


Parks & Recreation Board

DEPARTMENT: Parks and Recreation
FROM: Allison Smith, Deputy Director of Recreation
MEETING: June 18, 2026

SUBJECT:

Receive a report and hold a discussion related to recreation programming for inclusivity and accessibility. *(Staff Contact: Allison Smith, Deputy Director of Recreation)*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY AND GOAL(S):

Strategic Priority	Strategic Goal
 <p>Great Place to Live Through Expanded Quality of Life Amenities</p>	<p>4.2 Provide high-quality recreation opportunities, events and facilities for residents 4.3 Provide outstanding cultural, educational and entertainment opportunities</p>

SUMMARY:

The Parks and Recreation Department will provide a comprehensive update on current efforts and initiatives designed to support inclusive and accessible programming for individuals with disabilities and special needs. The report outlines existing programs and event accommodations, including designated special needs programming at community events, sensory-friendly activities, respite spaces, adaptive recreation programs, and partnerships that support individuals with different abilities.

Ongoing and recently implemented offerings include a designated special needs egg hunt at Bunny Daze, a respite area at Boo Bash, sensory hours at the Splash Pad, sensory-friendly family nights at the BRiCk, programs for individuals with different abilities, and weekly partnerships with Burleson ISD Adult Transition students at Russell Farm. Also, the recent addition of a Sensory Time at the Aqua Egg Hunt, which was implemented in direct response to community feedback.

Within the past year, the Recreation team has implemented a Special Needs Cohort, a collaborative group formed to bring together key organizations, departments, and advocates to

align on goals, identify gaps, and explore opportunities for collaboration related to inclusive and accessible city programming. The cohort includes representatives from the Burleson Recreation Department, Burleson ISD, the Center for ASD, and other community partners, with invitations extended to local youth sports organizations.

The group has met on October 28, 2025, March 5, 2026, and April 23, 2026. During these meetings, participants worked to build a shared understanding of the populations being served, identify opportunities for immediate collaboration, explore methods for gathering community input, and discuss strategies to improve communication and outreach so families and individuals are aware of available programs, services, and recreational opportunities. The April 23 meeting included a focused review of Recreation Department programs, facilities, events, and services through the lens of accessibility and inclusion.

Following the April 23 meeting, staff introduced the Special Needs Cohort initiative and its ongoing efforts to the Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities (ADA Committee) on May 27, 2026. The presentation provided an overview of the cohort's purpose, participating organizations, discussion topics, and preliminary findings as the department continues evaluating opportunities to improve accessibility and inclusion across parks, programs, events, and facilities.

The next step in the process is a joint discussion bringing together representatives from the Special Needs Cohort, the Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities, the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, and Parks and Recreation staff. This meeting will provide an opportunity to review findings, discuss identified barriers and service gaps, explore potential solutions and partnerships, and develop a shared understanding of priorities moving forward. Feedback from this collaborative discussion will help inform future recommendations related to accessibility, inclusion, programming, facilities, and services throughout the Parks and Recreation system.

RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

PRIOR ACTION/INPUT (Council, Boards, Citizens):

N/A

REFERENCE:

N/A

FISCAL IMPACT:

Proposed Expenditure/Revenue:

Account Number(s):

Fund:

Account Description:

Procurement Method:

STAFF CONTACT:

Allison Smith
Deputy Director of Recreation
asmith@burlesontx.com
817-426-9629