

CITY OF SAN DIEGO PARKS AFTER DARK

Evaluation Report

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Background

In June 2022, Price Philanthropies (Price) approached Isaac Martin, Chair of the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at University of California-San Diego (UCSD) about conducting an evaluation of a new pilot program for the City of San Diego. Parks After Dark (PAD), which was modeled after a program in Los Angeles, was to be run for seven weeks during the summer in three parks. Isaac asked Julie Wartell, a Continuing Lecturer and Staff Research Associate, to be the lead researcher based on a background in analyzing crime and safety, including working for the San Diego Police Department in the 1990s.

Parks After Dark (PAD) was held from 6pm-9pm from July 14, 2022 through August 27, 2022 at the City Heights, Linda Vista, and Skyline Hills Recreation Centers. PAD was a component of Mayor Todd Gloria's "Come Play Outside" initiative and was a partnership between the County and City of San Diego, the San Diego Parks Foundation and Price who funded this evaluation.

The evaluation consists of two parts – a survey and an assessment of crime. These will be described in more detail in the remaining part of the report.

Survey

Julie worked with Price, the City of San Diego Parks and Recreation Department (Deputy Director Sarah Erazo), the San Diego Parks Foundation (Nancy Maldonado), and a County of San Diego-funded UCSD Health Researcher to develop a survey that would be conducted at each event. Due to the County's Health Researcher requirements, the demographics that were collected extended beyond the needed questions and responses for this evaluation. The survey was created in a mobile application called Survey123 that feeds into a secure database maintained by UCSD. The survey allowed the user to see the questions and response options in English or Spanish. Screenshots of the survey are included as Appendix A.

We received a total of 901 responses. This included 449 from City Heights, 284 for Skyline, 164 for Linda Vista, and 4 with no park listed. The analyses of PAD-related questions and demographics of respondents are described below, delineated by park.

QUESTIONS RELATED TO PAD

Each of the tables below relate to the survey questions and are broken down by park name with highlights in text below each table.

How did you find out about this event?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Blank	All Parks
live in area	37%	39%	44%	75%	40%
someone told me	27%	25%	20%	25%	25%
flyer	21%	14%	10%	0%	16%
social media	7%	14%	12%	0%	10%
other	4%	4%	8%	0%	5%
website	3%	1%	3%	0%	3%
news or media	0%	2%	3%	0%	2%

For all three parks, 64% of respondents found out about PAD because they live in the area, or someone told them. "Living in the area" may mean that they were walking or driving by and happened upon it.

How often are you attending/plan to attend PAD this summer?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
not again	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
once or twice	32%	34%	31%	0%	32%
3-7 times	35%	20%	26%	50%	30%
once per week	14%	15%	17%	0%	15%
twice or more per week	18%	31%	25%	50%	23%

Two-thirds or more of respondents in each park attended or planned on attending PAD at least three or more times over the summer.

How often do you visit this park?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
daily	19%	24%	20%	50%	21%
weekly	52%	52%	54%	50%	53%
monthly	21%	12%	14%	0%	17%
yearly	3%	6%	1%	0%	3%
first time	4%	7%	11%	0%	7%

Approximately half of respondents visited the park weekly with another 19-24% visiting daily. For Skyline, 11% was the first time.

How safe do you feel at this event?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
Not Safe (1)	12%	3%	0%	0%	7%
Somewhat Unsafe (2)	6%	5%	0%	0%	4%
Not safe or unsafe (3)	14%	13%	2%	50%	10%
Somewhat Safe (4)	39%	49%	27%	25%	37%
Very Safe (5)	28%	31%	71%	25%	42%
Avg feeling of safety (1-5)	3.6	4	4.7	3.8	4

On average across all parks, people felt “somewhat safe,” although City Heights was the lowest with 3.6 (between not safe or unsafe and somewhat safe) and Skyline the highest with 4.7, very close to “very safe” (only 2% of respondents did not feel somewhat or very safe, nor did any feel unsafe).

How would you rate PAD?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
below average (2)	1%	0%	0%	0%	1%
average (3)	7%	3%	1%	25%	4%
good (4)	29%	27%	18%	0%	25%
excellent (5)	64%	70%	81%	75%	70%
Avg rating of PAD (1-5)	4.6	4.7	4.8	4.5	4.6

On average across all parks, ratings were between good and excellent with only 1% rating below average. In response to “Would you participate in PAD again?” 100% of people responding said “yes”; although there were small numbers of respondents: 31 for City Heights, 18 for Skyline, and 0 responses for Linda Vista.

Are you attending PAD with kids?	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	All Parks
none	5%	2%	3%	4%
Ages 0-5	53%	52%	54%	53%
Ages 6-12	71%	73%	64%	69%
Ages 13-17	17%	14%	14%	15%
Total People Responding	448	162	284	894
*Percentages total over 100% as people checked all that apply				

The vast majority of people that responded to the survey attended PAD with kids, many with multiple kids. The largest number by age group was 6-12 years old for all parks ranging from just under two-thirds (Skyline) to just under three-quarters (Linda Vista).

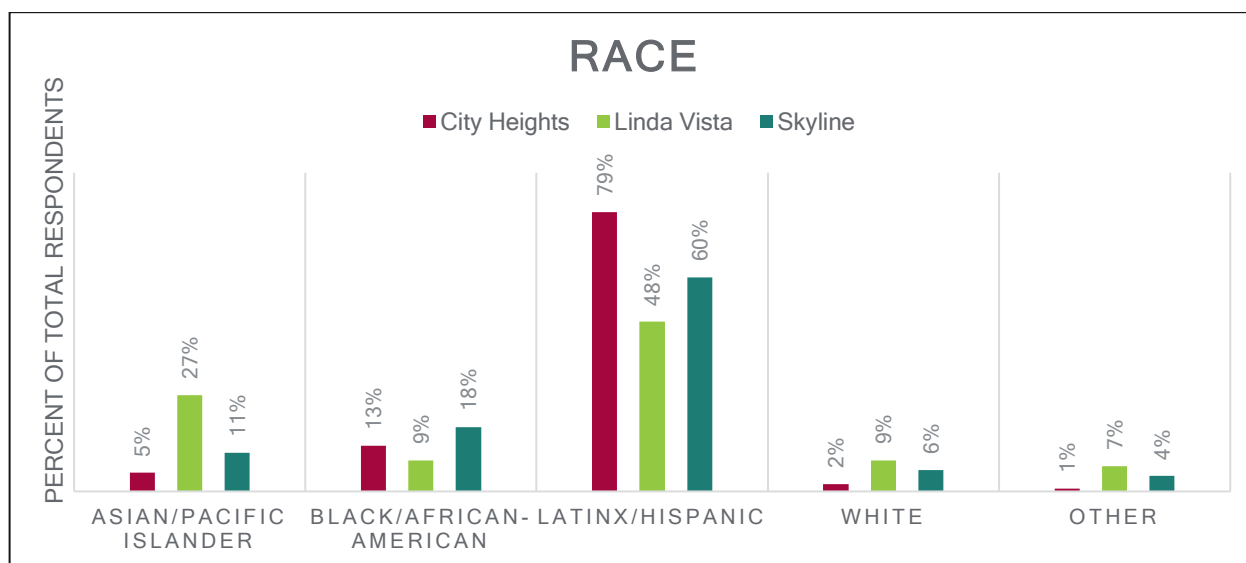
PAD...helps me get to know my community better	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
strongly agree	54%	64%	82%	75%	65%
agree	43%	31%	14%	0%	32%
neither	2%	4%	3%	25%	3%
disagree	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
strongly disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
PAD...makes it easier to get services I need	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
strongly agree	31%	45%	66%	75%	45%
agree	57%	43%	23%	25%	43%
neither	10%	9%	8%	0%	9%
disagree	2%	3%	0%	0%	2%
strongly disagree	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%
PAD...improves relationships bt community & police	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
strongly agree	36%	49%	70%	75%	49%
agree	46%	41%	22%	0%	38%
neither	12%	9%	6%	25%	10%
disagree	3%	0%	1%	0%	2%
strongly disagree	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
PAD...makes it easier to spend quality time w/family	City Heights	Linda Vista	Skyline	Unnamed	All Parks
strongly agree	65%	73%	84%	75%	73%
agree	34%	24%	15%	0%	26%
neither	1%	3%	1%	25%	1%
disagree	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Of the four questions relating to PAD's effect, all had very favorable results with at least 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Regarding helping to get to know the community better, this ranged from 95% in Linda Vista to 97% in City Heights. As for making it easier to get needed services, this was 88% or 89%. Improving relationships between the community and police ranged from 82% in City Heights to 92% in Skyline. 97% or 99% agreed or strongly agreed PAD made it easier to spend quality time with the family.

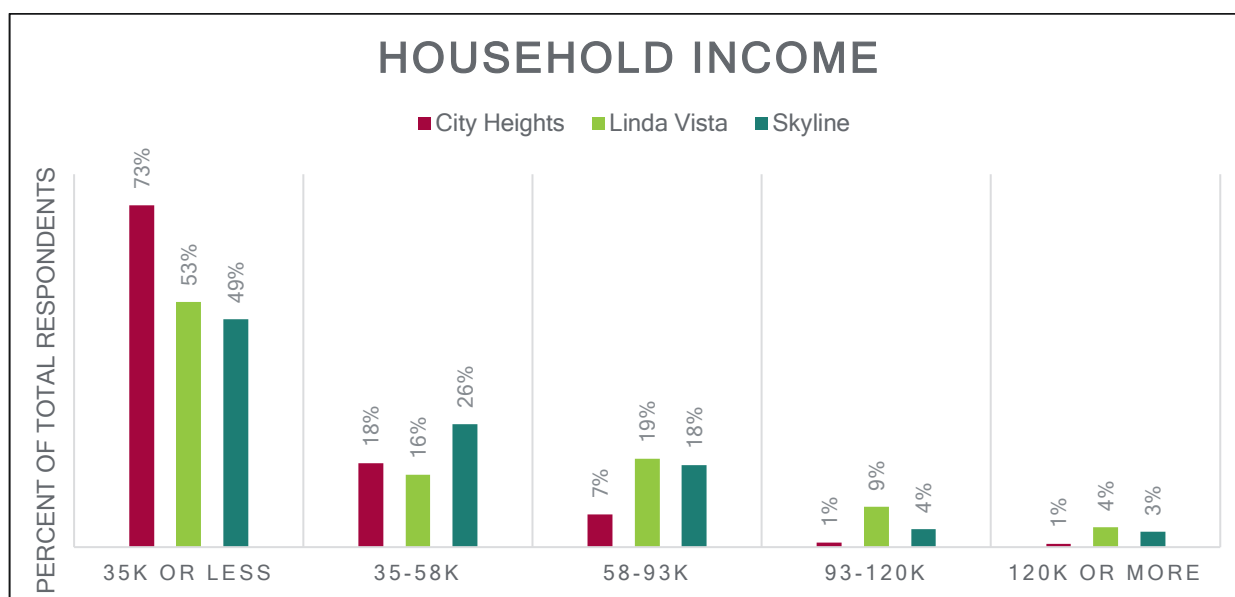
Which activity are you participating in?	City Hts	L Vista	Skyline	All
adult exercise	27%	20%	11%	20%
food	71%	65%	73%	70%
youth games	94%	92%	90%	92%
Total People Responding	434	160	282	879
* Percents total over 100% due to all that apply				

Almost all respondents participated in youth games and 65% (Linda Vista) to 73% (Skyline) with food, but levels were much lower (11%-20%) for adult exercise.

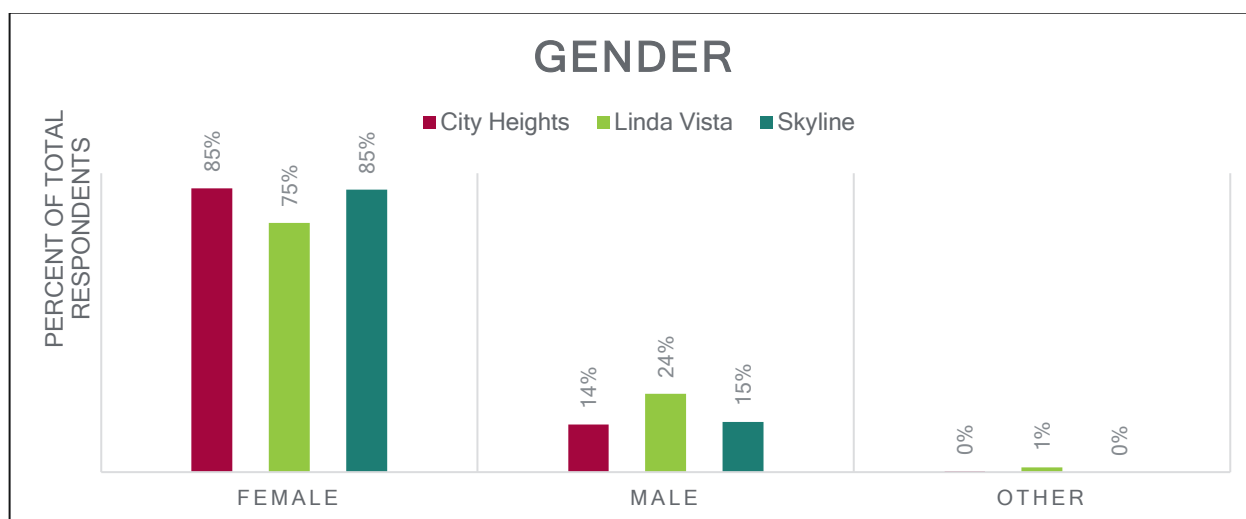
RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



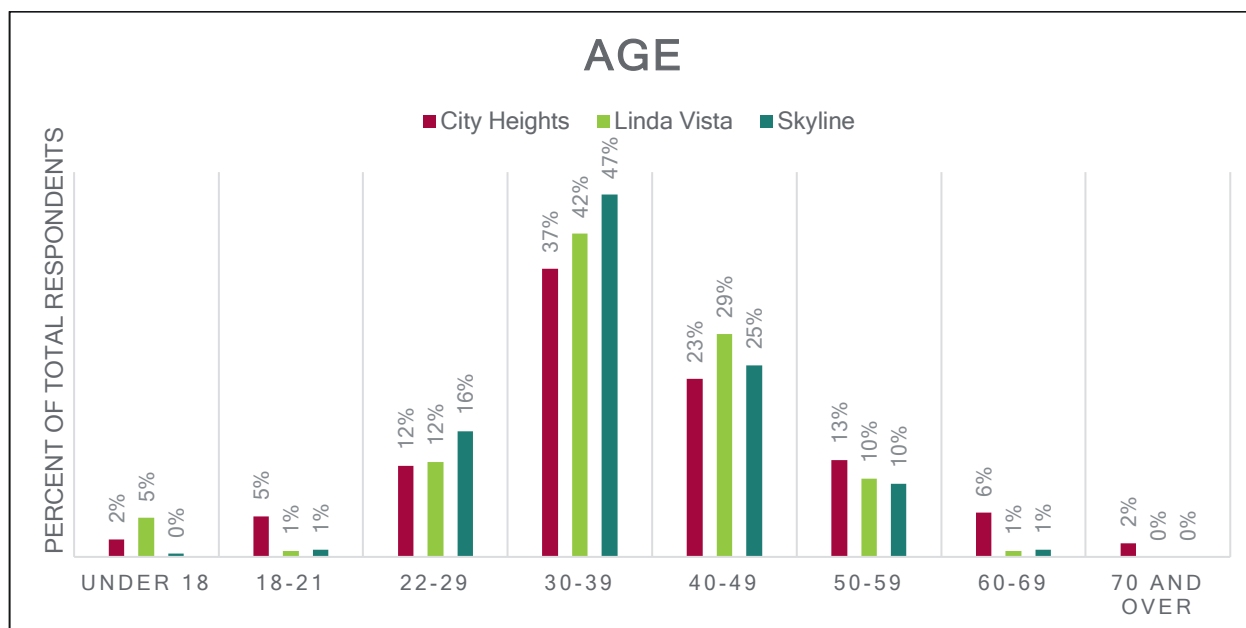
For all parks, LatinX/Hispanic were the largest percentage of race (ranging from 48% in Linda Vista to 79% in City Heights). Just over one-quarter of participants in Linda Vista were Asian/Pacific Islander. These stats are reflective of the park neighborhoods.



Nearly half (Skyline) to three quarters (City Heights) of the participants stated their household income was \$35,000 or less. Combining the next category (so less than \$58,000) increased the percentages to 91% for City Heights, 69% for Linda Vista, and 75% for Skyline.



The vast majority of attendee respondents were female, although Linda Vista had nearly one-quarter that were male.



The predominant age group for all parks was 30-39 years old. Combining this with 40-49 years old, we see more than two-thirds for all parks: 60% in City Heights, 71% in Linda Vista, and 72% in Skyline.

COMMENTS

There were two questions that included an open text field. These responses were combined for all 3 parks but can be separated if desired.

How strongly do you agree or disagree that Parks After Dark... (followed by any suggestions or comments).

We received 380 responses which have been summarized and combined (so not exact wording). There were 110 responses that stated a version of “no suggestions, all good, very fun, brings community and family together, etc.”

The most frequent suggestions (with 15 or more responses) are listed below:

- 47 – more games, toys and activities
- 42 – more security and/or surveillance such as lighting and cameras
- 31 – would like it to continue and more often
- 28 – more food and drinks
- 28 – have the police here and engaging with the community
- 15 – more prizes/raffles
- 15 – cleaner bathrooms & hand sanitizing areas

How would you improve Parks After Dark?

We received 565 responses with 90 stating “nothing/all good.” The most frequent improvements are summarized below:

- 155 – more games, toys, activities for all ages
- 65 – more security (cameras, surveillance, lighting)
- 51 – more food/drinks and more options (halal, healthy, etc.)
- 35 – better advertising/promotion to the community
- 22 – include adults more (food and activities)
- 22 – better on-site organization/clearer directions
- 19 – do it more often, more days/hours and more events like this
- 18 – keeping cleaner (restrooms, handwashing)
- 16 – police should be present

Crime Results

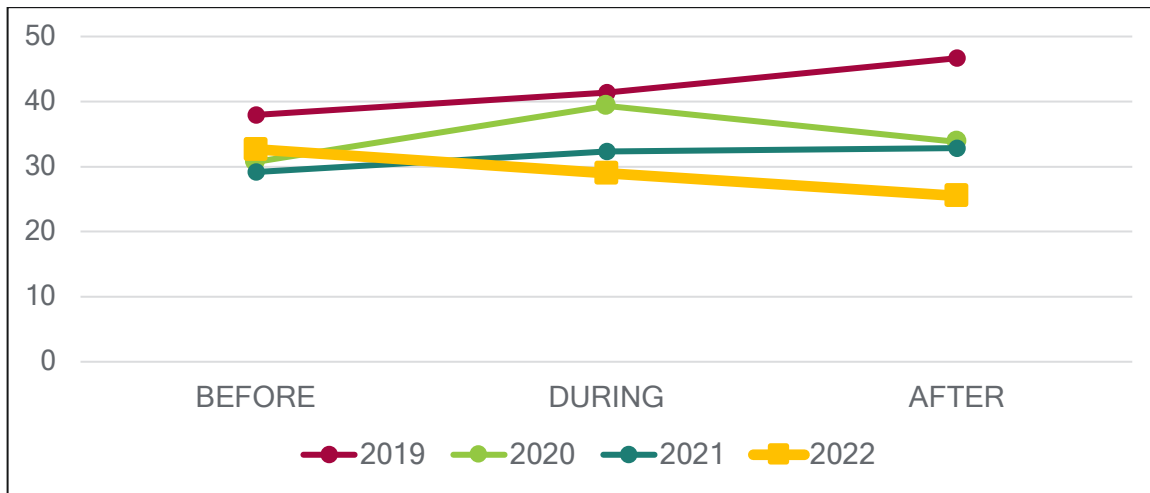
The data that were used for the analysis were provided by the San Diego Police Department (SDPD). The query was for one-quarter mile around each park's Recreation Center address. While SDPD provided crime cases and calls for service, only calls for service were used in the analysis. This is due partially to very low numbers of crime cases, but also calls for service are more indicative of community concerns and include many quality of life and disorder issues that are not captured in crime cases.

The data consisted of June to September for 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022. Because PAD took place for seven weeks from mid-July through August 2022, our "before" consists of six weeks of data and "after" is four weeks. Due to the time frames being different, raw numbers are not comparable, so we created a "per week" rate to be able to look at trends accurately. Additionally, we analyzed numbers of crimes and calls for the specific days and times of PAD for the same seven weeks for each year (Thursday, Friday, Saturday, 6pm-9pm). Lastly, the types of calls for service for each park for the entire time frame were analyzed. These charts and tables are shown below under each park's sub-heading.

The most frequent call type for all parks was "disturbing the peace," and we compared these for before, during and after PAD. The table below shows the rate of disturbing the peace calls per week. For all three parks, they were down, especially for Skyline which decreased almost 50%. After PAD, the rate for all parks for disturbing the peace calls was higher than before PAD.

DISTURBING THE PEACE CALLS PER WEEK (Total for 4 Years)			
PARK	BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
CITY HEIGHTS	34.0	32.7	39.0
LINDA VISTA	7.5	7.4	8.3
SKYLINE	6.0	3.1	3.8

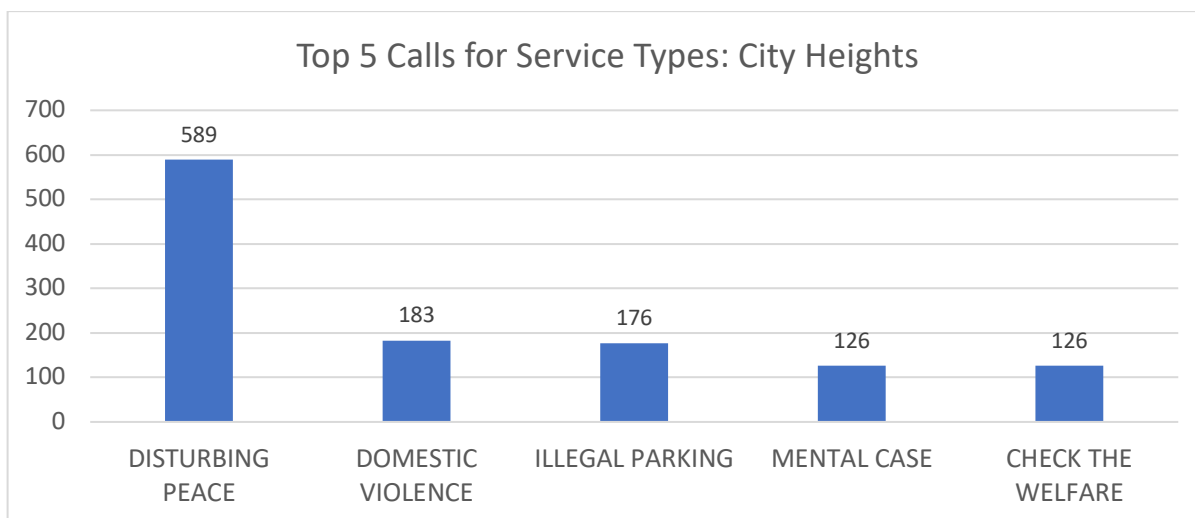
CITY HEIGHTS – ALL CALLS FOR SERVICE



In City Heights, the weekly rates of calls were trending up over the four years except for 2022. Calls were not only lower during PAD but continued down in the four weeks after PAD. Additionally, calls were lowest of all four years for the seven weeks during PAD.

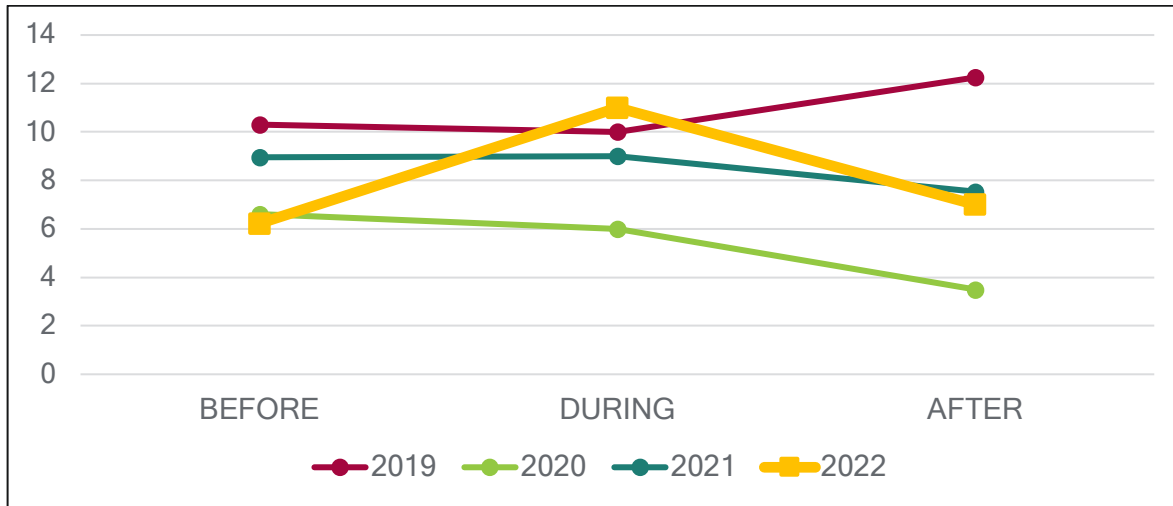
City Heights, during PAD days & times		
Year	Calls for Service	Crimes
2019	18	4
2020	19	3
2021	16	2
2022	12	2

Similar to above, when looking at specific PAD days and times, we see calls for service far lower in 2022 than the previous three years.



As noted above, for all parks, “disturbing the peace” was the most frequent call type by far. One also sees that of the top five call types, most are not instances with victims of crime but instead community concerns.

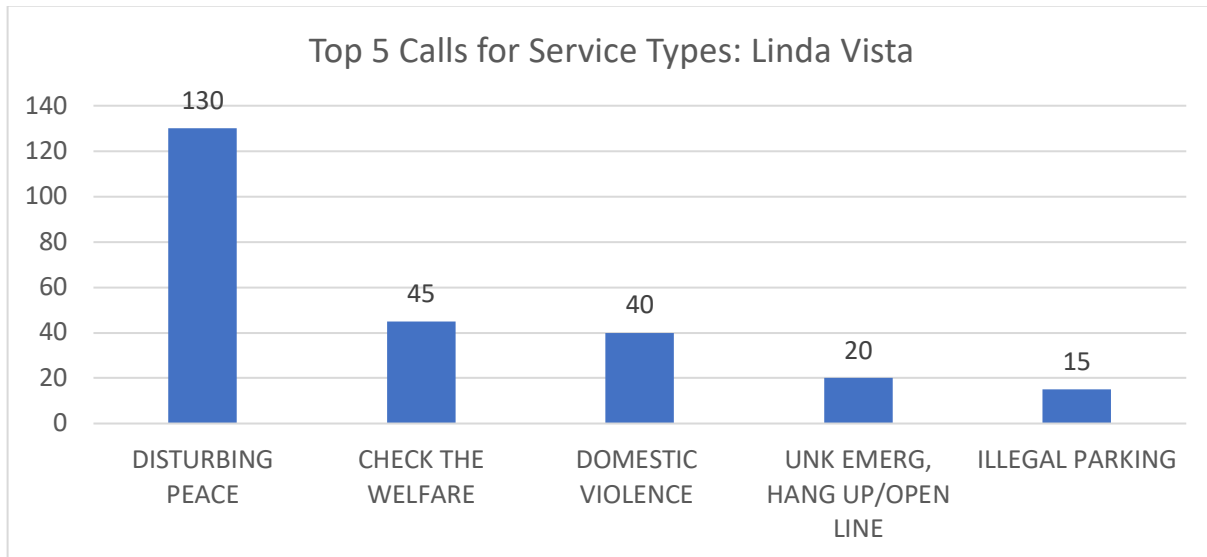
LINDA VISTA – ALL CALLS FOR SERVICE



In Linda Vista, calls for service varied greatly across the four years. Interestingly, during PAD, they were at nearly the highest rate for all time periods (with 2019 “after” rate slightly higher). One might explain this through more people out in the park and engaging with police leads to more people calling with their concerns.

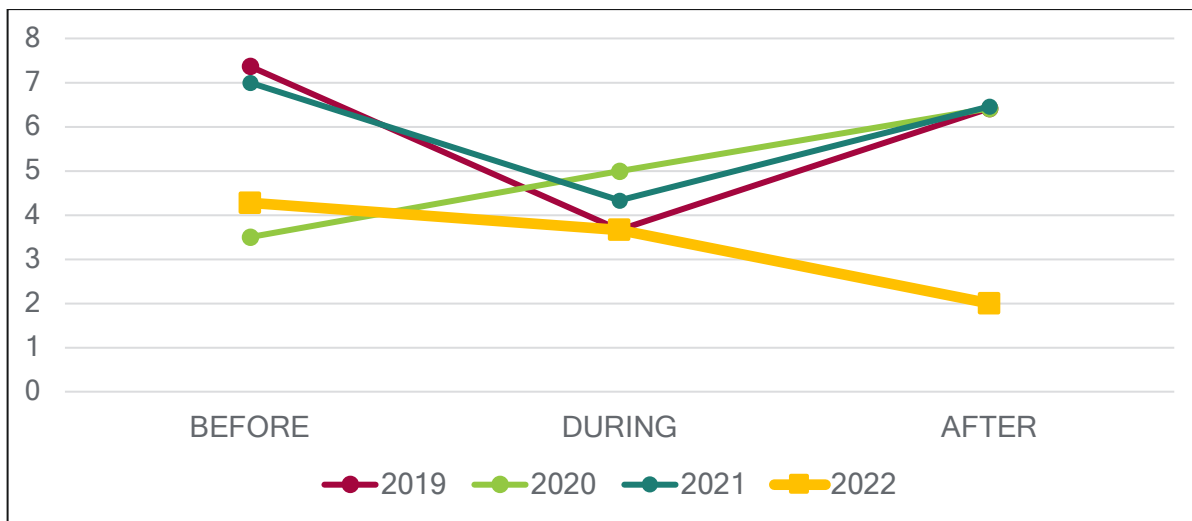
Linda Vista, during PAD days & times		
Year	Calls for Service	Crimes
2019	7	4
2020	5	0
2021	6	3
2022	4	2

Differing from the above chart, when looking at specific PAD days and times, we see calls for service lower in 2022 than the previous three years, although all had small numbers.



Once again, “disturbing the peace” was the most frequent call type by far. Also similar, one sees that of the top five call types, most are not instances with victims of crime but instead community concerns. Different than City Heights, “mental case” calls are not in the top 5, and instead hang up/open line are.

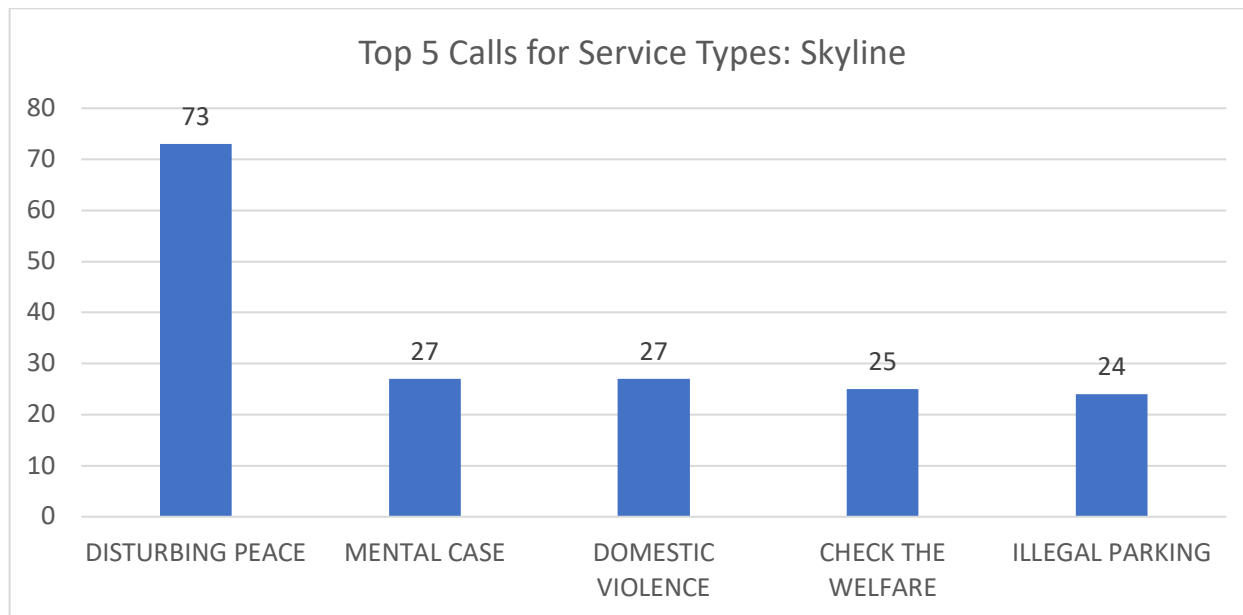
SKYLINE – ALL CALLS FOR SERVICE



In Skyline, similar to City Heights, calls for service trended down in 2022, differing from the previous three years.

Skyline, during PAD days & times		
Year	Calls for Service	Crimes
2019	2	0
2020	2	0
2021	1	0
2022	2	1

The numbers are so small and similar that nothing can be gleaned from the above table.



Like the first two parks, “disturbing the peace” was the most frequent call type by far. In this case, the same top five call types exist as City Heights, just in a slightly different order.

Summary

Based on the survey responses, PAD was successful on several levels. A majority of attendees attended or planned on attending PAD at least three or more times over the summer. Most people rated PAD between good and excellent, and most people felt at least “somewhat safe” at the event. Relating to PAD’s effect on getting to know the community, making it easier to get services, improving relations with police, and spending quality time with the family, all had very favorable results with at least 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

In addition to the survey results, based on the open text comments and suggestions, Parks After Dark was very well received. A few suggestions stood out that should be considered for future programming. These included safety-related such as security through lighting and cameras but overlapping with police. While PAD attendees did not just want police presence but also hoped for increased engagement from the police with the community. On the programming level, there were many requests for food for adults and more activities for all ages. Logistically, cleaner restroom facilities and better site organization for participants in terms of line management and signage.

In terms of police calls for service, during the seven weeks that PAD was in place saw lower amounts of calls, specifically “disturbing the peace” which was the most frequent call type by far. A word of caution, while this crime reduction can be an indicator of “success,” there is no definitive way to know whether crimes/calls in and immediately around the Park’s Recreation Center are directly related to PAD or park activity.

While time and resources did not allow for a more rigorous evaluation design, this could be possible in a future evaluation. There have been numerous studies about parks and their role in safety and crime prevention. This evaluation of PAD adds to our knowledge and understanding of this type of programming and should be used as the City of San Diego plans into the future.

APPENDIX A: Survey

Date*

☐ August 25

☐ August 26

☐ August 27

Parks After Dark Questions ▼

1. How did you find out about this event?

☐ live in the area/walking by

☐ flyer

☐ website

☐ social media

☐ someone told me

☐ news or media

☐ other

2. How often are you attending or plan to attend Parks After Dark this summer?

☐ will not attend again

☐ once or twice

☐ 3-7 times

☐ once per week

☐ twice or more each week

3. Are you attending Parks After Dark with people under 18? (Check all that apply)

☐ children age 0-5

☐ children age 6-12

☐ children age 13-17

☐ none

4. Which Parks After Dark activity have you/are you participated/ing in today? (Check all that apply)

☐ Food

☐ Youth Games & Activities

☐ Adult Exercise

5. How safe do you feel at this event (Parks After Dark)?

☐ 5-very safe

☐ 4-somewhat safe

☐ 3-not safe or unsafe

☐ 2-somewhat unsafe

☐ 1-not at all safe

6. Would you recommend Parks After Dark to friends or family?

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. How would you rate Parks After Dark?

☐ 5-Excellent

☐ 4-Good

☐ 3-Average

☐ 2-Below Average

☐ 1-Terrible

8. How would you improve Parks After Dark?

How strongly do you agree or disagree that Parks After Dark... ▼**9a. helps me get to know my community better**☐ 5-strongly agree☐ 4-agree☐ 3-neither agree nor disagree☐ 2-disagree☐ 1-strongly disagree**9b. makes it easier to get services I need**☐ 5-strongly agree☐ 4-agree☐ 3-neither agree nor disagree☐ 2-disagree☐ 1-strongly disagree

9c. improves relationships between community members and police☐ 5-strongly agree☐ 4-agree☐ 3-neither agree nor disagree☐ 2-disagree☐ 1-strongly disagree**9d. makes it easier to spend quality time with my family**☐ 5-strongly agree☐ 4-agree☐ 3-neither agree nor disagree☐ 2-disagree☐ 1-strongly disagree

9e. Any Suggestions/Comments?

General/Demographic Questions ▼

10. How often do you visit this park?

☐ Daily☐ Weekly☐ Monthly☐ Yearly☐ First time

11. How safe do you feel coming to this park (outside of Parks After Dark)?

☐ 5-very safe☐ 4-somewhat safe☐ 3-not safe or unsafe☐ 2-somewhat unsafe☐ 1-not at all safe

12. What ZIP Code do you live in?

13. What is your annual household income?☐ \$35,000 or less☐ \$35,001-\$58,000☐ \$58,001-\$93,000☐ \$93,001-\$120,000☐ \$120,001 or more☐ Prefer not to answer**14. What is your age?**

Leave blank for prefer not to answer.

15. What is your race/ethnicity?**15a. If multi or other race/ethnicity, please specify.**

16. What is your primary language?

16a. If other language, please specify.

17. What is your gender identity?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Transgender male

☐ Transgender female

☐ Genderqueer/gender non-conforming

☐ Questioning/unsure of gender

☐ I use another term

☐ Prefer not to answer

17a. If other gender identity, please specify.

18. What sex were you assigned on your original birth certificate?

We know this question is odd, and we're sorry but we have to ask it

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other

☐ Prefer not to answer

18a. If other sex, please specify.

18a. If other sex, please specify.

19. What is your sexual orientation?

Select the one that best describes you.

☐ Heterosexual or straight

☐ Gay or lesbian

☐ Bisexual/pansexual/sexually fluid

☐ Queer

☐ Questioning/unsure of sexual orientation

☐ Other

☐ Prefer not to answer

19a. If other sexual orientation, please specify.

20. Do you have a disability? (Check all that apply)

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment or medical condition lasting over 6 months that substantially limits a major life activity, which is not the result of a severe mental illness

☐ No disabilities☐ Difficulty seeing☐ Difficulty hearing☐ Other communication☐ Learning☐ Developmental☐ Dementia☐ Other mental☐ Physical/Mobility☐ Chronic health condition/pain☐ Other

20a. If other disability, please specify.

21. Have you ever served in the military?

☐ Yes, currently in military

☐ Yes, previously in military

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to answer

Submit

