



Director of Parks and Recreation

About Grand Rapids

Nestled along the scenic Grand River and just 25 miles from Lake Michigan, Grand Rapids offers the perfect balance of natural beauty and urban opportunity. Only a three-hour drive from Chicago, the city provides easy access to beaches, trails, and year-round outdoor recreation.

As West Michigan's economic and cultural hub, Grand Rapids boasts a vibrant downtown filled with award-winning museums, diverse dining, and a nationally acclaimed craft beer scene. This growing metropolitan area is recognized for its strong economy, affordable cost of living, and welcoming neighborhoods—making it not only an ideal place to build your career, but also a wonderful place to call home.

Honors & Recognition (2025)

#1 - LinkedIn Cities on the Rise 2025: The 25 fastest-growing U.S. metros for jobs and new talent (LinkedIn)

#20 - Best U.S. Cities for Women in the Workplace (Checkr)

#20 - Best Run Cities in America (WalletHub)

#20 - 25 Best Places to Live, Quality of Life (US News)

#5 - Metros Where Young Homeownership is Most Accessible (Consumer Affairs)

#28 - Best Cities for Jobs (WalletHub)

#40 - Best Place to Retire in the US (U.S. News & World Report)

#40 - Best Cities to Buy a House in America (Niche)

#41 - Best Cities for Young Professionals in America

Named Beer City 2025 by USA Today

Named AARP Age-Friendly Community

City Government

Grand Rapids operates under a Council–Manager form of government, with strategic direction from an elected City Commission and daily operations led by a professional City Manager. As one of Michigan's largest municipal organizations, the city employs over 1,700 full-time staff across 30 departments, serving a diverse and growing population.

The FY 2026 budget totals approximately \$735 million, including nearly \$196 million in the General Operating Fund to support core services like public safety, parks, and administration. This investment reflects Grand Rapids' commitment to fiscal responsibility, innovation, and service excellence. ([Strategic Plan](#))

Vision: Grand Rapids will be nationally recognized as an equitable, welcoming, innovative, and collaborative city with a robust economy, safe and healthy community, and the opportunity for a high quality of life for all.

Mission: To elevate the quality of life through excellent City services.

Values: The City of Grand Rapids' core values are embodied in its strategic plan, emphasizing *Accountability, Collaboration, Customer Service, Innovation, Equity, and Sustainability*.

The Ideal Candidate

The Director of Parks and Recreation is responsible for leading the overall operations of the City's park system, recreational programming, forestry, and cemeteries for the City of Grand Rapids.

The ideal candidate is a visionary, emotionally intelligent leader with a deep commitment to public service, community engagement, and operational excellence. This individual must demonstrate unwavering integrity, transparency, and honesty in all interactions, serving as both the face and voice of Parks and Recreation across diverse constituencies. They are politically astute and possess the acumen to navigate complex stakeholder landscapes—balancing multiple local interests while fostering inclusive, collaborative partnerships. With proven experience in parks and recreation departments, they understand both the current and future needs of the community and are skilled in translating vision into actionable, strategic plans.

Leadership Competencies

Stewardship of Resources

Ethical and sustainable management of all resources in a way that supports long-term wellbeing, equity, and resilience.

Decision Quality

Making timely and informed decisions based on sound judgment, analysis, and stakeholder impact.

Strategic Planning & Prioritization

Aligning efforts with goals and prioritizing tasks based on impact, urgency, and resources.

Organizational & Community Savvy

Understanding and navigating internal and external dynamics, policies, and relationships to build positive influence.

Continuous Improvement

Implementing creative, inclusive, and adaptive solutions that improve outcomes and support collaboration.

Emotional Intelligence

Recognizing and managing one's own emotions while showing empathy and adaptability in relationships.

Servant Leadership

Prioritizes the growth, well-being, and needs of others while sustaining their own capacity and well-being to serve effectively.

Effective Communication

Sharing timely, clear, and audience-appropriate information that fosters understanding and collaboration.

Instills Trust

Demonstrating integrity, reliability, and transparency to earn and maintain the confidence of others.

Manages Complexity

Breaking down complicated issues, anticipating outcomes, and adapting with clarity and logic.

Drives Results

Achieving meaningful outcomes by setting goals, mobilizing resources, and maintaining focus and perseverance.

Inclusive Leadership

Fostering a culture of belonging by valuing diverse perspectives, addressing systemic inequities, and modeling equity-driven behaviors to ensure all individuals feel respected, empowered, and included.

This candidate thrives in dynamic environments, multitasks with precision, and brings creativity to problem-solving. They are detail-oriented, future-focused, and committed to building lasting community partnerships. Above all, they are open and honest about the process it takes to achieve meaningful results—and they bring the right people to the table to make it happen.

DIRECTOR OF PARKS AND RECREATION

The purpose of this job is to plan, organize, coordinate, and direct the administration, operations, and maintenance of the City's park system, recreational programming, forestry, cemeteries, and special events office. Oversees and manages the entire department's distinct divisions' professional staff and subordinate staff.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES & RESPONSIBILITIES

This job description intends to provide a representative summary of the major duties and responsibilities performed by employees in this job. *Employees may be requested to perform job-related tasks other than those specifically presented in this description.*

- Supervises the work of assigned personnel; participates in hiring, training, and disciplinary actions; delegates work assignments; and conducts performance evaluations.
- Plans, organizes, prioritizes, and directs the activities of the department; assures the total operational effectiveness of the department.
- Assists the advisory board in fulfilling the board's responsibilities; serves as a spokesperson for the department.
- Initiates, develops, and implements innovative programs and solutions consistent with the department's transformation plan priorities.
- Establishes and implements operational policies, goals, and objectives for the department; ensures park operations and public recreational programs are carried out according to federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.
- Develops and implements continuous transformational plans for the parks system; creates long and short-range planning objectives and effective strategies for the department, and establishes goals.
- Conducts needs assessments for the improvement of the parks system and public recreational programs; manages, updates, and implements the department's 5-year planning document.
- Oversees project management team; develops annual capital improvement plan to implement park improvement plans.
- Prepares and presents the annual department budget; determines resources needed; prepares financial requests; and develops financial analytics, strategies, and performance metrics to meet priority goals.
- Monitors the financial operations for the department and each division; seeks additional and alternative funding for various initiatives through local, state, and federal grants and foundations.
- Directs and participates in the development of capital and land acquisitions and project plans and specifications; directs and coordinates project development to completion; coordinates with internal and external agencies for projects, including consultant engineers, landscape architects, architects, and other professional staff
- Plans, develops, and acquires professional services as appropriate to conduct or participate in technical and administrative studies, reviews, and reports; maintains department records; reports on needs and department status.
- Reviews periodicals, legal developments, and other materials to keep abreast of developments and best practices in the field of parks, recreation, cemeteries, special

events, operations, and management; implements business efficiency procedures and processes to ensure effective outcomes for staff and the department.

- Develops and implements public information programs; explains recreational programs, park systems, initiatives, and departmental goals.
- Performs related work as required.

REQUIRED EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

- Bachelor's degree in parks and recreation management, business administration, public administration, or a related field
- Seven (7) to nine (9) years of experience in parks management and public recreation programs, including supervisory or managerial experience.

--OR--

- Any equivalent combination of training, education, and experience that provides the required skills, knowledge, and abilities

Required Licenses or Certifications

None

Knowledge of:

- Board composition, structures, and responsibilities.
- Policy opportunity identification and policy development.
- Business unit-related federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations.
- Standard planning practices and procedures, and needs assessment approaches.
- Public finance, accounting, and funding practices and opportunities.
- Public budget structures and budget development practices.
- Various financial statements and operational balance sheets.
- Principles and practices of employee supervision.
- Legal terminology and court procedures.
- Principles and practices of basic bookkeeping.

- Modern office procedures, methods, and computer equipment.

Skills in:

- Project and program management.
- Interpersonal skills are necessary to develop and maintain effective and appropriate working relationships.
- Performing a variety of duties, often changing from one task to another of a different nature.
- Performing basic mathematical functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, and ratios.
- Assigning, prioritizing, monitoring, and reviewing work assignments.

Ability to:

- Develop, write, and publish planning documents.
- Negotiate contracts, fees, and term agreements.
- Prepare and present clear and concise reports
- Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
- Meet the schedules and deadlines of the work
- Understand and carry out oral and written directions
- Accurately organize and maintain paper documents and electronic files
- Maintain the confidentiality of information and professional boundaries

Salary

The City of Grand Rapids offers a competitive salary range (**\$121,204 - \$159,189**) and a comprehensive benefits package ([Fringe Benefits](#)). Relocation assistance will be available for the successful out-of-area candidate. For more information, take a peek at our [city brochure](#).

How to Apply

Interested applicants should forward a cover letter, 3 references, and a resume to: dsellers@nationalcareergroup.com.

****The deadline to receive resumes is October 31, 2025****

The City of Grand Rapids is an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer.