

Report to the Moraga Park and Recreation Commission

Moraga Commons Park

Background

In late 2012, Dr. Chris Chamberlain, a professor in the department of Hospitality, Recreation and Tourism at California State University, East Bay was contacted about the possibility of engaging Recreation Management students in a site specific master plan update for the Moraga Commons Park. Details were worked out for the timeline of the project that would include the design of an initial survey to be sent out in early 2013, in-person surveying at community events, and community focus groups.

The initial online survey was conducted and concluded in February 2013. Due to some unforeseen personal challenges involving Dr. Chamberlain, the other phases of the project were not completed according to the initial timeline agreed to.

Methods

Three recreation management students, two undergraduates and one graduate student worked with Dr. Chamberlain and researched more than a dozen park and recreation related master and strategic plans to develop a list of 24 questions that would provide the Town of Moraga staff with insight into the needs at Moraga Commons Park. Following completion of the draft survey, it was approved by Town staff and given a human subjects review through the Office of Research and Special Programs at California State University, East Bay prior to distribution. The survey was distributed by the Town Parks & Recreation Department via email link to their customers who live in Moraga. Approximately 3,000 customers were included in the email survey.

Findings

The Moraga Commons Master Plan Update survey yielded 564 responses, an 18.8% response rate. Nearly 66% of the respondents were female, with 49% of the respondents between the ages of 35-52. Ninety-two percent of the respondents had a bachelor's or other advanced degree. Just over 55% of the respondents had 1-3 children under the age of 18 in the household.

Almost two-thirds of the respondents (62.2%) reported shared decision making when it comes to spending money allocated for leisure/recreation and over 87% of the respondents felt that the Town of Moraga Parks and Recreation Department was satisfactory to excellent when it came providing recreation programs that serve the needs of the residents in Moraga. With comments to improve services, 35 comments related to the park itself, improving parking, lighting, dog parks, more holiday programming, more programs for teens and young adults. Over half of the respondents indicated they used public parks in Moraga for a combination of active and passive activities. They also indicated they envisioned similar use ten years from now.

The Moraga Commons Park is used by more than 93% of the respondents, with nearly 40% using the park once or more a week. Over 74% use the park once a month or more and over 75%

drive to the park for community events (71.6%), exercise (54.2%), enjoy nature (46 %), playground use (45.2%), and walk the dog (29.8%).

One of the questions in the survey asked respondents to indicate the types of use they would like to see in the “Back 40” area of the park, indicated as the open space adjacent to the walking path bridge that leads to the library and currently services as holes 6 &7 for the Disc Golf Course. The top five suggestions included: Leave it as is (24.7%), Dog Park (17.6%), Youth Soccer Field (11%), Tennis Courts (9.7%), and a Meditation Walk (8%).

Another question asked respondents to consider the types of use they’d like to see in the area of the park currently occupied by the Sand Volleyball Courts. The top four suggestions included: Leave it as is (61.7%), Replace with grass (10.2%), Tennis Courts (10.2%), and a Picnic Area (8%).

Regarding the types of activities or facilities respondents would like to see at the Moraga Commons Park, 20% (117) referenced the word “Park”, 39 of which stated they would like to see a dog park. More concerts was the second most referenced activity respondents would like to see at the park, followed by “activities”. This term was used in a variety of ways and included everything from “no new activities” to “include more senior activities”, “bocce ball courts”, more community and kid activities, a youth center, a teen center, and unscheduled activities to name a few. The fourth highest rated word used was “kids”. Responses with this term included playground equipment for older kids (7-13), more family/kids events planned at the park, tot soccer, activities for Jr. High and High School kids, more youth sports, and more benches to watch the kids. The fifth highest used word was “tennis courts”. While nearly all the responses referred to the need for public tennis courts, other needs included comments both pro and con for a dog park, badminton, a small gym, a café, and leave it as it is.

Only 11% of the respondents stated they belong to a club or group that regularly uses the park. Of those who do use the park, the top responses included: Moraga Movers, Moraga Juniors, Bocce, Fitness Boot Camp, and various clubs like the Lions, Lamorinda beach volleyball club, Rotary, and an exercise club.

Analysis

A preliminary analysis of the survey results notes that the Town of Moraga Parks and Recreation Department largely meets the needs of its citizens and that the Moraga Commons Park is used regularly particularly with families who have younger children who attend summer activities and concerts, visit the playground and use the park for exercise.

With respect to the “Back 40” area of the park, as well as the Sand Volleyball Court area, the majority were content to leave both areas “as is”. It is conceivable, given the age range and education level of the respondents, that they have some knowledge of the history of the park’s development and previous funding sources for various park improvements. This would be an area to further explore.

There is a vocal contingent that is pro dog park as well as a smaller contingent who are against installing a dog park. Respondents also indicated they would like to see more concerts and family oriented activities in the park. There is some support for public tennis courts as well.

Regardless, there is a clear need to continue to provide an active as well as passive mix of recreational facilities for community residents at the Moraga Commons Park.

Recommended Next Steps

It is recommended that further investigation through small focus groups be conducted with a more narrow focus with the park plan. It would be interesting to see how providing a preliminary budget number to the discussion would influence or alter decision choices about facility improvements at Moraga Commons Park.