

EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT METHODS TO ACHIEVE EQUITY THROUGH DESIGN

Public Open Spaces



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This report satisfies the Professional Project competency requirement for the Master of Science degree in Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's contemporary planning realm, it is essential for planners to place equity at the forefront of their priorities. Whether planning for housing, economic development, or public open spaces, the engagement process must first reflect a commitment to equity in order to yield desired equitable outcomes through design. To accomplish this feat, contemporary planners must necessarily develop effective engagement strategies that prioritize equity, with the intent of fostering designs that explicitly aim for greater equity. While the term "equity" is used in many contexts, "equity" for the purposes of this report corresponds to social aspects of the term, such as accessibility, racial equity, and socioeconomic status, all of which can be enhanced through community-informed design of land uses.

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to be a complementary guide to help planners utilize effective public engagement methods, in order to achieve equity through design. This report not only illustrates public engagement's role in achieving equity through design, but it exemplifies contemporary best practices, the importance of equity, and provides tangible recommendations.

This report doubles as a case study, which examines the methodology of an intriguing project I had the pleasure of working on: The City of Madison Parks' James Madison Park Master Plan & Shelter Design project. The entire master planning process was heavily guided by the City of Madison's Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI), with enhancing equity through design as a chief focus. The project incorporated several effective engagement methods and offered ample opportunities to collaborate with the public. The primary research and analysis used to produce this report is complemented by input from local engagement experts, practicing planners, and various design professionals.

"Equity is the residue of design"¹, as City of Madison Planner, Dan Rolfs likes to say. Equity, or the quality of being fair, impartial, and unbiased, is an important factor concerning the design of land uses, especially public open spaces. The three main forms of equity that were emphasized for this project correspond to **accessibility**, **racial equity**, and equity related to **socio-economic status**.

Accessibility

All land uses, especially open spaces, should be designed to be usable by people with the widest possible range of abilities. While accessibility is often linked to physical mobility impairments, the term encompasses other types of disabilities such as visual and hearing impairments, and cognitive disorders. Accessibility also relates to the overall inclusivity of a space and equitable opportunities to access it.

Racial Equity

Racial equity is defined as unbiased inclusion into a society in which all people can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential². This is achieved when design outcomes can no longer be predicted on the basis of race.

Socio-economic Status

Socioeconomic status is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation³. While it is highly correlated with race, all individuals of lower socio-economic status face inequities driven by the design of land uses.

¹ Rolfs, Dan "Development Practices." Lecture at UW-Madison

² Blackwell, Angela et al. "The competitive advantage of racial equity." Policylink.org. (2017).

³ "Socioeconomic status" American Psychological Association. (2019)

Social Impacts of Urban Design

While equity is a complex matter influencing the development of land uses, many of the impacts of inequitable design can clearly be identified. A distinct negative effect of inequitable design is exclusion, or the creation of uses that are primarily accessed and utilized by an exclusive group of individuals, resulting in disadvantageous effects on outside populations.

Alleviating potential or existing inequities starts with a robust, inclusive public engagement process that aims to extract input from historically under-represented individuals. For instance, a positive outcome of equity-based design is inclusion; when public open spaces are designed to enhance equity, all individuals feel welcome, creating a better quality of life for citizens and an increased sense of community.

This process of working collaboratively with community members to make decisions collectively is imperative to final design outcomes. Although public engagement is rarely glamorized, it is a powerful vehicle for the implementation of equity-focused elements in design.

“As we have come to recognize the racial and economic inequities in our society, the breadth and depth of community engagement is even more important such that all parts of the community are a part of the planning process, from beginning till end.” - Melissa Huggins, AICP – Principal, Urban Assets

Institutional Barriers

While public engagement has the ability to enhance equity through design, planners must work within a political system, in which their “power” is contingent on. Planning is inherently political; although plans and designs must be approved, decisions are largely predetermined by policies established through the political process⁴. For this reason, it is not only important for public engagement strategies to become more equity-focused, but policy makers and approval commissions and councils must also possess the same motives.

BEST PRACTICES

Land use development processes of the past lacked a focus on equity. This can be attributed to non-progressive public policy and a generally perceived unimportance of public engagement.

⁴ Blowers, Andrew. The Limits of Power: The Politics of Local Planning Policy. Pergamon, 1980. 12-13.

History as proof, land use design and the corresponding processes have significantly improved. There are now proven contemporary best practices for achieving equity through design, which exemplify essential techniques planners can utilize to foster equitable design outcomes. Fundamentally “macro-level”, These techniques should be uniquely modified to fit the specific case in focus.

“Historically, community engagement has been viewed as less important than the technical expertise provided by traditional planners and designers. In recent years, community engagement has been elevated in importance and allocated a greater portion of project budgets.” – Melissa Huggins, AICP - Principle, Urban Assets

Contemporary Public Engagement Best Practices

It is essential for equity-focused public engagement to be a foremost priority when developing any land use, especially public open spaces, as they are intended to be used by the greater community, which includes a diverse spectrum of individuals. Best practices include:

Alleviate Barriers to Engagement, Particularly for Under-Represented Individuals

Engage members of under-represented groups “where they are”. This can be achieved by conducting public meetings at fully-accessible locations, offering paper copies of all project materials, and offering accommodations for meetings, such as food, childcare, and free or subsidized transportation to a from meetings.

Obtain Input from Under-Represented Groups

Planners must make concerted efforts to capture input from those who are typically under-represented, in order to prevent the cultivation of inequities through design; carefully listen to the voices of those who have historically been excluded from planning decisions and create opportunities for lasting involvement throughout the process.

Collaboration with Local Community Organizations

Collaborating with local community organizations is one of the most effective ways to capture the voices of historically under-represented individuals. The challenge of attaining under-represented individuals’ input remains; established community organizations have the ability to bridge communication between planners and members of the community.

Effective Project Information Distribution

Project information and materials must be accessible, both in terms of public access to the information, and ensuring individuals of varying abilities are able to effectively consume the information. Utilize tools such as a project website, listservs, and flyers.

Transparency During Engagement

Planners must be transparent when presenting plans and designs. It is necessary to present what is truly being planned and allow individuals to comment on the proposed design, especially those who are most susceptible to potential inequities produced through design.

Contemporary Design Best Practices

Public open spaces must be designed to meet the needs of all people regardless of their ability, socio-economic status, or race. Established contemporary design best practices include:

“We [planners and designers] have to be the agents of advocacy and equity through design because it won’t happen on its own.” – Dan McAuliffe - City of Madison Urban Design Commission

Universal Design

Universal Design relates to guidelines influenced by the Americans with Disability Act (ADA), which sets minimum accessibility standards. Universal Design aims to design environments that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of age, size, socioeconomic status, or ability⁵. Though this design technique is frequently perceived as a benefit to only a minority of the population, it is a fundamental characteristic of sound design. Universal Design elements may include: wheelchair accessible paths and hallways, braille signage, elevators, audio signals, and walkway contours.

Equitable Access and Connectivity

Land uses, particularly public open spaces, should be designed to encourage access and use by people of widely varying demographics. To achieve this, entrances must be approachable and welcoming, and should be arranged and oriented in a manner that exhibits cohesiveness with the surrounding community. Per the [City of Madison Park and Open Space Plan](#), planners must strive to “develop parkland and amenities that create inclusive park experiences, as well as preserve landmark vistas from public access areas.”⁶

Design Park Facilities to Accommodate Diverse Activities and Populations

Provide flexible spaces that can respond to changing recreational trends, and incorporate spaces and facilities appropriate for different cultures, age groups, and abilities⁷. While it is important to provide active recreation areas, it is also essential to maintain a sufficient ratio of open green space for passive activities.

Creative Placemaking

Placemaking, is a cooperative, community-based design process which can be implemented to develop public spaces that creatively reflect local identity through arts and culture⁸. The interjection of culture and local history into the design of public open spaces can create a shared sense of community and promote social interactions among park users.

⁵ “What Is Universal Design.” *Centre for Excellence in Universal Design*. 2014

⁶ “2018-2023 Park and Open Space Plan.” City of Madison, 2018

⁷ “2018-2023 Park and Open Space Plan.” City of Madison, 2018

⁸ “What Is Placemaking?” Project for Public Spaces, 2007

CASE STUDY

James Madison Park & Shelter Design

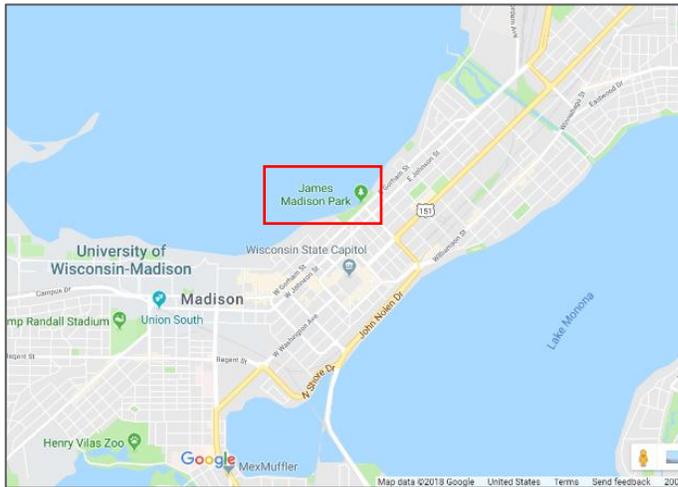


Fig. 1: Location of James Madison Park
Source: Google

James Madison Park is a 12.36-acre community park located in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. The park currently includes amenities to support both active and passive forms of recreation. The park is known for its alluring views of Lake Mendota, sunsets and the Wisconsin State Capitol. Although one of the most prominent public open spaces in the city, the park lacks a demographic diversity of users.

The City of Madison Parks Division issued a request for proposals (RFP) for the James Madison Park Master Plan and Shelter Design in September 2017, with the goal of updating the park master plan and preparing schematic designs for a new park shelter. The need for a new master plan was supported by a recognition of the population and demographic changes occurring in Madison, projected to continue over the next 20+ years⁹. This is an important factor, as the quality of life for City of Madison residents is heavily influenced by the City's natural resources: parks, open green spaces, and public access to the numerous waterways which deeply define Madison culture¹⁰.

Planning and Engagement Process

Master planning for James Madison Park incorporated extensive public engagement, historical research, analysis of existing conditions, and thorough review of regulatory requirements. The scope for the James Madison Park Master Plan and Shelter Design consisted of the following phases and included a robust neighborhood and community engagement process driven by the City of Madison Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) ([appendix B](#)):

- **Phase I:** Site Investigations and Assessment
- **Phase II:** Design Development – Schematic Park Master Plans and Shelter Designs
- **Phase III:** Draft and Final Park Master Plan

⁹ "Madison City Snapshot." City of Madison Planning, 2016.

¹⁰ "2018-2023 Park and Open Space Plan." City of Madison, 2018



Fig. 2: James Madison Park Phases of Planning Process
 Source: City of Madison Parks

Public Engagement

The public engagement process for the James Madison Park Master Plan is one of the most comprehensive public engagement processes for any City of Madison Parks project to date¹¹. The process was heavily guided by the City of Madison’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI). Engagement focused on gathering input from a diverse range of neighborhood and community members and user groups, particularly those who are historically under-represented in public planning processes.

In total, the project team made over **20,000 individual contacts** and received over **1,000 comments** as part of the planning process. A primary goal of the engagement process was to overcome common barriers to participation by conducting outreach at various times and locations, using a variety of engagement tools listed below:

Information Distribution

Information regarding project updates, participation opportunities and engagement results were made available through the City of Madison project website and distributed by email, flyers, social media (over **10,000 followers**), and mailings to over **8,000 addresses**.

Surveys

An online survey was conducted during the engagement process to gather feedback on current uses, likes, dislikes, issues, and opportunities at James Madison Park, which was publicized through the City of Madison Parks website, social media and email. A total of **215 responses** were received, with responses collected from **sixteen different Madison ZIP codes**.

¹¹ “James Madison Park Master Plan & Shelter Design.” *City of Madison Parks*, 2019

Focus Groups

Focus groups directly supported the goals of the City of Madison's Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) by identifying programmatic elements desired by diverse and typically under-represented user groups. 6 RESJ-based focus groups were facilitated, which included a total of **62 participants**. Focus groups included:

- Residents of the YWCA Third Street Program
- Community service groups
- Racial minority community organizations
- Clients of The Beacon homeless day resource center
- Access to Independence, Inc.
- Downtown Madison, Inc.

Public Meetings

4 public meetings were held, consisting of **179 total participants**. The public meetings gave individuals an opportunity to provide input directly to the project team, as well as collaborate with other individuals in a workshop setting.

- Public Meeting #1 – January 17, 2018: **Community Kickoff Meeting**
- Public Meeting #2: - February 10, 2018: **PARKitecture Workshop**
- Public Meeting #3: - May 14, 2018: **Design Concepts Workshop**
- Public Meeting #4: - September 24, 2018: **Final Draft Master Plan Presentation**

Intercept Interviews and Park Observation Logs

The activities of **460 park users** were observed during 12 separate park observations held at varying times of day and year. This also included 16 intercept interviews at the park.

Stakeholder Group

A standing 17-member stakeholder group provided a periodic sounding board for the project team and supplemented feedback from the other engagement tools throughout the planning process. It included private owners of the four residential properties located in the park, representatives from the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association and Capitol Neighborhoods, and organizations with strong connections to the park.

Comment Cards

Printed comment cards were distributed at public meetings and posted at 21 high-traffic community locations throughout Madison, frequented by a diverse clientele.

External Evaluation of Engagement Process

Throughout the public engagement process, the project team gathered participant evaluations as recommended through the City of Madison's RESJI initiative. This input evaluated approaches that were most and least effective. In order to synthesize the information, the "James Madison Park Master Plan and Shelter Design Public Engagement Summary Report" was

produced (Appendix C). The supplemental report includes metrics on specific engagement tools, as well as participant’s feedback on the effectiveness of these tools.

In addition, RESJI-focused analysis of the engagement process was conducted by the City of Madison’s Racial Equity Coordinator, members of the Parks Division, and the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association President. The project team also received and incorporated input from a multitude of City, County, State, and Federal agencies.

DESIGN OUTCOMES

Not only was it necessary to conduct a robust, equity-focused engagement process, the final master plan and shelter design had to reflect the City of Madison’s Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative (RESJI) and adhere to the newly adopted 2018-2023 Park and Open Space Plan. The project team also worked closely with Access to Independence and the WI DNR Accessibility Coordinator to identify “beyond compliance” opportunities to ensure that ADA accessibility is seamlessly integrated throughout the entire master plan as part of all future buildings, landscape, shoreline, and lake access amenities.

The draft James Madison Park Master Plan was presented to the City of Madison Board of Park Commissioners for approval on Wednesday, December 12, 2018; Designs were revised based on feedback from that meeting. Two alternate plans were subsequently presented to the Commissioners on January 9th, 2019 for discussion and additional feedback. Based on input received at the Board of Park Commissioners meeting in January, the revised draft James Madison Park Master Plan was presented for approval on Wednesday, February 13, 2019, where it was ultimately approved¹².

The robust public engagement process had the ability to effectively inform the final design of the master plan and park shelter. Pleasingly, several equity-focused elements were incorporated.

¹² “James Madison Park Master Plan & Shelter Design.” City of Madison Parks, 2019

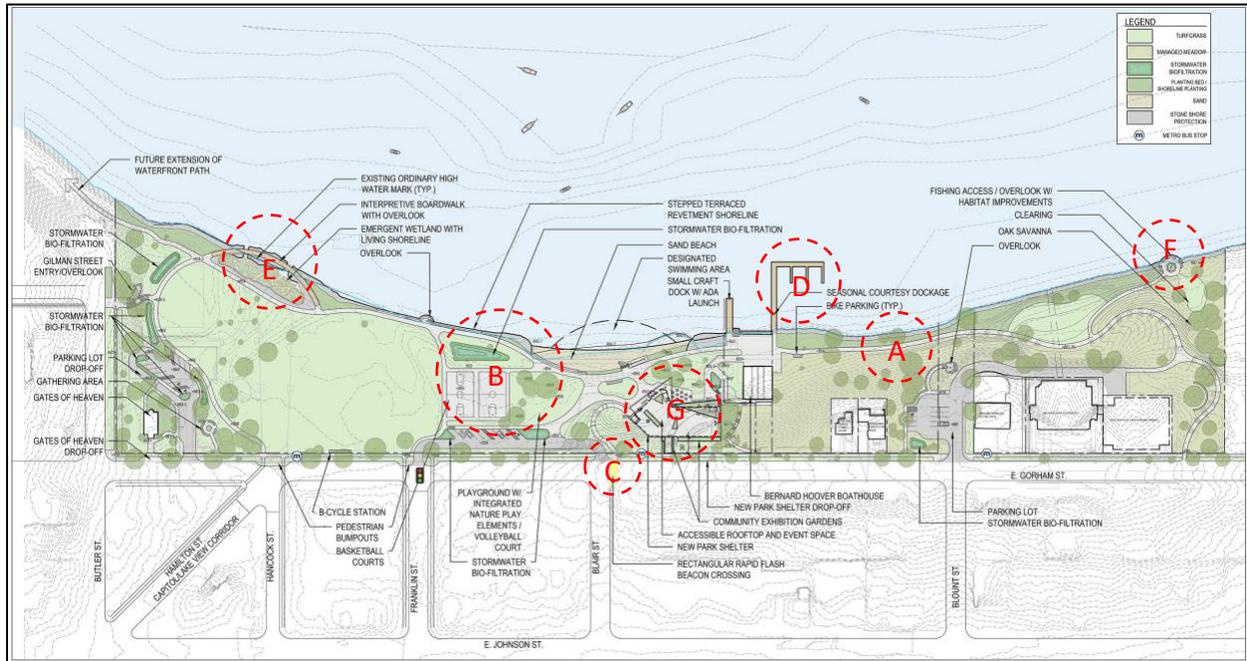


Fig. 3: James Madison Park – Final Master Plan
 Source: City of Madison

Highlighted plan features: Area **A** – ADA accessible path **B** – Central activity zone **C** – Rapid flash beacon
D – Seasonal courtesy dockage **E** – Interpretive boardwalk **F** – Fishing pier **G** – Park shelter

Access-Focused Design Elements

Top priorities received from public input included moving and reconfiguring the parking lot, reducing blind corners, maintaining a path that service vehicles can drive on, making any future building entries visible from the street, and improving pedestrian access to, from, and within James Madison Park. Access-focused design elements include:

Increased ADA accessibility

- + Fully ADA accessible 8' wide paths throughout park, including accessible waterfront path (fig. 3 – area A)
- + Small craft boat dock with ADA accessible launch
- + Lower-graded (ADA compliant) entry into park on west side (Butler Street)
- + Addition of 8 ADA parking stalls with proximity to activity zones and structures

Enhanced park access and crossings

- + Rapid flash beacon for safer crossing and access into park (fig. 3 – area C)
- + Pedestrian bump-outs at park entrance intersections
- + Enhanced entrances into park on East and West ends
- + Curb cuts to facilitate bicycle access directly from the E. Gorham Street bike lane
- + Improved parking configuration

Increased lake access

- + Stepped terrace
- + Enhanced and enlarged sand beach
- + Seasonal courtesy dockage (fig. 3 – area D)

Place-Based Design Elements

Top priorities from public input included accessibility improvements to structures (none of the existing park structures meet current standards for ADA accessibility), ensuring structures are welcoming and offer community space for programming, and the creation of a central activity zone. Place-based design elements include:

Park Shelter (fig. 3 – area G)

The public engagement process revealed a strong desire to improve the aesthetics and amenities of the existing park shelter, making this the top area of comment based on over **1,000 comments collected** throughout the process. The majority of comments related to the shelter indicated that it is perceived as unwelcoming, unappealing, lacks accessibility, and insufficiently sized and programmed to meet today’s community needs.

Equity-Related Design Elements include:

- + Welcoming and approachable design
- + Universal accessibility
- + ADA parking stalls adjacent to building
- + Accessible rooftop and event space
- + Community rooms for public use
- + Restrooms including ADA
- + Spaces for increased programming
- + Elevator



Fig. 4: Renderings of proposed Park shelter
Source: City of Madison

Central activity zone

- + Development of a central activity zone to improve multigenerational play and proximity to the park shelter/restrooms and parking (fig. 3 – area B)

Lakeshore

- + Full lakeshore redevelopment, including 4 different lakeshore types: emergent wetland with living shoreline, stone revetment shoreline, stepped terrace, and sand beach
- + Interpretive boardwalk (fig. 3 – area E)
- + Extension of lakeshore path and addition of 4 overlooks
- + Fishing pier on east side of park (fig. 3 – area F)

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

The James Madison Park Master Plan & Shelter Design process illustrated how effective public engagement methods can be used to achieve equity through design. While the final design outcome is indeed one to be pleased with, there were challenges faced along the way and valuable lessons learned.

A lesson learned, for instance, is that it is possible to get too much input from the same interest group. As a prospective planner, I was under the impression that more input invariably equates to a more effective engagement process. This project demonstrated how more affluent, entitled individuals can strategically saturate the collection of input in a way that drowns out the voices of traditionally under-represented community members.

A method that worked well to mitigate the potential diminishment of traditionally under-represented voices, was working with community and faith-based organizations. Facilitating focus groups at locations such as the YWCA, The Beacon homeless day resource center, Access to Independence, Urban League, and community churches, was a very effective way to ensure input from these individuals influenced the design of the park and park shelter.

Recommendations

Though I believe the James Madison Park Master Plan & Shelter Design process was successful, as it incorporated community-informed, equity-related elements into the final park and park shelter design, there are recommendations I have for those involved in projects of similar nature, or any land use development project for that matter:

Post Occupancy Analysis

Planners typically work on projects until the final design is approved, failing to gain knowledge regarding the actual functionality of the land use after it is in use. Post Occupancy Analysis can extract this knowledge by evaluating land uses in a systematic and thorough manner after they have been built and occupied for some time. Post Occupancy Evaluation helps generate recommendations based on all stakeholder groups' experiences¹³. This analysis would be beneficial, especially for a project focused on equity.

Contract Contingency Clauses

Performing the necessary tasks to ensure equitable outcomes in design undoubtedly requires more time than what is typically budgeted for in contracts. For this reason, contracts should include clauses allowing planners to use a separate budget to perform additional necessary tasks, such as post-occupancy analysis and incorporating changes recommended by municipal boards, commissions, and councils.

¹³ Preiser, W. F., White, E., & Rabinowitz, H. (2015). *Post-Occupancy Evaluation (Routledge Revivals)*.

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APPENDICES

[Appendix A: James Madison Park Master Plan](#)

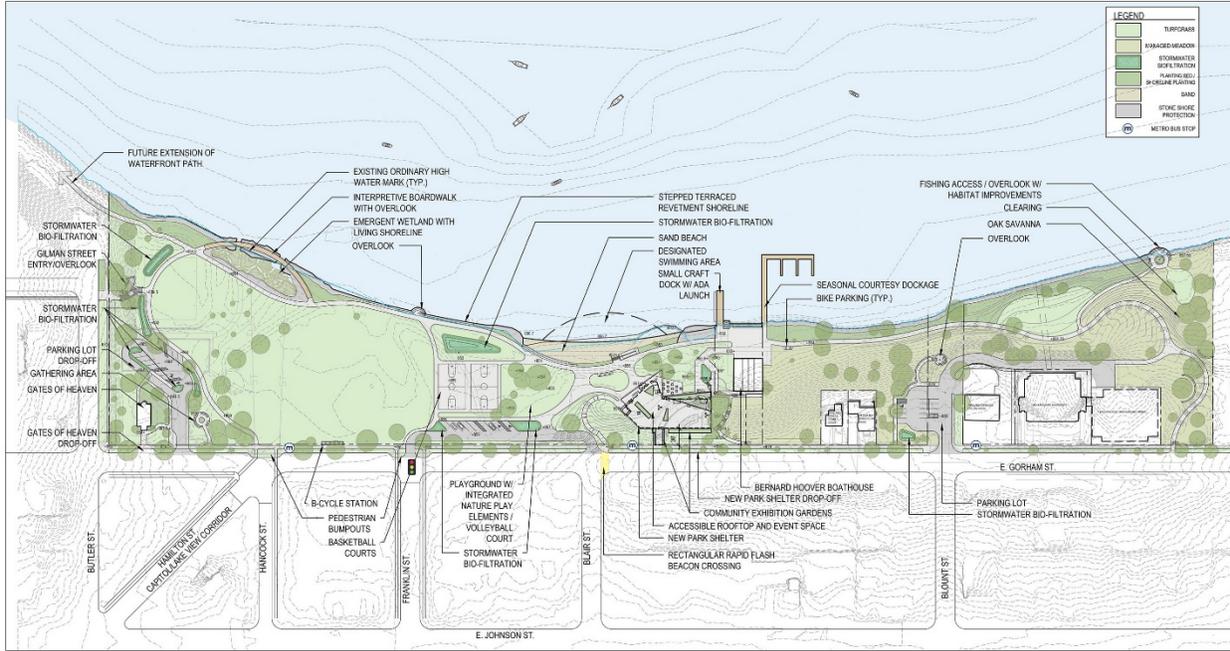
[Appendix B: City of Madison RESJI Guidelines](#)

[Appendix C: Public Engagement Summary Report](#)

[Appendix D: Urban Design Commission Meeting Notes](#)

APPENDIX A:

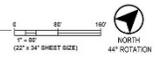
JAMES MADISON PARK MASTER PLAN



LEGEND

[Light Green Box]	TURFGRASS
[Medium Green Box]	SHRUBBERY/GRASS
[Dark Green Box]	STORMWATER BIO-FILTRATION
[Light Blue Box]	WATER
[Light Blue Box]	BIO-FILTRATION
[Light Blue Box]	SAND
[Light Blue Box]	STORMWATER PROTECTION
[Grey Box]	METRO BUS STOP

1 JAMES MADISON PARK MASTER PLAN - FINAL MASTER PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 80'



APPENDIX B:

CITY OF MADISON RACIAL EQUITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE (RESJI)

Racial Equity and Social Justice Initiative RESJ Tool: Comprehensive Version



INSTRUCTIONS

Use this tool as early as possible in the development of City policies, plans, programs and budgets.

For issues on a short timeline or with a narrow impact, you may use the RESJ Tool – Fast Track Version.

This analysis should be completed by people with different racial and socioeconomic perspectives. When possible, involve those directly impacted by the issue. Include and document multiple voices in this process.

The order of questions may be re-arranged to suit your situation.

Mission of the Racial Equity and Social Justice (RESJ) Initiative: To establish racial equity and social justice as core principles in all decisions, policies and functions of the City of Madison.

Equity is just and fair inclusion into a society in which all, including all racial and ethnic groups, can participate, prosper, and reach their full potential. Equity gives all people a just and fair shot in life despite historic patterns of racial and economic exclusion (www.policylink.org).

The persistence of deep racial and social inequities and divisions across society is evidence of bias at the individual, institutional and structural levels. These types of bias often work to the benefit of White people and to the detriment of people of color, usually unintentionally or inadvertently.

Purpose of this Tool: To facilitate conscious consideration of equity and examine how communities of color and low-income populations will be affected by a proposed action/decision of the City.

The “*What, Who, Why, and How*” questions of this tool are designed to lead to strategies to prevent or mitigate adverse impacts and unintended consequences on marginalized populations.

BEGIN ANALYSIS

Title of policy, plan or proposal:

Main contact name(s) and contact information for this analysis:

Names and affiliations of others participating in the analysis:

CITY OF MADISON RACIAL EQUITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTINUUM

Adapted from *Community Engagement Guide: A tool to advance Equity & Social Justice in King County*

The continuum provides details, characteristics and strategies for five levels of community engagement. The continuum shows a range of actions from county-led information sharing that tends to be shorter-term to longer-term community-led activities. The continuum can be used for both simple and complex efforts. As a project develops, the level of community engagement may need to change to meet changing needs and objectives.

The level of engagement will depend on various factors, including program goals, time constraints, level of program and community readiness, and capacity and resources. There is no one right level of engagement, but considering the range of engagement and its implications on your work is a key step in promoting community participation and building community trust. Regardless of the level of engagement, the role of both the City of Madison and community partners as part of the engagement process should always be clearly defined.

Levels of Engagement				
<p>City Informs City of Madison initiates an effort, coordinates with departments and uses a variety of channels to inform community to take action</p>	<p>City Consults City of Madison gathers information from the community to inform city-led projects</p>	<p>City engages in dialogue City of Madison engages community members to shape city priorities and plans</p>	<p>City and community work together Community and City of Madison share in decision-making to co-create solutions together</p>	<p>Community directs action Community initiates and directs strategy and action with participation and technical assistance from the City of Madison</p>
Characteristics of Engagement				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily one-way channel of communication One interaction Term-limited to event Addresses immediate need of City and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primarily one-way channel of communication One to multiple interactions Short to medium-term Shapes and informs city projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-way channel of communication Multiple interactions Medium to long-term Advancement of solutions to complex problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-way channel of communication Multiple interactions Medium to long-term Advancement of solutions to complex problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two-way channel of communication Multiple interactions Medium to long-term Advancement of solutions to complex problems
Strategies				
<p>Media releases, brochures, pamphlets, outreach to vulnerable populations, ethnic media contacts, translated information, staff outreach to residents, new and social media</p>	<p>Focus groups, interviews, community surveys</p>	<p>Forums, advisory boards, stakeholder involvement, coalitions, policy development and advocacy, including legislative briefings and testimony, workshops, community-wide events</p>	<p>Co-led community meetings, advisory boards, coalitions and partnerships, policy development and advocacy, including legislative briefings and testimony</p>	<p>Community-led planning efforts, community-hosted forums, collaborative partnerships, coalitions, policy development and advocacy, including legislative briefings and testimony</p>

APPENDIX C:

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY REPORT

James Madison Park Master Plan and Shelter Design

Public Engagement Process

Summary Report

November 27, 2018



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James Madison Park Master Plan and Shelter Design

Public Engagement Process Summary Report

November 27, 2018

Background

The following report details the quantitative and qualitative measures used to gauge the effectiveness of the community engagement process for the James Madison Park Master Plan, which extended from December 2017 through September 2018.

The report includes metrics associated with the specific engagement tools used, as well as participants' feedback on the effectiveness of several of these tools.



Engagement Tools & Participation

Public Meetings

All four total meetings planned for this process have been held, with a total of **179 participants** signed in. See Appendix A for public meeting summaries.

Public Meeting #1: Community Kickoff

Date & Time: Wednesday, January 17, 5:30 – 8:30 PM

Location: Madison Central Library

Sign-ins: 45



Public Meeting #2: PARKitecture Workshop

Date & Time: Saturday, February 10, 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Location: THE BUBBLER at Madison Central Library

Sign-ins: 31

Public Meeting #3: Design Concepts Workshop

Date & Time: Monday, May 14, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Location: Gates of Heaven

Sign-ins: 44



Public Meeting #4: Draft Master Plan: Final Presentation

Date & Time: Monday, September 24, 6:00 – 7:30 PM

Location: Christ Presbyterian Church

Sign-ins: 59

On-Site Pop-up Engagement Session

Urban Assets conducted an informal pop-up input session at James Madison Park from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m. on May 17, 2018, to gather additional feedback on the master plan concepts that had been presented at the third public meeting on May 14th. Ten park users stopped by the table to view and provide feedback on the concepts. See Appendix B for a summary of input gathered during this session.



Public Meeting Evaluations

Public meeting participants were encouraged to complete short evaluations to gauge the effectiveness of each meeting. See Appendix C for a summary of their responses.

1. Public Meeting #1: Community Kickoff
16 evaluations collected out of 45 participants
2. Public Meeting #2: PARKitecture Workshop
14 evaluations collected out of 31 participants
3. Public Meeting #3: Design Concepts Workshop
17 evaluations collected out of 44 participants
4. Public Meeting #4: Presentation of Draft Master Plan
Meeting evaluations were not collected.

Key takeaways from the public meeting evaluations include:

1. The **top three ways** participants heard about public meetings were:
 - Postcard mailing from the City of Madison
 - Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association listserv
 - Post and email from Alder Ledell Zellers
2. Other ways participant heard about public meetings included:
 - Outreach from Michael Ford (for the 2/10/2018 PARKitecture Workshop)
 - Friend/word of mouth
 - Madison Parks Division website
 - Mendota Rowing Club
 - Clean Lakes Alliance
 - Newspaper
 - A community event board
 - Facebook
3. Over **89% “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed”** that:
 - Information presented at the event was relevant and useful.
 - Questions about the master plan were answered.
 - Time was spent efficiently and effectively.
 - Ideas and opinions were acknowledged and recorded.
 - The event was comfortable and welcoming.



- o Left with greater understanding of the master planning process.
- 4. The meeting elements that participants thought were most useful were:
 - o Getting the opportunity to share and hear different ideas.
 - o Brainstorming in groups and hearing the opinions of fellow community members.
 - o Seeing plans and having the opportunity to discuss with project staff (including dot voting on precedent imagery and concepts).
- 5. Participants most often thought that meetings could be improved by adding more time for the open house and/or group critiques and discussion time.

Comment Cards

Printed comment cards were distributed at the public meetings and **posted at 21 locations** throughout Madison, focusing on high-traffic community locations that are frequented by a diverse clientele. A total of **51 comment cards** were collected from the following (see Appendix D for a summary of the input gathered):

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Public Meeting #1: | 6 comment cards |
| 2. Mailed to Parks Division: | 20 comment cards |
| 3. Capital Fitness: | 10 comment cards |
| 4. City Row Townhouses: | 7 comment cards |
| 5. Madison Children’s Museum: | 4 comment cards |
| 6. Cargo Coffee on East Washington Ave: | 3 comment cards |
| 7. Madison College South Campus: | 1 comment card |

Comment cards were distributed at the following locations:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. James Madison Park (3 brochure boxes) | 11. Pincus McBride |
| 2. The Beacon | 12. City Row Townhouses |
| 3. Bethel Community Service, Inc. | 13. Lyric Apartments |
| 4. Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center | 14. Cargo Coffee (East) |
| 5. YWCA of Madison | 15. Willy Street Co-op East |
| 6. Centro Hispano | 16. UW Memorial Union |
| 7. Capital Fitness | 17. Self-Serve Laundry (East Johnson) |
| 8. Madison Children’s Museum | 18. Villager Mall Atrium |
| 9. St. John’s Lutheran Church | 19. Madison College South |
| 10. Christ Presbyterian Church | 20. Urban League of Greater Madison |
| | 21. Access to Independence |

Park Observations & Intercept Interviews

Urban Assets conducted **12 park observations** and **16 intercept interviews** with park users at James Madison Park on the following dates from December 2018 to June 2019:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. December 19, 2017 (11 AM – 1 PM block): | 11:00 AM – 12:00 PM |
| Number of people observed: | 12 |
| Intercept interviews: | 4 |
| 2. December 20, 2017 (5 AM – 11 AM block): | 10:15 AM – 11:15 AM |
| Number of people observed: | 5 |
| Intercept interviews: | 0 |

3. December 28, 2017 (1 PM – 5 PM block):	1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
Number of people observed:	6
Intercept interviews:	0
4. January 3, 2018 (5 PM – 10 PM block):	5:00 PM – 6:00 PM
Number of people observed:	2
Intercept interviews:	0
5. February 15, 2018 (5 AM – 11 AM block):	8:15 AM – 9:15 AM
Number of people observed:	5
Intercept interviews:	0
6. March 2, 2018 (11 AM – 1 PM block):	12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Number of people observed:	9
Intercept interviews:	2
7. March 18, 2018 (1 PM – 5 PM block):	4:00 PM – 5:00 PM
Number of people observed:	96
Intercept interviews:	4
8. March 29, 2018 (3 PM – 4 PM block):	3:00 PM – 4:00 PM
Number of people observed:	23
Intercept interviews:	2
9. April 25, 2018 (5 AM – 11 AM block):	6:00 AM – 7:00 AM
Number of people observed:	6
Intercept interviews:	0
10. May 5, 2018 (11 AM – 1 PM block):	12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
Number of people observed:	92
Intercept interviews:	0
11. May 17, 2018 (5 PM – 10 PM block):	6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Number of people observed:	148
Intercept interviews:	3
12. June 16, 2018 (5 PM – 10 PM block):	8:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Number of people observed:	63
Intercept interviews:	1

The schedule for observations and intercept interviews is noted below. See [Appendix E](#) for full results.

		December				January				February				March				April				May				June					
		4	11	18	25	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	5	12	19	26	2	9	16	23	30	7	14	21	28	4	11	18	25
Block 1	5:00 AM - 6:00 AM																														
	6:00 AM - 7:00 AM																				X										
	7:00 AM - 8:00 AM																														
	8:00 AM - 9:00 AM										X																				
	9:00 AM - 10:00 AM																														
Block 2	10:00 AM - 11:00 AM				X																										
	11:00 AM - 12:00 PM				X																										
	12:00 PM - 1:00 PM											X										X									
Block 3	1:00 PM - 2:00 PM				X																										
	2:00 PM - 3:00 PM																														
	3:00 PM - 4:00 PM																X														
	4:00 PM - 5:00 PM														X																
Block 4	5:00 PM - 6:00 PM					X																									
	6:00 PM - 7:00 PM																						X								
	7:00 PM - 8:00 PM																														
	8:00 PM - 9:00 PM																										X				
	9:00 PM - 10:00 PM																														

Legend: Weekends
 No data
 X completed
 O upcoming

Online Survey

Madison Parks conducted an online survey to gather feedback on current uses, likes, dislikes, issues and opportunities at James Madison Park, which was publicized through the Parks Division website, social media and email listserv; at the first two public meetings; and on the informational flyer/poster that was posted in 21 locations throughout Madison. The survey received **213 responses** between January 17 and March 15, 2018. See Appendix F for a summary of the results.

Focus Groups

Urban Assets facilitated six community focus groups with organizations and individuals primarily representing minority populations in Madison. A total of **62 participants** were engaged in these conversations. See Appendix G for a summary of results from each meeting.

1. YWCA Third Street Program Residents – 14 participants
2. Clients of The Beacon – 14 participants
3. Community Service Providers – 2 participants
 - Savory Sundays (serves free meals in the park)
 - Tenant Resource Center
4. Minority Community Organizations – 3 participants
 - Urban League
 - Ho-Chunk Nation
 - Foshizzle Family
5. Downtown Madison, Inc. (DMI), Quality of Life and Safety Committee – 23 participants
6. Access to Independence / ADA Accessibility – 6 participants

Focus Group Evaluations

A survey to evaluate the effectiveness of the focus groups was completed by **20 individuals**. The survey was sent to all 32 individuals invited to attend a focus group, as well as the YWCA Third Street Program coordinator and the DMI Quality of Life and Safety Committee. See Appendix H for a summary of responses.

Key Takeaways:

1. Of those unable to attend a focus group (11 individuals), the primary reason was, “too busy.”

2. Of those who attended a focus group (9 individuals):
 - o 100% “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that the conversation had a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere.
 - o 71% “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that “focus groups are a useful tool for gathering more diverse opinions on city planning projects.”
3. Suggestions for improvement included:
 - o Send a reminder one week ahead so that people can plan rides (e.g., with paratransit).
 - o Offer incentives such as door prizes.
 - o Include a cultural activity at the end of the session.
 - o Involve a co-host who is a member of the community you are trying to reach.

Stakeholder Group

At the beginning of the master planning process, Urban Assets and Parks staff organized a stakeholder group to supplement feedback collected throughout the public engagement process, and to enhance community awareness of the project by leveraging members’ networks to distribute information. Stakeholder group members included owners of the four residential properties in the park, and representatives from organizations with strong geographic and programming ties to the park:

1. Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association
2. Capitol Neighborhoods
3. Worden House
4. Ziegelman House
5. Collins House / Mendota Lake House B&B
6. Urban Land Interests (Lincoln School Apartments)
7. Clean Lakes Alliance
8. Mendota Rowing Club
9. Volunteer park stewards

Meetings with the stakeholder group were held on the following five dates. See Appendix I for notes.

- January 10, 2018 – 14 participants
- February 28, 2018 – 11 participants
- April 25, 2018 – 16 participants
- July 16, 2018 – 14 participants
- September 12, 2018 – 21 participants

Email Comments

Email comments received prior to development of the three master plan and shelter schematic concepts (comments regarding general desires and concerns for the park), are reflected in the public engagement results and table below. Emails received in response to the three master plan and shelter design concepts presented at public meeting #3 are included in Appendix J.

Results

The chart on the following page provides summary analysis of all public engagement comments received during Phase I of the master planning process, including input from the public meetings, focus groups and stakeholder group meetings held during that time; open-ended responses from the online survey; and comment cards and emails.

James Madison Park Public Comments Summary

Sources: public meetings 1-3; on-site pop-up engagement session; 6 focus groups (YWCA; community service providers; The Beacon; minority community organizations; Downtown Madison, Inc., ADA Access); stakeholder group meetings 1 and 2; 151 open-ended online survey responses; 50 comment cards; email comments; and 16 intercept interviews.

Rank	Priority Summary Statement	Total Comments	Top Comments within each Category
1	Improve park shelter attractiveness & amenities	124	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make shelter more welcoming and expand usage Renovate shelter Remove towers on roof Make restrooms and showers clean, safe and accessible Add a gathering/performance space Improve lighting & electrical access Offer equipment rentals (e.g. kayaks, paddleboards, floaties)
2	Increase amount of basic park amenities	91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grills, drinking fountains, trash cans Increase park seating/tables Improve park lighting
3	Improve shoreline access & interaction	74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the beach Add Memorial Union-style steps Improve safety at the sea wall Naturalize the shoreline
4	Increase amount & types of play spaces for kids & adults	52	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the playground & add interesting equipment Install adult play/fitness equipment Multi-use paved courts
5	Improve lake & beach health/cleanliness	45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean up the beach Improve water health & cleanliness Install a curtain to keep weeds out of swimming area
6	Maximize utilization of park space & paths	38	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better utilize Lincoln School Apartments area Configure park to maximize space for heavy use Add more paths, improve path behind Verex Plaza Expand/reconfigure paths & paved areas to accommodate all users
7	Improve park safety and promote good behavior	34	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve personal safety Discourage consumption of drugs/alcohol Policing/security/lifeguards
8	Improve universal accessibility	33	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand ADA accessible infrastructure / universal accessibility Improve access in Gates of Heaven Make the playground & basketball courts accessible

9	Improve/expand native landscaping	32	Landscaping maintenance/weed control Natural areas/native plantings More trees/remove view blocking trees
10	Improve basketball court amenities	32	Restrooms Kiddie court Lighting Seating
11	Promote sustainability	31	Stormwater filtration system LEED certified park shelter Sprinkler or rain collection system, bioswales
12	Improve dog friendliness	31	Incorporate a fenced dog park Dogs welcome in park Dog waste receptacles & water stations
13	Expand infrastructure for watercraft & fishing	31	Add pier/expand existing pier Add marina/improve boat access
14	Increase amount of shaded park area	27	Open-air sun shelter More shade by beach and playground
15	Expand access to food	27	Concessions available for purchase Space for food carts/trucks Café/snack bar/biergarten
16	Integrate public art	26	Public art/sculpture Dedicated graffiti space Nighttime light/winter display
17	Increase parking and/or improve parking configuration	26	More parking spaces Improve lot shape/locate more centrally Parking for unloading/event setup
18	Improve safety of pedestrian connections across Gorham Street	25	Crossings Lights Traffic calming
19	Improve park aesthetic	23	Add color Break up long, flat, unplanned feel Improve entryways and signage
20	Improve park wayfinding, visibility, & adjacencies	21	Improve connections between east & west Improve visibility of park amenities/shelter Reduce distance between amenities
21	Create space for community gardens	20	Community garden, terraced or raised beds Food access for downtown renters & residents

22	Enhance "destination" appeal	20	Celebrate the lakes and site history Add a focal point Water transportation stop
23	Increase educational opportunities	15	Hillsides into terraced outdoor educational area Information on native plantings & species Environmental/historical interpretive installations
24	Better define park boundaries	15	Low boundary walls (sandstone, like UW Arboretum) Stone columns at street intersections
25	Expand opportunities for quiet/passive recreation	15	Meditation space behind Lincoln School Apts. East side of park as quiet, natural area
26	Increase diversity of park users and uses	14	Consider & cater to needs of all potential users Maintain role as comfortable community gathering place
27	Improve multi-modal access	13	Bike racks and service station Improve bike connections & friendliness Increase bus connections & friendliness
28	Improve park cleanliness and maintenance	12	Trash & broken glass Focus on cleanliness over new amenities Control pest populations (bugs, geese)
29	Expand opportunities for winter activities	12	Ice rink Winter activities
30	Expand opportunities for events & programming	10	Concerts, festivals, musical programming Youth events, activities, & programming
31	Rebuild shelter in existing location	7	Demolish and rebuild shelter
32	Increase support/resources for people experiencing homelessness	6	Access, resources, programming for residents of nearby shelters Community outreach, support to those who sleep in the park
33	Improve winter accessibility	5	Maintain paths for winter runners Improve accessibility, esp. dangerous Butler St. pathway
34	Expand opportunities for tree-based activities	5	Tree or poles designated for slacklining/hammocks
35	Rebuild shelter in new location	4	Build new shelter on far west end of park Build new shelter at edge of lake
36	Increase volunteer opportunities in the park	2	Better coordination of park volunteers Volunteers trained to monitor park behavior
37	Re-orient Gates of Heaven	2	Gates of Heaven synagogue should face East
38	Rename the park	1	Rename the park
	Total Comments	1001	

Table 1



Table 1 Design Notes:

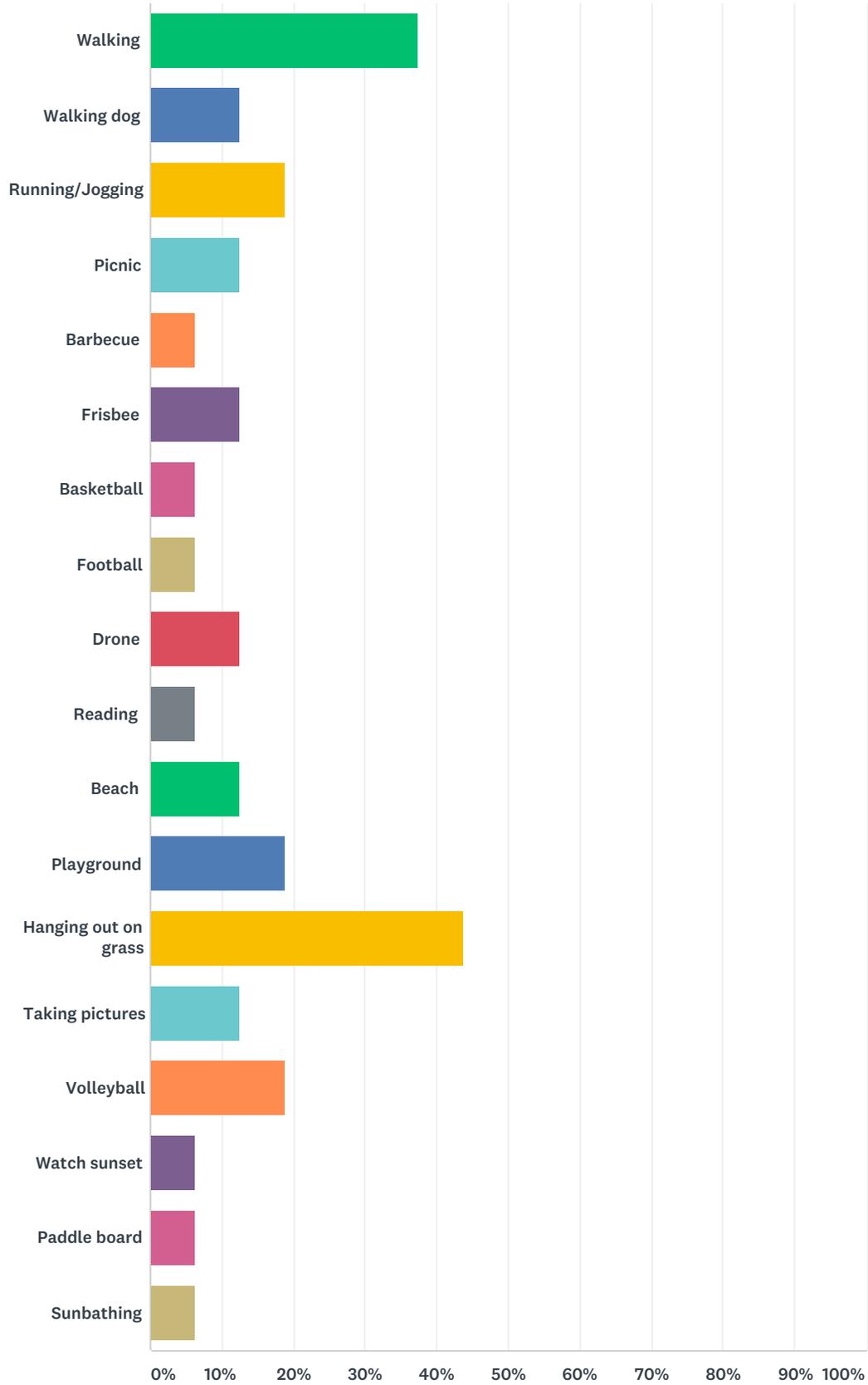
- Install a sprinkler system near the garden.
- Improve bathrooms.
- Remove shelter towers.
- Create a more hospitable shelter, keep gardens.
- Rethink the beach with more access to water using concrete steps.
- Break beach into segments alternating between concrete steps and natural beachfront.
- Improve Hamilton St. viewshed by:
- Remove trees in viewshed
- Place pier at that end of the viewshed
- Combine beach and volleyball courts.
- Remove tire chips from playground.
- Turn hillside behind shelter into terrace of community gardens.
- Create a hillside path down to lake from Blount Street entrance.
- Lincoln School becomes community space.
- Have a meditation space behind Lincoln school.
- Stone columns are present at each street intersection.

Design Feature	Green Dots	Yellow Dots	Red Dots
New shelter and cafe	5	1	
Accessible rooftop and event space	4	1	2
Gates of Heaven	2		
Future historic home relocation			1
Basketball courts	1	2	1
Volleyball court	1	1	
Playground with integrated nature play		2	
Designated swimming area		1	
Gilman Street entry & overlook	4	1	
Overlook on Blount Street	1	1	
Interpretive boardwalk with overlook	2		
Rectangular rapid flash beacon crossing		1	
Hamilton Street capitol/lake view corridor		1	
Shoreline – overlook	2		
Shoreline – terrace steps	2		
Shoreline – eastern portion		1	
Future extension of waterfront path	1		
Emergent wetland with living shoreline	6		
Stormwater bio-filtration	1		
Bioswale		1	
Natural area on east side of park		1	
Open green space on the west side	4		
Seasonal courtesy dockage	1	4	2
Small craft dock with ADA launch		1	
Multiuse path - general	1		
Multiuse path – ADA accessibility	1		
Multiuse path - sharp angles		2	
Multiuse path – bike/ped congestion		1	
Multiuse path - green space disruption		3	1
Parking lot - general	1	1	3
Parking lot – linearity	1	1	2
Parking lot - congestion of activities		1	
Parking lot – sharp angles and access		1	1
Parking lot – ADA accessibility	1		
Bike parking		1	
Total	42	31	13

Notes made by small groups on printed plans:

- Parking lot is too congested
- Shelter has too much glass – dangerous for birds
- Multiuse path may cause issues for pedestrians – should have different lanes
- Café concept is too aggressive
- Would like more safety lighting
- Would like more trees

Intercept Interview Responses



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Walking	37.50% 6

APPENDIX D:

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION MEETING NOTES

City of Madison Urban Design Commission Notes

MS URPL Professional Project

1:00-2:00 PM, February 20, 2019

Madison Municipal Building

City staff in attendance: Dan McAuliffe, Rebecca Cnare, Kevin Firchow, Janine Glaeser, David Trowbridge

What great design elements have you seen or would consider best practices used to enhance equity through urban design?

- breaks in building codes for floors
- Targeting where density goes
- Put multifamily homes closest to amenities and affordability
 - Access to parks, civic uses, opportunities
- When we make mistakes, we must get rid of it
 - Decentralized
 - Jane Jacobs
 - City sidewalk policy
- Design that makes it easier for people to live
- Use durable high-quality materials
- We have design guidelines, but have they really been tested?

What sort of requirements or guidelines does UDC have to ensure design influences equity and inclusion? Are there certain initiatives that have been implemented?

- Comprehensive plan
- Community resident panels
 - Trans/LGBTQ
 - What they felt were important were polar opposite of typical input
 - Provide small stipend
- Create equitable uses, in that the quality of life is enhanced

What engagement methods do you feel can be used to yield equity in design?

- Radio program WORT- callers give input
- Need to dig below the surface to get what people are really getting at
- Went to transfer point and just wanted to catch people
 - Rush hour

- Far different socioeconomic background
- Yellow public hearing signs
- Build comfort and be able to feel confident that they can give input

Any other thoughts?

- City has recently been thinking about equity
 - Same homogenous people, been trying to change it up,
- Monona did a great job with signage, welcoming art, types of cues that
- “YIMBY” is a great way to approach development
- It’s a privilege to have time to put in that input, which is why many affluent people have louder voices
- It is possible to have too much input
- Staff UDC with equity-focused members
- Have a passion in resilience in design
- Doesn’t lead to equity all by itself; how we process data and present to decision makers is important
- If we only get perspective to part of the population, failing to give a breath of perspectives or citywide, that’s when we foster inequities
- Neighborhood associations are worried about their neighborhood but need to think about the city as a whole
- Urban design
 - Make sure to have a good street system
 - Visibility
 - Try not to be isolated
 - Identifying bad urban design
 - UDC pushes hard to have everyone has a street with a tree line with neighbors
- Development review
 - Small number of requirements, very prescriptive
 - Who you have to notify and when to notify
 - Codes are very basic
 - RESJI