

**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.

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

**Date of Forum: September 25, 2013**

**Location of Forum: John Anderson Cultural Center**

**Moderator name(s): Shakira Abdul-Ali, Ted Enoch**

**Group Description**

The group started out with six participants – 2 white females, 3 African-American females, 1 African-American male. Others came in as the discussion moved forward, until we concluded with 11 participants: 4 African-American females; 4 African-American males; 3 white females.

**Ice-Breaker**

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

- I walk the trails from the Museum back to this area, and you can see a progression in the maintenance of the Park, from well-kept to poorly-kept. Poor lighting, etc. I want to share ideas about how we can improve the Park's appearance in this area.
- I used the Park a lot as a young person. I love watching the fireworks, and recently I noticed a hostel! What's that about?
- I went to St. Joe's Prep, and I grew up around the Zoo. I represent many people and groups tonight, including Wynnefield Residents Association, Wynnefield Business Association, and the Belmont Plateau, an important icon here. I'm concerned that the Park is becoming an embarrassment. There is little to no refreshment for visitors, and when you get refreshment, there is nowhere to dispose of the waste. There are no bathrooms. I don't hang around in the parking lot due to drug paraphernalia.
- I've used the Park for over 50 years. I want to hear about the vision for the Park, and to offer my input.
- I left the area, and recently returned – because of the Park. I am interested in seeing how there can be an improvement in the access to the Park.
- I'm representing Councilman Jones AND I'm here as someone who rode horses in the Centennial District. I have participated in track tournaments; I have run for Overbrook. I've run cross country. We have an interest in making the Park an Outdoor Classroom for the environment. Five schools in the 4<sup>th</sup> Council District are looking for outdoor experiences for their students. The Centennial District offers this possibility.

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Running or jogging on MLK/West River Drive
- Watching the July 4th fireworks from Belmont Plateau (Did you know that a giant VIP tent at the Mann Center now obstructs a lot of the view that I used to love?)
- Cookouts and picnics on the plateau and other locations
- Kelly Pool – swimming

- Basketball on the courts at Parkside. (Did you know that people often use the courts to illegally dump trash and construction debris?)
- Walking, all over the park, but notably near the Mann Music Center, and on Ford Road (I like to walk with three friends of mine...)
- Visiting Old Memorial Hall and enjoying the “magical” acoustic echo effects at the “Whispering Wall.” I love blowing people’s minds there. (Many in the group agreed!)
- Hiking all through the park, all the way to Manayunk, Valley Green or to Strawberry Mansion.
- My parents are docents at some of the park mansions.
- The Mann Music Center
- Sledding
- Trail walking, you can take a trail from out here all the way to 33rd street
- Camp Brotherhood – my family used to drive me around the park, and I thought I was travelling to foreign lands. Little did I know that I was still in my backyard, but my family just drove all over this beautiful, huge park.
- There are important educational components happening in the park. There are five schools in the West Park area that use the park and lake for an urban/rural classroom environment, where they study plant and animal life, and urban gardening
- People walk their dogs in the park
- There are dangerous wild dogs in the park.
- Dancing and music events
- Picnics like at Lemon Hill (Did you know their driveway is so full of potholes that in some places you can barely drive through it?)
- Youth conservation groups used to exist in the past that some in attendance were members of
- Volunteer work, like cleaning the park, just like Ready Willing and Able do today. They do a great job!
- Sports: Cricket, Football, Softball, Cross Country running (said a participant with many memories of painful runs on the plateau), Rugby, Ultimate Frisbee, Disc Golf, Tennis
- Please Touch Museum

How people would like to use the park and what gets in the way of that today:

- Love to use “Art Museum Phlash” types of buses to travel into the park
- There could be much greater access to, or even a tour of the W. Park, Centennial Lake. In the past there have been tours to historic African American locations in the park, like the site of the Negro Baseball League field, and the memorial statue dedicated to African American Civil War veterans, and other locations...
- Mansions could be used/adopted by more groups to help preserve and protect them. These mansions are great assets and they need to be better recognized and managed. There is a good example of this at the Woodford Mansion where volunteers conduct beekeeping and maintain an orchard.
- Sports should continue, but there needs much great support of the infrastructure and people who support the sports. There is only one port-o-potty at the plateau, and it is

often in dismal condition. There could be operational locker rooms and bathrooms. And simple concessions when sports are happening.

- We can promote fishing, perhaps with a fishing pier at Concourse Lake or Centennial Lake
- Would love to see more Movies in the Park

#### Barriers:

- Traffic. You can't cross the Avenue of the Republic at certain spots – as this moderator discovered tonight when he biked to this community forum :(
- The traffic from Mann Music Center events can be disruptive and dangerous for bikers and walkers. The park needs to be far more pedestrian friendly.
- Overgrowth and dead trees can block paths, or completely overgrow paths, and can cause safety hazards
- Personal safety, security needs to be improved
- Parking can be confusing, and in the large lots, like at The Dell, there is no lighting, or parking signs/zones to help you identify where you parked in the lot (like at major venue parking centers)
- Again, access is a problem for people, City Avenue, Montgomery Avenue, Belmont Avenue, these roads are very hard to cross safely for walkers and bikers
- Is West Fairmont Park underutilized? Or underdeveloped? Can we increase programming for youth and families?
- Families and youth need access to refreshments
- More civic partnership and friends groups are needed to steward the park, like the Garden Club of America during their 100 year celebration, they adopted Centennial Lake, cleaned it, dredged it and really helped its condition.
- We need better highlighting and promotion of the activities that are happening in our park
- People don't have an idea of what's happening in the park. We need better information and communication about park activities. Like with the summer camps. There are free summer camps for area youth that are (purposefully?) under publicized.
- The Centennial Cafe. Does anyone know about it? And even if you did, the traffic is terrible there and makes it difficult for walkers and bikers to get there.
- Definitely need better signage for landmarks and activities, maybe with QR codes, or audio/phone components
- We need to bring the history forward for park visitors (see above point)
- Accessibility issues. We need more ramps and railings.
- Bathrooms are in disrepair
- Trails and fields are overgrown. Could there be volunteer groups, like there used to be, the Young Park Rangers, who help maintain and clean parts 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:

- They're a good start
- Protecting wildlife is good.
- Enjoyment of water is encouraged, like supporting activities on the water – e.g. fishing
- Water-based education exploration – that's good
- I like #4 – helping people to get a better understanding of the Park is good. Signage that relates to people's experiences in the Park would be helpful.
- There was dance that was conducted on the Bridge! That was really nice.
- Making people more aware of what's going on is helpful. Using flyers to let people know what is on the schedule; right now there isn't really any way to know, until the day the event is happening.
- #6 – Safety and accessibility goals are helpful and important
- Transportation through the Park should be emphasized for bikes and walkers / runners, and made easier, enabling people to leave their cars at home.

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

- Trash removal! Weeds and bushes are badly overgrown.
- On West River Drive – plant life is overgrown.
- Graffiti on West River Drive – it seems that a lot of money is spent where wealthier people live to keep the Park well maintained and looking good. Not so much where working families live.
- There is no evidence that green technology is being used. Wind, solar and/or water power could be used.
- How do we bring the structures into a design that invites three generations of families into the Park so that all can enjoy it? Children, young- to middle-aged adults, and seniors, alike.
- Safety and security – these factors should be highlighted.
- Strengthen the connection between trails inside the Park.
- In some places – sidewalks become dead-ends; this should be addressed – clearing away debris to extend the trail, or alert that the trail is a dead-end.
- Guideline #2 – regarding “protect and enhance,” should include an emphasis on maintenance practices
- Guidelines #3 and #4 – regarding ‘stewardship.’ We should talk about how the public can take care of the Park – e.g. a Park Clean-Up Day.
- Each section of the Park can have a “Friends” Group to take care of that section of the Park.
- Fundraising & Clean-up programming would leverage current resources connected to business, philanthropy, government and civic collaboration for maintenance
- There should be greater accessibility for people using walkers and motorized chairs
- There is no public transportation through the Park – connecting different venues to each other for, e.g., tourists and other users. This requires people to have to drive their cars through the Park.

- We should encourage youth employment and volunteer opportunities in the operation of the Park. These opportunities should be connected to zones or neighborhoods around the Park.



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

**Date of Forum: September 25, 2013**

**Location of Forum: John Anderson Cultural Center**

**Moderator name(s):** Jeff Branch, Terrill Thompson

**Group Description**

There were nine participants in the group: three African-American women, three white men, one African-American man, and a six-year old. Three of the participants lived in or close to the park and three participants were connected with organizations that utilize the park. Participants came to the meeting for a variety of reasons, including wanting to see the park return to its glory, wanting to increase resources to the park, to preserve the park as a place for children to connect with nature, and out of concern for maintenance and cleanliness.

**Ice-Breaker**

The universal reasons these local community members gave for attending the meeting tonight:

- Want to see the park come back to its glory

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Walking, biking and hiking using both River Drives
- Exploring and testing the different Trails
- Drive through as a connector for West and North Philly; drive through as alternative to highway
- Recycling Center for compost
- St. Joseph Prep uses the park fields for all outdoor teams
- Rock collections: Lincoln Drive, Wissahickon Walkway
- Valley Green
- Azalea Gardens (Kelly Drive)
- Walkathons and Runs for both civic and corporate sponsored events and causes (i.e. cancer research)
- Wynnefield Heights: Easter Egg Hunts, Movie in the Park, Community Day in the park, Picnics and Birthdays

How people would like to use the park:

- Swimming through the creation of another 'Crystal Lake' (i.e. swimming place from past history)
- More tennis courts – Chamounix tennis courts often feel like a 'private club'; there are other tennis courts but they are poorly maintained
  - Revitalize the tennis courts for us; (nets; maintaining the courts to make them appealing for use)
  - As an example Chamounix Drive courts are used for camps and are well maintained...although, there is the feeling that 'pros' use Chamounix

- Boy Scouts build a camp that could be used for a variety of purposes...

Barriers:

- **Safety** – concern about the water with respect to drowning occurrences
- **Safety** – don't feel safe walking by myself; wants a partner – with the exception of the River Drives (all except one person), but depends on the time of the day
  - (ie. Dead bodies have been found in the park; Fairmount Park Rapist never been caught)
- **Safety** – would not go into the woods...not sure of wildlife
  - Wild dogs that travel into the community; foxes; deer (lyme disease or deer crossing roads)
- **Safety** – Weeds are too high in sections – promotes feeling of being unsafe (predators; wildlife)
  - On the positive – some concurred that they noticed cutting of bushes
- **Safety** – Trails not clearly marked; need signage and/or indication where the trails lead
  - If we make enhancements, expect that there would a positive change and willingness to experience the trails
- **Safety** – Saint Joseph Prep's (SJP) coaches indicated that even the police won't go to the upper lot of Belmont Plateau because of illegal activity
  - Coaches at SJP no longer allow the football team to tackle on the fields because of used condoms and needles that are clearly visible
  - Took football team off Belmont Plateau for practice because cars were burglarized...moved to using Temple University as a practice site
- **Safety** - Lack of police presence
  - 19<sup>th</sup> District is slow to respond. Participants voiced their opinions that the 19<sup>th</sup> district is stretched all over West Philly and does not view the park as a priority
  - Need substations in the park and callboxes
  - No longer have Mounted Fairmount Guards or at least not visible - need more mounted police to patrol the park
    - Is the stable on MLK Drive still used...?
    - What about bike patrols...?
    - Can meter maids be deployed differently...?
- Other cities (ex: Jamaica Queens experienced challenges similar to Philadelphia. People started using Central Park because it was well maintained – good memories from when one participant lived there...)
- **Access** – if we were lost, or something else, how would we be found because of lack of markings?
  - No major entrance points; no real aligned paths; no trail markers
  - Can we engage Boy Scouts to help with this process...?
- **Access** – 52<sup>nd</sup> street gets nothing
  - We need expansion of streets – wideside box; bicycle access
- **Access** – Need neighborhood to blend to/with park trails
- **Access** – Montgomery Drive @ Belmont Avenue (a major access point to the park) – big problem navigating the lights because not a walker or biker pathway access

- **Access** – Horticultural Center Entrance – impossible to get out of the Center because there is no traffic control
- **Access** – Policy of closing the Drives is a **Paradox**. People get to enjoy the activities that live outside the city, but closing the Drives leaves a ‘bad taste in the mouths’ of the adjoining neighborhoods...and, probably people coming into the city
  - A traffic nightmare – the River Drives are major roads to get out of and into neighborhoods
  - What gives anyone the right to close the Drive for a Regatta
    - Parking is an intrusion
  - April through October closure of the West River Drive causes a challenge...even though the intent is to promote usage
  - The heavy use of Belmont Plateau creates ad hoc parking lots that cause traffic log jams and extreme congestion on Belmont Avenue, entry to the drives and highways
- **Access Ideas** – Ideas emerged from the group to enhance access
  - Enhance public transportation access...currently we have Route 38 Bus which is a long drive
  - Think about creating specialty routes
    - Strawberry Mansion Bridge – Is it a possibility to create an access connection by creating a LOOP bus or trolley to Center City? Like there was in the 1950’s... (What is the weight capacity of the Strawberry Mansion Bridge – a consideration)
    - Would be helpful...something like the Art Museum Trolley. Create an intentional connector from the park to the zoo
    - PHLASH BUS – with mappings to encourage exploration
    - Something that connects major sites in the Park (Valley Green; Belmont Plateau; Dell; Mann, Horticultural Center; Smith Playground)
    - MAY BE ENCOURAGING FOR MORE SCHOOL GROUPS (IE Bushkill Falls)
    - Create a focus on neighborhoods and major sites...intentionally show the connections
      - Would be advantageous for neighborhoods and tourists
    - Research the ‘developing train’ idea that was talked about years ago
- **Access Technology** – Use technology to identify key sites and access points; use technology to develop codes that would identify trails and paths
  - Use Facebook and Twitter as another point of leverage to educate people

## Part 2: Discussion of draft guidelines

The group didn’t engage deeply with the guidelines. Questions such as “in what ways would these guidelines support or hinder the ideas you have for the park” received uncertain responses. The group did have productive conversation and expressed the following desires:

- Guideline 1: Start by improving how people enter and access the entire park.
  - More about bike access
- Include something for a wide age range
- Provide a place for dirt bikes and quads that is off of the streets
- Become accessible for people with physical disabilities

- The new bike rentals on Kelley Dr. are taking off; there should also be boat rentals if there aren't already
- Add bike and walking trails on the old trolley tracks (utilize what is already there)
- Guideline 3: Allow people to better enjoy the water.
  - Like this guideline, especially the end of it about education. Education will help prevent people from dumping into the water system.
- Explore partnership with other organizations to build new fields
  - Would need to become easier to partnership with. Right now it is difficult due to slow/lack of response and lots of red tape.
- Include surrounding schools among the stakeholder groups
- Look to other parks for ideas
- Tie to healthy youth/ decreasing obesity
- Have easy ways to find out about activities in the park so that we can participate
  - Have a Facebook page/ use social media
- Have a walk/run to raise awareness of the park
- Have good, easy to access maps
  - Both printed and online
  - Set the maps up to work with GPS
- Educate people regarding how to get information about the park that is already available
- Have more and nicer BBQ sites
- Make is easy to contact parks and rec. with questions
- Create a system for dealing with trans from BBQs and events

#### Possible Activities for Youth

- Soccer
- Skateboarding
- Free concerts and movies
- Roller skating area
- HUGE spray park (it would help limit fire hydrant usage)
- Park needs to be accessible from neighborhoods

#### **Common Ground**

Participants were particularly concerned about safety, cleanliness and access. There was interest among the group in having the Park look to partnerships and other creative way to increase resources.

#### **Minority Report**

None. The group members had different priorities, but there was not disagreement.

**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.*

**East and West Fairmount Park  
Community Vision  
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 Fairmount 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.

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

**Date of Forum: 10/2/13**

**Location of Forum: Lloyd Hall**

**Moderator name: Josh Warner**

**Group Description**

Group 1 had 15 members – eight female and seven male. Ages were evenly distributed, and ranged from college students to retirees. The group was entirely Caucasian, as no people of color were present. Nearly all of the participants were active users of Fairmount Park, and there was a large contingent of dragon boat racers and several others involved in rowing/paddling organizations. Some participants were residents of adjacent neighborhoods, but the majority of Group 1 hailed from other parts of the city. All seemed to have deep stakes in the park, however, whether through adjacency, organized team activity, or regular personal use.

**Hopes/Fears**

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

The ice-breaker discussion yielded numerous hopes and only one fear. Many of the hopes expressed by participants related to “access.” River access and safety, dragon boat access, pedestrian access and traffic calming were all brought up as hopes, and additional points were raised relating to the infrastructure that would support increased access, such as building new community boat houses within five years. Other hopes expressed included preserving the historic beauty of the park, increasing park-goers’ understanding of the beauty and history, facilitating the process of working with the parks department to get permits, achieving dedicated funding streams, and mitigating the over-use and “chaos” that afflict the park during large events. The one fear mentioned in the ice-breaker had to do with combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and the damage they cause to the park.

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Rowing
- Dragon Boat Paddling (immediately, the group started discussing the conflicts on/around the water because of the competition between rowing/paddling)
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Cycling
- Running/walking
- Driving
- Dance or Theater performances
- Fishing

- Picnicking
- Holiday tours of the Mansions
- Museums
- Rollerblading
- Viewing the Gardens
- Segways
- Various sports (emphasis here)
- Dog walking
- The carousel
- Cleaning up (park clean-ups)
- Exploring
- Concerts
- Reading

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

- A Beer Garden
  - But this brings issues of further commercialization/privatization of the park
  - Also, beer garden in the park was a historic use. Had existed in the past
- Jitney service – around the park or up/down major routes
- Would like to see the park uses more spread out
  - Alleviates the congestion that certain areas have
  - Redistribute the major events to different park locations for more even use
- Swimming in the River
  - Issues of safety, and infrastructure to support swimmers
- Cablecar from the Art Museum to the Zoo
- Easier and safer pedestrian crossings along Kelly Drive
- Experimental, temporary closings of Kelly Drive for recreation
- Access to Peters Island
- Respectful use of Lemon Hill by picnickers
  - Too much trash and disrespect of site currently
- Control the geese flocks
- Urban Nursery for young trees and perennials
  - Sales of plants to the public would make \$\$
- Divert traffic (or other methods of traffic leveling) from the east side to the west side (on weekends)
- “Daylight” the various streams in the park
  - Meaning exposing them, or restoring to a more natural state for viewing, recreation, aesthetics
- Having continuous bike trails to and through the park
- Fenced off dog parks
- Reclaim the East Park Canoe House
  - Restore and provide needed infrastructure for rowing/paddling teams

- Better lighting for West Fairmount Park, plus restored/improved restrooms
- Resurfaced bike & walking paths along West River Drive
- Native Plant restoration throughout the Park

#### Barriers:

- I-76
- Kelly Drive sized at 4 lanes
- Politics
- Parking – particularly street parking (lacking at times)
- Lack of signage (parking info, speed, directional, and walking routes)
- Parking enforcement is not done
- Police and Park Rangers provide inconsistent enforcement of the law
- Lack of Public Access to the River
  - Boat ramps in disrepair
  - “Schuylkill Navy” in full control of the river during Regattas
  - Public access should be improved along the whole river – look to points north of the congested rowing access areas
- Unequal/inequitable treatment for fees & permits needed for events in the park
  - Uniform fee schedule and permit requirements are not fair for individual artists or small non-profits, when compared to large Regatta organizers
- No restrooms on the west side of the park
- No working water fountains on the west side
- Lack of alternate transportation options to, in, around park
- Lack of Resources (money, services, volunteers, information)
- Safety and Security are a barrier (along with perception of safety)
- Historical Commission is a barrier
  - Limits the re-use and restoration options for the East Park Canoe House
- Water Quality (boating, swimming)
- There are constraints along the riverfront trail, due to private rights-of-way interrupting the trail
- Parochial attitude of the park sections and adjacent neighborhoods
  - Towards park use, resource (\$) use, volunteerism, and use of volunteers
    - For instance, volunteer groups only targeting one portion of the park, neglecting other parts
- There is much more maintenance and administration work to be done, now that the Commission has merged with Parks & Rec

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

Group 1 jumped right into the guidelines. Some of the discussion was based on specific guidelines; however, the participants often brought up themes or issues that were broader in scope. The group was given a few minutes to look over the guidelines, and then the discussion began. Based on the ways in which the participants accessed and analyzed the guidelines, it seemed that many of them had experience with deliberations or presentations of this nature

before, such as what might be presented in typical planning meetings or public policy workshops.

- GENERAL discussion of the guidelines (not specific to any particular one)
  - There is no mention of funding (emphasized). Administrative tasks, costs, and personnel are not mentioned either
  - There is a big tension between reducing cars and traffic, but guidelines do not acknowledge those that commute through the park daily.
    - “The park funnels movement” for the city
  - The emphasis on increasing connectivity and access (that is written into several guidelines) is great
  - There is no mention in the guidelines of how to guide or decide on the development or improvement of infrastructure
  - Guidelines do not mention the need for major conversations to be had (and actions to be taken) regarding park funding and prioritization
    - [This might link to Guideline #4]
  - Public/Private partnerships are not mentioned in the guidelines
  - There is no mention of public input
    - How to be involved in the park
    - How to make park happenings and proposals/decisions more known
    - Ongoing dialogue
  - Some guidelines can be merged [but no one offered specific numbers, since we were out of time]
- *Comments re Guideline 1: “Start by improving how people enter and access the entire park.”*
  - Liked the emphasis on access and connectivity
- *Comments re Guideline 2: “Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made.”*
  - There is little mention of the natural environment in un-programmed areas
  - Like that anything new or refurbished is sensitive to nature
    - However, there could be more language on sustainable building practices and architecture
    - And that this should be a pro-active stance, rather than reactive to proposals
- *Comments re Guideline 3: “Allow people to better enjoy the water.”*
  - This guideline should be more robust. Mention people “getting on the river”
  - The focus should be on the means of water enjoyment, not necessarily the ends. The ends are the activities on the water, the means are how to get them built or provide access
    - This should certainly involve outside groups as well
- *Comments re Guideline 5: “Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors.”*
  - The idea of “zones” or “districts” within the park – that parts of the park take on local qualities of the neighborhoods they border (This was seen as both a pro and a con of Guideline #5)

- Pros: parts of the park will be better used by adjacent neighbors
  - Cons: The neighborhood focus can be limiting to the needs of the whole city
    - Difficult to solve bigger/broader park issues (the “commons”)
    - Sometimes you need a global view to get things done
  - Should mention improvements for children, specifically
- *Comments re Guideline 6: “Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving.”*
  - Again, the guideline should reference children. How do kids get to the park? Is it the park’s responsibility to bring them in (busing?)
    - Park could connect to the School District and to parents to bring in more kids

Summary of discussion of the guidelines:

Group 1 offered a thorough critique of the guidelines, but did not necessarily go point by point. Much of the richest conversation was on the broader themes that could not be captured within one guideline. These themes, such as funding, partnerships, ongoing conversation, and continued public input were woven into the first part of the process (uses, barriers) as well. To offer this moderator’s editorial opinion, I think this group had much more experience with the “language of policy & planning,” and thus was able to process the guidelines and offer positive and negative critiques as well as missing points within such a short timeframe.

**Common Ground:**

- There was certainly common ground around access. Nearly every participant referenced access either directly or indirectly in the discussion of uses, barriers, and proposed guidelines.
- Water and boating related sports were another point of common ground. About half of the participants were rowers or paddlers, or had direct experience organizing teams or events related to these. For these participants (and other group members), “access” and “infrastructure” become almost synonymous in meaning. Getting to the water and also having the means to get on to the water with a boat were very important. But even so, the group admitted (as one of the very first discussion points) that conflicts among water uses/users are frequent.
- Funding and resources for the park at large were also common ground. Some of the participants were concerned about the merger and resultant budget/resource issues.
- Overuse and “chaos” in the park – especially related to traffic and major events was a common ground concern. There was some tentative common ground on redistributing, or at least easing, some of these sources of congestion.

**Minority reports:** None.

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

**Date of Forum: 10/2/13**

**Location of Forum: Lloyd Hall**

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

**Group Description**

The group consisted of 16 people (12 women and 4 men). Eight people identified as members of the rowing community (5 Dragon Boaters-trying to get access to the water). Five of the other eight people identified themselves as bikers, hikers, trail walkers. Three people identified themselves as present for the cultural aspects of the dialogue, raising consciousness of the historic houses and an estate manager, and to serve as advocates for young people. The group was from diverse neighborhoods in the city or the near surrounding Pennsylvania or NJ suburbs. Three African-American women were among the predominately white group. The group was 'focused' on making sure a sense of inclusion was present in the dialogue as they built on each others' points and also resonated with inclusion as central to any development work that may take place with the communities.

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

- Rowing
- Running
- Education - Historical Resources, Awareness, Tutoring and Counseling, Outdoor Environmental Education
- Recreational cycling
- Athletic cycling at different speeds
- Commuting cycling
- Transportation; Access for driving - scenic and peaceful route
- History of the park during colonial times
- Social gatherings and meetings on Boathouse Row
- Steward of history and archives of the park
- Sculpture appreciation
- Special events like the regattas
- 5k runs
- Community Orchards in the Strawberry Mansion community
- Dragon boat paddling
- Recreational kayaking
- Sailing
- Canoe club
- Community clean up days

- Picnics, BBQs, social
- Animal exercise
- All the marathons and triathlons
- Walkathons
- Bike racings
- Reading and engaging with nature
- Artists use for their work
- Fishing

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

- Like to have a 'Community' Row Boathouse built
- Only access is with private boat houses; Temple University rows out of a tent
- Quiet zone for picnics; no radios; just hearing the sounds of nature
- What is already here be better cared for; better stewards of our current resources
- Enhanced dredging - difficult with launching
- Bathrooms on the West Side
- Lighting
- Need more parking lots
- There is a stark difference with the West side and the East Side; need more development on the West Side
- Reduce fees for parking; East side is not parking friendly with the fees - it is more commercial
- Have West River Drive closed during the Winter; extend hours; make all year round
- Create instructions for bike trails; guidelines and basics for safety
- Trails identified and extended; education purposes; create maps of trails and signage
- More cafes (i.e. at St. Joe's House)
- Dedicate more things available for young people; music
- More statues reflecting history of Philly before Columbus
- Kelly Drive boathouses need to reach out to their neighbors and engage them; educate about races
- Advertise the park to college campuses as a way of enhancing engagement
- Develop Activity Centers for the young people on the West Side (i.e. Lloyd Hall type)
- Recreation Centers could be anchors connecting the park
- Create a Welcome Center
- Identify things that are available to do (ie Water Works)
- Get more boats on the water on the West Side; Develop docks; where will funding coming from?; Access to the river and commitment to engage the West Side community



- Better bike trail on West Side; there is a distinct difference - why?

#### Barriers:

- Traffic; hard to cross and not safe
- Surreys have to go because of safety concerns and problems navigating; Need to consider the big picture
- Bike rental site unsightly and unsafe; prohibits expansion opportunities
- Bike safety because of traffic and lack of trails identified
- Need more space for biking trails
- Need to enhance the feeling of being 'safe'; more lighting along trails and adjacent streets
- Address environmental issues; water drainage; trees and Vegetation overrides; need to focus on maintenance (stewardship)
- Cumbersome getting to places; Needs better public transportation to East and West side park; minimize car usage; something like the PHLASH; Forbidden Drive could be a northern boundary for the coverage
- Expand system to provide access
- Bridges need repairs
- West River Drive have these odd metal structures that are a hazard for runners, bikers; need to paint them bright colors so they can be visible or just eliminate; not sure of their purpose
- Need stairs cleared on West River Drive to get on Strawberry Mansion Bridge; difficult to access; vegetation overgrown and difficult to access
- We need greater pedestrian and bike access; No real access- We are "playing chicken" with the traffic; West Park is harder to access the river from Strawberry Mansion; no way to get across the drives without putting your life in danger if walking or biking because of the traffic
- Money or funding for development is a barrier
- Need to identify the priorities with less money available
- It is difficult to justify the existence of the park because of the cost in these economic times; Where do we allocate resources?; Will it increase usage?
- Bureaucracy in the city is a huge barrier because of the nepotism
- Politics and social differences; the park is not representative of the city as a whole; perhaps it is when considering the underdevelopment of the West side
- Access is for only a small portion of the population; need more access for diverse business interests; access for the neighbors
- We need to go into the neighborhoods for communication and engagement
- For example: Neighbors feel the regatta is an intrusion; neighbors are impacted and angry; They should be 'invited' in.
- Drives closure has both positive and negative community impact; have to figure out a way to balance it; causes congestion and is a parking nightmare
- For example, model drives in some ways after Boston's river community where there is walking access
- Boston has well developed Community Boathouses; Walking paths and tours

- There are way too many rules and regulations that focus on keeping young people out; we need to find alternatives to keep the young people engaged and interested in the many benefits of the park.
- We need to pay attention to and understand the different needs of the various constituents (men, women, children, bikers, rowers, runners, etc.). Need to design with these diverse interests in mind
- Enhancing lighting and maps will increase likelihood of usage
- We need to engage in a 'big picture' process; different ways we can use the space; How can we 'build community?'; How can we create an environment that encourages usage?
- Vancouver is another example: they have open access
- Camden Cooper River Community Boathouse is a closer example of greater access along the connection with walking trails
- Lloyd Hall is a good example. Need this is the West Side to create open access multi-purpose facility; the Drives need to be friendly for the entire community

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

The participants described the guidelines as a summary of their thoughts and immediately focused on what they saw as supports and offered their ideas to add to strengthen. This group started with the intentional of including all the stakeholders in any development work that could be done. Even though there were a number of individual/group interests about enhancing the West Side for access to the water, the group identified engaging the community as critical. This was reinforced in their elaboration of the 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."*
  - Strongly encouraged enhancing mapping and signage for trails
  - Suggested enhancement of transportation options be included
- *Comments re Guideline 2: "Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made."*
  - Create more gardens in quiet areas as special reflection places (Ex: Florence, Italy excavated a new garden)
- *Comments re Guideline 3: "Allow people to better enjoy the water."*
  - Include "strongly" - Support the development of better drinking water. Revitalize the springs.
  - Emphasize development of the West side to match development on East side with community neighbors as active partners
  - Add stewardship of assorted canoe clubs
- *Comments re Guideline 4: "Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer."*
  - Educate others about outdoor sculpture
- *Comments re Guideline 5: "Improve Fairmount Park for all residents, starting with near neighbors."*
  - Supportive of enhancing the emphasis of serving the neighbors

- Make language more focused on existing neighbors as stakeholders
- Connected with more intentional urban planning....make the park an attraction and attractive to live near
- Create the sports or activities center
- Create jobs for the near neighbors
- Mark the park a tourist attraction with free access for Philly residents (ex: Tokyo created lots of parks to cater to different audiences (motor powered; hiking; catered to young people); teens took pride in 'their' park because of the sense of ownership
- *Comments re Guideline 6: "Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving."*
  - Add lower costs of parking to enable the enjoyment of the park
  - Start to do more intentional urban planning to accommodate the different users
  - Add infrastructure to West Side so we can have development
  - Remove bureaucracy; city politics

Summary of discussion of the guidelines: The guidelines discussion was pretty robust with the participants able to make strong connections to their previous dialogue. In many cases, they reiterated prior comments or added clarity or greater emphasis. The group tended to focus on the West side development as a key option. Many of the participants were from the dragon boat community.

### **Common Ground**

The major common ground threads from this group centered on the development of the West side as a priority, especially as it related to gaining access to the water. A resounding echo of "engaging or partnering with the community" was prevalent throughout the dialogue. Stewardship of what is already in place and commitment to develop to enhance usage and access of the West side also resounded with the group. A message of "engaging in intentional urban planning" that involves all the stakeholders was especially important to this group.

### **Minority Reports**

There were not any minority viewpoints expressed by this group.

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

**Date of Forum: October 2, 2013**

**Location of Forum: Lloyd Hall**

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

**Group Description**

Group 3 was comprised of 14 members and conducted a vigorous and lively discussion tonight about the future vision of Fairmount Park. The group of 10 men and 4 women, all of whom who appeared to be white, was an adult group, tending towards middle-age (but certainly with exceptions in either direction). The members came from many neighborhoods within Philadelphia and from its surrounding suburbs.

**Ice-Breaker**

When asked “Why did you come to this meeting tonight,” the group members responded accordingly:

- A younger man from East Falls said that *he lives in Fairmount Park*.
- The coach of the St. Joe’s Prep football team explained that his team and many other Philly school teams use the park for practice, and that he has been using the park for years.
- An older man in a wheel chair living in Huntington Valley said that his active history with the park goes back perhaps 40 years.
- Another older man told us that he has been running and rowing in the park since the 1960s.
- A man who lives in Graduate Hospital neighborhood and who is an urban planning student at Penn bikes, runs and plays ultimate Frisbee in the park.
- A man from Brewerytown uses Lemon Hill Park all the time, exercises in the park and meets people in the park.
- An older man who works with the Philadelphia Rowing organization is interested in getting more young people involved with the park and river, especially through rowing, and wants to be active in supporting those outreach efforts.
- A woman from Delaware County who is a member of the Philadelphia Women’s Dragon Boat team wants to see her team return to the Schuylkill River (they now practice on the Cooper River in Camden), also does charity runs and roller blades in the park.
- A younger man works for Parks and Rec, and he manages teams of people who provide maintenance throughout the park, and he is also a park user.
- A woman living in Society Hill has a history of working to support Philadelphia tourism, and is interested in seeing the park improve as an economic engine in the region. She is also a dragon boater.
- A woman from Delaware County, also a dragon boater, is interested in seeing more access for boaters, especially paddlers and rowers, on the river. She see first-hand every

weekend how the lack of river access leads to people parking on the grass fields as the cluster around the limited river docks.

- A woman from Brewerytown, also on the dragon boat team, participates in many sports throughout the park, goes to concerts, and just really uses the park often.
- A man from the Graduate Hospital neighborhood uses the Mann Center, bikes often through the park out of the city, and is interested in seeing the park get more bike friendly, with dedicated bike paths and other measures.
- A man from Washington Square West is a runner in the park. He also works for the Philadelphia Planning Commission, and is currently working on a project that covers part of East Fairmont Park.

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

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

- Dragon Boating
- Rowing
- Running
- Biking
- Concerts
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Softball
- Football
- Picnics
- Looking at art and sculptures
- Taking pictures
- Exploring
- Hiking
- Driving and watching things, like cricket players, or simply people watching
- Enjoy the fact that you can park in many places throughout the park, seemingly anywhere
- Music
- Drive through to other neighborhoods, commuting
- Engagements, Weddings, Engagement/Wedding Pictures (like at the Azalea Garden)
- Hangout by the museum
- Watch films
- Aids Walk
- Tour boats
- Just enjoy being near the water
- Swim
- Breakfast at the Centennial Cafe, or other locations
- Skateboarding
- Boathouse parties
- Hanging out and meeting friends
- Gatherings: Family, Romantic (we used to call it “watching the submarine races”)
- Horse stables and riding

- Tours of the mansions
- School teams practice and compete in the park
- Fishing
- Kayaking
- Paddle boating
- The city earns money from events, plus park users dine, use our hotels, the drink and shop here.
- Laurel Hill Cemetery, see the statues and monuments
- Frisbee (Disc) Golf
- The driving range
- Rock Climbing
- Bird Watching
- Horse shoes
- Badminton
- Geo Caching -- treasure hunts using clues, Geo coordinates and maps
- Plus it must be mentioned that certain people use the park for more covert, unwatched, illicit activities like using drugs and having “car dates” with prostitutes.

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

- Would like to be able to kayak (and other paddling sports) more easily, with more access points to the river. More docks.
- A community boathouse would really help grow paddling and rowing sports in the region. It would really help with outreach.
- What about boating access on the Lower Schuylkill?
- More drinking fountains and bathrooms throughout the park, especially at Belmont Plateau where many school sports take place.
- More dedicated bike lanes and loops in the park
- More parking (I have a ticket right now from being at this event). Or more unlimited meter parking or more free parking. Two hour parking at a park is not a good unit of time. Many people use the park far longer than two hours.
- More crossing lights, stop lights, reflectors to help pedestrian and bike users, to protect them from cars.
- Speed limits (reduced) on Kelly Drive
- Like to see the historic stone stairwells maintained
- More access within the river through dredging. Many parts of river are unusable.
- The seawalls need to be fixed and maintained. The historic stone walls on the river.
- Love to see the park become even more of the city epicenter, like Chicago’s marina, with more commercial activity, restaurants, cafes.
- Cafe/food option near the Mann or in Parkside. Leverage Please Touch Museum to anchor a food option in that part of the park.
- Food carts or trucks could be an option.
- A wayfinding system to better know where the paths and trails go throughout the park.
- Better signs to guide you and to prevent you from getting lost (access and safety issue)

- Better lighting in the park, especially the trail along West River Drive, which is also very rough and in need of repair in places. This trail is dark and rough. Difficult for bikers and runners at night.
- Better marketing of the park
- Showcase and preserve the beautiful stonework and park architecture.
- Remove the graffiti from the bridges and tunnels
- Concentrate on sections or zones within the park. Much like Eakins Oval became a center this year, with activity and food and drink options. Highlight certain sections.
- More attention placed on crime, safety and security.
- Increased police/ranger presence. A dedicated park police who are concerned with the park as a whole, and who are not only looking at a small piece of the park, a fractured view of the system.
- Friendlier and more cooperative park commission staff.

#### Barriers:

- *For me, this is a place of work, I am a football coach for a team that practices here, August through November. I see how crime impacts our team and players. The kids' cars are broken into. I see used condoms in the parking lots, prostitution, drug use... And the police seem unconcerned. They seem more concerned whether or not one of my players' car tires is touching the lawn in the parking lot than the crime that surrounds us. I want to see crime, safety and security addressed.*
- Lack of police/security presence.
- Since it's a regional priority, our water source, can the state police be of assistance in monitoring the park?
- What about reviving the park police? Can they be revived?
- There is no uniform, total approach to the park safety and security systems.
- There are no facilities to support team sports, both scholastic and adult rec leagues.
- Traffic is very dangerous throughout the park.
- Lack of crossing spaces at Kelly Drive and by the Art Museum.
- Fast, dangerous traffic on Kelly Drive.
- Again, it is very dangerous for bikers in the park. I seem to see a bike accident, sometimes with ambulances involved, all the time in the park.
- Bikers are forced to share mixed-use paths and roads with cars and all sorts of foot/people traffic. This is going to lead to accidents.
- Working with the park commission has been a consistently horrible experience for me. We send in checks that have been lost. Staff has often been rude and ineffective. We have to hire our own services to mow and maintain the fields are adult leagues (and the school leagues) use. We had to bring in our own dirt for the baseball/softball fields...
- The overwhelming noise levels at concerts can be a problem for neighbors. Can we enforce the decibel level restrictions that are supposed to be in place?
- Accessibility issues for people with disabilities and mobility issues.
- Two-hour parking limits discourage people from using the park and cause park users pain and aggravation (tickets, extra trips back to the meter, taking away quality time from park activities).

- The city seems resistant to help. St. Joe's Prep offered private funding to improve a facility, and we were told "no."

## **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 in the conversation. However, as the conversation progressed, many felt that the language needed to be clarified, improved or more direct, as key issues and concerns seemed inadequately addressed. When asked what they specifically liked about the guidelines, the following points were made:

- That there is attention and intention to promote local use of local neighbors and communities. (#5)
- That there is intention to maintain the integrity of the park and reduce impacts on the park. (#2)
- The emphasis on the trails, to improve access for the trails and through the park. (#1 & #3)
- Interest in increasing water recreation activities. Hopeful that would lead to more access and docks on the river, which would also spread out parking more evenly throughout the park. (#3)
- The intention to improve understanding/information about the park, and the concept of realizing park "zones." This could really lead to increased ownership of the park. (#4)

This led to a lively debate about the concept of *park "ownership"* in a city's public space. Other terms like "responsibility" and "stewardship" were brought forward as a more ideal concept that could be fostered. One Art Museum neighborhood resident talked about how during the big concerts:

- *People park on my lawn. They urinate on my fence. That totally erodes the concept of local park ownership or responsibility.*
- *Another person talked about how Locals will leave town and take their money elsewhere. I get a hotel. I leave during these big events...*
- *And why does the trash cleanup take so long? Simple due diligence would help!*

An outcome of the *local vs. regional use of the park tension* was that people would love to see — *we need transparency* — how the revenues from the big concert events were being used to improve the park and benefit the neighborhoods that are adversely affected by the large events. It was also clear that these neighborhood folks feel that there is a lack of *accountability* to them, and their concerns are lost during the big events.

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

- Safety is not a clear priority here.
- Seems to be no attention to facility improvements.
- Seems to be no interest to develop more playing fields for kids.



The group got excited and interested in this point. They scanned all the park uses and noticed that so many uses of the park seem to be geared for adults, and that children and youth teams are an afterthought. Children use needs to be a priority.

- Water use. The river is already crowded. We can't have more activity without better and increased access and better management of the water itself. We could expand by going past the Falls Bridge and lower than the falls. But we can't just squeeze more use into the area we currently use.
- Needs to focus on increased public transportation throughout the park.

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

**Date of Forum:** October 2, 2013

**Location of Forum:** Lloyd Hall

**Moderator name(s):** Terrill Thompson

**Group Description**

Sixteen people from around the city participated in the group, half of whom lived near the park. Participants were all white and slightly more than 50% male. Most participants were middle-aged or older; one vocal participant was younger (Demographic are based on the observation of the facilitator. Participants were not asked to self-identify).

**Ice-Breaker**

Most participants were regular park users, and many came for specific reasons:

- Four participants came because of their connection to rowing or dragon boating, one of whom can't practice on the river anymore because of the river wall collapse
- Individuals came with specific concerns, including: cleaning up Girard and 33<sup>rd</sup>, business usage of the park, maintenance, working for parks and rec.
- Three participants came to learn information and give input more generally

**Part 1: Use in the park**

The group engaged in brainstorming well, yet never engaged in deep dialogue. Conversation was dominated by a few vocal participants and repeatedly returned to the same points. In comparison to other nights, the tone of this group carried more frustration and blame, although participants were respectful to each other.

How people used the park in the past and how they use it now

- Rowing
- Paddling
- Biking
- Hiking
- Tourism
- Walking
- Performance (dance, comedy sketches)
- Running
- Playground
- Zoo
- Fishing
- Disc golf
- Mann and Dell music
- Please Touch Museum

- Mansions
- Sports (football, soccer, baseball, softball, tennis, basketball)
- Swimming
- Dog walking
- Water Works
- Horticultural Center
- Being alone outside
- Bird watching
- Walking in woods
- Frisbee
- Picnic
- Golf, driving range
- Sit, relax and enjoy
- Horse riding
- Rollerblading
- Charity walks/runs
- Triathlons
- Marathons
- Restaurants/eat outside (Cosmic Café, Trolley Car)
- Weddings
- Holiday events
- Skateboarding
- Photography
- Art
- Cross-country (at Belmont Plateau)
- Centennial Lake and Concourse Lake
- As an environmental filter (for water, air, etc.)

Other things people would like to do in the park:

- Swimming in the river
- Beach front
- More river view
  - Remove the island in the river along Boathouse Row
- Public hall on the west side
- Diverse water sports (not just rowing)
- Zip line
- Mini golf
- Anything that gets people into the park
- Sculpture tour
- Adult playground (fun exercise)
- Restrooms (not port-a-potties; Australians do this well – they are simple, clean and beautiful)

- Open a seasonal café on Strawberry Mansion Bridge
  - Have a zip line to the west side
- Public boathouse rentals for wedding and conferences
  - Income source
  - Community Camden Boathouse does this

What gets in the way of current and desired uses:

- Safety
  - Lights
  - Police or volunteer town watch
  - Signs that say “stay to the right”
  - Security cameras
  - Car break-ins
- West side lacks infrastructure
  - Not enough people to feel safe
  - Needs to move people to west side to relieve congestion on east side
  - Add cafes and things for walkers (because boaters are on east side, walkers should be on west side)
- Better bike paths: more use on west side would increase safety
- Too much congestion in front of Boathouse Row
  - It is a hub with parking, bathrooms and mileage markers; need these same amenities other places
- Access
  - Walking in the Girard bridge area
  - Intersection at 33<sup>rd</sup> and Girard needs to be cleaned up; it is hard to cross
  - Public transportation; regional rail to Zoo, Mann and other locations
  - From Kelly Drive to Smith Playground
  - Pedestrian bridge at Locust Street and Schuylkill River banks (connect University City to the park)
  - Pedestrian bridge from Zoo to MLK Dr.
  - Trail under Spring Garden bridge isn’t wide enough
  - More and better sidewalks along road to Lemon Hill
  - Crosswalks need lights
  - Paint pedestrian crosswalks
  - Re-open Columbia railroad bridge as a pedestrian bridge; have a fence to protect boaters from things being thrown at them and to protect pedestrians from the railroad
- Slow down traffic on Kelly Dr., MLK and 33<sup>rd</sup>
  - Idea: City should take over the roads from PennDOT
- Parking: should be free and unlimited. It goes against what we are trying to do with a park to have parking be stressful.
- Administration
  - Redundancies
  - Hard to figure out permit process

- Needs to be streamlined
- Working in and around the park isn't business friendly; private sector could pay for reinvasions/maintenance
- Events restrict access to other areas
  - Part of the parking fee should go to the neighborhood for the inconvenience
- Major train lines go through the park carrying hazardous material that could spill
  - Should tax them heavily
  - Do they have excess rail property that they would let the park use?
- Trash and sanitation
  - Add more trashcans in and around the park (the trash ends up in the surrounding neighborhoods)
  - Get rid of bottles; promote refillable bottles and increase access to water via water fountains and bottle refill stations
- Gather and distribute statistics about the income the park brings to the city
- Way to access information
  - Easy to use website
  - Central place to access information
  - Calendar of events
  - Cell phone app that has information about: SEPTA, events, navigation, activity areas, historic houses, art
  - Signage that lists the website
  - Big sign with the seasonal detour dates (i.e. "expect detours from X date to Y date)
  - Historic signage (like along Forbidden Dr.)
  - Press, PR
- Bike rentals
  - Will renters know about the park and where to ride? What about locking the bike?
  - Should be in less congested location

## 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 the last sentence: "This includes building on improvements made to the park over the course of its history . . ."
  - Like ". . . make sure the park is safe for all to use" – this is huge. How do we do it?
  - #1 is too generic; should be combined with #6
  - Don't like the focus on nearest neighbors because it is a regional park; on the other hand the nearest neighbors are mostly black than this is an all white group; there is a disconnect between neighbors and the park.
    - Need education for African-American neighbors and tourists

- *Comments re Guideline 2: “Protect and enhance all that we already have in Fairmount Park, both natural and man-made.”*
  - The mansions being managed by nonprofits is a good model
  - Public buildings need professional management
  - Knock down the canoe club
  - Where will funding come from?
  - Put more emphasis into “teach people about history of the park;” include uses of the land by Native Americans
- *Comments re Guideline 3: “Allow people to better enjoy the water.”*
  - River hasn’t been dredged in years, which is impacting water sports and the quality of water
  - The river is the heart of the project
  - Redirect revenue from the water department to the park
  - Like “Create new water recreation activities”
  - Add engagement of people upstream because it impacts us downstream
  - South River Corridor should be engaged in the project
- *Comments re Guideline 4: “Help citizens better understand the park and all it has to offer.”*
  - The park vs. the park system is confusing
  - Like “Create more welcoming entrances that encourage people to use the park.”
- *Comments re Guideline 6: “Make the park safer and more accessible for people walking and biking; reduce the emphasis on people driving.”*
  - Can’t take away driving; not everyone has the ability to access it via walking or bike

Summary of discussion of the guidelines: The group did not engage deeply with the guidelines. They expressed concern about the presentation of the guidelines and requested that they be made simpler and cleaner by removing redundancies and using bullet points. In general, the presentation was more concerning to the group than the content.

### **Common Ground**

One participant summed up the key ideas as: dredge the river, clean up the bank, increase sight and develop the west side. The group approved this summary. One participant added “and slow the traffic down.”

### **Minority Reports**

Disagreement emerged in the group about the relative importance of focusing on the park’s nearest neighbors. One participant suggested that this focus should be removed because the park is a regional resource. Another participant, who lives near the park, responded with “about 80% of my neighbors are black and we are an all white group.”

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

**Date of Forum: October 2, 2013**

**Location of Forum: Lloyd Hall**

**Moderator name(s): Germaine Ingram (Group 5)**

**Group Description**

There were 18 participants in this group. From visual observation, there were 2 African-American women, 6 white males, and 10 white women. From visual observation and self-description, the age range of the participants is estimated to be mid-20s to 70s. One participant is a park commissioner and representative of the Philadelphia Horticultural Society, another is a City employee charged with managing some park functions. There was a journalist, a city planner, a graduate student. Several participants are affiliated with organized coalitions that use the park for running/marathons, cycling, rowing, dragon boating, and a youth hostel. Some use the park every day or several times per week for specific recreational activities, while others use the park irregularly for general enjoyment, or professed a “civic interest” in the park.

The discussion was balanced between specific interests connected to particular types of uses and general interest in the park. One person expressed frustration about inability to get the City to address some concerns of runners/marathoners. Participants listened to one another and shared the floor. They responded to and built on one another’s comments. The overall energy was thoughtful and measured.

**Hopes/Fears**

*Hopes included:*

- Greater responsiveness to the concerns of runners
- Park continues to be multi-functional
- The Park is there for future generations
- Reconnect with forgotten places in the Park
- Reduce automobile traffic
- Progress in addressing interests of the cycling community continues
- River trail continues south
- Preserve the “jewels” of the Park
- Park remains and becomes more accessible to bikers, walkers, and drivers
- A better balance between cars and other uses
- A community boathouse: boathouse accessible to a broader community
- More connection between the river drives and the rest of the Park
- A dock for dragon boating

*Fears included:*

- Future of the Park is unknown/uncertain
- Future investment in the Park will be insufficient
- Excessive asphalt—overdevelopment
- Lack of investment in infrastructure and maintenance (One participant shared a photo of an old, disabled bridge in a remote part of the Park. Some of the other participants were familiar with the bridge.)
- Park becomes “over-planned”— the rustic quality and natural beauty of the Park is lost
- Park ceases to be source of diverse enjoyments
- Vehicles will overwhelm quiet enjoyment
- Park will become over-regulated and overcrowded
- Lose sense of safety
- City will commercialize the Park in order to generate revenue

**Part 1: Use in the park**

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

By this point in the discussion, participants had shared a lot about their uses of the Park: mostly a variety of recreational uses, including walking, cycling, running, marathons, rowing, dragon boating. Some are avid users, engaging in activities in the Park every day or at least three days per week. Everyone present identified herself/himself as a Park user. One person who moved to Philadelphia about 4 years ago said that the Park is one of the city’s prime attractions for her. Participants commented on how “wonderful” it is that there is such diversity in ways that the Park is used, from walking and picnicking to rugby, frisbee, cricket, and soccer. They talked about the uses that have been lost and the ones they would like to see, as well as the barriers.

What used to be:

- Used to be able to rent row boats
- Used to be able to walk from the Zoo over the Expressway to MLK Drive
- There used to be a Fairmount Park trolley that ran from Strawberry Mansion; it stopped operating in the 1950s

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

- River swimming
- A variety of water sports, e.g. wind surfing and small crafts, water sports should be available to the general public
- Improvement and expansion of the trail network — trails that can be used by runners, bikers, and walkers
- Improvement of picnic tables. “The picnic tables are beyond terrible.”
- Multiple points of access, including access to Forbidden Drive by car
- More information on the Park’s history, especially for young people

Barriers:



- Parking is a big problem for people who want to use the park. There isn't enough parking, and some of the parking options aren't safe. The parking time limits do not jibe with the time it takes for popular recreational activities. Efforts for the past two years by the running community to address parking problems have failed to get action by the City. (There was some questioning and debate over what entity has authority over parking in and around the Park.)
- Safety is a key concern: some parking areas aren't safe; lighting has improved, but it needs to get better; families sometimes engage in unsafe activities — don't recognize or respect the dangers. Bring back Fairmount Park Guards. The challenge is to balance safety with the ability of the public to use the Park without unnecessary barriers
- Physical barriers: Belmont Plateau is blocked off – you can't get access to the view; the visual barriers to MLK Drive – “I want to see the river flashing by”; crossing MLK, Montgomery, and Kelly Drives should be easier; the stretch around the Art Museum is very dangerous for bikers – “give bikers more of a cushion”; fill in the bumps and holes in the bike paths on MLK Drive.
- Automobile traffic: “It's good that the MLK Drive is closed to cars on weekends in summer.” One participant proposed that it should be closed on weekends year-round from 7 am to 5 pm.
- You should not need a permit to use picnic tables
- There is no good map/rendering of the Park on-line. People are deterred from exploring the Park because they don't know enough about the terrain. A more informative website would also attract more Park users.

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

The group discussed the guidelines as a whole, rather than focusing on individual guidelines. There were questions about how the draft guidelines were created and what will happen with them next, i.e. what impact the public forums will have on the guidelines. There was a question about the impact of the Drive being a PA State highway and how does that impact discretion and responsibility for maintenance and planning. Critiques of the guidelines were:

- They are vague and general.
- They aren't ambitious enough.
- Safety must be a paramount concern.
- There is a strong bias in the guidelines toward the adjacent neighborhoods, but those neighborhoods can't sustain the entire Park. The guidelines need to leverage the interests and concerns of all user groups. The guidelines also need to address the interests of people who are not part of organized groups.
- MLK Drive should become a destination like Kelly Drive.
- The guidelines focus too much on structural concerns, and not enough on relationships. It was noted that there has never been a “Friends of the River Drive” even though people from all over use it regularly. There needs to be an investment of planning, funding and leadership to bridge and leverage the interests and energies of the variety of groups involved with the Park. Develop a vision and model for “stakeholding” in the Park. Stakeholders could:

- Help with clean-up and maintenance
- Improve safety by organizing town-watches
- Serve as representatives on bodies that give input to policies and planning
- Plan and organize activities and programs
- Build stronger connections between the Park and public/parochial schools----  
make the
  - Park a beneficiary of school-based volunteer efforts and beautification programs

### **Common Ground**

There was a lot of group investment in the idea of the Park as an important civic asset that should be widely accessible to the public. There was general appreciation of the array of activities that occur in the Park, and support for expanding those activities and making them accessible to a broad public. The two strongest messages regarding the guidelines were that (1) Safety must be a paramount concern, but needs to be balanced with accessibility; and (2) The guidelines need to address ways to embrace, coordinate, and leverage the interests and energies of the many groups that are involved with the Park as well as those of people who have no group affiliation. Attention to relational issues and opportunities is generally lacking in the guidelines.