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## Mayor Brandon Scott Announces \$120 Million Vision for Recreation and Parks in Baltimore

### Mayor Announces \$41 Million in American Rescue Plan Act Funding to Build Foundation for Ambitious Plan to Improve City's Recreation Infrastructure

**BALTIMORE, MD.** (Monday, February 28, 2022) —Today, Mayor Brandon M. Scott, alongside City Administrator Christopher Shorter, Director of Baltimore City Recreation and Parks (BCRP) Reginald Moore, Chief Recovery Officer of the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs Shamiah Kerney, CEO and President of the Parks & People Foundation Dr. Franklin Lance, Laurie Schwartz Executive Director of the Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, Executive Director of the South Baltimore Gateway Partnership Brad Rogers, KABOOM! CEO Lysa Ratliff, and Vice President of Community Relations for the Baltimore Ravens Heather Darney, announced a new era of recreation and park improvements throughout Baltimore City.

The \$41 million American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) allocation will allow BCRP to take a much-needed first step in addressing the systemic lack of investment in recreation. The funding would roughly allot \$10 million for public pools, \$20 million for recreation centers, \$5 million for playgrounds, \$1 million for trails, and \$2 million for athletic fields and courts.

"The presence of all of these partners coming together in support of our communities signals a new spirit of collaboration and a unified vision around improving recreational opportunities across our city. This is about showing our residents — especially our young people — that they matter. That we recognize their needs, are committed to their wellbeing, and are going to put our money where our mouth is by providing them with safe 21st-century spaces to exercise, develop life skills, and spend their time productively," **said Mayor Brandon M. Scott.** "This is another tool in the toolbox as we rebuild public safety in Baltimore City. Growing up in Park Heights and going to our city's rec centers, I have seen firsthand the profound positive impact that recreation and parks have on our communities. They can literally save lives. We are following through on our promises to provide Clean and Healthy Communities, Prioritize Youth, and Build Public Safety."

Over the years, the disinvestment in recreation has seen the closure of several rec centers, the overuse of athletic fields, deteriorating swimming pools, and other challenges that have left our communities wanting more. Recreation and Parks play an invaluable role in the overall health and wellness of Baltimore City and its residents.

"Mayor Scott's approach to the needed investment in recreation is comprehensive and touches all aspects of the system," **said Baltimore City Recreation and Parks Executive Director Reginald Moore.** "He has repeatedly spoken about how the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare our city's challenges and inequities. It has also highlighted the critical need our recreation centers fill for our communities and youth. The Mayor understands the importance of the Recreation and Parks department's role in the City's livability. Healthy greenspaces, safe and sound building infrastructure, and access to suitable recreation options all contribute to the growth of every Baltimore resident, but especially our young people."

The importance of the City's recreation spaces was demonstrated in no more significant way than early into the pandemic, where BCRP managed to keep parks and trails open and shifted rec center operations to emergency meal sites for school-aged children and their families. They kept Baltimore's communities connected — providing internet for young people to engage in virtual learning and for their families to work online and continue to access vital resources when in-person services were suspended during the height of the pandemic.

Recognizing the importance of these spaces, the Scott Administration plans on leveraging the ARPA allotment to secure additional investments into Baltimore City's recreation facilities and public parks. The Mayor's \$120 million vision for recreation opportunities takes into account the ARPA allocation and funds already appropriated for FY22, as well as financial commitments and requests made to nonprofit organizations, private funders, and State sources for FY23. Taken together, they represent the largest ever commitment towards expanding opportunities for city residents to exercise, play, and thrive.

"The public health emergency compounded our need for safe, public recreation spaces," **said Shamiah Kerney, Chief Recovery Officer.** "This investment will support the healthier, safer Baltimore that residents want and need. To increase the impact of this strategic ARPA investment, we are committed to pursuing critical partnerships with state, federal, and philanthropic organizations."

Despite challenges brought on by the pandemic, the Department was still able to reopen three previously shuttered rec centers (Hilton, Bocek, and Towanda). At the same time, they were bringing Baltimore its first-ever state-of-the-art fitness and wellness center (Cahill) and beginning improvements on the City's most utilized public pool (Druid Hill Park).

Partnership and a dedicated commitment to Baltimore City are what make these services possible. Through its strategic plan Rec2025 launched in 2019, BCRP prioritized a system-wide facility assessment.

An initial investment of \$41 million in Baltimore City ARPA funds, acquired by BCRP through the Mayor's Office of Recovery Programs, will lay the foundation for Mayor Scott's \$120 million vision for recreational opportunities for city residents.

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