



Appendix A: Core Advisory Group Meeting Summary



Core Advisory Group Visioning Workshop

June 20, 2003

Summary

CAG Overview

Roughly 40 participants and staff participated in the Core Advisory Group Visioning Session conducted by the Johnson Hill Land Ethics Studio Friday June 20. These participants were asked to help craft a set of goals and visions for Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation that will lead the department over the next five years. The statements and opinions contained in this summary represent the beliefs, opinions and feelings of the CAG participants only.

Following an overview of the County Park system participants were broken up into five groups of between 6-8 members each. These groups were asked:

1. Is the WCPARCs vision/mission statement accurate, or should it be modified? What is missing from the statement?
2. Are the existing park and recreation facilities adequate? What can be done to improve them?
3. Are the different regions of the county all adequately served by WCPRC facilities? Is there a need to develop additional facilities? Where?
4. What kind of facilities/services are most lacking in your area?
5. How can the Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation Commission best work with municipalities, other agencies and recreation providers to maximize recreation opportunities throughout the county?
6. Is WCPRC programming adequate? Is there a need for increased programming, or different programming at different locations?
7. Is there any specific land that you think is ripe for acquisition for natural area preservation, greenway linkages or recreation development?

Issues

During the course of the workshop, several themes and principals emerged as key focal points for the Master Plan Update. These themes are:

1. Developing a connected network of recreational facilities that provides a non-motorized connection to county, local and private recreation areas for all citizens.
2. Developing a connected network of natural areas and open space.
3. Washtenaw County's role in providing recreation is to serve as an umbrella organization – urging dialog, discussion and partnership between the myriad of recreation providers in the county. All groups recommended an annual recreation summit.
4. The need to engage in partnerships with municipal and private recreation providers as well as is public-private partnerships.
5. The need to improve the marketing of Washtenaw County parks to attract additional users as well as to develop a stronger identity.

While many of the groups offered specific recommendations, consensus was quickly developed for these principles.

Summary of Individual Group Responses:

Is the WCPARCs vision/mission statement accurate, or should it be modified? What is missing from the statement?

- Shorter - less specific
- Can mission statement include affordability & access to currently underserved population
- Stress partnership/collaborative
- Could be a lead role in parks/recreation coordination w/in county. This would help to institutionalize the partnerships, ensuring they survive individual participants. "oversight"
- Could also be performed by County Planning
- Need to recognize/prioritize the economic role of parks/recreation
- Need for balance - recreationalists not represented
- Leave out incomes, needs, age
- Excellent

- Security/safety in Parks is an issue — add this to “safe” experience— try to keep parks from becoming pick up places
- Need something about financing
- Stewardship – need to include stewardship in #4
- Rework #5 to be more about financing that about “revenue” – try and reword to develop self-sufficiency. Look at adjusting cost to ensure self-sufficiency.
- Continue partnership programs with other organizations for river parks & corridors. Take a greater leadership role ala a greenways advisory board

Facilities and Programming:

- Facilities lacking
- Frog Island Park in Ypsilanti needs upkeep and improvement. If not, then we loose something out of the system, in particular urban parks. Why not partner so perhaps County’s role might extend beyond just their facilities.
- Parks are local during the week, then on weekend they receive regional use.
- Why duplication of efforts, such as access stickers, for a reduced fee \$5 multiple access stickers. Reducers the number of users who will use different facilities with multiple stickers for access
- Municipal parks are often used by regional residents.
- Need additional canoe access points. Some are pay for use, others are not
- Revenue generation comes from active facilities. Interpretive centers don’t bring in \$\$, golf courses do
- Golf can generate \$100,000 - \$200,000 a year. This money can be used to purchase OS.
- Canoe access. Proper spacing for additional canoe users. Signage directing people to where some are privately run. This is a revenue generator or a service. HCMA makes \$25,000 a year on this. But you have to be careful not to have over use – a boating party
- Pools – have canoe livery at the water park.
- Recreation centers – as busy as they are, they don’t break even. Too often there are contract deals which give use away for free
- Limited parking at the Recreation Center is a problem
- Look to develop newer programs such as pilates to keep up with trends
- Disk golf – could have more users are willing to pay. Also need supervision and management

- Dog park
- Ironically park development can contribute to urban sprawl. People want to live near park facilities. Park expansion can be tax generators for communities. Having good parks increases property values. Wayne County, for example has good parks, Detroit does not.
- Shortage of winter weather activities
- Neglecting the skate park-age type user
- Linkage & connectivity i.e. biggest issues include horse trails in link
- Rolling Hills needs a non-motorized link
- Lots of very specific links on east side of 23 connect Saline w/ Milan w/non-motorized trail
- Land ripe for acquisition - River frontage in general and Key urban river frontage
- Between the cities and Metroparks, the County has sufficient facilities
- Buy land and provide programming for youth
- Only 1 naturalist at County – there is a need to increase efforts
- More support for site management of specific issues but also provide public programming component
- Enhance and augment – staff to inventory systems and coordinate management
- County serve as facilitator/coordinator of jurisdictional multi-agency programming provided – serve as “clearing house” for information
- Active rec well served
- Programming - Need for additional programming
- Stewardship can be a part of doing public image
- Should facilities/development be focused in communities that have made a commitment (financial) to parks & recreation
- Natural areas should be #1 priority, also fits in w/economic strategy
- Need more natural areas – no more golf courses
- Consolidate large contiguous blocks
- County needs to look at filling need to buy, preserve & manage large tracts
- Is WCPRC looking at what facilities/needs are not being met? Yes – survey by Morpace.
- County should focus on “linkages” inter-jurisdictional
- Critical need for access to Huron River for canoes & kayaks.

- Specific facilities – the real need is linkages.
- There is a demographic segment not being served – either Gen X or Gen Y
- Be more “flexible” to liability issues.
- There is a shortage of winter weather recreation activities. Existing winter facilities are full (Murray Recreation Center).
- Need more parking at Recreation Center

Role of Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation:

- County act as facilitators to ensure partnerships/collaborations survive
- Focus facilities & acquisition on municipalities w/ Parks & Rec resources – those communities that have made a commitment
- Each agency has a role – these should be complimentary, not competitive.
- Representation by active recreation groups – balancing needs of region together w/ WCPRC as clearinghouse
- Network of County Parks, Township Parks, City Parks, private nature preserves, HCMA, schools etc.
- Public/private partnerships
- Greenways – County – umbrella organization
- Development requirements
- Active recreation requests what does City do?, What should County do?
- Who’s who listing – “master list”, services that are available, who can provide help
- County coordinate larger stewardship & environ.
- Educational opportunities
- County can coordinate all of this – making sure services & programs don’t overlap
- County needs to be more proactive in identifying lands- have inventory ready & use other group to approach land owners
- Need to look at ways to stretch the partnership w/someone like SEMIC to act as negotiator
- Look at purchasing wetlands
- Key need to identify key natural areas
- NAP – key – county’s role is to help assist – acquire, preserve & manage the natural areas.

- Lead connectivity effort because they can bridge Municipal Boundaries
- Coordination of recreation efforts – more of this type of communication
- Coordinated GIS
- Protection of natural areas is key issue (Marshall Park, Townships)
- Protect the larger out-lying areas & state will not be interested in taking over
- State is dropping the ball on State Parks
- Parks are not about being self-supporting
- Would also tie in to overall expenses of park system – cutting parks very expensive.
- Facilitate connectivity projects, greenways and non-motorized path systems across jurisdiction lines and communities
- Coordination and ability between jurisdictions – bring together to collaborate and plan – County best suited to provide
- Coordinated GIS systems

Specific Land/Facilities for Acquisition/Development

- Huron River Trail completion key next 5 years.
- Connect along AA rail to Saline
- Look to augment & add to existing areas – look around the fringes of AA
- Specific facilities – the real need is linkages.
- Boundaries of urbanized areas would benefit from more preservation of natural areas/ open space
- Huron River particularly key urban river frontage
- Rolling Hills needs a non-motorized link
- Lots of very specific links on east side of 23 connect Saline w/ Milan w/non-motorized trail
- Milan – Saline connection
- Developer resisting granting of easement possible parks site on river
- State Property – York Twp. Open flat, ball fields, golf course
- Willis & Platt – cemetery site
- York Twp property donated by the state, 2 x 900 acres available
- Opportunity for joint acquisition next to Marshall park City of AA & County,

- Also for connections to Matthei
- More protection along Huron River – County-wide
- Too many golf courses in Michigan – in competition with private sector –County should not be in that business
- Buffer & enhance natural park areas around existing parks
- Areas adjacent to Marshall Park (owned by Dominos)
- Areas along 14 could/should be reviewed
- Look at purchasing additional wetland areas
- Identify natural areas throughout County for acquisition & protection

