



WE ARE PARKS

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

YEAR IN REVIEW

This was a year of change, momentum, and fulfillment. Long-term projects came to life, and our team grew even more cohesive, resilient and innovative. This work was amplified through partnerships with the community, non-profits, and interdepartmental collaboration. Everyone has a hand in making our parks, open spaces and tree canopy great.

We began with a strategic planning process that brought together every member of our team, from staff to the Board of Park Commissioners, to define our mission, goals, and values. We also hosted the second year of our annual conference, continuing to build a platform for shared learning and collaboration.

Across our venues and programs, we saw growth in both attendance and revenue, a reflection of the community's enthusiasm for our parks and offerings. While we said goodbye to Brian Byrnes in the spring, we were thrilled to welcome our new Deputy Superintendent, Kristin Andel later in the summer. She has already brought fresh energy and vision to the department.

This was also a year of remarkable progress across the park system. The Circular Waste Toilet System and Woodlot Depot came to life, and Phase II at India Point Park reached completion and engineering for Phase III is well-underway. General Street, Miguel Luna, Neutaconkanut, James Ahern, and Richardson Parks were fully renovated. At Conlan Jr. Park, we opened the city's first dedicated pickleball court. At Neutaconkanut, we celebrated another first with a fully accessible playground for mobility device users of all ages and abilities.

After years of planning, the Boathouse Café officially welcomed visitors. Construction advanced on Father Lennon and Joslin waterparks, with Father Lennon being a brand-new facility. The Obadiah Low-Flow Misting Park also introduced another creative way to help mitigate urban heat.

This year marked our sixth My HomeCourt project. Our fourth year of partnership with Providence Preservation Society brought visible improvements at Esek Hopkins, while restoration work at John O'Brien, Pastore, Merino, and Davis playgrounds secured their future as well-loved neighborhood destinations. Major infrastructure investments at Prospect Terrace are ensuring that this historic park will serve residents for generations to come.

We also celebrated many other accomplishments. At Waterplace Park, a new stage and performance center is primed to host events and performances. Downtown, shade sails and artistic lighting were installed at the skating rink. In Roger Williams Park, we advanced stormwater retrofits, Casino improvements and completed new road striping. The Museum of Natural History unveiled exterior lighting, a new education room, and other upgrades that continue its transformation into a modern hub for learning and exploration.

This was a year when our expertise was recognized in new ways. We hosted our Second "All Hands In" Parks Conference with 20 workshops led by our team members. We applied for WEDG certification for our work on adaptive shorelines. We hosted national and regional visitors eager to learn from our leadership in park maintenance and design. We were featured in local, regional and national news profiles and strengthened our systems for archiving, project tracking, and specifications. Moreover, our operations teams took on more challenges by doing work originally slated for contractors, saving over \$500,000 on capital improvement projects. Our Forestry team is now fully staffed and has been responsive to the challenges that climate change has wreaked on our tree canopy.

Most of all, I am deeply impressed by the quality, commitment, and expertise of our staff. Time and again, they stood with and for each other, and they gave their best for our community.

Wendy Nilsson, Superintendent



The Board of Park Commissioners from left to right: Commissioner Justin Holland, Council President Pro-Tempore Juan M. Pichardo, Commissioner Sara McConnell, Chairman Mayor Brett P. Smiley, Commissioner Randall Rice, Councilor Sue R. AnderBois, Commissioner Elizabeth Gordon-Martin, Superintendent Wendy Nilsson

STRATEGIC PLAN

Purpose – *Why we exist*

We are the essence of Providence, where every park is not just a space, but a shared moment of connection in the lives of our community.

We create and maintain exceptional, accessible, responsive spaces that serve as the foundation for wellbeing, quality of life, and environmental stewardship. Providence parks are where lasting memories are made—reaching out through generations as part of our city’s living legacy.

Vision – *What we are striving to accomplish*

To be the city’s most cherished asset, creating parks that are more than spaces—they are living parts of Providence that reflect our shared history, our diverse present, and our future aspirations.

Strategy – *How we will achieve our vision; our roadmap for the future*

Priority 1 – Maximize Our Parks’ Value.

Maximize the value of the investments we have made in our parks by transitioning from new construction to ongoing excellence, ensuring that our parks continue to feel fresh and valuable overtime.

- Plan for the lifecycle of park assets and amenities by developing holistic proactive strategies to ensure long-term functionality and sustainability.
- Highlight the value of past investments through visible, high-quality upkeep that excites and engages the community.
- Build on our foundation with upgrades and programming that adapts to evolving community needs, enhances accessibility, and increases the value and impact of parks over time.

Priority 2 – Share our Story.

Foster a deep sense of ownership and pride by building a compelling narrative around the parks' importance to the community and their role in enhancing public wellbeing.

- Inspire community pride and build momentum by celebrating our natural assets, park investments, and venues, while engaging residents and welcoming visitors from near and far.
- Create consistent, unified messaging to showcase how parks serve as community anchors and contributors to well-being.
- Evaluate and demonstrate the impact of the Parks department by using meaningful data to highlight outcomes to the public, policymakers, and funders.

Priority 3 – Build a Generative Future.

Cultivate strategic partnerships, diversify revenue streams, and plan proactively to ensure long-term sustainability and continuing meaningful impact.

- Plan for long-term sustainability by diversifying budgets for park upgrades ensuring financial nimbleness for future needs.
- Collaborate effectively to amplify resources and support iconic projects while laying the groundwork for future initiatives
- Expand revenue through diverse sources that align with the department’s mission.

ETHOS



Seeds of Stewardship

We see the land as a partner—not a backdrop. We care for our parks in relationship with the environment and the community, making decisions that support both ecological health and personal wellbeing, now and into the future.



Roots of Providence

Our parks* are the roots of our city. They provide places where people connect, grow, and find respite, enriching the city across generations.



Rings of Reliability

Our work builds year after year, like the rings of a tree steady and enduring. This reliability is the foundation of public trust and the continued success of Providence's parks.



Branches of Belonging

We believe parks should reflect the diversity of Providence. We are committed to equity and inclusion—ensuring that everyone, in every neighborhood, has access to welcoming, vibrant, and safe public spaces.



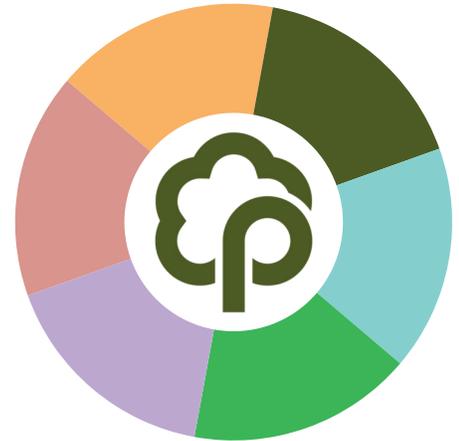
Leaves of Innovation

We embrace creative, forward-thinking approaches to caring for our parks. From sustainable practices to new technologies and evolving methods, we grow through continuous learning and improvement.



Canopy of Care

Just as a forest canopy offers shelter and connection, our Parks Department nurtures the city. By investing in our teams and offering programs that support our neighbors, we show that when we care for Parks, our city thrives.



Design Thinking



a tree combined with the letter P for Providence and Parks

The Parks Department is a tree with our community at the center as the roots that ground us. Each circular bough represents collaboration, trust, and the exchange of ideas.

Together, these overlapping circles create a broad, interwoven canopy that supports and strengthens our city. We are resilient, always growing, anchored in service, and reaching toward a shared future.

*parks, venues and spaces under the purview of the Board of Park Commissioners

OPERATIONS

The Parks Department manages 123 outdoor spaces across Providence, including traditional parks, athletic fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, conservation areas, walking and running tracks, trails, non-traditional recreation features such as skateboard elements, bike tracks, and parkour areas, as well as dog parks, cemeteries, an ice rink, and our flagship Roger Williams Park. We also care for all park and street trees, and our team plays an important role in the City's snow removal efforts.

Our operations team is made up of dedicated and skilled professionals who collaborate to ensure efficient and effective maintenance across all spaces. This work is strengthened by robust training and professional development programs.

The "Parks Academy" training program marked its 7th year in 2025. Nine managers and supervisors completed Certified Playground Safety Inspection training, while

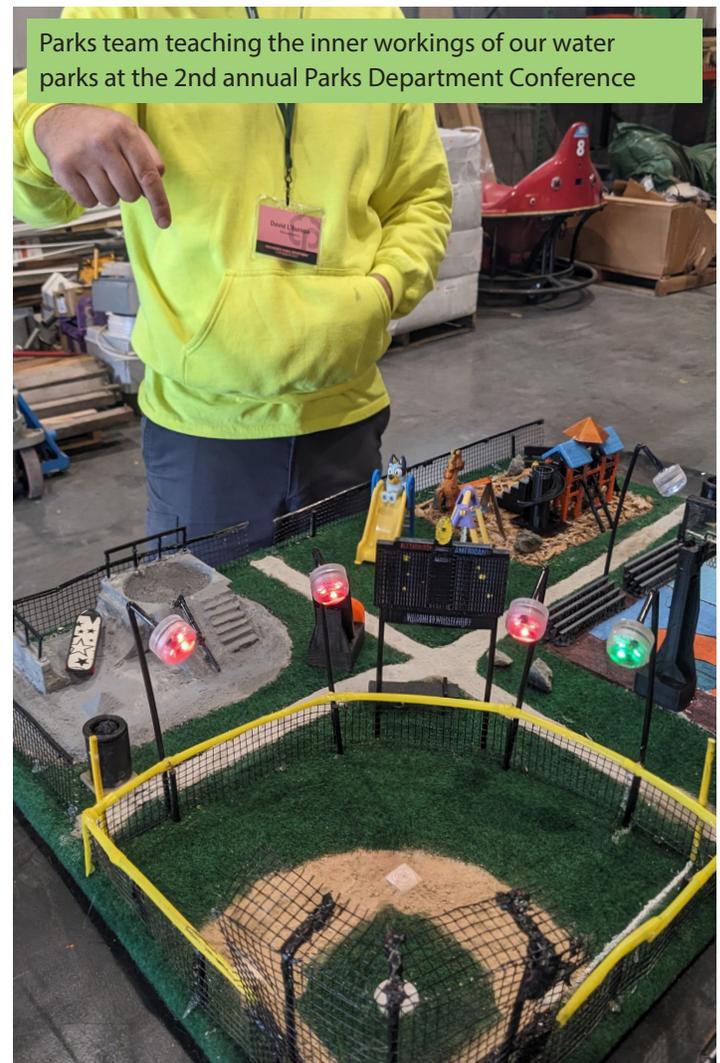
additional courses covered CPR. What to do until help arrives, stop the bleed, Customer Service, EHAT, Work Zone Safety, and OSHA 10 certifications. We also advanced our Forestry Tree Trimmer Apprenticeship Program, welcoming two new crew members into the field.

This year also marked the second year of the Parks Department "All Hands In" conference, a department-wide event designed for skill-sharing, training, and team building. As in previous years, our managers and crews continued to engage in a wide range of professional development opportunities to improve their ability to manage work efficiently, track assets, and maintain inventory.

These ongoing efforts ensure that our staff remains responsive, well-trained, and equipped to meet the growing demands of park operations across the city.



Parks team removing the old rink cooling tower from Biltmore Park to make room for sunshine, sightlines, and a much brighter park ready for people and events



Parks team teaching the inner workings of our water parks at the 2nd annual Parks Department Conference

Maintenance

In 2025, the Parks Department's Maintenance team continued to perform at an exceptional level, completing an average of 350 work orders per month. These requests covered the full spectrum of responsibilities, including irrigation systems, fountains, waterparks, concession buildings, electrical and HVAC systems, signage, playgrounds, and the maintenance of 26 buildings citywide. The team also responded efficiently and thoughtfully to PVD 311 submissions and other constituent-directed requests.

Through strengthened management practices, the division has cultivated a positive, high-performing work environment where staff take pride in their craft and consistently deliver their best. This culture of accountability, teamwork, and professionalism has significantly enhanced our ability to manage both daily operations and major capital projects.

Major projects completed in 2025 included:

- Restoration of the Lippitt Park Fountain
- Design and installation of new bocce courts at Bucklin Park
- Installation of new artificial turf fields at Donigian and Joslin Parks
- Futsal field replacement at Donigian and Joslin Parks – \$200,000 (fabrication)
- Amtrak Station Park concrete restoration – \$125,000 estimate (in-house \$6,000) – Complete
- Demolition of Rink Chiller Station – \$75,000 estimate (in-house \$2,000) – Complete
- Construction of Billy Taylor Park stairs – \$75,000 estimate (in-house \$3,000) – Complete
- Demolition work supporting improvements at Neutakonkanut, James O'Brien, and James Ahern Parks
- Operational support for the new Obadiah waterpark
- Lighting upgrades at the City Center Skating Rink
- Infrastructure support for the opening of the Boathouse Café in Roger Williams Park

- Lighting and building upgrades at the Museum of Natural History, along with support for the new education space
- Infrastructure and site work for the Father Lennon and Joslin waterparks
- Support for the new performance stage and center at Waterplace Park and new railings in western section

These accomplishments reflect the breadth of expertise and dedication within our Maintenance team. From everyday work orders to major improvement projects, their work keeps Providence's parks safe, welcoming, and vibrant for all who use them.



Neighborhood Parks Services

Neighborhood Park Services is committed to maintaining accessible, community-focused recreational spaces that enhance the quality of life for both residents and visitors. Each day, our dedicated staff work to provide well-maintained green spaces, walking paths, and playgrounds where individuals and families can relax, play, exercise, and socialize. We deliver a wide range of services, including landscaping and grounds maintenance, safety inspections, trash collection, and the upkeep of soccer, football, softball, and Little League fields. Ongoing employee training, such as turf management, sidewalk inspections, and proper pruning techniques, ensures that our team remains knowledgeable and effective in caring for our parks. In addition, NPS and Roger Williams Park employees support the city with snow removal during the winter months, further demonstrating our commitment to year-round community service. As the largest of the park divisions, our team includes six Forepersons, one General Foreperson, two Heavy Equipment Operators, and numerous equipment operators and laborers who work together to keep our parks clean, safe, and welcoming.

This year, the division achieved several notable accomplishments. We completed the transition of all playgrounds to Engineered Fibar Wood Mulch and delivered and spread more than 1,000 yards of this material throughout the park system. Staff also distributed over 200 yards of landscaping mulch, 400 yards of loam, and more than 900 pounds of grass seed while collaborating with more than 20 community friend groups. Monthly meetings with Forepersons helped promote teamwork and positivity across the department, and weekly park walkthroughs conducted by the Director of NPS and the Superintendent allowed us to identify and address emerging needs promptly.

Looking ahead, Neighborhood Park Services is preparing for continued growth as new housing expands the community. We remain focused on enhancing accessibility, sustainability, and overall cleanliness across all city parks. Additional training will ensure our staff stay current on green infrastructure, ADA compliance, and best practices for managing large gatherings. We look forward to supporting upcoming park renovations through collaboration with friend groups, offering suggestions, and contributing labor and expertise wherever possible. Our

vision for the future centers on keeping city parks clean, welcoming, safe, and active spaces for everyone.



Parks Superintendent, Wendy Nilsson and crews behind the scenes at PVDfest 2025

Forestry

The Providence Forestry Division had a highly successful year, enhancing the city's green infrastructure with expertise and innovation. This year, the Forestry Division maintained over 31,000 street trees and thousands more in parks and on other City properties. These trees captured 1,638,466 pounds of CO₂, intercepted over 20 million gallons of rainfall, and absorbed 6 million gallons of stormwater, reducing flooding and property damage. In addition, they contributed energy savings of approximately \$1,000,000 through shading and wind interception, helping to cool and heat homes more efficiently.

In collaboration with the Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (PNPP), we planted 523 trees and engaged over 48 volunteers in planting and tree care. Our Young Tree Maintenance Program continued to thrive, teaching residents how to care for young trees through pruning and mulching.

The Forestry Division also launched a Tree Trimmer Apprentice Program with Local 1033, offering valuable hands-on experience in arboriculture for current Parks employees. Our Block Pruning Program continued its annual cycle, pruning 389 street trees, including 21 significant trees requiring specialized care. The block pruning cycle is continuing through February with an anticipated 725 trees to be pruned in total. This effort also supported updates to our internal GIS tree tracking system.

Over 2,500 service requests were managed this year, addressing pruning, tree removals and storm debris cleanup throughout the city.

A major highlight was the creation of the Urban Wood Waste Facility on Salem Street, (the Wood Lot) which recycles wood waste for use in parks and public projects, while also providing woodchips and composting services to residents.

Additionally, the Forestry Division helped coordinate the city's holiday tree events at the

downtown ice rink and City Hall, ensuring the success of these beloved seasonal traditions.

Thanks to the collective efforts of the City administration, the Parks Department and the Forestry Division, Providence earned the Tree City USA award for the 38th consecutive year, continuing our legacy as one of the longest-running recipients.

- In-house trees pruned: **834**
- In-house dead trees removed: **180**
- In-house storm debris handled: **507**
- Yards of wood chips delivered: **148**



Forestry division and grounds crew removing fallen trees and debris from wind and rain storms



Professional Development & Training

In 2025, the Parks Department continued to prioritize professional development, offering a wide variety of training programs that enhanced the skills, knowledge, and preparedness of our staff.

Employees participated in safety and emergency response training, including Active Threat response, Zoo Emergency Response, Chainsaw Safety, Bloodborne Pathogens, Snow Plow Skills (DPW), and PEMA Emergency Response Team training. These courses ensured that staff are equipped to respond quickly and effectively in high-risk or emergency situations.

Technical and operational training also advanced our team's capabilities. Staff completed certifications in Certified Playground Safety Inspection, Asset Essentials and EvM, OSHA 10, Work Zone Safety, and Training in Time and Task Management further supported efficiency and project delivery across the department.

The department also invested in training that deepened our understanding of the broader role parks play in the community. Staff participated in workshops on connecting children to nature, exploring strategies to strengthen youth engagement, outdoor learning, and environmental stewardship. In addition, employees completed training on the economic impact of parks, highlighting how parks and green spaces contribute to public health, neighborhood vitality, and local economic growth. These sessions complemented other leadership and professional development offerings, ensuring that our team continues to approach park management with both a community-centered and data-driven perspective.

A highlight of the year was the Forestry Apprenticeship Program, which provided hands-on arboriculture training for staff interested in expanding their skills in tree care and urban forestry.

Finally, the department came together at the second annual Parks Department Conference, where representatives from our team and community partners led a full day of workshops, breakout sessions, and team-building activities. This event created a dedicated space for sharing knowledge, strengthening collaboration, and celebrating the expertise of our staff.

Through these diverse training opportunities, our workforce continues to grow stronger, more resilient, and better prepared to serve the people of Providence.





Dr. Diana S. Grigsby-Toussaint gives keynote speech at 2nd Annual Parks Department Conference



A new graduate from our Forestry Apprenticeship Program

Parks Partners & Affiliates

The Parks Department partners on several public/private/non-profit ventures located in our parks and venues.

Providence River Boat

Providence River Boat and Providence Kayak continue to operate from the Dyer Street Landing adjacent to the Crawford Street Bridge in downtown Providence. Seasonal operations of these two businesses have transformed the downtown Providence waterfront into a lively and welcoming destination for locals, tourists, and convention attendees. These partnerships, in collaboration with stakeholders such as P3 and the Downtown Improvement District, have improved river access, offered clean water and water safety education, and expanded programming; and have created safe, engaging spaces for neighbors, businesses, and visitors to enjoy the Providence and Woonasquatucket Rivers and shoreline.

In 2025, Providence River Boat celebrated its 34th season, expanding tours and events, including complimentary boat rides during Wicked Walk and special field trips for Providence Recreation campers. Riverwalk clean-ups and collaborations with local nonprofits, such as the Providence Downtown Neighborhood Association and the Rhode Island Audubon Society continue to strengthen community engagement.

Providence Kayak has gained popularity with its centrally located docks, hosting groups from local schools, non-profits, and groups from Providence Recreation. In 2025, the company expanded operations with more equipment, additional days, and longer hours, further increasing waterfront activity and public access in partnership with Providence Parks.

The Community Boating Center

Since 1994, CBC has provided affordable sailing and paddling instruction at India Point Park, serving residents through summer and after-school programs, including "Sailorship" scholarships for children who might otherwise not have access. In 2026, CBC will continue to support youth engagement, environmental education, and leadership development through its EcoAdventure and Learn to Sail camps for ages 8–16, reaching hundreds of children annually. We were pleased to collaborate with the Parks Department on the recent improvements in IPP and with the feasibility study for the adaptive shoreline. Adult sailing lessons and memberships remain affordable, with a fleet of over 60 boats available for community use.

Triggs Memorial Golf Course

Operated by FCG Associates in partnership with Providence Parks, Triggs Memorial Golf Course continues to serve the community, with a focus on youth development. Programs include free instruction, coaching, lessons, equipment, "play days," and mentoring, in collaboration with local schools, recreation programs, and organizations such as Brown

University, Providence College, and the PGA of America.

As of 2025, over 650 hours of instruction have been provided, with 1,900 combined rounds of golf played and more than \$2,500 in equipment distributed. Plans for 2025 include expanding programs and developing competitive golf teams at Mount Pleasant and Hope High Schools, further engaging youth in recreation and life skills development.

Providence Tennis Academy

Located in Roger Williams Park, the Providence Tennis Academy serves as a premier training center for adult and junior players of all levels. Its signature program, ONE LOVE PROVIDENCE, runs annually from May to June, offering free tennis sessions for youth ages 5–17. This six-week program introduces young players to tennis while fostering community engagement, physical activity, and athletic growth.

La Gondola – Boating Concession

in Roger Williams Park

La Gondola Inc. continues to enhance recreation at Roger Williams Park, offering swan paddleboats, electric boats, and kayak rentals. Seasonal favorites, such as illuminated swan paddleboat rides and pirate boat rides, remain a highlight for visitors. Our great achievement this year was opening the Boathouse Café & Bar at the Clark Dalrymple Boathouse dock, expanding amenities for park-goers.

Subway – Food and Beverage Concession

Subway recently received a new five-year contract to continue providing food services at the Providence Rink and downtown Providence, ensuring consistent, accessible dining options for visitors throughout the year.

These partnerships collectively strengthen Providence's parks, increase recreational opportunities, and foster community engagement, making our green spaces vibrant, safe, and inclusive for all.



Boathouse Café & Bar ribbon cutting

We are grateful to the Parks team and all the tremendous organizations that partner with us to amplify resources and make amazing park spaces possible:

- All of the volunteers who participated in service days
- All our corresponding City of Providence Departments
- Audubon Society
- Bailey Elementary School
- Blackstone Parks Conservancy
- Brown University
- Chroma Council
- College Hill Neighborhood Association
- Department of Corrections
- Downtown Providence Parks Network
- Federal Hill Commerce Association
- Friends of Adrian Hall Way
- Friends of Bell Street Park
- Friends of Brassil Memorial Park
- Friends of Brown St. Playground
- Friends of Cabral Park
- Friends of Gano St. Park
- Friends of India Point Park
- Friends of J. P. Hassett Sr. Park
- Friends of Lippitt Memorial Park
- Friends of Locust Grove Cemetery
- Friends of Mattie Smith Totlot
- Friends of Peace and Plenty Park
- Friends of Paterson Park
- Friends of Station Park
- Friends of Warren Street Park
- French American School of Rhode Island
- Jacqueline Clements Park Community
- Mary Fogarty School
- Mt Hope Neighborhood Association
- My HomeCourt
- Neutaconkanut Hill Conservancy
- One Neighborhood Builders
- Partnership for Providence Parks
- Perennial Planters
- Providence College
- Providence Community Libraries
- Providence neighborhood associations
- Providence Preservation Society
- Providence Public Building Authority
- Providence Stormwater Innovation Center
- Reservoir Triangle Neighborhood Association
- Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank
- Rhode Island School of Design
- Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management

- Rhode Island Latino Arts
- Rhode Island Master Gardeners
- RWP Conservancy
- Summit Neighborhood Association
- The Audubon Society
- The Avenue Concept
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Wild Place
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Waterman Street Dog Park Association
- West Broadway Neighborhood Association
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

...and many more highlighted throughout this report!



Stewardship effort at Station Meadow Park lead by the Parks Department's own Ilya Iskhakov with help from Providence College student volunteers and Station Meadow Friends Group

PARK IMPROVEMENTS

In 2025, the Parks Design Team continued to strengthen our leadership in placemaking and collaborative planning, resulting in welcoming and innovative park improvements across the city. Several parks underwent full renovations, while others advanced through additional phases of their master plans. Our landscape architecture work remained grounded in sustainability and climate resilience, with a strong emphasis on stormwater management, erosion control, and the use of native plantings. Early and consistent community engagement ensured that each project reflected the needs of residents of all ages and honored the character of each park. Our playground designs continued to prioritize inclusivity, vibrant and durable materials, natural elements, and flexible open spaces that support creative play and community gathering.

This year, we expanded our team with a full-time landscape designer experienced in public projects and placemaking. Staff strengthened their technical capabilities through Total Station training, enhancing our ability to produce accurate base plans. The acquisition of a drone has further improved our documentation, allowing us to capture detailed conditions throughout all stages of park renovation.

Professional development remained a priority. Several team members attended the ASLA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, participating in sessions focused on biodiversity and climate action. In addition, the design team held an internal retreat to share lessons learned and identify opportunities for greater efficiency and collaboration.

Providence children enjoy the new Richardson Playground improvements



Neutaconkanut Playground



Please join Mayor Brett P. Smiley, Councilman Pedro Espinal and Providence Parks Department

FOR THE RICHARDSON PARK RIBBON CUTTING

Acompañe al alcalde Brett P. Smiley, al concejal Pedro Espinal y al Departamento de Parques de Providence en la inauguración del Parque Richardson

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18 11:45AM
JUEVES, 18 DE SEPTIEMBRE A LAS 11:45AM

64 Richardson St, Providence, RI 02905

Design & Project Management

Park Improvements 2025: \$14.3 million

Taken together, this body of work represents 22 completed capital improvement projects, with a total investment of approximately \$7.5 million across Providence's parks and public spaces. This includes 12 playground and splashpad projects totaling \$5.34 million, focused on safe, inclusive, and developmentally rich play for children ages 2–12, and 11 additional park infrastructure and recreation projects totaling \$2.18 million, ranging from the Providence Rink and Waterplace Park to Roger Williams Park stormwater retrofits, athletic fields, lighting, and accessibility improvements.

In addition to recently completed investments, the Department is currently managing seven major capital projects under construction or in active delivery, all anticipated to be completed by June 2026, representing an additional investment of approximately \$6.7 million across Providence's park system. These projects continue our focus on equitable access to high-quality play, recreation, and environmental infrastructure in neighborhoods across the city.

2025 Playground & Splashpad Improvements: \$5.43 million

- Davis Park Playground Expansion – **\$75,000**
- Father Lennon Splashpad Addition – **\$382,000**
- General Street Park Playground and Splashpad Improvements – **\$662,000**
- India Point Park Playground Improvements – **\$290,000**
- James Ahern Playground, My Home Court, and Splashpad Improvements – **\$712,230**
- Joslin Park Playground and Fitness Center Improvements – **\$125,000**
- Merino Park Playground Additions, Guardrails, and Circular Waste Bathroom Units – **\$280,000**
- Neutaconkanut Playground – **\$655,400**
- Obadiah Brown Mist / Low-Flow Splashpad and Field Irrigation – **\$349,200**
- Pastore Park Playground Additions – **\$83,000**
- Richardson Playground and Splashpad Improvements – **\$1,621,363**

Other Projects: \$2.18 million

- Conlan Junior Pickleball Court – **\$96,700**
- Donigian Futsal Field – **\$200,000**
- Lippitt Park Fountain and Other Restoration – **\$80,000**
- Providence Rink Shade Sail – **\$750,000**
- Prospect Terrace Park – Additional Improvements – **\$100,000**
- Road Striping in Roger Williams Park – **\$150,000**
- Roger Williams Park Casino Beam Replacement – **\$85,000**
- Roger Williams Park Stormwater Retrofits – **\$67,000**
- Station Park Renovations (In-House) – **\$125,000**
- Tim O'Neill Ballfield Lighting – **\$150,000**
- Waterplace Park Stage – **\$376,000**

Projects Currently Underway: \$6.7 million

- George West Park and Playground – **\$580,000**
- Joslin Park Splashpad and Playground – **\$460,000**
- Roger Williams Park Cunliff Boardwalk – **\$2,265,000**
- Cabral Park Splashpad and Playground – **\$1,250,000**
- Gano Park Ballfield Lighting and Basketball Court – **\$830,000**
- Davey LopePark Playground Expansion – **\$100,000**
- Miguel Luna Park and Playground – **\$1,249,943**



Design Team

Davis Park Playground Expansion



India Point Park Playground Improvements



Merino Park Playground

Additions, Guardrails, and Circular Waste Bathroom Units



Obadiah Brown

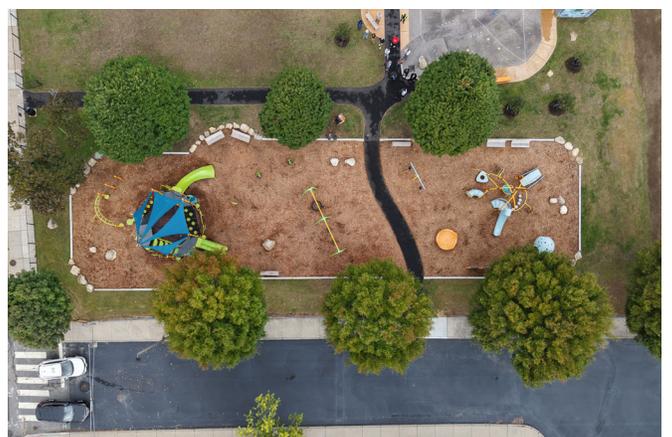
Mist / Low-Flow Splashpad and
Field Irrigation



Pastore Park Playground Additions



Richardson Playground and Splashpad Improvements



Lippitt Park Fountain and other Restoration



Providence Rink
Shade Sail



ROGER WILLIAMS PARK

The Parks Department achieved remarkable progress in capital improvements at Roger Williams Park this year, completing several major projects that enhanced both infrastructure and programming. Highlights include the restoration of the Museum of Natural History, which received comprehensive updates to the Planetarium, restrooms, foyer, exhibit halls, grand staircase, gift shop, exterior doors, and lighting.

The Botanical Center team made significant upgrades to the Pavilion Grounds. Additional advancements included the installation of new stormwater retrofits and the completion of road striping projects, improving circulation and safety throughout the park.

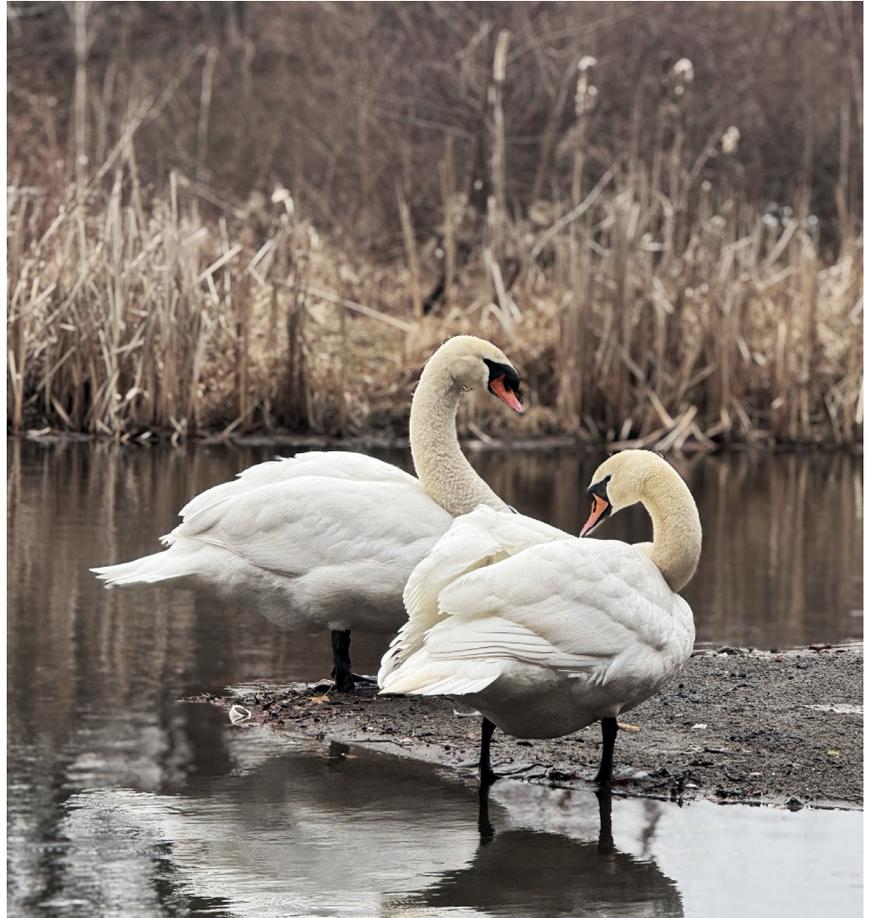
At the Casino, work continued to enhance the interior spaces and preserve historic features. The highlight was the opening of the long awaited, Roger Williams Park Café and Bar in partnership with longstanding park partners, La Gondola.

We were excited to continue our successful partnership with the Rhode Island Foundation and the Department of Art, Culture, and Tourism in hosting the 8th Annual Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra's Pops in the Park. We also co-hosted the Rain Harvest Festival and the Rhode Island Stormwater Innovation Expo, collaborating with several public partners.

Through our ongoing partnership with the Roger Williams Park Conservancy, we enhanced public programs, including their signature events such as FirstWorks Concerts, Movies in the Park, Hello Fall Festival, and more. In addition, we expanded offerings of free fitness classes and summer meals, ensuring even greater community access to healthy activities. The Conservancy also brought additional public art to the park with the temporary installation of long-wave, a motion sculpture by local artist collaborative, Pnuehaus.

These improvements, along with the ongoing dedication of staff and partners, reflect our

commitment to maintaining Roger Williams Park as a vibrant, accessible, and ecologically resilient hub for the Providence community.



Roger Williams Park Zoo

In 2025, Roger Williams Park Zoo advanced its mission through expanded community outreach, a major new habitat opening, strong educational and conservation outcomes, and continued professional growth among staff.

The year was highlighted by the opening of the new Penguin Point habitat, celebrated with civic leaders, including Mayor Smiley. The Zoo maintained strong engagement with city, state, and federal officials through events such as Zoo Day at the State House, General Assembly Night at Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular, and a mayoral visit welcoming the Zoo's first red panda kits.

Community partnerships expanded through collaborations with organizations such as the Women's Refugee Center. More than 200 participants from 11 Providence Recreation Centers took part in Holiday Lights Spectacular activities, and the Zoo partnered with Roger Williams Park leaders to coordinate the park-wide holiday kickoff.

Education remained a core focus, with 905 Zoo-led programs delivered statewide and on campus. ZooCamp and Snore & Roar Overnights engaged more than 950 participants. The Zoo hosted or participated in eight career fairs and workshops and launched an on-campus job shadow program. In partnership with local, state, and federal agencies, the annual Teacher Training Institute successfully met all program goals. The Zoo also co-hosted a youth climate summit, bringing together 53 youth and 11 adult mentors from

11 organizations and schools.

Conservation achievements included one of the most successful years in the 31-year history of the American burying beetle program, which was approved as AZA's 54th SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction) species. The Zoo also received a \$254,253 SNEP Watershed Implementation Grant to improve wetland health and water quality throughout Roger Williams Park. Additionally, the Zoo hosted an international sloth symposium that raised funds to support global sloth conservation efforts.

Organizational excellence was recognized with a 2025 Exemplary Worksite Health Award and the highest ratings from both Candid and Charity Navigator for transparency, accountability, and financial stewardship. Professional achievements included a Zoo veterinarian earning board certification in zoological medicine and national recognition for a veterinary technician.

In 2025, the Zoo published a new strategic plan centered on mission-driven engagement, an elevated guest experience, and a culture of wellbeing. By year's end, Roger Williams Park Zoo was home to 783 animals representing 127 species.

Looking ahead, the Zoo plans to open a new Conservation Learning Center in 2026, complete upgrades to the North American bison habitat, and begin development of major new habitats across multiple regions starting in 2028.



Penguin Point Ribbon Cutting



Red Panda kit

RWP Gateway Center

In 2025, the Roger Williams Park Gateway Center continued to serve as a vital community hub, strengthening connections between surrounding neighborhoods, Roger Williams Park, and the Broad Street corridor. The Center welcomed 8,722 visitors, providing an inclusive space for residents and tourists to gather, learn, create, and participate in a wide variety of community-driven programs. Steady growth in foot traffic and participation reflected its expanding role as a trusted resource for families, youth, and community partners across Providence.

Partnerships remained central to the Gateway Center's mission. The Center collaborated with more than a dozen organizations, including Groundwork Rhode Island, Save The Bay, ACT, Rhode Island Latino Arts, AARI, Friends of India Point Park, the AAPI Mobile Museum, the Departments of People & Culture and Sustainability, Community Libraries of Providence, Brown University, RISD, local cultural groups, and many other community-based organizations. These partnerships supported a rich array of arts programming, environmental initiatives, educational workshops, cultural celebrations, public art installations, and civic engagement events that strengthened neighborhood ties and broadened community participation.

A major highlight of the year was the Annual Halloween Anniversary Bash featuring the Wicked Walk Doors, now a cherished tradition in South Providence and beyond. Hosted with the Museum of Natural History and supported by Experience Rhode Island and Walgreens, the event transformed the Park into an immersive Halloween experience with themed doors, costumed hosts, crafts, and family-friendly activities. A sponsored shuttle ensured full accessibility for attendees. Hundreds participated once again in 2025, reinforcing the event's growing popularity and its place as one of the Center's most celebrated traditions.

Cultural programming expanded significantly with the launch of the Gallery Showcase, which turned the Center into a dynamic exhibit space for artists of all backgrounds. Notable installations included the month-long Blue Collar Rhody exhibit, the Friends of India Point Park installation, and multiple Gallery Night tours highlighting local artists, neighborhood history, and AAPI heritage. The completion of the Broad Street Story public art installations, created in partnership with ACT and RILA, marked another important milestone. These three place-keeping artworks were developed through extensive community engagement, and planning is underway for a formal unveiling that will honor the artists and celebrate neighborhood identity.

The Center also served as an active civic venue, hosting departmental meetings, staff trainings, professional development sessions, and community gatherings. In 2025, it supported rentals and meetings for Brown University, Community Libraries of Providence, RISD, and the Department of Sustainability, while continuing to provide a reliable meeting space for Parks Department divisions, neighborhood associations, and public agencies.

Additional major events further broadened the Center's community impact. These included the AAPI Healing Histories discussion, the AARI Farmer's Market, the Minority and Aging Health Summit, the New England Extravaganza fashion showcase, and the Grupo Sazón cultural gathering. The Center also supported key social service programs such as Know Your Rights trainings, the Esperanza Hope family giveaway, and the Whole Foods and McAuley Ministries Mobile Market, which served more than 700 community members.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Roger Williams Park Gateway Center remains committed to expanding its programs, deepening partnerships, and strengthening its role as a place where people can gather, explore, create, and grow. Continued investments in public art, environmental education, cultural programming, community wellness, and neighborhood engagement will ensure the Center meets the evolving needs of Providence residents while contributing to the vibrant future of Roger Williams Park and the communities it serves.





Gateway Center Halloween Bash



Ana Teresa Foundation & Unión Deportiva de Rhode Island: Grupo Sazón Event



Friends of India Point Park Gallery



Blue Collar Rhody, a photography exhibit about the golden years of Local 1329 of International Longshoremen's Association

RWP Botanical Center

The Botanical Center remained committed to mission-focused programming that welcomes a diverse range of community members and visitors to Rhode Island. Guided by its motto of service, the Center offers programs at tiered price levels to ensure accessibility across financial demographics. It continues to grow as a destination where both Providence locals and visitors can find respite, a sentiment frequently shared with visitor experience staff. Staff work together to ensure every guest enjoys a high-quality experience, whether attending a private event, celebrating a birthday, joining story hour, or participating in a senior outing, all within Rhode Island's largest indoor display garden.

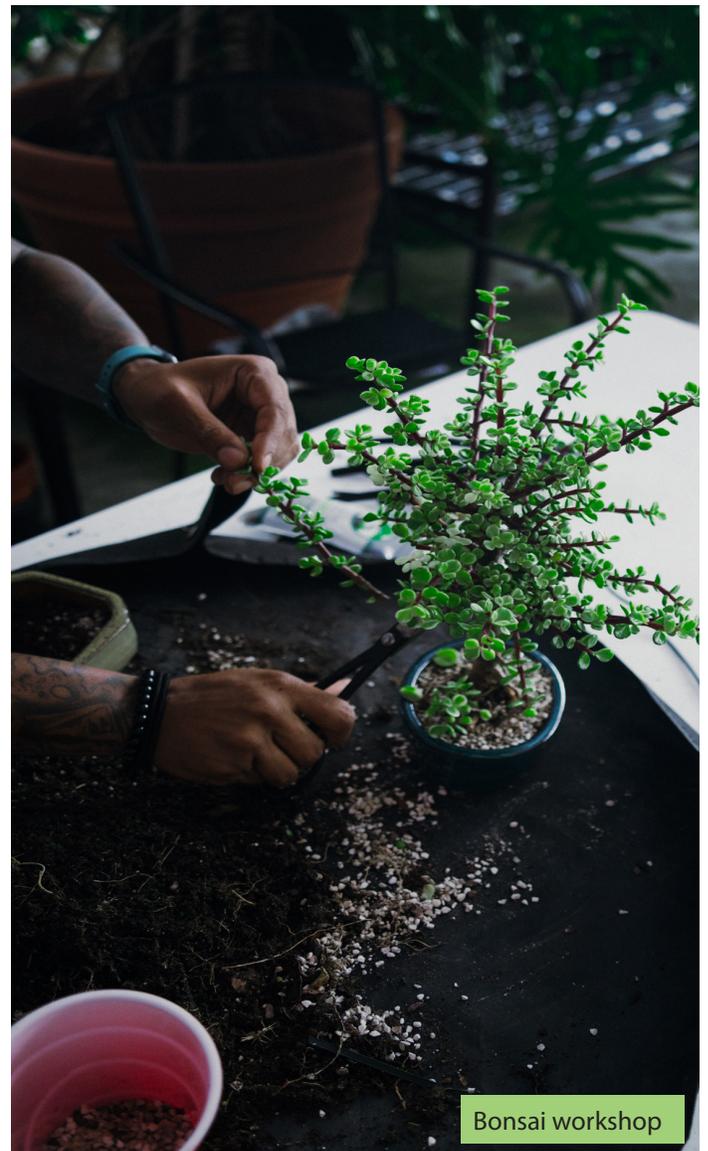
In 2025, the Center welcomed 25 percent more visitors than the previous year, and strengthened both free and revenue-generating programming. Core offerings such as the All Aboard the Holidays train exhibit and the Fairy Garden Days spring event were enhanced to boost visitor interest. Eleven new free programs were introduced, including musical performances, family crafts, art exhibits, and interactive activities. Recurring programs such as Story Time with Chris, Wee Wednesdays, the Community Garden Learning Series, the Books and Banter book club, Hike and Builds, and Holiday Wreath Workshops continued to grow in popularity. Gnome-venber remained a beloved annual tradition, while new offerings such as Bonsai workshops and Pastel Art with Jeneanne Lunn expanded educational outreach for seniors and younger participants. Membership growth continued its long-term rise, reflecting a 2,114 percent increase since 2010.

The Center expanded its All Abilities program through partnerships with West Bay Collaborative and Life Inc., transforming it into a job-training opportunity for neurodivergent individuals and participants with physical support needs. Through volunteer activities with goats and plants, participants developed task completion skills, social interaction, and gross and fine motor abilities. Despite the training demands of these programs, the Center has remained committed to fostering a safe and inclusive environment since 2016. This year, the All Abilities program supported 22 participants.

The Center was again invited to exhibit at the 28th Newport Flower Show, a valuable platform to share its horticultural expertise and educational work with national and international audiences. Engagement with gardeners, designers, and plant enthusiasts strengthened visibility and built new partnerships. Recognition extended beyond the event, including a generous Oak Grove donation from Bartlett. The show also offered professional development

opportunities that allowed staff to exchange ideas and bring new practices back to the Center, strengthening its mission and attracting new visitors.

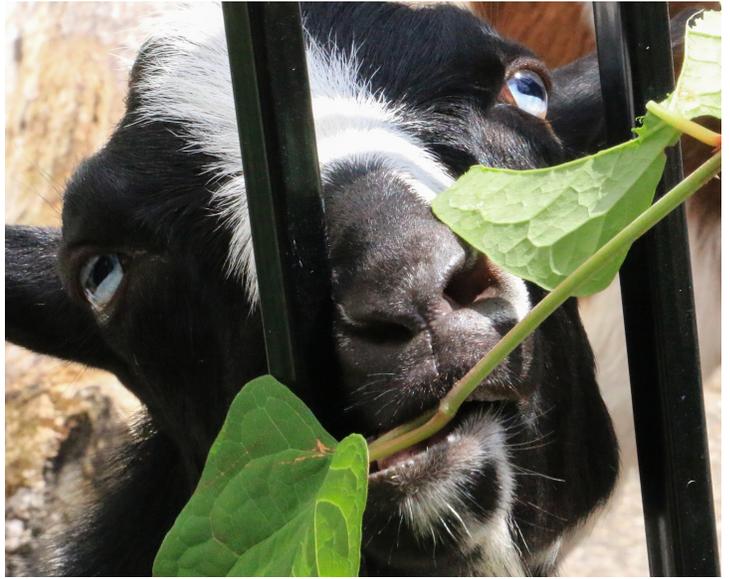
Key metrics for the year included a 25% increase in general admission and revenue. Fairy Garden Days revenue increased by 22% and ticket sales rose by 29 percent, representing a 243 % increase since the event was brought in-house five years ago. Membership sales increased by 385%. School tour participation rose by 70%. Free programs grew by 18%. Social media engagement increased, with Instagram gaining 1,300 followers and Facebook gaining 1,600. Nearly 4,000 pounds of fresh produce were donated to soup kitchens and food pantries, contributing to a total of nearly 40,000 pounds donated over five years through the Flavor Lab program.



Bonsai workshop



Brady's Hot Chocolate with Mayor Smiley



Museum of Natural History & Planetarium

The Museum of Natural History and Planetarium remained Providence's leading destination for science education and discovery in 2025, continuing to engage local and regional audiences even while undergoing renovations that required temporary closures. Despite these interruptions, the Museum welcomed 39,785 visitors. The improvements have enhanced the visitor experience and created new opportunities for programming, including successful events such as Halloween Night at the Museum and Concert Under the Stars. During closure periods, the Museum expanded its reach by bringing programs directly into the community.

Educational programming achieved strong participation throughout the year. Science field trip programs served more than 7,845 students and teachers, while 26 free customized science programs reached 1,438 Providence students and teachers. Special events, including Observe the Moon and Family Fun Science Days, drew more than 2,000 attendees. The Museum also continued its collaboration with Providence Recreation Centers, engaging 650 participants.

Programming beyond the Museum continued to thrive. Walking tours and educational activities were offered at Roger Williams Park, the Providence City Center Rink, and North Burial Ground. Free programs at the Betsey Williams Cottage featured open houses, tours, and family activities that encouraged multigenerational learning.

The Planetarium introduced new shows and three new full-dome programs, enhancing immersive science education for visitors. Three new exhibit experiences were curated to highlight the breadth of the Museum's natural history collection. Key capital improvements, including decorative exterior lighting and wall restoration, further improved accessibility and the overall visitor experience.

Partnerships continued to be central to the Museum's mission. Collaborations expanded with Roger Williams Park Zoo, local artists, colleges, the NASA Rhode Island Space Grant Consortium, Rhode Island Latino Arts, the AAPI History Museum, the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence Community Libraries, and the Roger Williams Park Conservancy. Signature programs such as Skating through the Cosmos and Observe the Night brought communities together for shared learning and exploration.

The Museum-on-the-Go initiative continued to grow, bringing elements of the museum collection into

neighborhoods through programs at the Providence City Center Rink, Providence Community Libraries, and Providence Recreation Centers, increasing access and engagement across the city.





School group from The Met School



Halloween at the Museum



Families attending LunaSCOPE



Planetarium in action

PROGRAMMING

2025 was a remarkable year for experiencing all that Providence Parks and our partners had to offer. Programming focused on arts and entertainment, health and wellness, and strengthening neighborhood events. A highlight was our Earth April series, which brought families together for hands-on and educational activities centered on water conservation and environmental awareness.

In collaboration with Art, Culture + Tourism (ACT) and P3, the Parks team also continued to improve the Edward Ely Performing Arts Series, presenting more than 48 performances by local artists in over 15 parks across the city. Free fitness opportunities expanded as well, offering yoga, tai chi, barre, Zumba, "Walks with Doc," and strength training in more than 20 park locations, welcoming residents of all ages and abilities.

Seasonal programming at Roger Williams Park also grew, with highlights including the Holiday Tree Lighting, Wicked Walks on the Michael S. Van Leesten Bridge, and the Halloween Bash at the RWP Gateway. Downtown saw a resurgence of interest in Roller Disco and Super Fun Athletic Club after closing the site for renovation

Together, these initiatives kept our parks vibrant and inclusive, strengthening community connections and celebrating the role of public spaces in Providence's cultural and civic life.

ROGER WILLIAMS PARK
GATEWAY CENTER ANNIVERSARY HALLOWEEN BASH 3:30 - 6 PM
OCTOBER 31, 2025

JOIN US FOR AN EXTENSION OF PROVIDENCE'S BELOVED 'WICKED WALK' AT THIS FREE AND FUN FAMILY FRIENDLY DOOR TO DOOR HALLOWEEN EXPERIENCE BETWEEN THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY AND ROGER WILLIAMS PARK GATEWAY CENTER!

FEATURING DOOR TO DOOR TRICK-OR-TREATING

Wicked Walk

FOR MORE INFO & TO RSVP SCAN HERE:

1197 BROAD ST & 1000 ELMWOOD AVE



ROGER WILLIAMS PARK GATEWAY CENTER
Providence Parks

JOIN THE GATEWAY CLEAN UP!

Small Actions, Big Impact
SATURDAY APRIL 26 AT 10:00 AM
1197 Broad Street, Providence, RI 02907

2025 ELY FUN(D)

Performance Series

Free community performances in Providence Parks all summer long.
No tickets. No reservations. All ages. All fun.



RWP Gateway Center Anniversary Halloween Bash

5th Annual Wicked Walk at Michael S. Van Leesten Bridge



Fitness in the Parks

Fitness in the Parks (FITP) programming continues to provide free, all-ages, and all-abilities fitness opportunities year-round—indoors and outdoors. While we hold true to the mantra “Outside Every Day,” expanding indoor offerings has been a key strategy for increasing equitable access to health and wellness resources. This blended approach supports healthier individuals and fosters a stronger, more connected community.

In 2025, the Parks Department continued our partnership with the City’s Senior Services division to broaden both class offerings and locations. Classes are now held at the Roger Williams Park Gateway Center, the Botanical Center, and Senior Services facilities across Providence, complementing outdoor programming citywide. We also expanded the number of parks equipped with durable, high-quality fitness equipment to 20 citywide locations.



**SUNSET
R&B YOGA**
w/ TValentine Yoga &
DJ Lady Ruck LIVE!

4-week session
Begins July 9,
2025

Wednesdays
7:30PM -8:45PM

Free to the public
Yoga mats provided
Beginner to intermediate levels

Roger Williams Gateway Center
1197 Broad St. Providence, RI 02907

Pre-register :
kfmleadership2018@gmail.com

Food & Play Access

This summer, the Eat Play Learn (EPL) program employed 52, high school and college students as EPL ambassadors, directors and meal site monitors in 35 parks, providing valuable work experience, mentorship, and exposure to health and wellness careers. The EPL in parks offers unstructured PlayCorps activities, crafts, books, games, and musical instruments, alongside community meal services.

EPL also partnered with libraries, nature conservancies, fitness instructors, and performers to deliver enrichment activities for youth and families. These experiences helped create safe, free and active environments for Providence families while showcasing a vast array of creative, family-focused talent.

Summer Meals

By combining unstructured play, enrichment activities, and meal services, EPL continued to draw families to city parks, creating spaces where mind and body are nurtured. EPL Ambassadors served free USDA summer meals while providing fun and engaging activities. Parks with EPL Ambassadors saw an increase in meals served.

In 2025, the program once again partnered with DoorDash to provide 400 Community Cards (valued at \$25 each) to families, ensuring access to nutritious food outside of regular summer meal service. This partnership, along with expanded programming, helped sustain the upward trajectory of meals served in parks for the fourth consecutive year. In the seven weeks of the program, over 65,000 free meals were served citywide in parks and enrolled sites throughout Providence.

CACFP Meals

In 2025, the Parks Department facilitated after-school snacks and suppers for youth across Providence, including all community libraries and Recreation Centers. As with the Summer Meals program, CACFP meals were paired with enrichment and recreation activities such as after-school homework help, basketball, soccer, arts and crafts, and storytelling, ensuring youth had access to both nourishment and engaging programming. In total we provided 68,477 meals to youth last year during CACFP service.

Weather and School Vacation Meal Service

Recognizing that food insecurity is often exacerbated when school is not in session or during unavoidable weather interruptions, the Parks Department and the Health and Human Services Office once again partnered to ensure that shelf-stable meals and milk reached families facing these challenges. Coordinating with recreation centers, libraries, and one YMCA in Providence, the City distributed more than 7,000

shelf-stable meals in 2025 to help address food insecurity during school vacations and weather advisory days.

Celebrating Stewardship: Earth April & Nature Everywhere

Mayor Brett Smiley's 2025 Earth Day theme, "Keeping Our Cool When Temperatures Rise," emphasized heat mitigation, the importance of a robust, citywide tree canopy, and other strategies to manage increased heat exposure. In partnership with community organizations, volunteers gathered in parks and public green spaces throughout April to steward these areas in recognition of Earth Month. More than 30 parks were activated, and 15 Friends Groups, 11 schools, and 5 recreation centers benefited from \$250 Evergreen Fund grants to host events and/or distribute materials related to heat resiliency. These efforts also included the planting of 250 saplings through the Sapling Stewardship Program. We look forward to seeing how the 2026 Earth Month theme inspires Friends Groups and community partners to further activate Providence's parks and public green spaces.



The Providence Rink

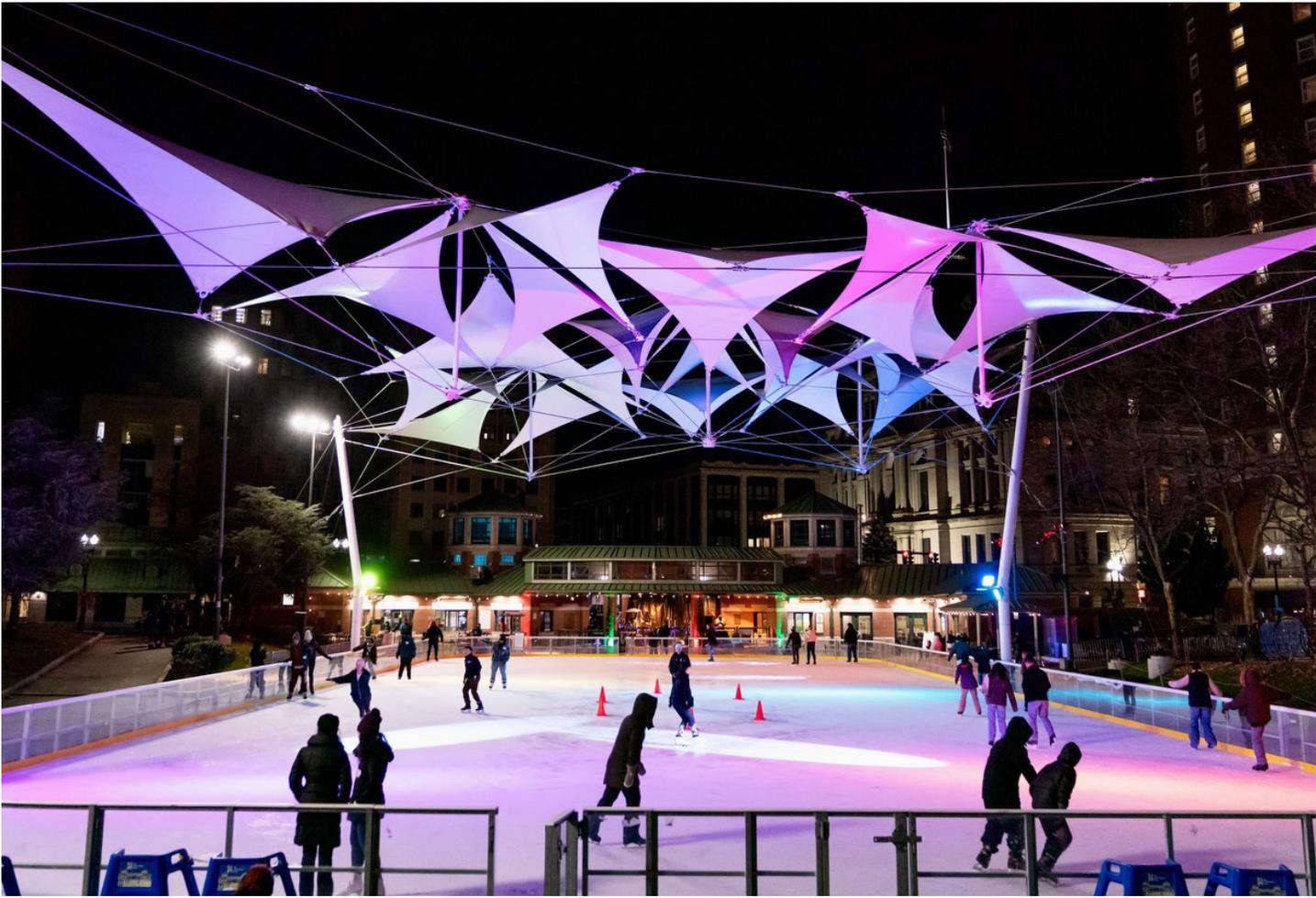
The Providence Rink continued its evolution this year, shifting from a period of major capital improvements to a dynamic rebuilding of programs, community activities, and downtown events. With the facility fully reopened, core skating programs returned at higher participation levels, and the rink delivered one of its most successful concert seasons to date. Expanded partnerships, new themed activations, and a revitalized calendar helped re-establish the rink as a centerpiece of downtown life, drawing residents, students, families, and visitors back to the park throughout all seasons.

Significant infrastructure enhancements also advanced this year, including the installation of the new shade sail structure and the installation of a state-of-the-art programmable lighting package. This investment in immersive lighting technology will transform the rink's atmosphere, strengthen evening programming, and create a signature visual landmark for downtown Providence. Together, these improvements support long-term resilience, broaden year-round use, and position the rink as a premier destination for recreation, arts, and cultural events.

The Providence Rink by the Numbers: Winter – Ice Skating & Year-Round Programming:

- 25,707 Admissions
- 27,346 Skate Rentals & Services
- 1,060 Roller Skating Admissions
- 5,538 Ice Bumper Car Tickets
- 1,287 Group & School Program Tickets
- 90 Birthday Parties & Private Rentals
- 120 Memberships & Season Passes
- \$5,130.30 Merchandise Sales





Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

In 2025, the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Conservation Partnership continued its mission of connecting residents and visitors to nature through city parks and neighborhood walks. Building on a decade of successful programming, the partnership fostered new opportunities for engagement through in-school programs, afterschool activities, and public events in collaboration with statewide organizations.

This year, the program welcomed Emily Cornelison as the new Urban Wildlife Coordinator, who has brought fresh energy and leadership to expanding community engagement and volunteer initiatives.

Monthly free bird walks continued to provide valuable data on local bird species while welcoming over a hundred participants of all skill levels engaging throughout the year. Family-focused Vamos a Pescar programs at Roger Williams Park drew hundreds of participants, teaching children and families about local waterways, fish species, and responsible stewardship of aquatic habitats. This year marked the highest level of participation in the 3rd Vamos a Pescar event in the series, with a total of 55 participants. A cohort of 10 teachers from 7 different Providence schools completed the Teacher Institute, a weeklong summer professional development program that trains teachers in outdoor education practices. Providence students increasingly used city parks as outdoor classrooms, expanding their learning from local schoolyards to nearby parks. Programming and partnerships also included special engagement with the Narducci Learning Center, further extending hands-on nature education opportunities for youth and improvements to the surrounding naturalized grounds.

The Parks Department, supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, maintained and enhanced the Amtrak Station native plant garden. Additionally, teachers and students from seven different Providence schools engaged with nature through walking field trips, serving over 400 students over the course of the year. A total of 275 participants joined our free bilingual fishing programs throughout the summer, and a total of 1,315 participants engaged in our free community events throughout the year.

Bilingual fishing program in Roger Williams Park





North Burial Ground

North Burial Ground (NBG) and Providence's other city cemeteries provide an essential public service and community space. Guided by our mission to remember the deceased, comfort the living, and preserve this historic cemetery as a destination, our work aligns with City and Parks Department goals and reflects the Parks Ethic, Canopy of Care. NBG is operated by a small, dedicated team of three full-time office staff and five grounds crew members.

NBG provides compassionate, culturally responsive burial services, offering full casket burial, cremation burial, and columbarium inurnment. This year, 32 funeral homes partnered with NBG. As of November 17, there were 215 interments. New land sales totaled 155 (109 as-need and 46 pre-need), with over half of all interments representing new families and a notable increase in pre-need sales. Nearly 78% of new owners reside in nearby Providence neighborhoods. We also completed 94 of 112 foundation installations.

Significant progress continued on the Cemetery Information Management System (CIMS). Mapping is complete for 69 of 78 developed acres, and records for 7,944 family lots—representing more than 25,000 individuals—have been entered, with remaining work focused on older sections.

We support grieving families through well-maintained grounds and responsive service. Crews fully maintained 113 acres four times annually, completed 24 section cleanups, advanced a Wind Phone installation in Randall Park, and planted 10,500 bulbs as part of ongoing beautification. Office staff conducted 580 burial and genealogy record searches and addressed constituent requests throughout the year.

NBG continued to expand its role as a cultural and educational resource. Thirty public programs attracted 986 participants, while 18 docent-led tours welcomed 342 visitors, for a total of 1,328 program attendees. Five community memorial programs drew an estimated 450 additional guests.

Educational partnerships with local schools and universities supported research, coursework, internships, and thesis projects, further establishing NBG as a site for learning and public history. NBG was also selected to serve on the local host committee for the 2026 AASLH & NCPH Conference, expected to bring approximately 1,500 public history professionals to Providence.



Halloween at NBG 2025
Walking Tour
With Docent Lydia
10/31 @ 4:30 PM

North Burial Ground
Providence Parks
HAYDEN BRETT & SHILEY
CITY OF PROVIDENCE

Meet at the Rochambeau Gate
Walking shoes recommended
Parking on North Main St



Juneteenth Honor Ceremony



Sunday 1899 Victorian Picnic



Moon Walk



Artful Parks

In 2025, Providence Parks continued to celebrate the intersection of creativity, culture, and community through public art. One of the year's most exciting milestones was the unveiling of the Billy Taylor Park Bridge art installation, in partnership with ACT, and designed in collaboration with The Steel Yard and artists Brandon Rose and Ysanel Torres. The design reflects the beauty of local flora while honoring the pride and resilience of the Mt. Hope community, transforming a functional structure into a meaningful neighborhood landmark.

We also celebrated the completion of the Trenton Dyle Hancock "My Homecourt" project at James Ahern Park. This colorful, basketball-themed installation highlights the role of play as a form of self-expression and belonging, bringing vibrancy and joy to the heart of the park.

The temporary installation of 6 Commemoration Lab Projects in several parks, an initiative of ACT, helped to enliven these spaces.

These projects demonstrate how integrating art into public spaces can elevate everyday experiences—turning bridges and courts into canvases that reflect the city's diverse stories, foster neighborhood pride, and invite residents to see their parks as places of both beauty and connection.



Holiday lights and displays throughout Roger Williams Park created by our parks team and community partners



INFORMATION & ACCESS

At Providence Parks, we strive to make every park unique, welcoming, and accessible to all. Central to this mission is ensuring that our teams, partners, and the public have access to accurate, actionable information. From monthly reports for the Parks Superintendent and Mayor's staff to skill-sharing presentations at industry conferences and age-based playground recommendations, our data collection and reporting systems form the foundation for informed decision-making and effective cross-departmental collaboration.

Through work order tracking, asset inventories, and GIS mapping, Parks continues to refine processes to maximize efficiency and transparency. Having such detailed Park information at hand, including specifications, warranties, and unit costs, allows us to visualize and strategically leverage the strengths of our diverse teams and contractors, optimizing the impact of funds spent on park improvements and facilitating maintenance programs that are intentional and proactive. Landscape design plans and improvements made are responsive to concerns of both Parks grounds and maintenance crews, and park users and community constituents. These are successes that should be accredited to our organizational systems as they are to our guiding principles and vision.

The Playground Safety team has continued to make strides to improve the safety, condition, and functionality of playgrounds. We began 2024 with a goal to thoroughly inspect 67 parks with playgrounds and/or outdoor fitness areas, using the Certified Playground Safety Inspection (CPSI) curriculum, on an annual basis, with the aspiration to reach 100% safe and functional playground portfolio.

In 2025, this effort was amplified to a dynamic bi-annual inspection program with additional activities to assist both demolition and salvage at the start of construction projects and punch list/ project close-out. We have also conducted numerous site visits with playground equipment representatives to leverage these relationships and their expertise.

In 2026, we aim to maintain the frequency of these playground inspections which will provide real-time feedback to refine our bid documents, park standard specifications, and target inventory of attic stock items for repairs. Regular refinement of these tools will be instrumental in attaining a 100% complete and "ribbon-cutting ready" park and playground portfolio. Our playground safety and maintenance program is a standard bearer for the Parks Department's Canopy of Care and the provides a strong use case for our asset tracking and work order data.

To illustrate the efficacy of our Playground maintenance program,

closing out 2025, there were 52 open maintenance work orders for our 1205 play or fitness features. The total open work orders represent features in 31 of 67 parks: 46% of parks with playgrounds affected - 4.3% of features are affected, or in need of maintenance. A "feature" is considered a piece of equipment that stands alone or is part of a larger composite playground structure. A composite playground structure may contain multiple features such as slides, climbers, or ADA access transfer stairs. For purposes of this analysis, a swing set including 1 or more swing seats, fitness combination structure with multiple exercises/stations are each considered a single play feature. As a point of reference, there are an average of 18 play features in one of our playgrounds.

Open playground work orders range from critical needs such as full replacement of a play feature (3 work orders, representing 0.0025% of all playground features, 5% of active playground maintenance work orders, and affecting 2 parks) to longer-term projects, including repainting equipment or upgrading components (11 work orders, or 20% of total work orders).

The majority of open work orders involve minor repairs, such as tightening or replacing small components or fasteners using parts that are currently available and on hand (21 work orders, or 40%). An additional 17 work orders (35%) are pending while small parts or fasteners are ordered or received.

This data has directly informed operational improvements by helping us pinpoint recurring maintenance needs by equipment type, manufacturer, and gaps in our internal tools and parts inventory. Analysis of active work orders shows a concentration of repairs related to rope play structures, which account for 21% of current playground maintenance activity. These repairs often require a specialized hydraulic crimping tool - equipment that, until recently, was only available through outside contractors or manufacturer installation teams. Identifying this trend has allowed us to reassess tool access and will reduce reliance on external support for routine repairs.

The data also revealed a strong manufacturer-specific pattern: 82% of rope structure repair work orders and 54% of all active playground work orders are associated with a single playground equipment supplier. This insight has enabled more targeted conversations with the manufacturer, who has been receptive to this feedback and is using it to inform product quality improvements, while also allowing us to better anticipate maintenance needs tied to specific equipment types.

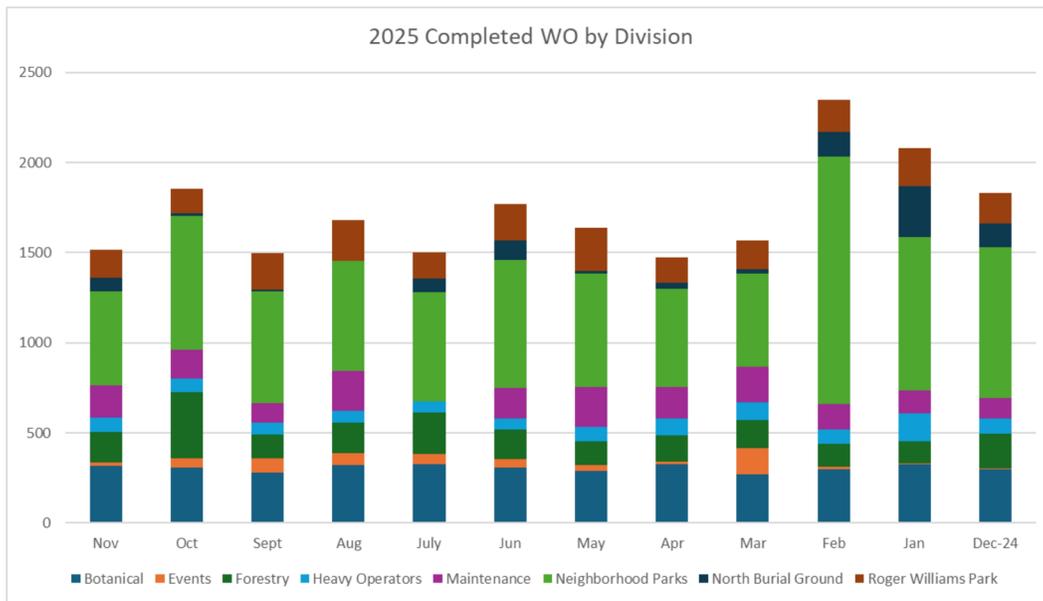
This data underscores the need for actionable operational improvements to keep pace with the growing diversity and

cost of playground investments. By analyzing maintenance patterns, we are able to identify opportunities to reduce complexity and improve efficiency, including decisions about equipment installed, expanding our inventory of commonly needed parts and specialized tools, and increasing both the frequency and level of detail of inspections.

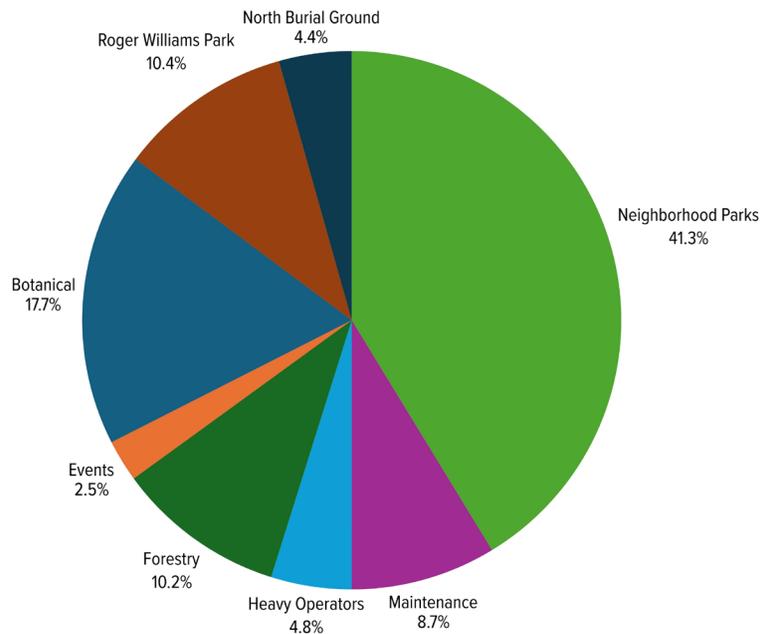
The overarching operational goal remains to complete routine maintenance proactively to prevent hazardous conditions and, when issues do arise, to expedite major repairs so they can be addressed within contractor and manufacturer warranty periods whenever possible. In the coming year, we will use this data to shift a greater portion of playground maintenance toward planned, long-term projects, such as

park upgrades and updates, while reducing emergency repair response times through the development of a more robust and predictable stock inventory.

In 2025, Parks continued to refine its data-driven approach, integrating innovation, collaboration, and transparency into every aspect of operations. Our commitment remains to be the best-run City Parks Department, continually improving services, infrastructure, and programming for the benefit of all Providence residents.



Total Completed Work Orders by Division 2025



FUND DEVELOPMENT & REVENUE

AWARDS - Total Grant Awards \$531,932

- **\$100,000** Helen Walker Raleigh Trust grant for Block Pruning Program and tree planting match.
- **\$55,000** USFWS Grant for Urban Wildlife Partnership through P3.
- **\$25,000** NASA Space Grant for Museum of Natural History.
- **\$6,932** RI Foundation (Gilmore Memorial Fund).
- **\$5,000** RI Foundation (Haffenreffer) Family Fund.
- **\$2,000** Litter Free RI Grant.
- **\$318,000** Private Donation for Roger Williams Park.
- **\$20,000** for Dexter Training Ground Filming.

EVENTS & PERMITS

- **342** total small events permits issued. \$38,220 revenue*
- **62** total special events permits issued. \$50,152.50 revenue*
- **43** private events and **48** free meetings at RWP Casino. \$98,852.90 revenue*
- **50** total events at the RWP Botanical Center. \$159,285 revenue*

*as of December 22, 2025



Members of the parks team attend a panel at the 2nd Annual 'All Hands In' Conference in RWP



Fiscal Management

The Fiscal and Administrative Office provides comprehensive financial and operational support to the Providence Parks Department, overseeing the department's operating budget, revenue tracking, payroll coordination, procurement and contract administration, grant management, and administrative services across all divisions. In FY26, the office played a critical role in maintaining stability during a period of organizational transition while simultaneously strengthening internal systems, improving coordination with city departments, and initiating department-wide improvements to revenue tracking and financial controls.

During the fiscal year, the manager ensured continuity of leadership and fiscal oversight by serving in an acting Deputy Superintendent capacity from April through the end of July following a vacancy. Oversight of all project-related contracts was centralized within the Fiscal and Administrative Office, enhancing coordination and tracking for Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects. The office also worked closely with the Finance, Purchasing, and Controllers Departments to begin standardizing revenue tracking practices, including the development of a deposit template and a SharePoint-based submission process to be implemented department-wide. Procurement compliance was reinforced across all divisions through clearer expectations around vendor alignment, quote requirements, and timely requisition entry following BOCS approvals. Additionally, the office began developing a more defined Parks project process, from concept through closeout, to improve documentation, consistency, and visibility across divisions. The team also welcomed a new staff member, Yamilet, and began shaping her role to support administrative coordination, financial processes, and ongoing operational improvements.

In terms of effectiveness, the Fiscal and Administrative Office oversaw an operating budget of \$18,035,837 across seven General Fund divisions and processed 515 requisitions during

the fiscal year. The office supported 12 revolving funds and eight trust funds, with total General Fund procurement totaling \$1,553,452.01. Staffing efforts included posting 22 positions—16 union and six non-union—and completing 18 hires, including hires with pending start dates. In addition, the office supported 123 seasonal and temporary hires across programs such as Eat, Play, Learn; Summer Meals; 55+ Senior Laborers; and temporary laborer positions. Metrics and activities in this section are reported on a fiscal-year basis to align with budget oversight, procurement, and staffing cycles, which differ from calendar-year reporting used elsewhere in this report.

Looking ahead to FY27, the Fiscal and Administrative Office will focus on execution and consistency. Key priorities include implementing standardized revenue tracking practices, formalizing a department-wide Parks project lifecycle from concept through closeout, and continuing close coordination with the Finance and Purchasing Departments to support operating and CIP budget planning, transparency, and accountability.

General Street Park ribbon cutting



IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Providence Parks Department and the parks team featured and recognized through a variety of publications and awards:

- **ProJo: Providence Parks design team is improving the community's playgrounds** <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/good-news/2025/09/03/providence-parks-design-team-is-improving-thecommunitys-playgrounds/85324345007/>
- **Photo gallery: Providence playgrounds — city parks designers are serious about fun** <https://www.providencejournal.com/picture-gallery/news/local/2025/09/03/providence-playgrounds-city-parks-designers-areserious-about-fun/85461982007/>
- **Providence Parks Department improves, maintains, builds outdoor city spaces** (The Providence Eye) <https://pvdeye.org/providence-parks-department-improves-maintains-and-builds-outdoor-city-spaces/> — Overview of major parks improvements across Providence The Providence Eye
- **Telling Their Stories: Inside Providence's North Burial Ground** (RI Monthly) <https://www.rimonthly.com/providences-north-burial-ground/> — Historical perspectives and tours Rhode Island Monthly
- **Mayor Smiley Announces Opening of Providence Ice Rink & Winter Programming** <https://www.providenceri.gov/mayor-smiley-announces-opening-of-providence-ice-rink-and-start-of-winter-programming/> — City press release on rink season and upgrades Providence RI
- **ProJo: Renovated ice rink now open downtown Providence** <https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/local/2024/12/24/renovated-ice-rink-now-open-in-downtown-providence-see-whats-new/77173596007/> — Article on upgrades and reopening Providence Journal
- **The Providence Rink named one of USA TODAY's 10 Best Ice-Skating Rinks** <https://10best.usatoday.com/awards/best-ice-skating-rink/>
- **Public Helps Maintain Providence's Public Gardens**(includes Randolph Garden in NBG) <https://ecori.org/public-helps-maintain-providences-public-gardens/> — Story on gardens & community volunteer work in parks/cemetery ecoRI News
- **10 weekend getaways you can do from Boston without a car** (Boston Globe) — Highlights Roger Williams Park and the Botanical Center in Providence as a rewarding destination to enjoy exotic plants and a tranquil setting just a short train ride from Boston. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2025/07/02/lifestyle/weekend-getaways-boston-without-car/>
- **Nature Everywhere Community** — Providence is featured as a Nature Everywhere Community, documenting how the city has transformed parks, playgrounds, and schoolyards with nature-based design and equitable access to outdoor play and learning. <https://www.childrenandnature.org/resources/community-spotlight-providence-rhode-island/>
- **Boston Globe Harvard Pilgrim Health Care / Sponsored Feature** — Providence parks' free fitness programming highlighted alongside other New England community health efforts BostonGlobe.com <https://sponsored.bostonglobe.com/harvard->

Community Voices

Positive words for the Parks Department team from members of our community:

"I just want to send my Thanks from me and both teams that took part in our annual Winter Classic game. Your staff was excellent as usual and everyone that came to watch had a great time. We love the new renovations and we all look forward to next year. Keep up the excellent work!"

"Thank you and I appreciate the empathetic and human touch from the City of Providence today!!"

"I am touched by your professionalism and dedication to caring for the park and also the hereby Neutaconkanut Park. I think your commitment to staying on top of things is refreshing."

"I am writing this letter to you because I want you to know that Heather Manning was an important part of our fabulous experience. From my first contact with her she was professional, collaborative and a pleasure to work with. Heather's expertise made us feel confident and comfortable. She represents Roger Williams Park and the City of Providence well."

"I wanted shout out and let you know (as a volunteer Elmwood Little League coach at Niantic Park) the good work your parks crew are doing there. The fields are looking really good and their work is appreciated. Please pass on my gratitude."

"Tony Levoie at Parks is amazing. No matter what I need, whether it's supplies for clean-ups, guidance on an issue, fixing a light fixture or removing graffiti, he is right there, and I mean, in like 10 minutes. He is always so helpful, kind, respectful, and knowledgeable and I wanted you to know how much I appreciate him. He is truly a great asset to your Department!"

"Dear Wojo, Many thanks to you and your crew for laying gravel and a stone border on the lower path of the park! It looks fabulous!! Plus, the stone border along the fence should help with some of the runoff issues."

"I wanted to take a moment to recognize the exceptional support Ron Baptista provided during the Juneteenth event this past Sunday. His professionalism and ability to think on his feet made a meaningful impact."

"Your crews were wonderful and very kindly helped me set up and break down the tent and misting set up and they diligently

monitored the water barrel and refilled it 4 times over the course of the event. It was easily at least heat index of 100 during the celebration and the misting tent got a TON of use, so THANK YOU for making this event as safe as possible for attendees!"

"Hi Wendy, It's been so nice to see the Lippitt Park fountain up and running! Quick note of gratitude to you and the Parks team!"

"Ms. Nilsson: I live on Edgewood Blvd in the city, a street that abuts Roger Williams Park. As the Park's neighbor, we often observe the staff taking care of the property; mowing, picking up leaves and trash, and plowing in the winter. We think they do a fabulous job. They deserve a special shout out today."

"I just wanted to call out what a fantastic job Alex did, and how great he was to work with on this project. Leading up to the project, he provided clear and detailed information regarding what we'd be doing, where to park, what we might need to bring and so forth, and also provided an excellent map of the Center for our team to use."

"Hi Wendy, Our sincerest apologies for the delay in sending you the biggest thank you ever for your support at our event. The technician you sent for electricity was AMAZING. He was attentive and quite flexible which we appreciated considering the DJ was running behind schedule."

"Dear Mayor Smiley, I am writing to thank and give recognition to the great assistance and work from the Providence Parks Dept in beautifying our city."

"The work was completed this week, and once again, your department has exceeded my expectations. The crew was conscientious, thorough, neat, and friendly. I would especially like to recognize the foreman, Anthony, who led the project with efficiency and thoughtfulness, treating the area as if it were his own yard. In summary, please extend my sincere thanks to you and your entire team, especially Joe and Anthony. Your excellent work is both noticed and deeply appreciated."

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, 2026 will bring new challenges and opportunities. Guided by our strategic plan, we will continue building on this momentum. Highlights will include Phase III at India Point Park, major park revitalization at Kerry Kohring, Prete-Metcalf, Cabral, Sessions Street, Murphy-Trainor, Adrian Hall Way Skatepark and pavilion, Wanskuck Park and Cottage, and further upgrades at Mashpaug Park and Trails. We will begin master planning for the North Burial Ground, and new bridges and landscaping will take shape at Pleasant Valley Parkway. Pearl Street Park and Peace and Plenty Park will see important improvements, and lighted, upgraded playing fields and courts will be built at Veazie Street and Gano Parks.

Together, we will continue shaping a park system that reflects the pride, creativity, and resilience of Providence – and we will do it “all hands in”.



Special thanks to Commissioner Justin Holland, David Santilli, Kyle Auclair, Hannah Falvey and many other contributors for the use of images used throughout this report.



Parks Department Management Team from left to right: Lee Ann Freitas, Nicholas Discullio, Brant Gawrys, Kristin Anandel, Michael Wojcicki, Megan Gardner, Sam Daganhardt, Rachel Colaiace, Joseph Wojtanowski, Renee Gamba, Victor Lopes, Annalisa Heppner, Emily Cornelison, Christyl Melendez, Hannah Falvey, and Wendy Nilsson. (Not pictured: Stacey Johnson)



