

# Appendix D:

## *Additional Public Input Results*

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# I. Focus Groups

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## INTRODUCTION

PLANPGH will guide the process of making Pittsburgh an even better place to live, work, learn, play, and thrive over the next 25 years. The Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan (OpenSpacePGH) is a component of the City of Pittsburgh’s first ever comprehensive plan, and is one of the first two elements being addressed. OpenSpacePGH will define how Pittsburgh’s open spaces shape the urban form; identify the best use for vacant, green and recreational spaces; and describe how best to manage, program and maintain these lands.

OpenSpacePGH is organized into four phases, with each phase incorporating community outreach activities to incorporate the ideas and feedback of community constituents. As part of the outreach effort in the first phase of OpenSpacePGH, the planning team held a series of focus groups. These eight focus groups were designed to address several already known key issues related to open space, and to draw many of the people already thinking about each of these topics into the planning process. The eight focus group themes are described below, in alphabetical order.

- *Connectivity:* Getting around Pittsburgh has been an ongoing topic of discussion and action in recent years. The Connectivity focus group was convened to bring together people working to advance bicycle, pedestrian, and other non-motorized transportation modes to discuss the use of the City’s parks, open spaces, and vacant land for connectivity purposes; to increase the accessibility of the City and its residents to parks and recreation activities; and to help connect people to places to live, work, shop, and play.
- *Maintenance, Management, & Programming:* Many organizations are involved in managing, maintaining and incorporating programs and activities into Pittsburgh’s parks, open spaces, and land resources. This focus group was designed to discuss the maintenance of parks and open space resources; the management of parks, facilities, greenways, and vacant lots; and the programming of park and recreational facilities with activities, sports, special events, and recreational programs.
- *Natural Environment:* This group focused on the natural environment within Pittsburgh, including the utilization of vacant land and natural areas for stormwater management purposes; development and protection of steep slopes, hillsides, undermined areas, and landslide-prone soils; and the restoration and connection of habitat areas.
- *Re-Thinking Active Spaces:* Pittsburgh’s park system incorporates many traditional active park features, with an inventory of facilities that was designed for a population twice as great as today’s. The Active Spaces focus group included many of the groups using these popular and traditional elements, to discuss how active uses fit into spaces within the City, what needs exist, and where there may be new opportunities for athletic fields and other active recreational uses.

- *Re-Thinking Vacant Properties:* Throughout Pittsburgh, there are vacant lots and open space assets that are in passive use. The purpose of the Vacant Properties focus group was to begin looking at how to use this land resource most effectively, including reforestation or renaturalizing, incorporating temporary uses and solutions, land banking and economic development.
- *Riverfronts:* Pittsburgh is a river city. In recent years, a variety of groups and advocates have been working to reorient the focus of Pittsburgh’s riverfronts. The Riverfronts focus group was a forum to discuss open space and recreational topics for the City’s rivers and riverfronts, including recreational uses (such as boating, kayaking, biking, and walking), how to create economic benefit to the City from riverfront development of parks and recreation facilities, and flood control measures that could occur in the open spaces along the rivers.
- *Special Populations:* For this focus group, special populations included people with disabilities, children and associated child development and play issues, and older adults/the elderly. The Special Populations focus group explored how these populations interact with the City’s park, open space, and recreation areas and how to reconfigure public spaces to better meet their needs.
- *Urban Agriculture and Gardening:* This focus group explored how vacant and underutilized lands can be used for urban agriculture and gardening purposes throughout the City, including crop production, biofuel generation, animal husbandry, apiaries, and individual floral, and vegetable, and plant gardens.

## OVERVIEW OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

The focus groups were scheduled in March, May and July 2010, at locations throughout Pittsburgh. Each focus group was structured to include introductions, a brief description of the overall PLANPGH project and the OpenSpacePGH planning process, a facilitated group discussion to consider both overarching and topic-specific questions, an around- the-table opportunity for participants to provide final thoughts, and a brief overview of next steps in the planning process. Section A includes the invitee and attendee lists for each focus group. Section B includes the agendas and discussion questions developed for each focus group, and Section C includes detailed notes from each group.

## FOCUS GROUP COMMON THEMES

Several comments cross-cut the focus group discussions, representing commonalities among the eight theme areas.

Open space, parks and recreation was highlighted during each of the focus groups as the cornerstone of quality of life and health and wellness. A common topic within all of the focus groups was discussion about the need for a unified vision or plan that presents an overall concept for parks, open space and green infrastructure, addresses multiple objectives, and provides for equity. OpenSpacePGH should fulfill this role.

Each of the focus groups included discussion of the riverfronts and Pittsburgh’s topography as being key signatures of Pittsburgh that define the character of the city. These should be emphasized within the

open space system, including the development of connections from neighborhoods to these signature places as well as the reservation and enhancement of the city’s steps. Focus group participants of all backgrounds also emphasized the need for greater connectivity throughout the city, from a broad-based perspective that considers transportation, ADA accessibility, habitat, geographical linkages, equity and other views of connectivity.

Multiple participants in each of the focus groups discussed the diversity of government entities, organizations, and individuals who are moving projects and visions ahead. The role for the City, identified across most of the focus groups, is to bring these efforts together and facilitate change. On a similar theme, participants remarked on the need for more streamlined policies and approval processes around use of land and implementation of projects to make it easier for people to implement creative and community-supported ideas. Multiple examples were given in the different focus groups about how current approvals are hindering community efforts.

Finally, all of the focus groups included a discussion of financial resources, or the lack thereof, and the need for long term stewardship of open space and park resources.

Looking at the individual focus group summaries in Section C, one can see that each of these groups had a wealth of ideas to share around their specific theme. Of corresponding importance is the observation that, while these groups were organized around specific themes, there was consistent cross-pollination and awareness of broader community issues among participants. For example, the Special Populations focus group discussed accessibility for people with mobility constraints, and so did any other groups, including the Connectivity group that specifically called out ADA accessibility as critical. These focus groups demonstrated that while people in Pittsburgh devote time to projects and issues they feel strongly about, they also are attuned to broader communitywide concerns and value integration and cross-disciplinary problem-solving.

## Section A: Focus Group Invitees and Attendees

This appendix includes lists of invitees and attendees for each focus group. Attendees are indicated in bold text.

### Connectivity

**Joy Abbott**

Chuck Alcorn

Terri Baltimore

**Tom Baxter**

**Christine Berger**

David Biber

Linda McKenna Boxx

Sean Brady

Scott Bricker

Andrew Butcher

Moses Carper

Erin Copeland

Ruth Ann Dailey

Department of City Planning  
Riverlife Task Force

Friends of the Riverfront  
Mayor’s Office

Bike Pittsburgh  
GTech

**Andrew Dash**

**Joyce Driben**

Megan Driscoll

Janie French

Mike Gable

Debra Gibson

David Hance

Hannah Hardy

**Noor Ismail**

Chris Koch

Louis Liss

Ilyssa Manspeizer

Richard Meritzer

Stephen Patchan

Chris Popovic

John Radcliffe

Susan Rademacher

Catherine Rassman

**Patrick Roberts**

**Dan Sentz**

**Dick Skrinjar**

Department of City Planning  
Blind Outdoor Leisure Activities  
Riverlife Task Force

Department of Public Works

Department of City Planning  
GTech

Mount Washington CDC  
Department of City Planning

Allegheny Cycling Association

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Department of City Planning  
Department of City Planning  
CitiParks

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Ron Porter, RDP Consulting

**Maintenance, Management and Programming**

**Joy Abbott**

**Chuck Alcorn**

**Alida Baker**

**Susan Bassett**

**Tom Baxter**

John Buck

Don Coffelt

**Andrew Dash**

**Megan Driscoll**

**Mike Gable**

**Jim Griffin**

**Phil Gruszka**

**Noor Ismail**

**Rebekah Keating**

**Nancy Knauss**

Ilyssa Manspiezer

Mike Radley

**Representative**

**Dan Sentz**

Department of City Planning  
Riverlife Task Force

Allegheny Commons

Carnegie Mellon University

Friends of the Riverfront

CDC, Inc.

Carnegie Mellon University

Department of City Planning

Riverlife Task Force

Department of Public Works

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

Department of City Planning

Mount Washington CDC

Penn State Cooperative Extension

Mount Washington CDC

CitiParks

CitiParks

Department of City Planning

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Ryan Mottau, MIG, Lauren Schmitt, MIG, Ron Porter, RDP Consulting

## Natural Environment

### Joy Abbott

Lena Andrews  
 Andrew Baechle  
 Dan Bain  
 Darlene Batko  
 Sue Baumgart  
 Tom Baxter  
 Christine Berger  
 Jim Bonner  
 Fred Brown  
 Danielle Crumrine

Department of City Planning  
 Bike Pittsburgh

Friends of the Riverfront  
 Mayor's Office

### Andrew Dash

Matthew Erb  
 Grant Ervin  
 Janie French  
 Mike Gable  
 Don Gibbon  
 Debra Gibson  
 Kim Graziani  
 Phil Gruszka

Department of City Planning  
 Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest  
 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania

Department of Public Works

### Noor Ismail

Todd Katzner  
 Barton Kirk  
 Roy Kraynyk  
 Louis Liss  
 Robert McKinley  
 Ilyssa Manspeizer  
 Mike Masiuk  
 Andrew Maul

Mayor's Office  
 Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy  
 Department of City Planning

Allegheny Land Trust

Jan Oliver  
 Susan Rademacher  
 Mike Radley  
 Catherine Rassman  
 John Schombert  
 Dan Sentz  
 Dick Skrinjar  
 Brenda Smith  
 Matthew Smuts  
 Student Conservation Assoc  
 Christopher Tracey

Mount Washington CDC  
 Penn State Cooperative Extension

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy  
 CitiParks  
 Department of City Planning

Judy Wagner  
 Nathan Wildfire  
 Arleta Scott Williams

Department of City Planning  
 CitiParks

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
 East Liberty Development, Inc.

### Consultant Team Attendees:

Tracy Zinn, T&B Planning

## Re-Thinking Active Spaces

### Joy Abbott

OPENSPACEPGH

Department of City Planning

**Chuck Alcorn**

**Alida Baker**

Fred Bonci

**Andrew Dash**

Randy Frankel

**Mike Gable**

Ralph Horgan

**Noor Ismail**

**Hank Jedema**

Erin Molchany

**Chris Popovic**

**Susan Rademacher**

Mike Radley

**Becky Reitmeyer**

Bob Reppe

**Dan Sentz**

**John Walluck**

Riverlife Task Force

Allegheny Commons

LaQuatra Bonci Landscape Architects

Department of City Planning

Squirrel Hill Baseball

Department of Public Works

Carnegie Mellon University

Department of City Planning

PGH Dynamo

PUMP

Allegheny Cycling Association

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

CitiParks

PGH Sports League, PUMP

Carnegie Mellon University

Department of City Planning

University of Pittsburgh

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Ryan Mottau, MIG, Lauren Schmitt, MIG, Robin Barber, T&B Planning

**Re-Thinking Vacant Properties**

**Joy Abbott**

**Malik Bankston**

Tom Bartnik

**Andrew Butcher**

Christine Berger

Don Carter

**Andrew Dash**

**Brandon Davis**

**Bethany Davidson**

Craig Dunham

**Matthew Erb**

**Grant Ervin**

**Carlos Gasca**

Elise Gatti

Court Gould

Kim Graziani

Janet Gunter

David Hance

**Ernie Hogan**

**Noor Ismail**

**Edward Jacob Jr.**

**Juliette Jones**

**Sallyann Kluz**

**Chris Koch**

Roy Kraynyk

Bonnie Laing

**Joe McCarthy**

**Ilyssa Manspiezer**

Department of City Planning

Kingsley Associates

Community Design Center of Pittsburgh

GTech

Mayor's Office

Carnegie Mellon University

Department of City Planning

PA House of Representatives

PCRG

Rubinoff Company

Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest

10,000 Friends of PA

Kingsley Associates

Carnegie Mellon University

Sustainable Pittsburgh

Mayor's Office

Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest

Perkins Eastman

PCRG

Department of City Planning

City of Pittsburgh, Finance Department

Pgh Food Forests

LK Architects

Gtech

Allegheny Land Trust

Hill District Consensus Group

Penn State Cooperative Extension

Mount Washington CDC

**Mike Masiuk**  
 Susan Rademacher  
**Dan Sentz**  
 Matthew Smuts  
 Rob Stephany  
 Michael Stern  
 Paul Svoboda  
**Judy Wagner**  
**William Waddell**

Penn State Cooperative Extension  
 Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy  
 Department of City Planning  
 Urban Redevelopment Authority  
 Urban Redevelopment Authority  
 Strata  
 Pennsylvania Senate  
 Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
 City of Pittsburgh, Finance Department

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Sally McIntyre, MIG, Ryan Mottau, MIG, Lauren Schmitt, MIG

**Riverfronts**

**Joy Abbott**  
**Chuck Alcorn**  
**Lena Andrews**  
 Ron Baraff  
**Tom Baxter**  
**Sean Brady**  
 Rick Brown  
**Andy Clientelle**  
**Andrew Dash**  
 JD Fogarty  
 Kathy Frankel  
 Mike Gable  
 Debra Gibson  
**Noor Ismail**  
 Jason Kobeda  
 Suzanne Krug  
 Louis Liss  
**Robert McKinley**  
 Russ Peterson  
 Shayna Pitt  
**Ollie Poppenberg**  
 Catherine Rassman  
 Mark Schiller  
**Dan Sentz**  
**Dick Skrinjar**  
 Doug Straley  
 Andrew Talento

Department of City Planning  
 Riverlife Task Force  
 Bike Pittsburgh  
 Friends of the Riverfront  
 Department of City Planning  
 Department of Public Works  
 Department of City Planning  
 Sports and Exhibition Authority  
 Gateway Clipper Fleet  
 Allegheny Clean Way  
 Riverquest  
 Three Rivers Rowing  
 Department of City Planning  
 Department of City Planning  
 CitiParks

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Ron Porter, RDP Consulting

**Special Populations**

**Joy Abbott**  
 Victoria Campbell

Department of City Planning

Rory Cooper  
**Andrew Dash**  
 Dee Delaney  
**Joyce Driben**  
 Diane Gallegher  
 Amy Hart  
 Liz Healey  
 Fran Jolly

Department of City Planning  
 Blind Outdoor Leisure Activities

**Noor Ismail**  
**Mara Kaplan**  
 Chaz Kellem  
 Louis Liss  
 Rich McGann

Department of City Planning  
 Let Kids Play

**Richard Meritzer**  
 Anne Nalepa  
 Chris Noschese  
 Catherine Rassman  
 Donald Rhoten  
 Ron Ruppen

Department of City Planning

**Eva Simms**  
**Dick Skrinjar**  
**Lucy Spruill**

Department of City Planning

Duquesne University, Child Psychology  
 CitiParks  
 United Cerebral Palsy of Pittsburgh

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Ron Porter, RDP Consulting

**Urban Agriculture and Gardening**

**Joy Abbott**  
**Rob Baran**  
 Greg Boulos  
 Andrew Butcher  
 Christine Berger  
**John Creasy**  
**Andrew Dash**  
 Carlos Gasca  
 Kim Graziani  
 Meredith Meyer Grelli  
 Kim Graziani  
 Noor Ismail

Department of City Planning  
 East End Food Co-op  
 PASA  
 GTech  
 Mayor's Office  
 Garfield Farm  
 Department of City Planning  
 Kingsley Associates  
 Mayor's Office  
 Burgh Bees  
 Mayor's Office  
 Department of City Planning  
 Department of City Planning  
 Mildred's Daughters Urban Farm  
 Gtech  
 Penn State University  
 Penn State Cooperative Extension  
 Pittsburgh Poultry Association  
 Penn State Cooperative Extension  
 Pennsylvania Senate  
 Grow Pittsburgh  
 HOP (Humane Options Pittsburgh)  
 Rosedale Block Cluster, Inc.

**Jason Kambitsis**  
**Barb Kline**  
**Chris Koch**  
 Heather Mikulas  
**Joe McCarthy**  
**Christopher McGuigan**  
 Mike Masiuk  
 Mikhail Pappas  
**Julie Pezzino**  
**Rebecca Reid**  
 Rosedale Block Cluster, Inc.

Claire Schoyer  
**Lee Scott**  
**Dan Sentz**  
**Jasneet Sharma**  
**Leah Smith**  
**Jana Thompson**  
**Judy Wagner**  
Nathan Wildfire

Landslide Farm  
Garfield Community Farm  
Department of City Planning  
Katz School, University of Pittsburgh  
PASA  
Northside resident  
Western Pennsylvania Conservancy  
East Liberty Development, Inc.

**Consultant Team Attendees:**

Sally McIntyre, MIG, Ryan Mottau, MIG, Lauren Schmitt, MIG

**Section B: Agendas**

Agendas and key questions developed for each focus group are contained in the following Section.

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## Section C: Detailed Summaries

### CONNECTIVITY

**July 6, 2010**

Focus group participants attending the Connectivity focus group want a priority of thought and resources given to the parks, trails, waterways and vacant land in Pittsburgh to create and parks, recreation and open space system that is:

- Widely used and accessible
- High quality
- An economic generator
- A model system of parks, recreation and open space that is recognized internationally

A holistic, green approach should be used to achieve connectivity.

#### Key Issues Related to Connectivity

Key issues related to connectivity and open space include:

- Bikes/auto conflicts in shared right-of-way
- Major gaps in connectivity
- Hub-type public transit system is inefficient for riders
- Some routes are unpleasant, e.g., too close to traffic, dying streams, ugly
- Separation of recreation and transportation; e.g., incomplete and underfunded Rack and Roll
- Inadequate maintenance
- Inadequate consideration of ADA accessibility
- Spread of invasive species (insects, fish, plants)
- Deer and geese issues
- Slow implementation of green stormwater management strategy
- Low hanging fruit has been picked and future projects may be challenging to implement
- No “big idea” that links all park resources – park system has not been effectively united in practice or concept

#### Priorities for Increased Connectivity

The following are priority improvements for increasing connectivity:

- Safety
- Choice
- Signage
- Simplicity
- Maintenance
- Aesthetics

Additional improvements noted included:

- Provide safe routes to school using parks
- Complete river corridors and connections to riverfront
- Connect Oakland with zero infringement on natural environments
- Create destination points
- Provide safe, well marked access
- Support recreational events related to transportation, e.g., car free day, bike ride through city
- Ecological, holistic approach to connectedness

### **Topographical Challenges**

Participants had the following comments regarding considering Pittsburgh’s challenging topography as we improve connectivity:

- Consider railroads which are more challenging than rivers
- Create connections from bridges to trails
- View topography an asset, adding character to the city
- Restore and make use of pedestrian stairs up hillsides
- Create a theme around the attractiveness of Pittsburgh topography
- Develop the least invasive approach, producing the least amount of carbon dioxide and fostering good stewardship of the future

### **Approach to the Comprehensive Plan**

The following should be considered as the City develops its comprehensive plan:

- Pittsburgh is a city within a park and surrounded by a park
- Open space should be starting point for City planning and design, and be well integrated with transportation and urban design
- The comprehensive plan should “look over the horizon” to consider economic, social, demographic, and scientific challenges that may arise
- The Plan should document and publicize benefits to diverse community constituents to enhance buy-in
- The economic benefits of open space should be acknowledged
- The allocation of scarce resources should be prioritized to achieve maximum benefit

## **MAINTENANCE, MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING**

**March 18, 2010**

Maintenance, Management and Programming focus group participants want a comprehensive plan that creates a green future for the City and provides a wide variety of enjoyable amenities and programs. As part of this vision, the future parks and recreation system will be adequately funded and improvements will be prioritized. Recognizing past successes and disappointments, participants identified a number of challenges faced to create a successful future for parks, recreation and open space in Pittsburgh.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan**

Maintenance, Management and Programming participants defined a successful open space, parks, and recreation plan as one that:

- Thinks about stormwater and surfaces for all types of locations (vacant land, trails, etc.)
- Provides aesthetic and enjoyable amenities
- Includes green infrastructure
- Encourages habitat and biodiversity
- Includes design standards for landscape and amenities
- Fosters good communication among multiple groups
- Has consistent signage
- Decreases visual competition
- Identifies funding sources and prioritizes improvements
- Provides for maintenance
- Utilizes university volunteers

- Identifies funding sources for volunteer transportation and materials

### **Greatest Successes**

Maintenance, Management and Programming participants identified the greatest successes in the last five years for open space, parks, and recreation as:

- Schenley Plaza
- Maintenance, programs, aesthetics
- Bike trails and riverfront trails
- City has dedicated pedestrian/bike coordinator
- Litter pick-up
- Tree education, awareness and tree canopy
- Specific dedicated funding for trees in public spaces
- Building partnerships
- Increasing communication between organizations
- City's greenway program
- Allegheny Commons Park

### **Missed Opportunities/Biggest Disappointments**

According to participants, the greatest disappointments were:

- Building it and walking away
- Lack of consistency in staffing
- Mellon Park
- Lack of park security
- No sports complex
- Potential loss of green space in Hays Woods
- Green space is undervalued
- More dog parks and irresponsible dog owners
- Park visitors can be disrespectful of other users, but no policing available
- Need to be comprehensive in our management and development of facilities
- Lack of resources for dealing with blighted areas

### **Challenges**

The following were identified as the biggest challenges facing parks, recreation and open space:

- Engaging a broad spectrum of the community
- Educating residents on the health benefits of active living
- Preventing traffic congestion in neighborhoods where there is a desirable facility
- Providing transit connections and bicycle facilities
- Relying on motor vehicles for transportation
- Negotiating with unions
- Duplicating facilities
- Considering regional and non-city resources
- Providing swimming opportunities
- Addressing challenging topography
- Engaging a strong environmental community
- Negotiating with developers who benefit from parks and recreation's contributions to economic development
- Involving the university community, such as the Penn State master naturalist program

- Increasing security, such as a parks ranger program
- Reinventing recreation centers to increase participation
- Providing accessible information on recreation resources
- Obtaining adequate funding
- Applying the Schenley Plaza model to smaller neighborhood/community parks
- Creating a sports commission
- Expanding recreation programs
- Engaging the school district
- Incorporating natural areas into the school curriculum
- Collaborating with school to create facilities
- Expanding community gardens and urban farming
- Creating flexible and coordinated recreation programs
- Developing park advocates
- Reducing the size of roadways in the City to create complete streets
- Providing excellent maintenance and stewardship
- Managing deer
- Addressing the issue of quantity vs. quality
- Evaluating resources strategically citywide, not by neighborhood
- Promoting connections and access
- Addressing vacant lands and distressed areas
- Preserving and utilizing City steps
- Building a sports complex (Larimer / Ltd site 2nd Ave)
- Having a plan rather than reacting with a plan for funding

## **NATURAL ENVIRONMENT**

**July 13, 2010**

Natural Environment focus group participants want a comprehensive plan that builds on past successes and expands green spaces in the City. The Plan should support restoration of ecological health, improve connectivity, and protect and restore habitat. The City should focus on the ecosystem services provided by open space as it plans for infrastructure needs. Pittsburgh's goal should be to achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability. To a large part, this effort will depend on informing and involving residents of all ages to build an understanding of the importance of the environment and to enhance stewardship.

### **Defining Natural Areas**

Natural areas were defined by this group as:

- Terrestrial systems and the rivers
- Ridge to River continuum (natural complement to the iconic view of the built environment in the Golden Triangle)
- Larger land and river areas that support ecosystems that are undisturbed by development (large parks, greenways, protected areas)
- Air and sky
- Private natural areas
- Nature; biodiversity; animals
- Not a pristine wilderness due to human impact
- Geology/soils
- Flora, fauna, and the soils and water on which they are based
- Acoustic environment / noise level

### Successful Plan

Participants thought that a successful Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan should do the following for the City:

- Implemented by the City and accepted by stakeholders
- Defines users, and their desires and needs
- Matches with reality and budget
- Protects quality open space
- Provides more greenspace than we already have
- Incorporates adjacent vacant land into existing open space
- Reduces the intrusion of vehicles into the open space, removes concrete/asphalt and expands green spaces, i.e., removes old playgrounds, parking lots, old swimming pools
- Promotes development where want it and protect greenspace elsewhere through Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) incentives. (Note that the City does not currently have TDR for open space, but does have it for historic structures Downtown)
- Identifies and articulates the City's pattern and natural assets
- Protects natural areas with common sense and visionary ways – out of the box ideas
- Is prescriptive, not just descriptive
- Defines objectives but doesn't necessarily give details to inspire creative thinking
- Transcends politics to inspire leadership not subject to the whim of politicians
- Includes measurable results and accountability

### Greatest Successes

According to participants, the greatest successes for open space, parks, and recreation in the last five years were:

- Nine Mile Run (NMR) stream restoration
- Parks Conservancy
- MWDCDC – Emerald View park
- Hillside Study
- Policies and support of the City
- East Liberty Development (ELDI) and Green Vision Plan doing urban renewal that considers open space, green infrastructure, community needs, etc.
- Friends of the Riverfront – creating launches for boats; physical restorations
- “Redding Up” – accountability and responsibility for caring for the environment –provided focus
- The trail system
- Increased Awareness of why natural environment is important
- The URA recognizing the value of green and building that into their model as they go forward
- Riverlife Taskforce and Venture Outdoors bringing people back to the rivers for recreational activities
- Cooperation and planning between organizations

### Missed Opportunities/Greatest Disappointments

According to participants, the greatest disappointments were:

- Cycle/consideration of funding loss – RAD funding frustrations and working with Public Works
- Communication issues related to view preservation, e.g., Keating; Mt. Washington CDC
- Lack of litter law enforcement

- Casino construction only did bare minimum regarding trails, green infrastructure approaches, etc
- Impacts of development
- Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) smell along rivers
- Loss of Frick Park Environmental Center

### **Meeting Environmental Goals**

When asked how well the current open space, parks and recreation system does in helping Pittsburgh meet its natural environment goals, participants had the following comments:

- Current open spaces are not ecologically healthy
- A lot of the parks are not “green” – only recreational
- Not every trail can be pristine; there’s a uniqueness to urban recreation that should be allowed, but other places need to be improved
- Need for more connectivity between green spaces and transportation
- Ecological functionality can be improved with habitat connections; however don’t connect degraded areas to pristine areas (Japanese knotweed, raccoons preying on songbirds, etc.)
- Consider ecological improvements to the Golden Triangle – rooftops provide opportunity (have green value – don’t need to be just wasted space)
- Provide more trails for quality of life experience (running, biking, rollerblading)
- Improvements are not necessarily orderly

### **Partnerships**

Participants identified the following ways to use partnerships to advance the preservation and management of the natural environment or to expand programming:

- Avoid duplication of efforts
- Connect with educational systems and universities
- Partnerships that aren’t so obvious, i.e., Bike Pittsburgh and Friends of the Urban Forest working together to promote trees/traffic calming
- More collaboration with utilities, stormwater, Duquesne Light, gas line management of rights of way, railroads, greening areas along those ROWs to create connections between places
- Corporations that would benefit from natural assets provided to their employees
- PennDOT for stormwater and wetland mitigation sites
- Work with schools (ecology partnerships) to count birds, etc.
- Alcosan and PWSA – developing wet weather plan and looking for sites for facilities; need green infrastructure approach
- Develop a Park Partners program
- Evaluate where funding could be put to best use by organizations and to create equity

### **Geographic Areas That Need Improvement**

The geographic areas with the greatest potential benefit to improve the natural environment were identified as:

- Hazelwood
- Use URA funding on the riverfront
- Fairywood
- Hays Woods
- Areas not publicly held but still provide spaces for recreation
- Areas identified in the 1994 WPC Allegheny County Natural Heritage Inventory

- Reduce road-width citywide
- Greenways distributed throughout the City
- Aging infrastructure areas

### **Stormwater Management**

Participants noted the following ways that the open space and parks system could be used for managing stormwater:

- Use vacant lots for stormwater management
- Use all green space as part of the stormwater system
- Provide best practices for stormwater management in the plan
- Develop a geographically distributed system to deal with stormwater
- Provide green infrastructure along trails and use permeable pavement
- Provide breaks in impervious pavement to infiltrate runoff and reduce impervious space
- Use replacement opportunities, e.g., when a trail or playground needs to be repaved, do it with permeable pavement
- Incorporate green infrastructure requirements in development agreements
- Analyze watersheds by flood issues and prioritize areas of improvement (floods and highest volume of sewer overflows)
- Look across boundaries – for example boundary between Greentree Borough and City
- Recognize that cobble/brick streets aren't better than blacktop except for historical value

### **Areas Without Natural Area Opportunities**

Participants identified the following areas as places that lack opportunities to interact with the natural environment:

- Lack of riverfront access (for example Lawrenceville and the Strip District)
- Inequity in distribution of resources in the City (quality of interaction with the environment)
- Overgrowth of invasive species along stairs
- Hill District – scrub over vacant lots in many cases isn't natural environment
- Recognize the resource provided by city steps
- Improve park access and safety
- Opportunities exist, but the quality of natural areas needs improvement

### **Highest Priorities**

When asked what the highest priority opportunities were to improve the natural environment, participants identified the following:

- Address City infrastructure needs to accommodate current and future population
- Protect our open space; you can always get some land back for development in the future if overprotected now, but it's much harder to get open space back after it is developed
- Provide better maintenance
- Provide better allocation of resources, e.g., closing underused schools
- Plant more trees (have old trees but not many young ones)
- Address collapse of populations – emerald ash, black locust, black cherry trees
- Manage deer issues which prevent native species from growing
- Hire a City ecologist
- Be a squeaky wheel
- Prioritize building river trail or conserving hundreds of acres of green space, recognizing that river trails are expensive

- Require developers to provide open space and recreation space to meet BOTH created and existing demand (more than they are now)

## RE-THINKING ACTIVE SPACES

March 18, 2010

Re-thinking Active Spaces focus group participants want to maximize the number of residents who participate in active recreation. By providing a financially sustainable system of parks and open spaces, including both close-to-home and accessible centralized recreation facilities and activities, residents can achieve physical, social, emotional and spiritual health.

### What Works

The following were identified as the greatest successes for open space, parks and recreation in Pittsburgh:

- Schenley Oval
- Paddler community planning
- Park facility improvements
- Field lighting improvements
- Permitting process that helps eliminate undesirable use
- The riverfront trails and trail system within parks
- Maintenance improvements
- User groups that help maintain facilities
- Connectivity and access
- “Parks are Free” website

### What’s Missing/Needed

The following active space needs were identified:

- Sports fields
- Better sports field management
- Upgrading the sports field quality
- Field space for emerging sports, e.g., Ultimate Frisbee
- Multi-use fields
- Coach training and clearance
- Animal control
- Trail maintenance
- Basic park amenities
- Restrooms
- Recreation centers located throughout the city
- Ways to incorporate vacant properties to meet identified needs
- Nearby green space and facilities
- Transportation access
- Equitable resources
- Sustainable open space and parks
- Balance of specialized facilities
- Consolidated information source
- Improved signage
- Safe play spaces
- Access for diverse residents

- Funding for program ideas
- Bike parking
- Bike sharing

### **Defining Active Spaces**

Participants defined active spaces as parks and open space that encourages an active life. These accessible spaces have few barriers, and may include a diversity of elements, such as:

- Trails/steps
- Sports fields
- Dog parks
- Outdoor amphitheatres
- Fountains for social gathering and ice skating
- Space accessible with few barriers
- Informal play opportunities
- Programs/activities
- Community gardens

### **Quality and Quantity**

Participants raised the following issues when asked where the balance of quality vs. quantity should fall:

- Residents, especially those of low incomes, have access and transportation issues to reach centralized facilities
- Trail connections are key to successful centralized facilities
- Neighborhood-based facilities create parking issues and the size of neighborhood parks can't accommodate many facilities
- Neighborhood-based parks and facilities must be well distributed
- A mix of dedicated fields and more accessible multi-use fields is a successful blend
- Preservation of natural areas must be achieved along with the accommodation of more active uses

## **RE-THINKING VACANT LAND**

**May 26, 2010**

Participants in the Re-thinking Vacant Land focus group contributed many ideas for projects that would make better use of existing vacant properties. Participants wanted shorter City approval time to facilitate the many community-driven projects and ideas. They identified policies that the City should consider in rethinking vacant land as well as potential funding sources for projects.

### **A Successful Plan**

Participants identified the following as evidence of success in rethinking vacant land in Pittsburgh:

- Shorter approval time for projects
- Harness community efforts
- Clear process
- Connectivity and support for the emerging cycling city concept
- Connect with the rivers
- A full array of green assets for all
- The greenways preserved and expanded
- Recognize that not all projects work

- Adequate maintenance
- An ongoing dialogue with residents

### Potential Policies

The following policies should be considered when rethinking vacant land:

- Develop green stormwater management practices
- Unleash developer creativity
- Mandate salvage of materials
- Utilize “reorganizing” vs. the term “right sizing” which provokes fear
- Educate residents about what makes a successful neighborhood and how density helps
- Capture the neighborhood visions
- Recognize the opportunity to grow neighborhood assets and increase livability
- Provide interim zoning for temporary or experimental uses
- Integrate City and neighbors’ efforts
- Recognize the value of natural and unmanicured landscape
- Make vacant properties easier to acquire
- Maintain historical/cultural resources
- Consider all costs/benefits and think systematically about what is missing from neighborhoods, considering existing jobs, connectivity, and ecology, etc.

### Funding

The following ideas were generated for funding re-use projects:

- Develop a building green bond
- Connect the future economic benefit to those who will benefit
- Identify land that should be on tax rolls
- Expand the regional asset district (RAD)
- Utilize parks conservation/supporting organizations
- Use Urban Renewal Agency funds
- Initiate a pervious surface tax

### Potential Projects

The following reuses should be considered:

- Urban agriculture
- Needs fertile land
- No building/foundation on property
- Water sheds/ green stormwater
- Restoration opportunity
- Appropriate location
- Greenway
- Steep
- Unbuildable
- Consolidate properties adjacent to existing greenways
- Develop a typology of green spaces and assign priority levels for implementation
- Reevaluate whether current parks and other public facilities, such as schools, are appropriately located.
- Green and consolidate properties, e.g., expand vacant school properties, – some will be developed in the future as larger tracts are needed

- Create a repurposing center
- Relocate housing to support a business district
- Address mini-brownfields, learning from industrial experience
- Provide additional systems within existing ROW
- Be open to community generated ideas

## **RIVERFRONTS**

### **July 8, 2010**

The Riverfronts focus group attendees believed that Pittsburgh’s riverfronts should be embraced regionally and nationally by citizens for the benefits they provide:

- Quality of life (health and recreation from walking, running, cycling and boating)
- A unique City identity (three rivers within the city)
- Attractiveness to people (appeal to large diversity of people)

Participants felt that the City should continue to be fiscally responsible while making greater use of the riverfronts.

### **OpenSpacePGH**

An effective OpenSpacePGH for the City of Pittsburgh would:

- Align conservation, preservation and development around one set of principles/common theme
- Provide open space opportunity/access for all
- Connect people to the natural amenities – rivers, parks and trails
- Clearly align the mission of the City and nonprofits
- Emphasize the City’s unique qualities and the recreational aspect of rivers as a major part of the City’s identity
- Identify unique and creative financing and maintenance strategies
- Recognize the importance of riverfronts as ecological habitat

### **Missed Opportunities/Greatest Disappointments**

In the past five years, the greatest disappointment for open space, parks and recreation has been:

- Lack of input – “two vertical sea walls which prevents the waves from dissipating”
- Difficulty in scheduling events due to need for multiple approvals, ie., Exhibition Authority, Steelers, Pitt Football, Pirates
- Lack of parking availability – especially on the Northside
- Extremely slow progress of development
- Railroad right of ways
- Gaps in trail system
- Lack of detours for trail closures

### **Greatest Successes**

According to participants, the greatest successes of past riverfront efforts have been:

- Volunteer efforts for clean-ups
- Trail system
- Riverfront events
- State/foundation funding support

- Top three locations in the country for boat registration/licensing
- Dedicated bike/pedestrian bridges
- Well-done housing development
- Water quality improvements

### **Advancing Past Efforts**

According to participants, the OSPR Plan can best advance the past efforts to enhance Pittsburgh's waterfront by:

- Filling in gaps (trails, monosite, Carrie furnace)
- Identifying maintenance strategies for public and private open spaces
- Obtaining financial support from multiple government and private resources
- Getting more public input
- Beautifying the riverfront through urban design
- Considering the riverfront and open spaces early in all planning processes
- Giving the riverfront area high priority for improvements
- Boosting economic development
- Identifying new launch locations for water transit
- Focusing on the quantity and quality of riverfront vegetation
- Educating the public about natural plantings and native species
- Connecting neighborhoods to riverfronts
- Repairing locks which are in disrepair, preventing easy access to the City
- Incorporating the study of rivers within school curriculum to foster an appreciation and understanding of the rivers and their roles in the lives of residents
- Be a model for green strategies

### **Areas Needing Additional Attention**

Riverfront areas that need additional attention include:

- Identify additional areas of the riverfront that is suitable for development
- Maintain trails
- Upgrade the sewer system
- Implement green strategies for stormwater management
- Consider stricter waterway preservation policies to lead the way as role models in riverfront preservation
- Clean the water as the City once cleaned the air
- Improve the North/East bank of the Ohio River

### **Support for Economic Development**

The riverfront improvements or programming that would support economic development, recreation, environmental, or health and wellness efforts are:

- Recognize Allegheny Cleanways' role in removing a significant amount of debris and litter from riverfronts
- Expand Kayak Pittsburgh's kayak rental service
- Recognize the role of riverfront amenities in attracting businesses to the community
- Incorporate the river into the physical education curriculum of downtown schools via kayaking, biking, and hiking
- Explore riverfront docking as a possible revenue source for the city

## Role of the City

According to participants, the role of the City of Pittsburgh in regards to the riverfronts, in relations to the other organizations, partners and agencies should be:

- Lobby for agencies' and organizations' needs
- Bring property owners together
- Develop zoning that protects the riverfronts, and supports development and full river utilization
- Expedite and facilitate planning processes
- Partner with nonprofits aggressively

## Other Needs

Other concerns that need to be addressed included:

- Consider modular docking (floating docks) to create boater access in multiple locations
- Create aesthetic docks and piers
- Prioritize demolition to facilitate park development

## Most Important Issues

Focus group participants identified the following as the most important issues facing the riverfront:

- Develop a riverfront master calendar and coordinated scheduling
- Showcase the City scenic appeal
- Zone for building and assuring riverfronts frame the City
- Convert vacant lots into open space systems
- Obtain funding for maintenance
- Preserve, protect and prudently advance the legacy that we have been handed
- Complete trail systems, providing connections to parks and communities
- Acknowledge the rivers as an eco-system

## SPECIAL POPULATIONS

July 14, 2010

The Special Populations focus group participants noted the need for universally designed parks and facilities that are accessible for the use and enjoyment of all residents. The particular needs of the elderly, and people with physical, sensory and mental disabilities, as well as other residents, such as veterans, small children, pet lovers, etc., should be considered. Participants expressed many ideas for modern, nature- driven, creative and accessible parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.

### Greatest Barriers

Participants noted that the greatest barriers to accessibility in Pittsburgh's parks and open spaces are lack of connectivity between parks and neighborhoods, as well as a lack of information about accessibility.

### Current Needs

The following is needed to improve accessibility in parks, recreation and open spaces:

- Accessible playgrounds
- Benches and tables
- Addressing the needs of special populations beyond wheelchair users, such as autistic children, seniors, etc.
- Information about access (maps, signage, web-based information, audible, large print)

- Accessible path of travel, e.g., wheelchair users cannot access the trail around Highland Park reservoir
- Major, multi-generational destination park
- Year-round destination water park
- Access to natural areas and trails
- Use of vacant land for gardens and recreation
- Financial support of private sector for improvements

### Simple Fixes

Several simple fixes were suggested to improve accessibility in parks, recreation and open spaces:

- Nature playgrounds
- Signage that includes accessibility information
- Enhance volunteerism
- Provide access information (e.g., hiking and biking maps)
- Address safety issues

## URBAN AGRICULTURE

May 26, 2010

Urban Agriculture focus group participants noted the variety of ways that agriculture can be incorporated into the urban environment. While a successful use of Pittsburgh's vacant land, the urban agriculture movement is hindered by difficulties in acquiring vacant land and securing liability insurance. More support from the City was desired to ensure success of Pittsburgh's many efforts in this area. With its many vacant properties, dedicated urban agriculture advocates, and many efforts already underway, Pittsburgh could be a nationwide leader in incorporating agriculture in the urban environment.

### Defining Urban Agriculture

Urban agriculture can take many forms in the City. Participants identified the following as potential urban agricultural endeavors:

- Large-scale, permanent farms
- Garden cooperatives
- Patchwork farming
- Network of backyard gardens
- Community gardens
- On-site farm stands
- Back yard/front yard gardens
- Edible schoolyards
- Children's gardens
- Chicken co-op
- Bio-energy crops
- Intermediate products
- Composting
- Farmers markets
- Apiary/honey
- Small animal farming, e.g., goats
- Nursery, e.g., annuals, native plants, urban trees
- Greenhouses

- U-Pick
- Gleaning
- Fruit trees

### **Needed Improvements**

The following issues should be addressed to promote urban agriculture as a successful use of open space in Pittsburgh:

- Consider changing the policy that prohibits for-profit ventures on vacant land
- Make it easier to acquire the deed to vacant properties to put properties back on the tax rolls, e.g., how to acquire deeds of unknown owners
- Consider enacting a homesteading program
- Provide education on acquiring vacant properties
- Address soil contamination and soil building issues
- Provide education on how to revitalize demolished lots
- Promote raised-bed gardening which can help address poor soils and contamination
- Update the inventory of existing urban agriculture efforts
- Make informational resources available to the public, e.g., use Penn State Extension and on-line resources
- Eliminate federal and city restrictions, such as City restrictions on small animal ownership
- Institute a “right to farm” protocol
- Allow the use of food stamps to purchase products from urban farmers
- Ensure that low income and culturally diverse residents have education about and access to urban agricultural opportunities
- Enhance funding for urban agricultural endeavors
- Provide access to water
- Address the removal of invasive species
- Consider establishing an umbrella insurance policy for farming enterprises to address liability issues
- Utilize land banking to acquire vacant land
- Explore profit-sharing between the City and urban farmers on City-owned properties
- Develop a farming network to share expertise
- Establish a tool library Make Pittsburgh a leader in promoting urban agriculture

## 2. Adult Questionnaire Summary

### Introduction

PLANPGH will guide the process of making Pittsburgh an even better place to live, work, learn, play and thrive over the next 25 years. The Open Space, Parks and Recreation Plan is a component of the City of Pittsburgh's first ever comprehensive plan, and is one of the first two elements being addressed. The OSPR Plan will define how Pittsburgh's open spaces shape the urban form; identify the best use for vacant, green and recreational spaces; and describe how best to manage, program and maintain these lands.

The OSPR Plan is organized into four phases, with each phase incorporating community outreach activities to incorporate the ideas and feedback of community constituents. This report summarizes the findings of the Open Space PGH questionnaire for adults, which was developed by MIG, Inc.. The questionnaire made available to any member of the community an opportunity to provide feedback on existing park facilities and services, as well as input on their priorities for future improvements of open spaces, parks, recreation facilities and services.

MIG, Inc. and the City of Pittsburgh administered the questionnaire online using the City's PLANPGH.COM web page from the first week of July 2010 through the first week of September 2010. The questionnaire was advertised in City publications, through multiple electronic mail lists and social networking websites and news feeds. The City also made available paper questionnaires at community intercept events, presentations and community facilities.

The response to the questionnaire was high compared to similar exercises in other communities, with a return of 1,329 questionnaires. The large number of questionnaire returns gives the City a look at the priorities and ideas of a large number of residents, however the responses should not necessarily be considered representative of the City as a whole. The patterns here do provide insight into the desires of over 1,000 Pittsburgh residents and hundreds of other users of the park system. For the most part, responses showed the same patterns across age, gender, race/ethnicity and location within the city. However, in some cases differences have been identified in the summary results below.

This document presents key findings of the adult open space, parks and recreation questionnaire. A set of summary tables and a copy of the questionnaire (as distributed on paper) are included. Open ended responses are documented in Appendix A to this summary.

## Key Findings

### Demographics

- The majority of questionnaire respondents (55%) are between the ages 25 and 44. The percentage of respondents ages 25-34 is 35% with those ages 35-55 representing 20% of respondents. The age distribution is similar to the age characteristics of the City.
- The results included a slightly larger proportion of females, at 61%, than is shown by the latest census data. According to the 2006-08 ACS Demographics the City of Pittsburgh population is 53% female and 47% male. This is not uncommon in survey efforts.
- The majority of respondents (87%) identified their ethnicity/race as White, with only 8% identifying themselves as African American/Black. The questionnaire respondents underrepresent the racial/ethnic diversity of the City with 27% of the City's population being African American/Black and 67% White.
- The geographic distribution of questionnaire respondents is similar to the population distribution across the City. The eastern portion of the City has the highest response rate with 56% (with 52% of the City's population), the southwest rate of response 20% (with 32% of the population) and the northern area at 15% response (with 14% of the population).
- 78% of respondents identified themselves as living within Pittsburgh. Of the remaining 22% of respondents, most currently work or go to school within the City but live in a neighboring community. Only 1% of respondents identified themselves as visitors.

### Character and Identity

- When asked what is the most important in defining the identity of Pittsburgh as a whole, 47% selected 'our neighborhoods' and 20% selected 'the three rivers.' Cultural life, including the symphony, libraries and museums was indicated as more important than the three rivers by African American respondents.
- Respondents were also asked to identify the most important characteristic of their neighborhoods. Residential homes were identified by 27%, the local business district by 22%, the people and our local culture by 18% and parks and recreation facilities by 16%.

### Focus

- Well maintained parks are a high priority for Pittsburgh residents. When asked where the City should focus its efforts and rank its importance, park maintenance ranked the highest overall. A higher priority was placed on this response by female respondents.
- Among African American responses, maintenance was second to providing youth with positive ways to fill their time.
- Similar to maintenance, providing a city that is attractive to professionals, entrepreneurs and artists was highly ranked by all respondents.

## Satisfaction

- Respondents are generally satisfied with the level of park maintenance in Pittsburgh; 73% indicated that they are somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with the maintenance of parks near their home. 23% of respondents indicated that they are very satisfied.
- Of the general geographic regions, respondents living in the east were most satisfied with maintenance. Respondents living in the Golden Triangle were much less likely to report that they were very satisfied with the maintenance of parks near their home.
- African American responses show a lower satisfaction with the maintenance of parks near home. The total of somewhat and very satisfied is reduced to 48%.
- Male respondents across all ethnicity and locations in the city were less satisfied with maintenance than females.
- When asked to rate the recreation activities and programs provided by CityParks the majority of respondents are generally satisfied with the activities and programs provided: 37% of respondents rate them as excellent or very good, 30% rate them as satisfactory and 25% indicated they were not sure or not aware of what is offered.
- Younger respondents (under 35) responded 'not sure/don't know what is offered' at a much higher rate than older respondents.

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## Park Usage

- Parks near home are popular among respondents with 82% of those responding using these types of parks at least once a month or more.
- Of those indicating that they seldom use parks; difficulty in accessing parks (too far away; too difficult to get to), lack of desirable features and poor maintenance were the most often cited reasons. Many respondents indicated 'other' as well indicating a range of reasons from too busy to lacking specific facilities.
- In addition to parks close to home, the next most frequently used park facilities for respondents as a whole are trails, greenways, natural areas and woods. Frequent users (once a month or more) are 74% for greenways and natural areas and 73% for trails. Other frequently used facilities are the riverfront parks and trails with 68% and large regional /destination parks with 63%.
- Among African American responses, parks with special facilities and sports fields were used more than trails, greenways and natural areas.

## Open Space/Trails

- Respondents were asked to pick their highest priority stewardship; cleaning up toxic materials and illegal dumps ranked the highest with 29%, preventing pollution from reaching the rivers 24%, and restoring watersheds and creeks 18%. These responses were consistent across the city, ethnicity, age and gender.
- A wide variety of reasons for expanding the trail network were selected, with no clear front-runner. The reasons selected by respondent area as follows: experiencing nature 27%, exercising 21%, getting to other areas of the city 19%, and commuting to work or school 18%.

## Priorities

- When asked to identify the top two priorities for improvement, expansion of the trail network was identified by 23% of the respondents, followed by restore or protect creeks, forests and hillsides with 19%, and improve maintenance of existing parks and facilities 18%.
- Of these priorities, looking at the only the first priorities selected, expansion of the trails system was identified by 30%, improvement of existing parks and facilities 20%, and restore or protect creeks, forests and hillsides 15%.





### 3. Community Workshop Summary

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In an effort to gather information on parks and recreation projects that are most important to the community, the city conducted five community workshops over the course of a two week period in April and May of 2011. The workshops were geographically spread throughout the city. As part of the workshops, city staff and consultants facilitated groups of participants through a prioritization exercise in the form of a decision-making game.

The game was designed to help participants understand the challenge of funding projects with a limited amount of capital funds (for construction) and operations funds (for maintenance and staffing). The game also provided the project team the opportunity to gain valuable feedback from participants about their priorities. A variety of projects were presented in the game, reflecting the different preferences noted during the public involvement process and the different community needs noted in the *Needs Assessment and Suitability Analysis, March 2011*.

#### Participants

A total of 105 individuals participated in the workshop process. The number of participants by meeting location that turned in comment forms are as follows: (8) Brookline, (14) Greenfield, (20) Lawrenceville, (16) Mt. Washington, and (21) Northside. At each workshop participants were asked to provide some information about themselves. The response rate for this task varied from question to question

- **Area.** Of the 79 responses, 57 (72%) respondents indicated the area in which they live and 22 left their response blank. The most represented area of the city indicated by these results were Mt. Washington/Hilltop West and South Pittsburgh.
- **Age.** Of the 77 responses, the 51 participants indicated their age from 25-44 (66%).
- **Live/Work.** The majority of participants noted that they live and work in Pittsburgh.
- **Children.** Of the 75 responses, 54 (72%) had no children.
- **Ethnicity.** Of the 77 responses, 70 (91%) indicated they were White/Caucasian, with the rest of the responses distributed among the other choices.

## Project Priorities

As part the workshop, participants were asked to select the projects and funding based on the importance of the project to them as an individual and within a group. There were 18 capital projects and four operating cost savings projects to choose from. The top five selected projects by individual participants across all workshops are:

Project	Count	Percent
Multi-use Trail Network	63	80%
Reforestation	60	76%
Stormwater and Natural Drainage Systems	56	71%
Title Clearing	48	61%
Hiking Trails	46	58%

There were 12 group exercise responses, representing the projects generally agreed to during the group exercise. The top 5 group responses are:

Project	Count	Percent
Multi-use Trail Network	10	83%
Stormwater and Natural Drainage Systems	10	83%
Access & Equity Improvements	9	75%
Reforestation	9	75%
Urban Agriculture	8	67%

Looking at the individual participant project selections by workshop location, the three top ranked projects are as follows:

<b>Project</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Brookline	8	100%
Reforestation	6	75%
Off-Leash Dog Areas	5	63%
Neighborhood Parks	4	50%
Greenfield	14	100%
Multi-use Trail Network	13	93%
Stormwater and Natural Drainage Systems	13	93%
Reforestation	12	86%
Lawrenceville	20	100%
Stormwater and Natural Drainage Systems	17	85%
Reforestation	16	80%
Multi-use Trail Network	13	65%
Mt. Washington	16	100%
Multi-use Trail Network	14	88%
Reforestation	13	81%
Title Clearing	13	81%
Northside	21	100
Multi-use Trail Network	19	90%
Title Clearing	15	71%
Adventure Recreation	15	71%

## Capital and Operations Choices

The project selections summarized above were each offered with a corresponding capital and operation costs (or cost savings in some cases). These reference figures, based on assumptions developed by the consulting team from actual costs and savings in Pittsburgh and other communities, helped participants connect public spending implications to their decisions as they were considering them. When working individually, participants varied widely in the number and total cost of projects. The total package of projects selected by each individual ranged from nearly all of the potential projects to only a small set of low cost options. The average total package costs are presented below.

Cost Type	Average Total
Capital	\$202,369,620
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$5,183,228

The averages of individual results by workshop location varies.

Cost Type	Average Total
Brookline	
Capital	\$185,426,875
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$(4,553,125)
Greenfield	
Capital	\$193,724,286
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$925,000
Lawrenceville	

<sup>1</sup> Participants were offered choices that added cost as well as projects that could reduce the operating cost of the system. The overall average came out on the cost savings side of this balance; negative numbers (in parentheses) indicate additional operating costs.

Capital	\$161,156,500
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$8,052,500
Mt. Washington	
Capital	\$235,007,188
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$7,096,875
Northside	
Capital	\$228,971,429
Operations Savings <sup>1</sup>	\$7,540,476

For the group exercise, results reflect the responses that represent a general consensus. Group results of this exercise also varied, but generally groups in Brookline and Greenfield spent less in capital and added to the operating costs, while most groups in Lawrenceville, Mt. Washington and Northside had higher capital cost totals but were more likely to select the major operating cost saving options.

In both individual and group responses, operating cost averages were heavily influenced by the selection of one of four options that assumed relatively large operating savings. Of these four (repurposing park land, title clearing, divesting swimming pools and divest recreation and senior centers), the most popular was title clearing, followed by repurposing park land. The largest operating cost saving option (divest recreation and community centers) was only selected by 18% of all participants. It is also important to note that the averages are impacted by a several large ticket items (including the improvements to community and historic regional parks which are each over \$100 million in capital costs) that were in the middle range of selection popularity. Additionally, the calculations are based on an all-or-nothing accounting of these options the actual number of facilities or acres impacted would change the costs and savings.

## 4. Community Intercepts

The OpenSpacePGH planning process was extended to the community through six community intercept events, where staff hosted outreach booths geographically dispersed throughout the city. Community intercepts, particularly those at existing events, provided access to hundreds of people. These events were scheduled to involve community members of all ages in the plan development process, and captured the ideas of residents who may not normally participate through other, more conventional public involvement activities. The Community Intercept events were designed to be interactive, with displays to inform residents about their community resources, and allow residents to identify community needs and priorities. Residents were also directed to the web-based questionnaires and other public outreach opportunities for the Plan, helping to encourage further involvement with the OpenSpacePGH planning process.

### Intercept Events

The display boards and questions were brought to 11 intercept events. These events included: the Venture Outdoors Family Outdoor Festival (3 separate events), Rachel's Sustainable Feast, the Shadyside Arts Festival, Little Italy Days, the Home Renovation and Preservation Weekend, the East Allegheny Pumpkinfest, Three Rivers BioNeers Conference, and the four Regional Parks Master Plan Meetings. These events were chosen to reach out to a variety of open space interests and age groups while attempting to be balanced geographically across the City.

### Questions Asked and Findings

**Q1. Which of the following open space, parks, and recreation benefits are most important to you?**

Benefit	Count	Percent
Preserving natural areas & environment	178	26.8%
Improving physical health and wellness	130	19.6%
Reducing crime	82	12.4%
Improving mental health & reducing stress	74	11.2%
Fostering youth development	55	8.3%
Protecting historic resources	46	6.9%
Attracting new residents & businesses	38	5.7%
Promoting city as a recreation destination	24	3.6%
Increasing property values	19	2.9%
Other	17	2.6%
Total	663	

**Q2. Why do you go to parks and open spaces in Pittsburgh?**

Purpose	Count	Percent
Walk or bike	231	26.2%
Peace / Solitude	139	15.8%
Experience nature	123	14.0%
Play Outside	100	11.3%
Attend special events/concerts	88	10.0%
Family activities	74	8.4%
A specific park feature (playground, basketball court, etc.)	47	5.3%
Hang out with friends	47	5.3%
Play team sports / attend sporting events	32	3.6%
Total	881	

**Q3. Which types of amenities are most needed near your home?**

Response	Count	Percent
Trails and Pathways	55	22.3%
Community Gardens	39	15.8%
Children's Play Areas	36	14.6%
Greenways/Woods	29	11.7%
Swimming Pools/Water Play Areas	32	13.0%
Sports Fields	19	7.7%
Off-leash Dog Areas	17	6.9%
Courts (basketball, volleyball, tennis)	9	3.6%
Picnic Tables & Shelters	9	3.6%
Other	2	0.8%
Total	247	

**Q4. How would you use the money if you were in charge? Use a dot to indicate your top two priorities for improving open space, parks, and recreation in Pittsburgh.**

Response	Count	Percent
Protect additional land for open space or parks	196	23.0%
Restore creeks, forests, and hillsides	169	19.8%
Improve maintenance of existing parks and facilities	160	18.8%
Expand the trail network	133	15.6%
Add new recreation facilities in existing parks	69	8.1%
Offer more programs and activities	66	7.7%
Enhance Pittsburgh's regional parks	59	6.9%
Total	852	

**Q5. Pittsburgh is now half the population that it once was, and the city contains many vacant, under-used and abandoned properties. How should these properties be re-purposed?**

Response	# of votes	Percent
Agricultural uses (community garden, farms, beekeeping)	65	35.1%
Raingardens, stormwater infiltration	29	15.7%
Habitat, forest and creek restoration	20	10.8%
Incubate local businesses, entrepreneurs, and non-profits	16	8.6%
Trail network expansion	15	8.1%
Make existing programs work faster (e.g. sideyards)	11	5.9%
Park recreation facilities	11	5.9%
Homestead program to bring in new homeowners	10	5.4%
Keep/landbank property with development potential	4	2.2%
Parking for neighborhood business districts that need it	4	2.2%
Total	185	