

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Montlake Community Center: November 26, 2007

Total Participants: 12 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Half of the attendees were long time volunteers for a variety of Park and Recreation programs. Some participants were very concerned about historic preservation of both Olmsted Parks and Gas Works Park. Others wanted more swimming pools. There was agreement that Parks and Recreation could not be all things to all people.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Parks and Facilities

- We only have two outdoor pools in our system. We need more, and they need to be open earlier and later
- The lack of pool space forces people to go to more expensive providers which is hard on people with limited income
- Little kids need to learn to swim, older citizens need to exercise
- The waiting list for private pools can be extensive
- We can swim on public beaches and in Lake Washington and we should not make investments in pools because we have other priorities
- Have separate kid and adult pools
- More 50 meter pools
- It is way too crowded to swim in Parks and Recreation pools. There are up to six people in a lane; it is hazardous
- We have lots of geese in parks
- There is a large increase of dogs off leash—they are taking over a lot of our parks

Access

- ADA accessibility needs to be better integrated into parks
- We need paved trails that are more handicap accessible

Green Practices

- Everything Parks and Recreation does should be environmentally sustainable
- We need a greater “green” consciousness from Parks personnel. Pocket parks should be pesticide free
- Do not cut down mature/healthy trees for development—more environmentally sound practices need to supersede development
- Need a Green Department within Parks and Recreation

Public Engagement

- There is a problem getting information from the public, as well as getting information out

- You are responsive to too many public interests—need a more even balance between recreation and historic park needs
- Homeless people are pushed out of everywhere they try to live

Programs and Services

- A lack of programming creates problems for teens
- Make fees less not more
- Prioritize swimming as something that is in the best interest of the public
- There needs to be more networking between Seattle Public Schools and Parks and Recreation to improve sports scheduling

Safety and Security

- There are real dangers in our parks including encampments and rowdy kids—we need rangers in each park
- There is bad behavior in overpopulated/isolated areas
- Staff are encouraging bad behavior when they do not call police—they send fighting teens out of the building and when they are through they can come back in the CC
- Some of this bad behavior is due to a lack of supervision and not enough structured activities for teens

Staff

- Put more money into the front line maintenance staff of the department

Maintenance

- There is inadequate funding for Parks staff to do maintenance

Partnerships

- Do not commercialize parks

Finances

- For Green infrastructure, landscape maintenance, parks relies on neighborhoods to go for grants

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Public Engagement

- Parks and Recreation is engaging the public in important decisions and seems to be listening to the public
- Parks and Recreation has improved its customer service
- Parks and Recreation can't please all the public with controversial topics—make your decision and move on!
- The 32 strategic meetings demonstrate dedication to public input—we appreciate it

Green Practices

- Efforts have been made to make parks more green including pesticide reduction in parks

Staff

- Parks and Recreation has very responsive staff
- Parks has high caliber employees

Parks and Facilities

- Magnuson Park is an excellent development
- Outdoor pools are 95% efficient and Mounger virtually pays for itself
- Golf facilities are excellent and have really improved

Programs and Services

- Parks has affordable swimming lessons
- Standardizing fees is a good thing

Partnerships

- ARC and the City are working well together

Finances

- Pro Parks funding was done in a very responsible way. We would support an additional levy

3. What are the threats facing Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Overused green infrastructure
- Debate regarding the appropriateness of lighting and artificial turf
- Labeling historic areas/land marking for the public
- Parks needs to show pride in land marking parks
- Increased use increases conflicts
- We are increasingly dependent on free public space
- More dependent on free public space
- All open space should stay as it is
- Don't add things like skate board parks unless you buy land specifically for that purpose
- Encourage bikes; maintain trails system so that we decrease transportation, congestion problems
- Volunteer Park changed when dogs off leash was included. It decreased the flow of the park

Public Engagement

- Conflict between parks users, the need for intervention
- Magnuson has become a battleground for various constituencies
- Inclusiveness—maintain integrity of parks while serving different uses—we need parks that can accommodate all kinds of activities without ruining the environment, for example, Magnuson
- Everyone needs to have a piece of the pie

Staff

- Staffing longevity, better sense of ownership, need for less turn over and moving around to have a continuity of staff
- Rotating staff leaves less continuity—fewer turnovers would result if people stayed in one place

Maintenance

- Better care of historic parks like Gas Works
- Take better care of our historic “legacy” parks
- Who is cleaning up after homeless encampments?

Finances

- More funding for asset preservation

Safety and Security

- Safety for all parks users

Urban Environment

- What cities are world class? What are they doing? Dividing resources evenly
- Congestion, transportation

Compliance with the Law

- Obey the law. Lawsuits against Parks occur because Parks doesn't follow regulations (i.e. Gas Works)
- Parks needs to obey laws like SEPA
- Pressure of city-wide development is putting pressure on our green infrastructure

4. What are the opportunities for Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Close proximity to nature for public, nearby recreation—people may not be able to afford to drive to nature that is far away
- Wi-Fi hot spots
- Nearby recreational opportunities
- Separation of parks from recreation

Green Practices

- Green energy, how we affect the environment
- Combine city agency services to be more environmentally sound

Environment

- Carbon footprint and climate change

Public Engagement

- Study the demographics in order to better serve the community
- Redistribution and increase in population

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Great access without congestion
- Pedestrian corridors

Public Engagement

- Inviting for all people to relax—draw in the public for community wide gathering
- Accommodate ages, races, classes and provide relaxation
- Community gathering place

Maintenance

- Cleanliness and respect
- Well-cared for parks
- Make parks invasive free. Take care of what we have

Safety and Security

- Alleviate conflict and bad behavior