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

Co-Creation Phase: Community Forum

Tuesday November 28th
200 Orange Street, Room G2
Facilitators and support

Liz Felker, Facilitator
Colleen Murphy Dunning, Urban Resources Initiative
Anna Pickett, Urban Resources Initiative
Chris Ozyck, Urban Resources Initiative
Joshua DeAnda, Urban Resources Initiative

supported by:
Logan Crews, Urban Resources Initiative
Leah Snavely, Urban Resources Initiative
Natalia Espinosa Caballero, Urban Resources Initiative
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

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

- Senior leadership and city staff meeting
- Community Surveys
  - Posted signage in 41 parks
- Staff Surveys
- Senior Staff Meetings
- Stakeholder Focus Groups
  - Park Commissioners
  - Alders
  - Park Friend groups
  - Sports groups
  - Non-profit organizations

**Co-create Phase 2**
November 28 - December 22

- Community Forum
  - Discuss opportunities, concerns and potential paths forward
  - November 28
- Process Snapshots
- Review recommended pathways with senior leadership and city staff

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

- DRAFT REPORT
- Final Recommendations
  - Community Forum and Feedback
  - Review recommendations and identify any remaining gaps or concerns.
  - January 10
- FINAL REPORT
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
- Co-Create desired outcomes
- Prioritization
Review Listening Phase

Community Survey
353 responses
Posted signage in 41 parks
Spanish and English

Focus Group Discussions
• Park Commissioners
• Park Friend groups
• Sports groups
• Non-profit organizations

Staff Discussions
• Senior Leadership and City Staff
• YARD Senior Staff Meeting
• Maintenance Senior Staff

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, Mont 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.

Listening Phase process snapshots available here and on URI website

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URBAN RESOURCES INITIATIVE
Review Listening Phase

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

Community Survey:
- Yes: 63.2%
- No: 36.8%

Focus Groups:
- Sports Groups
- Park Friends Groups & Non-Profit Organizations
- The New Haven park system meets my needs
  - Strongly disagree: 2
  - 3.3
  - Strongly agree
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 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.”

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

“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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Litter</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trails/paths</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mowing</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural areas</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterways</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Facilities Priorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash cans</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benches</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from 250 responses)
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

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We will be building from these outcomes for the next session.
As we present, consider what your desired outcomes are and what is missing.
## 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity in maintenance across all parks</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity in infrastructure amenities across all parks (bathrooms etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regardless of park size or volunteer group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All residents have park in walking distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All residents have playground (playscape, splashpad, swings) in walking distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming in every neighborhood (exercise classes, arts and crafts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe parks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEI/BIPOC centered initiative to address systemic neglect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal plan to address inequity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity of money spent community wide</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Review Listening Phase: Outcomes

#### Improving Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear vision and plan for the future of parks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecological restoration: invasive species removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designated nature centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park rangers that are public interfacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Work with Friends groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Dedicated to only a few parks with clear geographic responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reflect the community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff trained in</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Natural resource values and care</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Tree care and native/invasive plants</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Wildlife habitat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| 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

Review Listening Phase → Co-Create desired outcomes → Prioritization
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

- Review Listening Phase
- Co-Create desired outcomes
- Prioritization
Prioritization

• Each person receives 3 sticky—dots per theme station
• Review the suggested outcomes within each theme
• Allocated 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 10th 5:30-7:00 pm