



PORTLAND PARKS & RECREATION™

Healthy Parks, Healthy Portland

**FALL 2021 COMMUNITY INPUT
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

METRO LOCAL SHARE

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*Prepared by JLA Public Involvement
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Engagement Process Overview

In the fall of 2021, Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R) launched an engagement process to help determine community needs and priorities for how to invest in the City's Local Share of Metro's 2019 Parks and Nature Bond. The Local Share program gave PP&R access to \$31.8 million for projects that meet Metro's funding criteria. Funding criteria includes protecting habitat, connecting people to nature, and addressing racial equity and climate change.

PP&R's list of potential projects that meet Metro's funding criteria totaled more than \$57 million. The goal of the engagement process was to help PP&R staff understand what types of eligible projects best meet the community's priorities and needs. The processes used to gather community input focused on understanding community needs and values when experiencing and accessing local and regional parks.

Input was collected in two primary ways:

- Online survey in English and Spanish
- Eight online focus groups targeting specific cultural/language communities

Full reports on the survey and focus groups are available at portland.gov/parks/local-share. This executive summary is an overview of the engagement process and highlights some of the themes heard from these two sources of input. Input from the survey and focus groups will help inform PP&R decisions on a final project list to recommend to Metro and City Council in early 2022.

Survey Overview

A six-question online survey with additional demographic questions was open from **November 4 to November 30, 2021**. The survey was promoted through many channels including:

- Focus group meetings hosted by Verde and Community Engagement Liaisons
- East Portland Parks Committee meeting 11/4/2021
- Parks Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting 11/4/2021
- PACCO newsletter (Philippine Chamber of Commerce)
- PP&R's Facebook, Nextdoor, and LinkedIn account postings
- PP&R's webpage posting
- Email to PP&R's main email list

The survey was provided in Spanish and in English and received **1,346 total responses**. The English-language survey received **1,337** responses, and the Spanish-language survey received **nine** responses.

Focus Groups Overview

A major focus of [Metro's Local Share Program](#) is ensuring that meaningful community engagement is used to shape the local share investments. PP&R recognized from past efforts that online survey efforts are useful in hearing from a large number of community members in a quantifiable way, but they typically only reach a portion of the Portland community. Frequently, communities of color, Indigenous communities, people with low incomes, and people with Limited English proficiency do not engage with this format. Given that, PP&R worked with Verde and Community Engagement Liaisons to design a series of focus groups targeting these communities and held in a conversational format to draw out these communities' priorities for the Metro Local Share funds. This work was done by side by with the design of the online survey, so that both input methods used similar themes and questions.

A total of eight focus groups were held, and each was about 1 ½ - 2 hours long online via Zoom. Verde led the outreach and meetings with mobile home residents, Akateko speakers, Spanish speakers, and Black community members. PP&R contracted with Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) to lead focus groups with Native/Tribal community members and Chinese, Russian, and Vietnamese speakers. All participants received a gift card for their time and participation. The focus groups were organized by cultural/language affiliation. For the groups focused on a specific language, the presentation and discussion were led in that language, and the group leader provided notes in English for PP&R after the meeting. PP&R staff attended all of the focus groups to be a resource to help answer questions.

A total of 67 participants attended the eight focus groups:

1. November 4 – Mobile home residents (English/Spanish)
2. November 10 – Spanish speakers
3. November 11 – Vietnamese speakers
4. November 16 – Black community members
5. November 17 – Russian speakers
6. November 20 – Chinese/Cantonese speakers
7. November 24 – Akateko (Mayan Indigenous language) speakers
8. November 29 – Native/Tribal community members

All of the focus groups followed the same format designed by Verde, starting with an intro question about participants' favorite park or natural area in Portland. A presentation about the Metro Local Share funding was provided to introduce participants to the Metro and the Bond. The presentation outlined Metro's criteria for how the funding can be used and PP&R's list of potential projects by category. This matched the information provided on the webpage.

Following the presentation, the group leaders led a conversation with the following questions:

1. What is your (and/or your family or communities)' relationship with land and nature?
2. What does access to nature mean to you? (Follow up if people have a hard time with this question: How do you define a natural area?)
3. What would make a natural area or park feel welcoming and safe for you and your community? follow up: What amenities would help you be able to spend more time at a park or natural area?
4. From the slides of the projects that were shared, what is one priority project for you/your community? What is a project that is not your priority for this round of funding?

Themes From Survey and Focus Groups

Overall, participants in the online survey said that **better trails, parking, and habitat restoration** were their top priorities. English survey participants were also concerned about issues related to the **houseless, safety, and cleanliness** whereas Spanish survey participants were concerned about **safety** and more **accessible, better maintained** parks.

For the open-ended online survey comments in English, issues related mountain biking trails, the houseless, safety, access and cleanliness were the most common themes. Additional frequent themes in the open-ended English online survey comments include updating restrooms, more trees and shade in parks, maintaining trails, and issues related to dogs. Open-ended online survey comments in Spanish included concerns about park maintenance, invasive blackberry bushes, working restrooms, lighting, safety, and dogs. One participant commented, “Parks are nice, but the people who enjoy them don't represent the people of Portland.”

For the focus groups, **safety, and lighting** were the top themes. Every group mentioned safety as a major priority – this included better lighting and feeling like a park is cared for and clean. **Restrooms** were also a big priority for nearly all participants, especially if they are well maintained, accessible, and clean. Better **accessibility** for people with disabilities and families using strollers was also a high priority across the groups, as many visit the parks with elders and young children. **Restoration and conservation** were also shared themes across the groups.

A member of the Chinese group noted: *“Don’t overdo the park; maintain its natural ecology.”* A participant in the Native group observed that we cannot always restore natural areas to what they once were, but we can enhance them.

Destination parks such as Forest Park are appreciated, **but many noted that having nature accessible close to where they live is a higher priority** as they do not always have the time or transportation to go to places farther away.

River access and boating was a low priority across the online survey and the focus groups. Many in the focus groups noted that they do not have access to boat. Trails and other ways to access nature without special equipment were preferred.



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Sustaining a healthy parks and recreation system to make Portland a great place to live, work, and play.

