

2009 COUNTY PARKS BUDGET

property tax relief and lower taxes in 2009

In good times and especially in challenging times, Westchester residents rely on the County Parks Department with our 50 parks, 18,000 acres of greenspace and a dazzling array of free or low-cost activities that are theirs to enjoy 365 days a year.

We help them to get and stay fit, we offer amusement rides, pools, beaches and hiking trails, quiet park benches to relax and commune with nature... all for just under \$37 per year, per resident. That's less than a week's worth of cups of premium coffee!

It is not only our pleasure to provide what we do – it is our responsibility. And especially in these difficult economic times, we have a responsibility to Westchester's taxpayers to spend their dollars wisely, which has been the guiding force in outlining our operating budget for 2009.

At 10 cents a day, PRC is an extraordinary value to county taxpayers.



Our primary duty to every Westchester resident is to:

- ~ Support economic growth
- ~ Provide a sense of community
- ~ Facilitate community problem-solving
- ~ Promote health and wellness
- ~ Foster social, intellectual, physical and emotional development
- ~ Advance cultural understanding
- ~ Protect environmental resources
- ~ Provide recreational resources

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Fiscal Responsibility means added VALUE!

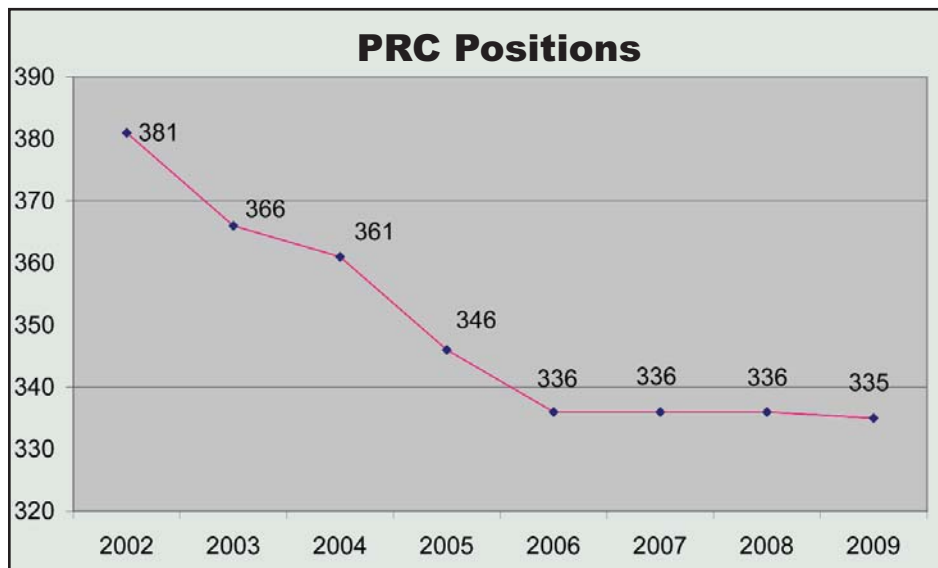
County Parks is demonstrating its commitment to being fiscally responsible in 2009.

With worldwide economic pressures like falling markets, devalued real estate, faltering financial institutions and continually rising consumer prices, PRC is proud to present a budget that represents an **8%** decrease in tax-levy support. We will still provide the services, programs and park facilities residents depend on, but in a leaner and more efficient way, costing **\$36,663,116** in 2009 (including our estimated share of miscellaneous budget items). That's just **\$37** per year per resident!

Here's how we've done it:

- ~ Since 2002, County Parks has consistently lowered its staff, with a **12% REDUCTION IN WORKFORCE.**
- ~ A new "pay-one-price" admission policy for the amusement area at Playland means taxpayers will no longer subsidize the rides; revenues will cover all operational and capital costs.
- ~ While keeping user fees affordable, we have been able to cover nearly **68%** of our operating budget.

PRC continues to be a tremendous value for taxpayers – our share of the full county budget is only **3.1%**



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Highlights from 2008

The support and partnership of the County Board of Legislators made it possible to make great strides in 2008:

- County Parks earned the distinction of being re-accredited by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA). This is the highest honor that can be bestowed on a parks system. Our parks system was the first county in New York State to receive this distinction when it received accreditation the first time around in 2003. Nationally, we are part of an elite group of just 71 municipal agencies that have been accredited since the program was introduced by NRPA in 1994.
- Phase One construction at Mountain Lakes Park was completed, enabling Camp Morty, our all-new sleepaway camp for underprivileged boys and girls, to be held there during July and August.
- We purchased two new rides and one existing ride at Playland, which resulted in Westchester County holding onto more of the revenue generated at the park.

- We conducted a Citizen Survey during the winter months to help determine parks, trails, aquatics, sports and recreation facility service priorities for county residents. The results of the random sample of households yielded a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-3.4%. Respondents expressed what they like about our parks, what they do with their leisure time and what they would like to see more of.

~ Eighty-four per cent of respondent households that have visited our parks and facilities rated them as either excellent or good.

~ Playland Park was the site visited most often in the county recreation facility category.

~ Kensico Dam Plaza was the most-visited county park.

~ Over 50 per cent of respondent households have used our walking, hiking and biking trails over the past year.



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~ **Patriot Skate Park** in Yorktown. This 65' x 120' modular skate park was built at a cost of \$250,000 of Westchester Legacy funding. All county residents will have access to the park by arrangement with the Town.

~ **Flint Park** in Larchmont. The new \$2.55 million all-weather, synthetic turf varsity-size field includes a picnic area, comfort station, bleachers and parking lot. The new field will also be open and accessible to all county residents, which is a major component of the county's Legacy program.

- We participated in creating and opening the Colonial Greenway, a new 15-mile hiking trail that traverses six municipalities and three county parks.
- We held grand opening ceremonies for two new Westchester Legacy projects: Patriot Skate Park in Yorktown and Flint Park in Larchmont. Both facilities will be operated and maintained by the respective municipalities under IMAs with the county.
- In response to requests from walkers, joggers and families with children of varying ages and abilities (some of whom may be too young to ride bikes and are confined to strollers), PRC expanded the scope of Bicycle Sundays to include these users.



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- As part of our "green" initiatives, we rolled out a new permanent compost bin sale program at five parks: Ward Pound Ridge Reservation, Lasdon Park & Arboretum, Glen Island Park, Muscoot Farm and Lenoir Preserve.
- We initiated a monthly indoor winter Farmers Market at the County Center following a successful pilot program in late 2007, and a weekly outdoor Farmers Market at Muscoot Farm from May 25 through October.
- The Pride in Parks program, the process by which all parks and reviewed and scored according to set standards, evaluated 29 parks



through October, with 27 parks, or 93% receiving a passing grade of 85% or higher.

- In October we opened a new interactive historical walk-through exhibit at Muscoot Farm, where children and adults can get a taste of late 19th century farm life in Westchester.
- At the county golf courses, new fall savings specials and incentives helped us build revenue during typically slower times of year while adding value for our golfers.
- For the first time in the history of the program, audiences at the Kensico Dam Music Fest Independence Day celebration experienced the music of the Westchester Philharmonic under the baton of a Latina conductor, 27-year-old Alondra de la Parra, a Mexico City native.

- The "Art in Parks" program continued to bring changing exhibitions of artwork to the parks to enhance the enjoyment of visitors. Three parks venues: Gallery in the Park at Ward Pound Ridge, Muscoot Farm and Lasdon Park and Arboretum participated in the county-wide "All Fired Up" 60-venue exhibition of clay sculpture in October and November.



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A Safe and Secure Park System adds VALUE!

With three million visitors each year and 18,000 acres of land, PRC considers the safety of park users a top priority.

- Director of Security – Responsible for reviewing, monitoring, making recommendations and implementing safety measures in cooperation with Public Safety and Emergency Services departments.
- Code Adam – Westchester was the first county government in New York State to adopt this national safety program.



- Lifeguard Training – guards at our pools and beaches are kept on the cutting edge of their field through training and re-training to the county's rigorous standards.
- Pool Operators Course – each facility has a fully trained staff member.
- Playground Inspection – continual program at all of our playground locations.
- CPR and First Aid training – for key staff members.
- AEDs (defibrillators) are located at golf courses, swimming facilities and Playland.
- Enhanced Training programs – for all ride operators at Playland.
- Emergency Telephones – located on our trails have been upgraded from analog to digital operation.
- Security measures – use of metal detectors to screen participants at various events.

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Health and Culture - VALUE that can't be enumerated

Each year we make a big splash with many "big shows," from concerts, outdoor films, festivals, symposiums, stage shows, trade shows and athletic events. But it's what we offer every day of the year that keep patrons coming back to see us time and time again. They hike, study nature or take their daily walk along a wooded path. They treat their bodies to exercise and fresh air. Sometimes they just exercise their "license to chill." And we're so pleased that they think enough of us to be our loyal customers over the years.

- Bird Watching and Nature Study – staff at our nature centers have a

deep appreciation and great knowledge about local flora and fauna, and gladly share their enthusiasm with visitors.

- Seaside Walk at Playland – the largest strip of publicly owned seaside land on Long Island Sound.
- Trailways – hundreds of miles of paved, unpaved, wooded and roadside trails from the North and South County Trailways and the Bronx River Pathway and hundreds of miles of trails inside parks.
- Art-in-Parks – works by established and up-and-coming artists are on display at many parks.



- Health Alternatives for Teens – continually growing success of annual Battle of the Bands events and Open Gym programs shows that this age group is responding to our efforts.
- "The Rising" September 11th Memorial at Kensico Dam Plaza is a completely unique and inspiring monument and the first of its kind in the region.

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Looking to 2009 for more VALUE than ever!



A comprehensive new "pay one price" plan, reflecting a \$3 million in projected savings to county

property taxpayers has been proposed for Playland Park's amusement area for 2009.

The plan calls for a one-price entrance fee of \$25 for residents and \$30 for non-residents that would allow for unlimited use of the rides all day. There would be a \$5 reduction for both residents and non-residents who come at twilight. Non-riders entering the amusement section of the park to walk, watch

the park's entertainment or to chaperone others would pay a modest entrance fee of \$3 for residents and \$5 for non-residents. Children under 36 inches tall will be allowed in free.

There will still be no charge for accessing to the boardwalk, pier, fishing arcade, seaside walk, museum, Fountain Plaza, fireworks viewing, food court, lake boating, Read Sanctuary, boathouse, kayak launch, public picnic areas, Captain Hook's Restaurant or the area by mini-golf.

In addition, parking fees will be reduced to \$4 weekdays and \$5 weekends, from the current prices of \$5 for weekdays, \$7 weekends and \$10 holidays.

