

# Re-envisioning how New Haven parks are managed, maintained and programmed

*Co-Creation Phase: Community Forum*

*Tuesday November 28<sup>th</sup>*

*200 Orange Street, Room G2*



# Facilitators and support

Liz Felker, Facilitator

Colleen Murphy Dunning, Urban Resources Initiative

Anna Pickett, Urban Resources Initiative

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*supported by:*

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Leah Snavelly, Urban Resources Initiative

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# Welcome from Mayor Elicker



# Goals of community input process for re-envisioning how New Haven parks are managed, maintained and programmed

URI to carry out a **community engagement process to understand strengths and weaknesses and desired outcomes** to more effectively and equitably serve the public and care for the City's natural resources. URI will **scope potential models** for restructuring and **provide recommendations aligned with input collected.**



# Community Input Process & Timeline



# Goals of Today's Community Forum

- Review Listening Phase
  - Current Strengths and Weaknesses
  - Prioritized key challenges and suggestions
- Identify and prioritize desired outcomes
  - Accountability and Transparency
  - Communication
  - Equity
  - Improving Services



# Ground Rules for Engagement

- *Active Listening*
- *Give everyone an opportunity to share*
- *No interrupting or disrespectful language*
  
- *Summary of forum through process snapshot on URI website*
- *Learnings and recommendations will be shared at next Community Forum (January 10)*



## Who is in the room

*Please raise your hand if*

- *You responded to the community survey*
- *You are part of a Park Friends Group*
- *You are part of a sports group*
- *You work for a non-profit that has activities in the parks*
- *You are city staff*
  
- *You have not responded to the survey or participated in a focus group*





# Today's Agenda

5:45pm



Review Listening Phase



6:00pm



Co-create desired outcomes



7:00pm



Prioritization



# Today's Agenda



# Review Listening Phase

## Community Survey

*353 responses*

*Posted signage in 41 parks*

*Spanish and English*

## Staff Discussions

- Senior Leadership and City Staff
- YARD Senior Staff Meeting
- Maintenance Senior Staff

## Focus Group Discussions

- *Park Commissioners*
- *Park Friend groups*
- *Sports groups*
- *Non-profit organizations*

## Staff Survey

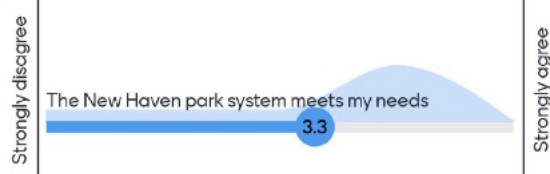


# Review Listening Phase

## SNAPSHOT: Nonprofit Focus Group

### Gathering Ideas for Re-envisioning New Haven Parks Listening Phase | Stakeholder Focus Group

During the focus group we heard from CitySeed, Save the Sound, LEAP for Kids, Monk Youth Jazz and STEAM Collective, Common Ground, Audubon CT, Sierra Club's Inspiring Connections Outdoors (ICO)



#### Strengths:

- **Proximity** – Always a park nearby
- **Collaboration** with nonprofits working in ranger station is working well.

#### Priorities:

1. Communication
2. Equity
3. Improved Services and Programming

#### Challenges:

- Concern for the **ecological functioning** of the vast set of parks, lack of park ecological management plan
- **Litter and pet waste**
- There is more demand for **nature-based programming** than non-profits can meet.
- **Limited ability of the rangers** and nature-based programming.
- **Lack of leadership and vision for parks**
- Parks in **BIPOC neighborhoods neglected**

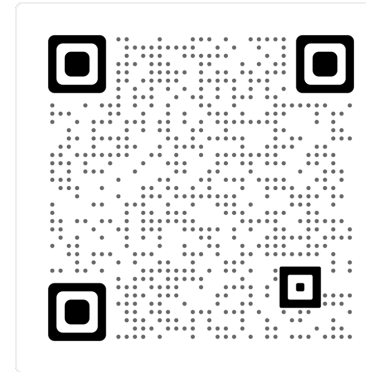
#### Suggested Outcomes:

- Provide **pet waste bags**
- Develop an **ecological management plan** that includes rotational (less) mowing, leaving the leaves where possible to create more habitat and water filtration, promote biodiversity and ecological function.
- Increase attention to **maintenance in BIPOC neighborhoods**
- Would like to see a concrete **DEI/BIPOC centered initiative**.
- Need **rangers who reflect the community** and have expertise.
- Create **signage** for ecological restoration to increase transparency and accountability
- Create resources that **help people know how to access parks** and park programming
- **Engage nonprofits** in providing more programs.



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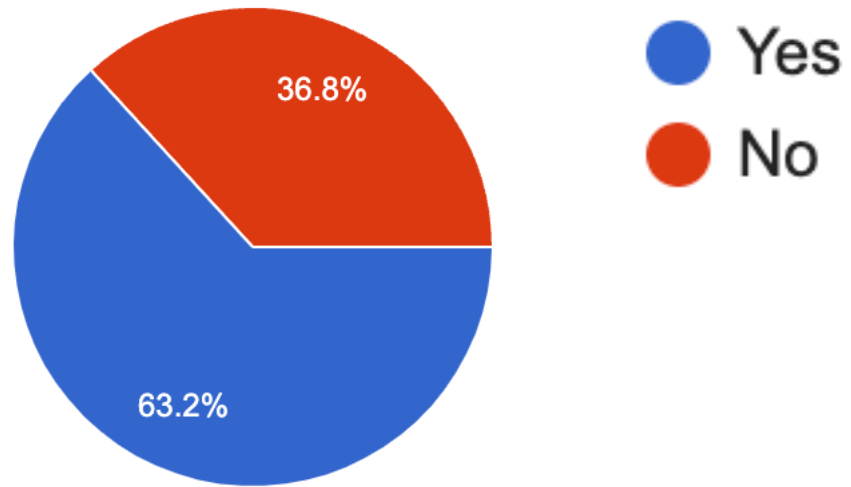
Listening Phase process snapshots available here and on URI website



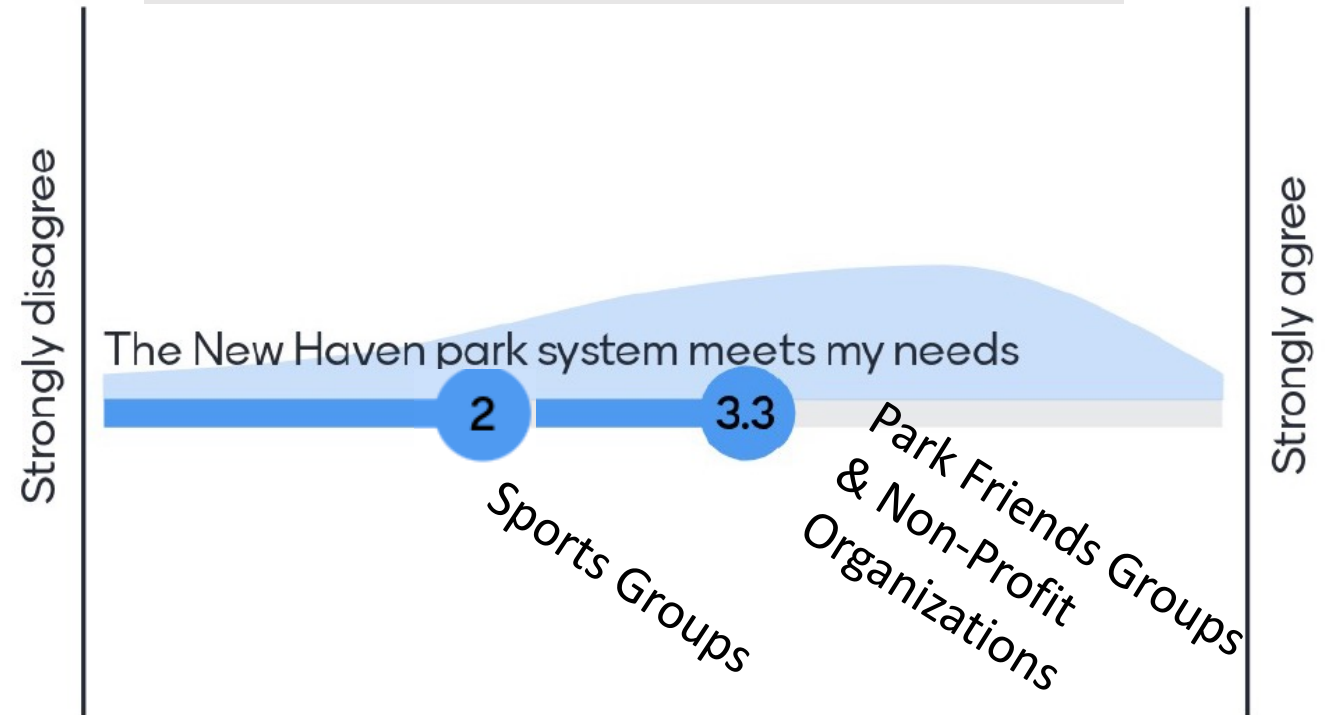
# Review Listening Phase

*Do you think the New Haven park system meets your needs?*

## Community Survey



## Focus Groups



# Review Listening Phase: Strengths

## Community Survey

What do you love about New Haven Parks?

*“There are so many and they provide opportunities for everyone to be in nature.”*

*“They are a respite and a way to be in nature. They offer ways to gather and recreate outside.”*

*“They are everywhere! I love the diversity of the types of parks and how there seems to be one around every corner.”*

*“I love community activations like farmers' markets and seasonal events.”*

*“The trees, waterways and mountains in those that have them.”*



# Review Listening Phase: Challenges

*What would you most like to see improved about New Haven parks?*

## Community Survey Maintenance Priorities *(from 250 responses)*

<b>Litter</b>	<b>191</b>
Trails/paths	76
Mowing	58
Natural areas	44
Waterways	30

## Community Survey Facilities Priorities *(from 238 responses)*

<b>Bathrooms</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>Trash cans</b>	<b>112</b>
Playgrounds	65
Lighting	63
Benches	61



# Review Listening Phase: Challenges

## Focus Groups discussed key challenges related to each top priority and suggestions for improvement

*Litter*

*Programming and events*

*Sports and recreation facilities*

*Trails and paths*

*Natural area maintenance*

*Waterways maintenance*

*Playgrounds*

*Mowing*

*Lighting*

*Trashcans*

## Example: Trails and Paths

### *Challenges*

- *Not all trails are considered parks and connected to the system*
- *Not clear who is responsible for maintenance or who to contact when a situation arises*
- *Lack of planning*

### *Suggestions*

- *Assessment needed on condition and use; prioritize by necessity, equity and urgency*
- *Data informed maintenance and management (i.e. infrared counter)*
- *Would like to see parks connected through trails*





# Review Listening Phase: Outcomes

## Accountability and Transparency

Regular maintenance schedules on city website

Regular trash pick-up schedules on city website

Clarity about who is responsible for what within the parks

Financial reports for park system: budget, actuals, fund source, by department

Bathroom cleaning standards

Playscape maintenance checklist

Follow through on planned facilities maintenance and upgrades

We will be building from these outcomes for the next session.

As we present, consider what your desired outcomes are and what is missing.



# Review Listening Phase: Outcomes

## Communication

### Clarify who to contact :

- Provide names, number, and who is responsible for what
  - Every park has a known contact pathway

Clear process to report concerns or problems

### Simple, user-friendly tool for external communication:

- Between park staff and friend groups, external partners
  - About what YARD is offering

### Publicize activities, programs, events, opportunities

- staff and volunteers working together



# Review Listening Phase: Outcomes

## Equity

Equity in maintenance across all parks

Equity in infrastructure amenities across all parks (bathrooms etc)

Regardless of park size or volunteer group

All residents have park in walking distance

All residents have playground (playscape, splashpad, swings) in walking distance

Programming in every neighborhood (exercise classes, arts and crafts)

Safe parks

Accessibility

DEI/BIPOC centered initiative to address systemic neglect

Internal plan to address inequity

Equity of money spent community wide



# Review Listening Phase: Outcomes

## Improving Services

**Clear vision and plan for the future of parks**

**Ecological restoration: invasive species removal**

**Designated nature centers**

**Park rangers that are public interfacing**

- Work with Friends groups
- Dedicated to only a few parks with clear geographic responsibilities
- Reflect the community

**Staff trained in**

- Natural resource values and care
- Tree care and native/invasive plants
- Wildlife habitat

**Lights**

**Playing surfaces**

**Sports facilities and parks kids are proud of**

**Basic amenities (bathroom facilities, water fountains) clean and updated**

**Athletics fields maintenance**

**Safe batting cages**

**Evening sports fields (lighting)**

**Improve mowing operations: close supervision; improve equipment**

**Programming**

- Ecology and nature
- Exercise classes in every neighborhood
- Arts and crafts activities in every neighborhood
- Community building (social) activities shaped by community input
- Intergenerational
- More robust, regular youth programming
- Ranger programming later in day and weekends
- Make registering easier
- Invest in community outreach and engagement

**Coordination between parks and other city departments**



# Today's Agenda



# Desired Outcomes

As the city considers restructuring how it manages New Haven parks,  
what **outcomes** would you like to see?

Desired outcomes are organized across 4 themes:

- **Accountability and Transparency**
  - **Communication**
  - **Equity**
  - **Improving Services**
- 
- Take 5 minutes to identify your key desired outcomes : talk to your neighbor!
  - Write each outcome on a sticky note
  - Go to the related themed station and share your desired outcome (say out loud)
  - Place the notecard grouped with other related or similar outcomes



# Desired Outcomes

**quick break + consolidate**



# Today's Agenda





# Prioritization

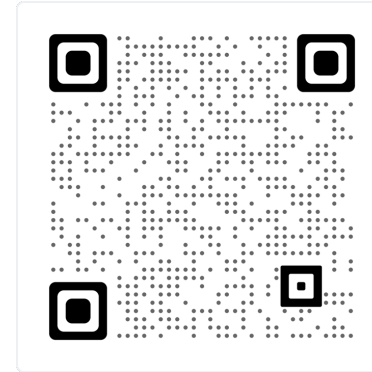
- Each person receives 3 sticky—dots per theme station
- Review the suggested outcomes within each theme
- Allocate your dots across the suggested outcomes according to your priority
  - You may weight your ranking (3 or 2 dots for one outcome,)
  - Or allocate evenly across three priorities (1 dot for your top 3 outcomes)



# Closing : Next Steps

**Listening Phase 1**  
*October 27- November 24*

**Check URI website for  
process snapshots**



**Finalize Phase 3**  
*December 23 – January 15*

**Join us for a Final Recommendations  
Community Forum and Feedback**

January 10<sup>th</sup> 5:30-7:00 pm

