



Lemon Hill Neighbors

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LEMON HILL NEIGHBORS COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

Residents Express Clear Priorities for FIFA Fan Festival Legacy Investments

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With less than 100 days until the FIFA Fan Festival opens at Lemon Hill Park on June 11, 2026, the community finally has its say. In late 2025, Lemon Hill Neighbors Association (LHNA) surveyed residents about legacy investments promised by Philadelphia Soccer 2026 following the 40-day event planned for summer 2026. Over four hundred Philadelphia residents responded with a clear message: they want the park to get basic infrastructure improvements—not cosmetic upgrades—and they want transparency about an event that could bring up to 25,000 people daily to a neighborhood park.

Key Survey Stats

- 448 total responses
- 85% from Fairmount and Brewerytown
- 57.8% of respondents visit 1-3+ times per week
- 44.7% of respondents report little to no familiarity with the FIFA Fan Fest plans

The survey reveals four overwhelming community priorities ranked by mean scores across almost 450 respondents: traffic reduction and pedestrian safety (4.38 of 5, the highest of all projects), bathroom restoration (44.5% ranked it their #1 priority in its category), and long-term maintenance funding (40% ranked it #1 in its category). Notably, among this group of high-use park visitors, 44.7% of respondents have low familiarity with FIFA Fan Fest plans, indicating that Philadelphia Soccer 2026 has failed to adequately communicate with the very neighborhoods that will bear the greatest impact.

BACKGROUND

Lemon Hill Neighbors Association has served as a Friends Organization for Lemon Hill Park for over 15 years, formally recognized in Philadelphia Parks & Recreation's Park Friends Network and fiscally sponsored by Park to Broad Arts & Business District. According to PPR's own metrics, Friends Organizations like LHNA contributed \$1,868,430.96 of labor value, \$179,831.88 in meeting hours and \$3,739,056.96 in community events in 2025. These numbers represent substantial public value—value that should earn these organizations a meaningful seat at the decision-making table.

In April 2024, LHNA leadership was invited to meet with Philadelphia Soccer 2026 (PHL Soccer) and city officials before it was publicly announced that Lemon Hill would host FIFA Fan Fest during the 2026 World Cup. At that first meeting, PHL Soccer promised quarterly meetings to share updates about planning and development. Since then, only four additional meetings have occurred, far short of quarterly, and LHNA and other local organizations have received no explicit information about promised legacy funds or meaningful updates about an event that will fundamentally alter the neighborhood for 40 consecutive days.

This stands in stark contrast to PHL Soccer's own public messaging. Their website proclaims: "Lemon Hill won't just be a temporary site for FIFA Fan Festival™ – **it will be part of the enduring legacy that Philadelphia Soccer 2026 aims to leave on the city.** Long after the tournament, the site will continue to bring joy to the residents of Philadelphia, serving as a lasting reminder of the magic of the World Cup and the city's enduring love for the beautiful game."

The community is asking: Where is this promised legacy? Where are the details? Where is the transparency?

The Scale of Impact

In February 2026, the New York/New Jersey host committee cancelled its centralized FIFA Fan Fest at Liberty State Park, citing the challenge of managing tens of thousands of daily visitors while maintaining community access—a decision made just four months before the tournament.

Philadelphia has made no such adjustment. Lemon Hill Park—a beloved neighborhood green space in Fairmount and Brewerytown—will host up to an estimated 25,000 people per day for 40 consecutive days, according to recent reporting by Billy Penn (article published March 3, 2026). For context, Lemon Hill's surrounding neighborhoods have a combined population of approximately 11,000 residents. **The event will more than double the daily human presence in an area that lacks the infrastructure to support it.**

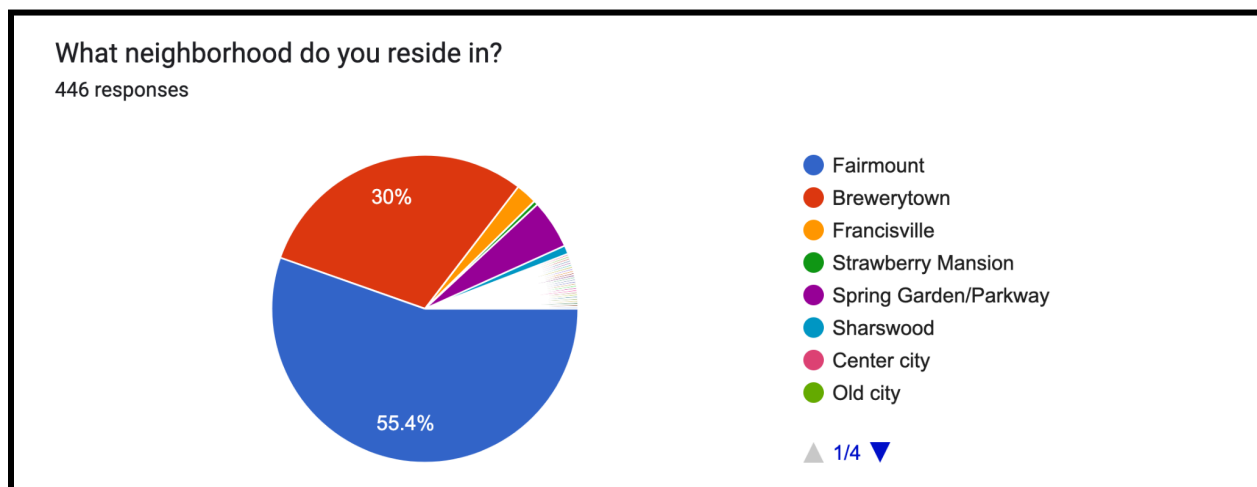
With less than 100 days until the event begins, Philadelphia Soccer 2026 has waited far too long to provide meaningful updates to the community or conduct substantive outreach.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was conducted over six weeks in late 2025, promoted in-person, with local flyering, and using online outreach to maximize community awareness. LHNA promoted it through their mailing list and social media channels, and shared it with community stakeholders including civic associations, CDCs, neighboring park organizations, the Philadelphia Housing Authority, and Councilman Jeffrey Young's office (District 5).

Physical flyers were posted on high foot-traffic streets—Girard Avenue, Ridge Avenue, Fairmount Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Poplar Street, and 29th Street—as well as at all park entrances, in cafes, recreation centers, schools, and grocery stores. The goal was to reach high-usership neighborhoods including Fairmount, Brewerytown, Spring Garden, the Parkway, Francisville, Sharswood, and Strawberry Mansion.

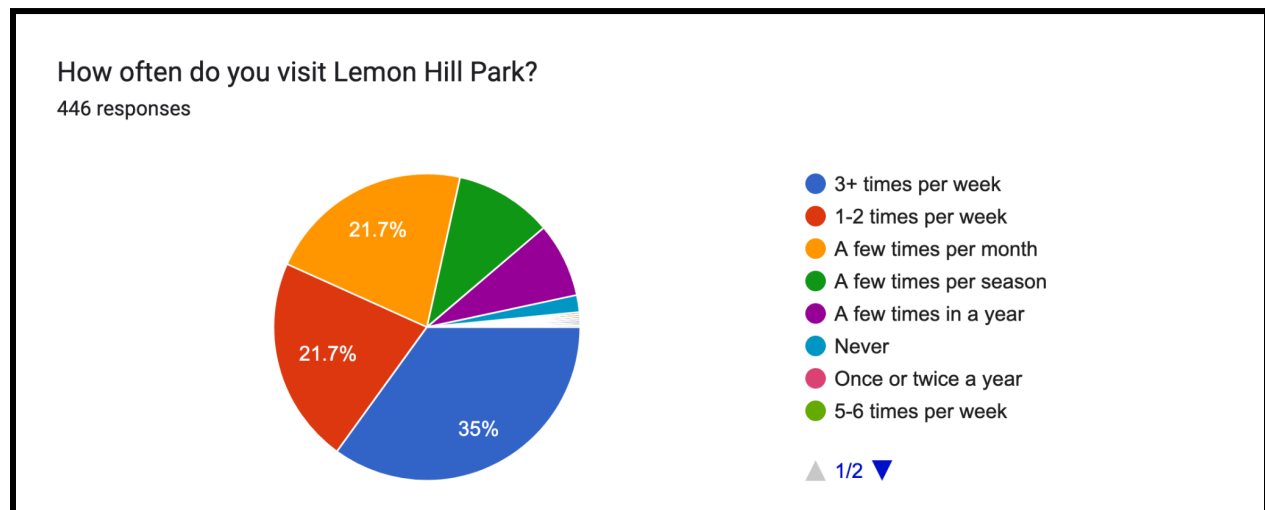
Respondents ranked sixteen proposed legacy projects across three categories: **Infrastructure**, **Facilities & Amenities**, and **Accessibility & Safety**. The survey explicitly noted that the City of Philadelphia is already funding a new and expanded playground and basketball court upgrades at Lemon Hill—the two most-used amenities in the park. This playground project is separate from the "legacy investment" promised by Philadelphia Soccer 2026 in April 2024.



WHO RESPONDED: A PARK CENTRAL TO DAILY LIFE

Nearly 450 Philadelphia residents completed the survey, with an overwhelming majority living in the neighborhoods immediately surrounding Lemon Hill Park. 55% percent of respondents live in Fairmount (zip code 19130), and 30% live in Brewerytown (zip code 19121). Combined, these two neighborhoods represent 85% of all survey responses. The remaining 15% came from Spring Garden, the Parkway, Francisville, Sharswood, and Strawberry Mansion—each contributing between 1-5% of responses.

These are not casual park visitors. The data reveals a community deeply engaged with Lemon Hill as essential infrastructure, not an occasional amenity. **More than one-third of respondents (35.7%) visit the park three or more times per week.** Another 22.1% visit 1-2 times per week. Combined, 57.8% of respondents are in the park at least weekly, and 79.7% visit at least a few times per month.



The age distribution shows a community spanning generations, with the largest group (34%) between ages 35-44, followed by 25.7% ages 25-34. Sixty percent of respondents are under age 45, indicating that Lemon Hill serves young families, working-age adults, and older residents alike.

Perhaps most concerning: 44.7% of respondents report low familiarity with the FIFA Fan Fest plans (rated 1-2 on a 5-point scale). This represents a serious communication gap. **Nearly half of the people who will be most directly impacted by this event—residents who use the park multiple times per week—do not have adequate information about what is coming to their neighborhood.**

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Respondents ranked 15 proposed legacy projects on a scale of 1 (lowest priority) to 5 or 6 (highest priority). The results reveal clear community consensus around four critical needs.

1. REDUCE TRAFFIC & IMPROVE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

19% ranked it absolute highest priority in its category

This is the strongest, most consistent signal in the entire dataset. Traffic and pedestrian safety is not just a top priority for a vocal minority—it has overwhelming support across age groups, neighborhoods, and frequency of park use. Respondents made clear that pedestrian access to the park is currently unsafe, with high-speed vehicular traffic on surrounding streets (Girard, Poplar, Sedgley) posing daily danger.

Some progress has already been made. The Office of Transportation, Infrastructure & Sustainability (OTIS) and the Streets Department have upgraded two of the four high-volume intersections around Lemon Hill, and Philadelphia Parks & Recreation will install two additional yellow traffic gates on Lemon Hill Drive to close it to vehicular traffic—a measure LHNA strongly supports.

However, more remains to be done. Open-ended survey responses emphasized the need for raised crosswalks at key intersections, flashing pedestrian signs and reflective indicators at crosswalks, tapering the wide intersection of Girard Ave/Poplar Drive/33rd Street to slow traffic, improving traffic signals and crossing times at Kelly Drive/Sedgley Drive and Girard Ave/Poplar Drive/33rd Street, closing the “cut through” entrance to Sedgley Drive from Girard Avenue, creating protected bike lanes or a multimodal pathway along Sedgley/Poplar Drives to connect safely to the Schuylkill River Trail, and installing physical deterrents to prevent cars from driving and parking on grass.

One respondent captured the urgency: *“If I had to vote for one element across all of these 15 features, it’s safety and maintenance. Crossing Sedgley to access the park is horrifying and cars speeding around the area are a constant concern.”*

2. BATHROOM RESTORATION

44.5% ranked it their #1 priority in its category

Nearly half of all respondents put bathroom restoration as their top priority in the Park Facilities & Amenities category. As the highest single top-ranking percentage of any project, this is not mild support—this is an urgent demand rooted in public health and dignity. The community is asking for the existing on-site bathroom facility to be restored, upgraded, and maintained as functional, clean, and accessible.

Lemon Hill is one of the top three picnic sites in Philadelphia. From May through September, weekends and holidays see the park filled with large gatherings: birthdays, graduations, family

reunions, and community celebrations spanning multiple generations. Despite this high level of use, the closest functional restroom is at Lloyd Hall, roughly a quarter-mile away from the Lemon Hill Mansion. Lemon Hill has a bathroom facility on-site, but it has been closed to the public for nearly two decades. Parks & Recreation has occasionally provided one or two temporary bathroom stalls for public use, but cleaning and maintenance has typically not kept pace with demand. In 2025, numerous stalls were left locked and inaccessible on the park grounds.

The absence of functional bathrooms forces park users to rent expensive temporary bathroom stalls or results in public urination and defecation in the park's woodlands. This is unacceptable. It is a public health issue, an equity issue, and a dignity issue. Philadelphians using a public space should not have to pay out-of-pocket for basic hygiene facilities, and they should not be forced into undignified alternatives.

3. LONG-TERM MAINTENANCE FUNDING

40% ranked it highest priority in its category

The community does not want one-time capital projects. They want assurance that improvements will be maintained long-term. This shows a sophisticated understanding of park management: residents know that new facilities without sustained funding will fall into disrepair.

Respondents are asking for dedicated funds for ongoing maintenance, not just upfront capital investment. These funds should be earmarked for tree removal and pruning, facility repairs, repainting, and upkeep of the restored bathroom facility. Lemon Hill Neighbors should participate in prioritizing how maintenance funds are spent, in coordination with Councilmember Jeffrey Young's office (District 5) who represents the constituent base of the park.

Funds raised by Philadelphia Soccer 2026 should be designated for Lemon Hill as repayment to the park and community for hosting FIFA Fan Fest and relinquishing their public commons for 40 days of the event and for months of construction and deconstruction that will occupy the park significantly. Legacy investments must ensure the park does not deteriorate after the event concludes. They must demonstrate a genuine commitment to community benefit, not just a temporary PR campaign.

ADDITIONAL PRIORITIES

Beyond the top four, the survey revealed strong support for extensive tree planting (mean score 3.71, 30% ranked it highest priority). Lemon Hill lost substantial tree canopy in preparation for this event. While LHNA was consulted for the majority of tree removal work, the sheer volume of loss in one work order remains significant. Many of the removed trees were standing dead, but others—though compromised—still had partial to full canopies and provided shade and ecological benefit. Parks & Recreation is developing a post-event planting plan, and LHNA has been in consistent communication with City Forester Erica Smith. The community expects

robust replanting to restore lost canopy and ensure the park remains a shaded, ecologically healthy green space.

Open-ended survey responses also emphasized the need for a restored drinking fountain, more trash cans throughout the park, and new benches for both pathway seating and picnicking.

WHAT RESIDENTS ARE SAYING

Three hundred seventy-five respondents (83.3%) answered the open-ended question: "Please expand on how this impacts you and your household." The high response rate demonstrates the personal significance of Lemon Hill Park to the community. These are not abstract policy preferences—they are rooted in daily life.

Frequent Park Users:

"My family lives on the other side of the railroad tracks and will be impacted by traffic, noise, and lack of access to our local playground."

"My boyfriend and I go to Lemon Hill often. He runs on the trails there multiple times a week. Losing access to the trails and park will be a big loss to us."

"We walk/run/bike on Lemon Hill nearly every day and also go there to read or picnic on weekends in summer."

Traffic & Parking Concerns:

"Use it daily for exercise and mental health—this event has a huge impact on my daily life not having access in addition to the impact on my neighborhood from excessive traffic and littering."

"Just a lot of questions still looming about impact on street parking, bus detours, how residents can attend/register and more!"

Access Loss:

"My partner and I do not have a car nor do we have a backyard or any kind of green space, so Fairmount Park, specifically the Lemon Hill portion and the River Trail, are hugely important to our quality of life."

"I bought a home nearby Lemon Hill - rather than in busier parts of town - for the sole purpose of having quiet green space like the Lemon Hill park."

Communication Gaps:

"We're excited for the World Cup and the many different nationalities that will be visiting Phila. It's such a great opportunity to showcase the city to the world! However, there is very little information from City or FIFA on what they actually want to do. How am I supposed to plan my family life around summer 2026 for the 40 days?"

"I live a few blocks away from Lemon Hill Park so this will very much impact my life. What is clear is that they are ripping up the park and we've been told it will be better. However, I have no clue what all the WorldCup Fanfest entails. Also, it's so unclear what they are planning on doing to the park other than ripping it up. I do think improvements are very welcome since the park has needed upgrades forever..."

VOICES FROM COMMUNITY LEADERS

Patrick Sherlock, Executive Director of [Park to Broad Arts & Business District](#) (LHNA's fiscal sponsor), captured the tension between excitement and frustration:

"Lemon Hill is the essential green, social, and recreation space for residents of Brewerytown and Fairmount. While the attention and maintenance that followed the decision to host the 2026 World Cup Fan Festival in the park has been long overdue, **inconsistent communication from the project team has created a lot of uncertainty and stress among community members**. A commitment to regular and thorough dialogue, details, and deliverables from now through the end of 2026 is vital for Lemon Hill's future, and the success of this summer's event for the city and near-neighbors."

Dustin Dove, President of [Fairmount Civic Association](#), echoed these concerns:

"With just a few months remaining, I am excited to see the improvements to street safety and the built environment on Lemon Hill, especially since so many Fairmounters use this part of Fairmount Park. I'm concerned, however, that there have been **no plans announced to help alleviate some of the most pressing concerns I've heard from neighbors**...we remain concerned that we and our neighbors haven't been given the full details."

CALL TO ACTION

Lemon Hill Neighbors Association, on behalf of almost 450 surveyed residents and the broader community, is demanding the following from Philadelphia Soccer 2026, the City of Philadelphia, and Councilmember Jeffrey Young (District 5):

1. Transparent Post-Event Improvements Plan

We need a detailed, publicly available plan outlining which legacy projects will be funded, when they will be completed, and how they will be maintained. This plan must include a clear timeline for financial distribution of legacy funds, disclosure of the total legacy budget amount, and transparency about who holds the funds during disbursement.

2. Commitment To Community Priorities

Based on survey data, legacy investments must prioritize traffic reduction and pedestrian safety infrastructure, bathroom restoration with a long-term maintenance commitment, and dedicated long-term maintenance funding. These are not wish-list items—they are data-backed community mandates.

3. Community Involvement In Decision-Making

Lemon Hill Neighbors must have decision-making input on how legacy funds are allocated and spent, in coordination with Councilmember Young's office. Friends Organizations like LHNA provide thousands of dollars in volunteer value annually. We should be treated as key stakeholders, not an afterthought. We know this park better than anyone, and we will be here long after Philadelphia Soccer 2026.

4. Clear, Frequent Communication Leading Up To The Event

Less than 100 days remaining until FIFA Fan Fest opens on June 11, the time for quarterly meetings has long passed. We need regular, substantive updates to the community via civic associations, public meetings, and direct outreach. This includes visits to all relevant civic associations in Fairmount, Brewerytown, Strawberry Mansion, and surrounding neighborhoods, and detailed information about event logistics and timeline, traffic and parking mitigation strategies, and how the park will be restored post-event.

5. Commitment To Restore The Park To Current Or Better Conditions

The park must be returned in equal or improved condition after the 40-day closure. Any damage caused by the event must be repaired at Philadelphia Soccer 2026's expense. Tree replanting and ecological restoration must be prioritized. The pavilion needs to be replaced. The community will be watching.

6. Fiscal Accountability & Fund Management

Legacy funds should be managed through LHNA's fiscal sponsor Park to Broad Arts & Business District or another transparent mechanism with community oversight. Lemon Hill Neighbors

should have direct input on prioritizing maintenance work funded by these dollars. We demand public reporting on how funds are spent. No vague promises. Transparency and accountability.

CONCLUSION

This is an opportunity for Philadelphia Soccer 2026 to demonstrate that when a community is asked to relinquish its public space for an event of unprecedented magnitude, the trade-off must be full restoration and sustained investment.

Lemon Hill Park is a precious but underfunded asset for Philadelphia. It is a historic section of the largest municipal park in the United States. In Fairmount Park's past, significantly more resources were dedicated to maintaining it as a world-class public space. Over time, accessibility and amenities were deemed too costly and abandoned. The community is saying: **If you're going to close our park for 40 days and bring thousands of people per day into our neighborhood, the trade-off must be meaningful investment—not empty promises.**

The most valuable legacy that FIFA Fan Fest can leave for Lemon Hill Park is this: the park receives the upgrades that the community is specifically asking for, delivered transparently, maintained long-term, and shaped by the voices of those who use the park every single day.

Four hundred fifty residents have spoken. **It's time for Philadelphia Soccer 2026 to respond.**

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Lemon Hill Neighbors Association is fiscally sponsored by Park to Broad Arts & Business District. Learn more at parktobroad.org.

Anonymized survey data with open-ended responses available upon request.