



WE ARE PARKS

2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

YEAR IN REVIEW

The Parks Department had a remarkable year of change, transition and learning to expect the unexpected. Throughout it all, our team remained focused on our mission. They used their expertise, innovation, and resourcefulness to exceed expectations.

As the city administration changed, we were thrilled to work with Mayor Brett P. Smiley and his team, City Council President Rachel Miller and many new City Councilors, as well as new colleagues throughout the City. We welcomed a new cohort of Park Commissioners and thanked outgoing commissioners for their outstanding service and dedication.

Enhanced by partnerships, we managed numerous small and large-scale projects to completion despite contractor delays, supply chain issues, and wild weather. Highlights include the addition of the RWP Botanical Center Pavilion and Goatyard, Harriet & Sayles/Mary E. Fogarty Green Schoolyard Complex, a new waterpark at Bucklin Park, and full renovations of Jacqueline Clements Memorial Park, Jennifer Rivera Memorial Park, JT Owens Playground (now Ed Hooks Playground), Viscolosi Park, and the expansion of the Neutaconkanut Skatepark. Other notable improvements include the revitalizations of John O'Brien Park, Corliss Park, Ascham Street Park (Phase III), the Father Lennon Park play area for 2–5-year-olds, the Locust Grove Cemetery entrance, expansion of the Amtrak Station urban meadow, and completion of the RWP Mounted Command grounds. Downtown, we restored the Bajnotti Fountain in Burnside Park, Memorial Tunnel Atrium glass, and all the lights in Memorial Park. Our historic buildings also received significant improvements. The Museum of Natural History HVAC system was replaced and the exterior of Wanskuck House was renovated. We hit it out of the park, so to speak, with improved athletic facilities including, the restoration of Collyer Park fields, addition of a Futsal Field to James Ahearn Park, and major repairs to five basketball courts. We also added a pickleball court at the Ninth Street courts in partnership with My HomeCourt, as well as a Wallopball Court at Billy Taylor Park in partnership with Mt Hope Neighborhood Association and Site-Specific LLC. We added flair throughout the city with artistic works. For example, the Sanford Biggers Mural was added to Ninth Street courts, the Joslin waterpark was transformed into a giant octopus, and new colorful lighting was installed at Memorial Tunnel in collaboration with Downtown Providence Parks Network. In addition, we installed two Rado Kirov sculptures to

Biltmore Park with The Avenue Concept, and the Edward Mitchell Bannister Statue in Market Square with Providence Art Club.

Our team’s accomplishments grew as a result of innovative collaborations within and across our operations and programs. We added a systems specialist position and adjusted other positions to enable managers and crews to fully utilize GIS based tools such as Asset Essentials for work orders, inventory control, and asset management. We used these tools to monitor the success of biodiversity and sustainability initiatives such as low-mow and no-mow, leave the leaves, and promoting urban meadow growth. Our City Center Team continued to provide resources, technical assistance, and support to our managers and crews. Our Neighborhood Parks and Maintenance teams worked together to restore lighting, repair historic structures, and improve landscaping to enhance the curb appeal of many of our parks. Despite the unprecedented weather, all our venues benefitted from these vital relationships. Each saw enhanced programming and attendance, including over 1000 visitors to North Burial Ground for programs and events, new landmark events at Botanical Center, and record attendance at the Museum of Natural History and the Providence Rink. The Museum and NBG also co-hosted the popular Moonlit Walks. We expanded summer meals and after-school meals and increased attendance at all our Urban Wildlife Partnership, Playcorps, and Fitness-in-the-Parks programs. We expanded the Michael Van Leesten Bridge Wicked Walk, one of our most successful events of the year, and added RWP as a new site. The Rhode Island Philharmonic Pops saw record attendance at their annual performance at Roger Williams Park.

In closing out 2023, we would like to thank the Board of Park Commissioners, Mayor Brett P. Smiley, the Providence City Council, our colleagues in City Hall, and our community partners for the support, collaboration, and resources that helped us improve our operations and create spaces that positively impact the quality of life in every Providence neighborhood.

We are proud. **We are Parks!**

Wendy Nilsson, Superintendent



The Board of Park Commissioners with Mayor Brett P. Smiley and Superintendent Wendy Nilsson.



The installation of the City's holiday tree at City Hall.

Mission

Providence Parks are a vital component of our healthy, inclusive and thriving community. Through our Parks Department we aim to provide city residents with inspiring outdoor spaces that dramatically impact the quality of life within each neighborhood. It is our belief that all residents should have access to a public park that is safe, brings community together and encourages our youth to play, learn and explore. By working in collaboration with local friends-groups, we will work to support the needs of each neighborhood and provide programming that is reflective of the children, adults and staff that use these spaces daily.

Goals & Priorities

- Develop parks, public spaces, and programs that engage and inspire
- Develop brand-recognition for quality services
- Continue to build the City's tree canopy
- Establish a national reputation for best practices and creative use of resources
- Be renowned for our responsiveness to community needs and interests
- Continue building a team of dedicated, talented, and committed employees who are proud to make Providence parks exceptional
- Increase biodiversity and ecological habitat as an integral part of parks design
- Improve ADA Access at all parks and facilities
- Create safe, healthy, welcoming spaces that meet the needs of Providence's distinct and diverse neighborhoods
- Enhance outdoor recreation opportunities by developing innovative, sustainable, and responsive parks, facilities, amenities and programs
- Develop facilities and programs appropriate for multiple generations of residents including those interested in traditional sports and those interested in alternative forms of recreation
- Connect children and families to nature and strengthen communities through our exceptional shared spaces that inspire
- Ensure safety and sustainability of all park features through training and Playground safety inspections and audits

OPERATIONS

The Parks Department currently maintains 121 outdoor spaces. These include traditional parks, athletic fields, basketball courts, playgrounds, conservation areas, walking/running tracks and trails, non-traditional recreation areas (skateboard features, bike tracks, parkour), dog parks, cemeteries, an ice rink, and the flagship Roger Williams Park.

Our “Parks Academy” training initiative continued for the 7th year. Courses included Certified Playground Safety Inspection completed by 11 managers and supervisors. Workforce Safety Training attended by 10 crewmembers, Stormwater Feature Maintenance at which the Roger Williams Park and Botanical Center crews received additional training, and Arborist License training, which 10 crew members took in partnership with Local 1033. Additionally, all managers and crews participated in a variety of trainings to optimize the tools for managing and monitoring work, assets, and inventory.



Maintenance

The maintenance team satisfied an average of 450 work orders per month in addition to scheduled annual maintenance of irrigation systems, fountains, waterparks, concession stands, electrical and HVAC systems, playgrounds, amenities, signage, site furnishings, 26 buildings, and responding to PVD 311s. The maintenance team also saved significant costs on major projects:

- Installed amenities and site furnishings at John O'Brien Park
- Refurbished the concession stand at Neutaconkunt ballfields
- Installed new lights in Locust Grove Cemetery
- Built a goat playground at the Botanical Center
- Installed benches at Ridge Street Park
- Resurfaced the waterpark at Joslin Park
- Built and installed a playground for 2–5-year-olds at Viscolosi Park
- Installed electrical infrastructure for the Memorial Tunnel artistic lighting installation
- Installed the first ever WhallopBall court at Billy Taylor Park
- Added power access to Jackie Clements Park
- Refinished all light poles and fences in Burnside and Biltmore Parks
- Organized and expanded grounds yard and storage facility
- Added new kitchen and office spaces to RWP Boathouse
- Provided maintenance to all park vehicles
- Installed fencing, retaining walls, basketball hoops, backboards, tennis nets, interior sections of fence, and poured concrete for sidewalk repair at Ninth Street Courts
- Completed demolition of the old playground and removed Engineered Wood Fiber to make way for a contractor to install new equipment at Donigian Park
- Restored and placed 12 historic benches



This image and below: Playground installation at Viscolosi Park.



A new retaining wall built for tennis and pickleball at 9th Street Courts.

Neighborhood Parks Services

Neighborhood Park Services (NPS) performs grounds maintenance and upkeep of all 121 Providence Parks and public spaces, including Roger Williams Park ensuring that all our parks look great every day.

Excluding special events, NPS emptied a record number of 150,000 trash barrels this year which is a 30% increase over last year. Crews also spread 1700 yards of playground safety mulch and added 200 yards of pine bark mulch for garden beds, trees, and landscaped areas. Our Ballfield crew spread over 45 tons of fresh infield mix on Little League and softball fields. We are also excited to share that we increased turf aeration to include smaller neighborhood parks and seeded almost 2000 pounds of grass seed throughout the parks system.

After much success last year, we continue mulching leaves across our City Parks—instead of bagging and hauling them away—significantly reducing Parks’ carbon footprint and saving \$28,000 in hauling and dumping fees.

In a continuing effort to improve efficacy and efficiency, NPS expanded and improved employee training on Asset Essentials software, which enables us to prioritize, assign, track and manage the broad range of services we provide.

Snow Operations cleared snow in streets of Wards 8 and 9, Roger Williams Park, North Burial Ground, and sidewalks and walkways in downtown and neighborhood parks.



Forestry

The Forestry division maintained more than 28,000 street trees, every city park tree, and other public trees for safety and health. These trees greatly benefit the city, its residents, and the environment. The street trees alone sequestered 3,543,378 lbs. of CO₂, the equivalent of 313 homes’ energy use for one year¹. These trees also collected more than 28,184,979 gallons of stormwater, helping to reduce flooding. The shade from street trees in Providence saved residents 1,642,577 kWh for a value of \$1,085,324, a direct reduction in costs for cooling and heating their homes. The trees also kept pollutants from the environment, reduced the city’s heat, provided habitats for vertebrates and invertebrates, and produced oxygen.

Continuing the partnership with Providence Neighborhood Planting Program (PNPP), Forestry trained 56 PVD Community Tree Keepers who pruned and maintained young city trees. Forestry managed over 2,000 service requests from Providence residents, including pruning, dead tree removals, and clearing Providence’s roads and sidewalks of debris. Forestry also transported the holiday trees displayed at City Hall and the Ice Rink.

1,026 total trees planted:

- **588** trees planted by Providence Neighborhood Planting Program
- **398** trees planted by Forestry

2,010 total trees pruned, including:

- **410** street trees pruned by City staff
- **1,600** street trees pruned via block pruning

118 dead trees removed

¹(<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>)





Parks Team & Partners

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 the friends of our neighborhood parks
- Blackstone Parks Conservancy
- All our corresponding City of Providence Departments
- Downtown Providence Parks Network
- Met School
- My HomeCourt
- Neutaconkanut Hill Conservancy
- Partnership for Providence Parks
- Perennial Planters
- Providence Community Libraries
- Providence neighborhood associations
- Providence Public Building Authority
- Providence Stormwater Innovation Center
- Rhode Island Latino Arts
- Rhode Island Master Gardeners
- RWP Conservancy
- The Avenue Concept
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council
- Families and Friends of Ed Hooks, Jaqueline Clements, and Jennifer Rivera who helped welcome the revitalization of namesake parks for these community leaders
- ...and so many more noted throughout this report



PARK IMPROVEMENTS

This year the Parks Design Team welcomed two new staff members with experience in landscape design and mechanical systems. This enabled us to further expand resources towards upgrades and renovations to our historic buildings internal systems with efficient applications. Additional neighborhood parks, playgrounds and splashpads were creatively constructed with in-house design and project management and opened for community enjoyment and programming.

Two members of the design team attended the ASLA (American Society of Landscape Architects) Annual Conference to further their professional growth and garner new insights on relevant practices. This included methods for increasing biodiversity and preserving and expanding our natural resources within the context of climate change.

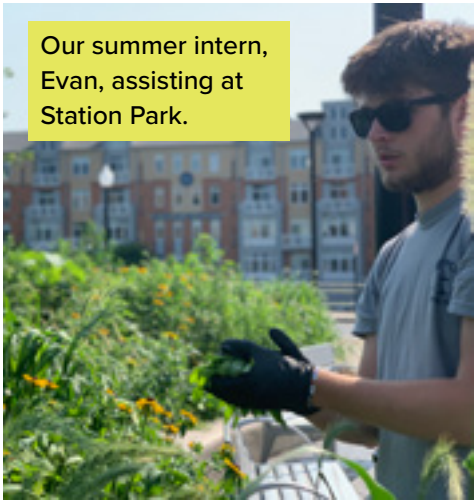
Sustainability & Biodiversity

The Design Team continued to focus its efforts on increasing biodiversity and wildlife habitat within our park spaces through design and maintenance practices which included establishing urban meadows and suspending or reducing mowing to allow for an increase in organisms, including pollinators and birds, and native grasses and forbs.

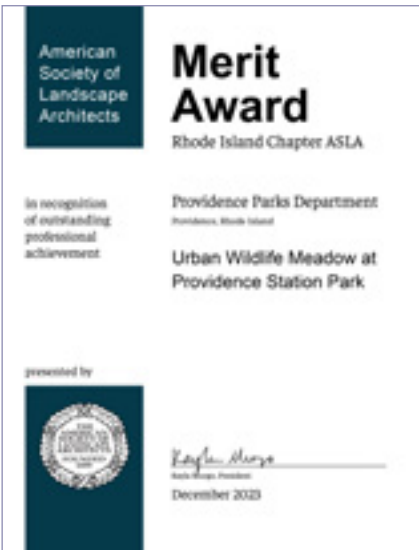
In addition, numerous parks were designed to perform as outdoor classrooms, where systems for intercepting stormwater runoff – such as raingardens and swales – where implemented in creative ways to also facilitate with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning.

Recognitions & Awards

Two of our park improvement projects were submitted to the Rhode Island chapter ASLA for professional awards. Both Jacqueline M. Clements Park project and the Urban Wildlife Meadow at Station Park project received awards in recognition of their excellence.



Our summer intern, Evan, assisting at Station Park.



Design & Project Management

Playgrounds & Splashpads

- Ascham Street Park
- Bucklin Park Splashpad
- Donigian Park Playground additions
- Father Lennon Playground additions
- Harriet & Sayles Park and Mary E. Fogarty Green Schoolyards Complex
- Jennifer Rivera Memorial Park
- Ed Hooks Playground at JT Owens Fields
- Paul Grande Park Playground
- John O'Brien Park Playground additions
- Viscolosi Park Playground

Skateparks

- Neutaconkanut Park

Ballfields & Courts

- Collyer Park Field
- Columbia Park Basketball Courts repair
- Corliss Park Basketball Court repair
- Major Park Basketball Court repair
- Fagnoli Park Basketball Courts
- James Ahern Field
- Ninth Street Ball Courts

Sustainable Circulation & Gathering Spaces

- Blackstone Park Coastal Upland Restoration
- Dexter Training Ground pathways and seating nodes
- Jacqueline Clements Memorial Park
- Locust Grove Cemetery
- Roger Williams Park Botanical Center Rose Meadow Path, Goat Run, Di-A-Log Area
- Roger Williams Park Botanical Center 3 Season Pavilion Tent

New Fencing, Benches & Brickwork

- Ridge Street Park

Fountains, Lighting, Cameras & Electrical

- Burnside Park

- Mt Pleasant Fields
- Waterplace Park Tunnel lighting
- North Burial Ground

New Signage

- Smiley Administration signage
- Surveillance signage
- “Low-Mow” and Meadow signage

Building Upgrades

- City Center Rink Grand Staircase insulation and waterproofing
- North Burial Ground multiple HVAC upgrades
- RWP Boathouse entrance
- RWP Casino deck and HVAC upgrades
- Museum of Natural History HVAC and building upgrades
- Wanskuck House exterior improvements
- Waterplace Park Atrium glass replacement

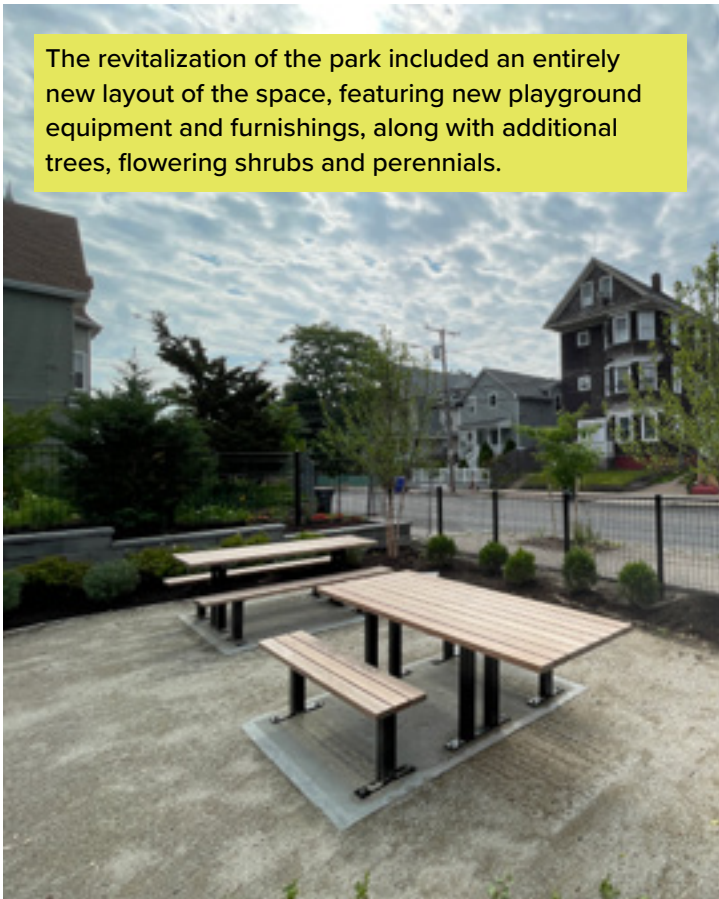


Locust Grove Cemetery



Improvements included a new gateway with lighting, bilingual signage, entrance landings, repaving the roadway and trees.

Jennifer Rivera Memorial Park



The revitalization of the park included an entirely new layout of the space, featuring new playground equipment and furnishings, along with additional trees, flowering shrubs and perennials.

Dexter Training Ground



Improvements at Dexter Park featured new pathways and sitting nodes with new and refurbished furnishings, a drinking fountain and relocation of historic markers to entryways.

Burnside Park



The iconic fountain received major upgrades to its exterior, and mechanical and hydraulic systems, including a mechanical filter, a cartridge filter, a UV sterilizer, and a saline-chlorine generator.



Jacqueline M. Clements
Memorial Park



The central plaza of the park has ample seating and the newly planted trees will grow quickly to provide natural shade.



Memorial stones from the old fountain were re-used at the entrances of the park to carry on the original tribute as a nod to the park's history.



Viscolosi Park

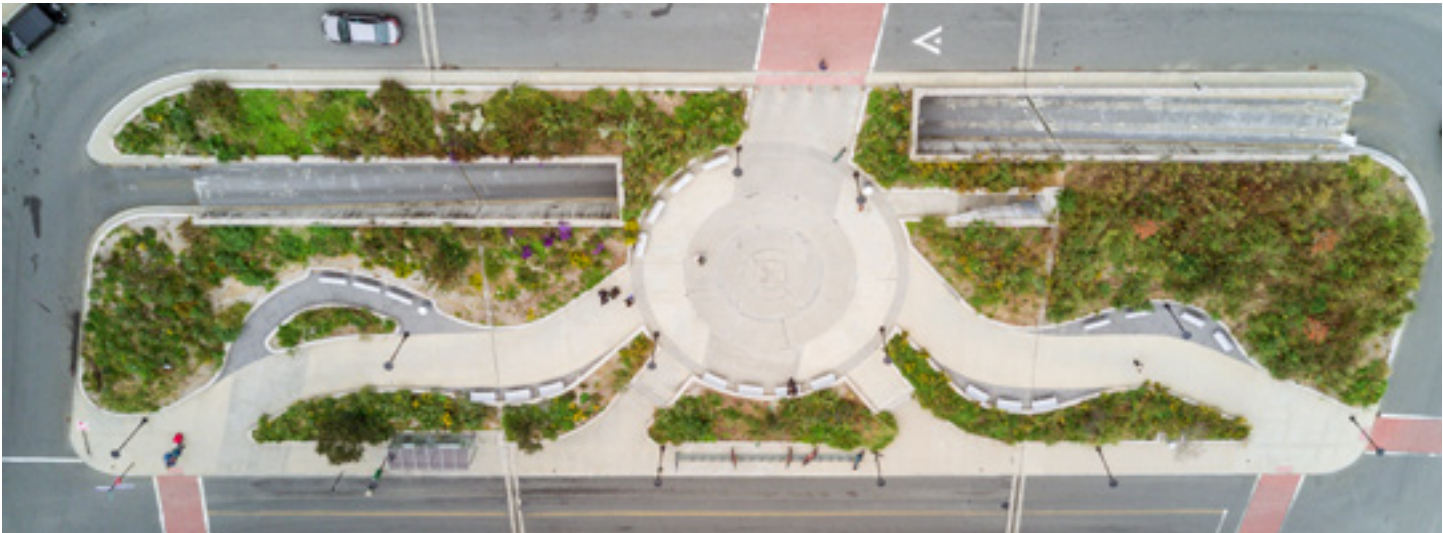


Expanding on the park’s existing topography provided an opportunity to create custom features and a dynamic play space.

Station Park



A Parks collaboration with US Fish & Wildlife Service, Station Park has been designated as an *Urban Bird Habitat* and transformed into a wildlife meadow.



Bucklin Park Splashpad



Bucklin Park now includes a colorful and whimsical splashpad with native boulders and interactive spray features. This amenity was designed for on-site stormwater retention and includes native trees and shrubs.

John O'Brien
Playground



John O'Brien Playground at Regent Avenue Park, received brand new play equipment for 2 to 5-year-olds and swings for 2 to 12-year-olds, as well as picnic tables and benches.



Mary E. Fogarty Green Schoolyard at Harriet & Sales Park



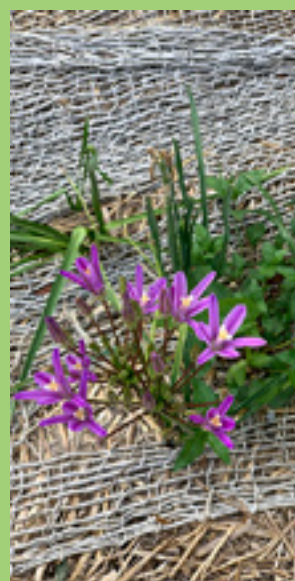
The Green Schoolyard boasts extensive play features and outdoor classroom areas, as well as a flexible greenspace, which connects the school to the park.



Native plants provide many ecological benefits as well as opportunities to learn about nature and nonhuman living beings.

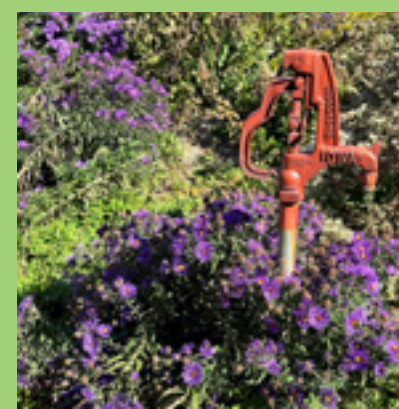


The park is also home to an interactive splashpad packed with fun spray features designed to keep kids cool and engaged.



Urban Wildlife Meadow at Station Park

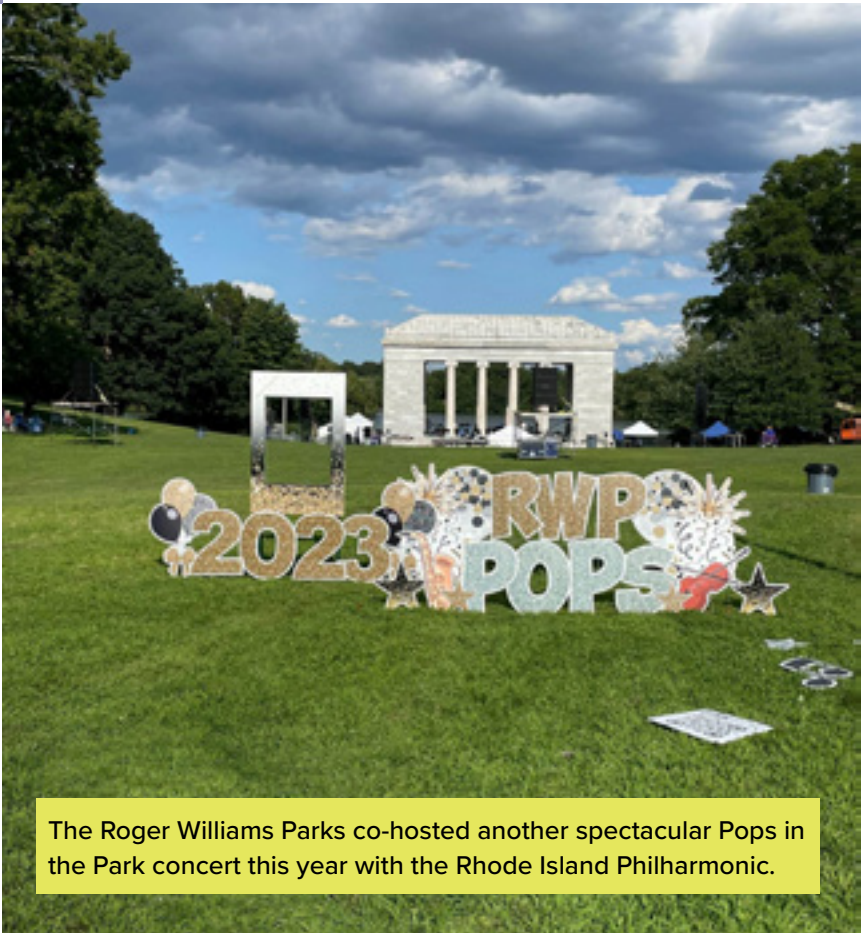
A huge thanks to our partners at US Fish & Wildlife Service, the Rhode Island Master Gardeners, Rhode Island Wild Plants Society, Parks staff and all the volunteers who had helped transform Station Park into a wildlife oasis.



ROGER WILLIAMS PARK

Many capital improvement projects were completed in Roger Williams Park, most notably the installation of the new HVAC System at the Museum of Natural History and new doors and ADA access system at the Boathouse, as well as the restoration of the Casino back porch. The RWP Conservancy provided matching funds for the architectural design work.

Once again, we were thrilled to work with the Rhode Island Foundation and Art, Culture, and Tourism to host the 6th Annual Rhode Island Philharmonic Orchestra’s “Pops in the Park”. We also co-hosted the Rain Harvest Festival and the RI Stormwater Innovation Expo with many public partners. Additionally, we continued to expand our offering of free fitness classes. As always, we partnered with Roger Williams Park Conservancy to expand public programs, including their signature event, Firstworks Concerts. We were also thrilled to resume the Annual Holiday Lighting event at the Bandstand with all of our RWP Partners.



Roger Williams Park Zoo

Roger Williams Park Zoo Activities, Accomplishments & Milestones:

- AZA accreditation renewed and Joined the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA)
- Second year participation in Providence Parks’ *Eat, Play, Learn* program and *Wicked Walk*
- Launched Zoo Access membership to include residents qualifying for EBT benefits, presently serving more than 1,500 families
- University of Rhode Island AVS327 Zoo Animal Management course team taught and hosted on zoo campus, and partnership established with Johnson and Wales University to assist and support animal science degree program
- RWPZoo/Antioch University community engagement and co-design program conducted five focus group meetings with Providence neighborhoods to identify residents’ expectations of the zoo
- Hired 112 staff members (mixture of seasonal, part- and full-time); recruited 500+ event volunteers, as well as Employed three *Skills for Rhode Island’s Future* interns
- Hosted seven corporate/community volunteer groups, 13 volunteer performance groups, Participated in 28 community outreach events
- Led, participated in and/or funded AZA SAFE

- (saving animals from extinction) programs: Andean Highland Flamingo, Jaguar, North American Freshwater Turtles and Songbirds
- Served as an event host site for Rhode Island Natural History Survey BioBlitz
 - In partnership with USFWS, RIDEM and other regional state wildlife agencies, completed the 29th season of endangered North American Burying Beetle breeding and release; bred and released 38 New England cottontail rabbits; and rescued, reared and released 3,800 spadefoot toads
 - Presented *Dinosaurs Among Us!* animatronic show, Dinosaurs in Flight bird show, and collaborated with Roger Williams Park team to engage summertime park guests in dinosaur experiences
 - Enjoyed daytime zoo attendance in excess of 530,000 guests, near record attendance for Jack-O-Lantern Spectacular at over 169,000 guests, and capacity zoo camp participation of over more than 900 campers
 - Initiated construction of new red panda habitat through City of Providence funding, constructed African aviaries and Aldabra tortoise habitat, rebuilt gibbon habitat through operational funding, constructed a giraffe shade structure funded by zoo members, and initiated construction of a serval habitat through philanthropic funding



RWP Gateway Center

In 2023, the Roger Williams Park Gateway Center officially opened for its first calendar year. Our primary objective was to increase public awareness of the center’s mission and foster connections between the community and RWP, as well as other parks in Providence. The community welcomed the initiative with over 6,000 visitors attending various events, programing, meetings, and workshops, or simply enjoying lunch outdoors and strolling through the picturesque trail behind the center.

We collaborated with community organizations to host 72 diverse events featuring partners such as Rhode Island Latino Arts, African Alliance of Rhode Island, DownCity Design, ACT, Southside Smoothies, MUSE Foundation, Youth Empowerment Society of Providence County, OutSpoken PVD, Esperanza Hope, ReMax Providence and Rhode Island Small Business HUB, West End Recreational Center, Wheeler School, Johnson & Wales University, Pechakucha PVD, Narragansett Brewing Company, and Providence Streets Coalition.

Notable events included Neighbor Days—a two-part series in partnership with Narragansett Brewing Company—consisting of family-friendly activities featuring live music and games that attracted over 300 participants. Additionally, the RWP Gateway Center Anniversary Halloween Bash—a collaborative event with all the partners—offered a safe trick-or-treat alternative for the community and attracted 200 attendees.

The Gateway Center conducted:

- **34** meetings for various Parks divisions
- **3** meetings for Ward 9 Councilor Juan Pichardo
- Mayor Smiley’s Comprehensive Plan Press Release
- **4** Providence Senior Citizen Department sessions
- **5** Providence DEIB Department gatherings



Gateway Center Halloween Bash.



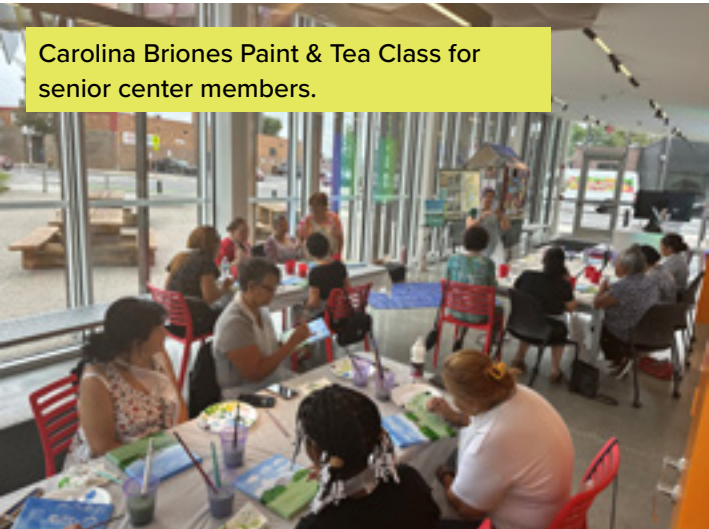
Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage Month.



Muse Foundation BLK MKT Flea. Pop-up BIPOC Marketplace with vendors, performances and food.



Outspoken PVD poetry night.



Carolina Briones Paint & Tea Class for senior center members.

RWP Botanical Center

This year, the Roger Williams Park Botanical Center hosted 43,067 visitors. The Center also increased membership by 30%, and hosted numerous pop-up shops, tours and field trips, all with the mission of connecting people to nature.

The Center featured seven artists that represented the LGBTQ, BIPOC and Latinx communities. Exhibits included blown glass with mined mineral deposits from an indigenous woman’s trek across the US, painted murals and pen and ink drawings, a Lego Master interactive exhibit with a mermaid, as well as a performance by the Providence Ballet Theatre and TEN31. The Botanical Center was once again prominently featured at the Newport Flower Show. This year the Center expanded its educational partnerships with St. Mary’s Home for Children, Bradley School, Beat the Streets, Johnson & Wales University, Brown University, Providence College, URI, Stormwater Innovation Center and continued its long-standing relationship with the MET school “School within RWP” and graduated the first cohort who started as freshman 4 years ago.



The Botanical Center by the Numbers:

- **32%** increase in volunteers
- **41%** increase in nature-based workshops
- **7** art exhibitions and performances
- **6** in-house trainings and employee appreciation meetings and events
- **70** new volunteers trained at the Center, with a 3-fold increase in volunteers in the goat program
- **3800** volunteer hours in programs such as the Food Donation Project, The Flavor Lab, perennial gardens, rose gardens, the Japanese garden, propagation, events, the Goat Ambassadors, and other projects
- **4** new volunteer trainings and **4** volunteer

education programs

- **10%** increase in children’s educational tours
- **3** in-house special events including Fairy Garden Days, Gnomevember, and All Aboard the Holidays
- Expanded pre-school children’s educational program participants by **89%**
- Increased social media followers by **15%**
- Constructed a one of kind pavilion to hold special events. With the addition of a bump out tent, the pavilion will be Providence’s largest capacity event space with the ability to hold up to **300** people
- Commissioned an art mural in the hallway of the Center
- Completed repairs and installation of a new floor

Museum of Natural History & Planetarium

The Museum of Natural History and Planetarium continues to grow as a local and regional learning and discovery destination for all. We welcomed a record 39,950 visitors, including school groups and special program attendees. We are especially excited about our innovative field trip programs, that include planetarium shows and hands-on workshops for schools, homeschool families, camps, scouts, community groups, and student mentorships, as well as our college internships.

The Museum:

- Customized free programs for **1,100** Providence students and 15 teachers
- Provided on-site Providence Recreation Center programming to **240** participants
- Supported **120** Providence students, through a NASA grant, to participate in Plant the Moon nationwide experiment.
- Expanded walking tour offerings at Roger Williams Park and at North Burial Ground
- Brought new programming to the Betsey Williams Cottage including Concerts Under the Sycamore and historical tours
- Installed two new exhibits (one of which was funded by NASA RI Space Grant Consortium) and produced new live planetarium offerings. An exciting addition was the Tyrannosaurus Rex fossil replica
- Offered a variety of new community programming in collaboration with RWP Zoo, Providence Stormwater Innovation Center, local artists, colleges and RWP Conservancy. Highlights include the Wicked Walk and new Halloween Bash at Roger Williams Park
- Museum Capital Improvements included the demolition of the old and installation of the new HVAC system. Architectural designs and plans were completed for continued improvements to the Museum to improve accessibility and enhance the visitor experience that are scheduled to be completed in 2024
- Created Museum-on-the-Go Kits for Providence Parks Summer Programming; bringing the Museum Collections to the Providence City Center and RWP Gateway



The Museum Director with visitors and a T-Rex replica.



Concerts under the Sycamore featuring *The Strings*.



A school group at the Museum.

PROGRAMMING

The year 2023 brought with it a renewed enthusiasm for gathering in our parks and public green spaces. We focused programming on arts and entertainment, health and wellness, and supporting smaller neighborhood events. Highlights of 2023 include our spring *Earth April* events, which provided educational and hands-on opportunities centered around tree care, tree equity, tree planting and all things trees. In addition, we launched “Pluwing,” citywide “Picking Litter Up While Walking” groups and hosted over 30 demonstration sites for Earth April. In partnership with Art Culture and Tourism and the Partnership for Providence Parks, the Parks team and ACT re-launched the Edward Ely Performing Arts Series that showcased local artists at over 15 parks. 2023 was filled with free fitness classes for all ages and abilities. Offerings included yoga, tai chi, barre, Zumba, walks with doc and pups, and strength training at over 20 locations.



City Center & Downtown Parks

2023 City Center & Downtown Parks featured programing included:

Art in the Parks

Biltmore Park – The Avenue Concept in partnership with parks opened a year-long solo exhibition of sculptures by Rado Kirov on two new sculpture pads. These are replacement sculpture pads funded through a Rhode Island Commerce grant and activated for the Three Nights of Lights festival.

Learn in the Parks

The mobile museum, in partnership with Roger Williams Park Museum of Natural History and Planetarium, provided mobile educational opportunities at the City Center Rink, Michael S. Van Leesten Bridge and Gateway Center.

Perform in the Parks

Five local roller disco DJ groups were

commissioned for weekly performances at the Thursday and Friday Roller Disco Series.

Movement in the Parks at The Providence Rink at BNCC

- Roller Disco weekly (Thursday and Friday)
- Swerve Saturdays (monthly)
- Super Fun Activities Club – Adult Sports Programming 300 participants per week
- Recreation Centers Roller Skating field trips
- Fitness in the parks at various park locations

Wicked Walk – October Halloween Event

- 5000 + participants at the Michael S. Van Leesten Bridge
- Expanded to 12 doors and door artists or groups
- Partnership with Waterfire and 195 District Park



Fitness in the Parks

Fitness in the Parks (FITP) programming creates free, outdoor fitness opportunities for all ages and abilities, all year around. “Outside Every Day” is a mantra we strongly believe leads to a healthier self, a robust community and showcases the diversity of our greenspaces during all four seasons. In addition, we partner with indoor park facilities to provide continuity in fitness for those who prefer to exercise inside during the colder months.

We provide outdoor fitness centers for all ages and abilities at 12 of our city parks. We also offer a diverse menu of organized group classes to build community and promote health. Instructors for these classes often live near the parks where they teach and reflect the diversity of the surrounding communities.

- 2023 Fitness in the Parks (FITP) Programming offered a diverse menu of organized group classes:**
- Yoga at Roger Williams and India Point Parks.
 - Boot camp on the Michael S. Van Leesten Pedestrian Bridge and RWP Gateway Center.
 - Wildlife walks with the Urban Wildlife Education Center.
 - Zumba at the Temple to Music and Roger Williams Park Gateway Center.
 - Shape and Sculpt at the Temple to Music and RWP Gateway Center.
 - Tai Chi on the grounds of the Japanese Garden and RWP Gateway Center.
 - Walk with a Doc at various parks throughout the city.
 - Pup Adopt Trots at India Point Park.
 - Free kayak tours at the Downtown Boat Launch.

Structured Fitness Programming Geared towards kids with Eat Play Learn Ambassadors and Community Partners during summer’s community meals program included:

- Brown Women’s Soccer Team for skills and drills.
- Moses Brown LaCrosse Camp.
- Kids Cardio Yoga.
- Betty Boop Hula Hoop for classes and hoop making.
- Roger Williams Park Zoo mobile for meeting critters large and small.
- 15 Minute Field Trips for walks, talks and crafts created from elements found in our parks.
- Walk with a Cop for lunchtime walks and talks with local law enforcement.



Food & Play Access

PlayCorps
Through our partnerships with One Providence, SkillsRI and *Eat Play Learn*, we employed 33 college-bound high-school grads to work at 15 parks each day as PlayCorps Leaders. PlayCorps offers a combination of free and open play along with more traditional recreation opportunities. Free USDA community meal services are also provided to the youth. This program truly feeds bodies and minds!

Summer Meals
Eat Play Learn Ambassadors served free summer meals to over 70,000 children and youth. This year, we partnered with community libraries, nature conservancies, physical fitness instructors, performers and various other city partners to extend the reach of all things *Eat Play Learn*.

Some of the activities our Eat, Play, Learn program offered:

- Arts and crafts from found and recycled materials.
- Obstacle courses, musical instruments and forts.
- Self-portraits made from leaves, sticks, grass and pebbles.
- Story telling based on real or imaginary park adventures.



Walk with a Doc at RWP Carousel Village & Zoo.



BankNewport City Center Rink

The Providence Rink at BankNewport City Center had an exceptional year and produced some of most exciting programming in downtown.

Winter season admission tickets totaled just shy of 40,000 and many more visited the park in the colder months. The Providence Rink hosted 85 birthday parties, sold 534 units of merchandise and hosted two ice skating performances by professional skaters.

During the spring, summer and fall the rink is transformed into an outdoor roller disco. Patrons skated to music by some of the best local DJs. This included 40 live DJ performances and over 2100 skating admissions on Thursday, Friday nights and select Saturday nights. We also marked our fifth year partnering with the Super Fun Activities Club to offer Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday night adult sports leagues with over 300 weekly participants.





UPCOMING

THIS SPRING, SUMMER, & FALL

ROLLER HOCKEY
MARCH-APRIL

PUBLIC ROLLER SKATING
APRIL-MAY

ADULT SPORTS LEAGUE
MAY-OCTOBER

MOVIES AT THE RINK
MAY-OCTOBER

ROLLER DISCO
JUNE-OCTOBER



The Providence Rink at BankNewport City Center by the numbers:

Winter – Ice Skating

- **37,150** Admission
- **34,960** Skate Rentals
- **3,894** Group Sales
- **93** Birthday Parties
- **56** Season Passes
- **608** Units of Merchandise
- **4,987** Ice Bumper Car Tickets

Spring, Summer and Fall – Roller Skating

- **2,313** Roller Skating Tickets
- **1,778** Rentals
- **80** Units of Merchandise
- **101** Season Passes
- **10+** Recreation Center Group Visits

Spring, Summer and Fall – Movies at the Park

- **69** Paid Seats (additionally provided free general admission)

PUBLIC ROLLER SKATING IS BACK

THIS MAY IN DOWNTOWN PVD
EVERY THURSDAY AND FRIDAY 5PM - 10PM

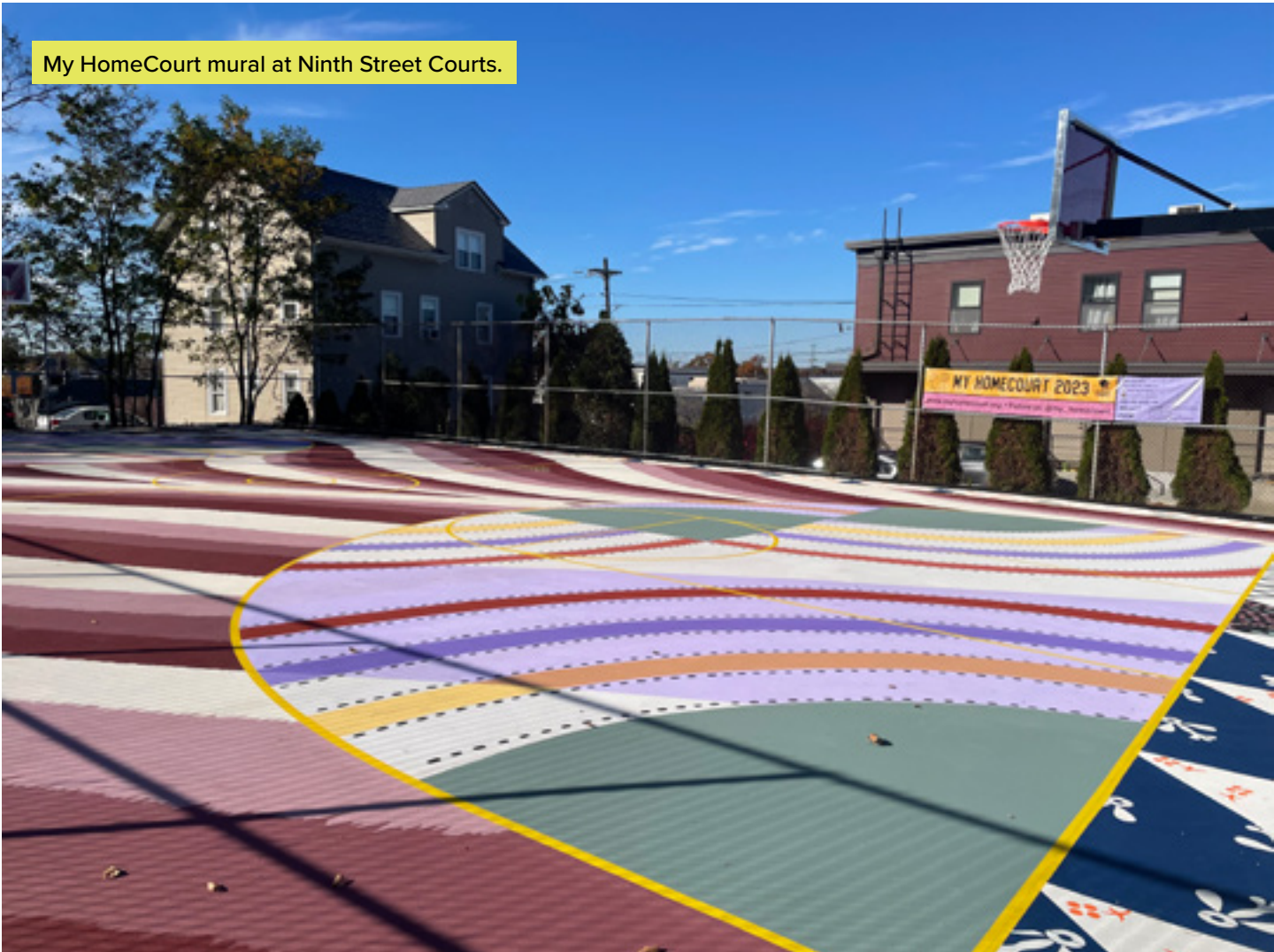
BUMPER CAR RESERVATIONS ARE NOW OPEN!

Artful Parks

We continue our commitment to public art. This year, we partnered with My HomeCourt and PC Galleries for the installation of Providence’s fifth My HomeCourt at Ninth Street Courts. This includes the Pickleball/tennis and basketball courts. The beautiful mural by world renowned artist, Sanford Biggers was painted by Elevated Thought and represents the rich cultural history of the Mt. Hope community. The artwork will be finished in the spring, but the courts are open and the mural on the basketball courts is complete. Additionally, we installed two Rado Kirov Sculptures in Partnership with the Avenue Concept in Biltmore Park and the Edward Mitchell Bannister Statue in Market Square with Providence Art Club.



Joslin waterpark.



My HomeCourt mural at Ninth Street Courts.



Above and right: Rado Kirov sculptures installed downtown.



Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership

In 2023, the Providence Parks Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership continued to connect children and their families to nature using city parks and neighborhood walks as outdoor learning areas. These connections are made through in-school programming with Providence students throughout the year, afterschool programs at schools and recreation centers, and through public events and programs hosted in partnership with RI organizations throughout the state. Each year, we host STEAM-focused programming to youth visitors in our city parks, allowing for immersive, hands-on, exploration experiences that strengthen connections between park visitors and the natural world. This year, we hosted multiple on-site trainings focused on environmental education and urban ecology, particularly with teachers in Providence. We also used Providence parks as learning hubs and models for teachers from all over the state. In addition to our annual summer, family-focused fishing events, we participated in Science Saturdays series alongside the National Parks Service, monthly bird walks throughout the city in partnership with the Audubon Society of RI, and supported efforts to increase the use of schoolyard habitats and public parks through formal learning with Providence Schools. Through our partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, we provided habitat improvements to the newly-instated Amtrak Station Park plantings that promote the health, safety, and wellbeing of both pollinator and migratory bird species that depend on native plants for sustenance and shelter. We are excited to report the sightings of some key Rhode Island wildlife species that have been utilizing the space this first year!

13 schools took walking field trips to local parks and over **180** participants took part in free bilingual fishing programs throughout the summer. Over **50** species of birds were seen by more than **115** participants during the free Providence Bird Walks.



North Burial Ground

The mission of North Burial Ground (NBG) is to memorialize the deceased, comfort the living, and serve as a historical destination for the community.

NBG’s burial practice continues to be robust. We increased our new land sales, both as-need and pre-need. We continue to primarily serve Providence residents, especially from Lower South Providence, the West Side, Manton, and the North End (over 50% of new land sales) and residents in other towns in Providence County.

This year we started the process to purchase a cloud-based cemetery management system, which will streamline our operations, allow constituents to search for relatives without office assistance and help us explore available space for new burials or cremation lots.

We continue to create an exciting, diverse programming initiative, bringing new people to the cemetery to enjoy everything North Burial Ground has to offer.



Mausoleum Hill Sessions & Market.

North Burial Ground highlights including infrastructure upgrades and burial program:

- Opening Rainwater & Main, with plans to create a new area for burials along a tree-lined space and fall-planted spring flowering bulbs.
- Completing Locust Grove Cemetery improvements.
- Opening Sycamore & Lily, first dedicated cremation burial section at NBG with 22 cremation family lots; with 3 sold to date.
- Installed a Gate Counter: approximately 8,000 vehicles enter NBG per month including funeral processions and Parks employees.

North Burial Ground by the numbers:

- **220** Burials
- **23** Cremations
- **111** Total Lots Sold
 - **60%** Active Burials
 - **20%** Pre-Need

North Burial Ground Community Engagement and Program Highlights:

- **140** Genealogy Requests via the form field on the website.
- **52** programs with **1,550** participants.
- **Most popular:** Sunday 1899, Mausoleum Hill Sessions, Halloween Ghost Tour, and Día de Los Muertos all with over **100** participants and the Moth Week.
- **Recurring, popular programs:** Death Café and NBG Reads Book Club, Moon hikes with the RWP Museum of Natural History and Planetarium.
- **\$7,000.00** in Gross Sales for Ticketed Events and Merchandise.
- **Community Partnerships:** Brown University-Haffenreffer Museum, MET School, Rhode Island Latino Arts, Rhode Island Black Storytellers, Imagining America Conference (AS220 & ACT), Brown University Dept. of Earth Sciences, Knights of Columbus, RI DAR, Sons of Union Veterans, Elmcrest Films, Mosshassuck Critters, US Postal Inspectors, Le Regiment Bourbonnais, RISD Nature Lab, Armenian Martyr’s Memorial Committee, Rhode Island Historical Cemeteries Commission, New England Cemetery Association, RI Cemetery Association, Preserve RI, Rhode Island Historical Society.

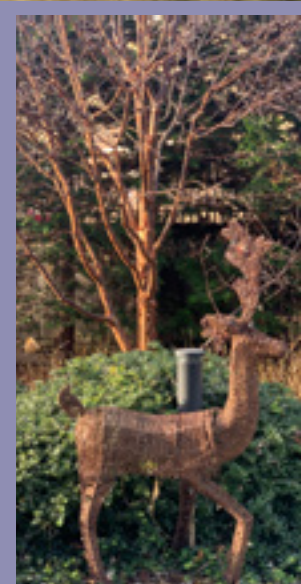
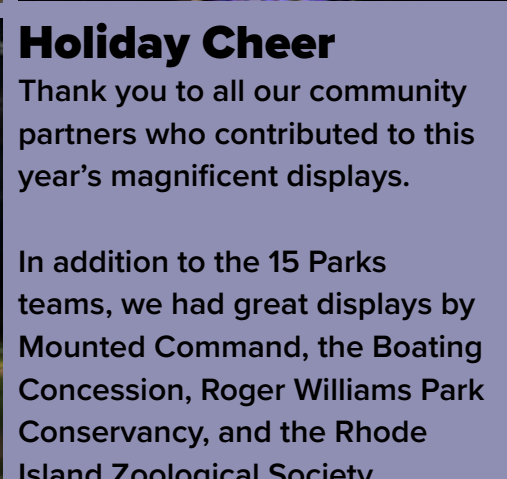
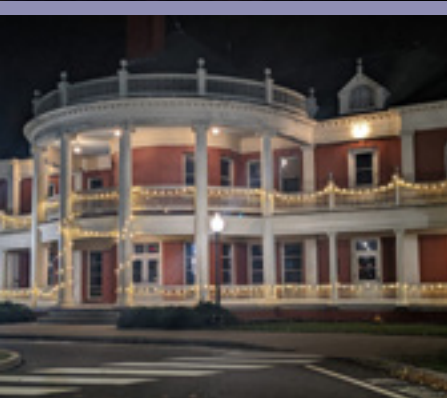
Rhode Island Historical Society Tour.



Ghost Tour.



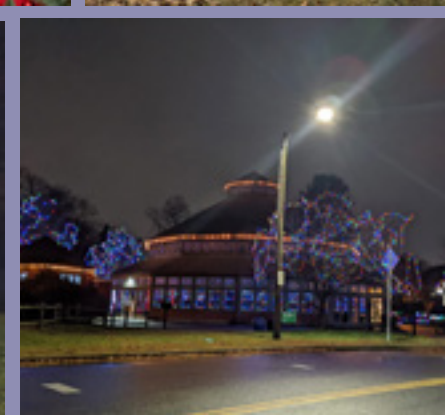
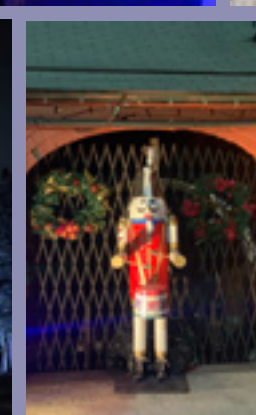
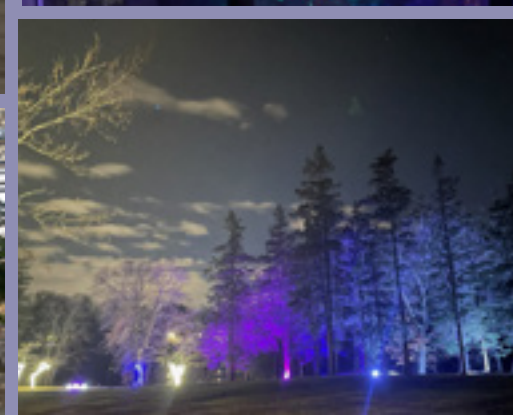
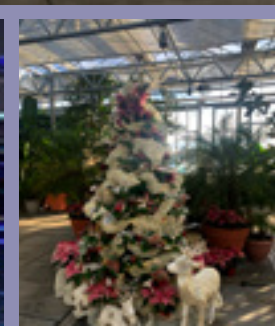
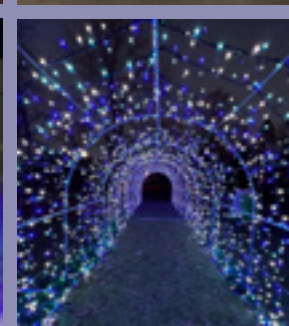
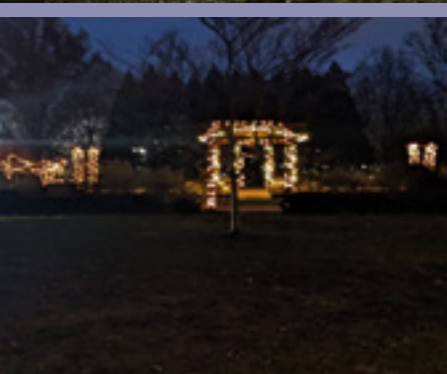
Día de Muertos.



Holiday Cheer

Thank you to all our community partners who contributed to this year's magnificent displays.

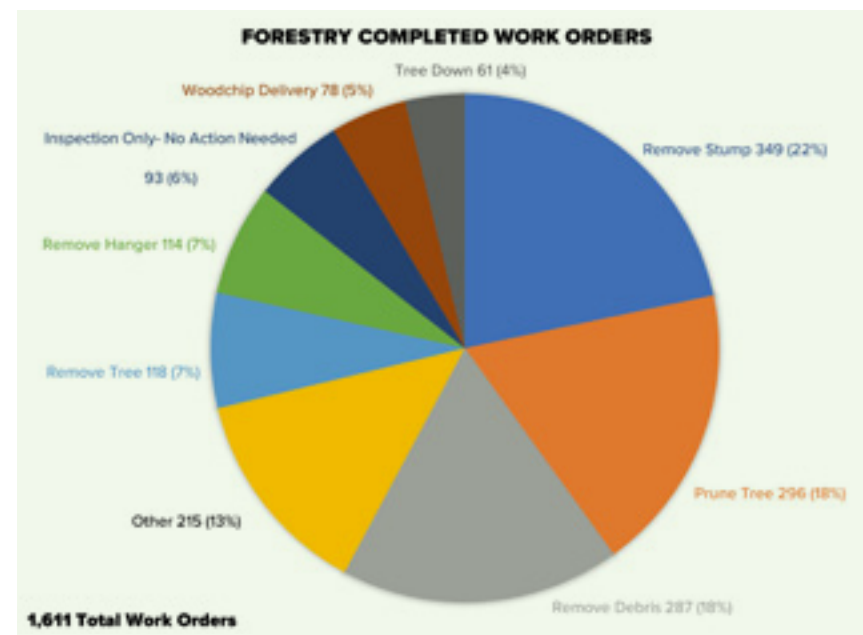
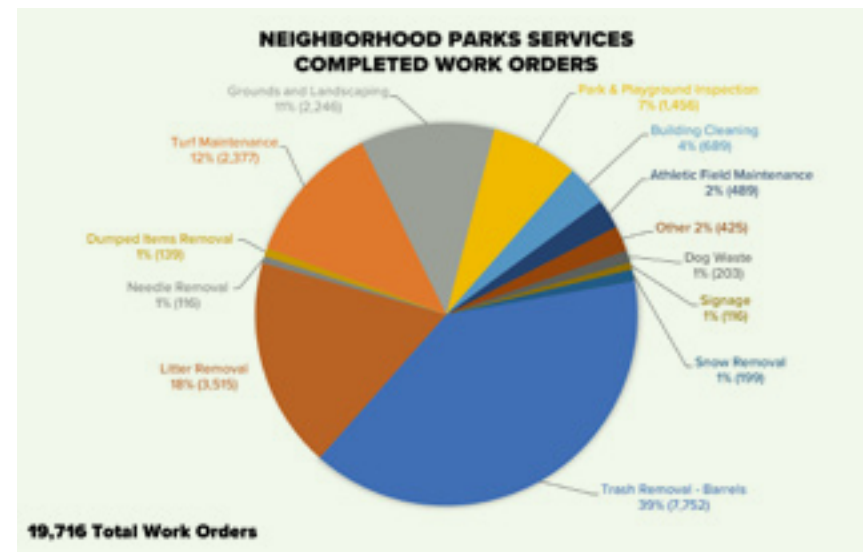
In addition to the 15 Parks teams, we had great displays by Mounted Command, the Boating Concession, Roger Williams Park Conservancy, and the Rhode Island Zoological Society.



INFORMATION & ACCESS

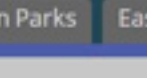
At Parks, engaging the public and improving access are core values – and that includes access to information. In 2023, we updated each of our Park Profiles to highlight new amenities, connect users to community and athletic groups, and provide contextual information from a historical perspective to the present day. The Parks GIS Hub which hosts these “Story Maps” was expanded to include planned improvement projects in all their various stages from concept to construction, encouraging public dialogue and participation whilst while building pride in Providence. In the coming year, we will completely revamp our website and correct Google Maps locations, as well as build face-to-face connections through pop-up exhibits, events, and community design meetings.

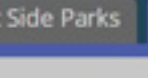
Operationally, Asset Essentials (AE) continued to be a conduit for managing and maintaining the Parks Department's extensive portfolio of assets and facilities. As Parks undertook the second phase of this system's implementation, more in-depth asset-level GIS data was collected and utilized including manufacturer, model, replacement cost, and expected lifespan of significant assets – from playground equipment to landscaping machinery. Increased focus on building preventative maintenance schedules has streamlined the work order life cycle for repetitive, event-based, and season-dependent tasks. Adding checklists, materials lists, and labor estimates to work orders are a few examples of how Parks continued to lead all City departments in building efficient operational systems, laying the groundwork that will inform truly data-driven decision making.

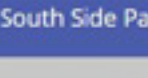


City of Providence: Parks Department
City of Providence, Mayor Brett P. Smiley

Downtown Parks
East Side Parks
South Side Parks
West End Parks
North End Parks

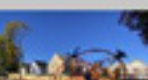

2 Annie Morris Todd


4 Arthur & Ruby Lawrence Park


5 Baxter Street Park


11 Daisy Unicef Park

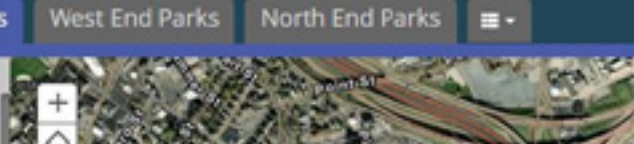

14 Harriet and Taylor Park


15 Jacqueline M. Diamante Memorial Park


17 Jennifer Rivera Memorial Park


22 Mattie Smith Tot Lot


25 Peace & Plenty Park



The screenshot displays a web-based GIS application. The background is an aerial map of the George J West Waterpark area, with various features labeled such as 'George J West Waterpark Building', 'George J West Water Tower', and 'George J West Playground Area'. A yellow polygon highlights a specific area within the playground. A blue pop-up window titled '(1 of 2)' is overlaid on the right side of the map, displaying detailed information for a selected object.

(1 of 2)	
OBJECTID	4810
Type	Swings
Material 1	Metal
Material 2	Plastic
Condition	Feature is in good condition with some visible w
Notes	8' Single Post 2 Bucket Seats
Age	
Appropriateness	2-5
Installation Date	1/23/1998
Manufacturer	Playworld
Model Number	ZZXX0818
ID	Blue
Life Expectancy	30
GlobalID	(F2FBC8BB-56AF-4E95-825F-C0E9E1E6B925)
Name	George J West Baby Swings

Information & Access Highlights:

- **103** Park Profiles updated – Story Maps
- **39** Parks audited to update Playground Equipment and other Asset Details
- **1,259** Preventative Maintenance Schedules built to date in Asset Essentials
- Key Improvements to Forestry work order process
- Gigatrak Inventory control software – updated from **800** products to **1,795**

FUND DEVELOPMENT & REVENUE

AWARDS

- **\$75,000** RIDEM Dock Grant for Design and Engineering for India Point Park Mooring Dock
- **\$75,000** My HomeCourt for Ninth Street Courts
- **\$50,000** Helen Walker Raleigh Trust grant for Block Pruning Program match
- **\$55,000** USFWS Grant for Urban Wildlife Partnership through P3
- **\$25,000** NASA Space Grant for Museum of Natural History
- **\$20,000** For Paul Grande Park Filming
- **\$6,270** Lottie Ruth Gilmore-Memorial Fund for Brassil Park
- **\$6,602** Haffenreffer Family Fund for Brassil Park
- **\$5,000** Haffenreffer Family Fund for Paterson Park

EVENTS & PERMITS

- **88** total events at Roger Williams Park Casino **\$113,792.37** net revenue
 - 60 permits for weddings, private events, and non-profits
 - 28 permits with fees waived
- **240 total** Small Park Permits issued **\$53,806.96** net revenue
 - 135 permits with fees waived
 - 105 permits with fees paid
- **76 total** Special Events Permits issued **\$35,250** net revenue
- **105 total** events at the RWP Botanical Center **\$209,026.46** net revenue
 - 96 permits for weddings, private events, and non-profits
 - 9 permits with fees waived

Fiscal Management

The Fiscal Office develops, maintains and tracks the Parks Department Budget, which in 2023 totaled \$16,784,120 in operating expenses. The office also manages payroll and Parks hiring with the assistance of the Payroll Personnel Assistant and Clerk.

This year we focused on revamping our requisition, purchase order and payment processes. These processes were restructured so that the fiscal office handles the requesting, tracking and payment of all Parks Department money, while working closely with Neighborhood Parks Services to manage their particularly large budget.

We also streamlined our hiring process by posting and tracking all vacancies and new work opportunities. These updated systems allow division directors to focus on their functions and create a stronger relationship between the Fiscal Advisor’s office and our divisions.

In the coming year, we’re looking forward to further improving the capacity and efficiency of our fiscal functions, including the parks event planning processes, as well as expanding our blanket contracts to make it easier for each division to obtain the parts, services and materials they need to keep our parks looking and performing great!



Fiscal Management by the numbers:

- **27** Parks/Zoo positions posted resulting in 31 vacancies filled
- **375** requisitions processed over **5** general fund divisions out of **13** revolving fund divisions
- **\$953,239** procured for the General Fund

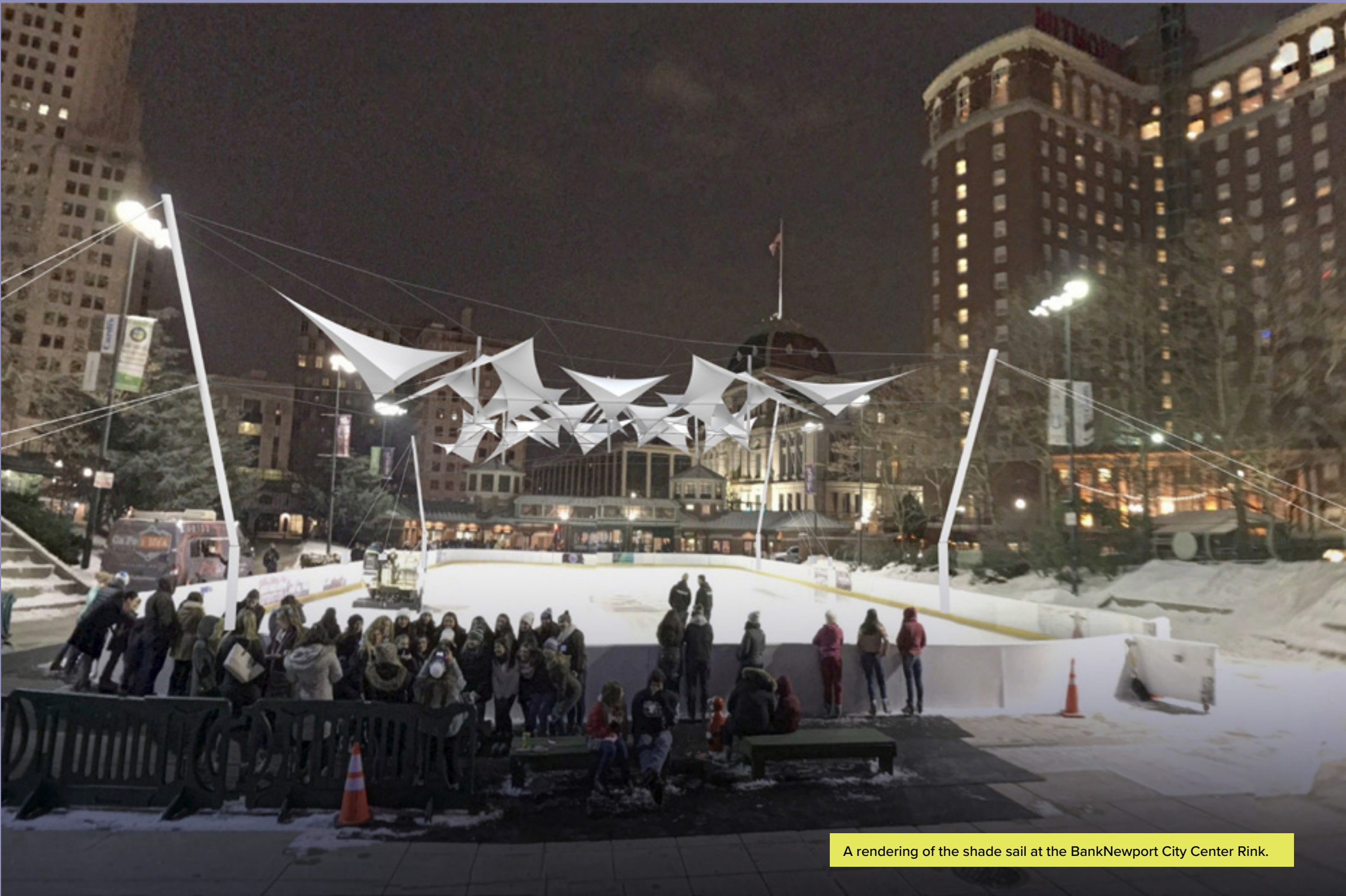
LOOKING AHEAD

The Parks Department enters 2024 with an amazing team of support staff, operations specialists, design and systems professionals, and program and facilities managers who are committed to making amazing and sustainable public spaces and programs that welcome all.

We look forward to completing some projects begun in 2023 that experienced unavoidable delays and starting some new ones that our design team professionals are preparing for construction.

On the west and north sides, these projects include Neutaconkanut ADA Accessible playground, Paul Grande Park, and General Street playground and waterpark. The East Side will benefit from some projects that have been long in the works, including major improvements at Brassil Park, Paterson Park, Lippitt Park, Prospect Terrace, Billy Taylor Park, and India Point Park. We are also very excited about the new shade sail for The Providence Rink at BankNewport City Center, and big changes to Waterplace Park that include a permanent stage. The Roger Williams Park renaissance will continue and include decorative lighting and new event space for the Museum of Natural History and Planetarium, repairs to the Casino's back porch, and phase two of the restoration of the Bandstand. The new Botanical Center event tent will allow for expanded programs and events. We are also looking forward to continuing to expand events and welcoming visitors from near and far at the Gateway Center. In terms of operational improvements, both our forestry and events divisions are undergoing an audit to inform best practices and efficiencies.

We are confident that all the new training, technical assistance, data collection, systems, partnerships, and innovations in which we have invested, will ensure that 2024 is a great year for all who work in, relax in, play in, or explore our parks! We are excited to work with Mayor Brett Smiley and his administrative team, as well as some new Park Commissioners and City Councilors. The new year will surely bring opportunities and challenges and we will make the best of these to create and maintain spectacular parks, venues, and programs.



A rendering of the shade sail at the BankNewport City Center Rink.

