Plan
- STEP:** Create new and update existing interpretive opportunities
- STEP:** Begin first phase master planning of the property on Wallace Creek to include research on the site's unique historical, natural and cultural resources

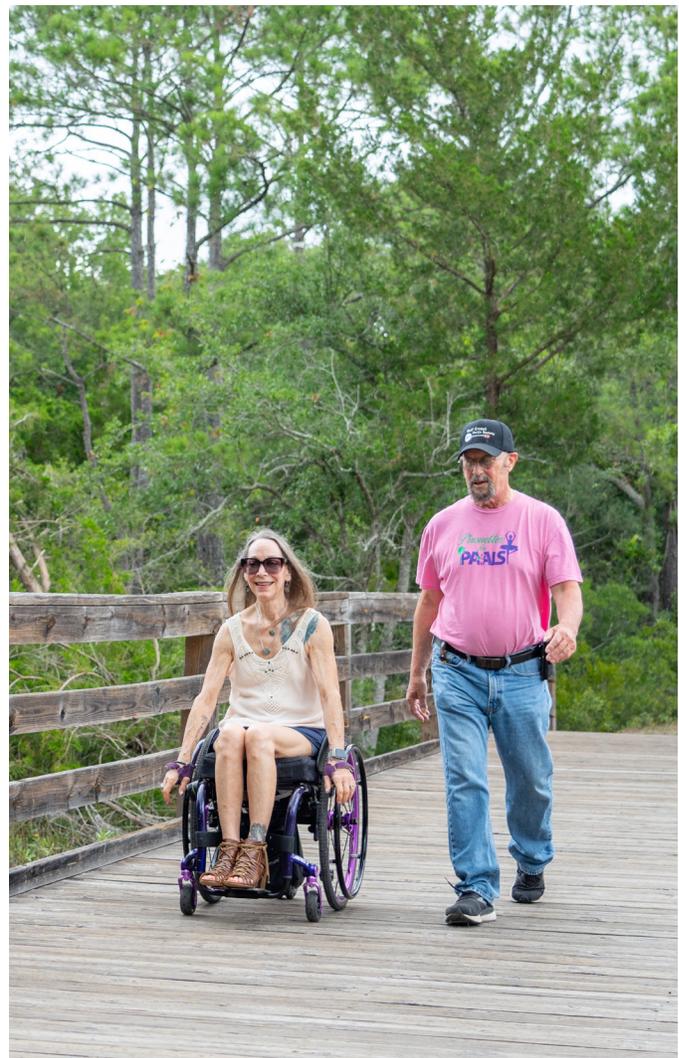
ACTION: ✓

Explore the transition to efficient or alternate fuels

- STEP:** Incorporate battery operated maintenance equipment, electric vehicles, AI powered tools
- STEP:** Expand electric vehicle charging stations within facilities

ACTION: ✓ 🔄

Evaluate park admissions to encourage rideshare, public transit, pedestrian or bicyclists to our parks





GOAL: Elevate Our Staff

ACTION: ✓ Ⓜ

Develop strategies to recruit the best applicant pool

STEP: Utilize the CCPRC recruitment committee for recommendations

STEP: Showcase existing staff testimonials and imagery in recruitment materials

STEP: Explore new avenues to bring broader awareness to open positions

ACTION: ✓ Ⓜ

Focus on the Agency's commitment to retain staff

STEP: Continually provide competitive benefits and pay

STEP: Encourage employee growth and development

STEP: Enhance the onboarding and orientation program for new employees

STEP: Support mentorship, internship, apprentice programs, and tuition reimbursement

STEP: Increase engagement in staff safety training

STEP: Develop a professional training program to encourage employee growth and facilitate succession planning

ACTION: ✓ Ⓜ

Position and promote staff as experts in their field

ACTION: Ⓜ

Pursue state and national achievements and recognitions for staff

ACTION: ✓ Ⓜ

Reinforce a positive workplace culture

STEP: Create meaningful staff appreciation program and events

STEP: Investigate new trends in human resources that support a healthy, happy and more productive workforce

STEP: Ensure employees are aware of and can easily access available staff resources

STEP: Promote participation in the Core Values Program





GOAL: Ensure Organizational Strength

ACTION: ✓

Continue sustainable financial management

ACTION: ✓

Maintain a balance between millage and user fees to create a structurally balanced budget

ACTION: ↗

Finalize the 3-year financial forecast

STEP: Maintain adequate staffing and organizational structure for current and future operations

STEP: Identify short and long-term bond strategies

STEP: Expand the role of the Charleston County Parks Foundation as a funding resource

ACTION: ✓ ↗

Enhance the capital improvement program

STEP: Maintain a 5-year capital improvement plan with annual updates

STEP: Balance investment between new facilities and the renovation, replacement and repair of existing facilities

STEP: Leverage existing and new grants as a funding source to offset capital improvement costs

STEP: Continue to develop a facility assessment program

ACTION: ↗

Identify new revenue generating opportunities

STEP: Conduct feasibility study to guide the future of the marina at Cooper River County Park

STEP: Conduct feasibility study to add future campground(s)

STEP: Research new user-fee models and implement when appropriate

ACTION: ✓ ↗

Pursue state and national achievements and recognitions for the Agency

STEP: Achieve reaccreditation with National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) program every 5 years

STEP: Apply for the NRPA Gold Medal Award

ACTION: ✓ ↗

Develop and enhance online services to make CCPRC offerings more accessible, efficient, and secure

STEP: Enhance online services to make it easier to find information, report problems, register for programs, and reserve facilities through a user-friendly website and mobile app

STEP: Improve data management to better collect and analyze data on park usage, visitor feedback, and program effectiveness to make informed decisions

STEP: Increase cybersecurity tools to protect sensitive information and ensure safe online transactions by implementing strong security measures and staff training

STEP: Expand digital outreach via social media, e-newsletters and more to keep our community informed and engaged

STEP: Support staff by providing training and tools to use technology effectively and improve overall efficiency

STEP: Enhance IT platforms to improve internal communication and collaboration

APPENDIX

The appendix included in this plan provides valuable information gathered during the comprehensive planning phase and other important supporting documents. These documents will assist in prioritization of actions and steps, promote social and geographic equity, and address service gaps.

- a. Map of social vulnerability to recreation access
- b. Projection of future Charleston County population growth patterns
- c. PARFA Community Survey results
- d. Capital Improvement Plan
- e. Division Annual Objectives



2022 Community Survey Summary for CCPRC's "Parks and Recreation for All" (PARFA) Comprehensive Plan

Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute administered a Community Needs Assessment Survey for the CCPRC during summer 2022. Survey packets were mailed to a random sample of households in the Charleston County. The goal was to complete a minimum of 1,000 completed surveys, and 1,009 completed surveys were collected. Data is available to be stratified by Planning Area when needed for more granular analysis.

Communications

Most respondents (83%) were aware of the differences between CCPRC and other recreation providers. Respondents learned about CCPRC facilities, services, programs, and events, primarily via CharlestonCountyParks.com (67%), word of mouth (63%), and the local news (44%). Respondents' top 3 preferred communication methods as CharlestonCountyParks.com (49%), Charleston County Parks email newsletter (40%), and local news (33%).

Services

Respondents were asked to rate their overall level of satisfaction with 24 parks and recreation services. Respondents were most satisfied (rating either "very satisfied" or "satisfied") with the cleanliness of parks and facilities (85%), condition of park and recreation amenities (83%), and customer assistance by staff (79%). The four most selected services having highest importance to respondents' households include:

- Cleanliness of parks and facilities (33%)
- Condition of park and recreation amenities (30%)
- Availability of information (27%)
- Connectivity of trails and pathways (24%)

Barriers to Use

Respondents were asked to identify all the reasons their household does not use facilities, programs, or services offered by Charleston County Parks more often. Respondents most often listed knowing what was available (43%), busy schedules (25%), and distance from residence or work (23%) as major barriers.

Future of Parks

Respondents rated the importance of 18 potential actions to enhancing Charleston County Parks over the next 5 to 10 years.

Respondents thought these items were most important (rating them "important" or "very important").

- Purchase and preserve wildlife-rich natural areas (90%)
- Focus on maintaining existing parks and facilities (90%)
- Renovating or upgrading aging parks and facilities and purchasing land for trails and open space (85%)

Respondents would most support the county implementing:

- Purchase and preserve wildlife-rich natural areas (29%)
- Focus on maintaining existing parks and facilities (25%)
- Develop new walking/biking trails in parks (22%)

Transportation

Use of Primary Mode of Transportation: Respondents indicated that cars are their most popular (97%) mode of transportation. Respondents were willing to travel the furthest (20 minutes or more) to visit a historic site (79%), attend a special event or participate in a family day outing (76%), or visit a nature center (75%). A majority of respondents (54%) were only willing to travel 10 minutes or less to visit their closest neighborhood park. Another majority of respondents (59%) would only travel 20 minutes or less to utilize a trail for walking, hiking, and running.

Satisfaction with Public Transportation Aspects: Respondents were least satisfied** with the quality and availability of resources about public transit stops and destinations (52%), public transit connections to their favorite County park (46%), the quality of amenities at public transit stops (50%), and the travel time between their residence and favorite County Park via public transit (47%).

Satisfaction with Shared-Use Paths: Respondents were most satisfied with the availability of trailheads and path amenities (57%), path conditions (49%), and the availability of trailheads and path amenities (43%). Respondents were least satisfied with the number of shared-use paths & greenways available (44%), and how well paths connect to their favorite County Parks (41%).

Satisfaction with Trail Services: Respondents were most satisfied* with the overall trail conditions (66%), availability of diverse trail types within county parks (59%), and the quality and availability of directional and informational signs on trails (58%).

*Rating either "very satisfied" or "satisfied"

**Rating either "very dissatisfied" or "somewhat dissatisfied"

Survey Results Summary

FACILITIES			
Priority Ranking	Unmet Need*	Most Important**	Investment Priority***
1	Outdoor performance area (67,552)	Natural areas - open to public (31%)	Natural areas - open to public (166)
2	Swimming pools (66,522)	Dog parks (26%)	Swimming pools (165)
3	Community gardens (63,609)	Paved trails (26%)	Unpaved trails - passive use (158)
4	Indoor fitness facilities (62,254)	Unpaved trails - passive use (22%)	Paved trails (158)
5	Unpaved trails - passive use (58,379)	Swimming pools (21%)	Community gardens (157)
6	Tennis/Pickleball courts (57,480)	Community gardens (20%)	Dog parks (140)
7	Social space for adults/seniors (57,275)	Cultural/Historic sites (18%)	Cultural/Historic sites (130)
8	Paddlesports launches (56,595)	Playground (18%)	Outdoor performance area (128)
9	Indoor sports courts (53,704)	Fishing/Crabbing docks/piers (16%)	Fishing/Crabbing docks/piers (125)
10	Paved trails (50,362)	Park benches (15%)	Paddlesports launches (124)
11	Park benches (49,203)	Picnic tables/areas (14%)	Park benches (121)
12	Fishing/Crabbing docks/piers (48,408)	Open-air shelters (14%)	Indoor fitness facilities (119)
13	Enclosed shelters (48,010)	Paddlesports launches (13%)	Tennis/Pickleball courts (117)
14	Cultural/Historic sites (47,717)	Enclosed shelters (11%)	Picnic tables/areas (115)
15	Unpaved trails - mtn. bike, etc. (47,535)	Boat landings (11%)	Social space for adults/seniors (112)
16	Picnic tables/areas (47,474)	Tennis/Pickleball courts (10%)	Open-air shelters (109)
17	Social space for youth/teens (45,666)	Outdoor performance area (9%)	Enclosed shelters (105)
18	Natural areas - open to public (44,607)	Social space for adults/seniors (9%)	Playground (105)

*Estimated number of households whose need for the facility is at or less than 50% met.

**Percent (%) respondents selecting as one of top four most important facilities.

***Index comparing facility importance vs. its identified need (indices over 100 considered to be a high priority for development by PARFA survey consultants).

Facilities Importance: In addition to assessing the needs for each Parks and Recreation facility, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each item. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, these were the four facilities ranked most important to residents:

- Nature/natural areas open to public access (31%)
- Dog parks (26%)
- Paved trails (26%)
- Unpaved trails (hiking, passive use) (22%)

PROGRAMS			
Priority Ranking	Unmet Need*	Most Important**	Investment Priority***
1	Adult athletic/fitness (74,050)	Outdoor concerts, performing arts & festivals (44%)	Outdoor concerts, performing arts & festivals (197)
2	Adult outdoor recreation (72,627)	Cultural events (28%)	Cultural events (158)
3	Outdoor concerts, performing arts & festivals (71,624)	Adult outdoor recreation (25%)	Adult outdoor recreation (155)
4	Adult nature & cultural history (69,970)	Family-focused events (23%)	Adult athletic/fitness (148)
5	Cultural events (69,064)	Adult nature & cultural history (22%)	Adult nature & cultural history (146)
6	Adult special interest (69,054)	Adult athletic/fitness (21%)	Family-focused events (129)
7	Community/Family meetup events (58,350)	Community/Family meetup events (17%)	Adult special interest (124)
8	Family-focused events (55,867)	Seniors athletic/fitness (14%)	Community/Family meetup events (119)
9	Seniors athletic/fitness (52,095)	Adult special interest (13%)	Seniors athletic/fitness (102)

*Estimated number of households whose need for the facility is at or less than 50% met.

**Percent (%) respondents selecting as one of top four most important facilities or programs.

***Index comparing program importance vs. its identified need (indices over 100 considered to be a high priority for development by PARFA survey consultants).





CHARLESTON COUNTY PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION

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