COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS SUMMARY

Introduction

As part of the community outreach process for the Palo Alto Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan (PTOSR Plan), MIG facilitated a series of three community workshops, on October 28, 29 and December 2, 2014. A total of 65 people participated in the interactive polling, and 57 signed in for all workshops. The workshops are one of several community outreach activities in the PTOSR planning process, all meeting the goal of fostering an accessible and community-driven planning process.

The objective of the community workshops were to obtain feedback about the character and design of Palo Alto’s parks and to discuss priorities (what to keep and enhance, which features to add). Input was collected through an interactive real-time polling activity, facilitated group discussions and comment cards.

Initially, two workshops were planned and scheduled to occur in October, and rooms were booked. As the workshops approached, the San Francisco Giants made it to the World Series. The final two games of the World Series were scheduled on the same nights as the workshops, which had already been advertised. Palo Alto added a third workshop, in anticipation that the World Series might discourage participation. Because City meeting rooms are so heavily used, the earliest a suitable room could be scheduled was December 2.

Following is a consolidated summary of the three workshops.

Visual Preference Survey Results

Community workshop participants were asked to indicate their preferences for a series of images in a PowerPoint presentation using an audience response system. This technology allows participants to use hand-held “clickers” to indicate their response to a question displayed in a presentation. The results of the poll are displayed instantly and anonymously in the PowerPoint presentation. The results of this exercise will inform recommendations at the park level and in developing design guidelines for the system.

The images in the visual preference survey were selected to represent various design approaches for parks, open spaces and trails. Participants were instructed to vote based on how well they thought each approach would work in Palo Alto. The answer choices were “I really like it,” “I would consider it,” “No way,” and “I’m not sure.” On the following pages of this summary are the visual preference survey images displayed with the polling results. As previously noted,
the results from all three meetings are aggregated. At each meeting, the facilitator prompted a brief discussion about some the images after participants’ votes to clarify responses. Each image is assigned a letter for reference purposes only.

**Figure A**

![Figure A](image)

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure

**Figure B**

![Figure B](image)

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure
Figure C

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure

Figure D

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure
**Figure E**

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure

**Figure F**

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure
Figure G

Figure H
Figure K

Figure L
Figure Q

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure

Figure R

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure
**Figure S**

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure

**Figure T**

A. I really like it
B. I would consider it
C. No way
D. I’m not sure
Figure U

- A. I really like it
- B. I would consider it
- C. No way
- D. I’m not sure

Figure V

- A. I really like it
- B. I would consider it
- C. No way
- D. I’m not sure
Small Group Discussion: Priorities for the Future

Workshop participants were asked to consider, record their responses to, and discuss the three questions below as a small group.

1. What features of Palo Alto’s parks, trails, open space and recreation system should be protected/preserved? (note the specific location/park if relevant)
2. Where do you see opportunities to improve or enhance features or programs that exist in the system? (note the specific location/park if relevant)
3. What new features or programs should be added to the system? (note the specific location/park if relevant)

Highlights and themes from each discussion we graphically recorded by MIG facilitators during the group discussions and are summarized below.

![Community workshop participants at the October 29 workshop.]

Protect and Preserve
Participants’ discussion about aspects of the park system that should be preserved and protected largely fell in two categories: protection of natural areas and features, and preservation of specific recreation facilities. There was also some discussion about preserving the community-designed or community-driven features in the system, such as Bol Park and the community gardens. Some of the specific suggestions and ideas within each theme are listed below:

**Open spaces and natural spaces**
- Rinconada – redwood trees
- Habitats: birds/bird hot migration spots
- Bol Park - Matadero Creek
- Vegetation and stormwater management
- Foothills park trails and fishing pond

**Recreation facilities and spaces**
- Sports fields and the quality of the fields
- Baylands trail
- Organized evening activities – gyms in Cubberley, lighted soccer fields
- User amenities – restrooms, water fountains, benches
- Iconic play structures
- Community gardens
Enhance and Improve
Workshop participants discussed aspects of Palo Alto’s park system that could be improved or enhanced. General comments included the desire for equitable maintenance across the parks as well as the need for universal design and improved accessibility. There were several comments expressing the need for new/more restrooms and one comment discouraging more restrooms. The comments fell under several themes ranging in scale and specificity. The comments below are categorized by themes.

Recreation
- Improve capacity for multi-sports
- More space for basketball; basketball tennis court combo
- A second community pool
- More tennis court capacity

Park furnishings
- More accessible and comfortable
- Allows for flexibility
- Locate closer to play places for supervision
- Need more spaces for groups to gather throughout the system
- Water fountains to allow for refillable water bottles

Nature and habitat
- More native species and habitat for pollinators
- Wetlands/creek rehabilitation and connect with parks
- Trees
- Nature play
- Environmental education: Improve interpretive centers (Baylands)
- Shorebird habitat near old marines
- Less intense lighting (Edgewood Plaza)
- Pesticide/herbicide-free landscaping

Dog parks
- More dog parks throughout the city with water features – greener, bigger and more interesting
- Post signs with rules about dogs
- More dog supervision
- Set times and spaces for dog access and assure habitats are protected

Connectivity
- Interconnectedness.
- Combine bike, people, creek
- Coordinate with shuttle and schools to get students from schools to after school activities
- Palo Alto is part of 3 of the 4 regional trail systems – enhance to help get traffic off road

Baylands
- Need better art, layout – like San Carlos
- Trail is dull, unprotected
- Shelters/shade structures
New
Participants discussed the new features or programs that should be added to the system. The conversations were creative and thoughtful. Universal access, multi-generational facilities, flexibility and environmental education emerged as areas of opportunities for new programs and facilities. Participants also suggested new or multi-use facilities for a range of sports and recreation activities and suggested expanding the use of existing recreation facilities with longer hours. Outreach to school students was mentioned as important to designing and programming parks that meet student’s needs.

Habitat
- Plants in parking strips
- Butterfly park – Ramos
- Add islands for shorebirds
- Habitat structures (non-plants)
- Nature Play and hands-on experiences (e.g., tadpole ponds)
- Environmental education: demonstration gardens

Recreation facilities for the following activities:
- Cricket
- Lacrosse facilities
- Disc golf
- Archery
- Kite-flying
- Pickleball
- Baseball -- batting cages
- Outdoor exercise classes (Mitchell)
- Ping pong tables
- Small tables for iPads, chess, etc.
- More coexistence
- Gym space
- Tennis center at Rinconada
- Water activities in the bay – kayaking, paddle-boarding
- Space for kids and pick-up games that is not continuously reserved for leagues

Meet the needs of multi-cultural and multi-lingual park users
- Multi-cultural and multi-lingual outreach and input into process
- Spaces for large family groups to gather
- More off-leash areas
- Better facilities for dog owners

Dog facilities
- More dog parks, especially downtown
- More off-leash areas
- Better facilities for dog owners

Maintenance
- User group maintenance – especially for fields
- Engage neighborhood association in care of local park
- WiFi in parks: benefits and drawbacks
- More restrooms
- Light more fields, later at night

Other
- Add café at Byxbee
- Food truck hubs
- Memorial groves
- Parklets
- Solar panels
- WiFi in parks: benefits and drawbacks
- More restrooms
- Light more fields, later at night