

Sterling Heights Parks, Recreation & Non-Motorized Plan Update

Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Adaptive Recreation & Accessibility Needs**

Date: November 11, 2021

Time: 4:00pm

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **adaptive recreation/accessibility** within the City
2. What are the most common barriers for persons with developmental, cognitive, and physical disabilities?
 - Related to programming
 - Related to facilities
 - Related to special events
 - Related to mobility
 - Other needs or concerns

Notes:

- Likes the splash pad and the music in the park at Dodge Park
- Handicap area after gate near the splash pad – would be nice to have a space to easily house items at/near the splash pad for disabled kids or disabled parents/grandparents
- Sufficient accessible parking
- Lower picnic tables
- Need adaptive playgrounds and sport opportunities (i.e., wheelchair basketball)
- Adult field trips (ball game, restaurant, etc.) – could be a good opportunity for disabled & independent adults
- Handicap parking for special events (farmer’s market, music in the park, etc.)
- Designated parking at senior citizen’s center for handicap parking for events
- Accessible ground cover in all the playgrounds in the city
 - Safety surface & barrier free ramps
- Changing tables in the bathrooms accessible for a very large kid – for older children or adults that may need help
- Senior track appears to work well for handicapped individuals
- Accessibility to bathrooms (paved trail) at the parks (for events and regular use)
- More adult programming
- POHI group runs programs and may benefit from accessible programming in Dodge Park
- Accessible buses & transportation options for seniors and disabled individuals
 - Better communication about the availability of programs

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Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Adult & Family Programming Focus Group Needs**

Date: November 5, 2021

Time: 5:00pm

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **adult & family programming focus group needs** within the City
 - Specific programs that should be offered which are not
 - Quantity/quality of special events
 - Facility/space/equipment issues related to programming
 - Location of special events and programs
 - Other related topics

Notes:

- Parks and facilities are well outfitted – if one park doesn't have it, then one of the other parks does
 - Can be difficult to figure out what amenities each park has (clearer communication)
 - Be sure to continue to pay attention to up-and-coming sports to ensure sufficient facilities (volleyball courts at dodge park is always busy, soccer and pickleball too is always busy). Add additional courts at other parks.
 - Only one park that has tennis courts, add additional courts at more of the parks.
- Parks feel very accessible: short drive, bike ride, or walkable in most cases.
 - No clear sidewalk access at Utica to dodge park for one resident (hop on trail at nature center and go from there – feel street is too unsafe)
- Bathrooms at the parks are nice, often to choose to visit parks that have them
- Programs that require registration were most popular with families with young kids to get them active
 - Rec center has some pick-up game activities that are attended frequently and are done well. Major issue is that there are often too many people so it becomes difficult to actually participate (only select times to be able to use the facilities/programming, can be frustrating because waiting a long time to actually use facilities)
 - More time availability or sign-up times to manage everyone's ability to participate
 - Good variety of programming options
- Swimming lessons would be a nice provision – offer the swim classes at a different facility where the water is heated (Maybe at the City of Warren?)
- More activities targeted for kids and young adults aged 18-24
 - Appears to have more activities for the young families not as many options for young-middle aged adults and even older teenagers (14-18)

- Senior/older adult programs occur during the day, which inhibits participation for adults between 25-50.
- Better advertisement of events and programming
- Special events should be sure to consider timing of events, for the most part they are very fun and fairly accessible
 - Sometimes busy and have to walk a bit to get to the event
 - Would deter people from going frequently because it gets very crowded (parking an issue during the concert, farmer's market nights)
 - Loved the Thursday night events, lots to do and to see, but just very busy
 - Something else similar to this for the winter (maybe not the same frequency as during the summer but a good option for socialization in the winter months)

Additional Comments Received:

- Activities that are growing and popular that would be nice: bocce ball and disc golf.
- Additional soccer turf fields due to popularity (indoor court with walls and turf)
- There aren't as many swings as there used to be; would like to see more swings at the neighborhood parks around the city
- Options to take the outdoor activities indoors in the winter months (additional facilities to allow more people to go at a larger spread of time.

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Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Age 50+ Programming Needs**

Date: November 3, 2021

Time: 5:00pm

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **age 50+ programming** within the city
 - Specific programs that should be offered which are not
 - Quantity/quality of special events
 - Facility/space/equipment issues related to programming
 - Location of special events and programs
 - Other related topics

Notes:

- Facility/space/equipment issues related to programming
 - Only two bathrooms in all of Dodge Park 5-mile trail
 - Needs additional drinking fountains or water filling stations
 - Rest stops with cart services to help get back to parking lot (emergency or otherwise)
- Maintenance
 - Paths are well-maintained
 - Flood lights on a timer? Stay on all the time or only when people are using them?
- Issue with selling drugs in parks deters elderly people from visiting parks
- Dodge Park – the walkers and the skateboards/bikes (need an alert system – better signage)
 - Some signage exists, more is needed at each park merging entrances
- City offered classes from community center to senior center and then causes trouble getting to the farmer's market, the classes, library, and the concert (parking issues)
 - Move programming to different days
 - Creates access problems with programming classes (yoga)
- Farmer's market needs more farmer's goods – not just a social scene
- If group is not city-affiliated, it is difficult to get and use space (community groups)
 - Cost prohibitive (enough availability)
 - Time prohibitive
 - Extensive rules, etc.
- Magnificent track at new community building
- Not many other activity options other than pickleball, track.
 - Many empty rooms for planned activities but then weren't formalized
- A workout gym would be nice, but significant cost
 - Swimming pool at Warren is great and easy to work
- Senior center is depressing

- They don't offer that many services for people who are over 50 and active (mostly for immobile persons)
 - Should offer art classes from an instructor
 - More classes that support the community like the programming already offered for Medicare info, care of the caregiver, mental health, etc.
- Senior Expo/Wellness Fair with vendors to expose seniors to Medicare, blood pressure checks/providers, outdoor activities, city programming, etc.
- Senior books in Sterling Heights only talks about death amenities
- Gardening programming
- Decorations/Wreath making
- Offering discounts to seniors for these programs
- Better communication about other events/programming in other local communities (not necessarily only in Sterling Heights)
- Cooking demographics for 1 or 2 people only
- More daytime programming, especially in the winter
- Field trips for seniors (i.e., community trip to DIA, museums, fun trips)
- Ask Sterling Heights to evaluate/compare programming against other cities
- Make sure there is programming for both active senior crowds and limited senior crowds
- Seniors visiting seniors program (ambulatory seniors visit homebound seniors, create a buddy sort of system, and reduce isolation)
- Magnolia Park has safety issues (guns/drugs?)
- Make the recreation amenities website into a grid so it's easier to follow
- Community garden would be a nice facility
- City should provide transportation to and from community facilities and specific programming
 - Better communication about that service
 - Extend the hours of this service
- Senior webpage with hotlinks to all the things the seniors need (increase communication!)
 - City website can be challenging

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Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Park Facility Needs**

Date: November 3, 2021

Time: 8:00am

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **parks facilities** within the City
 - Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - Facility needs by user groups (sports, different age groups, etc.)
 - Facility needs by area/section of the City
 - Facility needs by season (winter, summer)
 - Safety needs or concerns
 - Open space/natural resource facilities needs
 - Other related topics

Notes:

- Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - Hampton Park has no restroom at all – would be nice to have a restroom at each park
 - Recycling receptacles
 - Swimming pool/aquatic facilities
 - Versus renting from Warren for SH residents
- Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - Swing safety
 - Concerns get handled very efficiently – fixed before I even know it's an issue
- Facility needs by user groups (sports, different age groups, etc.)
 - Trash cans and recycling bins near to the facilities
- Facility needs by season (winter, summer)
 - More lights or come on earlier and can be shut off earlier in Dodge Park
 - Couldn't meet there in the evenings
 - Even just a few lights in the pavilion so people aren't left in the dark
 - Keeping restrooms open year-round
- Safety needs or concerns
 - More lights in pavilion
 - Sufficient police presence
 - Has a park monitor at the little league events and it is good
 - Safe crosswalks for busy streets (to increase park access)
- Other related topics
 - Better communication on how people should report parks safety issues

- E-sports makes city recreation wholly inclusive
 - E-sports are coming to HS
 - The City is already ahead by implementing E-sports in the city
- Offer recreation rentals (e.g., skis, sleds, canoes, etc.)
- Promote winter sports and recreation opportunities
- Offer adult tennis lessons

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Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Teen Facilities and Programming**

Date: November 15, 2021

Time: 6pm

Format: Youth Advisory Board Meeting

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **parks facilities** within the City
 - Most popular/well utilized park facilities
 - Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - Facility needs by user groups (sports, different age groups, etc.)
 - Facility needs by area/section of the City
 - Facility needs by season (winter, summer)
 - Safety needs or concerns
 - Open space/natural resource facilities needs
 - Other related topics

Notes:

- Most popular/well utilized park facilities
 - Dodge Park
 - Basketball courts
 - Very heavily utilized; very often you need to wait in order to play
 - Mini-soccer field
 - Also very heavily utilized; very often you need to wait in order to play
 - Would like to see more of this type of facility at Dodge Park and/or other parks
 - Would like to see an opportunity where secure/rent soccer balls and basketballs
 - Walking trails/nature walks
 - Excellent and well used amenity
 - This season, mosquitos have been a significant issue deterring park/trail use in certain areas
 - Love the reading areas and peaceful contemplation opportunities within Dodge Park
 - Farmers market pavilion is a great area for reading, in the morning
 - Dodge Park ice skating
 - Very crowded on Saturdays, possibly need another ice skating rink elsewhere

- A concern is that Dodge Park has gotten the most attention, with the best facilities. Would like to see better distribution of park facilities across the park system.
- Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - Outdoor exercise stations workout stations
 - Lockers at park facilities
 - Would love to see spaces for outdoor yoga
 - Kidd Elementary School – opportunity for development of a new park
 - Would love to see a butterfly house at the Nature Center
- Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - Imus Park needs better maintenance
 - Delia Park soccer fields condition is poor after heavy rains
- City's trail system
 - Some of the trails are narrow, results in safety issues for different trail users
 - Dodge Park bridge – heavily utilized, many bikers cross it very fast
 - After flooding – mud on the trail, sand on the trail
- Special event opportunities:
 - Youth Advisory Council is interested in helping organize and volunteer at special events. This allows for students to earn their school-required volunteer hours.
 - Idea to hold a scavenger hunt
 - Successful scavenger hunt event held at Jimmy John's Field, using the Goose Chase App, organized by teachers at Henry Ford/Stevenson
 - Art Contest event for kids and teens
- Winter season opportunities:
 - Snow man building contest
 - Snow sledding contest
 - Winter Show – Holiday songs
 - Fundraiser for needy persons during the holiday season
 - Turn the Farmer's Market into a pop-up holiday market
 - Food trucks – holiday themed food
- Comments about programming:
 - Youth would like to see some of the non-sport programming, such as arts and crafts
 - Drawing and painting programs, like Painting with a Twist locations
- Thoughts and strategies for communicating information about parks and recreation facilities, programs and special events
 - Parks newsletter helps, but other communication methods are needed
 - Create a City parks and recreation app with notifications
 - Consider creating a text message/notification systems
 - Better coordination with the schools to advertise City programs and events

Sterling Heights Parks, Recreation & Non-Motorized Plan Update

Focus Group Discussion Notes

Focus Group Topic: **Non-Motorized Facility Needs**

Date: November 1, 2021

Time: 8:00am

Focus Group Guiding Questions

Note: Some questions may not be applicable to all focus groups.

1. Please share your thoughts about **[parks or non-motorized] facilities** within the City
 - Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - Facility needs by user groups (sports, different age groups, etc.)
 - Facility needs by area/section of the City
 - Facility needs by season (winter, summer)
 - Safety needs or concerns
 - Open space/natural resource facilities needs
 - Other related topics

Notes:

- Facility types that should be offered which are not
 - *Landing pads for individuals who want to go close to the water*
 - *Educational Plaques at ruins/sites in the woods/along trails (Dodge Park, Clinton River Park North)*
 - “The abandoned early 20 century drag line excavator (“Crane” on the CRAMBA map) and tall sifter are of great interest to anyone who has seen them. Why were they there? What was the park used for in years past? An historic signpost describing the equipment’s past purpose would be very informative – if anyone knows. Was the soil excavated, and are the berms throughout the park a result of excavating?”
 - *More dock/platforms along river for viewing/fishing*
 - *Bike park with obstacles (example: [Bike Park at The Jones Center in Springdale, Northwest Arkansas — The Jones Center.](#))*
 - *Bike tire pumps throughout the park*
- Design/quality/maintenance issues for facilities
 - *Trail muddiness (lasts for 3 or so days)*
 - *Trail sandiness after flooding*
 - *Pathways that go under bridges because of roads are often unusable due to water/flooding/mud*
 - *Need an at-street crossing to make it safe to cross the street and alternative to go around instead of going under the bridge (on the way to Utica)*
- Facility needs by area/section of the city

- *New trail extension in areas where there are sidewalks that abruptly stop and start (on the way to trails and around the city)*
- *Bike lanes on roadways may be used if they feel safe (maybe separated from traffic?)*
- *Clinton River trail at Van Dyke should have a crosswalk to heritage park by City of Utica.*
- *Few more benches in Edison Court or along the water way.*
- **Safety needs or concerns**
 - *Signage for bikers to signal audibly when approaching walkers (sign near main bridge in Dodge Park)*



- *Signage to walk bikes over bridge (bridge farmers market)*
- *Overgrown shrubs on sharp corners (blind corners) in Dodge Park – danger for walkers/bikers*
- *Sloped bike trails near a bank (icy in the winter and too close to the edge)*
- *Farmstead Park to Donovan Park (along Clinton River Road along entrances from farmstead park to Donovan park): needs a bike lane and complete sidewalks along the roadways*
- *Wayfinding signage (Edison Court trail & bridge names)*
 - *“The main bridge should be given a name so that the bridge will not be confused with the Nature Center Bridge.”*
- **Other related topics**
 - *Freedom trail is loud; many users prefer to use other trails*

Additional Comments Received:

- Missing numbered emergency markers along the trail should be replaced. Since that are useful in estimating distance (almost 0.1 mile per marker) a numbered reference marker should be installed at the main entrance bridge (approx. #17.5). Since runners are measuring their running distances, I would suggest that the numbering system be in actual miles and tenths of a mile. (i.e., "Emergency Marker 13" would become "Mile Marker 1.3")
- After the new Dodge Park bridge was reconstructed some years back, Loop D became part of the main trail, and what was the main trail is now used as loop. The emergency markers should reflect this change, elimination the "D loop" designation on the main trail.
- It would be very useful to have a good trail map that can be downloaded, showing not only the main paved trail, but accurately showing the dirt bike trails and scenic designations. There is a reasonably good map published by the CRAMBA (Clinton River Area Mountain Bike Association), but the park needs one that includes more of the park's artifacts as well as a latitude/longitude grid that would work well with smart phones. One specific artifact that hardly anyone using the park knows about is the remains (pylons) of an historic early 1900's dancehall-speakeasy just about 300 ft near emergency marker #21. People are

shocked when I lead them to this site. There are at least four abandoned water wells in the park.

- There are many places where debris have been dumped in years past. The worst is the so-called "Rock Garden" (broken concrete) off the SW bike trail. It's treacherous walking in that area and a blot on the otherwise beautiful landscape. It would be nice to have concrete slabs cleaned out. Interestingly there are also abandoned wells in that area whose accessibility is inhibited by the broken concrete.
- More greenways connecting the Dodge Park pathways to other paths and parks would be nice. Getting to metro beach from Dodge Park is relatively safe considering the wider sidewalks on the way to 16 mile. Perhaps existing sidewalks could be widened as they are repaired in the future. Dedicated street greenways would also be a welcome fix. The bridges and fish dock in the northern end of the Dodge Park trail are getting a bit worn and may need a little more upkeep. This wood also seems to have lost its treated qualities as with a small amount of rain the planks feel like they are ice.
- My main safety concern is street crossings. I ride the sidewalk due to safety concerns and many of the crossings are poorly timed and controlled for bike and pedestrian use. An example of this is crossing Clinton river road to travel west on Riverland. I use this route when there is flooding on the path and have to rush across due to a short window time. Auto traffic trying to turn right (south) onto Clinton River Road does not usually know to yield. Perhaps a short period with a red arrow for auto traffic in areas like this would help.
- Another safety concern of mine is the speed of e-bikes. Most users maintain a safe speed, however, like cars there are some that feel they must top out. Perhaps a posted speed limit could be set with reminders along the trail.
- In general, I enjoy riding the trails and feel anything outside of that (street/sidewalk) is unappealing due to safety, scenery and ride quality. This makes trying to get to shopping centers and anywhere that's east or west of the Dodge Park system difficult and dangerous. I would like improved/widened sidewalks and greenways if possible. I think this would promote foot traffic and bicycle traffic. Adding greenways and sidewalks to areas that have none (Clinton river road/sections of Hall/other secondary and surface streets) would also positively impact non-motorized travel. Being forced into a street does not seem safe or appealing to the average citizen.