



**Couch Park – Parks Replacement Bond – Open House #1  
Comment Form Summary**

**Overview**

The first open house for the Couch Park Bond Project was held on Thursday, October 8, 2015 from 6:00-8:00pm at Congregation Beth Israel, 1972 NW Flanders. Outreach included a NWNW electronic newsletter article, post on project website, postcard mailing to 637 residents, yard signs in the Park, and two rounds of emails to interested parties. The Open House was attended by approximately 35 community members. A paper comment form was provided at the Open House, and a similar version was posted online for one week after the Open House. A total of 162 comments were received.

The goals of the Open House were to give an overview of the Parks Replacement Bond; introduce the project; educate the community about inclusive, nature-based, and contemporary playground design; and gather feedback from the community. The Open House included presentations on the Project Scope and Schedule by Sandra Burtzos, PP&R Project Manager; Site Analysis / Current Conditions / Plaza Precedents / Playground Design terminology and considerations by Ben Johnson with Greenworks, LLC; Inclusive Play by Mara Kaplan, Let Kids Play; and Nature-Based Play by Ben Johnson. Questions and comments were taken from the audience.

Given feedback received earlier this year from students at MLC who participated in school-organized design workshops, and the commitment of the Friends of Couch Playground and Harper’s Playground to raise an additional \$500,000 for the project, it is intended that this project will have inclusive play as a focus of the design. The aim is for the design to be as inclusive as the budget, site, and scope allows. Given that, the questions asked on the comment form were focused on gathering feedback on the types of play experiences the community would like, how much (if any) nature-based play to incorporate, and the community’s priorities for repairing the plaza.

It should be noted that this report reflects the opinions of those who chose to participate. It is not necessarily representative of the broader community. This information, in addition to information provided by the Project Advisory Committee; Technical Advisory Committee; staff, students, and faculty at MLC; stakeholders; and others will be used to inform the development of the final schematic design for the Couch Park plaza and playground improvements, and the installation of a Portland Loo.

**1. Regarding the playground at Couch Park, I would prefer (pick one):**

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- Combination of manufactured and natural play elements – 74%
- Natural play elements – 16%
- Manufactured play equipment (swings, slides, & climbing structures) – 14%

**2. Regarding the play structures at Couch Park’s playground, I would prefer (pick one):**

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- Contemporary Play Structures (domes & nets) – 43%
- Traditional Post & Platform Structures (with ramps) – 34%
- Independent Play Elements – 23%

**3. Options for Nature Based Play. Choose a number where you think the park play area should fall (1 = nature-themed manufactured equipment, 3= play equipment made of natural materials, 5= unstructured free play).**

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- 1 – 17%
- 2 – 22%
- 3 – 34%
- 4 – 21%
- 5 – 6

**4. I would use the Couch Park Playground more if (check all that apply):**

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- It had more/better features for children (ages 5-12) – 68%
- It provided a more relaxing environment – improved landscaping/benches – 55%
- Other (see below) – 47%
- It had more/better features for young children (ages 2-5) – 42%
- It had more/better features for teens – 16%
- It was easier to get to – 5%

**If you checked “it was easier to get to”, please explain:** Many expressed that they would like to see more ADA accessibility and parking options.

**If you checked “Other”, please explain:** Many expressed that they would like to see less drug use (specifically in the way of discarded needles) and a decrease in the transient population around the play area. Others expressed concern over the proximity of the dog off-leash area and amount of pet waste left behind. Regarding the playground itself, several individuals requested more nature play features like at Westmoreland Park, a climbing wall, musical play, and an “old school” merry-go-round (that spins much faster than “modern” merry-go-rounds).

**5. I would use the Couch Park plaza more if (check all that apply):**

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- It had more inviting seating areas – 51%
- Other (see below) – 40%
- It had better lighting at night – 36%
- It had improved landscaping – 30%
- It had a more modern design – 17%
- It had more sunlight during the day – 13%

**If you checked “Other”, please explain:** Some participants expressed that they would like to see the existing trees remain where and how they are. There were also several concerns regarding the transient population and drug use in the area. Suggested changes to the plaza itself included ADA improvements, a picnic table or two, and more natural elements such as native plants or a small pond.

**6. Regarding the plaza surface, I would (pick one):**

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- No opinion – 42%
- Prefer bricks (similar to existing) – 21%
- Strongly prefer bricks (similar to existing) – 17%
- Prefer patterned concrete or pavers other than brick – 15%
- Strong prefer patterned concrete or pavers other than brick – 5%

**7. I would like the Couch Park Plaza improvements to (pick one):**

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- Repair existing issues and retain similar look/feel in design (bricks, typical park benches, cherry trees) – 41%
- Repair existing issues and update the look/feel (consistent with the 2003 Master Plan = different paving type, different seating types and arrangements, new trees) – 31%
- No opinion – 28%

**8. The Parks Replacement Bond has allocated a budget for the plaza improvements and playground replacement. Funds will be spent on both. What is your priority for spending the money? (pick one):**

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- Strongly prefer playground replacement – 67%
- Prefer playground replacement – 19%
- No opinion – 6%
- Prefer plaza improvements – 5%
- Strongly prefer plaza improvements – 3%

**How far do you live from Couch Park? (pick one):**

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- More than one mile – 45%
- Five blocks or less – 36%
- Less than one mile – 19%

**How often do you visit Couch Park? (pick one):**

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- Every day or every other day – 47%
- Once or twice a week – 21%
- A few times a year – 15%
- Once or twice a month – 13%
- Never – 4%

**Do you... (check all that apply):**

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- Have a child who attends another school – 42%
- Have a child who attends MLC – 35%
- None of the above – 24%
- Attend or work at MLC – 6%

**How did you hear about this event / comment form? (check all that apply):**

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- PP&R email – 14%
- Yard sign in park – 12%
- NWDA newsletter – 8%
- PP&R website – 3%
- Postcard – 3%
- Other (see below)

**If you checked “Other”, please explain:** Many participants became aware of the event through the Metropolitan Learning Center (MLC) via email, Facebook page, or otherwise. Many others were notified by the Northwest Library Children’s Librarian. The remainder heard through friends and neighbors.

**How many children do you have living with you under the age of 18?**

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- Two – 47%
- One – 31%
- Zero – 13%
- Three – 8%
- Four – 1%

**How old are they?**

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- 5-8 – 51%
- 1-4 – 21%
- 9-12 – 20%
- 13+ – 8%

**I am age:**

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- 35-44 – 53%
- 45-59 – 20%
- 25-34 – 19%
- 60-79 – 7%
- 16-24 – 1%

**I identify as:**

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- Female – 74%
- Male – 25%
- Other – 1%

**Regarding Residence, I:**

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- Own – 69%
- Rent – 30%
- Other – 1%

**I identify as (check all that apply):**

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- White – 72%
- Hispanic or Latino – 4%
- Some Other Race – 3.7% (Answers: Other, Chicano, Hapa, Jewish)
- Asian – 3%
- American Indian / Alaskan Native – 2%
- Slavic / Eastern European Immigrant – 2%
- Black or African American – 1%
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander – 1%