



## CITY OF WICHITA

### PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PROCESS

#### PROS TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUP (TAG) MEETING #2 MAY 16, 2007 MEETING SUMMARY

The PROS Technical Advisory Group met on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 for an update on the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Planning Process. The meeting was led by Lauren Schmitt, of MIG, Inc, who began by giving the Committee a synopsis of work to date. Ms. Schmitt's introduction included a presentation of major findings regarding the planning context and existing conditions of the Wichita parks, recreation, and open space system.

The discussion portion of the meeting began with a conversation about positioning parks and recreation as a solution to problems in Wichita. As part of the conversation, the group identified problems which parks and recreation can help solve, including:

- Public health issues
- Lack of communication between public, private, and non-profit sectors
- Lack of environmental awareness
- Environmental issues (e.g., flood control)
- Social isolation
- Poor community image
- Youth issues
- "Brain drain"
- Neighborhood deterioration

The meeting also included a discussion about the role that the Department should play in providing park and recreation services. TAG members suggested the following roles:

- Partner
- Leader
- Provider of specific facilities (e.g. trails, sports facilities)
- Recreation provider
- Maintenance provider
- Cross-pollinator/facilitator
- Advocate
- Fundraiser
- Provider for underserved populations
- Quality of life booster
- Mentor/coach
- Decision maker
- Environmental steward
- Community developer

As a corollary to the discussion of Department roles, the group discussed the way that the Department should approach parks and recreation service provision. TAG members expressed disparate views, including the opinions that the Department should:

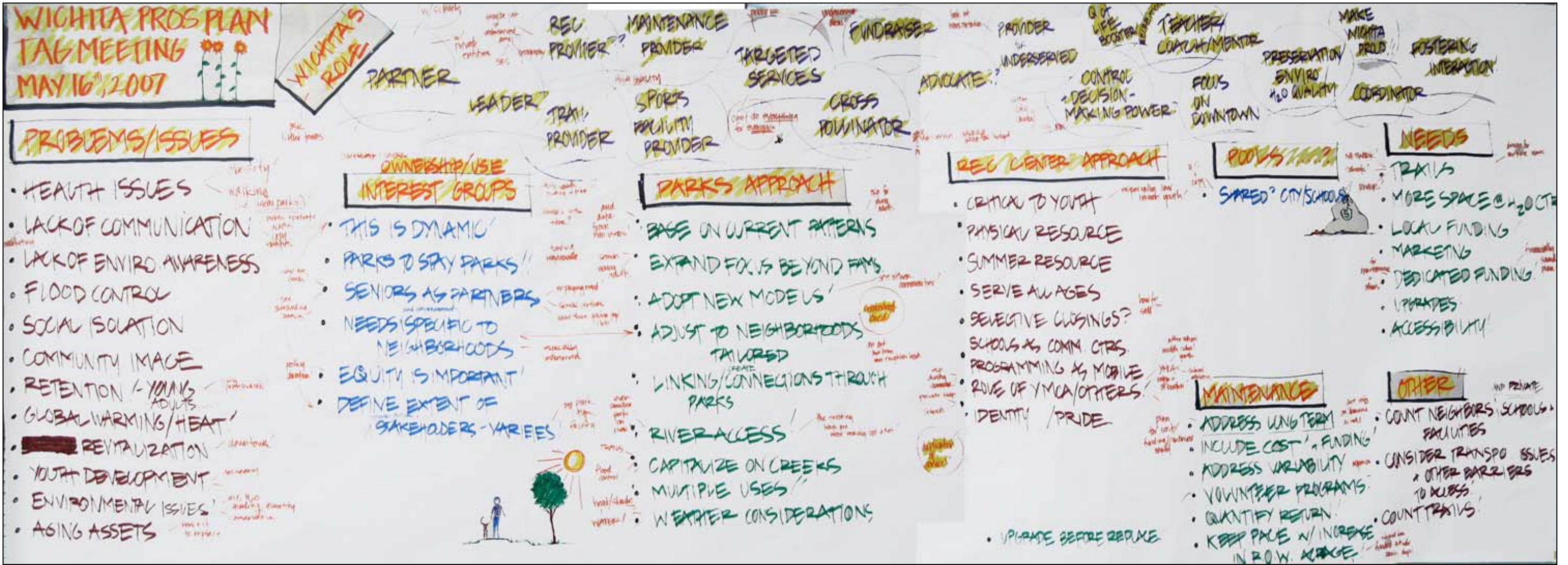
- Base approach on existing patterns of use, while recognizing that these patterns are dynamic
- Expand focus beyond families
- Focus on low-income communities
- Focus on youth
- Provide neighborhood-based services that respond to individual neighborhood's needs
- Capitalize on natural resources (e.g., creeks)
- Develop facilities with multiple uses
- Serve all ages
- Share resources with schools (e.g., pools, community centers)

The group also identified a series of current needs in Wichita, including:

- Trails
- More space at water center
- Funding
- Marketing
- Facilities upgrades
- Improved transportation
- Maintenance plan that:
  - Addresses the long term
  - Includes costs and adequate funding
  - Keeps pace with increase in right-of-way acreage
  - Includes volunteer labor
  - Prioritizes upgrades over replacements

Throughout the course of the meeting, a number of overarching issues and questions arose, including the following:

- Could programming be provided independently from the recreation centers? Could targeted centers and pools be closed?
- Where are we duplicating services?
- How do we enhance the city's and Department's sense of identity and pride?
- Planning process should consider barriers to access, including transportation and socioeconomics.



Wall graphic from 5/16/07 TAG Meeting