



FOREST PARK ENTRANCE & NATURE CENTER

Survey Summary #2

February 14, 2017

Summary of Findings

227 individuals participated in the Forest Park Entrance & Nature Center survey.

On each image board, there is section for the top two-three highest “like” images and themes that were heard from public comments. There is a section for the top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes that were heard from public comments.

There was a fatigue factor on how people participated in this survey. It is noticeable that participants became fatigue towards the end after seeing 120 images. There was a sharp decrease in participation from Board 1 to Board 9 (note: Board 5 is a combination of Board 5A and Board 5B.) The decrease in participation potentially could have altered the outcome of “like” and “dislike” images and how the public prioritize the significance of one image to the other.





Forest Park Survey Verbal Summary Overview By Board

Board #1 Access & Arrival

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- C - Arrival Shelter
 - Visually appealing, good use of incorporating natural environment
 - Good learning opportunity for families & children
 - Shelter good idea for protection of element
- D – Forest Park Shuttle Bus
 - Accessible by public transport. Promotes use public transport
 - Public transport environmentally friendly, less impact
 - Encourage less personal vehicle use
- H – Bike Parking
 - Bike friendly, safe/locked secure
 - Promote alt. transport
 - Good scale & incorporated w/nature

Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A – Bus Parking
 - Crowded, Congestion, Group tours, too many people
 - Limit number of Buses
 - Concerns regarding too many children
- F – Off Street Parking
 - Too many cars
 - Parking area too large
 - Destroys natural beauty, distracting, eyesore
 - Too crowded, allows for too many people
- L – Horse Trail Parking
 - Horses are dangerous, cause trail conflicts, destroy trails & leave droppings
 - Horse trailers increase pollution
 - Destroy natural habitat for wildlife

In response to access and arrival, survey respondents emphasized ease of arrival via multiple transportation options (bike, bus, max, street car, ride share and motor vehicles). Modes of transportation that had a lesser environmental impact are highly favored however; a need for some limited





parking is recognized. Overall survey respondents would like to keep car parking and bus loading areas offsite and away from the park entry.

In creating parking and loading areas respondents prefer to reduce the amount of concrete and have more natural gravel lots. In ensuring access for all, paid parking is discouraged. Areas for tour busses and school busses were also viewed negatively due to the perceived high impact and overcrowding that tours and field trips may have on the natural environment and the quiet enjoyment of Forest Park.

Board #2 Entry Experience

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- B – Entry Boardwalk
 - Wooden path protects sensitive soil/plants
 - Natural looking, adds beauty, peaceful.
 - Appropriate size/scale
 - Wider range of pedestrian traffic (elderly, disabled, strollers)
- C – Entry Gate
 - Art is incorporated in environment. Looks natural
 - Looks exciting. Gives it a sense of place
 - Supports artist
- E – Entry Trail
 - Most natural of the selections
 - Focuses on nature
 - Peaceful

Top three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A – Coffee/Information Stand
 - Becomes touristy/commercial
 - Not needed for Forest Park Experience. Distracts from nature
 - Produce garbage, litter, junk food, vermin, harm animals
- J - Entrance
 - Crowded, too many people, lines, noisy
 - Concrete, large draws away from nature
 - Too much like an amusement park/touristy
- K – Lobby Orientation and Gathering Space
 - Intrusive, commercial, retail not needed
 - Not reflective of Forest Park experience
 - Costly, waste of park resources





Survey respondents favored the most natural, understated yet clearly marked entries that incorporate natural and existing elements into its construction. Grand, extravagant or modern entry experiences were viewed as unnecessary and fiscally wasteful. There is a fear of the entry experience becoming too touristy and commercial. Elements such as zip lines and or other experiences that do not support traditional Forest Park activities such as, hiking, biking and bird watching should be discouraged.

A smaller portion of the respondents did support access to food and retail vendors citing that it encouraged community gathering and is supportive of families, elderly and disabled guests. In contrast those who did not support food and retail vendors, cited litter, vermin, vandalism and commercialism as reasons against.

Board #3 Recreation

Top three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- B – Running, Hiking, Dog Walking
 - Hiking/running main use of trail, good use of trails
 - Dogs are appropriate
 - Setting is natural
- E – Seclusion/Forest Immersion
 - Natural, peaceful, minimalistic
 - Trail hiking should be main focus
 - Low impact (no bikes, dogs)
- K – Competitive Running/Athletic Events
 - Running is a Forest Park activity
 - Organized competitive runs can provide revenue and exposure/visibility for park
 - Low impact activity

Top three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A - Equestrian
 - Horses destroy trails, should not be allowed, high impact
 - Horse droppings, safety, conflict w/other users
 - Non-native to habitat
- F - Play
 - Playground does not belong in forest, not an amusement park
 - Waste of money & space, not natural
 - Noisy, litter & vandalism





- L – Skate Park/Pump Track
 - Skate parks do not belong in Forest Park/Not nature focused
 - Would require clearing a large area of natural land
 - Only suitable for urban parks

Traditional recreational activities are overall favored, e.g. hiking, biking, bird & wildlife viewing. Many respondents voiced concerns over biking, dogs and horseback riding on trails. The main concerns include, impact on trails, safety of hikers, disruption of wildlife, off leash and sanitation concerns. Many respondents suggest designated trails for biking and horseback riding.

Additional activities outside the traditional activities that are supported are activities classified as passive recreation (yoga, exercise and quiet enjoyment). A smaller percent of surveyors cited the introduction of more adventurous recreation such as skate parks, climbing and/or zip lines. However, concerns were voiced over building structures in a natural area and the expense of such a project.

Board #4 Community/Other Uses

Top three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A – Group Picnic/Food
 - Provide community space for music, picnics & events
 - Good for families
 - Like that there are no built structures
- B – Nature Art Gallery
 - A peaceful place to connect nature & art
 - Like that it is underdeveloped
- K – Sculpture in the Forest
 - Art in park cool, fun, visually appealing
 - Picture not largely understood but people said they liked it
 - Low impact art is appreciated

Top three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- D – Bike Rentals
 - Bike rentals should not be in park
 - Commercial
 - Damaging to environment congested trails
 - Site is too developed
- H – Special Meeting Place/Retreat Venue
 - Limits access, elitist, benefits few





- Not aligned with Forest Park
- Limit man-made structures
- Does not preserve habitat
- J – Food Trucks
 - Unnecessary, keep as a natural space
 - Detract from nature
 - Too commercial
 - Litter, noise, vermin

Community gathering spaces for picnics, education and socializing are viewed as beneficial and favored by the majority of surveyors when seen as corresponding to traditional forest recreational activities. Cultural events, farmer’s markets and other similar activities were perceived as not corresponding with natural forest activities. Warming pits raised concerns about protection and safety of the forest. Rental space for conferences/retreats and retail shops were similarly not perceived as fitting into the framework of beneficial uses.

The majority of the audience does favor some type of community gathering space. However, dislike an overly planned and/or developed area. Modest picnic tables and an understated event stage are top priorities.

Board #5 Infrastructure & Amenities

Board #5 is a combination of Board 5A and Board 5B

Top three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A, N, S – Boardwalks
 - Natural, Low impact
 - Protection from mud & elements
 - ADA
- F – Restrooms
 - Necessary
 - Hygienic
- Q, U, V - Buildings & Structures
 - Natural elements incorporated well
 - Integrated with environment
 - Buildings/Structures modern and aesthetically pleasing

Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- B, C, J, K, R, W, X – Viewing





- Disruptive to birds and wildlife
- Unsightly, eyesore
- Hazardous, unsafe
- E, I, L, T – Retail
 - Unnecessary, commercial, touristy
 - Garbage, vermin, crowds
 - Wrong type of industry

Overall, survey participants favored some type of raised paths or boardwalks citing reasons of protecting habitat and making forest more accessible to disabled, elderly and persons with infants and strollers.

Built infrastructure has consistently throughout the survey rated poorly among survey respondents. These include, viewing towers/birding towers, buildings and structures, formal play areas, retail and art exhibits. The only exception to building new structures was restrooms facilities with a 90% approval rating. Those who voiced opposition to constructing restroom are concerned about misuse, illegal activities, safety and cleanliness.

As, mentioned in Board #4's summary community gathering areas, as build infrastructure is overwhelming supported when a minimalistic approach is employed.

Board #6 Interpretation

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- C – Discreet Interpretive Elements
 - Discrete interpretive elements are good. Contextual
 - Information is outdoors
 - People can interact at their level of interest
- F – Interpretive Trails
 - Interpretive trails engage visitors. Low impact
 - Like that the educational materials are in an outdoor setting
 - Signage not intrusive

Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- B – Wildlife Exhibits
 - Do not like dead animals/ taxidermy
 - Not a museum or the Audubon Soc.
- E – Cultural and Historical Context Exhibits
 - Too big, museum feel, costly





- Not relevant for park
- Takes people out of the experience of nature
- L – Interactive Media Exhibits
 - Multi-media, high-tech, exhibits are overkill
 - Expensive technology, requiring updates & IT support
 - Takes people out of the experience of nature

Forest growth and renewal cycles, wildlife exhibits and hands on interactive devices were viewed as an appropriate way of interpretation. Hi-tech and virtual interpretation was less favored because of associated expense, IT support and its perceived conflict between natural worlds and technology. Although, over 90% of survey participants disliked the use of high technology interpretation, the information gathered by survey may elicit some generational biases. As research supports that the growing millennial population accesses a large body of information and education via technological mechanisms.

In addition, fabricated snag interpretation, taxidermy displays and outdoor interpretations other than discrete interpretive signs were also rated negatively on the survey.

Board #7 Education

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- G – Educational Walks
 - Outdoor learning in a natural setting
 - Learning through immersion
- J – Forest Research
 - Research/education important public benefit
 - Acceptable use of natural space
- K – Pond Walks
 - Access to wetlands without damage
 - Hiking/Walking
 - Educating by getting people out in nature

Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- E – Flexible Classrooms
 - Classrooms should be outside. Inside official classrooms distract from park's natural beauty
 - No addition structures. Too big & imposing





- Expensive facility to operate and maintain
- H – Flexible Use Education Spaces
 - Wasteful, too expensive, too large
 - Learning is not in an outdoor setting
 - No large building/structures
 - High impact

Surveyors overall supported an educational aspect of the park experience. Having youth connect in a more tangible way with the forest and wildlife is viewed as more of an enhancing educational and learning experience than formalized classroom instruction presented in traditional settings. Educational activities that focus on forest growth and renewal cycles, wildlife, wetlands, preservation, stewardship and promoting healthy lifestyles are seen as worthwhile learning objectives. Gardening and scientific activities are not perceived as appropriate learning activities for a natural forest.

Board #8 Play

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A – Pond Play
 - Encourages exploring and natural play
 - Unique feature that integrates with nature
- B – Structured Play Area
 - Simple structure resembles natural area
 - Least obstructive, small scale
 - Child climbing area outside good for play
- D – Structured Play Area
 - Incorporates natural materials
 - Imaginative play
 - Good for play or rest area

Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- H – Zip-Lines
 - Zip lines do not belong in wild park
 - Commercial activity
 - Too much development
 - High impact
 - Dangerous/liability issues





- J – Structured Play Area
 - Do not want conventional playground/amusement park
 - Inappropriate for a natural environment
 - Too much infrastructure
- K – Structured Play Area
 - Inappropriate for natural park/Forest Park is not a playground
 - No city parks/amusement parks
 - Not integrated with surroundings

Built formal play areas and structures received overall negative responses. Formalized play areas are considered more appropriate for urban park settings, primarily because they add an unnatural aesthetic to a natural area and require the removal of native florals in the construction of such areas. Other concerns include; noise, high environmental impact due to over use and crowding, trash, unsanitary conditions and liability issues especially if bodies of water are included as an aspect of the play area.

The smaller percentage of surveyors who support formal or “built” play areas believe these areas will be good for families with small children and still promote outdoor activity while giving children the opportunity to incorporate imaginative play especially if the built play area parallels or incorporates the natural forest.

Board #9 Stewardship & Park Support

Top two-three highest “like” images and themes heard from public comments:

- A – Forest Restoration
 - Stewardship & Community involvement
 - Volunteers to maintain park
 - People connecting with nature
- F – Volunteer Activities
 - Encourages community volunteers
 - Win/win for park and volunteers
- K – Natives Greenhouses and Gardens
 - Hands on involvement & stewardship leads to a connection with nature
 - Opportunities for youth
 - Possible learning and job training
 - Community building





Top two-three highest “dislike” images and themes heard from public comments:

- D – Stewardship Lodge House
 - Obtrusive bldg., purposeless, learning should be outdoors
 - Expensive, not a priority
 - Too great of impact
- H – Information Desk
 - Costly, wasteful
 - Elaborate building is unnecessary for stewardship
 - Minimize structure
- L – Park Maintenance Storage and Shops
 - Minimize structures, too large scale
 - Minimize power tools, vehicles and noise
 - Expensive storage facility

Stewardship opportunities and volunteer programs similar to educational opportunities received a high approval rating from surveyors. Volunteer opportunities are viewed as a way of connecting the community to the park and offering a vested interest in the future and sustainability of Forest Park. Public engagement also provides a visible presence in the community and can be useful in promoting park use.

In supporting stewardship, it is understood that some build infrastructure and facilities for volunteers, park rangers and equipment storage maybe necessary the key theme that arises again is a minimalistic approach that is functional and practical. Greenhouses are not seen as a function of stewardship as they traditionally host non-native flora.

