

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT RESULTS MASTER PLAN PHASE

130 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**
Social Media and Outreach

Following a series of collaborator meetings, the design team developed a draft Master Plan to share with the public. The goal of community engagement during the Draft Plan Phase was to introduce the draft plan to the community and promote the online, virtual and in-person engagement tools to gather comments on the plan. The community engagement during this phase took place September 7 - 30, 2021.

Outreach during this phase included signage in the park, website updates, e-blasts, social media posts, and media coverage. Two virtual community meetings were offered and were well attended. A variety of detailed comments were provided on the draft plan using an online and hard copy comment form.

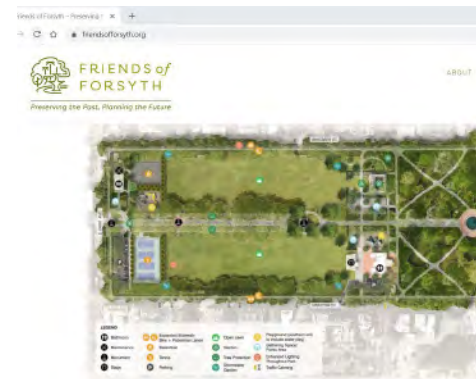
Signage



Signs were installed in the park from September 7 - 30, 2021 to advertise virtual community meetings and online engagement tools. Smaller signs featured QR code to facilitate access to website and engagement tools. Due to vandalism and removal of signage in previous phases, less signage was installed during this phase.

- 2 large banners hung at corners of Park Avenue/Drayton St. and Gaston St./Whitaker St.
- Signage promoting the engagement tools was attached to the two large wooden signs installed along the Central Spine of the park. On the in-person engagement days, the draft plan graphic was displayed on these two signs. The graphics were not left in place when the team was not in the park due to threat of vandalism.

Website



On September 15, 2021, the website was updated to display the draft plan graphic with rollover popup features to provide additional detail about the proposed features and amenities. The FAQ page of the website was routinely updated to provide answers to the commonly asked questions. Information about the virtual meetings and in park sessions were featured prominently along with a link to the comment form to provide feedback online. During the Draft Plan Phase, there were over 3,000 unique visitors and the average engagement time was 1.3 minutes. The City of Savannah also featured the project on its website.

Social Media



Social media posts on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and NextDoor focused on promoting all community engagement opportunities, including links to the website and details about in-park informational sessions and virtual meetings. Posts were often reposted on the City of Savannah and Mayor's social media accounts.

During the Draft Plan Phase, 17 posts were made on each platform during the period the comment form was active. Combined data from Facebook and Instagram include 47 total new likes and 786 total engagements. The average daily reach was 150 with a high of 1,063. (Engagement data unavailable for Twitter and NextDoor.) The total number of social media followers since project kick off: Facebook 706, Instagram 1081, NextDoor 384, Twitter 32.

E-blasts

E-blasts (or emails) were sent during this phase to share information of online and in-person engagement opportunities.

- A total of eight emails were sent to an email list of roughly 1,600 addresses during the month of September to announce and provide links to the two virtual community meetings as well as encourage use of the online comment form and attendance at in-park informational sessions.

Press

A press release issued by City of Savannah on September 7, 2021 announced the Draft Plan Phase and encouraged participation. This phase of the project also received much coverage in the press: Savannah Morning News, The Current, WTOG (2), WSAV, FOX28. Friends of Forsyth Project Chairs were interviewed on The Commute and SCADradio's The Parallax View with Scott Singeison.

Engagement Opportunities

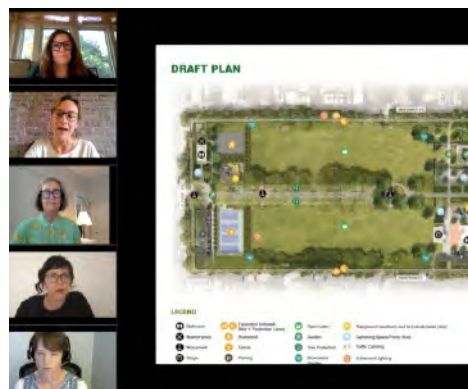


In Park Sessions



Teams of volunteers were located at three stations in the park to pass out comment forms and answer questions about the project and the design options presented. Sessions took place on September 18 & 25, 2021 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Volunteers wore Friends of Forsyth t-shirts and feather banners were set up at each location to promote engagement. Hours and days of engagement were reduced during this phase based on observations about traffic at the in-person stations during the first two project phases. Laminated visuals were provided to help the public better understand certain design details. A QR code linking to the online survey was very successful in overcoming barriers of visitors not wanting to complete the hard copy survey at that time and/or an alternative to filling out a paper survey during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 50 comment forms were completed in person.

Virtual Meetings



Two virtual community meetings were held on September 14, 2021 at 2:00 and 6:00 pm. The purpose of the meetings was to present the draft plan to the public and provide opportunity for Q&A with the project team. The meetings were identical in format and open to all. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour, and participants had the opportunity to raise their hand and unmute to ask their question. On average, each meeting was attended by about 80 people.

Presentations/Meetings



The draft plan was presented to City Council during the first week of August, to the Historic Preservation Commission in September, to the Historic Site and Monument Commission and Historic District Board of Review in October. A presentation to the Metropolitan Planning Commission was held in early November. These meetings with specific groups provided additional opportunity to share the draft plan and answer questions.

Comment Form

A comment form was shared online and hard copy at in-park sessions to allow the public an opportunity to share their comments on the draft plan. 330 comment forms were completed and provided valuable feedback for finalizing the Master Plan concept.

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Response Summary

330 responses were provided via an online or paper comment form. Comments were grouped into common themes and key topics summarized below based on top responses.

Bicycle Use

- On street bike lanes along Drayton and Whittaker would reduce the need for dedicated bike lanes in the park.
- Concern that expanded Perimeter Path is not needed and may endanger tree root zone.
- Enforcement is necessary to create separate space for cyclists and non-cyclists.
- Mixed experience of conflict between pedestrians and cyclists.

Overall Support for the Master Plan

- Appreciation that the revised plan responded to community concerns.
- Plan reflects a good compromise or balance of preservation goals and desired updates.
- Playground / Splash Pads.
- Concern with providing two play spaces in the park rather than co-locating in the same location.
- Enthusiasm for a water play feature coupled with concern that a spray ground was recently installed at bandshell.
- Concern with locating a playground next to courts primarily used by adults.

Monument (Existing Civil War Memorial and Proposed New Monument/Public Art)

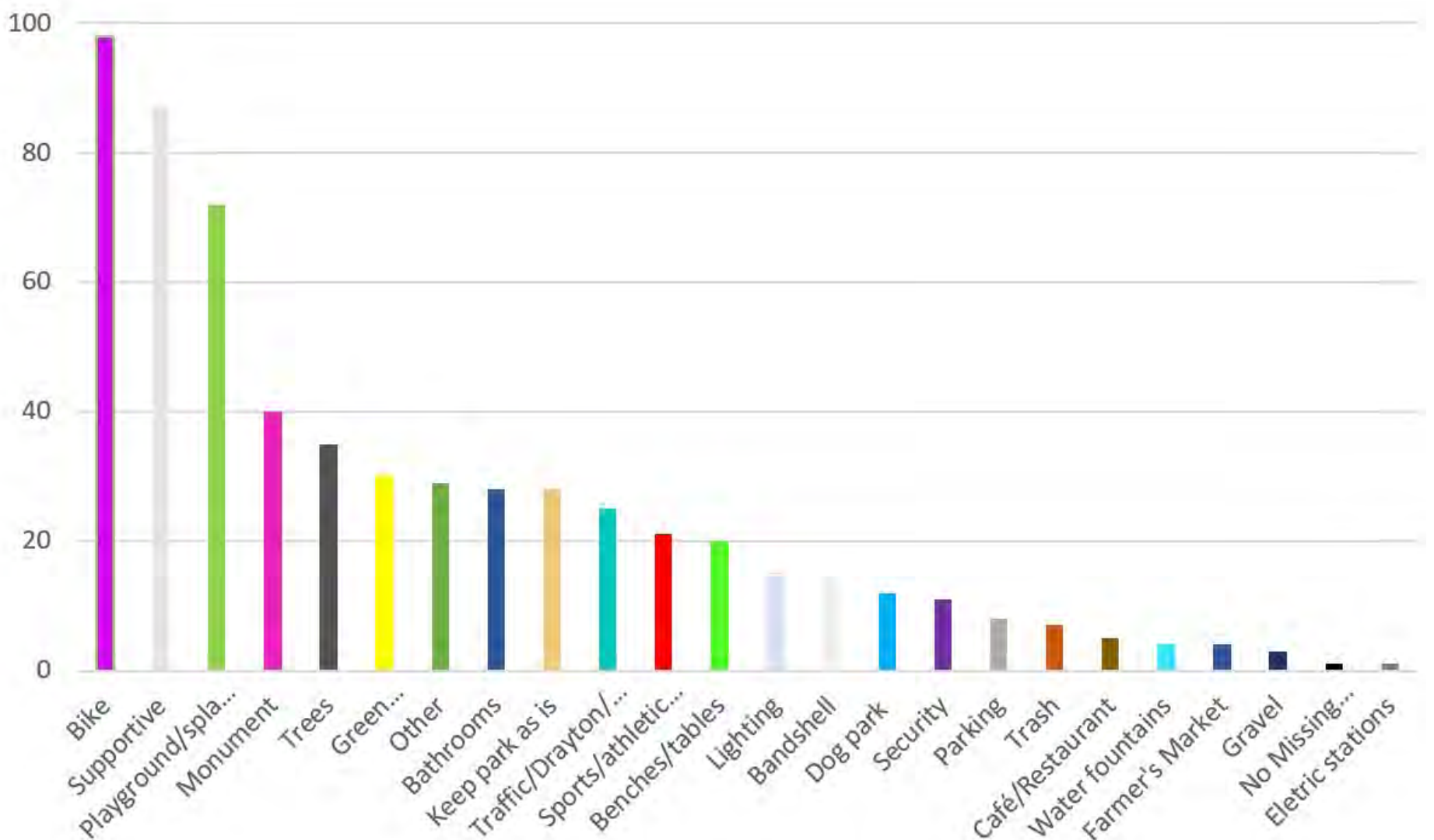
- A number of responses expressed interest in a new monument that would depict a fuller history of Savannah.
- Responses about the existing Civil War Memorial ranged from removing it to leaving as is with some suggestions for contextualizing it and removing the busts that were added at a later date. A majority of the responses requested the memorial to be removed.
- There were a few concerns that adding a new monument along the Central Spine could interrupt the view of the promenade.

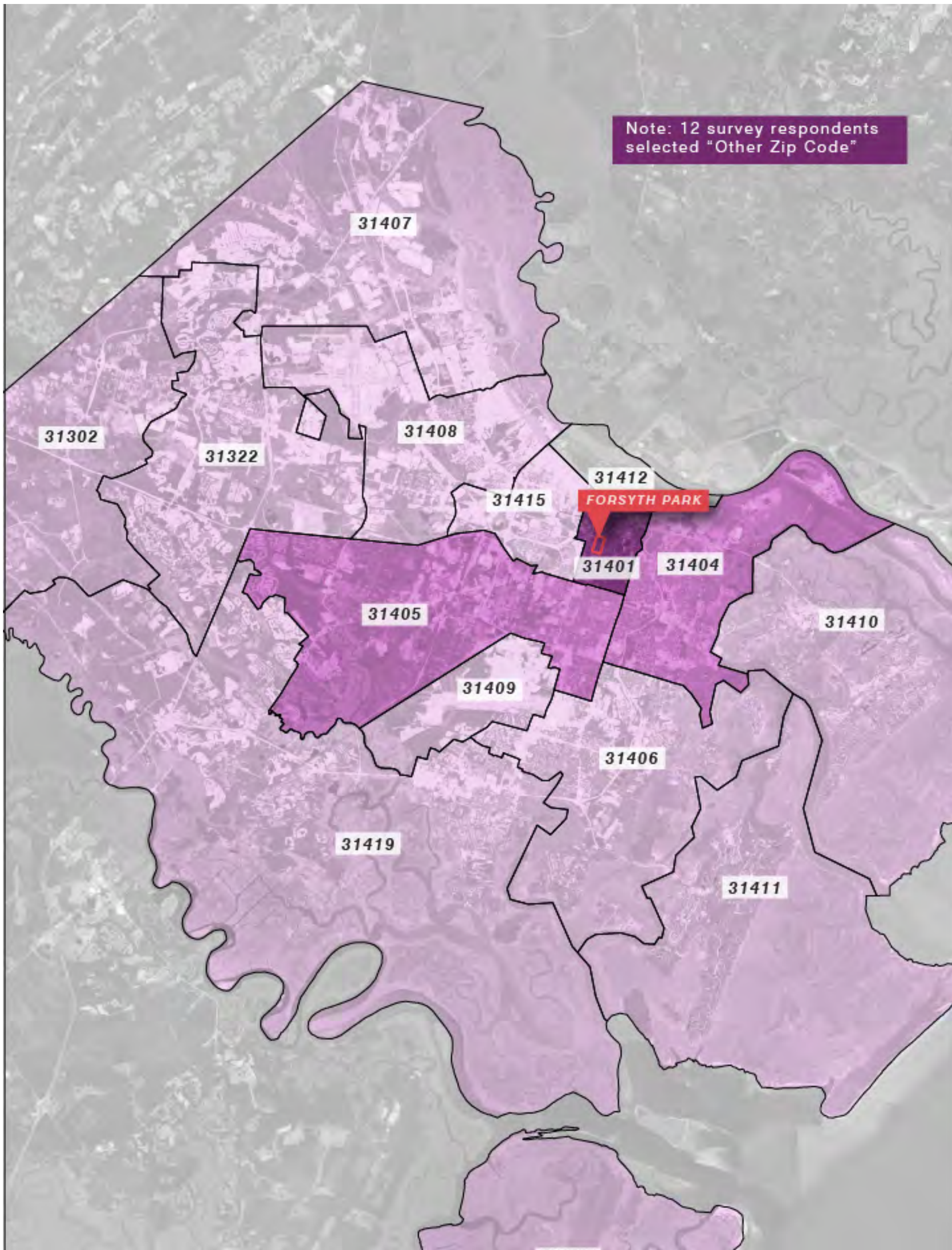
Tree Canopy / Green space / Open Space

- Support for preservation, maintenance and succession planning for trees.
- Support for preservation of open green space and addition of gathering spaces at key areas in the park.

Other Common Responses

- Support for bathrooms at south end of the park
- Concern that dedicated dog park area was not included in the revised plan.
- A few concerns that the park should be left as-is.





Responses to the survey were provided from residents across the City of Savannah and beyond, with most responses coming from residents in the zip code closest to the park.

Number of Survey Responses

