

# MILWAUKIE PARK DEVELOPMENT PROJECT



## FOCUS GROUP WITH BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR (BIPOC) COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### FEEDBACK SUMMARY

#### INTRODUCTION

The City of Milwaukie conducted a focus group with several people to understand the unique needs of people of color when they go to and visit parks. Participants were asked the following questions in the focus group:

1. What experiences do you like to have at parks?
2. What experiences do you not like to have at parks?
3. What are barriers to using parks?
4. What amenities do you want to see at parks?

**Date and time:** Thursday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 6-7p

**Location:** Wichita Community Center

**Staff:** Adam Moore and Jon Hennington (City of Milwaukie), Jennifer D'Avazano (Greenworks), Daniel Franco (izo), Jessica Pickul (JLA Public Involvement),

**Attendees:** A total of **four (4) people attended** the focus group, which was held September 8, 2022.

#### SUMMARY

Participants appreciate **parks with natural amenities**, like landscaped areas, trees that provide shade, play structures made of wood, and the ability to view water bodies (i.e., a rivers or streams). Having **amenities for a variety of ages and abilities** was important to this group, as was providing ample seating. Several comments were made in **support of water play features**. Overall, participants want all family members to feel comfortable and safe in parks.

A theme that surfaced several times was that **some neighborhood parks or pocket parks don't feel safe to many people of color**. One example was shared that going to some parks feels like being in an extension of somebody's backyard, and not everyone welcomes new or different people in parks. The city can help people feel welcome in neighborhood parks by **placing signage in the park that intentionally states that the space is for everyone** (e.g., "All are welcome here" sign) or by placing BIPOC focused artwork in the park. Inviting BIPOC vendors to participate in park events is also a good way to support the BIPOC community and help people feel welcome.

People also noted that if they live further from the city center, in apartments that don't have easy access to a local park, or if their neighborhood park is in poor condition, they have to come into the city to go to parks.

## FULL SUMMARY

Below is a summary of the feedback, organized by theme and question.

### What participants enjoy at parks:

- Enjoy playgrounds made of natural materials and wood. It feels more integrated into the background and the materials are better for her kids. A good example is Westmoreland Park.
- Parks that offer options to older kids that can do by themselves. Helpful to have paths that allow sightlines to both the smaller children play area and big kid activities so parents can view multiple areas at once.
- The best parks are the ones where parents can watch their kids but not be too close (good visibility).
- Water features or natural areas with animals (geese). This also helps people stay cool.

### Barriers to using parks or unpleasant experiences:

- At Bowman Brae Park, people who live there can enjoy the park, but the people who can't afford to live in the neighborhood need to drive there and there's no parking, making it inaccessible to people who can't afford to live there.
- Living outside of the city boundaries and coming into the city for park access. As a black person it doesn't always feel comfortable driving to a neighborhood park and appearing as an outsider.
- It's hard to know if you're welcome or safe in some parks.
- One participant explores all the parks to see which parks are actually safe for their family. There are some where they feel very unwelcome.
- It doesn't feel good going to parks that the city hasn't declared that it's a safe space and everyone's welcome.
- One participant doesn't like visiting parks that don't offer things for kids or have enough places for people to sit.
- It can be challenging when there's overcrowding of people that aren't kids: big kids, exercise groups, houseless people. It can make it hard to use the space because there's too many people.
- An opportunity to make it more inviting to people of color is to add art that's reflective of the community and shows POC.
- Proximity to home: nearby parks (i.e., Harmony Park) may be in bad condition and driving to one is a hassle. There's often not enough parking.
- Safety: nearby traffic isn't safe for small kids, as well as safety within the park.
- Noise from traffic.
- A suggestion was to provide outreach to neighbors that Milwaukie Parks are not people's personal backyards.

### Where can the City create parks and spaces:

- More nice parks in the east. As we move east, the neighbors have less access to nice parks – the folks closer to the river have more parks and amenities.
- People who live in apartments don't have access to very many parks.
- There was community support for developing Whitcomb Park more. It has a small baseball and soccer field as well as a playground, but it is geared toward older kids. Many families go there to walk, and it feels welcoming to diverse community members. One participant is organizing a community garden at Whitcomb that they would like to be open to the community.
- Build less parks that feel like they are in people's backyards/private/not welcoming (e.g., Furnberg Park).

### Preferred amenities or features:

- Play structures for different ages and abilities, sensory features (PSU park is good example)
- Places for concerts or other entertainment
- Accessible in all seasons (i.e., play surfaces that don't get muddy)

- More greenspace, trees for shade and cover
- Water features
- Walking paths
- Exercise opportunities, stations, or trail with signs
- Rock walls
- Provide a variety of things to do
- Seating, covered picnic area, BBQ
- Spray parks/splash pads
- Community space for meeting other people
- More games and different fun stuff that don't require you to be prepared
- Versatile play space (i.e., skate areas, dunes for remote control cars)
- Lights (it gets dark early); lighting near the play spaces and to make it feel safe
- Bridges or nature along pathways can give people more reasons to explore the park and to stay longer
- Flow and being able to get through the park comfortably

### **Technology in parks (charging stations):**

- There was a mixed reaction to the technology question. While some felt that a park is a place to get away from technology, it can also be nice to get some work done while kids play. There was agreement that it would get used if it was available.
- One participant felt strongly about going to the park to get away from the screen but wouldn't mind if options were available to others.
- Events in parks, like the Juneteenth celebration, will also need power for the music.

### **Dogs in parks:**

- It can be very overwhelming with kids and culturally having dogs in parks that are off leash.
- Dogs should be prevented from using water fountains that people use.
- Signs could be an opportunity to make it clear which areas dogs are allowed or not allowed (like Westmoreland).

### **Keeping participants engaged:**

- Public events with food, games, and entertainment, make it easier to bring kids. Including BIPOC vendors will encourage more their customers, friends, and family to attend.
- Parents Magazine
- Family groups – online and in-person (i.e., Facebook, NextDoor, Milwaukie ChitChat Facebook group)
- Clackamas Living on the cheap
- Eventbrite events
- Connect with the local schools
- Post information at the recreation center or public library