



Donner Trail Park

Community Engagement Report: First Phase

November 2023

Background

In November 2022, Salt Lake City voters approved the Parks, Trails, and Open Space General Obligation (GO) Bond. \$10.5 million of the bond funding is dedicated to reimagining neighborhood parks, trails, and open spaces, including at least one site in each City Council district. These parks were evaluated on a specific set of criteria and then approved by the City Council. Donner Trail Park is one of the parks that will receive funding in District 6.

Additional details about the Parks, Trails, and Open Space General Obligation Bond, along with insights into what other parks were selected to be reimagined are available online at gobondparks.com/info.

About the Park

Donner Trail Park is a 14.27-acre park in the East Bench neighborhood of Salt Lake City, located at 2903 Kennedy Drive. It is named after the ill-fated Donner-Reed Party that passed through Emigration Canyon (just east of the since-developed park) on their way to California. Their route carved the passageway for the Mormon Pioneers who entered the valley the following year.

Engagement Process

Public engagement for Donner Trail Park was conducted from May to September 2023 to understand the current usage of the park, capture the community's desires for its future, and better understand the unique elements surrounding the neighborhood's identity and history of the park.

Online Survey: Gather feedback on community preferences.

- **Content:** The survey asked questions to understand the current use of the park and users, desires for the space, the cultural history of the neighborhood, and how to increase accessibility for all users.
- **Open Dates:** May 10 - September 10, 2023
- **Stakeholders:** East Bench area residents, park users, and the East Bench Community Council
- **Participation:** 573 online survey responses and approximately 40 people engaged in-person
- **Accessibility:** Staff conducted intercept surveys at the park and provided poster boards with open-ended questions and visuals to collect input at events.

Other Forms of Engagement:

- Used social media platforms, specifically Instagram and Facebook, to promote the survey
- Distributed 720 mailers to nearby residents
- Launched targeted ads on social media to raise survey awareness:
 - Reach: 2,861
 - Clicks: 97
- Positioned yard signs featuring a QR code linking to the online survey throughout the neighborhood
- Set up information tables at the following events:
 - Downtown Farmers Market on July 15 and 22
 - East Bench Ice Cream Social (hosted by the Community Council) on July 19

- First Encampment Park Celebration on July 22

Engagement Analysis

Based on the feedback collected from surveys, events, and intercept surveys, community members value being able to connect with nature, experience solitude and quiet, and enjoy the views of the valley at Donner Trail Park. Park users appreciate being able to sit on the benches, walk the loop sidewalk, and have a place for their children to play. They often visit the park for small gatherings, such as picnics, light exercise, children using the playground, and walking dogs. Based on this feedback, future improvements to the park should maintain the views of the city and the park's peaceful environment.

Survey respondents frequently expressed their desire to see improved maintenance of the park's landscaping. Results also indicate the park could benefit from additional tree canopy, more picnic areas, shade near playgrounds, and more trash receptacles. Additionally, there was interest in upgraded playground features and creating a more accessible connection between Donner Trail Park and Rotary Glen Park (directly to the north and northeast). Public Lands will explore these options further in the next phases of the project, including additional public engagement.

Detailed analysis of in-person and online survey results are available in Appendix 1.

Next Steps

Public Lands staff will consult with technical experts, landscape architects, and maintenance supervisors to create a few concept designs that reflect the feedback gathered from the community engagement. There will be more engagement opportunities in early 2024 to give feedback on those concept designs.

Appendix 1: Survey Results

Identifying Current Uses

The survey sought first to identify the current users and use of Donner Trail Park, including how close they live, how often they visit, who they are visiting with, what amenities they enjoy or use most often, and reasons for not visiting the park.

Survey results came from the following:

- 90.75% of respondents live in the neighborhood (within 2 miles of the park)

Survey respondents indicated that:

- Most (63.35%) of them visit the park at least two times a week
- 82.55% of them walk/jog to the park
- 19.05% of them bike to the park

Additional Survey Insights:

Who typically visits the park, and who do they visit with? View Figure 1 on page 4 for full results. Note that respondents were able to select as many as applied.

- Adults, seniors, and children under 12 (who are most likely accompanied by adults)
- Many users bring their dogs to the park (Note: the high percentage may partially be due to survey respondents confusing Donner Trail Park with the northern park, Rotary Glen Park, which is an off-leash dog area)

Which existing amenities are currently enjoyed or most used at the park? View Figure 2 on page 4 for full results.

- 80.63% use the walking/jogging path
- 73.65% use the grassy area
- 67.71% enjoy the trees
- “Other” responses indicated:
 - The views of the valley from the park
 - The natural, unmanicured area on the northern perimeter
 - Benches
 - The “dog area” was mentioned several times, presumably referring to Rotary Glen Park, which is located north of Donner Trail Park, below the ravine

What causes users to rarely or never visit the park? View Figure 3 on page 5 for full results.

- Only 23% of survey takers answered this question, suggesting that most respondents visit the park regularly
- 7.5% indicated the park lacks quality facilities or amenities
- 7.16% do not have time to visit the park
- 7.5% selected “other,” often indicating personal reasons such as health limitations, kids have grown up, and accessibility challenges (being too far away, difficult to walk to, distance from transit stop)

Who do you typically visit Donner Trail Park with?

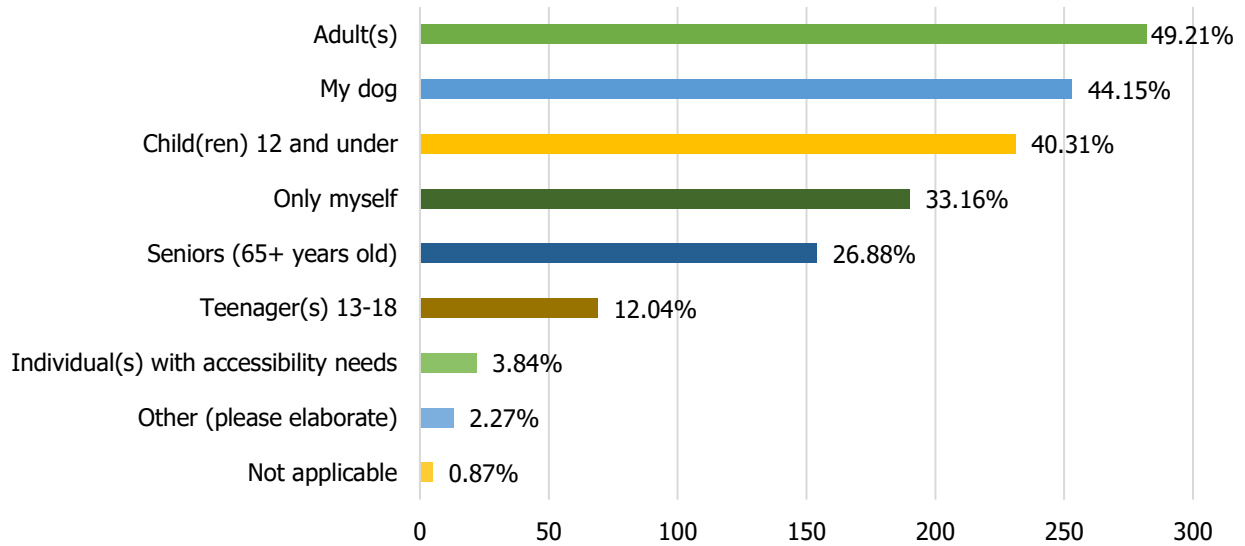


Figure 1: Shows who regularly visit the park (respondents could select as many as they desired).

Responses: 570 of 573

What do you currently enjoy or use the most at Donner Trail Park?

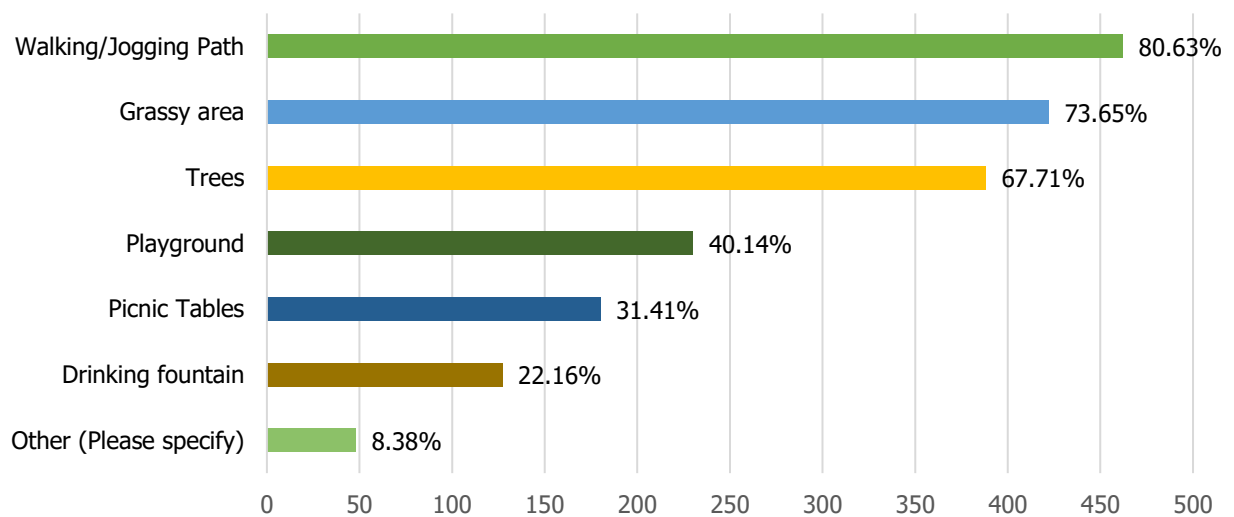


Figure 2: Shows what features are used most at Donner Trail Park.

Responses: 568 of 573

If you rarely or never visit the park, what are the reasons?

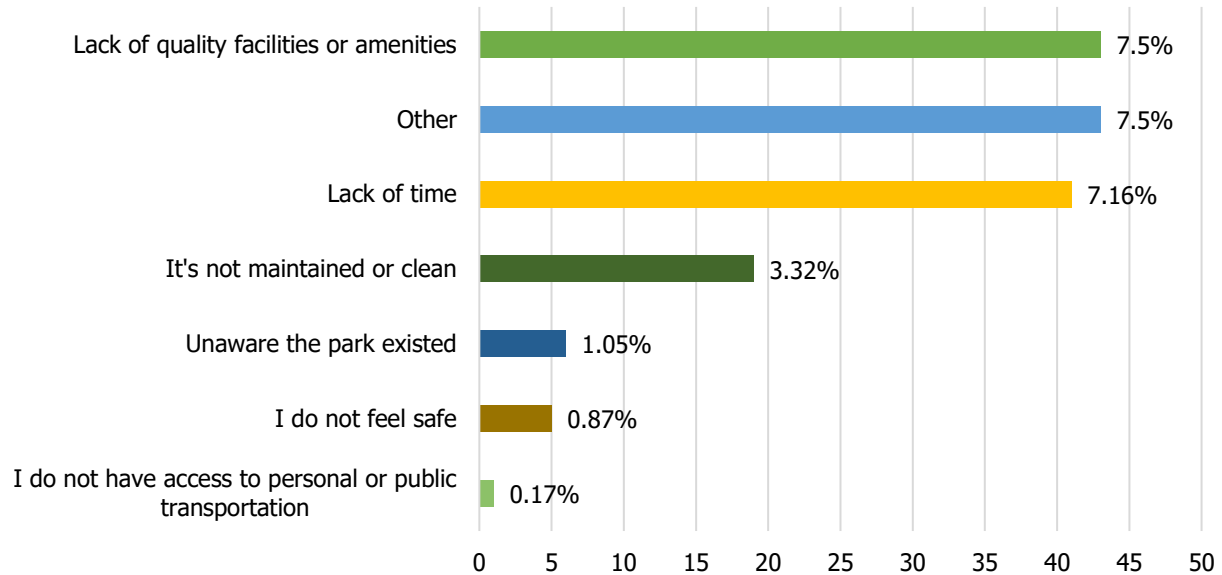


Figure 3: Identifies why people rarely or never visit Donner Trail Park
Responses: 133 of 573

Areas for Improvement

The next part of the survey identified respondents' values and how those apply to making Donner Trail Park more appealing or special.

What features make parks they've visited (other than Donner Trail Park) appealing or special? View Figure 4 on page 6 for full results.

- A place to enjoy nature and wildlife
- A passive, open space for walks

What changes could be made to Donner Trail Park to make it more appealing? View Figure 5 on page 6 for full results.

- 40.31% said more benches and seating areas
- 37.0% said better landscaping and plantings
- 31.41% said "Other," which included:
 - Better maintenance
 - Sports courts (particularly pickleball and basketball)
 - Additional amenities (fitness area, bike racks, more picnic tables, and a bathroom facility)
 - Increasing the natural footprint (more drought-resilient plants, less turf, more trees)
 - Creating/maintaining trail connections to Rotary Glen Park (as well as up Emigration Canyon and to the H Rock)

Think about some of the parks you've visited, other than Donner Trail Park. What features make those parks appealing or special?

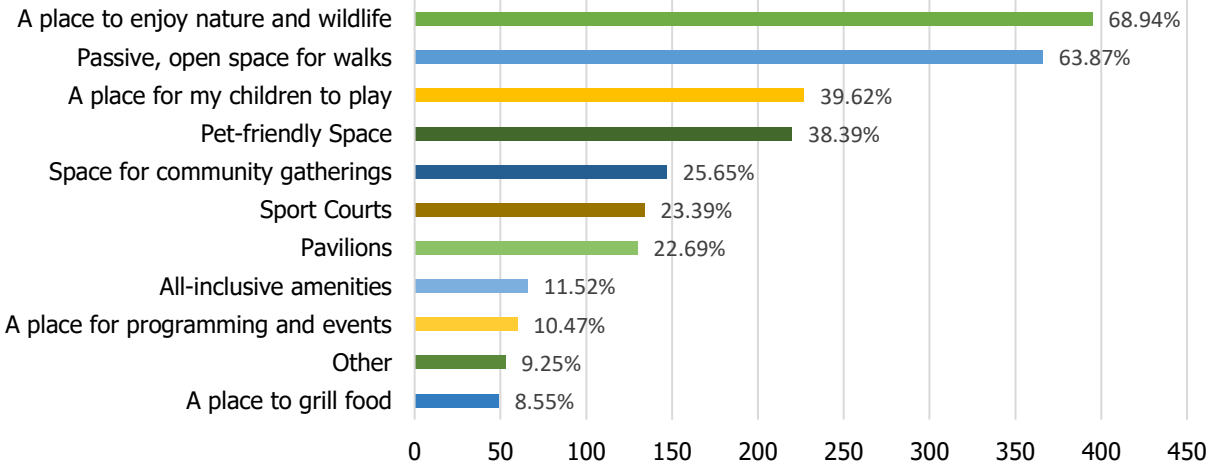


Figure 4: The chart captures what nearby community and park users value in parks other than Donner Trail Park.

Responses: 552 of 573

What changes could be made to Donner Trail Park to make it more appealing or special?

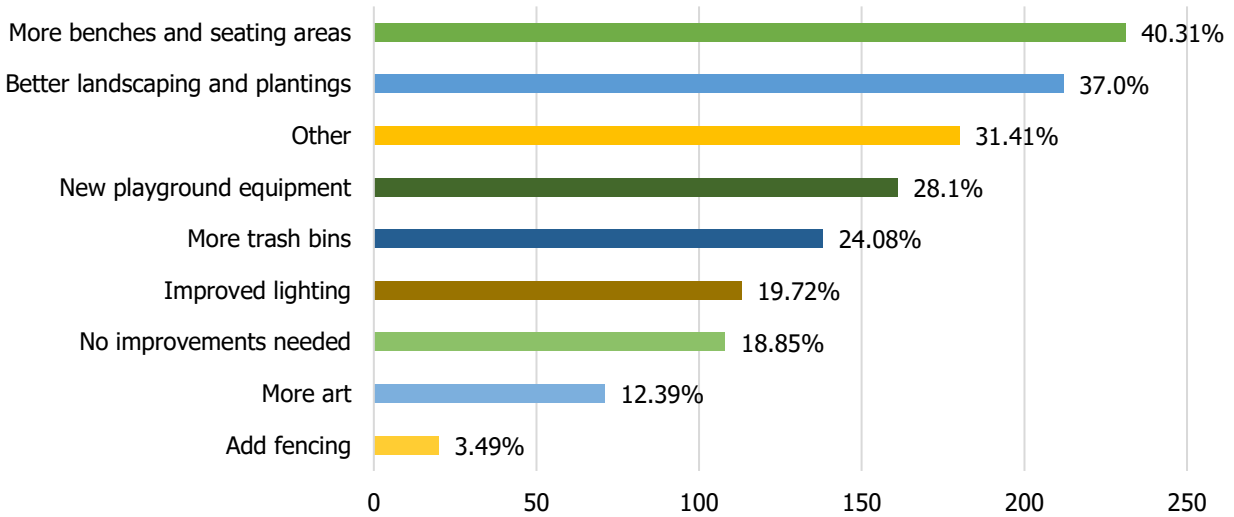


Figure 5: Desired, high-priority changes for Donner Trail Park include seating options and improved landscaping.

Responses: 559 of 573

Local Culture & Identity of the Park

The last section of the online survey focused on understanding and better incorporating local stories and histories of the area into the park.

279 of 573 survey respondents answered an open-ended question about the traditions, stories, or histories that should be reflected at the park. See Figure 6 for full results. Responses included the following:

- The namesake (Donner-Reed Party) and why the park is named after them
- The natural landscape, including the Great Salt Lake, wildlife, and geological and ecological history

Additionally, survey respondents were asked how they would like to see traditions, stories, or history incorporated into the park's design or programming. See Figure 7 on page for full results. The top three choices selected were:

- 27.57% chose art installations (murals, statues, etc.)
- 26.18% would like space for community gatherings or celebrations
- 19.55% selected interpretive displays or storyboards

What traditions, stories, or history from the local community do you think should be reflected in the park?

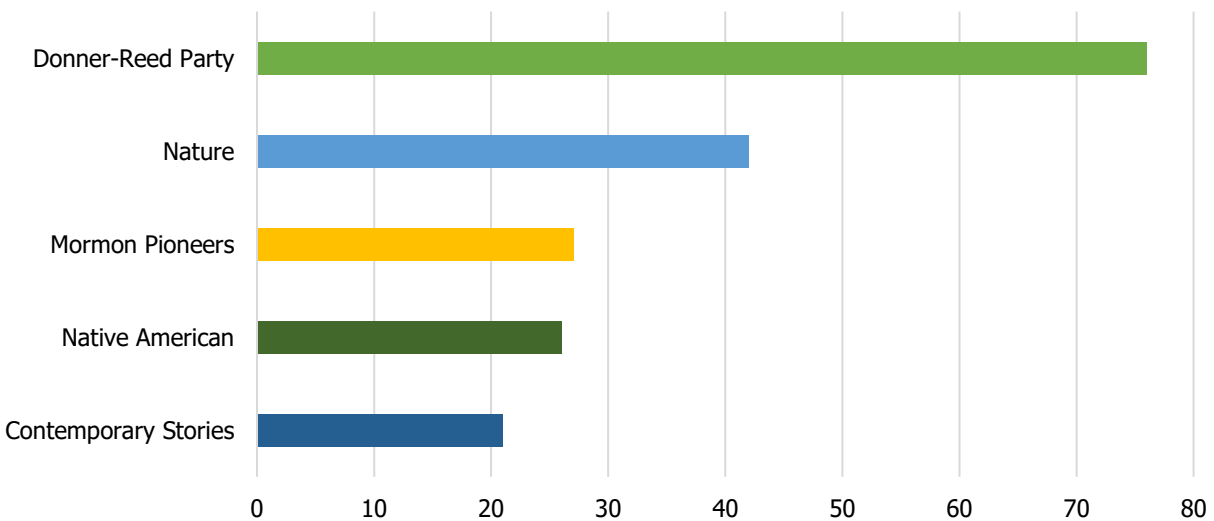


Figure 6: Results show the top responses to an open-ended question about what traditions, stories, or histories should be incorporated into the park.

Responses: 279 of 573

How would you like to see traditions, stories, or history from the local community incorporated into the park's design or programming?

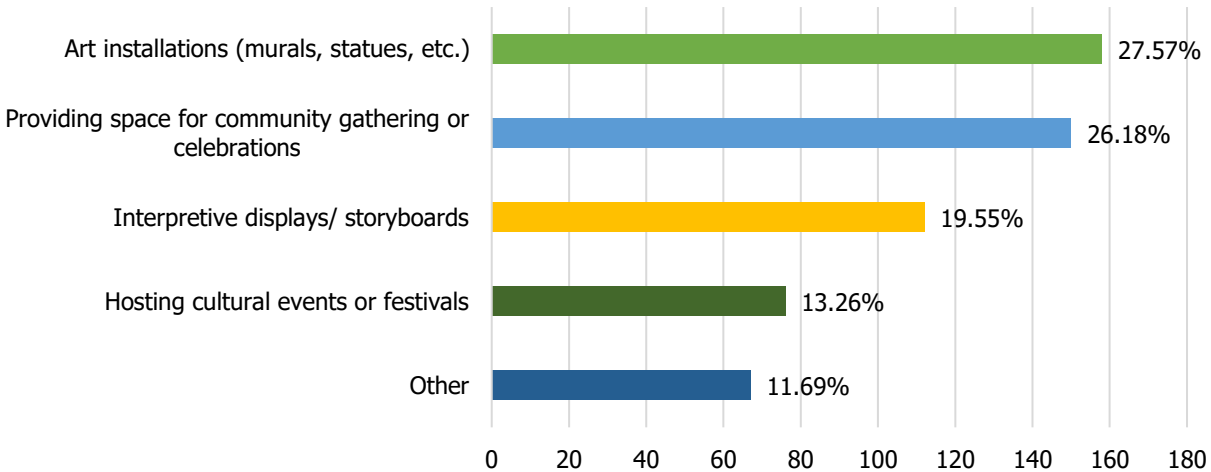


Figure 7: Results show how traditions, stories, or histories should be incorporated into the park. Responses: 366 of 573

In-person Engagement Analysis

In-person engagement was conducted during events that SLC Public Lands staff attended and through intercept surveys completed at Donner Trail Park. Participants were asked a series of questions to understand how they use the park currently and what future improvements they desired.

Individuals who participated in the in-person events frequently stated that they enjoy the open green space and the trees but would like the landscaping maintained or enhanced by adding more native plants and trees. Visitors to the park reported that they enjoy walking around it for exercise and as a place to enjoy nature and the city views. Participants also expressed they use the open green space for the following:

- Picnics
- Lounging
- Playing sports: soccer, frisbee, sledding, snowshoeing, playing catch
- Walking their dog
- Exercising

Participants' suggestions for park improvements were consistent with survey results. The in-person events provided insight into playground upgrades, including:

- Adding more features for toddlers, additional swings, a soft rubber surface, and workout equipment

The next engagement phase could further explore the specific improvements to make at the playground.

Refer to Figure 8 on page 9 for the full results of the comments collected at events and intercept surveys.

Desired Improvements for the Park

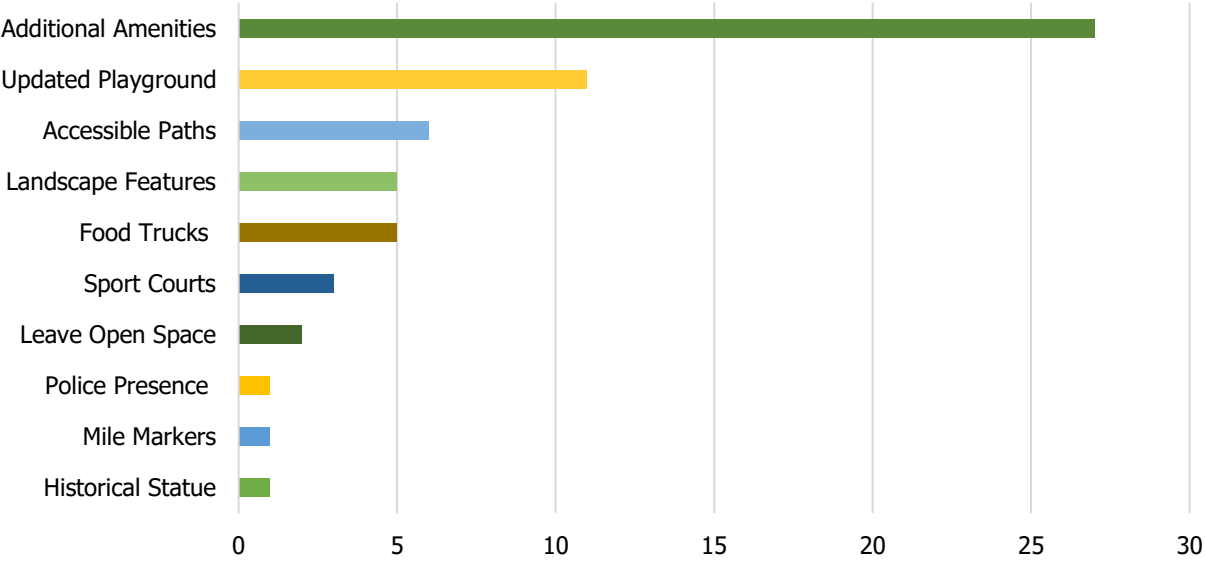


Figure 8: Shows the commonly desired improvements expressed at events and intercept surveys.