



Parks and Recreation Commission Staff Report

From: Daren Anderson, Assistant Director Community services

Meeting Date: March 28, 2023

TITLE

Results of Community Outreach for Proposed Palo Alto Recreation Wellness Center

BACKGROUND

The City of Palo Alto's Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan¹ (Master Plan) identifies a shortage of indoor recreation space. The Master Plan identifies several high-priority projects needing further study and strategic funding including a new public gymnasium. The Parks Master Plan states the following regarding gyms:

- As a means of responding to growth and to maintain, expand, and provide future programming, at least one multi-purpose gymnasium is recognized as a community need.
- Increasing sports facilities, sharing of facilities, and adjusting facility scheduling should be investigated.
- Sports programs, particularly middle school athletics and adult sports, are operating over capacity, with full teams and waitlists for most offerings. These programs are not easily expanded, as they rely on limited gym and field space.
- The highest participation in City programs is in sports (adult and youth), aquatics (youth and teen) and day camps. Continued demand for these program areas is anticipated, and program offerings should respond to this demand.
- Intramural sports provide the opportunity for children to learn a new sport, develop social skills, practice teamwork and build friendships. They also promote an active and healthy lifestyle. Palo Alto will explore creating an intramural sports program for middle and high school students. Implementation of intramurals will require coordination with PAUSD and would require additional field and gym space.

¹ City of Palo Alto Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan; September 2017;
<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/public-works/palo-alto-parks-master-plan.pdf>

The City of Palo Alto (City) does not own any recreational gymnasiums. The City currently leases the gyms at Cubberley (Gyms A and B and the Pavilion) from Palo Alto Unified School District. Gyms A and B have been closed since February 2022 due to water damage caused by several pipe failures. In addition to Cubberley, the Lucie Stern and Mitchell Park Community Centers are used for youth and adult recreational programming, however; space is limited especially in the summer and cannot accommodate uses such as organized sports leagues, drop-in sports and activities, and intramurals.

In 2019 the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) created a Recreation Opportunities Ad Hoc Committee to begin discussing about high priority recreation facilities as identified in the Master Plan. The Ad Hoc Committee prepared a memo² describing the need for a recreational gymnasium in Palo Alto and on November 17, 2021, the PRC voted unanimously to pass the following motion:

The Parks and Recreation Commission supports investigating a plan, design, and construction of a new public gymnasium, consistent with the Parks Master Plan. The Commission requests City Council to direct staff and the Commission to assess and conduct public outreach on a new gym project, including location, site considerations, gym features and requirements, construction and operations costs, funding timeline, demand assessment, and prioritization of projects. Feasibility is based upon privately funded construction and operation. A status update will be provided to City Council during calendar year 2022.

On March 7, 2022,³ the Parks and Recreation Commission presented to the City Council the need for a new recreational gym and recommended the Council direct staff and the PRC to assess and conduct public outreach on a new gym project, including location, site considerations, gym features and requirements, construction and operations costs, funding timeline, demand assessment, and prioritization of projects. The Council voted unanimously to direct staff and the Parks and Recreation Commission to conduct public outreach on a new gym, including location, siting, gym features, cost estimates, funding timeline, demand assessment and prioritization of projects. PRC to also investigate fundraising.

ANALYSIS

As an initial response to the Council's direction, Community Services staff and the Ad Hoc hosted a community meeting on March 7, 2023 to discuss the proposed Recreation Wellness Center. Additionally, an Open Town Hall online survey was available from March 7th through March 21st to offer an alternative method of providing feedback. The focus of both the meeting and the survey was to obtain initial feedback related to the location, facility amenities, and programming of a Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.

² <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/files/assets/public/agendas-minutes-reports/agendas-minutes/parks-and-recreation-commission/agendas-minutes/2021-agendas-and-minutes/final-city-gym-111021.pdf>

³ City Council, March 7, 2022; Agenda Item #6; Staff Report #14077, <https://portal.laserfiche.com/Portal/DocView.aspx?id=59373&repo=r-704298fc>

The community meeting was attended by 15-20 community members. Participants were asked specific questions and one open-ended question for additional opinions, comments and suggestions. The results of the questions are illustrated in Attachment A.

The online survey had 458 visitors and 388 responses: 114 registered responses and 274 unregistered responses as of March 21, 2023. The survey asked similar questions and the results are illustrated in Attachment B. Responses to the open-ended question can be found online⁴.

The Ad Hoc has since organized a Friends of the Palo Alto Recreation and Wellness Center (Friends) group with a nine-member Board of Directors. The Friends were incorporated on August 30, 2022 and received 501(c)3 nonprofit designation on December 1, 2022. Recognizing that the term Gymnasium does not fully capture all of the uses and benefits that could be offered in the proposed facility, Recreation and Wellness Center is now being used to describe the proposal.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

Resources associated with the community outreach efforts were mostly limited to staff time. Additional research will be required to determine the costs of community outreach, planning and ongoing operations and maintenance of a new Recreation and Wellness Center.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Results of March 7, 2023 Community Meeting

Attachment B: Results of Open Town Hall Survey for a Recreation Wellness Center.

Report #: 2303-1177

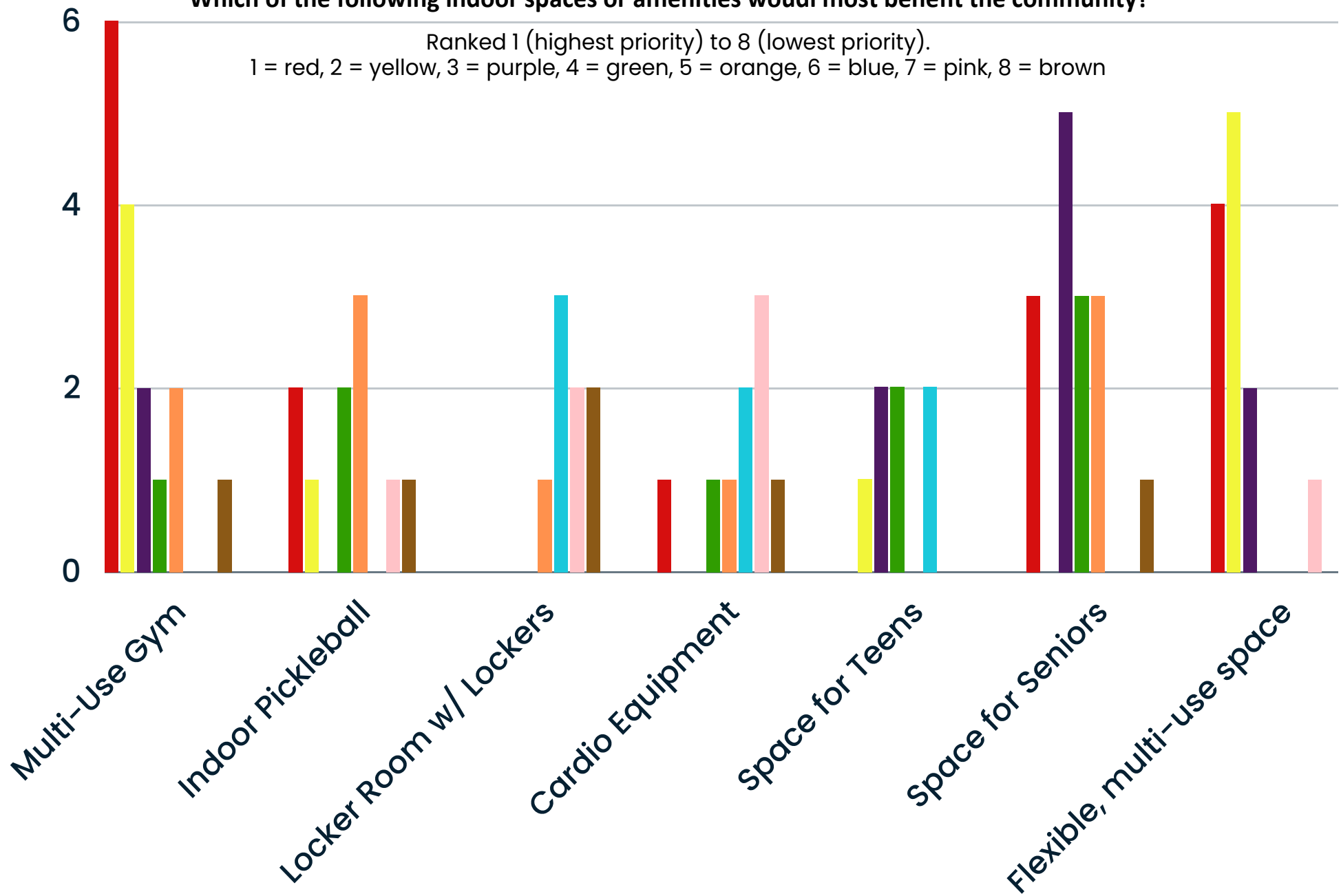
⁴ Open Town Hall survey responses;

https://communityfeedback.opengov.com/portals/paloalto/Issue_12662/survey_responses

Which of the following indoor spaces or amenities would most benefit the community?

Ranked 1 (highest priority) to 8 (lowest priority).

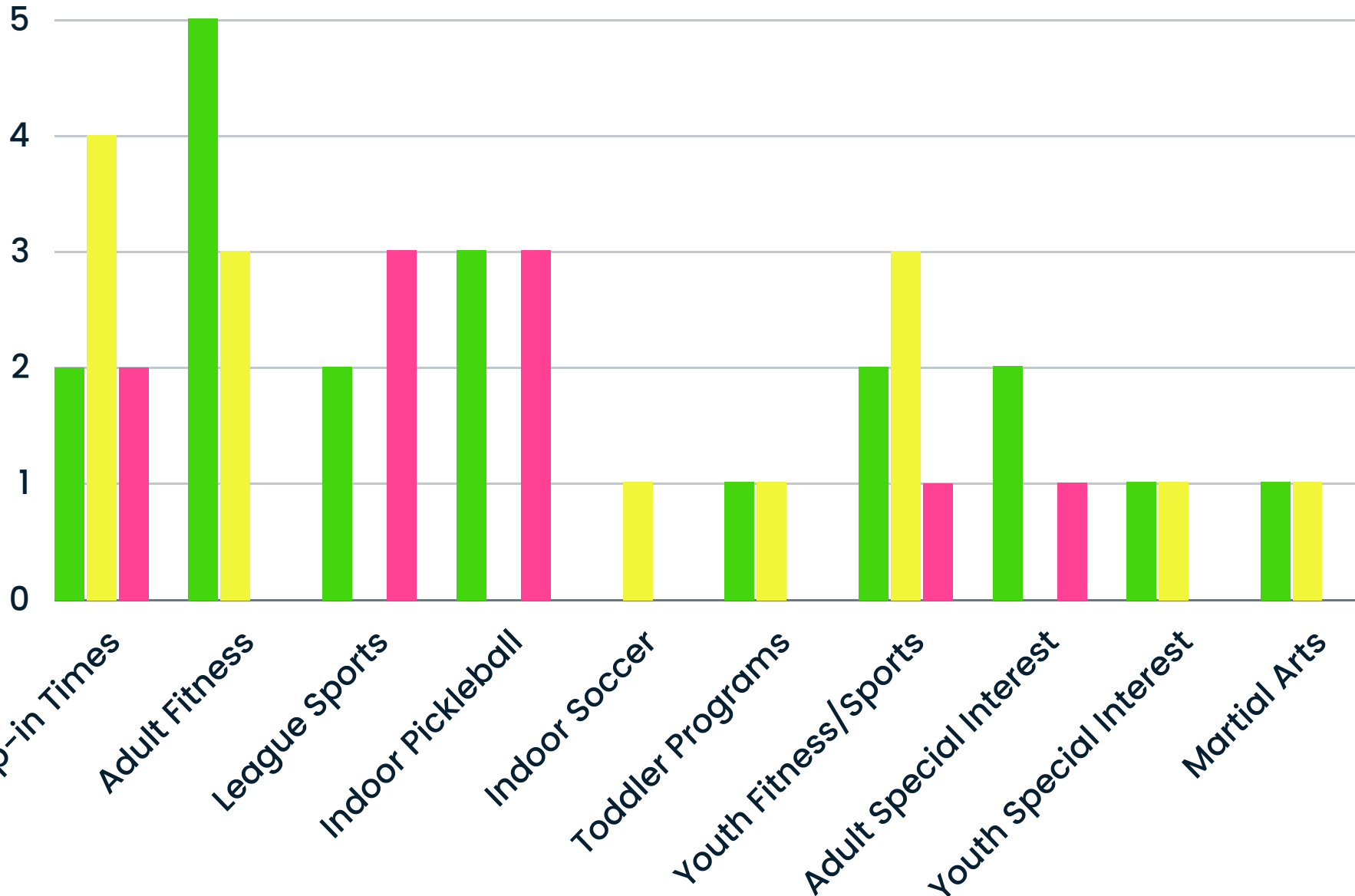
1 = red, 2 = yellow, 3 = purple, 4 = green, 5 = orange, 6 = blue, 7 = pink, 8 = brown



Notes from post-its: *Swimming Pool, *Ability to partition off and sound proof smaller spaces. * ability to serve as emergency shelters when weather is too cold for unhoused folks. * place to gather for celebrations/competitions/events.

What programs would benefit the community at a new Recreation Wellness Center?

Neon Green – Greatest Benefit | Neon Yellow – Beneficial | Neon Pink – Nice Addition



Open Play/Drop-in Times

Adult Fitness

League Sports

Indoor Pickleball

Indoor Soccer

Toddler Programs

Youth Fitness/Sports

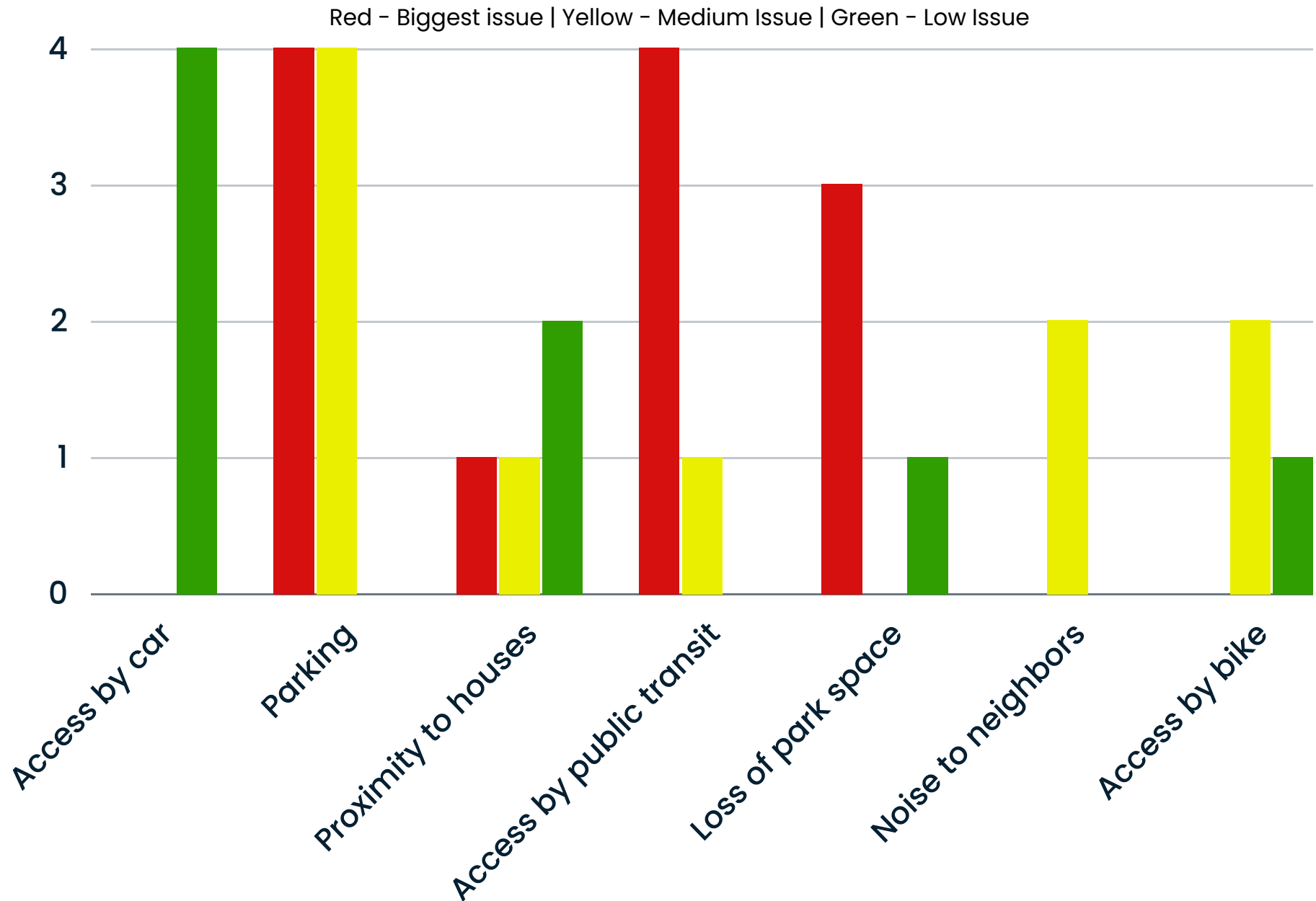
Adult Special Interest

Youth Special Interest

Martial Arts

Notes from post-its: *a hub to build community and host bigger events then is covered/possible under current available space. * rooftop soccer? but what type of turf. *look at kid options in SVL as an example. lots more offerings! Karate, gymnastics, etc. *promote team sports, not contact (under martial arts). *Ikebana *Heart Fit for Life has kept people alive for 35+ years. *swimming *gymnastics including aerial skills/circus arts

Although no site has been selected, Greer Park has emerged as a feasible location based on space, location, readiness, and because the park land is City-owned. What do you think are the biggest issues with this location, if any?



Notes from post-its: *Not Centrally located (2x's) *Too far *Inconvenient *Power relay station close by. *Actually quite far from most of PA population. * Will need to lose park space for parking?? Find other place with multi use parking. *

What else would you like to share with us about this proposal?

- *Heart Fit For Life saving cardiac program has kept people alive for 35 years and counting-
find a way to utilize this space - Cubberley.
- * Have we looked at repurposing the space in Mitchell Park behind JLS? Where there is
currently a dog park.
- * Could this be used for summer camps for kids. Huge need for this.
- *Prefer a central location a HUB.
- *Basketball at Mitchell Park.
- *Work with PASD to improve Cubberley before building a wellness center.
- *Other Sites: Cloudera Bldg & Pkg Lot in Ventura Area. *PA Square Lot at Page Mmill & ECR.

Recreation Wellness Center

March 21, 2023, 12:43 PM

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Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.

Summary Of Registered Responses

As of March 21, 2023, 12:43 PM, this forum had:

Attendees: 458
Registered Responses: 114
Hours of Public Comment: 19.4

Topic Start

March 7, 2023, 3:31 PM

Topic End

March 21, 2023, 12:00 AM

QUESTION 1

Although no site has been selected, Greer Park has emerged as a feasible location based on space, location, readiness, and because the park land is City-owned.

What do you think are the biggest issues with this location, if any?

Access by car



Parking



Proximity to houses



Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.



Access by public transit



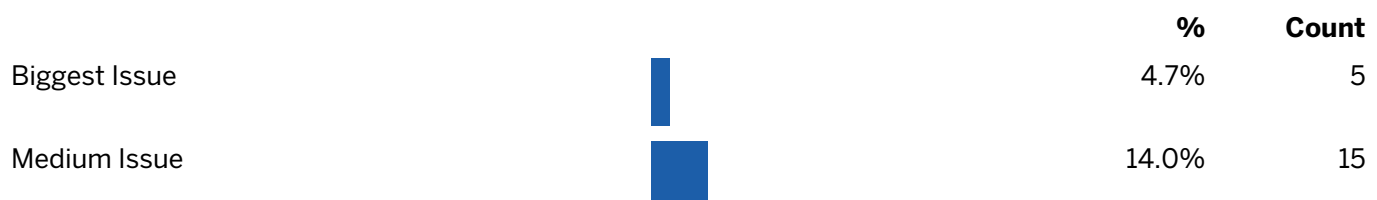
Loss of park space



Noise to neighbors



Access by bike



Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.



Other issues



QUESTION 2

Which of the following indoor spaces or amenities would most benefit the community? Please rank from highest priority at the top to lowest priority at the bottom.

1. Multi-use gymnasium
2. Indoor Pickleball Courts
3. Flexible, multi-use space
4. Space for seniors to socialize and exercise
5. Cardio Equipment
6. Space for Teens to hang out
7. Locker Rooms with lockers
8. Other amenities

QUESTION 3

What programs would benefit the community at a new Recreation Wellness Center?

Open play/drop in times for basketball, table tennis, etc.






Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.

Adult fitness classes (Zumba, yoga, aerobics)

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		42.0%	47
Beneficial		33.9%	38
Nice Addition		11.6%	13


League sports

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		14.3%	16
Beneficial		25.0%	28
Nice Addition		22.3%	25

Indoor pickleball

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		59.8%	67
Beneficial		10.7%	12
Nice Addition		17.0%	19

Indoor soccer

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		11.6%	13
Beneficial		19.6%	22
Nice Addition		28.6%	32

Toddler programs

Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		15.2%	17
Beneficial		26.8%	30
Nice Addition		24.1%	27

Youth fitness and sports classes

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		33.9%	38
Beneficial		29.5%	33
Nice Addition		10.7%	12

Adult special interest classes (i.e. retirement classes, ballroom dance)

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		29.5%	33
Beneficial		37.5%	42
Nice Addition		17.0%	19

Youth special interest classes (i.e. writing, public speaking, LEGO)

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		22.3%	25
Beneficial		28.6%	32
Nice Addition		16.1%	18

Martial arts




		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		10.7%	12

Recreation Wellness Center

Learn about and provide feedback on a proposal for a new Recreation Wellness Center in Palo Alto.

		%	Count
Beneficial		27.7%	31
Nice Addition		28.6%	32

Other programs

		%	Count
Greatest Benefit		9.8%	11
Beneficial		15.2%	17
Nice Addition		20.5%	23

QUESTION 4

What else would you like to share with us about the proposed Recreation Wellness Center?

Answered	61
Skipped	53