



December 2022 – Update to Wheels Roller Rink Residents Committee

Wheels Management and Operation

We had discussed two options for operations in our meetings:

1. A private operator to manage Wheels Roller Rink whose contract is managed by DPR.
2. A recreation center model directly managed by DPR.

The guiding factor we heard from the community has been “open Wheels to skating as soon as possible.” Our best option to do that is with a private contractor to manage the day to day operations of Wheels Roller Rink. This is very common. The City contracts with private operators to operate some City owned facilities, for example the Hillandale Golf Course, DPAC, and the Carolina Theatre. DPR contracts and/or has agreements with private operators to help run festivals, and even help program parks like Durham Central Park; we have an agreement with the Durham Bike Co Op to offer free bike repair programs. The City feels confident that we can hire and develop a contract for a credible managing operator that reflects the community values and needs.

Process for Selection and Management of an Operator:

DPR staff have researched various skating rinks across the country and are learning about different management models. We’ll use this information and the input you gave us online and at our WRRRC meetings to develop a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) for the operation of the Wheels Roller Rink. The RFP is estimated to be released in late January. The RFP posting will notify potential contractors that the City is in need of services and asks them to formally propose how to meet those needs. Proposals received from private contractors will be evaluated for compliance with the City’s standards and equity goals. The formal proposals allow us to fairly compare firms.

A panel of DPR Staff and a member of the office of Equity and Inclusion will review and score the proposals. In addition, we are inviting a member of the Wheels Roller Rink Residents Committee to serve on the scoring panel. Adrienne Quick Wright has a long history of working to manage cultural and educational institutions like DPAC and Maurine Joy School and most importantly, has a lifelong passion for roller skating. DPR staff will include Mary Unterreiner and Tom Dawson who have worked with the WRRRC and Joy Guy who has researched skating management models through the lens of her 30 years of parks and recreation experience.

Once a managing operator is selected, DPR will develop a contract which will include all of the values, expectations, and needs specified for City Council consideration for approval. Once City Council approves, the contract will be executed by the City Manager. The operator must hold to the letter of the contract. DPR will meet regularly to manage the contract for fidelity with the agreement and expectations. Our goal is to have a contractor ready to roll when the renovation of the Wheels Roller Rink is complete.



Wheels Roller Rink Architectural (Building/Code Compliance) Renovation Update

The request for a proposal from the operator is different than the request for proposals for architectural/building services. DPR and General Services staff put out a request for proposals for architectural services this October. We selected the firm DWT Architects; they are currently negotiating the contract. City staff has worked with DWT Architects before and has been satisfied with their thoroughness and dedication to excellence. We have addressed specific concerns the Wheels Roller Rink Residents Committee discussed including mold, roof, and the skate floor. We have also put contingencies in their contract in case they find something City Trades and Architectural staff didn't see during their review of the facility.

Splash & Play Project and Connection to Merrick-Moore Park

The overall Splash & Play Project planning and engagement effort has also been busy. This project looks at the overall site development for the former Wheels Fun Park site and connection to Merrick-Moore Park. After a months-long public engagement process, DPR is presenting the community and staff preferred design concepts to City Council. These concept drawings are still "broad brush." There will be future opportunities for engagement around the amenities like the playgrounds and spray grounds, art, and overall qualities of the space. These preferred concepts represent a direction to start in. The Wheels Roller Rink will be in operation when the major construction occurs on the other part of the property. DPR staff and consultants will continue to refine the design, look for engagement opportunities, and manage the balance between an operational Wheels Roller Rink and a developing aquatic center.

Children from the Merrick Moore Neighborhood and Durham recently selected a playground to be installed by the Merrick Moore Park shelter this winter.

The Splash & Play Project also looks at how to connect the adjacent East End and Long Meadow Parks utilizing City-owned land and improve recreational services. Similar to the former Wheels Fun Park site, concept designs have been created for East End and Long Meadow Parks utilizing community feedback and preferences. The concept designs for East End and Long Meadow Parks is unfunded, except for the R. Kelly Bryant Bridge Trail, which will run through both parks. The concept designs give guidance on what is possible for funding and what the public would be interested in seeing happen in the park. This will guide staff on what recreational amenities like covered basketball courts and playground should be considered for funding and what should develop alongside the upcoming R. Kelly Bryant Bridge Trail. The preferred concept also resolves a question posed in the City's Aquatics Masterplan: what should happen with the Longmeadow Pool? Staff will continue to keep the pool in operation for as long as possible, but will request funding for construction of a future pool out of the floodplain at East End Park.