



You Belong Here Inclusion Strategy



Urbana Park District (UPD) is committed to creating and promoting inclusion across all public spaces, places, facilities, and programs that the district manages. Through Urbana Park District's You Belong Here Inclusion Strategy, we welcome and support recreation experiences for everyone, while encouraging an inclusive and responsive staff culture. Celebrating inclusion regardless of age, ethnicity, culture, income, ability, interests—everyone and anyone belongs here!



Strategy Goals

This Inclusion Strategy outlines Urbana Park District's approach to ensuring inclusive environments and equitable opportunities for all community members in local parks and recreation.

This strategy ensures that:

- Community members utilizing our facilities, programs and services have equitable and appropriate access to programs and services, regardless of ability, race, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, or country of origin.
- Staff actively support all community members and promote inclusive behaviors in parks, recreation facilities, and in public spaces throughout Urbana-Champaign.
- Urbana Park District establishes and maintains an organizational infrastructure for management, oversight, implementation, communication about and monitoring of the strategy and its established goals and objectives.
- All staff are educated on inclusion expectations.
- Urbana Park District will continuously measure and improve inclusive practices.

You Belong Here Matrix Team Goals

(2020-21)	(2021-22)
More effectively reach and communicate with community members for whom English is a second language.	Expand staff involvement & the number of locations Urbana visits to provide on-site youth program registrations utilizing Carle scholarship funds as payment.
Strive to create an environment in which all UPD staff appreciate and promote the importance of diversity and inclusion.	Increase program guide and free pages distribution to community organizations and/or neighborhoods.
Seek opportunities in which UPD can bring activities to neighborhoods and be responsive to interests of community groups.	Research and implement Activenet's Spanish and French customer user interface modules.

You Belong Here is one of the four pillars of the UPD's Strategic Plan. You can read the entire plan at urbanaparks.org.

Staff Training

Urbana Park District staff will regularly participate in trainings grounded in proven training models using evidence-based content. Trainings will be comprehensive, cover multiple topics, based on credible research, and delivered by qualified personnel. All new staff members will be oriented to inclusive policies and practices during onboarding.

Urbana Park District hired August Ball, Founder and CEO of Cream City Conservation & Consulting, in 2021. Ball facilitated two surveys to full-time staff: 1) a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) assessment to establish benchmarks for individual readiness. 2) a questionnaire which highlighted culture, practices and sense of belonging amongst staff to better understand the different experiences of employees across varying demographics. Subsequently, full-time staff took part in the following three workshops provided by Ball; Racial Equity and Environmentalism, Foundations of Internalized Racism, and De-centering White Dominate Culture. The district's DEI executive committee is working to schedule pertinent training facilitators to continue these efforts in 2022.

Staff will partake in both general district-wide and specific staff-group trainings with Jennifer Skulski, Accessibility Consultant. General topics include an overview of the Americans with Disabilities Act and key principles for inclusion of people with disabilities in programs, services, and activities. Staff-group trainings may include, among others, the ADA and customer service, the built environment, playgrounds, or hiring procedures.

Urbana Park District staff participate in Community Choices and Developmental Services Center's Leaders in Employing All People (LEAP) training program to recruit and hire staff with disabilities as well as train staff to best accommodate people of all abilities in the workplace. This training is available and encouraged for all full-time staff.

The Inclusion Training Packet is a collection of resources for supervisors to utilize during training and onboarding process to ensure that all staff members have the tools they need to carry out the district's You Belong Here culture.



Organizational Support

Urbana Park District staff **will establish and cultivate** organizational supports that create a social environment that encourages all to be inclusive through positive relationships among staff, youth, families and throughout the community.

- Meet regularly with Urbana Park District's Community Outreach and Advisory Support Team (COAST).
 - Increase the diversity and utilization of construction-related Minority and Women Business Enterprises (MWBES) in the current prequalified provider program (PPP).
 - Alleviate transportation barriers by utilizing Urbana to bring accessible programs, events, and on-site registration to under-resourced communities.
 - Intentionally target under-resourced populations when advertising scholarship opportunities.
 - Hire and retain diverse staff using resources and tools provided by Krystal Ardayfio Consulting.
 - Utilize community support organizations to recruit diverse employees.
 - Be present at culturally diverse events held by other agencies in the community.
 - Partner with community organizations in providing services and available resources to under-resourced audiences.
 - Provide support to families through childcare and supervision to allow adults and caregivers to participate in UPD and other community services.
 - Utilizing the Urbana Park District Citizen Advisory Committee as a sounding board for new ideas, programs, projects, etc.
 - Maintain Gold level business certification with LEAP (Leaders in Employing All People) through collaboration with Community Choices and Developmental Services Center.
 - Participate in and support Uniting Pride's annual Champaign-Urbana Pride Festival.
 - Partner with Urbana Public Television and the Senior Task Force of Champaign County to provide local, senior-centric television programming.
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Environmental Support

Urbana Park District **already provides** environmental supports and practices that promote inclusion for all community members.

- Program inclusion services through Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation (CUSR); providing modifications depending on the individual needs and abilities of participants
 - A safe environment for participants, staff, and volunteers to identify and be addressed by their personal pronouns on their email signatures and other appropriate spaces
 - All rental, registration, membership, and print fillable forms in circulation are in 12-pt font or larger
 - Signage encouraging facility visitors to use the restroom which best aligns with their gender identity
 - Built environment enhancements, including modified equipment and ramps
 - Culturally-sensitive program hours
 - On-site language translation services through technology as well as in-person translation services by appointment
 - Signage and additional facility enhancements, such as artwork and murals, that promote diversity and inclusion
 - Fields, gyms, aquatic centers and other spaces to support culturally diverse athletics in the community
 - Adaptive equipment available to assist patrons with all abilities to enter and exit water safely at both aquatic facilities
 - Ensuring ADA regulations are followed on all new construction while also striving to implement universal design principles in projects to improve usability for all people
 - Offering community program information and resources to older adults (50+) through a monthly, printed newsletter
 - Gender nonrestrictive restrooms, private changing areas, and showers are available at both aquatic facilities
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Environmental Support Continued

Urbana Park District **will establish** environmental supports and practices that promote inclusion for all community members.

- Designate areas at programs and events for participants in crisis and/or sensory situations to take breaks.
 - Update signage on all single-stall restrooms to be gender nonrestrictive across the district.
 - Facilitate environmental resources and services in historically underserved neighborhoods and/or providing opportunities that save money while reducing environmental impact.
 - Implement best practice inclusive design principals in the new Health & Wellness facility.
 - Provide audio/visual support including large print signage and closed-captioning on media.
 - Contract with an Accessibility Consultant to perform an assessment of all parks and facilities; create a prioritized transition plan to address barriers to accessibility; perform a comprehensive review of policies, practices, and procedures for ADA compliance; and present various ADA trainings. As of November 2021, this process is still ongoing.
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Environmental Justice

Climate, Action, Resiliency, Education, and Sustainability (CARES) Plan

Climate change poses significant challenges in equity, inclusion, and justice. How people contribute to climate change, experience its impacts, and adapt to these impacts is determined largely by variables such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, and geographic location. Environmental conditions and the availability of resources contribute to the ability to cope with climate-related events and disasters. Low-income communities, people of color, people with disabilities, aging populations, and other marginalized people are disproportionately impacted by climate change. They may lack necessary infrastructure and support systems and gain fewer benefits from sustainable practices. Vulnerability to climate change varies across time and location, across communities, and among individuals within communities.

Addressing equity in the UPD's CARES Plan starts with identifying vulnerable groups of people. Efforts will be made to connect with people in these populations to determine their unique needs and barriers and to facilitate environmental resources and services, such as focusing tree plantings in historically underserved neighborhoods or providing opportunities that both save money and reduce environmental impact at the same time.

You can read the entire CARES plan at urbanaparks.org.

Solidarity Gardens Champaign - Urbana (C-U)

The Urbana Park District plays a critical role in the local Solidarity Gardens C-U initiative in collaboration with Cunningham Township, Sola Gratia Farm, Channing Murray Foundation, The Urbana Free Library, and other community partners to address current and worsening food insecurities in Urbana-Champaign by supporting local residents in growing food for themselves as well as neighbors in need. Solidarity Gardens C-U empowers individuals and organizations to create gardens throughout the Champaign-Urbana area and to donate seeds, garden supplies, and expertise.

Urbana Park District donated 18 perennial plots of different sizes, including raised-beds, to accommodate volunteers of varying ages and abilities. In the 2020 and 2021 growing seasons, a combined 2,100 pounds of produce was donated to Mobile Market, Jubilee Cafe, Eastern Illinois Foodbank, Free Friday Market, and targeted neighborhoods in the Urbana-Champaign community.

Continuous Measurement and Improvement

What began with the Urbana Park District's and University of Illinois Diversity Research Lab's 2017 study, Increasing Involvement among Underrepresented Groups in Parks and Recreation Programs, has evolved over time. The initial study held focus groups with users and non-users of park district parks, programs and facilities and worked to understand the honest barriers people in our community are facing. In order to assess the impact and effectiveness of changes and improvements implemented as a result of the findings of the original study, UPD is again working with University of Illinois Diversity Research Lab for a new study that began in late 2021.

In addition to the ongoing work with the U of I Diversity Research Lab, Urbana Park District will continue to seek opportunities which enable us to improve and expand our equity and inclusion efforts. The park district acknowledges that terminology and best practices surrounding inclusivity are dynamic and fluid, and will strive to stay accurate with our language and efforts. The park district will measure the effectiveness of this policy through staff and community qualitative and quantitative feedback from You Belong Here Matrix team, community partners, community engagement events, public forums, surveys, and by monitoring economic and health indicators.

Urbana Park District will monitor the following indicators to track progress of inclusive efforts:

- You Belong Here Matrix Team will evaluate the Inclusion Strategy annually
 - Feedback from COAST members will be provided three times a year
 - Input from UPD Board and UPDAC
 - Monthly You Belong Here board accomplishment reports from each department
 - Performance measures from the UPD's Strategic Plan and the CARES Plan goals
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Strategy Support

Urbana Park District will have ongoing support from community partners and advisors. Various organizations and agencies throughout the Urbana-Champaign community will provide insight to ensure the park district is practicing relevant and authentic inclusion strategies. Partnerships in the community are valuable resources towards the successful implementation of this strategy and will hold the Urbana Park District accountable for its inclusion efforts.

Community Outreach and Advisory Support Team (COAST)

This team is comprised of a group of partners, allies, and community leaders who provide guidance, suggestions, and feedback during the developmental stage of the quarterly program guide. The meetings allow for COAST members to give valuable input on UPD programs and events, as well as an opportunity for members to know what the district is offering and how to best utilize and evaluate resources available to serve the communities they represent.

COAST Members

Laurie Britt <i>Champaign County Regional Planning Commission Youth Assessment Center</i>	Tommy Askins <i>Lierman Neighborhood Action Committee</i>
Karen Simms <i>Champaign-Urbana Trauma & Resiliency</i>	Jes DeVries <i>New American Welcome Center at University YMCA</i>
Darya Shahgheibi <i>Champaign-Urbana Public Health Department</i>	Giovanna DiBernadetto <i>Silver Hearts</i>
Lemond Peppers <i>City of Urbana Community Engagement</i>	Nicole Frydman <i>Uniting Pride of Champaign County</i>
Kaitland Postley <i>Community Choices</i>	Janice Mitchell <i>Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center</i>
Debarah McFarland <i>Dream Girls Academy</i>	Mitzy Maldonado <i>Urbana School District #116 Dual Language and Student Engagement</i>
Cindy Sheppard <i>Faith in Place</i>	

Acronyms and Key Terms

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CARES	Climate, Action, Resilience, Education and Sustainability
COAST	Community Outreach Advisory Support Team
CUSR	Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation
MWBE	Minority and Women Business Enterprises
PPP	Prequalified Provider Program
UPD	Urbana Park District
U of I	University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana)
UPDAC	Urbana Park District Advisory Committee
YBH	You Belong Here
Adaptive Equipment	Any tool, device, or machine that is used to help with any task that is associated with daily living.
Culture	The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of heritage, religious, or social group.
Disability	A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of an individual.
Diversity	Differences in racial and ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic, and academic/professional backgrounds; people with different opinions, backgrounds (degrees and social experience), religious beliefs, political beliefs, sexual orientation, heritage, mental or physical ability, learning style, gender identity, and life experience.
Equity	The fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Environmental Justice	The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.
Environmental Support	Physical support and practices such as facility modifications, translation services, audio/visual support, etc.
Gender Identity	One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.
Gender Neutral	Denoting a word or expression that cannot be taken to refer to one gender only.
Gender Nonrestrictive	Not involving gender-based restrictions or limitations.
Inclusion	Bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources.
Organizational Support	Refers to positive networking, connections and relationships among staff, youth, families and the community to support inclusion efforts.
Race	Any one of the groups that humans are often divided into based on physical traits regarded as common among people of shared ancestry.
Sexual Orientation	A person's sexual identity or self-identification as bisexual, straight, gay, pansexual, etc.

Resources

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- “Inclusive Bathroom Signage Recommendations - Wa.” *Inclusive Bathroom Signage Recommendations*, Washington State Employees' LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group, July 2016, https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/shr/Diversity/DEIMEDIA/Inclusive-Bathroom-Signage-Recommendations_RAIN.pdf.
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- “Parks for Inclusion.” *National Recreation and Park Association*, <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/partnerships/initiatives/parks-for-inclusion/>.
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- Urbana Park District Strategic Plan 2020*. Urbana Park District, 10 Sept. 2019, https://www.urbana-parks.org/assets/1/6/Strategic_Plan_11.pdf.
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