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## Interest in Dallas' Klyde Warren Park remains strong after early burst of enthusiasm

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As the saying goes, “Build it and they will come.”

But will they come back?

Opening weekend at Klyde Warren Park last month drew an estimated 44,000 people — higher than the most optimistic predictions — who wanted to get their first peek at the long-awaited deck park over Woodall Rodgers Freeway.

Since then, staff members with clickers have moved through the park about 12:30 p.m. each day, when use is expected to peak, to count the visitors.

Mark Banta, park president, pronounced himself pleased with the result.

“We don’t want to be overconfident. Two weeks of data does not a metric make,” he said. “But we see attendance as very strong.”

On Oct. 29, the Monday after opening weekend, there were 189 people on the park midway through lunch hour. The number climbed through the week, to 802 on that Friday.

There was no official count during the second weekend, though Banta said 5,000 visitors on midafternoon Saturday was a conservative estimate.

A rule of thumb formulated by Dan Biederman, who developed New York’s Bryant Park and served as a consultant here, is that a successful park will have at least 25 visitors per acre at peak times. Klyde Warren Park is 5.2 acres, meaning it should have at least 130 visitors at peak times.

Banta said the daily count also showed a slightly higher ratio of female visitors to male. Such a balance is also considered desirable because it indicates that women consider the facility to be clean, safe and suitable for children.

Not everything has gone as planned. Banta noted that cold temperatures forced cancellation of a Dallas Symphony Orchestra concert on opening weekend.

Furthermore, park officials have made some adjustments. Visitors complained that there were not enough dog waste-bag stations and too few choices for food.

Banta said that more bag stations have been added. And there are now at least four food trucks or food carts available during lunch hours.

Weather also appears to have a significant effect on attendance. The visitor count was driven down by a recent cold snap but recovered as temperatures moderated.

Banta said he believes rain, rather than cold, is more likely to affect attendance as winter approaches.

The children’s park, the dog park and the great lawn appear to be the park’s most popular features. But Banta said more programmed aspects, such as the putting green and pingpong tables, continue to attract users.

Banta said he randomly quizzes park visitors about their experience. The biggest surprise, he said, is who uses the park.

While Klyde Warren Park has been touted as an urban amenity, it has apparently attracted people from the suburbs and beyond.

“I would hear people say they drove 25 miles just to use the park. They would tell me they’d drive in from Forney, even during a weekday afternoon,” he said.