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Amazing Parks Across the State
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Passing the Torch

When I have the opportunity to travel around the state, it’s always rewarding to meet with elected officials and staff in cities and towns. There’s no substitute for seeing things firsthand and getting the full perspective on local activities.

I believe local officials have the most innovative and practical solutions to issues that come up, and they are problem solvers that get the job done. I have frequently described cities and towns as the “get it done” level of government, particularly when we see other governmental systems bogged down in partisan bickering and seemingly endless gridlock.

Recently, on a trip to Page, I stopped at Horseshoe Bend to not only see the natural beauty of this spectacular sight, but also to learn about how the city is taking the initiative to solve the problem of the overwhelming popularity of this attraction. The number of people who want to visit has swamped the available parking space and the short trail to the viewing area.

The city stepped up and created a larger parking area just down the road and has a series of shuttle buses going all day to transport visitors. But this is just a temporary step. Construction of a much larger parking area at the trailhead enables visitors to have closer access for a small fee and be able to enjoy an upgraded trail and a better experience. City leaders recognized that the natural attraction has potential to bring visitors into town for a meal or brief stopover, whether they are planning to spend a few days in the area at Lake Powell or they’re just passing through. Another problem solved at the local level.

These kinds of stories are repeated every day in Arizona cities and towns, each one unique and empowered to solve problems and enhance the quality of life for residents, visitors and businesses.

As I’m sure you know by now, I have notified the Executive Committee of my plans to retire from this position of executive director at the end of this year. It seems like the timing is right, after 14 years, to pass the baton to the next person who will bring new ideas and a fresh perspective to the League.

There is no question this job has been the most rewarding one in my professional career, and I value the many friendships I have made with you all over these years. I have great admiration for the work you all do and the many wonderful, quality cities and towns this state is blessed with. I look forward to catching up with you over the next few months, and I wish you and the League all of the greatest success in the future. It’s been a pleasure.

Ken Strobeck
Executive Director
The Executive Committee and League Staff wish to thank Ken Strobeck for his 14 years of dedicated service to the Cities and Towns in Arizona.

His leadership, dedication and passion for local government has and will continue to make a positive impact on our state for many years to come.
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Parks and Prosperity

Almost every city official I’ve met talks of their community as a great place to live, work and play. Often what helps a community stand out is the “play” portion — especially parks!

We all like parks for the beauty they bring to our city or town. They provide a place to recreate, picnic or just hang out. But did you know that parks go way beyond just an aesthetic appeal?

Parks support the economy, public health, the environment and provide a sense of community. Homes that are near well-maintained parks have higher property values. When residents and tourists use a city park for no charge, they then have more money to spend on other things in your city or town, such as restaurants and shopping. Your city park can be a destination and encourage other economic activity.

People who use parks go outdoors and are more active. The trees and grass of our parks catch rain and storm runoff and provide shade and relief from the heat island. When parents bring their children to the park, or a group of seniors gets together, there is a sense of place and togetherness. The more people get to know one another, the safer your city will be — because neighbors watch out for one another.

In my city we have the Copper Sky Regional Park. This 98-acre site provides residents with endless opportunities for fitness, fun and leisure. The park includes soccer and ball fields, a fishing pond, pickleball, horseshoes, hosts tournaments of all kinds and does much more. Due to its success at drawing people from around the region, the area is now attracting multifamily housing, hotels and retail establishments. Build it and they will come!

Arizona has perhaps the greatest park in the world, the Grand Canyon. But many of our cities and towns have gems of their own, right down the street. Use your parks, promote your parks, celebrate your parks and watch your community prosper!

Sincerely,

Christian Price
League President
Mayor, City of Maricopa
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Cities and towns across Arizona have some amazing parks and play spaces. Parks serve as the background for recreational opportunities, they create community gathering areas and they display some breathtaking views.

Parks are often an individual’s first interaction with their city. It’s not often that a citizen will step foot in their city or town hall, but it’s very likely they’ve played softball in a recreational league, taken their dog to play in the dog park or brought their child to try out the new swings at their city playground.

In addition to being fun places to gather, parks also offer beautification for a city or town, provide diverse economic development opportunities and are often one of the first amenities that residents will look at when deciding where to live.

Parks are special places everywhere, offering people a variety of places to play, relax, enjoy the outdoors, get physically fit, gather their thoughts and meet other people. But in Arizona, parks are especially incredible. With our state’s diverse display of weather and climate, our parks have the ability to transport people from playgrounds along rivers, lakes and beachfronts, to open spaces in the mountains and forests.

Let’s explore some of the best places to enjoy the outdoors and find time to play in Arizona’s cities and towns.
Gilbert: Cactus Yards
Cactus Yards is a year-round premier sports facility in Gilbert that offers a one-of-a-kind game day experience, hosting youth baseball tournaments on the weekends and weekly adult softball, soccer and kickball leagues. The facility, located in south Gilbert, features eight small-scale replicas of Major League Baseball fields around the country, including Chase Field, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks, as well as Fenway Park in Boston and Wrigley Field in Chicago.

There is also an indoor fieldhouse that hosts youth and adult soccer leagues, including the newly added women’s league. In addition, Cactus Yards features an outdoor playground and several batting cages. Patrons have their choice of two on-site restaurants. The facility underwent a massive remodel and relaunched as Cactus Yards in February of 2019.

Bullhead City: Rotary Park
The riverfront community of Bullhead City has remarkable scenery and, more importantly, a hidden gem known as Rotary Park. This beautiful park encompasses more than 1 mile of free public beaches, right on the banks of the beautiful Colorado River, to be enjoyed year-round.

This picturesque park boasts more than 300 acres of space — six softball fields, a baseball and football field, eight lighted pickleball courts, a lighted tennis court, lighted basketball courts, a lighted skate park, a nine-hole regulation disc golf course, a beach volleyball court, 3.1 miles of hard-surface walking and biking trails and enough soccer fields to host more than 200 teams at once. Rotary Park is Bullhead City’s premier outdoor sports destination.

Rotary Park is the home of two annual AYSO soccer tournaments, three annual pickleball tournaments, four annual 5K races and a different softball tournament almost every weekend of the year.

Goodyear: Foothills Community Park
The City of Goodyear is proud to have 327 acres of public parks, greenbelts and special-use areas for the community and visitors to enjoy. Foothills Community Park is 17 acres and includes three baseball/softball fields, a multipurpose field, a playground and a pump track.

A pump track is a loop of tracks built with dirt mounds designed for high-speed bicycling without having to pedal. The community was instrumental in bringing it to fruition. Bicycle enthusiasts approached the City of Goodyear with the idea of a pump track, then helped design and build it. About 100 volunteers donated 2,500 hours to move and shape several tons of dirt to form the tracks.

The pump track, built in 2015, is believed to be the West Valley’s first pump track, and attracts hundreds of users from across the Valley each year.
Oro Valley: James D. Kriegh Park

Oro Valley’s first community park has a rich and diverse history, starting with its namesake, James D. Kriegh. Kriegh was instrumental in creating Oro Valley and is commonly known as the town’s founding father. As a young man, he signed a contract with a minor league baseball team. It’s fitting that his home was across the street from the park where he enjoyed watching kids play in his very own sandlot.

Baseball is a tradition at this park. It has been home to the Cañada del Oro (CDO) Little League for more than four decades. Thousands of kids learned how to throw a ball for the first time at James D. Kriegh Park. Many went on to play high school and college ball, and a few even made it to the big leagues!

Baseball has historically been a sport for boys; however, in 2008, 6-year-old Christina Taylor Green earned the starting second baseman spot on her Pirates Little League Team. Christina’s grandfather, Dallas Green, played in the MLB, and Christina dreamed of becoming the first female major leaguer. Tragically, on January 8, 2011, when U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords was holding a “Congress on Your Corner” event near Oro Valley, shots were fired. Nineteen people were shot that day; six of them died, including 9-year-old Christina. In an odd twist of fate, Christina’s date of birth was also a tragic day for many. She was born on September 11, 2001. In honor of her memory, the Angel of Steadfast Love, a 9-foot, 11-inch-tall structure made from World Trade Center steel was placed in the middle of the park. The Green Family stated, “it means a lot to us to know that there will be an angel in the outfield watching over CDO Little League.”

Parker: Western Park with Aaron Hill Field

Western Park in Parker has amenities that are great for all sorts of fun activities, and the park is used throughout the year. It offers a large covered ramada at the front with picnic tables and barbecues. Western Park includes a playground, swingset, full basketball court and sand volleyball court. The park also has a multi-use space for football, soccer and Frisbee. In addition, there is shade space that provides for relaxing, reading a nice book or taking a nap.

Located at the park is the Aaron Hill baseball field. The field was built by the Arizona Diamondbacks with former infielder Aaron Hill. The field is used by the Little League and for special events, and features a scoreboard, field lighting, warm-up bullpens, a batting cage and a covered seating area.
Parks That Are Uniquely Arizona

Arizona is home to incredible weather and gorgeous views, making it the perfect place for artists and innovators to create spaces for community members to enjoy. Some of Arizona’s parks are incredibly unique, drawing visitors to locales that features everything from desert gardens to sculpture-lined walking paths.

Carefree: Carefree Desert Gardens
The crown jewel of Carefree and an amazing oasis in the desert, the Carefree Desert Gardens is one of only two public botanical gardens in the Valley of the Sun, located along pedestrian-friendly Easy Street in downtown Carefree.

In 2001, a dirt lot in the center of town was transformed into the Gardens, with new walkways, bridges, water features and an amphitheater. In 2011, the Gardens were further renovated with the addition of a greater variety of plants and identification signage. Situated on 4 acres, visitors can stroll and enjoy rare and fascinating desert plant specimens on a self-guided walking tour.

The town holds numerous events throughout the year, including the Enchanted Pumpkin Garden Festival each October, a weekly farmers’ market, a monthly seminar series focusing on a variety of garden-related topics and Sights and Sounds in the Gardens, which showcases local artists and musicians throughout the space.

The park is also anchored by the Carefree Sundial, the largest sundial in the United States and the third-largest in the world.

Fountain Hills: Fountain Park
Fountain Park is a can’t-miss destination park nestled in the center of Fountain Hills.

It is home to one of the largest fountains in the world, whose plume reaches a striking peak of 560 feet in height, highlighting the mountain views of Four Peaks and Red Mountain in the background, making it a sight sure to astound visitors.

Visitors can take a stroll around the fountain and see the various art sculptures and enjoy the Veterans Memorial. Children can splash around in the splash pad or play on the playground, which features a unique music park.

There are also restaurants located right by the fountain, where park-goers can enjoy food on an outdoor balcony while they take in the views.

To see an amazing aerial view of the fountain, there is a short hike on the Overlook Trail adjacent to Fountain Park — a 2.5-mile-loop hike that the whole family can enjoy.
Gila Bend: 9/11 Memorial Park
Gila Bend’s 9/11 Memorial Park was designed to allow visitors a serene place to reflect on the tragedy that gripped our country on September 11, 2001, and to honor those whose lives were lost or affected.

At the north end of the park sits an 11-foot-tall, 4,000-pound steel beam remnant with bits of wood and concrete attached to it and J75/4 inscribed on the outside. The massive remnant faces a reflecting pool with water cascading over stone and a series of concrete benches.

A low-stacked stone wall also provides visitors a place to sit.
Several memorial Saguaro were planted throughout the minimalist xeriscape design. The U.S. flag, the Arizona state flag, the POW flag and the Gila Bend Firefighters’ flag fly 365 days a year in the park. Each year, the town holds a service in the park on Patriots’ Day.

Scottsdale: McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park
In April, Valley residents were asked to show the nation why there’s no place like McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park, and they went all aboard — voting online and Instagram-posting the park’s way to being named the best park in the United States.

The 30-acre park and Arizona gem is in the heart of Scottsdale and sits on land donated by the Fowler McCormick family in 1967. The family stipulated that the land be used as a park, hoping that their generous gift would encourage others to give and make Scottsdale a better place to live for succeeding generations. Today, the railroad park entertains approximately 1 million visitors annually.

Visitors can take a ride on the Paradise & Pacific Railroad and the 1950 vintage Allan Herschell carousel, enjoy shopping and ice cream, immerse themselves in the massive model railroad museum, or just relax in the grass under a tree.

Williams: Monument Park
One of the amenities for tourists visiting the City of Williams is Monument Park. This unique park is designed to tell a story about the community. The Bill Williams historical statue of the Mountain Man, Trapper and Explorer, stands high at the west end of the park with a beautiful walk curving west toward the Veterans Memorial.

The Veterans Memorial includes a memorial area dedicated to lost war heroes, proudly surrounded by the U.S. flag and military branch flags. The most recent monument added to the park is the monument to the USS Arizona, which displays an artifact from the battleship, which sunk during the attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

There are also engraved bricks laid along the Veterans’ Walk and in front of the USS Arizona Memorial Monument, dedicated to veterans both past and present.

Walking along the concrete pathway among the trees and rest benches can be very tranquil to those visiting Williams, and is an important reminder of those who have given service and sacrifice to our country.
Parks aren’t just for playtime. Wide-open spaces create gathering places for community members. Parks serve as stages for large concerts, backdrops for nighttime community movies and meeting spots for holiday celebrations.

Apache Junction: Flatiron Community Park
The first park on city-owned land in Apache Junction was a true cooperative effort from the outset. Just two years old, Flatiron Community Park has become an integral part of the city, playing host to several perennial and new events. The park’s development was unique in that the city was able to swap a blighted space for open land that once housed the city’s first library, and used development fees to help fund the project.

With additional budget, park planners set forth on a phased plan that included a splash pad, restrooms and water conservation features for the park. The park has now been home to concerts, festivals and other gatherings, drawing visitors from throughout the state.

In addition to the splash pad plaza, two water companies that serve the city partnered on an educational entry feature at the park, the conservation-minded “Think Water” feature.

The park was also named by the city’s Youth Advisory Council, which includes students from throughout the area. The name itself refers to a feature of the nearby Superstition Mountains, which can easily be seen from the park.

The cooperative efforts of city council, staff, local businesses, and city partners have made this park a community success.

Payson: Green Valley Park
Green Valley Park is called the “jewel” of Payson. This 45-acre park encompasses a variety of recreational opportunities, with three lakes, an amphitheater, ramadas, a playground, walking paths, benches and more. Green Valley Park is home to the Veterans’ Memorial and contains several historic buildings and museums, including a replica of Zane Grey’s Cabin. Green Valley Park also serves as a host to many special events, like Payson’s annual Fourth of July Hometown Celebration, Summer Concert Series and Food Truck Festival, to name a few. The lakes at Green Valley Park are part of a reclamation projection between the Town of Payson and the Gila County Sanitary District. The lakes are stocked and managed for recreational fishing by the Arizona Game and Fish Department as a part of the Urban Fishing Program. Green Valley Park is the perfect location for multiple recreational pursuits and serves as the best location for a scenic sunset.
San Luis: Joe Orduno Park
A symbolic community park on the corner of Main Street and Cesar Chavez Boulevard, Joe Orduno Park is a 9-acre venue providing a soccer field, softball and baseball fields, municipal pool, youth center, gym, senior center, community center and cultural center. It truly is a community gathering place. Recreational activities like softball, kickball, volleyball and basketball are a few of the 30-plus activities annually provided by the city’s parks and recreation department.

More than 30 events, like the Halloween Spooktacular, the Fourth of July Celebration and professional baseball exhibitions, attract more than 20,000 attendees each year.

Holbrook: Hidden Cove Petroglyph Park
Hidden Cove Petroglyph Park is owned by the City of Holbrook and is located 2 miles west of town next to the Hidden Cove Golf Course. The petroglyphs in the park span thousands of years, dating from the Pueblo Two and Three periods, as well as some that may date as far back as the Archaic and Basketmaker eras. The park is available by guided tour throughout the week.

There is a large reservoir located nearby, which is home to more than 200 bird species. The reservoir also supports a riparian habitat, which is a wonderful oasis in the middle of the high desert.

Prescott Valley: Fain Park
Prescott Valley’s Fain Park is a hidden jewel tucked in a canyon at the confluence of Lynx and Rose Creeks on the community’s south side.

The historic home of the Prescott Tradition People and remnants of this people are still evident in the Fitzmaurice Ruins near the site. The Walker Party found abundant gold in Lynx Creek in the mid-1860s. English entrepreneur Thomas Gibson Barlow-Massicks arrived in 1890, building a substantial mining enterprise including a dam still in use today, a small town and a Victorian house that is slated for a future museum.

Today, the park, which opened to the public in August 1997, sports a small lake, picnic facilities, fishing, birding and wildlife viewing, historic mining exhibits and extensive hiking opportunities.

Parks with a History
Arizona became a state in 1912, but before then there were many cities and towns established. Long before even then, history was already in the making. Several of Arizona’s municipal parks celebrate the history of our state and its ancestors.
Cave Creek: Spur Cross Ranch
The Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area encompasses 2,154 acres of diverse, rugged, upper-Sonoran Desert. The North Valley Conservation Area is located at the end of Spur Cross Road in the Town of Cave Creek. Each year, the conservation area has more than 23,000 visits by hikers, trail bicyclists and horseback riders. It contains fascinating archaeology sites and lush riparian areas along the creek, which flows throughout the winter months.

Remnants of early mining and ranching, from which it gets its name, are still apparent in the park. This area is a “must-see” for all wildflower lovers in the spring. The abundant vegetation present in the conservation area provides a rich habitat for a diverse assemblage of wildlife. The conservation area is managed by the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department.

Sahuarita: Sahuarita Lake Park
Sahuarita Lake Park is among the gems you will find in the growing community of Sahuarita. Featuring a 10-acre lake stocked with catfish, trout, bass and sunfish for all anglers to enjoy, it provides a Community Fishing Program affiliated with the Arizona Game and Fish Department. On Sunday mornings, a local model yacht club regularly races their sail boats, and the lake provides a test site for the inventor and manufacturer of EMILY, a robotic emergency integrated lifesaving lanyard.

The park amphitheater provides a place for concerts and other entertainment, and the pathway circling the lake is a favored destination for anyone seeking people-powered exercise. Triathlons have been held at the park, and thousands of people gather on Independence Day for the town’s annual celebration, “Red White and Boom,” featuring hand-made boat races in addition to a traditional aerial fireworks display.
**Sedona: Posse Grounds Park**

Once the staging area for an actual sheriff’s posse, Posse Grounds Park contains 78 acres of beautiful opportunities. Like other parks, it has athletic fields, tennis and pickleball courts, basketball courts, fitness equipment and playgrounds.

Unlike other parks, however, this one has two venues dedicated to performance arts: an indoor facility equipped with two stages and blackout curtains, and an outdoor performance venue with awe-inspiring views. Posse Grounds is also home to one of the largest pump tracks in the country, nestled into 13 acres of Bike Skills Park. This mountain bike playground also has three flow trails, a tot loop and a super-fun, racing-dual-slalom track that is open all year long.

Whether it is to enjoy the dog park, a picnic or a hike on the dirt trails, Posse Grounds is a must-visit in Sedona for arts and recreation lovers alike.

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**Unique Play Structures**

Playgrounds are perhaps most synonymous with the idea of city and town parks: childhood memories of swing sets, slides and sandboxes. Most of Arizona’s city and town parks feature play structures for children of all ages to enjoy. Some of these structures go far beyond the imagination, with jungle gyms towering like skyscrapers, play areas with unique activities and structures that accommodate individuals of all abilities.

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**Flagstaff: Chesire Park**

The City of Flagstaff’s recently renovated Chesire Park showcases a nature-themed play structure for the 5- to 12-year-old age group, with plenty of shade for those higher elevation sun rays.

The inclusive play space design was crafted with the assistance of Exerplay Inc., with the desire to have the structure blend in with Flagstaff’s earthly tones and forested landscape. The park features the new play structure along with spectacular views of the state’s highest peaks, making this park one of the coolest neighborhood spots in town.

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**Mesa: Pioneer Park**

Mesa’s original Pioneer Park on Main Street recently received a massive makeover to revitalize and rejuvenate this great place to play.

Highlights include a huge ADA-compliant multistory playground and a splash pad that includes a 15-foot-high water wall, the first of its kind in Arizona. Other improvements include remodeled restrooms, relocation of basketball courts and upgraded features.

The 9,000-square-foot playground is designed to mimic playing in the large legacy trees. A 500-foot-long elevated walkway connects the main central plaza to the playground through trees.

Preserving historic elements was paramount to the renovation. The Daughters of the Utah Pioneers monument was updated to improve visibility and restore the interactive nature of the feature. Also, the iconic Southern Pacific Train Engine No. 2355, at the park since 1958, was restored as a Mesa showpiece.
Lake Havasu City: Rotary Community Park

Rotary Community Park, often referred to as the "Jewel of Lake Havasu," was officially dedicated on May 19, 1991. While the park took several years to construct, it had been the vision of former Parks and Recreation Director Dick Samp for even longer. The beachfront area was originally developed by Mike Harrah and was known as Mudshark Beach. After several years of neglect, the area was in desperate need of renovation. In 1990, Lake Havasu City took control of the more-than-40-acre parcel and began construction on what is known today as Rotary Community Park.

The park has gone through several upgrades over the past three decades to now include 16 ramadas, three playgrounds, six volleyball courts, three bocce ball courts, three softball fields, a walking path, exercise equipment, a half-mile of beach, and the world-class Tinnell Memorial Skate Park. Rotary Community Park received its name after a sizable donation from the Rotary Club to help in the development of the park.

Tempe: Kiwanis Park

Located in the heart of Tempe, Kiwanis Park is unlike any other park in the Valley. Offering 125 acres of sports fields, sand volleyball courts, ramadas, playgrounds, picnic tables, and walking paths, there is also a 13-acre lake in the center of the park that is perfect for fishing, paddle boating and kayaking.

Located within the park is the Kiwanis Recreation Center, which features the Valley’s only indoor wave pool. Waves are offered seasonally. Swimming lessons are offered all year long, along with sports, fitness and babysitting classes. The recreation center also has a fitness center and gymnasium and a brand-new tennis center.

Kiwanis Park is home to Tempe's largest splash amenity, The Cloud at Kiwanis Park. The Cloud is a 5,000-square-foot splash playground with a rainforest theme, bringing thunderstorms to the desert from April to October.

Kingman: Cecil Davis Park

The days of playing in the sprinklers on hot summer days returned to this park for the entire community of Kingman. The Kingman City Council teamed up with the Venture Club of Kingman to build a splash pad that had been on the city's wishlist for years. Thanks to a public-private partnership with the Venture Club of Kingman, a volunteer organization for local young women, more than $250,000 was raised, with the support of the community and local businesses.

City engineering, building and parks departments were instrumental in moving this project forward. The park maintenance crew managed the project, transplanting trees, relocating water lines, providing the building materials for the mechanical room and adding a concrete surface around the perimeter of the splash pad. City staff identified further savings on the project by using the existing sewer and water tap, saving the cost of street excavation. The Unisource Company donated a pavilion with solar panels, which, over the course of the year, produces enough power to run the splash pad for a full season.
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