

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Hiawatha Community Center: December 4, 2007

Total Participants: 9 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Maintenance

- Concern about Athletic Field Maintenance not being adequate, and what should be the priority use of the fields
- Concerns about continuing to add assets without funds to maintain the assets

Parks and Facilities

- Lack Availability of swimming facilities in certain parts of the city
- Advocating increasing stewardship of the environment and the continued use of native plants, while promoting the "wildness" of our open space

Public Engagement

- Need for better techniques to get out Parks and Recreation's message to users and non-users about activities, programs, Parks, and facilities
- Concern about the future; people becoming apathetic about parks and recreation and tax payers not supporting the programs and activities, and resources to sustain the quality
- Building capacity and expertise within the staff to deal with difficult future issues.
- Parks and the Schools having a real opportunity to work together more strategically to meet the public's recreation needs

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Parks and Facilities

- There should be Photo sensors (not timers) on lights / and irrigation equip.
- Resolve skatepark issue – a lot of misuse of parks by skateboarders
- Better coordination between working groups of different areas of Seattle Parks and Recreation Department (compliment each others work)
- Restroom Facilities – Clean, but rusty and discolored, not inviting, closures, etc
- Create an Oasis in the urban area to battle the concrete jungle
- Availability of swim facilities (location & crowded lessons, etc)
- Hard to find public swim times, especially when holidays & out-of-school time
- Recreation Facilities closed during holidays; they need to be open on Holidays
- Condition of athletic fields is poor – hard to know where to go for improvements. For example: when there is a problem with EC Hughes field drainage, the response from maintenance, staff is "spotty"
- Establish priorities for local community to use athletic fields in neighborhoods above organizations that come from some other community
- Bathrooms should be open year around, Parks are used year round (x2)

Public Engagement

- Improve communication and decrease conflict
- Work with the public to protect the “wildness” (protect and restore) make good stewards
- Communication relating to sites (ex: Major Maintenance)
- Grounds maintenance not taking care of the fields, not being served as a customer—should be on Web
- Hard to navigate Web for specifics; tagging information concerned with a particular park or site and linking it—having information in the most logical space on the website
- Broad communication to public, regarding Parks and Recreation “message”, need more than website – target specific areas of need, for example, teens—mascot? Parks and Recreation Department needs to think more broadly about how to get out their message (marketing)
- Certain athletic leagues are treated as “customers” and need service above others

Security

- Amount of security in parks

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Staff

- Heroes are the Gardeners; they do an outstanding job
- Heroes are staff at Community Centers – do a great job, it is good to see the smiles on staff faces

Parks and Facilities

- Pleased that there has been a focus on native plants—keep focus on native flora
- There is an appreciation of what Langston Hughes does
- Creativity at Community Centers & Pools. For example: the special swimming program for Muslim women
- “Park Rich,” unique places, maintenance of park are a plus

Programs and Services

- Diversity in programming and activities are a plus
- Don’t abandon what you do well, for example: Learn to Swim voucher

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

Parks and Facilities

- Increasing density of dog off-leash areas
- Global warming, threatening the habitat
- Islands of habitat further disconnected by Urban sprawl from other open spaces

Finances

- Competition for limited dollars for maintaining staff and facilities
- Parks has a lot of assets on the operating side and capital side. It’s harder to maintain and reinvest in assets. Dollar value is decreasing. Harder to maintain what we have, let alone add to it - need vision, but need to maintain

- Rising costs

Public Engagement

- Letting people know about emergency shelters – people need to feel comfortable, regarding where to go
- Easy to take Park for granted, afraid of people becoming apathetic about Parks and Recreation, becoming complacent; lethargic attitude about our assets

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

Parks and Facilities

- Acquire additional sites by Partnering w/business community, and other governments and other organizations to get things done. i.e. Marymoor Park, City of Redmond, and business community
- Work closer with other groups and other City departments to achieve Park infrastructure to help accomplish Community Urban Villages and off-leash areas for pets
- Re-look at School / Park Agreement for users – not make so confusing and/or determine which property is which
- More and better off-leash areas without sacrificing wild spaces, better managed off-leash areas

Programs and Services

- Increase appreciation of environment: Be more involved in the wild fauna, etc., focus on what's there, keep invasiveness at a minimum nature programs
- There is a need for more Naturalists positions, both paid and volunteer—Volunteer Coordinator positions for more volunteer recruitment
- Increase volunteer efforts for all areas of Parks; increase funding of Volunteer Programs for recruiting training and placing volunteers

Public Engagement

- Assess what is being done; use other City Departments and other community groups to determine our opportunities to impact people
- Opportunity to distinguish Parks and Recreation from the poor image of the Seattle School district
- Opportunity to work with the schools in the coordination of the delivery of services and facilities to customers i.e.; Sealth High School fields used by Parks users, but serviced by the School District—make it more seamless
- New Parks and Recreation Superintendent + New Seattle School Superintendent: terrific opportunity here, new leadership in both areas; how to engage persons of varying cultures
- Opportunity to make the public more aware of the activities and programs that we have at Parks and Recreation

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Programs and Services

- To have sufficient research and analysis accomplished that we can engage people at community centers (varying cultures) in a variety of different activities and programs meeting needs

Parks and Facilities

- Continue converting sand fields to artificial turf—this could come at the cost of environmental issues
- More non-traditional field sports can be played on the fields

Public Engagement

- Parks and Recreation staff and leadership who have become experts with issues and how to provide and meet the needs of the citizens should somehow pass down that knowledge
- Leadership must know how to balance desires and needs of various issues regarding assets, identify staff that can do this effectively and retain those (build capacity)
- The Department engaging more citizens in the stewardship of eco-systems in various culturally diverse communities, and in creative ways w/ public groups (individuals, sport groups, environ. groups, etc.)
- Identify and enhance or improve on the “Brand” for Seattle Parks and Recreation
- Improve communication and decrease conflict

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- Alki, Hiawatha, and Southwest Community Centers are excellent