

Barnes Park Rehabilitation Project, Hands of Hope, Marion, IN

Information about the park project, and a lovely video from the grand-reopening celebration can be found here: <https://icadv5.wixsite.com/smallmoments/archive-moments>

Project description:

Thriving community environments can promote community health and deter violence. Public spaces, like parks, are places where neighbors can model and observe all kinds of respectful relationship behaviors—between people in romantic relationships, and also among friends, parents and children, siblings, and across generations. The connections fostered in these community spaces facilitate the exchange of social support and also accountability. Thriving neighborhoods support community pride and engagement, potentially reducing feelings of alienation and disempowerment among neighbors.

The effort to rehabilitate Barnes Park led by the community domestic violence program, Hands of Hope, a division of Family Service Society, Inc. in Grant County, Indiana, is a great example of the influence that safe and engaging green space can have on our relationships. With a small infusion of DELTA FOCUS funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention combined with the in-kind donation of materials and hundreds of hours of volunteer support, community members completely rehabilitated a previously neglected neighborhood park. Improvements included new landscaping, the addition of seating areas, the development of a recreational path, rehabilitation of existing playground equipment and the addition of new, accessible equipment, the installation of a little library and also of new grills.

Prior to this initiative, neighbors described the park as an eye sore—a dangerous place to be avoided. With the rehabilitation, neighbors have reported increased utilization, feelings of neighborhood pride, and willingness to engage in pro-social behaviors to support the community. Barnes Park is a well-maintained environment that supports the participation of neighbors diverse in age, interests and abilities.

Barnes Park Project Evaluation Framework

Evaluation question:

How does the park rehabilitation change residents' perception of the neighborhood including their safety and overall pride of the physical environment?

Outcome measures

Short-term

- # of neighbors and/or community members who have invested time/work into the park

A simple count was used to analyze this indicator

Intermediate

- # of structural changes that take place in the park

A simple count and description was used to analyze this indicator

Long-term

- Neighbors answers to the following:
 - How often did you use the park before improvements?
 - Has your use changed and why?
 - Does the park impact the way you think about your neighborhood?

Comparative analysis between usage of the park prior to renovations and after renovations was used and answered through these questions.

Short-term

Table 10

# of neighbors and/or community members who have invested time/work into the park	63
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Intermediate/Long-term

Table 11

and type of structural changes that take place in the park
19 structural changes
Installation of playground set (relocated by volunteers and Marion City Employees and installed by Marion City Employees)
Creation and installation of 'Barnes Park' sign by Street Department
Existing park equipment painted by local schools
Concrete slabs installed by the Street and Parks department
'Spring' toys painted and installed
Picnic tables painted and bolted down
Benches painted and installed
Two grills added
Trash can bolted down
Dog waste sign added
Baby swing installed
Berm installed by Comfort Landscapes
Trees and shrubs planted
'Little Free Library' built by resident and installed
Fence painted by University students
Alley leveled to eliminate pot holes
Bike rack installed by the Parks Department
Removal of unsafe/deteriorated equipment
Boulders donated by IMI were given to park to keep drivers out and for children to play on

The following park related questions were asked to a sample of 19 attendants of the park dedication. Prior to improvements, 2 attendants (10.5%) utilized the park often and 5 (26.3%) attendants utilized the park monthly. The remaining 11 attendants rarely (5 respondents) or never (6 respondents) used the park. Since park renovations, 8 attendants (42.1%) agreed their use of the park has increased. Reasons for increased usage include new structural changes and a clean, safe environment. Reasons for usage not increasing were due to attendants commenting they were not local, don't think to use it and their children grew up and left home. Fifteen attendants agreed that the park impacts the way they think about their neighborhood. Every comment in response to 'why' was positive about the improvements. For a full analysis and description of the responses see Table 14. In addition to park improvements positively impacting residents' perception of their neighborhood, 63.16% of residents (i.e. 12) agreed they would be more willing to pick up trash after park/neighborhood improvements. Twelve residents (63.16%) also agreed they were more likely to report crime, violence and nuisance after renovations.

Table 12

How often did you use the park before improvements?	
Never (0 times in the past year)	6
Rarely (a couple of times in the past year)	5
Sometimes (monthly)	5
Often (weekly)	2

Table 13

Has your use increased since park improvements?	
Yes	8
No	5
Why or Why not?	
Yes	Don't live here
Picnic tables	Children grew up and left
Here more often when mowed	Not local
Cleaned up and safe	Never think of it
I know where it is	
More stuff/equipment is not broken	

Table 14

Does the park impact the way you think about your neighborhood?	
Yes	15
No	1
If yes, how?	
Neighborhood is safer/safe area	3
Neighbors care/community buy-in	3
Better/improved place to visit	2
No park = no activities for children	1
Friendlier	1
Nice	1
Clean	1
More accomplished in neighborhood	1
“Makes me believe more changes are possible in ways I didn’t before”	1
Draw to move to neighborhood	1

Table 15

When you see trash, are you more willing now to clean it up after park/neighborhood improvements?	
Yes	12
Maybe	1
No	1
Are you more likely to report crime, violence or nuisances now than you were before park renovations?	
Yes	12

Maybe	0
No	2

The results from the Indiana Wesleyan report (attached in the previous reporting period) indicated that 22 out of 26 residents were proud of their neighborhood (i.e. 84.6%). This falls slightly short of our benchmark of 85%, however only a small sample was surveyed. Seven respondents indicated that they are proud of their neighborhood because it feels like they are in a welcoming community with kind neighbors. This was evidently displayed when the community, neighbors and city officials included, rallied behind the renovation of neighborhood park. Ultimately, this project is believed to have greatly contributed to the overall pride Garfield Neighborhood residents feel.