



APPLICATION FORM

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 3, 2019.** Please include this application form with electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Frederick County
Program Title: Frederick Heights Park Project
Program Category: Parks and Recreation

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Jon Turkel
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Department: Parks and Recreation
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SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Jay E. Tibbs
Title: Deputy County Administrator
Signature: Jay E. Tibbs

Executive Summary – Frederick Heights Park Project

Merging a variety of public input channels and using the information gathered to transform an underutilized public space into a desired park with accessible amenities was the intent and outcome of the Frederick Heights Park project. Located in one of the most densely populated areas of Frederick County, the 11-acre parcel, donated to the county for public use in 1967, had become a little used public area while requiring ongoing maintenance. By utilizing a combination of proffer and private grant funds, the community is now enjoying access to a playground, picnic areas, and a ½ basketball court via a parking area and ½ mile paved walking loop.

Following through on community survey results, Frederick County Parks and Recreation pursued meeting highly desired public amenities such as; multi-use trails, small parks, natural areas, and playgrounds. Continuing public input through open meetings and online comment opportunities allowed the public to further shape the vision and outcome of the project. The venue of Frederick Heights Park provided an ideal location due to the dense population surrounding the property, that it was already owned and maintained by the county, and the site's ability to advance top listed amenities. Being able to attribute amenity needs to population growth in the service area, development impact proffers collected for Parks and Recreation purposes could be used to support the project. Leveraging this commitment, and providing a vision consistent with McKee Foods, OH! Outdoor Happiness program, the project was selected to represent Virginia's expression of Outdoor Happiness and receive significant funding towards the project.

The development of access and amenities at Frederick Heights Park has helped improve Frederick County's ability to meet the desires identified by residents relating to health and well-being.

Overview

Wanting to meet citizen desires in a financially constrained environment, Frederick County Parks and Recreation greatly increased the probability of success by utilizing a variety of public input sources, and funding sources. The Parks and Recreation department had been tasked with the maintenance of 11 acres of land donated to the County in 1967 and greatly underutilized by the public despite being in a densely populated area. A playground and ½ basketball court existed on the site, however as access to these amenities involved crossing nearly 900 feet of open grassy field, use was limited.

A statistically valid community survey, conducted by the Parks and Recreation department in 2012, provided great insight into Frederick County amenity needs. Motivated by the survey, the Parks and Recreation Commission directed staff in 2015 to pursue meeting identified needs at the Frederick Heights Park location. Frederick Heights fit the description for identified needs in the areas of ‘small parks’ and ‘natural areas’ and held the potential to advance playgrounds through access provided by the top ranked ‘multi-use trails’. With oversight of the Parks and Recreation Commission, a concept plan was created and prepared for public input meetings.

The process of taking concept plans through public input meetings largely allowed residents local to the park to shape the project. Two public input meetings were held, one in October of 2016 and one in January of 2017 to ensure the voice of the public was heard.

As the project elements were attributable to population growth, development impact proffers were recommended for use by the Parks and Recreation Commission. Additionally, staff researched potential grants and recognized potential with McKee Foods OH! Outdoor Happiness grant program.

Aspirational, the OH! program was intended to highlight a project from each state to receive \$20,000 in order help “create, build, improve, and preserve areas to run, jump and play.” The Frederick Heights Project met the OH! program intent and provided the opportunity to leverage those funds in the creation of a much larger project.. Having the McKee Foods OH! grant funds support the project allowed for the inclusion of design features previously only considered as future options.

Completed in December of 2018, the additions to Frederick Heights Park has led to new opportunities for area residents to utilize amenities they had a large voice in defining. The public input process and pursuit of alternative funding streams are tools that allow this project to serve as a model towards meeting public needs.

Problem, Challenge, or Situation

The status-quo is a formidable barrier to improvement, and the area of Frederick Heights Park had been the way it was for almost a generation. Over the years, the primary feedback received from area residents centered on problems and opinions on what was not wanted. The legacy and reputation of the area was one of discontent where change was unwelcome. Utilizing data from the departments 2012 community survey, and initiating a robust public input program, the conversation was steered to emphasize increased benefits for area residents and improved quality of life. The project made significant changes in an area where it was believed that no change was wanted and now helps to meet high value recreation desires of the community.

Implementation

The seed of inspiration for the project began with the Parks and Recreation 2012 Community Survey which provided a meaningful perspective of community desires. Considering the Frederick Heights Park area in conjunction with a hierarchy of identified needs set the stage for community acceptance. Once a conceptual plan was created a public input meeting was held at a nearby community center giving residents the opportunity to express their opinions at the conceptual level. Online feedback forums and staff contact information was provided to allow for broader feedback, and the local newspaper was informed and reported on the concept plans. All adjoining property owners and any individuals who had previously commented or complained about the area were directly invited to provide input. Once initial comments were received, changes to the concept plan were integrated and a 2nd public input session was held. With no new comments, and overall positive responses nearing 95%, the Parks and Recreation Commission approved the concept and opened the door for funding requests. Funding was ultimately received and as discussed in a following section involved pursuing alternative funding sources prior to engaging the design engineer and ultimately awarding the construction contract.

The cost of the project

The total cost of the Frederick Heights Park project was \$217,000. As requested by the Parks and Recreation Commission, Frederick County provided \$197,000 to the project through development impact proffers collected from developments within the service area of Frederick Heights Park. Additionally, staff pursued McKee Foods, OH! Outdoor Happiness Grant for a project to represent the state of Virginia. The Outdoor Happiness! program identified one project in each state to receive a grant

of \$20,000. Recipients needed to demonstrate how their proposed project would increase the opportunity for outdoor recreation in a community or region. McKee Foods was attracted to the Frederick Heights Project as their contribution was greatly leveraged and provided a much larger ability to meet the programs intent by partnering with Frederick County Parks and Recreation. With the funding from McKee Foods, the project was able to move forward with bids received.

Project Results

Frederick County now has a park providing top identified recreation needs for the community. Items identified in the Community Survey including; multi-use trails, small parks, natural areas, picnic areas, and playgrounds are all either provided or integrated into the project, representing five of the top eleven desired amenities in Frederick County. While no visitor counts exist, neighbors surrounding the park property have spoken to regular activity in the park, where previously this was rare. Neighbors also report being pleased with the project and enjoying using the facilities themselves. In large part due to the multiple public input sources and opportunities, the park is providing users of all ages the ability to recreate at Frederick Heights Park in ways they were not able to previously. By pursuing a hearty series of public input opportunities, the project has transformed the attitudes of area residents and provided them with the amenities they will use.

Frederick Heights Park Project – Supporting Images

Ribbon Cutting:



Before and After Images:

Entrance looking South:



Entrance looking North:



Trail sign w/ McKee Foods OH! and Parks & Recreation Logos



Installed trail alignment 1:



Installed trail alignment 2:



Basketball court resurfacing:

