

Parks on the Street

Summary of Data Collection and Results

March 17, 2018

On Saturday, March 17, 2018, Vancouver Island University (VIU) students, under the supervision of VIU faculty and staff from the City of Parksville, collected data as part of the Community Park Master Plan and Survey Project. “Parks on the Street” Day had two objectives:

1. Collect preliminary data on residents’ opinions regarding the parks in the City of Parksville.
2. Inform the public of the beginning of this project and the development of Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan for the City of Parksville.

This event followed up the first “Parks on the Street” Day in Parksville on March 4, 2017. The first “Parks on the Street” Day was used to gain knowledge on Parksville’s parks network during the initial inventory phase of the project. The original three questions asked were framed to learn about amenities, rather than specific park spaces. The original questions were as follows:

1. What aspects of Parksville’s City Parks do you appreciate?
2. What do you believe is currently missing from Parksville’s City Parks?
3. What changes would you like to see occur in Parksville’s City Parks?

Using the results from last year, new questions were generated to target the entire parks, trails, and open spaces network and encourage participants to delve deep into what they would like the future of Parksville City Park’s network to look like.

The data collected during “Parks on the Street” Day has been compiled into themes and will be used to prepare for the next phases of the public engagement process and data collection: the Spring Mini Event on May 12 and the online survey. Below is a brief explanation of the “Parks on the Street” Day data collection process and the presentation of themes that emerged during discussions with the people of Parksville on March 17.

Data collection

After meeting at Parksville City Hall on March 17, 21 student volunteers from VIU were stationed at high-traffic areas around Parksville: in front of shops, roaming around the pedestrian down town, in Community Park, at trailheads, and at other popular parks within the City’s park network. Students were instructed to approach passers-by and ask them three questions:

1. Apart from the Community park, what other parks or open spaces do you use frequently, and why?
2. What changes would you like to see in these parks or open spaces?

3. What is your favourite trail around Parksville?

The intent behind these questions was to gather preliminary data from residents about Parksville's wider park and trail network, not just the popular Community Park: students were instructed to encourage respondents to think of all parks, but were careful not to mention specifics to avoid biases in the data.

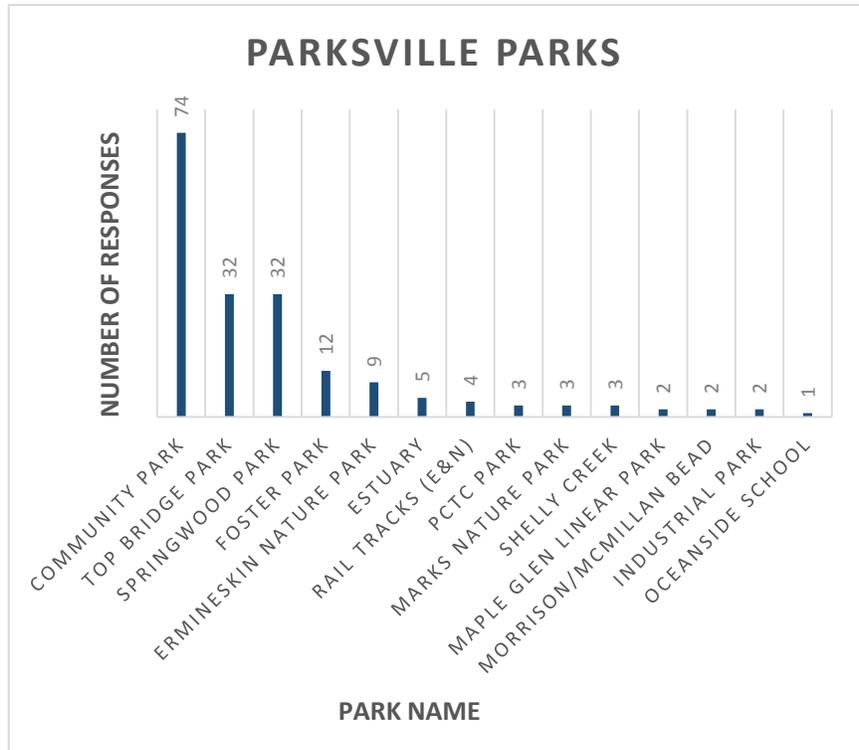
Students set out in teams for a morning shift, from 10 am to noon, and an afternoon shift, from 12:30 pm to 2 pm, of data collection. The teams reported that, being a chillier day, some park spaces may have been used less frequently than they would be in the sun. Furthermore, due to the event falling on St. Patrick's Day, there appeared to be more young adults and tourists on the streets than at the previous year's "Parks on the Street" Day. By the end of the day the team's goal of engaging with 150 respondents was surpassed with a total of 188 responses gathered.

Convenience sampling was used for this endeavor: this involves surveying people who are conveniently located and are willing to participate. It is a beneficial method for pilot studies and for discovering general themes in public responses. It is however non-representative of the population and is limited in generalizability. In other words, the answers do not reflect the thoughts of all Parksville residents and results are not meant to be a true representation of their opinions. The goal of this "Parks on the Street" Day was to begin collecting data and to prepare a preliminary list of themes that may be of importance to Parksville residents regarding their community parks. The themes that were gathered will be further explored during the next stages of this project.

Results

The results are presented below as themes that emerged from the participants' responses. When asked what their favourite park or open space was in question one, respondents were quick to mention the Community Park. While this answer was accepted and used in the data, respondents were also encouraged to discuss which other parks and open spaces in the community they frequented. One park that was mentioned repeatedly was Rath Trevor Beach Provincial Park, which although is not one of the park spaces that the City of Parksville maintains, is important to the connectivity of Parksville to the greater parks network. Parks located in Qualicum Beach, Errington, Nanoose, Nanaimo, and Tofino were also all mentioned, some of these answers are likely due to both residents and visitors being questioned. The graph below illustrates the results for question one collected from the completed 188 questionnaires. Respondents replied to the open-ended question with multiple answers for their favourite Park or open space, offering a total of 315 responses to the question.

Of these collected responses 266 were within Parksville City limits, however Rathtrevor Beach Provincial Park received 62 responses, and Englishman River Regional Park received 18. These parks were cut out from the presented 186 responses, all of which are parks managed by the City of Parksville.



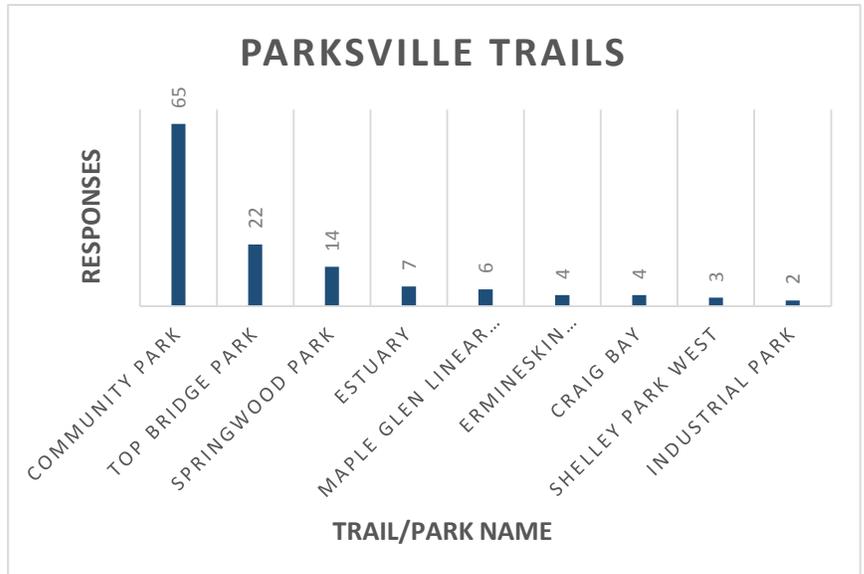
Another important factor to note in regards to question one is that by attempting to exclude the Community Park from the answers, people were already thinking of other beach parks in the area, this may help explain the prevalence of Qualicum Beach and Rathtrevor in the data.

Question 2 provided a wide variety of responses for what changes participants wanted to see in parks and open spaces. Although some answers were for specific parks and open spaces, the majority related to the large network of park spaces in Parksville. The responses from question two were coded into five categories:

- a) **Dogs:** while dog owners expressed the desire for more off-leash areas, others wanted dog-walking prohibited in particular park areas, or wanted more regulation regarding dog owners picking up after their pets.
- b) **Services and Amenities:** increased amount of garbage and recycling facilities in parks, or more strategically placed, more food services at a variety of parks, café, maintain existing facilities, more playgrounds, increase parking at popular parks
- c) **Connectivity and future acquisition:** extend the boardwalk, increase the parks network
- d) **Wildlife:** protect Brant Geese season, keep natural and undeveloped, protect trees
- e) **Accessibility:** Restrictive, could be more accessible.

The data collected for question 2 was similar to the data that was collected for question 2 and 3 in the previous year’s “Parks on the Street” Day. This information is a useful tool for cross-referencing the data from the consultation efforts that have been conducted parks, trails and open spaces over the past year, particularly to brainstorm on the park network.

When asked which trail was their favourite, Question 3 was used to gauge where respondents enjoy walking in Parksville. Once again, Community Park was a favourite amongst respondents for the boardwalk, easy accessibility, and location along the ocean. Many respondents were also willing to travel farther into neighbouring communities for trail access, including locations such as: Little Qualicum Falls, the RDN’s Lighthouse



Country Regional Trail, and Nymph Falls in Comox. Once again, this variety of data could be attributed to both residents and visitors participating in “Parks on the Street”.

Interestingly, the popular responses to both questions 1 and 3 were Community Park, Springwood Park, and Top Bridge Park; the City of Parksville’s three major parks. The prevalence of these Responses can be explained by the greater investment of amenities and services over the City’s neighbourhood parks. A goal for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan, will be to showcase and allow for a greater variety of responses around more of these neighbourhood parks. Furthermore, although questions were phrased to generate answers aside from Community Park, it is clear that “Parksville’s crown jewel,” Community Park, remains the clear favourite amongst respondents as both a trail and park.

Conclusion

The second “Parks on the Street” Day was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback and great responses from all participants. The event not only informed participants of the project, but helped in collecting initial data for the Parks, Trails and Open Spaces Master Plan. Data collected will inform the next stages of the project and assist in developing discussion points for the online survey and Spring Mini events in May.