

Planning Session for Improving the Use of
the Sports Complexes of Vestavia Hills Parks
and Rec

Report

Vestavia Hills Parks

October 28, 2014

Auburn Montgomery Outreach,
Organizational Consulting

Introduction

Purpose

- To develop strategies to improve the use of the Sports Complexes as an offering of Vestavia Hills Parks and Recreation

Process

- Meetings with key stakeholders; identified problems and 5 key strategies
- Review and decide how to implement strategies; measure results

Payoff

- An offering that meets the needs and expectations of the Vestavia Hills community.
- Plan for moving forward
- Keep residents happy and attract people to city

Sports Complexes

Liberty Park Sports Complex - Liberty Park Sports Complex features 4 youth softball fields, 5 adult softball fields, and 5 soccer fields.

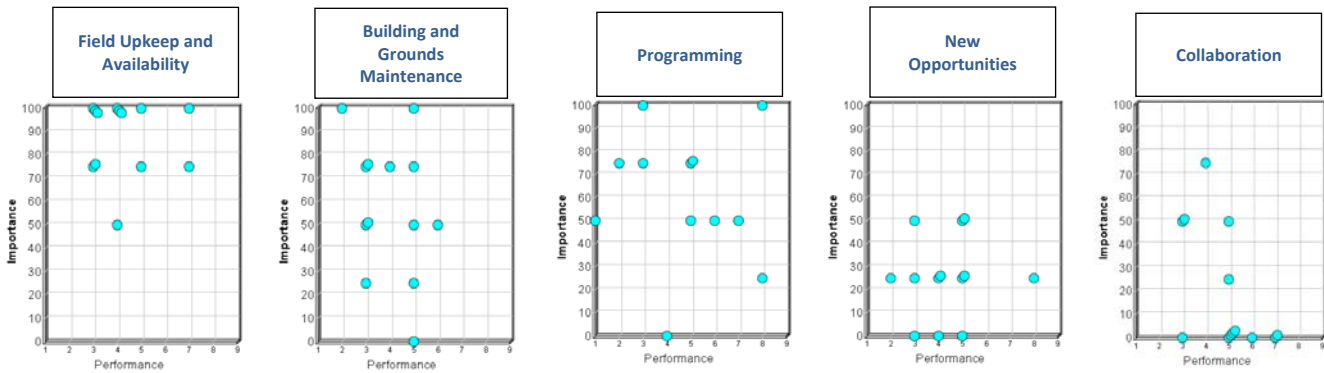
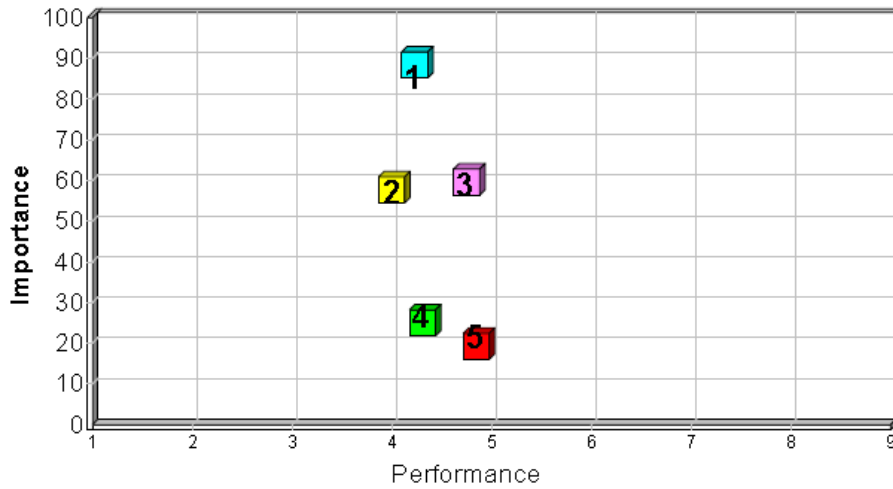
Cahaba Heights Athletic Fields - This facility has 3 youth baseball fields, and one multipurpose field that can be used for baseball, soccer, flag football, or lacrosse. The complex is located directly behind Vestavia Hills Elementary, Cahaba Heights on Dolly Ridge Road.

Sicard Hollow Athletic Complex - This former coal-mining site is now more than 11 acres of lighted synthetic turf playing surface, divided into two areas in a configuration that allows more flexibility for the layout of different sizes and numbers of fields. The fields are enclosed with an 8-foot, coated chain link fence with netting above (netting also extends through the center between the fields). The project included constructing a concessions/restroom building, four scoring towers, ADA accessible routes to all fields, a playground, and parking for 300 cars.

Wald Park - Wald Park features 5 baseball fields, the Civic Center, playgrounds, tennis courts, the pool, walking track, press boxes, storage rooms, concession stands, batting cages, and a maintenance building.

Central Field – Central Elementary School fields used for soccer; 1 field (3 soccer fields)

Opportunity Map – Sports Complex Improvement Strategies

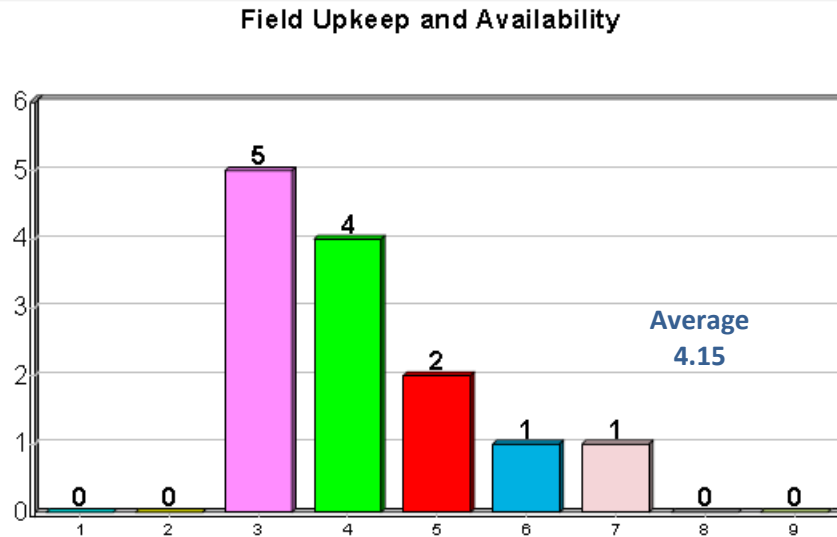


Strategies	Importance	Performance	Observations
1. Field Upkeep and Availability – Maintain all fields to their highest standard and make them available for regular use (inside the fence)	88.5%	4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest opportunity • 4.2 to 9.0 in performance?
3. Programming – Coordinate Sports Complex programming with sports leaders and users to meet their needs and expectations	59.6%	4.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second biggest opportunity • 4.8 to 9.0 in performance?
2. Building and Grounds Maintenance – Maintain the buildings and grounds (outside the fences)	57.7%	4.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An emerging opportunity • Lowest performance at a 4.0
4. New Opportunities – Pursue new revenue opportunities for Sports Complexes	25.0%	4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower priority
5. Collaboration – Collaborate with City Schools to maximize the Sports Complex offering	19.2%	4.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowest priority of the 5 items

Field Upkeep and Availability

Maintain all fields to their highest standard and make them available for regular use (inside the fence).

What's our current performance on Field Upkeep? (Vote, Rating 1 – 9)



Expectations: What would successful “Field Upkeep” look like?

- No weeds in turf (artificial and real) 100% weed free
- Better quality turf can endure more traffic
- Soccer fields have uniform Bermuda grass on the entire field
- Lips need to be taken care of
- Grading issues need to be corrected- this would help drainage
- More intense maintenance of grades
- Worry is that it's not the top layer that's the problem- but below. How it's constructed?
- Protect the infields
- Alabaster has a paid tournament every weekend- different sand, doesn't blow off of field, it drains
- Maintenance of score boards (Buffalo Rock deals with this but maybe Vestavia needs to speak with them about issues)
- Trash picked up (not a field maintenance issue- inside the fence but outside of field upkeep)
- Tournaments not canceled due to rain- this is a field drainage issue. Softball fields have organic build up- this can be dealt with

Strategy: What needs to be done to achieve these expectations?

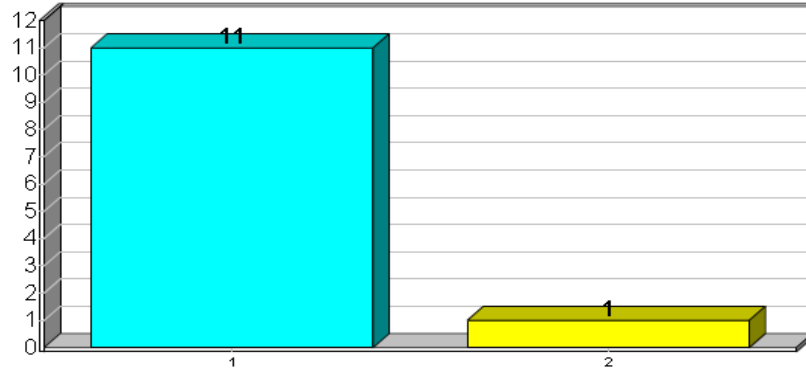
1. Contract Out Field Upkeep

- Outsourcing would give maintenance time to focus on other issues
- Parks and Rec staff would work with the chosen contractor to make sure scheduling is done properly
- Collaborative effort with maintenance and the chosen contractor that is cost effective
- Less staff would be needed to handle fields with the chosen contractor. - 4 full time, 3 part time at Liberty Park to handle inside the fence with the chosen contractor (all playing surfaces)

- *More equipment would be needed at Liberty Park to maintain higher standards*
- *Outsourcing inside the fence would be helpful to staff but concern is where will staff be placed. Staff may go to other departments if they aren't needed at Parks and Rec (Public Works, etc.)*

Should we contract out field upkeep? 11 of 12 say yes.

Contract Out Field Upkeep



Item	Votes	Percent
1. Yes	11	91.7
2. No	1	8.3

2. Effectively manage Field Usage: What needs to be done to effectively manage field usage?

- *Jason would work with outside staff to schedule*
- *A simplified process to book a field, it's too complicated now*
- *A website where schedule is posted*
- *Outside staff would have to have a schedule so that they can work on the fields*
- *Be proactive with scheduling*
- *If it doesn't create value for Vestavia Parks and Rec, may need to say no to save the fields*
- *Dual use of fields for practice and otherwise*
- *Football teams use outfields- is it destructive or can it be mitigated? Ideal for football teams to practice elsewhere. If there is some other place besides the outfield, that would be beneficial. If fields are too wet, football wouldn't be able to drive sleds*
- *Communication about what's destructive to fields and how to alleviate*

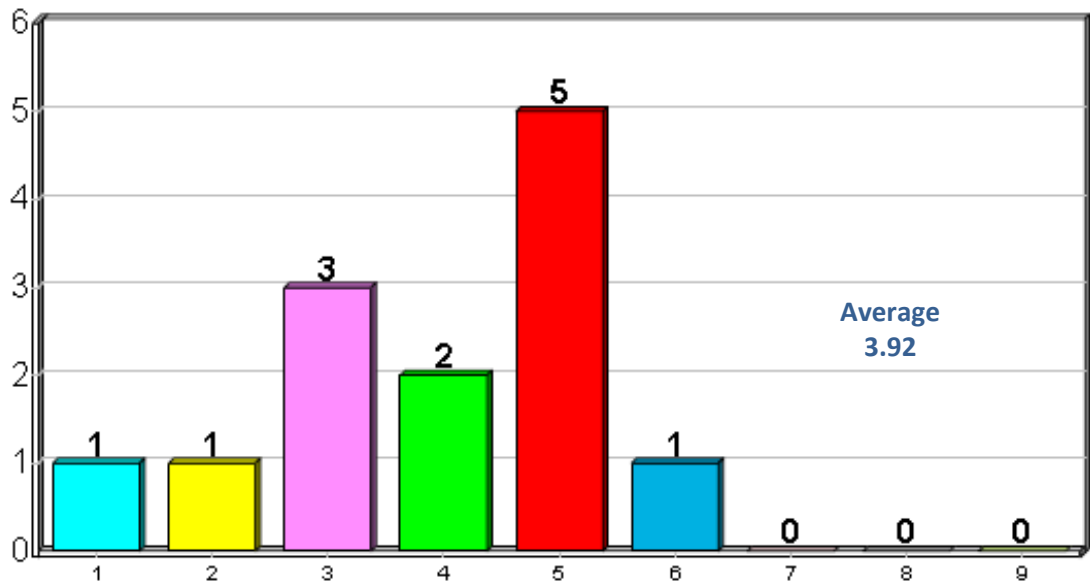
Feedback: What are the key indicators of Field Upkeep?

- *Conduct a regular/quarterly evaluation by Sports leaders and users.*
- *Key indicators:*
 - ✓ *Weed free*
 - ✓ *No lips*
 - ✓ *Level playing surface*
 - ✓ *Good drainage*
 - ✓ *Strong turf*

Buildings and Grounds Maintenance

Maintain the buildings and grounds to their highest standard and make them available for regular use (outside the fences). Outside the fences means any hardscape including fences, foul poles, goals, nets, gateways (greenery), parking lot, bathrooms, playgrounds, cages, civic center, lodge, pools, concessions, trash receptacles, bleachers

What's our current performance on Buildings and Grounds Maintenance? (Vote, Rating 1 – 9)



Expectations - What would successful "Buildings and Grounds Maintenance" look like?

- Good drainage, engineering study for drainage issues
- Aesthetics
- Green space to park gateways and common areas
- Preventative maintenance
- Taking existing flower beds and make them nicer (no weeds, etc.)
- Clean restrooms regularly
- Locker room at swimming pool
- Shaded bleachers, additional shade in general
- Trash picked up regularly
- More fields
- Track around Liberty Park
- Wi-Fi
- Dog park
- Batting cages at liberty park

Strategy - What needs to be done to achieve these expectations?

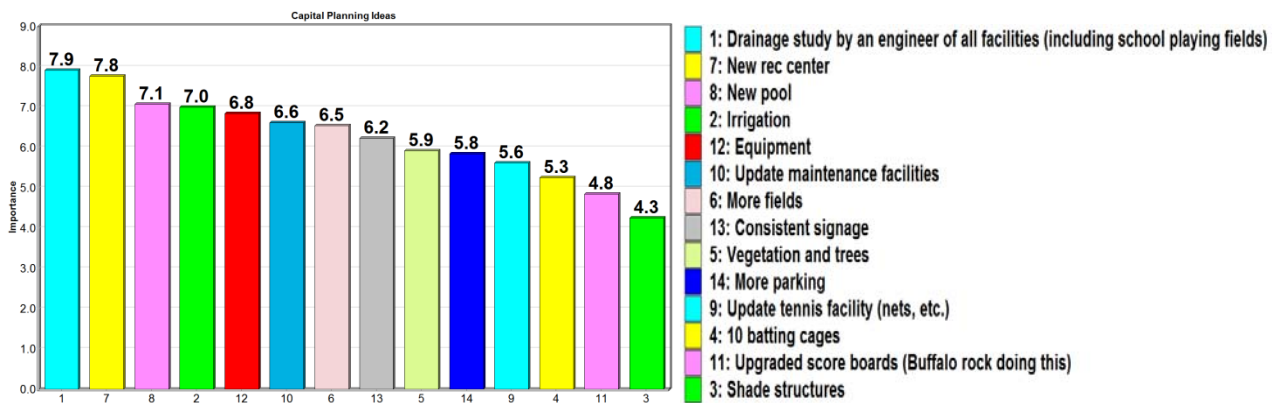
1. City Staff Focus and Ownership

- *More attention to detail outside of fences*
- *Staff given priorities on routine maintenance that matters*

2. Capital Planning

- *Drainage study by an engineer of all facilities (including school playing fields)*
- *Irrigation*
- *Shade structures*
- *10 batting cages*
- *Vegetation and trees*
- *More fields*
- *New rec center*
- *New pool*
- *Update tennis facility (nets, etc.)*
- *Update maintenance facilities*
- *Upgraded score boards (Buffalo Rock doing this)*
- *Equipment*
- *Consistent signage*
- *More parking*

Prioritized Capital Planning ideas



Feedback

- *Conduct a regular/quarterly evaluation by participating groups and users*
- *Participate in the annual citizen survey*
- *Create and report on a checklist of capital projects*

Programming

Coordinate Sports Complex programming with sports leaders and users to meet their needs and expectations

Expectations - *What would successful "Programming" look like?*

- *Clear line of communication between city staff and various programs and the user groups, effective communication*
- *Cooperative collaboration between staff and sports programs*
- *City staff be more proactive instead of reactive*
- *Balance revenue opportunities, rec program for community is number 1 priority*

Strategy - *What needs to be done to achieve these expectations?*

- **Better Communications**
 - ✓ *Website with specific scheduling information*
 - ✓ *More efficient scheduling process*
 - ✓ *Electronically accept requests for field reservations*
 - ✓ *Flow of consistent communication so that issues can be resolved*
 - ✓ *Have a meeting with sports leaders and Parks Board to communicate expectations*
- **Improved Focus, Greater Capacity to Solve Problems**
 - ✓ *Clear understanding of the governance structure of Parks and Rec*
 - ✓ *Consistent engagement with all sports so the city can be proactive in responding to their needs*
 - ✓ *More face time with individual sports board leaders (meeting with Moose, Jason, Jim)*
 - ✓ *Sports board leaders should be required to invite liaisons to a meeting to communicate (possibly a signed "contract" that explains what is expected)*
 - ✓ *Jason should know this information so that he can disseminate information accordingly*

Feedback

- *Survey sent by Jason to sports leaders to identify issues at the conclusion of every sport's season*

Revenue Opportunities

Pursue revenue generation opportunities for Sports Complexes

Expectations - *What would successful revenue generation look like? How much revenue? What opportunities?*

- *Currently, they generate \$400,000 per year
More manpower for Let's Play Vestavia*
- *Attract events (like the Howard University event), baseball events, softball events*
- *Let's Play Vestavia reach out to semi-pro soccer team in Birmingham*
- *Set up events that aren't sports events (concerts, etc.)*
- *Maximize all venues and assets*
- *Event coordinator on staff in city or contracted*
- *Identify the minimum amount that an event would have to bring in (cost benefit analysis) to be worthwhile- also look at quality of life*
- *Synthetic turf (especially central field)*
- *New rec center to attract new events (wrestling, volleyball, etc.)*

Strategy - *What needs to be done to achieve these expectations?*

1. *Preparation*
 - ✓ *Deal with field conditions before worrying about revenue generation*
 - ✓ *Study of availability of resources and fields*
 - ✓ *Better scheduling*
2. *Outsource Events*
 - ✓ *Continue working with Let's Play Vestavia and expand*
 - ✓ *Find someone to run baseball tournaments at Wald Park in June- there may be no room for this*
3. *Involved with non-sport activities*

Feedback - *What are the key indicators of successful revenue generation from new opportunities?*

Collaboration with City Schools

Collaborate with City Schools to maximize the Sports Complex offering

Expectations - *What would successful collaboration with the school system look like? In what areas can we collaborate?*

- *Board of Education wants to collaborate*
- *Parks and Rec has a relationship with all schools*
- *Cultivate relationship between Parks and Rec and Athletic Director at high school*

Strategy - *What needs to be done to collaborate more effectively with the school system?*

- *Communicate with Sheila Phillips (superintendent)*
- *A policy that states that when school facilities aren't being used, Parks and Rec can use and vice versa*
- *Turf Central Field*
- *Maximize use of Central field and gyms*

Measures of Success and Future Evaluation and Follow Up

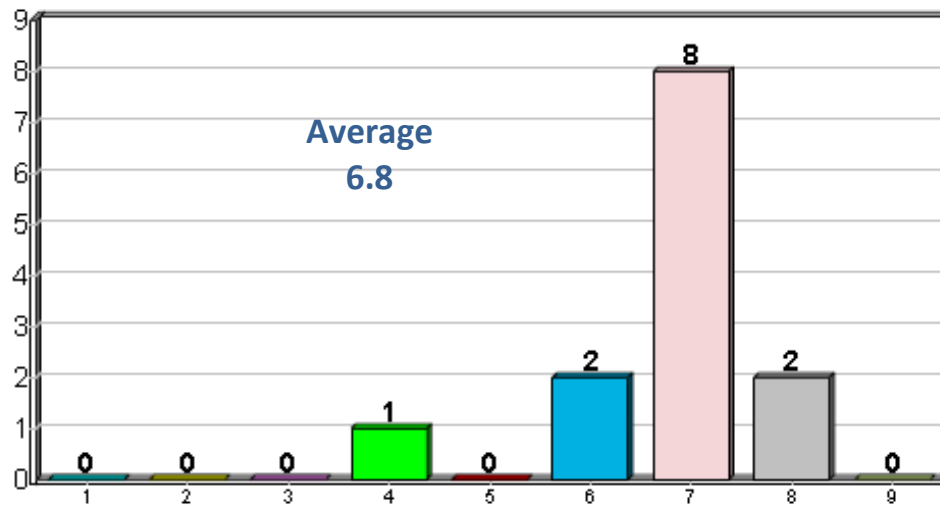
Summary

What are the indicators of success in each area?

- **Field upkeep** – evaluation/inspection from sports leaders and stakeholders (possibly monthly, bimonthly)
- **Building and Grounds Maintenance** – quarterly inspection/ evaluation. Set of expectations in writing.
- **Programming** – survey from Jason to sports leaders at the end of each season (maybe quarterly). Annual meeting
- **Growth in revenue** – capacity evaluation accomplished by a work group
- **Collaboration** – policy written to provide for collaboration, meeting with Sheila Phillips about opp. for collaboration

Confidence

What's your confidence that this strategy will work?



Next steps

- *Concerns on who will make this happen?*
- *Bryan has a big role, get support from park board, assign responsibilities*