City of San Diego:

Child and Teen-Friendly City

Coalition Meeting #3: Existing Conditions Review

Meeting Summary Report

April 30th, 2025

Prepared by:

City Planning Department

Child and Teen-Friendly City is a County of San Diego CalFresh Healthy Living program implemented by the City of San Diego's City Planning Department. This work supports the *Live Well San Diego* vision for healthy, safe, and thriving communities. For more information, visit LiveWellSD.org. Funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Visit CalFreshHealthyLiving.org for healthy tips.

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2. **Appendix A: Presentation 8**

Roundtable Meeting #3

Meeting Objectives and Agenda

- Provide an overview of information gathered from previous meeting and review the types of engagement activities conducted along with data conducted from respective activities.
- Activity and discussion among coalition members think about what does and doesn't work well from a public realm standpoint for children and youth in San Diego.

Agenda	
Time	**Section**
3:30 – 3:35 PM	Welcome + Introductions
3:35 – 3:40 PM	Summary of Engagement Activities
3:40 – 3:50 PM	Survey + Things We Heard
3:50 – 4:05 PM	Coalition Meeting Takeaways
4:05 – 4:55 PM	Questions + Discussion
4:55 – 5:00 PM	Next Steps

Project Team Present at the Meeting

Facilitator: Kristin Haukom, Senior Planning Associate, Consultant Project Team: Alta Planning+ Design

- City Planning Department Project Team
  - Sameera Rao, Assistant Deputy Director
  - Breanne Busby, Senior Civil Engineer
  - Kusum Mamtani, Associate Planner
  - Christopher Carrillo, Associate Planner
  - Myles San Agustin, Management Intern
- County of San Diego Team
  - Alondra Estrada-Lam, Community Health Promotion Specialist I
  - Elizabeth Cooper, Community Health Program Specialist
-Participants
  - Sarah Tuakli Cooper, Elementary Institute of Science
  - Shana Wright, UC San Diego Center for Community Health
  - Carlos Cristiani, Fleet Science Center
  - Tara Ryan, Office and Child and Youth Success
  - Courtney Baltiyskyy, YMCA
  - Norma Santos, Ocean Discovery Institute
  - Khea Pollard, Café X

Summary

Welcome + Introductions.

All Coalition members were given an opportunity to introduce themselves and staff welcomed all participants and provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

Coalition Meeting Takeaways

The project team shared that the summary of the last coalition meeting will be posted on the Child and Teen Friendly City website, listing takeaways from the previous coalition meeting. The team briefly summarized key takeaways from previous coalition meetings, such as Wayfinding as a strategy, connected neighborhoods and amenities, and youth representation.

Summary of Engagement Activities

The project team presented the summary of engagement activities conducted as part of the Child and Teen Friendly City Initiative. These activities included youth engagement events such as a Resident Leadership Academy workshop with teenage girls and tabling at Balboa Park during December Nights. Outreach meetings with community organizations, businesses, and the Promise Zone were held to build awareness about the initiative.

Survey Insights

A survey was made available online and distributed in paper format during engagement events such as December Nights to gather input from caregivers and teenagers on their favorite public spaces, how often they visit them, and how welcoming those spaces feel for children, caregivers and teens. Key findings include:

- Majority of the respondents (370) were from the City of San Diego, with Clairemont Mesa being the most represented area. In total, 31 zip codes were represented in survey.
- Favorite public spaces included parks/playgrounds, beaches/waterfronts, and specific locations like Balboa Park, Civita Park, New Childrens museum, and Liberty Station.
- Caregivers suggested improvements such as increased parks, improved cleanliness and maintenance, and clean restrooms. Other desired improvements included increased shaded areas, and enhanced security and safety.
- Families tend to visit neighborhood parks and recreational centers during the week, while traveling to beaches or larger parks at a distance during the weekends. This raised concern about equity and accessibility, with some caregivers advocating for better park spaces in underserved areas.

Observational Survey Findings

The project team conducted observational surveys at selected locations in San Diego, identifying common themes.

- Gathering and group spaces: People tend to gather in designated spaces with shade, seating areas and interactive spaces. Also, group sizes varied based on the location.
- Intended use and access: Observed locations were used as intended, with clear signage contributing to this. Additionally, all these locations had moderate to good access via driving and walking, but cycling access needed improvement.
- Inclusive Spaces: The surveyed locations catered to diverse users, with an equal representation of age groups. Libraries offered designated areas for various age groups, encouraging caregivers to allow children and teens to be more independent.

These findings highlight the importance of providing accessible, clean, and well-maintained public spaces that cater to diverse users and promote social interaction, independence, and play.

Questions + Discussion

Coalition members participated in an activity to share their perspectives on what works well—and what doesn't—in the public realm for children and youth ages 0–18. Each participant wrote their responses on three sticky notes per question and placed them on designated posters around the room. Once all notes were posted, the project team read them aloud and facilitated a discussion around specific comments. The following are verbatim responses provided by coalition members:

Things that work:

Separate spaces for cars & children	Flexible seating
Clean restrooms	Water play
Spaces to run, climb, jump and swing	Last mile connectivity with vibrant, active pause points that help introduce safety and encourage people to participate
Colorful play spaces	Door play step
New funding formula in the Parks Master Plan to allocate funding south of the 8 freeway	Libraries – many with kids and youth programming
Low or free-cost events (year-round and seasonal)	Areas for teens to build community
Ample shade in play areas	Context - planning for a specific area
Spaces that promote independent play	

After responding to the prompts, coalition members discussed their comments and shared reflections on what is currently working well in the public realm for children and teenagers.

Members agreed that the following features are especially effective: access to clean restrooms, flexible seating, shaded areas, opportunities to engage with water (such as splash pads and fountains), play areas that encourage climbing and swinging, and colorful, well-maintained public spaces. They emphasized that a clear separation between vehicular traffic and play areas promotes safety and allows for independent or unsupervised play. The group also noted that opportunities for doorstep play —such as small play zones integrated into residential streets or courtyards—are especially valuable for families with young children.

The coalition highlighted the City's Parks for All of Us initiative as a positive step, noting that it provides a dedicated funding source for parks in underserved and park-deficient communities, supporting more equitable investment in recreational infrastructure.

Additionally, coalition members appreciated the City's free and subsidized public events. Programs like movie nights or December Nights were cited as meaningful experiences that foster a sense of belonging among teenagers.

Finally, members emphasized that public spaces are most successful when designed with the local context and users in mind. For example, a shaded seating area located near a school or youth center can encourage teens to gather after class—whereas the same feature placed in an isolated location may go unused.

Things that don't work:

Following the discussion on what works well for children, teenagers, and caregivers in public spaces, coalition members responded to prompts about what does not work well. The following are verbatim responses provided by coalition members:

Areas with cars – parking lots, busy streets	Queues & lines for waiting
Spaces without snacks and bathrooms	Public transportation
Unable to gain a sense of independence anymore	Lack of walkability to parks/public spaces
No dedicated spaces for kids and teens, especially teenage girls	Undermaintained spaces
"Build and they will come" mentality	Lack of knowledge about existing spaces and amenities
Unsafe spaces (physical access, distance, etc.)	Cost prohibitive programming/programming that most reflect needs of adults
Height of sinks, toilets, etc.	Relationship with unhoused populations

Coalition members shared that play areas located too close to parking lots can be a source of stress for both children and caregivers. They also noted that the absence of clean restrooms and opportunities to purchase snacks at parks and recreation centers often discourages caregivers with young children from visiting these spaces regularly.

Members expressed concern that the urban realm for today's children and teenagers is shrinking. Compared to several decades ago, there are fewer opportunities for youth to independently walk or bike to destinations, limiting their autonomy. Additionally, coalition members highlighted that current public spaces often overlook the needs of teenage girls, and that failing to consider local context and user needs during the design process has contributed to the creation of underused spaces throughout the city.

Participants also pointed out that many public restrooms lack child-sized toilets and sinks, which reduces children's independence and increases reliance on adult assistance. Public transportation was another key concern, with members expressing that it is widely perceived as unsafe—especially for families with young children—which limits access to beaches and other public spaces for those without cars or who choose to limit car use. The lack of parks within walking distance from homes, combined with inadequate safe transit options, makes public spaces less accessible for resource-constrained families.

During the activity, participants also engaged in a meaningful conversation about our relationship with unhoused individuals, including unhoused youth and teenagers. They acknowledged that while certain situations can pose safety concerns, being unhoused is not a crime and should not be inherently viewed as a threat. Several members emphasized that a significant number of students within the San Diego Unified School District are currently unhoused—highlighting the need for more inclusive and empathetic approaches to public space planning.

Next Steps

The project team provided an overview of next steps, which include the following:

- Existing Conditions Report to be published soon.
- Community Engagement with youth around San Diego
- The project team will work on drafting Child and Teen Friendly Design Policy Document and identifying funding for the Placemaking Project
- A future coalition meeting will be scheduled in June 2025



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A city designed to be child-friendly and supportive of a healthy childhood is a better city for everyone.

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Summary of Engagement Activities

- **2** coalition meetings
- **4** youth engagement events
- **16** meetings focused on building awareness
- **370** surveys completed
- **500** postcards submitted
- **1400+** people engaged









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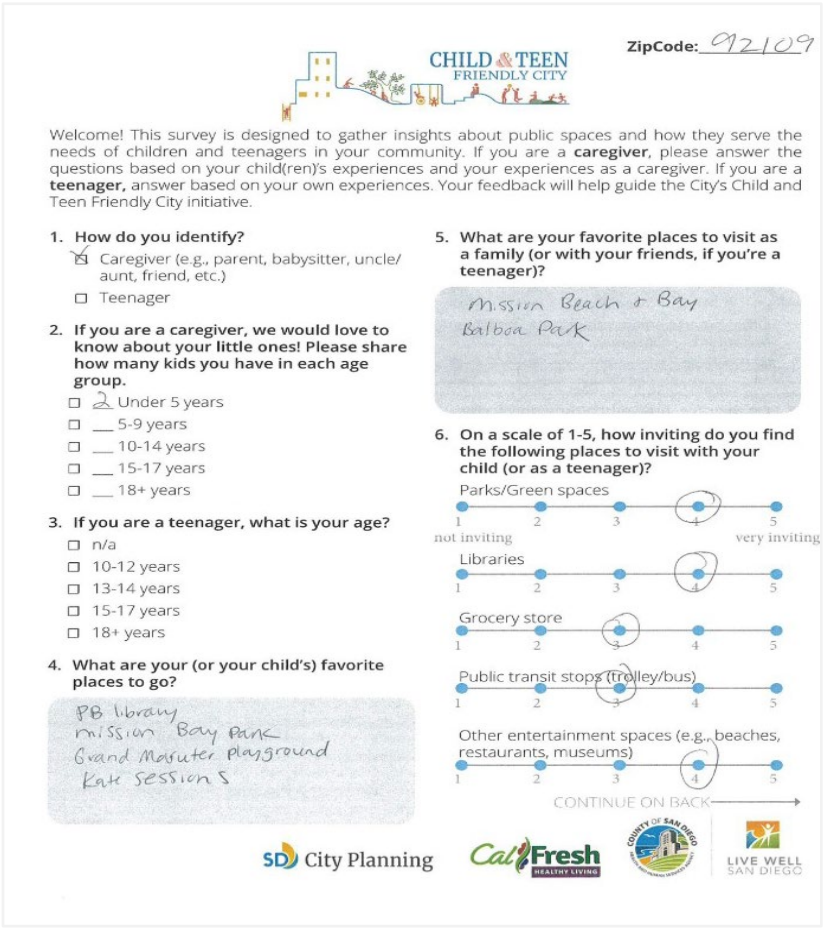
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Caregiver Surveys



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ZipCode: 92109

Welcome! This survey is designed to gather insights about public spaces and how they serve the needs of children and teenagers in your community. If you are a **caregiver**, please answer the questions based on your child(ren)'s experiences and your experiences as a caregiver. If you are a **teenager,** answer based on your own experiences. Your feedback will help guide the City's Child and Teen Friendly City initiative.

1. **How do you identify?**
   - ☒ Caregiver (e.g., parent, babysitter, uncle/aunt, friend, etc.)
   - ☐ Teenager
2. **If you are a caregiver, we would love to know about your little ones! Please share how many kids you have in each age group.**
   - ☐ 2 Under 5 years
   - ☐ ___ 5-9 years
   - ☐ ___ 10-14 years
   - ☐ ___ 15-17 years
   - ☐ ___ 18+ years
3. **If you are a teenager, what is your age?**
   - ☐ n/a
   - ☐ 10-12 years
   - ☐ 13-14 years
   - ☐ 15-17 years
   - ☐ 18+ years
4. **What are your (or your child's) favorite places to go?**

   PB library
   mission Bay Park
   Grand Masuter playground
   Kate Sessions
5. **What are your favorite places to visit as a family (or with your friends, if you're a teenager)?**

   Mission Beach & Bay
   Balboa Park
6. **On a scale of 1-5, how inviting do you find the following places to visit with your child (or as a teenager)?**

   Parks/Green spaces: 1 2 3 4 5 (not inviting … very inviting)

   Libraries: 1 2 3 4 5

   Grocery store: 1 2 3 4 5

   Public transit stops (trolley/bus): 1 2 3 4 5

   Other entertainment spaces (e.g., beaches, restaurants, museums): 1 2 3 4 5

CONTINUE ON BACK →

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7. **How often do you (or your child) visit the following places?**

   Parks/Green spaces: Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Daily

   Libraries: Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Daily

   Grocery store: Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Daily

   Public transit stops (trolley/bus): Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Daily

   Other entertainment spaces (e.g., beaches, restaurants, museums): Never · Rarely · Sometimes · Often · Daily
8. **On average, how much time do you (or your child) spend at the following places each time you visit?**

   Parks/Green spaces: 0-30 min. · 30-60 min. · 60-90 min. · 90-120 min. · 2+hrs.

   Libraries: 0-30 min. · 30-60 min. · 60-90 min. · 90-120 min. · 2+hrs.

   Grocery store: 0-30 min. · 30-60 min. · 60-90 min. · 90-120 min. · 2+hrs.

   Public transit stops (trolley/bus): 0-30 min. · 30-60 min. · 60-90 min. · 90-120 min. · 2+hrs.

   Other entertainment spaces (e.g., beaches, restaurants, museums): 0-30 min. · 30-60 min. · 60-90 min. · 90-120 min. · 2+hrs.
9. **What improvements can help make these places more enjoyable for you (or your child, for caregivers)?**

   more shaded areas
   less woodchip parks & more foam/ rubber like Encinitas community park
10. **Is there anything else you would like to share about public spaces in your community?**

    n/a

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences. Your input is valuable and will help shape the City's Child and Teen-Friendly City initiative.

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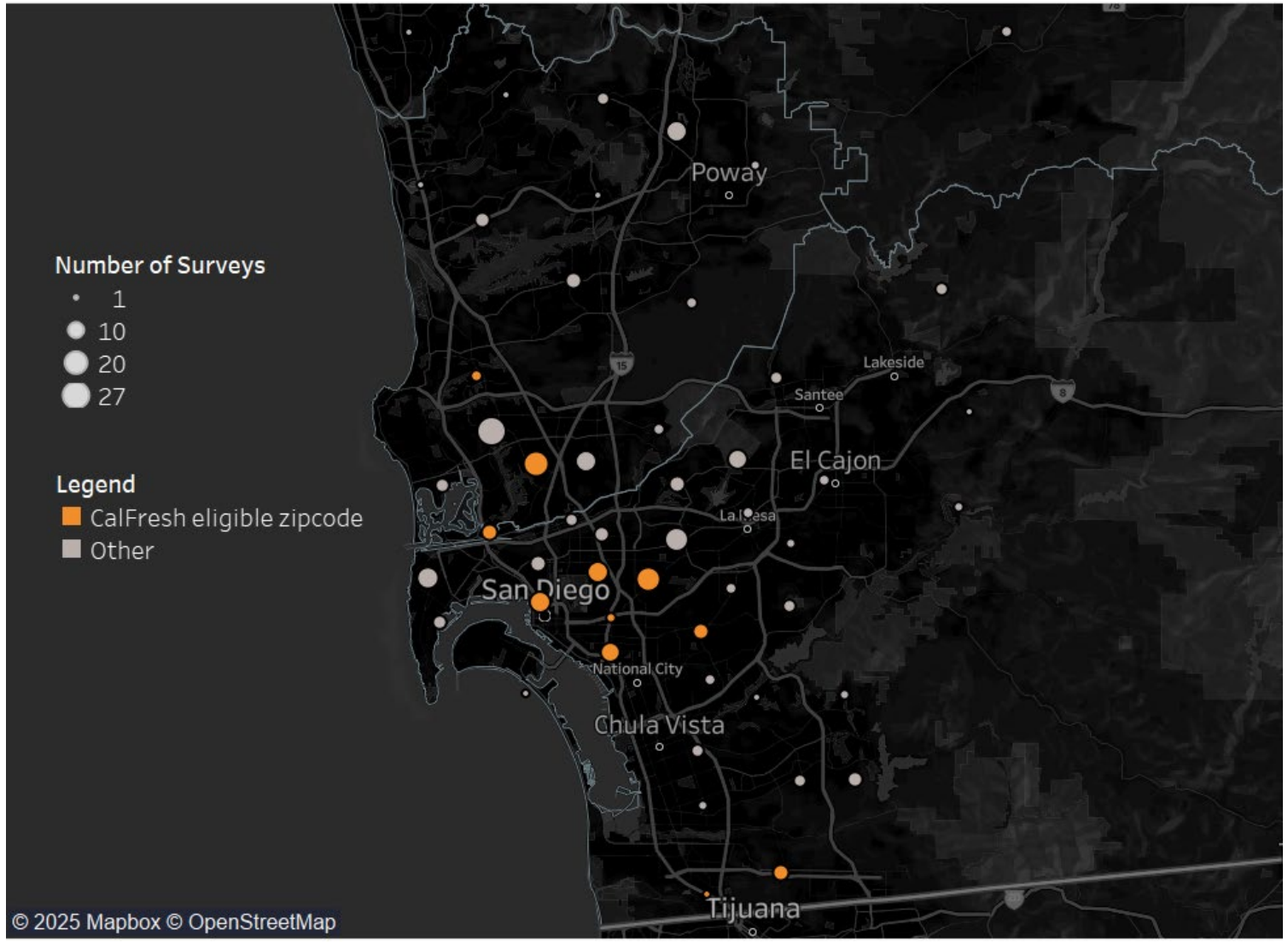




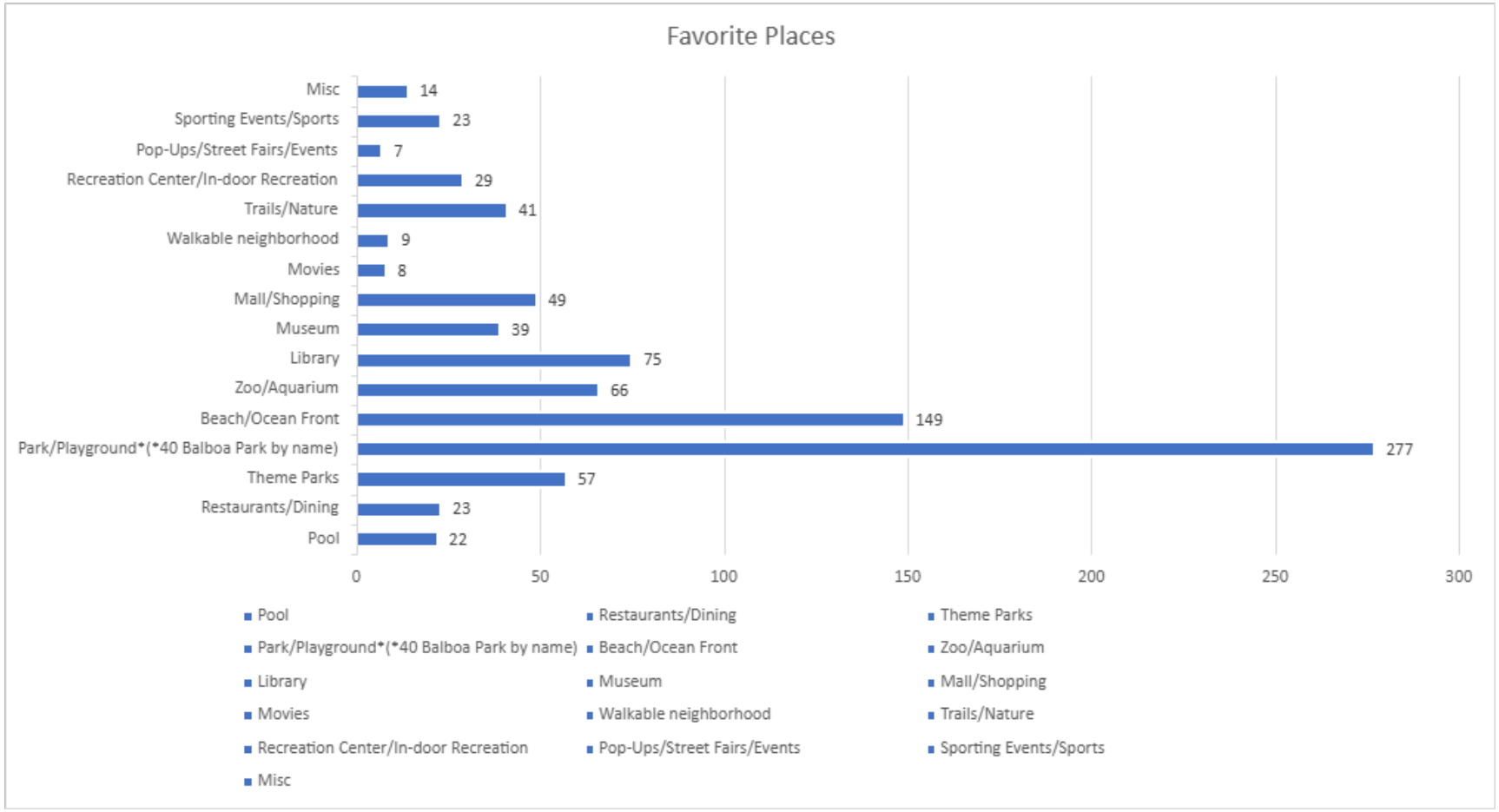
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Things We Heard

Survey Participant Locations



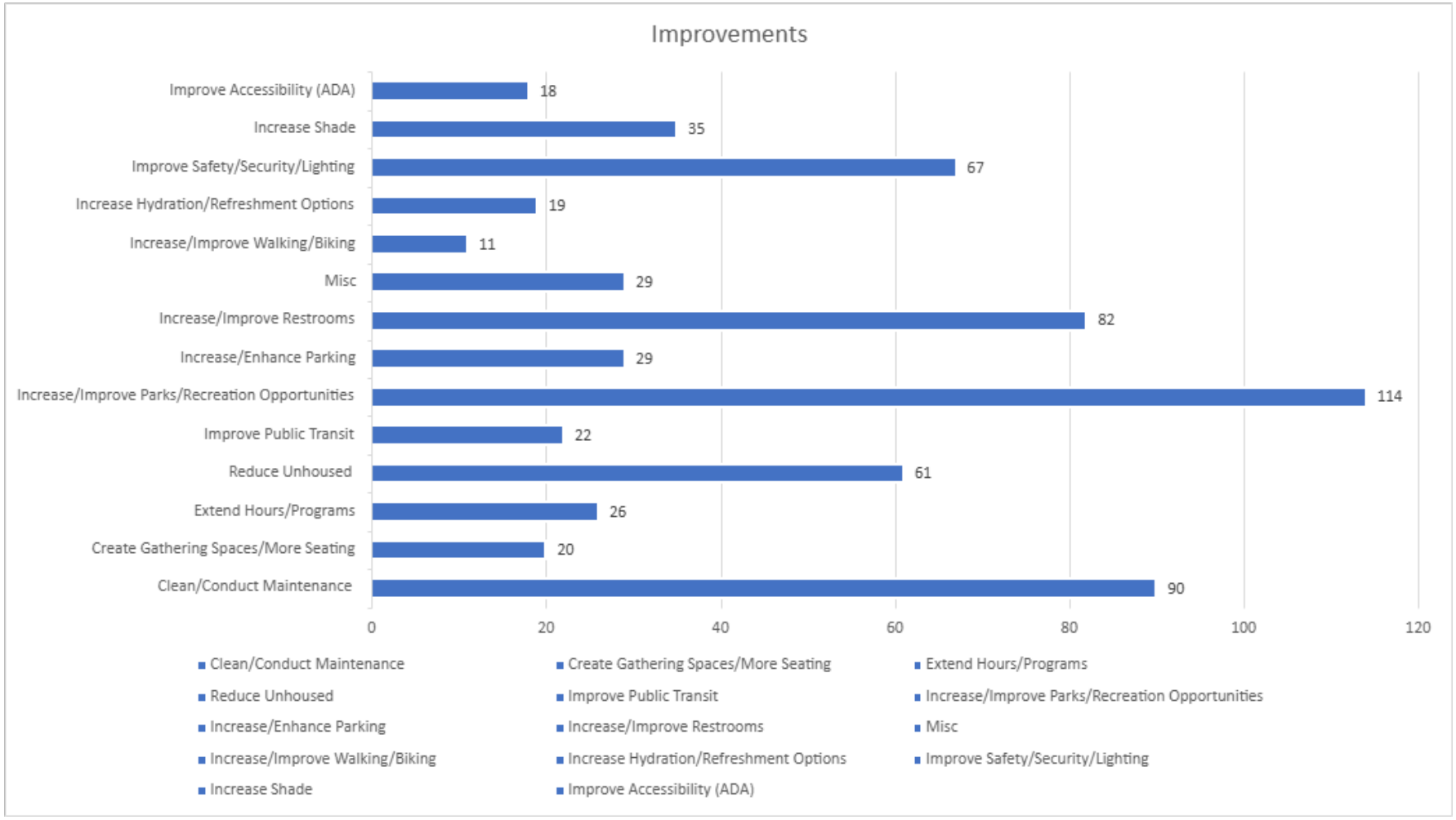
Things We Heard



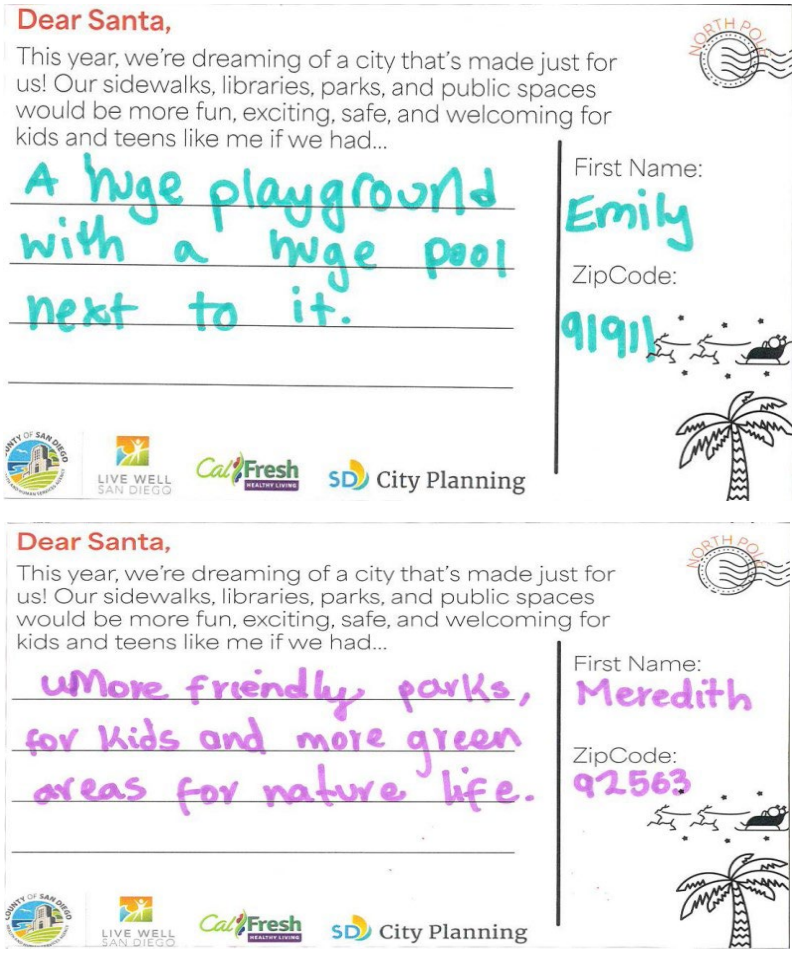
The top named favorite places:

- Balboa Park
- Children’s Museum
- Civita Park
- Liberty Station
- Mission Bay/Beach
- Sea World
- Tecolote (Beach and Park)
- Waterfront Park

Things We Heard



Letters to Santa


Dear Santa,

This year, we're dreaming of a city that's made just for us! Our sidewalks, libraries, parks, and public spaces would be more fun, exciting, safe, and welcoming for kids and teens like me if we had...

A huge playground with a huge pool next to it.

First Name: Emily

ZipCode: 91911

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Dear Santa,

This year, we're dreaming of a city that's made just for us! Our sidewalks, libraries, parks, and public spaces would be more fun, exciting, safe, and welcoming for kids and teens like me if we had...

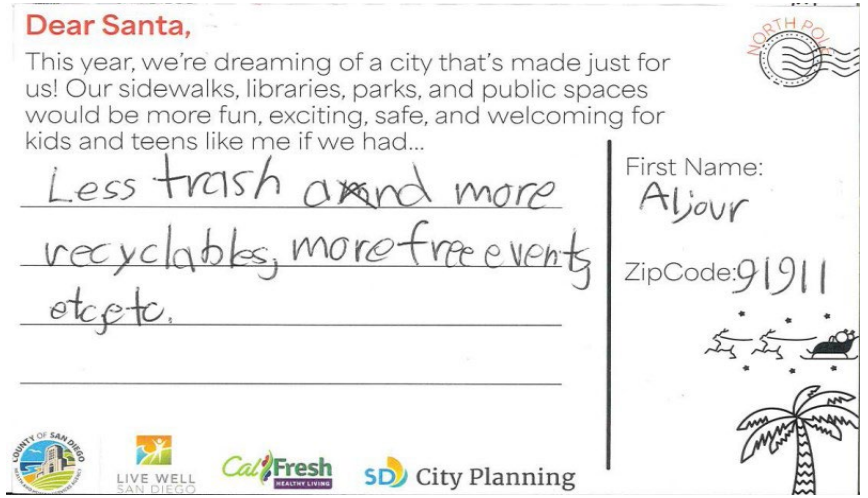
more friendly parks, for kids and more green areas for nature life.

First Name: Meredith

ZipCode: 92563

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Dear Santa,

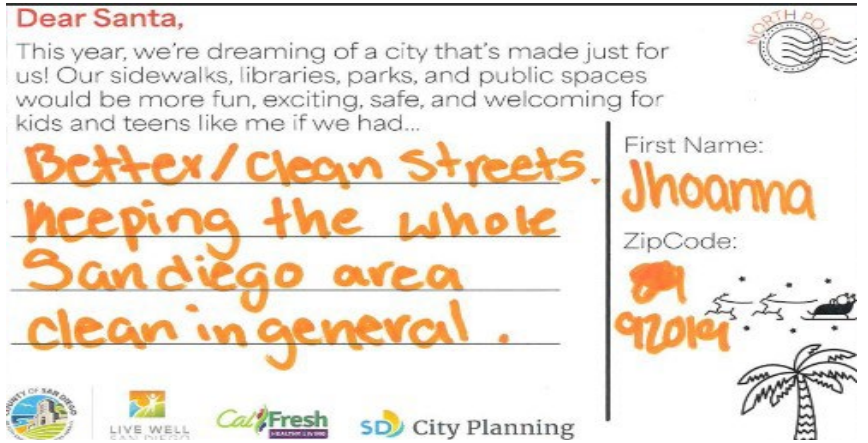
This year, we're dreaming of a city that's made just for us! Our sidewalks, libraries, parks, and public spaces would be more fun, exciting, safe, and welcoming for kids and teens like me if we had...

Less trash and more recyclables, more free events etc. etc.

First Name: Aljour

ZipCode: 91911

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Dear Santa,

This year, we're dreaming of a city that's made just for us! Our sidewalks, libraries, parks, and public spaces would be more fun, exciting, safe, and welcoming for kids and teens like me if we had...

Better / clean streets. keeping the whole San diego area clean in general.

First Name: Jhoanna

ZipCode: 92019

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Things We Heard

- *Gathering and Group Spaces*
- *Intended Use + Access to the Location*
- *Spaces Suited for a Range of Users*







Coalition Meeting Takeaways



Wayfinding as a strategy

Connected neighborhood amenities and neighborhoods

Our Vision:

We envision mixed communities—embracing diversity in race, income, and age—that are connected through thoughtful pathways, allowing people to access spaces without feeling isolated or secluded.

Youth representation matters

Spaces and buildings that fosters independence for all ages

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Sites Selected for Observational Surveys

Linda Vista Recreation Center
City Heights Weingart Branch Library
Logan Memorial Educational Campus
Old Town Trolley Center
University Avenue and 50th Street

Bonus Add: San Ysidro Library



Resident Leadership Academy Workshop









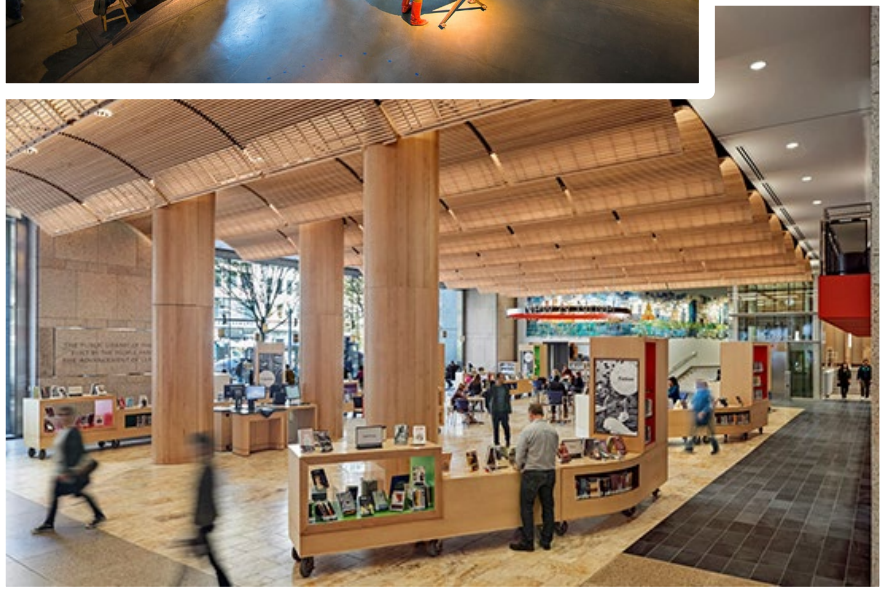
Libraries

Libraries and interactive learning centers can serve as public gathering spaces that provide services and programming for kids, as well as providing public spaces to gather without the expectation of payment.









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Parks

Parks provide spaces for residents of all ages to gather and play, especially kids. They provide space for sports, playgrounds, programming, festivals and other community building activities







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Questions + Discussion

Question 1: What are 3 things that work for ages 0-18

Question 2: What are 3 things that don't work for ages 0-18?

2025 Next Steps

- Existing Conditions Report |May
- Community Engagement | June
- Placemaking Project | July

Next Coalition Meeting | June

Thank you!

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