

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

High Point Community Center: November 29, 2007

Total Participants: 5 Public, 3 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

The five in attendance seemed primarily concerned about parks spaces and amenities, with no mention of recreation programming. Two of the five in attendance were asked to attend the meeting by the local youth soccer organizations to ensure that Parks folks heard about the need for more/better fields in West Seattle. All attendees were concerned about keeping parks, playfields and play areas clean, healthy and properly maintained. Citizens felt that we should be conservation minded and that we should work to better educate maintenance staff and parks users on how to be good stewards of park spaces.

Another commonality with the attendees is that they appear to have volunteered in various Parks endeavors at one time or another. They had mixed experiences around Parks staff allowing input, or providing good response time to requests for information.

Overall, while the group was small, the discussion was open, honest and thoughtful. The three Parks staff were fabulous, of course, in keeping the discussion as global as possible, yet validating the attendees' specific concerns. After hearing the feedback from citizens, I walked away thinking...we could do a lot more with volunteer coordination to help leverage resources and we really could do more cooperative work with other city departments (Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Department of Transportation, City Light, Department of Neighborhoods).

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Maintenance

- Better maintenance of play areas
- Better and timelier graffiti removal and/or repair of damaged signs
- More or improved education for maintenance staff on best practices of maintenance to keep habitat intact
- Educate staff so there is no pulling or damaging native plant species, mowers and weed eaters damaging trees, ruts being left in play fields, open spaces

Green Practices

- Conservation of resources, organic gardening
- Less mowing and watering in the summer
- Less use of chemicals in parks maintenance

Programs and Services

- Providing more family-friendly environments – thinking about parents with younger kids in mind

Public Engagement

- Volunteer coordination, support, response and recognition

- Better visibility of who to contact if issues arise at non-staffed areas (i.e. play areas, comfort stations, dog parks, etc)
- More opportunity for public input on projects (e.g. trail work at Fauntleroy Park done irresponsibly; damaged native plant species, path seems too wide and detracts from surroundings; trail guidelines/policies not applied with practicality)
- Better signage, education, and enforcement for park users re: leash laws, scoop poop, etc.

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Public Engagement

- At times opportunities are allowed for citizen input and input has been honored and accepted, and requests have been responded to, for example, Schmitz Park

Parks and Facilities

- Community centers are clean, accessible, informational

Finances

- Revenue generation efforts with the rentals of parks and spaces for weddings, meetings seems very professional—would like to see more efforts like these

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

Finances

- Lack of Money/Resources

Public Engagement

- People not being educated about things that hurt/damage parks (i.e. dogs off leash, chemical usage that affects environment, invasive species spillover from homes to parks spaces)

Parks and Facilities

- Some facilities appear underutilized and they might get lost
- Deserved maintenance attention not given, they become under funded or cut in budgets, etc.

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

Public Engagement

- More education efforts for staff and citizens can help improve/save stewardship of parks
- Hire folks to lobby legislature for additional resources or to help support parks issues
- Continue to market great aspects of parks and recreation (i.e. the wedding brochure) in order to increase revenues from fees

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Visitors to Seattle often praise our Parks system (implied sentiment was that we are doing something good here and we should keep it strong!)

Partnerships

- More integration, coordination, and cooperation with other departments such as Seattle Department of Transportation, Seattle Public Utilities, Department of Neighborhoods on issues around shared spaces, adjacent spaces, right of ways—how to work together to keep spaces clean, safe, available for recreation uses, etc.
- More integration, coordination, and cooperation with Seattle Schools specifically when schools are vacated—why not give the land to Parks program and bring additional assets into the Parks system
- Bike lanes...some go through Parks and Recreation spaces others through Seattle Department of Transportation spaces...some areas are good, some not so good.

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- Would love to see the Hiawatha field upgrades happen—replace dirt with turf
- We envy Loyal Heights playfields...we would like nice turf surfaces in West Seattle
- Camp Long is a nice facility
- Alki Beach maintenance and landscaping, including Commorant Park have been outstanding in the last 2 – 3 years
- Full time weeding of Fauntleroy Park has been a great thing
- Education efforts around homeowner use of lawn chemicals has helped reduce algae bloom in Fauntleroy waters