



Date: August 15, 2012

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager

Through: Wanda S. Page, Deputy City Manager

From: Rhonda B. Parker, Director, Parks and Recreation

Subject: Update on the Parks and Recreation Master Planning Process

Executive Summary

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) is beginning the process of gathering input from the residents of Durham for a new Master Plan. The final plan draft is expected to be presented to City Council for its review in spring 2013. DPR is utilizing a range of options for engaging residents and determining their ideas about the future of the City’s parks and recreation programs. Since members of the City Council may hear questions or comments from their constituents about the planning process, DPR staff is providing Council members a brief report on these various options for engagement.

Recommendation

The City staff recommends that the City Council receive this report.

Background

The current master plan guiding the capital and, often, operations requests of the department was adopted by the City Council on November 17, 2003. Some of its data, including surveys and community meetings, actually date from 2001-02. The department also completed a Community Needs Assessment on its recreation programming; that assessment dates from 2005. Those documents were both excellent for guiding the department for some years, but both are getting noticeably outdated. With an increasing population, with additional areas annexed into the City, and with changing trends in recreation, it is time for a new plan that takes the current pulse of residents’ desires for parks and recreation programming and makes recommendations for the next decade.

Issues and Analysis

A master plan is complex and requires a great deal of “front end” work before any document is written; hiring a consultant is the usual route to take, but that can be expensive. Cary contracted with GreenPlay, Inc. for \$185,000.00 for its parks and recreation master plan in 2011. Raleigh has contracted with AECOM Design + Planning for its 2012 master plan for \$250,000.00. DPR is proposing to use a combination of staff work, assistance from other City departments, assistance from residents, and some specific smaller service contracts (totaling less than \$50,000) to create a new plan for Durham.

- Assistance from other departments has already come from Transportation and Technology Solutions as Long Range Plan growth modeling data, Census Block data, and GIS mapping.
- Assistance from residents will come from the Recreation Advisory Commission (Council appointed members) and from the new *ad hoc* Steering Committee (created from nominations

from groups and organizations and self-nominations). The Steering Committee will be taking the lead on hosting eight community meetings to gather information in October and November, then collating and assessing community priorities, then reviewing a draft of the plan before it goes back to the public. The first six community meetings have been scheduled:

- a. October 9 Southwest Regional Library (3605 Shannon Rd.)
- b. October 11 North Regional Library (221 Milton Rd.)
- c. October 16 DPS Staff Development Center (2107 Hillandale Rd.)
- d. October 18 Main Library (300 N. Roxboro St.)
- e. October 24 Forest Hills Clubhouse (1639 University Dr.)
- f. November 1 Holton Career and Resource Center (401 N. Driver St.)

There will be two other meetings at other sites, but dates and locations have not been finalized. Council members are invited to all meetings.

- The contracts include two that are specifically for information gathering:
 - a. A PARCS survey (Parks and Recreation Community Survey) will be run by the National Research Center, Inc. of Boulder, CO. The surveys will be mailed to selected households in numbers sufficient to ensure an approximate 96% accuracy rate; DPR staff have customized the questions for Durham, including some open-ended questions to gauge community attitudes on various key questions. We will also receive our response data with numbers broken out by geographic regions of the City and demographic subgroups, so we can understand the different concerns of different communities.
 - b. The MindMixer website was launched on August 27. Mindmixer is described by its developers as “an online community meeting.” DPR staff have created the information, and the project team has put together the web pages. The site is highly interactive – it invites responses to different types of questions (and the questions are changed often) and it rewards participants with points that can ultimately be redeemed for prizes. Data suggest that this type of community involvement engages exactly the demographic least likely to attend a face-to-face community meeting: youth and young adults.

DPR hopes that City Council members will visit the MindMixer site regularly, as discussion topics will change often, and that they will encourage others to do so as well at PlantoPlayMoreDurham.org.

Financial Impact

The work of the Steering Committee and the community meetings will cost approximately \$400.00 for materials; meeting sites are libraries, schools, and recreation centers. The contract with the National Research Center, Inc. is for \$26,500.00 and was included in the FY 2011-12 DPR budget. This cost is discounted based on DPR’s membership in the National Recreation and Parks Association. The contract with Social Momentum, LLC, dba MindMixer, is for \$18,250.00 and is included in the DPR budget for FY 2012-13.