



Tukwila Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan

Moving Listening Sessions

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The City of Tukwila is updating its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan to guide the future of the City's parks and recreation system. To create a plan that meets the needs of Tukwila's diverse community, the PROS planning process will include many opportunities for public input, participation, and engagement. An inclusive process that attracts diverse community input is critical to developing a plan that meets the needs of the community now and in the future.

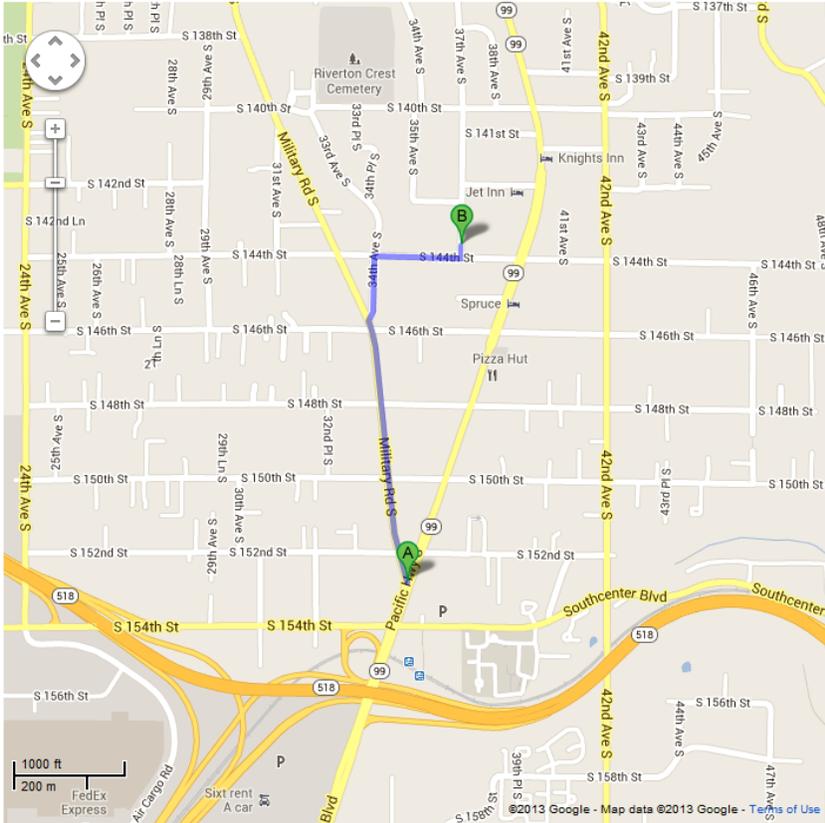
Many members of linguistic minority communities have participated in community workshops as part of the City's recent strategic planning process, as well as planning for the development at Tukwila Village. Instead of a similar workshop-format, we will gather information on community priorities and concerns through a moving listening session with a staff member, an interpreter, and several community members. The moving listening sessions will generate similar information as focus group, but will be tied directly to the park spaces and individuals' specific experiences. The objectives of the session are:

- Engage members of the linguistic minority communities in conversation about recreation and play in the neighborhood, including Cascade View Park.
- Identify obstacles, both material and perceived, to the City's parks and recreation facilities and program.
- Identify community needs and preferences as they relate to the City's Parks, Recreation, and Open Space systems.
- Identify priorities for improvements in recreation spaces and programming.

Description and Summary

Four Moving and Listening sessions were held on Saturday, June 1, 2013 from 10-12 pm. The Moving Listening Sessions paired City of Tukwila staff with an interpreter and 4-7 members of a linguistic minority community. Interpreters were arranged through the Refugee Woman's Alliance and Dynamic Languages. City staff were provided a focus group protocol and coached on information needs and questions to ensure similar information. The focus groups were conducted as the party walked between the ReWA offices and Cascade View Park, the route map is shown in Exhibit 1. Immediately after the focus group, staff and interpreters discussed what they heard and checked for mutual understanding. The staff and interpreter discussion was recorded and transcribed. The summary presents input by theme and discussion topic.

Exhibit 1
Moving Listening Session Route Map



PARTICIPANTS

The City conducted four Moving Listening sessions, each focused on a specific linguistic minority. They included:

Language	Parks and Recreation Staff Member	Interpreter	Number of Community Participants
Somalian	Randy Engle	Abdirahman Hashi	6
Nepali	Stephanie Gardner	Lila Alan	9
Chin, Burmese	Tim Carpentier	Clifford Chankim	7
Tigrinya, Amharic	Dawn Couch, BERK	Afeworki Ghebreiyesus	6
Float	Dave Johnson		

SUMMARY

What do you like about this park and others in the community?

- Nepali, Somali, and Burmese participants appreciate the clean-up of the “jungle area” (where there was dense vegetation on the hillside of the park) and want to see it maintained. They were complementary about the change. Staff described it as a “work in progress”.
- The Somali participants have very positive reviews of the parks. They have been in the community a long time and good networks. They sometimes have celebrations at Starfire and sometimes have celebrations at the community center because the community organizes.
- Participants note how much families use the park—the park is beloved by the community.
- Though older people of the various communities do not mix that often, the park is a place that everyone uses, and the children and mix. Participants note the importance of both having the opportunity to gather as a group, and the opportunity to mix with other groups in a non-threatening way. Parents gather and share the news with members of their own ethnic community while the children do what children do in the middle [a staff member notes that this is the dynamic he often observes in the park].
- Participants like the open mountains and the park is a lush area to come to. Green space is very important to them.
- Participants like this place, love this park, and are very comfortable coming there, especially in the daytime.

If no, what prevents you from using this park and others in the community? What would make you use it more?

- **Personal safety and security is a primary barrier to park usage for some participants.**
 - People generally feel safe at the park, but there are some issues there, too. The Somali and Eritrean participants felt safe in the park.
 - The biggest issues are safety at the park and walking around in the neighborhood (between park and ReWa)
 - The Nepali community has recently experienced harassment, theft, and people trying to take money. Some women in the community have been mugged, their jewelry has been ripped from them in broad daylight. These experiences of being threatened in the neighborhood has made the community uncomfortable with being out in public, including in the parks. The muggings have happened to younger people, so the older people feel that they themselves must be even more vulnerable and are afraid to go out.
 - While they love the park in the daytime, nighttime can be intimidating.
 - Participants describe gang members and people brandishing guns taking over the park at night. The park users call the police, and when the police come the threats always run up the hill and never get caught. The parks users were realistic and understand that the police can't always come right away, and when they do the threat is rarely resolved, it just chases the threats off temporarily.
 - There is lots of gang activity and drug dealing within the parks. Local youth seem to be part of the problem, immigrants believe they are seen as an easy mark.
 - Park users are intimidated by people asking for money and cigarettes at the bus stop.

- Burmese participants' questions seemed centered around security. They feel more security is necessary, including things like security cameras.
- Community members don't always know how to get help if something happens.
- **Transportation to and from parks and trails outside the neighborhood is a challenge**
 - Many people do not have transportation between parks.
 - Walking to and from is sometimes not an option because of the public safety concerns.
 - Many parks and facilities are far removed from the cultural communities.
 - When it's summer, it's hard because they want the kids to get out and about but transportation is a big issue; no shuttles that are easy for them to use.
- **Awareness of resources and events are an obstacle to using them**
 - While some of the participants had "heard" of the community center, none had actually ever used it. Some described it as a myth—something they everyone has heard about but no one has seen.
 - Somali participants who knew where the Community Center was, thought it was too difficult to get to.
 - The Burmese participants had never heard of it.
 - It is particularly difficult to access for new arrivals.
 - Some community events don't have a lot of relevance to their community. For example, some community members don't really celebrate public safety services in an American way—so a touch a truck event doesn't mean anything to them. [Once it was explained exactly what the event was about, they thought their kids would probably love to attend].
 - The Eritrean participants who like jogging did not know there were running trails available in Tukwila. They thought if they knew where they were and how to get to them, that they would enjoy using them for jogging.
 - When asked if they use any other park, the Eritrean participants' response was "what other parks? Where are these parks? Do you have a list of parks to give us?"—this speaks to the lack of awareness of the recreation amenities in the City.
 - Even with a translated list, participants would be disinclined to go out and explore the parks on their own. However, if a tour could be organized for a group of 10 or so, they would share the information broadly throughout the community. No one would go on their own to a place unfamiliar with everyone in the community.
 - There could be an opportunity to do parks tours for community groups and group leaders.
 - There is also some confusion about which open areas are parks, or are for private use.
- **For newly arrived groups, navigating the cultural diversity in the community and park is somewhat of an obstacle.**
 - Participants value that it is a public park, and believe it is good all cultural groups use it. However, for some who are trying to navigate American culture, having to navigate all the cultures is intimidating.
- **Fees are an obstacle for some user groups.**

- **In the summer months there are lots of activities and opportunities for recreation and exercise, but there are not many opportunities the other 9-10 months of the year when the weather is bad.**

If yes, what activities do you or your family enjoy in this park? How do you get here?

- **Celebrating and gathering with other community members.**
 - Communities have lots of events in the summer, but there is often not enough room for them to celebrate/host them.
 - They go to SeaTac a lot since there is more space for them there.
- **Non-traditional sports and soccer.**
 - Badminton and table tennis are popular sports.
 - Participants like Starfire, but need them to provide discounts because there are a lot of people in their groups.
 - Many cultural communities need soccer facilities that are closer to them. Many youth play soccer on the school properties, but they are not technically allowed to do so. The communities are trying to navigate the community and the resources, but it is very complicated. They have tried to organize informal tournaments, but learned they couldn't reserve the grounds—an in fact weren't supposed to use them.
 - Participants want to be able to use soccer fields and we need to let them know they can use the fields in the City, that it's affordable and can be reserved.
 - The Burmese community likes to play a traditional game with woven ball.
- **Health and fitness activities.**
 - Cultural communities are much more focused on fitness and exercise than the city thinks.
 - Many participants like to jog and feel there is a real focus on group jogging in their communities. For many, there was a social aspect to jogging—so they prefer to jog where they are likely to see their other co-ethnics jogging. For that reason, they always go to Foster Higher.
- **Activities that they can participate in groups.**
 - People like to spend time together, as a community. Many of the participants mentioned a desire to do things in community or family groups.
 - Participants stressed that in their cultures they want to do things as groups – can they sign up all in a group instead of as individuals? People are disinclined to sign up for activities, or sign their children, up for activities as individuals.
 - Is there a standardized process or way that Tukwila could help them with organizing group events or group registration for classes?
 - The ethnic communities need time and opportunities to spend time together as a community, so places they can gather are very important.
 - Participants would like to do a soccer tournament to get all the people in their communities and other neighborhoods together.

What activities would you like to do but can't?

- **Soccer is the most popular activity**
 - Both the Napoli and Somali participants mentioned soccer as a desirable, popular activity.
 - The Cascade View Park, the closest park to the community isn't well set up for soccer. You do get people practicing footwork, but it doesn't have the space for playing soccer.
 - Starfire is somewhat far away—many people can't access it.
- **There is interest in non-traditional sports, especially those that don't have school sponsored counterparts, like badminton and table tennis.**
 - Kids create their own games since they don't have facilities for doing the games they want to play, like table tennis or badminton.
 - Many children played table tennis and badminton back home, and don't have a place to play here.
 - Volleyball is a popular sport in Eritrea, table tennis and foosball are also popular.
- **Gardening is an activity that many would like to participate in, if there was community space to do so.**
 - It's a big deal for them to use back at home, so they would like to do it here.
 - Pea-patches would be something they're interested in, perhaps not year around but in the warmer months. There are lots of open spaces on Highway 99 that have been vacant for a long time, that could fill this need
 - The trouble with Tukwila's pea-patch is that it is far away from would-be users.
- **Space for traditional, cultural celebrations and gatherings.**
 - The park needs a larger, more usable covered area.
 - The small covered area that does exist is not big enough for gathering under, and there is no sitting area. It is not a shelter that meets their needs.
 - The Nepali participants said they needed a shelter they can use year around, so that they can come outdoors all times of the year. They have a love of being outdoors, being outside of the apartment space.
 - In Nepali culture, mourners need outdoor space to honor their dead. They need a place they can gather every day for 13 – 16 days when a family member passes. It needs to be big enough to accommodate children and immediate family members, and something that they can reserve for an hour a day during the 13-16 day mourning period.
 - Current options for large gatherings are expensive, such as Starfire and school properties.
 - The local Somali community is very large, and there are not a lot of options (especially low-cost options) for venues in which to gather and celebrate traditional holidays. For example, July 1 is Somali Unification Day and they need a place to gather. It is good for the community.
 - People need space to be together as a cultural group.
 - Often this space would be used for very close family members, so not a huge amount of space but enough that would be covered for a big family; maybe with picnic tables for 10-12 people.

- It is important to find indoor opportunities for adults to gather, too. Maybe like an open community room.
- **More open space for amateur and non-organized soccer and sporting use.**
 - Many children are used to playing pick-up soccer on plain open space.
 - It is hard and expensive to plan and make a reservation; people would like to be able to just go play.
 - Right now there is no place to play pick-up soccer but they would really like to. Often the park is so crowded that you can't really play.
 - Everyone likes playing soccer at Starfire, but they need some sort of discount because there are a lot of people trying to use it and it is expensive.
- **Open space, with amenities like benches and covered areas, for being outdoors year-round.**
 - Green space and more open space for passive use would be nice.
 - There are no shelters at the park; there is not a place you could gather and sit at.
 - Parks need more benches, because people don't want to sit on the concrete. Especially around the swing area, or areas where people are supervising their children. People are watching their kids here for hours sometimes.
 - Participants would like to have a space they could use year-round; there's a real love of the outdoors.
- There is a need for more swings. They get very crowded.

If you were able to change one thing about the parks or community spaces what would it be?

- **For Cascade View park, lighting is a significant issue.**
 - The Somali participants feel the lights that are here are not bright enough. They look nice but are a decorative item, not a security item.
- **Play equipment is not sufficient to meet the needs.**
 - People fight over the swings, there are not enough of them. We looked around to where we might put more swings, but swings need a pretty big fall area. That is what takes up so much room. There are only a couple of flat areas, or you would have to dig into that hill.
- **More information, especially information in their languages, that will help them navigate parks and tell them what they can and can't use.**
 - People don't know what they can and can't use, so they are uncomfortable going to unfamiliar parks.
 - A park and information center would be a big help – people don't want to look ignorant and don't want to have to ask for help, so they sometimes avoid those situations. They would access this information passively.
 - They don't see people at parks sometimes, and don't know who can go where or do what at parks, so it can be confusing to use those facilities.
- **Parks should be equipped with clean, drinkable water fountains.**
 - There are no water fountains at some of the parks.

- There is no water source; this can be an incredible expense for people (buying and hauling water bottles).
- Often a water fountain either doesn't work or isn't clean.
- People don't want to be around smoking, and don't want their children around smoke.
- Some participants couldn't think of anything they would change.

Is there anything else the City can do to improve the neighborhood environment for encouraging wellness?

- **Provide linguistically appropriate tours, tutorials on use, and information about parks.**
 - It would be ideal if we could get linguistically-appropriate information to them so they can share it amongst themselves.
 - Park tours would be a good way to get information out about the parks system, and they would be easy to expand to community groups.
 - People are really interested in knowing about the parks, but they don't necessarily want to go to them on their own.
- **Keep the dialogue with linguistic minority communities going.**
 - Somali people have a lot of centers nearby, which could provide an inlet.
 - Some attendees would be willing to work as community ambassadors.
 - It would be a good idea to work with the school at the Mosque and set up a time to meet with members.
 - Using common agencies is the best way to connect with the community.
 - It might be possible to get some volunteer translators to help distribute a survey to gather information.
 - Parks and Recreation staff could attend a practice session at the soccer fields and meet with the community there.
 - Parks and Recreation staff should speak with the people who are using the facilities.
 - There should be specific outreach out to seniors from these linguistic communities.
 - Parks and Recreation staff should let people they reach out to for information know well in advance of when you want to meet with them, so that they can plan on what they want to talk about.
 - Many participants were very interested in how they could work to improve the park and community conditions in the neighborhood

Other Community Concerns

In addition to the questions queried by city staff, community members also mentioned other areas of concern not directly related to the City's parks. These include:

- **Parking during Ramadan** is very limited in the City of Tukwila.
 - It is an issue for this area, Ramadan brings sometimes up to 1,000 people to the parks, but they have nowhere to park.

- In the evening, some of the local merchants will allow them to use their spaces, but during the day time there is really nowhere to park.
- Ramadan is a 30-day event and parking is probably more of a constraint sometimes than others are, but you know when it going to happen so the City could help plan for it. There are empty lots along Tukwila International Boulevard that can be used for parking needed for the community to attend Ramadan events at the mosque.
- Participants shared many concerns and questions about **neighborhood conditions**. Community members are very interested in improving their neighborhoods, but often do not know how to address their concerns about neighborhood conditions.
 - Participants wondered about the empty houses and properties in the neighborhood. They believe the empty properties attract crime.
 - The Colonial Garden Apartments are in need of maintenance and attention from the owners. It sounds like the owners don't follow up with needed repairs. They say that the Samara Apartments owners are a lot more responsive. The residents at Colonial Garden Apartments have had a lot of legitimate maintenance concerns, including problems with toilets.
 - No one deals with garbage or maintenance and repairs in many neighborhoods.
 - [from an interpreter] there is an opportunity to involve the community in maintaining the park, it is their park. There is more opportunity with women, not so much the boys, they boys are always messy. The women can teach the boys about respect for the park.
- The Burmese participants asked for a **school bus to stop** at Samara Apartments.