

## Park and Recreation System Surveys Key Findings Report

- A. Our system is beloved and heavily used by the community. We have 159,000 people now living in Eugene. 50% of the community (80,000 people) visits a park or natural area at least once a week and 73% (117,000 people) say they visit at least once a month. 20% of community residents (32,000 people) visit our Recreation facilities or participate in a program at least once a week, and about 33% (53,000) once a month. Women and households with children are also the biggest users of the system. (Sources: Statistical Survey with solid support from Convenience Survey)
- B. In addition to the high level of usage, over 90% of people say that the system is a very or somewhat important to their quality of life in Eugene. They care about the system and are passionately concerned that we care for it appropriately into the future. (Sources: All Surveys)
- C. When given six choices for reasons they appreciate the Park and Recreation system, “Enjoy Beauty and Nature” is the top choice, with “Exercise and Fitness” and “Places for kids to play and have fun” are nearly tied for second and third. (Sources: Statistical Survey, Convenience Survey)

What do people specifically like to do in our parks and recreation system? Most frequently listed activities include:

- Hiking, walking or running/jogging
- Bicycling
- Swimming in pools or the river
- Playing at playgrounds

Additional activities listed, but with fewer responses, included:

- Recreation camps or classes
- Sporting or athletic events

- D. Given a list of 18 park and recreation amenities or facilities and the opportunity to rank their importance on a 1-10 scale, none of the items scored less than a 5 in the statistical survey. Top ranked items included:

### Park Types

Natural Areas  
Small Neighborhood Parks  
Large Community Parks

### Park Amenities

Restrooms  
Safe River Access  
Paved multiuse paths in parks  
Playgrounds  
Unpaved Trails

Notably, this order was basically exactly reflected in both the statistical *and* the convenience surveys. (Source: Convenience and Statistically Valid survey)

- E. Finally, we asked what people would like more of in parks and recreation as an open-ended question. Answers, in relative order of priority, included:
- Safety and security infrastructure and programs – lighting, clear views, security call boxes, and patrols.
  - Safe and clean river access
  - A pool and more splash / spray play
  - Clean safe restrooms – and more of them
  - More athletic fields and sport courts
  - Mountain bike facilities and disc golf
  - Trails and bike paths, making safe pedestrian / bike connections
  - Affordable access to nearby facilities and programs – neighborhood parks, playgrounds, free activities in the park, etc.

(Source: Convenience Survey (we didn't ask this in the Statistical Survey))

- E. When asked about Operation and Maintenance funding, 81% of people consider it “very important” that the City adequately maintains park and recreation facilities. Another 15% consider it “somewhat important.” In general, this is reflective of a strong value around ‘caring for what we have’ that is reflected throughout data collected in all surveys. (Source: Statistical Survey, Convenience Survey)
- F. Given four choices of where to spend money on parks and natural areas, “Making major repairs” to existing amenities came out on top by a large margin – 46% - in the statistical survey. This jumped to 60% in the convenience sample survey. “Expanding existing community centers” topped three other recreational facility choices at 34% including building new facilities or expanding existing pools. This seems to be a relatively clear message around “caring for what we have” over expanding the system, particularly in combination with data reflected in ‘C’ above. At the same time, it’s important to note that this information shouldn’t be interpreted as a lack of support for new facilities in the community, but more a prioritization of repairing what we have first. (Source: Statistical Survey, Convenience Survey)
- G. From a recreational facilities standpoint, our community greatly appreciates the pools and recreational staff and instructors. People express frustration about over-crowding in our facilities and, to some degree, the age and condition of the buildings. Recreation Services also focuses providing services that aren’t necessarily well served by other recreation providers including Senior Programming, Adaptive Recreation and Aquatics.

As a result, people tend to use a variety of public and private recreation providers throughout the area to meet their needs. The addition of a new pool in un-served areas and enhanced community centers are consistently mentioned as desired items. Lower cost and free access to programs and facilities throughout the system are also highly desired for large families and lower income members of the community. (Convenience Survey, Low Income Survey).

- H. Safety issues emerge in a significant way on all the open-ended questions, whether its about pools or community centers or parks. Hundreds of people articulated their fears, frustrations and concerns about safety in parks in individual written comments in the on-line survey. Many went on to add that they feel unable to use many areas of the park system as a result.

While much of the commentary is focused on 'homeless' issues, people describe a variety of human behavior and conditions in parks that make them feel unsafe. So while these conditions may or may not be caused by homeless individuals or illegal camping activities the community has a tendency to lump or label them as such.

Comments describe discomfort with people's out-of-control, intimidating, scary or unpredictable behaviors and environmental impacts to the park sites and facilities. Trash, feces, unusable restrooms and environmental degradation are consistently listed as park site impacts of illegal camping. Aggressive panhandling, drug abuse, drug dealing, and scary looking people just 'hanging out' in park shelters, near playgrounds or community centers, and along paths and trails are all behaviors mentioned that limit the community's sense of park safety.

People go on to entreat the City to address these problems effectively, compassionately, efficiently and equitably. Suggested solutions to problems include additional lighting; park patrols; providing a place for the homeless to camp legally and with less environmental impact; and additional maintenance funding.

In summary, the community cares about our system deeply and wants to be able to use it without fear of unsafe situations or conditions. In addition they are passionate about reducing the environmental impacts of camping and other social issues in all park settings. (Sources: All surveys)