

November 24, 2021

WILMAPCO (Chair)

Rt. 9/13 All Civics

Collins Park Civic
Association

Dunleith Civic
Association

Hamilton / Eden Park
Civic Association

New Castle Prevention
Coalition

Overview Gardens /
Garfield Park Civic
Association

ProRank Business
Solutions, LLC

Rep. Frank Cooke

Rosegate Civic
Association

Rose Hill Gardens Civic
Association

University of Delaware
Partnership for Healthy
Communities

YWCA Delaware

Ms. Kendall Sommers
Parks Director
67 Read's Way
New Castle, DE 19720

Ms. Sommers:

On behalf of the *Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee*, thank you and the Department of Community Services and Public Works for engaging in community-based conversations related to park needs. The residents and stakeholders of the Route 9 Monitoring Committee are thankful for the opportunity to provide input. We appreciate the reference to, and consideration of, the addition of lights needed for the Tri-Park area within the Route 9 corridor.

The Route 9 Health Subcommittee has been working to identify community health issues. Through that group, the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, in great partnership with community residents and the New Castle Prevention Coalition, led a community survey last spring to learn more about some of the root causes of the poor health outcomes in the area. Based on this survey, safety concerns continue to be noted. When pressed on what would need to be done to address these concerns, community residents have shared increased police presence, and a relationship with patrolling officers, as well as improved lighting throughout the corridor – particularly lights on the Tri-Park Trail.

During this year's Harvest Festival, residents out using the trail informally shared the following thoughts:

- If there were lights, youth (specifically teens) would be able to safely play or walk/bike/jog keeping them out of trouble after school (especially in the cooler months)
- Residents who use the park for physical activity would like to use it year-round and with the sun setting early in the winter months, it's difficult to get out after work. Lights would help them continue to be active.
- Many residents who bike or walk for transportation shared that they wish that there were lights on the trail to be able to safely get to Route 9 for basic needs. In talking with residents, they like the ability to use the trail because it is safer than walking on the road, and they would use it all day if possible.

Residents shared that any lighting would help and offered the idea of potentially installing small lights in or around trees that may be less costly, but still help with the darkness. If this would at all be possible, the Health Subcommittee is ready to support by providing and finding additional resources that may be used for this “smaller” project.

While this is indeed a health issue, it cannot go without mentioning that this is also an equity issue. Burgeoning research points to the fact that park inequities in low-income communities contributes to many chronic health conditions. As has been shared in forums with the community, this research aligns with the perceptions and realities in the Tri-Park area as well. Amenities are generally less maintained, and, in comparison with parks in higher-income communities, there are fewer opportunities for safe recreation.

The Tri-Park trail was a step towards increasing park equity, but it will only be successful in long term health benefits if we ensure that it is maintained and utilized on a regular basis. We hope that you will consider the ideas posed by the community that if long-term lights are not a feasible option at this time, we can open a conversation about how to look at a short-term solution and study the impact through a partnership with the University of Delaware and the many stakeholders around the table.

The mission of the Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee is to help guide and fulfill the recommendations of the Master Plan, which established a shared vision for the transportation and land use redevelopment of the Route 9 corridor. This work will be accomplished through a collaborative dialogue between its membership, which includes implementing agencies, local civic and community leaders, other key stakeholders, and the communities they represent.

Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any questions or concerns! I can be reached at: bswiatek@wilmapco.org, or 302-737-6205 x113.

Sincerely,



Bill Swiatek, AICP
Chair, Route 9 Master Plan Monitoring Committee