

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Alki Community Center: December 5, 2007

Total Participants: 22 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Maintenance: Comments included a need to focus on long term planning to ensure that existing aging facilities, new facilities, and infrastructures receive adequate resources dedicated for maintenance. People seem to feel that Parks and Recreation lacks funding and expertise to maintain existing facilities at acceptable levels. Before adding additional facilities or parks, the needs of existing ones should be met. The group felt the parks and trails were well maintained.

Communication: Comments focused on both communications from the public to Parks and Recreation and from Parks and Recreation to the public. This meeting was cited as an example of how things are done well. Finding more creative ways to get input from the public was a theme. They would like to see more venues to both input and receive information along with more frequent updates. They saw a role for Parks and Recreation as a lead agency during natural disasters.

Programs: Participants use a variety of programs and appreciate the range of classes offered. The specialized classes and programs (Senior Programs, special populations programs, rowing, sailing and tennis) were mentioned as an asset to the community. Programs need to be designed to match the specific communities and avoid stereotypes. To keep the community involved, the participants suggested keeping programs affordable, maintaining low cost programs, and providing a broad spectrum of programs. Keeping building use accessible to the public is important.

Community Building Opportunities: This meeting reflected a deep respect for community and the role of Parks and Recreation in achieving this. The public believe a primary function of parks facilities and staff is to build and support community. Volunteer efforts create stewardship and community. Methods to attract, train, and involve all the public in volunteer efforts should be a priority. The group emphasized a need to make this an ongoing, living effort under constant review to include changes in demographics and outside impacts to the community.

Safety/Security: The parks need to be well lit and aren't. Park rangers or presence is needed to deter vandalism, especially in larger parks. Some parks do not provide safe ADA access; this should be evaluated across the system as our population ages.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Marketing

- Word of Mouth
- E-mail
- Flyers

Maintenance

- Timely maintenance
- If you can't maintain it, don't operate it
- Comfort stations/bathrooms are poor across the Parks and Recreation system
- Evaluate and upgrade aging systems
- Collaborate and involve partners (schools, parks, and other departments)
- Areas for Parks and Recreation to consider:
 - Staff
 - Expertise
 - Planning
 - Budget
 - Green buildings
 - Documented follow through
- Parks and Recreation needs a less cumbersome, more efficient and timely public process for maintenance

Public Engagement

- Upgrade the existing website
- Update the website more frequently
- More venues to access information
- Inventory communication tools and opportunities to become involved
- Better facilitation of volunteer processes
- Provide opportunities to communicate consistently throughout the City
- Build team, respect, and understanding
- Share what Parks and Recreation does more creatively, including work orders and budget decisions and impacts

Parks and Facilities

- Parks and Recreation doesn't do skateparks—it should
- Pro Parks spending
- Some facilities still need upgrades
- Continue to seek funds
- Leadership needed on site for large parks
 - Example: Park Rangers
 - Benefits: on site management

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Programs and Services

- Senior Programs
- Children, youth ,childcare, summer programs
- Community picnics and annual events; for example: Alki Picnic, Old Timers' Picnic
- Range of classes—content, age specific
- Special populations programs, especially at the South West Community Center
- Large range of specialty programs; for example: tennis/rowing, sailing, etc

Landscaping and Facilities

- Flower beds, annual color
- Number of community centers
- Sharing space with schools/partners

Public Engagement

- Citizen involvement, specifically through the Advisory Councils
- Support for volunteer projects
- Soliciting community input

Staff

- Great Staff

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

Finances

- Costs—need money to maintain system
- Prioritize and state Parks and Recreation’s mission
- Let go of lower priorities
- Look at how special interests compete for funding
- Look at programs and let some programs go
- Parks and Recreation should focus on:
 - Equipment
 - Paint
 - Programs

Safety and Security

- Walking in parks
- Lighting/security is lacking
- Patrol City-wide to control vandalism in parks and facilities
- Parks and Recreation needs a plan for natural disasters and needs to communicate that plan to the public

Parks and Facilities

- Need to provide venues for specific activities, including skateparks
- Improper use/congestion in parks
- There is not enough parking
 - Parks and Recreation could encourage public transportation as alternative by providing bus routes and other alternatives to driving
- Identify needs and prioritize long term issues for older facilities
- Increase use of Parks and Recreation parks and facilities including increasing diversity of people and variety of uses

Public Engagement

- Small or special interest groups

- When an issue comes up, perform more outreach for opinions

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

Community

- Volunteer manpower
- Parks and Recreation needs to demonstrate desire and commit time to work together with the community on a long term vision
- Parks and Recreation needs a deliberate focused approach to closer connections
- Bring neighbors together to build community
- Teach the community what it takes to build parks
- Provide a vision for a future world and give youth positive classes, views, and opportunities
- Parks and Recreation should demonstrate leadership in planning and education to our citizens of Seattle for shelter opportunities

Environment

- Land acquisition to preserve for future generations
- Available information on environmental change
- Plan for rising water
- Teach children to be involved in future of our planet and how we impact it

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Land Acquisition and Development

- Continue Olmsted's' vision
- Make community centers anchors in the community
- Turn all football fields to soccer fields
- Skatepark in every neighborhood
- Small parks throughout the City
- Use improved technology to mix use and increase use; for example: improved outdoor sound systems that reduce noise impact to neighbors

Programs and Services

- Recreation geared to aging community
- Programs that reflect changing demographics
- Regional focus – providers come together to “ hub” communities
- Put infrastructure in place to promote and sustain healthy lifestyles and bike transportation
- Offer intergenerational programs
- Promote healthy lifestyles through education

Fee and Pricing Policies

- Parks and Recreation is a leveler of society; charging for room space is not a good direction
 - Examine what Parks and Recreation can charge for private groups
- Provide free or affordable recreation; currently taking a family swimming is cost prohibitive

Public Engagement

- Get everyone involved in volunteer programs; make volunteer programs more appealing
 - Financial payback or benefits as well as the intrinsic payback of increased recognition
- Accountability for promises, especially related to the budget and community

Community Vision for Parks

- Parks and Recreation's vision should follow the direction of communities
 - Maintain flexibility in vision

Partnerships

- Continue partnership with the Seattle Public School District
 - Keep it seamless from the patrons' point of view
 - Shared building use increases public benefit
 - Parks and Recreation should continue to work proactively with the school district to keep properties for public use, recreation, and education—not private use

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects:

- The trails at Schmitz Park need to be paved for ADA access
- Vehicle access for ADA is needed
- The HVAC system at Alki needs maintenance or replacement
- Repair exhaust fans at Alki CC
- Lifeguards are needed back on beaches, specifically Alki Beach