



Park and Recreation Needs Assessment

Fairfax County Park Authority

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Park Needs Survey Results: At-a-Glance

Context

- The purpose of the survey is to provide statistically valid, objective, and quantitative data reflecting public input relating to park and recreation needs. The survey is part of the broader Park Needs Assessment study. Including such a survey in a park and recreation needs assessment study is an industry best practice.
- PROS Consulting LLC, a nationally recognized leader and expert in the parks and recreation industry, was selected as the primary consultant to provide assistance for the needs assessment. ETC Institute/Leisure Vision, a member of the consultant team, administered and is analyzing the need survey. ETC is an industry leader in the design, administration, and analysis of park and recreation surveys.
- In March of 2015, surveys were sent to 15,000 randomly selected Fairfax County households. A threshold of 3,000 responses was needed for analysis; 4,665 responses were obtained. The completed surveys yield a 95% confidence level with a margin of error of +/- 1.4%.

Key Park Needs Survey Results

- Use of parks in Fairfax County surpasses the national average: 87% of households have visited parks operated by FCPA in the past 12 months; the national benchmark is 79%. (See Q.2)
- 91% of the households rate the physical condition of Fairfax County parks and facilities as excellent or good. (See Q.3)
- The two most important services for the Park Authority to provide are: 1) preservation of open space and the environment; and 2) provision of opportunities to improve physical health and fitness. (See Q.4)
- The three most important (expressed needed) parks and facilities are: paved walking and biking trails; large regional parks; small community parks. (See Q.7)
- The three most important outdoor or indoor facilities are: swimming pools; exercise and fitness facilities; gyms (basketball, volleyball, etc.). (See Q.9)
- The three most important programs/activities are: biking, hiking, walking; exercise/fitness; special events, concerts. (See Q.11)
- The top four actions households are most willing to fund with County tax dollars: expand/renovate walking/biking trails; purchase land to preserve open space, restore/maintain natural areas; upgrade/renovate existing park buildings. (See Q.14)
- If given \$100 to spend on parks, households would spend it this way:
 - Repair/maintain existing parks and infrastructure: \$30
 - Upgrade/expand existing park facilities: \$22
 - Conserve and maintain natural and historic resources: \$18
 - Acquire new parkland and open space: \$17
 - Develop new recreation and parks facilities: \$13 (See Q.15)

- 57% of households rate their satisfaction as high (10, 9, or 8 on a scale of 10 to 1). (See Q.16)
- 62% of households rated high quality parks, trails, recreation facilities and services as ‘extremely important’ to the quality of life in Fairfax County; another 31% rated it ‘highly important’. (See Q.17)

Trends and Takeaways from Park Needs Survey Results

- County households express a need for and report that they heavily use a wide variety of facilities, parks, and programs offered in Fairfax County parks; this is consistent with past need surveys.
- Parks are more popular than ever – 2015 survey reflects the highest park use numbers received in last five community surveys.
- Parks are being ‘loved to death’ – use is up, but satisfaction is down slightly and condition rating is lower than comparable systems.
- The importance of parks to quality of life is through the roof – higher than it has been in 12 years.

How Park Needs Survey Data Will Be Used

- Data will be used to develop survey findings; a summary report of the survey will be included in the final Needs Assessment Study Report.
- Survey findings along with other qualitative data and trends research will inform development of park service level standards and a 10-yr Park Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).
- Data will support sound decision making by Park Authority staff and board.
- Data will be used to support capital project prioritization for Park Bond Referenda in 2016 and 2020.
- Data will support comprehensive planning of the Fairfax County park system.



If any accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.