This Task Force was led by the District Department of Parks and Recreation with the District Office of Planning and the District Department of Transportation to address improving access to the green space, open space, and recreation space in the city.
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Executive Summary

The primary goal of the Parks and Natural Spaces Public Access Task Force (Task Force) is to achieve the Sustainable DC Nature Goal #3: *Enhance access to parks and open spaces for all residents*. This goal is furthered through the vision and implementation strategy of the Play DC Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a long-range strategy for the Department of Parks and Recreation to build upon the District’s great parks and recreation legacy and plan for a bold future. Both Sustainable DC and Play DC share a goal of ensuring that all residents are within a 10-minute walk of a park or natural space.

The objectives of the Mayor’s Order are to:

A. Recommend capital budget enhancements for those actions that require capital investments;
B. Include recommended modifications to maintenance schedules to protect the appearance and safety of facilities;
C. Recommend staffing and a hiring plan that allows the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Department of General Services to improve public access to parks and natural spaces;
D. Recommend methods for protecting the District from legal liability from unauthorized use of parks and natural spaces;
E. Include design guidelines for parks that encourage spaces that are safe, inviting, attractive, and interconnected with the surrounding community and support access for all persons, accounting for differences in age, race, ethnicity, income, and ability; and
F. Include recommendations for changes to transportation access to parks and other open spaces, focusing on access by currently underserved communities to large parks and open spaces in the District.

The Task Force is charged with providing recommendations to further these objectives by September 30, 2015, in order to build upon the Play DC Implementation Strategy, which will be completed in December 2014. The recommendations of this report are designed to provide early steps toward achieving the goal of parks access for all residents.
The Play DC Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The DC Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and DC Office of Planning (OP) launched development of a 15-year parks and recreation Master Plan – called the Play DC Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Play DC) – in January 2013. Play DC is focused on both programming and capital improvements that celebrate the rich park and recreation legacy in the District while defining a path for improving parks and recreation services in a dense, growing urban environment. The plan will guide a new, bold, and strategic vision for advancing the District’s parks and recreation resources and citywide goals.

Play DC launched with five project goals:

1. Deliver equitable access, great spaces, and world class experiences. All residents will be able to reach outstanding parks and facilities close to home. These spaces will be designed for beauty and function, and support creative and diverse activities for all kinds of users.

2. Foster community health and sustainability. The District’s parks and facilities will be places where people go to get active and lead healthier lifestyles. These resources will help boost the local economy, strengthen civic bonds, and enhance environmental quality.

3. Respond to existing residents’ needs and priorities. Although the District has many parks and recreation assets, there are still needs to be met. It is imperative to first take care of our existing system and tackle long-standing deficiencies as identified by residents.

4. Address changing demographics and other trends. The District’s parks and recreation system must be flexible enough to change with population growth and other emerging issues. Programs, in particular, will adapt to changing interests, and facilities will be designed for multiple purposes.

5. Fulfill the DPR mission to “Move. Grow. Be Green.” All projects and programs in the District’s parks and recreation system will champion the principles of Move, Grow, and Be Green.¹

When completed, Play DC will accomplish the following outcomes:

¹ The guiding “Move. Grow. Be Green.” principles are defined as: MOVE – Provide all residents affordable, enjoyable opportunities for physical fitness and recreation; GROW – Support personal development among residents through self-enrichment activities – like classes, clubs, tours, and lessons; BE GREEN – Promote practices that connect residents to their local environment and economy.
1. Establish a clear understanding of the current conditions of District parks, recreation centers, and outdoor facilities, as well as programs;
2. Identify challenges and service gaps; and
3. Develop and propose solutions that are:
   a. Phased for implementation over the next 15 year;
   b. Based on sound and detailed analysis that is inclusive and responsive to District residents;
   c. Grounded in community input and industry best practices that improve public services and reduce costs;
   d. Improve the District’s ability to protect and preserve historic resources; and
   e. Progress citywide goals identified in the Sustainable DC Plan, including economic strength and diversification, education and workforce preparation, sustainability and quality of life.

DPR identified needs and priorities through a variety of methods, most conducted in 2013, to include:

- Observational Analyses:
  o Site visits
  o Facilities and condition assessment reports from 2009 and 2013
  o Previous planning efforts, such as CapitalSpace and the 2006 agency master plan

- Qualitative Analyses:
  o Advisory Committee – comprised of District Government Agencies, federal partners, and non-profit partners
  o Stakeholder and staff interviews
  o Focus groups
  o Public workshops and surveys

- Quantitative Analyses:
  o Level of service (LOS) analysis – GIS analyses that considered industry best practices, existing conditions, and barriers to access such as natural barriers (rivers) and man-made barriers (major roadways)
  o Statistically valid survey
Master Plan Vision + Implementation Strategy

DPR and OP released the Play DC Vision Framework (Vision) in March 2014. In the Vision, the parks and recreation system is understood as seven elements, to include Parkland, Outdoor Facilities, and Environmental Lands + Natural Areas. DPR developed targets and “Big Moves” (broad steps the District should take to improve the system) for each element. The target for Parkland is ensuring a 10-minute walk to a park for all residents and providing 4 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents.

The “Big Moves” for Parkland are as follows:
- UPGRADE: Make the best of existing District-owned parks. Develop an enhanced maintenance and improvement schedule to upgrade the quality of passive and active spaces.
- INTEGRATE: Make green space owned by District government agencies available and accessible to DC residents for recreation purposes, with an emphasis on opening DC Public School facilities to the community.
- EXPAND: Acquire more parkland under District jurisdiction through strategic property transfers, purchases, and private development proffers.

Additionally, several “Big Moves” for other Vision elements are key to improving parks access:
- Within Outdoor Facilities:
  - IMPROVE: Raise the bar on the condition of our existing outdoor facilities - re-invent playgrounds across the city; convert some fields to artificial turf; and add lighting, seating, and other support features.
  - UTILIZE: Be creative – take advantage of the rich network of urban infrastructure to meet recreational needs and promote exercise.
- Within Environmental Lands + Natural Areas:
  - RECLAIM: Within the larger parks, establish healthier tree cover and green landscapes. Weave plantings and other natural features into mini and pocket parks, especially in areas with inadequate open space.

These goals and “Big Moves” are suggestions stemming from the needs assessment phase of the Play DC plan development. This phase considered existing conditions (e.g. number, size, and location of DPR parks), level of service (identifying which areas of the city are not within a half-mile of a park), and public engagement techniques (a statistically valid survey of needs and priorities).
Throughout 2014, DPR and OP have continued development of Play DC, and an implementation strategy, to include capital improvement suggestions and operational suggestions, will be completed in December 2014. The Play DC implementation strategy will address all areas of the parks and recreation system, to include improving access to parks.
Parks Access Task Force

The Parks and Natural Spaces Public Access Task Force, established by the 2013 Sustainable DC Mayor’s Order, developed recommendations designed to further the goals of Play DC. The Task Force built upon the needs assessment, which included a statistically valid survey of DC residents and level of service analysis of parkland to formulate recommendations.

The Task Force, led by DPR, was comprised of a subset of members from the Play DC Advisory Committee, which met throughout 2013 and early 2014 to shape the vision for parks in the District. Representatives participated from the following District agencies: Department of Parks and Recreation; Office of Planning; DC Public Schools; Department of General Services; District Department of the Environment; Metropolitan Police Department; and District Department of Transportation.

The Task Force identified several perspectives from which to consider access, which guide the recommendations:

- The physical number and location of opportunities: are parks not only physically available, but are they located in areas that ensure residents can easily access them?
- The desirability of visiting parks: are DC’s parks well-maintained and inviting? Do they offer desired amenities, such as seating, landscaping, and trees? Are the parks designed to welcome everyone, without regard to physical ability, age, or culture?
- The knowledge of parks and opportunities: are residents and visitors aware of the locations of parks and what activities or amenities are located in each? Do parks have clearly marked signs, particularly signs indicating American’s for Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible routes?
- The ability to physically get to a park: can residents and visitors easily get to the park through multiple means, including walking, biking, and transit? Are sidewalks and entrances ADA accessible?
Findings on Parkland in the District

A primary goal of Play DC is to provide parks or open spaces within a 10-minute (half-mile) walk of all residents, a goal shared with the Sustainable DC Plan. Additionally, Play DC has a target of providing at least four acres of parkland per 1,000 residents (two acres for every 1,000 residents in the downtown core) in each neighborhood cluster. The District has a tremendous park system, largely due to the 75% of parkland acreage managed by the National Park Service, and most residents are easily able to access a park. About 20% of the District is parkland. Nevertheless, some neighborhoods are underserved and access is not equitable (See Figure B).

As an example, Ward 7 is home to roughly 303 acres (or about 33%) of DPR-owned parkland, while Ward 2, which is more dense and characterized by access to the National Mall, only has roughly 21 acres of DPR-owned parkland. The distinction between types of parkland in the District is important, as NPS property is often comprised of parks with monuments or naturalized areas, and DPR property is often comprised of active recreation such as playgrounds, ball fields, and sports courts. Of the 931 acres of DPR parkland, only about 73 acres are in parks that are under ½ acre, which often serve purely passive purposes.

Numbers alone do not tell the entire story. In some neighborhoods or Wards, there may be a large number of parks or park acreage, but there are barriers to accessibility. For example, major highways such as Interstate-295 (Baltimore-Washington Parkway) limit access to parkland along the Anacostia River for residents of Wards 7 and 8.

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2 As analyzed by the Office of Planning. For more information: http://planning.dc.gov
It is also critical to consider access in terms of the ability of all residents to not only travel to a park, but to easily enter the park and to feel comfortable within the park. A full study of the conditions of each park in the District has not been done, but an assessment of playgrounds, which are often located within larger parks and share similar qualities to many of the District’s parks, sheds some light on the possible existing conditions of parks. Through the playground improvement project undertaken by DPR and DGS from 2012 until present, a scorecard was developed and assessment of all playgrounds completed. Many of the playgrounds needed maintenance, ADA improvements, or other park amenity improvements, such as the addition of water fountains or seating.

The park system in the District will face increasing pressures in the coming years due to recent and future demographic changes. Some neighborhoods, such as the downtown core and areas to the north and northeast of the downtown core, will experience population growth, especially among seniors and young children, that will place new or increased demands on parks.
Figure B. Access Level of Service for DPR + NPS Parkland. Areas in light gray represent neighborhoods that do not currently have access to a park within a ½ mile (10 minute walk). Dark gray areas also do not have access to a park within a ½ mile, but they are non-residential land uses. The darker the red or orange shade, the better the access to parkland.
Recommendations

The Task Force recommends support of the forthcoming Play DC Implementation Strategy, which will highlight methods for improving parks access for all District residents and visitors. These recommendations are designed to be early implementation actions to reflect the existing work of the Play DC Master Plan and to build upon the final strategy to be released in December 2014.

The recommendations are grouped into the following goal areas:

Goal 1: Increase the number of park sites/opportunities.
Goal 2: Improve access to parks through maintenance and safety/comfort upgrades.
Goal 3: Improve access to parks through wayfinding and information.
Goal 4: Improve access to parks through multiple transportation methods.

Goal 1: Increase the number of park sites/opportunities.

One strategy to increase access to parks and natural spaces is to increase the number of sites or opportunities. An example of increasing opportunities is improving on the operating hours or availability of a site, such as adding lighting to fields to increase playing time into the evening hours. This goal furthers the objectives of the Mayor’s Order to suggest capital budget enhancements and design guidelines for parks. Further capital budget enhancements will be recommended as part of implementation of Play DC.

ACTION 1.1: Increase parks access by opening DC Public School sites for community use.

a. **Summary:** District residents see outdoor facilities at schools as community amenities and desire access to playgrounds, fields, and tracks at schools. The Play DC Master Plan highlights the opening of DCPS properties to the public outside of school hours as a critical opportunity to greatly increase the level of service for parks and outdoor recreation facilities. In the spring of 2014, DPR, DCPS, and DGS initiated a co-location task for regarding shared indoor space between DPR and DCPS. Pursuant to the recommendations of the co-location task force and ongoing inter-agency dialogue, this Task Force recommends that the District pursue opening school sites to public use, particularly in those areas where residents are most underserved by access to open space or playgrounds.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Opening public school sites would benefit District residents who are not located within a 10-minute walk of a park by providing increased opportunities for recreation and leisure.
c. **Fiscal Impacts**: A rough order of magnitude for upgrading DCPS sites for public access, which could include upgrading fields natural turf and lighting, improving or adding fencing, adding site surveillance and other security measures to protect the school property, and adding park features such as landscaping and benches, is estimated at approximately $500,000 per site on average. Inclusion of an artificial turf field increases the cost by approximately $900,000 per field. New York City has developed a phased program of upgrading school sites (Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program\(^3\)) to accommodate public use. In that program, sites needing new equipment received $400,000 per site and sites needing capital improvements received $1,200,000 per site, in 2007 dollars.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts**: Residents will have varied reactions to co-locations. Some may feel that the schoolyard should be kept just for the school and desire that persons unaffiliated with the school are not authorized to use the site. Others may find that their access to recreation amenities is greatly improved and will be in support of the opening of DCPS sites.

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts**: N/A

f. **Recommendations**: The DCPS-DPR-DGS co-location task force should continue to meet to determine details of maintenance responsibility, additional operating costs, liability issues, and a course of action that is agreeable to all parties. The agencies should work together to identify sites that offer the biggest recreation return on investment, such as reducing a gap in the level of service of parks and playgrounds, and pilot several sites. They should also interview DCPS principals who have already opened their gates after hours to determine what challenges they have encountered and what motivated them to open their site to the public. Finally, the District should engage counterparts in New York City, Chicago, and Denver, which are the only major cities in the United States to have opened school yards for public use, to evaluate their programs and lessons learned, in order to formulate the District’s plan of action.

**ACTION 1.2: Increase operating hours at some existing outdoor sites.**

a. **Summary**: Grass fields close on rainy days and for several months a year for regrowth, limiting the number of hours available for permitting and play. Increasing the operating hours at existing outdoor facilities can be primarily achieved through installation of artificial turf on fields to extend playing seasons and to make fields available during rain events. Adding lights to fields and courts allows for evening play. DPR will need to secure capital funds for

\(^3\) For more information on the Schoolyards to Playgrounds Program, please visit: http://www.nyc.gov/html/ia/gprb/downloads/pdf/NYC_Parks&Rec_Schoolyards.pdf
field renovations and either operating or capital funds for lighting upgrades, depending upon the scope of the project. DGS will need to adjust its maintenance budget to accommodate for artificial turf fields, which do not require mowing, but do require routine maintenance such as periodic (minimum of twice a year) raking and grooming. Additional operating costs may be needed to accommodate an increase in energy use from the lights. The District should explore options for solar-powered lights or other efficient fixtures to mitigate this cost over time. As DPR and DGS already provide and maintain some artificial turf fields and lit courts and fields, major operational changes are not expected.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Residents seeking active recreation opportunities will have increased playing time for fields and/or courts.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** There is an initial fiscal cost to installing artificial turf and/or lights. There is some relief in the cost outlay through the potential additional revenue of permit fees. The need for weekly mowing is eliminated, although a maintenance contract should be in place for semi-annual raking and grooming. On average, an artificial turf field costs $8.50 per square foot. A field striped for football, soccer, and baseball would cost an estimated $750,000 for design and installation. On average, lights for a basketball or tennis court cost at least $150,000 for a complete system; this cost increases for fields, depending upon the size. DPR may need additional staff support to manage an increase in permit requests and an increased need for DPR Park Rangers to monitor the facilities. DGS may need additional staff or contractual support for the maintenance of artificial turf facilities.

d. **Political/citizen Impacts:** Residents seeking active recreation opportunities will have increased opportunities for playing times on fields and/or courts, which is generally a positive benefit and would also result in an increase in collected permit fees. Some residents may oppose this action, however, due to a preference for natural turf fields or an opposition to fields or courts being open during the evening, particularly if they are immediate neighbors to the park. While athletic lights are carefully angled to properly illuminate a court or field, there may be some residual light onto neighboring homes and streets and an increase in “light pollution.” There may also be an increase in noise as field and court users leave the park premises at a later time.

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** N/A

f. **Recommendations:** The District should support capital requests for the renovation of select fields to artificial turf and the addition of lighting at select fields and courts. Decisions on locations should be made based on existing use

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4 The permit fee schedule is currently being revised, and the differential revenue figure is not available.
data and an analysis of areas where demand exceeds capacity; balancing opportunities throughout the District; and community input.

**ACTION 1.3: Support development of small parks strategy, and use new park design guidelines in development or redevelopment of park sites.**

a. **Summary:** Two important initiatives – one currently with a developing scope of work and one to be completed as part of Play DC – should be supported in developing or redeveloping park sites. First, the Office of Planning is currently developing a scope of work for a Small Parks Vision and Management Strategy, designed to maximize the potential of small parks to contribute to growing recreational and environmental needs in the District. The strategy will include recommendations for management and best uses of small parks, as well as design guidelines for small parks. Second, the Play DC Master Plan includes design guidelines to help elevate the quality and level of service of DC’s parks and recreation system. The guidelines – to be finalized in December 2014 – suggest optimal features for three park typologies and their orientation to the surrounding neighborhoods.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Implementation of the completed small parks strategy and Play DC design guidelines will improve the park system to feature aesthetically pleasing, environmentally sustainable, and multi-functional sites.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** The fiscal impacts are difficult to predict without definitive sites, existing condition reports, and scopes of work. However, if all DPR parks were updated per the design guidelines, a rough order of magnitude suggests that triangle and pocket parks could be improved at a cost of $125,000 per acre, and larger parks improved at a cost of $250,000 per acre. Improvements include landscaping, hardscaping, furnishings, and stormwater management. To illustrate the potential magnitude, DPR currently operates 73 acres of triangle and pocket parks, which would cost over $9,000,000 to upgrade. DPR’s 172 acres of neighborhood-serving parks, at $250,000 an acre, could cost $43,000,000 to upgrade. Operating funds are also needed to fully develop the small parks strategy.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts:** The political and citizen impacts from adopting a small parks strategy and Play DC design guidelines are generally positive. There may be residents who view the design guidelines as too prescriptive, or residents that do not wish parks – particularly triangle parks – to be activated or upgraded. An implemented small parks strategy could provide tremendous citizen benefits through a cohesive approach to the management of small parks, which often serve as valuable green space in neighborhoods without large parks.
e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** Depending upon the research and outcomes of the small parks strategy, some transfers of jurisdiction may be requested.

f. **Recommendations:** DPR and DGS should adopt the Play DC Design Guidelines in moving forward on park renovation or development. The District should support the proposed unified small parks strategy development, which will result in cohesive management of important green space.

**Goal 2: Improve access to parks through maintenance and safety/comfort upgrades.**

A second strategy to increase access to parks and natural spaces is to improve maintenance and provide safety and/or comfort upgrades so that existing parks are fully accessible and attractive to all residents and visitors. This strategy begins with a full outdoor facilities and parkland assessment to establish baseline data on the conditions of our parks.

**ACTION 2.1: Conduct an outdoor facilities/parkland assessment, to include ADA assessment.**

a. **Summary:** DGS currently has facilities assessments for select DPR spaces such as recreation centers and pools. As part of the Play DC Playground Improvement Project, DPR assessed all DPR playgrounds. The next step in assessing conditions should be an assessment of all outdoor facilities, to include small parks, with a focus on identifying maintenance needs, ADA compliance, and potential for future development. This assessment should be used to develop future Capital Improvement Programs, operating requests for small upgrades or improvements, and increased maintenance budgets.

b. **Expected Benefits:** An assessment would provide DPR and DGS with a baseline for understanding the outdoor facilities and parkland maintenance and improvement needs. DPR and DGS could then prioritize projects and request appropriate funding to ensure that parks are fully accessible and ADA compliant, clean, attractive, and functional.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** Operating funds will be required to conduct an outdoor facilities/parkland assessment. Additional operating funds and capital funds will be required to implement the recommendations from the assessment.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts:** Through ADA improvements at all sites – and not just recreation centers or new playgrounds – more residents will be able to utilize the park and recreation system.

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** N/A
f. **Recommendations:** The District should support an assessment of all DPR parkland and outdoor facilities, and use the results to develop future Capital Improvement Programs and operating fund requests. Improvements to ADA access should be prioritized.

**ACTION 2.2:** Develop and implement a site amenities improvement plan focused on improving safety and comfort.

a. **Summary:** Using the outdoor facilities and parkland assessment, the District should develop and implement a plan for improving site safety and comfort, specifically a phased plan for continued maintenance, but also a plan to replace or add site furnishings. Where not present or in disrepair, site safety features should be added, repaired or replaced. These may include lighting, fencing, signage, and surveillance monitoring depending on the needs and conditions of the park. Comfort features such as benches, recycling and trash containers, water fountains, shade structures, and landscaping, should also be added to a replacement, repair, or addition schedule.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Existing parks will be made more attractive and functional to users.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** The costs for each site improvement are highly dependent upon the size of the site, existing conditions, and scope for improvement (e.g. – Is this a simple replacement of old or broken benches, or a redesign and redevelopment of a park?).

An entire park renovation is a capital eligible expense, whereas small improvements such as replacing a bench or adding landscaping require operating funds.

A sample of costs is included in the table below, based on 2014 site amenities purchases by DPR and DGS (note that this list is not exhaustive or exclusive, but representative of items frequently included in existing parks; costs do not include material or labor):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Average unit cost</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park bench – 6’ metal, with armrest</td>
<td>$1,250.00 + estimated $125 for freight/delivery</td>
<td>Unit cost only includes bench and makes no assumption of installation cost, required grading, or concrete pads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bike rack – model facilitates 9 bikes</td>
<td>$750.00 + estimated $100 for freight/delivery</td>
<td>Unit cost does not include installation or concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trash or recycling receptacle – with DPR logo, 32 gallon</td>
<td>$1,250.00 + estimated $125 for freight/delivery</td>
<td>Unit cost does not include installation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shade structure – 16’ fabric shade</td>
<td>$12,090.75 + estimated $125 for freight/delivery</td>
<td>Unit cost does not include installation or any required grading or footers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Automatic locking gates</td>
<td>$6,500</td>
<td>Would secure site after hours without requiring staff to lock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site lighting – Washington Globe standard light</td>
<td>$10,000 per light pole/globe</td>
<td>Cost assumes power is already wired to site and does not include installation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d.  **Political/Citizen Impacts**: Installation of fencing, gates, and surveillance monitoring can be politically sensitive. Care must be taken in the design so that a park does not feel “caged” in by fencing, and assumptions of danger are minimized. Lighting must be designed to provide for safety, particularly along walkways, but not to illuminate activities that are closed after dark, such as playgrounds.

  **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts**: N/A

e. **Recommendations**: The conditions assessment recommended above should first be conducted to establish a baseline need for amenities. Further surveying or engagement with local residents in areas with high-need parks should be conducted to determine which comfort or safety features will be installed and where.

**Goal 3: Improve access to parks through wayfinding and information.**

A third strategy for improving access to parks is through public information, specifically appropriate signage and communication tools such as websites. The District has a wealth of parks and open spaces, but information on what amenities are available and how to get there is not often readily available.
ACTION 3.1: Evaluate existing and develop new signage to communicate park rules and regulations.

a. **Summary**: DPR’s existing park signage should be evaluated for clarity and comprehension, with particular emphasis on evaluating them for clarity to non-native English speakers or non-English speakers. New signage should be developed and installed at parks to ensure visitors feel comfortable, have an understanding of policies and park rules, and recognize the park as a DPR facility.

b. **Expected Benefits**: Visitors to the park, without regard to language ability, will be able to understand how to engage in the park and will feel more welcome in the park.

c. **Fiscal Impacts**: There may be an operating cost to developing the signs if a consultant is sought to review language and graphics. There is an operating cost to fabricating and installing new signs. On average, DPR’s cost for sign fabrication and installation is $13,000 per park.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts**: N/A

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts**: Signage will need to be reviewed to ensure that it clearly addresses regulations affecting park users.

f. **Recommendations**: DPR should work with DGS, the Office of Human Rights, the Office of the Attorney General, and other agencies to review existing park signage. DPR should consider hiring a consultant to review signs and propose new language or graphics that are more universally understood. DPR should also work with the Office of Human Rights to identify neighborhoods that may have high concentrations of non-English speakers and to create and install appropriate bi-lingual signage. DPR should secure operating funding and, working through a contractor, install new signs at all parks as a bulk purchase and installation and/or as parks are renovated, whichever comes first.

ACTION 3.2: Add ADA wayfinding signs to parks.

a. **Summary**: Wayfinding signs – which provide information about directions and destinations – can direct visitors at entrances and throughout parks. Signs that specifically point out the closest ADA route of travel should be installed at neighborhood, community, and District-serving DPR parks for ease of entrance and movement throughout the park. For example, if a park has both stairs and a ramp, the ramp should be clearly identified through a sign for ease of use.
b. **Expected Benefits:** Clear directional signs indicating ADA routes of travel will enhance the park experience for visitors by clarifying entrances, ramps, and pathways.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** There will be an operating cost for fabricating and installing signs individually.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts:** N/A

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** N/A

f. **Recommendations:** Signs should be coordinated with the Office of Disability Rights to ensure optimal design and placement. DPR should secure operating funding and, working through a contractor, install new signs at all parks as a bulk purchase and installation and/or as parks are renovated, whichever comes first.

**ACTION 3.3:** Improve DPR’s public information to include an improved website with a focus on parks and a mobile application.

a. **Summary:** Public information and marketing can better inform residents about parks and other recreation opportunities. As identified during the public engagement sessions for the Play DC Master Plan, residents are very interested in better marketing, and often indicated that the reason for not attending a program, site, or park was a lack of knowledge.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Better marketing and information will help inform residents and visitors of the many parks and amenities throughout the District, which may increase their use and enjoyment of the District’s parks.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** The operating costs of DPR hiring an additional communications staffer to focus on website maintenance and a mobile application (app) is approximately $130,000 annually. The cost to develop an app is approximately $50,000.

d. **Political/Citizen Impacts:** The information must be maintained regularly in order to have a positive citizen impact.

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** N/A

f. **Recommendations:** DPR should hire a consultant to develop an app that would provide locational information such as the nearest park, amenities available at the park, and how to get to the park. Directional information tailored for pedestrians and cyclists should be included. DPR’s website should be enhanced.
Goal 4: Improve access to parks through multiple transportation methods.

A fourth strategy for improving access to parks is to improve the transportation options for residents and visitors. Play DC has a goal of ensuring that all parks are accessible by foot, and that 90% of parks are accessible by bicycle. The great news in DC is that most parks are already accessible by both foot and bicycle, and we only stand to improve through continued investment in our transportation system.

As part of the development of Play DC, DPR and OP consulted with the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) and their MoveDC long-range transportation plan. MoveDC includes many suggestions for new trails and bike lanes, some of which would provide new or improved means of access to parks. Suggested transit projects, particularly those along north-south routes in the vicinity of Rock Creek Park, would also improve residents’ ability to travel to parks.

This Task Force does not make any new recommendations for additional transit projects in order to access parks, but does recommend that the District move forward in supporting the Move DC plan, which would improve access to all areas of the District, including parks. The Task Force does recommend the following action, to align DPR projects with nearby DDOT projects, to further enhance pedestrian and bicycle access.

**ACTION 4.1: Align DPR’s and DGS’ capital and operating requests for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with DDOT’s trail and bicycle lane construction schedule.**

a. **Summary:** As DDOT refines its schedule for trail and bicycle infrastructure (construction, bike lanes, cycletracks, etc.), DPR and DGS should align their requests for capital and operating funds to provide trail connections and bicycle amenities (bike racks, comfort features such as water fountains) at nearby DPR parks.

b. **Expected Benefits:** Aligning bicycle and pedestrian improvements on DPR properties with DDOT’s Move DC plan will enhance the overall bike and pedestrian system and provide better access to and within DPR parks.

c. **Fiscal Impacts:** The fiscal impact of constructing additional bike paths can be significant, with costs approaching close to $1 million per mile for an asphalt path. Most connections that could be made to new or existing DDOT paths, however, would be less than a mile in length.
d. **Political/Citizen Impacts:** The impact for residents and visitors is generally positive. In the face of other competing fiscal priorities at park sites, however, there may be some resistance to prioritizing funding for bicycle and pedestrian-oriented infrastructure.

e. **Legislative/Regulatory Impacts:** N/A

f. **Recommendation:** DPR and DGS should align capital and operating budget requests for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with Move DC and DDOT’s trail and bicycle infrastructure development schedule. Parks near new trails and bike lanes should receive trail connections and infrastructure such as bike racks.
Conclusion

The development of the Play DC Parks and Recreation Master Plan and subsequent focus on parks and natural spaces present rich opportunities to increase quality of life for all residents and visitors to the District. The recommendations in this report are early steps that can be taken to achieve better access to parks primarily through improving the existing conditions of parks but also through expanding opportunities to use parks and outdoor recreation facilities.

The recommendations included herein are neither exhaustive nor exclusive, and the release of the Play DC Implementation Strategy in December 2014 will present new opportunities to continue the discussion. It is important to note that there are many current ongoing conversations between DPR and DGS regarding parks maintenance and better aligning the operating budget to appropriately maintain parkland, and between DPR, DGS, and DCPS to forge a strong co-location relationship, which may result in expanded access to DCPS sites, including outdoor facilities. These ongoing conversations will be critical to achieving a world-class, accessible park system.

Finally, the Task Force also discussed the role of partnerships in improving access to parks and natural spaces. While these recommendations were not necessarily deemed as early steps, they are nevertheless important to consider moving forward, and are thus included here to reflect the full discussion of the Task Force.