



Joey's Park Community Input Survey Final Report

September, 2012

*Developed by:
The Friends of Joey's Park (FOJP)
Belmont, MA*

Acknowledgements

The Friends of Joey's Park (FOJP) is a committee dedicated to the rebuilding of the Joey's Park playground, located next to Winn Brook Elementary School in Belmont, MA.

The FOJP Community Input Subcommittee was primarily responsible for designing and distributing the survey and analyzing the results. We would like to thank the other members of the FOJP steering committee for their input and support during the survey design and collection process.

Special thanks go to the 349 individuals who took the time to complete the survey, providing the Committee with valuable insight to community interests in Joey's Park playground.

Introduction

Purpose:

The **Friends of Joey's Park** was formed in March 2012 to lead the process to rebuild Joey's Park playground, which has been identified by playground inspectors to be at the end of its life. The group is tasked with investigating replacement options for the playground; facilitating the process of playground design; fundraising; and, importantly, seeking community input during all phases of the process. The Friends of Joey's Park Community Input Subcommittee developed the survey as a tool to establish an initial conversation with the community-at-large regarding concerns, hopes, and expectations about the existing and future Joey's Park playground. The survey is intended as the first of many opportunities for community input throughout the process.

This report presents the results from the Community Input survey. The findings are intended to inform the overall design of the playground as well as to indicate the community's investment in the playground.

This draft report consists of three parts.

1. Four charts with text representing the responses to the four quantitative questions
2. Four charts with text representing the responses to the four qualitative questions
3. Code definitions and notes for the four qualitative questions
4. Summary of Findings

Methods:

The survey was distributed during May and June 2012 via several channels. It was emailed to all Winn Brook School families through Principal Janet Carey, and was distributed through four list serves: Belmont Yahoo Newsgroup; Belmont Family Group; Second Soccer list serv; and Arlington Family Network. Surveys were also distributed in person at Belmont Town Day and at the playing fields next Joey's Park one Saturday morning during Second Soccer.

A total of 349 completed surveys were collected. The majority of the surveys were completed online using Survey Monkey and approximately 30 were completed on paper and then manually entered into Survey Monkey. Data from Questions 1-4 was analyzed in Survey Monkey. Questions 5-8 were open-ended text questions and were analyzed by members of the Community Input Subcommittee. The text responses were coded using the Survey Monkey text analysis function and then exported into MSExcel for analysis.

More about the Data and Implications for Use:

This survey was designed to be exploratory in nature. Questions 5-8 were deliberately designed to be open-ended in order to generate themes and inform a framework for how the community wants to improve Joey's Park playground.

While we are presenting the text responses (questions 5-8) in percentages, please remember that these coded categories were generated from open-ended responses. That is, respondents were not shown a pre-determined list of the codes and then asked to check off the list. The responses reflect initial reactions to the questions, without the prompting of pre-determined categories (e.g., a need for more shade was identified in several survey responses; however, the exact percentage of people who mentioned this in the open-ended context of a qualitative question is not necessarily indicative of the overall value placed on this particular concern).

Ultimately, the data is important for a variety of uses:

- To demonstrate the interest and importance of Joey's Park for fundraising and other "make the case" situations;
- To educate the contracted designer about the community's needs around the park;
- If FOJP chooses to conduct a subsequent, more targeted, quantitative survey, these findings would inform the development of pre-determined response options.

Attachments:

- Copy of the Joey's Park Community Input Survey

Findings

Figure 1.

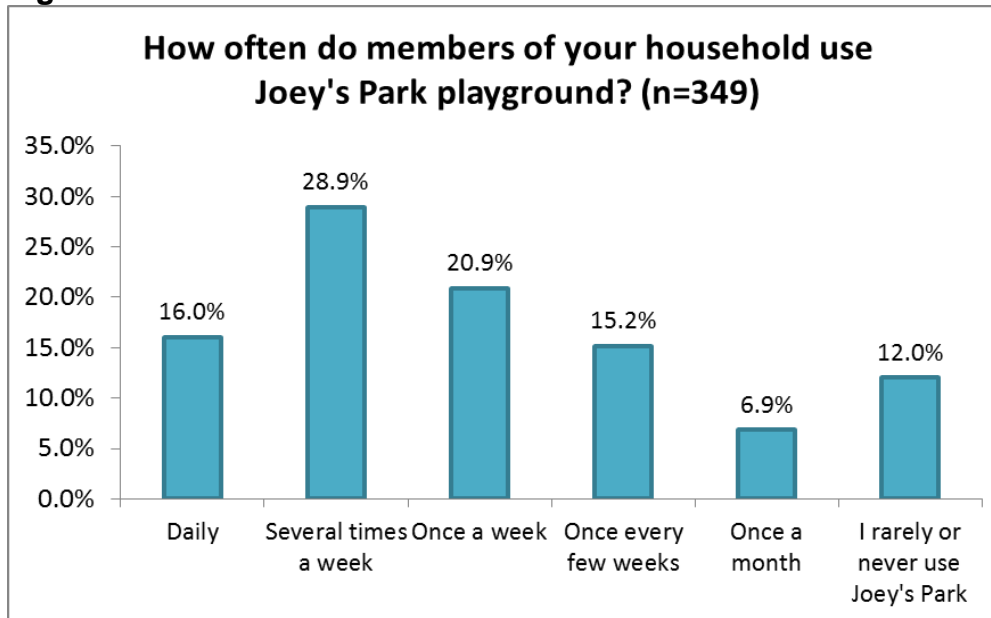
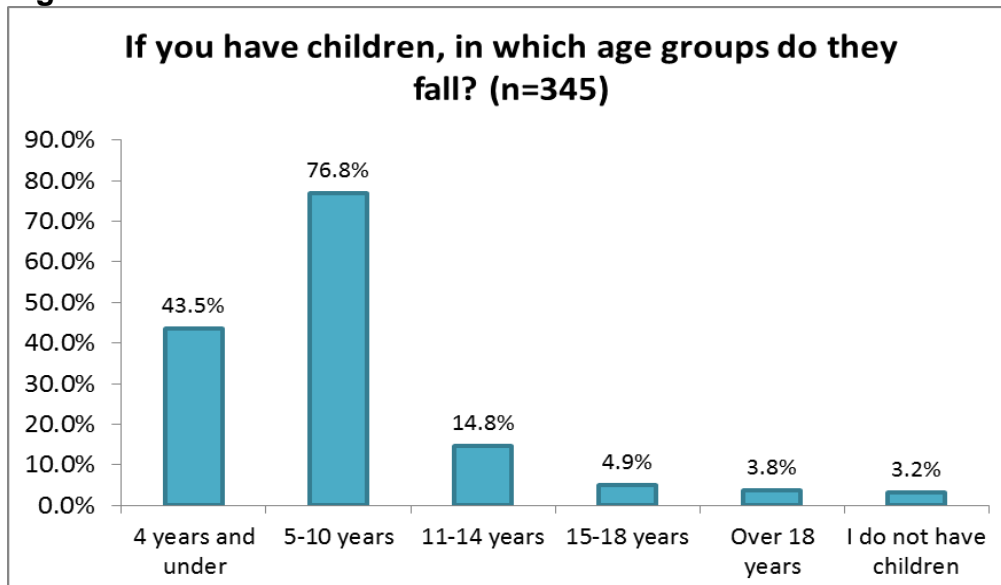


Figure 2.



- The survey respondents are frequent users of Joey's Park. Nearly two-thirds reported using Joey's Park playground once a week or more (Figure 1).
- As expected, nearly all of the respondents had children, with over three-quarters having children ages 5-10 years old and 44% with younger children (Figure 2).

Figure 3.

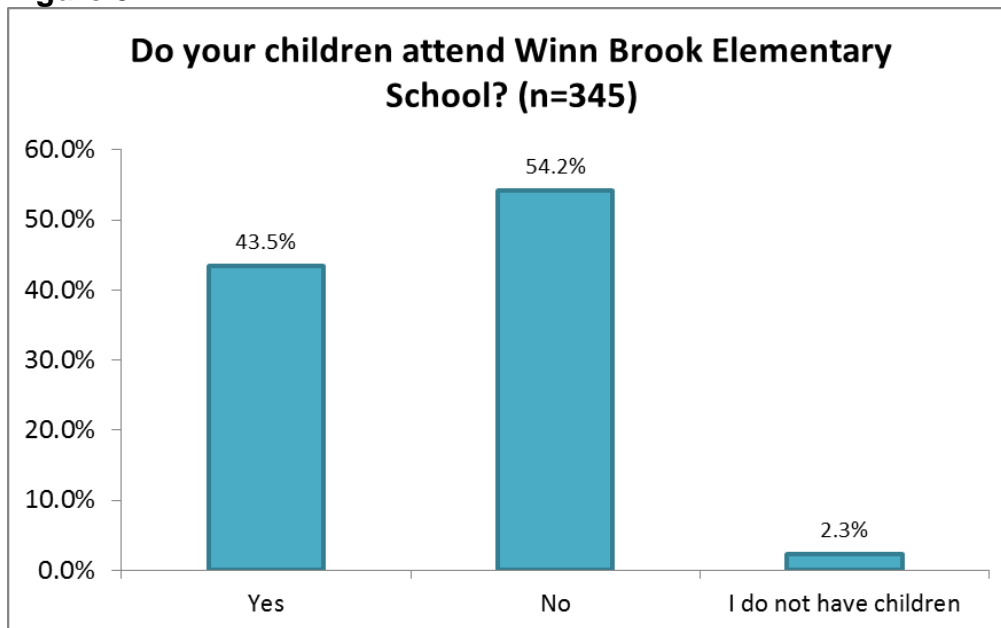
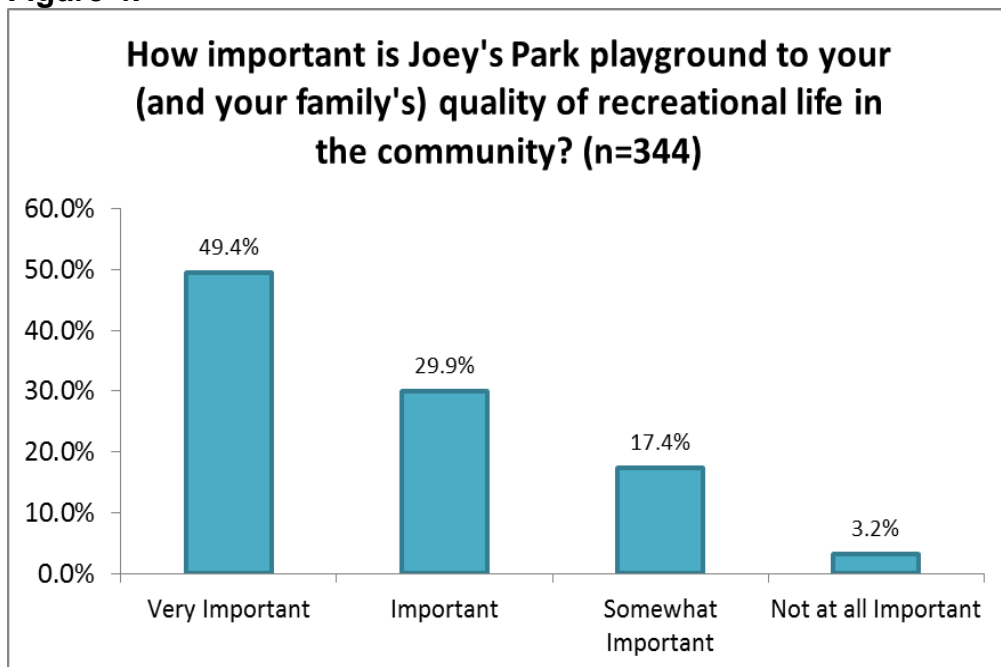


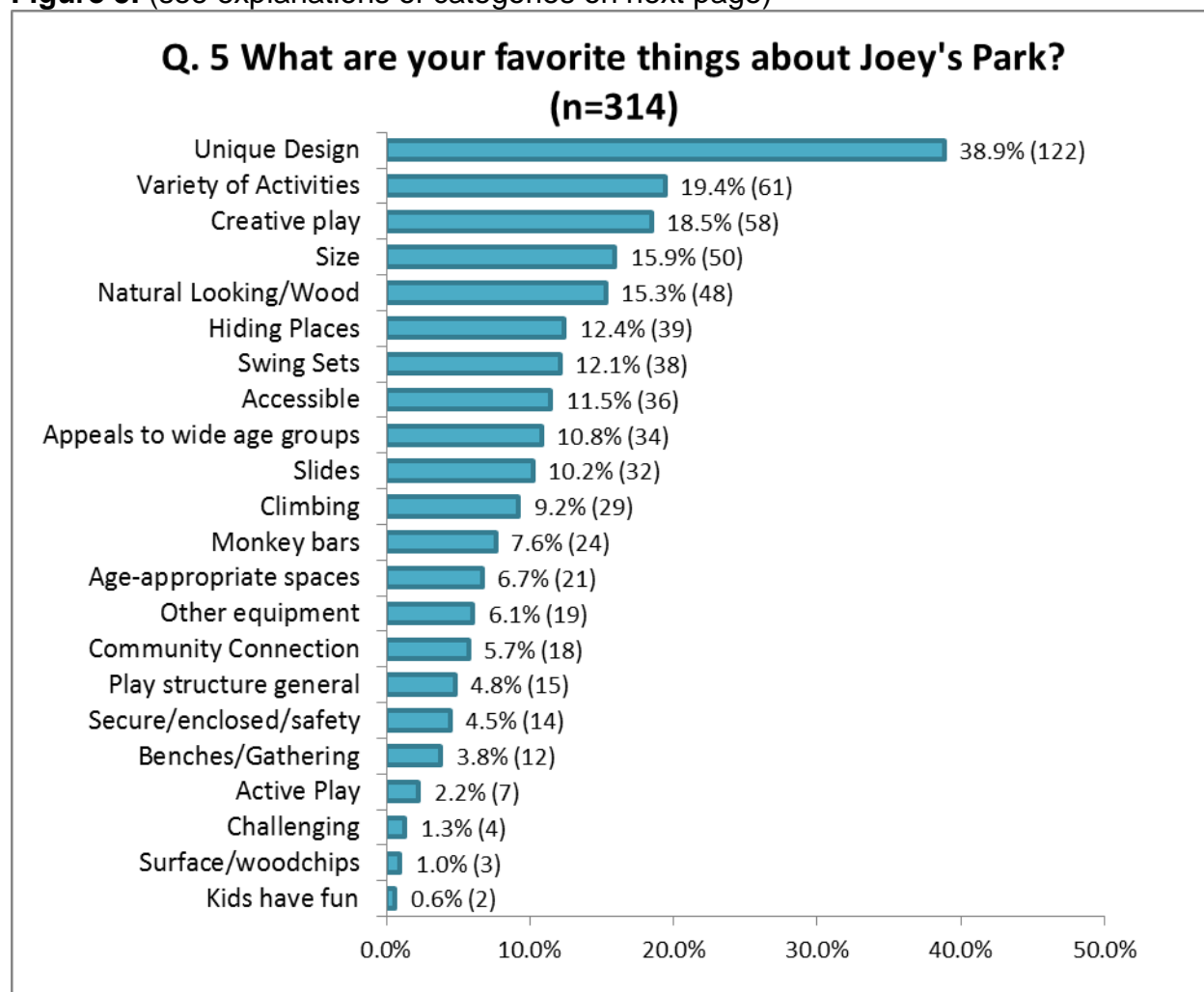
Figure 4.



- Over half of the respondents did *not* have children who attend Winn Brook. This finding indicates that the input from the survey reflect the opinions of greater Belmont, not just the opinions of the Winn Brook neighborhood residents (Figure 3).
- The majority of the respondents (nearly 80%) feel that Joey's Park playground is either *Important* or *Very Important* to their recreational life in the community.

Questions 5-8 were open-ended questions.

Figure 5. (see explanations of categories on next page)



Respondents were enthusiastic about many parts of Joey's Park playground:

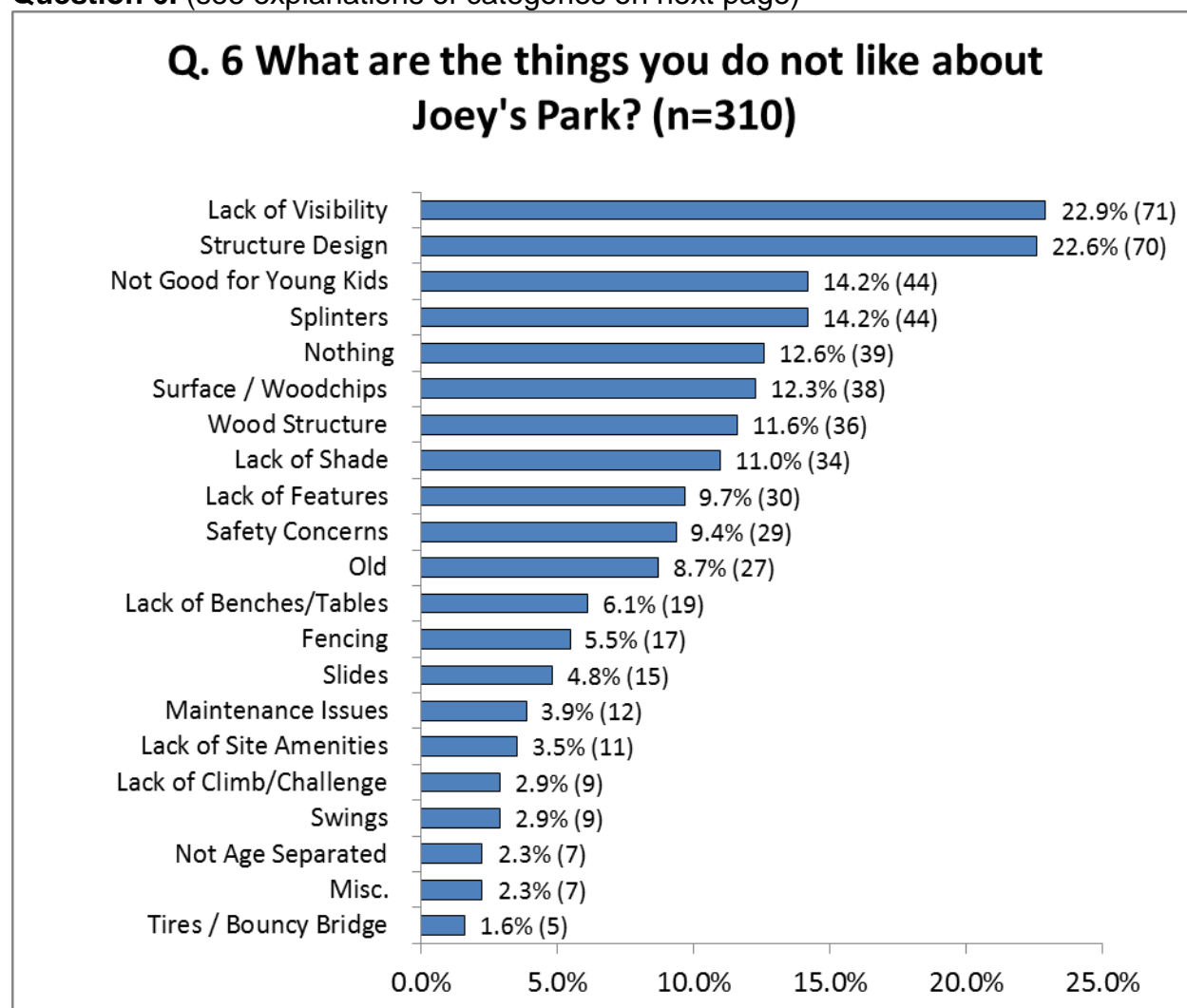
- Of all of the favorite things about Joey's Park cited by respondents, the most frequently mentioned was the playground's unique design. Respondents called it "interesting," "unusual" and "creative" with its towers, castle-like or fort-like design and maze-like interconnectedness.
- Respondents also liked the variety of activities the playground offers ("my kids never get bored!") and felt that its design encourages creative and imaginative play.
- Respondents liked the big size of the playground (big enough for kids to run around), as well as its natural look. For many, that the playground is *not* full of bright colored equipment is a plus.
- Others like that the playground offers the opportunities for hiding, climbing and connecting with other kids and parents.

- Respondents also like the amenities, such as the slides, swing sets and monkey bars and feel the playground adequately appeals to a wide variety of age-groups.

Question 5: What are your favorite things about Joey's Park?

Code	Notes
UNIQUE DESIGN	The playground is interesting, unusual, and creative; like the towers; like the castle-like, fort-like design; it is "old school"; like the maze and interconnectedness.
SIZE	The playground is big; there is open space; space to run around; space for parents to be with kids without getting in the way.
CREATIVE PLAY	The playground design encourages imaginative and creative play and games.
SWING SETS	Like the swing sets.
ACTIVE PLAY	There is open space for kids to run around, get exercise.
ACCESSIBLE	The playground is well-located; access to the fields, soccer, and basketball courts; easy parking; accessible to school kids at recess.
CHALLENGING	Playground design allows opportunities for healthy risk-taking.
NATURAL LOOKING/ WOOD	Like that the playground is made of wood/natural materials with no bright colors; like the rustic look and wooden structures.
VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES	Playground offers a lot of different activities, pieces of equipment, and play spaces; kids never get bored; not a single purpose playground; different than other playgrounds.
BENCHES/GATHERING	Like the places to sit, gathering spots in sun and shade; parents can sit and watch kids; like the "amphitheater" seating for parents to sit.
SURFACE/WOODCHIPS	Wood chips offer soft surface.
APPEALS TO WIDE AGE GROUP	Like that it accommodates kids of different ages; offers challenges for different age groups; there is a variety of equipment for different age groups.
CLIMBING	Opportunities for climbing.
HIDING PLACES	Playground offers Opportunities for kids to hide, play hide and seek; like the tunnels, "discovery space", and "nooks".
MONKEY BARS	Enjoy the monkey bars.
OTHER EQUIPMENT	Especially the tire tunnel, fire pole and rubber/bouncy bridge.
PLAY STRUCTURE GENERAL	Liked the playstructure overall, like everything about it.
SLIDES	Enjoy the slides
COMMUNITY CONNECTION	The playground is a good place to meet neighbors and other kids; nice place to gather; it means a lot to Belmont because of its association with Joey O'Donnell; it represents a nice community effort; valuable addition to the community.
AGE-APPROPRIATE SPACES	Like that there is a separate play area for littler kids; age appropriate play spaces
KIDS HAVE FUN	Kids love it
SECURE/ENCLOSED/SAFETY	Like that it is enclosed; safe from street.

Question 6. (see explanations of categories on next page)



While the respondents gave a lot of praise for the playground, they also had comments regarding what they did *not* like about it.

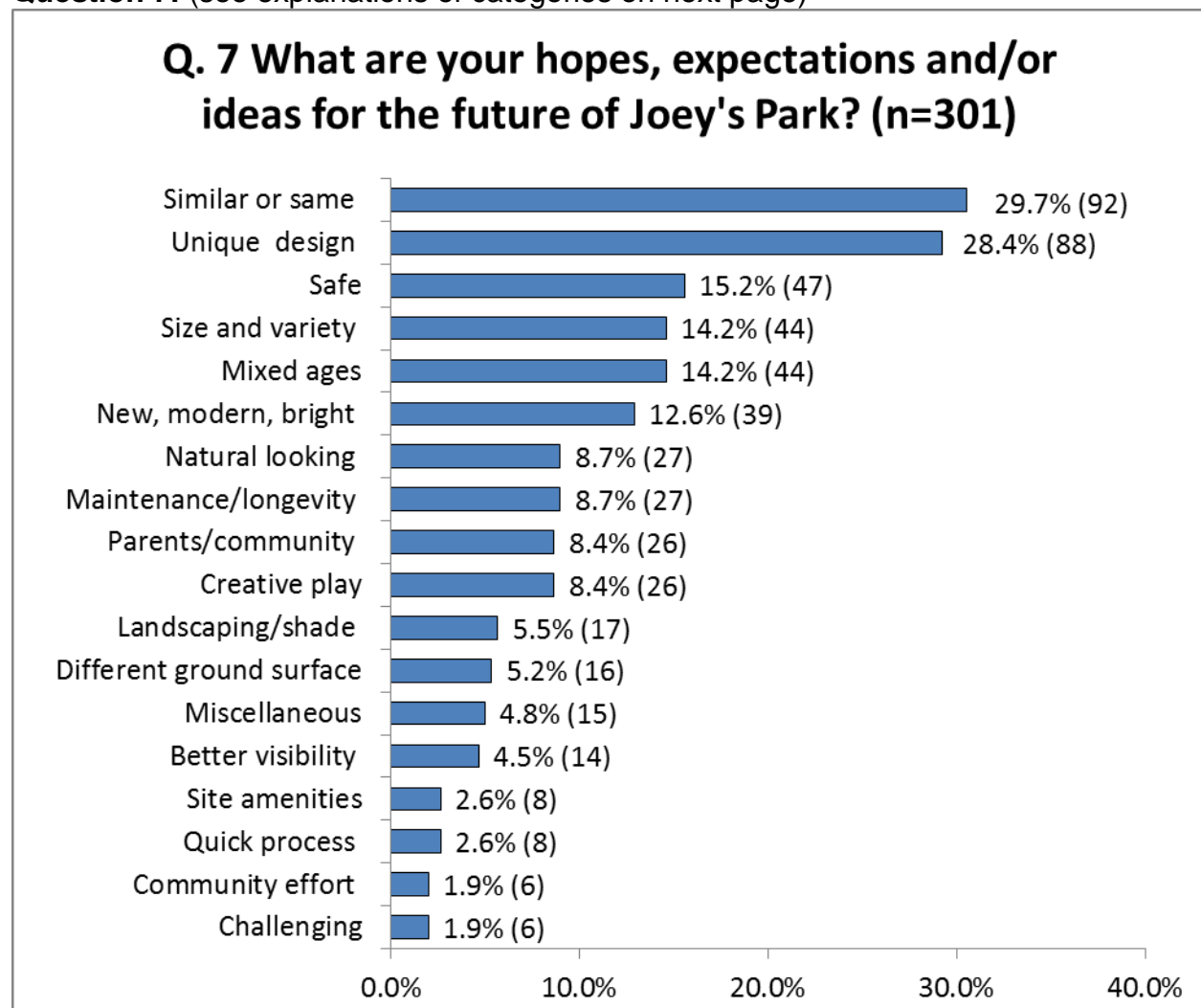
- The most frequently mentioned unfavorable aspects were the lack of visibility and the overall structural design. Respondents found that the structure's design, which includes tunnels, small spaces, open spaces without railings, and low overhangs, make it easy to lose sight of children, especially small children, and often result in falling, bumping heads, and other hazards. Closely related to these two categories, and the third most frequently mentioned, was "Not good for young kids." Respondents felt that the structural design rendered the playground not appropriate for younger children.
- Forty-four respondents said that the old wooden structure lends itself to potential for splinters. Many did not like the wood materials primarily due to the splinters but also because it looks old and would prefer addition of more modern materials.
- Lack of shaded areas, not enough sitting and eating areas for both kids and adults (particularly that are shaded), and lack of site amenities (e.g. bathrooms, water fountains and recycling bins) were also cited as negative aspects.

- Twenty-six respondents felt the structure is old and out-of-date, while 29 had concerns regarding the play structure's safety, in that is slippery, has protruding nails and potentially toxic chemicals in the wood.
- Others mentioned were not enough fencing around the perimeter of the playground, metal slides that are too hot in the summer, and that the playground is not being maintained well enough.

Question 6: What are the things you DO NOT LIKE about Joey's Park?

Codes	Code Explanations
SPLINTERS	The wood design lends itself to splinters or potential for splinters.
SURFACE / WOOD CHIPS	Don't like the wood chips as ground surface; would like different ground surface.
WOOD STRUCTURE	Don't like the wood materials, primarily due to the splinters but also because it looks old; would prefer plastic or the addition of more modern materials.
LACK OF VISIBILITY	Lack of visibility in and/or around structure; easy to lose sight of small children; not "transparent" enough.
STRUCTURE DESIGN	The tunnels, small spaces, low hangings, open spaces without railings and steps can lead to bumping heads, falling, and other hazards, especially for the younger kids.
SLIDES	The metal slides get very hot in summer; slides are not long enough.
SWINGS	Baby swings should be placed next to the big kid swings; big kid swings are too low to the ground; need more swings.
TIRES / BOUNCY BRIDGE	Issues with tires and bouncy bridge.
LACK OF FEATURES	Missing features that were there before (fireman's pole, monkey bars etc.); wanting additional features (water spray fountain etc.).
LACK OF CLIMB / CHALLENGE	Not enough climbing apparatus, particularly for younger kids; not challenging enough, particularly for elementary age kids.
NOT AGE SEPARATED	Young kids and older kids sharing same space; no specific toddler area.
NOT GOOD FOR YOUNG KIDS	Between the tunnels, hiding places and drop-offs, it is not good for young kids.
FENCING	The playground is not completely fenced in; would like to see more fencing, particularly around areas for younger kids.
LACK OF SHADE	There are not enough shaded areas.
LACK OF SITE AMENITIES	No bathrooms, water fountains, recycle bins etc.
LACK OF BENCHES / TABLES	Not enough picnic tables, benches, seating area for adults, particularly <i>shaded</i> seating areas.
MAINTENANCE ISSUES	The playground needs work; not well maintained; parts are in disrepair.
OLD	The structure is old; out-of-date; antiquated.
SAFETY CONCERNS	The structure is slippery when wet; has protruding nails; toxic chemicals in wood.
MISCELLANEOUS	Miscellaneous comments

Question 7: (see explanations of categories on next page)



Over 300 respondents shared their hopes, expectations and/or ideas for the future of Joey's Park:

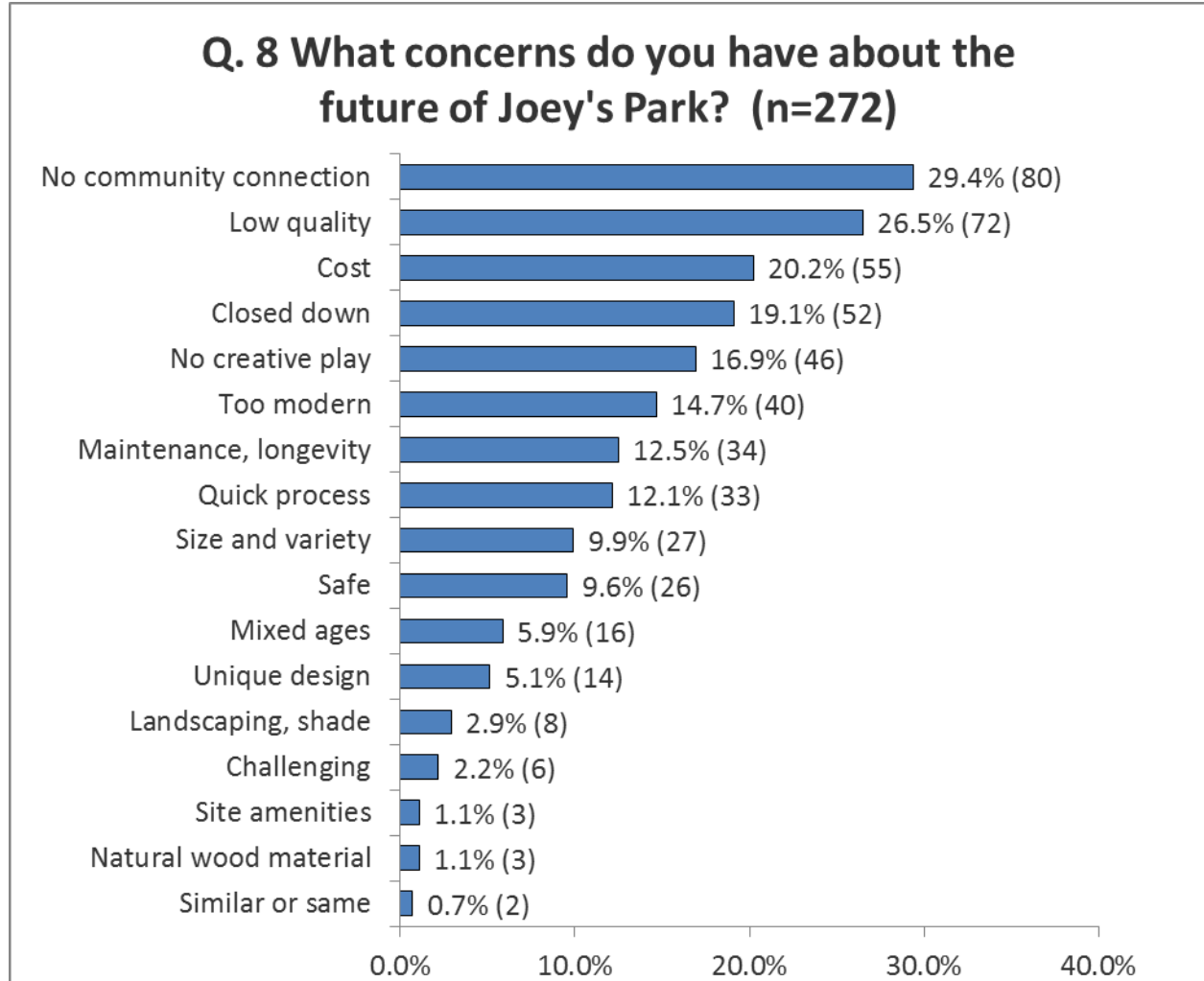
- The two most frequently mentioned hopes for the playground were closely related. Respondents hope the new playground replicates or reflects the character of the current playground. Similarly, they hope for a new playground that is interesting and that maintains its castle-like and creative design.
- Respondents have expectations that the new playground will be made with safe materials and adhere to safety standards and that it will be large, offering variety of options and age-appropriate equipment to accommodate a lot of kids.
- Many respondents hope the playground will look modern and new, while others hope it is made from natural or natural-looking materials (not much plastic).
- Respondents hope for a well-maintained playground that will not only last a long time but also provide a good gathering place for the parents and kids in the community.

- Other hopes include additional plants and shade trees (landscaping), a new rubber surface, and better site lines to improve visibility of children when playing on the structure.

Question 7: What are your hopes or expectations and ideas for the future of Joey's Park?

Codes	Code Explanations
UNIQUE DESIGN	The playground is interesting, and maintains the towers, castle-like, fort-like, "old school", and creative design.
SIZE AND VARIETY	There are a variety of options, the playground is large and can accommodate lots of kids.
CREATIVE PLAY	Encourages imaginative play and creativity.
CHALLENGING	Allows opportunities for healthy risk-taking.
NATURAL LOOKING (WOOD)	The playground structure is made from wood or wood-like composite, includes natural materials, but little or no plastic.
GROUND SURFACE	The playground uses rubber surfacing instead of wood chips.
MIXED AGES	The playground offers challenges for different age groups, with a variety of age-appropriate equipment.
BETTER VISIBILITY	The design offers better visibility and site lines to see kids.
COMMUNITY EFFORT	Desire to have community involved in design, input from the kids, and community build.
LANDSCAPING / SHADE	The playground includes more natural elements such as plants and shade trees.
MAINTENANCE / LONGEVITY	Desire to hold the town responsible for maintenance; desire to ensure that new playground will last a long time.
MODERN / BRIGHT COLORS	Want playground to look bright and modern, new; not "old and wood."
PARENTS / COMMUNITY	The playground has places for parents as well as kids; seating for parents; amenities that go beyond just play equipment; bring in the community at large in other ways; community gathering places.
QUICK PROCESS	That we are not without a playground for a long time.
SAFE	The playground is safe, made with safe materials, and adheres to safety standards.
SIMILAR OR SAME	The playground is like it is now; reflects the current playground; replicates or preserves the character.
SITE AMENITIES	Desire for seating, trash and recycling, drinking fountains, rest rooms, etc.

Question 8.



Respondents shared their concerns regarding the future of Joey's Park playground:

- The most frequently mentioned concern was that the playground would not continue to be a valued community resource for town families and Winn Brook students or would not honor the memory of Joey O'Donnell.
- Similarly, respondents expressed concern that playground would end up being like other playgrounds, not of the same quality as the current one, or would have a "cookie-cutter" design.
- Concerns were raised about the high cost of building and maintaining a playground, as well as the availability of sufficient funds.
- Respondents want as much space and stimulation for creative play as the current playground; they don't want to lose the "wow" factor.
- Others expressed concern that the playground will be too modern looking, including a lot of plastic and brightly colored elements.

- Respondents are also concerned about the length of time the community will be without the playground, as well as the capacity to maintain the playground once it is built.

Question 8: What concerns do you have about the future of Joey's Park?

CODES	Code Explanation
CLOSED DOWN	Concerned that playground will be closed down, dismantled, not replaced.
LOW QUALITY	Concerned that a new playground will not be good quality or the same quality as the current one; will not be the best park it could be; will be just like other playgrounds; will have a cheap, basic, generic, pre-fabricated, or "cookie cutter" design.
NO COMMUNITY CONNECTION	Concerned that playground will not be a valued community resource for town families and Winn Brook students to use and enjoy; will not honor the memory of Joey O'Donnell; won't get proper attention and commitment from the Town of Belmont.
NO CREATIVE PLAY	Concerned that a new playground won't provide enough space and stimulation for creative play as the current one; will be uninspiring, antiseptic play space; won't cater to multiple abilities; will lose the "wow" factor.
TOO MODERN	Concerned that playground will be too modern looking; will include a lot of plastic elements; will smell of rubber; will include too much steel, metal, multi-colored, and brightly colored elements.
CHALLENGING ELEMENTS	Concerned that playground will not offer enough challenging activities; will not offer children growth challenge.
COSTS	Concerned that funding won't be available or sufficient; that money will not be used wisely; that playground will not be cost effective to buy and maintain; will be expensive.
SHADE	Concerned that the new structure will get too hot; that current shade trees and grass will be replaced.
MAINTENANCE, LONGEVITY	Concerned the playground won't be adequately maintained; that there will be a lack of support for maintenance. Want playground to be long-lasting.
MIXED AGES	Concerned that playground won't accommodate all multiple age-groups; won't be age appropriate. Want it to be toddler friendly; good for older kids.
NATURAL WOOD MATERIALS	Concerned that it won't feel like being outside. Want natural materials, wood chips, grass, sand.
QUICK PROCESS	Concerned about the timing of the rebuild: that it will take too long; that it won't be done in a timely fashion.
SAFE	That the new design is safe for the kids and fenced in with a gate that latches securely.
SIMILAR OR SAME	Want the playground to stay the same or relatively the same as it is now.
SITE AMENITIES	Want to keep the picnic tables, resolve litter problem, and improve overall amenities.
SIZE AND VARIETY	Concerned that a new playground won't be large enough for kids to run around; won't have the extended play structure with connections between structures; won't keep small and big kids separate.
UNIQUE DESIGN	Concerned that the playground will lose its unique structure and design.

Summary

In May and June 2012, the Friends of Joey's Park Committee surveyed the Belmont community to assess their needs and concerns regarding the future of Joey's Park playground. The survey consisted of 9 questions and was distributed, primarily, through online channels and, secondarily, in person. The findings from the survey will be used to inform the playground design process and to demonstrate the importance of Joey's Park for fundraising purposes.

A total of 349 people responded to the survey. The respondents were overwhelmingly parents of young children (97% had children - 77% with children between the ages of 5 and 10 and 44% with children ages 4 years and younger) and used the playground with great frequency (66% reported using the playground at least once a week). Over half of the respondents did not have children at Winn Brook School, indicating that the opinions expressed in the survey go well beyond the immediate Winn Brook neighborhood.

Respondents highlighted the significance of having a park like Joey's in their neighborhood as nearly 80% indicated that the playground was either important or very important to their quality of recreational life in the community.

The respondents provided well-informed responses to 4 open-ended text questions regarding likes, dislikes, hopes/expectations/ideas, and concerns regarding the future of Joey's Park playground:

- The community loves the unique design and the natural look of the playground and finds that its amenities, castle and fort-like design, nooks and crannies, and vast size offer a variety of activities appealing to different age groups, as well as opportunities for creative and imaginative play. In fact, respondents expressed concern that a new playground would not live up to the current one; fearing it would lose its "wow" factor or would be a cookie cutter design. The most frequently mentioned hope for a new playground was that it reflects the unique character of the current one.
- Respondents also had constructive criticism of the playground. Many comments concerned the difficulty in keeping sight of children, particularly young children, due to the tunnels and hiding spaces throughout the structure. Many felt that the overall structure made it a bit hazardous to young kids. Many also commented that they did not like the wood material primarily due to the risk of splinters and an old and outdated look; they would prefer something more modern.
- Another theme that arose was the importance of the playground for community connection. Respondents enjoy it as gathering space to connect with other kids and parents and find meaning in its history, a community effort dedicated to Joey O'Donnell. Respondents would like to see seating and picnicking area amenities to improve it further as a gathering space.
- Respondents also hope for a safe, quality playground that has a viable maintenance plan (with funds behind it) to ensure many years of enjoyment and connection ahead.

ATTACHMENT – COMMUNITY INPUT SURVEY TOOL



WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Joey's Park Community Input Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey below, OR go to

<http://www.joeyspark.org> and click the link to the online version of the survey.

Greetings!

The **Friends of Joey's Park Committee** is seeking your input regarding the future of the beloved neighborhood playground. Last fall, the playground at Joey's Park, located next to the Winn Brook School, was temporarily closed due to multiple safety issues identified by playground inspectors. The Town of Belmont promptly made repairs and removed hazards to prevent prolonged closure of the playground. But these were temporary fixes. The park is now 23 years old and playground inspectors estimate a 20 year life span for a playground of this kind. Joey's Park is on town property, and town officials have asked the Winn Brook PTA to form a committee to research options for the playground's future.

The **Friends of Joey's Park Committee** was formed in March and is tasked with investigating repair and replacement options; facilitating the process of playground design; fundraising; and, importantly, seeking community input regarding all phases of the process. The Committee needs your input now, at the beginning of the process, to inform its next steps.

Joey's Park was built in 1989 in memory of Joey O'Donnell, a Winn Brook graduate who succumbed to cystic fibrosis in 1986 at the age of 12. Joey was an amazing and positive kid, loved by his peers and community, and the playground is a beautiful, creative and beloved reflection of their esteem. Made possible by numerous donations, large and small; designed by the children who would play on it; and built by Belmont residents working together in a massive "barn-raising"; Joey's Park stands as a testament to one and every child, and the community that embraces them.

Thank you in advance for your participation. Your input is very important and highly valued!

1) How often do members of your household use Joey's Park Playground? This can include your children and/or when you bring other family and friends to the park (check one).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Once every few weeks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Several times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> I rarely or never use Joey's Park |

2) If you have children, in which age groups do they fall? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 years and under | <input type="checkbox"/> 15-18 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5-10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Over 18 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11-14 years | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have children |

3) Do your children attend Winn Brook Elementary School?

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not have children |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|

4) How important is Joey's Park playground to your (and your family's) quality of recreational life in the community?

___ Not at all important ___ Somewhat important ___ Important ___ Very important

For the next four questions keep in mind the following things: playground design; type of equipment; equipment materials; seating; age-appropriate play-spaces; the kind of play children engage in while there; safety; fencing; sun/shade; and playground surface.

5) What are your favorite things about Joey's Park?

6) What are the things you do not like about Joey's Park?

7) What are your hopes, expectations and ideas for the future of Joey's Park?

8) What concerns do you have about the future of Joey's Park?

9) Please check off how you would like to participate in shaping the future of Joey's Park.

___ I would like to join the Friends of Joey's Park Committee

___ I would like to be put on your email list

___ I would like to participate in another way (please specify) _____

Please provide your name and email address (your name and email address will NOT be associated with your responses on this survey; nor will it be shared with any other parties or organizations).

Name: _____ email address: _____

Questions? Comments? Contact us at friends@joeyspark.org & Thank you for your time!