INVolVing THE pUBLIC IN pARK pLANNING

A Presentation of a Draft Public Participation Policy and Guidelines for Raleigh Parks and Recreation

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To assess how, to what degree and to what end citizens participate in decisions regarding the scope and character of park sites.

Specifically

- How, to what degree, and in what form the opinions, needs, and desires of citizens were included in final park designs that resulted from both processes.
- How well citizens understood the process and how their opinions, needs, and desires were factored into the final design.
Two Processes, Four Parks

Processes:
- Parks Planning Committee (Resolution Process)
- Core Team (Community Meeting Process)

Parks:
- Forest Ridge Park (Resolution Process)
- Horseshoe Farm Park (Resolution Process)
- Leesville Park (Community Meeting)
- Timberlake Park (Community Meeting)
Evaluation Criteria

- **Quality**
  - Decisions that (1) identify the values, interests, and concerns of all who are interested in or affected by the planning decision; (2) use the best available knowledge, and (3) incorporate new information, methods, and concerns that arise over time.

- **Legitimacy**
  - Process is seen by the public as fair and competent and follows governing laws and regulations.
Capacity

Participants, including Department staff and consultants, (1) become better informed and more skilled at effective participation; (2) become better able to engage the best available knowledge and information about diverse values, interests, and concerns; and (3) develop a more widely shared understanding of the issues and decision challenges and a “reservoir of communication skills, mediation skills, and mutual trust.”
Outcomes

- Both processes produced **quality planning** from the perspective of the public involved.
- Process **legitimacy** was the most problematic of all three practice outcomes for both planning processes.
  - **Community Meeting Process**: lack of community-wide participation and transparency.
  - **Resolution Process**: problems stemmed from issues of leadership and process management.
- Both processes, when done well, can create **capacity** for future decisions.
General Recommendations

1. Adhere to core principles
2. Manage processes effectively
3. Develop a broad public involvement policy
4. Engage citizens in comprehensive planning and system integration planning
5. Establish clear definitions of appropriate park elements and programs
6. Decouple planning for controversial elements from planning for the park
General Recommendations

7. Gather data on potential park uses and users before engaging in planning
8. Improve communication mechanisms including use of the internet
9. Use consultants with proven public participation skills
10. Evaluate every public participation process
11. Maintain process flexibility
Implementing Report Recommendations

- Tasked by City Council to assist Parks and Recreation Department in implementing study recommendations

- Goals:
  - Develop a comprehensive public participation policy based on sound principles
  - Recommend a policy that will be consistent for all Department park planning processes
  - Enhance procedural flexibility to allow for context-appropriate public engagement processes
Public Participation Policy

- Policy consists of three documents
  - Policy document
  - Public Participation Guidelines
  - Department Operating Instructions
Policy Document

- Describes roles and responsibilities of Raleigh citizens and the Parks and Recreation Department in planning, designing, and developing park lands, greenways, and recreation facilities.

- Describes the situations in which the advice, aspirations and concerns of citizens are reflected in planning and development decisions.

- Specifies circumstances in which the Parks and Recreation Department does not seek public input (very few).

- Describes a set of principles that govern all public participation processes organized by the Department.
Policy Directives

- Invite and organize opportunities for direct public involvement in planning, design, development, major renovation, and substantial modification
- Adhere to the core principles of public participation
- Provide sufficient organizational resources and capacity to every public participation event and process
- Manage public participation processes effectively by following best practices (defined in Guidelines)
Policy Directives

- Provide early and thorough notification
- Complete public participation processes by notifying involved and interested people and groups of final decisions, the impact of their input on those decisions, and the reasons for them
- Commit to learning and improving public participation processes by engaging in self-assessment and design correction
Principles

- Process Design
  - Strive for inclusiveness of participation
  - Design processes collaboratively
  - Make processes transparent
  - Time processes in relation to decisions
Principles

- Process Management
  - Promote full participation
  - Promote mutual understanding
  - Strive for inclusive solutions
  - Share responsibility for decisions

- Information Integration
  - Ensure transparency of information and analysis
  - Anticipate information needs
  - Pay attention to both facts and values
Activities Covered Under the Policy

- Site master planning, plan revision, plan amendment
- Facility design and development (15-30% construction drawing review)
- System integration planning
- Major renovation and redevelopment
- Ad hoc studies such as feasibility, costs/revenue, or other charge from Council
- Strategic planning (e.g., aquatics, dog parks)
- Comprehensive park system planning
People Affected by the Policy

- Park neighbors
- Park users
- User organizations
- Neighborhood groups and HOAs
- Citizen Advisory Councils
- Parks, Recreation, & Greenways Advisory Board
- Raleigh Dept of Parks and Recreation
- Other City of Raleigh Departments
Roles and Responsibilities

- Parks Staff and Consultants
  - Process design and planning
  - Process approval
  - Process management
  - Communication management
  - Process promotion and notification
  - Department spokesperson
  - Technical expertise
  - Process facilitation and meeting management
  - Process recording and summarizing
Roles and Responsibilities

- Parks, Recreation & Greenways Advisory Board
  - Process review
  - Outcome review
  - Capital improvement planning

- City Manager and City Council
  - Process approval
  - Adoption of final plans
Other

- Notification and public comment
- Activities exempt from the policy
- Relationship to other City departments and ordinances
- Glossary of terms
Public Participation Guidelines

- Describes formats, methods and techniques for the Department and Raleigh citizens to work in concert to plan, design, and develop park lands, greenways and facilities
- Assist the Department to adhere to the principles contained in the Policy Document
Four Pathways for Public Participation

- Outreach
- Information Exchange
- Feedback and Consultation
- Consensus Seeking
Four Pathways for Public Participation

- **Outreach**
  - **Purpose:** Provide citizens with timely and objective information to understand the problem, alternatives, consequences, and proposed actions
  - **Promise to the Public:** The Department will keep the public informed about the planning, design, and development process of the projects

- **Formats:** Project websites, fact sheets, press releases

- **Examples:** Construction status; greenway map; bond program advertisement
Information Exchange

**Purpose:** Exchange data and opinions with citizens to identify the problem and alternatives, describe the consequences, and develop proposed actions.

**Promise to the Public:** The Department will keep the public informed, work with citizens to exchange data, opinions, and options for park planning processes, and provide feedback on how the public influenced the decision-making process.

**Formats:** Open houses, listening sessions, public comment, focus groups.

**Examples:** Playground design.
Four Pathways for Public Participation

- **Feedback and Consultation**
  - **Purpose:** Consult with the public throughout the planning, design, and development process to ensure citizens’ concerns, aspirations, and advice are considered.
  - **Promise to the Public:** The Department will work to ensure citizens’ concerns, aspirations, and advice are reflected in the alternatives developed, and provide feedback on how the public influenced the decision-making process.
  - **Formats:** Community meetings, task forces, advisory boards and committees.
  - **Examples:** Hill Street Park master plan.
Consensus Seeking

**Purpose:** Partner with the public in each aspect of the planning, design, and development process to identify and analyze various options, recommend creative solutions and find common ground among competing points of view.

**Promise to the Public:** The Department will partner with citizens in formulating potential solutions, and incorporate recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.

**Examples:** Forest Ridge Park master plan
Guideline Components

- Best practices and techniques for each pathway
- Process selection guide: A context specific approach
  - Representation and communication with key groups
  - Level of interest by citizens
  - Level of conflict and mistrust
  - Degree of complexity and uncertainty
- Evaluating public participation processes
- Conducting a situation assessment
- Example planning committee charter
- Making consensus work
- Selecting a facilitator
Departmental Operating Instructions

- Departmental procedures related to Council-adopted Master Plan, Master Plan Amendment or Revision for undeveloped or partially developed sites
- Incorporates specific documents and reports as references
- Describes System Integration Plans, Master Plans and public notification process
How the Documents Work Together

- The **Policy Document** charges the Department to organize and conduct processes for citizen engagement in adherence to principles and standards held by practitioners and scholars of public participation.

- The **Guidelines** provide information to the Department and the public about how to organize and structure public involvement processes that are contextually appropriate and adhere to the principles in the policy document.

- The **DOI** outlines Departmental procedures for carrying out its planning processes in accordance to the policy document.