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Clackamas County Parks

Community Engagement Findings & Recommendations for Feyrer Park & Barton Park

February 29, 2024





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Project Summary: Context & Purpose

Clackamas County Parks's (CCP) commitment to supporting its users and marginalized communities with evidence-based practices and equity-informed community engagement comes at a crucial moment. As communities continue to emerge post-pandemic and coalesce around community-centered spaces, parks and the outdoors offer respite from the pressures and challenges of day-to-day life. While nature is often a great equalizer, the last several years have put a finer lens on the ongoing systemic issues that continue to impact public spaces. This spotlight has sparked a growing national dialogue aimed at advocating for equity and inclusion, and confronting historical legacies that don't match modern values and diversity — as evidenced by efforts to rename organizations like National Audubon Society. By making significant strides towards incorporating community engagement in its work, CCP has clearly demonstrated a commitment to continue supporting intentional placemaking and equity efforts in parks and recreation.

The community engagement lens for this project revolves around empowering the public to influence decisions. In particular, community members, especially from communities systemically underrepresented, marginalized, and underserved, have been historically left out of civic participation and government decision-making processes. To ensure their voices are substantially reflected, well-designed engagement efforts are critical. In doing so, these voices can be more thoughtfully and impactfully included in shaping the capital plans for CCP to:

- Establish and maintain relationships with diverse community stakeholders
- Encourage BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) representation in parks governance
- Develop and expand processes that foster culture of equity and inclusion

Using a combination of methodologies, we collected rounds of data to produce findings and recommendations toward effectively informing Feyrer Park and Barton Park improvement projects.

Our approach included:

- Research & Landscape Scan
- Media Plan
- Parks Survey
- Community Engagement & Deep Listening Sessions

After Bruce's justice-centered approach to research is informed by community-based participatory research (CBPR). Not all practices within CBPR apply to this project, but it's important to understand the scaffolding that holds our approach and strategy together. The CBPR framework supports collaborative interventions that involve strategists and researchers alongside community members as partners in engagement projects, each with their own strengths and value. To counter dominant cultural narratives that are deficit-focused rather than strengths-based, we position communities as having the capacity and expertise to conduct critical inquiry into their own lived experiences, rather than merely the objects of inquiry. This ensures that communities most impacted are involved in multiple aspects of the project, strengthening the assessment, planning, design, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination of engagement. The CBPR approach supports communities in identifying, organizing, and sharing its collective voice with decision-makers to ensure that ensuing efforts are responsive to the communities' needs.

Two key purposes drove this research:

1. Provide the CCP team with actionable information regarding the overall CCP community needs, audience motivations, and key engagement considerations
2. Identify gaps, needs, and opportunities related to community engagement that may inform the design, approach, and improvements that may be undertaken by CCP

This memo will explain our findings and recommendations. We offer these for consideration as CCP works toward its goal of establishing meaningful, equity-informed, and impactful engagement of stakeholders — community voices — in the Feyrer Park and Barton Park improvement efforts.

Shared Context for Feyrer and Barton Park

In laying the groundwork for the improvement initiatives at Feyrer Park and Barton Park, it is imperative to establish a shared context that articulates the overarching vision, purpose, and collaborative spirit driving these efforts, and in particular, equity within those efforts.

Both park initiatives are driven by a shared vision of creating vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable public spaces that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of the community. The vision encompasses a commitment to cultivating a sense of

belonging, promoting recreational opportunities, and preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the respective areas. At the heart of these initiatives, there is a community-centric philosophy that acknowledges the insights and contributions of local residents, stakeholders, and organizations. By actively involving the community in the planning and decision-making processes, the aim is to ensure that the parks authentically reflect the identities and desires of the people they serve.

As Feyrer Park and Barton Park initiatives unfold, the establishment of this shared context can demonstrate the county's commitment and intentions as a way to build relationships and earn trust with marginalized communities. By aligning visions, engaging the community, fostering partnerships, and embracing adaptability, these initiatives can be poised to create enduring public spaces that enrich the lives of all those who call the community home.

I. Project Overview

Background

This memo integrates findings and recommendations related to Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), low-income individuals and families, rural communities, people living with disabilities, and other marginalized communities in Clackamas County using demographic insights, ensuring that both Feyrer Park and Barton Park updates are designed to serve the needs of all of the county's residents.

Feyrer Park Paving Project

The Feyrer Park Paving Project plans to enhance recreational opportunities by:

- Bringing the park up to modern roadway, parking, and accessibility standards
- Resurfacing 103,000 sq ft of 25 year old failing asphalt
- Adding 10,000 sqft of new paved surfaces
- Adding 3,150 linear ft of new curbing and removing unsafe parking stops
- Install 7 new ADA approaches to substantially improve ADA accessibility
- Create 8 new parking stalls, and 1 ADA stall
- Install 9 speed humps for traffic control and visitor safety

Site Analysis/Location Assessment

- Feyrer Park serves as an easily accessible family friendly regional recreation site. The park offers drive-in camping, 4 reservable shelters, a playground, family friendly restrooms and shower building, and river access a short drive from metropolitan areas.

- Feyrer Park is a regional recreation hub and has the potential to serve a diverse user group. The closest city is Molalla, which is comprised of the following demographics:
    - 14.4% of residents are BIPOC
    - 9.4% experience low-English proficiency
    - 11.2% are 65 years old or older
    - ~33% are family residences; 3,362 families out of 10,228 total residents

Barton Park Complex Master Plan

The Barton Park Complex Master Plan is the largest and most popular county park, encompassing 122 acres and offering 112 campsites; 103 with water and electric hookups.

The goals of the Barton Park Complex Master Plan are:

- Develop a community-supported master plan that provides guidance for future expansion of Barton Park
- Prepare a master plan that strengthens the connection between Barton Park and Carver Park, and that integrates the disparate Barton Park Complex parcels of land that considers transportation, the Temporary Debris Storage and Reduction Site and habitat conservation objectives and impacts
- Connect Barton Park to the regional trail network and improve access to the future Cazadero Trail

Site Analysis/Location Assessment

- Barton Park serves as an easily accessible family friendly regional recreation site.
- The park offers over 100 campsites, 4 parking lots, 4 restroom sites, 7 reservable picnic table areas, 1.5 miles of hiking trails, and 1 boat ramp with accessible fishing on the river.

Barton Park is a regional recreation hub and has the potential to serve a diverse user group. It resides in the 97009 ZIP code area, which is comprised of:

I. 9.4% of residents are BIPOC
II. 15.5% of household incomes are less than $45,000
III. 17% are 65 years old or older
IV. 64% of the households are nuclear family households

II. Community Engagement Process

The following section provides an overview of the fundamental elements that set the stage for receiving community feedback for Feyrer Park and Barton Park. We've included it to ensure that all CCP stakeholders are aligned in their understanding of the community engagement process. The concepts that follow are foundational and inform our approach.

Data Is Not Neutral

Data is never neutral, objective, or free from bias. They are the result of a series of calculated decisions, processes, approaches, and evaluations that reflect the lenses, beliefs, and biases of those who collect and manage that data. The lack of diversity in data science means that marginalized communities are often further marginalized or invisibilized by the systems that rely on data sources to inform policy and infrastructure.

Data disaggregation is a foundational strategy for identifying audience segmentation through an equity lens. By disaggregating available data around race and ethnicity — breaking down information into smaller subgroups — as well as income, sex, age, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics, we can better identify underlying social determinants, disparities and inequities. This will improve our engagement and message delivery to be even more specific and culturally relevant. Some examples include:

- Previous CCP surveys did not appear to take into consideration that diverse communities need diverse strategies and that may have directly impacted the number of earlier responses from BIPOC individuals living in Clackamas County in 2018-2022. Earlier surveying also did not collect demographic data, making it difficult to gain perspectives from particular community groups.
- By taking intersectional approaches in research, CCP could learn more about the unique experiences from people that share one or more group identities. For

instance, a Black woman with a disability may experience discrimination or marginalization differently because of her intersecting identities, and therefore may have different needs in terms of safety and/or accessibility in a park setting.

Framing May Not Be Normative For Some Communities

When factoring for cultural norms and stigmas, it's critical to consider that sharing direct, honest feedback and opinions may not be normative for some communities. As such, invitations to participate in facilitated groups, associations, and other dominant culture models of giving input may not resonate.

Community Engagement Approach

When conducting formal community engagement to inform improvement plans, ongoing awareness and trust-building efforts with communities is and will be crucial throughout the process. Underrepresented and marginalized communities make up a small percentage of the entire population in Clackamas County and therefore require tailored and intentional outreach. Our engagement outreach began in the latter half of 2023 and concluded at the end of January of 2024. Though After Bruce's community engagement has ended for the scope of this work, this memo provides multiple recommendations for CCP to continue engagement with our identified audiences.

Community-Based Organizations

We recruited people to participate in listening sessions and the survey (more details are provided lower in the Key Audiences section) through our network of community-based organizations (CBOs). Our strong relationships with CBOs were crucial to recruitment success. By partnering with organizations already trusted in the community, we have a much more effective avenue to hear from community voices.

Some of these close partnerships include the following organizations: APANO, El Programa Hispano, Familias en Accion, Brown Folks Fishing, Clackamas County Community Action Board, Latino Network, NW Steelheaders, Oak Grove (North Clackamas) Boys & Girls Club, People of Color Outdoors, Portland in Color, Seeding Justice, Unite Oregon, Unlikely Hikers, and Wild Diversity.

Transcreation

In order to reach our Hispanic & Latiné communities in Clackamas County, a major community of focus in our work, we transcreated all outreach materials in Spanish, and hosted listening sessions with a native Spanish-speaking facilitator. Transcreation is a

process different from translation; whereas the latter is a word-for-word language exchange, the former engages native speakers to rewrite the English copy in the target language. This process of transcreation improves cultural relevance, emotional resonance, and increased effectiveness in communication.

Compensation

By its nature, volunteer-based engagements and convenings can require disposable time and income, which could have presented challenges to participation from people disproportionately impacted by inequity. With that in mind, After Bruce offered various forms of direct monetary compensation for participation in the survey and these listening sessions (such as direct compensation and raffle winners), as well as multiple opportunities for engagement. When we engage community members, it is important to recognize their lived experiences as the basis of their expertise. By honoring their time, and incentivising their participation, we prove to them that we value their perspectives. When the budget is not available to provide direct financial compensation to community members, one should get creative – free parking passes, vouchers for rentable assets owned by CCP, gift cards to local stores, seek out donated goods, park-branded accessories, etc.

Surveys

After receiving information from CCP on the project, the After Bruce team conducted a materials review and landscape scan. This research and analysis of similar projects helped us identify what types of questions should be asked in our survey. From transportation modes, to information channels, through park amenity use, we covered all the major areas of the park that we inferred our community members would have opinions about. Additionally, we included a catch-all question at the end of the survey as a fail-safe (*Is there anything else you would like us to know?*).

An online survey is an excellent way to create data for both qualitative and quantitative analysis. The combined nature of our questions (open ended + canned responses) were intentionally written as such so that we were not prescribing what the fixes for the park would be, while also keeping our audiences focused on changes they found most important.

The survey we distributed covered both parks. This helped us gather all the information into one central repository for analysis. Because one of the early questions asked for information regarding who'd visited either, neither, or both of the parks, we were able to

sort answers and disaggregate specific feedback when analyzing each park.

We distributed the survey through our CBO networks, personal community and organizational contacts in the Clackamas area, and through paid media. We built connections with audience members by introducing the Barton Park and Feyrer Park plans through email narratives and moving people up the ladder of engagement. While we received nearly 600 responses in total from the survey, a closer examination of the data from our second round of outreach indicated about half of the responses may have been AI generated. This discovery was revealed in our QA process, which is conducted with the understanding that in our current digital landscape, AI-generated participation is an accompanying risk. After reconciling those responses, we still found results consistent with our initial survey analysis, suggesting that even with a smaller than initially reported sample size, the quality of responses and insight offered were still robust and informative to the overall research. The survey reached diverse audience segments, well aligned with our goals and tracking proportionally or better with state population percentages: ~50% white, ~15% Black or African American, ~12% Native American or Indigenous, ~12% Asian, ~9% Hispanic or Latino, and ~2% other.

Regarding paid media, census data allows us to target demographic groups through zip code and geo-targeting information to focus on BIPOC, low-wage earners, and rural communities in Clackamas County. We used Facebook and Instagram as our main platforms for paid media, with the central campaign objective being trafficking people to our survey.

Listening Sessions

The listening sessions were crafted largely with open-ended questions from the survey. Our focus for both listening sessions and surveys were essentially the same: learn what was priority for our Clackamas community members. Once the questions were written and approved by CCP, we crafted accompanying slide decks for the listening sessions. People process information in different ways and at different speeds; it is important to provide information both visually and audibly to meet different accessibility needs.

Since community members' time is valuable, we were conscious of balancing efficiency with thoroughness in running these sessions. To assist with this, we create "facilitator guides." These lengthy documents outline the exact run of show for each listening session; we provide introductions of the presenters and background information to the project, presentation slides, context for each question asked,

approximate minutes allotted for each section, and a comprehensive “next steps” portion. These best practices help our team to prepare for the unexpected. For instance, if our assigned facilitator has an emergency, the support staff can step seamlessly into the role as they have a script and organizational tools already prepared for them. This practice is also quite helpful when onboarding facilitators for non-English sessions and makes for a smooth process for our contractors and participants.

During the listening sessions, we monitor participation to ensure that we’re proactively and thoughtfully engaging everyone in the room. To alleviate any potential disruptions, we also monitor for bots or agitators, who are liable to be removed from the session.

Key Audiences

The goal of the listening sessions and surveys was to better understand the priorities for park experiences from our participants. The success of engaging these participants hinged on effectively reaching our key audiences in Clackamas County and the surrounding area.

Key audiences identified before outreach began included Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC), low-income individuals and families, rural communities, people living with disabilities, and other marginalized communities. After producing our recruitment materials in English and Spanish, we conducted outreach to over 65 CBOs directly serving the Clackamas County area, with emphasis on those serving historically and systemically marginalized and underserved communities.

Cities with Feyrer Park Engagement

As part of this work with CBOs, along with email blasts and paid media, we communicated with members within Clackamas County and surrounding areas; at least 3 or more participants in our engagement activities identified as residents of Oregon cities including Boring, Canby, Clackamas, Damascus, Estacada, Happy Valley, Molalla, Oregon City, Portland, and West Linn. These have been written in alphabetical order.

Cities with Barton Engagement

As part of this work with CBOs, along with email blasts and paid media, we communicated with members within Clackamas County and surrounding areas; at least 3 or more participants in our engagement activities identified as residents of Oregon cities including Beaverton, Boring, Canby, Clackamas, Damascus, Eagle

Creek, Estacada, Happy Valley, Oregon City, Portland, Sandy, Troutdale, and West Linn. These have been written in alphabetical order.

Guiding Research Questions

Five questions guided our approach to research and engagement:

1. Understanding specific improvements that can enhance visitors' confidence and experience in parks is essential, therefore what elements of a park are most important to our community members?
2. What resources, services, or initiatives related to equity and belonging within the Clackamas County Parks are currently in place?
3. How should information be conveyed to park visitors? Who needs access to information and how can we better communicate?
4. What cultural or community-specific elements would community members like to have incorporated into the park design to create a sense of belonging for all residents?
5. In what ways does the existing set of resources, opportunities, and communications regarding Feyrer and Barton Park fall short in ensuring users have the information they need to feel informed, choose to use the parks, and effectively provide input?

<u>Feyrer Park</u>

From the guiding research questions, our team developed a specific set of listening-session prompts that were facilitated to engage participants. Besides research and survey distribution, our deep listening efforts completed to-date include:

- Five online listening sessions: two in Spanish, three in English
    - We conducted three more listening sessions than what was originally scoped due to audience segmentation findings in the research and discovery phase that suggested an adjustment in our scope would exponentially yield a more robust set of findings; we were able to complete these within the originally scoped budget
- Each session included on average 10 community members from Clackamas County and nearby surrounding areas
    - Most participants identified as non-white, and about half were people who had previously visited at least one of the two parks

<u>Barton Park</u>

From these research questions, our team developed a specific set of listening session questions for Barton Park that were crafted to engage participants. Besides research and survey distribution, our deep listening efforts completed to-date include:

- Three online listening sessions: one in Spanish, two in English
- Each session included on average 10 community members from Clackamas County and nearby surrounding areas

III. Engagement Limitations

Engagement Limitations for Both Parks

When engaging our community groups, we encountered some challenges such as outreach constraints, accessibility with the digital divide, and trust.

Outreach Constraints

Since our scope focused on English and Spanish language speakers, we did not recruit other communities directly in additional languages; in anticipation of the potential need for non-English and non-Spanish engagement, we noted the availability of materials in other languages in our existing recruitment messages. However, we did not receive any additional requests for transcreation. This may have limited our ability to get input from non-Spanish speaking, low-English proficiency community members.

Accessibility

While virtual listening sessions offer great flexibility in schedule and access for many participants, it may also present limitations for those who are more acutely marginalized by the digital divide. For instance, if people were not comfortable navigating click-through links, online surveys, or Zoom, they likely did not participate in our engagement activities. Older individuals, people in temporary housing, or some low-income households may not participate actively in our efforts; disparities in internet access and digital literacy curbs online engagement, limiting the reach to communities with less access to technology.

Trust

There is a general distrust of government and governmental organizations with many marginalized communities, especially in a state such as Oregon. Historical mistrust of government initiatives requires extra effort to establish credibility and encourage participation. One of our main strategies to overcoming this was by communicating

and reaching audiences through trusted community-based organizations with which we have relationships.

Addressing Limitations

At After Bruce, we always look back to our strategic foundation and address engagement challenges and limitations with tools we know create an open line of communication with our key audiences. This includes:

- Having a transparent and inclusive dialogue in all communications within the context of the strategy which includes: offering clarity on process, how information is utilized and why, what's expected throughout our engagement process with participants, relevant and relatable transcreation in additional languages when appropriate to ensure accessibility for non-native English speakers, and finding additional options within virtual and in-person settings to encourage participation.

- Creating opportunities for questions and feedback throughout the process, whether it's with a survey or a listening session. Although many participants do not share their feedback after the engagement process, we find that they do share appreciation of that open line of communication which continues to build community trust.

IV. Barriers to Access Feyrer Park & Barton Park

Analyzing Barriers

Analyzing listening sessions and survey results with an intersectional lens is crucial for gaining a nuanced understanding of the complex and interconnected factors that contribute to individuals' experiences and perceptions. Understanding the intersectionality of barriers helps stakeholders allocate resources in a more equitable manner. This ensures that interventions and improvements address the most pressing needs and prioritize those who may be disproportionately affected by multiple systemic inequalities. An intersectional analysis promotes inclusive community engagement, ensuring that the voices and experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds are heard and considered. This representation is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and ownership within the community.

Overall Barriers to Access

From the survey responses and listening session analyses, we found that some of the greatest barriers to accessing Clackamas County Parks are outside of CCP's scope and ability to address directly. While we identify these below, we also offer some actionable solutions later in the document:

Time constraints and distance

Time constraints and distance from home were two of the greatest barriers to attending the parks from both our English and Spanish survey respondents. When we see time and distance as a hurdle, we find that there are additional factors that accompany this, including internal and external barriers like: the park seeming inaccessible in terms of location which can make it the last option on someone's list for recreational activities or issues like safety have park-goers refrain from making time to visit the park.

Since we are not able to change the location of the parks, nor the homes of the park-goers, looking into transportation assistance is a potential route for easing this barrier.

Budgetary constraints

Budgetary constraints came in at third as a barrier to accessing Barton Park. Since we cannot change these factors dramatically with our park improvement efforts, in this section we will add additional context of more concrete elements of park-goers' barriers.

Racism and Inequity in Parks and the Outdoors

In the survey, we distinguished three systemic inequalities as potential barriers deterring people from visiting the outdoors; those three are *Historical discrimination or exclusion*, *Racism*, and *Gender Inequality*. All three are noted by respondents as deterrents from visiting the outdoors.

- Conservation and park building initiatives have historically contributed to the displacement of Indigenous communities from their ancestral lands to create protected areas or national parks. This has resulted in the loss of livelihoods, cultural heritage, and traditional ways of life.
- Marginalized communities disproportionately suffer from environmental pollution and hazards, leading to negative health effects and worsening social and

economic inequalities. Often, these communities also face the highest barriers to accessing nearby green spaces and/or programming may not explicitly invite or welcome communities most impacted by inequalities and lack of access

- BIPOC communities are often excluded from decision-making processes related to nature access and conservation. Combined with the history of racial violence, discrimination, and exclusion in natural spaces, a legacy of fear and caution may impact some communities and their relationships to parks.
- Regarding people feeling represented or not, there was a clear disconnect between non-white and white participants. A majority of our white respondents noted that they felt safe and that they believe “everyone” feels safe; whereas many of our BIPOC respondents identified feeling othered, unwelcomed, and underrepresented at parks due to marginalization.

Feyrer Park’s Unique Barriers and Needs

Barriers Revealed at Listening Sessions

The insights gathered from the listening sessions for Feyrer Park reveal a community deeply invested in shaping a diverse and inclusive recreational space. Participants highlighted the importance of identifying young children and older adults as primary stakeholders in the improvement of paved roads for accessibility and safety needs. Participants also expressed challenges experienced with signage, emphasizing the need for clear, multilingual signs in areas such as entrances, parking, restrooms, and other park-provided amenities and facilities. Entrances and bathrooms were underscored as critical elements, with a call for well-maintained facilities.

In addition to the above, repeated calls for the following from community members also arose: covered areas to combat the unpredictable weather experienced in Oregon, well-maintained picnic areas with accessible seating options, addition of water fountains, as well as safety measures such as well-lit spaces. Furthermore, participants expressed a desire for historic and informational signs, connecting the park to the local environment, native wildlife, and the historical significance of the land – specifically attributing and acknowledging the people indigenous to the land. This emphasizes the importance of recognizing and intentionally engaging Indigenous communities as partners and leading voices in that storytelling.

With smooth pavements, signage, and cleanliness being primary concerns for most participants, they also envisioned a dynamic and engaging park experience, emphasizing the importance of entertainment, activities for kids, and inclusive

playground equipment catering to children with diverse sensory abilities. Recreational activities are deemed essential, reflecting a commitment to a vibrant park atmosphere, and as the primary way for non-white community members to feel celebrated and included. These findings collectively highlight the community's aspirations for Feyrer Park, emphasizing accessibility, safety, diversity, and a rich tapestry of recreational and cultural offerings.

When it comes to general environmental concerns, most community members stated that air pollution/air quality is very important to them; allergens and the improper disposal of waste came in second and third, respectively. This was reflected in both survey and listening session responses. Overall, several consistent themes emerged across the five sessions:

- A desire for multi-use spaces, increased signage, and well-maintained facilities catering to various recreational interests and family-oriented activities
- Safety was a major concern as people do not feel comfortable visiting the park; here were a number of calls for security personnel, lights, and signage to convey the rules of the park
- Cultivating an inclusive environment for visitors, especially those who have historically been marginalized from these spaces includes the following:
    - One of the key suggestions from the listening session was to be aware of who lives near the parks and how and why the county is defining inclusion or inclusive environments. In other words, it’s ideal for the county to have a clear perspective and articulation of what inclusion looks like will help identify what placemaking efforts to prioritize, whether in the built environment (such as spaces for prayer) or in park programming. These are ideas that came up during the listening session,
    - Signage in multiple languages was called for as critical to make an inclusive environment; historical and informational signage was also a popular choice by listening session attendees to better familiarize themselves with the living history of people indigenous to the land of the site
    - A large portion of attendees thought a stage or similar space would be beneficial for hosting cultural events
        - A large portion of attendee feedback on this subject centered on connecting with community groups of different cultures by hosting events with various cuisines available (such as multiple food trucks

with various cultures represented), or an opportunity to host local artisans to showcase and sell their goods

Engagement Reveals Consistency with Survey Respondents - Feyrer Park
The improvements that were most important to survey respondents that have visited Feyrer Park are: Traffic and Parking, Safety, and Accessibility for the Disability Community.

Most participants were in consensus regarding challenges related to traffic flow and parking facilities, with nearly three fourths of participants identifying traffic flow (movement on the property in vehicles) at the park and parking as the top improvements they'd like to see. The data suggests that addressing issues related to accessibility, congestion, and parking fees are likely to have a substantial impact on the overall park experience, as it represents a primary focus for the community's improvement priorities. Safety and amenities were nearly tied as the second most popular response for park improvement types. Lastly, the survey findings highlight a critical perspective from approximately ¼ of participants in Clackamas County who either have a physical disability or care for someone with one. These individuals have emphasized the importance of prioritizing disability-supported facilities within the park, such as the need for accessible toilets, picnic areas, and signage tailored to individuals with disabilities. This data underscores the significance of enhancing accessibility features to accommodate the specific needs of this segment of the community.

It is essential to consider the community's desire for inclusive park environments that cater to individuals with physical disabilities and their caregivers. Addressing these concerns aligns with the broader goal of creating parks that are accessible and welcoming to diverse groups, ensuring a positive experience for all community members. When we design spaces for people most impacted, everyone benefits.

Barton Park's Unique Barriers and Needs

When revealing barriers to access from our listening session and survey participants, it is also important to mention that these community members have enthusiasm for what they feel Barton Park offers, particularly local Clackamas County residents. They identified river access and the picnic tables as their most utilized amenities of Barton Park, and also noted these as the amenities they felt the most positivity and confidence towards. Participants also articulated a genuine stake in caring about a sense of belonging and how one experiences the park. There were suggestions for more

educational signage that include additional languages so that all who visit can enjoy its historic imprint. This includes interest in how conservation is happening in the park and related guidance regarding how to properly interact with the wildlife and nature of the park.

Barriers Revealed at Listening Sessions

According to our listening sessions groups, several themes consistently emerged across the board that we perceive as addressable barriers. These common themes included a desire for safety, an understanding of rules, the upkeep of park cleanliness, and the need for smooth and well-maintained walking paths. We found that if there's a reduction of these barriers, it can improve recreational interest, increase community interest in activities at the park, and make the park more accessible to people impacted by inequalities.

Safety Issues

During the listening sessions, safety was revealed as a top concern for community members. Here are some notable highlights:

- Participants expressed a strong desire for a park to be inviting; it must provide a secure environment for individuals and families to enjoy outdoor activities.
- Lighting was one way that people identified as a key way to feel safe. Well-lit areas, particularly during evening hours, were needed to enhance visibility and deter potential safety hazards.
- A number of participants also encountered park-goers drinking alcohol (some underaged) and making people feel unsafe while there; this could also be aided by the following point about signage for understanding rules.
- We received conflicting information from one regular park-goer who noted that the Barton Park benches and picnic tables were infested with bees (to the point they could not use the assets), while other participants who claimed to have visited the park never experienced a bee infestation.

Miscommunication of Rules & Signage

Multiple participants discussed how they felt that more signage could help with there being a better understanding of the rules of the park.

- One participant stated: "If everyone is supposed to operate by the same set of rules, they must be clearly detailed."
- One participant shared a story of a park ranger telling her and her friends rules about campgrounds that were different than what a different ranger had told

them on a different visit; this caused confusion and frustration as there was no central hub they could point to in order to clarify the disagreement, and the participant's friends were asked to vacate the campgrounds.

Concerns about Cleanliness & Hygiene

Consistently across our Barton Park listening sessions we heard participants express the need for a clean park in order to feel like they wanted to visit.

- Having facilities stocked with the appropriate hygiene materials was certainly an important aspect.
- There were claims that our listening session participants had seen syringes, needles, and injection materials on the grounds. For participants with families and children, this was of great concern and importance.

Limited Accessibility: More Smooth & Well-Maintained Walkways

There was a consistent desire and need throughout all listening sessions for both Feyrer Park and Barton Park to have smooth and well-maintained walkways. However, Barton Park listening session attendees identified a greater importance around having high quality, maintained walking paths as this is seen as a vital factor influencing the overall park experience.

- This was highlighted especially by our older adults, parents with children, and disabled participants in the listening sessions. This need plays tidily within the desire for safety for our CCP parks.
- Additionally, a participant offered the thought of adding signs to the beginning of hiking trails, letting people know if there was rough terrain on the path (to warn people who may have assistive mobility devices); this suggestion was well received by the other listening session attendees.

Engagement Reveals Consistency with Survey Respondents - Barton Park

From the survey respondents that have visited Barton Park, we noticed the following in regards to which types of improvements are most important to people: Recreational Opportunities (*trails, sports, fishing, bikes, river use)*, Traffic and Parking, Safety, Amenities, Environmental (*wildlife habitat)*, all had a majority of the responses; with Operations (*maintenance, rangers, park staff*), Accessibility, and Signage placing in secondary positions. For this question, we allowed people to select multiple options in the survey.

In regards to safety, the top three concerns for survey respondents who visited Barton Park were Public Drug Use, Burglary/Theft, and Assault. This can be echoed by the overarching minor concerns for safety that we heard in the listening sessions. The most mentioned concern from surveyed individuals with regard to wildlife and plants is safety from wildlife and avoiding animal attacks, followed by mosquitos and other insects.

Lastly, we want to note that both Barton and Feyrer Park respondents agreed that online was the top choice for how they would prefer to make reservations as well as where/how they'd like to learn more information about the park's information and guidance.

V. Recommendations

The demand for safer, cleaner, and more accessible Clackamas County Parks is undoubtedly a top priority for the communities we engaged with. The information gathered throughout the engagement process revealed an overall desire to see improvements happen for both parks. Whether a participant was local, a few counties away, or never visited our parks before, participants and respondents acknowledged the importance of a holistic, community-driven inquiry to better inform refinement and enhancement of an already beloved set of Oregon parks. Continuing to work on outreach and engagement plans that specifically target meaningful input from BIPOC, low-income, and historically marginalized people ensures that the park projects are not only responsive to the diverse needs of the community but also reflect the cultural richness and aspirations of all people living in Clackamas County.

After assessing all of the information and data we gathered for both Barton Park and Feyrer Park, our recommendations include the following actionable items:

Early Engagement

When adopting new and ongoing park improvement plans, we recommend integrating community engagement as a crucial initial step in the planning process, and maintaining engagement thereafter. The commitment to accessibility and trust-building should begin at the inception of any initiative as a way to bridge the gaps between institution, stakeholder, and community. When community engagement becomes central to parks' plans, it can inform the overall project goals and strategy in a way that

matches the evolving values of CCP. This ensures that, from the beginning, resources are allocated equitably across a project and historical disparities in park development are addressed.

Continued Engagement and Messaging Out

Communities of color, people with disabilities, and underrepresented people have historically been left out of decisions about how parks are planned and built. Maintaining clear, concise, and open communication is essential to informing residents and park visitors that they have an avenue to voice their concerns during the improvement process and overall future of Clackamas County Parks. When thinking about continued engagement, it's important to develop specific messages for these audiences and consider how the community receives that information.

Examples of messaging include:

"Your feedback helps make parks better"
This is an example of encouraging engagement and collaboration with residents, local businesses, schools, and community organizations. This can enhance ongoing efforts to understand and build community confidence in public recreational institutions. In this message, we also consider how this will translate into other languages and how we always have transcreation in mind. (See "transcreation" above)

"Let's make our parks safer together"
This can be a way to initiate inclusive community conversations that start to build mutual trust and activate possibilities for proactive and voluntary community clean-ups and outdoor meet-ups that focus on safety. This type of messaging also creates a platform where onsite workshops, such as the following, could be hosted: poison ivy and other dangerous plants, CPR, cultural competency training, and outdoor safety tips. These types of experiences can empower the community to imagine and co-create what safety looks like.

Create Strategic Communications Tools and Culturally-Specific Materials

When and how the community receives information is important from planning through the execution of the parks project. Below are our recommendations for approaching communications:

- Plan regular updates through open community meetings, community forums, and digital platforms that will cultivate a sense of ownership or buy-in among residents and park visitors
- Implement continuous feedback opportunities to identify and address evolving community priorities and concerns
- Facilitate workshops in accessible locations to gather input on park development (these could include the parks, rentable CBO offices, community centers, and virtual meeting rooms)
- Leverage online forums and social media as a way to distribute polls or get the word out about new engagement opportunities (social media platforms could include Facebook (Gen X and above), Instagram (Millennials), TikTok (Gen Z), or Snapchat (Gen Z))
- Maintain open channels (phone, email, online form, social media, etc.) for community feedback throughout the construction and post-completion phases
- Disseminate information in multiple languages and accessible formats to ensure that diverse communities can engage effectively
    - Post flyers or share graphics on social media platforms, and when appropriate, in multiple languages for a wider connection with underrepresented communities
    - Learn and consider best practices when approaching ways to communicate with underserved and/or marginalized communities
    - Offer avenues for how people can access the shared information in other languages
    - Utilizing images as a universal language is a good practice for multilingual communication if the information is simple enough to convey via icons/drawings
- Establish partnerships with community organizations and leaders to bridge communication gaps and enhance representation
    - As a way to bridge the communication gaps, reporting or sharing out updates about new and ongoing initiatives happening with parks keeps community organizations abreast of what's happening
    - Community organizations may be enthusiastic about keeping their own communities informed about changes and updates through email newsletters; this is a way to enhance awareness and representation
- Provide cultural competency training for project stakeholders and park staff members/rangers, to enhance understanding and responsiveness to diverse

community perspectives in planning discussions, as well as on-the-ground response

Continue ongoing relationship building

With improvements on the horizon, it's possible that the majority of focus will be allocated toward the physical improvements of the park with fewer opportunities for ongoing engagement. As we've worked through the engagement process with the CCP team, there is a clear understanding that continuing to build relationships with community members across all demographics is crucial to the success of the expansion, particularly those who are historically marginalized and struggle to trust institutions. Ongoing relationship building can serve as a catalyst for substantive, long-term connections with the community, while inviting a sense of reassurance and confidence in government institutions.

Building a trusting relationship starts with the onsite park office and park rangers as they may have the first (and only) interaction with park visitors. We know that sincere, positive first impressions can create comfortability and assurance for most people; yet in underserved and underrepresented communities, the power dynamic of park staffers will likely be felt regardless of a positive direct interaction. We advise emphasis on clear, welcoming signage and word-of-mouth from repeat park goers to make an impact on creating long-term community visitation and participation.

Continue to focus on park infrastructure

- Focus on improving walkways by considering other ways of proactively anticipating accessibility needs, such as clear and direct communication through signage. Increasing accessibility and use of paths for a variety of accessibility needs and activity levels can look like informing park goers with signage of trail-terrain. An example of this is specific information on trails: a "difficulty" rating will mean different things to different people (for instance, someone in a wheelchair will have different challenges than someone walking with a toddler). By providing information calling out gravely terrain, sharp turns, large rocks, etc the community is informed about what they're getting themselves into, rather than narrowly defined assessments of the trail.
- Post clear rules and guidance for the park with both physical signage and online information (such as rules for drinking, smoking, and campsite behavior being some of the most common needs). Consider multilingual signage.

- Implement more strategic and efficient park lighting for evening and overnight camping attendees. When and if the budget allows, consider informing the public about any existing lighting limitations to help people prepare or be more at ease.
- Ensure amenities/facilities are stocked with the appropriate hygiene materials and have a reporting system to notify park staffers of issues (an example could be a phone number with a voicemail for missed calls).
- Implement and promote sustainable practices in park management, such as water conservation, waste reduction, and biodiversity preservation.
- Offer discounts and waive fees for low-income families.
- Prioritize a welcoming environment for people who are new to visiting the parks before, during, and after the improvement process by encouraging and/or facilitating activities at an introductory level to promote education, exercise, relaxation, and social interaction. This can include a focused tour around the park, an activity that highlights a certain part of the park, or a gathering with community members that help them connect park improvements in real time.

As park infrastructure improves, utilize continued engagement and messaging practices as a guide to report out to the community. This includes feedback opportunities in the different phases of work.

Co-create programs to help serve community and build park awareness

When we think about co-creating programs, there are both passive and active approaches that Barton Park and Feyrer Park can take to serve the community, while building park awareness. Knowing that CCP is a parks department without programming staff, here are a few avenues to consider:

- Actively seek out and communicate with community-based and multicultural-specific organizations. There are dozens of community based organizations in Clackamas County and surrounding areas that serve diverse segments of the community. Building trust and co-creating opportunities for programming on the CCP side could look like actively informing the community that there is space, which in turn builds awareness of the park and its expansion plans. As Barton Park and Feyrer Park expands its outdoor recreational space, educational signage and materials that speak to and reflect underrepresented communities will be key to the parks' inclusion efforts.
- More partnerships with shops and local businesses. For example, trusted outdoor-focused local stores like Next Adventure or Patagonia have programs

that diversify parks and the outdoors. From a community engagement standpoint, people want to see place and culture interconnected. CCP may not be familiar to people in the surrounding areas, but they might already be connected to a particular store brand or culture. In recommending this, we can also assume that local companies and brands are on a similar trajectory when it comes to their own community engagement efforts for the underserved and underrepresented populations, which creates more opportunities for park awareness and attendance across demographics.

- Track outcomes by creating community feedback opportunities. Make it clear to park-goers that CCP is interested in their experiences and wants to make the park a more welcoming experience for all. Though the parks' websites include an email and phone number as contact information, consider adding a direct link or language to encourage people to alert the parks' maintenance teams of issues. This should only be enacted if there is someone who would read the responses with the intention of passing the feedback to the right member of staff; offering a feedback opportunity without someone reading the responses is performative.

While these recommendations are made without enough context to consider CCP budget and available resources, they hopefully provide starting points to engage community members that can make an impact in the long-term.

VI. Conclusion

It is clear that both Barton Park and Feyrer Park initiatives are driven by a shared vision of creating vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable public spaces that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of the community. Overall, we can see that small adjustments can go a long way in breaking down barriers to access and cultivate true partnership with communities. By continuing to incorporate diverse perspectives, prioritize sustainability alongside critical feedback from marginalized voices, and align placemaking and programmatic opportunities within budgetary constraints, these improvement projects are poised to become a cornerstone of community life.

A significant data point to be cognizant of throughout the park improvement process is that communities of color, the disability community, and families experiencing poverty make up a small percentage of the entire population in Clackamas County and

therefore require tailored and accessible outreach. Continued collaboration and deliberate ways of communicating and responding to these diverse communities will ensure CCP's Feyrer Park and Barton Park become long-term successes as cherished destinations for all of Clackamas County residents.