PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL AWARD WINNER

Strategic Plan 2012-2015

Strategic Plan 2012-15

Director Park

William V. Owens Sports Complex, Delta Park

Teen Environmental Education program

PORTLAND
PARKS & RECREATION
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

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Sustaining a healthy park and recreation system to make Portland a great place to live, work and play.

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Trail bridge in Marquam Nature Park

From the Director

Congratulations on being the best!

In 2011, Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) was recognized as the best managed park system in the nation. This Gold Medal from the National Recreation and Parks Association resulted from over a century of recurring community investments, innovative programs, a highly appreciated and motivated staff, and a broad spectrum of parks and facilities.

Mike Abbaté, Director

In recent years we have opened new parks, invested in maintaining existing parks and facilities, and expanded amenities in parks east of I-205. For example, Director Park opened in 2009 and is now a vibrant plaza in the heart of the city, a new bicycle pump track was installed in Ventura Park, and ten new splash pads provide summer fun in north, northeast, and southeast Portland.

Despite these recent successes there still remain challenges for the future of PP&R, specifically:

1. Our ability to protect, maintain, and improve our current parks, natural areas, and facilities.
2. Our ability to offer facilities and programs equitably, to all segments of our community.

Furthermore, as technology continues to increase its influence on all aspects of culture, people are spending less time in active play. Our youth are especially vulnerable, spending less time outdoors and physically active. Increasing levels of childhood obesity and nature deficit disorder are recognized symptoms.

Key to reversing these trends is increasing the amount and variety of active recreation in our city. PP&R is uniquely positioned to provide these opportunities in our parks, natural areas, facilities, and programs.

Our focus over the next three years will be on actions that close gaps in our system so that everyone has an opportunity for healthy and active recreation. Addressing inequities in access to parks and recreation opportunities will be a guiding lens for prioritizing action. Deepening community partnerships is critical if we are to serve more Portlanders and to leverage public investments. This strategic plan will ensure that PP&R continues to thrive, giving our community the Gold Medal system they have come to expect.

Mike Abbaté

Springbreak swim fun at East Portland Community Center pool

Vision and Mission

Context

In 1999 a group of citizens gathered together to chart a course for park and recreation services for the City of Portland. Over the next two years, the Vision Team, with assistance from Bureau staff, engaged hundreds of citizens from all walks of life in crafting a new vision for parks and recreation for Portland. The Parks 2020 Vision was adopted by the City Council in 2001 and provides a long-term perspective on where PP&R needs to be in the future. The 2012-15 Strategic Plan provides a map for the near term that is consistent with the 2020 Vision.

Parks 2020 Vision

Portland's parks, public places, natural areas, and recreational opportunities give life and beauty to our city. These essential assets connect people to place, self, and others. Portland's residents treasure and care for this legacy, building on the past to provide for future generations.

Mission

The mission of Portland Parks & Recreation is to help Portlanders play - providing the safe places, facilities, and programs which promote physical, mental, and social activity. We get people, especially kids, outside, active, and connected to the community. As we do this, there will be an increase in the wellness of our residents and the livability of our city. We accomplish this through:

- Establishing, safeguarding and restoring the parks, natural areas, public places, and urban forest of the city, ensuring that these are accessible to all;
- Developing and maintaining excellent facilities and places for public recreation and community building;
- Providing dynamic recreation programs and services that promote health and well-being for all;
- Partnering with the community we serve.

Hot weather play day at Essex Park

Friday night drag races at Portland International Raceway

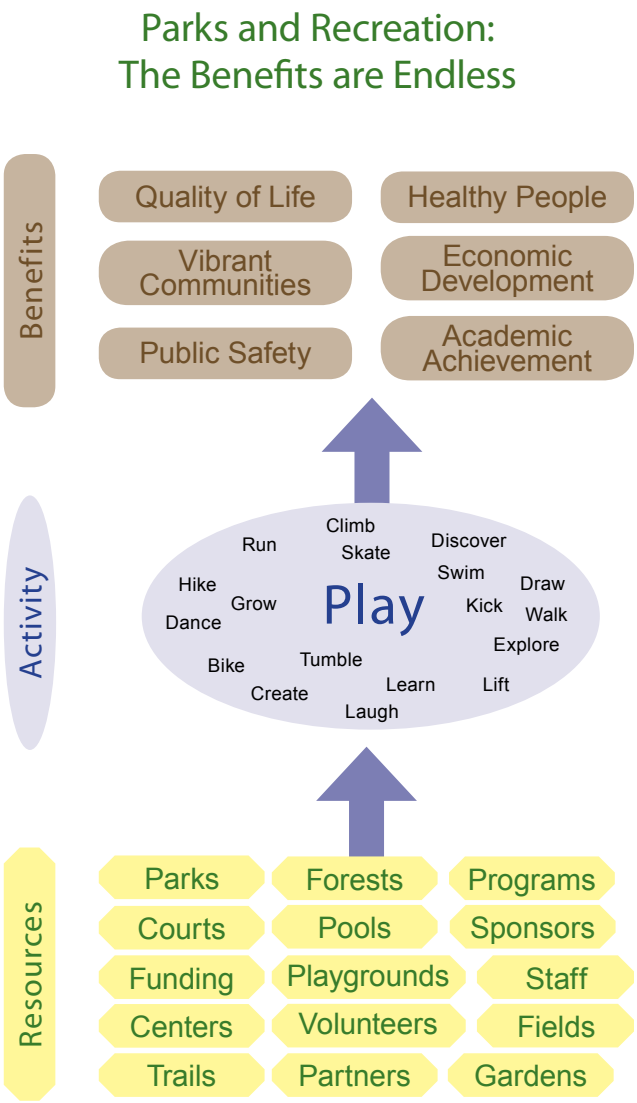
Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland for All

Public parks and recreation contribute endless benefits to the community. The outcomes are "more than fun and games," playing a substantial role in developing healthy lives and building community, preventing crime and providing positive alternatives for youth, contributing to economic development and increasing property values. An outstanding parks and recreation system enhances the quality of life of our community.

Three major trends have resulted in a new generation of children who rarely experience unstructured play in a natural setting. A major shift of population from rural to urban settings, the prevalence of an automobile society, and the pervasiveness of electronic devices and games all contribute to nature deficit disorder. The effects on public health are profound. Obesity rates have been increasing over the past 20 years for both adults and children. In 2009, (latest data available) 26% of American adults were obese. Nationally, obesity can be a harbinger of many other serious conditions, including heart disease, stroke, type-2 diabetes, and some cancers. In Oregon, obesity rates mimic the national trend with 24% of adults identified as obese in 2009. Among Oregon eighth graders 26% were identified as overweight or obese.

At a time when most school systems are challenged, reducing curriculum, increasing class sizes, and even reducing the school year, public parks and recreation programs help improve academic outcomes. Similar to active recreation, participation in recreational arts and music programs often see corollary benefits in school attendance, self-discipline, and academic performance. Partnerships with schools, such as Schools Uniting Neighborhoods Schools (SUN Schools) and joint-use partnerships are effective ways to extend the benefits of parks and recreation in response to these challenges.

However, the benefits of parks and recreation programs do not accrue equitably to all Portlanders. Various communities face a number of impediments to participation, including a basic lack of nearby parks and community centers. Public parks and recreation programs have a unique and vital role to play in providing the opportunity for healthy and active recreation that is affordable and accessible to all.



Play and the Benefits of Parks and Recreation

It is said that the benefits of parks and recreation are endless: building community, creating healthy lives, improving academic performance, preventing crime, increasing property values, and economic development. Parks and recreation contribute to the overall quality of life in a region by providing opportunities for healthy, active play.

Multiple resources support these benefits: parks and natural areas, trails and pathways, sports courts and fields, community centers and community gardens, swimming pools and skate parks. People bring some of the highest value: parks operations and recreation programming staff, volunteers, sponsors, and donors. Financial resources support the physical assets, programs, and people: property taxes, program revenues, system development charges, and at times local option levies or capital bonds.

Play is the critical ingredient to get benefits from the resources – play in whatever form one chooses. All the resources produce the desired benefits and outcomes through participation, engagement, and utilization. Play is what puts the resources to their purpose.

The Play Gap

Stuart Brown, MD and founder of the National Institute for Play, has been researching the value of play for years. By definition, play is purposeless and all consuming. And, most important, it's fun.

We play in all sorts of ways: body play like skipping rope, sports play, social play through games, imaginative play like a kid lost in their own world, or outdoor play like hiking or skiing or birding. We play instruments to make music and we play roles in theater. Play is as wide as the parks and recreation system, as diverse as our community, and as rich as our imagination.

Like the achievement gap, there are gaps in our community at play. Some people don't get to play enough for healthy and happy lives. For example, we know that barely half of eight graders in Multnomah County get enough physical exercise to meet CDC recommendations, and just 55% of adults do.

While we all could do with more recreation, there are people that demand our focus: our youth and the under-served communities in our city. There are also physical gaps in the overall system that serves everyone; both now and for future generations.

The following are examples of specific gaps that contribute to the overall play gap:

There are disparities in how much we play, how much access we have to recreation, and especially in the beneficial outcomes of active daily recreation. Our strategy is to focus on closing those gaps.

Health	Health outcomes vary by community: for example, rates of childhood obesity, Type II diabetes, and other preventable diseases are higher in communities of color.
Recreation Programs	Recreation participation rates vary by community in the city. Communities of color, recent immigrant communities, and older youth/young adults do not participate in public parks and recreation programs as much as others.
Access and Equity	Not everyone has a park or natural area within a 15 minute walk. And other barriers to access exist, such as: financial, cultural, language, physical design, and transit.
Trails	There are gaps in the trail system. It is not complete. It is not yet possible to walk or bike throughout the city or region.
Asset Management	There is a large gap between current funding and the resources needed to preserve the public investment in parks, natural areas, and recreation facilities.
Sustainability	Science and community standards are changing the definitions of a healthy and sustainable parks system. Sustainable management practices are evolving and need to be applied across the system.

PP&R Unique Role

Providing places, spaces, opportunities, and programs to play is the role of PP&R. We have partners in the schools, social services, health community, non-profit agencies, and business. Each brings their talent, expertise, and passion.

What needs to be done? Close the play gap. We build parks and trails. We provide programs and facilities. We do this so that everyone can have a healthy, fun, and active life. We are going to ensure that everyone has a chance to play. We're going to focus on building parks and trails in neighborhoods of greatest need. We're going to focus recreation programs on communities with the least resources. And we're going to do it in a way that we can keep doing it generation after generation, sustainably.

Closing the play gap requires places and spaces. We need to build out the system to ensure that everyone has equal access to parks, trails, and natural areas. We need to maintain that system to ensure that it remains available and accessible. And we need to do this in a way that is sustainable: that these resources are available to all future generations.

Closing the play gap requires programs and outreach. We need to build and provide recreation programs that encourage people to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles. We need to partner with other agencies to extend our collective resources to more people. To do so, programs need to be fun and rewarding over and over again. Programs need to build communities that support each other. We need to ensure that communities with fewer resources can come out and play.

This strategy is critical now because of the significant gaps in quality of life, health, and achievement in our community. By closing the play gap over the next three years, we will improve community health, quality of life, and level of equity in Portland.

Strategic Plan and Parks 2020 Vision

A strategic plan is the organization's focus for the next three years. In contrast to a comprehensive work plan, it does not include everything the organization does, but brings focus to those aspects of parks and recreation that need improvement and change.

A twenty year vision sets a compelling direction for an organization. Each three year strategic plan provides specific actions in the near term, allowing the organization to respond to a changing external environment and its current internal situation. Each three year strategic plan is a stepping stone towards fulfilling Parks 2020 Vision.

A matrix illustrating the relationship between the goals of this strategic plan and the goals of Parks 2020 Vision is included as Appendix B. There is an emphasis on programs and partnerships in this strategic plan that respond to the 2020 Vision goals of "Community in the City" and "Recreation Services for all residents."

Strategic Plan goals are correlated to Parks 2020 Vision goals on a matrix shown on Appendix B – see the back of this document.

Playing tennis among the roses in Washington Park

Guide to the Strategic Plan

The PP&R 2012-15 Strategic Plan is organized into two mission-focused Key Result Areas (KRA) and the four perspectives of a balanced score card. Within each KRA are three strategic themes. Themes by KRA are listed as follows:

- Manage and Protect Assets
  - Trails
  - Asset Management
  - Sustainability
- Improve Service Delivery
  - Health
  - Recreation Programs
  - Access and Equity

One or two outcome-oriented goals are stated for each strategic theme. Performance measures are linked to these goals. The core of the strategic plan is the set of 28 initiatives, specific actions to be undertaken in order to achieve the goals of each strategic theme. Each initiative is assigned to a project manager. It is important to realize that many of the initiatives reach across more than one theme, and often bridge more than one perspective. This is illustrated in the Strategy Map included as Appendix A.

Four perspectives make up the balanced score-card of this strategic plan, seen as the horizontal rows on the Strategy Map in Appendix A.

- Community
- Process
- Financial
- Organizational Capacity

Two key result areas from the prior strategic plan are represented by these perspectives: Reach and Involve the Community, and Enhance Organizational Capacity. This approach emphasizes the importance of community engagement and organizational capacity to all six themes of the strategic plan.

Key Result Area: Improve Service Delivery

A major Parks 2020 Vision goal is to provide a wide variety of high quality recreation services and opportunities for all residents. Delivery of recreation services is challenged by ever changing public preferences and interests, by the breadth of different types of recreation, and by continual fiscal constraints. The strategic plan calls for developing new models through innovative partnerships plus creative and more effective management approaches.

Strategic Theme: Health

Providing the places and opportunities to build healthy lives and communities through recreation in all its forms is central to the mission of PP&R. This strategic plan aims to expand the benefits of public recreation programs through partnerships with the public health community and increasing the focus on healthful activities in active programming.

Goals

1. Expand active recreation by partnering with the public health community.

   Performance Measure
   - *Individuals served through public health partnerships*

2. Contribute to improved health outcomes for youth through increased physical activity and improved nutrition.

   Performance Measures
   - *Percentage of Multnomah County 8th graders meeting CDC Physical Activity Recommendations*
   - *Obesity rate for Multnomah County 8th graders*

Initiative

Deepen partnerships with the public health community.

Action Items
- Evaluate effectiveness of partnerships with the health care community.
- Publish evaluation that assesses effectiveness, makes recommendations about internal alignment (identifies gaps, resolves overlaps), and recommends where new partnerships could be established or existing partnerships expanded, contracted, discontinued, or otherwise adjusted.

Initiative

Incorporate health standards into all youth programs.

Action Items

- Engage scientists, youth, and PP&R staff to establish and publish standards including benchmarks, expected outcomes, and measurement mechanisms.
- Incorporate physical activity and nutrition standards for a healthy lifestyle into all youth programming.

Strategic Theme: Recreation Programs

The way in which recreation programs are planned and supported has a profound effect on the capacity of the organization to deliver services. Improving recreation program development and delivery through a focused service delivery strategy is integral to the strategic plan.

Goals

1. Connect more youth to the outdoors, physical activity, and their communities.

   Performance Measures
   - *Visits by program*
   - *Number of Youth Served*

2. Improve the recreation service delivery model through coordinated programming, integrated marketing, and supporting services.

   Performance Measures
   - *Cost recovery rate for fee-supported programs*
   - *Percent of residents satisfied with the affordability of recreation programs*
   - *Percent of residents rating the overall quality of recreation programs as good or very good*
   - *Percent of customers rating the overall quality of their experience as good or very good*

Initiative

Implement an integrated marketing strategy.

Action Items

- Integrate various media channels and coordinate messages.
- Synchronize promotions and discounts across the system.
- Standardize pricing for the same activities across the system.
- Improve on-line registration.

Initiative

Coordinate programming efforts, with a focus on youth.

Action Item

- Pilot system-wide coordination for the following programs: Environmental Education, Teens, Tennis.

Initiative

Update the scholarship policy, systems, and procedures.

Action Items

- Update the Scholarship Policy to reflect goals for access balanced with finite resources.
- Establish scholarship budget or targets.
- Simplify and centralize scholarship procedures.
- Set up system tools to segregate and manage scholarship funds.

Initiative

Realign staff roles in accord with changes in responsibilities that coordinated programming and integrated marketing bring.

Action Items

- Complete "unpacking programming" to fully describe all the elements involved.
- Repack programming into roles that group site or program-based versus system-based elements.
- Identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities for newly aligned roles.

Swim buddies in Sellwood Pool

Strategic Theme: Access and Equity

Improving access to parks and recreation programs, thereby expanding equitable outcomes, is key to building a healthy community. The strategic plan continues the emphasis on access to parks and natural areas set out by Parks 2020 Vision, while renewing focus on providing opportunities for communities that do not enjoy easy access to both parks and recreation programs.

Goals

1. Provide equitable access to developed parks and natural areas within walking distance to all residents.

   Performance Measures

   - *Percentage of households within 1/2 mile of a park or publicly accessible natural area*
   - *Percentage of residents rating neighborhood closeness to Parks as good or very good (annual resident survey)*

2. Improve recreation opportunities for underserved communities.

   Performance Measures

   - *Participation in PP&R Recreation Programs (including race/ethnicity, age)*
   - *Percentage of residents satisfied with the affordability of recreation programs (annual resident survey)*
   - *Scholarships as a percentage of total revenue*
   - *Percentage of scholarships that are funded*

Initiative

Identify communities where PP&R can most effectively close the largest gaps in recreation services.

Action Items

- Establish priorities based on published research findings and stakeholder knowledge.
- For prioritized communities, identify recreation preferences and barriers to participation.
- Remove or reduce barriers to access and participation.

Initiative

Prioritize communication efforts that reach identified communities.

Action Item

- Deploy specific promotion campaigns and efforts that increase participation in PP&R and affiliated programs.

Initiative

Strengthen partnership opportunities that improve access for identified communities.

Action Items

- Assess partnership strengths and opportunities.
- Develop relationships, establish joint use agreements.

Initiative

Develop parks and park amenities on existing park land.

Action Item

- Prioritize and implement a list of improvements that will increase access and participation in parks (e.g. E205 II).

Initiative

Update fundraising practices to reduce barriers to participation.

Action Items

- Develop resources to fund scholarships.
- Update Naming Policy.
- Update Sponsorship Policy in concert with scholarship policy and integrated marketing.
- Complete fundraising priority matrix.
- Create a Grant Policy and procedures.

Initiative

Support workforce diversity with management systems that eliminate barriers.

Action Items

- Create an employee support group as a safe forum for exploring institutional barriers to diversity and full inclusion.
- Advance the Diversity Development Committee to represent a balanced spectrum of employees and management, charged to develop policy and procedure improvement options to barriers identified by the employee support group and others.

Initiative

Focus everyone on inclusive customer service.

Action Items

- Emphasize the role that every PP&R employee has in creating a welcoming experience for all customers.
- Establish opportunities for employees to enhance cultural competence through connecting to various cultures and learning additional languages.

Initiative

Diversify the workforce to reflect Portlanders.

Action Items

- Hire staff members who reflect the communities we serve.
- Leverage the diversity in our seasonal workforce to attract and retain a diverse and dedicated permanent workforce.

Pier Park
Community Garden

Key Result Area: Manage and Improve Assets

PP&R is responsible for a large, rich, and diverse asset portfolio that includes parks, community centers, pools, trails, sports facilities, community and public gardens, cultural landscapes, and natural areas.

Parks 2020 Vision identified the following major goals related to built and natural assets: ensuring PP&R's legacy for future generations, protecting Portland's natural resources, and creating an interconnected system of trails.

Strategic Theme: Trails

In numerous surveys, walking and hiking are among the most desired recreation activities. The Regional Trails Strategy calls for 220 miles in a connected system. However, only 152 miles are built, leaving 68 miles in gaps throughout the region. The strategy calls for improved tools to acquire, develop, and manage the trails system.

Goals

1. Meet the demand for trails by closing gaps in the trail network.

   Performance Measures
   - *Miles of regional trails*
   - *Miles of trails in PP&R parks and natural areas*

2. Strengthen management tools for developing and maintaining PP&R trails.

   Performance Measure
   - *Condition of Trails*

Initiative

Develop a policy to selectively apply expanded authority for acquisition of trail properties or easements.

Action Items
- Draft Policy
- Council acceptance of policy

Initiative

Update design and construction standards.

Action Item

- Expand design and construction standards for all types of trails.

Initiative

Create a cross-functional team to clarify and coordinate trail planning, design, development, and management issues.

Action Items

- Clarify trail management responsibilities and update policy.
- Develop safety standards and enforcement protocols for trails.
- Inventory all trails not managed by PP&R. Develop incentives for other trail managers to upgrade and maintain these trails to PP&R standards or to turn these trails over to PP&R to manage.

Strategic Theme: Asset Management

The bureau manages one of the most diverse asset portfolios in the city, covering 11,209 acres with 201 developed parks and 7,593 acres of natural areas. The strategic plan emphasizes development of a thorough asset management program that integrates with operations, financial planning, and performance management. Asset management is essential to maintaining the existing portfolio for future generations and planning for new parks and facilities in underserved areas of the city today.

Goals

1. Improve the condition of PP&R's built and natural assets by implementing an asset management program.

Performance Measures

- *Percentage of residents rating the condition of park facilities as good or very good*
- *Percentage of residents rating the condition of park grounds as good or very good*

2. Lower the system-wide risk of assets' failure to provide established levels of service.

Performance Measures

- *Facility Condition Index*
- *Natural Areas Condition Rating*

Initiative

Establish levels of service by asset classes.

Action Item

- Levels of Service for major asset classes of the system

Initiative

Assess condition of assets to determine remaining useful life.

Action Items

- Build Asset Register to contain and manage data
- Determine asset replacement costs
- Assess asset condition and determine remaining useful life

Initiative

Develop asset risk profiles.

Action Items

- Define risk assessment methodology across all asset classes
- Evaluate Business Risk Exposure for critical assets

Initiative

Prepare Asset Management Plans.

Action Item

- Develop three to five representative Asset Management Plans for key asset classes

Initiative

Develop funding strategies for capital improvements.

Action Item

- Inform CIP priorities based on Level of Service, asset condition and risk; augmenting existing CIP ranking criteria

Strategic Theme: Sustainability

The City of Portland recognizes sustainability as practices that meet the needs of today without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Already a national leader in the field, this strategic plan focuses on two challenges essential to ensuring that generations are able to enjoy the benefits of parks and recreation long into the future.

Goals

1. Extend ecologically sustainable landscape management practices over the entire spectrum of PP&R's green infrastructure.

   Performance Measure
   - *TBD - Sustainable landscape performance standards are in development*

2. Reduce consumption of water and energy resources system wide.

   Performance Measures
   - *Greenhouse Gas Emissions of PP&R operations*
   - *Water use – Irrigation of PP&R park landscapes*
   - *Water use – Potable by PP&R facilities*

City Nature programs work with neighbors to plants trees in Portland's parks and natural areas.

Initiative

Establish ecologically sustainable landscape goals and standards.

Action Items
- Develop a white paper defining the elements of a sustainable PP&R landscape, including implications for future O&M.
- Identify performance standards and return on investment (ROI) criteria for use in future design processes.

Initiative

Update internal design review process and tools to ensure construction of ecologically sustainable landscapes.

Action Item

- Extend review of design and construction drawings to PP&R sustainability stakeholders to provide the opportunity to evaluate the design against ecologically sustainable performance standards.
- Update standards, specifications, and design details as needed to be consistent with ecologically sustainability performance standards.

Initiative

Develop and implement management practices that improve and adapt existing landscapes.

Action Items

- Inventory and develop list of least sustainable landscapes.
- Redesign least sustainable landscapes using a multidisciplinary team.

Initiative

Reduce use of fossil fuels through improved fleet management.

Action Items

- Research smaller and more appropriate vehicles, including electric vehicles.
- Develop techniques to reduce employee at-work travel time.
- Implement a comprehensive policy that guides decision making related to vehicle purchases and travel modes.

Initiative

Identify high impact energy and water conservation capital projects.

Action Item

- Compile a list of priority conservation CIP projects accompanied by a proposed funding plan and associated benefit/cost analysis.

Initiative

Train staff in sustainable practices and skills.

Action Items

- Design and implement a staff development plan that includes ongoing training and supports day-to-day application of sustainable practices and skills.
- Pursue professional certifications, such as offered by LEED or alternatives, in sustainable sites design, construction, and management.

Mother and daughter equestrian riders at Powell Butte Nature Park

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