



Kossuth Playground

📍 East Mosholu Parkway North between Jerome Avenue and Van Cortlandt Avenue, Bronx, NY

Community Visioning Report

April 2016

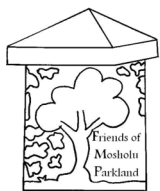


MOSHOLU PARKLAND: REDISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Kossuth Playground Community Visioning Report

APRIL 2016

PLANNING & VISIONING LED BY



**Friends of
Mosholu
Parkland**

*Made possible by the City Parks Foundation,
thanks to Councilman Andrew Cohen and
the Parks Equity Initiative of the New York
City Council under the leadership of Speaker
Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito.*

MADE POSSIBLE BY

**PARTNERSHIPS
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A joint program of NYC Parks and City Parks Foundation.



A part of the People Make Parks project

REPORT PREPARED BY

NIED STRATEGIES
Neighborhood Initiatives & Economic Development Strategies

COVER PHOTO CREDITS

Select photos by Melanie Rieders



Hungarian folk art symbol.

Philosophy of the Friends of Mosholu Parkland

The interconnecting landscaped enclaves on Mosholu fosters cohesion, embracing the diverse neighborhoods in hopes of a cleaner, safer environment, strengthening social ties and spurring economic and housing development for a better quality of life.

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Acknowledgements and Introduction

This material is based on work graciously funded by Council Member Andrew Cohen, the New York City Council's Parks Equity Initiative, the Partnerships for Parks Capacity Fund Grant, and community and public donations. Our work was also made possible through the support of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation Bronx Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa.

In this limited space, it is simply impossible to give the names of the large numbers of friends and well-wishers who provided invaluable cooperation indirect and directly help assist us in carrying out this visioning event .

We owe a deep gratitude to Partnerships for Parks Community Visioning & Planning Manager, Le'alani Boykin, and the People Make Parks Program for helping our group with the logistics of the visioning as well as providing the resources that were needed to achieve a successful and important community event.

We are personally obliged and highly grateful to the following individuals and programs that guided us, provided us with extra resources, and took on more than they anticipated to make this project a success:

From the NYC Parks Department: Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, Bronx Borough Commissioner, Mike Grattan, Deputy Chief of Operations, Leenda Bonilla, Bronx Outreach Coordinator, Kathleen Martin, Million Trees Program.

The Partnerships for Parks staff and Grants & Resources Program.

Our local elected officials that have been instrumental through-



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The board members of Bronx Community Board 7 and their assistance in hosting meetings and assistance at the visioning session, especially Barbara Stronczer and Helen Hartman Kutnowsky.

The following community based organizations for their assistance:

Mosholu Preservation Corporation, The COVE, Norwood News, Bronx Green-Up, and the NYC Feral Cat Initiative.

We are thankful to COFFEED, a local small business owned by Frank Raffaele, for the donation of coffee and black/white cookies, and to Fernando Tirado of NIED Strategies, Inc.

Our interactive park entertainers:

Steven Oates- Guitarist, Catherine Gasta –“Mime for Hire”, and to a Norwood small business, “Popular Magic Parties” for their balloons and face painting activities.

The Friends of Kossuth Playground, especially Barry Fedebagha and his family .

The Friends of Williamsbridge Oval especially Sheila Sanchez, Tancy and Anthony Rodriguez, and Jennie and Abby Skaggs for doing all the arts and crafts.

And last but certainly not least, to the members of the Friends of Mosholu Parkland, especially Carmen Mendez, David Claudio and his workers; Emily Quaranta for creating the “eye” flyer, Sandra Alvarez, Lorita Watson, and Daniel Cheveyo.

~Elizabeth Quaranta, President Friends of Mosholu Parkland

NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Kossuth Playground is located in the northwest section of the Bronx within the boundaries of Council District 11. It is situated along the north service road of Mosholu Parkway and joining the neighborhoods of Bedford Park to the south and west with Norwood to the north and east. Below is a brief history of these areas.

Mosholu Parkway

Mosholu is an Algonquian word (the language of some North American Indian groups) that means “smooth stones” or “small stones” for the nearby creek now known as Tibbet’s Brook.

The Parkway began in the late 19th century when New York City bought several underdeveloped lands in the Bronx to build park space and parkways between 1888 and 1890.

The movement to create more parks in the city began in 1881, when John Mullaly, a former newspaper reporter and editor, and a group of citizens concerned with widespread urban growth, formed the New York Park Association. The group’s lobbying efforts

helped the passage of the New Parks Act in 1884, which funded the acquisition of several major underdeveloped lands with the purpose of creating parks and parkways.

Today Mosholu Parkway connects the Bronx Park to Van Cortlandt Park and stretches from Allerton Avenue to Gun Hill Road, with an extension north through Van Cortlandt Park.

Bedford Park

Over 150 years ago, Bedford Park began as an area of farmland owned by Leonard Jerome —



Photo credit: Fernando P. Tirado

Winston Churchill's grandfather. Jerome sold the Bedford Park tract in the 1850s and he and August Belmont, Sr. began to build the Jerome Park Race-

course, which is now the Jerome Park Reservoir. Twenty years after the sale, a group of developers built a suburban community to the east and named it Bedford after the London suburb.

The Reservoir project was completed in 1906 and in 1914, the Grand Concourse & Boulevard

was completed. In 1917, the Jerome Avenue subway line was extended to serve Bedford Park.

Today, Bedford Park is an ethnically diverse community that is home to a number of prestigious high schools, colleges, and some of the oldest churches in the city.

Norwood

Norwood began as a dairy farm owned by the Varian family. It is commonly believed that the neighborhood’s name comes from the name “North Woods.” In fact, several Revolutionary War battles were fought in this once densely wooded area, and the foreign heroes of the time have been immortalized in the names of local streets (DeKalb, Rochambeau, and Steuben Avenues).

Today, Norwood is home to several major institutions and landmarks such as the Montefiore Health System and Williamsbridge Oval Park.

Other landmarks in the Norwood neighborhood include the Valentine-Varian House, which is home to the Museum of Bronx History; and the old Williamsbridge Reservoir Keeper’s House, which was bought and restored by the Mosholu Preservation Corporation, the community development arm of Montefiore, for use as a community space.

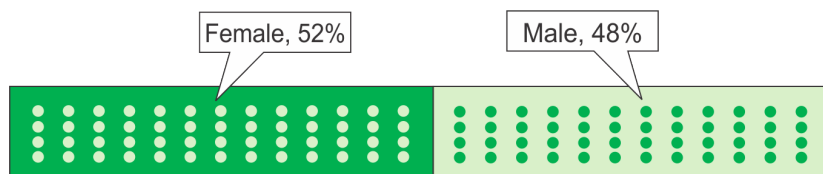
NEIGHBORHOOD DEMOGRAPHICS

The community surrounding Kossuth playground is a diverse and young population. The area around the playground consists predominantly of mid-density residential units, with one and two family homes scattered throughout many of the side streets.

A subset of City Council District 11 was identified to identify which residents would benefit the most from capital improvements to the playground. This subset consists of five (5) census tracts along the parkway, two in Norwood and three in Bedford Park, lying between Jerome Avenue to the north and Webster Avenue to the south; all within a 5-minute walking distance to the parkway.

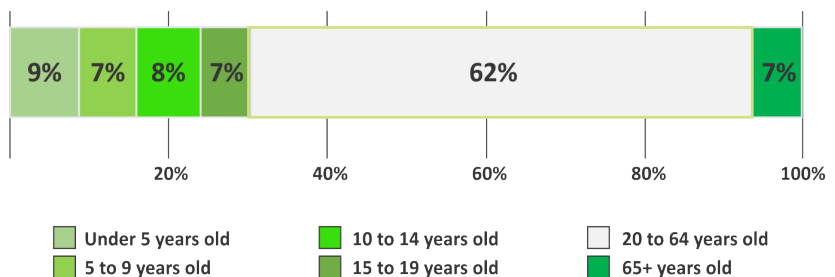
The graphs to the right provide some of the demographic, social, economic, and housing makeup of this subset, which has been identified as the “Mosholu community”. Using data from the 2009-2013 American Community Survey, the NYC Department of City Planning, and the 2015 City Council District Profile provided by New Yorkers for Parks, we are able to calculate population density and resident access to open space for the Mosholu community in relation to the Council District 11, the Bronx, and to New York City.

Population by Gender of the Mosholu Community*



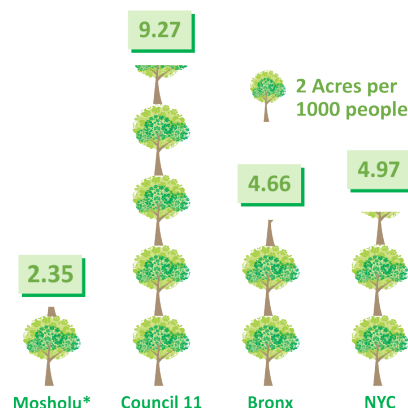
Source: NYC Census Fact Finder, 2009-2013 ACS

Population by Age of the Mosholu Community*



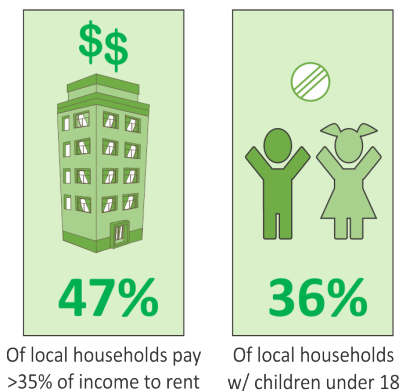
Source: NYC Census Fact Finder, 2009-2013 ACS

Density and Open Space Access



Sources: NYC Census Fact Finder, 2009-2013 ACS; NYC Dept. of City Planning 2014; 2015 New Yorkers for Parks, Council District 11.

Community Data on Mosholu*



Source: NYC Census Fact Finder, 2009-2013 ACS

*Based on the NYC Census Fact Finder, 2009-2013 ACS. Census tracts used to define the Mosholu Community are 411, 413, and 415 in Bedford Park and 419 and 425 in Norwood. Open space data for Mosholu Parkway obtained from the “Natural Area Mapping and Inventory of Mosholu Parkway, 2011”, NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation.

ABOUT KOSSUTH PLAYGROUND

This playground, located along the historic Mosholu Parkway at Mosholu Parkway North and Kossuth Avenue, is named for Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894), a leader in the Hungarian radical reform movement of the 1830s. Trained as a lawyer, Kossuth edited several journals and newspapers that allowed him to broadcast his increasingly popular ideas. He issued fiery pleas for Hungary's independence from Vienna's Hapsburg Monarchy, for emancipation of the peasants, and for industrial development. Kossuth was elected to the Hungarian Diet (national assembly) in 1847, and a year later he led the revolution that created a new national government for Hungary.

The creation of Mosholu Parkway came as a result of the widespread park and parkway movement that distinguished landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) pioneered during the 1860s. Olmsted conceived a system of parks connected by a new type of road called a parkway, the scenic qualities of which made them extensions of the parks they were connecting.

By 1888, the City had acquired properties in the Bronx that would eventually become known as the Van Cortlandt, Pelham Bay, Bronx,

Crotona, and Claremont Parks, as well as four parkways, including the Mosholu Parkway.

The 600-foot-wide Mosholu Parkway is a landscaped highway connecting Van Cortlandt Park to the northwest to Bronx Park to

building, basketball court, volleyball court, shuffleboard court, swings, slides, seesaws, and climbing equipment. The playground is one of several features along the parkway, which also boasts a WWI monument by Jerome Conner at Marion Avenue depicting a group



Photo credit: Melanie Rieders

the southeast. An extension north through Van Cortlandt Park runs past the Mosholu and Van Cortlandt Golf Courses, with interchanges at the Major Deegan Expressway (Interstate 87) and the Henry Hudson Parkway. Parks and the Department of Transportation share joint responsibility for the parkway's maintenance.

Kossuth Playground opened on September 6, 1930. The new playground featured a recreation

of American doughboys in action. The southern end of the parkway borders the New York Botanical Garden, the internationally renowned public gardens and research institution and the 52nd Police Precinct at Webster Avenue is a New York City landmark.

Excerpts of "Mosholu Parkway—Kossuth Playground" taken from the NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation webpage: <http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/mosholu-parkway/highlights/11860>

MISSION AND VISION OF THE FRIENDS OF MOSHOLU PARKLAND

Mission Statement

Providing leadership that engages the Mosholu community to improve the green spaces along Mosholu Parkway for now and future generations.

Vision

The Friends of Mosholu Parkland envision a park, recreation and traffic system that:

- Develops a center of community life, bringing together the neighborhoods of Bedford and Norwood on Mosholu with public gardens and enhanced green spaces.
- Helps to restore a sense of community, wellbeing, and public safety.
- Preserves recreational opportunities, natural areas, and designated public spaces.
- Preserves a system of walkways, greenways, and trails that links residential homes to the park malls and enclaves.
- Encourages use by all ages.
- Supports designated areas with economic development opportunities in both the Norwood and Bedford Park communities.
- Provides enhanced scenic views for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and park users.

The Role of the Friend's Group

Becoming a member of a Friend's group is the first step in creating a positive lasting change in a park or green space in the following roles:

- Support
- Protect
- Conserve
- Beautify

Our Friend's group also helps to



Photo credit: Melanie Rieders

facilitate, encourage, and promote community cohesiveness and accountability for Mosholu parkland, the common denominator between neighborhoods.

We also seek to raise awareness, advocate for funding, and increase volunteer opportunities to maintain and improve all green and play spaces.

The aims of Mosholu Parkland and Kossuth Playground are:

- A Welcoming Place
- Healthy, Safe and Secure
- Clean and Well Maintained
- Sustainable
- Conservation and Heritage
- Community Involvement
- Marketing (housing and economic development)
- Management between city agencies

Methods for recognizing issues and creating transformation for Kossuth Playground were:

- Hosting Town Hall meetings
- Coordinating park community visioning for larger designated area of interest.
- Organization of smaller projects with community volunteers and youths.
- Attendance and participation of neighborhood, Community Board Parks committee, and Friends group meetings.
- Collaborations with the Bronx Parks Department officials, City Councilmember, Community Board Members, residents and youth, business owners, and volunteers.



Project Background

“KOSSUTH PLAYGROUND LONG OVERDUE FOR A MAKEOVER, SAY PARK ADVOCATES”

Kossuth Playground is in need of a makeover, say park advocates. But it first needs a vision.

As part of a broader discussion on the revitalization of Mosholu Parkway, Friends of Mosholu Parkland plan to survey residents over the needs of the playground’s improvements.

For the past few years Kossuth Playground, found on East Mosholu Parkway North between Kossuth and Steuben avenues, has been eyed for renovations. The only section where neighbors are legally permitted to recreate by the parkway, Kossuth Playground is heavily used, though improvements could be made, according to Elizabeth Quaranta, the group’s president. Also, given the population boom that’s expected in Norwood, renovations should be warranted, she noted.

“We need an updated playground that is even ADA-accessible,” said Quaranta. “At this point you can’t put a wheelchair on top of that flooring at all.”

The playground’s amenities include a basketball court, jungle gym and seesaws. It opened in 1930 and is named after Lajos

Kossuth, a Hungarian revolutionary who was active in the 1830s.

The group is expected to convene an information gathering at the playground Oct. 10, to pepper Bronx residents on what rehab work needs to be done at the playground. Quaranta was offered

“We’re preparing for the future so we don’t lose our Mosholu Parkland”

a preview of some answers that are to be expected at the upcoming event after talking with some residents about the playground over the summer.

“I asked him, ‘So, how often do you come?’ And a lot of times they would say, ‘Not often because it’s either too dark, too dingy. It’s not what my kids want to play. There’s too many teenagers on that site,’” said Quaranta.

The data is expected to become the DNA for a blueprint for fixing the playground. Agreeing to help FOMP’s cause is Partnerships for Parks, a joint program of City Parks Foundation and the New York City Department of Parks &

Recreation. The group’s visioning program, People Make Parks, intends to teach volunteers how to develop a convincing visioning report to submit to legislators who can help fund improvements to a park.

But a visioning plan is never a guarantee to effect change, but an act of persuasion. With the New York City Parks & Recreation Department with a small capital funding budget, and a bureaucratic maze that involves funding, designing it and building it, the Kossuth Playground project could be mired in years-long development.

But should it be given the green light to be built, it will join 164 park projects in the Bronx that currently in procurement, design or construction, according to Parks’ website.

“We’re preparing for the future so we don’t lose our Mosholu Parkland,” said Quaranta. “Kossuth is a solution to the activities that people want.”

Written by David Cruz. Reprinted with permission.

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SUPPORT AND ACTIVITIES LEADING UP TO THE “REDISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD” COMMUNITY VISIONING EVENT

PLANNING AND ORGANIZING PHASE

Support for a community visioning plan for Kossuth Playground began galvanizing in early 2015, when the Friends of Mosholu Parkland (FOMP) and park goers expressed that a rehabilitated playground was long overdue. FOMP reached out to both the office of Councilman Andrew Cohen and Partnerships for Parks to propose a visioning event that would gather public input about what park elements, activities, improvements, and other amenities could help to create a more welcoming environment for the playground.

OUTREACH PHASE

Working with the local park manager and Bronx Borough Parks Commissioner Iris Rodriguez-Rosa, FOMP applied for a special events permit for the “Rediscover Your Neighborhood” event in mid-summer of 2015. They also worked with Partnerships for Parks to outline the goals for the events and which tools would be used to justify a major capital rehabilitation. FOMP members devised a budget and conducted local fundraising activities to cover the costs for the event. A stakeholder analysis was also conducted to promote participation as part of FOMP’s public relations plan.

PREPARATION PHASE

With guidance from the Parks Department, a final run through was conducted three weeks before the event to address any potential issues. This included identifying volunteer translators to assist in both outreach and during the event. Additional media strategies included sending out a press release to local blogs and media outlets, utilizing social media to promote the event, and placing an ad in the local newspaper, the Norwood News. FOMP members and volunteers also distributed and posted flyers along local commercial strips and throughout the Jerome Gun-Hill Business Improvement District.

IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The community visioning event was held on October 10th, 2015, with over 100 participants taking part in the activities and entertainment. Residents were able to provide input through a variety of activities, casting ballots, advocating for amenities, and model making for their ideal park layout. Residents were also treated to live music, face painting, food, giveaways, and other activities provided by FOMP and various partners.

RESPONDING TO THE COMMUNITY’S VISION

A true visioning process can only be claimed when residents are engaged from the onset and their input valued. The Kossuth Playground Community Visioning event was an example of a process that worked well, and park goers will benefit from the efforts of those that contributed to the event’s success.



ENVISION CHANGE!
GET INVOLVED!





Photo credit: Melanie Rieders

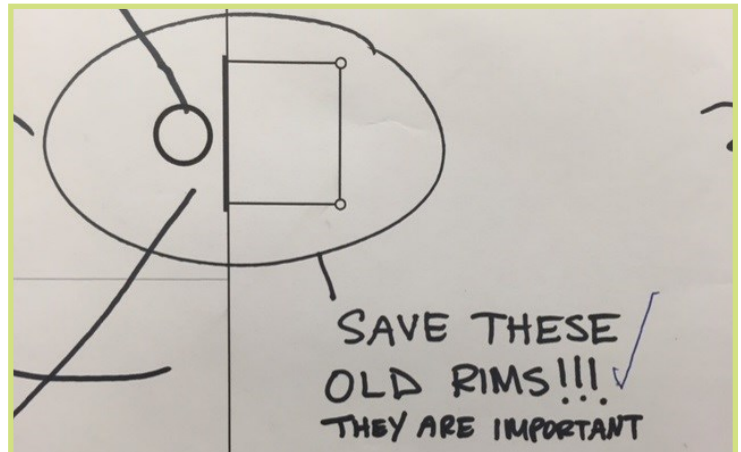


Photo credit: Melanie Rieders





Community Visioning Activities and Results

CAPTURING COMMUNITY INPUT TO INFLUENCE FUTURE RENOVATIONS

At the “Rediscover Your Neighborhood” Community Visioning Event, park goers had the opportunity to voice their concerns about conditions in the park and their suggestions for what should be considered when planning future renovations.

With guidance from Partnerships for Parks and utilizing the People Make Parks strategy, FOMP developed various activities to engage the community: a registration table to distribute information and passports to complete the activities; story boards for the community to preserve or replace park features; video interviews conducted by The Cove to capture “Your Park Story”; voting houses to capture

attitudes about park usage; the “Tree of Wishes” for capturing thoughts on what users would like to see in the park; a “Hoops for Improvement” booth for users of the basketball courts to provide their recommendations for this area; a model making activity to capture park goers ideal park amenities; and an exit booth to collect feedback and provide prizes for participants who completed their passports and evaluations.

In addition to the activities, FOMP invited several local public, private, and non-profit organizations as part of a “resource fair” to provide the community with additional opportunities to become civically engaged.

The data collected from the passports and activities are divided into the following sections: Participation results park elements; support for activities and features; improvement recommendations; support for events and programming; park usage; and safety perceptions. The “Voting Houses” activity asked participants what park elements, activities, and improvements they would like to see at the playground. An additional eight survey questions from other activities captured the values and vision of park goers. Together, this information will be used to inform future renovations and contribute to a greater park experience for the neighborhood.

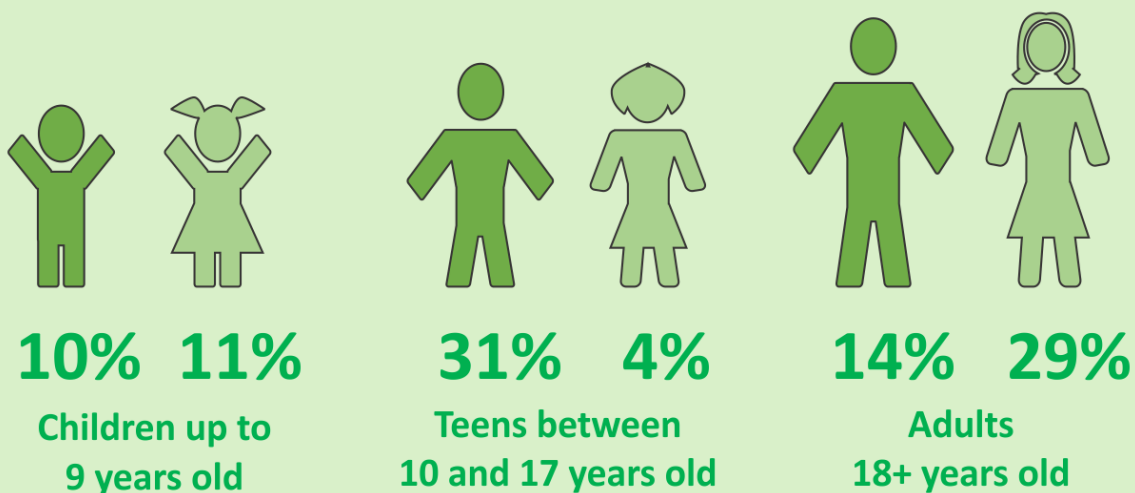


VISIONING PLAN DAY LAYOUT

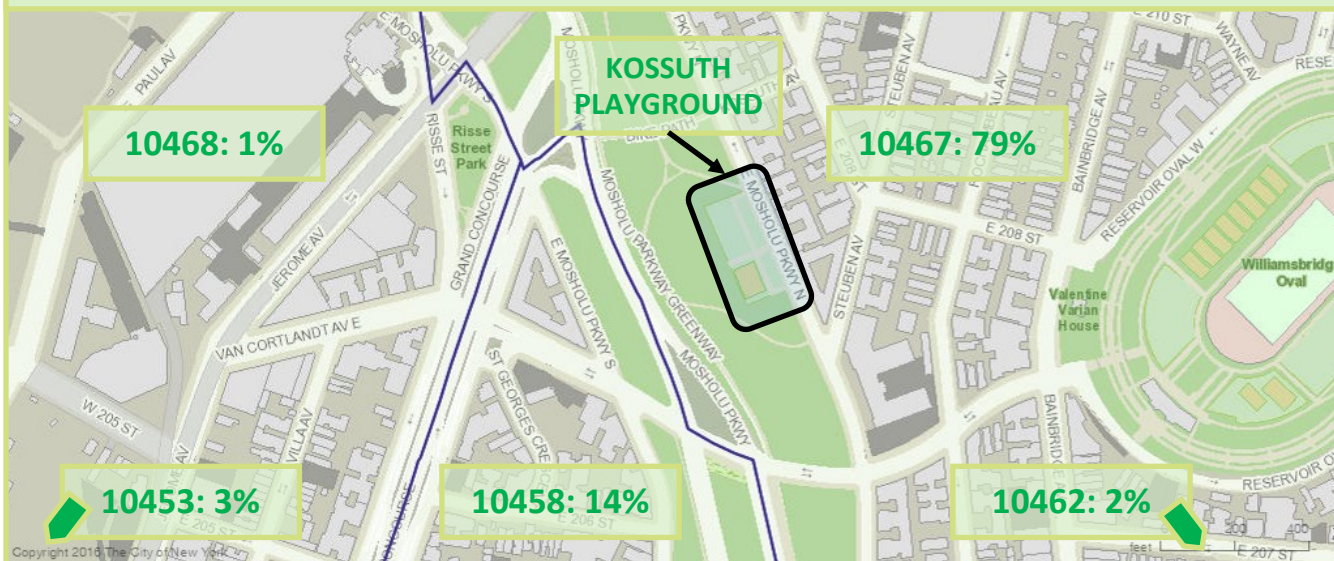
1. Registration, Info & Passports Table
2. Story Boards
3. Voting Houses
4. “Your Park Story” with The Cove
5. NYC Dog Alliance
6. Face Painting
7. Tree of Wishes
8. Community Board 7 Table
9. Food provided by “Coffeed”
10. Bronx Greenup Table
11. Storytime
12. Hoops for Improvement Table
13. “Open Play” - Parks Dept.
14. Model Making
15. General Boards / Gardening Section
16. Exit, Prizes & Evaluation Table

SURVEY PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

REDISCOVER YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY PARTICIPANTS



RESIDENCE OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS BY ZIP CODE



WHAT RESIDENTS SAY THEY LIKE BEST ABOUT THE PARK

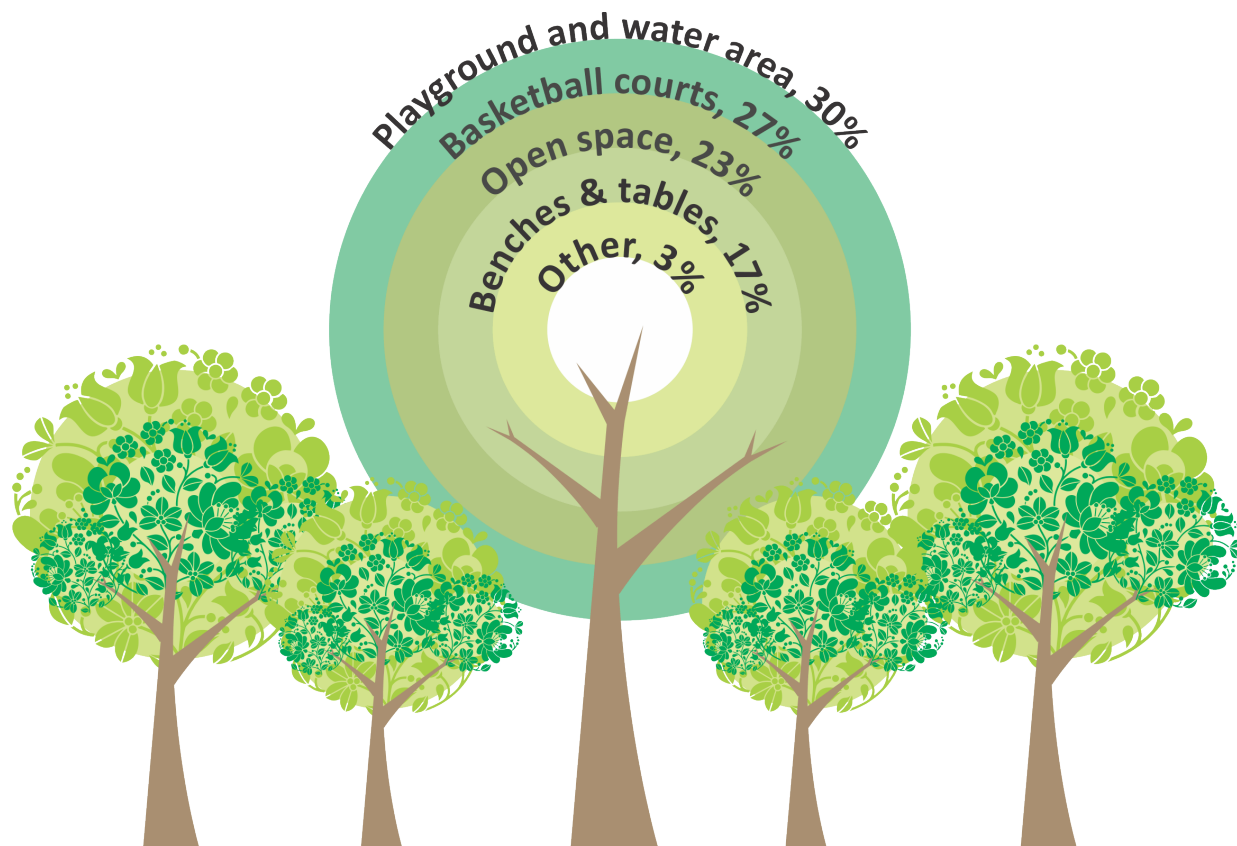


Photo credit: Melanie Rieders



Photo credit: Melanie Rieders

SAFETY RECOMMENDATIONS AND USAGE

WHAT A SAFE PARK MEAN TO RESIDENTS

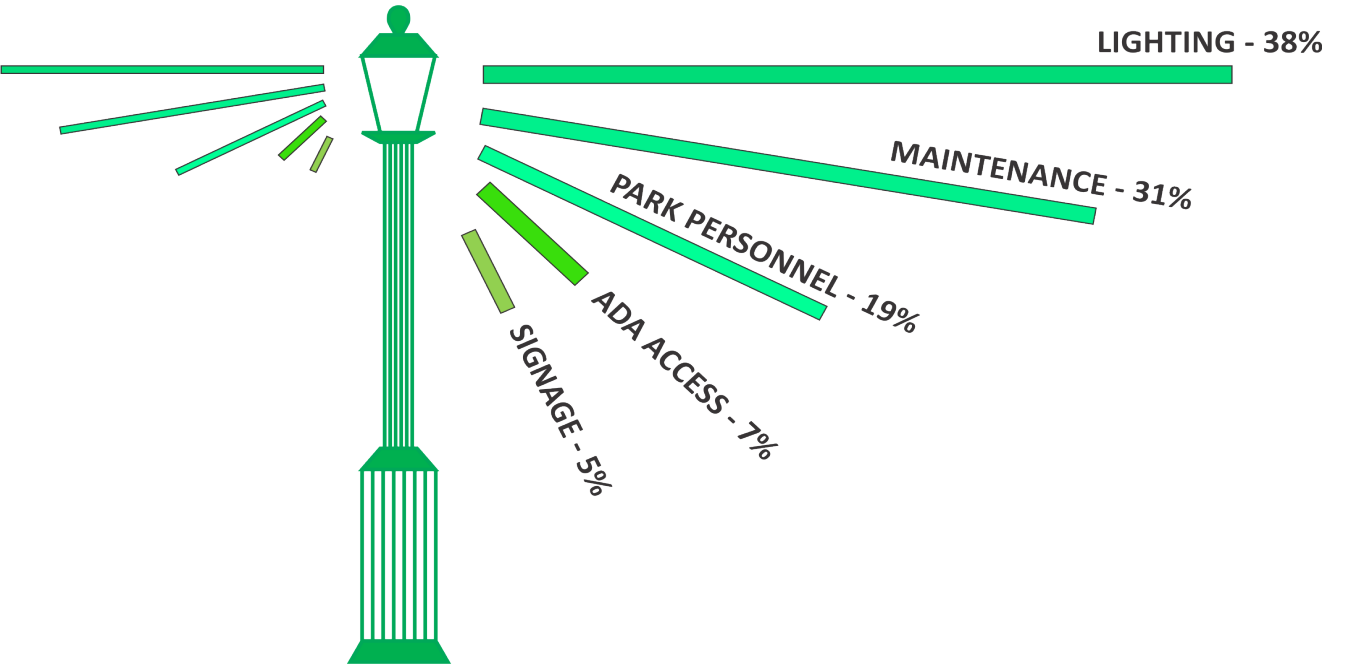
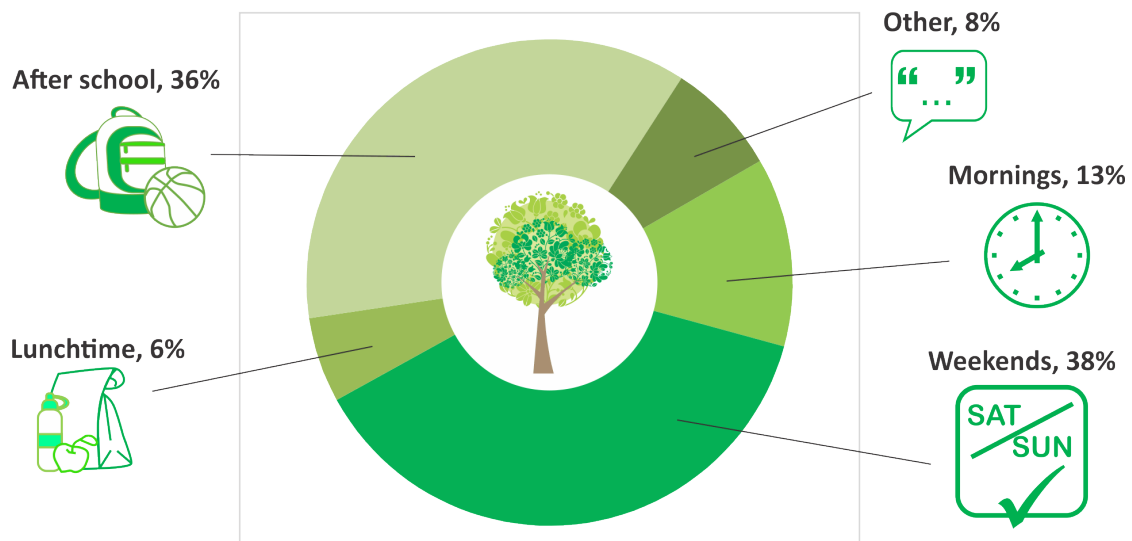


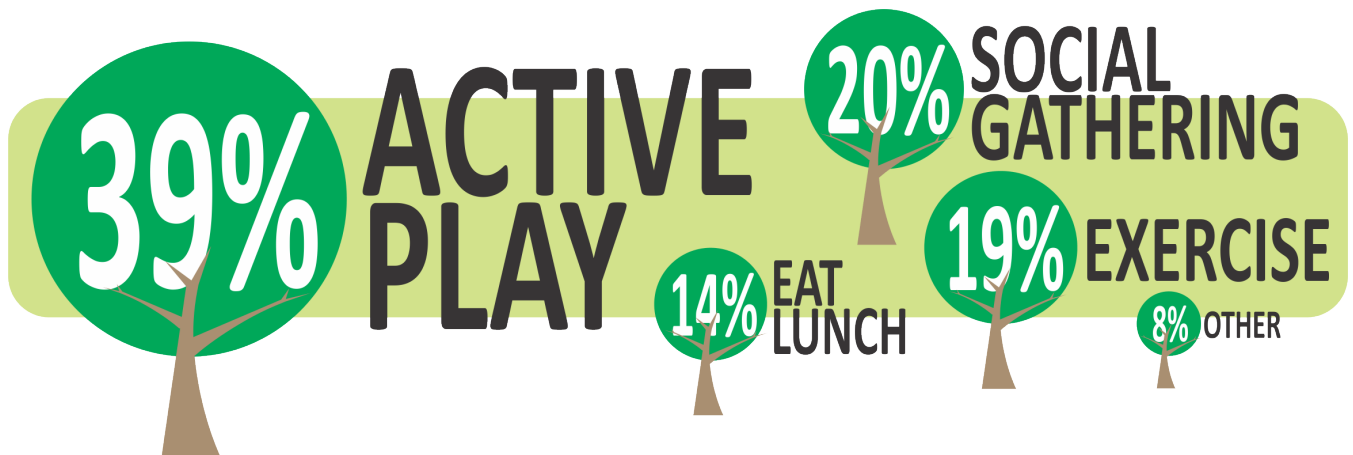
Photo credit: Melanie Rieders



WHEN RESIDENTS SAY THEY USE THE PARK

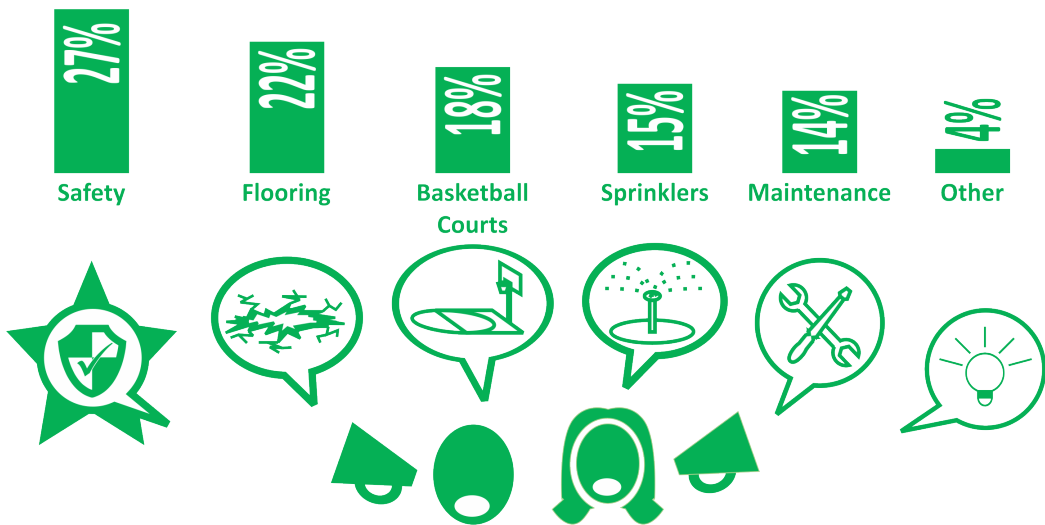


HOW RESIDENTS SAY THEY USE THE PARK



IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

WHAT RESIDENTS SAY THEY WANT TO SEE MOST IMPROVED



SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENT REQUESTS FOR THE WATER SPRINKLER

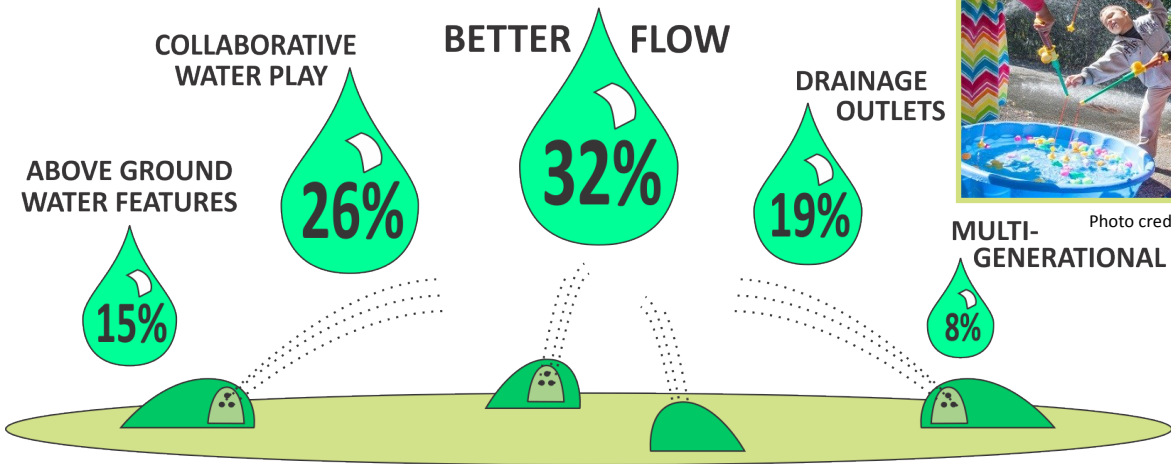


Photo credit: Melanie Rieders

MOST DESIRED IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING PARK FEATURES

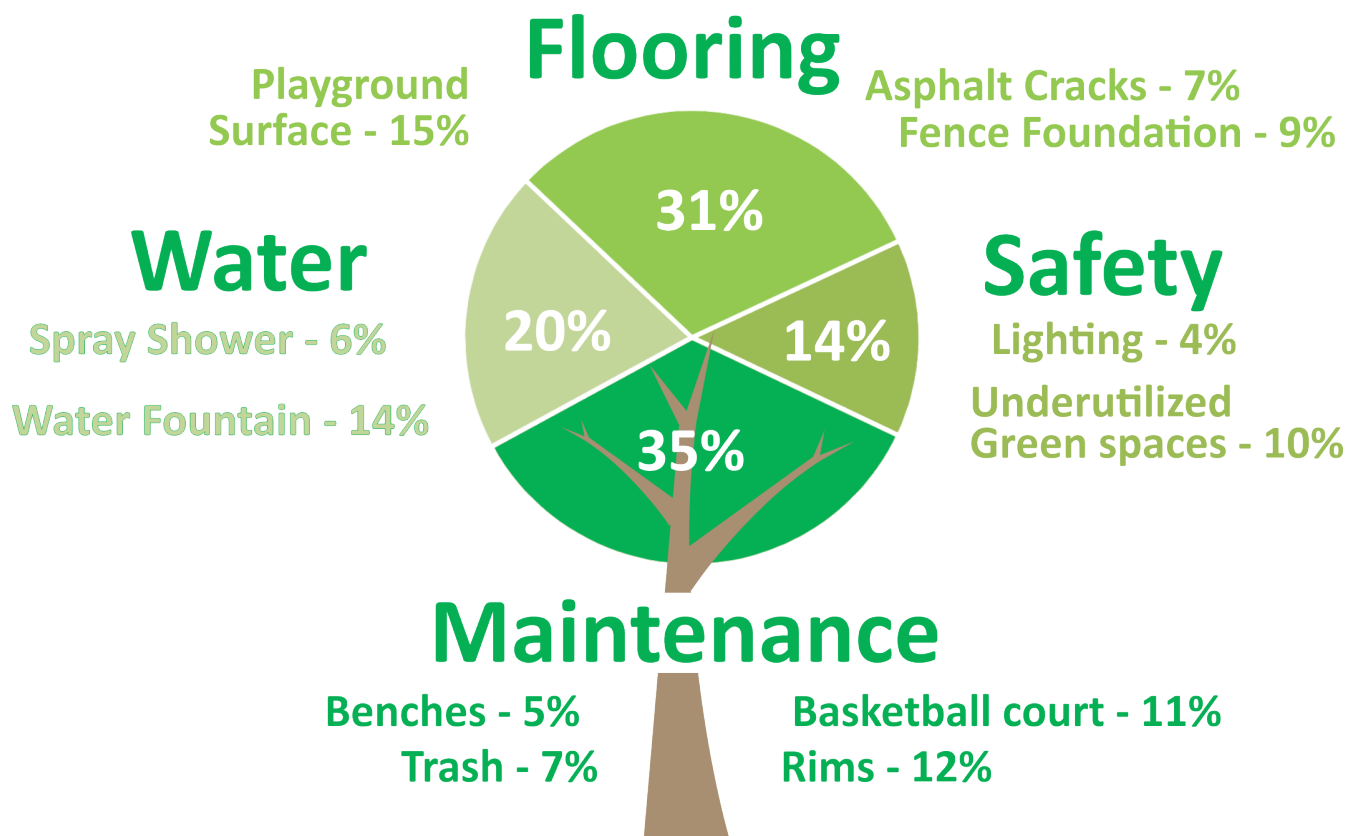
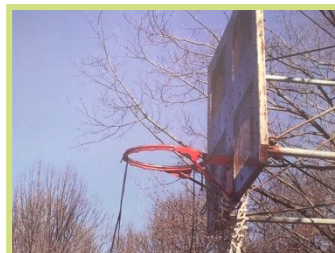
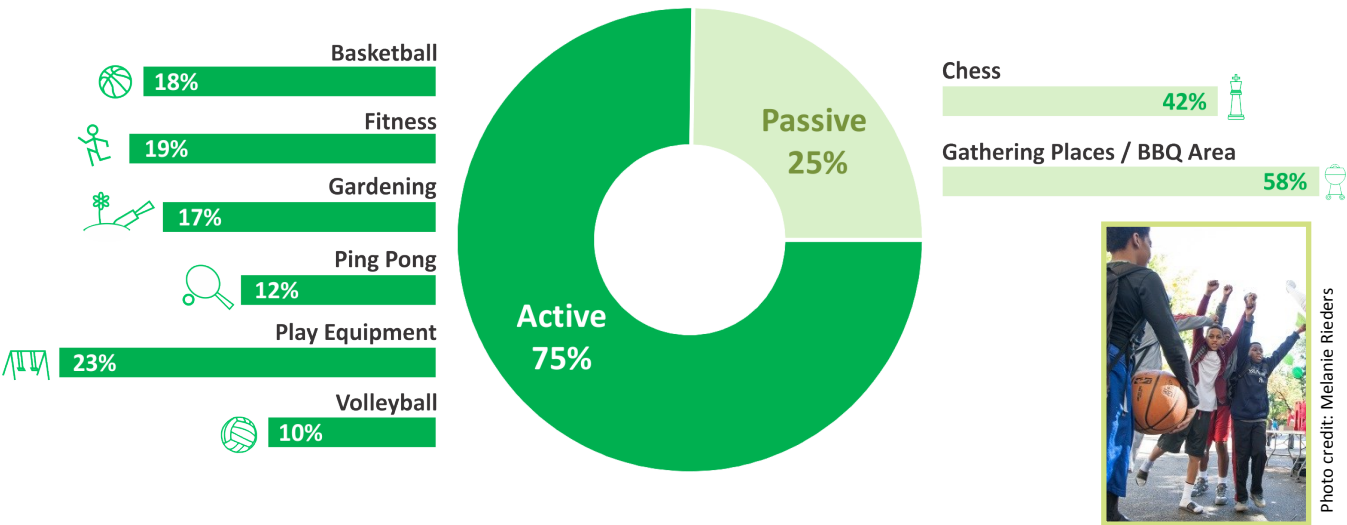


Photo examples of items in need of improvement...

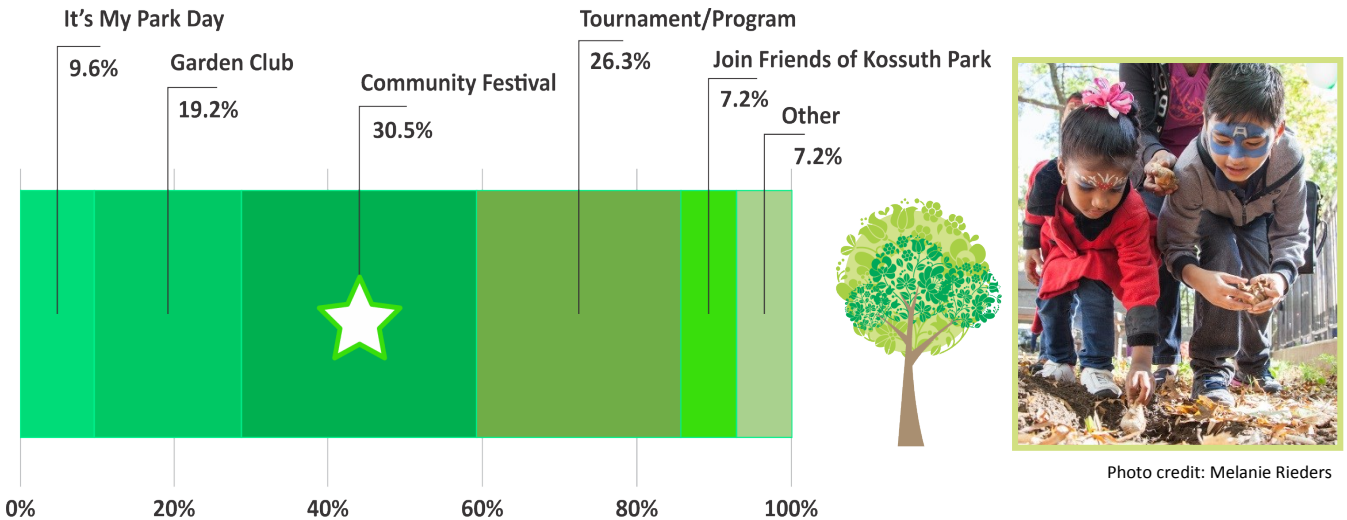


ACTIVITIES, ELEMENTS, AND FEATURES RECOMMENDATIONS

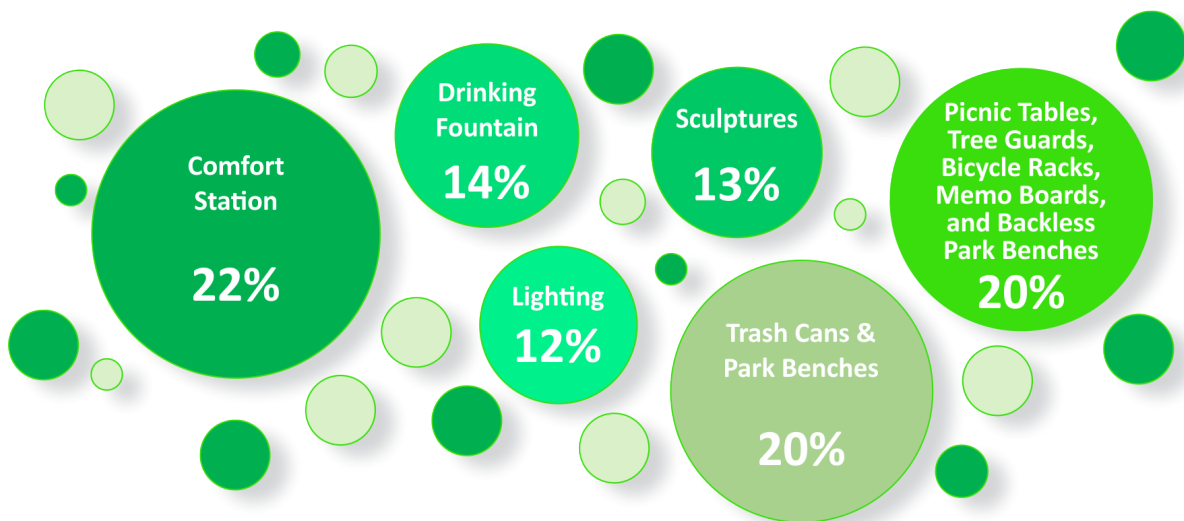
MOST DESIRED ACTIVITIES BY TYPE



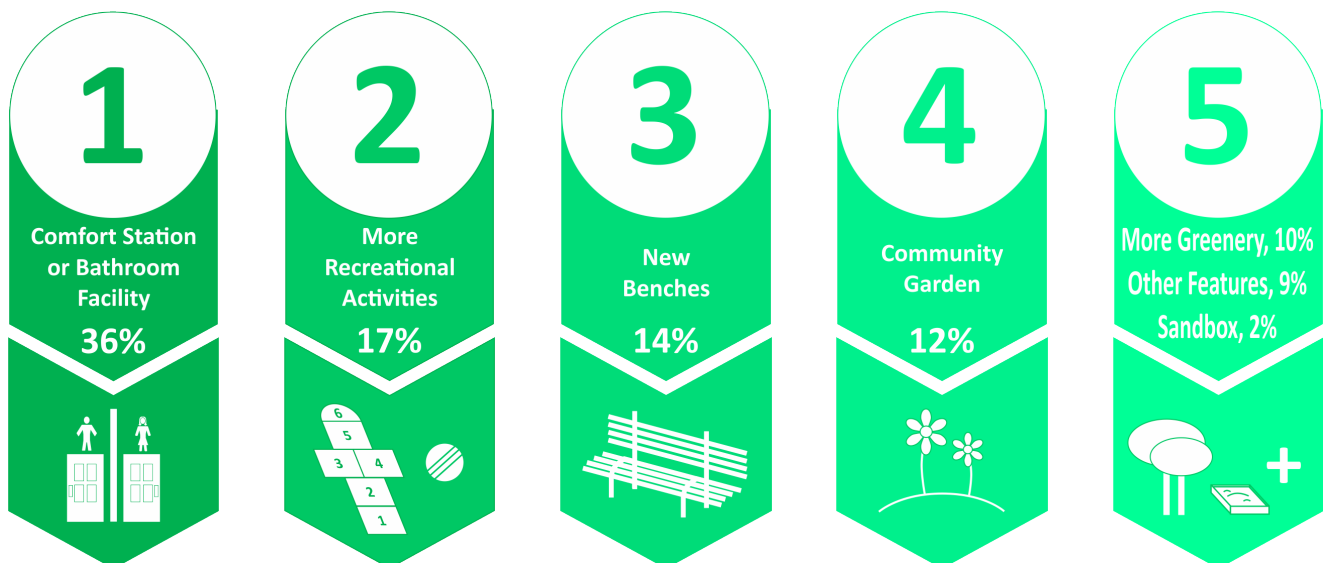
COMMUNITY GATHERINGS RESIDENTS WOULD MOST LIKELY PARTICIPATE



MOST DESIRED NEW PARK ELEMENTS



NEW FEATURES RESIDENTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN THE PARK





Conclusions

REDISCOVERING KOSSUTH PLAYGROUND

The community visioning process guided residents in “rediscovering” their playground and contributed to the wealth of information that has been used to arrive to the conclusions and in this section.

Kossuth Playground is a park that is well utilized by the Mosholu community primarily for many active and passive recreation opportunities. While many people across all age ranges use the playground, this open space attracts many adolescent males to the several basketball courts located in the park.

Years of heavy usage and lack of capital investments in the playground have contributed to the numerous maintenance and safety issues as expressed throughout this document. Park goers voiced a desire to seek investment in and modernize the playground, such as restoring amenities like a comfort station. Other basic improvements such as lighting, floor maintenance, and attractive and operating sprinkler systems were also expressed by participants.

Participants also suggested that additional improvements should include more passive recreation opportunities like enjoying a meal or attending social gatherings. Given that there is less green space per capita in the Mosholu community than in the district, borough, or city, capital investments that can foster these activities are considerations for the playground and the surrounding green spaces.

Finally, participants expressed that they have a great deal of pride and ownership of the park. They stated that they would like to see and participate more in activities and events that knits the community closer together. While some of the recommendations made require smaller capital funding, such as for a new community garden or park benches, many of the recommendations are for programmatic activities.

The following sections provide key recommendations and next steps to help inform a reimagined space for Kossuth Playground, one in which residents can take pride in calling it “their” park.



Given that there is less green space per capita in the Mosholu community than in the district, borough, or city, capital investments that can foster these activities are considerations for the playground...

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

New Comfort Station

1



2

Improved Lighting

2



3

Repaired & New Active Play Spaces

Basketball Court & Hoops
Playground Renovations
New Rubber Flooring
Fitness Equipment

3



4

New Passive Recreation Spaces

Gathering Places
Gardening
Chess Tables

5

Renovated Water Features

Sprinkler System
Water Fountains

4



5



*Photos courtesy of the NYC
Department of Parks and Recreation*

NEXT STEPS

Below is an estimated timeline of next steps in presenting the results of the Community Visioning information to local leaders and the Parks Department. It is meant to provide the community with a basic outline for devising a capital funding strategy to implement some or all of the recommendations in this document for Kossuth Playground.

Approximate Date	Tasks, responsibilities, and Follow Up
Late April 2016	Final review of contents; approval by FOMP and Partnerships for Parks; printing and distribution
May 2016	Present to Councilman Cohen of the 11th Council District; Present to Bronx Parks Commissioner; Present to Parks & Recreation Committee of Bronx Community Board 7
June 2016	Discuss with Councilman Cohen and other elected officials potential capital funding plan; Present at a Town Hall meeting for the Mosholu Community; Distribute additional copies to stakeholders
July 2016	Beginning of the NYC 2017 Fiscal Budget; Work with Bronx Community Board 7 to include Kossuth Playground Capital Investment in District Needs Statement and Capital Priorities
September 2016	Meet with elected officials to solicit support for funding a capital infrastructure plan; Work with Parks Dept. to devise timeline; Present at Bronx Community Board 7 General meeting
October thru December 2016	Meet with community stakeholders to galvanize them in supporting the recommendations of this report in future capital funding proposals; Create community event to celebrate anniversary of Kossuth Playground Community Visioning Event
January 2017	Present to Bronx Community Board 7 Capital & Expense Budget Priorities meeting and advocate for Capital Plan as one of the top 5 capital recommendations; Work with Councilman Cohen to seek initial funding commitments to the capital plan for Kossuth Playground
February thru June 2017+	Follow up with Parks Department on the importance of a renovated playground, monitor budget process to ensure inclusion of capital plan for the playground; respond to additional community inquiries, and other follow up as necessary until completion.

COMMUNITY VISIONING PHOTO GALLERY



Photos by Melanie Rieders



***Thank you to all the participants who came out to the support the Kossuth Playground
Community Visioning event and all those who have lent their support to this effort.***

The Friends of Mosholu Parkland



Kossuth Playground Community Visioning Report

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