

Imagine LaSalle

A Community Vision for
Buffalo's LaSalle Park



Imagine
LaSalle

OCTOBER 2018

Acknowledgements

Imagine LaSalle is a community-driven initiative to explore the future of LaSalle Park. This effort is made possible through the generosity of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation in partnership with the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. This report summarizes the Imagine LaSalle community visioning process that took place over the summer of 2018.

The work was guided by a focus group of 22 community ambassadors who dedicated their time and energy to explore LaSalle Park's unique features and draw inspiration and ideas from parks in other US cities. The group participated in several tours of LaSalle, made trips to parks in Chicago, Cincinnati, and New York City, and reached out to their neighbors and community partners to get involved in the community process.

The Belle Center staff and youth ensured representation from young people through a "PhotoVoice" activity incorporated into their summer program. This brought ten summer campers to the park to take pictures and write about their thoughts and ideas for LaSalle.

Nearly 1,200 park users and community members weighed in via the Imagine LaSalle community survey. In addition to a team that administered the survey at the park on nearly 30 occasions, more than two dozen community groups provided outreach support by getting the word out or hosting the survey team at local or regional gathering places.

The City of Buffalo provided data, connected community groups to the project, opened opportunities to engage people at the park, and provided overall guidance to the project. The Division of Parks and Recreation, the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning, the Department of Community Services and Recreational Programming, and the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation all played a critical role.

A stakeholder group of 19 local organizations or agencies provided technical guidance and advised on collaboration opportunities. This group reviewed analysis and shared information about nearby projects or programs that may impact the future of LaSalle Park.

The University at Buffalo Regional Institute, with support from faculty from UB's School of Architecture and Planning, oversaw the engagement process and synthesized the public input for this report.



Focus Group members

Tuona Batchelor, *Buffalo Quarters Historical Society*
Dominic Bonifacio, *West Side Little League Baseball/Softball*
Dan Brady, *Columbus Park Neighborhood*
Jamil Crews, *Buffalo Urban League Young Professionals*
Mateo & Amanda Escobar, *West Side International Soccer*
Lacy Folga, *Fargo Estates Neighborhood Association*
Melissa Fratello, *Buffalo Audubon Society*
JP Gillespie, *Sunday Skateshop*
Renato Graham, *Lakeview Family Homes*
Ibrahim Iftin, *Somali Bantu Community Organization of Buffalo*
Lian Thluhlawng, *Chin Community of Buffalo*
Daniel Leong, *Karen Society of Buffalo*
Kevin Lynch, *The Barkyard*
Frank Lysiak, *Waterfront Village*
Marnetta Malcolm, *Rick James Memorial Funk Festival*
Deb O'Shea, *Lakefront Commons*
Christine Seibert, *D'Youville College*
Dinorah Santos, *Marine Drive Apartments / The Belle Center*
Charles and Christian Torres, *Puerto Rican and Hispanic Day Parade of WNY*
George Williams, *Pine Harbor Apartments*

Stakeholder Organizations

Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper
Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy
Buffalo Public Schools
Buffalo Water Board
City of Buffalo Department of Public Works, Parks & Streets
D'Youville College
Erie Canal Harbor Development Corporation
Erie County Department of Environment and Planning
Explore and More Children's Museum
GObike Buffalo
Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council
New York Power Authority
New York State Department of Transportation
New York State Thruway Authority
Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority
Niagara River Greenway Commission
US Army Corps of Engineers
West Side Rowing Club
Western New York Land Conservancy

What went into this report

How do people get to the park?

Who uses the park?

What values and principles should guide future investments in the park?

Where are the communities, neighborhoods, and places connected to the park?

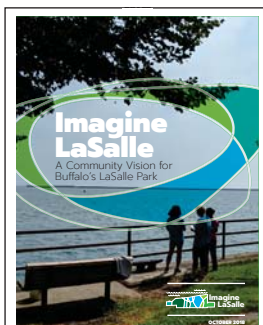
How does the park fit into Buffalo's broader planning framework?

What are the park's amenities and attributes?

What do people like about the park, and what do people wish was different?

What aspirations do people have for the park's future?

Imagine LaSalle was crafted through a multifaceted research and community engagement approach that aimed to answer basic, yet critical questions to guide the future of LaSalle Park.



Understanding the Current Context



A look at the current context of LaSalle Park to explore baseline information about the park and its surroundings.

PG 6 The History of LaSalle Park



PG 8 Planning Context for LaSalle Park



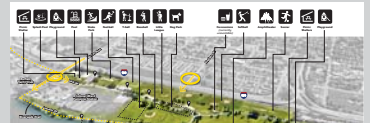
PG 10 Assets Near LaSalle Park



PG 12 Parks & Recreational Opportunities along Buffalo's Waterfront



PG 14 Looking at LaSalle Up-Close



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PG 22 How People Get to LaSalle Park



PG 24 A Closer Look at Access and Connectivity



Community Engagement and Outreach



Focus group representing community voices

Working with the City of Buffalo and community leaders, a focus group was developed to guide vision planning and serve as ambassadors to the community throughout the project. Focus group composition was designed to represent the diversity of voices and cultures that regularly use LaSalle Park.

Community- and cultural-based park users

Neighborhood leaders

League or special event user groups

Youth and regional park users

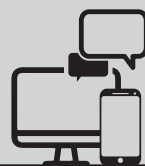
The focus group took inspiration from park tours in three cities, focusing on parks with relevant lessons for Buffalo.

**New York City
Chicago
Cincinnati**



Youth perspectives captured through photos and reflections

Youth from The Belle Center, a nearby community center, were invited to participate in a photography and journaling activity called "PhotoVoice." Kids walked through LaSalle Park with cameras to photograph things they like or dislike, then wrote about their photos back at The Belle Center.



Community survey reaching 1,100+ community members

Imagine LaSalle's community survey set out to understand what LaSalle Park means to neighborhoods throughout the city, how residents connect to the park, and the amenities they think would make LaSalle better. Survey highlights include: 28 visits to LaSalle, engaging everyday park users as well as those attending small and large events; four visits to other waterfront destinations to gain a regional perspective; two visits to the Lafayette High School Community Garden; availability in seven languages; park signage drawing people to a mobile phone-based version of the survey; and a version available online aimed at engaging neighborhood and community groups throughout Buffalo.



Stakeholders providing technical guidance

A group of stakeholder organizations provided technical guidance. They reviewed and provided input on background research and shared information about nearby projects or programs that may impact the future of LaSalle Park.

The stakeholder group represents 19 organizations that manage or own nearby property or infrastructure, are working on recreation or public space initiatives elsewhere on the waterfront, or offer regional perspective on topics or interests related to LaSalle Park.

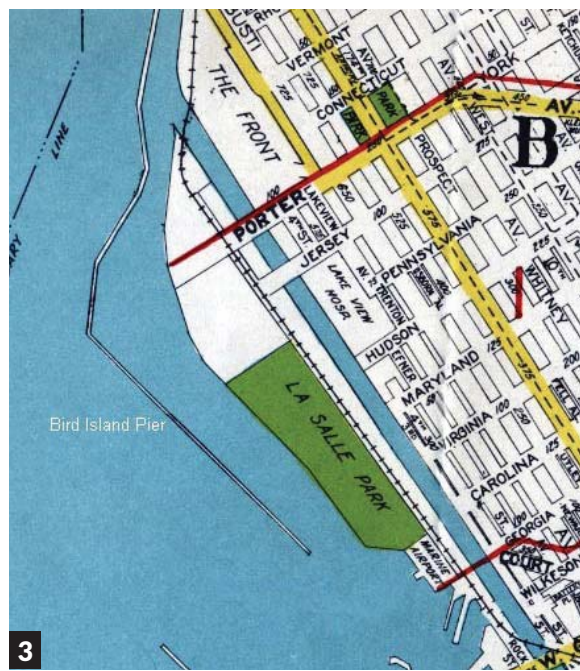
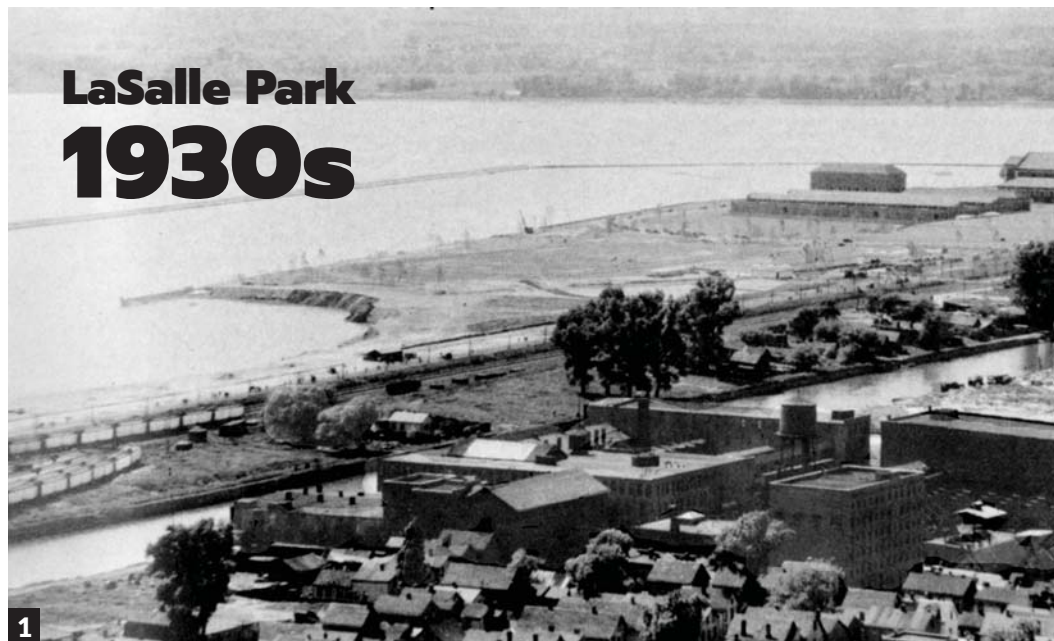


The History of LaSalle Park

Imagining a better future for LaSalle calls for a look back at the park's history—how it came to be, how it transformed over the years, and how it continues to change today.

LaSalle Park emerged from the waters of Lake Erie—literally—as much of the land that makes up the park was originally below water. In 1911, the City of Buffalo purchased a tract of land and underwater property between Georgia and Jersey Streets for \$1 million. The massive Colonel Francis G. Ward pumping station, an architectural and industrial marvel that still provides the city's water supply, was completed in 1915. The property was used as dumping grounds through the 1920s, and gradually filled in until 1931 when plans to create a permanent park were finalized. The City then began leveling, seeding, and landscaping the area, and Centennial Park opened during Buffalo's Centennial Celebration in 1932. At that time, the Erie Canal formed the eastern edge of the park where the I-190 is today. Soon after, Centennial Park was renamed LaSalle Park after René-Robert Cavalier de La Salle—the first European explorer to view the land that later became the City of Buffalo.

Over the years, the landscape of the park gradually changed as sports fields and recreational amenities were added, but little formal planning was done. In 1998, the City completed a comprehensive Master Plan for LaSalle Park. Some of the proposals of the 1998 Master Plan were put in place, including the reconfiguration of sports fields. In the time since, other big changes were made to the park, like the addition of the dog park and skate plaza. In 2017, the park's master plan was updated.



1 1932 aerial view of Centennial Park while it was still being created. The Erie Canal flowing along the park's edge, and Colonel Ward Pumping station (upper right) are both visible.

Image Credit: WNY Heritage Press, 2006. Retrieved August, 2018 at https://web.archive.org/web/20060110192549/http://wnyheriteagepress.org:80/photos_week_2005/lasalle_park/lasalle_park.htm

2 Map from 1895 showing the natural shoreline of the area that later became LaSalle Park.

Image Credit: Ibid.

3 1940s map of the area around LaSalle Park. The Erie Canal flowed where the I-190 exists today.

Image Credit: Ibid.

Sources: City of Buffalo, De Leuw Cather & Company, and Foit-Albert Associates, Architects, P.C., "Buffalo's Premier Waterfront Park: LaSalle Park Master Plan," 1998; The Buffalo News, August 21, 1931 retrieved at <http://buffaloah.com/a/LasallePK/tc.html>.



4 Aerial photo of LaSalle Park in 2015, taken from a similar viewpoint shown in the 1932 aerial image.

5 An on-the-ground look from November 1931 at the land that became Centennial/LaSalle Park as it was being filled and graded.
Image Credit: Ibid.

6 1932 aerial view of the seaplane landing ramp at LaSalle Park. The city's first international passenger flight, a 45-minute trip to Toronto, took off from this spot on June 29, 1929. Today, the seaplane ramp is deteriorated, but plans to convert it into a formal launch for non-motorized boats are under consideration.

Source: Buffalo Evening News, June 29, 1929, retrieved August 2018 at <https://www.buffalohistorygazette.net/2010/07/buffalo-international-airport-on-outer.html>
Image Credit: The Buffalo History Gazette, 2010. Retrieved August, 2018 at <https://www.buffalohistorygazette.net/2010/07/buffalo-international-airport-on-outer.html>



Planning Context for LaSalle Park

Over the last 20 years, planning efforts at the regional, citywide, neighborhood, and site level shaped the development of LaSalle Park and its relation to its surroundings. A look at what these plans say about LaSalle Park is an important starting point for understanding what people value about the park and its role in the broader Buffalo planning framework.

The research team for Imagine LaSalle reviewed 17 relevant plans to understand how LaSalle Park fits in the city's broader planning framework and to elevate community values to guide the park's future. A careful review of the goals, objectives, values, and principles suggest some common themes that describe foundational values for LaSalle Park's future.

Key Planning Themes

Connect People to the Waterfront

Plans at the city, neighborhood, and regional level all emphasize reconnecting Buffalo with the waterfront. Buffalo's neighborhoods originally met the city's waterfront, but decisions of the past severed many of those connections. Plans show the value of reconnecting city residents with water through new and improved points of access and a shift away from automobile-oriented design towards multi-modal design. LaSalle Park's waterfront should be easily accessible to all residents, regardless of socioeconomic status, ability, or mode of transportation.

Celebrate Diversity

LaSalle Park should celebrate the richness and diversity of the cultures in the neighborhoods that surround the park. Stronger connections between LaSalle Park and adjacent neighborhoods would serve to create a public space that celebrates the diversity of city residents. Park amenities should also reflect the cultural needs and desires of surrounding communities. This is a key priority raised in the 1998 Master Plan and is consistent with the city and region's priority of promoting diversity and inclusion.

Focus on Accessibility

LaSalle Park is isolated from surrounding neighborhoods and the city. Planning efforts seek to find solutions that make LaSalle Park easier to get to, while striking a better balance between vehicle, bike, and pedestrian accessibility, both in getting to and around the park.

Protect and Restore the Environment

Buffalo's waterfront, including LaSalle Park, evolved over the years as natural landscapes were reshaped to suit the needs of humans and support industry and commerce. Previous planning efforts emphasize the restoration of natural shorelines along the waterfront, benefiting wildlife and people. Softening the shoreline creates new opportunities for education and recreation while bringing people closer to the water.

Create Opportunities for Recreation

LaSalle Park is a recreational asset for local and regional residents and visitors. Park goers enjoy passive recreation activities as simple as lounging at the water's edge and taking in the sights of Lake Erie. LaSalle Park also offers active recreational opportunities along the waterfront, like festivals, athletic leagues, pick-up games, playgrounds, a skate park, a dog park, fishing, swimming, bicycling and more. Past planning efforts sought to enhance existing recreational elements of LaSalle Park while adding additional features to supplement the amenities already offered.

Recognize LaSalle as a Regional Asset

LaSalle Park is not just a community park, but a regional attraction that offers a public benefit to residents of the greater Buffalo Niagara region. LaSalle Park should reflect its role as an amenity for all of Western New York and as a gateway to the city and the country. This includes enhanced connectivity and synergies with other regional amenities and public spaces.

Plans Reviewed

Park Plans

LaSalle Park Master Plan, 1998

Final Design Report for LaSalle Park Design & Waterfront Access, 2017

US Army Corp of Engineers Detailed Project Report and Environmental Assessment, 2014



Neighborhood Plans

West Side Sustainable Community Plan, 2010

Broderick Park Master Plan, 2014

Downtown Buffalo Infrastructure and Public Realm Framework, 2015

City Plans

Queen City in the 21st Century, 2006

Queen City Waterfront Plan, 2007

Riverwalk Revitalization Draft Action Plan, 2014

Buffalo Green Code Land Use Plan, 2015

Buffalo Bicycle Master Plan Update, 2016

Buffalo Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) Plan, 2017

Regional Plans

Erie County Parks Master Plan Waterfront Strategy, 2003

Great Lakes Seaway Trail Corridor Management Plan, 2005

Niagara River Habitat Conservation Strategy, 2014

Niagara River Greenway Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement, 2017

Empire State Trail Plan, 2017

Assets Near LaSalle Park

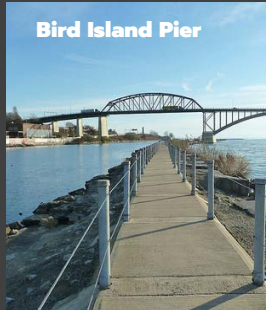
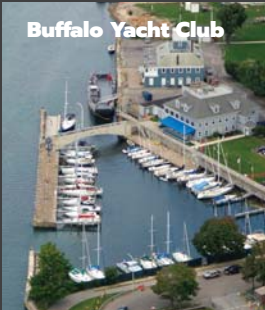
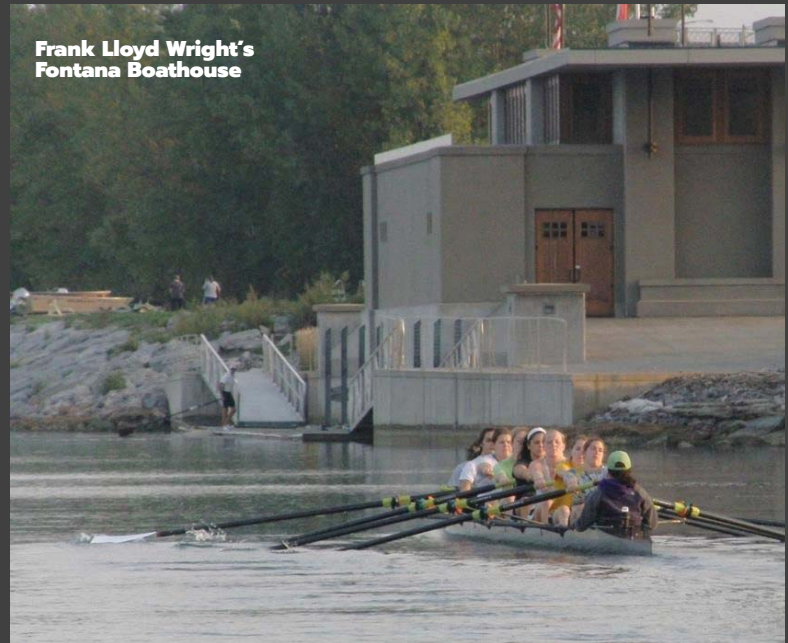
Visitors to LaSalle Park will find themselves within a short trip to many of Buffalo's cultural, historic, civic, and recreational assets, such as City Hall, Erie Basin Marina, KeyBank Center, and Kleinhans Music Hall. LaSalle Park is also near several other regionally-significant waterfront attractions that are symbols of Buffalo's ongoing rebirth, such as Canalside and the Outer Harbor. This prime location positions LaSalle Park within Buffalo's diverse Lower West Side community and in close proximity to a revitalizing downtown waterfront.

 **PARKS**

 **OTHER ASSETS**

0 1,000 2,000 3,000
Feet
500





Parks & Recreational Opportunities along Buffalo's Waterfront



Riverside Park

The last park to be added to Buffalo's historic Olmsted system, Riverside Park is a nationally registered historic site that offers many amenities.



Black Rock Canal Park

Sitting along the Niagara River, Black Rock Canal Park is a prime stop along Buffalo's Riverwalk Trail, featuring a boat launch for motorboats and jet skis, and an off-leash Bark Park for dogs.



Tow Path Park

Tow Path Park is a five-acre county park named for the historic towpath that once followed the Erie Canal. It offers views of the Niagara River, and is a popular spot for fishing and picnicking.



Unity Island Park

The northern end of Unity Island offers panoramic views of the Niagara River and winding recreational trails for pedestrians and bicyclists that form part of the Riverwalk Trail. The city's wastewater treatment facility also sits on the island, just south of the park.



Broderick Park

The newly renovated Broderick Park on the southern tip of Unity Island sits at an historic endpoint of the Underground Railroad. Today, it is a popular fishing spot that connects to the Bird Island Pier for long walks with one-of-a-kind waterfront views.



Front Park

Front Park is an historic Olmsted park featuring a semi-circular terrace with panoramic views of Lake Erie and the Niagara River. The park once included the neighboring Fort Porter grounds, where the Peace Bridge Plaza exists today.



Amenities

 Baseball	 Skate Park	 Boat Launch	 Playground
 Football	 Basketball	 Kayak/Canoe Launch	 Amphitheater
 Soccer	 Splash Pad	 Concessions	 Parking
 Tennis	 Pool	 Picnic Shelter	 Restrooms
 Ice Rink	 Dog Park	 Multi-Use Trail	



Columbus and Prospect Park

These neighboring pocket parks are two of Buffalo's oldest public spaces. About a half-mile off the waterfront, one can feel refreshing breezes off the lake, but without the waterfront views.



LaSalle Park

Buffalo's largest waterfront park offers many sports fields, open meadows and trails where park goers can take in panoramic waterfront views. The park also features an off-leash dog park, and the city's only skate park.



Waterfront/Emerson Park

Another city park separated from the waterfront by the I-190, Waterfront/Emerson Young Park has sports fields and a playground for neighborhood residents to enjoy.



Erie Basin Marina

Erie Basin Marina is a municipal inland harbor completed in the 1970s that offers a place to dock and launch boats, as well as several restaurants, restrooms, a small beach, gardens, and a public observation deck with magnificent views of Lake Erie and the Buffalo skyline.



Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park

This waterfront park hosts a museum that pays tribute to the sacrifices of our nation's military. It is home to several massive decommissioned US Naval vessels, smaller vessels and military aircraft.



Canalside

Canalside has quickly become Buffalo's premier waterfront attraction. The heart of Buffalo's waterfront revitalization, the space hosts a plethora of events throughout the year, including festivals, concerts, and an outdoor ice-skating rink.



Times Beach Nature Preserve

Once a dumping ground for dredged materials, the protected wetlands and woodlands of Times Beach now provide wildlife habitat with trails and boardwalks to take in the sights and sounds of nature amidst the backdrop of downtown Buffalo.



Wilkeson Pointe

Established as a park in 2013, Wilkeson Pointe features naturalized landscapes, a wind sculpture park, a public beach, kayak launches, and a beer garden on Buffalo's Outer Harbor.



Outer Harbor

This open area features a bike path which connects by ferry to the Inner Harbor at Canalside, and offers event space for summertime concerts and festivals. Future plans include natural restoration, mountain bike trails, and flex event space.



Buffalo Harbor State Park

New York's newest state park, and the first within the City of Buffalo, this park along Lake Erie features a nautical themed playground, a beach, boat launches, and a restaurant.



Tift Nature Preserve

This 264-acre nature sanctuary boasts five miles of trails through forests, ponds and wetlands, and offers programs for environmental education and scientific research.



Union Ship Canal Commons

This rehabilitated brownfield, once the site of an iron smelting factory, is now a peaceful waterfront park, with bike trails, fishing spots, and ample seating to take in the waterfront views.



Looking at LaSalle Up-Close

With an area of approximately 90 acres, LaSalle Park is the City of Buffalo's largest waterfront park. Located on the shore where Lake Erie and the Niagara River meet, the park offers expansive waterfront views alongside an array of recreational amenities. During warmer months, LaSalle Park comes alive as regular park visitors from the city are joined by visitors who come from around the region to enjoy musical, cultural, and community events held in the park.



Pedestrian/Bike Access to LaSalle Park





Concessions
(currently
unavailable)



Softball



Amphitheater



Soccer



**Picnic
Shelters**



Playground

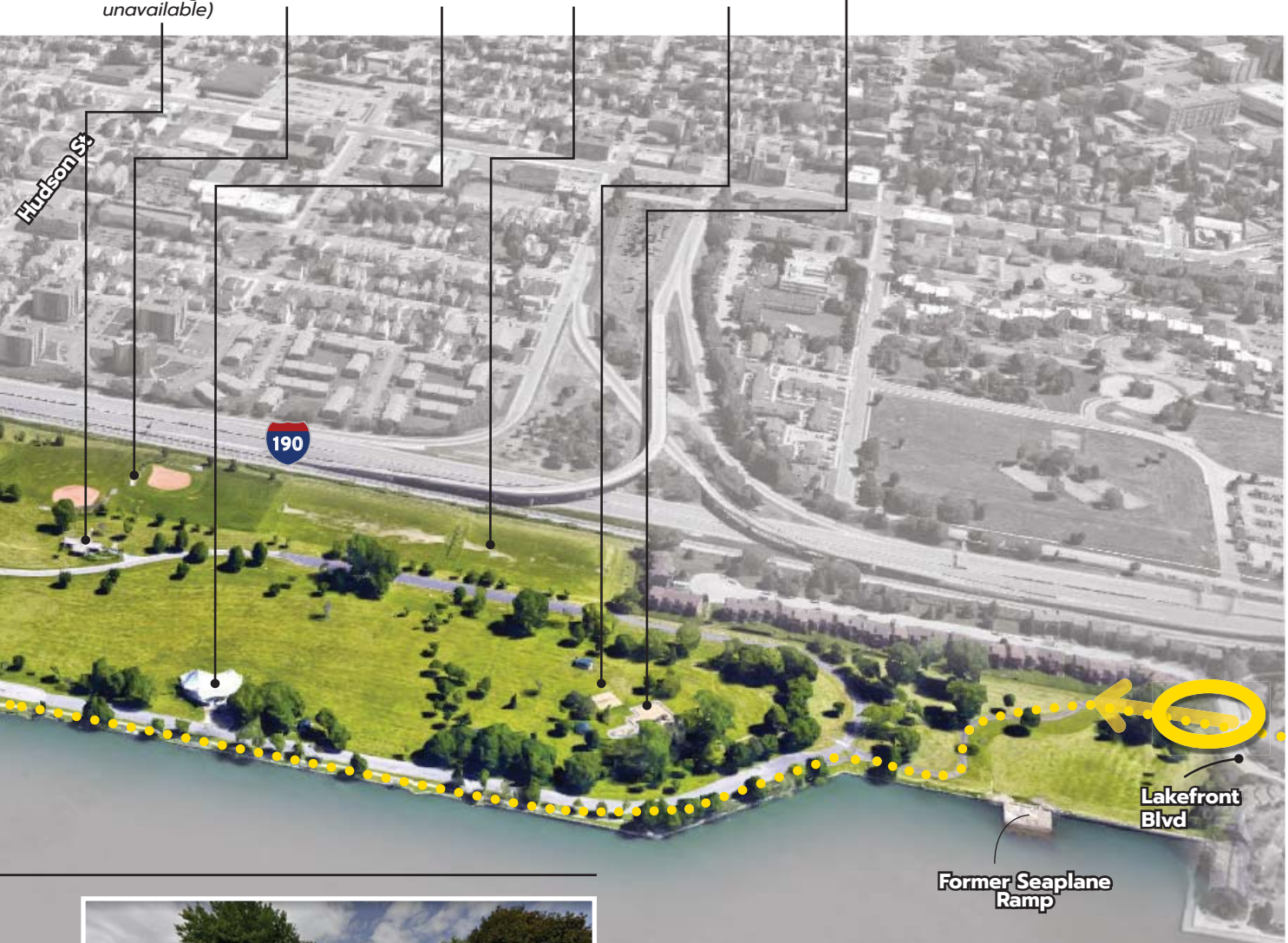
Park Entrances



**Pedestrian and
Bicycle Access**



**Auto, Pedestrian
and Bicycle Access**



Lakefront Blvd Entrance

Access to the park is provided at three entrances: **Porter Ave.**, **Hudson St.**, and **Lakefront Blvd.** At the Porter entrance, visitors can arrive by bike, foot, or car. When entering at Hudson, visitors must cross over a six lane interstate highway via pedestrian bridge. Visitors arriving via Lakefront can enter by foot or bike, but not by motorized vehicle.

Amenities/Facilities at LaSalle Park

LaSalle Park is one of the most widely used parks in Buffalo. With its waterfront setting and wide range of facilities, LaSalle offers a unique experience that is hard to find in other city parks.



Pool and Splash Pad

With an average of over 15,000 visits each summer, the Centennial Pool is the most widely used public pool in Buffalo and can attract more than 500 swimmers on hot, sunny days. Reconstructed in 2010, Centennial is the city's most up-to-date pool, and accounts for 25% of all public pool usage in Buffalo.



Skate Park

Opened in 2010, the LaSalle Skate Plaza is the only skate park in Buffalo. With its unique waterfront setting, it has received national attention and attracted world-ranked professional skaters. It was updated in 2017, and plans for a final upgrade are underway.



Colonel F. G. Ward Pumping Station

The Colonel Ward pumping station, which provides the city's water supply, sits within LaSalle Park. The station is closed to the public and fenced in to ensure security. The engineering marvel hosts annual tours to small audiences that showcase the plant's five, 60-foot tall steam pumps that once pumped 30 million gallons of water a day.



Riverwalk Trail

Buffalo's Riverwalk Trail, partially renovated in 2017, is part of the Niagara River Greenway and the Erie County Shoreline Trail. The portion of the Riverwalk Trail that runs through LaSalle is used daily for running, walking, cycling, or just enjoying the scenery.



Baseball Diamonds

The nine diamonds at LaSalle Park are used by a number of leagues, most frequently the West Side Little League, over 200 times each year for both baseball and softball. The diamonds closest to the football field, used by Little Leagues, have the most use. The diamonds are also regularly used for casual play.



Source: UBRI analysis of annual logs of park permits and public pool attendance, 2016-2017. Retrieved from the City of Buffalo, Department of Parks and Recreation, August, 2018.



Football Field

The football field is often used for playing catch and pick-up games. The field also hosts practices and games for the West Side Seahawks, a little league football team.

Soccer Fields

Along with daily pick-up games, the soccer fields are used by a number of leagues, and for large events, like the international soccer tournament that takes place each year on World Refugee Day. The use of soccer fields increased in recent years as Buffalo's immigrant community grew.



Dog Park ("The Barkyard")

The first official off-leash dog park in the city, the Barkyard attracts thousands of visitors throughout the year, and garnered broad public support since first opening as a temporary space in 2007.



Pavilion

The pavilion hosts events for a diverse range of communities and cultures. Annual events include the Puerto Rican & Hispanic Day Parade, Rick James Funk Fest, and others. The lawn facing the stage is used by adult kickball leagues.



Picnic Shelters

The park's seven picnic shelters are used every weekend over the summer for a variety of events, including family reunions, cookouts, birthdays, baby showers, cultural activities, church functions, and company picnics. On some days, every single shelter in the park is booked.



What the Community Nearby Looks Like

LaSalle Park is surrounded by five distinct neighborhoods of Buffalo's Lower West Side—Columbus, Front Park, Fargo Estates, Lakeview, and Waterfront—that together make up one of the most diverse areas in all of Western New York.

Neighborhood boundaries are defined by the City of Buffalo and align with Census tracts. These geographies are used to obtain Census data at the neighborhood level.

Niagara River

Front Park

Fargo Estates

Lakeview

LaSalle Park

Columbus

Lake Erie

Waterfront

Buffalo River

Neighborhoods near LaSalle Park



Front Park Neighborhood

The area around Front Park is home to nearly 3,000 residents, with a greater concentration of people under the age of 18 (33%) than any other neighborhood near LaSalle Park. The population here is evenly mixed between Whites (34%), Blacks (32%), and Hispanics (31%); 20% of residents are foreign born, and 28% are limited English speakers. The neighborhood also has the highest poverty rate (51%) and lowest median home value (\$76,400) of all neighborhoods near LaSalle Park.



Fargo Estates Neighborhood

With growing commercial activity and rising home values, Fargo Estates is an eclectic neighborhood, home to Kleinhans Music Hall and a nationally registered historic district. The population here is more educated—31% have earned a Bachelor's degree or more—but similar to other nearby neighborhoods in terms of the concentration of foreign born residents (16%) and high poverty rates (41%).



Lakeview Neighborhood

The Lakeview neighborhood is the heart of Buffalo's Hispanic community, centered around Avenida San Juan, a city-designated Hispanic Heritage District along Niagara Street. Over half of households here (55%) speak Spanish at home. The neighborhood has a lower median household income (\$16,290) than any other neighborhood nearby, and a poverty rate of 47%. Lakeview residents have the best access to LaSalle Park as 71% of homes are within a 15-minute walk.



Waterfront Neighborhood

This neighborhood includes Waterfront Village, an enclave of high-end condominiums and townhomes, and Marine Drive Apartments, an income-restricted apartment building complex. The median home value here is \$372,700—five times that of the city, and the median income is twice that of the other four neighborhoods near LaSalle. Waterfront also has the highest share of adults with at least a Bachelor's degree (40%) and the lowest poverty rate (13%).



Columbus Neighborhood

The Columbus neighborhood, positioned between LaSalle Park and the city's central business district, has more jobs than any other neighborhood near LaSalle. The population is a relatively even mix of Hispanic (34%), Black (33%), and White (28%) residents. Nearly half (48%) of households do not own a vehicle—more than any other neighborhood nearby. But despite the neighborhood's close proximity to LaSalle, no residents live within a 15-minute walk of the park due to the configuration of streets and land uses around the park.

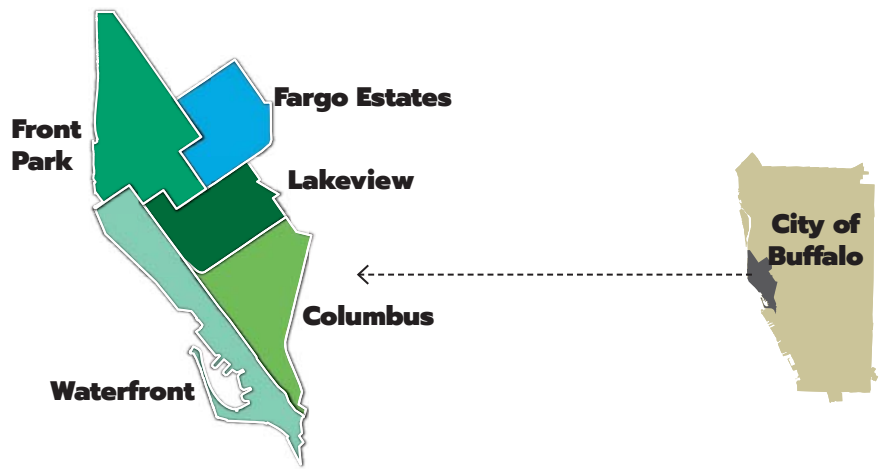
Neighborhoods by the Numbers



While each neighborhood near the park is unique, they have many similarities, the most notable being diversity. Collectively, the five neighborhoods have a higher share of Hispanics than the city as a whole, but also have a large population of black, white and foreign born residents. The community around LaSalle Park is largely made up of lower income residents—43% of households earn less than \$20,000 a year. Compared to the city’s population overall, residents of these neighborhoods are more likely to rent, to not speak English, to live in poverty, and to not own a car. These neighborhoods are also home to a variety of businesses with over 8,000 workers, mostly in service sectors like finance and insurance, education, and information.

Population by Neighborhood	
Front Park	2,996
Fargo Estates	4,096
Lakeview	3,576
Columbus	2,764
Waterfront	1,847

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016.



	Front Park	Fargo Estates	Lakeview	Columbus	Waterfront	City of Buffalo
Age	33% 9% UNDER 18 65+	20% 16%	28% 7%	25% 15%	17% 18%	23% 12%
Race and Ethnicity	31% 3% 34% 32% WHITE BLACK HISPANIC OTHER (ASIAN/MULTIPLE/OTHER)	21% 42% 26% 11%	4% 17% 62% 16%	5% 28% 34% 33%	1% 43% 27% 28%	8% 45% 10% 37%
Median Household Income	\$18,813 	\$21,507 	\$16,290 	\$20,910 	\$44,795 	\$33,119
Poverty Rate	51%	41%	47%	46%	13%	31%
% of Households within a 15-min. walk to LaSalle	43%	14%	71%	0%	36%	14%
% of Households without a vehicle	37%	46%	47%	48%	16%	29%
% of Population with Bachelor's +	17%	31%	13%	22%	40%	25%
% Foreign Born	20%	16%	7%	6%	14%	9%
Median Home Value	\$76,400	\$109,800	\$102,700	\$156,500	\$372,700	\$72,600
Total Jobs	1,524	620	1,258	3,085	1,561	143,126

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016; UBRI analysis using ESRI ArcGIS software with parcel data from the City of Buffalo (2016), and streets and address points from the NYS GIS Program (2018); US Census Bureau, Longitudinal-Employer Household Dynamics Program, LODES Data, 2015.

How People Get to LaSalle Park

LaSalle Park is accessible by foot, public transit, bicycle, and automobile, with future plans to add access by water. Visitors can enter the park by road, a multi-use trail, or a park pathway.



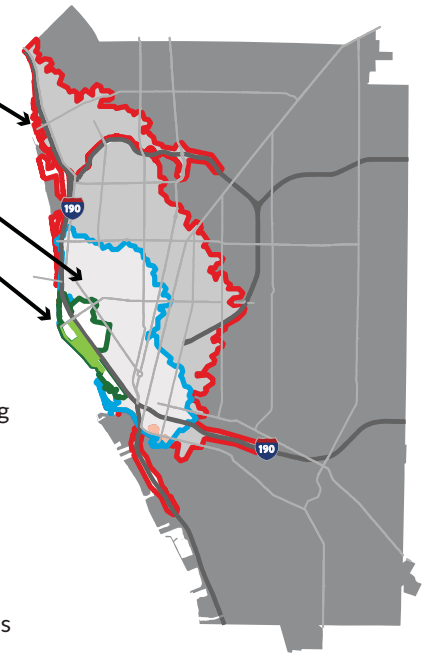
Area within a **10-Minute Drive** to LaSalle Park



Area within a **10-Minute Bike Ride** to LaSalle Park



Area within a **10-Minute Walk** to LaSalle Park



At two of the three entrances, walking into the park requires visitors to cross a wide interstate highway by sidewalk on an overpass (Porter Ave.), or by pedestrian bridge (Hudson St.). The third entrance (Lakefront Blvd.) is at-grade with a narrow street in a residential neighborhood.



Six NFTA bus lines with stops within a 10-minute walk of an entrance to LaSalle Park are available for public transit riders. These six lines extend in every direction to the city limits and beyond, reaching as far as Hamburg, Niagara Falls, Cheektowaga, and the University at Buffalo South Campus.



Bicyclists can also access the park from all three entrances. Residents living in the Lower West Side, Downtown, Allentown, parts of the Elmwood Village, and parts of the lower East Side can all reach LaSalle Park within a 10-minute bike ride. The Riverwalk Trail and other bicycle infrastructure on city streets can access LaSalle Park from different areas of the city, and ongoing investments in bike infrastructure will continue to improve this access moving forward.

By water, visitors are out of luck—for now. Although no docks or ramps designed for boaters currently exist, a site on the southern end of the park is being considered as a stop along the proposed Buffalo Blueway.



Getting there on foot, by bus or car



Pedestrian and Bicycle Access



Auto, Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

..... Riverwalk Trail



Closest bus stops

Nearby Bus Routes

Route #22 Route #40
Route #5 Route #29
Route #8 Route #6



Getting there by bike



Pedestrian and Bicycle Access



Auto, Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

..... Riverwalk Trail

10-minute bike ride to park entrance

Multi-Purpose Trail

On-Street Bike Route

Bike Infrastructure Under Construction



Getting there by water



Pedestrian and Bicycle Access



Auto, Pedestrian and Bicycle Access

Concrete Launch

Dock Launch

Dock and Roller Launch

Proposed Launch for Buffalo Blueway

A Closer Look at Access and Connectivity

Access to and from other waterfront destinations is limited.

People who wish to walk or ride their bikes to LaSalle from Canalside or Erie Basin Marina must follow a portion of the Riverwalk Trail tucked behind the residential developments at Waterfront Village. This segment runs parallel to railroad tracks and I-190, and includes crossings in front of automobile traffic at Erie St. and Lakefront Blvd.

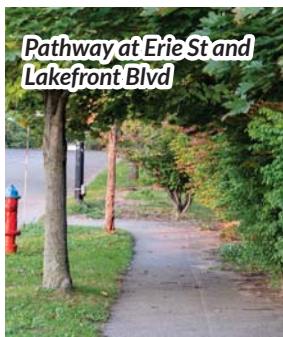
Drivers traveling from these waterfront destinations to LaSalle often use I-190 and take the Peace Bridge exit, entering the park from Porter Ave.

I-190 and ramps act as barriers, ultimately defining where you can enter the park.

A busy, six-lane highway cuts off the park from surrounding neighborhoods.

Some visitors use unofficial, unsafe routes under I-190 to access the park.

In addition to I-190 acting as a barrier for Columbus neighborhood residents, the Virginia/Carolina ramps cut off the neighborhood from the Hudson Street Bridge. Anecdotes from community members reveal that residents occasionally use an unofficial, unsafe crossing through a fence under the highway and across train tracks, which turns a 25-minute walk into a 5-minute walk.



LaSalle is a waterfront park with no access to or from the water.

Ironically, the city's largest waterfront park has no access to the water. Currently, boaters have no way to launch or land in LaSalle Park.



Crossing the Hudson St. Bridge can be uncomfortable and unsafe.

For nearby residents, the bridge is the most direct point of access into the park, yet the approach on the neighborhood side lacks signage and is visually uninviting. In addition to noise and air pollution, the bridge is often littered, and its concrete base is enclosed by a chain link metal fence.



Pedestrians and cyclists face a challenging path along Porter Ave.

The bike path along Porter Ave. is designed to connect neighborhoods to LaSalle Park, Front Park, and the Riverwalk Trail. However, in order to take this path into LaSalle, one needs to cross Porter at Lakeview Ave., go over an I-190 overpass bridge, then cross Porter Ave. again at the foot of a blind hill, facing oncoming traffic.



Community Engagement

1,164
survey responses

Over a two-month period, Imagine LaSalle engaged with the Buffalo community to answer these questions and more.

What do people
like about
LaSalle Park?

What
would they
change?

What **big ideas**
do they have
for the park?

Focus group PG 28



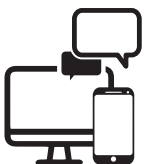
Engagement was guided by a focus group of 22 community ambassadors selected by the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and the City of Buffalo Division of Parks and Recreation. Drawing on their unique connections and experiences with the park, the group walked through LaSalle to identify key themes about the park's unique assets and areas in need of improvement. They brought that same energy and critical eye as they explored inspirational parks in three different US urban settings – New York City, Chicago, and Cincinnati.

Youth Photovoices PG 44



Youth from The Belle Center, a community center within a 10-minute walk of the park over the Hudson Street Bridge, also took a close look at LaSalle to identify strengths, weaknesses, and future aspirations for the park. Equipped with digital cameras, the ten elementary and middle school youth took pictures around the park and wrote about them back at The Belle Center.

Community Survey PG 54



Nearly 1,200 Western New Yorkers weighed in on a community survey administered during July and August. Surveyors were in LaSalle talking to park users almost every other day. Respondents were also drawn to the survey with lawn signs placed at activity centers around the park. The survey was available online in seven different languages, and was brought to key gathering places outside the park. An extensive online outreach campaign via email and social media promoted the survey to diverse audiences.



TEN KIDS

from the Belle Center took

332 photos

Surveys completed in English,
Spanish, Karen and Burmese

700 palm cards
handed out

Focus group visited

3 cities

21 parks

took 800+ photos

35
signs
posted
throughout
the park

FOUR

surveyors spent
365 people-hours
collecting field surveys

Survey respondents
speak **27** different
languages

Focus Group



A focus group of 22 community ambassadors took a close look at LaSalle Park, exploring the park's unique features and drawing on inspirational ideas from parks in other US cities.

Focus group members represent the diversity of uses at the park, as well as the diversity of communities that frequent LaSalle on any given day. It includes leaders from nearby neighborhood associations, representatives of recreational park-user groups (i.e. sport leagues, the skate park, and dog park), and members of immigrant and ethnic organizations that frequent the park and host events at LaSalle. In addition, a representative from a regional nature and park organization was included, as was a student from the closest college.

IMAGINE LASALLE FOCUS GROUP

Tuona Batchelor	<i>Buffalo Quarters Historical Society</i>
Dominic Bonifacio	<i>West Side Little League Baseball/Softball</i>
Dan Brady	<i>Columbus Park Neighborhood</i>
Jamil Crews	<i>Buffalo Urban League Young Professionals</i>
Mateo & Amanda Escobar	<i>West Side International Soccer</i>
Lacy Folga	<i>Fargo Estates Neighborhood Association</i>
Melissa Fratello	<i>Buffalo Audubon Society</i>
JP Gillespie	<i>Sunday Skateshop</i>
Renato Graham	<i>Lakeview Family Homes</i>
Ibrahim Iftin	<i>Somali Bantu Community Organization of Buffalo</i>
Lian Thluhlawng	<i>Chin Community of Buffalo</i>
Daniel Leong	<i>Karen Society of Buffalo</i>
Kevin Lynch	<i>The Barkyard</i>
Frank Lysiak	<i>Waterfront Village</i>
Marnetta Malcolm	<i>Rick James Memorial Funk Festival</i>
Deb O'Shea	<i>Lakefront Commons</i>
Dinorah Santos	<i>Marine Drive Apartments / The Belle Center</i>
Christine Seibert	<i>D'Youville College</i>
Charles & Christian Torres	<i>Puerto Rican and Hispanic Day Parade of WNY</i>
George Williams	<i>Pine Harbor Apartments</i>

Focus group members toured LaSalle Park and were asked **what they like, what they would change** and **what their big ideas are** for LaSalle Park.



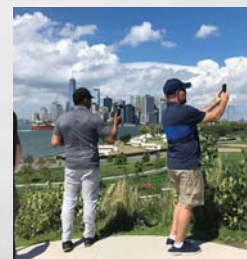
In July, the group participated in a series of LaSalle Park walking tours, offering their perspectives on specific areas of the park, its history, current usage, and what works or could be improved. Guided by faculty from the UB School of Architecture and Planning, focus group members talked about their unique perspectives on the park and wrote field notes that were transcribed and analyzed by the Imagine LaSalle team. This feedback serves as a basis for understanding the park as a whole and how diverse park user groups value its various attributes.



Focus group members toured parks in



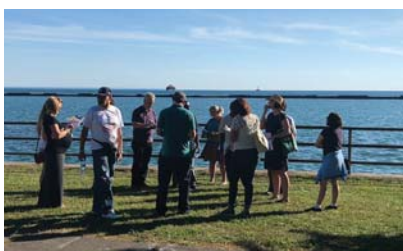
In August, focus group members brought that same energy and critical perspective to park tours in three city destinations—New York City, Chicago, and Cincinnati. They met with park representatives from diverse parks, learning about each park's history, usage, design elements, funding, management, and more. Focus group members enjoyed discussions about their views on these parks, and captured them in field notes and with their phone cameras.



Focus Group Tour of LaSalle Park



What they like



Waterfront views are exceptional.

LaSalle Park is uniquely situated by Lake Erie and the Niagara River. Waterfront views should be preserved and highlighted for all to enjoy in the future. Focus group members describe the views from LaSalle Park as “amazing,” “awesome,” “exceptional,” “great,” “beautiful,” “incredible” and “gorgeous.”

The amphitheater and fabric structure are functional and interesting.

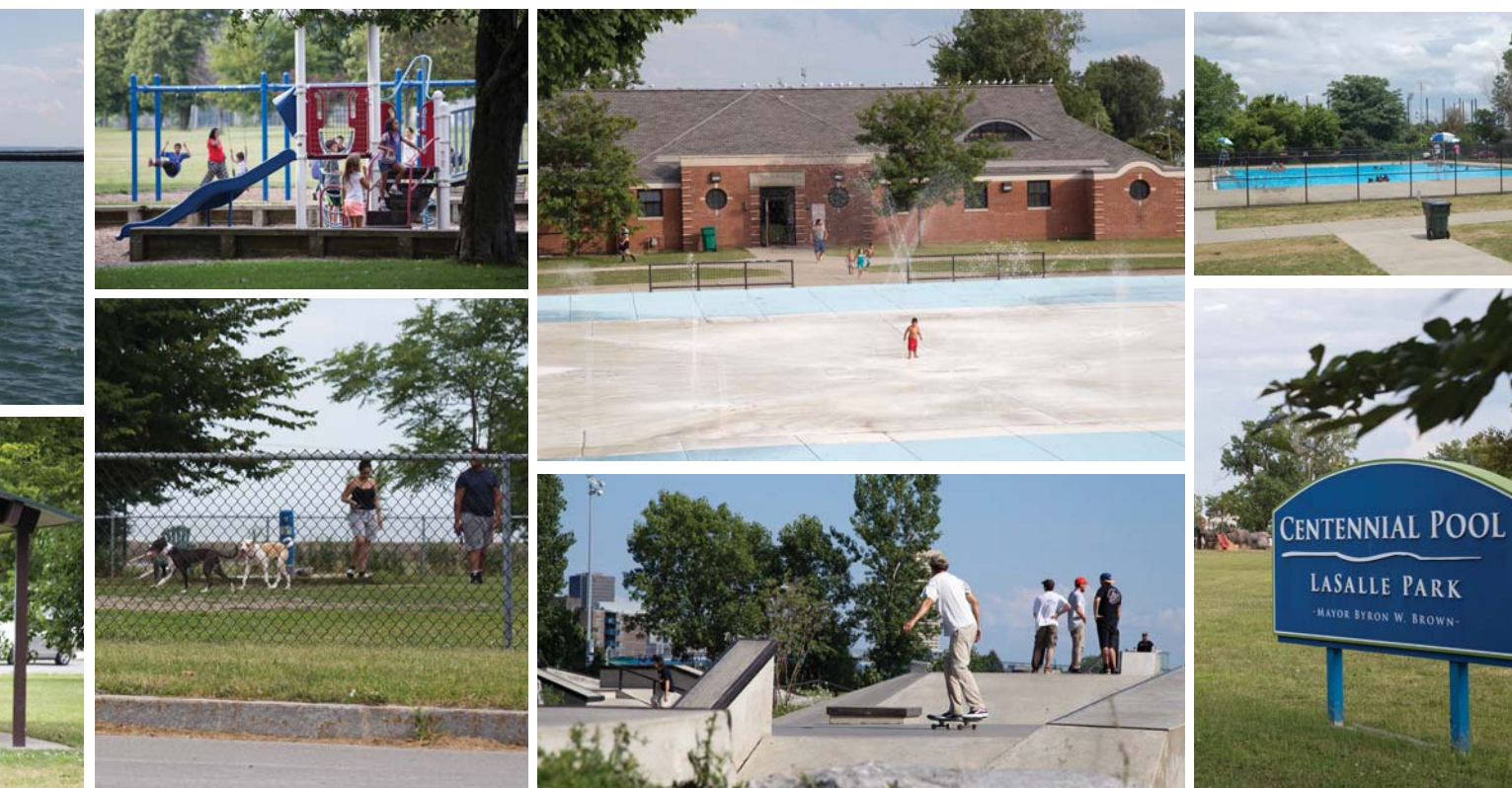
Featuring a stage, staging rooms, and electrical service, the amphitheater hosts cultural events and concerts each year. The space is flexible, easy to use, and an underutilized asset in the park.

Picnic areas and the playground are quiet and shady.

Although much of LaSalle Park is “open,” with undifferentiated grass without trees, the picnic shelters and playground at the southern end of the park offer a more relaxing atmosphere. The area is quieter, more shaded by trees, and is a great place to bring children and families.

Soccer fields are an asset for celebrating diversity and community.

From leagues to informal pick-up games among neighborhood kids, the soccer fields get a lot of use. Soccer is connected to the diversity of the city and should be celebrated.



The dog park is a unique asset.

As the city's first and largest off-leash dog run, the Barkyard at LaSalle Park is an attraction for people across the city. With separate spaces for large and small dogs, benches, a shelter, and dog water fountains, the Barkyard's amenities make the space well-used.

The skate park is a regional attraction.

LaSalle Park's skate park is one of the few skate parks in WNY and the only one in the city. It attracts users of all ages and skill levels from across the region, making it an irreplaceable asset that will continue to grow in popularity with further proposed expansions.

The pool and splash pad work well together.

At the northern end of the park, the pool, splash pad, playground and picnic shelters bring families and children together, creating a sense of community. People of all ages can find something fun to do in this part of the park.

Focus Group Tour of LaSalle Park



What they would change



Create additional seating to make the park more comfortable.

Places where additional seating could be added include the skate park, sports fields, playgrounds, and the Riverwalk. Seating would allow parents to more easily watch their kids, and allow more people to relax and enjoy views of the water.

Add basic necessities like restrooms and water fountains.

Currently, the park has port-a-potties and a few restrooms in the pool house which are only open during pool hours. There are no drinking water fountains for people. Adding permanent restrooms and water fountains to the park could make visiting more comfortable, family- and kid-friendly, and add to the experience of event goers and sports teams.

Explore better parking solutions.

During large events, parking is often inadequate, leading to traffic jams and illegally parked cars in grass areas. Existing parking could be reconsidered to allow high-quality parking options to enhance the overall experience for park users, and to make large events more viable and efficient.

Install lighting throughout the park.

The soccer fields, baseball and softball diamonds, and skate park do not currently have lighting. Because sporting events often last past dusk, additional lighting could enhance the usability of these facilities while making them more comfortable and safer for children and families.



Beautify LaSalle with public art.

The aesthetic quality of the park may improve through public art installations and other beautifying elements. Public art could supplement the natural beauty of the park, especially along the park's waterfront, or could even reduce the visual impacts of security fencing.

Take care of litter and long grass.

Overall maintenance of the park could be improved. Litter in the park is a common problem, so additional waste management strategies could be implemented. Focus group members also noted that the grass tends to grow too long before being trimmed.

Buffer against highway noise.

Traffic from Interstate-190 on the east edge of the park creates a high level of ambient noise. This noise interrupts the otherwise relaxing atmosphere of the park. A natural or structural barrier between the park and the highway could improve the park experience by diminishing the sights and sounds of nearby traffic.

Remove barbed wire and chain link fences.

A barbed wire-topped chain link fence surrounds the pumping station at the northern end of the park, which detracts from the aesthetic appeal of the park at its primary entrance. Exploring more aesthetically pleasing security alternatives could enhance the overall look of the park. Other chain link fences throughout the park are functional, but feel visually off-putting.

Implement wayfinding and interpretive signage.

Wayfinding signs for the Shoreline Trail exist near entrances to the park, but signage that provides wayfinding for amenities within the park is absent. In addition to wayfinding, signs could also function as interpretive features that provide information about the history of the area and the ecology of the lake, river, and shoreline.

Design additional picnic areas.

Picnic shelters in the park are a popular destination for families and groups to gather and spend time together, but at times there are not enough of them to meet popular demand. With additional picnic tables and shelters near the shoreline, in open areas, and near the skate park, even more people will be able to enjoy LaSalle Park.

Bring back concessions.

The park has an existing concession stand that has not been regularly used in many years. Reopening the stand for large events at the pavilion, sporting events, or even everyday use could increase the attractiveness of the park for all users. Instead of leaving the park to find food, people could have the option to extend their stay in the park by eating at the concession stand, or other concession facilities elsewhere in the park.

Provide additional shade and trees.

A lack of trees and manmade sources of shade make parts of the park uncomfortable. Areas around the pool/splash pad, skate park, and sports fields are especially important to consider when adding additional shade, as users in those areas are active and could benefit from respite from the sun.

Focus Group



Big ideas for LaSalle Park



Celebrate soccer to promote diversity and unity.

Soccer is an increasingly important activity to the surrounding community. LaSalle Park's **soccer fields have the potential to be a central part of this community.** Adding more and better fields (potentially with artificial turf), bleachers, nets, and storage could help realize this vision.



Expand the skate park, improve amenities, and grow programs.

Because the **skate park is such a crucial regional draw** in LaSalle Park, it could be a focal point in the park's future. Suggestions for doing this include creating a larger variety of skate park elements, adding adjacent amenities (such as water fountains and bathrooms), and holding events at the skate park.



Improve conditions at the event pavilion.

Although the events pavilion has a large stage and several storage areas, the electrical service to the structure is inadequate to serve current technology and often requires event organizers to arrange for supplemental power to support large events. In addition to **modernizing the structure**, additional features like **permanent or semi-permanent seating** and **weather protection** could make the pavilion area a highly desirable space for concerts, cultural events, and community activities.



Make the Hudson Street pedestrian bridge a gateway to the park.

In its current state, the Hudson Street Bridge is uninviting. The structure is a crucial connection to the park for pedestrians and bicyclists from the adjacent neighborhood, but it is loud, steep, heavily littered, and intimidating. The focus groups envisions a **reconceptualization of this bridge as a gateway to LaSalle Park** that is easy to use for people of all abilities, safe and comfortable to cross, and visually welcoming to visitors.





Enhance the park's connection to the water.

LaSalle Park's waterfront stretches for almost a mile, yet the entirety of the shoreline separates people from the water. In the future, the focus group envisions **water access for small craft and swimming, piers for birding or fishing, and connections to the inner and outer harbors by ferry or water taxi.** In addition, repairs to the seawall could incorporate designs to make it easier for people to connect to the water.



Take an integrated approach to paths for bikes, pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers, and cars.

People get to—and around—LaSalle Park in a variety of ways. Future changes to LaSalle Park should reflect the **entire spectrum of transportation modes used in the park** while focusing on accessibility, safety, efficiency, and aesthetics.



Create a comprehensive landscape plan.

The draw of many parks is the abundance of natural beauty. LaSalle Park could be greatly improved by **carefully planned, executed, and maintained landscaping** that includes flowers, shrubs, native plants, and trees. A comprehensive landscape plan could complement the existing beauty of the lake, open spaces, and tree groves.



Think big!

The focus group started to brainstorm some big ideas for new amenities they would like to see added to the park that might make it an even larger attraction for the residents of WNY and beyond. Ideas included **public art, mini-golf, rock climbing, zip-lining, an ice rink or track, and tours of the pumping station.** Subsequent visits to parks in other cities provided even more inspirations for big ideas to transform the park.



Find ways to unify the park and enhance the flow of movement.

Members of the focus group observed that the park doesn't seem to "flow." Counter-intuitively, this seems a result of the relative openness of the park and the lack of differentiation between one set of activities and another. If landscape improvements and tree plantings were used to frame the various clusters of activity spaces—ball diamonds, skate park, soccer fields, concert venue, etc.—the park could be experienced as a series of "rooms" giving users a sense that the park flows from one room to another.



Focus Group

Inspirational Park Tours

“ We gotta **think big**. We’re just getting by. These people [in Chicago] dream.”

“ I saw **many adults laughing and feeling the whimsy** of the space [at Maggie Daley Park].”

Parks should have something for **everyone**. ”

“ Use what you have.”

“ With the amount of space we have, **we shouldn’t have to compromise**. Green areas, sports fields, and high use public spaces like playgrounds are **all do-able**.”

“ Put **meaning** into everything. **Make everything special**.”



Key takeaways from other parks



Brooklyn Bridge Park offered something for everyone on a string of repurposed shipping piers. Active and passive spaces alternated piers with soccer fields and skating rinks, gardens and event lawns. At Pier 6, a cluster of playgrounds — Slide Mountain, Swing Valley, Sand Village, and the Water Lab — showed how creative child’s play can be. Other features included restaurants, a dog park, climbing wall, beach, carousel, and stunning views of Wall Street. The Squibb Bridge intrigued the focus group, who saw it as an inspiration for reconceptualization of LaSalle’s Hudson Street Bridge.



Governor’s Island was a park in progress, a former military base becoming a park for the whole city. Features included an adventure playground, a “Hammock Park” among newly planted trees, and an urban farm. But the highlight was a constructed hill which visitors could clamber up for views of downtown Brooklyn, Jersey City, Manhattan, the Statue of Liberty and the whole harbor.

The Battery is New York City’s oldest and busiest park. Millions come through here every year on the way to the Statue of Liberty tour boats, or to several subway stops, but also to linger among its natural gardens, winding walkways, and to enjoy dramatic views of the Hudson and the harbor. The Sea Glass Carousel and a popular restaurant anchor the south end. A dog park, an urban farm, historic ruins, and memorials are farther north.

Battery Park City, built on fill in the 1970s and ‘80s, dedicated one third of its new land to parks. Ground rents from commercial development provide generous funding of an archipelago of waterfront promenades, playgrounds, public art, a marina, historical commemorations like the Irish Famine Memorial, quiet groves, and active play areas.

The High Line showed how the unique re-use of an abandoned rail line, spurred by a grassroots citizens’ movement, could offer new perspectives and unusual vistas of the city while inserting a bit of nature into old industrial infrastructure. On a sunny summer day, the High Line was hot and crowded, but at slower times the plantings, water features, public art, and commercial uses would help provide a bit of quiet respite in the humming city.

Chicago



Millennium Park is a tourist mecca and a popular local park where visitors flock to take selfies at the Cloudgate sculpture and Crown Fountain, and downtown Chicago workers plan an after-work picnic-before-concert on the grounds of the Gehry-designed Jay Pritzker Pavillion. There is parking underground and gardens above, a cause for jealousy among the LaSalle Park focus group members.



Maggie Daley Park features creatively-designed playgrounds with age appropriate options and ADA compliance. The focus group particularly liked the climbing wall, skating ribbon, and the nine-part all-ages playground. The park is located next to a 10-lane highway, but the way the land was contoured seemed to diminish the noise. Maggie Daley is connected to Millennium Park across the spectacular BP Bridge by Frank Gehry.

Chicago Riverwalk is a sliver of urban park inserted on the edge of a busy waterway. The Riverwalk was constructed as a series of “rooms” framed by the bridges carrying city streets overhead and containing a mix of restaurants, trees and gardens, and seating areas. The focus group appreciated that ADA access was a “first thought” in design. On a summer mid-day the Riverwalk was teeming with people.

Northerly Island, once a small airport, has been transformed into a serene and natural escape from the bustle of city life. Users bike, run, or walk along the winding pathway and enjoy panoramic Lake Michigan vistas. The focus group liked incorporation of fishing lessons and environmental education in the experience, although some felt there was a missed opportunity for educational signage.

Ping Tom Park exemplified how culture and ethnic heritage can be woven into a park’s art and landscape. The playground and boathouse were memorable, as were the mix of natural and manicured landscapes, and the distant views of downtown north along the Chicago River.

The 606 – the Bloomingdale Line, a disused elevated rail line like the High Line, has become a trail for walking, running, biking, and skating, connecting neighborhoods east to west. Mile-marker signs, natural plantings, and frequent entrances from below, impressed the focus group. For many in the focus group The 606 was just “amazing.”

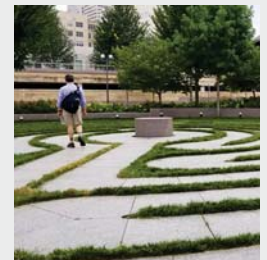
Clark Boathouse, part of a Mayoral effort to reclaim the Chicago River for people, featured attractive, sustainable architecture and support for competitive rowing and recreational paddling, with great potential to accommodate a broader range of activities.

Cincinnati



Smale Riverfront Park wowed the group with interactive play spaces, use of water features, incorporation of art and history, and ample basic amenities. Designed to connect downtown to the riverfront, the diversity of funding sources that support the park was a key takeaway.

The Serpentine Wall features curved steps down toward the river’s edge, doubling as a performance space and casual seating area just feet above the Ohio River.



Yeatman's Cove features a fabric structure pavilion much like the one in LaSalle Park but well-framed by trees to create a surprisingly intimate performance space. **Sawyer Point Park** offers a more established parkscape with a splash pad, tennis courts, and mature gardens, and the **International Friendship Trail** celebrates cultures of the world with national flags, embedded art, mature trees, and celebrations of Cincinnati’s sister cities.

Eden Park, one of Cincinnati’s oldest parks, is perched on rolling hills above the Ohio River, with stunning views of the valley below. Eden Park demonstrated how major cultural institutions — the art gallery, drama theater, and conservatory — can be incorporated in an otherwise heavily wooded and natural space.

Burnet Woods gave an example of how a serene, natural wooded space can be integrated into the city. Concerts in the gazebo at the top and educational programming in the nature center by a small lake below were popular features, along with disc golf and an attractive picnic area, but most users were not clamoring for more programming.

Washington Park provided a lot of inspiration — amenities and facilities for events and casual meetings, cool play and playground features, a great dog park, innovative signage, and first-class restrooms. The park is more than 200 years old, the group learned, but was recently redeveloped in a big way. It is managed by a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to neighborhood revitalization and funded, in part, by revenue from a new underground parking ramp, as well as corporate sponsorship and other sales.

Civic Garden Center of Greater Cincinnati provided an example of an organization that educates the public on key environmental issues like native plants, green infrastructure, and community gardening. The focus group found the exhibits to be instructive and learned how strong partnerships and the use of volunteers have been crucial to the success of the center.

Focus Group

Inspirational
Park Tour

NYC



Integration of flowers and horticulture like these native plants on the High Line are noted by the group at various parks visited.

The High Line



The High Line

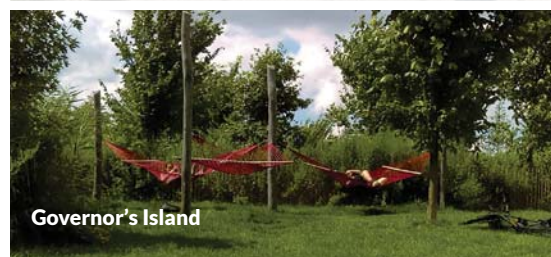
The High Line and the Squibb Park Bridge at Brooklyn Bridge Park show that pedestrian bridges can enhance access while creating exciting experiences for those that use them.



Brooklyn Bridge Park



The High Line



Governor's Island



Governor's Island



Jane's Carousel at Brooklyn Bridge Park



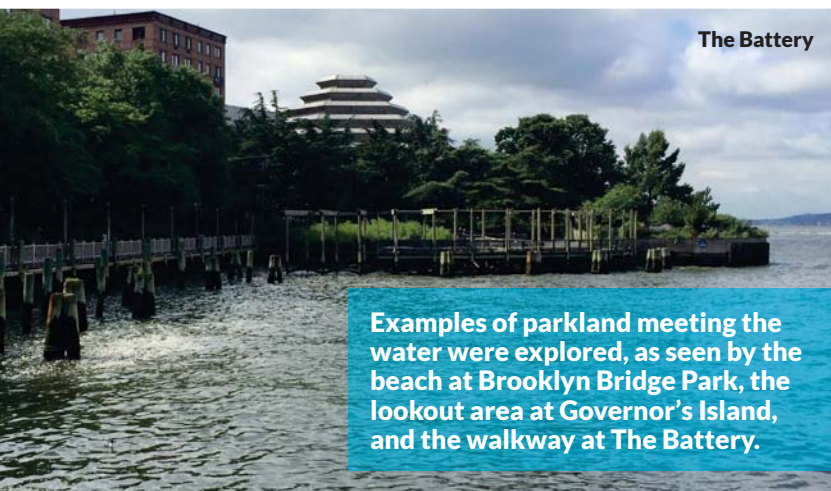
Water Lab

The long slide at Governor's Island and the Water Lab, Sand Village, and Jane's Carousel at Brooklyn Bridge Park are inspiring examples of play spaces and splash pads.



The High Line

The focus group enjoyed popsicles and public art on the High Line.



The Battery

Examples of parkland meeting the water were explored, as seen by the beach at Brooklyn Bridge Park, the lookout area at Governor's Island, and the walkway at The Battery.



Governor's Island



Governor's Island

Man-made hills at Governor's Island offered ideas on topography in parks.



Brooklyn Bridge Park

Artificial turf fields at both Brooklyn Bridge Park and Battery City are noted for their quality.

Takeaways for LaSalle Park



It's great to have **topography**.

Improving **access to the water** is key.

Don't forget about **security**.

Urban farming has a role to play in drawing users.

Public art should be in public parks.

NYC showed us how we might **improve access** (including a bridge).

Designing **adequate funding models** is crucial.

Organizing and defining spaces and their purpose is key.

Parks need **concessions** (food, drink, restrooms, presence).

Make **playgrounds creative**—not off the rack.

Quality sport fields of many kinds make a park.

The right **plants lovingly cared for** **bring beauty** to a park.

Focus Group

Inspirational
Park Tour

Chicago



A rock climbing wall is just one of several unique active recreation features of Maggie Daley Park.

Maggie Daley Park



Northerly Park

Northerly Park offers serene refuge from the city through expansive wild areas and educational programming.



Crown Fountain blends public art and recreation into a space where people can play and cool down in the water or enjoy from afar.

Millennium Park



Signage in Millennium Park displays the variety of activities available for people of all ages.



The playground at Maggie Daley Park offers accessible and creative play options for kids of all ages.

Maggie Daley Park



Clark Boathouse supports rowing and boating activities as part of an effort to take back the river, but has potential for a broader range of activities.

Clark Boathouse



The Riverwalk path runs for 1.25 miles along the Chicago River in the very center of the city.

The Riverwalk



Food and activity options along the Riverwalk enhance the park experience.

The Riverwalk

Ping Tom Park reflects the cultural and historical heritage of the neighborhood around it while mixing natural and manicured landscapes.



Ping Tom Park



The 606

Running along a former rail line, The 606 is a multi-modal connection between other parks and neighborhoods.



The 606

Public art installations are one of the features of The 606 observed by the focus group.

Takeaways for LaSalle Park



Provide **ADA** access as a “first thought”.

Find a way to **limit cars**.

Don’t forget about **security**.

Build a bridge to connect neighborhoods to the park.

Honor local **cultures**.

Consider **family programs** like camping.

Create more **events**.

Consider **gardens** as a feature.

Interactive **water features** are interesting.

Put **seating** everywhere.

Balance natural and manicured **landscapes**.

A **skating ribbon** seems like such a good idea.

Parks should **flow and use space** effectively.

Incorporate **waterfront activities** and uses.

Think about **retail and restaurants**, pop-up and permanent.

“A **parking garage** under the park would be a dream.”

“We need **public art**, an icon, that is uniquely Buffalo.”

Focus Group

Inspirational
Park Tour

Cincinnati



The Serpentine Wall's steps serve as a beautiful performance space and casual seating area on the edge of the Ohio River.

Serpentine Wall

Cincinnati's riverfront parks include features similar to those at LaSalle, such as the event pavilion at Yeatman's Cove.



Yeatman's Cove



Burnet Woods

Burnet Woods offers a natural, serene setting where environmental and historical programming is incorporated into the park experience.



Smale Riverfront Park

Artistic features designed for relaxing and enjoying the view are incorporated into the waterfront at Smale Riverfront Park.



Smale Riverfront Park

Interactive, unique features like the foot piano, flying pig, water toys, and labyrinth were popular among the focus group.



The Southwest Porch in Washington Park is a good example of corporate sponsorship helping make park features happen.




Washington Park




Civic Garden Center

While not a park, the Civic Garden Center is an integral part of making Cincinnati a city of parks through environmental education, partnerships, volunteers, and exhibits.



Washington Park boasts both underground parking and a concessions building, and is integrated well into the surrounding urban fabric.

Washington Park



Focus group members walk along the International Friendship Trail, a path along the riverfront with public art, mature trees, and celebrations of sister cities in other countries.

International Friendship Trail



Sawyer Point Park is a more established public space that has tennis courts, a splash pad, and mature gardens.

Sawyer Point Park



Washington Park

The splashpad in Washington Park wowed the focus group with fountains synchronized to music.

Takeaways for LaSalle Park



Incorporate creative **play spaces** and attractions (e.g. swings, musical instruments, carousels, and great, well-programmed playgrounds).

We need a bigger, **better pavilion** with stronger programming.

Celebrate history, culture, geography with **public art and events** (the border, Canada, water, freedom).

Foster **partnerships** – financial, organizational, volunteer.

Design interactive **water features** – sometimes with light shows.

Plant gardens with native plants – “planting in the post-wild world”.

Step down to the water, maybe like Serpentine Wall, or not.

Make **permanent space for concessions**, maybe like “the Porch”.

Improve the **spatial organization of the park** – make it flow, frame the “rooms,” eliminate dead space.

Design for the site (topography, views, water, surrounding city).

Fix the **parking**; underground?

Create an **environmental education center**.

Connect across the water to Canalside, Outer Harbor.

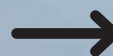
Signage and orientation maps can be creative.

Youth Photovoices



Equipped with digital cameras and their thinking caps, ten youth from the nearby Belle Center walked through the park to capture their thoughts and aspirations for LaSalle. While each photo and written comment represents a unique voice, four distinct trends stood out.

For kids, LaSalle Park is a place to play, experience nature, and connect with the water. And they want it to be litter-free.



Youth were asked to take photos of **what they like, what they would change** and **their big ideas** for LaSalle Park.

They were asked to reflect on the photos they had taken and **write captions** for each.







Youth Photovoices

What they like

**LaSalle
Park
is for
playing.**

Numerous photographs and comments called out park recreational amenities as important to the youth experience. They particularly like the **pool and splash pad, skate park, the two playgrounds, and the various sports fields.**



When kids play it makes me **happy.**



“ a **boy** sticking his head in the middle of it.



“ Porque puedo estar **activo.**

(Because **I can be active.**)



“ Porque brincas saltas y te diviertes haciendo trucos y callendote de cara.

(Because you jump and have fun doing tricks and falling off on your face.)



“ I like bringing my skateboard to the **skate park**.



“ Me gusto porque tu puedes divertirte en el pool.
(I like it because you can have **fun in the pool**.)



Make **more playgrounds** ...**make a football area there.** ”



“ I want to build a **big slide** and a **big pool** but, I mean a big, big slide.



“ My friend is in the picture he's **on the Buffalo**.



I love this picture because it's a picture of a pool and **I think that is all about water.** ”



“ I like **playing baseball** with my friends.



Youth Photovoices

What they like

LaSalle Park is a place to experience nature.

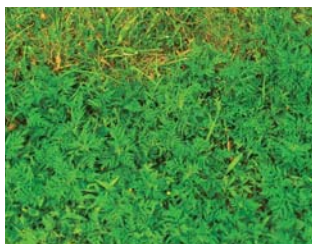
For kids at the Belle Center, entering LaSalle Park offers greenery, scenery, and open air that is not commonplace in the neighborhood surrounding the center. Pictures of the grass, wildflowers, trees, and the open sky were highlighted by the students, accented with descriptions that celebrate their beauty and natural appeal.



“ There are a lot of **trees** and in the background there is a city.



“ I like the **scenery**.



So **green** and that's great.”



“ **Beautiful flowers** and they are my favorite flower forever.



“...you can look closely at to the tree’s bark.



“ Beautiful flowers growing.



The feather is so soft.”



“ Beautiful and extraordinary.

It’s growing.”



“ I love it because [it] is so clean and the tree is like a forest.

Youth Photovoices

What they like



**LaSalle
Park is a
a place to
connect to
the water.**

As the bird flies, The Belle Center is less than half a mile from the water, but views of Lake Erie are obscured by the I-190 and train tracks. Upon crossing the Hudson Street Bridge into LaSalle, children and families can **connect with the water and see it up close**. All the kids took pictures of the water, and many chose to write about the beauty and wonder of being close to the water's edge.



“

People
can **go
boating.**



“

I like
going on
boats.



“ Beautiful.



“
Like.”



Porque te relajas.”
(Because you can relax.)



What they would change

**Make
LaSalle
Park
clean and
healthy.**

When The Belle Center kids were asked to describe what they wish was different about the park, one major theme stood out: **make it clean and healthy.**



“ Change the railing.



“ ...they should drain out the pool because when it's raining **leaves blow and it might land there and it's going to take longer to get in the pool.**



“ ...littering is bad for the environment and there was a lot of it there and some plants were not growing because of that.



“ I would like to change this part of the park because it has a lot of **litter.**



There is a lot of dirt in these grills. People at the park should clean them. ”



“ There is garbage near the garbage can, the garbage is supposed to be in the garbage can.



Big ideas for LaSalle Park



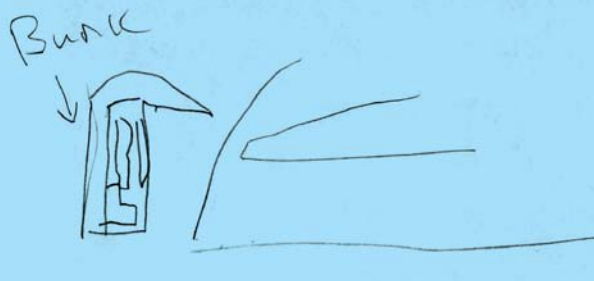
To make a rocket to take you anywhere you wanted to go.

A bowling alley.

Dog obstacle for dog training.

Para una pista de carreras.
Put a race track.

[A child's drawing of a baseball dugout structure.]



I will change the park a little for there can be **swings, and monkey bars.**



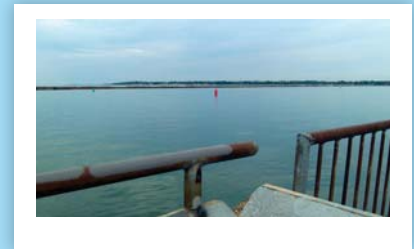
I would like to change about LaSalle Park is to **pick up garbage.**



...build a bridge where you can only walk not drive to Canada and a wipe out game for kids where there is no fish clean water like a pool no nothing underwater...



a big slide and a big pool at the end but, I mean a big, big one.



a teleporting garbage can so, people that throw garbage in the floor the garbage teleports and the garbage makes it in the garbage can.

Big tunnels underground.

More room for playgrounds.

A big, big pool, but free so people can enjoy fresh water.

Community Survey Responses



1,164 Survey Responses

The Imagine LaSalle community survey gathered basic information about who uses LaSalle Park, what they like or dislike about it, and what they envision for the park's future.

Throughout July and August 2018, the survey team visited LaSalle Park on 28 different occasions, from average weekday afternoons to large weekend events. The survey team also visited Broderick Park, Canalside, Wilkeson Pointe, and Erie Basin Marina to hear from regional waterfront visitors, and canvassed twice at the Lafayette High School Community Garden to hear from West Side high school students and their families.

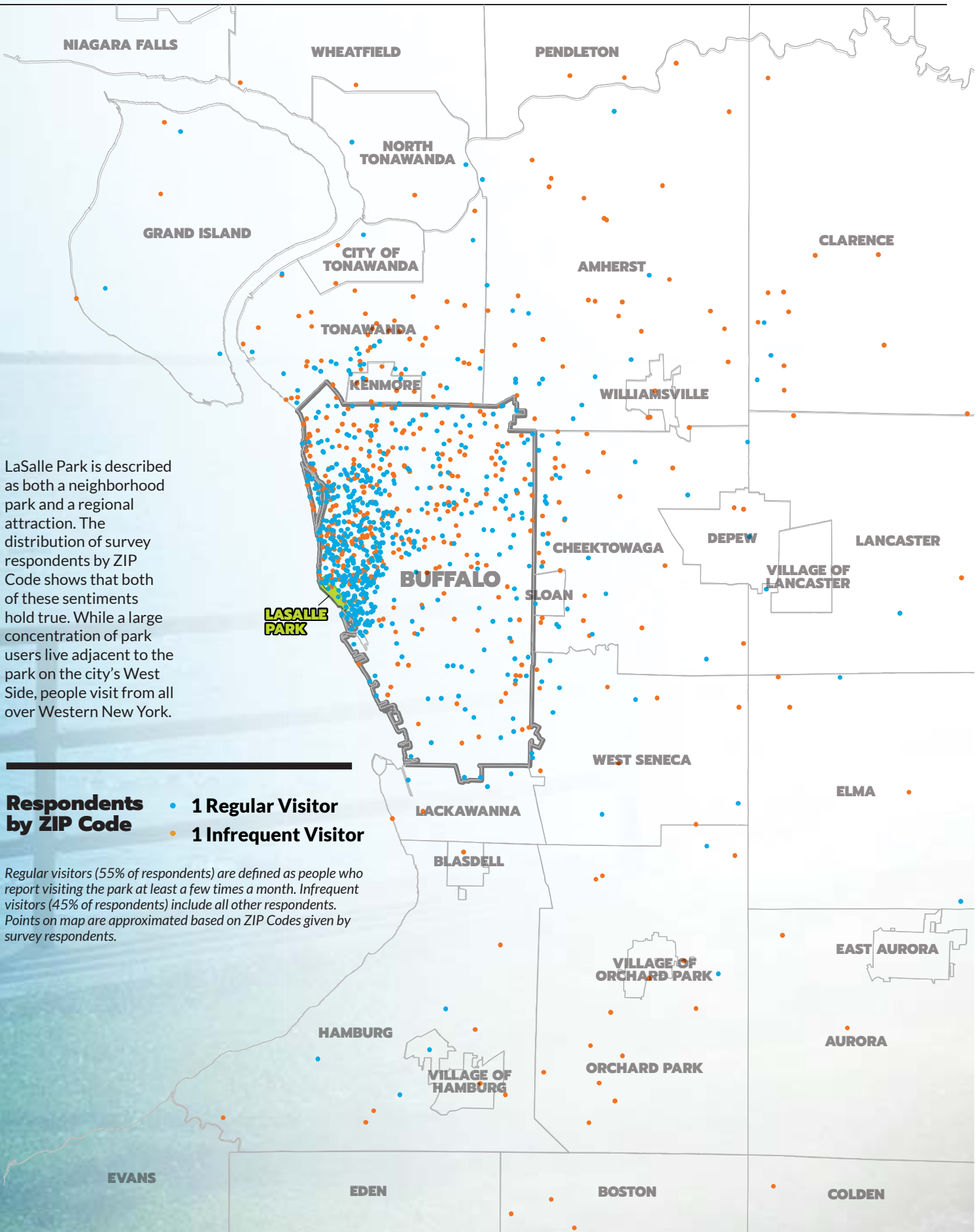
The survey was available in the seven most commonly spoken languages in the nearby community—English, Spanish, Karen, Burmese, Somali, Nepali, and Arabic.

Also available online, the survey was promoted in four local news stories, across Facebook and Instagram, and through email blasts from organizations with ties to the park. In the park, 35 lawn signs placed in high-traffic areas announced the survey to visitors. Additionally, flyers promoting the survey were displayed at local businesses or community centers.

These efforts culminated in the collection of **1,164 surveys over a 60-day period**. Survey results provide a broad overview of how people experience LaSalle Park and reveal how perspectives on the park can vary depending on how often someone visits, how they get to the park, or where they live.

Survey Respondents Characteristics

Age		Gender		Race and Ethnicity		Languages Spoken Most At Home	
Under 18	7%	Female	54%	White	57%	English	86%
18-34	38%	Male	43%	African American/Black	16%	Spanish	5%
35-54	34%	Prefer not to Answer	2%	Hispanic	13%	English and another language	4%
55-64	12%	Other	1%	Other	8%	Karen	2%
65+	6%			Prefer not to answer	4%	Arabic	1%
Prefer not to answer	3%			Asian	4%	Somali	1%
				Native American	1%	Burmese	1%
						Other	1%



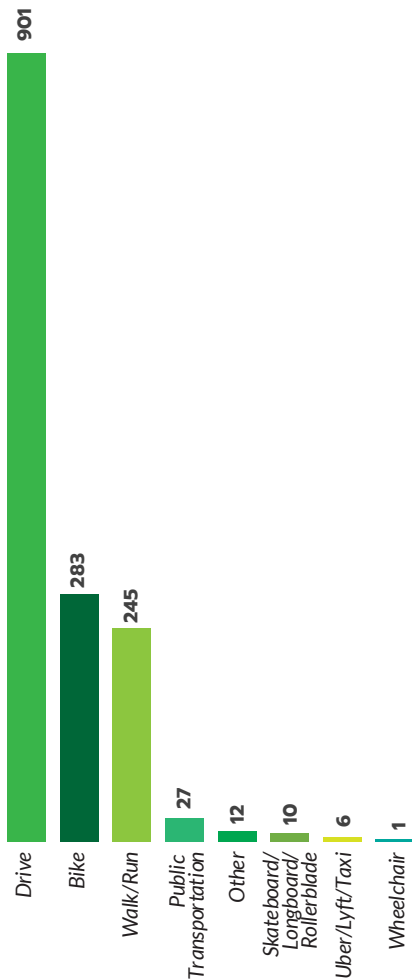
LaSalle Park is described as both a neighborhood park and a regional attraction. The distribution of survey respondents by ZIP Code shows that both of these sentiments hold true. While a large concentration of park users live adjacent to the park on the city's West Side, people visit from all over Western New York.

Respondents by ZIP Code

- 1 Regular Visitor
- 1 Infrequent Visitor

Regular visitors (55% of respondents) are defined as people who report visiting the park at least a few times a month. Infrequent visitors (45% of respondents) include all other respondents. Points on map are approximated based on ZIP Codes given by survey respondents.

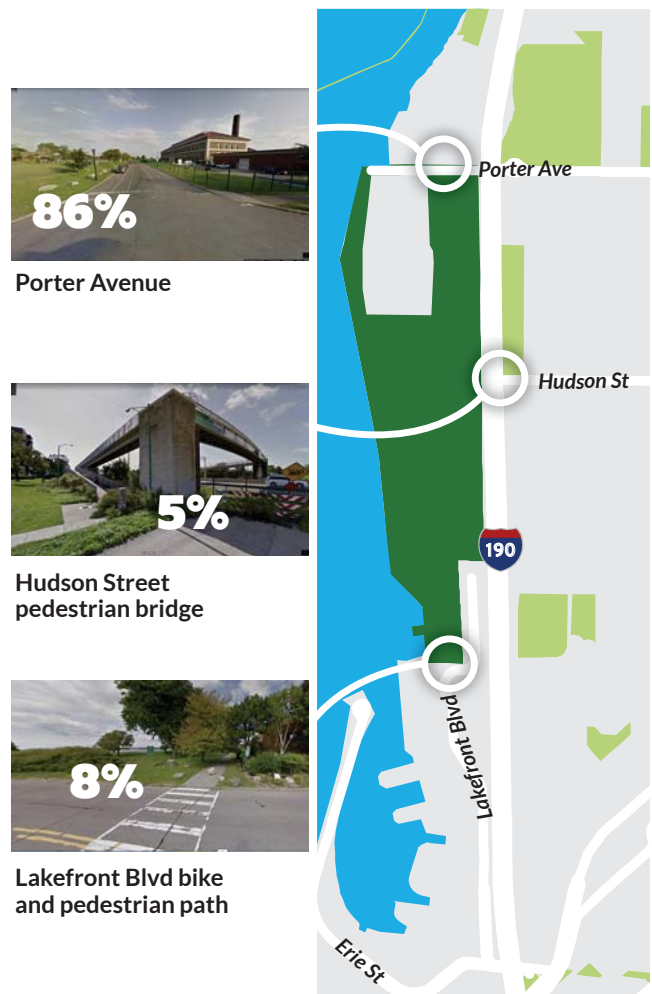
When you visit, how do you get to LaSalle Park?



The majority of respondents report driving to LaSalle, although biking and walking or running are also popular methods of getting to the park. About a fifth of those who drive also use other modes to get to the park, and almost a quarter of respondents don't drive to the park. Less than three percent of people report using public transportation to get to the park, with few stops within walking distance of a park entrance.

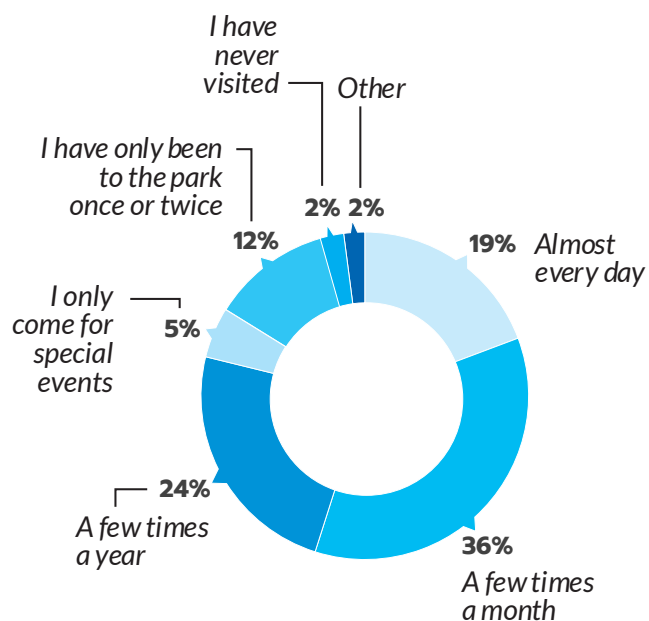
Respondents were allowed to give multiple answers to this question. Therefore, the sum of the values above is greater than the total number of respondents.

Which entrance do you use when you visit LaSalle Park?



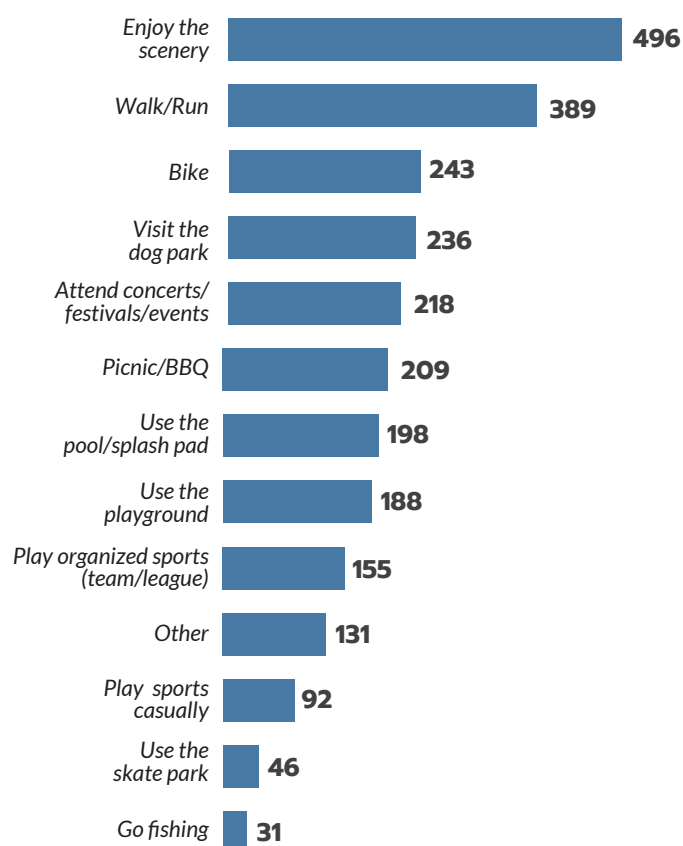
About 86% of visitors use the Porter Avenue entrance since it is the only entrance with vehicle access. Among those who don't drive to the park, Porter Avenue is used slightly less than half the time, while the other two entrances are used about a quarter of the time.

How often do you visit LaSalle Park?



Nearly a fifth of all respondents visit the park almost every day. Regular visitors, or people who visit the park a few times a month or more, make up 55% of all respondents. About 140 people said they have only visited the park once or twice, and 27 respondents said they had never been to LaSalle. The few respondents who have never visited the park gave a variety of reasons why they have not visited before, ranging from safety and accessibility concerns to lack of knowledge about the park.

What do you usually do in the park?



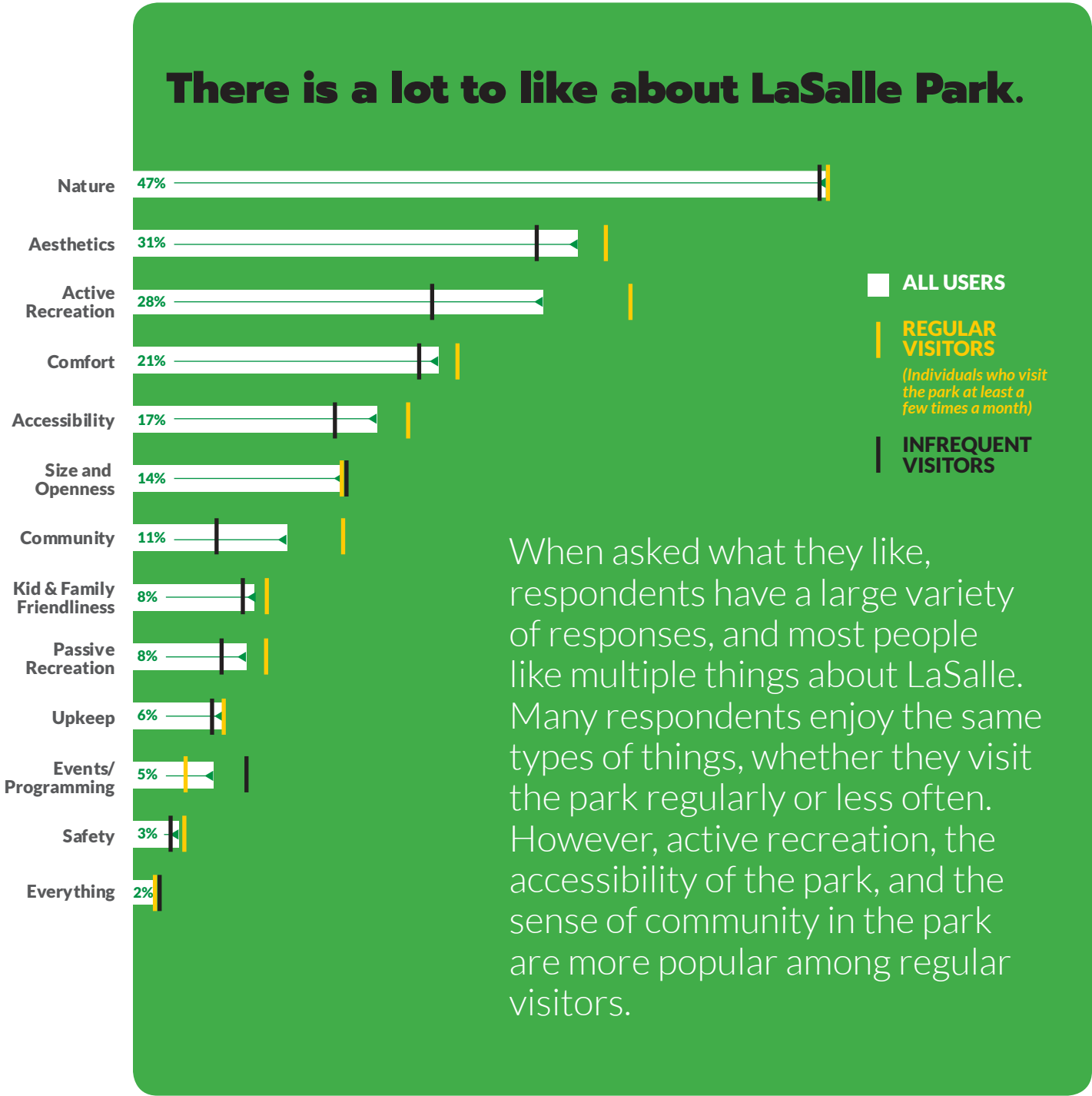
Overwhelmingly, respondents report enjoying the scenery as the number one activity in the park. Walking and running is the second most common activity in the park among respondents. Beyond that, activities that involve specific amenities in the park (such as the dog park, pool, picnic shelters, and playgrounds) are the most popular. Casual sports, skating in the skate park, and fishing are reported the fewest number of times. Activities that fall into the "other" category include reading, people watching, listening to music, kayaking, working, photography, kite sailing, windsurfing, learning to drive, and more.

Respondents were allowed to give multiple answers to this question. Therefore, the sum of the values above is greater than the total number of respondents.



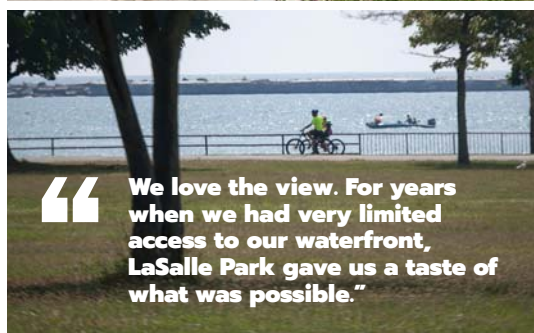
1,164 Survey Responses

What they like





“Beautiful location, spread out, lots of room to bike/exercise with great views.”



“We love the view. For years when we had very limited access to our waterfront, LaSalle Park gave us a taste of what was possible.”



LaSalle Park connects the community to water and nature.

Almost half of respondents say they like to connect with nature at the park. Of the 539 responses relating to nature, 86% mention enjoying the park’s relationship to water, the lake, or the river. In addition to water, other natural features such as the cool breeze, birds, trees, grass, and greenspace are highly valued among survey respondents.

Visitors come to enjoy the views and scenery of the park.

A large number of respondents like that LaSalle Park is aesthetically pleasing in some way. Although waterfront views are popular among respondents (especially of sunsets), views of the city’s skyline, the Peace Bridge and Canada, and the overall beauty within the park all matter to respondents.

Active recreation opportunities are a popular activity.

Active recreation includes activities such as sports, swimming, playing on the playground or the splash pad, running, walking, biking, visiting the dog park or skate park, or other physical activities. Although active recreation is generally well-liked, it is even more popular among regular park users.

The park feels removed from the hustle and bustle of the city.

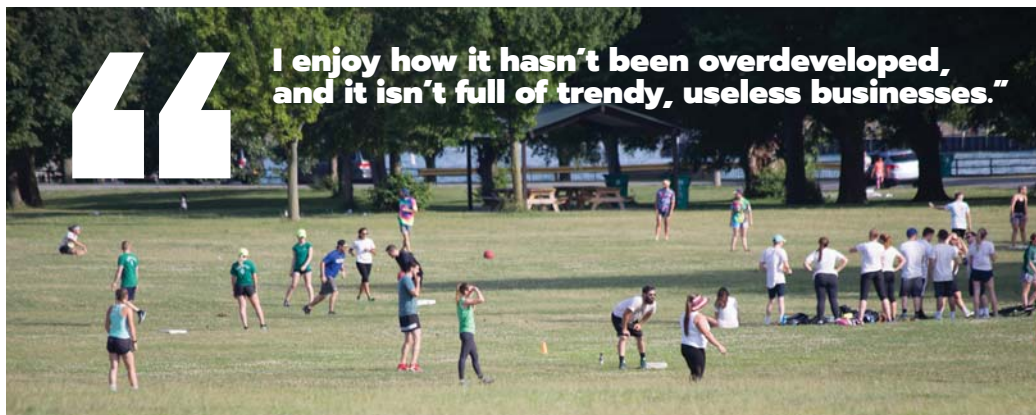
Many respondents stated that they liked how calm, quiet, peaceful, and relaxing the park is. Visitors also value the cool breeze off the lake, which makes for a comfortable place to visit during hot summer days.

LaSalle Park is convenient for many visitors.

When it comes to accessibility, many survey respondents like that LaSalle Park is located near their homes, which makes it convenient to use. Others like that the park is near downtown. Respondents also like the park’s connections to the Riverwalk Trail that leads south and north of the park.

LaSalle is a celebration of diversity and community.

Respondents value the diversity of park users. From cultural diversity to diversity of age, race, or socioeconomic status, the variety of people who use LaSalle Park is one of the park’s assets, according to respondents. The sense of community in the park and the friendliness of park visitors are also commonly cited as things respondents like about LaSalle.



People appreciate how large and open the park is.

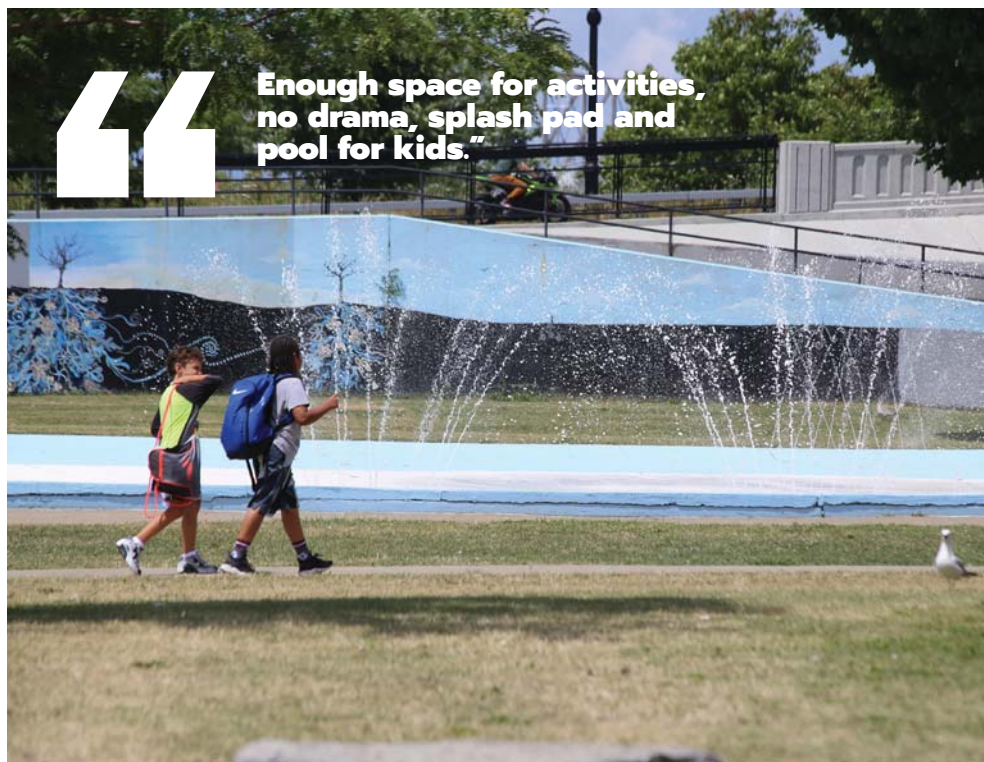
As the city's largest waterfront park, LaSalle's size is a popular feature. More specifically, respondents commonly state they like the openness of the park, which allows so many different concurrent uses. Some respondents like that LaSalle is not as developed or commercialized compared to other waterfront areas such as Canalside.

Kid- and family-friendly spaces are vital.

Both specific amenities and the overall atmosphere of the park make it comfortable for families and children. Respondents like that LaSalle has plenty for kids to do, and spaces for families to relax or celebrate together in a safe, welcoming environment.

Visitors enjoy a range of passive recreation opportunities.

Respondents like passive activities such as lounging, people-watching, reading, grilling, picnicking, fishing, or using the shelters for parties or other get-togethers. Several of these responses relate to comments about the openness of the park, the park's sense of community, and the views of the water.



For some, LaSalle Park appears relatively clean.

Although some respondents like that LaSalle Park is clean and well-maintained, a few of those responses come with a quantifier, such as “relatively”, “fairly”, “for the most part”, or “compared to most/ other parks”. Other comments refer to the cleanliness of a specific part of the park, such as the dog park, but not to the park as a whole.

Visitors feel safe in LaSalle park.

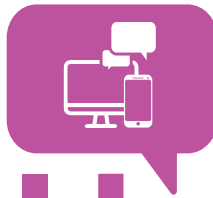
For some, feeling safe in the park is something they like about it. Safety and security is a matter of escaping the drama of everyday life in some cases, while others note that the park and its amenities are safe for kids and families.

LaSalle Park has a tradition of large events.

Those who like the events and programming in LaSalle Park specifically mention summer concerts, cultural festivals, and community celebrations as something they enjoy. More generally, others note that they like the event pavilion and its potential to host even more events in the future.

Some people love everything about LaSalle.

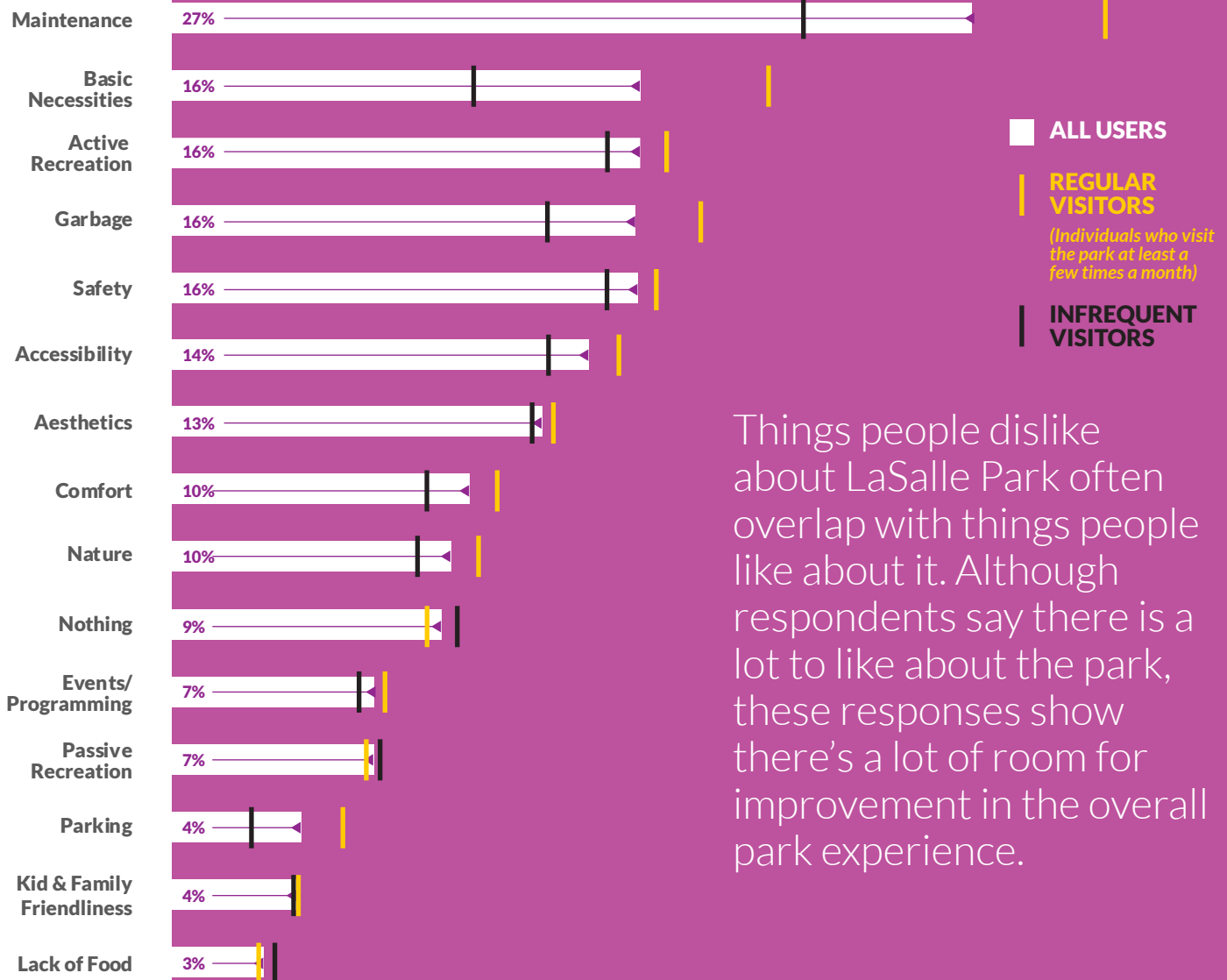
Some respondents had difficulty coming up with specific things they like about LaSalle Park, so 17 people stated that they like everything about it.



1,164 Survey Responses

What they would change

There's room for improvement in the overall park experience.





Improved maintenance could enhance the park experience.

The number one concern about LaSalle Park is the need for more maintenance. Comments point to every area of the park, including roads, pathways, railings, the seawall, sports fields, port-a-potties, playgrounds, and open spaces as being areas of concern. Maintenance issues are often related to concerns about safety, functionality of amenities, and aesthetic appeal of the park.

Active recreation areas should be expanded and improved.

Respondents emphasize the need to improve the condition of athletic fields, bike trails, and pedestrian paths. Comments also note a desire for amenities people feel are missing from the park, such as tennis courts, basketball courts, a boat launch, and more unconventional features like rock climbing walls or exercise facilities. Sometimes, respondents like existing amenities but feel they should be expanded, including the dog park, skate park, and bike paths.

The park needs some basic necessities like bathrooms and water fountains.

Public restrooms in the pool house are only available when the pool is open (from Sunday to Friday over summer, weather permitting). The concession stand building also has bathrooms, but are not open to the public. Port-a-potties dot the landscape around LaSalle, but respondents would prefer permanent facilities that are more sanitary and accessible to families. Water fountains throughout the park could complement athletic and active uses and facilitate longer stays in the park.

Getting to and moving around the park can be difficult.

Some respondents want safer pedestrian and bicycle access at Porter and Hudson entrances, as well as pedestrian-only access on the waterfront to improve safety and aesthetics. Others desire better vehicle connections to adjacent neighborhoods and waterfront destinations, especially since the I-190 presents a physical, visual, and mental barrier that cuts off the park from surrounding neighborhoods and the city. Because sections of the park are isolated from one another, some want better connectivity within the park itself. Respondents also desire water access for paddle or motor boats.

The park could use an aesthetic update.

Generally, people see a need to make LaSalle modern, clean, and inviting. People mention that there is not a lot of variety in the terrain; large, open, mowed spaces can make the park feel desolate. Many respondents wish for planned landscaping or wild-growth areas. Others think the highway visually detracts from the view of the city at the northern edge of the park. Some respondents also feel that park entrances could be beautified to make the park feel more visually welcoming.

Visitors wish the park felt safer.

Respondents express concerns over the general feeling of safety in the park, especially during dark hours and in areas without lighting. There are also safety concerns about drug use resulting in used needles around the park. Athletes point out that soccer fields and baseball diamonds can be unsafe because of holes and rocks. Several respondents also note that the seawall railings are unsafe and pose a threat to children. Pedestrians and bicyclists feel that park roads are unsafe because of car-centric design and speeding vehicles.



LaSalle needs a better waste management strategy.

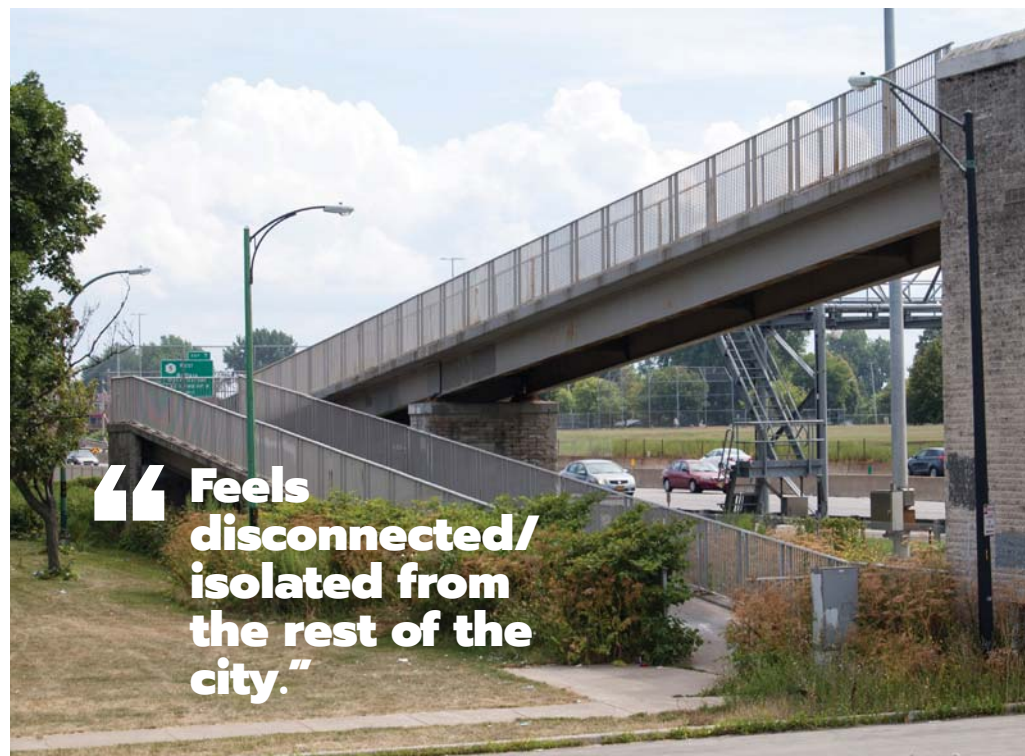
One hundred seventy nine comments explicitly note litter in the park as a problem. In some cases, respondents see more trash receptacles as the solution, but others wish to see additional cleanups, efforts to educate the public on littering, and strict enforcement of litter laws.

The park should be a connection to nature.

Respondents feel that the park could benefit from additional trees, vegetation, and other landscaping, including places for habitat restoration. Softening the shoreline could allow better connectivity between the water and people. In a few cases, this includes suggestions for a naturalized shoreline. At the same time, birds and bugs are commonly cited nuisances in the park.

Visitors want LaSalle to feel more comfortable.

Smells in the park, which include exhaust from the highway, bad odors from the lake, and smoke from cigarettes or marijuana, detract from the comfort of the park. Traffic from the I-190 is loud and distracts from the relaxing nature of the park while music from visitors in cars or at picnic shelters can exceed comfortable levels. Due to occasional crowding in more popular areas of the park, some respondents desire more places to sit and relax, especially in the shade.



“Feels disconnected/isolated from the rest of the city.”



Some people like LaSalle exactly as it is.

More than 100 people say there is nothing they dislike about LaSalle Park. Some of these respondents clarify they could not think of anything at the moment, or that they do not have enough experience in the park to have a poor opinion of it.

Passive recreation areas should be everywhere.

Dislikes relating to passive recreation mainly focus on the need for more seating, picnic areas, and places to grill. Responses say there should be additional seats and benches, particularly near the waterfront, playgrounds, pool and skate park. Others note that many existing tables and benches are in poor condition from burns and graffiti.

The park is underutilized for events and programming.

Respondents express a desire for more events (festivals, concerts, tournaments, community activities, etc.) in the park throughout the year, making better use of the event pavilion area. A few people wish LaSalle was a year-round destination. For existing events, respondents want better parking and traffic options. Many wish the pool was open on Saturdays.

Parking is inadequate.

Some respondents feel there is not enough parking throughout the park, especially during large events. A few respondents wish that the gravel lots were paved, with barriers to prevent drivers from parking on grass areas.

LaSalle could be better for kids and families.

Respondents see a need for more kid- and family-focused amenities. Playgrounds should accommodate the number of kids who actually want to use them and should be modern and attractive for all ages, not just young children. When it comes to child safety, respondents call for woodchips to be replaced with softer foam mats. People show a desire for more family-friendly places, events, and programs in the park so kids and adults alike can relax, play, and have fun in a safe environment.

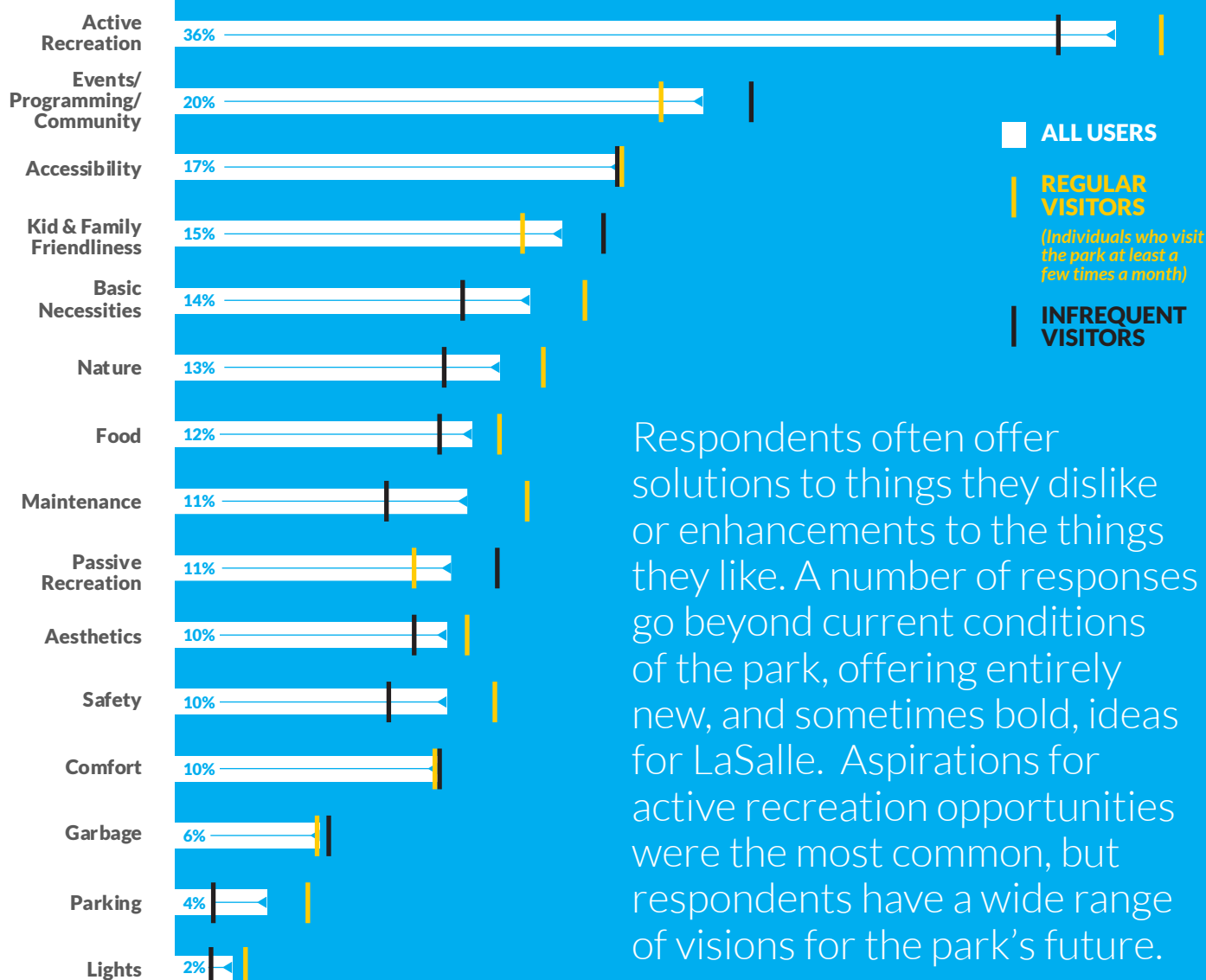
People want a place to get food in the park.

Several respondents bring to light the need for concessions or places to get food while visiting LaSalle Park. Some express a desire to reopen the concessions building in the park that is very rarely used, or to open a new building that sells food, and has bathrooms and a place to relax.

1,164 Survey Responses

Big ideas for LaSalle Park

If you could make one big change, what would it be?



Respondents often offer solutions to things they dislike or enhancements to the things they like. A number of responses go beyond current conditions of the park, offering entirely new, and sometimes bold, ideas for LaSalle. Aspirations for active recreation opportunities were the most common, but respondents have a wide range of visions for the park's future.



Expand and improve active recreation areas of the park.

More than a third of all “big ideas” involve improving and expanding active recreation opportunities in the park. Responses vary from general recommendations about expanding playgrounds, the skate park, and dog park, to specific suggestions for new amenities. Some examples include slides and water buckets in the pool and splash pad, agility courses and water features in the dog park, kayak and boat launches, exercise equipment, a sports complex, and facilities for basketball, tennis, volleyball, and handball. An entertainment complex, hot tubs, a stadium, rock climbing walls, a naval boat, an amusement park, a disc-golf course, a jet-ski rental, and a beach are some of the more unique responses.

Make the park easier to get to.

In terms of scale, the biggest idea for improving access to the park is to remove, cover, or reconfigure the I-190, making it less of a barrier to the park. Some wish for additional vehicle access to facilitate getting in and out during large events, while others suggest adding a place to arrive by motorized or non-motorized watercrafts. More and better pedestrian and bicycle paths could improve connectivity to places within the park. Some suggest removing vehicle access along the waterfront to increase the quality of the pedestrian experience at the water's edge. Wayfinding signage throughout the park showing where park amenities are located, and demonstrating the park's connections to other waterfront destinations are also desired.

Improve the event pavillion and use it more often.

A common theme is the idea that the park, especially the events pavilion, is underutilized. Respondents see opportunity for more concerts, cultural festivals, community events, fireworks, carnivals, sporting events and tournaments, and art fairs in the park. From the perspective of programming, respondents would like the pool to be open on Saturdays, and more family- and kid-oriented activities like outdoor movies, arts and crafts, and educational programming.

Focus on kid- and family-friendly amenities.

A majority of comments related to kids and family-friendly amenities mention playgrounds. Overwhelmingly, respondents wish to see bigger playgrounds with more features for kids of all ages, especially swings. In the pool area, some people want a place for younger children to play in the splash pad or pool separate from older kids and adults. Respondents also wish the park was safer for kids and had more kid-oriented activities and events.

Reconnect LaSalle Park with nature.

Improved landscaping, additional trees, native-species plantings, and flowers throughout the park would improve the park's aesthetic appeal. Some respondents also suggest making the shoreline softer or more natural as a way to improve access to the water. Others recommend creating a community garden that could be a tool for both beautification and education.

Start with the basics.

People want a permanent, accessible, sanitary bathroom somewhere in the park. Some suggest bathrooms that are open year round. Additionally, public water fountains around the park are a highly desired amenity that could compliment active uses in the park.



Plan for future maintenance and improvements.

Aside from a broad notion that the park could benefit from more maintenance, paving and repairing roads, paths, and sidewalks are a priority for respondents. People would also like easily-maintained, improved turf on the sports fields and in the dog park. People also want existing, damaged benches and tables to be repaired or replaced.

Incorporate passive recreation throughout the park.

Among ideas for improving passive recreation, the most common was the addition of more picnic shelters with grills around the park, especially near the pool and waterfront. Others wish for more comfortable seating and places to hang out near the water.

Beautify through nature and art.

Many comments call for more trees, vegetation, gardens, and flowers, but a few aesthetic suggestions also call for public art, including murals and sculptures. Some respondents want decorative fountains and benches as part of a park-wide landscaping effort. Removing the I-190 and softening the shoreline are some of the large-scale aesthetic considerations recommended by respondents.

Design for comfort.

Adding more comfortable places to sit and relax could enhance the comfort of the park. For some, this means indoor seating or seats with overhead cover. One respondent even recommends bench swings along a boardwalk. Some people specifically mention the need for more shade in the park.

Integrate food options.

Respondents want a place to get food in the park. Ideas range from temporary solutions like food trucks or stands, to permanent structures like a concession building (new or renovated) or a restaurant.

Make LaSalle safer and more secure.

In terms of physical safety, respondents wish for improvements to the seawall railing, soft mats on playgrounds, and additional traffic calming measures. To help people feel safer in the park, respondents want more police presence and security cameras in the park to enforce laws and park rules. Others advocate for closing the park at night to reduce crime.

Implement a waste management strategy.

Comments relating to garbage generally wish for litter in the park to be cleaned up. Specific suggestions for doing so include anchored or permanent garbage cans that can't be knocked over, more garbage cans throughout the park, and stricter enforcement of litter laws.

Manage parking efficiently.

Some respondents want more parking throughout the park. Comments clarify that parking lots should be paved and include barriers to prevent people from driving into grass areas to park. People also wish to see more lenience on parking tickets when a lot of people use the park at once and parking is scarce.

Light up the park.

Respondents would like to see more lighting throughout LaSalle. Lighting in the athletic fields would make it easier to play past sundown, while better lighting on the pedestrian bridge and sidewalks could make the park feel safer at night.

1,164 Survey Responses

Big ideas for LaSalle Park

“ ...more **family friendly** activities, add a large playground for young children, also play areas for teens to use.

Bring the imagination back. ”

“ More **community art**, get the **youth involved** from community.

“ Have **more concerts** here, more events, it's so big, it's **great**.

“ ...a **waterfront boulevard** connecting LaSalle with the Marina and with the outer harbor.

“ More garbage and recycling cans and more trees.

“ Add a **LOT MORE benches**.

Something with **refreshments**, maybe a beer garden for adults. ”
Help get people here and involved.

“ More **vegetation** - more **trees**... more **wildflower** meadows.

“ A building for **bathrooms** where you can wash your hands.

“ Add a **beach!**

“ Make a **gateway entrance** to enhance the importance of the park.

“ More **concession** options, maybe **food trucks**.

Light fixtures around the soccer fields, baseball fields, and skate park. ”

“ More **shaded, sitting areas**. Add **more fun and colourful features** in the splash pads.

“ Build a **turf field** for soccer.



Through the eyes of children, in the survey responses of more than a thousand LaSalle Park users, and in the deliberations of community focus group members who visited parks in other American cities, a slate of “big ideas” with the power to transform LaSalle Park is revealed.

Celebrate the park’s culture of inclusivity and diversity.

Maintaining LaSalle’s identity as a welcoming place for all, especially nearby residents and Buffalo’s immigrant community, is crucial. Installations, amenities, signage, and other features should embrace the wealth of cultures that enjoy LaSalle Park and build on Buffalo’s identity as an international community.

Embrace nature with inspiring landscaping.

While LaSalle Park is an oasis for some, many feel that the landscaping leaves much to be desired. An inspiring comprehensive plan for a richer, more sustainable landscape is a must.

Support exciting and diverse active recreation opportunities.

People come to parks to play soccer and softball, to skate and skateboard, to run, bike, walk, and more. Active recreation facilities in LaSalle Park should be improved, expanded, and complimented by new amenities, including those that invite year-round use of the park.

Design creative play areas for all ages.

Playgrounds don’t have to be “off the shelf.” Children and adults alike are drawn to things they can touch, that surprise, that make them move, and that incorporate water.

Strengthen neighborhood connections.

Park access should be easy, safe, and equitable, but LaSalle is disconnected from many residents of nearby neighborhoods. Land bridges, tunnels, signage, and new routes can span barriers, promote the park, and support thriving neighborhoods.

Sustain the park with creative financing.

Financing the future of LaSalle Park may require an innovative combination of public funding, philanthropy, corporate sponsorship, built-in revenue sources, and partnership.

Connect people with water.

Waterfront parks should benefit from their unique location and the views they offer. To fully realize its potential, LaSalle needs to maximize its direct connections to—and from—the water, including features such as boat launches and docks, beaches, natural shorelines, and fishing piers.

Enrich the park's event space.

Infrastructure upgrades, stronger promotion, and more events can make the park's event pavilion the major attraction that visitors want it to be. New programming involving the Colonel Ward Pumping Station could also take advantage of the park's historic nature.

Provide a space for concessions.

Whether it's a permanent building or spaces for mobile vendors like food trucks and carts, visitors want a place to buy food and drink without leaving the park.

Create quiet and peaceful places by separating disparate uses.

Park users come to parks for quiet refuge from the city, but noise from cars often intrudes. LaSalle could be protected from noise by land forms, landscaping, or techniques used in other parks.

Enhance the park's unique identity with public art.

Public art contributes to a park's distinctive sense of place, especially when it tells the story of the community and expresses its pride in local history and culture.

Get smart about parking.

Rethink how, why, and when we manage parking at LaSalle, while considering the overall role vehicle access should or should not play throughout the park.

Enable movement throughout the park.

Spaces in LaSalle feel undifferentiated from one another, limiting the sense of flow. Creative topography and landscaping can create connections and encourage movement around the park.

Fix the basics.

Provide seating, restrooms, and water fountains; ensure security for users; install appropriate lighting and way-finding signage; maintain the grounds; pick up litter.



Imagine LaSalle

A Community Vision for Buffalo's LaSalle Park

OCTOBER 2018