

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Ballard Community Center: November 29, 2007

Total Participants: 14 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

The major themes at this meeting were: open space, urban horticulture, alternative sports participation, and Discovery Park issues.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Development of Services and Programs

- Preserve open space land for urban farming
- Learning from agriculture, for example P-patches, and integrating with parks to generate interest
- Passive park users don't have the same voice as organized user groups
- Parks should make land acquisition a priority, while also changing the Department's view on what constitutes an "official" park
- Look at small parcels for developing small pocket and neighborhood parks
- There needs to be some analysis of public benefit from private lands—e.g. Parks should look at all private lands that are being subdivided and acquiring those instead of letting them be developed
- Tree protection ordinance
- Street-ends and small pedestrian areas need more funding and stronger visibility; Parks and Recreation should work with SDOT for public access in compliance with the Shoreline Management Act

Programming

- Programming should reflect current population needs and demands, specifically there should be expanded hours for senior populations
- There are currently scheduling conflicts and a need for more transparency
 - Specifically, there are conflicts around having field available when scheduled and the need for user ability to see what's scheduled when
 - Parks and Recreation should post schedule times online or on site at a kiosk

Urban Forestry and Species Diversity

- Urban forestry should be a priority to protect, preserve and enhance tree canopy
- Look at the Green Seattle partnership and Ground Swell partnerships
- Develop an integrated plan for long-term invasive species removal
- Need to explore and utilize more diverse selection of large tree plantings
- Inspire more creativity in planting
- Group park facilities and crews via location and water shed – ecological functions, wildlife corridors – all should be connected

Maintenance

- Volunteers and graffiti removal
- Recycling containers in every park
- The Discovery Park Chapel needs funding for restoration

Marketing

- Invite and reach out to the public for input on park development and planning
- Sensitivity to diversity—the staff, programming, etc should reflect changing demographics
- Youth involvement in skatepark planning
- Need to reach out to kids for planning and development through other venues, including online, youtube, and via existing facilities
- Communicate to different user groups—lacrosse, skateboarders, on-site kiosks

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Programs and Services

- Community Center programming
- Pools allow for individual, relaxed swim program
- Balancing interests of different user groups

Facilities

- Field maintenance
- Little Jewels - Kubota Gardens, Camp Long, Lilly ponds

Staff

- Fantastic park system and staff that take on issues, such as adopt-a-park, park stewards

3. What are the threats facing Parks and Recreation?

Funding

- Lack of funding
- Parks and Recreation should pursue fundraising events, such as runs, and the Community Centers should partner with Advisory Councils for fundraising
- Parks should be treated as an essential public service—consider designating with funding and a park district
- A new ProParks levy

Land and Maintenance

- Seattle has a finite land base that restricts park capacity
- Invasive weeds are problematic
- Limited financial resources and available land result in competition with low income housing

Community

- Integrating parks with community to create connections
- Increasing density and dogs are putting demands on services and programs. Parks should be a refuge

Safety

- Inappropriate use of large parks and weak police presence results in illegal activity, including trash, drugs, drinking, and loud music
- The Park Ranger program should be expanded

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

Community

- Parks should work in partnership with other agencies in an integrated way so that all stakeholders and agencies work together to link public spaces
- Citizen involvement in policy decisions and with ARC and Community Councils

Facilities

- Parks should plan to purchase as much land as possible
- Parks should purchase the Discovery Park houses and convert the General's house into a museum
- Parks should be actively planting and developing green canopy to counter hot-house affects and to promote sustainability
- Seattle City Light properties should be transferred to Parks and developed into multi-use sites and as solar collector sites given the infrastructure

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Facilities

- Parks are a small oasis for mental health
- Activate the spaces
- Utilize and preserve green natural areas in urban environments
- Neighborhood playgrounds
- Large in-door recreation center – with a running track, swimming pools and fields – a fit for the NW winter weather
- Complete the Olmsted plan
- Larger plant nursery
- Swimming pools with zero depth entry

Outreach

- More regional work with salmon
- More help with neighborhood, volunteers and grant writing