The Value of Urban Parklands: A Park User Study of the Baldwin Hills

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Center For Urban Resilience | Loyola Marymount University | Spring 2017

Abstract

The preservation and conservation of public open spaces are essential in urban settings as they promote the growth and sustainability of local communities and surrounding environments. The Baldwin Hills Conservancy manages the Baldwin Hills Parks System, and aims to promote recreation, restoration and protection of urban parks. In order to inform significant improvements to the parks system, a longitudinal study of the attitudes and behaviors of park visitors is being conducted. As part of the CURES (Center for Urban Resilience)/ TBF (The Bay Foundation) internship program, numerous LMU students administered a visitor survey over the course of 4 study seasons. This poster summarizes the survey findings from season 3, from June through September 2016. A total of 501 hours were spent in the park allowing for 416 surveys collected and 150 counts completed. Preliminary analyses on this data show several interesting findings, including a decrease in the number of users walking or cycling to the park throughout seasons, an increase in refusal rates by season, and evidence of a diverse user population. Future efforts consist of fully analyzing the collected data, and applying this study to public green spaces in Los Angeles as well as internationally.

Introduction

• Urban parklands provide important social and health benefits to the community and individuals (cite!!).
• This study seeks to gather information on the usage of several parks in the Baldwin Hills Parks System.
• This study will inform ongoing initiatives, specifically the BH Master Plan and Park to Playa, along with additional recommendations for land development, restoration efforts, and resource allocation.

Methods

• The study gathers data through multiple methods: visitor counts, a user survey, observational research, and a game camera study of visitation.
• Research Assistants are paired in groups of two and sent to preselected locations for 4 hours at a time where they administer park user surveys and conduct strategic visitor counts.
• The survey asks questions about frequency of use, demographics, park activities, park accessibility, and environmental awareness.

Data

Survey Refusal Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Visitors Approached</th>
<th>Visitor Refused</th>
<th>Refusal Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Season 1</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season 2</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season 3</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season 4</td>
<td>892</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Select Findings – Mode of Transport

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Season 1</th>
<th>Season 2</th>
<th>Season 3</th>
<th>Season 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycle</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus or Train</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Differences in usage and activities by park

Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA) had the highest visitation rate, averaging 5.7 visitors per minute on the weekends.

Results

• 416 surveys were completed, which will add to the projected final total of over 2,000 surveys for the project.
• 150 user counts were completed; 4,880 total park visitors were counted.
• Refusal rates increased from Season 2
• Kenneth Hahn State Recreation Area (KHSRA) had the highest visitation rate, averaging 5.7 visitors per minute on the weekends.
• The 10% uptick in interest in public transportation (bus or train) from Season 1 to Season 2 dropped slightly in Season 3.
• Largest park user groups by race: Black or African-American (40%), White or Caucasian (28.5%), and Other (21%).
• Of the 82 “Other” respondents, about half listed their race as a Hispanic or Latino ethnicity.

Discussion

• Trends by season provide insight into park users and their behavior.
• Analyses of all data from 2015-2017 will allow us to better understand:
  • The seasonal differences in park attendance
  • Trends over time
  • Differences in usage and activities by park
  • Place attachment and park value
• This study will provide the Baldwin Hills Conservancy with an improved understanding of their user population, which can help them to better allocate existing resources and seek additional resources as needed.
• Preliminary data have already been used in state funding applications.
• Dr. Auger is incorporating the project into his LMU spring Environmental Studies course which has enabled a cohort of students to take an active role in the research as part of their education.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the Baldwin Hills Conservancy for funding this project through Proposition B4. We also want to thank the professors and researchers at the Center for Urban Resilience and the seven additional undergraduate research assistants who collected data in Season 3.

Literature Cited
