



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

DownCounty Focus Group Notes

Potomac Community Center

April 12, 2010

Following are the notes from the discussion held by the three (3) focus group attendees. This focus group was facilitated by Hadiyah 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?

- Diversity of services the county offers – recreation centers, Crescent Trail, swim resources, community centers.
- The breadth of services attracts a broad spectrum of users.
- The depth of ages that the programs appeal to. Wide array of classes and resources.
- Programs are affordable.
- Services, facilities, and classes are plentiful and affordable.
- Wisconsin Place Community Center is great. And, it's good that the county is tweaking programs to reflect the users.

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 and recreation?

- Parks. I have two young children and the availability and maintenance are incredible. Safe clean areas for my children to play in. It's great to have a resource for birthdays, etc.
- Community centers and recreation services.
- The classes. There is something going on every night here that caters to people from youngsters to elders.
- Meeting facilities for clubs.
- Gym (weight rooms).
- All are essential to a full service recreation center.
- Having a hub for kids to come to after school, in the winter, etc.
- Club Friday and after school hours programs.
- Green space. Protecting what we have and seeking out opportunities to increase green space in Down County.

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

- Ball field maintenance. Park grounds in general. Maintenance of resources impacts the community.
- Maintenance of the community centers needs to be improved. Dilapidated facilities are unsafe, ugly, etc. We don't do a good job of preventative maintenance and upgrading. Everything that we have should be maintained before we open new facilities and/or create new properties.
- A place for teenagers to go is important. Occupying the time of teens so that they aren't just hanging out at home when no one is there is important.
- Community building. The community centers can pull the community together. Give a focal point to the neighborhood. Perhaps events could be targeted towards neighborhoods. Events such as craft day, open houses, international festivals, etc.
- Can bring people together that wouldn't normally come together.

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

- Some of the centers could use better transportation to the recreation facilities, i.e. activity bus (Wisconsin Center for example).
- The new community center at Wisconsin needs more publicity so that users will know about what is there.
- Improve access to pool programs; expand pools, or some other strategy. The classes are in high demand and there could be more access. Demand exceeds the resources. There is a lack when it comes to aquatic resources.
- Some of the contractors should be reviewed. Not enough supervision for the children. Bad camper to counselor ratio. The camper classes weren't very good; it was more like a day care. The whole summer camp program should be reviewed. Programming should be more enriching. Also, it would be good to provide ½ day programs rather than full-day.
- Capital improvement plan for the Department of Recreation should be designed. You have to be able to take care of what you have.
- Review the organization structure. Why is the recreation department separate from the parks program? Merging the two departments would help to alleviate inefficiencies and redundancy. Why is there a separate park pass account and recreation account for users? There should be a better connection between the two departments. For example, why do you have to register a team through the parks department but use a recreation facility?
- Combine the ID systems at a minimum. With regards to registration, why do you have two different passwords/member numbers which depend on which department a user is registering for? As a consumer it seems confusing.
- Expanded hours for the community centers. Example, earlier hours would allow for pre-work access.
- Evaluate locations for expanded resources. The Wisconsin Place Center has a need for additional indoor basketball resources.
- A community oriented information newsletter or web post that informs the community about what is happening at the center and possibly in the community in general. Could use the list serves, community websites, etc.
- Address the growing "boomer" population. Therefore smaller, community based centers will be important so that elder populations will not have to commute to recreation centers on freeways, etc.

- As the populations age, seek out opportunities to create programs that do not require money and do not necessarily make money. For example, bridge clubs, walking clubs, book clubs, moms clubs, etc. This supports minimal costs opportunities while building community. Use the existing infrastructure but find opportunities to organize users.

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

- Given the limited resources of the county, innovative relationships with the community members should be sought out and encouraged. For example, create a “Friends of...” program.
- Community should be engaged to support the parks, for example. It would be great to have opportunities to contribute when possible, such as community tree plantings (even if community members work together to donate trees), placement of benches, painting teams, etc. (Attendees seemed to have had varying experiences with involvement opportunities. One knew a lot more about what opportunities for involvement there were. Bottom line, there could be more education or public information about the opportunities to contribute.)
- More public-private partnerships. And/or community public partnerships.
- Better planning through capital improvement plans, strategic plans, maintenance plans, etc.
- Think in terms of leveraging the skills and abilities of the community resources to create programs – boy scouts, organizing walking clubs, holiday craft fairs, etc.

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?

- The county does a pretty good job reaching out to diverse groups with lots of diverse resources.

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

- Use the volunteers, let them organize themselves, don't be afraid of that.