

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

**Date of Forum: September 24, 2013**

**Location of Forum: Cornerstone Baptist Church**

**Moderator name(s): Germaine Ingram**

**Group Description**

There were as many as 14 people in the group, 13 of which were there throughout the session. From visual observation, there were 3 white males, 1 white woman, 3 African-American women, and 7 African-American males. From visual observation and their comments, the AA participants were probably in the age range of 50s to mid-60s. Except for one white male, the white participants appeared to be in their 30s. The African-American participants were long-time residents of the Strawberry Mansion area; some of them are actively involved with civic groups that focus on improving their community. Two of the white participants have professional connections to Parks and Recreation, and two others are involved with volunteer efforts to expand recreational options on both sides of Fairmount Park.

Conversation was animated and thoughtful throughout the small group session. People came to the forum with lots of ideas about the topic, and they were eager to share them. A discussion format was almost irrelevant to the conversation as participants shared their views without a need for structured guidance from the moderator. It was necessary to tamp down the tendency of a couple of members to dominate the discussion, and the moderator had to interrupt moments of related side-talk. Overall, participants shared the conversational space and listened to one another. There was a lot of common ground in the group, even though there was diversity in where people place their priorities for working for the future of Fairmount Park.

**Hopes/Fears**

Participants pounced on this “ice-breaker” to begin sharing their key aspirations and concerns for Fairmount Park.

*Hopes included:*

- The Park will become safer
- The Park will be there to be enjoyed by her grandkids (current grandchild is 6 years old)
- There will be more activities in the Park
- Young people will be part of the planning and will be better-served by the Park
- The history of the Park, especially at it reflects the role of African Americans, will be researched and taught (one participant brought an article about Joseph Mander – someone who she thinks should be celebrated.)
- The Park will “regain its old glory” and that the institutions in the Park will serve all people

- The natural assets of the Park will be restored and nurtured
- Environmentally-responsible strategies will be used to enhance the Park
- Communities will be involved and engaged as planners, stakeholders, users and stewards of the Park
- A holistic and homogeneous vision for the Park – the Park should serve all ages and encourage intermingling of people from both sides of the Park
- Bring back public rowing, climbing, hiking, and camping
- Improvements to restrooms and water fountains, and more food concessions
- Better environment for biking and hiking

*Fears included:*

- That the Park will be like “Ave of the Arts North and Ave of the Arts South”, where there is a clear divide and far more attention accorded one part than the other (one participant used the term “apartheid” to emphasize this concern)
- That there will be an absence of strength and will to see the Park regain its full glory
- Continued disinvestment in the East Park area – that usable buildings will be demolished rather than restored and repurposed
- Local residents are second-class to weekend users
- Income becomes a barrier to people enjoying the assets of the Park

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

As with the “ice-breaker”, participants veered off in a variety of directions, all related to their relationship to the Park. People talked about what they did in the Park when they were growing up or were young adults:

- “I learned how to row, canoe, play tennis, and hike...”
- People used to water ski and drive motor boats on the river
- “I learned to swim”
- “Thirty years ago, people went to the park every day.”
- Fishing
- One participant commented on how a recent 5K run stimulated young people’s curiosity about the history and current uses of the park mansions; she suggested that education and employment programs could be connected to the park mansions.

When asked what they would like to do in the park, the overwhelming response was that they want to be able to do the things that they used to do.

There were lots of thoughts on what the barriers are to their use of the Park:

- People can’t find out what’s going on—there isn’t enough communication and marketing.
- There’s no longer a community newspaper which could be an information resource about what’s happening in the park.

- There were differing views on how effective the Internet is as a resource for publicizing activities in the Park – one person said that the Internet isn't enough because lots of people don't have access; someone else noted how quickly young people learn about events through Facebook, and suggested that social media should be used to engage young people in Park activities.
- Community organizations need to be more involved in developing park activities – “there needs to be strong community involvement and activism...”
- A lot of the creeks where people used to fish are now dry. The creeks should be reactivated and replenished with fish.
- Safety is a big concern. One participant said that she was afraid of what she's seen going on in the Park, and as a result does not go there anymore. Someone else said “Strawberry Mansion has sunk to its lowest level. People don't feel safe in their own community.” Loss of park guards – that started being phased out in the 1970s – contributed to a decreased sense of safety when people use the park.
- City politicians are just now beginning to take an interest in restoring the Park; there's more attention to the Park as a city asset.
- There needs to be better lighting and signage.
- There needs to be a comprehensive plan for the Park. Look at New York as a model for planning and making parks a priority. Prospect Park was mentioned as an example of effective planning and reinvestment in parks.
- People need more education on the history of the Park and its assets, “...so that people can know the stories...”
- There needs to be better coordination and collaboration between the School District and the Recreation Department in the use of land and properties.
- There need to be more sources of funding for the Park, e.g. charging fees to “outsiders” for use of the Park
- There needs to be an organized and united voice on behalf of the Park in order to address “the powers that be.”

## **Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines**

The overall response to the guidelines was that they are vague, general and wordy, making it difficult for participants to critique them. Things they identified as missing were: strategies for generating dedicated revenue for the Park---but people said that dedicated revenue is not enough---there also needs to be support from the general fund; and coordination of Park activities, including a centralized calendar. Responses to specific guidelines served to reemphasize participants' aspirations for Park improvements:

- *Comments re Guideline 1: “Start by improving how people enter and access the entire park.”*
  - Improve bus routes to and from the Park
  - Make street crossings safer
  - Centralize sources of information
  - Find ways to identify the Park (Park guards and guard houses used to serve this purpose)

- Make bike lanes available and accessible
  - Increase staffing for recreation centers
- *Comments re Guideline 2: “Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made.”*
  - Restore what’s there: creeks, restrooms, water fountains, buildings, concession stands, etc.
- *Comments re Guideline 3: “Allow people to better enjoy the water.”*
  - Take down barriers to natural lands around the reservoir.
- *Comments re Guideline 4: “Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer.”*
  - More involvement by community-based organizations.
  - Each community should have a seat in the Park governance structure.
- *Comments re Guideline 5: “Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors.”*
  - Add “recreation” to the sentence that addresses “education and employment opportunities” for youth.
- *Comments re Guideline 6: “Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving.”*
  - Use technology (e.g. surveillance cameras) as well as physical security to improve safety
  - Make WIFI available
  - Install emergency systems
  - Improve signage

One participant noted his support for the plan for a bird sanctuary.

### **Common Ground**

There was a high degree of consensus in this group. Despite the Park’s many needs, there seemed to be considerable optimism within the group about the possibility of progress and improvement. The determination and energy of community-based organizations, combined with support of City politicians, is leading to belief in the potential for reinvestment in the neighborhood and the Park.

### **Minority Reports**

No particularly divergent views were expressed.

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

**Date of Forum: September 24, 2013**

**Location of Forum: Cornerstone Baptist Church**

**Moderator name(s): Ted Enoch**

**Group Description**

The spirit and participation of everyone making up small group #2 during tonight's forum at Cornerstone Baptist Church was positively outstanding. The group of 13 participants was significantly comprised of local community and church members -- 8 of 13 members identified as either from the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood, one of its CDCs or civic organizations, or from Cornerstone Baptist Church. All of these participants were African American, including 2 elder gentlemen who worked with the church and who started off listening only, but who eventually joined in with input of their own.

**Ice-Breaker**

Some of the stated reasons these local community members, mostly adult or older adult women, gave for attending the meeting tonight were:

- *I wanted my voice to be part of the conversation. I want there to be better and greater access for our park.*
- *I'm "nosey," I wanted to hear what was going on, and I want to see more employment opportunities for our community.*
- *I'm from the church and we care deeply about this community, including how people and young people use the park.*
- *I was raised at 30th and Poplar, I have used this park my entire life. I want to see more safety and lighting in the park. I want to see enhancements made to help neighborhood use. I want to protect the landmarks in the park. (This woman brought her daughter, the only child present during the proceedings.)*
- *I'm from this neighborhood and represent our CDC. We need to be an active part of our park's future.*

Another African American man lived in the neighboring Brewerytown neighborhood, but identified himself as a person who works for Council President Clarke, and therefore had a more citywide concern and perspective. He was interested in *seeing full utilization of the park, with a modernization guiding future updates for the park.* A woman of Asian Pacific Island decent recently moved to Philadelphia from New York described how *the park was one of the reasons I moved here. I love the park. I'm here to represent bicyclists, women cyclists, and safety is a concern of mine.* Another woman, white and also in her early-ish twenties, from East Falls, also came as a bicyclist, with similar concerns of safety and access. A twenty or early thirty-something white man was also a recent transplant to Philadelphia. He lives in Fairmount and finds that *he only uses neighboring parts of the park.* And that, for him, *legibility and quality maps and signage* were important, to help him and others *gain a better mental map of the park.*

Finally, another young white woman from 5th and Girard described how she comes to the park often with her dog to use the woods and trails, and that she also was interested in *improved signage and maps, and improved green infrastructures throughout the park*. Much of the first portion of the group's discussion involved brainstorming.

### **Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Jogging
- Baseball, basketball, tennis
- Picnics
- Walking and playing
- Exploring
- Hiking
- Dog walking
- Biking and mountain biking
- Please Touch Museum
- The ravines
- Concerts -- Robin Hood Dell
- Kelly Pool and other swimming
- Rock Climbing
- Smith Playground
- Taking out-of-town visitors and showing off the park
- Golfing
- Frisbee golf
- Shortcuts and travelling to West Philly
- Looking at boats and the water
- Meeting points for friends
- Watching sunsets and fireworks
- Reading in the park
- The Japanese House
- Playgrounds
- Weddings
- Festivals (like the Cherry Blossom Festival)
- Garbage Cans (it's nice to know they are there and I can use them if I need to.) But there needs to be more recycling bins!
- Fishing
- Bird watching
- Visiting the mansions
- Cafes
- Centennial Park
- Feeding ducks
- Travel to and from work

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

- We need to control pests like possums and raccoons. Do you know how often possums get into people's homes near the park?
- There should be concession stands at different locations. Right now there is one by the Art Museum and one by Valley Green at the other end. What about spots in the middle? Water, snacks, like hotdogs... Tee shirts to raise money for the park... What about a restaurant or bar?
- Invest more resources into gardens and gardening, landscaping. We could have destination spots that are beautiful that beg for people to go there and get their pictures taken, like the way people do it at the Rocky Steps or by the LOVE statue... Create more iconic vistas and places of beauty. Like Lemon Hill.
- Reduce the areas that are overgrown and underutilized. Some parts of the park are impenetrable.
- Need more sports programs for kids. And better info on how to get kids into those programs. Bulletin boards by the fields that are used to help people realize how to sign up for the different leagues, when they play, etc...
- Nature programs for kids, gardening clubs, growing food, exploring and hiking
- Simplify permit process to use the park for everything. (Nearly all the group members thought this was too hard to do any kind of event in the park.) One person groaned at the cost and tedious process of trying to show a movie in the park. She shook her head and said it was impossible
- Do more theater in the park
- Increase bike rentals
- Increase horse riding and carriages in the park
- Could there be a small petting zoo somewhere? The goats and sheep would help with natural maintenance of parts of the park...
- Laser Tag and Paintball!
- Camping
- Have occasional storage lockers

Water related ideas:

- Restore the buried streams
- Bring back the ability to drink from the spring water taps.
- Water fountains more often
- Help bring safety for swimming in natural settings, the streams, creeks and river.

The group went into two major areas of conversation – ACCESS and SAFETY – that were both related to future uses, but also related to barriers to using the park. The group felt that if these two issues were improved, park usage would naturally go up.

Access Issues:

- We could use a pedestrian bridge over 33rd street to the park that would help protect our children

- it is very dangerous crossing Kelly Drive to get to the river. Are there only 2 stoplights? Can there be pedestrian islands? Push Button options. More lights?
- We should bring back the 85 bus through the park, over the Strawberry Mansion Bridge. The route 3 bus is too limited. We have to be more pedestrian/non-car user friendly.
- Trolley lines could bring you deeper into the park. Connecting you to places like Smith Playground.
- We need to support non drivers.
- Improve the sidewalks. Sidewalks seem like an afterthought.
- We need better signs throughout the park.
- And better gateway signs. It would be great to have a gateway sign letting people know the park can be entered here at Strawberry Mansion.
- Signs that really welcome you into the park and into the community
- Signs that orient you within the park as to where you are in relation to streets and neighborhoods
- Signs that tell you distances of trails, times of walking/hiking
- Trail maps
- Have more benches to encourage people to travel deeper into areas
- Speed bumps to slow down cars
- Anything we can do to increase traffic calming and help pedestrians and bikers have greater access and safety
- Reflective sticks, posts, walkway markers, crossing zones...
- Improve accessibility for folks with disabilities and the elderly
- Mobile Apps, phone apps to help people navigate and understand the park.
- Offer professional and other guided tours of the park
- Increase interactive, audio based tours.
- Teach the history of locations

#### Safety Issues:

- Cell Phone coverage doesn't really work in the park
- We could use more ranger mini-stations
- Lighting on more trails, sidewalks and pathways would help, lights with automatic light sensors...
- More emergency phone and alarms at more locations
- Trail signs that help you understand if they are beginner, intermediate or expert, in terms of exertion and risk
- Have bike trail indicators, with similar beginner, intermediate and expert demarcations.
- Greater programming and use = greater safety = greater use. Things like walking clubs, garden clubs, mountain biking groups, these things create safety.
- Parking cars is a problem. There are many break-ins.

#### **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, though no one

seemed to have a strong reaction either way. It was clear that in the current form, the guidelines were not convincing readers that their key concerns were being addressed substantially, even if and when their concerns were found somewhere in the guidelines. It was clear to this moderator that very often, a reader would advocate that a priority concern was missing or needed to be strengthened that was at least (intended to be) addressed in the draft guidelines.

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

- Safety is not a clear enough priority in this document. The group was nearly in complete consensus in believing that enhancing safety is a fundamental priority to ensure the future of the park.
- Designing park use and facilities to engage the closest neighbors needs to be a priority. One participant described this as adhering to one of Olmstead's key principles of design.
- That existing and future "gemstones" are protected, created and promoted because these are real magnets for tourists and visitors, and revenue.
- There needs to be a focus on signage improvements and much better use of trail maps and signs throughout the park.
- There needs to be a greater use of staff and rangers, to promote safety, employment and easier use of the parks.
- Sustainability, starting with income generating programs for the park, needs to be a key function in order to promote long term health of the park.
- In relation to guideline #3, Allowing people to better enjoy water, one participant also talked about the need to use better water management/drainage/flood prevention practices to protect neighbors from water.
- In relation to guideline #5, where in the middle of the text body it states, "Make park improvements with existing residents in mind:" One member said that planners and builders should not just keep residents in mind, but *they should get input from neighbors about future developments*. Many others agreed. And further, that consistent communication with neighbors and park users needs to be maintained, including: newsletters, ads, meeting with park friends groups and other civic organizations, social media and other ways of keeping in touch with communities.
- (Again, the following point was raised:) There needs to be a greater commitment to connecting with neighborhood groups, civic associations, churches, clubs and schools.
- There needs to be better and more outreach for help in maintaining and improving the park, including seed money to help motivate volunteers and groups. That groups need to be encouraged to adopt parts of the park, much in the same way that the Frisbee Golfers have adopted Sedgely Woods in this neighborhood.
- Related to outreach, there needs to be dedicated staff and mission to outreach and community connection.
- The parts of the park that are neglected and underused could be sold or leased, thereby creating revenue to invest in other parts of the park that are being used. This was not universally agreed upon, as one member put it: *You know they will sell the parts of the park in the inner city, near poor communities, and put the money in the better off communities. How can we protect poor neighborhoods, who really need resources like a*

*quality park with quality activities for its neighbors? How can we keep the park accountable to its community members?*

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

**Date of Forum: 09/24/13**

**Location of Forum: Cornerstone Baptist Church**

**Moderator name: Josh Warner**

**Group Description**

Group 3 had 11 members – six female and five male. The group appeared to have three seniors and three 30-somethings, with the rest in the 40-60 age range. Most were residents of Strawberry Mansion, with two members coming from other Philadelphia neighborhoods and one from the near suburbs. Eight group members were African American, and three were Caucasian. Most of the Strawberry Mansion residents had lived in the neighborhood and near the park for a long time, but there were two relatively new residents in attendance. The three members living elsewhere all made use of the park for personal recreation, and two of these used the West Park in a coaching capacity, for team sports such as cross-country.

**Hopes/Fears**

Participants pounced on this “ice-breaker” to begin sharing their key aspirations and concerns for Fairmount Park.

The ice-breaker discussion yielded many more hopes than fears. Many of the hopes expressed by participants related to “restoration” of some kind. Transportation and access were key issues – expressed as restoring streams and restoring bus/trolley routes that had been canceled. Restoring recreation and sports related facilities such as drinking and decorative fountains, concession stands, and bathrooms were also a priority for several participants. Education and information were also common themes, as some group members felt uninformed about the park and its possibilities. Fears discussed by the group included safety and lighting (that conditions would worsen), and that Strawberry Mansion would lose access to the park and possibly more through the status quo and any new decisions made by the Park Commission.

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Sports, basketball, and athletic fields
- Walking
- Running
- Picnics
- Relaxation
- Entertainment (Robin Hood Dell)
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Frisbee Golf
- Bocce Ball

- Soccer
- Horse Trails
- Biking
- Trolleys (past use)

#### Other things people would like to do in the park

- Dedicated space for family reunions
- Tennis courts that are lit
- Bathroom facilities (better, more)
- A simpler and cheaper way to access permits for special events
- Designated spots/picnic areas that allow & have infrastructure for amplified sound
- Better children's activities
- Have a public venue in the park for park project planning meetings, or implementation hearings
- For identified streams, use them better or for recreation
- Better transportation:
  - Transportation to the park, as well as within the park
  - Better bus service
  - Re-establish trolley service
  - Have routes to/from Strawberry Mansion
  - East Park to West Park transit
  - Bring back the #85 bus
  - Transit to/from Belmont Plateau
- Concession stands restored, with better signage
- Bike paths OR traffic calming for the I-76 exit/entrance at Montgomery to the Belmont Avenue area
  - Biking is impossible now, either add bike paths or do traffic calming
- A dedicated bus or shuttle to all the sites of the park, like Philly Phlash
- Make entertainment uses more accessible
- Use the marquee at Robin Hood Dell to inform community about events
- Establish other electronic sign/notification locations too

#### Barriers

- Traffic – too many private cars
- Major events on the east side create huge congestion
  - There is no neighborhood level information about these events
- Not knowing all that the park offers – lack of information
  - Need a master schedule
  - Plus notification about detours (when, where)
- There is no newsletter about the park
- Difficult to get permits for events
- Not having enough buses with routes to or into the park

- No specific community-level information. Neighborhood specific notices of events
- There are limited bathrooms
  - Those that do exist are not maintained well
- Lack of signage. Where signs do exist they are not good

## **Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines**

Group 3 took a few minutes to read over the draft guidelines, and then they were asked about their opinion on the guidelines, in order of appearance. While the group had quite a lot to say about uses, potential uses, and barriers, the discussion around the guidelines was fairly sparse. Most folks admitted that all of the guidelines sounded fine, but a few members brought up the theme of “who decides” in their discussion points. What participants thought of the specific guidelines they discussed:

- *Comments re Guideline 1: “Start by improving how people enter and access the entire park.”*
  - Question: why just walking access? #1 seems to be focused on pedestrians
  - No references to parking
  - Dedicated parking for big events should be a focus
  - Consider (or add to guidelines) safety measures and lighting
- *Comments re Guideline 2: “Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made.”*
  - Enjoying the water is great, but what about access to drinking water?
  - The group liked the “not overpowering” aspect of the guideline. But in order to do this, the Park Commission has to actually talk to the community
    - Perhaps even sacrificing some commercial or revenue-generating uses
  - Guideline should seek to raise awareness of the different kinds of wildlife one can encounter in the park. Some residents are not aware and can be pleasantly (or unpleasantly) surprised.
- *Comments re Guideline 3: “Allow people to better enjoy the water.”*
  - What about actually cleaning the water? How?
  - Access and safety are important points for water enjoyment. Both recreation and drinking water
- *Comments re Guideline 4: “Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer.”*
  - There is no component of education in this, and no specifics on how citizens would be helped. Web or internet presence and methods?
- *Guidelines 5 & 6 were not discussed, as we ran out of time*

Summary of discussion of the guidelines: Again, the discussion was not as rich and did not flow like the previous section of the process. Overall, it seemed like the guidelines were fine, and generally acceptable, but that the lack of clear actions prevented the group from really deliberating on pros and cons. The group admitted that most of their current and future uses *could* be fostered through the six guidelines, but that they were unsure how this might happen.

### **Common Ground**

- There was certainly common ground on restoring and improving Park conditions and access for the Strawberry Mansion community.
- There was also agreement that the west side of the park needed improvements too (there were no “territory” arguments or disagreements)
- Education and information provision were frequent topics of discussion.
- The topic of decision making and public input came up quite frequently, but usually indirectly in relation to a use, barrier, or guideline opinion. The local Strawberry Mansion participants felt strongly that their voices should be heard in the beginning, middle, and end of any major decisions or planning processes related to the park. QUOTE: “It all comes down to who makes the decision”
- Transportation came up often, and there was common ground around increased transit opportunities to and through the park, as well as support for nearly every kind of transport mode. Support for biking, trolley service, walking, and also car use (through improved parking management) was shown in Group 3.

**Minority Reports:** None.

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

**Date of Forum:** September 24, 2013

**Location of Forum:** Cornerstone Baptist Church

**Moderator name(s):** Jeff Branch

**Group Description**

This group consisted eleven highly engaged participants, including a number of (6) community activists/liaisons (Director of Strawberry Mansion Community Concern; Ward Leader; etc.) that were immediately drawn to 'being included' in the process and declaring partnership and collaboration as their goal for Fairmount Park and Community Development (hand-in-hand). It was obvious that some knew each other or of each other already and were coherent in their interests and how they engage in and expressed their interests in the dialogue. Six men and five women were in the group.

A husband and wife jazz music/cultural arts enthusiasts were drawn to the meeting to share their project of bringing jazz/arts to the park as a way to promote the history of jazz in Philadelphia. One community activist strongly expressed "job creation" as his number one priority. The group also included a member of the Fairmount Park Conservancy who is also a user of the park; seniors who have been long-time residents of Strawberry Mansion; an architectural student from Texas; and two people identified as connected with the 'Fairmount Park Project,' directly or indirectly.

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- One participant expressed that transparency was essential for community engagement. So, "where did the guidelines come from? Doesn't seem like everyone was involved." A continued expression "that it feels like a tale of two cities...with shifting populations: permanent...transitional."
  - Use the example of nature to inform how you (project team) embrace the development.
  - Demonstrate that there is real care and wanting involvement instead of fixing it for you.
  - Develop with humanity>embrace reality and beauty

Moderator was able to shift conversation to 'uses' with the promise to address the possibilities how to approach the 'community vision.'

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

- Walking for exercise
  - For safety seniors meeting each other as a group commitment to gather and walk; established walk markers along 33<sup>rd</sup> street until they reach the 'dead zone' (nothing there) and because of distance capacity (age related)

- Rowing; Biking and Hiking through the trails and gaining understanding of the system
- Enjoyed the Dell more this year for shows; made a choice to take advantage of the outdoor concert atmosphere
- The DELL – hearing more about the shows
  - Not an affordable venue; Feels out priced now; took away lawn chairs; not welcoming – all about business now
  - Competing - City versus Private Shows – need clarity about who it is for
    - Opportunities for city officials to give out free tickets
  - Neighborhood doesn't use the Dell as much
    - TARP closes out the community – doesn't feel welcoming
- People also walk through the Dell
- Gateway to West Philly – without Strawberry Mansion Bridge we would be landlocked
  - When closed, Strawberry Mansion Bridge causes us to be stuck; cars; bike riders
- Brings a human family connection for ideas; discovering commonalities through conversations as a gateway to create energy
- Exploring – have noticed more family picnics

#### Things people would like to do in the park:

- We need better transportation that can be used for education purposes
  - Trolleys/buses for tours – free of charge (connected to Woodside Park)
- For the kids and family...Bring back the circuses/carnivals in the park – can't remember anything for the last 15 years; More Amusements, besides the Please Touch Museum
- Raise Awareness about Chamounix Drive and the Horse Program
- Need to develop and grow Community Gardens and engage
  - Flood waters; springs
  - Currently closed off and causing seepage into homes...and flooding because of backing up

#### Barriers:

- Need more bathrooms because the park is bigger (big emphasis)
- Permits are needed now...You get revenue, but at what expense as far as community use...It is public space...awareness of enforcement when they come around and ask for permits
- Safety – need park rangers or more park rangers for safety, not just enforcement of fees
- Lighting – wondering about the environmental impact of additional lighting...? How does that impact ecology?
- There was a shift from community focused usage to corporate usage
  - At one time there were major bike rides in Strawberry Mansion where anyone was involved
- Who 'really' is the community in the vision?

- Information about possible park perks are not evident. We don't know what is going on, and it feels deliberate; not communicate to/with; no information
  - There needs to be a genuine partnership or collaboration. We want to be a part of the process
    - There needs to be transparency in the process and what will happen next
    - Community cares – there is fear, accusations and lack of trust
    - Federally funded? Vital that offices and organizations have transparency
      - We can see the development; we are aware the Strawberry Mansion is viewed as an opportunity area
  - The 'project' needs to be clearly defined? What is it really?
    - What is the economic and social impact?
      - It should mirror the “nature...ecology of the work demonstrating connection for us as a community”
      - Kids need a place. Seems like work is always done for outside groups
      - At one time, Fairmount Park was an inviting place to come
  - What would be the evidence that the community is involved?
    - Seniors are satisfied
    - Community organizations are actively involved
    - Sense of pride
    - Children are engaged with fishing; education and learning about nature; greater familiarity
    - Park is inviting with a family atmosphere
      - No permits are needed...a public domain
      - No more privatization

## Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

Participants' initial responses to the guidelines:

- There was an initial ambivalence or lack of connection to the guidelines. However, after some prompting the group was able to identify what they thought was missing by extending the dialogue from Part One...mostly indirectly and in some cases directly to the guidelines.
- What participants thought of the specific guidelines they discussed:
  - *Comments re Guideline 2: “Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made.”*
    - Need to allay fears about privatization of the park....
      - Share key elements of the ‘Land Protection Ordinance’ to provide security for community that the Park will be user friendly for neighborhoods
  - *Comments re Guideline 3: “Allow people to better enjoy the water.”*

- Relook or rethink water for Energy Creation as an Economic opportunity....
  - Question about “better enjoy the water” ...How can you tie business development to this guideline
  - How does “better enjoy the water” infringe on the neighboring community(ies) and their needs...We need clarity about what this really needs
  - The park with overrunning foliage shields water... Need to concentrate on providing a visual connection to the water
- *Comments re Guideline 4: “Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer.”*
  - How do we better utilize the assets that we already have....? (ie LCD at the DELL – keep it connected sharing what is happening for the community
  - Needs to be a rebirth of education of Fairmount Park
    - Create catalogues, maps, guides and signage
  - Create a public art/jazz park for residents
    - Will bring tourists to celebrate the history of Philadelphia
- *Comments re Guideline 5: “Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors.”*
  - People have to be ‘fed’ or ‘educated’ about Fairmount Park
  - Add television show about Fairmount Park....perhaps Public Access
  - Needs to be a focus on building community though inclusion...that’s where connection, commitment and equality is achieved as you engage the community as full partners...from children to seniors
  - Feels like you’re ignoring residents as the closest neighbor
  - Where is the recreation? It offers economic opportunity...for the underserved
  - Guidelines should have language that demonstrates equity and partnerships
  - Provide economic opportunities to proprietors who want to invest
    - Their...There (ownership and inclusion in the process)
- *Comments re Guideline 6: “Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving.”*
  - Include creating road bumps to slow down vehicle traffic

- **Summary of discussion of the guidelines**

The general consensus was that the guidelines need to be clearer to create a better connection and engagement for the ‘users’ of Fairmount Park. The participants expressed that the ‘language’ needs to express the ‘essence of the spirit of the work’ of enhancing Fairmount Park through community engagement and participation

### **Common Ground**

The participants landed on these points:

- A desire to be invited to more meetings regarding the planning process for Fairmount Park to make it truly a community vision
- To be fully engaged in the process of building a community vision
- Provide more information through community advocates to genuinely create a community vision for Fairmount Park

### **Minority reports**

The only viewpoint that sought more resolution was about job creation. The question of what this (community vision) means for jobs in an underserved and economically depressed neighborhood was important to the participants. Most saw this as an added benefit with less energy for direct dialogue. However, the expectation would be that it would be a byproduct of the economic development. The one person who voiced the concern about job creation left the end of the meeting wanting to get a direct response about job creation as a part of the intentional plan for East and West Fairmount Park Community Vision.