

MEMORANDUM

Date:	August 27, 2012
То:	David Shouse, City of Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation Cassie Schumacher-Georgopoulos, City of Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation Emily Ander, City of Raleigh Department of Parks and Recreation
From:	Miranda Maupin, Skeo Solutions Vernice Miller-Travis, Skeo Solutions Sarah Malpass, Skeo Solutions Sarah Little, Sarah Little Landscape Architecture
Re:	Chavis Park Community Conversation Kickoff Public Forum
Attached:	Kickoff Public Forum Handout (A) Kickoff Public Forum Presentation (B) Sign-in Sheets (C)

Introduction

The City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation Department has engaged Skeo Solutions to facilitate a Community Conversation around the past and future of Chavis Park that will result in a revised Chavis Park Master Plan. This memorandum summarizes the outcomes of the Kickoff Public Forum, held on August 11, 2012 at the Chavis Park Community Center. The agenda for the day is included as Attachment A.

The Kickoff Public Forum hosted approximately 57 stakeholders, including community residents, elected officials, and media representatives. Diane Sauer, Director of the Department of Parks and Recreation offered welcoming remarks and recognized that there has been frustration regarding past and recent decisions related to Chavis Park and that the City can do better moving forward. Mayor Nancy McFarlane also gave remarks at the opening of the Public Forum, and then demonstrated her commitment to the Chavis Park Community Conversation process by staying throughout the forum, engaging with the participants, and visiting the various stations.

Vernice Miller-Travis and Sarah Malpass then shared the findings from the Situation Assessment and provided an overview of the project through a presentation (Attachment B). Following the presentation, participants shared considerations and feedback during a group discussion facilitated by Vernice Miller-Travis. While many participants shared their stark assessments about the lack of equal investment in Chavis Park and its maintenance over the past several decades, they still agreed to participate in the Chavis Park Community Conversation process going forward. Vernice Miller-Travis asked the participants whether they are committed to engaging in this process, and whether they are committing to staying at the table as long

as it takes, and the majority of participants responded enthusiastically with a resounding yes! Former Central CAC leader F. Lonnette Williams shared in a post event note to Parks and Recreation staff that people were truly engaged and honored in a way that she had not seen before.

The following considerations and questions were shared by participants during the group discussion:

- Role of the Park: Participants emphasized the significant cultural role the park has played in the community. One participant described the park as "Chavis Heights' community home." Other participants questioned why Chavis Park is classified as a Community Park when it has historically served the role of a regional park.
- <u>Amenities</u>: Several participants commented on the loss of amenities (including the original swimming pool, WWII plane and train ride) at the park over time and described the painful impact of these losses to the community. A significant number of participants supported adding bathrooms and drinking water fountains to the park during the first phase of reinvestment to increase functionality for users. Participants also recommended resurfacing the current track facility and preserving the War Mother's Memorial.
- <u>Rebuilding Trust</u>: A number of participants shared that their trust in city processes has been broken in the past due to lack of communication, a decline in the maintenance of park facilities, and disagreement over the carousel relocation. Participants asked how they could trust that the community dialogue processes during the Chavis Park Community Conversation would result in their meaningful engagement in the planning process and real influence over the content of the revised master plan for the park.

In response, the project team shared that the stakeholder-led Public Leadership Group will directly shape the goals and priorities of the Master Plan, review the draft Master Plan, and present the Final Master Plan to the Parks Board and City Council for approval and adoption.

- Public Leadership Group (PLG) Membership: One participant applauded the involvement of youth on the PLG and suggested that more youth participants should be identified. Several other names were put forward for consideration for service on the PLG, . Additional representation from youth, the faith community and Shaw University was also strongly suggested.
- Implementation: Participants emphasized that the planning process must include a commitment to implementing the plan. Participants suggested that the plan should include a phased timeline to guide implementation. One participant commented that the level of municipal investment in implementation and continued maintenance of amenities over time would demonstrate the city's commitment to the park.
- <u>Funding</u>: Participants had several questions about funding mechanisms for implementation, including when a bond process could start and whether the city would raise taxes to fund the plan.

In response, City staff stated that many factors must be considered when considering when to propose and what to include in a Parks Bond issue, such as when Wake County schools and community college ask voters to decide on funding bond referenda. Having a reasonable, implementable plan and support from the community will be the key to moving forward with funding.

Next participants moved through four stations designed to gather feedback on the following topics. Descriptions of each station and a summary of the feedback provided by participants are found below.

- Station 1: Favorite Places
- Station 2: Preliminary Issues and Uses identified in the Situation Assessment
- Station 3: Public Leadership Group and Subject Matter Experts
- Station 4: Design Your Park!

Station 1: Favorite Places

At this station, participants used a park map to share their favorite places in Chavis Park. No limit on either the number, or "era" was placed in the charge. Most participants put only one suggestion down, some two or three. Participants were encouraged to note whether their favorite places were amenities that existed in the park's past or present. Hence the "pool grandstand" refers to bleacher-style seating associated with the original pool setting. Likewise the "stadium" refers to the bleacher structure(s) for the original athletic field, as probably does the bandstand and concessions.

The results, in order of frequency, include:

Category	Participant Description	Frequency			
Aquatics		18			
	Pool / swimming pool	13			
	Public grandstand	2			
	Olympic pool / Olympic size pool	2			
	Pool and restrooms (the people are really nice, too)	1			
Carousel		7			
	Carousel / beautiful carousel	7			
Sports facilities		7			
	Track	2			
	Track / old running track	1			
	Ballfield	1			
	Ballfield / old stadium	1			
	Stadium, football, baseball	1			
	Basketball	1			
Train		5			
	Train	5			
Natural Features		5			
	Trees	2			
	Walking by the stream	1			
	Rolling hills of the park	1			
	Greenway	1			

Historic Features		3
	War Mothers' Memorial	1
	Historic statues	1
	Historic Monument	1
Playground		2
	Playground	2
Picnic Amenities		2
	Picnic shelters	1
	Picnic areas	1
Plane		2
	Red tail airplane	1
	Airplane	1
Other		7
	Bandstand	1
	Concession stand and information booth	1
	Food	1
	Art	1
	Interactive	1
	Speed bumpers	1
	Nursery school	1

Station 2: Preliminary Issues and Uses identified in the Situation Assessment

At this station, participants were offered the opportunity to share feedback on the key issues identified in the Situation Assessment and add ideas about what is most important to include in the revised master plan. Suggestions focused on expanding the list of amenities and programming options that could be considered during the Solutions Development phase of the process, including:

Improve or expand current park conditions/amenities:

- Address use of the park by dogs. Suggestions included: add dog cleanup stations, make sure dogs are on leashes, and/or enforce the current "no dogs allowed" policy, and create a dog park area to limit free roaming dogs throughout the park.
- Resurface and maintain the track.
- Increase space for employees at the pool to include a meeting room and space for administering first aid.
- Expand outdoor and indoor meeting places for church groups, including the picnic areas.
- Add additional lighting throughout the park, particularly at the tunnel.

- Address flooding problems at the tunnel.
- Improve sidewalks by the bridge.
- Change the playground surfacing (the sand is too hot for kids to play on).
- Replace current playground equipment with innovative, interactive playground equipment that emphasize full-body engagement for kids (e.g. tinsel rope structure at Pullen Park, mounted balance boards).
- Create a lush, colorful natural landscape to make the park a magnet for users.

Consider the following new amenities:

- Concessions stands (potentially in the old Carousel building)
- Dance area and bandstand
- Designated area for bike use
- Toddler playground
- Picnic area and shade near the playground (so adults can watch kids while they play)
- Year-round, heated aquatic center
- Basketball court
- Drinking water fountains and bathrooms located throughout the park for children and adults
- Benches, chairs, tables and umbrellas to provide shade at the pool
- Historical marker for the War Mothers Memorial

Consider the following programming options:

- Water aerobics classes
- Community picnics with music and dancing
- Opportunities for sharing community history, perhaps during the picnics
- Recreational league basketball teams
- Teen programming at the community center (consider developing a room specifically for a teen center)
- Exercise classes with instructors, including classes geared towards seniors
- Expand regional connections to the park:
 - Develop a recreational trail that connects the park to St. Augustine's College, Shaw University and downtown.
 - Use trail spaces to share community history with trail users.
 - Complete Little Rock Greenway corridor

Station 3: Public Leadership Group and Subject Matter Experts

At this station, participants shared feedback on additional candidates to consider for the PLG and SME. Several persons mentioned the importance of increasing the participation of young people and the faith community on the PLG, and a representative of Shaw University.

Input from the public forum will be incorporated into the final PLG nominations and forwarded to the Parks Recreation and Greenway Advisory Board on September 13th for consideration on September 20th. The ultimate goal is to recommend to City Council and empower a citizen planning committee that fairly represents all stakeholder groups yet is a manageable size.

Station 4: Design Your Park!

At this station, participants used interactive park modeling to share what they thought the park should look like. Drawing materials were also available for children. Key considerations gathered by staff during the exercise include:

- Improve opportunities for parent supervision of children: Parents and children want to go to the park together, and parents want to exercise and use the track while their kids play. The current set up does not facilitate parental supervision of their children. Some people suggested mini playground equipment be placed up closer to the track, and there was a suggestion to remove vegetation between the track and existing playground to open the view. Grouping kid attractions (carousel, playground, community center, pool) appeared to have support from a number of people.
- Improve the current track facilities: The track area was the existing park feature that received the most comments and suggestions for improvement.
- Add cultural and historical amenities to the park: There was great support for adding park features that highlight the culture/history of the park and surrounding South Park community.
- Improve natural features of the park: Some stakeholders suggested exploring possibilities for increasing usability of the stream area. This could include improving the visibility around stream, addressing the mosquito problem, and identifying what uses might be allowed under the State's easement agreement.

Stakeholders also recommended addressing the erosion on the hill along Chavis Way, and adding beautiful landscaping throughout park that could attract birds and butterflies.

- War Mother's Memorial: Participants recommended that the area needs to be cleaned up and enhanced. They emphasized that the memorial should be kept in the same location but with landscaping changes that make the Memorial Bench more prominent.
- Address dogs in the park: Numerous participants mentioned that there is a problem with loose dogs in the park and that the new Master Plan should designate a specific area for dogs only. Other participants felt that dogs should be banned from the park entirely and that resources should be devoted to enforcing that ban.
- Restroom access and security issue: Some stakeholders suggested developing a system where
 walkers can access the restroom with a hotel type key or code. Key holders would have to apply
 and sign a contract.
- Creating interactive, engaging amenities for adults and children: Utilitarian objects (handrails, bridges, play equipment) can be works of art/ imaginative/ interactive/ timeless/ make memorable to children. Add interactive park elements for children like at the Durham Museum of Life and Science.

- Hispanic park users: Participants report that the Hispanic population using Chavis has increased. They asked what parks such as those in San Antonio and Dallas are doing to attract/meet the needs of multi-cultural park patrons.
- Increasing participation of the faith community: Some participants recommended investigating ways to create more church group participation at the park.
- Park expansion: Some stakeholders suggested that the park should be expanded to accommodate
 additional amenities. Other participants, particularly residents in areas adjacent to the park, felt
 amenities should be incorporated into the existing park space.

Additional suggestions for the various areas of the park include the following:

Location								
Current track	Amenities							
location	Restrooms							
	Earlier lighting							
	Shade trees/ shade structures placed around the track for rest areas							
	 Seasonal cooling stations (with misters) so people can still use the track very hot weather 							
	 Additional/new outdoor fitness stations. There are some existing workout elements near the track, but they are worn out and outdated 							
	Fitness obstacle course							
	 Small scale/ mini playground equipment near the track so parents can exercise but still keep an eye on their kids 							
	 Public seating areas so people can sit and watch events and activities such as Shaw band practice, football practice, etc. 							
	Concession stand							
	Outdoor basketball courts							
	 Need shade shelters and spectator /sitting areas around track 							
	Programming							
	 Park staff to supervise kids while parents exercise 							
	Teenage frolic							
Current seasonal	Amenities							
pool location	 Olympic size pool with new bathrooms and changing areas 							
	 Year round pool is more important than an increase in the pool size. 							
	Grandstand							
	Water slide							
	New pool							
	Programming							
	 A year-round pool facility could provide swim lessons, water aerobics, etc. 							
Current playground	Amenities							
location	Picnic shelters							
	Restrooms							
	 Shade trees to shade the play equipment 							
	Historic airplane at playground							

	 More toddler two equipment
	 More toddler type equipment Oct sid of cond and just have a small area with a conduct of a conduct.
	 Get rid of sand and just have a small area with a sandbox for sand play Location Considerations
	Move the playground to the current tennis court location, so all the
	 Move the playground to the current terms could location, so all the children's activities could be close together, for birthday parties, etc.
	 Tree removal between playground and track so parents can keep an eye
	on kids playing while parents use the track
Historic carousel	Amenities
location	Concession stand
	 Dance hall/ dance pavilion, open year round, with heat/AC
	Restrooms
	Interactive history center
	Outdoor seating/amphitheater
Chavis Way	Amenities
entrance (historic	Picnic shelter and restrooms
park entrance)	 Public art (visual)
	 Place for performance art
	 Bandstand/ amphitheater
	Concession stand
	Dance hall
	 Information booth/ kiosk on Chavis history, culture, background
Current park	Amenities
entrance at	 Information booth/ kiosk on Chavis history, culture, background
community center	 Pedestrian bridge at Martin Luther King Blvd
	 Widen greenway tunnel
	Lighting in tunnel
	 Landscape with flowers to make the entrance more inviting
Greenway / large	Make this area a focal point
picnic shelter	Need signage for picnic shelter locations
current location	
Within/throughout	Amenities
park (various	Historic markers throughout park
locations could	Historic walking path, leading people to historic park elements/ locations
work):	(including connectivity to Top Greene)
	Kiddie train
	Additional amusements
	Historic airplane
	Tuskegee Airmen Memorial/ sculpture
	Skate park (suggested locations include the area adjacent to the stream
	corridor, west of the old steps and the current playground location, or on
	the small parcel on the other side of Chavis Way, that supports the stream.
	The discussion included the idea that this parcel is not adjacent to existing
	homes or other park uses, and noise and activity from the skate park would
	not be as likely to disrupt)
	Outdoor basketball courts

 Additional tennis courts (fenced like courts at Seabrook Park in Fayetteville)
Climbing wall with varying challenge levels
Rope bridge
More benches
Restrooms and picnic shelters
Community garden areas squeezed in where they could fit

Recommended Next Steps

Next steps in the process will include:

- Finalize and submit the list of PLG nominees to the Parks Board and City Council for approval on September 20th and October 2nd respectively.
- Schedule the Public Leadership Group Retreat following PLG nominee approval and convene PLG members to begin planning for the Shared Learning phase of the process.

Appendix A. Kickoff Public Forum Handout

Chavis Park COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

WELCOME!

Today is the first Public Forum which kicks off the process for the Chavis Park Community Conversation. The purpose of today's meeting is:

- To gather your feedback on the issues the project must address in order to successfully update the Chavis Park master plan, and
- To take comments on the preliminary list of nominees for the Public Leadership Group.

Prior to today's kickoff event, the project team conducted a Situation Assessment. To download a copy of the report, please visit the project website (<u>http://chavisconversation.skeo.com/</u>). Key findings are summarized in today's presentation as well as at the open house stations.

Agenda

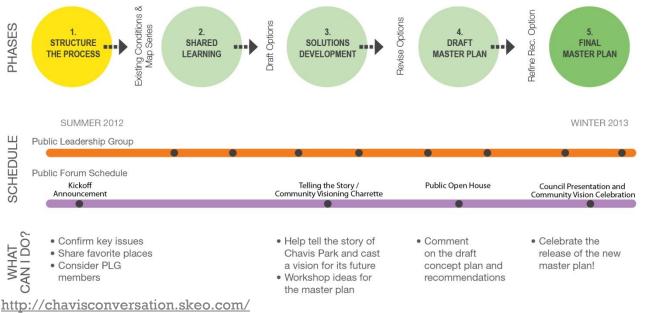
10:00 AM = Doors open 10:15 AM = Presentation and discussion, followed by Q & A 11:15 AM = Visit stations (see page 2) 12:00 PM = Refreshments and activities 1:00 PM = Dancing in the

HOW TO GET INVOLVED / PROCESS OVERVIEW

Everyone with an interest in the future of Chavis Park is a stakeholder and should get involved in the Community Conversation! The success of the Chavis Park Community Conversation will rely on the ability of residents, government planners, and local decision-makers to decide together how to preserve the park's legacy while creating a new vision for the future.

Park

The project will be organized into five phases, including 4 Public Forums to gather community input. The process will take place over 12-18 months and will be guided by a Public Leadership Group made up of local stakeholders. The diagram below illustrates the project phasing and opportunities for involvement in the Public Forum dialogues and Public Leadership Group.



OPEN HOUSE STATIONS

Handouts and project materials are available at the Welcome Table. Comment cards are also available for submission of written comments. Please visit each of the stations outlined below to provide your input today!

<u>STATION 1:</u> Favorite Places

Use the park map to share your favorite places in Chavis Park!



<u>STATION 2:</u> Preliminary Issues and Uses identified in the Situation Assessment

Share your feedback on the key issues identified in the Situation Assessment and add your ideas about what is most important to include in the revised master plan. Key issues include:

- 1. Ensure inclusion of existing residents, newer residents and other key institutions in the Chavis Park redesign process.
- 2. Address the upgrading of Chavis Park facilities through a prioritized, phased master plan.
- 3. Recognize and honor the historic and cultural role and amenities of Chavis Park.
- 4. Develop a strategic approach to obtaining political, civic and budgetary support for a revised Master Plan for the park.
- 5. Make clear to the public how the results of the Chavis Park Community Conversation will result in substantive outcomes for the park's renewal.

STATION 3: Public Leadership Group and Subject Matter Experts

Share your feedback on PLG and SME nominees. Descriptions of each group and names of nominees can be found at the station.

<u>STATION 4:</u> Design Your Park!

Use interactive park modeling to show us what you think the park should look like! Drawing materials will also be available for children.

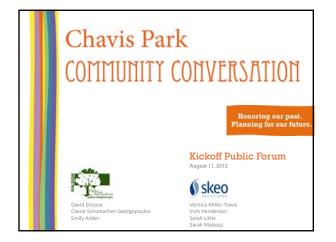
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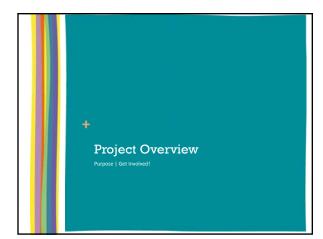
Honoring our past. Planning for our future.

Website: http://chavisconversation.skeo.com/

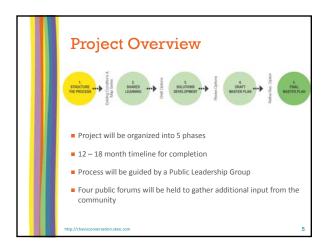
Appendix B. Kickoff Public Forum Presentation

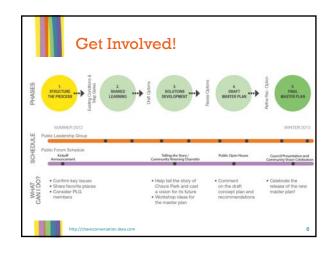


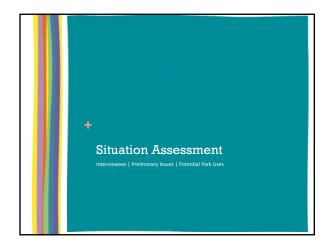












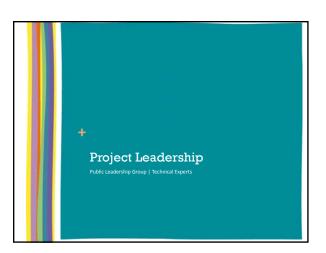
Situation Assessment Interviewees

- Immediate neighbors and active park users
- Downtown stakeholders
- City of Raleigh staff and elected representatives
- Stakeholders with planning involvement at Chavis Park
- Faith community
- Non-profits, service providers and community development corporations
- Youth and young adult organizations
- Environmental organizations

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Preliminary Issues

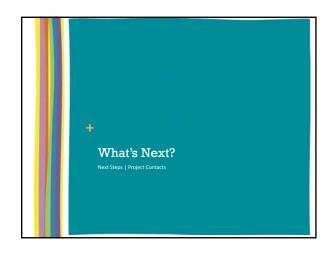
- Ensure inclusion of existing residents, newer residents and other key institutions in the Chavis Park redesign process.
- Address the upgrading of Chavis Park facilities through a prioritized, phased master plan.
- Recognize and honor the historic and cultural role and amenities of Chavis Park.
- Develop a strategic approach to obtaining political, civic and budgetary support for a revised Master Plan for the park.
- Make clear to the public how the results of the Chavis Park Community Conversation will result in substantive outcomes for the park's renewal.











Next Steps

- Input from today's meeting will be summarized in a memo
- PLG nominee recommendations will be finalized and submitted to the Park Board and City Council for approval
 Sept. 20th – Anticipated approval of final nominees by Parks Board
- Oct. 2nd Anticipated approval of final nominees by City Council
- PLG will receive training and begin to prepare for the Telling the Story / Community Visioning Charrette

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Appendix C. Kickoff Public Forum Sign-in Sheets

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