

Tahola Lane Community Engagement Findings Report

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Overview

On Thursday, August 8th, Daily Acts hosted a Community Listening Session at Tahola Lane Pocket Park with the purpose of understanding the surrounding community's accessibility needs, planting desires, and experiences with the garden. The following ethnographic data points are the primary findings collected during the listening session. We hope that this information will be utilized to inform a scope of work and budget that will beautify the Tahola Lane Park, and allow the space to reflect the communities needs and desires.

Community Engaged

Listening Session participants: 18

Survey Responses: 5

Suggestion Box Responses: 4

Total Community Members Engaged: 25

Primary Findings

The Daily Acts team determined the following primary findings from our listening session and survey engagement:

- The overwhelming majority of community members explained that there are various accessibility issues preventing them from accessing the garden, including ADA accessibility problems, lack of seating, lack of signage, and inadequate shade coverage
- Because of the various accessibility barriers, most participants enjoy the garden only while walking by, but rarely enter the garden
- To improve enjoyment of and engagement with the garden, residents , would like to see infill plantings of shade and fruit trees, flowering perennials, and native groundcovers; this would ultimately require the removal of some large shrubs and an irrigation and rainwater harvesting system repair and/or retrofit

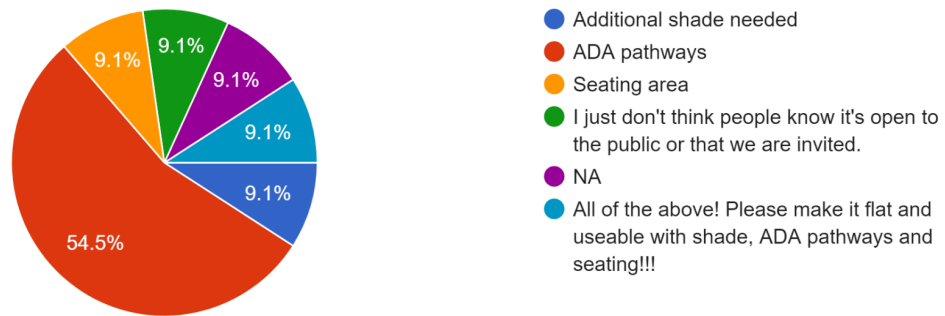
Current Community Engagement

Of the participants we engaged, 57% of individuals enjoy the garden when walking or driving by; 21% almost never engage with the garden; the primary individuals who interact with the garden consistently are the immediate next door neighbors.



Central Accessibility Issues and Needs

As previously mentioned, the immediate residents of the Tahola Lane neighborhood highlighted several accessibility issues preventing them from more consistently enjoying the park. The following subsections will provide further context and details around the community’s concerns and desired changes.



ADA Accessibility

The most prevalent accessibility concern expressed by community members is the need for ADA accessible pathways. 54.5% of participants responded that they would like ADA pathways installed, and many expressed similar concerns in conversations not captured in the survey response. More specifically, since the existing river rock “pathway” and swale is a fall risk, residents would like to see an alternative material utilized that would better support the needs of all individuals.

Community Interview Excerpts:

- *“My suggestion is that the rock path be better for walking if young. The rocks make it easy to trip. This would benefit the littles who walk this area.”*
- *“We need better pathways that are wheelchair accessible, since there are two senior care facilities nearby.”*
- *“I wish it was easier to walk. The rocks are uneven.”*

Moreover, participants explained that because there are two senior care facilities near the pocket park, including Our House and Vineyard Post Acute, ADA pathways, such as decomposed granite, would be a valuable improvement in the space.

Seating & Signage

Another frequently expressed desire of the community, articulated heavily in conversations during canvassing and in the listening session were the needs for seating and updated signage inviting people into the garden.

Community Interview Excerpts:

- *“I would like benches, chairs, a little table, maybe a free little library. There is nothing to do except walk to the back and then leave. A place to hang or sit and read would be nice. It’s a beautiful garden.”*
- *“I always forget it’s a park. I usually think of it as private property. Perhaps more benches? Signs inviting people in?”*
- *“We need signage! Benches, things for kiddos”*

Because most participants feel deterred from enjoying the garden, due to the common misconception that it is private property, inputting clear signage and providing places to sit would effectively increase the community’s interaction with the space.

Additional Commonly Expressed Concerns

Line of Sight

Problem:

Community members feel that the park is uninviting in part because there is a lack of clear line of sight, caused by the large lollipop hedge plants.

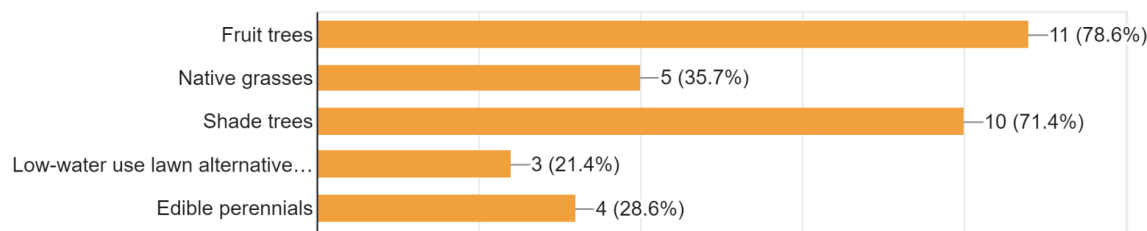
Proposed Solution:

The large hedge plants in the center of the space be removed and replaced with lower-growing low water-use groundcovers, native grasses, and flowering perennials.

Community Planting Desires

In addition to accessibility concerns, Daily Acts also extensively surveyed community members about their planting desires that would better support their enjoyment of the park.

When asked what plants they would like to see more of in the garden, residents expressed clear desires for fruit trees, shade trees, native grasses, and edible perennial plants.



Fruit Trees:

- As captured in the above graphic, 78.6% of residents expressed a desire for more fruit trees.
- Specifically, residents expressed significant desires for pomegranate trees, and some expressed desires for apples and lemons.

Shade Trees:

- 71% of participants expressed a desire for more shade trees, since the space is often too warm to stay for extended periods during the summer months.

Pollinator Plantings:

- 83% of participants expressed that they would like the garden to support bird and pollinator habitat

Low Water-Use Plantings:

- Many also expressed a significant desire for the garden to support watershed health and water conservation initiatives, in part through planting additional low water-use plants
- When asked to mark which low water-use plants they liked the best, the following were the most predominantly selected:
 - Shrubs: Lavender, Hotlip Sage, Sagebrush
 - Perennials: California Poppy, Milkweed, Mexican Marigold, Catmint
 - Groundcovers: Verbena, Lantana

Color Preferences

Most program participants expressed significant desires for a diversity of colors mixtures, particularly highlighting a desire for more purple, lavender, and orange plantings.

Additional Desires

Habitat Features

As mentioned above, several participants expressed that they value a garden that supports bird and pollinator habitat. In addition to pollinator plantings, three participants articulated that they would like to see owl and bird boxes implemented into the space.

Educational Opportunities

To support the Loma Vista School and the children in the immediate community, multiple participants emphasized that they would like the space to incorporate more educational opportunities.

Community Interview Excerpt:

- *“This space is an opportunity to provide a small interactive space for children. Being a lifelong educator, I would like to see it as an interactive space that provides more teachable moments to children 0-12.”*

This desire could be met by improving signage and continuing to support bird and pollinator habitat.

Community Gathering Space

67% of participants expressed that they would like the space to function as a community gathering space. So, ensuring that the space is accessible and inviting will be a central consideration in the Tahola Lane pocket park redesign.

Conclusion

From our listening session and survey conversations, Daily Acts has distinguished the following priorities as most central in improving the community’s use of and experience with the Tahola Lane garden:

- The river rock pathway must be replaced or paired with an **ADA pathway option**
- **Seating areas**, such as benches or tables, and **updated educational signage** would increase the community’s interaction with the garden
- **Shade, in the form of trees or structures**, would also increase residents’ ability to stay in the garden for longer periods of time
- **The removal of large hedgerow shrubs in the center** of the garden would beneficially increase line of sight into the garden
- **Infill plantings** of low water-use fruit trees, flowering perennials, and native groundcovers/grasses would enhance the beauty and subsequent engagement with the garden
- **An irrigation and rainwater harvesting system retrofit** that improves the longevity and self-sufficiency of the garden will be necessary in ensuring the long term success of the space