

2023 | ANNUAL REPORT

SALT LAKE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS

— Parks | Urban Forestry | Golf | Natural Lands —



Public Lands
Parks | Trails & Natural Lands | Urban Forestry | Golf

FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year's annual report highlights Public Lands' work toward achieving our Reimagine Nature Master Plan community-driven vision and aspirations. Our five big goals, Sustain, Connect, Welcome, Protect, and Grow, outline approaches for action and strategies we are using as a roadmap to address complexities facing our public green spaces, from aging infrastructure to climate change.

Initial implementation of these strategies is woven into our everyday work as we engage the community, strive to keep clean, green, and safe parks, plan for next year's budget, and plan and design capital projects. The master plan is our guide for the next decade of work, shaping our policies and how we think about our park systems' future.

This annual report is intended to show the culmination of our work, which so many people contribute to in various ways, to achieve the five big goals. Our dedicated staff steward these special green spaces that make Salt Lake City an incredible place to live, work, and play. From the parks, paths, and golf courses along the Jordan River to the Bonneville Shoreline Trail, Public Lands staff work daily to keep our trees pruned, our parks, businesses, and private properties graffiti-free, our golf courses trimmed, and our natural lands WILD (Welcoming, Inclusive, Limited Impact, Do What You Can). These spaces are precious to Salt Lakers because they give us respite, make community, and reflect our values for living a healthy lifestyle.

Last year was another busy, highly productive year for Salt Lake City Public Lands with the successful launch of Keep Your Cool, engaging thousands of residents to share the importance of trees and tree watering. We initiated the GO Bond's first issuance and began engaging with hundreds of residents to ask them how they want to reimagine their parks, trails, and open spaces. We adopted the community-driven Glendale Regional Park Plan and broke ground on the construction of Phase I. We completed the Allen Park Adaptive Reuse and Management Plan and constructed the City's first Urban Orchard. The Regional Athletic Complex had an estimated \$15M in economic impact in 2023, with people visiting from 38 states and eight countries. We are looking to save nearly 30% more water this year by installing new irrigation systems and other turf and water reduction strategies. We have made habitat enhancements and trail improvements, put on 19 city-wide events, planted trees, and, of course, conducted the day-to-day work critical to maintaining greenspaces across the City.

Our focus remains on how we can best serve residents and visitors. We are working with indigenous residents to honor the original stewards of the lands we live on. When opportunities arise, or we are invited to collaborate, Public Lands will work with indigenous peoples and local communities to support their vision and learn from their stewardship experiences to amplify their leadership in conserving lands, waters, and ways of life. Together, we are better positioned to meet the challenges and opportunities our City's greenspaces face.

Thank you,
Kristin Riker, Salt Lake City Public Lands Department Director

PUBLIC LANDS LEADERSHIP TEAM

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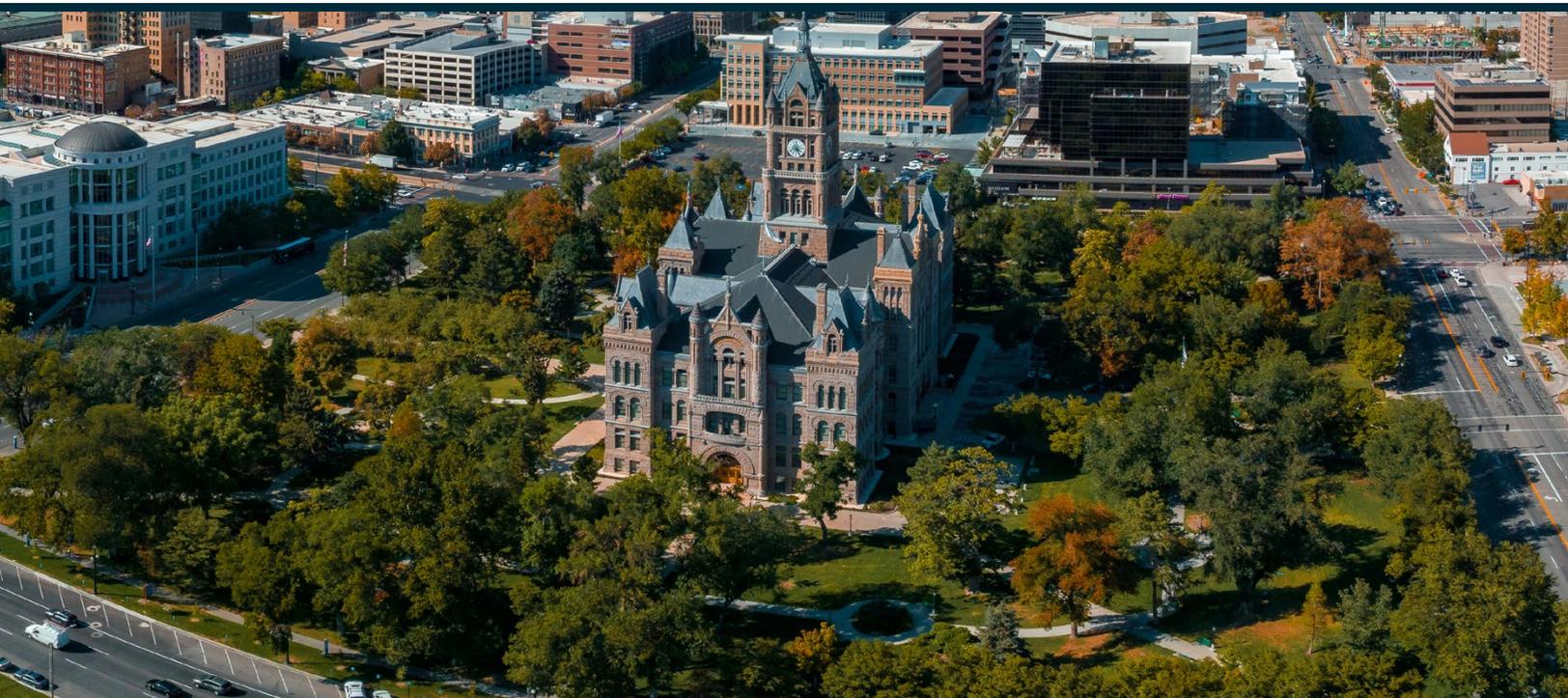
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At-Large - Kerri Nakamura, 2023

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SUSTAIN: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Reimagine Nature Master Plan Goal

Public Lands will continue to be on the forefront of environmentalism, employing sustainable operations practices such as conserving water resources for greater resilience to climate change and making significant contributions to an equitable and healthier natural environment such as increasing tree cover that improves regional air quality and provides bird habitat.



Position Public Lands to increase the ambition of Salt Lake City's climate resiliency goals.

Enhanced Water Conservation and Floodplain Restoration:

The Natural Lands team undertook a significant initiative and planted 10,000 rare and native plants, strategically linking the Jordan River Flood Plain to the newly finished storm water improvement program at the Cornell Wetlands. This effort represents a collaborative approach to restoring natural floodplain functionality.

Optimized Water Conservation in Golf Course

Management: Collaborating with the United States Golf Association (USGA) and employing their advanced equipment, the Golf Division staff successfully implemented a GPS-aided player tracking initiative across all golf courses. The insights gathered from this data are pivotal in pinpointing irrigated turf areas that can be transitioned to turf species with lower water requirements.

Explored Eco-Friendly Practices in Golf Operations: The Golf Division engaged with regional suppliers of landscaping chemicals to explore options for more eco-friendly products. This exploration focused on organic formulations that could help climate resilience and biodiversity in the future of golf course landscapes.

Purchased Electric Equipment: The Parks Division utilized grant funding to invest in four 72" electric ride-on mowers. The grant also facilitated the acquisition of a trailer equipped with rooftop solar panels designed to charge the mowers while housed within. This approach will be tested in 2024, and based on its success, we will explore further funding opportunities to expand our sustainable machinery inventory.



Top: Crews planting rare native plants at Cornell Wetlands. **Bottom:** A new electric mower used by Public Lands maintenance staff.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Enhanced Water Conservation: Focused efforts in water management and conservation, especially in golf courses and wetlands.

Innovative Stormwater Management: Implementation of effective stormwater systems at key locations.

Urban Forestry Expansion: Campaigns and initiatives for increasing urban tree canopy and promoting tree care.

Biodiversity and Native Plants Program Growth: Expansion and collaboration for enhancing biodiversity and native plant propagation.

Sustainable Golf Course Practices: Initiatives for eco-friendly operations in golf courses.

Optimized Irrigation through Weather Station Integration at Regional Athletic Complex: Public Lands successfully integrated a weather station with the Regional Athletic Complex's site control irrigation system. This strategic enhancement optimizes water application and scheduling for the upcoming season. Aligning the irrigation system with real-time evapotranspiration (ET) data ensures more precise and efficient watering.

Completed an Invasive Species Management Plan: Public Lands has successfully updated the 2012/2016 Invasive Species Management Plan. The updated plan will now serve as a comprehensive guide for managing invasive species across all natural lands in the City. The updated plan incorporates current best practices for invasive species control in natural areas. It also outlines functional approaches for low-pesticide/no-pesticide management in parks, golf courses, gardens, farms, and orchards, aligning with our commitment to efficient practices and sustainable operations.

Implemented Innovative Stormwater Management at Regional Athletic Complex: Public Lands completed phases I and II of a stormwater and pond project at the Regional Athletic Complex. As a result, stormwater is now effectively contained within the complex, eliminating the need to use the Public Utilities drainage system. The second phase included a comprehensive mosquito management plan, which involved cutting and spraying phragmites in both ponds to mitigate mosquito issues during athletic events.

Protected City Stormwater Infrastructure: The Parks Division dedicated substantial resources to clear debris from the City Creek riverbed in a proactive measure addressing the heightened flood risk posed by the unprecedented snowpack levels and the rapid onset of warm weather in early spring.



Top: Regional Athletic Complex Field. **Bottom:** The stormwater retention pond at the Regional Athletic Complex.



(continued) **Position Public Lands to increase the ambition of Salt Lake City's climate resiliency goals.**

Established Sustainable Water Practices in Golf Courses: Salt Lake City Public Utilities team conducted a comprehensive irrigation audit at the Forest Dale Golf Course. This initiative is part of a broader effort to create a Drought Management Plan for Public Lands, focusing on low-water landscape interventions. Audits for other golf courses are scheduled to continue throughout 2024.

Advanced Turf Reduction Strategies in Golf Courses: Public Lands project planners began assembling the scope of work details to develop a Request for Proposals (RFP) for selecting a specialized golf course architect. The architect will help finalize each golf course's comprehensive turf reduction plan. The RFP is scheduled to be published in the spring of 2024.

Progressed in Locating Urban Wood Re-utilization Facilities: The Urban Forestry Division, collaborating with Public Utilities, Sustainability, Real Property Management, and Public Lands Planners, began actively identifying suitable city-owned properties for the new Urban Wood Re-utilization (UWR) facility and yard.

Position Public Lands as a City leader for driving improvements in environmental health and environmental justice.

Expanded Arborist Training Across City Divisions: The Urban Forestry team has conducted two highly successful chainsaw safety workshops, targeted specifically for the staff of the Natural Lands and Streets Divisions. These workshops, focusing on essential safety practices, were well-received and have led to the development of additional training sessions. Building on this success, the team is now preparing to offer tree pruning and watering workshops for other city divisions.

Updated Tree Protection Through Urban Forestry Ordinances: The Urban Forestry Division has significantly strengthened tree conservation efforts by updating its tree protection, planting, and watering specifications. Complementing these updates, the division has also developed draft amendments to the Urban Forestry Ordinance. These proposed updates will provide more robust enforcement measures and mitigation strategies in cases where public property trees are damaged or destroyed.

Top: An image of Bonneville Golf Course. **Middle:** An image of Glendale Golf Course. **Bottom:** Public Lands Urban Forestry crews removing a tree.

Launched the 'Keep Your Cool' Campaign for Urban Tree Care:

The Urban Forestry Division developed and launched the 'Keep Your Cool' campaign. This campaign aims to educate and engage city residents in promoting better tree watering and care practices. The initiative reached thousands of residents in 2023 through various channels, including tabling events, community council meetings, videos, and social media posts. Additionally, the distribution of educational and promotional materials, such as signs, stickers, hats, t-shirts, brochures, and the highly acclaimed 12-month Tree Watering Calendar, has been instrumental in enhancing awareness about the vital role of trees in urban environments and the responsibilities of residents in maintaining their health.

Implemented a Specialized Tree Irrigation System in Cottonwood Park:

The Urban Forestry Division successfully installed a tree-specific irrigation system in Cottonwood Park. The new system will provide water to over 100 new and existing trees in the park. It enables the trees to receive adequate water even when turf watering might be restricted or inappropriate due to environmental considerations. The new trees on this watering system already show excellent growth and health.

Expanded Native Plants & Biodiversity Program Through Strategic Partnerships:

The Natural Lands program has formed partnerships with the University of Utah and the Utah State Department of Corrections, resulting in increased greenhouse capacity and the expansion of biodiversity projects across the city.

Collaborated on Environmental Restoration Along the Jordan River:

The Trails and Natural Lands team has partnered with the State of Utah DNR to establish a weed management and native plant propagation program along the Jordan River at the Glendale Regional Park. This initiative serves as a valuable study to inform future restoration projects along the Jordan River.

Led Sustainable Infrastructure Initiatives:

Public Lands staff played a pivotal role by co-chairing the City's internal Sustainable Infrastructure Committee and actively contributing to the update of the City's sustainable infrastructure policy. The revised policy now mandates that all public lands-related capital projects with budgets exceeding \$2 million in value achieve SITES certification.

Constructed an Urban Orchard: At the 9-Line Community Orchard site, eleven stone fruit trees were planted this fall, and the remaining forty trees will be planted in Spring 2024. This project is in partnership with Tree Utah, Wasatch Community Gardens and Parkview Elementary and includes new grading and paths, a central gathering space, drip irrigation, and water-wise landscaping.



Top: An image of a yard sign promoting the Keep Your Cool Campaign. **Middle:** Native plants growing in a City greenhouse. **Bottom:** An image of the 9-Line Community Orchard site.

CONNECT: ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED GREEN SPACES

Reimagine Nature Master Plan Goal

Well-maintained, welcoming trails, streets, public transportation, and sidewalks are interconnected as the city's circulatory system. This system connects pedestrians, cyclists, and riders to the city's green spaces and outstanding natural landscapes of Salt Lake City's Public Lands: mountains, foothills, valley, wetlands, and lakes. The City will continue to enhance these systems and increase connectors to include everyday destinations ranging from the daycare, library, grocery store, pharmacy and museum.



Connect people to information about their park system to increase visitation.

Planned New Wayfinding Signage for the Salt Lake City

Foothills: Public Lands worked with SE Group, recreation, and trail wayfinding specialists to develop wayfinding signage templates for the Foothills Natural Area. This collaboration aims to update and supplement the 2015 Salt Lake City Parks, Open Space, and Trail Signage Guidelines, reflecting the newer Foothills Plan. The project includes creating and installing trail head signs, kiosks, maps, "Be WILD" educational stations, and on-trail wayfinding signs by 2024.

Enhanced Outreach and Support for Homeless

Communities with Park Rangers: The Park Rangers built meaningful relationships with individuals experiencing homelessness in the parks, trails, and natural areas of Salt Lake City. They partnered with HEART, VOA, and other human services organizations to create informative resource brochures. This dedicated approach to outreach and support was featured in a KUER story, underscoring the Rangers' commitment to fostering a welcoming and safe environment in parks.

Developed and Implemented New Bilingual Signage

Standards: Public Lands completed and implemented an updated signage standard for all new signs. All signs in the new standard were designed to be bilingual in English and Spanish, with both languages being equally represented. To begin implementing this new standard, signage design has been completed to replace all signage in ten community parks citywide. Construction for these signs will begin in 2024.



Top: Trail signs in the Salt Lake City Foothills.
Bottom: Public Lands employees observing a park map sign.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Enhanced Accessibility and Information: Introduced new way finding and digital enhancements, including bilingual options, to make parks more navigable and informative.

Accessibility for All Communities: Identified new ways to connect with and understand perspectives of individuals experiencing homelessness, those with disabilities, and west side neighborhoods.

Greening Urban Trails and Spaces: Advanced environmental projects, like Hidden Hollow and the Green Loop, to increase public green space and promote sustainability.

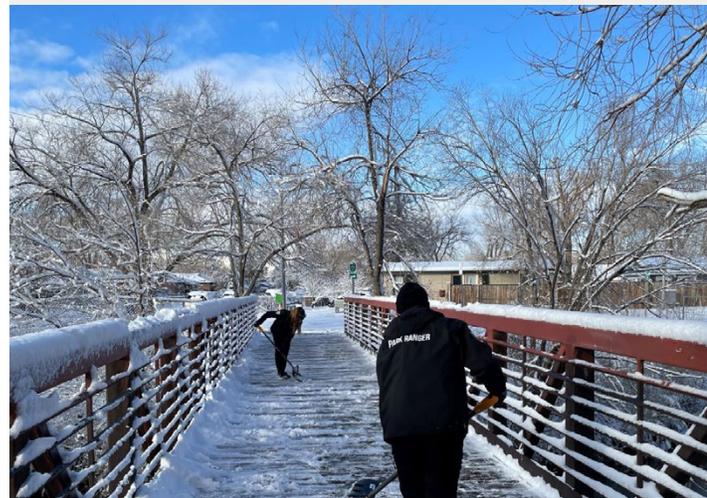
Community Engagement Enhancements: Broadened community engagement with translation services, ensuring accessible communication across multiple languages.

Revitalized Public Lands Website for Enhanced User Experience: Public Lands began evaluating and overhauling essential pages on the Public Lands Website. A complete redesign and template creation was completed for all project pages. The redesign was focused on user-friendly access, incorporating critical information, improving the mobile user experience, and simplifying navigation.

Increase the ease of access to public lands, making it easier to travel to, between and within them.

Conducted an ADA Accessibility Audit in Parks: The Mayor's Office ADA Coordinator began a project in collaboration with Public Lands to develop a Parks ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (SETP). This process involved visiting every park and assessing the ADA compliance of various elements and amenities including play features, parking, walkways, sports fields, and seating. The findings of these evaluations will be compiled into a report along with the Citywide SETP, and Public Lands will have a phased list of projects to improve accessibility throughout our parks system.

Enhanced Accessibility through Translation Services: Public Lands has integrated translation services into our community engagement and communication efforts on key projects, including Glendale Park, Allen Park, Steenblik Park, the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan, and Glendale Pickleball Courts, offering translations in Spanish and Samoan. Additionally, our project websites allow visitors to choose their preferred language for content translation.



Top: Public engagement event with youth group.
Bottom: Maintenance crews shoveling snow from a City park bridge.



Top: An image showing Salt Lake City staff touring the Green Loop with consultants. **Bottom:** An image from the Salt Lake City Green Loop opening night.

(continued) **Increase the ease of access to public lands, making it easier to travel to, between and within them.**

Enhanced Hidden Hollow with Improved Access, Safety, and Sustainability: Public Lands made significant enhancements in Hidden Hollow, with project completion planned for 2024. Key improvements include the addition of pedestrian pathways throughout the park, aimed at boosting circulation and accessibility, and the installation of new lighting to enhance safety. Public Lands also added new irrigation systems and planting areas and expects them to be operational by spring 2024, contributing to the sustainable infrastructure outlined in the 'Sustain' section of the master plan.

Revitalized the Green Loop Project for a Greener Downtown: Collaborating with multiple city departments, Mayor Mendonhall has elevated the Green Loop project. The initiative started with a successful Green Loop pop-up event in the summer, followed by concerted efforts in planning and designing the 200 East leg beginning in the early fall. The 5.5-mile loop around downtown on 200 East, 900 South, 500 West, and South Temple and North Temple Streets will potentially add up to 60 new acres of public green space downtown. This cross-departmental project is one of the mayor's top priorities for her second term.



These metrics highlight some of the ways Public Lands measures its performance each year.

1.5 Trees Planted for every Tree Removed

880 of Developed Parks in Salt ACRES Lake City

12 Cared for by Each Full Time Maintenance Employee
ACRES
In Developed Parks

50% of wood resulting from tree removal was recycled

90% of residents live within walking distance of a public park.

2000+ Natural Lands & Trails in Salt ACRES Lake City

Metrics are based on data from Fiscal Year 2023
—
July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023.

WELCOME: ACTIVE, AUTHENTIC AND INCLUSIVE SPACES

Reimagine Nature Master Plan Goal

Ideal parks are actively used by the community, inclusive for all ages, abilities and cultures and strive to be authentic, or reflective of the neighborhood and community's culture. The Public Lands Department is committed to looking at top-down and bottom-up community-driven solutions to welcoming more people. The department will strive to reflect the diverse culture and history of Salt Lake City neighborhoods in the tapestry of parks and open spaces.



Design and program Neighborhood Parks to highlight the unique natural, historical, cultural and economic identity of the surrounding area and community in which they are located.

Engaged Community in Public Space Visioning: Active community involvement significantly influenced the design of our public spaces. We engaged directly with more than 4,500 individuals. Outreach methods included city council meetings, city events, focus groups, advisory groups, canvassing, workshops/open houses, intercept interviews/surveys, and school events. In addition, we received over 2,839 survey submissions for our projects.

Engagement activities were conducted for the following projects: Allen Park, for the Adaptive Reuse and Management Plan, Emerald Ribbon Action Plan, Jordan River Corridor, Liberty Park Playground, Steenblik Park, Donner Trail Park, Tauffer Park, Richmond Park, Warm Springs and North Gateway Parks, Miller Park, Glendale Park, RAC Playground, and Foothills Natural Area.

Launched a Park Stewardship Campaign: The Public Lands Department launched the "SLC Be W.I.L.D." campaign to educate the community to care for each other and our shared spaces. The goal is to promote greater awareness of the City's Public Lands through the Be W.I.L.D. acronym: Welcome - Explore and enjoy our public lands; Inclusive Spaces - Our public lands are for everyone to share; Limit Your Impact - Be aware of the impact of your feet, wheels, and paws; Do What You Can - We can all do our part through volunteering and stewardship.



Top: Public Lands pop-up engagement event. **Bottom:** Salt Lake City Park Ranger tabling about the BE W.I.L.D. campaign.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Robust Community Engagement: Engaged over 4,500 community members in shaping the future of Salt Lake City parks.

New Engagement Strategies: Prioritized reaching traditionally under-represented communities.

Community Programming: Provided diverse publicly accessible events and activities and received additional event funding.

Community Golf Resources: Developed resources for the community to utilize when engaging with Salt Lake City golf courses.

Support active programming that brings people out to their parks for art, events, programs, recreation, and community. This programming should be diverse and adapted to represent the community culture and encourage creation of social connections.

Improved Park Facilities at Backman Community Open Space:

In collaboration with the community, Public Lands secured funding to enhance the new Backman Community Open Space. In 2023, efforts were concentrated on finalizing the design and obtaining extra funding for this space on the border of the Rose Park and Fairpark neighborhoods, near Backman Elementary School. The project's scope includes an outdoor classroom, a natural playground, irrigation for drought-resistant plants, new pathways, and an improved alignment of the Jordan River Parkway Trail, facilitated by the recently installed Bridge to Backman. This unique and versatile park is set to open in 2024, offering a vibrant green space for the community.

Introduced Free Golf Practice Areas: The Public Land Golf Division identified and developed 15 free practice areas across SLC golf courses, offering residents and visitors a complimentary way to enhance their golf skills. Simultaneously, each golf course management team began evaluating these areas, focusing on ongoing improvements and expansion opportunities, with further developments expected in 2024.



Top: A rendering of the Backman Community Open Space
Bottom: Players on a Salt Lake City Golf Course.



Top: A rendering of a proposed playground at the Regional Athletic Complex. **Bottom:** An image from the drone show held at Jordan Park. **Right:** Lindsey Gardens Park Baseball Fields.

(continued) **Support active programming that brings people out to their parks for art, events, programs, recreation, and community. This programming should be diverse and adapted to represent the community culture and encourage creation of social connections.**

Secured Budget Expansion for Community Events: The City Council approved a budget expansion for the addition of a full-time staff member and nine new community events. This investment, along with the success in park activation, has solidified these spaces as vibrant, inclusive focal points, significantly strengthening community bonds and engagement.

Hosted New Community Events Throughout the City: Successfully organized 16 unique events that created over 49 activation days in parks citywide. Events attracted a wide audience with activities like movie nights, Lumen Land, drone shows, and more. Additionally, new weekly recreational activities we introduced, such as dog training and yoga sessions in Pioneer Park.

Engaged Community in Designing Destination Playground at Regional Athletic Complex: Public Lands began working on a project to design and install a playground at the Regional Athletic Complex (RAC). A significant community engagement initiative involved a survey and in-person voting opportunities. This effort gathered over 400 votes from children who participated in selecting the theme for the playground. The project is currently in the design phase, with construction scheduled to commence in the fall of 2024.

Park Rangers Led Diverse Community Programs for Park Activation: Park Rangers spearheaded 32 programs, primarily focusing on young people and families, to activate citywide parks and make them focal points for every neighborhood. These programs included leading tours of the Foothill trails, educating school groups such as the ecological importance of worms, and conducting nature craft sessions for families at the library.

Updated Golf Course Information Resources: The golf administration staff began creating detailed web pages and videos with location maps, detailed information, and guidelines about using each course's free practice areas. New videos and webpages will be posted to slcgolf.com in mid-2024.

Implemented New Performance Planning Process: Public Lands developed and implemented a comprehensive performance plan and evaluation process to guide supervisors and employees in establishing goals that are in harmony with the adopted master plan, with a strong emphasis on fostering employee professional development and enhancing overall productivity and effectiveness.



Did you Know?

Park Rangers Hubs are located at the Fisher Carriage House, Jordan Park, Pioneer Park, Liberty Park, and Fairmont Park and serve as operational home bases. These centrally located Hubs make it possible for Park Rangers to equitably visit all parks, trails, and natural lands as they walk, bike, and hike throughout the city.

PROTECT: A COMMITMENT TO STEWARDSHIP

Reimagine Nature Master Plan Goal

The Public Lands Department will balance providing safe green spaces for the public while also protecting iconic, irreplaceable natural resources that keep the city wild. The Department will lead the stewardship and care of urban green spaces and seek out opportunities to partner with advocacy groups and schools to educate on how the public can be stewards of the land and learn its history.



Top: Mayor Mendenhall with community members at a construction groundbreaking for Glendale Park.
Bottom: Crews removing storm water debris near City Creek.

Ensure iconic, irreplaceable assets are not lost or rendered less valuable due to neglect, destruction, or development.

Progressed Park Revitalization and Infrastructure

Investments: Public Lands made significant progress on major projects funded by the 2022 Parks General Obligation Bond and the 2022 Sales Tax Revenue Bond, focused on enhancing various parks and open spaces. Nearly two dozen sites were chosen for revitalization across the City, including Glendale Park, Liberty Park Playground, Allen Park, the Folsom Trail, Donner Trail Park, Taufer Park, Richmond Park, Steenblik Park, Warm Springs and North Gateway Parks, Sunnyside Park, and the Jordan River Corridor, among many others.

In 2023, many of these projects began extensive community engagement and design, resulting in thousands of interactions with the community, ensuring that the upgrades reflect each neighborhood's unique history and desires.

Celebrated One Year Milestone of Park Rangers Enhancing Community Engagement:

The Park Ranger program completed its first full calendar year, marking a significant milestone in its development. The Park Rangers have positively impacted the community by being a consistent presence and a knowledgeable source of information about the parks, trails, and natural lands of Salt Lake City.

Improved the Park Ranger Program: All Park Rangers became trained as Certified Interpretive Guides through the National Association of Interpretation, elevating their ability to educate and engage with park users through public programming. The Park Rangers developed a partnership with the Utah Cultural Site Stewardship Program to track and report any damages, vandalism, and misuse of public spaces with cultural significance.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Infrastructure Enhancements: Invested in park revitalizations and infrastructure to protect iconic assets through bond-funded projects.

Park Ranger Program Evolution: Enhanced training and partnerships, elevating community engagement and protection of public lands and led educational campaigns to encourage responsible park use.

Community Engagement Strengthening: Fostered community ties and volunteer involvement for increased public lands stewardship.

Developed the Guiding Documents for Allen Park: With input from hundreds of neighbors and current and interested park users, Public Lands developed the Adaptive Reuse and Management Plan for Allen Park in 2023. It will be finished in early 2024. The plan, guided by robust public engagement and the park's 2022 Cultural Landscape Report, will help shape the future programming for Allen Park, including how to spend \$4.5M funded by the Parks Trails and Natural Lands GO Bond in 2022. Structural and landscape restoration in Allen Park will further its reputation as a peaceful oasis in the heart of the city.



Top: Urban Forestry arborists conducting a large tree pruning. **Bottom:** Community members gathering at Allen Park.



Leverage the power of the community to help steward SLC's Public Lands.

Strengthened Community Ties through Free Youth Soccer Clinics:

The Regional Athletic Complex successfully partnered with Real Salt Lake to host four free youth soccer clinics in 2023. These clinics, targeted at children aged 5-14, were conducted during weekday evenings and saw participation from over 50 children in each session. The success of this collaboration has laid the groundwork for ongoing partnerships with Real Salt Lake and other local athletic organizations to continue offering free sports camps and clinics, mainly benefiting the youth in west side communities.

Fostered Community Collaboration through Volunteer Events:

The Public Lands Volunteer Program actively collaborated with 12 Community Organizations and "Friends of" Groups to host 18 community volunteer and engagement events and held a total of 42 volunteer events throughout the year. These events played a crucial role in activating and enhancing Public Lands sites, while also elevating awareness of the program.

Addressed Off-Leash Dog Activity: Park Rangers focused on off-leash dog activity in high use areas like the Foothill Trails, Liberty Park, Memory Grove Park, Lindsey Gardens, Wasatch Hollow, and Rotary Glen. Rangers often offered dog owners free slip leashes and encouraged them to utilize sanctioned off-leash areas. They also educated visitors on the impacts of dog waste on our environment.

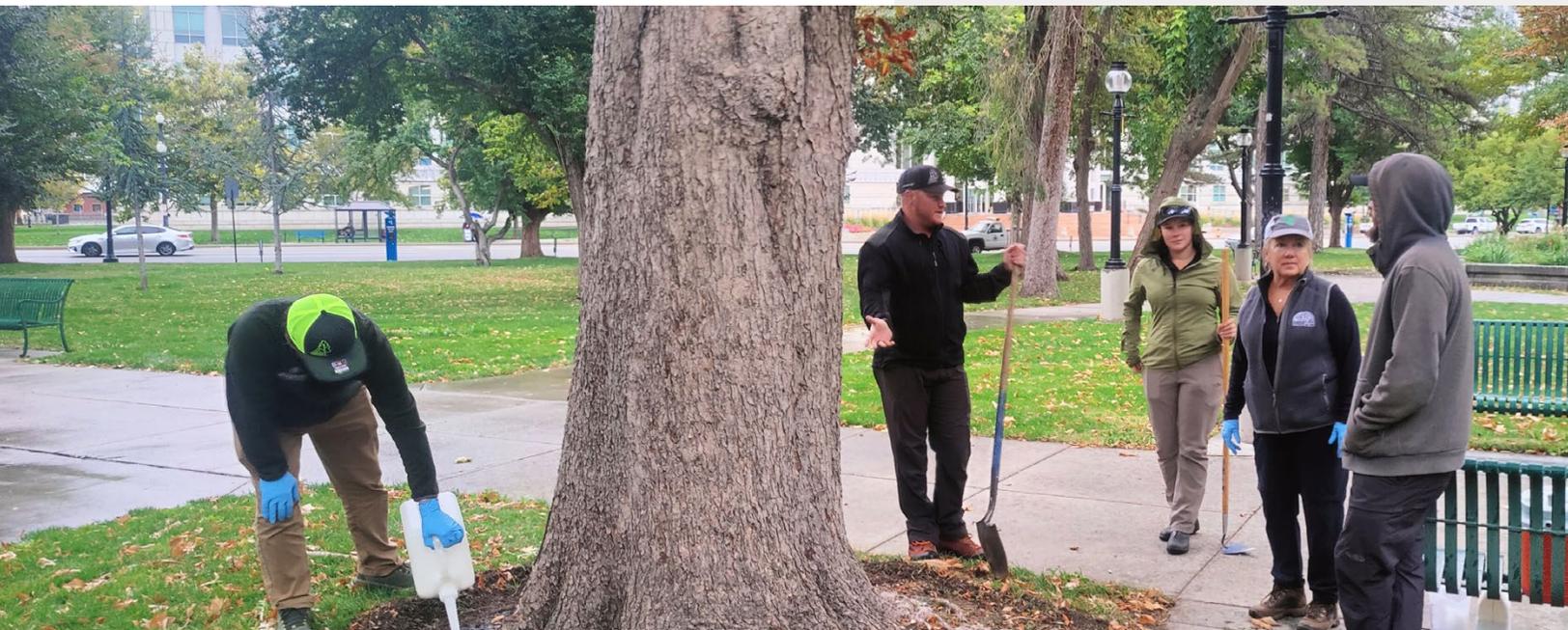


Top: Salt Lake City Park Rangers. **Middle:** Youth at free sports clinic at the Regional Athletic Complex. **Bottom:** Rangers providing education about bringing dogs to public parks.

Launched Public Lands Stewardship Email List for Volunteer Engagement: The Public Lands Volunteer Program initiated a strategy to cultivate lasting relationships with volunteers by establishing a Public Lands Stewardship email list. This list will email previous program participants to encourage ongoing stewardship engagement. This initiative aims to acknowledge and support the most active stewards' contributions and expand the opportunities for more individuals to become stewards of public lands.

Promoted Tree Stewardship Culture Outreach Campaigns: The Urban Forestry Division participated in various speaking and presentation opportunities to encourage a culture of stewardship in Salt Lake City, especially regarding the care and preservation of the city's trees. These outreach efforts have engaged a diverse range of audiences, including Community Councils, Salt Lake City Garden Club members, University of Utah Urban Ecology students, Gardening Utah Podcast listeners, and Green Industry Conference attendees.

Educated Public on Risks from Snowmelt and Wildlife Encounters with Park Rangers: In response to the challenges from unusually heavy precipitation in 2023, the Park Rangers proactively communicated with the public about related dangers. They informed visitors about the increased presence of wildlife, like elk, in urban areas like Parley's Historic Nature Preserve. Additionally, Park Rangers worked with Urban Forestry, Parks, Trails and Natural Lands and HEART to communicate risks associated with snow melt induced flooding to communities along river trails. They also participated in sandbagging events in areas like Wasatch Hollow to mitigate major flooding.



Top: A volunteer project at the International Peace Gardens. **Middle:** A youth group volunteering in a public park. **Bottom:** Urban Forestry staff providing tree care education in Washington Park.

GROW: EXPAND OUR PUBLIC LANDS SYSTEM

Reimagine Nature Master Plan Goal

City departments and partners work together to provide green space and recreation opportunities in our rapidly re-developing downtown. We innovate and make smart use of the public properties we have, being strategic with our resources and creating funding sources to expand our urban forest, trails, park system, and natural areas.



Be proactive and strategic about the growth of the Public Lands System.

Increased Indigenous Representation on Parks, Natural Lands, Urban Forestry, and Trails Advisory Board: Two additional seats were added as representatives of indigenous populations or communities. This decision underscores a commitment to ensuring diverse perspectives and voices, particularly those of indigenous communities, and offers formal and consistent opportunities to provide advise on public lands decision making process.

Initiated Data Collection and Public Engagement by Park Rangers: Park Rangers used a GIS-based survey software to enhance data collection and reporting. This tool allows Park Rangers to pinpoint specific locations in their reports, offering a clearer understanding of how their time positively impacts parks and the community. This data is available on a weekly updated dashboard accessible on the website.

Started the Emerald Ribbon Action Plan with Wide Community Participation: The Emerald Ribbon Action Plan engagement was initiated by Public Lands Planning and Design team, conducting outreach to collect ideas for the future improvements and maintenance of the Jordan River Corridor. Engagement included 14 focus groups, two public workshops, two advisory committee meetings, a community event, and more than ten stakeholder interviews. All these activities worked to gather essential feedback that will help us decide how to use the 2022 General Obligation Bond funding. Throughout the year, 350 people were engaged in the planning process, with more activities planned for 2024.



Top: An Indigenous focus group meeting for Warm Springs park. **Bottom:** Maintenance equipment in Liberty Park.

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SUMMARY OF PROGRESS

Planning & Design Staff: Hired two planners and strategically reconfigured existing staffing resources.

Diverse Community Engagement: Prioritized indigenous representation and increased public engagement through innovative engagement strategies.

Focused on Accessibility, Connectivity, and Expansion: Initiated projects to help public lands respond to the rapidly growing population's desire for more green spaces.

Considered Donation Opportunities: Began streamlining donation processes and possibilities for personalized tributes and stewardship in Public Lands.

Conducted a Park Ranger Public Survey: From September 7 to October 18, the Park Rangers conducted a public survey to evaluate their program's perceptions and seek community input to improve Ranger services. The survey results indicated:

- Many Salt Lake City residents are interested in learning more about the Park Ranger Program's role in our community.
- Opportunity to better showcase the Program's positive impacts in the parks.
- Strong community desire for more Park Ranger programs like nature tours, stewardship events, and educational activities.

Secured Funding Boosts Public Lands Maintenance: SLC Council approved Public Lands request to utilize Funding Our Future dollars for the growth of our maintenance team, adding 11.5 FTE's and ten vehicles. This enhanced maintenance effort will be used to address new properties, growth, and use impacts in Trails & Natural Lands and Parks operations. This funding increase resulted in the City's first dedicated Foothill Natural Area Maintenance Team.

Consolidated and Expanded the Public Lands Planning & Design Team: Public Lands has proactively responded to the growing demands of the Public Lands system by hiring two additional planners, bringing the total to four, and integrating four existing landscape architects into a newly formed Planning & Design Team within the department. This strategic consolidation combines all planning, landscape architecture/design, and project management responsibilities for public land projects under the Public Lands Department.



Top: Salt Lake City Park Rangers. **Bottom:** An engagement workshop for Salt Lake City Emerald Ribbon Project.



Overcome difficult obstacles to growth needs through creativity and through leveraging external assets and resources.

Funded Feasibility Study for Road Connectivity to Regional Athletic Complex: Salt Lake City's Transportation Division secured funding to conduct a feasibility study for a new road connecting the Regional Athletic Complex to Redwood Road. This initiative is a significant step toward improving connectivity in the area. A dedicated 'Road to the RAC' project team has been formed, and a consultant has been engaged to assist with the feasibility study, design layout, and cost estimation for the road and trail connections.

Collaborated on Accessible Memorial Forest Concept: The Urban Forestry Division and the Public Lands Planning Division have joined forces to develop a concept and select a site for a Memorial Forest. This initiative will offer pre-determined, carefully designed tree-planting locations for memorial purposes. The aim is to enhance the beauty of parks, increase tree canopy, and provide a tree-centered memorializing service accessible to the public. Donner Park was chosen as the pilot location for this innovative Memorial Forest.

Developed Standardized Public Lands Donation and Volunteer Policies: Public Lands began developing comprehensive donation and volunteer policies for Public Lands. This initiative aims to standardize the process of capitalizing on the public's enthusiasm for participating in nurturing and improving parks and public spaces. By creating clear and consistent guidelines, the team is ensuring that the community has a clear path and opportunities to provide donations to Public Lands. The new policy is expected to be finalized in 2024.



This report included a summary of progress toward achieving the REIMAGINE NATURE MASTER PLAN vision for Salt Lake City. This master plan proposes big ideas to transform and sustain quality outdoor spaces that are welcoming, safe, and walkable; ensuring people, wildlife and ecosystems benefit from fair investment of Salt Lake City resources over the next 20 years.

To see the full master plan visit our website or scan the QR code below.



An aerial view of Pioneer Park.



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