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TO: Mindy Milos-Dale
Oakland Township Parks and Recreation Commission

FROM: Chris Nordstrom, PLA, ASLA

DATE: October 2, 2019

RE: Recreation Plan Survey Analysis

The following is a summary of the results of the Oakland Township Parks and Recreation Plan survey as of October 1, 2019. While the survey is ongoing and will be re-evaluated at the end of the month, we expect that results as they now stand will be representative of the final tally. The survey was advertised in the Parks and Recreation Newsletter and other publications, at PRC programs and events, on the Township website and on social media, and has been available since September 12. 108 individual responses have been collected; 92 of the responses (84%) came from Oakland Township residents. Of those respondents, 44% lived in the southeast quadrant, 29% in the southwest, 22% in the northeast, and 5% in the northwest. 18 responses (16 %) from other communities with the majority of those responses coming from Rochester and Rochester Hills.

The results of this survey, which will be tabulated after it closes on October 9, will be combined with comments received at the open house on October 23 to help inform the final recommendations for the community.

RESPONDENT BACKGROUND

The vast majority of respondents (91%) resided in single-family homes. 58% lived in typical subdivision homes while 33% lived on lots with more than one acre of land. Only about a quarter of households (24.5%) indicated children under 18, while almost a third (29.1%) had individuals 65 and over. While the number of seniors participating in the survey almost exactly matches the percentage reported by the US Census Bureau (28.7%), the number of households with children is significantly under-represented (46.2%).

The largest age group (27%) was between 65 and 74 years old, with 55 to 64 (23%) and 35 to 44 (20%) the next largest groups. These percentages combined with the US Census values suggest a potential bias towards senior activities and facilities in the overall survey results.

GENERAL COMMENTS

The results of this survey are closely aligned with those seen in the previous recreation plan. Maintenance of existing facilities (score of 2198) remains the top priority for residents, with natural area stewardship (2020) the next highest. Acquisition of new parkland (1855) came in third, which is somewhat higher than expected, and suggests a desire to expand the existing park network either by adding land to existing facilities or creating entirely new facilities.

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PARKS

Satisfaction rates for the Township’s parks were generally very positive. Excluding the “Don’t know / Haven’t visited” category and combining “Very satisfied” with “Satisfied”, “Somewhat dissatisfied” with “Very dissatisfied”, and leaving “Neutral” separate resulted in the following positive satisfaction rates:

Park Name	Sat.	Dis.	N	Park Name	Sat.	Dis.	N
Bear Creek Nature Park	92%	4%	3%	Lost Lake Nature Park	83%	6%	11%
Blue Heron Environmental Area	44%	37%	19%	Marsh View Park	59%	9%	33%
Charles Ilsley Park	68%	8%	24%	Mill Race Trail	48%	16%	36%
Cranberry Lake Park	86%	3%	11%	O’Connor Nature Park	35%	13%	52%
Cranberry Lake Farm Historic District	87%	3%	10%	Paint Creek Heritage Area – Wet Prairie	62%	7%	31%
Draper Twin Lake Park	76%	5%	18%	Paint Creek Trail	90%	4%	5%
Gallagher Creek Park	67%	10%	22%	Stony Creek Ravine Nature Park	61%	21%	18%
				Watershed Ridge Park	40%	26%	34%

Four parks had less than 50% overall approval ratings, Blue Heron, Mill Race Trail, O’Connor, and Watershed Ridge. The common thread with these four facilities is that other than the Mill Race Trail that provides a pedestrian trail which parallels Orion Road, they are generally undeveloped and viewed as inaccessible by residents. Comments like, Not able to utilize the park, no parking, no trails”, and “Open up trails and parking in the unused parks”, were used to describe why respondents were dissatisfied with some parks. In contrast, highly used and visible facilities like Bear Creek Nature Park, the Paint Creek Trail, and Cranberry Lake Park & Farm received very high marks.

Residents are primarily using the parks for exercise (80%), access to nature (76%), and trail activities (70%). The overwhelming reason for not using parks is a lack of leisure time (60%), which is a trait that is out of the control of the Township. A lack of walking and biking access to parks (26%) was the next highest reason for not using parks, which indicates a need to improve the trail network connecting the parks. 89% of respondents currently have to drive to reach existing facilities, despite the fact that 84% of respondents regularly participate in trail related activities, with 73% indicating that the walk at least once or twice weekly.

The top amenities that residents would like to see in the parks are rustic trails (60%), followed by restrooms (49%). Restrooms were also described as the top in-park trail and pathway need (100%), with directional signage a distant second (60%). Natural areas and restoration of natural areas both scored well (43% and 37%), as did multi-use walking paths (32%) and fitness trails (34%). Dog parks were mentioned by 31% of respondents.

Participation in park programming varied greatly, with nature programs (64%) and Music in the Meadows (58%) seeing very high participation levels. More active programming events like ice skating (7%), soccer (5%) and basketball (3%) at Marsh View, and hunting at Stony Creek Ravine (0%) all scored very low. These participation levels contrast with the reasons for participating in programs; 59% of respondents indicated they take part in programming for exercise. Nature appreciation (70%) and pure enjoyment (56%) scored very high, and seem to be more in line with stated participation rates.

Residents who do not participate in programming cite lack of leisure time (47%), a lack of awareness of offerings (27%) and a lack of convenient times (18%). Expanded marketing of programs and events can help correct communication issues; residents were interested in seeing an improved interactive park website with a calendar (45%) as well as e-newsletters and e-mail blasts (44%). Saturday (73%) and Sunday (66%) daytime events were the most easily accessible times for participants. Residents indicated that they would like to see more nature education programs (44%), environmental stewardship events (42%), and special events such as concerts or festivals (40%). Programming fees were generally viewed as on-track, with the exception of archery range rentals (38%) and sled hill rental (70%).

Two-thirds of respondents had visited the Cranberry Lake Farm Historic District. The typical visitor spent 1 to 2 hours on site. Most of the visitors (61%) came to walk the grounds, while 41% came for concerts. Square dancing was mentioned in the comments multiple times. 81% of respondents said they were interested in concerts at the park. Other popular offerings included educational programs (71%), recreational events (62%), rotating exhibits and the museum (both 59%). Like the park system in general, flushing restrooms (51%) was a desired improvement, with expanded garden areas (44%) and a working farm (42%) relatively popular. Maintenance issues, specifically cleaning up garbage left on back trails, were mentioned by a few participants.