

Section 1

Executive Summary

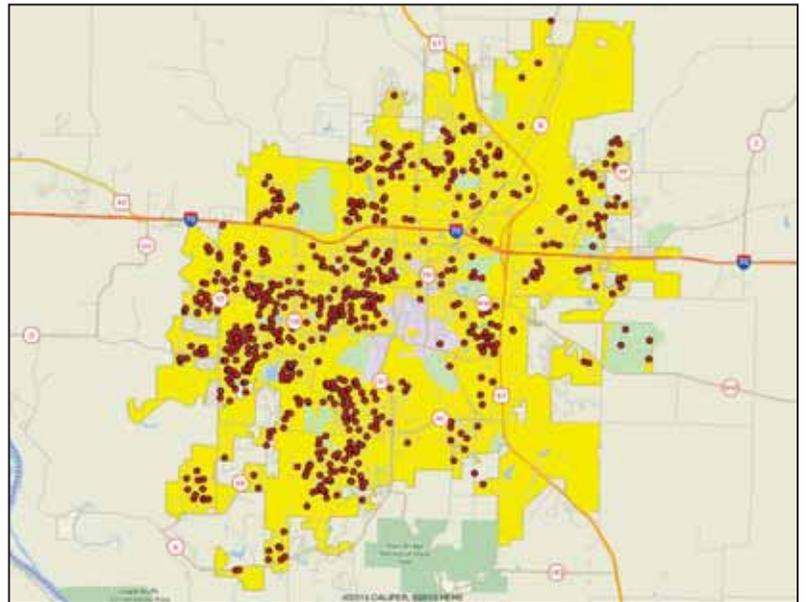
Community Interest and Opinion Survey

Executive Summary Report

Overview and Methodology

Leisure Vision/ETC Institute conducted a Community Interest and Opinion Survey for the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department during the spring of 2015 to establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was mailed to a random sample of households in the City of Columbia.

A total of 706 households completed the survey. The results for the sample of 706 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/- 3.6%. The chart to the right shows the location of survey respondents.



Major Findings

VISITATION AND RATING OF PARKS

- **Park visitation:** Ninety-two percent (92%) of respondent households indicated that they *have visited* City of Columbia parks over the past 12 months. Of those respondents who have visited parks, 33% indicated that they have visited parks *a few times* over the past 12 months. Other similar visitation levels include: A few times per month (26%), at least once a week (24%), and at least once per month (18%).
- **Rating of parks:** Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents rated the overall physical condition of parks as *good*. Other ratings include: Excellent (33%) and fair (5%).

FACILITY USAGE

- **Facility Usage:** Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondents indicated that they have used *walking, hiking, and biking trails* over the past 12 months. Other facilities used include: Nature trails (53%), playgrounds (44%), natural areas (42%), picnic shelters (42%), and Activity and Recreation Center (41%).

- **Most visited facilities:** Based on the sum of respondents top four choices, 68% indicated that they visit *walking, hiking, and biking trails* the most often. Other similar visitation levels include: Nature trails (33%), playgrounds (32%), activity & recreation center (26%), and natural areas (24%).

FACILITY NEEDS

- **Needed facilities:** Seventy-four percent 74% or 31,653 households indicated a need for *walking and biking trails*. Other needed facilities include: Large community parks (65% or 27,949 households), park shelters and picnic areas (60% or 25,753 households), small (2-0 acre) neighborhood parks (59% or 25,451), and nature trails (57% or 24,633 households).
- **Most important facilities:** Based on the sum of respondents top four choices, 53% indicated that *walking and biking trails* was the most important to their households. Other most important facilities include: Small (2-10 acre) neighborhood parks (32%), large community parks (30%), and nature trails (28%).

PRIORITY FOR PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

- Seventy-two percent (72%) indicated that the City officials should place either a “very high priority” or a “high priority” on maintaining the conditions of the parks, trails, and recreation facilities in the Columbia parks and recreation system. Other priority rankings include: Medium priority (20%), very low priority (5%), and low priority (3%).

SATISFACTION AND BENEFITS FROM P&R DEPARTMENT

- **Satisfaction with value received:** Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents households indicated that they were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with the overall value their households receives from the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs, activities and facilities. Other satisfaction levels include: Neutral (12%), somewhat dissatisfied (3%), and very dissatisfied (2%).
- **Benefits residents feel that Columbia Parks and Recreation Department provides to the community:** Ninety percent (90%) of respondent households indicated that they feel that Columbia parks and recreation *promotes health and wellness*. Other benefits include: Provides recreational experiences (88%), strengthens community image and a sense of place (76%), and protects environmental resources (53%).

WAYS RESIDENTS LEARN ABOUT PROGRAMS, ACTIVITIES, AND FACILITIES

- Sixty-seven percent (67%) of respondent households indicated that they learn about Columbia Parks and Recreation department programs, activities and facilities through “*Leisure Times*” activity guide. Other ways include: From friends and neighbors (59%), parks and recreation website (43%), newspaper articles and advertisements (38%), and “City Source” utility newsletter (38%).

TRAIL USAGE AND PREFERENCES

- **Trail Usage:** Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondent households indicated that they use the *MKT trail*. Other trails used include: Stephens Lake Park Trails (59%), Trail(s) in a neighborhood park (38%), Hinkson Creek Trail (36%), and Bear Creek Trail (29%).
- **Trail preferences:** Twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondent households indicated that they prefer *a combination of gravel through flat areas and hard surface on slopes and areas where there are frequent washouts*. Other preferences include: A hard surface trail because it doesn't wash out when it rains, has less annual maintenance costs, is cleaner, and doesn't adversely affect the environment by erosion (24%), do not have a trail surface preference (24%), and a gravel surface because it has less impact on my joints and/or because it fits in more with natural surroundings than a hard surface (23%).

MAJOR PROJECTS FUNDED FROM 2000-2014 FROM THE 1/8TH CENT SALES TAX

- **Importance of projects:** Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondent households indicated that it was either "very important" or "somewhat important" for the *replacement and repair of old deteriorating bridges on the MKT trail* was an important parks and recreation project. Other important project include: Stephens Lake Park, Philips Park, Gans Creek Recreation Area, and the park property adjacent to Battle High School (83%), installation of new year-round restrooms to replace portable toilets on the MKT Trail, Garth Nature Area , and grindstone Nature Area (82%).
- **Most important projects:** Based on the sum of respondent households top four choices, 47% indicated that they thought the most important project for that was funded by the 1/8th cent sales tax to improve parks and recreation services was *Stephens Lake Park/Philips Park/Gans Creek Recreation Area, & the park property adjacent to Battle High School*. Other most important projects include: Installation of new year-round restrooms on the MKT Trail, Garth Nature Area, and Grindstone Nature area (39%), replacement/repair of older deteriorating bridges on the MKT Trail (34%), and Stephens Lake, Philips, Bonnie View Nature Sanctuary, Jay Dix (34%).

POTENTIAL NEW PROJECT TO BE FUNDED WITH THE 1/8TH CENT SALES TAX

- **Support for potential projects:** Based on the percentage of respondents who were either "very supportive" or "somewhat supportive," 88% indicated that they would support the City to fund the *fix-up and repair of older park facilities, shelters, playgrounds, and restrooms*. Other similar levels of support include: Develop new walking and biking trails that connect neighborhoods to destination (major) trails (75%), upgrade and improve existing pools, sports fields, and golf courses (74%), and acquire land for preservation and develop walking and hiking trails (73%).

- **Actions residents are most willing to fund:** Based on the percentage of respondent households top four choices, 37% indicated they would be the most willing to fund the City to *acquire land for preservation and develop walking and hiking trails*. Other actions include: Fix-up and repair older park facilities, shelters, playgrounds, and restrooms (37%), continue to develop the trail loop around the city (33%), develop new walking and biking trails that connect neighborhoods to destination (major) trails (32%), and acquire land to preserve open space and protect the environment (28%).

SUPPORT FOR RENEWAL OF THE 1/8TH CENT SALES TAX

- Eighty-two percent (82%) of respondent households would be either “very supportive” or “somewhat supportive” of the renewal of the 1/8th cent sales tax to fund the types of projects residents indicated are the most important to their household. Other levels of support include: Not sure (10%) and not supportive (8%).
- Twenty-three percent (23%) of respondent households would be willing for the 1/8th park sales tax to be in effect for 8 years prior to coming back to a vote for renewal. Other amounts of time include: 10 years (23%), 5 years (18%), 1 year (14%), 7 years (9%), 0 years (9%), and 6 years (5%).

ALLOCATION OF \$100 TOWARD PARKS, TRAILS, AND FACILITIES

- If respondent had \$100 to spend toward parks, trails, and facilities, they would spend \$42 toward *maintaining the condition of existing parks, trails, and facilities*. Other amounts include: \$21 toward trails, including new construction, improvements, acquisition, and connections, \$21 toward acquiring, protecting and preserving, parks, green space and stream corridors, and \$16 toward new park or facility development.

SUPPORT FOR MAKING THE 1/8TH CENT SALES TAX PERMANENT

- **Level of Support:** Seventy-two percent (72%) of respondent households are either “very supportive” or “somewhat supportive” of making the 1/8th cent park sales tax a permanent funding source for local parks. Other levels of support include: Not supportive (15%) and not sure (13%).

- **Reasons respondents are “not sure” or are “not supportive” of making the 1/8th cent sales tax permanent:** Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents indicated that they were “not sure” or would “not support” the 1/8th cent sales tax becoming permanent *because they think voting to approve the tax every 5 years is appropriate and that there is no reason to make it permanent*. Other reasons include: I do not support any type of tax renewal of the park sales tax (25%) and I would be willing to support increasing the number of years the sales tax is in effect to help fund larger ticket items, but would not support a permanent 1/8th cent park sales tax (17%).