

Matheson Hammock Park – General Plan Draft - Meeting Notes

The following are written comments received during a public open house at St. Thomas Episcopal Church Meeting Hall located at 5690 N Kendall Dr, Coral Gables FL 33156 and held on Thursday, August 13, 2015 from 6:00pm to 8:00pm. The purpose of the open house was for the presentation of the conceptual plan of Matheson Hammock Park and to gather public input through the form of written comments.

1. Flip Chart Comments:

Three stations were provided, one for 'East side' of the park or the portion located east of Old Cutler Road; a station for 'West side' of the park or the portion located west of Old Cutler Road; and a station for the Overall master plan. These stations were staffed with 19 Park employees to answer questions and flip charts were provided for participants to provide written comments. The following are comments recorded on flip charts.

General Comments:

- Area 6 is all native Florida trees and plants, now overgrown with sewer vine- Get rid of evasive plants.
- Keep West Side as it is, in its natural/virgin state as that is what makes it special to visitors.
- Wonderful plan- Proceed.
- Keep West Side trails natural, not paved.
- Since vehicular access will end to West Side on School House Rd., provide alternative parking space elsewhere for visitors to this area.
- The proposed parking along Old Cutler road is a welcome feature. Visitors can now walk and bike in the park and not drive into the park.
- Query about why the West Side was prioritized over the East Side since this contradicts the present flow of people in the Park.
- Crumbling wall on south side of nursery requires immediate attention and repairs. The broken wall poses a danger to wildlife.
- Request to keep entrance open to cars as the other entrance is too far off especially for kids on their bikes to come up.
- Safer pedestrian and bike access. Regulate car speed both inside and outside the park.
- 3000 cars per month traveling through the residential area needs to be addressed.
- Keep all vehicular movement outside of park.
- Garbage becomes an issue on East Side especially during a holiday weekend. Plans/proposed features on improving this issue.
- East Side Park- The path north of the roadway is partially under water every day. This path needs to be elevated by at least a foot.
- Having more trees on both East and West Sides of the park is supported by commenters. All specimen trees should be marked and have identification signage for educational purpose. Boy scouts and rangers could be brought in to help with the process of identification and marking of these trees.
- Comments related to dog park area:
 - Majority of those who use the West Side go solely for the purpose of walking on the trails with their pets. Keep/ restore that area in its present form.

- Dogs being walked to the fenced dog park area or around the park need to be kept on a leash, which is not being enforced presently. Leash laws need to be put into place.
- The four trails on West Side are open for walking pets, which is a wonderful feature, as many others parks contain their dog park areas into a limited space.
- Why is the Dog park area restricted to a specific space? There is not enough room for the dogs to run. The park is huge and many of the citizens use it to walk their dogs- it creates a sense of community and has worked for years. Request to not close the dog park. Most visitors do not want a fenced in dog park.
- Few commenters felt that the fenced dog park is a good feature. They felt that the area proposed is sufficient in size.
- Walk to the dog park is too long for physically disabled pets.
- Dogs and dog walkers keep the park safe.

East Side Park Comments

The following comments are transcribed from flip charts. Additional comments can be found in Section 2 of the notes (park maps).

- Comments related to Bike Path:
 - Raised bike paths.
 - Make the bike path into a boardwalk.
 - Repair bike path.
- Old Cutler Road:
 - Enforce “No Parking” along Old Cutler Rd.
 - Forcing vehicles only to use Old Cutler Rd. creates a traffic bottleneck especially during peak hours. Parking creates additional traffic issues and hampers safety and access.
 - Cutler Rd. parking forces all visitors to walk through dark unlit areas to reach the park. Perception of safety can be an issue.
 - Provide barriers along Old Cutler Rd to prevent parking.
 - Keep all trailer and boat parking on Old Cutler Rd. parking areas, outside the park.
 - Do not allow boats and trailers to park on and block Old Cutler Rd. if the marina is closed.
- General Comments:
 - Dock area requires improvements.
 - Possible parking at Wading beach area.
 - Protect mangroves.
 - Future maintenance costs and affordability.
 - Ensure park security and safety of visitors.
 - Add a playground.
 - Shaded seating areas.
 - Designated activity areas: tot-a-lots, playgrounds, exercise stations, bike paths, dog park.
 - No extra boat lifts.

West Side Park Comments:

The following comments are transcribed from flip charts. Additional comments can be found in Section 2 of the notes (park maps). Comments listed below are grouped by theme.

- Preservation of the West Side:
 - Keep the west side as it in its natural state. Very few of such natural public areas are left in the neighborhood; therefore this one needs to be conserved instead of overdesigned.
 - West Side should be protected as wildlife sanctuary and nature preserve.
 - Label native plant species.
 - Get rid of invasive plants.
 - All parking should be pervious.
 - No cutting of mangroves on East or West side.
 - Protect historic trees like royal palms and other palms.
 - Signage for historic nursery.
 - Make walk through the nursery a part of trail and walking route.
 - Feral cats need to be removed from park.
- Dog park Comments:
 - Proposed dog park area size is sufficient. It does not need to be bigger.
 - Proposed dog park area size of 3 acres is not sufficient.
 - Dog area needs a water feature for dogs to swim.
 - Dedicate the whole west side for unleashed dogs.
 - Have specific hour limitations when dogs can be unleashed in the park. Do not have a fenced in dog park area.
 - Suggestions for “Central Park” solution - unleashed dogs are allowed at specific hours of the day.
 - Dog park area should not be done at the expense of removing grassy habitat areas of wild animals, especially birds, nor should it result in the loss of any native trees or other native vegetation.
- North Entrance Comments:
 - Provide driving access to Matheson Dr.
 - Do not allow cars to access West Matheson Dr.
 - Make access to Old Cutler Rd. safe.
 - Provide vehicular access through School House Rd and provide parking by the dog park.
 - Allow 12 parking spaces at the pedestrian entry to the park.
 - Create parking area at north entrance.
 - Make north entrance a vehicular entrance. A car accessible entrance from 52nd Ave.
 - Traffic on 52nd Ave. is very heavy and four way stop is not monitored by traffic police.
 - Speed bumps at north side of park or a traffic circle.
 - No Parking = No Park
 - Maintain vehicular access on School House Rd. Add parking area to the School House Road entrance.
- Old Cutler Rd entrance Comments:
 - ADA accessibility from Old Cutler parking lot to main area of park.
 - Access path is too far to walk to.
 - Cars on Old Cutler Rd. have been subject to vandalism.
 - Accessing park on trail from the Old Cutler Rd parking lot does not feel safe. Trail needs to be wider and well lit.
- Spend most funds on improving the East Side, which is the “real” park side while the West Side remains the way it is, a large area for dogs.

- Concentrate on East Side of Park first.
- Why is the West Side Phase I? How and why was this prioritized?
- Need for a playground.
- Budget to maintain the new park?
- Do not make pedestrian trail that directly abuts the homes on Kerwin Oaks without a significant buffer.
- Buffering off park from neighboring residential units - "Cannot allow adjacent houses to use park as their backyard".
- Do not privatize park.
- Provide a fence between the park and adjacent homes to prevent unauthorized access.
- The financial expense for 200' buffer cannot be justified as good for all.
- Maintain existing facilities: boat docks, restrooms.
- Stop commercial sail and kite boarding. They are destroying the shallow grass beds.
- Provide a website with comments, process, and dates.