

2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Novi Parks, Recreation
and Cultural Services





Thank you for your interest in Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services. We're proud to share achievements that enhanced the experiences of our 2025 program participants, park visitors, volunteers, partners and sponsors.

Our accomplishments and customer service priorities are reflected in our core values of Team, Innovation, Commitment, and Trust.

This report is a quick look at the department's successes. As always, we encourage you to reach out with any questions, comments, or suggestions by emailing noviparks@cityofnovi.org or calling 248.347.0400.

*Jeff Muck,
Director, Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services*

trust

AARP TAX AIDE

For more than 40 years, the City of Novi has hosted the AARP Tax-Aide Program, providing free tax preparation assistance to community members. While the majority of participants are retired and have relatively low incomes, the service is open to all residents.

The program operates each Wednesday from February through mid-April. In 2025, a total of 52 volunteers were trained in Novi and served residents at six different locations, five days a week. Demand for the service continued to grow, with 460 appointments scheduled. The Novi site reached full capacity by February 7, nearly a month earlier than in previous years, highlighting the program's ongoing value to the community.



RESIDENT PRIORITY REGISTRATION

Registration for Camp Lakeshore and Camp PowerPlay sold out quickly, as they usually do. In 2025, Resident Priority Registration was implemented to ensure Novi community members had first access to these popular camps. 100% of camp attendees were Novi residents, compared to 85% in 2024. Resident priority registration, held one week before non-residents, will continue for the most popular programs offered by Novi Parks.



NW PARK PRAIRIE RESTORATION

Improvements continued at Northwest Park in July. The two-acre open field at the south end of the park was fully restored to a native Michigan prairie, as envisioned in the park's original conceptual plan. The restoration process included removal of existing vegetation through mowing and targeted herbicide application by an experienced contractor, followed by a permitted controlled burn and re-seeding with Michigan native plants. Prairie restoration enhances habitat, supports biodiversity, and advances the City's long-term sustainability goals for park development.



GIGGLES FOR GAGA BALL

Ella Mae Power Park is home to a new Gaga Ball pit thanks to Eagle Scout Candidate Jack Hoppesch of Troop 777. Jack is a former camper at Camp Lakeshore, then Counselor in Training, and now a Junior Counselor. The PowerPlay campers had a blast using this new park amenity.

innovation

SIZZLING SUMMER ART SERIES – R/C RACEWAY COLLAB

This summer, PRCS introduced an innovative, multi-part program that creatively connected three of Novi's unique resources through art, history, and recreation. The initiative included a hands-on art workshop as part of the Sizzling Summer Series, an exhibition in the Novi Civic Center Atrium Gallery, and a community race day at the R/C Raceway Park. Together, these components raised awareness of Novi's parks, programs, and clubs while celebrating the City's legacy in car racing and manufacturing.

The program engaged 140 participants who designed and built their own 3D paper cars, which were later featured in a public gallery exhibition alongside custom-painted R/C car shells by club members and the historic Novi Special racecar. Selected participants were then invited to bring their designs to life at the R/C Raceway, where club members mentored youth and hosted a race day using their own vehicles. The result was a dynamic, intergenerational experience that blended creativity, education, and play and setting the stage for a program we hope to repeat in the future.





DIWALI FEST

The first-ever Diwali event was held in October and included an opening ceremony, cultural performances, DJ and dancing, vendors, restaurants, and fireworks. The response from the community was overwhelmingly positive and it is estimated that 3,000+ people were in attendance. Plans are underway for the 2026 event to be held in early November.

OLDER ADULTS ARE OUT AND ABOUT

The City of Novi's Older Adult Travel Program has grown by 54% between 2022 and 2024, increasing from 350 to 538 travelers. In partnership with five travel companies and utilizing the City's 14-passenger bus, the program offers a diverse range of domestic and international day and extended trips. Spring and fall travel fairs further enhance program visibility and provide participants with valuable opportunities to meet face-to-face with travel partners. While the program is open to residents age 50 and older, the majority of participants are in their late 70s through early 90s.



NATURE.NURTURE.NOVI AND N3 JR.

Nature.Nurture.Novi (N3) programs offer residents opportunities to explore nature, create, and learn best practices for environmental stewardship. In 2025, nearly 1,400 participants took part in programs ranging from Buzz About Bees and Owl Prowl to perennial exchange, garlic mustard removal, bird watching, and other hands-on experiences.

New in 2025, N3 Jr. programs were introduced to engage the next generation with age-appropriate environmental education. These offerings included dissecting owl pellets, creating art from recycled materials, gardening workshops, and more.



YOUNG ACTORS HAVE A PLACE TO GROW

The partnership with In the Mitten Productions has continued to thrive. Youth productions regularly feature casts of more than 70 actors and achieve ticket sales exceeding 900 seats. Participants range from elementary through high school, and the high level of talent has made leading roles increasingly competitive.

To support program growth and encourage younger performers, a new, smaller-scale production was introduced for students in kindergarten through third grade. The Claw, the spring 2025 production, featured 20 actors and sold 320 tickets. Moving forward, we plan to continue to offer separate productions for older and younger actors twice each year.

BUILDING ON A GOOD FOUNDATION

The Novi Parks Soccer Club serves nearly 1,000 players, from Tiny Tikes through high school-age select travel teams. The club offers spring and fall league play, with some teams also participating in tournaments and winter indoor leagues. Summer camps and programs keep players engaged and in shape during the off-season. New for 2025, three levels of skill and development training, a soccer instruction camp, and a creative skills camp were added.

commitment

PLANNING AHEAD

In January, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) approved the City's five-year Community Recreation Plan. Adoption of this plan is required for municipalities to remain eligible for State and Federal recreation grant funding. The plan was developed using components of the 2020–2024 Strategic Community Recreation and Master Park Plan, along with DNR guidelines for Community Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans.

MAKING A SPLASH

In early 2025, Novi Parks received an Outstanding Park Design Award for Jessica's Splashpad.

Opened in May 2024, Jessica's Splashpad was created as a joyful, inclusive space that honors the memory of Novi resident and FOX 2 meteorologist Jessica Starr-Rose, while also raising awareness about mental health. The splashpad features a cohesive weather theme throughout the site, including the arched entryway bridge, logo and signage, mingling tables and chairs, and interactive water features.

The first season was a resounding success, welcoming more than 14,500 visitors. Following the season, staff conducted an operational debrief and reviewed usage data, which led to several beneficial adjustments for future seasons. These included refined open hours based on peak usage and the addition of a dedicated weather hotline to improve communication with patrons.



VILLA BARR ART PARK ENHANCEMENTS

The Villa Barr Art Park webpage (cityofnovi.org/villabarr) was refreshed and restructured to make it easier for park visitors and prospective artists-in-residence to find information. Staff and the Friends of Villa Barr also agreed to advertise for three local resident artists annually, in addition to the three artists selected to stay in the house for 6–8 weeks. Local resident artists will utilize the Villa Barr studios but will not stay on the property. All residencies are funded by the Novi Parks Foundation. In addition, the two studios were cleaned, reorganized, and partially repainted, creating a more welcoming and functional space for applicants.

OAKLAND COUNTY VETERANS FAIR

The Novi Civic Center was the 2025 host site for a Oakland County Veterans Resource Fair in February. The fair was open to all veterans, active duty, guard and reserves and their families. More than 500 people registered for the event. Attendees received nonperishable food boxes (cars were lined up in the parking lot, reaching 10 Mile Road), and had the opportunity to meet with dozens of representatives from services offered by the state and county.



team

TEAMWORK = DREAMWORK

The Novi Parks team is committed to excellence, both in service to Novi residents and in supporting one another and the parks and recreation profession. In 2025, this commitment was reflected in several professional achievements.

Steve Fellhauer earned the Certified Parks and Recreation Professional (CPRP) designation, demonstrating his dedication to continued professional growth and industry standards.

Director Jeff Muck received the Fellowship Award, the highest individual honor presented by mParks. This award recognizes members who consistently demonstrate significant investment, support, and guidance to fellow professionals. Honorees exemplify the highest level of professionalism within their organizations and throughout the profession.

Several members of the Novi Parks team also lead or serve on statewide committees and shared their expertise at the 2025 mParks Annual Conference and Trade Show through presentations and assistance, contributing to the advancement of the profession across Michigan.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Justin Fischer
 Mayor Pro Tem Laura Marie Casey
 David Staudt
 Brian Smith
 Matt Heintz
 Priya Gurumurthy
 Aaron Martinez

PARKS, RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Jay F. Dooley
 Ryan Joseph
 Swaminathan Gopalakrishnan
 Salene Riggins
 Ebony Bagley
 Charles A. Staab
 Hideki "Harry" Torimoto

our digital reach

