

Executive Summary

Pittsburg Park Assessment Report:

A community-based participatory research and evaluation project

Prepared March 2015

1. INTRODUCTION

In spring and fall of 2012, a collaborative team of residents and early childhood health organizations assessed 22 parks within the City of Pittsburg to determine their suitability for young children and families to play and engage in physical activity. The partners included: the East County Regional Group—a parent advocacy group comprised of residents of Antioch and East Contra Costa County; First 5 Contra Costa Children & Families Commission; and Healthy & Active Before 5 (HAB45)—a collaborative of Contra Costa agencies committed to promoting early childhood health. During follow-up workshops, the team analyzed the data, selected priority parks, determined priority issues, and developed recommendations for improvements.

2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

Prior to assessing the parks, the team developed a park survey tool. The tool included seven assessment categories: family amenities, maintenance, safety, innovative play atmosphere, all-abilities accessibility, young child experience, and parent overall rating. ECRG members and staff then identified and assessed 22 parks in the spring and fall of 2012 (Image 1). Following the completion of the assessments, project staff compiled the assessment data and facilitated a series of community workshops in 2013 and 2014 to identify quality park spaces and parks in need of improvement. The partners used data from the parks surveys, East Contra Costa County health indicator report, Pittsburg crime reporting, and U.S. Census Bureau to prioritize two parks in need of immediate improvement. Lastly, the partners and residents conducted site visits at the priority parks in winter of 2015 to inform the final recommendations.

3. FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Highlands Ranch and Mariner parks received some of the highest parent ratings of all the parks evaluated. Parks that rated highly overall, generally rated well in each of survey areas. Analysis of the data showed a stark disparity in the quality of parks located in lower- versus higher- income neighborhoods and highlighted several issues particular to each park. Among those parks needing improvements, four thematic priority areas emerged from the data analysis: safety, play equipment, bathrooms, and water fountains. While the team found that a number of parks assessed need improvements, the ECRG members selected DeAnza and City Park as priority parks in need of immediate improvement on behalf of young children. Both parks rated poorly in each of the priority areas (Table 1), and are located in neighborhoods with high poverty rates and a high concentration of young children under age 5. DeAnza Park, in particular, is located in a neighborhood with very high crime rates.

Table 1: Selected Park Ratings

Park Name	Amenities	Maintenance	Safety	Innovation	ADA Access	Child	Parent
Highlands Ranch	4.9	4.9	4.4	4.9	3.3	5.0	4.9
Mariner	5.0	5.0	4.8	4.8	5.0	5.0	4.8
City Park	2.4	3.1	3.3	1.6	2.9	2.0	1.9
De Anza	1.3	2.4	2.2	1.0	1.5	1.3	1.0

Color Coding Key

4.00 – 5.00	3.00 - 3.99	2.00 - 2.99	1.00 - 1.99
No Improvement Needed	Needs Only Minor Improvement	Needs Some Improvement	Needs Major Improvement

* Reference: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey. Obtained by Contra Costa Health Public Health Epidemiology, Planning, and Evaluation Department, April 2014

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the partners recommend that low-rated parks that are both located in very low-income areas and inhabited by a high concentration of young children are prioritized for immediate improvements, with a focus on improvement to the four thematic priority areas. In particular, the partners recommend that DeAnza and City Park are prioritized for immediate improvements to the areas of amenities, maintenance, play equipment, and safety, with a particular focus on improvements that benefit young children (Table 2). The team encourages the City of Pittsburg to allocate capital improvement funds and work with the partners to explore additional park improvement grant funding as well as other revenue generating strategies. Lastly, the partners recommend that a community safety coalition is formed in partnership with the Pittsburg Police Department and residents to implement a robust violence prevention strategy in the neighborhoods surrounding the priority parks, as the partners identified safety in both parks as a pressing issue.

Table 2: Priority Parks, DeAnza and City Park	
Priority Area	Recommendations by Needs and Issue Areas (* indicates City Park only; † indicates DeAnza Park only)
Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basketball courts† Water fountains Picnic tables† Grills† Walking path with ADA accessibility* Bus shelters† Mosquito prevention & abatement* Multilingual signs with key phone numbers
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bathrooms* Garbage and recycling bins Dog waste bags* Dumping and bulk waste vouchers†
Play Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative playgrounds for children of all abilities, ages 0-12
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lighting Video surveillance Neighborhood watch†

Image 1: Pittsburg Park Locations, parent ratings



KEY

Pin color indicates parent overall rating

Green:

"These parks are great" (4-5)

Yellow:

"These parks need minor improvement" (3-3.99)

Orange:

"These parks need some improvement" (2-2.99)

Red:

"These parks major improvement." (1-1.99)

Blue:

Not assessed