



## WTC MUD NO. 1 5-YEAR PARK PLAN

### Frequently Asked Questions

**1) Is it true that people who don't live in our District are allowed to take survey #1? Does this mean that non-residents, who don't pay taxes for our parks, will get to decide how we spend our District tax dollars?**

It is true that that we don't restrict non-residents from taking survey #1. However, this does not mean non-residents will be deciding how we spend our tax dollars. Here's why:

First, Survey #1 does ask respondents where they live so we can evaluate the responses of District residents apart from non-residents. The planning team is not ignoring this distinction, and when we look at the survey data, we will of course look at this aspect closely.

Second, this first survey is not a referendum on what goes in our parks. The survey is being conducted as just *one part of a broader planning process*, which will afford additional opportunities for community input all along the way. We are still in the early stages of this process and have many steps to go, including a second survey, which will help drill down on some of what we heard in survey #1. More information about the planning process can be found here: <https://www.wtcmud1.org/projects/play-in-the-mud-5-year-park-plan>

To clarify, the purpose of survey #1 is to try to get a sense for people's experiences with our parks, who uses the parks, what works, where problems and conflicts exist, what observations do people have, and what, generally speaking, would make people more excited about visiting the parks.

The reality is that several of our parks are used heavily by people who live around but not in the District, and those people might have valuable, interesting things to share about the way our parks operate. But the input we get from this first survey won't in and of itself dictate what improvements we make and how those improvements are prioritized and funded. This survey *only* provides some initial direction, some insights, and an opportunity to look for patterns in the way people feel and think about the parks.

And, although it may not be well known, non-residents who use some of our facilities (e.g., tennis courts, pavilion rentals) do pay a premium to do so, and this adds a secondary, albeit small, revenue stream to the District which helps subsidize the costs of maintaining these facilities (just like we pay more to use certain City of Cedar Park amenities). So, by learning more about who uses our parks from outside the community, and how they use them, we may be able to better leverage our non-resident fee structure.

**2) Once the plan is complete and adopted, how will park improvements be funded?**

You may be concerned that the sole purpose of this planning process is to justify costly future expenditures. In actuality, it is quite the opposite. Planning processes like this are intended to promote responsible decision-

making and fiscal responsibility. And the value of planning for the future is that it gives us an opportunity to strategize about how to appropriately fund projects using the resources we have.

Future improvements could be funded in a variety of ways, including the District's operating budget (mostly comprised of tax dollars), which has been used effectively for many years to fund incremental improvements to the parks; public and private grants, which have also been used in the past to fund park projects (e.g., AMW Park); and creative use of community resources, which we've used over the years to improve the way our parks look and function (e.g., neighborhood events, volunteer projects, etc.).

In summary, the District already has all the resources it needs (without raising taxes or assuming new debt) to have a really great park system that benefits the entire community. *The key is in how to prioritize these incremental changes to reflect the values of the community.* And that is where this planning process comes in. In the past, park improvements have been made largely without substantial public input, which means that improvements were decided upon almost exclusively by the Board of Directors.

The purpose of *this* planning process is to make sure that before any more decisions are made about how and where to invest in our park system, we are asking the public to tell us what they actually care about investing in and what types of things are priorities. In other words, we're trying to spend the revenue we have more thoughtfully to improve our parks incrementally, over time.

And the great news is that there are many opportunities to maximize the value of our park system that don't come with a huge price tag. Sometimes small changes can make a big impact on the way people use and experience a park.

It should also be noted that our planning consultant, Verdunity, was selected for this job partially because their company focuses on fiscal responsibility and using the resources a community has rather than overspending or planning for pie-in-the-sky improvements that a community can't really afford. We did not want a plan that was beautiful and exciting, but ultimately unattainable for us.

### **3) Why does Survey #1 ask about expensive improvements such as water play features (e.g., splash pad)?**

Since the purpose of Survey #1 was to get some initial direction from residents about what kinds of improvements they value, we tried to ask about a broad range of ideas, from projects that would be almost free to implement (e.g., volunteer opportunities), to more expensive projects that would require us to think strategically about how best to fund them over time, such as a splash pad. All of the projects/improvements we asked about in the survey are things that residents themselves have proposed at one time or another. And we wanted to get an initial sense for how broad the support is for each of those potential investments.

For some of the improvements we asked about, there may only be a small subset of the community that would support them, while other projects may have a lot of support. *But it is important to note that just because we asked about something in the survey, does not mean we have any official plans to implement it.* We don't know how people feel unless we ask!

In the case of the water play feature/splash pad, having a District-owned water amenity is something that has been talked about in the community for many years. In 2008, there was a community petition to build a swimming pool, and, in response, the Board of Directors prepared a feasibility study to understand where we could reasonably locate such an amenity and the financial implications of such a decision. You can see the study [here](#):

[https://www.wtcmud1.org/static/c7a68e683dc70c003edee8119d213b92/Pool Preliminary Feasibility Study 12 10 08 6ddba8cb86.pdf](https://www.wtcmud1.org/static/c7a68e683dc70c003edee8119d213b92/Pool_Preliminary_Feasibility_Study_12_10_08_6ddba8cb86.pdf)

At that time, the Board ultimately decided not to pursue the project, but over the years, some residents have continued to ask about a community pool. And many residents have continued to express their wish for a splash pad or other, perhaps less expensive and more inclusive, water amenity to help beat the summer heat. Since this continues to be an ongoing request from at least some portion of the community, we felt it was important to address the issue as part of this planning process. As we move through the process, we hope to get a better sense for just how much residents value this type of amenity and the range of costs (both initial and maintenance) associated with pursuing this type of project so that, as a community, we can decide whether or not this is a priority for us.

#### **4) What if I don't want to invest in any improvements to the parks?**

Both survey #1 and the planning process in general are intended to accommodate all possible opinions about our park system. For example, if you are a person who doesn't want any money invested in our parks, each of the questions in Survey #1 was designed to allow a response consistent with that opinion. In addition, there are multiple opportunities throughout the survey to add open-ended responses, including, but not limited to the catch-all question, "Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the District parks or ponds?"

But please remember survey #1 is not the only opportunity to provide input during the planning process. Input is welcome throughout the process, and in Survey #2 we will come back and ask some more direct questions about priorities and funding. So stay engaged!