

Parks and Recreation Citizen Survey

conducted for the

City of Columbia, Missouri

by

ETC Institute/Leisure Vision

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****Executive Summary - Random Citizen Survey***

Overview of the Methodology

The City of Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation conducted a citizen survey in June and July of 2001 to help determine citizen usage, satisfaction, needs, priorities, and funding support for parks and recreation services, as part of the Department's long range master planning process. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Columbia.

ETC Institute/Leisure Vision worked extensively with Columbia officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance in evaluating current parks, facilities, and program services; and additionally to effectively plan the future system.

The goal was to obtain at least 500 completed surveys. This goal was exceeded and 527 surveys have been completed. The results for the random sample of 527 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/- 4.3%.

This report contains: 1) an executive summary; 2) *graphs and charts of respondent answers; and 3)* a copy of the survey document.

Major Findings

- **More than 95% of respondents participated in some leisure activities each week (Question #3).** 39% of respondents participated 10-15 hours per week, forming the largest percentage group of respondents. 25% of respondents participated 1-5 hours per week, followed by 15% who participated 11-15 hours, 10% who participated 16-20 hours, and 8% who participated 21 or more hours. 3% of respondents indicated that they did not participate any hours in leisure activities each week.
- **More than 40% of respondents (45%) indicated they had less time to participate in leisure activities than 10 years ago (Question #4).** 32% indicated they had more time and 23% indicated they had the same amount of time.

**Survey charts and survey instrument can be found in Appendix B.*

- **Household respondents were presented a list of 29 different types of recreation activities and asked to check ALL the activities that members of their household participate in on a regular basis (Question #5) . 69% of respondent households indicated they participated in walking and jogging, which was the most frequently mentioned activity.** Other activities that household respondents participate in on a regular basis included: swimming (36%); festivals (34%); visit nature preserves (34%); and biking (34%).
- **38% of household respondents indicated they participated in programs offered by the City’s Parks and Recreation Department during the past 12 months (Question #6).** *This percentage is considerably higher than the national benchmark of 29% of households.*
- **The marketing means that participants used most frequently to learn about programs was word of mouth (55%) (Question #6b).** Other marketing means that were frequently used by participants to learn about programs included: Leisure Times - Parks and Recreation Activity Guide (38%); newspaper (38%); and flyers/brochures (34%).
- **90% of household respondents have visited a City of Columbia park during the past year. (Question #7).** *This percentage is significantly higher than the national benchmark of household visitations to parks for communities across the country, which is 67%.* 21% of household respondents visit a park at least once a week, with an additional 20% visiting a few times per month.
- **Household respondents were presented with a list of 10 different functions performed by the Columbia Department of Parks and Recreation and asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with each performance area (Question #8).** For the vast majority of functions, the percentage of household respondents rating the department’s performance as excellent or good was far in excess of those with fair or poor ratings. For example, 78% of respondents rated the department’s job in providing places for the quiet enjoyment of the outdoors as either excellent (30%) or good (48%) as compared to 11% who rated it as fair (9%) or poor (2%). 11% indicated don’t know. The only function that more household respondents rated the department’s performance as fair (25%) or poor (18%) than as excellent (7%) or good (17%) was in providing places for indoor recreation and fitness activities, which will be addressed with the new community recreation center.
- **60% of household respondents use recreation programs or activities provided by organizations other than the City of Columbia (Question #9).** 40% of household respondents do not use any other organizations other than the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation.

- **The principal reason that keeps household respondents from not using parks and recreation facilities more often is “we are too busy or not interested” (33%) (Question #10).** Other frequently mentioned reasons included: members of my household use facilities from other organizations (22%); and the locations of city facilities are not close to my home (16%). Poor customer service by staff was cited by only 1% of household respondents as a reason influencing their not using parks and recreation facilities more often.

- **Out of a list of nineteen program areas, in nine program areas a majority of respondents (with an opinion) were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the availability of recreation programs (Question #11).** The program area that had the highest satisfaction with availability rating was city-wide special events with 76% being either very or somewhat satisfied. The program area with the lowest satisfaction with availability was teen programs with 28% being very or somewhat satisfied.

- **Out of a list of 19 programming areas, city-wide special events is the recreation program that the most household respondents have participated in over the past two years, with 34% of households indicating they have participated (Question #11a).** Other programs that at least 10% of households have participated in over the past 2 years include: golf programs (12%); youth sports programs (11%); summer recreation programs (11%); and adult sports leagues (10%).

- **From the list of 19 programming areas, respondents were asked to pick the 4 programs that were most important to their household (Question #12). 34% of household respondents indicated that special events were one of the 4 most important programs to their household.** Other programs listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: adult exercise/fitness classes (24%); recreation classes (17%); summer recreation programs (17%); adult sports leagues (16%); golf programs (15%); and youth sports programs (15%).

- **Out of a list of 23 different types of parks and recreation facilities, for 14 different parks/facilities a majority of respondents (with an opinion) were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the availability of the park or facility (Question #13).** The parks or facility type that had the highest satisfaction with availability rating was walking and biking trails with 89% being either very or somewhat satisfied. The park or facility area with the lowest satisfaction with availability was indoor nature center with 15% being very or somewhat satisfied.

- **Out of a list of 23 different types of parks and recreation facilities, walking and biking trails were the most used park or facility by household respondents over the past two years, with 67% of households visiting these facilities (*Question #13a*). Other parks and recreation facilities that were visited by at least 50% of household respondents included: picnic facilities/shelters (62%); neighborhood parks (62%); open space 10 minutes from household (50%); and playgrounds for children (50%).**
- **From the list of 23 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to pick the 4 parks or facilities that were most important to their household (*Question #14*). The most important passive parks and recreation facility was walking and biking trails, with 45% of household respondents listing them as one of the 4 most important parks or facilities to their household. Other passive parks or facilities listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: neighborhood parks (30%); picnic facilities/shelters (27%); and open space within 10 minutes from households (26%).**
- **The most important active parks and recreation facility, based on a sum of respondents top 4 choices were outdoor swimming facilities (16%) (*Question #14*). Other active parks or facilities listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: municipal golf courses (15%); large multi-use parks (11%); and soccer fields (11%).**
- **72% of household respondents indicated that open space provided economic benefits to the City of Columbia (*Question #15*). Only 8% indicated no and 20% indicated don't know.**
- **90% of household respondents indicated that well maintained parks and open spaces enhanced property values of surrounding homes (*Question #16*). Only 4% indicated no and 6% indicated don't know.**
- **81% of household respondents were either very supportive (62%) or somewhat supportive (19%) of requiring residential developers to set aside a portion of all new developments for parks and open space (*Question #17*). 8% were not supportive, with the remainder being not sure.**
- **67% of household respondents were either very supportive (41%) or somewhat supportive (26%) of the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department developing an Indoor Nature Center for teaching environmental education in one of the city's parks (*Question #18*). 12% were not supportive with the remainder being not sure.**

- **From a list of 5 options, household respondents were asked to choose 2 options for acquiring and developing open space for parks and recreation that they most supported (*Question #19*). 88% respondents favor acquiring open space for parks and recreation purposes in some manner** 51% of household respondents support acquiring and developing open space for passive usages, such as trails, picnicking, and shelters, as one of their 2 choices for acquisition and development of open space. 50% support acquiring and developing open space for both passive usages (trails, picnicking) and active usages (baseball, soccer, softball). 47% feel that open space should be acquired and left undeveloped for future generations as one of their 2 options.

- **Out of 16 potential parks and recreation facilities to develop at the Stephens Lake property, respondents were asked to indicate ALL the types of facilities they would support developing (*Question #20*).** The highest support was for picnic sites (73%); nature trails (66%); open and natural wildlife habitat (49%); outdoor swimming facility (48%); arboretum/botanical garden (45%); and non-motorized boating facility on the lake (45%).

- **Out of 16 potential parks and recreation facilities to develop at the Stephens Lake property, respondents were asked to pick their top 3 choices that members of their household would use most (*Question #21*).** Nature trails were selected by 46% of household respondents as one of the 3 facilities they would use most. Other facilities listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 3 choices included: picnic sites (36%); arboretum/botanical garden (24%); and outdoor amphitheater (20%).

- **Out of 14 potential parks and recreation facilities to develop at the Russell Farm property, respondents were asked to indicate ALL the types of facilities they would support developing (*Question #22*).** The highest support was for nature trails (74%); wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society (65%); picnic shelters (46%); and no development (maintain open and natural) (40%).

Cross tabs of *Question #22* and *Question #24* were conducted to understand if there were any differences/similarities in support of parks and recreation facilities based upon the location of the respondent's home in relationship to the Russell property. These cross tabs showed strong similarities regarding respondent's support for developing parks and recreation facilities at the Russell Farm property.

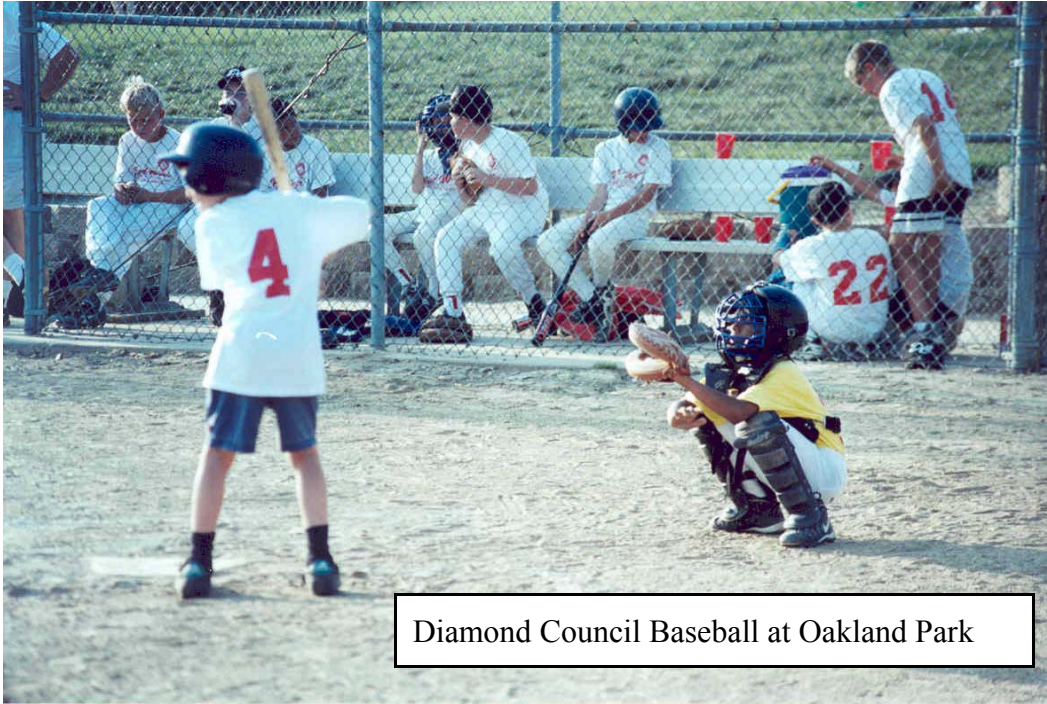
For example, nature trails were the highest supported parks and recreation facility to develop for respondents who lived within ½ mile of the Russell property, for those who lived within ½ to 1 mile, within 1-2 miles, and over 2 miles of the Russell property. Wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society was the 2nd highest supported parks and recreation facility for those who lived within ½ mile of the Russell property, for those who lived within ½ to 1 mile, within 1-2 miles, and over 2 miles of the Russell property. Picnic shelters were the 3rd highest supported parks and recreation facility for ALL of the locations and no development (maintain open and natural) was the 4th highest supported parks and recreation facility for ALL locations.

- **Out of 14 potential parks and recreation facilities to develop at the Russell Family Farm property, respondents were asked to pick their top 3 choices that members of their household would use most (*Question #23*). Nature trails were selected by 65% of household respondents as one of the 3 facilities they would use most.** Other facilities listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 3 choices included: wildlife habitat managed with the Audubon Society (40%); picnic shelters (28%); no development (maintain open and natural) (20%) and Environmental Education Center (16%).

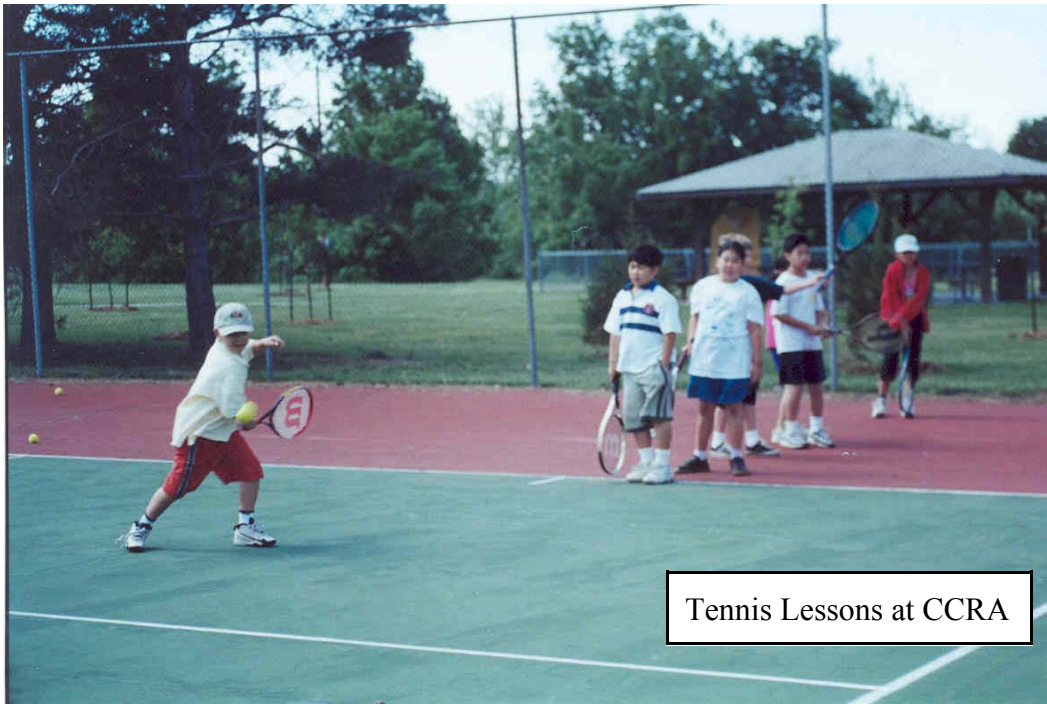
Cross tabs of *Question #23* and *Question #24* were conducted to understand if there were any differences/similarities in usage of parks and recreation facilities based upon the location of the respondent's home in relationship to the Russell property. These cross tabs showed strong similarities regarding respondent's usage (based upon a sum of their top 3 choices) for parks and recreation facilities at the Russell Farm property.

For example, nature trails were the parks and recreation facility respondents indicated they would use most for respondents who lived within ½ mile of the Russell property, for those who lived within ½ to 1 mile, within 1-2 miles, and over 2 miles of the Russell property. Wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society was the parks and recreation facility respondents would use 2nd most for those who lived within ½ mile of the Russell property, for those who lived within ½ to 1 mile, and over 2 miles of the Russell property. For those who lived within 1-2 miles, wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society came in as the 3rd most used facility. Picnic shelters were the 3rd most used parks and recreation facility for ALL of the locations, with the exception of those who lived 1-2 miles from the Russell property, where it was the 2nd most used. No development (maintain open and natural) was the 4th highest used parks and recreation facility for ALL locations (note: tied with camping for 4th most used for those households 1-2 miles from the Russell property).

- **Respondent households would allocate \$33 out of every \$100 in new revenues for parks and recreation for improvements/maintenance of existing parks and recreation facilities (Question #25).** Respondent households would allocate the remaining \$67 as follows: \$17 for the acquisition of open space areas and areas for preservation. \$16 for the acquisition and development of walking and biking trails. \$14 for the construction of environmental facilities (wildlife areas, nature trails). \$11 for the development of special facilities (water playgrounds, camp grounds, skate board parks, dog parks, etc.). \$9 for the development of a new indoor nature/environmental center.



Diamond Council Baseball at Oakland Park



Tennis Lessons at CCRA