A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is with great excitement that we present Durham Parks and Recreation’s 2023 Annual Report. As we reflect on the achievements and challenges of the past year, we are filled with gratitude for the collaboration of our community members, leadership, partners, and stakeholders. Through our collective efforts, we have continued to uphold our commitment to enriching the lives of Durham residents and fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.

Throughout 2023 we remained committed to our mission to connect our whole community to wellness, the outdoors, and lifelong learning through improving universal accessibility, engaging with our community, elevating and celebrating staff, providing great customer service, maintaining our parks and spaces, building our parks system, and enhancing community recreation services.

The impact of our programs and services was significant in 2023, as evidenced by increased participation rates, broad and equitable community engagement, measurable improvements in universal accessibility, and beautification and safety improvements at parks and playgrounds.

As we look forward to the future, we are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and remain committed to advancing our mission and working together to create a healthier, more vibrant, and more connected community for generations to come.

WADE WALCUTT
DIRECTOR

Recreation Advisory Commission

Special thanks RAC members, past and current, who served in FY 2023

Lesley Stracks-Mullem  Karthik Sundaramoorthy
Cedric Burke          Koko Nayo
Girija Mahajan        Kenneth Barnes
Jill Thomas           Teah Rawlings
Marcella Scurlock-Jones Mike Johnston
We are a nationally accredited team of passionate professionals devoted to building better lives and a better community through the power of parks and recreation. Our talented team is devoted to community service and provides a diverse range of programs, services, opportunities and experiences while being united through our ten core pillars.
MISSION

Play More: Connecting our whole community to wellness, the outdoors, and lifelong learning.

VISION

Durham Parks and Recreation will be Durham’s leading resource for recreational choices to help citizens enjoy life while contributing to their health and well-being.

1
New Playground

2,000+
Community Engagements

12
New Pickleball Courts

3,824
Volunteer Hours

1,008
Shelter Rentals

5,200
MyDurham Check-Ins

5,000+
Program Participants*

32,800+
Special Event Attendees

Durham Parks and Recreation is proud to be accredited by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). CAPRA is the national accreditation of park and recreation agencies and is a valuable measure of our agency’s overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community. Achieving CAPRA accreditation is the best way to demonstrate that our agency and staff provide our community with the highest level of service.

*Summer Camp, After School Care Programs, Enrichment & Education Programs, Fitness & Wellness Programs, MyDurham Annual Memberships, Special Programs, Outdoor Recreation Programs, Swim Lessons
CAPRA REACCREDITATION

In 2023, DPR completed our year-long preparations for the CAPRA reaccreditation process, once again demonstrating our commitment to providing our community with the highest level of service. A Self-Assessment report, including Evidence of Compliance (EOC) for 154 standards were submitted to CAPRA, which is the only national accreditation of park and recreation organizations; it is a valuable measure of an organization’s overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community.

The CAPRA Visit Review Team completed a preliminary review in the Spring and determined the departments readiness for the virtual site visit. The virtual site visit was held in May where the virtual tours and interactions brought life to the Self-Assessment Report and EOC. At the end of the review, the Visit Review Team recommended the department’s reaccreditation to the CAPRA Commissioners, indicating all 154 standards as compliant.

In October 2023 the Commission’s voted to affirm our reaccreditation. There are 206 accredited agencies in the US and 14 in North Carolina. CAPRA Accreditation demonstrates that DPR meets national standards of best practice, helps secure external financial support which reduces costs for the community, and holds the department accountable to the public and ensures responsiveness to meet their needs.
Marcella Scarlock-Jones
Durham Parks and Recreation always have great concerts
My opinion Only

@DPRPLAYMORE

Cocoa Cinnamon
@cococacinnamon

Replying to @dprplaymore
@dprplaymore tennis has been such a healthy outlet these last few years. thank you!

Danielle Adams
Thank you for your work!

Jeannie Bee
Had a wonderful ride on the trail this morning. Thank you all!!

Lucy Moore
Thanks for putting on such a creative, fun and family-friendly event! My friend and I appreciated all of the work your team put into making this event. And, everyone working was so friendly and helpful. Really enjoyed how well-organized it was, as well. Looking forward to attending similar events, in the future. Happy Halloween!

NC Recreation & Park Association
Great job Durham Maintenance Team!

Erik Landfried
@DurhamComplete - 22h
@dprplaymore, my son and I thank you for the smooth ride on theEllerbe Creek Trail to @lifeandscience camp this morning!

Durham Downtown
Thanks for recognizing Black History contributions.

15.5k followers

4k followers

2.9k followers

240 subscribers
DURHAM PARKS AND RECREATION - FINANCE

FY 2023

17.3M

ACTUAL FY 2023 BUDGET

REVENUE
$15,985,812 General Fund Property/Sales Tax
$1,326,032 Program and Rental Fees

EXPENSE

REVENUE

General Fund Discretionary 92.3%

Park Maintenance 22.7%
Recreation Centers 17.5%
Park Planning 4.7%

Outdoor Recreation 2.5%
Operations & Reservations 6.6%

Special Events & Outreach 3.2%
Technology 2%
Aquatics 7.9%

Administration 8.7%
Athletics 5.1%
Child Care Services 4.8%
Custodial Services 3.3%
Heritage Parks 2.1%
Marketing 3.6%
SPIMA 2.7%
Athletics 5.1%
Child Care Services 4.8%
Custodial Services 3.3%
Heritage Parks 2.1%
Marketing 3.6%
SPIMA 2.7%

FINANCIALS
Our park system has grown this year through the work of the Planning & Development Division. Nearly 55 acres has been brought into the park system (via existing City property). The team has also expanded planning, promotions, and development through enhanced GIS work.

Work on the 2024 Durham Comprehensive Parks, Recreation and Open Space Systems Plan began in Spring of 2023. This plan will recognize current needs and plan for flexibility to incorporate future facilities that will address trends and needs of residents as the city continues to grow.

Inventory and analysis of the parks and recreation system, as well as the first phase of public engagement began in Spring of 2023. With consulting firm, McAdams, we have received feedback from DPR staff, PACs, the general public through discussions, pop-up engagements, public meetings, and surveys. Through the process, we have had over 2,000 engagements.

From information gleaned through public engagement, needs will be assessed and recommendations will be made. The plan is slated for adoption in Summer 2024.
This past year, improvements were made to 28 parks with FY 23 Half Penny funding. A total of $580,027 of Half Penny funds were spent delivering park improvement projects.

The Maintenance & Operations unit worked this year to construct and improve trails, land management, and facilities with a focus on social equity and universal access. Some of these projects included surface repairs and replacements at courts, playgrounds, and trails; improvements to the Downtown Skate Park; upgrades to the Lakeview Park basketball courts and walkways; as well as artificial turf maintenance at Twin Lakes and C.M. Herndon Parks.

They also focused on improving safety, cleanliness, and beautification of parks, trails, and facilities. Trash receptacles were upgraded in 3 parks, and entrance plantings, vegetation clearing, landscaping, and general beautification projects were completed at several parks including Wrightwood Park, Weaver Street Park, and Burton Park.

A sensory garden was planted with the help of Merrick-Moore Elementary School at Merrick-Moore Park, to enhance the playground for people with all types of sensory needs and preferences.
The half penny tax for parks and trails provides a dedicated funding source for maintenance of the City’s park and trails.
We rely on devoted volunteers all year to keep our parks clean and beautiful, in addition to making our events and activities possible!

Over 1,000 volunteers devoted nearly 4,000 hours cleaning up park trails, assisting programs, helping staff at special events, planting flowers and plants, and creating playgrounds. Community partners such as Durham Community Trail Watch, Novartis Gene Therapies, Coach2Inspire, and many, many more provide support to DPR to help enhance our services.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to EVERY volunteer who supports DPR throughout the year in creating better lives and communities!
In 2023, the Business Services division worked to improve equitable economic impacts and operational efficiencies. This was achieved through improving the departmental grant management processes by developing standard operating procedures and workflows, reviewing and improving checks and balances, and providing opportunities for staff development.

Staff reviewed existing grants policy and implemented a process to review grant proposals for eligibility and alignment to existing work goals. Information on grants and sponsorship processes was given at a Community Recreation Programming Meeting and a bimonthly grants focused meeting was scheduled to ensure deadlines and deliverables were communicated. This process resulted in Durham Parks and Recreation being awarded three grants: The North Carolina Accessibility for Parks Grant, The Game Time Accessibility Grant, and The Durham County ARPA Grant.

Staff improved the partnership with Durham Parks Foundation including entering into a formalized partnership agreement, receiving a grant of $85,000 for the poured in place surface at Merrick-Moore Playground, and working with the Foundation to offer t-shirts for sale at the Durham Earth Day Festival and Bimbé Cultural Arts Festival.
DPR’s 2024-2026 Strategic Plan was updated and implemented with the leadership of the Business Services division. This document will help guide the department over the next 3 years.

The team also expanded use of the Cityworks Asset Management Software this year. Through a collaboration with Durham One Call and Technology Solutions, DPR Cityworks service request templates were integrated in the external Public Stuff System. This allows residents to enter a request for service from Park Maintenance via the City’s website. In addition, Durham One Call staff have been trained to key service requests for parks and trails which reduces the number of times resident calls are transferred. Additional service request template types were implemented for the landscaping crew and outdoor fitness equipment inspections were transitioned into the Cityworks system. The expansion of this system will continue next fiscal year.

DPR achieved reaccreditation by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) in 2023. A Self-Assessment report and Evidence of Compliance (EOC) were submitted to the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) by the deadline.

The CAPRA Visit Review Team completed a preliminary review and determined the department’s readiness for the virtual site visit. The virtual site visit was held in May where the virtual tours and interactions brought the Self-Assessment Report and EOC to life. At the end of the review the Visit Review Team recommended the department’s reaccreditation to the CAPRA Commissioners, indicating all 154 standards as compliant. DPR officially received reaccreditation in the Fall at the National Recreation & Parks Association Conference.
DPR concluded its ADA audits for all playgrounds in 2023 with the completion of the final 25. Staff from various units and teams received hands-on training through participation in many of the audits.

Accessibility improvements included installing an adaptive swing at Morreene Road Park, repairing the safety surfacing at Forest Hills Park and upgrading the Merrick-Moore Park Playground design to include a roll-on Whirl.

As playgrounds continue to be designed, updated, and installed, DPR is keeping inclusive play and universal accessibility a top priority. Inclusive features that will make participation easier, more fun, and engaging for children (and their adults) of all abilities and needs are part of each new playground design, which are reviewed by the public and community members with vested interest in inclusive play.
Enhancing staff recruitment and hiring new positions has allowed DPR to achieve our goal of improving equitable economic impacts and operational efficiencies. The Personnel team increased their presence at job fairs this year, allowing us to meet people directly and inform them about job opportunities offering pay above living wage, including full-time positions with comprehensive benefits. Economically disadvantaged individuals who might have limited time and opportunity to research and apply for jobs get to go in depth with us about position details and clarify misconceptions that might have stopped them from considering themselves qualified for employment with the City or in the Recreation field.

The team also developed and implemented strategies to improve recruitment including collaborating with Human Resources to pilot an incentive program to target the most difficult to recruit positions. Job advertisements were updated to provide more relevant and realist picture of the duties the position performs rather than using just the generic information from the job description. The department advertised hard to fill and high profile positions on an increased number of external job boards (7 or more college boards in addition to our usual boards).

Operational efficiency has been enhanced by an increase in applications from those we meet at fairs, providing larger candidate pools and improving the chance of completing an assessment process in a single round. Hard-to-fill full-time positions also benefit, as we often meet qualified candidates who are interested in the department and are looking for insight. They have the opportunity to learn more about what a job is really like, receive guidance on what position is right for them, and better understand the experience and skills that we value.

Adding additional full-time positions in the Plan & Development, Culture & Community, and Park & Trail Maintenance teams has added value to the department. We are able to use the tools created by the Business Systems Analyst and Planner positions to plan, evaluate and make decisions, as well as use in developing initiatives and programming. The Community and Economic Development Analyst (Latino Outreach) position allows us to reach more of the population and develop stronger working relationships. Reassigning full-time maintenance staff from custodial services at our facilities to working in the parks and trails has made it possible to increase the number of parks and trails maintained each week and having dedicated part-time staff assigned to our facilities has made it possible to continue to keep our facilities clean.
The Community Recreation Services (CRS) division provides all ages and abilities, all across the city, opportunities to “Play More!” Our team works all year to thoughtfully plan and implement enriching programs, recreational opportunities, and services focusing on athletics, aquatics, school age care, cultural heritage, outdoor recreation, mature adults, special programs, teen programs, and canine recreation. DPR’s wide range of recreational events, programs, and activities contribute to the wellness and lifelong learning of Durham’s residents, and most importantly, help people enjoy their lives!

This unit also includes the operations of DPR’s seven recreation centers: Edison Johnson Recreation Center, Walltown Park Recreation Center, W. D. Hill Recreation Center, Weaver Street Recreation Center and the Irwin R. Holmes, Sr. Recreation Center at Campus Hills. Additionally, it includes DPR program offerings at the Community Family Life and Recreation Center at Lyon Park and the Holton Career and Resource Center.

In 2023, the CRS team worked hard to increase program enrollments across all units to provide more recreation services to more people.
The Aquatics unit successfully built program participation in 2023. They achieved increased enrichment and education program activity registrations by 290, fitness and wellness program activity registrations by 210, and teen program activity registrations by 300, successfully building program participation in 2023.

Water Exercise participation membership usage alone saw an increase of 1075% from 208 total during 2021-22 to 2,444 total during 2022-23.
- Membership use rose from 3.21% in 2021-22 to 21.93% in 2022-23.

Additionally, the team increased Lifeguarding Course registrations by 20% from 2021-22 to 2022-23 seasons. We were also able to increase program participation for Swimming Lessons by 129 participants.

The Aquatics unit achieved these program participation goals through enhanced marketing and communications efforts in the facilities, relationship building with instructors, adding to lifeguard rotation to accommodate the increase in class attendance.

New water exercise equipment, increasing accessibility to pool space for MyDurham programs, increasing swim instructors, and creating a successful framework for Fall, Spring, and Summer swim lessons all contributed to program attendance and program success in 2023.
ATHLETICS

To contribute to the CRS goal of increasing program attendance, the Athletics unit worked to grow existing programs and events in 2023.

All existing youth programs were either at maximum, showed an increase from last year to this year or were within 5% of program maximum.

- Youth basketball showed a 27% increase from 263 to 336 participants.
- Durham Girls Soccer League recorded a 29% increase in the Fall 2023 and a 51% increase in Spring 2023 compared to previous Fall and Spring seasons. In fiscal year 2023 we served 461 participants in this program.
- Adult Kickball numbers have steadily risen, from the fall season of 2021 to the fall season of 2022 we have increased 39% from 187 participants to 259 with an increase to 275 participants in the spring of 2023.
- Adult Women’s Soccer numbers have remained steady at around 160 participants per season along with our adult tennis leagues where we are serving 4500+ on an annual basis.

This mission success is thanks in part to the Harris Teeter Corporation who donated $6000 in support of our youth athletic programs.

We are continually supported in our youth basketball program by Coach2Inspire who provided 42 volunteers alone for our youth basketball program in 2022-23 along with staffing for two youth basketball academies.
Canine Recreation held 5 events in FY 2023, Pooch Plunge, Barktoberfest, Santa Paws, Dog Gone Egg Hunt, and Canine Field Day. These events have been growing as dog ownership continues to rise.

In FY 2023 Dog Park registrations also increased from 896 to 1927 tags purchased in large part due to routine staff inspections at each dog park.

DPR and residents alike celebrated the grand opening of the Rock Quarry Dog Park in June. Barktoberfest, held at Durham Central Park on Saturday, October 29, 2022 was again co-sponsored with Beyond Fences. Sponsorships increased to $15,000. There were approximately 3500 attendees. We had a record number of 45 vendors and sponsors in attendance.
Cultural Heritage private tour bookings increased from one private tour of 25 participants from June 2021-July 2022 to 7 private tours bringing in a total of 77 participants in Fiscal Year 2023.

This unit also experienced many program successes. An Afternoon in the Park experienced growth this year drawing in 55 participants compared to 40 last year. Through a partnership with the Durham Parks Foundation, we were able to expand our audience by offering alcohol and T-shirt sales, as well as live music and more activities. This event promises to continue to grow and benefit the community by creating a “backyard” party for the entire community.

Our new program this year was our History Explorer’s Days. These programs offered thematic explorations of West Point on the Eno and its history. The programs brought in 27 participants.

In 2023, DPR’s Cultural Heritage team increased the number of field trip groups and private tours.

Cultural Heritage field trip participation increased from 5 field trip groups bringing in 155 children from July 2021-June 2022 to 12 field trip groups bringing in 483 children from July 2022-June 2023. Welcoming children into our parks and giving them an exciting educational experience in nature fosters positive memories and makes them more likely to return with family on their own time. In turn it makes them more likely to return in the future as adults. Through our field trip programs last fiscal year, we are connected over 480 children with the outdoors and encouraged a love of life-long learning.

To achieve this growth, the DPR increased outreach to local homeschool groups. We also developed field trip curriculum based on NC State Standards and promoted field trip options using a field trip “menu” that can be easily distributed and utilized by educators.
Teen Programs and MyDurham achieved their goals of improved programs and accessibility this year. Registered teens increased by 100 from FY 2022 and MyDurham memberships increased by 500. Through enhanced program promotion, adding flexibility to program hours of operation, and improving popular programs like DPR PALS Summer Basketball League and Night Flight Basketball, we were able to achieve our goals of building teen programs overall in FY 2023.

Goals were also achieved through careful assessment of the programs to understand what improvements were needed to better serve the teen community. Staff evaluated the MyDurham Program and implemented changes to meet the needs of the teens. Some of those changes included forming clubs that included swimming, fitness, and anime. Teens’ interests were gauged by conducting formal and informal surveys. A Teen Advisory Group was established, comprised of full-time staff responsible for teen programming from each center to promote collaboration and cooperation.

Duke University Occupational Therapy Doctoral students also conducted focus groups with MyDurham participants and shared a report that reinforced teens needs being addressed physically, socially and mentally.

MyDurham also partnered with Durham Public Schools Career Day this year. The student participants had an opportunity to explore the different fields that are offered throughout DPR. In addition to careers, our participants were able to explore the vocational and technical aspect of Bull City Woodshop and Lowell Boats.
The Outdoor Recreation unit achieved program success this year, increasing the number of registered participants by 71 from FY 2022, and drop-in program participants by 115.

This year, the team began a new Enrichment and Education program, Students to Stewards, which welcomed 712 participants in FY 2023.

New and enhanced existing programs also contributed to the success of Outdoor Recreation programs this year. The Creepy Clown Trail, a new program for adults, has quickly become one of DPR’s most popular seasonal Fall events. The reintroduction of Bull City Campout had high attendance, and the children’s program Muddy Boots expanded by increasing its numbers since restricted Covid numbers, and adding Sandy Creek as an additional location.
I.R. Holmes, Sr. Recreation Center at Campus Hills

Campus Hills Recreation Center had increased participation in Education and Enrichment Programs (Chess for Beginners)

Campus Hills helped increase Fitness and wellness Program Activity Registrations in the following programs:
- Get Fit w/ Style, Mature Women on weights, Adult Open Gym, Pickle ball, Line Dance, Daytime Yoga.
- Increased offerings for Pickleball to 6 time per week.

Campus Hills contributed to Teen Program Activity Registrations:
- Increased days of Teen open gym
- Started new Teen conditioning program at Campus Hills
- Pickleball at Campus Hills showed growth supporting the need to increase to 6 time offerings per week.
- Extended Chess for Beginners and also provided session to School Age Care participants.

Edison Johnson Recreation Center

Increased participation by 132 participants in the following Enrichment and Education programs: Home School Fun, Total Tot Time, Kid Fit, "A" is for Autumn, Vamp It Up Gobble Till You Wobble, Cookie Creations, All About a Garden, Canvas and Cupcakes, Knitting, Chill and Paint.

Edison Johnson helped increase Fitness and wellness Program Activity Registrations: by introducing new fitness and wellness programs: Extreme Hip Hop Step, Line Dance, Dance Fitness, Power 5, and Get Fit with the Band. They also added new drop in offerings for Pickleball.

Edison Johnson contributed to Teen Program Activity Registrations with the new Teen HIIT program. They also increased participation in Teen Conditioning:
- Teen Conditioning program became a consistent teen offering with 50+ teen participants compared to 5-10 in previous years.
Walltown Recreation Center
Walltown Recreation Center had 122 participants in Enrichment and Engagement programs in FY 2023.
- Bike Safety program was introduced, providing free bike helmets to community
- Added a variety of new cooking classes including Delightful Desserts, Healthy Cooking, and Kid Kitchen
- Introduced new STEM class Builders Academy
- Added an updated Program Board for all patrons to view programs at the site

Walltown had 6,261 participants in Fitness and Wellness activities this year.
- Introduced new wellness classes including Belly Dancing, Core Fitness, Couch to 5K, and Extreme Hip Hop Step
- Increased opportunities for Volleyball open gym and took over Volleyball League that maxed out with teams
- Updated amenities in fitness room
- Added ping pong table to walking track area

Walltown had 814 participants in Teen Program Activities:
- Restarted the MyDurham Program at Walltown
- Introduced theme “Teen Nights” catered to teens
- Added amenities to Teen Room and opened during all operating hours

WD Hill Recreation Center
W.D. Hills Recreation Center increased Education and Enrichment programs/registrations with Coffee with Canvas, new Tot programs, youth sports, Beginners Golf and Intro to Roller Skating. Intro to Roller Skating was brought indoors to and focused on children ages 8 to 12.

They Increased the Fitness and Wellness activity registrations in Tae Kwon Do and Teen Resistance Training and added amenities to the Fitness Room. The Pickleball program was also revived by connecting with a Pickleball group, which helped to increase participation.

New programs saw great success this year including Yoga, Pre-schoolers Open Gym, and Coffee with Canvas.

W.D. Hill is proud to continue their relationship with Believers United for Progress, Inc. Located next door, the program provides desperately needed healthy food for the community surrounded by the recreation center, which is a food desert. This year DPR has coordinated logistics with the organization, maximizing the number of residents that can pick up the food weekly in our parking areas.
Weaver Street Recreation Center plays a major role in accomplishing goals for DPR’s work with teen programs. In addition, the center worked with community partners this year to provide very directed programming to the Cornwallis community. GRACED, Inc. provided holistic programming providing youth and teens with resources to assist in coping with mental health needs including healing circles, arts & crafts, and mentorship. Additionally, GRACED programming focuses on life skills and the introduction to the STEAM field. Another partnership that was continued in FY23 was with Terreiro de Arte e Culturo. This program provides youth/teens an outlet to express their emotions through Capoeira (Brazilian Martial Arts/Dance).

Community Family Life & Recreation Center at Lyon Park

CFLRC at Lyon Park is home to many of our Mature Adult fitness and social activities, Special Programs recreation, and teen activities including open gym. This year, Lyon Park hosted several community events as well, including a Holiday Market, in which gently used clothes and household items were given away. 45 families benefited from the event.

The West End/Lyon Park Youth Summit and Pick-up Basketball Game in August was a collaboration between DPR, West End Community Foundation, Lyon Park Legacy Project, and community members. We had a total of 16 registered participants.
Holton Career & Resource Center

Holton helped keep the community healthy and fit this year, with 1,430 participants in their free group fitness classes. Mature Adults especially showed up for their health, with 809 registering for Mature Adult Open gym.

Holton also hosted several community events this year. Over 300 people had a great time collecting candy and showing off their costumes at Trunk or Treat. Their annual Holiday program, Frosty Family Affair had 50 people in attendance and children received a free toy!
The School Age Care unit offers child care all year long through After School program and Summer Camps.

This year After School programs saw a participation rate of 95 participants while operating at three sites.

Summer camp program participants increased by 103 in FY 2023. This year Summer Camp programs saw a participation rate of 290 participants while operating at three sites. Staffing shortages for School-Age Care was consistent with nationwide childcare staff staffing concerns.

Although we were able to enroll and serve 385 participants in our Summer Camp and After School programs, our waiting lists numbers showed significant interest in the programs. It is our hope that with increased staffing the School-Age Care unit will be able to serve additional participants.

Staff recruitment, as well as participants recruitment, was enhanced by distributing hiring materials to over 25 local parks, businesses and college campuses, hosting and attending job fairs, and building marketing tactics on social media and through signage.

This year, all Summer Camp participants were given the opportunity to participate with Outdoor Recreation with fishing, canoeing and hiking. We also worked with several contractors and volunteers that provided opportunities to interact and engage with DINE, Durham Book Mobile, Durham County Library, Fire Department, Police Department, Interfaith Food Shuttle, Durham Arts Council, NC Museum of Natural Science, Ready, Set, Paint, Traveling Tortoise and various off site field trips for participants to engage in Durham and the surrounding communities.

During planned school closures Fun Days (teacher work days) and Intersession, programs were offered to participants with recreational activities, arts and crafts, STEAM and other enrichment activities. In FY 2023, 146 participants were enrolled and served in our Fun Day (teacher work days) programs. Intersession camps were offered for our year round participants during their three-week school breaks, including Fall, Winter and Spring. In FY 2023, 128 participants were served.
Special and Mature Adult Programs offer opportunities for people to build community, get fit, learn something new, and have fun in accessible ways!

Durham Senior Games and Silver Arts was a huge success this year. This Olympic-style event is designed to create a year-round health promotion and competition for participants who are 50+ years old. Participants competed in a wide range of events including heritage and visual arts, croquet, table tennis, basketball shooting, swimming, shuffleboard, pickleball, and more! The 2023 games had 78 new participants!

Mature adults unit has worked with AETNA and Oak Street to offer programs throughout the year. We offered 5 lunch and learns that averaged 20 people per program.

Mature Adults had fun building community this year at the first annual Friendsgiving event (50 participants) and Ugly Sweater event (70 people).
DPR has demonstrated significant progress in our Culture & Community efforts in 2023, reflecting a commitment to enhancing Latino outreach, community engagement, marketing, and communications. Through targeted efforts, the team has bolstered connections with the Latino demographic, increasing the availability and hours of bi-lingual (Spanish-speaking) staff for customer service, translation, and interpretation services, we have also been able to expand our Latino outreach efforts through new programming and events, which have improved equitable access for residents with limited English proficiency and created partnerships with trusted local Latino/Hispanic organizations.

Community engagement initiatives have flourished, with increased participation and involvement from diverse groups for projects including the Wheels Roller Rink, Splash & Play, playground replacements, and the Comprehensive Plan. Through 2023 we have built public engagement initiatives such as forming and engaging with resident focus groups, hosting listening and visioning sessions with neighborhoods, providing multiple in person and digital platforms for engagement and providing feedback, and ensuring use of the City of Durham’s Equitable Engagement Blueprint.
As we reinvest in promotions, outreach, and marketing, our reach and impact across across the City has grown. In 2023, we experienced a 10% increase in Facebook followers, a 33% increase in Instagram followers, and an 11% increase in Twitter followers from the previous year.

Internally, there has been notable improvement in fostering a culture of fun, collaboration and inclusivity. In 2023, we held 8 staff engagement events, 2 All Staff meeting and our annual Staff Appreciation Retreat. These gatherings provide an important opportunity for connection, fellowship, and exchange of information for the entire department, as well as an opportunity to celebrate and thank staff for their work and dedication.

The team also hosted two Marketing Summits for staff, which included presentations from media and marketing professionals, City Communications, and DPR communications. These summits provided an opportunity to establish branding, marketing, and communications standards as well as provide staff with the information and tools needed to participate confidently in DPR’s outreach and marketing efforts, and to work within the Culture & Community team’s existing systems.

These achievements underscore the Culture & Community team’s dedication to advancing our organization’s mission through connecting the public to information, elevating and celebrating staff, breaking down barriers to access, and providing outreach to the community.
In 2023, the Special Events division set out to improve special event management, delivery, operations, and customer experience. These goals were set amongst major structural change that will better serve Durham residents; the unit is now in charge of the City's permitting process for external event producers and has made great strides in improving customer service, clearly identifying expectations and collecting proof that requirements have been met.

Goals were achieved through a multitude of tactics. Staff training on special events operations and the training manual was provided to keep the team informed and enhance available crowd managers for events. The Special Event Guidelines received a full overhaul, including updating the application, communication processes, paperwork tracking, SERT Team review and responsibilities. The inspection process and forms were recreated for outside departments, and the inspection process was created and implemented.

To increase opportunities for place-making initiatives and fostering a connection between
downtown Durham business owners, residents, and the City, the team reviewed, evaluated, and recommended necessary changes to local ordinances, policies, and practices. They collaborated with DDI to rework the communication process with downtown businesses and residents, began to research set parade and 5K routes to lessen the impact on downtown and Police services, and created and implemented new parade guidelines for any occurring in the City of Durham.

The addition of and improvements to the Parade Guidelines are not only putting us ahead of legislation that is working the way through the NC court system, but also is ensuring parade safety. Proven compliance of all parade organizers is also being ensured through the addition of onsite event inspections.

Safety in the 2022 Holiday Parade was improved by having the Emergency Operations Center open. This helped provide quicker responses in the case of emergency and improved communication between DPR and all emergency entities.

Bimbé Cultural Arts Festival brought in over 12,000 people to celebrate 50 years of hip-hop. This celebration continues to be one of the largest of its kind on the east coast. 2023 marked the 53rd year of the festival and hosted a large, exciting, and celebratory experience for attendees. A proclamation was introduced at the event because DPR put a spotlight on this historical celebration. DPR was awarded the NC Recreation & Park Association Humanities Class 1 award for the Bimbé Cultural Arts Festival. The Arts and Humanities Awards recognize the most innovative and effective arts and humanities programs of NCRPA agency members.