

Parks and Recreation

Introduction

During the recent Reality Check Workshops, topical experts and members of the public worked together in small groups to examine a particular topic in-depth. During the two-hour workshops they worked with a trained facilitator to complete the following exercises:

- 1) Review of Ideas. Participants reviewed all of the ideas related to their topic that were collected during the community Idea Gathering Sessions.
- 2) Critical Questions. Participants engaged in a discussion of two Critical Questions, which had been identified by the *Vision for Staten Island* Steering Committee. The facilitator recorded the results of the discussion on flipchart paper, and then helped the group summarize major areas of agreement and disagreement.
- 3) Implementation Recommendations. At the end of the discussion period, each participant wrote down two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps to help Staten Island achieve its vision for their topic.

The results from the Parks and Recreation group are provided below. Note that responses have been recorded verbatim, and some errors may remain due to handwriting legibility. Responses are numbered for reference purposes only; this does not indicate any sense of priority.

Critical Question 1:

Are there gaps in existing parks and recreational opportunities? Where are they? Write your ideas below and, if appropriate, use the map provided to indicate locations for specific suggestions.

1. Not every green space is assessed in the same way or may not be assessed at all. No plan for some sites
2. Historic communities line the Kill Van Kull. Need greenway on waterfront – will create a “West Village” type of community. Park ? implemented
3. Community needs to be better informed that many of these things exist
4. Create/recreate vest-pocket parks using empty lots, etc. Multi-level parks, roofs of sewage plants
5. Need more small neighborhood parks – create greenways/bikeways to connect parks, island-wide network
6. Better defined active vs. passive for specific sites. For example, leave a woodland as a woodland rather than put in a bike trail
7. Park hill has no parks for children, no bathrooms: Florence Simple Park
8. Restoration of degraded areas – how to decide what to do there. Look at any open space!
9. North Shore Waterfront Greenbelt Park (Blissenbach Marina) needs to be implemented to restore North Shore
10. Working with local neighborhoods to take “ownership” of their parks
11. Create an overall survey via Community Boards, civic groups, etc. to identify both needs and places – abandoned buildings, lots. See Trust for Public Lands. Building permits could be used to fix these sorts of problems
12. Develop a better classification of green sites, island-wide, to inform needs assessments and decisions (active vs. passive)
13. Improve communications among parks and preservation groups and agencies. Make it seamless – city, state, national
14. Appropriate recreational opportunities for teenagers

Critical Question 1 SUMMARY:

1. ID and assessment of what the areas are for us and elected officials: vest parks vs. large ones vs. networks vs. recreational vs. open land
2. What are the key features of these areas?
3. Communication internally and externally
4. We are surrounded by water
5. Large parks vs. tiny parks – where to put money?

Critical Question 2:

How can we ensure continued funding for maintenance, improvement, and expansion of parks and recreation facilities?

1. Educate congressmen and elected officials about specific parks and activities, significances of the sites
2. Funding is essentially a political issue so community has to be involved – including kids, everyone. Sustained involvement. “It’s important to us – fund it and build it.”
3. Create a fund that could not be raided – real estate sales: 1.25% to city, 4% to state – for land acquisition. Maintenance uses conservancies and “friends of”
4. Grants and partnerships – YMCAs partner with parks (not in NYC) for programs. Can work on grants together
5. Build a constituency among people who will/may use parks. Build political constituencies
6. Secure more grants and partner with corporations vested in green initiatives; e.g. Toyota, Home Depot
7. Get people involved in their parks, cleaning up behind their children, do small fundraising projects – grassroots funding. Adopt-a-plot
8. Look at costs – budget for specific activities in parks and decide based on budget/cost of maintenance/ballfields vs. grass
9. Focus on health benefits for people and environment and tap into those grant sources
10. Look more closely at costs; inventory supplies, for example. Reuse and recycle! Standardize on equipment

Critical Question 2 SUMMARY:

1. Constituency building, politicos
2. Grants partnerships local and national
3. Assessment and evaluation of costs and activities at parks
4. Dedicated funds
5. Keep corporations and government separate. Muddies the issue. Privatizing the public arena

Implementation Recommendations:

Consider the draft vision statement, the ideas gathered from the public, and your group's discussion of critical questions. Please recommend two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps that you would recommend to help Staten Island achieve its vision for your topic.

1. Compile summaries and run ideas past elected officials and agencies such as city planning, CBs
2. Series of articles in media outlets and print media
3. Assess needs for Staten Island program vs. funding
4. Go see the Wizard!
5. To repair the parks in the North Shore. Stop cutting the money out in some neighborhoods
6. Put a bathroom in Lopez Park. We're doing a fitness program
7. Complete spatial assessment of existing facilities, natural features, programming, stewardship groups and partnerships (i.e. DCP studies, Oasis Map natural areas and StewMap all rolled into one)
8. Increase partnerships that can focus on increasing programming in existing parks to fill immediate needs
9. We must use our enormous resource of waterfront and waterfront access around the Island (we are an Island) specifically the North Shore along the Kill Van Kull in order to simply have a positive future.
10. People must feel they have a stake in and control of their environment. We need to attract people who will care for their (waterfront) parks because they are theirs
11. Implement a standardized assessment method for all parklands and classify the green space more descriptively
12. Partner with other constituents to secure larger grants. Train more grant writers
13. Evaluate costs of types of park facilities/functions and limit number of high cost facilities on a city-wide basis (gives political reps realistic discussion points to defend specific decisions regarding park space uses)
14. Maintain definition between active/passive uses of parks
15. The North Shore Waterfront Greenbelt and Greenway Trail along the Kill Van Kull will bring an economic, environmental, and cultural renaissance to Staten Island. This is now one of the most wasted waterfronts in the world. This would link the 51 Ferry with historic communities, cultural institutions, and historic sites; the Indian Burial etc. in West Brighton. This will bring people to visit and live here restoring our historic communities

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