

CHAPTER 4

Public Input

The recommendations of the Round Rock Strategic Parks and Recreation Master Plan Update, Playbook 2030: Building a Connected Community, are intended to provide high quality parks and recreation to meet the needs of the community today and into the future. As such, it is important to get an updated understanding of the community's wants, needs, and priorities.

Throughout the planning process, a variety of engagement types were used to gain an understanding of the thoughts and ideas of the public. By using different engagement strategies, varying user types were given a chance to express their opinions in the setting most comfortable for them. The public input process familiarized residents with the master planning process, generated awareness about current planned improvements and opportunities for additional enhancements, and asked the community to identify their priorities for the future of Round Rock's parks and recreation.

Engagement methods used throughout the planning process included:

- Two citywide telephone surveys (one specifically for parks and recreation and one focused on all City services), to determine broad based public opinions and perceptions from across the City;
- An online survey, available to any resident of the community so that all people had the opportunity to specifically voice their opinion;
- Neighborhood public open house meetings held throughout the City with a survey given to the attendees of those meetings; and
- Meetings with City Council and the Planning and Zoning Commission to garner their feedback and priorities.



“Where parks and open space are plentiful and recreation services strong, residents enjoy the closest attachment and engagement within their communities...”

~ National Recreation and Park Association

Public Surveys

Overview and Methodology

ETC Institute conducted a statistically valid Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) to establish priorities for the future improvement of parks, recreation facilities, programs and services within the community.

A goal was set to obtain a minimum of 600 completed surveys within the City boundaries. Leisure Vision/ETC Institute reached that goal and obtained a total of 633 completed surveys. The results for the sample of 633 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision rate of at least +/- 3.8%. The survey was conducted from September to November 2015.

A second online public survey was open to the greater public and included the same questions as the statistically valid survey. This survey was advertised via a PARD e-mail blast; social media posts on Facebook and Twitter; advertisements in local newspapers; flyers distributed to recreation centers, City Hall, and the library; and a “News Flash” included with residents’ City utility bill. The survey was available for residents to complete during each of the five neighborhood open house public meetings as well as during two impromptu open houses at the Rock’N River Water Park and Play for All Playground.

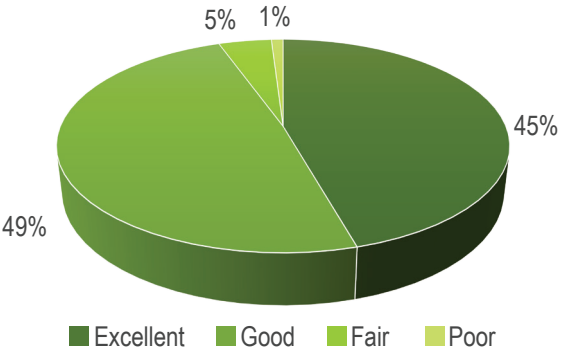
The online survey was offered from August through September 2015 and once again from May through June 2016. It was completed by 531 respondents. Results largely affirmed the statistically valid survey. Highlights from the statistically valid survey are illustrated on this and the following pages. Online survey results that differed noticeably from the statistically valid results are explained, where necessary.

Major Findings

Parks and Open Spaces

The parks and open space system is highly used by residents. A majority (77%) of households indicated that they have visited parks and/or open spaces operated by the City of Round Rock over the past 12 months. This is comparable to the national visitation rate of 79 percent. An even greater percentage (91%) of the online survey respondents indicated that they had visited the parks. The online survey went on to ask which park respondents visit most frequently. Old Settlers Park was selected by an overwhelming majority as the park most frequently visited. The second and third most visited parks and open spaces were the Brushy Creek Greenbelt and Trail and the Play for All Abilities Park, respectively.

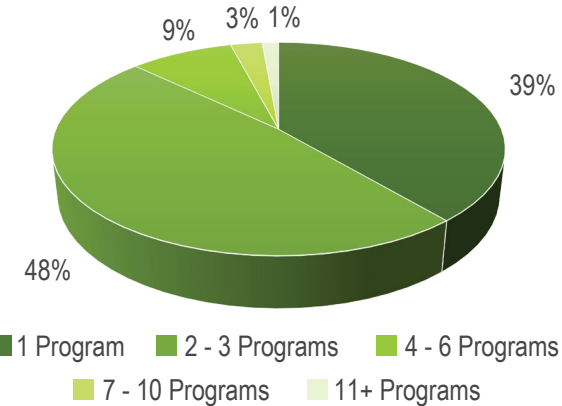
Figure 4.1, Physical Condition of Round Rock Parks and Open Spaces



Excellent ratings of parks and open spaces are much higher than the national average. Respondents were asked how they would rate the physical condition of all the parks and open space provided by the City. The overall condition of the parks was rated as excellent by 45 percent of households, which is higher than the national benchmark (31%). Only six percent of respondents felt that the condition of parks was either fair or poor (see Figure 4.1, *Physical Condition of Round Rock Parks and Open Spaces*).

Current Programs

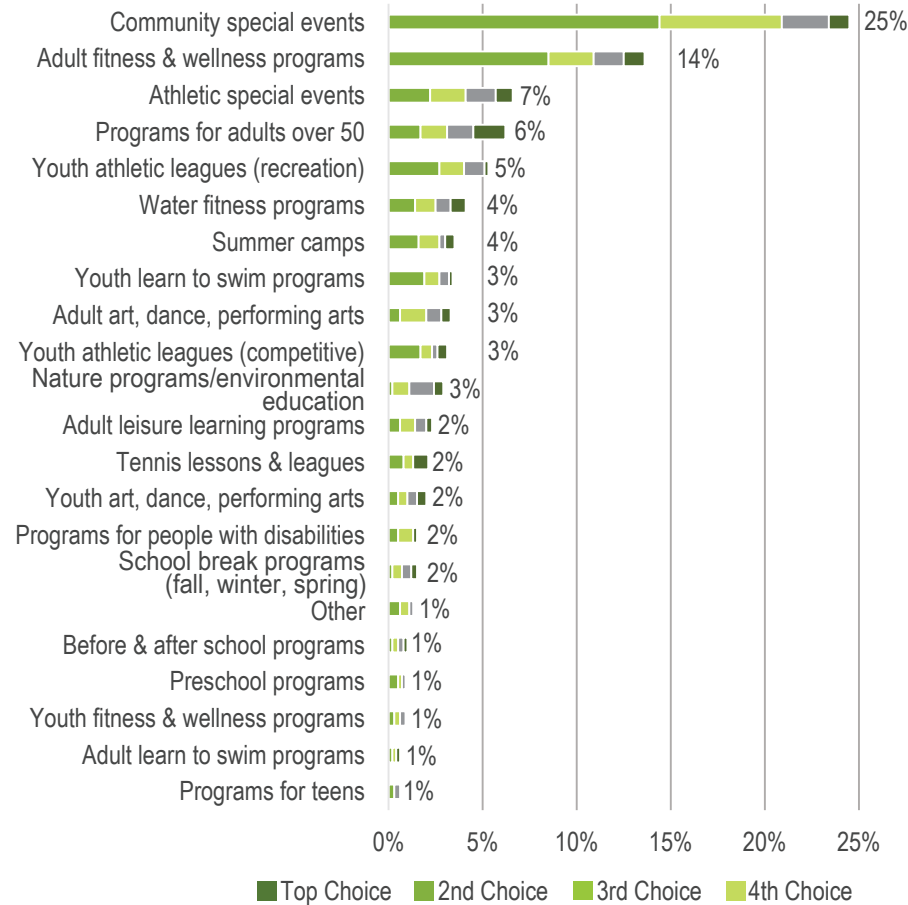
Figure 4.2, Program Participation in the Past 12 Months



Approximately one-quarter of households participate in recreation programs. When asked about their level of participation in the City’s recreation programs, 23 percent of households indicated that they had participated in programs during the past 12 months. Participation rates are about 10 percent lower than the national average. Of the 23 percent who participated in programs, 48 percent participated in two to three programs and 39 percent participated in one program over the past 12 months (see Figure 4.2, *Program Participation in the Past 12 Months*). Notably, 46 percent of online survey respondents indicated that they have participated in programs within the last year.

The top two reasons households participate in programs include (1) cost of program or activity and (2) location of program facility.

Figure 4.3, Program Participation by Type



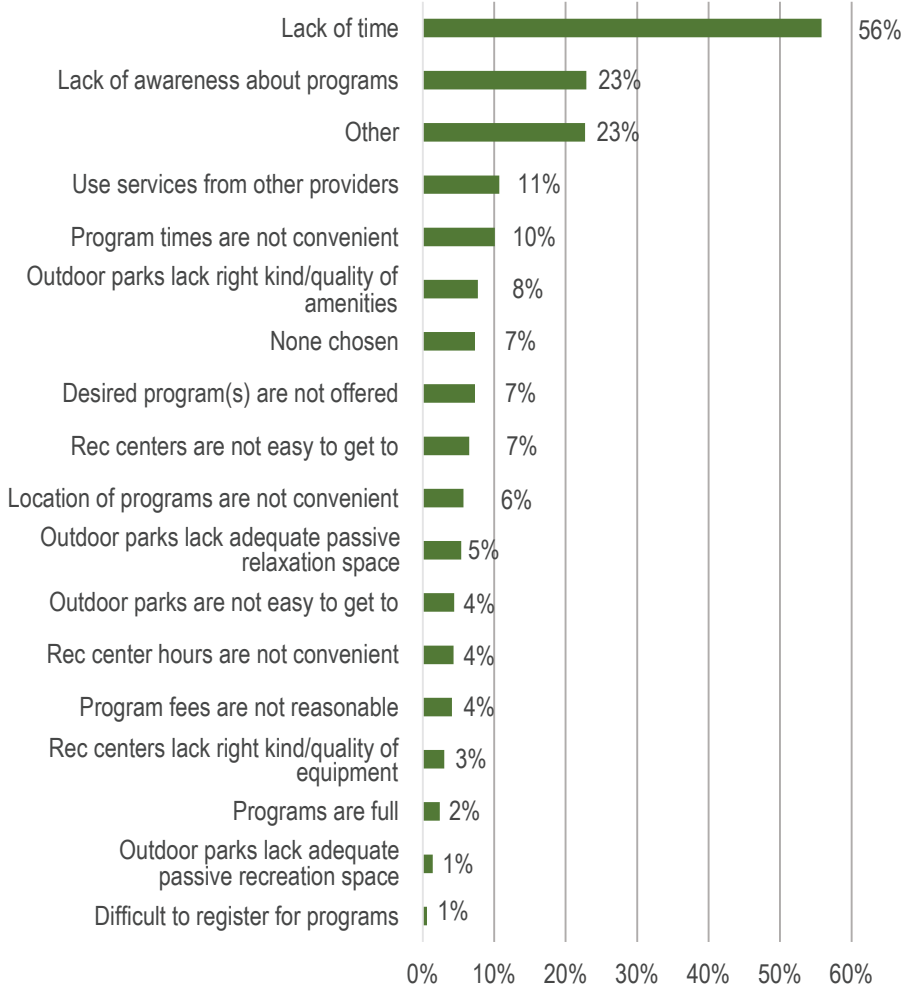
Community special events are a popular program in Round Rock. Households were asked to indicate the top four programs they participate in the most often. Based on the sum of households’ top four choices, 25 percent indicated that they participated in community special events the most. Other most participated in programs include adult fitness and wellness programs (14%), athletic special events (7%), and programs for adults over 50 (6%) (see Figure 4.3, *Program Participation by Type*). Households rate the overall quality of programs as higher than national averages.

How Households Rate the Quality of Programs They Have Participated In

	National	Round Rock (statistically valid survey)	Round Rock (online survey)
Excellent	35%	44%	58%
Good	53%	53%	37%
Fair	10%	3%	4%
Poor	2%	1%	1%



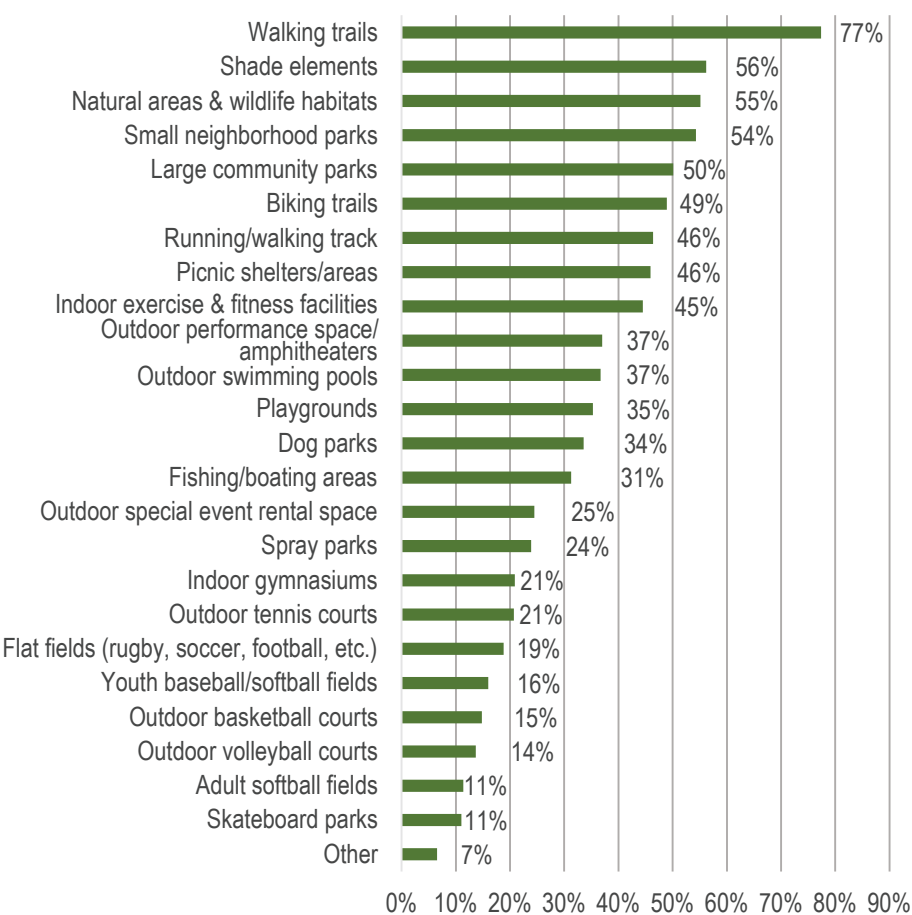
Figure 4.4, Reasons that Prevent Greater Use of Parks and Recreation



Busy lives and lack of awareness prevent greater program participation. The top reasons households indicated that prevent them from using outdoor parks, indoor recreation centers, and programs are lack of time (56%) and lack of awareness about programs (23%) (see Figure 4.4, *Reasons that Prevent Greater Use of Parks and Recreation*). This number is comparable to the national average (22%).

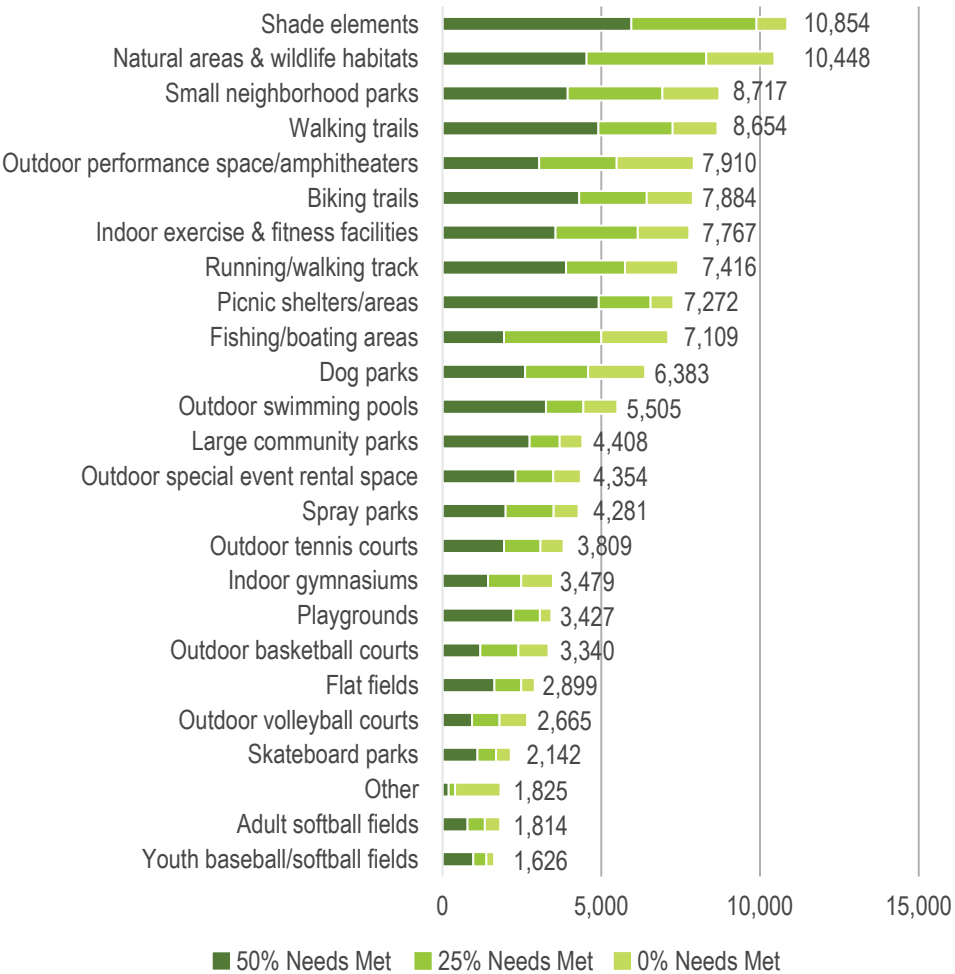
Parks and Recreation Facility Needs

Figure 4.5, Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities



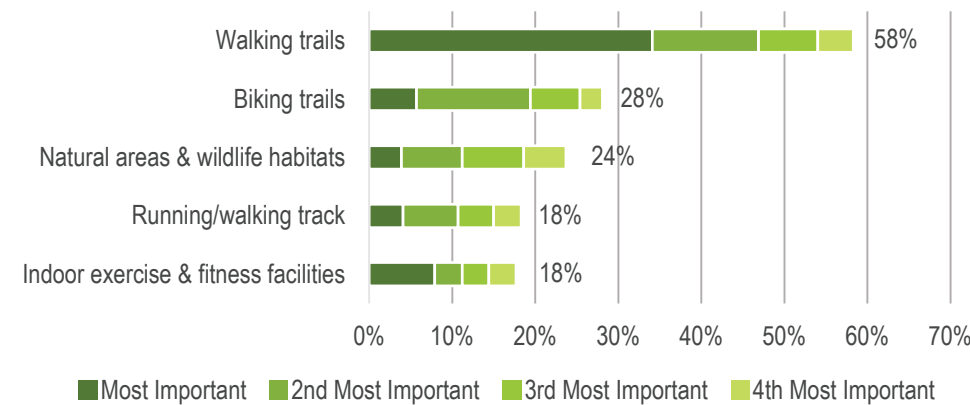
Passive recreation facilities are the most needed among households. Respondents were asked to identify which park and recreation facilities they had a need for. A strong majority of respondents (77% or 27,129 households) indicated a need for walking trails. This is slightly higher than the national average (69%). Other most needed facilities include shade elements (56% or 19,698 households), natural areas and wildlife habitats (55% or 19,313 households), small neighborhood parks (54% or 19,032 households), and large community parks (50% or 17,560 households) (see Figure 4.5, *Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities*).

Figure 4.6, Estimated Number of Households Whose Recreation Facility Needs are Being Met 50% or Less



Passive recreation facility needs are the least met needs in the parks system. After identifying whether their household had a need for a variety of park and recreation facilities, respondents were asked how well their needs were being met. Facilities for which respondents most frequently indicated their need was only being met fifty percent or less of the time were shade elements, natural areas & wildlife habitats, small neighborhood parks, walking trails, and outdoor performance spaces (see Figure 4.6, *Estimated Number of Households Whose Recreation Facility Needs are Being Met 50% or Less*).

Figure 4.7, Facilities that are Most Important to Households

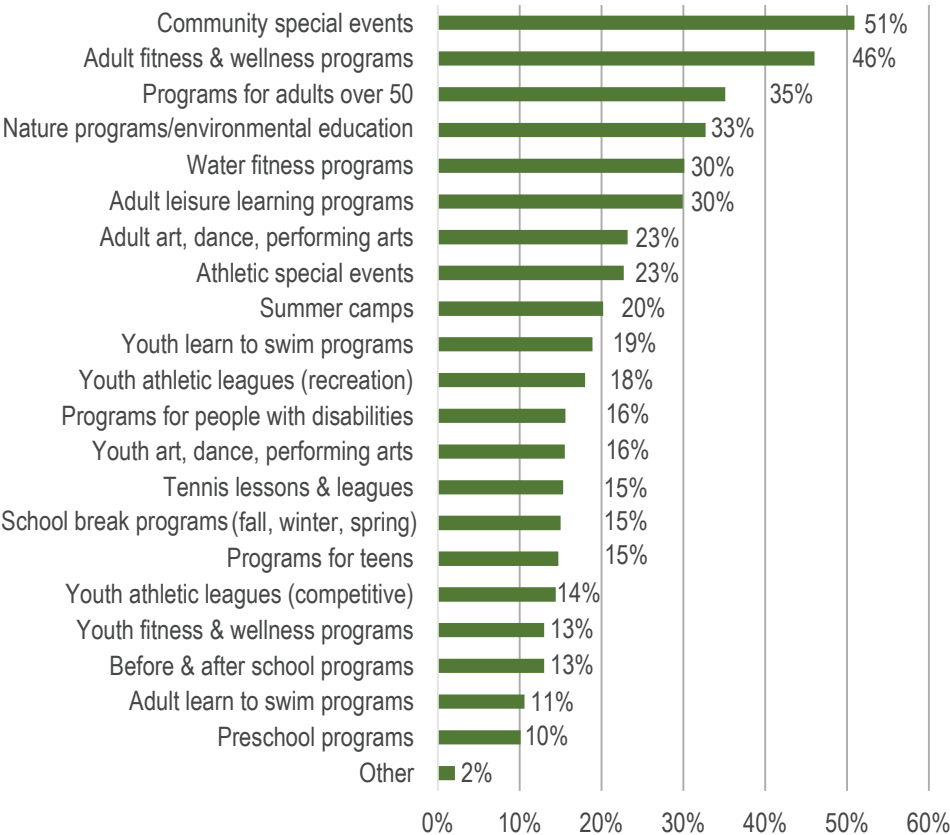


Active and passive fitness opportunities which provide access to nature are most important to households. Shown the same list of parks and recreation facilities as the previous questions, respondents were asked to choose the top four facilities that were most important to their household. Based on the sum of households' top four choices, the most important facilities are walking trails (58%), biking trails (28%), natural areas & wildlife habitats (24%), running/walking track (18%), and indoor exercise and fitness facilities (18%) (see Figure 4.7, *Facilities that are Most Important to Households*). Other top priority facilities identified during the online survey included outdoor swimming pools and playgrounds.



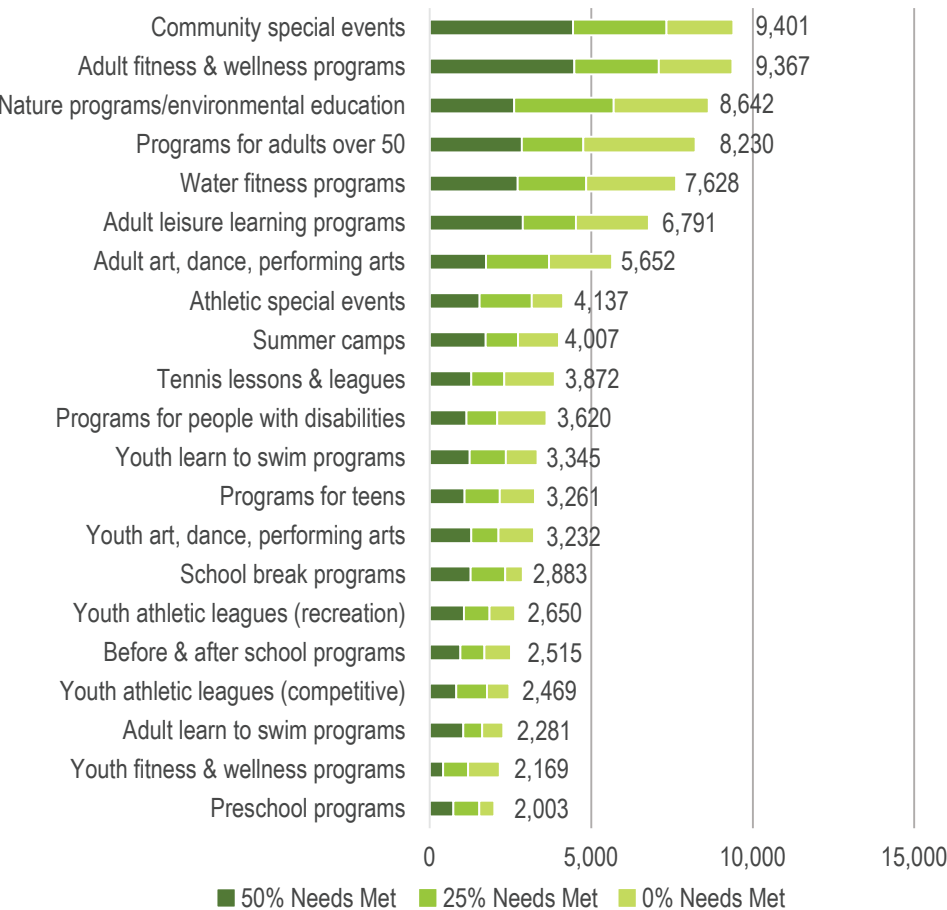
Program Needs

Figure 4.8, Need for Parks and Recreation Programs



Adult and multi-generational programs and events are the most needed. Respondents were shown a list of recreation programs and asked to indicate if their household had a need for them. As seen in Figure 4.8, *Needs for Parks and Recreation Programs*, 51 percent or 17,840 households indicated a need for community special events. This is 11 percent above the national average (40%). It is evident that Round Rock residents value opportunities for family-friendly community interaction. Other highly needed programs include adult fitness and wellness programs (46% or 16,123), programs for adults over 50 (35% or 12,303), nature programs/environmental education (33% or 11,461 households), water fitness programs (30% or 10,550), and adult leisure learning programs (30% or 10,480 households). Aside from community events and nature programs, in general terms, the greatest programming need is for adults.

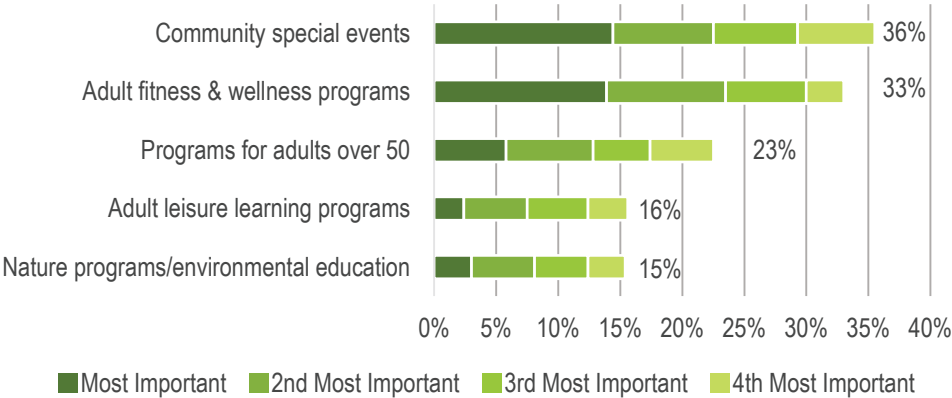
Figure 4.9, Estimated Number of Households Whose Recreation Program Needs are Being Met 50% or Less



The most highly needed programs are also the least met needs. When asked how well their household's recreation program needs were being met, needs for the same top five programs were selected most often as only being met fifty percent or less of the time. Based on Figure 4.9, *Estimated Number of Households Whose Recreation Program Needs are Being Met 50% or Less*, respondents felt that youth and children programming is largely meeting their needs, while the need for adult and senior programs is greater at this point.



Figure 4.10, Programs that are Most Important to Households



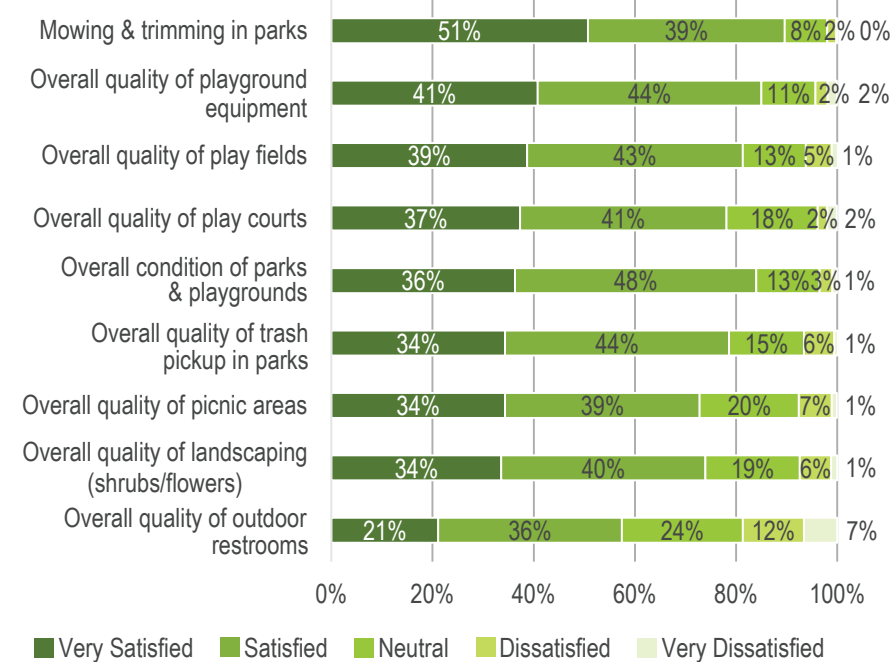
Community events and adult wellness and fitness are top community priorities. After indicating their need for recreation programs, respondents were asked to choose their top four programs. Not surprisingly, community special events (36%), adult fitness and wellness programs (33%), and programs for adults over 50 (23%) were selected as the most important programs (see Figure 4.10, *Programs that are Most Important to Households*).



Parks and Playground Services

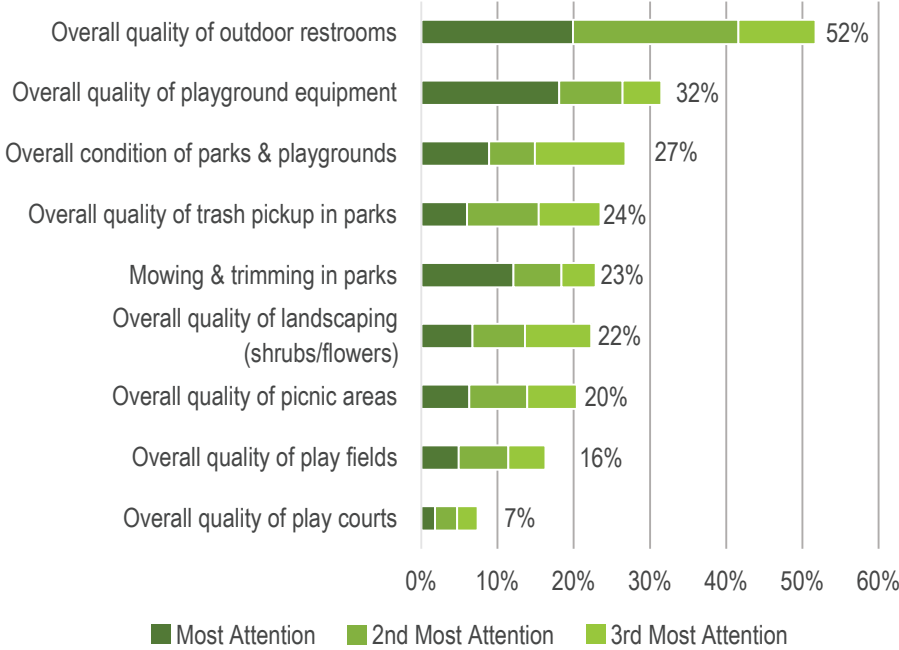
Playground usage is similar to general park usage. When asked if their household used any playgrounds in the last 12 months, 71 percent of households indicated that they have. Over 80 percent of online survey responses indicated that they have used a playground in the last year.

Figure 4.11, Household Satisfaction with Parks and Playground Services



Residents are largely satisfied with the quality and condition of parks. Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with a variety of park and playground services provided by the City. Overall, households are satisfied with the quality and condition of facilities, amenities, and maintenance of parks. Over 70 percent of households are very satisfied or satisfied with all the services listed, with the exception of outdoor restrooms. Based on resident responses (see Figure 4.11, *Household Satisfaction with Parks and Playground Services*), the City could work on improving its outdoor restrooms to increase user satisfaction with the parks system.

Figure 4.12, Parks and Playgrounds Services that Should Receive the Most Attention Over the Next Two Years



Restrooms, playground equipment, and the overall condition of parks and playgrounds are high priority maintenance items for residents. Respondents were asked to choose the three park and playground services they think should receive the most attention from the City over the next two years. Directly related to their level of satisfaction, the top item chosen by over half (52%) of households was the overall quality of outdoor restrooms. However, even though respondents were largely satisfied with the City's playground equipment and condition of parks and playgrounds, it is important to residents that these services continue as a high priority (see Figure 4.12, *Parks and Playgrounds Services that Should Receive the Most Attention Over the Next Two Years*).



Developing additional trails was the most important item for survey respondents.

Importance of Actions for the Parks and Recreation Department

Figure 4.13, Importance of Potential PARD Actions

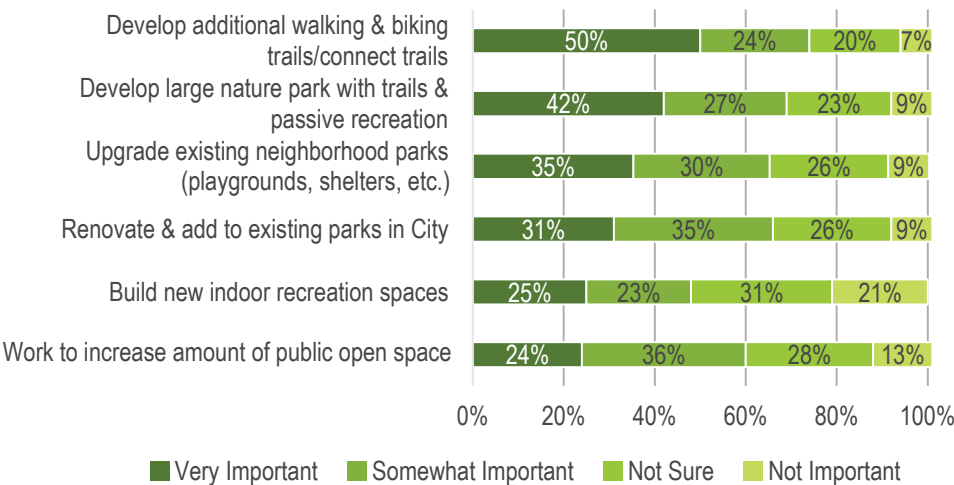
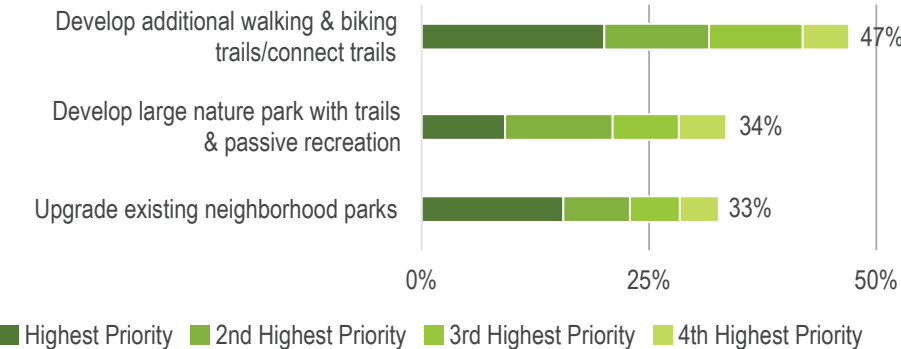


Figure 4.14, Highest Priority Potential PARD Actions



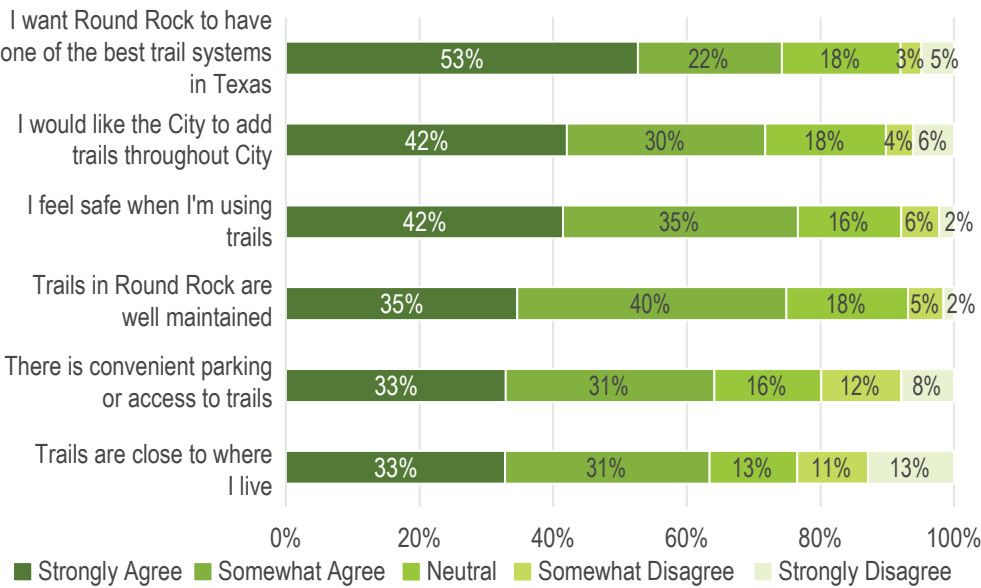
Developing large nature parks with trails and passive recreation opportunities is the second highest priority item for survey respondents.

Trail-related actions and upgrading and further developing existing parks are considered most important. Moving forward, there are a variety of actions the PARD can take to improve, expand, and further develop the parks system. In order to gain an understanding of resident priorities, respondents were asked to indicate how important they considered a series of potential actions. Developing additional trails/connecting trails (74% phone / 78% online survey) and developing nature parks with trails and passive recreation (69% phone / 78% online survey) were considered the most highly important actions when considering very important or somewhat important responses. Other highly ranking actions were upgrading existing neighborhood parks (65% phone / 81% online survey), renovating and adding to existing parks (66% phone / 72% online survey), increasing the amount of public open space (60% phone / 65% online survey), and building new indoor recreation spaces (48% phone / 63% of online survey responses) (see Figure 4.13, *Importance of Potential PARD Actions*).

Trails and parks within walking distance are residents' highest priorities. Considering the same list of potential PARD actions, respondents were asked to choose their top four priorities. Based on the sum of households' top four choices, the highest priority actions include adding trails and trail connections (47% phone / 49% online survey), developing nature parks with trails and passive recreation (34% phone / 30% online survey), and upgrading existing neighborhood parks (33% phone / 22% online survey) (see Figure 4.14, *Highest Priority Potential PARD Actions*).



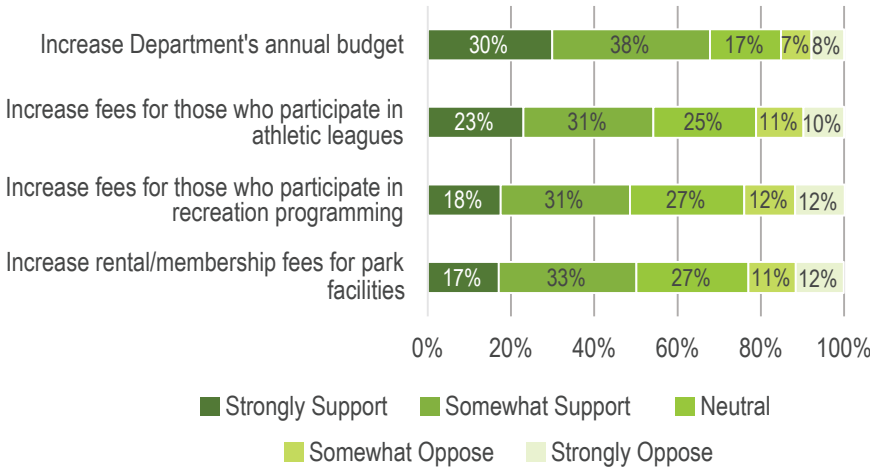
Figure 4.15, Trail-Related Statements



Residents want a state-of-the-art trail system. Based on all the previous survey questions, it is very apparent that residents value a high-quality, well-connected trail system. In order to determine trail priorities, respondents were asked to indicate how strongly they agreed with a series of trail-related statements. As seen in Figure 4.15, *Trail-Related Statements*, when considering strongly agree and somewhat agree responses, residents strongly desire Round Rock to the have one of the best trail systems in Texas (75%), and would like to see additional trails throughout the City (72%). Notably, respondents largely feel that the City’s existing trails are safe, well maintained, provide convenient parking, and are located near residences. While approximately half of respondents indicated a desire to use trails to get to places of interest, it appears that many people simply want to use trails for recreation and fitness purposes.

Financial Strategies

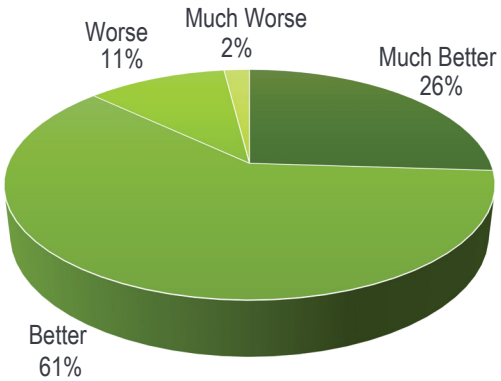
Figure 4.16, Support for Financial Strategies



The most supported financial strategy is to increase the PARD’s budget. Similar to many other cities, Round Rock’s PARD may require additional funding to meet the desires of its growing population. As such, respondents were asked how strongly they supported four different financing strategies. A large percentage (68%) of households indicated that they strongly supported or somewhat supported an increase in the PARD’s annual budget. Support for the other strategies was slightly lower but still near 50 percent or above (see Figure 4.16, *Support for Financial Strategies*). In general, 10 percent or greater of online survey respondents strongly supported or somewhat supported all the financing strategies.

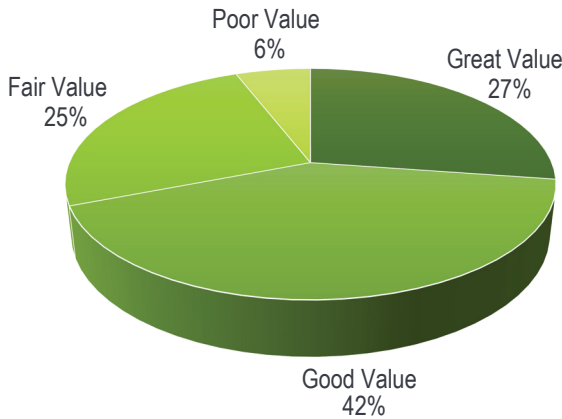
Other Findings

Figure 4.17, How Round Rock Parks Compare with Other Cities



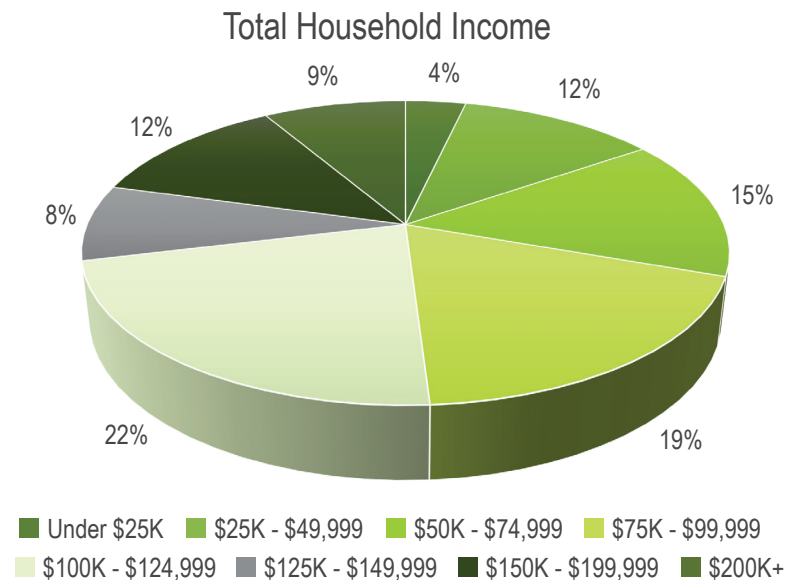
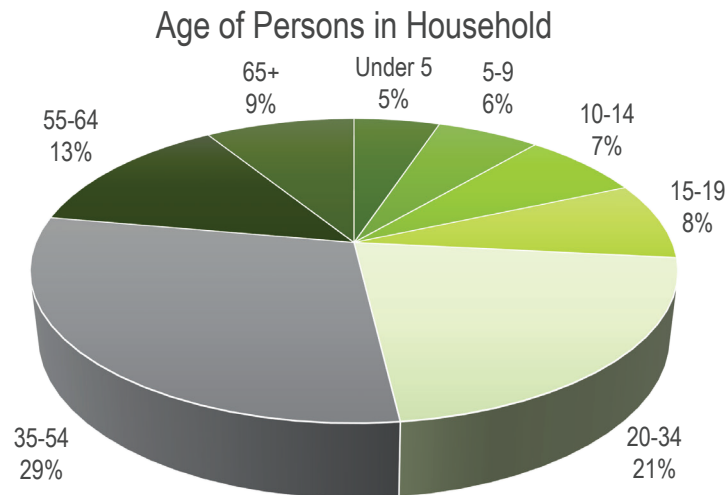
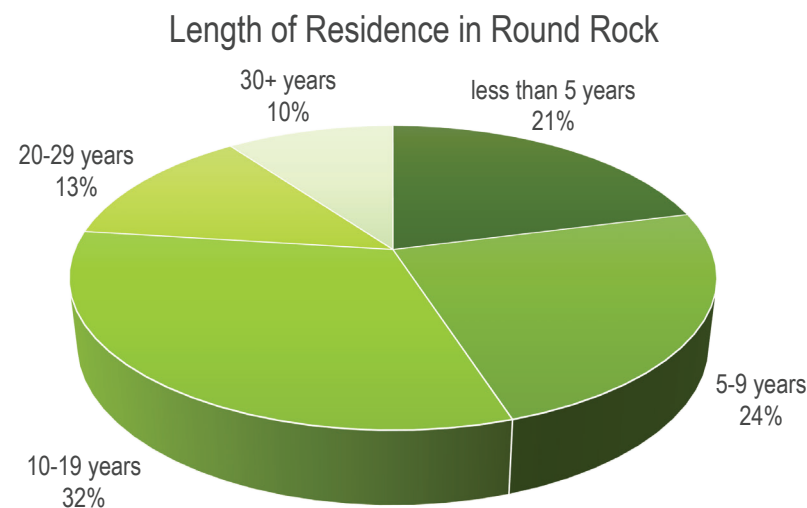
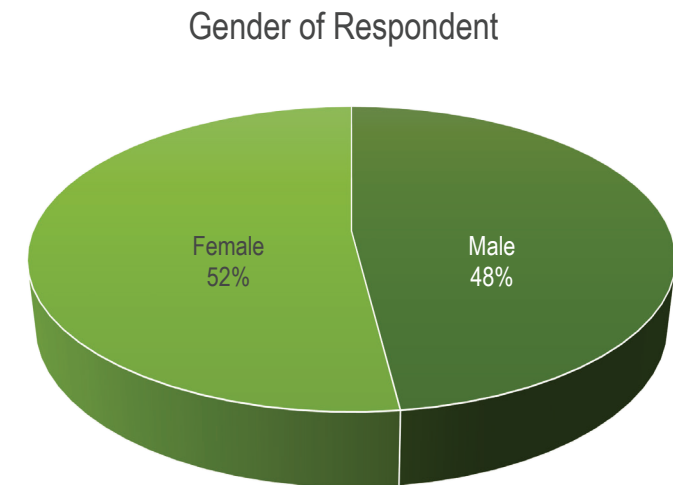
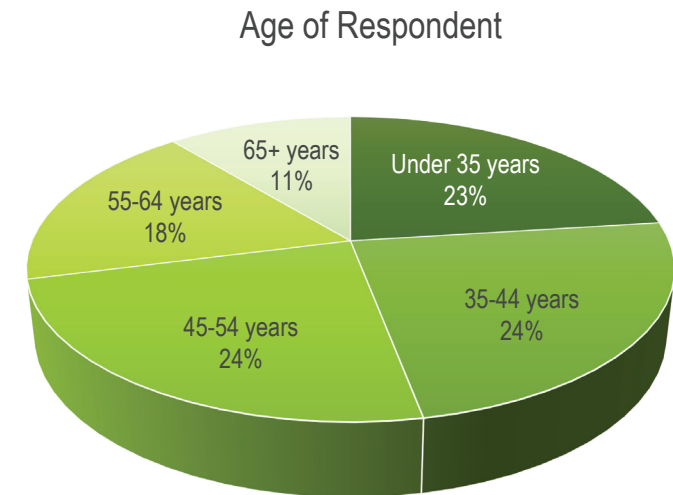
Most people feel that Round Rock parks are better or much better than other cities. After identifying their desires and needs, it is helpful to understand how residents compare the parks in their community to other cities. Considering responses to previous questions, residents desire upgrades and enhancements to the City’s parks, trails, and open space system. However, 87 percent of households still indicated that parks in Round Rock are either much better (26%) or better (61%) than those in other cities. Notably, only 13 percent felt that Round Rock’s parks were worse than those in other cities (see Figure 4.17, *How Round Rock Parks Compare with Other Cities*).

Figure 4.18, Value Received for Taxes and Fees Paid to the PARD



Most residents feel that they are getting a good or great value for their money paid to the PARD. The PARD is funded, in part, by taxes and fees paid by Round Rock residents. As such, respondents were asked about the services the City provides for their money. Nearly 70 percent of respondents felt they’re getting a good or great value for their money. Impressively, only six percent of households felt they were getting a poor value for their money. While respondents have voiced their desire for improvements, it is clear that Round Rock’s PARD deserves commendation for its parks and recreation system to date.

Figure 4.19, Statistically Valid Survey Respondent Demographics



Respondent Demographics

As illustrated in Figure 4.19, *Statistically Valid Survey Respondent Demographics*, respondents to the statistically valid survey included a wide cross-section of residents from all age groups and were relatively evenly split between male and female. While some households included children age 19 and below, the greatest percentage of households included people ages 20 to 54. The majority of respondents have lived in Round Rock for 10 to 19 years and have a household income of between \$75,000 and \$124,999. Respondents to the online survey included a greater percentage of female respondents and households with children.

When analyzing and interpreting survey results, it is important to recognize how respondent demographics differed from the overall citywide demographics. According to U.S. Census Bureau information, 85 percent of Round Rock residents are ages 54 and down. Of that 85 percent, over 50 percent are under the age of 35. Conversely, a large percentage of survey respondents represented older age brackets and households without children. It is thus understandable that a number of survey trends reflected the desire for adult and senior programming, while overlooking the need for expanded youth programming and spaces/facilities to accommodate those programs. Other methods of receiving public input better reflect the true demographics of Round Rock and the opinions reflected in those surveys should be taken into consideration.



Respondents to the statistically valid survey included a wide cross-section of residents from throughout the community.



Public Open Houses

Introduction

Over the course of two weeks in August 2015, there were five neighborhood open house meetings held in various parts of the City of Round Rock. The open houses were heavily advertised through email blasts; in the Round Rock Leader and Community Impact newspapers; on Facebook and Twitter; on the City’s website; on the PARD digital display boards in recreation centers; as part of featured media stories in the Round Rock Leader and Austin American Statesman; in a “News Flash” included with City utility bills sent to all residents; and with fliers distributed to customers at the Clay Madsen Recreation Center, Allen B. Baca Center, City Hall, and Library. There were a total of 113 open house attendees. In addition to the five formal open house meetings, there were two impromptu open house meetings at two of the City’s most popular destinations; Rock’N River and Play for All Playground.

Attendees were presented with an overview of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan planning process and an update on progress since the 2009 Plan. The City’s vision for the future of the parks, recreation, and trail system and concepts for key parks were introduced to the public. After viewing the informational portion of the open house, attendees were asked to indicate what facilities and programs are most important to them as the City expands from 100,000 to 250,000 people. Top ranking facilities and programs are depicted in Figure 4.20, *Key Open House Facility-Related Findings* and Figure 4.21, *Key Open House Program-Related Findings* on this and the following pages.



Figure 4.20, Key Open House Facility-Related Findings

Expand Existing Pools



Aquatic Facilities

All Abilities Recreation Facility



Adaptive Recreation Facilities

Zip Line



Outdoor Adventure Facilities

Nature Facilities



Recreational Water Sports

Recreation Facilities



Indoor Exercise Facilities

Cultural or Arts Facilities



Botanical Garden

Figure 4.21, Key Open House Program-Related Findings



Other Citywide Public Input

In addition to the public input gathered during this parks and recreation planning process, the City was concurrently gathering public input regarding overall community satisfaction with all aspects of City services and desired transportation improvements. Key highlights from the City’s 2016 Community Survey and Round Rock Transportation Master Plan Update survey are presented on the following pages.

2016 Round Rock Community Survey

During the summer of 2016, ETC Institute administered a community survey for the City of Round Rock. The purpose of the survey was to assess resident satisfaction with the delivery of major City services and to help set priorities for the community. ETC Institute has administered the survey every two years since 2008. The survey was administered to a random sample of 500 residents. Respondents included an equal split between males and females and represented all age groups, with a better representation of the actual demographics of Round Rock than the ETC survey completed specifically for PARD.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with a variety of parks and recreation services and then indicate the level of importance they attribute to each service. The combined satisfaction and importance results are illustrated in Figure 4.22, *2016 Round Rock Community Survey Importance - Satisfaction Assessment Matrix for Parks and Recreation Facilities*.

The Importance-Satisfaction rating is based on the concept that public agencies will maximize overall customer satisfaction by emphasizing improvements in those areas where the level of satisfaction is relatively low and the perceived importance of the service is relatively high. ETC Institute developed an Importance-Satisfaction Matrix to display the perceived importance of major services that were assessed on the survey against the perceived quality of service delivery. The two axes on the matrix represent Satisfaction (vertical) and relative Importance (horizontal).

The I-S (Importance-Satisfaction) matrix should be interpreted as follows.

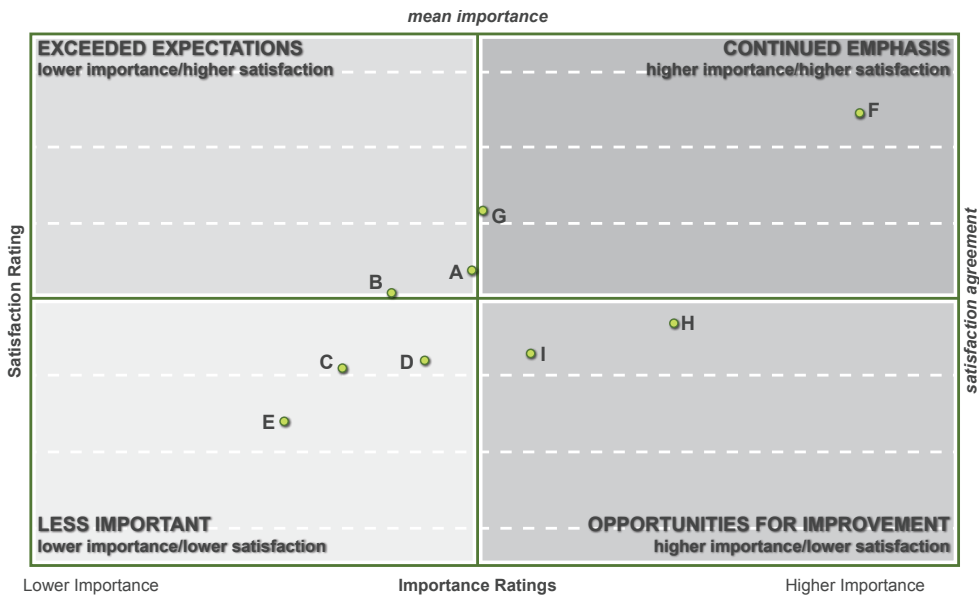
- **Continued Emphasis (above average importance and above average satisfaction).** This area shows where the City is meeting customer expectations. Items in this area have a significant impact on the customer’s overall level of satisfaction. The City should maintain (or slightly increase) emphasis on items in this area.



- **Exceeding Expectations (below average importance and above average satisfaction).** This area shows where the City is performing significantly better than customers expect the City to perform. Items in this area do not significantly affect the overall level of satisfaction that residents have with City services. The City should maintain (or slightly decrease) emphasis on items in this area.
- **Opportunities for Improvement (above average importance and below average satisfaction).** This area shows where the City is not performing as well as residents expect the City to perform. This area has a significant impact on customer satisfaction, and the City should DEFINITELY increase emphasis on items in this area.

Figure 4.22, 2016 Round Rock Community Survey Importance - Satisfaction Assessment Matrix for Parks and Recreation Facilities

(points on the graph show deviations from the mean importance and satisfaction ratings given by respondents to the survey)



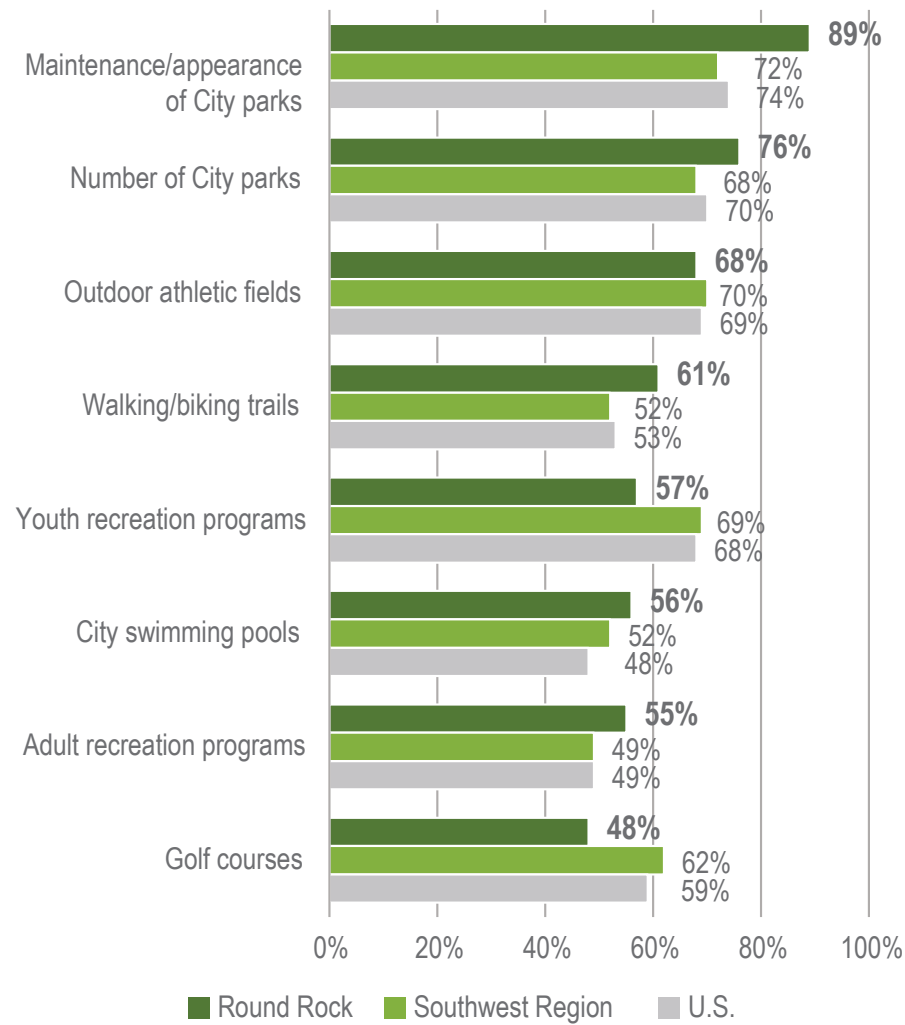
Exceeded Expectations A. Quality of outdoor athletic facilities B. City recreation centers	Continued Emphasis F. Appearance/maintenance of City parks G. Number of City parks
Less Important C. Adult recreation programs D. City swimming pools E. Forest Creek Golf Course	Opportunities for Improvement H. Hike and bike trails in the City I. Youth recreation programs

Source: ETC Institute

- **Less Important (below average importance and below average satisfaction).** This area shows where the City is not performing well relative to the City's performance in other areas; however, this area is generally considered to be less important to residents. This area does not significantly affect overall satisfaction with City services because the items are less important to residents. The agency should maintain current levels of emphasis on items in this area.

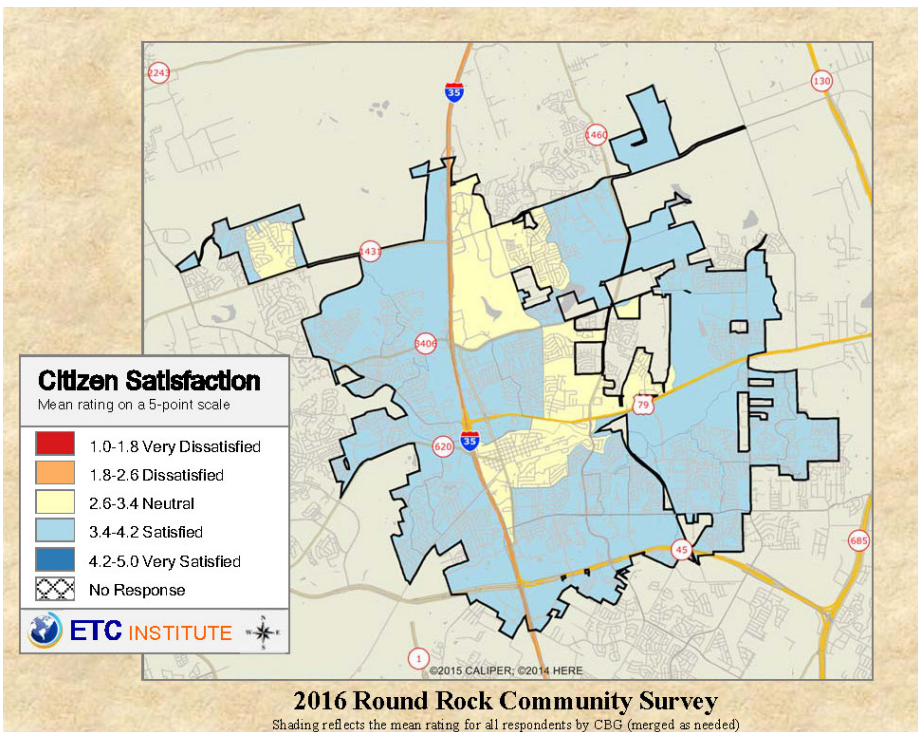
As part of the survey, respondents' overall satisfaction with different aspects of Parks and Recreation were compared to similar responses in the Southwest Region and the United States (see Figure 4.23, *Overall Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation*). Overall, Round Rock ranked better than or very similar to the Southwest Region and United States in most categories. However, the City fell short in youth programming and golf courses.

Figure 4.23, Overall Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation



Another significant result of the City's 2016 survey includes satisfaction based on respondents' geographic location across the City. These results are especially helpful to determine public safety response times, transportation needs, and access to resources in specific areas across the City. In the case of parks and recreation, these results are most important to consider when discussing trails. Trails that can't be easily accessed by residents are not useful as recreational amenities or alternate modes of transportation, and therefore levels of satisfaction will be lower. The yellow areas in Figure 4.24, *Satisfaction with Hike and Bike Trails in the City*, show the areas of the City where satisfaction with hike and bike trails was lower. These areas correlate with areas with no major trail connections or gaps in the trail system. With trails being a high priority in all surveys conducted, it is important to ensure easy access to all sectors of the City.

Figure 4.24, Satisfaction with Hike and Bike Trails in the City

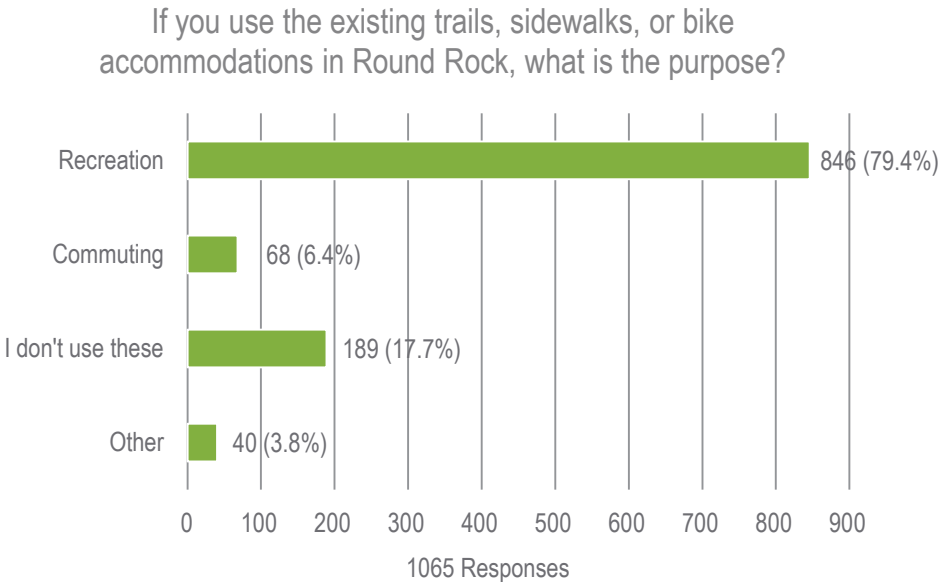


Source: ETC Institute

2016 Round Rock Transportation Master Plan Update

Also during 2016, the City conducted a public survey as part of its Transportation Master Plan Update. The survey received over 1,000 responses, over 60 percent of which were from residents ages 35 to 54. In addition to vehicular and transit related questions, the survey asked a series of questions about trails, sidewalks, and bikes. Key results shown below illustrate the community’s desire for improved trail connectivity to parks and recreation, Downtown Round Rock, and other key destinations, and that nearly 80 percent of respondents use the City’s trail system for recreation purposes. When this information is considered as a supplement to the public input received during the parks and recreation planning process, it is clear that the community values and highly uses the existing trail system and would like to see it enhanced and extended.

Figure 4.25, 2016 Round Rock Transportation Master Plan Update Survey Highlights



If provided in your area, would you use a walking or cycling trail to get around Round Rock?

