

# News Release

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## City of Durham Announces New Parks and Recreation Director

DURHAM, N.C. – City Manager Tom Bonfield has named Wade Walcutt as the next director of Durham Parks and Recreation (DPR).

Walcutt brings a servant leadership philosophy to the community with high energy and a passion for people, parks, and recreation. His 20 years of parks and recreation experience include organizational leadership, budget and finance management, project management, mentoring team members, creating public/private partnerships, and improving communication and employee culture.

In his most recent position, Walcutt served as executive director of the Cincinnati, Ohio Park Board where he provided executive leadership for a park system comprising of 200 employees, a \$20 million budget, and 10% of the city's land mass which included 5,000+ acres and 60 miles of trails. During his leadership, the organization was recognized by The Trust for Public Land as a Top 10 Park System in the United States. Walcutt worked to improve community-wide access to parks and social services by removing financial barriers to residents. He effectively lobbied for federal funding and acquired \$15 million for the city's riverfront park project with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. He also improved cost recovery by 10% by developing a system-wide reorganization in financial management/controls and park operations while increasing the average annual private donations to over \$1 million to support the parks system.

Prior to this position, Walcutt served as director of the City of Greensboro, N.C. Parks and Recreation Department from 2011 to 2017, where he led a department of 200 employees, a \$18 million budget, and a park system comprised of 8,500 acres and 100 miles of trails. While there, he secured public/private partnerships and sponsorships of over \$25 million in private dollars to leverage public funds allowing for significant capital projects, infrastructure improvements, and expanded park development. He also led a \$12 million LeBauer Park project in the city's downtown through the concept, design, and construction. One of Walcutt's proudest contributions during his tenure was being a part of a public/private collaborative effort to reduce food disparity in the community through parks and recreation.

According to Bonfield, Walcutt's breadth of experience matched Durham's current needs. "We are at a critical time in the life of our city and our Parks and Recreation Department. As we chart a course to re-establish services coming out of the pandemic, and also contemplate how to best serve those in our community who have traditionally been underserved, I am confident Wade has demonstrated the innovation and leadership that make him the best fit for our department," Bonfield said. "Wade's colleagues and staff praised his ability as a listener and his proactive approach toward engaging the community to chart a path for the departments he has led."

Walcutt has also served as a community centers director for the City of Columbus, Ohio from 2005 to 2011 as well as a program director for the City of Westerville, Ohio from 2001 to 2005. Walcutt was nationally recognized in the industry when he was selected to serve on the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Board of Regents as an instructor at the National Supervisors Management School. He has also been recognized by Engaging Local Government Leaders as one of the Top 100 local government influencers in the United States and has been selected by the NRPA as an education presenter along with individual state associations in North Carolina, South Carolina,

Ohio, and Maryland. He was selected as one of only three outstanding young professionals nationwide by the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, and was recognized in the Triad Business Journal's 40 leaders under 40 in North Carolina.

Walcutt, a 1999 graduate of Ohio University with a Bachelor of Science in Parks and Recreation Management, succeeds Rhonda Parker, who retired as director of DPR in February 2020. Walcutt will begin serving in his new role in October 2020.

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101 City Hall Plaza, Second Floor, Durham, NC 27701

919.560.4123

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