



Plan Your Park Community Survey - Topline Findings

September 10, 2021

Report by Regional Government Services

Introduction

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) contracted Regional Government Services to conduct an online survey of area residents about the proposed features for the Rancho Cañada Unit of Palo Corona Regional Park. The survey was open from June 27, 2021 until August 31, 2021 with 270 respondents.

The invitation to take the survey was conducted in a variety of ways: a) MPRPD website announcement, b) multiple MPRPD Facebook posts, c) MPRPD press release email blast to Let's Go Outdoors! contact list of over 5000, d) email blast by Dog Park 4 volunteer group of 400 subscribers, e) flyer posting at other parks within the District, f) flyer distribution at local events, and g) brochure distribution at Palo Corona Regional Park Open House Event for the Rancho Cañada Unit.

This report presents a topline summary of the findings and conclusions of that survey for MPRPD's consideration in planning. Detailed results with charts, graphs, and findings per question can be found in the Plan Your Park Community Survey presentation uploaded to the MPRPD's shared server. The raw data is online in the MPRPD SurveyMonkey account.

This narrative of the survey findings is organized by feature. Majority, or 50% response rate is used as the guideline for reporting. Plurality (most response, but not 50% or more) may be reported if majority is not received for the question or if features related to the Regional Park Program Grant did not reach 50%.

Question 3 (Q3) and Question 19 (Q19) are the same question that asked respondents to choose features and amenities that would make the park an exceptional open space. For almost all items related to the RPP grant, the percentage of respondents who chose those features increased. This increase may be related to how respondents

engaged in the survey, read more about proposed features, and considered the development possibilities.

The “Summary of Majority Voice” is the finding related to that feature that received a response rate over 50%. Here is a list of what the respondents endorsed, based on majority findings:

- experience of nature and protection of wildlife habitats;
- habitat restoration of the pond with wildlife viewing and ecology education;
- creation or extension of multi-use trails;
- a nature-inspired playground designed for ages 3 to 12 to engage in play inspired by natural park elements, with the inclusion of accessible pathways for wheelchairs and mobility devices and with ramps to play structures;
- an off-leash dog park;
- an outdoor classroom with a tree-inspired design, seating, and water;
- picnic shelters by the playground with a capacity of up to 12 people;
- a bus stop; and,
- other amenities: restrooms, free entrance and use, seating within the park, water fountains, and shade structures.

Pond Wildlife Habitat Restoration / Ecology Education

[Note: The re-purposing of the pond includes several proposed features for the park. This section will include responses to: the experience of nature, habitat restoration of the pond, wildlife viewing area, and the outdoor classroom *with observation deck*. See Outdoor Classroom section for “outdoor classroom” as an exceptional open space feature.]

Summary of Majority Voice: The experience of nature and the protection of habitats are the primary directives for development of the park. These are paramount in making the park exceptional open space. The re-purposing of the pond and the educational opportunities that it could provide follow the primary directives and make the park an exceptional open space.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. An overwhelming majority of the respondents thought that the following would make the park an exceptional open space:

- experience of nature (Q3, 97%; Q19, 97%)
- habitat restoration of the pond (Q3, 86%; Q19, 89%)
- wildlife viewing area (Q3, 79%; Q19, 84%)

(Note: The term “outdoor classroom with observation deck” is included in this section about the re-purposing of the pond.)

Habitat restoration of the park was ranked as the second highest priority of eight features (Q1). Relatedly, wildlife viewing area was ranked as the fourth highest priority, and outdoor classroom with observation deck was ranked as the sixth.

Features. In Q12, almost three-fourths of the respondents chose interpretive signage about wildlife and ecology (72%), observation deck (71%), and nesting boxes (70%) as appealing features for the pond. A near majority chose wildlife spotting scope (47%) as an appealing feature. In the 17 comments to “other-please specify,” most were about protecting habitats and the other half was about educational programs and signage regarding Native Americans or signage in different languages.

Multi-Use Trails

Summary of Majority Voice: The creation, re-purposing, and/or extension of multi-use trails would enhance the accessibility of the park and provide an exceptional open space, especially if developed according to ADA and if some are open to bikes.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. In Q1, multi-use trails ranked 1st of 8 features that respondents thought MPRPD should further develop. A vast majority thought multi-use trails would make the park an “exceptional open space” (Q3, 93%; 97%). In both of these questions, it was only exceeded by restrooms and experience of nature.

Deeper Dive. In this survey, there were no specific questions about the development or extension of multi-use trails. However, in Q20, we asked respondents to share any ideas or comments about transforming the park into a beautiful nature space for all to enjoy. A total of 47 topics about trails were mentioned. Many noted their desire for ADA trails, multi-use trails, and bike trails. Others related to use restrictions or expansions and specialized features like signage for trail ratings and fitness/workout stations.

Playground

Summary of Majority Voice: A nature-inspired playground would make the park an exceptional open space. It should be designed for ages 3-12 and incorporate accessible pathways for wheelchairs and mobility devices, and have ramps to structures so children can engage in play inspired by natural park elements.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. A majority of respondents (69%, Q19) thought the addition of a nature-inspired playground would make the park an “exceptional open space”. This was an increase from 45% of respondents when asked the same question in Q3.

Focus of Activities. Respondents were asked what activities should be the focus of a nature inspired playground with materials that blend well with the park. The majority of respondents chose (see Q5):

- climbing
- exploring
- balancing
- swinging
- learning in the nature lab
- imagining
- sliding

This question listed a variety of activities that are possible at the playground but there was no option for "none of the above". There was an answer option for "other-please specify". Within these open ended answers, 15 respondents opposed the concept of a playground in the park on the basis of potential noise, desire to keep it an open-space only, or unspecified reasons. Since there was a demographic split among age groups in this survey, where 47% of the respondents were 60 or older and 40% of the respondents were in the traditional family-forming age groups of 18 to 49, personal need for a playground may have contributed to this minor split in support.

Inclusive and Accessible. When asked about the importance of all-inclusive and accessible features on the playground, the majority thought that pathways accessible with wheelchairs and mobility devices ramps to structures and ramps to structures are very important. As many as 40% to 49% thought the following features are very or fairly important (Q6.):

- rails on elevations
- a design that encourages side-by-side play among children with different abilities
- play activities for various senses
- transfer platforms for wheelchair users

Age-Specific Playground. Over 75% of the respondents thought that play structures should be designed for 5 to 12-year-olds (81%) and 3 to 4-year-olds (77%). Almost half (49%) thought there should be play structures for the 0 to 2 age group.

Off-leash Dog Park

Summary of Majority Voice: A small majority endorsed an off-leash dog park as a feature that would make the park an exceptional open space. There is majority support for its existence as a community benefit, though the vocal minority has concerns about the mingling of dogs with other park users who find their nearness unwelcome.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. An off-leash dog park ranked 3rd of 8 features that respondents thought MPRPD should develop (Q1). A near majority (49%) in Q3 and a small majority in Q19 (54%) thought that dog park would make the park an exceptional open space. Note that these questions did not define it as an "off-leash dog park".

Community Benefit. In Q7, respondents were asked if they thought the community would benefit from an off-leash dog park. A majority (60%) said that it would. When asked if they would use the dog park, the trails, or both, a plurality (49%), but not a majority said they would use both. Over a quarter (27%) said they would use neither. Only 6% said they would use the dog park.

Concerns. The respondents were asked about their concerns of having a dog park at the Rancho Cañada Unit of the Palo Corona Regional Park. A majority indicated that cleanliness (59%) and dog conflicts (54%) concerned them. Forty-two respondents answered the “other-please specify” part of this question. There were 29 mentions of opposition to the dog park or its harm to nature/wildlife. Other mentions related to the desire for safe management of the dog park (16) or for desired features that are already in the concept design like seating, water, and shade.

Outdoor Classroom

Summary of Majority Voice: An outdoor classroom with a tree-inspired design that includes seating and drinking water would make the park an exceptional open space.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. In Q1, the outdoor classroom with an observation deck ranked 5th of 8 features that respondents thought MPRPD should develop. There was a 10-point increase from Q3 (66%) to Q19 (76%), in the majority of respondents who thought the addition of an outdoor classroom would make the park an “exceptional open space”. (Note: “observation deck” was not included in the description in Q3 and Q19.)

Design Inspiration. When presented with concept images of outdoor classrooms with different materials and features from which to indicate their preferred design inspirations, a majority chose a tree-inspired wood structure. Almost half (46%) chose an outdoor pavilion with movable seating (Q10). When asked specifically whether storage, electricity, water, or seating should be considered for the design of the outdoor classroom, a majority chose seating and water. Slightly less than half (44%) chose electricity (Q11). The most frequently cited feature in the “other-please specify” to this question was shade by four respondents. Four other respondents questioned the need or did not support the development of an outdoor classroom.

Picnic Shelters

Summary of Majority Voice: Picnic shelters by the playground with a capacity of up to 12 people would make the park an exceptional open space.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. In Q1, picnic shelters ranked 7th of 8 features that respondents thought MPRPD should develop. This should not be interpreted as being undesired, but that there were six other features ranked higher in priority. There are data indicating that picnic shelters are highly desired. A majority of respondents (62%, Q3; 71%, Q19) thought the addition of picnic shelters or pavilions would make the park an “exceptional open space”.

Preferred Size. Respondents were asked to choose the maximum number of people that the largest picnic shelter should accommodate (Q16). Almost half (49%) desired a picnic shelter with capacity up to 12; a bit more than a third (36%) desired a picnic shelter up to twice as large for 13 to 24 people.

Location of Picnic Shelters. A majority of respondents (58%) preferred the playground for location of the picnic shelters (Q15). A near majority (46%) chose open areas throughout the

park. Almost a third chose locations with vistas (34%), by the pond (31%), and near the outdoor classroom (29%).

Thirty-eight respondents left comments for “other-please specify” in Q15. Over 30 comments referred to placement throughout the park, near the entrance and by the parking lot where they can be easily accessed and maintained. In consideration of these suggestions, respondents seemed to be supporting tables rather than a large structure.

Amphitheater

Summary of Majority Voice: The development of an amphitheater received the lowest ranking in priority of all the features listed in the survey (Q1). A minority of respondents thought an amphitheater would make the park into an exceptional open space (Q3, 38%; Q19, 44%). There was not a majority finding in support of the amphitheater.

Envisioned Use. Respondents were presented the suggestion that a naturally sloping area of the park is a logical place for an amphitheater (Q13). They were then asked how they envisioned an amphitheater to be used. A majority thought that an amphitheater could be used for educational programs, guest speakers or lectures, and music concerts or entertainment acts. A nearly majority (47%) thought it could be used for outdoor movies. In the “other-please specify” answers to this question, 19 respondents made dissenting remarks about developing an amphitheater, concerns about noise, and issues about how it would be used.

Concerns. The biggest concern by a plurality (49%), but not a majority was noise (Q14). Approximately one-third cited their concern about traffic (35%), overuse (34%), and parking (29%). In the open-end responses to this question, 8 respondents cited their concern about harm to wildlife / nature, and an equal number cited their concern about the development, noise, and uses of the amphitheater.

Parking and Pathways

Summary of Majority Voice: Most visitors are likely to park near the left side of the park and use those features and most are likely to use a constructed path to the other side. Consider that these results may be affected by the number of respondents who have interest or not in the dog park on the other side. These results are not definitive for parking and pathway planning.

Preferred Parking. In Q17, respondents were shown a concept drawing of the park with the dog park on the right side of the main parking lot where they will be added parking (P2) and the other features at the park on the left side of the main parking lot (P1). Then, they were asked to choose from three statements about where they would likely park. A majority (60%) chose “I am likely to use the park features on the left and park my vehicle near those during a single visit.” This was 5.5 times as many who said they will use the dog park and park nearby (11%).

Preferred Path. In Q18, respondents were asked how they would get from one side of the park to the other. No path was cited by a majority, though one-third (33%) said they would take the most direct route while a combined majority of 51% would follow a constructed route around the parking lot (32%) or around the Ranger’s Station (19%).

Amenities

Summary of Majority Voice: The park would be an exceptional open space if it had the following amenities: restrooms, free entrance and use, seating within the park, water fountains, and shade structures. A near majority endorsed the bus stop.

An Exceptional Open Space Addition. Of the amenities that would make the park an exceptional open space, the following were chosen by a majority:

- restrooms (Q3, 95%; Q19, 96%)
- free entrance and use (Q3, 92%; Q19, 90%)
- seating within the park (Q3, 82%; Q19, 84%)
- water fountains ((Q3, 72%; Q19; 73%)
- shade structure (Q3, 68%; Q19, 72%)

A near majority chose a bus stop (Q3, 44%, Q19, 46%).

High Priority. In Q2, respondents were asked to rank a list of nine facilities that are proposed for their comfort, safety, and convenience. These were the top four:

- 1st - restrooms
- 2nd - seating within the park
- 3rd - water fountains
- 4th - shade structures

A bus stop was ranked 5th.

Demographics

- A near majority(45%) lives more than 5 miles, but less than 20 miles from the park. The same percentage respondents live between 5 and 20 miles (45%) as those who live between 1 and 5 miles (45%).
- Just over a third (35%) live in Carmel-93923, while almost half (48%) live in the combined ZIP Codes of Monterey-93943, Carmel Valley-93924, Pacific Grove-93950, and Seaside-93955— each representing between 10% and 13%.
- Almost half of the respondents (47%) were 60 or older. Traditional family-forming age groups between 18 and 49 represented 40%.