

# Columbus Parks and Recreation Community Relations Plan

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1111 First Avenue  
Columbus, Georgia 31901

# **Columbus Parks and Recreation**

## **Community Relations Plan**

Our vision for this plan is to define our relationship between the community and our department. Our goal is to provide quality programs and services to the citizens we serve, and this plan aids us in achieving this goal.

With competition from outside agencies, it is in our best interest and the best interest of the citizens to engage the community as to what we provide on a daily, monthly, even yearly basis.

To become a better steward to our community, we must establish a legacy of trust by:

- Building positive and sustainable relationships in our community with key individuals, groups and organizations.
- Demonstrating sensitivity to community concerns and issues.
- Designing and implementing community programs that improve the quality of community life and promote our long-term goals.
- Continuing our role to become essential in community service.
- A dedication to excellent customer service.
- Branding our agency's image as that of excellence.
- Achieving National Accreditation.
- Sharing our vision, mission, values and benefits.

Columbus Parks and Recreation provides numerous outreach programs to our citizens, and this would not be possible without the help of our numerous public-private partnerships. This support helps us provide more programming and events in our City.

These partnerships also assist with the public's overall perception of our agency. Having partners known throughout this community, can bring about better programs and more marketing of those programs as well.

Our major partners include:

- ❖ Columbus Parks and Recreation Citizen Advisory Board – Appointed by Council, per their district, these members act in an advisory capacity and a liaison to the public. The members visit various parks and events and help promote our department in these endeavors. This board also lobbies on behalf of our agency to promote programs, activities new facilities, improvements and funding alternatives.
- ❖ Muscogee County School District – Through a Memorandum of Understanding, shared facilities are addressed throughout the city. Additionally, our twenty-two after school programs are held at our local school sites. This helps us target and reach a signification and varied market segmentation of children and their families.
- ❖ Columbus Regional Tennis Association (CORTA) – Through a partnership and various memorandums of understanding, CORTA is instrumental in promoting the game of tennis in our city. Additionally, our partnership with CORTA has brought about numerous new tennis courts, facilities and improvements that we would otherwise not be able to fund. This is all done in the joint effort to inform citizens about the game of tennis and our newest sport, Pickleball.

- ❖ Columbus Sports and Events Council – Our partnership with the Sports Council has been instrumental in getting local, regional and national events to our city. This brings about numerous heads in beads to Columbus which results in economic impact. Again, without the Sports Council, some of these events would not be possible. The Sports Council is also instrumental in marketing these events and reaching out to the users of the facilities and events they partner with.

Knowing that communication is instrumental in community relations, Columbus Parks and Recreation has various avenues to relay information to our community.

- Email blasts – We use this capability to target different user groups via a voluntary distribution list. Through these lists we are able to communicate vital information such as programs, events, closures, etc.
- Print, radio and television advertising are occasionally used to promote the department, programs and events.
- Banners, pop-up advertising and other such methods are put out throughout the city and at events to promote the department.
- News releases are done frequently to highlight our department and different things going on in our department and the city.
- Annual Report – Published annually to inform users of the year in review and what we can accomplish for the year.
- Facebook – Now days, it seems as this is the most effective communication and community relations tool. Since inception of our Facebook account, we have grown to almost 6000 followers. This avenue provides excellent community relations not only in marketing our department, but by giving the community the avenue to communicate with the department about their issues. Staff answer community questions as quickly as possible and

we use it seven days a week if warranted. In addition, our Facebook automatically posts on Twitter and Instagram in order to reach a broader audience.

- Flyers – Flyers are posted and/or given out at our facilities often. In addition, flyers are given to our after-school program participants, the local area and schools and at other events that department staff may attend.
- City-Wide Events – Our numerous city-wide events have been a successful way to reach thousands of citizens a year from diverse backgrounds, neighborhoods and schools.
- Brochures/Pamphlets – Several of our amenities have brochures or pamphlets that advertise their various facilities programs or events. These are also displayed at times in the main office lobby.
- Presentations to Civic Organizations – Staff are at times called up to make presentations to various civic organizations. This is a great opportunity to inform the public on various offerings and the vital role the department plays in the community.
- Comment/Suggestion Cards – These are placed in various amenities throughout our department in order to gain feedback from the community and to ensure the community has a relationship with our agency.
- Program Evaluation Forms – Used after most, if not all events and programs, this is a great tool for feedback from the community. This not only helps in evaluation of the programs, but also gives buy in from the community that they have a voice.
- Citizen Advocacy Groups – Our agency has a few groups that lobby on behalf of certain amenities and parks under our umbrella. They also help

with funding ideas and grant initiatives. These groups help educate the community as well through different meetings and events that they hold.

- Website – Our newly redesigned website has all information to the department to include, parks, amenities, programs and a vast array of other information.
  
- CCG TV – The City of Columbus has its own access channel for the surrounding areas. This station provides a great line of communication on all things city related and allows feedback from the public from interviews, their Facebook, etc.

## Community Relations Matrix

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Market Segment</b>	<b>Distribution Channel</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Email Blasts	As needed	Community	Email	On demand	No cost
Print, radio and television	As needed	Community	Print, radio and television	7-14 days before event	Varies based on medium
Banners, pop up advertising	As needed	Specific events throughout the community	High traffic areas	10 days before and during event	Varies based on medium from \$200 up
News Releases	As needed	Community	Print, Radio/Television	14 days before or on demand	No cost
Annual Report	Yearly	Community	Internet, email and print	End of calendar year	\$1000 and up
Facebook	Minimum of 3 to 4 posts weekly	Community	Internet	7 to 21 days prior to event or on demand	No cost
Flyers	As needed	Community to include school children, churches, etc.	Electronically and print	Minimum of 20 days before or on demand	Varies based on quantity and size
City-wide events	Varies	Community	Facebook, flyers, Instagram, Twitter, CCG TV, emails, etc.	Minimum of 30 days prior to event	Varies based on event

### Community Relations Matrix (continued)

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Market Segment</b>	<b>Distribution Channel</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Brochures Pamphlets	As needed	Community Participants and visitors	Facilities, Schools and events	As needed	Varies based on quantity and size
Presentations	As needed	Community	Organizations	As needed	No cost
Comment, Suggestion Cards	As needed	Community	Facilities and events	Permanent	Minimal costs as to cards printed
Program Evaluation Forms	As needed	Community	Facilities and events	End of program	Minimal costs as to forms printed
Citizen Advocacy Groups	As needed	Community	Through the groups	As needed	No cost
Website	As needed	Community	Internet	Often	No cost
CCG TV	As needed	Community	CCG TV	At least 7 days prior or on demand	No cost



**Current other partnerships for various programs and events include:**

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Departmental Division</b>
Safeguard	All Divisions
Safe Kids	All Divisions
Covenant Woods	Senior Section
Allwell	Senior Section
Columbus Regional Mobile Unit	Senior Section
Girls, Inc.	Recreation Services Division
Boys and Girls Club	Recreation Services Division
American Little League	Athletics Division
Eastern Little League	Athletics Division
National Little League	Athletics Division
Northern Little League	Athletics Division
Peach Little League	Athletics Division
Pioneer Little League	Athletics Division
Sally Little League	Athletics Division
West Georgia Dixie Baseball	Athletics Division
Columbus Youth Football	Athletics Division
River City Football Club	Athletics Division
Columbus Youth Soccer Club	Athletics Division
USA Softball	Athletics Division
Bright From the Start	Community Schools Division
Feeding the Valley	Community Schools Division
Seamless Summer	Community Schools Division
Chattahoochee Valley Libraries	Community Schools Division
Feeding the Valley	All Divisions

**Public Information and Community Relations Responsibility**

The purpose and intended process of the City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Department's public information, community relations and internal and external marketing functions and activities is to inform the public of Parks and Recreation Services, facilities and programming available through a marketing promotion mix that impacts public relations, customer service and is based on the Department's Mission Statement:

***The mission of the Department is to enhance the quality of life for all citizens of this community by providing passive and active recreational, educational, and cultural programming services for all***

***age groups. It is our objective to provide parks and recreation facilities that are safe, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing to the entire community.***

Division Managers provide monthly reports to the Director regarding Public Information, Community Relations and Marketing.

The following describes examples of the functions performed by the Parks and Recreation Administrative Division.

### **Inform the Public of services, facilities and programs**

#### ***Media, Marketing and Promotion***

In the absence of a marketing and public relations budget, the Administrative Division works to maximize positive coverage in the mass media without incurring advertising costs.

To maximize marketing requirements, the Administrative Division consults with the Mayor's Office of Special Events on event planning and promotion.

The Division communicates the Department's message using promotional methods, including press releases, media alerts, public service announcements, photo opportunities, Social Media and select publications highlighting the Department's program and services.

The Administrative Division is responsible for planning and directing media coverage, public relations and marketing for the department.

The Administrative Division develops and manages story ideas that appeal to the media and promotes the message to the targeted audience.

#### ***Community Relations***

Information is made available to the public through the following methods:

- The City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Website
- Local media – achieved through press releases and press conferences
- The City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Annual Report
- Printed leaflets, newsletters and catalogs
- The City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Facebook, Twitter and Instagram Page
- The City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Center Calendars
- Columbus Consolidated Government Access Channel