

## Gathering Ideas for Re-envisioning New Haven Parks Co-Create Phase | Community Forum

The Community Forum on November 28, 2023 was attended by more than 40 people including Mayor Elicker, city staff, members of parks friends & athletic groups, and NHV residents. Building on the Listening Phase, participants shared their desired outcomes for re-envisioning New Haven parks. Participants then identified their priority outcomes across four themes: Accountability & Transparency, Equity, Communications, and Improving Services.

### Priorities for Improving Services

**1) Coordination between parks department and other city departments** in particular non-profit and elderly services and transportation.

**2) Park rangers that are public facing.** Participants shared programming suggestions including: river paddling; nature walks and plant ID, youth programming, pollinator pathways and day camps led by trained H.S. students from neighborhoods.

**3) Climate change planning and education including:** acknowledgement and planning for how parks will be impacted by climate change.

**4) Improving basic amenities** including repaving parking lots, shed storage, and dog poop bags.

**5) Clear vision and strategic plan for future of parks** linked to grant writing to ensure we have resources to improve services.

**6) Staff training and public education** about wildlife viewing, permaculture, indigenous knowledge and practices.

**7) Improve forest and tree management** such as tree pruning and care, response to downed trees in trails as well as strategic management of forests in bigger parks to include indigenous knowledge and practices.

Participants would like to see improved services on:

- Trail blazes and maps
- Light evening sports fields given safety concerns
- Mowing (avoid flower gardens and small trees)
- Ecological restoration, invasive species removal
- Regular water clean-ups
- Playing surfaces and equipment
- Athletic fields maintenance
- Athletic facilities and equipment (safe batting cages)

### Equity Priorities

**1) Safe parks** including physical and psychological safety. Concerns include accessibility, illegal activities, lighting, relationship between park rangers and community, street parking and cross walks to reach playgrounds.

**2) Equity in maintenance across all parks.**

**3) Diversity Equity and Inclusion and Black, Indigenous and People of Color centered initiative to address systemic neglect.** This initiative could foster a welcoming park community, address neglected neighborhood parks, and improve language accessibility.

**4) Equity of money spent community wide.**

**5) Equity in infrastructure amenities across all parks.**

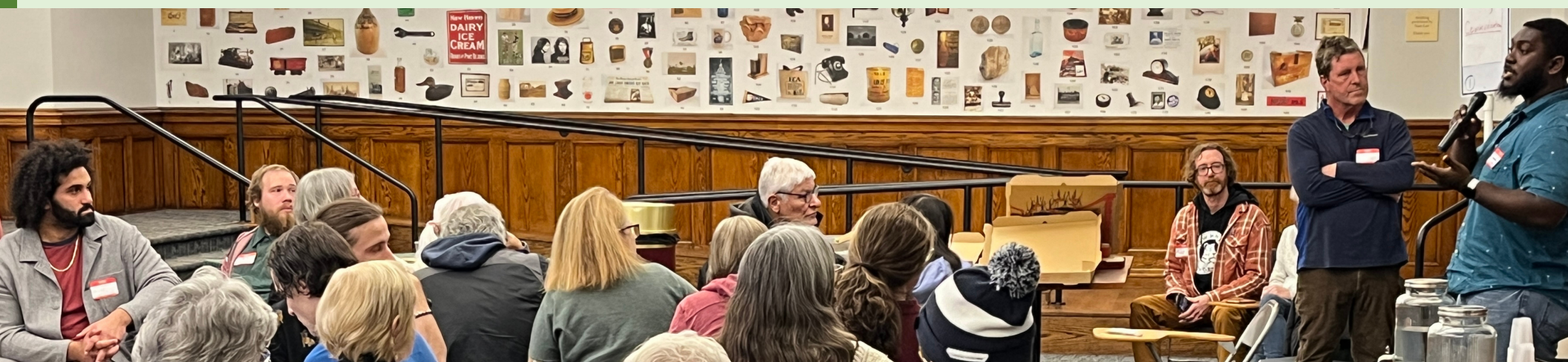
**6) All residents have a playground in walking distance (playscape, splashpad and swings).**

Other equity priorities identified include:

- Improving accessibility
- programming in every neighborhood (exercise classes, arts and crafts)
- all residents have a park within walking distance
- internal plan to address inequities



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### Accountability and Transparency Priorities:

**1) Clarity on who is responsible for what within the parks:** participants asked for follow through and timely responses when residents report problems, for example related to bathroom clean up or parks maintenance. They would like to see cooperation between city departments to solve problems and clear chains of command for maintenance.

**2) Financial reports for park system:** participants expressed a desire for more clarity about financial reporting, funds that are being allocated + spent by each department, fund sources, and perhaps most importantly, inclusion in the process of more funding being made available.

**3) Follow through on planned facilities maintenance and upgrades:** Develop a strategic Master Plan for long-term development and maintenance of parks.

**4) Maintenance accountability strategies identified:**

- Schedules on city website related to regular trash pick-up, maintenance and sports activities
- Bathroom cleaning standards
- Playscape maintenance check-list

### Communication Priorities:

**1) Simple user-friendly tool for external communication:** Desire for improved communications via social media, neighborhood email lists, and a monthly calendar with schedules for park events, sports and maintenance activities.

**2) Clarity about who to contact:** Desire for a single number and email for each park that doesn't change with staff turnover.

**3) Clear process to report concerns:** Participants would like to see an efficient process to report concerns or problems such as a single individual to contact with issues who relays the report to the responsible department or person. They also suggested a method to post the status of resolving long-term improvements, updates, and repairs.

**4) Publicize activities, programs, events, and volunteer opportunities:** Participants suggested multiple pathways for publicizing including a physical location such as kiosks with signs.

**5) Involve educational institutions** in creating an ethic of stewardship and in helping to maintain trees, flower gardens and athletic fields.

Other outcomes participants requested include:

- System for community input on playground design
- Annual thank you event for Park Friends Groups
- Less dependence on users to report maintenance needs: Staff proactive in identifying and resolving problems.

