

Community Surveys and Feedback

The following documents outline various community surveys and feedback received from spring of 2019 until now. Additionally, during the Proposition 68 community park design meetings for 3 potential park sites in summer of 2019 there were some overwhelming trends in the park amenities users desired. These were: splash pads, benches, shade over playgrounds and benches, walking loops, picnic tables and shelters, ADA/adventure/natural playgrounds, BBQ's, basketball courts, and volleyball nets.

Pages 2-5 – Youth Council Townhall Survey Highlights Spring 2019

Over 1,000 youth from Merced and Golden Valley High Schools participated in a survey as part of the Youth Council's Townhall events in the spring of 2019. (El Capitan High School was unable to participate due to a last minute facility emergency at the school).

Pages 6-8 – Youth Council Various Events Survey Results 2019

The Youth Council surveyed youth attending their various park cleanup, social, and tabling events in 2019.

Pages 9-12 – City of Merced Parks and Recreation Virtual Programming Survey May 2020

This survey was posted on Facebook to ascertain what kind of virtual programming, if any, the community would like to see. The sample size was very small-17 respondents.

Pages 13-18 – Facebook Post Responses July 2020

These are every single response to a Facebook post asking the question, "If you could create any Parks and Recreation program you wanted, and make any improvement in any park you wanted...what would you create?"

The post was shared on the Parks and Recreation Facebook page, the City of Merced-Home Facebook page and the Merced Zoo Facebook page. The responses were organized into several categories based on reoccurring themes.

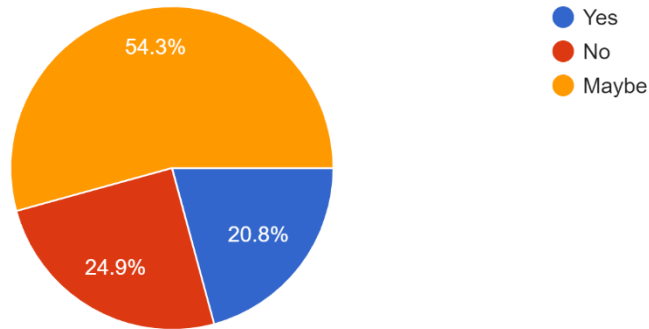
Pages 19-22 – Parks for Teens Article 2015

This is an article outlining some considerations and lessons learned from a park planning process for teens in Boulder, Colorado.

Spring 2019 Youth Council Townhall Survey Highlights

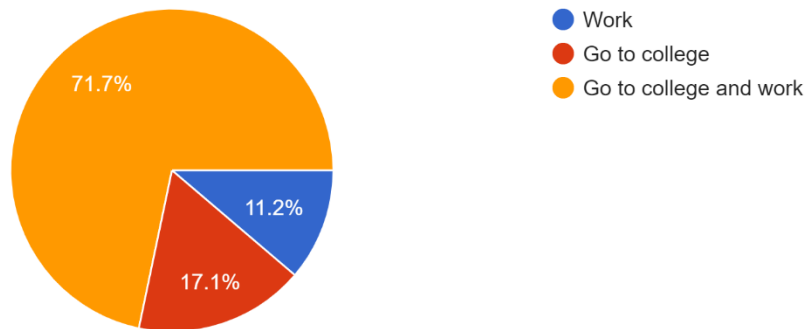
Do you plan to stay in Merced after graduation?

1,063 responses

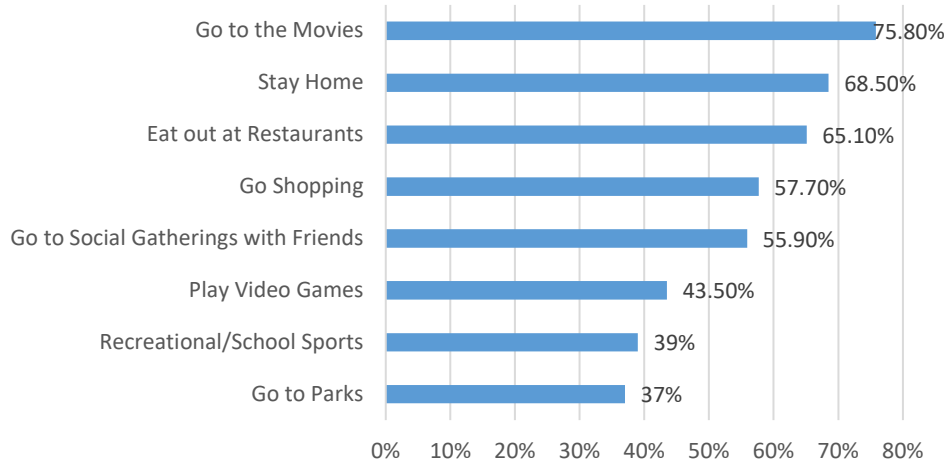


If you answered "yes" or "maybe" to the last question, what would you do after graduation?

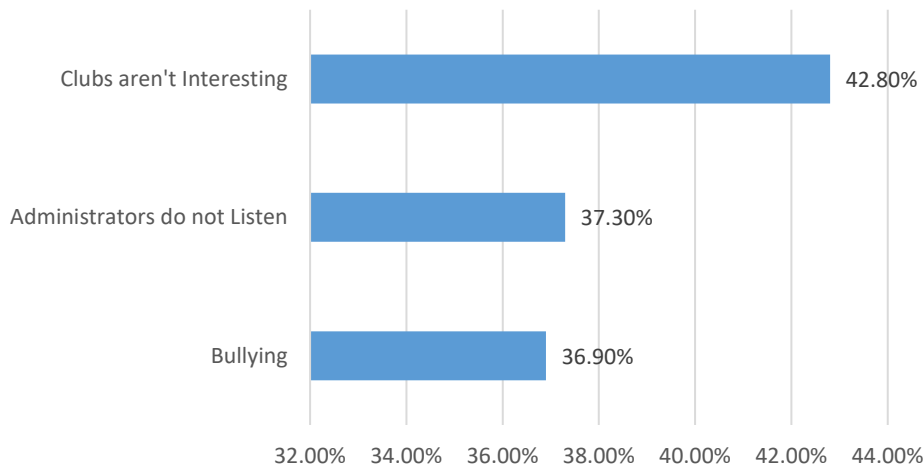
926 responses



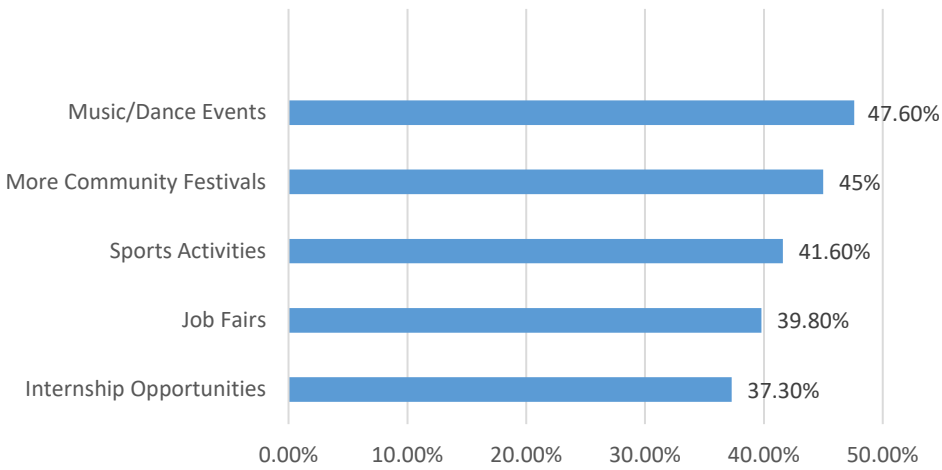
What do you Like to Do in Merced?



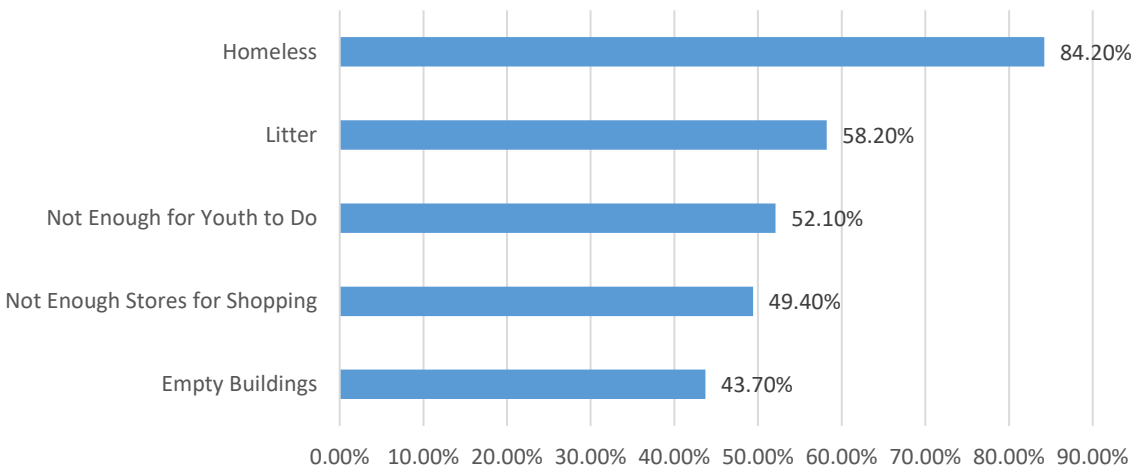
What are the Biggest Problems at School?

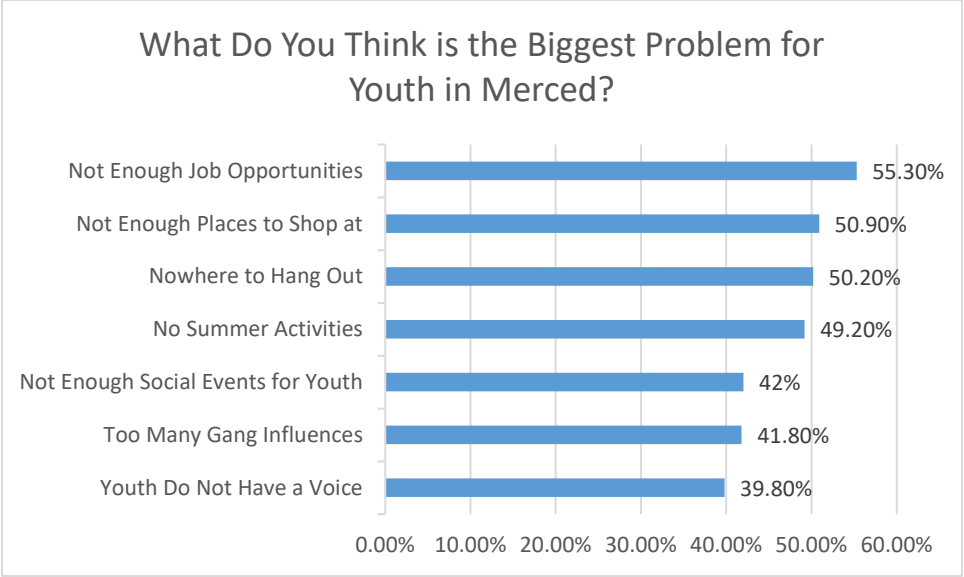


What Events Would you Like to See in Merced?



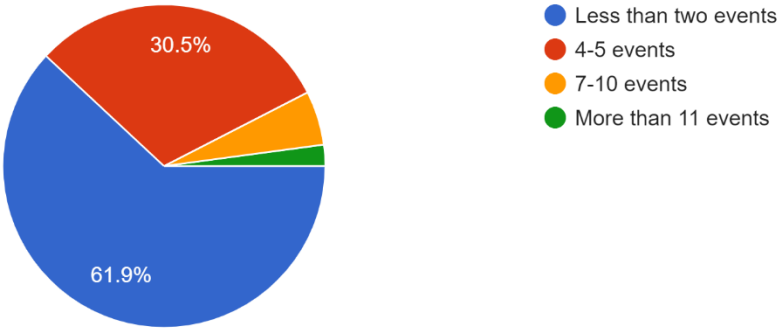
What do you Think is the Biggest Overall Problem in Merced?





How many events do you think go on per month in Merced?

1,127 responses



2019 Youth Council Events Survey Results

Question 1 & 2 (what changes/events would you like to see in Merced)

- Smoother streets
- More recreational space ***
- Less trash in streets, highways, parks, etc. ***
- More focus on the homeless***
- Better bathrooms in public areas
- Fixing parks
- Safer places for kids to hang out
- More parks
- More sports activities
- More youth related activities
- More store choices ***
- More restaurants
- Better medical service
- Ways to get kids more involved
- More buildings for activities
- More merced based events
- More investment in the youth
- Invest more money in the city to improve conditions and look
- Skate park
- Funding of high school sports
- More baseball fields
- Fixing up the mall; making it better
- Bowling alley in Merced
- More stores/ businesses in El Cap area
- Downtown area given more attention
- Want Merced to be "updated" ***
- More safe events on the south-side ***
- Arcades
- Less poverty
- Fix up Roller Land
- Water Park ***
- More trees/ green
- Restoring old buildings downtown/ making them look nicer
- An Escape Room
- More Bike Paths
- Drive in movies
- Bands/ small concerts
- Diner

Question 3: (what areas/ parks need special attention)

- Fahrens
- Skate Park
- Davenport Park
- Bike paths
- Roller Land
- Lot across Raleys could be used for something
- Downtown***
- Places around the mall
- Rahilly Park (restoring color)
- Applegate Park
- Schools
- Main Street
- Applegate Zoo
- Parks by Black Rascal
- South Side***
- Football Fields
- Merced Mall
- Burbank Park
- Parks in general ***
- El cap area too plain
- Bear Creek basketball court
- McNamara Park
- Rivera Area
- Theatre
- Kiddie Land
- Dog Park
- Roads
- Loughborough

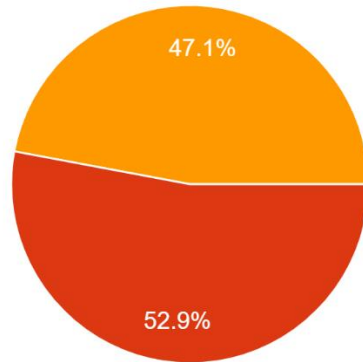
Question 4: (what are some issues that youth face)

- Bullying ***
- No transportation ***
- More things at school***
- Employment
- Family issues
- Peer pressure***
- College
- Social media
- Depression
- Mental issues
- Lack of youth support
- Not being heard
- Grades
- Lack of money
- Stress ***
- Gang violence
- Drugs
- No involvement in community activities and decisions
- Abuse
- Poverty
- Racism
- Not enough free time
- Too much homework
- Not knowing what's going on
- Lack of leadership opportunities
- Scared to be outside after dark because of crime levels***
- No places out of the house to go to ***
- Unsafe neighborhoods
- Obesity
- Not being able to express themselves
- Social media addiction
- People underestimating the youth

City of Merced Parks and Recreation Survey May 2020

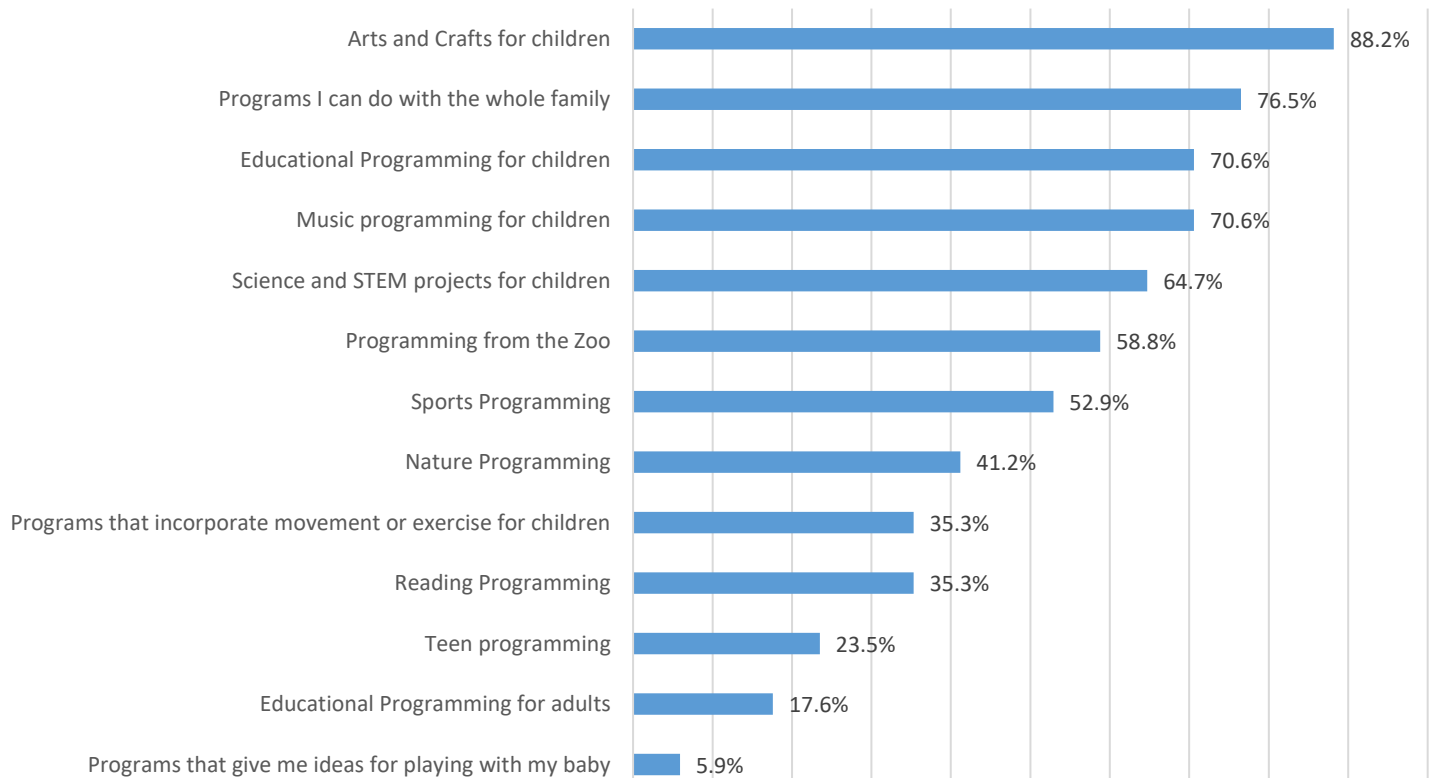
Would you like to see Merced Parks and Recreation virtual programming?

17 responses



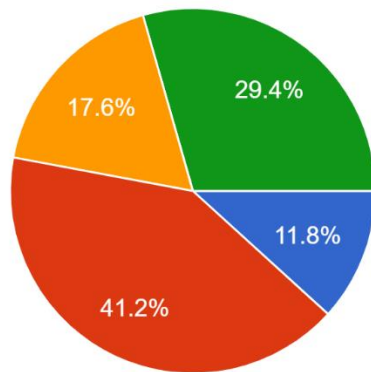
- No thanks, I have found plenty of virtual programs online already.
- Yes, I would love anything you could offer.
- Maybe, if it was the right kind of programming.

If you would like to see virtual programming what kind would you like to see? (Select all that apply)



How often would you like to see programming?

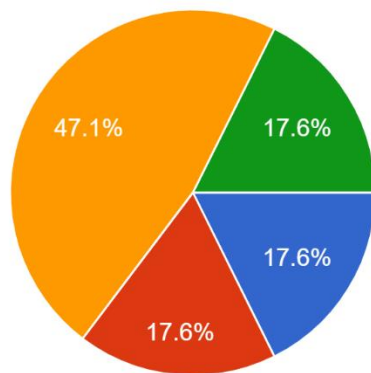
17 responses



- Daily on weekdays
- Several times a week on weekdays
- Once a week on a weekday
- Once a week on Saturday

What time of day would you like programming?

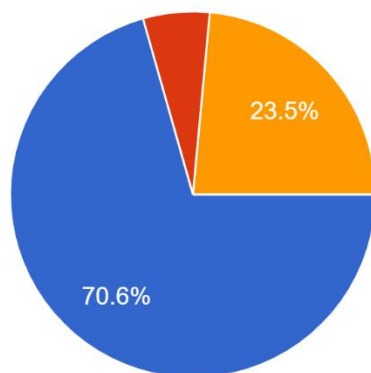
17 responses



- Morning
- Noon
- Afternoon
- Evening

Would you like drive by events?

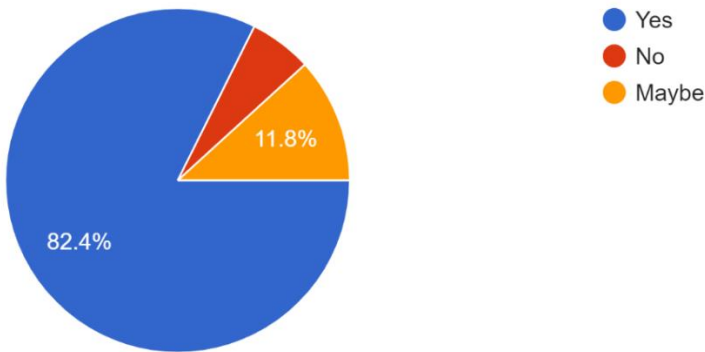
17 responses



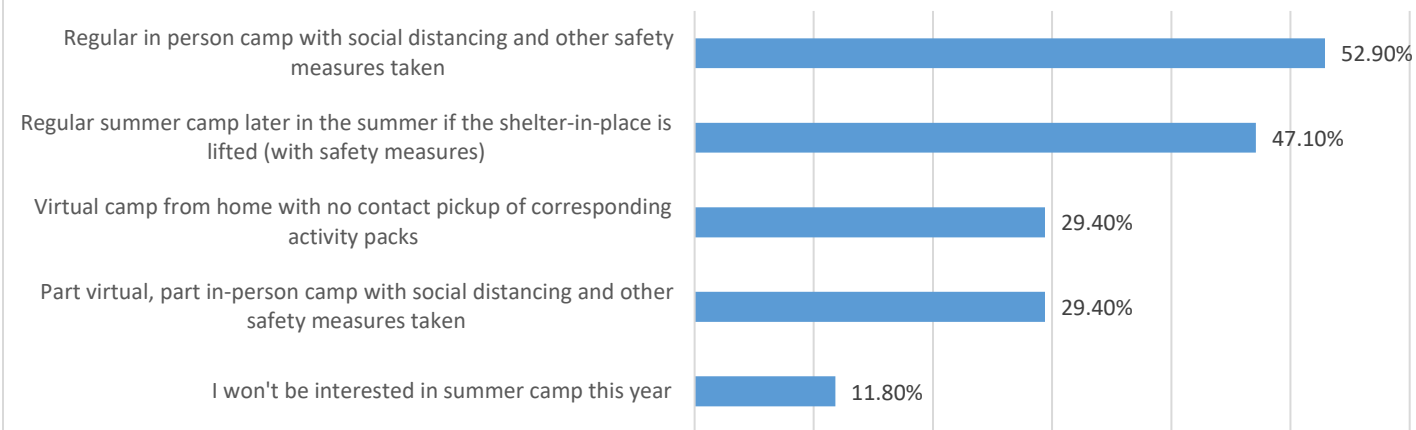
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Would you like a no contact pick up for supplies for things you could do at home?

17 responses

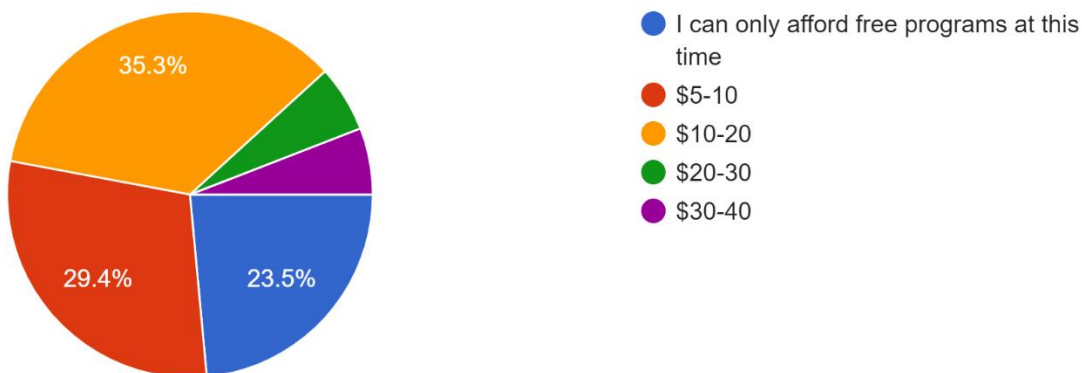


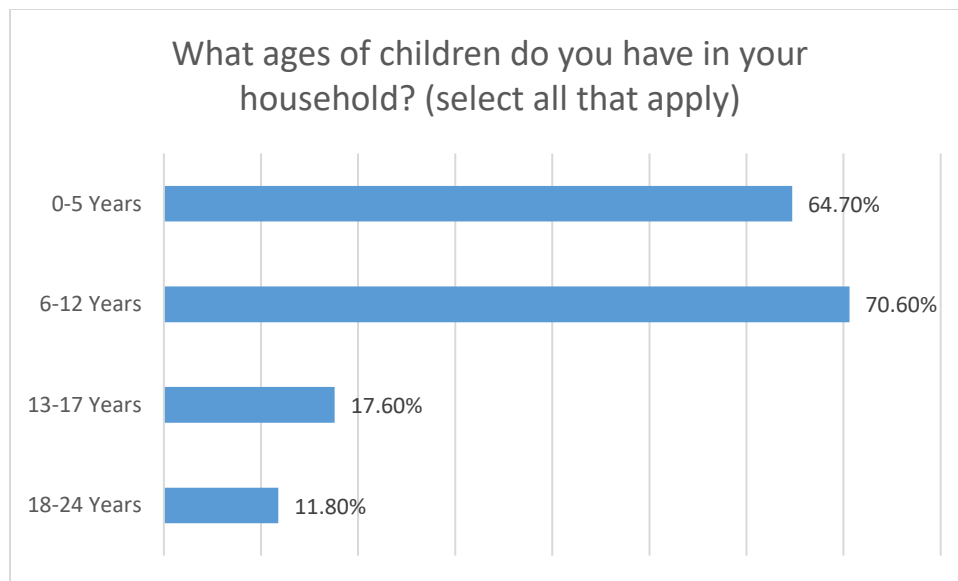
We are looking into various options for holding our regular Summer Camp for Kindergarten through 6th graders- which of the following options would you be interested in? (select all that apply)



What would you like to pay for virtual programming?

17 responses





Thank you for taking the time to answer this survey. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

6 responses

Thank you for trying to keep the community together and help us interact with our children

My daughter is 12. 6-12 is a huge range.

The pay question is difficult ultimately to answer as it would depend on class. Science class if we had to pick up supplies I would expect to pay more etc.

My son really enjoyed the swimming lessons in the past years. I know it's been cancelled this year but hopefully the swimming pool would be open when it's safe to do so.

Yes programs that help children with learning disabilities.

Any info regarding existing in-person programming such as recreational sports

July 8, 2020 Facebook Post Responses

If you could create any Parks and Recreation program you wanted, and make any improvement in any park you wanted... what would you create?

Splash Pads, Playgrounds, Shade & ADA

Splash pads. I feel for the kids!

Parks that have water for kids to run through. It's too hot to go to the park some days

A large undertaking but our city should build our own water park! We could generate in the positive to then fund our other city programs. Plus, we could create jobs, offer entry-level jobs for our youth, and give families more things to do in our town. 🥰

Water slides!!

More splash pads!

Splash pads, heated community pools with free water aerobics and swim lessons

Updated play grounds for all parks, more skate parks, more water parks, and more family friendly activities.

No more wood chip playground; soft turf is nice. A large shade over the playground, maybe some misters on really hot days

Absolutely more splash pads and shade. Bathrooms at more parks. No more wood chips. A community center with classes. My kids say- keep them cleaner and have more swings and more things to climb on.

A shade structure over the playground and/or party hut at Bob Carpenter Park on Silverado/Parsons in Merced. The trees there provide so little shade where it is needed. It's an amazing small playground, but the lack of shade is unbearable at times. Putting in a volleyball net would be awesome too! That park is always used for volleyball closer to the fire station side.

Handicap accessible items/structures, shade coverings, and splash pads at all parks instead of creating something new. This way all citizens of Merced have the access in their local neighborhood parks.

I would like to create more picnic areas and seating closer to the playgrounds. But specially making them shaded areas. Also I'd like to have small outdoor party venues if not remodel the ones there already with family friendly paint. Mini water splash areas. I think small vendors or a small store with ice cream and other healthy snacks and drinks would be handy too.

1. Adventure Playground
2. Play Café (I would pay \$\$ for coffee, believe me... money for the dept, plus additional jobs?)
3. Shade. Just...shade.

This was discussed on here before...we were trying to get wheelchair swings installed in some of the parks...don't know if it ever happened.

A discovery indoor play area that we could either pay monthly or the day we go. Which could include a playhouse area, outdoor area, play house, grocery store etc.

What about the dilapidated playground equipment in Fahrens Park. The children in this area deserve a nice playground. This area still had sand and never received the bark that all the other parks have which is hazardous because the sand level is depleted.

Wheelchair swings

Tumble time park for toddlers

Multi family eat and play park...lots of shading for summer valley heat.

How about a handicap accessible park. I see them in bigger cities. Also, I completely agree with shade coverings over play structures. Is the play ground equipment ever deep cleaned or sanitized? Just curious. Thank you!! [City of Merced Parks and Recreation](#) wonder if people would volunteer or maybe organizations. Kinda like adopt a playground like they have adopt a hwy or adopt an animal at the zoo.

It would be very easy to install a handicap accessible swings at every park. That would be great so you don't have to drive all the way across town to get to the ones on the south side

Spray parks at every park. More shade trees. A community center that offers classes including preschool and an indoor swimming pool open year round.

A Public pool like they have in Bend, OR.



Waymarking

Juniper Swim & Fitness Center - Bend,
Oregon - Public Swimming ...

Visit



Sports Fields & Sports Programming

I would immediately add Futsal courts to Applegate and a few other parks!

unitytennis.net

<https://manteca.bigleaguedreams.com/>

An obstacle course for people to train at for spartan races.

A workout theme park for older children/kids would be a great incentive for all kids who want to workout to improve their health and physical being. And also an innovated way to introduce kids to exercising equipment that will make them excited to workout. Especially beneficial for kids who don't have a gym membership.

It would be awesome to have a playground at the sports complex on Wardrobe ave.

Improve all parks!!! Basketball, baseball, soccer, football every sports needs something nice to be played on. But fix it the right way, the best soccer complex we have made in Merced is not done right, has hills all over, balls going over to neighbors houses and damaging their property. Lights don't even lighten entire park correctly.

Merced Tennis Center UnITY Tennis-Merced's own tennis program

Futsal courts!

Tennis courts back in Applegate Park.

Model the softball for seniors program after the way they do it in Modesto. They have try outs, coaches draft their players so all teams are equal within age groups. Teams can add players from extras waiting to play so there are no forfeits. It's all about playing. Guys can play several games a night if teams are in need. No trophies. Only a BBQ dinner at the end.

If its improving existing facilities, adding futsal goal cages under basketball courts would be good too

More city sponsored recreational Sports for kids. Seasonal recreation leagues, even if they're developmental, keeps kids busy and families healthy. The City of Campbell has a great model to reference and has similar population and resources.

Have sand volleyball courts at one of the parks, with weekly maintenance to maintain the quality of sand. Would be a great park activity for families, and even the opportunity to have group play for weekly hangouts that are healthy. The City of Folsom has a great model to reference and the population and resources are about the same as Merced.

Newly paved, lined state of the art Basketball 🏀 Courts with full court play ability along with bleachers for spectators. Splash pads are always good too 👍 Also an City run outdoor football field that can be used by local youth sports instead of solely relying on the School fields.

and Hand ball courts

Soccer complex with multiple fields for all ages, with a community center. 🏠🙏 Or a Athletic Skills Garden

<https://youtu.be/k28U7pPWj8>

Exercise sports training equipment park for ages 6+

Tennis courts! There's a program with 50 kids and 30 adults but have to play at the College. I have just the spot for it too... M St. And Cardella would be ideal.



The addition of batting and pitching cages at Youth Sports Complex and Joe Herb Park.

I would build a playground that is all inclusive with a miracle league baseball diamond for kids/adults with special needs to have a baseball program just for them.

the young people I work with have said they would like to add on to the youth sports voucher program, lights at the new skatepark, a water fountain at the new skatepark. amongst other ideas they have had.

Applegate Park Zoo

Art art art. I dont know maybe paint night with the animals.

Yes with the park there and the grass there is a beautiful place not much shade! (zoo)

Murals painted in the animal enclosures to make them look more like natural habitat.

Sell benches or trees for around the park and zoo for donations with plaques

First I would grow the zoo and then we would have Zoo Camp once a month.. the zoo needs to triple in size at the very least .

Larger and more natural habitats, so children can understand that animals don't live in cages.

Any chance for a zoo tax here like Fresno's to expand animal habitats and make them more like where they would live in nature.

I also think a white elephant fund raiser and a high tea are fundraising ideas for zoo

Redo the gift shop for hands on experience with a video that teaches kids about the different animals at the zoo, how they got there and what to do to help =]

Updated and Clean park bathrooms Also maybe bring more color and animals to the Applegate park,. It's at the heart of the town and has so much potential.

Merced Zoo Safari & Merced Zoo Jurassic

This would be a Youth Program & Seniors Program to help draw attention to the Merced Zoo to help bring in more funding as well as attention to the zoo.

Invite guest in that own exotic animals to introduce them to the guest while sharing the importance of them and why zoos are important to help keep these creatures safe and continue to prosper without the fear of harm.

Expanding the zoo would be great to so you could offer more exhibits and add more interesting or interactive zones for families to take part in.

When I held Jurassic Gustine Day at our museum we had over 100+ new guest come from all over the valley and the Bay Area to check out some Dino statues and stayed for tours & spending on souvenirs.

The Zoo can be a real hotspot and great for the city.

I am pushing to turn the gift shop into more exhibits like more hands on stuff :) I am going to keep bugging them :p

Dinner with the animals. More animals.

Repaint the zoo! Brighter colors, draw interest! It gets hidden with brown!

Bathrooms, Homeless and Park Upgrades

Update or add bathrooms to all parks. Keep trash bins available and maintained. Keep landscaping maintained. It's not too much to ask

And please update and upgrade kiddie land

I would like to suggest that the city explore a partnership between homeless agencies and the PD to work with the homeless to encourage them to be better stewards of public places. In fact, a community wide campaign to encourage everyone to be better stewards. It's disheartening to go anywhere, let alone a park and see garbage and vandalism.

How about a Merced City Boxing Club, I would volunteer to Coach 2 days per week while implementing life lesson plans as part of being a member. As for the Homeless, a lot of the homeless congregate at the parks because many religious organizations and people feed them there and they don't want to miss a meal. I was homeless for 3 1/2 years and I knew what time and what parks to be at to eat. I'm not saying that is the only reason but Merced had no soup kitchens or anything else to motivate one to leave. Furthermore most of the religious organizations that used to feed us have better kitchens than most restaurants and are fully capable of running a soup like kitchen but the truth of the matter is they don't want them around either. Remember I said "Most" religious organizations not all. Again speaking from my experience previously being homeless in merced but there are many reasons why people are homeless.

Get all the homeless out of the parks, It's a disgrace what the homeless have done to our parks. They shouldn't be in any of our parks and you guys let them

I like a lot of the ideas already posted. I'll reiterate, update the bathrooms, also maybe consider converting some parks to draught friendly that could include some hardscapes and turf or alternative materials. In addition, how can we as a city address the parks in south side Merced that are under Mella Roos from decades ago? There is no upkeep of those parks. Is there NOTHING Parks and Recs can do?

Bathrooms at every park! It's miserable to walk (or drive) to the park with little ones, and then have to quickly leave because they urgently have to go potty!

Dog Park

Just took our dog to the Merced dog park. What a disgrace. Will not go back

A better maintained dog park with at least 2 more additional benches .

Other Ideas

We need more mentoring programs for our youth. Big brothers, big sisters something like that

A Merced Metropolitan Park, like a Grant Park (Chicago), Central Park (New York), or Golden Gate Park (San Francisco) in North Merced off of G Street. From the Hospital all the way to Bellevue. We can preserve land for the enjoyment for Merced residents for hundreds of years to come. Let's build more homes while preserving land for beautiful parks. Gotta have that balance

Bike-friendly suspension bridge crossing Bear Creek somewhere between G and McKee (Glen or Parsons).

An internship outreach program, or a social service staff member who could go with police on calls when requested

A wine area for mammas with massage chairs to sip and relax while we keep an eye on the littles who suck the life out of us

Can we start by stopping the spraying of dangerous pesticides/herbicide such as round up at our local parks?

Something like <https://playmodesto.com/> that. Its an indoor play area for younger kids, maybe up to 10? It could focus more on educational stuff as well

a community center with activities/classes for kids and adults... i grew up with a great one in sunnyvale and my son grew up with a great one in Milpitas

Volleyball, kayaking, and hiking/biking for kids on Merced's beautiful trails. Outdoor exercise equipment like at the parks in Seattle. it is a glowing gem for the entire county!

A bouldering (rock climbing) area

Parks for Teens: 10 Features Teens Want to See

Published on 02-12-2015 at 10:08

<https://www.childinthecity.org/2015/12/02/parks-for-teens-10-features-teens-want-to-see/>

In many parts of the world, park designers have turned to nature play as a way to foster connections to nature, increase social and cooperative play, and facilitate more physical activity. In many instances, these parks are designed for pre-teen children.

Like more traditional playgrounds, these spaces often exclude teenagers through their design. Yet in a variety of projects facilitated by [Growing Up Boulder](#) – a child-friendly city initiative in Boulder, Colorado, USA – teens have requested parks where they feel welcome and that have design features that can integrate them into a broader public sphere. For example, in a participatory process with Junior Rangers involved in Boulder’s open space planning, teens found a city playground at the edge of open space land. Designed for much younger ages, teens found creative means to play with toddler swings and other equipment. In discussion, one of the teens said, “We want parks for teens, too. I am so tired of having moms yell at us.”



10 teen-friendly features:

The City of Boulder’s Parks and Recreation department and Youth Opportunities Advisory Board asked teens what features they would want to see in city parks. This list is also consistent with Growing Up Boulder’s participatory work with teens for public space planning and neighborhood design. Ten of the most consistent features teens in Boulder have requested for public space include:

1. **WiFi** – Teens repeatedly have said they would like a study space with shelter from rain and tables to work in groups. WiFi is a critical aspect of this, as well as for accessing music and other media with phones.
2. **Movie Nights** – Teens like the idea of a central performance space that can show a wide range of movies for all ages and interests.

3. **Food Trucks and Cafés** – From tacos to coffee, teens want access to affordable and diverse food options, representing a variety of cultures and food interests.
4. **Interactive Lighting and Art** – Teens are drawn to interactive spaces, whether they be interactive lights (as found in the New York City’s Pulse Park), or interactive sculptures that allow climbing or play. In response to a solar-powered giraffe sculpture, one teen suggested providing a whole field of African animals that were interactive, such as hippo that spits water or a crocodile to climb on. Importantly, teens not only wanted interactive art pieces (that light or are otherwise playful), but they also wanted places where the public could create the art, such as a graffiti wall, mural wall, or inspirational chalk board with questions such as “What do you love about Boulder?” or “What are your goals?” (Growing Up Boulder 2015).
5. **Play Spaces for both Children and Adults** – Many teens want to play, but do not feel free to do so in playgrounds designed with structured equipment for specific ages. Parks that mix play types are more effective at enabling teen play. For example, at Lizard Log Park, designed by Fionna Robbe in Western Sydney Parklands, Australia, large swings that require cooperation also facilitate more teen play. Other types of play spaces that teens request include fields for pick-up games of soccer or ping-pong tables. Younger teens consistently ask for more active forms of play, such as zip lines or parkour courses that allow risk taking (Growing Up Boulder 2015).
6. **Study Space** – As mentioned for WiFi in parks, teens repeatedly request places where they can hang out and complete school work together outside. These spaces could be simple picnic tables that have some shelter from the elements, a grove of trees with tables and benches, or a tree house for teens. In a public space planning project in Boulder, elementary students wanted a treehouse from which they could read, watch the creek, and listen to birds. At the end of the process, teens also said such a place was important for them, stating: “treehouses are for teens, too!” (Growing Up Boulder 2015).
7. **Trees, Flowers, Nature** – Teens also consistently say that they enjoy being in nature while spending time with their friends. In this case, nature often serves as a backdrop for other experiences, but is appreciated for its aesthetic and restorative qualities, nonetheless. Teens envisioned a study space in a grove of trees, which is part of the City of Boulder’s new Civic Area plan. Like many of the features in this list, teens wanted to see natural features integrated with other functions, such as studying. Some other examples include a koi pond or a pond with colored lights.
8. **Music Events** – In a small neighborhood park designed for and by teens in Malmö, Sweden, music was an integral feature. The park allows teens to hook up their own phone to a musical system with speakers, lights, and interactive benches, which allow teens to select music, hang out, and dance. There are time and volume limits on these features to respect the neighborhood’s needs for quiet and darkness at night. At times, we have heard from teens that they don’t go to parks because they are “for little kids.” When we showed them the park from Malmö, they said, “can we have one of those here, too?”
9. **Lighting and safety features** – Teen girls in particular, request lighting and emergency call boxes for safety. This can extend the length of time teens have access to the park and can also provide an enjoyable walk through public spaces instead of going around it during dusk or darkness.
10. **Water features** – Teens repeatedly request features for water play with younger siblings and friends as well as water fountains for sound and visual interest. This can be highly designed fountains, such as the Crown Fountain in Millennium Park, Chicago or simple creek play, with boulders to hop across. Many teens with roots in Latin America particularly like fountain features, which bring a cultural consistency from many Latin American plazas.

Fortunately, many of these features are part of contemporary public space designs. As an example, the City of Boulder's recent master plan also incorporates many of these features. A challenge is thinking about how to integrate these features into other public spaces and small parks throughout a city so that teens feel welcome wherever they go.



Why parks are important for teens

As the world's cities become increasingly dense, concerns have emerged at decreasing allocation, types of social interactions, and inclusivity of public space (Day and Wagner 2010, Madanipour 2010). Young people, in particular, are less tolerated in public spaces (Day and Wagner 2010) and can be marginalized in public processes for these spaces (Vivoni 2013). Teen girls, in particular, are isolated from public space (Loukaitou-Sideris and Sideris 2010).

Many people assume that teens want to be separated from the rest of society, but child-friendly research has not found this to be true: teens want to be integrated into public spaces, and they want to see public spaces designed for everyone (Bourke 2015, Breitbart 2014, Derr and Kovács in press). This is particularly significant in the context of adolescent development. When we isolate teenagers from other age groups and parts of society, we increase teen alienation, indifference, dysfunction, and antagonism in the younger generation (Bronfenbrenner and Condry 1970). And it goes against what teens consistently request, which is a place for all ages.

Author: Victoria Derr

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