



**APPENDIX C:
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Extensive qualitative analysis was complemented over months of community input through various strategies including focus groups, community meetings, pop-up events, and more. Due to Spokane’s high rates of volunteerism and enthusiasm for the parks system, there was high participation. Residents were excited to share what they love about the parks and natural lands and to provide feedback on ways for the Parks Department to improve. Common themes emerged from all the engagement sessions including a desire for more equitable distribution of parks, more accessible recreation and programming, and an overall more inclusive system. The input from all the engagement efforts was analyzed side-by-side with quantitative data measuring the quantity and quality of the existing parks system to inform the recommendations in chapter three.





Except for pop-up events, which took place in the community at strategic events or parks facilities,

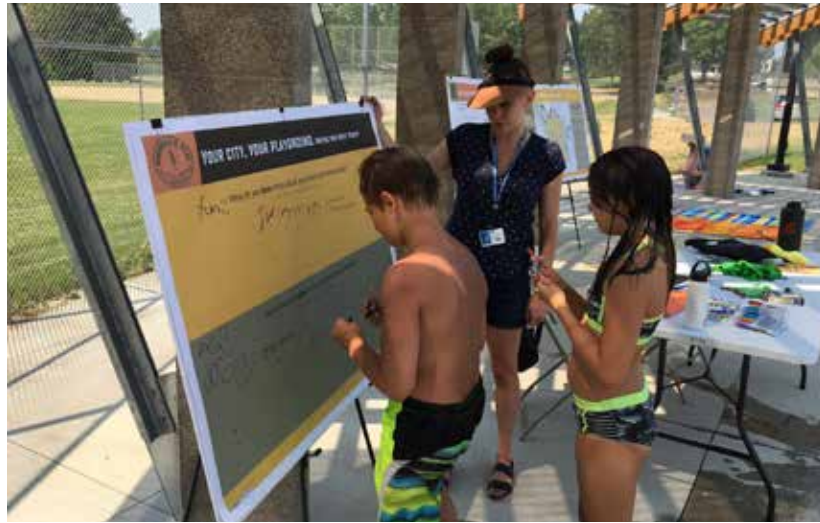
all engagement participants were either self-selected (such as residents who have the time and interest to attend public meetings) or there in a professional capacity, such as Park Board members. This is important to keep in mind because even though participation was high and enthusiastic, it likely does not represent the needs and desires of all those who love and use the parks. Volunteers participated as Ambassadors to encourage participation from a diverse pool of residents and included someone who had previously experienced homelessness in Spokane, NAME and NAME. Specific demographics who were not engaged but should be going forward include college students and other transient residents, and Indigenous residents. Future efforts should focus outreach on these groups and other underrepresented and under-resourced populations.

METHODOLOGY

FOCUS GROUPS

Over the course of six days in April 2021, a series of seven focus groups were held online. The focus group themes ranged from “Outdoor Recreation” to “Natural Lands, Ecology, Greenways.” A total of 110 individuals participated, with an average of 15 attendees per meeting. Input from the focus groups echoed sentiments from other engagement methods, notably that the existing parks and natural lands are highly valued, that diversity, access, and connectivity in existing parks and recreation offerings were highlighted as important. Participants

Date	Action	Outcome
WINTER/SPRING 2021	 Inventory and Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus groups and stakeholder interviews • Review of existing resources and programs • Benchmarking comparable communities • Park condition analysis • Equity analysis 	Foundational understanding of existing park system
SUMMER 2021	 Creating a Needs Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community surveys and pop-up events to understand residents' perspectives on values, current park use, recreational needs and opportunities for improvement • Community feedback on inventory & analysis 	Draft themes, goals and objectives
FALL 2021	 Community and Neighborhood Workshops	Plan strategies and action items
WINTER/SPRING 2022	 Create draft plan with action steps for implementation over next 10 years	Celebrate and share draft plan with community for adoption



noted that the most important factors to addressing equity are ensuring parks are accessible to all incomes, ages, abilities, and within walking distance of all residents. Many people expressed desire for park utilization 365 days a year and year-round aquatics access. The lack of an indoor aquatic facility is a noted deficit though the community highly values free outdoor aquatics access in the summer months. Dog parks, pickleball, disc golf, and mountain biking rose to the top as amenities and activities that are important to residents. Participants requested upgrades like lighting to encourage evening use of facilities and a need for year-round restroom access. There is a need for balance between accommodating recreation and protecting critical habitat. The Spokane River, for example, is experiencing pressure from multiple fronts including development, recreation use, and impacts from unsheltered residents inhabiting areas along the shoreline.

There was also feedback from the focus groups that differed from what we heard through other engagement methods. Spokane has high rates of adverse childhood experiences, which

can result in behavioral challenges that can lead to low participation in programs. There is also a cultural norm of leaving trash behind. The focus groups recommended exploring partnership opportunities to form “Friends of” groups as well as business and community-oriented support such as Greater Spokane Incorporated, Tribal organizations, corporate sponsorships and Continuum of Care. The city currently does not have a park fee requirement for new developments, which could be explored. These potential partnerships could help highlight and reflect the cultural and historic characteristics of Spokane through programming, art, interpretive displays.

Participants were asked to vote on what they believe the Parks Department should focus on over the next five years. The three highest rated were:

1. Give attention to maintenance and enhancement of park facilities
2. Focus investment on undeveloped City-owned properties
3. Expand the system and acquire new lands for parks and trails

Participants were also asked to rate which locations are most in need of park additions of enhancements. The below are averages from the various groups:

1. District 1: Northeast (37%)
2. District 2: South (13%)
3. District 3: Northwest (26%)
4. In the urban growth areas/outside City of Spokane limits (24%)

POP-UP EVENTS

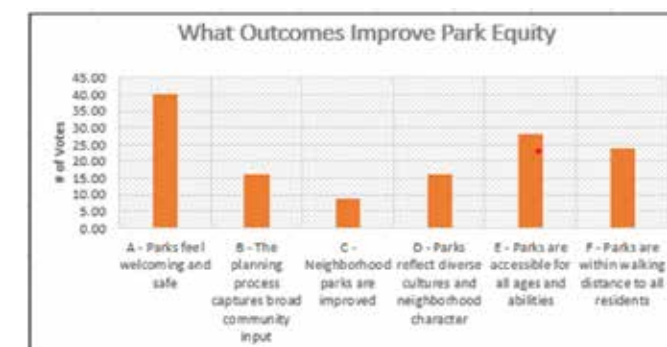
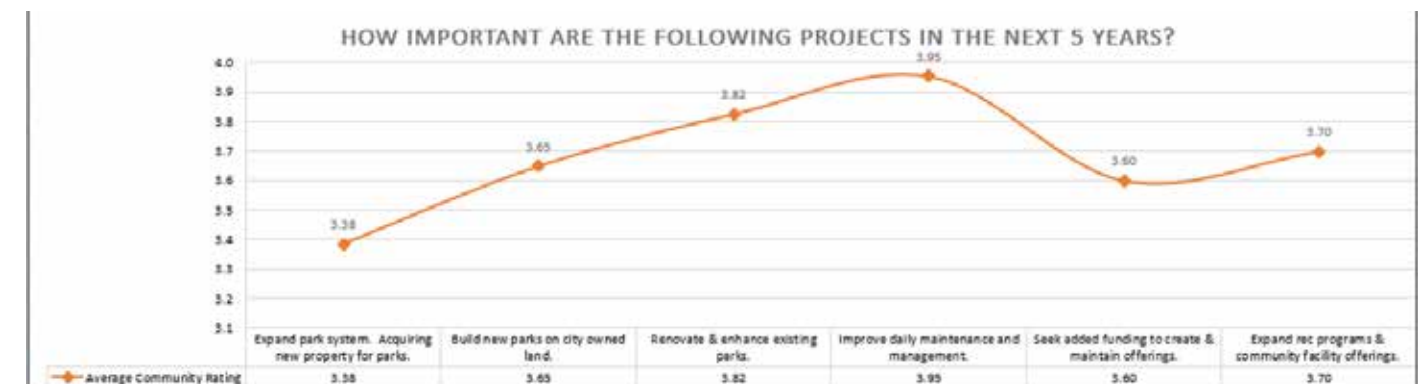
During the summer of 2021, the Parks Department hosted fourteen pop-up outreach events in the community, engaging more than 250 individuals and distributing nearly 800 flyers. The events, which included 1 Spokane Indians baseball game, 1 park concert [which park], and pop-ups at six pools, 3 parks, and 3 farmer’s markets, posed a set of questions on a preference board: ‘What outcomes improve park equity’ and ‘How important are the following projects in the next five years?’ Respondents voted for “Parks feel welcoming and safe” the most in response to the question about improving park equity. In terms of priorities, “improve daily maintenance and management” and “renovate and enhance existing parks” were the top two. The results from all fourteen events are below and results from individual events can be found in Appendix X..

ONLINE SURVEY

Polco’s National Research Center (NRC) conducted a representative survey of residents to obtain feedback on how they prefer to use parks and natural lands in Spokane. Four thousand randomly selected residential addresses were contacted two times (a postcard followed by a letter) inviting them to complete the online survey. The invitations to participate were in English and six additional languages (Arabic, Chinese, Marshallese, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese). The full survey was available in all seven languages. The survey resulted in an 8 percent responses rate (329 households), which falls within the typical range for this type of survey (5-15%).

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A coalition of stakeholders were engaged throughout the process in



various capacities including focus groups, advisory committees, and workshops. A total of X meetings with X participants were held between DATE and DATE. Key findings/themes include...

PARK BOARD

The Park Board served in an advisory role during the process, providing input and helping to guide recommendations and priorities, reviewing deliverables at key milestones, and spreading the word to help get the community involved. Twelve out of the 14 Board members have lived in Spokane for 10 years or longer.

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee consisted of 12 members representing various Spokane special interests including the Park Board, Mayor's office, City Council, Parks Department, City staff, and public schools.

NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOPS

Two Workshops were conducted with residents who live near Minnehaha and Meadowglen Parks. Minnehaha is prioritized for renovations and upgrades, while Meadowglen is currently undeveloped and prioritized as a new park. Both workshops were virtual.

PROJECT AMBASSADORS

Ambassadors are leaders who represent key interest groups that utilize the Spokane Park system and will benefit from its success. This group represents a diverse cross section of the Spokane community, representing various groups from neighborhood councils to those experiencing homelessness.

Ambassador Roles & Responsibilities

- Participate in and share public engagement opportunities for workshops and surveys within the community.
- Inform organizational and public interests about the effort.

Ambassador Role: It is essential in plan making to involve the community early in the process to help identify project values and goals. As an ambassador, it is your role to converse with the public to notify them of the master plan effort, to gather input via provided materials, and distribute public engagement materials to your channels. You may be involved in staffing pop-up event booths, sharing social media posts provided by the City, presenting to your boards/committees, notifying your professional and personal networks. These outreach options are all available to you, and which options you utilize will depend on the needs of the group you are representing and seeking feedback from. It is expected that you have a high-level understanding of the Spokane Parks and Natural Lands Master Plan process and have read through the survey questions to understand the type of feedback we are asking for in this phase of engagement.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public input was integral to the formation of this plan. Because attending public meetings is not accessible for many people, it was important to go out into the community and engage directly with residents. A series of fourteen pop-up events were held over the course of six days in MONTH at parks, pools, farmers markets, and special events. [insert photos] The feedback

obtained from preference board surveys indicated that the goals of the stakeholders, namely equity and preservation, were in alignment with

the general public's desires.

POP-UP EVENTS

Respondents at pop-up events indicated that improving daily maintenance and management as well as renovating and enhancing existing parks were the top two priorities for the next five years. Ensuring that parks feel welcoming and safe and that they're accessible for all ages and abilities were important outcomes to improving park equity.

YOUTH OUTREACH

More than 200 kids in grades K-6 were asked for their preferences for and feedback on Minnehaha Park. A high preference was made for traditional playgrounds with swings and slides, climbing on big rocks, trees, climbing walls, and other equipment, and bicycle facilities including a BMX track.

ONLINE MAPPING

A virtual engagement tool, Social Pinpoint was used for the first time by Spokane Parks and Recreation on this project. The engagement resulted in thousands of public comments in five categories: maintenance, recreation, new places, structures, and nature. An overwhelming number of comments were highly complementary of the parks system and many focused on trails, access, courts, and parking.