

Clark County Public Works, Parks and Lands Division

Project: Clark County Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan Update

Location: Web-ex

Interview Date: August 28, 2020

Time: 10:00 am

Notes and interviewer: Laura Hoggatt, Clark County Parks and Lands Division

Participants: Derek Thompson, Executive Director and Regina Thompson, Director of Operations and Development for Hands of Favor, a non-profit organization.

Stakeholder Discussion Notes

Purpose: To discuss park priorities and potential ways to improve community engagement.

Introductions

Derek and Regina Thompson founded Hands of Favor, NPO in 2013. Since then, the non-profit organization has provided services to over 24,000 individuals and partners with 27 organizations on a regular basis. Their mission statement “*Building relationships that rebuild lives*” is fulfilled by providing direct services based on the need of individuals.

In the beginning, Hands of Favor focused on providing free haircuts and other services to restore dignity and renew confidence in individuals who were homeless, or near homeless. They have changed lives by providing kindness, care and a listening ear as each person shared their story while sitting in the barber chair. Hands of Favor has observed the positive impact of this service, but also realized there were other needs to help motivate people to seek employment, go to school or interact with others in public. Over time their ministry grew to partner with other organizations to provide food, clothing, toiletries, shelter and other services.

The impact of Covid-19 closed the personal services portion of their ministry. They have been focusing on helping to build relationships and address social inequities. Hands of Favor is fully committed to fighting injustice, inequality and corruption using the tools and resources available to them. To find out more about the non-profit please visit www.handsfavor.com.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you or your organization see as the key priorities for the county’s park, open space and trail system?
 - Continue conversations and engage more BIPOC individuals and organizations in planning.
 - Conversations should include asking diverse community members to determine what is needed.
 - Focus and prioritize bridge building to create a community of inclusion.
 - Transparency and simplicity are keys in communication.
 - Review the current system and get more people involved.
 - Do what is right for the people.
 - Be willing to listen
2. Jump forward 5 years and imagine Clark County in 2025. Please share your vision for one stand-out project completed or initiative started to improve access to the park, open space and trail system.
 - When we look in any of our parks, we see a wide diversity of people of various colors and abilities. They are having fun and enjoying life. It is a place to build family and community. It is so inviting that when a Police Officer drives by, they stop and join in the fun and engage with people in the park.

3. What, if any, are the barriers you see or face in accessing the county's park system? (e.g., physical access, safety, cultural concerns, communications/information)
 - Many people are unaware of what is available in a park or even what they would do there. Sometimes you have to show people what is possible.
 - Redlining is a discriminatory practice that puts services out of reach for residents of certain areas based on race or ethnicity (*Investopedia.com*). Redlining still exists if we are not including community members in planning. The elimination of voices, whether intentional or within a subconscious bias needs to change.

4. What should Clark County prioritize in order to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in its parks and facilities?
 - Engage community members and organizations in continued conversations as an ongoing practice.
 - LISTEN to what diverse community members have to say. Do not decide for them.
 - Look at the plan and ask; "How are the Parks & Recreation plans being diverse enough to include the Black population?"
 - Culturally our children are left far behind. Inclusion and equity in the Clark County park system is important and most often overlooked.
 - Open transparency is important.

5. What contribution or collaboration can you or your organization bring to the advancement of inclusion in the county-wide park system?
 - We are looking for venues to speak to people to provide a different point of view. We would be happy to meet with others to discuss issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, homelessness and more.
 - We believe that love in action rebuilds lives.
 - Our core values are Compassion; Empathy; Love; Laughter and Faith. These values help to further our mission to rebuild lives.

6. One of the challenges we face is homeless encampments in public places. How can we serve people better who are living outside?
 - We often see people who became homeless within these three categories 1) Life circumstances that were no fault of their own; 2) Problems such as addiction or other issues; 3) Life choice to live off the grid. No matter the circumstance, we see people as individuals.
 - Not all individuals who are homeless are living outside. Some have been fortunate enough to get into a shelter, others live in their car.
 - Please remember that individuals experiencing homelessness are human and treat them with care and dignity.
 - Connect them to resources whenever possible.
 - Include agencies who provide resources and services in the solution.

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Interview Date: August 26, 2020

Time: 10:00 am

Notes and interviewer: Laura Hoggatt, Clark County Parks and Lands Division

Participant: Nicole Daltoso, Facilities Planning Manager, Vancouver School District.

Stakeholder Discussion Notes

Purpose: To discuss park priorities and potential partnerships between Clark County and area school districts.

Discussion: The discussion began with a brief introduction and overview of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PROS) update process. A set of questions were provided in advance and used to initiate dialogue.

Background: Vancouver School District (VSD) covers 58 square miles and includes 21 elementary schools, 6 middle schools and 5 high schools. VSD reported serving 23,457 students during 2019-2020. Of these, 51% live in low-income households, 13.7% receive special education services, and 24% speak a language other than English in their home. The growing population has required growth within the school district facilities. In 2017, voters approved a bond to fund 30 construction projects. More information may be found at: <https://vansd.org/reschools/#>

VSD and Clark County Parks and Lands have partnered to provide public park amenities to local communities. Examples include Jason Lee Middle School Park and Eisenhower School Park.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you or your organization (VSD) see as the key priorities for the county's park, open space and trail system?

Key priority: Inclusion

- Individuals and children with disabilities are provided equal access to park and recreation amenities.
- Include children and families with children in the planning process.
- Include diverse community members in the planning process.
- Provide signage in several languages to encourage participation.

2. Jump forward 5 years and imagine Clark County in 2025. Please share your vision for one stand-out project completed or initiative started to improve access to the park, open space and trail system.

Vision: The park and recreation amenities are very inviting with opportunities for a variety of activities and multi-use features.

- A space with a playground for children of varying abilities and includes access for children with disabilities. Musical instruments can be accessed and enjoyed by most.
- Walking trails that are accessible for varying abilities.
- Open green space for a variety of activities.
- Multifaceted use of topography incorporated into the park design.
- Inviting: Newer up to date pieces, interesting pieces, not cookie cutter.
- The space is interactive and inclusive to draw people to the site.

3. What, if any, are the barriers you see or face in accessing the county's park system? (e.g., physical access, safety, cultural concerns, communications/information)

Barriers: While there are many good things about the parks available in our communities there is room for improvement.

- Accessible playground for children of all abilities.
 - Parking is an issue for some of the neighborhood parks.
 - Communication and information sharing will help more people access the park system. Many people don't know much about what is available or where parks are located.
 - How do people find out about the parks and trails system?
 - A robust communication plan may help to inform the community.
4. What should Clark County prioritize in order to advance diversity, equity and inclusion in its parks and facilities?

Priority:

- Communication and information strategies would be important to help to include a larger range of people.
 - Communication should be provided in a variety of ways and in several languages.
 - Communication can help to involve equity and inclusion.
 - Help the public become familiar with the park system.
5. What contribution or collaboration can you or your organization bring to the advancement of inclusion in the county-wide park system?

Contributions and Collaborations:

- VSD has prioritized collaborative partnerships with Clark County Parks with the assignment of a liaison to participate in the Parks Advisory Board (PAB) since the inception of PAB in 2014. The VSD liaison provides insight of current policies and projects with PAB to help support inclusion discussions. VSD will continue to share thoughts and ideas on this topic.
 - VSD has properties connected to the public park system and partnerships in place to provide recreation opportunities for local communities.
6. Are VSD playgrounds and open space areas open to the public?

While it is a priority of the current superintendent of Vancouver School District to provide public access to school properties, there is a fine balance between student safety and public access. It is fair to say that properties are not open to the public during the same hours as a public park, therefore these spaces might be counted differently in a level of service for public recreation amenities. Observed activities by the public include early morning and after school sport practices; walking adults on tracks and trails where available; and playground use after hours. Community members use greenspace for walking, open field activities, and sledding on hillsides.