

Public Process Summary

Key Dates in 2013

- **April:** *First draft* of Parks Legacy Plan released for public comment and posted on Parks website
- **April – May:** Parks staff and public input; comments taken via e-mail, snail mail, public meetings, Facebook and Twitter
- **May:** Parks hosted six public meetings
- **June:** *Second draft* of Parks Legacy Plan released with draft goals and strategies
- **June:** Parks Legacy Citizens' Advisory Committee begins meeting
- **June – November:** Preparation of Final Parks Legacy Plan
- **December:** Presentations to Mayor and City Council

Public Involvement

Parks developed a comprehensive public involvement process, which included a project website, extensive community and media outreach, and briefings with City leaders and various agencies—including the Office for Civil Rights, Seattle Housing Authority, Department of Neighborhoods, Immigrant and Refugee Commission and the Associated Recreation Council.

Public Meeting Goals

During May 2013, Parks hosted six public meetings at various locations throughout the city. The primary goals of these events were to:

- Provide the public with a greater understanding of the challenges facing Seattle Parks and Recreation.
- Provide a forum for the public to share their priorities for preserving our parks legacy.
- Engage in a citywide dialog about Seattle Parks and Recreation's future.

*"I would like to take this opportunity to highlight one very innovative and interesting program that was piloted through Seattle Parks and Recreation in partnership with community agencies: the **Women of the World Swim Program**. This is an innovative program that helps to remove barriers for immigrant communities to get active, learn water safety and have a fun physical activity for women and kids. The Parks Department should continue this innovative program."*

-Public comment

Meeting Format

All six public meetings followed a similar format. After introductions, a Parks presentation summarized key findings in the Legacy Plan. Following the overview, participants divided up into small groups for discussions. Parks staff facilitated the theme-oriented groups. The groups were set up to encourage community discussions, and staff recorded participants' ideas, priorities, and concerns. After 20-30 minutes participants had the option of moving to a different group. Some participants switched groups two or three times; others chose to stay in their original groups for an in-depth discussion.

Themes included, but were not limited to:

- Aquatics
- Tennis
- Senior and teen programs
- Environmental programs
- Urban forestry
- Maintenance and open space.

The last meeting focused on immigrant and refugee communities. Parks conducted additional outreach for this meeting and provided fliers, posters, and interpreters in nine different languages.

Seattle should be justly proud of its programs for youth and adults with disabilities. I have always been impressed with the staff and their interaction with their attendees. Each participant has always been treated with utmost respect, understanding and compassion."

-Public comment

Outreach

Individual Park Board members went to 10 District Council meetings to announce the public meetings and ask that district councils distribute the information to their member organizations and email lists. KEEP POSTED, a commercial distributor, delivered 175 posters to coffee shops and other highly visible public areas around Seattle. Parks distributed posters to community centers, pools, environmental learning centers, golf courses, the Amy Yee Tennis Center, branch libraries, neighborhood service centers, Seattle Housing Authority, City Hall, and at the 23rd Avenue Action Plan (Union-Cherry-Jackson) Department of Planning and Development-sponsored community workshop.

"There is always demand for something"

-Public comment

Parks sent email notices to more than 30,000 individuals and a variety of listservs. Press releases went out to 400 local news outlets, neighborhood blogs and the City's official minority media list. Parks posted messages on Facebook pages and Twitter. The Mayor, Councilmember Bagshaw, and Seattle Schools included information on the meetings in blog posts.

Parks sent notification to Seattle Young People's Project, Annual Teen Summit, Seattle Parks Youth Programs, and Lifelong Recreation lists.

Participation

More than 300 people signed in at the public meetings, and an additional 120 people participated through email and other written comments. Written comments focused on everything from archery to dog off-leash areas, to the impact of specialized programs, to the benefits of a tennis bubble and paying lighting fees through one's mobile phone.

There have been 1,750 page views on the project's website, and 541 people looked at the draft plan online.

Staff Engagement

Each Parks division provided opportunities for all employees to learn about the plan and provide input. In addition, each division director worked with his or her management team to develop goal statements based upon the public and staff input gathered during the public process.

"Parks and Recreation's Special Populations (program) has given all of us a chance to breathe and to enjoy our child's abilities rather than always worrying about his disabilities."

-Public comment

The Results

There was overwhelming appreciation for Parks staff, programs and open space. Many community members shared stories about how a staff person or program or outdoor access had a significant impact on their life. The following list captures some of the hundreds of comments received.

"As someone who teaches Environmental Justice, I was quite pleased to see that your recent survey thoughtfully gave voice to those historically underrepresented in park usage. Your special effort to represent those groups is to be commended."

-Public comment

Athletics

- Creative funding, logos, sponsorship and advertising on ball fields should be considered if it is consistent with Parks' mission and values. Community members should be engaged in the selection process.
- Start an athletic field lottery and rotate annually to provide equitable access to fields.
- There is a high demand for field time for soccer, lacrosse and cricket.
- Athletic clubs should contribute more to synthetic turf maintenance.

Aquatics

- Spray parks are very popular.
- There need to be more amenities at pools, such as slides, toys, shallow entry, and hot tubs, to make them more marketable.

- The current school use agreement leads to times when pools are not available to the public, but are not being used by schools.
- Small craft centers are well loved—there were many testimonials to the value of rowing and sailing programs.

Community Centers

- Need consistent and sufficient staff.
- Programs and staff need to reflect the changing face of the community; be engaging, multi-lingual and reach out into the community.
- Parks needs better promotion/marketing/outreach for programs offered.
- Need to balance fees with scholarships and simplify forms.

Lifelong Recreation

- There is not enough capacity for the demand for active programming; need vans, space, and staff.
- Increase intergenerational opportunities such as computer classes and volunteering.
- This type of program is not offered elsewhere.

Specialized Programs

- Parks is the only service provider within King County with this type of program and affordability.
- The program provides growth and social skills for individuals and families not available elsewhere; it is a lifesaver for families.
- Stability of the program is very important.

Teen Programs

- Opportunities for multigenerational programming—mentors, drawing and painting, interviewing skills, tech programs and assistance with career training, music workshops.
- Make sure facilities are safe.
- Need more partnerships between schools and community centers.
- Engage and help develop healthy lifestyles through athletics and community.

Dog off-leash areas

- Suggested a good dog/green dog program.
- Should be fee based.

Parks Resources

- Priorities are to clean comfort stations, pick up litter, and maintain sports fields.
- Would like to have more horticultural training for volunteers and stewards.

“I feel that the most important role of urban parks is to be able to maintain regular and ready access to natural spaces for our urban residents. The psychological, health and economic benefits of such access and integration of contact with nature into our urban lives is enormous and immeasurable.”

-Public comment

- Encourage Green Seattle partnership to do more training of volunteers to do other maintenance tasks.
- Keep turf fields in playable condition. Maintained sports fields last longer and are safer for users.

Major Maintenance

- Reduction of maintenance costs.
- Reduction of utility costs.
- External funding.

Natural Resources Unit

- Forest restoration and stewardship is essential; restoration projects need to be maintained so past efforts are not lost.
- Docent and adopt-a-park programs are good ways to accomplish other goals, such as trail maintenance, and tree planting.
- Developers should be assessed by parcel to provide open space; percentage of new development.
- Expansion of greenways and trails provides health benefits for everyone.
- This urban forest is the largest in the country. It is critical to wildlife, insects, and a healthy environment.

"I appreciate the conundrum faced by Parks as you try to cover existing projects and facilities with a budget that is facing ongoing threats. I understand that major maintenance projects are building up in an ever-increasing backlog, and that you've had to reduce programs and find efficiencies so that core programs and work can continue. Your reading materials and presentations have convinced me that there is a critical need for a significantly increased Parks annual budget."

-Public comment

Citizens Advisory Committee Formation and Roles

In June 2013, an Advisory Committee will begin meeting to review the recommendations of the Legacy Plan and public and staff comment/input. The committee is composed of two co-chairs, a representative each from the Board of Park Commissioners, Parks Foundation, and the Associated Recreation Council, and additional committee members appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

The Committee will:

1. Look at different funding options, including the potential use of a Metropolitan Parks District or property tax levy
2. Examine how we allocate these funds and seek a balance among funding for keeping facilities open, maintenance, and acquisition of new land and development of new facilities.

The Committee's goal will be to make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on a Parks funding ballot measure that would go the public for a vote in August 2014.

