

Meeting Notes

Subject	Raleigh System Plan - Interviews
Date	January 10 - 17, 2013
Time	n/a
Location	n/a
Attendees	City Staff/ Officials
Prepared	January 17, 2013
Prepared by	Dave Barth

Purpose: Interviews of City Staff and city officials were conducted as part of the public involvement process for the needs and priority assessment phase of the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation System Plan. The following questions and topics were discussed with interviewees:

Questions:

1. Overview of Process
2. Needs and Priorities
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
4. Comparable Communities
5. Vision
6. Additional Comments

The following are comments recorded as part of each interview:

Interview #1

1. Overview of Process
(no comments)
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Don't get a lot of calls; have such a great program. Don't get calls, complaints, etc.
 - Geographic issues: for example Pullen Park doesn't serve African-American community
 - Many parks embedded in neighborhoods, communities, need to be updated and expanded
 - More interest in pocket parks, neighborhood parks, non-programmed
 - Used to hear about connectivity of greenways system, but not much anymore
 - Downtown needs as urbanize, e.g. community/ fitness center
 - Don't hear from dissatisfied users, don't hear about lack of programming, don't hear about people being under-served
 - Occasionally will hear about specialty facilities, e.g. a velodrome
 - Sports tourism/ recruitment is important, lacking in some areas; big opportunity

- Bond issues should include renewal; neighborhood parks are often strongest connection to the City, community-oriented government
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Bonds have been “vehicle of choice”; always have been approved
 - Impact fees generate some funds; primarily pay debt service
 - Fees generate 15-20% of revenues
 - We will be able to get funding; it’s a matter of priority
 4. Comparable Communities
 - Chamber of Commerce does intra-city visits; focus on key topics
 - Austin, because of reputation to be very sustainable
 - No specific City; based on current issues
 5. Vision
 - One of the most Sustainable Cities in the US
 - Culture has changed, used to be about facilities, greenways, etc
 - Don’t hear as much about nuts and bolts anymore, now about quality of life: access to parks, greenways, air and water quality, LEED, recycling, historic preservation
 6. Additional Comments
 - Be careful that Dix Park does not become focus of plan
 - Interested in tourism/ economic development of parks; need to identify opportunities, needs; CVB does marketing, need to do other best practices?
 - Need to address needs of arts, culture, historic preservation entity
 - More public art in addition to ½ cent for public work? Greenways, parks, etc?
 - Using aged infrastructure e.g. the high line, parking lots, etc
 - Capture BIG IDEAS e.g. red fields to green fields, others

Interview #2

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
 - Already hearing from residents about good involvement
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Equity of all resources in southeast area of City
 - Examples: programs, community center facilities, amenities added to existing parks
 - Computers for after school programs, internet access
 - Southeast Raleigh senior center
 - Lack of bathrooms in existing parks
 - Need for centers to be open on weekends, incl. Sundays
 - Updated, safer playground equipment
 - Security, lights in parks and greenways
 - Keep up with renovation, both internal and external; low cost ways to demonstrate responsiveness?
 - Air conditioned gyms
 - Exhibits, interactive “stations” re: African-American history in Raleigh
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Some improvements, such as painting, could come from general fund
 - User fees for programs, camps, etc.
 - Get as many grants as possible
 - Parks bond referendum (2002, 2007); have been successful
 - Partnerships with schools, businesses
 - Already using sales tax, impact fees
4. Comparable Communities
 - Why is District not like other communities in Raleigh?
 - Inner cities: Denver, Pittsburgh (brought small businesses into run down areas)
5. Vision
 - Continue with programming in community centers, greenways and trails, upgrades; equitable distribution of high quality facilities
6. Additional Comments
 - Parks Dept. is doing an outstanding job
 - Best system in the state; have always had a vision, didn't start yesterday

Interview #3

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Don't hear anything; biggest complaint is there's no place to park in Pullen Park
 - What are we going to do with Dix Park?
 - People are aware there's no new money, new reality; quit asking for facilities?
 - City services have not been cut
 - Believe that senior centers and activities (active adult centers) will be needed based on demographics
 - Shared facilities, e.g. Wake County Schools, Wake County Parks
 - County is responsible for human services, including seniors; what is the responsibility of the City?
 - Is there a model for joint use w/ seniors?
 - In addition to "graying of America", also have "browning of America". More inclusiveness, including Hispanic community
 - Not sure what else we need; don't need more golf courses, driving ranges
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Have been very successful with parks, transportation public housing bonds
 - By the time we get bond approved, people are impatient
 - Have been geographically diverse
 - If people see that there's something in it for them, generally vote for it
4. Comparable Communities
 - A couple of places where I've said "oh wow"; Minneapolis has extensive greenways, urban greenways, parks programs, have become a recreation capital; Denver has unique assets (including mountains), outdoor recreation, healthy lifestyles; Boston is walkable, has the commons, history walk; also big urban parks in Chicago, New York, San Francisco with significant public art
5. Vision
 - First and foremost, provide necessary services to seniors, young people; keep kids busy so they stay out of trouble
 - Create a sense of community
 - Create a brand including innovation
 - What's our story? Research, quality of life, innovation
6. Additional Comments
 - City Parks and Rec has done a great job of breaking down internal silos
 - Moore Square project

Interview #4

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Walkable neighborhood parks
 - Inequity in park investments
 - Need to upgrade
 - Not hearing critical lack of facilities; more of a need to add, augment
 - Dog parks not as hot of a topic right now
 - Greenways developed as part of transportation system, not just recreation; need to connect destinations
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Could increase park impact fees, but may be concerns
 - Grants, User Fees
 - Bonds
 - Partnerships
4. Comparable Communities
 - Provided to Parks and Recreation staff
5. Vision
 - Truly sustainable: economically, socially and environmentally. The most sustainable mid-sized city in America
 - Broad-based quality of life
 - Have metrics?
6. Additional Comments
 - Need to make recommendations for Dix
 - Old notion that small parks were useless; need to talk about role for economic sustainability
 - Need to recognize economic value of parks
 - Acknowledge social and economic benefits
 - Want Raleigh to be #1 in every conceivable way

Interview #5

1. Overview of Process
 - Need to address future land use
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Open space in redevelopment areas; not just interior courtyards, balconies
 - Need some type of vehicle, mechanism to create new spaces such as squares to create a sense of place
 - Don't hear as much about sports, soccer, etc. as much as open space preservation, new spaces in urbanizing areas
 - Maintain character, legacy as "City within a park"
 - Parks Dept. doesn't want to maintain small spaces
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Bonds
 - Impact Fees
4. Comparable Communities
 - Charleston, Savannah, Washington DC
 - Some people believe that we need to mimic large cities
 - More into human scale, walkability, low height limits, choices
5. Vision
6. Additional Comments
 - Look at Future Land Use Map
 - How do we plan for increased density, capacity
 - How do we provide for adequate green open space in intensive, redeveloped areas; e.g. original Raleigh plan with major squares
 - Need to interview Jamie Ramsay
 - Talk with Ken Bowers, Mitchell Silvers about redevelopment areas
 - Need proactive planning to show relationships between redevelopment areas, transit corridors (identified), suburban areas, LOS, urban zones
 - Dix will be at one end of Pullen Park
 - Need to asset map Dix; process, governance model

Interview #6

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Opportunities for connectivity of greenways system
 - Wayfinding
 - Greenways for transportation s well as recreation
 - Need to differentiate between urban, suburban spaces
 - Make sure that Parks System Plan is in alignment with Comp Plan
 - Need to do a facility-based LOS analysis
 - Aging in place; shifting away from aging campuses, smaller housing opportunities, walkable areas, walk-to parks, trails
 - LOOK AARP LIVABLE COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
 - 120,000 units by 2030; 270,000 people; shift 60% into 8 growth centers, 12 multi-modal corridors
 - Form-based codes
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Bond issues
 - Impact fees (don't raise)
 - Recommendations to be incorporated into Comp Plan
4. Comparable Communities
 - Want to be trend-setting City of our size
5. Vision
 -
6. Additional Comments
 - Stay aligned with Comp Plan
 - Mitch to send base maps: Area to be Rezoned, Draft Growth Framework (need to identify potential locations, prototypes)
 - **Impact analysis for re-zoning**
 - **Capacity, service area analysis for facilities**

Interview #7

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Dix #1
 - Connectivity, completing greenway network as means of transportation; work on quality; priority is to make north south connections to become a legitimate loop
 - Historically the City has done a fantastic job on parks; as we've grown horizontally, we've developed large parks to meet the needs of communities
 - Have grown to lateral extent, now the opportunity to come back and look at our parks system differently, link parks together
 - Pocket parks #2 (neighborhood, walk-to parks); e.g. 121 Drewery Lane, city-owned site that could connect to the greenway/ sewer easement with bridge
 - Greenway could be the strand, pocket parks could be the pearls
 - Larger parks are excellent, comes down to "granular" level; pocket parks, connectivity
 - Could be opportunities to establish nature trails off of paved trails, mountain bike trails, trail runs
 - Lassiter Mill Dam (on Crabtree creek)
 - Bridges across creeks to provide connectivity
 - Every park to be connected via greenway and bikeway
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Bonds, impact fees
 - Need overall policy with school board
 - Need vehicle/ model for partnerships with businesses
4. Comparable Communities
 - New York conversion, re-capture of public space; use of "throw away spaces for urban farms, gardens, nature parks, etc.
5. Vision
6. Additional Comments
 - Topography is significant; not walkable, "bike-able" for everybody
 - Continuing to use greenway as a transportation network, eliminate barriers as bottlenecks such as Lassiter Mills dam

Interview #8

1. Overview of Process
 - No questions about process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - Aquatics- competition is fierce for lanes, pool time
 - Competition will become more acute as population grows
 - Completion of greenways
 - Have 82 road races/ year – more than 1/ weekend
 - Very active community, into outdoor sports, league play, football/lacrosse/ softball: very active community + magnet for tournaments
 - More tournament facilities will be in demand; residents being forced out of spaces
 - Continue to expand programmatic emphasis on broader human needs, particularly in disadvantaged areas of town
 - Green road facility needs improvements; how do we get local people invested, owning facility, caring for it
 - BUY-IN FROM THE NEIGHBORS
 - Getting people in, training them, empowering them, etc. – remarkable department
3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - BIDs, TIFs in redevelopment areas
 - IMPACT FEES + INCREASED TAX VALUES JUSTIFIED PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN URBAN GREEN SPACES IN NEW URBAN CENTERS
4. Comparable Communities
 - Have never come across a parks system as good as this
 - Austin model: parks department as neighborhood liaisons
5. Vision
6. Additional Comments
 - People become attached to their own facility
 - See -click- fix: how do we respond to street ROW mowing, cleanup?
 - Similar situation on facility side (Facilities and Operations)

John Odom:

1. Overview of Process
2. Needs and Priorities
 - In northeast District, have done very well getting things opened, new aquatics center
 - Biggest question is on outer edge: don't have any recreation facilities
 - Need more facilities
 - Need more senior centers; can't get to new senior centers. Used to have 40+ senior programs, have put all of our money into big centers. Is this the model? Centralized vs. de-centralized
 - Not hearing a lot, have reaped the benefits of the new stuff.
 - Horseshoe Farm was supposed to include gym, soccer fields; still need facilities so people won't have to travel
 - Need to be able to maintain new facilities; include in bond?

3. Funding/ Implementation Opportunities
 - Bonds
 - Should City approach School Board about new bond referendum? Talk to Diane.
 - Impact fees
4. Comparable Communities
 - No comments
5. Vision
6. Additional Comments
 - Just leased big park – Dix
 - Friends of Dix

Summary Themes: (City Councilors, City Manager, Asst. City Manager)**Needs and Priorities:**

- 5 of the 9 interviewees mentioned the need for new neighborhood, “walk-to” or “pocket” parks in under-served areas (this is related to the equity issue below; a total of 7 interviewees mentioned either “equity”, “walkability” or “new neighborhood/pocket/ walk-to” parks)
- 5 of the 9 interviewees said that they do not get calls from dissatisfied or under-served constituents, or hear much about the need for new sports or recreation facilities
- 5 of the 9 interviewees mentioned the need to update or expand existing parks and recreation facilities, with an emphasis on expanded amenities and programs (such as bathrooms, safer play equipment, lighting, air conditioning in gyms, computers with internet access, after – school programs, expanded weekend/ Sunday hours for community centers, historical exhibits)
- 5 of the 9 interviewees mentioned the need to start planning for Dorothea Dix Park
- 5 of the 9 interviewees discussed the need to expand, complete and/or connect the greenways, trails and sidewalk system for transportation as well as recreation; the need to improve the “wayfinding” system was also mentioned
- 4 of the 9 interviewees discussed the need for equity in the geographic distribution of recreation facilities across the City (as mentioned above)
- 4 of the 9 interviewees discussed the need to serve an aging population and/or the need for new senior centers, including one in southeast Raleigh
- 3 of the 9 interviewees discussed the need for urban parks in the downtown/ redevelopment areas to accommodate the growing urban population. They noted that urban parks serve a different function than suburban parks and should be planned and designed differently. They also discussed the need for “vehicle” or “mechanism” to create these spaces as redevelopment occurs
- 3 of the 9 interviewees mentioned the need for “special use” sports venues – including an aquatics center, tournament athletics facility, and a velodrome - to serve the local population and to attract sports tourism. It was also mentioned that competition sports facilities are “forcing people out” of traditional recreational parks
- 2 of the 9 interviewees mentioned the need for joint planning and use with Wake County Schools and Parks

- Other needs mentioned by interviewees included arts, culture and historic preservation; more diversity and inclusiveness, particularly focusing on the needs of the Hispanic community; “branding” the City of Raleigh; and maintaining the legacy and character of a “City within a park”

Funding/ Implementation:

- 8 of the 9 interviewees stated that voter-approved bond referendums have historically been successful in Raleigh, and would be the preferred funding mechanism for proposed parks and recreation system improvements
- 7 of the 9 interviewees also mentioned impact fees as a traditional funding tool; however several interviewees cautioned against increasing the amount of current park impact fee rates
- Several interviewees also mentioned the general fund, grants, partnerships with schools and businesses, and/or the use of special assessments and taxing districts such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Tax Increment Financing (TIFs)

Comparable Communities:

- 3 of the 9 interviewees felt that Raleigh has no comparables
- Other interviewees mentioned Austin, Denver (healthy lifestyles, outdoor recreation), Pittsburgh (redevelopment), Minneapolis (greenways and parks), Boston (walkable), New York (re-capture and conversion of “throw-away” spaces), San Francisco (public art), Chicago (big urban parks), Charleston, Savannah, Washington, DC,