Appreciate Opportunity to Comment

1. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these documents! They are very important and I hope the Parks Board will work hard to thoroughly understand them and polish them up before sending them to City Council.

Value of Public Participation in Park Planning

2. I preface my comments on the updated Public Participation documents by first acknowledging this topic is of great personal interest and of some concern to me. From my years as a former Raleigh Parks and Recreation employee from 1973 until 1984, I learned how much Raleigh residents love their parks and the sense of ownership they feel. The cultural assets of our public commons (parks, greenways, plazas, etc.) mirror the collective "spirit" of a city or village. The values of democracy and community engagement are exercised and experienced in meaningful ways in our public parks. The opportunity for citizens to actively participate in park planning helps to grow the "muscles" of civic engagement, creating more understanding and commitment to the wider community. The ripple effects of such opportunities in an individual life, to the life of the neighborhood and the larger community is very valuable. This helps to build a sense of place, commitment to something beyond one's self and makes for stronger and safer cities.

A city committed to being a strong, vibrant American community should look for opportunities to foster meaningful public involvement, especially in our public parks. The ramifications for improved public relationships, public health and good environmental stewardship are part of the big picture when we consider our public parks.

Size of and Use of Documents

3. A number of volunteer hours have been contributed to help refine the public participation program.

Use of and Use of Documents

4. It is important that the Dept provide next steps to the City Council to illustrate how the documents are being implemented. The true value to citizens is that the Public Participation Program provides clearly defined steps to determine a planning process and engage citizens in planning and developing a park. The planning team has observed that most citizens are inclined to become more engaged (and concerned) with both the park planning process and the resulting plan/study/design after a specific action is begun, particularly when a site or facility is proposed in their neighborhood or relates directly to their interest. At the time a specific plan/study/design is presented, it will also be supported by the Getting Involved in Park Planning participation sheets and a full description of the planning process (Figure 1 in the Policy, or "flow chart"). For those citizens who are interested in learning more about the process, we will develop a 2-3 page stand-alone Executive Summary describing the public participation program and the 3 documents.

Lastly, the policy document belongs to everyone (Citizens, City Council, PRGAB, Staff) so that everyone understands the respective roles and responsibilities with respect to public participation in park planning; the Manual is designed to inform staff about their role and responsibilities in publication participation efforts; the Guidelines are designed foremost to inform staff and PRGAB; and the Getting Involved in Parking Planning participation sheets are designed to help citizens engage.

5. I have talked with many parks fans, and do not know of a single person other than myself who has read everything. The sheer size of these documents is daunting, off-putting and a handicap to creating an educated and empowered citizenry and greater democracy in park planning.

The documents are intended to provide a foundation for widely accepted public participation principles to be applied regularly and thoroughly during park planning. As mentioned above, we will add an overview sheet (Executive Summary) for the public audience. We believe citizens will become much more involved in a specific planning action when that action affects them more directly. The planning team feels that rather than a handicap the combination of Guidelines, Policy, Manual and supporting participation sheets demonstrates a sincere commitment to conduct planning processes in the most transparent and engaging manner.
General
I hope that both the Parks Board and City Council will read every page in these new draft documents (as well as all comments and responses in 2010 and 2012) prior to having any discussion or making decisions about them.

The planning team shares that hope as well. As such, the Policy document (which includes Figure 1) is the central text which draws from the broad Guidelines as well as drives the Manual. An Executive Summary, as well as incorporating sample Participation Sheets will facilitate the discussion and decisions by both the PRGAB and City Council. Continued engagement of the PRGAB in ongoing planning actions will enable them to see, question and understand both the documents and the planning process.

Observing the seeming lack of interest among the current PRGAB, evidenced by the attendance of only one board member at the recent public meeting to explain the documents, I am concerned this material and policies will not be implemented, as no one will understand it beyond Staff.

The PRGAB received an update at their February 2012 meeting. Dr. Lou Addor delivered a session at the March PRGAB Retreat on active listening skills that relates to their role in public participation in park planning actions. There are numerous checks and assurances built into the process to ensure it will be implemented including a professional staff, consultants, approvals by the Department Head, City Manager and City Council.

For the PRGAB to be involved in determining which process to use they need to be knowledgeable of the Guidelines. As mentioned earlier, I am concerned about Board members lack of interest in this material. I do realize that the intention is that new board members would be introduced to the Guidelines, Policy and Manuel during their orientation. The material is too much to present in one the usual orientation session where there is a lot to share with new board members.

In addition to an overview of the Public Participation Program in new member orientation, the whole PRGAB will receive process review and updates throughout the project. There are usually one or two Board members with direct involvement in a planning action, and they typically provide an update to the full Board at each monthly meeting. The Development of an Executive Summary should assist in orienting new and current Board members.

There is no clear and specific planning process outlined.

The PRGAB has had several opportunities to be introduced to and ask questions about the implementation of the comprehensive Public Participation process, including an update during their regular monthly meetings and a retreat this spring. Their opportunity to review and comment also coincided with the public 45 day review period and a public forum convened by the planning team expressly for this purpose. Additionally, as current park planning actions proceed over the next 12-18 months (the Chavis Conversation and the Park System Update) the staff will make additional efforts to point out to the PRGAB how the Policy is implemented through methods, techniques and best practices. The revised Policy document contains edits that make the PRGAB’s role expressly more specific concerning review and making recommendations on a specific planning action. Both the public and the PRGAB will be provided Getting Involved in Park Planning participation sheets for each meeting of a planning action. As a formal recommendation to adopt this comprehensive process moves toward City Council review, an Executive Summary document will help to tie together the documents, roles, and opportunities for review and feedback.

Ensure Accountability (Build Trust)

PRGAB: Do they understand and are they working with the Comprehensive Program?

PRGAB: What is Mechanism to Educate PRGAB and Public About the Public Participation Program?
General

10

These documents have a lot of words and not much that will guarantee citizens a real voice. Citizens will feel (and be) more powerless than they were under Resolution 715. Staff is given creative reign to design different process with each park. There is no consistency that the public would be familiar with from park planning process to park planning process. There is no accountability outlined beyond city administrative staff and PRGAB, only on as-needed basis. The PRGAB can decide if post-planning evaluations should be shared with City Council or not.

Any future changes to these documents should be provided to the public and Parks Board for review with “track changes” so any alterations can be clearly seen.

I am disappointed that so many of my last comments were dismissed or cut off in the “Comments and Responses” spreadsheet that was done. Many “pad”, unsubstantive and unhelpful responses were given to people’s comments and no real answers or rationale was often given for not incorporating people’s suggestions. A good example is comment #100: the response given is totally out of context and does not address the important issue raised.

11

When final drafts of these documents are eventually ready for Council action, the City Council should adopt them ALL so that they are all-official and cannot be changed without public notice or Council awareness.

12

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15

Since City Council is responsible for allocating funds for park planning and consultant fees, I think it is necessary that Council be informed of the processes chosen and copied on evaluation reports. Where is accountability determined otherwise? I feel the current document side-steps elected officials more than previous park planning policies and the lack of accountability beyond city administration is of concern to me.

16

While there are some advantages to the fluid, staff-makes-up-new-processes with each new park, the lack of consistency introduces some potential landmines for gaining public trust and ensuring accountability. The flexibility will help staff get the outcomes they desire, but citizens will likely feel frustrated without knowing what to expect with each park to be planned.

See the response to Comment #10 for clarification in how processes are selected when using widely accepted public participation principles. The public participation program is intended to better identify citizens’ interests, and empower them to work together with each other and staff to find solutions that meet those interests. In addition, it is the responsibility of professional staff to present, explain and advocate for empirical data and demonstrated trends in programs, activities and facilities necessary to provide current and future residents with a first class, nationally recognized sustainable urban park system.

The public participation program seeks to balance efficiency and accountability with the flexibility that is needed to effectively and fairly incorporate as many citizens’ interests as possible during a planning process. More prescriptive processes were not meeting this intention. The Guidelines provide specific guidelines on how to design processes to meet specific situations that are expected to be encountered (varied levels of controversy, trust, and decision-making authority) in different planning cases. Consistency will be experienced once the public aspects of a process begins with explanations of the process for a project, including the use of fact sheets and explanations of specific Pathways for Public Participation in the meetings associated with Park Planning Process.

The accountability is clearly outlined in numerous places, including the Policy and Manual documents as well as Figure 3, the “flow chart”. Accountability for specific aspects of the process include professional park planners, consultants, City Administration, citizens and elected officials as maintaining ultimate responsibility to ensure the current and future citizens needs, desires, and aspirations are adequately addressed in the final plan/study/design. As a Final Plan/Study/Design is approved by City Council, a brief summation of the planning process is available. Assigning responsibility for the Process/Implementation Evaluation to the PRGAB is an attempt to provide additional accountability for staff/consultant/Administration and engage the Board members at a higher level of detail than typically provided to the City Council. PRGAB can communicate any aspect, positive or negative to the Council; there is an official method and responsibility to do so.

16

General

Ensure Transparency

The Planning Team agrees that all three documents (Guidelines, Policy and Manual) should be presented to City Council for adoption (with supporting documents for exhibits - sample Getting involved in Park Planning participation sheets and Figure 1, attached to the Policy). The planning team does not expect changes will be needed to the Guidelines in the immediate future since they are broad and based on accepted best practices. The Guidelines and Policy are recommended to be reviewed in five years. The planning team does expect changes, some immediate, to be necessary to the Manual. When originally presented as a “Department Operating Instruction” (DOI) there was a recognition that staff must have some flexibility in implementing the processes due especially to changing technologies, demographic and organizational conditions, and this is evident in the latest City efforts to enhance the citizen’s access to information. A new “My Raleigh Subscription” service has been offered in late March; expected upgrades to the City/County Geographic Information Service street address better features will enable better accuracy of postal addresses. The implementation of these aspects of the Manual are examples that are far beyond the specific scope of park planning and are being implemented to enhance better government in general. In addition the planning team will benefit from oversight by outside consultants from the NCSU Natural Resources Leadership Institute for the Chavis Conversations. This will provide more immediate feedback during and after this Revised Master Plan effort already in the planning stages.

The ultimate goal of the following three documents is to ensure an effective and efficient process that fairly and equitably maximizes citizen input and support for the planning and development of the City of Raleigh’s park system.

As stated in the Preamble in each document: The planning team will benefit from oversight by outside consultants from the NCSU Natural Resources Leadership Institute for the Chavis Conversations. This will provide more immediate feedback during and after this Revised Master Plan effort already in the planning stages.

As stated in the Preamble in each document: The ultimate goal of the following three documents is to ensure an effective and efficient process that fairly and equitably maximizes citizen input and support for the planning and development of the City of Raleigh’s park system.
Good quality transparency is still not ensured in these documents. This should be a priority and the documents should be corrected for this. For example it should be consistently provided across all documents that citizens, the Parks Board and Council will have the ability to review and comment on the Process Design and Communication Plan (Council should have the ability to make changes) based on this review. This should be required to ensure transparency. The Parks Board should review and recommend changes that will improve transparency and accountability for citizens.

Ensure Role of the Public and City Council in Process Design

The role of the City Council, the Parks Board, and the general public are still weak and diluted in these documents. The Manual and the Policy are especially tilted in favor of and focused on the Parks Department’s role rather than that of citizens. Citizens and the elected officials have been shut out of key, important decision making steps such as process design approval. This should be changed before these documents are adopted.

Repeat my previous comment #127. My comment is focused on the public’s right to review and comment on the type of process proposed, since the staff wants to retain the right to change up the process every time. The following things should be included for public review and comment and City Council approval:

1. Situation assessment
2. Goals of the planning process
3. Selecte guidance and outcomes
4. How outreach will take place
5. Process map
6. How will the proposed design process/plan be advertised?
7. Steps such as those under Techniques for Consensual Seeking Processes, e.g. how will stakeholders be defined/stakeholder matrix completed.
8. Expected timeline
9. Will staff or neutral facilitator be employed as facilitator?
10. Communication plan

There are many, many redundancies that I commented on in 2010 that should be removed so the documents can be streamlined (one example: similar glossaries in all three documents.)

Ensure Consistency Between the 3 Documents

In my last comments, I pointed out many gross inconsistencies in the way things are addressed in the three documents. Many inconsistencies still exist and will be problematic in implementation – perhaps not so much for staff, but for citizens for whom these documents are intended to assist. Review documents in detail to correct for these inconsistencies. Samples of inconsistencies are:

a. Process design - who is involved, how the process design is made available for review and comment, etc. This is presented differently in Manual, flow chart, etc. Who does the broad outline mentioned in 7.1.2 of the Manual go to for approval to proceed?

b. Different terms used: Master Plan Team, Consensus Committee, Planning Committee, process type names, Public Leadership Group, task force, resource team, Design Review Team, etc.

c. In places it says that some aspects of the planning process (e.g. process design) will be done up front, and then in other sections of the documents it says that changes can be made as the process proceeds.

d. Promises that were made in the responses to comments on 1/26/12 that changes had been made to the documents have not been made; the Parks Board should review these comments and ensure that all changes agreed to in the comments have actually been made.

Once these documents have been approved, new terms such as “Public Leadership Group” should not be introduced or used when running processes, as this will cause confusion. Stick to the terminology you have developed in your policies.

We have proposed changes to the Policy section #6 to address these concerns and those in #18, 19.

We will include something in the manual/policy explaining that a situation assessment requires interviewing key stakeholders, and asking stakeholders how they would like to or be able to participate. The summary of the situation assessment should indicate what was heard from these interviews.

With this method, citizens are engaged in process design from the very start. Because more than one person has expressed this concern thus the public’s and city council role probably needs to be elevated. Citizens and Council should be able to refer to the situation assessment if they have concerns/questions about the type of process selected and why. expanding on her question at left:

Agree; this information will be supplied as part of the process for consultant selection, contract approval, and review by the PRGAB of initial public meetings and committee selection, which goes back to Council for approval. Will include in the Manual as a checklist for information to supply to PRGAB, Council, committees, and public.

The facilitation and planning teams have worked to ensure clarity throughout the documents. We added the glossaries to each document to address a concern expressed earlier. Are there other redundancies? Can you provide examples?

We will go back and review. For example, there is no mention of the Manual in the Guidelines. The Preamble references the three documents to ensure no one document stands alone.

The planning team has reviewed the documents for inconsistencies and will continue to do so.

A) By intent, process design is presented in greater detail in the Manual (this directs staff how to specifically carry it out). Item 7.1.2 is clear in the context of the document. Included is an example and direction that variations in the proposed process design may required Council approval if additional resources (change in scope or contract) are required. There is a dilemma, and some difficulty in determining a detailed process design prior to contracting a consultant. Ergo, changes in the process (meeting styles or number, adjustments to stakeholders, etc.) might only be identified after a consultant is involved.

B) yes, committees, processes, and teams have different functions. Staff will look for an opportunity to combine and/or delete these terms if they are confusing.

C) refer to A above concerning the need to adjust elements of the planning process. This is a necessary feature of an effective process.

D) Please let the planning team know about promises we did not follow through with or specific inconsistencies. The 45 days of public review and an open public forum were provided in order to discover and be responsive to specific concerns.

We will read through documents to ensure terminology is consistently applied. Public Leadership Group is used in the documents and has been used in two formal processes (Moore Square Master Plan and Lake Johnson Master Plan Amendment). It seems to be both appropriate to the function of the citizen group and well accepted by the public.
In the Policy for Park Planning the Principles for Public Participation outlines what policies the Department of Parks & Recreation will do while engaging citizens in a planning process. 8B says: the department shall design public participation processes collaboratively with those participating in them. Which indicates the public will actually have involvement in determining what the process will be. I think this is misleading, the department is not interested in relinquishing control to the degree necessary to have a collaborative involvement in planning the process.

There is still significant lack of clarity that should be improved. For example, last time I commented on 9. Activities Exempt From The Policy (page 9) that examples of these situations should be given. 1) was improved with more explanation, but 2) and 3) need clarification as well. This is very important!

A situation assessment should be required, not strongly encouraged, and made available to the public for review on the City’s website. If not required, the circumstances where one is not needed should be clarified.

An edit to this section provides that any exclusion of a planning action from the Policy is subject to review by the City Attorney. An example of this could be a situation where a donation or gift is being considered that carries some stipulation for planning and/or development. In a case like this the City Attorney and City Manager, as employees of City Council, assume the responsibility to consider the Policy and are free to consult with the Parks and Recreation Director and staff concerning appropriate public participation.

A situation assessment is required under the policy as described in Section 6.D. An Assessment will result in a convening report that does not identify locations of projects or sites for any proposed public participation actions. In the sentence "Based on citizen feedback...", the word "plants" should be changed to "citizens" to be consistent with the rest of the sentence. This description has been included in the Manual.

The PRGAB liaison(s) will be active members of the planning committee. They have specific opportunities and a format to report to Council. The statement is consistent with their role as an advisory board.

The PRGAB liaison has been added to the Policy statement. The function of a Board member or two as liaison and host (not a meeting facilitator) has been added to the Manual.

A situation assessment is required under the policy as described in Section 6.D. An Assessment will result in a convening report that does not identify locations of public participation actions. Further, the public participation process design will be an agenda item at all project initiation meetings. For those citizens who are less concerned about process design, the involvement of the PRGAB in process design decisions provides an avenue for notification and participation. In addition, the public participation process design will be an agenda item at all project initiation meetings. For those citizens who are less concerned about process design, the involvement of the PRGAB in process design decisions provides an avenue for notification and participation. In addition, the public participation process design will be an agenda item at all project initiation meetings.

Without citing specific inconsistencies the planning team can not respond to the comment. The PRGAB liaison(s) will be active members of the planning committee. They have specific opportunities and a format to report to Council. The statement is consistent with their role as an advisory board.

More active language will be included in the Guidelines and Manual. The intent of the Public Participation Policy is to provide a comprehensive approach to public involvement in parks and recreation planning and development that allows for flexibility in approach so that public involvement fits both the context and desires of citizens; is based on well established and accepted practices; and provides mechanisms for oversight and correction. We believe we have struck the proper balance among all three objectives in this policy and related documents. For example, the referenced phrase is used twice in the Manual and is supported both times with an example (one is an edit in response to the comment.)

Suggested change to Section 7.2, last sentence: Other interested groups as suggested by... Persons with Disabilities, and any interested individuals who have requested to be informed of meetings and project information, shall be notified. Both the policy and manual will be updated.

A situation assessment is required under the policy as described in Section 6.D. An Assessment will result in a convening report that does not identify locations of public participation actions. Further, the public participation process design will be an agenda item at all project initiation meetings. For those citizens who are less concerned about process design, the involvement of the PRGAB in process design decisions provides an avenue for notification and participation. In addition, the public participation process design will be an agenda item at all project initiation meetings.

The PRGAB liaison has been added to the Policy statement. The function of a Board member or two as liaison and host (not a meeting facilitator) has been added to the Manual.
The Guidelines is a large document at 70 pages. I found it very informative and will provide a useful resource book for educating staff to issues they may face with citizens, a variety of methods for notifying the public about park planning, an array of methods of designing park planning processes, how to communicate with citizens, the responsibilities of all parties involved, etc. Park board members would find it informative and should be encouraged to read it, but only those most desiring to be educated in the details of park planning are likely to undertake the task.

The Consensus section, beginning on page 16, should have the process for seeking consensus noted at the end of the Techniques for Consensus Seeking section. Page 16 lists the stages of a consensus process - a macro view. Consensus as described on pages 54-56, is the decision-rule that allows a consensus-seeking process to work - a micro view. The decision-rule introduced on pages 54-56, involves lengthy discussions, patience, and active listening skills; it is not a majority/minority decision or voting process. It takes several iterations of testing for consensus and exploring inclusive solutions, of ensuring everyone involved has had the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations before a group or committee will converge on a decision.

Thank you for catching this; dissenting or alternative opinions are often documented in meeting summaries and in any final meeting reports. This information will be provided to the PRGAB for their review as well as to City Council. The Guidelines have been changed to clearly reflect this on pg. 52 (charter example) and again on page 56 - making consensus work.

Regarding the Consensus section, I suggest a highly skilled facilitator with the capacity to maintain an atmosphere of respect for differences is paramount for consensus to provide the best outcomes. I have a concern that without a skilled facilitator consensus will not be achieved because of the time necessary to allow differing sides to speak and to feel heard.

Conducting meetings using collaborative principles will often incorporate small group work and then large group round-out, group techniques that allow a number of participants to engage in divergent thinking before convening on solutions or alternatives and facilitation of open discussion and deliberations. These kinds of processes allow participants not only to share their concerns and interests, but to develop their proposals or recommendations. That said, there may be activities when time limits are necessary but it is not expected to the default form of engagement for the participants. The reference to a two-minute time limit in the Sample Charter found in the Guidelines has been edited to show a facilitator may incorporate time-limits as need. Alternatively, a group should develop its specific charter and determine this item in the context of both the planning action being considered and the specific meeting situation(s).

Guidelines regarding the time limit in the Sample Charter found in the Guidelines has been edited to show a facilitator may incorporate time-limits as need. Alternatively, a group should develop its specific charter and determine this item in the context of both the planning action being considered and the specific meeting situation(s).

A reader of the Guidelines will not understand exactly how a park planning process will be conducted, only that there are lots of ways it can be done and what the best practices are for these various methods.

Guidelines note: “Allow time for the dissenting parties to express their concerns and reasons for dissent.” In my experience with many public meetings there is often impatience to listen to a dissenting voice. Using a one-minute time limit is not in keeping with the spirit of consensus.

Conducting meetings using collaborative principles will often incorporate small group work and then large group round-out, group techniques that allow a number of participants to engage in divergent thinking before convening on solutions or alternatives, and facilitation of open discussion and deliberations. These kinds of processes allow participants not only to share their concerns and interests, but to develop their proposals or recommendations. That said, there may be activities when time limits are necessary but it is not expected to the default form of engagement for the participants. The reference to a two-minute time limit in the Sample Charter found in the Guidelines has been edited to show a facilitator may incorporate time-limits as need. Alternatively, a group should develop its specific charter and determine this item in the context of both the planning action being considered and the specific meeting situation(s).

The Consensus section, beginning on page 16, should have the process for seeking consensus noted at the end of the Techniques for Consensus Seeking section. The Decision Process for consensus doesn’t appear until pages 50 – 55. One has to read many pages more to learn that it is a voting process rather than the Quaker method of pains-taking, respectful listening consensus. The reference to a two-minute time limit in the Sample Charter found in the Guidelines has been edited to show a facilitator may incorporate time-limits as need. Alternatively, a group should develop its specific charter and determine this item in the context of both the planning action being considered and the specific meeting situation(s).

It is not clear enough about how and to whom dissenting opinions will be communicated beyond the conclusion of the process. These dissenting opinions should always be included in all reports and be part of the record of the process. In these documents PRGAB determines if and when reports are made to City Council. I propose that all dissenting opinions be included in reports to City Council and that all final reports from park planning meetings be given to City Council.

The text is not clear enough about how and to whom dissenting opinions will be communicated beyond the conclusion of the process. These dissenting opinions should always be included in all reports and be part of the record of the process. In these documents PRGAB determines if and when reports are made to City Council. I propose that all dissenting opinions be included in reports to City Council and that all final reports from park planning meetings be given to City Council.

Thank you for catching this; dissenting or alternative opinions are often documented in meeting summaries and in any final meeting reports. This information will be provided to the PRGAB for their review as well as to City Council. The Guidelines have been changed to clearly reflect this on pg. 52 (charter example) and again on page 56 - making consensus work.

The Consensus section, beginning on page 16, will have the process for seeking consensus noted at the end of the Techniques for Consensus Seeking section. Page 16 lists the stages of a consensus process - a macro view. Consensus as described on pages 54-56, is the decision-rule that allows a consensus-seeking process to work - a micro view. The decision-rule introduced on pages 54-56, involves lengthy discussions, patience, and active listening skills; it is not a majority/minority decision or voting process. It takes several iterations of testing for consensus and exploring inclusive solutions, of ensuring everyone involved has had the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations before a group or committee will converge on a decision.

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If not clear how an Advisory Committee in a Feedback and Consultation process (page 15 of Guidelines) is set up, and whether or not the PRGAB and City Council can review and approve this committee membership. If there is a need for an advisory committee, it should be set up by Council so that Open Meetings Laws apply. A committee of this kind should have a charter, etc. and be treated similarly to a Committee of this kind should have a charter, etc. and be treated similarly to a Consensus Seeking Committee.

The requirement for environmental stewardship recommendations that was in the Resolution process should be included in the Guidelines Chart section 4. FINAL PRODUCTS.

The reference to the Policies is now changed to Planning Committee, and the recommendation is from the PRGAB to City Council for all Planning Committees regardless of what the body is called.

The Consensus section, beginning on page 16, will have the process for seeking consensus noted at the end of the Techniques for Consensus Seeking section. Page 16 lists the stages of a consensus process - a macro view. Consensus as described on pages 54-56, is the decision-rule that allows a consensus-seeking process to work - a micro view. The decision-rule introduced on pages 54-56, involves lengthy discussions, patience, and active listening skills; it is not a majority/minority decision or voting process. It takes several iterations of testing for consensus and exploring inclusive solutions, of ensuring everyone involved has had the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations before a group or committee will converge on a decision.

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The Sentence in guidelines section 5. AUTHORITY OF THE COMMITTEE (page 46) that says the Parks Board can reject the work of a planning committee should be changed to read “Products generated by the Committee will be reviewed and considered by the PRGAB, who will forward them unchanged to City Council along with their own recommendation for Council action.”

Agree; we will make this change in section 5 of the Guidelines.

The Consensus section, beginning on page 16, will have the process for seeking consensus noted at the end of the Techniques for Consensus Seeking section. Page 16 lists the stages of a consensus process - a macro view. Consensus as described on pages 54-56, is the decision-rule that allows a consensus-seeking process to work - a micro view. The decision-rule introduced on pages 54-56, involves lengthy discussions, patience, and active listening skills; it is not a majority/minority decision or voting process. It takes several iterations of testing for consensus and exploring inclusive solutions, of ensuring everyone involved has had the opportunity to contribute to the deliberations before a group or committee will converge on a decision.

The Guidelines provide directives for facilitators and encourage neutrality of the facilitators. As well trained as parks staff may be, I suspect it would be hard for a member of staff to maintain neutrality during park planning processes. Hiring outside facilitators will allow staff to openly voice their opinions providing a more honest tone for meetings.

The best practices for consensus seeking processes expect the use of a neutral and experienced facilitator given the level of complexity in master planning (and potential for conflict). Many consultants are skilled in effective public participation processes and thus can serve in this role (other organizations have this capacity such as university centers in conflict resolution). When another professional provides the facilitation, we agree that this affords staff more of an opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns within the substantive discussions.
There are real issues with Parks Dept. staff trying to play the role of neutral facilitator. They are not neutral in any way. Perhaps a Planning Dept. staff person can be the facilitator or someone from outside can be hired for this purpose only.

Has the Parks Board or City Council been fully briefed on the process design for the upcoming Parks Plan update? Both bodies should be informed of the detailed process to be employed.

Consider explaining public participation or public involvement on the page 1, chapter 1. These are the principles, the best management practices, the guidelines by which everything following should be judged against. Give people an understanding of it all up front, and the rest of the material may be more easily understood.

Most likely, having 3 documents will be confusing to someone not intimately involved in their development, including Parks board members and citizens, who are the people this is supposed to serve. It makes sense that there are currently 3 docs, as that is how they were written and built upon one another. Now, that endeavor is completed, so it can be repackaged for easy digestion.

One big document, with different chapters or units would allow for one page 12 or one section 2.0 being referenced, instead of 3 documents, each with a page 12 and a section 2.0. It would have one glossary, one set of appendices (which not everyone will need printed out anyway). It might be 60 pages or more but that is better when compared to the cost of confusion of 3 documents. Making things simpler will help build relationships between PRGAB and staff. It could be the Public Participation Policy, Manual & Guidelines document - the PPPMG - how great is that! (or maybe a shorter title)

During the March 2012 retreat for the PRGAB, the proposed process for the current System Plan Update was presented. The proposed scope and process will be presented to City Council for review and approval as part of the consultant contract approval.

We will add the paragraph on the value of public participation within the executive summary we are developing to explain how to review the program.

It is not expected that citizens or citizen-volunteer Park Board members thoroughly master every aspect of the public participation process. An Executive Summary will be developed that should provide an overview and emphasize staff’s role in implementation and assisting citizens throughout every planning action. With respect to combining the documents, the reasoning is sound but because the three documents have a different purpose the suggestion would require substantial editing and additional review. No changes recommended.

The legend for the bullets at the top of the page help to identify why they are used and the varying bullets develop a hierarchy of responsible parties. Incorporating page or section numbers as a direct reference after the documents are adopted is a good idea.

This is good explanation of what several comments have pointed out. We are using this feedback to make edits to section 6 in the Policy.

Another concern I have about the city mngr making the decision, is that it leaves open the opportunity for all this to occur without the parks board knowing about it, which could be interpreted to be keeping the board in the dark. This public participation process was begun because of a history of discontent, so every effort should be made to mitigate for past problems.
Stakeholder matrix and situation assessment - EXCELLENT! This will help keep the entire process within the guidelines for public participation, and will help everyone understand issues better for years to come concerning each park planning process.

Thank you for the insight into the public benefit of those two resources.

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2.6 Role of Facilitator.

It needs to be specifically stated that the facilitator, even if a parks staff member, will have no other role in the process, and if for some reason s/he is called upon to be on the agenda because of expertise only s/he can provide, an alternate will serve as the facilitator during that specific meeting, or at least during that presentation and discussion section of the agenda.

Agree, we will add this idea/make this it clear within the manual.

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Section 4. This is wonderful. This caused confusion in the past when there was no specific guidelines for what is what, and what happens when, and who gets to weigh in on it.

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4.10 Incorporation of input. Email listservs need to be used. For example, if I want to be kept up to date on a planning process for Lake Johnson park, I should be able to add my name to a listserv and all announcements about that planning process should be sent to that listserv. The public should not have to continuously check the park dept website to find out if changes have been made. The listserv need to be specific for each planning process. In addition, the Parks department should strive to make the Park Dept website a stellar experience, instead of an exhaustive one. I realize they have to work within the restrictive bounds of the City’s website, but they can strive to do better and be an example for other departments, just as they are doing with this public participation process.

The City of Raleigh is providing a new opportunity for citizens to register to receive email and text messages on many topics, including projects and updates. It is called MyRaleigh Subscriptions and is prominently offered on every web site home page. There may be a transition period while stakeholders (and staff) learn about the subscription opportunities so email lists will be utilized to ensure full outreach.

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7.2 Process Design: Specifically list that a stakeholder matrix be developed. This will have to occur for a Situation Assessment to happen, so why not just list it as 7.2.1. If something happens that the SA needs to be postponed or delayed, etc, a stakeholder matrix will have already be developed which can help guide any decision made.

Will add to the manual.

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Comments on Guidelines

59 Guidelines page 23/27 (note - specifically on large documents, number the pdf the same as the document) -Show the tool/guide first, then explain the scoring.

Addressing pagination is a good idea. Understand the reasoning behind flipping the scoring and the instrument but not practical at this time for minor benefits that may be achieved. No change recommended.

60 Guidelines page 40/44 - I think the stakeholder matrix should be first and foremost before the situation assessment. In fact, it should be its own appendix. In my experience more people question ‘who is being considered a stakeholder’ before they are concerned about what they may be asked.

We have added text emphasis at the beginning of the App. A to assist in making the distinction evident. Also, App. A adequately addresses both 1) issues and 2) stakeholders as being interdependent within the Assessment.
PRGAB: What is Mechanism to Educate PRGAB and Public About the Public Participation Program?

Ensure Accountability (Build Trust)
Ensure Consistency Between the 3 Documents

Reduce Redudancies

Ensure Role of the Public and City Council in Process Design
Neutrality of Facilitators

Comments Pertaining to the Guidelines