



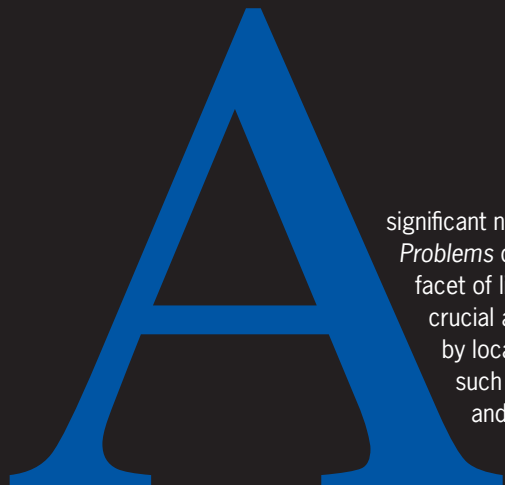
DC APPELSEED

ARTS, RECREATION  
& TOURISM

DC

2006

# ARTS, RECREATION & TOURISM



significant number of *Solving DC Problems* contributors see another facet of life in Washington, DC, as crucial and deserving of attention by local officials: leisure activities, such as art, recreation, and tourism. Their ideas and opinions fell into four major categories:

providing artistic, creative and recreational activities for the city's youth; bolstering and augmenting the artistic talent base that already exists in the city; beautifying the city and improving the leisure activity facilities and venues; and inspiring city pride and supporting tourism.

## I. ACTIVITIES FOR THE CITY'S YOUTH POPULATION

Many of the respondents in this category felt that increased opportunities for young residents of Washington, DC, would "open their eyes to opportunities" and that physical activities would encourage kids to get "off the couch and away from the TV to reduce the obesity of DC youth."

### A. Artistic Expression

Some of the artistic pursuits that residents suggested include:

- "Shakespeare in the Park," where teenagers would gather in a park to first recite classical poetry (e.g., Shakespeare, Shelley, and Keats) and then engage in a "poetry slam" and share their own poetic works.
- "Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue Children's Summer Theater" which would draw assistance from various members of the community.
- A quarterly activities guide "developed by teens, including articles dealing with issues that affect them, interviews with local teen heroes, and surveys of teen thoughts and concerns" that "will result in a better city with our teens developing

civic ownership, positive emotions, and intellectual and social growth."

- A magazine created by students to discuss prevalent issues that would "empower students to solve their own problems."

### B. Recreational Activities

Athletic outlets and recreational activities were also suggested, including:

- An indoor sports complex on the Anacostia waterfront containing "dozens of basketball and volleyball courts, indoor soccer spaces, skating and roller rinks, batting cages, a golf driving range, climbing walls, and gymnastics apparatus."
- Structured recreation leagues requiring good behavior and a "C" grade average or better.
- Conversion of RFK Stadium into a youth athletic facility.
- A "think before you move" program that would challenge teens to view chess as a metaphor for life; participants would first attend "skill sessions in career planning, interpersonal relationships, the art of decision-making, anger management, managing money, and protection against STDs and HIV" and then learn "the art of chess, wherein youth learn the history and rules of chess to include basic moves and strategy."
- Overhaul recreation centers by: including books and computers; arranging for visits from local heroes to act as role models; soliciting financial support from private entities; establishing internships and jobs at the centers; and promoting use of the facilities through live radio broadcasts.
- Create an outdoor school on the Anacostia waterfront where students would learn about leadership, the outdoors and basic life skills.

- Establish a youth empowerment program that would offer safe after-school programs with incentives for academic achievers and drug-free attendees.
- Refurbish every high school field with the help of the DC Sports and Entertainment Commission.

## II. ARTISTIC SUPPORT/DEVELOPMENT

The city's residents are concerned about retaining local artistic talent. One contest participant declared that Washington, DC "needs more local artists contributing to the cultural identity of our city" and proposed three ways to fulfill that wish: provide affordable housing and studio space for artists (offering the new stadium area as the location); promote sales of locally produced art through gallery crawls and street fair exhibits that are accessible to all; display local art throughout the city and encourage design through contests. Another resident suggested offering special housing and space for artists to "encourage artists and designers to develop and create their own spaces and businesses through relaxed zoning regulations for warehouse conversions and tax credits to not penalize those whose work in the area."

One resident suggested "beautifying the DC area... through an art competition to design new manhole covers in the DC area." Another suggested painting the walls in Metro stations, reflecting the character of the local neighborhood, as a way to "lighten the mood in the tunnels." In addition, this resident would like to extend that space to Master of Fine Arts students. A fourth resident drew upon a program that was successfully implemented in Boston that "inspired dialogue, creativity, healing and learning by introducing artwork into nonprofit environments for ten years." To corroborate the success, the resident quoted a fifth grade student: "When I walk into a room I've never been into, I look around and see what's in it. If there's lots of art, I feel wanted. If there isn't, I feel lonely. The proposed name for the District-version of the program was "Art Connection in the Capital Region."

## III. IMPROVEMENT OF FACILITIES AND CIVIC SPACES

### A. Community Centers

Residents would like to see the city maximize the use of existing facilities for community enrichment programs. Rather than turning the land over to commercial development, one resident suggested converting closed public schools into recreational facilities for children. Other residents recommended using the space for adult leisure and educational activities, such as adult literacy classes, community meetings, or opportunities for "intellectual stimulation." A "knowledge-share" program was proposed to offer adults low-cost, peer-run colloquia covering a variety of topics including language, project management, art,

music, computers and fitness. A marginal fee would be charged and returned to the public schools.

### B. City Parks

Another concern of residents is the condition of the city's parks. Many residents feel that cleaner, revitalized parks would be more appealing to families, would foster a strong sense of community and would deter crime. To address this, they suggest: restoring and beautifying park fountains by adding decorative lighting, building restrooms, planting flowers, strictly banning trash and pet waste, and increasing police presence. One resident offered an idea for the former Convention Center location: designing a "Central Park" for events in the city that would be a "gift to Washingtonians" (instead of using the space for another parking lot or office building). Another resident suggested paving part of the National Mall, making it easier for baby strollers, bikes, wheelchairs, and elderly people to navigate.

Participants also contributed an assortment of ideas for outdoor events: an annual Regatta on the Potomac River; fishing tournaments on the Anacostia River (to increase awareness of clean-up efforts); and Anacostia River adventures for local students.

## IV. TOURISM

District residents would like to improve the ways the city manages and welcomes visitors. Specifically, they expressed concerns about navigation through the city, transportation in the city, information available to tourists, and displaying the many and varied treasures throughout the city beyond the principal highlights.

### A. Navigating the District of Columbia

One resident offered the following as a navigation challenge for tourists: "try finding the bike path from the Mall to Georgetown, or biking to the Portrait Gallery or the National Arboretum, or connecting to Rock Creek Park." Some participants suggested improved pathways, signage and maps to alleviate the problem. Others suggested a more tourist-friendly, cheaper and more flexible bus or shuttle service to help tourists travel from one place to another.

While some participants would like to facilitate tourist foot and road traffic, others would like to impede it; several people suggested barring tourist auto travel on certain roads during peak hours. Of those who favor tourist travel on city streets, some suggested implementing a "tourism defense" for parking tickets (taking into consideration that street parking regulations can be confusing) and others would like to see an increase in available parking near major destinations.

## B. Information for Tourists

Many residents feel that the city should provide more information for tourists, specifically to inform them of the diverse array of attractions in the city. One resident felt that “tourists in DC usually see only a fraction of what the city has to offer” and proposed designing a compilation of digital video and photography (of local points of interest) to be featured on a highly visible website. A similar suggestion was offered as a way to encourage tourists to spend money in the city: “The project would organize this video shorts collection on a website, with the URL being ubiquitous on Metro and elsewhere. A mid-morning and early evening program on the District’s Office of Cable Television and Telecommunications’ Channel 16 (cable access) would feature a revolving selection of such clips, as hotel guests throughout DC are planning their daytime and evening itineraries.”

Another concern regarding tourists in the city is the lack of assistance given to those for whom English is not their primary language. One resident noted that although “Metro translates its Web pages into several languages ... there’s not much describing the White House, Capitol, Air and Space Museum, etc.” This resident noted that the suggested solution – for the Smithsonian and DC Convention and Tourism Corporation to provide information in languages other than English – is worthwhile because “going multilingual is fundamentally important for a tourist industry town.”

Other suggestions for how the city could help tourists enjoy their visit to the District: to “develop a single iPod type device that visitors can use at all the affiliate Smithsonian museums” and to install coin-operated restrooms in highly trafficked areas.

## C. City Museum

A sense of city pride was expressed in many of the contest entries. Several participants would favor a new or revived City Museum, perhaps modeled after Baltimore’s. Residents suggested that “instead of separate planning initiatives for a central library, the DC Archives, and ... initiatives such as a City Museum or a Visitors Center,” the city should consider “combining the functions into one place.” Since “great cities treasure their history and knowledge,” tourists could visit the museum and obtain a wealth of information about the city in one central location. One resident suggested that it be “more fun” than the old City Museum, that it “should have showcases for local talent,” and that it be free of charge.

Lastly, many residents want to improve tourists’ perception of District residents. To accomplish this, one resident proposed forming a “Hometown Ambassadors Corp (DC-HAC)” that would represent the city during personal encounters with tourists and visitors as well as during planned speaking opportunities with visiting groups.

## 2ND PLACE WINNER

### Give DC youth more indoor recreational opportunities by building a Chelsea Piers-like sports complex on the Anacostia Waterfront

*Submitted by Phil Heinrich*

*resident of Ward 3 in the District of Columbia*

**PROBLEM:** DC youth and athletic-minded adults have adequate outdoor recreation spaces near downtown. The Mall features scores of pickup and organized softball, soccer, ultimate Frisbee, volleyball games on every nice afternoon. But there’s no large indoor sports space within a reasonable distance of downtown DC. Even finding gym space for a volleyball or basketball league can be a problem.

**SOLUTION:** Build a sports complex similar to New York City’s Chelsea Piers along the Anacostia waterfront. The Chelsea Piers complex in New York City, built along abandoned piers overlooking the Hudson River, has become a destination for many New Yorkers seeking to play organized sports. The complex features dozens of basketball and volleyball courts, indoor soccer spaces, skating and roller rinks, batting cages, a golf driving range, climbing walls, and gymnastics apparatus. The District, in particular the Anacostia Waterfront Development Corp, should alter its plans to include space for a sports complex like this. In addition to serving the large number of active young adults in the District, it would serve tour bus groups of high-school children, conventioners, and those charter schools with inadequate gym space

