

Board of Representatives Budget Presentation

March 18, 2025

Nette Compton
President & CEO



Organization Function

The Collaborative was established as a public/private partnership that would “provide collaborative leadership in creating and sustaining a successful Mill River Park.”

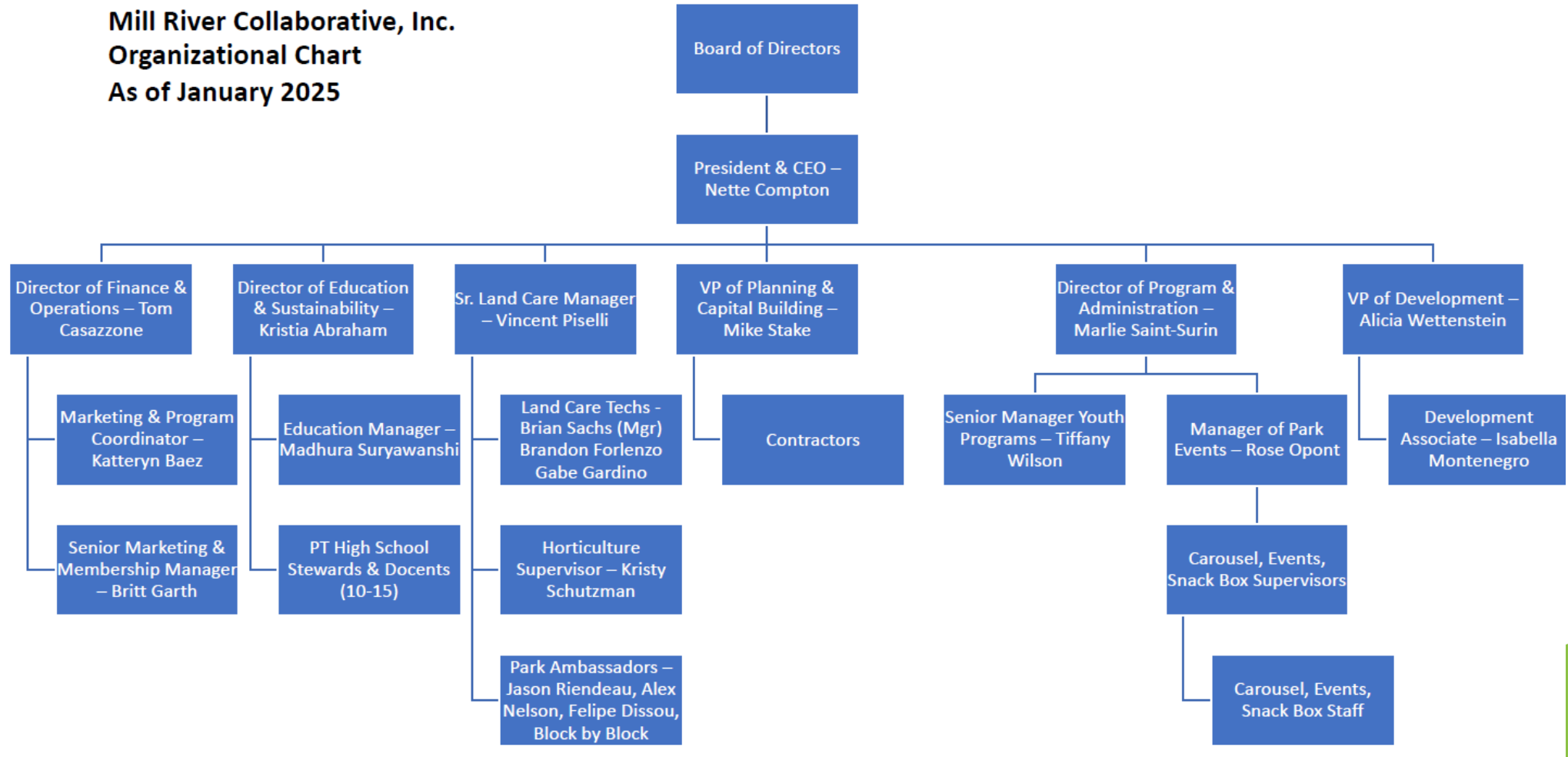
Collaborative Mission

Our mission is to run a world-class urban park in the heart of Stamford that serves as both an oasis in city life and a vibrant, diverse, green-space that inspires sound environmental practices and learning.



Organizational Chart

Mill River Collaborative, Inc.
Organizational Chart
 As of January 2025

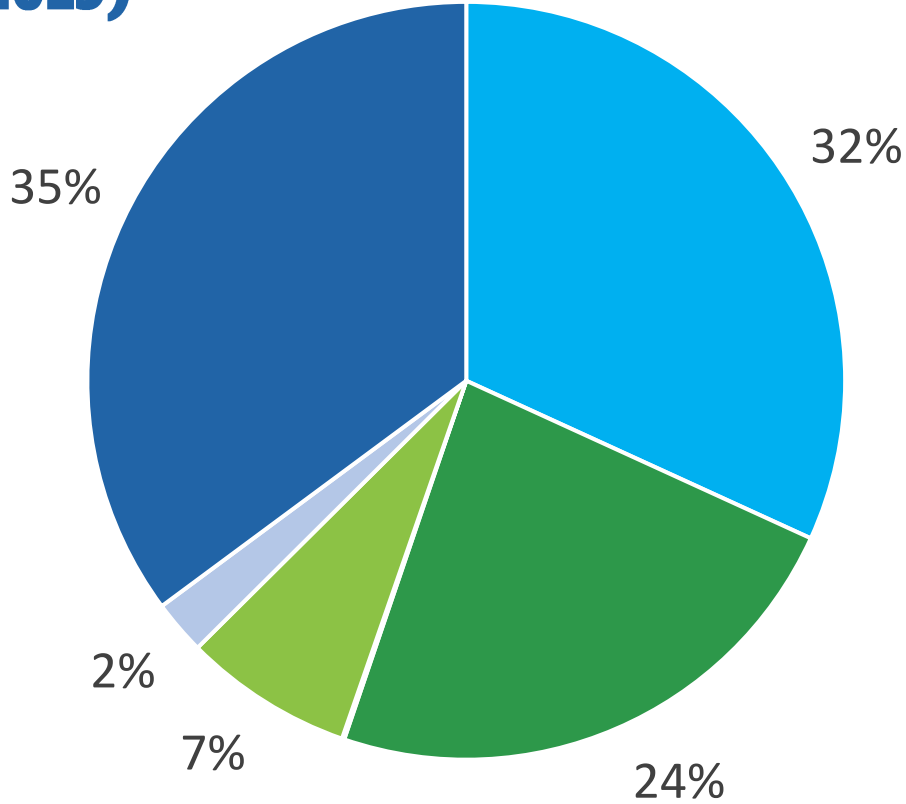


2024 Park Visitation Overview

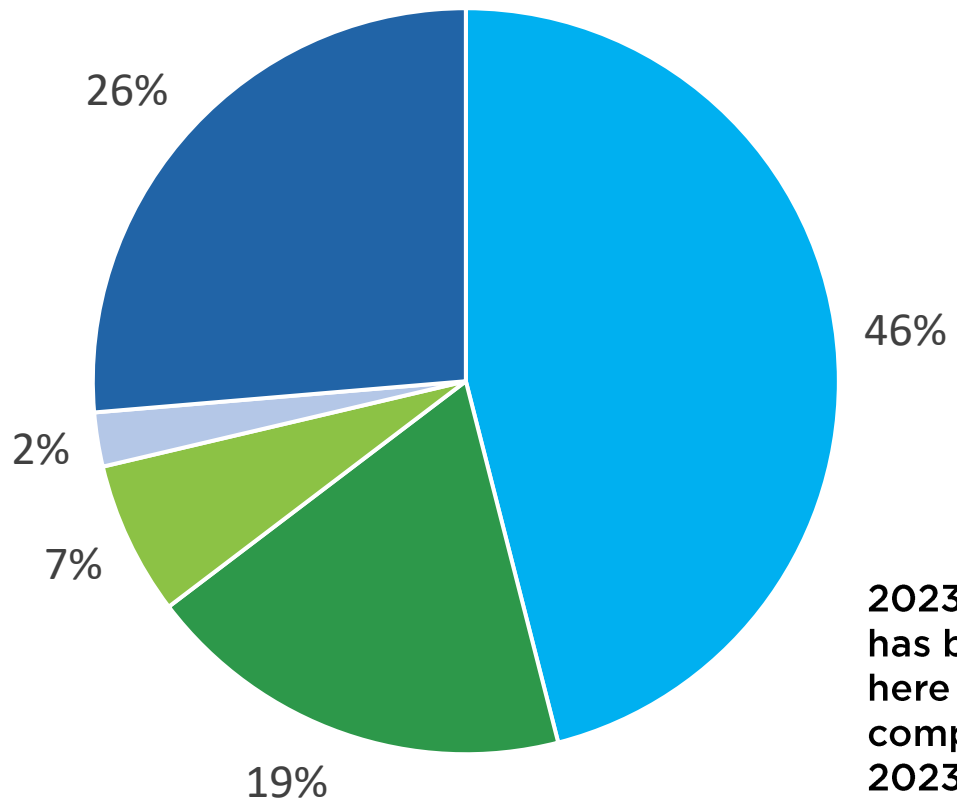
- Consistently over 200K visits a year
- Even in the colder months, thousands visit the Park each week
- Average stay is almost 2 hours
- Park Visitor Profile:
 - 82K median income (vs 107K median income in Stamford)
 - 68% of our visitors identify in the BIPOC community
 - 46.5% of our visitors live in Stamford
 - 22K people live within a 10-minute walk of the Park (source: [Parkserve.tpl.org](https://www.parkserve.tpl.org))



Park Visitor Race and Ethnicity (2023)



Stamford Race and Ethnicity (2023)

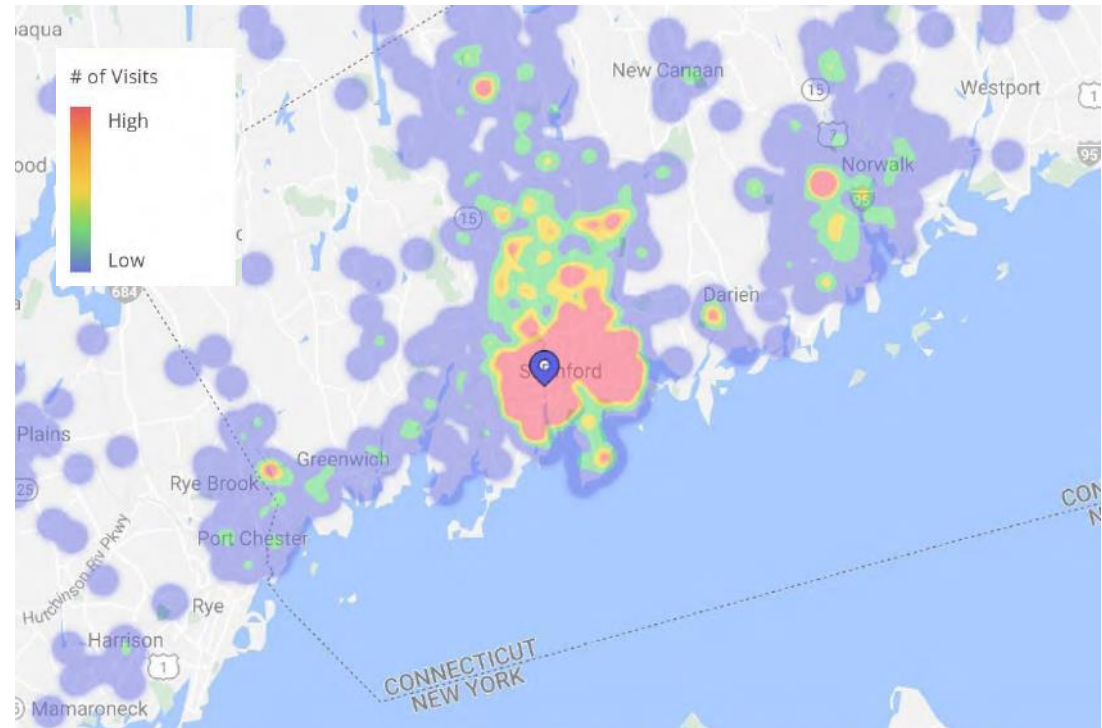


2023 visitor data has been used here to accurately compare with the 2023 census data for Stamford

- White
- Black
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Two or More Races

TOP TEN VISITOR ZIPCODES

Zipcode	Visitors	City
06902	24K	Stamford, CT
06905	5.8K	Stamford, CT
06903	3.3K	Stamford, CT
06906	3.1K	Stamford, CT
06901	2.6K	Stamford, CT
06907	2.1K	Stamford, CT
06851	1.7K	Norwalk, CT
06854	2.7K	Norwalk, CT
06850	1.3K	Norwalk, CT
10573	1.2K	Port Chester, NY



Strategic Mindset



Our Strategic Plan is the roadmap to accomplishing the vision for Mill River Park for the next 5 years.

Organizational Excellence

- Collaborative Budget Planning
- Maintain operational expenses at or below 5%
- Improved staff diversity
- Strong organizational culture

Civic Goodwill

- Community Engagement
- Education and Accessibility
- Inclusivity and Support

Capital Completion

- Continue to innovate landcare practices
- Complete projects underway: Richmond Hill Riverwalk (2024), Playground (2025), Community Commons (2027)
- Expand the Park south to Long Island via federal funds and private development
- Orient the organization to prioritize the operations and success within its footprint.

2024 Programming Achievements

Education Department Impact

Field Trip Participation and Growth

- 100% of Stamford Public Elementary Schools participate in field trips
- 66.66% growth YoY in the number of field trips in 2024

Long-term impact tracking of youth programs

- Implemented a tracking mechanism for the long-term impacts of the Docent program and obtained the first data set

Positive Community Impact through Programs

Sunday Funday – Focused on different cultures

- 36 books read, 1,167 pages
- Participants learned 35 new words per page
- Longest book read was 48 pages

Fun Saturday Mornings – Extended the season (now May - Dec)

- Focused on interactivity, fun, learning, and cultural diversity
- Our most popular event was Circus Splendiferous, with 185 attendees
- Other highlights were Jumpin’Jams (182 attendees), Bubble Fest (174 attendees) and Little Engineers (163 attendees)

Fitness Fun Classes – Expanded offerings

- Rhythmic Yoga and Zumba classes were the most popular
- We once again hosted Tai Chi, Sunrise Yoga, and Total Body Fit session
- New for 2024 was a Hula Fit class



2024 Programming Achievements

Increased Programming Attendance

PROGRAM NAME	2024 ATTENDANCE	2023 ATTENDANCE	% Change in Attendance
Sunday Funday	1,556	1,349	15% Increase
Fun Saturday Morning	1,800	690	161% increase
Fitness Fun	1,458	792	84% increase
Stamford Day with Mayor's Multicultural Council	850	415	105% increase
Swing Night	222	200	11% increase
Movie Nights in the Park	657	230	186% increase
Holiday Vendor Fair and Santa at Carousel	750	300	150% increase
Programming Totals	7,293	3,976	83% increase overall

2024 Programming Achievements

Diverse and Inclusive Programming Highlights

- Jamaican Independence Day Fun Saturday Morning with Carnival Trio band playing steel drums
- Silent Book Club
- Open Mic Night
- Grandparents Day
- Stamford Pride Gayme Night
- Cherry Blossom Picnic
- Off Main Experience
- Sunday Funday themes – around the world and the country, exploring different cultures
- Lunar New Year Fun Saturday Morning with a Chinese Dragon Dance performance

2024 Programming Goals

Increased Afterschool Program Attendance to 51 students

- (2023) 23% capacity - 30 unique students - averaging 15 students a month
- (2024) 45% capacity - 25 unique students - averaging 25 students a month
- We are down unique students, but students are staying longer in the program

Increase summer camp enrollment to 100 unique campers

- (2024) - 93 unique campers
- (2023) - 89 unique campers
- Vacation Camp averaged 15 campers, for each session.
We did not have to cancel any this year for low attendance!

2025 Programming Goals

2025 Programs Goals

- Grow park attendance by continuing to enhance the visitor experience
 - Increasing program offerings, including programming at the new Riverwalk
- Increase partner events in the Park by 10%
 - Working with RiseUP group to add 14 arts events related to the SEED
- Exceed 100 children enrolled in camp programming
 - Added a new Pre-K 4 group to the camp roster for this year
- Proactive and collaborative team effort to promote programming and grow our audience
- Reach capacity of 51 students in afterschool

2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Richmond Hill Riverwalk



2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Richmond Hill Riverwalk



2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Whittingham Discovery Center



2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Playground



The playground was closed for a major renovation.

Design Highlights

- Seamless Integration: Blends natural features with the park's lush landscape.
- Inclusive Play: Designed for children of all abilities with accessible play structures and sensory-rich areas.
- Community-Centric: Includes ample seating for caregivers and shaded picnic spots for families.

Community Collaboration

- Informed by feedback from over 1,000 local students and numerous family meetings.
- Reflects the needs and desires of Stamford families and children.

Key Features

- Natural Play Areas: Logs, boulders, and plantings to inspire creative and adventurous play.
- Inclusive Equipment: Adaptive swings, wheelchair-accessible ramps, and sensory play zones.

Safety & Accessibility

- Meets modern safety standards with accessible surfaces and equipment



2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Playground



2024 Capital Projects Achievements | Community Commons



- In March we received 4.5 million Dollars in Federal Funding
- In September we received 7.685 Million in State CIF
- We are currently working on our environmental impact study, which is required for federal funding.
- We have started kick off meetings with both agencies.

Significant Changes & Challenges

- **Uncertainty across funding:** Federal grants, impacts to State Funding, and private Philanthropy
- **Safety & Security:** Challenges across our city and many others show up within Mill River as well, including those experiencing homelessness and substance abuse challenges; working with Stamford PD and nonprofit partners to address, increasing security staffing within the park



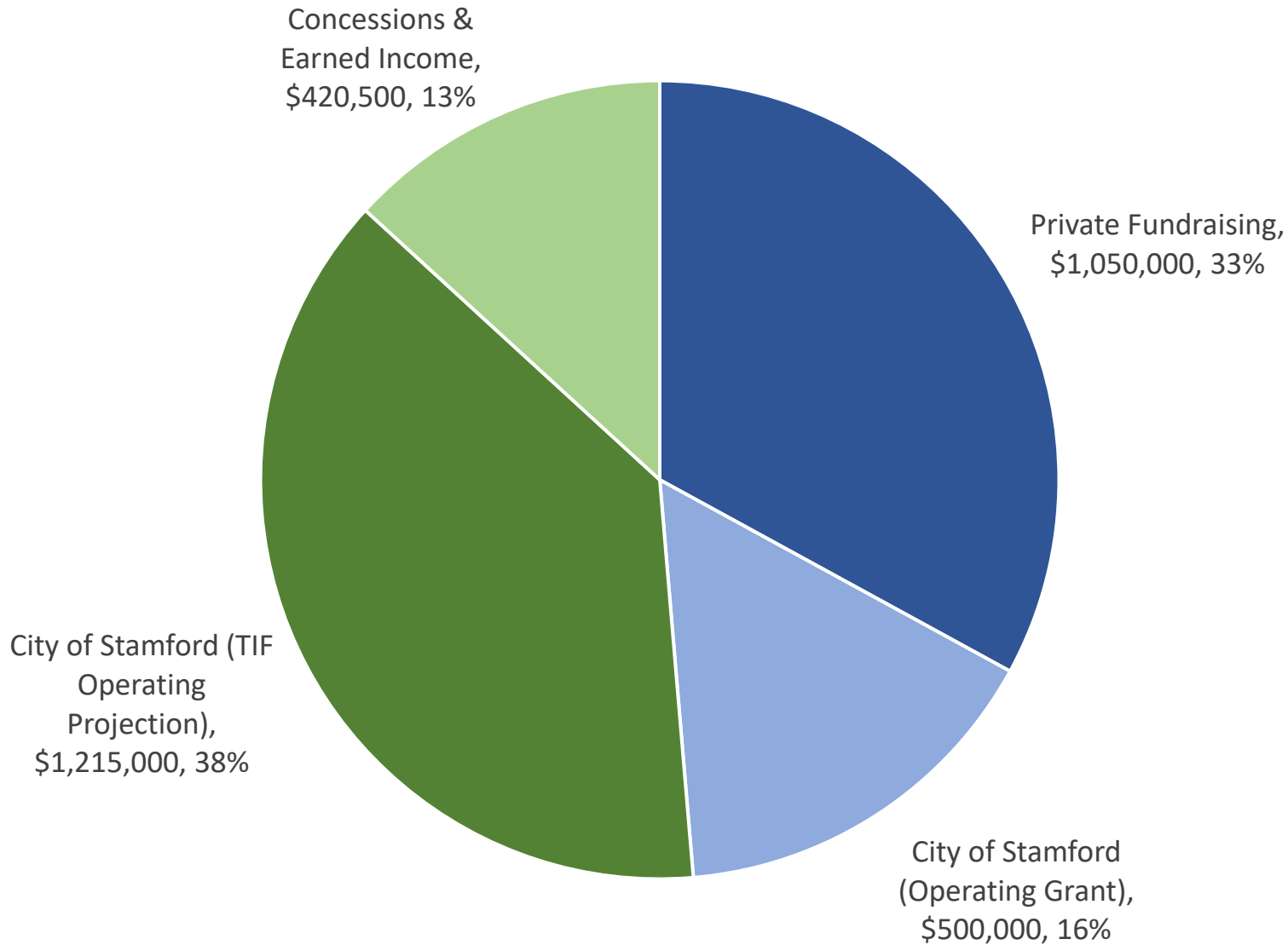
Operating Grant Request

FY 26 Budget Proposal:
\$500,000 for FY 26

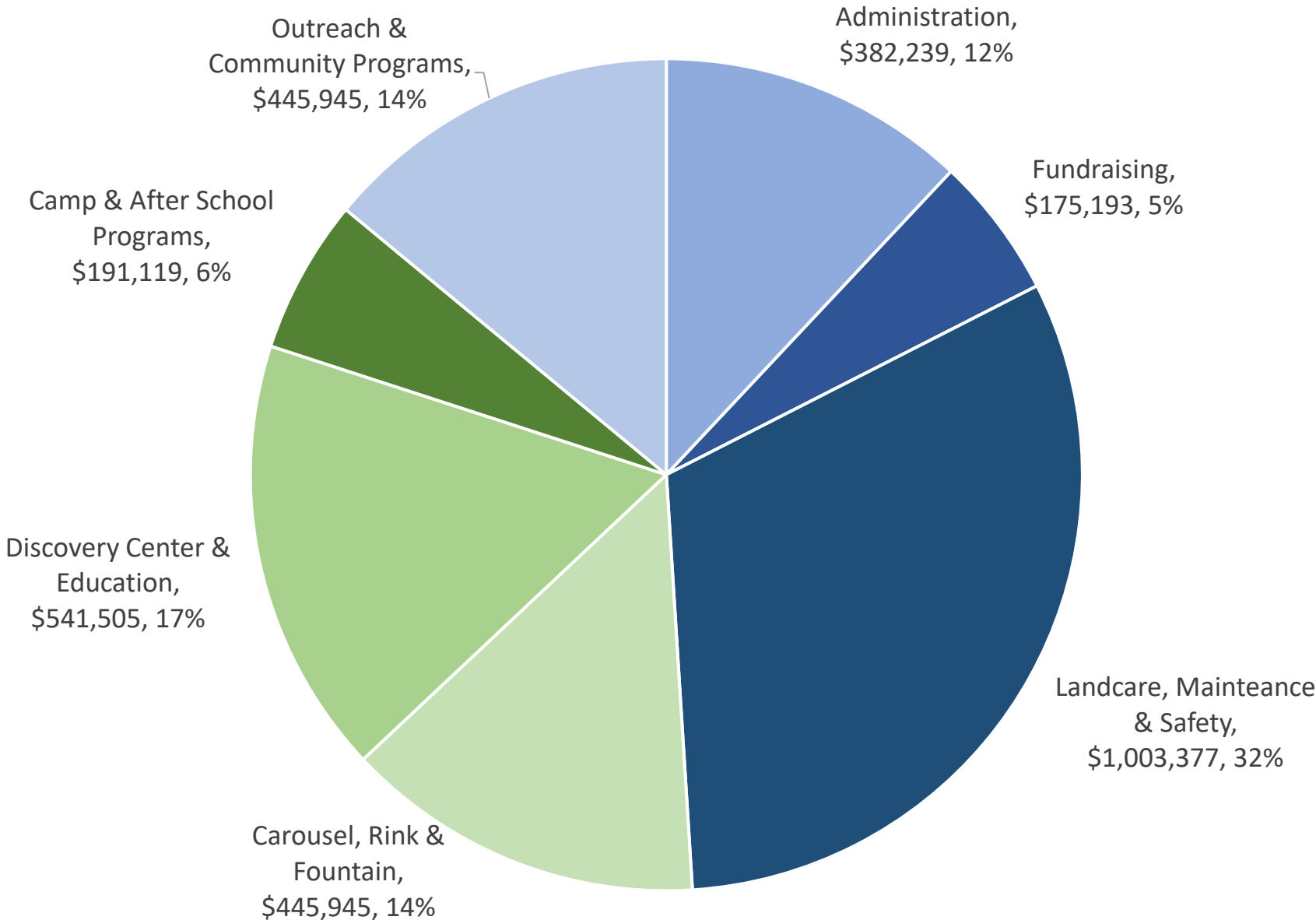
0% increase in annual request



FY 26 PROJECTED OPERATING REVENUE



FY 26 PROJECTED OPERATING EXPENSES



FY 26 PROJECTED CITY OPERATING AND TIF ALLOCATION

Budget Category	Total Expense	Expense Funded by City Funds	% Funded by City Funds
Administration	\$382,239	\$ 0	0%
Fundraising	\$175,193	\$ 0	0%
Land care, Maintenance & Safety	\$1,003,377	\$1,003,377	100%
Carousel, Rink & Fountain	\$445,945	\$156,081	35%
Discovery Center & Education	\$545,505	\$189,527	35%
Camp & After School Programs	\$119,119	\$98,044	51%
Outreach & Community Programs	\$445,945	\$267,567	60%

