

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Garfield Community Center: November 26, 2007

Total Participants: 20 Public, 7 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Value and importance of open space and parks was emphasized by many of the citizens. The question responses indicated Seattle Parks and Recreation should set a strong environmental stewardship message through how we care for our parks. Also, the participants liked the Pro Parks Levy funding support and generally expressed that Parks and Recreation staff did a good job and needed additional funding to better serve the public.

Generally, the citizens felt improved program and facility marketing was needed, using multiple media communication methods. They were concerned about commercialization of parks system and private business having higher priority over public needs.

The group participating largely consisted of parks users (park volunteers, community center advisory council members, youth athletic program volunteers and swimming pool users). Non-users were not represented at the meeting.

Comments about Strategic Action Plan public input:

- The online survey does not allow enough space for complete comments.
- The online survey does not let the viewer see the whole survey document – prefer this capability as opposed to completing one section at a time and then advancing.
- Will Parks staff or consultant email Strategic Action Plan meeting participants the results of all the feedback given at the 30 plus meetings? Will a listserv be established to provide Strategic Action Plan process updates?

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Public Engagement

- More power to the communities over the larger organizations (ex. Parks Foundation, Coyote)
- Comprehensive publication of all programs throughout the City
- Better community outreach and inclusiveness – identify mechanisms for this
- Use televisions to show programs in Community Centers and connect to web site (marketing idea)
- Better communication with the public
- Clear communication that Community Centers are a part of Seattle Parks & Rec.
- Parks response to calls from concerned citizens identifying park maintenance need
- Park's staff needs to be responsive to citizens

Programs and Services

- Provide childcare during program activities
- More programs in the evening for families – intergenerational programs (indoor for winter/outdoor for summer – ex. Movies, music, children’s events)
- Improve amount of time available for time in pools and also for swim teams – lower cost for swim teams, so more kids can swim
- Hours of Operation need to expand – open Centers on mornings and weekends
- Better relationship with Seattle Public Schools on Joint Use management – coordination to maximize use of facilities
- Address volunteer participation in park maintenance work that can be hazardous

Finances

- More oversight on how money is spent
- Keep businesses out of parks and greatly increase their rental fees and limit time usage.

Parks and Facilities

- More advocacy for smaller parks
- Improve swimming pools
- Plant more trees
- Hire more gardeners
- Increase natural area crews
- Provide more plants to park areas
- Future strategy for park and open space acquisition – what are the next steps for continued progress
- Enforcement of off-leash parks sites – improve control of off-leash users
- Need park restrooms open year round for visitors use
- Need park field houses open and useable year round for citizen use

Maintenance

- Get rid of mowers / blowers – explore the use of goats
- Need to increase tree health assessment for safety and tree preventative maintenance
- Involve park volunteers in annual park walk-throughs to assess maintenance needs of park

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Finances

- Operate on a miniscule/tiny budget

Public Engagement

- Active Advisory Councils
- East Central Parks crew is very responsive to citizens
- Responsive to park volunteer group requests for supplies/equipment supporting volunteer work parties
- Good job of seeking public input/feedback
- Good signage to let citizens know about park projects

Programs and Services

- Lifelong recreation

- Intergenerational programs
- Art programs in conjunction with Pratt and other organizations – do more of these

Parks and Facilities

- Running trails through parks – Discovery, Seward, etc.
- Range – Diversity of facilities
- Good at quickly responding to graffiti removal
- Opening summer wading pools for families – very popular and well used – good staff
- Pro Parks acquisition program was well done – conducting strategic analysis of open space needs

Staff

- Contracting with workers who know native plants
- Good at improving neighborhood playgrounds – good communication with Parks Project Managers and neighborhood steering committee – staff support is excellent

3. What are the threats facing Parks and Recreation?

Finances

- Money – funding (x2)

Programs and Services

- Demand for more P-Patches
- Coordination between Community Centers and Senior Centers
- Balancing needs of all age and ethnic groups and programs
- Coordination with Metro bus service to Parks facilities (ex, Seward Park)
- Participation access – financial barrier to participation for low income – affordable to all families
- Support youth fitness and general youth programming
- Insurance costs for program participants
- Improved bus access to parks, community centers, pools, other facilities
- Shuttle service in larger parks for visitors (ex. Discovery Park, Seward Park, Lake Washington Blvd.)

Maintenance

- Maintenance of buildings
- Maintaining borders, boundaries and boulevards

Public Engagement

- Better outreach to individuals and businesses
- Sharing information with the powers that be (telling our story – benefits of parks & rec.)

Parks and Facilities

- Need good plan for the Parks and Recreation system to respond to future population growth in Seattle
- City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan did not include open space needs (including pocket parks), only focused on land use issues
- Need to look at equitable distribution of parks and open space
- Demand for trails, pathways for walking
- Parking for park visitors

Green Practices

- Increasing trees to help with global warming
- Having the Mayor and City Council be supportive of “green”

4. What are the opportunities for Parks and Recreation?

Finances

- Charge developers more
- Rising cost of land
- Facilities should not pay for themselves
- Voter resistance to taxation

Public Engagement

- Marketing and outreach
- Reach more volunteers and those who are willing to volunteer
- Better use of education and higher learning
- Coordinated communication and marketing
- Cultural expression in parks system – ex. Having park features that tell the story of our history, the people (knowing our community’s history and recognition of the past contributes to community/neighborhood identity – ex. Homer Harris Park)
- Inclusiveness – reaching out to ethnic communities
- Younger generation needs to learn about other citizens and their contribution to their community and how it benefits them
- Park features that tell the story of the park, community center, pool, etc.

Parks and Facilities

- Providing open space
- Activity specific facilities – weight lifting facility
- Aquatic activity specific facilities – Olympic sized Pool, wake board water park
- Global warming – how can parks act to help reduce impact?

Programs and Services

- Increased need for citizens to engage in health and fitness activities
- Aging population
- Desire for building community
- Flexibility to respond to changing needs in youth athletic programs and field scheduling
- Greater density of population
- There has been an increase in Seniors and disabled populations

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Programs and Services

- Require volunteer hours from high school and middle school students per year—percent of hours in parks and schools

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- Innovative mechanism for volunteering (high school) – marketing of this volunteer program – lots of different experiences
- GPS classes
- More cultural programs – music, celebrations, etc.
- Investing in our youth to develop and grow into positive/productive citizens

Parks and Facilities

- To build new pools – Canadian version (wave pool, etc)
- Better use between Parks and School use of pools
- Revisit School/Parks Agreement
- Parks in SoDo District – well planned
- Invasive plant free – no more ivy, blackberries, etc. (x2)
- Large evergreen trees everywhere possible
- City groups and organizations using fields have priority over outside of city groups
- New playfields
- Improved recycling
- Integrated technology with Parks
- Cool gadgets in parks
- Using incarcerated labor force in parks or those who need to do community service
- A place for families to come
- Connection to nature/natural environment
- More facilities for specific sport/recreational activity – specialized facilities
- Safe parks parents can trust
- Reforestation of Seattle
- Open streams – increasing restoration and day lighting
- Opportunities for low impact recreation
- Increase bike trails
- Acquire new space for dog off-leash parks
- Well cared for park facilities

Finances

- Increased money – funding
- Another Pro Parks levy

Public Engagement

- Strong outreach effort to inform citizens about parks and recreation opportunities – improve marketing
- Parks and open space are critical to our community – they are a necessity, not a luxury

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- Keep hanger at Magnuson/Sand Point – don't turn it over to Arena Sports
- Amy Yee Tennis Center is well maintained and well staffed
- Good Lifeguard staff at Madrona Beach – excellent public safety