

Focus Group Team Report

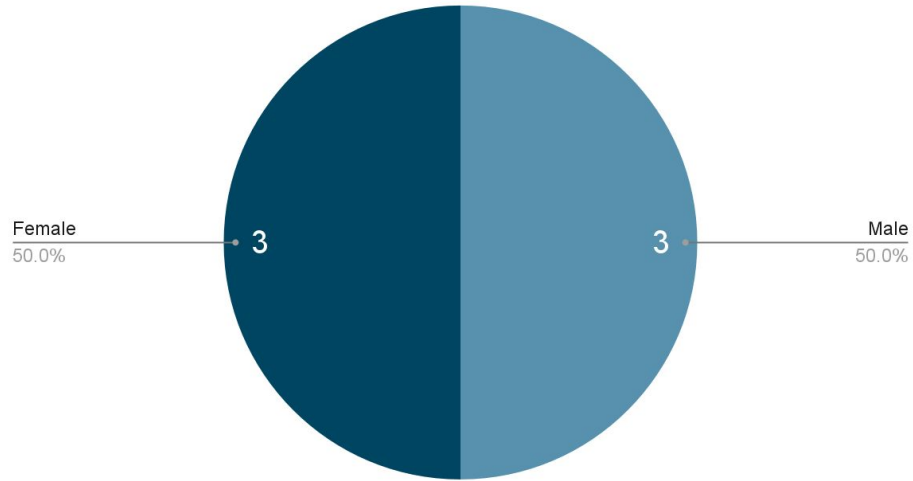
Created by: Kay and Lucia

Goal of Focus Group

Main goal:

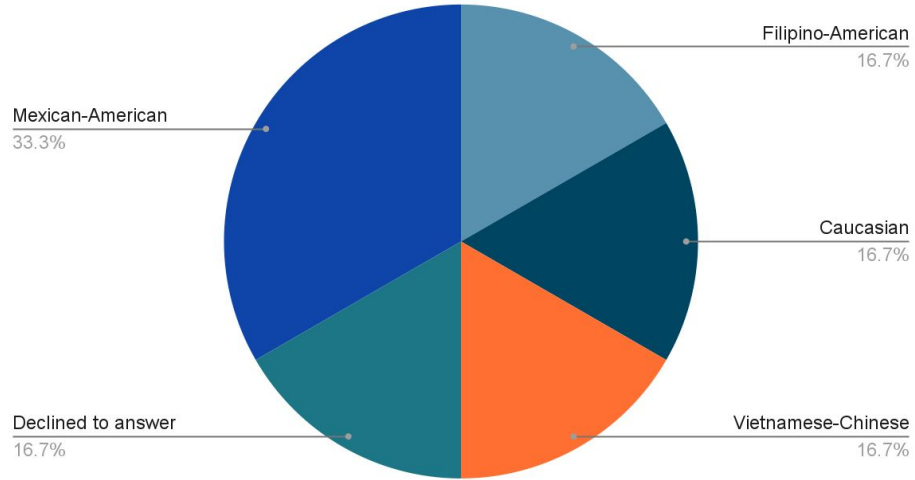
- To gather youth perspectives on Balboa Park to inform how to improve the park experience for them and others.
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1. Learn what the park has to offer that visitors already enjoy
 2. Learn how the park can change or add certain experiences to better fit the preferences of visitors

Gender Identity

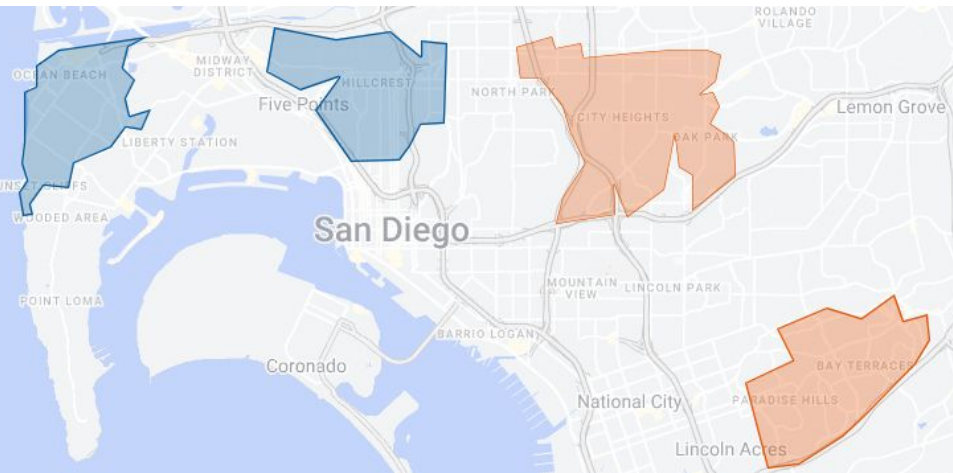


Participant Makeup

Ethnicity of Participants



Participant Makeup



Participant Makeup

Participants and Balboa Park

How often do you visit Balboa Park?

Every day (1):

- Once every day (proximity to school)

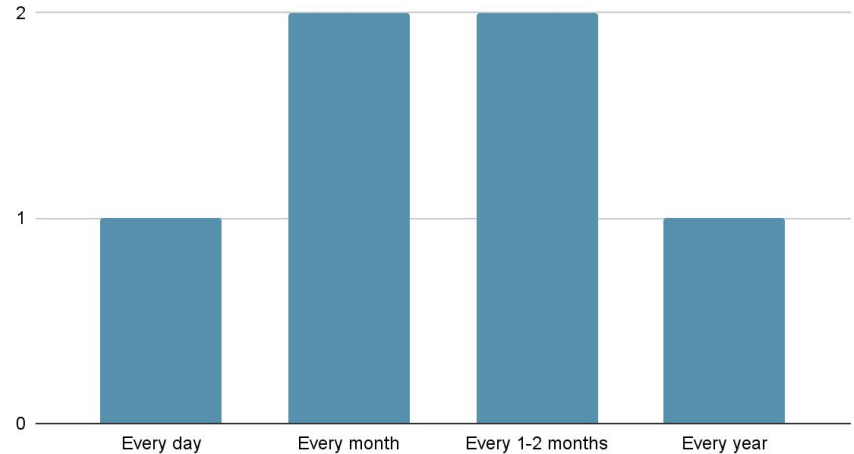
Every month (3):

- 1-2 times a month
- 1-2 times a month when free (summer break; not during school months)
- 2-4 times a month

Every 1-2 months (2):

- Once every 1-2 months
- Once every 2 months

How often do you visit Balboa Park?



Participants and Balboa Park

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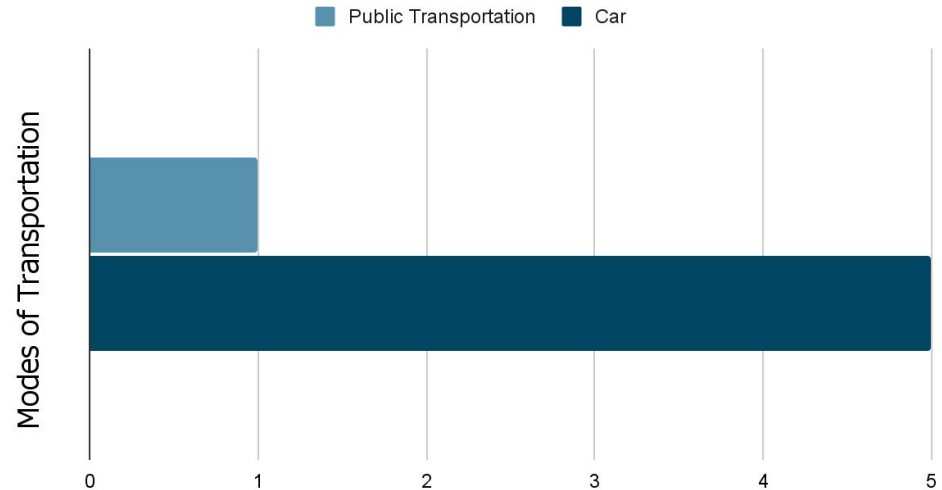
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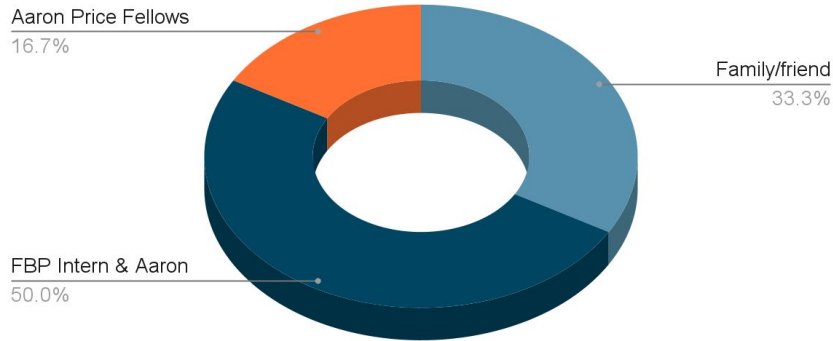
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Getting to Balboa Park

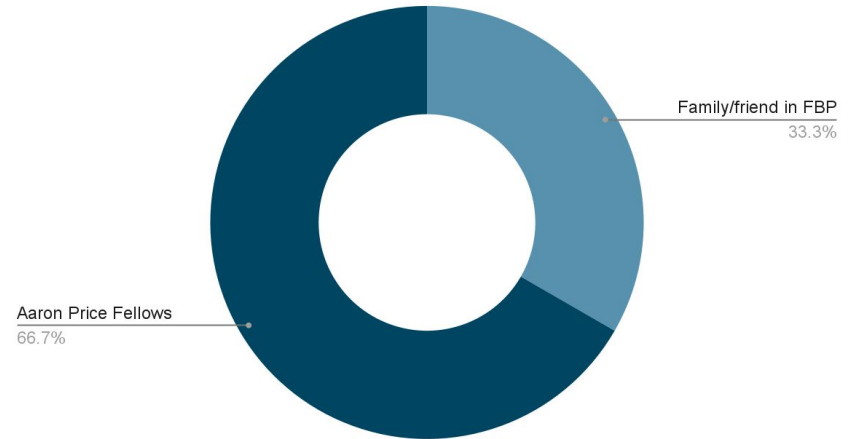


Participants and the Focus Group

How did you learn about the focus group?



How did you learn about FBP?



Theme 1: “Balboa Park is a visually appealing place that attracts people of all different backgrounds from all around the world”

- ❖ The first thing you notice about Balboa Park is its stunning scenery. All of the gardens and parks are well maintained by workers and volunteers so that visitors can get the most out of their experience.
 - One participant mentioned how “...the rest of the city doesn’t look like...” Balboa Park and how its “vibrant and lush” landscape are what attracts so many people
 - This aspect of the park offers a feeling of nature in an area that can sometimes feel too urban
 - Another participant spoke about how the park, while very large, can feel like a “hidden gem”.
 - There are parts of the park that the participants themselves, although they are locals, are still less familiar with



Theme 1: “Balboa Park is a visually appealing place that attracts people of all different backgrounds from all around the world”

❖ Another thing the park has to offer is the historical component. It seems like almost everywhere you look in the park, a building is being restored to how it was when the park first opened. This gives visitors a little insight into how Balboa Park looked in the early 20th century.

- One participant described it perfectly by saying that Balboa Park is the perfect “...combination of old and new...”, and that this is what makes the architecture so unique
 - The whole group agreed that something the park should continue doing even more is conserving and preserving the cultural history of the park
- Another participant spoke about how they enjoyed the “historical factor” of the park because it gives them the chance to imagine what the park looked like at its creation



Theme 2: “Balboa Park acts as a safe space, almost a sanctuary, in the middle of a busy, urban area”

- ❖ The park is a very welcoming place for many patrons. Youth in particular, feel safe at the park because of how open-minded their values are.
 - One participant said they could see themselves coming to the park after the “...libraries close too early to stay and study...” because they knew they would feel at ease there.
 - Some of the participants also mentioned how they would rather come to the park to study for example because places that are normally intended to be for that sort of thing don't feel as welcoming



Theme 2: “Balboa Park acts as a safe space, almost a sanctuary, in the middle of a busy, urban area”

- ❖ Balboa Park being viewed as a safe space also makes it the perfect place for activism and advocacy. The public parks and grounds of the park are the prime location for rallies and protests.
 - One participant brought up how the park is an “...established and credible location...” for possible scenes of activism.
 - This makes people more likely to trust the message and potentially want to join in
 - Another participant talked about how the park does simple things, such as flying the pride flag during pride month, that create a stronger community and a “sense of inclusivity”
- ❖ As Balboa Park is a completely public space, there could be displays of activism that have conflicting messages. We asked the participants what they thought about this and if they thought it could turn people away. The overall answer was that having different opinions in the park would teach the importance of listening to each other’s thoughts and not limiting to only one idea. They also said that they thought the number of people who wouldn’t come to the park because of this would not at all compare to the number that would visit more.

Theme 3: “Balboa Park is a place of variety, it has a taste of everything for everyone”

- ❖ Balboa Park is known for having a mix of everything within its boundaries. It not only has amazing museums and parks, but also trails, a thriving cultural district, and one of the most famous zoos in the country. The wide variety that the park has to offer is how it attracts so many people each year.
 - One participant talked about their visits to December Nights and how although it is generally extremely crowded, they go because “...it helps create a community experience.”
 - Another participant also mentioned their visit to the international houses and how it was their favorite place to get food because it gave the opportunity to get a literal taste of another culture
 - There were several participants who talked about how they also enjoyed using the “open spaces” of the park for things such as running or playing disc golf, because it is usually less crowded.
 - The entire group was also very supportive of using “free Tuesdays” to visit the museums when they are less crowded and have more special exhibits going on.
 - The park has something to offer for everyone so that each member in a party is satisfied with their visit.

Theme 4: “Balboa Park as a space that engages its community.”

- ❖ Balboa Park offers a safe community space and could be improved upon by continuing to strengthen that aspect - encourage locals to visit often, and expanding its hours into the evening to offer (youth in) groups more activities and opportunities to do.
 - Participant noted that festival events - created a sense of community
 - Park - emphasizes the community aspect of a public space
 - Many suggestions from participants were community-focused including creating a farmer’s market, inviting locals to set up booths

Suggestions & Recommendations

Continue to:

- Continue to maintain the gardens and park spaces
- Continue to work on building restoration projects - preserve its cultural history and the architecture
- Continue housing a wide range of museum exhibits, activities, and experiences in the park - attract many diverse perspectives
- Continue teaching people about the history of the park and its role in preserving culture - old & new
- Continue to leverage the park's unique role as a cultural and historical center and celebrate that

Suggestions & Recommendations

- Consider hosting events during breaks/weekends - target audience: youth
- Have an additional free day each month
- Plan more special exhibits or experiences during the off season so they aren't just made for tourists
- Open up a suggestions box
- Teach people about the park through little factoids on the map pamphlet, tell people about it on the tours and programs for youth/family - Many people are unaware that the open spaces and even some of the residential areas are also a part of Balboa Park
- More festival events (like December Nights and National Carousel Day), exhibitions from local curators, and events to commemorate anniversaries
- Celebrate the historical aspect of Balboa Park

Suggestions & Recommendations

- Have festivals that last either more days or longer hours during the day
- More awareness about the existence and benefits of the Visitor's Center and talking to volunteers —> Encourage more locals to utilize services
- Provide more opportunities for young kids to visit Balboa Park - sense of wonder and curiosity; school programs, field trips, perhaps an expanded school in the park program, discounted/free tickets for kids and their family
- More effective outreach perhaps through social media - target audience: youth
- Annual events are easier to anticipate; for other one-off events, additional outreach efforts may be necessary to encourage more people to come

Suggestions & Recommendations

- Study place (safe space to study at night)
- New cafe (low prices for low income families or in general, shorter wait times)
- Extend closing hours until at least 8 PM (since many people have school/work); could extend hours on certain days if every day isn't feasible)
- Increase accessible features for people with disabilities (ramps, ear set tours for the legally blind)
- Install more plaques - acknowledge culture/history (indigenous people)
- Host movies/concerts in the park
- Farmer's market - local growers, community farms
- Vendors/booths - small/local businesses

Suggestions & Recommendations

Activism in the park:

- Look into creating a space for org. doing rallies/protests (open space, easy access, distinguishable landmarks); facilitate discussions
 - Park is safe space, with many people in it, visitors could become allies, est. location, all ages, inclusivity, for the ppl, trusted, might degrade park experience bc it might seem endorsed by park and might lead to conflict, promote listening to each other, look to downtown/city hall/in front of city buildings downtown for examples, activists currently might not know if they're allowed to protest in Balboa Park, and the audience might not be right (tourists v city officials who can actually enact change)

Next Steps

- ❖ Host a focus group to discuss Balboa Park as a space for activism more in depth – both the pros and cons. Effects? Implementation? Perhaps with more activists
- ❖ For specific events/experiences (study space)



Thank you!