



SUN PRAIRIE
PARKS, RECREATION
& FORESTRY

2024
ANNUAL
REPORT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STAFF, MUSEUM BOARD & PRFC.....	2
ABOUT US.....	3
IMPACT SUMMARY.....	4
FINANCIALS.....	5
NOTABLE PROJECTS.....	6
AQUATICS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	7
CONSERVATION ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS....	8
EVENTS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	9
FORESTRY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	10
MUSEUM DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	11
NAVIGATORS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	12
PARKS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	13
RECREATION DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS.....	14
METRICS AT A GLANCE.....	15
COLLABORATIONS.....	16
STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS.....	18

Parks, Recreation & Forestry Commission

Kate Piela, Chair ● Kristen Newell ● Beka Bartel, Vice Chair ● Alder Cassi Benedict
Jeremiah Holiday ● Adebowle Mofikoya ● Karyn Richmond

Museum Board

Andy Schoenherr, Chair ● Juanona Brewster ● Dan Callies ● Lorie Candelmo
Mayor Paul Esser ● Alder Mike Jacobs ● Donna Mackey ● Kristin Pierre, Vice Chair
Kyle Utech

Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department Team

includes FT, PT, and year round LTE staff

Kristin Grissom, Director of Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department
Carrie Anderson, Business Services Specialist
Sunshine Anderson, Museum Programming & Design Coordinator
Cindy Burtley, Parks & Forestry Director
Nolan Carlson, Arborist
Deb Dreyer, Payroll Specialist
Katie Edwards, Parks Maintenance Technician
Oscar Escamilla, Parks Supervisor
Zachary Gundrum, Parks Maintenance Technician
Brandon Hellenbrand, City Forester
Vernard Johnson, Neighborhood Navigator
Fred Kleinschmidt, Parks Maintenance Technician
Yamileth Lothe, Neighborhood Navigator
Barry Mahlum, Neighborhood Navigator
Alyse Peters, Community Events/Sponsorship Manager
Teran Peterson, Neighborhood Navigator Program Manager
Holly Pohl, Recreation Supervisor
Tiniki Powell, Community Health Worker
Emily Rebarchek, School-Based Programs Coordinator
Katie Scanlan, Museum Director
Joe Seltzner, Parks Crew Leader
Chad Shelton, Recreation Director
Alyssa Smet, Recreation Programs Coordinator
Dylan Tucker, Museum Assistant
Buck Vernig, Parks Maintenance Technician
Steve Vernig, Parks Maintenance Specialist
David Walden, Parks Maintenance Specialist

ABOUT US

OUR PURPOSE

To support the health, happiness, and wellbeing of our community

OUR VISION

Inspiring the health, wellness, and connectedness of all those who live, work, and play in the Sun Prairie community

OUR MISSION

To provide and maintain an accessible, equitable, and sustainable park system

To offer high quality recreational programming that is affordable and inclusive

To restore, manage, and protect a diverse urban forest

To promote and preserve open, natural spaces that provide local opportunities for exploration and connectedness to nature

To serve the community and provide programs and services that contribute to a high quality of life in Sun Prairie

2024 OVERARCHING GOALS

THESE GOALS GUIDE THE DIRECTION AND DECISIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT. THEY ARE AT THE CORE OF EVERYTHING WE DO.

- 1. Operate at the highest level of efficiency**
- 2. Provide barrier-free access to PRF programs, services, events, and facilities**
- 3. Provide high quality and relevant programs, services, events, and facilities**
- 4. Be a steward of Sun Prairie's environment, culture, and history**

IMPACT SUMMARY

The Parks, Recreation & Forestry Department (SPPRF) is comprised of a team representing five divisions/functions: Events, Parks & Forestry, Recreation & Aquatics, Museum, and Neighborhood Navigators.

Below is a summary of the team's collective impact:

\$287,846

Alternative Revenue
(donations, sponsorships,
and grants)



374

Unduplicated individuals
that utilized the
"Recreation is for
Everyone" Scholarship
Program



\$88,498

Wage savings from use of
volunteers

84% increase from 2023

25%

Total cost recovery across
all PRF Departments

47

Collaborative
partnerships established

46,742

People engaged in PRF
programs, events and
services



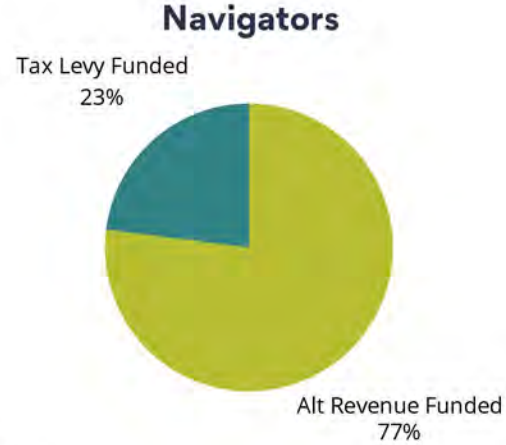
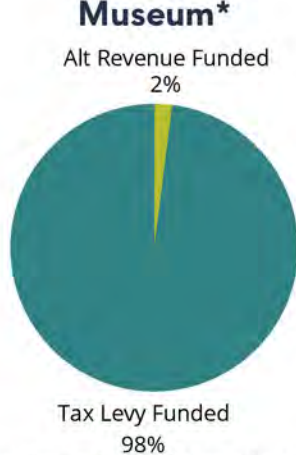
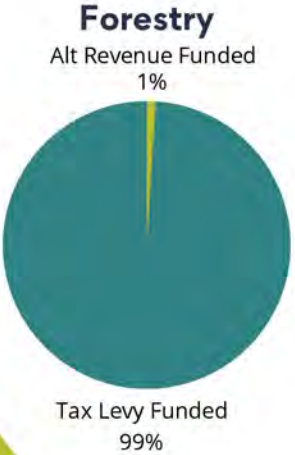
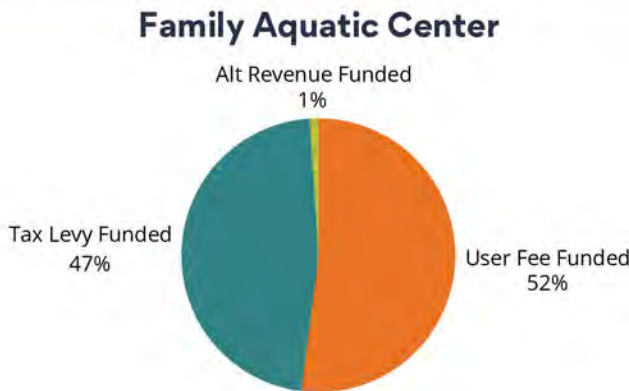
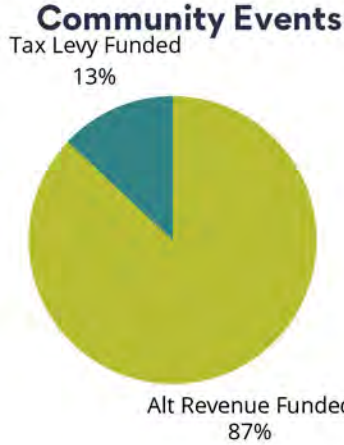
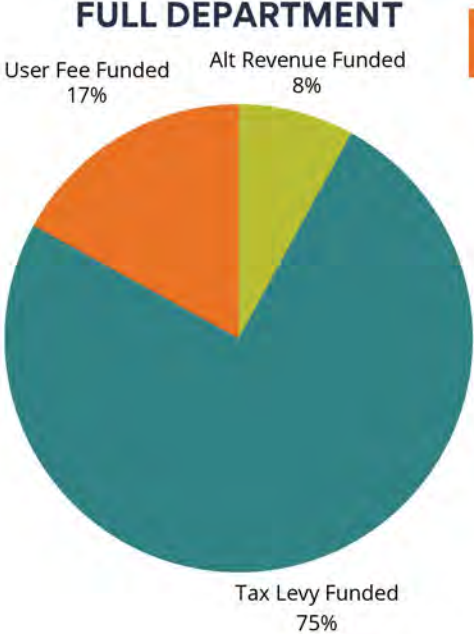
FINANCIALS

SPPRF is committed to having the highest level of fiscal responsibility. It is part of our culture to find efficiencies, seek alternative revenue sources, and continuously evaluate programs and services to ensure our resources are being allocated in alignment with community needs.

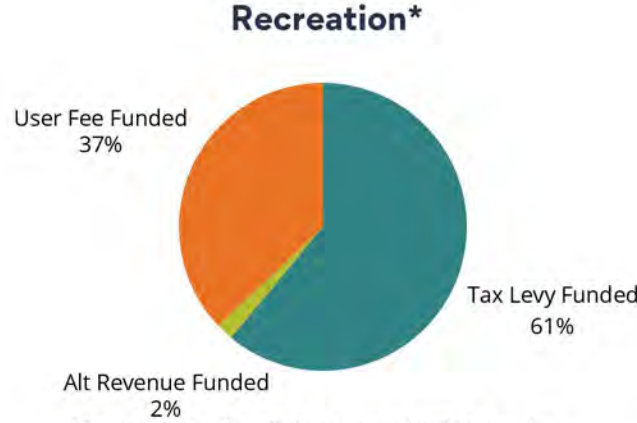
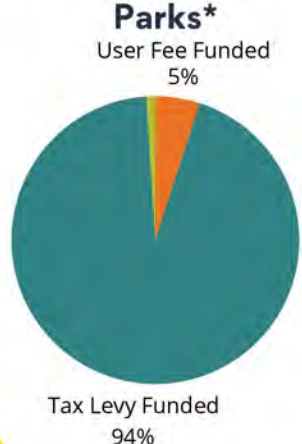
For every \$0.75 that taxpayers invest in SPPRF programs and services, they receive \$1.00 of value!

(25% of the total SPPRF budget is funded through non-tax levied sources)

2024 Year End Cost Recovery by Division



*Museum operations rely heavily on volunteer work. Not reflected in this chart is \$27,552 of wage savings due to use of volunteers



*Operational budget only; Does not include capital budget

*Cost recovery for all direct costs is 117%. Surplus funds indirect costs. PRF Director's salary and fringes are allocated 100% to recreation budget

NOTABLE PROJECTS



Q1: JANUARY – MARCH

- Urban Forestry Management Plan was adopted
- Construction and installation of a new kiosk at Wyndham Hills Park
- Memorial Park – transplanted seedlings from Sheehan Park prairie to create noise buffer along HWY 151
- West Prairie Village/Colorado Commons Master Plan was completed and adopted
- Town Hall Crossing Master Plan was completed and adopted
- Launched searchable public-facing database of Museum collection, <https://sunprairie.catalogaccess.com>
- 2025-2029 Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan kicked off

Q2: APRIL – JUNE

- Gravel bed construction and tree installation complete
- Wetmore East Park Shelter construction completed
- Launched the GO-Cart mobile recreation unit
- 3-hole disc golf practice course installed at Wyndham Hills Park (Sun Prairie Parks Friends, Inc.)
- Installed GaGa Ball Pit at West Prairie Village Park (Eagle Scout project)
- Began architectural and engineering design on the Family Aquatic Center renovation project
- Published a virtual tour of Georgia O’Keeffe’s Formative World at <https://theclio.com/tour/2621>

Q3: JULY – SEPTEMBER

- Cardinal Crest Park Rehabilitation - ADA improvements, playground replacement, and gazebo replacement
- Evergreen Park sand surfacing was replaced with woodchips
- Piloted in-house beer sales for select community events

Q4: OCTOBER – DECEMBER

- Completed in-house Emerald Ash Borer Treatments (201 trees/3,489 DHB inches)
- Westwynde Park Rehabilitation - ADA improvements and playground replacement which was installed using volunteers
- Completed Youth Baseball Complex fencing replacement and drainage improvement project
- Installed security cameras at Stoneridge Estates Park
- Completed first harvest and planting of gravel bed trees
- Restoration of the Corinth bridge project completed
- Adopted a new Public Events in City Parks Policy
- Completed Museum Assessment Program through the American Alliance of Museums and the Institute of Museum and Library Services
- Officially launched Xplor Recreation, new registration and reservation system, to the public
- Reconfigured three Museum storage rooms to improve workspace and collections management
- Substantial completion of Smith’s Crossing Shelter and Restroom facility

AQUATICS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Hosted the Tri-County Conference Swim Meet:** Brought this major event back to Sun Prairie for the first time since 2014, welcoming over 2,000 visitors to Sun Prairie.
- **Welcomed Group Visits:** Hosted 56 group visits to the Family Aquatic Center throughout the summer season.
- **Offered Free Community Swim Days:** Partnered with Sun Prairie Utilities and TDS Telecom to provide free swim opportunities for the community.
- **Expanded programming:** Introduced the first annual Adult Swim event, exclusively for individuals 18 and older, featuring organized games and activities.
- **Increased Attendance:** Recorded 23,110 open swim visits, a 2% increase from 2023.
- **Provided Free Swim Lessons:** Thanks to a grant from the Sun Prairie Education Foundation, 24 youth received free swimming lessons.



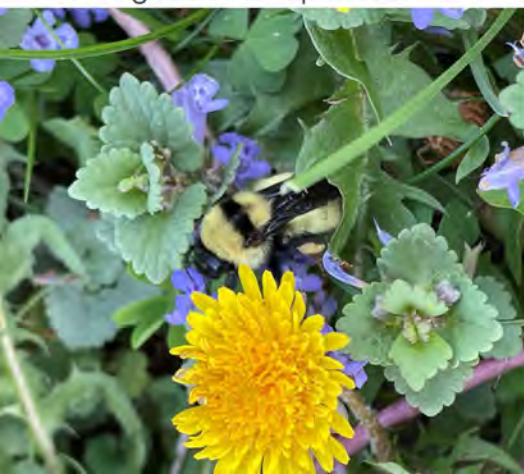
CONSERVATION*

ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS



**Conservation is not technically its own division within SPPRF, but our efforts are continuing to expand to meet the needs and wants of our community.*

- **Restoration & Habitat Management:** Reintroduced prescribed fire at Sheehan Park to restore prairie habitat and facilitated a prescribed burn at the Library. Partnered with SPPF to host invasive species removal events, clearing sumac, buckthorn, and honeysuckle to restore prairies and woodlands in multiple parks.
- **Pollinator & Native Plant Initiatives:** Installed pollinator gardens at Sunset, Wetmore, Birkinbine, and Liberty Parks in partnership with SPPF. Received and planted \$600 worth of donated native plants at city parks and facilities. Assisted the Sun Prairie School District in installing its first pollinator garden.
- **Community & Youth Engagement:** Partnered with Eagle Scouts to install bat boxes, construct species-specific birdhouses, and transplant mature prairie plants into a new native garden. Collaborated with a Girl Scout troop to plant oak seedlings at Sheehan Park for future oak savanna restoration.
- **Sustainability & Education Efforts:** Led environmental education courses, presented on pollinator-friendly practices for Earth Day and the City's Employee Gym Program, and participated in a sustainability podcast focused on native plantings. Distributed signs and stickers for No Mow May participants and facilitated a citizen science project.
- **Citywide Conservation Leadership:** Issued official City Proclamations for Arbor Day and Earth Day, passed a City Resolution for the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and No Mow May, and earned recognition in the Mayor's Monarch Pledge Leadership Circle.



EVENTS

DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Launched the Fire & Lights Parade and Tree Lighting Event:** Successfully hosted this beloved community tradition for the first time under the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department, transitioning it from the Business Improvement District.
- **Record-Breaking Taylor Swift Tribute Concert:** Drew approximately 2,500 attendees near and far from Sun Prairie. The event was relocated to accommodate the anticipated audience, featuring emergency management collaboration with Fire/EMS.
- **FUN Prairie Success Stories:** Introduced new, highly successful events, including a Food Truck Night and the inaugural Kite Flight, both of which attracted enthusiastic community participation.
- **Innovative Revenue Strategies:** Piloted in-house beer sales, generating additional revenue to support community events, and achieved a record year for event sponsorships.
- **Expanded Beer Gardens:** Beer Gardens rotated across multiple community park locations, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees.



FORESTRY DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Community Gravel Bed:** Located at the City of Sun Prairie's Wastewater Treatment Plant, a gravel bed was constructed and used to stock and then harvest 187 bare root trees.
- **Arbor Day Event:** A new event was added to celebrate Arbor Day! 300 White Oak and Hazelnut seedlings were handed out to residents at the Historical Museum.
- **Added a 1.0 FTE Arborist:** This new position was added through repurposing funds in the PRF department. This position, which adds ISA Certified Arborist and ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification credentials to the team, is instrumental in managing our urban forest.
- **Tree City USA Designation:** The City received its annual Tree City USA Designation for the 31st year. In addition, we also received a Growth Award for the 5th time.
- **Tree Plantings & Plant Health Care Treatments:** Between spring and fall plantings, 406 new trees were planted! Additionally, 192 trees were treated for Emerald Ash Borer.



MUSEUM DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Welcomed More Visitors:** Welcomed 3,461 visitors to the museum, an increase of 6% from 2023, fostering a deeper appreciation for local history.
- **Engaged Local Students:** Engaged with 387 local grade school students through interactive learning experiences.
- **Supported by Dedicated Volunteers:** Logged a total of 1,660 volunteer hours, an effort equivalent to \$27,552 in wage and fringe benefits if performed by an LTE staff member.
- **Conducted Historical Research:** Fulfilled 82 research requests supporting a mix of personal and scholarly inquiries, as well as research for community organizations, businesses, and other projects.
- **Expanded Digital Access:** Made more than 3,000 historical photos publicly available online at <https://sunprairie.catalogaccess.com>



NEIGHBORHOOD NAVIGATORS

DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



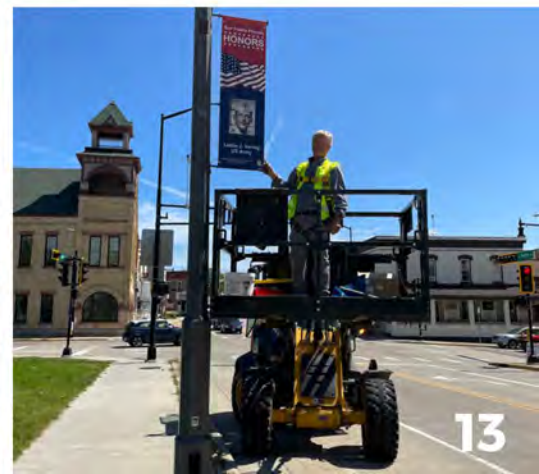
- **Expanded Youth Mentorship:** Over 100 youth participated in a barrier-free mentorship program designed to support Sun Prairie's most socio-economically disadvantaged families.
- **Increased Community Access:** Hosted weekly drop-in office hours at multiple locations, helping residents connect with vital resources and navigate available services. Donated 50 bikes to families in need, encouraging active and low-cost mobility.
- **Launched Neighbors Helping Neighbors Laundry Program:** This initiative provides free loads of laundry at local laundromats, ensures families have access to clean clothing while reducing the risk of theft during programming.
- **Offered Free Recreational & Wellness Opportunities:** Provided open-to-all basketball programming at the Boys & Girls Club, which included free meals, physical activity, and arts programming for families.
- **Strengthened Community Partnerships:** Engaged in numerous outreach events to connect with residents, including the Multicultural Fair, Juneteenth, MLK Day, mental health fairs, school picnics, the Housing Coalition, Trunk or Treat, resource fairs, and the Community Sunshine Meal.
- **Enhanced Public Health & Safety:** Established Sun Prairie's first OAK (Overdose Aid Kit) Box for overdose prevention, expanding harm reduction efforts in the community.



PARKS DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Facility & Park Improvements:** Opened, implemented a winter warming house with attendants, and provided year-round restroom access at the new Wetmore Park East shelter. Completed major park rehabilitations at Westwynde (Community Build) and Cardinal Crest Parks.
- **New Park Amenities:** Partnered with Sun Prairie Parks Friends, Inc. to install a 3-hole disc golf practice course at Wyndham Hills Park and collaborated with an Eagle Scout to add a Gaga Pit at West Prairie Village Park. Created a woodland trail through Sheehan Park conifers.
- **Infrastructure & Safety Enhancements:** Rehabilitated the Corinth Bridge, installed security cameras at Stoneridge Estates Park, and completed fencing construction at the Little League Complex in Sheehan Park. Reached substantial completion of the Smith's Crossing Shelter & Restroom.
- **Sustainability & Accessibility Efforts:** Modified Wetmore shelter path designs to preserve mature oak trees, participated in No Mow May at various parks, groomed cross-country ski trails at Sheehan Park, and completed 51 ADA Transition Plan tasks.
- **Operational & Policy Advancements:** Developed a GIS-based Park Asset Management system, created a citywide Mower Safety Policy, and established a geocaching policy for city parks.



RECREATION DIVISION HIGHLIGHTS



- **Launched the GO-CART Program:** In its inaugural year, the community arts & recreation trailer made over 30 event appearances, engaging nearly 2,000 individuals.
- **Upgraded Registration System:** Successfully implemented new registration and facility reservation software, Xplor Rec, enhancing the user experience.
- **Revamped Preschool & Youth Sports:** Transitioned soccer and t-ball to a volunteer-led format, resulting in increased participation and better cost recovery.
- **Expanded Parker's Pals Program:** Extended this popular initiative into the school year, providing continued recreation opportunities for young children.
- **Enhanced Fitness Offerings:** Introduced new programs tailored for active older adults, expanding recreation options for this growing demographic.
- **Hosted Pickleball Tournaments:** Hosted three tournaments at the Wyndham Hills Pickleball Complex, drawing over 750 participants, including many from outside of Sun Prairie and even out of state.



2024 METRICS AT A GLANCE

Metrics are just one way success is measured in the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department. While numbers help track participation, engagement, and impact, they don't always capture the full value of our programs, services, and community connections. We use metrics to ensure transparency and accountability, providing a clear picture of how we serve the community. By tracking and sharing this data, we can reflect on our efforts, demonstrate the impact of our work, and continuously improve the experiences we provide for Sun Prairie residents.

144	volunteers	50.84%	of the Museum's collection is searchable online
5,748	volunteer hours	1,032	walk-in visitors at the Museum
\$50,924	sponsorship dollars received	3,641	total Museum visitors (including community events)
32%	PRF revenue that comes from alternative sources (grants, donations, sponsorships, etc.)	387	schoolchildren engaged with the Museum
9.4	acres of active-use parkland per 1,000 residents	16	community events that the Museum participated in
34%	playgrounds that meet PRF's accessibility standard	4,677	recreation program enrollments
406	trees planted	98%	program surveys reported "satisfied" or "very satisfied" for overall program/event quality
170	tree-related requests/inquiries	3.9%	enrollments that utilized the "Recreation is for Everyone" Scholarship program
3,588	diameter inches of trees pruned	309	unduplicated people that the Neighborhood Navigators served
\$4.63	amount per capita spent on urban forestry	177	referrals provided to individuals through the Neighborhood Navigators
23,110	pool visits		
17,536	community event attendees		
39	total number of outreach events that team PRF participated in/tabled at		

COLLABORATIONS

INTERNAL IMPACT

SPPRF takes pride in contributing to the success of the organization as a whole. When capacity allows, our team leverages its specialized expertise and resources to support broader city initiatives and projects, fostering collaboration and strengthening the community we serve.

OFFICE OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR

105+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Annual Employee Summit
- Communications Committee
- Earth Month Programming
- Media Center Financial Sustainability Consultation
- Juneteenth Celebration
- Local Government Day
- Mayor's Monarch Pledge
- Multicultural Fair
- No Mow May



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

42+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Community Conversations Open House
- Downtown Redesign Project Support
- Fall Fun Event Support
- Housing Coalition - Staff Representation
- Housing Exhibition
- Housing Sun Prairie Panel Participation
- Ladies Night Out Event Support
- Mowing/Land Ownership Consultation
- Spooktacular Event Prep
- Training of new BID Manager
- Tree Consultation
- Unhoused Grant Support



LIBRARY

31+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Large Tree Transplant
- Library Expansion Support
- Native Prairie/Prescribed Burn Consultation
- Research of Photographs
- Shrub Removal
- Spring Prescribed Burn Permit Coordination

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

26+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Employee Gym
- Policy Development
- Seasonal Employee Onboarding

PUBLIC SERVICES

30+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Bike Path Signage
- GIS Easement Project
- Mowing Contract Assistance
- Seed Mix/Grass Selection Consultation
- Sheehan Stomwater Pond Shrub Removal
- Trash Can/Cone Removal
- Road Reconstruction Tree Help
- Wasterwater Bareroot Garden

COLLABORATIONS

EXTERNAL IMPACT

SPPRF values its role as a community partner and is dedicated to supporting external organizations in achieving their goals. By sharing our expertise and resources when capacity allows, we help strengthen partnerships, enhance community services, and contribute to the overall quality of life in Sun Prairie.

SUN PRAIRIE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

45+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Aligning Futures Committee
- Community Schools Executive Team
- Pridefest
- Site Leadership Teams

SUN PRAIRIE OPTIMIST CLUB

15+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Tri-Star Basketball Tournament
- Pancake Breakfast Support
- Pickle-Palooza Tournament Support

SUN PRAIRIE AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

12+ hours supporting projects such as:

- 2nd Grade Field Trips to Museum
- Back to School Events

SUN PRAIRIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

27+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Annual Meeting Presentation
- Collections Loans
- Love on the Prairie Event

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

13+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Host Coffee Chat Event
- Sweet Corn Festival Event Support
- Digital Photo Reproductions

SUN PRAIRIE PARK FRIENDS

10+ hours supporting projects such as:

- Pollinator Garden Assistance
- Invasive Species Removal Events
- Westwynde Playground Community Build

...and an additional 40+ hours supporting organizations such as Capital Area Planning Commission, Colonial Club, Dane County Historical Society, Sacred Hearts Catholic School, Sun Prairie Moves, Wisconsin Historical Society, and more!

THANK YOU!

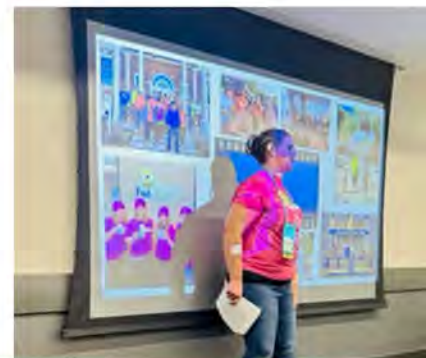
We recognize that our work could not be done without the support of other City Departments, local businesses, and community organizations. To all that have supported our mission in 2024, a heartfelt THANK YOU!

STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

CERTIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

100% of fulltime and regular part-time staff completed a minimum of 8 hours of professional development in 2024.

- Carrie Anderson, Business Services Specialist, graduated from the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association's Leadership Academy
- Sunshine Anderson, Programming and Design Coordinator, completed the 2023-2024 Leadership Sun Prairie program and attended the 2024 American Association of State and Local History's Annual Conference
- Cindy Burtley, Parks & Forestry Director; Holly Pohl, Recreation Supervisor; Kristin Grissom, Director of PRF; Emily Rebarchek, School-Based Programs Coordinator; Chad Shelton, Recreation Director; and Alyssa Smet, Recreation Programs Coordinator attended the 2024 Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association's Annual Conference
- Nolan Carlson, Arborist; Fred Kleinschmidt, Parks Maintenance Technician; Alyse Peters, Community events/Sponsorship Development Manager; and Alyssa Smet, Recreation Programs Coordinator attended the Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association's Leadership Academy
- Nolan Carlson, Arborist, obtained the ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification
- Katie Edwards, Park Maintenance Technician, obtained the WDATCP Pesticide Applicator Certification
- Zach Gundrum, Parks Maintenance Technician; Fred Kleinschmidt, Parks Maintenance Technician; Alyssa Smet, Recreation Programs Coordinator; and Steve Vernig, Parks Maintenance Specialist completed the City's 3-Day High Performance Organization training
- Zach Gundrum, Parks Maintenance Technician, graduated from the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association's Leadership Academy and obtained a Commercial Driver's License
- Brandon Hellenbrand, City Forester, attended the 2024 Wisconsin Arborist Association/Wisconsin DNR's Annual Conference
- Alyse Peters, Community Events/Sponsorship Development Manager, attended the WI Governor's Tourism Conference
- Teran Peterson, Neighborhood Navigator Program Manager and Tiniki Powell, Community Health Worker, attended the 2024 Wisconsin Public Health Association's Annual Conference
- Steve Vernig, Parks Maintenance Specialist, renewed his Certified Playground Safety Inspector Certification



AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Team PRF presented at Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association's Annual Conference and Madison College: Pushing the Boundaries of Team Engagement
- Cindy Burtley, Parks & Forestry Director and Kristin Grissom, Director of Parks, Recreation & Forestry presented at Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association's Fall Workshop: Advancing Employee Engagement & High Performance
- 2024 Wisconsin Park and Recreation Association Silver Star Award for Go-Cart Project

