

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Green Lake Community Center: December 1, 2007

Total Participants: 27 Public, 6 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Overall, the participants identified important issues and used specific examples from Green Lake Park. There were many comments that addressed a need for more park land, and, specifically, more natural, passive open space that is not dedicated to organized sports. There were conflicting comments about the need for organized and unorganized facilities. As the City grows and becomes denser, Parks and Recreation needs will also increase. More programming of existing facilities that reflects changing demographics is crucial to meet community demands. Rethinking the traditional Parks services provision model and establishing non-traditional partnerships will be cost effective and efficient, but Parks should not be commercialized. Improving the quality of the information Parks provides on the website, field scheduling, and meeting notices are important.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Parks and Facilities

- Need more all-weather turf fields
- Need more open space, passive use areas like Green Lake
- Increase passive space and reduce concrete, asphalt, and artificial turf
- The pools are dated and overused
- An aging population is putting more demand on pools. There are not enough 25-50 meter pools to meet the demand. Organized teams use a lot of the time that the pools are open
- Maintain current parks rather than develop new parks
- Need more passive recreation and less pavement

Scheduling

- Field use and facility scheduling is archaic, inefficient, and not transparent
- Scheduling is difficult. It would be helpful to have a list of available fields rather than to ask for the availability of each individual field
- The field schedules are not available on-line

Public Engagement

- Parks meetings are held to take public input, but there is no effort to ask where people stand on an issue and give weight to that input when making decisions. Instead, Parks administration decides everything. There are instances where input is not taken into account at all
- The general public is unsure what “Strategic Action Plan” means. The notice for the meetings was unclear about what the meetings were about

Finances

- Commercialization of parks is offensive—we are all parks owners

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Staff

- Very helpful, friendly staff
- Capital projects staff are extremely competent and get jobs done and on budget, especially compared to Seattle Schools

Parks and Facilities

- Recent field improvements seem well thought-out and executed. For Example: Magnuson fields that allow multiple users at once. Do that in other areas
- Makes underutilized areas more functional
- Pools are run very well
- Grounds keeping

Public Engagement

- Engaging people and allowing input to Parks and Recreation. It is the only place in the country where community members can serve on Advisory Councils and help with the centers (ex: programming, toys purchases, ping pong club, pool spinner). The membership is open on all Advisory Councils
- Announcements that are sent for all projects—public involvement notices are regularly sent for all sorts of activities.

Programs and Services

- Community center programs are cost effective and affordable.
- They are a huge benefit; there are programs for all kids

3. What are the threats facing Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Increasing density and population use of existing facilities
- Figuring out ways to deal with neighborhoods bordering on parks: issues such as light, noise, parking, and that the public is shut out of using parks for organized use
- Park land is finite. Conversion to specific uses will affect passive areas, natural areas, and open space. How much land has not been converted or developed for special uses?
- No more park land than what we have now
- No more buildings should be built or fields developed in existing parkland, no turf conversion to reduce open space
- If more development is wanted, then more acquisition is necessary—keep the open space we have
- Destruction of the natural aesthetics of parks
- Don't go into open space and natural areas to develop ball fields—put them in underdeveloped/underused parts of parks
- Loss of areas to have unstructured play. As population grows, we will lose natural and open space areas and there will be no place to walk, hear the birds sing, and wander through the woods
- There is a lot of crime in parks and that will get worse as density increases
- The health of natural areas to parks. For example: alley of trees along Green Lake. We should be looking at planned replacement so we don't lose the resource—they could be part of a Vegetation Management Plan

- Anti-fields is not anti-child. Need areas to just run and play unorganized sports (pick up games)

Finances

- Lack of funding
- More usage at parks will require more funding
- Parks administration looking for income not conducive to public parks. For example: privatization at Magnuson.
- Precious, limited space being turned over to private concerns—pressures to maximize profits will affect parks
- Park land for private users

Programs and Services

- Need an equitable way to serve all users and in various ways
- Organized sports are not the “bad guy.” Kids need to participate—don’t shut kids out of parks (Sometimes sports team kids have to be bussed to Tukwila to get a field.).
- There is an obesity issue and Parks needs to provide facilities

Public Engagement

- Voices are heard are often the negative ones only. Very vocal and often overpower other’s views

4. What are the opportunities for Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Help address open space issues
- Acquisition of more park land
- An aquatics center is needed and more outdoor lap swim pools
- Need a world-class pool facility
- Open water swimming facility is needed
- Maximize the Joint Athletic Field Development Plan. Tap into the resources that we have—schools rental rate for fields is higher than Parks
- Missed opportunity for Parks facilities to maintain existing facilities
- Better use of existing facilities as they are currently closed one day a week, and on holidays
- Pool schedule should not be cast in stone—adjust it by looking at hours/schedules
- Parks should obtain old, empty buildings such as the roller rink in White Center and convert them to indoor fields
- More swimming to meet the unmet demand—both outdoor and indoor facilities
- Waterfront: Parks should have a role in the future of the waterfront
- Small scale gathering spots throughout the City help with community-building. For example: in New York, handball courts are all over the city, and they are used for that sport, bocce, community events, and other mixed uses—they offer eyes on the community and help with social development
- Green spaces around light rail stations
- Acquire land, military bases, reservoir lids, and more area to use for park land
- More artificial turf is a priority
- Sustainable technology in the coming years

Partnerships

- Reach out to health center providers

- Involve college students in development to parks management decision-making
- An elderly cohort is developing and there will be enormous numbers in the north end of Seattle—reprogramming budgets, activities and looking outside our own facilities to provide services. For example: Senior center would partner with an existing center
- Also, could be done with schools—keep trying if the initial partnerships fail and make it work—work with existing school providers
- More public/private partnerships. Field-naming with corporate name—could find beneficial partnerships

Programs and Services

- Teenage son was empowered by the life guarding class. Other opportunities such as trail building, keeping trails safe would be good. Pay a stipend—it would be a teen summer employment program
- Middle school and high school community service at parks to contribute to community—could be coordinated with the School District
- Closer work with School District to open gyms for intramural sports, drop-in sports—offer times after school and other times, for both kids and adults

Public Engagement

- Create an ongoing dialogue. Hope Tim Gallagher will cause Parks personnel to reinvent themselves to engage the public, etc—new beginning

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Public Engagement

- Accessibility to information on-line—accessible maps of parks, scheduling information, and special events
- Parks dialogues with all parties; connectivity
- Tim’s visit to Yosemite where he observed the Park’s vision was abandoned to community interests—adopt a vision and stick to it; sustain our lives
- Multi-cultural system—more interaction with all in parks
- More “bridging functions” for more diversity in parks. For example: Colman Park path leading to the waterfront and pool is a hub on multi-cultural convergence
- Reach out to other city agencies. For example: animal control in parks

Parks and Facilities

- More localized parks activities and “hubbing”
- Connectivity of green spaces that is accessible to runners, bicyclists, walkers, strollers
- Return to the Olmsted Plan (x2)
- Diversity and modernizing public parks usage
- Plots of land like urban farms, more p-patches, etc.
- More picnic areas, including fire pits
- King County parks
- Look beyond our own properties. Parks and Recreation for City, not just our own property. For example, tree planting on Seattle Department of Transportation parking strips—parks should be involved and not just for programming

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- Parks leadership for different ways of providing open space. For example: private buildings downtown with mandatory open space—what is really being done with it?
- Think of the whole city as a park—play, work, live
- Growth Management Act levels of service. King County UPS Park (Pioneer Sq.)—the sound of water erases the intensity of neighborhood
- Program facilities. For example: Green Lake is an underused facility, the more users at a park, the safer it will be
- Parks that feel safe and quiet. Funding for Parks Department for security—same as other departments

Land use and Development

- Convertible uses for park land. For example: tennis on parking lots
- Manage special multiple uses of our existing spaces
- Development mitigation for parks contribution of land, money
- Establish “Guerilla Parks” like NYC—reuse vacant, unused parcels; use spaces creatively
- Unused areas for parks even if for 5-10 years, low cost park development
- Mitigation using Transfer Development Rights, apply to parks
- Use transit stations excess land for staging areas, etc. for parks
- More opportunities for acquisition—use abandoned power stations slated for housing now, but what about Parks?
- Need for creative use of programming and facilities. Don’t lose places to be in nature through inattention of development of adjacent uses

Programs and Services

- Don’t lose special places. For example: revisit Green Lake motor boats, activities on weekends—avoid programs that erode, diminish, and degrade parks
- Changing culture—missing unorganized time for kids. For example: city kids in the woods need to readjust in 3-4 days to figure out what to do when not scheduled—don’t need a program for everything, unstructured play is important
- Work more with Metro to improve bus access to parks, especially on the west side of Seattle. For example: Golden Gardens

Green Practices

- Sustainability in all aspects of Parks—“Green Parks and Recreation”
- Sustainable green space and organized spaces. Designate areas for each in the long term master plan.
- Keep an eye on the vision—be aware of incremental changes and the cumulative effects of the small changes

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- The Bathhouse Theater needs rehabilitation
- A new community center at Green Lake is needed. The Park is high use and is a park gem in Seattle. There is significant potential for use with rentals, meetings, and parties. Preserve the historic building in some way
- Need more cross walks into Green Lake Park
- Not enough parking at Green Lake Park—It also has neighborhood impacts too
- Lower Woodland Play Field is empty on weekends and should be scheduled more in the daytimes—evenings the fields are busiest and are no longer family-friendly

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- Green Lake Park is kept very clean
- Green Lake is mowed often
- Green Lake has areas like the Aqua Theater that has trucks parked on it and is congested, and things are on the lake, and “improvements” have been shoddy—look at the whole park, protect it and don’t spoil it
- Improve the outer path at Green Lake
- More effort to maintain the Bathhouse Theater, Magnuson Bathhouse
- Green Lake quality is important—alum treatment has worked