

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Northgate Community Center: December 6, 2007

Total Participants: 25 Public, 5 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

Parks and Recreation staff heard many comments about expanding pools, especially outdoors. There were also many comments about integrating the urban village concept to recreation programs and having a variety of recreational opportunities close to home. People felt that Parks and Recreation facilities were well maintained and beautiful and provided a lot of great programs and activities. Many people wanted to see more health and fitness programs. Generally, the meeting was very positive about Parks and Recreation. There seemed to be a general sense the public would have another opportunity to comment on the Draft Strategic Action Plan.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Parks and Facilities

- More Parks all over the city
- More multi purpose parks – active and passive activities
- More parks and open space in Northeast Seattle
- More Pools – indoor and outdoor
- More Lighted playfields/sports fields
- More outdoor pools throughout city
- More pools and extend hours – including more holidays
- Annex the Waldo property to Maple Leaf
- More trails that network for running
- Provide walking and jogging paths around parks and fields
- More accessible and better maintained trails
- Better ADA access to sports fields
- SPR – the title seems to put more emphasis on parks and not recreation facilities

Public Engagement

- Better public notification for meetings – like this one, not everyone heard about it until it was too late
- Better communication between parks and public about project meetings
- Encourage more volunteers to help with projects and programs
- Encourage more recognition of volunteers service

Programs and Services

- Extend hours of operations at Recreation Centers
- Expand funding for more Environmental programs that could be Intergenerational. More signs that help to educate public about the urban environment
- Keep program prices reasonable

Maintenance

- Increase staff to better maintain parks
- Improve facility maintenance and staffing – some centers are looking worn out already and need more staff to keep them open longer

Partnerships

- Encourage more partnerships – example with PAWS

Safety and Security

- Better staff accessibility in the off hours to respond to rentals and emergencies at centers (this is related to the phone number provided on doors; sometimes there is not a response from the emergency number)

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Programs and Services

- In general, Parks and Recreation does well with a variety of programs
- Do very well with Special Population programs – need more
- After school programs are very good
- Affordable youth sports programs
- Impressive variety of programs and events
- ELC provide some very good programs – need more

Public Engagement

- Good community outreach for input gathering
- Good way for volunteers to get involved with their community
- Centers are community assets – that make neighborhood livable

Green Practices

- Stewardship in many natural areas
- Parks has done great by using less chemicals and more native plants and improved habitats
- Many of the new buildings show leadership in sustainable designs

Parks and Facilities

- Public Golf courses are some of the best in the country
- Signage on trails like the Longfellow Creek – partnership with SPU that makes that one work
- Playgrounds are great and safe places for children

Partnerships

- Do well in some of its partnerships

Staff

- Fabulous staff

Maintenance

- Parks look well maintained – litter picked up and lawns mowed

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

Parks and Facilities

- Many in the community have a lack of appreciation for the importance of parks and open space being an neighborhood amenity, it benefits the community in many ways including helping with home values
- Not using the Olmstead Plan to maintain the heritage and legacy of parks
- Lack of honoring our historical plans

Public Engagement

- Balancing special interest groups and partnerships so that parks maintains or increases public benefits
- Neighbors close to parks who expect special treatment or who have created private use of parks – this cost money and energy to deal with and to clean up
- Private use and encroachments of park space

Finances

- Reduce budgets may cut programs
- Bad economy
- “Corporatization” of public entities: selling out to large businesses

Urban Environment

- Traffic and grid lock make sure the city is developing a plan that looks at dividing the city into quadrants – urban villages to reduce driving and encourage walking, riding bicycles and using buses
- Increased populations and reduced resources
- Zoning threatens development of more neighborhoods parks and open space

Green Practices

- Invasive plants need to be eliminated

Environment

- Climate change

Safety and Security

- Public safety: There is a perception of lack of safe parks, which results in fewer users and more misuse

Maintenance

- Threat to the infrastructure by not maintaining our assets including big old trees
- Vandalism – graffiti costs that take away from other uses

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

Programs and Services

- Opportunity for Parks and Recreation to help improve public health using our programs and facilities including pools, trails and outdoor space

- Help seniors to stay active and healthy
- More opportunities to provide volunteers to exercise while maintaining parks or “Green Calories”
- Partner with public health agencies to provide more programs and connections
- Art programs in partnership with U of W
- Expand the learn to swim program because we are surrounded by water
- Develop more programs that use local resources (neighborhood gardens and markets)
- Inspire property owners on sustainable practices – including pesticides and native plants
- Sponsor more events that promote healthy choices and lifestyles (Example Danskin Triathlon)
- Sliding scale for fees to encourage participation for all

Parks and Facilities

- Develop a pool – indoor or outdoor at Magnuson Park
- Better and safer accessibility to and in parks
- Better cooperation between city departments to develop trails, signs, bike routes through the city to connect neighborhoods

Partnerships

- Develop and continue partnerships with non-profits
- Ease restrictions that may hamper partnerships that help us with our goals and values
- Develop more partnerships with neighborhood gardens and markets

Public Engagement

- Increase volunteers, especially neighbors to improve their local parks

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Programs and Services

- Develop a “Flex Bikes” (similar to the Flex Car concept) available at community centers
- Incorporate into all programs to encourage, promote and measure health and fitness lifestyles for all ages including youth
- Promote nutritional values – partner with organizations that do this for their businesses
- Encourage support and measure healthy programs

Parks and Facilities

- We should be able to walk throughout the city by connecting the city with green belts; green connectivity from north to south and east to west
- Preserve the Olmsted Legacy – including natural habitat and green belts
- Look at quadrants – build sufficient opportunities in each one that helps to reduce travel. Develop programs and activities that are focused within the quadrant, example youth sports.
- Safe – non toxic places to play
- Vision a better coordination effort between city departments to facilitate pedestrian and bike access
- Play areas that provide connections to the natural environment not just the standard playgrounds

Public Engagement

- Parks and Centers are a place where ALL are welcome

Green Practices

- Buildings are models of sustainability
- Recycle bins throughout parks

Maintenance

- Bathrooms (comfort stations) that are unlocked and maintained all year round
- Parks without “sanicans”

Environment

- Help fight global warming