

WEST DES MOINES
PARKS & RECREATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2023



We provide
everyday
enjoyment to
our community
through
people, parks,
& programs

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

In looking back on 2023, it was a year of continued growth, fundraising success, accolades, and new beginnings.

With retirements in early 2023, we lost more than 80 years of experience from three valued staff members in Sally Ortgies, Dave Sadler, and Melanie Perry. Marco Alvarez was promoted to Superintendent of Parks from Park Planner in January. I began my tenure as Parks and Recreation Director on April 3, the same day that two new staff members began their career with West Des Moines, Laura Murphy, Superintendent of Recreation, and Eric Doll, Park Planner. On May 30, Naturalist, Jess Lancial, started in her new role and in November, Cory Warner, RecPlex Facility Specialist, was promoted to a full-time position. As Director, I could not be more excited about these promotions and new additions to our team and the impact that each of them will have on our community!

2023 was a banner year with wide-ranging programs offered, facility visitors, projects completed, and economic impacts. The MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex had one million visitors come through the doors and hosted 68 special events including AAU Junior Olympic Games in late July and early August. Playgrounds at Willow Springs Park, Peony Park, and Scenic Valley Park were renovated and reopened in early summer with a focus on inclusivity and a more welcoming environment for all. The \$1.9 million playground at Raccoon River Park also got a much-needed makeover and reopened to the public with a ribbon cutting on October 14.

The 52,000 square foot playground provides ample seating, landscape throughout the site, and amenities that encourages play of people of all ages and abilities. The Recreation division had more than 12,000 program registrations and more than 900 adult sports teams participate the past year. We are fortunate to have tremendous sports venues in Holiday Park Baseball, Holiday Park Girls Softball, Raccoon River Park Softball Complex and the MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex that are tremendous assets to our community as well. These sports complexes contributed to \$41.8 million economic impact this past year.

We provide our community everyday enjoyment through people, parks, and programs and I could not be prouder to lead this department and work alongside the talented, dedicated, and passionate staff that carry out our mission every single day. Our work is valued by City management, City Council, and our residents and for that, we could not be more grateful. More great things to come from Parks and Recreation in 2024!



Ryan Penning

Director of Parks and Recreation



WINNER

BEST PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

WINNER

BEST PARK - RACCOON RIVER PARK

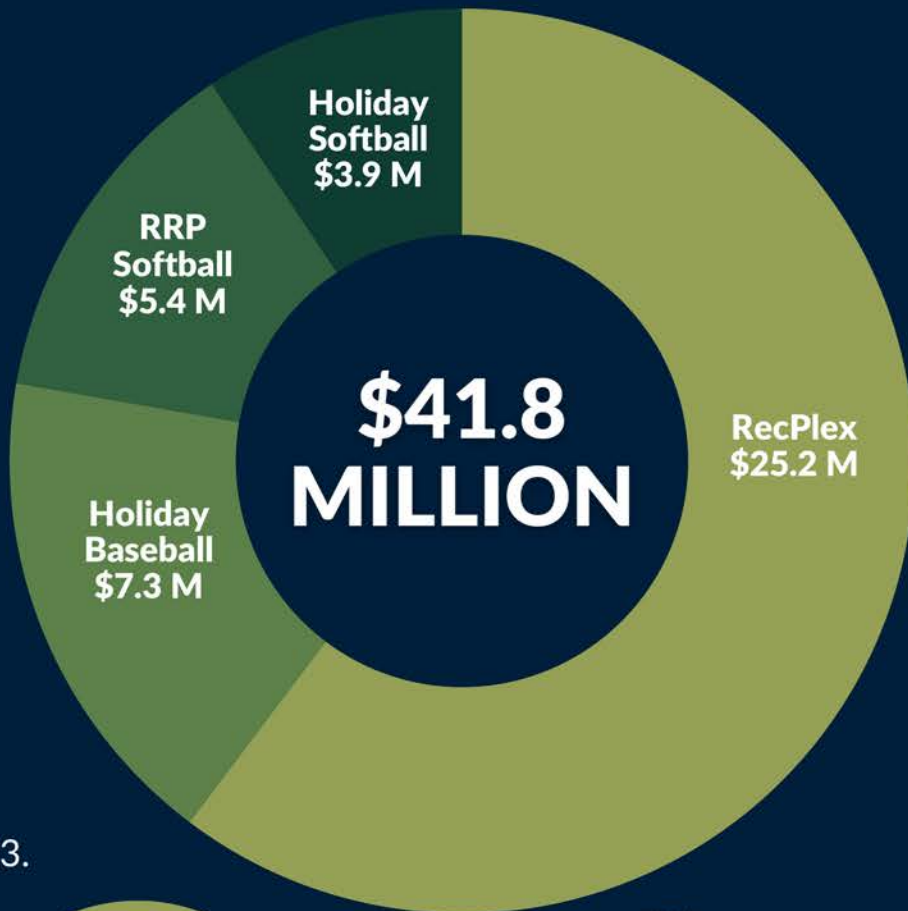
RUNNER-UP

BEST PLAYGROUND - RACCOON RIVER PARK

**THANKS FOR
THE VOTES!**

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Parks and recreation departments are powerful engines of economic activity, especially when it comes to sports complexes and recreational facilities. In West Des Moines, we are fortunate to have similar venues in Holiday Park Baseball, Holiday Park Girls Softball, Raccoon River Park Softball Complex, and the MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex that host local, regional, and national events and tournaments that attract visitors from across the nation. Direct economic impact includes local spending at hotels, restaurant visits, attractions, transportation costs, and entry fees. Those tournaments and events resulted in an estimated \$41.8 million in direct economic impact in 2023.



1,000,000
visitors to the
RecPlex

3,152
games played at
Holiday Park
Baseball
Complex



3,155
games played at
Raccoon River
Park Softball
Complex

3,140
games played at
Holiday Park
Softball Complex



WHAT YOU GET FOR \$112 A YEAR

A West Des Moines resident owning a home with a \$200,000 assessed value pays \$112.31 a year in property taxes to support **ALL** of these Parks and Recreation amenities at no cost.



ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

\$558,100

in other funding sources helped support park projects, recreation programs, and events in 2023.

\$226,000

sponsorships, donations, pledges, and advertisements

108

public/private partnerships

GRANTS

Iowa DNR - REAP	\$200,000
Iowa DNR - WRAC	\$75,000
BRAVO	\$29,000
Iowa DNR - ED	\$16,000
WDM Community Foundation	\$7,100
Polk County Betterment	\$5,000

TOTAL = \$332,100

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS



PARKS & RECREATION ADVISORY BOARD

Melissa Clarke-Wharff
Joe Hrdlicka
Linda Lowe
Jim Miller, *Chair*
Heather Schebel
Aaron Sewell
Kathleen Till-Stange



PUBLIC ARTS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Virginia Barrette
Ryan Crane
Tami Kitner
Mahesh Mathrubutham, *Chair*
Courtney Moller
Jeff Phillips
Amenda Tate



BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMISSION

Missy Berg, *Chair*
Michael Berry
Steve Herwig
Bobby Kennedy
Lyndley Kent
Nick Welter
Diane Witt

FRIENDS OF WEST DES MOINES PARKS & RECREATION

Inaugural
Pickleball
Tournament
raised \$2,050

Volunteer
based
nonprofit
501(c)(3)
organization

Support and
promote West
Des Moines
parks, trails, and
recreation
programs



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Virginia Barrette
Pam Gillaspey
Meggan Guns
Jason Henson
David McCluskey
Suzanne Meyers Warrick
Orion Nauman
Virginia Porter
Chelsea Reece
Curt Schroeder
Diane Witt, *President*



 **DONATE TODAY!**



RECREATION

12,634
program
registrations

73
new
programs
offered

184
STEAM
related
programs

921
adult sports
league teams



PARKS

22
special
events

821
park shelter
rentals

4
playgrounds
replaced



ARTS & CULTURE

10,365
Jamie Hurd
Amphitheater
attendees

61
performances
& art exhibits

9,799
department
Facebook
followers

RACCOON RIVER PARK

672
archery
permits &
passes

1,646
dog park
permits &
passes

7,903
boat rentals

83
boat lockers
rented



GREEN INITIATIVES

54
environmental
education
programs

381
Shade
Crusade trees
distributed

111
community
garden plots



AQUATICS

1,057
swim lesson
participants

138
aquatics staff
hired

101,360
aquatic
center
attendees



PARKS



The Parks division continues to strive to provide safe and inviting playgrounds in our community. To continue to provide this level of service, playgrounds are programed to be replaced generally on a twenty-year lifecycle.

Playgrounds replaced in 2023 were all designed with a focus on inclusive design. In addition to a more accessible safety surfacing, the new playgrounds included inclusive play features to allow for children of all abilities to play together. Playgrounds scheduled to be replaced in 2024 include Jaycee Park, Crossroads Park, and Kiwanis Park.

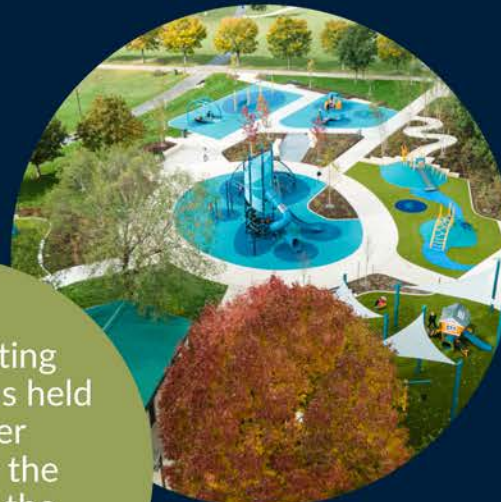


Renovated playgrounds that opened in 2023 included Peony Park, Willow Springs Park, Scenic Valley Park, and Raccoon River Park. These playgrounds were the first in our system to utilize a poured-in-place rubber safety surfacing which greatly enhances accessibility and reduces maintenance.



**\$3.2
MILLION**
spent renovating
playgrounds in
FY 22-23

Ribbon cutting ceremony was held in October celebrating the opening of the Raccoon River Park Playground.





The social media post announcing the opening of the new playground at Raccoon River Park generated over 32,000 views and 617 Likes + Shares, making the post our most popular post in 2023! The social media post announcing the opening of the three neighborhood parks was also very popular and generated 546 Likes + Shares.

Thank you for your help in establishing the new playground at Raccoon River Park. I've been a resident of WDM for over 45 years. I was delighted to take my special needs grandson to this new park on Saturday. Everything has been done with the needs of these special children in mind – places accessible for wheelchairs, etc. On Saturday it was being enjoyed by many. It is a happy, safe environment. Thank you for making this possible. -WDM Resident



VALLEY VIEW PARK PICKLEBALL COMPLEX

2,833
programmed
hours

121
league
teams

\$18,161
court
reservation
revenue

The Complex was completed in late 2022 and programmed in 2023. The complex features eight, stand-alone, lighted courts on the western side of the park, off of 88th Street. Leagues, reservations, and an inaugural tournament made for a very successful first year! Future improvements for the complex include a parking lot and a shelter/restroom facility.



REC RP PLEX

In 2023, the MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex completed its second full year of operation featuring a full array of special events, accolades, and community engagement. Several national events including the Major League Quidditch Championships, Golden Age Games and AAU Junior Olympics all highlighted a year of firsts and contributed to reaching the **one million** visitor mark for the first time.



NAIA Mens Volleyball Championships

ECONOMIC IMPACT

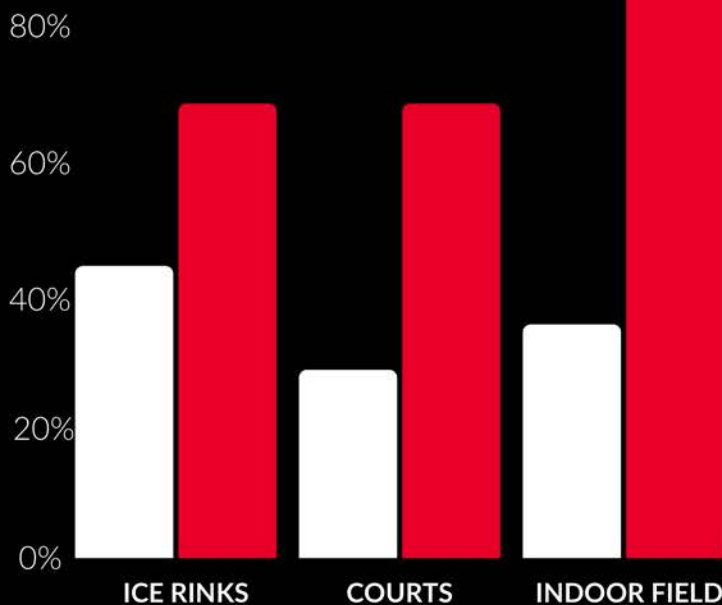
2023 Direct Economic Impact = \$25.2 M
2022 -2023 Cumulative Total = \$37.6M



39,239
community
drop-in
users

8,312
skate
rentals

2023 SURFACE RENTALS



● 2019 Feasibility Study Utilization Rate
● 2023 Actual Utilization Rate

Utilization Rate = % of available hours rented



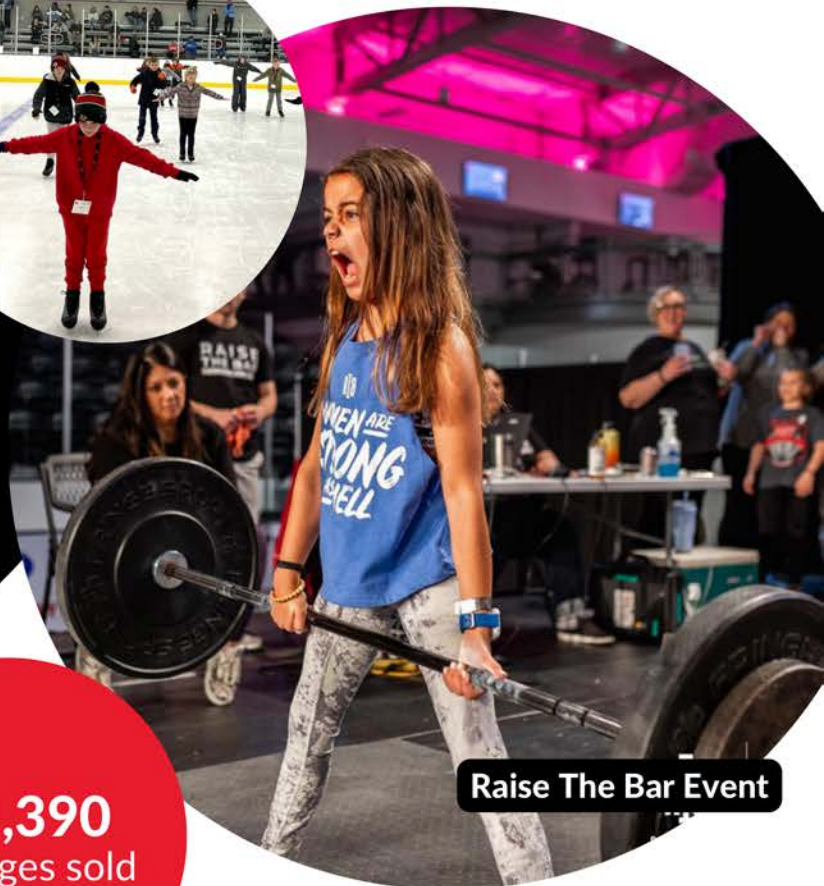
CATCH DES MOINES

Catch Des Moines honored local businesses, Champions, and community members at its Annual Celebration. "The Catch Des Moines Annual Celebration is an event where we reflect on the past year, recognize the many events that happened and our many partners that made a huge impact on our region," said Catch Des Moines President and CEO Greg Edwards. "And wow, what a great year it has been!"

The MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex was awarded the **Game Changer Award**: The venue has a "yes" attitude to hosting and bringing in events to Greater Des Moines.

COMMUNITY DROP-IN PARTICIPATION

Public Skating	13,045
Toddler Time	7,791
Pickleball	7,016
Stick & Puck	4,111
Soccer	2,735
Figure Skating	2,068
Basketball	922
Softball	514



Raise The Bar Event

197,906
concession
items sold

101,390
beverages sold

\$634,905
gross
concession
revenue



Major League Quad Ball
Championship

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

RP Kids Camps/ Parent's Night Out	3,284
Learn to Skate	957
Little Hoopers	480
Sports Camps	474
Little Kickers	285
Esports Camps/Leagues	228
Youth Volleyball	95
Youth Dodgeball	65
Zamboni Experience	30

PUBLIC ART



The **vision** of the West Des Moines Public Art Program is the creation of a diverse collection of public works of art of high aesthetic and intellectual quality and excellence along with a program that promotes cultural expression and artistic appreciation.

The **mission** of the West Des Moines Public Art Program is to create a city with enriching public spaces incorporating public works of art that offer moments of discovery and opportunities for reflection and growth--a city with public art woven into the fine grain detail of the public infrastructure.

RIISING FROM THE PRAIRIE

Rising from the Prairie, the City's newest public art piece, was unveiled on December 7 at Railroad Park. This \$50,000 commissioned work by artist Daniel Perry represents the past, present, and future of West Des Moines and Valley Junction. Located at 425 Railroad Avenue, it features native prairie grasses, railroad elements, historic buildings, landmarks, and abstract versions of the city roadmap and Raccoon River.



FREE LITTLE ART MART

The first Free Little Art Mart (FLAM) was installed in April at Peony Park (1100 63rd Street), funded by the Public Art Advisory Commission. The FLAM allows anyone to take or leave free art. Simple rules encourage sharing creativity and self-expression: Take any artwork that inspires you, contribute suitable creations for all ages, and share your finds and contributions on the FLAM Facebook page by scanning the QR code on-site. Help fill its shelves by donating art and spread joy through artistic exchange.



LOOKING AHEAD

ATHENE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

The construction of the Athene Pedestrian Bridge began in 2023. At the end of the calendar year, one of the six spans over the Raccoon River is in place and the concrete river piers for the remaining five spans are nearly complete. Once the concrete is in place for the main river span, the focus will shift to the approach bridge spans on the south side of the river in Walnut Woods State Park. Once the bridge is complete, the trail segments will be paved. The entire project is anticipated to be completed by fall 2024.



RACCOON RIVER GREENWAY 1ST STREET RIVER ACCESS

An extensive six-month master planning process was completed in 2023 for a portion of the east Raccoon River Greenway. The master plan site is situated on 35-acres of city-owned land north of the Raccoon River, west of 1st Street, and south of Railroad Avenue. Proposed improvements identified include recreation opportunities such as fishing, paved trail connections, single-track trails, water access, low-impact camping, and ecological restoration. The first phase (1st Street River Access) has been identified as a proposed water trail access point in the Iowa Confluence Water Trails (ICON) master plan. This river access project is being completed in partnership with Polk County Conservation and will serve various types of watercrafts including boats, rafts, kayaks, and canoes. Other improvements include a paved access road, parking lot, watercraft loading zone, cast-in-place concrete launch, site lighting, native landscaping, and signage. The construction is planned for 2024 with completion in fall 2024.

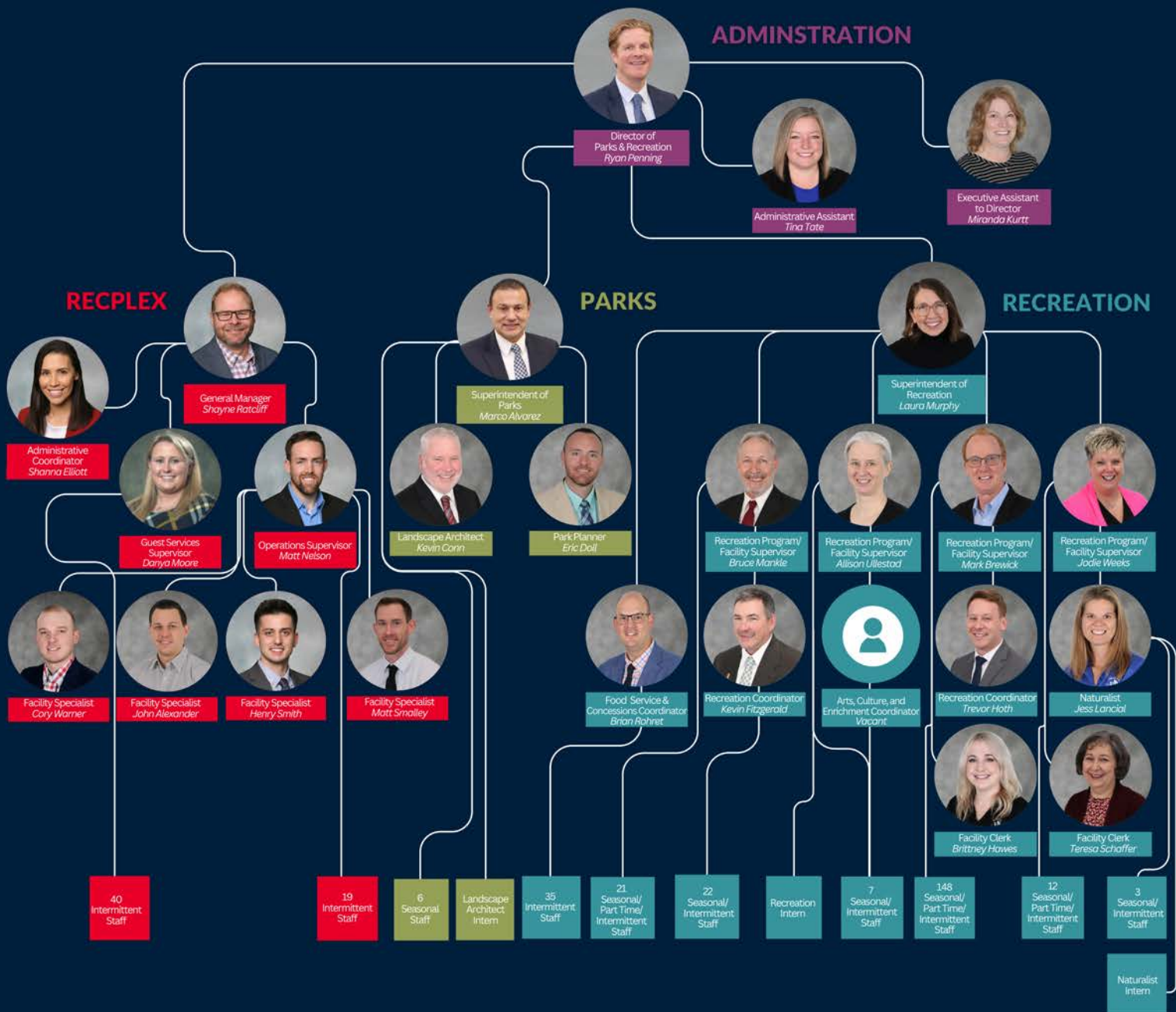


RECPLEX EXPANSION

With the sustained success and increased demand for ice time, combined with the ever growing need for special event and multi use space, a plan for the expansion of the RecPlex has taken shape. The expansion would include a third sheet of ice, additional meeting room space, and expanded food and beverage offerings. Conversations with several stakeholders and potential partners are taking place to ensure both current and future needs are considered and accounted for. The fundraising and community engagement component is expected to rollout in 2024.



DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE



WE PROVIDE OUR COMMUNITY EVERYDAY ENJOYMENT
THROUGH PEOPLE, PARKS, AND PROGRAMS.



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wdm.iowa.gov



Facebook.com/WDMPR



Instagram.com/wdmparkrec

**"NO ONE ACHIEVES
ANYTHING ALONE."
- LESLIE KNOPE**

