

## STAFF REPORT

Town Council Work Session, October 25, 2011

### **Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan Update (PR12-13)**

Consideration of issues related to the update of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan

Speakers: Danny Hopkins, PRCR Director; Doug McRaine, Parks Planning Manager, Anne Miller, GreenPlay (Consultant) and Other Staff

From: Danny Hopkins, PRCR Director

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**Executive Summary:** The purpose of this work session is to provide Town Council with an update on the current status of the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan. In addition, a summary of the input and findings will be presented to Council for review. These findings are based on considerable input obtained from Town of Cary residents regarding the future of the Town's park and recreation system and will form the basis for developing the final plan. The Master Plan is scheduled to be completed by the spring of 2012. Staff requests council feedback and direction for continued development of the master plan and that staff present the draft plan to Council in February 2012.

**Background:** The Town's nationally accredited Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department oversees a park system of over 2,400 acres of combined parks and open space. This system consists of 22 developed parks, 58 miles of greenways, 3 community centers, 13 staffed facilities and 4 major sports and entertainment venues. This system is vastly different from the completion of the last master plan effort. It has been eight years since Town Council approved the *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Facilities Master Plan* in 2003. Since that time, this document has been the principal guide for capital budget planning, programming and facility development. Since 2003 the Town and its system of parks, greenways and facilities has continued to grow. Given the amount and scope of change the Town has experienced during the past few years, this planning effort is considered significant in defining the direction for park and facility development over the next decade.

**Discussion:** In March 2011, Council approved hiring the consulting firm "GreenPlay" to complete the PRCR Master Plan. There are three major phases to this planning process. These include:

- Phase 1: Information Gathering
  - Public Process
  - Inventory and Analysis
- Phase 2: Findings
  - Identification of Key Findings, Issues
- Phase 3: Plan Development
  - Generate Options and Recommendations

The first phase (Information Gathering) took place between May and September and is now completed. To accurately reflect the needs and desires of the community, it was essential that this first phase include a comprehensive public participation process. Below is a listing of the range of approaches that were used to obtain input. The engagement process emphasized data collection methods that were efficient, effective, and which incorporated the Town's available resources to the greatest extent possible. This process was critical in obtaining that information which will be the basis in determining community values and needs.

- **Joint PRCR Boards and Committees Meeting** - On May 10, 2011, the Town conducted a joint meeting of its PRCR Boards and Committees. The purpose of the meeting was to “kick-off” the 2011/2012 Master Plan process. The Boards consisted of the PRCR Advisory Board and the Public Art Advisory Board. The Committees include the Athletic, Cultural Arts and Greenways. The Boards and Committees were divided into 4 groups and asked to complete a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) for Greenways, Recreation Programs and Community Facilities, Parks and Open Space and Cultural Arts.
- **Focus Group Meetings** (June, July and August) - A series of focus groups were held in June, July and August 2011 to obtain input from stakeholders on a variety of topics: indoor and outdoor athletics, community centers and special use facilities, parks and open space, and cultural arts, greenways and venues. After a project overview of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources Master Plan was provided to attendees by the Planning Team, community and staff stakeholders discussed a series of questions related to the focus group topic. Over 200 citizens attended these meetings.
- **Public Meetings** (July 18 and 19) - The Town of Cary held two public meetings to gather input as part of the process to complete the Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources Master Plan which were attended by over 100 citizens. In terms of format for the meetings, a short project overview was presented to the public followed by several questions that were asked regarding the value and vision of parks, recreation, and cultural resources to the Cary community. Then participants were asked to circulate to different stations (Values/vision, System Overview, Parks and Recreation, Cultural Arts, Greenways and Open Space) that were set up around the meeting room. At each station were a series of questions. The questions were printed on large sheets of paper and tacked to the wall. Participants were given post-it notes to write comments. Staff and consultants were assigned to each station to answer questions as needed.
- **Master Plan Survey** - The purpose of this study was to gather public feedback on the Town of Cary’s parks, recreation, open space and trails programs, services and other community investments. The survey was conducted using three methods: 1) a mail-back survey, 2) an online invitation only survey, and 3) an open link online survey for members of the public who did not receive a randomly selected survey in the mail. The analysis focused primarily on surveys received via the first two methods. A total of 5,100 surveys were mailed to a random sample of Cary in August 2011, with 5,010 being delivered after subtracting undeliverable mail. The final sample size for this statistically valid survey was 661, resulting in a response rate of 13.2 percent and having a margin of error of approximately +/- 3.8 percentage points. The open link survey generated an additional 808 responses.
- **Benchmarking Comparative Data Analysis** - Comparative data from the following seven communities was collected and analyzed in comparison to the Town of Cary. The communities were chosen because they are known for having quality parks and recreation systems. Each community was sent a benchmarking data request form and self-reported the data.

  - Clarksville, TN
  - Fort Collins, CO
  - Lakewood, CO
  - Naperville, IL
  - Plano, TX
  - Rockville, MD
  - Scottsdale, AZ

- **Master Plan E-mail** - As part of the public process of the Master Plan, a specific e-mail address was created ([parksplan@townofcary.org](mailto:parksplan@townofcary.org)) to provide citizens with the opportunity to share ideas and concerns with the Town regarding the development of Cary's future parks system. Aside from the focus group meetings, public meetings and mail-in survey, citizens wishing to provide additional input could do so through this email. Between June and September 2011, 116 emails were received regarding the Master Plan. These were grouped in the following areas: Parks and Open Space (20), Greenways (12), Facilities (81), and Downtown (3). The majority of the emails for new facilities were for a farmers market (64).
- **Indoor and Outdoor Facility Inventory** - A formal inventory process was used to obtain a current inventory as well as level of service being provided by the Town's parks and facilities.

### **Schedule**

The Master Plan is currently in Phase 2: Findings. This phase will extend into December of 2011. Based on this work session, along with public input staff receives during this phase, Plan Development is expected to occur in January 2012. A second work session will be scheduled for February 2012 with a draft of the Master Plan for Council to Review. Additional public meetings will be held at that time. The plan is expected to be completed by late Spring 2012.

- Phase 1: Info Gathering - August/Sept 2011
- Phase 2: Findings - Sept- Dec 2011
- Phase 3: Plan Development - Jan – May 2012

**Public Art Master Plan Update** - The Public Art Master Plan is also underway. This process is being lead by the PRCR Cultural Arts Division and consultants Brown & Keener, out of Philadelphia. This process is an update the 2001 Public Art Master Plan.

The planning process for the Public Art Master Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Master Plan (PRCR Master Plan) share a similar schedule. Because of this the public outreach for both plans – the workshops, forums and surveys – were therefore designed to be complementary so that they could inform and benefit from each other. Specifically, the Focus Group meetings provided the opportunity to receive input on public art, including a focus group in June, a public meeting in July and a survey questionnaire. The results of this input will be shared with participants in the public art workshops and incorporated into both the public art and parks master plans.

The Public Art Master Plan process includes two workshops scheduled for the first week of November. The multiple purposes of the workshops are to a) see and discuss examples of new public art projects in the US and abroad; b) revisit the 2001 public art principles; c) discuss how public art is experienced; and d) generate new ideas, guidelines and venues for public art in Cary. In addition, the second workshop will include a hands-on exercise for participants to share ideas and locations for public art within Maynard's Loop – the parks, greenways and cultural facilities. These recommendations will be incorporated into both the Public Art and Parks Master Plans.

In addition to the November workshop, Cary's public art staff and consultants will be meeting with local officials and organizations to gain further input on public art issues. A draft public art master plan will be completed in late January for discussion by the Cary Public Art Advisory Board, Town Council and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Department. Pending further discussion and revisions, the final public art master plan is expected to be ready for adoption in late March.

**Fiscal Impact:** There are no operating or capital impacts associated with this staff report.

**Staff Recommendation:** Staff requests council feedback and direction for continued development of the master plan and that staff present the draft plan to Council in February 2012.