



**The NYC Social Assessment: Understanding Waterfront Users
Sherman Creek Park Profile**

Authors: Anne Toomey, Abigail Alvarez, Camryn Becker, Maeve Casey, Anuj Chowdhuri, Dillon Crace, Chiara Feimer, Gillian Holland, Cheerish Ramdial, Stephanie Schwartz, Monica Palta

Zone Names
1 - Accidental Marsh-Wooded Area
2 - Picnic Area
3 - Community Garden
4 - Wooded Area
5 - Restored Marsh-Boardwalk
6 - Bike Path-Boathouse
7 - South Bikepath
8 - Commercial Area-Hard Shoreline
9 - Highbridge Park
10 - NYCHA



The Social Assessment method was developed by the USDA Forest Service - NYC Urban Field Station for use in urban green and blue spaces has been used in many parks, natural areas, and waterfronts across the New York City region. See Auyeung et al. (2016) for complete methodology and protocols.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Fall, 2021, Pace University faculty and students carried out a social assessment of Sherman Creek Park as part of two separate undergraduate courses. Students collected quantitative and qualitative social data through direct observations of human actions, observations of signs of human use, and rapid interviews with people in and around SCP.

The social assessment methodology provided insight into the most frequent uses of SCP, as well as the values that park goers and residents held with the space. For example, the social assessment found that a majority of respondents (68%, n=13) specified that they most appreciated the park for its nature, scenery, and nature-based amenities provided by the park. Another significant percentage (42%, n=8) mentioned their appreciation for how well-kept the park is, many mentioning NYRP's role in caring for the space and providing safety. In response to a question about what would encourage more visitation to the park, one third of respondents expressed a desire for more activities and events, as well as additional amenities, while another third indicated that they preferred the park to be kept as is, with no changes to amenities or programming.

Students also interviewed people about their awareness and perceptions of the planned boathouse, as well as their suggestions for how the boathouse could engage the local community. The vast majority of respondents (80% of those who responded to the question, n=20) were unaware of the plans for the new boathouse. Reactions to the boathouse were mixed. Many respondents indicated that they believed it could be a positive amenity for the park, as long as it did not disrupt current uses of the space. Some people mentioned concerns about future access to the site that the boathouse would be built upon, which is currently a popular picnicking area and offers waterfront access and bird watching. Over a third of respondents (36%) expressed the importance of ensuring that the boathouse is open to and accessible by the public, rather than being a private space. Others mentioned the need for the boathouse plans to engage with the local community and current park users, and suggested possible community outreach ideas, such as free kayaking and rowing, especially for youth.

The social assessment also revealed the importance of maintaining existing green space in the area and investing in additional parks. Some respondents indicated that they did not want to see any development in the area, and a few mentioned specific concerns with regard to commercial development, including gentrification. Several respondents also listed ideas for various amenities and infrastructure projects, including a dog park, more benches and barbeque areas, a pedestrian bridge that would connect to the Bronx, and additional lighting to enhance the safety of the park. The remainder of this white paper provides more details in the social assessment methodology and findings.

I. Park Narrative

Sherman Creek -Neighborhood, Land use, History, and Ecology

The Sherman Creek Parks are located in northern Manhattan and connect the neighborhood of Inwood with the Harlem River waterfront. The socioeconomically-diverse communities of Inwood have a higher percentage of Hispanic/Latino individuals as compared to the rest of the city (NYCDP 2021). Households

in this area have on average a far lower median income, and the number of people living under the poverty line is approximately double the rate in the city (NYCDCP 2021).

Sherman Creek Park is a former illegal dumping site which began as a shore cleanup and now spans five acres along the Harlem River including Swindler Cove, the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse, and Riley-Levin Children's Garden, restored "living shoreline" (tidal marsh and oyster reefs), and reinforced shoreline. The area also contains the Harlem River Greenway, which is made up of an esplanade, bike path, and a cherry tree planting project; the latter is an effort associated with the Million Trees Project NYC, a PlaNYC initiative with NYC Parks and the New York Restoration Project (Million Trees NYC, 2009). Additionally, an "accidental" (self-restored) tidal marsh/mudflat area has been created in the area that used to be the inlet for Sherman Creek, before the creek was filled in. The New York Restoration Project (NYRP) is responsible for "conceiving, developing, executing, and maintaining the vibrant and versatile Swindler Cove at Sherman Creek Park" ([NYRP n.d.](#)). In 1999 in partnership with the State of New York Department of Transportation and landscape designer Billie Cohen, the NYRP transformed the land into "an oasis of native natural habitats with a lush array of restored woodlands, wetlands, native plantings, and a freshwater pond, accented by a gracious pathway" (NYRP n.d.). Swindler Cove was opened to the public in August 2003.

After clearing the pathway to access the Harlem River, NYRP opened the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse in June 2004, which is now home to their non-profit partner, Row New York. "The idea for a recreational community boathouse first came to NYRP Founder Bette Midler when she learned that many academic and athletic scholarships being made available to northern Manhattan high school students who participated in rowing programs were being unused due to the lack of local programs... In 1998, NYRP engaged celebrated architect Robert A.M. Stern to design the Peter Jay Sharp Boathouse, the first community boathouse of its kind on the river in over 100 years" (NYRP n.d.). The Boathouse was finished in 2003 but assembly was completed after an additional year. Armand LeGardeur, a former architect with Robert A.M. Stern Architects, led assembly of the boathouse.

In 2020, Sherman Creek Park created a living shoreline, including native tidal marsh grass plantings and an artificial oyster reef. The living shoreline's goal is to attenuate waves that wash away sediment and enhance the native wetland habitat.

Social-Environmental Assessment Needs at Sherman Creek

Sherman Creek Park is currently threatened by several environmental concerns. As one of the last remaining native tidal marsh habitats in Manhattan, it is imperative that efforts be made to protect and restore what is left of the marsh. Marshes provide natural flood control by temporarily holding and absorbing flood water and moderate coastal storm surge. They help control erosion and stabilize shoreline, provide critical fish and wildlife habitat, and provide opportunities for recreation and education. The park's shoreline along the Harlem River suffers from erosion, which has intensified due to boat traffic, increased storm surge, and sea-level rise—the latter two are driven by climate change. Within Sherman Creek, NYRP's main focus is to continue to develop and sustain its living shoreline and wetland habitats in the park's grounds to combat these issues. The living shoreline integrates both native plantings and artificial oyster reefs to attenuate waves that wash away sediment. In particular, areas

closest to highways and other high-emission sources are most susceptible to air pollution from smog and ground-level ozone, including the areas surrounding Sherman Creek Park due to proximity to the Harlem River Drive.

As one of the only green spaces in Inwood, Sherman Creek Park is a cornerstone of its neighborhood. Modern urban lifestyles are heavily characterized by chronic stress, insufficient physical activity, and exposure to environmental stressors. Urban green spaces like Sherman Creek Park can promote mental and physical health, and reduce morbidity and mortality of urban residents by providing psychological relaxation and stress relief, stimulating social cohesion, supporting physical activity, and reducing exposure to air pollutants, excessive heat, and noise pollution. These benefits make Sherman Creek an essential community space for residents of the nearby Dyckman Houses, a NYCHA housing development close to the park.

NYRP's work in Sherman Creek and the surrounding landscape recognizes the importance of the natural resources found in Northern Manhattan and works to create improved access to and management of the diverse natural communities of the region. Sherman Creek serves as "the center of [the New York Restoration Project's] volunteer opportunities... [and] serves to demonstrate the sustainable management of public lands in an under-resourced community" (NYRP). Preliminary discussions with NYRP staff revealed several assessment and content needs related to Sherman Creek Park: (1) the degree and nature of community usage of Sherman Creek Park, (2) opportunities for engagement of the community surrounding the park through educational programming, and (3) enhanced awareness of the environmental concerns pertaining to the park. NYRP staff further specified particular issues associated with the park for which they needed more knowledge or content, namely: (1) neighborhood awareness of and access to the park; (2) passive and active recreation uses of the park; (3) neighborhood awareness and opinions of the impending construction of a new boathouse by Row New York in what is currently the picnic area of the park (Figure 2); (4) educational opportunities around pollution issues associated with the park (namely, air and water pollution); (5) educational opportunities around environmental restoration and management by NYRP (living shoreline, forest, community garden); (6) active learning opportunities available at the park (e.g., providing a means for K-12 students to physically enter habitats along or within the Harlem River to take samples and measurements).

In 2021, Pace University partnered with NYRP to provide a comprehensive social assessment of Sherman Creek Park's uses, as it is critical to detail the ways that the space currently serves the community and how they can be improved. A small grant funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation's Periclean Faculty Leaders (PFLs) program in STEM and Social Sciences provided \$3,500 to support this work. Information gained from this project can be used to evaluate potential park development projects and create new educational and volunteer opportunities of particular interest to the community surrounding the park.

II. Research Questions and Methods

We explored the following questions:

- 1) How do people use and value Sherman Creek Park?

- 2) What environmental problems are park users aware of?
- 3) How do park users and residents feel about the proposed boat house to be built in Sherman Creek Park?
- 4) How would park users and local residents like to see the waterfront developed, if at all?

This waterfront study was adapted from the existing methodology for studying the use, value, and meaning of parks and natural areas created by the USDA Forest Service, NYC Parks, and the Natural Areas Conservancy (Auyeung et al. 2016). Data collection was carried out between September and October by ten undergraduate students from Pace University, under the supervision of two Assistant Professors in the Department of Environmental Studies and Science.

Social and site data were collected in order to understand how urban waterfront users engage with Sherman Creek. Primary means of understanding were direct observations of human actions, observations of signs of human use, and assessment of language and narrative conveyed through interviews with waterfront users. Students worked in small groups in order to enhance reliability through corroboration and to provide greater richness of daily debriefs and qualitative field notes. An end-of-season debrief was held with the entire class.

We triangulated three data collection approaches: 1) direct observations of human activities, 2) observations of signs of human use, and 3) interviews with waterfront users. Human activities were grouped functionally by type (e.g. sitting, socializing, bicycling, exercise, nature recreation). Field observation protocols (Appendix A-D) guided a mix of structured, quantitative counts; qualitative field notes; and photographic documentation.

The direct human observation protocol (Appendix A) was implemented throughout the study area, which was subdivided into zones according to park boundaries, management practices, uses, infrastructure, and cover type (see map). The prior protocol was modified to include a broader range of specific waterfront activities. Pairs implemented the protocol, taking photographs and logging observations of waterfront users and signs of human use, with debriefs conducted at the completion of a zone and at the end of a day of fieldwork. Research crews covered all terrain that was navigable without extensive bushwhacking, following all established and informal trails within each park site before moving onto another site. Crews were instructed to complete zones in a single day (i.e., not to split zones across visits). Type of activity and level of sociability (individual, pair, small group, large group) were recorded for all people observed in a particular zone. A total of 294 observations were made (within Sherman Creek Park) through this protocol.

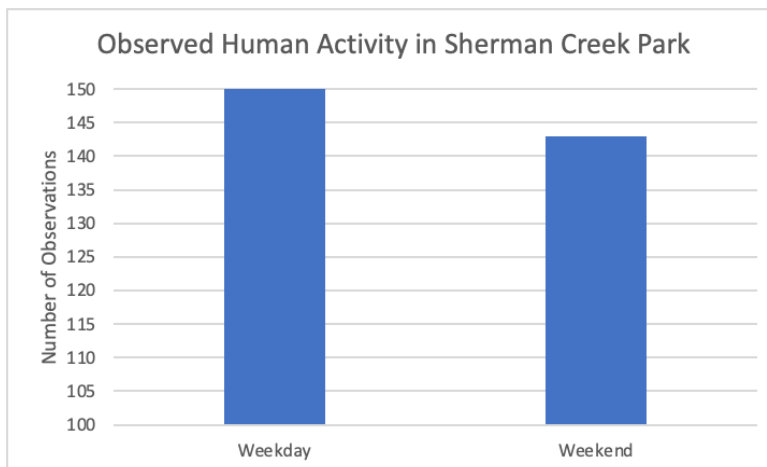
Observations of signs of human use (Appendix B) were collected through attention to the following key areas: signs of activity; signs of neglect, decay, or damage; signs of environmental stewardship; and signage, writing, and art. In other words, these signs are part of the traces that people leave behind in waterfront parks, offering important clues and insights into the use and value of a particular area. Photos of key signs (as indicated with the camera symbol on the forms) were also collected. Field researchers observed 120 signs of human use and captured 80 images through photographic documentation.

Finally, the interview protocol (Appendix C) was implemented throughout the study area. The prior protocol for park users was modified to gather additional data about waterfront use and perceptions of waterways. Minors under the age of 18 were excluded from interviews and not approached. Researchers selected any waterfront user encountered and approached them for a rapid interview, unless they were overly occupied (i.e. playing sports, talking on a phone) or if the situation was deemed too uncomfortable or unsafe (i.e. approaching an inebriated individual). This technique was used due to the limited number of people found in each zone. Interviews were voluntary and remained anonymous. This included 31 in-place interviews with waterfront users - 19 with people within Sherman Creek Park and 12 with people in the peripheral areas to the park. Of the interviewees, 87% of participants fell in the age range of 18-65. Only 13% were over the age of 65. Research teams found that language was a barrier when conducting interviews, with some park visitors only speaking what was observed as Spanish.

II. Park Observations

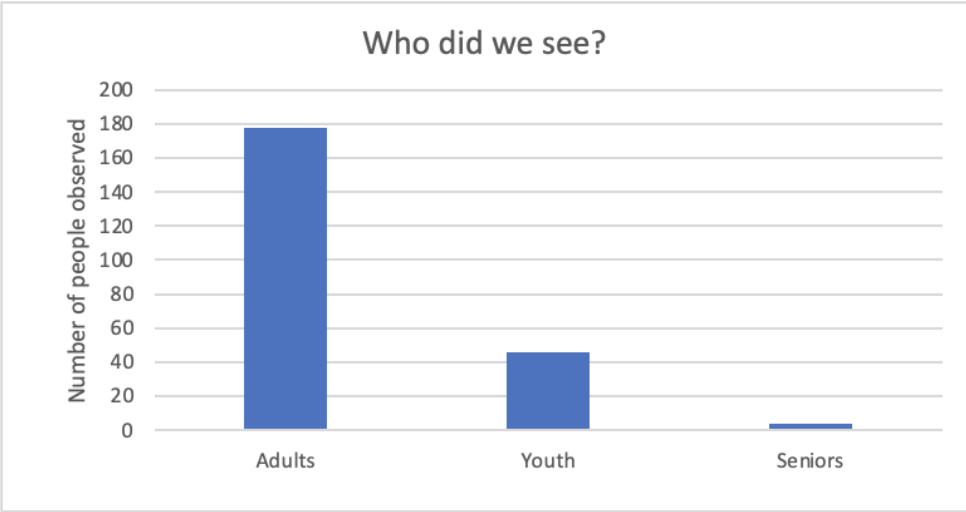
When did we see people in the park?

We made a total of 294 observations of human activity in Sherman Creek Park on three separate visits - one weekday and two weekend days (all in the afternoon). We found more activity on the one weekday (a Wednesday) than on the two weekend days (both Saturdays) combined. This could be a result of weather, as the weather on the weekday was 68 and sunny, while the weather on the weekend days was in the low 60s.



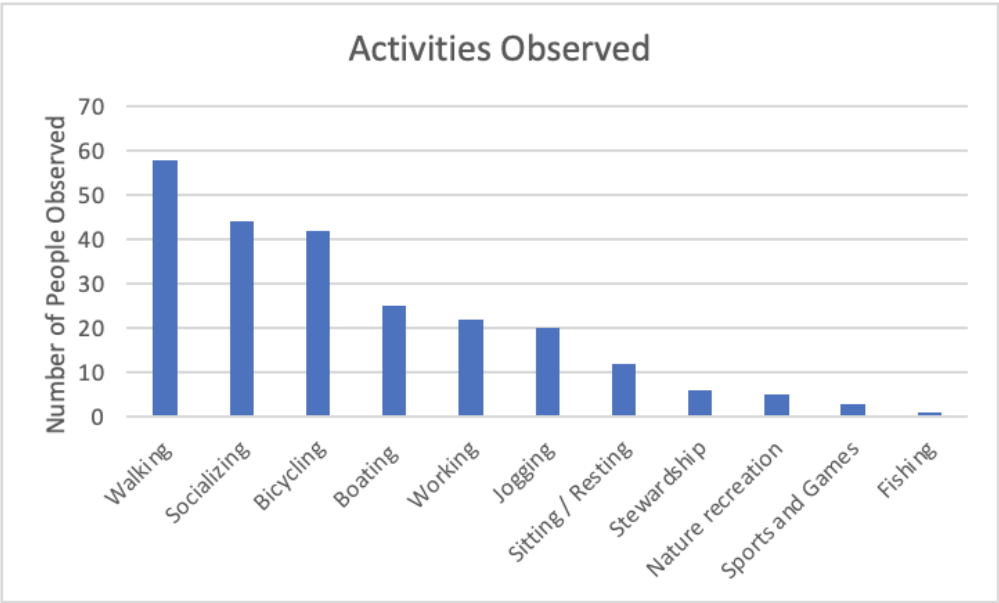
Who were they?

Through the Direct Observation Protocol, the approximate age of 228 visitors was recorded within Sherman Creek Park. The vast majority of visitors (78%, n=178) observed were adults (ages 18-65), and approximately 20% (n=46) were recorded as youth (younger than 18 years old). Seniors made up the lowest percentage of visitors (only 4 recorded observations, less than 2%). This could be because of transportation limitations, such as lack of access to a car or the distance to the nearest subway being located over a half mile away. This could also mean that the park needs to become more accessible to seniors. There were a few more young people than there were seniors which could be due to the fact that there are nearby schools, providing easy access to the park.

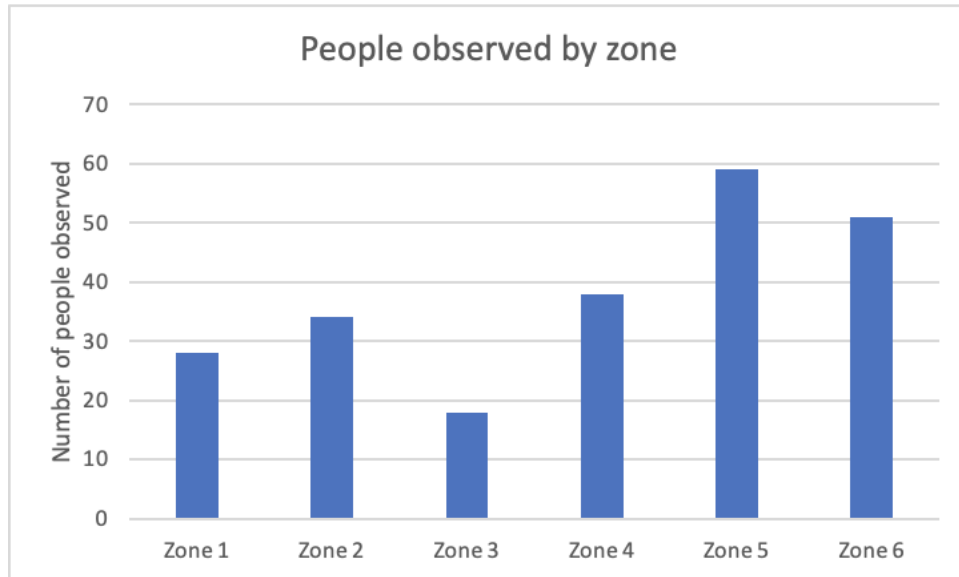


What were they doing?

The activities listed below represent categories of activities observed at Sherman Creek. Some categories represent a singular activity observed, such as walking, bicycling, or fishing. Other categories represent an overall theme of the activity observed. For example, 18.5% of observations (n=44) were of people socializing in place. This theme includes observations of people sitting together on benches, meeting up to talk, or resting together on the grass. Additional activities that we sought to measure but did not have any recorded observations were: Foraging / Plant gathering, Non-power boating (e.g. kayaking), Educational tours, Sunbathing / Shore play, Crabbing, Swimming / Wading.



Where did we observe them? (by zone)



Detailed Counts

Activity: Counts of people observed in the park interior

Activity Observed	Park Zone							Time of Visit			Age Group			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	Weekday	Weekend	Total	<18	18-65	>65	Total
Bicycling	0	2	4	1	14	21	42	20	22	42	0	42	0	42
Jogging / Running	8	6	1	0	3	2	20	19	1	20	11	9	0	20
Walking	5	5	5	2	11	10	38	23	15	38	17	18	3	38
Sports & Recreation	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	1	3	0	3	0	3
Educational Group / Tour	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nature Recreation	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	6	0	6	2	4	0	6
Fishing/Crabbing	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
Swimming / Wading	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sunbathing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Boating - engines/sails	0	0	0	13	0	12	25	3	22	25	0	25	0	25
Boating - nonpower	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Plant Collection / Foraging	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Stewardship	0	0	2	2	2	0	6	6	0	6	0	6	0	6
Sitting / Resting / Standing / Waiting	1	1	0	0	5	5	12	10	2	12	2	9	1	12
Socializing in Place	9	15	2	6	7	5	44	22	22	44	14	30	0	44
Working	0	4	2	5	6	5	22	6	16	22	0	22	0	22
Other Activity	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	18	24	18	29	56	60	219	117	102	219	46	169	4	219

Signs of Activity Observed by Zone

Because you can't always see people "in the act" of interacting with the site, the assessment team documented signs of human use to capture traces of activities and practices that occur across different timeframes and over longer time horizons. We will miss the birders at dawn, or the slow erosion of grass under feet. So we look for traces, for signs of human use, for the imprint that park users leave on the landscape. We note desire lines and well-worn trails. We document counter-narratives in the form of graffiti, hand-made signs, dumping, and vandalism. We note murals, gardens, impromptu seating, and temporary shelters. All of these signs are evidence that humans are ecosystem engineers, that our parks are co-created, by the Parks Department, of course, but also by the broader public.

Sign	Zone						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Informal Trails	3	9	0	4	1	0	17
Encampment/Sleeping Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Informal/Improvised Sitting Area	1	6	0	22	0	0	29
Fire Pit	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Memorial/Shrine/sacred Symbol	1	0	0	0	3	0	4
Damaged/Vandalized Building or Property	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Substantial Dumping or Debris	3	0	3	5	0	0	11
Graffiti, Art, Murals	1	1	0	1	2	5	10
Signage, Flyers, Stickers	0	0	5	0	2	4	11
Garden in Park	0	6	1	0	0	0	7
Bird Feeder/Birdbath/Bird Box/Bat Box	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Boats	0	4	0	2	0	1	7
Fishing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Crabbing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

*Crews were instructed to take note of any other noteworthy or unique observations that stood out to them in each zone of the park. For Sherman Creek Park, other signs of activity noted included, for example, images of a construction site.



Informal trail to Accidental Marsh
Wooded Area



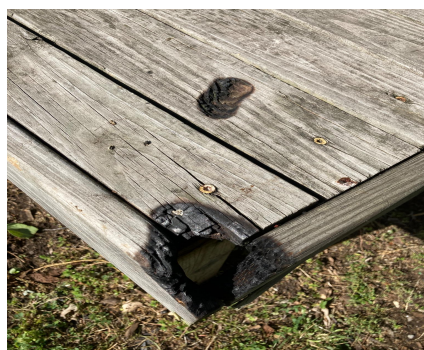
Token nailed into tree at Picnic area



Cat food in



Informal trail in Wooded Area
River From Pier



Burnt bench in Picnic Area



Boat in Harlem



Goose barrier in the Dock Area
Wooded Area



Shopping cart in Wooded Area



Discarded pants in



Memorial in Restored Marsh
at Boathouse/Bike Path

Carving near Boathouse/Bike Path

Sticker on plaque

Sociability Observed

Zone	Pairs (2)	Small Group (3-10)	Large Group (10+)	Total
1 - Accidental Marsh-Wooded Area	5	3	0	8
2 - Picnic Area	5	2	0	7
3 - Community Garden	4	1	0	5
4 - Wooded Area	4	6	2	12
5 - Restored Marsh - Boardwalk	4	2	0	6
6 - Bike Path - Boathouse	4	6	2	12
Total	26	20	4	50

III. Interviews with Park Users

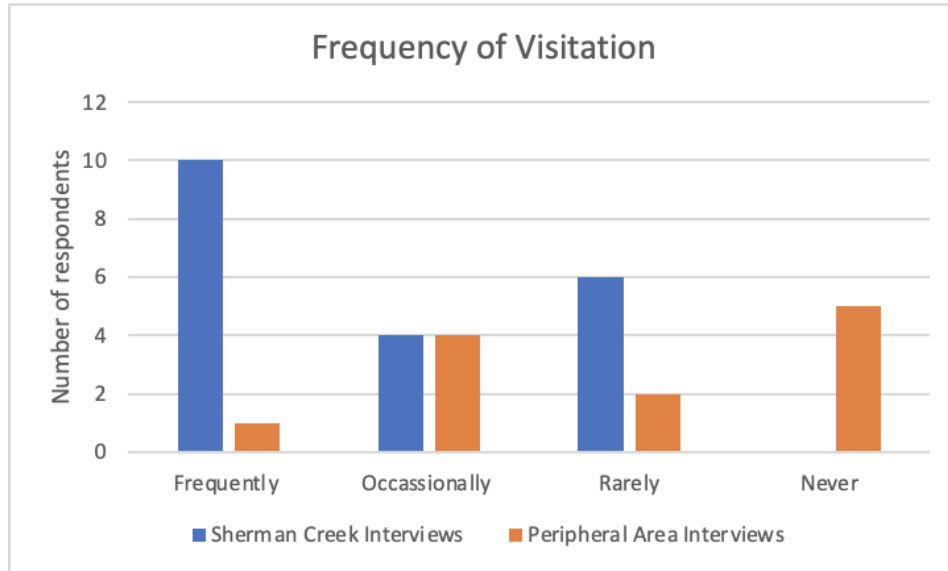
The next section presents the results of open-ended interview questions with waterfront users. Respondents could answer in any way that they chose and these responses were later coded for emergent themes by researchers. The tables present a summary of the rank-order of the occurrence of these themes among all the interviewees in the waterfront, which are then explained in the text. The percentages may total to more than 100% because respondents often identified with multiple themes. X participants were interviewed in total, 20 in Sherman Creek Park and 12 in peripheral areas. % of participants fell in the age range of 18-65. x% were over the age of 65. Research teams found that language was a barrier when conducting interviews, with some park visitors only speaking Spanish (only one member of the research team was fluent in Spanish).

1. How often do you visit Sherman Creek Park?

We asked all interviewees, including those in areas peripheral to Sherman Creek, how frequently they visit the park. Here we grouped responses into Frequently (reflecting those who visit the park daily or weekly), Occasionally (those who visit monthly or depending on season/weather), Rarely (those who visit very seldomly or who visited in the past, but not currently), and Never.

Approximately a third of interviewees in the park and peripheral zones reported that they visit Sherman Creek Park on a daily or a weekly basis. Half of respondents visited less frequently, either occasionally (25.0%) or rarely (25.0%). As would be expected, people interviewed within the park reported coming to the park more frequently than those interviewed in the peripheral areas, some of whom had never visited the park. This included interviewees approached in the Dykeman Houses area across the street from the park.

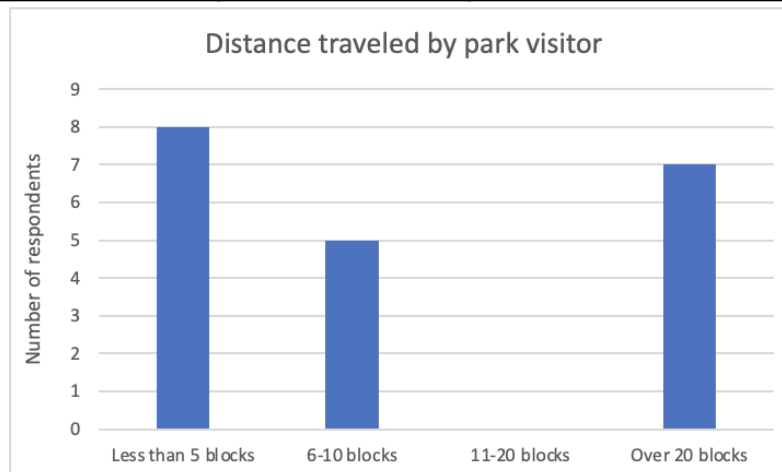
How often do you visit Sherman Creek Park?				
THEME	COUNT (Interviews within Sherman Creek Park)	COUNT (Interviews in Peripheral Zones)	TOTAL COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Frequently (daily or weekly)	10	1	11	34.4%
Occasionally	4	4	8	25.0%
Rarely	6	2	8	25.0%
Never	0	5	5	15.6%
Total Respondents	20	12	32	100%



2. How far did you travel to get to this park?

For interviews conducted within Sherman Creek Park, we asked respondents to estimate how far they traveled to reach the park. 40% of participants traveled less than 5 blocks to get to Sherman Creek Park, while (31.5%) traveled over 20 blocks to reach the area.

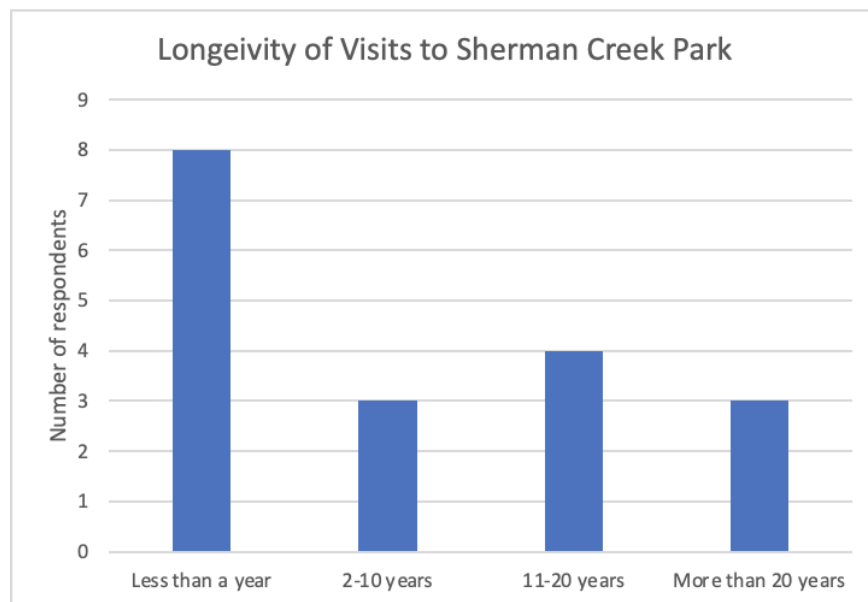
Distance Traveled To Sherman Creek		
THEME DISTANCE	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Less than 5 Blocks	8	40.0%
6-10 Blocks	5	25.0%
11-20 Blocks	0	0.0%
Over 20 Blocks	7	35.0%
Total Respondents	20	100%



3. When did you first come here?

18 respondents answered our question about their first time visiting Sherman Creek Park. Several people were visiting the park for the first time, or had visited for the first time in the past year (44.4%). A couple of people stated they began coming to the park when they moved to the area within the last ten years. Others stated that they came here for the first time with their school in the early 2000's, two responses also detailed that they had been to the park for the first time in 2005 and 2009, respectively (22.2%). Three interviewees responded that they had been coming to the park for over 20 years, one of whom said they had been visiting the area since before the park opened in 2003.

How long have you been visiting Sherman Creek Park?	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Less than one year	8	44.4%
2-10 years	3	16.7%
11-20 years	4	22.2%
Over 20 years	3	16.7%
Total Respondents	18	100%

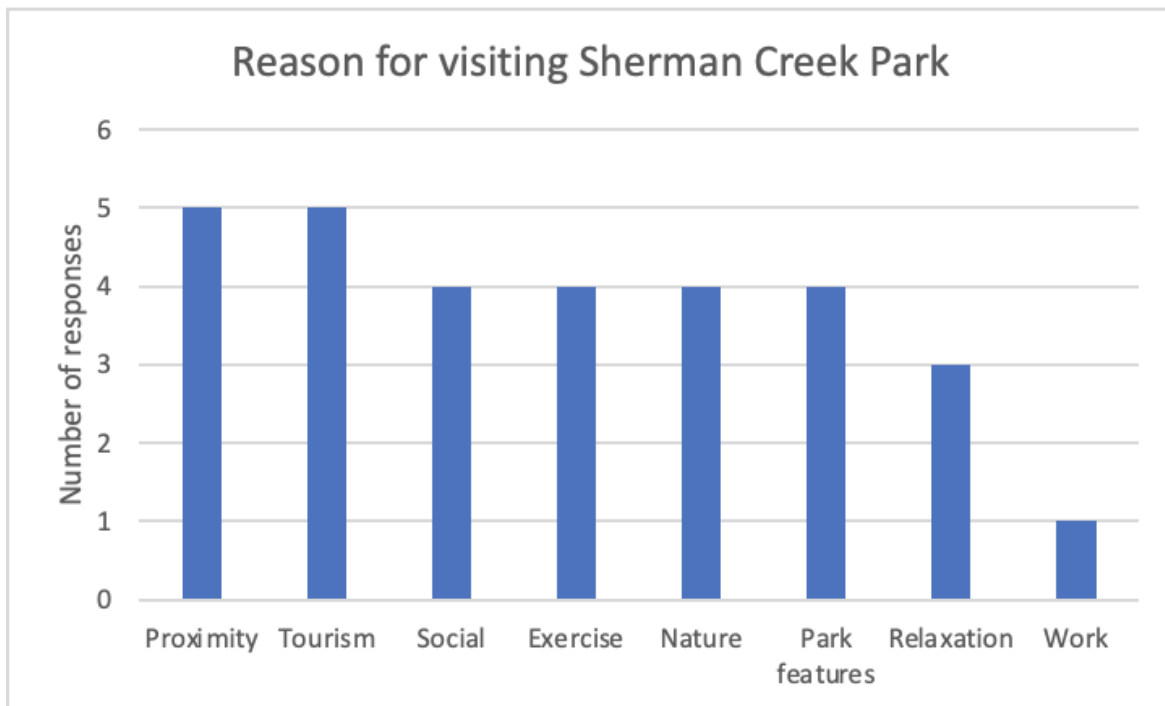


The next section presents the results of open-ended interview questions with park users. Respondents could answer in any way that they chose and these responses were later coded for emergent themes by researchers. The tables present a summary of the rank-order of the occurrence of these themes among all the interviewees in the park, which are then explained in the text. The percentages may total to more than 100% because respondents often identified multiple themes.

Q4. What brings you to this park / waterfront area today?

Respondents reported they were in the park for multiple reasons. Proximity was an important reason for a quarter of respondents, whereas another quarter indicated that they were “exploring” and visiting the park as a tourist. Additional reasons for visiting included park amenities, such as the garden, the waterfall, or the waterfront areas, as well as nature and nature-based activities, such as photography and bird watching. 20% (n=4) of visitors also mentioned that they were there to spend time with a friend or family member, sometimes sharing food or walking together.

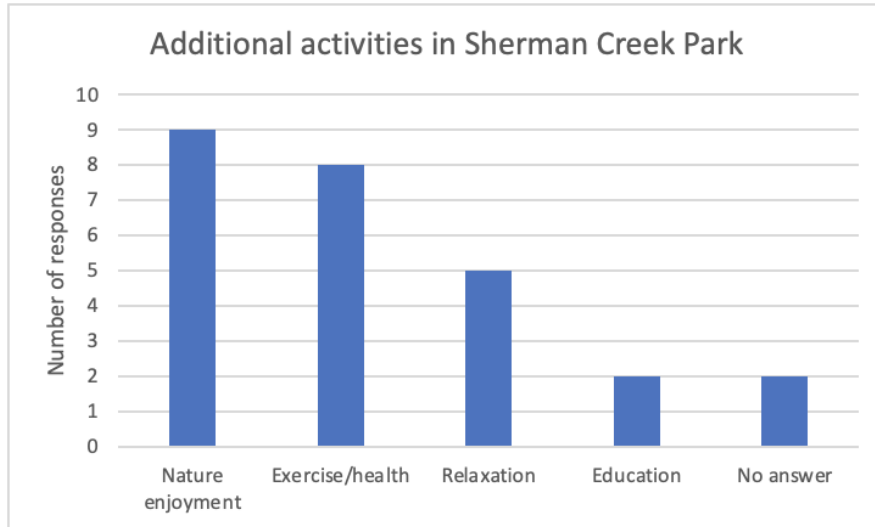
What brings you to this park/ waterfront area today?		
THEME	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Proximity (from home, work, or school)	5	25.0%
Tourism (exploration)	5	25.0%
Social (spending time with friends or family)	4	20.0%
Exercise	4	20.0%
Nature / nature-based activities	4	20.0%
Park features (e.g. garden, waterfront)	4	20.0%
Relaxation / appreciates being in the space	3	15.0%
Work	1	5.0%
Total Responses	33 (20 respondents)	Percentages total more than 100% due to multiple reasons given



5. What other types of activities do you like to do in this area? (i.e. fishing, boating, running, etc.)

Five unique codes were identified after interviewing participants about their use of the park: Nature enjoyment, Socializing, Relaxation, and Exercise/health. Nature enjoyment and nature-based activities were frequently cited. For example, one visitor said that they “loved to look at the flowers when they bloom- the park smells great in the Spring and Summer.” Exercise and wellness were also mentioned by many visitors, who used the park for biking, walking, jogging, and kayaking. Two participants did not answer this question. ‘Exercise/health’ included all participant accounts of physical and mental health. This information was only collected from interviewees within Sherman Creek Park and was not asked to participants in the peripheral zones.

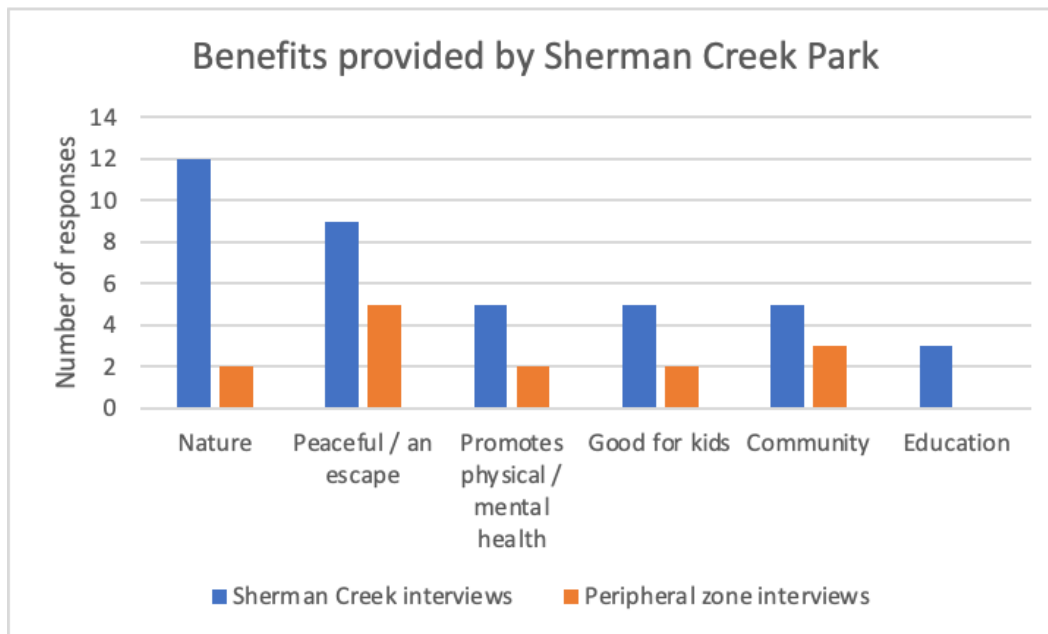
Other Activities		
THEME	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Nature enjoyment / nature-based activities	9	34.6%
Exercise / Health (biking, jogging)	8	30.8%
Relaxation	5	19.2%
Education of self and others	2	7.7%
No answer	2	7.7%
Total Respondents	28	100%



6. What benefits do you think this place provides to you? To your community?

In response to the question above, six unique codes were identified, which were very similar to those referenced during questions regarding the participants' activities in the park: Nature; Peacefulness / an Escape; Place for Community; Promotes physical and mental health; Good for Kids, and Education. The opportunity to enjoy nature and the importance of Sherman Creek as a "peaceful" place to escape the city were the most frequently cited benefits, both occurring in 45.2% of the interviews. Respondents cited additional benefits referring to physical and mental health (exercise and stress relief), as well as the importance of the space for community, children, and education (the last category referring to appreciation of learning opportunities and youth programs). Many respondents mentioned multiple benefits in their answers, as expressed in the following response, "lots of relaxation, peace, nature, and space to appreciate life."

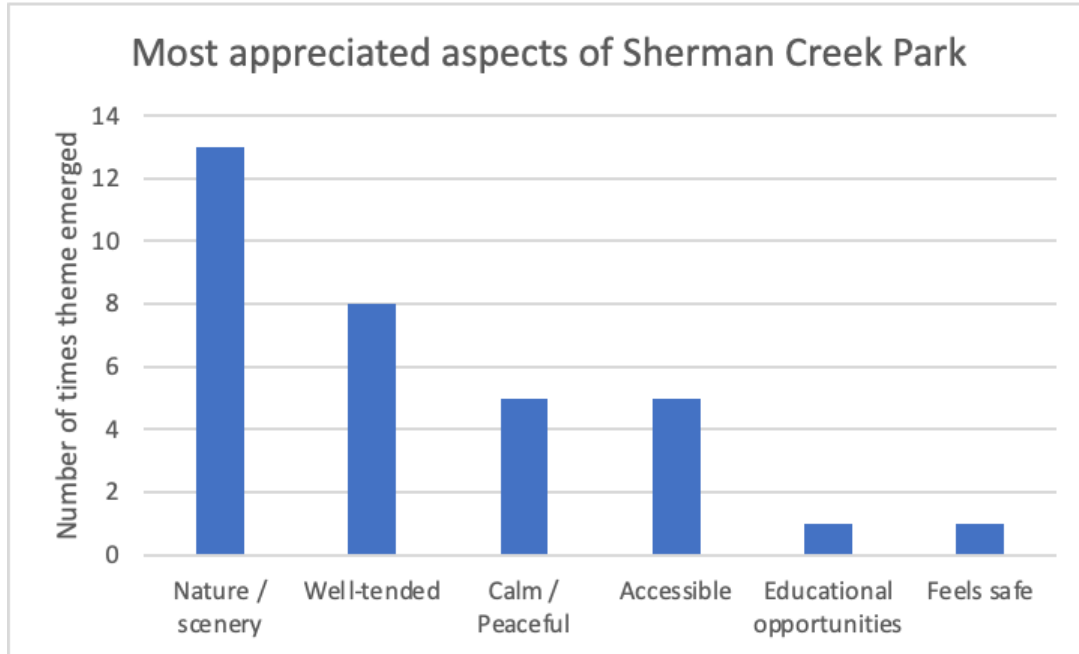
Benefits provided				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS (n = 31)
Nature	12	2	14	45.2%
Peacefulness / an escape	9	5	14	45.2%
Place for community	5	3	8	25.8%
Promotes physical / mental health	5	2	7	22.6%
Good for kids	5	2	7	22.6%
Education	3	0	3	9.7%
Total Responses	39	14	53	



7. What do you appreciate most about this space? What makes you feel most comfortable?

Over half (68.4%) of respondents answered that they were in the park to enjoy nature and to enjoy the scenery and nature-based amenities, such as the children’s garden or the waterfall. Another large percentage (42.1%) discussed how well-tended the park is, frequently mentioning the role of the NYRP staff at the park. For example, one person said, “the area is government-funded, free, and kept clean. The workers are always friendly,” and another person added that the park “feels safe and NYRP are always around.” Similar to previous questions, 36.8% of respondents expressed enjoyment of the peaceful nature of the park and said that they went there to get away from the city. Accessibility was also mentioned as an important benefit; this included access to the park as well as to the waterfront, which two respondents specifically pointed out. One person appreciated the education that was provided to them within the park area and one person appreciated how safe they felt in the park, especially being a woman who often walked alone.

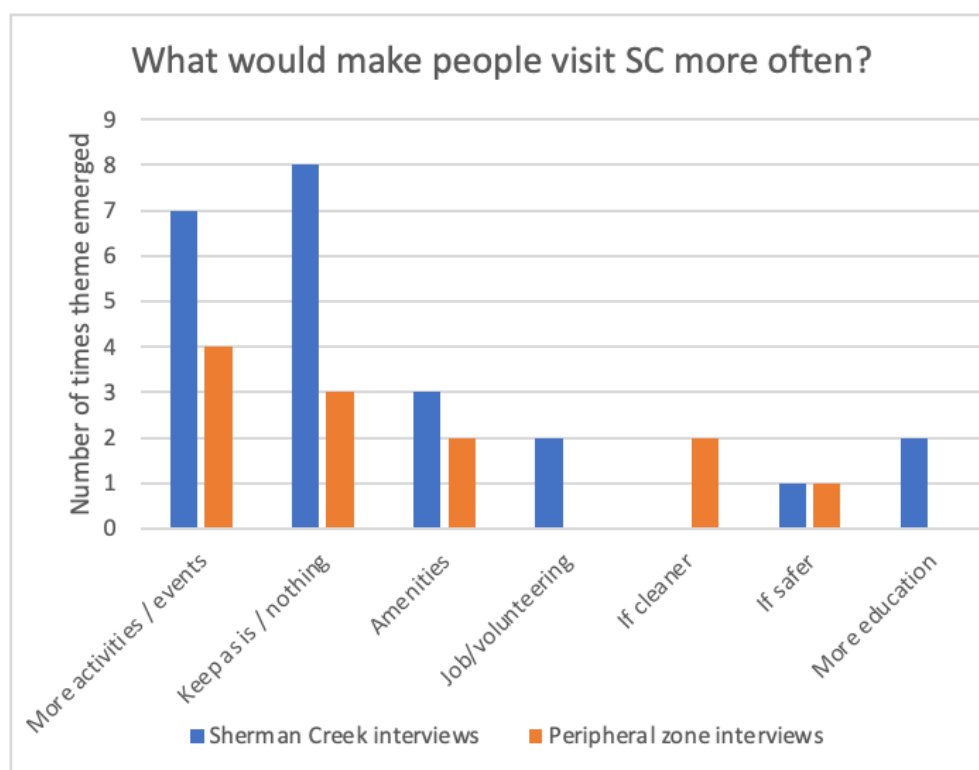
Reasons for appreciating Sherman Creek		
THEME	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Nature/ Scenery	13	68.4%
Well-tended/ NYRP presence	8	42.1%
Calm / Peaceful	5	26.3%
Accessible	5	26.3%
Educational opportunities	1	5.3%
Feels safe	1	5.3%
Total Respondents	19	



8. What would make you come to the park more?

Approximately one-third (35.5%) of respondents indicated that they preferred to keep the park as is and/or nothing would bring them to the park more frequently. Another third mentioned having additional events and activities, particularly activities for children and families. Kayaking, meditation, and exercise classes were mentioned as activities that interviewees were interested in participating in, as were movie nights and concerts, for attracting more of the local community. Respondents also mentioned specific amenities they would like to see in the park, including additional benches, a viewing platform, and longer walking paths. Some responses also pointed to the importance of providing more educational information, especially regarding the wildlife and history of the park, and also of job/volunteer opportunities (6.5%). Finally, a couple of respondents suggested that the park could be cleaner / safer, specifically the area in Zone 6, where motorcycles often travel down the bike path and large BBQs often result in trash/litter.

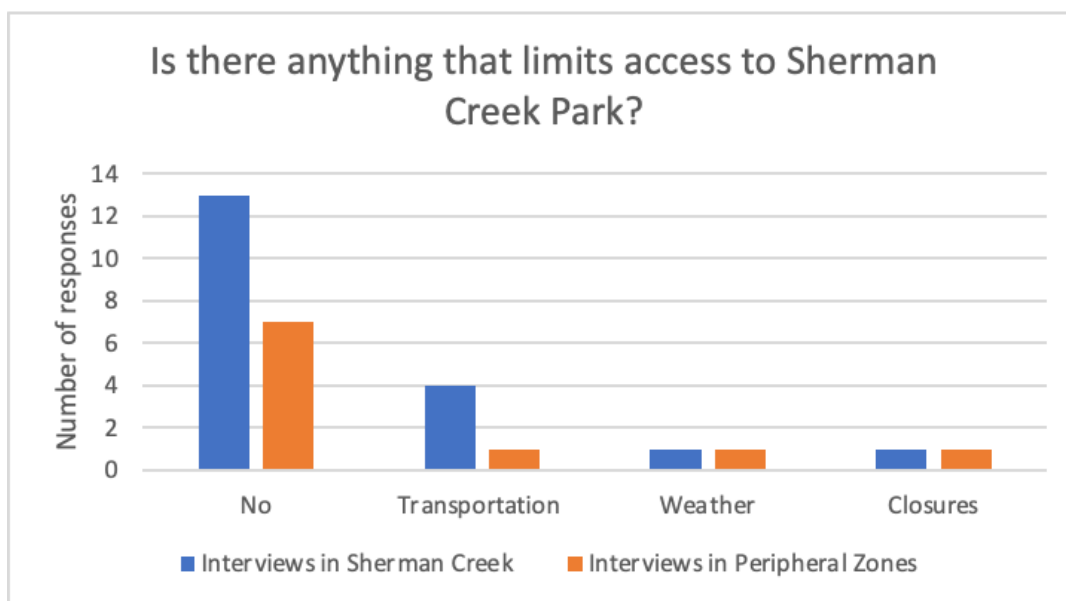
Would visit park more if:				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS (n = 31)
More activities / events	7	4	11	35.5%
Keep as is / Nothing	8	3	11	35.5%
Additional amenities	3	2	5	16.1%
Job or volunteer opportunities	2	0	2	6.5%
If cleaner	0	2	2	6.5%
If safer	1	1	2	6.5%
More educational information	2	0	2	6.5%
Total Responses	23	12	35	



9. Is there anything that limits your access to the park?

Over two-thirds (69.0%) of interviewees in both Sherman Creek park and the peripheral zones said that there was nothing limiting their access to the park. Of the remaining third that gave examples of things that limit their access to the park, 17.2% mentioned transportation issues. These limitations ranged from not having access to a car, living too far away to regularly visit, the lack of a bike stand, and not having a nearby subway stop. Another two respondents said that the weather was the only thing limiting them from visiting the park and two others said that the only thing limiting them from accessing the park was when it was closed.

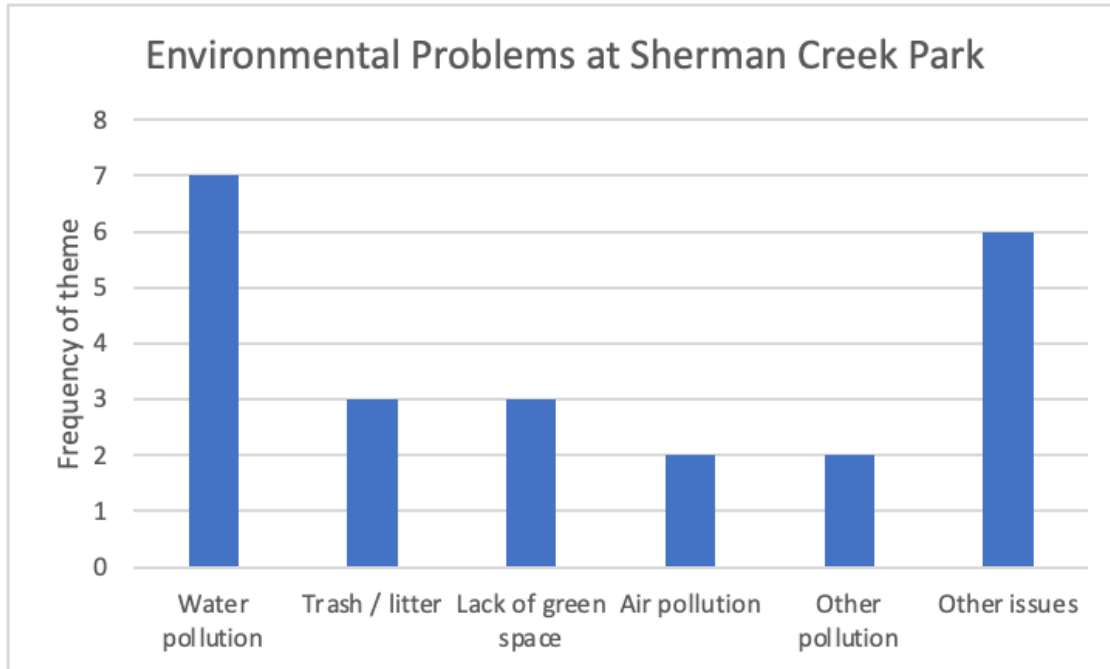
Limitations for Visiting Sherman Creek Park				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS
Nothing	13	7	20	69.0%
Transportation	4	1	2	17.2%
Park closures	1	1	2	6.9%
Weather	1	1	2	6.9%
Total Respondents	19	10	30	



10. What types of environmental problems do you think might exist here?

Only the interviewees in Sherman Creek were asked about their perceptions of environmental problems in the area. About half of those interviewed (52.6%) indicated awareness of pollution in the area; water pollution in particular was a concern of over a third of respondents. Several additional observations referenced the water quality of the area, for example, mentioning excessive dumping in the river, and one person was concerned that the boathouse falling apart may be causing problems in the area. One interviewee mentioned that they did not like the amount of new development in the area, stating “the area was beginning to feel too rich.” 10% of those interviewed mentioned that there was trash present in the park. Two people discussed problems with animals in the park, one person said that there were many geese causing problems in the area, while another mentioned turtles going missing in the area. One of the people mentioned problems with air pollution with respect to environmental justice. 10% of responses referenced human activity as an environmental issue in the park, one of which responded that there was a lot of erosion of the wetland ecosystem along with water becoming higher due to climate change. 14% of these respondents did not notice any environmental issues in Sherman Creek Park.

THEME	COUNT	% OF RESPONDENTS
Water pollution	7	36.8%
Trash / litter	3	15.8%
Lack of green space	3	15.8%
Air pollution	2	10.5%
Other pollution types	2	10.5%
Other issues	6	31.6%
Total Responses	23	100%



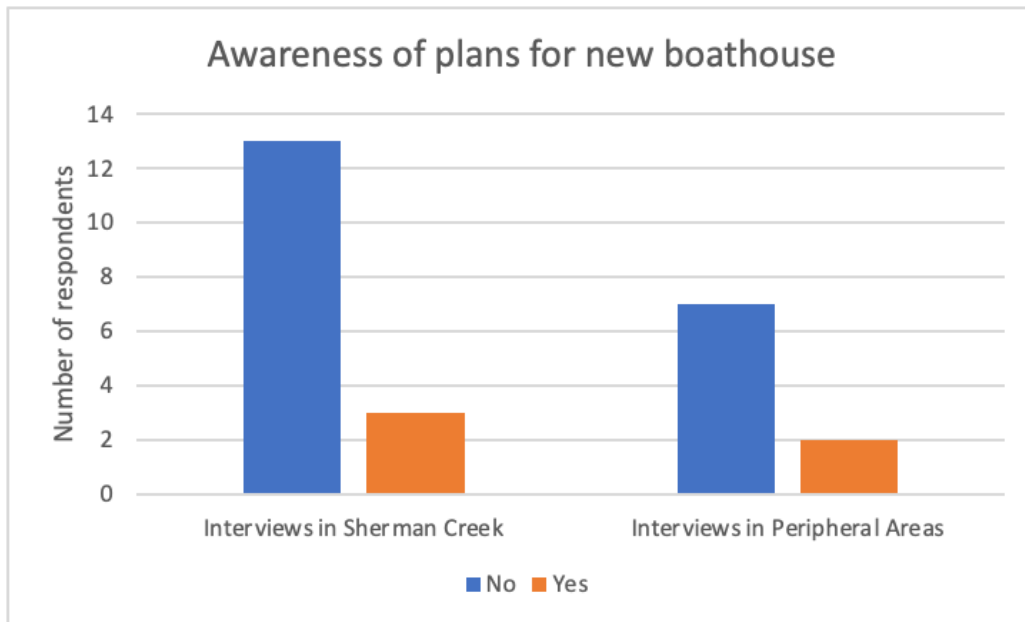
Development of Sherman Creek Park

There is a plan to build a privately-owned boathouse in place of the picnic section (Zone 2) of Sherman Creek park. We interviewed people about their awareness and perceptions of the planned boathouse, as well as their suggestions for how the boathouse could engage the local community. We also asked how people would like to see the local waterfront developed in the future, if at all.

11. Did you know about the plan to build a boathouse on the picnic section of Sherman Creek Park?

The vast majority of respondents (80% of those who responded to the question) were unaware of the plans for the new boathouse. Only 20% of the respondents were aware of the plans to make the boathouse.

Did you know about the plan to build the boathouse?				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS
Yes	3	2	5	20%
No	13	7	20	80%
Total Respondents	16	9	25	100%



13. How do you feel about the plans for the new boathouse?

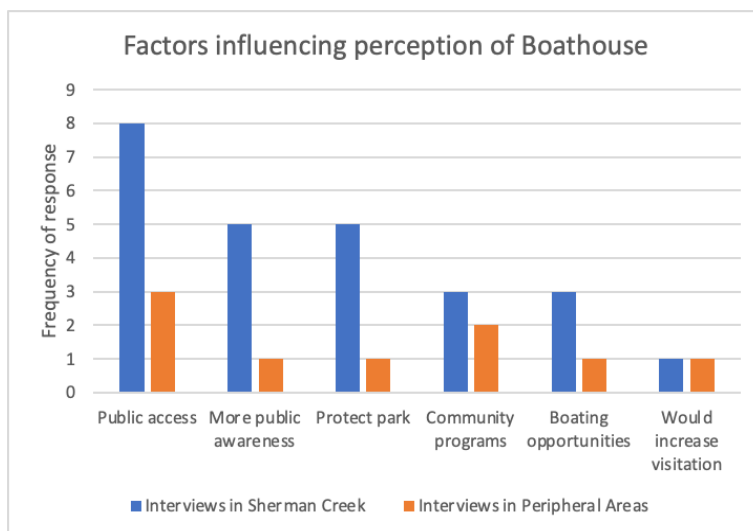
Reactions to the boathouse were very mixed, an equal number of respondents reporting either positive or negative feelings about the plans. Many people expressed that it could be a positive amenity for the park, as long as it did not disrupt current uses of the space. For example, one respondent said they would support the plans “if the boathouse looks good, serves the community, and doesn't hurt the park.” Some people expressed concerns about future access to the site that the boathouse would be built upon, which is currently a popular picnicking area and offers waterfront access and bird watching. Several respondents requested more information to be able to form an opinion about the benefit of the boathouse to the park and the local community.

Community Views On Boathouse				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS
Positive	5	3	8	29.6%
Negative	7	1	8	29.6%
Mixed feelings / undecided	7	4	11	40.7%
Total Respondents	19	8	27	100%

14. What factors contributed to your opinion on the boathouse?

After informing the respondents of the plans for the boathouse, most shared their reasons for their opinion of the boathouse. Over a third of respondents (35.5%) expressed concern over public access. People also expressed the importance of ensuring that the boathouse is open to and accessible by the public, rather than being a private space. Multiple respondents (19.4%) also said that they wanted there to be more information and advertisements of the boathouse provided to the public, both to enable people to have an informed opinion as well as to increase excitement over the plans. Some people expressed concerns about future access to the site that the boathouse would be built upon, which is currently a popular picnicking area and offers waterfront access and bird watching. Many respondents mentioned the need for the boathouse plans to engage with the local community and current park users, and suggested possible community outreach ideas, such as free kayaking and rowing, especially for youth.

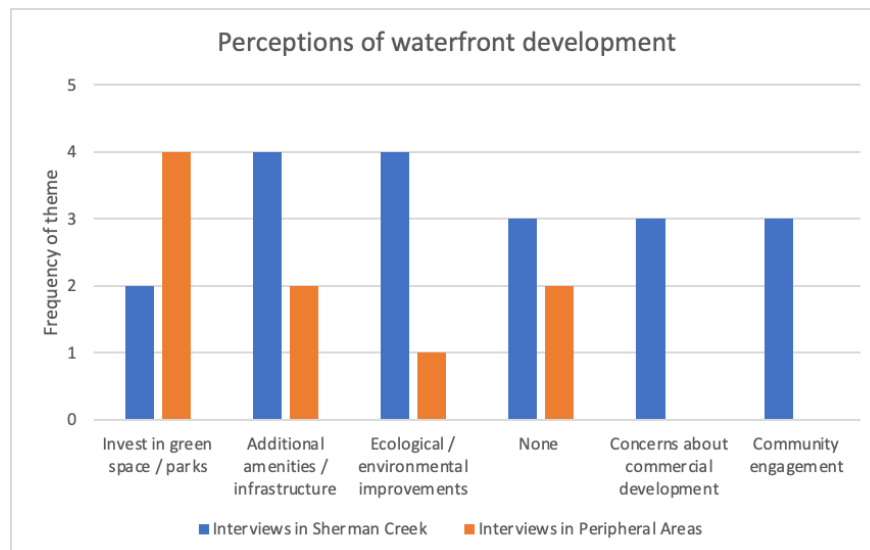
Contributing Factors to Views on Boathouse				
THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS
Public Access	8	3	11	35.5%
More Public Awareness	5	1	6	19.4%
Protect Park	5	1	6	19.4%
Community Programs	3	2	5	16.1%
Boating Opportunities	3	1	4	12.9%
Would increase visitation	1	1	2	6.5%
Total Responses	25	9	34	



16. How else would you like to see the waterfront developed in the future, if at all?

Interviewees expressed the importance of maintaining existing green space in the area and investing in additional parks. Similarly, multiple respondents (16.1%) indicated that they did not want to see any development in the area, and another 9.7% mentioned specific concerns with regard to commercial development, including gentrification. Several respondents also listed ideas for various amenities and infrastructure projects, including a dog park, more benches / BBQ area, a pedestrian bridge that would connect to the Bronx, additional lighting, and a boathouse / marina.

THEME	Sherman Creek Interviews (n=19)	Peripheral Zone Interviews (n=12)	Total	% OF RESPONDENTS
Invest in green space / parks	2	4	6	19.4%
Additional amenities / infrastructure	4	2	6	19.4%
Ecological restoration / environmental improvements	4	1	5	16.1%
None	3	2	5	16.1%
More community engagement	3	0	3	9.7%
Concerns about commercial development	3	0	3	9.7%
Total responses	19	9	28	



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DIRECT HUMAN OBSERVATION OF SHERMAN CREEK – 2021
☐ WEEKDAY

☐ WEEKEND

☐ MORNING ☐ AFTERNOON ☐ EVENING

Names of observers:			Zone:
Date:	Camera #	First Photo #:	Last Photo #:
DIRECT HUMAN OBSERVATION	# Kids (<18)	# Adults (18-65)	# Seniors (>65)
Bicycling			
Jogging / Running			
Walking / Dog Walking			
Sports & Recreation (soccer, tennis, cricket, baseball, volleyball, football, frisbee, playground use, tag, etc.)			
Educational Group / Tour (remember primary purpose, note the activity - count each individual)			
Nature Recreation (birding, digging, building w nature, climbing, etc.)			
Fishing (fishing with pole, fishing with net or hands)			
Crabbing			
Swimming / Wading / Water play (jumping, playing, relaxing in water)			
Sunbathing / free play on shore (playing in sand, beach activities)			
Boating – with engines or sails (launching or landing boat, jetskiing, sailing)			
Boating – nonpower (launching or landing boat, kayaking, paddleboarding)			
Plant Collection / Foraging / Gathering			
Stewardship (gardening, tree care, weeding, trash removal, watering, volunteers in parks)			

DIRECT HUMAN OBSERVATION OF SHERMAN CREEK – 2021
☐ WEEKDAY

☐ WEEKEND

☐ MORNING

☐ AFTERNOON

☐ EVENING

Sitting / Resting / Standing / Waiting / Keeping Watch (alone, not socializing)			
Socializing in Place (people talking, barbecuing, party, in groups, children in free play)			
Working (parks maintenance, vendor, utility, repair, building, re-building)			
Other Activity (homeless person sleeping, musician on street, washing or fixing car)			
Encounter with Resident: <u>positive</u> (remember to record what they are doing)			
Encounter with Resident: <u>negative</u> (remember to record what they are doing)			
SOCIAL OBSERVATION			
# of pairs			
# of small groups (3-10)			
# of large groups (10+)			
# of dogs			

Field Notes:

Names of observers:			Zone:
Date:	Camera #	First Photo #:	Last Photo #:
SIGNS OF HUMAN USE		COUNT	
Informal Trails 📷 (cut-throughs, foot paths, desire lines, bike tracks)			
Encampment / Sleeping Area 📷			
Informal / Improvised Sitting Places 📷 (bench, chair, grill)			
Fire Pit 📷			
Memorial / Shrine / Sacred Symbol 📷 (colored ribbons, RIP, "in memory of," stuffed animals)			
Damaged / Vandalized Building or Property 📷			
Substantial Dumping or Debris 📷 (NOT bagged trash or litter)			
Graffiti, Art, Murals 📷 (hand written/painted messages or signs – do NOT photo small, illegible tags)			
Signage, Flyers & Stickers 📷 (community bulletin boards, institutional signs, NOT city street signs or standard parks signs)			
Garden in Park 📷			
Bird Feeder / Birdbath / Bird Box / Bat box 📷			
Boats 📷 (stationary or tied)			
Fishing 📷 (lines, hooks, nets)			
Crabbing, Etc. 📷 (clam digging, traps)			
Other 📷 (specify in Field Notes)			

Zone Overview Photo #:

Field Notes: *capture any official or unofficial name for the zone – via signage or in conversation with public / managers*

ZONE DEBRIEF NOTES: *(after finishing all three protocols, debrief the experience with your team. Note number of and reasons for interview refusals and any other encounters with park users).*

SHERMAN CREEK OBSERVATION 2021

☐ WEEKDAY

☐ WEEKEND

Team members:		Date:	Zone:
Approximate age:	☐ 18-65 ☐ >65	Time:	
What brings you to this park / waterfront area today?			
How often do you visit this waterfront area/park? ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely			
How far did you travel to get here? ☐ Less than 5 blocks ☐ 6-10 blocks ☐ 11-20 blocks ☐ Over 20 blocks			
What other types of activities do you like to do in this area? (i.e. fishing, boating, running, etc.)			
When was the first time you came here? (year, or month if in the last year)			
What benefits do you think this place provides to you? To your community?			
What do you appreciate most about this space? What makes you feel most comfortable?			
What would make you come to the park more? (additional prompts: What types of activities would you like to do here? What types of amenities would you like to see here?)			



SHERMAN CREEK OBSERVATION 2021☐ WEEKDAY☐ WEEKEND

Is there anything that limits your access to the park?

What types of environmental problems do you think might exist here? (additional prompts: for example, in the water or the air?)

Did you know about the plan to build a boathouse on the picnic section of Sherman Creek Park? How do you feel about that plan? How would you like to see the boathouse engage with the community?

How else would you like to see the waterfront developed in the future?

FIELD NOTES:



SHERMAN CREEK OBSERVATION 2021

☐ WEEKDAY

☐ WEEKEND

Team members:		Date:	Zone:
Approximate age:	☐ 18-65 ☐ >65	Time:	
What brings you to this park / waterfront area today?			
How often do you visit this area? ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely			
How far did you travel to get here? ☐ Less than 5 blocks ☐ 6-10 blocks ☐ 11-20 blocks ☐ Over 20 blocks			
Are you familiar with Sherman Creek Park?			
If so, how often do you visit Sherman Creek Park? ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Occasionally ☐ Rarely ☐ Never			
What benefits do you think Sherman Creek provides to you? To your community?			
What would make you come to Sherman Creek Park (more often)? (additional prompts: What types of activities would you like to do there? What types of amenities would you like to see there?)			



SHERMAN CREEK OBSERVATION 2021☐ WEEKDAY☐ WEEKEND

Is there anything that limits your access to the park?

Did you know about the plan to build a boathouse on the picnic section of Sherman Creek Park? How do you feel about that plan? How would you like to see the boathouse engage with the community?

How else would you like to see the waterfront developed in the future, if at all?

Is there anything else you would like to share with the staff of Sherman Creek Park?

FIELD NOTES:

