



Vision 2030

Montgomery County Parks and Recreation Vision 2030 and Strategic Plan

Youth Advisory Committee Focus Group Notes

Holiday Park Senior Center

April 27, 2010

Twelve members of the Youth Advisory Committee participated in this focus group. Following are the discussion notes.

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

- Recreation Centers. Provide safe outlets for students.
- Basketball courts
- County basketball teams
- Parks are great and well kept
- Club Friday
- Potomac After Hours
- Cabin John Park. The train is neat (2 mentions). The trash compactor pig is awesome – there should be more of them.
- Recreation centers are amazing; the facilities are terrific.
- Potomac Community Center has a lot of fun stuff to do and they have camps.
- Sports Academy. Blair in particular has great programs for kids.
- Sports programs through the county. Flag football, tennis, soccer, softball, dance, and voice programs.
- Swim teams. The summer swim team is really good.
- Swim teams are awesome. I was afraid to put my head under the water until I took lessons.

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?

- The year round programming is important.
- Keep the parks as jewels of the county. Keep up maintenance of facilities and resources (remove graffiti, keep clean, etc.)
- Swim team and sports programs. I have been a part of the swim team community since I was little and I feel like the leadership and participants are like family I could turn to.
- Middle school After Hours program provides a good place for kids of that age.
- Homework centers, recreation centers, sports academies, after school on campus programs, and RecExtra.
- Counselor In Training program. Middle school aged and autistic children programs should be expanded so that there are more older kids to support the adult staff.
 - TR assistant
 - Mainstream companion program

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

- Really good programs in the county, but the marketing of them is insufficient.
- Recycling. Opportunities to learn about and practice recycling.
- More middle school aged children programs. Hoover Middle School doesn't have the after school programs and we should.
- Drugs and alcohol in youth. Peer pressure.
- Cheating. There are a lot of pressures for students to compete and excel and students cheat as a result.
- Gangs
- The County should team up with schools and counselors.
- A lot of homeless people come on to the track preventing us from using it safely. More security.
- Parks and Recreation could develop programs that target elementary students to teach ethics – address cheating, physical violence, drugs, and gangs. Provide a foundation for all programs to address conflict resolution, personal integrity, etc. Start earlier in a child's life.
- Parent seminar run by the Parks and Recreation to educate parents on signals of problem behavior and to offer management strategies.
- Increase leadership programs and workshops that build youth confidence. Students who have confidence and goals are less likely to make decisions dictated by peer pressure.
- Jobs, career opportunities, college. Support programs that would engage students and make them aware of what is possible in their lives.

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

- Fix the distribution of information concerning programs and registration. Parks and Recreation websites is not user friendly. Everything is difficult to understand and navigate.
- Invest in game systems so that students can have the chance to play together.
- Wii Tournaments should happen more often. Take advantage of fads that kids are playing to raise the profile.
- More youth leadership opportunities for young people.
- More career centers for students.
- Thomas Edison program should be expanded to parks and recreation.
- Internships. Programs should offer more internship options.

Marketing/Outreach

- Marketing should target middle to high school students so that younger students won't be left out.
- Newsletter, one that people could sign up for to get updates.
- Columbia Home School Community as a partner
- *Private schools are often left out of the loop.*
- Flyers are ineffective. Students get a lot in the same day; they all look the same.
- Recreation website is not very useful, effective, clear, or easily navigable.
- Homeroom videos. Show programs in the county. Kids are visual and the message would be more effective.
- School counselors should be engaged to inform students about programs in the county.
- Facebook
- Text messaging

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

- Use Youth Advisory Committee to learn what fads are “in” now and leverage that information to create awareness of programs.
- Use existing news programs on campus to get the word out, i.e. morning announcements, Wake Up news.
- Student assemblies on campuses that are like an information fair for Parks and Recreation programming.
- Target the parents. Parents make more decisions for middle school and elementary school children.
 - Direct Mailing
 - Email
 - Text alerts – place to sign up

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’s access to programs needs to be improved because it is very difficult to understand what is available, the appropriate age, the way to sign up, etc.
- Rockville, Gaithersburg, Potomac are not as well connected to the Park and Recreation programming as they could be. The county doesn’t seem to reach out to the cities.
- Potomac students cannot easily access centers, programs, and events. It would be great if there were a bus, or system to transport students. Problems: no sidewalks, no bike paths, a lot of traffic, a lack of public transit.
- Some youth do not have access due to lack of transportation.
- Provide more in local communities so that students do not have to travel so far.
- Provide vans or buses at locations to take students from central transportation spots located in the neighborhoods. (Not only schools.)
- Ride On buses should expand the teen fee program. Provide free local buses for students. Morning student bus access.

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

- Schools
- Metro
- Universal Ride-on and Metro pass