

**MERION BOTANICAL PARK MASTER PLAN**  
**SURVEY REPORT**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the survey was to determine the opinions, ideas and concerns of residents that live in the service area of Merion Botanical Park to serve as a foundation for decision-making regarding the park. By understanding resident's needs and interests, the Township will be better able to direct resources for the benefit of the community.

**Process:**

Township staff and members of the Merion Botanical Park Master Plan Study Committee prepared a survey to be mailed to residents that live within a ¼ mile radius of the park. The survey was open-ended in order to secure as much information from residents as possible. Surveys were distributed to residents using the U.S. Postal Service's "Every Door" direct mail program in manila colored envelopes lacking the Township's return address. This could have impacted the responses received. Should this service be used again in the future, greater emphasis will be placed on designing an envelope that will identify the mailing as coming from the Township. Surveys were mailed to 1,573 residences in a ¼ mile radius. 149 responses were received for a return rate of nine percent. Typically, direct mail surveys generate a return rate of two to four percent.

**Return:**

Survey respondents lived on all streets within the park's service area, which essentially is bordered by Bowman Ave. to the west, Montgomery Ave. to the north, City Ave. to the east and E. Wynnewood Rd. to the south. The Amtrak/ Septa track that immediately border the park cut the park off physically, but residents from south of the tracks appear to regularly use the park.

*1. Children*

Forty-one percent (41%) of the homes responding have children between the ages of less than one year old up to twenty. Ages were spread out among respondents.

*2. Park Visitation*

Of the 149 responses, eighty (54%) said that they visited the park daily or weekly. Fifty-four respondents (36%) visited the park monthly or sporadically, while fifteen (10%) said they rarely or never visit the park.

### 3. *Other Parks*

Fifty-two respondents (35%) visit other parks, including Township, non-Township, County, State and Federal parks, colleges and arboretums. The majority of other parks visited were Township parks, however, the most frequently listed park was Fairmount Park in the City of Philadelphia. Other frequently identified parks included Narberth Park, the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, Shortridge Memorial Park and General Wayne Park. The parks included a variety of active parks with playgrounds and athletic facilities and passive, natural areas with trails, but the more frequently visited parks were in generally two categories:

- Close to Merion Botanical Park
- Offered walking trails and open space

Merion Botanical Park does not have active recreational facilities and while it is a natural open space with a perimeter trail, it is not very long.

### **Summary of Findings:**

The survey confirms that Merion Botanical Park is an important part of the surrounding neighborhood and it provides clear direction on how to manage and enhance the park to meet the recreational needs and interests of residents. The major survey findings follow:

#### 1. *Recreational Pursuits*

The two most popular recreational activities cited by respondents were:

- Walking / walking with their dog
- Enjoying the park's open space, beauty and serenity

#### 2. *Park Positives*

When asked what they liked about Merion, the five most popular answers were:

- Open space, peacefulness and natural beauty
- Plantings, trees
- Creek, stepping stones
- Trail
- Well-maintained

#### 3. *Improvements*

When asked what they would like to see improved in the park, the five most popular answers were:

- More trees and shrubs
- Better upkeep of plants
- Better care of the other side of the creek, including screening the tracks and adding paths
- Care of the stream, including repairing the stepping stones
- Address muddy conditions

#### 4. *Amenities at other parks*

When asked what attracts respondents to other parks in the area, the five most popular answers were:

- Playgrounds
- Walking / hiking paths
- Athletic fields
- Natural surroundings, beauty
- Plants, trees

#### 5. *Suggested Improvements*

When asked about what they would like to see improved in the park, the five most popular answers were:

- Better care of trees
- More plants shrubs and trees
- Nothing
- Provide more benches, picnic tables
- Improve the other side of the creek, including screening the tracks and adding trails

#### 6. *Themes*

When asked what improvements should focus on, respondents provided the following direction:

- Seventy-two respondents (48%) disagreed that the parks should be maintained in lawn with planted specimens, but forty-four (30%) agreed.
- One hundred twenty-three respondents (83%) agreed that the park should be a combination of lawn and natural area.
- One hundred five respondents (70%) agreed that native plant species should be used as much as possible.
- Fifty-seven respondents (38%) agree that the priority should be on plant specimens, regardless of whether or not they are native, but thirty-two (21%) disagreed and forty-nine (33%) were unsure.

- One hundred fourteen respondents (77%) agreed that labeling plant species names is important.
- One hundred twenty-nine respondents (87%) agreed that it is important to preserve the creek's stepping stones.

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