



COMPREHENSIVE AUGUSTA RECREATION AND PARKS MASTER PLAN PUBLIC INPUT

August 21, 2015

A. INPUT OPPORTUNITIES

The planning process has included extensive public input and participation in formulating this comprehensive master plan. The consulting team conducted meetings, subject matter focus groups, forums with the public at large, and multiple interviews with key leaders. This interaction played an important part in establishing priorities for the future improvement and direction of the Recreation, Parks, and Facilities Department.

In addition, the planning process included a specially designed project website to maximize advocacy and community engagement and to provide a means for conveying consistent project updates to the citizenry (www.planaugustaparks.com). The site included the consulting team, key Department staff, the planning process, schedule, meeting dates and times, and opportunities for feedback gathering, including social media integration.

The crowd-sourcing website also included an online survey using www.surveymonkey.com methodology.

B. OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

The consulting team and the Department drafted a public outreach agenda to maximize community engagement and input into the master plan. The process included input from eight focus groups, three open public forums, and individual interviews with key leaders in the city. During these interviews and focus groups the consulting team gained an understanding of the community values as well as the priority for recreation facilities and programming and park needs for the Department. This information helped identify key questions to be utilized in the statistically-valid community needs assessment survey. Invited participants in the process for interviews and focus groups included the following:

- Elected officials
- City Administration
- Key business leaders



- Key partner/philanthropic/complementary organizations
- Users of the recreation and park system
- Department staff
- Stakeholders

Elected officials were invited for separate individual briefings on the master planning process and for the purpose of receiving their specific input.

C. INPUT FROM FOCUS GROUPS AND PUBLIC FORUMS

Public forums were held to present information and gather feedback from citizens at large. Public Meetings 1 and 2 were identical meetings held at different locations within Augusta on back-to-back evenings. The first session was held at Julian Smith Casino on March 30, 2015, while the second assembly occurred at Diamond Lakes Community Center on March 31, 2015. An additional public form was held at Minnick Park on August 18th, 2015.

Notification Methods

Notification for the Public Forum Meetings utilized television, radio announcements and postings on City website and the Augusta Recreation, Parks and Facilities' Facebook page. Television news crews and reporters covered portions of the March 30th meeting and broadcasted information about the upcoming March 31st public forum meeting on the evening and morning news broadcasts.

On the same two days the consulting team conducted seven focus groups of residents and City staff. On March 30, 2015 four identical focus groups assembled at Julian Smith Casino. Participants were comprised of system users, community leaders, designers, educators, partners, promoters, stakeholders, etc. Three additional focus groups met on March 31, including groups of key City staff members and stakeholders: City department heads and representatives; stakeholders and key program users; and recreation program staff.

Meeting Format

Each meeting began with the Interim Director of the Augusta Recreation, Parks and Facilities Department outlining the objectives of the Master Plan, meeting purpose and the introduction of the Master Plan project team members. The Master Plan project team presented via PowerPoint the project schedule with key milestone dates and the National Recreation and Park Association's issue pillars



(Conservation, Health and Wellness, Social Equity) that will also be addressed in the Master Plan. The Master Plan project team then highlighted key tasks and the project progression for developing the Master Plan. Future demographics projections for Augusta-Richmond County and their implications and consideration in developing the Master Plan were presented and discussed. The new website www.planaugustaparks.com was introduced as an important vehicle for community interaction, input, Master Plan updates, and progress notifications.

Finally, the meeting attendees were asked specifically:

- What are the current “Strengths” of the Augusta Recreation and Parks system?
- What “Opportunities” you believe will improve the Augusta Recreation and Parks system?
- What is the “Single Biggest Priority” you would like to see as an outcome of the Augusta Recreation and Parks Master Plan?

For each meeting, notes were captured via flip charts of the Public Forum meeting participants’ responses and feedback and were transcribed (see Meeting Transcripts). Also, the first two meetings were videoed/sound taped for a digital record.

Comment Organization

The input comments received in the public forums and focus groups have been loosely classified in four categories for the ease of use and analysis by the consulting team. These categories include the following:

- Facilities
- Programs
- Operation
- Other



D. SUMMARY OF PUBLIC FORUM COMMENTS MARCH 30-31, 2015

	Facilities	Programs	Operations	Other
Strengths	<p>The parks offer a variety of facilities and are strategically located and distributed near the population. The system has water, walking paths and shelters.</p> <p>Diamond Lakes Park is an asset with its many amenities and activities. Pendleton King Park with its gardens, playground and disc golf and Dyess Park's swimming pool</p> <p>Augusta River Walk Augusta Common Aquatics Center Lake Olmstead</p>	<p>The parks are free and rental facilities are affordable.</p> <p>After school and summer programs for youth provide positive activities.</p> <p>Good senior oriented programs and participation</p> <p>Neighborhood/Community park programs</p>	<p>Community partnerships for joint use of facilities and bundling of financial resources like the Library at Diamond Lakes.</p> <p>The Recreation and Parks staff is a good partner and involved in the community.</p> <p>Department does well with what they are given</p>	<p>Parks help unite the community and can be a positive factor in neighborhood revitalization.</p> <p>Active volunteers</p> <p>Good non-profit partners</p>
Opportunities	<p>Expand facilities where warranted and include infrastructure enhancements for better ingress and egress and also access for people who don't drive.</p> <p>Improve fishing lakes, importantly, stocking lakes with fish and more access to the river at Lock and Dam Park.</p> <p>Add more green space to encourage passive and active recreation like walking, hiking, and biking; Augusta is known as the "Garden City" but where are the gardens in the parks?</p> <p>More bike trails for families and outdoor fitness workout courses in the parks.</p>	<p>At smaller parks, partner with community organizations to provide more programmed offerings.</p> <p>Have age appropriate programming and facilities especially for ages 5-17 years old.</p> <p>Identify opportunities for youth skill development in recreational programming.</p> <p>Use seniors to help mentor youth</p>	<p>Establish and implement maintenance standards for improved upkeep of facilities.</p> <p>Improve safety and security at parks. Empower park rangers and employees to issue warning and citations to enforce rules; need more staff.</p> <p>Seek new funding sources for operations and maintenance of facilities including revenue generators like music, entertainment, and water parks and attract more national and regional tournaments and events.</p> <p>Encourage recycling in parks and facilities.</p> <p>Need to manage forward</p>	<p>Partner with schools and education department to maximize use and access to facilities and continue existing partnerships with Boy and Girls Club/YMCA.</p> <p>Seek new mutually beneficial partnerships with neighborhood and volunteer groups.</p> <p>Integrate recreation and parks into already planned development projects.</p> <p>Improve volunteerism and advocacy for recreation and parks and seek community groups to help maintain parks and facilities.</p> <p>Rebrand Augusta Recreation and Parks including more market-</p>



	Facilities	Programs	Operations	Other
	<p>More facilities for small children (lack of swings). At Diamond Lakes add facilities for small children and families including better access to shelters with electricity and restrooms also add swimming pool and exercise equipment for Community Center.</p> <p>Consolidate parks/ repurpose excess sites</p>		<p>vision for recreation and parks versus reactively planning.</p>	<p>ing and outreach to communicate programs, the value of parks and the benefits of recreation.</p>
Most Important	<p>Provide more regional parks dispersed equitably around the City.</p> <p>Provide fewer small parks that are very well maintained.</p> <p>Enhancements to Diamond Lake Park, i.e. bike trail, walking track, soccer field, disc golf course, driving range, indoor playground, batting cages</p>	<p>Integrate more education into recreational programming.</p> <p>Positive community-outreach, especially youth and provide a safe alternative and outlet for youth.</p> <p>Parks should be well used, relevant and inclusive with more multi-generational programming for seniors, youth and small children.</p> <p>Prioritize offerings and consolidate where needed</p>	<p>More efficient with staff, financially stable and focus on internal and external customer service.</p> <p>Better public transportation access to parks</p> <p>Safety and lighting. Parks should feel safe and be safe.</p>	<p>A more equitable plan and implementation that would foster a sense of community pride throughout the City.</p> <p>A plan that works and that is benchmarked against national standards that the community and City leadership support.</p> <p>Plan would help encourage park usage and give people more opportunities to participate in recreation.</p> <p>Provide better park connectivity and accessibility to bus lines, trails, greenways and sidewalks.</p> <p>Develop partnerships with schools and community organizations to address underserved needs.</p> <p>Articulation of a new brand image and identity for Recreation and Parks Department that aligns with vision of new master plan.</p>



[Narrative to be added for the final report following the completion of all meetings and interviews – general summary, divided by Facilities, Programs, Operations, and Other, including specific recurring observations and recommendations.]



E. LIST OF COMMENTS FROM PUBLIC FORUMS AND FOCUS GROUP INPUT SESSIONS MARCH 30-31, 2015 AND AUGUST 18, 2015.

A complete listing of the qualitative data collected from these focus groups and community meetings is assembled below.

Note: The opinions listed below are solely those of the individual attendees at the meetings and may not reflect the overall community, nor the consulting team's opinions.

STRENGTHS. What are the current strengths of the Augusta Recreation and Parks system? What are the things you want to keep? What does Augusta Recreation and Parks do well that you would like to continue over the next ten years and build upon?

Facilities

1. Availability of facilities throughout the county
2. Great natural resources to work with
3. Community centers for senior citizens
4. Augusta River Walk
5. Great facilities, including Newman Tennis Center, Aquatic Center, Soccer Complex, Diamond Lakes, Julian Smith Casino and Park, and Augusta Canal Trails
6. The Boat House is well used and well-maintained for rowing club and regattas.
7. Pendleton King Park and its disc golf course
8. Lighted walking tracks at Brookfield and Warren Road Parks
9. The Augusta Common is a great site.
10. Diamond Lakes has so much to offer in one place.
11. A good combination of facilities for active recreation and passive use people
12. Parks are in the center of the community and serve as natural gathering spaces for all.

STRENGTHS
(Continued)



13. Parks are for people
14. Good, well-located facilities in the central city
15. Pendleton King Park
16. Lake Olmstead – good condition / improvements good (especially within last 3 - 5 years)
17. Aquatics Center
18. The Augusta Common
19. Beautiful park – Diamond Lakes
20. Library at Diamond Lakes
21. Neighborhood / community parks are very important to communities. Chafee Park is [was] an example (Gym, pool, neighborhood, community park, gathering place).

Programs

1. Good youth programs with high participation numbers
2. Good senior citizen programs that support seniors throughout the community
3. Partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club have been advantageous in helping with at-risk youth.
4. Partnership with Augusta Canal Authority is unique and has been great for connectivity with their trail system.
5. Partnership with outside organizations, like Buffalo Soldiers
6. Special events in sports tourism, like Augusta Half-Ironman and Nike Peach Jam, have attracted sports tourists across multiple age groups
7. Augusta Sports Council and Augusta Parks and Recreation have a great partnership together.
8. Boat races and regattas are successful special events.

STRENGTHS
(Continued)



9. Augusta has a great variety of parks and facility offerings.
10. Augusta Recreation offers a diversity of programs that respond to the needs and desires of a variety of people and a wide range of socio-economic groups.
11. Family friendly programs are good for the entire community.
12. Augusta has affordable recreational opportunities for the youth in fantastic programs.
13. Programs are at the center of the community, family focused and an incredible strength
14. Program offerings are multi-faceted, not just active, but also passive.
15. Public recreation is for those who can afford it the least.
16. Value for the money in parks and program offerings
17. Diversity in program offerings for all groups is a great thing.
18. Helping underserved children:
19. Provide programs across ages and demographics

Operations

1. The recreation and parks staff is great to work with and are doing a good great job with what they have.
2. The use of community service workers is positive for the park system, and keeping them engaged, busy, and outside is positive.
3. We like Ron Houck.
4. The staff is very good at what they do and go the extra mile. With revenues and support of recreation declining, the staff has done an excellent job of doing more with less and managing what they have.
5. Great staff, very responsive, and open to community events.
6. The staff is very community-minded and partners well with other community organizations.

STRENGTHS
(Continued)



7. The department is family friendly and community focused.
8. There is no better feeling than "the faces don't change."
9. The recreation department staff knows their customers names and makes everyone feel like family. Like the Cheer's show from television, **nothing is better than walking into a place where everybody knows your name.**
10. This result is possible because employee retention in the Recreation and Parks Department is high.
11. The city's investment in this master plan to ensure long-term sustainability and to identify true community needs is a very positive strength.
12. Committed, knowledgeable staff and engaged stakeholders with a desire to make a difference and take pride in their work
13. Inmate crews contribute to maintenance staff.
14. There is an employee engagement committee that is charged with bringing options to management for addressing employee concerns.
15. Strong private/public partnership at Pendleton King Park
16. Active volunteers – labor and maintenance
17. Non-profit partners
18. Department does well with what they are given.
19. Passion of citizens for improvement

Other

1. Downtown is growing in population



OPPORTUNITIES. What opportunities do you believe will improve the Augusta Recreation and Parks system? What would you like to change? What are unmet opportunities?

Facilities

1. Newman Tennis Center was a very large economic driver, but needs updating, as does Fleming Tennis Center.
2. New Shoals section at New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam
3. More recycling options and education of the people about them
4. Trash cans at all facilities, strategically placed to ensure people don't litter
5. More water fountains to help runners in town
6. Report polluter signs and trash dumping signs
7. Have park signage and maps at all the parks.
8. Have more bike lots and bike racks at all the parks.
9. More soccer fields at Diamond Lakes
10. Change Diamond Lakes putting green to disc golf course to support international headquarters for disc golf in Augusta
11. Public access for canoes and kayaks
12. Refurnishing the Augusta River Walk with lighting and brick repair
13. More dog parks
14. Stormwater bodies can be educational.
15. Covered play areas for inclement weather and shade
16. Pocket Parks, like Sand Hills, etc.
17. Add public art, statues, to park landscapes.
18. Community Gardens

Opportunities (Continued)



19. Dredging Lake Olmstead will create an opportunity for water ski tournaments, paddle-boats, and other water sports.
20. Provide comprehensive walking and biking opportunities in the community to create connectivity within the city and to adjoining jurisdictions, like North Augusta Greenway System and Augusta Canal Trail System.
21. Make facilities good enough to bring in major events for economic support.
22. Develop a three-course championship disc golf facility at Diamond Lakes Park.
23. Close or re-purpose un-manned parks and focus on larger parks.
24. Develop a water park.
25. Need more shade – plant trees
26. Need to keep a balance between active parks and open space
27. Provide more shade structures and trees in parks since Augusta is one of the hottest cities in the South.
28. Improve maintenance at key venues like Augusta Common and Augusta River Walk
29. Provide more destination locations that draw people to the community.
30. More bike trails
31. Family friendly amenities such as camping sites, gazebos, etc.
32. Close small neighborhood centers and then build regional facilities that will attract tournaments and generate income.
33. Generally improve the facilities by making the flagships better and promoting safety and maintenance in other parks.
34. Create more walkable places and parks in the community and enhance connectivity through sidewalks, trails, and greenways
35. Evaluate existing parks throughout the community for under-utilization / overserved for possible consolidation or disposal

Opportunities (Continued)



36. Use resources to help update parks in other areas of higher need.
37. Improve May Park in downtown.
38. Spend additional resources in developing and creating the downtown.
39. Improve access to the Savannah River and Lake Olmstead blueways as a recreational amenity.
40. Bring parks facilities / amenities up to national average standards.
41. Development of multi-generational facilities
42. 70± parks is a lot: Duplication/funding scarcity, need to focus efforts / funding
43. Community or pocket parks from land bank properties with local neighborhood volunteers for maintenance
44. Return excess property to tax rolls
45. Community gardens reunite people
46. Provide community park facilities with ball courts to keep children off streets. Better community parks for underserved areas such as Harrisburg.
47. Co-locate parks and public transportation – bus stops near parks.
48. Safe trail facilities to connect neighborhoods to parks, parks to parks, etc
49. Shaded playground equipment for kids
50. Diamond Lakes has limited / no playground equipment or programs for young children (Shaded facilities would be nice.). Also, lake at park needs to be cleaned/dredged.
51. Facilities for Seniors

Programs

1. Use park facilities as leverage to provide economic impact for the city.
2. The tennis program offers year-round opportunities for recreational activity.

Opportunities (Continued)



3. Need to have a consistent message throughout the system and methods of communicating the message, like re-branding, etc.
4. Fully utilize outdoor adventure venues and water resources in the city.
5. Opportunity for Newman Tennis Center to have more regional tournaments for economic benefit
6. Inadequate engagement of the community to actively take part in and take ownership of the parks
7. Provide offerings across different socio-economic perspectives.
8. Parks are not as diverse as they could be; create a product that is more diverse.
9. Utilize partnerships with the Boys and Girls Club.
10. Correct the inadequate budget for parks and recreation offerings.
11. Opportunity to define what the recreational opportunities are in Augusta for the 51 weeks of the year outside of the Masters Tournament
12. Need to empower advocates: it is cheaper to *recreate* than to *incarcerate*
13. Create a kayaking academy
14. Offer more non-sports activities, such as dance classes, art classes, and cultural programs for adults and kids.
15. Offer more waterfront/river activities.
16. Provide boat docks on the river at Eighth Street to promote leisure and weekend activities.
17. Have programs at the amphitheater continuously, so that something is going on every weekend.
18. Offer additional programming for special events, such as Arts in the Heart.
19. How do you encourage kids to be outdoors and participate in the programming that is offered?

Opportunities
(Continued)



20. How do you address health and wellness with programs, citing obesity as well as healthy initiatives such as community gardens, etc.?
21. There are not art programs in all of the schools. Art programs could be offered in the park system.
22. Ensure access for all in the community through affordable programs, while focusing on financial sustainability.
23. Look for additional revenue opportunities through the current parks and facilities program, like paddleboard and other boat rentals in Lake Olmstead
24. Communicate the rich history of Augusta to the people, bring back the historic trolley for public transport, as an example.
25. Partner with Georgia Regents University to provide offerings.
26. Stage more fishing tournaments in the river and other opportunities to generate revenue.
27. Are the existing programs over/under priced and are they good values? There just aren't enough offered.
28. The Department currently offers scholarships for those who can't afford registration in programs; still not everyone can afford everything.
29. Utilize more partnerships, such as public-public and public-private arrangements such as with the Canal Authority, the Greater Augusta Sports Council, or North Augusta. This way the City of Augusta doesn't have to do everything.
30. Opportunities for recreational tourism. This will benefit from the close relationship between the Sports Council and the Convention and Visitors Bureau.
31. For small, unstaffed parks, how do we know "nobody is using it?"
32. Have special events as fundraisers; have something every weekend.
33. Create more special events for an older audience, for example, summertime band music, smooth jazz, etc.

Opportunities (Continued)



34. Summertime concerts need to be on the weekends, so that people can go and don't have to get up to go back to work the next day.
35. Senior programs are currently underserved and need to be expanded. This should be more than just lunches and ceramics.
36. Try to recoup the revenue from lost user sectors, with offerings similar to what the YMCA/Pop Warner, etc. offers. Recapturing that market will require rebranding.
37. Create partnerships with the Richmond County School system to provide after school programs tied to the transit system. We can't get people to the facilities by city bus right now. For example, they can't get to Diamond Lakes. We can't get the most needy to where they need to go.
38. Augusta does not have the marketing to bring regional events to town and does not market their regional capacity that exists. Marketing is currently done through the city and is not specific to the department.
- 39. Add a staff person for marketing and public relations to help promote the department and its offerings in the city and region**
40. A quasi-governmental partnership would be very helpful, for example, institutions like Georgia Regents University. It is easier for them to partner than trying to run things through their own system.
41. Opportunities: Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) can advertise to and through partner organizations
42. Need to expand existing partnership and cross-promote offerings to everyone through other providers and target partners who do it better and complements them.
43. Need to have a focus on marketing and communications to promote our story better.
44. Partner better with the school system to get the word out through teachers and students about increasing participation, since many families are not aware of programs.
45. Volleyball programs would be important to offer for ancillary spectators as an added sport below the high school level.

Opportunities

(Continued)



46. Offer programs/tournaments etc. that draw more people for economic impact. Tournaments are everywhere! Not so much in Augusta.
47. Adventure races and running events would be great additions.
48. Provide more leadership development opportunities for youth and individuals in the community, including internships to get kids to buy in and become the important sources of change.
49. Create a sense of pride in the community through Recreation and Parks.
50. Need to make people of different races feel better together and welcome one another.
51. Need to make parks safer through partnerships with the local sheriff's department to serve and protect. You should know an officer's name in your community. What if there were coordination with them to do things like a basketball tournament for the community vs. the police [Sheriff's] department.
52. Build brand by "Re-writing the story": rebrand using specific personal stories focused on people to help re-branding.
53. Need to partner so that there are activities provided in their local park outside of athletics, like health screenings, wellness programs, etc.
54. Generate income from events at our facilities like track meets.
55. Health and wellness programs like childhood obesity etc.
56. Better use of technology, such as mobile apps, kiosks, crowd funding, could be utilized.
57. Focus on economic development using parks and recreation as an economic driver and catalyst.
58. Increase participation in outdoor recreation programming, such as zip lines, kickball, ropes courses, adventure races, multi-use facilities, etc.
59. Use seniors to help mentor youth (similar to Baltimore, MD)

Opportunities (Continued)



Operations

1. Recreation and Parks Department to maintain the stormwater system and use it as an educational opportunity, for example, bio-swales.
2. The City Commission needs a vision as a group or as individuals with forward-thinking vs. reactive-thinking
3. Over the years the City Commission has been good at planning funding to build things, but not to continue and maintain operations.
4. The Department is understaffed to meet the maintenance needs for the facilities and programs. The Augusta Commission builds facilities without having the staff to maintain them. Recreation and Parks Department does a great job with what they have but they don't enough resources.
5. Staff morale is low due to limited or no salary increases. This situation results in a number of people who have not had raises in years and limits the ability to attract good new staff as well.
6. An unmet opportunity is the decline of facilities over time from lack of proper maintenance, so that they are not competitive with what is being provided in other communities. The commissioners and community members do not value Recreation and Parks, because there has not been a plan and vision in place.
7. Need to define what the Department is and what it is that the Department does. A major problem is that the City Commission looks at Recreation and Parks just as cost and needs to know what the economic impact and value really is. **Need to change the story to have them look at it as investment.**
8. The Recreation and Parks Department is the most likely one to be cut at budget time. Only operations funds have been targeted not facility cutbacks.
9. Need to hire a public relations individual to help communicate the value of who the Recreation and Parks Department is and what it is that the department does.
10. **Need to communicate both the quantitative value (economic impact) and qualitative value (quality of life) message to the community and the leadership.**

Opportunities (Continued)



11. Need to define the Recreation and Parks Department, what it is and what it does.
12. Budget is never enough for first class facilities; need to consider beautification and newer trends nationwide
13. Ensure that Recreation and Parks is advocating and present at commission meetings to tell the important story of the department as one of the solutions to community problems.
14. Better marketing and outreach would be helpful to inform people about what is going on in town, where are places to go and things to do. It should pop-up on the website.
15. More investment to help maintain what is available now
16. Additional monies could come from "crowd-funding" methodology online, which is not being used here currently but could be.
17. Recreation and Parks has not done a good job of telling the story of their value to the community and elected officials. Need to find a better way to talk about recreational tourism and economic impact. Because of the stress of lack of funds, the staff doesn't have time to be able to tell the good stories.
18. Need to continuously and consistently communicate what is going on in the department through an on-going education process, including great human interest stories that could be given to the local newspapers.
19. The department has been running too many facilities and some of them need to be shut down; but this is a political issue. They need to focus on the ones that they can operate well. The Department doesn't have the resources to take care of what we have. We have to focus on operating and maintaining what we have, weighing what is most important.
20. Need to focus on maintaining what we have, with adequate maintenance funding. Lack of resources has really hurt the department.
21. Identify costs of offerings what you have; then look at prioritizing how and where you spend the money. Need to set priorities with limited financial resources and keep to them, so that we can manage limited funds, or else close things down. Too many silos in this town: elected officials and people

Opportunities (Continued)



who don't consider things that are beyond their own areas. These are people who are single-focused and not looking at the big picture.

22. Keep Augusta Common and the River Walk clean, policed, and maintained. Recreation and Parks doesn't have the money to do the job they need to do and keep everything up.
23. Maintain parks and open space as the city densifies in population over time. As the city grows open space is critical it provides the backbone of the community.
24. Need to evaluate what parks are unused or underutilized, unstaffed, or poorly maintained and eliminate some of them while adding and expanding other offerings.
25. Make long-range decisions and vision that are vibrant and draw people to the city, and decide where to spend the limited resources.
26. Leverage parks and recreation to reinvigorate the surrounding area and the city as a whole.
27. Make sure that the plan addresses both the long-range and the short-range.
28. The Augusta Transit System should include stops at city parks.
29. Concentrate on regional facilities for the revenue stream that they can bring and close small centers and sell the real estate.
30. Have an internal marketer (one FTE) to sell the regional marketing functions to serve the Recreation and Parks Department, like the Convention and Visitors Bureau and Sports Council.
31. Improve poor customer service in place and train staff on customer service to be delivered consistently. There is good staff in place, but the silos make them inefficient; morale is low, because staff is not motivated nor engaged because they have not been well compensated. It is systematic of not having the right people in the right places.
32. Expand partnerships with schools for transportation to before and after school programs at destinations like Diamond Lakes.
33. Staff should be more helpful and morale should be improved. Need to get outstanding or reprogram existing staff to get extraordinary customer service.

Opportunities (Continued)



34. Capitalize on using volunteers and having business adopting parks. Creating partnerships with local businesses to go to each park, and do community days that help with landscaping and cleanup.
35. Empower staff and community members to take ownership in the park system.
36. How do you operate and maintain the existing facilities?
37. Evaluate the properties to see how much they are being used and dispose of the ones that aren't being utilized to help pay for the ones that are being used.
38. Reassess the use of the properties and reposition to serve the under-served areas.
39. Inmate crews provide inconsistent quality of maintenance and are not as efficient as hired staff. They are not necessarily skilled in the work that they are performing.
40. Need volunteer training guidelines
41. Centralize the internal controls of the accounting system in the department.
42. This master plan will help the city provide a long-range plan (a component of the Comprehensive plan) that is not presently in place.
43. Spend public funds to support Recreation Programs
44. Better maintenance of what we have
45. More partnerships with neighborhoods and volunteer groups
46. Signage / Branding
47. Marketing Parks and Services – Do a better job of “telling our story”

Other

1. Engage the broader diverse community.
2. Need to showcase better Recreation and Parks and tie-in with the Masters Tournament and other opportunities while we have a captured group in town, take advantage of it.

Opportunities (Continued)



3. Provide greater equity of access and focus on social impacts as well. Many parks are not well-used and feel unsafe. There was a reason that parks were developed at some point in time and as a group they provide the backbone of the community.
4. Shade is good, as we live in one of the hottest cities in the country.
5. Make places safer.
6. Act like a large City and be proud of Augusta.
7. Build a sense of pride in the community and retain people who live here.



SINGLE BIGGEST PRIORITY. What is the single biggest priority that you would like to see as an outcome of the Augusta Recreation and Parks Master Plan? What is the one thing you would like to create? If you had to list your one top priority, what would it be?

Facilities

1. Connectivity through trails, greenways, sidewalks, and blueways that connect the city geographically as well as socio-economically
2. Fix Augusta River Walk.
3. Reinvest in tennis facilities.
4. Upgrade all the facilities and fields so that they are able to provide a quality experience, including artificial turf facilities to allow for more intense use.
5. Focus on urban revitalization and live up to the name of the “Garden City.”
6. Make things pretty; people are visual learners and things should be obvious to help attract people to the place to live, work and play.
7. Revitalize New Savannah Bluff Lock and Dam Park, which will be a whole new resource in the river.
8. Build an indoor sports arena complex for youth and adults.
9. Provide increased biking opportunities and good quality boat ramps to increase river access.
10. Become an international destination for outdoor adventure sports such as rowing, cycling, kayaking, disc golfing, etc., and use facilities to drive economic impact.
11. Provide more multi-purpose field space for sports tournament use.
12. Provide opportunities for recreation and parks throughout the city.
13. Provide additional community gathering spaces and upgrade those community centers that are in need
14. Make Dyess Park a regional park by expanding into vacant and under-utilized properties nearby.

SINGLE BIGGEST PRIORITY
(Continued)



15. Expand May Park across 4th Street.
16. Provide a holistic approach to planning that includes multi-use facilities and having a specific use for each park.
17. Provide permanent solutions and long term plans for non-owned public parks, such as Pendleton King Park.
18. Building multi-purpose building in Pendleton King Park.
19. Make use of the centralized park concept, like Bernie Ward.
20. Improve, upgrade, maintain all facilities, including increasing the size of existing facilities that are the most used.
21. Connectivity between GRU campuses by way of the parks

Programs

1. Have programs that citizens can be proud of, that engage broader socio-economic groups and reaches out to various age groups, including the kids and seniors so that they have things to do in the community itself without having to go elsewhere
2. Keep a balance between active recreational parks and passive parks for all users.
3. We used to be called the Garden City and really aren't anymore. The experience starts in the parking lot, as "imagineers" at Disney would say. Augusta needs to work on "the parking lot."
4. Tourism dollars can be generated from big events.
5. Augustans are happy about living here due in part to having a nearby neighborhood park and program offerings that make them feel part of the community, welcome, safe, and connected.
6. Develop a definitive use program in the Sand Hills neighborhood.
7. Develop new front ideas to bring people and events into town, such as fishing tournaments as an opportunity to raise revenue.
8. Get people outdoors as much as possible through Recreation and Parks.

SINGLE BIGGEST PRIORITY
(Continued)



9. Stay current changing trends toward health and wellness and create a walkable community.
10. Take the opportunities generated by people coming here for events from out of town and use the resulting money to help fund the local things that need to be maintained.
11. Engage our youth, keep them out of trouble, and strategically provide maximum opportunities for them through Recreation and Parks directly and through partnerships.
12. Have family friendly events and entertainment for the family and single people.
13. Build a culture based upon environmental stewardship, including education, recycling, indoor air quality, health, wellness, etc. Focus on the quality of the offering and the quality of the facility and people will return and use it.
14. Offer family-focused health and wellness programs for all groups, not just athletics.
15. Prioritize offerings where needed, consolidate
16. Safety, lighting – Parks should seem safe and be safe
17. Spend more on regional parks and push community parks more to neighborhoods.
18. Easier public transportation access to parks

Operations

1. Make Augusta a City in which Recreation Department operations and programs are not an afterthought, but instead form a key part of raising the quality of life in the area
2. Have a financially sustainable Recreation and Parks Department, including paying adequate salaries for the staff.
3. Recreation and Parks should update the city Commission regularly that the Department is creating value. The message should be not only what is done, but how it is done.

SINGLE BIGGEST PRIORITY
(Continued)



4. The community population is invested in the facilities and helps take care of the park, so that they can be leveraged for economic development
5. Provide good maintenance for the facilities and do not allow them to decline, as people are visual and form a rapid opinion of a facility based on what they see.
6. A happy employee makes the users happy. Build morale in the employee ranks to increase customer satisfaction. Morale is low and those issues need to be tackled, particularly better pay.
7. Maintain the facilities at a high-class level and staff them.
8. Identify the true community opportunities and vision for the Recreation and Parks Department through this Master Plan. Provide a true roadmap for the community implementation of the plan.
9. Convince the elected officials to make Recreation and Parks a priority and a huge contributor to economic impact.
10. Use external resources and income from larger events to maintain what we currently own. Parks need to be well-maintained and well-used.
11. Manage equity of access to insure maximum utilization
12. Establish a strong focus on operations and maintenance to keep the quality of existing parks and facilities at high standards with better attention to detail. That does not necessarily mean fancy; it means quality.
13. Create an engaged, customer-focused staff that will meet the needs and wants of the community.
14. Move from a neighborhood to regional model for local users and economic impact development.
15. Become a self-sustaining organization.
16. Look at the 1973 plan and see if anything can be expanded.

SINGLE BIGGEST PRIORITY
(Continued)



Other

1. Make Augusta a place where I want to stay and live with my family and do not always have to get in my car to travel, but have interconnectivity throughout the City with trails, greenways, etc.
2. Have a population that has ownership of the parks and serves as advocates for Recreation and Parks

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