



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

PUBLIC MEETING BREAK-OUT DISCUSSION

February 23, 2010

7-8:30 pm

M-NCPPC Montgomery Regional Office
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Forty-four residents participated in this public meeting, a first in a series of public input opportunities as part of the Vision 2030 project. Following introductions and a project overview, participants broke into small groups to discuss a series of questions. A summary of these discussions follow.

1. What are the key strengths of the parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services in Montgomery County?

Parks are a key strength especially because there is a high number of them and they are spread out across the county. Parks are beautiful and interconnected through trails. Most noted about programs is the variety and affordability. Staff is helpful and knowledgeable, with a noteworthy strength in biological knowledge. Accessibility is achieved through affordability, location of community centers, and the ability to service a diverse population.

Parks

- Number of parks
- Parks spread out well across county
- Plentitude of park space, beautiful, distribution
- Interconnected parks and greenways
- Beautiful parks (carefully preserved)
- Stream Valleys
- Park structure/management: emphasis on environment
- Nature Centers / focus on education / Brookside Gardens
- Reasonable number of outdoor resources
- Paved / unpaved trails

Programs

- Variety of programs, and facilities
- Variety of activities/experiences
- Affordable programs
- Quantity and quality



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- Programs responsive to community
- Senior programs – free

Staff

- Management with biological knowledge
- Staff is helpful
- Well-managed

Accessibility

- Accessibility of community centers
- Access – big / small vehicles
- Easy access
- Equal access / value from taxes
- Most parks are free
- Some age-appropriate parks
- All ages
- Suits a diverse population

Safety

- Safe
- Access card (identified who is in facility)

2. What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks and recreation services in the community? Why do you see it/them as essential?

A diverse population often refers to immigrant populations but can also include seniors and people with special needs. Methods to provide accessibility to diverse populations include affordable fees, open space, emergency shelters, and location. The beauty and environmental benefits of parks is essential. Parks and open spaces provide opportunities to get people outdoors. Not only is it critical that youth have access to afterschool, summer camps and constructive outlets, but un-programmed opportunities through scheduling and space are necessary. Parks and recreation services provide health benefits such as physical and mental health.

Accessibility

- Access to open space for kids and adults
- Access to diverse population – low cost
- For everyone/diversity
- Provide emergency shelters
- Programs—no barriers, affordability, geographic
- Affordable rental space
- Rental space is walkable, accessible and local
- Accessibility
- Location / services provided



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Natural Resources (Environment)

- The 10% of county land held by Parks Department is an ecological service
- Stream Valley and flood control; helps to protect area (home, environment, etc.)
- Environmental education
- Nature deficit
- Connecting green spaces from neighborhood to neighborhood
- Protect/preserve open space per urban density
- Green feel
- Natural beauty

Youth

- After school activities
- Summer camps for children
- Alternative activities for children
- Youth creative/constructive outlet
- Un-programmed opportunities
- +9 years playground

Safety

- Safe haven for kids (park police and patrols)
- Feeling safe

Health

- Quality of life (how it offers to communities)
- Balance physical/mental health
- Lifelong recreation
- Get moving/wellness
- Wellness

Other Essentials

- Drinking fountains and bathrooms
- Permitting and scheduling to eliminate confusion
- On-going maintenance
- Needs to add value
- Historical
- Fun!
- Forward looking
- Creates community
- Outreach
- Teaching—experiential/outdoor lab
- Appreciation/value



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3. What community issues or problems can the services of parks and recreation address?

Residents believe that parks and recreation can reduce the opportunities and desire for youth to join gangs. Continue to support after-school programs. Engage teens through mentoring programs and teen centers. Sports fields need to be better distributed based on community needs. Protect natural and historical resources by educating users on how to become good stewards. Providing activities for seniors increases their wellbeing.

Youth

- Reduction of after-school/ early evening crimes
- Gang prevention
- Teen options/gangs
- Reduction of obesity
- Continue to support after-school programs to keep youth engaged
- Programs for young school dropouts
- Teen center in Gaithersburg
- Engage teens: leadership, mentors
- Decreased school funding
- Active kids
- Distribution of and coordination of programs with schools

Outdoor Experiences

- Closing of park eliminates ball field, community facility
- So few sports fields, increased traffic and not well-distributed across population
- Addresses need for people to be outside and enjoy nature
- 9-hole golf course: ecologically managed
- Bike/walk infrastructure

Environmental

- Junior park stewards
- Example for environmental ethics
- Good land/air stewards
- Maintain water quality in streams / separate horses
- Park act as buffers from pollution
- Buildings as teaching tools: green buildings (need caretakers)

Health

- Healthy aging
- Increase mental health
- Obesity
- Provides activities for seniors
- Senior options



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Accessibility

- Access
- High costs of permits reduce quantity of programs
- Diversity
- ADA
- Decreased park and recreation funding
- Meeting spaces

Education

- Education
- Historical preservation/interpret/educate (markers)
- Promote non-classroom education: nature, problem-solving

Other Issues

- Alternative activities
- Maintenance

4. What improvements/changes would you make to the parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services in Montgomery County today?

In 10 years?

In 20 years?

Increasing accessibility includes reducing costs of permits and rental fees, increasing awareness of programs and facilities, and engaging various populations and communities through dialogue, education, and partnerships. Improve public transportation, trail, and sidewalk connections to facilities. Maintenance of trails and bathroom facilities was frequently cited, as well as development of a restoration plan.

Accessibility

- Advance outreach to diverse communities
- Education on what is available
- Reduce costs of permits
- Distribution of services
- Rental costs are high (areas for picnicking)
- Lower rental fees
- More access for 18-60 year-olds – new/different opportunities
- Walking access (local parks)
- More creativity – connections with transportation
- Connection to facilities – local businesses
- Locate facilities/services with transit and bike connections
- Trends: walkability / biking in city / sidewalks
- On-line park reservation system



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Civic Engagement

- Intense community involvement: friends of park and community/agencies working together
- Ownership of local parks – unique parks to neighborhood-design/input
- Education of process up-front: knowing design guidelines and why
- Matching programs and settings (e.g. Yoga at Brookside Gardens)
- Centralize information
- Neighborhood dialogue

Outdoor Resources

- Complete purchase of greenways
- Increase dog parks
- Sligo Creek – Bike repair
- Natural and synthetic turf fields
- Adult parks/teen parks

Trails

- Improve / increase biking trails (connected trails)
- Plowing of trails
- Add walking trails

Maintenance

- Improve bathroom facilities, especially in winter
- Public-private cooperation to assist in maintenance for cost to access to advertising
- Restoration plan
- Restoration/green/stewardship
- Improvements

In 10-20 years

- More fields
- More lights
- Limits to development
- Save trees
- More development = higher taxes
- More multi-use buildings
- How do you serve growing senior population?

Safety

- Increase park police

Other Improvements

- Coordination/collaborations— intra agency/inter agency
- Barriers to highways
- Flexible space
- More attractive buildings



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5. How do you think the Departments can work to responsibly address these improvements/changes given its resources? What opportunities exist?

Better allocation of facilities was frequently cited as a responsible improvement. Construct facilities both in areas with limited resources and in areas with too few facilities to meet high demand. Work closely with local communities by forming partnerships with local businesses and building a volunteer base.

Investment

- More new construction especially in areas with limited Park & Rec resources
- More facilities in certain areas with more people vying to use
- Better allocation
- Spend more on maintenance and fundamentals
- Spend less on new construction

Partnerships and Volunteers

- Bring in local businesses (sponsorship)
- Volunteerism with local communities

Other Opportunities

- Continue public outreach
- Merge departments
- Rationalize the purpose
- Improve reservation system

6. Do you believe there are populations/geographic areas that do not have access or who have limited access to parks and recreation services? If yes, please explain. What are solutions to address?

- Programs are heavily geared towards children
- Facilities are available but pass close (nearby) facilities to (participate in) programs (further away)
- Down County amenities are lacking