

CHINQUAPIN PARK COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

PROCESS

From September through early December 2012, the public was invited to provide input on the existing conditions and possible future uses for Chinquapin Park. To gather information, the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities (RPCA) held a public workshop to discuss Park needs, distributed a survey asking for feedback, and met with a group of T.C. Williams High School students.

This same process simultaneously occurred for each of the City's large parks, including Simpson Park, Four Mile Run Park, Hensley Park, Brenman and Boothe Parks, and Holmes Run Park. Combined, over 585 Alexandria residents responded to the surveys and 45 attended workshops.

Throughout the 2012/2013 winter, RPCA will use the information gathered to determine Park needs and priorities to develop Park Improvement Plans. Ultimately, these plans will help inform budget decisions and on-going use considerations.

SURVEY RESULTS

On October 1, 2012, online park improvement surveys became available to the public through the City of Alexandria's website, press releases



"I've lived in Alexandria for 30 years. Chinquapin is the only park I use regularly. The community garden and the many people I've met there are chief among the reasons I enjoy living in Alexandria. Chinquapin is a great park; sensitive planning and a renewed commitment to providing activities suitable for all Alexandrians will only enhance it."

"This park is an important green space for the City and needs to be protected and enhanced."



and social media. RPCA also distributed hard copy surveys through boxes located at entrances to the park and at the Chinquapin Aquatics Facility, and in the mailboxes of adjacent neighborhood homes. RPCA received 99 completed surveys.

RPCA acknowledges that this survey is not statistically accurate. Rather, it served as a self-reporting method of data collection—those who sent in the survey saw it and wanted to provide feedback. While this is a sample of Park users, it is not representative of all users. As an example, through sports permitting and summer camp registration, RPCA is able to capture the number of players and campers that use the fields daily; yet, the surveys do not fully represent this use. For this reason, the information below will be supplemented with site observation and additional data to support recommendations.

The survey asked park users to identify their usual point of access into the park, the mode of transportation they use to get there, their typical park activities, what they like about the park, and what area of the park need improvement. Survey participants also prioritized their improvement needs.

Of those surveyed, 26 participants lived in the 22302 zip code, 20 lived in the 22314, 17 lived in 22305, and 16 lived in 22304. Fewer than 10 participants lived in each of the other Alexandria zip codes. Two participants lived in Fairfax County. The majority of those who visit do so weekly (47%).

“I like how many different groups use the park. It really seems like a center for use by all people in the community. Also I think the gardens are absolutely wonderful. Very life-affirming in addition to being very beautiful and interesting.”

“It’s a unique little oasis and community recreation area in our urban community. I can run around the park or park in the park and run around the track or on King Street”.

“This is an incredible asset to the city, Invest in it!”

Where do you live?

(Darker color zip codes indicate a higher number of survey participants)

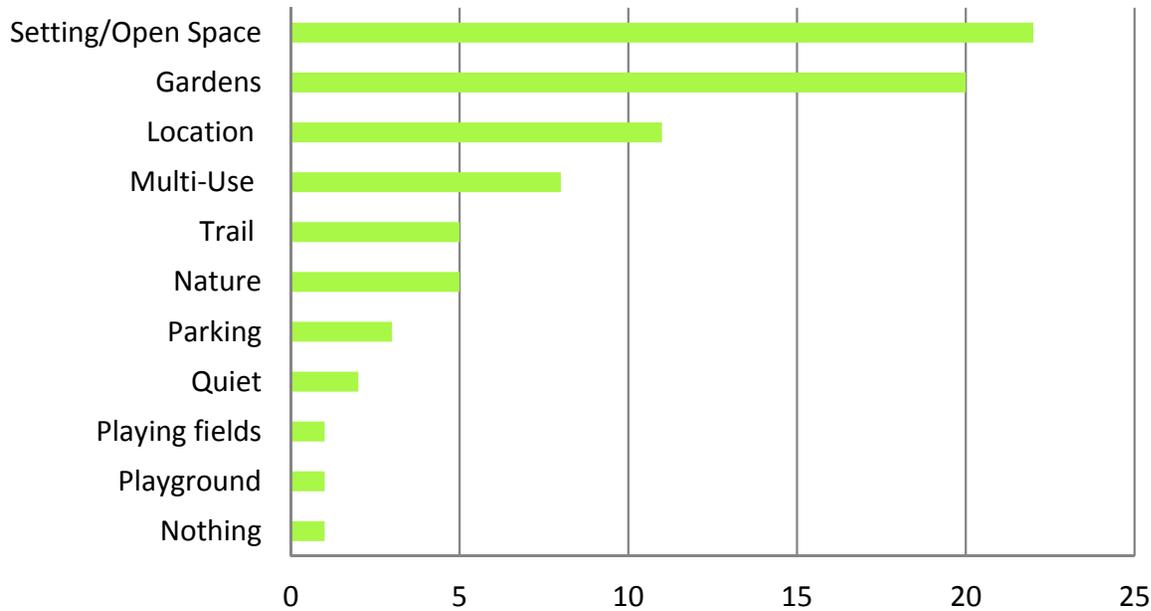


How often do you visit the Park?

Value	Count	Percent
Daily	18	15.7%
Weekly	54	47.0%
Monthly	26	22.6%
Yearly	15	13.0%
Never	2	2%



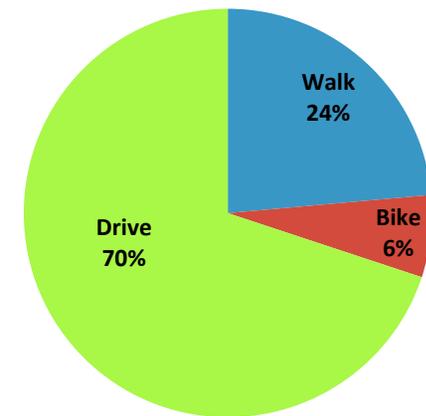
What do you like about the Park?



This is what we heard from them:

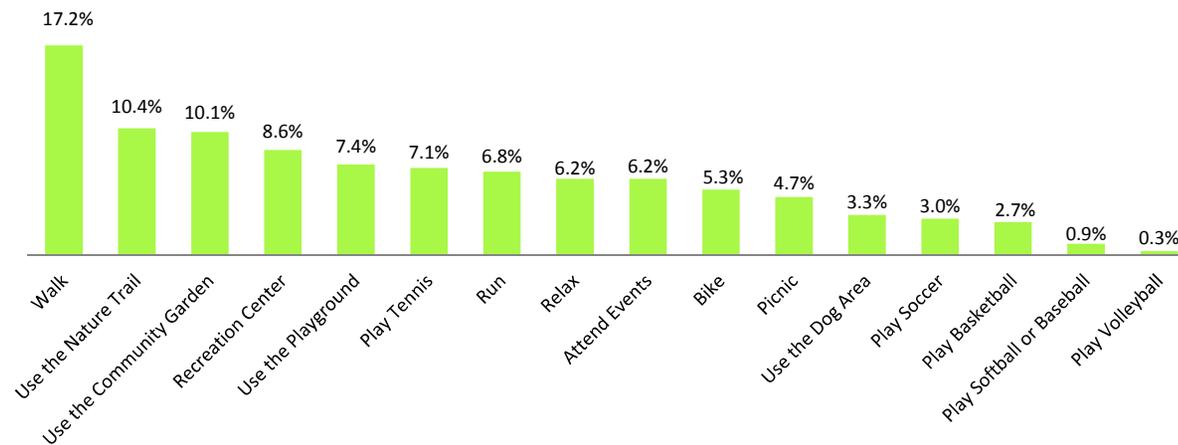
ACCESS AND PARK USE

Seventy percent of survey participants drive to Chinquapin Park. Twenty-four percent walk to the Park and only 6% bike. This high number of vehicles implies both a need to improve the parking options and to review opportunities for encouraging safe cyclist and pedestrian access into the Park.



The access response is particularly interesting when looking at this information in combination with the question "What do you do in the Park?" The majority of participants stated that they use the park to walk, indicating that they drive to Chinquapin, park their car and then walk. Twenty-three participants stated that they run in the park. Presumably many are walking or running along the loop, shared with vehicles or on the nature trail. Other activities of significance include the community

What do you do in the Park?



garden, playground, and the tennis courts. Fewer participants reported using the fields for athletics.

When asked, “What do you like about the Park,” participants overwhelmingly identified the Park’s open space and natural setting, reinforcing the uniqueness of a large passive use green space in the City. Chinquapin Park has a serene and pastoral character, which is clearly desired as an escape from more urban areas nearby.

Many also replied that the gardens are extremely important to them. While it appeared that a disproportionate number of garden users may have responded to the survey compared to other Park users, their response clearly identified that the gardens bring a sense of community and culture to the City. This type of passion shown in the comments about the garden exemplifies how open space is so important in bringing residents and nature together.

IMPROVEMENTS

Participants identified the Park’s playground as having the highest need for Park improvements, with parking as the second highest need. The following page has selected statements that support the need for identified improvements. The comments are shown in prioritized order, (all participants selected a need but did not always provide additional comments on their selection):

Areas identified as “in need of improvement”



Priorities are based on the number of responses to needed improvements and then weighted by how participants prioritized their answers



Playground

- *"Provide more accessible playground equipment, especially an accessible swing."*
- *"The playground area needs to be upgraded with another newer play structures that would appeal to older kids and also another shaded area."*
- *"With this park and many others in Alexandria, I would love to see a roof over the playground. In the summer months, it is so hot that my young kids can hardly last a few minutes outside in the hot sun, especially since the equipment - slides, etc. get too hot to touch. A roof over the playground would be a wonderful improvement!"*
- *"I would love to have a zip line on any of the playgrounds in Alexandria"*
- *"Not sure that anybody knows that there is a great playground right behind the pool, maybe let people know about it"*

Parking

- *"The one-way drive is such a pain, better parking w/o having to drive all the way around?"*
- *"Please change the parking signs to read no parking for school days so that parents can park here for evening events"*
- *"Rec Center expansion with adequate parking and safe traffic plan. Further incorporate sustainable elements in the park for greater fee generation and expanded programming."*
- *"In context of large parks management planning, this park needs a closer look at how parking is arranged, traffic"*

Community Garden

- *"I would like to not only see the gardens*

maintained but expanded as I know there is high demand for this. The field above the gardens that was once used as a soccer field and later as a construction parking lot for TC might be such a place."

- *"Expanding plots in the garden. It brings so many in the community together and the children love it. There are many people on the waiting list and it would be so great to share the joy of it with more Alexandria residents."*
- *"Ensuring that the community gardens have a permanent place in the park. There were suggestions last year that the gardens would become soccer field, which is ridiculous geographically and does not allow for use diversity. There are plenty of soccer field available now elsewhere. Gardens are both practical and environmentally friendly."*
- *"In the community gardens, many of the paths between gardens are unstable and not flat -- and therefore dangerous to try to walk. These should be made safe with retaining walls, or by other means."*
- *"More garden plots in higher ground"*

The Loop

- *"First, recommend green light turn signal for drivers going west and taking left into Chinguapin. Second, the distance from King to first parking lot entrance is so short that it is dangerous because cars coming behind you may be going to fast. The walkers' light signal is on when trying to take left. This causes backup onto King Street. Cars typically block the parking lot entrance even though there is sign and lines to not block entrance/exit to first parking lot. Also, there should be bumps in first parking lot entrance. Cars go to fast when*

arriving and leaving. There are babies and children and parents should not have to worry about being hit."

- *"The multiuser trail needs to be paved to allow access to those with disabilities. I find it shocking that no thought has been given to this."*
- *"A loop accommodating joggers, walkers in addition to parking needs"*
- *"The loop requires repaving, parking is a challenge especially when TC has events, the fields are getting grass-bare."*

Park Furniture

- *"More user friendly with equipment for exercise and benches"*

Picnic Area

- *"It would be nice to have a water line, for potable water, at the gazebo."*
- *"Picnic area looks a little dilapidated, but I've never actually tried to use it for a picnic."*

Sports

- *"Put turf fields in center of loop. Alexandria could then host a variety of tournament (soccer or lacrosse) events with a collection of multi-use fields in one location. It would also provide a practice area for several of TCW's "*
- *"The loop breaks up valuable field use space. we could host a full sized soccer, baseball, or softball field, maybe two full sized fields. why do we continue to "bus" TC students around when they should have access to fields near the school. athletic teams, year round. Income from field rental would eventually pay for both the fields construction and maintenance."*
- *"Have you thought about putting a basketball court near the tennis courts so the lighting*



could be shared with the basketball players?"

Tennis Courts

- "Turning on and leaving on ALL tennis court lights 365 days a year is silly, wasteful, and harmful to migrating birds. Implement a pay-as-you-go system to turn on the lights for an hour at a time, only on the courts that people are actually occupying."
- "The tennis courts are alligned east-west, which makes it difficult to play because the sun is in one players eyes. This is unusual, as almost all tennis courts are alligned north-south."
- "More tennis courts"

Natural Areas

- "Plant trees to replace ones damaged by storms over the past few years."
- "Do not encroach on the natural forest area with any other uses. Leave it exactly the size that it is. Untouched land is one of the city's scarcest resources and Chinquapin forest should be preserved at all costs"
- "It would be great if the city could do some eradication of poison ivy along the nature trail. It tends to grow right at the edge of the trail and often very far into it and it's very pervasive in summer."
- "Need more invasive plant removal, the english ivy is taking over."

Security

- "Continual usage of the lights available at Chinquapin. As an early morning walker, it is very dark and the lights in the parking lot and on the street are not maintained and many times are not even turned on for the 6am arrivals at Chinquapin Center. It seems that

the street lights are turned on by Chinquapin but I have heard they are to be maintained by TC Williams. Well many of the street lights are burned out and are not being replaced especially right on the corner of King and the road to Chinquapin. Only one light is working in the two lights from the King. Since TC Williams has no external lighting there, it gets quite dark and dangerous."

- "More lights"

Maintenance

- "Quality of natural areas for people and wildlife. Park is in desperate need of regular trash clean-up (disgusting!), invasive plant removal, planting of native species, monitoring of stream quality. If the proper balance is there, we will all be rewarded with more birds and biodiversity."
- "General maintenance needs improvement"
- "More trash pickup at the gardens to prevent rodents."
- "Better trash pick up in garden and maintenance like regularly mowing grass. Clearly marked composting and recycling areas would reduce amount of trash."
- "1. Better stewardship, management, and maintenance generally. Specifically, including removal of debris, patching of potholes, timely collection of trash from the garden area and allocation of financial and human resources to park and garden management/maintenance. 2. Better City maintenance of the pathways, public areas and parking areas in the community garden. 3. Improvements to the picnic pavilion, including installing steps for better access and addressing the flooding and drainage problems, are also a priority."

- "looks neglected and not in keeping to Dept standards of appearance & safety."

Dog Area

- "There needs to be a fenced off dog run area (away from the gardens and playground) where people can let their dogs off leash. Dogs should not be off leash elsewhere in the park and that should be enforced."
- "A fenced in dog area. The fenced in dog parks are so heavily used in the City that we need some more locations."
- "Would be really great to have a fenced dog park in the area as well. Many people walk their dogs through the park without leashes and this concerns me. I think a fenced dog run would be welcomed by the local residents."
- "There is a real problem in the Park with dogs running around off-leash. This is especially true of the access road behind the community garden."
- "There should be a fenced off dog run area where dogs can go leash-free. This should be away from gardens, picnic area and playground. Off-leash dogs are a problem/danger at the park now."
- "Doggie bag stations for your pet"

Paths/Trail

- "Improved trails from Janneys to park"
- "I would like the path through the woods that ends up at the back of Douglas MacArthur Elementary to be improved."
- "Better surface for the trail"

Wayfinding/Marketing

- "The park isn't well known - I lived here for years before I knew what was there. The amenities aren't well known."



- "I like the walking trail but what I'd really like is a map that shows all the main paths."
- "The nature trail needs to be better marked and possibly made more interactive for kids with kid friendly signage, etc."
- "I walk my dogs on the nature trail but had no idea there was a dog exercise area in the park. Signs would help direct people to the different areas of the park."

Restrooms

- "Have porta johns, that are maintained all the Year long, that are available 24/7"
- "Bathrooms!"

Other

- "NO lights"

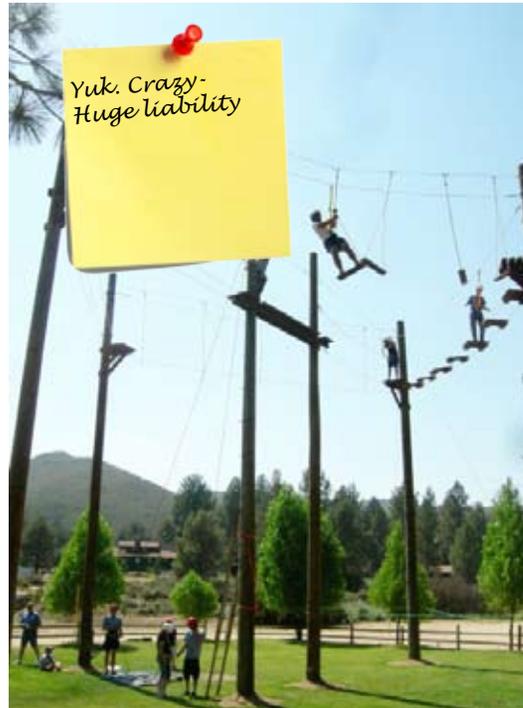
WORKSHOP

A Chinquapin Park workshop was held on October 24, 2012 at T.C. Williams High School with the purpose of having community members identify the priorities for future improvements, based on their park experiences and observations. The workshop was advertised through the City's e-news and calendar. Signs with workshop information were posted at Park Entrances and flyers were distributed through the Chinquapin Aquatics Center and dropped in the mailboxes of homes in the adjacent neighborhood. A total of ten park users attended.

INSPIRATION BOARD

As participants entered the room they were asked to comment and write their thoughts on precedent images. The exercise was designed to provoke ideas and inspire site

programs. None of the images were from City of Alexandria Parks. Participants commented on the following images:





Late night noise in neighborhood is problematic



Great idea!

Occasional use could be fun.



If Hammond Rink is closed, might be a good idea

Great idea
Terrific!
I Second that!
A farmers market would be awesome!



Good for fitness

No more please
No Lights!



Expand. Gardens are great!!! We want more



Nice. B-ball courts could be improved.



GROUP EXERCISE

Following a presentation on the Park's existing conditions, participants joined one of two tables for group exercises. The results of those tables have been aggregated, as shown below.

The first exercise was designed to identify the Park's top five assets. These are the areas of the Park that participants felt keep them coming to the Park and should remain in the Park and be further enhanced:

The top five park assets

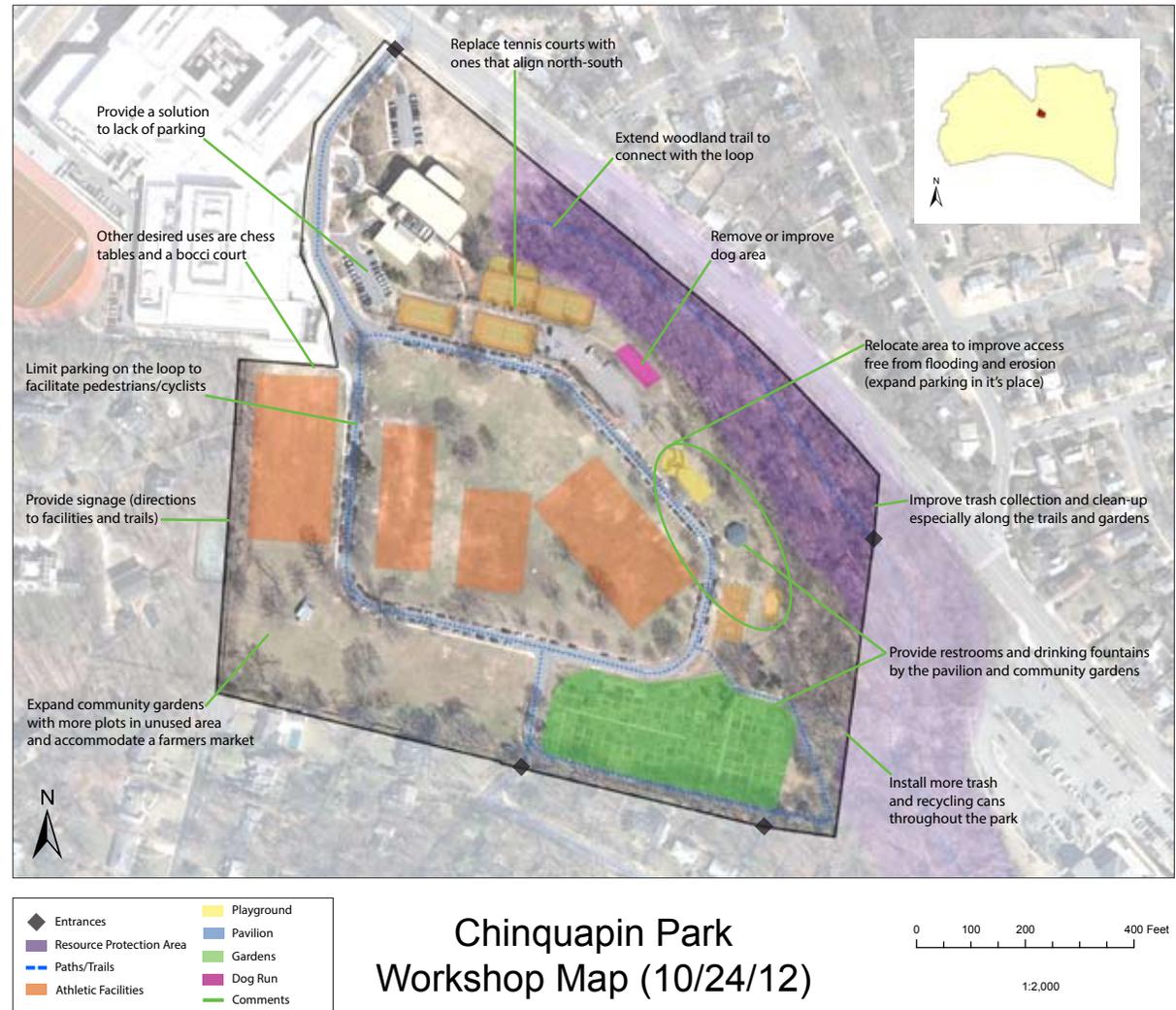
1. Trails
2. Community gardens
3. Natural space
4. Multi-use availability
5. Attracts a diverse population

Second, the groups used a map of the Park to (1) suggest where pathways should be for optimal park circulation, (2) which existing conditions need improvement, (3) and what programs and facilities are not in the park, but should be. The results of this exercise are shown to the right.

Additional requests included providing:

- Drinking fountains
- Benches
- Chess tables
- Signage along the trails (educational and directive)
- Distance markers

Both groups identified general park maintenance as a high priority.



T.C. WILLIAMS STUDENTS

On October 22, 2012, RPCA staff met with thirty T.C. Williams High School students in an after-school program sponsored by Liberty's Promise. The intention of the meeting was to gather feedback on the Park from students who use the Park during the school day and after school for recreational use.

The students identified their top five assets as:

1. You can play soccer
2. Walk/run and play tennis (tied)
3. Close proximity for students
4. The field is free to use

Other responses included:

- It's clean and safe
- You can park in it
- There are diverse activities
- You can play lacrosse and basketball
- There is space to ride bikes
- There are places to sit on benches

The aggregated recommendations are shown on the right.



Chinquapin Park
Workshop Map (10/22/12)
TC Williams Students

0 100 200 400 Feet

1:2,000



SUMMARY

There are some consistent themes throughout the three methods of community feedback.

These include:

1. **Improve mobility for pedestrians and vehicles.** The survey and both workshops indicated that a parking management strategy is needed to determine how to maximize use of the parking lots and limit parking along the Loop. This may allow the development of a car free lane for walkers and runners, better supporting one of the Park's main uses.
2. **Preserve the pastoral green space, while accommodating multi-use sports.** The survey results clearly stated that the people like the Park because it is open and green. However, the T.C. students remarked that the green space is not usable for their recreational activities. Chinquapin's future design will need to be flexible enough to support multiple uses, such as sports, while still open and natural in character.
3. **Expand or improve the community gardens.** The gardens are highly active, year-round, and create a vibrant community within the Park. The land dedicated to gardening is currently limited and the plots have a very infrequent turnover rate. New ways to expand the gardens and access to gardening will be explored in the improvement plan.
4. **Improve the playground.** As shown in the survey results, the playground is a priority for Park improvements. The workshop also indicated the need to renovate the picnic

area, frequently used for summer camps. These two renovation projects may be combined in order to create a multi-use outdoor activity center with equipment geared towards various age groups and abilities.

5. **Improve general maintenance.** The survey and workshop results both stated the need for improved general maintenance of the Park, including better distribution of trash receptacles. Many maintenance improvements can begin prior to other projects and continue as park renovations trigger the implementation of park facility standards.

While these five themes were consistent throughout the feedback process, they are not fully comprehensive to all of the Park's improvement needs. The information will be supplemented with site observation and additional existing conditions data to ultimately support recommendations and an implementation plan.

