

**PHILADELPHIA PARKS AND RECREATION  
FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY  
APRIL 1, 2026**

**INTRODUCTION**

Good afternoon, Council President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Susan Slawson, Commissioner. Joining me today are Marissa Washington, First Deputy Commissioner, and Susan Buck, Deputy Commissioner of Operations. I am pleased to provide testimony on Philadelphia Parks and Recreation’s Fiscal Year 2027 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 fairly, equitably, and sustainably. PPR stewards these treasures with programs and services that contribute to the health, wellness, and prosperity of all in pursuit of the Mayor’s goal of making all Philadelphia neighborhoods safe, clean, and green.

**Fiscal Year 2027 Priorities**

In Fiscal Year 2027, PPR will focus on three core priorities: maintaining and modernizing our assets, expanding equitable access to programs, and operating more efficiently and sustainably. We are investing in the upkeep and improvement of existing facilities while advancing capital projects that reflect community priorities. Resident engagement continues to guide our decisions, ensuring our programs serve Philadelphians of all ages and backgrounds.

We are also strengthening sustainability efforts through energy efficiency, waste reduction, and environmental stewardship, while leveraging technology to improve service delivery and close the digital divide. Finally, we are investing in our workforce—providing staff with the training and tools needed to deliver high-quality, responsive services citywide.

**Summer 2026: Safety, Opportunity, and Access**

Summer is our most critical season for service delivery—and our greatest opportunity for impact.

PPR will provide more than 800,000 meals to children and families, ensuring consistent access to nutritious food. Through Career Connected Learning PHL (C2L), we will provide approximately 1,100 jobs for teens, supporting workforce development and economic mobility.

To maintain safe, clean, and active public spaces, we will hire approximately 1,400 seasonal employees. These positions will ensure we operate more than 100 summer camps and open 63 pools. To safely staff these pools, we are expanding lifeguard recruitment through targeted outreach and partnerships, while continuing to offer free American Red Cross–certified training and incentives for young people.

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Our Summer Food Program will continue to support camps and Playstreets, combining meals with safe, structured activities in neighborhoods across the city.

### **Youth Sports & Anti-Violence Initiative**

PPR continues to advance the Youth Sports & Anti-Violence Initiative in partnership with the Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative. This initiative invests directly in community-based organizations, providing funding for equipment, travel, registration, and coaching development. It also embeds trauma-informed practices, creating safe and supportive environments where young people can build skills, confidence, and resilience. This year, we will expand our boxing program, invest in upgraded equipment, and further support the volunteer coaches who are vital to these efforts.

### **Major Events and Citywide Impact**

This summer, PPR will help deliver large-scale events that drive community engagement and economic activity, starting with the Roots Picnic at the Belmont Plateau. FIFA FanFest at Lemon Hill will bring thousands together to experience World Cup matches in a shared, citywide celebration. In partnership with Wawa Welcome America, we will host “Philly Fair 250,” a three-day festival in the Centennial District that commemorates the 1876 World’s Fair and showcases Philadelphia as a destination for residents and visitors alike.

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*Before and after photos of short dumping cleanup sites.*



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**PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS**

| <b>General Fund Financial Summary by Class</b>  |                              |                         |                              |                            |                              |  |
|---|------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|--|
|   | FY25 Original Appropriations | FY25 Actual Obligations | FY26 Original Appropriations | FY26 Estimated Obligations | FY27 Proposed Appropriations | Difference: FY27 Proposed-FY26 Estimated |
| Class 100 - Employee Compensation               | \$64,409,830                 | \$65,695,796            | \$67,057,180                 | \$69,578,312               | \$72,052,757                 | \$2,474,445                              |
| Class 200 - Purchase of Services                | \$10,888,442                 | \$12,810,445            | \$12,053,442                 | \$12,053,442               | \$10,983,442                 | (\$1,070,000)                            |
| Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment | \$4,700,038                  | \$4,671,578             | \$4,705,038                  | \$4,705,038                | \$4,782,248                  | \$77,210                                 |
| Class 500 - Contributions                       | \$1,500,000                  | \$4,309,944             | \$3,500,000                  | \$3,500,000                | \$1,500,000                  | (\$2,000,000)                            |
| Class 800 - Payment to Other Funds              | \$0                          | \$4,321,865             | \$0                          | \$0                        | \$0                          | \$0                                      |
|   | <b>\$81,498,310</b>          | <b>\$91,809,628</b>     | <b>\$87,315,660</b>          | <b>\$89,836,792</b>        | <b>\$89,318,447</b>          | <b>(\$518,345)</b>                       |

| <b>Contracts Summary (Professional Services only)</b> |             |             |             |             |                    |                |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|----------------|
|   | FY23        | FY24        | FY25        | FY26        | FY26 YTD (Q1 & Q2) | FY27 Projected |
| Total amount of contracts                             | \$2,000,217 | \$5,830,093 | \$6,991,209 | \$4,129,469 | \$2,379,469        | \$4,300,000    |
| Total amount to S/LBE                                 | N/A         | N/A         | N/A         | N/A         | N/A                | N/A            |
| Total amount to M/W/DSBE                              | \$1,455,500 | \$2,763,723 | \$2,525,751 | \$1,552,399 | \$902,399          |                |
| S/LBE Participation Rate                              | N/A         | N/A         | N/A         | N/A         | N/A                | N/A            |
| M/W/DSBE Participation Rate                           | 73%         | 47%         | 36%         | 38%         | 38%                |                |

*\*S/LBE not yet available as the City works to build the S/LBE registry and begin setting small and local business participation goals.*

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| Total S/LBE Contract Participation Goal (Public Works; Services, Supplies & Equipment; and Professional Services combined) |      |      |                |
|--|------|------|----------------|
|  | FY25 | FY26 | FY27 Projected |
| S/LBE Contract Participation Goal  | N/A  | N/A  | N/A            |

*\*S/LBE not yet available as the City works to build the S/LBE registry and begin setting small and local business participation goals.*

**Proposed Funding Request:**

The proposed Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund budget totals \$89,318,447 a decrease of \$518,345 from Fiscal Year 2026 estimated obligation levels. This decrease is primarily due to one-time payments for contracted bonuses, as well as one-time 2026 special events-related investments.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$72,052,757 in Class 100, a \$2,474,445 increase over FY26 estimated obligations. This increase is attributable to wage increases for seasonal employees, members of DC33 and DC47, non-represented employees, and exempt employees, along with the addition of positions, particularly for IT needs. This funding will support the department’s 935 full-time positions, 75 part-time positions, and over 1,400 seasonal positions. These positions will support youth programming and increased management of our natural resources.
- \$10,983,442 in Class 200, a \$1,070,000 decrease from FY26 estimated obligations due to one-time funding for 2026 special events needs. 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 residents and visitors use daily.
- \$4,728,248 in Class 300/400, a \$77,210 increase over FY26. This funding will provide resources for staff to complete their daily assignments in the care and maintenance of public spaces and facilities throughout the city of Philadelphia.
- \$1,500,000 in Class 500, a \$ decrease from FY26 due to one-time funding. This Class 500 funding for the Philadelphia Activities Fund will assist local communities in providing activities for youth, seniors, and special populations.

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**STAFFING LEVELS**

The department is requesting 934 budgeted General Fund positions for FY27, an increase of eight positions over FY26.

The increase is attributed to additional funding to expand IT and program support for our growing system. This investment helps the department provide quality services and improve technological support to field sites.

| Employment Levels (as of November 2025)                |               |                            |               |
|--|---------------|----------------------------|---------------|
|  | FY26 Budgeted | Filled as of November 2025 | FY27 Proposed |
| Number of Full-Time Positions                          | 926           | 750                        | 934           |
| Number of Exempt Positions                             | 40            | 36                         | 43            |
| Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above) |               | 7                          |               |
| Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions              |               | \$62,650                   |               |
| Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions               |               | \$55,290                   |               |

**NEW HIRES**

| New Hires (from 7/1/2025 to November 2025) |                           |         |
|--|---------------------------|---------|
|  | Total Number of New Hires | Spanish |
| Black or African American                  | 36                        |         |
| Hispanic or Latino                         | 2                         | 2       |
| White                                      | 11                        |         |
| Total                                      | 49                        | 2       |

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| New Hires (from November 2025 to March 2026) |                           |         |
|--|---------------------------|---------|
|  | Total Number of New Hires | Spanish |
| Black or African American                    | 12                        |         |
| Hispanic or Latino                           | 2                         | 1       |
| White  | 9                         |         |
| Total  | 23                        | 1       |

VACANCY RATE AND ALLOWANCE

| Vacancy Rate Summary (General Fund) |                          |                                 |                   |                                      |                                 |                                      |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|                                     | FY25 Actual Vacancy Rate | FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance | FY26 Vacancy Rate | FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate | FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance | FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate |
| Departmental Total                  | 26.1%                    | (\$5,740,981)                   | 19.0%             | 10.8%                                | (\$8,474,015)                   | 14.45%                               |

*Note: PPR's staff includes a large number of part-time employees, which may skew this calculation.*

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### **OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS**

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

The department received approximately \$4.1 million in federal funding in FY25. Federal funding supports the following programs:

- The Afterschool Snack Program, which provides healthy snacks to children in after-school activities.
- The Summer Food Service Program, which provides nutritious meals to low-income children.
- The Older Adult Program for senior citizens, held at our six older adult centers.

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**CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE**

| M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts |                              |                           |                |                     |               |  |  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------|---------------------|---------------|--|--|-----------------------------------|--|----------------|------------------------------------|
| Top Five Largest Contracts, FY26                                |                              |                           |                |                     |               |  |  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
| Vendor Name   | Service Provided             | Dollar Amount of Contract | RFP Issue Date | Contract Start Date | Ranges in RFP | % of M/W/DSBE and SBE Participation Achieved | \$ Value of M/W/DSBE and SBE Participation | Total % Participation - All DSBEs | Total \$ Value Participation - All DSBEs | Local Business | Waiver for Living Wage Compliance? |
| First Phila Labor Servs dba Event Technolgy                     | Stagehand Services           | \$200,737                 | 2/2/2022       | 6/1/2025            | MBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  | 0%                                | \$0                                      | Yes            | No                                 |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | WBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | DSBE: BGFE    | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | S/LBE: BGFE   | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
| Synergetic Sound & Lighting                                     | Sound Consultant Services    | \$195,520                 | 2/23/2022      | 5/31/2025           | MBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  | 0%                                | \$0                                      | No             | No                                 |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | WBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | DSBE: BGFE    | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | S/LBE: BGFE   | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
| Light Action  | Ligthting Managment Services | \$159,113                 | 2/8/2022       | 5/17/2025           | MBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  | 0%                                | \$0                                      | No             | No                                 |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | WBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | DSBE: BGFE    | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | S/LBE: BGFE   | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
| First Phila Labor Servs dba Event Technolgy                     | Box Office Services          | \$125,329                 | 2/17/2022      | 4/18/2025           | MBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  | 0%                                | \$0                                      | No             | No                                 |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | WBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | DSBE: BGFE    | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | S/LBE: BGFE   | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
| Station Avenue Productions LLC                                  | Production Stage Services    | \$84,500                  | 5/6/2022       | 6/13/2025           | MBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  | 0%                                | \$0                                      | No             | No                                 |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | WBE: BGFE     | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | DSBE: BGFE    | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |
|   |                              |                           |                |                     | S/LBE: BGFE   | 0%   | \$0  |                                   |  |                |                                    |

*\*Participation rates for contracts cannot be captured as none of the vendors have been certified.*

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| Non-Profit Vendor Demographics         |            |          |
|--|------------|----------|
| Urban Affairs Coalition                | Minority % | Female % |
| Workforce                              | 94%        | 51%      |
| Executive                              | 100%       | 38%      |
| Board                                  | 58%        | 35%      |
| Philadelphia Youth Sport Collaborative | Minority % | Female % |
| Workforce                              | 56%        | 44%      |
| Executive                              | 40%        | 60%      |
| Board                                  | 50%        | 67%      |
| Fairmount Park Conservancy             | Minority % | Female % |
| Workforce                              | 28%        | 52%      |
| Executive                              | 0%         | 43%      |
| Board                                  | 38%        | 43%      |
| Center for Employment Opportunities    | Minority % | Female % |
| Workforce                              | 73%        | 66%      |
| Executive                              | 33%        | 67%      |
| Board                                  | 46%        | 44%      |

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### **PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Recreational Services

**Program Number:** 01

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$39,847,352

**Program Description:** Recreation centers are community hubs where people come together to improve their health and connect with 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.

### **FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- In partnership with the Philly Youth Sports Fund, PPR will continue to support community-based youth sports programs.
- In 2026, PPR will update and improve its boxing program to help young people across the city build confidence, discipline, and emotional strength through structured boxing, mentorship, and community engagement. There will be 12 structured boxing programs throughout the city.
- In summer 2026, PPR anticipates having all operational pools open. With the completion of various Rebuild and capital projects, PPR expects to have over 60 public pools open and provide more opportunities for swim lessons and other aquatic programming.
- PPR’s Philly Stat “declutter initiative” focuses on getting rid of unnecessary items and utilizing spaces productively for recreational activities. This initiative will expand to the entire PPR system and include inspections and periodic deep cleaning of at least 24 recreation centers per year.
- To complement the summer 2026 FIFA World Cup events, PPR will expand the Unity Cup soccer tournament to encompass a broader range of youth-centered programming and activities in FY27.

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**FY27 Performance Measures:**

| Measure   | FY25 Actual | FY26 Target | FY27 Target |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of programs offered <sup>1</sup>                         | N/A         | 2,500       | 2,700       |
| Number of unique individuals who attended programs <sup>1</sup> | N/A         | 115,000     | 125,000     |
| Total visits (in millions)                                      | 5.6         | 6.0         | 6.0         |
| Percent change in pool visits <sup>2</sup>                      | 24%         | 3%          | 17%         |

<sup>1</sup> PPR revised its approach for counting programs beginning in FY26. Previously, PPR only counted new programs that were entered into the system during that fiscal year, which led to missing information. PPR has adopted a new method that counts all programs active in the fiscal year, regardless of when they were entered into the system. This ensures a more accurate and comprehensive representation of program activity. Due to this change in methodology, a comparison to FY25 data is not applicable.

<sup>2</sup> FY26 actuals for this measure were impacted by the work stoppage in July of 2025. For this reason, a significant increase is expected in FY27.

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**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Infrastructure and Property Management

**Program Number:** 03

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$36,201,639

**Program Description:** The Infrastructure and Property Management 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.

**FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- PPR will continue to maximize its impact by leveraging its grants manager to secure diverse funding streams while the PPR Skilled Trades team implements capital projects through the most efficient procurement and construction processes. By integrating workforce development through PowerCorpsPHL and piloting climate-adaptive restoration practices, the Department will continue to scale its efforts to modernize infrastructure and natural lands, ensuring that every investment results in a high-impact, legacy asset for the community.
- PPR will advance the recommendations of the Philly Tree Plan. PPR’s Urban Forestry Unit and Natural Lands team will focus on establishing long-term maintenance cycles and diversifying species to protect the city’s urban forest against emerging pests and the impacts of climate change.

**FY27 Performance Measures:**

| Measure  | FY25 Actual | FY26 Target | FY27 Target |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| New trees planted <sup>1</sup>                                     | 4,384       | 3,750       | 4,000       |
| Percent of 311 requests closed that meet the standard <sup>2</sup> | 69%         | ≥ 70%       | ≥ 73%       |
| Percent of work order requests closed that meet the standard       | 70%         | ≥ 68%       | ≥ 68%       |

<sup>1</sup> Major planting events that occurred in FY25 are not expected to repeat in FY27. The target of 4,000 reflects expected planting levels in FY27.

<sup>2</sup> Anticipated staffing level improvements are expected to impact the target for FY27.

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**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

**Program Name:** Communication and Engagement

**Program Number:** 10

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$3,955,311

**Program Description:** The Communication and Engagement 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.

**FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- PPR will grow social media engagement by prioritizing platform-specific, creator-driven content that connects youth and communities to programs, employment opportunities, training, special events, and public spaces.
- To boost teen engagement efforts, PPR will conduct a teen survey at the 2026 Welcome America Community Fest in the Centennial District. This will help determine the focus of youth efforts in FY27 and beyond.
- PPR will continue collaborative efforts with the Philadelphia Police Department to build relationships with the city’s youth.
- To aid the many visitors expected in Philadelphia throughout 2026, PPR is collaborating with other City departments, including the Managing Director’s Office, Office of the City Representative and Special Events, Streets, and Philadelphia Water Department, to provide Hospitality Hubs throughout the city where there is an anticipated higher volume of foot traffic. The Hubs will be activated during the peak of 2026 special events, providing a range of services, including restrooms and water stations. PPR will help organize and staff the Hubs at PPR sites based on the needs of specific events.

**FY27 Performance Measures:**

| Measure                                      | FY25 Actual | FY26 Target | FY27 Target |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total engagement (social media) <sup>1</sup> | 57,748      | 70,000      | 70,000      |

<sup>1</sup> Engagement is measured by how many times followers like, share, or comment on Departmental content.

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**PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:**

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

**Program Number:** 04

**FY27 Proposed General Fund:** \$9,314,145

**Program Description:** This program provides leadership that focuses on optimizing the functions of the Department, aligning goals with the Administration's objectives, while managing resources effectively. It involves setting performance standards, evaluating departmental outcomes, and improving operational efficiency while enhancing executive leadership skills, strategic planning, and decision-making abilities.

**FY27 Strategic Goals:**

- PPR will continue to manage and refine its Philly Stat 360 goals and performance measures to drive service improvements and ensure alignment with the Department’s mission and vision.
- PPR will strengthen its safety program to meet performance goals in accordance with Risk Management standards.
- Reducing vacancies and furthering staff development will remain priorities. PPR will work with the Office of Human Resources (OHR) to fill budgeted positions and provide professional development and training opportunities through the City’s learning management system, in-house training, and other City partners.

**FY27 Performance Measures:**

| Measure   | FY25 Actual | FY26 Target | FY27 Target |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Percentage of permanent staff attending trainings | 93%         | 96%         | 96%         |
| Net hires (full- and part-time)                   | 40          | 35          | 40          |