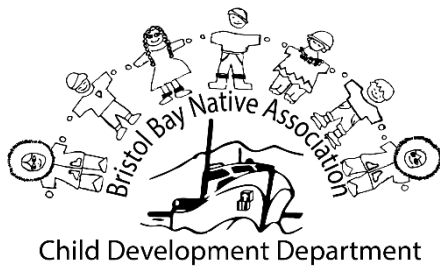


Dillingham Downtown Park Strip Playground Renovation Project: 2021 Community Survey Results

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report was to investigate Dillingham residents' attitudes and preferences regarding the renovation of the Downtown Park Strip in Dillingham, AK. A community survey was conducted via available social media outlets in May 2021. The results of the community survey indicate that the majority of the participants:

- Have children aged 0-12 and use the existing park space frequently;
- Use the existing park space, but would like to see improvements made to the equipment and space itself to increase engagement and accessibility;
- Are interested in volunteering and/or supporting the planning and building process.

It is recommended that Bristol Bay Native Association's ("BBNA") Child Care and Development Fund ("CCDF") work with the City of Dillingham to plan, purchase, and install new playground equipment and functional use spaces to increase overall community engagement at the Downtown Park Strip.

Introduction

The Downtown Park Strip in Dillingham is one of the only designated park areas in Dillingham, Alaska. Currently, the park includes the following equipment and facilities:

- Basketball court
- Gravel area historically used for volleyball, badminton, tennis, etc.
- Small playground structure for children 2-12
- Large field historically used for group games such as soccer.

While the park is accessed and used fairly regularly by the community, the existing equipment is outdated and in poor repair. The current basketball court's paint is faded or missing; the gravel area does not include a volleyball or tennis net; the playground equipment is broken and damaged from exposure; the existing fence structure is missing pieces and is in disrepair; and the field is minimally maintained/overgrown with weeds.

BBNA CCDF is a tribal program whose mission is to increase access and availability of affordable, safe, and quality childcare services for tribal children throughout the Bristol Bay region. CCDF operates in several communities throughout the region including Dillingham. In Dillingham, CCDF certifies Home Childcare Providers and supports the center-based Child Care Center at BBNA's Family Resource Center campus. CCDF receives federal funding annually to increase the quality of programming throughout the region, including Dillingham. Because the Downtown Park Strip is one of the only existing public park spaces in Dillingham, many CCDF Home Childcare Providers use this space when caring for clients. Additionally, improving the Downtown Park Strip aligns with the overall goals of both Head Start and CCDF to increase family and community partnerships in order to improve developmental outcomes for children in the region.

Currently, the Downtown Park Strip is located at USS 2732 Bock 5 in Downtown Dillingham. The space is currently platted by the city for use as a park. The existing playground equipment was donated to the city by CCDF. The City currently owns the land and holds liability insurance on the property.

Methods

The research was conducted via an electronic survey and investigated Dillingham residents' attitudes towards the current condition of the park, values that participants view as important in the planning of a new park space, and preferences for types of equipment and facilities in the space. The survey was distributed over the course of a week on available local public social media outlets from May 7-14, 2021. The survey contained a variety of question types, including Likert scale, multiple choice, and short open-ended response. The responses were aggregated using Google's Forms software. Open-ended responses were aggregated and grouped by topic.

Results

There was a total of 61 survey responses over a 7-day period. A breakdown of responses is included below.

Demographics

Of the 61 total survey participants,

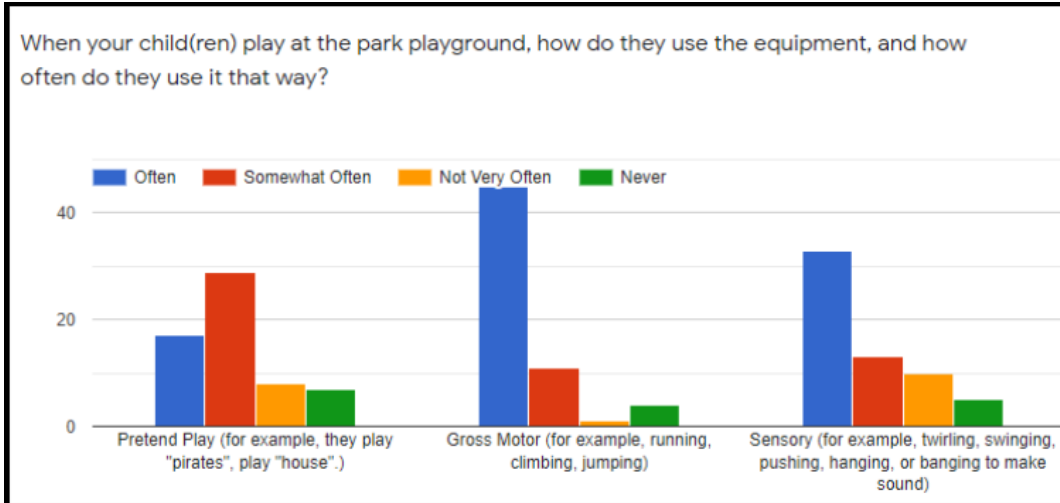
- 88% have children
- 43% of participants have children ages 0-4
- 57% of participants have children ages 5-12
- 25% of participants have children ages 13-17

Current Park Usage

Of the 61 total participants,

- 61% of participants use the current park playground 1-5 times per week.
- 36% of participants currently do not use the park playground.
- Most participants indicated that their child(ren) use the park primarily for gross motor (for example: running, climbing, jumping, sliding) and sensory (for example: twirling, swinging, spinning, pushing, hanging, or banging to make sound. (See Table 1 below)

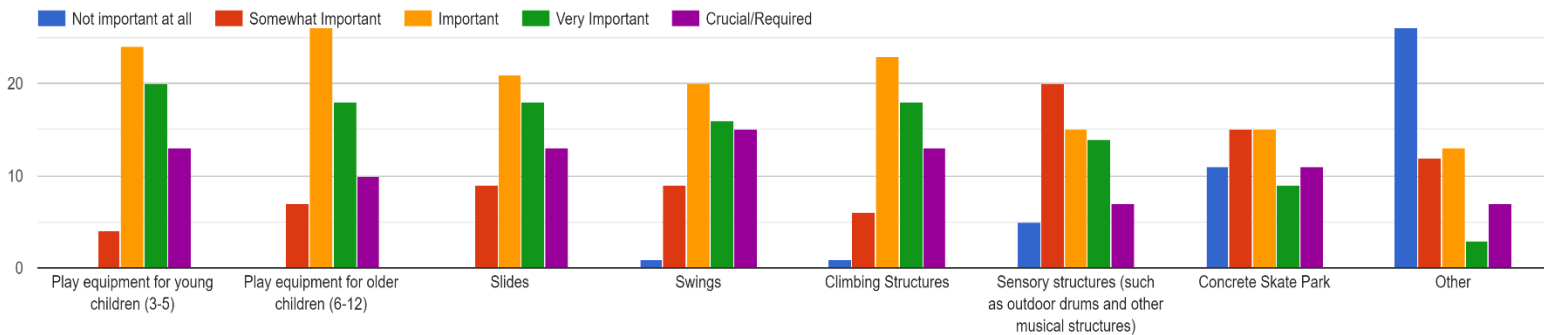
Table 1: How children currently use the park playground equipment



New Park Playground Equipment and Facility Preferences

- 95% of all participants said they would like to see the park being used for other community activities, such as festivals, community meet-ups/ swap meets, concerts, etc.
- 84% of participants said making the playground equipment accessible to children with disabilities is important.
- The following playground equipment was ranked as important most often: play equipment for children 3-5; play equipment for children 6-12; slides; swings; climbing structures. See table below.

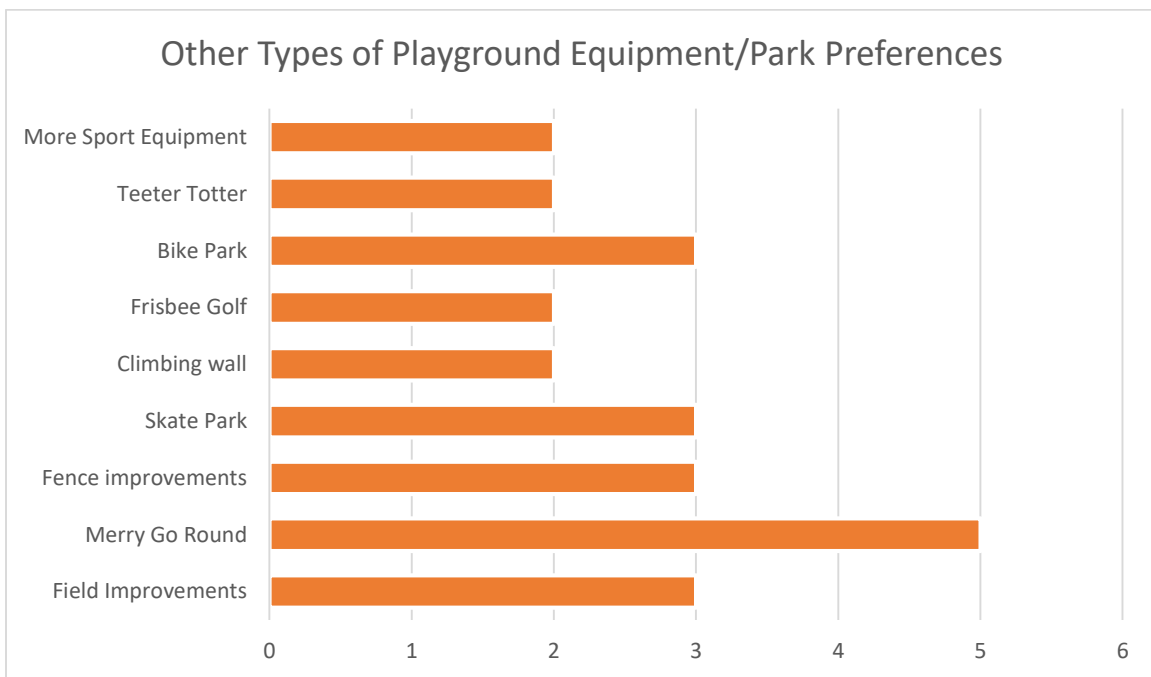
What type of playground equipment would you like to see at the park? Please rank each equipment type by how important you think it is.



Short Answer Responses

- 27 participants indicated another type of playground equipment that was not included in the chart above. Overall, the participants indicated that play equipment for multiple ages is important.
- Heavy emphasis was placed on preservation and improvement of the existing soccer field.
- Heavy emphasis was placed on a bike park
- Emphasis was placed on including “more sport equipment,” such as soccer goal posts, football goals, small basketball hoops for young children, etc.

See table below.



Community Interest in Volunteering to Assis in Planning and Construction

- 63% of participants indicated that they would like to or maybe like to volunteer in the planning or building of the park.
- Of the total number of participants, 14 participants shared their contact information.

Discussion/ Interpretation of Results

It can be seen from the results in the previous section that the survey participants do currently utilize the existing park space, and are interested in seeing improvements to the equipment, facility, and spaces in order to increase functionality and engagement. The majority of the survey participants indicated that the playground equipment should be diverse enough to accommodate a wide range of ages and abilities. Specific playground equipment like merry-go-rounds, teeter totters, slides, and swings were among the highest preference. Overall, the participants access the playground with child(ren) for gross motor and sensory activities most often.

It should be noted that there is specific interest in the development of both a skateboard/skate park and a bike park. While these two facilities would provide new engagement opportunities for Dillingham youth, special consideration should be made when developing plans for these structures including the potential for increased liability costs and physical space constraints. In addition to these facilities, it should also be noted that 92% of participants would like to see the space being used for other engagement activities. Within the individual short answer responses, it was noted that the project partners should consider including in the design a half-shell or other stage-like venue to be used for community concerts and events.

The results of the community survey are consistent with research conducted by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), a nonprofit dedicated to research and implementation of *placemaking*. According to PPS, “placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution. With community-based participation at its center, an effective placemaking process capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, and it results in the creation of quality public spaces that contribute to people's health, happiness, and wellbeing.” (PPS.org, 2021)

While the results of this survey clearly indicate the community's desire to improve the existing park space, there are some limitations that warrant attention. Dillingham currently has a population of approximately 2,000 residents. Of that total population, only 63 residents actually participated in the survey. This represents only 3.2% of the overall population at this time. The reason for the limited number of responses could be due to a variety of factors, including inconsistent access to internet/data/social media and the short response window.

Recommendations

Based on the information gathered, it is recommended that CCDF, the City of Dillingham, and any other identified project partners begin the planning process to renovate and rehabilitate the Downtown Park Strip. The project should include:

- Creation of a community steering committee to assist in the planning of the park;
- Agreement between BBNA CCDF and the City of Dillingham to address maintenance, liability, repairs, etc.
- Thoughtful design and construction of an improved park space that provides access and engagement for a diverse range of ages and abilities.

Based on the scope of work, the project team may consider planning the project in a series of stages over the course of 2 to 3 years.