

South Commons: Assessing Contemporary Use and Envisioning New Users



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Executive Summary

The Friends of South Commons requested CSU's Columbus Community Geography Center assist in two projects. This project focused on two types of data related to South Commons. First, analyzing feedback from visitors to the Columbus Museum's Common Grounds exhibition on the activities they wished to see on South Commons. Second, students collected baseline data to assess who is using South Commons for everyday active and passive use, what our team began to call "background." From August to November 2017, the Columbus Community Geography Center's (CCGC) urban geography team collected data to support community partners Friends of South Commons and the Columbus Museum.

Museum visitors were encouraged to share feedback in a paper survey and annotate a South Commons map. The survey was completed by 54 respondents who were offered 13 choices. The top five choices included: riverfront park, dog park, playground, community gardens and walking trails. The annotated map (we refer to as the suggestion map) received 105 responses that were subsequently organized into 5 themes: Creative Engagement (music, theatre, film and art performance spaces and festivals), Market Place: Big Box, Little Box and Outside the Box (food store, farmers and flea markets), R&R (Recreation & Relaxation), Parks for All (human playgrounds, trails and community gardens and dog parks) Education & Humanitarian Engagement (Museums, housing for specific populations and support services), and Refreshment (Food, libations and indulgences).

No study of everyday informal and everyday use has been conducted of South Commons. This is primarily because recently this park has been defined as a "regional" park offering "big box" recreational amenities: ice rink, softball complex, football stadium and civic center. Data is collected only for attendance at those sections of the park and for major events. The community geography team designed their baseline data collection instrument with inspiration from the 2011 Central Park study defined as "a model for how to mobilize park users to collect vital information about a public place they cherish in their everyday lives" (Central Park Conservancy 2001). Collecting data over two seasons (summer and fall) between August to October 2017, the study included nine, 2-hour data collection periods focusing on both weekend days (Saturday and Sunday) and one week day (Wednesday). As the 172-acre site had numerous access points for auto, bicycle and foot traffic, and our data collection team was small and worked primarily in pairs, the team focused on observing visitors entering the western end of South Commons closest to the Chattahoochee River and downtown Columbus. The number of visitors observed entering the study area of South Commons was 221. Park visitors were identified by apparent gender, race/ethnicity, age, whether visitors arrived alone or with others, their medium of transportation to the survey site, whether they brought dogs, and whether they were active or passive users. We also focused on skatepark visitors who were primarily male, showed a 50;50 split between African American and White users, who were aged between 18 and 64.

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South Commons: Assessing Contemporary Use and Envisioning New Users

Introduction

South Commons, located on the east bank of the Chattahoochee River in Columbus, Georgia is a recreational community space shared ‘in common’ for the use of everyone and is managed by the city’s Parks and Recreation Department. Over 100 years ago this space was held in common by the citizens of Columbus for the community’s collective recreational benefit. According to the State of Georgia, the legal description of South Commons is as follows

All of that portion of the South and East commons of the city of Columbus lying south of Fourth street and extending across the Chattahoochee River to the southern boundary of the city of Columbus, which lies East of Fourth avenue to Tenth avenue, except that portion of said area which is now enclosed as part of the colored cemetery' also all that portion of block No. 53 of the South commons lying west of what is known as the colored cemetery which has not been heretofore sold by said commissioners of commons (State of Georgia, 1910).

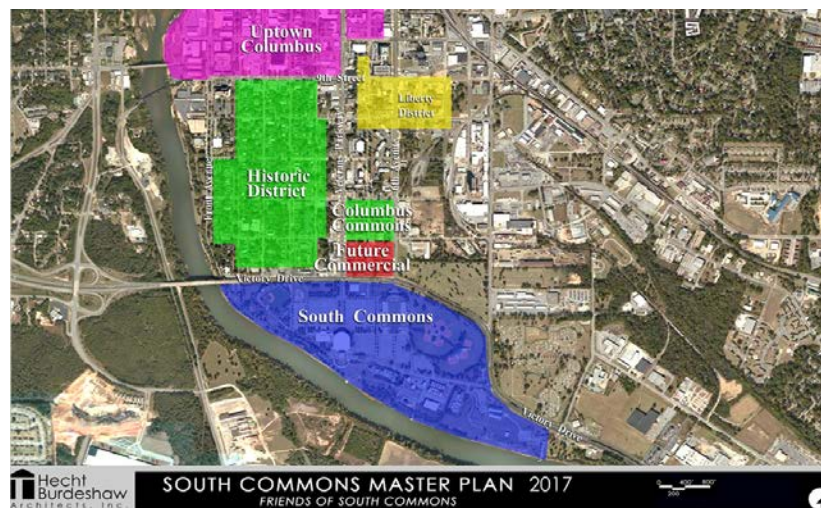


Figure 1: South Commons Master Plan 2017, Friends of South Commons.

The site is located close to the community’s Historic District, the first historic residential district of the city; the commercial downtown area known as “Uptown”, the Liberty District, the location of the pre-desegregation black commercial district; a new mixed income housing development Columbus Commons; Riverdale-Porterdale Cemetery including the historic black cemetery of Porterdale; and a large area to the east of South Commons that contains both commercial and industrial activity known as Victory Drive. (Figure 1).

South Commons and Golden Park (placed together) is one of 47 parks managed by the city's Parks and Recreation Department (Appendix 1) divided into four major park types: mini, neighborhood, community, and regional. South Commons (as it is commonly called), is one of the city's 8 regional parks. South Commons is home to seven large recreational buildings and sports facilities including: South Commons Softball Complex and Stadium Fields (8 softball fields used in the 1996 Atlanta Olympics), Golden Park (a 5,000-seat baseball stadium), Columbus Civic Center, A.J. McClung Memorial Stadium (football 15,000-seat football stadium), Columbus Ice Rink, and the Columbus Civic Center (10,000-seat multi-purpose arena built in 1996). Its most recent addition is the Jonathan Hatcher Skatepark.

With city budgets tightening, the mayor and council have recently been looking for ways to cut expenses in the Department of Parks and Recreation. Since the city's minor league baseball team played its last season in approximately 2005, Golden Park has been identified as an expense the city should review. The city entered discussions to sell Golden Park to a private development company who proposed the possible redevelopment of the site with a casino. Currently casinos are illegal under Georgia law. However, proposals to legalize casino gambling have been repeatedly submitted to the state legislature over the last few years with the expectation that casino gambling will eventually be made legal. The Ledger-Enquirer, the city's local newspaper has covered numerous City Council debates that reflect on the future of the site "\$200 million resort casino" (Williams 2016). The Friends of South Commons (FoSC) made a presentation to the City Council April 11, 2017 protesting this proposal and stopped the sale of the Golden Park Stadium, located on South Commons (CCG-TV 2017). The FoSC's mission is to "revitalize Columbus's historic South Commons as an inviting and inclusive public recreation destination" (Friends of South Columbus 2017) and its membership is wide ranging (Appendix 2).

Genesis of this Community Geography Project

Inspired by the contemporary community debates around the use of South Commons, the Columbus Museum developed the exhibition called *Common Grounds* (July 1-November 5, 2017). The exhibition provided a history of the city's commons spaces from the antebellum period to the 20th century. During the antebellum period, there were three commons areas (south, east and north) that surrounded the original City of Columbus. In the post-Civil War period, the east and north commons were developed for residences, industry and the railroad. The South Commons remained a green space for recreation during this period and has remained that way since.

At the end of the exhibit, museum patrons were invited to watch a slideshow developed by the FoSC that shared a series of possible future uses of the area. Patrons were then asked to share their own thoughts and suggestions in two distinct modes. First, patrons could fill out a survey form asking them to rank their top five choices from a list of possible uses provided by the Friends of South Commons. Second, the exhibition included a large map of the South Commons, the only space left in the city held in common to provide recreation for the community. The curators invited

museum patrons to share their ideas for possible future uses of South Commons, we subsequently referred to this as the suggestion wall.

The exhibition curators sought our help in interpreting the data the museum was collecting. In addition, the FoSC recognized that there was no user data for South Commons beyond the large events that occur at its major venues: softball complex, football stadium, civic center, and ice rink. The FoSC asked the Columbus Community Geography Center to analyze the survey data and conduct an observational survey of the South Commons to collect baseline demographic data relating to current users.

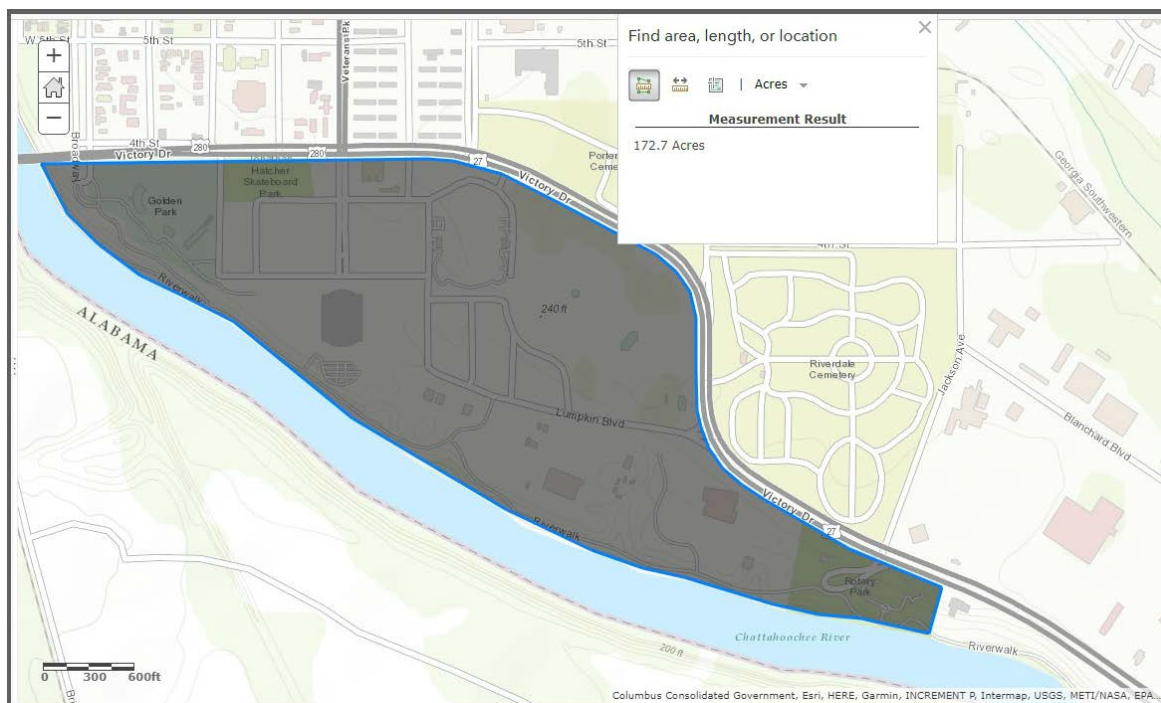


Figure 2: Boundaries and approximate size of South Commons, Christopher Gass 2017.

Methodology

a. Museum Survey Analysis

The Columbus Museum designed a short survey asking visitors to provide feedback on the future of South Commons. Fifty-four patrons responded to an opportunistic survey the museum constructed concerning preferred possible future uses of South Commons. They provided demographic data (gender, age range, race/ethnicity, zip code). In addition to demographic data, they were asked to rank their top five possible future amenities. It became clear early on that while patrons were not ranking their top five, they were able to identify five major types of uses. Not all patrons who submitted surveys completed the entire survey. For example, not all respondents completed the section requesting their zip code.

b. Museum Suggestion Wall

Museum patrons were invited to fill out colorful sticky notes with suggestions for the site on a large map of South Commons at the end of the exhibit. One hundred and five distinctive suggestions or support of other suggestions were left up until the time of data analysis. Using the interrater reliability methodology, two researchers analyzed the data separately and developed themes capturing broader trends in the suggestions. Those themes were then brought together, discussed and further defined.

Note: Students completed their analysis of the museum data a week prior to the end of the exhibition. Thus, there were approximately five surveys and five suggestion wall comments that were not included in this analysis.

c. South Commons Baseline Users

Our community partners wished to know how many people use South Commons, what they use it for, when they use it, and some basic demographic data about those who use South Commons (age, gender, race etc.). After reviewing park user assessment strategies, we decided to model our analysis on the extraordinary and extensive user assessment methodology identified in a large Central Park, New York (Central Park Conservancy 2011). This study was designed to collect the everyday use of Central Park outside of major events, and we felt that this example best fit our goals.

Assessing Demographic Variables and Atmospheric Conditions

We identified seven variables of user data we believe most important to understanding South Commons: gender, ethnicity, age, mode of transportation to the park, whether visitors were active or passive recreationalists, and whether visitors were alone or came with others, and whether they were accompanied by dogs. In addition, as the heat and humidity can often be extreme in west-central Georgia, we also recorded temperature, sun/cloud cover, precipitation, and humidity at the time of

data collection. We developed a survey instrument, tested and refined it before beginning data collection together to learn how to use the tool.

Assessing apparent age, gender, race/ethnicity was conducted with relative ease, though dark tinted windows of automobiles remained a challenge, our most challenging variable to define was the difference between active and passive use of the park. Early in the testing phase of data collection, it was clear that we did not have a clear way to define these two options. Fortunately, students kept effective field notes and the team could discuss this issue further and collectively we defined active park users as those entering the park by foot, bicycle, or skateboard. While, those entering the defined area of study by auto but leaving their car to walk, bike or skateboard were considered active. Those entering the park by car and walking to the skateboard park (for example) but sitting to watch other skate were define as passive.

Defining the Study Area.

The large size of the South Commons park (approx. 172 acres) and the large number of auto and pedestrian entrances to assess those entering the park (approximately six), required our team to focus on a subsection. Because of the proximity of residential areas such as the residential Historic District and its surrounding residences, the newly developed South Commons residential development, the Uptown commercial district which supports recreational use by renting bikes, combined with the much-used Chattahoochee Riverwalk and the relatively new skateboard park, the research team decided to focus on sampling user data at two sites either side of Golden Park Stadium at the western end of South Commons. In comparison, the area to the north and eastern end of the park was surrounded by two cemeteries and industrial development with adjacent residential communities. In addition, this area of the park was host to stadiums (football and softball) and the Civil War Naval Museum, which together we concluded are less likely to encourage every day, informal recreational use.

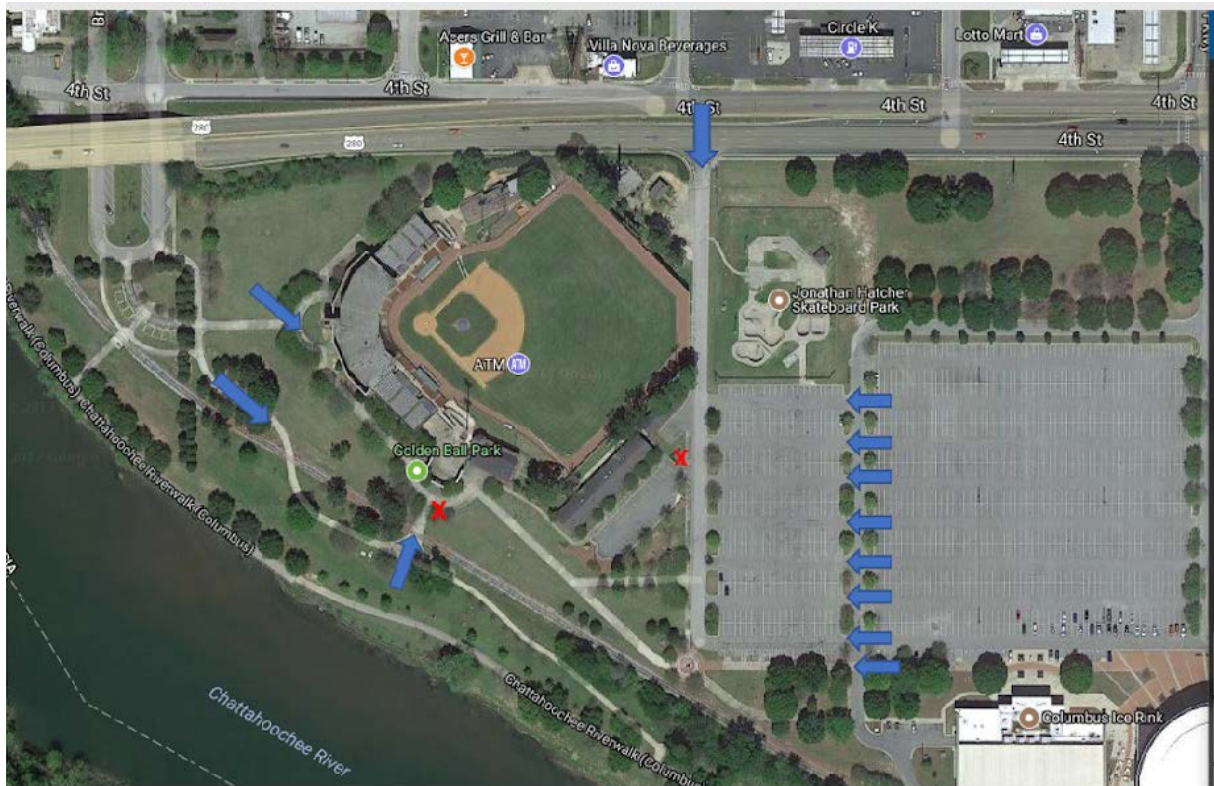


Figure 3: South Commons area entrance areas assessed (blue) areas and locations established for observation 2017.

After an initial site visit driving through the commons we identified the area closest to the Chattahoochee River next to Golden Park Stadium to be most likely used by park visitors. Having identified four entrances to this area and we placed ourselves at two strategic points to watch two entrance areas each (marked with a red X). All visitors observed entering the South Commons study area marked with blue arrows were counted in the assessment.

Data Collection Schedule

Our initial plan was to collect data at regular intervals during August, September and October to cover the late summer into mid-fall. Indeed, the weekend class schedule was designed to support data collection in this fashion. However, as the class schedule was established in the winter of 2016 prior to the fall 2017 event schedule. Field data collection was further complicated by two hurricane events in fall 2017 which either brought hundreds of east coast Georgians (often from older adult care and mental disability care homes) to shelter at the civic center at South Commons. The second event promised heavy rains and high winds, thus teams were rescheduled. The research team quickly realized that flexibility and rescheduling were a consistent element of field data collection at this large site. The complexity of field data collection resulted in a data collection strategy that would best be described as opportunistic.

We sampled users for 2 hour periods on three days, one day in the week and two weekend days, specifically: Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday. Our role was to assess general users “background use” by visitors who were not being accounted for by Parks and Recreation Department user data collection: major college football games, ethnic festivals, wooden bat league (baseball) games etc. Planning research “around” major events proved remarkably challenging.

The class began in mid-August when we began to research events that would occur at South Commons during fall 2017. We began by reviewing various institutional websites of activities hosted at South Commons. We consulted with the director of the Columbus’ Parks and Recreation Department and obtained a list of weekend sports activities from the Columbus Sports Council (Appendix X Calendar of South Commons Events 2017). While several of the Parks and Recreation’s sub-departments shared data, others did not. In choosing the days of data collection we Unfortunately we did not receive complete data from the athletic program supervisor nor the civic center director. This subsequently led to some data collection challenges, however, when large events occurred we typically cancelled data collection and rescheduled data collection. In addition, we managed data collection around two hurricanes which either directly threatened the site or whose broader influence impacted research. Two examples help capture these challenges. First, 500 people were evacuated from coastal Georgia and housed in the Civic Center at South Commons for several days. Second, the baseball stadium to auction surplus city property along with Wooden Bat Baseball League games both of which were not shared the team. Our data collection occurred from August to October 2017.

Our focus was to collect data that would include a week day (Wednesday) and two weekend days (Saturday & Sunday). We collected data at 2 hour increments at three periods during each of the three days to identify periods of high and low use:

- 7.45-9.45AM
- 9.45-11.45AM
- 1.45-3.45PM

Findings

a. Museum Survey Data

In reviewing demographic data, we see that most respondents were 24 years and younger, with 32 respondents with only 19 respondents between 25-65+ (Table 1). In terms of race and ethnicity while 27 respondents out of 48 identified as white, 20 identified as (Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic or Latino and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander) (Table 2). One respondent preferred not to indicate their ethnicity/race. Of the 48 respondents who indicated their gender: 26 respondents indicated they were female while 22 respondents

indicated there were male. Respondents were reasonably balanced in terms of gender: with just over 50% females and just under 50% males (Table 3).

Forty-six survey respondents included their zip codes and these were mapped to examine geographical diversity (Figure 4). Out of the eight standard zip codes that cover Muscogee County seven are represented on the map above of patrons who filled out the museum survey. Note: The city of Columbus and Muscogee County are consolidated into one institution. Zip codes with the highest representation density of responses occur in Midtown Columbus and East Columbus with 9 patrons responding (Table 4) Medium levels of response (4-6 per zip code) occur in four zip codes (31901, 31904, 31905, 31909 and 31820). Zip codes in Muscogee County that have no response levels include: 31903 (South Columbus that is dominated by an environmental education center, a golf course and is home to approximately 22,000 residents. There are two other zip codes (31808 and 31829) with no representation that dip into the northeast and northwestern section of Muscogee County. In addition, patrons did come and share ideas from three zip codes Alabama and from Chattahoochee County, Georgia. It should also be noted that the southern and eastern area of Muscogee County is home to the military base Fort Benning. The highest level of engagement came from equally two separate zip codes with 16.6% of the patrons were from the zip code 31906 which is Midtown as well as 16.6% from the zip code 31907 which is east Columbus and the northern portion of Fort Benning. The largest percentage of museum patrons traveled from Midtown, East Columbus and Fort Benning, each zip code having four responses. In addition the number of respondents per zip code was compared with the population of each zip code (Table 4)

Having established the demographic representation of the museum's 54 respondents, patron responses were then analyzed. Museum patrons were given a list of possibilities and asked to indicate their top five choices of amenities they would like to see (Table 5). Respondents identified 232 choices. The data breaks down into two groups, those with between 22 and 33 responses: Riverfront Park, Dog Park, Playground, Other, Community garden, and Walking Trail. The second cluster garnered between 3 and 14 responses: Mountain Bike Trails, Soccer Fields, National Civil War Naval Museum expansion, Commercial and Retail Development, Riverside Housing and Apartments and Softball Complex Expansion. Of the 23 patrons who choose "other," they shared a variety of responses with drive-in movies having the single largest response (Table 6)

b. Museum Suggestion Wall

On the large map of South Commons, patrons left 105 distinctive suggestions or indicated their support of other suggestions using colored sticky notes. Using the interrater reliability methodology, two researchers analyzed the data separately and developed themes that captured the foci of the suggestions. Those themes were then brought together (Table 7). The Suggestion Wall opened up a new set of themes that the original survey did not tap including a rich variety

of creative engagement opportunities, commercial activity, recreational activities, parks, education and humanitarian engagement and refreshment.

c. Baseline South Commons User Data

During nine, two-hour survey periods 221 visitors were observed entering the study area of South Commons (Table 8). Sunday saw a total of 85 users, Saturdays 81 and Wednesday 51 (Table 8). The most popular visiting period was: 1.45-3.45PM (86 users), 9.45-11.45AM (76 users) and finally 7.45-9.45AM (59 users). The apparent age of users 172 visitors were between 18-64 years of age, 22 visitors were under 18 years old, and 22 visitors were over 65 years of age (Table 9). The gender of park uses was: 81 females, 125 were male and 15 unknown gender (Table 10). The racial/ethnic makeup of visitors included 163 white, 49 African American, 1 Hispanic/Latino and 8 unknowns (Table 11). In terms of the mode of transportation to South Commons, 87 visitors arrived on foot, 58 visitors arrived by automobile and 52 arrived by bicycle (Table 12). Fourteen people visitors arrived at the park with one or more dogs (Table 13), 120 visitors arrived with others while 101 visitors arrived alone (Table 14). There were 133 active users visiting the park and 76 passive users (Table 15). Entrances choose by park users saw 103 visitors arriving from the river walk (west of Golden Gate Park) while 76 visitors arrived via the skateboard parking lot and the road that connects the skateboard park and Golden Park Stadium (Table 16). Weather conditions were varied: with temperatures varying from 64- 90 degrees Fahrenheit and a humidity range from 45- 94% and cloud cover were assessed (Table 17).

d. Skateboard Park User Data

Defined by a black metal fence with two gates, we observed the skateboard park over four, two-hour periods assessed (total of 8 hours), 18 visitors entered the Jonathan Hatcher Skateboard Park area. There was only one 2-hour period when users did not enter the park, and even on that date, there were users already present at the skatepark. Of the 18 visitors, 15 were males (89%) and 3 females (11%) (Table 18). The apparent race/ethnicity of the visitor’s revealed a balance of 9 white Americans and 9 African Americans (Table 19). The age of visitors included: 5 under 18, 12 between 18-64, and 1 visitor over 65 (Table 20). The modes of transportation used to access the skatepark was primarily by skateboard, (66%) bicycle (3%) and auto (41%) (Table 21). This is remarkable in that it indicates that 70% of users are arriving from neighborhoods within biking and skateboard distance of the skateboard park. It should be noted that visitors used both skateboards and bicycles in the park. Active users in the skateboard park were defined as those. skating, biking and 12 visitors were active (66%) (Table 22). Passive use is defined as either walking through the park to access another area, or simply being a bystander standing or sitting, and 6 visitors (33%) were passive use. 11% of users brought dogs to the skatepark. Overall, the data reflects users as being mostly males with the race and ethnicity being 50/50 in representation while more than half of the visitors were being actively engaged in the parks amenities.

Table 1: Age Range of Museum Survey Respondents

Survey Respondents Age Group:	
Under 18	17
18-24	15
25-40	9
41-64	9
65+	1
Total	51

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 2: Race/Ethnicity of Museum Survey Respondents

Survey Respondents by Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2
Asian	1
Black or African American	11

Hispanic or Latino	4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	2
White	27
Other	
Prefer not to answer	1
Total	48

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 3: Gender of Museum Survey Respondents

Survey Respondents by Gender:	
Female	26
Male	22
Total	48

Source: Original data obtained by first author

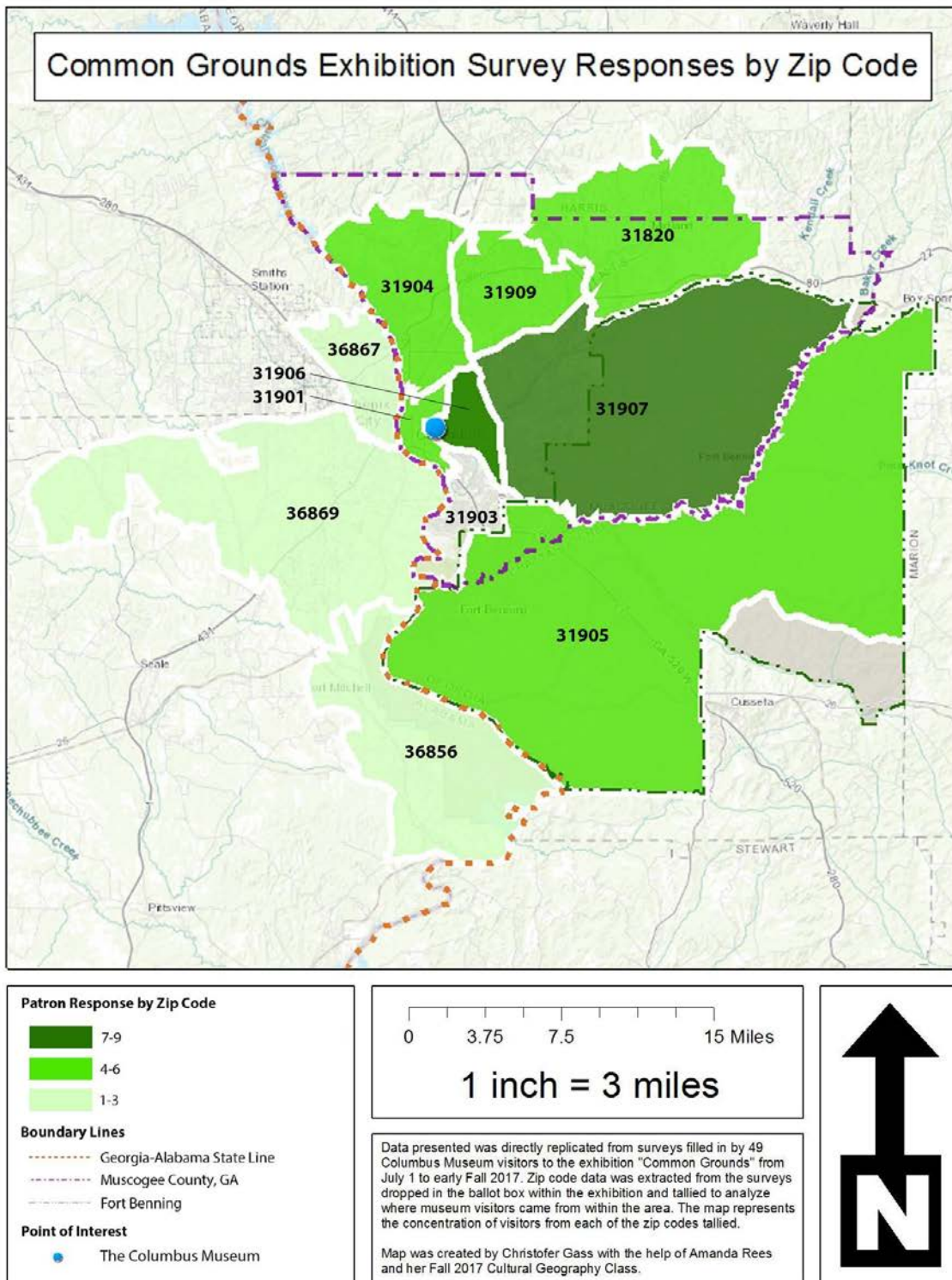


Table 4: Museum Survey Respondent Zip Code Representation Compared to Zip Code Population

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Zip Code	Locations in Muscogee County	Zip Code Population	Survey Representation
31901	Downtown Columbus, South Veterans Pkwy	8,868	4
31903	South Columbus, South of Victory Drive	22,689	0
31904	Northeast Columbus, North of Route 80	33,973	4
31905	South Fort Benning, South of Muscogee County	14,667	4
31906	Midtown Columbus, West of Box Road	21,916	9
31907	East Columbus, North Fort Benning	57,373	9
31909	Central North Columbus, North of US-27	35,536	6
31820	Midland, North of Fort Benning	10,058	4

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 5: Top Five Amenities Identified by Museum Survey Respondents

	# of Respondents	%
Riverfront Park	33	14.2%
Dog Park	27	11.6%
Playground	26	11.2%
Community Garden	23	10%
Walking Trails	22	10%
Mountain Bike Trails	14	6%
Soccer Fields	11	4.7%
National Civil War Naval Museum expansion	11	4.7%
Commercial/retail development	8	3.4%
Riverside housing/apartment development	5	2.1%
Softball complex expansion	3	1.2%
Other (Cheese monger, place to eat, drive-in (4 responses), grocery stores and restaurant, water park, art gallery)	23	10%
Total	232	

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 6: Museum Survey Respondents Suggestions in response to “other” in survey

	# of Responses
Dining/Restaurants/Places to Eat	6
Drive-in	4
Remote Control Park	2
Cheese monger	2
Treehouse	1
Covered market	1
Upscale shopping	1
Green space	1
Grocery store	1
CSU Athletics	1
Recreational	1
Art gallery	1
Casino	1
Water Park	1
Total	23

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 7: Suggestion Wall Themes & Definitions

Themes	Theme Definition	# of suggestions
1. Creative Engagement:	Music, theatre, film and art performance spaces and festivals	25
2. Market Place: Big Box, Little Box and Outside the Box	From food stores to farmers and flea markets	22
3. R&R (Recreation & Relaxation)	Team sports, recreational activities and amusements	21
4. Parks for All	Human parks (playgrounds, trails and community gardens) and canine parks	18
5. Education & Humanitarian Engagement	Museums, housing for specific populations and support services	12
6. Refreshment	Food, libations and indulgences	7
		Total: 105

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 8: Number of Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date 2017	Time	Visitors	
Wednesday 10/4	7.45 AM	18	
Wednesday 9/27	9.45 AM	17	
Wednesday 10/11	1.45 PM	20	Total 55
Saturday 10/7	7.45AM	25	
Saturday 10/7	9.45 AM	24	
Saturday 9/16	1.45AM	36	Total 85
Sunday 10/1	7.45AM	17	
Sunday 10/15	9.45AM	34	
Sunday 9/17	1.45PM	30	Total 81
	Total	221	

Source: Original data obtained by first author

Table 9: Apparent Age of Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Under 18	18-64	65 & over	Unknown
Wednesday 10/4	7.45 AM	3	13	2	
Wednesday 9/27	9.45 AM	0	13	4	
Wednesday 10/11	1.45 PM	0	17	3	
Saturday 10/7	7.45AM	1	22	2	
Saturday 10/7	9.45 AM	3	15	6	
Saturday 9/16	1.45AM	2	32	2	
Sunday 10/1	7.45AM	2	12	2	1
Sunday 10/15	9.45AM	3	27	0	4
Sunday 9/17	1.45PM	8	21	1	
	Total	22	172	22	5

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 10 Apparent Gender of Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Female	Male	Unknown
Wednesday 10/4	7.45 AM	7	11	1
Wednesday 9/27	9.45 AM	5	11	1
Wednesday 10/11	1.45 PM	6	10	4
Saturday 10/7	7.45AM	16	8	1
Saturday 10/7	9.45 AM	11	13	
Saturday 9/16	1.45AM	12	21	3
Sunday 10/1	7.45AM	2	14	1
Sunday 10/15	9.45AM	10	21	3
Sunday 9/17	1.45PM	12	16	2
	Total	81	125	16

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 11: Apparent Race/Ethnicity of Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	African American	Hispanic /Latino	White	Unknown
Wednesday, 10/4	7.45 AM	4		13	
Wednesday, 9/27	9.45 AM	6	1	10	1
Wednesday, 10/11	1.45 PM	7		10	3
Saturday, 10/7	7.45AM	9		16	
Saturday, 10/7	9.45 AM	3		21	
Saturday, 9/16	1.45AM	4		29	3
Sunday, 10/1	7.45AM	5		12	
Sunday, 10/15	9.45AM	8		26	
Sunday, 9/17	1.45PM	3		26	1
	Total	49	1	163	8

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 12: Mode of Transportation into South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Auto	Bicycle	Foot	Skateboard	Unknown
Wednesday, 10/4	7.45 AM	6	2	7		
Wednesday, 9/27	9.45 AM	8	6	5		
Wednesday, 10/11	1.45 PM	12	1	4	3	
Saturday, 10/7	7.45AM		12	13		
Saturday, 10/7	9.45 AM	2	9	13		
Saturday, 9/16	1.45AM	2	4	13		1
Sunday, 10/1	7.45AM	2	1	14		
Sunday, 10/15	9.45AM	12	10	9		3
Sunday, 9/17	1.45PM	14	7	9		
	Total	58	52	87	3	4

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 13: Number of Dogs Walked by Humans Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Dog Visitors
Wednesday, 10/4	7.45 AM	1
Wednesday, 9/27	9.45 AM	0
Wednesday, 10/11	1.45 PM	0
Saturday, 10/7	7.45AM	2
Saturday, 10/7	9.45 AM	3
Saturday, 9/16	1.45AM	0
Sunday, 10/1	7.45AM	4
Sunday, 10/15	9.45AM	2
Sunday, 9/17	1.45PM	2
	Total	14

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 14: Park Users Alone Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Alone
Wednesday 10/4	7.45 AM	11
Wednesday 9/27	9.45 AM	14
Wednesday 10/11	1.45 PM	9
Saturday 10/7	7.45AM	18
Saturday 10/7	9.45 AM	9
Saturday 9/16	1.45AM	14
Sunday 10/1	7.45AM	8
Sunday 10/15	9.45AM	9
Sunday 9/17	1.45PM	9
	Total	101

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 15: Active and Passive Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Day & Date	Time	Active	Passive	Unknown
Wednesday 10/4	7.45 AM	10	8	
Wednesday 9/27	9.45 AM	8	9	
Wednesday 10/11	1.45 PM	4	11	5
Saturday 10/7	7.45AM	25		
Saturday 10/7	9.45 AM	18	6	
Saturday 9/16	1.45AM	19	15	1
Sunday 10/1	7.45AM	15	2	
Sunday 10/15	9.45AM	26	5	3
Sunday 9/17	1.45PM	8	20	2
	Total	133	76	11

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 16: Entrance Chosen by Park Users Entering the South Commons Study Area

Days of the Week & Dates	2 hr time beginning at	River Park Entrance	Skateboard Park/ Large Parking Lot
Wednesday 10/4	7:45PM	6	11
Wednesday 9/27	9:45AM	5	11
Wednesday, 10/11	1:45AM	4	15
Saturday 10/7	7:45AM	20	5
Saturday 10/7	9:45AM	22	2
Saturday 9/16	1:45PM	5	37
Sunday 10/1	7:45AM	6	11
Sunday 10/15	9:45AM	15	19
Sunday 9/17	1:45PM	20	10
		103	121

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 17: Weather Conditions During Data Collection at South Commons (temperature, humidity and cloud cover)

Day	Date	2 hour period	Temperature	Humidity	Cloud Cover
Wednesday	9/27	7.45-9.45 AM	90°F	55%	Partly Cloudy
Wednesday	10/4	9.45-11.45 AM	64°F	72%	Partly Cloudy
Wednesday	10/11	1.45-3.45 PM	90°F	56%	Partly Cloudy
Saturday	9/16	1.45-3.45 PM	87°F	67%	Partly Cloudy
Saturday	10/7	7.45-9.45 AM	73°F	94%	Cloudy
Saturday	10/14	9.45-11.45 AM	73°F	82%	Cloudy
Sunday	10/1	7.45-9.45 AM	64°F	61%	Sunny
Sunday	10/15	9.45-11.45 AM	71°F	90%	Cloudy
Sunday	9/17	1.45-3.45 PM	89°F	45%	Sunny

Source: Original user data obtained by first author. Weather data for 10/7/2017 was not recorded. Obtained on 11/18/2017 from www.weatherunderground.com

Table 18: Apparent Gender of Skateboard Park Users

	Female	Male
Apparent Gender	11%	89%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 19: Skateboard Park Users by Apparent Race/Ethnicity

	African-American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Hispanic/Latino	White
Apparent Race/Ethnicity	50%	0%	0%	50%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 20: Apparent Age of Skateboard Park Users

	Under 18	18-64	64 and over
Apparent Age	33%	61%	5%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 21: Mode of Transportation Used to Access the Skatepark

	Bicycle	Automobile	Skateboard/other
Mode of Transportation	3%	41%	66%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 22: Active and Passive Skateboard Park Usage

	Passive Recreation	Active Recreation
Type of Use	33%	66%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Table 23: Canine Companions Accompanying Skateboard Park Users

	With Dog
Humans with Canine Companions	11%

Source: Original data obtained by first author.

Conclusions

Museum patrons provide a wealth of feedback in both survey and suggestion map. Thirteen 13 survey options resulted in patrons identify five top choices with 10% or more votes: riverfront park, dog park, playground, community gardens and walking trails. The suggestion map saw 105 responses that revealed 5 themes: Creative Engagement (music, theatre, film and art performance spaces and festivals), Market Place: Big Box, Little Box and Outside the Box (food store, farmers and flea markets), R&R (Recreation & Relaxation), Parks for All (human playgrounds, trails and community gardens and dog parks) Education & Humanitarian Engagement (Museums, housing for specific populations and support services), and Refreshment (Food, libations and indulgences).

Nine, two-hour data collection periods over three months resulted in 221 visitors who visited most often between 9.45 and 11.45AM and were most likely to visit on Sundays (85 visitors)) and least likely to visit on Wednesdays (51 visitors). Park users were primarily white, male, between 18 and 65. They were more likely to arrive with at least one other companion and were active rather than passive park visitors. Weather conditions ranged between 64 and 90 degrees and from 45 to 94% humidity.

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Chris Gass who continued his interest in this project after he had completed his Columbus Museum internship. Not only did he volunteer to collect user data but he also conducted analysis and develop several maps for this report. Though not a member of the Urban Geography class he became a co-author. For his impactful work as the co-curator of Common Ground exhibition he was awarded the Georgia Association of Museums and Galleries' Student Project Award 2017. Chris, along with the other students on this project authored a conference poster for the 2017 Southeast Division of the Association of American Geographers entitled. *Finding Common Ground: Engaging Community in Envisioning Public Space* Authors: Christofer Gass, Alexandria Ard, James Bennett III, Kenya Davis, Erica Mehl, & Steven Stanelle

Rebecca Bush for generously giving her time to talk about the mission of her institution and the project with the class at the beginning of the semester. This process is crucial in community geography as it quickly connects students to the needs of the community, and their role in fulfilling those needs. Thanks for regularly sharing the museum data so we could develop strategies for analysis before the end of the project. Finally, for taking the time to revisit our classroom as students shared their findings.

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Holli Browder, Director of Department of Parks and Recreation for sharing contact information with us about South Commons calendar of events.

David Rush who volunteered to collect data during several early morning weekend calls.

Appendix 1: Overview of 47 Parks and their Types in Columbus, Ga.

1. **Mini Parks (3)**
 - 1.1. 23rd Street Park
 - 1.2. Woodruff Park
 - 1.3. North Highland Dam Park

2. **Neighborhood Parks (23)**
 - 2.1. 29th Street
 - 2.2. Alexander Park & Pop Austin
 - 2.3. Anderson Village Park
 - 2.4. Ardahlia Mack Rec Center
 - 2.5. Belvedere Park
 - 2.6. Benning Park, Frank Chester Recreation Center & Senior Center
 - 2.7. Benning Hills Park
 - 2.8. Bibb Soccer Fields
 - 2.9. Boxwood Park
 - 2.10. Britt David
 - 2.11. Carver Park & Rec Center
 - 2.12. Charlie Hill Park
 - 2.13. Crystal Valley
 - 2.14. Dinglewood
 - 2.15. Double Churches Park & Pool
 - 2.16. Ed Vance
 - 2.17. Edgewood Park
 - 2.18. Ewart/South Lawyers Lane
 - 2.19. 8th Street Park/Fluellen
 - 2.20. Heath Park
 - 2.21. Heath Park Pavilion
 - 2.22. Hemlock Park
 - 2.23. Lindsey Creek Bypass

3. **Community Parks (13)**
 - 3.1. Cooper Creek
 - 3.2. Chatt Promenade #1
 - 3.3. Chatt Promenade #2
 - 3.4. Chatt Promenade #3

- 3.5. Edgewood Senior Center
- 3.6. Flat Rock Park
- 3.7. Fox Senior Center & Admin Offices
- 3.8. Haygood Gym
- 3.9. Heritage Park
- 3.10. Lakebottom & Weracoba Park
- 3.11. Roadside Park
- 3.12. Shirley Winston Park, Pool & Recreation Center
- 3.13. Tillis Park, Recreation Center & Gallops Senior Center

4. **Regional Parks (8)**
 - 4.1. Fall Line Trace - Talbotton Road (linear walking/bike trail with several small parks)
 - 4.2. Fall Line Trace - Manchester Exp (linear walking/bike trail with several small parks)
 - 4.3. Lake Oliver Marina
 - 4.4. Riverwalk (linear walking/bike trail with several small parks)
 - 4.5. Riverwalk #2 (linear walking/bike trail with several small parks)
 - 4.6. Rotary Park
 - 4.7. South Commons & Golden Park
 - 4.8. Woodruff Farm Soccer Complex

Source: Columbus Consolidated Government. n.d. Columbus Parks & Recreation website: <http://www.columbusga.org/parks/parksmap.htm> accessed 8.19.2017.

Appendix 2 Membership of the Friends of South Commons (FoSC) 2017

- Neil Clark, Hecht Burdeshaw (Architects)
- Virginia Causey, Retired Educator
- Brinkley Pound, Retired Educator
- Holly Beasley Wait, Port Columbus
- Richard Bishop, Rbishop Consulting
- John Boyd, Golden's Foundry
- Leah Braxton, WC Bradley (family of companies including real estate)
- Trent Chester, Chester's BBQ
- Rodney Close, Boys/Girls Club
- Robert Gahagan, HDPS
- Ken Henson, Henson Law
- Ross Horner, Uptown Columbus (Business Improvement District)
- Henry Jackson, RiverWarden
- John Lester, Columbus State University
- Kimberly McElveen, Columbus State University
- Jonnell Minefee, Concerned Cities of South Columbus
- Buddy Nelms, Restaurateur and Music Venue Owner
- Pete Pease, CB&T (Bank)
- Ashley Sexton Turner, Bradley Farms
- John Turner, WC Bradley (family of companies including real estate)

Source: Dr. Virginia Causey, FoSC via email with first author.

Appendix 3: Suggestion Wall Responses Arranged Under Themes

1. Creative Engagement: Encompassing music, theatre, film and art performance spaces and festivals (25 responses)

Music

1. No Casino! Concert Venue instead!
2. Chastain park-type amphitheatre *privately owned
3. Chastain like venue
4. Summer Music Festivals
5. All weather performance space
6. Yes!

Film and festivals

7. Drive in movie! Festival
8. Victory Drive In Movie
9. Yes!
10. I Agree!!
11. Drive-In Movie Theater
12. Drive-In Theater
13. Drive in Movies!!!
14. Drive in!
15. Drive In Movies
16. Yes!
17. Yes!
18. Yes
19. I agree
20. Drive-in

Art

21. Public Graffiti (art) Space
22. Yes! Yes!
23. outside art gallery

Theatre

24. Theatre Performance Outdoor
25. Yes!

2. Market Place: Big Box, Little Box and Outside the Box. Food stores and farmers markets

Big Box (22 responses)

1. Grocery Store – like a Publix but not a Walmart
2. Trader Joe's
3. Trader Joe's "somewhere" "anywhere"
4. Costco
5. Trader Joe's!
6. a public supermarket. More grocery stores in this area
7. Whole Foods
8. Earth Fair "somewhere" "anywhere"
9. A public supermarket. More grocery stores in this area

Small box

10. Cannabis dispensary
11. Cheesemonger

12. Cheesemonger
13. A video games hangout spot
14. Shops on the riverwalk like savannah ga not market days (alcohol)
15. (yes this)
16. Cat café
17. Locally owned bookstore.

Outside the Box

18. Farmer's market
19. Locally sourced produce
20. Flea market
21. ART incubators & co-ops with studios and art classes – Huntsville has a place like this
22. Second – love mill style art venue

3. R&R (Recreation & Relaxation): team sports, recreational activities and amusements (21 responses)

Team Recreation

1. Minor League Baseball Games
2. Amateur Baseball League
3. Baseball team ☺
4. Open stadium for public recreational use
5. Tennis courts – outdoor & indoor – Columbus has no indoor courts
6. Pickleball
7. Pickleball
8. Drift Track
9. Drift Track
10. Skate & bike park
11. Recreation for Special Needs Residents
12. Special needs recreation area
13. Agreed
14. Basketball courts one for wheelchairs
15. Fish tours and boat things

Amusements

16. RC Park – remote control planes, drones, cars
17. A Ferris wheel a la the “eye of London”
18. A carousel
19. Go-cart track with go-carts
20. River boat rides with history and interactive events
21. Amusement Park

4. Parks for All: Human parks (playgrounds, trails and community gardens) and canine parks (18 responses)

People park

1. Expand Riverwalk trail into proposed parks
2. Riverfront Park
3. Big play ground or lake (inc. restaurant)
4. Fenced in park/playground
5. Fountains on the riverwalk

Community Gardens

6. Grow spot
7. Garden

8. Community greenhouse w/floating gardens
9. Demonstration community garden
10. Community garden
11. Community garden
12. More trees everywhere
13. No more black top heat island
14. More turtles

Dog Park:

15. Medium-Sized Dog Park
16. Big Dog Park & Little Dog Park without wood chips
17. Yes!
18. Dog park
19. Dog park

5. Education & Humanitarian Engagement: museums, housing for specific populations and support services (12)

Education

1. AIDS education center
2. Science Museum (like St. Louis kids museum or Exploratorium in San Francisco)
3. Agreed
4. An interactive museum park for children – Emphasize Creek Indians, Coweta Town, Programs to interact/w river would bring a lot of people to S. Commons
5. Studios with art classes

Humanitarian Services

6. Shelter for LGBTQ homeless youth
7. Senior Dev. Housing
8. Senior housing
9. VA hospital
10. Homeless Shelter
11. homeless/animal shelter
12. non profit law office for ids in foster care

6. Refreshment: Food, Libations and Indulgences (7 responses)

1. Restaurant (open to the public) with a view of the river
2. Burger spot
3. Food Truck Court
4. Restrant [sic]
5. Drive-up Margarita Bar
6. Underwater Café
7. Ice Cream Shop

In addition to the suggestions of uses, two respondents commented that they want to see South Commons serviced by public transportation with both CSU and city bus services. Another respondent made it clear that South Commons should not be privatized, saying “Don’t Privatize any of the Commons (Leases only)?” One comment related to another of the city’s parks” Need a dog park near Lakebottom/Dinglewood.

Appendix 4: South Commons/Memorial Stadium/Golden Park Special Events and User Data

September 1-3 – Black Softball Circuit World Series Softball Tournament – South Commons – approx. 2500 attendees in 2016
September 8-10 – CSU Fall Classic Baseball Tournament – Golden Park – approx. 600 attendees in 2016
September 10 – USSSA Baseball Tournament – South Commons – new event
September 16 – Columbus Youth Football Opening Day – Memorial Stadium - approx. 4000 attendees in 2016
September 23 – Aflac Relay for Life Charity Softball tournament – South Commons - new event
September 29 – Friday Night 1-pitch Softball Tournament – South Commons - new event
October 7 – Tuskegee vs. Morehouse Football Game – Memorial Stadium - approx. 5000 attendees in 2016
October 13 - Friday Night 1-pitch Softball Tournament – South Commons - new event
October 26-28 – Georgia High School State Softball Tournament – South Commons - approx. 10750 attendees in 2016
November 4 – Fountain City Classic – Memorial Stadium – approx. 6000 attendees in 2016
November 18 – Columbus Youth Football Peanut Bowl – approx. 2500 attendees

High School Football Schedule at Memorial Stadium

September 8 – Spencer vs. Kendrick – 7:30pm
September 15 – Jordan vs. Manchester - 7:30pm
September 22 – Carver vs. Westover – 7:30pm
September 29 – Kendrick vs. Rutland – 7:30pm
October 12 – Kendrick vs. Pike Co. – 7:00pm
October 13 – Carver vs. Cairo – 7:30pm
October 19 – Hardaway vs. Americus – 7:00pm
October 20 – Carver vs. Columbus – 7:00pm

Adult Softball League Games

Adult softball league games every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings. Games start at 7:00pm and play until around 11:00pm. We will have between 20-24 teams playing each night.

Appendix 5. 2017 Fall Columbus Men’s Wooden Bat League Schedule

Sunday
9/17/2017
11:00am- Mets/rays 1:15pm-braves/redsox 3:30pm- braves/expos GOLDEN PARK
09/24/17
11:00am-rays/braves 1:15pm-Rays/ mets 3:30pm-RED SOX/EXPOS GOLDEN PARK
10/1/2017
11:00am-mets/rockies 1:15pm-rays/ rockies 3:30pm-expos/braves GOLDEN PARK
10/07/17
11:00am- mets/braves 1:15pm-mets/rays 3:30pm-expos/Rockies GOLDEN PARK
10/14/17
11:00am-braves/expos 1:15pm- braves/rays 3:30pm- mets/ red sox GOLDEN PARK
10/21/17
11:00am – EXPOS/REDSOX 1:15pm-Expos/mets 3:30pm-rays/braves <i>GOLDEN PARK</i>
10/28/17
PLAYOFFS (GOLDEN PARK) wildcard-#4 vs.#5 10:00am wildcard: #5 vs.#4-12:45pm rd.1: #2 VS. #3 -3pm
11/04/17
PLAYOFFS GOLDEN PARK GM 3 (IF NEEDED)- #3 VS #2 10:00AM GM 2- #1 VS WC - 12:45PM GM 3 (if needed)- WC VS #1 - 3PM
11/11/17
GAME 2 CHAMPIONSHIP (GP) 11AM - #1/WC VS #2/#3 230PM- GAME 3 (IF NECESSARY)
ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS? PLASE CONTACT- CITY ATHLETIC DIRECTOR/ COLUMBUS PARKS AND REC: CARSON REVELL 706-366-0375 OR CMBL PRESIDENT- PAT CREECH 706-304-3060. * Schedule may subject to change** ALL MAKE UP GAMES WILL BE PLAYED ON MONDAYS, I WILL GIVE AT LEAST A WEEKS TO 2 WEEK NOTICE BEFORE SCHEDULING

