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TECHNICAL
R E P O R T



Community Engagement as Input to the Design of the Environmental Center at Frick Park and Beyond

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Sponsored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy

This work was sponsored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. The research was conducted in RAND Health, a unit of the RAND Corporation.

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Published 2011 by the RAND Corporation
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Preface

This report describes park use among underserved residents living near Frick Park in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The report examines barriers to park use, residents' level of awareness of and interest in environmental issues, and the importance residents place on environmental education and programs. The result of a new research project sponsored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, this report provides recommendations to address the barriers and issues identified in research commissioned by the Parks Conservancy in 2011.

The analysis is based on community focus groups and brief informal interviews with local residents. This report should be of particular interest to the City of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, the Environmental Center at Frick Park, and any other community groups or organizations (including other parks conservancies) that are interested in the needs of underserved populations and children, especially in regard to these groups' engagement in park use.

This work was sponsored by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. The research was conducted in RAND Health, a division of the RAND Corporation. A profile of RAND Health, abstracts of its publications, and ordering information can be found at www.rand.org/health.

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Summary

For more than 15 years, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the City of Pittsburgh have been engaged in a public-private partnership aimed at restoring the city's four largest parks: Frick, Highland, Riverview, and Schenley. Together, these parks comprise approximately 1,800 acres of greenspace. The Parks Conservancy focused its 2011 research on the design and development of the new building of the Environmental Center at Frick Park (ECFP), paying special attention to underserved communities and children within the vicinity of the park who have not historically participated in environmental education programming at the center. The Parks Conservancy contracted with the RAND Corporation to provide structured engagement with neighborhood community groups to allow for public input into the ECFP design, including input concerning the needs of underserved populations and children. RAND conducted community focus groups and brief informal interviews with a total of 81 local residents to gather input on park use and barriers to use.

Overarching Findings

The mere existence of a park is insufficient to attract users. Although large urban parks were originally designed to be refuges that would attract urban populations of all classes and backgrounds and, in particular, to serve low-income groups that would otherwise not have access to open greenspace and fresh air, parks do not automatically serve all members of the local community. Overall, we found relatively low levels of park use and awareness of the ECFP among underserved populations living near Frick Park.

We found that the key barrier to use of the ECFP and to program and event participation among our population of interest (i.e., underserved communities and children within the vicinity of the park) was general lack of awareness of ECFP activities and programs. Other barriers concerned distance, transportation, and parking; alignment of interests; level of comfort; and safety. Other challenges involved personal schedules and availability, lack of child care, and having children who are too young to participate in programs.

Study participants living near Frick Park expressed a strong interest in environmental education, but they want to feel welcome to participate. A majority of the individuals who participated in the study expressed an interest in environmental education and issues. The generally high level of interest in environmental education suggests that, if barriers can be addressed, participation in ECFP activities and involvement at Frick Park could increase.

However, many comments made during the interviews and focus groups indicated that local residents do not feel entirely welcome in Frick Park or at the ECFP, and some comments

suggested that Frick Park and the ECFP may not be appealing or interesting to youth or adults in underserved communities close to Frick Park, such as Homewood. This lack of appeal may be due to a lack of exposure among residents to environmental issues and education or to competing priorities or interests.

Promotional efforts that can effectively compete with media will be necessary to increase attendance at local parks. In today's world, there are multiple competitors for people's leisure time, and electronic media activities are dominating this competition. Attracting individuals to parks therefore requires that the programming and experience offered by the parks be superior to alternatives. Given that the advertising budgets for parks pale in comparison with mass media advertising budgets, and considering the inconvenience of distance and travel to parks for many, attracting new users is a significant challenge that any organization with limited resources will find difficult to overcome.

After analyzing responses from local Pittsburgh residents, we concluded that people preferred a "push" mechanism for learning about activities rather than a "pull" mechanism; that is, they wanted to hear about activities more directly and wanted to receive targeted information rather than having to seek out information on their own. Thus, as discussed later in this summary, a variety of outreach strategies will be needed to reach local audiences. We do note, however, that our recommendations and findings are based on a small sample size. Further research with a larger sample would help validate our findings and recommendations.

Recommendations

We offer the following recommendations, presenting them by issue area.

Awareness

To address the lack of awareness about ECFP programs and activities, we recommend improving and increasing outreach to community members through a variety of means, including the following:

- Provide maps and directions to the ECFP and its programs within Frick Park, particularly in the case of playground areas that attract individuals from all over the city (i.e., the Forbes and Braddock playground, the Blue Slide playground).
- Collaborate with community organizations (e.g., churches, community groups, schools) and community advocates who are already familiar with the ECFP.
- Engage in outreach to schools and other organizations already working with children.
- Use culturally sensitive advertising in print media posted in strategic places frequented by community residents (e.g., churches, bus stops, hair salons, day care facilities, grocery stores).
- Use targeted social media messages to reach youth and other specific community groups.

Alignment with Interests

To ensure that the ECFP provides a range of activities that are aligned with the interests of local residents, we suggest that the Parks Conservancy

- Invite local community-based organizations to hold special events in Pittsburgh’s large parks.
- Consider employing creative marketing programs that tie the use of park resources with other benefits, including “frequent user” incentives.
- Consider partnering with other organizations working with youth (e.g., Frick Art and Historical Center, the YMCA Lighthouse program, local schools) in order to introduce youth to the ECFP and ECFP activities and, potentially, increase interest in environmental issues, education, and the ECFP.
- Invite local residents to program activities and to special events at the ECFP and other large parks that honor historical figures important to conservation and the outdoors, particularly those of significance to minority communities (e.g., George Washington Carver, Nobel Prize–winning environmentalist Wangari Maathai).

Distance, Transportation, and Parking

To increase participation and engagement among residents with limited access to Frick Park, we recommend the following approaches:

- Provide clear directions to the ECFP and related information (including bus routes, travel times, and parking availability) on posters, flyers, and mailings, and post strategically located signage within and near the park to assist visitors.
- Bring ECFP activities (e.g., nature exploration, cultivation of native plants, events) to community parks and other community locations in underserved communities and schools.
- Provide transportation to key programs and activities (or partner with community organizations to do so) to increase participation among community members who do not have personal transportation and who live too far away to walk to the park.

Scheduling and Child Care

To address residents’ variable work schedules, we recommend the following:

- Hold ECFP and park events at various times (i.e., morning, afternoon, and evening) on weekdays and weekends.
- Integrate and coordinate ECFP programming with schools and churches to reach youths who may be unable to attend if they must rely on parental transportation. If possible, establish drop-off and pick-up locations close to specific underserved communities (e.g., establish a drop-off and pick-up point at Westinghouse Park).

To address problems in coordinating child care in order to attend ECFP activities, we recommend the following:

- Consider offering adult and children’s programs concurrently (e.g., a gardening program for young children and a composting education program for adults).

Safety

Addressing safety concerns could improve the reputation and appeal of the new ECFP. We recommend that the Parks Conservancy

- Emphasize safety in the design and construction of the new ECFP building; specifically, we recommend that the new design be especially sensitive to providing ample exterior lighting.
- Consider offering and advertising guided walks on the trails to help to alleviate fears about the wooded trails and to help individuals be more comfortable in newer settings.

Level of Comfort

To address concerns that Frick Park is exclusive or unwelcoming, especially for African-American visitors, the Parks Conservancy should consider the following:

- engaging youth advocates who can publicize ECFP activities and programs
- hiring residents of underserved areas to staff ECFP activities (e.g., camps)
- using authentic depictions of diverse groups of people in advertising and marketing materials to highlight the diversity of community residents engaged with the ECFP
- bringing ECFP activities and programs to schools and other community organizations to expand the current view of the ECFP
- waiving or subsidizing program fees for individuals or children from low-income households.

Conclusion

Parks, greenspace, and environmental education and programming provide many important benefits for physical, mental, and social health; the natural environment; and social well-being. We found, however, that the presence of greenspace and environmental education alone is not enough. Equal access to and use of greenspace and environmental education are partly an issue of geographic proximity, but they are also influenced by other real and perceived barriers. Facilitating the use of and engagement in Pittsburgh parks (and specifically Frick Park and the ECFP) requires addressing both the real and the perceived social and physical challenges that park supporters, current park users, and potential park users face.

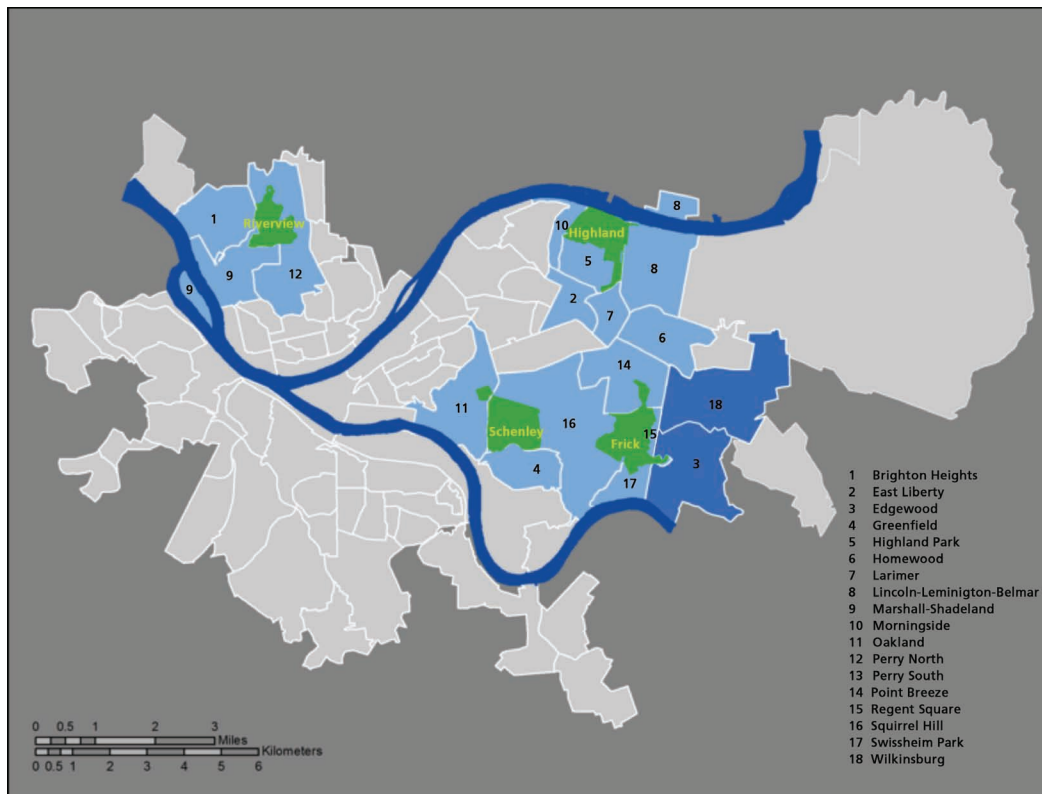
Acknowledgments

We sincerely thank the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy staff for the time and resources they contributed to bring this project to fruition. Marijke Hecht in particular helped to organize and coordinate all of the focus groups, and she was a pleasure to work with. We are grateful to B. Lynette Staplefoote for assistance with data collection and to Stephanie Lonsinger for assistance with both project administration and editing a draft of this report. This report was substantially strengthened by our reviewers, Thomas McKenzie and Deborah Cohen, and we sincerely thank Kristin Leuchner for her editing work and other contributions. We appreciate of all of the individuals who participated in this project through focus groups or interviews, and we especially thank the Rosedale Block Cluster, the Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg, the students involved in the YMCA Lighthouse Program at Westinghouse High School, and the Homewood football team for their willingness to participate in the focus groups.

Introduction

For more than 15 years, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the City of Pittsburgh have been engaged in a public-private partnership aimed at restoring the city’s four largest parks: Frick, Highland, Riverview, and Schenley (see Figure 1.1). Together, these parks comprise approximately 1,800 acres of maintained greenspace within the city. As part of this partnership, the Parks Conservancy has been committed to conducting research to assess residents’ satisfaction with, beliefs about, and use of the parks—all with the aim of better serving the needs of Pittsburgh’s communities.

Figure 1.1
Map of Pittsburgh Showing the Four Historic Regional Parks and the Surrounding Neighborhoods



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The Parks Conservancy focused its 2011 research on the design and development of the Environmental Center at Frick Park (ECFP), which is located within Frick Park. It paid special attention to underserved communities and children within the vicinity of the park and potentially throughout the city. The ECFP was established in the 1930s, and through the years it has offered a variety of environmental education programs, including field lessons, nature hikes, and summer camps. The mission of the ECFP is “Education Through Restoration,” and the center aims to connect people to nature and to allow them to have a personal stake in their park (Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, undated). Although the most recent ECFP building was destroyed in a fire in 2002, the ECFP’s programs have continued. The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy is currently working with the City of Pittsburgh and the local community to design a new ECFP building.

The Parks Conservancy selected a multidisciplinary team of landscape architects, architects, engineers, artists, environmental restoration specialists, and others to design the new ECFP building. Community engagement is a key driver in the Parks Conservancy’s concept development phase. The Parks Conservancy contracted with the RAND Corporation to provide structured engagement with neighborhood community groups to allow for public input into the ECFP design, including input concerning the needs of underserved populations and children. RAND also supplied a preliminary presentation to senior staff, an interpretation of the findings (presented in this report), and Parks Conservancy communication points (based on the research findings) for targeted audiences.

Background: The Role of Parks and Outdoor Spaces in Pennsylvania

Parks play an important role in communities, including promotion of environmental stewardship, personal health and enrichment, social interaction, and cultural understanding (The National Association of State Park Directors, 2001; Cohen et al., 2007). Fredrick Law Olmsted, considered the father of American landscape architecture, envisioned greenspaces as havens where city residents could experience “the beauty of nature, breathe fresh air, and have a place for ‘receptive’ recreation (music and art appreciation) as well as ‘exertive’ activities (sports as well as games like chess)” (Olmsted, 1999). Parks are also places where people can socialize (Cohen et al., 2007) and build a community. Previous research has found that parks provide an important venue for physical activity for all income populations but that parks are often underutilized (Cohen, 2011).

A key barrier to participation in outdoor activities and recreation at parks is a lack of information about park activities and programs. A 2007 online survey of 911 residents of western Pennsylvania found that residents felt more comfortable participating in outdoor activities when they perceived the activities to be fun (65.3 percent), relatively inexpensive (59.9 percent), free (57.3 percent), and/or safe (52.9 percent) (Campos Inc., 2007).¹ Fewer than half of survey respondents (39 percent) agreed that it was easy to find information about outdoor activities and recreation opportunities (Campos Inc., 2007). The respondents indicated that they would prefer to learn about activities via numerous different sources, including newspa-

¹ Survey participants were part of an established panel that had been recruited through print and online social media advertising. The survey took place between February 26 and March 12, 2007, and was conducted by Campos Inc. and Sustainable Pittsburgh.

per articles or event listings (55.5 percent), a website or online event listings (45.7 percent), television (43.1 percent), and/or an email newsletter from an outdoor recreation organization (42.6 percent). They also mentioned word of mouth (41.7 percent) and direct mail advertising (38.6 percent) (Campos Inc., 2007).

In 2008, the governor of Pennsylvania established a task force to strategize about ways to reconnect Pennsylvanians with the outdoors through schools, communities, and beyond (Moyer, 2008). The task force recommendations (provided in Moyer, 2008) included

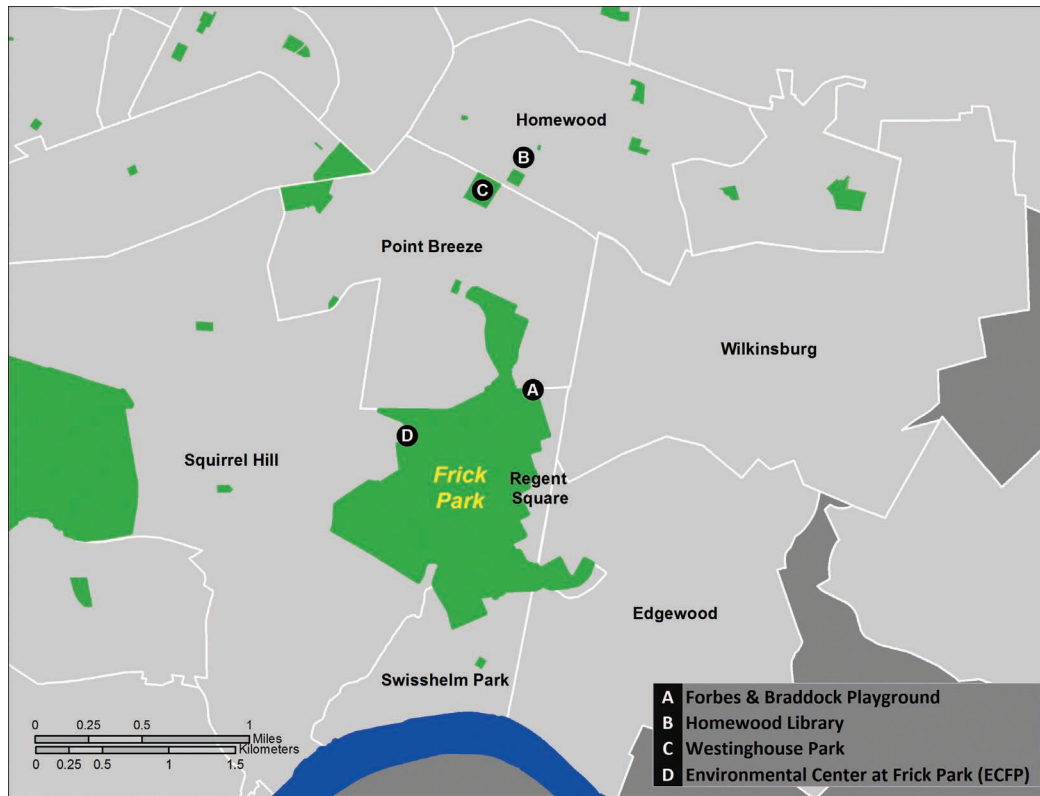
- distributing information about the benefits of living in a “green, healthy” community
- linking civic, religious, and community groups “with organizations . . . engaged in outdoor volunteer efforts”
- enlisting “nontraditional partners” to endorse outdoor activities and events
- providing outdoor training sessions for community members
- connecting youth to outdoor career opportunities
- working with “professional organizations . . . and sustainable business networks” to explore strategies for growing a “green economy”
- improving signage to direct community members to parks and outdoor spaces
- creating a “‘master’ web portal” to serve as a directory for all outdoor resources available in the community, including wildlife programs and events offered
- incorporating the use of technology, such as “geocaching and podcasts”
- engaging with “media professionals” to learn how to improve coverage of the outdoors and available programs
- surveying Pennsylvanians to “understand how they use outdoor resources and how they . . . [may want] to use them in the future.”

Maintained greenspace and parks are typically less plentiful in neighborhoods with low socioeconomic status (Estabrooks, Lee, and Gyurcsik, 2003; Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006) or with higher percentages of minorities (Gordon-Larsen et al., 2006). Like many American postindustrial cities, Pittsburgh is characterized by racial and socioeconomic residential segregation. Pittsburgh is home to 296,324 people, of whom 68.3 percent are non-Hispanic white, 28.0 percent are non-Hispanic black (African-American), 3.8 percent are Asian, and 1.9 percent are Hispanic. The communities surrounding Frick Park that are the focus of this study, particularly Homewood and Wilksburg, are low-income and predominantly African-American neighborhoods (see Figure 1.2). According to the 2010 Census, 94 percent of Homewood residents and 67 percent of Wilksburg residents identify as African-American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011).

The Current Leisure Time Pursuits of Americans

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) reports that, on an average day, individuals over the age of 14 spend half of their leisure time watching television and only 19 minutes participating in sports, exercise, or recreation. Additionally, given the current economic climate, including the high unemployment rate and the increase in the number of Americans living in poverty, individuals have fewer resources to spend on entertainment and leisure activities. Thus, attracting individuals to parks requires both breaking trends in social norms (e.g., making outdoor

Figure 1.2
Map of Frick Park and the Surrounding Neighborhoods



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activities an attractive alternative to activities involving electronic media) and advertising that outdoor programs cost little or nothing. Given that the advertising budgets of parks pale in comparison with mass media budgets, and considering the inconvenience of distance and travel to parks experienced by many potential visitors, attracting new users is a significant challenge that any organization with limited resources will find difficult to overcome. In addition, the effect of the current poor economy on city parks imposes additional constraints on setting appropriate registration fees for park activities and programs.

The Purpose of This Research

For this project, we sought to elicit information and input from residents of neighborhoods bordering Frick Park concerning park use and barriers to use. We also analyzed and synthesized this information, which is intended to inform the design of both the ECFP building and future Parks Conservancy plans and programs.

The study addressed three questions that were identified as part of a research agenda developed by the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy in its effort to better serve the needs of all communities across Pittsburgh:

- What is the level and type of park use among residents living near the park?

- What are the barriers (real and perceived) to park use?
- What is the level of awareness of and interest in environmental issues among residents, and what importance do residents place on environmental education and programs?

This report provides information supplied by community members that can help answer these questions. It also provides recommendations designed to help the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy both improve community awareness of environmental issues and park programs and increase park use.

Methods

The City of Pittsburgh has an extensive system of public parks that consists mainly of four large parks—Frick, Schenley, Riverview, and Highland—as well as several smaller neighborhood parks and “parklets.” The four main parks comprise approximately 1,800 acres of land. The largest and youngest of these parks, Frick Park, was opened to the public in 1927. Situated in the East End of Pittsburgh, the park consists of 561 wooded acres that host an extensive trail system for walking and biking, two playgrounds, a bowling green, tennis courts, soccer fields, a baseball diamond, two off-leash dog parks, pavilions, and picnic facilities. Frick Park is also home to the Frick Art and Historical Center and the Environmental Center at Frick Park. The ECFP is a 151-acre reserve that offers programs about the park’s habitats and ecology. The center serves as the starting point of an extensive trail system and includes a handicap-accessible trail through the woods that is used for educational programs and nature walks. Nature programs, including day camps and school and family programs, continue year round on the grounds of the Frick Woods Nature Reserve.

During our research, we used methods to gather information directly from community residents surrounding Frick Park, placing an emphasis on community residents from underserved populations. We conducted community focus groups and brief informal interviews to maximize feedback from park users and local residents. Specifically, we conducted four community focus groups and 52 brief informal interviews in various locations.

Community Focus Groups

We worked collaboratively with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to ensure that we engaged a variety of community residents. The Parks Conservancy was responsible for identifying and recruiting community groups and organizing the logistics of the sessions; we were primarily responsible for developing discussion content and facilitating the sessions.

Each focus group lasted about an hour and addressed the following topics:

- park use in general
- Frick Park use and barriers to use
- perceptions of safety in Frick Park
- experience with and interest in the ECFP
- design ideas for the new ECFP building.

We aimed to include both individuals with knowledge of Frick Park and the ECFP and those who were less familiar with the park and the center. We gathered information from two

groups of adults: (1) affiliates of the Rosedale Block Cluster, an organization located in and serving the needs of residents in Homewood (n = 8); and (2) a group of engaged community stakeholders at the Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg with an interest in environmental education (n = 11). We also received input from two groups of youths: (1) teenagers affiliated with the YMCA Lighthouse Program at Westinghouse High School, an after-school program that provides students with the opportunity to engage in artistic fields, such as music production, filmmaking, architectural design, graphic design, spoken word, and visual art (n = 8); and (2) the Homewood football team (n = 20). We presumed that individuals associated with the Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg or with the Westinghouse High School Lighthouse Program would be familiar with Frick Park and the ECFP because of those organizations' prior involvement in ECFP programs and work with the Parks Conservancy. We made no assumptions about familiarity with Frick Park and the ECFP among individuals associated with the Rosedale Block Cluster or the Homewood football team. The community focus group discussion guide is reproduced in Appendix A.

Brief Informal Interviews

We administered 52 brief informal interviews with individuals at the Frick Park playground at the corner of Forbes and Braddock Avenues (n = 28), the Homewood Library (n = 18), and the playground in Westinghouse Park in Homewood (n = 6). Two research assistants administered the interviews, which took approximately five minutes each. We approached nine additional individuals who declined to participate.

The interviews focused on engagement in Frick Park activities, Frick Park visitation frequency, current and best methods for advertising park activities, perceptions of Frick Park safety, personal and community interest in outdoor and environmental education, interest in and awareness of ECFP programs, and perceived barriers to participation in ECFP programs. The interview guide is reproduced in Appendix B.

Sample Description

Participants in the community focus groups. A majority of the 39 community focus group participants were African-American. The participants included both adults and children, and a wide variety of age ranges were represented. Most participants resided in the Homewood, Highland Park, Wilkinsburg, or Penn Hills communities.

Participants in the brief informal interviews. Table 1.1 displays the demographic characteristics of the 52 individuals who participated in the brief informal interviews. A majority were African-American. The age distribution was concentrated around individuals ages 26–40, but individuals from most adult age groups were represented. Additionally, a majority of respondents were female (73.1 percent) and had children they were accompanying at the time of the interview.

Approximately 28 percent of interviewees reported that they lived within walking distance of Frick Park (see Figure 1.3). The darker-shaded neighborhoods in Figure 1.3 are neighborhoods technically outside the boundaries of the City of Pittsburgh. The majority of interviewees were from Homewood, Wilkinsburg, East Liberty, Squirrel Hill, Regent Square/Edgewood/Swissvale, Penn Hills, or Highland Park. Other represented neighborhoods included Swisshelm Park, Verona, Bellevue, Brookline, East Hills, Garfield/Bloomfield, North Point Breeze, Greenfield, and Shadyside.

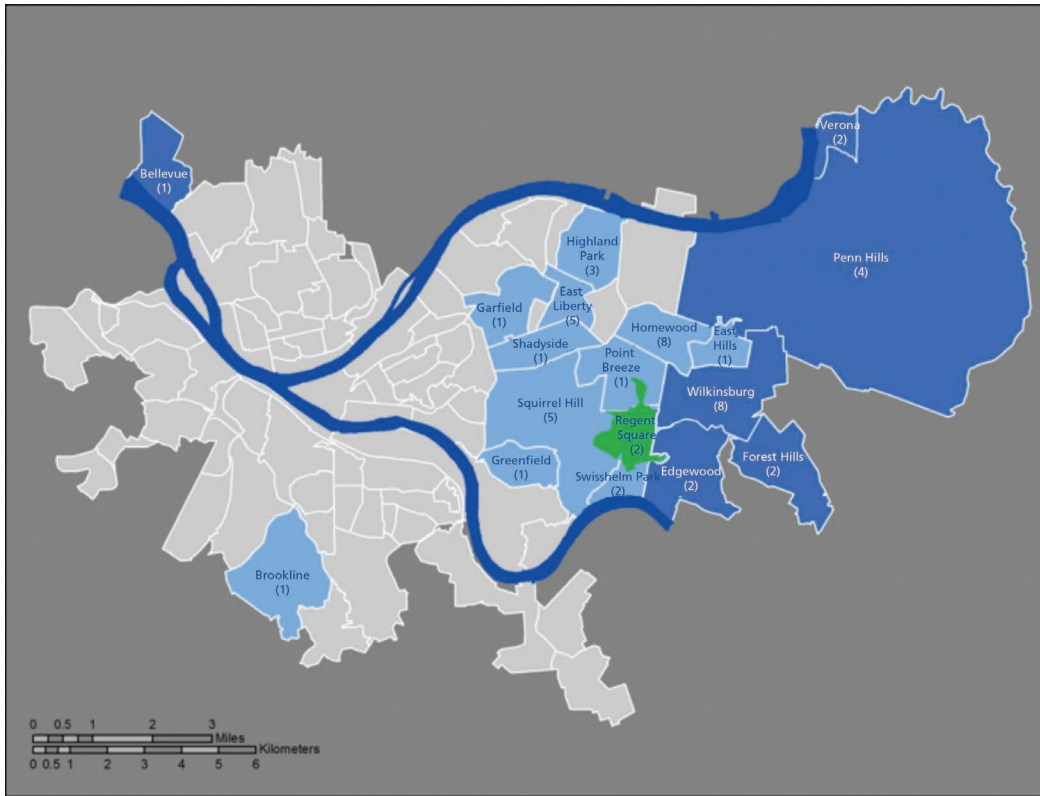
In the next chapter, we present key findings from the study.

Table 1.1
The Characteristics of Participants in the Brief Informal Interviews

Sample Characteristics	Number	Percentage
Race/ethnicity		
Black	29	55.8
Latino/Hispanic	1	1.9
White	22	42.3
Age (years)		
19–25	2	3.9
26–30	16	30.8
31–40	12	23.1
41–50	7	13.5
51–60	8	15.5
61–70	4	7.7
71–80	3	5.8
Gender		
Female	38	73.1
Male	14	26.9
Children		
With children	35	67.3
Without children	17	32.7
Total for each characteristic	52	100.0

NOTE: Totals may not sum to 100 percent.

Figure 1.3
Map of the Neighborhoods Where Participants in the Brief Informal Interviews Lived



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Key Findings

This chapter describes the key findings derived from the community focus groups and the brief informal interviews. These findings focus on park use, barriers to park use, and local residents' awareness of and interest in environmental issues. We also present findings related to current Frick Park communications and to the marketing of park activities.

Level and Type of Park Use Among Residents Living Near the Park

We asked participants both about park use in general and about use of Frick Park specifically. We also asked how residents learned about available park activities.

Most Individuals Use the Park Closest to Home

Most individuals tended to use the park closest to where they lived. Those living in Homewood reported using Westinghouse Park or Baxter Parklet in Homewood, and those living in Highland Park reported using Highland Park. However, a few individuals reported visiting Frick Park on a regular basis, even though other parks were closer to home.

As Expected, Focus Group Participants Used Frick Park Infrequently, While Interviewees Reported Higher Levels of Use

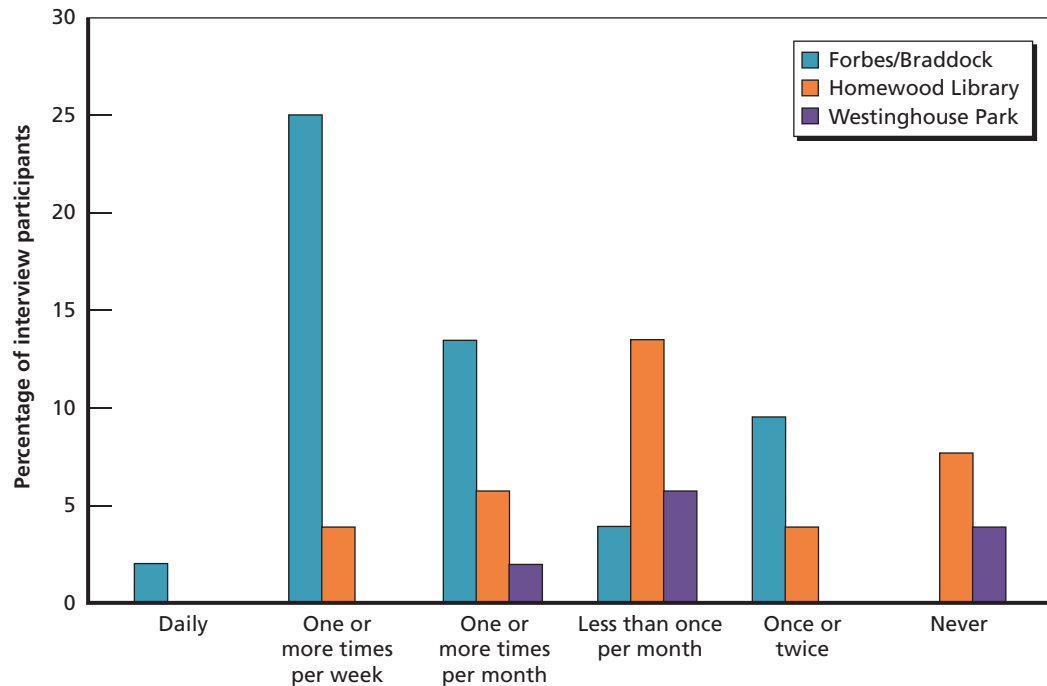
Community focus group participants reported low use of Frick Park (a few times per year). This finding was aligned with our expectations because these focus groups intentionally involved community residents who we believed may not be frequent users of Frick Park.

Interviewees reported higher frequency of use of Frick Park (see Figure 2.1). This finding too was aligned with our expectations and is not of any particular substantive interest; rather, it is likely a product of our sampling approach. The brief informal interviews were conducted with convenience samples, which included 28 interviews with individuals at the Frick Park playground at the corner of Forbes and Braddock. Individuals interviewed at the Homewood Library or in Westinghouse Park used Frick Park less often than individuals interviewed at the Forbes and Braddock playground.

The Most Popular Activities at Frick Park Were Using Playgrounds and Walking or Running

Focus group and interview participants reported that their typical activities at Frick Park included “visiting the playgrounds” and “walking or running on the trails.” Participants less frequently mentioned participating in individual or team sports and family gatherings or picnics.

Figure 2.1
Use of Frick Park Among Participants in the Brief Informal Interviews



Few focus group participants or interviewees were aware of the ECFP or had participated in ECFP activities. In comparison, 25 percent of Frick Park visitors interviewed at the Forbes and Braddock playground had visited the ECFP. Many participants reported that they thought the ECFP was in disrepair or no longer used. For example:

You can't go in because it's blocked off. It's not used for anything. (focus group participant, Westinghouse High School student)

Is the Frick Environmental Center that building that burned down? (interviewee in Frick Park, Forbes and Braddock playground)

Participants Reported Using Multiple Means to Learn About Activities at Frick Park

As shown in Table 2.1, interviewees reported learning about activities at Frick Park through a variety of means, including a friend (21.2 percent), a website (17.3 percent), and a flyer/poster (13.5 percent). Interviewees also indicated what they considered to be the best means of learning about park activities, with radio (32.7 percent), a flyer/poster (30.8 percent), and email (30.8 percent) being suggested the most. Importantly, half (50.0 percent) of the participants interviewed reported that they do not hear about activities.

Some participants emphasized the importance of culturally sensitive marketing, including word-of-mouth recommendations from local residents:

Me, a brown faced person, told them to [get involved]. . . . Telling people to bring friends. Telling people that we want their kids. Here's why I want your kids. Why can't your kids enjoy the same thing that the rest of America, or the rest of Pittsburgh, are enjoying? (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Table 2.1
Typical and Best Ways of Hearing About and Marketing Frick Park Activities,
According to Participants in the Brief Informal Interviews

Mode of Communication	Current (%)	Best Way (%)
Flyer/poster	13.5	30.8
Mail	9.6	21.2
Radio	9.6	32.7
Website	17.3	3.9
Email	3.9	30.8
Friend	21.2	23.1
Community organization	7.7	13.5
Faith-based organization	0	11.6
I never hear about activities	50	N/A

SOURCE: We conducted several short surveys during the brief informal interviews. These results are from the short survey on ways of communicating about park activities.

NOTE: Interviewees reported multiple modes of communication; therefore, the percentages do not sum to 100.

We also received several open-ended responses to the question about how best to reach individuals. Participants suggested the following locales and means:

- community organizations and centers
 - Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
 - community churches
 - the Kingsley Center
 - neighborhood swimming pools
 - after-school programs
 - Healthy Hearts and Souls
- local businesses
 - Trader Joe’s
 - hair salons
 - the Shadow Lounge
 - day care centers
 - libraries
- print media
 - the Pennysaver
 - newspapers
 - the Friendship newsletter
 - *The City Paper*
 - the Citiparks guide
 - direct mail
- flyers/posters
 - posters at the bus stop with a phone number for more information

- flyers on the bus
- other
 - Kennywood
 - First Friday concerts
 - using the existing Urban EcoStewards program to recruit more young people
 - the mayor’s office.

Barriers to Park Use

Participants reported barriers to using Frick Park that fall into several categories: distance, transportation, and parking; alignment with interests; level of comfort; and safety.

Distance, Transportation, and Parking Were the Top Barriers to Using Frick Park

Travel logistics—including distance, transportation, and parking—were frequently cited as barriers to using Frick Park on a regular basis. Many residents of Homewood and the surrounding neighborhoods said they would not walk to Frick Park because of the distance. For example:

[Frick Park is] too far away if you can go to a neighborhood park, like Baxter Park. (focus group participant, Westinghouse High School student)

Some participants reported feeling most comfortable in the parts of the park farthest from Homewood. This means that they would have to travel even further to get to those parts of the park.

One focus participant noted that the geographical distance to Frick Park was also a reflection of the psychological distance between community members and the park:

The leap from this neighborhood to Frick Park may be too big. It also has to translate from what do I learn in Frick Park that translates back to my community. Looking at spaces that are overlooked, opportunity for spaces to become transformed. Once you embrace opportunity and community, the leap from Frick Park to “my park” will come. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Additionally, several participants who relied on public transportation reported that they did not know of a bus route that would enable them to conveniently get to Frick Park. A few individuals with personal transportation—and particularly those who visited the Forbes and Braddock playground—reported lack of parking as a barrier to using the park. For example:

Transportation is an issue. If you don’t have a car, maybe it’s easy if you live in Point Breeze. But if you want to walk [from Homewood], you have to cross Penn Ave. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

I don’t know if there’s a bus that takes you from Wilkinsburg to the park. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

If you decide you want to go, parking . . . is a big issue. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

Some Participants Reported That Park Activities Did Not Fit Their Interests

Some participants stated that they did not feel that park activities were aligned with their interests. Walking or sitting in the park was not appealing to them. The high school students told us that they are too old for the playground swings and jungle gyms. One participant in the Rosedale Block Cluster community focus group who works with children explained:

If the kids that I know see swings, softball, and tennis courts, that might not appeal to them. I think basketball would interest them, but it might be good to have some other programming for them as well. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

An older woman at the Rosedale Block Cluster community focus group stated,

People in my age group don't have young children that would be using the park. We're not into softball games and stuff. If there were something else that people in my age bracket would enjoy doing or learning about doing, some of the places, like Home Depot—if you want to learn about gardening, want to improve homes. That would be a draw for us. Just sitting in the park, I don't want to do that, especially since stink bugs have arrived. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

Some Participants Did Not Feel Comfortable in Frick Park

Some participants in the focus groups involving adults explained that some residents of predominantly African-American communities do not always feel comfortable in Frick Park. Some noted that they did not see others like themselves in the park, and some explicitly discussed continuing racial divisions in the city of Pittsburgh. For example:

You want to relax around people who look like you, act like you, dress like you. Frick Park doesn't give you that setting. It doesn't on the Squirrel Hill side either. No matter where you go in the city, there are areas of similar people. Whether it's living, shopping, socializing. Something that has never been broken down. Sad to say here in 2011. It's a very, very divided city. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

Everybody says it's for everybody, but they mean “everybody but black people.” Or “it's for black people, but black people only at this time.” (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Others stated that some potential park users do not feel comfortable on the trails in Frick Park and that this may be due to a lack of education about or comfort with the outdoors. For example:

You also have to educate the adults. I've had some friends, grown men; they are really taken back when we go out into the woods. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Some focus group participants offered ideas for making the park seem more welcoming to African-Americans and other local residents. For example, one noted that local residents could be used as advocates for the park in order to help others feel welcome:

Feeling that people are welcome is important. Using advocates and encouraging them to use their networks to reach out to their connections. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

A Few Participants Mentioned Safety Concerns

Most interviewees reported feeling safe or very safe (92 percent combined) at Frick Park. One interviewee explained that he felt safer in Frick Park than in parks in Homewood.

However, a few interviewees expressed safety concerns related to Frick Park, with the specific issues ranging from inadequate park lighting to concerns about the wilderness and the width of the trails. The most commonly reported concern was related to unleashed dogs on the trails and in the rest of the park (outside of the off-leash area). Others mentioned trail safety issues, such as concerns about falling and then being far from help, and concerns about being in the wilderness. A few interviewees also mentioned heavy traffic on Forbes and Braddock and poor lighting in the park.

Findings Related to the Environmental Center at Frick Park

Participant Interest in ECFP Activities Was Strong

To ascertain potential interest in ECFP activities, we provided interviewees with the following brief description of the ECFP:

The Environmental Center at Frick Park (ECFP) is located just off of Beechwood Boulevard in Squirrel Hill. Some of the main activities offered through the ECFP are programs aimed at connecting people to the natural environment and actively engaging them in Frick Park. There are currently adult classes about growing local plants and composting and seasonal children's programs such as summer day camps and the Frick nature school. The ECFP also hosts guided nature walks.

A majority of interviewees (76 percent) reported that they would be interested in participating in ECFP activities. We also discussed the ECFP with the focus group participants. Although most were unfamiliar with the ECFP, they too expressed interest in the ECFP and in participating in its activities.

Some focus group participants offered ideas for increasing awareness of and participation in environmental activities. For example, a participant noted that local churches often demonstrate interest in the environment and might provide a connection to the ECFP:

The churches have a very big impact and influence on the community. More and more churches are understanding stewardship of God's earth. Church leaders can say, let's start that by going to Frick Environmental Center. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Some also suggested that the ECFP could do more to bring its activities out into the community. For example:

Bring the environmental center to the people. The younger you can get the child . . . the more you can engage the child early. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Participants Indicated That They Would Be Interested in a Wide Range of Activities

Participants in the two community focus groups involving youth described activities in which they would like to participate and that they would like to see offered at the ECFP:

- camps (both day and overnight)
- scavenger hunts
- nature walks
- nighttime activities, including campfires
- amphitheater events
- educational programming focused on animals
- field trips
- arts and crafts projects
- fair/carnival activities.

Other recommendations included free food, Internet access, and an indoor location in which to relax with friends.

Participants in the two community focus group involving adults also provided suggestions for activities at the ECFP:

- gardening, including growing local plants and vegetables
- composting
- cooking classes
- lessons in healing herbs and flowers and in how to grow and use them
- nature walks
- activities for toddlers where they could listen to music and dance around together
- art
- yoga.

Participants Indicated That the ECFP Could Do More to Reach Out to Youth

Some focus group participants noted that ECFP personnel could go to external locations in order to connect with youth. One participant suggested the following approach:

Go to where the kids are. Once kids are exposed to it, they are more excited about it. They take ownership of it. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Another participant provided an example of how this has worked in other contexts:

There is a program that the Boys and Girls Scouts has with the Frick Art Museum. The kids started off hesitant and now they love it. You can build from that. It's always the same people (teachers, people from the Frick Art Museum) coming; the program gets bigger and bigger. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Still others expressed similar opinions. For example:

Go . . . to where the kids are. Homewood football, pools, baseball. The football team leaders really like the idea because they want to expose the kids to different activities and promote diversity. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Some focus group participants emphasized the importance of having the “right person” involved to address youth. For example:

The messenger is just as important as the message. We look toward organizations to get the word out. Young people’s voices are the most influential. If a bunch of kids wanted to go do something, I would be more inclined to look into it. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

You also have to have the right person do the job. If you come in and the kids don’t like you, they’re not going to learn from you. If you bring information to the table in a different and creative way, even if the kids have no clue about it, they will learn and they will like it. It doesn’t have to be elaborate or expensive, it just has to be the right person for the kids. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

A Majority of Participants Reported Barriers to Using the ECFP

Although focus group and interview participants expressed a high level of interest in the ECFP, 63 percent of the interviewees who participated in our short surveys reported that they perceived barriers to using the ECFP. Many of the specific barriers were similar to those reported about using Frick Park more generally and involved such areas as lack of awareness of ECFP programs; distance, transportation, and parking; personal schedules and availability; lack of child care or having children who are too young to participate; level of comfort; and alignment with interests.

Lack of awareness of programs. Many participants were unaware of the ECFP and its activities and events. This is a chronic problem suffered by parks around the nation, whose budgets for outreach and marketing have historically been limited (Godbey, 1985).

Distance, transportation, and parking. Those without personal transportation, and especially residents of Homewood and surrounding communities, reported that the ECFP was too far away.

Personal schedules and availability. Several participants stated that their work schedules affected their ability to attend events at the ECFP. There was variation among their stated work schedules—some reported that they work on weekends, others stated that they work during the day or in the evening—but every type of work schedule made it difficult for participants to attend certain events and activities. Others stated that they were simply too busy and had too many other things to do.

Lack of child care or having children who are too young to participate. Some participants who were parents stated that they would like to attend events but that they lacked child care. Other participants who were parents stated that their younger children would be too young to participate in some of the activities designed for children.

Level of comfort. One participant reported feeling uncomfortable visiting the ECFP. Similar comments about using Frick Park were voiced by others as well. For example:

It needs to be culturally sensitive. I think that has been an issue over the past 10–15 years. They haven't embraced all cultures, and that's why the center has been seen as a neighborhood place instead of a city place. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

Alignment with interests. Some interviewees stated that they were not interested in learning about composting or other environmental topics. One participant explained that he was already aware of environmental issues and that composting and gardening were already a part of his life; therefore, he would rather participate in other activities outside of home.

Level of Awareness of and Interest in Environmental Issues and Environmental Education and Programs

One of our brief surveys asked interviewees about the importance of environmental education and about their awareness of and participation in ECFP activities.

A Majority of Interviewees Said Environmental Education Was Very Important

A majority of interviewees (95 percent) at the Forbes and Braddock playground within Frick Park indicated that they and their children are interested in environmental education. Among interviewees at all locations, 59 percent stated that environmental education was a top priority, 31 percent said it was somewhat important, and 10 percent said that it was not a priority.

Most Interviewees Said That Environmental Education Is Important in Their Community

A majority of interviewees (approximately 77 percent) reported that environmental education is of importance in their community. In addition to broad social issues, the following recreational and social activities specific to parks were also reported to be important: football, picnics, jazz in the park, volleyball, softball, going to the dog park, running, trails, and using the playground.

Interviewees who reported that environmental education was “not a priority” in their community said that other demands and needs were competing for the community's attention. For example:

There are other issues here. Economics, housing. We don't even have a gas station or a grocery store in this neighborhood. (focus group participant, Rosedale Block Cluster)

In addition, some focus group participants noted that local youth were less interested in environmental issues. Young African-Americans may have difficulty imagining themselves pursuing this area because of a dearth of African-American environmentalist role models. One focus group participant stated,

I think there's a shortage of academic interest among African-Americans in environmental issues. . . . I grew up being the only African-American attending environmental activities. To me, it's an exciting subject, and I think if they are exposed to it, they would be more interested. (focus group participant, Boys and Girls Club of Wilkinsburg)

Summary of Findings

Overall, our interviews and focus groups revealed a relatively low level of park use and awareness of the ECFP among underserved populations living near Frick Park. However, the generally high level of interest among local residents in environmental education and programs offered through the ECFP indicates that there is an opportunity to expand involvement in ECFP resources, programs, and events. In the next chapter, we discuss options for increasing local engagement.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, we present overarching conclusions from the research and provide our recommendations.

Conclusions

The Mere Existence of a Park Is Insufficient to Attract Users

Although large urban parks were originally designed to be refuges that would attract urban populations of all classes and backgrounds and, in particular, to serve low-income groups that would otherwise not have access to open greenspace and fresh air, parks do not automatically serve all members of the local community. In the case of Frick Park, we found a relatively low level of park use among underserved populations living in the vicinity of the park and an even lower level of use of the ECFP.

Jane Jacobs, a well-known critic of urban renewal policies, recognized that parks do not automatically confer a boon on deprived urban populations (Jacobs, 1961). In her view, parks are useful to people only if they are located in areas that support heavy traffic and multiple uses or if they provide “demand goods” with features that attract people who want to use them. Demand goods include facilities (such as baseball fields), concerts, and events. Magnificent views and handsome landscaping are seldom sufficient in themselves but are adjuncts to unique and attractive activities that add some excitement and variety to an otherwise dull or inconvenient location.

We found that there are many barriers to use of Frick Park, including those that involve distance, transportation, and parking; alignment with interests; level of comfort; and safety. Most of these barriers (with the exception of safety) were also mentioned as barriers to use of the ECFP itself. Other ECFP barriers included a lack of awareness of ECFP programs, personal schedule and availability challenges, problems getting child care, and having children who are too young to participate. The key barrier to use of the ECFP and to participation in programs and events was general lack of awareness of ECFP activities and programs.

Participants Living Near Frick Park Expressed a Strong Interest in Environmental Education, But They Want to Feel Welcome to Participate

A majority of the individuals who participated in the focus groups and interviews expressed an interest in environmental education and issues. Most said that environmental education was important, both for themselves and in their community. The generally high level of interest

in environmental education suggests that, if barriers can be addressed, participation in ECFP activities and involvement at Frick Park more generally could increase.

However, many comments made during the interviews and focus groups indicated that local residents do not feel entirely welcome in Frick Park or at the ECFP. Some respondents noted that, as African-Americans, they felt uncomfortable in the park or that they did not “see people like themselves” in the park. Further, some comments suggested that Frick Park and the ECFP may not be appealing or interesting to youth or adults in Homewood. This lack of appeal may be due to a lack of exposure among residents to environmental issues and education or to competing priorities or interests.

Promotional Efforts That Can Effectively Compete with Media Will Be Necessary to Increase Attendance at Local Parks

In today’s information age, the electronic media dominate leisure time, with the average person watching television nearly five hours a day (Nielsen Company, 2009). Moreover, low-income groups and African-Americans spend more time watching television than other groups (Nielsen Company, 2011). In this context, it will be necessary for the Parks Conservancy to actively promote Frick Park, the ECFP, and related activities.

After analyzing responses from local Pittsburgh residents, we concluded that people preferred a “push” mechanism for learning about activities rather than a “pull” mechanism; that is, they wanted to hear about activities more directly and wanted to receive targeted information rather than having to seek out information on their own. Thus, as discussed later in this chapter, a variety of outreach strategies will be needed. Participants provided many suggestions related to outreach, including collaboration with community organizations (e.g., churches) in Homewood and surrounding neighborhoods; culturally sensitive advertising; the use of community advocates; and off-site programs.

Recommendations

Our recommendations for the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy are intended to inform the design of the new ECFP building, the structuring and content of ECFP programs, and plans for outreach and marketing. We present these recommendations by issue area.

Awareness

Collaboration with community organizations offers an opportunity to disseminate information about ECFP activities and programs. Collaboration with community organizations might be achieved through outreach to local churches, community groups, schools, and youth involved in the Urban EcoStewards program. In particular, the Parks Conservancy can activate interest in the park and its resources by working with community organizations to sponsor programs and events that are both of particular interest to local organizations and a good fit for the mission of the ECFP. Novel directions could include recognizing the challenges, achievements, and model programs that have been developed outside of Pittsburgh (e.g., successful green job programs), if these are relevant and offer important lessons for local residents. The Parks Conservancy might also bring in outside experts and well-known leaders in the environmental movement to inspire and energize constituents. Ideally, such leaders would be persons of color or recognized leaders among African-Americans in Pittsburgh.

Parks Conservancy staff should meet with key representatives from community organizations to discuss ECFP activities, programs, and other resources and to discuss ways in which Frick Park and the ECFP could meet the needs and interests of specific community organizations. These outreach meetings could lead to invitations for park or ECFP personnel to present at community organization meetings or functions either to provide a full educational program or to give an overview of the ECFP and the resources, programs, and activities available to community members. Churches and other organizations in Homewood and surrounding neighborhoods might allow the Parks Conservancy to gain access to community members, and such partnerships could result in more opportunities for the Parks Conservancy to reach its target audiences. We recommend that the Parks Conservancy think broadly about community groups and that it also reach out to local businesses about promoting and sponsoring ECFP programs and activities.

The Parks Conservancy should reach out to children in such community locations as schools and other sites. Exposing children to information about ECFP programs and activities in their own community organizations (rather than having them come to the ECFP) provides an opportunity to raise children's awareness of the ECFP in a familiar environment. Because of the ECFP's many educational activities, schools provide an ideal partner for expanding the center's reach. This partnership could also help schools provide hands-on activities and lessons that increase children's understanding of environmental issues.

We recommend the use of culturally sensitive advertising in print media posted in strategic places frequented by community residents (e.g., churches, bus stops, hair salons, day care facilities, grocery stores). Targeted and appropriate advertising was repeatedly cited by participants as an essential mechanism for reaching and engaging minority communities, such as Homewood and Wilkinsburg. Print media can include posters and directly mailed flyers. We also recommend the use of culturally sensitive radio advertising.

ECFP advocates can help disseminate information about ECFP programs and activities. The Parks Conservancy can encourage individuals who are already familiar with ECFP programs to reach out to their friends and extended networks. We specifically recommend (1) asking individuals who have participated in programs and activities to invite their friends and (2) providing attendees with flyers that they can share with others.

The use of targeted social media messages can help reach specific community groups. For example, to reach out to youth, the Parks Conservancy might create a youth-focused Facebook or Twitter page to advertise events and activities and to create incentives for participation (e.g., it could enter all individuals who "like" the ECFP Youth Facebook page into a drawing to win a prize). The availability of these pages could be advertised at the ECFP, on posters and flyers, at ECFP programs and activities, and at community events sponsored by other organizations. Additionally, the Parks Conservancy should ensure that websites and advertising materials are designed to be culturally appealing to communities of color.

Alignment with Interests

To attract youth from diverse communities, we suggest that the Parks Conservancy provide additional services and activities at the ECFP, such as programs featuring African-American environmentalists, that it offer computers with Internet access, and that it host events with free food. Additionally, creating a safe and comfortable place for youth will promote use of the environmental center and may expose youth to the environment and the outdoors. The Parks Conservancy might partner with other youth-focused organizations (e.g., the

Frick Art and Historical Center, Lighthouse, local schools) in order to introduce youth to the ECFP and ECFP activities and, potentially, increase interest in environmental issues, education, and the ECFP.

The Parks Conservancy might also consider providing incentives for visiting the park. These incentives could be similar to the successful loyalty “frequent user” programs that make individuals eligible for benefits or prizes. For example, individuals who visit three or more times per month could be included in a lottery to win a special prize or free tickets to an event.

Distance, Transportation, and Parking

To increase participation and engagement in communities with limited access to Frick Park, we recommend that the Parks Conservancy consider bringing ECFP activities to community parks and other community locations in underserved communities and schools. For example, the ECFP could work to develop cooperative gardens in unused green spaces (e.g., abandoned or available lots); it could plant native flowering plants and advertise the ECFP as a sponsor, adding a billboard that advertises upcoming ECFP programs and activities; and it could offer neighborhood nature walks that explore plants and animals found in local communities.

To increase awareness of transportation to Frick Park and the ECFP, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy could provide directions from surrounding communities to help potential visitors locate the park and the ECFP. For example, the Parks Conservancy could include bus routes and travel times to and from certain communities on posters, flyers, and direct mailings associated with specific ECFP programs and activities. Additionally, the Parks Conservancy could strategically place signs with directions to the ECFP within Frick Park (e.g., at the Forbes and Braddock playground), including directions to the ECFP’s parking lot. The space for these signs could include advertisements for ECFP programs, activities, and resources to increase awareness of the ECFP among current users of Frick Park.

The Parks Conservancy could consider providing transportation to key programs and activities to increase participation among community members who do not have personal transportation and who live too far away to walk. Because implementing this recommendation might be prohibitively expensive, the Parks Conservancy could also consider partnering with community organizations that provide transportation to community members.

Scheduling and Child Care

To help accommodate the range of scheduling concerns noted in the interviews, we recommend that the Parks Conservancy hold ECFP and park events at various times (i.e., morning, afternoon, and evening) on weekdays and weekends. Additionally, we recommend that the Parks Conservancy integrate and coordinate ECFP programming with schools and churches to reach youth who may be unable to attend if they must rely on parental transportation. The Parks Conservancy could also consider modifying the day camp programs to better coordinate with parental work schedules. If possible, potential drop-off and pick-up locations should be moved closer to specific underserved communities (e.g., establish a drop-off and pick-up point at Westinghouse Park).

To increase interest among parents with small children, the Parks Conservancy should consider offering concurrent adult and children’s programs. Such programs would allow individuals with young children to attend programs and would help engage children at

younger ages. Other suggestions include establishing programs for young children and offering specific programs for families.

Safety

Although most people felt that Frick Park in general was a safe place, addressing safety concerns could improve the reputation and appeal of the ECFP.

We recommend that the Parks Conservancy emphasize safety in the design and construction of the new ECFP building. Specifically, the new design should be especially sensitive to exterior lighting. The ECFP might also consider explicitly posting the Frick Park rule that dogs must be on a leash and under control to encourage the use of leashes near the ECFP building.

The ECFP should consider advertising guided walks on the trails to address some individuals' concerns about the wooded trails. These guided walks could help alleviate fears about the wooded trails and could also help individuals be more comfortable in newer settings.

Level of Comfort

To address perceptions that Frick Park is exclusive or unwelcoming, the Parks Conservancy should consider engaging youth advocates and hiring residents of underserved areas to staff ECFP programs. Youth advocates would be familiar with Frick Park, the ECFP, and ECFP activities and programs and could encourage individuals in their networks to use Frick Park and the ECFP. Similarly, hiring residents of underserved areas as staff could increase community members' level of comfort with the park. Working with community leaders to publicize ECFP activities (especially those that honor African-Americans) and bringing in new recruits could also help address this problem. The Parks Conservancy should also consider using authentic depictions of diverse groups of people in advertising and marketing materials to highlight the diversity of community residents.

The ECFP should consider bringing ECFP activities and programs to schools and other community organizations to expand the current view of the ECFP. As noted earlier, the Parks Conservancy can increase awareness of the ECFP and other Frick Park activities through increased collaboration and partnerships with community organizations in which local residents are already involved. Similarly, the ECFP could take its own activities into other locations in order to raise awareness of and increase interest in environmental activities among community members, especially youth and children.

Additionally, we recommend that the ECFP waive or subsidize program fees for individuals or children from low-income households. Currently, there is a wide range of registration fees for ECFP programs. For example, although the Native Seed Class, an Urban EcoSteward Training workshop, requires no registration fee, the Backyard Compost Class has a \$50 registration fee per person. We recommend that the ECFP evaluate the current registration fees and consider reducing or subsidizing the fees for individuals from low-income households to make ECFP programs and activities more affordable. This will allow the Parks Conservancy to reduce the cost barrier for individuals from underserved communities and, potentially, to expand the diversity of ECFP participants.

Closing Comments

The specific combination of community member characteristics revealed during the focus groups and interviews—including an interest in environmental issues and education, a lack of awareness of the ECFP, and some current use of Frick Park—provides a significant opportunity for the ECFP to address the barriers identified in this report and to increase residents' use of Frick Park and the ECFP.

Perceived distance from Frick Park (and the ECFP), transportation and parking, alignment with interests, level of comfort, and perceived safety were topics identified in focus groups and interviews as barriers to use of Frick Park. Thus, increased focus on each of these domains may improve access to Frick among residents in nearby neighborhoods.

Parks, greenspace, and environmental education provide many important benefits for physical, mental, and social health; the natural environment; and social well-being. We found, however, that the presence of parks, greenspace, and environmental education alone is not enough. Equal access to and use of greenspace and environmental education are partly an issue of geographic proximity, but facilitating the use of and engagement in Pittsburgh parks (and specifically Frick Park and the ECFP) requires targeted marketing, outreach, and sponsoring events and programs that honor the needs and sensitivities of minority populations. Addressing the real and perceived social and physical challenges that park supporters, current park users, and potential park users face will require greater collaboration with local community-based organizations and more-creative use of novel marketing tools.

We acknowledge that this project was limited by a small sample size (in both the brief informal interviews and community focus groups), that the samples used may not have been representative of the diverse population of underserved minorities in Pittsburgh, and that many of the identified barriers are multilayered and complex. Additional research, with a larger and more representative sample, would provide an opportunity to validate our findings, expand and refine recommendations, and more deeply understand many of the issues at hand.

Community Focus Group Discussion Guide

The community focus groups discussion guide is reproduced on the pages that follow.

Observations

Date:

Time:

Group name:

Meeting location:

Number of attendees:

Approximate age range and distribution:

Gender distribution:

General description:

Section I. Background Questions

1. Where do you live (neighborhood)?

2. How long have you lived at your current address?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Less than 1 year	
Between 1 and 2 years	
Between 3 and 4 years	
Between 5 and 9 years	
More than 10 years	
Non-responders	

3. When you think of the parks in your community, which parks do you think about and what comes to mind?

Section II. Frick Park Use and Barriers to Use

4. In a typical month, how often do you go to Frick Park?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Daily	
A few times a week	
1 time per week	
A couple times per month	
Monthly	
A few times a year	
Never	

5. If you replied that you use Frick Park less frequently, what's keeping you away from the park? (In other words, what are the barriers you face for using the park?)

Let's take some time to discuss the barriers about using the park... Can you please describe why {EXAMPLE GIVEN} is a barrier?

6. When you come to Frick Park, how do you usually get there? (Potential follow-up question: Is it difficult for you get to Frick Park? If yes, why?)

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Walk	
Bike	
Bus or other public transport	
My own car	
Someone else's car	
I don't go to the park	
Other:	
Other:	

Section III. Questions Specific to Frick Park

7. Why do you visit Frick Park?/What do you usually do in this park?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Visit the Environmental Center at Frick Park	
Visit Frick Art and Historical Center	
Active organized sports: Baseball/softball Basketball Soccer	
Self-directed sports: Tennis Lawn bowling Frisbee	
Social activities: Celebrations, picnics First Friday concerts Meet friends	
Playgrounds: Playground (Blue Slide Playground) Playground (Forbes/Braddock Playground)	
Relaxing: Sitting in park (relax)	
Walking, running, or biking: Biking Hiking/walking/running on the trails Snow-shoeing/cross-country skiing	
Dog-related activities: Walking with dog Visiting the off-leash dog park	
Other	
I don't go to the park	

Follow-Up Prompt: If you're not doing some of these other activities, why is that?

8. How do you find out about Frick Park activities?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses	Description
Flyer		
Poster		
Mail		
Media: radio		
Website		
Email		
Friend		
Community/service organization		
Faith-based organization		
Other:		
I've never heard about park-sponsored activities.		
Other:		

9. What would be the best way for you to find out about Frick Park activities?

10. When you are in Frick Park, do you meet people you know?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Yes, often	
Yes, sometimes	
Rarely	
No, not at all	

11. Is there something you especially like about Frick Park?

12. Is there something you especially dislike about or feel uncomfortable with at Frick Park?

13. In general, how safe do you feel the park is?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Very safe	
Safe	
Not very safe	
Not safe at all	

14. If you don't feel safe, why? What could be changed to make you feel safer?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Safety hazards	
Crime or violence	
Other	
Other	
Not well lit (?)	
I think it's safe	

Section IV. Leisure, Recreation, and Other Park Use

15. Which other parks do you use and why?

Potential Answers (Other Parks)	Number of Responses
Schenley	
Mellon	
Highland	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	

16. What are the things you feel that your community park(s) offer you? Of these things, what do you use (the most; the least)? Why?

17. What kinds of outdoor activities do you participate in for leisure and recreation? Where?

18. What additional activities, programs, or facilities would you like to see in your community [or in the park?] that would allow you to be more physically active? [or more social; or more engaged with your community?]

Potential Answers	Number of Responses	In Their Words...
Bicycle paths		
Walking paths or trails		
Adult sports leagues		
Adult dance classes		
More fitness classes		
More youth sports leagues		
Organized adventure/walks		
Park events/fairs, competitions		
Park concerts/dances		
More trees/different landscaping		
Garden areas		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

Section V. Children’s Use of Frick Park (May not be applicable for all groups)

If you have a child under 18, can you tell us about your child’s use of Frick Park?

19. How often does your child come to Frick Park?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Daily	
A few times a week	
1 time per week	
A couple times per month	
Monthly	
A few times a year	
Never	

20. For what purpose does your child typically come to Frick Park?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Visit the Environmental Center at Frick Park	
Visit Frick Art and Historical Center	
Camps—YMCA, YWCA (field trips)	
Active organized sports: Baseball/softball Basketball Soccer	
Self-directed sports: Tennis Lawn bowling Frisbee	
Social activities: Celebrations, picnics First Friday concerts Meet friends	
Playgrounds: Playground (Blue Slide Playground) Playground (Forbes/Braddock Playground)	
Relaxing: Sitting in park (relaxing)	
Walking, running, or biking: Biking Hiking/walking/running on the trails Snow-shoeing/cross-country skiing	
Dog-related activities: Walking with dog Visiting the off-leash dog park	
Other	
I don't go to the park	

21. How easy is it for your child to get to Frick Park? Why?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Very easy	
Easy	
Difficult	
Very difficult	
Impossible	
I don't go to the park	
Other:	

22. When your child is in the park, how often does he/she meet people he/she knows in the park?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Yes, often	
Yes, sometimes	
Rarely	
No, not at all	

23. Do you allow your child to go to the park alone? (Does this differ for children of different ages?) [Want to capture age ranges of kids]

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Yes, often	
Yes, sometimes	
Rarely	
No, not at all	

24. In general, do you think it is safe for your child to play in Frick Park? (How does that vary with or without parental supervision?)

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Very safe	
Safe	
Not very safe	
Not safe at all	

25. If you don't think it is safe, why?

Potential Answers	Number of Responses
Safety hazards	
Crime or violence	
Other:	
Other:	
I think it's safe	

26. How often does your child go to other parks and what other parks are they going to? Why?

Potential Answers (Frequency)	Number of Responses
Daily	
A few times a week	
1 time per week	
A couple times per month	
A few times a year	
Never	

Potential Answers (Other Parks)	Number of Responses
Schenley	
Mellon	
Highland	
Other:	
Other:	
Other:	

Section VI. Questions Specific to the Environmental Center at Frick Park

27. Have you ever visited the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

28. If no, why not?

29. If yes, how many times have you been there?

30. What was your impression of the Environmental Center at Frick Park and the programs/activities?

31. What did you like about the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

32. What did you dislike about the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

33. Are you aware of the adult programs offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park? If yes, how did you learn about these adult programs?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Urban EcoSteward Training (e.g., Native Seed Class)	
Backyard Compost Class	
Guided nature walks (e.g., wildflower ID)	
Other:	
Other:	

34. Have you ever attended one of the adult programs offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park? Why or why not?

35. Are you aware of the seasonal children's programs offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Summer day camps (Programs include Kinder Nature Camp, Kids Nature Camp, Survival Camp, and Outdoor Expeditions)	
Habitat Explorers (1st grade)	
Frick Nature School	
High School Urban EcoSteward Program	
Other:	

36. Has your child ever attended one of the children's programs offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park? Why or why not?

37. Are you aware of the family programs and events offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Night Explorers	
Bump in the Night	
Earth Day Celebration	
Camp fires/camp fire cookouts	
Other:	

38. What types of programs/activities offered by the Environmental Center at Frick Park are most important to you?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Trainings (planting techniques, invasive plant control, how to plant a tree)	
Guided walks (learning how to identify birds)	
Volunteer activities (to improve the park)	
Other:	

39. How can the programs/activities that you attended be improved?

40. What programs/activities would you like to see offered at the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

Section VII. Review Photos to Inform Design Ideas

Section VIII. Wrap-Up Question

41. Do you have any additional comments to share about Frick Park or the Environmental Center at Frick Park?

Brief Informal Interviews Discussion Guide

The brief informal interviews discussion guide is reproduced in the pages that follow. Note that question 7 was originally worded as, “Do you or your child have an interest in learning about the environment and outdoor education?” The question was modified partway through the interview period to assess the individual’s perception of importance rather than interest. In addition, question 8 (regarding importance in the community) was added at the same time.

Day and Time of Interview

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Morning (9 am–12 am)							
Afternoon (3 pm–6 pm)							
Evening (6 pm–9 pm)							

1. Do you live within walking distance?

2. In which neighborhood do you live?

Regent Square	
Edgewood/Swissvale	
Point Breeze	
Homewood	
Wilksburg	
East Liberty	
Squirrel Hill	
Greenfield	
Other	

3. On average, how often do you go to Frick Park?

Daily	
One or more times/week	
One or more times/month	
Less than once/month	
Once	
Never	

4. (FOR INTERVIEWS IN FRICK PARK) Why do you visit Frick Park?/What do you usually do in this park?

Ask Specifically	Number of Responses
Visit the Environmental Center at Frick Park	
Visit Frick Art and Historical Center	
Active organized Sports: Baseball/softball Basketball Soccer	
Self-directed sports: Tennis Lawn bowling Frisbee	
Social activities: Celebrations, picnics First Friday concerts Meet friends	
Playgrounds: Playground (Blue Slide Playground) Playground (Forbes/Braddock Playground)	
Relaxing: Sitting in park (relax)	
Walking, running, or biking: Biking Hiking/walking/running on the trails Snow-shoeing/cross-country skiing	
Dog-related activities: Walking with dog Visiting the off-leash dog park	
Other	
I don't go to the park	

5. In general, how safe do you feel Frick Park is? Do you have any comments about the safety of the park?

Very safe	
Safe	
Not very safe	
Not safe at all	

FREE TEXT (comments):

6. How do you currently find out about activities happening at Frick Park? What would be the best way for you to find out about Frick Park activities?

	Current Ways	Best Ways
Flyer		
Poster		
Mail		
Media: radio		
Website		
Email		
Friend		
Community/service organization		
Faith-based organization		
I've never heard about park-sponsored activities.		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

Environmental Education

7. How important is participation in environmental education to you and your child? Would you say that it is a top priority, somewhat important, or not a priority? What other activities are more important to you?

8. How important is participation in environmental education in your community? Would you say that it is a top priority, somewhat important, or not a priority?

Environmental Center at Frick Park

The Environmental Center at Frick Park (ECFP) is located just off of Beechwood Blvd in Squirrel Hill. Some of the main activities offered through the ECFP are programs aimed at connecting people to the natural environment and actively engaging them in Frick Park. There are currently adult classes about growing local plants and composting and seasonal children’s programs such as summer day camps and the Frick nature school. The ECFP also hosts guided nature walks.

9. Are you interested in attending Environmental Center at Frick Park programs and activities? Why or why not?

Yes	
Environmental education and activities are priority for me	
Other (please describe)	
No	
Too far	
No time	
Not interested	
Other (please describe)	

10. If you are interested in participating in activities at the Environmental Center at Frick Park, is there anything that would make it difficult for you to participate?

Yes	No	Don't know
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If yes, what would make it difficult?

Demographic Characteristics

Please circle your response

Gender

Male/Female

Race/Ethnicity

White/Caucasian

Black/African-American

Latino

Other

With child(ren)/Without child(ren)

Age Range (in years)

18 and under	51-60
19-25	61-70
26-30	71-80
31-40	81+
41-50	

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