

Parks, Open Space and Recreation Working Team
Chinatown Working Group
June 18, 2009

Meeting Minutes

Location: Columbus Park Building

Time: 4:00pm – 5:30pm

In Attendance: Edward Ma (CB #2), Anne Frederick (Hester Street Collaborative), Paul Gong (Friends of Columbus Park), Robert Mclean (NYC Department of Parks and Recreation), Kirsti Bambridge (Partnerships for Parks), Hiroko Tachibana (Councilmember Alan J. Gerson), Triple Edwards (Chatham Green), Howard Chin (Chinese American Student Exposure)

Media in Attendance: Jacky Wong (Sing Tao Daily)

1. Introductions

2. Should we merge?

Triple Edwards suggested that the Parks and Transportation Working Groups collaborate on tree plantings on St. James Place. NYPD is currently planning to install bollards. The group will explore the possibility of planting trees instead of installing bollards. AF to check in with NYRP about obtaining street trees.

Paul Gong suggested that another way to increase attendance is to change the time of the Parks meeting. Either week day evenings or weekend mornings are best for attracting residents. However, we will need translation if we are to attract park users. Paul also suggested that the CWG should also be action oriented. The working team will explore the other potentials times/dates.

3. Park Issues and Concerns

Columbus Park Concerns:

Athletic turf field

The turf is pulling up on the field and children pick up black pellets on their clothes when they play on it. Although Parks contends that the pellets are safe, people are concerned that children might accidentally ingest these pellets.

Basketball & volleyball courts

The basketball courts adjacent to the soccer field are conflicting with the volleyball court, and are missing the appropriate markings. The lower courts have poor drainage and floor during the rain. Often adults or teens dominate the courts and it is difficult for younger children to play. Can we find ways to regulate the older players?

Homelessness

There currently are several homeless individuals sleeping and relieving themselves in the upstairs of the park building.

Rats

Historically the rat population in Columbus has been enormous. Robert Mclean reported on recent baiting and reduction of the rat population. Paul requested translated signage on the traps to warn park users that the traps are filled with poison.

Bathrooms

The bathrooms in the Park are very unsanitary. Robert suggested advocating for an attendant to help keep the bathrooms cleaner. Paul suggested outreach to park users as another strategy.

Park Stewardship:

Although Columbus is generally cleaner than SDR Park, there is still an issue with cleanliness. The group brainstormed a few ideas for encouraging a sense of ownership in local park users

Gardening clubs for seniors and students – can we get access to gardeners to work with park users, and tools that are accessible to adult volunteers on a regular basis? Also we need to get someone to run a gardening club. Paul thought local businesses adjacent to the park would be willing to donate to help improve the park.

Programming:

In general we need more programming for youth and seniors. How can we take better advantage of the park building for programming?

4. Summer research project

Over the summer the working team will begin to administer surveys to park users to gather input about how to improve the park. The goal of this surveying process is two-fold: 1. to inform the working team's recommendations 2. to mobilize local park users on projects to increase local ownership. It was agreed that the working team should primarily target parks users in Columbus Park, SDR Park and Seward Park.

5. Review of draft survey

Anne presented a draft survey for the working teams review. It was agreed that Anne will slightly modify the survey so that it parks users can weigh in on a specific park rather than parks in Chinatown in general. Therefore there will surveys specific to the three target parks.

Next Mtg: TBD