



STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of March 11, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

VIA: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBMITTED BY: Christopher Roke, Parks and Recreation Director

SUBJECT: Hercules Parks and Recreation Department Update

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Receive an update on the City of Hercules Parks and Recreation Department.

BACKGROUND:

The mission of Parks and Recreation is to provide exceptional recreational experiences, promote health and wellness, protect natural resources, strengthen safety and security, foster human development, increase cultural awareness, support economic development, as well as strengthen community image and sense of place.

We are part of a network of people working together to fulfill the needs of the Hercules citizens. Our elected officials work through our City Manager to develop high-level policies and goals for the community. Our City Manager sets priorities with the Executive Team, and work is distributed among departmental staff who work directly with the residents here in Hercules. We are all here to provide service to our community.

The team is currently comprised of (5) full-time staff, including a Parks and Recreation Director, a Recreation Manager, two Recreation Supervisors, and a Recreation Technician. We are a small department, and we all wear many hats, i.e., our Manager oversees Youth Programs, including our Preschool program (Tiny Tots), Childcare (Kaleidoscope Kidz/RAP and Breakfast Club), our in-house camps program (Camp Dynamite), and various administrative duties. Recreation Supervisor #1 oversees fee classes, contractors, the seasonal activities guide, the Office, Teens, and Youth Sports. Recreation Supervisor #2 oversees Aquatics, Seniors, Facilities, and Outdoor Rentals. Recreation Technician for Aquatics works on staffing, training, and pool/facility maintenance.

The full-time staff are supported by approximately 50 part-time staff, 20 contractors, 25 volunteers, 14 City-recognized nonprofit groups, and the Commission. In addition, these individuals support, develop the programs for, oversee, and staff 3 Community Centers, 3 Child Care Centers (i.e. Kidz Centers), 1 Teen Center (now a Preschool Center), 1 Senior Center, 13 Parks, 1 Dog Park, 12 Facility Rental locations, 8 picnic sites, 2 Gazebos, 1 Gym, 1 Aquatics Center, 2 baseball fields, 2 soccer fields, 3.5 outdoor basketball courts, 2 bocce ball courts, 2 horseshoe pits, several play structures, swings, restrooms, and 8 tennis courts.

Together, we all support one another and still find the time to offer special events in our programs, participate/organize/and often run special events like All In One Day, Spring into Wellness, Community Cleanup Day, Juneteenth, movie nights in the parks, 4th of July fireworks celebration, swim meets, Halloween Trunk or Treat, Scarecrow Contest, PUMPKATAZ, the Holiday Tree Lighting and more. In addition, we support several cosponsored events like National Night Out, Bay Front Festival and Run, Crab Feed, Lunar New Year, Career Fair, Bottles and Bites, and Cultural Festival and Breakfast with Santa. We also help make the Herculean Mile Award possible.

Part of our staff responsibility is to create awareness for our programs and services. One primary method of marketing is through the City of Hercules Parks & Recreation Activity Guide. Three times a year, this publication is mailed to every household in Hercules and many local businesses. This guide complements our websites and social media presence.

ANALYSIS:

The first Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan is one of the most important citywide plans completed to date. It is a long-range plan that has identified the needs and priorities of this growing community. The goal of the plan is to help the City strategically allocate resources and leverage opportunities to maintain and enhance the overall parks system over the next decade.

The Master Plan process began in the Fall of 2022 with a complete inventory of all City parks and recreation facilities, as well as a conditions assessment. Thereafter, staff completed a state of the parks review, followed by the identification of needs and opportunities, and the Master Plan was ultimately adopted in the Spring of 2024.

In addition to the Master Plan, the Parks and Recreation Department has been busy with programs, activities, and projects. Programmatically, the Parks and Recreation Department continues to rebound from the pandemic. Significant changes to the Parks and Recreation landscape over the past few years include a reduction in preschool programs (primarily due to the school district requirement to develop a TK [Transitional Kindergarten] program on their elementary school sites). While this move took potential kids from the City's Preschool Program, the City has seen an increase in the afterschool program with the addition of TK students needing care after school. Another area of change has been the Teen program, which simply has not rebounded here in Hercules. With more people working from home, families have found a way to pick up their tweens/teens after school.

Some of the recent projects that the Parks and Recreation Department is working on or has completed include upgrades to the gym, including the addition of basketball hoops in the gym, the interior painting of the Community Swim Center, and some smaller projects that included the resealing of both the gym and the senior center floors. We also replaced the drain covers on both pools to remain vigilant and compliant with the VGB (Virginia Graeme Baker) requirements. We have replaced water fountains in City Hall, and the Senior Center is transitioning to bottle refill stations. And we recently upgraded the kitchen in the Senior Center through an infrastructure grant from the County. A few projects are on the horizon, including the exterior painting of the Community Swim Center, which is scheduled to be done this spring. The Beechnut Mini Park playground project will use money from Prop 68.

One of the things Parks and Recreation are known for is the ability to run fantastic community events. During the pandemic, many of the events acted as the lone bright spot. These events continue to grow, like our Trunk or Treat/PUMPKATAAZ event, which has grown from 75 participants to over 2,000 participants. The Fireworks celebration was held each of the past 3 years down at the Bayfront – this year will be our 4th consecutive year holding fireworks, and each year, it gets bigger.

No analysis is complete without providing program numbers. Our 2024 swim lesson program boasted 808 swim lessons and 1596 in-house camp registrations (both the highest numbers in the past decade). The 808 swim lessons equated to an average of 161 participants per session, and the 1596 camp registrations equated to 194 campers per week. Given that our Fall 2024 swim lessons sold out and our Spring 2025 swim lessons appear to be headed that way, things continue to move in the right direction.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with receiving this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Presentation