

An aerial photograph of the Santa Monica coastline. The image shows the Pacific Ocean on the left, transitioning from deep blue to turquoise near the shore. A wide, sandy beach runs along the coast. To the right of the beach, the city of Santa Monica is visible, featuring a mix of residential and commercial buildings, including a prominent curved building in the foreground. In the background, the Santa Monica Mountains are visible under a clear sky.

# concept design community outreach summary report

Palisades Garden Walk + Town Square, Santa Monica  
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# COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUMMARY REPORT

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Concept Design Community Outreach for Palisades Garden Walk + Town Square consisted of a quantifiable survey and on-site Open House and Workshop held on July 24, 2010. Feedback has been solicited on a range of topics including park uses, park themes, challenges, opportunities, and the site. Results from 435 surveys and approximately 200 community members who attended the open house are summarized below. Data analysis and comprehensive additional comments can be found in a series of appendices attached to this summary report.

### Uses

A clear majority of both survey respondents and workshop attendees envision Palisades Garden Walk as a place for passive recreation with “Areas for Picnicking, Lounging, Sitting, Reading, Relaxing and Viewing” as the primary use. Survey respondents rank “Pathways for Walking, Running, and Cycling” and “Areas for Cultural Events” as second most desirable uses, while workshop attendees favor “Horticulture and Display Gardens,” “Public Art,” and “Cafes.” For Town Square, both survey respondents and workshop attendees identify “Areas for Organized Civic Events and Activities” as the park’s most important use. The design team will develop alternative design schemes, which all support passive recreation for Palisades Garden Walk and flexible civic event space for Town Square. Various ratios of additional uses will also be explored.

### Themes

“Sustainability and the Environment” is identified by survey respondents as the most important design theme to be explored for both Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square. Workshop attendees, however, identify “Views and Topography” as the most important theme for Palisades Garden Walk and “Civic Engagement and Public Discourse” for Town Square. Additional themes including “Innovation and Progressive Design,” “Access and Connectivity,” “Local and Site History,” and “Identity and Destination” were identified and will be incorporated into concept design schemes for both parks.

### Challenges

The most significant design challenge identified by survey respondents for Palisades Garden Walk + Town Square is “Designing a space that works for multiple uses at different times of day.” Based on other comments and explanatory feedback, implicit in this challenge, is concern for the city’s homeless population and its use of the parks. Another significant challenge identified for each park is parking availability, traffic, and noise associated with adjacent roads and vehicular circulation. While parking is not in the scope of this project, this challenge is being addressed by the city through larger scale planning initiatives that consider the entire civic center campus.

### Opportunities

The two most significant design opportunities identified by survey respondents are “The Creation of a New Destination in the Heart of Santa Monica” and “Strong Adjacent Destinations.” These and other design opportunities will be capitalized upon in the concept designs for the parks.

### Site

Community members provided valuable feedback on the future physicality of the site-- its context, its edges, and its core. Comments include the desire for wind breaks and buffers to block noise from adjacent roads; the desire to protect existing trees, provide additional shade, and maintain flexible open space; and, the desire to provide both visual connections to the ocean and city hall as well as physical connections to the site’s adjacent destinations.

Santa Monica residents are playing a critical role in the design of Palisades Garden Walk + Town Square. Their valuable and extensive feedback will be used by the city and the design team to inform project program and concept designs, which will be presented at a second Workshop to be held on September 19, 2010.

## **SURVEY**

435 surveys containing 12 questions were submitted both electronically (utilizing survey monkey) and via paper collection. To represent the data for questions 2, 3, 6 and 7, responses are graphed from most popular on the left side of the page to least popular on the right. Actual number of responses to these questions has been graphed; however, popularity has been determined by weighting the value of individual responses. A value of 4 was assigned for “very important” rankings, and a value of 1 for “not important”. The total number of responses was then multiplied times its respective value (1-4) and then divided by total response to produce weighted values for each response. Questions 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11 required respondents to select one response out of a series of options. In order to represent the data, a percentage value has been assigned to each response to assess its popularity. Summaries for each of the responses are below:

### **Question 1: To get you started, think about what best characterizes Santa Monica and complete the sentence below. Santa Monica is...?**

Many community residents expressed their desire to have the Civic Center Parks reflect the character of Santa Monica. Narrative responses to this question varied significantly; however, a number of trends and shared values can be extrapolated from the 388 responses and will help shape design thematics for the project.

Most residents would describe Santa Monica as:

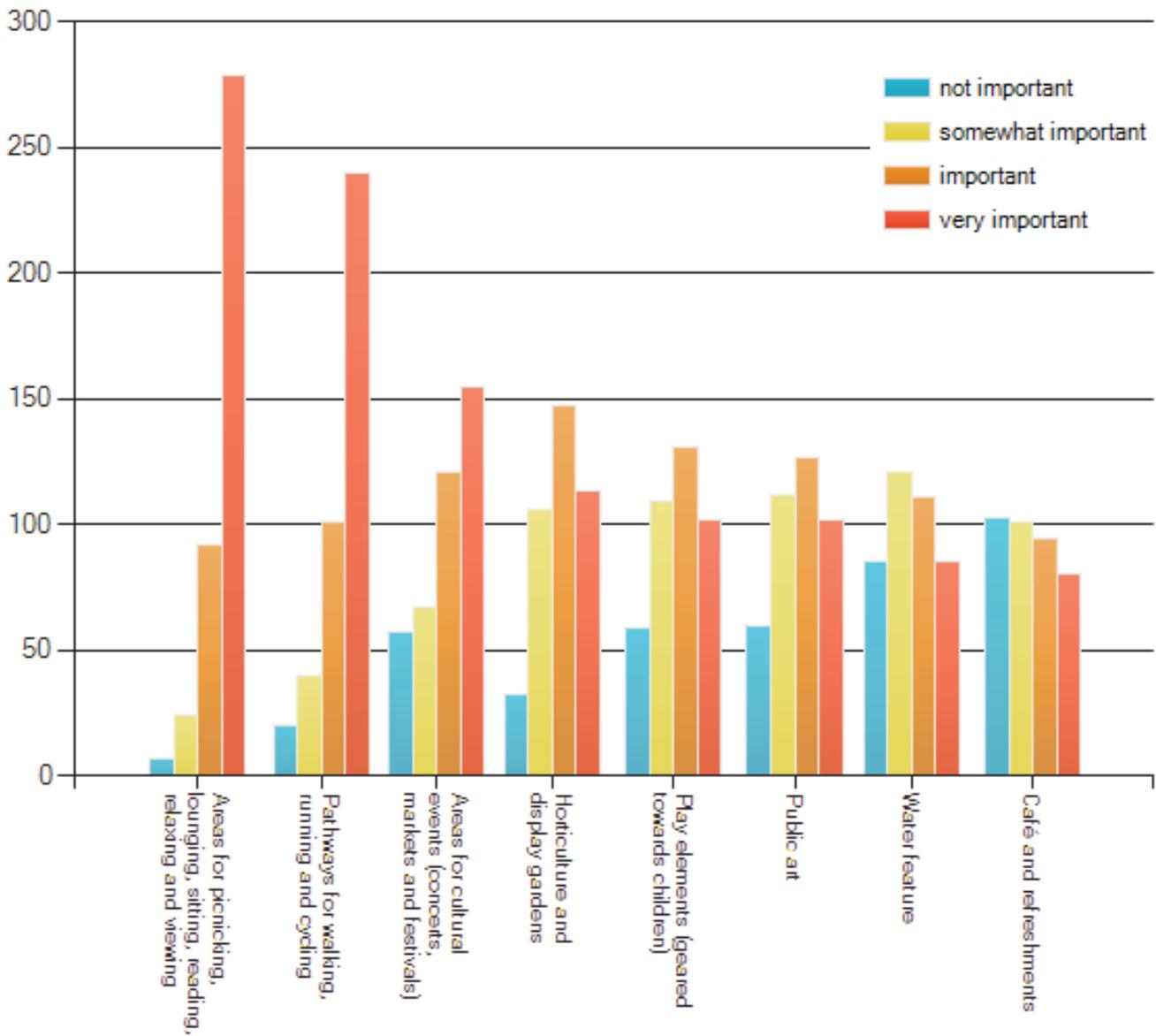
- committed to being green and sustainable.
- diverse, inclusive, vibrant, and active.
- a close community within a large scale urban context.
- a beautiful place with significant contextual assets that include the beach and the Santa Monica Mountains.

The comprehensive set of individual responses can be found in the first part of Appendix 1.

**Question 2: For PALISADES GARDEN WALK (SITE 1), please rate the following USES, from not important to very important:**

Respondents were asked to rate uses for Palisades Garden Walk based on the categories identified in the table below. The responses show that a majority of respondents believe “Areas for picnicking, lounging, sitting, reading, relaxing and viewing” and “Pathways for walking, running, and cycling” are the best uses for the site. Café and refreshments, received the lowest ranking of all possible uses with the majority of respondents (53.9%) ranking this as “not important” or “somewhat important” Significant other comments related to USES included support for shaded spaces, an amphitheater for events, viewing spaces, quiet spaces for meditation, and family oriented spaces. Support was expressed for and against active recreation, high speed circulation, playgrounds, and large (and potentially noisy) events.

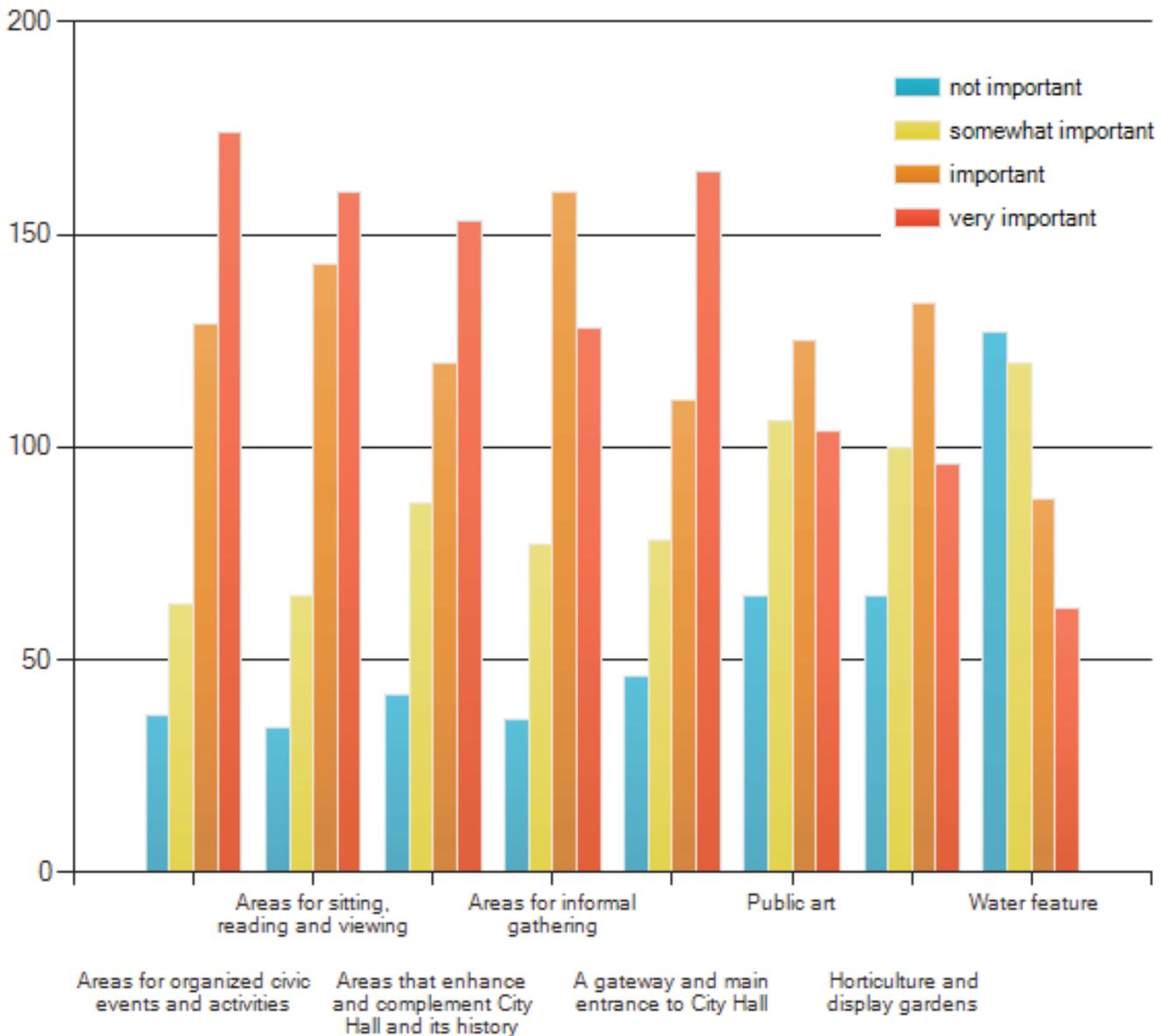
**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



**3. For TOWN SQUARE (SITE 2), please rate the following USES, from not important very important:**

Respondents were asked to rate uses for Town Square based on the categories identified in the table below. “Areas for organized civic events and activities”, “A gateway and main entrance to City Hall”, “Areas for sitting, reading, and viewing”, “Areas that enhance and complement City Hall and its history”, and “Areas for informal gathering” all received high ranking, with approximately 70% of all respondents specifying these uses as “important” or “very important.” Public Art was also seen as important. “Water Feature” received the lowest ranking. Significant other comments related to Town Square USES include the need for shaded seating and the importance of preserving and not overshadowing city hall’s historic nature.

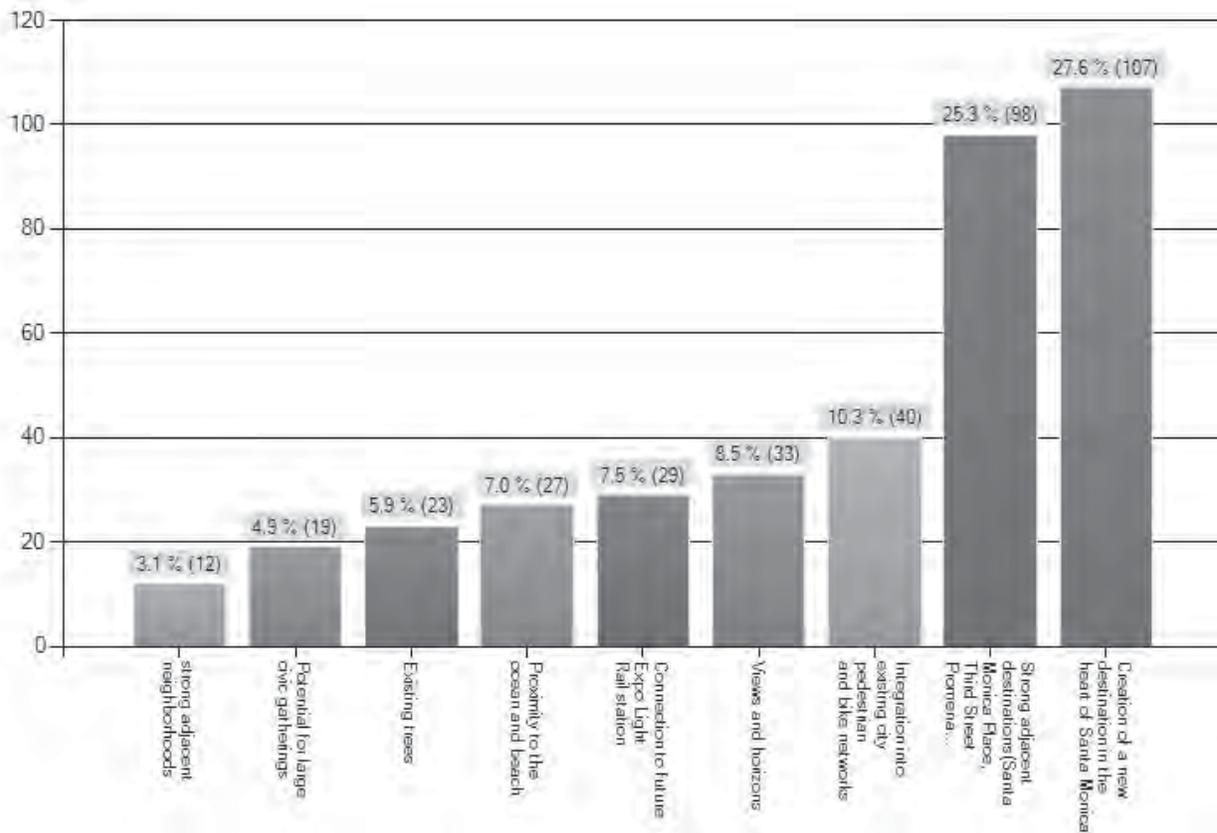
**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



**4. There are many OPPORTUNITIES for Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square. Which of the following is the greatest OPPORTUNITY (select one)?**

Respondents were asked to identify the biggest opportunities for Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square. The overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the two biggest opportunities for the sites were the “Creation of a new destination in the heart of Santa Monica” and “Strong adjacent destinations”. The next highest ranked opportunity was “Integration into existing pedestrian and bike networks.” Many respondents also found the relative flatness of the site as an opportunity to create elevation changes that provide users a great view of the ocean, beach and pier. In general, additional comments focused on the desire to have a park that is both environmentally sustainable and critically rooted in the local culture.

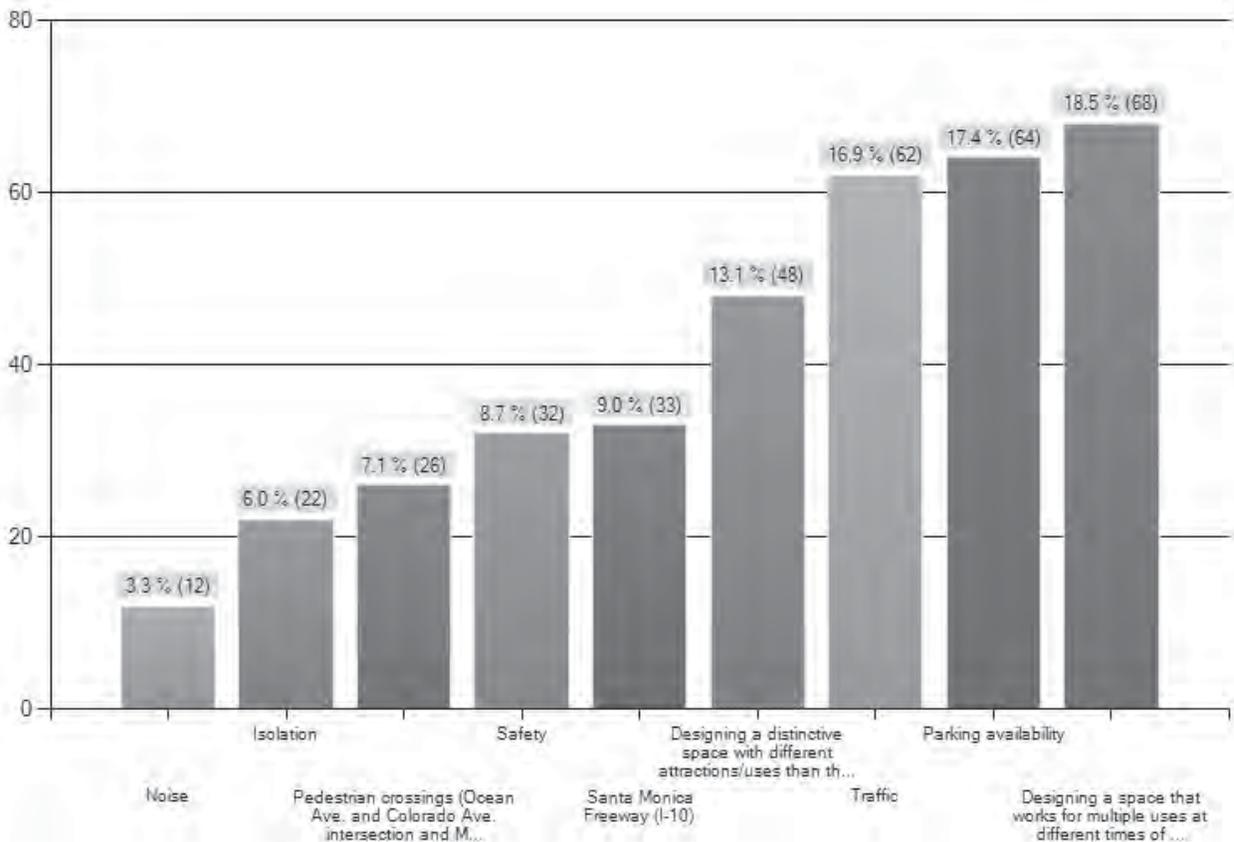
**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



**5. There are many CHALLENGES for Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square. Which of the following is the greatest CHALLENGE (select one)?**

Respondents were asked to identify the biggest challenge for Palisades Garden Walk and Town Square. “Designing a space that works for multiple uses at different times of the day and week”, “Parking availability”, and “Traffic” were identified as the three greatest challenges for park design. Significant other challenges identified in the comments included maintenance and the negative perception of a threatening homeless population.

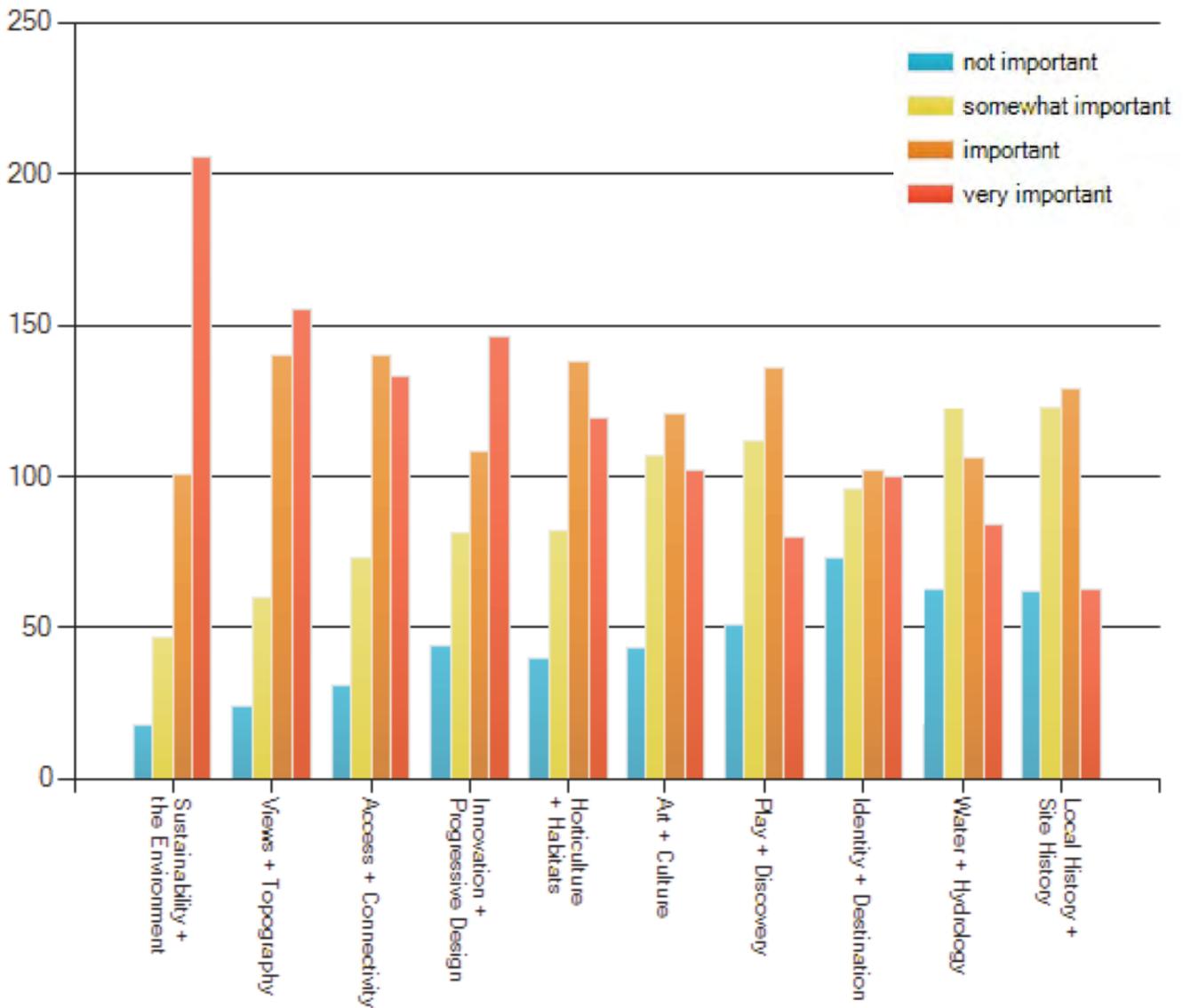
**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



**6. For PALISADES GARDEN WALK (SITE 1), please rate the following THEMES that you would like to see explored, from not important to very important:**

Respondents were asked to identify the most important themes they would like to see explored for Palisades Garden Walk based on the categories identified in the table below. “Sustainability and the Environment” was the highest ranked theme with 55.4% of respondents ranking it “very important.” “Views and Topography,” “Access + Connectivity,” and “Innovation and Progressive Design” also ranked, on average, as being important. A broad range and comprehensive range of other comments are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

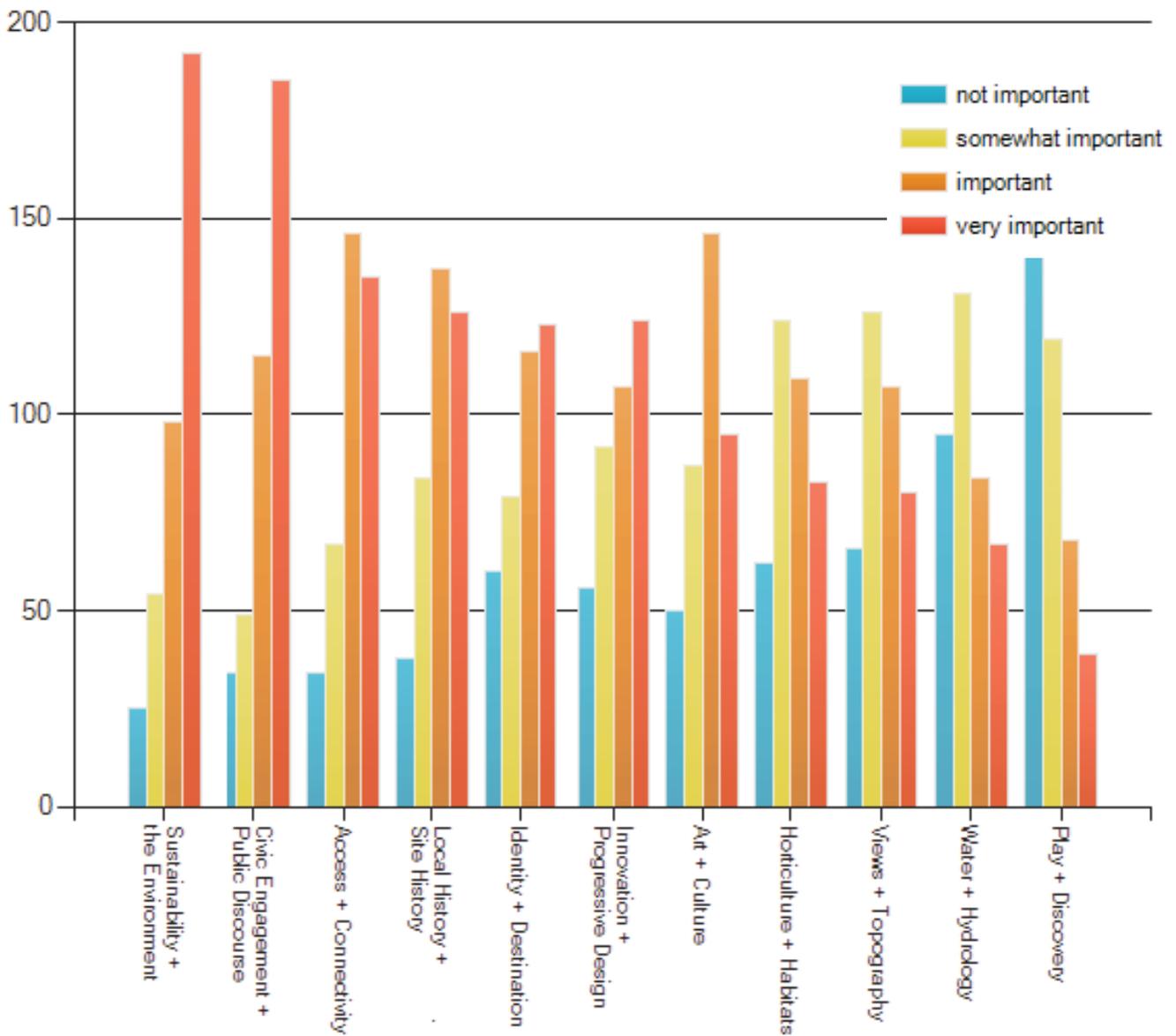
**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



**7. For TOWN SQUARE (SITE 2), please rate the following THEMES that you would like to see explored, from not important to very important:**

Respondents were asked to identify the most important themes they would like to see explored for Town Square based on the categories identified in the table below. Sustainability and the Environment was the highest ranked theme with 52.3% of respondents ranking it “very important.” “Civic Engagement and Discourse” was a close second with “Innovation and Progressive Design” and “Identity and Destination” also ranked as being important. A broad and comprehensive range of other comments are included in Appendix 1 of this report.

**GRAPHIC SUMMARY**



## **8. Your additional comments may be added here:**

The on-line survey provided space for any additional comments respondents might have. 180 survey respondents provided additional comments. The most significant trend in the responses was the general enthusiasm of the community for a park that is both unique and progressively designed, as well as a meaningful reflection of Santa Monica's identity. Other comments included but were not limited to:

- the need for shade
- the need for preservation of trees on site
- problems associated with traffic, noise, and parking
- concerns about the city's homeless population and their use of the future park
- desire for horticultural plantings that reflect seasonal change
- desire for an amphitheater
- desire for athletic fields
- desire for food carts
- desire for design simplicity
- desire for the absence of playgrounds

**Detailed respondent demographics and answers to questions 9-12 can be found in Appendix 1.**

## WORKSHOP STATIONS

An on-site Workshop and Open House included six thematic stations that solicited community input, feedback and comment in a variety of ways. The stations were: “Community Context”, “Park Uses”, “Park Themes”, “Places”, “Town Square”, and “The Video Project”.

### Community Context

Community members were asked to map the places they go and routes they take within Santa Monica. Maps are included in Appendix 2, and reveal the park as being centrally located and along the primary routes many respondents take within the city. Significant comment conclusions include:

- Views to the ocean are desirable.
- Connection to primary bike routes within the city is desirable.
- Adjacent shopping areas, the Pier, and Palisades Park are frequently visited.
- Parks within walking distance offer dog runs and playgrounds.
- Western breeze from the ocean is desirable, but sometimes too strong.
- Noise from adjacent Ocean Avenue is strong and should be blocked.



## Park Uses: Palisades Garden Walk

Community members were asked to identify and mark their two favorite park USES for Palisades Garden Walk. 177 responses from this interactive table survey show that consistent with the on-line survey, “Areas for Picnicking, Lounging, Sitting, Reading, Relaxing, and Viewing” is the highest ranked use for Palisades Garden Walk. Other responses differed slightly were as follows:

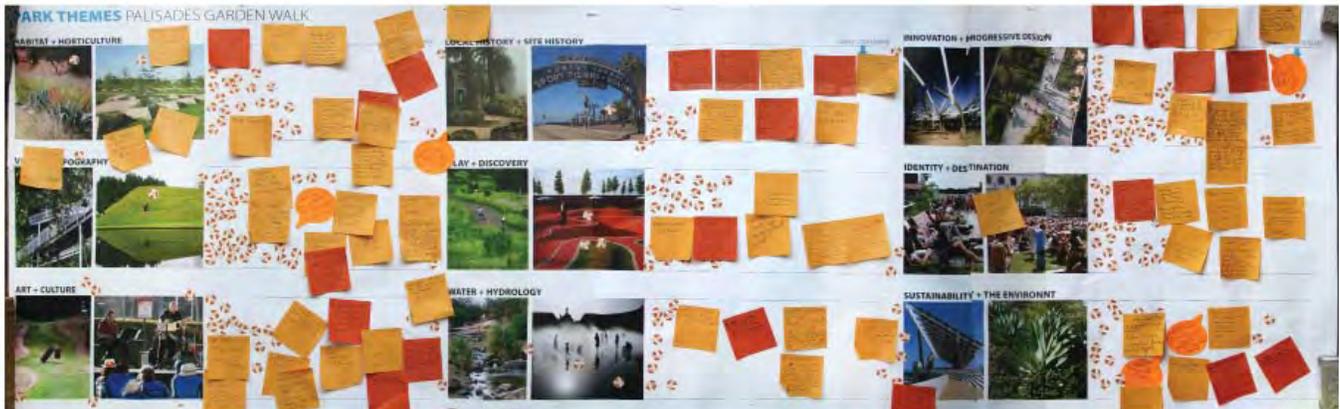
- Areas for Picnicking, Lounging, Sitting, Reading, Relaxing, and Viewing: 38 responses, 21%
- Horticulture and Display Gardens: 28 responses, 16.5%
- Public Art: 22 responses, 12.5%
- Café and Restaurants: 21 responses, 12%
- Play Elements (geared toward children): 18 responses, 10.5%
- Pathways for Walking Running and Cycling: 15 responses, 8.5%
- Areas for Cultural Events (concerts, markets, and festivals): 15 responses, 8.5%
- Water Feature: 13 responses, 7.5%
- Other (please specify): 5 responses, 3% (Chez Jay, dancing, forest, rest rooms)



## Park Themes: Palisades Garden Walk

Community members were asked to identify and mark their two favorite park THEMES for Palisades Garden Walk. 208 responses from this interactive table survey show a different set of favorite themes from the on-line survey. While “Sustainability and the Environment” was the highest ranked theme in the on-line survey, “Views and Topography” and “Innovation and Progressive Design” were the highest ranked themes for Palisades Garden Walk. Quantified responses are as follows:

- Views and Topography: 37 responses, 18%
- Innovation and Progressive Design: 35 responses, 17%
- Play and Discovery: 24 responses, 11.5%
- Identity and Destination: 23 responses, 11%
- Habitat and Horticulture: 22 responses, 10.5%
- Art and Culture: 20 responses, 9.5%
- Sustainability and The Environment: 19 responses, 9%
- Water and Hydrology: 15 responses, 7%
- Local History and Site History: 13 responses, 6.5%



## Places

Community members were asked to identify and mark their favorite PLACES on site. The design of Palisades Garden Walk + Town Square will respond to these existing site features. Favorite places, in general, were at the center of the park, shaded areas of the park, the base of “Morty,” the site’s large Moreton Bay Fig tree areas that offered views of the ocean, and the rose garden at Town Square.



## Town Square

Community members were asked to identify and mark their two favorite park USES for Town Square. 161 responses from this interactive table survey show that consistent with the on-line survey, “Areas for Organized Civic Events and Activities” is the highest ranked use for Palisades Garden Walk. Other responses differed slightly were as follows:

- Areas for Organized Civic Events and Activities: 49 responses, 30.5%
- Public Art (concerts, markets, and festivals): 22 responses, 13.5%
- Areas that Enhance and Complement City Hall and Its History: 19 responses, 12%
- Areas for Sitting Reading and Viewing: 18 responses, 11%
- Water Feature: 16 responses, 10%
- Horticulture and display gardens: 13 responses, 9%
- A Gateway and Main Entrance to City Hall: 11 responses, 8%
- Areas for Informal Gathering: 9 responses, 5.5%
- Other (please specify): 4 responses, 2.5% (Café, Café, Walking Paths, Music)

Community members were asked to identify and mark their two favorite park THEMES for Town Square. 193 responses from this on-site survey show that consistent with the on-line survey, “Civic Engagement and Public Discourse” is the highest ranked theme for Town Square. Other responses were as follows:

- Civic Engagement and Public Discourse: 35 responses, 18.5%
- Identity Destination: 27 responses, 14%
- Local History and Site History: 23 responses, 12%
- Innovation and Progressive Design: 23 responses, 12%
- Art and Culture: 21 responses, 11%
- Sustainability and The Environment: 19 responses, 10%
- Horticulture and Habitats: 15 responses, 7.5%
- Views and Topography: 15 responses, 7.5%
- Water and Hydrology: 15 responses, 7.5%



## The Video Project

Community members were asked what Santa Monica means to them. Varied narratives and a range of personal responses from adults and children of all ages were in line with responses to the on-line survey and are attached to this report as a viewable DVD.



## COMMENT CARDS

Community members were asked the following questions about the site's features and adjacencies.

**1) Community Context: Take some time to get acquainted with the Civic Center Specific Plan. Look at the survey flag line on site to understand that Olympic Boulevard will continue through the site to Ocean Avenue. Imagine the future of this edge of the park and tell us what you think.**

Comments varied and included (in order of occurrence), but were not limited to:

- The desire for bike racks at entries, multi-speed paths, and bike connectivity.
- The desire for a central open space.
- Concern about shade and the protection of existing trees.
- The desire for viewing hills and / or a tower.
- The desire for noise buffers.
- The desire for pedestrian connectivity to Samohi.
- The desire for wind breaks.
- The desire for an identity rich entry.

**2) Park Themes: Experience the noise of the freeway within the context of the trees. Walk along the freeway edge next to this station to see views of the Holiday Inn, Main Street Bridge, Third Street Promenade and the McClure Tunnel. Tell us what you think about this edge of the site.**

Comments varied and included (in order of occurrence), but were not limited to:

- The desire for some way to screen views of the freeway.
- Appreciation of Morty, the site's large Moreton Bay Fig tree.
- The possibility for future connections to be made over the freeway.

**3) Park Uses: Walk out onto Ocean Avenue to understand this important intersection and potential future connections to the Santa Monica Pier, Palisades Park, and Bayside. Notice transit stops and experience the noise of the street. Tell us what you think about this edge of the site.**

Comments varied and included (in order of occurrence), but were not limited to:

- The need for and overhead crossing to connect Palisades Garden Walk with Palisades Park.
- Pedestrian crossing is critical at this location.
- The desire for lights to be present, but not too bright.
- The desire for noise buffers to block out sound associated with traffic.
- The desire preserve and promote views to the ocean.

**4) Places: Visit the central viewing station next to this station to get an overview of the entire site. Notice key site features and views. Tell us what you think about the interior of the site.**

Comments varied and included (in order of occurrence), but were not limited to:

- The desire for viewing hills and / or a tower.
- The desire for green / garden / shaded spaces.
- The desire to preserve and capitalize on the existing location of Chez Jay.
- The desire for wind breaks.
- The desire for noise buffers to block out sound associated with traffic.
- The desire for community gardens.

**5) Town Square: Walk out onto Main Street to understand the connection between these 2 new parks. Notice transit stops and experience the noise of the street. Tell us what you think about Town Square and how it relates to Palisades Garden Walk.**

Comments varied and included (in order of occurrence), but were not limited to:

- The desire to keep the area open for civic use.
- The desire to keep the design simple.
- The desire to support the architecture of City Hall.

