The Successful Design of Small Parks

and

Results of Public Feedback (so far)

regarding

Jenkintown's Cedar Street Property

May 17, 2017

Jenkintown Environmental Advisory Committee Meeting

Prepared by Lucinda Bartley

Design Process

Inventory and Analysis

(where we are)

Concept Designs

Final Design

Construction, Financing, etc.

Purpose of Research

Examine the design of successful pocket parks, particularly as those design goals can be applied to a new open space in Jenkintown

Successful = sociable + ecologically sustainable

Central Park, NYC

Phipps Center for Sustainable Landscapes, Pittsburgh, PA

To investigate

- **Use**:

  Who? and How?

- **Design, construction, and care**:

  What design elements are vital to a park's success?

- **Ecology**:

  How can "green" design elements enhance the ecological health of the neighborhood?

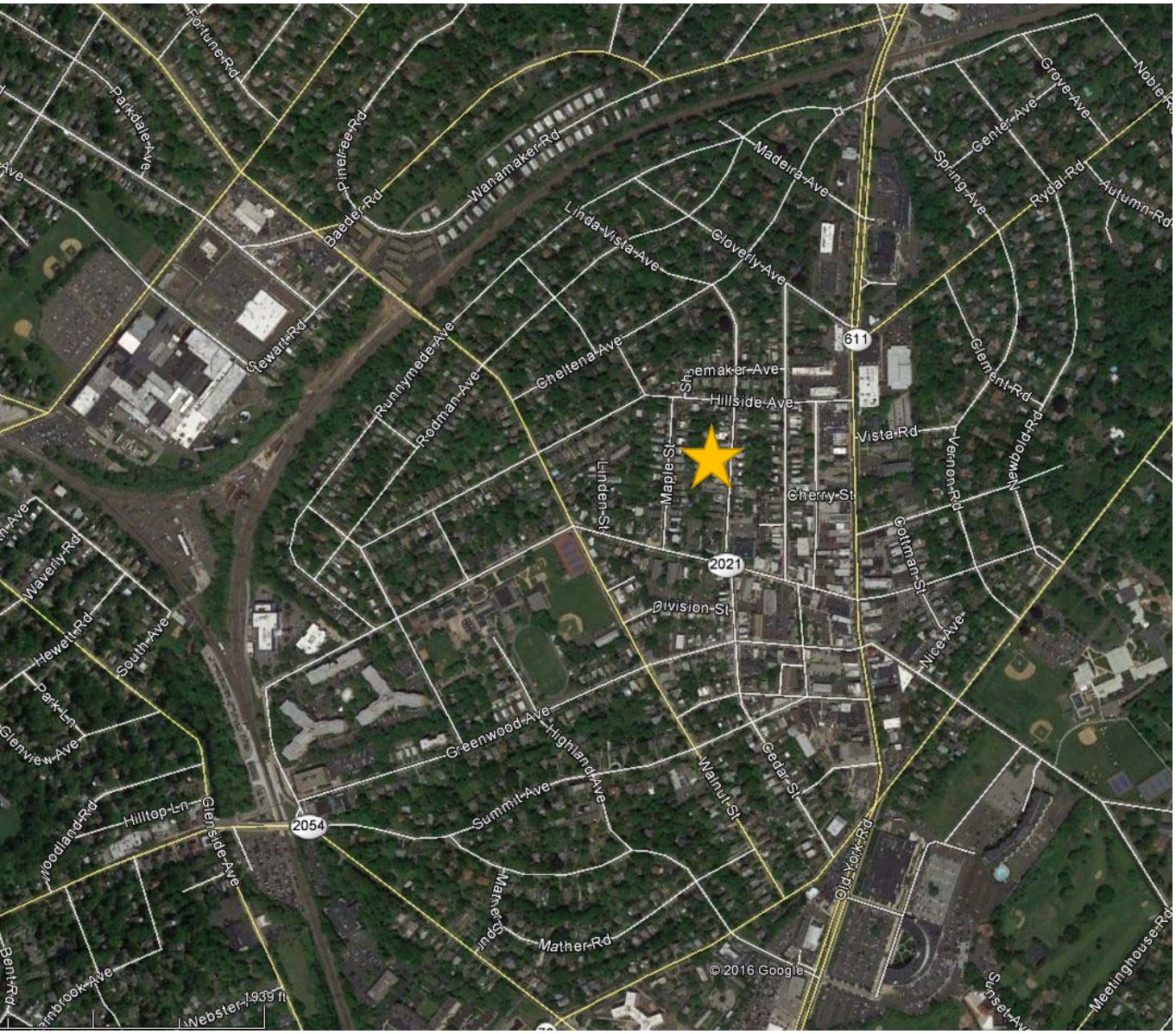
Background

- History of Philadelphia-area parks, from Penn's squares to pocket parks

- Theory:
  Whyte's "people attract people" and Warner's "current environmental crisis"

- Five design elements of "good" design for small public parks (Currie)

Accessibility	Provide easy, nearby access to nature for a greater number of people.
Specificity	The *specific* reason a design is appropriate in a *specific* location. Uniqueness comes from such things as historic, cultural, or geographic significance.
Authenticity	*Genius loci* - the spirit of the place - reflects the user's values and needs in the design process. A site must actually *be* the thing it is representing.
Adaptability	Reflects change over time - a sustainable model that provides for flexibility and continuity.
Functionality	Provide uses that respond to the surrounding population's wants and/or needs.



Jenkintown Context

433 and 435 Cedar Street

Site Analysis

Jenkintown Borough:

- Fully built-out first-ring suburb with historic buildings
- Fourth most dense municipality in Montgomery County
- Existing public open space: Town Square and school playground & fields

Property:

- 0.36 acres with two houses, garages, and driveway
- Mid-block property in denser residential area near commercial district
- No ESA Phase I environmental contamination concerns

Opportunities and Constraints for Jenkintown's Cedar Street Open Space

***Opportunities*:**

- Limited public open space
- Grants to assist in developing new open space
- Enthusiasm about new open space among majority of participating residents
- Increase permeable cover and habitat for birds and pollinators
- Property is half a block from “uptown” Jenkintown
- Property in a dense residential section of Jenkintown where residences tend to have smaller personal yards
- Local organizations could use the garages for storage
- Larger house is in acceptable condition and could be brought up to appropriate standards for reuse

***Constraints*:**

- Mid-block location could reduce visibility and access
- Property is fairly small at 0.36 acres
- Nearby residents concerned about noise, traffic, disturbance
- Borough does not have a large budget for construction or maintenance
- Previous land use as garages might have left contamination
- Existing buildings (433 Cedar, 435 Cedar, and the garages) will need to be upgraded and maintained, or demolished and removed

Case Studies of Comparable Parks

Jefferson Market Park, Manhattan: green oasis in dense urban area

Three Bears Park, Philadelphia: well-established playground and open space

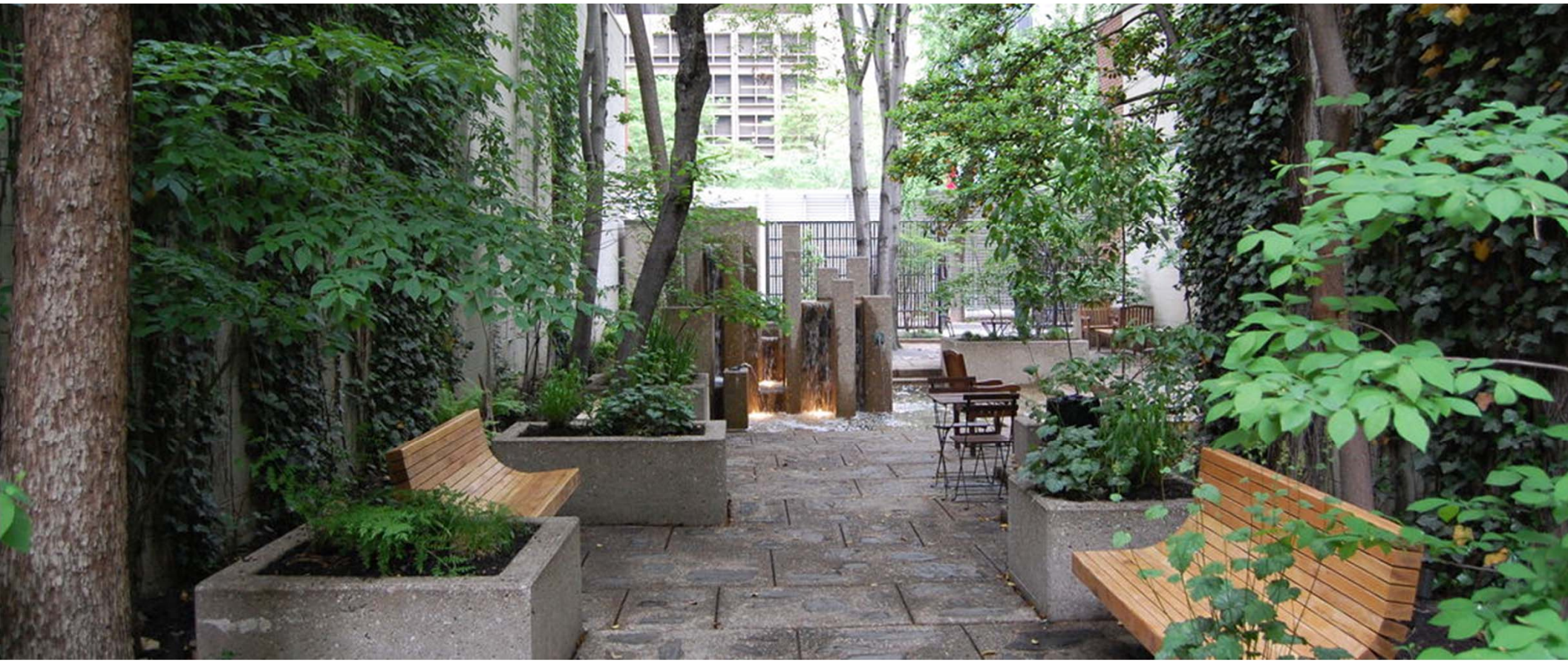
Linwood Park, Ardmore: sustainably designed, mixed-use space in suburbs

Jefferson Market Park

Three Bears Park

Linwood Park

Famous pocket parks

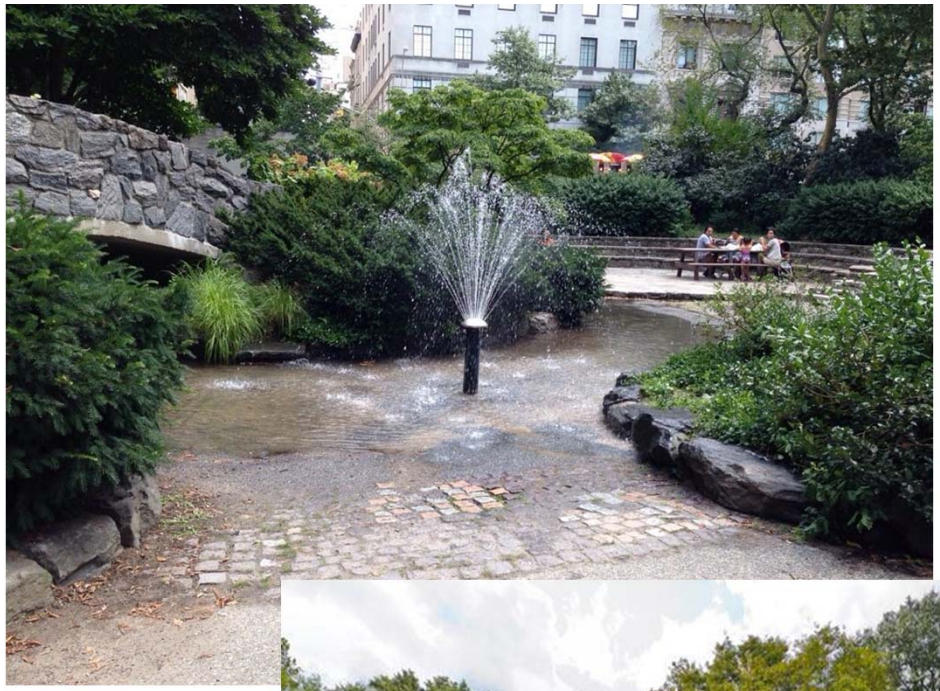


John Collins Park, Center City, Philadelphia: 0.1 acre

Famous pocket parks

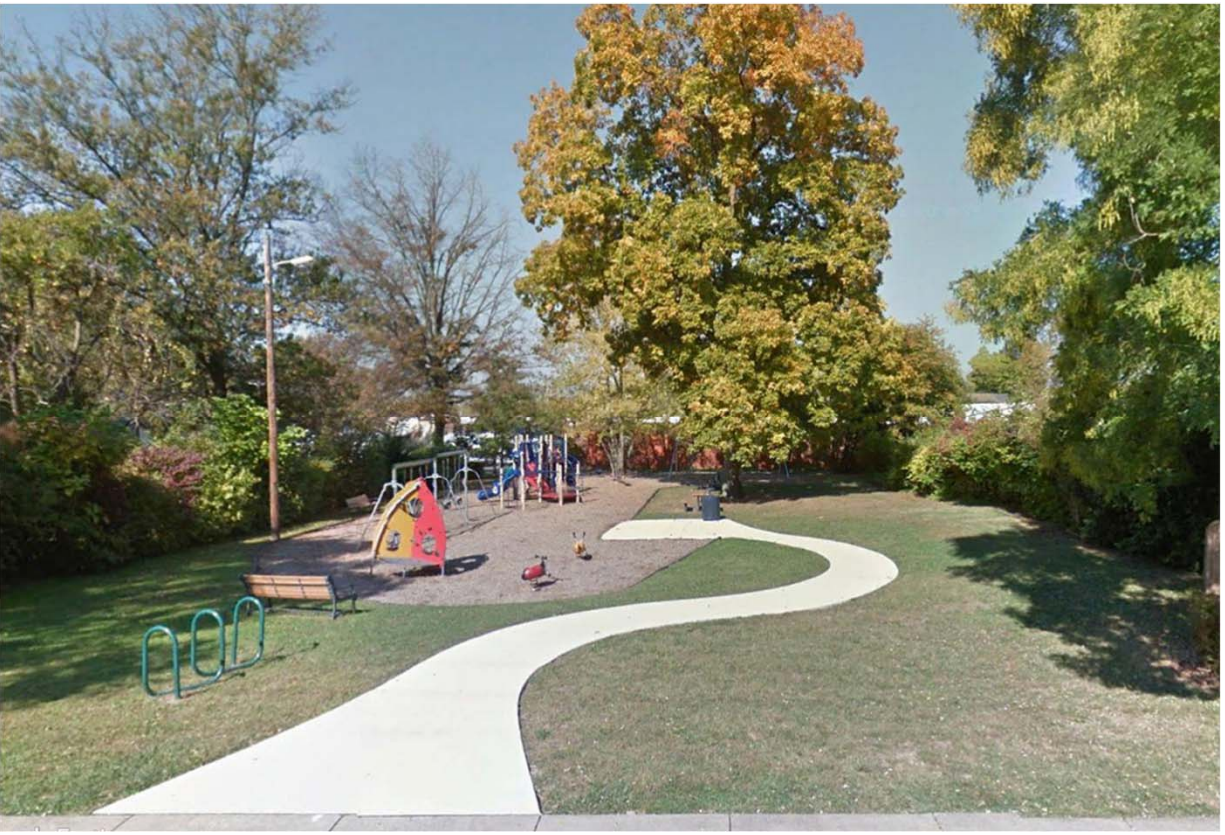
Paley Park, New York

Children's play space - more natural



Billy Johnson Playground, Central Park, New York

Children's play space - more manicured/ simple



Wee Walers, North Wales
One residential lot

Passive recreation

Jefferson Market Park, New York
0.4 acres

Passive recreation

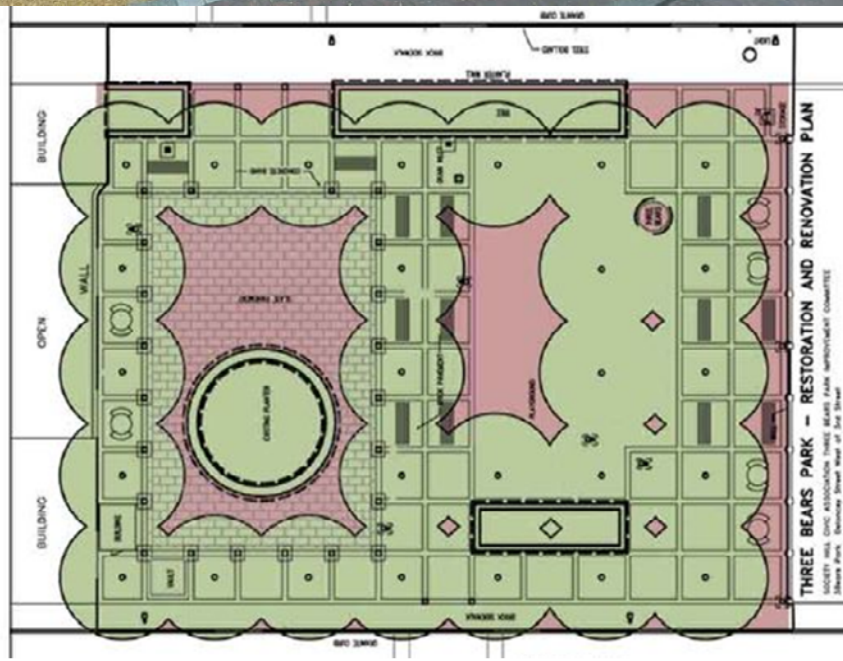
Linwood Park, Ardmore
1 acre

Mixed use

Cobble Hill Park, Brooklyn
0.58 acres

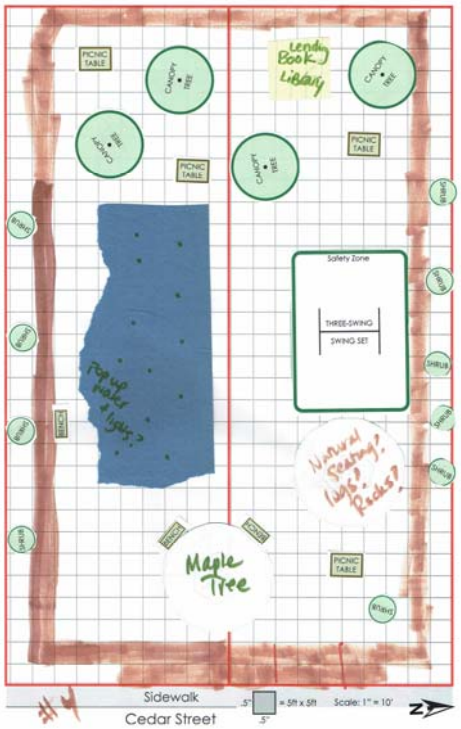
Mixed use

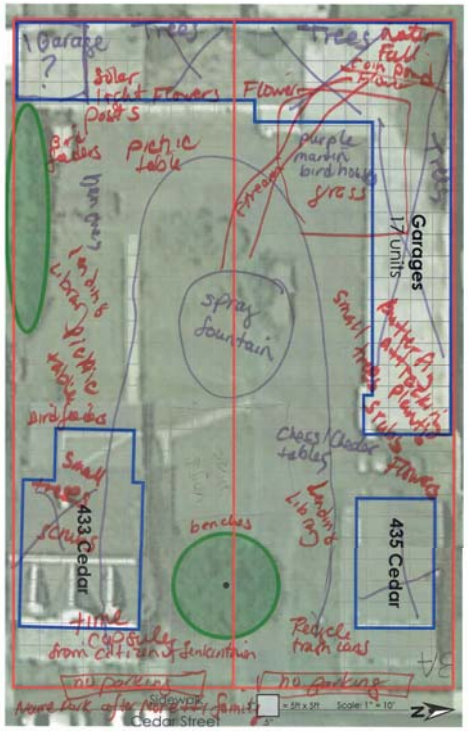
Three Bears (Delancey) Park, Philadelphia
0.4 acres

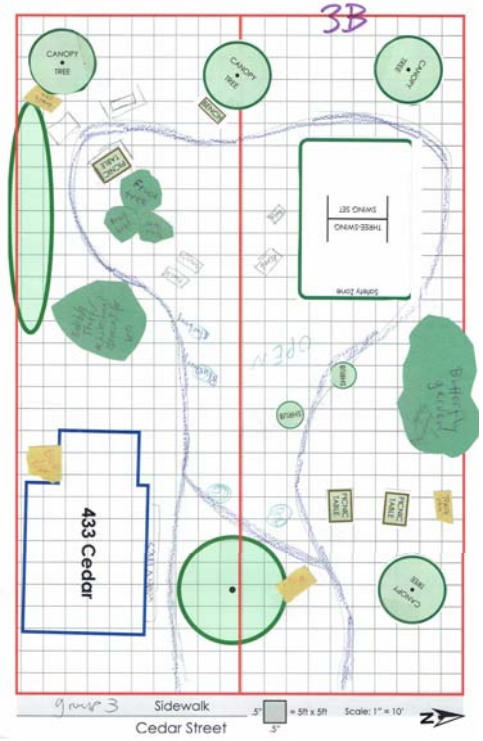


Public Feedback: Visioning Meeting

2/15/2017







- Intro
- Slideshow presentation
- General discussion
- Small-group workshop

Visioning Meeting:

Quantification of Public Feedback

Themes	Details	Mentioned in general discussion	Included in small-group plans
Water			**7**
	Waterfall	Y	2
	Fountain	Y	2
	Spray/splash/mist play feature	Y	2
	Stream		1
Hardscaping			**8**
	Loop path	Y	4
	Paved pad for food truck		1
	Paved patio/gathering area	Y	
	Permeable paving	Y	
	Repurposed brick from demolition	Y	
	Variety of path surfaces, widths		2
	Vehicle access		1
Terrain			**2**
	Mounds		1
	Multi-level design	Y	
	Sunken amphitheater/banked listening shell		1
Seating			**14**
	Benches	Y	5
	Chess tables		2
	Hammocks		1
	Natural: logs or rocks	Y	2
	Movable tables/chairs	Y	1
	Picnic tables		3
Vegetation			**28**
	Edible: bushes (blueberries)		1
	Edible: fruit trees		1
	Flowering trees		2
	Flowers		2
	Green roof on garages		1
	Large trees/canopy	Y	6
	Meadow/butterfly garden	Y	3
	Native plants to attract birds	Y	2
	Privacy hedge	Y	1
	Retain existing Japanese maple	Y	4
	Shrubs		3
	Trellised vines		1
	Turf		1
Passive recreation			**4**
	Sunset views	Y	1
	"Calming park"/green oasis	Y	
	Secluded seating areas		2
	"Flexible space"	Y	1
Play and active recreation			**6**
	Bouldering wall		1
	Dog park	Y	
	Pathways to accommodate bike riding	Y	1
	Ping-pong table		1
	Play equipment from natural materials	Y	1
	Sand box	Y	
	Skate park	Y	
	Swing set		2
	Tot lot	Y	
Safety			**2**
	Close park at dusk	Y	
	Increased police patrols	Y	
	Install fence and locking gate	Y	1
	Motion-sensitive lighting		1
	Road striping mid-block	Y	
	Traffic speed cushion	Y	
Furniture and amenities			**15**
	Art/sculpture	Y	
	Bat box		2
	Bike racks		1
	Bird feeders		1
	Bird houses		1
	Drinking fountain	Y	
	Hummingbird feeders		1
	Little library	Y	2
	Mural	Y	1
	Rain barrel	Y	
	Solar light posts	Y	2
	Time capsule		1
	Trash and recyling receptacles	Y	3
Structures			**5**
	Garages	Y	4
	433 Cedar	Y	1
Programming			**6**
	Block parties	Y	
	Board game lending library		1
	Tool lending library	Y	2
	Bicycle repair tool library	Y	1
	Yoga	Y	1
	Painting	Y	
	Educational environmental programs	Y	
	Movie showings	Y	
	Music	Y	1

Visioning Meeting General Conclusions

- A combination of a natural, green space for passive enjoyment with some limited space for active recreation or children's play.
- Site furnishings such as seating and play equipment made from natural or recycled materials, i.e., logs or boulders.
- Many people value the presence of birds in the neighborhood and would like for a park to enhance bird habitat, including installing native plants and trees.
- Because the location of the property may be out of the way, people want to attract users to the site, through programming (events, talks, parties) and furnishings (comfortable seating, picnic tables, play equipment, water features).
- Neighbors are concerned about disruptive use, including excessive noise from park visitors or their dogs, loud or inappropriate use by older children or teenagers, excessive light at night, and increased demand for parking. There is also concern about safety in the park.

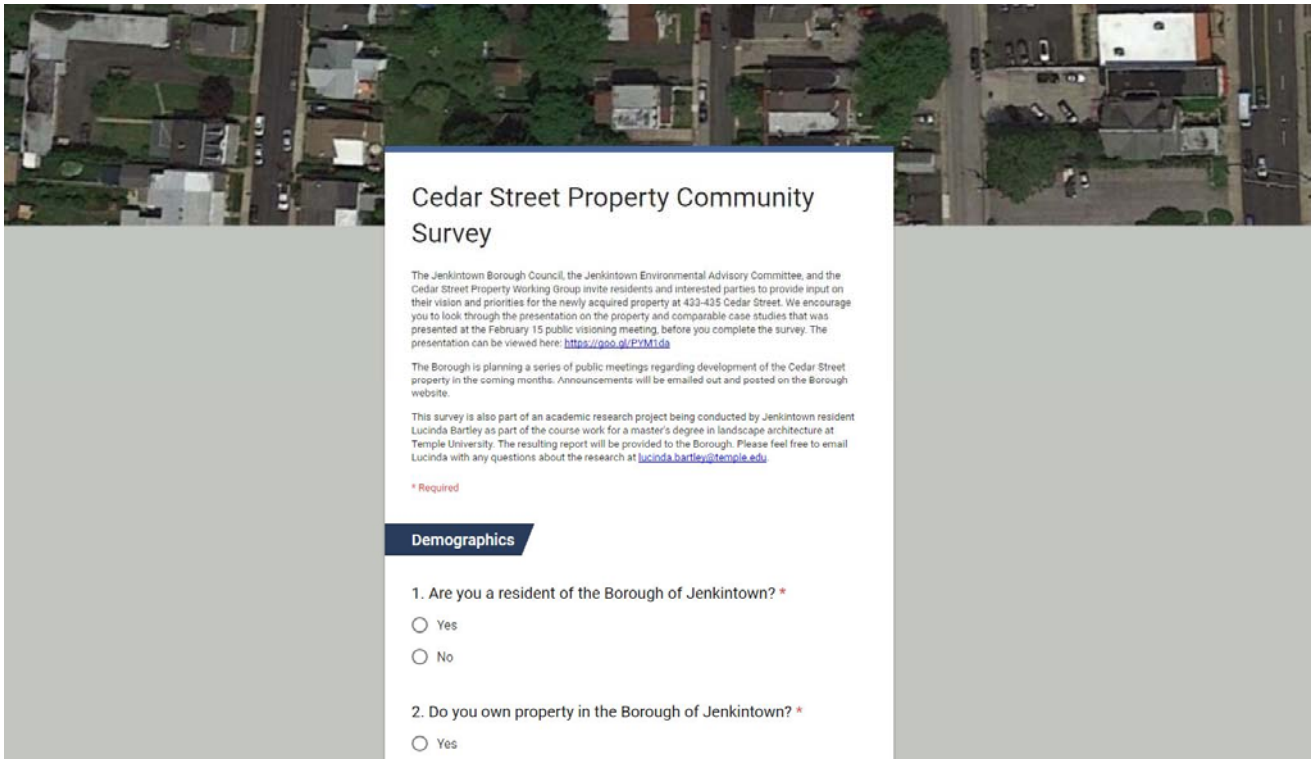
Public Feedback: Online Survey

3/31 through 4/11/2017

Survey covered:

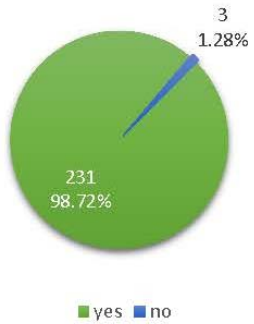
- Demographics
- Use and users
- Design to support use
- Sustainable/“green” elements

Ended with invitation to participate

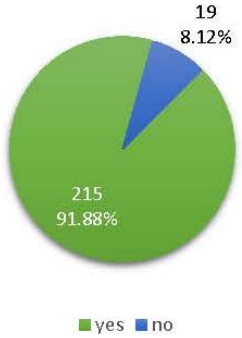


Demographics

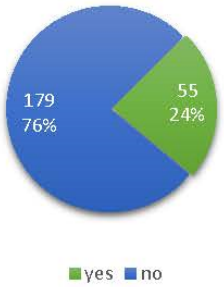
1. Are you a resident of the Borough of Jenkintown?
(n=234)



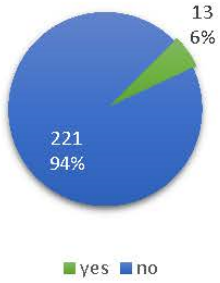
2. Do you own property in the Borough of Jenkintown?
(n=234)



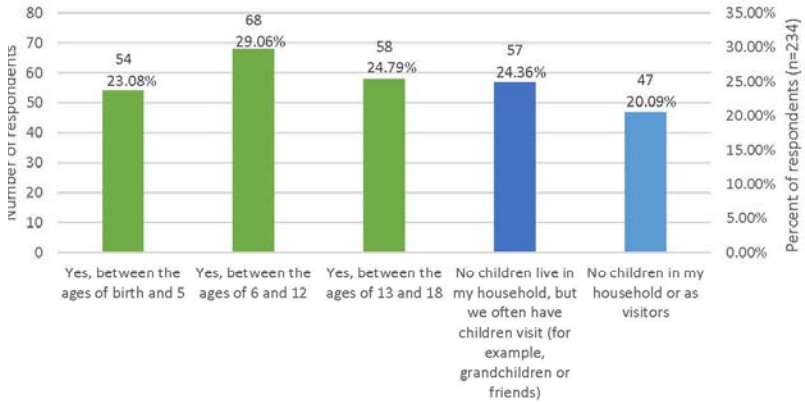
3. Do you work or own a business in the Borough of Jenkintown?
(n=234)



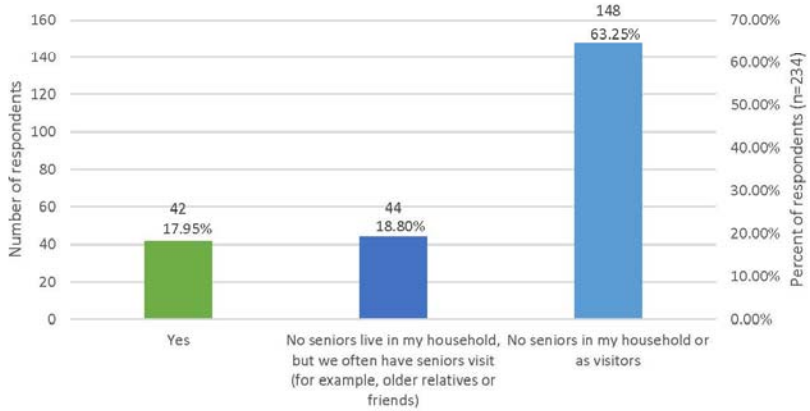
4. Do you live or own property on the 400 block of Cedar Street?
(n=234)



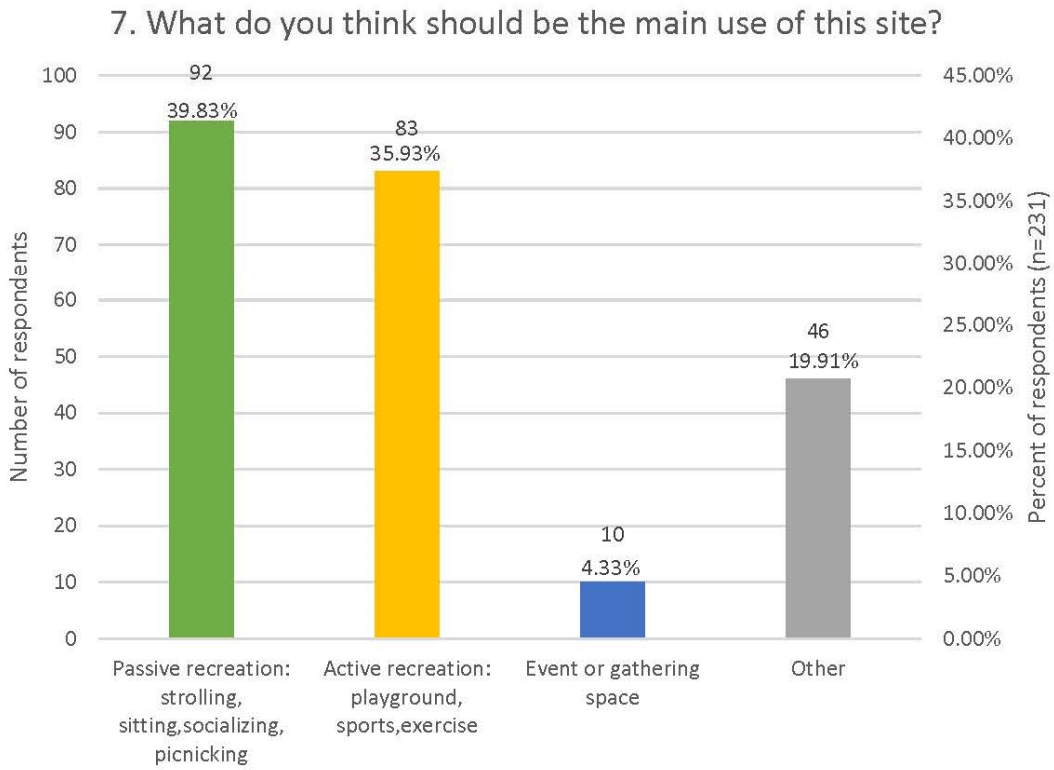
5. If you are a resident of Jenkintown, are there children in your household? (check all that apply)

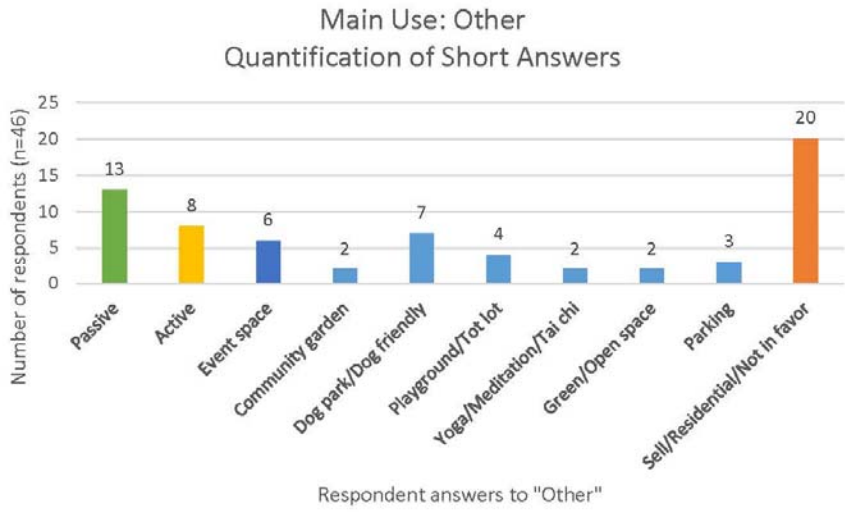


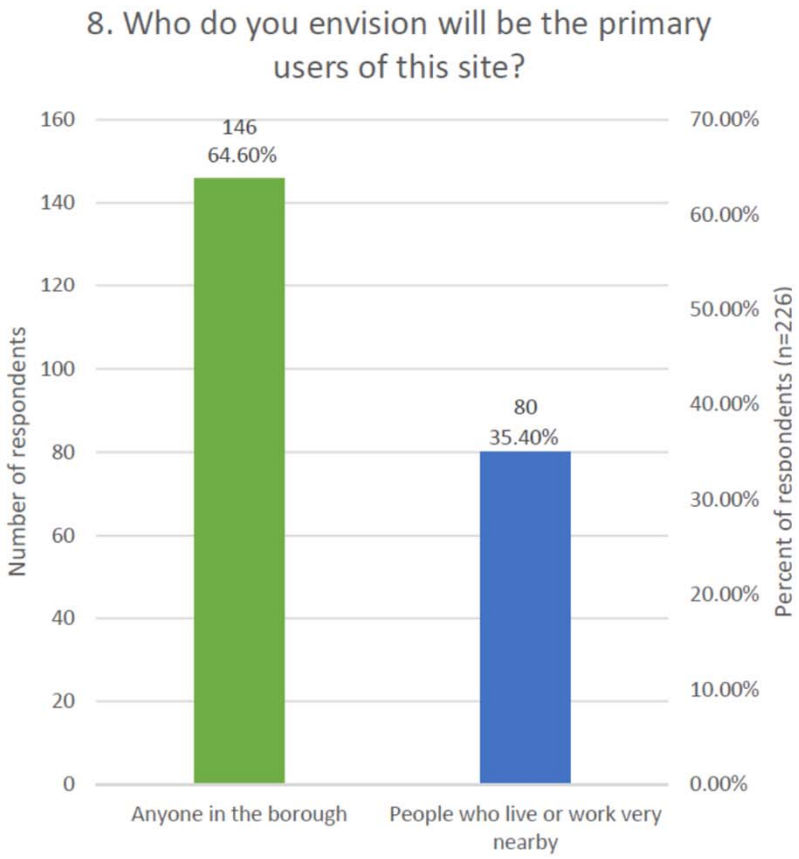
6. If you are a resident of Jenkintown, are there seniors aged 65 or older in your household?

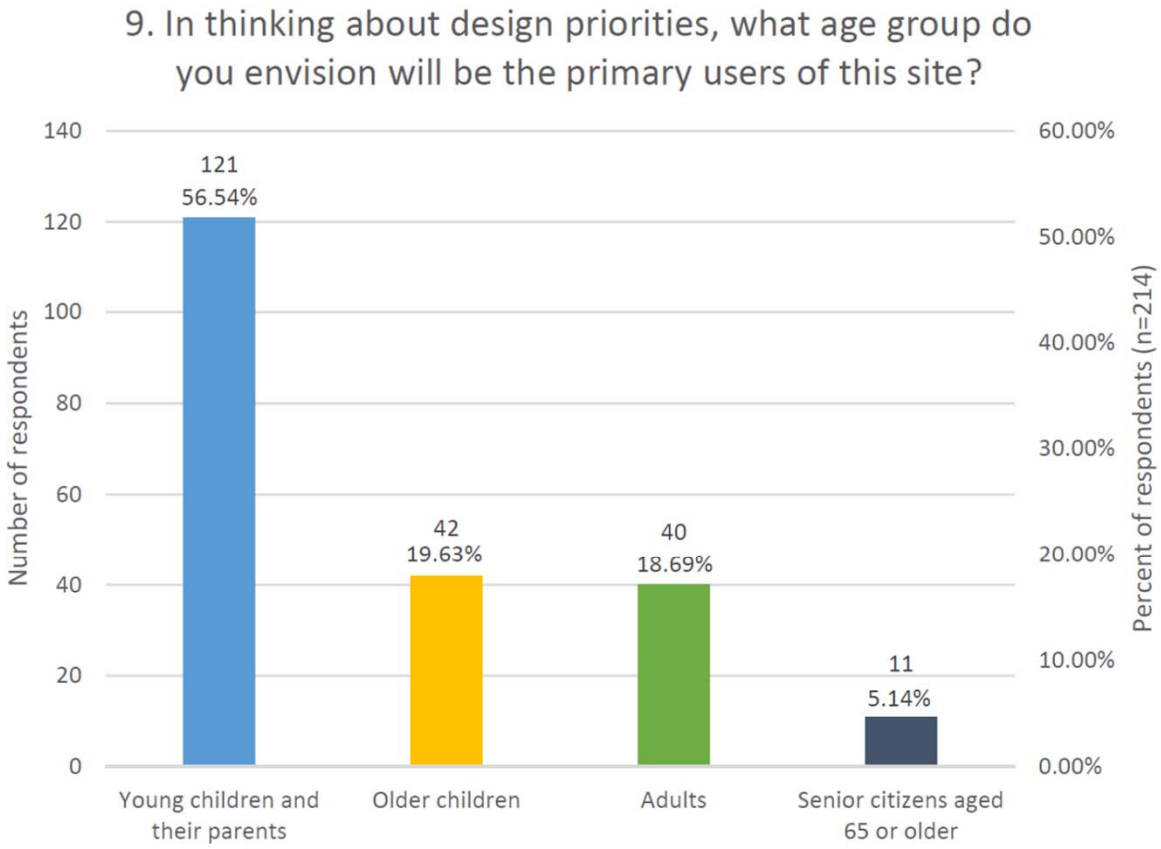


Use


7. What do you think should be the main use of this site?
Number of respondents
Percent of respondents (n=231)
92
39.83%
83
35.93%
10
4.33%
46
19.91%
Passive recreation: strolling, sitting,socializing, picnicking
Active recreation: playground, sports,exercise
Event or gathering space
Other


Main Use: Other
Quantification of Short Answers
Number of respondents (n=46)
13
8
6
2
7
4
2
2
3
20
Passive
Active
Event space
Community garden
Dog park/Dog friendly
Playground/Tot lot
Yoga/Meditation/Tai chi
Green/Open space
Parking
Sell/Residential/Not in favor
Respondent answers to "Other"


8. Who do you envision will be the primary users of this site?
Number of respondents
Percent of respondents (n=226)
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
70.00%
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%
146
64.60%
80
35.40%
Anyone in the borough
People who live or work very nearby


9. In thinking about design priorities, what age group do you envision will be the primary users of this site?
Number of respondents
Percent of respondents (n=214)
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
60.00%
50.00%
40.00%
30.00%
20.00%
10.00%
0.00%
121
56.54%
42
19.63%
40
18.69%
11
5.14%
Young children and their parents
Older children
Adults
Senior citizens aged 65 or older

11. Please describe your vision for the use of green open space at the Cedar Street property. What use do you think would best serve the neighborhood and residents of the Borough?

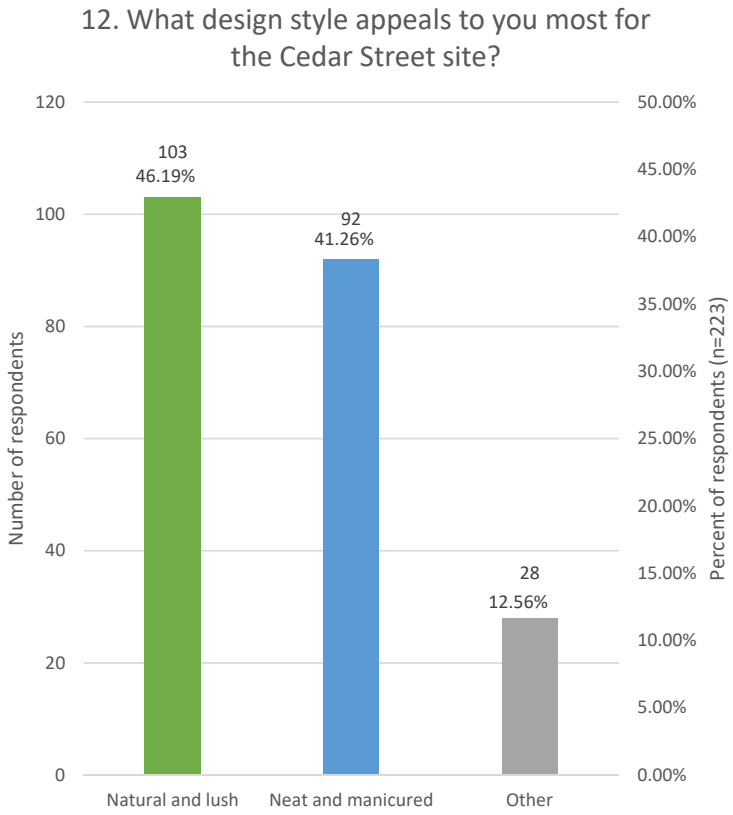
“A gathering place for families and older residents to play, rest, find natural beauty and connect with each other.”

“A small playground for younger children, open lawn to run around, seating area for eating, reading.”

“Native plantings and creation of habitat. Play place for teens and natural seating and play equipment.”

“Splash pad, picnic tables and covered pavilion-type space.”

“There aren't many spaces for my 10 & 7yr olds to walk with his friends and hang out in safe space. I would also like to be able to walk there with my small kids and have them be able to run around while I sit and chat with friends”

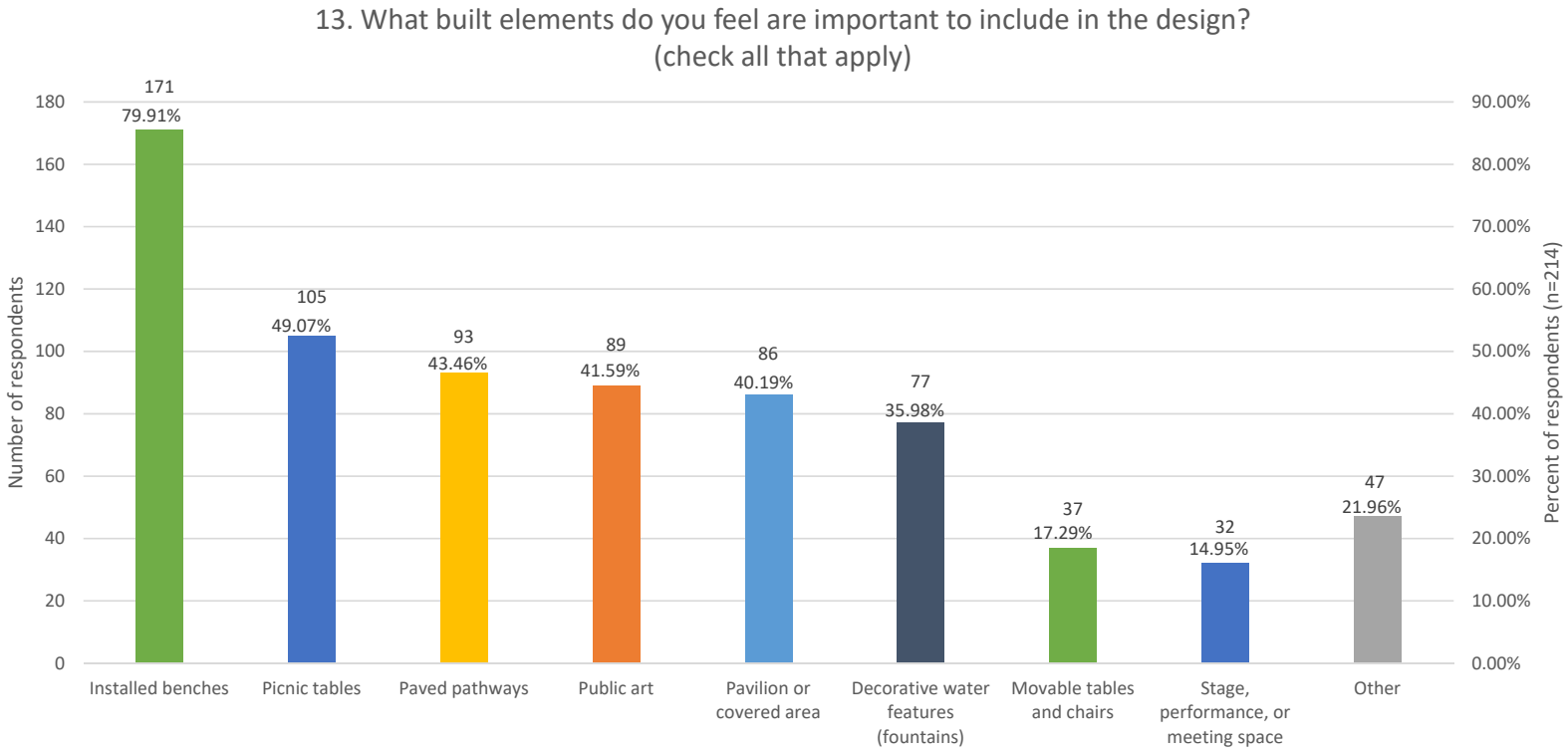


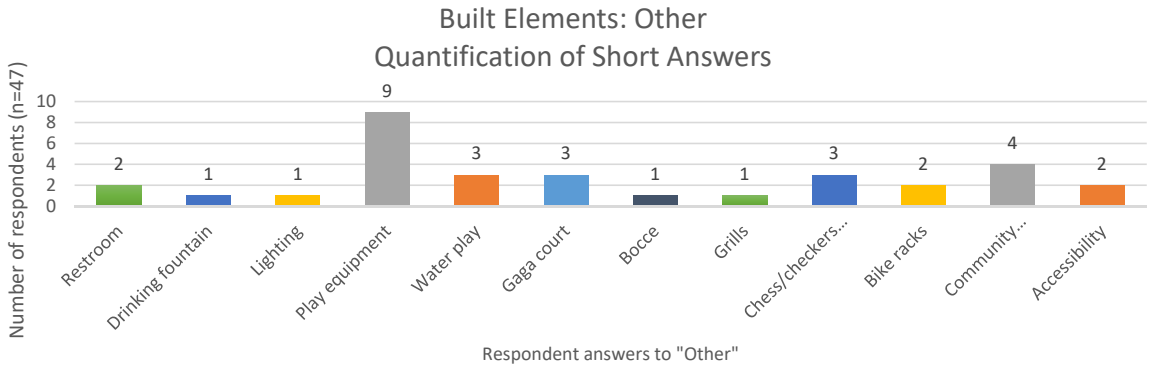
Design Style: Other
Short Answers (examples)

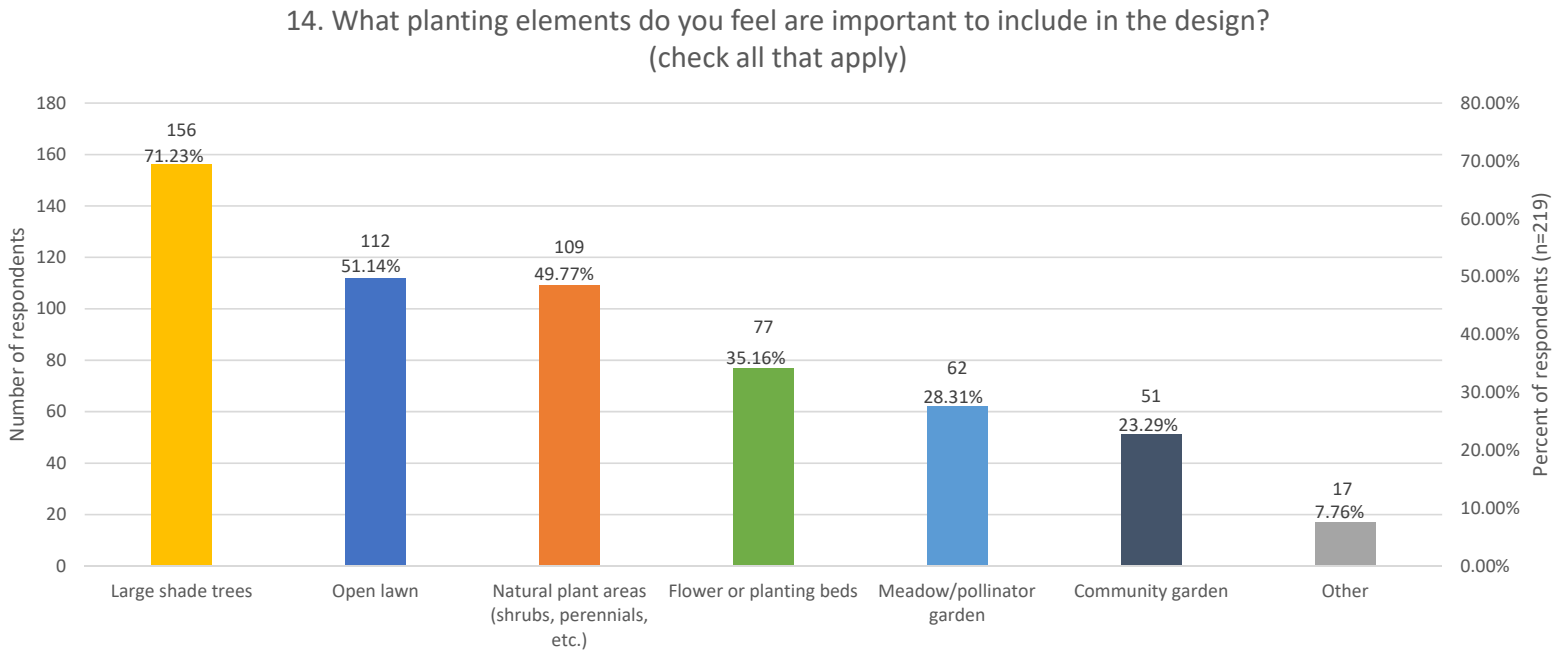
"I generally prefer natural landscapes, but in a dense neighborhood it will look better to have a neat, managed appearance."

"Controlled lushness"

"Natural gets overgrown very quickly and manicures requires too much maintenance so something in between."


13. What built elements do you feel are important to include in the design? (check all that apply)
Number of respondents
Percent of respondents (n=214)
0
20
40
60
80
100
120
140
160
180
0.00%
10.00%
20.00%
30.00%
40.00%
50.00%
60.00%
70.00%
80.00%
90.00%
171
79.91%
105
49.07%
93
43.46%
89
41.59%
86
40.19%
77
35.98%
37
17.29%
32
14.95%
47
21.96%
Installed benches
Picnic tables
Paved pathways
Public art
Pavilion or covered area
Decorative water features (fountains)
Movable tables and chairs
Stage, performance, or meeting space
Other


Built Elements: Other
Quantification of Short Answers
Number of respondents (n=47)
0
2
4
6
8
10
2
1
1
9
3
3
1
1
3
2
4
2
Restroom
Drinking fountain
Lighting
Play equipment
Water play
Gaga court
Bocce
Grills
Chess/checkers...
Bike racks
Community...
Accessibility
Respondent answers to "Other"

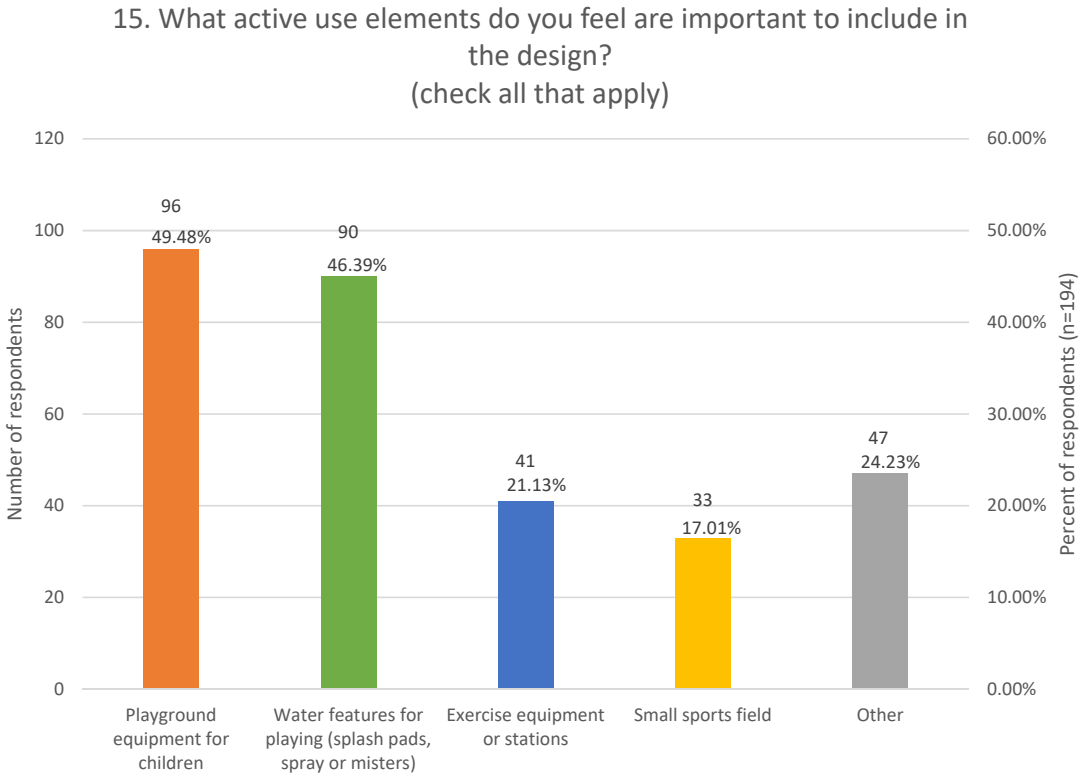


Planting Elements: Other
Short Answers (examples)

“DON'T do community garden without phase 2 environ study - former use raises concerns about growing food there. Likewise, please look into this before installing any stormwater infiltration.”

“Trees, natural plants...no community garden...ugly, weeds, upkeep...not a good idea.”

“is it too small for community garden? stormwater retention (rain garden) should be done.”



Active Elements: Other
Short Answers (examples)

"None"

"VERY IMPORTANT: playground equipment for children with special needs"

"gaga court"

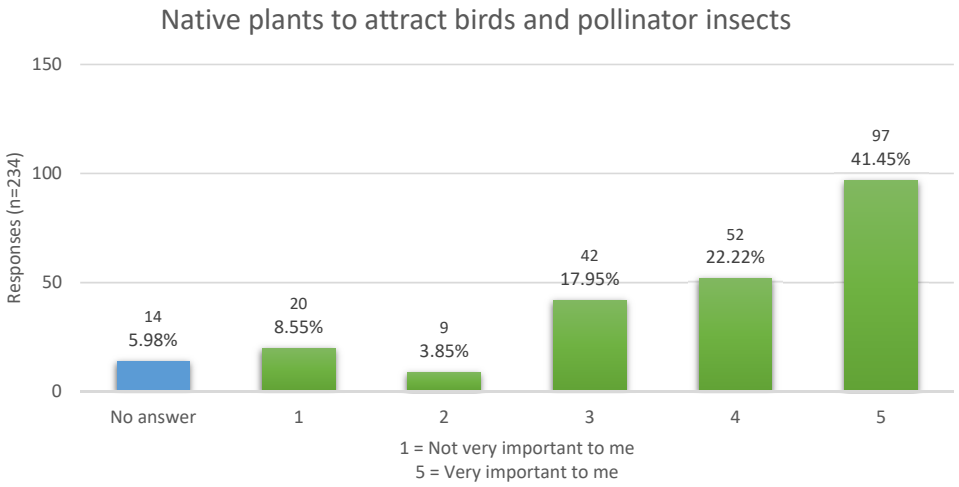
"bocce court(s)"

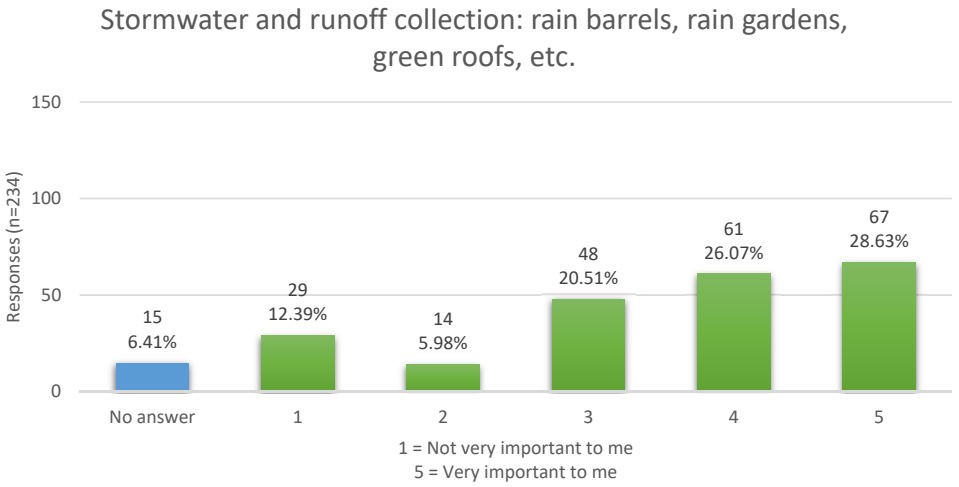
"Boulders or other natural materials for kids to climb"

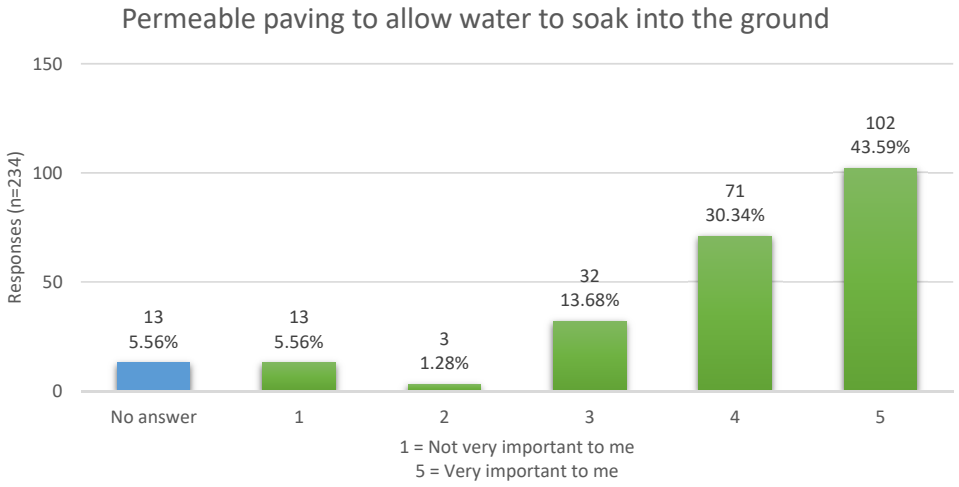
"Park swing. Book exchange."

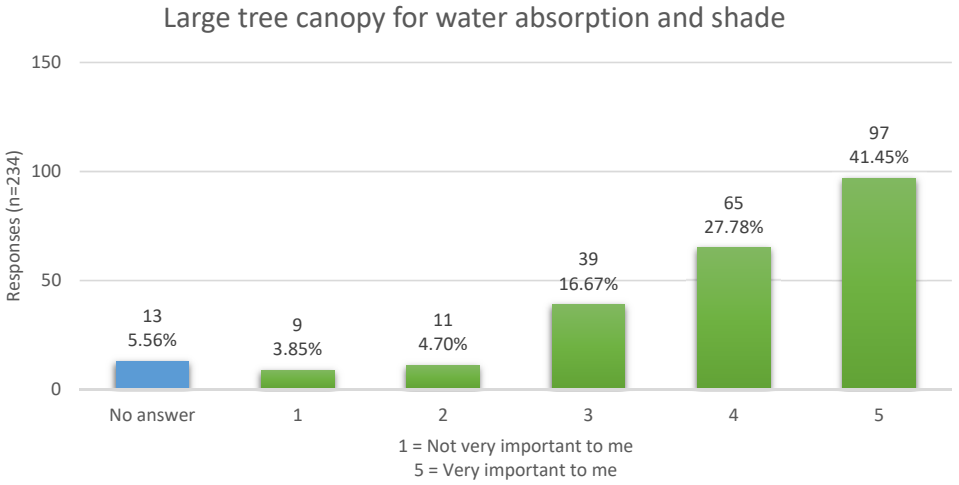
"walking paths, tree house/bridge and/or nature-based play area"

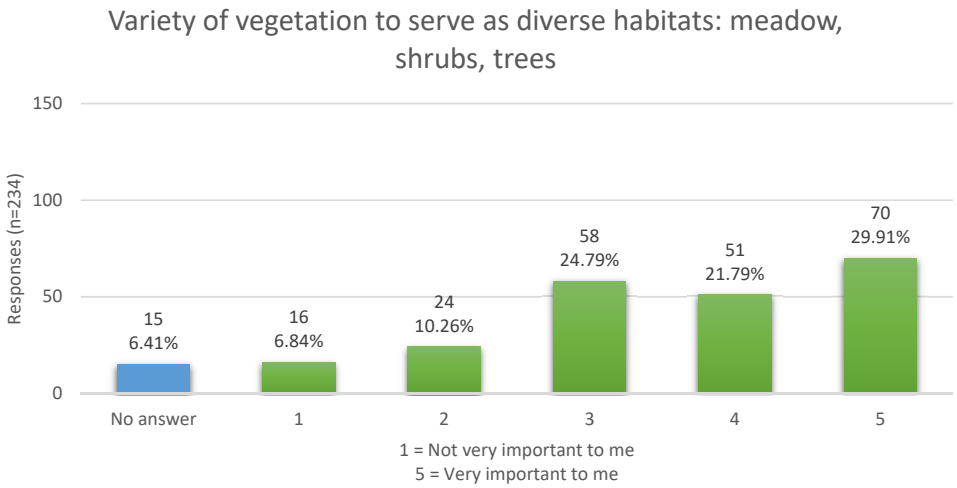
16. Please describe how important it is to you for the following "green" elements be included on the property:

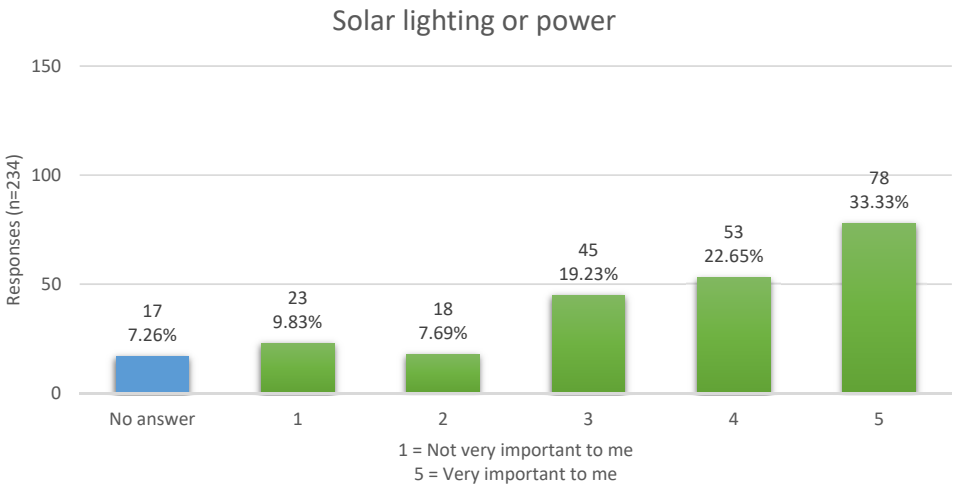


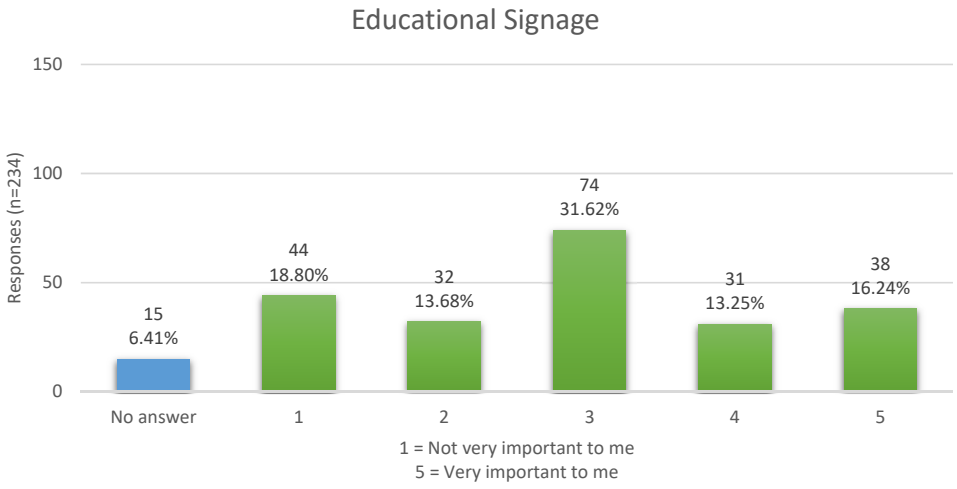


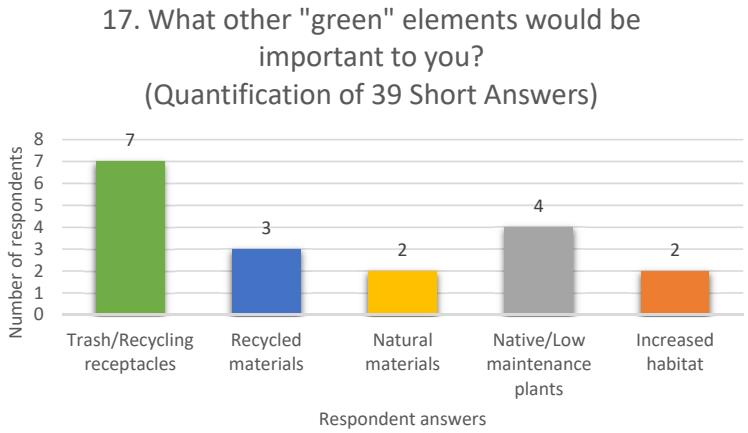




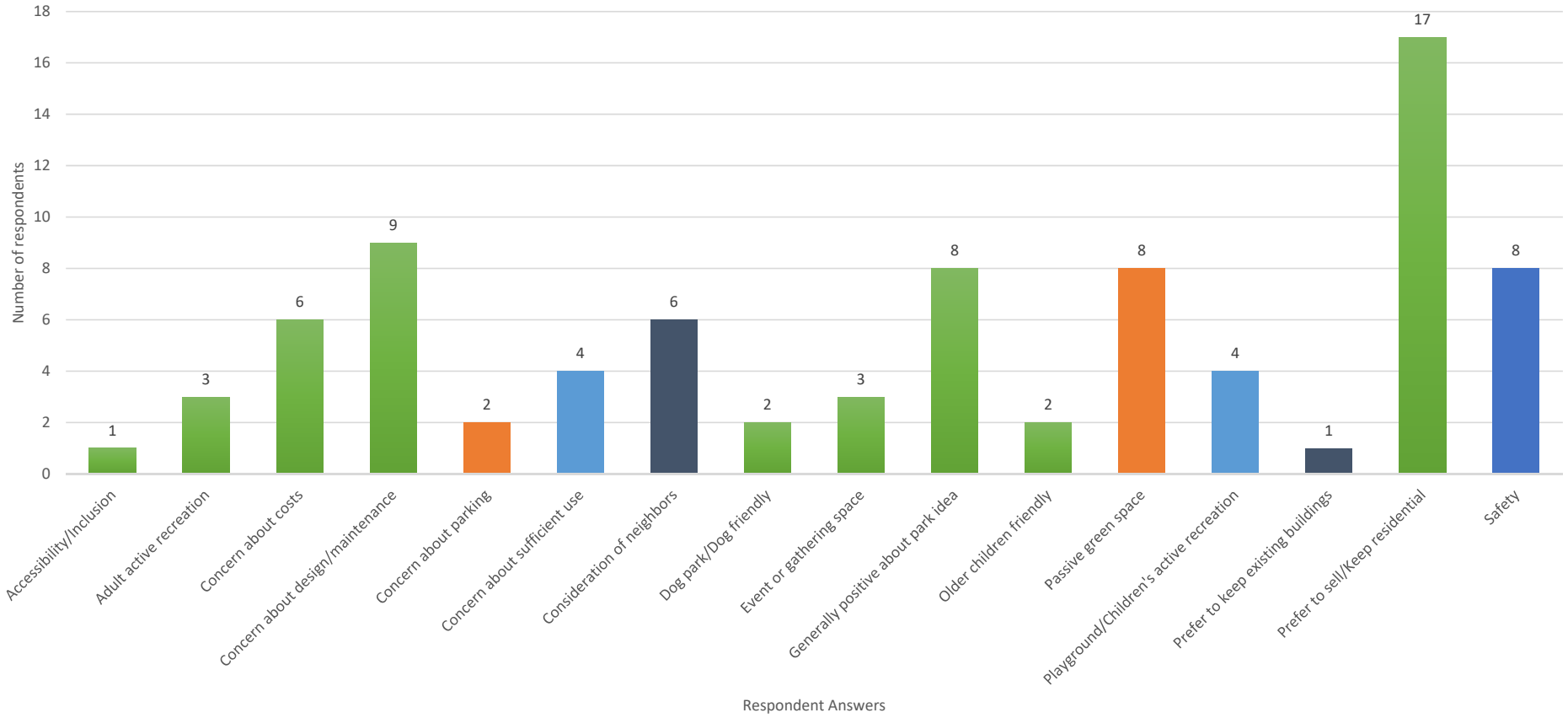

Variety of vegetation to serve as diverse habitats: meadow, shrubs, trees
Responses (n=234)
150
100
50
0
15
6.41%
16
6.84%
24
10.26%
58
24.79%
51
21.79%
70
29.91%
No answer
1
2
3
4
5
1 = Not very important to me
5 = Very important to me


Solar lighting or power
Responses (n=234)
150
100
50
0
17
7.26%
23
9.83%
18
7.69%
45
19.23%
53
22.65%
78
33.33%
No answer
1
2
3
4
5
1 = Not very important to me
5 = Very important to me


Educational Signage
Responses (n=234)
150
100
50
0
15
6.41%
44
18.80%
32
13.68%
74
31.62%
31
13.25%
38
16.24%
No answer
1
2
3
4
5
1 = Not very important to me
5 = Very important to me


17. What other "green" elements would be important to you?
(Quantification of 39 Short Answers)
Number of respondents
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
7
3
2
4
2
Trash/Recycling receptacles
Recycled materials
Natural materials
Native/Low maintenance plants
Increased habitat
Respondent answers

18. Do you have any other thoughts, ideas, or concerns about the development of the Cedar Street property that you would like to share? We welcome your ideas!
(Quantification of 71 Short Answers)



Public Feedback: Results

Use:	mixed passive and active
	don't duplicate
	accommodate different age groups
Design:	path and seating
	large trees AND lawn
	natural materials – seating / kids' play
Ecology:	bird habitat
	stormwater

Recommendations

visibility -- pedestrian traffic -- events

native plants -- existing maple -- existing house -- neighbors

school mural -- Tyson pear -- music

multi-use areas -- intergenerational -- movable furniture -- Friends group

comfortable seating -- room to gather -- safety