



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:	November 13, 2024 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Re:	Public Meeting #1	Issue Date:	December 3, 2024

ATTENDEES:

Simone Collins (SC):

William Collins (WC), *RLA, Principal*

Pankaj Jobanputra (PJ), *AICP*

Robert Gladfelter (RG), *RLA, ASLA, Project LA, Natural Resources Analyst*

Certified Parks & Recreation Professionals

Derek Dureka (DD) (virtual), *CPRP*

Kathleen Muller (KM), *CPRP*

Attendees:

Matt Tuerk, *Honorable Mayor of Allentown*

City of Allentown Parks & Recreation Department (PRD)

Mandy Tolino (MT), *Director of Parks and Recreation*

Lucinda Wright (LW), *Deputy Director of Parks and Recreation*

Bryne Heffner-Bair, *Program Coordinator for Capital Projects*

Chris Hendricks (CH), *Recreation Manager*

Priscilla Reyes (PR), *Special Events Manager*

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 attendees 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 questioned how many times the community should solve problems.**
 - a. The participant noted that the Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) should ask the community before removing things from parks.
4. **A participant questioned if rezoning will accompany this plan?**
 - a. A participant noted that the plan should consider evaluation of open space and fee-in-lieu development requirements.
5. **A participant brought attention to the 2006 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.**
 - a. The participant stated that the equitable rehabilitation of 5th Street Park is still important.
6. **A participant brought attention to access to soccer fields.**
 - a. The participant stated that there are no full-size soccer fields on the east side after one was removed.
 - b. A participant noted that soccer is becoming the number one sport for youth and seconded that access to fields is a problem.
 - c. MT noted that a mini-pitch is being built at Jordan Park.
7. **A participant brought attention to Keck Park.**
 - a. The participant stated the fence around the baseball field has deteriorated, the restroom is not accessible, and the park is not always safe.
 - b. A participant noted that the fallow field at Keck Park could be used for soccer.
 - c. LW stated that the PRD will work with the community to identify how Keck Park can be improved.
 - d. WC stated that three parks will be master planned as part of the comprehensive planning process, but that all parks will be looked at.

- e. The three parks identified for “master planning are: Fountain, Roosevelt, and Bucky Boyle

8. A participant brought attention to safety at Bucky Boyle Park.

- a. The participant stated that their dog has been attacked and no one picks up dog feces. The participant also stated they have nearly been hit on Riverside Drive by people flying through the stop sign.
- b. A participant stated that the stop sign from Liberty is not positioned properly.
- c. A participant stated that there are no lights in the park and there is a lack of enforcement at Bucky Boyle Park. The participant feels there should be more police officers in parks.
- d. MT noted that PRD is far from having park police, but that park rangers, who can enforce minor rules, have been budgeted for.
- e. A participant stated that rangers will not deter crime as police would.
- f. LW noted that PRD hears the need for increased safety and enforcement.
- g. A participant stated that school resource officers could work with the rangers.

9. A participant stated that a lot of issues coming up are related to access to resources.

- a. The participant stated that the City could require a recreation fee from developers.
- b. A participant stated that the City is seeing a lot of redevelopment now that will be taxable in 10 years and provide additional funds.

10. A participant brought up concern about access to recreation for seniors.

- a. A participant stated that there is little attention to recreation for adults/seniors.
- b. WC noted that improving trail systems comes to mind when providing recreation access for seniors.
- c. A participant stated that passive recreation, such as walking trails, is a good opportunity for seniors and makes parks feel safer.

11. A participant spoke about the potential at Roosevelt Park.

- a. The participant noted that there is a dilapidated building at Roosevelt that could be made useful. Once one park is improved, that will increase interest in improving other parks.
- b. MT noted that a pavilion is being installed at Roosevelt Park.
- c. WC noted that the consultants are looking to find improvements that can be implemented right away and reminded participants of the online

survey. The survey provides information that the city uses to prioritize improvements.

12. A participant questioned how to develop passive recreation opportunities downtown.

- a. The participant stated that new development is creating private recreation opportunities.

13. A participant brought up demographic changes in the city.

- a. The participant stated that PRD should look into changes in the age of residents in various parts of the city and stated that two parks on the south side are no longer used because of a lack of children in the area.

14. A participant who is a member of the Lehigh Valley Disc Golf Club brought attention to the disc golf course on the Little Lehigh Parkway.

- a. The participant stated that maintenance is an issue. When it is wet, the course cannot be mowed.
- b. The participant stated that nine other courses exist within 20 minutes which are run by volunteers, and that collaboration is not possible in Allentown due to union rules.
- c. WC noted that flooding affects the course and questioned whether a disc golf course belongs in a floodplain.
- d. A participant questioned what action can be taken if recreation development cannot be built in floodplains.
- e. WC responded that we do not have answers yet.
- f. A participant stated that the community wants to take action and start applying for grants.

15. A participant brought up Valania Park.

- a. The participant stated that Valania Park is one of the safest parks and now has lights and no more gang activity.
- b. A participant noted that the community sometimes has to take action and “rule over” a park. No one shows up if they do not feel safe.
- c. A participant noted that Valania Park is a great model for parks in the city and that they would like to see more bathrooms in parks.

16. A participant questioned if there are plans for any indoor facilities.

- a. MT stated that PRD is interested in indoor facilities.
- b. A participant questioned if abandoned buildings could be repurposed for indoor facilities.

17. A participant questioned if PRD has had tables at events seeking out volunteers.

- a. The participant stated that they feel many parents would be willing to help.
 - b. A participant stated that if PRD set up a method to apply for volunteers, hundreds of volunteers could be found.
- 18. A representative from the Environmental Advisory Council (EAC) stated that EAC sees parks as the City's natural spaces and would like to make sure they are stewarded ecologically.**
- a. A participant stated that parks have been developed around waterways in the City.
 - b. A participant questioned how to naturalize areas in the City, such as forests for foraging and stated that food security is a significant issue.
 - c. The participant stated that they hope the community backs up PRD on fresh ideas.
 - d. KM stated that interviews have been conducted with staff and that if ideas don't come from the community, they will not be implemented. She noted that the consultant team will engage with seniors and youth as part of the plan development process and that if there are actions that can be taken to provide a model for future activities, such as with volunteer recruitment, that will be beneficial.
- 19. A participant brought attention to a bike lane on MLK that would connect parts of the city and stated that kids would learn about ecosystems and advocate for the Parkway.**
- a. A participant noted that there is not a lot of equitable access from the center of the city to trails, to reach the city's "emerald necklace."
 - b. A participant questioned if there were any negotiations with railroad companies for rights-of-way.
 - c. MT noted that PRD is working on MLK Phase 1 to connect to Cedar Park and the Lehigh Parkway. She noted that it is owned by the City.
 - d. WC noted that safe walking and biking connections through the existing streets are an important part of connecting "trails."
- 20. A participant brought attention to rowing and requested more community access to rowing.**
- a. The participant stated that it is good to work on access to waterways for urban youth.
- 21. A participant brought up the idea of All Recreation Day, with venues for karate, gymnastics, biking, martial arts. The day would include the whole community.**
- a. LW noted that the PRD Monday Funday is a similar pop-up event and that PRD is open to other new ideas.

22. A participant from the Blue Zones Project stated that the organization is invested in improving health in the community and will be hosting an event soon.
23. A participant stated that she goes to many parks in the city, but not Stevens Park which she lives close to.
24. Mayor Tuerk stated that the City has received funding from various sources and commended MT – whose previous job was managing trails on the D&L Canal. (City has received funding from the Bloomberg Harvard Youth Climate Action Fund, as well as the United States Forest Service to conduct a tree inventory and to prepare an Urban Forestry Master Plan and the PA Department of Community and Economic Development for the MLK Trail.)
25. Mayor Tuerk explained the recently-created “Parknership” as the latest partner to the City to assist with future park improvements.
26. Attendees were thanked for participating and asked to pass on the survey information to friends, family and social networks – to increase responses.

ONLINE NOTES:

1. BHB welcomed online participants to the meeting, shared links to the online public survey and mailing list signup, and invited participants to share questions and comments in the online chat.
2. A participant questioned if future public meeting locations would be accessible.
 - a. BHB stated that she believes all future public meeting locations are accessible.
3. A participant questioned if there are plans for a soccer/football practice area at Jordan Meadows Park at the location of the current roller rink.
 - a. BHB stated that a “mini-pitch” system for soccer is planned for that location.
4. A participant brought attention to the importance of considering accessibility during planning process.
 - a. The participant noted that accessible parking at parks is also important to consider.
5. A participant asked if additional adult programs will be considered during the planning process.
6. A participant noted that they would like to see more native and edible plantings in Allentown parks.
 - a. The participant mentioned that edible plantings could connect park visitors to food systems and potentially improve community health.
 - b. The participant also noted that converting turf grass to native plantings would improve the ecological function of parks, reduce and clean runoff, and reduce maintenance costs.

- c. Another participant noted that the Lehigh River was recently named one of the country's most endangered rivers and agreed with the need to include more native plantings at Allentown parks.
- 7. A participant brought attention to the need for public restrooms at Allentown parks.**
 - a. Another participant agreed that restrooms are needed and added that the restrooms should be accessible.
- 8. A participant brought attention to the new Jordan Creek Greenway (JCG).**
 - a. The participant noted that the JCG is beautiful but that the intersection with Tilghman Street is not designed well for pedestrians. Pedestrian access involves walking out of the way and is inconvenient.
 - b. The participant also noted that the intersection with American Parkway feels unsafe for pedestrians.
- 9. A participant brought attention to Bucky Boyle Park.**
 - a. The participant asked if developer Urban Residential Properties has met previous promises of community support.
 - b. The participant also asked if John Palumbo, COO of Urban Residential Properties, is on the board of The Parknership.
 - c. The participant noted that river access at Bucky Boyle Park has been taken over by the Lehigh University crew team and that river access needs to be made public.
- 10. A participant asked if there was potential for a state park in Lehigh County/Allentown.**
 - a. The participant noted that the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is a good resource.
- 11. A participant brought attention to the language used in meetings regarding the Allentown Parks and Recreation Department.**
 - a. The participant noted that the budget was introduced at city council as “a little budget” and that the attitude about the importance of parks that that reflects is apparent in Allentown’s parks.
- 12. A participant noted that there are a lot of planning efforts taking place in Allentown at this time which has created a significant amount of “planning exhaustion.”**
- 13. A participant brought attention to efforts to create a “Friends of the Jordan Creek” and invited participants to join.**

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 blue ink, appearing to read 'Toby Levin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Toby Levin, RLA