

5/26/11: To friends and members of the Wissahickon East Project:

Below is a summary of consensus points discussed at the 5/14/11 community planning meeting for the new park. The summary takes into account the City's goal to provide a '10 minute walk-to-park' for every neighborhood, watershed and Fairmount Park regulations, the no-building easement, community ideas, park neighbors needs and the future expansion of Cresheim Creek green land of which we are one of several projects.

We just learned that City Council will have a hearing to accept the park as City property on June 6 at 10:00 am (seating at 9:45) at City Council Chambers, 4th floor, City Hall. Please recruit attendees – neighbors, family and friends. A good showing will be encouraging to City Council members and Fairmount Park. Please e-mail us at info@wissahickoneast.com to confirm attendance.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in clean-ups, community meetings, letter-writing, endorsements, lobbying and made financial contributions. Together we have achieved a lot and will do a lot more in the coming years. As soon as we start work in the summer we will contact everyone who signed offers to volunteer.

Sincerely, the WEP Board (see website: www.wissahickoneast.org)

Wissahickon East Project Community Planning Meeting 05-14-2011
Summary of Group Consensus Ideas

Overarching Vision: Create the first upper East Mt. Airy Park. Restore and protect the natural (urban) Cresheim Creek valley and environment and provide recreational and educational opportunities for all members of the community.

Key Features

- Natural Trails – ideally loop trails on both sides of the creek with stepping stones or a bridge that connect them. Some parts should be accessible to people with disabilities.
- A Unique (and quiet) Place for the Community – possibilities: a 'walk-to' neighborhood park, showcase for native plantings, bird habitat, use of natural spaces including for youth and children, spaces for interaction (logs to sit on), educational programming for environmental protection, local human and animal history of the area.
- Engagement of Many Special Constituencies – children, youth, people with mobility issues, bird watchers, walkers, etc. – that is respectful to the immediate neighbors.
- Safety – fence to discourage dumping, better lighting, parking, police presence, cameras (real or fake), and signage re: dumping, hours park is open, dog use, noise etc.
- Signage – that identifies park regulations (dogs, daytime use, etc.), provides education on the environment and the human history of the park land and welcomes all constituents (e.g., Braille on signs).
- Vision for Connection -- further Cresheim Creek restoration and connections of green spaces in the Cresheim valley. Collaboration with other groups and agencies with similar goals, for example Friends of Cresheim Trail, Fairmount Park, Friends of the Wissahickon, East Mount Airy Neighbors, the Chestnut Hill Quaker Meeting, Rotary Club, etc.

How We Get There

Short-term (2011): Planning meeting with Fairmount Park, establish city ownership (City Council meeting on June 6, 2011), community cleanups (small and large trash items), invasive species removal, start assessments and develop long term use and restoration plan, build long-term partnerships with the Water Department, FOW, Fairmount Park, Streets Department, etc. Start fundraising for new park projects.

Longer-term: heavier and pre-planned work that requires more assistance, collaboration with other agencies and funding to get us to the point of establishing focal points & activity areas (the things that will make the park special & unique).

Leverage community resources (skills, people power, funding connections, etc) by thinking broadly about involving other local institutions (for example the United Cerebral Palsy Association), schools, businesses and government resources.

Recognize that fundraising and continuous involvement by the community is the key to our success. Develop effective procedures/processes for both.

Timing & Sequence: Development of long-term and yearly sustainable work plans that consider impact of each step so as not to create problematic issues (e.g., make it a walk-to-park that welcomes people but provide limited parking so as not to clog the street with parked cars and attract night parkers).

Areas of Concern:

What are the right policies re. dogs (leash laws), bicycles on trails, possible illegal camping, parking, too much traffic, dumping on Anderson Street and in the park, safety, crime, etc.? Develop solutions such as no-parking zones (except for people who live on the street and a couple of spots for disabled people); have a permanent membership spot for a park neighbor on the WEP Board; etc.

Upcoming Events and Projects:

- June 1: Planning Mtg with Fairmount Park, establish agreements and a framework for roles and responsibilities
- June 6, 9:45 a.m.: City Council Hearing, WEP presentation and community attendance
- Summer: Coordination Meetings with Water Department, Friends of the Wissahickon, (etc.) to establish a framework for collaboration
- Summer and Fall: start clean up and invasive species removal, start ongoing work teams, reach out to people and organizations with expertise, machinery and people power. Start minor trail development. Consider 'ribbon-cutting- event', street party, walk-through, etc. Start fundraising/grant writing team. Enhance communication, PR, media (etc) procedures.
- September or October: WEP membership meeting to vote in Board and agree on long-term and 2011/12 focus points. Build understanding among membership of Philadelphia 2015 goals, City Park, Watershed regulations, park vision and goals (and limitations).
- Major clean-up days: September 17 and December 3
- Fundraiser at Trolley car Diner: week of September 19-25
- Ongoing: Weather permitting invasive species removal/native planting, clean-up and trail building teams work year-round.

Summer Priorities:

- Fencing
- Initial signage
- Prepare for parking regulations
- Start clean-up at the north-east corner
- Start invasive species removal
- Start planning: assessments for creek and land restorations, understand regulations, initial simple trails, safety – in line with WEP vision, Fairmount Park, watershed and easement regulations and needs of immediate neighbors. Work with Fairmount Park, FOW, Water Department.