SUSTAINABILITY IN PARKS AND RECREATION







Cover image: A wildflower, pollinator garden in Ariel-Foundation Park in Mount Vernon, Ohio, benefits bee, butterfly and bird populations.

Photo courtesy of Cierra Strawser, Ariel-Foundation Park, Mount Vernon, Ohio.

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INTRODUCTION

Park and recreation professionals and their agencies build vibrant, healthy, resilient communities through amenities and programming that promote better health, greater wellness, broader equity and longer-term sustainability. Park and recreation infrastructure, including quality parks and green spaces, helps mitigate the impact of severe weather and climate change while agencies develop resources to improve tree canopy equity, help native habitats flourish and reduce the climate impacts from their own activities.

What is sustainability? Sustainability is a broad term most often defined as "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." For parks and recreation, sustainability starts with the more than 11 million acres of public land that it collectively manages. The more than 10,000 park and recreation agencies across the United States have the potential to implement community-wide sustainability measures that improve the environment, promote human and ecosystem health, and that could potentially lead to cost savings. In many locales, park and recreation leaders focus on activities that reduce their agencies' carbon footprints and water usage to comply with city, state or federal mandates. Parks and recreation also is a leader in educating the public on the importance of this work, showcasing best practices and connecting their communities to nature and sustainability efforts.

At the same time, many agencies face challenges in advancing their sustainability efforts. Scarce resources — funding and staffing — are issues for many agencies. Acquiring and maintaining expertise is also critical, especially as knowledge and technology evolve. More broadly, sustainability efforts may lack prioritization among political leaders.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) seeks to learn more about how park and recreation professionals are working to make their agencies and their communities more sustainable. As part of this effort, in October 2022, the NRPA Research team surveyed park and recreation professionals to better understand the activities and programs their agencies provide that promote more sustainable, resilient communities. The 20-question survey focused on the agencies' goals, the level of financial and political support for these efforts, and the challenges and barriers hampering greater success. The 183 survey responses serve as the basis of this report.

¹ Brundtland Report for the World Commission on Environment and Development, 1992

Sustainability in Parks and Recreation Report: Key Statistics



Park and recreation leaders place high importance on strategies that protect the natural habitat, embrace park infrastructure for stormwater management and lower agency water usage.

43% of park and recreation agencies operate under a formal sustainability plan

14% of agencies have their own formal sustainability plan 29% of agencies operate in a jurisdiction with a formal sustainability plan





Sustainability plans typically focus on:

- > Reducing/eliminating the use of carbon-based energy
- > Using park infrastructure for stormwater management
- > Reducing water usage

The most common park and recreation agency sustainability actions are:

- Planting trees
- Transitioning to native and climate-adaptable plants and trees
- Updating and retrofitting buildings and other park infrastructure



KEY FINDINGS

Focus Areas of Park and Recreation Agency **Sustainability Efforts**

Park and recreation professionals and their agencies adopt many strategies and actions that promote greater sustainability. They also face limited staffing and financial resources — and often tepid political will — to support these efforts. As a result, park and recreation leaders must prioritize areas of focus for their agencies' sustainability activities. Agencies are more likely to deliver on those sustainability measures that they and their key stakeholders view as most important.

At least two-thirds of park and recreation leaders place high importance on strategies and actions that protect the natural habitat, embrace park infrastructure to manage stormwater better in the community and lower agency water usage. Other important sustainability focus areas for many park and recreation agencies include decreasing landfill waste and water usage and reducing or eliminating the use of fossil-based (carbon) energy.



COURTESY OF LAUREN MCKINNIS, DURHAM PARKS AND

Protecting the Natural Habitat

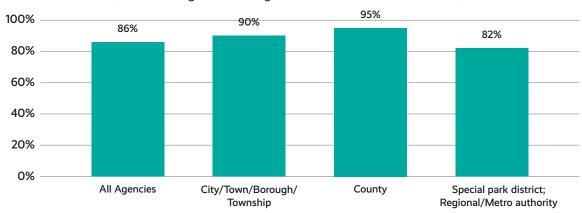
The natural habitat — including wildlife and native vegetation — is vital to sustainability efforts in creating, promoting and maintaining healthy ecosystems. Natural habitats support carbon sequestration and capture, lead to reduced use of chemicals, advance climate adaptation and protect biodiversity. Additionally, native habitats are crucial in maintaining the health of our ecosystems, such as ensuring the survival of pollinator species. Pollinators rely on native habitats for their food and protection and serve as a keystone species group in our ecosystem.² In particular, they are responsible for the reproduction of 85 percent of the world's flowering plants, including two-thirds of our crops. At the same time, without greater protection, many pollinators are at risk of extinction.

Six in seven park and recreation professionals rate protecting natural habitat including wildlife and native vegetation — a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance as a critical sustainability focus area for their agencies. Agency jurisdiction and locale also play a role in how an agency prioritizes the protection of natural habitats. Ninety-five percent of county park and recreation agency professionals and 90 percent of those whose agencies are in a city or town indicate that protecting the natural habitat is an important sustainability focus. Eightytwo percent of professionals at special park districts also indicate that protecting the natural habitat is a priority for their agencies' sustainability activities. The protection of natural habitats also receives a rating of "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance from 86 percent of agencies located in urban areas, 90 percent of those in suburban locations and 95 percent of agencies in rural areas.

² A keystone species is one which has a disproportionately large effect on its natural environment relative to its abundance.

Important Sustainability Focus Area: Protecting the Natural Habitat

(Percent of Agencies Rating a "4" or "5" on a Five-Point Scale)



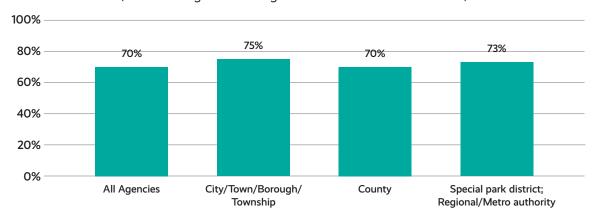
Building/Retrofitting Park Infrastructure to Manage Stormwater

Park infrastructure plays a critical role in a community's strategy to manage stormwater, including open spaces, tree canopies, vegetated buffers, bioswales, and porous surfaces that can slow, soak in and store stormwater and divert runoff and pollution away from waterways. Green infrastructure results in benefits, such as increased air quality, lower temperatures, maintaining ground water levels, climate resiliency and increased native habitat. With the increase in severe weather due to climate change, green infrastructure can improve a community's resiliency.³

Seventy percent of survey respondents indicate that building and/or retrofitting park infrastructure to manage stormwater better is their agencies' vital sustainability focus. Again, jurisdiction and locale play roles in how an agency prioritizes the infrastructure to manage stormwater. Three-quarters of leaders at city/town agencies rate this sustainability measure a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance. Seventy percent of agency professionals at county systems and 73 percent of those at special park districts or regional/metro authorities rate this measure the same. The building and/or retrofitting of park infrastructure to manage stormwater better also receives a rating of "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance from 79 percent of agencies in urban locations, 75 percent of those in suburban locations and 65 percent of agencies in rural areas.

Important Sustainability Focus Area: Using Park Infrastructure to Manage Stormwater

(Percent of Agencies Rating a "4" or "5" on a Five-Point Scale)



³ For more information about NRPA's green infrastructure resources, see nrpa.org/GreatUrbanParksResources

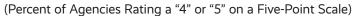
Reducing Water Usage

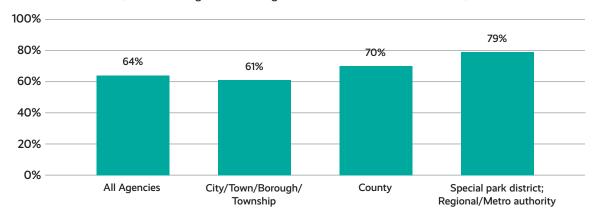
Park and recreation agencies are among the largest protectors of public space in their communities; that space includes golf courses, sports fields and aquatics infrastructure (including pools). Water is a critical resource for each of these amenities. But in many parts of the United States, climate change and growing populations have made water an increasingly scarce resource. That can be a challenge for park and recreation agencies when managing public spaces that need water.

For example, maintaining a one-acre turf field with an inch of water per week during a summer necessitates using nearly 326,000 gallons of water during a 12-week period.4 With an eye toward reducing demand, many agencies are turning to landscape designs, such as xeriscaping and climate-adaptable vegetation, sustainable turf varieties, water-conscious design features, and maintenance practices and reuse of greywater.

Sixty-four percent of park and recreation professionals rate reducing water usage a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale as an essential focus for their agencies' sustainability activities. Slightly more than three in five leaders at city/town systems indicate that reducing water usage is a critical area of focus. Seventy percent of respondents from county agencies and 79 percent of those from special park districts indicate the same. The reduction of water usage also receives a rating of "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance from 65 percent of agencies located in urban areas, 69 percent of those in suburban locations and 65 percent of agencies in rural areas.

Important Sustainability Focus Area: Reducing Water Usage





Reducing Landfill Waste

The 2022 NRPA Engagement With Parks Report found that 275 million people visited parks and recreation facilities at least once during the prior year.⁵ Those visitors and the staff who make park and recreation experiences rewarding are creating waste. Limited landfill space and growing interest in recycling waste (e.g., metals, glass, plastics) have fueled efforts to reduce landfill waste. Some park and recreation agencies are expanding these efforts to serve their broader communities. Examples include hosting composting and trash-free events and drop-off locations, and reusing natural resources — such as logs, tree material and other raw materials from their parks — in their planning and maintenance efforts.

More than half (56 percent) of park and recreation professionals rate reducing landfill waste a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance among their agencies' most crucial sustainability areas of focus. A little more than half of those from agencies in cities/ towns and counties (52 percent and 53 percent, respectively) rate reducing landfill waste a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance. Leaders from special park districts are more likely than other park and recreation agency professionals to view reducing

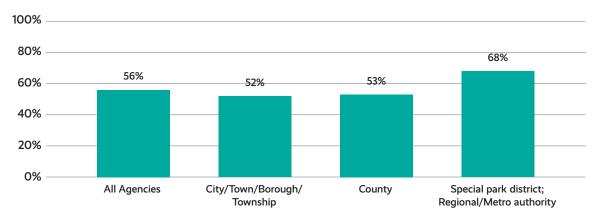
⁴ See the Environmental Protection Agency report, "Landscaping with Native Plants."

⁵ Find the report at nrpa.org/Engagement.

landfill waste as important (68 percent). The reduction of landfill waste also receives a rating of "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance from 52 agencies in urban locations, 58 percent of those in suburban areas and 63 percent of agencies in rural locations.

Important Sustainability Focus Area: Reducing Landfill Waste

(Percent of Agencies Rating a "4" or "5" on a Five-Point Scale)



Reducing or Eliminating the Use of Carbon-Based Energy

Park and recreation agencies use significant amounts of energy to deliver their services to their communities. Electricity powers the lights on sports fields and at recreation centers and runs the pumps and filter systems at pools. Gasoline and diesel remain the primary fuels for trucks, automobiles and lawn-care tools. The result of this reliance on traditional energy sources is that park and recreation agencies have a significant carbon footprint. A 2011 study revealed that a leaf blower emits nearly 300 times the amount of air pollutants as a pickup truck. Similarly, a 2001 study showed that using a gas-powered lawn mower for one hour is equivalent to driving a car 100 miles.⁷

Forty-two percent of park and recreation professionals rate reducing or eliminating the use of fossil-based (carbon) energy a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale as an important sustainability area of focus for their agencies. Forty-six percent of respondents from city/town agencies and 30 percent of those at a county agency hold the same view. At the other end of the spectrum, 54 percent of special park district respondents view reducing or eliminating their agencies' use of carbon-based energy as important. The reduction and/or elimination of fossil-based (carbon) energy also receives a rating of "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of importance from 62 percent of agencies in urban locations, 41 percent of those in suburban locales and 40 percent of agencies in rural areas.

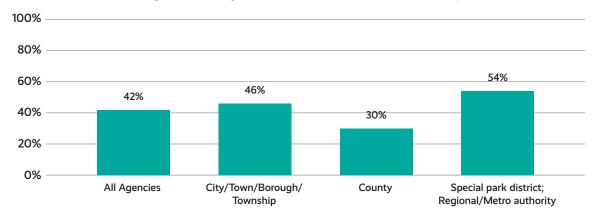


⁶ https://www.edmunds.com/about/press/leaf-blowers-emissions-dirtier-than-high-performance-pick-up-trucks-says-edmunds-insidelinecom.html

⁷ https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2001/05/010529234907.htm

Important Sustainability Focus Area: Reducing/Eliminating Use of Carbon-Based Energy

(Percent of Agencies Rating a "4" or "5" on a Five-Point Scale of Importance)

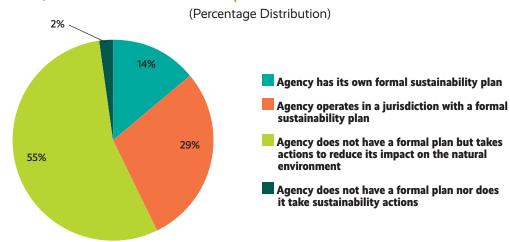


Park and Recreation Sustainability Plans and Goals

Virtually all park and recreation agencies — 98 percent of survey respondents — have sustainability strategies and take actions that aim to reduce energy usage, decrease water consumption and/or protect the natural habitat. But a far smaller percentage of agencies (43 percent) have or operate under a formal suitability plan with specific goals and targets developed by either the agency or the jurisdiction (city/town/county/state) under which it operates.

Fourteen percent of park and recreation agencies have developed a formal sustainability plan, while 29 percent operate within a jurisdiction with a formal sustainability plan. Fifty-five percent of agencies take actions that aim to reduce energy or water usage or help protect the natural habitat, even though they do not operate under a formal sustainability plan. Only two percent of park and recreation agencies take no sustainability actions in their communities.

Most Park and Recreation Agencies Aim to Reduce Their Impact on the Natural Environment, but Less Than Half Operate Under a Formal Sustainability Plan





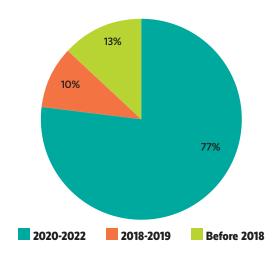
OTO COURTESY OF ANGIE GOULD

Agency-Developed Formal Sustainability Plans

Most park and recreation agencies that have formal sustainability plans have either created or updated them recently. Seventyseven percent of agencies with their own formal sustainability plans have created or updated them since 2020, including half of agencies that have done so within the past year. Ten percent of agencies last updated their plans in either 2018 or 2019, while 13 percent of respondents indicate that they have not updated their plans since before 2018.

More Than Three-Quarters of Park and Recreation Formal Sustainability Plans Have Been Updated Within the Past Three Years

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies With a Formal Sustainability Plan)



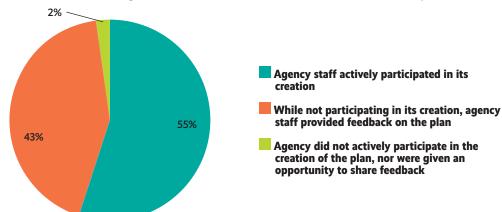
Typically, agency staff lead the creation and updating of sustainability plans for park and recreation agencies. In addition, some agencies partner with outside entities when creating their sustainability plans. These partners include:

- Local political and community leaders
- · Community residents
- External paid consultants

Even those park and recreation agencies that do not have their own sustainability plans often participate in the creation and updating of jurisdiction-based plans. Fifty-five percent of park and recreation professionals actively contribute to or participate in creating their jurisdiction-led sustainability plans. Park and recreation professionals at county agencies most often play a role (67 percent) in contributing to jurisdiction-led sustainability plans. Another 43 percent of survey respondents indicate that agency staff provide feedback for jurisdiction sustainability plans even if they do not actively participate in the creation of those plans.

Slightly More Than Half of Park and Recreation Professionals Actively Contribute to Formal Jurisdiction-Created Sustainability Plans

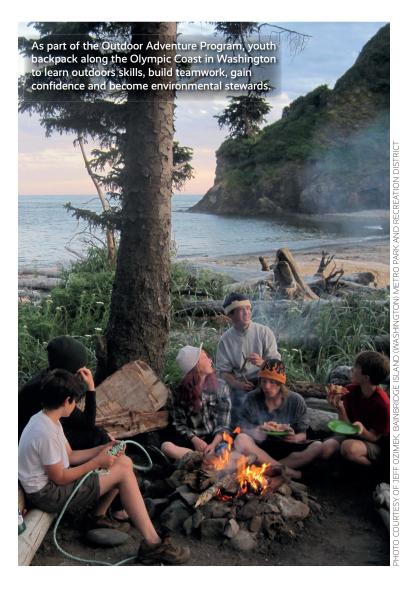
(Percent of Agencies With a Formal Jurisdiction-Led Sustainability Plan)



Regardless of whether a sustainability plan is solely for a park and recreation agency or for the jurisdiction under which an agency operates, those plans most likely include components that are focused on protecting the natural habitat. More than nine in 10 agency plans cover the protection of natural habitat, as do 82 percent of jurisdictionled plans.

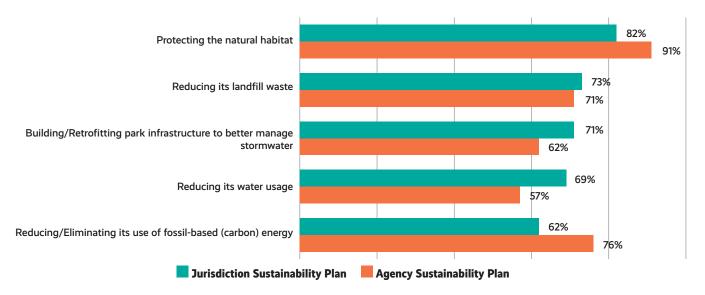
In addition to protecting natural habitats, sustainability plans look to reduce or eliminate the use of carbon-based energy, shrink landfill waste and use park infrastructure to support stormwater management. The priorities differ slightly if the sustainability plans are jurisdiction led or agency led:

- 62 percent of jurisdiction-led plans look to reduce/ eliminate the use of fossil-based (carbon) energy; 76 percent of agency-led plans do so.
- 73 percent of jurisdiction-led plans aim to reduce landfill waste, compared to 71 percent of agency-led plans.
- 71 percent of jurisdiction-led plans favor building/ retrofitting park infrastructure to better manage stormwater; 62 percent of agency-led plans do so.
- 69 percent of jurisdiction-led plans aim to reduce water usage compared with 57 percent of agencyled plans.



Formal Sustainability Plans Most Likely Focus on Protecting the Natural Habitat and Reducing Landfill Waste

(Percent of Agencies Operating Under a Formal Sustainability Plan)



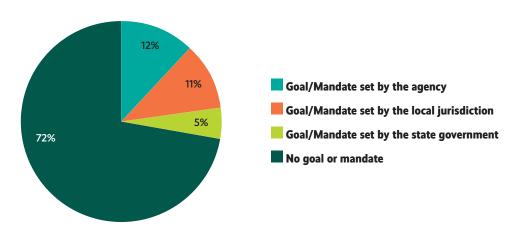
Park and Recreation Carbon Footprint Goals

More than a quarter of park and recreation agencies (28 percent) have a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints. Twelve percent of park and recreation agencies have a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints that they have set themselves. Eleven percent have a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints set by their local jurisdiction, and five percent have a state-set goal or mandate for such a reduction.

Agencies with a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints by locale include 56 percent of agencies located in urban areas, 13 percent of agencies in suburban locations and 48 percent of agencies in rural locales.

More Than a Quarter of Park and Recreation Agencies Have a Mandate to Reduce Their Carbon Footprints

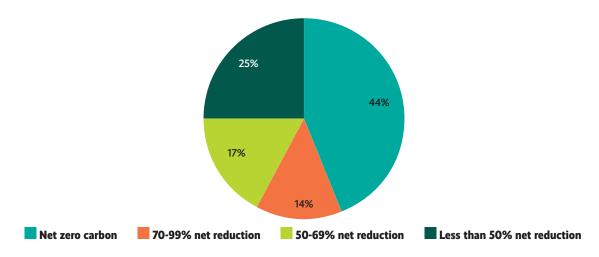
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)



Forty-four percent of park and recreation agencies with a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints aim for net zero emissions. Nearly a third of agencies aim for a net reduction of 50 to 99 percent in carbon emissions, while a quarter looks to reduce net emissions by less than 50 percent.

Two in Five Mandates Call for Net Zero Park and Recreation Carbon Emissions

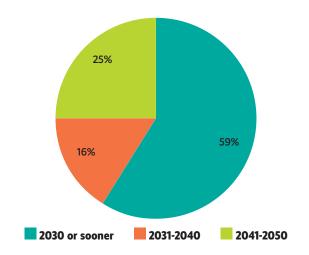
(Percentage Distribution of Agencies With a Carbon Footprint Reduction Goal/Mandate)



Fifty-nine percent of park and recreation agencies with a goal or mandate to reduce their carbon footprints look to meet this mark by 2030. Sixteen percent aim to meet their goal of reducing their carbon footprints between 2031 and 2040, while a quarter of agencies look further to 2041-2050 as their target date.

Three in Five Park and Recreation Carbon Reduction Plans Set 2030 as Their Target Date

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies With a Carbon Footprint Reduction Mandate)



Planting trees and other vegetation is the most common approach park and recreation agencies take to meet carbon reduction and other sustainability goals. Eighty-three percent of park and recreation agencies currently plant trees to reduce carbon emissions. Eleven percent plan to plant trees for this sole purpose in the next five years. Suburban park and recreation agencies are more likely than those in other locales to focus on tree planting to help reduce their carbon footprints. Eighty-eight percent of agencies in a suburban setting currently plant trees and the remaining 12 percent plan to implement tree planting to reduce their carbon footprints within the next five years. Two-thirds of agencies are transitioning to and expanding native and climate-adaptable plants and trees, with 24 percent of agencies planning to join this effort within the next five years.

Twenty percent of park and recreation agencies have transitioned to electric, hydrogen and/or battery-powered vehicles/ equipment. Within the next five years, more than half intend on making this transition. At the same time, 14 percent of agencies located in rural areas are currently transitioning their vehicle fleet to electric and/or hydrogen, and 38 percent plan to implement this within the next three to five years. This will make more than 60 percent of rural agencies' fleet electric and/or hydrogen within three to five years.

Additional measures currently used or planned for implementation include updating and retrofitting buildings and other park infrastructure, acquiring more green spaces and transitioning land to wetlands, prairies or other carbon sinks.

Urban park and recreation agencies lead the way in the current and future implementation of carbon reduction plans. Indeed, urban agencies are currently implementing more tactics to meet carbon reduction goals than are park and recreation agencies overall:

- Planting trees: 88 percent of urban agencies compared to 83 percent of agencies overall
- Transitioning to and expanding native and climate-adaptable plants and trees: 70 percent of urban agencies compared to 66 percent of agencies overall
- Updating and retrofitting buildings and other park infrastructure: 65 percent of urban agencies compared to 42 percent of agencies overall
- Acquiring more green spaces: 53 percent of urban agencies compared to 40 percent of agencies overall
- Transitioning land to wetlands or prairie or other carbon sinks: 41 percent of urban agencies compared to 36 percent of agencies overall
- Adding solar panels, geothermal or wind energy to buildings and other agency infrastructure: 30 percent of urban agencies compared to 23 percent of agencies overall
- Transitioning vehicle fleet to electric and/or hydrogen: 39 percent of urban agencies compared to 21 percent of agencies overall
- Transitioning power equipment to battery power: 27 percent of urban agencies compared to 20 percent of agencies overall

Park and Recreation Agencies Are Planting Trees, Retrofitting Buildings and Acquiring More Open Space as Top Strategies to Meet Carbon Reduction and Other Sustainability Goals

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies)

	Currently implementing	Plan to implement within the next year	Plan to implement within the next 3-5 years	Have no plan to implement
Planting trees	83%	9%	2%	6%
Transitioning to and expanding native and climate-adaptable plants and trees	66	15	9	10
Updating and retrofitting buildings and other park infrastructure	42	5	30	24
Acquiring more green spaces	40	8	20	31
Adding solar panels, geothermal or wind energy to buildings and other agency infrastructure	23	7	30	41
Transitioning land to wetlands, prairies or other carbon sinks	36	6	12	46
Transitioning vehicle fleet to electric and/or hydrogen	21	6	27	46
Transitioning power equipment to battery power	20	10	25	46



Funding for Sustainability Activities

Park and recreation agencies draw from various funding sources to support the previously mentioned strategies and tactics. The most common funding source for sustainability efforts is the agencies themselves. Nearly 80 percent of agencies report their operating budgets and 68 percent indicate their capital budgets are significant funding sources for their sustainability activities.

Government funding is another common funding source:

- State grants (cited by 46 percent of respondents)
- Federal grants (35 percent)
- Other government departments within the same jurisdiction (e.g., transportation, utilities) (34 percent)

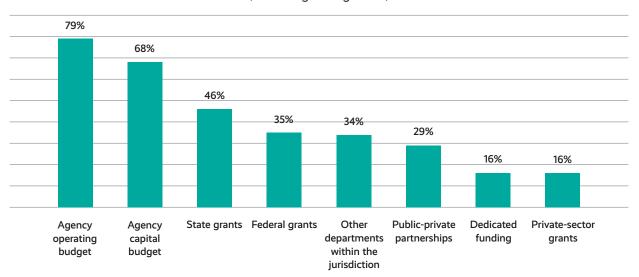
Additional sustainability effort funding sources include public-private partnerships (cited by 29 percent of respondents) and private-sector grants (16 percent).



A child participating in Wildlife Explorers camp takes an up-close look at what nature has to offer at Founders Park at Campbell Station in Farragut, Tennessee.

Park and Recreation Operating and Capital Budgets Are the Most Significant Sources Used to Fund Sustainability Activities

(Percentage of Agencies)



Support for Park and Recreation Sustainability Efforts



Sustainability efforts are most successful when they receive solid support from key community stakeholders, including local political and community leaders and the general public. Robust support ensures the agencies have access to critical financial and staffing resources.

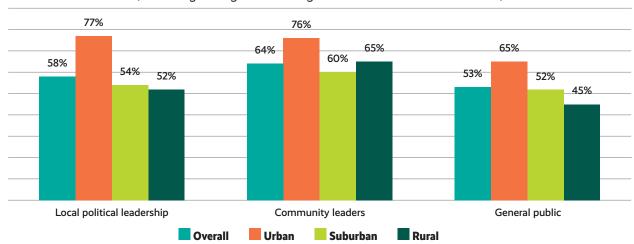
Most park and recreation leaders indicate that their agencies' sustainability strategies receive support from key stakeholders. Specifically:

- Fifty-eight percent of park and recreation professionals rate the level of support they receive from local political leadership a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale. Nineteen percent of local political leaders provide weak support (i.e., a "1" or "2" rating).
- Sixty-four percent of agencies rate the level of support they receive from community leaders a "4" or "5" on that same scale. Sixteen percent of local community leaders provide weak support (i.e., a "1" or "2" rating).
- Fifty-three percent rate the level of support they receive from the general public a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale. Nineteen percent indicate the general public provides weak support (i.e., a "1" or "2" rating).

Urban agencies receive the most support from both local political and community leaders and the general public compared to agencies in suburban and rural locales.

Urban Park and Recreation Agencies Are Most Likely to Have Support From Political and Community Leaders and the General Public for Their Sustainability Efforts

(Percentage of Agencies Rating a "4" or "5" on a Five-Point Scale)



Support for these actions grows as the public becomes more aware of their park and recreation agencies' sustainability efforts. Agencies that engage with the public about their sustainability plans see varied support for the agencies' many sustainability actions and activities. Planting trees, shifting to LED lighting and invasive plant removal receive strong public support. Eightyeight percent of park and recreation professionals rate planting trees a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale for the level of public support this action receives. Seventy-eight percent of survey respondents report strong support for shifting to LED lighting, while nearly three in four rate removing invasive plants a "4" or "5" on a five-point scale of having strong public support.

Additional typical sustainability activities that receive robust public support include:

- Adding electric charging stations (cited by 51 percent of respondents)
- No-mow zones that allow for the growth of native plants (49 percent)
- Shifting away from fossil fuel-powered vehicles (41 percent)
- Electric charging stations (41 percent)
- Shifting away from fossil fuel-powered tools (37 percent)

Public Strongly Supports Planting Trees as a Park and Recreation Agency Sustainability Activity

(Percentage Distribution of Agencies With Known Public Input)

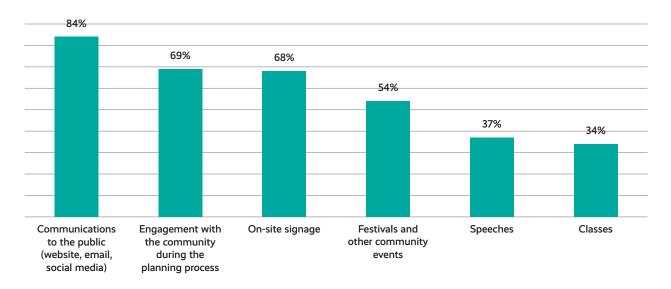
	Strong support (5 or 4)	Moderate support (3)	Weak support (1 or 2)
Planting trees	88%	10%	2%
Shift to LED lighting	78	16	6
Invasive plant removal	73	15	12
No-mow zones that allow for native plants to prosper	49	26	25
Shift away from fossil fuel-powered vehicles	41	27	32
Electric charging stations	41	23	26
Shift away from fossil fuel-powered tools	37	30	33

As demonstrated above, public support for sustainability efforts helps ensure the success of sustainability programs. Park and recreation agencies can secure public support through intentional communication and education activities. These avenues provide the public with information on sustainability efforts and the reasons for them. Eighty-four percent of park and recreation agencies educate their communities about sustainability initiatives through direct communications with the public via their websites, email and social media. Other communication and education strategies include:

- Engaging with the public during the planning process (cited by 69 percent of respondents)
- On-site signage (e.g., signs indicating where the agency purposely does not mow in certain areas) (68 percent)
- Festivals and other community events (54 percent)
- Speeches (e.g., at civic groups, schools) (37 percent)
- In-person and virtual classes (34 percent)

Park and Recreation Agencies Promote and Educate the Public About Their Sustainability Initiatives

(Percent of Agencies)





CONCLUSION



The findings in this report showcase park and recreation agencies' innate role as sustainability leaders in their communities. Sustainability is playing a growing and critical role at park and recreation agencies nationwide. Even with the progress made in recent years, there is an excellent opportunity for agencies to advance sustainability planning broadly through agency-led initiatives, both by creating their own plans and being active participants in creating and updating their jurisdictions' climate action plans. Park and recreation leaders are continually reviewing and updating their plans to address their communities' specific needs and goals while leveraging the latest knowledge, best practices and technology to advance these efforts toward sustainability.

Some sustainability practices enjoy wide adoption — such as those to protect native habitats. Others that focus on goals such as reducing carbon footprints are not as prevalent. Yet, even these represent opportunities for substantial impact, as these practices incorporate several other sustainability practices (e.g., trees, native habitat, reduced chemical use, electric fleets).

While there is widespread support for sustainability activities from political and community leaders and from the public in general, park and recreation leaders need to cultivate advocates further, especially as their agencies seek greater and more reliable funding. One way to achieve this goal is by measuring and evaluating their agencies' sustainability activities.

To aid in these efforts, NRPA will build on its strategy to equip park and recreation professionals with the education, tools, resources and plan templates that increase access to sustainability practices and implementation plans.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABOUT NRPA

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading not-for-profit organization dedicated to building strong, vibrant and resilient communities through the power of parks and recreation. With more than 60,000 members, NRPA advances this vision by investing in and championing the work of park and recreation professionals and advocates — the catalysts for positive change in service of equity, climate-readiness, and overall health and well-being.

NRPA brings strength to our message by partnering with like-minded organizations, including those in the federal government, nonprofits and commercial enterprises. Funded through dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, NRPA produces research, education and policy initiatives for our members that ultimately enrich the communities they serve.

NRPA places immense importance on research and data to raise the status of parks and recreation. We conduct research with two goals: First, NRPA creates and analyzes data to help park and recreation agencies make optimal decisions on operations, programming and spending. Second, NRPA develops data and insights that support park and recreation professionals making the case for greater and more sustainable funding to policymakers, key stakeholders, the media and the general public. The NRPA Research team works closely with internal subject matter experts, respected industry consultants and the academic community to develop its reports and data resources. Learn more at nrpa.org/Research.





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