



Recreation Program Plan

Fiscal Year 2011-12



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Introduction

Citizens of Austin are vested in their park system and most especially in the neighborhood recreation centers which are valued for the specific benefits each center provides to the neighborhood. Values such as community, investment in youth development, personal and enrichment manifest themselves in the programs and services desired by Austin residents.

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department commissioned the University of Texas School of Public Health to conduct a community needs assessment with the specific goal of understanding what citizens value and how these values directly correlate to the programs and services provided at neighborhood recreation centers. *Attachment A, Recreation Center Community Engagement Results* is the complete and final draft of this assessment. The needs assessment quantitative and qualitative methodologies yielded specific dominant themes that serve as the guiding principals of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department Recreation Program Plan.

The purpose of the Recreation Program Plan is to:

- provide demographic data associated with recreation program delivery trends,
- identify community issues,
- identify community program and service desires,
- establish strategies for improving service delivery, and
- make specific recommendations for implementing the plan.

Guiding Principles

The business of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department is guided by the Department vision, mission and values. These elements in combination with the community values will guide future resource allocation, the recreation center program complement, changes in service delivery and recreation center operations.

Recreation Department Vision

Create a livable community through people, parks and programs.

Recreation Department Mission

The **Austin Parks and Recreation Department** is committed to provide, protect and preserve a park system that promotes quality recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin Community.

Recreation Department Values

Sustainability

Preserve and protect
Plan for the future

Creative

Developing dynamic park spaces, lifelong recreational, cultural and educational opportunities for Austin's diverse communities

Collaborative

Developing strong partnerships
Embracing Austin's cultural diversity

Accountable

Quality over quantity
Maintain public trust

Inclusive

Accessible to all

Committed

Provide unbeatable customer service and
Personally invest in our community

Spirited

We are passionate about our work,
have fun doing it and celebrate a job well done

Integrity

Honor the public's trust by conducting
ourselves with integrity and doing what
it takes to get the job done right, the
right way

Recreation Program Unit Value Statements

We value lifelong recreational, cultural, environmental and educational opportunities for Austin's diverse communities.

We value professional accountability to ourselves, to one another, to our organization, and to our customers.

We value continuous relationship building through effective communications.

We value a commitment to offer accessible, affordable quality core services within safe and inclusive environments

Community Input

Over the course of 6 weeks, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department hosted 22 separate meetings at neighborhood recreation centers and also made available an on-line survey to assess citizen's opinion as to the value of the Parks and Recreation Department. Dominant value themes emerged and included creating community, personal enrichment and youth development. These values will be considered as part of future program development and will be discussed at length later as part of the overall Recreation Program Plan.

Citizen's also identified operational issues and programming desires that will be most helpful in determining recreation center goals and resource allocation. Utilizing the community input, the Department will review operations holistically to ensure a balanced programming complement and improved services to close the identified operational gaps.

Demographics

The 2010 census information has yet to be complete and final age, income and housing information is not available at the time of this printing; however, preliminary trends indicate the following regarding ethnicity:

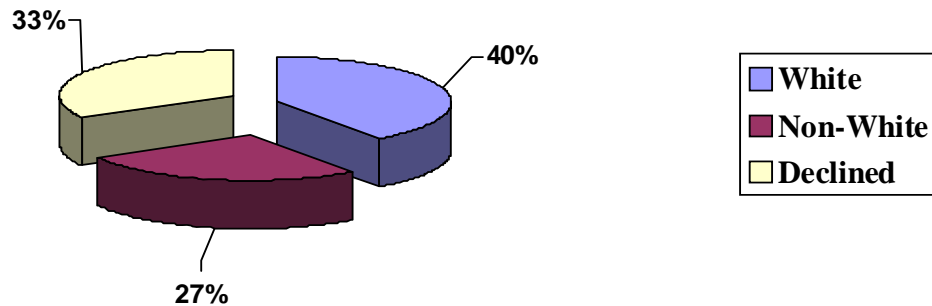
- One out of every two children within the City of Austin is now Hispanic
- The total population continued to diversify in terms of racial and ethnic makeup
- There has been a decrease in the total number of African Americans within the City as the overall metropolitan African American community expanded and suburbanized
- Working-class Hispanic households continue to concentrate within Barrio-like neighborhoods while middle-class Hispanic households continue to disperse and suburbanize

- Continued rapid growth of the Asian community with a de-concentration of household clusters across the metropolitan region

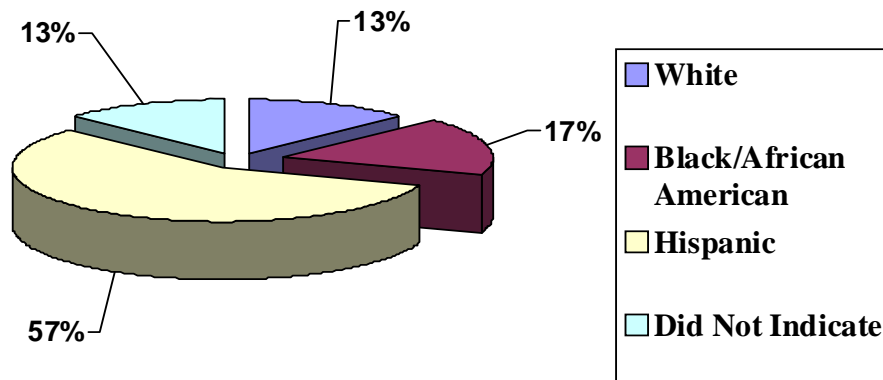
Ethnicity demographics within a two mile radius of each recreation center has been collected and charted. Overall the ethnicity demographics indicate a growth in the Hispanic population in specific areas of the city and a decline in the African American population in historically African American neighborhoods.

In terms of ethnicity, almost the same number of Hispanics as non-Hispanics participated in the neighborhood meetings (40% of participants were white, 27% were non-white and 32.9% declined to select a race, however the majority of these individuals identified themselves as Hispanic and chose not to select a race). Approximately 52% of participants completing the on-line survey indicated they were white, 9.2% indicated they were Black/African American, 13% Hispanic, 3.1% Asian and the remaining 23% did not indicate a race.

Neighborhood Meetings



On-Line Survey



Complete demographic information is important to neighborhood program planning and service delivery to ensure:

- Surveying community interests for future program diversity,
- Adapt existing programs to meet needs of the neighborhood demographic,
- Developing program marketing and communication plans,
- Developing community education and outreach programs,
- Developing an appropriate fee structure, and
- Expanding current public/private partnership opportunities.

Horizon Issues

Aging Facilities-

The majority of the recreation centers are in dire need of repair or replacement. Compounding the issue is the lack of adequate resources. Further, the maintenance of buildings and equipment is often deferred, not only because of lack of adequate maintenance staffing, but the lack of sufficient funding. Over time, this potentially impacts employee and patron safety, reduces efficient operations, and drives costs. Primarily because of emergency repairs to facilities and replacement of aging equipment some failures occur during peak programming periods. A significant number of work orders remain in back log.

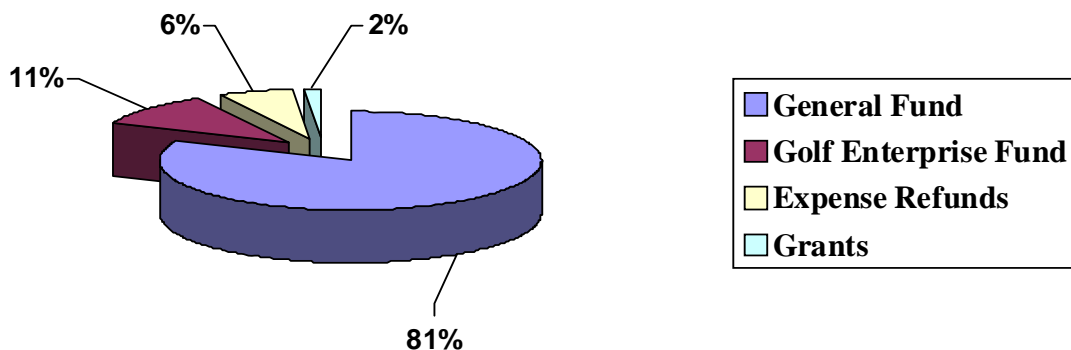
Insufficient Staffing-

Recreation Center programs are being operated with less than adequate staff. Consequently the public has voiced concerns regarding inadequate programming, less than stellar customer service during facility rentals, less than desirable recreation center hours of operation, and un-kept facilities. Recreation center staff has been attempting to provide the same programs and services as when resources were more plentiful. While the quantity of services has not changed, the quality has significantly decreased.

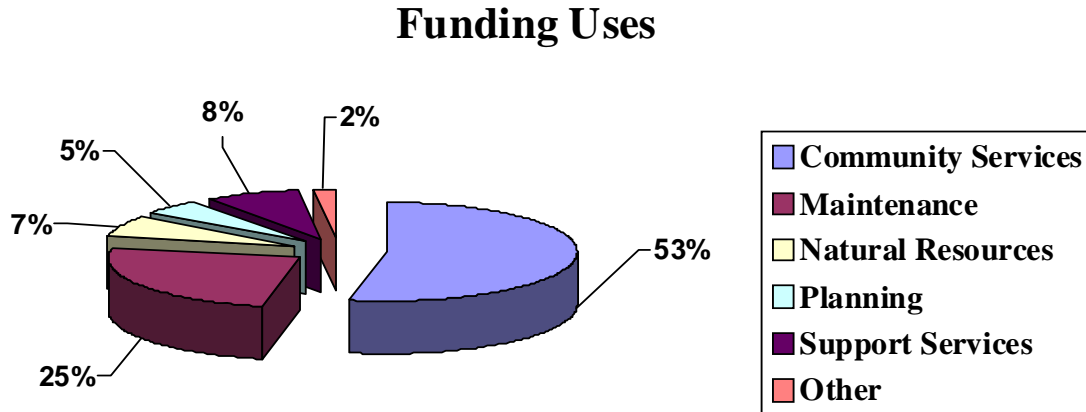
Financial Review-

Funding for recreation is comprised of the following sources 81.5% general fund, 10.8% golf enterprise fund, 6.2% expense refunds and 1.5% grants for a total of \$53.4 million.

Recreation Funding



Uses for the funding include 53% community services, 25% maintenance, 7% natural resources, 5% planning, 8% support services and 2% other.



The Austin Parks and Recreation Department is expected to collect \$7,888,610 in revenue or a mere 15% of the Department's total expenses.

It is expected the Department will reduce its budget by approximately \$1.9 million in fiscal year 2012. The direct impacts to the Recreation Centers will be the closure of two (2) recreation centers. The full-time staff at each facility will be repurposed at other locations thereby resulting in no full-time job loss. Other cuts will also be made, but will not directly impact the recreation centers.

Action Plan Recommendations

1. Develop training to ensure program staff understand the guiding principals of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department
2. Collect completed demographic information and profile individual neighborhoods surrounding recreation centers
3. Develop and implement a basic preventative maintenance plan within available resources to slow facility deterioration
4. Review individual recreation operations budgets and personnel budgets to determine resources available for program implementation and facility services (i.e. rentals, supervision, etc.)
5. Develop program planning process for appropriate staff and budget allocation
6. Develop basic customer service training to improve staff/patron interactions
7. Research site specific revenue generation opportunities and develop implementation plan by fiscal year 2014

Recreation Programs Review

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department has 18 neighborhood recreation centers, 1 recreation center dedicated to adaptive recreation, 1 recreation center dedicated to outdoor activities and 3 senior activity centers. The programming complement at the neighborhood centers range from after-school programs to athletics to cultural arts to technology to environmental education. The 18 recreation centers traditionally serve all age groups from pre-school to senior citizens. The adaptive recreation center serves clientele ranging in age from elementary school ages to adult and the clientele have a variety of disabilities.

To date, the program quality has varied from center to center, based upon the expertise of the recreation center staff and budgetary restrictions. Personnel and operational budgets vary from site to site and contribute to the inconsistency in program offerings and the ability to meet the neighborhood's recreational needs. Additionally, programs have been added to the complement based upon the desires of citizen groups who request programming.

The program fees at each site have varied based upon "historical" prices. In other words, fees have been set based upon what staff believes the community can afford and what has been charged in the past. A fee philosophy does not exist and there is no standardized procedure regularly followed to establish program fees or center rental fees across Department-wide centers.

Some recreation centers have active citizen support groups. The partnership between the neighborhood recreation centers and their respective citizen support group has the potential to be very beneficial. Some support groups remain active, but the majority has become disenfranchised with the Department. To date the relationship lacks a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between the groups and has been contentious at times.

The Department's resources continue to shrink yet the demand for providing services remains high. In order to better serve the citizen's of Austin, the Department assessed citizen's opinion as to the value of the Parks and Recreation Department. The dominant values and program themes that emerged are as follows:

Creating Community

Fostering a sense of community and bringing people within the neighborhoods together was a strong recurring theme. People overwhelmingly spoke of the recreation center as a place in the community that would bring people together. Program suggestions related to the theme of creating community included large holiday events, community oriented special events, or events for specific interest groups (like parent's night out where kids supervised at center and parents able to utilize time to socialize with other adults).

In the same vein as creating community, citizen's desired an opportunity to enhance their relationships with their neighbors and the neighborhood recreation center personnel. Citizen's expressed a sincere desire to know their neighbors. Specific program ideas included intergenerational programming and English as a second language classes to reduce communication barriers. It was also suggested the Department consider developing neighborhood specific relationships with external partners such as churches, schools and community organizations to leverage resources and opportunities and enhance the sense of community. It was also desirable for neighborhood recreation centers to become the information hub for the community.

Holistic Youth Development

With the exception of the 3 senior recreation centers, citizens expressed a clear desire to have positive programming and multiple diverse opportunities for youth. More precisely, there is a desire for the recreation center to "develop children with ethics, morals, strengths and confidence." This is not about a single program but instead about offering varied and diverse programming opportunities for youth to develop skills that will make them healthy well adjusted productive adults. Specifically, citizen's expressed a desire to see tutoring, counseling and mentoring services available at the neighborhood recreation centers as means to facilitate holistic youth development.

Programming specifically associated with youth development that was rated most desired by the neighborhood recreation centers included youth and teen after-school and camp programs; athletics programs (basketball, soccer, baseball, etc); early childhood programming; and cultural art programs (dance, arts and crafts, etc.). In regards to the adaptive recreation center, the most desired programs included adult day programs and adaptive sports for youth ages 8 and older.

Adult Enrichment

Citizen's expressed a desire to provide opportunities for adults to participate in both new and established life long leisure opportunities. A significant determining factor for adult participation is whether or not the participant learns something new or benefits from the experience. Citizen's expressed the desire for programming that encouraged learning and self-improvement. Some specific programming suggestions included computer classes; fitness classes (yoga, aerobics, etc.) and health/wellness lectures.

It is important to consider the senior citizen (in this case defined as 60 and over) perspective separate from the overall assessment as this population has a unique and focused need. Overwhelmingly senior participants reported they valued socialization and staying active as a means of improving their quality of life. Seniors participating in the meal program reported this to be an important factor to their participation in senior center activities. Additionally seniors' top program desires included fitness classes; informative health, wellness and nutrition classes; and day trips/excursions.

Benefits Based Recreation

It is apparent from citizen's responses that if the programs and services provided must produce a measurable benefit for the neighborhood. It is important the department measure and demonstrate how the programs and services offered benefit the community and adhere to that which the community values. For example, it is important to demonstrate a program or service creates a sense of community, develops youth, or improves a participant's quality of life. Currently, neighborhood recreation centers do not have a system by which the benefits derived from participating in a recreation program are measured and recorded. Therefore, neighborhood recreation centers struggle to prove their viability.

Action Plan Recommendations

1. Define Recreation Programs Unit fee philosophy
 - Define "costs" including but not limited to direct, indirect, administrative and personnel, fixed
 - Define core services, community benefit services, user benefit services
 - Determine which services should be subsidized by Department
 - Determine "formula" for program fees
 - Determine subsidization methodology
2. Review each individual recreation center program complement against the community engagement results
 - Use a program delivery model to determine programs to be delivered by the center
 - Use a program delivery model to determine programs to be delivered by a partner organization or contractor
 - Determine what new program opportunities/enrichment opportunities are desired (i.e. community based programs, family focused events; community volunteer opportunities) and the appropriate way to support these new programs
3. Work with citizen support groups to define partnership roles and responsibilities
 - Create operating procedures to be followed by both staff and support groups
 - Create appropriate Department policy to guide staff through citizen support group partnerships
4. Research neighborhood specific partnership opportunities to support community engagement results, especially creating community, youth development, and adult enrichment.
5. Organize and coordinate Department enrichment activity opportunities to be utilized by recreation centers for the purpose of enhancing program complement
6. Create standards for similar City-wide programs offered at recreation centers to insure the same quality program regardless of location (to include but not limited to after-school programs, camps, athletic programs, adult enrichment programs and senior programs)
7. Create a consistent and systematic evaluation methodology to assess the benefits of recreation to the participants

Marketing and Public Relations Review

The Austin Parks and Recreation Department utilizes print materials, a Department specific website and social media as a means by which to connect with the citizens of Austin. At the time of this writing the Department is working to develop a public relations plan and a program marketing plan. While similar, public relations are the practice of managing communication between the Department and the citizens. This communication may include building rapport with citizens and customers, educating the public through public speaking engagements, or working with the media to managing crisis communication or announce items of public interest.

A marketing plan is a means by which to determine what programs and services may be of interest to citizens, providing the desired programs and services and developing a strategy to build customer relationships to increase the customer base. Marketing includes key concepts such as determining the target market, publicity, promotion, branding and increasing the customer base.

In every single community engagement meeting participants expressed a concern over the lack of awareness among users and non-users alike. Participants clearly stated they did not know what was going on at their neighborhood recreation center. Additionally, in some areas, Spanish speaking citizens stated there was a lack of bilingual print material thereby eliminating potential users because of a language barrier.

Survey results confirmed the concern expressed during the meeting. Comments such as the website is “terrible”, “cumbersome” and “difficult to navigate” or that information is often lacking or incomplete coupled with only 37% of respondents indicating information about recreation programs was easy or somewhat easy indicates the Department has some work to do in marketing and advertising programs and services. Additionally the print material produced by recreation centers was “lacking”. Survey participants indicated they would prefer to receive information via the website, an e-mail/list serve or neighborhood newsletter or seasonal activity guide.

Another overall theme of the community engagement meetings included participants’ perception that the neighborhood recreation center staff did not always relay information to the community regularly or consistently. Policies, procedures or rules may change, but the community was not informed nor consulted regarding the changes; causing confusion. Additionally, staff was not always able to articulate the reason for the changes; causing the neighborhood to develop skepticism about the professionalism of the operation. It was noted that this skepticism led to a sense of being treated unfairly.

There was a strong desire to continue the community engagement process as a regularly scheduled opportunity.

Action Plan Recommendations

1. Working with the Department's Public Information Office, develop a comprehensive marketing plan
 - Review and redesign the website to make it user friendly
 - Utilize recreation center based resources to regularly post events and program schedules
 - Develop and implement a plan to make print materials available in Spanish and English (insuring both are grammatically correct)
 - Create a comprehensive social media marketing plan
 - Research the feasibility of creating a seasonal activity guide and implement the development and distribution of a seasonal guide working within available resources
 - Develop and implement a plan to cross marketing/cross promotion plan for programs within neighborhood recreation centers and across neighborhood recreation centers
2. Develop Department wide consistent regular community engagement/community event schedule to include an opportunity to educate neighborhood citizens as to new program opportunities, operational improvements and receive feedback
3. Research the feasibility of creating neighborhood specific recreation center newsletters to be distributed on a regular schedule. Based upon research outcome, develop newsletter template and distribution schedule
4. Develop a comprehensive plan to ensure staff professionalism
 - Develop Department wide access to the city charter, city ordinances, city administrative bulletins, Department policies, Department standards and Department operational standards
 - Develop site specific operating procedures for each neighborhood recreation center
 - Conduct regular staff training to ensure understanding those items that govern the business of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department (including but not limited to all items listed above) and ensure consistent enforcement
 - Schedule and conduct annual customer service training
5. Research neighborhood recreation center specific opportunities to provide informational brochures for neighborhood partner organizations

Attachment A

City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Recreation center community engagement results

[June 2011]

Executive Summary

Background

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) wants to know what programs and services they should be offering at recreation centers to meet the needs of community members. To this end, a community engagement process was undertaken that included community meetings as well as a community wide survey. Participants were asked about their values, priorities, and preferences in regard to recreation programming through the City of Austin. A community engagement meeting was held at each recreation center. These meetings were open to anyone to attend, but mainly drew users of that particular recreation center. There were approximately 350 participants based on sign-in sheets, but only 304 participants filled out demographic surveys. The survey had 261 participants. It was available for 10 weeks online and also in hardcopy at each recreation center and during community meetings.

Types of Programs

Survey respondents were asked what types of programs they felt it was important for PARD to offer, based on their beliefs about the role of PARD in the community. The top three responses were:

- Programs that are accessible and affordable for those with limited recreational opportunities, 71.6%
- Programs that encourage people to be healthy and stay in shape, 71.3%
- Programs for youth and teens that are safe and fun, 69.7%

These results are supported by the responses given in the community meetings. People valued many kinds of programs for youth and teens and programs that educated and encouraged healthy lifestyles and habits among all ages. In determining which activities in which to participate, cost was always mentioned as a factor.

Populations

Survey respondents were asked to choose which populations they feel it is important for PARD to serve. The top three populations are:

- Older adults (ages 60+), 67.8%
- Teens (ages 13-17), 67.4%
- Youth (ages 5-12), 65.9%

This is consistent with what was said at meetings. Youth, teens, and older adults were consistently talked about as important population groups at all meetings. Preschoolers, the group with the lowest rating of importance in the survey (47.1%), were rarely discussed at meetings, with the exception being early education programs such as tiny tots.

Activity Preferences

The following list of activities and types of programs are those that were rated as most important for PARD to offer on the survey and/or those that were most frequently discussed and valued at the meetings.

- Afterschool programs and day camps for youth and teens
- Special events and opportunities to bring people together
- Outdoor leisure activities (especially hiking, walking, and gardening)
- Computer classes
- Programs that promote activity such as fitness classes and youth and teen sports
- All types of special needs programs
- Health education and nutrition classes for all ages
- Programs that emphasize creativity and artistic expression (e.g. drawing, dancing, pottery)
- Field trips/excursions for youth and older adults

Additional services

Respondents were asked what additional non-recreation services they felt were important to have available at recreation centers. The services receiving the greatest percentages of people rating them as important or extremely important are:

- Meeting rooms open to community groups, 61.7%
- Senior Services (transportation, meals, excursions etc.), 51.0%
- Certification Classes (CPR, first aid, babysitting), 47.5%
- Health Education (nutrition, smoking cessation, disease management, wellness classes etc.), 47.1%

With the exception of certification classes, these services were also discussed as important in the meetings. Although tutoring (35.6%) and ESL classes (32.2%) were rated low in importance on the survey, these services were frequently mentioned at the meetings. Tutoring and mentoring were both repeatedly discussed as valuable services for youth and teens, while ESL classes were valued by those that use the program, and often suggested as something the center should offer.

Awareness of Programs

Respondents were asked how they currently hear about recreation programs. The top three methods were word of mouth (34.9%), visiting or calling a parks/recreation center (28.4%) and the Parks and Recreation Website (27.6%) When asked how they would like to hear about

recreation programs, the Parks and Recreation Website (46.0%), email/list serve (41.4%), and neighborhood newsletters (36.0%) were the most common responses.

There was great concern at community meetings that current marketing tactics are ineffective at promoting programs and reaching non-users in the community. Participants stated that people in the community are unaware of programs, or even the center itself. This is substantiated by the fact that the main reasons survey respondents gave for not participating in recreation programs was because they did not know what programs were being offered (56.1%), didn't know program locations (28.8%) or it was too hard to find the information (22.7%). Some meeting participants stated that they themselves didn't feel they knew all that was offered at their recreation center although they used it regularly. Many suggestions were given and ideas discussed, many of which focused on providing information online and improving the Parks and Recreation website.

Conclusion

The community recreation center serves a variety of purposes as it provides programs and services for all ages. The main roles of recreation centers as described by meeting participants and survey respondents are:

- **Building community:** Participants valued special events and open meeting rooms as an opportunity to bring family, friends and neighbors together. Providing occasions to socialize and feel connected to the local community as well as the larger community of Austin is an important role of the recreation center and its programs.
- **Enrichment opportunities:** The recreation center is a place to offer programs that increase knowledge, build skills, and expose participants to new ideas and opportunities. Computer classes, field trips, art classes, health education classes, and fitness activities all provide opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Holistic youth development:** Youth and teens were a clear priority at the meetings and in the survey. Recreation centers were seen as a place that should provide a safe environment for kids to develop life skills and a variety of positive attributes.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) needed to collect data and conduct a needs assessment regarding recreation centers and programming as part of the process for developing a five year strategic plan. In June 2010, PARD staff approached faculty at the University of Texas School of Public Health, Austin Regional Campus, regarding assistance with the design and implementation of a community engagement initiative, and the subsequent analysis of collected data and relative recommendations.

The overall goal of this project was to collect and analyze data regarding recreation center program preferences and values in order to inform immediate decisions and strategic planning. This was done via the creation and implementation of a unique community engagement initiative. A secondary aim stated that accreditation from the National Parks and Recreation Association (NPRA) required PARD to conduct a needs assessment as part of its development of a five year strategic plan, and would thus be more likely to occur if a needs assessment was completed.

The needs assessment focused on programming at all PARD recreation centers located throughout the city of Austin. The department operates 23 centers with a wide range of programs and users. Three facilities function as senior centers with programs and activities for older adults, while one center is designed specifically to provide programs for disabled participants. The purpose of the community engagement process is to understand what people want from their center and the motivation behind those wants in order to offer the best mix of programs and services to meet the needs of the population.

METHODS

The community engagement initiative followed a two-pronged approach. A city-wide survey was created to collect quantitative data, and a community meeting process was developed to gather qualitative data. Stakeholder input was gathered early, to guide the development of the

needs assessment and the design of the two data collection tools. Further description of these processes is below.

It was necessary to gather input from PARD staff members regarding current community engagement protocol and existing practices. Two key groups of stakeholders were identified and included in the development and implementation of this process. The first group included executive staff that oversees the Parks and Recreation Department, and specifically the Programs Division. The second group consisted of the site supervisors from each center who would be responsible for implementing and sustaining the community engagement processes. The history and background information for this project, as well as constraints and expectations, were provided by management personnel at PARD, notably Assistant Director Kimberly McNeeley, and Division Manager Patrick Corona. The recreation center supervisors were asked a series of questions to obtain information on current public involvement techniques, program marketing, evaluation processes, and existing community partnerships. Both stakeholder groups presented information that was used to guide the development of the public survey, the format and content of the community forum, the supervisor training process, methods of recruitment, and decisions about how and when to offer opportunities for public participation.

Qualitative

It was extremely important to PARD to create a community meeting model that could function as a public engagement tool to hear from as many people as possible. The purpose of the community meetings was to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying motivations and values that encourage or prohibit recreation center program participation. Because each center serves different geographical neighborhoods and populations, it was deemed necessary to conduct a meeting at each recreation center. In order to encourage public involvement, and hear from as many people as possible, these meetings were open to the public. In addition, as part of their professional development, PARD staff was responsible for conducting and facilitating these meetings.

In order to account for uncontrollable variables and maximize the value of the information obtained from these meetings, they were structured to encourage input from all participants and to minimize the possibility of bias from supervisors. In order to receive

meaningful insight without limiting the number of participants, it was decided that each meeting would split into small groups with a facilitator who did not work at the center, and then follow the nominal group technique.

The nominal group technique was chosen because it allows each individual to contribute ideas in turn, and then discuss each, thus fostering a conversation that provides insight into fundamental beliefs and values. It was also chosen because it limits opportunities for site supervisors to interject their own thoughts or explanations into the process and potentially influence a group's thoughts. The nominal group technique helps avoid such traps because the participants have control over the direction and content of the discussion. The facilitator maintains the process, asks the questions and appropriate probes when necessary, but refrains from entering the conversation.

The community meeting process that was created for PARD was both standardized and flexible. In order to ensure quality and consistency at all meetings, it was necessary to create a standard model and uniform script. However, in order to account for the uncontrollable variables and the diverse nature of each center, the process was flexible enough to adapt to different conditions.

After the community meeting model and content was approved, the process needed to be implemented. Prior to conducting the meetings were the training and recruitment phases. Staff training began in early January and continued through mid-February when actual meetings began. Generally there was a supervisor preparation meeting early in the work week, and then an all staff simulation during Thursday morning staff meetings. A variety of training techniques were used to ensure full understanding of the practice. In some training sessions actual questions were used in order to see what was easy, confusing, or difficult. Other training sessions involved unrelated topics in order to illustrate the multitude of possible responses and various discussions. A somewhat strict time frame was kept to keep people on track and simulate the real meetings. In addition, training groups varied in size to practice dealing with both small and large groups.

Recruitment occurred through PARD organized, city-wide promotion, as well as grassroots techniques employed by each center. PARD wanted to hear from as many people as possible, so all meetings were open to the public, and there was one at every center to further encourage people to come to their neighborhood center and give their opinions. PARD created a community engagement website with details about the entire initiative and a schedule of

meetings. These meetings were advertised on the Austin Notes website, the PARD home page, and through the local radio station. There was a uniform flier complete with a full schedule posted at each center, and site supervisors were tasked with promoting their meeting through local organizations and other grassroots efforts. These tactics included fliers on doors and through schools, distributing information to neighborhood associations and advisory board groups, word of mouth to all users, and disseminating information to local churches and other community organizations.

The community meetings were conducted over the course of three weeks in late February to mid-March. Most meetings were held at 6:30pm Tuesday through Thursday. There were a few meetings held on Saturday afternoons, and the senior center meetings occurred on weekday mornings. PARD staff acted as the small group facilitators and scribes during these meetings. There were also bilingual staff members available at some meetings to run Spanish speaking groups and/or to assist with translation when necessary. In all cases supervisors were present to deal with any problems or issues that could occur. The community meetings had anywhere from 2-50 participants, and only one meeting (Northwest Recreation Center, closed for renovations), was cancelled due to lack of turnout. In total there were 353 participants in 22 community meetings.

Data was analyzed with a case study approach. Each site was looked at as an individual case, in which the recorded responses and ideas were looked at in conjunction with specific circumstances, nature of participants, and field notes/observations. Each center was examined and coded to find the dominant themes and any significant outliers. After the initial analysis stage, the centers were then cross-analyzed for emerging trends and differences in order to determine the prevalent values and motivations of all PARD users. Because the three senior centers comprise a particular subgroup, they were also analyzed as a separate unit, the results of which can be found in the senior center subsection.

Quantitative

The purpose of the survey was to gather information about what programs and services the people of Austin would like offered at PARD recreation centers. To answer this question thoroughly, the survey included questions about recreation center and program usage,

programming priorities and preferences, program marketing, and additional non-recreation services people would like offered at recreation centers. Additional questions about nature-based activities (hiking, fishing, etc.) and park maintenance were added at the request of Kimberly McNeeley and Sara Hensley.

Feedback on question content, form, and ease of understanding was provided by Kimberly McNeeley, Patrick Corona, and approximately 30 PARD staff members involved in the implementation of the community meeting process. Revisions to the survey were made using this feedback. Once the survey was finalized and approved, it was then translated into Spanish. Questions were read for understanding and consistency with the English version.

The survey was made available in hard-copy format at each recreation center and online through the Parks and Recreation website. A dedicated web page with a link to the survey and information about the project was created by PARD. The survey was promoted on Austin Notes, a list serve run by the city, as well as on the cable access channel and KUT radio. Hard copies of the survey were printed and placed in each recreation center as well as the PARD main office. Hard copies were also made available during the community meetings held at each center. Both the online survey and the hard copies available at the centers and community meetings were available in both English and Spanish.

The survey was available from February 8 through April 11, 2011. There were 261 completed surveys. In addition to looking at the overall data, results were stratified by gender (male, female), race (whites, non-whites- including those of mixed race), ethnicity (Hispanic, non-Hispanic), age (18-39, 40-50, 60+), annual household income (less than \$50,000, \$50,000 or more), and geographic location (zip code east of Interstate 35, zip code west of Interstate 35). Chi squared tests for independence were used to determine if significant differences existed between answers to survey questions in each stratum. Fisher's exact test was used when expected cell counts were less than five. Results of statistical tests were verified by two different analysts using both Stata and Minitab statistical programs.

COMMUNITY MEETING RESULTS

Over the course of three weeks, 22 meetings were held, with approximately 350 participants. Demographic data was collected for 304 participants. There were 205 women and 97 men. The average age of participants was 54.5 years, however ages ranged from 11 years to 93 years old. There were almost the same number of Hispanics (140) and non-Hispanics (151). In terms of race, 40.1% of participants were white, 27.0% were non-white, and 32.9% declined to select a race, however the majority of these individuals identified themselves as Hispanic and chose not to select a race. Participants included new users as well as lifetime users, and the average number of years using the center was 11.6 years.

As expected, specific answers varied at times based on the demographics of participants and location of centers. However, in looking at all the meetings together, and determining the underlying concerns and motivations of participants, there were many recurring themes. These commonalities were sometimes expressed in different ways and through different priorities, but were often rooted in the same values and beliefs. Following is a review of the dominant themes that emerged during the community engagement meetings.

The Community

Fostering a sense of community and bringing people in the neighborhood together was a strong, recurring theme at every meeting, expressed through discussion of various values, motivations, and beliefs. People overwhelmingly spoke of the recreation center as a place in the community that would bring people together and serve the needs of the community.

Bring People Together

Participants repeatedly spoke of the recreation center in terms of a community center that should bring the community together. This was apparent in discussion about the center as a place to meet new people, a place to meet neighbors, a place to meet people with similar interests and/or lifestyles, and a place to network. These ideas were expressed consistently throughout the centers and were reinforced by explicit preference for the large, holiday-oriented community events (Thanksgiving dinner, breakfast with Santa, etc.) as well as the request for more similar events in which all community members can participate and meet one another. Participants also

expressed an interest in nights dedicated to a certain interest or cause. For example, single parents night in which the kids can come and play, and the parents have the opportunity to socialize and share experiences. Socialization was a key factor in why people use various programs and services, and was important for adults, seniors, and parents (representing their children).

It was also repeatedly mentioned that the center should serve as a place where community members can meet for their own reasons, without a specific program. Some centers focused on the need for meeting space in which community members can gather and deal with greater social justice issues. Some centers focused on open meeting space that could be available for local organizations (e.g. neighborhood associations) and/or citizens to use and coordinate activities relevant to the neighborhood. Again, they want the center to bring people together in their immediate community and serve the needs of the people in that immediate community.

Strengthen Bonds

Not only should the center foster a sense of community, it should provide activities and opportunities to enhance these relationships. This means helping to create new bonds, and strengthening those that already exist. People want to know their neighbors and feel connected to them. This was particularly notable when people suggested offering English-Spanish conversation classes at recreation centers. While ESL classes and improved Spanish language communications were also mentioned, the desire for conversation classes is about being able to communicate and interact with your neighbors. As mentioned, people feel the center should facilitate and enhance relationship building. Consistent with this belief, many people spoke of the center as a place to encourage family bonding, especially between parents and children, or as a place that can provide assistance and guidance for young families. In addition, many participants expressed a desire for more intergenerational activities, specifically between seniors and young users.

The other important relationship to remember is the one between community members and the staff. It was repeatedly mentioned that staff should be happy to be at work, passionate, caring, and interested. This was true in terms of being positive role models for children, but also in terms of being welcoming to the seniors. The staff is a significant part of the center's success

and the users' satisfaction. They set the tone of the center, and should be encouraging a friendly, positive environment through their attitude and behavior. Most participants had only positive comments about their staff members; this relationship is an integral component of how a center should run, and is often a factor in determining participation and satisfaction.

Community Pride and Safety

Bringing people together and offering opportunities to socialize and get to know each other can also contribute to users' sense of safety. It was mentioned throughout these meetings that the center is the hub of the community, and should be a safe place for people to participate in activities. This was particularly prevalent in terms of preventing youth misbehavior and providing safe alternatives for children and teenagers. These people, many of whom have lived in these neighborhoods for decades, are connected to their immediate community and proud of where they live and who they are. They want to develop a sense of community pride and respect, and believe that the recreation center should exhibit that pride. As expected, there was some talk of enhancing current maintenance and cleanliness, as well as building new facilities or adding new features. While this is not the focus of the report, it is important to note that these concerns are rooted in identifying the recreation center as a symbol of their neighborhood. People are concerned about the appearance and upkeep of their centers because of this association, and their personal connection to the center. If this place represents them, their families, and their neighborhood, then they want it to look good. That being said, many communities did discuss the condition of the center in regards to public image and pride. Safety is intrinsically linked to this sense of community togetherness and pride. If people know everyone in the community, it becomes a safer place (or perception of safety changes) because of increased trust and knowledge of the neighborhood.

PARD Relationships

While the emphasis was on strengthening the sense of community in these neighborhoods, there was also a strong urge to not be ignored and to belong to the larger, citywide community. There were multiple discussions about wanting to have what other centers

have. However, when the data is looked at and the values are considered, this is actually a false statement. People say they want to have the same things (facilities, opportunities, activities, rules) as other centers, but in reality what they want is open information and communication. Participants at every site encouraged the needs assessment and stated that PARD should go into the community, find what the community wants, and offer it. In conjunction with this sentiment, participants also described the types of programs they like and want. These were not the same at every site. Different sites had different preferences as to the specific programs they used and wanted, however each said that they want the center to offer what the surrounding community wants. This means that programs and services may vary by center, based on the needs of that community.

When participants spoke of wanting what other centers have, or not understanding why there were so many disparities between centers, it was rooted in a concern for equality and consistency - not about sameness. Because many of the centers are older, or have limited space, some seem much nicer than others. This makes people feel that they are not as important. They feel that they are ignored by PARD for a number of reasons. This is about feeling connected to the entire PARD system, and the city at large. People feel that they are being forgotten, or that their center is the least important. What they want is to know that there is consistency and fairness. Because the center is a symbol of their community, and by extension, part of their self-identification, they want to know that they have equal opportunities and access.

The above information focuses on connecting individual centers and enhancing internal relationships, but many participants also discussed the importance of external relationships with schools, churches, and other community organizations. Sometimes these were mentioned as potential (or existing) partners, who could help promote programs and provide resources such as facilities, volunteers, expertise, and services. They were also mentioned as organizations with which the center should coordinate to meet the needs of the community and ensure high program participation rates. People also suggested that PARD could partner with other organizations to offer new and different programs and services. It was repeatedly mentioned that the recreation centers could work with UT (and other nearby universities/colleges) to recruit volunteer coaches and mentors to work with youth and teen programs. This was often suggested as a way to provide positive role models with little cost. Partnerships and coordination were talked about as ways to maximize limited resources and create a more positive program experience.

Enrichment

Personal development and improvement was a recurring priority at every center. Regardless of age or involvement with the center, participants spoke of opportunities for themselves and/or their children to learn and grow. The recreation center can offer programs and activities that impart knowledge and skills and enhance capabilities, but it can also expose people to new and different ideas and opportunities.

Holistic Youth Development

Children and teenagers were a clear priority at every center (except senior centers), and participants expressed a clear desire to have positive programming and multiple opportunities for the youth. The criteria for determining program participation and satisfaction with the recreation center are clearly rooted in a deeper sense of youth development. People spoke about the center, the programs, and the staff as components for providing a safe place where kids can play, socialize, learn new skills, build relationships, receive tutoring and mentoring, learn about college and job opportunities, and become a more well-rounded individual. In this sense, people expressed a clear desire for the recreation center to "develop children with ethics, morals, strengths, and confidence." This is often referred to as holistic development. Participants want the youth in the community to go to the center and become better people. This is not about a single program, or excelling in a specific activity, but rather developing life skills.

Participants believe the center should be a safe haven for kids and teenagers that provides safe, healthy, and fun activities, as well as support and guidance. There was significant appreciation for homework help and a desire for more tutoring and mentoring programs. Some participants suggested partnering with the nearby universities to provide positive mentors for children. In addition, there was a lot of discussion regarding the role and function of staff. Not only do users cite staff, coaches, and instructors as deciding factors for participation, there was a clear consensus that the center staff should want to work with children and be positive role models. This is consistent with the belief that the center should be contributing to the complete

development of youth. The people who interact with this population group are just as important as the activities and services provided.

In accordance with holistic youth development was a strong desire to see more counseling and/or mentoring opportunities, directed at future opportunities. Many of the participants believe that children and teenagers in these communities need extra help, and that the recreation center should provide such assistance. Some of this is as simple as tutoring and helping with home work. Some of this deals with possible problems at home or at school, in which children could benefit from a mentoring program or an on-site counselor. In addition, participants repeatedly suggested help with placing teenagers in summer jobs and college preparation. In addition, some participants believed that there should be leadership training at their center and enhanced opportunities for adolescents and teenagers to develop such skills. This is consistent with the overall idea that the center should facilitate holistic youth development and provide a variety of resources and programs that can promote positive growth and enrichment.

New Experiences

Many participants talked about liking and wanting more programs and events that offered new experiences. For some this meant learning a new skill, for others it meant field trips. What is important is this desire to do new and different things. Youth sport is popular, and current sports were mentioned at all of the meetings, yet many also expressed an explicit interest in new sports and suggested that the center try offering different sports than what is normally offered. In addition, many people valued the opportunity to learn new things at the recreation center. They specifically stated that a reason to participate was to learn something new or to acquire a new skill. People also discussed the various field trips or outings, and often suggested that there should be more of them. This was true of day trips for youth and teens, as well as for seniors. When talking about new experiences people really valued the opportunity to do something they otherwise would not be able to. The recreation center allows them to learn and experience new things, which they greatly value.

Cultural Opportunities

Cultural can mean a variety of different things, and many people talked about wanting more cultural programs and opportunities at their recreation centers, although this did not always mean the same thing. Two interpretations of cultural experiences emerged throughout these meetings. The first was the desire to have more programs that would traditionally not be programmed for a certain population. This generally referred to sports and activities associated with the upper class such as tennis, golf, and gardening. This correlates with the idea of new experience and skills. The second meaning of cultural had to do with different cultural groups and their traditions. This was a bit more educational in nature, in which people can learn about different cultures through experience. When people talked about cultural programs in this sense, it had to do with promoting tolerance and harmony by learning about different cultures. This learning was not discussed in a traditional, academic, educational form, but rather through various programs and activities that celebrate and express these cultures. This also connects to the desire for new experiences, and to bring the community together.

Improve Skills/Lifelong Education

When participants talked about personal enrichment and learning new things, the conversation focused on opportunities for anyone to learn and improve skills. While youth development was a dominant topic, lifelong education and self-improvement for adults and seniors was a prominent topic. This was apparent in the responses given to all of the discussion questions. People stated they value programs that deal with learning and education. They also discussed the opportunity to learn something new as a determining factor in participation, and they believe the recreation center should provide services and resources that encourage self-improvement and confidence. They often wanted more programs and assistance in their quest for continued education. Computer classes were an important program at many centers, and at others there was a desire to have computer classes, or have more of them. In addition, many participants spoke of help with the GED and job applications. People are looking to better themselves, become more accomplished, and improve their quality of life through education and enhanced skill development, and they appreciate what the recreation center can do to provide such resources.

Awareness

Marketing Efforts

In every single community meeting participants expressed a concern over the lack of awareness among users and non-users alike. Participants often stated that they did not know everything that was going on at the center. They said that they knew about some programs, generally those they participated in, but were not always aware of all the opportunities. In addition, many believe that others in the community don't know what is offered and therefore don't use the center. Many participants stated they learn about recreation center activities and programs via word of mouth, either through the staff or their friends. However, many claimed that they feel unaware of what is going on at their center because there is a lack of information posted and easily available.

Marketing was a recurring topic of discussion throughout these meetings, and people often claimed they felt that it could be vastly improved through enhanced use of internet tools such as email, websites, and social media. Participants felt that the centers and PARD should make information accessible on the internet, and that there should be cross promotion of programs and activities among the recreation centers, especially when specific centers offer unique opportunities. Many participants who use one specific feature or program suggested open houses in which programs were described, demonstrated, and available for trial. This would allow them to learn more about what the center offered.

There was also some discussion about a lack of information in Spanish, which for those Spanish speakers that participated in the meetings was a huge factor in program participation and overall experience at the recreation center. There was a concern that material should be available in Spanish and English, especially newsletters and fliers about upcoming events in the community and at the center. Participating Spanish speakers stated that they want more information in Spanish, and that they only participate in the programs they know about. Increasing bilingual marketing efforts may increase awareness and amount of users.

Understanding Rules and Policy

A common theme among participants was a desire to better understand what was going on at the center. This includes actual knowledge of events and programs, but also knowledge about the rules and policies related to PARD activities. There was frustration over miscommunication and misunderstandings about what is and is not allowed, as well as how things work. Participants want to know the basis for decisions and policies; they want to understand the process. This was particularly apparent when people discussed personal experiences with program cancellations, registration, payment, hours of operation, and fundraising efforts. Their stories expressed frustration and confusion, and a clear desire to better understand the rules. A better understanding of policy allows user to know what to expect, and makes them feel involved and respected.

The frustration expressed regarding unclear and inconsistent rules was connected to conflicting responses and information given out by different staff members and/or different centers. People expressed a concern that there were different rules at different centers, which seemed unfair and made it difficult to know what was right and wrong. In addition, some participants reported that staff members contradicted each other, either because they did not know the correct answers or because they were actually told different answers. There is a clear belief among users that not everyone knows (or communicates) the same rules and policies, which leads to a sense of unfairness and dissatisfaction. Policies should be implemented and enforced equally at all centers. This does not mean each center has to be the same, but rather that the same guidelines apply to all centers.

Resources

Access to information and resources was talked about at all meetings, and was a major topic of discussion. People want the recreation center to serve as a type of information hub or resource center. As described above, they want more information about recreation centers and PARD, but they also want information about services and citywide events. This includes, but is not limited to resources on subjects such as: Medicaid, nutrition, food stamps, unemployment, job fairs, financial aid, college applications, first time and/or single parents, health and human services, and city events/services. Many participants wanted more information regarding how to

apply for and use these services. In addition, many wanted more information about the greater Austin community including opportunities, family activities, and special events. All of this contributes to this desire to be informed and know what is going on around you, and to be able to get the help you need.

Organizational Structure

While the community meetings focused on programs and the underlying motives and values behind participation and satisfaction, discussion occasionally turned to more structural aspects of PARD. In this sense people discussed some of the existing rules and policies that dictate how PARD operates and how they affect PARD programs.

Fees

Participants in the community meetings are customers, and they purchase services from PARD, thus cost is always a topic of conversation. In this case, there was minimal discussion about the actual cost of programs, and a significant focus on how fees are collected and enforced. There was general concern among participants that there should be alternative payment options, especially for higher priced programs such as summer camps. Many participants suggested that current fees and payment options are difficult for a lot of families. While some suggested the use of a sliding fee scale, others discussed the option of a payment plan that allows families to pay in installments. Another interesting idea that was presented at a few meetings was to offer incentives and packages, such as a discount for participation in multiple programs. While all of these ideas were generally discussed with positive approval, it should be noted that implementation would need to be done consistently at all recreation centers. Some participants expressed confusion over the fact that enrollment fees at some centers seem to be lower than at others, which they felt was unfair. It should be noted that this is consistent with the desire to better understand the rules and know how any why PARD operates the way it does. Another concept that was given a lot of attention was scholarships for kids who could otherwise not afford to participate in programs. Conversation around fees focused on how to make it possible

for more people to afford programs, with a real effort on alternative payment options and creative solutions, as opposed to just lowering the fee.

Staff Training and Qualification

At these meetings participants spoke about center staff and how those individuals affected participation decisions and satisfaction with the center and its programs. Overall, people spoke highly of the staff, and many participants claimed that staff should be better appreciated and recognized for their work. However, there was a constant theme surrounding qualified staff who want to be there and work with children. Participants talked about the importance of hiring people who like children, in order to ensure that the center is a positive place for youth and teens. Positivity was also discussed in terms of overall staff attitude. Users want to come to the center and interact with people who are happy and positive and seem genuinely interested in their work. This expectation was expressed at all centers in a variety of ways. As mentioned, it was often appreciated and cited as a positive factor, or as something that they think could be improved upon with basic training. Staff members interact with users and their families on a daily basis, and should have strong interpersonal skills. PARD should attempt to ensure that those hired meet these requirements and/or provide some training on customer relations management. The majority of participants were not complaining about the staff members at their centers. Conversations regarding qualifications and training focused predominantly on ensuring that the center was a welcoming, safe place with a positive environment.

Regular Community Meetings

Participants repeatedly mentioned needs assessments and discussed the importance of involving users in the decision making process. Many suggested continuing community meetings on a more frequent basis in order to allow for more people to participate, and to keep an open dialogue between PARD and community members. This suggestion is rooted in a desire for better communication and information, as well as a strong desire to be involved and feel a part of the community. As has been mentioned, people at these meetings want the center to serve the community and be a part of the community. This requires input and involvement from the people

in the community to ensure the center is functioning to the best of its abilities. Listening to the users was a constant theme, and because of the nature of the community meetings, many people suggested that this be done more frequently, or with some regularity to ensure that the center is operating in the interest of the community. Keep in mind that users did not suggest the exact same type of meeting they were attending, but rather something that would serve as an exchange of information and ideas. In addition, many participants suggested meetings at alternative times and for alternative groups (such as children) in order to get feedback from users who may not be able to attend week night meetings. This concern for those that were not in attendance correlates to the overarching themes of creating community and a sense of togetherness.

CITY-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS

The total number of survey participants was 261. The demographic characteristics of survey respondents are found in Table 1. Most of survey participants were users of recreation centers, female, non-Hispanic, and white. More reported living west of I-35 and having an annual income of \$50,000 or greater. There were slightly more 40-59 year olds than those 60 years and older and those 18-39. Of the 194 (74.3%) respondents reporting access to the internet, 171 reported daily internet access. The majority of survey takers also reported being comfortable or extremely comfortable receiving and sending email (n=187, 71.6%) and searching for information on the internet (n=184, 70.5%). Fewer participants reported being comfortable or extremely comfortable using social media (n=109, 41.8%).

Participants who reported living in zip codes east of I -35 were significantly more likely to be Hispanic, non-white and have an income of less than \$50,000. Those reporting an annual household income of less than \$50,000 were more likely to be Hispanic, non-white, live east of I-35, and be a user of a recreation center compared to those making \$50,000 or more.

Respondents between the ages of 18 and 39 were more likely to be Hispanic than other age groups, and respondents 60 years and older were more likely to be users of recreation centers compared to younger age groups. There were no significant demographic differences between males and females. Finally, Respondents without daily internet access were significantly more likely to be 60 years and older compared to those with daily access.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of survey respondents. (n=261)

Characteristic	n	%
Male	47	18.0%
Female	158	60.5%
Gender missing	66	25.3%
Hispanic	34	13.0%
Non-Hispanic	161	61.7%
Ethnicity missing	66	25.3%
White	136	52.1%
Black/African American	24	9.2%
Asian	8	3.1%
Mixed	5	1.9%
Race missing	88	33.7%
Annual income less than \$50,00	71	27.2%
Annual income of \$50,000 or more	108	41.4%
Income Missing	82	31.4%
Zip code east of I-35	80	30.7%
Zip code west of I-35	124	47.5%
Zip code missing	54	20.7%
18-39 years of age	50	19.2%
40-59 years of age	81	31.0%
60 or older	66	25.3%
Age missing	64	24.5%
Recreation Center User	166	63.6%
Non-User	66	25.3%
Missing	29	11.1%
Access internet daily	171	65.5%
Access internet weekly	14	5.4%
Access internet monthly/rarely	9	3.4%
Never access internet	9	3.4%
Internet access missing	58	22.2%

Recreation Values and Priorities

Survey respondents were asked to choose the importance of offering certain types of

programs, and what populations PARD should serve. They were then asked to choose the two most important categories for each question. The results follow.

Programming Priorities

Based on their beliefs about the role of PARD in the community, participants were asked to rank the importance of types of programs (see Figure 1). The top programs were those that are accessible and affordable (71.6%), programs that encourage people to stay in shape (71.3%), and safe and fun programs for youth and teens (69.7%). When asked to pick the two types of programs most important to them, people were more likely to pick affordable and accessible programs (32.6%), safe and fun programs for youth and teens (25.7%) and programs that encourage people to stay in shape (21.5%) as one of their two most important programs (see Appendix A for all survey results). Programs that focus on competition were the least likely to be picked as programs most important to the respondent (2.7%).

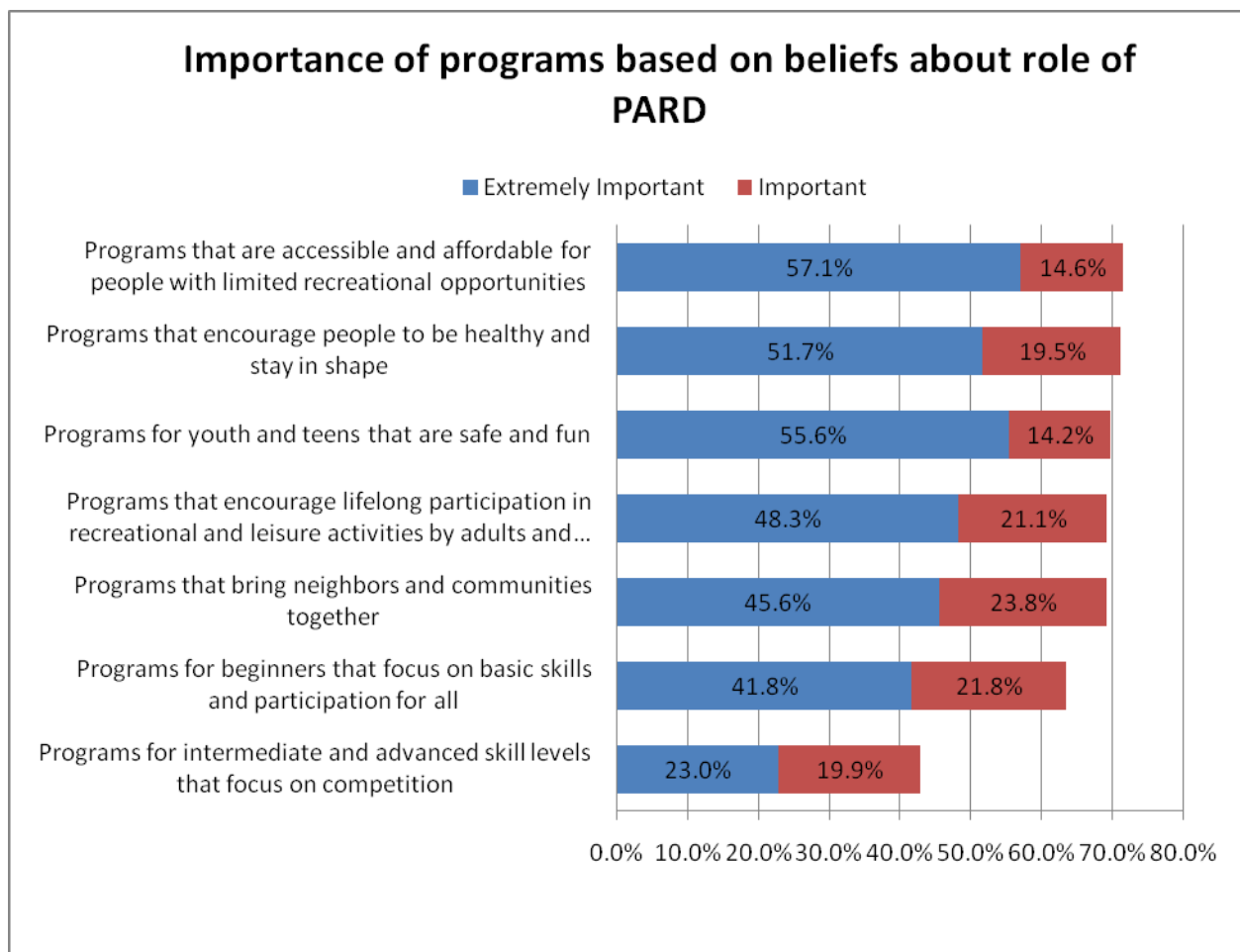


Figure 1. Percent of survey participants who ranked each program as important or extremely important based on their beliefs about the role of PARD in the community. (n=261)

Subgroup Analysis

Across all groups, all types of programs were rated as important for PARD to offer with the exception of programs for intermediate and advanced skills that focus on competition. This was the lowest rated type of program across most groups. While 76.5% of Hispanics did rate these types of programs as important or extremely important, and were significantly more likely than non-Hispanics to mark programs for intermediate and advanced skill levels that focus on competition as important or extremely important compared to non-Hispanics, it was still their lowest rated type of program. Additionally, when asked to pick the two most important types of programs, programs that focus on competition were only picked by 2.9% of Hispanics. Some important differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics were found. Hispanics were significantly more likely to pick programs for youth and teens compared to non-Hispanics, and non-Hispanics were more likely to pick programs that encourage people to be healthy and stay in shape as one of their top two most important programs.

While all age groups followed the same patterns as the overall results in rating the importance of programs, when asked to pick their top two most important programs, those in the 18-39 year age group were more likely to pick programs that are accessible and affordable for people with limited recreational opportunities elsewhere compared to other age groups (18-39 = 54.0%, 40-59= 33.3%, 60+ = 39.4%).

Population Priorities

Participants were also asked about what types of populations PARD programs should serve. Older adults (67.8%), teens (67.4%), and youth (65.9%) were ranked the three highest (See Figure 2). When asked to pick the two populations most important to them, Youth (30.7%), Teens (28.4%), and older adults (26.1%) were picked the most. Preschoolers were rated the least important.

Subgroup Analysis

All populations were rated as important or extremely important by all subgroups. Youth, teens and older adults were the groups that got the highest ratings across groups, while people with disabilities and especially preschoolers were consistently the bottom two groups.

Differences in importance did appear when people were asked to pick the two populations most important to them. People 60 years and older were significantly more likely to pick older adults compared to other age groups, while 18-39 year olds were more likely to pick preschoolers, and 40-59 year olds were more likely to pick youth. These results are not unexpected since younger age groups are more likely to have children and would therefore want those populations served and those 60 years and older are more interested in programs that would serve them.

Differences were also found between Hispanics and non-Hispanics. When asked to pick the two most important populations, Hispanics were significantly more likely to pick youth and teens compared to non-Hispanics. Non-Hispanics were more likely to pick older adults compared to Hispanics. Finally, those living east of I-35 and non-whites were more likely to rate preschoolers as an important population compared to those living west and whites respectively, but when asked to pick their two most important groups, there were no differences between groups.

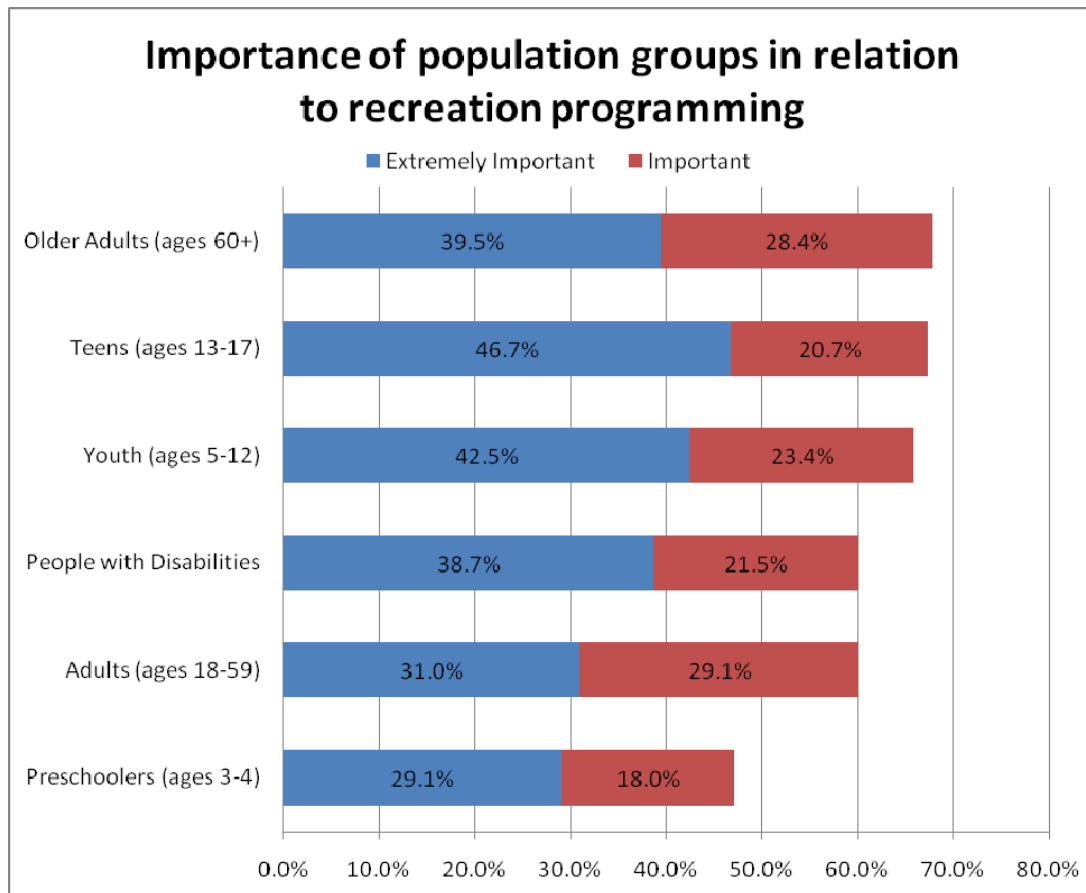


Figure 2. Percent of people rating different population groups as important and extremely important for PARD to serve (n=261).

Activity Preferences

Survey takers were asked about what programs they think are important for PARD to offer. They were presented with a list of 71 activities and asked to mark if they felt it was extremely important, important, somewhat important, or not important at all for PARD to offer each activity. The importance of each individual activity is found in the appendix A. Table 2 shows the 25 activities with the highest percentages of importance. When looking at the list of programs offered by PARD and how respondents rated their importance, clear trends emerge regarding program preferences and user groups. Of the top ten most important programs for PARD to offer, the afterschool programs and summer day camps for youth and teens comprise half of the top choices. An examination of the top 25 activities shows there is also a focus on youth and teens sports, as well as an emphasis on all types of programs for special needs populations.

The remaining activities in the top 25 share an emphasis on two types of programs: those that have an educational or creative component and those that promote health and well-being. These include computer classes, walking, gardening, dance classes, health/nutrition lectures, aerobics, yoga, and arts and crafts. Walking, dance, aerobics, yoga and even the lectures all point towards a preference to be active and healthy. Computer classes, the third most important activity, were also repeatedly mentioned during community meetings as a valued program. Gardening was also discussed as an activity at various centers in different ways. For some, gardening was about education and learning healthy foods and eating habits. For others, gardening was an enjoyable leisure activity that contributed to beautification of the center and created pride in the center and the community at large.

In addition to what is most important, this list of activities also shows the least important PARD programs. The least important activities received far fewer responses of "important," and much more of "not important" responses. These activities are skateboarding, disc golf, adult rugby, adult lacrosse, caving, and boxing. With the exception of boxing, none of these programs are currently offered by PARD, which could explain why they are not important, because they don't exist. However, early childhood programs were rated as important by 42.5% of respondents, and these programs are currently not offered by PARD either. This suggests that programs like boxing and caving are considered unimportant because people do not actually find them valuable for PARD to offer. This is corroborated by community meetings in which none of the low-rated activities were even mentioned. The exception to this was boxing, which was discussed at only a few sites, albeit with much intensity.

Although adult sport leagues were often low in comparison to other listed activities, it is still important to look at the most valued of those offerings. During some community meetings participants mentioned a desire for more adult recreation sport opportunities. Even if it is not a top priority among survey respondents, programming for adults is still a valid function of PARD. Overall, the most important adult sports are basketball, volleyball, and softball, these sports were also the most important when examined by subgroups.

It should be noted that on average, each line item was skipped by 40% of respondents. Since this question was fairly long in length this could be due to survey fatigue. However, skipping an item could also point to a lack of importance of the activity to the survey taker. Respondents may have been more likely to mark items that they found important and skip those

they don't need, know about, or prefer. Percentages of activity importance should be interpreted with this in mind.

Table 2. The 25 programs or activities receiving the highest percentages of respondents marking them as either important or extremely important. (n=261)

Activities/Programs	Extremely Important or Important	Somewhat important or Not important at all	Skipped the question
Youth Afterschool Programs (ages 5-12)	50.2%	11.5%	38.3%
Youth Summer Day Camps (ages 5-10)	49.4%	12.3%	38.3%
Walking	47.9%	17.2%	34.9%
Computer Classes	47.9%	18.4%	33.7%
Teen Summer Day Camps (ages 11-14)	46.7%	11.9%	41.4%
Youth Day Camps on School Closure Days (teacher work days, holidays)	46.0%	13.8%	40.2%
Youth Basketball (ages 5-12)	45.6%	16.1%	38.3%
Gardening	45.6%	19.5%	34.9%

Table 2. Continued.

Activities/Programs	Extremely Important or Important	Somewhat important or Not important at all	Skipped the question
Teen Afterschool Programs (ages 13-17)	45.6%	14.6%	39.8%
Special Needs - Adult Day Programs	45.2%	16.1%	38.7%
Dance classes (salsa, ballet etc.)	44.8%	25.7%	29.5%
Health/Nutrition Lectures	44.8%	21.5%	33.7%
Youth Baseball (ages 5-12)	44.8%	17.2%	37.9%
Youth Soccer (ages 5-12)	43.7%	16.1%	40.2%
Hiking	43.3%	17.2%	39.5%
Special Needs - Adaptive Sports (ages 8+)	42.9%	15.7%	41.4%

Special Needs - Life Skills/Socialization	42.5%	18.0%	39.5%
Early Childhood Programs (ages 3-4)	42.5%	16.1%	41.4%
Aerobics (step, zumba etc.)	42.1%	26.4%	31.4%
Teen Basketball (ages 13-17)	41.8%	16.9%	41.4%
Yoga classes	41.4%	26.1%	32.6%
Arts & Crafts	41.4%	23.0%	35.6%
Youth Softball (ages 5-12)	41.4%	17.6%	41.0%
Youth Volleyball (ages 5-12)	41.0%	18.8%	40.2%
Teen Baseball (ages 13-17)	41.0%	16.5%	42.5%

Subgroup Analysis

The ten activities that had the highest percentages of importance (there may be more than ten activities if percentages were equal) were examined across different groups. Generally, the same types of activities, and even the exact same programs were considered important regardless of demographic characteristics. These include day camps and afterschool programs for youth and teens, as well as youth and teen sports leagues. In addition walking, gardening, hiking, computer classes and health/nutrition lectures were repeatedly chosen as important. Most groups thought adult day care programs for special needs individuals are important for PARD to offer. While the same programs were chosen again and again, there were some differences between subgroups.

There was greater variety in the types of programs selected by whites and those living west of I-35. In comparing whites and non-whites, both groups focused on youth and teen programs, however white respondents did so with less frequency. They chose more outdoor and educational options, as opposed to sports leagues for youth and teens. Likewise, of the 10 activities rated most important by those living west of I-35, only 4 were for youth or teens. Fitness programs, outdoor leisure activities and computer classes rounded out the top ten. In contrast, the types of activities with the highest percentages of importance for those living east of I-35 were predominantly focused on programs that help provide care to those that need

assistance (early childhood, youth, teens, and special needs). While health and nutrition lectures were deemed important, no fitness classes were listed in the top activities.

Hispanics rated many activities important or extremely important compared to non-Hispanics even if those activities were low in their overall rating of importance. Activities for youth and teens made up 9 out of 10 of the activities rated most important for Hispanics. The only exception was computer classes. In contrast, of the 10 activities rated most important by non-Hispanics, only 4 were for youth or teens. The remaining six included fitness, outdoor, leisure, and education activities as well as special needs adult day programs.

Those in the 18-39 category marked youth and teen activities as the majority of their most important activities. This may be because this age group may include many parents of youth and teens. These respondents were also more likely to mark many items as important. Those in the 40-59 age range also ranked youth and teen after school and camp programs as the most important for PARD to offer, but included a few outdoor and leisure activities (walking, hiking, and gardening) in their top choices. Those over age 60 had different preferences compared to the youth and teen programs chosen by younger age groups. These differences will be discussed in the senior center subsection.

Activity preference does not vary greatly between income groups and. Both groups focused on youth and teen programs, consistent with the overall survey results. Some significant differences are the strong preferences among low-income respondents versus those making \$50,000 or more for computer classes (64.8% vs. 54.6%) and aerobic classes (57.7% vs. 47.2%). Likewise males and females both chose teen and youth afterschool care and camps as important. Women as a whole thought computer classes, walking, and gardening were important, while men had more of a focus on youth, teen, and adapted sports.

Use of PARD Recreation Centers and Programs

Recreation center users made up 63.6% of survey respondents. Survey participants were asked where they participate in different types of programs. The types of programs most participated in regardless of location were Fitness classes (57.5%), Special events (52.1%), Nature based activities such as hiking, gardening, fishing and kayaking (50.2%), and outdoor activities such as cycling, running, and disc golf (42.5%).

Figure 3 shows the percent of people who said they participated in these types of programs either through PARD or through another organization. The activities people participated in most through PARD were special events such as dinners and carnivals (37.2%), nature based activities (32.6%) and outdoor activities (30.3%). These programs and activities are consistent with the results of another question asked in the survey regarding use of city parks (regardless of the presence of a recreation center), in which respondents cited events, exercise, and trail use as the main reasons for visiting a city park.

More people reported participating in Teen sport leagues (9.2% vs. 4.6%) and youth sport leagues (17.6% vs. 8.4%) through PARD rather than through another organization as well as teen afterschool programs (8.4% vs. 3.1%) and youth afterschool programs (12.6% vs. 4.2%). However more people used another organization instead of PARD for fitness classes (38.3% vs. 24.9%), leisure activities (21.5% vs. 14.9%), educational and cultural programs (17.6% vs. 15.3%) and early childhood programs (7.7% vs. 5.7%).

Subgroup Analysis

The four most participated in activities regardless of location were looked at by subgroup populations. Among users of fitness classes, non-whites, those with incomes less than \$50,000, those living east of I-35 and those aged 60 and older were significantly more likely to participate in fitness classes through PARD, while whites, those with incomes \$50,000 or greater, those living west of I-35, and those younger than 60 were more likely to participate in fitness classes through another organization.

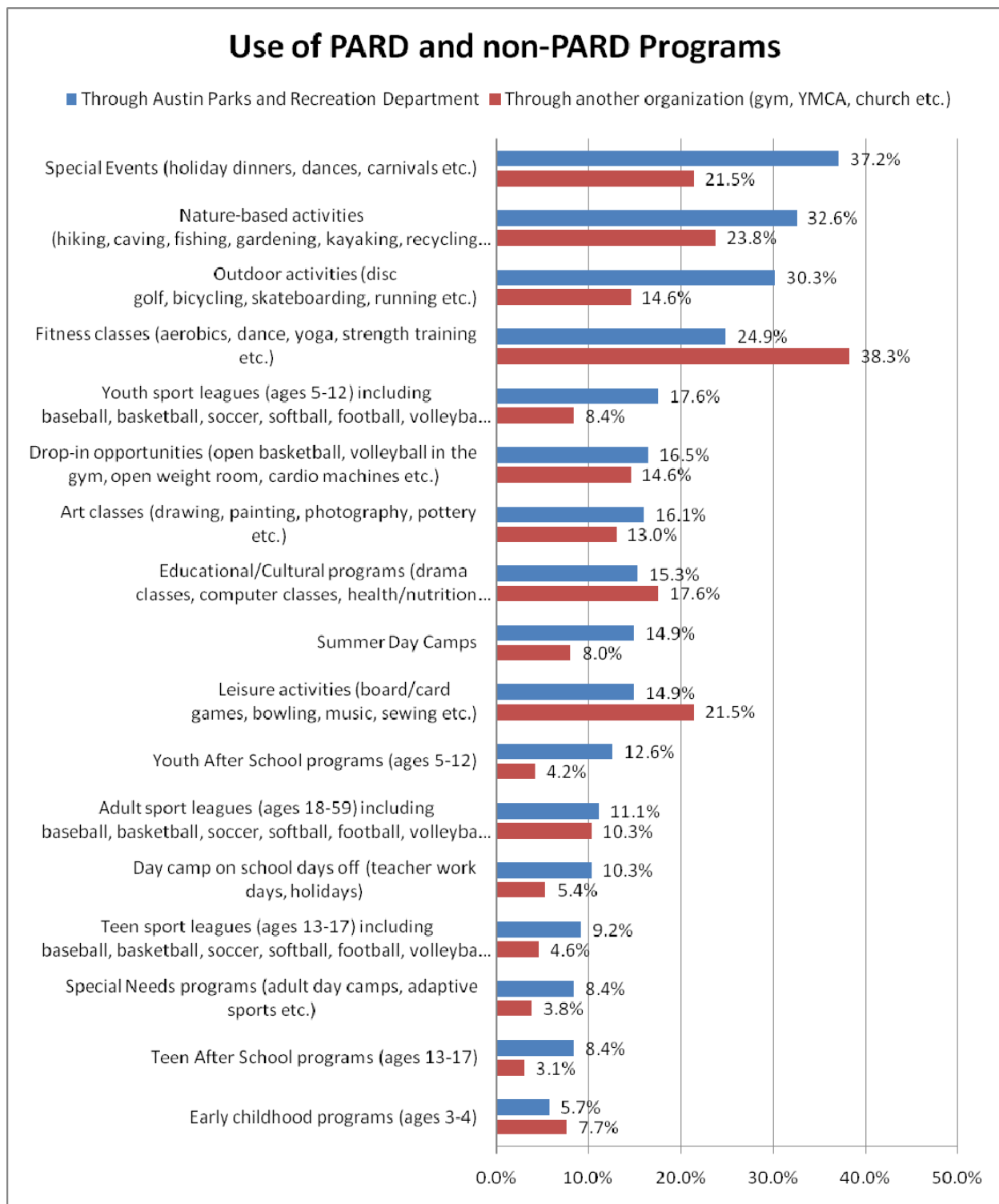


Figure 3. Percent of people who reported participating in certain activities through PARD or through another organization. (n=261)

Among participants in special events, whites were more likely to participate in special events through another organization while non-whites were more likely to participate through PARD. When looked at by income and geographic location, all groups had higher percentages of people participating in special events through PARD than through another organization. However, those with an income of less than \$50,000 and those living east of I-35 were significantly more likely to participate in special events through PARD compared to the higher income group and those living west of I-35 respectively. All subgroup populations participated in nature based and outdoor activities mainly through PARD more than another organization.

It is interesting to note that some activities, such as afterschool programs and day camps, had low participation numbers whether through PARD or another organization, even though in another question they were activities that people overwhelmingly rated as important for PARD to offer. One possible explanation is that these survey respondents do not have children to participate in these programs but realize the value of these services in the community. Unfortunately, questions about children were not asked by the survey. However, additional questions about priority populations and the beliefs about the role of PARD also indicate survey respondents believe programs for youth and teens are very important.

Additional Services

Respondents were asked to rate the importance to them of non-recreation services being offered at recreation centers (see Figure 4). Meeting rooms open to community groups was the number one service ranked as important or extremely important (61.7%) followed by senior services (51.0%), certification classes (47.5%) and health education services (47.1%). English as a second language (32.3%), Health and Human services (32.6%) and Professional services (33.7%) had the lowest numbers of people ranking them as either important or extremely important.

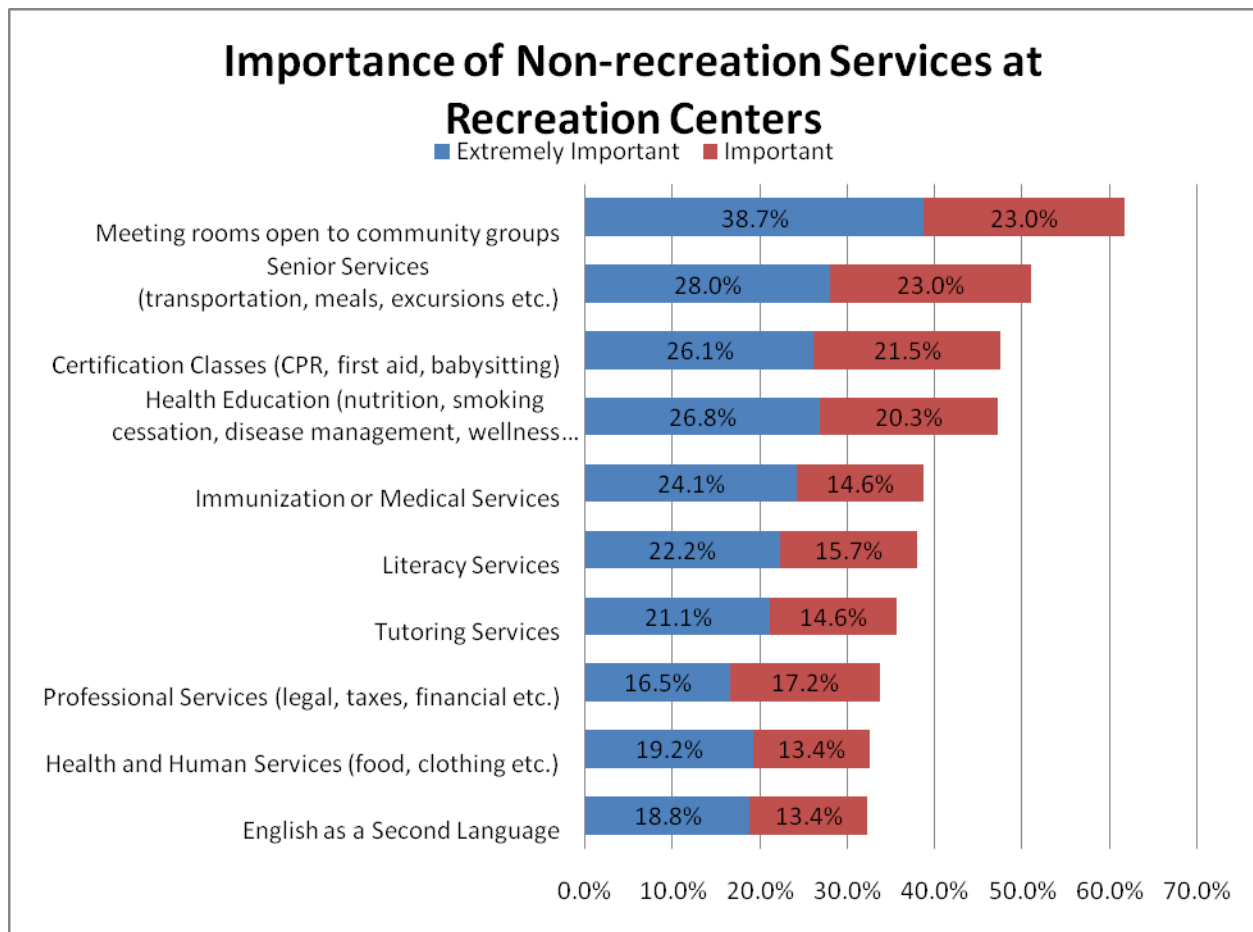


Figure 4. Percent of survey respondents rating non-recreation services as important or extremely important to offer at recreation centers. (n=261)

When looked at across all population characteristics, the results do not really change. Meeting rooms, senior services, certification classes, and health education, were repeatedly the top choices, regardless of subgroup. Immunization services was a top three choice for those aged 60 and older, but otherwise all groups listed three of the above four as the most important services for PARD to offer.

The results from this question are consistent with what was said during community meetings. Participants spoke about recreation centers providing space for groups and local organizations to meet. Senior services were also discussed at many meetings, with varying degrees of focus and intensity. Outside of the senior centers, the most important topics regarding senior services were the need to provide transportation and the value of senior excursions and day trips. Health education, especially in regards to nutrition was often appreciated, suggested,

and wanted at many recreation centers. This is also consistent with previously mentioned findings that list health and nutrition lectures as a top activity. The only apparent exception is the strong desire for certification classes which were not mentioned at any meetings. However, job training and readiness was a constant topic of discussion and approval amongst participants, and it could be considered that certification classes give necessary skills for certain jobs and may make resumes more appealing, thus assisting in job readiness.

Awareness of Programs

A number of survey questions focused on awareness and knowledge of PARD recreation centers and programs. Questions asked about current and preferred methods of communication and promotion, as well as ability to find information regarding programs. In addition to ease of finding information, there was a specific focus on use of the website to provide necessary information. The results are discussed below.

Communication Preferences

People were asked how they heard about PARD recreation programming and how they would like to hear about recreation programming. Figure 5 shows a comparison of those results. Word of mouth (34.9%), visiting or calling a Parks and Recreation facility (28.4%) and the Parks and Recreation website (26.7%) were the top three ways that people currently hear about recreation programs. However, the Parks and Recreation website (46.0%), email/list serve (41.4%), neighborhood newsletter (36.0%), and seasonal program activity guide (32.2%) are the ways that people would prefer to get information regarding these programs.

Because electronic methods were the most highly chosen forms of preferred communication, it was necessary to look at the differences between the types who chose electronic methods and those who did not. Those who would like to hear about programs through electronic means were more likely to be white, earn \$50,000 or more a year, and be under 60 years of age, than those who did not mark electronic means as a preferred method. However, across all subgroups the electronic methods were still chosen the most frequently as a preferred method, along with the neighborhood newsletter. For those who did not select either the website or email, they chose direct mail (32.7%), the seasonal program activity guide (29.1%), and neighborhood newsletter (27.3%) as their preferred forms of communication.



Figure 5. Ways that people currently hear about recreation programs compared to how they would like to hear about recreation programs. (n=261).

Ability to Find Information

When respondents were asked to mark how easy it was to find information about recreation programs, 37.2% chose easy or somewhat easy while 27.2% chose difficult or somewhat difficult. Interestingly, 11.9% said they did not know, and 23.8% skipped the question. This question allowed respondents to explain their answer in the space provided.

Looking through the written comments helps paint a better picture of the numbers. A handful of responses said they did not even know recreation centers offer programs thus illustrating that marketing efforts could be improved. There were positive comments about calling, visiting a center, and hearing about programs from others, however the majority of responses focused on the website. These comments were overwhelmingly negative, citing that the website is "terrible," "cumbersome," and "difficult to navigate," and that information is often lacking or incomplete. There were some who said that they knew about a program or searched for a specific program and could not find what they wanted via the internet. Similarly, some said that even at recreation centers there is a lack of posted schedules and fliers with program information. While many stated the process was easy, it is important to keep in mind the written comments and the fact that much of what makes it easy is existing knowledge and use of programs which makes word of mouth and calling centers more effective.

When discussing the website in particular, respondents were asked whether or not they had used it to search for information in the past year, and if so, were prompted to answer about ease of use. Only 119 respondents qualified to answer the question, 54.6% of whom stated finding information about recreation programs was easy, and 61.3% of whom stated it was easy to find information about recreation centers. A fair number said it was difficult to find information about programs (37.8%) and recreation centers (29.4%). This data can be interpreted in different ways, as over half of respondents did not even answer this question. This indicates that there could be lack of knowledge, access, and/or ability to use the PARD website. It should also be considered that, as cited above, certain activities and programs appear (as reported by respondents) to be easier to find online than others, and may explain why there seems to be a discrepancy between the numbers and what people wrote. There was also discussion during community meetings about improving the website and the registration process to make it more cohesive and easy to use.

While the majority of survey takers were users, there were 66 respondents who reported not using a recreation center in the past year. When prompted to give reasons for their lack of use, answers involving a lack of knowledge and awareness were chosen with the most frequency. Respondents said they don't know what programs are offered, don't know the location of programs, and consider it hard to find program information. This is due to a lack of awareness caused by limited marketing efforts (e.g. word of mouth), much of which reaches current users

more effectively than non-users. There is a clear lack of advertising and promotion of programs, combined with a lack of easy-to-find information that affects participation rates. Participants in the community meetings shared similar sentiments, stating that awareness was a determining factor in participation and that they felt marketing efforts should be improved.

SENIOR CENTERS

It is imperative that the senior centers be looked at as related, but different from the other centers because they focus on a specific population. As a result, there are differences in some of the program preferences and values. However, many of the overarching themes and trends are consistent with the values and motivations found for all users. The differences emerge when discussing specific types of programs, the relationship with staff, and reasons for using the center. In addition, barriers to and facilitators of participation, while sometimes similar, are often caused by different factors.

Generally, participants/respondents cited opportunities to socialize and stay active as driving forces for participation. Socialization was often talked about as a reason to leave the house and meet people and have human interaction. For many this was fundamental to emotional health and well-being. So while socialization was important to all users, it was important for different reasons to many of the seniors. Coming to the center gives a purpose to their day and helps create a schedule and routine. For many seniors participation occurs because the program is available at the time they already come to the center. In addition, the meals that are offered at the senior centers were repeatedly mentioned as an important activity, partially because of the service it provides, but also because it allows the seniors to get out of the house and socialize with others during meal times.

In terms of fitness and exercise many meeting participants and survey respondents remarked that these programs are important to them, and that they understand the value of staying active for longevity and quality of life. Many of the top programs cited by seniors in the survey were fitness oriented, including walking, aerobics, dance, strength training, and yoga. Youth afterschool was the only age specific program rated in the top ten by respondents 60 years or older. Their preferences focused on fitness and leisure activities, as well as educational

programs versus younger age groups who often had a greater focus on youth and teen activities. The lack of focus on youth and teens is different from overall results and most other groups, yet not unexpected. However, the activities they do find important are consistent with the non-age specific programs that are most preferred by all respondents.

Discussion about facilities and staff were more serious at the senior centers than other centers. For many of these people the center is a home away from home, and a place where they come and feel like they matter. Many of these individuals crave human interaction and want to feel like they belong and matter to a larger society. The senior center provides them with the ability to meet people, maintain relationships, and contribute to something bigger. Thus, when they talk about the quality of facilities and the nature of the staff, it is much more important to them and has a more intense impact on their overall sense of self-worth and mental health. Generally, facilities were discussed in terms of maintenance, and being easy for seniors to use. This includes parking availability, the condition of parking lots and outdoor space, and wheelchair accessibility (especially in terms of vans/buses). However, as with non-senior users of recreation centers, the condition of the center and surrounding park area is a source of pride for these individuals.

Consistent with what emerged at many meetings, and further corroborated by the survey data, seniors are interested in programs that allow them to socialize, improve health, and function in society. Computer classes were an extremely important offering for many individuals and groups of people, but it was especially important for survey respondents aged 60 or older. In addition, seniors, like many non-senior participants wanted PARD and their specific center to serve as a resource center for their needs. Specifically, they wanted more information on health, nutrition, available senior services, and how to use government programs such as Medicare and Medicaid. Seniors also highly favored day trips and outings, with the one complaint being lack of wheelchair accessible transportation. This correlates with the desire and need to get out of the house and to interact with others. While volunteering was discussed at multiple meetings, amongst seniors it was often cited as a way to stay involved in the community and stay connected to others, especially members of younger generations.

Just like non-senior meeting and survey participants, seniors expressed the desire for better marketing and promotion of events, activities, and services. What may not have been expected from seniors was the desire to receive this information through electronic means. In the

meetings, seniors felt that information should be available on the internet and through email, and a few even suggested the use of Facebook. While survey respondents 60 and older were less likely to choose electronic methods as ways they would like to hear about PARD programs compared to other age groups, they still picked the Parks and Recreation website (43.9%) and email list serve (37.9%) as their top two preferred methods, just like other age groups.

Electronic means of communication should be considered as an effective and cost efficient tool to reach out to seniors. In the survey, the majority (62.1%) of seniors reported having daily home access to the internet, and reported being extremely comfortable sending and receiving email (60.6%) and searching for information on the internet (53.0%). Seniors were less likely to have daily access to the internet compared to younger age groups, but this is because younger age groups reported more locations for daily access including home, work, and their phones. Very few seniors reported having daily work (since many are retired) or phone access. Comfort in using social media was very different between age groups. Over half of those younger than 60 were extremely comfortable with using social media compared to only 9.1% of those 60 and older. Social media may not be the best method for communicating with the majority of seniors, but given the interest shown in Facebook at the community meetings, this lack of comfort could present an opportunity for PARD to offer classes in social media for seniors. Classes of this nature present a chance for seniors to learn and stay connected with the world around them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the survey the information learned from the community meetings, and subsequent analysis, recommendations are provided. These recommendations vary in scope, and include simple changes as well as long term plans. All recommendations are made with the intent to meet the needs of the population, provide programs and services that are valued, and enhance the user experience.

Foster a Sense of Community

- Organize and promote more community-wide special events that do not focus on

established holidays. This can vary by site to appeal to the local community, however all participants said they love the large special events. These provide an opportunity to socialize, meet new people, and enhance existing relationships. Ideas include:

- neighborhood parties and/or fairs on the weekend
 - monthly social nights with a specific focus or theme
 - special events that are educational/cultural in nature (i.e. February is Black History Month, and there could be a night to celebrate the culture and history)
 - Graduation celebrations and Back to School Parties for all community members
- Create unique opportunities for community members to meet and work together on volunteer projects that boost community pride. This can include park beautification days, work on the center or the facilities, organizing end-of-season events for sports leagues, community garage sales, and gardening.
- Use bulletin boards in the entrance to announce upcoming events, give results from sport events/tournaments, and celebrate other notable accomplishments and achievements of both the center staff and the users.
- Improve use of social media, specifically Facebook presence. Each center should have an individual Facebook page managed by that center to promote and advertise programs, activities, and events. Users can talk about the center, learn information, share stories and photos, and connect to those they meet and know through the center. People are extremely proud of their center and the neighborhood it represents, and they want to be able to use Facebook to express and share these emotions.
- Create family sports leagues or games in which families compete together in games against other families. Some opportunities may require families to be joined together. This creates opportunities for family bonding, but it also allows people to interact and get to know other families/people in the neighborhood. Because people of all ages will participate it promotes recreation and fun over competition, and provides opportunities

for intergenerational bonding. Possible activities include sports like softball and soccer, as well as camp-type games like capture the flag.

Improve Marketing Efforts

- Every center needs to have a posted schedule of weekly events, program activity guides available, and should post fliers and announcements regarding upcoming activities.
- Centers need to cross promote new or different programs on fliers and reminders for the most popular programs. These opportunities are especially true when promoting established and successful youth programs, in which those fliers can include information about adult programs (either because it is similar to the youth program, or because it is occurring at the same time and can be a potential activity for parents while children participate in their program). This type of leverage can increase knowledge of, and participation in, more varied programs and activities.
- Make all information available in Spanish. Especially fliers that advertise upcoming events, newsletters, and material that includes important policy and/or registration information. There should also be at least one staff member who can verbally communicate effectively in Spanish.
- Promote PARD, and the recreation centers, via a large scale marketing campaign that involves unique open house experiences at each center. These events provide information and/or demonstrations of available programs, along with the opportunity to meet instructors and PARD staff. They can also be a tool to solicit feedback and community input regarding program preferences.
- The website needs to be improved and made easier to navigate and find information. People should be able to look for the closest center and see what is offered. Incidentally, they should also be able to search all centers to see which (if any) offer a particular program of interest. That way people can find accurate information regardless of how their search criteria.

- Individual recreation centers should not be competing with each other, and should be looking for opportunities to promote and leverage the activities and services of centers that offer unique and/or different programs and experiences.

Enhance the Relationship between PARD and Community Members

- The center should create a monthly newsletter that is available in print and electronic form. Printed copies will be available at the center, and possibly through partner organizations. Electronic copies can be sent to all users on an established email list serve. The newsletter can include stories of interest (about people/places/events unique to the center, the neighborhood, or PARD), bio pieces on PARD staff members, information on upcoming events and programs, important dates and deadlines, and any pertinent policy procedures or changes to it, as well as other relevant announcements.
- Use and respond to the suggestion box. Most centers have them, but most do not use them (either by their own admission or because people asked for one in places where they exist). The idea behind a suggestion box is for people to unanimously give input and provide ideas. When there is no acknowledgment (regardless of feasibility) people feel disconnected and the suggestion box fails to serve its purpose. It is neither expected nor practical that every suggestion be followed, however they should all be addressed. There are different ways to do this, but one that may prove easy and effective is to have a bulletin board where suggestions are posted along with a response, explanation, or follow-up. This allows users to see that their ideas are being listened to and considered.
- Make staff more accessible. This can be done through increased visibility at the center, "staff member of the month" features or Q&A's in a newsletter, or a front desk person. This is particularly relevant for the senior centers.
- PARD needs to continue its current trends of consistent enforcement of rules and policies, regardless of past experiences. Because this can be confusing and frustrating for longtime users, PARD needs to make a concerted effort to be transparent in the decision

making process and related rules and policies.

- Staff members at every center should know and have readily available site specific information as well as a general understanding of PARD policies and practices. They should be providing the same information at every center, and should be knowledgeable about the particular events, activities, and circumstances of their center.
- Staff and instructor qualifications and/or certifications should be listed in program descriptions.

Promote Positive Youth Development

- Organize and manage youth sports teams as recreational, non-competitive sport opportunities in which participants develop skills, have fun, and experience teamwork without the pressure to win and be the best.
- Create and/or use potential scholarship funds to maximize the benefit of the scholarship. Use an application process that teaches and provides practice for youth/teens at filling out applications and/or writing essays. The application process can be a learning experience about how to apply for college and jobs, and eventually it will reward specific participants. These scholarships should be need-based, but can follow any criteria determined by PARD and/or the funder. This also encourages kids to get involved in the center and community activities that will increase their chances of receiving the scholarship, but will also (ideally) impart life skills and develop a more well-rounded individual.
- Ensure that staff members and volunteers behave appropriately around youth and teens.
- Advertise for coaches, mentors, and other volunteers through university programs and volunteer banks which will recruit college students who want to contribute to programs and services that benefit youth.

APPENDIX A: Responses to survey questions

Have you or a member of your household participated in any of the following activities through either the Austin Parks and Recreation Department or another organization in the past 12 months? Please mark the appropriate organization columns for ALL activities that apply.

Answer Options

	Through Austin Parks and Recreation Department		Through another organization (gym, YMCA, church etc.)		Skipped the question	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Fitness classes (aerobics, dance, yoga, strength training etc.)						
Youth sport leagues (ages 5-12) including baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, football, volleyball etc.	65	24.9%	100	38.3%	111	42.5%
Teen sport leagues (ages 13-17) including baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, football, volleyball etc.	46	17.6%	22	8.4%	196	75.1%
Adult sport leagues (ages 18-59) including baseball, basketball, soccer, softball, football, volleyball etc.	24	9.2%	12	4.6%	226	86.6%
Drop-in opportunities (open basketball, volleyball in the gym, open weight room, cardio machines etc.)	29	11.1%	27	10.3%	210	80.5%
Art classes (drawing, painting, photography, pottery etc.)	43	16.5%	38	14.6%	183	70.1%
Outdoor activities (disc golf, bicycling, skateboarding, running etc.)	42	16.1%	34	13.0%	192	73.6%
Nature-based activities (hiking, caving, fishing, gardening, kayaking, recycling programs etc.)	79	30.3%	38	14.6%	150	57.5%

Leisure activities (board/card games, bowling, music, sewing etc.)	85	32.6%	62	23.8%	130	49.8%
Educational/Cultural programs (drama classes, computer classes, health/nutrition lectures, continuing education etc.)	39	14.9%	56	21.5%	170	65.1%
Early childhood programs (ages 3-4)	40	15.3%	46	17.6%	182	69.7%
Youth After School programs (ages 5-12)	15	5.7%	20	7.7%	229	87.7%
Teen After School programs (ages 13-17)	33	12.6%	11	4.2%	219	83.9%
Summer Day Camps	22	8.4%	8	3.1%	233	89.3%
Day camp on school days off (teacher work days, holidays)	39	14.9%	21	8.0%	207	79.3%
Special Needs programs (adult day camps, adaptive sports etc.)	27	10.3%	14	5.4%	224	85.8%
Special Events (holiday dinners, dances, carnivals etc.)	22	8.4%	10	3.8%	231	88.5%
<i>answered question</i>	97	37.2%	56	21.5%	125	47.9%
<i>skipped question</i>	232					

Please mark how important it is to you that the Austin Parks and Recreation Department offers each of the following activities.

Answer Options	Extremely Important	Important	Important and Extremely Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important At All	Somewhat Important and Not Important	Skipped Question	
	n	n	%	n	n	%	n	%
Aerobics (step, zumba etc.)	52	58	42.1%	29	40	26.4%	82	31.4%
Boxing	19	18	14.2%	36	80	44.4%	108	41.4%
Dance classes (salsa, ballet etc.)	58	59	44.8%	39	28	25.7%	77	29.5%
Martial Arts (karate, capoeira etc.)	29	41	26.8%	45	37	31.4%	109	41.8%
Pilates classes	27	45	27.6%	50	37	33.3%	102	39.1%
Strength Training classes	52	49	38.7%	44	29	28.0%	87	33.3%
Yoga classes	52	56	41.4%	38	30	26.1%	85	32.6%
Disc Golf	18	29	18.0%	40	60	38.3%	114	43.7%
Mountain Biking	31	30	23.4%	45	46	34.9%	109	41.8%
Road Biking	36	35	27.2%	36	43	30.3%	111	42.5%
Running	51	37	33.7%	28	34	23.8%	111	42.5%
Skateboarding	15	33	18.4%	46	45	34.9%	122	46.7%
Walking	83	42	47.9%	20	25	17.2%	91	34.9%

Caving	14	25	14.9%	44	64	41.4%	114	43.7%
Hiking	66	47	43.3%	22	23	17.2%	103	39.5%
Kayaking	38	36	28.4%	42	34	29.1%	111	42.5%
Rock Climbing	26	29	21.1%	43	47	34.5%	116	44.4%
Youth Baseball (ages 5-12)	60	57	44.8%	22	23	17.2%	99	37.9%
Youth Basketball (ages 5-12)	63	56	45.6%	21	21	16.1%	100	38.3%
Youth Flag Football (ages 5-12)	49	50	37.9%	25	31	21.5%	106	40.6%
Youth Lacrosse (ages 5-12)	23	36	22.6%	41	45	33.0%	116	44.4%
Youth Rugby (ages 5-12)	20	34	20.7%	38	52	34.5%	117	44.8%
Youth Soccer (ages 5-12)	54	60	43.7%	23	19	16.1%	105	40.2%
Youth Softball (ages 5-12)	55	53	41.4%	23	23	17.6%	107	41.0%
Youth Tennis (ages 5-12)	42	55	37.2%	26	30	21.5%	108	41.4%
Youth Volleyball (ages 5-12)	52	55	41.0%	25	24	18.8%	105	40.2%
Teen Baseball (ages 13-17)	59	48	41.0%	18	25	16.5%	111	42.5%
Teen Basketball (ages 13-17)	64	45	41.8%	18	26	16.9%	108	41.4%
Teen Flag Football (ages 13-17)	48	49	37.2%	18	33	19.5%	113	43.3%
Teen Lacrosse (ages 13-17)	25	41	25.3%	34	45	30.3%	116	44.4%

Teen Rugby (ages 13-17)	22	42	24.5%	33	47	30.7%	117	44.8%
Teen Soccer (ages 13-17)	48	58	40.6%	21	26	18.0%	108	41.4%
Teen Softball (ages 13-17)	53	51	39.8%	18	28	17.6%	111	42.5%
Teen Tennis (ages 13-17)	45	53	37.5%	21	31	19.9%	111	42.5%
Teen Volleyball (ages 13-17)	52	50	39.1%	19	25	16.9%	115	44.1%
Adult Baseball (ages 18+)	35	40	28.7%	37	38	28.7%	111	42.5%
Adult Basketball (ages 18+)	44	44	33.7%	34	35	26.4%	104	39.8%
Adult Flag Football (ages 18+)	27	37	24.5%	37	43	30.7%	117	44.8%
Adult Lacrosse (ages 18+)	16	26	16.1%	41	59	38.3%	119	45.6%
Adult Rugby (ages 18+)	16	27	16.5%	42	57	37.9%	119	45.6%
Adult Soccer (ages 18+)	31	43	28.4%	33	40	28.0%	114	43.7%
Adult Softball (ages 18+)	44	39	31.8%	32	37	26.4%	109	41.8%
Adult Tennis (ages 18+)	38	35	28.0%	35	40	28.7%	113	43.3%
Adult Volleyball (ages 18+)	46	38	32.2%	32	40	27.6%	105	40.2%
Drop-in Basketball	48	45	35.6%	30	35	24.9%	103	39.5%
Drop-in Volleyball	44	39	31.8%	33	36	26.4%	109	41.8%
Drop-in Weight Room	61	34	36.4%	31	35	25.3%	100	38.3%
Drawing/Painting	51	53	39.8%	32	30	23.8%	95	36.4%

Photography	40	61	38.7%	33	31	24.5%	96	36.8%
Pottery/Sculpture	44	49	35.6%	39	33	27.6%	96	36.8%
Fishing	24	43	25.7%	46	40	33.0%	108	41.4%
Gardening	63	56	45.6%	29	22	19.5%	91	34.9%
Recycling Programs	69	37	40.6%	30	23	20.3%	102	39.1%
Arts & Crafts	64	44	41.4%	35	25	23.0%	93	35.6%
Board/Card Games	35	41	29.1%	42	39	31.0%	104	39.8%
Bowling	27	34	23.4%	42	47	34.1%	111	42.5%
Cooking	59	41	38.3%	36	29	24.9%	96	36.8%
Music Classes/Lessons	51	51	39.1%	26	31	21.8%	102	39.1%
Needlework (sewing, knitting, crocheting etc.)	39	47	33.0%	42	37	30.3%	96	36.8%
Computer Classes	82	43	47.9%	17	31	18.4%	88	33.7%
Health/Nutrition Lectures	77	40	44.8%	24	32	21.5%	88	33.7%
Theatre/Acting	32	42	28.4%	45	38	31.8%	104	39.8%
Early Childhood Programs (ages 3-4)	75	36	42.5%	19	23	16.1%	108	41.4%
Teen Afterschool Programs (ages 13-17)	91	28	45.6%	16	22	14.6%	104	39.8%
Youth Afterschool Programs (ages 5-12)	97	34	50.2%	11	19	11.5%	100	38.3%

Youth Summer Day Camps (ages 5-10)	102	27	49.4%	12	20	12.3%	100	38.3%
Teen Summer Day Camps (ages 11-14)	94	28	46.7%	11	20	11.9%	108	41.4%
Youth Day Camps on School Closure Days (teacher work days, holidays)	89	31	46.0%	15	21	13.8%	105	40.2%
Special Needs - Adaptive Sports (ages 8+)	73	39	42.9%	12	29	15.7%	108	41.4%
Special Needs - Adult Day Programs	75	43	45.2%	15	27	16.1%	101	38.7%
Special Needs - Life Skills/Socialization	78	33	42.5%	16	31	18.0%	103	39.5%

Based on your beliefs about the role of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department in the community, how important is it to you that the Austin Parks and Recreation Department offer the following types of programs?

Programs	Extremely Important or Important		Somewhat Important or Not important at all		Skipped Question	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Programs that are accessible and affordable for people with limited recreational opportunities	187	71.6%	19	7.3%	55	21.1%
Programs that bring neighbors and communities together	181	69.3%	21	8.0%	59	22.6%
Programs for youth and teens that are safe and fun	182	69.7%	15	5.7%	64	24.5%
Programs that encourage people to be healthy and stay in shape	186	71.3%	20	7.7%	55	21.1%
Programs that encourage lifelong participation in recreational and leisure activities by adults and older adults	181	69.3%	27	10.3%	53	20.3%
Programs for beginners that focus on basic skills and participation for all	166	63.6%	32	12.3%	63	24.1%
Programs for intermediate and advanced skill levels that focus on competition	112	42.9%	76	29.1%	73	28.0%

From the choices below, please mark the TWO types of programs that are most important to you.

Programs	n	%
Programs that are accessible and affordable for people with limited recreational opportunities	85	32.6%
Programs that bring neighbors and communities together	52	19.9%
Programs for youth and teens that are safe and fun	67	25.7%
Programs that encourage people to be healthy and stay in shape	56	21.5%
Programs that encourage lifelong participation in recreational and leisure activities by adults and older adults	41	15.7%
Programs for beginners that focus on basic skills and participation for all	14	5.4%
Programs for intermediate and advanced skill levels that focus on competition	7	2.7%
Skipped the question	107	41.0%

Have you or anyone in your household used an Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation center or senior center in the past 12 months?

Answer Options	n	%
YES	166	63.6%
NO	66	25.3%
<i>answered question</i>	232	
<i>skipped question</i>	29	

Please mark ALL centers that you have used in the last 12 months. (n=166)

Answer Options	n	%
Alamo Recreation Center	4	2.4%
Camacho Recreation Center	6	3.6%
Metz Recreation Center	6	3.6%
Pickfair Community Center	6	3.6%
Virginia L. Brown Recreation Center	9	5.4%
Givens Recreation Center	10	6.0%
McBeth Recreation Center	12	7.2%
Northwest Recreation Center	12	7.2%
Rosewood Recreation Center / Chestnut House / Doris Miller Auditorium	12	7.2%
A.B. Cantu/Pan Am Recreation Center	13	7.8%
Dove Springs Recreation Center	13	7.8%
Dittmar Recreation Center	14	8.4%
South Austin Senior Activity Center	14	8.4%
Parque Zaragoza Recreation Center	15	9.0%
South Austin Recreation Center	15	9.0%
Dottie Jordan Recreation Center	16	9.6%
Montopolis Recreation Center	17	10.2%
Austin Recreation Center	18	10.8%
Gus Garcia Recreation Center	18	10.8%
Conley-Guerrero Senior Activity Center	19	11.4%
Turner Roberts Recreation Center	22	13.3%
Hancock Recreation Center	48	28.9%
Senior Activity Center - Lamar	52	31.3%

Please mark ALL the reasons why you have NOT used an Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation center or senior center in the past 12 months. (n=66).

Answer Options	n	%
Classes are full or have waiting lists	1	1.5%
I do not have transportation	1	1.5%
Lack of accessibility at program locations (wheelchair ramps, too many stairs)	1	1.5%
Communication/Language is a problem	2	3.0%
I feel customer service is poor	2	3.0%
Registration for programs is difficult	3	4.5%
I am concerned about safety at program locations	3	4.5%
Programs that I want are not offered	4	6.1%
There are not enough staff members	4	6.1%
I am not interested	6	9.1%
I feel there is a lack of quality programs	6	9.1%
Program fees are too high	7	10.6%
Condition of facility is poor or unappealing	8	12.1%
Program locations are not convenient	9	13.6%
I am too busy	15	22.7%
It is hard to find program information	15	22.7%
I don't know locations of programs	19	28.8%
I use recreation facilities or participate in programs run by other groups	25	37.9%
I don't know what programs are being offered	37	56.1%
Other (please specify)	11	16.7%

How important is it to you for the Austin Parks and Recreation Department to provide programs for each of the groups below?

Populations	Extremely Important or Important		Somewhat Important or Not important at all		Skipped Question	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Preschoolers (ages 3-4)	123	47.1%	54	20.7%	84	32.2%
Youth (ages 5-12)	172	65.9%	17	6.5%	72	27.6%
Teens (ages 13-17)	176	67.4%	14	5.4%	71	27.2%
Adults (ages 18-59)	157	60.2%	31	11.9%	73	28.0%
Older Adults (ages 60+)	177	67.8%	25	9.6%	59	22.6%
People with Disabilities	157	60.2%	30	11.5%	74	28.4%

From the choices below, please mark the TWO groups that are most important to you.

Populations	n	%
Preschoolers (ages 3-4)	21	8.0%
Youth (ages 5-12)	80	30.7%
Teens (ages 13-17)	74	28.4%
Adults (ages 18-59)	50	19.2%
Older Adults (ages 60+)	68	26.1%
People with Disabilities	40	15.3%
Skipped the question	97	37.2%

How important is it to you that services other than recreation are offered at Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation centers in your community?

Services	Extremely Important or Important		Somewhat Important or Not important at all		Don't Know		Skipped Question	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Immunization or Medical Services	101	38.7%	83	31.8%	6	2.3%	71	27.2%
Health Education (nutrition, smoking cessation, disease management, wellness classes etc.)	123	47.1%	63	24.1%	7	2.7%	68	26.1%
Literacy Services	99	37.9%	82	31.4%	5	1.9%	75	28.7%
Tutoring Services	93	35.6%	81	31.0%	7	2.7%	80	30.7%
English as a Second Language	84	32.2%	84	32.2%	9	3.4%	84	32.2%
Professional Services (legal, taxes, financial etc.)	88	33.7%	95	36.4%	7	2.7%	71	27.2%
Health and Human Services (food, clothing etc.)	85	32.6%	90	34.5%	6	2.3%	80	30.7%
Senior Services (transportation, meals, excursions etc.)	133	51.0%	60	23.0%	3	1.1%	65	24.9%
Meeting rooms open to community groups	161	61.7%	39	14.9%	3	1.1%	58	22.2%
Certification Classes (CPR, first aid, babysitting)	124	47.5%	55	21.1%	4	1.5%	78	29.9%

How easy is it to find information about Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation programs? Please explain why you feel this way in the text box below.

Answer Options	n	%
Easy	44	16.9%
Somewhat Easy	53	20.3%
Somewhat Difficult	51	19.5%
Difficult	20	7.7%
Don't Know	31	11.9%

How do you hear about Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation programs? Please mark ALL that apply.

Answer Options	n	%
I don't hear about programs	42	16.1%
Cable TV community access program	12	4.6%
Community bulletin board	23	8.8%
Direct home mail	13	5.0%
Email/List serve	43	16.5%
fliers sent home at school	22	8.4%
fliers posted in community (grocery stores, on cars etc)	15	5.7%
Neighborhood newsletter	30	11.5%
Newspaper announcement	20	7.7%
Parks and Recreation Website	72	27.6%
Radio announcement	13	5.0%
Seasonal program activity guide	33	12.6%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	11	4.2%
TV news	12	4.6%
Visiting or calling a parks/recreation center	74	28.4%
Word of mouth	91	34.9%
Other (please specify)	22	8.4%

What ways would you like to hear about Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation programs? Please mark ALL that apply.

Answer Options	n	%
Cable TV community access program	32	12.3%
Community bulletin board	48	18.4%
Direct home mail	52	19.9%
Email/List serve	108	41.4%
fliers sent home at school	39	14.9%
fliers posted in the community (grocery stores, on cars etc)	57	21.8%
Neighborhood newsletter	94	36.0%
Newspaper announcement	53	20.3%
Parks and Recreation Website	120	46.0%
Radio announcement	54	20.7%
Seasonal program activity guide	84	32.2%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter)	46	17.6%
Open house meetings	28	10.7%
Text message	23	8.8%
TV news	46	17.6%
Visiting or calling a parks and recreation facility	66	25.3%
Word of Mouth	58	22.2%
Other (please specify)	14	5.4%

Would any member of your household take part in nature-based activity programs (hiking, fishing, caving, gardening, kayaking, rock climbing etc.) if offered through an Austin Parks and Recreation Department recreation center?

Answer Options	n	%
YES	113	43.3%
NO	26	10.0%
MAYBE	72	27.6%

Please mark ALL reasons why you would NOT participate in nature-based activities.

Answer Options	n	%
Not interested	12	46.2%
Too busy	10	38.5%
Not familiar with nature	1	3.8%
Too expensive	2	7.7%
Don't like to be outside	2	7.7%
Participate in nature-based activities elsewhere	1	3.8%
Would rather play sports	5	19.2%
Intimidated by nature	2	7.7%
Other (please specify)	4	15.4%

Have you searched for information about recreation programs or recreation centers on the Austin Parks and Recreation Department Website in the last 12 months?

Answer Options	n	%
YES	119	45.6%
NO	84	32.2%

On the Parks and Recreation Website how easy was it to do the following activities? (n=119)

Answer Options	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Easy and Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult and Difficult
Find out about recreation programs	26	39	54.6%	36	9	37.8%
Find out about recreation centers	38	35	61.3%	27	8	29.4%

Where do you access the internet to check email, search the web, and find information?

Answer Options	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		Rarely		Never	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
At home	155	59.4%	20	7.7%	6	2.3%	4	1.5%	12	4.6%
At work	105	40.2%	8	3.1%	1	0.4%	3	1.1%	29	11.1%
In a public place or business (library, coffee shop)	9	3.4%	12	4.6%	9	3.4%	44	16.9%	50	19.2%
On your phone	59	22.6%	10	3.8%	2	0.8%	9	3.4%	51	19.5%

How comfortable are you with your ability to:

Answer Options	Extremely Comfortable (would use daily)	Comfortable	Extremely comfortable and Comfortable	Somewhat Comfortable	Not Comfortable (would never do)	Somewhat comfortable and Not comfortable
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Receive and send email	171	16	71.6%	7	5	4.6%
Search for information on the internet	162	22	70.5%	6	9	5.7%
Use social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	88	21	41.8%	29	49	29.9%

How often do you use or visit a City of Austin park?

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Daily	33	12.6%
Weekly	81	31.0%
Monthly	36	13.8%
Occasionally	38	14.6%
Rarely	11	4.2%
Never	6	2.3%

Why do you visit City of Austin parks? Please mark ALL that apply.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Biking	39	14.9%
Bring children	65	24.9%
Events	100	38.3%
Exercise, walk, or jog	143	54.8%
Picnic	43	16.5%
Playscapes	41	15.7%
Relax	95	36.4%
Trails	95	36.4%
Other (please specify)	41	15.7%

In general, do you feel safe in City of Austin parks?

Answer Options	n	%
Always	85	32.6%
Often	79	30.3%
Sometimes	27	10.3%
Never	5	1.9%
No Opinion	7	2.7%

In general, how would you rate the quality of the parks in the City of Austin?

Answer Options	n	%
Excellent	43	16.5%
Very Good	70	26.8%
Good	66	25.3%
Fair	14	5.4%
Poor	4	1.5%
No Opinion	5	1.9%

APPENDIX B: Community meeting process and script

Recreation Center Community Meeting Guide

Arrival (5-10 minutes)

- Fill out short questionnaire, get name tag
- Enjoy refreshments and talk with others
- Find a chair

II. Introduction (5-10 minutes)

- Patrick, Kelly, Joe, or Gina get everyone's attention to stop talking and pay attention.
- They follow the script below to welcome everyone and then introduce the center supervisor
- The supervisor will follow their section of the script to introduce the process for the evening

SCRIPT: Patrick, Kelly, Joe, or Gina

“Good evening everyone. My name is _____ and I am a _____ .

As you may or may not know, the Austin Parks and Recreation Department is conducting a city-wide initiative to find out what types of programs and opportunities people want offered at their recreation centers, and that is why we are all here tonight.

On behalf of the Parks and Recreation Department’s Director, Sara Hensley, I want to thank all of you for coming out and taking part in our community

engagement discussion tonight. It is our mission is to provide, protect, and preserve a park system that promotes quality recreational, cultural and outdoor experiences for the Austin Community, and we want to make sure we are providing all of you with the programs and services you want and need. In order to best do that, we are asking you for your thoughts and ideas about such programs, services, and opportunities.

By the end of this session we hope to have a better understanding of what is important to you, why you participate in various activities, and the type of programs you'd like to see at recreation centers like ____ (name of center) _____. This information will guide us in the months ahead as we look to provide the programs and services that reflect your interests.

We want to hear from all of you. Please be open and direct with your ideas. In order to provide you with the programs you want and enhance your experience, we need to know how you really think and feel about various things.

At this point, I'd like to introduce _____, the supervisor of this recreation center. _____ is going to give you more information about how tonight's community engagement meeting will be conducted."

SCRIPT: Center Supervisor

“Hi everyone, again, for those that don't know me, my name is _____
and I am the supervisor here. I want to thank you again for coming out tonight
and let you know how much I appreciate the support you give this neighborhood
and recreation center. As (name of lead facilitator) said, tonight is about all of
you, and what you think, so please don't hesitate to speak openly and honestly.

In a few minutes we are going to break into small groups based on the color of the star on your name tag. Although you will be in different groups, everyone will be answering the same questions. This way everyone will have the opportunity to share their ideas and be heard. Each group will be led by a parks and recreation staff person who does not work here, and once in your group they will explain what we are going to do. After the small group discussions are completed, we will join back together for a brief overview of what each group talked about.

(This part about breaking into groups will only be said when there are enough people to warrant splitting into at least two groups).

I want to let everyone know that once in these groups we will be using two methods to record your ideas: writing them down and using an audio recording device. Please keep in mind that the audio recording will only be used later in the evaluation process if we need clarification. The ideas you discuss tonight will be

evaluated by graduate students from the University of Texas and will inform recommendations about future programs and services offered at our recreation center. Alright, let's get everyone into groups.

III. Small Group Discussions (1 hour - 1 hour 20 minutes)

- Explanation of process using script below (5 minutes)
- 4 questions (15-20 minutes each: 3 to write, 10-15 to discuss and use dots)

SCRIPT: Small Group Facilitator

Hi everyone my name is _____ and I will be your facilitator this evening. This is _____ and he/she will be our scribe for the night. In order to make sure that everybody has a chance to speak, we are going to follow a process that allows for all ideas to be discussed. This is how it works. All of you have blank sheets of paper in front of you. I'm going to ask the group a question, and everyone will have a few minutes to think and write down as many answers as you can. Think of this like a brainstorming activity. After a few minutes, we will go around the group and each of you will give one idea at a time, until there are no new ideas. As you share your ideas, _____ will be writing them on the large posters so everyone can see them.

Once all the ideas are up, you all will be able to ask questions and make comments about what different things mean. As a reminder, there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, we just want to know what all of you think. We will discuss the ideas until everyone understands what they mean. All of you have a sheet of dots in front of you. Once we are done discussing the ideas, I will tell you what color dot to use, and you will place all of those dots on the ideas you agree with the most, and that you think should be a priority for the Parks and Recreation Department. You can choose to place them where ever you want, and do not need to divide them evenly. We will do this after each question.

Again, I want to remind you that we are here tonight to get your ideas and opinions. _____ and I are not here to answer questions or provide explanations. We will not be offended by what you say so please be open and honest.

Quickly, we have posted here some meeting reminders to ensure our small group discussions are a success:

- open and constructive discussion
- treat all ideas with respect
- speak for yourself and don't interrupt when others are speaking

Alright, we only have four questions to discuss tonight, so let's get started.

QUESTIONS

**remember probes do not need to be asked unless people don't have any ideas.*

they are meant to help get people thinking, but not to influence their answers

**you can also ask people to clarify: what they mean by "x" or why they think "x"*

1st: What programs, classes, services, and opportunities do you value the most?

- probes:
- Why are you currently participating in certain programs?
 - What do your children like to do?
 - What benefits are you looking for?

2nd: How do you determine which programs and activities you participate in?

- probes:
- How does scheduling effect your decisions?
 - days of the week, times, duration?
 - Are you aware of all the programs available here?
 - Does everyone in your family participate in the same

programs?

3rd: What do you think is the role of the recreation center in the community?

- probes:
- What should the center's priorities be?
 - What kind of programs do you think the community needs?
 - Who should the center focus on?

4th: If you were in charge, what would do to make the center and its programs better?

- probes:
- what would you change?
 - what do you think should be done differently?
 - how would you decide what programs to offer?
 - is there anything you would avoid?
 - how would you try to prevent problems?

-For each question the group will follow the NGT procedure explained above.

After the group has seen how the dots are placed for each question, there should be a couple minutes for some follow up discussion/clarification before moving on to the next question.

SCRIPT: Small Group Facilitator:

Alright, looks like we are wrapping things up here. We are going to head back into one large group and report our findings. I know it's getting late, but we're almost done here. It looks like this is what we all agree upon: _____ (depends on answers) _____. Are we all in agreement with that? Are there any concerns or questions with what I just said? Great, thanks again for all of your work and your

patience. Lets head back to the group now.

V. CLOSING (10 minutes)

- Small groups finish up.
- Center supervisor and facilitators gather everyone back into one large group.
- Ask each group leader to report a summary of the main ideas.
- Instructions for anyone who has any questions, comments, concerns to feel free to stay afterwards and talk to who ever is there.
- Remind people about the nature of the project, and have surveys available for them to take home and/or fill out right now.

SCRIPT: Lead Facilitator

Again, we thank you for your time and energy. The ideas you've discussed tonight will help us in future program planning so we can better meet your needs. We want to improve and enhance your experience here at _____. We value our relationship with our users and are always open to feedback and suggestions. If you have any additional comments or concerns, we will be here to talk to you afterwards. Also, if you have not yet taken the city wide survey, we have copies here that you can take with you and fill out at home. Thank you again for your time. Have a wonderful night.

APPENDIX C: Demographic characteristics of community meeting participants

Demographic characteristics of community meeting participants collected by survey at each meeting. (n=304)

Characteristic	n	%
Male	97	31.9%
Female	205	67.4%
Missing	2	0.7%
Hispanic	140	46.1%
non-hispanic	151	49.7%
missing	13	4.3%
White	122	40.1%
Non-white	82	27.0%
missing	100	32.9%
<18 years old	3	1.0%
18-39 years old	74	24.3%
40-59 years old	83	27.3%
60 years and older	125	41.1%
Average age	54.5	
Average years of recreation center use	11.6	
Average age (senior centers)	74.9	
Age range (senior centers)	57 - 93	
Average years of use (senior centers)	7.9	
Range of years of recreation center use (senior centers)	0.125 - 32	
Average age (non-senior centers)	47.9	
Age range (non-senior centers)	11-91	
Average years of use (non-senior centers)	12.7	
Range of years of use of centers (non-senior)	0 - 60	