

EUGENE SIMPSON STADIUM 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 Simpson Stadium 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 the Del Ray Citizens Association.

This same process simultaneously occurred for each of the City's large parks, including Chinquapin Park, Four Mile Run Park, Hensley Park, Brenman and Boothe Parks, and Holmes Run Park. Combined, over 585 Alexandria people 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 and facility considerations.

SURVEY RESULTS

On October 1, 2012, online park improvement



"THERE ARE ALWAYS SO MANY PEOPLE THERE, IT'S A GREAT COMMUNITY PARK."

"THE LOCATION IS GREAT AND THE DOG PARK HAS AMAZING PEOPLE AND DOGS. I LOVE THE DOG PARK!"

"I LIVE NEARBY AND I LIKE THAT IT HAS A WIDE VARIETY OF USES, AND THAT IT ATTRACTS THE COMMUNITY."



surveys became available to the public through the City of Alexandria's website, press releases and social media. RPCA also distributed hard copy surveys through boxes located at entrances to the park and in the mailboxes of adjacent neighborhood homes. RPCA received 244 completed surveys.

RPCA acknowledges that this survey is not statistically accurate. Rather, the responses are from those who saw the survey and chose to participate. While this is a sample of Park users, it is not representative of all users. As an example, through sports permitting, RPCA is able to capture the number of players 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 inform recommendations in the Park Improvement Plans.

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 areas of the park need improvement. Survey participants also prioritized their improvement needs.

Of those surveyed, 149 participants lived in the 22301 zip code, 35 lived in the 22302, 26 lived in 22305, and 23 lived in 22314. Fewer than 15 participants lived in each of the other Alexandria zip codes or outside City limits. The majority of those who visit do so weekly (49%), though 32% visit daily.

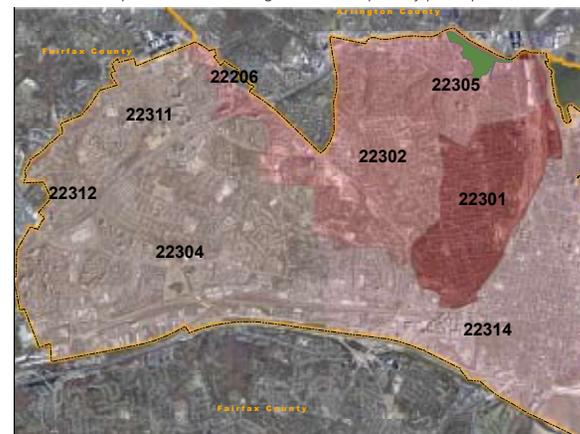
"I LIKE THAT THE DOG PARK AND THE PLAYGROUND ARE NEAR EACH OTHER, SO THAT THE WHOLE FAMILY CAN HAVE FUN IN THE PARK."

"I LOVE THE PARKS SIZE AND GENERAL FEEL. I LOVE THE GARDEN AND THE WALKING PATH. I ENJOY WATCHING BASEBALL GAMES. I LOVE THE PARK!"

"I LOVE THE MIXED USE OF THE PARK -- THROUGHOUT THE DAY, WE CAN HEAR CHILDREN'S VOICES, A GREAT SOUND, AND WALK THROUGH THE REMARKABLE GARDEN AREA TO WATCH THE BASEBALL GAMES."

Where do you live?

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

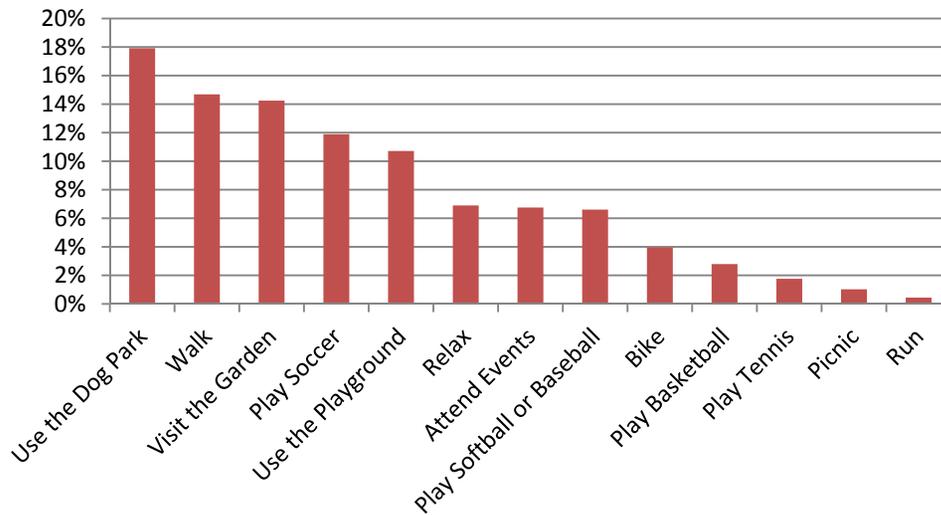


How often do you visit the Park?

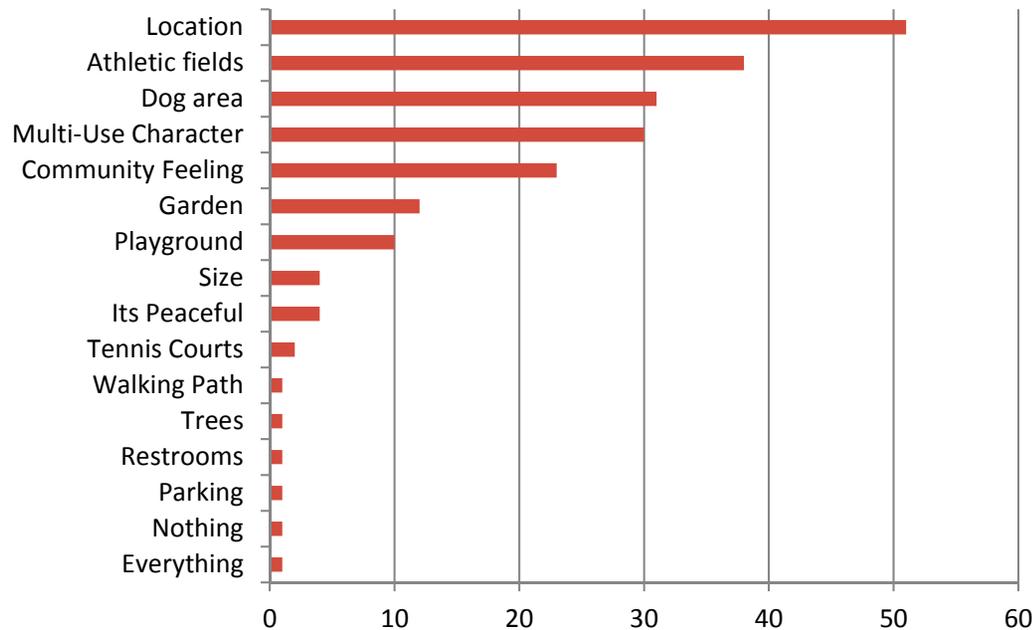
Value	Count	Percent of responses
Daily	87	32%
Weekly	135	49%
Monthly	32	12%
Yearly	13	5%
Never	6	2%



What do you do in the Park?



What do you like about the Park?



This is what we heard:

ACCESS AND PARK USE

Fifty percent walk to Simpson Park, 46% drive and only 4% bike. Of those that drive, most are using the sports fields. This high number of vehicles demonstrates both a need to consider parking options when the fields are in heavy use and to review opportunities for encouraging safer pedestrian and cyclist access into the Park.

When asked, **“What do you do in the Park?”** many participants stated that they partake in a multitude of activities, but the majority go just for one purpose. The highest use was to visit the dog park (18%), though other activities, including walking (15%), visiting the garden (15%) and using the playground (11%) were not far behind. Sports use had a combination of over 18%, which can be broken out by 12% playing soccer and 6.6% playing softball or baseball.

In answering, **“What do you like about the Park,”** participants overwhelmingly identified the Park’s location. The athletic fields and dog area followed and many people who mentioned these two features also stated that they enjoy these activities because of the interaction they have with people and neighbors in the Park. Close to 25 people simply stated that they like the park because of the community. It is clear from these responses that Simpson has the feel of a neighborhood park while offering citywide amenities. People go to this park to see and be



with other people, whether it is by interactions between parents and kids in the playground or watching a baseball game. The one exception is the garden, which park users enjoying visiting for its serene setting. These type of park uses exemplify a vibrant urban park that weaves together, recreation, community, and nature in a compact open space.

IMPROVEMENTS

Participants identified parking as having the highest need for Park improvements, with the dog area 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):

PARKING

- "More available parking and easier access to soccer fields from parking"
- "With the new soccer fields, parking (especially on the weekends), is crazy!."
- "Parking. Weekend users of the park are parking far into the neighborhoods. The crosswalk at Leslie and Monroe is unsafe due to poor sight-lines. Some traffic calming is needed on Monroe east of Leslie."
- "The city rents out the soccer fields to anyone (non-residents) but provides no additional parking. The old fields had plenty of dedicated parking."
- "It is almost impossible to find a place to park when there are several soccer practices "
- "Definitely parking! With games, the local streets are overcrowded. Just create a



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



- residential sticker so people who live on Duncan and Monroe can park at home!"
- "The parking situation is tough now that the soccer fields have opened. People park on Monroe Ave and the crossing there isn't very safe (we walk across it to access the park)."
 - "Parking - when the new soccer fields are in full use, there is not enough parking available for the number of people using the park."
 - "To encourage parking along Monroe and to keep people from parking in the neighborhood, a gate to the soccer field should be put in the fence for the soccer field along the Monroe Ave side."
 - "Parking is so far away from the soccer fields."
 - "This is a remarkably poorly layed out, dangerous and ugly assembly of facilities. There is not enough parking - build a garage It is not a pleasant spot b/c of the weird lay out (the garden is pretty; the rest an eyesore) It is grossly dangerous. There are no lines of site between the parking and the fields. A kid could be nabbed from there and no one would notice. So....thanks for the facilities. Please fix the mess you've created."
 - "There needs to be more parking provided for those days on which there are baseball games and soccer games. But not at the expense of the dog park. We dog owners pay our taxes too, and should not have to give up our park for parking. There needs to be another solution."
 - "Parking is a big problem and will get worse as the playing fields become more heavily used."
 - "PARKING! not adequate parking for Simpson-related activities + YMCA usage, especially on Sat / Sun."

DOG AREA

- "This dog park would be convenient, but it is not appealing at all. It is covered mostly in gravel/sand which doesn't provide dogs with good traction, and is messy and uncomfortable for them to walk on, especially in heat or wet weather. Instead of a traditional "dog park" (which only serves dogs), I suggest fencing in a much larger multi use "dog friendly area" that is grassy and has trees and bushes and picnic tables, etc in it, so it is designed for people but lets dog owners let their dogs off leash too."
- "I'd like to see more attention taken to the dog park. Possibly more seating or a few more trees for shaded area. Also, it wouldn't hurt to add additional ground covering every so often. Overall, i think there should be additional seating across the park. In the dog park, it would be nice to have the water fountain fixed- it seems that many pebbles are starting to block the drain. possible even improving on the water fountain situation could be a nice lofty goal. But I would start with more trees in this space and additional seating. The playgrounds look like they needs some new slides or equipment- or at least to fix the existing areas within."
- "Dog park - grass would be nice."
- "Please put more effort into maintaining the dog park. I have watched as THOUSANDS of \$\$ have been spent ond grooming and maintaining the extravagant soccer fields and have seen NO effort to landscape the much smaller area of the dog park. The park should include more features for dogs to exercise and play."
- "Would like an area for small dogs that is

separate from large dogs."

- "Dog park could be better maintained. A lot of money seems to go into other areas of the park - new soccer fields, new fence around the tennis court, new bathroom facilities, yet very little has been done in the dog park."
- "Making dog area nicer - trees, some ground cover."
- "More seating within the dog park area and ground lighting within the garden would be a beautification/safety measure, particularly in the evening."
- "Would be very helpful for there to be some separation of dogs in dog park according to size/weight."
- "Dog park is pretty limited compared to other in the area."
- "Artificial Turf or Grass for the Dog Park. The gravel is not good for the dogs as it is a mess to clean out of their paws....and owners cannot use th park after rain...due to drainage issues and mud. Also, we are very careful when we go to not have our dog play in areas where people have not cleaned up their feces along the fence and in the weeds. It would be nice to model our dog parks after other communities that have gone to the artificial turf....see the Beneful Dream Dog Parks website as an example!"
- "Make the dog park even better...line the outside of the fence with trees that would give needed shade...contour aerate, leaf mulch and grass seed on the grassy berm in the dog park so chunks of construction debris and glass are not eroded out of the hill. We need a grass field dog park where dogs can run on grass instead of gravel"
- "fix up the dog park....I pay taxes, have a dog,



and want the park reflect the use it generates.. everyone uses the park..put some \$\$ into it."

- "The dog park needs more trees."
- "Grass/lighting for dog park"
- "The dog park needs upgraded benches, more trees for shade , the hill full of rocks and glass needs to be flattened and an alternative to the gravel dirt would be nice. Most important , do not put in a bulletin board that needs THUMB TACKS! I pick up thumb tacks off the ground everyday. Put in a new nesssge area but have in enclosed so the tacks can't fall on the dirt and dogs won't step on them."
- "Dog park is nothing more than a gravel pit with rock clay and weeds. Dog owners represent a very large sector of Alexandria taxpayers. Dogs are like kids to us, so we want the same treatment as the city gives to the soccer/baseball fields...spending big bucks to upkeep these fields, how about us dog owners?"
- "Larger , cleaner dog park!!!!!!!!!!!"

ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

- "The entire park feels like a series of fences without a clear circulation path. Finding needs to be improved and there needs to be more grassy areas open to play on. If I want to play soccer, I can't get on the fields. I don't even know if I can go on the baseball diamond."
- "The main gate (closest to the parking lot) should be reopened to make it easier to get dogs into the park. It also would be great if stairs could be put in on the hill next to the front entrance so people and their pets coming from the east can have an easier time getting down to the park (because they're going to try

to walk down the hill anyway)."

- "Easier access to the dog park."
- "Landscaping and a defined walking trail with signage - would be nice if the walking trail extended around the soccer fields."
- "Gates and pathways and stairs that allow for easier access into the park complex -- gets in fences on all sides of soccer field. Better steps and paths into the park by the bball court."
- "An opening in the fence closer to rt. 1 will allow more people to drop off kids closer to the fields."
- "the soccer field access that is closest to Monroe Ave (between the little league field and the dog park) contributes to a huge bottleneck of people crossing between the dog park, the ball fields, and the soccer field. Please close that entrance and put a Soccer entrance on Monroe Ave"
- "safe drop-off/pick-up zones for kids playing soccer."
- "The area around the larger baseball field need to be redone. The bleachers need to be moved to have the pavement replaced. The retaining wall is nothing more then a trip hazard."
- "A few more gates so I can get more easily from Swing's Coffee across Monroe into the field, or from Duncan Ave to the soccer field without going all the way to the Monroe Ave side."
- "More access to the soccer fields. It's really inefficient."
- "More entrances to the soccer fields will make it easier to park. Now if you park far away you need to walk around the fence area to get in. There should be gates in all corners."
- "Integrate all the elements into one cohesive design."

- "Some organization and planning...this park is totally unorganized. you need to fix access from the street and provide direct access to the soccer fields and dog park that does not require coming from the YMCA only, Steps, paths, seating (at the fields) and shade trees could all use some attention"
- "a real design to meet the needs of access from parking and people movement int he park"
- "Better drop-off and pick-up areas along with a new access point to the soccer fields."
- "Stairs to walk from the street parking down to the front entrance of the dog park."
- "More walking paths"
- "There is no way that I know of to access the soccer fields from all that street parking along Monroe. So you end up parking in the small lot by the baseball field or in the Y lot. Otherwise you have to walk around the dog park."
- "Having steps installed from the street parking. It is extremely difficult for people to access the park. The hill by the dog park is bare due to people slipping down the hill to get to the dog park."

PLAYGROUND

- "It would be nice to add some facilities for older (tween aged) kids. They hang out at the toddler playground because there isn't anywhere else to go (except the bleachers). That mix causes tween wildness to mix with underfoot toddlers, and knock-downs happen."
- "playground needs updating"
- "I'd like to see the wood chips on the playground replaced with the soft rubber surfacing"
- "Play equipment interesting to kids older than



- 5"
- "Playground equipment is old and often in disrepair. Also not sufficient shade - makes it impossible to use this playground in the summer months because the structures get dangerously hot."
 - "Playground needs shade - can't use it most of the summer because it's too hot."
 - "larger playground with sets for children of different ages."
 - "1) Adult playground/outdoor work-out stations 2) Children's spray park"
 - "The mulch should be removed on playground and the new soft turf should be installed like other parks."
 - "Playground...great place for a sprayground!"
 - "Playground needs to be expanded and updated"
 - "ground cover for playground move away from mulch and use surfaces installed at school playgrounds. Better upkeep of equipment"

PASSIVE USE

- "Other/Needs areas you can play in without needing a permit. I would like to play catch, soccer, or frisbee with my children but there are few areas where we can do that at Simpson. The baseball and soccer fields appear to be off limits to us unless we are league members. Please create open grassy areas where people can play ball without a reservation. We need to encourage kids to have unsupervised play in addition to their many supervised activities."
- "There is no real green space to speak of at Simpson park to do anything that requires space. Children have no room to run. All the big spaces -- i.e., the baseball fields and the

soccer fields are locked up most of the time. It is particularly galling that the soccer fields are always locked up as we, in the neighborhood, have to put up with all of the traffic the fields generate on the weekends, however get no use of the fields unless your child is playing on a team. All the other green spaces are either devoted to dogs or plants. It is really ridiculous."

- "We would love to be able to access the little league field (obviously when not in use by organized teams) to play a pick up game of baseball, or just throw the ball and run the bases."
- "The park needs more open play space for Del Ray's young people. When the new soccer fields are locked up (which they are far too much of the time), there is inadequate open play space. Also, what space is available is not well-graded and sodded."
- "In my opinion, there are far too many fences. It looks like a prison compound and highly uninviting. This fall, we tried several times to visit the soccer fields only to be locked out. I understand that the organized groups have priority with these spaces, but the fields should be open to the public when games and practices are not taking place."
- "For the city in its entirety, not just the park: More green space for kids to play PICKUP soccer (in addition to the formal fields where the kids play organized soccer). An equivalent issue: Parking/drop-off/pick-up zones, given the huge number of kids playing in Alexandria soccer leagues who practice there."
- "More non-playing field open space. Better parking"

LIGHTING

- "Add lights!"
- "Lights in the dog park."
- "Lighting for the dog park in the evenings (1 to 2 large floodlights needed to create a safe environment, esp in winter months when it gets dark early)"
- "The dog park could use a little more lighting at night."
- "Lighting for the soccer fields."
- "The baseball field lights are not very good. I watch TC Williams baseball games there and have sometimes been concerned about player safety."
- "A light or two for the dog park!"
- "Lighting the soccer fields"
- "More light around the dog park. Sometimes I do take my dog early morning or late afternoon and will be great to have some extra light to see where my dog is and what is she doing."
- "Please add lights to the soccer fields. My daughter's team was unable to practice there after the daylight savings time change and it was so convenient in its proximity to GW."
- "Lighting of the dog park."
- "Lights for the fields."
- "Lights on soccer field"
- "Lights for the dog park. There are lights everywhere in the park EXCEPT the dog park. I was disappointed when the new lights went in for the baseball field and the soccer fields, that not one light was added for the dog park. If you measure the usage over the course of the year, I have to believe the dog park gets just as much if not more traffic than the sporting fields."
- "Solar lighting along the garden walkway, by the playground, would be nice."



- "Lights at night"
- "Lighting at the park should be a priority."
- "Lights for the dog park"
- "as a neighbor, the ball field and b-ball court lighting could be better directed downward and toward the fields/court, and away from our bedroom windows as well as westbound car traffic on Monroe - it can be blinding."
- "Lights for dog park. A couple of trees have just been planted, but a couple more would be great."
- "lights for the dog park for evening hours"
- "Lighting improvements are vital in winter months when visibility is difficult as early as 5pm."
- "Lights for the dog park and a second dog park. A second dog park for the growth in housing from Potomac Yard is critical. The Simpson Dog Park is probably the most used park use. People and dogs there every day morning, noon, and night. In the peak hours, the park has too many dogs in it and safety of dogs and people must be a priority too."
- "More walking paths with landscaping, better security lighting. It gets fairly dark at night, and if the main path isn't lit by the baseball field lights, it feels quite unsafe."

PARK FURNISHINGS

- "Another drinking fountain, perhaps, plus more trash cans."
- "would like to see more benches outside of the playground area since I sometimes visit the playground with grandchildren and with the dog - there's no place to sit outside of the playground area. continued grounds

- maintenance, more trees, more trash cans"
- "More benches for parents of toddlers using the playground and for peaceful contemplation of the serene garden center."
- "More bike racks."

SOCCER FIELDS

- "#1 turf on one of the fields. #2 Lights"
- "For the soccer fields, given high use, wear and tear and past history, it seems likely that the quality grass fields will not last. City should consider turf and lights for all season play and extended practice hours."
- "Turf soccer field."
- "Dedicated Soccer Field."

BALLFIELDS

- "Additional netting should be installed for foul balls at the 90' ("big") baseball field."
- "Baseball field improvements"
- "Improvements to baseball facility - turf field"
- "Grading of Simpson's 90' field and rebuilding the "bunker" for the TC Baseball program."
- "Turf field for baseball"
- "Better drainage on the baseball field"
- "Fix the seating areas of the ballpark, improve the baseball fields!"

SECURITY

- "Security. There are often homeless men hanging about who can seem intimidating to women and children."

GARDENS

- "I would encourage the gardeners to expand their area. An educational garden would be

- great- butterfly habitat etc. The gardens have greatly improved the experience of the park. The corner next to the playground would be a good site for expansion of the gardens."
- "Maintain gardens, be nicer to the volunteers who do a tremendous amount of the work."

MAINTENANCE

- "There is too much broken glass along walkway areas of the park. There was some work done between the basketball court and Monroe Ave that left up turned debris from the soil including lots of broken glass. This is the only means of ingress and egress to the dog park currently and is completely inexcusable."
- "People need to be more considerate of the garbage they generate and leave behind. It looks run down with utility vehicles and storage units"
- "would be useful if Parks and Rec Department equipment/vehicles were not stored and parked in open areas and pedestrian walkways."

RESTROOMS

- "A public bathroom for all the various sporting games that go on at the park."
- "All season bathrooms and water fountain"
- "Restroom and concession facilities are critical additions needed (recognize work underway)."

SHADE

- "maybe plant a few more trees in the dog park section."
- "More shade trees"
- "It would be great to get some shade trees for the playground. Our nanny takes the kids



to the pocket park behind Monroe's instead of here because it is too hot in the middle of summer. It would be nice to be able to use it more if there was ample shade."

- "more shade trees & benches"
- "Trees and/or other planting along the perimeter of the park would give some useful shade and encourage people to walk to Simpson park. The dog park is used by many people from throughout the City so it will be good to spruce it up a bit and thanks to the City staff and dog park volunteers who recently cleaned up there!"
- "More shade"
- "we need lots of trees so it becomes more peaceful like ft. Ward."
- "Comprehensive landscaping plan with far more shade trees. Staff needs to take the Urban Forestry Master Plan seriously."

NOISE CONTROL

- "Lower the PA system."

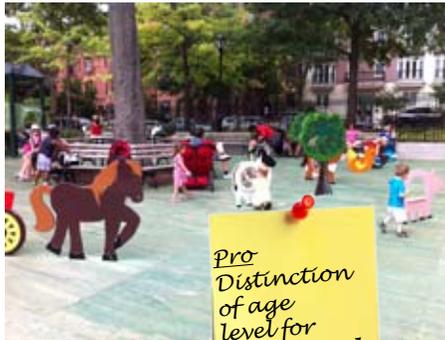
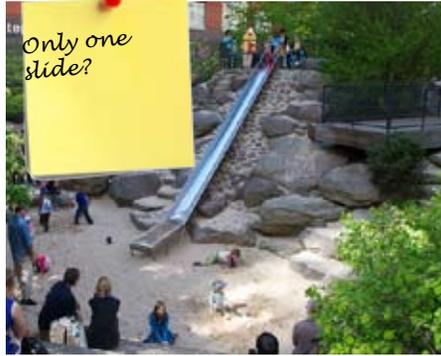
WORKSHOP

A Simpson Park planning workshop was held on October 17, 2012 at Mount Vernon Recreation Center 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 dropped in the mailboxes of homes in the adjacent neighborhood. A total of fifteen 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:







Like dogs & water



Fun place for dogs



Pro
Grass
Benches

Con
Fence too short



Its hard to believe this many people would ever be using this. No privacy when working out



Community gardens build community - great idea!





GROUP EXERCISE

Following a presentation on the Park's existing conditions, participants joined one of four 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:

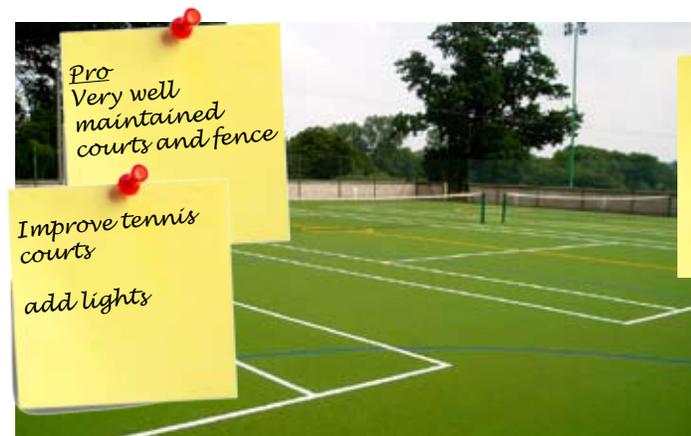
The top five park assets identified:

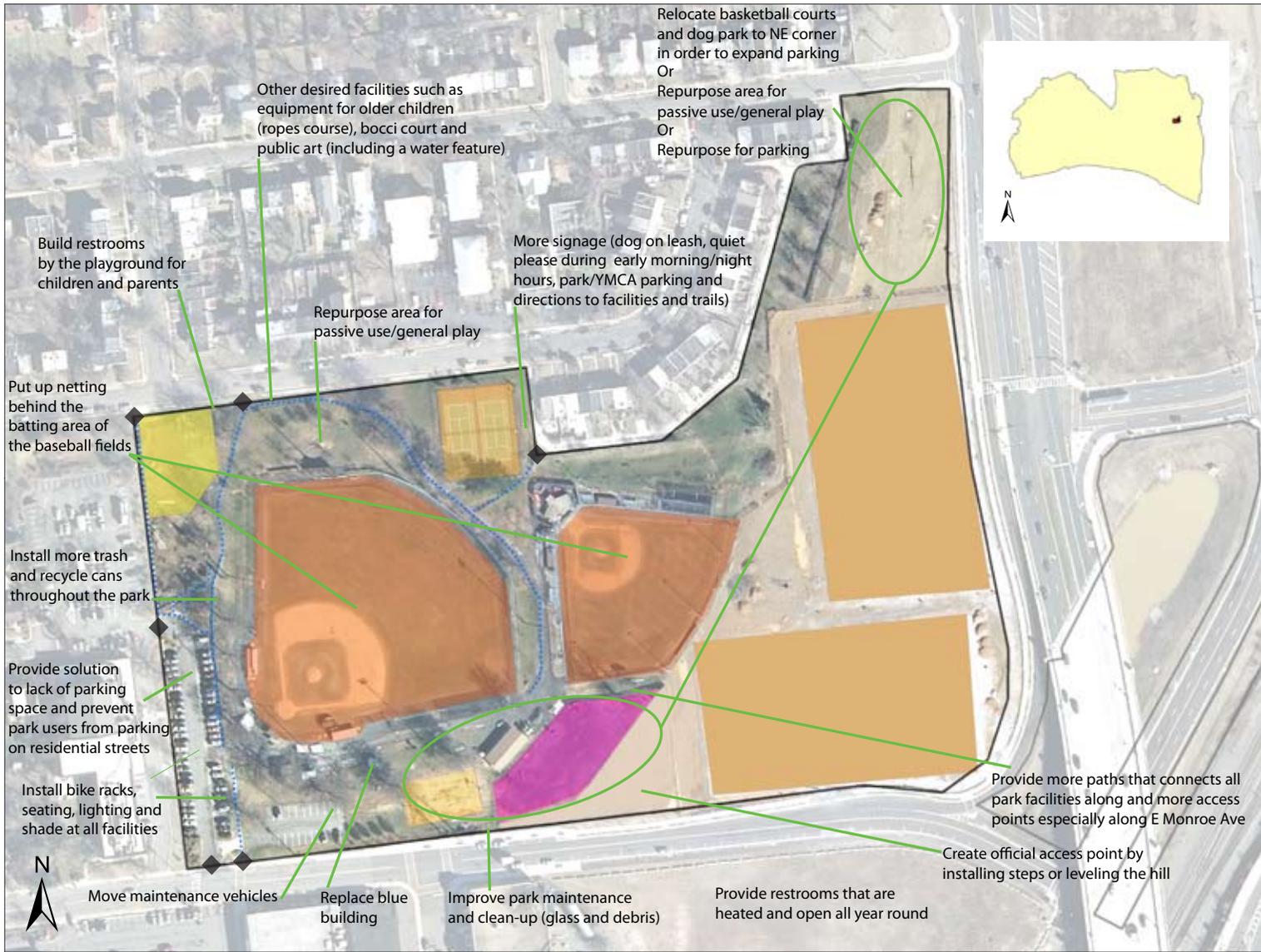
1. High quality turf surface on field
2. Heavily used baseball fields and basketball courts
3. Heavily used playgrounds
4. Used throughout many hours during the day
5. Dog park

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 opposite page.

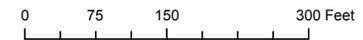
Additional feedback included:

- Fields are too restricted by fencing/permits
- Turf fields are overused
- The park is generally unattractive and run down
- There are a lack of entrances





Eugene Simpson Stadium Park Workshop Map (10/17/12)



1:1,500



DEL RAY CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

On November 12, 2012, RPCA staff attended the monthly Del Ray Citizens Association meeting at Mount Vernon Community School. This meeting provided an opportunity for Del Ray residents who were unable to attend the Simpson Workshop to provide feedback. Suggestions included:

- Provide a vegetable garden
- Install distance markers along the running/walking trail
- Enforce an overall landscape plan
- Create a succession plan for the garden
- Install bike racks and a Capital Bike Share platform
- Manage the parking by clearly marking the parking spots for park and YMCA use
- Open the soccer field for the public when its not scheduled through permits
- Create a traffic calming plan for East Monroe Avenue
- Preserve the park and prevent the fields from being a future school site
- Provide more trees and open space

SUMMARY

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

1. **Parking.** The survey and both workshops indicated that a parking management strategy is needed to determine how to control parking during heavy use of the

soccer fields. From the users perspective, there needs to be easier access to the fields from parking spaces, yet from the neighborhood point of view, park users should be limited from parking on residential streets. A multi-pronged strategy must be determined to address the parking issue. This may include providing increased access to the fields from Monroe Avenue, altering the field use schedules to minimize conflicting use, better management of the existing spaces, or finding a location for additional spaces.

2. **Access and Circulation.** The community feedback clearly shows the need for improved pathways and entrances to the Park. Currently, park users enter where convenient, such as from Monroe Avenue, rather than where there are formalized paths. These informal entrances have become dangerous and caused erosion. Pathways that better connect park facilities and user patterns would create a more cohesive site.
3. **Dog Park.** The dog park is highly active, year-round and facilitates a strong community among dog owners. Many dog park users feel that the facility lacks amenities such as shade, lighting, new surfacing, and seating. A landscape plan that accommodates the dog park needs would provide more specific recommendations and implementation strategies to improve the site.
4. **Playground.** As shown in the survey results, the playground is a priority for Park improvements. As suggested, a playground

renovation should include rubberized surface, areas for ages over five, and more shade. The design could also be better connected to passive use areas, making it family friendly for multiple age groups.

5. **Passive Community Space.** Simpson Park has many facilities to support organized activity for specific user groups. It lacks, however, a welcoming space to throw a frisbee, gather for a picnic, or let kids just “run around.” While the park is compact, better circulation could help carve out open areas for unorganized passive use. Additionally, the fields may be opened on occasion for monitored use without a permit.

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 herein will be supplemented with site observation and additional existing conditions data to ultimately create recommendations and an implementation plan.

