

**PHILADELPHIA PARKS AND RECREATION  
FISCAL YEAR 2025 BUDGET TESTIMONY  
APRIL 3, 2024**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good morning, President Johnson, and Members of City Council. My name is Susan Slawson, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation. Joining me today are Aparna Palantino, (Former) Deputy Commissioner for Capital Infrastructure, and Marissa Washington, Deputy Commissioner of Administration. I am pleased to provide testimony on Philadelphia Parks and Recreation’s Fiscal Year 2025 Operating Budget.

**DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS**

**Mission:** The people of Philadelphia own a treasure of facilities and resources that they have entrusted to Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PPR) to manage democratically, equitably, and sustainably. PPR activates and stewards those treasures with programs and services that contribute to the health, wellness, and prosperity of all.

**Plans for Fiscal Year 2025:**

**Summer 2024**

We continue to plan for a summer season with robust program offerings and services. We have been actively planning for a full summer pool and camp season. The second Philly Phreeze pool plunge, a one-day pool fundraiser that supports our aquatics program, assisted in raising awareness of the need for lifeguards. We will once again offer hiring incentives for lifeguards to ensure that 60 pools will open on time and are safe for the 2024-summer season.

Working across City agencies with community partners, PPR will continue to provide safe and fun programming by offering summer camps, and Playstreets throughout the city. We will once again provide Kensington activations, which provide high-quality experiences to support working families and youth through the PlayParks initiative at Hissey Playground, McPherson Square Park, and Harrowgate Park.

**Teen Engagement**

PPR is building on last summer’s efforts through a continued partnership with the Managing Director’s Office and community groups. PPR hosted the “Teen Takeover” at Eakins Oval on Thursday nights in July and August. We are bringing back the Teen Takeover this summer at the Oval, where safe space is provided for fun programming, including games, music, dance, food, and more.

**Sports & Anti-Violence Initiative**

In addition to opportunities that we provided last summer, we are in the initial phase of a project to reduce the cycle of violence by empowering youth through sports, mentorship, and conflict resolution training to foster a culture of peace, resilience, and positive community engagement. The project will incorporate trauma-informed practices by providing a safe and supportive environment for youth to learn and grow.

**Safety**

Our targeted enforcement program operates from Memorial Day weekend to late September with support from the PPD. Working with Philadelphia Police Department and PPR Rangers, we have a plan that includes both education and enforcement aimed to reduce quality of life concerns.

**Natural Lands and Sustainability**

As stewards of Philadelphia’s natural lands, PPR works to maintain, increase, and protect natural resources across the city. The Natural Lands team planted 5,400 trees and shrubs across several restoration sites and completed major restoration plantings in two of PPR’s largest deer enclosure areas. The team initiated new partnership initiatives with PowerCorpsPHL and the U.S. Forest Service to address climate resiliency while providing workforce development training.

PPR will implement recommendations of the Philly Tree Plan to increase staffing of the Urban Forestry Division for public tree maintenance and communication with residents. PPR will prioritize tree planting in communities that lack tree canopy and need restoration and maintenance of forested natural areas.

**PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW**

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY23 Original Appropriations	FY23 Actual Obligations	FY24 Original Appropriations	FY24 Estimated Obligations	FY25 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY25-FY24
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$61,031,936	\$56,440,606	\$65,706,117	\$63,862,117	\$64,270,972	\$408,855
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$7,674,442	\$8,850,395	\$8,673,442	\$10,400,442	\$8,488,442	(\$1,912,000)
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$2,930,025	\$4,535,107	\$3,538,538	\$8,052,538	\$3,500,038	(\$4,552,500)
Class 500 - Contributions	\$1,500,000	\$5,401,016	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$0
Class 800 - Payment to Other Funds				\$2,500,000		(\$2,500,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$73,136,403</b>	<b>\$75,227,124</b>	<b>\$79,418,097</b>	<b>\$86,315,097</b>	<b>\$77,759,452</b>	<b>(\$8,555,645)</b>

**Proposed Funding Request:**

The proposed Fiscal Year 2025 General Fund budget totals \$77,759,452 a decrease of \$8,555,645 over Fiscal Year 2024 estimated obligation levels. This decrease is primarily due to a onetime payment to the capital fund of \$2.5 million, \$3 million in funding for Youth Sports and \$1.75 million for the transfer of capital staff and supplies from PPR to the new Capital Projects Office.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$64,270,972 in Class 100, a \$408,855 increase over FY24. This funding will support the department’s 930 full-time positions, 75 part-time positions, and over 1,500 seasonal positions. These positions will support extended facility hours and increased management of our natural resources.
- \$8,488,442 in Class 200, a \$1,912,000 decrease from FY24. This funding will support contracts and professional services. These services are necessary for the maintenance and management of over 10,000 acres of public land and hundreds of facilities and amenities that see millions of visits a year. The primary decrease is due to \$1.7 million internal realignment from the mid-year transfer.
- \$3,500,038 in Class 300/400, a \$4,552,500 decrease from FY24. This funding will provide resources for staff to complete their assignments in the care and maintenance of public spaces and facilities throughout the city of Philadelphia. The primary decreases are due to \$1.5 million internal realignment from the mid-year transfer and \$3 million for youth sports.

- \$1,500,000 in Class 500, level with FY24. This funding through the Philadelphia Activities Fund will assist local communities in providing activities for youth, seniors, and special populations.
- \$2,500,000 in Class 800, a decrease over FY24. This funding will support the Simons Recreation Center capital project. This was a one-time payment towards the capital project

### STAFFING LEVELS

The department is requesting 930 budgeted positions for FY25, a decrease of 15 positions from FY24.

The decrease is attributed to a transfer of positions for the creation of a new capital projects office to support citywide capital projects and Rebuild.

Employment Levels (as of December 2023)		
	FY25 Budgeted	Filled as of December 2023
Number of Full-Time Positions	930	657
Number of Part-Time Positions	75	50
Number of Exempt Positions	44	42
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)	6	6
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions	\$55,660	\$57,781
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions	\$53,842	\$52,519

### NEW HIRES

New Hires (from 7/1/2023 to December 2023)		
	Total Number of New Hires	Spanish
Black or African American	9	
Hispanic or Latino	2	1
White	4	
Total	15	1

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Recreational Services

**Program Number:** 1601

**FY25 Proposed General Fund:** \$33,990,480

**Program Description:** Recreation centers are community hubs where people come together to improve their health and connection to others through innovative programming. Trained PPR staff provide a broad range of high-quality programming to all residents at low or no cost. In partnership with community members, employees plan, organize, and implement these programs in a safe and nurturing environment to help children and adults reach their full potential.

**FY25 Strategic Goals:**

- PPR will develop a year-round aquatics program to provide swim lessons, lifeguard training, and aquatic programming throughout the year.
- PPR will establish quarterly processes for training and community engagement for core sports programs to equip all staff members to support youth sports and resource all community groups to lead effective programming.
- PPR will expand teen engagement efforts. In addition to the “Teen Takeover” at the Oval, PPR will activate teen-specific spaces at two recreation centers in each PPR district to ensure teens have a safe and welcoming place to gather in every neighborhood of the city.

**FY25 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY23 Actual	FY24 Target	FY25 Target
Number of programs	2,527	2,500	2,500
Number of unique individuals who attended programs	115,604	115,000	115,000
Total visits (in millions)*	5.0	7.0	7.0
Program participation rate	83.7%	80.0%	83.0%
Percent change in pool visits**	71.9%	18.0%	0.0%

\* While there were increases to PPR program visits, this measure was below the target in FY23.

\*\* There was a large increase to this measure in FY23 as more pools were opened than in FY22. PPR anticipates FY25 pool visits and openings will be consistent with FY24, resulting in 0% change.

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Infrastructure and Property Management

**Program Number:** 1603

**FY25 Proposed General Fund:** \$32,230,793

**Program Description:** This program ensures access to safe, clean, and ready-to-use facilities through planning, development, and management of construction projects for new and existing assets, while caring for and maintaining PPR’s natural lands and facilities.

**FY25 Strategic Goals:**

- The PPR Capital and Natural Lands Team will continue implementation of projects utilizing the most advantageous and economic process, including Public Works process, Special Projects team, the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, nonprofit partnerships and even volunteers, focusing the work on historically divested neighborhoods to promote equitable services across the system.
- PPR will implement recommendations of the Philly Tree Plan to increase staffing of the Urban Forestry Division for public tree maintenance and communication with residents. PPR will prioritize tree planting in communities that are most in need of new tree canopy as well as restoration and maintenance of forested natural areas. PPR will prioritize tree planting in communities that are most in need of new tree canopy as well as restoration and maintenance of forested natural areas.
- Launch operation of a lumber yard at the Fairmount Park Organic Recycling Center, upcycling urban wood from mulch to usable lumber.

**FY25 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY23 Actual	FY24 Target	FY25 Target
New trees planted*	2,421	3,000	3,000
Percent of 311 requests closed that meet standard	68.8%	63.0%	68.0%
Percent of Performance requests closed that meet standard*	59.9%	68.0%	65.0%

\* FY23 actuals were low due to turnover in contractors for tree planting.

\*\* Performo is a work order/asset management system used by PPR for facility maintenance. The target for FY25 is decreasing slightly due to enduring skilled trades vacancies. PPR is working to fill these positions.

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Executive, Administration and Performance

**Program Number:** 1604

**FY25 Proposed General Fund:** \$7,751,678

**Program Description:** This program provides leadership for PPR, accurately measures its impact, and costs, and ensures that PPR is part of an efficient and effective government.

**FY25 Strategic Goals:**

- Support the 2024 administrative and leadership transition to ensure PPR continues to provide safe, high-quality programming and successfully implements new initiatives.
- PPR will continue to focus on reducing staffing vacancies. Current hiring and recruitment strategies will be maintained within each division and program to ensure that critical positions are filled.
- Retention of staff will remain a priority. The Department will work with the Office of Human Resources to develop retention strategies, evaluate job specifications, and provide funding for workforce development. Training and professional development opportunities will be offered to all staff through in-house training and the use of LMS and local partners.

**FY25 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY23 Actual	FY24 Target	FY25 Target
Percentage of permanent staff attending trainings	95%	95%	96%
Net hires (full- and part-time)*	48	28	25

\*PPR anticipates the same number of separations and fewer positions being filled as civil service lists have not had an adequate number of candidates.

**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Communication and Engagement

**Program Number:** 1610

**FY25 Proposed General Fund:** \$3,786,501

**Program Description:** This program establishes and sustains relationships with volunteers, partners, and businesses, and uses communication strategies to increase awareness of PPR’s diverse amenities, initiatives, opportunities, and experiences. The program encourages innovation, collaboration, and capacity building among communities in public spaces.

**FY25 Strategic Goals:**

- Leverage external resources and partnerships to reimagine underutilized space in recreation centers and parks. With a focus on the many special events being planned for the nation’s semi-quincentennial in 2026, PPR will ensure that Philadelphia is ready to serve visitors as they explore the city and its amenities.
- Further implementation of the Urban Agriculture Plan by developing external funding sources and increasing collaboration between City agencies, grassroots and not-for-profit organizations, philanthropic partnerships, growers, and city residents. The Agriculture Resource Center is expected to open to the public this spring. It will serve as a centralized tool library and resource center for the city’s gardening, farming, horticultural, and environmental stewardship communities.
- Continued support, planning, and investments in marquee public spaces like FDR Park, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, and the Centennial District by providing spaces where neighbors and visitors can gather. The large-scale special events in 2026 will provide PPR with an opportunity to serve as a national model for community engagement and economic development.

**FY25 Performance Measures:**

Measure	FY23 Actual	FY24 Target	FY25 Target
Percent increase in concessions revenue	18%	4%	13%
Percent increase in volunteer participation	14.2%	10.0%	10.0%
Percent of permit holder Net Promoter Score survey respondents who are detractors	17.0%	20.0%	20.0%
Total Engagement (individuals)	86,631	86,000	86,000

## **OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS**

### **Federal and State (Where Applicable)**

PPR is reliant on federal funding to support the following programs. We are not anticipating decreases or increases for FY25.

- The Afterschool Snack program, which provides healthy snacks to children in after-school activities.
- The Phil-A-Job II Work Experience, a federal grant program funded through Career Connected Learning, formally called PYN.
- The Summer Food Service Program, which provide nutritious meals to low-income children.
- The Older Adult Programs for senior citizens held at our older adult centers and recreation facilities.