



Bluff View Park Renovation Project

- Final Report -

Created for:

Live Healthy Red Wing

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Introduction

The renovation project of Bluff View Park, in an underserved neighborhood of Red Wing, is scheduled to be carried out by the city in 2019. Live Healthy Red Wing planned an outreach process in connection to this upgrade to build community ownership of and for this neighborhood park, and to pinpoint concerns and wishes for this shared neighborhood resource.

“We aim to amplify the voices of these important community members and use this opportunity to build community ownership of and for this neighborhood park so that all have a safe place to play.”

The outreach process included two community input sessions, an online survey for feedback, and hard copies of the survey translated and distributed to local residents. While the scope of this project did not include in-person outreach to all neighborhood residents, door-knocker invitations were crafted and distributed so those in closest proximity to the park were invited to attend. Invitations and surveys were also shared online via mailing lists and social media.

The team worked with the community to answer the following core questions:

- What barriers currently exist to using the park?
- What amenities would the park need to make it more usable?
- What programming can be considered or provided moving forward to make the park more safe, and feel more safe?

Project Background and Summary

- Organizers are working with a community that has traditionally been underserved.
- Organizers aimed to get folks involved that haven't been involved in the past, particularly a women's shelter that adjoins the park.
- There are good working relationships with the organizations and stakeholders currently affected and involved, including Live Healthy Red Wing, the Colvill Family Center, the City of Red Wing, the HOPE Coalition, and Hispanic Outreach of Goodhue County.
- There is economic diversity in the neighborhood; there is also age diversity, and a population of children, young families, and elders.
- The park is generally not considered safe and clean by those that use it.
- The City of Red Wing Public Works is moving forward quickly and the renovation is slated to occur this year.
- City council meeting to review proposal and budget is scheduled for March, 2019.

Barriers / Benefits

Any outreach process in an underserved neighborhood may come across barriers. In this specific instance, we faced a few additional hurdles. The quick turnaround time, while a benefit for the community to see a project come to fruition, also limited the amount and extent of boots-on-pavement outreach that could be done. The language barrier for some of the neighborhood's Spanish speaking only residents proved to be another obstacle. Winter was an additional and significant factor, and due to storms and weather occurrences one outreach meeting was postponed, another was difficult to access for residents planning to walk to the meeting due to ice and other winter conditions. A private session was planned for the women's shelter neighboring the park, but this was cancelled due to widespread illness.

Core team members worked around barriers by salting walkways, providing translation throughout the process, distributing door knockers by hand, sending out a sample of direct mailers to Spanish-speaking residents, and encouraging participation person-to-person. Additional care was taken to make sure free child care was provided onsite, and that translation was available as needed for the listening sessions. Food and door prizes were also provided to encourage and incentivize attendance. Goals were set high for metrics but were not met, largely due to timing and weather constraints.

Key findings

Below is a summary of answers to key questions posed by the outreach team.

What barriers currently exist to using the park?

- Safety and perceptions of safety are the known, steady barriers. Removing problematic structures, increasing lighting, and updating equipment are good initial steps towards addressing safety concerns. Increased activity will further address this issue.
- Lack of restroom facilities prevents groups from using the park more consistently.
- There is a community perception among some that Bluff View Park is not a city resource, and rather is a resource of Colvill School. This can be addressed with improved signage, branding, and local awareness. Consider a broad outreach effort for the grand opening of the updated park.

What amenities would the park need to make it more usable?

- Improved lighting is critical for functionality and safety of the park in evening hours.
- Safety fencing will need to be installed to prevent a decrease in park usage due to requirements for Head Start and student safety when using the park.
- Addressing lack of shelter and restroom facilities are biggest structural hurdles for greater usability.

What programming can be considered or provided moving forward to make the park more safe, and feel more safe?

- Connecting with stakeholders and potential partners to make sure the updated park is on their list of viable site locations for activities is advised, including but not limited to: The City of Red Wing Park Naturalists, the YMCA youth program, and the local scout troops.
- Clean-ups, led by youth groups, the local police department and/or Live Healthy Red Wing, would be good way to engage residents in the care and maintenance of the park. These could also be a way to find local leaders for a renewed neighborhood watch.
- To underwrite this increased effort, city of Red Wing could consider Bluff View when determining funding and location for youth programming.

Red Wing Moms Group:

What we look for in a park

- Restroom facilities
- Accessibility
- Parking Ease
- Variety
- Parents' Area
- Safety

Survey Summary

- We received a mix of responses from residents in the neighborhood and those who travel to use Bluff View Park
- Safety and perceptions of safety - this is by far the largest barrier.
- Mobility is a second barrier, and was listed as a barrier more often than weather.
- There is universal support for updated playground equipment, even from those that do not utilize it.
- There is mixed support for public art.
- There is mixed support for an adult gym, a demographic breakdown of the neighborhood would be helpful here.
- There is support for a field to be utilized for sports.
- Survey reiterates strong need for fencing, particularly among core current users of the park.

Making Connections

| <i>Desired Programming & Activity</i> | <i>Stakeholders / Potential Stakeholders</i> | |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| Parties / birthday parties | Residents | Schools |
| Kids playing! | Three Rivers Head Start | Vacation Bible School / Church Groups |
| Local clean-ups | ELC | Colvill School |
| Plantings / green space / gardening | Haven of Hope | Police Dept & Beat officers |
| Summer recreational activities | Recreational Groups | Public Works |
| Kite flying | ArtReach | Community Rec |
| Sports | YMCA | Live Healthy Red Wing |
| Hiking | Naturalists | Scouts Groups |
| Sidewalk use (chalk drawings, cycling) | City Council members | Parent Groups |

Next Steps and Consultant Recommendations

Team can take the following next steps to ensure community engagement, increased park utilization, and enhanced partnerships with key neighborhood and regional stakeholders.

- Craft a contact list for stakeholders identified, paying particular attention to who makes program location decisions.
- Plan summer event for park opening, invite all residents, stakeholders - *and potential stakeholders*.
- Consider funding / fundraising for additional amenities.
- AT LAUNCH EVENT: have sign-up for clean-ups and park activities, with incentivization for joining mailing list. (Raffle, etc)
- Also consider a sign-up for Neighborhood Watch organizers - possibly in advance of the park opening.
- Team should address fencing as part of park renovations.
- Craft a press release and notice that discusses community process, successes, and how plans have shifted as a direct result of community input. Share on social media.

Note: While there was mixed support for public art, there are currently more funding opportunities for public art than there are for other above-listed amenities and resources. Team could consider paired projects for safety and art such as creative lighting; artist-designed signage; bike racks; a creative artist-designed fence that adds safety while not decreasing visibility.

Consultant Recommendation: Future outreach efforts in this neighborhood should allocate time and resources to door-to-door outreach or at minimum, distributed surveys with postage paid returns. This will maximize responses from residents, particularly elderly residents with limited mobility - and especially in winter months.

Potential Funding Opportunities

Traditional sources:

- National Neighborhood Watch - Community Safety Grants: <http://www.nnw.org/community-grant-support-programs>
- DNR Legacy Grants: <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/grants/recreation/index.html>

Outside the box opportunities:

- Keen Foundation: <https://www.keenfootwear.com/grants.html>
- NorthFace explore fund: <https://www.thenorthface.com/about-us/outdoor-exploration/explore-fund.html>