

# Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment: 2011 Park/Recreation User Survey

## *Findings Summary*



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**Executive Summary**

**2011 Park/Recreation User Survey**

## Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey 2011 Park/Recreation User Survey

### Methodology Overview

An invitation to complete a web-based survey was sent via email to 6,079 Parks & Recreation web mail subscribers (50+ Programs, Adult Softball, ARC Announcements, Basketball, Football, Golf, Indoor Sports, Leisure Times Activity Guide, Soccer, Baseball/Softball, and Youth Lacrosse). Due to sampling procedures, individuals who use parks or facilities yet are not web mail subscribers were not included in the sample. To increase response rates, online respondents were offered an opportunity to enter in a drawing for prizes and hard copies were also offered to anyone unable to enter online. A total of 786 completed surveys were received between November 9 and December 2, 2011, for a final response rate of thirteen percent (13%; note: some individuals may subscribe to more than one webmail list and thus may be counted more than once in the sample list, lowering the reported response rate). The survey instrument included questions similar to the 2010 Parks and Recreation Citizen Survey, with the elimination of questions related to the 2010 Parks Sales Tax ballot issue and the addition of questions specific to park users. For questions in which respondents were asked to indicate rankings, data were cleaned to remove multiple identical responses per respondent on a single question.

### Major Survey Findings

**1. Visiting City Parks.** Ninety-nine percent (99%) of respondents had visited City of Columbia parks during the past year. Of those, the *park visited most often* by respondents was Cosmo Park (47%), followed by Stephens Lake Park (17%), Cosmo-Bethel Park (6%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area (6%), and Albert-Oakland Park (4%). When considering the *top three most often visited parks*, seventy-one percent (71%) of respondents reported Cosmo Park in their top three, followed by Stephens Lake Park (50%), Cosmo-Bethel Park (22%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area (17%), Albert-Oakland Park (15%), Flat Branch Park (13%), and Grindstone Nature Area (10%).

**2. Visiting City Trails.** Seventy-nine percent (79%) of respondents had visited City of Columbia's trails during the past year. Of those, the *trail visited most often* by respondents was the MKT Trail (53%), followed by Stephens Lake Park- Lake or Perimeter Trail (11%), and Bear Creek Trail (11%). When considering the *top three most often visited trails*, seventy-four percent (74%) of respondents reported the MKT Trail in their top three, followed by Stephens Lake Trails (41%), Bear Creek Trail (23%), Twin Lakes Recreation Area Trail (21%), Grindstone Nature Area/Capen Park - Nature Trails (19%), Forum Nature Area – Nature Trails (13%), Cosmo Park – Fitness Trail (12%), and Hinkson Creek Trail (12%).

**3. Condition of Parks/Trails.** Ninety percent (90%) of the respondents rated the physical condition of the parks/trails they've visited as either excellent (35%) or good (55%) condition. Only seven percent (7%) of respondents rated the physical condition of parks/trails as fair, and less than one percent (<1%) rated them as poor. In addition, two percent (2%) indicated they didn't know.

**4. City Parks and Recreation Facilities Used or Visited.** The City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents have used/visited during the past 12 months are: walking, hiking, and biking trails (81%), nature trails (57%), picnic shelters (56%), playgrounds (55%), and the Activity & Recreation Center (40%). When considering the *one facility used most often*, twenty-nine percent (29%) of respondents indicated walking, hiking and biking trails, followed by softball/baseball fields (14%), skateboard/roller hockey park (13%), and playgrounds (9%). When considering the *top four most often used/visited facilities*, sixty-nine percent (69%) of respondents indicated walking, hiking, and biking trails, followed by playgrounds (33%), nature trails (29%), softball/baseball fields (25%), the Activity & Recreation Center (24%), and picnic shelters (21%).

**5. Reasons Preventing Respondents from Using City Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The most frequently mentioned reasons preventing respondents from using City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities are: “we are too busy” (26%), “location of City facilities is not close to my home” (24%), “personal security/safety” (13%), “fees are too expensive” (12%), and “parks do not contain the facilities we need” (12%). In addition, thirty percent (30%) of respondents indicated that nothing prevented them from using City of Columbia parks and recreation facilities.

**6. Perceived Green Space Within Walking Distance.** Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents feel that there are sufficient parks and green space within walking distance of their residence, while twenty-nine percent (29%) responded there is not sufficient green space within walking distance of their residence. In addition, eight percent (8%) responded they were not sure.

**7. Participation in City Parks and Recreation Programs.** The parks and recreation programs with highest percentage of respondents reporting participation over the past 12 months are: youth and adult sports (47%), special events (34%), and aquatics (31%). Twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents indicated they do not use recreation programs. When considering the *one most often used program*, respondents indicated youth and adult sports (37%), followed by special events (11%) and aquatics (9%). Similarly, when considering their *top four most utilized programs*, forty-seven percent (47%) of respondents indicated youth and adult sports, followed by special events (34%), aquatics (30%), fitness/exercise classes (18%), outdoor/nature education (11%), and golf programs (11%).

**8. Need for More Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of respondents have an additional need for more of are: small neighborhood parks (39%), ice skating facilities (30%), large community parks (26%), boating and fishing areas (25%), walking and biking trails (23%), off-leash dog parks (21%), and soccer fields (20%). In addition, fourteen percent (14%) of the respondents indicated they do not need any additional parks and recreation facilities.

**9. Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities.** When asked to select which parks and recreation facilities are the *most important* to the respondents’ household regardless of how often used, thirteen percent (13%) indicated skateboard parks/bike parks as their top one choice, followed by walking and biking trails (10%), and ice-skating facilities (8%). When considering

the *top four facilities most important* to respondents' household regardless of how often used, twenty-four percent (24%) of respondents indicated walking and biking trails in their top four choices, followed by ice skating facilities (22%), small neighborhood parks (20%), skateboard parks/bike parks (18%), off-leash dog parks (16%), and nature trails (14%). In addition, eight percent (8%) of the respondents reported that none of the facilities were most important to their household.

**10. Need for Additional Recreation Programs.** The recreation programs that the highest percentages of respondents have an additional need for more of are: special events/festivals (17%), adult fitness and wellness programs (17%), nature education programs/outdoor adventure (16%), education/life skills programs (12%) and youth/teen sports programs (12%). In addition, forty-two percent (42%) of respondents indicated they do not have a need for additional recreation programs.

**11. Most Important Recreation Program.** Regarding programs that are the *most important* to the respondents' household regardless of how often they participate, seven percent (7%) indicated youth/teen sports programs as their top one choice, followed by adult fitness and wellness programs (6%), youth learn to swim programs (6%), special events/festivals (6%), and adult sport programs (6%). When considering the *top three programs most important* to respondents' household regardless of how often participate, twenty-two percent (22%) of respondents listed special events/festivals, followed by nature education programs/outdoor adventure (17%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (16%). In addition, thirty-three percent (33%) of the respondents reported that none of the recreation programs were most important to their household.

**12. Recreation Programs Participated in Most Often.** When asked to select which *one recreation program* respondents currently participate in most often, thirteen percent (13%) indicated youth/teen sports programs, followed by special events/festivals (11%), and adult sports programs (9%). When considering the *top four recreation programs* respondents currently participate in most often, twenty-six (26%) of respondents indicated special events/festivals in their top four, followed by youth/team sports programs (16%), adult sports programs (12%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (12%). In addition, forty-one percent (41%) of respondents reported none.

**13. Ways Respondents Learn about Programs and Activities.** The most frequently indicated ways respondents report learning about Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs and activities are: parks and recreation website (63%), "Leisure Times" activity guide (61%), friends and neighbors (49%), email bulletins or E-newsletters (30%), newspaper articles/advertisements (28%), radio (24%), repeat customer (23%), and school flyer/newsletter (20%). In addition, fourteen percent (14%) of respondents indicated they learn about Columbia Parks and Recreation Department programs through Facebook.

**14. Radio Station Popularity.** The most listened-to Columbia area radio stations by respondents are KBIA 91.3 FM (15%), followed by KCLR 99.3 FM (11%), KOQL 106.1 (9%), and KBXR 102.3 (9%).

**15. Actions Most Willing to Fund.** The actions that the highest percentage of respondents are “very supportive” of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: fix-up/repair older park facilities/shelters/playgrounds (73%), upgrade/improve existing pools/sports fields/golf courses (56%), acquire land for preservation & develop walking/hiking trails (52%), and acquire land to preserve open space & protect the environment (48%).

When including respondents that are somewhat supportive, a similar pattern emerges. The actions with the highest percentage of support (i.e., “very supportive” and “somewhat supportive”) of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: fix-up/repair older park facilities/shelters/playgrounds (97%), upgrade/improve existing pools/sports fields/golf courses (89%), acquire land for preservation & develop walking/hiking trails (88%), and acquire land to preserve open space & protect the environment (87%), acquire land for developing neighborhood parks (86%), acquire land for developing athletic fields and recreational facilities (84%), and develop new nature/education trails (79%).

There were only two actions with the majority of respondents are “not supportive” of funding with their parks and recreation tax dollars are: acquire and develop a new golf course (65%), and develop equestrian trails (52%).

**16. Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Parks and Recreation Department.** Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents are either very satisfied (51%) or somewhat satisfied (37%) with the overall value their household receives from the City of Columbia Parks and Recreation Department. Only four percent (4%) of respondents are either somewhat dissatisfied (3%) or very dissatisfied (1%). In addition, eight percent (8%) of respondents indicated they were neutral regarding the overall value to their household.

**17. Priority of Maintaining Existing Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities.** Eighty-eight percent (88%) of respondents feel that city officials should place either a very high (46%) or high (42%) priority on maintaining existing parks, trails, and recreation facilities. Twelve percent (12%) feel that it should be a medium priority, and less than one percent (0.4%) of respondents feel that maintaining existing parks, trails and recreation facilities should be a low priority.

**18. Support for Funding Technological Improvements within the Parks and Recreation System.** Four technology improvements received support from the majority of respondents: develop online reservation system for picnic shelters (90%: 50% very supportive, 40% somewhat supportive), develop mobile applications for smart phones (77%: 42% very supportive, 35% somewhat supportive), provide wireless internet access in the parks (62%: 27% very supportive, 35% somewhat supportive), and develop online videos (57%: 14% very supportive, 43% somewhat supportive). The technology improvement that received the greatest proportion of respondents indicating they are not supportive of it is provide webcams at various park facilities (42%), followed by provide wireless internet access in parks (34%), and develop online golf tee time reservations (31%).

**19. Change in Use of Public Parks and Recreation Facilities during the Past Year.** During the past 12 months, sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents have used public parks and recreation facilities the same amount as in the past. In addition, thirty-one percent (31%) of

respondents have made *greater* use of public parks and recreation facilities, while only six percent (6%) have made *less* use of public parks and recreation facilities.

**20. Demographics.** Sixty-three percent (63%) of respondents were Female, while thirty-five percent (35%) were Male and two percent (2%) did not answer. Regarding race/ethnicity, the majority of respondents reported to be White (92%), followed by Black (2%), Hispanic or Latino (2%), and Other (2%).

Thirty-nine percent (39%) of households had at least one youth under the age of 19 years. Of those, nine percent (9%) had at least one child under 5 years, eleven percent (11%) with at least one child 5-9 years, eleven percent (11%) with at least one child 10-14 years, and eight percent (8%) with at least one child 15-19 years. In addition, twenty-one percent (21%) of households had at least one adult between 20-34 years, thirty-eight percent (38%) with at least one adult between 35-64 years, and only two percent (2%) of reporting households had at least one adult 65 years or older.

Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents live within Columbia city limits, while twenty-three percent (23%) do not. Additionally, two percent (2%) indicated they do not know, or did not answer. Regarding zip code, forty-five percent (45%) of respondents have a home zip code of 65203, followed by 65202 (27%), 65201 (18%), and other (10%).



Heritage Festival at Nifong Park