

PARKS COMMISSION – VALUES & PRIORITIES

By Shayanne Wright

VALUES (in order of priority for myself)**1. Safety**

At a bare minimum, our parks and programs must be safe. We have a fundamental responsibility to protect the health and well-being of our community members. This is the baseline from which everything else builds.

2. Maintenance & Optimization

Many of our existing facilities and programs are underutilized or in need of attention. In times of limited funding, we can still make meaningful improvements by maintaining and optimizing what we already have: increasing access, visibility, and usefulness.

3. Community-Centered

The feedback, needs, and ideas of the community should be at the heart of every decision we make. We serve the public, and often, their solutions are simpler and more effective than we expect.

4. Equity

To me, equity means ensuring equal access to parks and city programming regardless of income, location, or physical ability. That includes affordability, ADA compliance, and ensuring every neighborhood can reach a park safely.

5. Sustainability

We must protect our natural and open spaces especially unique areas like Fairview Park. But sustainability also means smart, long-term choices: using drought-tolerant landscaping, preserving water, installing LED lighting, and designing parks that serve future generations.

6. Innovation

Let's reimagine what parks can be — spaces that serve all ages and purposes. Whether it's dog parks, public gardens, youth skate spots, shaded gathering areas, or spaces that support food, art, or active transportation.

HOW I PRIORITIZE THESE VALUES

I believe in balancing **practical responsibility** with **community-driven vision**. Using a “hierarchy of needs” model helps clarify how we make decisions when values are in tension:

1. **Start with Safety**
Reducing liability and protecting public safety must always come first.
 2. **Then, Maximize What We Already Have**
Whether we have a budget surplus or nothing at all, we can always improve how we use our existing parks and programs. Optimization is key to stewardship.
 3. **Always Center the Community**
Even as we prioritize safety and responsible use of resources, we must always reflect the will of the community. Listening to residents ensures our values translate into what people actually need.
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HOW THIS SHOWS UP IN REAL LIFE

Here are some scenarios that illustrate the tension between values and decision-making:

Scenario 1: Off-Leash Dogs at a Community Park

Some residents want a dedicated dog run; others want stricter enforcement of leash laws. We have the budget for only one.

Tension: Community-centered values are in conflict. How do we weigh safety, equity of use, and community input?

Scenario 2: Events & Environmental Use at Fairview Park

Model airplane flying and summer concerts are beloved by many, but environmental groups argue Fairview Park should remain untouched.

Tension: Sustainability vs. community enjoyment and historical use. How do we balance preservation with active use?

Scenario 3: Budget Surplus Allocation

In the event of a budget surplus, we are offered 3 options:

1. Revamp a park in an underserved neighborhood
2. Replace unsafe playground equipment
3. Fix up a revenue-generating sports complex.
4. All options have equally strong community support.

Tension: Safety vs. equity vs. financial sustainability. Which value guides the final choice?

IN CONCLUSION

For me, the most important part of this values exercise is applying it **practically**. These aren't just big ideas — they're tools to guide the hard decisions we face as Parks Commissioners.