

From: [Carolyn A. Highsmith](#)
To: [Tarra Jolly](#)
Cc: [Jim Ritchey](#); [Amy Crum](#); [Aaron King](#)
Subject: Please vote to send this "DRAFT PARKS and OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE" back to the Planning and Parks & Rec Depts for more REAL PUBLIC INPUT & PARTICIPATION before referring to the City Council.
Date: Thursday, October 10, 2019 4:19:48 AM

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Dear Planning Board Members,

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend the **10.10.19 Public Hearing** on the "**Draft PARKS and OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE.**" However, after reading this Draft Update, **I find the lack of citizen participation and the lack of a true process for citizen participation in this plan to be deplorable.** It looks like there was an online survey and a five public drop-in sessions in 2017--over two years ago. On page 24, the report states that there were "**over 325 respondents to this process**" but there is no differentiation in this total between city versus county residents or any demographics of the respondents.

Given that in 2017 the Winston-Salem population was 244,605 and the Forsyth County population was 376,320, this means that only 0.13 percent of the Winston-Salem population and/or 0.09 percent of the Forsyth County population gave any input over two years ago about the future of our parks and open spaces--way below even 1% of the total population. Then, given the amount of money that taxpayers currently pay for parks and recreation and given the extremely poor parks rating that Winston-Salem/Forsyth County has ("35 out of a possible 100 points ranking it 86 out of 100 cities in the 2019 ranking" with the major problem being "access"), I re-iterate that this lack of citizen participation is totally unacceptable and makes the responses biased to certain interest groups pushing for more downtown and regional parks, when the overall preferences in this very small survey were for Walking/Hiking Trails, Open Space, Playground, Dog Parks, and Picnic Shelters--or passive recreation areas.

As such, I am asking the Planning Board to refer this "Draft PARKS and OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE" back to the Planning and Parks/Recreation Departments, where these Departments shall conduct a new, major, and better effort in getting citizen participation regarding the future of our city/county parks and open spaces and where at least 1.5 to 3% of the city/county population is actually contacted and engaged in this process as soon as it is feasible. Such participation should include a wide variety of socioeconomic levels, ages, etc., plus a certain and equivalent percentage of participation from each Ward and County area.

Several neighborhoods in the South, West, and Northwest Wards have been advocating to our City Council representatives since 2017 for more neighborhood and special parks that promote communing with nature, walking/hiking trails, picnic areas, and accessible playgrounds--where we want to protect private green space land that currently is not public land but have old and virgin tree stands (up to and over 100 years old) and especially a wide variety of wild life that give character to and also buffer these neighborhoods against ever encroaching development (both commercial and high intensity residential). Most of these proposed areas are only a few acres to at most 20 acres. However, some how due to the lack of a real push to get public participation, none of us became participants in this current Draft Plan's Input Process. And, although our City Council representatives appeared receptive to our initial pleas for designating green space areas in our neighborhoods for park land and protection, we feel that we have been met by a brick wall by the City of Winston-Salem with regards to these issues.

Regarding the actual Draft Plan, there are also some inaccuracies. For example, "69" is noted as the South neighborhood park. However, it's real name is "South Park." And, there is a large track of city-owned park land/green space from Rhyne Ave to E. Clemmons Rd and bordered by US Hwy 52--that is not even noted in this Draft Plan.

Also, after the Konnoak Hills Community purposefully asked its City Council representative to help the Konnoak Hills Community develop two different parcels of land in the Konnoak Hills area as park and nature areas--the only land referenced for our area is "1"--Anderson Dr/Luther St, where the Konnoak Hills residents were never asked for their input about developing this area for better park land--given its location--in our neighborhood area.

Same goes for another South Ward neighborhood, Kingstree, that also has a potential piece of property that residents would like to see developed into a neighborhood park and playground area. **Basically, there is a scarcity of neighborhood and special parks south of I-40 to the county line in the South Ward, where residents of any age can go for a picnic, commune with nature, and let their children play in an accessible playground area.**

Finally, "**access and accessibility**" are key deficits regarding the parks and recreation areas in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County. Although this Draft makes references to these deficits and possible solutions, I allege that the deficits of access and accessibility

need to be re-addressed and need to go back to the drawing board. Why? Because there are a lot of city and county parks that are just not accessible to their nearby residents via walking and/or by transportation. Plus, there are just not enough neighborhood and special parks where residents feel comfortable and feel that they can own such spaces for communal gatherings and frequent visitation. Examples of great communal gathering places "owned" by its residents: The High Line Park in New York City and other neighborhood parks in New York City.

And for the ideal playground accessible to anyone at any age with any type of mobility issue, etc., the Magical Bridge Playground in Palo Alto, CA, is the playground to emulate and replicate. Please click on the LINK below for details.

https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/a-playground-for-everyone-no-matter-your-age-or-ability?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=pbsofficial&utm_campaign=newshour&fbclid=IwAR2iVNSPmU85QWLc82r5wgk8Ny7ib3Uky-J9kDju5dvkNnDUngI-vRPh5BI

In conclusion, I am asking the Planning Board to refer this "Draft PARKS and OPEN SPACE PLAN UPDATE" back to the Planning and Parks/Recreation Departments before referring to the City Council, where these Departments shall conduct a new, major, and better effort in getting citizen participation for this Draft Update regarding the future of our city/county parks and open spaces, and where at least 1.5 to 3% of the city/county population is actually contacted and engaged in this process, with equivalent participation from every Ward and County area.

Sincerely yours,

Carolyn A. Highsmith

President, Konnoak Hills Community Association, konnoak_hills@outlook.com

Vice President, New South Community Coalition, newsouthcommunitycoalition@outlook.com

Facilitator, Coalition FOR EQUITY In Public Education, coalitionforequityinpubliceducation@outlook.com

336-788-9461; carolyn_highsmith@outlook.com