



CONNECTICUT RECREATION & PARKS ASSOCIATION

STRATEGIC PLAN

Our Mission

CRPA's mission is to support the recreation and park profession and steward the future of public parks and recreational opportunities in Connecticut in order to promote active lifestyles, livable communities, and quality of life for all who call Connecticut home.

We do this by serving as a statewide voice for access to public recreation and open space and by supporting parks and recreation professionals through training, networking, advocacy, and member services.

Our Core Values

Environmental Stewardship and Sustainability

- We are committed to promoting environmentally sustainable policies and practices within communities across Connecticut and to helping all citizens of the state understand and embrace the value of acting in an environmentally responsible way.

Access and Inclusion

- We believe that people of all backgrounds and means deserve to actively participate in all aspects of society and should have full access to the opportunities available to citizens in towns across Connecticut.

Professional Excellence

- We believe in doing our best, meeting the highest standards, providing exceptional quality and service, and creating innovative solutions to the challenges we and members of our association face.

Accountability and Integrity

- We believe in behaving ethically, meeting our commitments, and taking responsibility for our actions, and we strive to conduct business in a manner that reflects a commitment to transparency, honesty, and fairness.

Citizenship and Community Impact

- We believe in being a socially responsible and valued partner in Connecticut and, through our members, are committed to having a positive social and economic impact in communities across the state.

Our Aspirations for the Future

CRPA's aspirations for the future reflect both the current strengths it wishes to preserve and leverage *and* the formidable challenges, as well as some exciting opportunities, CRPA needs to address in the period ahead.

The most significant and strategic imperative embraced by the board and staff as they look to the future is the need to extend CRPA's focus beyond the professionals it serves; CRPA's mission and message also must reach the communities enriched by these professionals and by the parks and programs they manage so that both municipal leaders and residents recognize and appreciate the value they receive.

CRPA must both act as a professional association (serving its dues-paying members) *and* position itself as a movement (serving a public good through municipal departments and thus benefiting tax-paying citizens).

As the board and staff look to the future, they envision a CRPA that within three to five years will be...

- Functioning and perceived as a solutions-based organization that helps towns and citizens address issues of direct concern to them
- Establishing parks and recreation as a critical contributor to health, economic development, environmental sustainability, and community throughout Connecticut
- Effectively representing the interests of parks and recreation to the Connecticut Legislature as the voice of and public policy advocate for CRPA's members
- Diversifying its membership and recruiting young professionals in greater numbers than ever before
- Equipping its members to advocate effectively for increased funding and support for parks and recreation at the local level
- Playing a more active and visible role in park stewardship and environmental sustainability
- Offering affordable, high-quality conferences, trainings, and networking opportunities that are relevant and add value for all generations, all towns, and all levels of professional experience
- Helping parks and recreation professionals learn from each other and stay current with best practices in the field
- Collaborating creatively and effectively with new organizations to increase value to members and communities
- Expanding the base of volunteers and engaging more volunteers in CRPA's mission
- Maintaining connections with "the old guard" in parks and recreation who are retiring while forging new connections with and meeting the needs of students and young professionals just entering the field
- Utilizing board members effectively as ambassadors to town managers and directors who do not yet appreciate the value-added CRPA offers and who are not encouraging young or new staff to engage
- Expanding and strengthening relationships with vendors that support CRPA's mission
- Inspiring individuals other than members of the parks and recreation professional to support CRPA's mission
- Sustaining current sources of income while tapping into new and diverse sources of unrestricted, sustainable funding
- Staffed adequately and appropriately to meet member expectations, pursue opportunities, and achieve organizational goals

Our Overarching Goals

In support of this aspirational vision and its implied desired outcomes, CRPA will pursue five overarching goals:

1. **Engage in public outreach** to promote the positive human and community impact and the significant economic benefits associated with parks and recreation
 - Position CRPA and the state's parks and recreation agencies as a source of solutions to community challenges
 - Illuminate the connection between parks and recreation and towns' economic development goals
 - Unite the state's parks and recreation agencies under a coordinated statewide marketing campaign to improve the perception of municipal parks and recreation departments among elected officials and the general public
 - Partner strategically with other organizations to amplify the messaging around parks and recreation as an essential community service
 - Serve as a statewide voice for access to public recreation and open space in Connecticut
 - Advocate at the State Capitol for sustained levels of state funding to municipalities

2. **Empower and equip CRPA's network** of members, vendors, and partners to advance and advocate for parks and recreation programs and professionals throughout Connecticut
 - Help parks and recreation agencies be more visible to the public they serve as well as to local politicians and town management
 - Partner with universities and other organizations to generate data and reports that parks and recreation directors can use to highlight the positive quality-of-life benefits of parks and recreation opportunities
 - Expand the role parks and recreation agencies play as partners with other agencies and across disciplines to build healthy, livable, sustainable communities
 - Assist parks and recreation programs in developing and offering opportunities that reflect commitment to inclusion and social responsibility and that promote access to public parks and recreation opportunities for all residents
 - Help parks and recreation agencies build transparency and accountability into the delivery of their services
 - Promote and facilitate bold leadership within the parks and recreation field and collaboration between public and private sectors

3. **Provide programs, resources, and support** to CRPA's members to meet their evolving needs and spread best practices in parks and recreation
 - Develop a stronger network, greater fellowship, and even more sharing of information among parks and recreation professionals in the State
 - Expand focus on and programming for CRPA's parks-focused members
 - Offer ongoing professional development opportunities that respond to needs identified by CRPA's membership
 - Offer training and tools to help members apply proven practices in critical areas such as marketing, succession planning, and revenue generation
 - Help CRPA's members develop as leaders in protecting open space, connecting children with nature, and helping communities engage in conservation practices
 - Help parks and recreation agencies partner with others to combat complicated, expensive health and wellness challenges Connecticut communities face – from hunger to obesity to physical inactivity

- Promote more innovation and risk taking among parks and recreation officials
4. **Strengthen organizational capacity** to enhance value to members, expand impact in the wider community, and promote programmatic sustainability
- Develop a clearly defined organizational structure with clearly defined roles for staff, board members, and volunteers
 - Expand CRPA's paid professional staff as necessary to maintain high levels of support for the Association's members and also support attainment of strategic goals
 - Increase both number of volunteers and engagement by volunteers, and foster a positive environment for all who contribute their time and talent to the organization
 - Recruit and engage young professionals in leadership roles within CRPA and the parks and recreation field generally
 - Attract and retain an engaged, diverse, and forward-thinking board of directors whose members bring experience, expertise, and connections that will help CRPA achieve its goals
5. **Fortify CRPA's fiscal foundation** to ensure long-term financial sustainability
- Ensure member towns, in addition to individual members, understand and appreciate the value in what CRPA offers
 - Sustain current membership levels and deploy creative promotional and programming strategies to attract new members
 - Market CRPA's programs and trainings to professionals responsible for recreational programming in organizations other than municipal parks and recreation departments
 - Develop new sources of unrestricted, sustainable funding to support mission and vision
 - Generate an annual operating surplus to build both emergency reserves and discretionary funds that can be invested strategically to advance CRPA's priorities