



Southeast Citizens Planning Advisory Committee

Chair: Debbie Johnson Vice Chair: Jon Malmind

February 28, 2018

The Honorable Anna Lopez Brosche, President
Office of the City Council
117 W. Duval Street, Suite 425
Jacksonville, FL 32202

Dear Council President Brosche:

This letter is in response to your letter dated November 21, 2017 regarding the special committees you convened which are to focus on increasing the quality of life in the City of Jacksonville. We applaud your efforts, as well as appreciate you reaching out to the CPACs to solicit their suggestions for consideration by the special committees as they carry out the objectives of their work.

Upon receipt of your letter, our Southeast CPAC created an ad hoc committee to thoroughly review your request. We read with interest the background of the two special committees and your specific charge to them. Our ad hoc committee met twice to formulate suggestions and recommendations. In addition, time was allotted at our last two regularly-scheduled Southeast CPAC meetings to obtain additional input from members who had not served on the ad hoc committee. Finally, to prepare for our assignment, the ad hoc committee reviewed the minutes from meetings of the Special Committee on Parks.

The following represents those suggestions and comments received from Southeast CPAC members:

Special Committee on Parks:

- Create or maintain an existing set of metrics on which city personnel can review and evaluate parks on a variety of areas including amenities, cleanliness, signage, lighting, access, etc. It should be noted that some parks may not be intended to have all the amenities others have such as lighting if the park is only open from dawn to dusk.
- Consider finding property no longer used for its original purpose and acquiring it for parks
- Ensure all parks have proper signage to inform the community of their location
- Have parks near libraries as each will enhance the experience of the other
- Increase the number of parks with water access
- Research park systems in other cities where they are considered very good and learn best practices
- Ensure all parks are properly maintained including trash pickup

- Partner with businesses to “adopt” a park and assist with cleanup
- Have more organized sports at parks
- Increase the presence of the sheriff’s office at parks
- Evaluate whether parks without lighting should have them, and install such where deemed necessary
- Consider whether charging a small fee could ensure more quality parks
- Develop a marketing plan to better inform the community of the locations of the parks
- Create special events to draw the community to parks
- Need more after-school, evening and weekend programs for children at parks
- Develop a comprehensive inventory of various amenities and determine gaps – items would include pools, nearby senior centers, playground equipment, soccer fields, baseball fields, docks, restrooms and accessibility
- Identify parks that contain preservation land
- Have the city make parks a priority
- Develop a partnership with places such as libraries where there are no parks or other suitable areas for youth to congregate after school
- Determine if parks are accessible by public transit
- Determine if the number of parks are evenly spread throughout the city to ensure access
- Create legislation to mandate the set-aside of certain acreage of land for parks when new communities are developed
- A final observation – parks create memories. Help make Jacksonville’s parks the kind of place where the residents of our community want to go and make memories.

Special Committee on Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods:

- Increase the number of townhall meetings by district council members where the community can be better informed about their neighborhoods
- Develop a plan for infrastructure and related maintenance to ensure sufficient sidewalks, safety features (lighting, JSO presence), parks, more frequent garbage pickup, better animal control and maintenance of ditches
- Ensure there are not measures taken by developers, when creating new neighborhoods, to circumvent existing rules that would keep neighborhoods healthy

- Need better responsiveness to all matters brought before the city
- Inform the community on how they can be more proactive in matters involving them and their neighborhoods
- Review previous studies on neighborhoods and then evaluate the outcome of any suggestions and recommendations
- Provide better instructional signs when new lanes or other road enhancements are made
- Need more mass transit capabilities
- Have crosswalk signs display countdown seconds
- Enforce planning codes and regulations already in existence
- Open libraries for a period of time all seven days of the week
- Develop relationships with schools and other organizations where each could use the other's pool, walking trails, and other amenities
- Ensure no legislation is passed that would forgive code enforcement fines currently shown as a receivable to the city – these dollars could provide much-needed funds for safe and healthy neighborhood initiatives
- Ensure rezoning notices are handled and displayed properly – adhere to all current rules
- Construct shelters for bus stops
- Ensure every neighborhood has access to city sewer and water
- Ensure every neighborhood has paved streets
- Develop better communication to inform neighborhoods about projects that directly affect them
- Decrease response time by police, fire and rescue
- Have more street lights
- Expand the area of a neighborhood receiving 350 notices, especially if the proposed development is adjacent to vacant land
- Consider the following when developing new neighborhoods: schools, fire stations, hospitals, police stations, traffic flow, size of roads, and libraries
- Limit truck-driving training in heavy-traffic areas
- Have annual tree giveaways

- Increase number of trees at schools and in our neighborhoods
- Evaluate whether a sufficient number of community centers exist in each district

Observations of Parks Personally Visited by Members:

- Note: some parks were visited by two members. Both sets of observations are included below:
- *Beach and Peach Urban Park* (located on Anders Blvd. about 1/2 mile west from the corner Peach Drive and Anders Blvd.) – small park with small parking area. No one was in the park and there was an abandoned truck in the parking lot with florescent police stickers on it. Park was nicely kept with lots of outside trash cans, a cemented sidewalk, some park benches along the sidewalk and a couple of small pavilions with tables for picnickers. Sparse shade. These observations made on a weekday between 3:30 – 4:40 p.m.
- *Windy Hill Elementary School Park* (located on the eastern end of Anders Blvd. on the corner of Anders Blvd. and Skycrest Drive) – very poor parking facilities for the actual park. People would have to park on the street or on the edge of the park. Other paved parking available to the park is fenced off as it is also the parking lot of the school (located on the western-most end of the park). NO SHADE. Not-so-friendly signs posted at one entrance (which are in need of refurbishing) which inform the visitor that 'trespassers shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law' and that the 'school is under video surveillance.' Another entrance further north of the 'unfriendly' one actually posts the hours when the park is available to the public. Not too many trash cans. Nice playground area with maintained equipment and sawdust flooring in two areas which were significantly separated by several yards. Three baseball fields (one being used by the community), one outside basketball court. Odd/random bench and picnic table completely fenced off for access in the south-eastern most part of the park and near a retention pond. Large, non-labeled, poorly maintained storage-pod right next to one of the entrances. These observations made on a weekday between 3:30 – 4:40 p.m.
- *Windy Hill Center* (10540 Anders Blvd.) – nice building without ready access. Adequate outdoor trashcans. Two small outdoor pavilions with tables for picnickers. Great parking spaces. Some man-made shade (pavilions). No visitors were present when visited. These observations made on a weekday between 3:30 – 4:40 p.m.
- *Forest Blvd. Firetower Park* (corner of Forest and Beach Blvds.) – very shady park. Nice large and paved walking path. Very large pavilion with three tables for picnickers. Nice, small playground area that was well-maintained. Paved parking, but not too many spaces, however, those spaces might be adequate, though all but one were taken when I visited the place. Lots of visitors there. These observations made on a weekday between 3:30 – 4:40 p.m.
- *Losco Regional* – I live within walking distance of Losco Regional, and am there fairly often. This is one of the nicest parks I've seen. It has primo soccer fields, thanks to former Councilman Art Shad, and just got a splash pad. The playground equipment is scheduled to be updated soon, and the park is in very good condition. It could use a few more benches around the lake, but otherwise I'm very pleased with it.

- Flynn Park – parking lot was flooded with less than an inch of rain on Friday 01/12/2018. Recommend parking lot be paved (asphalt). My second concern is lighting for night time to deter nonsense activity. This park is well used and well maintained. Visited 01/12/2018.
- Mandarin Park – well-maintained park. Noticed several feral cats throughout this park. Could this become a possible rabies issue? Someone is feeding them and they do not seem aggressive. Also noticed the main pavilion has faded and needs to be re-stained for preservation. Visited 01/13/2018.
- Mandarin Park – great place for group picnics! Adequate facilities, near the river. Parking area could be larger.
- Walter Jones Park – beautiful park! Very well preserved. My recommendation would be to add a small playground in the front by the school house. Visited 01/14/2018.
- County Dock Road – this once beautiful dock was destroyed by Hurricanes Matthew and Irma, currently pending FEMA funds. Is there an estimated completion date? Visited 01/14/2018.
- County Dock Road – taking a long time to repair the dock. Need to open up boat and kayak ramps. The park has several interesting and educational features, the grounds, the paths, the boardwalk at the river bank, the oldest school building in the county (shame on the city for allowing the old school in Bayard to be destroyed!), the museum, old houses, the vegetable garden, etc. Great place to bring children, listen to folk music at festivals, etc.
- Alberts Field – large covered picnic area with only four picnic tables. Recommend adding more tables. Second, there is no playground. Recommend adding a small area with equipped playground. Visited 01/15/2018.
- Camp Tomahawk – not the easiest park to find, hidden away in a residential neighbor with poor signage, but a very nice place to relax and enjoy nature.
- Friendship Park – great place for public events, but not used as much as in earlier years.
- Observation of Certain Parks – we are blessed to have several small neighborhood parks in San Marco, along San Jose Blvd. and St. Augustine Rd - good for taking walks and providing green space for trees, birds, and wildlife. Parking is often very limited or non-existent at some of them.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on two very important areas that affect our quality of life here in the great city we call our home!

Sincerely,



Debbie Johnson, Chair, Southeast CPAC