



# Vision 2030

## **Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan**

### **Recreation and Community Center Advisory Boards**

#### **Focus Group Notes**

March 24, 7-8:30 pm

**Attendees:** 10 advisory board members (plus 3 staff)

A brief introduction to the Vision 2030 project was provided by Jeff Bourne (Department of Recreation), Tanya Schmieler (Montgomery Parks), and Anne Miller (GreenPlay consultant), followed by a discussion of the following questions, summarized below.

#### **1. What are the key strengths of the parks and recreation facilities, programs and services in Montgomery County as it relates to your group?**

- Pride in community; great reputation
- Foresight of acquiring and protecting the stream valleys
- Extent of the services, facilities, and parks
- Range and scope of offerings, all ages, all interests
- Beautiful county in which to live – open spaces, parks, and trails, classes and programs (on your own or with instructor or group)
- Youth development – homework clubs, Club Fridays, Sports Academy, after school programs for school age kids, valuable service to have youth development and keep them out of trouble
- Neighborhood playgrounds, walkable local parks, create sense of community
- Community centers provide a sense of community

#### **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?**

- For people with special needs, Therapeutic Recreation programs are essential; tend to be rather isolated; publicize programs, advertise information on bulletin boards
- Keep seniors and those with special needs fit and active and engaged
- Well conceived programs that are responsive and flexible

#### **3. In your opinion, what future parks and recreation trends will most impact what services and facilities are needed?**

- Challenge to provide these services in a walkable or bikable environment versus getting in your car and driving, almost anywhere in the county; development didn't take this into account, retrofitting is a challenge, no linkages
- In this year of recession, we are seeing increased participation in running club (low cost recreational activity)

- Have and have not's division will grow and will become more separate; have not's will have a greater need for these type of services in the future; how do we support these needs in the future?
- Greater cultural diversity; language barriers
- Mechanism to see the trends changing and respond to them
- Disabled population
- Two parents work or single parent work, kids unsupervised (gangs, crime and underage pregnancy, inactivity), lack of adult supervision, guidance and development of kids
- Lack of funding or political will to maintaining an exceptional staff, cuts to programs – staff needs are not addressed, do more with less
- Skateboard park (indoor)
- Cricket
- Frisbee golf
- Badmitten (popular with Indian community)
- Ping Pong
- Climbing wall
- Destination playground
- Pools
- Wheaton Recreation Center could use better lights, signage, improvements, upkeep, aging infrastructure; add basketball hoops and recreational amenities to the parks to activate the parks
- Multi-purpose all in one stop, recreation center and outdoor fields and amenities (Audrey Moore Center and Wakefield Park in Annandale, VA – all programs run in black – automated weight program card swipe structured monitored trainer program)

**4. What improvements/changes would you make in the parks and recreation facilities, programs and services in Montgomery County today? In 10-years? In 20-years?**

- Language diversity
- Land procurement and development for trails or appropriate park land, amenities – smart growth – need more developable park land – as development occurs, ensure that we also have usable natural environments to complete greenways – allow for wildlife corridors
- Connectivity

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

*For example, how best/most responsibly can indoor recreation needs be met in the future? Is it feasible to build and operate a greater number of smaller community centers with fewer amenities? Or should the County consider building fewer, but larger, multi-purpose regional recreation centers (incorporating pools, fitness, gyms, and other amenities)?*

- Add big centers (three) to complement existing neighborhood centers (tennis, swimming, bike, run, etc. on a campus)
- Address transportation
- Must bring services to the community too, to avoid barriers
- Tie group homes into community centers, connect with partners, and use aides
- Smaller community centers are the tie-in to larger centers

- Family-oriented changing rooms (more)
- Walkable standards – depends on the route/road and congestion, or if there were green spaces and plazas along the way – may depend on ability of the person – ¼ to ½ mile walking but only if there are no street crossings or barriers, 15-20 minute walk, 1 to 2 miles biking - adults may drive everywhere; kids have to walk or bike
- A walkable standard is important to get to an amenity and if the County wants to be “green”
- Complete trails and sidewalks without barriers (not many sidewalks) and make them a usable width
- Make these usable trails accessible, need parking and trailheads along trails like Capital Crescent trail
- Linear parks may allow more accessibility
- Many people don’t know that the little neighborhood or local parks exists – don’t want the neighborhood parks to draw too much automobile traffic
- Capital Crescent trail (3 mile trail that is 10-12 feet wide) is a great example – people will walk ½ to 1 mile on a regular basis and 2 miles for fit walkers – a little conflict between commuters and trail users

**6. Are there potential partnerships that the Department of Parks or Department of Recreation should consider working with in the future?**

- Inter-government agencies, all agencies should work together better – interagency charge backs are ridiculous
- Schools, parks, and recreation should be a close bond, CUPF/ICB
- Not partnering is stupid; we have lots of opportunity to partner; non-profits
- Use key community leaders and advocates
- Use volunteers and expand this program, give volunteers an incentive to volunteer (you can only get XYZ if you volunteer – it’s not for sale or available any other way, like a family membership) – use volunteers to supervise volunteers
- Don’t give up county identity to naming facilities after commercial businesses
- Non-profit partnerships should be developed too; territorial issues; what’s the difference between sports associations or senior resource associations?
- Become competitive with other private or non-profit providers (baseball, football, fitness/weights); but recreation moved out of those areas where others have stepped up
- What recreation does well is serving larger groups of people (general focus)
- Politicians need to be all in with programs and services or don’t do it at all