

# Bear Creek Park Master Plan

*Denver, Colorado*

## *Public Engagement Phase I Summary*

May 9, 2022



# Bear Creek Park Master Plan

## Public Engagement Phase I Summary

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PHASE I

**The first phase of community engagement for the master plan sought to understand current conditions and the community vision and hopes for the park.** The community touch points included: the inaugural meeting of the Bear Creek Park Steering Committee; a virtual community meeting; and a community survey.

The Bear Creek Park Master Plan **Steering Committee** held its first of four meetings on **March 8, 2022**. This committee is comprised of key stakeholders within the local community including leaders from City Council District 2, registered neighborhood associations, schools, The Southwest YMCA, Mile High Flood District, and local youth and environmental organizations. Sixteen stakeholders attended the kickoff meeting. In response to an overview of existing park conditions and a series of questions, the Steering Committee members commented on their vision for the future of Bear Creek Park.

The **first of three virtual community meetings** was held on **March 17, 2022**. Over the course of the 90 minute meeting, 45 participants received an overview of the planning process, the existing conditions in the park and provided many comments about their experiences in the park and what they would like to see in the future. The meeting included a number of polling questions.

Finally, an online **Public Survey** was advertised and made available from **March 17, 2022 through April 13, 2022**. Community members were surveyed about their current use patterns and preferences for improvements at the park. It was advertised via fliers, emails, social media, and newsletters sent to the community and on the City and County of Denver website. The survey received 359 responses.

### Key Themes and Take-Ways from the First Phase of Public Input:

#### **The park has unique amenities that should be celebrated/enhanced**

- Peaceful natural area with rolling landforms on the south side
- Soft surface trails for walking
- Beloved Sombrero playground
- Creek access for play and enjoyment
- Access to urban wildlife

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### Key Themes and Take-Ways from the First Phase of Public Input Continued:

#### **The park is not always comfortable, welcoming, or easy to get to**

- Safety concerns related to illegal drug use/drinking/loitering in parking lots
- Concern with urban camping and the concentration of people experiencing homelessness
- Perception that the park is dirty and has a trash problem
- Lack of year-round access to restrooms
- Concern with traffic noise
- Concern about water quality in the Creek
- The park is hard to get to and wayfinding is poor

### Desired Improvements:

#### **Maintenance and Operation:**

- Better park maintenance
- More ranger patrols in the park
- Year-round restrooms
- Better lighting

#### **More Active Uses:**

- More options for children
- Bigger splash pad
- Basketball
- Dog Park
- Disc Golf
- Exercise equipment for adults
- Bike Trails, pump tracks, skatepark features

#### **Improved Passive Uses:**

- More benches and tables
- More covered picnic areas
- Educational/historic markers
- Creek Access
- Connected circulation, sidewalk along Kenyon
- Keep the park natural and tranquil

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### Desired Improvements Continued:

#### Healthy Park Ecology:

- A cleaned-up creek
- Trimmed/managed vegetation on the south side of the park

#### Improved Access:

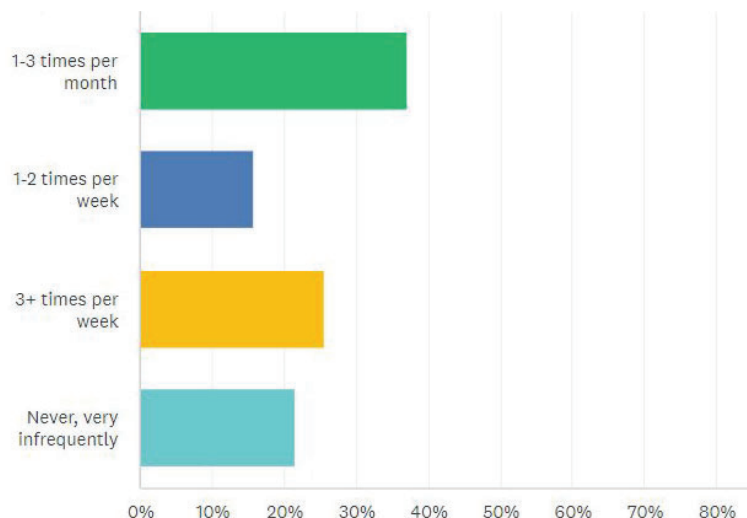
- Better ADA access within the park
- Better access to the park on Raleigh Street and from the YMCA
- Redesigned parking lots on north side of park (Raleigh Street) and on the south side (Kenyon Street)
- Updated bridges across Bear Creek
- More ways to cross Bear Creek
- Separation between bikes and pedestrians on the Regional Bike Trail
- Connected soft surface trails

### Detailed Results of the Public Survey Questions:

#### Question #1

How often do you visit Bear Creek Park?

A. 1-3 Times Per Month	<b>38.03%</b>
B. 1-2 Times Per Week	15.77%
C. 3+ Times Per Week	<b>25.07%</b>
D. Never, Very Infrequently	21.13%





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### Detailed Results of the Public Survey Questions Continued:

#### Question #2

*If you do not frequent Bear Creek Park, what makes you choose other parks over Bear Creek?*

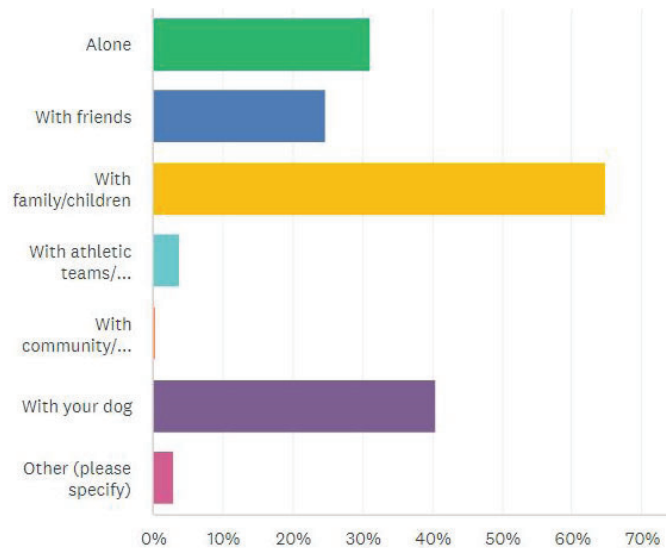
Among the sixty survey respondents the primary reason given for not visiting Bear Creek Park is a **concern about safety**. Comments related mostly to the perceived presence of a homeless population and **“homeless camps” as well as observed drug use and drinking in the park**. Several people expressed concern about the safety of children due to these factors. Another safety concern is the **overgrown vegetation** on the south side of the park.

Another theme is that the park is **not clean and lacks adequate bathrooms**; trash overflows the dumpsters and is observed around the park. People also said they have other park options closer to where they live and that it is difficult to access Bear Creek Park. A number of people also said the **traffic noise** on the north side keeps them away from the park.

#### Question #3

*Who do you typically visit the park with?*

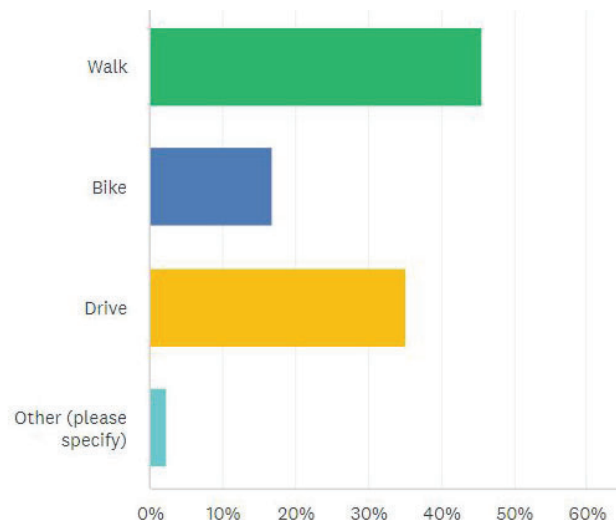
A. Alone	30.77%
B. Friends	24.41%
C. Family/Children	<b>65.22%</b>
D. Athletic Teams/ Recreation Groups	3.68%
E. Community/ Religious Groups	0.33%
F. Your Dog	<b>40.47%</b>
F. Other _____	3.01%



#### Question #4

*How do you typically get to and from the park?*

A. Walk	<b>45.15%</b>
B. Bike	16.39%
C. Drive	<b>36.12%</b>
D. Other	2.34%



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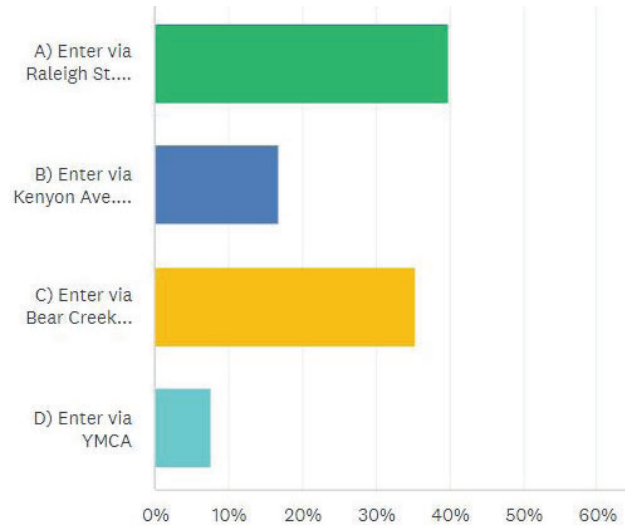
## Public Engagement Phase I Summary

### Detailed Results of the Public Survey Questions Continued:

#### Question #5

*Where do you enter the park?*

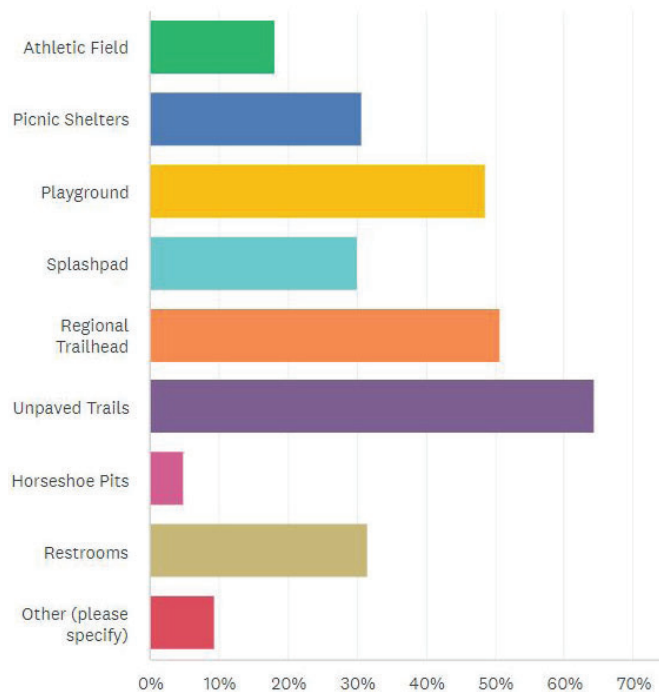
A. Enter Via Raleigh St. (North)	<b>39.86%</b>
B. Enter Via Kenyon Ave. (South)	16.89%
C. Enter Via Bear Creek Trail	<b>35.47%</b>
D. Enter Via Ymca	7.77%



#### Question #6

*What amenities do you or members of your family use at Bear Creek Park?*

A. Athletic Field	18.09%
B. Picnic Shelters	31.06%
C. Playground	<b>49.83%</b>
D. Splash Pad	31.06%
E. Regional Trailhead	<b>50.85%</b>
F. Unpaved Trails	<b>64.16%</b>
G. Horseshoe Pits	4.78%
H. Restrooms	32.42%
I. Other _____	9.56%



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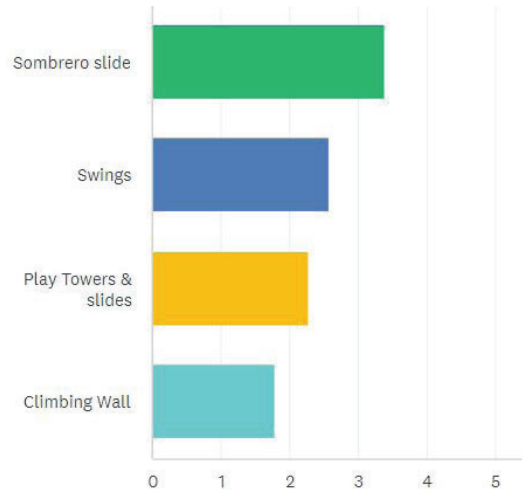
### Detailed Results of the Public Survey Questions Continued:

#### Question #7

*What is your favorite part of the playground?*

*\*Rank from most (1) to least favorite (5)*

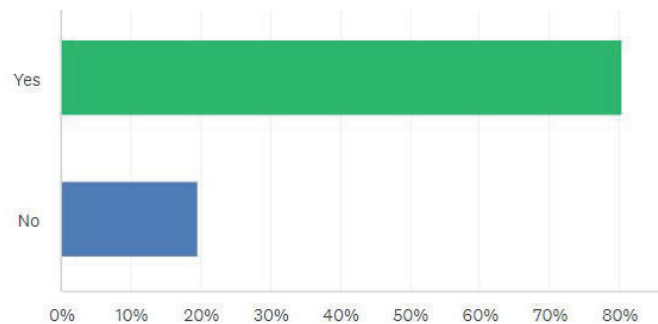
- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Sombrero Slide       | <b>65.35%</b> Ranked #1 |
| B. Swings               | 43.15% Ranked #2        |
| C. Play Towers & Slides | 43.0% Ranked #3         |
| D. Climbing Wall        | 52.79% Ranked #4        |



#### Question #8

*Do you visit the natural open space on the south side of Bear Creek Park?*

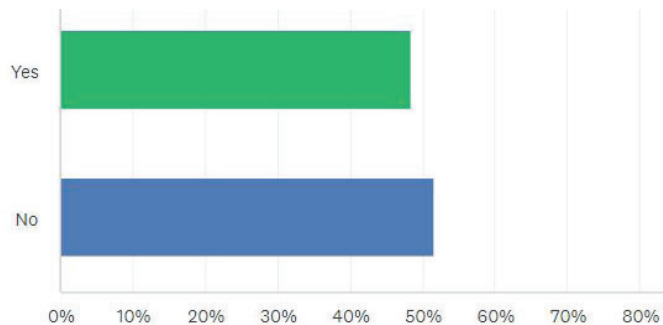
- |        |               |
|--------|---------------|
| A. Yes | <b>80.13%</b> |
| B. No  | 19.87%        |



#### Question #9

*Do you recreate in or near Bear Creek itself?*

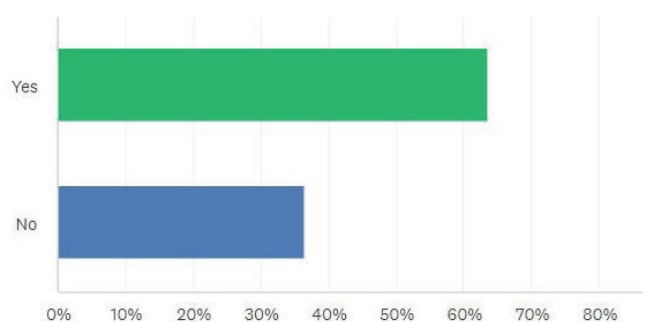
- |        |               |
|--------|---------------|
| A. Yes | 48.28%        |
| B. No  | <b>51.72%</b> |



#### Question #10

*Should there be more areas/opportunities to engage with the creek?*

- |        |               |
|--------|---------------|
| A. Yes | <b>63.12%</b> |
| B. No  | 36.88%        |



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### Detailed Results of the Public Survey Questions Continued:

#### Question #11

*What new or different park amenities and play features would you enjoy seeing in Bear Creek Park?*

Many comments centered around **better opportunities for kids, particularly a bigger, more updated and safer playground area**. A bigger, improved **splash pad** is particularly desired for the park. Others asked for **natural features in the playground** and that it be more ADA accessible. Some suggested installing a sound barrier to **deaden noise from HWY 285**.

Another major theme continues to be concerns about safety in the park. **Many comments ask for more consistent effective public safety measures to make the park safe**. This includes effectively addressing the issue of **people experiencing homelessness in/near the park. Create safer access to the park**, particularly via the Raleigh St. entrance. Park improvements do not really matter if people are afraid to go to the park.

**More consistent maintenance and cleaning in the park**. Many of these related comments included request for **more trash cans and improved, regularly maintained bathrooms -- ideally bathrooms that are open year-round**. Also, a request for **dog waste bags**.

Other popular requests included **more picnic areas** (including covered areas) and **more benches** in the park. Others want to see more natural areas and **improve/better maintain the natural area on the south side of the creek**.

There were also suggestions for new amenities, mostly for a **dog park/dog off leash area** and a **disc golf course**. Other popular ideas included **exercise equipment for adults, a basketball court and information placards** in the park about the cultural and natural history.

NOTE: Relatively few comments related to trails. **Trails comments** included a desire for wider trails, more dirt trails and increased opportunities for mountain bikes. Only a couple of the comments referenced user conflicts related to bikers on the regional trail. Some comments mentioned that entrance to the park is a challenge via trail from YMCA (poor condition) and via the regional trail (safety concerns related to homeless camps).

#### Question #12

*Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences at Bear Creek Park?*

The vast majority of the responses asked to **clean up the park and make it safer**. There are a lot of very specific (in some cases) graphic descriptions of current perceived danger, drug use and trash in the park and calls for greater public safety and police presence, at least temporarily. **Specific areas of concern** mentioned include the **playground/parking lot on the north side and the Regional Trail section under Sheridan Blvd**. Some suggested the park install **better lighting for safety**. Perhaps **redesigning the parking lot** via Raleigh St. can discourage vehicle-related safety concerns. Comments included **better trash pickup, more trash cans, cleaning up the creek (if possible) and the natural area on the south side**. Maybe more volunteer clean up efforts.

More pointedly, a number of folks said that maintaining the park is clearly higher priority than developing the park. Concerns that DPR is unable to adequately maintain the park in its current condition.

Otherwise, many people love the park, especially the creek, the sombrero slide and the natural character of the south side. It is an opportunity for nature in the city. A number of people said that they really like the way the park is right now.

A few comments did mention a **desire to see better separation between the bikers on the regional trail and other users of the park**.