

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 5, 2021

To: Mark Israelson, City Manager
Jack Carr, Deputy City Manager – Development Services

From: Ron Smith, Parks and Recreation Director

Subject: Department Overview

This memorandum is companion material to the October 11 Preliminary Open Meeting presentation.

Overview:

Founded in 1968, the Plano Parks and Recreation Department is an industry leader. The *Trust for Public Land* ranks Plano as the number one parks and recreation agency in Texas. Accredited since 1994, the department is a four-time winner of the National Gold Medal Award. Plano is a 32-year [“Tree City USA”](#) community. These honors attest to the successful history of the Department in fulfilling its mission, which is enriching Plano through inviting spaces, caring service, outstanding value and memorable experiences. By realizing this mission, Plano Parks & Recreation supports City Council’s vision for Plano to be a global economic leader bonded by a shared sense of community, where residents experience unparalleled quality of life.

Starting with a 5-acre donation by the Harrington family in 1897, the Department has steadily grown along with Plano’s population into the comprehensive system it is today, consisting of:

- 5,268 acres of responsibility
- 88 miles of trail
- 85 parks
- 15 athletic sites
- 69 playgrounds
- 9 swimming pools
- 4 recreation centers
- 4 performance venues
- 2 nature preserves
- 2 golf courses
- 1 senior center
- 1 21-court tennis center
- 1 museum
- 1 nature & retreat center
- 1 convention center
- Lots and lots of fun!

The Department’s operating budget is approximately 8.5-percent of the City’s budget. These funds provide the necessary resources to maintain the award-winning assets that make Plano Parks and Recreation a standard of excellence in the region, state and country. The Department is committed to being good stewards of these public resources.

The maintenance of assets and delivery of services is accomplished by a workforce of over 970 fulltime, part-time, and seasonal employees functioning within the following seven (7) service divisions:

- Recreation Services
- Park Services
- Park Planning
- Plano Events Center
- Visit Plano (CVB)
- Arts, Culture and Events
- Park Technical Services

Recreation Services:

Consisting of 80 fulltime, 166 part-time and approximately 500 seasonal employees, the Recreation Division oversees the operation of the City's recreation centers, swimming pools, the Sam Johnson Center for Adults 50+, the [Pecan Hollow](#) golf course, the [Oak Point Nature & Retreat Center](#), the [High Point Tennis Center](#), and over 6,000 classes, camps, and programs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the division generated annual program and facility attendance of 1.5 million. The COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected participation numbers, with FY 2019-20 registering a steep decline in class and program attendance. Labor shortages associated with the pandemic shortened the summer pool season at some locations. Conversely, the pandemic invigorated certain "COVID-friendly" programs like golf and tennis, with Pecan Hollow seeing record participation coming out of the pandemic.

Parks Services:

The Parks Division consists of 137 full and part-time employees functioning in three service areas: Park Grounds Maintenance, Park Support Services and [Athletic Operations](#). These work groups maintain more than 4,376 acres of parkland (and associated amenities), 892 acres of medians and rights-of-way, and other public grounds. Scheduled athletic opportunities are available through the department's cooperative effort with several non-profit sports groups on the 99 soccer/football fields, 69 softball/baseball fields, and 8 cricket pitches. Prior to the pandemic (FY 2018-19), Plano hosted an estimated 1 million sports attendees, generating a financial impact of over \$1.5 million.

Arts, Culture and Events:

Consisting of 10 full-time and 14 part-time employees, the Arts, Culture & Heritage Division is comprised of [Plano Stages](#), Special Events and the Volunteers-in-Plano (VIP). The division oversees the development of the Downtown Plano Arts District and works in conjunction with the Historic Downtown Plano Association, local nonprofit arts and heritage groups, artists and citizens. Through events, marketing and venue management, this Division brings art and culture to the community in a variety of ways. Plano Stages manages two theaters, two outdoor venues, an art gallery and the [Interurban Railway Museum](#). The division is responsible for the All American 4th fireworks show, Apparition Expedition, Underground Movement Festival, Dickens in Downtown, and the Daddy's Little Sweetheart Dance. Two new festivals, Texas Fest, celebrating Texas' independence and RIP, a Halloween-themed event, will launch in 2022. The work of the City is enhanced by the participation of a vibrant volunteer base coordinated by the VIP (Volunteers in Plano) group, matching volunteers with departments who have a need for supplemental workers. Prior to the pandemic, volunteers donate more than 92,000 hours of service at a value exceeding \$1,700,000 annually.

Plano Events Center:

[Plano Event Center](#) (PEC) is an event venue with a multi-purpose exhibit hall, ballroom, and meeting rooms. Hosting an average of 350 events annually (pre-COVID), customers choose Plano Event Center for its unparalleled customer service, onsite full-service food and beverage operations, state-of-the-art audio-visual offerings and convenient parking. Examples of functions served by the 28 full-time and 21 part-time PEC staff include corporate meetings, tradeshow, conventions, job fairs, sporting events, expos, fundraisers, festivals, weddings and social events. The future full-service hotel will support PEC efforts.

Visit Plano:

[Visit Plano](#) (formerly Plano Convention and Visitors Bureau), expands the economic base of the City by attracting business, sports and leisure travel to Plano. Funded 100 percent by the hotel/motel tax, this division (consisting of 10 fulltime employees) advertises, promotes, and recruits groups to Plano as a destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events, and general tourism. When not curtailed by a global pandemic, Visit Plano brings in millions of overnight visitors to Plano each year. These visitors spend millions of dollars at local hotels, restaurants, retail shops, attractions, gas stations, entertainment venues and much more – resulting in substantial economic impact for Plano.

Park Planning:

The nine full-time employees of the Park Planning Division manage [park-related Community Investment Projects](#) (CIP). This includes park site development and redevelopment, land acquisition, the selection and oversight of consultants and contractors, construction project management, and the preparation and administration of project-related grant applications. The Division oversees the development and implementation of the [Parks, Recreation, Trails and Open Space Master Plan](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic had little direct impact on the progress of parks CIP projects; however, the aftermath of winter storm Uri, and lingering labor and material shortages negatively affected project costs and completion schedules.

Park Technical Services:

The “business” side of Plano Parks and Recreation, this division consists of four full-time employees responsible for Department accounting, recreation program software, membership sales, and the [Plano Recreation](#) catalogue layout and publication. This division coordinates hardware and software rollouts with the City’s Technology Services department.

COVID-19:

The impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on the Department is mixed. The Recreation division continues to feel the effects of the March 2020 closure in lower class registration and participation numbers. Conversely, Plano’s two nature preserves experienced a surge in popularity during the shutdown, as multitudes poured into Arbor Hills and Oak Point in search of exercise and fresh air. Golf and tennis participation remains strong due to their COVID-friendly format. The pandemic seriously harmed the travel and tourism industry, leading to lower revenue in the City’s Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) fund.

During the shutdown, the Department redeployed recreation center staff as friendly Park Monitors. These friendly monitors provided a general “staff presence” throughout the park system; they encouraged patrons to abide social distancing guidelines while at parks and on trails. This effort allowed the City to keep parks and trails open and available to the public during the height of the pandemic.

Winter Storm “Uri”

Parks and Recreation fully engaged in the City’s overall response to the 2021 winter storm. Department leadership helped stand-up the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Plano Event Center became a daytime warming facility. Recreation centers welcomed residents into facilities for showers. Department

employees covered shifts at temporary shelters and drive-through water distribution sites. Parks field personnel cleared snow and ice from critical parking lots and walkways and joined in the citywide residential water shut-off effort - offloading a significant number of emergency calls from First Responders. Following the cold temperatures, the Plano Event Center's parking lot became a makeshift depot, providing a location for Public Works to stage woody debris from thousands of trees and shrubs overwhelmed by the storm. The Department's response to Uri continues, as it collaborates with other City departments on managing 6,000 compromised trees throughout Plano.

Top Trends:

Trend: Labor shortage. Similar to other industries, the Parks and Recreation profession is experiencing a labor shortage – primarily in part-time/seasonal and entry-level positions. This shortage is posing challenges to the Department's ability to deliver excellent service to Plano residents. The premature closure of outdoor swimming pools due to a shortage of lifeguards is an example of how this trend is affecting services.

Addressing the gap: Parks and Recreation is working with Human Resources and the Budget Department to implement creative solutions to bridge this gap. Examples could include absorbing the cost of lifeguard certification fees, absorb the cost of swim instructor certification fees, and expanding the number of hours part-time employees can work per week (from 19 to 25 hrs).

Trend: The role of Parks and Recreation in mental health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 shutdown highlighted the importance of public open space. When other options shut down, Plano's parks, trails and playgrounds remained open, providing respite and reprieve from lockdown blues. Post-pandemic research links mental health with recreational activity, like walking in a park or riding a bike. Plano is fortunate to have many quality options of health-promoting leisure activity, but there is [more to do](#). Plano Parks and Recreation envisions a community where all residents live within a **10-minute walk** from a park, trail or recreation facility – and we are working to reach this benchmark.

Addressing the gap: Through timely acquisition and development of parkland, the Department seeks to achieve the goal of all residents living within a 10-minute walk from a park, trail or park facility. The future development of Los Rios Park, Moore Park, Hall Park and Glasscock Park will add to the City's inventory of quality parks. Some Plano residents experience obstacles or barriers that prevent engagement in recreational activity. To combat this, the Department initiated the *Play in the Park* program, which brings recreation to the residents. Much like Neighborhood Services' popular Party Trailer, *Play in the Park* is a mobile operation that delivers weekly, staff-led activities to select park locations during the summer. Since 2015, this program has grown steadily.

Trend: Aging infrastructure. In harmony with the City Manager's goal of taking care of Plano's infrastructure, Parks & Recreation is focusing on maintaining, renovating, and replacing aged-out assets to rejuvenate Plano's maturing park system. The two Parks and Recreation-related proposition on the May 2021 Bond Referendum (B and C) focus heavily on renovating park amenities that are 20-years old or older.

Addressing the gap: The passage of both propositions indicates this focus aligns with community sentiment. Over the next four years, Parks and Recreation will initiate and complete roughly \$80 million dollars in park and park facility CIP projects. Replacing and relocating the inadequate and undersized

maintenance facility at Schell Park will provide appropriate facilities for Park personnel responsible for taking care of assets east of US HWY 75-Central Expressway.

Trend: Engaging in recreational activity via technology. COVID ushered-in a new era of online recreation. Recreation enthusiasts can now engage in many preferred activities online and at home.

Addressing the gap: To better serve this emerging clientele, Plano Parks & Recreation is repurposing a full-time Recreation Coordinator position into a “virtual programs” coordinator, with specific focus on creating quality online content.

Trend: Drop-in open play. Today, more people are enjoying their sport-of-choice informally. Demand for drop-in open play continues to increase within the recreation centers and in our parks. The Department is responding with creative solutions to meet this growing demand.

Addressing the gap: In recreation centers, staff is offering a comprehensive “open play” sports schedule that accommodates basketball, volleyball, pickleball, table tennis and badminton five days a week (at varying locations). On the parks side, staff is allocating more resources toward turf management at certain neighborhood park locations with good success. The turf quality at these select locations is improving, making the “drop-in” experience more enjoyable for end users, and relieving pressure off the City’s fee-based, scheduled-use fields.

In the future, the City could benefit from the conversion of a “big box” retailer into a large, multi-court gym space for adult volleyball and basketball leagues and “pick-up” games. The future development of Moore Park could offer additional solutions to the growing demand for quality “drop-in” space for soccer and cricket.

Trend: Senior Recreation. As more residents choose to “age in place,” the need to expand recreational services for seniors grows accordingly. Although the Sam Johnson Center for Adults 50+ remained partially closed for 18 months due to the pandemic, patrons are gradually returning to pre-COVID numbers. The need for more leisure services targeting this population (adults 50+) remains strong.

Addressing the gap: Each recreation facility is producing more senior-focused programs. Although senior recreation participation slowed during COVID, the Department continues to observe trends pointing to a second senior-specific recreation facility in the future.

Conclusion:

Plano Parks and Recreation has a long history of excellence, spanning a period of over 50 years. The Department provides a variety of services to the resident of Plano that contribute to the overall quality of life in the community. Parks and Recreation benefits from strong community support. Today’s emerging trends are met with resolve. As the Department lives up to its mission to enrich the lives of Plano residents through inviting spaces, caring service, outstanding value and memorable experiences it supports the City Council’s vision for Plano to be an economic leader bonded by a shared sense of community, where residents experience unparalleled quality of life.



Plano Parks and Recreation

Plano City Council
Preliminary Open Meeting
October 11, 2021

Department Overview

- **Achievements:**
 - 4-time National Gold Medal
 - National Accreditation (1994)
 - Trust for Public Land “*ParkScore*”
 - Tree City USA (1989)
 - Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary



Benefits of Parks and Recreation

- Personal Health and Wellbeing
- Quality of Life
- Sense of Community
- Safe, Vibrant Neighborhoods
- Economic Vitality
- Sales tax revenues
- Conservation/Stewardship
- Cleaner Air and Water
- Fun!



Department Overview

- **Work Force:**
 - 278 Full Time Employees
 - 206 Part Time
 - 491 Seasonal/Temp Employees
- **Revenue**
 - \$7.43 million
- **Operating Budget \$30.3m**
 - 8.5% City Budget

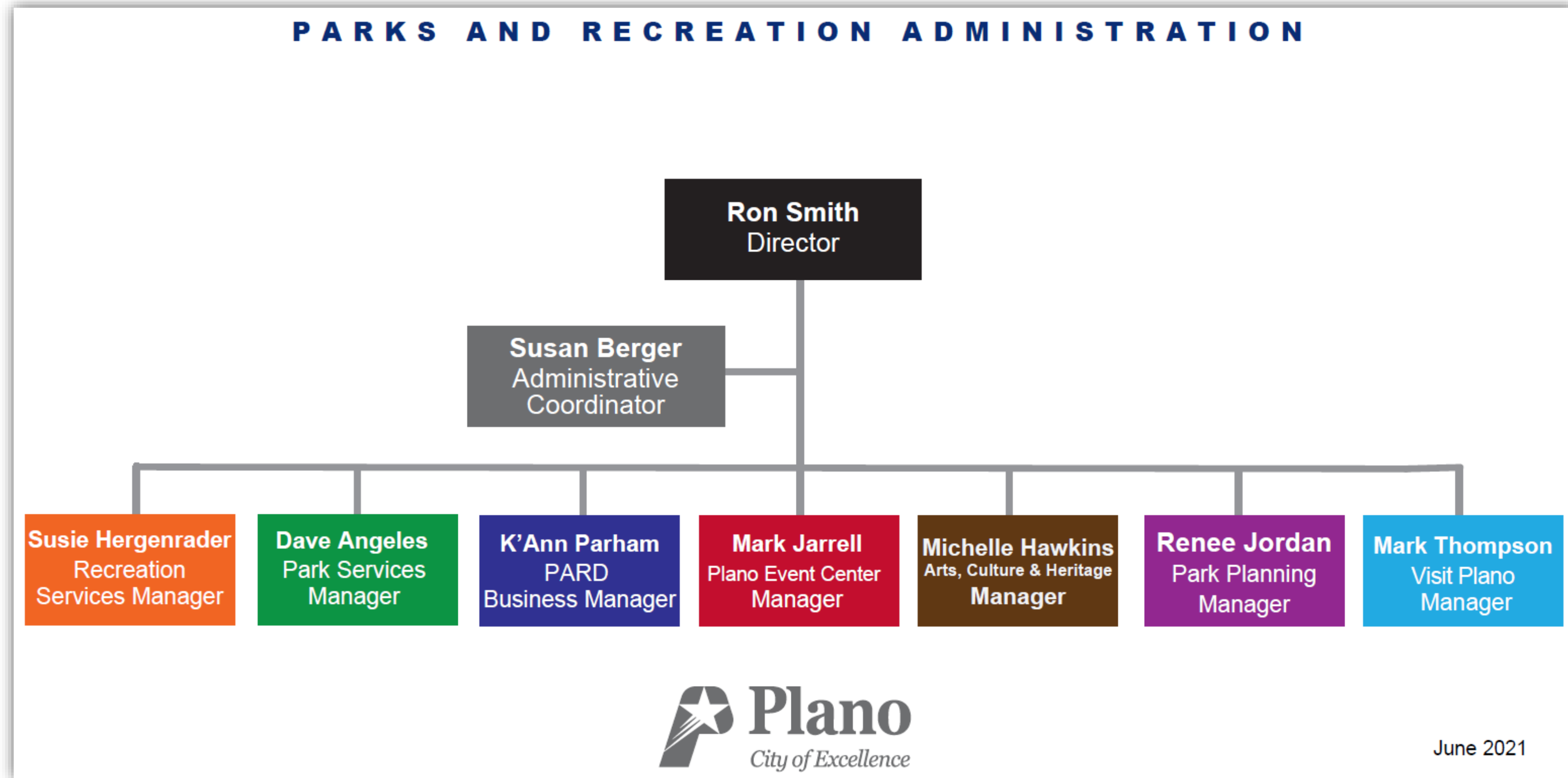


Park System at a Glance:

- 5,268 Acres of Responsibility
- 85 Parks
- 88 Miles of Trails
- 160+ Sports Fields
- 2 Nature Preserves
- 79 Playgrounds
- 1.7 Million Trees



Organizational Structure



Division Managers:



Susie Hergenrader: Recreation



K'Ann Parham: Business



David Angeles: Parks



Mark Jarrell: Events Center



Mark Thompson: Visit Plano



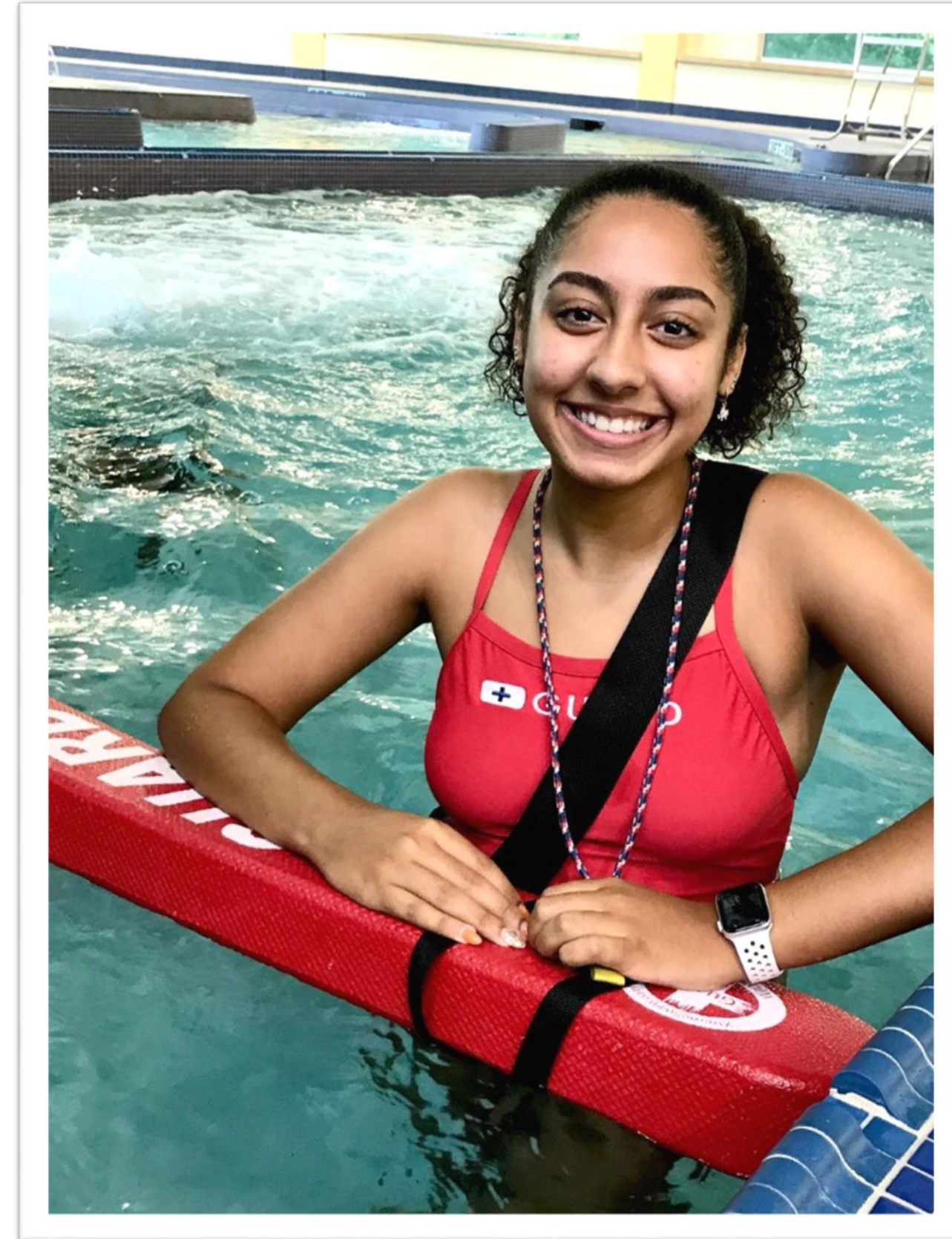
Renee Jordan: Park Planning



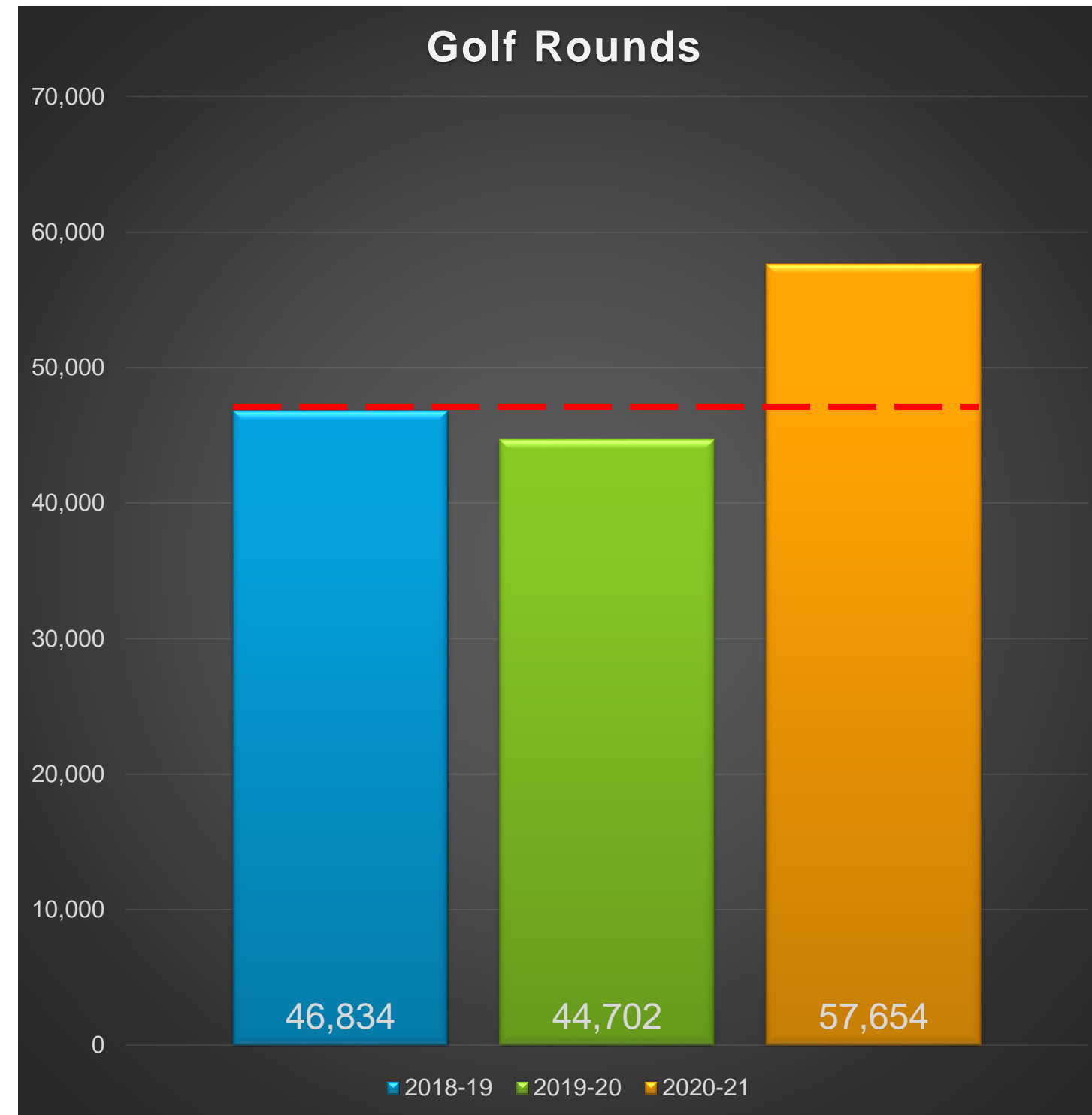
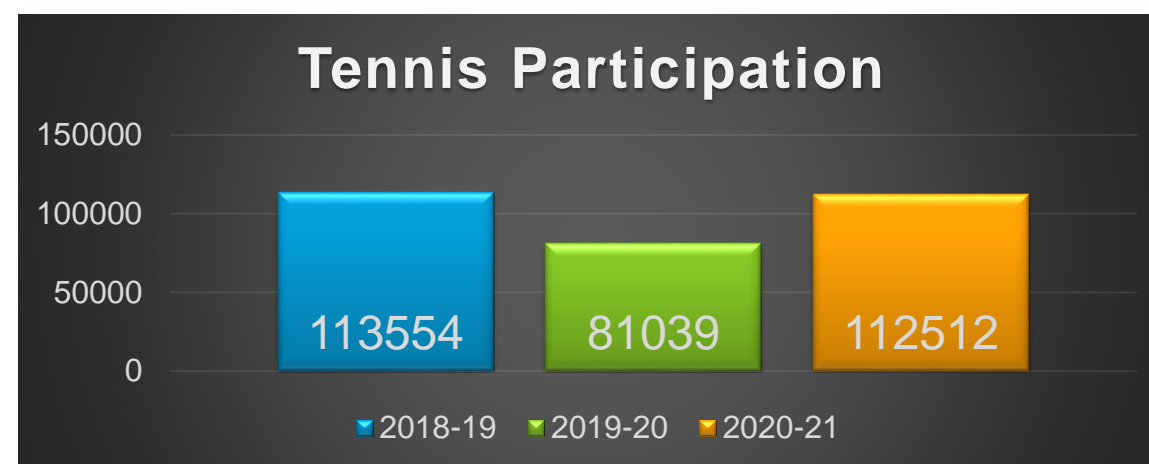
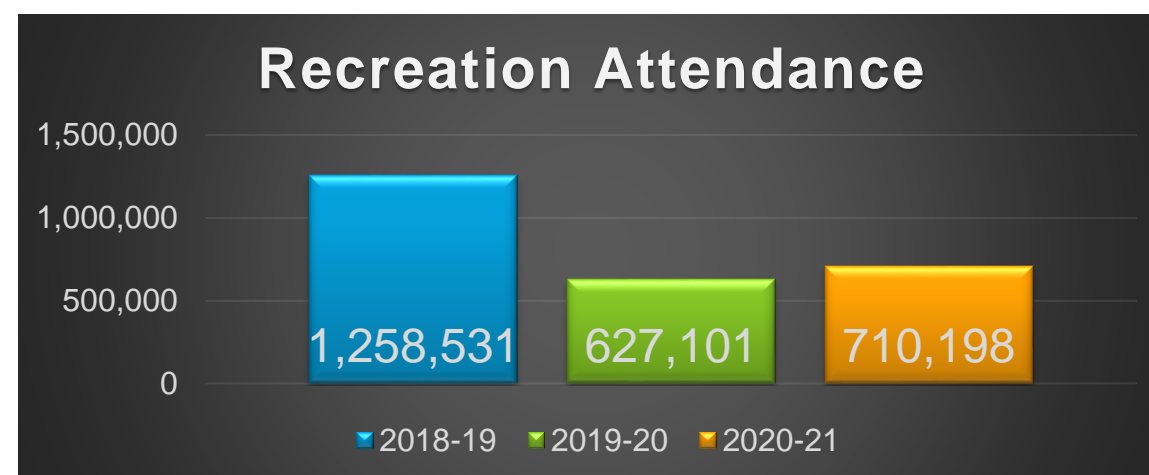
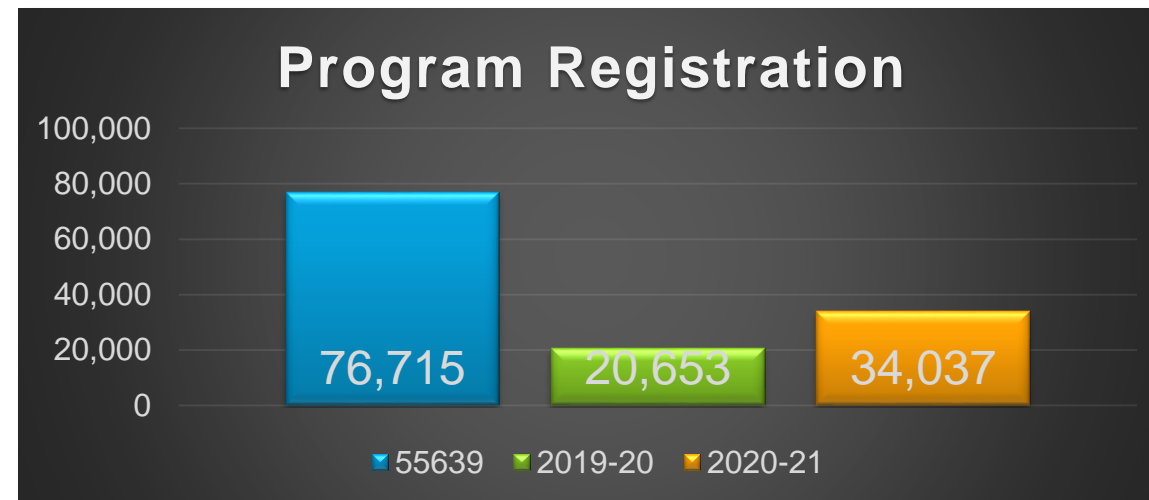
Michelle Hawkins: Arts, Culture & Heritage

Recreation Division

- 4 Recreation Centers
- 1 Senior Center (accredited)
- 21-Court Tennis Center
- 60 Shared PISD Tennis Courts
- 2 Golf Courses
- 1 Nature & Retreat Center
- 5 Indoor Pools
- 4 Outdoor Pools



Recreation Division – Annual Participation



Parks Division

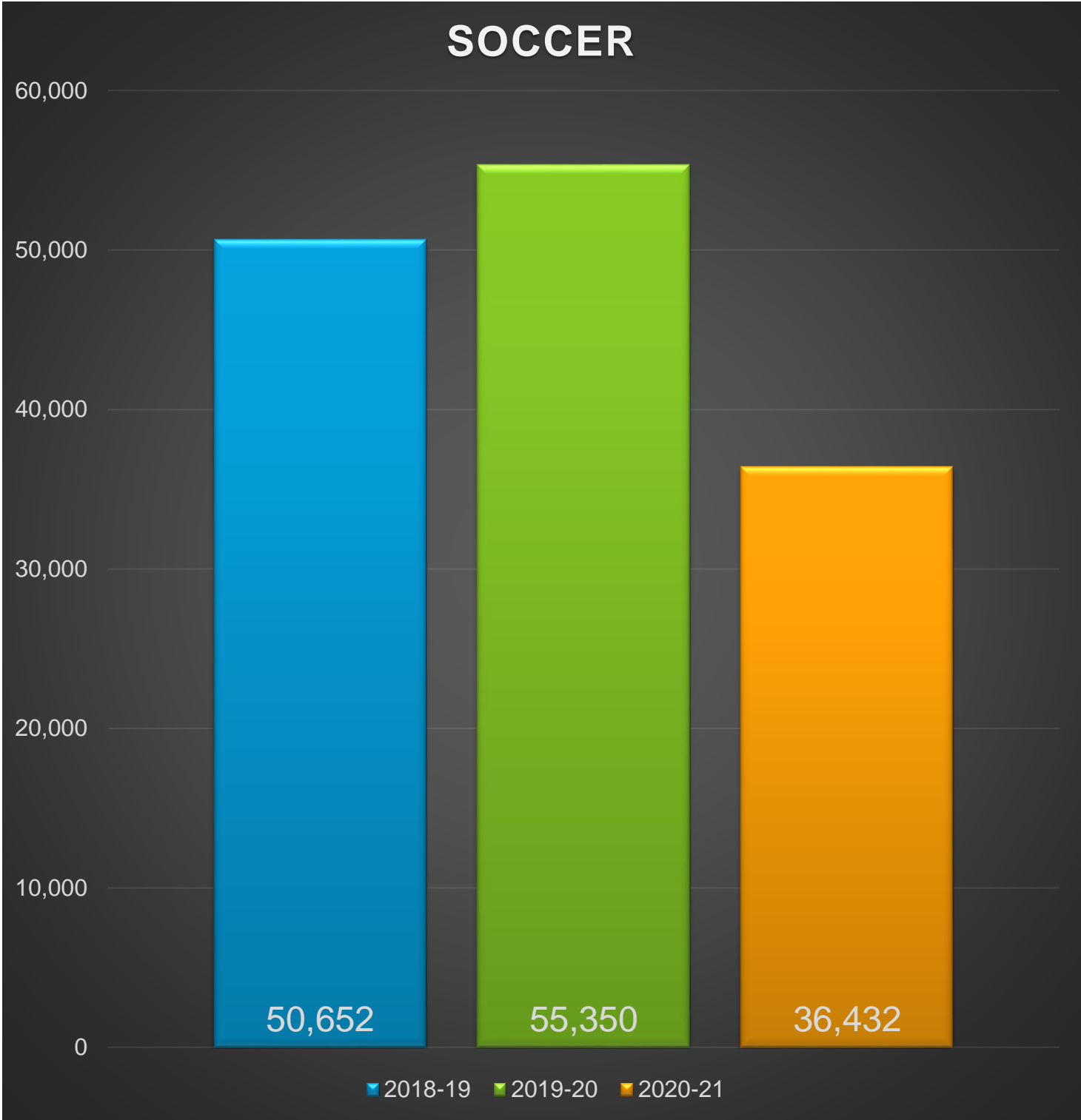
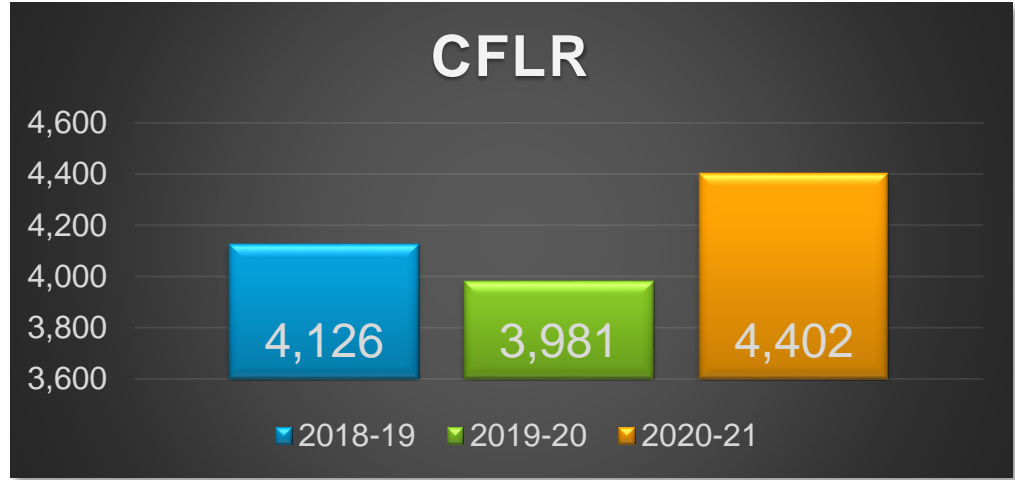
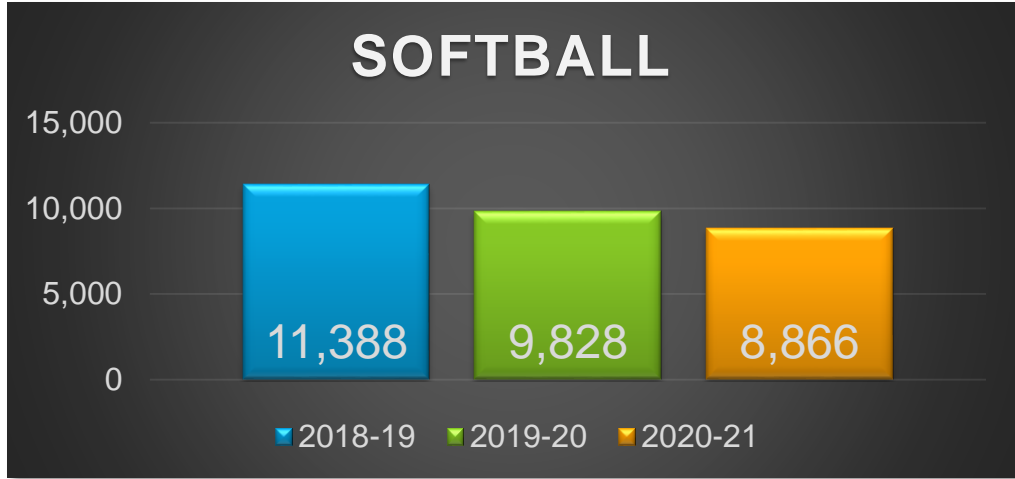
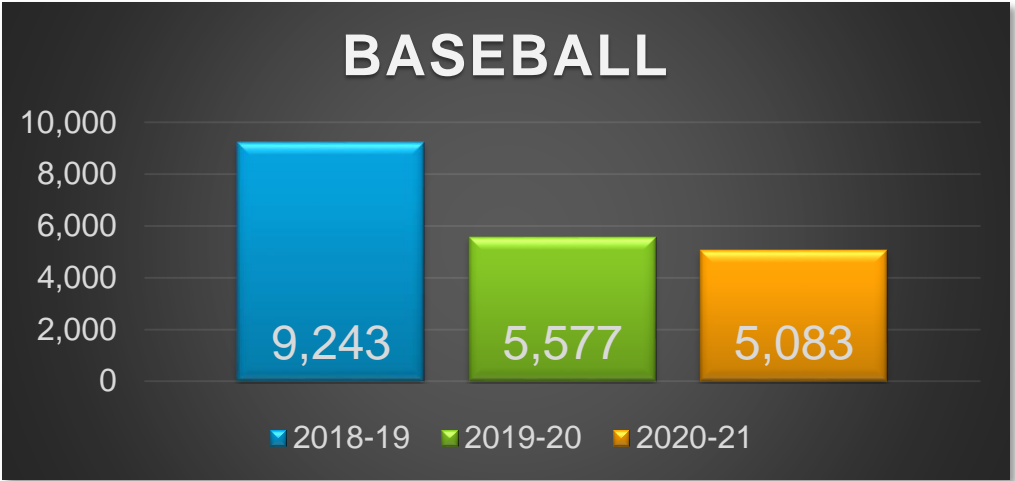
- Grounds Maintenance
- Park Support Services
- Athletic Operations



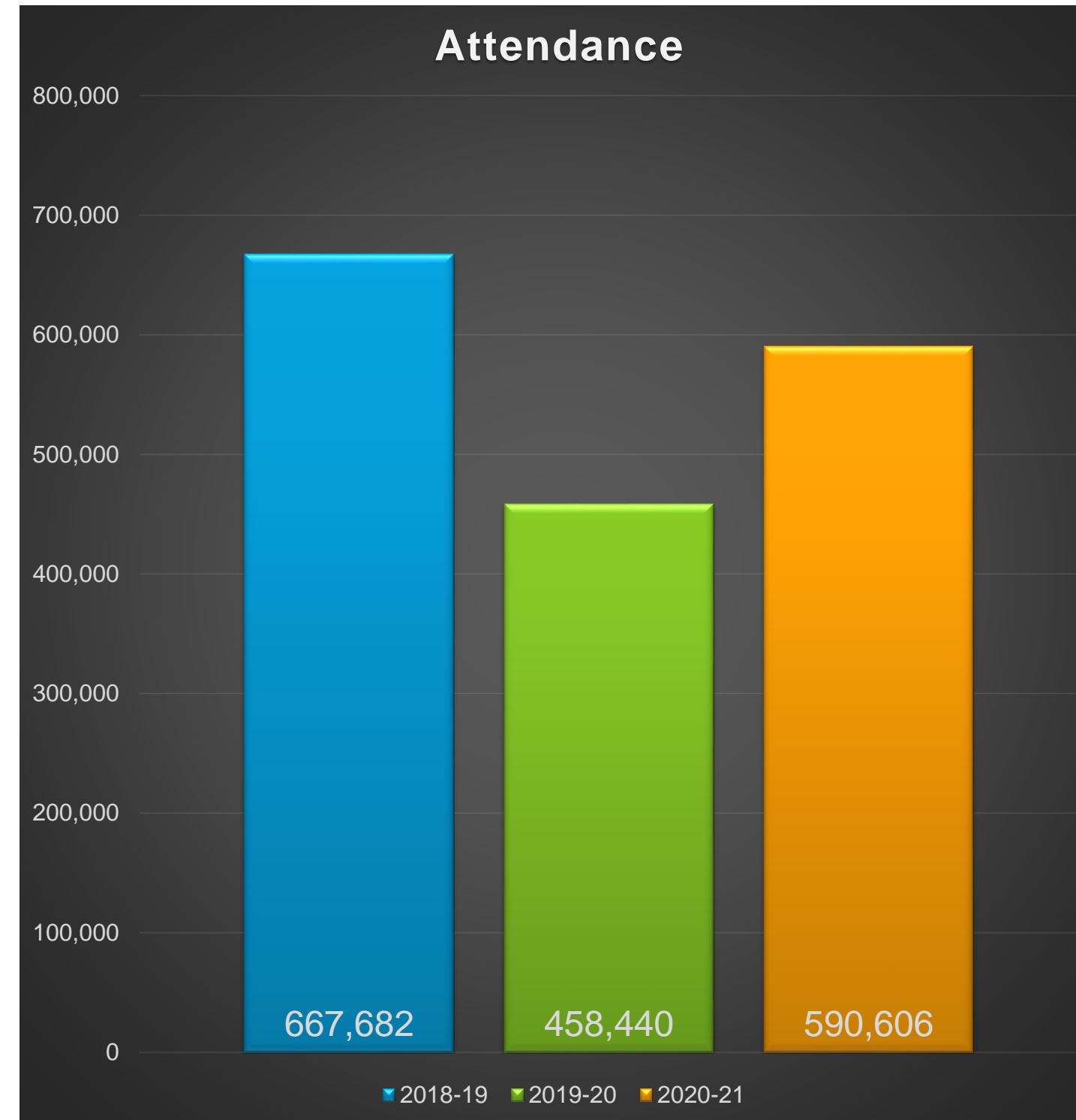
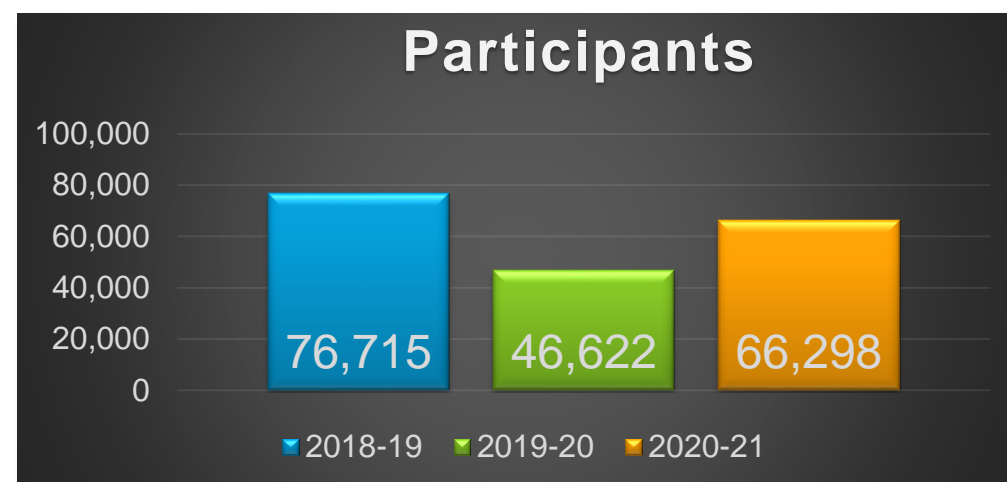
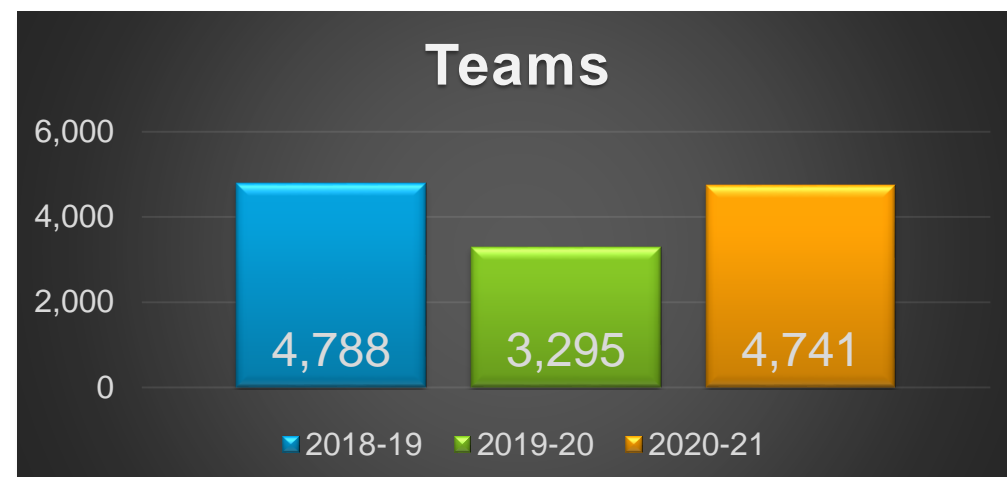
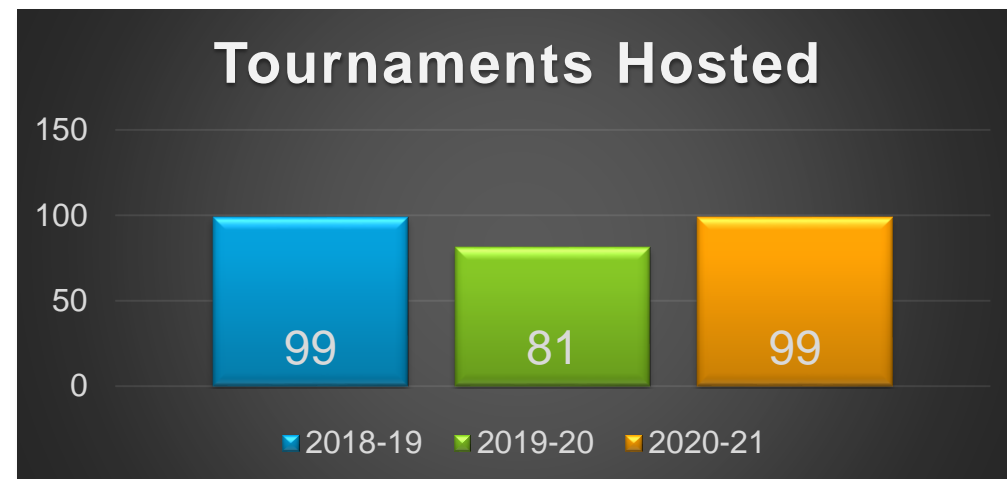
Athletic Operations



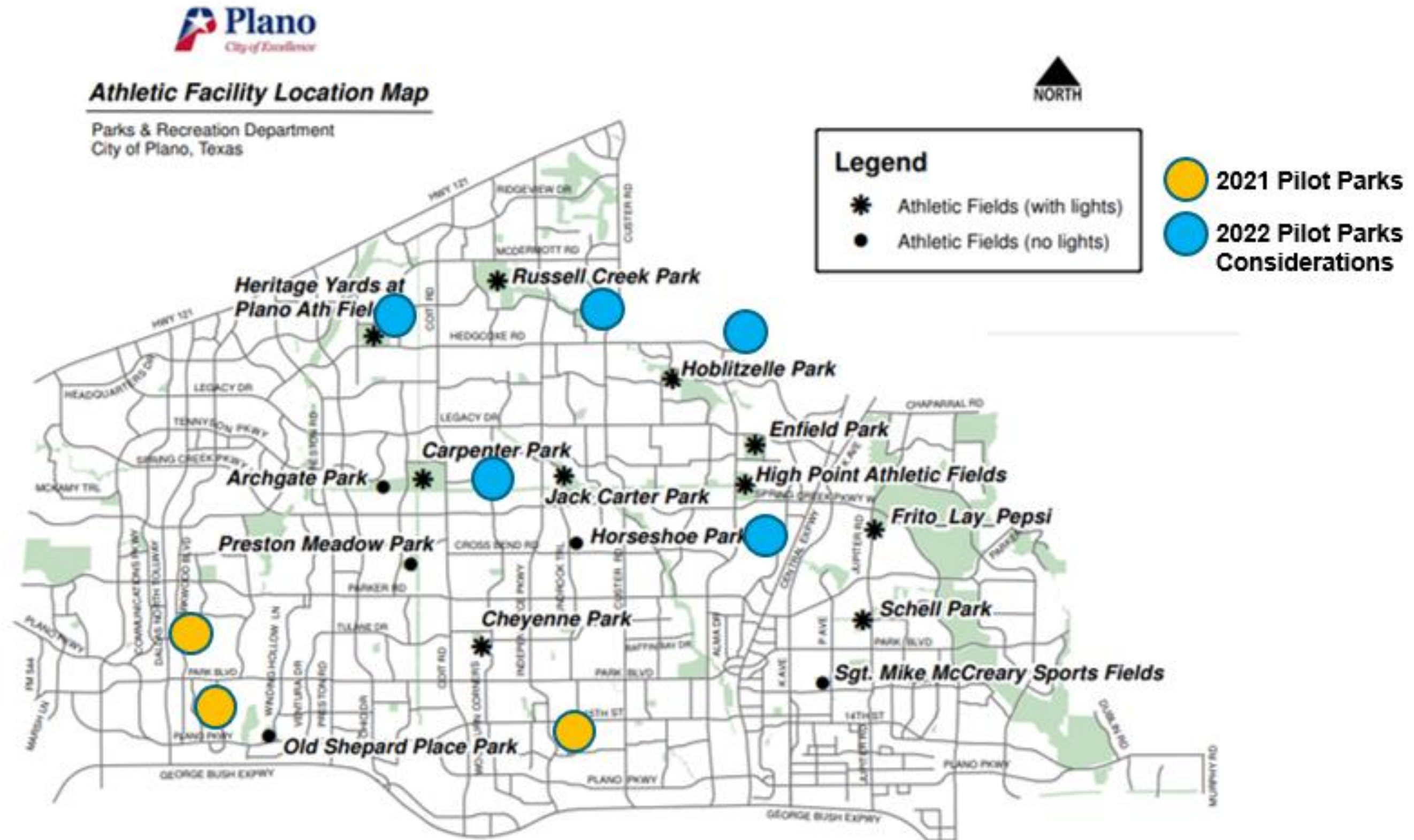
Athletic Participation (Leagues)



Athletic Participation (Tournament)



Parks Division – Neighborhood Park Turf Enhancement



Arts, Culture and Heritage Division

- Courtyard Theater
- Cox Playhouse
- Red Tail Pavilion
- McCall Plaza
- Interurban Railway Museum
- Volunteer Programs
- Special Events / Permits



Community Events

- Underground Movement Festival
- Courtyard Texas Music Series
- All American 4th
- Apparition Expedition
- Plano Christmas Market
- Dickens Downtown
- Salt the Rim
- RIP Festival (new)
- Texas Festival (new)



Volunteers in Plano (VIP)

- 4,300* resident volunteers
- 46,000* Hours
- \$850,000* monetary value

*COVID-19



Plano Event Center

- **Flexible function space**
 - 5,000 capacity
 - Corporate meetings
 - Conventions
 - Trade shows
 - Holiday parties
 - Weddings
- **Column-free exhibition hall**
 - Professional master stage
 - High dock
 - Street level access

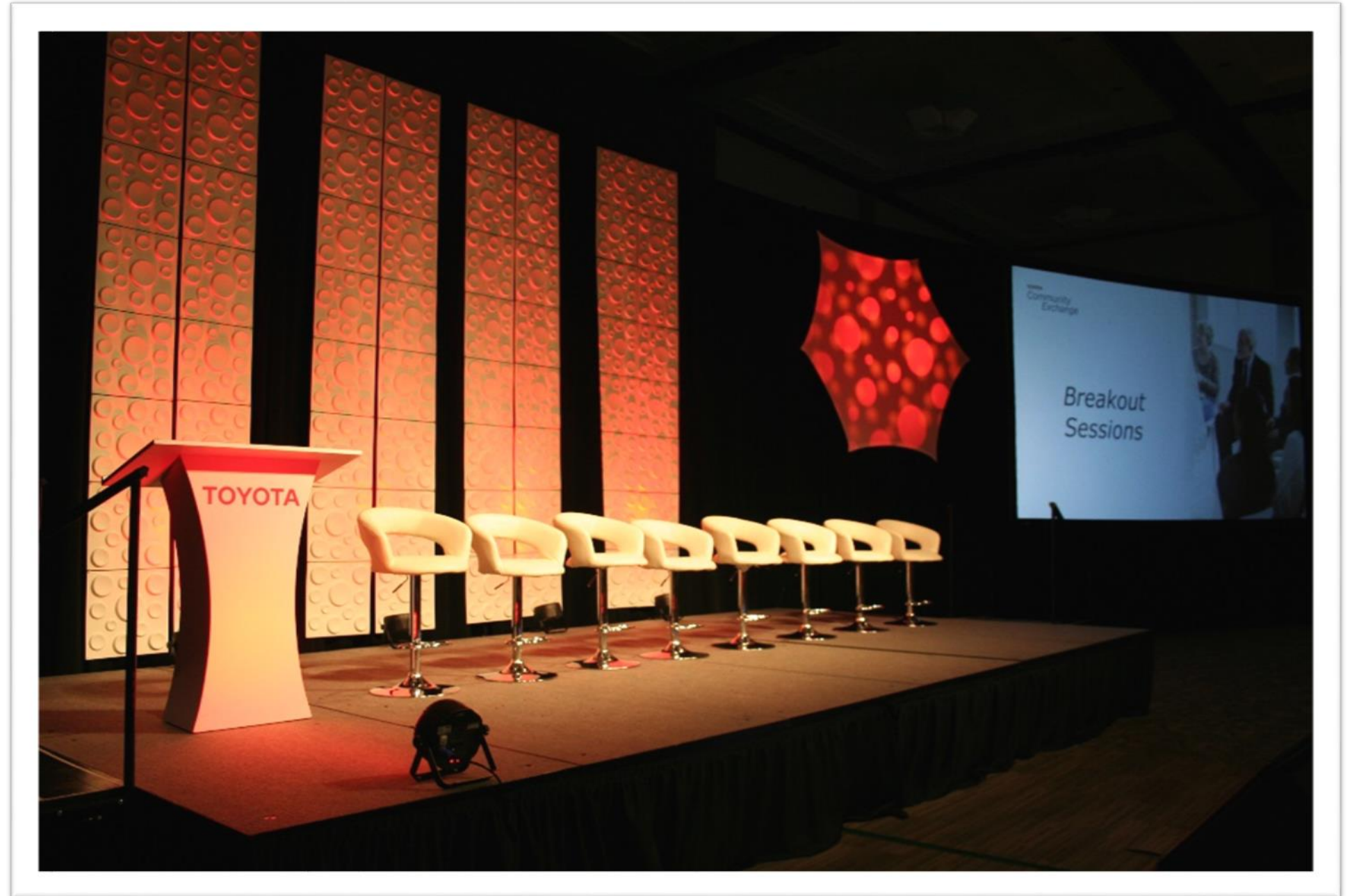
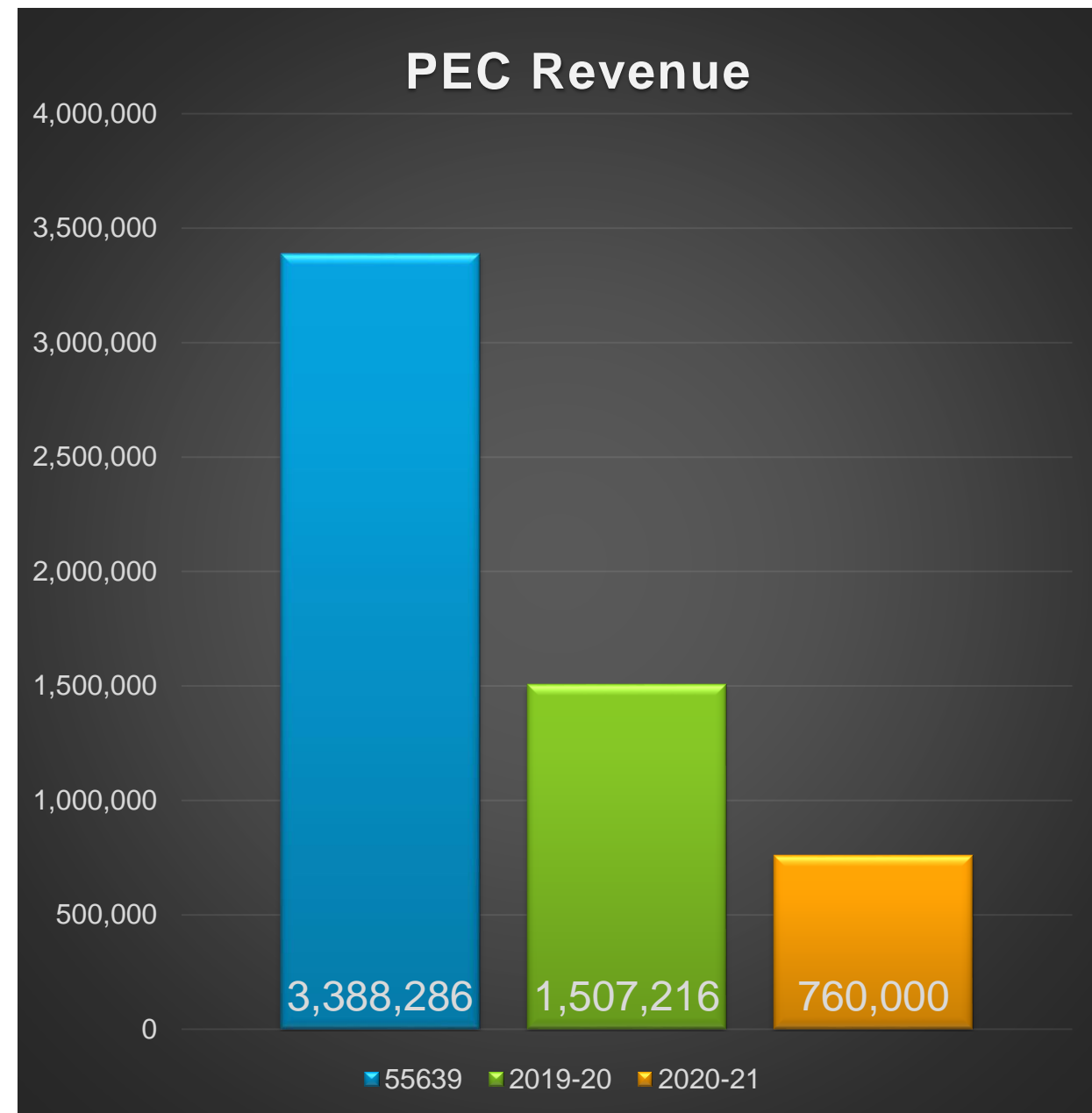


Plano Event Center

- Full catering services and chef
- AV team and state-of-the-art equipment
- Free parking
- Free public Wi-Fi
- 86,400 square feet of rental space
- 21,600 square feet of column-free exhibit space
- 14 break-out rooms



Plano Event Center

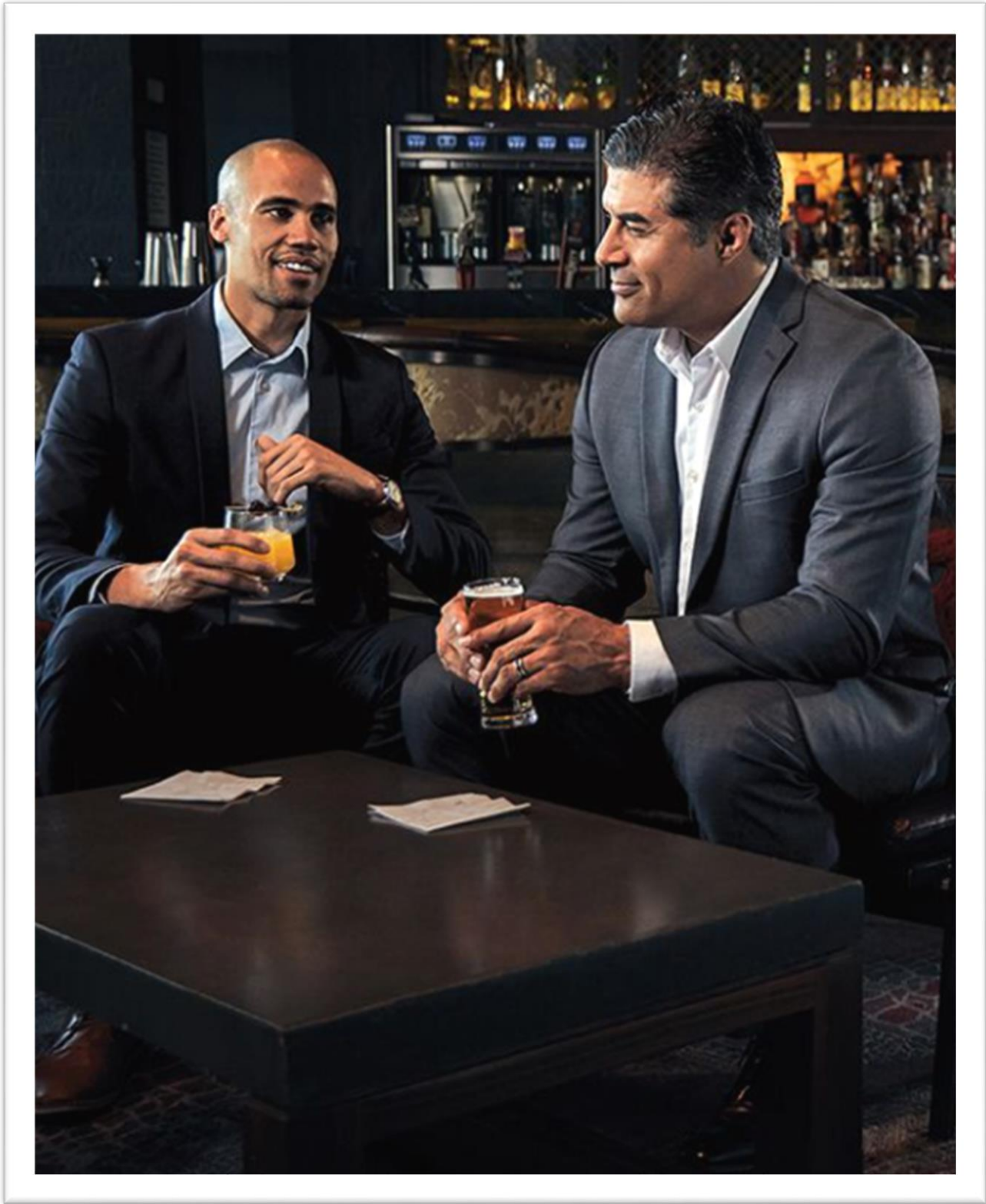
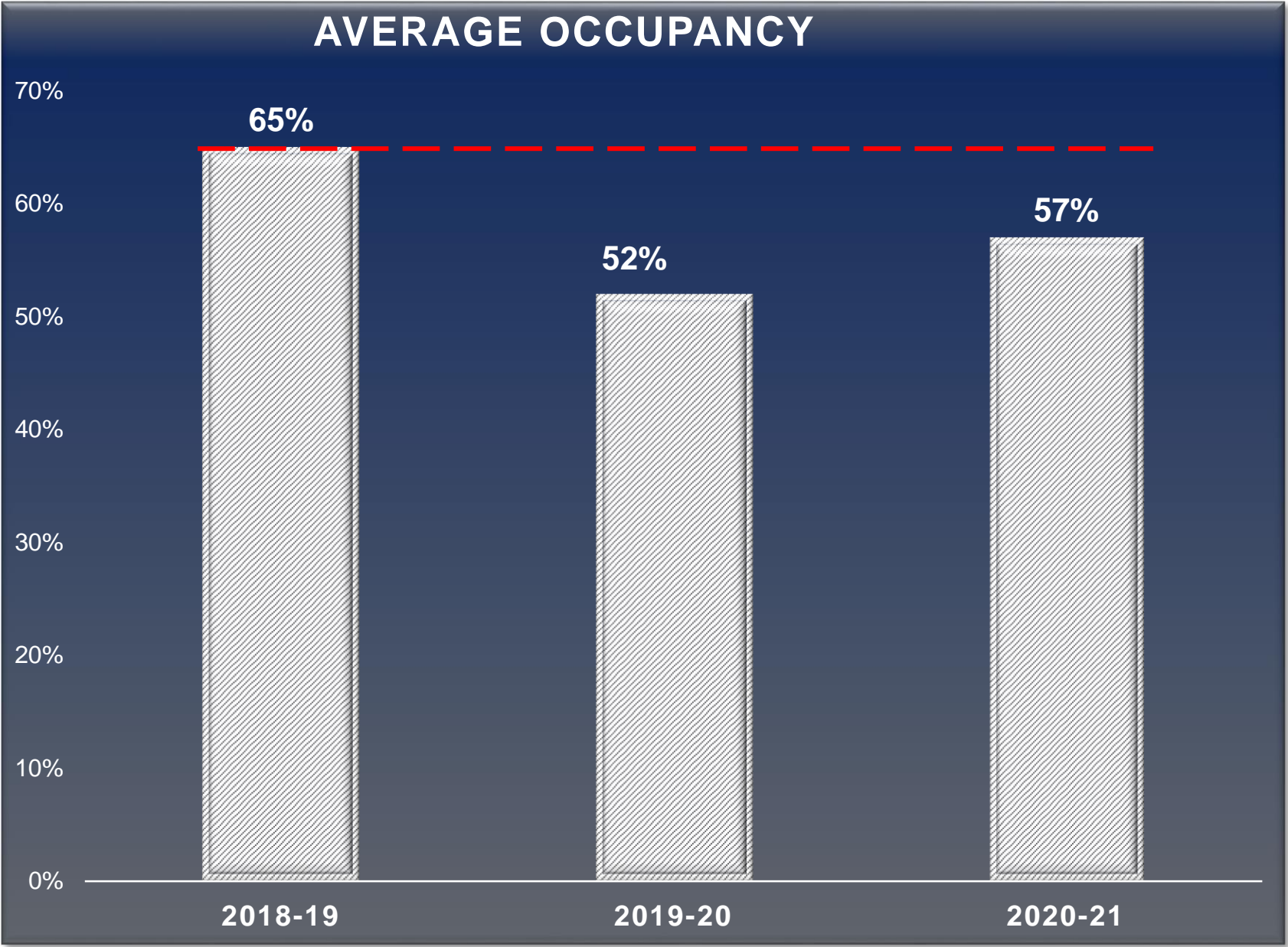


visit lano – CVB

- Expands Plano's economic base
- Attracts business, sports, leisure traveler
- Funded 100% by Hotel/Motel Tax
- Staffing:
 - 10 Fulltime, 1 part-time, 1 seasonal
- Millions of overnight visits to Plano
- Hit hard by pandemic



visit lano – COVID Impact

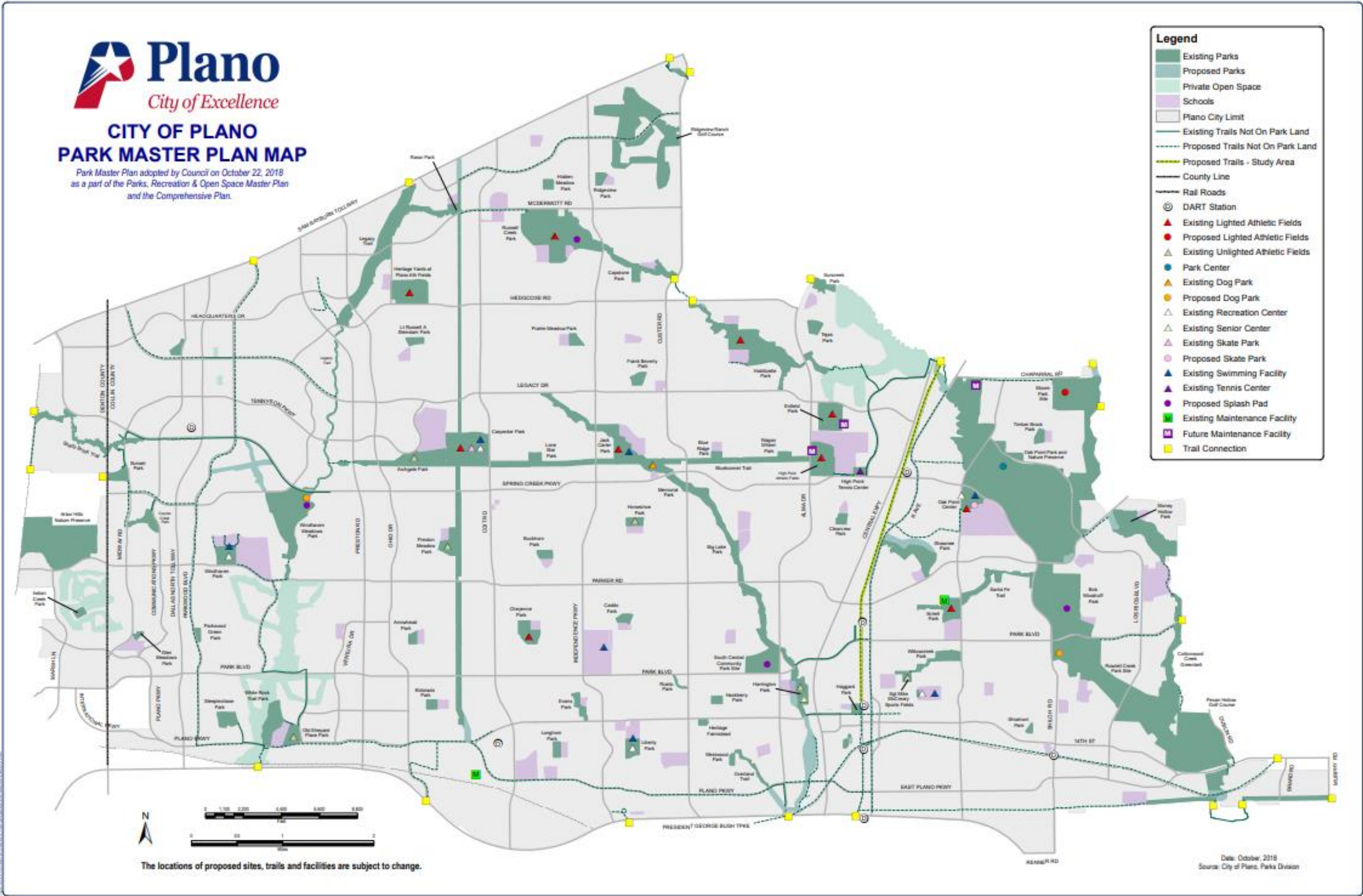


visit Plano Projects

- *Taste of Plano* Foodie Pass
- COVID-Safe photo shoot
- Digital meeting and trip planner
- Produced 12 new *That's Tempting* videos
- New *Let's Go* video campaign
- Digital restaurant coupon book
- New Visit Plano shopping campaign
- Brand new *Visit Plano* brochure



Park Planning Division – CIP Projects



Windhaven Meadows Park – Opened 2019



Carpenter Park North – Opened 2020



Arbor Hills Restrooms – Completed 2021

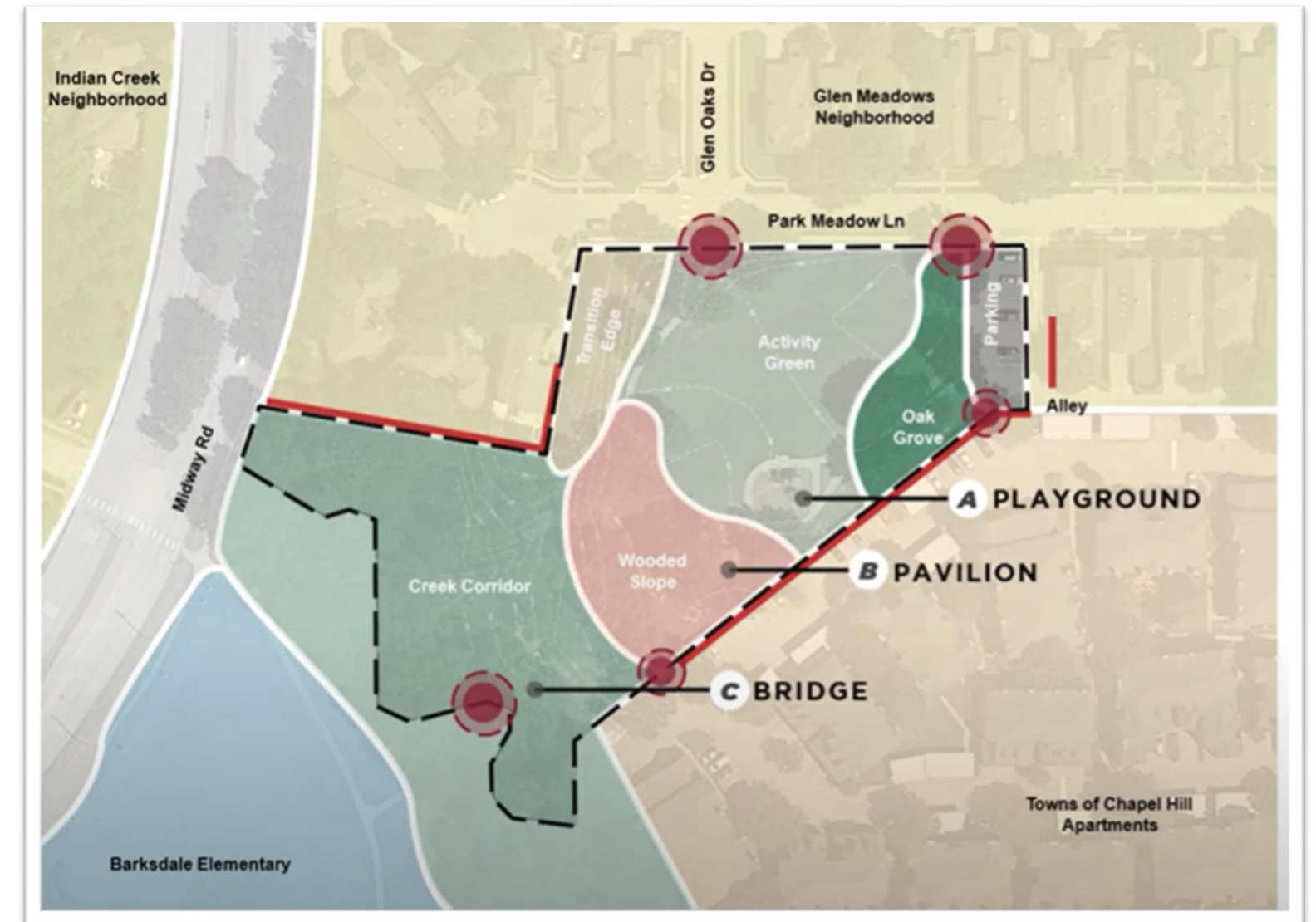


Oak Point Outdoor Pool (Summer 2022)



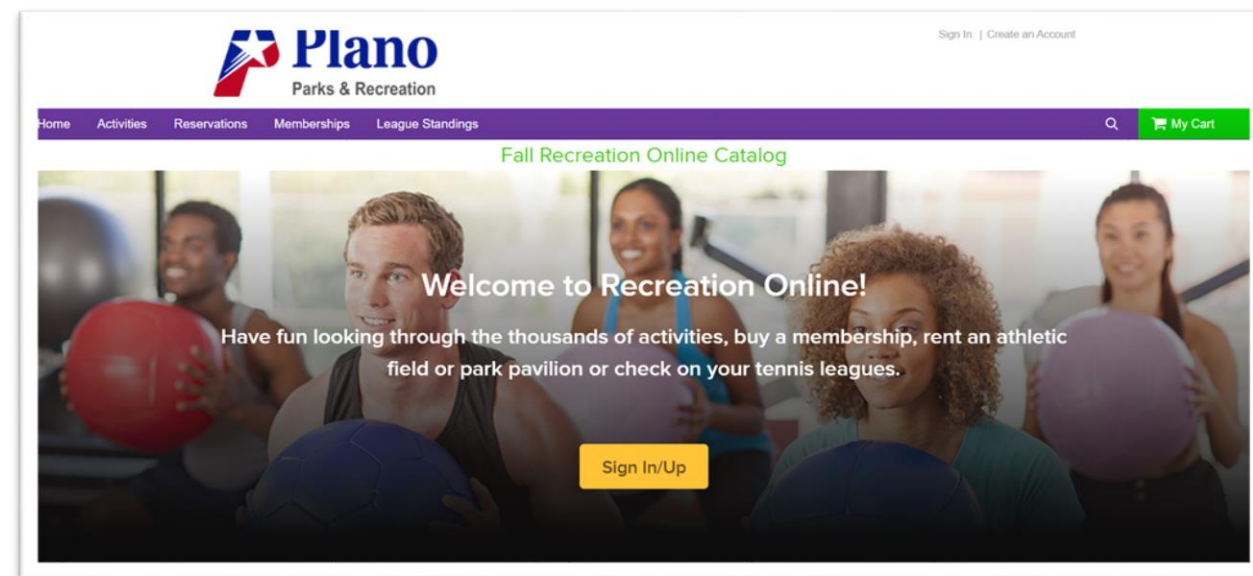
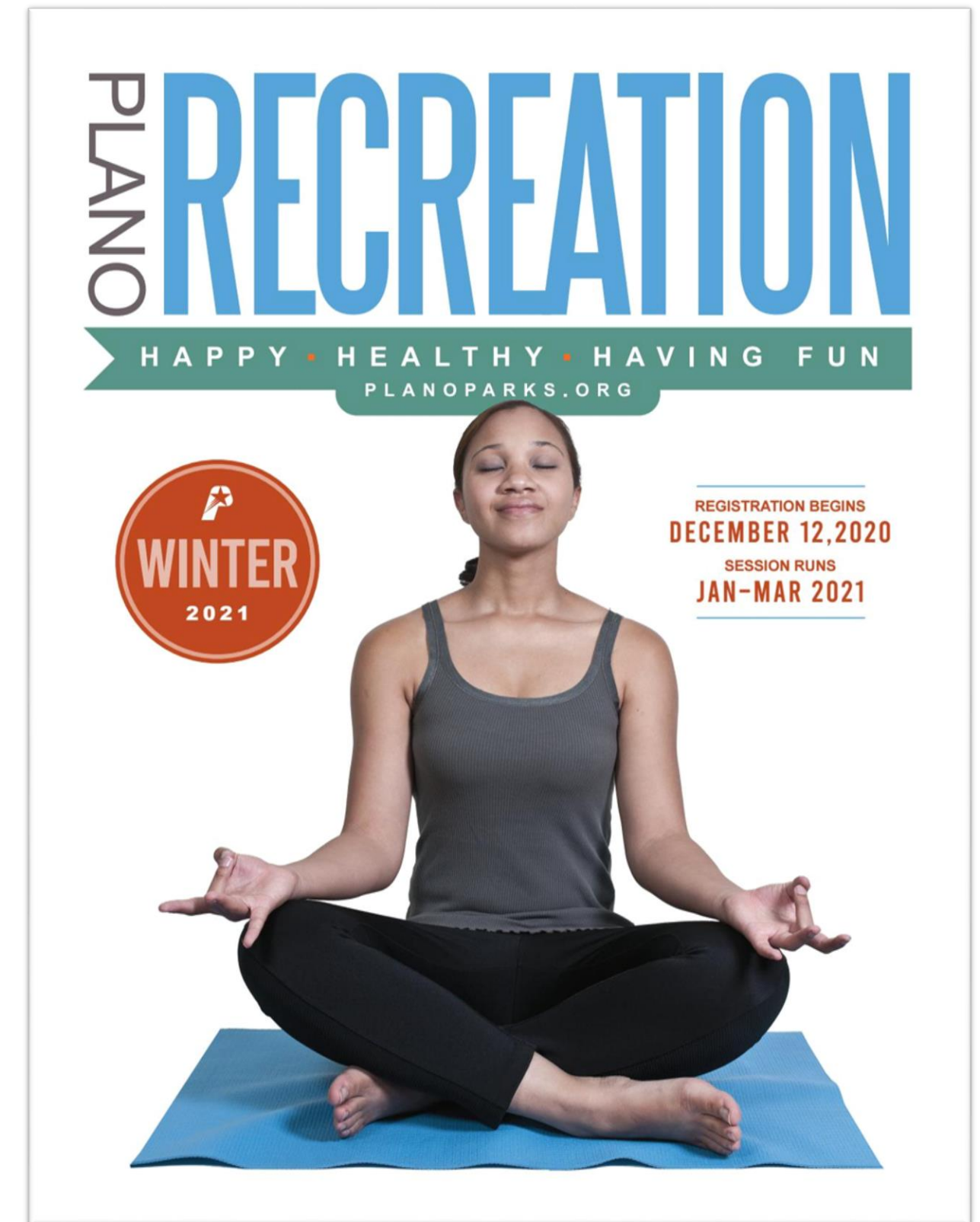
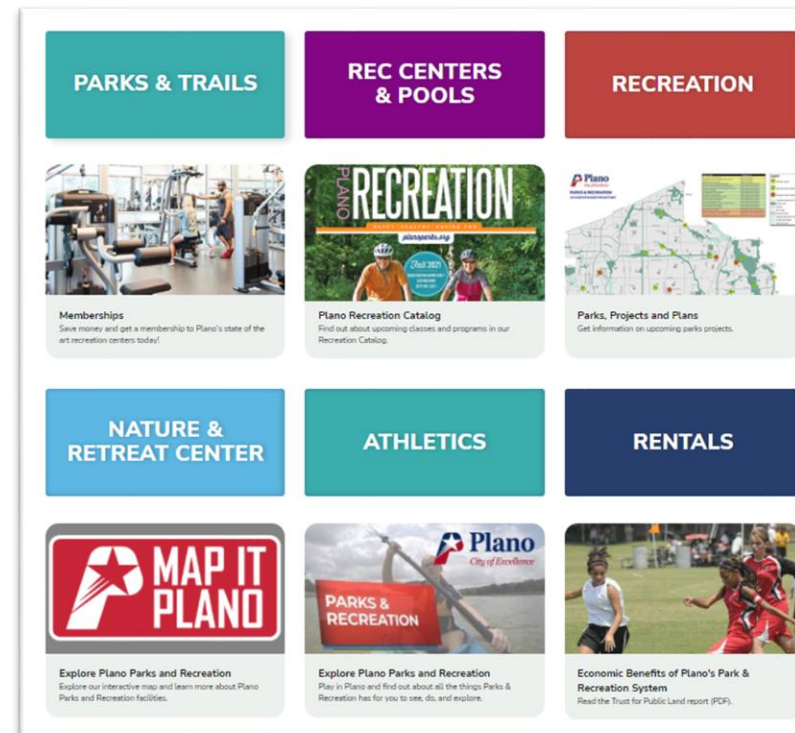
Current & Future Projects

- Russell Creek Park
- Evans Park Renovation
- Willowcreek Park Renovation
- Glen Meadows Park Renovation
- Old Shepard Place Park Renovation
- Jack Carter Park Improvements
- Oak Point Park Hillside Improvements
- Los Rios Park Trail
- Bob Woodruff South restroom replacement



Business Division

- Marketing
- Accounting
- Technology



COVID-19 and Winter Storm Uri



Top Trends

- **Trending...**

- Labor Shortage
- Parks, Recreation and Mental Health
- Aging Infrastructure
- Online Recreation
- Drop-in Play
- Senior Services



- **Response...**

- Creative Solutions
- 10-min. walk
- Proposition B and C
- Virtual Programs Coordinator
- Scheduling, enhanced maintenance
- Expanded programs, second location

Mission and Vision

- Plano Parks and Recreation is enriching the lives of Plano residents through inviting spaces, caring service, outstanding value and memorable experiences.
- Plano is an economic leader bonded by a shared sense of community, where residents experience unparalleled quality of life.



Questions?