

## Responses to Public Comments

The CapitalSpace partners thank the more than 40 civic leaders, organizations, and/or individuals that provided comments on the initial draft CapitalSpace plan and helped make the final draft better. The following summarizes some of the major categories of public comments, and how they influenced revisions to the final draft plan:

### *1) Improved public access to open space on the Armed Forces Retirement Home and within the surrounding communities*

The largest number of comments received noted that the plan did not address the need for improved public access to parks and open space for the surrounding neighborhoods of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), including improved connections between existing and potential open space amenities. A common message was that the plan should support making open space on the AFRH publicly-accessible. In response to these comments, the partner agencies have included language on page 27 of the draft final CapitalSpace plan that broadly discusses this issue, and language on page 95 that reaffirms the existing agency commitments to work together in the future on opportunities for parks and open spaces, including at the AFRH.

### *2) Implementation*

Comments on implementation issues were common, including questions on how the agency partnership would continue, how projects are prioritized and funded, and how organizations can coordinate with the agencies.

*Agency partnership:* Many comments noted that coordination among the partner agencies has been limited in the past and wanted to know how this might change, and how the partner agencies specifically plan to maintain coordination to implement the recommendations.

*Prioritization and funding of recommendations:* Many comments asked about projects that will be done and establishing benchmarks for performance. Other comments noted that the plan lacks a bigger picture prioritization of projects and a strong commitment of resources by all the agencies. Comment letters requested information on funding, funding sources and how the partner agencies will maintain parks, stating that the plan needs to better address budgeting and long-term maintenance and care issues.

*Coordination with organizations:* Many organizations positively noted in their comments that they are eager to get involved, and wanted to discuss with the partner agencies how they could help move recommendations forward.

In response to the comments on implementation, the partner agencies have strengthened their commitments to work together on moving the plan's recommendations forward, with a focus on the seven priority actions. To aid in

this coordination, the partner agencies have committed to holding quarterly meetings and to developing a public annual report on progress. The report will pull into one place action items the partners agree to target in the upcoming year, recognizing that each agency already has a number of related activities underway. The partner agencies also have clarified their commitment to continued collaboration in these areas: providing park planning and operation information to the public; ongoing maintenance, aligning comprehensive plan and other plan policies and recommendations with those within CapitalSpace; developing green job programs associated with improving and maintaining Washington's park space; and developing sustainable management practices. In addition, the partner agencies made further commitments to maximize resources by better coordinating current and future work plans and capital budgets as they relate to Washington's park system. Discussions on these commitments are included within a revised and expanded *Moving the Plan Forward* section within the draft final plan, beginning on page 91.

3) *Improvements or programming of specific activities or park types*

Some comments asked for the plan to better address specific programming needs (for example: improved trails and information for bicycling or better rowing facilities) or to better address improvements of specific parks (such as stream valleys, waterfronts, and escarpment associated green spaces).

A number of the topics raised in the public comment letters are being addressed in concurrent initiatives that the partner agencies and other groups are working on separate from CapitalSpace, such as the National Mall Plan that NPS is undertaking, DDOT's Bicycle Master Plan, or projects underway through the Anacostia Waterfront Initiative led by the District. Comment letters have been provided to appropriate agencies for their reference.

In response to these comments, additional language is included on pages 1, 4 and 31 that identifies that the plan provides a vision for Washington's park system and priority areas identified by the partner agencies – the action-oriented Six Big Ideas – where collaborative efforts would provide substantial progress in making the vision a reality. Page 4 describes how the Six Big Ideas were developed and explains that the CapitalSpace plan is not intended as a comprehensive plan that addresses all park issues and park sites, nor is it a plan that addresses physical improvements at specific parks. Instead, the recommendations included in this document are intended to provide a guiding framework in which to coordinate and address more site-specific park and open space projects. And, as the CapitalSpace partner agencies continue to work together, there will be future opportunities for new issues, including those raised in the public comment letters, to be considered in more detail.

4) *Tying to larger community issues and building community support*

Many comments wanted improved linkages of the plan's recommendations to District-wide issues such as sustainable development, job creation, crime fighting, health, and walkable and bicycle-friendly neighborhoods. Some comments noted that the Mayor's green summer job program is a significant opportunity to help further these ideas and that a lot can be done using summer employment to improve parks. To address these comments in the draft final CapitalSpace plan, the partner agencies enhanced the narrative within the *Benefits of Parks and Open Space* section, beginning on page 14, to highlight District-specific benefits. Pages 93-95 in the Moving the Plan Forward section also identifies public information, sustainable practices and green job development as issues for partner agency collaboration as the plan is implemented.