



# America's Great Urban Parks: Designed for Active Living

Meg Cheever, President and CEO



# Importance of Park System

*A great park system is a key element in a city's value proposition, because parks play a key role in*



- Health and recreation
- Environmental quality
- Economic development
- Community building

# Central Park: New York City





# Central Park: Designed for Walking



The Mall in the 1890s



# Central Park: 1859 Drawing





# Central Park: Designed for Active Living





# Central Park: Designed for Variety





# Central Park: Right in the Middle of Things





# What makes a park “seductive?”

- Lively and Engaging
- Beautiful
- Safe
- Clean
- Free
- Well Designed





5 million  
annual visitors

# Central Park: The Mall in 1979





# Central Park:

The Central Park Conservancy,  
Founded 1980



Rebuilding  
Central Park  
A Management and  
Restoration Plan





# Central Park: Park Perimeter in 1980





# Central Park: Park Perimeter Today





# Central Park: Great Lawn in 1980





# Central Park: Great Lawn Today





# Central Park: Bethesda Fountain in 1980





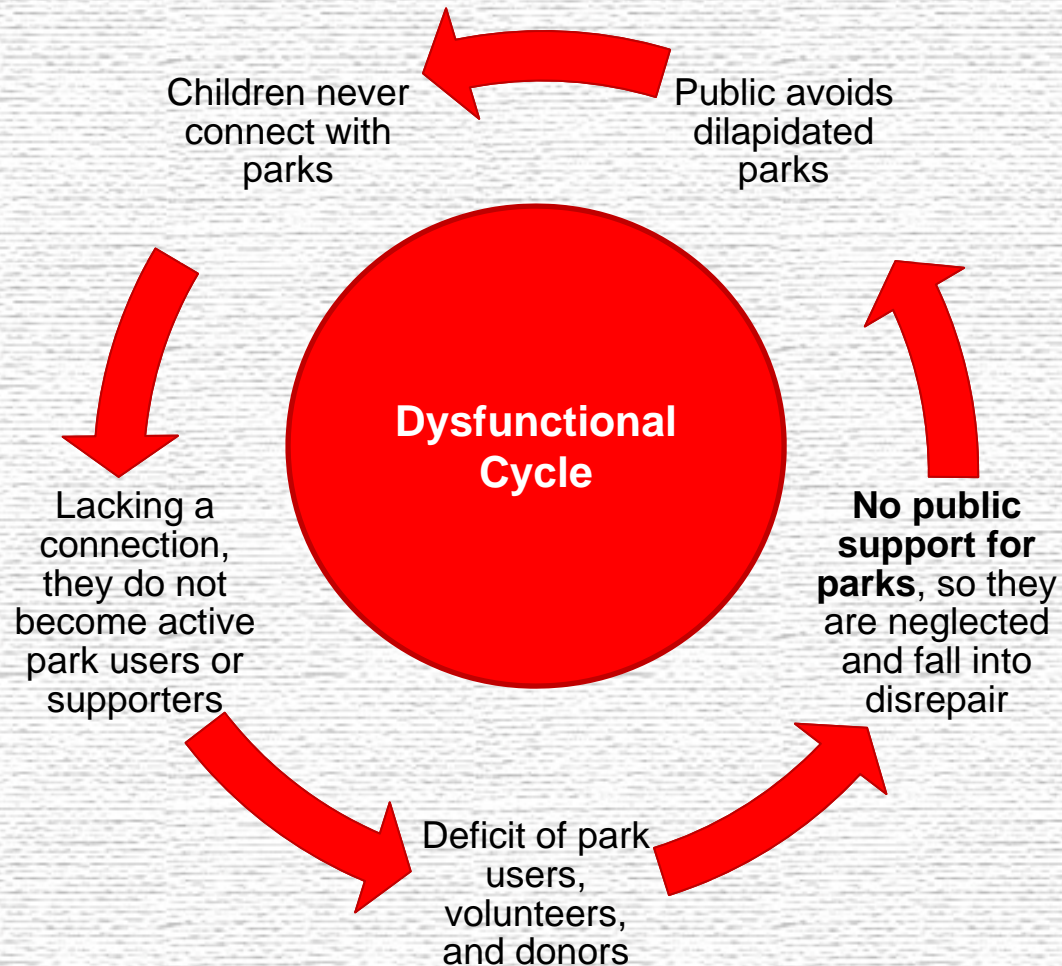
25 million  
annual visitors

# Central Park: Bethesda Fountain Today



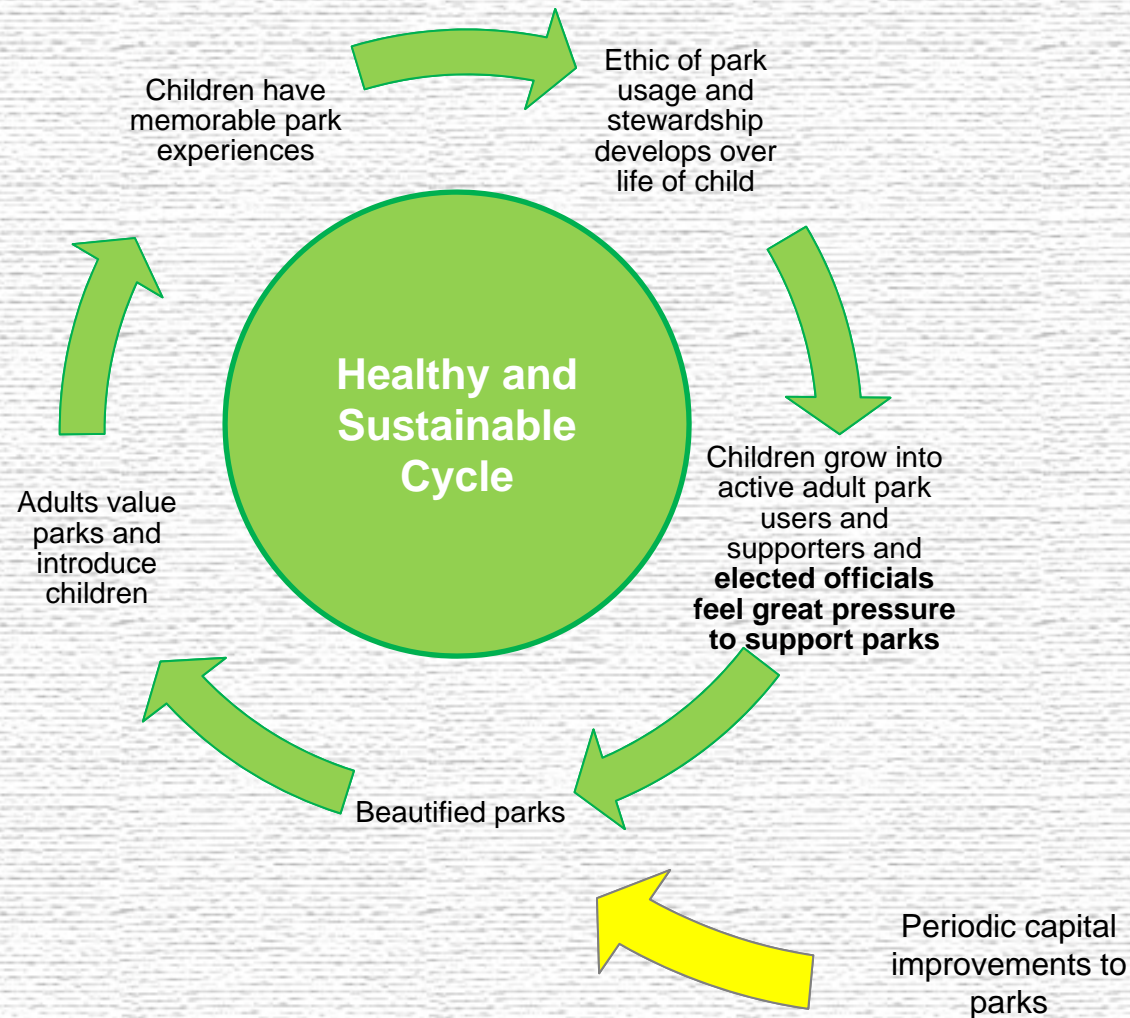


# Dysfunctional Parks Discourage Park Use and Active Living

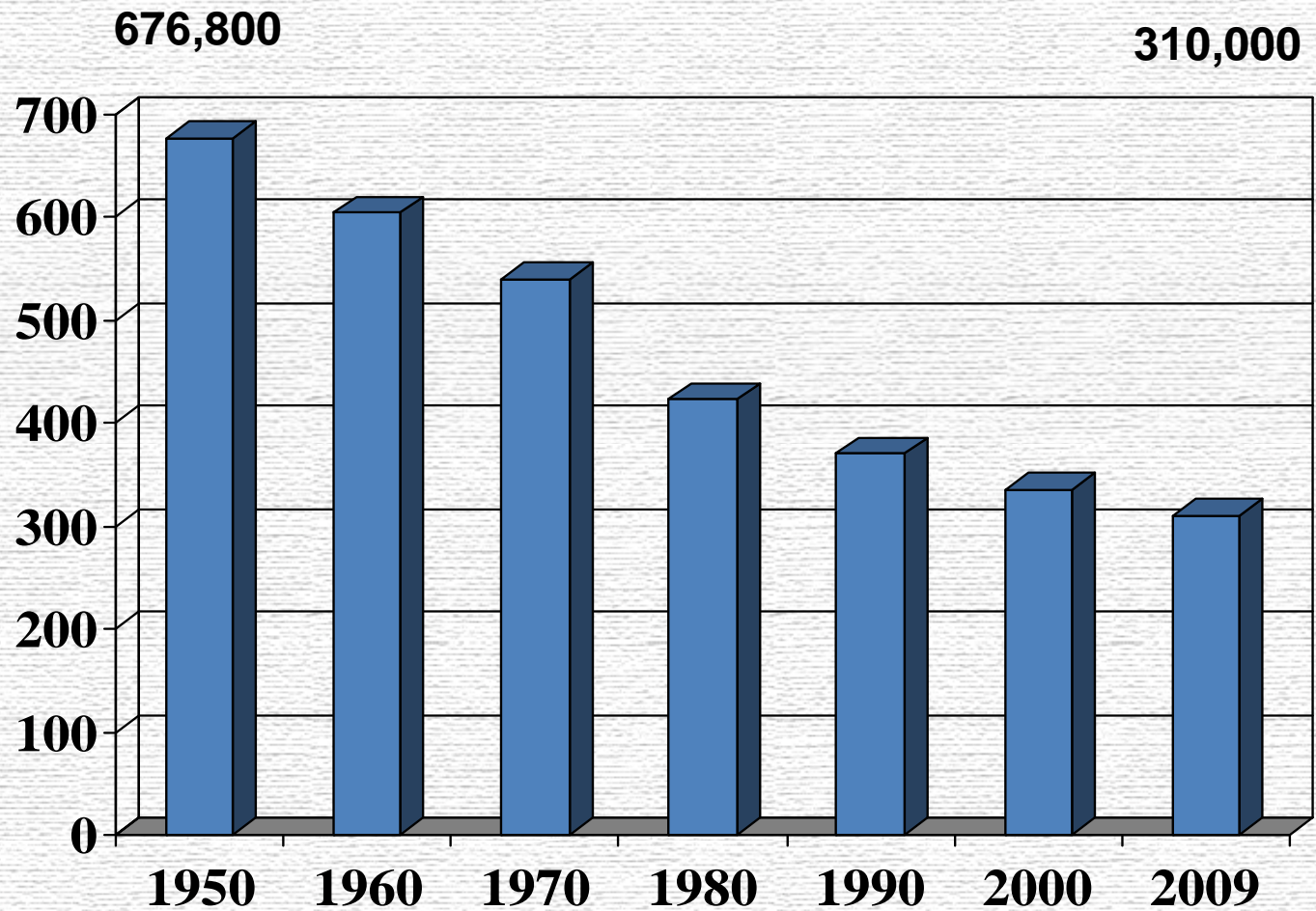




# Healthy Parks Encourage Park Use and Active Living



# Pittsburgh: Population 1950-2009





# Pittsburgh: Park System by 1996

- Diminished tax base
- Lackluster maintenance
- 40 years of deferred maintenance
- \$120M+ backlog of capital reinvestment



# Pittsburgh:



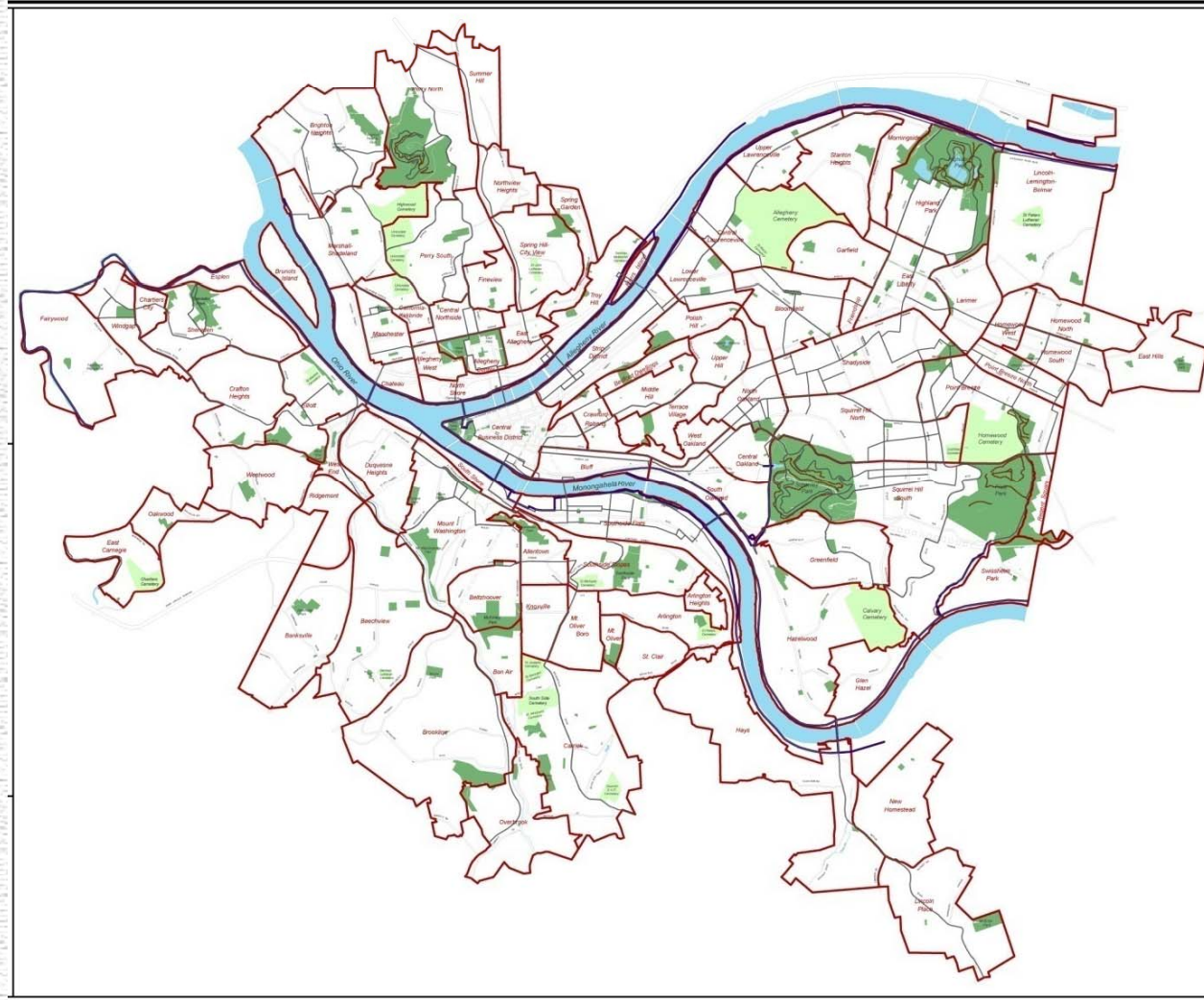
**Founded 1996**

## Mission:

To improve quality of life for the people of Pittsburgh by restoring the park system to excellence in partnership with the City.

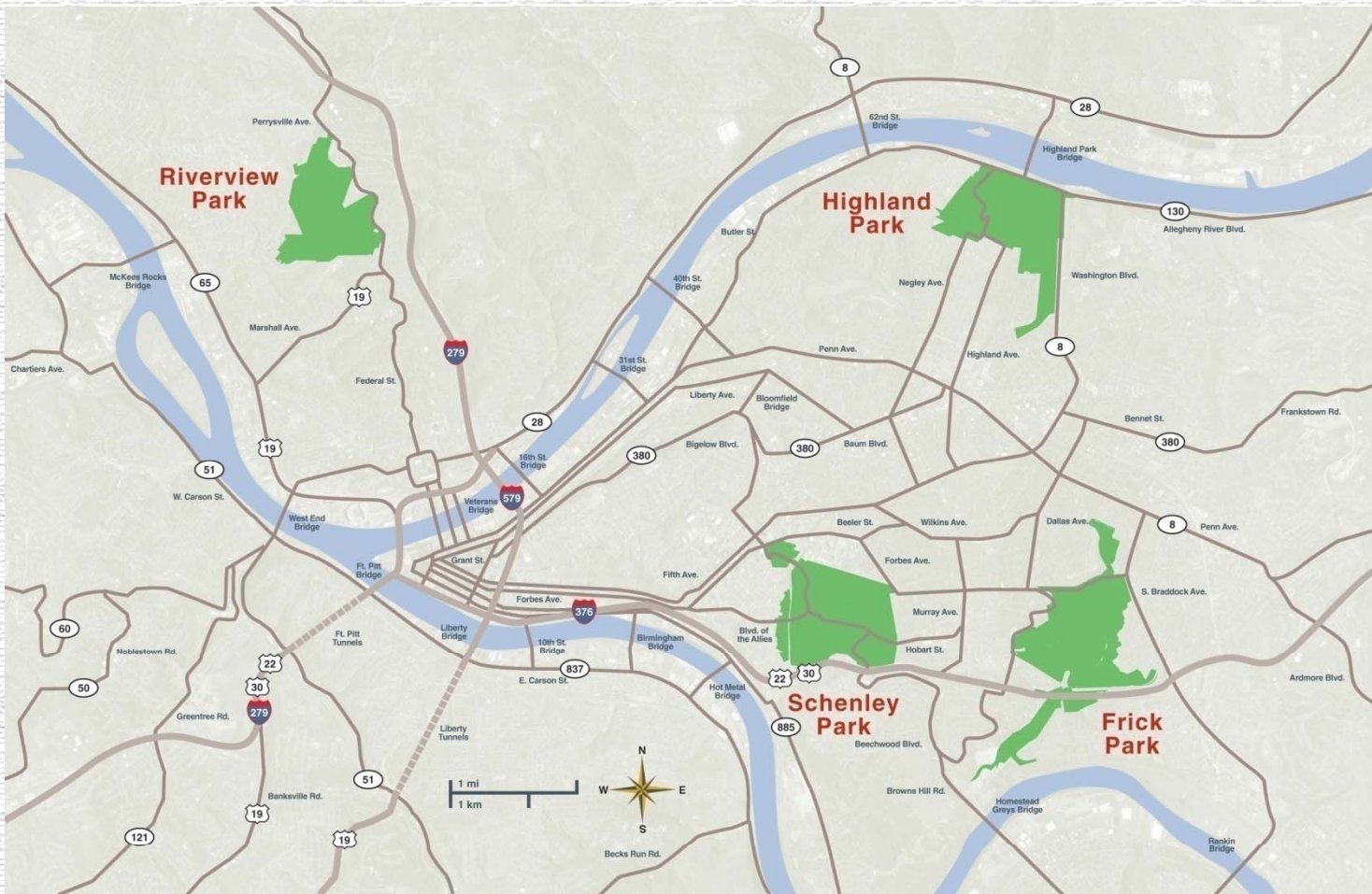


# Pittsburgh: System of 171 Parks



# Pittsburgh:

## 4 Largest Parks – 80% of Acreage



9 Projects in Smaller Parks





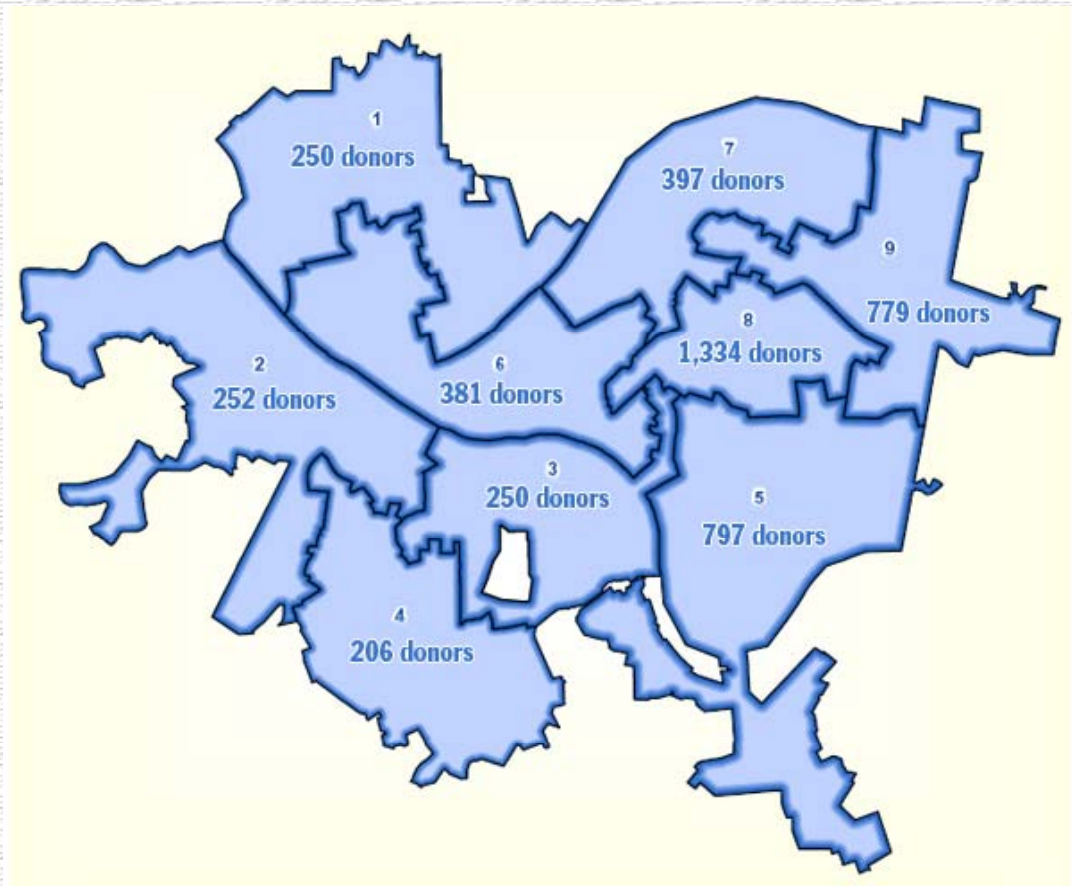
## Measures of Success

- \$45 million raised
- Ten major capital projects
- Large volunteer program for ecological restoration
- 13,000+ person database



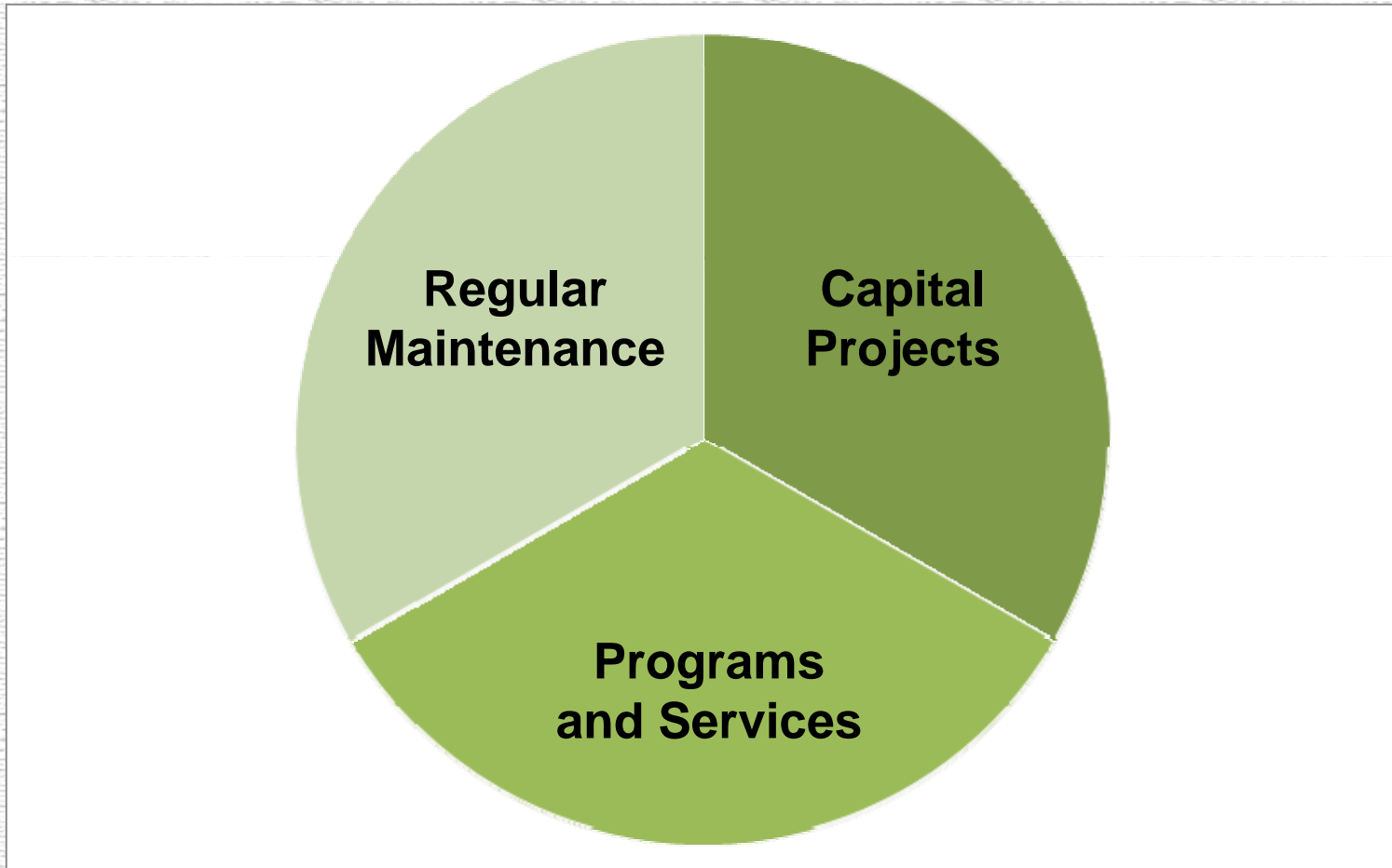
## Broad-Based Constituency

- Membership of over 8,300 donors
- 4,691 donors in City of Pittsburgh (56%)





# Integrated Park Management Model



# Pittsburgh:

## Developing Community Consensus

Original  
Master Plan  
1998 – 2000

PITTSBURGH'S  
REGIONAL PARKS  
MASTER PLAN



*A New Ethic of Stewardship*

*"The beauty of the park . . . should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, of the green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquility and rest to the mind . . . A great object of all that is done in a park, of all the art of the park, is to influence the mind of men through their imagination."*

Frederick Law Olmsted (Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns, 1870)





# Pittsburgh:

## Engaging the Community in the Plan

- Over 30 public meetings
- Intercept interviews in parks – 350 park users
- Telephone survey – 500 area residents
- Community leader survey – 50+ people



# Pittsburgh: Guiding Principles of Plan

- Respect the park's historic design
- Employ best environmental practices
- Respond to needs of modern users
- Promote the free and democratic nature of the space







# Best Environmental Practices





# Best Environmental Practices





# Meeting the Needs of Current Users









# Democratic Space: The PNC Carousel





# Democratic Space: Free Programming





# Schenley Plaza



Completion  
2006



# Pittsburgh: Strategies for Encouraging Park Use, Awareness, and Support

**Get fit! Have fun!**  
Visit a Pittsburgh park today.

**Parks are free.com**

Sponsored by  
**UPMC HEALTH PLAN**

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy Parks for All CITY OF PITTSBURGH Citiparks

- Radio
- TV
- Print

- Web
- Outdoor
- Special Events



# Pittsburgh:

## Strategies for Encouraging Park Use, Awareness, and Support



- 130 free cultural events, including readings, chess, movies, concerts, Kids Days, and Summer Reading Extravaganza
- 35 exercise and health programs, including UPMC Health Plan Healthy Living Lecture Series, woodland walks, and yoga

# **Pittsburgh:**

## **Strategies for Encouraging Park Use, Awareness, and Support**

- Walks in the Woods and Tyke Hikes
- Urban EcoSteward Program
- Volunteer Days
- Membership Campaign:
  - Direct Mail, Website, Blog, Newsletter, Tweets
- Special Events
- Funding Opportunities:
  - Bricks, Benches, Trees, Daffodils





# Pittsburgh: Annual Visitorship – 4 Largest Parks

It is estimated that the four regional parks welcome **6 million visitors per year.**

Source: Allegheny Regional Asset District



A stylized graphic of a green leaf with a dark green stem and veins, positioned on the left side of the slide. The leaf has several lobes and a pointed tip.

# **Major Upcoming Projects**



# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting to the Community



# **Pittsburgh: Hill District – Reconnecting to the Community**





# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting to the Community



**Greenprint Plan**

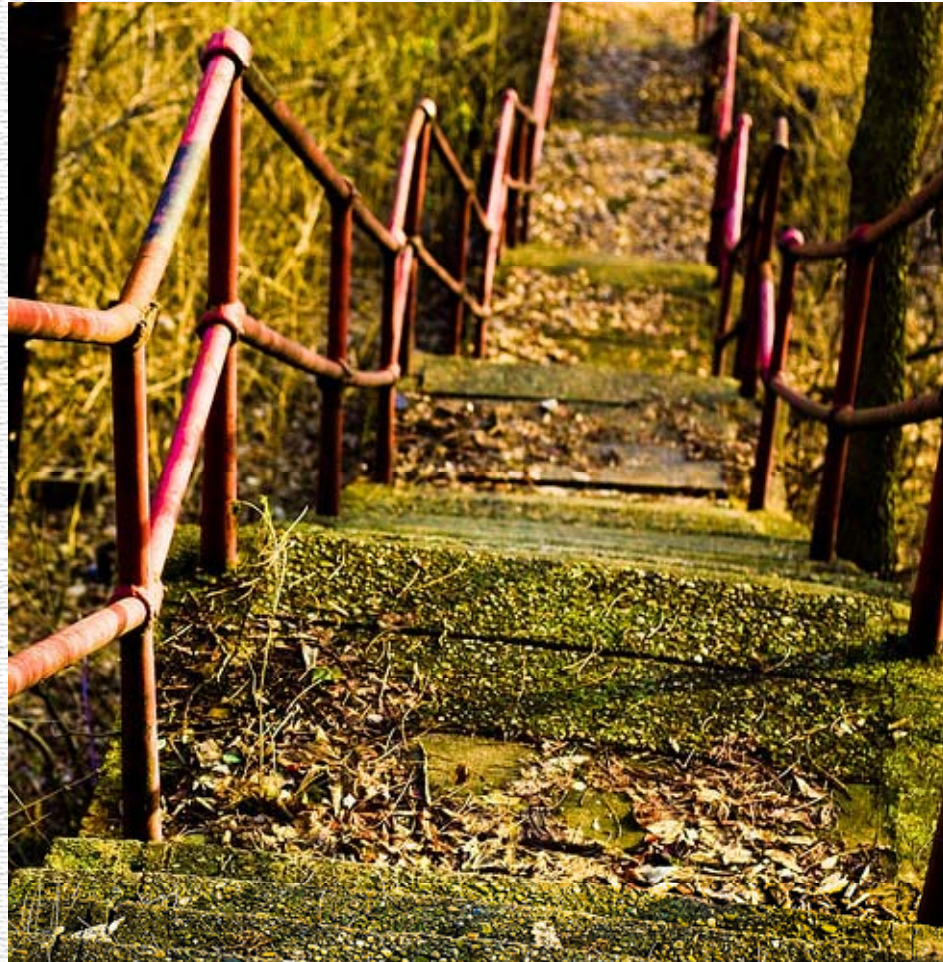


# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting to the Rivers





# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting Hill Neighborhoods





# Pittsburgh: Hill District – Cliffside Park





# Pittsburgh: Hill District – Cliffside Park



Reconnecting to the Rivers



# Pittsburgh: Hill District – Cliffside Park





# Pittsburgh: Hill District – Reconnecting to the Community





# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting to the Natural World



Frick Park – Environmental Center







## WOODLAND AREA



**WOODLAND AREA**  
The Woodland Area is a natural area  
located in the heart of the Woodland  
Area. It is a beautiful area with  
many trees and a peaceful atmosphere.  
It is a great place to visit and  
enjoy the outdoors. The Woodland  
Area is a great place to visit and  
enjoy the outdoors. The Woodland  
Area is a great place to visit and  
enjoy the outdoors.



# Pittsburgh: Encouraging Lifelong Active Living

Frick Park





# Pittsburgh: Reconnecting Children to Nature

Frick Park



# Pittsburgh: Value of Connection to Nature

- Imagination
- Complex thinking
- Character development
- Combating ADD
- Health, fitness
- Creating the next generation of stewards of the environment



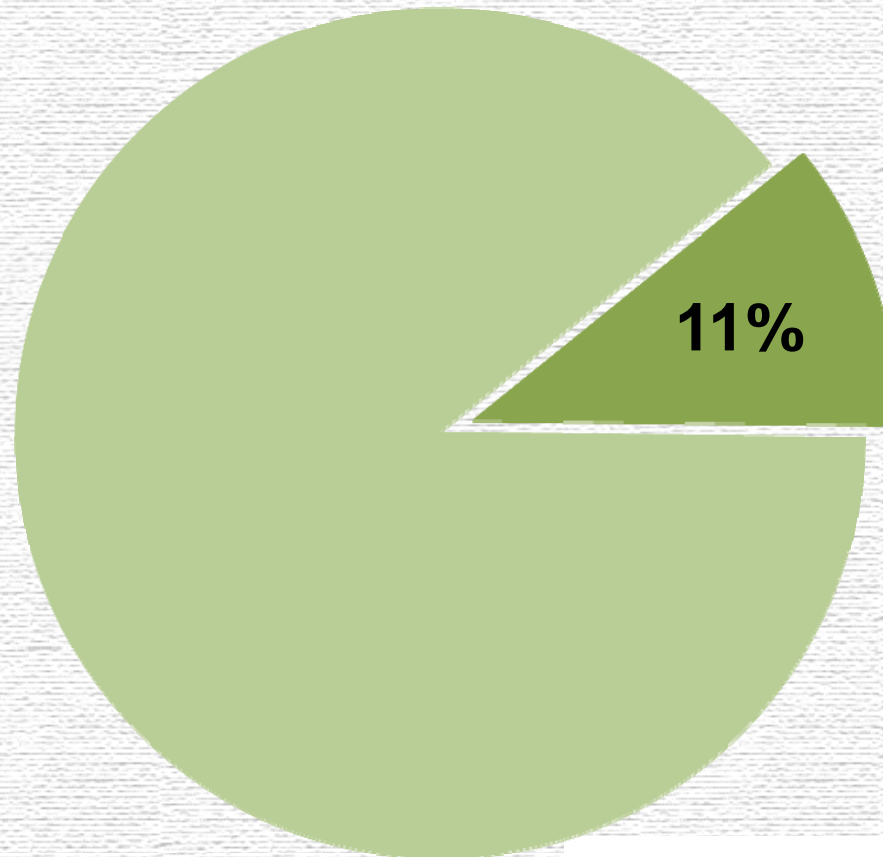


# Pittsburgh: Encouraging Active Living in Frick Park

- Miles of trails
- Picnic areas
- Playgrounds
- Off-leash dog areas
- Mountain biking trails

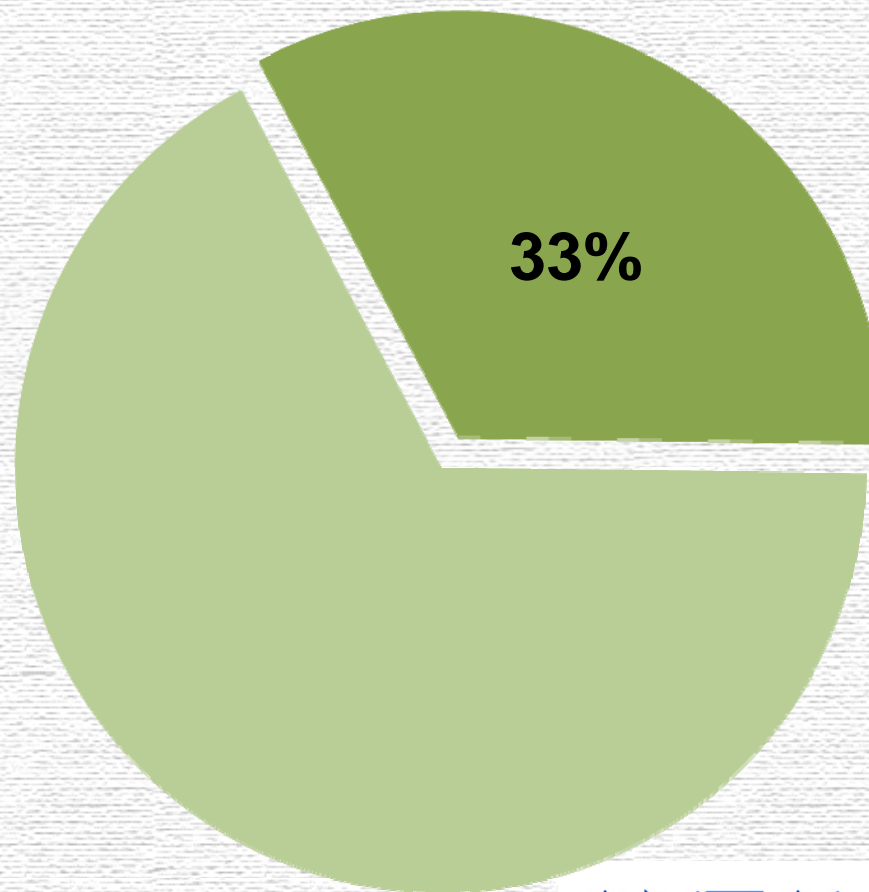


# Pittsburgh: Daily Park System Use

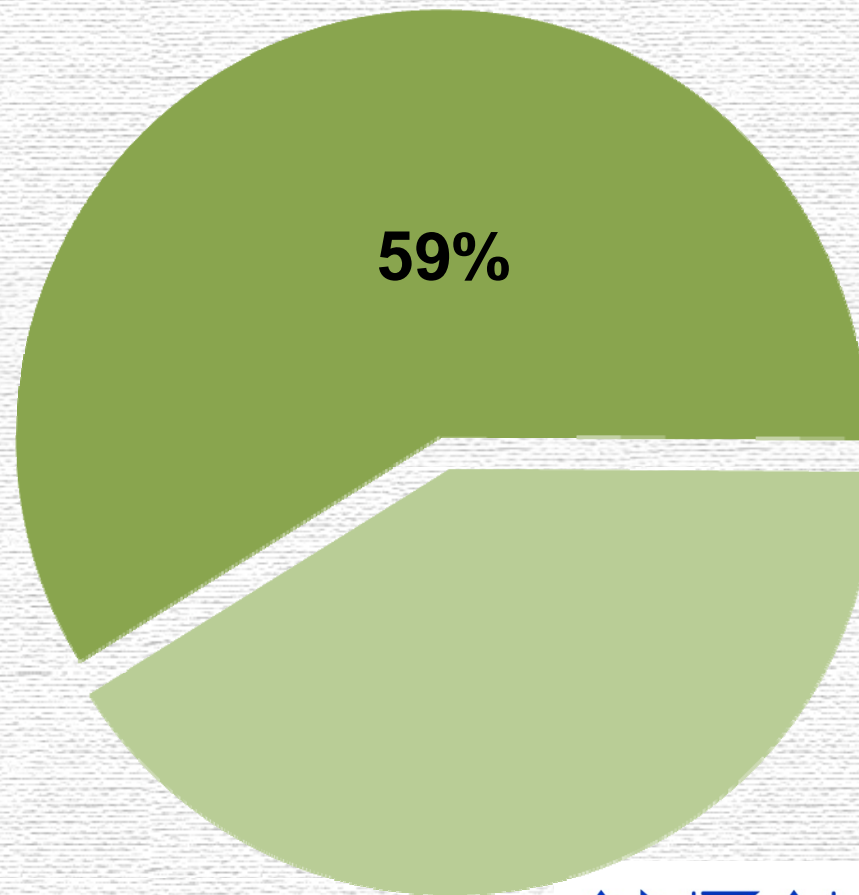




# Pittsburgh: Weekly Park System Use

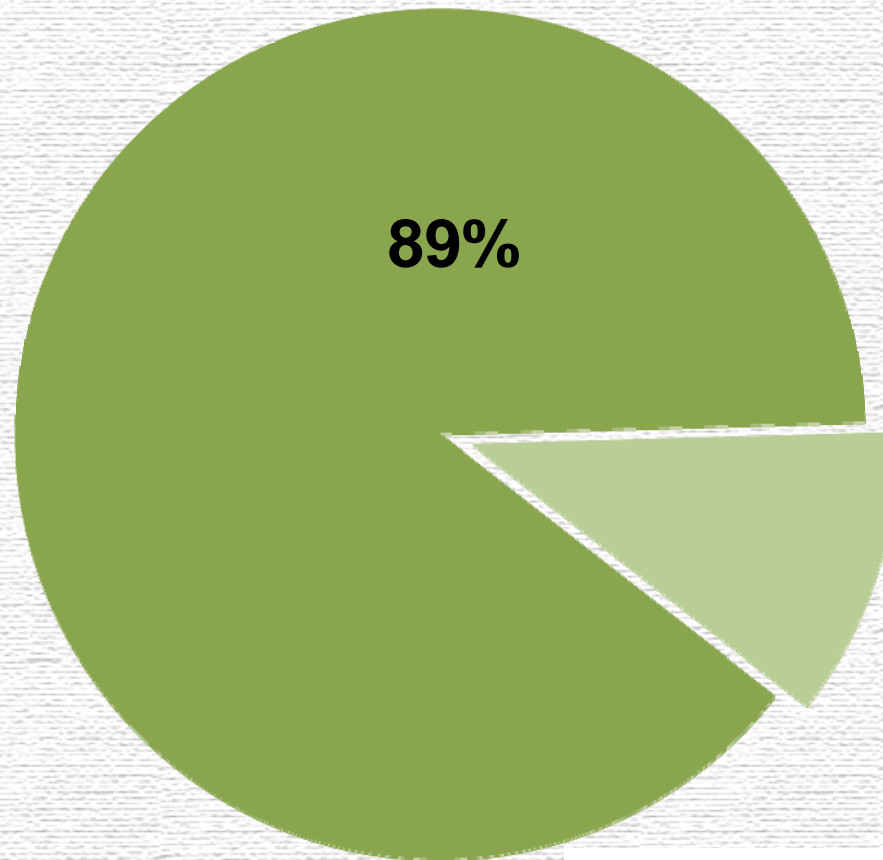


# Pittsburgh: Monthly Park System Use





# Pittsburgh: Yearly Park System Use



# Pittsburgh: Park Use

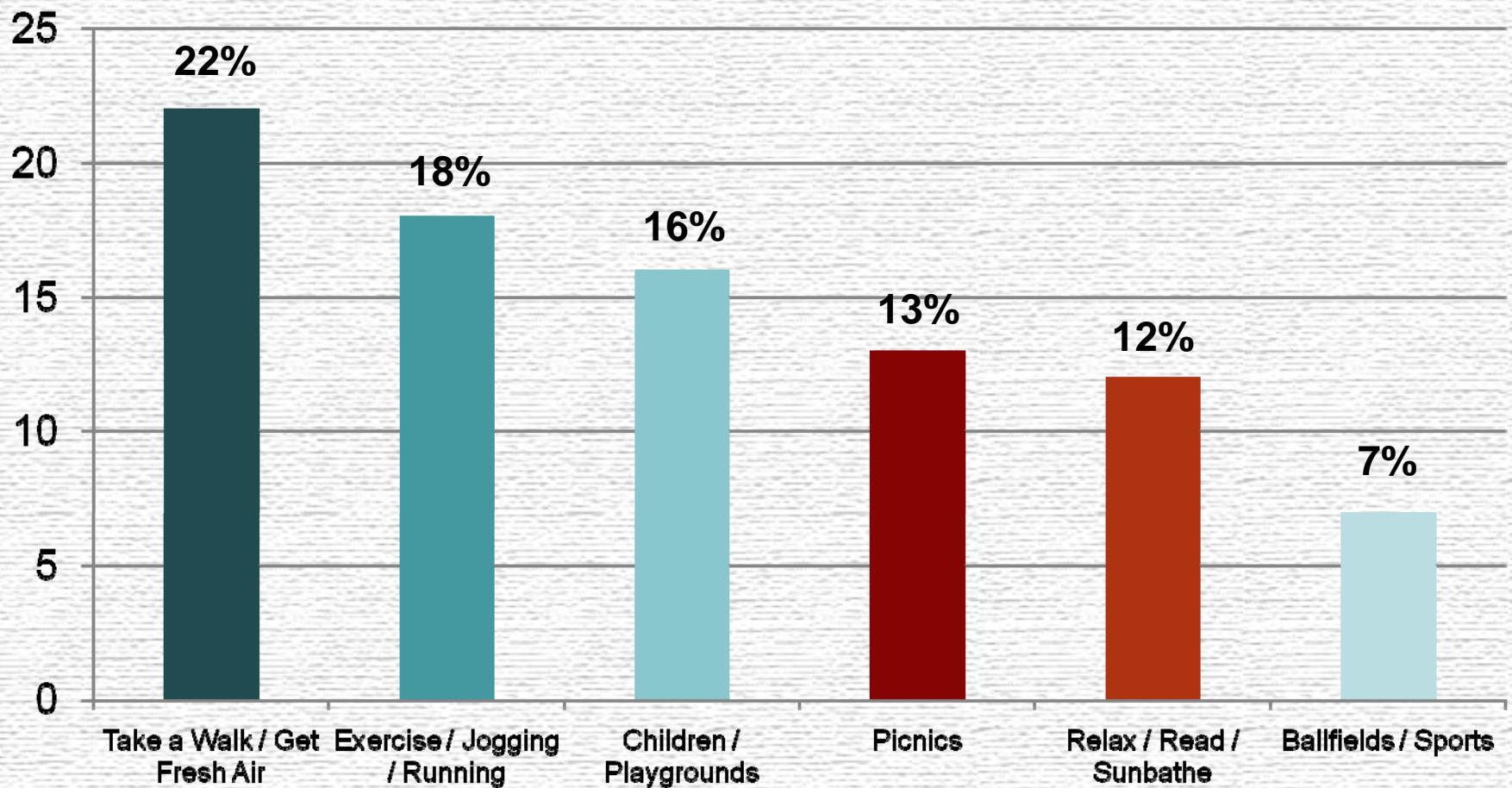
**20% increase** in park use  
since 1999





# Pittsburgh: Park Use

## Main Reason People Use the Parks in Pittsburgh





*Nurturing Nature. Planting Possibility.*

[www.pittsburghparks.org](http://www.pittsburghparks.org)