



## MEETING NOTES

### **Rochester Parks & Recreation Master Plan – Advisory Committee Meeting #1**

October 15, 2015

5:30. – 7:30 p.m.

*City of Rochester Parks & Recreation, Room 320 in City Hall*

#### **Attendees:**

Laurie Brownell, Nick Champion, Amy Eich, Ed Hruska, Peter Marohl, Pam Meyer, Michael O'Connor, Paul Scanlon, Randy Thomas, and Vern Yetzer; Rita Trapp and Anna Springer from HKGi; Mike Nigbur and Paul Widman from City of Rochester.

#### **1. Introductions**

The consultant team provided a brief introduction of the firms and individuals involved with the project. Advisory Committee members then did a quick introduction of themselves, including what organization(s) they represent and something interesting or notable they learned from their park visit.

#### **2. Master Planning Process Overview**

The consultant team provided an overview of the planning process, including what a park and recreation master plan is, what the benefits are of having one, and what elements would be included in the plan. An overview was then provided on the key tasks and schedule.

#### **3. Advisory Committee Input**

Advisory Committee members were asked to provide their thoughts on what works well today, what could be improved, what the priority needs are for the system, and/or what are their goals for the final Master Plan.

- Final master plan goals could align with DMC goal: Healthiest City in America. How do we do that? The goal should be to activate EVERYBODY! How do we fund? The private sector is investing and that seems to be working around the country, versus the government doing it all the time.
- Improve undeveloped spaces for wildlife. Attention to erosion and invasive species. Need to be careful that we are not loving those places to death! There is some paved trails in Quarry Hill. Should preserve remnant oak savannah, prairie, etc. Issues with Garlic mustard, Buckthorn, and Wild parsnip (which is dangerous).
- Swimming: difficult in a lakeless county! Swimming and water access. Lake Elmo's simulated beach is great; a man-made pond where kids can experience sand! More natural. School district also faces aging issues (pools). Pool space is inadequate in the city. John Adams is shut down indefinitely. Kids need to learn to swim, and also be fit and recreate. Pool maintenance is very expensive.

- Winter Outdoor activities should be expanded. Could Rochester have a winter activity center like Elm Creek or Theodore Wirth that offers multiple activities (skiing, tubing, snowboarding, etc.)? To accomplish will have to look beyond city resources and take long term approach. Also consider Legacy funds, etc.
- Outdoor hockey rinks are an awesome amenity. Is a differentiator and gets kids out in the winter. A warming house is fantastic.
- Ice on Soldiers Field track- add warming space to attract even more people. Multi-purpose building there would be good.
- Never enough rental space at the bulk time for wrestling, volleyball, etc. Should overlap with schools. Cannot build stand-alone buildings that are empty at certain times a day anymore. These spaces need to be tied to other functions, e.g. attached to school. Community Centers? Have weddings there? Does Rochester have these kinds of buildings? There are so many active groups in the winter – deciding who gets the access to the facilities at peak times is difficult. Less traditional activities now, too: e.g. pickleball
- Nature center: Get requests from groups all the time to hold meetings or a group workshop in a natural setting. Weddings. Celebrations. They just aren't really set up to accommodate these requests.
- Fire station at Silver Lake: want to repurpose that for public programs. Additional programs could include: community theatre, art classes, yoga. Lack of flexible space for these types of groups that the rec center doesn't fit them.
- Program gaps: U students don't seem to have problems with associations; use Soldiers field for flex space. Partnership with different organizations seems to work pretty well. Publicizing of programs maybe is not as good as it could be. Recreational opportunities (unorganized) seem to be limited for kids that aren't on a team. Do we have capacity to offer non-competitive programs within the existing rec associations?
- Neighborhood Parks – feel cookie cutter right now. Good to have distinguishing feature in each park. It would be great to get the neighborhoods more involved – including financially/labor. Larger park installation may get more bang for the buck. Could some be more natural than just a standard park?
- Facilities on state-owned land is problematic.
- Trails – good but some sections of the City not as well connected (like SW). How do you connect north and south? Key Crossings are needed. Students want to use trail system to get to campus and around town. Better wayfinding/trail marketing needed. City should prioritize corridors that get maintained during the winter; there should be a hierarchy; main trails get plowed. Ancillary trails don't get plowed.
- Just about anything in facilities is outdated! Pools. Restrooms. Most complaints are about cleanliness of restrooms and general appearance. Trail system is great. Kids and parents love being able to ride for miles safely.
- Clean up along river is needed. Neglect of river valley over years and years. Still lack of development to enjoy river.
- Concerned about long term support and deferred maintenance, and land acquisition for future parks.

- Accessibility for system needs to be considered.
- Improve Mayo Field. Needs more space, modernity, and space to accommodate events. Take a long term view on this. Outsiders see this facility when they come to Rochester.

#### 4. Park and Recreation Trends

Park and recreation trends and their implications for the City of Rochester were reviewed. The 16 trends presented were grouped into social, health demographic, environmental, and park and recreation categories. Advisory Committee members provided the following feedback on the trends.

- Diversity – the data cited was for the entire population. If one were to look at just the younger population it is much more diverse. There are also pockets of poverty where more than 60% receive free and reduced lunch.
- Accessibility – there is a need for more accessible activities. It would also be helpful to look at how accessible parks and park features are by transit.
- Millennials and younger – stereotype that antisocial/connected to device that not accurate. Able to use connectivity for more spontaneous activities. Less likely to plan ahead since can get group together pretty easily. Makes it difficult to get permit and prior approval for use.
- Number of races and walks has been on the rise – starting to cause congestion and challenges with permitting. Also have a group that does informal 5k runs that might have 5 people or 100 people. Registering events is important for traffic support and security.
- Birding is a trend in parks
- Design of parks is starting change – offered example of rolling turf
- Safety is of concerns in Rochester parks too. Certain areas target for graffiti. Non-desirable uses of spaces in dark hours. Uptick of overnight camping, graffiti. Do use surveillance in some areas. Most request park amenity is lighting. There had been a RCTC – park ranger program but it ended about 10 years ago due to cost and issues with park rangers trying to outside of duties.
- Population is doubled by visitors who come in – what are opportunities for those who are visiting?
- Golf – what is trend and how should the trend be addressed?
- Pickleball is growing - now have tournaments too

#### 5. Community Engagement

October will be a key month for initial community engagement for the project. It will involve an online community survey, 7 listening sessions and one community meeting. Advisory committee members offered the following thoughts:

- Diversity – suggest going to those groups, potentially having interpreters. Possible locations to reach out could include Hawthorne Learning Center adult literacy classes or IMAA at Hawthorne School
- Twitter or Facebook page for project with some open-ended questions might be good for younger folks.
- Get public schools involved to help spread the word to kids/parents.