

GREEN SPRING GARDENS

JANUARY 29, 2015 PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING

COMMENTS

The following is a summary of the comments voiced at the Public Information Meeting for the Green Spring Gardens Master Plan Revision.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- Friends of Green Spring (FROGS) provided a comprehensive list of observations and recommendations for 14 specific park issues including the need for additional parking, suggestions for the north property, and an outdoor classroom. These comments were also formally submitted in writing and shared, in their entirety, at the end of this meeting summary.
- The townhouse gardens should be updated so as to be more relevant to county residents including the use of low-impact development techniques such as permeable pavers.
- Several in attendance noted the dedication and excellence of the staff and Green Spring Gardens and the quality of the educational programs offered.
- Would like to see better support for the site staff.
- There was some discussion of the idea of providing additional lighting within the park.
 - Support for lighting was suggested to increase the usage of the park and to increase security.
 - Opposition to additional lighting was noted due to the cost of installation, maintenance, and usage.
- Several in attendance mentioned concerns and desires for connectivity. There is a desire that there be better connectivity to the surrounding communities for pedestrians, bikes, and wheelchairs. Circulation should be considered in terms of site access for staff. Green Spring is one of the few parks in the county that is accessible by transit.
- Concerned was mentioned about maintaining separation of vehicles and park visitors.
- Some mentioned the idea of fencing the park for better security and the exclusion of deer.



COMMENTS REGARDING THE NEW NORTH PROPERTY

- Most suggestions for the northern property largely recommended retaining it in its current wooded condition.
- Educational programs
- Provide trail connections through the site for enjoyment and to better connect to adjoining communities.
- Expand on bird habitat and over story
- Provide treatment of invasive species

- Only utilize low-impact development methods
- Establish a Tree Stewardship program
- Utilize the new property to expand on educational/interpretive opportunities such as interpretation of low-impact development, water resources, forest resources

ADDITIONS AND EXPANSION OF EXISTING FACILITIES

- Addition of a multi-use facility was recommended to ease scheduling difficulties and enhance educational opportunities.
- Suggestion was made for a large use space that could be subdivided into smaller rooms in an effort to accommodate a broader range of activities.
- It is desired that any new development occur in proximity of existing building footprints.
- Any new development should include low-impact development techniques such as permeable pavement, green roofs, limited pavement, water catchment systems, and solar lighting.
- Existing buildings should be similarly retrofitted as possible.
- There was some discussion of the idea of providing additional lighting within the park. Support for lighting was suggested to increase the usage of the park and to increase security. Opposition to additional lighting was noted due to cost of installation and usage.

FISCAL SUSTAINABILITY

- Several in attendance made suggestions to build the Green Spring business model
- A business plan should be developed to address funding and timing of any improvements with milestones to track progress.
- Make the park more knitted into the community to draw people in.
- Some liked the idea of providing food service in the park, possibly at more than one location. The high attrition rate of new restaurants was also noted.
- Plan for publicity so that more people will come to the park.
- Draw on the resources of GMU and high school students.



FRIENDS OF GREEN SPRING

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TO: Fairfax County Park Authority

FROM: Friends of Green Spring, Inc.

RE: Green Spring Gardens Master Plan Revision

Date: January 29, 2015

We, the Friends of Green Spring (FROGS), being a partner organization to the FCPA in keeping Green Spring Gardens operating and flourishing, and having invested substantial time, expertise, and funding in Green Spring, advise that the Green Spring Gardens Master Plan address the following areas for improvement and development.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

- We have attempted to anticipate park improvements broadly to allow for a progressive realization of the full potential of Green Spring Gardens to deliver on its mission (to preserve, protect, maintain and interpret the horticultural, historic and natural resources of the park and to provide for educational and inspirational use of the resources by Fairfax County residents and visitors).
- Many of the requirements listed below (indicated by a '1992 Plan' notation herein) echo recommendations of the FCPA 1992 General Management Plan and Conceptual Development Plan for Green Spring that have been either incompletely or not yet addressed to date.
- The Green Spring Gardens Cultural Landscape Report prepared in 2009 is a rich resource detailing Green Spring's valuable natural, cultural and horticultural assets; its extensive content should be reviewed and carefully considered throughout the 2015 master plan process.
- We believe a comprehensive master plan should include a business plan to target future government and non-government resources to bring the improvements and expansions identified in the master plan to fruition.

SPECIFIC AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT/DEVELOPMENT

1. Parking. There is old business to take care of: clearing the overflow parking lot that is now being used for storing mulch and other materials. This parking lot has capacity for at least 40 cars, and the parking is badly needed. On many days, volunteers and staff use more than 1/2 of the available parking spaces. It is therefore difficult to plan for more than one program at a time because of the parking limitations. (1992 Plan)

2. North Property. Currently, much of the current operation of Green Spring Gardens is funded by FROGS, with no growth of programs or features in sight save with privately raised funding. It is therefore imperative that an event/program space, to be used for revenue-generating Garden-compatible purposes, be planned for Green Spring Gardens. Potential use for the as yet undeveloped north property should be thoroughly explored, but could integrate spaces for a and b below along with rehabilitated natural landscape features.
 - a. This should include a café/restaurant space, that could be used both for revenue generating events and to offer food and drink services to visitors, thus increasing visitation.
 - b. The event/program space should be designed as part of a business plan for the future growth and viability of Green Spring Gardens. FROGS understands that the future of Green Spring Gardens depends on financial self-sustainability.
3. Outdoor Classroom. A 'field-based' outdoor classroom facility for adult and children's education programs would expand programming opportunities three-fold: via (a) added space (beyond the Horticulture Center and Historic House), (b) weather shelter (hot summer days and rainfall), and (c) accommodating larger groups for hands-on nature focused curriculum.
4. Children's Garden. Children's programs are an essential part of Green Spring's and FROG's mission. We would like to see the Children's Garden expanded to encourage fun experiential learning in the immediate term and to build loyalty and visitation from families that will benefit the entire Green Spring Garden enterprise long term.
5. Circulation. Vehicular and foot circulation is incomplete. The Master Plan should incorporate visitor circulation to allow for a visitor to make a complete loop through the entire garden areas, and for staff vehicular circulation that provides for serving all areas of the garden without competing with visitor access. In particular, the portion of the road behind the Horticulture Center that borders on the Children's, Family, and Wildlife Gardens should be closed to vehicles. *(1992 Plan*
6. Interpretive Areas. Additional natural interpretive areas (*e.g.* enhanced Turkeycock Run stream valley planting restoration for natural stormwater mitigation *(1992 Plan)*; native plant trails; interactive smartphone tools encouraging exploration of the site's natural history) should be incorporated and can provide operational as well as interpretive benefits.
7. Horticulture Center. Please review the Horticulture Center for needed upgrades. Despite recent changes, the office space is inadequate for personnel to support visitorship and programming that has expanded considerably since the Center's construction. There is sufficient space behind the children's classroom for an addition that could partially alleviate this problem.
8. The Plant Shop. The Plant Shop, a FCPA-FROGS partner operation, that brings in \$50,000 per year, has the potential for more room and access to cash register services, so that the buyer does not have to walk outside and back into the front of the Visitor Center to buy plants. Expanding the Plant Shop would not only increase sales, but would generate visitors.
9. Historic House. The interpretive and event space of the Historic House can and should be expanded. Revenue is needed to enhance programming and to contribute towards the

maintenance of the House. This could be achieved with new space for private event rentals and larger audiences for historic and cultural programs.

10. Fencing. Fencing is needed to keep deer out of the entire property as well as for security. There is a serious problem of theft of plants, often those that are the most valuable. *(1992 Plan)*
11. Outdoor Lighting. Thoughtfully designed outdoor lighting is needed for after hours use potential to be realized and would provide an additional security measure.
12. Signage. Visitor experience should be improved via professionally designed wayfinding and interpretive signage. *(1992 Plan)*
13. Townhouse Gardens. The townhouse gardens should be renovated. Fairfax is home to a huge population of townhouse dwellers, and Green Spring Gardens could be the go-to place for all who live in a townhouse to learn from the demonstration gardens.
14. Existing Gardens and Features. Lastly, we do not wish to lose any of the existing focus points, features, and individual gardens listed in the Green Spring Gardens brochure, in the revised Master Plan.

FROGS' vision for Green Spring Gardens: A thriving place that celebrates a unique intersection of nature, culture and history in a way that sustains people and place—through engaging experiences large and small, thoughtful interpretation, and artful creativity: a leading enterprise grounded by a strategic and financial plan that sustains continued growth and delivery on Green Spring's mission.