

2025 Annual Report



MISSION

Our mission is to provide and promote exceptional standards of education, networking, and resources for all professionals in the Illinois park, recreation, and conservation communities.

VISION

IPRA leads the nation in providing premier education, networking, and resources for professionals in parks, recreation, and conservation.

SOCIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

At the Illinois Park & Recreation Association (IPRA), we believe in the inherent dignity and worth of every individual. Our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging is unwavering and integral to our mission of enhancing the quality of life for all Illinois residents and visitors through parks and recreation.



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On behalf of the IPRA Board of Directors and staff team, I am proud to report that IPRA had another year of significant success during 2025 and I'm deeply grateful for the leadership, collaboration and commitment that made it possible. Our staff continues to be one of IPRA's greatest strengths, working alongside a dedicated and talented Board of Directors and countless section and committee leaders. The recent Membership Survey used words like, "professional" and "fun"—an accurate reflection of this association.

2025 marked the second year of implementing the IPRA Strategic Plan, and it was an important shift from laying the foundation to scaling our impact. We refined processes, strengthened systems, and prioritized initiatives that deliver the greatest value to members, focusing on four key areas. Workforce development remained a priority as we invested in the future of the profession through the Take a Walk in the Park campaign, the digital recruitment resource kit, and the launch of the Ambassador Program. Outreach to Illinois high schools and emerging professionals continues to introduce the next generation to careers in parks, recreation, and conservation.

We also made significant progress in strengthening systems and volunteer infrastructure by formalizing processes that enhance transparency, equity, and consistency across volunteer engagement. Data guided the expansion of education and events, highlighted by the creation of the IPRA University Committee. These member experts developed aligned core competencies across career stages, ensuring education offerings are intentional, accessible, and impactful. To support educational growth, IPRA invested in staff capacity, welcoming Camilla Best as Digital Education Coordinator to advance the Learning Management System and digital education strategy.

Operational improvements, enhanced communications, and evolving digital tools contributed to record-high member retention and strong event participation. As we prepare to refresh the Strategic Plan, IPRA's intentional progress positions the association for a bright and sustainable future. I'm honored to be here with you to continue this journey!



SUZI WIRTZ, IOM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ILLINOIS PARK & RECREATION ASSOCIATION

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

On behalf of the IPRA Board of Directors, thank you for your continued support of the association and the work we do together to advance parks, recreation, and conservation across Illinois. It has been a privilege to serve as Board Chair during a year marked by thoughtful progress, collaboration, and a shared commitment to strengthening IPRA. Guided by our Strategic Plan, the association focused intentionally on transparency and access, ensuring members clearly understand how to engage, apply, and serve in meaningful volunteer leadership roles.

A significant highlight of this year was the completion of a comprehensive review of IPRA's joint committees and the successful conclusion of a multi-year effort to update the Joint Agreement with the Illinois Association of Park Districts. The revised five year agreement clarifies responsibilities, strengthens collaboration, and reinforces our mutual goal of advancing parks, recreation, and conservation throughout Illinois. In parallel, IPRA completed a year-long review of joint committee operations, resulting in clearly documented qualifications, term limits, and appointment processes. These improvements provide greater access to leadership opportunities and ensure a transparent, equitable pathway to serve at the highest level of IPRA volunteer leadership.

This year also marked an important milestone with the relocation of IPRA's office for the first time since 2011. The new Hinsdale location enhances the association's ability to support staff operations while providing a more functional and welcoming space for members, partners, and visitors. In addition, IPRA expanded its workforce and outreach efforts through the launch of a new Ambassador Program, with more than 80 professional members stepping forward to inspire future professionals and build awareness of career opportunities in parks, recreation, therapeutic recreation, and conservation.

I am grateful to the IPRA staff, Board of Directors, volunteers, and partners whose dedication made this work possible. It has truly been an honor to serve as Board Chair and to help advance an association that continues to lead with purpose, professionalism, and a strong vision for the future.



ERIKA STROJINC, CPRE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
BUFFALO GROVE PARK DISTRICT



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Erika Strojinc, CPRE
Buffalo Grove Park District
Chair

Laure Kosey, CPRE
Oak Brook Park District
Chair Elect

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Geneseo Park District
Past Chair

Joan Scovic, CPRP
Northbrook Park District
Secretary/At-Large Representative

Derek Harms, CPRP
Springfield Park District
Central Region Representative

Keith Wallace, CPRP
Lincolnway Special Recreation Association (LWSRA)
Chicago Metro Region Representative

Daniel Jones, CPRP
Cary Park District
Northwest Region Representative

Jonelle Bailey, CPRP
Sycamore Park District
Section Director Council Representative

Kimberly Caughran, CPRP
City of Collinsville
Southern Region Representative

HEADQUARTERS STAFF



Suzi Wirtz, IOM
Executive Director



Kim Laper
Senior Manager, Member
Engagement



Barry Franks
Senior Director, Finance &
Operations



Cindy Galvan
Manager, Conference &
Sponsorship



Heather Weishaar
Director, Communications &
Membership



Vince Davis
Manager, Digital Strategy &
Membership Manager



Duane Smith
Director, Education



Camilla Best
Coordinator, Digital
Education



Maria McGuire
Manager, Administration &
Operations

HIGHLIGHTS



IPRA's New Headquarters Office

- Relocated to new office space in Hinsdale in September
- This office building location meets employee, operational and member needs while providing space for collaboration
- Lower monthly rent with predictable annual increases, including four months of free rent
- Shared amenities — training room, boardroom, café, and fitness space — support future growth and cost-effective delivery of IPRA educational programming



Take a Walk in the Park Elevates Workforce Recruitment

- Launched a statewide recruitment initiative to promote careers in parks, recreation, and conservation
- Supported member agencies in attracting both seasonal and long-term talent
- Delivered ready-to-use recruitment resources, including:
 - Digital ads
 - Videos
 - Social media content
 - Customizable promotional materials
- Enabled consistent, engaging messaging across multiple platforms
- Earned multiple design awards recognizing creative excellence and recruitment impact



Expanded Leadership and Committee Participation

- Completed a comprehensive review of IPRA joint committees and IPRA committees
- Concluded a multi-year update to the Joint Agreement with the Illinois Association of Park Districts
- Documented clear committee member qualifications, term limits, and appointment processes for joint committees that reinforce expanded access to leadership opportunities and ensured a transparent, equitable pathway to IPRA volunteer leadership

HIGHLIGHTS



IPRA University Advances Competency-Based Learning

- Made significant progress toward the early-2026 launch of IPRA University, IPRA's Learning Management System
- Established the IPRA University Committee to guide virtual education development
- Developed eight Core Competencies to serve as the foundation for IPRA's professional learning framework
- Expanded the learning management system with Legacy Content and Expert Insight recordings
- Featured subject matter experts from parks, recreation, and conservation agencies across Illinois
- Strengthened IPRA University as a statewide resource for accessible, high-quality professional development



BALANCE SHEET

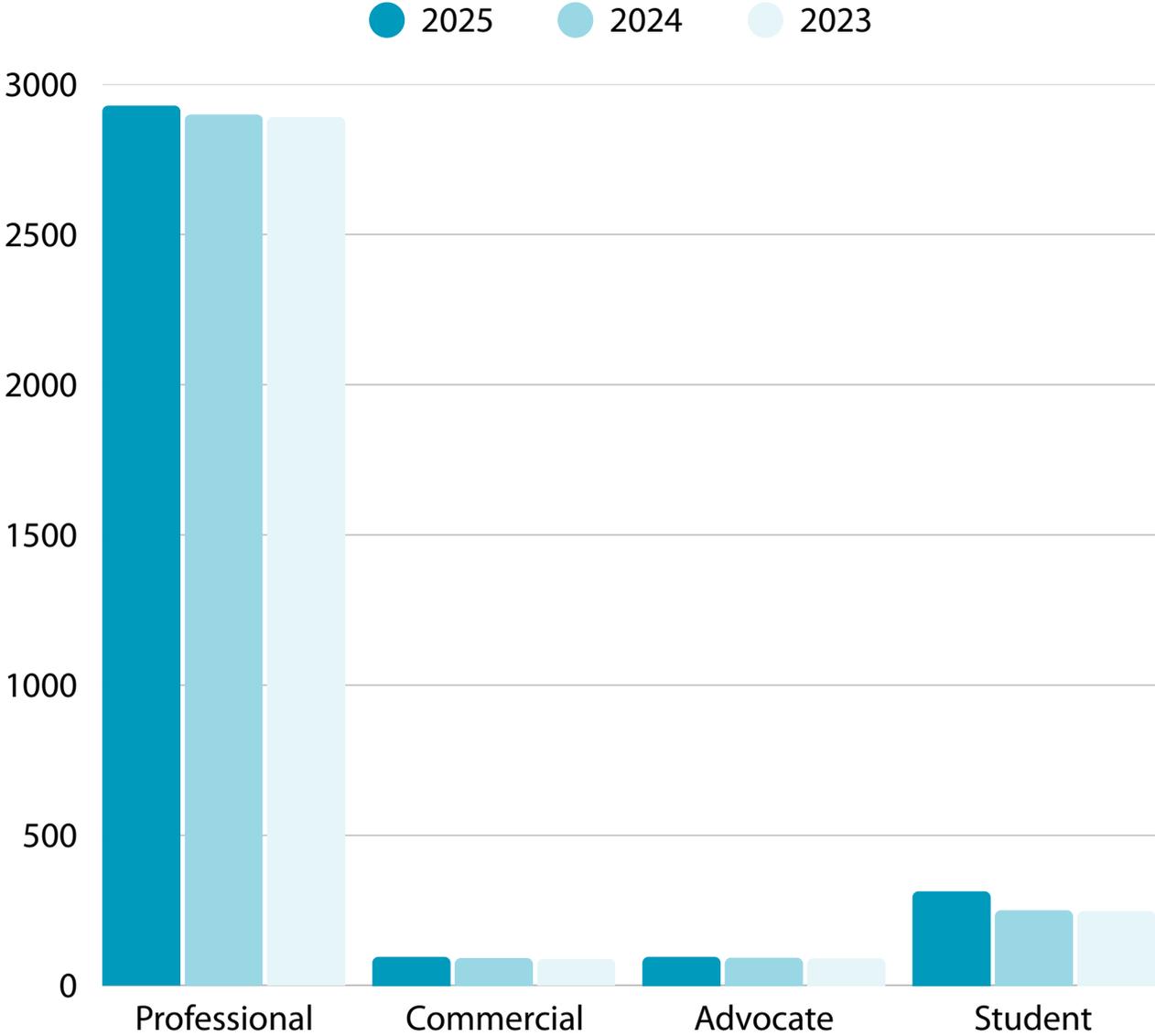
unaudited as of 12/31/25

	2024	2025
ASSETS		
Current Assets	\$2,267,649	\$2,570,777
Checking/Savings	\$626,415	\$497,102
Total Current Assets	\$2,894,064	\$3,067,879
Fixed Assets	\$0	\$93,641
TOTAL ASSETS	\$2,894,064	\$3,161,520
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Current Liabilities	\$699,997	\$882,806
Other Current Liabilities	\$699,997	\$882,806
Equity	\$2,194,067	\$2,278,714
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$2,894,064	\$3,161,520

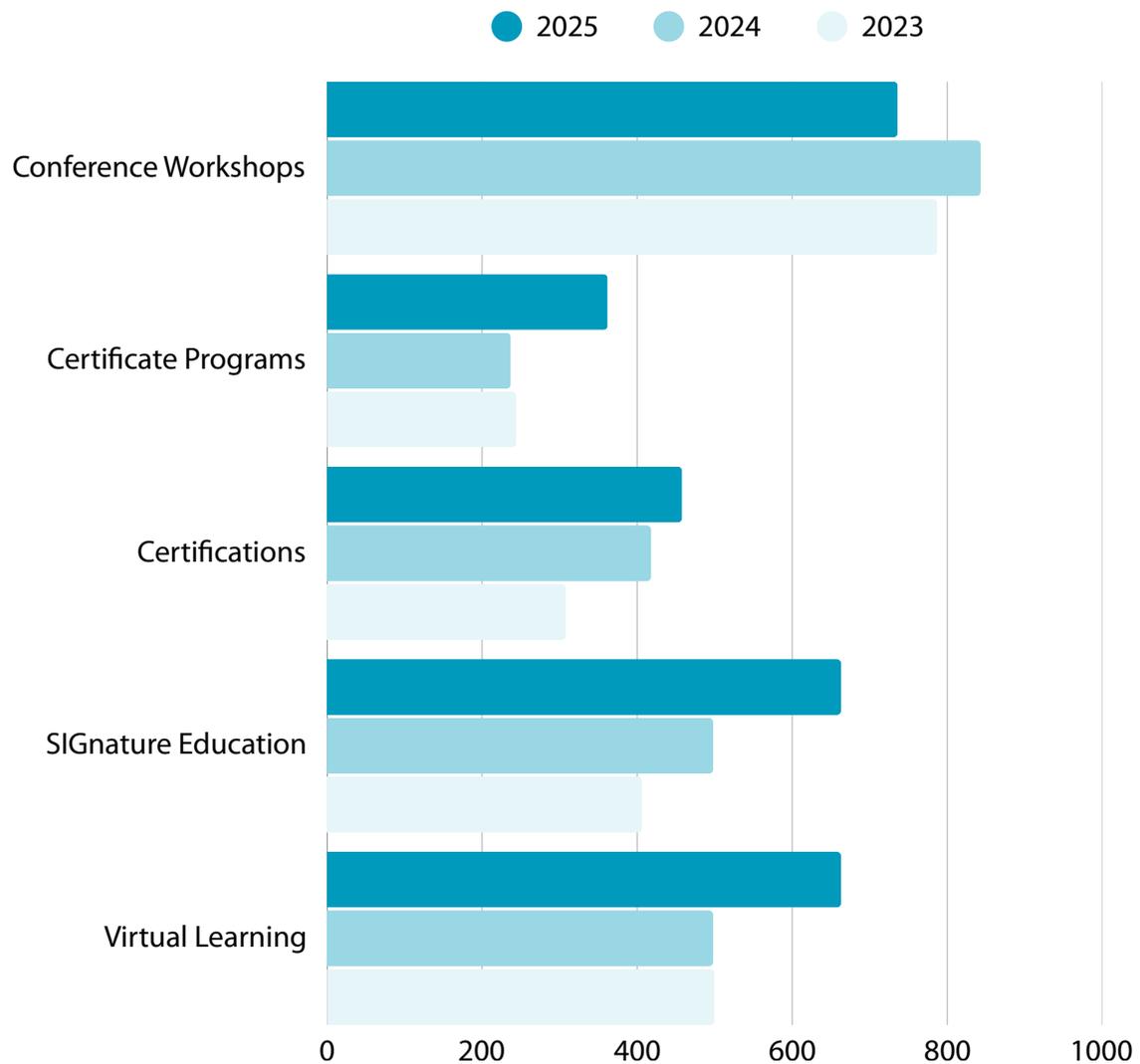


- 10 consecutive years achieving/exceeding budget
- 88% revenue growth in the last five years
- 30% increase in reserves in the last five years

MEMBERSHIP



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



- Registration for IPRA educational programs has **increased 58%** over the past two years
- Skills Development Webinar Series had **68 subscribing agencies** from nine states



AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Designed to recognize the best-of-the-best in Illinois parks, recreation, and conservation, the Awards & Recognition Program provides an opportunity to recognize colleagues and community members for their extraordinary work and contribution to the industry.

ROBERT ARTZ LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Michael Benard

COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

Quincy Bejster

PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR AWARD

Jim Rogers

YOUNG PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

Taylor Krawczyk

CHAMPIONS FOR CHANGE AWARD

Homewood-Flossmoor Park District

DISTINGUISHED PARK & RECREATION ACCREDITED AGENCIES

Cary Park District

Glencoe Park District

Huntley Park District

Geneseo Park District

Glenview Park District

Waukegan Park District

Worth Park District

OUTSTANDING PROGRAM OR SPECIAL EVENT

- Program (Division 2): Waukegan Park District, Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration
- Special Event (Division 1): Yorkville Parks & Recreation Department, School's Out Beach Party
- Special Event (Division 2): Northbrook Park District – Paint the Prairie

OUTSTANDING PARK AND FACILITY

- Division 1 Park (Operating Budget Less Than 5 Mil): Burr Ridge Park District, Harvester Park – Homestead Hill and Route 66 Playgrounds
- Division 2 Park (Operating Budget Greater than 5 Mil): Plainfield Park District – Van Horn Woods
- Facility Division I – Freeport Park District, Wing It! Mini Golf
- Facility Division II – Naperville Park District, Rothermel Family Skate Facility

EXCEPTIONAL WORKPLACE AWARD

- Fox Valley Special Recreation Association (FVSRA)
- Geneseo Park District
- Oswegoland Park District
- Park District of Highland Park
- Vernon Hills Park District



Learn more about IPRA's
Award & Recognition Program here

AGENCY SHOWCASE

Agency Showcase is a spirited competition spotlighting bright ideas exhibited by park, recreation, and conservation agencies. This professionally judged competition recognizes Illinois agencies for their marketing and communication efforts ranging from print to multimedia.

OVERALL AGENCY SHOWCASE WINNERS

1st Place: Park District of Highland Park

2nd Place: Roselle Park District

3rd Place: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

PEOPLE'S CHOICE AGENCY SHOWCASE WINNER

Park District of Highland Park

CATEGORY HONORS

Brochure Print: Lake County Forest Preserve District

Brochure Virtual: Winnetka Park District

Integrated Photography: Romeoville Park District

Large Format Marketing: Glencoe Park District

Logo Design: Northbrook Park District

Marketing Campaign: Elmhurst Park District

Print Communication – Informational: Dundee Township Park District

Print Communication – Promotional: Oak Lawn Park District

Social Media Campaign: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Table Display: Plainfield Park District

Videography - Long Form: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Videography - Short Form: Hoffman Estates Park District

Website: Forest Preserve District of DuPage County

Written Content: Fox Valley Park District



VOLUNTEERS

IPRA's special interest sections are crucial to the membership experience because members are placed with others that share a common work setting, interests and challenges.

Thank you, 2025 Section Leaders:

Administration & Finance Section

Jackie Iovinelli, Section Director
Kara Moss, Communication Director
Steven Muenz, Education Director

Forest Preserve and Conservation Section

Anamari Dorgan, Section Director
Caitlynn Martinez-McWhorter, Communication Director
Jenny Heider, Education Director

Communications & Marketing Section

Katie Garrett, Section Director
Cassidy Reinhard, Communication Director
Amy Lewandowski, Education Director

Parks & Natural Resource Management Section

Chris Leiner, Section Director
Bob Johnson, Communication Director
Steve Bessette, Education Director

Diversity Section

Manuel Aguilar, Section Director
Kevin Adams, Communication Director
Andre Cobbs, Education Director

Recreation Section

Kimberly Barton, Section Director
Mark Dolphin, Communication Director
Natalie Wood, Education Director

Facility Management Section

Katy McKinnon, Section Director
Lacy Marinenko, Communication Director
Dave Littwin, Education Director

Therapeutic Recreation Section

Mia Ross, Section Director
Becky Fredrickson, Communication Director
Jordan Chandler, Education Director



- IPRA launched an [application process](#) for available volunteer opportunities
- Recruited [over 90 volunteers](#) to serve as Ambassadors - volunteers who visit schools to discuss career opportunities in the field



VOLUNTEERS

Participation and leadership in an IPRA committee provides opportunities for individuals to share and develop personal skills, while developing resources and professional development opportunities for the membership. Thank you to the following 2025 Committee & Joint Committee Chairs:

Agency Showcase

Sheri Potter

Section Director Council

Jonelle Bailey

Finance Committee

Brad Sholes

ProConnect Board of Regents

Alex Engelhardt

Governance Committee

Andy Thurman

Professional Development School Board of Regents

Josh Williams

Health and Wellness Committee

Shannon Tovey

IPRA Conference Program Committee

Rachel Lenz

Joint Conference Committee

Brian Tibbs

Joint Editorial Committee

Kari Felkamp

Joint Coordinating Council Committee

Andy Thurman

Joint Exhibit Committee

Tom Hartwig

Joint Distinguished Park And Recreation Accreditation Committee

Jan Arnold

Joint Legislative Committee

Mike Benard



PARTNERS & SUPPLIERS

This year marked an important step forward in strengthening IPRA's sponsorship program to better serve both our partners and our members. IPRA [streamlined program and event sponsorships](#) to create more cohesive, clearly defined packages - making it easier for sponsors to engage meaningfully with the association.

Increased sponsor support also directly [benefited IPRA members](#) by helping offset rising event costs. Additionally, the introduction of the IPRA Conference Kick-Off in 2025 created a new, highly successful engagement opportunity for members and sponsors alike. The event met its initial sponsorship goals and has already generated three times the planned sponsorship support for 2026, underscoring the value of strong partnerships in delivering high-quality member experiences.

The logo for Amilia, featuring the word "amilia" in a bold, blue, lowercase sans-serif font.The logo for FGMA Architects. It features the lowercase letters "fgma" in a bold, red, lowercase sans-serif font, with the word "FGMA" in a smaller, red, uppercase font above the "ma". Below "fgma", the word "ARCHITECTS" is written in a smaller, grey, uppercase font.