

LOOKING AHEAD . . .

Technical Appendix

**Department of Park and Planning
Strategic Planning Division**

APPENDIX 1

**FALL 2002 QUARTERLY
MANAGEMENT MEETING**

**RESULTS OF
STAFF FOCUS GROUP**

SUMMARY

STAFF RESPONSE TO CENSUS PRESENTATION

OVERVIEW: The Fall 2002 Quarterly Management Meeting focused on a presentation on the Census 2000 material. Following the presentation, the 175 participants were organized into groups of 12 each to discuss its relevance to the Department's future direction and work program. The discussions provided a wide range of perspectives, which are captured in this summary report. Following are key issues identified and their corresponding recommendations voiced by participants regarding the demographic and economic trends that were presented.

KEY ISSUES AND SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff Issue 1:

Montgomery County is in transition from a suburban to an urban community, yet our park system is still responding to suburban needs. The County is experiencing unprecedented demographic change. The population is growing, becoming older and more diverse.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Re-energize the Department to become a more dynamic organization with fresh new ideas, an organization that can change, become more efficient, and is open to learning new ways.
- Focus on the needs of the future rather than reacting to the past. Be proactive.
- Redefine park planning to better respond to needs of changing demographics and culture.
- Revise departmental permitting practices...they tend to discriminate against "non-mainstream" users.

Staff Issue 2:

Many park facilities are not being used as they were originally designed.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Reassess park use regularly and comprehensively, particularly in neighborhoods experiencing changing demographics and land use.

Staff Issue 3:

Current approaches to determining park need are not effective in serving the needs of future populations.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Do a better job of listening to customers' wants and needs.
- Conduct park user surveys on a regular basis to determine community needs.
- Collaborate with the citizens to design parks and provide facilities that are responsive to their needs and culture.
- Change park designs in response to changing uses: redevelop and maintain aging facilities that are being stretched by greater demand to address diverse and changing needs and demands.
- Provide more soccer fields, dog parks, active sports facilities, and unique neighborhood needs.
- Revise parking standards at our parks, they need more capacity.
- Extend park opening hours. Open parks earlier and close later.
- Increase police presence in communities and parks.

Staff Issue 4:

Urban parks are under-budgeted.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Allocate more resources for redevelopment and maintenance of the most used facilities, which incidentally, are in the higher density, lower income areas.
- Provide more financing for new facilities to meet changing needs.
- Identify and implement potential revenue-generating facilities.
- Turn some parks over to homeowners' and neighborhood associations, community organizations, chambers of commerce, etc., for monitoring, lawn mowing, trash pick-up, management, etc. Establish better relationships with these groups.

Staff Issue 5:

Increasing cultural diversity means greater need for multi-cultural amenities, multi-lingual communication, and bi-lingual staff.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Give consideration to diversity during early stages of planning. Plan parks to accommodate more "cultural programming" in the future.
- Be inclusive. Conduct regular park user surveys targeting the grassroots, typically uninformed, citizens. Listen to the "silent minority."
- Outreach and educate the diverse communities to assess needs, raise awareness, and encourage participation; find out where they meet; get to know their leaders.

- Provide signage in other languages in the parks, brochures, and web site.
- Train staff to become more sensitive to diverse cultures and changing park needs to be better able to plan and program as the society changes.
- Diversify our workforce to instinctively get a better understanding of the communities we serve. Perhaps follow the Park Police model to get minorities to recruit other minorities to work for the Commission, perhaps with a bonus for every recruitment and multi-lingual staff.
- Involve field staff in planning to benefit from their knowledge and experience regarding changing park usage and maintenance concerns.

Staff Issue 6:

Increasing numbers of older people and youths have special needs; they are also a potential resource.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Aggressively reach out to the youths and older citizens. Understand their special needs and ensure that facilities are responsive to them.
- Design facilities according to local wants, needs and cultures. E.g. gardens, circles, sitting walls, gathering spaces, themes, and accents.
- Target and attract retiree baby-boomers and youths to participate in community outreach, facility planning, programming, maintenance, and management.

Staff Issue 7:

Low-income families are likely to be excluded from certain facilities that require fees.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Generate revenues from certain facilities to be used to subsidize lower income citizens.
- Charge user fees based on incomes.

Staff Issue 8:

Safety in our parks is a special concern for the elderly, women, and children.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Improve public safety commensurate with increased park usage.
- Increase coordination between park police and county police.
- Recruit more bi-lingual police officers to represent the community at large – recruit from out-of-state, colleges, trade schools, etc.

Staff Issue 9:

Heighten commitment to staff training.

Staff Suggestions for Change

- Provide more supervisory training to first-line supervisors to help them better motivate staff to work more efficiently.
- Re-define in-service training to focus on technical park topics, since training time for basic skills is steadily decreasing.
- Use the census as an opportunity to educate staff and as a basis for future park planning.

APPENDIX 2

RESULTS OF STAFF FOCUS GROUP

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SUMMARY REPORT OF STAFF FOCUS GROUP

OVERVIEW: The 55 participants in this focus group included management and staff from all divisions and units of the Department (Community-Based Planning; Strategic Planning; Park Planning and Resource Analysis; Park Director's Office; Park Development; Community Services; Central Maintenance; Northern Region; Southern Region; Natural Resources; and Park Police). The group also included Park Managers, staff nominated by the Region Chiefs, and representatives from Montgomery Parks Foundation, and Montgomery County Department of Recreation also attended.

The topic was the effect of demographic and societal changes on the Montgomery County park system, the purpose being to engage staff in a dialogue about how current trends will affect the park system in the future, and to generate ideas about how best to meet future park need.

The agenda had two parts. In the first part, participants responded to a Power Point presentation of demographic, land use, technological, economic, and environmental trends. This was followed by suggestions and discussions about the significance of the changes to our parks. In the second part, participants divided into 8 smaller groups for discussions about how the Commission can meet the anticipated changes, given the trends as well as prevailing limited resources.

PART 1: STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Process Recommendations

- Manage the varied natural environments and active recreational facilities of the park system to: provide a respite within each community and business district to enjoy nature; serve the wide variety of culturally diverse active, passive, organized and informal recreational pursuits of the public; conserve the natural environmental beauty and habitats of the indigenous flora, fauna, and wildlife within the county; and, educate current and future residents, visitors, and businesses in the benefits and significance of the park system to the quality of life for everyone.
- Develop resource management plans that detail long-term management strategies for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of biodiversity, sensitive environmental areas, wetlands, streams, forests, rare, threatened and endangered species, and natural communities.
- Assure that our core obligation of maintaining existing facilities is sustained.

- Redefine park and planning areas so that they overlap/coincide and make the park master plan process and master plan work program more responsive to changing recreation needs. Provide adequate resources to park planning to make it an integral part of all activities within the Department.
- Do a better job of listening to citizens' needs during and after planning. Implement constant extensive outreach targeting the "silent majority" at the individual, association, or organizational level will create channels for feedback and input as well as for marketing our parks to our constituents, especially to diverse communities.
- Aggressively outreach to established older residents of communities early and throughout the facility planning or redevelopment process and during programming in order to fully address their concerns and gain their support for new facilities and programs intended to meet changing needs.
- Provide for the needs of the total community; not just to those communities with access to cars and interested in organized sports.
- Involve all disciplines - community relations, park police, environmental planning, natural resources, etc – in park planning and development.
- Maintain our primary mission while exploring partnership with the private sector. However, do not allow private-public partnerships to erode our mission. Formulate stringent guidelines for partnerships. Be aware that private-public partnerships can have a negative cost.
- Explore possibilities for developers to be able to contribute to operations and maintenance for parks and recreational facilities that they develop or help develop. Could developers buy equipment through development district?
- Carefully consider requests from private companies to do business on parkland, particularly where services and camps are no longer offered by Recreation or Parks, and permit them where the benefit of private opportunities is balanced across the County and the service provides what people want.
- Reexamine recreational guidelines to ensure that the private sector using park facilities supports our public open space objectives.
- Coordinate better with the Board of Education and the Recreation Department to maximize the use of available resources and programs.
- Respond to current budget realities; embrace innovative revenue generation and cost cutting; redefine areas of responsibility.

- Pre-negotiate fees paid by our agency to others, e.g. tipping fees, Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission fees.
- Review and improve the budget and procurement process; remove bottlenecks; improve response time.
- Explore and take advantage of the growing numbers of potential volunteers to augment programs in planning programming, and maintenance of parks - naturalists, IT/computer experts, horticulturists, landscapers, etc. Provide incentives to volunteers, such as, credit for free use of facilities.

Program Recommendations

- Recognize the growing interest in environmental stewardship and recreation, and plan accordingly to focus educational programs at nature centers on current environmental issues.
- Achieve and demonstrate sound environmental stewardship in all activities, products, and services through: parkland acquisitions that preserve open space and natural areas; resource management plans that detail long-term management strategies for the protection, maintenance, and enhancement of biodiversity, sensitive environmental areas, etc.; and best management practices for park design, development, management and maintenance.
- Actively promote balance between stewardship of natural and cultural resources and recreation in Montgomery County Parks. Integrate stewardship programs across the Department in order to efficiently and effectively project one, unified vision of balance consistent with the Department's mission. Use successful stewardship to leverage future development in parks and across the county.
- Promote cultural and educational recreation by providing resources.
- Broaden and strengthen nature centers and interpretive programs to include: 1) expanded and multi-lingual interpretive displays and signage at trail heads, along trails, and at cultural points of interest; 2) kiosks and interactive computers at nature centers; 3) outreach and interpretive programs in changing communities and non-traditional park sites; and 4) environmental education and nature appreciation programs, tours, lectures, and retreats that promote an awareness and appreciation for the park system's natural and cultural resources, and also compliment the County Public Schools curriculum.
- Establish clear guidelines for facilities use by outside groups – religious, day care, aerobics, commercial, etc.

- Provide increased programs and facilities to meet the needs of baby-boomers and senior citizens.

Facility Recommendations

- Adopt adequate park and recreation facilities guidelines to provide adequate facilities for the citizens as the county grows and as our communities change.
- Ensure that we are capable of funding the maintenance of both existing and new additional facilities before planning for additional ones.
- Develop a maintenance plan for greater efficiency, involving maintenance staff and based on the level of usage of facilities with maintenance standards, guidelines, and timing of tasks. School fields can only be maintained when the students are not using them.
- Provide public linkage and access (by foot, bicycle, and public transport, particularly Ride-On) during park planning in order to reduce car traffic.
- Re-examine how park facilities and programs function, and follow up with a comprehensive revitalization, and redevelopment of existing facilities to meet future needs.
- Ensure that park facilities are hospitable and safe so that all age groups feel welcome.
- Manage all parks and their facilities to be not only the traditional natural open space environments that contribute to the quality of life of the county but also recognize their unique relationships to the daily lives of our residents and visitors they serve. Provide within the parks system, for the dynamic needs of the community(ies) each park or parks facility serves.
- Develop multi-purpose parks and recreational facilities to serve multiple age groups and needs.
- Build more nature centers to help meet demand for structured programming in our parks based on the demographic presented. Fund and construct the planned South Germantown Regional Park Nature Center that was deferred from the current CIP.
- Work with the “Smart Parks” system to aid resource allocation - a labor distribution system that reflects task frequencies, materials used, park usage patterns, etc.
- Identify the most used parks and allocate adequate funding commensurate to their level of usage.

PART 2: STAFF RESPONSES TO TRENDS

Trend/Demographics *Younger Population and Families*

- ***Expected growth in number of youths, especially minority youths***
- ***Increasing number of families***
- ***Increasing family size***
- ***Increasing number of non-traditional families***
- ***Increasing number of larger households living in apartments, possibly for longer periods of time***

Staff Response to Trends

- Increase in children, more Asian and Hispanic children, diversity has different meaning
- More youth - increased and new demand
- Cultural differences
- Minorities in apartments/parks are only recreation spaces
- Language problems
- Development trends, increased population - more dense neighborhoods
- Different cultures - impact on design
- Neighborhood parks different, infrastructure may fail
- Minorities - need to learn their values
- Different groups - different interests - need for more participation
- Families want more education included in parks / increase in home schools
- Tourism is affected...park visitors should be considered
- Infill - more compact communities; access is issue - people need to walk to parks
- Work together to accommodate smart growth
- Increased competition between adults and juveniles/more new programs
- Kids want new things/families have cultural needs which are continuous older buildings harder to maintain and harder to adapt to new uses
- Rethink the way we design our parks - population is younger with ethnic issues - mass transit must be considered
- Family sizes increasing/program for the family - cost in permitting services are changing
- Dilemma - younger children want extreme sports but older population still want traditional facilities
- Limited resources - redirect traditional activities - use school facilities
- Kids activities can be detrimental to environment
- Board of education to bear traditional facilities costs
- Facility availability evenings and weekends is an issue
- Volunteers/retired farmers and police retirees - more of a pool of volunteers

Trend/Demographics Older Population

- ***Expected to increase by 51.1% by 2020.***
- ***Many residents plan to retire in the County***
- ***People are expected to live longer, be healthier and more active.***
- ***Boomers are demanding and technologically savvy***

Staff Response to Trends

- Trails for older people - need for hard surfaces...older people have special needs
- Budget - constrained - new priorities
- Older population - vulnerability
- More organized activities needed for elderly
- Older people have dogs...more dog parks needed
- Older folks - day use - competition
- Opportunity for enterprise facilities for older people during the day
- 3 – 5 years people moving and leaving Park & Planning problem - loss of institutional knowledge

Trend/Demographics ***Ethnic Diversity***

- ***Foreign immigration accounted for 89.1% of Montgomery County's population gain in 90's.***
- ***Great diversity within the foreign born population***
- ***Foreign-born have larger households (often multi-generational)***
- ***In 2000, 12.9% of the population did not speak English well***
- ***More likely to live in rental apartments***

Staff Response to Trends

- Communication with ethnic communities needed
- Diverse population / reach out to them and create sense of involvement
- Follow-up evaluation with how parks are actually used
- Listen to community input
- Involve communities that we have not contacted before
- Conflict between new immigrants and older established residents regarding recreational needs. Older resident do not usually want change.
- Buildings can be intimidating to users
- Reach out to the community - talk to them
- Park police / student volunteer program
- Recruit minority officers
- Immigration from agricultural areas - special needs
- Different cultures / new programs for employees to learn new languages
- Communication - how to reach our customers - 3 or 4 languages should be considered
- Older community / long-term residents - tension with new residents - new program needed
- Population growing - where to expand, budget reduction - problem solution easier tin the north
- Internet - resource to the world, added people - new marketing needed
- People conveniently don't understand English
- Permitting is a problem: people can't get them (permits), or they are afraid
- Parents both work - evening meetings - problem
- The design aspect effects park maintenance
- Offer access to other areas/time, distance, and safety - issues
- Maintenance methods may change / citizens may help, management needs to change
- "Broad Acres" - prototype / ethnic groups - bad problems resulted
- Future thinking must resolve safety / and competition issues
- Infill...preserve the open space in built up areas
- Don't develop remaining land
- Save small areas of open space in built-up areas

- Additional down-county maintenance facilities are needed
- Resolve budget conflicts - park maintenance budget
- Public-private partnerships - can we do better getting private money?
- For urbanized areas, think of nontraditional open space such as roof-top areas
- Land use revitalization - upgrading quality of communities and parks
- Public-private partnerships have a price - partners have their own agendas
- Bestow grants to create partnerships give - give seed money
- One-third/two-thirds development criteria
- What about "Fed Ex" Regional Park?
- Survey people as to what they want
- Involve people - visit them at work - go to them
- Use flyers in several different languages - use church and community groups
- In the past we had space; now space/land is limited - we need to look at tennis and baseball relative to need for new priorities
- Historic preservation is successful with non-profit groups ("Heritage Tourism Plan" - 3 trails, e.g., technological innovation trail) affects tourism and people in the county

Trend/Land Use Development Trends

- ***Much of the County's future development will be "infill" and redevelopment***
- ***Reinvestment and redevelopment of suburban communities to continue as suburban***
- ***Redevelopment of suburban and urban communities into "Urban intensity and character"***

Staff Response to Trends

- Redevelopment down county: we do not look at use of existing facilities
- Recreational centers are party and yoga centers
- We must work with Recreation Department
- When facilities age, costs increase and we must plan for reuse
- Central maintenance has hard time attracting people which we need

Development Trends

Trend/Land Use *Open Space*

- ***Challenges to protect, provide open space***
- ***Increasing number of people that available open space must serve***
- ***Greater emphasis on providing open spaces that serve a variety of functions***

Staff Response to Trends

- Limited resources - look at what we have, e.g., stream valley parks - look at uses
- Fast growth region / quality of life - what to do with 30,000 down county? and what services do we provide?
- We provide for the region
- Look at new plans as to how many trees are lost and how many new are provided
- Park system - magnet - compare different maintenance with other budget considerations
- Stream valley - safety and crime prevention issues - call boxes installed; underground lines for call boxes - design for safety
- Are there ways to get people to dedicate land?
- Limited resources - ancillary budgets vs. core budgets
- We need to link quality of life that the parks bring
- We need to do a better job of showing economic advantages of parks
- Make sure we are providing neighborhood park spaces...look at controlling infill development to get more open space
- Natural streams...are being degraded

Trend/Technology

Internet

- ***67% of households had computers in 1997.***
- ***Lowest computer rate was in multi-family housing (lowest incomes also)***
- ***Most of the elderly do not have computers***

Staff Response to Trends

- Look at anew ways to reach people who don't have computers
- Low income families do not [have] have access to technology...but cell phones are increasing
- We need to communicate better with park maintenance staff
- Share technologies between agencies; use internet and libraries
- Address the labor problem related to personal email
- Dog parks - lots of email
- Computers in community centers
- Electronic guides in nature centers
- We have reduced nature centers
- Look at nature centers as satellite park information centers
- Foreign born residents from agricultural communities use these people as resources at nature centers
- Reach out to people about nature centers - use outreach

Trend/Economy
Income Disparity

- **Growing disparity in household incomes**
- **Increases in groups with the lowest and highest incomes.**

Staff Response to Trends

- Middle income people are leaving the county (\$25,000 - \$145,000)
- Use maps to communicate at ride-on stops
- In up-county
- Income lower in multi-family housing
- Do not always correlate minority and poor
- Hot to get people into the stream valley parks from their neighborhoods

Trend/Environment Pollution

- ***Buildup of greenhouses gases – caused a gradual increase in global temperature***
- ***Atmospheric pollutants such as carbon monoxide and nitrogen oxide emissions are projected to increase.***
- ***This year between May 1 and August 13th, 32 times when the 8-hour ozone standard was exceeded and 15 Ozone Action Day Forecasts were issued.***

Staff Response to Trends

- Smart growth - less driving
- Exotic plants come in when forests are fragmented
 - non-native plants from other parts of the world are prolific
 - these plants out-compete the existing ecosystems
 - exotic plants spread and threaten biological diversity world-wide
- Study of invasive species - need for budgeting
- More people are biking to work - look at bike trails as commuter trails
- We are losing forest canopy
- Acid rain- problem - new trees needed
- New concerns - West Nile
- Rules and regulations related to emissions and mowers which do not meet standards

APPENDIX 3

**JURISDICTIONS CANVASSED
IN THE NATIONWIDE SURVEY OF
INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES**

Jurisdictions Canvassed in the Nationwide Survey of Innovative Initiatives

I. Jurisdictions With High National Profiles and Mature Park Systems

City of Austin Department of Parks and Recreation

City of Boulder Parks and Recreation Department

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Park and Recreation Department

Minneapolis/St. Paul Parks and Recreation Board

Portland Parks and Recreation Department

Westchester County (N.Y.) Department of Parks, Recreation and Conservation

Three Rivers Park District (Formerly Suburban Hennepin Region)

Marin County Department of Parks, Open Space, and Cultural Services

Bergen County, New Jersey

City of San Francisco

II. Park Facilities Recognized by Project for Public Space and National Park and Recreation Association for their Innovation and Success

The Greening of Detroit Park, Detroit, Michigan

Pegram Park, Pegram, Tennessee

Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, Manhattan, New York

Dufferin Grove Park, Toronto, Canada

El Sitio Feliz, East Harlem, New York

Forsyth Street Garden/Hua Mei Bird Garden, Lower East Side, New York

Post Office Square, Boston, Massachusetts

Riverside Skate Park, New York City

CASA Community Garden, Huntsville, Alabama

Commons Park, Denver, Colorado

Energy Park, Greenfield, Massachusetts

Elliott Donneley Youth Center Park, Chicago

Albert Park, San Rafael, California

Post Office Square, Boston, Massachusetts

Eugene Field Park, Chicago, Illinois

Vittum Park, Chicago

Post Office Park, Montpelier, Vermont

Court Street Community Square, San Bernardino, California

***III. Jurisdictions Surveyed by Office of Legislative Oversight for the Report:
“Managing Park Maintenance Costs: A Comparative Study”***

City of Modesto Parks, Recreation and Neighborhoods Department, California

Prince William County Department of Planning, Virginia

Orange County Division of Parks and Recreation, Florida

City of Portland Department of Parks, Oregon

City of Phoenix Parks, Recreation and Library Department, Arizona

Greater Vancouver Regional District, British Columbia, Canada

Fairfax County Department of Parks and Planning, Virginia

Hennepin County Department of Parks, Minnesota

APPENDIX 4

**EXAMPLES OF
NATIONWIDE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS**

The following benchmarks are used by some jurisdictions throughout the country:

1. Increase the proportion of residents who think the Department is doing a very good job of preserving natural areas and providing for active recreation areas in our densely developed, mature communities.
2. Continue to achieve or exceed the ___% approval rating of the public who feel the overall quality of parks is good or very good.
3. Increase the proportion of residents who feel the Department does a good job of “securing additional parks and open spaces” to keep up with growth and changing need.
4. Increase the ratio of volunteer hours to paid staff hours to at least ___%.
5. Increase the proportion of residents who use parks and recreation facilities, and participate in recreation programs.
6. Increase the proportion of funding that comes from gifts, grants, and donations from _____% in 2001 to _____% in the 2010.
7. Increase allocated funding for building maintenance from the current ___ to the Industry standard of 2% of the replacement value of the Department’s buildings per the budget guidelines established by the National Research Council.
8. Increase the number of educational programs that focus on the environment from ___ to_____.