

SECTION 3



PUBLIC MEETING #2

The planning team reviewed the major strategies and recommendations with the public May 21, 2014 at the Martin Janis Senior Center.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Public Engagement section describes how the planning team worked with residents, stakeholders and department staff to develop strategies for improvement. The resulting public input is summarized along with stakeholder and staff interviews. This process started to inform the vision for the future of CRPD.



PUBLIC PROCESS OVERVIEW

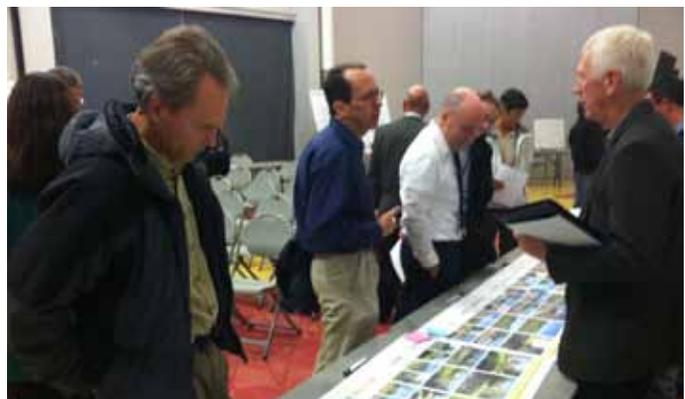
INTRODUCTION

This Master Planning effort was guided by a public process that engaged the community on a number of different levels. Throughout the process, the planning team met with a Steering Committee that was comprised of CRPD staff, other City department heads, and the vice president of the Recreation and Parks Commission. An Advisory Committee made up of Area Commission members was also convened. The planning team met with both groups on a nearly monthly basis to shape the plan, gain critical input and insight, and received feedback on ideas, recommendations and strategies. The Recreation and Parks Commission also received timely updates and provided input a critical stages of the planning process.



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND ONLINE INPUT

To gain input from the public, the planning team and CRPD held a series of public workshops in November and December of 2013. Based on Area Commission and Civic Association boundaries, the city was divided into five geographic Study Areas. These represent the In-Town, North, Central, Southeast and Southwest portions of the City. These areas were defined based on their similarities of land use and development patterns and allowed the planning team to focus its analysis and field work.



Prior to meeting with the public, the planning team visited a selection of parks based on typologies in each Study Area. Then, a public workshop was held in each of the five study areas to gain input and ideas from the public on how CRPD could better serve residents in the next ten years. More than 120 attendees total came to these five workshops and provided valuable insights in terms of how they currently use recreation and parks facilities, what facilities are currently missing in their neighborhoods, and how the department could better serve their needs. A summary of each of the five neighborhood meetings can be found in the subsequent pages.

The planning team held a public workshop in each of the five Study Areas.

This information was also shared online, with 230 people providing additional input.

In addition to holding in-person meetings, meeting materials and survey forms were also made available online for those who could not participate in the public workshops. Available from November 2013 to January 2014, the online survey generated 1,197 responses. While not part of the statistically valid Community Interest and Opinion Survey that was conducted during the winter, these responses are additive to the overall process and are another source of information that CRPD can take into account when prioritizing improvements and investment. A summary of this input is also provided in this section.

STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF INTERVIEWS

The planning team also conducted a series of stakeholder interviews with allied organizations, user groups and partners. These groups provided key insights and provided key information in terms of how these special interest groups use and partner with CRPD. The planning team conducted similar interviews with CRPD staff and department heads. The resulting information helped to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats for CRPD.

A city-wide public meeting was held May 21, 2014, to summarize public input, the results from the Community Interest and Opinion Survey and draft recommendations. More than 60 members of the public attended the meeting and provided input on the direction of the Master Plan.

Figure 3.1 Public Workshops Announcement Flyer

2014 Columbus Recreation & Parks Master Plan

"The Recreation and Parks Department is excited to be developing a master plan which will help to guide us into the future. Your input into the recreational needs of the community is critical to the success of the planning effort. Please join us as the department charts its course for the future."

- Alan D. McKnight, Director

Public Workshops

Five Public Workshops will be held across the City in November & December to help shape the future of Columbus Recreation and Parks:

1. Central Study Area

Thursday, November 14, 2013
Whetstone Park of Roses Shelterhouse
3901 North High Street, 43214
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM



2. North Study Area

Wednesday, November 20, 2013
Lazelle Woods Community Center
8140 Sancus Boulevard, 43081
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM



3. Southeast Study Area

Thursday, November 21, 2013
Barnett Community Center
1184 Barnett Road, 43227
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM



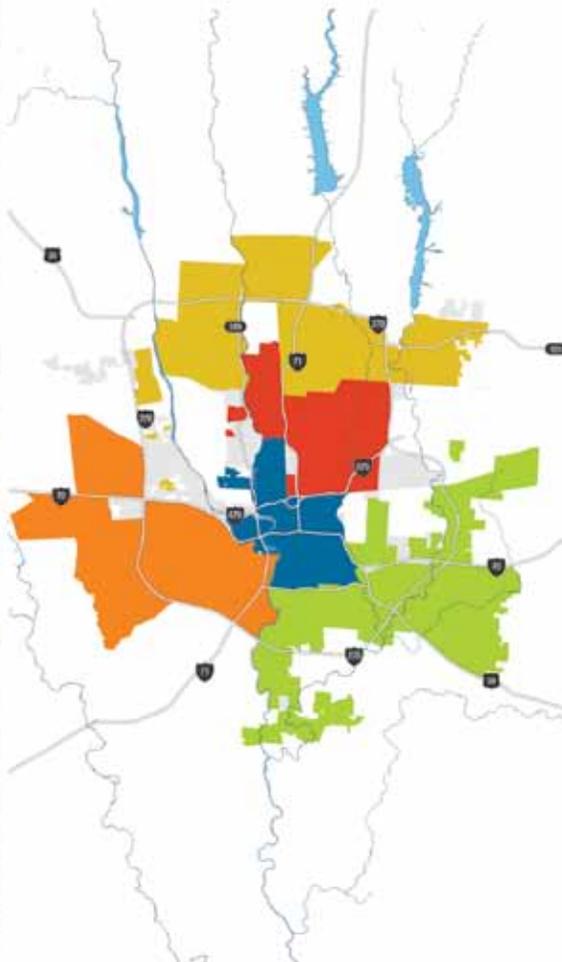
4. In-Town Study Area

Wednesday, December 4, 2013
Dodge Community Center
667 Sullivant Avenue, 43215
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM



5. Southwest Study Area

Thursday, December 5, 2013
Westgate Shelterhouse
3271 Wicklow Road, 43204
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM



Your City, Your Community, Your Parks!

For more information please visit parks.columbus.gov



PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

Concurrent with the public workshops, the meeting materials and questions were posted online for additional input from the public. The results of both the in-person and online input are summarized here and provide an additional layer of information and serve to reinforce the results that were gathered by the Community Interest and Opinion Survey (see page 78).

Parks and Facilities

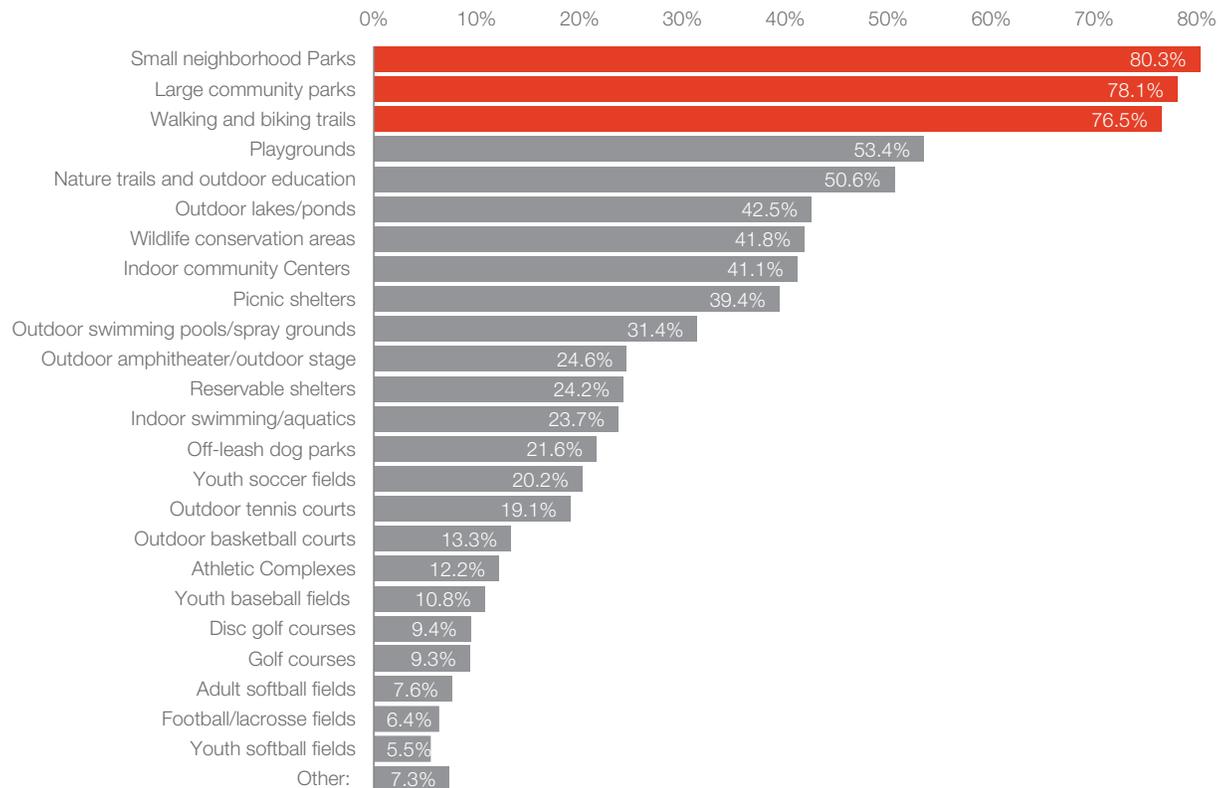
Over the past 12 months the top three facilities households have used most are Small Neighborhood Parks (80.3%), Large Community Parks (78.1%), and Walking and Biking Trails (76.5%). Fifty-six percent of households visit park facilities within their neighborhood at least per week. Improvements that would encourage households to use park facilities more often include:

- More interconnected multi-use trail system and greater trail access to neighborhoods and other parks
- Wider, less congested multi-use trails

- Expanded hours at community centers and pools
- More staff, better maintenance and safety
- More restroom facilities
- More natural areas, access to nature programs and passive wildlife viewing opportunities
- Better advertising of programs and activities, maps of facilities
- Mobile app for programs and registration
- Free wi-fi

In certain Study Areas, residents had more specific needs for improvements and facilities. The North and Southeast Study Areas expressed a need for more neighborhood and community parks and better playground facilities and shelters. The North and Central areas of the City, especially at the second Public Meeting indicated a need for an outdoor pool facility. The In-Town Study area, especially toward the western portion of the study area in the 5xNW neighborhood expressed a need for more park space.

Figure 3.2 Facilities Respondent Households Have Used or Visited in CRPD Parks During the Past 12 Months



Eighty percent (80%) of respondent households have used small neighborhood parks over the past 12 months. Other facilities respondent households have used or visited in the City of Columbus Parks during the past 12 months include: large community parks (78.1%), walking and biking trails (76.5%), playgrounds (53.4%), nature trails and centers (50.6%), and outdoor lakes/ponds (42.5%).

SHARE YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF COLUMBUS RECREATION AND PARKS

Your City, Your Community, Your Parks

Columbus Recreation and Parks Master Plan

Please join us at the Martin Janis Senior Center for a **PUBLIC MEETING** in which we will present preliminary findings and recommendations from the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.

This will be the last opportunity for the planning team to hear what YOU have to say about the future of YOUR parks

When:
WEDNESDAY, MAY 21, 2014
 6 PM - 8 PM

Where:
MARTIN JANIS SENIOR CENTER
 600 EAST 11TH AVENUE
 COLUMBUS, OH 43211

*This event is **FREE** and open to the general public. For more information please visit parks.columbus.gov*




The city-wide public meeting May 21, 2014, allowed participants to review and comment on Master Plan recommendations.

PUBLIC INPUT SUMMARY

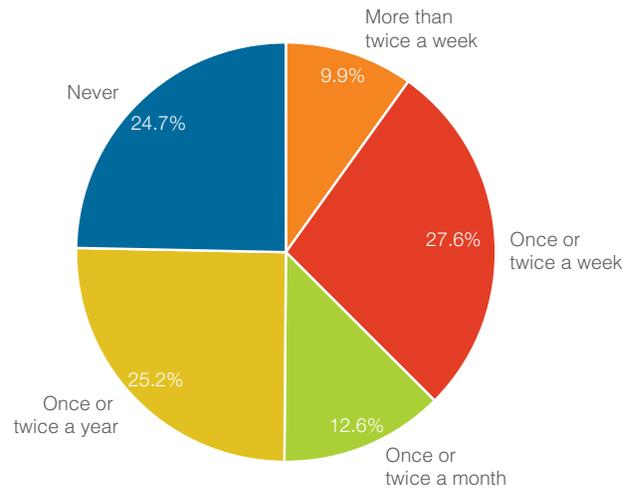
Community Centers and Programs

Over the past 12 months, the top three sports and recreation programs that individuals or members of households have participated in include, Community Special Events and Festivals (38.4%), Adult Fitness and Wellness Programs (29.3%) and Youth Sports Programs (28.8%). Thirty-seven and a half percent of respondents participate in programs and leagues on a weekly basis. Improvements that would encourage households to participate more include:

- Longer hours at all centers
- Better advertising in advance of programs
- Program information available on multiple platforms: mailer, email, website
- Greater accessibility
- Greater variety in programs, more diversity
- Having programs that aren't just geared toward seniors and kids

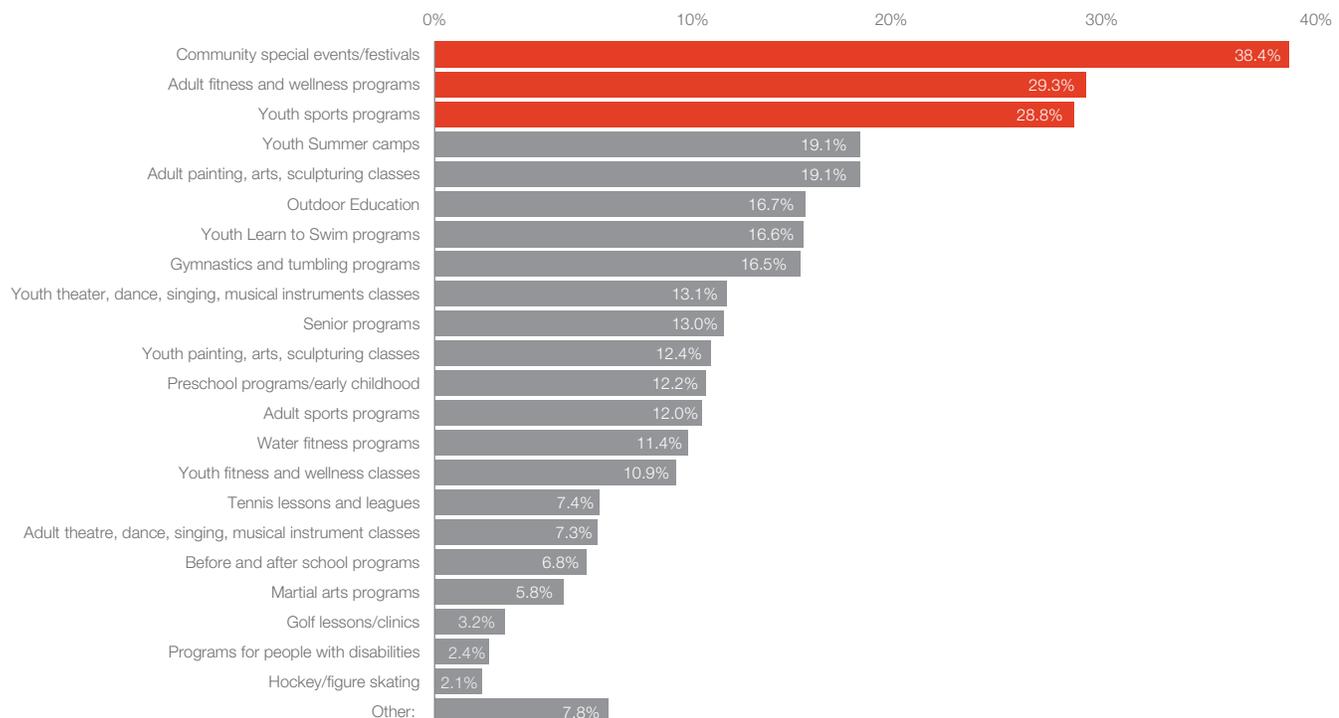
Similar to needs expressed for parks and facilities, the North and Southeast Study Areas indicated a need for additional community center facilities to serve their communities. The In-Town and Central Study Areas also requested longer hours and weekend hours for exercise facilities, programs and activities.

Figure 3.3 How often do you participate in Recreation and Parks programs and leagues?



By the percentage of respondents, 9.8% of respondents participate in Recreation and Parks programs and leagues at least more than twice a week. Other amounts include: Once or twice a week (27.8%), once or twice a month (12.6%), once or twice a year (25.2%), and Never (24.7%).

Figure 3.4 Recreation programs respondents have used in CRPD Parks or facilities over the past 12 months:



Based on the sum of respondent households' top four choices, (38.4%) of respondent households currently participate in community special events and festivals the most often. Other programs that respondent households currently participate in the most often include: Adult fitness and wellness programs (29.3%), and Youth Sports Programs (28.8%).

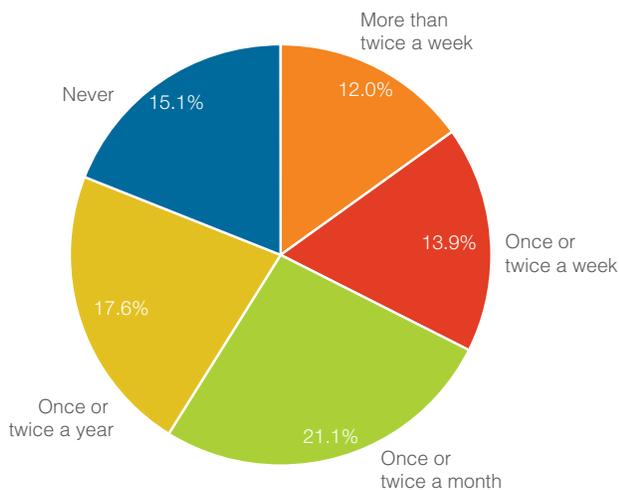
Multi-Use Trails

Nearly 26% of those attending the Public Workshops and online survey respondents use the City’s Multi-Use Trail system on a weekly basis. More than 48% report that the trails are accessible to their neighborhoods, however there were a great deal of requests for improved access. Improvements that would encourage households to participate more include:

- Improved access (both on-street bike facilities and off-street trails) to better connect neighborhoods and parks with the larger trail network
- Better east-west connectivity
- Addressing bicycle safety and education and resolving conflicts between bicyclists, walkers, runners and other trail users
- Improved signage and wayfinding on-trail and to trailhead locations
- Bike stations with tools and pumps
- Better promotion of the existing system

Specific issues mentioned by many respondents included congestion on the Olentangy Trail and the need for better access across and along busy thoroughfares such as High Street, 161, Bethel Road and Morse Road to access trails.

Figure 3.6 How often do you use the City trail and bikeway system?

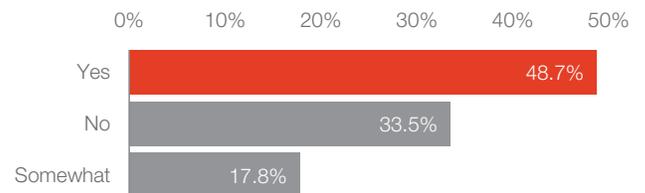


By the percentage of respondents, 12% of respondents use the City trail and bikeway system at least more than twice a week. Other amounts include: Once or twice a week (13.9%), once or twice a month (21.1%), once or twice a year (17.6%), and Never (15.1%).

The Southwest Study Area is eagerly awaiting completion of the Camp Chase Trail and numerous comments were received that expressed a need to connect that new trail to the neighborhoods that surround it. Similarly, the Southeast Study Area and Central Study Area are interested in neighborhood and park connections to the soon-to-be-completed Alum Creek Trail.

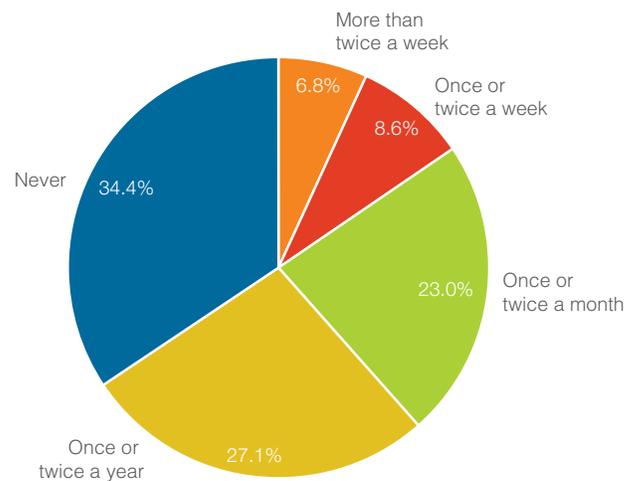
Participants in the Public Workshops and online also expressed a need to increase access to the City’s waterways to allow for expanded recreational use. Respondents pointed out that the Multi-Use Trail system and the emerging “water trail” system are complimentary uses and need to be considered as such as new facilities are planned and implemented.

Figure 3.5 Are these trail systems accessible to your neighborhood?



By the percentage of respondents, 48.7% of respondents consider trail systems accessible to their neighborhood. Other answers include: No (33.5%), and Somewhat (17.8%).

Figure 3.7 How often do you use the regional trail systems?



By the percentage of respondents, 6.8% of respondents use the regional trail systems at least more than twice a week. Other amounts include: Once or twice a week (8.6%), once or twice a month (23%), once or twice a year (27.1%), and Never (34.4%).

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

INTRODUCTION

In developing the Master Plan for the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, the planning team conducted a series of interviews with special interest groups and key stakeholders. These interviews revealed opinions, interests, and goals from the perspective of agencies and individuals that are closely partnered with CRPD, and the feedback obtained will play an integral role in the planning process and future success of the department. Interviews conducted included the following participants:

Key Stakeholders

- Karla Rothan - Recreation and Parks Commission
- Steve Whitman - The Whitman Group
- Chad Jester - Nationwide Insurance
- Nathan Wymer - Nationwide Insurance
- John O'Meara - Director of Columbus Franklin County Metro Parks
- David Celebrezze - Greenspot Coordinator, City of Columbus
- Andrew Roberts - Columbus YMCA
- Jeff McNealey - Recreation and Parks Commission and Metro Parks Board
- Keiana Mitchell - The Crew Soccer Foundation
- Dale E. Heydlauff - American Electric Power

Special Interest Groups

- Jerry Halloway - Friends of Alum Creek
- Paul Carlson - Columbus Department of Technology
- David Rutter - Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- Claire Jennings - Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission
- Laura Fay - Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (F.L.O.W.)
- Friends of Parks Groups
- Sports Groups
- Fishing and Boating Groups



The YMCA of Central Ohio includes 12 Full Facility Branches in the Columbus Metro Area, in addition to outdoor facilities and Educare Centers

Stakeholder & Special Interest Group Interview Summary

- Need to engage in more strategic planning to incorporate input from partners of the park system
- Better connect parks, engage in more effective community outreach, identify and eliminate duplication of services
- Need to improve existing parks and facilities
- Enhance security in the parks and facilities to gain trust of users and ensure a safe experience
- Find new sources of stable funding to encourage financial sustainability
- Need to improve marketing strategy and create a stronger social media presence
- Need to develop and train future leaders in the organization
- Need to offer a proper balance of well-connected, highly accessible parks and trails with a variety of recreation services that is inclusive of all types of users
- Department needs to play a more prominent role in environmental stewardship
- Expand the trail system to provide better connectivity and accessibility

KEY STAKEHOLDER RESPONSES

What are your expectations of the partnership you have with the City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Department?

In general, the interaction of the department with key stakeholders are friendly in nature, but those interviewed suggested there are many opportunities to strengthen these relationships to create more effective partnerships. Opinions suggest that there is a dire need to do more strategic planning that incorporates input from partners of the system. There are numerous opportunities for improvement within the system that could be easily achieved if the department found more ways to involve partners and seek feedback. Key stakeholders interviewed also mentioned that the Recreation and Parks Department showed signs of having low morale. Stakeholders also suggested collaboration should lead to better connectivity of parks, more effective community outreach, identifying and eliminating duplication, and shared strategies on pricing and service delivery.



Schiller Park benefits from the effort and dedication of the volunteer organization Friends of Schiller Park

What are the key outcomes you would like to see come from the Master Plan?

Key stakeholders interviewed provided a variety of desired outcomes from the Master Plan process. The most common responses indicated a strong need to improve the existing parks and facilities of the department, especially improvements to infrastructure. A new philosophy to parks in the downtown area to incorporate more modern, urban designs and attractive landscaping and green spaces is giving a much needed boost to the downtown area. Developing parks along roadways and increasing the amount of activities in the parks downtown and along the riverfront is greatly improving the visibility and value of the department to its users. The department must also enhance security in its parks and facilities to gain the trust of users and ensure a safe experience. Finding new sources of stable funding that encourage financial sustainability is also a primary concern of key stakeholders. Currently, the City doesn't have the financial capability to manage their assets, and this needs to be addressed quickly. Many suggest the development of a maintenance endowment for parks to ensure the funds are always available to keep parks well maintained and attractive. Many also suggest determining the actual total cost to maintain each park and facility to establish the necessary funding level of a potential endowment dedicated to park and facility maintenance. Key stakeholders also expressed a need for an improved marketing strategy. It will be crucial for the planning process to identify the needs of the community and understand the priorities of local residents and incorporate those needs and wants into future developments of the system. The department must improve the logistics of its social media operation and deliver a more complete message that effectively captures its audience through a strengthened social media presence. The final desired outcome mentioned by key stakeholders was to develop

and implement succession planning due to the fact the department is losing people rapidly and there is not a strong mentoring program to develop and train future leaders in the organization.

What are the key issues that you and your Commission deal with that the Master Plan needs to address?

Key Stakeholders of the department identified numerous areas of concern they believe need to be addressed in the Master Plan. Many of the issues identified in interviews deal with the operation and organizational structure of CRPD. The role of the Commission will need to be evaluated during the planning process. The Commission is currently ineffective due to its lack of political power and their inability to have input on policies of the department. The general perception is that the Commission is advisory only because it lacks true power and does not govern as a board. The Commission is considered atypical when compared to other Boards in and around the city. Those interviewed also indicated CRPD's identity is unclear to its users at times.

The local population has a tendency to confuse the department with the Metro Parks system, and the Master Plan should work towards establishing CRPD brand so that the department is easily identifiable as its own entity. CRPD must also strengthen its partnerships with similar agencies, such as Metro Parks, local schools, and the YMCA, and collaborate in a way that each agency complements the other and addresses any gaps and overlaps in service for the Columbus area as a whole.

Another key issue among stakeholders is how the operations of the Department are funded. Many feel there are untapped resources available to the department and that the department should identify all available funding sources and develop a plan to solicit those sources that will create financial sustainability.

According to key stakeholders, the Department should also address the facilities and services it provides to the community and evaluate if they are creating sufficient value among users. The community centers of the system are a hot topic and many believe the current lineup of facilities are inconsistent and not effectively serving the local population. The Master Plan needs to develop a comprehensive plan for the future of the centers, and identify solutions to issues surrounding the centers; such as, large centers versus smaller community centers, whether to adopt a regional approach, the effectiveness of intergenerational centers, the need for more quality facilities, the need for heightened security, creating a safer environment for users and staff, improvements to infrastructure, and alleviating gaps/overlaps in service coverage. The Department must also evaluate the needs and interests of the community and ensure the expectations specific to the demographic characteristics

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

of each service area are being satisfied, especially among high-risk areas and the senior population. Interviewees believe it will be important to strengthen advocacy within the community and create a strong sense of unity through programming aimed at attracting large groups (i.e. festivals, concerts, etc.) and celebrating the history and culture unique to each area. Opinions agree that the riverfront should remain a primary focus for the future development of the system, and this locale should be used as a spring board for implementing and executing new strategies and recommendations outlined in the Master Plan.

What do you feel the Recreation and Parks System is mandated to do?

The system is mandated to provide a thorough mix of programs and services through well-maintained parks and facilities to promote health and wellness, recreation, environmental stewardship, and culture, in order to appeal to the needs and interests of the entire community. The department has a duty to create safe, secure, and positive experiences that act as a driving force in unifying and celebrating the community. The Master Plan should provide a framework for the department to offer the proper balance of well-connected, highly accessible parks and trails with a variety of recreation services inclusive of all types of users. The plan should incorporate strategies and processes that would enable the department to deliver award-winning, best in practice results. The Mayor and City Council are beginning to view the Recreation and Parks Department as an economic development tool and the new Master Plan must put systems in place to allow the department to efficiently and effectively assume the role of a revenue generator for the city.

Are there performance measures you would like us to instill into the Master Plan?

Responses indicated a variety of performance measures that stakeholders would like to see included in the Master Plan. Establishing key metrics within the system and understanding data on attendance, user type, and community needs will be vital to the future success of the department. These measures must be closely tracked and analyzed on a site-by-site basis, as well as the system as a whole, and the Master Plan should identify the proper time increments for evaluation. Improvements to the website are overdue, and enhancements should add interactive elements that incorporate the ability to collect a tapestry of user information and provide a platform for useful feedback. A goal of the consulting team in the planning process should be to provide CRPD with metrics that are clearly understood and demonstrate objective outcomes. The Master Plan must also delve into financial performance measures and provide a template for evaluating costs and developing cost benefit



Scioto Audubon Metro Park is an existing partnership between CRPD and Metro Parks

goals and strategies that lead to informed decisions in the future.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP RESPONSES

What are your expectations of the partnership you have with the City of Columbus Parks and Recreation Department?

The expectations of the Department and the partnership arrangement tend to vary among special interest groups. Many times collaboration with partners lacks consistent structure and functions on a case by case basis. Although most groups interviewed feel their relationship with the parks is cordial, there is an underlying issue of communication within existing partnerships. This lack of communication has contributed to a level of frustration that is suppressing the potential for collaboration between the Department and its partners. There is also a sense that the Department lacks some core competencies that could be easily provided by special interest groups associated with the system. The Department needs to rely on partnerships and capitalize on each group's capabilities to provide better experiences for users through more efficient operations.

What are the key outcomes you would like to see come from the Master Plan?

The most common outcome desired among special interests groups interviewed is for the Department to expand and improve its outdoor recreational spaces. There is a severe shortage of natural open space and athletic fields within the system. Interview responses indicated a desire for the Master Plan to take a thorough inventory and establish level of service standards to identify where the department is lacking sufficient resources. Development of a strategic plan to improve the state of the system's facilities, specifically community centers, would be helpful in

providing a road map for incorporating new facilities in the future and improving or removing existing sites. Interviewees also suggested a need to improve access to departmental resources, such as connecting trails to neighborhoods and adding and improving access points along waterways. Another goal of the Master Plan should be to seek additional funding through corporate partnerships/sponsorships and potentially developing an endowment fund to help support maintenance of departmental assets.

What are the most pressing concerns that we need to be aware of in developing this Master Plan as it applies with your partnership with the city?

Given the nature of the Department, some of the most pressing concerns expressed by partners of CRPD pertain to environmental issues, and the department must play a more prominent role in environmental preservation and fulfill its duty to stewardship. Also, the Master Plan must develop a comprehensive maintenance plan for parks and facilities to maintain a quality standard and implement proper routine maintenance. Expansion of the trail system and better connectivity and accessibility of the parks is another area of interest for groups collaborating with the department, which will be much more attainable if CRPD takes advantage of the vast partnership opportunities that are available. The quality of facilities within the system are inconsistent and subpar as a whole, and the Master Plan must determine the appropriate next steps for improvement and provide clear strategic direction for CRPD to follow into the future.

Where do you see yourselves in the future as it applies to your partnership with the city?

The general perception among focus groups interviewed is that all agencies currently partnered with the Recreation and Parks Department see an excess of unrealized potential. A variety of agencies are very eager to work with the Department, but most feel there is little enthusiasm in return. The consensus is that every partnering agency has an abundance of ideas on how the Department could help their organization grow (and vice versa), but the response and participation from CRPD comes off as somewhat lackadaisical at times. This is perplexing to the partnering organizations because it seems very apparent that both sides have a lot to offer and even more to gain by establishing solid partnerships. It is very important that CRPD takes the time to nurture their existing partnerships to strengthen them for the future.

Is the city staff delivering on the expectations from the partnership in terms of how to keep them informed, involved in meetings, communication, etc.?

All groups interviewed agreed that CRPD are good partners to work with and communicate well. Although the city

does a good job on the basic functions of the partnership, there is a common perception that there is a substantial amount of unmet potential. The Department needs to take more initiative in collaborating with its partners and be more receptive to suggestions and ideas for growth. Most agencies interviewed have an extensive list of new opportunities that would benefit both sides, but it seems that the Department isn't always interested in entertaining new ideas.

Does your partnership agreement spell out the expectations of the city and your group financially?

For the most part, all groups interviewed feel that financial agreements with CRPD are clear, fair, and equitable. In certain circumstances, there were some who perceive that funding can be unfair at times and the city needs to pay their fair share on major repairs. Overall, partners of the department have very detailed agreements from a financial standpoint, and these agreements are generally accepted to be very fair and reasonable.

Do you have performance measures you track on how well the partnership is working?

Feedback from interviews with partners of the Department revealed that is a lack of performance measures in place and this is an opportunity for growth within the planning process. Groups associated with CRPD are interested in establishing shared goals with the Department and improve the lines of communication within partnership arrangements for a more collaborative effort. The Master Plan should aim to put the necessary performance measures into place that will breed more productive relationships with partners of the department.

Who do you see as a partnering person within the city responsible for making your relationship work in the best way?

The general consensus is that CRPD works well with its partners overall and they are responsive and willing to help, but many believe there are opportunities to improve communication within partnerships, which will lead to more effective interaction in the future. Some feel the Department should seek more feedback and consider input from partners when addressing difficult issues.

STAFF INTERVIEW SUMMARY

METHODOLOGY

The planning team interviewed staff during a two-day work session in December of 2013. From the information gathered, a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis was created. The following information was created from those interviews as well as observations and discussions with the community.

STRENGTHS

City and community support for CRPD is strong at the moment with the recent public passage of a bond issue that set aside capital dollars for community centers, multi-use paths, pools, parks, playgrounds and equipment. CRPD has a good relationship with the Mayor's Office, other City departments, special interest groups and corporate sponsors. Much of this credit goes to the strong leadership of the organization. As the department looks to improvements, design standards, including green design standards, have been put in place for parks, facilities and buildings. The Department has also developed good standards for lighting and trails.

Programmatically, the department has cultivated community center staff that know their communities, customers and the value of the services they provide. The department benefits from a high degree of community—the equivalent to 57 full time employees. The department maintains and manages its downtown parks well through strong corporate partnerships and setting up an endowment. These parks are the showcase of the system since they are the home of many special events annually.

WEAKNESSES

There are numerous areas where staff indicated weaknesses that need to be addressed.

Community Centers

Many are outdated and too small to meet community and program needs. Programs are often not well matched to the populations that are served by the centers. Senior services is not as well integrated into as many centers as it could be.

Parks and Facilities

Additional land acquisition is needed in underserved areas of the city. Sports fields city-wide are outdated and in need of improvements. While design standards exist, a set of overall design principles are needed to support key outcomes.

Operations

Internal sections within Recreation and Parks operate under a silo mentality and communication needs to improve to create a more integrated approach to comprehensive



A department strength is good volunteer support, with over 2.5 million hours supported by volunteers in the department, which is equivalent to 57 full time staff.

planning and problem solving at all levels. Many staff feel over-extended and operational budgets don't meet community expectations. Full-time staff is lacking in therapeutic recreation, marketing, grant-writing, forestry, GIS staff, maintenance, sports and the permit office. Part-time staff are limited and turnover is high. Low bids and poor quality contractors on park buildings have resulted in quality issues.

Maintenance

The department's 14-day mow cycle and Mode Three mowing standards doesn't meet the public expectations for safe, clean and green parks. Equipment lifecycle management is not being followed and there is no maintenance management software or work order system in place.

Revenue Generation

Rental facilities, community centers and competitive sports fields all require upgrades to maintain competitiveness. Allowing for online permitting and the lack of weekend permitting hours limits users of the system.

OPPORTUNITIES

Staff interviews generated numerous opportunities for the department.

Operations

Standards for park maintenance, program services, facility management, customer service, permitting and development need to be created to improve management. The functional management structure should be updated to more accurately depict roles and responsibilities, streamline management and reduce the silo mentality within the department. One example of reorganization would be to

consider moving property management and natural resource management under parks. Finally a training system should be developed for staff to address needs and achieve a higher level of consistency in customer service, program development, efficiency management, cost of services, partnership management, pricing of services, marketing of services, business management, and policy management.

Budget

Cost of service assessment and cost recovery goals for community center, programs and special use facilities will help to support the Department's operation budget. The budget process should engage staff members so they have greater ownership and responsibility.

Community Centers

Community centers should have greater flexibility over when centers are open and closed to better serve their communities. From a facility standpoint, community centers could do more to serve more age groups and a wider population. These include developing a true nature center, making fitness and wellness a core function and program, the addition of indoor heated pools for seniors and therapeutic recreation, considering adding after school programs as a core service, and adding vans to each community center site. Stronger connections should be made between the Art Center and community centers in the system to share programmatic resources. Another indoor field house is also needed for sports services.

Maintenance

CDRP has established modes for maintenance for each park throughout the city. Maintenance standards should be upgraded system-wide from a Mode Three maintenance cycle to a Mode Two maintenance cycle to increase safety, aesthetics and usability. An equipment replacement schedule should be instituted to keep operations costs down and staff productivity high. Refer to Strategies for Maintenance on pages 148-149 of this document for additional information.

Marketing

A marketing and branding plan for the system should be created and the Department should invest in a true marketing department.

THREATS

CRPD staff felt that not having a clear vision for the department and everyone working toward it was the biggest overall threat. There was a definite need identified to become proactive as opposed to being reactive. A big part of this is related to having operational budgets



Lack of park safety will keep people from using parks

that match the service expectations of the public such as reinvesting in existing assets and finishing ambitious projects like the connected multi-use trail system. Instituting higher maintenance standards is critical to improving the image of the parks system in the eyes of the public and increasing safety. The Department is currently hampered budgetarily by not being able to grow budgets through earned income. Solving this problem would allow the department to better invest in revenue producing facilities and cover operational costs.

Communication improvements are also paramount. Department divisions need to work together and directors and managers need to cooperate to maximize effectiveness. Roles need to be better defined and cross training needs to occur across divisions to better integrate the system. Communication externally is just as important as communication internally. The Department needs to do a better job of marketing itself to attract more users and make it easier to take advantage of facilities and programs. The Department could also do a better job of building its brand, differentiating itself from and to tell its story and let residents know what it does and how it positively impacts the City's economy, healthfulness and well-being.

Operationally, one of the biggest concerns is retaining quality people to become full-time employees. A key piece of this is developing and fostering new leadership and allowing younger tenured leadership in the department to emerge.