

A wide-angle photograph of a lush green park. In the foreground, a large, well-maintained lawn is filled with people sitting on blankets, some with bicycles. The middle ground is dominated by a dense canopy of mature, leafy trees. In the background, a modern building with a green facade and a set of stairs is visible. To the right, a calm body of water reflects the sky and trees. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds.

What's trending in Parks and Recreation for 2025?

Our Parks, Recreation, and Libraries team works with agencies across the country on projects large and small, which gives us a unique view into major trends happening within the industry.

Here's what the team is seeing in 2025

Using technology for enhanced operations and community engagement

There is much promise in the ways technology can help agencies achieve their goals and engage their community more effectively.

"From language translation to video creation, AI is here. At a recent session I presented, 25% of participants were already using AI on a frequent basis. Now is the time to dive in and start learning how it can help your agency."

- **Ryan Hegreess** | Senior Consultant

"I'm seeing a desire for making plans actionable from day one by using dashboards to visually display priorities and track progress in real time."

- **Becky Dunlap** | Senior Consultant

"One tool I'm excited about is Placer AI to gather data on visitation trends to inform services and staffing. From hourly, daily, and seasonal trends to durations of visits, this tool can help agencies better serve their communities."

- **Miranda Hanson** | Consultant

"The same old ways of engaging communities in planning aren't working anymore. I'm seeing a move toward more engaging and public-friendly formats, such as digital storytelling via videos to help promote and gain buy-in for new services."

- **Lisa Paradis** | Senior Manager

"GIS mapping is helping parks and recreation departments better understand their communities. Many are even making these maps interactive and available to the public to help constituents find the information they need about the facilities near them."

- **Dante Cavaz** | Consultant

"With the upswing in AI, combatting disinformation is harder than ever. Balance out your technology efforts with getting out in your community, building trust face-to-face."

- **Nikki Ginger** | Manager



Continued focus on inclusivity

Parks and libraries are a community asset meant to be enjoyed by the whole community. Our team has seen a continued focus on inclusivity, whether that means making parks more accessible for those with disabilities, providing spaces for working parents, or finding creative ways to engage different age groups.

“Balancing childcare and professional responsibilities is a common challenge for working parents. The overall increase in remote work presents an opportunity for parks and recreation agencies to support these parents by providing fast Wi-Fi, comfortable seating, and meeting rooms. This setup allows parents to focus on their work while their children participate in enjoyable and healthy activities.”

- **Becky Dunlap** | Senior Consultant

“There’s a lot of action around ADA planning efforts, from assessments, action plans, and transition plans to making sure they are up to date.”

- **Lisa Paradis** | Senior Manager

“In addition, we’re seeing many agencies go well beyond ADA standards in making their parks, trails, open spaces, and services accessible, based on the unique needs of their communities.”

- **Jason Genck** | Senior Manager



Emerging sports and activities

As communities evolve, demographics shift, and lifestyle trends change, new ways of recreation emerge. We’re seeing some interesting new trends as well as a new era in pickleball!

“In the Chicago suburbs, there is a private venture to fund a cricket stadium. The sport has become so popular locally that the smaller park spaces can no longer accommodate the growing fan base.”

- **Dani Wilson** | Manager

“We’re seeing creative solutions for engaging teens in communities, including e-sports competitions, extreme sports, outdoor adventure programs that introduce teens to kayaking or stand-up paddleboarding, as well as creative workshops where they can learn about music production and similar technologies. We’ve even seen graffiti and street art classes that help teens express themselves.”

- **Lisa Wolff** | Senior Consultant and **Art Thatcher** | Manager

“One trend I’m seeing is a truce in the tennis-pickleball war. With pickleball continuing to gain in popularity, we’re seeing an increased interest in shared spaces that can accommodate both sports using mobile pickleball equipment that can be moved from place to place.”

- **Jeff Milkes** | Senior Consultant

Human-centered design

For agencies in urban, suburban, and rural areas, there is a growing recognition of the mental health benefits of nature. Increasingly, communities are looking for not just more trails but more walkable communities that provide places of respite from the noise and pollution of traffic.

“Providing opportunities to connect with nature in a variety of ways, such as nature programming where communities can learn about the environment, as well as providing places where people can relax in nature are important for many of my clients.”

- Elsa Fisher | Manager

“Creating walkable communities significantly enhances the quality of life. This involves building trails, improving access to multi-modal transportation, and ensuring safer spaces for movement. Many communities are reimagining urban landscapes to be more people-friendly by incorporating effective lighting, clear wayfinding, and traffic reduction measures.”

- Caylon Vielehr | Consultant

“My focus is on arts and culture master planning. Public art, including monumental sculptures, can add a human element to communities and give residents inspiration and beauty. One thing that sometimes gets neglected, though, is maintenance for public art. I work with clients to help them develop a budget and a maintenance plan to protect their investment and increase the community's enjoyment of art.”

- Rich Neuman | Senior Consultant





Innovative strategies for parks, recreation, and libraries

BerryDunn's consultants work with you to improve operations, drive innovation, identify improvements to services based on community need, and elevate your brand and image—all from the perspective of our team's combined 100 years of hands-on experience. We provide practical park solutions, recreation expertise, and library consulting.

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wherever you are based, we look forward to working together.

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