



# *City of Atlanta's Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation*

2013–2017

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# Greetings



December 13, 2013

## *I am proud to present the City of Atlanta's Department of Parks and Recreation's (DPR) 2013–2017 Strategic Plan.*

In these pages, the opportunity to leverage parks and recreation centers as central elements in the city's larger policy objectives of community building, economic development, and youth development comes to life.

Partnerships have the power to create and maintain urban parks that build community and make our cities sustainable and vibrant. Innovative partnerships within city departments and public-private partnerships both play a key role. In the last three years, a partnership with the Department of Watershed Management has allowed us to add more than 400 acres of green space. Cooperation with Invest Atlanta, Atlanta Public Schools, the Atlanta Housing Authority and others can unlock hundreds of more acres.

The transformation of the city's recreation centers, made possible by public-private partnerships, is one of the top successes of my first term. For far too long, the doors of the city's recreation centers were closed. With that, the athletic and educational activities, as well as the character building opportunities I thrived in as a child, were being denied to the youth of today.

During my first campaign for mayor of Atlanta, I vowed to turn abandoned neighborhood recreation centers into safe havens for children and entire communities. I promised to form partnerships with organizations that shared my vision of giving kids an opportunity to be great. Eleven months after I was elected Mayor, I kept my promise and re-opened all 33 of Atlanta's recreation centers. The next step was transforming them into Centers of Hope, which meant converting them to state-of-the-art, comprehensive learning centers with more in-depth programming, improved facilities, and specially trained staff.

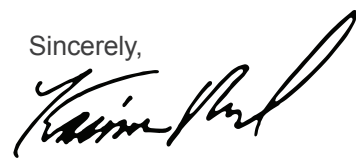
Dedicated corporate partners including Coca-Cola, Turner Broadcasting, Wells Fargo, and US Micro Corp have contributed more than \$5 million towards helping to transform abandoned recreation facilities into Centers of Hope. Today, there are 10 Center of Hope sites. The Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta is the featured program partner at four of the Centers of Hope sites. All 10 Centers provide enhanced youth development programs to over 1000 children every week.

The Department of Parks and Recreation has also completed major transformations in City parks and other recreation centers including:

- a new pool at John A. White Park
- new artificial turf field at Ben Hill Recreation Center.
- the city's first disc golf course at Perkerson Park
- a renovated McGhee Tennis Center
- new playgrounds at Spink Collins, Esther Peachy-Lefever, Tullwater, Benteen Tuscon, Wilson Mill and Springdale parks

I am also proud to announce that as part of an effort to improve customer service for Atlanta residents, the Department launched iPARCS (internet parks, arts & recreation customer service), its first online registration and reservation portal.

I would like to commend Commissioner George Dusenbury for his leadership and all of the department's employees for their diligence and commitment to improving the quality of life for the citizens of Atlanta. I encourage residents, business leaders and important stakeholders to read DPR's 2013–2017 Strategic Plan, which reflects the Department's vision to make Atlanta the city of choice through exceptional spaces and memorable experiences.

Sincerely,  
  
**Kasim Reed**

**Kasim Reed**  
Mayor

**Michael Geisler**  
Interim Chief Operating Officer

**George A. Dusenbury**  
Commissioner, Department of Parks and Recreation

**Office of Parks**

**Doug Voss**  
Director

**Office of Park Design**

**Paul Taylor**  
Director

**Office of Recreation**

**Annika Holder**  
Executive Director

**Boisfeuillet Jones**  
*Atlanta Civic Center*

**Ann Marie Moraitakis**  
Director

**Communications**

**Jennifer Ogunsola**  
Communications Manager

**Partners**



MAYOR'S OFFICE,  
CHIEF SERVICE OFFICER



MAYOR'S OFFICE OF  
CULTURAL AFFAIRS



**Department of Parks and Recreation**

233 Peachtree St. NE | Harris Tower Suite 1700 | Atlanta, Georgia 30303

**Customer Service Call Center**

Call: 404-546-6788 or Email: [parkscustomerservice@atlantaga.gov](mailto:parkscustomerservice@atlantaga.gov)

Nights, weekends and holidays call 911 to report trees down in the street  
Monday through Friday: 7:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Customer Service representatives are available to help with park maintenance requests and concerns, right of way (public), park tree concerns, reservation and programming questions, and your comments or suggestions.

**Greetings**

December 13, 2013



***Under Mayor Kasim Reed's leadership, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is committed to building strong communities and a vibrant economy by providing safe and exceptional parks, facilities and programs through effective leadership, collaboration and innovative thinking.***

The Department plays an integral role in fostering, supporting and promoting high quality recreational, educational and cultural experiences for our residents and visitors.

In his first year in office, Mayor Kasim Reed fulfilled his campaign promise to re-open all 33 of Atlanta's recreation centers and turn them into safe havens where the city's young people could receive academic enrichment, engage in physical fitness activities and learn character-building skills. The re-opening of the recreation centers was the first step; the next step encompassed transforming them into Centers of Hope with more in-depth programming, improved facilities, and specially trained staff.

In 2012, the city launched Centers of Hope pilot programs at the Thomasville and Adamsville recreation centers. This fall, Mayor Kasim Reed took his vision for the Centers of Hope even further with the expansion of the program to a total of 10 recreation centers, which were identified based on spatial, geographic and demographic filtering criteria. More than 90 percent of young people in the city live within 2.5 miles of a Center of Hope or the Chastain Arts Center.

The recent transformation of the Atlanta's arts and culture scene is also creating a real boon to the city's convention and tourism industry and the physical make-up of our neighborhoods.

And all of our centers and art can be found within some of the nation's most dynamic and innovative public spaces—including the Atlanta BeltLine.

DPR's 2013–2017 Strategic Plan details how we will enhance our capacity to impact quality of life, promote economic development, strengthen youth development, and improve public health through exceptional spaces and memorable experiences.

**George Dusenbury**  
Commissioner  
Department of Parks and Recreation

## Executive Summary

On behalf of the dedicated and hard-working staff of the Department of Parks and Recreation, we are proud to present our 2013–2017 Strategic Plan.

Over the past year and a half, our strategic planning committee—consisting of the Commissioner, Directors and other staff—conducted a departmental assessment, researched national best practices, surveyed department personnel, and incorporated input from Council, Mayor Kasim Reed’s Administration and Atlanta’s residents. The result is a methodically researched plan that will enhance the Department’s capacity to impact quality of life, promote economic development, strengthen youth development, improve public health and make Atlanta the city of choice for residents and visitors.

DPR’s 2013–2017 Strategic Plan builds upon the 2008–2011 Strategic Plan, which set the groundwork for DPR becoming one of the largest parks departments accredited by The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). Our mission, vision, core values and seven strategies are aligned with Mayor Kasim Reed’s priorities for the City of Atlanta: Youth Development, Public Safety, Financial Health, Economic Growth and Promoting a Culture of Excellence.

### Vision

*To make Atlanta the city of choice through exceptional spaces and memorable experiences.*

### Mission

*We are committed to building strong communities and a vibrant economy by providing safe and exceptional parks, facilities and programs through effective leadership, collaboration and innovative thinking.*

## Core Values

### Community-Oriented

We recognize the value and needs of each community.

### Customer Service-Focused

We are courteous, helpful, knowledgeable, honest, and prompt in responding to the needs and desires of the customers that we serve.

### Safety Conscious

We focus on creating a safe environment for our customers, constituents, and employees.

### Collaborative

We effectively communicate and work together in a respectful and professional manner, both internally and externally, for the good of the community and our stakeholders.

### Professional

We are competent, qualified, and polished, conducting ourselves with a sense of duty, responsibility and the highest level of commitment in all our efforts as competent and qualified professionals.

### Engaged

We possess the diligence, dedication and drive to excel and carry out our mission.

## Strategies

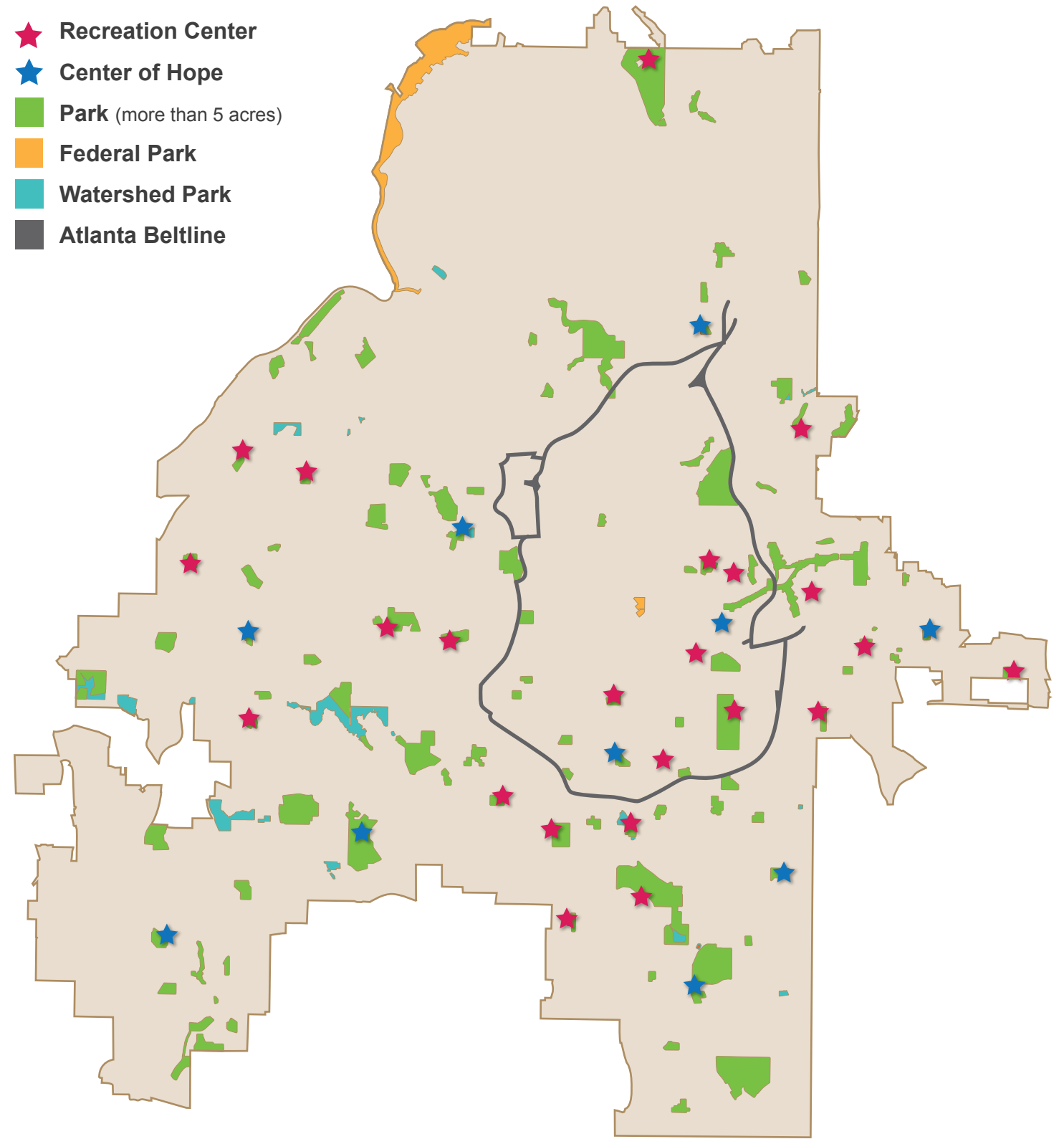
DPR has identified seven strategies for pursuing our mission. Over the next five years, we will:

-  **Strategy 1** Deliver exceptional spaces and diverse experiences
-  **Strategy 2** Mandate safety and security in all operations
-  **Strategy 3** Create a culture of innovation
-  **Strategy 4** Enhance our organizational capacity
-  **Strategy 5** Expand our impact through collaboration
-  **Strategy 6** Plan and build a marketing support system
-  **Strategy 7** Communicate effectively



## Department of Parks and Recreation's Assets

- ★ Recreation Center
- ★ Center of Hope
- Park (more than 5 acres)
- Federal Park
- Watershed Park
- Atlanta Beltline





## Strategy 1 Deliver exceptional spaces and diverse experiences

***DPR will provide parks, facilities and programs that are safe, accessible, attractive, and exceed the expectations of our customers.***

### Background

Outstanding parks, facilities and programs help a City transition from good to great. Chicago's Millennium Park, with its world-class arts and cultural facilities, has generated billions in investment and attracted millions of visitors since it opened in 2004. New York's Central Park, with its zoo, Shakespeare Theater and diverse recreational facilities, serves as Manhattan's backyard while welcoming millions of visitors each year. The development of similar spaces and experiences in Atlanta are essential to making our city the city of choice. The City of Atlanta and its partners have recently added new and fully renovated parks and trails to its inventory including parks associated with the Atlanta Beltline. Many of Atlanta's parks are heavily used on almost a year-round basis. The addition of new parks and amenities will challenge the department to continue to maintain and improve maintenance levels at parks that see a high volume of use.

### Current State Assessment

While Atlanta has seen quantifiable improvement in recent years, its park, recreation and cultural facilities continue to need consistent, significant investments. In a recent ParkScore analysis by the Trust for Public Land, Atlanta ranked 26th of 40 cities in regard to the quantity and accessibility of its park system (though its park access ranked above average). The Atlanta Civic Center is 47 years old and in desperate need of renovation, as is the Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Museum. More than half of our recreation centers are past life cycle, and the City has not built a new recreation center since 2003. Mayor Reed recently doubled grants-for-arts funding, and the Atlanta Jazz Festival returned to Piedmont Park for a three-day festival for the first time since 2007.

The Department has made significant investments in youth programming for children over the past few years. In 2010, the Office of Cultural Affairs launched its Culture Clubs, focusing on academics, character and arts and culture. The Office of Recreation partnered with the Administration to launch two Centers of Hope pilot projects in conjunction with the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA. The Office of Recreation brought in certified teachers to support the after school program, which also integrated the Study Island online tutorial program. In 2012, the Office of Recreation launched four Freedom School pilot sites and updated its Camp Best Friends curriculum to include integrated reading. In addition, the University of Georgia's Fanning Institute conducted an assessment of Camp Best Friends.

While these initiatives have strengthened the Department's youth development efforts, the capacity of our programs can be greatly expanded both in quantity and quality. There is a great need to serve in the Out of School Time (OST) space to bridge the achievement gap, reduce dropout rates and make sure that our youth are well prepared to enter higher education and the workforce. We also need to evaluate the specific needs of each community we serve and make sure we are addressing the needs of every demographic segment.

### Recommendations & Impact

The Department will need to develop and implement facilities and programming plans if it is to meet the goal of delivering exceptional spaces and diverse experiences. The Office of Park Design will lead the development of a Facilities Provision Plan for the entire Department. Building upon Project Greenspace (2009), the Plan will define the number, type and distribution of facilities and the necessary parkland needed to ensure all residents have access to parks, events and programs. DPR has identified access within a half mile walking distance to parkland, trails or greenways, as a high priority and will be developing a plan and budget for a parkland acquisition program for bringing half mile access to the 37% of Atlanta residents who currently do not enjoy it.

The Department also will complete a strategic assessment of both the Atlanta Civic Center and the Cyclorama in terms of physical structures and infrastructure as well as reviewing business models to ensure their long term viability in the community. The Office of Cultural Affairs will continue to work internally with artists, conservators and with other DPR division to ensure the proper maintenance and presentation of public art currently valued at over \$22 million dollars.

The Department will support the facilities plan by leveraging its asset management system, Hansen, to improve preventative maintenance and address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) concerns that limit accessibility for disabled individuals.

The Office of Parks will provide a park system that is well managed and maintained to be a source of pride for the community, stakeholders and the employees of the City of Atlanta. This will be accomplished through the creation of annual goals and objectives specific to the division. Some of these goals and objectives include annual assessment and improvements to operational plans, increasing appropriate amenities and managing parkland using best-in-class standards to maximize customer enjoyment.

The Office of Recreation, in conjunction with the Office of Cultural Affairs, will partner with the Chief Service Officer to plan, develop and implement a citywide program for the Centers of Hope. This plan then will be incorporated into a broader comprehensive program plan for the Department. The program plan will include guidelines, minimum standards and a monitoring system for quality programming and service delivery. In order to provide best-in-class afterschool programs, we need to implement a comprehensive, cohesive after-school plan based on a rigorous outcomes-based measurement.

### Delivering exceptional spaces and diverse experiences will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:

1. **Youth Development**—Expanding the Centers of Hope initiative to reach more of the city's children is the centerpiece of Mayor Reed's youth development initiative.
2. **Public Safety**—Increasing access and providing diverse programming to youth and teens will engage them in productive activities and lessen the number of children who become involved in criminal activity. Well-designed and well-used facilities will increase safety at those sites
3. **Economic Growth**—Exceptional spaces and diverse experiences will help make Atlanta the city of choice, attracting businesses, residents and visitors.
4. **Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Excellent cities have innovative parks, facilities and programs that exceed expectations.
5. **Financial Health**—Improved programming will increase revenue to the city; an effective asset management effort—emphasizing preventative maintenance—will reduce departmental costs in the long-term.

*Chart continued on next page.*





Strategic Action Items	Outcomes	Operational Steps
Develop a Facilities Provision Plan (parks, buildings, etc.) for the entire Department informed by project Greenspace, a Comprehensive Program Plan, safety and programmatic needs		A. Identify gaps and a plan for future facilities based on a robust, analytical approach that incorporates the needs of the community
		B. Ensure access to parks, event and program locations through adequate distribution, planning best practices and strategic acquisitions
Grow the parkland inventory according to goals set in the Greenspace Plan.	Establish a comprehensive asset management and capital investment plan to ensure that we provide world class, accessible facilities for our customers	
Develop and maintain an Asset Management System.		A. Include a comprehensive inventory
		B. Incorporate a plan for preventative maintenance, life cycle replacement, etc.
		C. Develop a plan to bring current facilities, and parks to an acceptable safety and quality level
Bring facilities, programming, policies, and staff into ADA compliance		A. Develop more ADA policy-related and life skill-related training for Directors, managers and staff
	B. Implement required ADA renovations at facilities and parks	
Partner with Chief Services Officer to plan, develop and implement a citywide program for the Centers of Hope	Provide world class programming and services to our customers that adequately meets the needs of all segments of the population	A. Conduct a comprehensive inventory and analysis of DPR's children's and youth program offerings, etc., identifying gaps and a plan for programs based on a robust, analytical approach that determines the needs of the community and what meets the desired goals.
		B. Develop guidelines, minimum standards and a monitoring system for quality programming and service delivery
		C. Strengthen public-private partnerships for delivering programs that benefit the youth in our community
Develop and implement a Comprehensive Program Plan		A. Conduct a comprehensive inventory and analysis of DPR's program offerings
		B. Identify core competencies and purpose
		C. Identify gaps and a plan for programs and events based on a robust, analytical approach
		D. Develop guidelines, minimum standards and a monitoring system for quality programming and service delivery
		E. Ensure socio-economic factors (such as ethnicity, age and income level) are considered in event and program planning

Priority	Primary Functions Assigned	Estimated 5 Year Total	Notes
Critical	Park Planner, Director of Park Design	\$250,000,000	Consultant Costs (Park Improvement Fund)
Routine	Park Planner	-	Ongoing activity, Park Access analysis complete
Important	Park Design Director	\$225,000,000	Includes Acquisition, Cleanup and Staffing Costs for team of up to four; Addresses only park access, not facilities or total acres
Important	Data Analyst	\$20,000	Extra help or student assistance for field truthing
Important	Parks & Park Design Directors	\$50,000	Extra help or student assistance for field truthing; Consultant Cost to assist with Hansen
Critical	Parks & Park Design Directors	\$35,000	Extra help or student assistance for field truthing; Consultant Cost to assist with Hansen
Vital	Program Management Officer (PMO)	\$25,000	Consultant Cost, Supplies,
Critical	Park Design Director	\$6,500,000	CDBG funding
Vital	PMO	\$50,000	Centers of Hope implementation plan presented to COO
Routine	Director Recreation	-	
Routine	Director Recreation (w/ Chief Service Officer) PMO	-	Issuing programming RFP; negotiating out of school time service delivery with single partner
Vital	PMO	\$100,000	Consultant Costs—staff costs see Item C
Critical	PMO		Staff costs—see Item C
Critical		\$395,000	Consultant Costs, Business Planner staff costs
Routine	PMO	\$15,000	Travel and misc expenses
Routine	PMO	\$25,000	Consultant Costs for report checking on stats to evaluate success of plan
		<b>TOTAL \$22,680,000</b>	



## Strategy 2 Mandate safety and security in all operations

**DPR will ensure that system-wide safety and security are driving factors in all departmental actions and activities.**

### Background

The Department of Parks and Recreation has hundreds of parks and facilities open to the general public on a daily basis. The Department measures its success largely by the number of people who enroll in our programs and visit our sites. We are the only City of Atlanta Department whose mission is to invite residents and visitors into our facilities.

Providing DPR's customers a safe and secure environment is the foundation for our facilities, programs and services. Whether a cultural event, a recreation program, a facility or a park, residents simply will not come if they are overly concerned about their safety or the safety of their children.

### Current State Assessment

Currently half of the City's recreation centers are more than 40 years old (average life cycle), and all but eight will exceed life cycle by the end of this decade. Over the past two years, the Department has invested more than \$5 million upgrading facilities and investing in cameras, alarms and other security features. By the end of 2012, all centers had upgraded their security systems, including fire and door alarms. The Department continues to make additional investments in cameras.

In 2012, DPR rolled out a "park patrol," a pilot program through which we funded four off-duty APD officers to provide an important security presence in our parks and at our facilities. While the pilot program was an important step in enforcing park rules and making residents feel safe at our facilities, the four officers are spread thin over our 33 recreation centers, 5 tennis centers, 13 outdoor pools and the numerous other facilities scattered over nearly four thousand acres of parkland at more than 370 sites.

Finally, the Department has made a significant investment in creating a culture of safety within the organization. In 2011, DPR hired a safety and training officer, filling a role that has been empty since 2009 due to budget cuts. As of early 2012, the safety and training officer instituted a safety training program for field personnel in the Office of Parks and regular tailgate safety meeting among crews.

Since early 2012, the Offices of Recreation and Cultural Affairs have been working with a consultant to update standard operating procedures at all of their facilities. In conjunction with the Chief Operating Officer, the Department rolled out a safety initiative focusing on enhanced child supervision and providing secure facilities. The department conducts monthly safety inspections of all facilities.

### Recommendations & Impact

DPR will develop and implement a safety and security plan for all facilities and programs, incorporating the plan into standard operating procedures and employee evaluation tools. Operationally, we will incorporate safety and security into orientation, performance management, training, and certification. We will make physical investments in our facilities and sites to enhance the physical environment and incorporate cameras, enhanced alarms and other technology that promote safety. DPR will establish a dedicated team that monitors and promotes safety in all operations. Finally, we will work with the Atlanta Police Department and the Office of the Mayor to establish a dedicated, system-wide security presence.

**Enhancing safety and security will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:**

- Youth Development**—Ensuring safe and secure environments will increase the number of parents who entrust their children to our care.
- Public Safety**—Ensuring safe and secure operations and facilities is fundamental to public safety.
- Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Excellence cannot exist without a foundation of safety.
- Financial Health**—Safe and secure facilities will reduce accidents and incidents of vandalism, lowering operational costs.

Strategic Action Items														
Develop a plan for safety and security for facilities and programs	Internalize a culture of safety				Review and enhance facility safety and security			Establish structure and processes to promote safety in operations			Establish a dedicated system-wide security presence			
Outcomes														
Establish a safe and secure environment at all DPR facilities for our customers to engage in activities; minimize, if not eliminate, all safety and security related incidents														
Operational Steps														
A. Create plan for daily, weekly, monthly and annual metrics	A. Incorporate safety and security in performance management	B. Integrate safety and security into new employee orientation and mandatory annual training	C. Train and maintain staff certifications, e.g. CPR, AED use	D. Continue regularly scheduled safety drills in collaboration with other professional agencies (AFRD, APD etc)	A. Incorporate safety and security in any renovations	B. Develop a technology infrastructure plan to enhance safety and security (cameras, E911, exit alarms etc)	C. Change the physical environment according to CPTED Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) principles	A. Establish a dedicated team that implements and monitors all aspects of safety and security	B. Develop a safety and security audit mechanism	C. Integrate safety into program design and implementation	A. Explore opportunities with Public Safety	B. Explore opportunities with private industry	C. Engage the community in employing safety and security measures	
Priority														
Vital	Critical	Critical	Routine	Routine	Important	Important	Important	Vital	Important	Important	Critical	Important	Important	
Primary Functions Assigned														
Directors, Safety Officer, Principle	HR Liaison, Directors	HR Liaison, Rec. Program Supervisors	Safety Officer, Principle	Safety Officer, Principle	Facilities Administrator, Director, Safety Officer	Safety Officer	Directors	Safety Officer	Safety Officer(s)	Programmers, Directors, Safety Officer	Directors, Commissioner	Commissioners, Directors	Directors	
Estimated 5 Year Total														
\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$38,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$650,000	\$1,040,000	\$525,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$120,000	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$2,373,000
Notes														
Building upon existing efforts		Working with HR to overhaul department-specific orientation	Y1: \$15 x 350 staff Y3: 2 x \$1,500 training			Y1: Consultant Y2-Y5 sites @ \$30k each; Funded thru CoH trust fund	Y1: consultant, 10 sites @ \$2k Y2: 10 sites @ \$50k Y3: 10 sites @ \$2K Y4: 10 sites @ \$50k	Y1: seasonal Y2: New F/T + 60k seasonal w/ benefits	Audit mechanism exists and will be reviewed annually	Ongoing	Y1: OT APD pilot program BeltLine unit excludes centers			





### Strategy 3 Create a culture of innovation

**DPR will foster a work environment that engages and motivates both employees and stakeholders to help develop innovative solutions.**

#### Background

The Department of Parks and Recreation oversees an incredibly diverse array of facilities, events and properties. Within our jurisdiction, there are more than 350 parks, 33 recreation and cultural centers, 13 outdoor pools, 5 tennis centers, 6 golf courses, 4 natatoriums, dozens of public art pieces, the Atlanta Civic Center, the Atlanta Cyclorama and Civil War Museum and the Chastain Arts Center and Gallery. Our facilities, programs and events are as diverse as the communities that we serve, and within that diversity is tremendous opportunity to be more efficient, more effective and more impactful.

Moreover, as we strive to provide exceptional spaces and memorable experiences, we constantly must adapt to the changing world around us. To succeed in this environment will require our staff to have the time and support to develop, evaluate, and implement innovative ideas.

#### Current State Assessment

There is a synergy and a common purpose that unites the various offices within the Department of Parks and Recreation. We share the common goal of leveraging our intellectual, physical and capital resources to enrich lives, strengthen communities and make Atlanta the city of choice.

However, tight budgets and staff time constraints have curtailed the department's ability to develop and implement innovative proposals for increasing efficiency and effectiveness. For example, DPR just recently launched a long overdue online registration and reservation system.

#### Recommendations & Impact

To promote more effective leveraging of our resources, DPR will create a planning and innovation team that focuses on big-picture, high-return initiatives that will allow us to expand our impact on Atlanta's quality of life. The innovation team, which require the reallocation of staff within the Department, consists of two staff members reporting to DPR's Program Management Officer and serving the various offices. The team will emphasize alternative funding strategies, partnerships with thought leaders at metro Atlanta's many institutions of higher learning, and empowering employees to be part of the innovation effort. The Department budget and finance team also will report to the Project Management Office.

**Investing in innovation will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:**

- Youth Development**—Innovative programs and partnerships, as well as the more efficient allocation of resources, will expand DPR's ability to impact our youth.
- Public Safety**—Investments in technology and design, as well as innovative partnerships with public safety agencies, will result in safer parks and facilities.
- Economic Growth**—More effective investments in exceptional facilities, programs and events will impact quality of life, attracting business investment and new residents.
- Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Innovation is essential to achieving excellence.
- Financial Health**—Expanding DPR's capacity to analyze the return on investment of existing and proposed functions will result in the more efficient and effective allocation of resources, saving the city money.

Strategic Action Items								
Establish a Planning & Innovation Team			Maximize employee engagement in Innovation	Leverage Educational Institutions to Develop Innovative Initiatives	Develop an Alternative Funding Plan			
Outcomes								
Establish best practices to improve operational efficiencies; increase revenue generated through new channels					Improve the bottom line by increasing revenues, reducing costs and brining in grant funding			
Operational Steps								
A. Study best practices, institutionalize trends analysis and promote implementation within our Department. (#1)	B. Explore options to venture into alternative areas of service delivery	C. Have annual retreats at the leadership level to look at the big picture	A. Encourage out-of-the-box thinking		A. Employ progressive revenue strategies	B. Locate alternative funding sources	C. Develop opportunities for cost containment and cost sharing	
Priority								
Vital	Important	Routine	Important	Critical	Important	Vital	Critical	
Primary Functions Assigned								
PMO	PMO (P&I)	Commissioner	HR Manager, Directors	PMO (P&I)	PMO (P&I)	PMO (Directors)	PMO (P&I + MSO)	
Estimated 5 Year Total								Total
\$1,225,000	-	\$5,000	-	\$700,000	-	\$425,000	-	\$2,355,000
Notes								
Create P&I team— Management Analyst Sr., Financial Analyst, Data/ Reporting Analyst. Accomplished by reallocating personnel		Miscellaneous Costs		Evaluate needs and options and setup MOUs in Year 1; Hourly rate of \$200 for 3 months in Year 2; for 6 months Year 3 onwards	Budget to be developed based on projects (varies year to year); projects yield positive ROI over time	Staff cost— Grants Development Officer	Budget to be developed based on projects (varies year to year); projects yield positive ROI over time	

#### Glossary:

- P&I Planning and Innovation team (Sr. Management Analyst, Sr. Financial Analyst, Data/Reporting Analyst)
- PMO Program Management Officer
- MSO Management Services Office
- TBD Budget to be developed based on projects (varies year to year); projects yield positive ROI over time



◀ The City of Atlanta Office of Parks maintains 3,000 acres of parkland and greenspace.



◀ City of Atlanta's first full-sized artificial turf field, Ben Hill Park and Center of Hope

The City of Atlanta has transformed 11 of its computer labs into state-of-the-art technology centers. ▶



Since 2010, the department has renovated three of its five tennis centers. ▶



◀ March 2013, the City of Atlanta launched iPARCS—the department's first online registration and reservation system.



◀ The City of Atlanta has four state-of-the-art spraygrounds located throughout the city.

The Atlanta Civic Center is comprised of two event spaces; a 4,600 seat Theatre and the Piedmont Room. ▶



The Departments three culture clubs provide cultural experiences and academic enrichment to Atlanta's youth. ▶





## Strategy 4 Enhance our organizational capacity

***DPR will support and invest in an effective, efficient workforce through training, broadened recruitment and proficient business practices.***

### Background

An organization is only as strong as its staff and the structure within which they operate. The need for strong organizational structure, established policies and procedures, and a well-trained work force is especially true in an organization like ours. Established policies and procedures allow staff to be comfortable and productive as they move between DPR's many diverse facilities. A well-trained staff understands and adheres to these policies to ensure safe and effective operations. Thoughtful, proficient business practices ensure the efficient use of our human, physical and capital resources.

### Current State Assessment

Recent investments, especially within the Office of Recreation, have allowed the department to halt and in some cases partially recover from decades of steadily decreasing budgets. However, while funding has stabilized, demand for services has increased significantly due to popular initiatives like the Centers of Hope, Atlanta BeltLine and Contract for Arts Services expansion. Increased staffing and operational funding will be needed for the department to provide the requisite high level of support to make these efforts successful.

The closing and reopening of more than 20 facilities have highlighted the need to update and consistently assess DPR's policies and procedures. Rapid changes in technology and related impact on business practices have exacerbated the need to both train staff on the latest software and update and improve policies and procedures.

The Department recently completed an overhaul of Hansen, its work order and asset management system, with a goal of emphasizing preventative maintenance and budgeting for lifecycle costs for equipment and facilities. In July 2012, DPR began processing all registration and reservation activity through ActiveNet, a web-based transactional database that eventually will allow residents to make reservation or register for programs on line.

In June 2011, DPR reached out to consultants to conduct an organizational assessment of the Office of Recreation. As a result of this assessment, the department invested in staff training, hired additional facility managers, and developed new standard operating procedures for its facilities and several programs. The recently hired Safety and Training Officer has developed and implemented safety training for all personnel, despite the lack of city-wide funding for training.

### Recommendations & Impact

First, the Department needs to conduct a comprehensive organizational assessment similar to the one conducted for the Office of Recreation. That assessment will show the development of a three-pronged strategy to increase organizational capacity. The importance of this effort is to increase investment in staff development and training. Staff development will focus on aligning training and performance management to meet the goals of the Department.

In addition to training front-line staff to deliver quality programs and facilities to our customers, it is imperative to train managers in the professional development of front-line personnel. DPR will actively engage with the Department of Human Resources in this effort, using their expertise in the performance management structure to improve department operations. Importantly, DPR's management will advocate for increased compensation for departmental employees, especially those who consistently perform at a level of excellence.

Finally, the Department will continue to review and improve its standard operating procedures, policies and processes in an effort to operate more efficiently. It will incorporate the City's ATL Stats program to define appropriate metrics for driving staff performance and judging the effectiveness of operations.

Investing in organizational capacity will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:

1. **Youth Development**—Increased training for staff and better leveraging technology will allow DPR to provide more impactful programming to our youth.
2. **Public Safety**—Investments in technology and improved standard operating procedures will make our facilities safer.
3. **Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Nothing is more essential to a culture of excellence than adequate training, recruitment and operational structures.
4. **Financial Health**—Improving operational efficiencies will reduce costs, while enhanced businesses practices and leveraging technology should increase revenue to the department and the City.

*Chart continued on next page.*





**Strategy 4**

**Enhance our organizational capacity**

Strategic Action Items	Outcomes	Operational Steps
Conduct a comprehensive organizational assessment	Establish an organization with structured processes supported by the required infrastructure and tools as well as qualified professionals aligned with the current and future needs of the department, motivated and dedicated to achieving DPRs objectives	A. Based on future direction and needs, execute any organizational realignment as necessary and implement a process to recruit appropriate talent to meet needs
		B. Create a succession plan that fosters leadership and growth
		C. Determine areas where external partners may supplement operations
Foster an environment that promotes leadership at all levels		A. Strengthen the leadership skills of the management layers within DPR
Implement training curriculum that focuses in key areas		A. Create job-specific orientations for new DPR employees
		B. Increase capacity to manage partnerships through staff training, particularly for facility managers, and creation of partnership manual
		C. Integrate customer service into performance management; make annual training mandatory for all front-line personnel
		D. Identify key staff and train them to use asset management system for budgeting and development of annual plans
		E. Budget and business planning
		F. Performance management
	G. Leadership and management (motivation, decision-making, fun, development of others)	
	Emphasize effective performance management	A. Ensure that performance management ties into strategic plan and annual work plan
	B. Establish minimum standard training and professional development requirements; incorporate into job descriptions.	
	Continuously improve operational and business processes	A. Establish process flows for all core functions
B. Periodically review and update SOPs		
C. Build capacity to implement new technology strategies in order to streamline and automate processes.		
D. Develop Office-specific annual work plans		
E. Incorporate accreditation requirements in annual work plans		
Set up professional advancement and mentorship programs within the department	A. Create opportunities and a clear path for career progression	

Priority	Primary Functions Assigned	Estimated 5 Year Total	Notes
Important	Commissioner, Directors	\$50,000	Assess internal structure in year 1 and adjust to meet goals year 2; repeat process in year 4.
Important	Directors & Commissioner, working with H.R.	\$10,000	Possible consultant fees
Important	P & I Team, working with Directors and Commissioner	\$30,000	Consultant to assess operations in other best-in-class cities
Important	Directors & Commissioner working with H.R.	\$80,000	Training focused at and below the Director level; integrate with performance management.
Important	Directors, working with H.R.	\$10,000	Develop DPR orientation manual
Important	HR, Directors	\$35,000	Training and possible consultant to create partnership manual
Important	Directors	\$0	
Important	Directors	\$0	Leverage investment in Hansen as an asset management tool
Important	Planning & Innovation Team; Budget Manager	\$0	
Important	HR, Directors	\$0	Reinforce
Important	Directors	\$25,000	Look for opportunities through GA Recreation and Parks Association or National Recreation and Parks Association.
Important	Directors, working with H.R.	\$0	
Important	Directors, working with H.R.	\$0	
Important	Directors, Commissioner	\$0	
Routine	Directors, Managers	\$0	Accreditation standard
Important	Planning & Innovation Team	\$0	Look for opportunities to partner with educational institutions.
Routine	Directors	\$0	Already incorporated into Director Goals.
Routine	Directors, Accreditation Manager	\$0	
Important	Directors, working with H.R.	\$0	Leverage professional learning communities
		<b>TOTAL \$240,000</b>	



## Strategy 5 Expand our impact through collaboration

*DPR will merge its strengths with the strengths of others to produce efficient, effective programs and facilities.*

### Background

The culture of DPR is one of collaboration. We rely upon volunteer coaches to make our athletic programs work. Community and business groups donate thousands of volunteer hours and financial support for park and facility improvements each year. Private funding and in-kind donations provide thousands of Atlanta Public School children cultural experiences each year through programs such as Cultural Experience Project.

### Current State Assessment

The Department of Parks and Recreation has a long history of collaboration. We partner with American Golf, First Tee of Atlanta, USA Pools and United Tennis Management to operate our golf courses, outdoor pools and tennis centers.

Through Park Pride, more than 50 “friends of the park” groups invest in City of Atlanta parks through volunteer days, capital improvements and programming. Specific memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with groups from the Piedmont Park Conservancy, West Atlanta Watershed Alliance and Historic Oakland Cemetery provide enhanced programming and customer experience at nearly a dozen of our parks.

The Office of Recreation partners with dozens of vendors to provide programming at its centers. The Athletics division relies on volunteer coaches and youth athletic associations to expand the programs offered to Atlanta’s youth. In 2011, as part of Mayor Reed’s Centers of Hope initiative, the Office collaborated with the YMCA and Boys and Girls Club to launch innovative youth development programs at the Adamsville and Thomasville Recreation Centers.

The Office of Cultural Affairs extends throughout Atlanta’s arts and cultural communities to deliver innovative, high-caliber programs like the Atlanta Jazz Festival, Culture Clubs, the Cultural Experience Project and ARTSCool. Its Contracts for Arts Services Grant program provides funding to a diverse group of recipients ranging from individual artists to the Woodruff Arts Center.

### Recommendations & Impact

The Department will build upon its history of partnerships and collaboration to expand the breadth and depth of experiences that it offers to the public while expanding community engagement.

Using Park Pride as a model, DPR will cultivate relationships with organizations that focus on recreation and culture. By having contractual relationships with organizations that share the vision and geographic focus of the Department, DPR will have greater flexibility to deliver exceptional spaces and diverse experiences. In addition, these non-profit partners will expand funding opportunities to support these efforts.

DPR similarly will work with the Atlanta Public School system to develop a working relationship that better leverages both organizations’ facilities and coordinates programming opportunities.

Finally, the Department will develop and implement a plan for leveraging partnerships to help us fulfill our mission and pursue our vision. Identifying specific goals for our partnerships and creating a structure through which we can engage other organizations in collaborative efforts is integral to this plan.

### Strategic collaboration will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:

- Youth Development**—Collaborating with like-minded organizations will allow us to improve the services that we offer and our capacity to serve more youth.
- Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Partnering with best-in-class organizations will improve the quality of our product and provide opportunities for our employees to learn and grow professionally.
- Financial Health**—Public-private partnerships will leverage DPR resources, allowing us to serve more people at a lower cost to the City.

Strategic Action Items				
Cultivate mission-specific non-profit partners to help deliver services in Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs	Develop a plan for leveraging partnerships with public, non-profit, for-profit, and community entities		Develop increased partnership with the local school system to provide complementary and comprehensive youth programming and access to facilities	
Outcomes				
Non-profit partners established who would support, complement all DPR functions and champion DPR causes	Best in class partners provide quality programming and/or services in all required areas identified as non-core competent		Established relationships with local school systems that allows for efficient sharing of resources and data to complement each other’s functions	
Operational Steps				
	A. Identify potential partnering needs and opportunities; prioritize and dedicate resources for pursuing top opportunities	B. Investigate possible synergy or partnerships with local educational institutions	C. Develop a streamlined process and internal infrastructure for codifying and managing partnerships	
Priority				
Critical	Vital	Important	Important	Important
Primary Functions Assigned				
Directors, Park Pride		Directors, Programming Team	Commissioner, Director of Rec., Programming Team, Procurement, Law	Director of Recreation, Programming Team, Athletics Director
Estimated 5 Year Total				
\$42,500		\$50,000	\$100,000	<b>Total</b> \$192,500
Notes				
Legal costs for incorporation, board recruitment, possible office space for nonprofit (in-kind)	Working with Procurement to issue programming RFP—model for partnerships	Possible consultant cost	Possible consultant cost; research best practices like LA Partnership Office; potential new integrated software	

- Economic Growth**—partners assist in providing more interesting, attractive parks and facilities and diverse events, attracting visitors and making the City a more desirable place for residents, increasing economic activity
- Public Safety**—community partnerships create ownership and increase use—“eyes on the park”—which increases safety and security



## Strategy 6 Plan and build a marketing support system

**DPR will develop and implement a marketing strategy that enhances our image, improves our positioning and promotes our offerings.**

### Background

The Department of Parks and Recreation is the retail arm of the City of Atlanta. While studies have consistently shown the physical, mental and social benefits of what we do, we recognize that our products are only some of the many options available to Atlanta's constituents. Residents and visitors choose to visit our parks, use our facilities or experience our programs and events.

### Current State Assessment

As a whole, the Department does not effectively market itself. Our space on the City's website is not adequate for proper marketing of what DPR has to offer, and promotional materials largely do not exist. In 2011, the Office of Recreation developed a marketing campaign with some support materials to promote its after school and senior programming. The Office of Cultural Affairs has consistently and effectively marketed its programs. The Office of Cultural Affairs also maintains a separate website for the Office as well as two separate websites for the Atlanta Jazz Festival and the Cyclorama and Civil War Museum.

The Civic Center and Cyclorama are enterprise funds that largely function as independent retail operations. Both have developed marketing plans to support their operations.

While DPR's Offices do some marketing with varying resources and results, there is no centralized marketing effort. In addition, until recently DPR had only a single staff member, its Public Information Manager, dedicated to communications and marketing. In an effort to address these challenges, the department was able to bring on a Communications Manager in the fall of 2012. Consolidating funding and marketing efforts may provide tremendous opportunity for the Offices to leverage staff and resources to expand and improve marketing capacity, though additional funding is needed.

### Recommendations & Impact

DPR needs to develop and implement a marketing plan that leverages resources available across the administration and various Offices. At the foundation of this effort will be developing a DPR brand that defines the look and public persona of the department. The plan will emphasize the development of an effective website and the leveraging of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, while also recognizing the importance of traditional marketing materials like flyers, posters and brochures.

The Department anticipates the need to invest additional resources in staff, consultants and materials. We will partner with the Communications Director to identify these resources and integrate our marketing efforts with those of the City.

### Significantly investing in marketing will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:

- Youth Development**—Improved marketing will drive registration, increasing participation and our impact on the City's youth.
- Economic Growth**—Increased awareness of DPR's programs and facilities will help attract residents and businesses to Atlanta.
- Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Effective marketing will serve as an extension of internal excellence, with high quality materials reflecting well on the department and the City.
- Financial Health**—Improved marketing will increase participation and revenue to the department and the city.

Strategic Action Items									
Create a central marketing team that is customer driven	Develop and implement a marketing plan								Brand Management
Outcomes									
We are continuously meeting the needs of the communities we serve; all customers, current and potential future ones, are aware of all the facilities, programs and services we offer; increased revenues and maximum utilization									
Operational Steps									
	A. Conduct survey and focus groups to assess their wants and needs	B. Work with staff and stakeholders to have them tell our story	C. Increase our web presence	D. Provide periodic departmental Leisure Guides & other material	E. Develop and implement a social media plan	F. Maintain current inventory and market available resources in assets and programs	G. Develop a long term resource development strategy for partnering with those that can help DPR secure funding as well as positive media coverage	A. Develop a branding strategy	
Priority									
Critical	Vital	Important	Important	Important	Important	Important	Important	Important	
Primary Functions Assigned									
Communications Manager	Comm. Manager	Comm. Manager	Comm. Manager	Comm. Manager	Graphic Designer/Social Media staff	Comm. Manager	Communications Manager	Comm. Manager	
Estimated 5 Year Total									
\$849,462	\$10,000		\$58,000	\$125,000			\$45,000	\$25,000	<b>Total</b> \$1,112,462
Notes									
Communications team in place effective March 2013—Staff reallocated to fund	Currently reaching out to Community Facility Managers	Outreach	Need to overhaul site. Have successfully integrated iPARCS	Three times per year (Fall, Spring, Summer)	Part of communications plan; integrate into city plan				Look and feel of facilities, performance of the people, and product consistency



## Strategy 7 Communicate effectively

**DPR will foster an environment of effective communication that leads to increased understanding, awareness and trust.**

### Background

With more than 350 full-time employees and more than 200 seasonal employees working at more than 50 locations, effective communications is essential to efficient operations within the Department of Parks and Recreation. Established channels of communication facilitate the free flowing of good ideas, while also helping to sustain and improve employee morale.

From an external perspective, DPR front-line staff have frequent communication with patrons, community leaders and other stakeholders. Communications training and performance standards will help our employees best tell our story while building important relationships and enhancing community engagement.

### Current State Assessment

The Department of Parks and Recreation has significant opportunities for improving formal communication structure and training. The Department has produced internal and external newsletters; however, not consistently. The Commissioner holds quarterly meetings with all staff, as well as a quarterly meeting with the public. Specific DPR staff has been assigned to attend every Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) meeting, and the department provides staff talking points and material for distribution. The Department is working to create a comprehensive calendar of events.

### Recommendations & Impact

DPR's new Communication Manager will develop an internal communications plan to foster improved sharing of information within the Department. The plan will encourage communication and relationship building between offices and facilities. DPR would supplement the internal communications plan with an "Open Channels" initiative to examine existing communication processes and identify ways to make information more accessible to the community, our partners and within the Department. Central to this effort will be the creation of a calendar of events to increase cross-functional planning, collaboration and coordination.

The Department will provide staff with additional communications training to help them develop as ambassadors. Communications standards will include effective writing skills, verbal communication, and appropriate body language.

**Improved communication will allow the Department to support the following Mayoral priorities:**

- 1. Public Safety**—Improved internal communication will help ensure that policies and procedures are current, increasing operational safety. Improved communication also will allow staff to better respond to immediate security concerns.
- 2. Promoting a Culture of Excellence**—Effective communication is essential to ensure that any organization is operating efficiently and that employees understand their roles and responsibilities in helping the organization achieve its mission.
- 3. Financial Health**—Operational efficiencies depend upon accurate registration, reservation and financial data.

Strategic Action Items							
Internal knowledge management (cut down the rumor mills; improve understanding of the organization)	"Open channels" initiative (teaching discernment of information up and down the organization, which combines scheduled communication and ad hoc)			Ambassadorial/Personnel communication development			
Outcomes							
All stakeholders, internal and external, are continuously engaged with and aware of all DPR activities, future plans and direction; an organization that is actively engaged with communities and customers							
Operational Steps							
A. Develop an internal communication plan that provides accurate, regular, and consistent information to promotes increased understanding at all levels of the organization	B. Develop initiatives that support and encourage cross-divisional communications and relationship-building	A. Review and improve communications processes to create a higher degree of transparency and make information more accessible to the community, our partners, and the department.	B. Develop an internal "calendar of events" to increase cross-functional and inter-departmental planning, collaboration and coordination.	A. Promote DPR staff involvement and engagement with communities by attending various community meetings that allow constituents to actively engage with DPR	B. Provide employees with formal training on effective communications (written, verbal, and non-verbal)	C. Develop communication performance standards requiring effective writing skills, verbal communications, and the use of appropriate body language	
Priority							
Vital	Vital	Vital	Important	Important	Important	Important	
Primary Functions Assigned							
Communications Manager, Commissioner, Directors	Communications Manager, Commissioner, Directors	Communications Manager, Commissioner, Directors	Communications Manager working with Directors	Communications Manager, Directors	Directors, working with H.R.	Directors, working with H.R. and Communications Manager	
Estimated 5 Year Total							
\$5,000	\$5,000	\$17,000	\$2,000	-	\$50,000	\$5,000	
<b>Total</b>							\$84,000
Notes							
Complete June 30, 2013—then implement	Work with the Commissioner's HR Task Force; possible funding for incentives	Leverage web site, iPARCS and social media—reflects potential associated costs.		Build upon ongoing NPU attendance; leverage marketing opportunities.	Work with H.R. to identify training opportunities; possible training costs	CFM Applicants to be given writing test; possible consultant	



# *Department of Parks and Recreation's Strategic Planning Committee, Key Stakeholders & Process*

### ***Strategic Planning Committee***

- George Dusenbury**, Commissioner, DPR
- Melvin Anderson**, Budget Manager, DPR
- Camille Russell Love**, Director, Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs
- Ann Marie Moraitakis**, Director, Office of Atlanta Civic Center, DPR
- Vasu Narayanan**, Program Management Officer, DPR
- Paul Taylor**, Director, Office of Park Design, DPR
- Doug Voss**, Director, Office of Parks, DPR
- Margo Walker**, Human Resource Manager, Senior, Department of Human Resources
- Nicholas Williams**, Interim Director, Office of Recreation, DPR
- Nicole Young**, Project Manager, DPR

### ***Strategic Planning Consultant***

Centre for Strategic Management

### ***Key Stakeholders***

- Residents
- Visitors
- Employees
- Partners



-  Facebook: [City of Atlanta Department of Parks and Recreation](#)
-  Twitter: [@ATLParksandRec](#)
-  Tumblr: [atlparksandrec.tumblr.com](#)





# *City of Atlanta's Strategic Plan for Parks and Recreation*

2013–2017

Kasim Reed, Mayor of Atlanta

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