



Community Conversations Summary

Three community conversation events were held at Beaver Acres Elementary School on the evenings of November 9, 15, and 16, 2016. These conversations, structured like focus groups, were intended to gather input from neighbors and community members regarding their values, needs, and desires for a new neighborhood park. Input and discussion was directed to help THPRD understand how the new park can best serve the neighborhood and park users. Each of the three conversations was organized to draw participants from key community demographics – residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the park site; underrepresented minorities; and young families. A total of 31 people participated in the conversations.

Recruitment for the community conversations consisted of door-to-door canvassing near the park, promoted posts on Facebook, email sent to THPRD subscribers, and THPRD staff's existing networks. Participants applied to join a conversation group through an online form on the project website or by directly contacting staff. As an incentive, participants were offered an honorarium of \$25 and four passes to THPRD facilities.



Each conversation was structured similarly. After a round of introductions, Vaughn Brown led the discussion with an exercise in which participants were asked to describe what an ideal neighborhood would look and feel like. Participants were asked to visualize what physical features they would expect in this ideal neighborhood and how the people there would interact with the setting and each other. Participants were prompted to compile a list of the main elements of their ideal neighborhood and choose two or three of the most important to be posted on a

sticky wall. These items were grouped by topic and became the basis for conversation about how a park design can contribute toward enhancing neighborhood quality of life.

The findings from these conversations summarized below will be used to guide the park's design. Community workshops will have the summary findings for reference as they develop initial park concepts. Park concepts developed in the design workshops should capture the most commonly held and important preferences expressed by participants to date.

Community Conversation 1: Nearby Neighbors (November 9)

Participants: 10. Divided equally by gender. Nearly all live on Pheasant Lane or Beaver Court, adjacent to or within a block or two of the park site.

Project team in attendance: Vaughn Brown, John Todoroff, Steve Gulgren, Anabel Lopez-Salinas, Nicole Paulsen

Values and characteristics of importance to participants:

- Safety
- Quiet
- Natural setting
- Minimizing impact of active uses in the park

Park amenities and features discussed:

- Nature trails
- Places to gather, sit, and/or picnic
- Safe pedestrian connections for students and MAX riders
- Exercise facilities for youth and elderly
- Art installations

Concerns:

- Noise
- Amenities could impact the neighborhood with trash, increased traffic, strangers, homeless campers
- Light pollution

Community Conversation 2: Underserved cultural communities (November 15)

Participants: 11 (three joined the group late). Most participants were Latino, one Russian, one Vietnamese. All reside in the Aloha and Beaverton area.

Project team in attendance: Vaughn Brown, John Todoroff, Anabel Lopez-Salinas, Nicole Paulsen, Tim Bonin

Values and characteristics of importance to participants:

- Bringing people together
- Appealing to families and people of all ages
- Protecting the natural environment
- Clean and safe

Park amenities and features discussed:

- Programming like classes or other learning activities
- Gathering spaces, benches
- Exercise equipment
- Interpretive signs
- Ways to interact with the creek, for play and learning
- Lighting for safety
- Restrooms
- Trash receptacles

Concerns:

- Self-segregation by race/ethnicity, socio-economic background, and age
- Safety



Community Conversation 3: Young Families (November 16)

Participants: 10. More women than men. Mostly living near the park with younger (pre- and elementary age) children.

Project team in attendance: Vaughn Brown, John Todoroff, Steve Gulgren, Anabel Lopez-Salinas, Nicole Paulsen, Rob Russell

Values and characteristics of importance to participants:

- Nature and wildlife
- Pedestrian connectivity
- Appealing to a variety of ages

Park amenities and features discussed:

- Natural learning opportunities, such as a wildlife habitat viewing area
- Gathering spaces like a pavilion or other covered area, with places to sit
- Picnic tables
- Lighting to discourage nuisance activities
- Accessible paths
- Landscape or built features that celebrate the rain
- Water play area
- Interpretive or place-making feature that connects to land and history
- Activities like bocce court, horseshoes, tabletop games, miniature golf
- Artistic/decorative garbage receptacles
- Programming like gardening classes or nature education

Concerns:

- Homeless campers
- Parking lot as an attractor for camping or other unwanted activities
- Safety

Common Themes

Natural setting is important to retain.

- Design activities and amenities to leverage and protect the setting
- Provide environmental information – signage and classes – to educate park users of all ages
- Install trash cans to encourage keeping the park clean

Invite community members of all types.

- Create gathering places – open space, picnic tables and covered areas
- Foster family oriented uses
- Promote a variety of activities for different age groups
- Build accessible trails
- Encourage integrated park use (e.g., place activity for younger and older aged park users near each other)

Make the park safe and clean

- Disallow camping
- Consider lighting for safety and to discourage unwanted or illegal activities

Reflections and lessons learned for ongoing participation

Recruitment

Staff from JLA and THPRD used multiple methods to recruit participants for the community conversations. For the session with nearby neighbors, door-to-door canvassing was an effective method because the small geographic area made it cost-efficient, and also because property owners who live adjacent to the park site are motivated stakeholders and eager to participate. We were also helped by staff at Beaver Acres Elementary School who live in the neighborhood and know many of the families nearby. A wider net was cast to recruit for the other two groups. Anabel Lopez-Salinas, THPRD's Community Outreach Coordinator, spread the word through pre-existing networks among immigrant and Latino organizations. Nearly all participants for the Diversity group were recruited through these networks. Online social networking generated interest in participation as well. THPRD promoted the community conversations on Facebook and through email lists. People were invited to apply to participate via a web form on the project website, resulting in two dozen responses.

Meeting venue

Beaver Acres Elementary School was chosen as the venue for these meetings because of its location close to the park, its familiarity with nearby residents, and its neutrality as a public building. Two of the conversations were held in the library, which was a well-suited space for a small group discussion. One was in the cafeteria where seating was less flexible and loud refrigerators distracted from the conversation. The larger scale of the cafeteria felt less accommodating for comfortable conversation.

Using key findings inform upcoming outreach

Key findings from the community conversations will inform further public involvement and outreach efforts for the park's design. The most prominent and consistent topic that emerged from the conversations was how highly people value the natural setting of the park site. Outreach events and materials can emphasize both protecting resources and capturing/creating natural settings to encourage community interest and engagement. Many participants, and especially the nearby neighbors, value the quiet setting of the park site. However, many other participants would also like to see active uses in the park (such as playgrounds or sport courts) that could likely attract many visitors and bring noise, traffic, or other disruptions to the neighborhood. Upcoming design workshops should consider including discussion of this trade-off between quietness and active uses. Participants expressed a desire for a wide variety of uses and programming in the park, so the design workshops should discuss ways that park amenities can be designed with versatility in mind.