

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Yesler Community Center: December 5, 2007

Total Participants: 23 Public, 3 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Comments included the need for Parks and Recreation to have better communication both within the Department and with other agencies, such as SDOT, City Light, and Seattle Public School District. Also, people expressed concern over the way Parks and Recreation gets out information for public meetings. Recommendations included using a variety of media outlets (i.e. local news papers, radio, and television). Desire for better community outreach was also mentioned.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Public Engagement

- Better communication about public meetings
- Earlier and more widespread notice about meetings
- Don't just have website notification, use email addresses more
- Do better outreach, especially to immigrant communities
- Increase updates on public meetings
- Improve access to information about Parks and Recreation
- Work to put what is happening in Parks and Recreation more in the news, especially local newspapers
- More transparency around how Parks and Recreation spends money

Maintenance

- Get rid of invasive species, including blackberries and ivy
- Improve plant pruning
- Re-organize maintenance priorities
- Replace trees that have been removed more quickly

Programs and Services

- Offer more teen oriented activities
- Adopt the Prospect Park complaint model throughout entire Parks and Recreation Department

Parks and Facilities

- Need more outdoor pools
- Need more local pocket parks in south end of city
- Need more green space for children to play
- Prioritize recreation areas for kids over recreation areas for dogs

Staff

- Employ more scientists and professional staff
- Not much growth for staff within Parks and Recreation

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Maintenance

- Improved maintenance responsiveness due to previous bad publicity
- Keeping Parks clean, mowing, graffiti removal

Green Practices

- Recycling and environmental actions

Facilities

- Weather and other emergency shelters
- Community Centers are great assets to communities and are affordable

Programs and Services

- Teaching kids to swim
- Everyone has equal opportunity to participate in programs

Public Engagement

- Providing translation at community meetings

3. What are the issues and challenges that Parks and Recreation will face in the next five years?

Finances

- Lack of funds for maintenance of current property and for acquiring new property
- End of the Parks Levy
- Commercialization in Parks
- The need for Parks and Recreation programs to be more self supportive when it should be working to be more accessible for people with lower incomes

Changing City

- City growth increases stress on Parks and Recreation system-wide
- Lack of land for expansion
- Competing recreation and facilities interests cause a potential threat and conflict

Encroachments

- Encroachments on Lake Washington Boulevard
- Parks and Recreation, as well as other city departments, show favoritism to the rich regarding encroachments

Maintenance

- Invasive plants are a threat to parks and greenbelts
- Vegetation is being damaged due to old age, disease, weather and pollution, Parks and Recreation needs to groom them back to a well state

Partnerships

- Poor coordination with other city departments (SDOT, City Light)

- Seattle Public School District makes Parks and Recreation's job difficult
- Partnerships that may not be beneficial are forced upon Parks and Recreation
- Seattle Parks Foundation
- City departments don't hold Parks and Recreation property in high regard

Public Engagement

- Parks and Recreation needs to repair and improve relationships with communities
- Work with community groups to find better ways to use facilities
- Public perception of park land and facilities, the Parks and Recreation Department, and Seattle City government
- Parks and Recreation does not value volunteers

Public Safety

- Downtown parks are perceived as being unsafe
- Dress code for downtown parks

Organizational

- Lack of central vision or goals; programs and services are not prioritized
- Parks and Recreation hierarchy is in disarray

Access

- Limited parking at community centers
- It is difficult to get to parks

4. What are the emerging trends that will drive how Parks and Recreation does business over the next five years?

Public Engagement

- Outreach and community participation
- Improve and increase available information about the recreation opportunities offered each park, including mapping by recreation opportunity and by park
- Improve marketing
- There is potential for volunteers to do much more for Parks and Recreation
- Parks Advisory Councils

Programs and Services

- Respond to the different needs of different communities
- Look to improving the health of children; work to get children and seniors active
- Analyze demographic trends to identify new and cutting-edge recreation trends to get kids moving
- Look at having new urban programs
- Changing demographics due to aging population means there is a need for more/better senior programs
- ***Community Vision for Parks***
- Create a long term vision and goals, with input from everyone
- Look at other parks in the U.S. and the world to identify best practices

Parks and Facilities

- Landscapes provide users with great opportunities
- Increase historical information in parks, including pictures and written information about the history of the park, facilities, and surrounding neighborhoods
- Off-leash dog areas
- Overcrowding and use conflicts are a problem at Green Lake and on the Burke-Gilman Trail

Partnerships

- Parks could partner with other departments to improve the ease of getting from one park to another
- Work with the Seattle Public School District to provide student service learning projects for volunteer hours

Environment

- Global warming
- Demonstrate gardening drought plantings (xeriscapes) that people could visit in local neighborhood parks

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Finances

- Have another Parks levy to improve and enhance Parks and Recreation and include a Pro Parks above and beyond vision

Partnerships

- More cohesion with other city departments including better networking and communication across the City; create a “one stop shopping” experience
- Better collaboration with school districts, universities, other organizations

Public Engagement

- Communities coming together
- More information to the public and mass media about Parks and Recreation programs, meetings, etc.
- Improve communication with the public

Parks and Facilities

- Embrace natural wildlife in Parks
- Make parks a place where people want to go through high maintenance standards and emphasis on beauty
- Obtain surplus Seattle Public School District properties
- Improve access to parks, especially big parks, and facilities for all people
- A system of parks that balances different recreation needs

Programs and Services

- Parks and Recreation should provide spaces and activities; a place to learn

Other

- Do not call it a strategic plan

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- Mt Baker rowing center has a good staff