

Parks and Recreation Park User Survey

conducted by

City of Columbia, Missouri Parks and Recreation Department

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**Executive Summary - Park User Survey*

Overview

In addition to the random public survey conducted by ETC Institute/Leisure Vision, the Parks and Recreation Department wanted to survey those that are actively using parks and recreation programs and facilities. Users were invited to complete a web-based survey or asked to complete a paper copy on site.

An invitation to fill out the web-based survey was sent via e-mail to subscribers to the Parks and Recreation Sports Listserve, TreeKeepers, and PedNet Coalition. Parks and Recreation staff went to the pools, golf courses, parks, Antimi Baseball Complex, Rainbow Softball Center, Skate Park, and recreation classes to invite citizens to fill out surveys. The Department obtained 430 completed surveys during July and August 2001.

Note: Comparisons to the random public survey are written in italics below.

Major Findings

- **Household respondents were presented a list of 28 different types of recreation activities and asked to check ALL the activities that members of their household participate in on a regular basis (*Question 1*). 67% of respondents indicated they participated in walking and jogging, which was the most frequently mentioned activity. *Walking/jogging also ranked first in the random public survey.* Other activities that household respondents participate in on a regular basis included: biking (62%), visit nature preserves (59%), and festivals (54%). *In the random public survey walking/jogging was the only activity in which 50% or more of those surveyed participated in; whereas, in the park user survey there were five activities in which 50% or more surveyed participated in regularly.***
- **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 2*).** For all but one, respondents rating for the Department's performance as excellent or good was in excess of those with fair or poor ratings. For example, 88% of the respondents rated the department's job in operating parks and facilities that are safe as excellent (33%) or good (55%), as compared to 9% who rated it as fair (8%) or poor (1%). 3% indicated don't know. Providing places for indoor recreation and fitness activities

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

was the only function that more respondents rated the department's performance as fair (31%) or poor (18%) than as excellent (6%) or good (18%). This need will be addressed with the new community recreation center. *On the average, 8% more park users rated these various functions as excellent or good than those in random public survey.*

- **Out of a list of 19 program areas, a majority of respondents (with an opinion) in 13 areas were either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with the availability of recreation programs (Question #3).** The program area that had the highest satisfaction with availability rating was Adaptive/Special Olympics with 68% being either very or somewhat satisfied. The program area with the lowest satisfaction with availability was teen programs with 38% being very or somewhat satisfied. *On the average, 6% more park users rated the availability of these recreation programs as very or somewhat satisfied than those in random public survey.*
- **From the list of 19 program areas, respondents were asked to pick the 4 programs that were most important to their household (Question #4). 58% of respondents indicated that city-wide special events were one of the 4 most important programs to their household.** Other programs listed as being of high importance based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: youth-at-risk programs (37%), summer recreation programs (34%), youth sports programs (29%), and adult sports leagues (29%). *Youth-at-risk programs ranked second (38%) among the park users, and yet ranked last (3%) in the random public survey. While recreation classes ranked third (17%) in the random public survey, it ranked last (0%) among the park users.*
- **The principal reason that keeps respondents from not using parks and recreation facilities more often is "the location of City facilities is not close to my home" (22%) (Question #5).** Other frequently mentioned reasons included: "members of my household use facilities from other organizations" (17%) and "not enough trees or shade" (15%). *In both the user survey and the random public survey, "poor customer service by staff" (2% & 1% respectively) and "the City does not have quality programs" (2% & 1% respectively) ranked the lowest as a reason influencing their not using parks and recreation facilities more often.*
- **Out of a list of 19 different 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 #6).** The park or facility type that had the highest satisfaction with availability rating was skate parks with 76% being either very or somewhat satisfied. *Walking and biking trails had the highest satisfaction rating with availability in the random public survey with 89% being either very or somewhat satisfied and ranked second in the park user survey with 74% being either very or somewhat satisfied.*

The park or facility area with the lowest satisfaction with availability in the park user survey was indoor gyms and fitness space with 32% being very or somewhat satisfied. Lack of availability of indoor facilities will be addressed by the new community recreation center.

- **From the list of 19 different parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to pick the 4 parks or facilities that were most important to their household (*Question #7*). The most important passive parks and recreation facility was walking and biking trails, with 70% of respondents listing them as one of the 4 most important parks or facilities to their household. *Walking and biking trails also ranked first in the random public survey (45%).* Other passive parks or facilities listed as being of high importance to Columbia households based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: natural resource parks (41%), neighborhood parks (37%), and playgrounds for children (29%).**
- **The most important active parks and recreation facility, based on a sum of respondents top 4 choices was outdoor swimming facilities (30%) (*Question #7*). *Of the active parks and recreation facilities, this also ranked first in the random public survey (16%).* Other active parks and recreation facilities listed as being of high importance to park users based on a sum of their top 4 choices included: baseball/softball fields (23%), large multi-use facilities (21%), and indoor swimming facilities (17%). *Handball/racquetball courts ranked lowest in importance in both the random public survey (2%) and the park user survey (0%).***
- **Respondents were asked to rank their choices for allocation of funds to 6 different parks and recreation facilities (*Question #8*). 29% of respondents chose improvements/maintenance of existing parks as their first choice, 23% chose acquisition of open space areas as their first choice, 21% chose acquisition/development of walking and biking trails as their first choice, 12% chose construction of environment facilities as their first choice, 11% chose development of special facilities as their first choice, and 6% chose development of a new indoor nature/environmental center as their first choice. *In a similar question on the random public survey, the rankings of facilities for allocation of funds were the same as the park user survey, with improvements/maintenance of existing parks ranking the highest.***
- **Out of 17 potential parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to choose three facilities they would most support developing at the Stephens Lake property (*Question #9*). Nature trails were selected by 40% of respondents as one of the three facilities they would most support developing at the Stephens Lake property. *In a similar question on the random public survey, nature trails also ranked first (46%) as a facility respondents would use most on the Stephens Lake property.* Support was also shown for arboretum/botanical garden (39%) {ranking**

third in the random public survey (24%)}, open and natural wildlife habitat (38%), and outdoor swimming facility (36%).

- **Out of the same 17 potential parks and recreation facilities in Question #9, respondents were asked to choose the three facilities they would least support developing at the Stephens Lake property (*Question #10*). 60% of respondents chose lighted sports fields as one of the three facilities they would least support at the Stephens Lake property. 58% chose a 9-hole golf course, 32% an off-leash dog park, and 27% chose a disc golf course as one of the three facilities they would least support at the Stephens Lake property.**

- **Out of 13 potential parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to choose three facilities they would most support developing at the Russell property (*Question #11*). Wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society was selected by 84% as one of the three facilities they would most support at the Russell property. 83% chose nature trails, 47% chose no development (maintain open and natural), and 31% chose environmental awareness/education as one of the three facilities they would most support at the Russell property. *On the random public survey, nature trails ranked first (74%) and wildlife habitat managed with Audubon Society ranked second (65%).***

- **Out of the same 13 potential parks and recreation facilities in Question #11, respondents were asked to choose the three facilities they would least support developing at the Russell property (*Question #12*). 70% of respondents chose lighted sports fields as one of the three facilities they would least support at the Russell property. 64% chose a golf course, 31% chose hard surface trails, and 27% chose a disc golf course as one of the three facilities they would least support at the Russell property.**