

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANTS AND THE URBAN PARK AND RECREATION RECOVERY PROGRAM

Making Local Communities Healthier and Economically Viable

NRPA POLICY POSITION

- ★ Support funding for the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR).
- ★ Support funding for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and other programs that assist economically distressed urban localities in the rehabilitation of parks and recreation facilities in FY15 appropriations.

Background

Nearly 80 percent of the U.S. population lives in an urban or metropolitan area. Fully functional park systems play an essential role in metropolitan areas' ability to create jobs, stimulate growth, and attract business investments, a highly skilled workforce and tourism dollars. Access to quality park and recreation opportunities also positively impacts public health and provides for cost-effective and nonregulatory means of addressing environmental and conservation concerns.

Despite the many benefits provided by close-to-home parks and recreation, the absence of funding specifically for urban park and recreation projects has caused park and recreation infrastructure to deteriorate at alarming rates. As a result, many American communities now suffer from a lack of green space, dilapidated and outdated facilities, unsafe playgrounds and inadequate access to recreation resources.

Why Congress Should Act

Parks are part of our national infrastructure. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers, parks, beaches and other recreational facilities contribute \$730 billion per year to the U.S. economy, support nearly 6.5 million jobs and contribute to higher property values.

While park and recreation agencies in urban communities are eligible for federal funding through programs such as the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and other federal grants, those programs provide funding for many other types of projects, and there is great competition for limited funding.

Historically, the only program that provided federal funding for urban park and recreation projects was the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program (UPARR). Over the course of two and a half decades, UPARR awarded approximately 1,500 grants totaling more than \$270 million to 380 localities in 43 states. Despite the program's success, UPARR has not been funded since FY02 and has limitations that must be revised and updated in order to best meet the demands of today's metropolitan communities.

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