

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Message from the Interim Director

The National Recreation and Park Association estimates that local Park and Recreation agencies in the US generated more than \$200 billion in economic activity and supported more than 1 million jobs in 2021 (most recent data available). Of equal note from the report, Parks and Recreation agencies contribute significantly to the health and wellness of their communities through spaces, program, and services, and support community resiliency through conservation, protection, and care of natural resources. We are proud to be a part of that story in Spokane, where our treasured parks and vibrant recreation programs improve the quality of life for our community members. Our 2023 annual report highlights some of those impacts. Thank you to the community we serve, our partners, and volunteers for another incredible year.

– Jason Conley, Interim Director, City of Spokane Parks & Recreation

Recreation

Our dedicated Recreation team maintained their commitment to discovering fresh and unique ways to meet the recreation needs of our community, while reducing barriers. They continued to offer popular community favorites; quality programs that offer a robust variety of activities for all ages and abilities. The Recreation team continues to foster essential community partnerships and networks with State Parks and the Washington State Recreation and Parks Association.

2,172	Programs sessions offered
870	Adult athletic team participation
23,749	Total program participation
127,907	Open swim participants
4,464	Athletic complex field rentals

- **Corbin Art Center:** The D.C. Corbin house turned 125! To celebrate, staff created events that brought fresh awareness to the historic facility, including the Age of Elegance, a 10-day event that welcomed almost 400 visitors to enjoy the center decorated by local furniture stores. The Festive Family Holiday Fun event welcomed 90 participants to visit with Santa Clause and make holiday decorations. The events raised \$4,000+ towards the center's preservation and maintenance. The Governor's Mansion Foundation donated two etchings of George Washington to be displayed at the Corbin Art Center. Over the year, 2,000 people enjoyed nearly 340 classes at the center.

- **Aquatics:** With 76 lakes within an hour drive, plus the Spokane River, water safety is a huge priority for Spokane Parks & Recreation. 3,650 people took swimming lessons at our facilities this summer! We also welcomed about 127,900 aquatic visitors for free open swim. Across our 6 aquatic centers, we employed about 185 seasonal employees including 52 new lifeguards this year!
- **Athletics:** Organized sports are an excellent outlet for adults to be social and participate in physical activity. With the continued addition of new middle schools and use of the Podium, the adult volleyball program continues to hit record numbers with 450 teams and 2,650 players this past year! Adult softball also increased with 313 teams and 4,200 participants. Adult flag football had 50 teams and 662 players, and the cornhole league saw 49 teams with 116 players. The Youth NFL Flag Football program had 278 participants that made up 26 teams in 2023.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** 1,080+ people enjoyed activities like kayaking, paddleboarding, whitewater rafting, snowshoeing, Nordic skiing, hiking, archery, and various youth camps. In partnership with Washington State Parks' boating program, Outdoor Recreation served youth in Northeast Spokane by providing free kayaking and water safety education, and provided a free type III life jacket to take home!



- **Therapeutic Recreation Services:** TRS provided quality recreation experiences to 1,700+ people. A new partnership with Spokane Valley Parks & Recreation allowed for new opportunities like an expanded bicycling program and Paint & Taste classes. With a new biski Dynamique, we could offer more successful ski lessons to those with physical hurdles that previously prevented them from enjoying this sport. Other new adventures included our first teen week of Funshine Day Camp, and sailing on Lake Pend Oreille.
- **Wellness and Enrichment, Recreational Sports:** 4,150 youth and adults enrolled in Wellness and Enrichment programs. The senior participants in the Enhanced Fitness/Longevity Fit program are seeing measurable mobility and quality of life improvements. Another highlight was offering recreational programs at The Podium, where 200+ youth enjoyed the state-of-the-art indoor sports facility through badminton camps, summer day camps, and Run, Jump, Throw events. We also partner with NEWESD 101's Safe Communities Partnership in various gang prevention efforts.
- **Community Centers:** We affiliate with ten Community, Youth, and Senior Centers that provide resources and recreational services to our citizens: Corbin Senior Center, East Central Community Center (MLK), Hillyard Senior Center, Mid City Concerns, Northeast Youth Center, Project Joy, Sinto Senior Center, Southside Senior Center, Southwest Community Center, and West Central Community Center. Combined, these centers served 182,000+ participants. Community volunteers donated nearly 42,000 hours to help provide wonderful resources to the community.

Holiday Celebrations

Holidays at Riverfront

The Riverfront Trail of Lights, Numerica Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration, and Winter Farmer's Market were all created to provide safe and enjoyable holiday activities for our community while supporting small businesses and the downtown economy.



Drive-Thru & Walk-Thru Lights at Manito

We again partnered with The Friends of Manito and several thoughtful sponsors to transform the park into a drive-thru and walk-thru holiday light show to brighten spirits for tens of thousands of visitors.



Fireworks Shows

Riverfront hosted 4th of July and New Year's Eve fireworks with sponsor Idaho Central Credit Union, and included a free Spokane Symphony concert for the 4th.



Easter Egg Hunt

Amidst 20,000 eggs, 5,500 kids and kids-at-heart enjoyed finding candy and prizes.



Park Planning & Development

- **Corbin Park Sport Court Renovation:** Work began, and will wrap up in spring 2024. The project will create a new dedicated tennis court and 2 dedicated pickleball courts. Work is anticipated to cost about \$240,000.
- **Dutch Jake's Park Playground Surfacing:** A new rubber surface surrounds the playground area, enabling all users to fully enjoy the playground regardless of their mobility, at a cost of \$175,000.
- **Grant Park Playground:** A new playground with a saucer swing, rope climbers, merry go round, and monkey bars for children to enjoy climbing, swinging, and spinning together opened in October. Construction and equipment cost \$98,000, funded by American Rescue Plan funds designated by the City Council and the Spokane Parks & Recreation budget.
- **Liberty Park:** The renovated park includes a new 4,000+ square foot playground with a rubberized walking surface and equipment selected by neighborhood children. A renovated restroom facility, new walkways and lighting, and large picnic pavilion are also onsite. Adjacent to the playground, a new disc golf course is already seeing great use. Underground, a modern, automated irrigation system replaced outdated manual watering equipment. Construction ran May – September. The playground, restroom, and irrigation projects cost \$970,000, funded by American Rescue Plan funds designated from the City Council, Spokane Public Library (co-location funding for the Liberty Park Library), and the Spokane Parks & Recreation budget.
- **Make Beacon Hill Public – Phase 2:** Design was substantially completed for Phase 2 of the project to permanently protect ~250 acres of privately owned land through purchase and donated conservation easements. The project connects four existing public parks (undeveloped portions of Esmeralda golf course, Minnehaha, Shields, and Camp Sekani) to create one larger, jointly managed regional park of 550 acres with a 46-mile trail system. Design, engineering and permitting for improved trailheads accessing this land cost \$310,000.
- **Riverfront Park South Suspension Bridge:** Renovation of the second Expo '74 suspension bridge was completed, and the bridge will open to the public in spring. The concrete deck and adjacent approaches were completely replaced, all steel was cleaned and repaired/replaced, new lighting was installed. The bridge renovation was funded by a federal grant from the Land and Water Conservation Fund, with local matching funds provided by city the REET program. The \$2.6 million dollar project is the third park bridge renovation project completed in as many years, and Park staff are very excited to turn attention from bridges to neighborhoods.
- **Master Planning:** Our team built upon the momentum of the 2022 Master Plan, working with an executive committee to develop an investment package to meet those highest priorities identified through extensive community outreach. In August 2024, the public will be offered the option to invest in a 'Healthy Neighborhoods, Health Parks' levy focused on neighborhood park improvements.
- **Susie's Trail Phase I:** Phase I of the new Susie Stephens Trail opened in September. The trail is named for environmentalist and well-known bicycle and pedestrian safety advocate, Susie Stephens. Susie's life was cut short when she was struck by a bus at a crosswalk in 2002. Since then, her mother, Nancy MacKerrow, has been honoring Susie's legacy through planting hundreds of trees and trail building. Phase I of the trail includes an 8' wide path along the street tree exhibit on W. Woodland Blvd., between D. St. and W. Trinity Pl. Eventually, the trail will be 0.7-miles, and span from Woodland Center in Finch Arboretum to the intersection of 13th and Lindeke St., where it will connect with the Fish Lake Trail. Nancy donated \$100,000 towards construction, and those funds were matched by City of Spokane Parks & Recreation to complete this portion of the trail.



- **Trolley Trail Land Acquisition:** Working collaboratively with Spokane County Parks, the City acquired an additional 3.7 acres in Spokane's Grandview Thorpe Neighborhood, officially securing permanent public access to an additional 1,000 feet of the 'Trolley Trail' at no cost.
- **Wildhorse Playground & Walkway:** Wildhorse Park, near Esmeralda golf course in Hillyard, cut the ribbon on a new playground in October. The project included a new 3,000 square foot playground aimed at ages 3-12 years old, with a saucer swing, rope climbers, tree house, and swaying cat tails. In addition, there are several new shade trees, new 6' wide concrete sidewalks, and a 10' wide asphalt trail connecting the park and adjacent Minnehaha Neighborhood to the Children of the Sun Trail and to downtown Hillyard. The project cost \$300,000, funded by American Rescue Plan funds designated by the City Council and the Spokane Parks & Recreation budget.
- **Water Conservation:** Ongoing water conservation projects at golf courses and parks are estimated to have saved 55-60 million gallons of water annually by the end of 2023 (about 8% of total park water use). Parks and Utilities continued year 3 of a 10-year partnership to conserve water on public lands through annual funding of water conservation projects that support the Water department's stewardship program.

Looking ahead to 2024, we'll see needed repairs made to damaged playgrounds at about 16 parks, thanks to a \$100,000 maintenance grant received from the Washington Recreation and Conservation Office. We will also open the renovated South Suspension bridge in Riverfront Park and sport court at Corbin Park, work on the Riverfront Park Post Street Parking Lot near downtown, Underhill sport court, the Make Beacon Hill Public trailheads, along with additional improvements to neighborhood park irrigation systems, playgrounds, and restrooms. Staff will apply for grant funding to improve Meadowglen & Coeur d'Alene Park. Parks will offer voters a levy option in August 2024 to provide widespread renovations to neighborhood parks across the city over the next 20 years.

Park Operations

Our Park Operations team worked hard to ensure our parks were well maintained and clean for the community to enjoy. Teams work on maintenance of grounds, facilities, and equipment. With about 100 properties covering 4,000 acres, it's a big job!

The Park Operations team is diligent and takes pride in providing the best service to our community. The team saw an increase in vandalism in 2023 across park properties. Coupled with staffing shortages and supply chain issues, rapid repair of damaged facilities (like restrooms) was especially challenging. They remain focused on the priorities of safety, sanitation, and asset protection so the community can enjoy our beautiful parks.

32	lane miles of snow removal and maintenance of sidewalks/pathways
562	work orders in 2023, outside routine work, including memorial bench installations, plumbing repairs, electrical work, etc.
75,000	people attended the Drive-Thru and Walk-Thru Holiday Lights in Manito
\$100,834	revenue from park reservations (non-athletic)
115,000	people attended activities happening as part of a park reservation, like weddings and family reunions (not including Riverfront)



In 2023, we invested in neighborhood parks with three new playgrounds and one new restroom facility. Improving playgrounds was one of the top community desires we heard in our master planning outreach. When you see kids being able to walk or ride their bike to a park and enjoy that new playground, we're hitting at the heart of what we heard our community wants to see.

Natural Resources

Urban Forestry: Spokane Urban Forestry creates a diverse, healthy, and accessible urban tree canopy for the benefit of Spokane's citizens through quality planting, protection, and stewardship. In 2023:

168	site inspections were performed for certificate of occupancy
266	new community trees planted, including 200 in partnership with The Lands Council and community volunteers through the SpoCanopy program. Neighborhoods with low canopy cover were targeted zones for tree plantings.
328	development and demolition plan sets were reviewed
360	street tree permits were processed representing 2,926 trees
981	trees were pruned by Urban Forestry staff, 26 by tree service contractors and an additional 883 by contractors through City Engineering projects
1,000	seedlings were given out at a free event
3,050	native tree seedlings were planted by Spokane Ponderosa on public properties

Natural Areas: It was a robust year for forest health thinning, with about 200 acres treated in collaboration with the Spokane Fire Department.

- 39 at Indian Canyon Golf Course and Park
- 24.5 at Romine Conservation Area
- 56 at Palisades Park
- 25 at Wyakin Park
- 54 at Esmeralda Golf Course and Minnehaha Park

Our goat grazing project for vegetation management was successful again this year, in partnership with Avista and Friends of the Bluff. Four parks were grazed with about 200 goats each, covering about 30 acres.

We also celebrated Arbor Day and the Fall Leaf Festival with free family-friendly activities at Finch Arboretum.



Golf

Golf continues to enjoy popularity. Revenue from rounds was up 6.5% over 2022, with 177,670 rounds played in 2023. Revenue from pass sales increased 10% year-over-year.

Visit SpokaneGolf.org to view flyover videos of each course, produced in 2023 to highlight the incredible quality and challenge our courses provide.

Our City Championship sold out, with 133 players over a 3-day tournament (and the longest waitlist yet). Thank you to our sponsor, Renaissance Financial.

Indian Canyon: With more than 43,000 rounds for the 3rd year straight, it was a busy year including events like the Rosauers Open, WIAA High School State Championship, and EWU Women's Invitational. Instruction and player development programs programs were popular, like Op 36 for juniors with 100+ students, and Women's Golf 101 with 50+ participants.

The Creek at Qualchan: Qualchan enjoyed its third-best season since opening in the 1990's, with 40,999 rounds. Junior golf continued to be highly popular, as was the men's club with the largest membership to date of 456 people. 2024 will see increased junior, women's, and couples offerings to help meet demand.

Downriver: Edging towards 50,000 rounds, Downriver saw another popular season. The junior program was strong with continued growth, and the Wounded Warriors event was as popular as ever.

Esmeralda: Esmeralda saw 44,000 rounds, a 2,700-round increase over 2022. A new high-efficiency HVAC system was installed, providing consistent and reliable heat throughout the building.



Riverfront Spokane

Community Engagement

Riverfront is known for free and low-cost programming to help people enjoy their downtown park. Popular picks include Riverfront Eats, Riverfront Moves, Story Time at the Carrousel, vendor markets, Movies at the Pavilion, free concerts by the Spokane Symphony, Easter egg hunts, fall festival, holiday trail of lights and tree lighting, and 4th of July and New Year's Eve fireworks! Many programs are supported by generous sponsors listed in this report – thank you.

Events

From large community events like Hoopfest, to private groups rentals for birthday parties and corporate meetings, to weddings – Riverfront is the community gathering space. The summer concert series brought 9 shows to the Pavilion, and event attendance increased by 31% over 2022.

Speaking of events, Riverfront is busy planning for the 50th anniversary celebration of Expo '74, slated for May 4 – July 4, 2024. Plan to join us and a wide variety of community partners in commemorating this pivotal event for Spokane!



Attractions

The Loeffl Carrousel, Numerica Skate Ribbon and SkyRide remain popular attractions for locals and visitors alike, year-round. Riverfront offers something for everyone, in every season.

144	Community Engagement event days offered at little or no cost (19% increase)
134,317	People attended free and low-cost Community Engagement programs (79% increase)
62	Events held by event organizers for the public
265	Private events/party rentals (7% increase)
36,584	Numerica Skate Ribbon attendance – The Ice (28% increase)
103,370	Numerica SkyRide attendance
103,694	Loeffl Carrousel attendance

Park Rangers

Our Park Rangers saw a 79% increase in calls for service (from 2,724 to 4,877), primarily due to implementation of 24-hour service between Memorial and Labor Day holidays. They continue to do a great job meeting community need while serving as park ambassadors.

Capital Improvements

Building on the tremendous community investment of the Riverfront Park redevelopment between 2016-2022, the park continues to invest in infrastructure for the next 50 years.

- South Suspension Bridge:** The \$2.5M dollar restoration of one of the Expo '74 bridges involved a new deck, repair/replacement of corroded steel floor beams, repair/replacement of lighting and electrical components, and an upgraded railing. The bridge was substantially completed in 2023, on budget and on schedule, and will open to the public in spring 2024 to allow the surface time for curing. The twin north suspension bridge received similar renovation in 2022.
- Stepwell:** Stepwell is an interactive wood sculpture inspired by the Expo environmental theme, logo, and Riverfront's topography. It is located just north of the Providence Playscape. The Riverfront Park redevelopment bond allocated \$500,000 for a signature piece and an art plan for the park, representing 1% of the total bond, a public art allocation that is required by the city for similar projects. It opened in the spring.
- Butterfly Replacement (Riverfront):** Riverfront's iconic lilac butterfly got its wings again in October, reconstructed after high winds brought it down in January 2021. The butterfly was originally constructed for the 1974 Worlds Fair, and an original weld failed in extreme weather. The butterfly has since gone through complete re-engineering with structural and aerodynamic modifications made to enhance safety. The renovated butterfly was funded by reimbursable FEMA funding due to the windstorm, with support from Riverfront Park bond funds and the Spokane Parks Foundation. The cost for construction was \$256,000.





Programming & Project Sponsors – Thank You!

A special thank you to our partners whose support help make events, places, and programs possible:

Anam Cara Healing Center, Avista, Barre Code North, Bartlett Tree Experts, Beyoutiful Hot Yoga, Bloomsday Association, BMT Metal Fabrication, Budweiser, Coil Fitness, Core Four Collective, David's Pizza, Disc Golf, Uprising, Eclipse Power Yoga, Evergreen East Mountain Bike Alliance, Friends of the Bluff, Friends of the Centennial Trail, Friends of Coeur d'Alene Park, Friends of Manito, Friends of Palisades, Friends of Riverfront, Garco Construction, Hooptown USA, Idaho Central Credit Union, Innovia Foundation, The Isaac Foundation, Jess Roskelley Foundation, KHQ, King Beverage, Lake City Figure Skating Club, LeafGuard, Mobius, NEWESD 101's Safe Communities Partnership, No-Li Brewhouse, Northern Quest Resort & Casino, Numerica Credit Union, One Heart Spokane, Pool World, Precision Pilates, Providence Health Care, Renaissance Financial, River Park Square, Senske Services, Shala Living Yoga, Skyhawks RISE, Spokane Arts, Spokane Barre, Spokane

Chiefs Hockey, Spokane City Council, Spokane City Public Works & Utilities, Spokane Disc Golf Club, Spokane Humane Society, Spokane Parks Foundation, Spokane Public Library, Spokane Rapids, Spokane Rotary 21, Spokane Shakespeare Society, Spokane Symphony, Spokane Tribe, Susie Forest, Swire Coca-Cola, TDS Fiber, The Lands Council, The Union, Wagstaff, Inc., Walker Construction, Washington Recreation & Park Association, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington State Recreation & Conservation Office (RCO), Washington Trust Bank, Windermere Spokane, WSECU.

Spokane Parks Foundation – Thank You!

The Campaign for Riverfront Spokane has raised nearly \$3M to provide additional amenities beyond the bond-funded projects. **Grant funds** totaling \$25,385 were provided to support recreation programs and park amenities in 2023. **Additional project support** in the amount of \$61,348 was provided from funds held at the Foundation.

Park Friends Groups & Volunteers – Thank You!

Thank you to our Park Friends groups and our volunteers, who ensure our park spaces are supported by community efforts to help them thrive!
www.SpokaneParks.org/volunteer

Park Board

The Spokane Park Board was created in 1910 and granted power by the City Charter to layout, establish, purchase, procure, accept and have the care, management, control and improvement of all park grounds and parkways controlled by the City of Spokane and used for park purposes.

About 2.3% of the City's budget is spent on Parks & Recreation. Additional funding comes from fees and charges for programs and services, and grants. The City's golf courses operate as an enterprise fund and are not supported by tax dollars. Visit SpokaneParks.org/board for meeting details.

2023 Park Board – all volunteers

- Bob Anderson**, President, Finance Committee chair
- Gerry Sperling**, Vice President, Riverfront Park Committee chair
- Jennifer Ogden**, Development & Volunteer Committee chair
- Nick Sumner**, Golf Committee chair
- Greta Gilman**, Land Committee chair
- Sally Lodato**, Recreation Committee chair
- Kevin Brownlee**, Urban Forestry Tree Committee chair
- Barb Richey**, Spokane Parks Foundation liaison
- Hannah Kitz**, Bylaws chair
- Christina VerHeul** (resigned September)
- Doug Kelley** (joined September)
- Jonathan Bingle**, City Council liaison

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www.SpokaneParks.org