



**SIMONE COLLINS**  
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## MEETING NOTES

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Project:	<b>Allentown Comprehensive Recreation, Open Space, &amp; Parks Plan (CROSP)</b>	Project No.:	<b>SC# 22028.00</b>
Location:	<b>Ripple Church and Microsoft Teams (Virtual)</b>	Meeting Date/Time:	<b>February 26, 2025 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM</b>
Re:	<b>Public Meeting #3</b>	Issue Date:	<b>March 11, 2025</b>

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### ATTENDEES:

#### **Simone Collins (SC):**

William Collins, *RLA, Principal*

Pankaj Jobanputra, *AICP*

Rob Gladfelter, *RLA, ASLA, Project LA*

Toby Levin, *RLA, ASLA, Project LA*

#### **Certified Parks & Recreation Professionals**

Derek Dureka, *CPRP*

Kathleen Muller, *CPRP*

#### **Attendees:**

#### ***City of Allentown Parks & Recreation Department (PRD)***

Mandy Tolino, *Director of Parks and Recreation*

Bryne Heffner-Bair, *Program Coordinator (virtual)*

Chris Hendricks, *Recreation Manager*

Avery Daniels, *Love Your Block Fellow/Project Manager, City of Allentown*

## NOTES:

- 1. Simone Collins Landscape Architecture (SC) gave a presentation** that reviewed feedback from the previous public meeting, preliminary public survey results, capital projects and other planning efforts happening concurrently with this plan, parks and recreation partners, park classifications, and environmental justice in the City of Allentown.
- 2. The meeting then shifted to six breakout groups.** In person breakout groups were organized around four broad neighborhoods (East, West, South, and Center), as well as a breakout group dedicated to recreational programming. In-person meeting participants were invited to start in the breakout group for the neighborhood where they live or recreate most frequently. Participants were invited to rotate to a different breakout group every 15 minutes but could also remain in the same group. The final breakout group was online.
- 3. Notes from the East breakout group:**
  - a. It is difficult/unsafe to get to Canal Park
  - b. Arterial roads are very busy (with vehicles)
  - c. East side is a very dense residential area and not bike-friendly
  - d. Northridge development project
    - i. Will there be public access to internal trails?
    - ii. Development will include new school + mixed use
    - iii. Place basketball courts further from homes
  - e. West Bethlehem to East Allentown rail trail – how to connect to Allentown
    - i. Is there a plan in Allentown?
    - ii. Could it connect further into Allentown?
  - f. Both bridges to/from East need better ped/bike amenities
  - g. D&L Trail should be a priority for connectivity
  - h. Connectivity between central East side and D&L Trail should be a priority
  - i. Could there be a dog park parallel to River Drive in the vacant parcel?
  - j. Adding senior friendly/ADA exercise equipment would be appreciated.
  - k. Is there parking accessibility for trail users at Coca-Cola Park?
  - l. Requested amenities include:
    - i. open field (grass)

- ii. swinging chairs (grouped together)
  - iii. more sand volleyball courts
- m. Franklin Park
  - i. Playground is in need of repair
  - ii. Off-leash dog area with bag stations
- n. Reducing speed limits around parks
- o. Add more street-side wayfinding signage to get to parks
- p. Canal Park
  - i. Needs more signage, improved security
  - ii. Visitors park right over train tracks but really need/should be able to park deeper in the parking lot. That location is not safe.
- q. Will there be a connection between Parkettes/MLK Dr and the Jordan Creek Greenways?
- r. MLK/D&L/Jordan Creek Connections
  - i. Focus should be on Hamilton/Hanover St. with ped./bike priority
  - ii. Roads and waterways divide the neighborhoods, so connecting back into neighborhoods is important.
- s. Turner Street needs a bike lane.
- t. Regional trails are all on the edges of the neighborhood
- u. D&L Trail
  - i. Goal to connect from Philadelphia to Jim Thorpe
  - ii. What sections of D&L Trail to work on connecting?
  - iii. Add lighting Trail especially along River Drive
- v. Hanover Canal Park
  - i. Open up trail, Allentown thru Whitehall
  - ii. Raise Riverside Drive LVPC (3 Mile Project)
  - iii. Check vacant parcels being identified vs. developments in process

**4. Notes from the West breakout group:**

- a. Tilghman St. is very busy and difficult to cross.
- b. West Park
  - i. Replace trees. Park was originally built as an arboretum, had a complete canopy

- ii. Formerly “City Park” - oldest park in city (100+ years)
- c. Trexler Park had greenhouses, but they were demoed and parking was moved.
- d. Lehigh Parkway: WPA elements have not been maintained
- e. Valania park is nice after the renovations.

**5. Notes from the South breakout group:**

- a. Ithaca Park has basketball and a swing set, could use sprucing up.
- b. There is need for rec by Ripple Church
- c. Grass cutting at West Park is getting worse
- d. Canal Park
  - i. They are fixing the area under the bridge
  - ii. Across park gets loud (cars)
- e. Bike lane starts on Mack Blvd. just steps
- f. Address kids/teens riding bikes in middle of street, especially Hamilton Blvd and Mack Blvd
  - i. Cyclists will practice at Trout Creek
  - ii. Need to create space with amenities for them to go to
- g. Partner with Atom Parking Authority to shuttle tournament goers at Fountain Park
- h. Trout Creek
  - i. Path is insufficient, need sidewalks
  - ii. Need benches
- i. Percy Ruhe Park has space for soccer
- j. Improved signage at South Mountain
- k. Need a Link trail map to show where all trails are at Bucky Boyle

**6. Notes from the Center breakout group.**

- a. Crosswalks are needed
- b. Connections from trails to dense areas
- c. Bike safety is a widespread issue
- d. Art Park
  - i. Could use more programming
  - ii. Traffic nearby is fast

- iii. 7<sup>th</sup> Market area
- e. Sports vs passive recreation
- f. Need Signage/lights
- g. Dog poop is an issue
- h. City needs to invest in parks
- i. Visual appeal of parks is important
- j. More grass in neighborhood
- k. Partnerships
- l. Parks need to have Gateways
  - i. Should provide a welcoming entrance
  - ii. Limit parking around entrance
- m. Preserve open space in zoning
- n. Find mini park opportunities and infill greenspace
- o. Sledding
- p. Basketball
- q. Cleanliness around parks
- r. It will be important to rebuild community ownership of the parks
  - i. Will take cooperation with groups to organize needs
- s. Programming for children and care for environment
- t. Watersheds are parks
- u. Could the waterways be used to create partnerships?
- v. How to create ownership for renters?
- w. Need to see Leadership

**7. Notes from the Programming Breakout group:**

- a. Environmental Education
  - i. Incorporate Outdoor Classrooms into site design...Consider proximity to schools for maximum access
  - ii. Develop Outdoor Recreation and Environmental Education Programs that are offered through Parks & Recreation
  - iii. Pair with Pollinator and Community Gardens
- b. Parks
  - i. Update the smaller parks. They need love & attention.

- ii. Pavilions foster a sense of community & provide shade
- c. Health & Wellness
  - i. Park Passport Program: Get your passport stamped and earn prizes. This will encourage residents to visit different parks and try new programs.
  - ii. Develop Walking Loops (1st & 6th Wards),
  - iii. Park Connections and Walking Clubs
  - iv. Programs for individuals with Autism: Sensory Trails, Quiet Spaces in Parks, Sensory Activities (musical installations) in playgrounds
  - v. Connect kids with programming by the Lehigh Valley Health Network
    - 1. Explore BROOM Program (LVHN) and Re-set Outdoors (Bethlehem), possible partnership
    - 2. Program uses public spaces (bus shelters) and other spaces to post ideas for parents of young children to offer “teachable moments”. Counting, colors, etc. “Find something green”. “Count the trees”.
- d. Basketball Courts at Franklin Park: There are two schools of thought:
  - i. No courts, they attract a bad element
  - ii. Install half courts side by side. Kids want and need courts
- e. Pools
  - i. Bring them Back
  - ii. Kids need to learn to swim
  - iii. Our communities need pools
- f. Youth Ideas
  - i. Swings!
  - ii. Arts & Crafts “I make bracelets and sell them”
  - iii. Volleyball: skills & drills, league for 11–15-year-olds
  - iv. Kickball
  - v. “We like Cedar Creek pool and playground”
  - vi. Trips Trexlertown (?) Zip Line and Rock Climbing
- g. Outdoor Recreation
  - i. Water Sports: Boating (canoe & kayak)

- ii. Inner tubes on the river
- h. Possible Partners
  - i. CAMELOT
  - ii. ARC
  - iii. COHESION Network
  - iv. Individuals: Darien Colbert, Joselyn Correa-Melendez (LVHN)

**8. Notes from the Online Breakout group:**

- a. Participants would like to see more events and community groups/clubs in the parks.
  - i. Youth Programming would be particularly beneficial.
  - ii. Organizations that could be more active in parks include:
    - 1. Reset Outdoors
    - 2. Wildlands
    - 3. Lehigh Valley Greenways
    - 4. YMCA
    - 5. Local universities
- b. Old Fairgrounds Park would benefit from renovations.
- c. Parks Ambassadors from neighborhood organizations would help promote community ownership of the parks.
- d. Pavilions could be used as community hubs.

**9. Answers to Breakout questions:**

- a. **What Parks do you visit?**
  - West Park
  - Trexler Park
  - Lehigh Parkway
  - Arts Park
  - Cedar Creek Park
- b. **What do you like best about the parks?**
  - Natural spaces + clean air
  - Ecosystem services
  - Pollinator/community gardens

- Carbon sinks

c. **What are your favorite memories?**

- Walking in Trexler Park
- Visiting the Rose Gardens & old-fashioned garden
- Concerts in West Park
- Planet Walk on the Lehigh Parkway

d. **What would you like to see added to the parks?**

- Carbon sinks
- Nature preserves
- Pollinator gardens
- Native plants
- Natural spaces
- Dog trash cans
- Bike racks and bike fixing stations
- Activities for kids of different ages
- More of a police presence
- Water fountains to drink and wash hands
- Dog park
- Positive message or art on fence
- New fences
- Restrooms
- Franklin Park: swings + more slides

e. **What are obstacles in getting to the parks without a car?**

- Inroads from trails into the neighborhood + city parks
- Safe intersection, clear crosswalks
- Signage + wayfinding
- Lighting

f. **Who else could be considered a partner for the parks?**

- Neighbors (those who live near and/or use the park)
- Local businesses close to parks/trailways (restaurants, bodegas, etc.)



- Ski resorts (for sledding/tubing)
- Northridge Development Project

## 10. Map notes:

- a. **Areas noted for improvements to access (crosswalks, sidewalks, bike racks, etc.)**
  - i. Cedar Creek Parkway
  - ii. Joseph Daddona Lake and Terrace (Union Terrace) Park
  - iii. Tilghman St: Busy and dangerous
  - iv. Trexler Memorial Park: Good – part pedestrian, part bike. Needs lighting
  - v. Cedar Crest Blvd + Chew St traffic light safest for walk/bike
  - vi. Cedar Crest Blvd + Parkway Blvd: Bad intersection, alternate route: use side streets between Cedar Parkway and Trexler Park
  - vii. Ideas for connections to greenways from inner neighborhoods:
    1. Sidewalk “loops”
    2. Designated sidewalk routes
  - viii. Trout Creek
  - ix. South Mountain Reservoir
- b. **Areas for new park amenities (restrooms, water fountains, pavilions, etc.)**
  - i. South Mountain Reservoir
  - ii. Cedar Beach Park and Pool – swings too close to the ground, needs lighting
  - iii. Fountain Park – not closed because in flood plain
- c. **Areas for new recreation amenities (sports fields, sports courts, exercise equipment, playgrounds, etc.)**
  - i. Union Terrace – Bad soccer pitch
  - ii. Ithaca Playlot
  - iii. Li'l-Le-Hi Trout Nursery
- d. **Areas for safety improvements (lighting, emergency call boxes, improved visibility, etc.)**
  - i. Lehigh Parkway
  - ii. Li'l-Le-Hi Trout Nursery

- iii. Trout Creek
- iv. South Mountain Reservoir

**11. The meeting was adjourned with thanks to Ripple Church and Pastor Angela Moyer for hosting the public meeting at their facility.**

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



Toby Levin, RLA