

My name is Jerry Lee and I've served on Mecklenburg's Greenway Advisory Council for the past 5 years.

I'm here today to specifically talk about investing in a part of our parks and rec system that was **highlighted in 2021 in our Meck Playbook but has thus far not been funded.**

This non-funding is with respect to the creation of jobs in the area of (what I'll broadly call) **"Park Publicity"**. When I say "Publicity" I am referring to positions outlined on pages 202-203 of the playbook, such as:

- 1) **community engagement liaisons.**
- 2) **marketing and communication specialists**
- 3) And, I'd add to this list, **technologists (including programmers and wayfinding experts)** who can help facilitate access to our park system

Any Park system can be measured by

- 1) **its size**
- 2) **it's quality**
- 3) **it's relevance to a city and**
- 4) **its usage**

I believe that **our county will NOT spend a more potent dollar in terms of driving usage** than by investing in these "Publicity"-related positions.

Obviously, we **need to continue to aggressively invest in park growth and maintenance** as we rank **behind our peer cities** in terms of **size and expenditures on a per capital basis.**

But I also believe we are **not doing enough** to make it easy for our community to understand **what resources we currently have and how to access them.**

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**Equity is a guiding principle for the Meck Playbook ... but without staff to update websites, create detailed maps, improve wayfinding, and drive community awareness, it's difficult for me to understand how we're catering to this equity goal.**

To take this a step further, **without leveraging technology to improve wayfinding, it's difficult to understand how we are going to change the behaviors of the way people get around this city, as is called for in the Future 2040 and Strategic Mobility Plans.**

I encourage each of you to **try to access** a part of the greenway system that is **new to you** without the help of someone who has been there before. It is challenging.

I spoke at this meeting last year talking about how **the UDO was a broad call for densification and that our parks and greenways were the pressure release valves for our community.**

**I believe that more today than ever before.**

**More Parks and greenways are necessary.**

But **helping our residents understand how to access these amenities will disproportionately drive usage, as investing in park publicity is leverageable across our entire system.**

Please re-read Pages 202 and 203 of the Playbook and fund what should have been funded 3 years ago.

**A relatively small financial investment (we're talking about just a handful of jobs) can make an out-sized impact on our vast, growing, and crucial network, not to mention how our community gets around.**