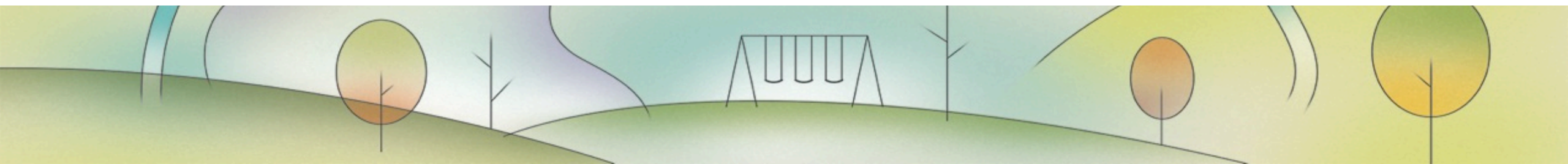




SPARK Parks: Monitoring the Implementation and Impact of Schoolyards-turned-Public Parks

ACTIVE LIVING RESEARCH CONFERENCE 2015





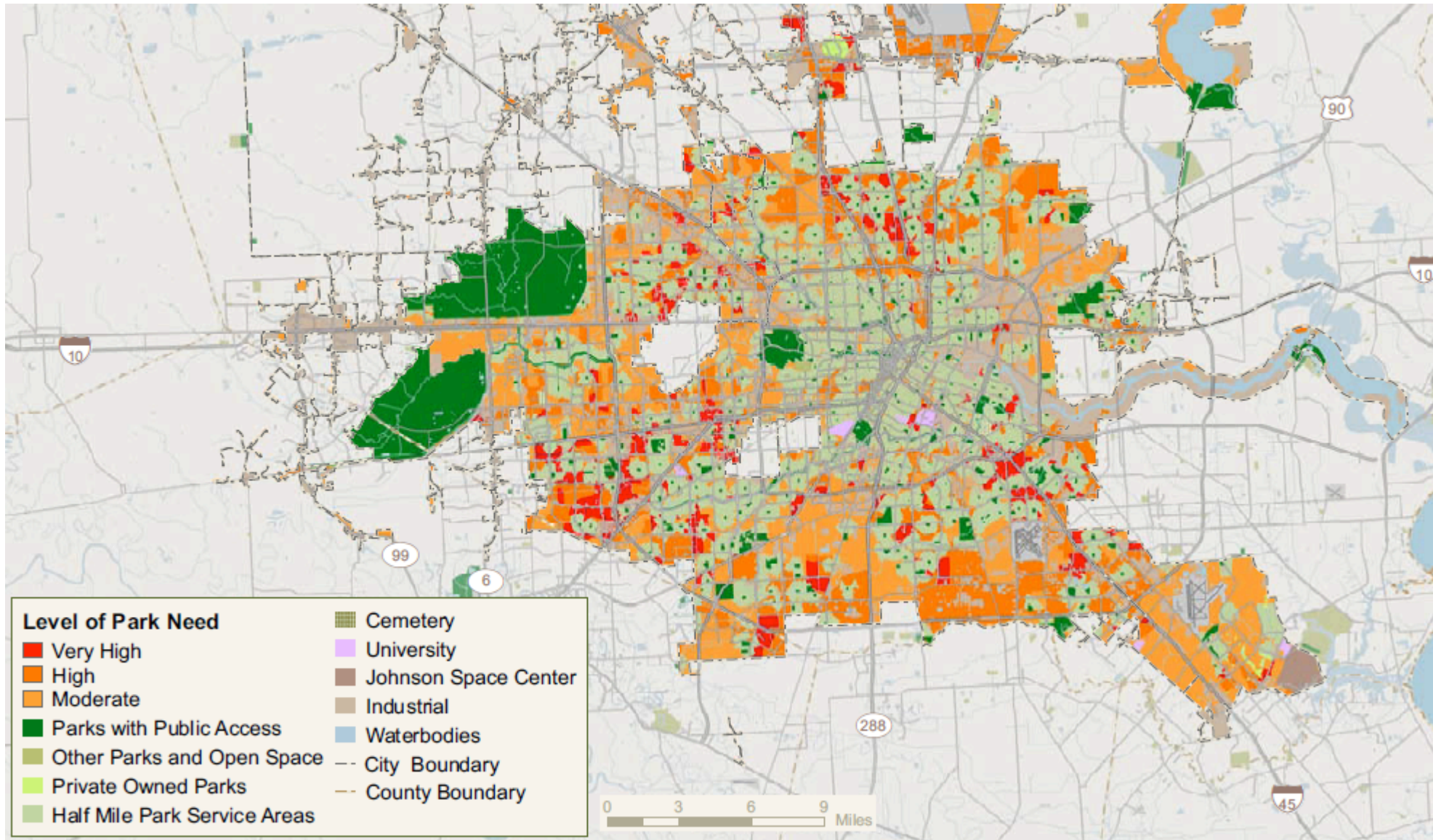
Today's talk

- Introductions:
 - Study Area: Houston, Texas
 - The SPARK School Park Program
 - The Trust for Public Land
 - SPARK Park Assessment
- Preliminary Findings
- Next steps
- Q&A



Today's talk

- Introductions
- Preliminary Findings:
 - Park Access Mapping and Analysis
 - JUA Monitoring
 - Park Use
 - Park User Input
 - Case Study: Lyons Elementary
 - SPARK Park Factors
- Next steps
- Q&A



Study Focus: Houston, Texas





Wilson Montessori Elementary/Middle
Houston ISD; Re-SPARKed in 2012





Travis Elementary
Houston ISD; Re-SPARKed in 2011





Travis Elementary
Houston ISD; Re-SPARKed in 2011





SPARK Park Assessment: Objectives

- 1) Evaluate the SPARK School Parks role and impact within Houston's parks and open space system
- 2) Collect information that could inform future actions (park conditions, park use, park user input)
- 3) Study SPARK service areas

Funded by the Houston Endowment

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT

A Philanthropy Endowed by Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones



SPARK Park Assessment: Methods

1) GIS Analysis

- Park access
- Identify high priority areas

2) Assessment and Inventory

3) Observations

4) Park User Survey

SPARK Park Assessment: Methods


1) GIS Analysis

2) Assessment and Inventory

- Physical Accessibility
- Features & Amenities
- Maintenance
- Aesthetics

3) Observations

4) Park User Survey

 **SCHOOLYARD PARK EVALUATION TOOL**
SPARK EVALUATION 2014
This Schoolyard Park Evaluation Tool was developed in 2014 by The Trust for Public Land. Development of this tool was supported by a grant from The Houston Endowment as part of an Evaluation of SPARK School Park Projects in Harris County.
Evaluator: _____

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. School/SPARK Park Name: _____
2. Address/Location: _____
3. Date: _____ / _____ / 2014
Time: _____ : _____ am / pm
4. Was the park easy to find onsite? Yes Somewhat No
5. Weather (check all that apply): Hot Warm Cool Cold Sunny Cloudy Windy
6. Approximately how much of the park is shaded? <25% 25-75% >75%
- Do any of the following features provide shade? Trees Gazebo/pavilion Building/overhangs

II. ACCESS

7. How many points of entry does the park have?
 More than 5 (or park boundary is open) 2-5 Only 1

8. Are the following features or conditions present?

Can the park be accessed for use?		
Are there gates and fences?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are any of the gated entrances locked?	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Is at least one gate unlocked?	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are areas of the park being used by school or other organized groups?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
How community-friendly is the park?		
Is there a sign with the name of the park (a SPARK park sign)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there posted hours of operation?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there signs with rules?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there any features that make the park difficult to access (e.g. stairs)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

9. From the center of the park, how visible is the surrounding neighborhood (i.e. If you are outside the park, can you see most of the areas or people inside? If you are inside the park, are you visible to people who might be walking by?)
 Fully Partially Not at all


SPARK Park Assessment: Methods

- 1) GIS Analysis
- 2) Assessment and Inventory
- 3) **Observations**
 - SOPARC
 - Included in this presentation is information from over 3,100 observations
- 4) Park User Survey



SPARK Park Assessment: Methods

- 1) GIS Analysis
- 2) Assessment and Inventory
- 3) Observations
- 4) Park User Survey
 - Frequency of use
 - Access to open space
 - Travel mode to parks
 - Concerns and perceptions

 **SCHOOLYARD PARK SURVEY
SPARK EVALUATION 2014**

This survey is part of an evaluation effort that explores the role of SPARK School Parks in Houston and Harris County's open space system. This effort is led by The Trust for Public Land and funded by the Houston Endowment. All answers are anonymous, and we appreciate you taking the time to answer these questions.

"This park" refers to the School/SPARK Park you are currently visiting: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / 2014 Time: ____ : ____ am / pm.

1. How often do you visit this park? (Check one)
 Daily
 A few times per week
 Once per week/a few times per month
 Monthly
 A few times per year
 Never, this is my first time

2. When do you usually visit this park? (Check all that apply)
 Weekdays
 Weekend mornings (before noon)
 Weekend afternoons (noon to 4pm)
 Weekend evenings (after 4pm)

3. What do you usually do while at this park? (Check all that apply)
 After-school program Playground
 Attend events Exercise
 Visit with child Basketball
 Meet friends Soccer
 Picnic Sit and relax
 Other: _____

4. How do you usually travel to this park? (Check one)
 Walk Drive Bike
 Other: _____

5. Is there anything that makes it difficult to visit this park? (Check all that apply)
 Sidewalk conditions Traffic
 Safety concerns Lack of parking
 Gate locked/park inaccessible
 Other: _____
 None, it is easy

6. What are the specific things you like about this park?

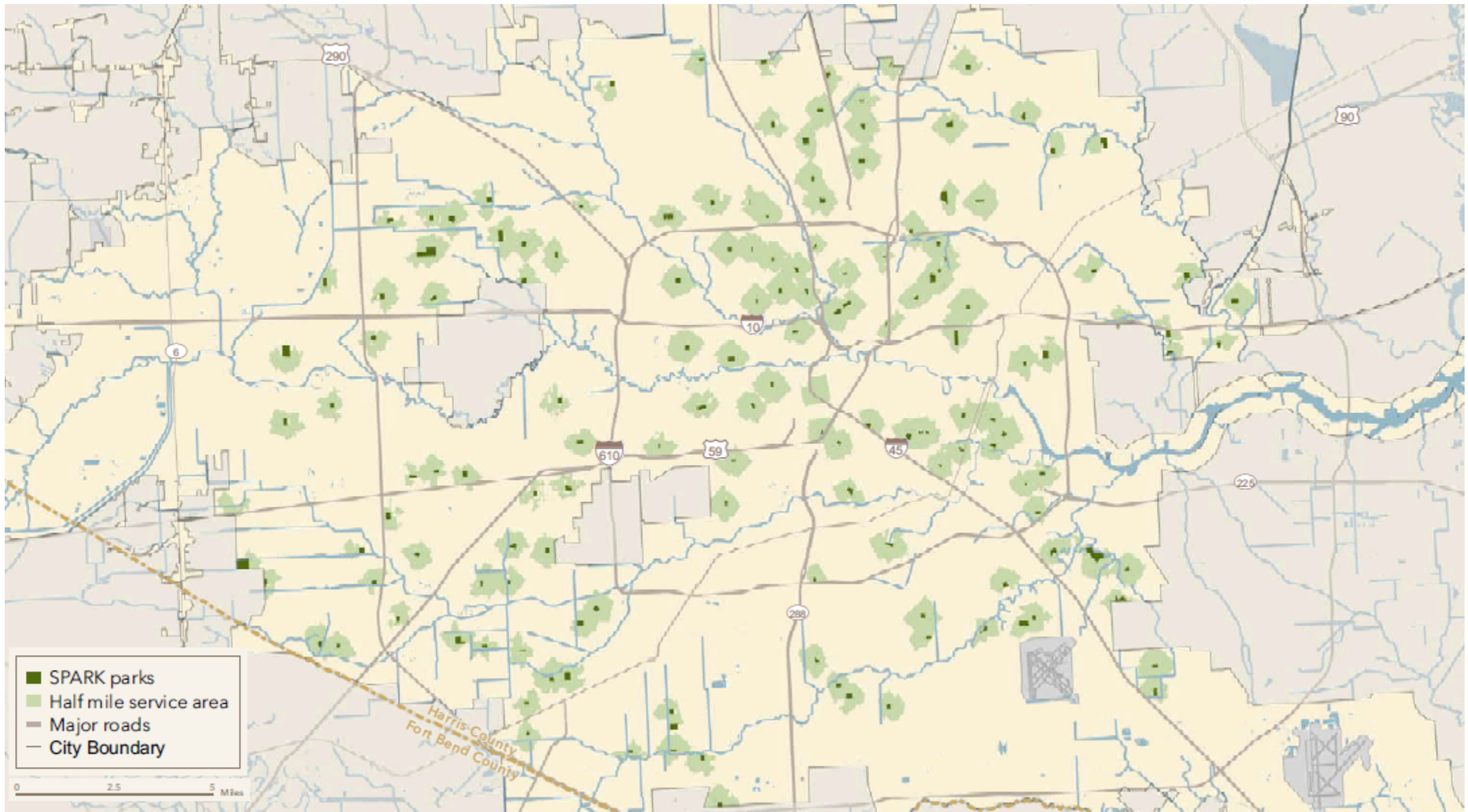
7. What are the specific things you do not like about this park?

8. If you do not visit this park or go very often, why not? (Check all that apply)
 Safety concerns
 Maintenance issues
 Not nearby to my house
 Gate locked/park inaccessible
 Desired facilities/equipment not available
 No lighting at the park
 Other: _____

9. What would encourage you to visit this park more often?

10. Do you visit other parks? (Check one)
 No Yes; which ones? _____

11. Is this park (that you are currently visiting) the primary park you visit? (Check one)
 No Yes



Park Access Mapping

Park Access Analysis

Percent of Houston Residents that are served by the existing Park and Open Space Systems*

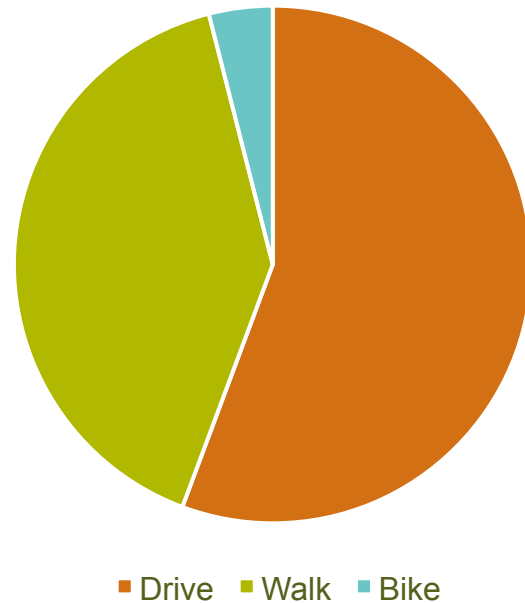
Park/System	Total Houston Population	Children	Low Income Households
All Public Parks and Open Space	46%	45%	47%
SPARK Parks	14%	14%	15%
SPARK Parks, and Not Served by Other Parks	6%	6%	6%

**defined as those that live within a 1/2 mile of parks or open space*

Park Access Analysis

- A 10-minute walk is used by The Trust for Public Land to determine access to parks and open space

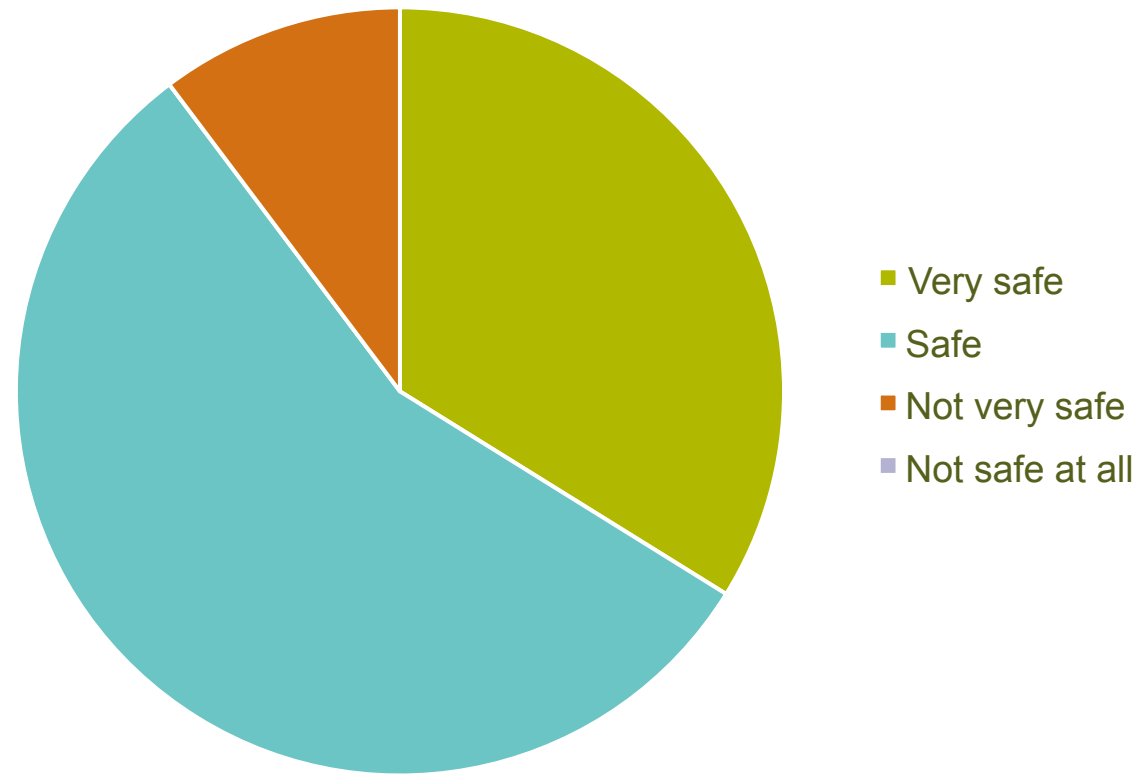
How do you usually travel to this park?



**Next step: map where people live and assess the distances that people are walking to the parks from.*

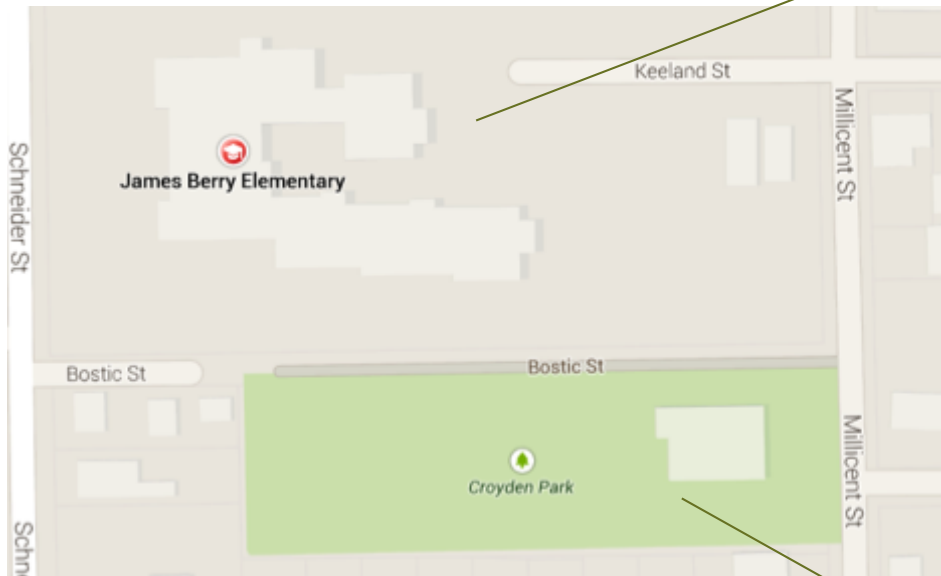
Access and Park Use

How safe do you feel this park is?



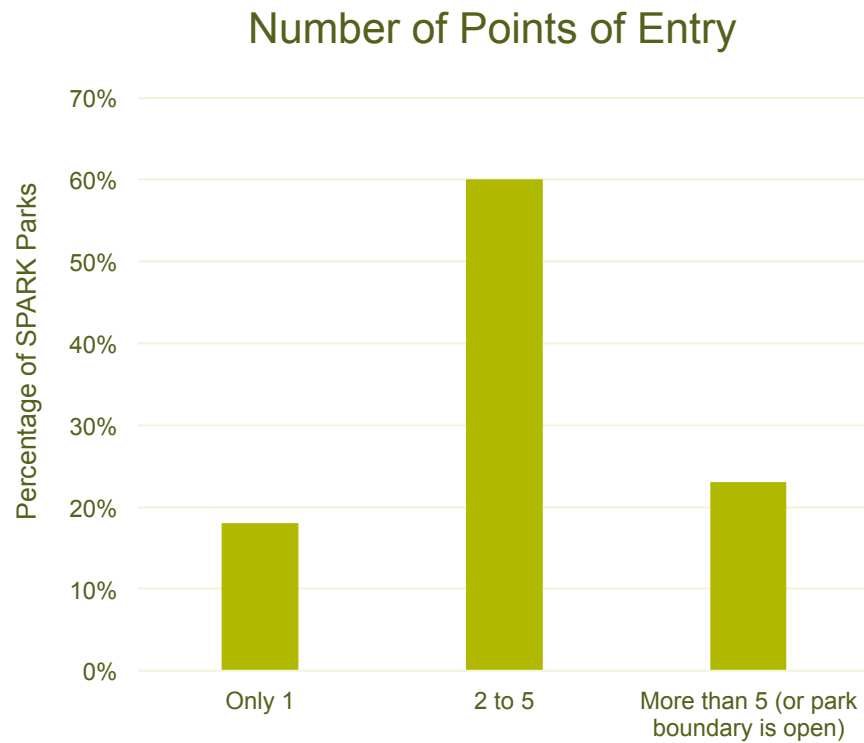
Access and Park Use

James Berry Elementary and Croyden Park example



JUA Monitoring

- How accessible and open to the public are these parks currently?*

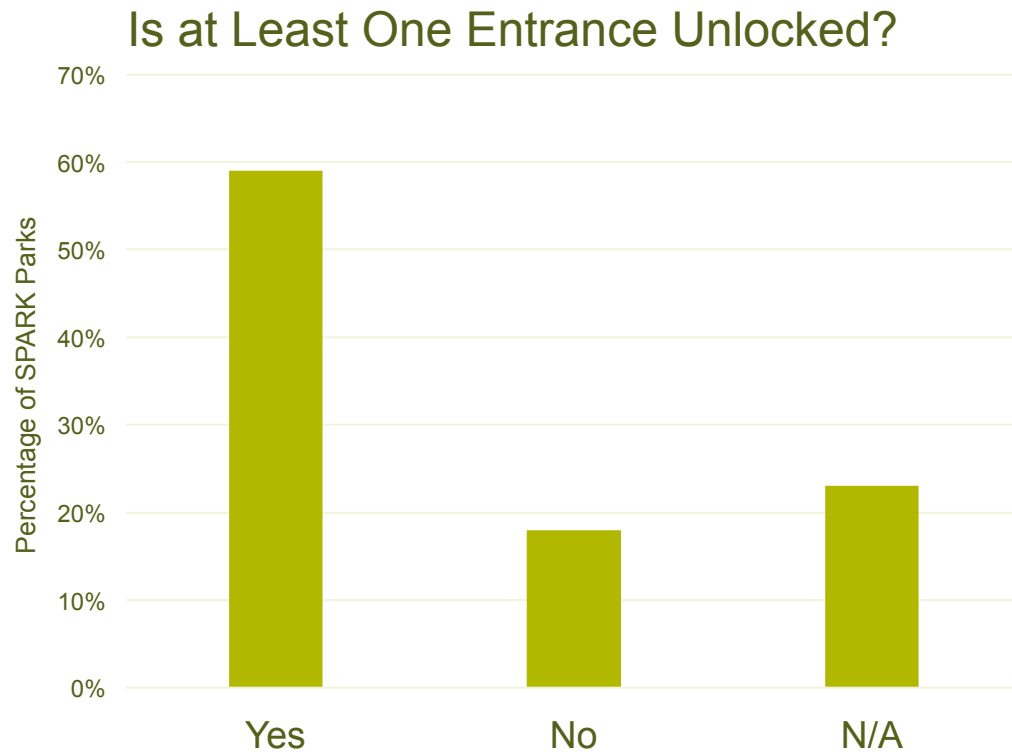


90% of parks have gates



JUA Monitoring

- How accessible and open to the public are these parks currently?*

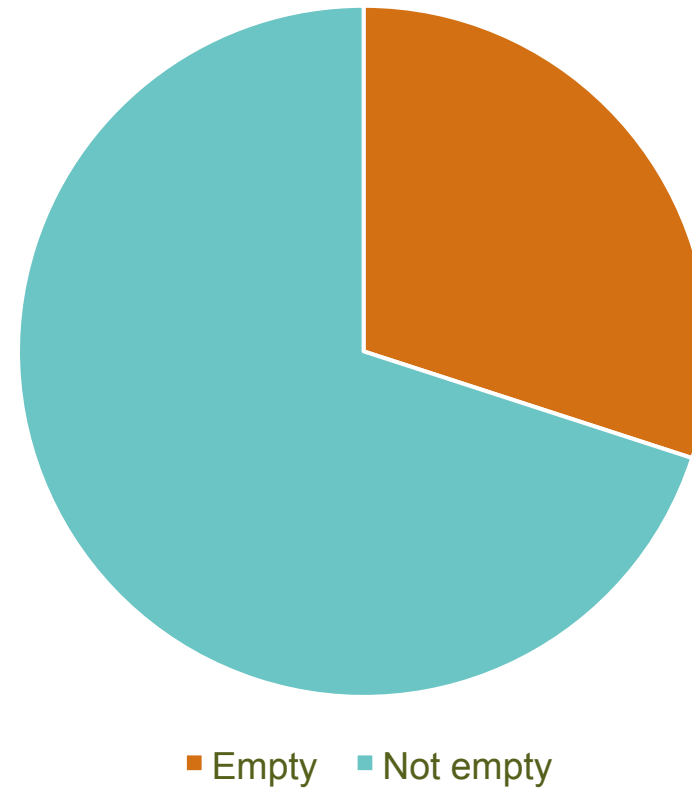


Park Use

- *Are they being used?*

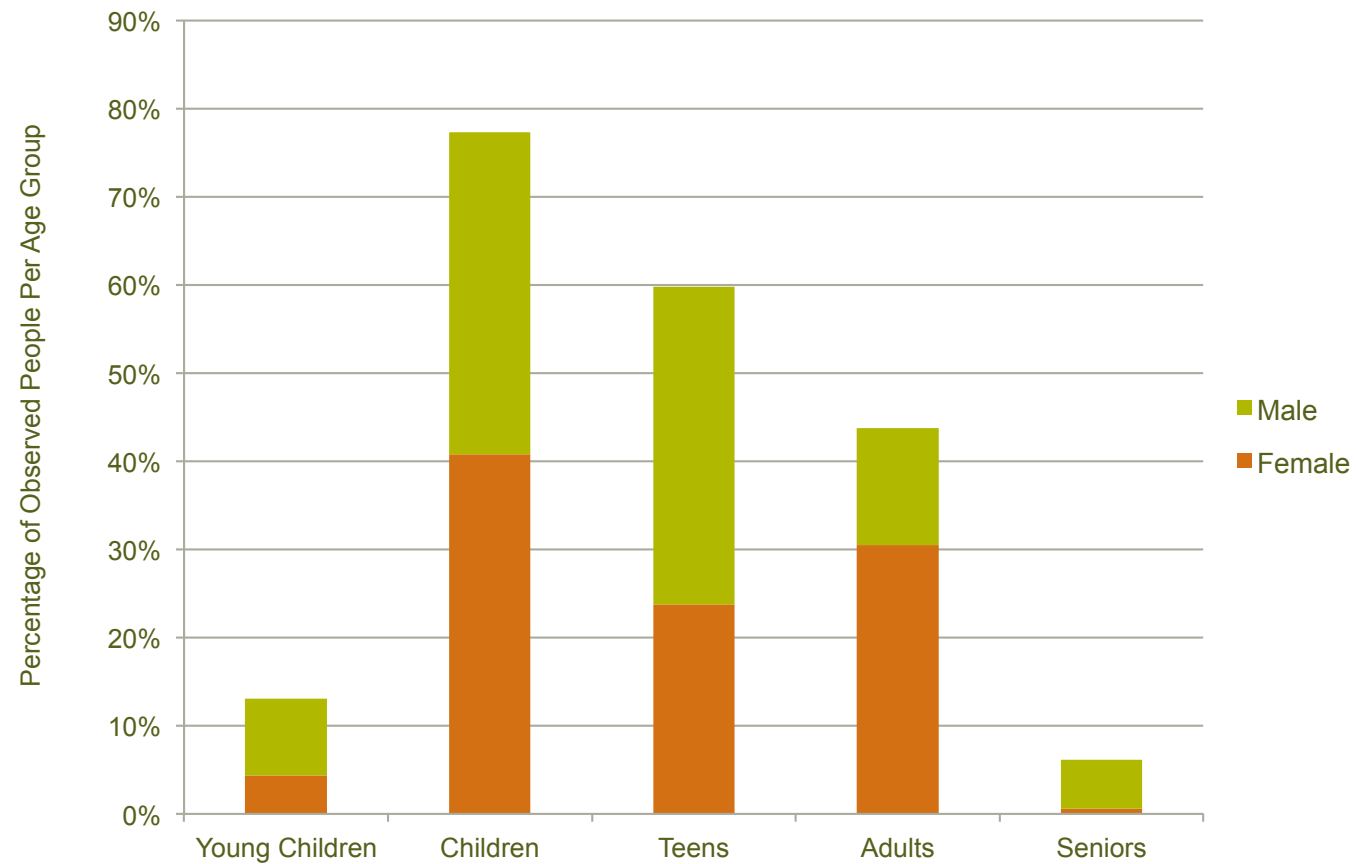


Percentage of Parks Observed as Empty/Not Empty



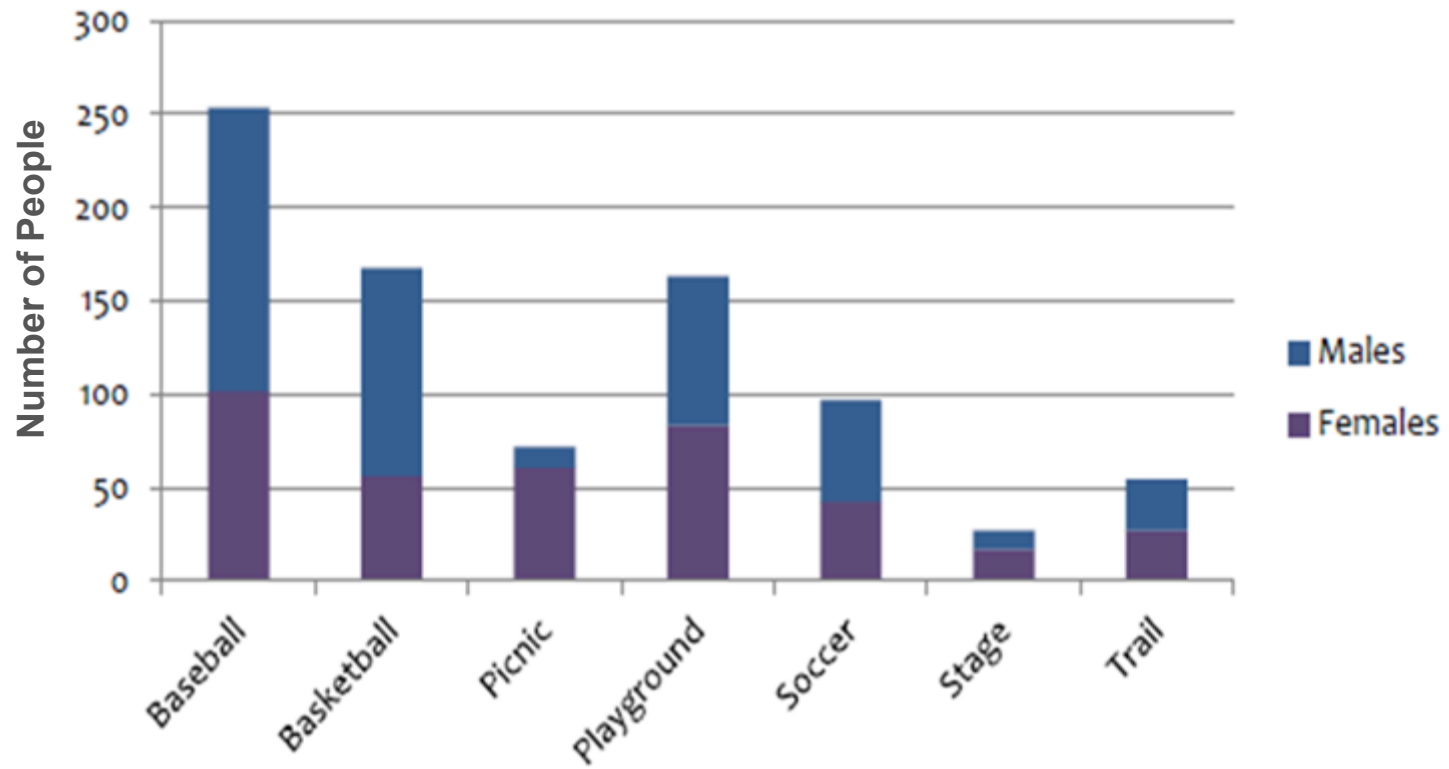
Park Use

- 3,300 people observed in the parks total



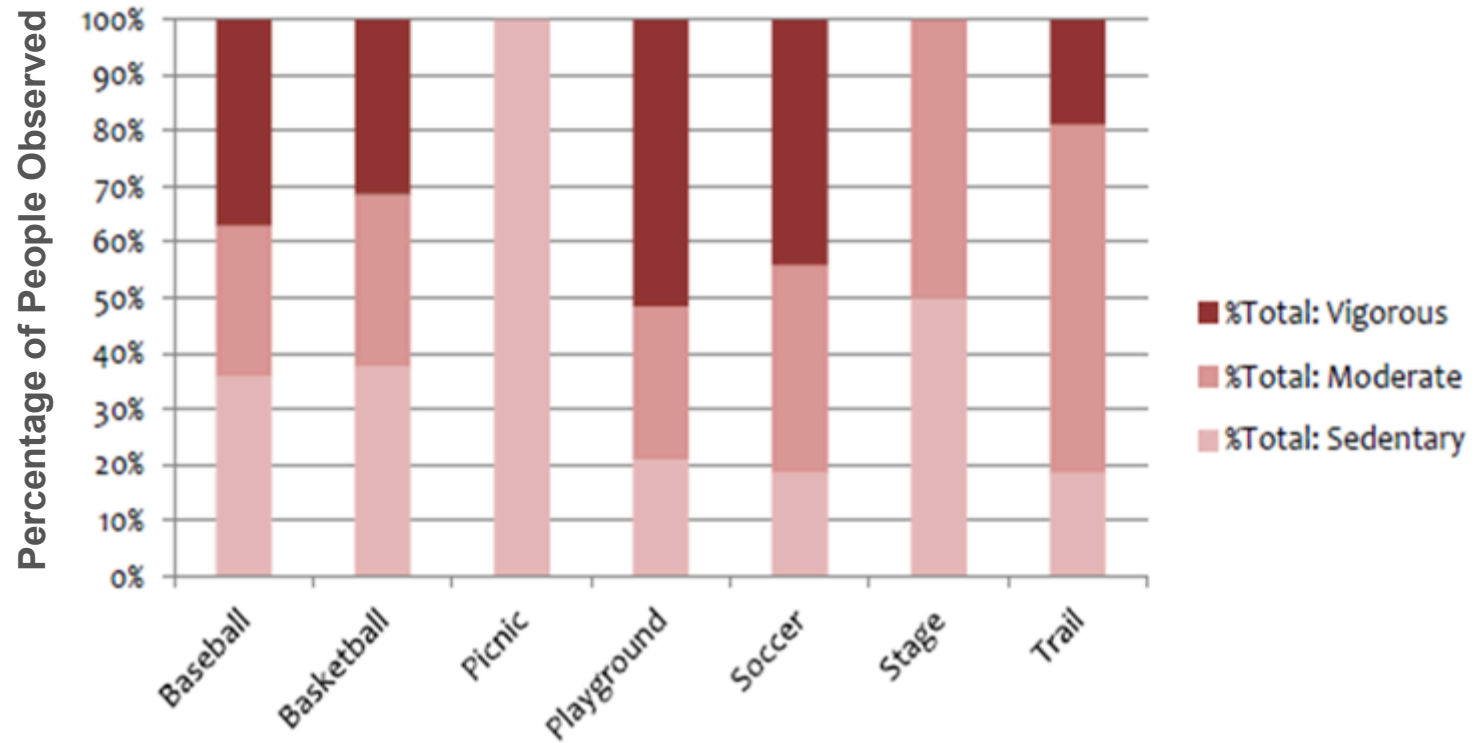
Park Use *(Preliminary/draft)*

Average Weekly Park Use, by target area type (DRAFT)



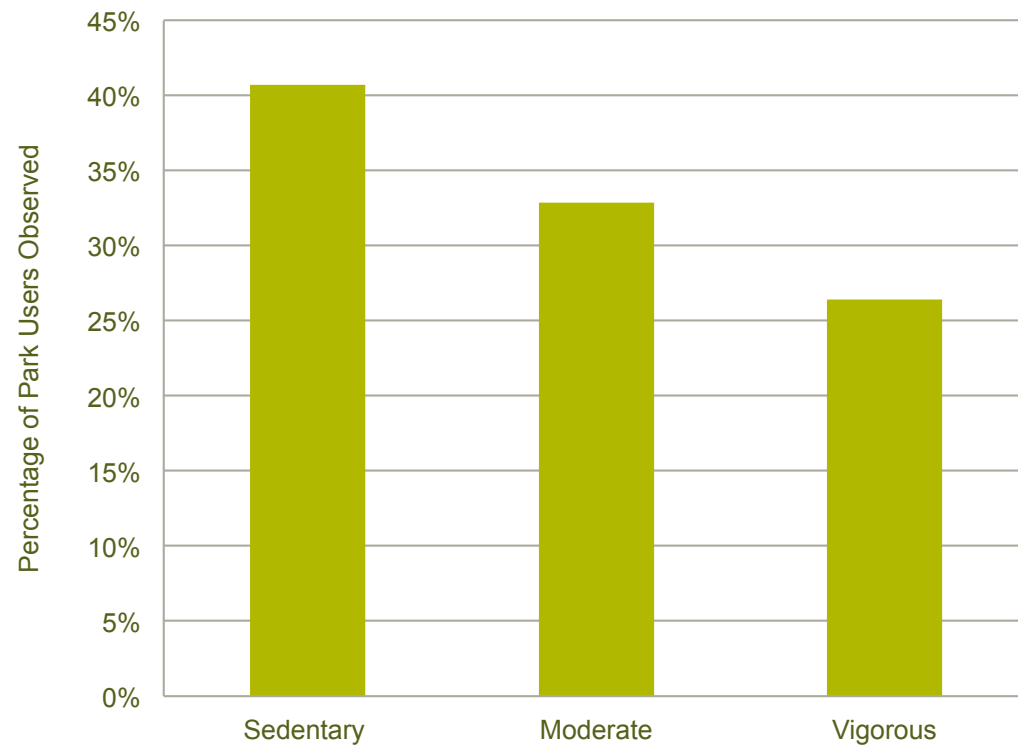
Park Use *(Preliminary/draft)*

System-wide Average Physical Activity Levels, by target area type (DRAFT)

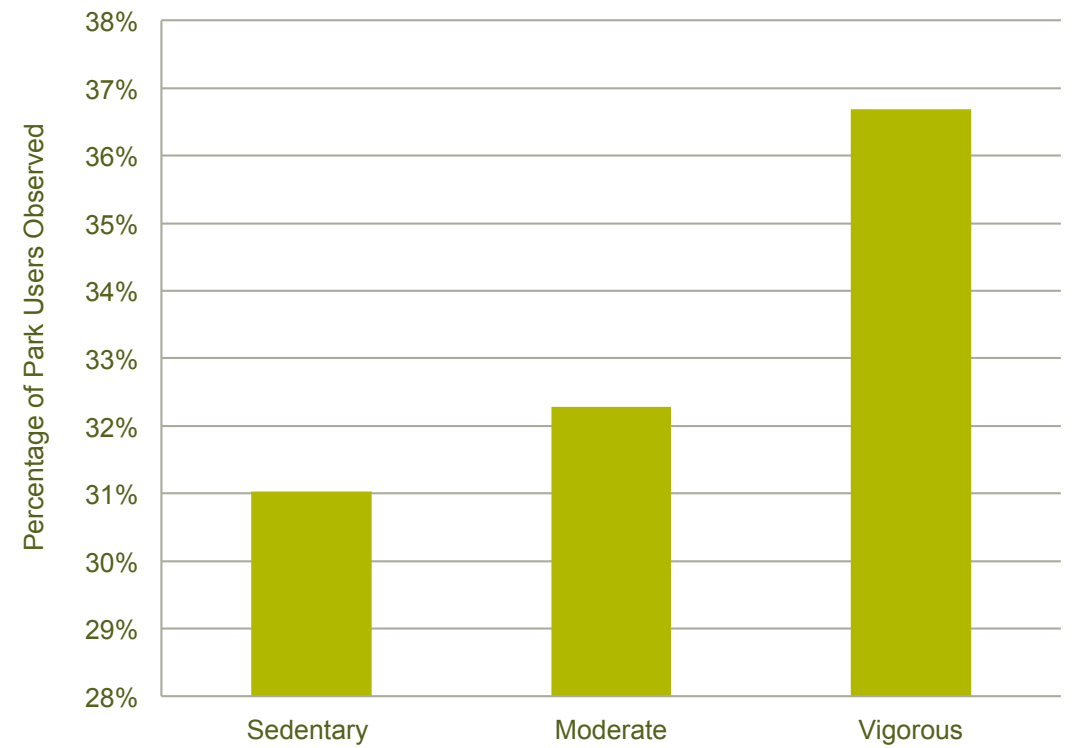


Park Use

Female Activity Levels - Observed



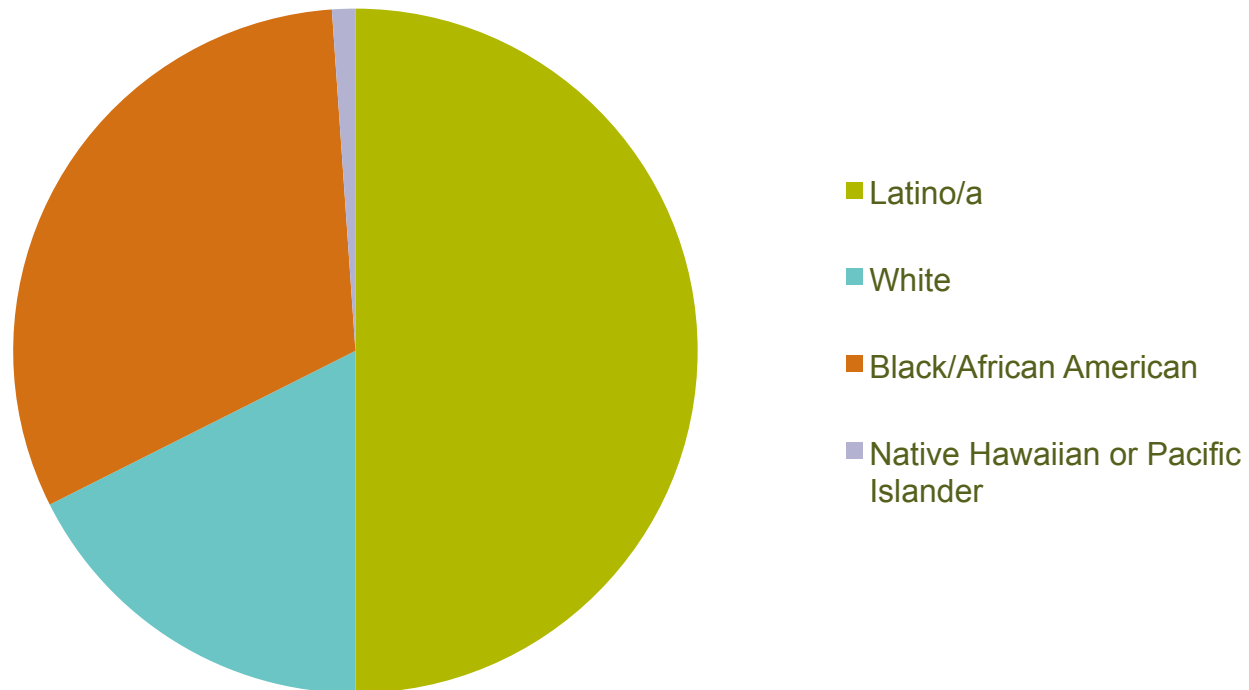
Male Activity Levels - Observed



Park User Survey Respondents

- Over 200 people were surveyed (25% of “eligible” respondents)

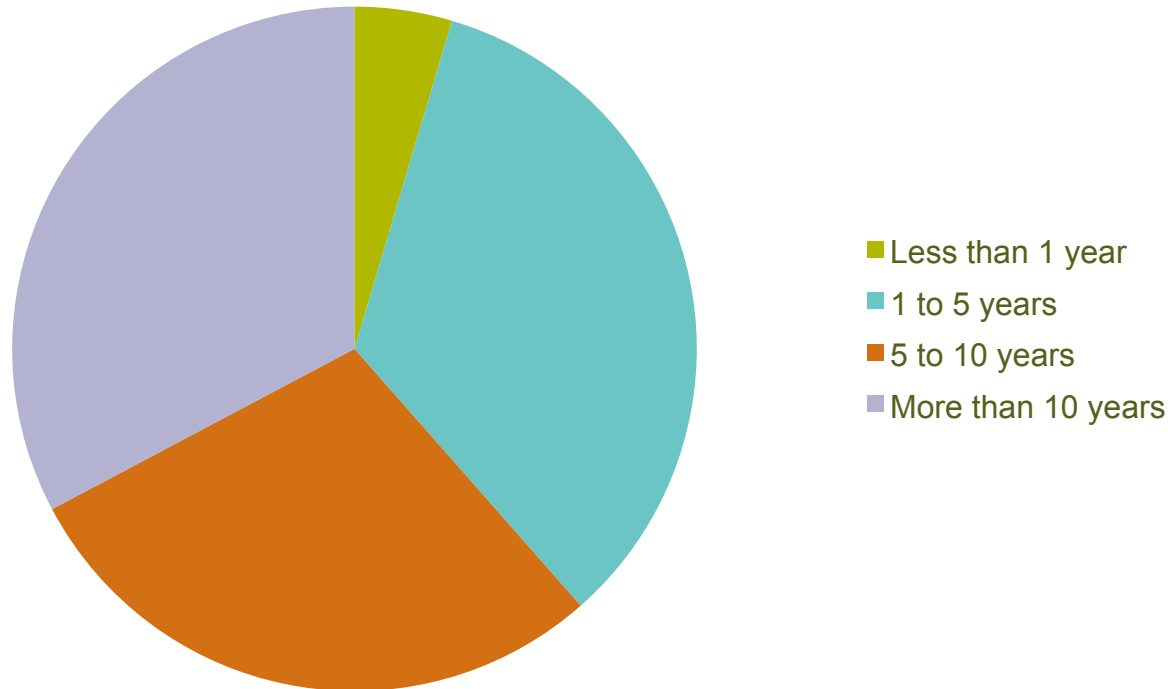
Characteristics of Survey Respondents (how would you describe your race/ethnicity?)



Park User Survey Respondents

- Over 200 people were surveyed (25% of “eligible” respondents)

Characteristics of Survey Respondents (how long have you lived in this community?)





Park User Input

- Most frequent responses for why people like the SPARK parks:
 - Provide close-to-home park space
 - Provide playgrounds, open space, and places to walk (trails/walking paths)
 - They're clean and aesthetically pleasing
 - *Assessments: park rank as well-maintained and contain elements that enhance aesthetics*



Park User Input

- On average, SPARK parks users feel:
 - they have sufficient access to park space
 - that being at parks or in natural settings increases their wellbeing
- 86% reported that SPARK Parks are the primary park they visit
- 58% of respondents do not visit other parks



Park User Input

- Maintenance and safety elements didn't seem to be a major concern in most of the parks
- Most frequent responses about concerns:
 - Lighting (or lack of)
 - Access (gates are inconsistently unlocked at some parks)
 - Access (distance from their homes is the primary reason they don't visit the parks or visit them often)



Lyons Elementary
Houston ISD; SPARKed 2004





Lyons Elementary
Houston ISD; SPARKed 2004



Number of People Served by Lyons Elementary

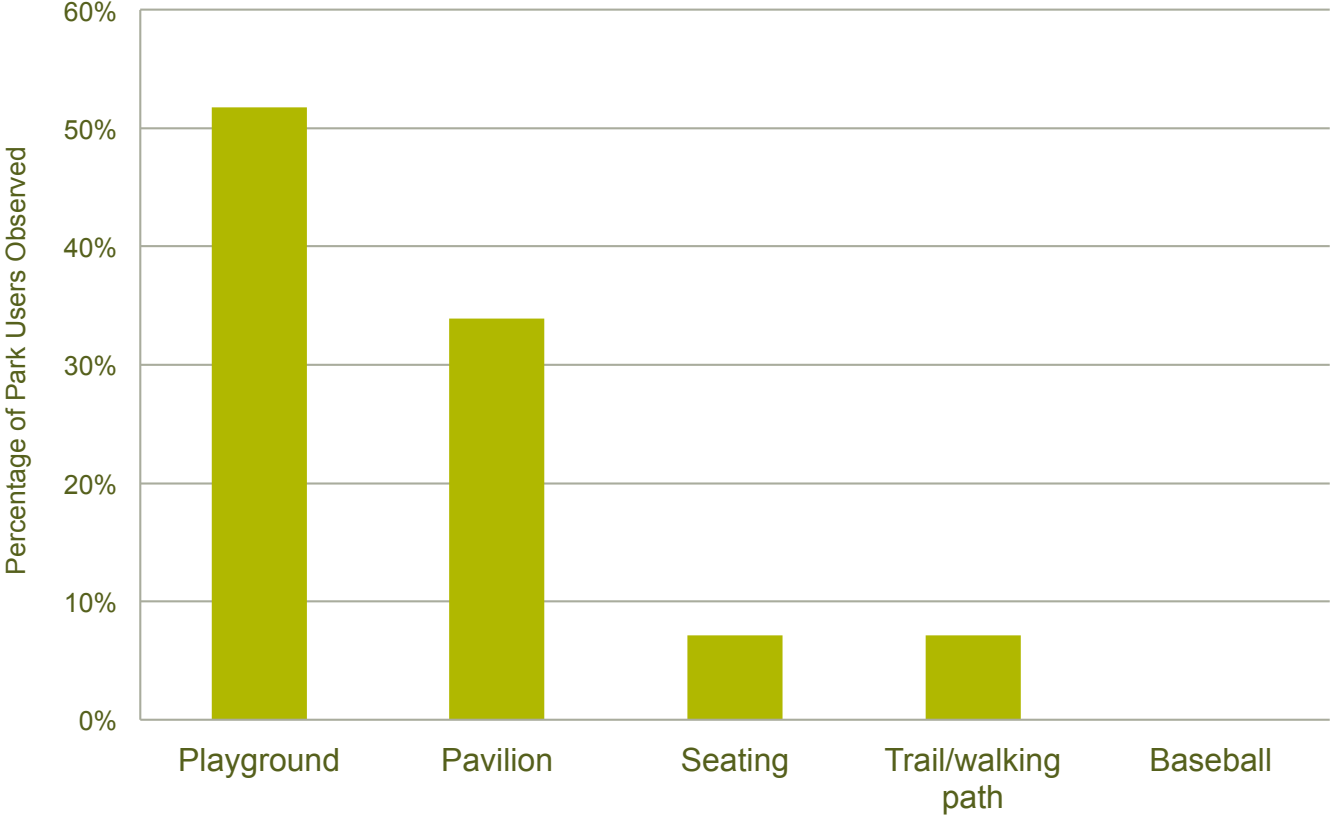
Total Population	Kids (19 and younger)	Adults (age 20-64)	Seniors (age 65+)	Low Income Households	Percent of Students with Free/Reduced Lunch
3,235	1,175	1,852	208	357	13%

A survey response from Lyons Elementary:

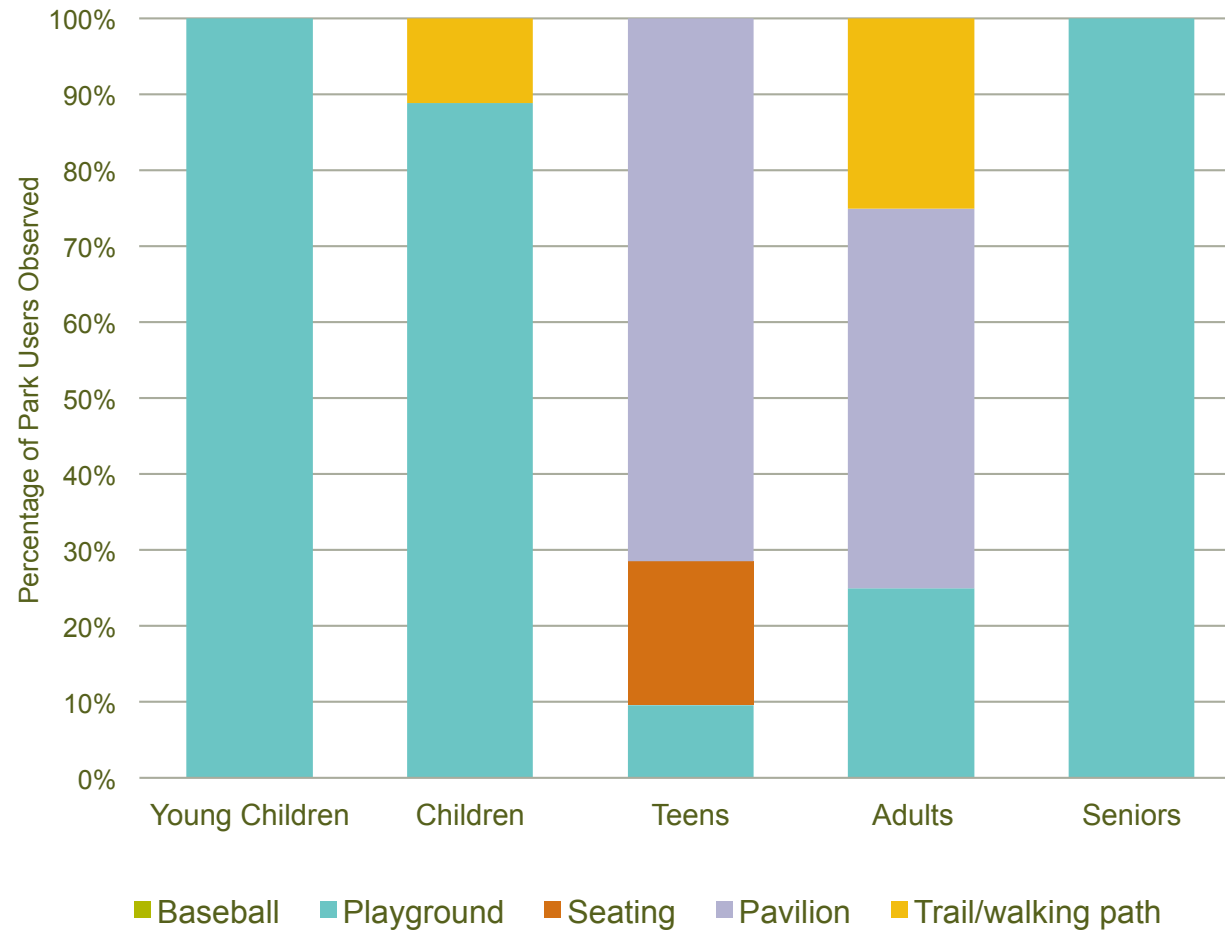
“Yes, this [SPARK Park] is the park I visit the most – it’s quiet and close to my house (I don’t have a car), and it’s really the only place I have to escape, relax, de-stress.”



Overall Park Use by Target Area



Park Use by Age Group





SPARK Parks Factors

- Committed Leadership
 - SPARK Program
 - Schools and principals
- Continued Communication
 - Community engagement
 - Signage
 - Ensuring new principals are aware of SPARK contracts
- Explore:
 - Programming options
 - Friends of groups



Next Steps

- Next steps?
 - Mapping where people live and which parks they go to
 - Analysis of specific parks (like Lyons example)
 - Mapping efforts to identify high need areas
- Where to invest/reinvest?
 - Low assessment results
 - Low or no use (observations)
 - Mapping analysis and decision making tools
 - Explore programming, outreach, continued community involvement



Questions?

Contact Information



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