

City Manager's Report

October 10, 2023



Parks and Recreation Update

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D. Tyrell McGirt
Parks and Recreation Director



Parks & Recreation Comprehensive Plan

D. Tyrell McGirt
Parks and Recreation Director

City Council Meeting
October 10, 2023



Key Takeaways



The last Parks and Recreation Plan was updated in 2009.

Staff initiated a process to update the plan.

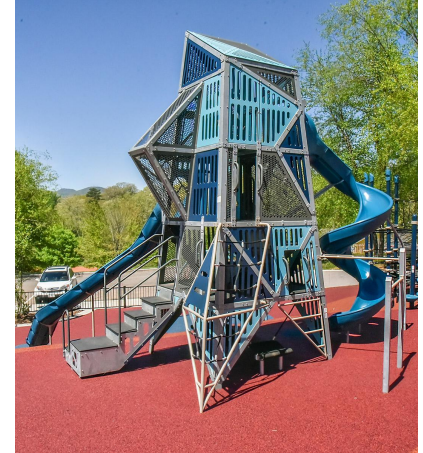
A RFP was issued in January and a consultant was selected to update the plan in February.

March 28, 2023 – Council’s Environment and Safety Committee voted to move forward a recommendation to approve a contract to hire the consultant and on March 28, 2023 full Council approved the contract with Design Workshop for the development of the P&R systemwide plan.

The presentation today will provide an update on the public engagement process.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to create a **vision** for an **enhanced Parks and Recreation system** that meets the needs of the current and future Asheville community.



Key Outcomes



Assess current and future community recreation needs.

Equitably **prioritize** programs and capital investments with a focus on revitalizing our existing parks and facilities.

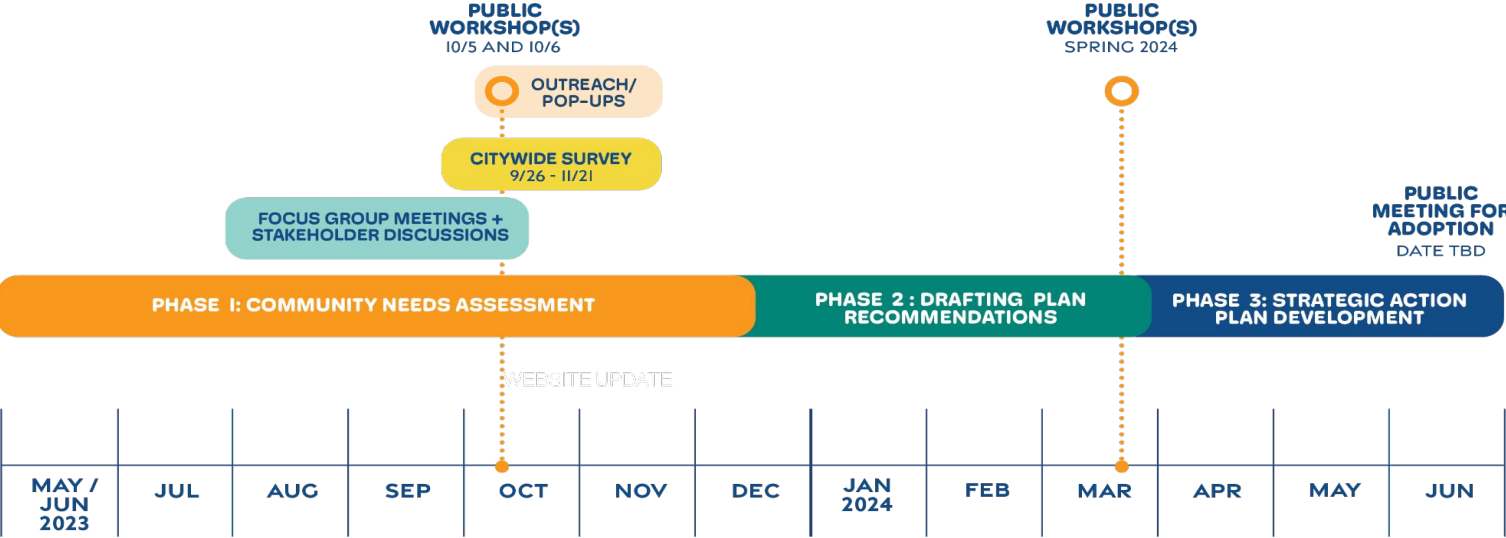
Promote **new ideas and partnerships** / Aids in innovation.

Provide sustainable practices and strategies to **fill gaps** in desired recreation.

Educate the public and build **community support**.

Project Schedule

Anticipated Project Schedule



Resident & User Engagement Opportunities

Planning: August

Focus Group Meetings (Recreation, Sustainability, Equity, Placemaking)

Website: **RecreateAsheville.com**

Promotion: September

Monthly Newsletter, Banners, yard signs, neighborhood associations, press release, transit bus ads, etc.

Survey/Questionnaire

September 25 - November 3: Statistically Valid Random Survey via Mailer

September 25 - November 20: Public Input Survey Online **RecreateAsheville.com**

Public Workshops (Child Care, Transportation Vouchers, Language Services)

October 5: Nature Center 5-7 pm

October 6: Dr. Wesley Grant Sr. Southside Community Center 8am - 12pm

October 9: Linwood Crump Shiloh Community Center 2-6 pm

October 12: Carrier Park - 5-7 pm



Resident & User Engagement Opportunities

Other Opportunities to Promote the Online Survey

- Department Led Activities, Events, and Programs
- Community Events and Festivals
- Neighborhood Meetings
- Farmers Markets

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Questions



Public Safety Updates

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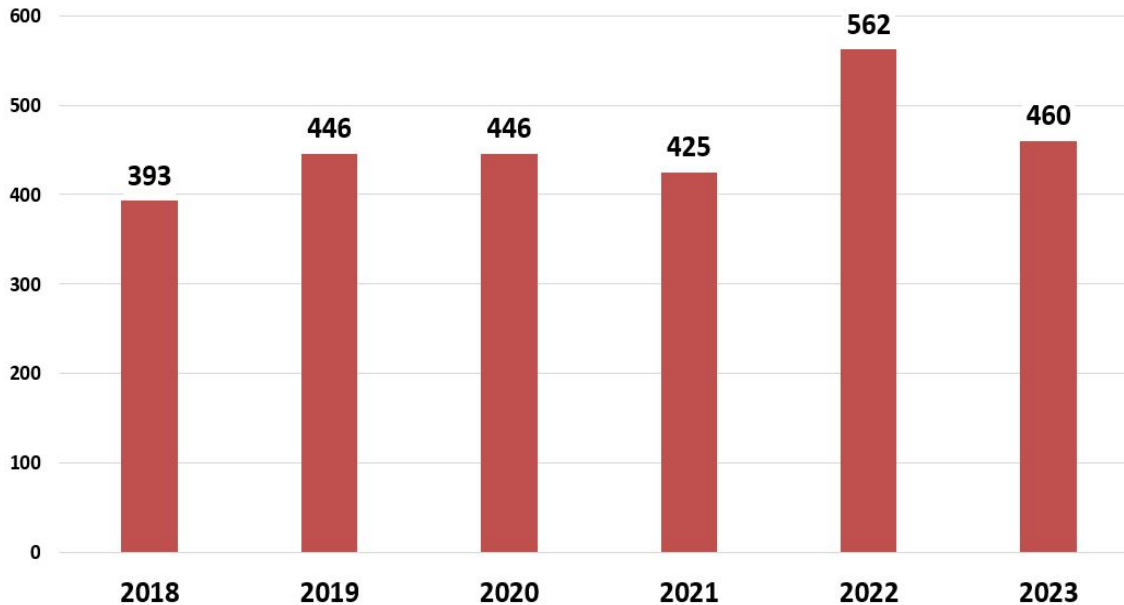
Ben Woody, Assistant City Manager
Jackie Stepp, Deputy Police Chief



Key Takeaways

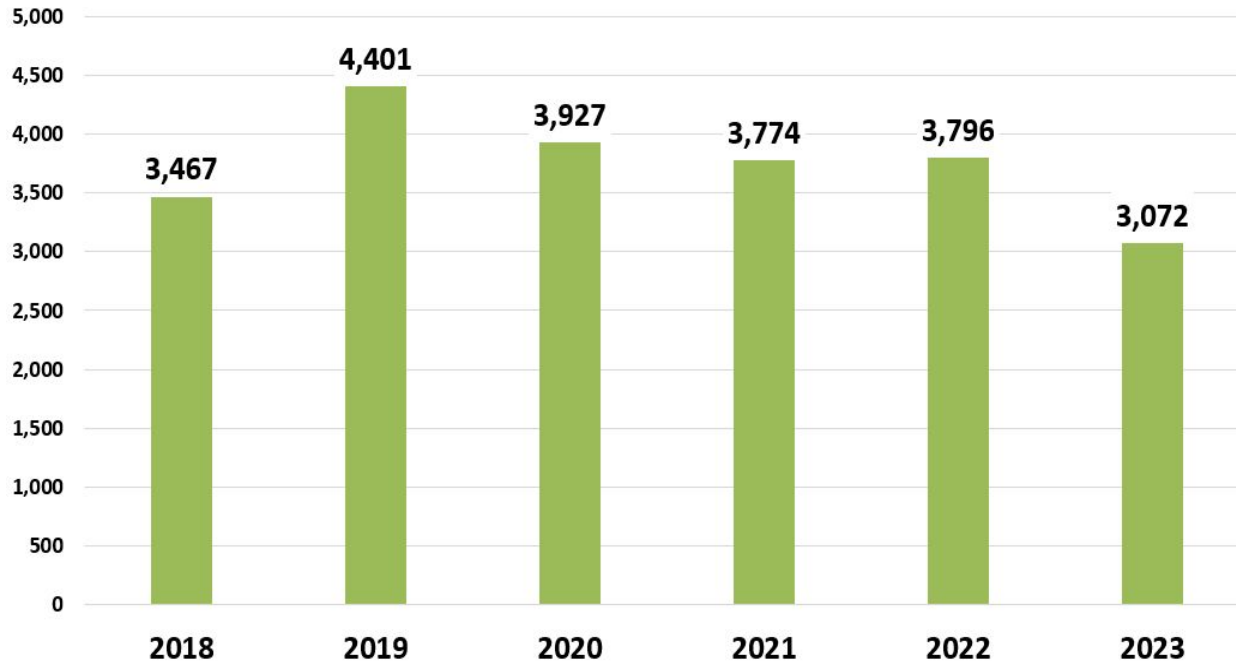
- Public safety and cleanliness remain a top priority.
- The City continues to take an interdisciplinary approach that prioritizes safety and cleanliness conditions citywide with a focus in the downtown area.
- Since the 60-day initiative concluded, downtown service levels have been maintained or enhanced. Staff is identifying resource needs to further enhance those services in the future.
- New communications strategies are rolling out to keep the community better informed of efforts.
- Public safety and cleanliness continues to be a community-wide responsibility and the City is pursuing partnership opportunities for further enhancement.

Citywide Violent Crime Year-to-Date



- 18% lower compared to 2022. However, when you have a record year, you will most likely see a decrease the following year.
- 1% higher compared to the 5 year average.
- Still 8% higher than what it was in 2021 or the annual average from 2018 to 2021.

Citywide Property Crime Year-to-Date



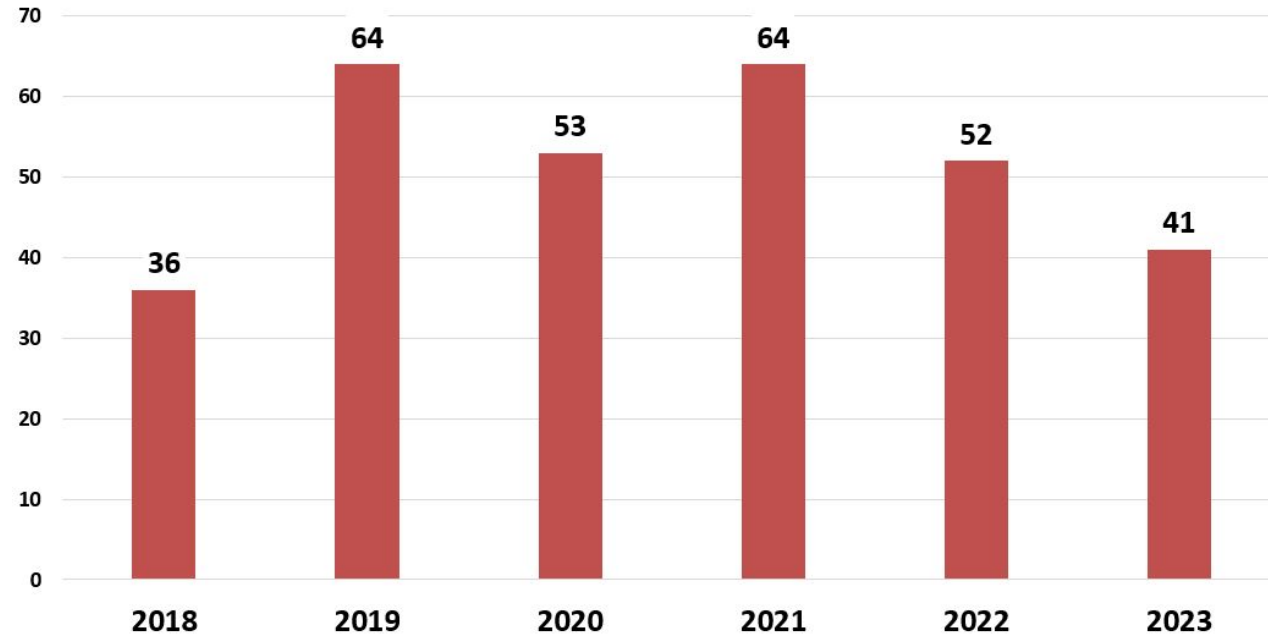
- 4% lower compared to 2022 and down 2.5% compared to the 5 year average.
- 16% lower compared to 2019, which is the highest in the past 5 years.

Uniform Crime Reporting Part I Property Crime as of October 1

Citywide Property Crime Year-to-Date cont...

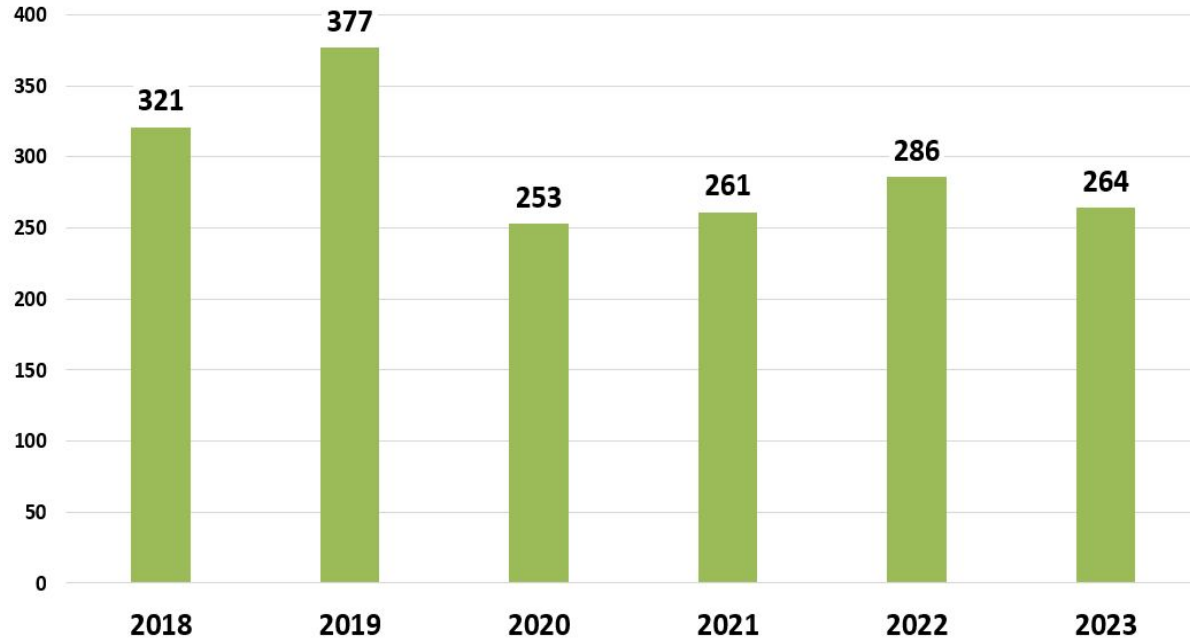
- Changes in corporate policy and reduction of Loss Prevention staff contribute heavily to the reduction in shoplifting calls for service.
- Asheville Mall - 60% reduction in shoplifting reported annually since 2020.
- Kohl's - 75% reduction in the shoplifting reported annually since 2020.
- Walmart on Hendersonville Road - 50% reduction in the shoplifting reported annually since 2020.
- River Ridge Marketplace - 50% reduction in the shoplifting reported annually since 2020.

Downtown Violent Crime Year-to-Date



- 21% lower YTD compared to 2022 and down 24% compared to the 5 year average.
- We contribute this to increased enforcement downtown.

Downtown Property Crime Year-to-Date



- 8% lower YTD compared to 2022 and down 12% compared to the 5 year average.

Downtown Crime Review

- Downtown is a crime hotspot in the city because it has the highest crime counts per square foot.
- Almost 10% of all city crime happens downtown.
- Since the downtown initiative, there have been 4 fewer crimes reported each week compared to the last 5 years.
- During the downtown initiative (May-Jun), arrests increased to 47 per month. Citations increased to 84 per month.

Downtown Crime Review cont...

- So far this year, APD has made 387 arrests and issued 460 citation charges in Downtown Asheville, averaging 37 arrests and 49 citations per month through September.

Month	Arrests	Citation
Jan	36	37
Feb	25	41
Mar	36	61
Apr	29	32
May	47	82
Jun	47	86
Jul	37	23
Aug	37	50
Sep	39	30
Oct	54	18

APD Presence and Coverage Downtown

- Overall downtown overtime coverage has increased each month by 10% in July, 20% in August, and 13% in September 2023.
- Offering additional overtime shifts for officers to patrol downtown before and after their regular scheduled shift.
 - Officer burnout is a major concern.
- Continue to focus on foot patrol and encourage bike patrol as staffing allows.
- APD also continues to staff downtown with two regular on-duty patrol officers 24/7, which coincides with city-wide staffing.

APD Partnerships

- Community/business groups (ADA, DARN, AIR, Hospitality Group).
- NC Department of Public Safety (Both ALE and Probation & Parole).
- FBI, DEA and ATF (assist in addressing violent crimes).
- Community Responders and BC Community Paramedics.
- BCSO - While APD has met with the BCSO and welcomed assistance to address downtown issues, minimal assistance has been provided.
 - BCSO could only provide 8 hours of assistance during the COA 60 day initiative, made no arrests and issued no citations, and no reports taken or crimes investigated.
- APD and BCSO recently met to discuss a path forward. After the meeting there were agreed upon next steps.
- Unfortunately the recent communication from BCSO suggesting APD did not want support from them was both disappointing and inaccurate.
- APD remains willing to collaborate with the BCSO to address this important community issue.

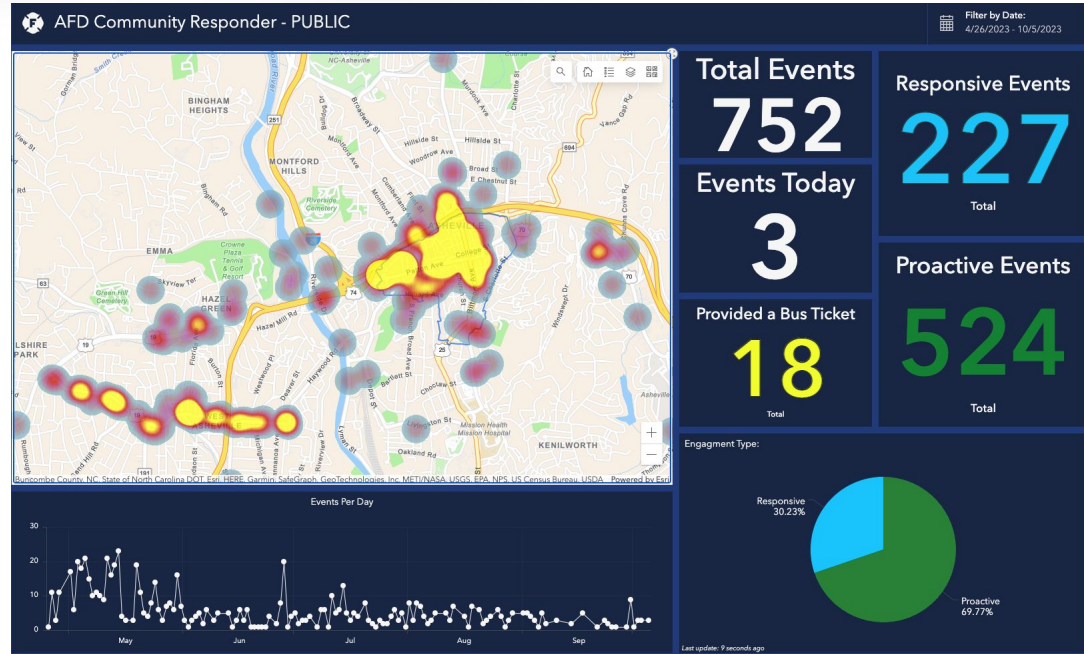
APD Recruiting and Retention

- Currently have 4 in Field Training.
- Currently have 5 recruits in BLET.
- Expected to have 10 in the January BLET class.
- Hired 5 lateral officers since May 2023, compared to 2 since 2017.
- More than a dozen inquiries from officers from outside agencies.

Community Responder Program

Proactive Engagement

- Identify immediate needs
- Assist as able
- Share available resources
- Understand business and resident experiences
- 9am - 9pm daily
- Gathering information during each interaction to identify resource needs/gaps
- Will focus on additional downtown outreach to supplement APD presence



[Click here](#) to view the dashboard

Commitment to Addressing Homelessness

- Goal is to provide housing
- Homeless Strategies Division is working with community partners to implement recommendations of National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH)
 - November 16 Joint City/County Work Session to discuss progress
- City staff meets monthly with service providers located in downtown
- Notable City investments in community capacity:
 - Compass Point Village - 85 permanent supportive housing units (opened mid-September 2023)
 - Shangri-La/Step-Up - 113 units scheduled to open early 2024
 - City and County each approved \$875K to add 43 year-around shelter beds
 - Code Purple sheltering (beginning October 15) at ABCCM and Salvation Army will include more beds than last year
- New education series this fall on issues related to homelessness, best practices in response and opportunities for participation in solutions

Citywide Cleanliness Efforts

- Citywide services include vegetation control, litter cleanup, street receptacle waste collection, encampment site clean up, pressure washing, street sweeping, graffiti abatement, and general maintenance
- Beginning in 2023, the city is leveraging ARPA funding to contract for additional roadside litter collection, hot-spot litter cleanup, and biohazard materials cleanup
- The city regularly contracts with Asheville Greenworks to complete cleanliness projects using volunteers
- Staff successfully launched a purple bag program to provide a low cost method for people experiencing homelessness to collect and dispose of waste
- City Council approved funding for a Solid Waste Master Plan that will include an analysis of solid waste services and recommendations for improvement



Downtown Service Highlights

- 9 full-time public works staff dedicated to downtown cleanliness including graffiti abatement, vegetation control, street sweeping, and code compliance
- Contracted services for supplemental clean-up, vegetation control, and pressure washing
- Improved response to hot spots and cleanliness issues
- Daily trash collection and incremental replacement/refurbishment of receptacles
- Daily security coverage in downtown parks
- Daily cleaning of downtown parks and contracted horticulture maintenance
- **Since July, overall service levels have been maintained or enhanced**

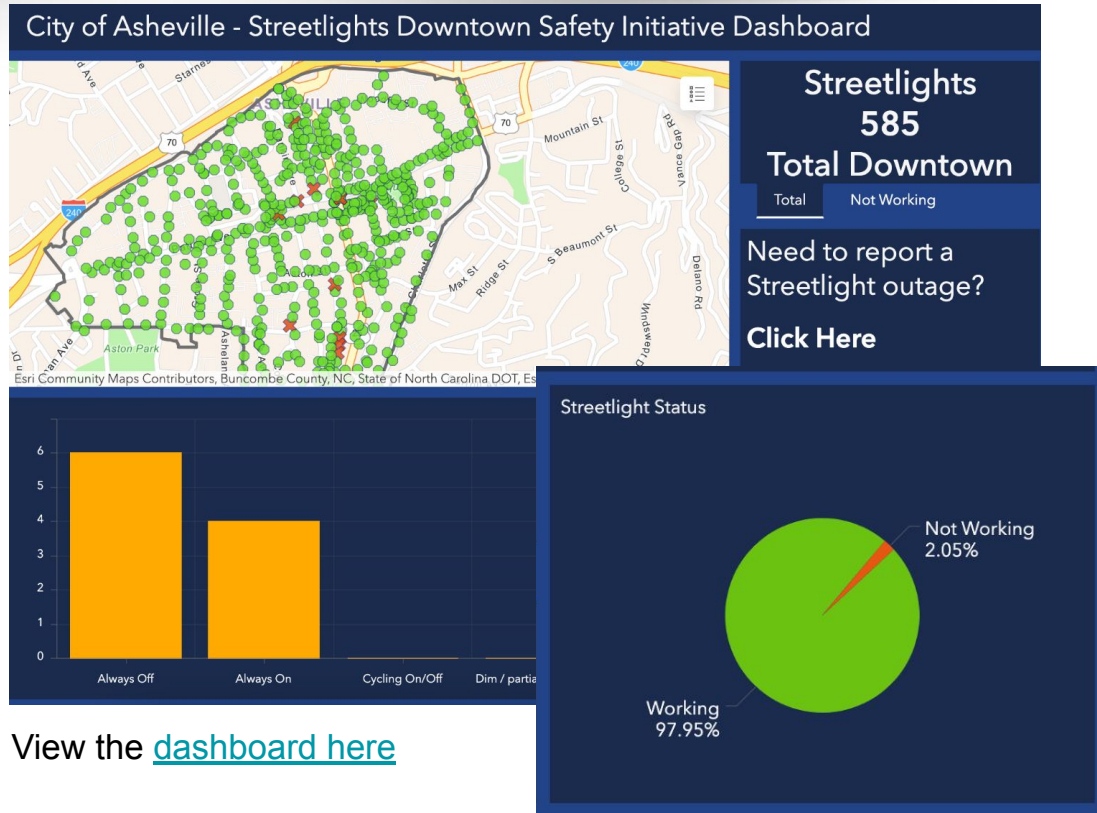


Downtown Parking Garages

- A pressure washing contract has been in effect since May 2023 to clean the stairwells in the parking garages on a monthly basis.
- A 24/7 security contract for the parking garages will be coming to City Council for approval during November 2023.
- Parking Services staff is available to escort customers who are parked in a city parking garage to and from their vehicle to the appropriate entrance/exit by calling (828) 778-3216 which is listed on signs located at entrances and exits.
- A request for bids to install security cameras in HCCA parking garage is currently advertised and bids are due on October 27, 2023.
- The additional parking availability sign for the HCCA parking garage is expected to be installed along Haywood Street by the end of the calendar year.
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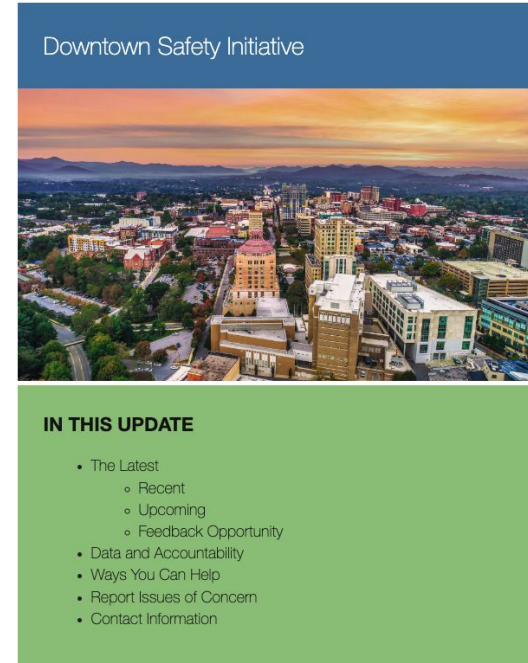
Downtown Street Lighting

- Repair needs and resolutions being tracked on a dashboard (launched during 60 day initiative)
- New Duke fixtures will automatically alert maintenance needs
- **Since July, improved systems of reporting and tracking repairs have continued**



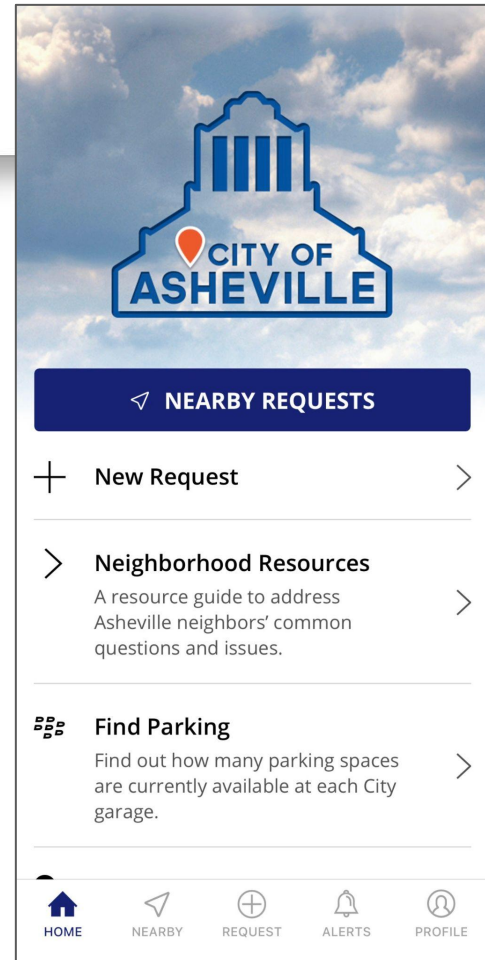
Downtown Communications Enhancements

- **Monthly newsletter** focused on:
 - Progress on the City's downtown safety & cleanliness efforts
 - Opportunities to support initiatives (homelessness, clean-ups, etc.)
 - Guidance on [reporting crime](#), cleanliness issues, concerns
 - Open to the public to [subscribe](#)
- **New Public Input page** that includes:
 - Tracking of services/impacts
 - Latest news on the City's efforts
 - Resources and guidance
- **Regular in-person updates:**
 - Public safety updates to Downtown Commission every other month
 - Environment and Safety Committee updates and discussion



Ways the Community Can Help

- [Report](#) crime and all issues of concern
- Anonymously share tips with APD using [TIP2APD](#)
- [Submit](#) a trespass letter to APD
- Use the [Avl App](#) or contact the city's [Constituent Services Coordinator](#) for city service requests
- [Schedule](#) a security survey with APD and/or utilize Crime Prevention Through Env. Design [concepts](#)
- Register and upgrade security camera systems with the Buncombe County Sheriff's Office [Real Time Intelligence Center](#)



Next Steps

- Downtown 101 Guide
 - Brochure with guidance for downtown businesses/residents on supporting a clean and safe environment
- Education and outreach for solicitation ordinance
- Increased proactive code enforcement of nuisance issues
- Cross-Agency Collaboration
- Support Business Improvement District Exploration
- Detailed Tracking of Services and Impacts
 - To continue tracking, communicating and evaluating impacts
- Cross-Departmental Operational Prioritization for Resource Identification
 - Expansion of Community Responder program
 - Expansion of city clean-up and maintenance crews

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