



WHO WE ARE

BACKGROUND:

A department of Parks was included in the City's first Freeholder Charter, adopted in 1889. Placed under its jurisdiction were parks and public land that had been set aside for the perpetual use of the community in the original Spanish land grants. Parks on this land are now called the Plaza, Pershing Square and Elysian Park.

Los Angeles established the first municipal Playground and Recreation Department in the United States in 1904. The City's first playground was opened within a year. A Charter amendment adopted in 1947 consolidated the Department of Parks and the Department of Playgrounds and Recreation into the Department of Recreation and Parks, combining facilities and services of both.

FUNCTION:

The Department of Recreation and Parks maintains and operates more than 400 sites for recreational use. At the head of the Department are the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners, appointed by the Mayor with confirmation by the City Council. A General Manager, appointed by the Commissioners, is the chief administrator.

The Department establishes, operates and maintains parks, swimming pools, public golf courses, recreation centers, museums, youth camps, tennis courts, sports programs and programs for senior citizens. It also supervises construction of new facilities and improvements to existing ones.

PROGRAMS/FACILITIES:

The Department of Recreation and Parks is the most comprehensive social service agency in the City, operating 184 recreation centers, 61 swimming pools, 11 lakes, 7 camps both in and out of town, more than a dozen museums and historic sites, and hundreds of programs for youth, senior, physically disabled and volunteers. The responsibility for the total year-round recreation program at each of the local centers is in the hands of that center's director, a trained professional recreator.

Among museums under the jurisdiction of the Department are Cabrillo Marine Aquarium and the Los Angeles Maritime Museum in San Pedro, and the Banning Residence Museum in Wilmington. Others include the Fort MacArthur Military Museum and Drum Barracks Civil War Museum in San Pedro and Travel Town in Griffith Park.

Several mountain facilities for groups and individuals and camps for young people, staffed by trained counselors and directors, are maintained and operated in the Los Angeles area and in the San Bernardino Mountains and High Sierra.

Thirty-one centers specifically for senior citizens are located in all areas of the City. Also, senior citizen clubs hold meetings and special events at numerous other recreation facilities.

Year-around schedules of events include sightseeing excursions, picnics, shuffleboard tournaments, bridge, dancing, and crafts. Volunteer work is coordinated by the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). There also is a senior citizen low cost nutritional lunch program, as well as a program whereby meals are delivered to senior who are home-bound.

In addition to extremely broad and extensive sports programs for children and youth, the Department sponsors a municipal sports program for adults which includes baseball, softball, tennis, soccer and basketball. Canoeing, sailing and swimming instruction also are available through the Aquatics Division.

The Department administers more than 15,700 acres of parkland, including 4,282 acres in Griffith Park, one of the largest municipal parks within the boundaries of an American city. Among the park's attraction are the Griffith Observatory with its Planetarium, the Los Angeles Zoo, Greek Theater, hiking and bridle trails, youth camps, tennis courts and a nearby swimming pool. Other large parks in the City of Los Angeles are Elysian Park, which is close to Downtown, MacArthur Park, Echo Park and Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City.

Two flood control basins leased from the federal government provide varied recreational facilities. Hansen Dam Recreation Area provides two lakes, a golf course, picnic areas, children's play areas, softball field and bridle trails. Sepulveda Dam Recreation Area is a major sports center comprising three 18-hole golf courses, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, soccer, volleyball, softball and handball courts.

Park Rangers patrol parks and conduct interpretive programs, particularly for students.

There are 13 municipal golf courses throughout the City and well over a million rounds of golf are played each year. Free golf instruction for youth and many tournaments are conducted during the year.

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