



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!

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 are educated on inclusion expectations and 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.
- Urbana Park District will continuously measure and improve inclusive practices.
- Urbana Park District efforts are approached in an accountable and transparent manner, with emphasis on openness, ethics, equity and inclusion.

You Belong Here is one of the four pillars of the UPD's Strategic Plan.

You can read the entire plan at urbanaparks.org.

You Belong Here Matrix Team Goals

Goals (2023-24)-	Strategies (2023-24)-
<p>Offer assistance to anyone who may need support in filling out applications; including computer access and in-person translation services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise that assistance for application is available by appointment (program guide, website) • Promote at teen programs • Use translation software (Say Hi) • Advertise availability of computer access • Promote spring job fair in program guide • Provide translation services at spring job fair
<p>Provide tech assistance and hardware access for any required technology platforms associated with our programs and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise that assistance for application is available by appointment • Establish processes and point-persons for troubleshooting issues; promote internally/externally • Track common issues and providing accessible solutions to those frequent problems. • Translate staff tutorials for timekeeping software
<p>Create a list of existing community champions, and other neighborhood partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a comprehensive Excel file and ensure it is accessible to staff • Start from COAST/Affiliates • Gain input from all departments- fall retreat
<p>Develop and utilize graphics, signage and pictures to promote the You Belong Here messaging.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight existing art pieces that are reflective of the community • Develop a "campaign" of graphics for cohesive messaging across facilities; "You Belong Here". • Share stories of various programs and events on socials • Add photos of full-time staff members on website • Highlight staff and volunteers on socials

Staff Training

Urbana Park District staff will regularly participate in trainings and professional development opportunities grounded in proven training models using evidence-based content. Training 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.

In May 2022, Karen Crawford-Simms from CU Trauma and Resilience led staff through the connections between resilience and wellness in healing trauma and toxic stress with an overarching goal to improve staff understanding of trauma, resilience, and best practices for addressing community violence.

In February 2023, the UPD joined the Champaign Park District and Champaign County Forest Preserve for a hands-on Active Intruder training led by FBI Personnel. In this training, staff experienced real-world scenarios, emergency aid training and developed a better understanding of what to do in the event of an active shooter.

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.

All full-time employees attend a mandatory, annual, Sexual harassment training involves educating employees on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the workplace and equipping them with the tools and knowledge needed to recognize and correct behavior that may be perceived as inappropriate.

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 the 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.

American Sign Language Training video with instructor Kerry Lowry is available to all-staff and covers some common words and phrases related to programming activities.

All full-time staff are provided the opportunity to attend bi-annual connections hosted by the Central Illinois Recreation Leisure Excellence (C.I.R.C.L.E). Relevant topics and themes included hiring and retention, conflict resolution, multi-use spaces, supporting LGBTQ+ youth in the community, agency branding, and customer service.

Organizational Support

Urbana Park District staff **will establish and continuously strengthen** 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 pre-qualified 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.
- Collaborate with community organizations in providing services and connecting audiences to available resources.
- 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.
- Collaborate with Urbana Public Television and the Senior Task Force of Champaign County to provide local, senior-centric television programming.
- Continue to foster a strong relationship with the Urbana School District; continuing to collaborate on after school activities, employment, communication, service projects, facility use and program partnerships.
- Provide Urbana Park District representatives to regularly attend and support community-wide initiatives and goals of various local committees and boards; including, but not limited to, Champaign County Community Coalition, Champaign County African American Heritage Trail, Environmental Education Association of Illinois, 40 North, Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission and Age-Friendly Champaign-Urbana.

Environmental Support

Urbana Park District **already provides** environmental supports and practices that promotes 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
- Offer program adaptations and modifications to all participants upon registration and reservations
- Designates areas at programs and events for participants in crisis and/or sensory situations to take breaks
- A safe environment for participants, staff, and volunteers to identify and be addressed by their personal pronouns on their email signatures and other spaces
- All in-house rental, registration, membership, and print fillable forms in circulation are transitioning to 12-pt, sans serif font or larger
- Signage encouraging facility visitors to use the restroom which best aligns with their gender identity
- Gender nonrestrictive restrooms, private changing areas, and showers are available at both aquatic facilities
- Free menstrual hygiene product stations in year-round, indoor facility restrooms. Most stations are self-access, others by request.
- An accessible dock at Crystal Lake Park equipped with an accessible kayak launch and an ADA compliant paddleboat
- Adaptive equipment available to assist patrons with all abilities to enter and exit water safely at both aquatic facilities
- Culturally-sensitive program hours
- Fields, gyms, aquatic centers and other spaces to support culturally diverse athletics in the community
- 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
- All-terrain wheel chair available at the Anita Purves Nature Center for free public use
- Offering community program information and resources to older adults (50+) through a monthly, printed newsletter
- Offer multi-lingual support for ePACT users (adults/legal guardians of campers) where participants can have the ability to select their preferred language of Spanish, French, or English
- Providing QR codes on all new, in-house museum exhibits and district-wide interpretive signs that directs visitors to a Spanish translated webpage with the related information.

Environmental Support Continued

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

- Update signage on all single-stall restrooms to be gender nonrestrictive across the district.
- Facilitate environmental resources and services and/or provide opportunities that save money while reducing environmental impact in neighborhoods which face more barriers to green practices.
- Utilize COAST members and other community connections to identify and help alleviate potential barriers to green practices.
- Implement best practice inclusive design principles in the new Health & Wellness facility.
- Provide audio/visual support including large print signage and closed-captioning on media.
- Continuing to increase the number of translated documents with emphasis on those included on the UPD website.
- 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. Findings were presented at the March 2023 Board Study Session. The prioritized transition plan is still in progress as of Spring 2023.
- Update trail guides, new interpretive panels, and online information to better describe the length, difficulty, terrain and available parking.

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 are being 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 Urbana - Champaign

The Urbana Park District plays a critical role in the local Solidarity Gardens initiative in collaboration with Cunningham Township, Sola Gratia Farm, Channing Murray Foundation, 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. Since the program launched in 2020, over 5,000lbs of produce has been harvested and donated to Mobile Market, Jubilee Cafe, Eastern Illinois Foodbank, Free Friday Market, and targeted neighborhoods in the Urbana-Champaign community.

You can learn more about Solidarity Gardens at <https://www.solidarity-gardens-cu.org/>

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 order to assess the impact and effectiveness of changes and improvements implemented as a result of the findings of the original study, UPD collaborated with the University of Illinois Diversity Research Lab to complete the 2022 study, Combating Systemic Racism in Access to Nature, Open Spaces, and Parks and Recreation Resources. From the completion of this study, the Diversity Research Lab was able to utilize UPD's efforts in the formation of a blueprint for best practices that other recreation agencies can follow to provide programs and services driven by inclusive practices.

In addition to the ongoing work with the U of I Diversity Research Lab, Urbana Park District will continue to seek opportunities that 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

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 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. Partnerships with COAST members afford UPD the opportunity to collaborate on programs and events such as Dia de los Muertos, CU Pride Fest, and Welcoming Week. In 2022, many of the Urbana Mobile Recreation Unit's 67 appearances were made possible through collaboration with COAST member organizations.

COAST Members

Cayla Richard <u>Champaign County Regional Planning Commission Youth Assessment Center</u>	Yazmin Fernández <u>New American Welcome Center at University YMCA</u>
Karen Simms <u>Champaign-Urbana Trauma & Resiliency</u>	Giovanna DiBenadetto <u>Silver Hearts</u>
Makiya Turner <u>Champaign-Urbana Public Health Department</u>	Josh Gavel <u>Uniting Pride of Champaign County</u>
Kaitland Postley <u>Community Choices</u>	Jeniece Mitchell <u>Urbana Neighborhood Connections Center</u>
Debarah McFarland <u>Dream Girls Academy</u>	Mitzy Maldonado <u>Urbana School District #116 Dual Language and Student Engagement</u>
Cindy Shepherd <u>Faith in Place</u>	

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.

For a more detailed list of terms and definitions, check out [NRPA's Equity Language Guide](#) glossary of terms to help park and recreation professionals develop a common language around diversity, equity and inclusion.

Resources

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