

The Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission as an organization (APRC) was established in 1908 by a vote of the citizens of Ashland. The citizens approved the formation of the organization with the oversight of an elected 5-member board of commissioners (the “Commissioners”). The formation of the organization and establishment of the Commissioners was accomplished through the Charter for the City of Ashland and for the purpose of setting apart the operations of APRC from the City of Ashland. APRC was endowed with a levy of property taxes to ensure that it could continue to operate to fulfill its mission to provide, protect and enhance parks and recreation opportunities for residents and provide a base for tourism – a mission APRC and the Commissioners continue to uphold.

The historic value and priority placed on parks and recreation in Ashland has helped shape the community and provides many social and economic benefits, such as providing a multitude of diverse and accessible outdoor and indoor recreation opportunities, maintaining Lithia Park, one of Americas “Great Public Spaces”¹ and a “National Landmark for Outstanding Landscape Architecture”². APRC also provides services and support to Seniors through our Senior Program, as well as educating adults and youth on the natural environment, ecology and stewardship at North Mountain Park Nature Center. Our recreation programs reach thousands of youth and adults every year and provide support, socialization, activity and enjoyment for everyone.

APRC contributes to the base economy of Ashland through tourism at many of our sites, including Lithia Park, the Ice Rink, Nature Center, Golf Course, Trails, Open Space, Splash Pad, North Mountain Sports Park and many other amenities. APRC also provides support for and encouragement to residents and visitors with active lifestyles and a love for the environment as exercised through mountain biking, trail running, hiking, jogging, strolling, bird watching and many other outdoor activities. The high level of maintenance traditionally provided at our facilities improves community livability and property values around our parks.

We provide this background as support for the framers of Ashland’s City Charter and to enumerate just a few of the values that APRC provides to this community. We also provide this background to defend the high level of pride and sense of duty that our staff and elected Commissioners place on fulfilling the mission of the City Charter and the organization. And to point out that hundreds of dedicated people, just like us have been delivering these services to the community for 113+ years.

¹ Lithia Park has been designated as one of “Americas Great Public Spaces” by the American Planning Association <https://www.planning.org/greatplaces/spaces/2014/lithiapark.htm>.

² Lithia Park has also been recognized by the American Society of Landscape Architects as a “National Landmark for Outstanding Landscape Architecture.” https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/CMS/Professional_Resources/HALS/ASLACentennial_MedallionSites.pdf