

Point Paper
Friends of Royal Lake (FORL)
Community Vision Plan for Royal Lake Parks
to
FCPA Planning and Development Division
May 2, 2018

FORL Purpose: To support and improve Royal Lake Parks to strengthen the parks programs and facilities to enhance the benefit to the community and our natural environment.

Discussion Paper Purpose: To provide an overview of the community-developed consensus Vision Plan to upgrade and enhance the four parks (Lakeside Park, Royal Lake Park, Kings Park West Park and Pohick Stream Valley Park as they abut Royal Lake) around Royal Lake to the FCPA Planning and Development Division. Our objective with this Vision is to obtain support for:

- Comprehensive and coordinated Park development programs and activities
- Master Planning Development
- Input for 2020 Bond money for Park upgrades.

How did we get here?

- Users of the Parks around Royal Lake expressed a desire for park improvements
- Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) held a series of community-wide meetings:
 - Trails Discussion with FCPA trails leadership
 - Resource Protection Area (RPA) issues with DPWES
- Survey of users of the Royal Lake Parks
 - Over 250 individuals responded
 - Inputs provided views on features needed for park enhancements and upgrade
- FORL held additional meetings
 - Review of the survey results with the community
 - Follow-up meetings to gain community-wide consensus on features for enhancement and upgrades of the park
- FORL developed a draft Vision document based on the community-wide consensus
 - Shared results with meeting participants and through community-wide announcements
 - Incorporated and adjudicated the comments into a final document

General Overview

The community appreciates and supports the current features of Royal Lake Parks to include: playgrounds, baseball field, soccer fields, basketball courts and other recreation areas (Braddock Nights, etc)

FORL, with strong support of Kings Park West Civic Association and other Homeowner Associations and members of other local communities, have a strong volunteer program to clean and improve the parks.

Highlights of the Vision

The Vision Plan contains history and background information; however, the heart of the Vision is a list with rationale of long-term capital improvements and short-term operations and maintenance projects envisioned by the community for the Royal Lake Parks for enhanced and safer experiences:

Trails

Trails are perhaps the most important feature of Royal Lake Parks, where the community would like significant effort directed. Trails allow access to facilities throughout the site and form a loop through the park for exercise and nature appreciation.

Key needs of all trails are:

- Replacement of all non-fiberglass bridges with safe alternatives
- Develop and upgrade a network of trails through 155-acre Royal Lake park that are integrated into a single system
- Widen and upgrade trails, where appropriate

Lake Circuit Trail. The lake circuit trail should be rehabilitated

- Install/upgrade new bridges
- Upgrade trails to allow for walking in wet weather
- Install steps on areas with steep slopes for safety

Lakeside Park Trail

- The trail entrance that leads from Richardson Drive into Lakeside Park is very steep, is breaking apart, and presents a fall hazard for park patrons. The ingress/egress route should be re-engineered to provide a less steep and safer approach to Lakeside Park.

Kings Park West Park Trail

- Upgrade and extend natural trail from Lakeside and Royal Lake Parks along Commonwealth Boulevard in Kings Park West Park to connect with the lake circuit trail.

Pohick Creek Stream Valley Trail

- A natural trail should extend from Roberts Road and from the Gainsborough /Claridge public access in Pohick Creek Stream Valley Park to connect with the lake circuit trail.

Lakepointe Trail Access

- A natural or paved trail for pedestrian traffic should extend from the Lakepointe Townhouse community at the eastern end of the dam to connect with the lake circuit trail.

Glen Cove Access Trail

- Natural trails should extend from the Glen Cove community in Pohick Creek Stream Valley Park to connect with the lake circuit trail.

Trail Amenities

- *Signage/upgrade existing kiosks:* New kiosks should be installed with general information about the park. Signage should be installed to provide visitors an overview of the complete trail network in the 155-acre park.
- *Scenic Overlook Sites* Picnic tables and/or benches for scenic overlook sites.
- *Butterfly Garden* A site with adequate sunlight should be set aside for use as a butterfly garden.
- *Dog Amenities* Addition of two pet waste stations should be located in the park: one at Lakeside Park and one at Royal Lake Park

Shaded Picnic Area/Pavilion

- The current picnic area at Lakeside Park should be enlarged to accommodate groups of greater size, and a removable canvas-sail shade structure should be provided.

Restrooms

- The lack of restrooms is a concern to park patrons. Provide modular flush restrooms to Royal Lake Park encompassing solar power, extreme water conservation, and minimal ground disturbance for a reduced environmental impact.

Aquatic Opportunities

- The dredging of Royal Lake, the reconstruction of a boat ramp at Royal Lake Park, and the construction of a new boat ramp at Lakeside Park provide a possible opportunity for boating.
- Re-establish a rental boat concession consisting of canoes and kayaks at Royal Lake.

- Re-position the gate at Lakeside Park leading into Kings Park West Park to permit trailered vehicles to port their boats to the boat ramp,
- Provide a safe entry kayak structure to support patrons using kayaks.

Environmental Upgrades

Stream Restoration Efforts

- Surging storm water run-off continues to erode the banks of streams feeding into the lake, resulting in the toppling of many mature trees along the eroded stream banks and putting more sediment in the lake. Two storm water efforts are needed in the Kings Park West Park:
 - Rabbit Branch from Commonwealth Boulevard to the lake entrance
 - Un-named tributary that runs from the intersection of Commonwealth Boulevard and Pommeroy Drive to the lake entrance.
 - The other stream restoration effort is needed in the Pohick Creek Stream Valley from Roberts Road down Shane's Creek to the lake entrance.

Storm Water Sewer Outfall Rehabilitation

- Evaluate the street water runoff that is damaging streams and lake and modify as appropriate.

Installation of Trash Traps

- Trash from the streets that ends up in the parks' streams and lake is a significant environmental issue. Installation of trash traps would significantly reduce trash.

Native Vegetation

- At Lakeside Park, the following actions to remove non-native invasive plants with native plants are desired.
 - The existing stand of privet between the parking lot and the picnic area should be removed and replaced with native species trees/shrubbery.
 - The Chinese juniper bushes between the main loop trail and the soccer field/baseball diamond should be removed and replaced with native trees/shrubs that are easier to manage.
 - Native species trees that provide shade should be planted around the picnic area and the playground, while still maintaining line-of-site and unhindered access between the picnic area and playground.
 - Native species trees that provide shade should be planted between the ball field and the Open Play Area.
 - The existing stand of vegetation along the trail bordering the lake at Lakeside Park should be removed and replaced with native species shade trees incidental to the widening of the trail.

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