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MEETING NOTES

Project:	Allentown Comprehensive Recreation, Open Space, & Parks Plan (CROSP)	Project No.:	SC# 22028.00
Location:	Bucky Boyle Park & Microsoft Teams (Virtual)	Meeting Date/Time:	September 25, 2024 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Re:	Committee Meeting #1	Issue Date:	October 2, 2024

ATTENDEES:

Simone Collins (SC):

William Collins (WC)

Pankaj Jobanputra (PJ)

Robert Gladfelter (RG)

Leonard Bustos (LB)

Certified Parks & Recreation Professionals

Derek Dureka (DD)

Kathleen Muller (KM)

Attendance

Bryne Heffner-Bair (virtual)

Candida Affa

Andrew Atiyeh

Darron Benson Jr.

Christian Brown

Bryan Cohen (virtual)

Chris Hendricks

John Leonard
Christian Martinez
Liz Rosencrans
Janet Roth (virtual)
Jose Rivera
Rosario Stoops
Mandy Tolino (MT)
Lucinda Wright
Dan Bosket (virtual)
Ce-Ce Gerlach
Becki Kiss (virtual)
Shaniqua Lrak (virtual)
Simon Moore (virtual)
Fatima Nabavian (virtual)
Kim Schaffer (virtual)
Hamp Smith Jr. (virtual)

NOTES:

1. Simone Collins Landscape Architecture (SC) gave a presentation that introduced the consultant team and the project scope of work. The SC team also reviewed existing data, took the committee through a photo-tour of the team's initial site visit with Parks and Rec personnel, and explained the proposed online survey and next steps for the plan.
2. SC then opened the meeting comments and discussion.
3. A participant brought attention to the pools in Bucky Boyle and Roosevelt Park closing, which are located near low-income communities.
 - a. The participant felt that the communities utilizing those pools (primarily Latino and African American) were underserved due to their removal.
 - b. The participant questioned the security and safety in areas of the City's trails and parks.
 - c. WC clarified that many communities have lost pools in their parks, for many different reasons, and that each community is searching for solutions to resolve the issues.

- d. KM stated that the negative activities related to safety are a nationwide-statewide and not only an Allentown city issue – so communities must be knowledgeable of who their partners are (leaders, Council, law enforcement, etc.) who can collaborate toward resolving these issues.
- 4. A participant questioned solutions for programming spaces to draw out the younger generations into the park spaces.
 - a. The participant stated that once a pavilion was removed, there was no “place” the younger generation felt comfortable to go.
 - b. DD stated that through conversations during the ‘Stakeholder interviews,’ we can get a list/ideas of what youth community members are interested in – to help the team identify potential solutions that will feel attractive to draw youth out into the parks. This strategy should help also draw out others to participate.
 - c. Along with safety improvements, the participant also noted the need to communicate effectively with the Latino community.
- 5. A participant brought attention to Fountain Park having new housing development in its surrounding area.
 - a. There is a need to bring the park “back to life” due to the park being intensively used by the Latino and African American communities.
 - b. There was also mention of ‘unsheltered’ communities in the surrounding area.
 - c. The question was posed whether park improvements might cause displacement issues.
- 6. A participant questioned how can the City avoid removing the unsheltered population in hopes of solving the issue. The participant further suggested that the City find balances in resolving these issues, and not only by removing these groups.
 - a. A participant shared concerns about who these City parks are really for. Will new improvements to the parks be for those who are outside of Allentown or for those who live in Allentown?
- 7. A participant shared a concern on the cost to operate pools.
 - a. The questioned was asked if spray parks are becoming popular or not?
 - b. DD suggested that if pools are decided to be built/rebuilt low-income areas are one priority. DD clarified the benefits of spray parks. DD also suggested that parks are designed with access to nearby rivers/waterways.
 - c. WC stated the issues with “legacy pools” – plumbing, ADA accessibility, lining, etc. Developing a cost estimate will give us a better idea.

- d. WC also stated that spray pad features do not enable youth to learn to swim.
8. A participant stated that the pool closures were a matter of racial justice.
 - a. It was also stated that most residents have access to “open space” while some do not have access to specific facilities, such as playground, courts, etc.
9. A participant brought attention to the trash/littering dilemma and asked about the SC team’s strategies to resolve the issue.
 - a. WC clarified that the Committee decides project goal and the SC team will seek to assist in resolving the issues.
 - b. The online Public Survey will also generate more feedback on these issues.
 - c. Alternative solutions are to advertise the survey via QR codes, posters, etc. – perhaps having some at schools?
 - d. A participant suggested that the consultant team be more ‘up front’ to the community –and perhaps when visiting parks, ask existing park users about their insights and encourage them to take the survey.
10. A participant insisted that the team focus on the ‘WHY’ – *Why did the pool close?* What were the issues that led to these outcomes?
11. A participant shared a concern with disability access and hoped for it to be considered in the project.
 - a. KM reassured them that this will be considered. She noted that there is a DEI committee that works with municipalities to provide accessibility to all people with disabilities. She also stated that racial justice, which relates to the pool closures must be addressed. Groups such as Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL) will be important.
 - b. WC added that the Allentown parks that that were viewed by SC have been improving their universal accessibility features – such as ADA compliant crosswalks, curb ramps, and sidewalk connections to neighborhoods.
12. A participant brought attention to the importance of food accessibility. The participant also expressed interest in helping to draw out the younger generation and create a wider age range for those who take the survey.
13. A participant shared an interest in identifying cemeteries, as many communities are starting to think about how to use them, as supplemental green space.
 - a. KM stated that these spaces should be acknowledged as they are potential amenities for the City. However, she cautioned that Allentown

already contains many other spaces for opportunities, which will cause a competing interest if developed further.

14. A participant questioned how the output of one of the three project (3) Master Site Plans (Bucky Boyle, Fountain, & Roosevelt Park) is similar or different to the output pertaining to the other parks?
 - a. WC clarified why these parks were selected – the City asked the consultants to develop master plans for the selected parks due to high demand/importance.
 - b. MT noted that the City has tangible grants to help fund these Master Plans.
 - c. WC shared the experience of working with the City on a master plan for Percy Ruhe Park, which was a model for integrating stormwater management within public recreation sites.
15. A participant questioned what classifies an area as ‘open space?’
 - a. WC stated that, in city parks, these are generally areas of unprogrammed uses.
 - b. RG added that park standards “metrics” will be used to compare the City’s park facilities and amenities to communities of similar size as well as to national standards.
 - c. A participant described Trexler Memorial Park as ‘wide open space’ and that people enjoy the green space.
 - d. RG shared that some ordinances do not allow cities to have active recreational areas in passive parks or open spaces, such as Trexler Memorial Park perhaps, so that the places maintain their passive nature.
 - e. DD tied in the City’s goals – how much natural space would the community want?
16. A participant added that there are many underutilized spaces in the City.
 - a. That person further suggested that this project focus on the youth – they want basketball courts. We must acknowledge where they go, and want to go for fun.
 - b. WC expressed the difference in usage of basketball courts and pools. A basketball court can be sometimes used every month of the year, while a pool is more seasonal (approximately 3 months).
 - c. DD noted that he will analyze park operations and programming, in collaboration with City Parks and Recreation staff.
17. WC shared that the City of Allentown has a unique partner in the Trexler Trust.

18. A participant expressed concerns about how to craft the online survey so that respondents do not have unrealistic expectations, but rather, have them dream big in an aspirational sense, but understand that all ideas cannot be realized.
 - a. DD shared the idea that someone may say they want a “50-foot water slide” in a park – and that there are no bad ideas. Even though a feature may not be 50 feet tall or even a water slide, the original idea can morph into some sort of water feature (water fountain, creek, runnel, etc.) – that is something more realistic.
19. A participant shared that there are only three (3) pools in the City that are open – and suggested that learning how to swim is a priority for Allentown youth, and that programming within the parks matters. Equity and justice are important to how this plan develops.
20. A participant shared that the “Monday Fundays” event – a new program created by City parks staff, is a great chance for the youth to come out, socialize, and have fun. They expressed that the youth will be drawn out if there are more things for them to do and engage in.

This report represents the Professional’s summation of the proceedings and is not a transcript. Unless written notice of any correction or clarification is received by the Professional within ten days of issue, the report shall be considered factually correct and shall become part of the official project record.

Sincerely,
SIMONE COLLINS, INC.
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leonard Bustos', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Leonard Bustos