

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Loyal Heights Community Center: November 28, 2007

Total Participants: 18 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

This meeting focused on the balance of open space acquisition, preservation, and access with organized and structured uses such as traditional sports and developed fields. People were liberal with praise for what Parks does well, but frustrated that outreach to the community for input to the Strategic Action Plan was so limited. There was deep concern by most attendees about branding, fast food franchises in the parks, and other commercialization of public facilities.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

Public Engagement

- Improve outreach and notification of Strategic Action Plan—use email and US mail:
- Loyal Heights Advisory Council and Community Council weren't notified about the Strategic Action Plan meeting
- Other affiliated groups such as ARC were not notified

Parks and Facilities

- The look and feel of community centers affect how people feel welcomed
- Conduct more non-traditional park activities such as skateboard parks, roller skating and dog off leash parks
- Dog parks are a swampy mess—add funds to improve these activities
- Preserve open space for non-structured activities
- Reduce/ eliminate commercial advertising
- Enforce off leash dog rules—pressure other City departments to enforce rules
- Balance organized sports needs with unstructured open space needs
- Stop transition of open spaces to sports complexes, find other ways to meet the needs of organized sports

Programs and Services

- Tailor more programs to working adults and their schedules
- Parks should facilitate an instructor pool to improve programs

Maintenance

- Improve coordination of volunteer efforts with maintenance staff.

Staff

- Stabilize staffing at given sites—yearly rotation of staff is challenging especially on young users; makes it difficult to maintain the human connection at community centers

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

Parks and Facilities

- Praise for the city wide skatepark plan—see it through
- Praise for acquiring and developing land, especially pocket parks
- New sports are welcomed and accepted
- Kudos to Grounds and indoor Maintenance
- Praise for use of tools which are environmentally friendly and green

Organization

- Parks has the big vision of what to accomplish, the problem is accomplishing the vision—streamline the process to get there
- Parks provides strong leadership, build on the efforts of some staff who got directly to the issues

Partnerships

- Partners well with other groups
- Brilliant partnerships have been built with the Associated Recreation Council and advisory councils—unique model which promotes local control

Public Engagement

- People's welfare is at the top. Praise for efforts to reach immigrants, kids, and underserved
- Good website
- Good use of volunteer efforts

Programs and Services

- Great services to 0-5 age group
- Good programs and outreach to older children via youth sports

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

Finances

- Pro Parks levy expires at the end of 2008—this will end the acquisition of land and the city may miss opportunities
- Groups rely on having large indoor spaces for public use and there are no funds to acquire more
- Population changes threaten youth sports as adult needs are addressed—funds are limited
- Hierarchical economic structure and priorities are skewed to major sports (stadiums) and IT development (south lake union development)

Marketing

- Branding

Partnerships

- Development of fast food franchises—worst thing possible
- Improve Park and Recreation's relationship and agreements Seattle Public Schools relationships
- Develop joint facility use
- Structure depends on school principals

- Private developers may dictate and/or influence new park features

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

Parks and Facilities

- Fund the Skateboard Plan
- Lobby for improvements to public transportation and access to Parks and Recreation parks and facilities

Public Engagement

- Develop outreach policies to underserved people including:
 - People of color
 - People with low incomes
 - English language learners
 - At-risk youth
- This will invite and develop cultural learning and richness

Programs and Services

- Bring back Summer Nights at the Pier, Amphitheater, or anywhere
- Make community centers reflect the neighborhood culture
- Maximize opportunities to design programs for mixed age groups.
- Showcase native landscape to maximum advantage—use for environmental education

Parks and Facilities

- Refurbish older community centers like the Library has

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

Parks and Facilities

- Acquire more land so all users will have access to structured and unstructured activities
- Adequate facilities for dogs
- There are more dogs than kids in the City
- More dog parks
- Don't meet the needs of every community group one hundred percent—preserve as much open space as possible
- A city and public which recognizes Parks facilities and open space and uses them fully
- Facilities open seven days a week from 5am – 10pm
- Parks and Recreation free of commercialization

Programs and Services

- Deliver services inline with population trends—reflect our communities
- Full community centers and full usage

6. Other Comments on Specific Projects

- Improve Loyal Heights community center aesthetically, it looks like an institution
- Concern about Magnuson—do not commercialize the only large indoor spaces available for rent to the public
- Keep paying attention to and continue to improve the Burke Gilman Trail
- The proposed commercialization of Magnuson Park, specifically the takeover of Hangar 27 by Arena Sports, excludes other uses
- Not enough general funds given to Parks and Recreation to operate Magnuson and maintain public use and access
- Burke Gilman Trail is threatened due to lack of maintenance
- Tree roots and potholes need to be fixed—safety issue
- Get ahead of the curve on Roller skating league. This sport is taking off for women and there are no spaces in the city to practice/play—gyms are not welcoming