

Recreation Survey Results

The Public Attitude Survey of San Diego City Park and Recreation was conducted in September 2004 and was developed by Parsons Brinkerhoff Quade and Douglas, Inc. and San Diego State University. The survey was developed to evaluate satisfaction with recreation facilities, frequency of use, satisfaction of visits, and the importance of facilities. Overall, San Diego residents are satisfied with the variety and quality of the City's recreation facilities. The results are based on 305 qualified respondents which results in a six percent margin of error with a 95 percent confidence level, meaning there is a 95 percent certainty that if all adults within the City were polled the results would be plus or minus six percent of the responses identified in the survey.

Satisfaction of Visit

A combination of open and closed-ended questions were asked to determine overall satisfaction with park and recreation facilities. Questions gauged satisfaction with the number, quality, and distribution of facilities. Approximately 65 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the number, 71 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality, and 58 percent were satisfied or very satisfied with the quantity (lack of dog parks, swimming pools, and skate parks skewed the results for quality downward).

Frequency of Use

Open-ended questions were asked to determine most often visited parks or recreation facilities. Respondents were asked to name the last park or recreation facility visited in the last year. The facilities most often sited as last visited are regional in nature, with Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park receiving a combined 26 percent of the responses. Asked to name *another park visited in the past year*, Balboa Park and Mission Bay Park garnered 20 percent of the responses with the remaining 80 percent generally spread out evenly among more localized recreation facilities.

Closed-ended questions were asked to determine types of recreation facilities visited and the frequency of those visits. Residents were asked how many times they had been to one of 14 types of facilities in the past year. The frequency of visits generally coincided with the level of specialization associated with the facility. The frequency of visits from most to least visited were as follows.

- Non-specialized (beaches, cultural facilities, passive parks, trails, & playgrounds)
- More specialized (sports fields, sports courts, recreation centers, gyms, & water sport areas)
- Most specialized (dog parks, swimming pools, golf courses, & skate parks)

It should be noted that there is a correlation between the number of facilities and the frequency of visits.

Importance of Facilities

A series of "trade-off" questions were asked to gage the relative value/importance residents place on recreation facilities. To determine this, participants were given a choice of allocating \$10.00, in any manner, on the following three choices:

- Improving existing facilities;
- Increasing the operations and maintenance budgets of existing facilities; and
- Building new parks and recreation facilities.

A majority of the funds (\$7.20) were identified to be allocated toward improving existing facilities and increasing their operations and maintenance budgets, and \$2.80 was allocated toward building new parks and recreation facilities.

Survey Conclusions

In order to understand the existing baseline attitude of the public toward recreation facilities in the City and to provide insights to the development of refined standards and a future park master plan, the Planning Department commissioned a Public Attitude Survey of San Diego City Parks and Recreation. Results point to the following:

- The City as a whole has nearly all of the recreation facility-types that residents want;
- Regional parks (beaches/Balboa Park) and neighborhood parks are the most visited;
- A better distribution of specialized facilities such as dog parks, swimming pools, sports courts and skate parks is desired; and
- Residents would prefer to improve, upgrade, and maintain existing facilities rather than build new facilities.

Survey Policy Implications

Given the overall positive response to the existing recreation facilities, the challenge will be to maintain and improve the level of satisfaction while accommodating future population growth. In order to address this issue, the survey suggests the City develop policies that:

- Place greater resources into the maintenance and improvement of existing recreation facilities rather than build new facilities;
- Locate recreation facilities, especially general purpose passive parks with facilities such as playgrounds, walking trails, swimming pools, or sports courts in regions of the City perceived as lacking;
- Improve accessibility, and overall maintenance of existing facilities (perception appears to be the most direct factor in level of overall satisfaction); and
- Use to its advantage, the City's natural environment, in particular beach/ocean access and open spaces.

Note: This survey was conducted on a limited budget for the purpose of gaining an initial reading from the public. Depending upon how we proceed, a survey with a larger sample size may be needed.