

**East and West Fairmount Park
Community Vision
Moderator Report**

Date of Forum: September 30, 2013

Location of Forum: Discovery Charter School

Moderator name(s): Shakira Abdul Ali

Group Description

The group was comprised of **17 participants** – approximately 3/5 were African American, 2/5 were Caucasian; mostly female (approx. 5/6?)

(As sole moderator, I neglected to acquire an exact count of the demographic make-up of the group due to an interest in starting in enough time to complete the task.)

Ice-Breaker

Some of the stated reasons these local community members gave for attending the meeting tonight were:

- *I work in the Park; I love it and care for the future of the Park.*
- *I'm interested to know what's going on; I live near the Park and I play there*
- *The City doesn't maintain our section of the Park (Conshohocken Ave.), near the old Woodside Park. There's lots of debris. One of my neighbors and I take care of that area – picking up trash.*
- *I'm a long-time resident. Given the presence of this new school (Discovery Charter), can the Park be used for parking for parents?*
- *I also have concerns about the parking and the vehicle congestion. Cars are driving too fast through the area.*
- *I'm interested in the preservation and conservation of various sites in the Park.*
- *I want to know about plans for the Park, including cleanliness and lighting.*
- *I just started jogging. More traffic lights are needed; paving on Belmont Avenue would be helpful.*
- *I'm a life-long advocate for the parks. I want them to be everything for everyone!*
- *Crossing Belmont Avenue during rush hour is really difficult.*
- *I see the potential for the Park. I want it to be cleaner and safer.*
- *I'm new to the area, and just want to know more about the community and about the Park.*
- *I want to know what's going on. I'm also new to the area; I use the Park to walk and for bike riding.*
- *I want to know what impact will any development have on property values – and I want to "preserve the quiet enjoyment" of the Park (emphasis intended!)*
- *I represent Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. – we want to hear residents' concerns, and offer his input.*
- *Came to listen; I live in Chester, PA and I want to learn about local, civic engagement practices that work.*

- *I use the Belmont Plateau. I want more active participation and engagement in the Park among residents*

Part 1: Use in the park

How people used the Park in the past, and how they use it now.

- *Family cookouts & barbecuing*
- *Football leagues – 8-9 years – 15 yrs. Pop Warner teams. They play at Belmont & State Road, near Centennial Café.*
- *Dog walking – currently there's a dog 'park' near Lincoln statue entrance*
- *Walking, jogging, biking and hiking*
- *Study botany*
- *Meditation walks*
- *Swimming*
- *Driving down Kelly Drive*
- *Viewing the City from the Belmont Mansion.*
- *Attending events in the Park.*
- *Watching the horses on Chamounix Drive; and the Youth Hostel – it's a great place for People watching*
- *Tennis, basketball and soccer*
- *13 miles of trail in the Park*
- *Concerts at the Mann Music Center and Dell East*
- *Watching fireworks*
- *Finding quiet places to draw and meditate.*
- *Photography*
- *Sports leagues based in the Park*
- *The Whispering Benches*
- *Please Touch Museum*
- *Bird watching*
- *Eating at the Inn on Forbidden Drive*
- *Participating in organized walks*
- *Exercising*
- *MLK Drive: being closed from April – October*
- *Azalea Gardens in the Spring*
- *Japanese House and the Horticultural Center*
- *Centennial Café*
- *Family Reunions in the Summer*
- *Regattas on the River*
- *Japanese Festival in the Spring*
- *Star gazing*

How people would like to use the park and what gets in the way of using the park in these ways:

- *I would like to fish in the Park*

- *I would like to draw, paint AND fish in the Park at nighttime. Now, there are too many wild dogs and rabid raccoons.*
- *Would love to walk and feel safe anywhere in the Park*
- *Would like the Playhouse in the Park to be rebuilt and re-opened.*
- *Would like to see the Underground Railroad House open for more regular hours.*
- *Would like to see trees labeled.*
- *Would like to see police on horseback; a greater presence whether on horses or bikes, would lend a greater feeling of safety.*
- *I would like the Nature Center for Children to add fishing capacity.*
- *Trash dumping in the Park is a major problem. There are no “No Dumping” signs. They should add flashing lights or speed bumps in order to slow the traffic down going through the Park.*
- *Add Rangers to enforce existing codes; also provide education about the features of the Park.*
- *Plant flowers along the City streets that abut the Park – especially along the entry ways into the Park. That would likely deter trash dumping.*
- *Add Community Gardens in the Park.*
- *Improve the walkway along Sweetbriar Road with better lighting.*
- *Make the Deer Hunting season known to the local community, so that residents know when the deer roundups will occur. I was in the Park before dawn one morning, and witnessed this activity. It was scary.*
- *Rehab and reopen the Fountain in front of Memorial Hall; bring back dancing at night.*
- *Prevent industrial dumping in the Park. Some of us are working to keep these areas clean where people have filled up the trash cans.*
- *Restore the cookout pavilions. Notwithstanding that Permits regulate how people are to use them, they are not kept in great shape.*
- *Add more bathrooms; more seating; keep them clean; add greater police watch.*
- *Add compostable toilets.*
- *Make the Park more ‘children’ friendly – add lighting supervision, history guides to educate children on the features and structures in the Park*
- *Provide a greater opportunity for community engagement and volunteerism to address some of these ideas*
- *Start a “Friends” group of concerned neighbors who are invited to join.*
- *How do we share information? What media can we use that will get to everyone?*
- *Fewer cars parking in the Park; the parked cars diminishes the beauty of the Park*

Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

During the second portion of our group conversation, we examined the draft guidelines for East and West Fairmont Park. Most felt that the guidelines more-or-less supported the current and future uses they wished to see in the park that had been discussed earlier.

When asked what they specifically liked about the guidelines, the following points were made:

- #5 – considering that anything we do, there will be an impact. We paid for living in this area. We want people to be mindful of the impact that any actions taken will have on this neighborhood.
- #6 – Making the Park more accessible; having a walkway / sidewalk to access the Park safely
- #5 – Neighbors should have input before changes are made in the Park areas adjacent to their homes – e.g., volume levels of Park events; closing roadways (the impact on local parking)
- The noise pollution from the music coming from the Mann Center and the Robin Hood Dell is tremendous. The new stage tends to over-project the sound.
- #3 – Would like education about the location of creeks, identifying what is accessible. Currently, there is no map, and no signage. Is the water potable? There are other beautiful venues that don't have signage to identify what they are.
- The café at the Please Touch Museum – the admission fee is prohibitive for many local residents. Residents should be able to use the café without paying the Museum Admission fee.
- There aren't too many concessions where Park users can get refreshments.
- #6 – Memorial Hall – as places charge for parking, visitors tend to use street parking – taking up precious spaces from local residents. Or – it encourages people to park in the grass. Also – Park access is closed to local residents when certain events are convened.
- #1 – Visitors to the City who rely on public transportation have few options to get from one place to another in the Park.
- #2 – Dogs and raccoons are dangerous. (People abandon unwanted dogs.)
- #2, #6 – All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) speed dangerously through the Park – down Parkside Avenue, Ford Rd, Strawberry Mansion, etc.
- #4 – People don't know what's there. They need to be encouraged to use it (they'll do so if they know more about what's available). However, people need to be encouraged to undertake responsible usage.
- #s 1, 6 – Will there be a Bike Share station / kiosk in the Park?
- #s3,4 – Add signage to incorporate the history of the Park
- On MLK Drive – there are no facilities for bathrooms or drinking water fountains. There are no concessions. Users have to get to the other side of the Park for any amenities. It's like a wasteland on our side.
- On MLK side of the Park – there are no mile markers for walkers.
- Parking on the grass is destroying the area and the trees, creating dangerous grooves in the ground – safety hazard for walkers and runners.
- #5 – Clear out the dead / fallen trees.

When asked what they would change about the guidelines, the following points were raised:

- People who come from other communities sometimes disrupt the usage among local residents; first preference for use should be local residents. Guidelines should include this.
- There should be a greater emphasis on police presence for safety in the Park.

- *Trash management – when permits for using the Park are given out, there should be guidelines and resources for getting rid of the trash.*
- *There should be provisions for volunteer organizations to offer support for various issues mentioned here.*

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Moderator Report**

Date of Forum: September 30, 2013

Location of Forum: Discovery Charter School

Moderator name(s): Jeff Branch

Group 2 Description

Group 2 consisted of a group of 17 people (11 women and six men) who from a generational standpoint would be considered predominately Baby Boomers with Traditionalists as the next largest group. The dialogue was spirited and passionate. The group tended to build on each other's opinions, declarations or inquiry. The majority of the group consisted of members of the nearer neighborhoods (11 people from the Parkside Avenue communities through Wynnefield and 6 people from outside the community (Center City-1, Delaware County-2; Valley Green-1; Southwest-1; Germantown-1).

The group was predominately African-American from the community with white males and females participating from the outer neighbors as illustrated above. A Ward Leader and community activists were also active participants in the group. The other participants used the river for rowing and biking and were very interested in having the West Park developed to provide more access. A loud echo from this group included more intentional connection with the community as partners in any development.

Part 1: Use in the park

How people used the Park in the past, and how they use it now.

- Morning walks: Belmont Ave to Please Touch Museum and back to 42nd and Parkside - 1 hour each morning 5x per week
- Concourse Lake: Boot Camp for Black Girls Run
- Family cookouts; games organized for kids
- Walking dogs: Please Touch Museum to Horse stables and back
- Biking, walking, running and dragon boat racing
- Off road mountain bike trail - Belmont Plateau
- Cycling on/off road. Dangerous because traffic is too fast
- Rowing 3xs per week - used to be more; Boathouse Row for rowing and meetings.
- Used to ride horses
- Part of the cleaning volunteer efforts
- Taking visitors to different sites - course at Sedgley Woods
- Chamounix Drive for tennis and tennis courts near Mann Center
- Chamounix Drive to the stables for talking and reflection
- Kelly Pool
- Visit all the sites: Please Touch; Mann; Dell

- Bike on Drives on the weekends and 3xs per week
- Leisure walks on the weekends just to enjoy nature
- Prayer group every Saturday at 6am in the Mann Center area
- MLK Drive to travel to Center City
- MLK Drive as a connector to North Philly
- Travel throughout all the city; all sorts of shortcuts to avoid the expressway
- Foreign tourists using for the Hostels; guiding people who are searching for hostels; it is dangerous at night for people who are not familiar and looking for shortcuts
- Valley Green for walking and restaurants
- Schools use parks as Learning Centers; Philadelphia Horticultural meetings and cleaning the lakes
- Running and bike riding through the Wissahickon
- Enjoy the Mansions in the Park
- Art museum area and Water Works restaurant
- Fishing
- Weddings at the different facilities

What they would like to do/see in the Park:

- There were opportunities to swim all year round and play basketball at Memorial Hall for the kids; now we've left them with too much idle time. Needs to be another alternative that is kid friendly
- Needs to be more recreation centers, basketball courts in the park
- Trails need to be extended and paths created for walking, running and biking
- Opportunities to put more boats back on the river utilizing the West River Side
- Boat Houses for the most part are owned by schools and fraternities; need community boat houses
- Would like to see a 'Lloyd Hall' on the West Side
- Utilize Springs on both sides
- Amplifies Theaters - like Playhouse in the Park that would be free to the public
- Cycle Cross Country practice paths
- More restaurants throughout the park
- Create water taxis to get to different places
- Create different ways to use the water; unrail to the zoo; create a water park for the underutilized area; drainage is already there
- Recreation - Create a driving range (private owner); swings for kids
- More bathrooms; maintaining clean bathrooms

Barriers:

- Access issues
- Underpass at Sweetbriar; because of poor drainage, flooding causes havoc with traffic

- Paving on the streets is eroded; can't walk or ride; need to ride in middle of the streets (Ford Road area; Falls, etc.)
- Physically challenging for disabled people/less mobile communities; they are locked out; trees uprooted; can't navigate the sidewalk; many obstacles to navigate
- Need to drive to get to most points; can't walk and no public transportation; roads are cutoff
- Speeding on the access roads; you are forced to keep up
- Safety; because of narrow strips near the river, there have been accidents where people can drive into the river
- No transportation - no buses - can't easily get to venues
- Will the city take the time to address the issues
- Safer pedestrian crossings; it is frightening (ex: Montgomery Drive and Belmont); we need some mechanism to slow the traffic
- Japanese House is a paid venue, but it is hard getting in and out because of traffic.
- Less areas for spontaneous free picnics because of the emphasis on paying for permits.
- Take away paid parking spaces near Lloyd Hall - It should be public space. I am irritated by it and the commercial emphasis.
- Expense of using the park is going up and up. Application is minimal, but the permits (have 5 for diff orgs - costs 60K).
- Needs to be better lighting (safety) with shrubs cut back to be better able to see
- More lighting because people are walking earlier
- Too many overgrown shrubs; no place to walk in certain areas; cement is torn up can cause hazards
- More walkways that can be utilized; can't see them because of overgrown shrubbery;
- Safety: found bodies in shrubs
- Need to be more trails and a LOOP from Spring Garden Bridge. The West Side development opportunities offer 6 miles of boating and other activities that is currently underutilized (why is that?); could be both land and water activities
- Need to build on public transportation; Can bus routes be extended; or can we create a park trolley?
- Can drives go back to one lane each way to better manage traffic and access; insert speed bumps to discourage speeding
- Drives are competing with expressway congestion; how have the drives been taken over as a public access highway?
- Park property is public property that should not be used for paid parking; there is resentment from neighborhoods representing the impact of public events
- One place to go to find out what is going on in the park
- Need more security throughout the park (Park Guards or Houses created as mini-stations); less security is visible; used to be police at Memorial Hall

- Finance gets in the way - City budget - we are selling off park property for more commercial uses
- Need to stay public as much possible; we have competing interest with private investors
- Costs at least \$3 million for restoration and Fairmount Park budget is raided every year to manage shortfalls in other city budget lines
- We need to better manage the competing interests: biking; pedestrians; roadway and water
- Park is used for discarding large volumes of trash-just thrown from cars; illegal dumping sites just spring up; needs to be more enforcement

Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

The participants expressed a consistent viewpoint that the guidelines were a good summary of their dialogue as a group. The moderator asked for consensus or differing viewpoints about the guidelines. Because the dialogue was robust, the group expressed a desire to talk about more ideas, while reiterating that the guidelines 'voiced' a summary of what they talked about. The energy was definitely pointed to staying connected with other ideas that could inform the guidelines. What participants thought of the specific guidelines:

- *Comments re Guideline 2: "Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made."*
 - Would like to see the issue of trash included under protect and maintenance of what we have in the park.
 - We need better wildlife control. Balance the ecology of the park with neighborhood impact of lack of wildlife control (connected to guideline 5 and residential impact). Have more deer. Over extended vegetation hides them (Lyme disease, traffic accident potential, etc.) as they search for food
 - We experience a summer influx of raccoons and possums. There must be a way to control it, especially for the benefit of the surrounding neighborhoods
- *Comments re Guideline 4: "Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer."*
 - Is there still a Fairmount Park Commission? Haven't heard from them. Clarity around purpose and function would be helpful. They could serve as the ambassadors for the park.
 - Enhance communication vehicles about events in the park.
 - If the community knows in advance, they can make choices about what events to engage with and also understand the impact of special events in their community
 - Should be a calendar centrally housed: electronically or website development. Info is not all-inclusive. There is less info now after a combined calendar was implemented for all city events. Why, less info?

- (For example: Puerto Rican parade and all night festivities weren't really advertised broadly.)
- Look for ways to engage community leadership to help promote events as partners
 - Need consistent promotion and preservation of the park mansions
 - *Comments re Guideline 5: "Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors."*
 - Think of managed parking as a solution for residents. Neighbors resent the intrusion of outsiders and the inconvenience related to parking for special events.
 - Can funds earned from parking be shared with the neighborhoods. They are constituents and can be viewed as partners with the community getting monetary compensation. How would revenue be shared with the community?
 - Grass is killed from parking and impacts the beauty of the park. Parking companies are supposed to engage in replenishment as part of the contract. How effectively is this being managed or overseen by the city? If not, maintenance needs to be enforced.
 - What is going on with Temple University boathouse? It was just built without any community involvement or engagement. How can we just build without the community input about the impact?
 - Boathouse Row is excluded from the general public. Public engagement is needed to include the near residents that border the East side to make it more accessible. Almost like we are priced out because everything is paid for on public property
 - Focus on rehabbing buildings that are crumbling across from the Dell. Enhance a Strawberry Mansion music pavilion. Remove the tarp. It feels like the community is boxed out.
 - Build more playgrounds. Look for educational opportunities like practicums as intentional learning tools for the next generations.
 - Engage in the park. Make the invitation more real and personal. Love the park and build it up.
 - Summary of discussion of the guidelines
 - Participants were able or I was able to make some threads/ties to the guidelines as the participants engaged in further thoughts and ideas. There were a couple of people that clearly could point where the comments could go as a definitive connection to the guidelines. The group reiterated that the guidelines expressed at a good level the essence of their conversation.

Common Ground

This group was pretty much in concordance and demonstrated excellent coherence as they connected throughout the dialogue. Themes that consistently reverberated were around: 1)

Enhancing the park and leveraging what we already have; 2) Providing greater accessibility for near neighbors, including the physically disabled who are forgotten with regards to access; 3) Community partnership and engagement as key constituents; 4) Development of the park to better use the water from the West Side (boating; water parks; and restaurants); and, 5) Safety (Police, and park guard presence; Managing vegetation; managing wildlife, etc..)

Minority Reports

No minority viewpoints expressed in this group.

**East and West Fairmount Park
Community Vision
Moderator Report**

Date of Forum: September 30, 2013

Location of Forum: Discovery Charter School

Moderator name(s): Germaine Ingram (Group 3)

Group Description:

There were 17 participants in the break-out group. From visual observation, there were 3 white men, 3 white women, 3 African-American men, and 8 African-American women. From visual observation, the estimated age range within the group was late 30s/early 40s to 70s. More than half of the group live in the immediate vicinity of the site of the forum – one participant has lived in the neighborhood for 52 years; one person lives in King of Prussia, another in West Philadelphia, another in the West Park area, another in South Philadelphia. One person works at a local organization that serves cancer patients. One person worked in the area years ago, and since retiring, travels from his home in suburban Philadelphia to volunteer in the neighborhood 3 days per week. Another person organizes recreational programs in the West Park and East Park.

This group was animated and friendly. Most came to the forum with some specific concerns that they were eager to share. However, they listened to each other's views and often endorsed ideas offered by other participants. Everyone shared in the conversation, and seemed to enjoy the lively discussion.

Hopes/Fears

Hopes included:

- More kid-friendly activities – improved playgrounds
- A dog park
- Easier/safer pedestrian crossings
- A serious beautification program
- Enforcement of laws against short-dumping
- Address traffic and parking problems created by weekend activities
- A 15 mph speed limit; speed bumps
- Better communications about Park activities
- Improved safety
- Places in the Park where there can be inter/non-denominational rituals related to water, e.g. baptisms; places for eulogies and funerals free of charge
- Restore/reopen places that respond to interests of naturalists, explorers, and stargazers
- Reserved parking for local residents, especially on weekends
- Public transportation on Chamonix Drive

- Constraints on/enforcement of use permits
- More statues; better lighting
- An old-fashioned trolley that is accessible to Park neighbors, and is a source of information about Park locations and events
- Bridges and pedestrian overpasses to increase safety
- Encourage recycling
- Restore the Park's assets, e.g. steps, paths, ponds, creeks
- Designated areas for recreational vehicles
- Removal of dead trees and downed tree limbs
- More transparency about the budget
- More activities and amenities for older adults, e.g. benches
- Organized, informal activities like music and dancing

Fears included:

- That the Park will be developed for non-recreational and non-public uses (e.g. proposal for a Police stable)
- High prices for parking will keep people from using the Park
- Privatization; commercialization
- That neighborhoods that abut the Park won't see investment/reinvestment
- That public voices will be "blown off", and people will lose enthusiasm for participating in planning process
- That revenues that are generated by the Park will go into the general fund and not be reinvested in the Park

Part 1: Use in the park

How people used the Park in the past, and how they use it now.

- Walks – her mother would take her for walks in the park and teach her about mushrooms and flowers
- Driving through the Park is therapeutic
- Attend performances at the Mann Center, but it's hard to drive out of the area after concerts, and parking is too costly
- Walking, picnicking, exploring----there need to be more benches and seating areas
- Cycling
- Some of the places where they used to go, like Shofuso (Japanese Tea House), are hard to get to due to barriers
- There used to be all kinds of folk and ethnic dancing on the steps of Memorial Hall
- Reading
- Native American Festival ("the PowWow"); but it's not in the Park anymore
- Walking in the moonlight has become unsafe and possibly illegal because the best places are barred
- Playhouse in the Park no longer exists
- Outdoor movie screenings

- One person noted that the fountain in front of Memorial Hall has operated only once in the past 40 years

One participant summarized this part of the discussion by saying that one of the distinctive things about Fairmount Park is that it is a place where people live, work, and play – it’s not just a destination separated from the communities of everyday people. Therefore, the people who live and work in and near the park need to be heard. There also needs to be better cooperation and collaboration between Park employees and Park neighbors.

Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

The moderator asked the participants to look over the guidelines and share their reactions. Their response was to continue to share their ideas about how the Park should be improved. Some of their suggestions might fall under some the guidelines, but they were not inclined to relate them to particular guidelines. Comments were:

- The Park should be celebrated – it shouldn’t be treated simply as a place you drive through to get somewhere else
- There should be more attention to environmental training for young people; coordination and partnering with nearby schools; students can become volunteers
- Improve the safety. There was particular concern about a nearby drug rehabilitation center – participants said that it draws activity all hours of the day and night.
- Collaboration and transparency – Park authorities should talk with the communities on a regular basis
- Improved communication about events and activities going on in the Park – newsletters and on-line applications can be used to share information. There was some debate about where the responsibility lies for communications. Some thought that Parks and Rec have the responsibility, while others thought that it’s not feasible for Parks and Rec to communicate about the many privately-sponsored events that happen in the Park.
- People are concerned and annoyed about disruptions to their lives due to weekend events in the Park – noise, traffic, parking problems. There were questions about who has to have a permit and what the process is for seeing that the terms of permits are enforced.
- There should be some type of training or orientation (“Fairmount Park 101”) required for anyone who gets a permit for Park usage.
- The residents of neighborhoods near the Park can be “Fairmount Park Ambassadors.” There can be employment opportunities and stipends attached to involvement with the Park. Such a relationship would instill a sense of pride in the Park, a way of demonstrating that the Park is valued.
- The voices of the Park’s neighbors should have greater impact.
- There should be emphasis on the needs of children and seniors. The Park isn’t wheelchair friendly; local schools could be paired with senior facilities, and the Park could be a meeting place for joint activities.
- The Park can be a platform for teaching important values to children and youth. Values that could be taught through more intentional programming are: sustainability; civic

pride; curiosity; the importance of education; the significance of history (one person related that in 1876 an arm of the Statue of Liberty was on display in Fairmount Park); spirituality; art appreciation; the power of story and narrative.

- Income should not be a barrier to use of the Park
- People who work in the Park should earn a living wage.

Common Ground

There was a lot of convergence in the ideas shared by the participants. At the end, they agreed on three key messages:

- Regular communication, coordinated and shared. Use diverse media for communicating – Internet, phone, text, radio/TV, town crier, kiosks, etc.
- Keep the Park the “People’s Park”
- Control vehicular traffic

The point about Fairmount Park being distinctive because it is an active environment where people simultaneously live, work, and play bears repeating.

**East and West Fairmount Park
Community Vision
Moderator Report**

Date of Forum: 9/30/13

Location of Forum: Discovery Charter School

Moderator name(s): Terrill Thompson

Group Description

The group was made up of fifteen participants. Ten participants were residents of the neighborhood, which runs along the park. Participants also represented West and South Philadelphia. Of the fifteen participants, seven were black women, three were black men, three were white men and two were white women. Participants were mostly middle aged and older. Demographic are based on the observation of the facilitator. Participants were not asked to self-identify.

Ice-Breaker

Participants attended the meeting for a variety of reasons: concerns with security, boating and youth recreation were most often mentioned. Five participants reported that they use the park regularly. The group was engaged and listened well to each other's ideas.

Part 1: Use in the park

How people used the Park in the past, and how they use it now.

- Biking
- Boating (competitive and recreational)
- Walking
- Picnics
- Running
- Zoo visits
- Entertainment (Mann Music Center and Dell Music Center)
- Youth hostel
- Kelly swimming pool
- Stables
- Tennis
- Shofuso/Japanese House and Garden
- Horticultural Center
- Recycle Center
- As a resource lab for students
- Making art
- Sports fields
- Playground
- Scenic quality
- Please Touch Museum

- Centennial Café
- Drive through the park
- Place for silence/hear the birds
- Fishing
- Belmont Plateau:
 - Exercise
 - Social space for youth
 - Watch fireworks
 - Flying radio airplanes

Other things people would like to do in the park

- Boating that is accessible to the public
 - Boat rentals
 - Paddle boating
 - Working boat ramp
 - Public classes: sailing, canoeing, rowing, etc.
 - Not water skiing (nothing motorized)
- Concession stands
- Bathrooms
- Camping
- Trolley that runs into the park (public transportation)
- Trolley tour to learn about the park
 - Make free for locals
 - Tie to school curriculum
- Family things (like paddle boating)
- More picnic space
- Winter recreation for kids (ice skating)

Barriers:

- Density of trees
- Fear about how changes regarding future restrictions could impact families
- Utilizing/accessing information that is available
- Condition of sports fields (dangerous, overuse)
- Big events impact neighbors
 - Sound, etc.
 - Should be moved deeper into the park
- Improve what is there before building new (Example: Horticultural Center)
- Connect improvement to the park with improvements to the neighborhood (Example: lighting)
- Involve community leaders in the process
- Crew teams currently get priority on the water and shouldn't
- Lack of boat ramp to use for personal river use
- Need more things for small children

- Closer playground
 - Volleyball, badminton
- Can't afford the Please Touch Museum
- Traffic – especially at Belmont Ave and Parkside Ave
 - Slow traffic down, add speed bumps
 - Add more lights
 - Gets worse when Mann Music Center closes roads
- Accessibility for pedestrians and bikes
 - Add more lights, especially to get to Belmont Plateau
 - Add bike lane on Conshohocken
- Safety
 - Need more police
 - More lighting
 - Place for quad and dirt bikes to go (they aren't safe around kids)
 - Car break-ins
 - Can't tell police where you are (lack of address) – need location markers
- Walks/fundraiser close off access
 - Desire to understand the permit process
- Public transportation INTO (not just to) the park
- More real bathrooms (not port potties)
- Dogs
 - Bites – need to be on leashes
 - Poop – provide bags, give fines
- Park maps and signage
- Calendar of events
- Noise control for neighbors
 - Police don't enforce rules
- Maintain fields for runners (too many potholes)

Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

What participants thought of the specific guidelines they discussed:

- *Comments re Guideline 1: "Start by improving how people enter and access the entire park."*
 - Like:
 - "Closest neighbors"
 - "Building on improvements made to the park"
 - Would like to see signage about historical significance
 - "Make sure the park is safe"
 - "All ages"
 - Concerns:
 - "Attract people" – does that mean tourists? Concern that it won't be accessible to the public

- That the plan is already done and these meetings won't influence the plan
 - "Walking access" – this is good, but should also include public transportation
- *Comments re Guideline 2: "Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmont Park, both natural and man-made."*
 - Like:
 - Concern about nature and wildlife
 - Sports fields are being built in natural areas; rules aren't followed about building in the park
 - Needs to be a balance
 - "Find a better way to teach people about the history of the park and attract people to its historic structures"
 - Rebuild old fountains and the Civil War Memorial
 - "Enjoy the water, but not overpower it"
 - About balance
 - Would like to see a way for the public to have equal access to the river as competitive rowers
- *Comments re Guideline 3: "Allow people to better enjoy the water."*
 - Like:
 - "Trails along old creeks"
 - Need more education about where they are
 - Additions:
 - Water park, spray park, wading pool, place for toy sailboats
 - Address the trash in the river, keep it clean
 - Drinking fountains for human, dogs and horses (don't want to share a drinking fountain with animals)
- *Comments re Guideline 4: "Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer."*
 - Like:
 - The idea
 - "Is it one big park, every park in the city, or numerous smaller parks?"
 - Like that it is all Fairmont
 - "Create more welcoming entrances that encourage people to use the park."
 - Ideas:
 - Send literature around to neighborhoods
 - More ads, media coverage
 - "Fairmont Park Day" – hosted in and by neighborhoods
 - Maps
 - Easy to use website (it is hard to use now)
 - Fairmont Park app for walking tours
 - Concerns:

- Signage is important, but don't want it to be an eye sore, make it fit the park (not commercial looking)
- *Comments re Guideline 5: "Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors."*
 - Like:
 - The idea
 - "Existing residence in mind"
 - Improvement should be to the surrounding areas too
 - Needs to be a true asset to neighbors (not for money for the city or a private company)
 - Recently enforcing the no trash on the curb before 7pm rule – they are enforcing what they want to enforce
 - Noise from Terror Behind the Walls bus stop is impacting neighbors
 - Want communication between city agencies/institutions and neighborhood
 - "Promote... regional trail network"
- *Comments re Guideline 6: "Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving."*
 - Like:
 - Less driving, more biking and walking focus
 - Safe crossings
 - Ideas:
 - Add a pedestrian/bike bridge across the river and the express way
 - Have transit rail in the park that makes key stops
 - Underground parking
 - Need a better parking system (event parking is hard on residence)
 - Bring back Fairmont Park guards
 - Add lighting
 - Increase funding for tree maintenance (trim limbs, areas are overgrown)
 - Identify interior places in the park to develop with different ecologies (for education purposes)

Summary of discussion of the guidelines: The group engaged with the each individual guideline. The sense of the group was that they are good. They expressed numerous ideas and concerns regarding implementation. A major concern was the impact changes will have on neighbors.

Additional thoughts/ ideas:

- Where will the money come from for all of this?
- Sustainability is important; take long-term care approach and don't neglect things (good practices for erosion, etc.)
- Promotion idea: understand the value to human health (oxygen, etc.)

- What is the mission of the park? Think about branding.
- Have agriculture and animals
 - Education opportunities
 - Feed residence

Common Ground: Several common themes emerged:

- Balance: The need to find balance was mentioned on several occasions. Examples: the group valued both sports fields and natural space and using the river but not overpowering it.
- Affect on Neighbors: Many group members expressed concern about how the park impacts adjacent neighborhoods, and how changes might further impact the neighborhood. Examples include noise, traffic, trash, etc.
- Preservation: Many group members expressed a desire to see preservation of what already exists.