



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

PUBLIC MEETING BREAK-OUT DISCUSSION NOTES

February 24, 2010

7-8:30 pm

UpCounty Regional Services Center
12900 Middlebrook Road
Germantown, MD 20874

Twenty-six residents participated in this public meeting, a second meeting 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?

At the top of the list of strengths is the variety of programs and facilities. Also, participants indicated that facilities are clean and well-maintained (e.g. community centers, soccer fields, etc.). Programs are appropriately sized and affordable. At the same time, people were enthusiastic about the number of parks and natural resources such as the wildlife habitat, river corridors, and undeveloped land. Other key strengths included use of the internet, the volunteer base, and the safety of the parks and facilities.

Internet

- Information on the internet
- Web-based registration

Programs

- Variety of available programs and facilities
- Affordability of programs and free programs
- Variety of size and types of locations
- Variety of programs (3)
- Varied, quality, quantity
- Classes are appropriately sized (sometimes poses a negative to access when classes are closed)
- Community centers
- Many facilities (soccer, golf)
- Clean, well-maintained facilities



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Parks

- High use of parks
- High number of parks throughout county
- Park acreage
- Lots of space (parks)
- Lots of land
- Lots of parks

Outdoor Resources

- Wildlife habitat
- Natural resources (undeveloped)
- Trails
- River corridors
- Vast array of resources
- Balance between recreation and conservation

Other Strengths

- Staff provide strong customer service
- Safety
- Volunteers
- Special use permitting and regulations encourage use
- Public/Private Partnerships

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?

Three key themes emerged – youth, outdoor recreational resources, and natural resources – followed by access and safety. Programs for youth are most essential, especially afterschool, summer, and for ages 18-25. Outdoor recreational resources were often cited – in particular rectangular and other sport fields, community gardens, pools, and trails. Access meant the many opportunities, such as through connected trails and affordability, to use park and recreation resources.

Youth

- After school programs
- Summer youth programs
- Programs for youth and ages 18-25
- Provide “latchkey” programs (public service)
- Opportunities for youth

Recreation

- Organized sports
- Rectangular fields



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- Recreation centers
- Pools
- Skate parks
- Understand “sports” demand for youth and adults
- Sport fields and facilities

Parks and Natural Resources

- Native integrity
- Larger parks more desirable
- Environmental /outdoor education
- Outdoor classroom
- Learn to revere nature
- Natural resources (stream valley parks, undeveloped parks, ecological function)
- Community gardens
- Trails
- Providing open space for environmental benefits

Safety

- Safety
- Park patrols for safety
- Maintain and improve safety and quality of visitor experience

Access

- Connectivity to nature
- Trail accessibility
- Access to outdoor recreation
- Access to quality facilities
- Affordable programs
- Maintains balance of access between facilities and use, proportional distribution of resources
- Maintain accessibility

Other Essentials

- Senior programs
- Mental health
- Inspiration
- Special needs programs (increasing services, future needs)
- Diversity
- Community collaboration involving users and residents in service provision
- Opportunities for range of ages (age appropriate activities)
- Increases quality of life through services and resources
- Bathrooms



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

Channel youth energy towards positive and healthy choices rather than towards gangs, drugs, and alcohol. Provide youth-based spaces and amenities for changing trends. Another key issue to address is childhood obesity. Provide access to open spaces, community gardens, sports fields, to get people outdoors more often. Improve outdoor resources with impervious surfaces, better lighting, and artificial turf fields. Parks and recreation services are able to provide seniors with opportunities to socialize and have inexpensive meals.

Youth

- Lack of life experiences
- After school issues
- Gang issues
- Inappropriate teen use of drugs and alcohol
- Keeping kids busy – afterschool programs needed
- Teen centers
- Lack of youth-based spaces
- Obesity
- Childhood obesity
- Children have a safe place to play/walk/ride bikes or engage in sports
- Activities for youth
- New trends in amenities (skate parks, paved areas—i.e. for trikes, knowing what they want)
- Channel energy

Outdoor Resources

- No connection to nature
- Nature deficit disorder (get people outside)
- Accessibility to open areas
- Park and recreation programs addressing health issues through trails and exercise programs
- Lack of natural learning experiences
- Growing food
- Lack of community gardens (quantity)
- Providing “native nectar” or habitat
- Lack of rectangular fields (different opinions of artificial turf fields)
- Lighting
- Impervious surfaces and storm water management
- Light pollution (urban growth)
- Equitable division of park resources

Seniors

- Senior issues (socialization)
- Seniors have a place to go during the day and have good inexpensive meals



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Community

- Can provide a sense of community
- Parks and recreation needs to address unique local issues

Other Solutions

- More frequent assessments
- Coordination between land owning agencies
- Police patrol
- Tourism

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

This question led to many and varied solutions which seem to fit under the themes of services, outdoor resources or facilities, parks, programs, and indoor facilities. Following are highlights from the small group discussions. Understand customers' needs better, such as the desire to participate in new recreational trends. Maintain flexibility in programming. More engagement with users through education will lead to proper usage and reservation of fields. Increase accessibility by connecting parks through trails and sidewalks. Invest in more dedicated fields such as soccer and football as well as cricket and rugby.

Services

- More customer service
- Understand customer needs better
- Flexibility in programs and usage
- Improve communication
- Improve outreach to teach proper usage and reservation of fields
- Increase the departments' speed in adjustment to new trends
- Streamline responsiveness
- Maintain affordability
- Increase transportation
- Litter/trash collection
- Cooperation between parks and recreation allows them to better address issues
- Enforce the field downtime
- Method to address new sports

Outdoor Facilities

- More picnic areas
- More dog parks
- More soccer fields
- More observational gardens
- More dedicated football fields



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- More walkable access (add sidewalks)
- More fields, especially for youth activities (cricket, rugby)
- More skate parks

Parks and Natural Areas

- Increase weed warrior program
- More park land
- Connect more parks
- Create more greenways
- Deer management
- Connect trails (trails master plan)
- Edible vegetation in parks
- Increase, expand, enhance environment with parkland

Programs

- More after school programs
- More recreation and education programs
- Programs should reflect diversity
- Programs for 10 to 20-year olds
- Plan for more seniors, more diversity, and more youth services

Indoor Facilities

- Green technology for building
- More quality facilities
- Free open gym centers
- Soccerplex (too many fields)
- One stop shop
- Community gathering places

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

The departments can consider potential funding sources such as raised taxes, higher and more usage fees, and state and federal grants. Maintain realistic budgets. Community involvement can produce viable partnerships. Increase the volunteer base.

Investment

- Increase fees to raise revenues
- Higher fees for private use
- Raise taxes
- Grants
- Tap into state and federal grants
- Maintainable and realistic budgets



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- Look at other funding sources
- The county needs to charge for its use, all usage. Folk will pay if they know that we need to get funds for maintenance. Issue a tax. Proof of payment through a car sticker, for example.

Partnerships

- Increase partnerships
- Community involvement/partnerships
- Public/private partnerships
- Recreation and parks can work together (cooperation)
- Partner with schools
- Outreach to communities

Volunteers

- More opportunity for volunteers
- Volunteer programs

Other Improvements

- Benchmark
- Ask children how to improve
- Address accessibility (identify inequities)

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?

There are not enough fields for football or dedicated space for extreme sports or off-road bikers. Hadley Playground is a good example of meeting special needs; increase such opportunities for persons with disabilities. Down County needs better public transportation connections to resources. Clarksburg is underserved and Silver Spring has too few parks in proportion to the high density population. Engage the Latino and African populations more.

Specialized Sports

- Not enough football fields
- Extreme sports
- Off-road bikers

Special needs

- Disabilities/Distribution (mobility, equal access, Hadley Playground is a good example)

Geographic Areas

- Down County (transportation)
- Clarksburg (underserved)
- Up County



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- Silver Spring (high density to number of parks)

Immigrant Populations

- Latino
- African
- Customize plans to specific populations
- Address diverse communities

Other Populations

- Car-less population
- Young teens
- Tiny tots
- Seniors
- Financial aid