

SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK MASTERPLAN

Prepared for:
Friends of
Schuylkill River Park
May 2020 - DRAFT



Playing softball
with other
Greenfield parents

here. Edge dog park, used play ball
with kids - the dog was an
outfielder - got ball a run
over 1st - out -
LOTS OF FUN HERE

I like
slide

"I remember Mommy saying "No, No Isla
don't climb the high chair"
Isla
3 years

My firstborn (now 11) used to
love owning 'a store' under the
slide in the toddler park while
my 2nd (now 7) slept in the

Katherine
Swings


The afternoon my love of
my life walked around
and read our bikes. So
happy to have moved here
I hope you just

with grand +
on the
and apple juice!

Evan's first
Scooter ride!


My Babie
over the

We
Played tag

to the te
COURTS

I like to go on
the monkey bars!!
SMING 

I wish Philly has
fun & safe parks / pla
like this one
Swimah

ght train.
SEE
CLIMB
TREE

Playing frisbee
with my son

The best time
to visit
TO WINTER
TO STIDEI

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IN COLLABORATION WITH:

Friends of Schuylkill River Park
&
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation



Friends of
Schuylkill River Park
doing the monkey

PHILADELPHIA
PARKS &
RECREATION

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 5 Masterplan Goals

MASTERPLAN INTRODUCTION

- 6 Masterplan Methodology
- 7 How to Use the Masterplan
- 8 Project Schedule
- 9 Participant Information

STATE OF THE PARK

- 10 Park Overview
- 12 Park Usage
- 13 User Perceptions

SHORT TERM GOALS

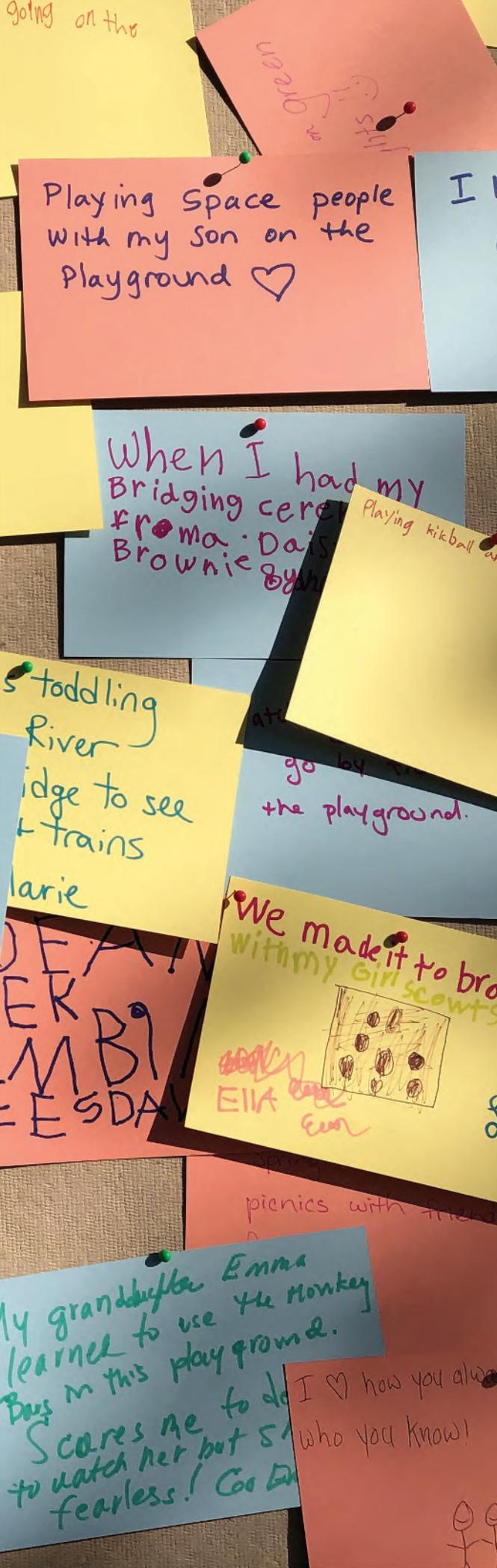
- 16 Public Communication
- 18 Basketball and Multi-court
- 20 Dog Park
- 22 Social Spaces
- 24 Community Garden

LONG-TERM GOALS

- 28 Markward Recreation Center
- 30 Markward Entrance Plaza and Play Areas
- 32 Athletic Fields / Tennis Courts
- 34 Schuylkill Arboretum
- 36 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
- xix Acknowledgments





Photos courtesy of Friends of Schuylkill River Park

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Schuylkill River Park plays a significant role in the daily lives of thousand of Philadelphia residents. Because of its central location within the city and its unique amenities this park draws a diverse set of individuals and groups that visit for a multitude of reasons. The paths and places of this park have been the backdrop for many memories and the venues for community building and there are many with a profound relationship to this park that goes back several generations.

The value of this public space is well recognized by the Friends of Schuylkill River Park who have shepherded outreach and public participation for this masterplan document to be developed. With the goal of preserving and maintaining the park as a space for much needed social capital, they reached into the community to ask how park users felt about the park, and how we can all look forward together to build a stronger and more equitable future.

The outreach and engagement strategy included public events, one-on-one interviews with stakeholders and park users, and an online survey that invited public feedback. The recommendations that are contained in this document are based on the needs and concerns expressed during this process.

With special attention to identifying opportunities for greater inclusion and increased equity, the projects are divided into short and long term recommendations, and then further divided into discrete projects that can be achieved through various levels of participation and involvement.

The following pages outline how this documents is meant to be used by the Friends of Schuylkill River Park as well as by the community to both maintain and celebrate the existing park successes while prioritizing opportunities for improvement to meet the goals established for the future of the park.

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 across use areas to increase social capital.**
- **Identify ways for greater community involvement.**
- **Identify opportunities for increasing equity and greater inclusion.**

MASTERPLAN INTRODUCTION

Masterplan Methodology

The objective of this master plan is to learn about the people that use the park; investigate how the design of the park serves their needs; and make recommendations for measures that can be taken to improve the park while promoting it as an inclusive and equitable piece of social infrastructure. The masterplan includes evidence-based recommendations based on feedback received through on-site observations, one-on-one interviews, park events, public meetings and digital surveys.



424 surveys completed



68 on-site interviews



34 on-site observation hours



128 park outreach event participants
(*at date of first draft)



26 stakeholder participants
(*at date of first draft)

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 while others looked at the overall connections and perceptions. Through this we were able to determine how people use and perceive specific spaces and also how those spaces correlate to other spaces with common users. Write-in comments gathered through surveys, one-on-one conversations, and engagement events have been condensed to the common themes and are included under the “what people are saying” section for each project page.

This information has then been compared against the Friends of Schuylkill River Park Board of Directors' overall masterplan goals to determine how effectively these goals are being met and develop recommendations to make them more successful. To see the full range of engagement, including the survey questions, engagement event results, and stakeholder meeting minutes, please see the appendix of this document.

How to Use the Masterplan

1. Summary of Findings

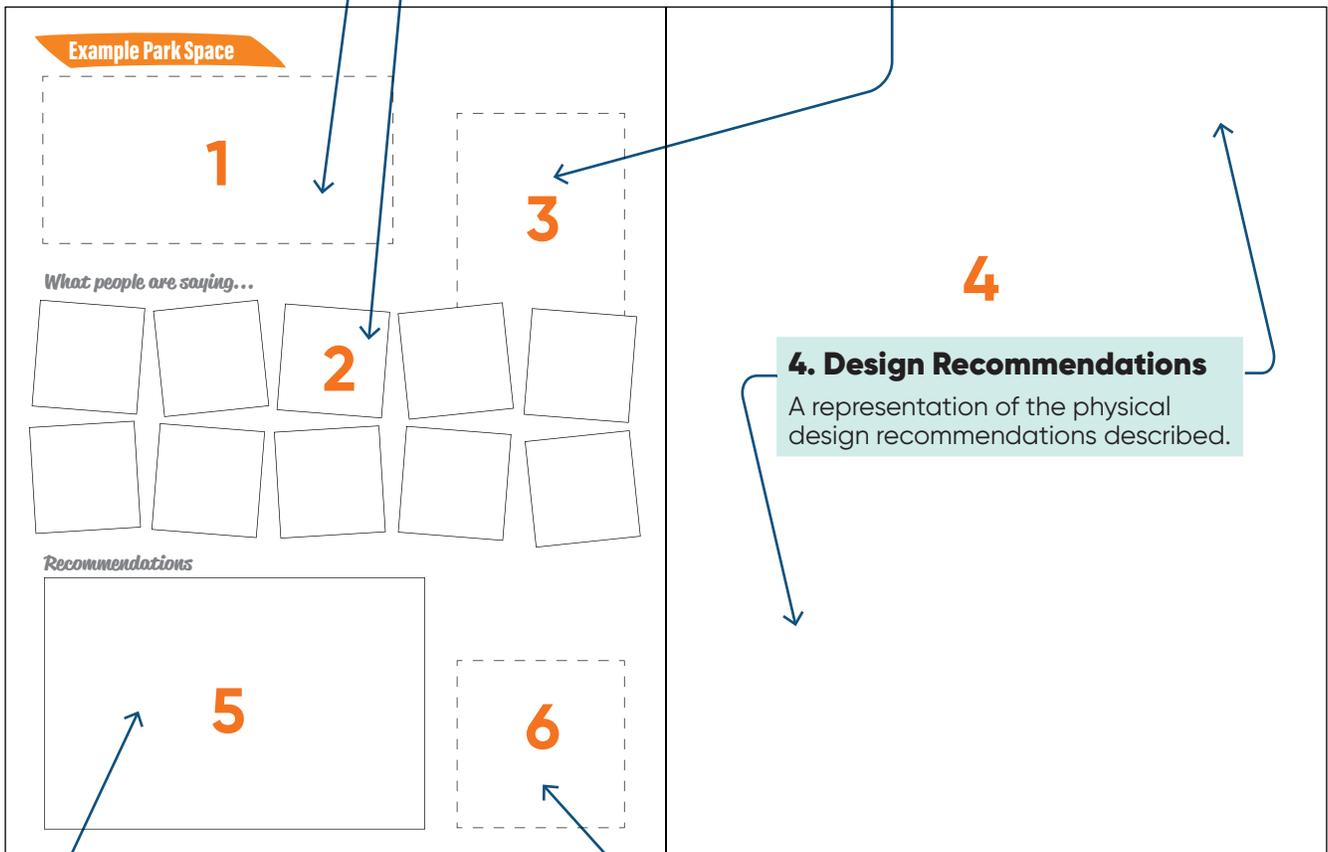
A summary of recommendations being considered and explanation of other relevant considerations.

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.

Project Schedule



SEPTEMBER 2019

Masterplan Kick-off and Goal Setting Workshop

Friends of Schuylkill River Park Board of Directors

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY & SURVEY DEVELOPMENT



OCTOBER 2019

Schuylkill River Park Annual Fall Festival

Masterplan kick-off event at Markward plaza

**PARK OBSERVATIONS
ON-SITE PARK USER INTERVIEWS
DIGITAL SURVEY**



DECEMBER 2019

Stakeholder Public Meeting

Early engagement findings and stakeholder conversation

DIGITAL SURVEY CLOSED 12/31/2019



SPRING 2020

Stakeholder Public Meeting

Draft masterplan review and stakeholder conversation



TBD

Masterplan Draft Reveal Event

Masterplan reveal event at Markward plaza

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD



TBD

Stakeholder Public Meeting

Masterplan review, comment and stakeholder conversation



TBD

Final Masterplan Delivered to FSRP

Participant Information

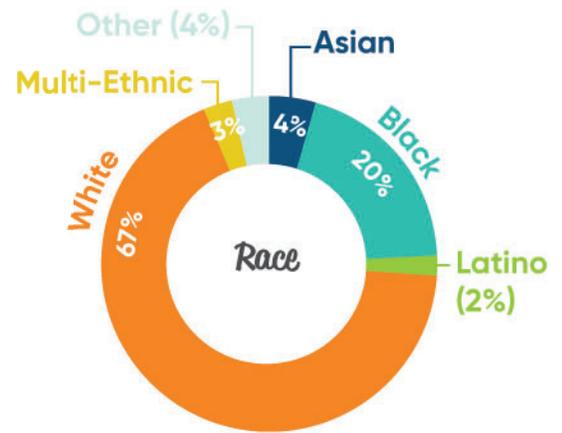
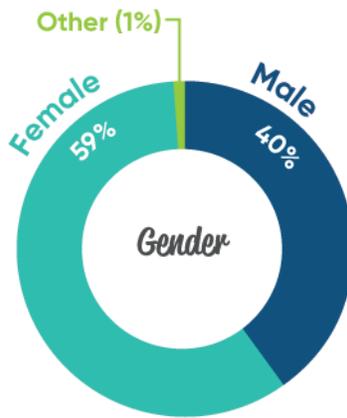
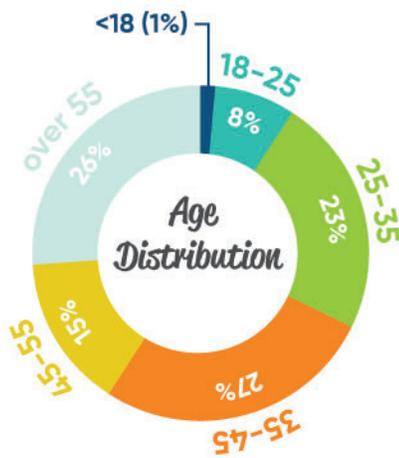
The individuals that participated in the interviews and surveys were given the option to provide their demographic data. This was gathered for the purpose of evaluating the voices that are represented and to adjust additional outreach efforts in order to reach those that were underrepresented.

The park serves a dual purpose as both a neighborhood park for the adjacent communities, but many aspects of the park serve the larger, city-wide community due to its central location, site features and connectivity to the Schuylkill Banks trail.

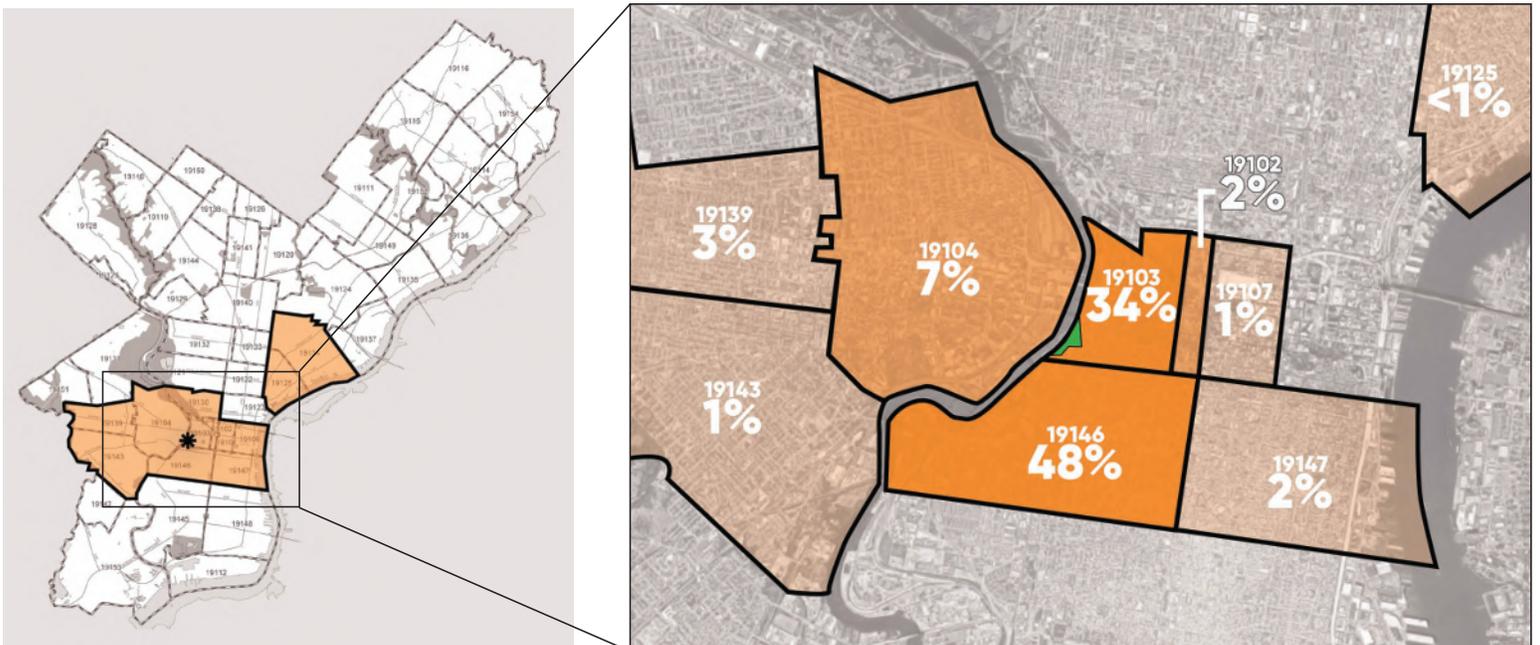
The responses and data provided should be viewed with an understanding that the demographics of those that responded do not represent the demographics of the city of Philadelphia as a whole, but they may represent the demographics of the park users which are a mixture of adjacent neighbors and destination users as described above.

The recommendations contained within this masterplan encourage the Board 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.

How do you identify?



Where are you visiting from?



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 and 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 is not contiguous. The park connects with the Schuylkill Banks Trail via a pedestrian bridge, which was completed in October of 2012.

This public green space serves neighborhoods on both sides of the Schuylkill River as a recreational venue for people of all ages. In addition to the amenities outlined below, it contains tree-lined walkways and various seating and social spaces. Schuylkill River Park is heavily used on a daily basis and is well loved by both newcomers and by those that have enjoyed this park for decades.

Sum of the Parts

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



Basketball Courts

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



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.



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.



Veteran's Memorial

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



Playground

Renovated in XXXX, this playground is set to receive additional improvements in the summer of 2020 which include update playground equipment and surfacing.



Markward Recreation Center

Built in XXXX, this building is the headquarters for the park. Managed by Parks and Recreation staff, it offers classes, after school programs, and summer camps while making the spaces available for community meetings and events. It also contains bathroom facilities that are available during regular hours for the park users.



Tennis Courts

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



Athletic Fields

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



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 both small and large dogs. It is overlooked by the Schuylkill River Trail overpass.

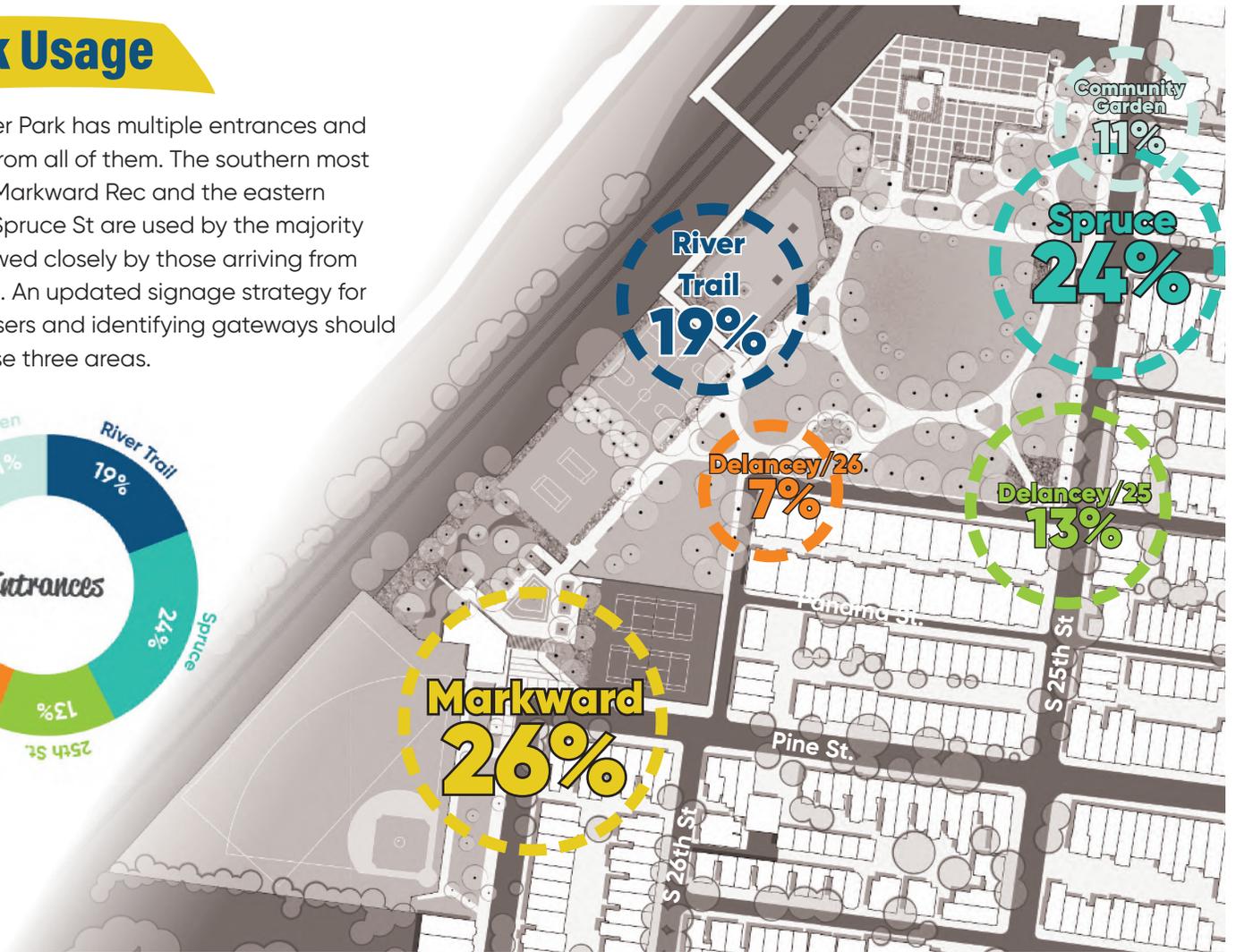


O'Conner Pool

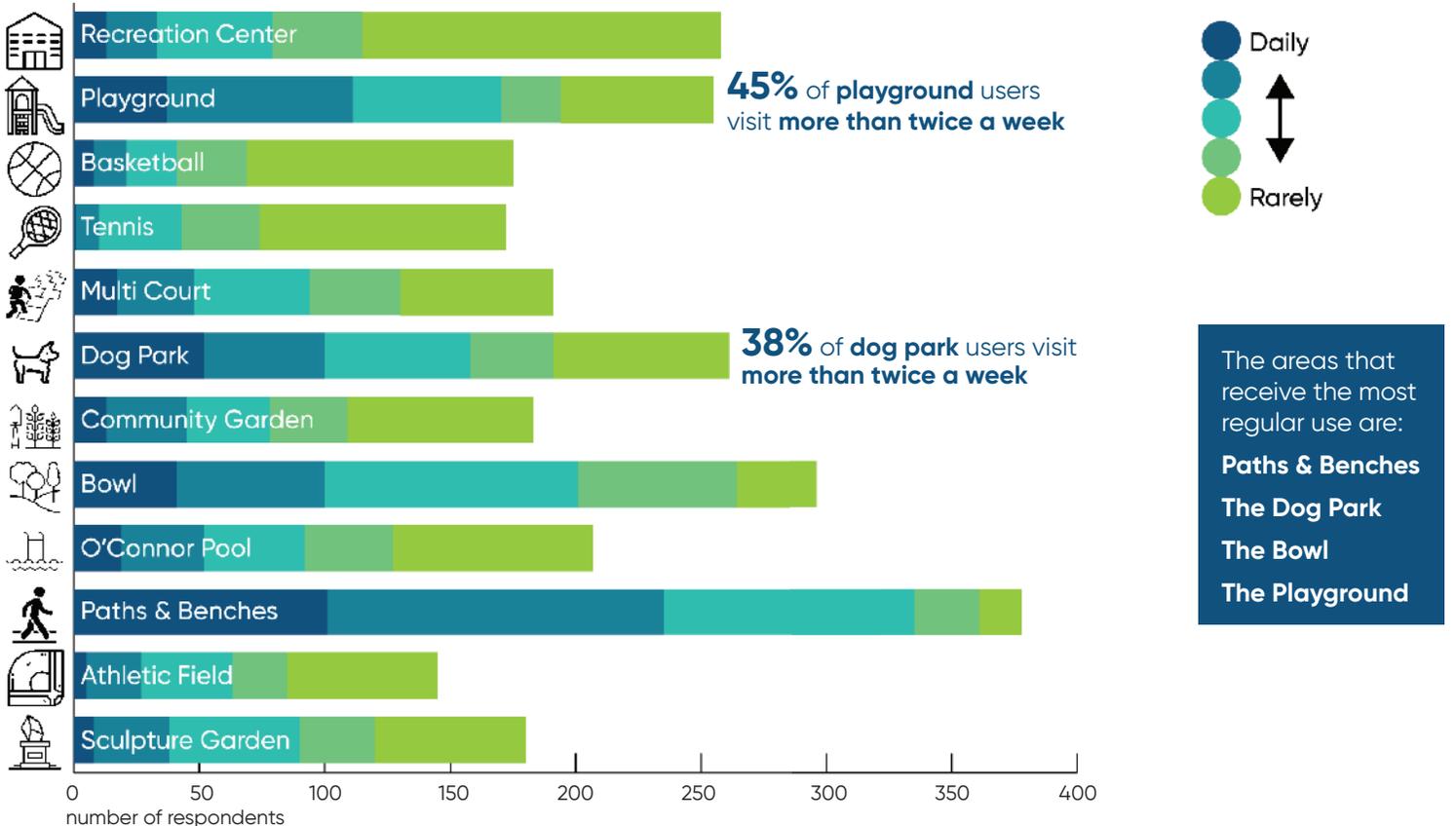
Located outside the physical boundary of the park, this pool is open seasonally and heavily used. In the summer of 2019, it was a recipient of Swim Philly's Pop up Pool project which provided additional seating and vegetation. It needs structural repairs along the exterior retaining wall.

Park Usage

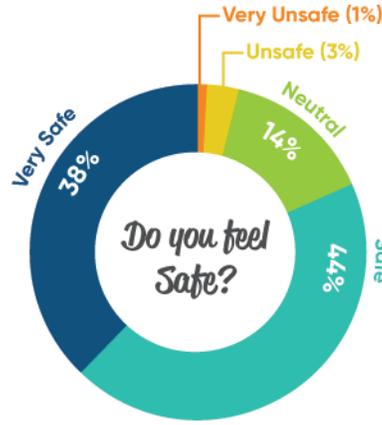
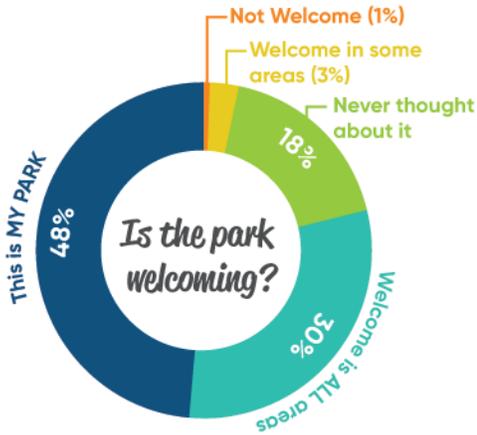
Schuykill River Park has multiple entrances and is accessed from all of them. The southern most entrance at Markward Rec and the eastern midpoint at Spruce St are used by the majority of users followed closely by those arriving from the River Trail. An updated signage strategy for welcoming users and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



What park spaces do you use, and how frequently?



User Perceptions



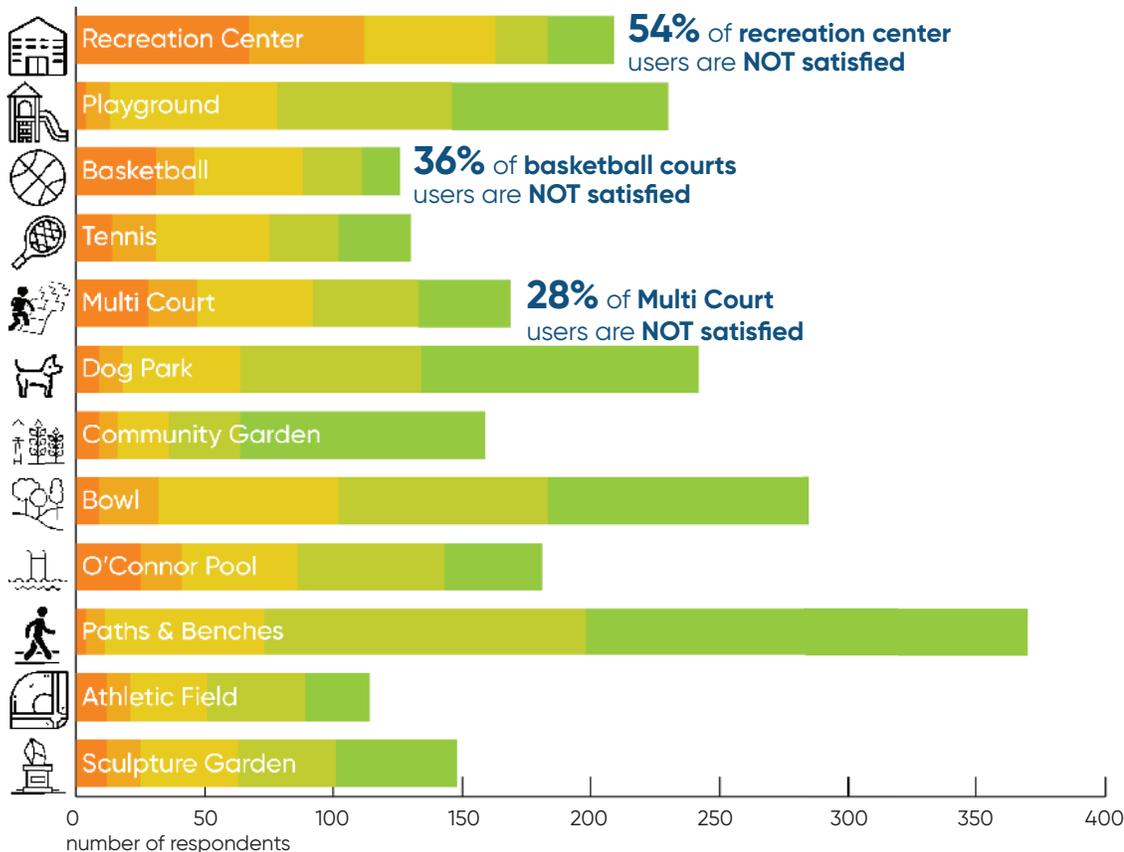
Park users feel **very safe** when inside the park even though many comments referenced a desire for improved lighting. This masterplan does not identify safety as a primary concern.

Overall this park is perceived as **very welcoming**. However not all areas are perceived as welcoming. 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.



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**

SHORT TERM GOALS

that can be accomplished in the next 2 to 5 years.

The following section contains recommendations for small projects and park improvements that can be made in the short term and will have a high impact for 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. Each of the recommendations made aim to accomplish one or more of the goals.

Short Term Project Goals

- **Maintain existing park features while planning for future needs.**
- **Improve communication and transparency around park programming and opportunities for citizen participation.**
- **Build capacity and increase involvement.**
- **Strengthen the sense of a park community across its various interest groups.**
- **Increase equity and inclusion among users.**
- **Provide infrastructure to formalize current informal uses.**

Continued Engagement

While this masterplan is in response to community input and recommendations are based on needs identified by the park community, continued engagement is required as each improvement project is undertaken to foster communal ownership and stewardship. Based on the survey responses, it is clear that there is a great deal of interest in participating in activities that improve or maintain the park.

The map to the right shows the locations of the areas of improvement identified in the short-term recommendations. Five projects are described in detail in the following pages. Each project can be completed as a stand-alone project, or in coordination with another project.



Basketball & Multi-purpose Courts

- Unify two spaces with complimentary uses and users.
- Provide new amenities and update existing equipment.
- Formalize existing uses.
- Preserve and add to existing tree canopy.



Tennis Courts

- Provide infrastructure for improved communication.
- Formalize existing waiting and picnic area.



Sculpture Garden

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



Community Garden

- Provide a welcoming environment for all park users.
- Expand gardening opportunities outside the fence.
- Improve gardening conditions.



The Bowl

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



Dog Park

- Improve drainage, waste and barrier issues.
- Formalized dog viewing areas.



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.



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 more – the feedback received was full of interest to participate.

The greatest barrier to capitalizing on this high level of 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 physical and digital methods to consider in updating the current communication strategy.

Some components can be accomplished through volunteer board involvement while others may not.

The primary goal of improving public communication is to make it possible for everyone with an interest in the park to feel a sense of shared pride and responsibility. This will also increase Friends of Schuylkill River Park board and committee capacity to better maintain and make improvements to the existing park.

The below recommendations outline ways to have continual support for regular channels of communication that keep the park community updated and involved. The realization of all of the recommendations of this masterplan will depend on the ability to engage and mobilize the wider park community.

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.

Keep existing signage up to date and include open hours and information on how to sign up for a garden plot.

All message board should include contents outlined below.

Message board should include upcoming events at the dog park, schedule for dog related meetings and other message board contents outlined below.

Incorporate existing signage into overall signage strategy.

Develop entrance signage strategy to welcome and communicate park expectations and rules.

Relocate message board to the entrance of the courts. Include info about league play as well as message board contents outlined below.

Install a new message board to post hours of scheduled programming, open play hours, methods for sign-up as well as message board contents.

Relocate message board to entrance of the park or incorporate into entrance signage. Include rec center hours and program schedules.

Develop entrance signage strategy to welcome and communicate park expectations and rules.

Install a new message board to post league schedule, and league joining information as well as other message board contents outlined below.

All Message Boards to Include:

- Current Park Newsletter
- Upcoming Events
- Board and Committee Meeting Schedules
- Park Website & Social Media Contacts
- Contact info for additional information

-  Existing Static Signage
-  Existing Message Board
-  Proposed Static Signage
-  Proposed Message Board

S 25th St
Spruce St

S 26th St

Maney St

Lombard St

Basketball and Multi-court

Unifying and improving these adjacent hard courts is a means to reach multiple short term goals: strengthening community across interest groups, increasing equity and inclusion, and formalizing current park uses.

Many who use the basketball courts expressed feelings of neglect and isolation from the rest of the park and other park visitors. Many who use these courts are members of Philadelphia's black community, and if the park is to become more inclusive and welcoming, improving and connecting the basketball courts to the rest of the park is imperative.

The adjacent multi-court area is heavily used and well loved by many that use the park regularly. This area was identified as the place of some of the fondest memories of the park took place. By investing in both the basketball courts and multi-courts together, there is an opportunity to build relationships and create a more vibrant and inclusive park.

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** with painted activities

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.

Amphitheater seating!

Schedules posted for pick-up games and leagues

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

Recommendations

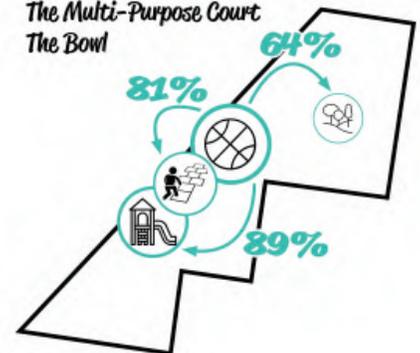
- Renovate the basketball courts and multi-court together as a single project with a unifying ground mural to improve existing conditions, formalize existing uses and unify these spaces.
- Improve visibility and connection between basketball, multi-court, and playground to simplify the experience of parents and caregivers.
- Increase the amount of shaded seating throughout.
- 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 developing ideas for the ground mural. Be sure to include a representative of the basketball user group to increase attendance and make the events 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:

The Playground

The Multi-Purpose Court

The Bowl



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

Install bleacher seating against ramp edge with new shade trees and access from main path.

Install new hoops, nets and backboards.

Work with artist to develop a ground mural to connect basketball and multi-purpose courts.

Repair or replace existing benches with backless options to allow views in both directions.

Install a low basket for kids.

Install ball wall at edge along train tracks.

See communication plan to relocate signage.

Save existing trees and slowly replace with species per the arboretum plan as they reach the end of their life.

Example ground mural shown with integrated tricycle track and street games.

Install new benches under new shade trees.

Install new shade trees above grade with bench seating surrounding planters.

Dog Park

The dog park is a unique amenity enjoyed by both dog owners and spectators. It is crucial to assure the safety of its users as well as sufficient management of waste.

Opportunities for viewing dogs from outside is both an enjoyable past time as well as a necessity for caregivers that are not able to bring their children inside the fence. In order to make it possible for users to adhere to the posted guidelines, a viewing and waiting area that allows non-disruptive opportunities for dog watching should be provided with visibility to both dog areas.

Physical improvement recommendations are meant to reinforce behavior consistent with being a considerate member of the park community.

And finally, recommendations for expanding programming for dog owners is made with the goal of better incorporating dog owners into the overall park community, reducing tensions over park rules and expectations, and encouraging better stewardship of the whole park.

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

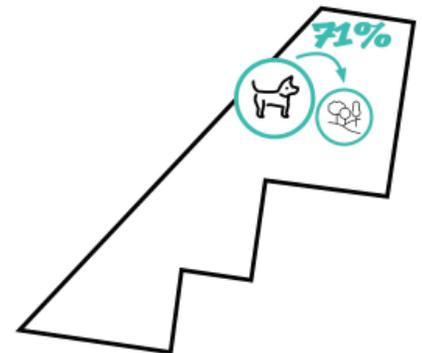
Physical improvements:

- **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.

Install dog waste receptacle with internal and external access.

Provide seating area to allow dog watching at ground level with visibility from inside the dog area.

Replace trees in existing tree pits and protect all trees from dogs with low barriers.

Provide additional barrier to keep dogs in designated areas.

Improve drainage to mitigate flooding issues.

overpass ramp is popular dog watching area

long term:
add enhanced
play features

Provide dog waste receptacle in vestibule.

Install low barrier to protect plants and prevent interaction between dogs and children.

Install more shaded benches.

Provide dog waste receptacle with external access.

Plant more trees in plant bed for shade.

Social Spaces

While the park already offers a large quantity of 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.

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 seating opportunities that support small groups in the areas where gathering is already happening.

The addition of new seating types to create more formalized and 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.

Planting Improvements and Maintenance:

- **Planting:** Designated planting areas at entrances, edge of path, around dog park, and at the sculpture garden should be improved and maintained.
- **Maintenance Strategy:** Develop maintenance strategy to allow park users to manage discrete areas of the gardens or determine need for outsourcing maintenance at an additional cost.

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.

A detailed landscape architectural plan of a park area. The plan features several distinct zones: a large green field labeled 'The Bowl' with clusters of picnic tables and lounge seating; a purple-colored area labeled 'Sculpture Garden' with a central sculpture; a 'Picnic Grove' with picnic tables under trees; and two blue tennis courts. The plan is surrounded by parking lots and buildings. Various trees are represented by circles of different sizes and colors (green, purple, pink).

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.

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.

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 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.

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...



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.

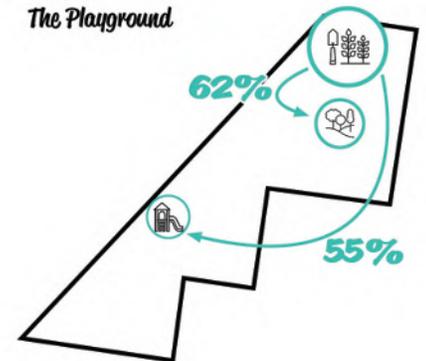
Planting Improvements and Maintenance:

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

Community Garden users frequently visit:

The Bowl

The Playground



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.

Develop updated signage with posted open hours and membership information.

Edit perimeter planting for greater safety and visibility at garden wall.

Plant fruit tree orchard for additional gardening opportunities outside the garden gates

Develop gardening opportunities to be adopted by individuals without an existing garden plot.



LONG-TERM GOALS

that can be accomplished in the next 5 to 10 years.

The following recommendations for long-term goals represent improvements that will require significant investment and additional planning. 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

- More space for recreation center year-round and summer camp programming.
- Greater accessibility, visibility and interconnectivity between park areas.
- Equitable access to cooling water in hot summer months.
- Greater opportunity for play.
- Growth and stewardship of natural assets.
- Better infrastructure for athletic programs.



Playground

- Allow better visual and physical connections between play areas throughout the park.
- Provide more varied play opportunities.



New Rec Center

- Develop new and larger recreation center to match the needs of the community.
- Relocate building to provide a welcoming entrance into the park as well as functionality for events and camp programming.



Athletic Fields

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



Schuylkill Arboretum

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



Play Garden

- Provide new nature 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.



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.

This map shows the locations of the areas of improvement identified in the long-term recommendations. Five projects are described in detail in the following pages. While the first three projects are meant to be completed in conjunction, they can be phased or completed as stand-alone projects.



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.

The following recommendations provide a long-term goal of developing a new recreation center

that functions as an accessible and welcoming public amenity. It should have accessible bathrooms, opportunities for concessions, and a variety of multi-purpose rooms so that the programming can be expanded. Ideally this should be developed in conjunction with the community plaza, new splash pad, play spaces and tennis courts shown on the next two sections as a single project.

What people are saying...

37% of comments pertain to **bathrooms being open more often.**

35% of comments expressed desire to **update or clean bathrooms.**

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

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 updating

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

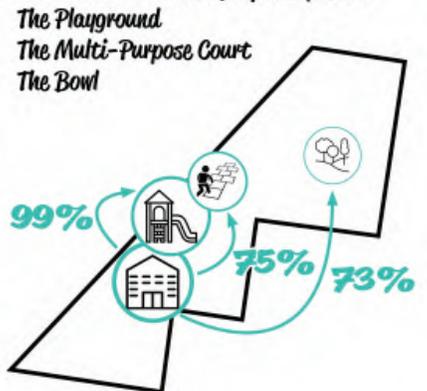
Planning Next Steps

- 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.

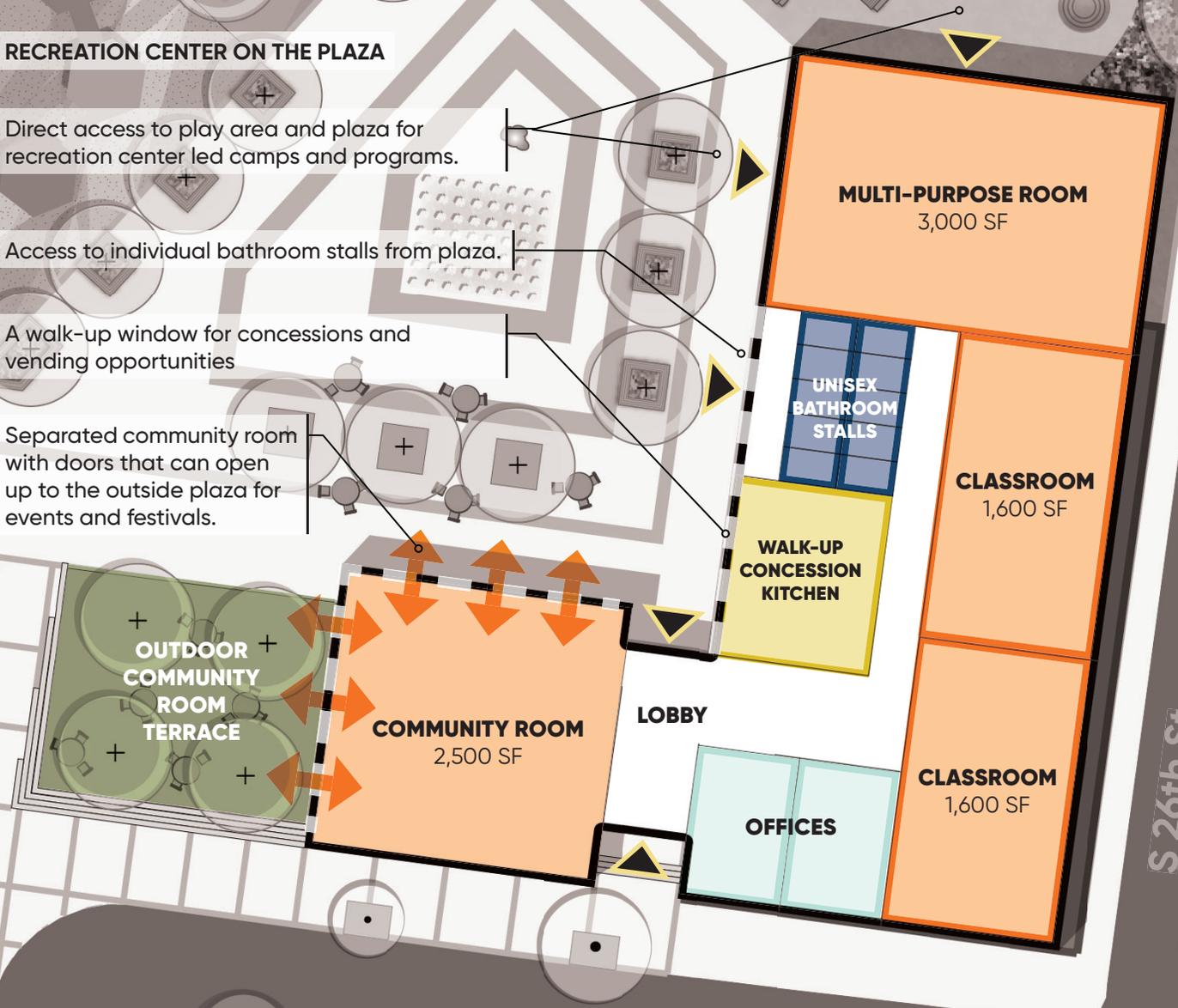
RECREATION CENTER ON THE PLAZA

Direct access to play area and plaza for recreation center led camps and programs.

Access to individual bathroom stalls from plaza.

A walk-up window for concessions and vending opportunities

Separated community room with doors that can open up to the outside plaza for events and festivals.



S 26th St

Pine St

Markward Entrance Plaza and Play Areas

The playground is a primary draw for many people that visit the park and has the highest number of regular visits. It is also located at the park entrance that sees the most use. Many responded to the survey indicating that the existing playground serves their needs as it is now, but there is still a desire for expanded play opportunities to manage large visiting groups and younger children.

Parks and Recreation is currently undergoing designs for renovations to the playground and entrance plaza, so any significant changes to this area should be

planned for the long term and in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Markward Recreation Center (outlined on previous page).

Recommendations for redeveloping this outdoor play area and plaza are centered around providing more comfort for caregivers, diversity in play opportunities and better connections between the play spaces, the rec center, and the rest 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

Kids love to watch the trains, but there is not a safe place to do this

Water play! A large splash area would relieve the pressure on the overcrowded pool

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

Larger play space with more engaging options for older kids (~9-12)

More equipment and water sprays for summer

It needs a splash pad and a coffee shop

Consider creating an adventure playground as a model for the rest of Philadelphia. Nature play would also be lovely. Extend the idea of play throughout the park, around the bowl and along the city streets.

32% would like, **greater variety of play elements.**

12% would like, **more shaded seating.**

Recommendations

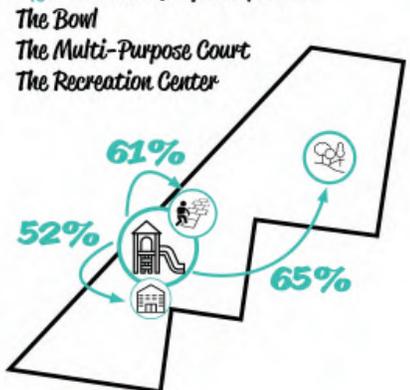
Entrance Plaza

- Create a more open and welcoming entry with universal access.
- Include a greater diversity of seating opportunities
- Create outdoor spaces that works as an extension of the rec center.
- Retain the character of the existing entry while updating it for greater function and comfort

Playground

- Bring elevation of the playground down to be flush with "The Plaza" and multi-courts for better connection and accessibility
- Incorporate more variety of play opportunities including a fenced-in "Play Garden" for 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.

NEW AND UPDATED PLAY AREAS:

Platform for train viewing also doubles as stepped seating for caregivers.

More trees with surround benches create shaded social seating for caregivers.

A diversified play infrastructure that includes terrain changes and more opportunities for non-directive play.

A low fence with gate surrounds new play garden to corral younger children.

New nature play area with terrain change and natural materials.

Picnic tables allow small gatherings and provide seating with visibility to all play areas.

PLAY GARDEN
(nature play/ tot lot)

PLAYGROUND

THE PLAZA

ENTRANCE PLAZA UPDATES:

New trees with surround benches provide flexible seating and reflect the character of the park.

Relocated existing sculptural fountain.

New in-ground water jets create seasonal water spray-ground.

Movable seating allows for flexible use of the outdoor spaces.

Elevated stone dust terrace with shade trees, movable seating and adjacency to rec center.

COMMUNITY ROOM TERRACE

VETERAN'S TERRACE

ACCESSIBILITY AND ENTRANCES:

Updated entry slopes at 5% for universal park access without handrails and provides steps for short cuts and social seating.

An expanded lower terrace with fixed seating incorporates relocated veteran's memorial, expands entrance area and serves as a place for food trucks.

Pine St

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.

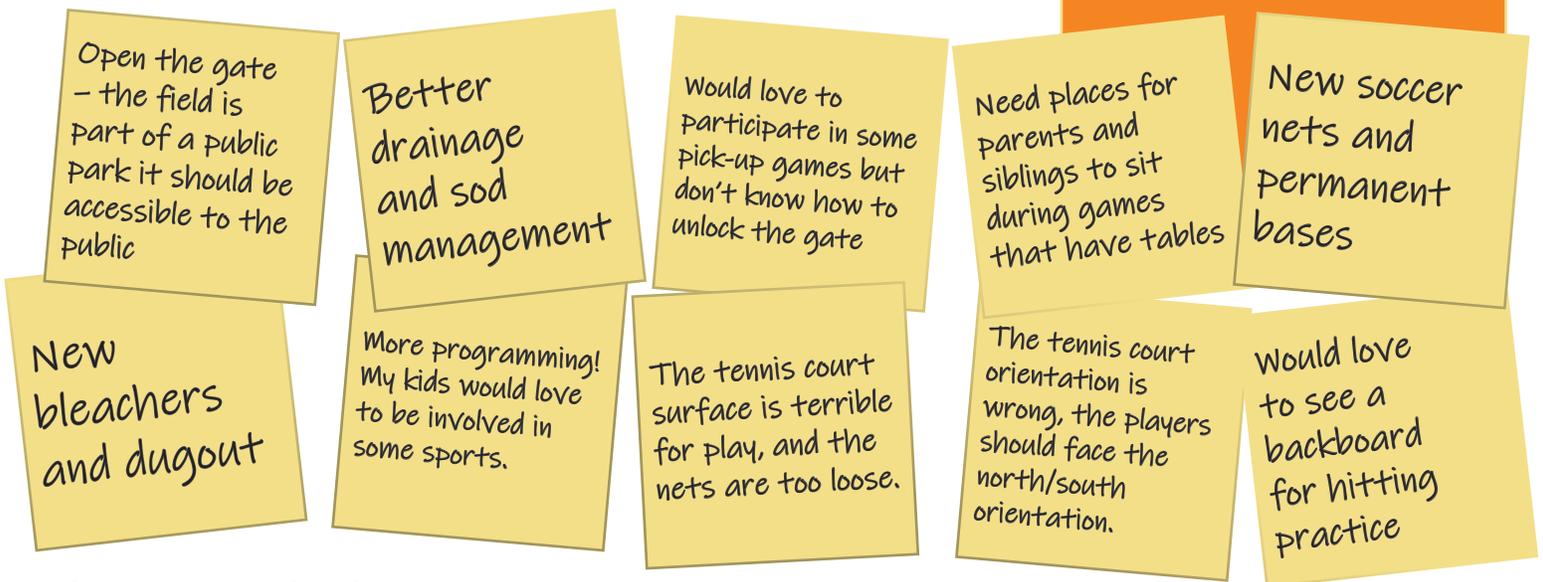
Below are recommendations that should be completed in correlation with the previous sections on the new rec center and entrance plaza.

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.

What people are saying...



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

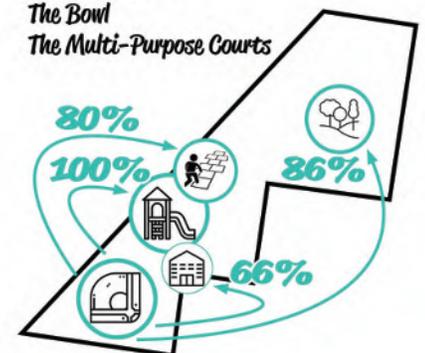
- Regrade and properly prepare field base to ensure proper drainage.
- Provide new seating and gathering areas.
- Upgrade sport infrastructure including bases, fixed soccer goals and improved dugout.

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.

RELOCATED TENNIS COURTS:

The ground mural from adjacent play areas continues and tennis courts are rotated closer to optimal north/south solar orientation.

New shade trees with surround benches create a tennis waiting area that can also function for high visibility teen gathering.

New solid backboard for solo tennis practice.

EXPANDED VETERANS PLAZA

See 'Entrance Plaza' page for details.

ATHLETIC FIELD IMPROVEMENTS:

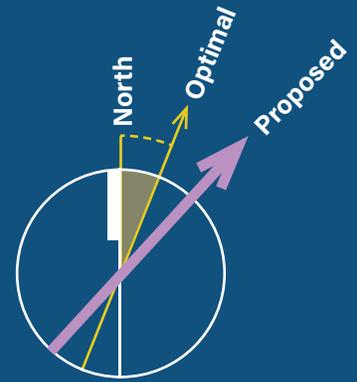
New picnic terrace at field level to support families and league events.

New bleachers

A regraded and refurbished turf to accommodate 230' X 130' soccer field.

Refurbished dugouts

Baseball field shifted and refurbished to accommodate relocated tennis courts above.



TENNIS ORIENTATION

Schuylkill Arboretum

The mature trees of Schuylkill River Park are very appreciated 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 and assign accession numbers 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 / Orchard

Planting of any new trees in this area need to be carefully considered for potential impact on sunlight in the garden plots. Selection of the trees for the fruit orchard should be in conjunction with the development of an orchard management and maintenance plan that will be administered by the community garden members.

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.

THE ORCHARD

THE BOWL
no trees

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.

S 25th St

Spruce St

Delancey St

S 26th St

Pine St

Taney St

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.

What people are saying...

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.



Recommendations

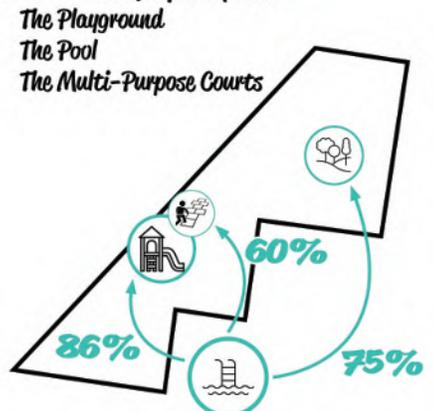
Increased Water Play Opportunities:

- 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:



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

Proposed seasonal spray ground at redeveloped Markward Plaza to expand opportunities to access to water during hot summer months.



Existing O'Conner Pool

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

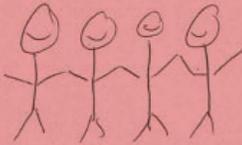
* picnics on green
* movie nights !!

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

EVERY
THING

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!





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.



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

Meeting Minutes: Board of Directors - 09.12.19

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 Haines | 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

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)
 - Fitler Square Neighbor Association (FSNA)
 - *Friends of Fitler Square
 - Markward Advisory Council
- Potential Partner Organizations
 - Philadelphia Parks and Recreation
 - * City Council Kenyatta Johnson
 - * State Representative Brian Sims Office
 - * Philadelphia Water Department

- * 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

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

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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. 	<p>Include a recommendation for regrading the infield of the baseball field for better drainage.</p>

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.

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

Schuylkill River Park Masterplan | Sign-in Sheet

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Schuylkill River Park Masterplan | Sign-in Sheet

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Acknowledgments

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FRIENDS OF SCHUYLKILL RIVER PARK BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Steve Slaterbeck, Schuylkill River Park Community Garden

Shelia Cavanaugh, Schuylkill River Dog Park

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Barbara Halpern, Center City Residents Association

Crystal Axelrod, Markward Advisory Council

Liz D'Angel, Friends of Fittler Square Park

Sylvia Devietti, The Philadelphia School

DeWitt Brown, Taney Baseball

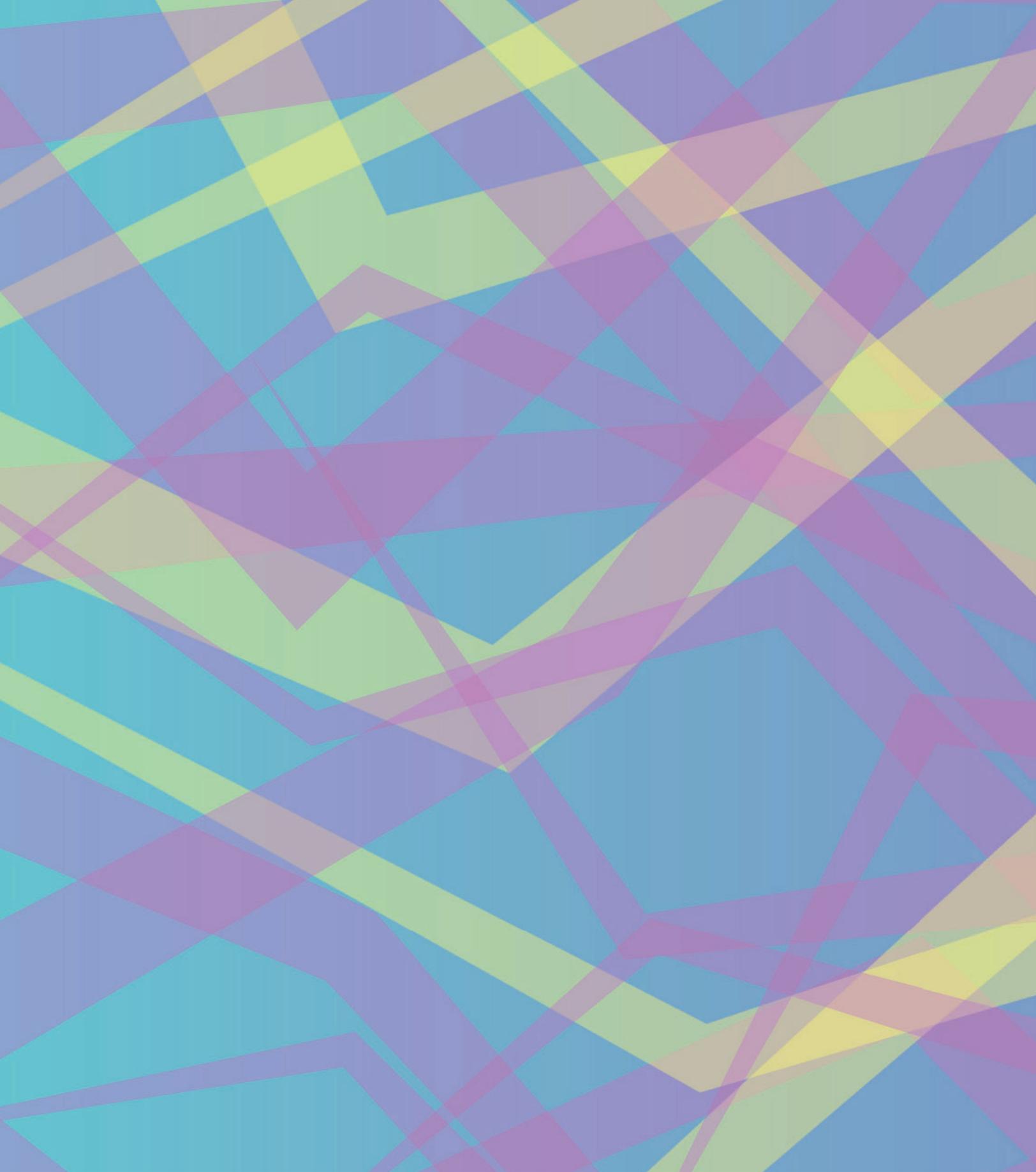
Lena Smith, Penn Futures

James Harrison, Neighbor

Todd Lane, Neighbor

Robin Kohles, Neighbor

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IN COLLABORATION WITH:

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&
Philadelphia Parks & Recreation

