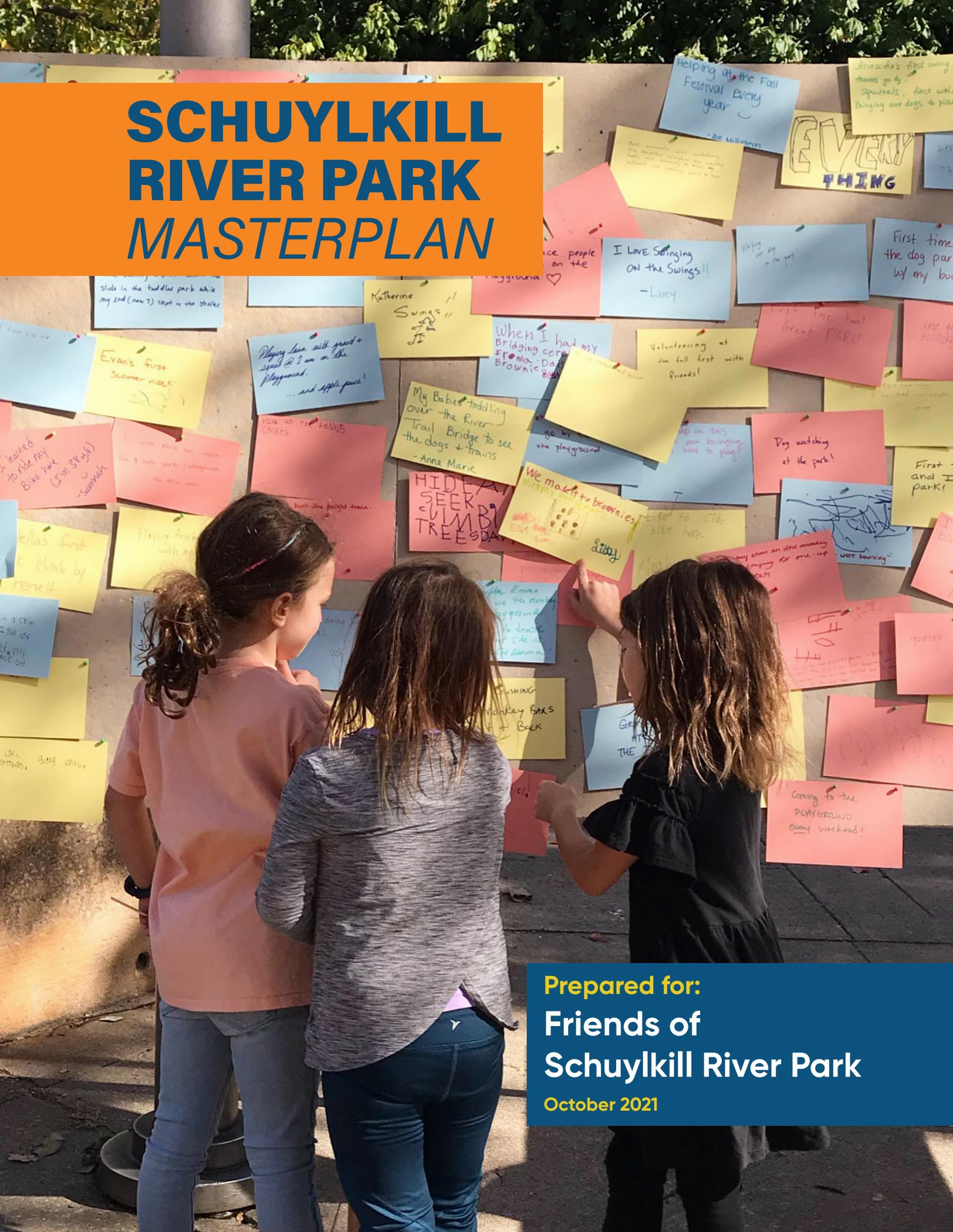


SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK MASTERPLAN



Prepared for:
**Friends of
Schuylkill River Park**
October 2021

Acknowledgments

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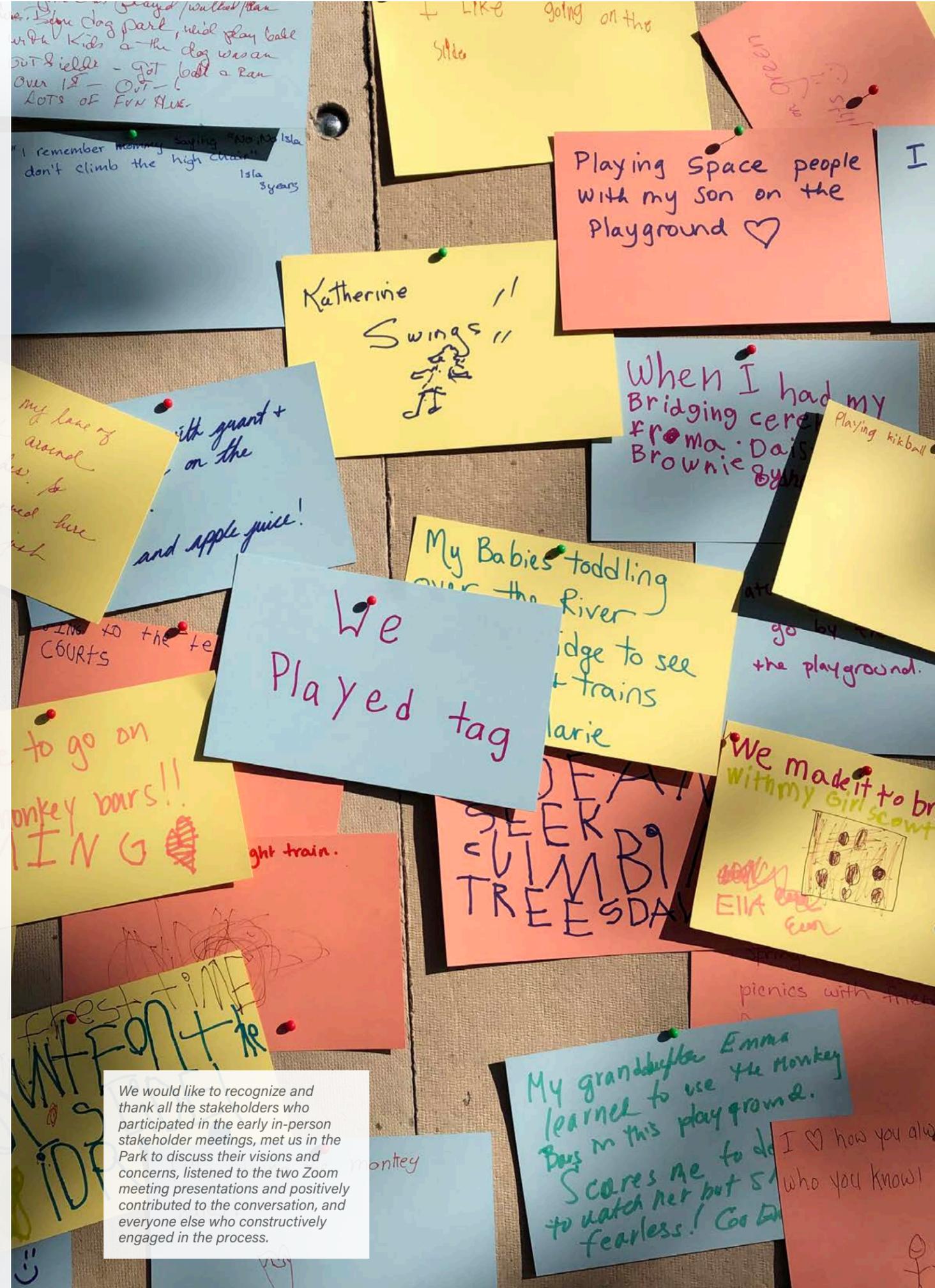


Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

5 Masterplan Goals

MASTERPLAN INTRODUCTION

6 Engagement Strategy

7 How to Use the Masterplan

STATE OF THE PARK

8 Park Overview

10 Survey Participants

11 Park Usage

12 User Perceptions

13 Flood considerations

SHORT TERM GOALS

16 Basketball and Multi-court

18 Nature Play

20 Social Spaces

22 Dog Park

24 Community Garden

26 Markward Rec

28 Public Communication

LONG-TERM GOALS

32 Schuylkill Arboretum

34 Main Park Entry & Rec Center

38 Athletic Fields / Tennis Courts

40 O'Conner Pool

APPENDIX

ii Fall Festival - Masterplan kick-off event

iv Fall Festival - small sample of memories shared

v Survey - paper copy

vi Survey - online

vii Survey - signage displayed in park

viii Meeting Minutes: Board of Directors - 09.12.19

xii Meeting Minutes: Stakeholder Meeting #1 - 11.25.19



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schuylkill River Park plays a significant role in the daily lives of Philadelphia residents. Because of its central location within the city and its unique amenities, the park draws a diverse set of individuals and groups. The spaces and connecting paths have been the backdrop for many memories and many park users have a profound relationship to the park that goes back several decades or generations.

The value of this public space is well recognized by the Friends of Schuylkill River Park (FSRP) who have shepherded the outreach and public participation for this masterplan document. FSRP will use this masterplan to build a stronger and more equitable future for the park and its users.

Proposed projects are divided into short and long term goals that can be achieved through various levels of participation and involvement.

Masterplan Goals

- Preserve the character of the park for future generations
- Identify and celebrate what makes the park special
- Strengthening a cohesive park-wide community
- Identify ways for greater community involvement.
- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for increased equity and inclusion

Short Term Projects

- Unify and improve basketball & multi-courts
- Create new play opportunities
- Improve social gathering spaces
- Dog park improvements
- Community garden updates
- Improved Public Communication

Long Term Projects

- Obtain arboretum status
- Improve rec center & main park entrance
- Improve athletic fields & tennis court orientation
- New water play opportunities

Continued Engagement

These recommendations are based on needs identified by the park community at the time of the completion of this plan. The feedback gathered during the masterplan process shows that there is a high level of interest in on-going public participation in guiding the implementation of these recommendations. Continued engagement with the park community at every stage of the implementation of the recommendations in this plan will be critical to foster communal ownership and stewardship of the park.

INTRODUCTION

Engagement Strategy

The outreach and engagement strategy for this plan included public events, one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and park users, and an online survey that invited public feedback. This process highlighted how people use the park, how they want to use the park, and how the design of the park could better serve their needs. The recommendations that are contained in this document are based on the needs and concerns expressed during this process.



424 surveys completed



68 on-site interviews



34 on-site observation hours



128 park outreach event participants



26 stakeholder participants



100+ public virtual meeting participants



The information gathered was a mix of quantitative and qualitative data, and the responses offered a wealth of valuable information about the park. Some questions pertained to specific places within the park, others asked about the physical connections between spaces used by similar users, and ultimately individual perceptions about how users feel while in the park.

How to Use the Masterplan

1. Summary of Findings

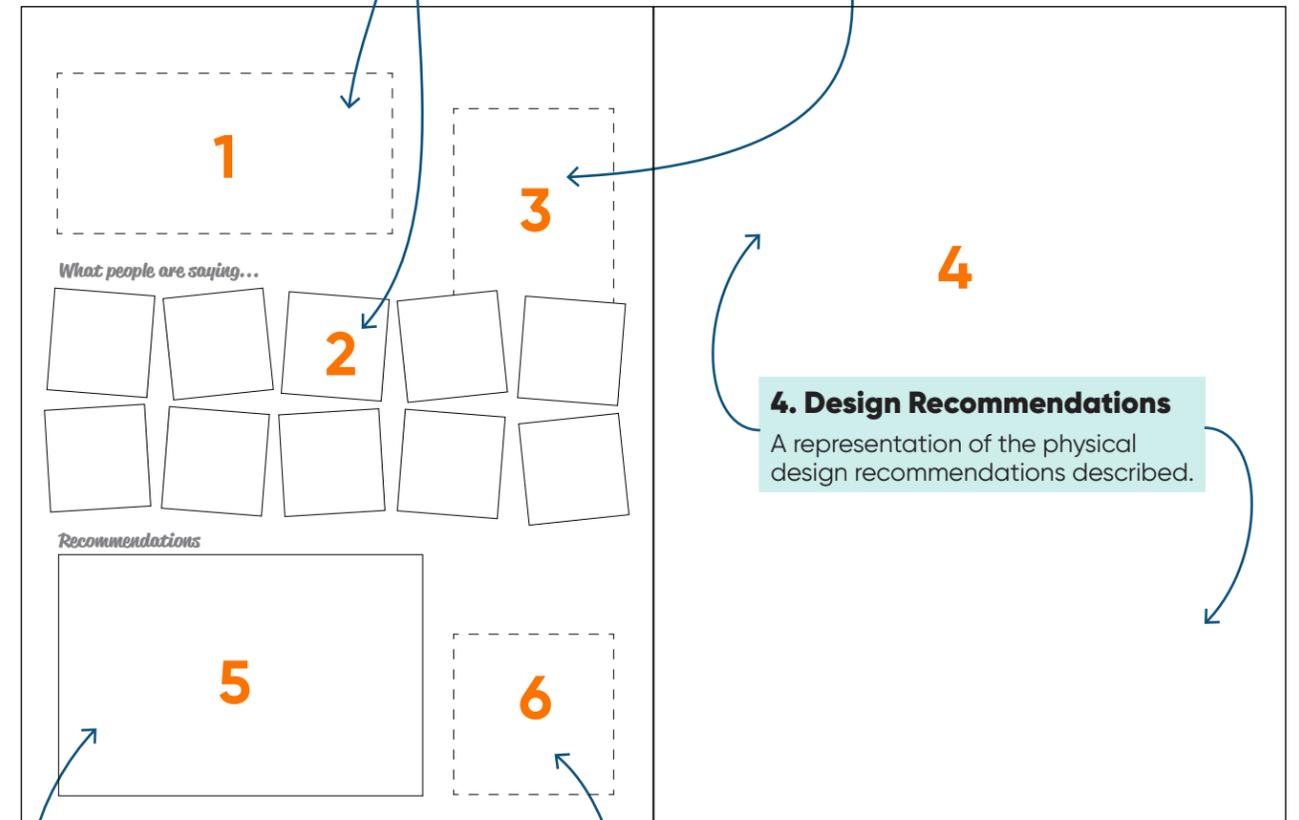
A summary of recommendations being considered and explanation of other relevant considerations.

2. Comments & Feedback

A representative composite of frequent comments gathered during one-on-one interviews and public online surveys.

3. Comment Themes & Statistics

This information helps to interpret the comments in the context of most common themes.



5. Summary of Recommendations

A list of items that are instrumental in completing the recommended next steps.

6. Correlations Between Spaces

An analysis of the survey responses uncovered connections between park spaces that are used by the same groups or individuals.

STATE OF THE PARK

Park Overview

Schuylkill River Park, nestled along the eastern edge of the Schuylkill River, was designed and built in 1976. Owned and operated by Philadelphia Parks & Recreation, it encompasses the green area bordered by the CSX tracks, 25th Street, Manning Street and Lombard Street. It also includes the O'Connor Pool which has an entrance near 26th and South Streets. The park connects with the Schuylkill Banks Trail via a pedestrian bridge, which was completed in October of 2012.

Sum of the Parts

The park is a collection of many different programmed spaces, each of which attract different users. Data collected through the engagement process shows that many visitors use only one or a few of these spaces and do not feel a personal connection to the others. The following recommendations focus on both finding opportunities to **improve each individual space** and finding ways to **make the park feel more connected** to engender a sense of community across the park.



Sculpture Garden

A contemplative space, this area provides benches flanking a sculpture under the cover of trees. It is used as a meeting location for birthday parties and other small gatherings.



Playground

Undergoing renovations at the time of this plan, the playground is receiving improvements which include update playground equipment and surfacing.



Tennis Courts

Two tennis courts sit on the corner of 26th and Pine Streets. They were resurfaced in 2016.



Multi-Purpose Court

This paved area is used for a variety of activities including young children learning to ride bikes. In the past it has been used for bike polo, volleyball leagues, and other organized sports.



Markward Recreation Center

Managed by Philadelphia Parks & Rec, it houses classes, after school programs, and summer camps. It contains bathroom facilities that are available during regular hours for the park users. It endured significant flooding in the summer of 2021 during Hurricane Ida.



Athletic Fields

The Schuylkill Pocket Veterans Memorial field is home to Taney baseball, soccer and softball leagues



Basketball Courts

Featuring two full courts, this destination basketball court is heavily used by individuals from all across the city.



Veteran's Memorial

Small memorial stone and flags erected by local Veterans is a focal point for Veteran's Day celebrations.



Community Garden

The Schuylkill River Park Community Garden is managed by the Center City Residents' Association. Plots are available for limited terms via application.



The Bowl

This large open green area is the physical heart of the park. This open space allows opportunity for events and larger gatherings.



Dog Park

Completed in 2012, the dog run provides two separate enclosed areas for small and large dogs. It is overlooked by the Schuylkill River Trail overpass.



O'Connor Pool

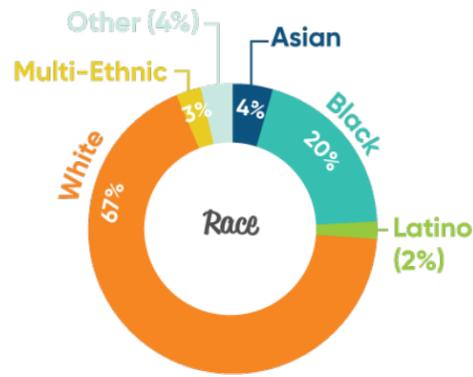
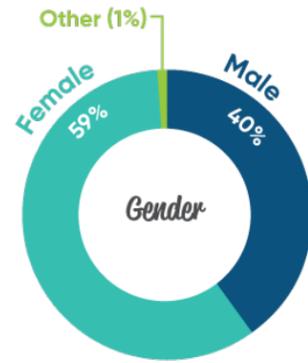
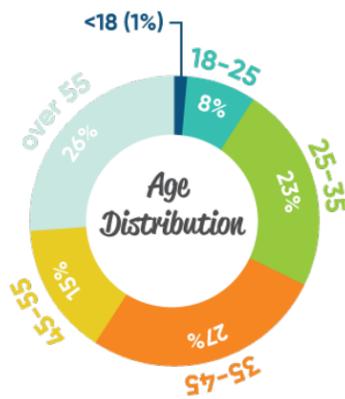
Located outside the physical boundary of the park, this pool is open seasonally and heavily used. In the summer of 2019, it was a recipient of Swim Philly's Pop up Pool project which provided additional seating and vegetation. It needs structural repairs along the exterior retaining wall.

Survey Participants

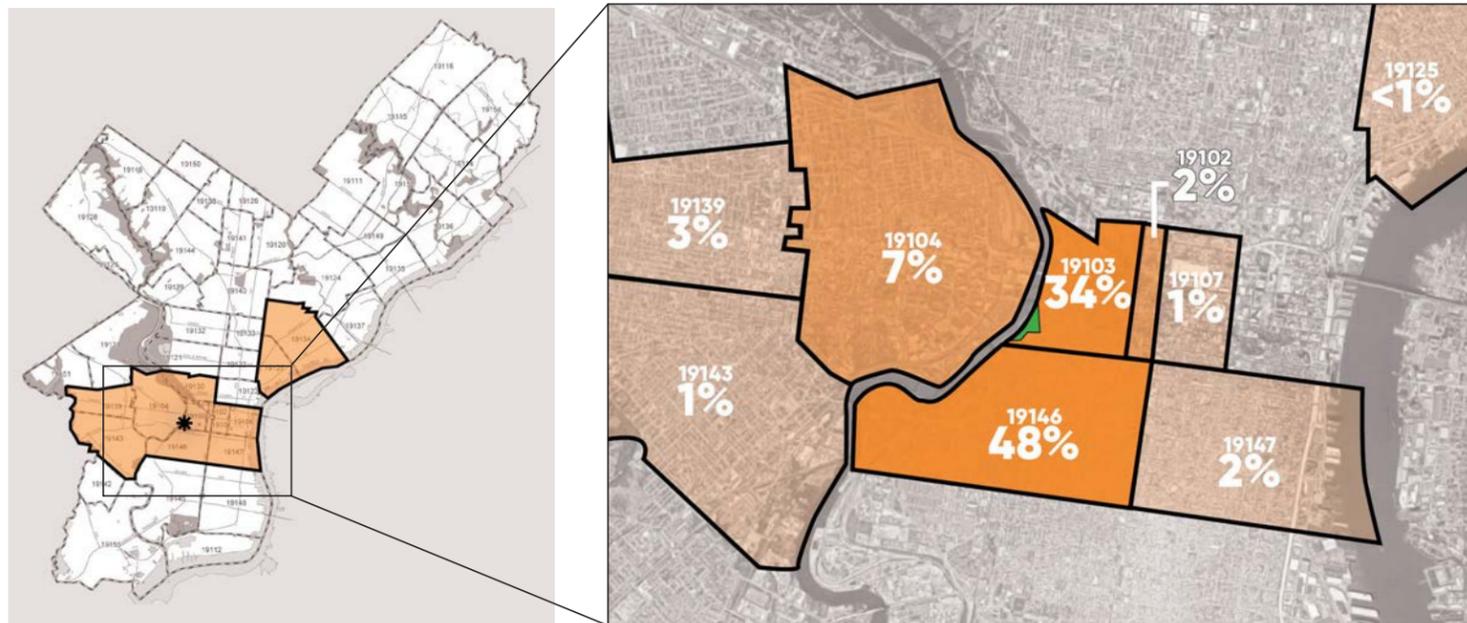
The individuals that participated in the survey were given the option to provide their demographic data. The responses and data provided should be viewed with an understanding that the demographics of those that responded do not represent the demographics of the city of Philadelphia as a whole. However, they may represent the demographics of the park users which are a mixture of adjacent neighbors and destination users.

The recommendations contained within this masterplan encourage the Friends of Schuylkill River Park (FSRP) to think holistically to be more inclusive of individuals shown as being underrepresented. In particular, special attention should be given to making the park more welcoming to people of color.

Who responded?



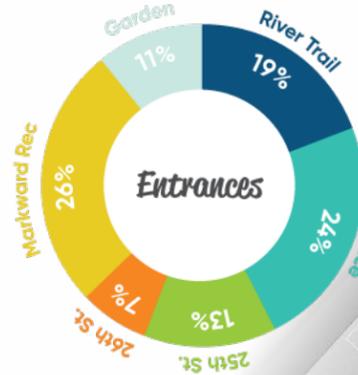
Where are they visiting from?



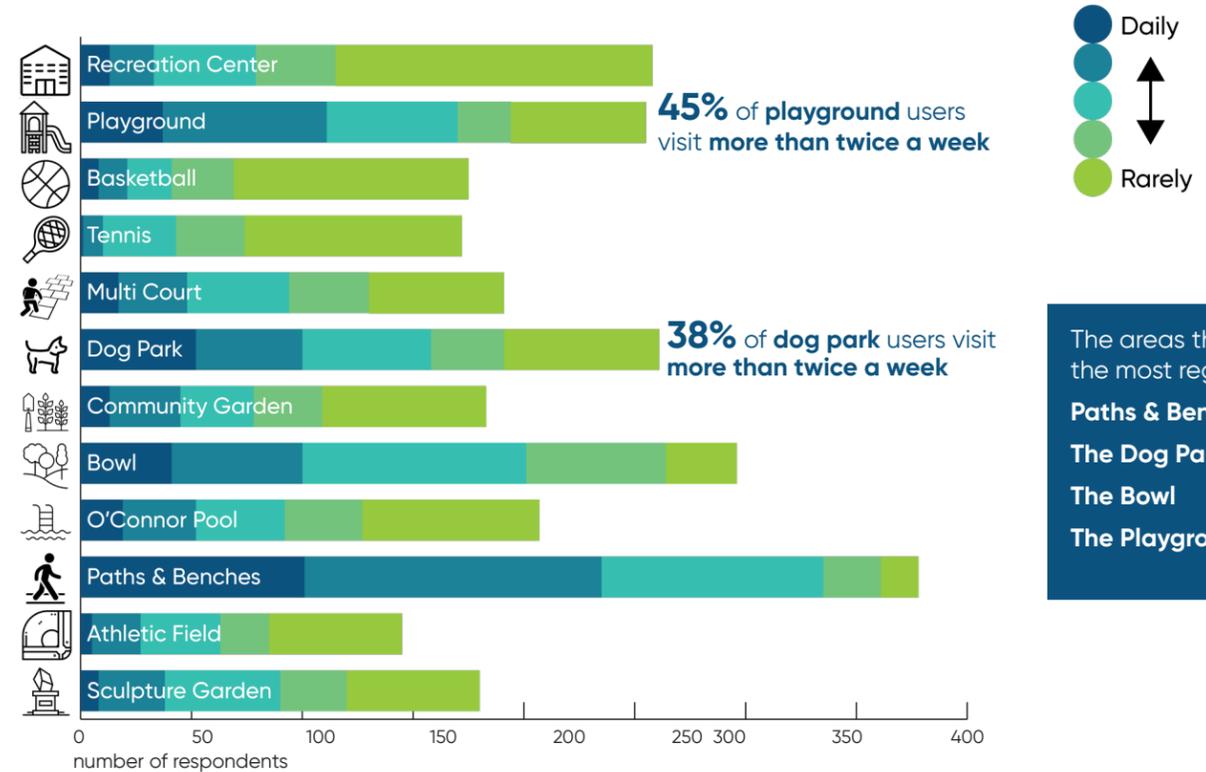
Most people that use the park are accessing it from adjacent neighborhoods, but zip codes from the survey show that it is also a destination from across the city.

Park Usage

Schuylkill River Park has multiple entrances. The southern most entrance at Markward Rec and the eastern midpoint at Spruce St are used by the majority of users followed closely by those arriving from the River Trail. An updated signage strategy for welcoming users and identifying gateways should focus on those three areas.



What park spaces do you use, and how frequently?



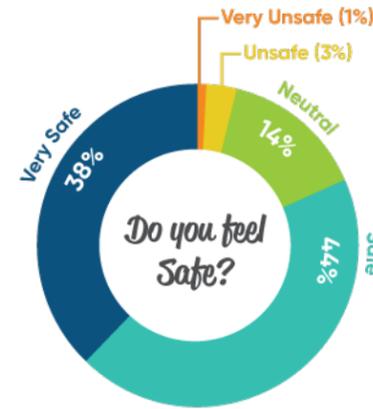
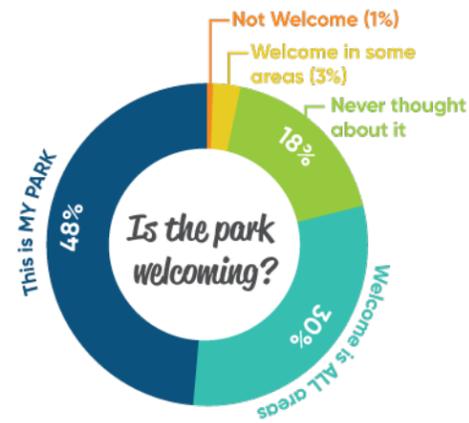
45% of playground users visit more than twice a week

38% of dog park users visit more than twice a week

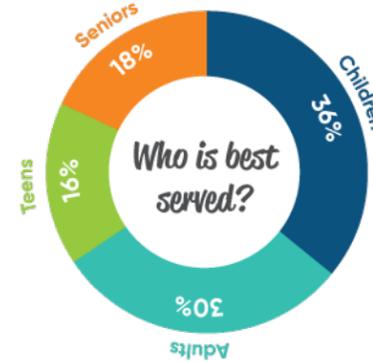
The areas that receive the most regular use are:
 Paths & Benches
 The Dog Park
 The Bowl
 The Playground

User Perceptions

Overall this park is perceived as **very welcoming**. However, that does not apply to all areas of the park. Suggestions for how to make the park more inclusive are captured in the public communications recommendations and in recommendations for the various park areas in the short-term goals section of this document.

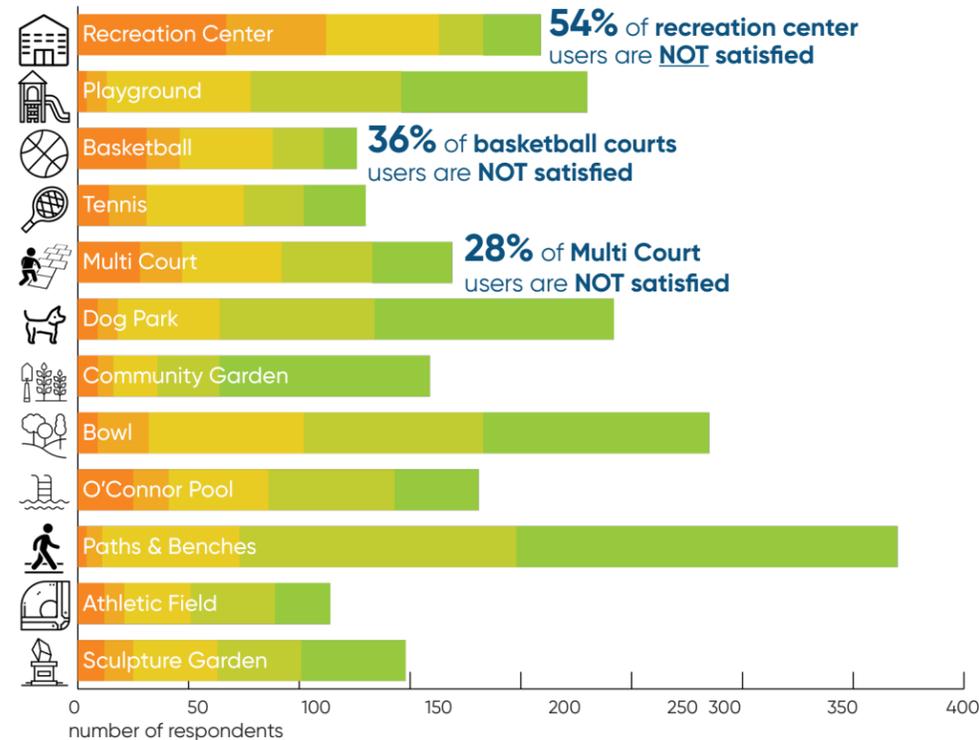


Park users feel **very safe** when inside the park even though many comments referenced a desire for improved lighting. This masterplan does not identify safety as a primary concern.



Individuals of **all ages** are served well by the spaces and programs offered. Seniors and teens should be further engaged to develop even more inclusive programming opportunities.

Do these spaces satisfy your needs?



- It needs work
- Could Be Better
- It's OK
- It's good
- It's Great

The areas identified as needing the most attention are:
Recreation Center
Basketball Courts
Multi-Purpose Courts

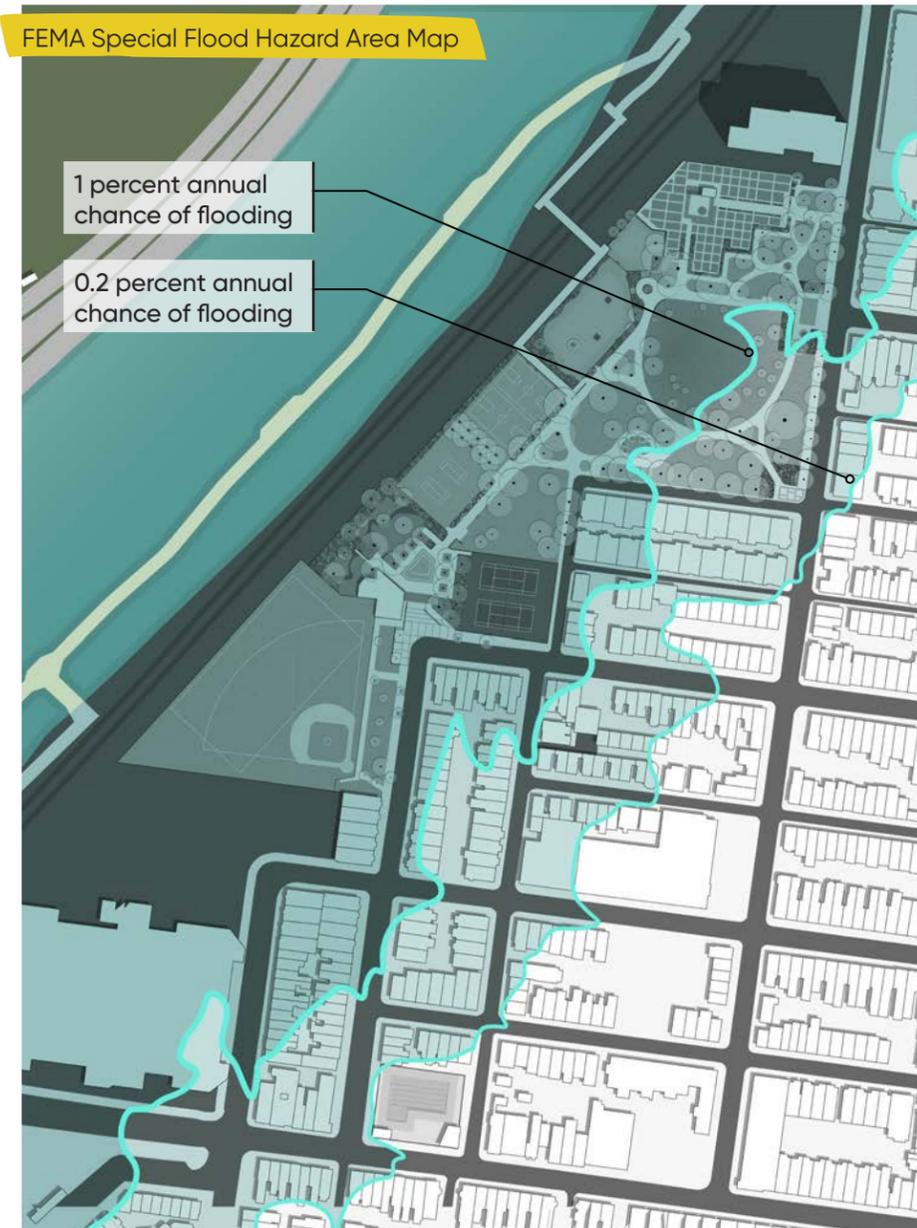
Flood Considerations

This image indicates the areas of Schuylkill River Park that are located in a Special Flood Hazard Area, either a **1 percent** or **0.2 percent annual chance of flood**. These areas are delineated in FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps, and have a 1 in 100 chance or 1 in 500 chance, respectively, of flooding in any given year. These flood events were previously referred to as "100-year" or "500-year" floods. This terminology can easily be misinterpreted to imply that these events occur only

once in every 100 years, while in fact the zone has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year and can even occur multiple times in a single year.

Because of its location next to the Schuylkill River, the park also has an elevated risk of flooding due to rain that falls upstream during heavy rain events. Please note that there are building restrictions and requirements for any new construction that happens in these areas.

FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area Map



flooding after Hurricane Ida (summer 2021)



Photos courtesy of Friends of Schuylkill River Park

SHORT TERM GOALS

that can be accomplished in the next 2 to 10 years.

This section contains recommendations for projects and improvements that can be made in the short term. These have been identified as opportunities for **high impact with the least amount of financial capital**.

The below goals, identified as the most urgent issues and needs for the park, were used to guide these recommendations.

Short Term Goals

- **Maintain and improve existing park features to better support current uses.**
- **Build capacity and increase involvement through improved communication and transparency around park programming and involvement opportunities.**
- **Reinforce a sense of community across interest groups.**
- **Increase equity and inclusion among users.**
- **Provide improvements to better support social spaces.**
- **Increase opportunities for play.**

Short Term Projects

- **Unify and improve basketball & multi-courts**
- **Create new play opportunities**
- **Improve social gathering spaces**
- **Dog park improvements**
- **Community garden updates**
- **Improve existing rec center**
- **Improve public communication**

Basketball & Multi-purpose Courts

- Unify two spaces.
- Provide new amenities and update existing equipment.
- Preserve and add to existing tree canopy.

Play Garden

- Provide new nature play opportunities.
- More seating options for caregivers.

Rec Center

- Improve bathrooms
- More transparency and openness
- Flood protection

Sculpture Garden

- Maintain existing area and provide improvements to support existing uses.

Community Garden

- Provide a welcoming environment for all park users.
- Improve gardening conditions.

The Bowl

- Provide furniture for small and mid-sized gatherings.
- Identify opportunities for this central space to unify park users.

Dog Park

- Improve drainage, waste and barrier issues.
- Increase dog viewing opportunities.

Paths and Benches / Throughout Park

- Unify park spaces with signage and messaging.
- Create strategic maintenance program for key site features and ongoing site issues and concerns.
- Identify opportunities for increased community involvement.



Basketball and Multi-Court

Even though the basketball courts are centrally located, the experience that court users have expressed is one of isolation and neglect. Part of this sentiment is due to the fact that the courts, hoops and backstops are all in disrepair. Improving and connecting the basketball courts to the rest of the park is imperative to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

The adjacent multi-court area was identified as the location for some of the fondest memories that took place in the park. Acting as overflow for both the playground and basketball courts, the hard surface is valued as a safe place to play and learn to ride a bike.

By investing in both the basketball courts and multi-courts together, there is an opportunity to strengthen connections across interest groups. The improved amenities and connecting ground mural outlined in the recommendations below can be an early action project to foster community connections, support current park activities, and build trust.

What people are saying...

Better basketball backboards and nets. Resurface and re-stripe blacktop.

Basketball courts feel neglected and isolated from the rest of the park.

Add low basketball hoop for kids and a wall for throwing or kicking a ball against.

Schedules posted for pick-up games and leagues

Amphitheater seating!

Love this open flexible space! Used for so many things!

Paint surface to tell a story and give court users pride in their neighborhood court.

Both courts are heavily used and needs to get regular sweeping and maintenance.

Add markings for games and a track for trikes and kid bikes

More places for adults to sit and watch kids play

47% of basketball comments pertain to **repairing or replacing broken equipment**

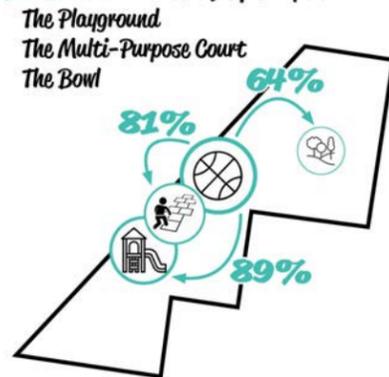
12% of basketball comments express feelings of **isolation and neglect**

32% of overall comments reference new **colorful surfacing** and painted games

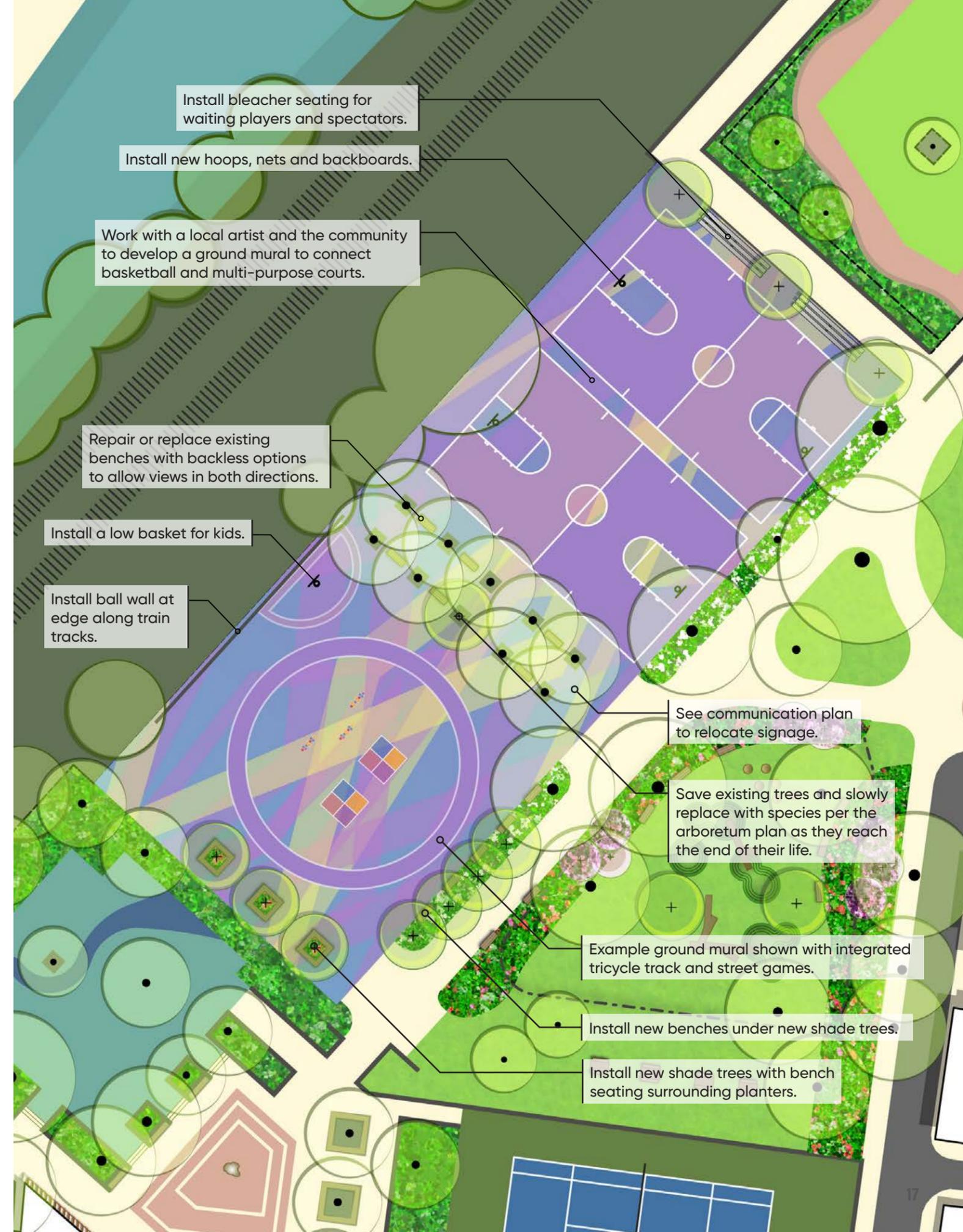
Recommendations

- Renovate the basketball courts and multi-court together as a single project with a unifying ground mural to improve existing conditions, support existing uses and better connect with basketball courts.
- Improve visibility and connection between basketball, multi-court, and playground to simplify the experience of parents and caregivers.
- Increase the amount of shaded seating.
- Increase the opportunities for play in the multi-court with the addition of low basketball net, wall ball, and integrated trike track, and street games incorporated into mural.
- Future engagement and design needs: Organize workshop events on-site to develop ideas for the ground mural. Be sure to include representatives of the basketball user group as hosts and co-planners of the event to be as inclusive and welcoming as possible. In order for the renovations to be most impactful, the design needs to be developed in conjunction with all users to foster collective ownership.
- Work with basketball court users to explore possibility of hosting league basketball to increase opportunities for involvement.

Basketball Court users frequently visit:



Basketball court users utilize the neighboring playground and multi-court regularly. To optimize their experience, these spaces should connect physically and visually.



Nature Play

The existing playground is a primary draw for many people that visit the park. Many responded to the survey indicating that the existing playground serves their needs as is, but there is still a desire for expanded and varied play opportunities for younger children.

Centered around providing more comfort for caregivers and creating better visual connections between the play spaces, a new nature playground will expand play opportunities in a highly visible and safe location.

Philadelphia Parks & Rec is currently undergoing renovations to the existing playground including new equipment and playground surfacing. Inclusion of a new nature play area is meant to compliment that work and create additional opportunities that pull play into more of the core of the park.

What people are saying...

I'd like to see the playground connect more with the rest of the park, in particular the multi-purpose courts and a picnic area so I can see my different aged kids in different places at the same time

Fence around the tot playground with a gate

The tot lot is hidden behind the building. I worry about being there alone.

Nature play would be lovely. Extend the idea of play throughout the park, around the bowl and along the city streets.

Would love to see more loose parts available to make the existing equipment so much more enjoyable and creative - the Rec Center could be in charge of loaning out items

More comfortable places for adults to watch kids

More space with shade for young children

More equipment for different age groups

We end up playing in the field next to the tennis courts when the playground is too busy

Consider creating an adventure playground as a model for the rest of Philadelphia.

32% would like, greater variety of play elements.

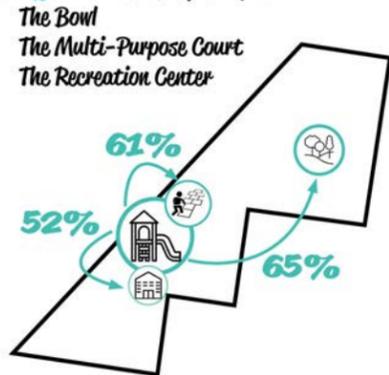
12% would like, more shaded seating.

Recommendations

Play Garden

- Develop a play space for children age 5 and under that incorporates natural materials and loose parts.
- Include non-toxic aromatic plants as part of the planting design.
- Provide an enclosure fence that makes it easy for caregivers to monitor young children.
- Provide a variety of comfortable multi-season seating for caregivers with visibility to all play areas.

Playground users frequently visit:



The playground is a major draw to the park but users feel disconnected from other areas, keeping them from utilizing other park amenities.



Social Spaces

While the park already includes many benches at the path edges, there are very few opportunities for social interaction or small group gathering.

Gatherings such as birthday parties, fitness classes and informal meet-ups have little support infrastructure but often take place in various areas around the park.

The sculpture garden is a common place for gathering because of the arrangement of benches in a circle. Both the bowl and the grass area adjacent to the tennis courts are also used for small informal events but require visitors to bring their own tables and chairs.

The recommendation of this masterplan is to add flexible seating, picnic tables and other group gathering amenities that support small groups in the areas where gathering is already happening.

The addition of new seating types to create more inviting social spaces can be accomplished incrementally, beginning with low cost furniture to test how these spaces are used. Over time, more investment can be made that directly supports how the spaces are being used.

What people are saying...

I would like dedicated areas for groups or parties with a table for food

Need a comfortable place to watch or wait for a tennis court to become available.

Would love to see designated picnic spots with tables and/or pergolas.

This is a quiet and shaded place in an otherwise busy park. Don't do anything to the sculpture garden!

Different options for benches and chairs

A few cafe tables and chairs would allow neighbors to sit together and play chess, eat, do work.

The sculpture garden is the perfect place to meet people

PICNIC TABLES PLEASE!
And we loved the Adirondack chairs.

It is surprising how frequently all the benches are full.

I love "Conversation Park" (sculpture garden) but it is always being used.

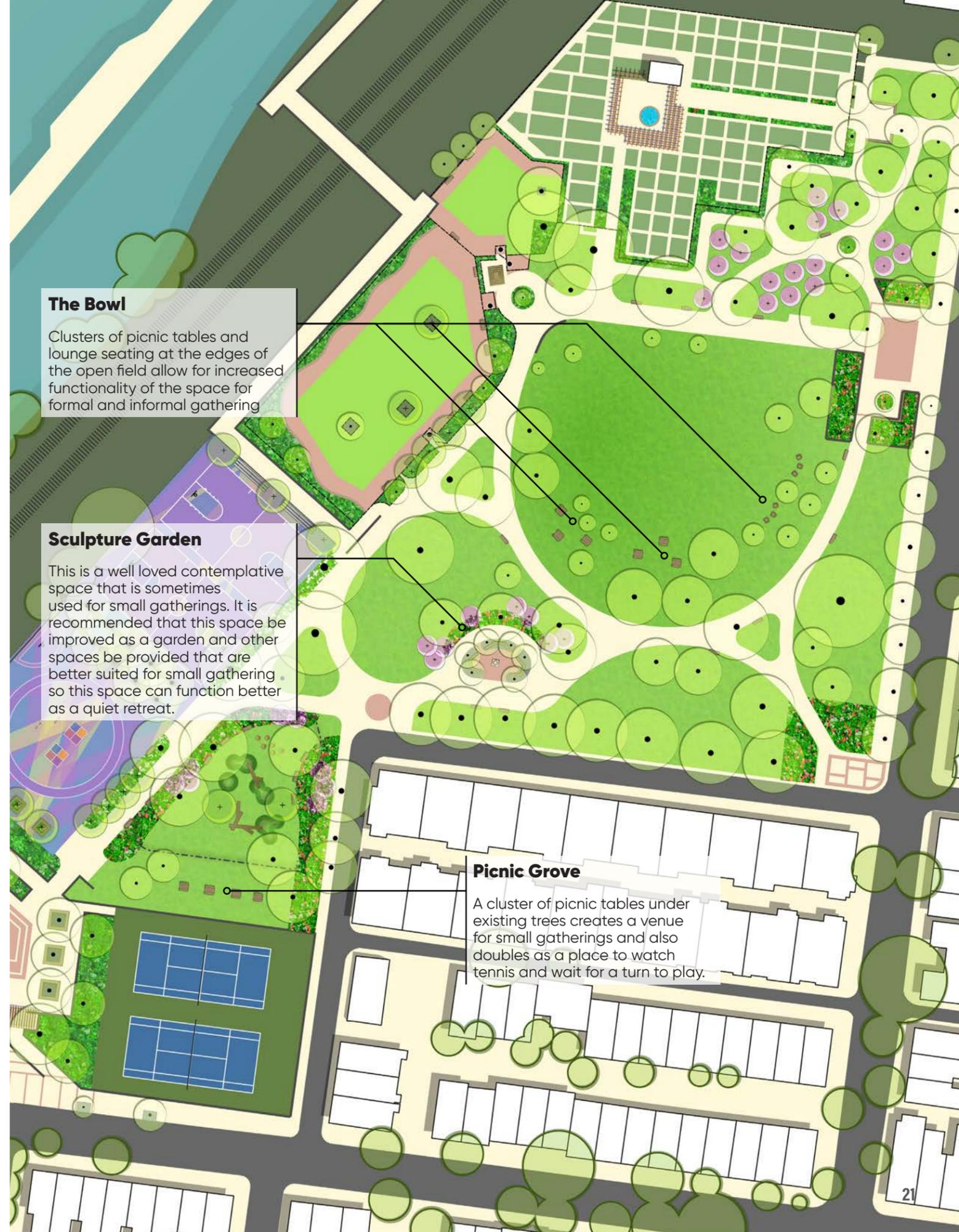
Recommendations

Early Action Seating Improvements:

- **Picnic Tables:** Add inexpensive picnic tables at locations where small gathering is already happening.
- **Seating Variety:** Explore and add various seating opportunities such as cafe tables, lounge chairs or bench facing configurations to add to edges of the Bowl.

Second phase improvements:

- **Testing and Feedback:** Through a survey or by observing the use of the various seating opportunities in the new gathering spaces FSRP can identify additional needs or potential improvements.
- **Higher Investment:** Once seating preferences are determined, FSRP can invest in more robust site furnishings based on the needs identified during the first phase of investment.



The Bowl

Clusters of picnic tables and lounge seating at the edges of the open field allow for increased functionality of the space for formal and informal gathering

Sculpture Garden

This is a well loved contemplative space that is sometimes used for small gatherings. It is recommended that this space be improved as a garden and other spaces be provided that are better suited for small gathering so this space can function better as a quiet retreat.

Picnic Grove

A cluster of picnic tables under existing trees creates a venue for small gatherings and also doubles as a place to watch tennis and wait for a turn to play.

Dog Park

The dog park is a unique amenity enjoyed by both dog owners and dog lovers. The primary considerations for this space are around safety of both people and dogs and to make it easier to be a considerate member of the park community.

Trash receptacles for dog waste need to be located more conveniently for dog owners to avoid the current problems of dog waste bags not being placed in receptacles.

Watching dogs from the overpass ramp is a favorite activity enjoyed by many. Additional opportunities for watching dogs could be provided near the gates as well. This would allow children to watch dogs while being near their parents who may be inside the dog park and would make it easier to adhere to the posted guidelines restricting children inside the fence.

- 33%** of comments pertain to **inaccessible or overflowing trash receptacles**
- 28%** of comments expressed desire to **enforce posted rules**
- 19%** of comments raised concerns around accessibility to area over short brick wall
- 47%** of comments regarding the bowl expressed frustration with **off-leash dogs**

What people are saying...

Even though I don't use it, I love to watch the dogs play!

Better enforcement of the rules!

Locate trash cans so that they are used successfully - no more poop bags in the bushes!

Fence off the area behind short brick wall

New tree in tree pit. More trees in general

More places to sit in the shade

Terrain changes and tunnels for enhanced play!

More signage regarding rules and dog park etiquette

ENFORCE LEASH LAWS OUTSIDE THE DOG PARK!

Is there a way to volunteer? Can I donate to a fund for additional cleaning? How can I be involved?

Recommendations

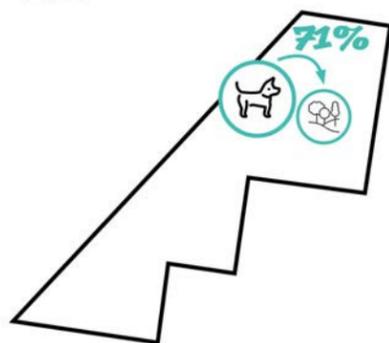
Physical improvements:

- **Trash Receptacles:** Develop means for easy access to dog waste receptacles for park users and maintenance staff (both sides of fence).
- **Plant Beds:** Install barriers at outside edges to prevent spectators from entering plant beds and interfering with dogs through the fence.
- **Designated Viewing Area:** Provide opportunity for safe dog watching with close proximity to gates that allows families with children to use the dog park together and follow dog park rules.
- **Drainage:** Improve drainage and minimize flooding in large dog area.
- **Edges:** Create barriers to keep dogs in designated play areas only.
- **Seating:** Provide more shaded seating inside dog park.
- **Signage:** Develop signage strategy at bowl regarding off leash rules.

Suggestions for integration of dog park users with larger park community:

- Include dog park updates in newsletter and distribute at dog park.
- Establish dog park volunteer group and regular cleanup events.
- Organize seasonal dog oriented vendor fair.

Dog Park users frequently visit:
The Bowl



Dog park users come from the greatest distances and use the fewest other areas of the park demonstrating that it is an important city-wide destination with low user investment in the park as a whole.



Community Garden

The community garden, which occupies a half acre of the park, provides gardening opportunities to nearby residents. Because this amenity is limited to a set number of individuals each year there is frustration and resentment among other park users regarding membership, access to plots, open house hours, garden etiquette and a feeling of exclusion from the garden community.

that require less commitment while allowing the same benefits of being a part of the gardening community.

Creating a welcoming environment through events, open hours, and gardening opportunities outside the garden fence, will allow more people to be able experience the garden and contribute to the beautification of the park.

With an understanding that the plots in the garden are already maximized to allow as much participation as possible and that membership is rotated to allow new members to join, below are recommendations

12% believed it to be privately owned, **not part of the public park**

32% would like to see **regular public access**

22% would like to be involved in some way even if they are not able to manage a plot

What people are saying...

This is my 4th year and I love it!!!

Keep it open more often!

Remove, or prune trees to increase sunlight to garden

Many local residents believe that it is privately owned because the gates are always locked

I would love to be able to use these gardens, but I don't know the rules... aren't these private? How can we use them as a community?

I wish it was easier to view from the outside.

Would love to participate even if I don't have a plot

Really miss the tart cherry trees. They were all removed because they cast shadows on plots. Is there another place in the park to reintroduce them?

Love events like the ladybug release - more public events!

Way too elitist in its operation. If you're not an "official gardener" you're never allowed in and then made to feel like a trespasser when the gates are open.

Recommendations

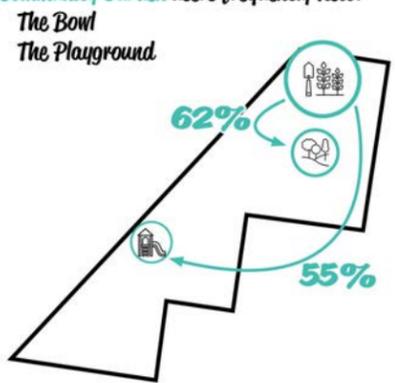
Communication:

- **Open Hours:** Post regular hours that the garden is open to the public staffed with rotating volunteers and community gardeners.
- **Plot Access:** Post application information to become a plot holder.

Planting Improvements and Maintenance:

- **Garden Edge:** Edit perimeter planting for better visibility.
- **Fruit Trees:** Plant native flowering and fruiting trees (such as serviceberry and persimmon) in partnership with an organization such as Philadelphia Orchard Project to provide learning opportunities and food access outside the main community garden.
- **Adopt-a-Garden:** Develop program to allow park users to maintain designated ornamental planting areas outside garden.
- **Tree Pruning and Removal:** Work with certified arborist to develop a plan for increasing light to garden plots with minimal impact to mature trees.
- **Tree Replacement:** For each tree that is removed, additional trees should be planted elsewhere in the park.

Community Garden users frequently visit:



Community gardeners do not frequent other park areas while other park users feel excluded. Priority should be given to bridging those connections in a way that can benefit the users and the park as a whole.



Markward Recreation Center

The recreation center is the heart of the park, but it is confined to the existing small footprint and its presence is often overlooked. Even though it is staffed and operates a variety of programming, most park visitors do not know about them or they do not feel welcome.

The building is frequently used for its bathrooms, and even those are often closed and could receive an upgrade making them easier to maintain. Many of the events or programs do not have ample space within the current recreation center.

While many people envision a new rec center with more room for community functions and capacity for programs, and potential for concessions, there are small improvements that can occur to make the building better in the short term. See the long term goals for ideas for a new rec center and reconfigured main entrance.

37% of comments pertain to **bathrooms being open more often.**
35% of comments expressed desire to **update or clean bathrooms.**

What people are saying...

- More communication about programming and hours. I might use it if I knew how it was available.
- Restrooms open more!
- More welcoming and open to the public. I feel like I'm trespassing when I go inside.
- Available for meetings and gatherings.
- Would love to see upgraded bathrooms, info center, vending machines, tables, and an indoor multipurpose room for group classes.
- Bathrooms need to be cleaned and updated
- Replace the wood that is filled with carpenter bee holes.
- Upgrade to the building exterior
- Better water fountains
- It looks like it has not been renovated in 30 years.

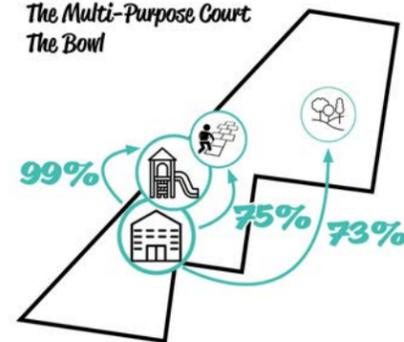
Recommendations

Upgrade the Existing Rec Center

- Update the bathrooms and make them more consistently available.
- Replace sections of the glass block with transparent windows to make the rec center more open and inviting.
- Provide an improved bulletin board that is more prominent and visible and is kept up to date with active programming in the building and participation opportunities.
- Repair and replace deteriorating wood slats and benches.
- Repaint the metal supports.

Recreation Center users frequently visit:

- The Playground
- The Multi-Purpose Court
- The Bowl



The existing recreation center does not operate as a park anchor. It has correlations to the playground, but not the other active parts of the park.



Repair wood cladding

Replace glass block with glass panels for more transparency

Update the bulletin board for better visibility and functionality

Public Communication

People are interested in becoming more involved in the park. Whether that is by participating in more events, volunteering their time, donating financially, or just wanting to know when and how they can contribute.

The greatest barrier to capitalizing on this interest is communicating how individuals and groups can best engage in a way that aligns with their interests and the park's needs. The following recommendations outline methods to consider in updating the current communication strategy.

The primary goal of improving public communication is to allow everyone with an interest in the park to feel a sense of shared pride and responsibility. This will increase FSRP's board and committee capacity to better maintain and make improvements to the park.

The realization of all the recommendations in this plan will depend on the ability to engage and mobilize the park community. The below recommendations outline regular channels of communication that keep the park community updated and involved.

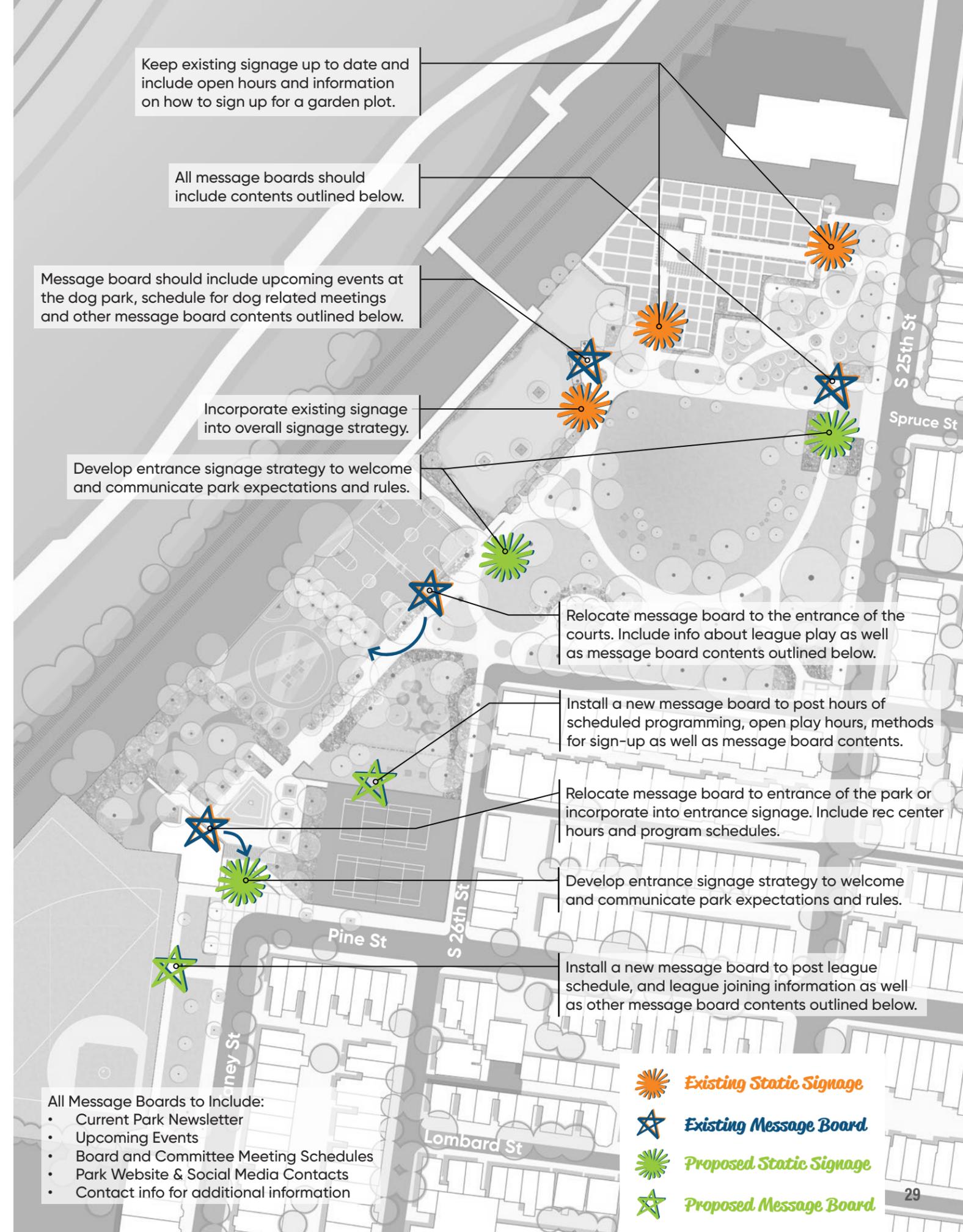
What people are saying...

35% of survey respondents included **contact information** to be involved and learn more.

- How do I learn about community events that happen here?
- It would be great to learn about games, sign-ups, and league play.
- I wish there were more opportunities to get involved.
- I follow on Facebook, but there isn't much information there.
- I want to help but I don't know how.
- I've never used the tennis courts because I don't know the rules or sign up procedure.
- How do I find out about resources, hours, events and programs?
- More planned activities. I am happy to join a committee! Where do I start?
- More welcoming and significantly better public communication of public programs/services.
- The group that runs the park isn't interested in hearing from me. Are meetings public?

Recommendations

- **Online Presence:** Update the website and social media platforms. Consolidate various on-line communication outlets and keep current.
- **Open Door Meetings:** Publicize public board meetings and share committee and interest group updates.
- **Regular Committee Meetings:** Organize existing interest groups and volunteer organizations to coordinate with each other through a regular meeting schedule.
- **Newsletter:** Share news and stories that pique interest, share helpful information and invite people to be a part of the park community. A quarterly newsletter could be emailed and posted in the park for visitors to read. Some things that it could include:
 - Park User Profiles: Recognize and celebrate staff, volunteers and users that make this park unique.
 - Park Highlights: Share interesting or unknown facts about the park that may invite more interest.
 - Volunteer Opportunities: Share volunteer events and committee meeting times and location.
 - Invite Support: Request sponsorship or donations of park improvement campaigns.
- **Signage:** Locate unified signage at primary entrances and key areas to welcome visitors into the park, share park goals, outline expectations, and highlight participation opportunities to make it easy to become involved.
- **Message Boards:** Keep park message boards up to date and relocate underused message boards.
- **Accept Donations:** Set up methods for receiving donations for general or specific purposes.



LONG-TERM GOALS

that can be accomplished in the next 10+ years.

The following recommendations for long-term goals represent improvements that will require significant investment, additional planning, and robust community engagement. Focusing on the southern portion of the park, these goals represent ambitious aspirations to greatly improve the experience of park users and expand amenities in the following ways:

Long Term Project Goals

- Greater accessibility, visibility and interconnectivity between park areas.
- More open and welcoming main entrance.
- Growth and stewardship of natural assets.
- Improved fields and spectating areas for athletic programs.
- Create a more accessible and functional rec center

Long Term Projects

- Obtain arboretum status
- Improve main park entrance and rec center
- Improve athletic fields & tennis court orientation
- New water play opportunities



The Plaza

- Develop a central plaza/hub that connects park parts.
- Provide overflow area for events, gathering and play.
- Provide water play to relieve pressure on O'Conner Pool.



Rec Center

- Options provided for new or expanded recreation center to meet the needs of the community.
- Locate building to provide a welcoming entrance and better connectivity.



New Tennis Courts

- Move tennis courts to a better suited area to have better park circulation and more optimal court orientation.



Veteran's Plaza

- Expanded veteran's plaza at street level to allow space to relocate and formalize the existing memorial.
- Provide comfortable seating for relaxation and reflection.



Athletic Fields

- Update field and athletic infrastructure to meet the needs of multiple sports play.



Schuykill Arboretum

- Preserve and protect trees.
- Plan for replacement and addition of new trees.
- Achieve arboretum status and accreditation.



Schuylkill Arboretum

The mature trees of Schuylkill River Park are valued and give the park much of its character. However, there is no current plan for the selection and planting of the next generation of canopy trees that will preserve this character after the existing trees reach the end of their life. It is recommended that the Friends of Schuylkill River Park commission a tree inventory and arboretum plan in accordance with the guidelines outlined by ArbNet as a first step in achieving level I arboretum accreditation.

This masterplan serves as an interim guide to help structure the goals and purpose behind the arboretum and can be used to direct tree planting in the short term in a way that will support an overarching arboretum vision. Broad criteria are outlined for selecting plants within specific regions of the park to support park function and reinforce the sense of place.

What people are saying...

More established trees will make a big difference in time.

Add more trees for environmental reasons

All parts of a park do not need to be programmed. Trees are important elements of the park.

More educational "what's this tree?" type of events

Could trees be incorporated into nature play - Spread those playable opportunities around the park.

Keep planting trees! We will miss them when they die.

Trees and more plantings are always welcome!

I really miss the tart cherry trees. They were all chopped down because they cast shadows on plots. Is there another place in the park to reintroduce them?

I love the trees, my daughter loves the trees to climb

Additional attention to native plantings of trees and pollinator species to support habitat for birds and butterflies

Recommendations

Additional Planning:

- Commission a tree inventory to catalogue the existing collection.
- Commission an arboretum plan in accordance with the criteria according to ArbNet.org for obtaining level I accreditation as an arboretum.

Short Term Planting and Improvements:

- Plant new trees and shrubs in conjunction with short term park improvements that support the proposed improvements and are in line with the broader goals identified in this section of the masterplan.
- Commission a certified arborist to identify existing trees and provide tree labeling with scientific and common names.
- Delay replanting of trees where existing trees have died in areas where long term improvements are planned that would conflict with those tree locations.
- Preserve all existing trees until they reach the end of their life or conflict with a larger improvement project.

- EXISTING TREE TO REMAIN
- PROPOSED CANOPY TREE
- PROPOSED FLOWERING UNDERSTORY TREE

Community Garden / Native Orchard

Planting of any new trees in this area needs to be carefully considered for potential impact on sunlight in the garden plots. Selection of the trees for the native orchard should be in conjunction with the development of a management and maintenance plan.

Informal Allee

Use tree planting over time to reinforce the primary pathway of the park. Trees should not be of identical species but should be selected to create the effect of a tall canopy allee. Infill new trees around mature trees to take their place as they become over-mature and begin to die out. Plant on regular spacing when possible.

Shade Canopy

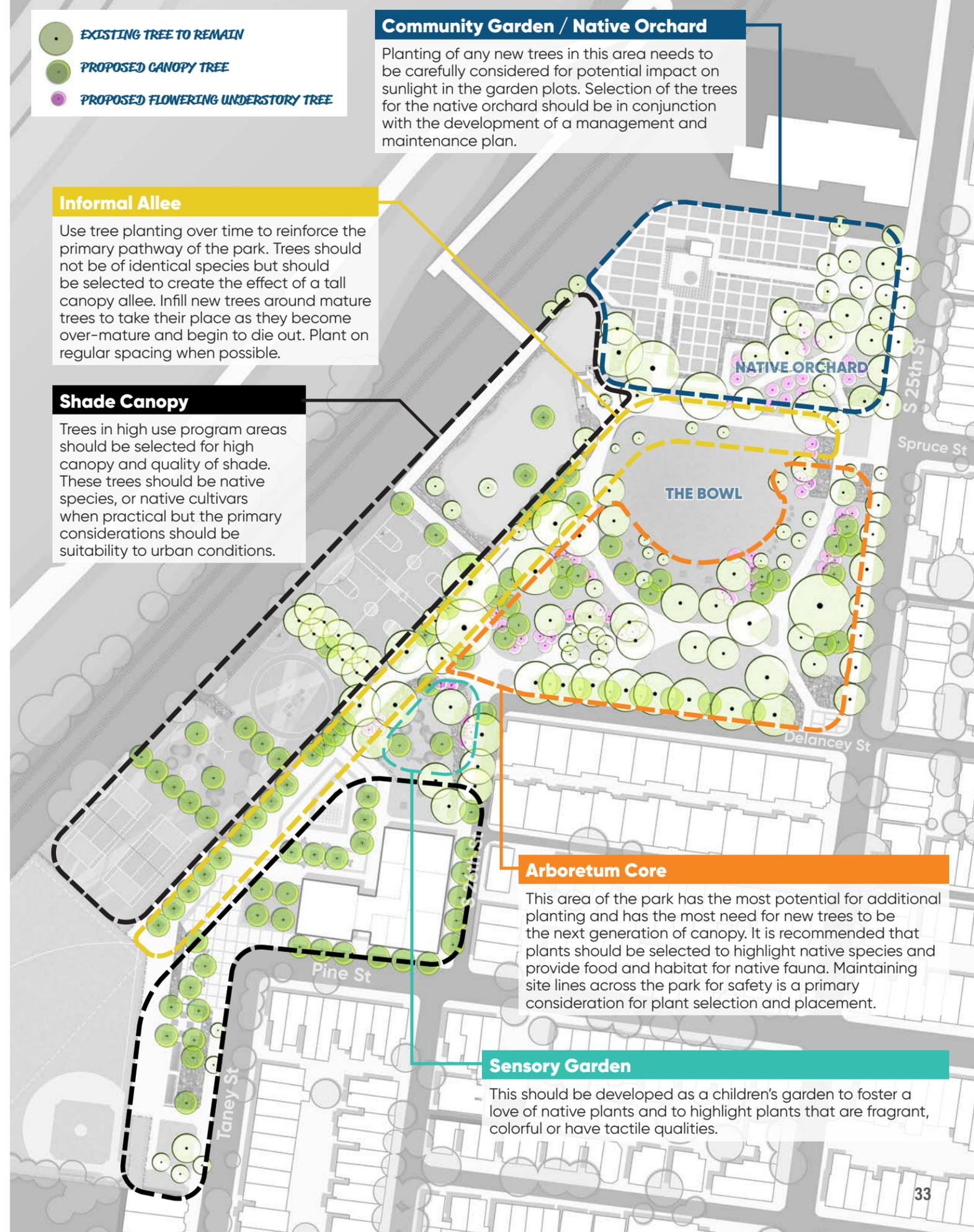
Trees in high use program areas should be selected for high canopy and quality of shade. These trees should be native species, or native cultivars when practical but the primary considerations should be suitability to urban conditions.

Arboretum Core

This area of the park has the most potential for additional planting and has the most need for new trees to be the next generation of canopy. It is recommended that plants should be selected to highlight native species and provide food and habitat for native fauna. Maintaining site lines across the park for safety is a primary consideration for plant selection and placement.

Sensory Garden

This should be developed as a children's garden to foster a love of native plants and to highlight plants that are fragrant, colorful or have tactile qualities.



Main Park Entry & Rec Center

The entry to the park is constricted by the rec center on one side and the tennis court fence on the other. Visibility into the park from the street is very limited and can make this entry feel unwelcoming. The central plaza is a well used and well loved space that has a good connection to the playground, however the rec center feels disconnected and closed off from this active space. Likewise, the tennis court fence acts like the blank wall of a building that faces the plaza and makes it feel disconnected from the rest of the park.

The existing rec center does not meet the current needs of the community and could be re-imagined as a community hub. Part of this reimagining should include reconfiguring the spaces at the entry to make it more inviting, open, and functional.

The following page shows options for reimagining this critical hub within the park with varying degrees of intervention.

What people are saying...

26% of comments wanted a new recreation center with larger spaces and space for community events.

- Add more water features for summer!
- Larger play space with more engaging options for older kids (~9-12)
- The tot lot is hidden behind the building. I worry about being there alone.
- Make it (rec center) better connected to the park and provide a daily purpose.
- Would love to see upgraded bathrooms, info center, vending machines, tables, and an indoor multipurpose room for group classes.
- I'd like to see the playground connect more with the rest of the park, in particular the multi-purpose courts and a picnic area so I can see my different aged kids in different places at the same time
- Complete overhaul! The building is old and should be completely demolished and rebuilt.
- Larger space for more community events.
- Food and coffee! A concession stand please!
- Nicer rooms for classes, with mirrors on walls for movement classes and tables for learning classes.

Recommendations

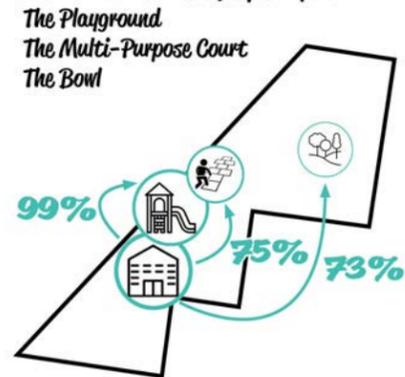
Planning Next Steps

- Work with Markward Rec staff, camp staff and volunteer organization to determine space needs.
- Work with Parks and Recreation to determine limitations and design parameters.
- Develop early feasibility study, and preliminary cost estimate for new recreation center.

Implementation

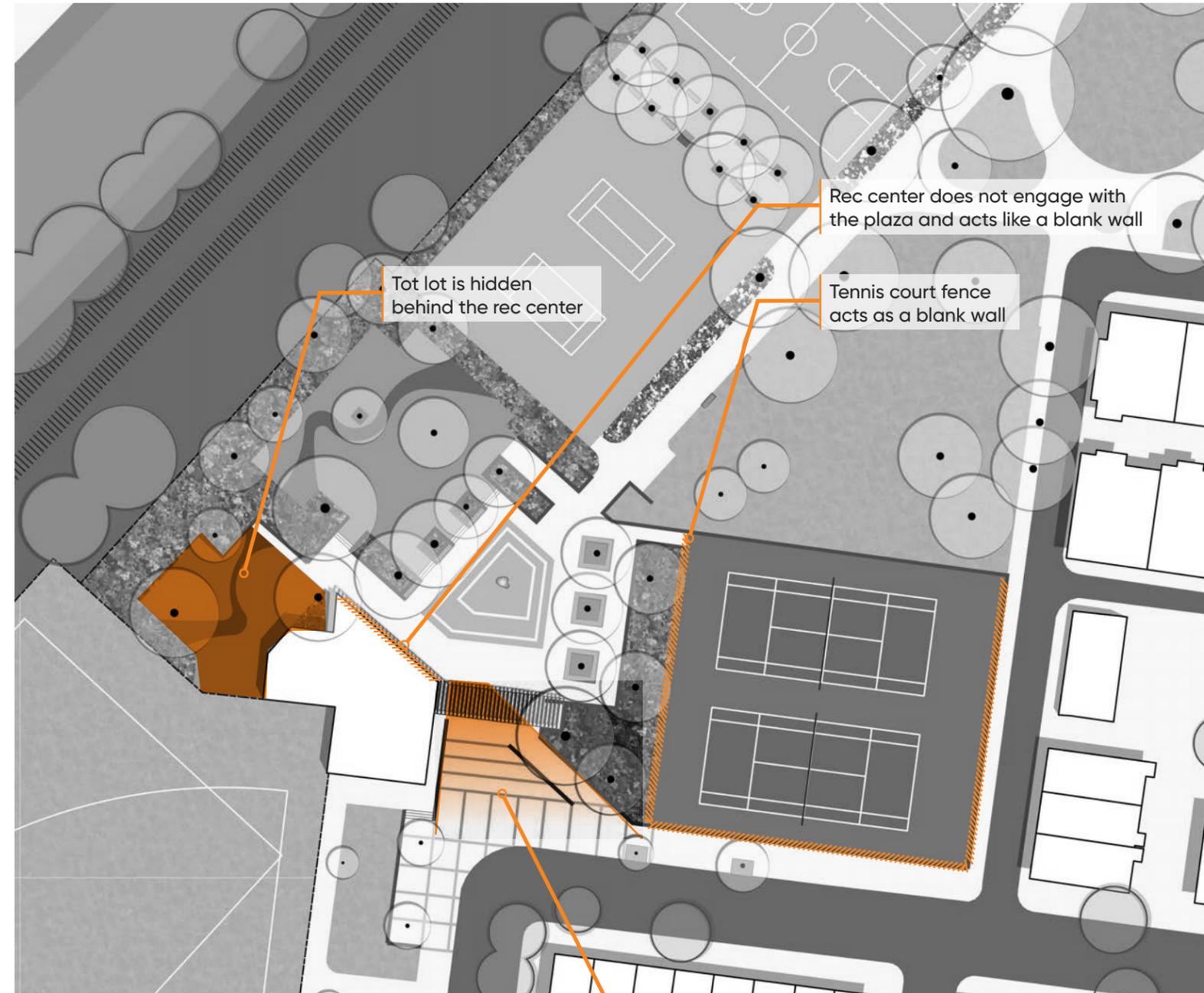
- Launch capital campaign for partnership opportunities and fundraising efforts.
- Solicit design team proposals that includes a robust community engagement process to build off this master plan.

Recreation Center users frequently visit:



The existing recreation center does not operate as a park anchor. It has correlations to the playground, but not the other active parts of the park.

Existing conditions



visibility into the park is constricted and the entry is dark and unwelcoming

Option 1: lower level building expansion



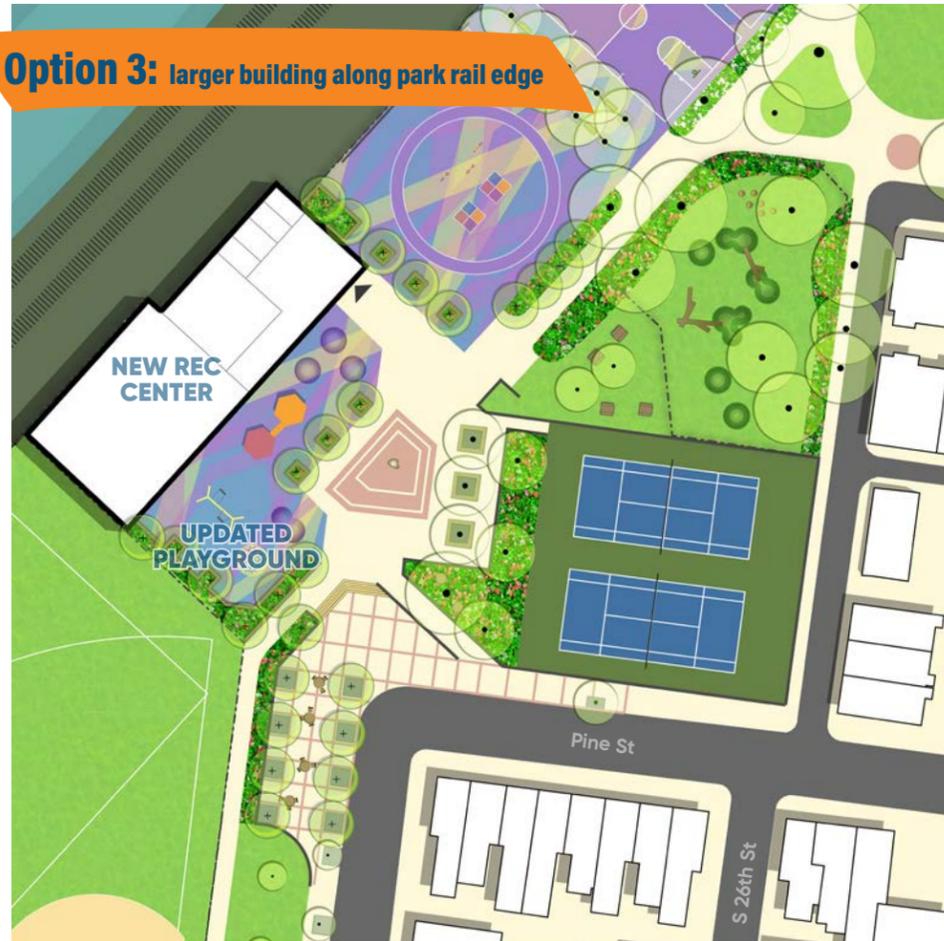
Strengths

- Space for new restroom and walk-up concession stand
- Easy access to playgrounds and athletic facilities
- Presence at park entrance along street edge
- Lowest cost

Weaknesses

- Entry is not improved
- Located at lower level from existing building
- Tot lot remains hidden behind existing building
- No expansion of program space

Option 3: larger building along park rail edge



Strengths

- Increased size for more program capacity
- More open and welcoming entry
- Building faces the park

Weaknesses

- Reduces playground space
- Pushed back and disconnected from the plaza by the playground
- Greater flood risk

Option 2: extend building to train tracks



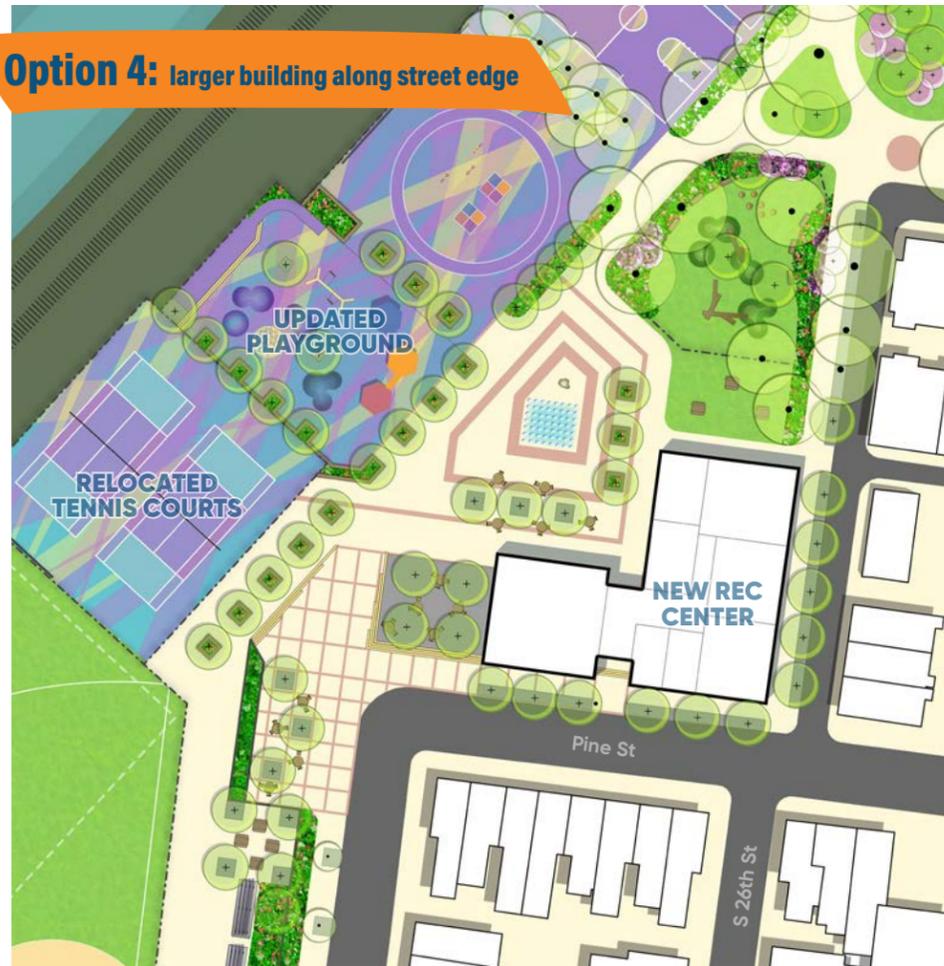
Strengths

- Increased size for more program capacity
- Opportunity for expanded central plaza
- More open and welcoming entry
- Opportunity to connect playground to multi-court

Weaknesses

- Rec center does not directly engage the plaza
- Tennis court remains a barrier preventing better visual connection between play areas

Option 4: larger building along street edge



Strengths

- Increased size for more program capacity
- Visual and physical connections between all play areas
- Larger plaza allows for more seating that views all play areas
- Larger plaza allows room for expanded water play
- Vending and bathroom access on the plaza
- Allows a larger sidewalk along 25th street for tree plantings

Weaknesses

- Higher cost
- Alienate neighbors who value the existing vista

Athletic Fields / Tennis Courts

The Athletic fields are regularly used by Taney Baseball, Soccer and Softball leagues and are locked the remainder of the time to maintain field condition. This practice is viewed as exclusionary by individuals that wish to use it for pick-up games but do not feel welcome to do so. The fields are in need of re-grading to help with drainage issues and to maintain the turf.

The tennis courts are also well used but there is some confusion around how and when the courts can be used, and what the protocols for use are. The tennis courts have been recently resurfaced but there are many complaints about the surface and the equipment. In addition, there is not a place where people can wait to play a game.

Below are recommendations that reference 'Option 4' for a new recreation center, although the recommendations can be incorporated into any option.

What people are saying...

- Open the gate - the field is part of a public park it should be accessible to the public
- Better drainage and sod management
- Would love to participate in some pick-up games but don't know how to unlock the gate
- Need places for parents and siblings to sit during games that have tables
- New soccer nets and permanent bases
- New bleachers and dugout
- More programming! My kids would love to be involved in some sports.
- The tennis court surface is terrible for play, and the nets are too loose.
- The tennis court orientation is wrong, the players should face the north/south orientation.
- Would love to see a backboard for hitting practice

41% of athletic field comments requested **more access to fields** during non-game times

27% of comments would like to see **field and spectator improvements** including sod management, seating, gathering areas, lighting, permanent bases and goals.

19% of court and field comments would like **better communication** around programming and scheduling.

Recommendations

Communication

- Develop strategy for allowing additional field access while minimizing use by dog owners.
- Develop protocol and communicate how individuals can access field for pick-up games.

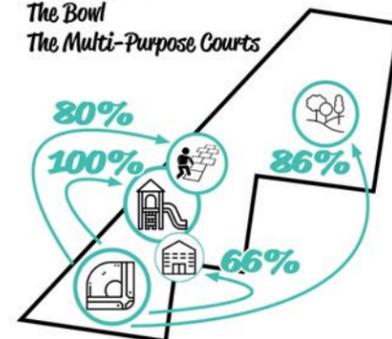
Field Improvements

- Regrade and properly prepare field base to ensure proper drainage.
- Provide new seating and gathering areas.
- Upgrade sport infrastructure including bases, fixed soccer goals and improved dugout.

Tennis Improvements

- Better court orientation (closer to N/S orientation).
- Better court surface and nets.

The Athletic Field users frequently visit:
 The Playground
 The Bowl
 The Multi-Purpose Courts



Visitors that utilize the athletic fields frequently visit other areas of the park.



O'Connor Pool

The O'Connor Pool, while not contiguously connected, is a part of Schuylkill River Park and managed by the Markward Recreation staff during the summer season. It is heavily used and a large part of summer memories for many nearby residents.

Given the popularity and demand for the pool in the summer months, we recommend relieving pressure by adding additional water features closer to the recreation center. This would allow the opportunity to extend access to water play and accommodate more people.

The pool benefited from the "Pop up Pools" initiative in 2019 which provided planters, umbrellas, lounge chairs, and a rainfall shower. While more improvements to the lockers and bathrooms were frequently mentioned in

the survey, it should be noted that the engagement for this masterplan plan took place outside the pool season without access to area to complete an evaluation. Therefore additional engagement with pool users and stakeholders to develop any improvement strategies is needed. The retaining wall at the western edge of the pool will be receiving repairs after a structural study has been completed in 2020, but no additional improvements are planned for the pool at this time.

50% of pool comments wished for more access to the pool by **extended hours**.

23% of comments would like to continue seeing upgrades to **seating, shade, and vegetation**.

Only **9%** of survey results referenced overhauls to bathrooms and physical pool infrastructure.

What people are saying...

On a busy day, it is the most socio-economically diverse place in our neighborhood.

Longer hours! Longer season!

More family swim hours so we can be there with our kids

More chairs. Cleaner bathrooms. Lockers.

The O'Connor Pool is a true neighborhood gem.

I love O'Connor pool!

This is so overcrowded during the summer weekends.

Improve the exterior sidewalks to make it a year-round space.

I would like a snack cart or even vending machines.

Some people are only here to sun but are still counted against the capacity numbers.

Recommendations

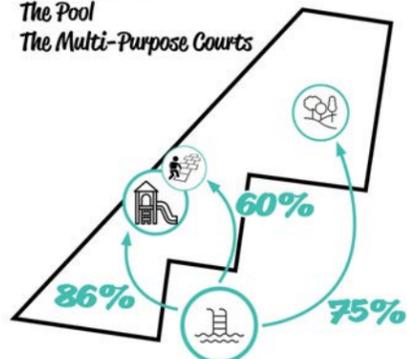
Increased Water Play Opportunities:

- Create a sprayground at the redeveloped Markward Plaza to provide an alternative to the pool for cooling off and to relieve some of the overcrowding and lines at the pool.

Pool Infrastructure Updates:

- Upgrades to the retaining wall and pool infrastructure should be prioritized to create a safe and enjoyable swimming experience.
- An expansion of the provided beach chairs, planters and shade structures can make the pool experience more comfortable.
- Provide street trees at edges of pool for shade during times when there is a line to access the pool.

The Pool users frequently visit:
The Playground
The Pool
The Multi-Purpose Courts



A complete analysis of pool users and other park use correlations was not able to be completed due to timeline of masterplan engagement.



Fall Festival - Masterplan kick-off event

The public engagement for the masterplan process began on October 19, 2019 at the annual Fall Festival hosted by Friends of Schuylkill River Park. At the event we began to document shared values by asking individuals to share a favorite memory of a time spent in the park. Below are images of participants.



Fall Festival - small sample of memories shared

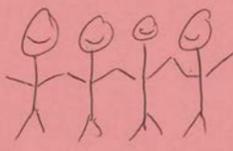
* picnics on green
* movie nights !!

Growing up in this park and now bringing my girls here to play!

EVERYTHING

Dog watching at the park!

I ♥ how you always see someone who you know!



I was going in a circle on MY bike. I fell off it. I got scraped on my knee, but I got back on!



Survey - paper copy

SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK SURVEY

We are working with the Friends of Schuylkill River Park to conduct this survey with park users to identify items that can be improved or addressed in a park-wide masterplan. Please answer the questions below to help us better understand how this space can be made better for you.

1. **Where do you regularly enter the park?** (see other side for map)
- River Trail Bridge
 - Delancey Entry @ 26th
 - Spruce Entry
 - Markward Entry
 - Delancey Entry @ 25th
 - Community Garden

This demographic information is for the purposes of verifying accurate representation of the neighborhood. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential.

What is your age?

<12 13-18 18-25 25-35 35-45 45-55 >55

Do you identify as?

Female Male Other Prefer not to answer

Do you identify as?

Asian Black or African American Latino White Multi-Ethnic/Other Prefer not to answer

2. **Share a favorite memory of a time spent in this park.**
- _____
- _____
- _____

3. **How frequently do you use the below areas of the park?** (see other side for map)

	Never	Rarely	Once / Month	2-3 times / Month	Daily
Markward Rec Center	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Basketball Court	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tennis Courts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Multi-purpose Court	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Dog Park	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Community Garden	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>				
O'Connor Pool	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Paths and Benches	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Athletic Fields	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sculpture Garden	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>				

4. **Does that space satisfy your needs?**

	Needs Work	Could be Better	It's OK	It's Good	Yes! It's Great
Markward Rec Center	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Playground	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Basketball Court	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Tennis Courts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Multi-purpose Court	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Dog Park	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Community Garden	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The Bowl	<input type="checkbox"/>				
O'Connor Pool	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Paths and Benches	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Athletic Fields	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sculpture Garden	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/>				

5. **How can it be improved?**
- _____
- _____
- _____

6. **Do you feel like this park belongs to you?**

This is My Park

Welcome in ALL areas of park Never thought about it Welcome in SOME areas of park Not Welcome

7. **What would make you feel more welcome in the park?**
- _____
- _____
- _____

9. **Who is best served by the park?**

Children Teens Seniors

Adults

10. **How can the park better serve the community?**

What would make you visit more often, be more involved, or become a member of Friends of Schuylkill River Park?

8. **What types of events or programs do you attend now? Or, what would you like to see happen?**
- _____
- _____
- _____

11. **How would you rate your feeling of personal safety in the park?**

Very Unsafe Unsafe Neutral Safe Very Safe

12. **Your Zip Code**
- _____

The following is to be filled out by survey administrator:

Date: _____

Location: _____

Survey - online

SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK SURVEY

Park Spaces

The following questions have to do with specific areas within the park.

If you **DO NOT** use or visit the area in question, leave the questions blank and skip to the next section.

If you **DO** use the area in question, please answer the questions as they relate to that specific space only.

Community Garden

The Bowl

Dog Park

Sculpture Garden

Basket Ball Courts

Multi-purpose Courts

Tennis Courts

Playground

War Memorial

Markward Rec. Center

Athletic Fields

O'Conner Pool

BACK NEXT

Page 3 of 19

Survey - signage displayed in park

Your Voice

Your Park

Complete the Schuylkill River Park Survey

The Friends of Schuylkill River Park are conducting a survey with park users to identify items that can be improved or addressed in a park-wide masterplan. Use the QR code to access a survey to help us better understand how the park is currently used, and how it can be made better for you and the community.

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK

Schuylkill River Park Masterplan

Board of Directors Kickoff Goal-Setting Meeting
Thursday, September 12 | 6:00PM – 8:00 PM



In Attendance

Sean O'Rourke | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Gerard Schellenberg | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Jerry Schellenberg | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Andrew Dalzell | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Robert Haimes | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Susan Kahn | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Carolyn Pecchia | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Susan Halpern | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Kathryn Wurges | Friends of Schuylkill River Park, Board of Directors
Ari Miller | Hinge Collective
Alexa Bosse | Hinge Collective

MEETING MINUTES

The purpose of this meeting was to convene a large group of stakeholders that represent the range of organizations and individuals that use the park or have an interest in the development of the park or have insight into factors that would impact any future improvements.

Introduction

Hinge Collective (Hinge) invited everyone in attendance to introduce themselves, their relationship to the park and why they decided to be on the board. Board members also shared their favorite memories of a time spent in SRP which influenced a later portion of the conversation.

Hinge shared base line master planning goals. The master plan should act as a:

- Visioning Document that the BOD can aspire toward.
- Framework for future improvements so as to coordinate efforts to strategically use resources and increase efficiency.

Masterplanning Process

Hinge stated that the masterplan will contain both long-term aspirational goals and short-term "bits-size" incremental improvements that can happen with smaller funding requirements. Projects such as the dog park and pedestrian bridge over the rail are successful past examples of long-term projects requiring large funding sources already shepherded by the SRP BOD.

SRP Mission Statement *"Friends of Schuylkill River Park is a non-profit organization. It was formed in 1988 by concerned neighbors to foster the preservation, beautification, improvement, maintenance, and enjoyment of Schuylkill River Park."*

Based on a discussion, the following elements were determined to be important for SRP specifically.

- A plan that is responsive to collective needs of the park community, has broad support and builds participation and membership/capacity
- It should identify and understand the SRP community

- Who is using the park? Where are they coming from?
- How the park is currently serving the community well and what it could be done better?
- What is the collective understanding of the park community?
- Engage people on each section of the park
 - Survey questions and one-on-one interviews from users in all areas of park
 - Relationship to space and larger community
- Evoke favorite memories to understand what makes this particular space memorable.

Project Schedule

Because it is already September, Hinge Collective and the BOD will prioritize engagement and outreach efforts that were to take place in the park asap before the winter months made it more difficult to conduct interviews. The fall and early winter months will be used to gather feedback and the plan will be developed early 2020.

Goal Setting Workshop

Hinge facilitated a goal setting workshop to identify the park community, park successes, and set goals for what would like to be achieved in this plan. The discussion follows:

What do you think is working well? What parts of the park would you consider sacred and want to be left untouched?

- Shade – the trees in this park are highly appreciated. They should be a priority.
- The bowl – it is a flexible open space that can host a variety of events
- Multi-purpose court – the paved area between the playground and basketball court was mentioned as the location for many of the "favorite memories" at the beginning of the meeting. It seems unassuming but is frequented by many neighbors.
- Playground – it received renovations recently, it is slated to receive more, and is a very good playground.
- Dog Park – with the exception of some cosmetic improvements, the dog park is already a successful destination area that draws people from all over the city
- Community Gardens – There is active leadership and it is maintained well.
- Baseball and Soccer Fields – These spaces are popular and see a regular schedule of programmed activity occurring on them.
- Pool – this is one of the best pools in the city and is in high demand during the season
- Tennis Courts – with the exception of the new surface, the tennis courts are used and appreciated
- Pathways – the paths are in good condition and cover the area that they should

What would you like to see change in SRP? What are the overall goals? If you had a magic wand to change something, what would it be?

- A new bigger and better community center with more program space or public accessibility. Markward recreation should be a community hub, but it does not currently do that.
- A cohesive arboretum planting design to identify what and where to plant when someone wants to dedicate or donate a tree.
- More opportunities for intergenerational mixing. The park should serve everyone from cradle to grave.
- Designed NO DOG areas of the park.

- A vending or concession area – providing coffee and snacks will allow people to stay and enjoy the park longer while providing income revenue to help maintain the park.
- Picnic areas! Places for people to meet.
- More benches.
- Teen hang-out spaces
- Access to programming 365 days a year
- Designated food truck locations
- Income generating parking opportunities
- More whimsy . . .
- Comprehensive lighting plan
- Exercise equipment
- Stronger gateways and entrances
- Flexible furniture
- More color!
- We should be considering how this park is sustainable and resilient.
- Historic Representation

- * Philadelphia Parks Alliance
- * University of Pennsylvania
- * Penn Futures

*additional names added to list after the meeting to build an inclusive stakeholder group

Next Steps

BOD to create list of project partner recommendations

BOD to develop stakeholder group and begin initial outreach and announcing master planning efforts

Hinge will develop survey for BOD to review

Hinge to begin observational analysis and initial on-site interviews

Hinge to convene Public kick-off activity at Fall Festival – organized by FSRP on October 19, 2019

BOD and Hinge to set date for first stakeholder meeting

Who makes up the Park Community? Who uses the space regularly? What are the spaces and people that should be represented in the masterplan conversations?

- Key Park Spaces
 - Playground (Sat AM) Neighbors
 - Basketball Courts
 - Community Garden
 - Dog Park
 - Veterans Memorial group
 - Bike Polo
 - Volleyball
 - O’Conner Pool
- Park Users
 - Markward Camp and After School
 - Immediate neighbors
 - Bench sitting elders
 - The Philadelphia School (TPS)
 - Trinity Playgroup
 - Goddard School
 - Greenfield Soccer
 - Taney Baseball
 - Farmer’s Market (Wed PM)
 - USGE South Philly Tennis
- Neighborhood Organizations
 - Center City Residence Association (CCRA)
 - Fidler Square Neighbor Association (FSNA)
 - *Friends of Fidler Square
 - Markward Advisory Council
- Potential Partner Organizations
 - Philadelphia Parks and Recreation
 - * City Council Kenyatta Johnson
 - * State Representative Brian Sims Office
 - * Philadelphia Water Department

End of Meeting Minutes

The above minutes represent the official record of this meeting.

Notification of corrections or additions must be made within 15 business days of distribution date.

Schuylkill River Park Masterplan

Stakeholder Meeting #1
November 25, 2019 | 6:00-7:30pm | Markward Recreation Center



In Attendance

(See attached Sign-in Sheets)

Distributed on December 11, 2019 to: Board of Directors, Friends of Schuylkill River Park; All in attendance; To file

MEETING MINUTES

The purpose of this meeting was to convene a large group of stakeholders that represent the range of organizations and individuals that use the park or have an interest in the development of the park or have insight into factors that would impact any future improvements.

Introduction

Hinge Collective (Hinge) invited everyone in attendance to introduce themselves and their affiliation or relationship to the park.

Hinge stated the goals of the meeting as an opportunity to share the community input that had been gathered to date and to use that input as starting point for a group discussion about the park as a whole and its individual parts. Hinge also stated that the stakeholders will also have an opportunity to identify strategic partnerships and opportunities for collective support of improvements identified in the forthcoming masterplan.

Hinge shared information gathered through a park user survey as well as information gathered through an engagement exercise at the Fall Festival on October 19th. Hinge noted that all information presented at the meeting is incomplete because input is still being collected and there are some groups that may require special attention to ensure equal participation. With this caveat stated, Hinge related the key takeaways from the engagement and discussed them with the stakeholder group in attendance. Key takeaways that related to the park overall included the following points:

- Many people have a long-standing relationship with the park that spans generations.
- The park is well used and well loved.
- Better communication is needed to spread awareness of the existence of the Friends group and of ways that community members can contribute to the development and upkeep of the park. Better communication regarding events is also needed.
- The park seems to be the least accommodating of teens and elderly.
- The park is very welcoming to most people and many people feel a sense of ownership over the park.
- The park is viewed as being a very safe place to be.
- Most people enter the park at the Markward entrance and the Spruce St entrance.

Hinge then opened up the discussion to the larger group, prompting the discussion by sharing survey comments about each individual park space.

Stakeholder Discussion of Park Areas

The following is a record of the Stakeholder discussion on each area of the park as well as action items for additional follow-up:

Topic	Comments	Action Item
Markward Rec Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building could be more open, connected to the outside and welcoming. • The potential for concessions at the rec center should be explored. Barbera Halpern from CCRA mentioned that CCRA might be able to help facilitate inclusion of concessions. • There is already not enough space for the current programming at the rec center. • The bathrooms need renovation and they are frequently not open. Many responses to the survey asked if they could donate money directly to the bathrooms. Megan Funk from PPR did not know the answer but will confirm. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up with Barbera H. at CCRA regarding concessions. • Follow up with PPR regarding potential for concessions as well as donations for specific improvements or staff time to keep bathrooms open. • Identify short term for bathrooms and long-term goals for more ambitious overhaul of the building.
Playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An upgrade of the surfaces is needed. • The equipment should be upgraded to include more elements for older kids. • There is a desire for some nature play elements. • The Philadelphia School (TPS) recess can take over the playground and make it difficult for others to use it. The arrangement with TPS of the yard could be revisited or revised to minimize this conflict. This issue was noted in many of the survey comments as well. • The playground is due for upgrades in the short term. Any recommendations in the masterplan for this area will be long term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up with TPS regarding an informal agreement and make sure that proposed changes to the playground in the masterplan are responsive to any potential future arrangements. • Identify this as a long-term project in the masterplan.
Multi-court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This area is well used and well loved. • There was a survey comment asking for more separation from the Basketball courts. A neighbor, and frequent user of the basketball courts believed that this comment was in regards to a desire to be farther from the people who play basketball and she suggested that there should be less separation, not more, to build better relations between the basketball court users, who are predominantly black, and those who use the multi-court, who are predominantly white. • There was support for an idea to incorporate a mural on the ground surface that could unify the basketball courts and multi-court. • There was support for the idea of adding additional seating and shade in this area. • Ideas for including painted games on the ground as well as backboards for handball and other games was well received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include mural idea in the draft masterplan and vet through frequent users of the Basketball courts and the multi-court. • Identify this area as a short term project in the masterplan.

Topic	Comments	Action Item
Basketball Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This user group is underrepresented in the survey and at the stakeholder meeting. More effort is needed to get input from this group and make sure their voices are heard. Upgrades to the courts and baskets is seen as a good short-term improvement. Including a hoop that lowers to allow kids to play here was suggested by both the survey responses and those at the stakeholder meeting. There was a suggestion to include a half court basket so that more people can use the courts when full court games are going on both courts. There was interest in hosting a league, but parking issues would need to be addressed first. There was a suggestion to include bleacher seating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up a meeting with basketball court users. Spend time at the court and interview those using the space during peak hours. Perform more outreach to get more survey responses from people who use the basketball courts. Identify this area as a short term project in the masterplan.
Tennis Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was support for the idea of a message board to better communicate sign up for play. There was discussion around whether the courts could be reserved. Many objected to the idea of there being a fee to play or to reserve the courts. There was some support for the idea that some hours could be reserved for private lessons. The new surfacing is not good and should be replaced or repaired if possible. The current courts are at the wrong orientation. There was a suggestion to explore adding additional courts and re-orienting them. The fence needs vine clearing and repair. The existing grass area that is used as a waiting area for those in line to play is also used for occasional children's programming and birthday parties. If this area is to be developed as a better waiting area, it should be multifunctional for the existing uses. There was support for the idea of adding a backboard for hitting practice during non-peak hours. It was noted that the tennis courts may be located on top of contaminated soil. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore ideas for adding and re-orienting courts as a long term goal in the masterplan. Include low cost improvements to make the waiting area function better for tennis and for other small events in the short term.

Topic	Comments	Action Item
Dog Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watching dogs is a favorite activity in the park. Watching from up above on the pedestrian overpass is great for dogs and people. Watching dogs on the ground through the fence is disruptive to dogs and is potentially dangerous to children. More opportunities for viewing dogs in the park from a safe distance should be explored. There are no trash cans for poop bags inside the park because PPR will not go in to the park to pick up bags for safety reasons. The current system is not working and results in poop bags being everywhere in scattered around the trash cans outside the fence because they are thrown. A new solution for this should be explored. The representative from the dog park confirmed that the area behind the brick wall should be fenced off. There was support for more places to sit in the shade. There was also confirmation that the posted rules are not followed. No solution to this was presented. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include ideas for more dog viewing from a safe distance or for more formalized viewing from the overpass. Include solution for restricting access to planted areas not technically part of the dog run. Identify solutions for poop bag disposal. Include ideas for better communication and enforcement of the rules.
Community Garden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were comments regarding public access from both the survey and stakeholders. The Community garden is viewed as private space by most even though it is technically publicly accessible. A representative from the community garden stated that the garden should be open whenever there is a gardener present. The garden cannot be open unless there is a gardener present to make sure that no produce is taken without permission. There is some confusion about how one obtains a garden plot and when the garden is open to the public. More can be done to make the community garden feel more open to the public. There was a request for pruning of the trees for more light. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities for better communication about the community garden and increasing the public nature of this space. Include a recommendation for a pruning schedule to allow for more light. Request shade study recently performed by community garden club.
Athletic Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drainage issues were mentioned by both those responding to the survey and a stakeholder. There was a response to survey comments regarding public access. There was concern that removing any physical barriers might encourage more dog walking on the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a recommendation for regrading the infield of the baseball field for better drainage.

Topic	Comments	Action Item
O'Conner Pool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is concern regarding the integrity of the retaining wall currently for the pool, and an engineering study is currently underway. The pool creates "dead zones" on the block where it is located that is a place where crime occurs. Many agreed that this is not an ideal place for the pool After the official end of the meeting there was a suggestion made that the pool could be relocated to be within the limit of the park. While this is an ambitious project, it would solve many of the issues with the current pool. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow-up regarding the wall study. Explore the feasibility of relocating the pool on the park grounds.

The meeting went over time before there was an opportunity to discuss the following Park areas with the full group:

- The Bowl
- Sculpture garden
- Paths and Benches

End of Meeting Minutes

The above minutes represent the official record of this meeting.

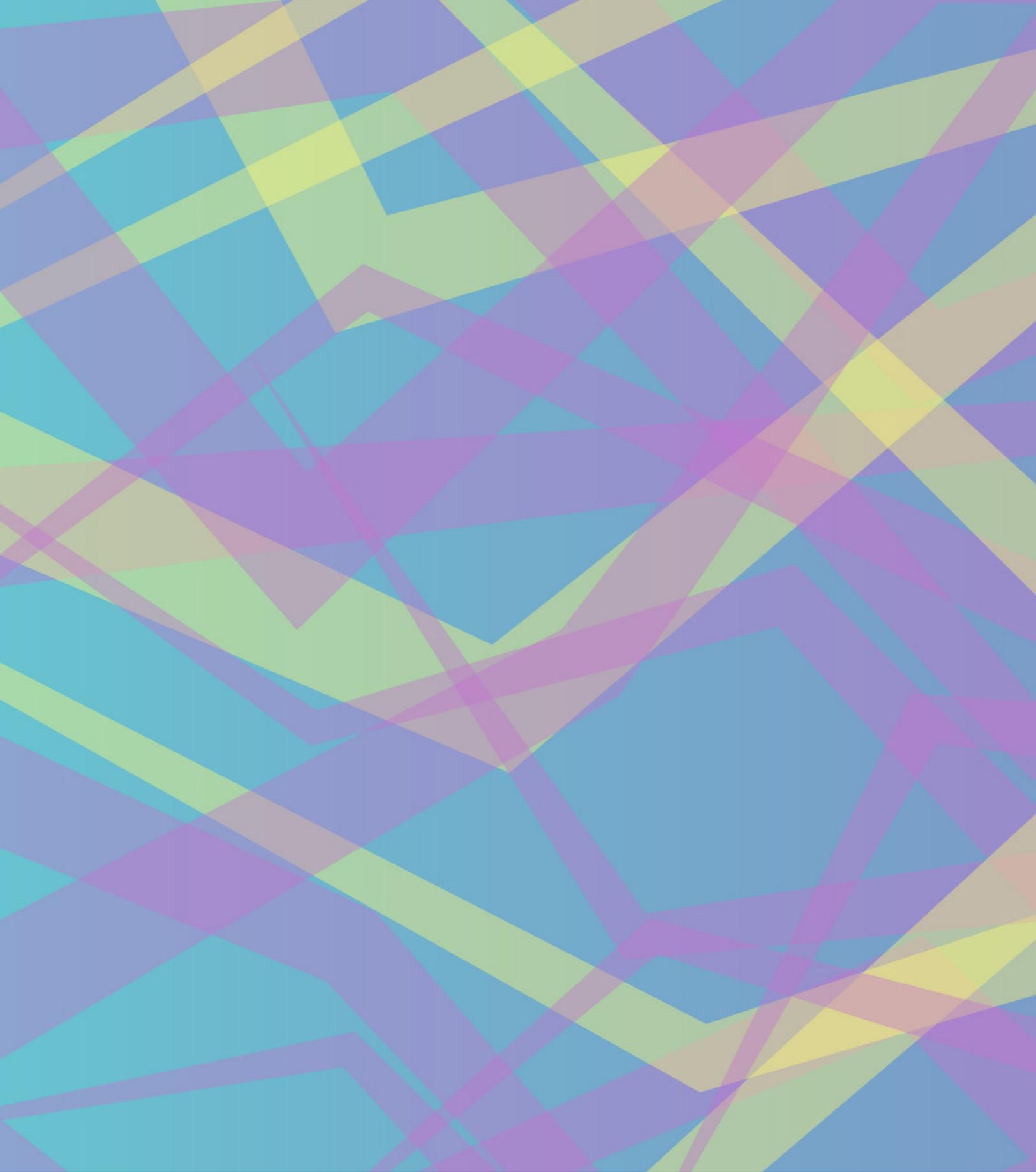
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Schuykill River Park Masterplan | Sign-in Sheet

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Schuykill River Park Masterplan | Sign-in Sheet

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IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Friends of Schuylkill River Park &
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

