



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

Instructors Focus Group Notes

Department of Recreation, Administrative Office

April 14, 2010

Following are the notes from the discussion held by the four (4) focus group attendees of contract instructors. This focus group was facilitated by Hadiah Jordan from Justice and Sustainability Associates (member of the GreenPlay consultant team) as part of the Vision 2030 project.

1. What are the key strengths of the parks and recreation facilities, programs and services in Montgomery County?

- Variety of programming that serve range of ages and the number locations.
- Number of facilities. Large supply of buildings, facilities, and properties for activities. The Montgomery County resources are significantly greater than in other counties.
- The collaborative nature of Montgomery County's various facilities. They are individual locations that also work well together.
- High quality of county's programs, skilled people (contractors) and partnerships, including resources, teachers, level of experience of teaching staff/contractors.
- The flexibility of the administration with regards to the contractors needs. For example, if the courses oversell and the "cap" needs to be raised, frequently permitted. When the courses need to be altered by location or date the county has historically worked with the instructors.
- The county values the experience and expertise of the contractors and it is reflected in their policy toward class cancelation.

2. What do you believe to be the most essential (of critical importance) public parks and recreation services in the community?

- Places to gather.
- The free programming that is currently offered. For example, outdoor courts, open gym periods, and classes.
- The breadth of the programs and parks that are offered. The park must continue to offer resources that are affordable to most.
- The resources need to be accessible in all ways including transportation and cost.
- From an administrative and instructor's point of view that there is an effort made to accommodate the needs of the students/participants.

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

- Occupying teens' free-time. Providing space for kids and teens to be comfortable and sociable.
- Engage youth and activating their mental and physical abilities.
- There is a lack of community across the county. Community centers help to create a place for local communities to grow.
- The county is divided. Programs could be utilized to bridge the gap.

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

- Improved outreach for the programs currently offered.
- Improved advertising for classes that will be offered. Help the instructors get the word out through marketing, website updates, flyers, etc. Look for more cost effective ways to get the word out.
- Focus on the cleanliness, maintenance of the facilities.

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

- Extend the distribution list for the program to include new county residents.
- Offer free classes and open houses to help inform the community about new and current services.
- Mail out postcards that say to sign-up, pick up guides, and look online for what we offer. List a few of the classes so people will know immediately what is available (cooking, crafts, sports, etc.). This might ease the burden of increasing the number of guides and the associated costs of mailing to more people.
- Consider a Free Trial Offering of an upcoming class if people register (coupon). Other option if a participant takes a free bonus trial class, then when she registers for the class the cost of the class will be reduced (enter a code).

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?

- People who don't drive.
- Eastern area, much of which was attributed to lack of registration on the part of the community members (this led to cancelations).
- The county residents' view of neighborhoods, such as of East County, leads to a cycle of failure of programs. The belief that an area is dangerous and crime ridden prohibits people from becoming participants. Solutions include better lighting and security.
- The problems in East County include the lack of awareness, ill-fitting programs, the need to get the word out. Work more with the community.
- Commuters want classes to begin no earlier than 7:00pm.

7. Are there potential partners that the Department of Parks or Department of Recreation should consider working with in the future?

- Churches and religious institutions
- Increase partnerships with small business to host programs.
- Especially schools and libraries, as well as and other government agencies – marketing of programs, more collaboration – support of flyering, distribution of guides.