

SECTION 3: PUBLIC INPUT

Public input is the most critical component in developing a comprehensive plan for a Parks and Recreation Division. The citizens are the participants in and users of the parks system and recreation programs, and without strong support and usage by them, the parks system becomes ineffective. For the plan to be effective in improving service delivery and facilities, it must accurately reflect the facilities and programs most desired by the community. The recommendations contained in this master plan were driven by public input gathered through a variety of forums: interviews, public meetings, focus group sessions, a design charrette and both an online user and mail survey of the residents of Dunwoody. Quotes throughout this section are selected from the comments on the returned surveys and input sessions.

The public input process started with interviews that included meetings with the Parks and Recreation Manager, the Mayor and City Council members, citizens who represent groups who currently manage programs or facilities in the parks, conservation and environmental group representatives and other City staff. These interviews were not only necessary to develop an understanding of how the Parks and Recreation Division and City government function, but also to develop an understanding of issues that exist within the community and the Parks and Recreation Division itself. Interviews with the Mayor and Council members provided the planning team with an overview of how the parks and recreation staff interact with elected officials and share information. The interviews also provided insight into their vision for long-term planning and administration of the Division and on their priorities for the Division as part of the overall City government. The input process was complemented by public meetings where issues identified included everything from desired park programs and facilities to safety and maintenance issues to the need for new and renovated facilities.

Interview Findings

Interviews with parks staff, public officials and with user groups were initiated September 19-21, 2010, and again on October 9-11, 2010. These conversations explored administrative practices, contract maintenance duties, ongoing partnership agreements and factors related to funding and park usage. Interviews with parks and recreation staff revealed information about the daily operations of the Division and also offered insight into the opportunities and constraints that staff are faced with on a day-to-day basis. These interviews provided a historical perspective of the evolution of parks and recreation in the city, as well as additional information about relationships with leagues and organizations and opinions for needed facilities.

The following is a bulleted summary of the issues that were the most commonly discussed in the interviews.

Operations

- The Parks Manager is the only full-time park staff member at this time and began his employment with the City in June of 2010.
- Management of the City combines a small number of City employees and contract services provided by a variety of firms, including Lowe Engineers, which employs the Park Manager as part of the Public Works Department.
- Park operations and programming is done through a combination of contract maintenance crews and volunteer groups who offer programs and assist with minimal maintenance of facilities.

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- Programming of recreation programs as traditionally offered by public recreation agencies is not a priority for the City and is currently not being performed. Partnerships are currently preferred over traditional programming.
- Partnerships with Dunwoody Nature Center, Dunwoody Senior Baseball, Dunwoody Community Garden at Brook Run, Brook Run Dog Park and Spruill Center for the Arts are the primary program providers and facility managers in the park system.
- The Brook Run Skate Park programs are being conducted through a separate contract management agreement.
- “We do not need to try to compete with the County as a youth sports provider.”
- “The churches and Jewish Community Center are doing a lot of youth programs and we do not want to compete with them.”
- “We need to determine if the existing parks and programs offered by others are sufficient for meeting active recreation demands.”
- A maintenance supervisor is needed to improve the quality of maintenance in the parks and make sure facilities are safe.
- A fee system needs to be established to increase revenue generation from the parks.
- Park system lacks an identity; there are no standards in the parks.
- Partnering program providers have their own websites and own identities.
- Managing special event permits is one of the main duties of the Park Manager.
- Forms for special events need to be automated to make the process easier and more efficient for staff.
- There are no weekend maintenance activities in the parks.
- Trash is picked up in parks by DeKalb County sanitation workers after it is collected by user groups in the parks.
- Programs should cover operating cost but not capital and replacement cost.
- Expand Dunwoody Nature Center programs for all ages, not just small children.
- “We should stress quality over quantity.”
- “We should have parks for all ages.”
- Our facilities should be maintained with safety as a high priority.
- Donaldson-Chesnut site should be programmed.
- Dunwoody Senior Baseball is challenged by number of games and lack of adequate facilities.

Marketing

- Due to the age of the division, it has not created a defined brand or identity.
- The City is not known as the facilitator for many of the programs that are operated by volunteer groups in the parks.
- The lack of special events sponsored by the City impacts the image and marketability of the division.
- The City should receive more credit from partnership groups.

Funding

- Lack of land and cost of land will impact the City’s ability to develop additional parks and greenways.
- The City funded the park master plan in order to determine needs and capital cost to provide improved parks and recreation services.
- Funding will limit the City’s ability to develop a traditional parks department.
- In order to keep recreation budget within obtainable limits, partnerships and sponsorships should be stressed over growing the department.

- State law does not allow the City to charge out of city fees to DeKalb County residents
- City is seeking bond funds from DeKalb County that were earmarked for Brook Run Park.
- Community gardeners pay \$50.00 per year for a plot.
- Community garden plots can be purchased for six or 12 months.
- Most of the groups programming in the parks are 501-C3 non-profit organizations.
- A bond program will be needed to fund major development of parks and land acquisition.
- More revenue generations is needed.
- Parks facilities should be free to use by the community.
- City has increased budget for parks next year.

Programs and Facilities

- Although the City does not have public swimming or a large number of tennis facilities, most HOAs have pools and/or tennis courts.
- There is currently a lack of green space and parkland to meet the needs of the community.
- There is a need for greenway development to increase walking and bicycling opportunities.
- Most facilities are old and in need of major repair or replacement.
- Dunwoody Nature Center has great programs but needs a new building.
- Dunwoody Senior Baseball needs more fields and existing fields need lots of work.
- We should be a facilitator of programs and partner with community groups.
- We should be a golf cart friendly city.
- Should look at working farm or some combination of programs at Donaldson-Chesnut Home site.
- Donaldson-Chesnut Home site would be a great wedding or corporate rental facility.
- Parking could be an issue for large gatherings at Donaldson-Chesnut site.
- Brook Run Park needs to be developed more fully and should have multi-use trails.
- Buildings at Brook Run Park need to be torn down.
- Theater at Brook Run Park needs to be evaluated for reuse.
- A City operated theater should be in a more urban setting than in a park.
- Need new pavilion in Brook Run Park.
- Need to expand community garden in Brook Run Park.
- Need to fix water feature in Brook Run Park.
- Windwood Hollow Park is underutilized.
- Windwood Hollow Park tennis courts are in bad condition.
- Windwood Hollow Park would be a good trailhead site.
- City needs more public tennis courts.
- City needs more un-programmed greenspace.
- City needs more greenspace.
- City needs more playgrounds.
- Old Emory Hospital site, partially developed PVC farm property and the sister property are all large tracks of land worthy of purchase.
- Buy land along proposed greenways for small parks.
- Purchase old and problematic properties and convert to park land.
- Build a new Dunwoody Nature Center facility.
- Create a public space for community festivals.

Public Meeting Findings

Another form of public input used during the master plan process was to conduct two public meetings. The planning team held one meeting at City Hall on November 10 and a second on November 11, 2010 at Dunwoody Baptist Church. Approximately 75 individuals came to the meetings to share their opinions of the park system, their desired facilities and programs, and their vision for the future of Dunwoody recreation and parks.

The general “wish lists” developed during these meetings included improvements to existing facilities, development of new facilities and new programming opportunities. All of the comments reflected that the citizens care about the parks system and desire a parks system of which they could be proud. The following bulleted lists include the discussed topics and requested items during the public meetings:

Facility and Program Needs/Desires, and General Comments

Trails and Passive Green Space Comments

- Off-road greenways/multi-purpose trails for walking, running and bicycling are needed in both highly populated areas and natural areas
- Bike lanes on roadways
- Bike paths (paved for bicycle only)
- City is not bike friendly
- Lack of exhibits and green building practices
- Develop greenway along creeks
- Form partnerships with land owners and other communities to create walking and biking trail

Marketing Comments

- Need improved visibility
- Program providers need to do a better job partnering with the City
- Provide links to program providers on City web site

Athletic Facilities Comments

Additional athletic fields are needed to provide for the demand of several sports:

- Indoor/outdoor multi-generational facility for tennis and indoor, multi-generational programming space
- Aquatics is growing
- Need more tennis facilities
- Need an aquatics facility
- Need a gymnastic facility as new one at Marcus Jewish Community Center is too small
- Murphy Candler, located just south of Dunwoody, has historically met community’s youth baseball needs but does not have enough parking

Programs and General Comments

- North DeKalb Cultural Arts Center has parking issues
- People go to Alpharetta, Roswell, Sandy Springs and Norcross to use their parks
- Make Donaldson-Chesnut House a dual programming facility
- Some volunteers are antagonistic over government
- Expand horticulture programming
- Edible landscaping that is low maintenance

Brook Run Park Comments

- Get rid of the old buildings; they are creepy
- Provide arts center and include Stage Door Players
- Good location to be home of Community Band
- Provide miniature golf
- Provide Frisbee golf
- Provide senior programs like those at Marcus Jewish Community Center
- Provide senior programs like those at Marcus Jewish Community Center
- Dogs have been in dog park without leash, got into properties
- Buffer areas between dog park and property
- Noise level from music festival and special events is a problem
- Noise from the maintenance traffic
- Support taking building down
- Would like theater to stay and a police precinct be developed in the park
- Open entry from Brook Run to Peeler
- Small amphitheater in back of Brook Run
- Open entry from Peeler Road all the time
- Need new building closer to front
- Need improved visibility
- Treat Brook Run as a blank canvas and start over with new design
- Natural outdoor venue; not a formal amphitheater.
- Passive education & active recreation should be included

Dunwoody Park Comments

- Expand Dunwoody Nature Center and repurpose Dunwoody Park
- Improve baseball facilities

Potential property to acquire as park land and land comments

- Need more park land
- Old Emory Hospital
- Vermack property
- Peeler Road/ Glaser Drive/Winters Chapel Road property
- PVC Pipe Farm
- Increase buffers within conditional use areas
- Provide nature preserve areas within communities
- Be creative with Windwood Hollow Park; do more with the land

Sounding Board Meeting

On the evening of November 10, 2010, a Sounding Board Meeting was held. This meeting was a four hour workshop with representatives appointed by the City Council who represented a cross section of recreation and green space issue in the city. The Sounding Board was comprised of: Dr. Brad Anchors, Kirk Anders, Stephen (Steve) K. Barton, George Binder, Rick Callihan, Clayton W. Coley, Ashley Doolittle, Mike Mey, Alicia Nations, Carl Pirkle, Jay Spearman, Peter Yost, Kathryn Chambless and Blake Tiede. The participants worked in small groups and then collectively to respond to a series of questions. The team and collective responses to the questions are provided below.

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Question 1. What are the five most critical issues facing the Parks and Recreation Department?

Group 1 Responses

1. Budget
2. Raise standards, not up to church standards or nearby cities
3. Prioritize what needs to be done, programs and facilities to pursue
4. Connectivity
5. Space/land

Group 2 Responses

1. Funding
2. Available land
3. Condition/lack of existing facilities
4. Staff levels
5. Council vs study results, whose recommendations will prevail

Group 3 Responses

1. Rundown facilities/parks
2. Lack of park/green space
3. Developing Brook Run to include all citizens
4. Need for central community center
5. Additional staffing/community involvement

Question 2: Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Group 1 Responses

Strengths

1. Community support
2. Desire to improve
3. Blank canvas at Brook Run Park
4. 1000+ kids participate with Dunwoody Senior Baseball (13 – 18)
5. Nature center – good organization of volunteers
6. Community garden/dog park
7. Opportunity to learn history at Donaldson-Chesnut House

Weaknesses

1. No shade at Brook Run Park playground
2. Underserved areas in parts of Dunwoody
3. Poor drainage at Dunwoody Park
4. No opportunities for exercise (trails, bike paths)
5. Poor condition of Dunwoody Nature Center building
6. Lack of fields for soccer, ultimate Frisbee or flag football

Group 2 Responses

Strengths

1. Brook Run facilities are diverse, size of property and the skate park
2. Dunwoody Nature Center is well organized has great programs, camps and volunteers

Weaknesses

1. Connectivity
2. Lack of adult activities
3. Lack of space for youth activities

Group 3 Responses

Strengths

1. Brook Run – Playground and skate park
2. Potential for trails and bike paths

Weaknesses

1. Dunwoody Nature Center – building and parking
2. Dunwoody field conditions
3. Lack of room at Murphy Candler Park, move program to Dunwoody

Question 3. If money and politics were not issues, what programs would you include in the ideal system for the community? What facilities would you include?

Group 1 Responses

Facilities

- Outdoor amphitheatre
- More pavilions for gatherings
- Trail system through Brook Run and connect to other areas
- Professional maintenance for upkeep of facilities (building/fields)
- Buy PVC farm and hospital site
- Improve look of all parks (aesthetics)
- Lots of greenspace
- Community center
- New roof on well at Vernon Oaks Park

Programs

- Add lots of staff

Group 2 Responses

- Horse park (ring and stalls)
- Bike paths
- Community center
- Indoor swimming pool
- Outdoor music venue
- Soccer field

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- Multi-use athletic facility (indoors) volleyball, basketball
- Indoor/outdoor tennis facility
- Baseball/softball fields complex
- Shooting facility

Programs

- Youth and adult programs

Group 3 Responses

Facilities

- Natatorium
- Playgrounds
- Sports fields
- Bike trails
- Bike paths
- Sports complex
- Indoor tennis facility
- Multi-use football/soccer/lacrosse fields with practice facilities

Programs

- Aquatic programs
- Children's programs
- Seniors
- Community orchestra
- Disabled Citizens
- Evening programs
- Movies
- Family night

Question 4. National Facility Standards

Unlike the other questions where each team was asked to work independently, question 4 was developed by the entire group simultaneously. On this question, Lose & Associates, Inc. team members presented a chart of National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) facility standards that are based on per capita standards. These standards make up a level of service provided in each community. The sounding board members were asked to review the national standard and make recommendation regarding the level of service to increase or decrease the level of service based on the unique factors that influence recreation facilities in the City of Dunwoody. Table 3.1 shows the NRPA service standards and those recommended for the City of Dunwoody and details the impact of these recommendation based on current facilities, current and projected population levels.

Table 3.1 NRPA Standards and Community Based Desired Level of Service

Community Based Standard and NRPA Standards for Park Facilities	NRPA Recommended Level of Service	Community-based Desired Level of Service	Existing Number of Dunwoody Park Acres and Facilities	Current Acreage and Facility Need Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2010 Population of 46,267	NRPA Facility Recommendation Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2010 Population	Current Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using NRPA Recommended Level of Service)	Current Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using Desired Level of Service)	Future Acreage and Facility Need Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2015 Population of 49,822	NRPA Facility Recommendation Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2015 Population	Future Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using NRPA Recommended Level of Service)	2015 Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using Desired Level of Service)
Acreage	10.5/1,000	5.5/1,000	160	221	486	-326	-61	274	523	-363	-114
Outdoor Basketball	1/5,000	1/10,000	0	4	9	-9	-4	5	10	-10	-5
Tennis	1/2,000	1/2,000	4	20	23	-19	-16	25	25	-21	-21
Volleyball (outdoor)	1/5,000	1/10,000	0	4	9	-9	-4	5	10	-10	-5
Baseball/Softball	1/2,500	1/2,500	3	16	19	-16	-13	20	20	-17	-17
Football	1/20,000	1/10,000	0	4	2	-2	-4	5	2	-2	-5
Soccer/Multi-Use	1/10,000	1/10,000	1	4	5	-4	-3	5	5	-4	-4
Swimming Pool/Aquatics ¹	1/20,000	1/20,000	0	2	2	-2	-2	2	2	-2	-2
Running Track	1/20,000	1/20,000	0	2	2	-2	-2	2	2	-2	-2
Developed Standards for Park Facilities	NRPA Recommended Level of Service	Community-based Desired Level of Service	Existing Number of Dunwoody Park Acres and Facilities	Current Acreage and Facility Need Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2010 Population of 46,267	NRPA Facility Recommendation Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2010 Population	Current Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using NRPA Recommended Level of Service)	Current Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using Desired Level of Service)	Future Acreage and Facility Need Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2015 Population of 49,822	NRPA Facility Recommendation Based on Dunwoody Estimated 2015 Population	Current Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using NRPA Recommended Level of Service)	2015 Facility Deficit/ Surplus (using Desired Level of Service)
Trail System	1mile/3,000	1/3,000	0	13	15	-15	-13	17	17	-17	-17
Playground	1/1,000	1/5,000	5	8	46	-41	-3	10	50	-45	-5
Community Center	1/50,000	1/50,000	0	1	1	-1	-1	1	1	-1	-1
Picnic Pavilion	1/2,000	1/5,000	2	8	23	-21	-6	10	25	-23	-8
Skate Park	1/100,000	1/100,000	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0

*From City of Dunwoody Comprehensive Plan, June 2010

¹Includes spraygrounds

Population Data Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2010 estimates.

Data projects to 2015 until the newest census is published

In comparing the standards set forth by the NRPA, as well as the new community standards based on population needs, the City of Dunwoody is insufficient in all categories, excluding the skate park category. The key deficiencies are found in the amount of sport fields and we find an overall acreage shortage. As the population continues to increase, the gap widens notable with playgrounds, picnic pavilions, tennis courts and baseball/softball.

Question 5. Prioritize the lists of ideal programs and facilities identified in question 3.

The top five facilities that were recommended in question 3 are as follows:

1. Multipurpose community center with indoor and outdoor tennis and aquatic facilities and programming space
2. Multipurpose fields for lacrosse, soccer, frisbee and practice
3. Multi-use trails/bicycle and pedestrian facilities

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4. Music venue/outdoor amphitheater
5. Baseball fields

The top five programs that were recommended in question 3 are as follows:

1. Youth programs
2. Adult/Senior programs
3. Aquatic programs
4. Family programs
5. Special needs population programs

Question 6. How should the City Parks and Recreation Department fund the recommendations that will be identified in this master plan?

Group 1 Responses

- Private donations
- Tax/bond referendum for facility development
- Prayer

Group 2 Responses

- Lodging tax
- General obligation bond = to \$50.00 per \$400K house over 20 years

Group 3 Responses

- Special taxes, aimed at non-Dunwoody residents
- Bonds
- Participation fees
- Special events, i.e. Dunwoody Music Festival
- Theme based fund raising

Note: a copy of the workshop questionnaire is provided in Appendix of this document.

Community Survey Findings

Community surveys were sent out on November 30 and December 12 that allowed recipients to respond online. The survey was coded with a number on the outside of each envelope that had to be entered as part of the survey response to maintain statistical integrity of the survey. The survey went to 2,500 homes. The survey was sent to a random sampling of households in Dunwoody, and a total of 387 surveys were returned or filled out online by the cutoff date. For a population the size of Dunwoody, a sample of at least 250 surveys is needed to make estimates with a sampling error of no more than $\pm 5\%$, at the 95% confidence level (Salant and Dillman, How to Conduct Your Own Survey). With 387 returned surveys our sampling provides a sampling error between $\pm 5\%$ level of confidence. The same survey was posted on the web for anyone to complete.

In addition to the statistically valid sampling, the same survey was posted on the Parks and Recreation Division's webpage from December 15 to January 21, 2011. The online questions were identical to the mail survey, and a total of 461 responses were submitted.

The survey contained questions assessing the types of programs in which citizens are currently

participating and those that show a future interest of participation. Questions also assessed the priority for future facility development and renovations, and possible options for funding the improvements. Survey results were intended to provide insight into the community's desires for public recreation.

The following charts and graphs illustrate some of the survey results and compare responses to both. Also included are selected comments from respondents. To see all survey results and a copy of the mailed survey, refer to the Appendix.

Program and Activity Participation

The survey results revealed that general park activities (e.g., walking on trails, visiting a playground, picnicking) and special events were the most popular park activities by a wide margin. In fact, 34% of responses to this question were among general park activities. When asked what programs, activities and events that they or their families have participated in, there were five clear preferences:

1. Walking on trails (237 responses)
2. Visiting a playground (217 responses)
3. Lemonade Days (215 responses)
4. Parades (191 responses)
5. Picnic in the park (162 responses)

Respondents were asked to identify the programs, activities and events that their families would like to participate in from the same list as used in the aforementioned questions. Walking on trails was clearly the highest ranked on the list. Next, we see a desire for more planned activities and events such as movies in the park and music festivals. The following ten activities received the most responses:

1. Walking on trails (247 responses)
2. Movies in the park (192 responses)
3. Picnic in the park (176 responses)
4. Music Fest (165 responses)
5. Lemonade Days (160 responses)
6. Fall Family Festival (146 responses)
7. Visiting a playground (141 responses)
8. Jogging/running (137 responses)
9. Parades (tied with 137 responses)
10. Cooking classes (122 responses)

The response to general park activities and special events is not surprising as it is consistent with the preferences of many other communities the planning team has studied over the last three years. It is common to see individual-oriented and family-oriented activities ranked high because they are usually free, do not require any special skills or knowledge of a sport, and appeal to a broader audience. Organized team sports and athletics generally rank lower, whereas general or passive park activities rank higher. In Dunwoody, 17% of responses were related to availability of youth sports for the programs in which families have participated in, which corresponds to the youth sports programs that are in the City. This number decreases to 12% in the response to activities in which residents would like to participate. **The decrease in percentage of responses does not indicate that people would like to participate in these activities less; it does indicate that senior activities, adult sports, classes and special events are not offered at a level that people desire.**

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Figure 3.1: Program Participation

Listed below are programs and activities typically offered by parks and recreation departments. Please place a check next to the programs and activities that you or members of your family have participate in:

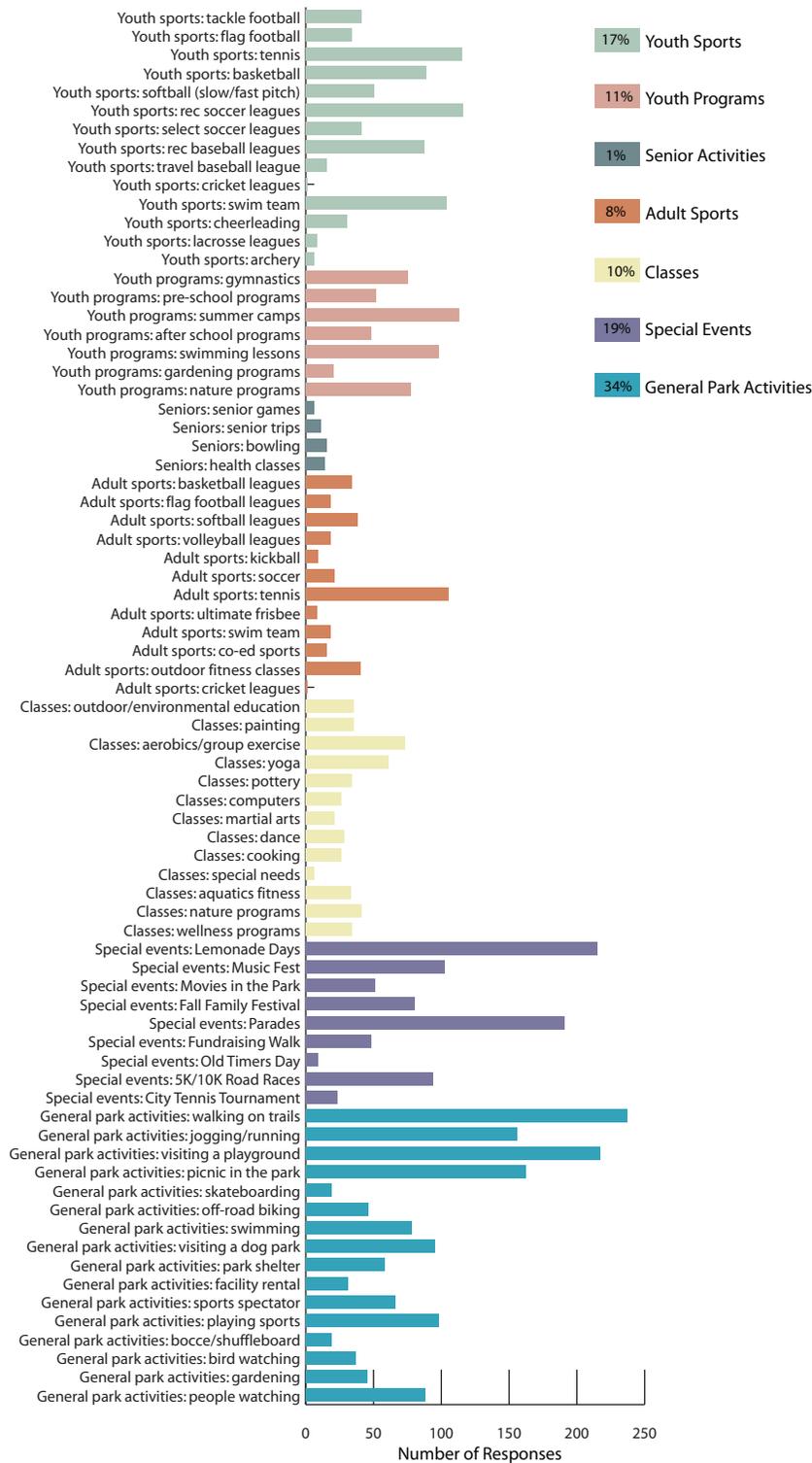
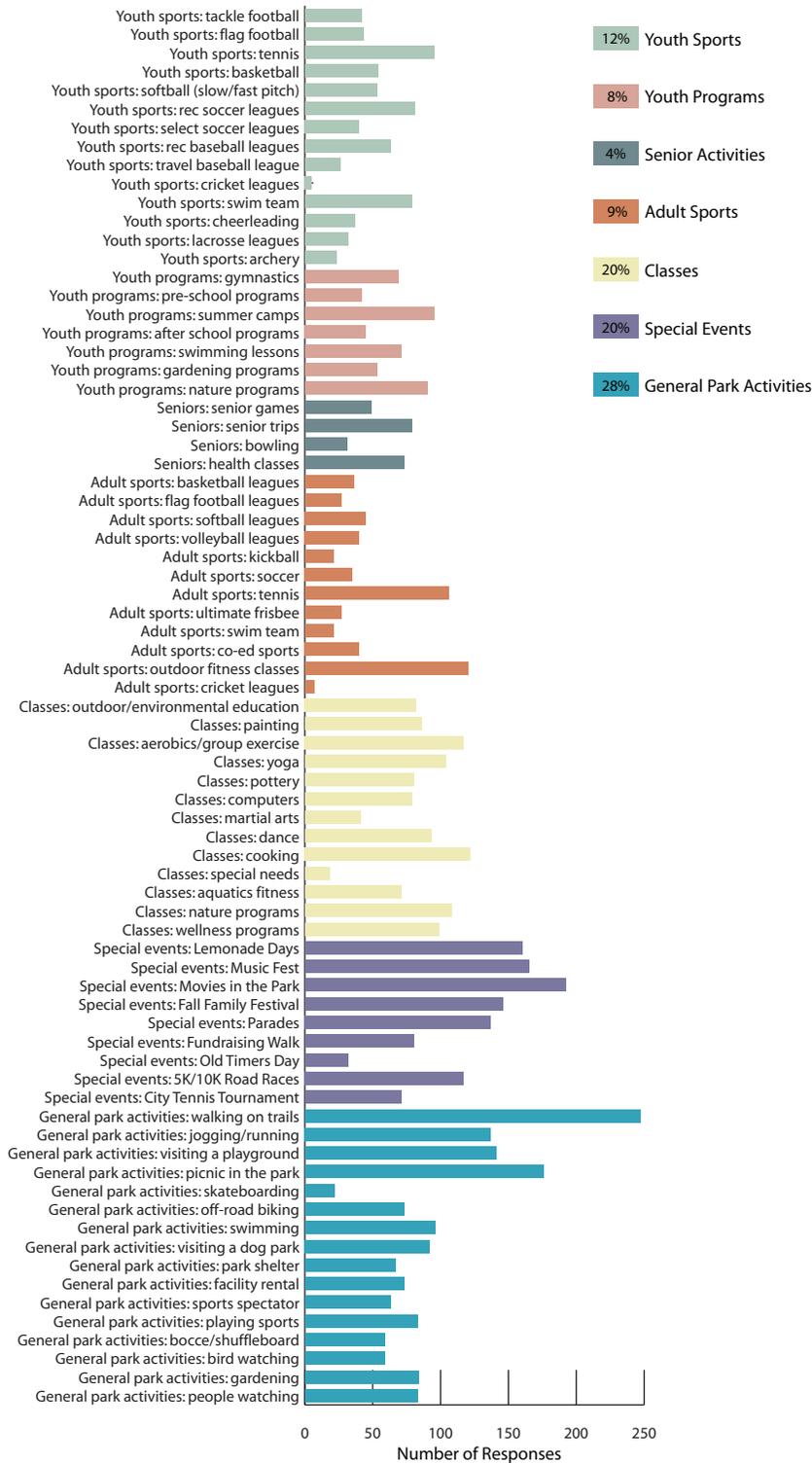


Figure 3.2: Desired/Favorite Programs

Listed below are programs and activities typically offered by parks and recreation departments. Please place a check next to the programs and activities that you or members of your family would like to participate in:



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Next, respondents were asked to list five new programs they would like Dunwoody, or through a partnership with local agencies, to offer. The list includes new programs like off-road biking, suggestions for group classes, and gardening opportunities. Some of the programs listed are activities the Department already offers, which may indicate that these individuals are unaware of all of the Departments offerings.

The programs listed most often, include:

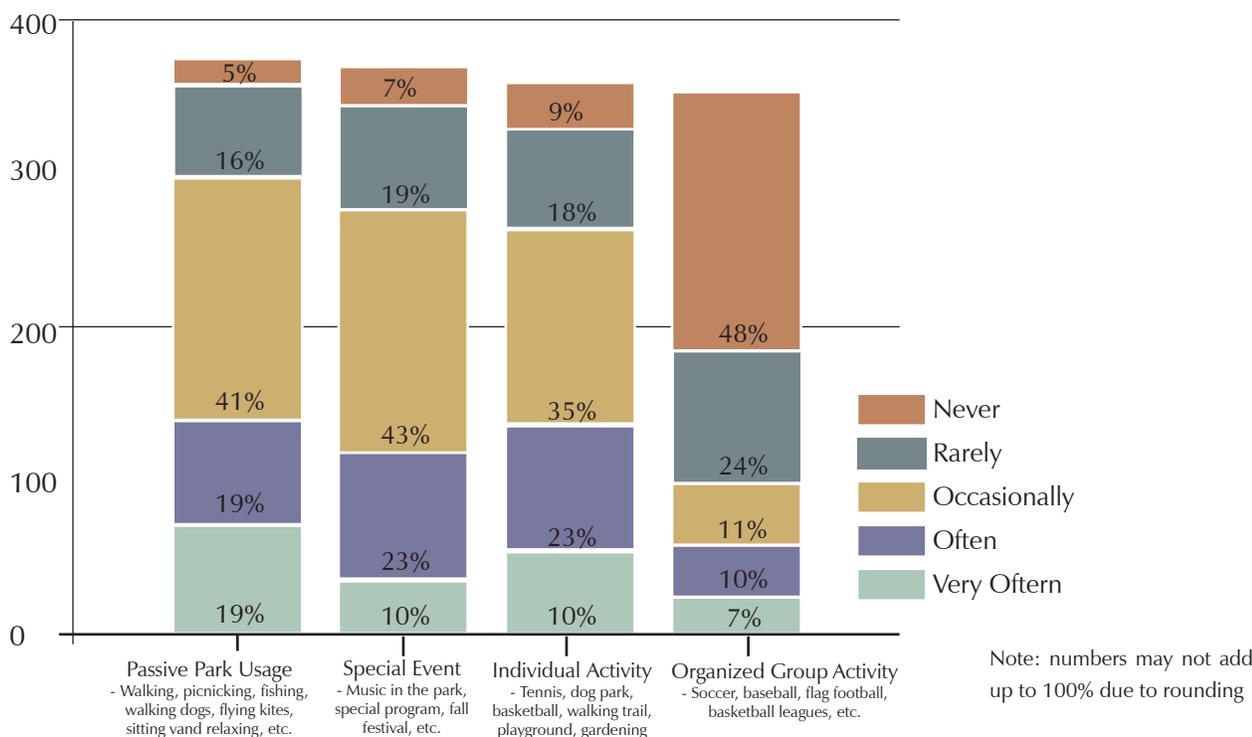
1. Biking (off road and road biking)
2. Youth sports (majority soccer)
3. Classes (computer, dancing, etc.)
4. Trails (nature trails, greenways and sidewalks)
5. Gardening

Park and Program Usage

Survey respondents were asked to describe how they use the programs and parks, if at all, and what parks facilities they use most often (Figure 3.3: Participation). When asked how often they participate in passive park usage, a special event, an individual activity or an organized group activity, the majority of respondents indicated "occasionally." Passive park usage and special events received the highest "occasionally" response with 41% and 43%, respectively. When "very often" and "often" are combined, passive park and individual activities tie at 37% each with special events close behind at 32%. Organized group activities appear to have the lowest participation, as 48% have never participated. The responses to this question support the findings in the first question, which asked respondents what programs they have participated in.

Figure 3.3: Participation

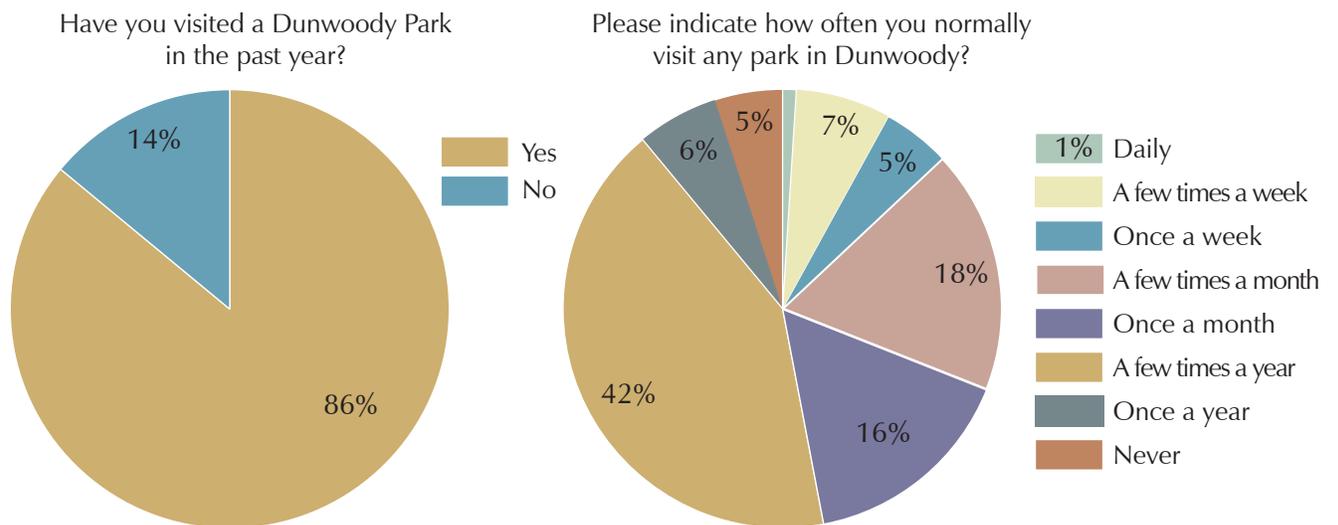
Using the list below, indicate how often you take part in the following parks programs:



Again, respondents show higher participation and involvement in general/passive park activities and special events. This is not entirely surprising as these types of activities are typically free, do not require a special skill or knowledge of a sport, and appeal to a broader audience.

When respondents were asked if they had visited a Dunwoody City Park facility in the past year, 86% said yes. The highest responses to the survey question - how often you normally visit any park - was "a few times a year" with 42%. When asked which parks do you or your family use most often, respondents said Brooks Run Park (81%) and Dunwoody Nature Center (51%)

Figure 3.4: Park Usage



Respondents indicated that one of the reasons for not visiting parks was not being familiar with facilities and location. Other responses included walking or jogging in areas closer to home and lack of time.

Do you travel to other communities? 60% answered yes with 78% indicating that the factor that most influences their decision is that the facilities are not available in Dunwoody parks.

Figure 3.5: Factors Influencing Travel



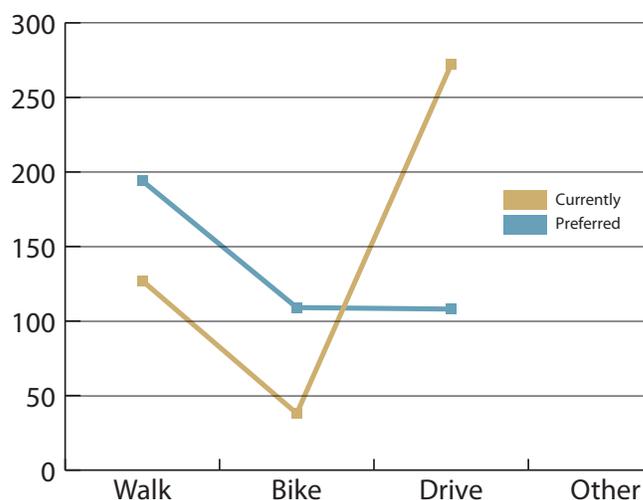
Access to the Parks

Respondents were asked about their mode of travel to and from the parks (Figure 3.6). Currently, 75% travel by car, 35% walk to the parks and 10% bicycle; the percentages do not add up to hundred because respondents were able to select more than one mode of travel that they currently use. When asked how they would prefer to access their parks, the preference for vehicular transportation drops to 30% with a dramatic increase in walking (53%) and cycling tied closely with driving (30%) These results are similar to findings from the City’s recent transportation survey where 50% of respondents indicated that they would prefer to walk more.

In Dunwoody, it appears that with more sidewalks, trails and/or greenways and with parks located near uses, residents would not travel by car as they do currently. This indicates that parking in future parks plans could be reduced with the addition of more parks and trails connecting them with residents.

Figure 3.6: Park Travel to/from Parks

Please indicate which of the following ways you currently as well as prefer to access Dunwoody Parks and Recreation facilities?



Regardless of the reasons for their preference, the survey responses communicate the need for the development of greenways and trails linking the parks to residential areas and to each other.

Survey respondents were also asked how far they would be willing to walk, drive or bike to parks and recreation facilities. Only 14% said they would not walk, but 72% indicated they would walk up to two miles and 14% would walk up to five miles to reach parks. This is a low response rate of those who would not walk and their decision not to may be influence by perceptions of safety along the roadways or sidewalks, the distance of their homes from existing parks or preference for vehicular travel.

Biking yielded very different results in comparison to walking, which appeared to be the preferred method of alternative travel. Thirty-seven percent of respondents would not bike, but 22% are willing to bike at least two miles and 30% said they would bike from 2-5 miles. Respondents who would not bike could mean that they do not prefer the activity or they are not comfortable or willing to ride with traffic. Based on open comments in the survey, bike lanes and other safety improvements are needed

before residents feel comfortable riding. If those respondents had access to off-road multi-use trails or bike lanes their response to this question may have been different.

When asked about drive times, a large percentage of people prefer a drive under 15 minutes (72%) or 15 to 30 minutes (22%). Although not asked, some people may travel farther for specific facilities or to participate on certain leagues. The high response for keeping drive time under 15 minutes could indicate that respondents would like for parks, trails, and facilities to be located closer to their home.

Perceptions of Safety

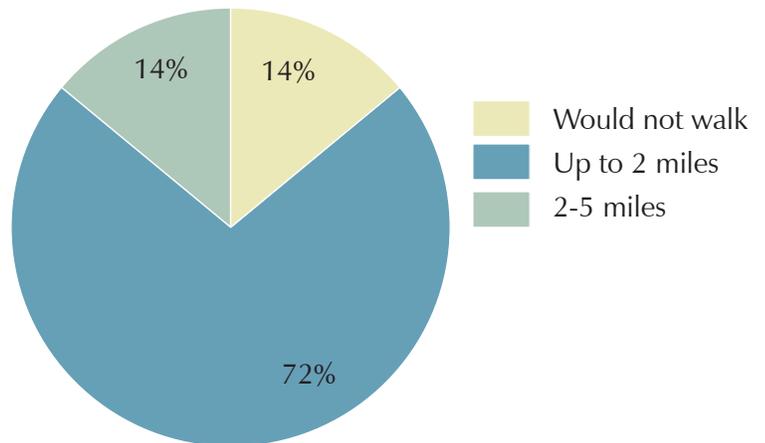
Safety in parks and on trails was addressed in public meetings as well, though it was not identified as being a major issue. When asked in the survey about perceptions of safety within the parks, 47% said that they felt “very safe” and 49% feel “somewhat safe”. Only 4.1% feel unsafe and no one feels “very unsafe”.

One safety issue that has been cited in Dunwoody parks is a lack of lighting and need for police presence, with several mentioning problems around Brook Run. One of the concerns with Brook Run is its location – it is cited as being secluded and abandon buildings are a problem. Solutions could include renovating or removing buildings to provide more “eyes on the park” as well as installing emergency call phones and other security measures.

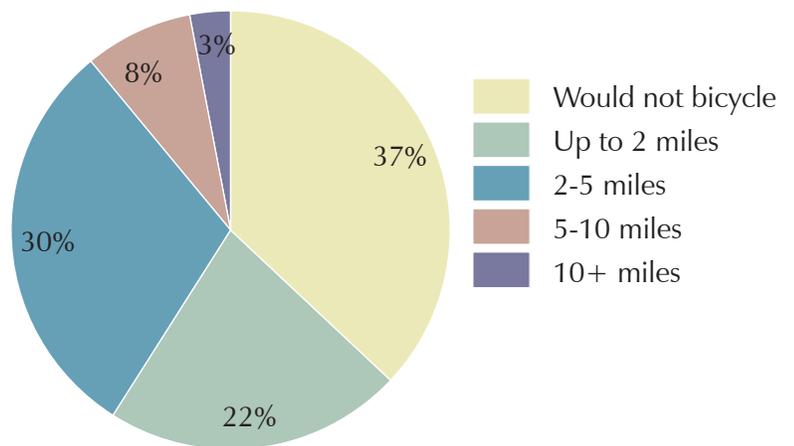
Figure 3.7: Travel Distance Preferences

How far would you be willing to walk, drive or ride a bike to park and recreation facilities?

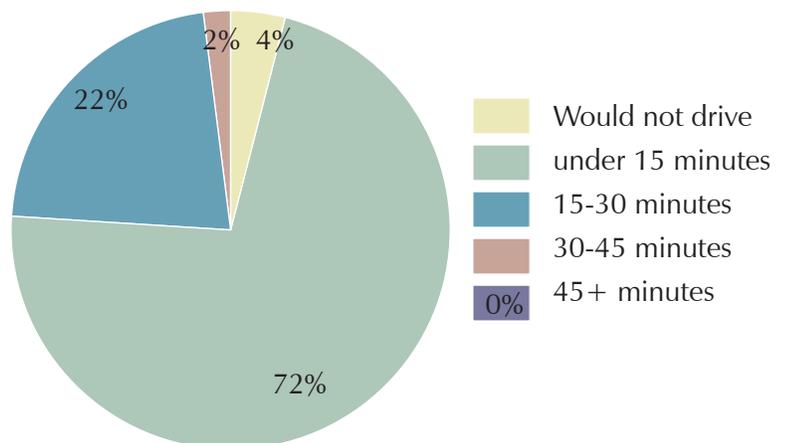
Walk



Bike



Drive

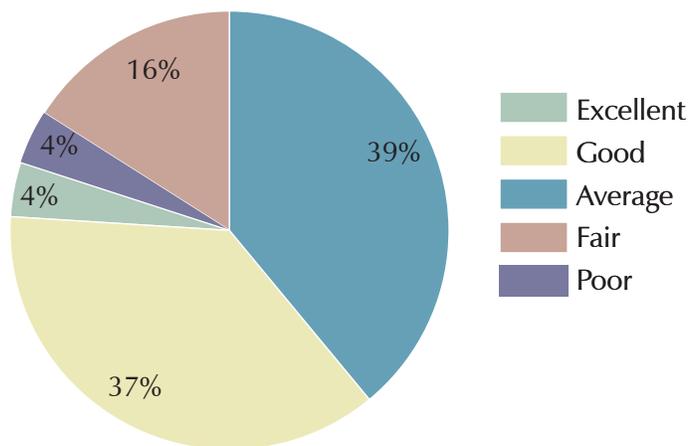


Overall Performance

Respondents were asked to give the Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Division and their partnering associations an overall grade as to whether park programs met their needs. 39% percent gave an “average” rating and 37% gave a “good” grade (Figure 3.8). Those who gave a grade of “average” or less were then asked to share what would make it better (see below).

Figure 3.8: Overall Grade for Park Programs

The Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Department and their partnering associations provide a range of programs, events activities and services. Using the scale below, please give an overall grade as to whether or not the park programs meet your needs.



The most common responses regarding where improvements could be made:

- Publicize park, locations, and programs
- Provide better communication on available services
- Offer more programs and specific activities

These comments are consistent with the responses to other programming questions and what we heard in public meetings, which is that the Parks and Recreation Division is not reaching the people who want more program variety nor are they getting their message out to the public.

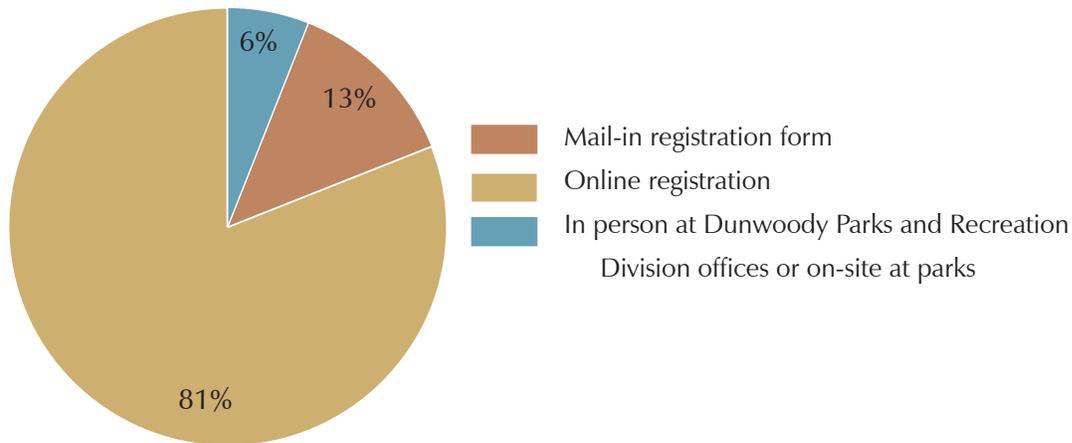
Marketing

In an attempt to determine how individuals find out about upcoming activities, the survey asked respondents to indicate the most common method for obtaining information about Dunwoody’s recreation events and programs. The most common information dissemination methods were through local newspapers (75%), word of mouth (22%) and email (13%)– results do not equal 100% because respondents could select more than one answer. When asked how the public “prefers” to get information on recreation events and programs, most answered through the Division’s website and through a semi-annual Parks and Recreation guide. A preference for receiving information through emails was also extremely popular. Given the vast difference in how people are currently get the information and how they would prefer to receive it, the Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Division may consider a review of new and/or expanded avenues of marketing the parks’ activities and programs. One possibility is combining its programs with existing associations into a more comprehensive guidebook to increase the awareness of all programs in Dunwoody.

When asked how you prefer to register, respondents ranked “online registration” extremely high, The Division should consider this information when making updates to the Dunwoody Park and Recreation webpage.

Figure 3.9: Preference for registration

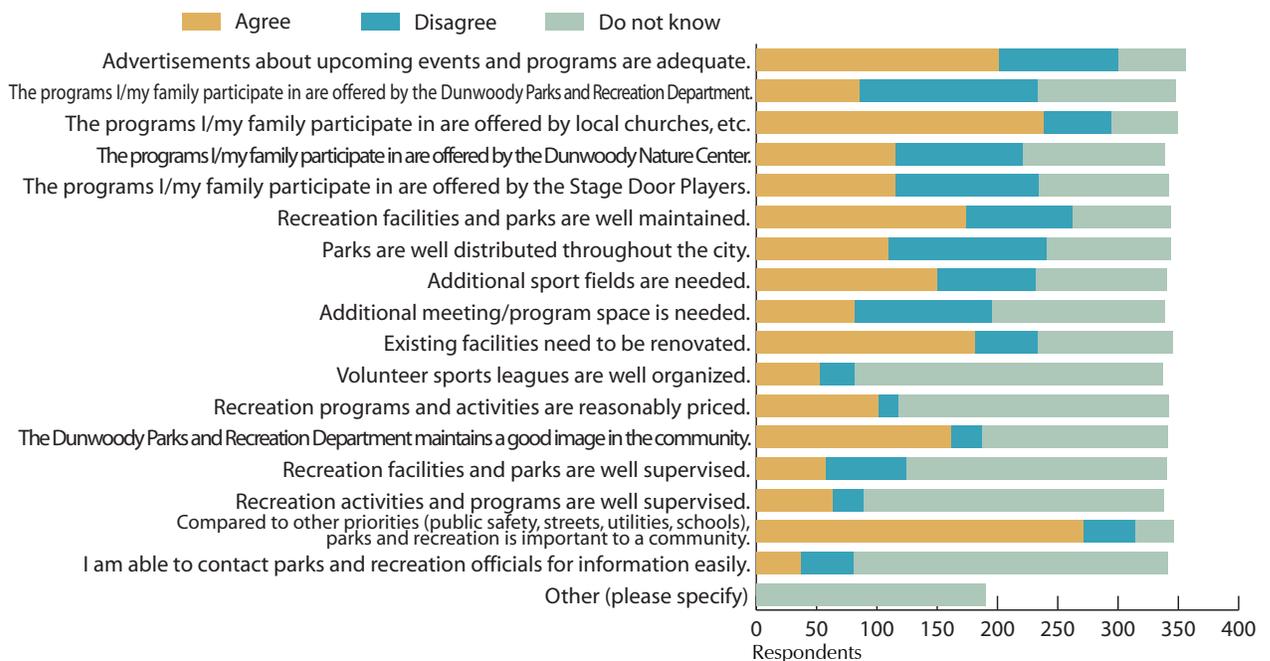
How would you prefer to register for Parks and Recreation programs?



Questions directed at evaluating the overall performance and quality of recreation and parks are shown in Figure 3.10. Perhaps the most significant tally in this figure is the strong belief that parks and recreation opportunities are important to a community (74%). The results also show some conflicting information with facilities and park are well maintained (48%) and the need to renovate existing facilities (44%), which could indicate services may not be balanced across the City.

Figure: 3.10: Overall Performance

Please indicate if you agree, disagree or do not know about the following statements:



The most negative response, and the one receiving the largest number of “disagree” votes, concerns the programs offered by the Dunwoody Parks and Recreation Division (40%). Also, respondents are going elsewhere to meet their recreation needs: over half of respondents who participate in programs

SECTION 3: PUBLIC INPUT

say they are not offered by the Division or by associations who run park amenities. Park distribution was in the top three negative aspect of the current park system. In almost all the communities we have worked, these three items typically receive the most “disagree” responses. It should be noted that throughout the public input process, citizens said they want more communication and information from the Division. It should be noted that citizens highly value parks, which is evident by 74% supporting the statement that parks are as important as good streets, public safety and schools.

Facility Priorities

Respondents were asked to list any enhancements to current park facilities that would improve their recreation and parks experience. The following are a few of those enhancements, in no particular order:

- More walking trails, bicycle paths, sidewalks and greenway
- Locate parks and facilities near residents and connect
- More activities for youth and adults
- More information/better advertising of events
- Swimming facilities

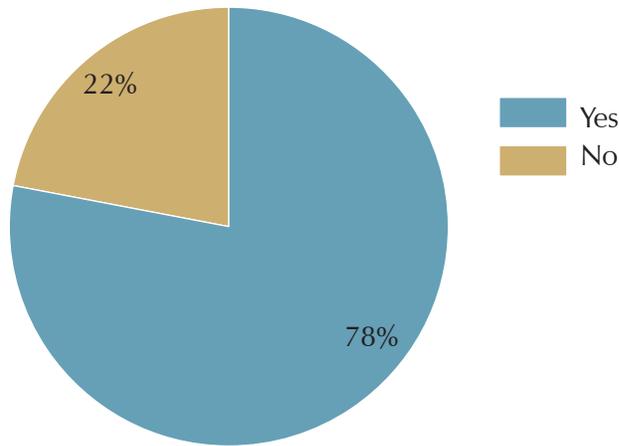
When asked to indicate the high priority, medium priority and low priority for implementation, respondents echoed a strong support for the following prioritized action steps. Listed below are those projects that respondents believed were the highest priority.

1. Develop more walking trails within existing parks
2. Develop a greenway/trail system throughout the city to connect parks and neighborhoods
3. Develop bike lanes through the city along roads
4. Improve the level of maintenance at current parks and recreation facilities
5. Acquire natural areas for protection with limited development
6. Develop unpaved nature trails
7. Provide passive open space/green space in the city
8. Develop more parks throughout the city
9. Provide a multi-use green for community events
10. Connect greenway systems to neighboring communities

Connections and the need for more parkland and maintenance were popular topics. It is clear that trail connections should be top priorities for the City. The survey continues to support those findings with 85% supporting the development of greenways and multi-use trails to connect parks, schools and neighborhood facilities throughout the city. And 78% would like to see the City work with surrounding communities and governmental entities to develop an interconnected regional greenway system.

Figure 3.11:

Would you support the City working with surrounding communities and governmental entities to develop an interconnected regional greenway system with multi-use trails?

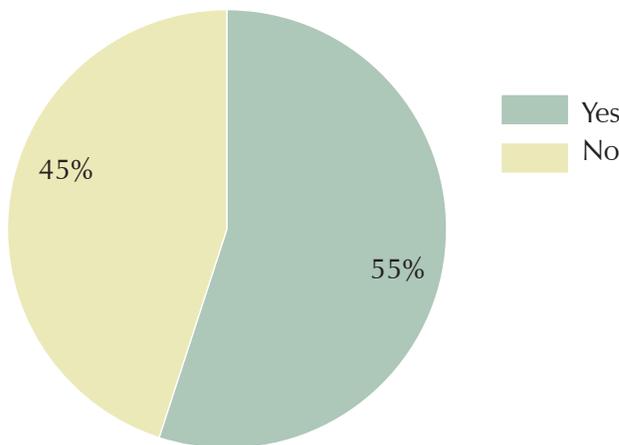


Funding and Willingness to Contribute

Acquiring right of way is a big obstacle to a greenway trail but nearly 55% respondents citywide said they would be willing to provide an easement for the construction of the trail on their property, provided that it did not interfere with the use of their property.

Figure 3.12:

If a multi-use trail were planned to be located on your property, would you be willing to provide an easement for the construction of the trail, provided that it did not interfere with the use of your property? The online survey response was even higher with 67% being willing to provide an easement.



In Dunwoody, there is a shortage of large parcels of undisturbed land on which to build new parks and provide more public green space. The existing land is quickly being developed and if the City does not act there will be a further decrease in quality parkland. In recognition of this fact, respondents were asked if they would support the purchase of parkland if the city could not develop the land immediately upon making the purchase: 75% of survey respondents said “yes” they would support land acquisition.

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The surveys asked respondents what methods of funding were preferred in order to maintain and improve current recreation and parks programs, events, activities and services. Respondents were asked to indicate all funding options that they would support.

The strongest support was for charging non-DeKalb County residents higher fees (58%), followed by sponsoring more tournaments and special events that generate sales tax and hotel tax dollars (43%). Respondents also supported the option to increase rental fees for park facilities (42%). Charging parking fees at parks was the least favorable option.

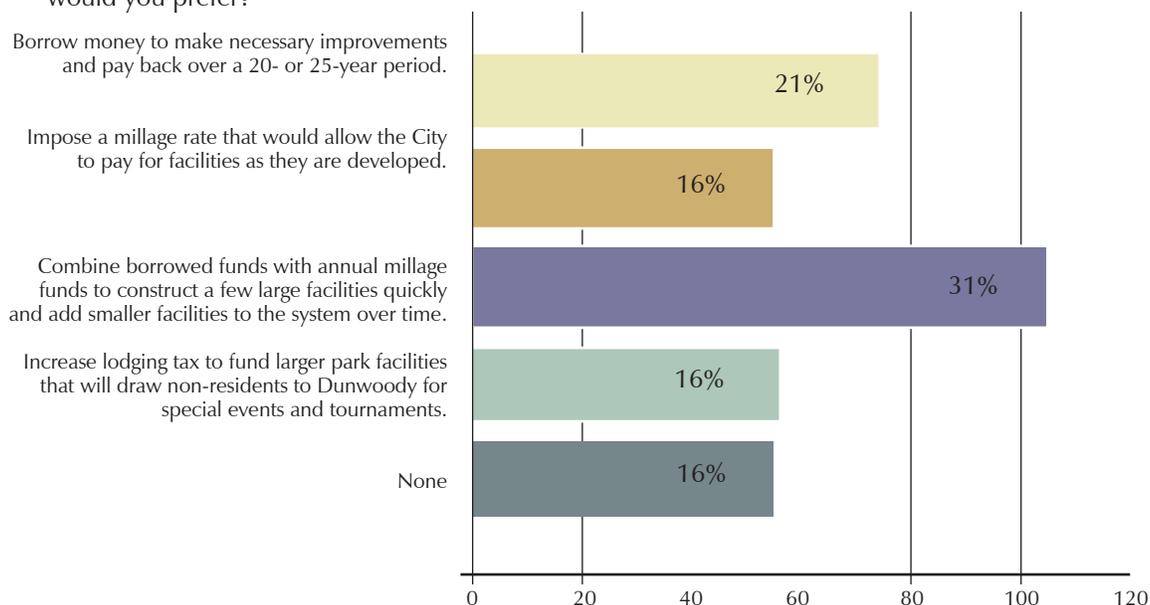
When asked to share their own ideas for funding methods, responses include seeking more donations and finding corporate sponsorship. Other ideas include requiring an annual parking pass, use property taxes and charge park fees but provide Dunwoody residents with a free pass.

The surveys went on to ask how much respondents would be willing to spend per household per month to support new and/or improved park programs and facilities. The source of these funds was unspecified, but they could come from park user fees, program fees, or a dedicated recreation tax or millage. The mail survey indicated that 50% would be willing to spend \$1-\$10, followed by \$11-\$20, per month at 20%. The next highest response (18%), were those not willing to contribute. With 20,278 households in Dunwoody (2010 Census estimate), a \$10 per month per household fee would generate over \$2,500,000 per year.

In other funding related questions, respondents were asked their preference for funding park renovations, development and capital improvements and whether they would support a recreation authority that could access a dedicated millage. The majority of respondents (30%) combine borrowed funds with annual millage funds to construct a few large facilities quickly and add smaller facilities to the system over time. 21% support bonds that would be paid over the course of 20-25 years. Options impose a millage rate, lodging tax or none, all tied at about 16%.

Figure 3.13: Preference for Increasing Park Funds

Which method of funding for park land acquisition, greenway and park facility renovation and development would you prefer?



Respondents' Demographics

The vast majority of the responses to the survey came in from the 30338 zip code. See Figure 3.14 for the gender and age groups of respondents; females represented the majority of respondents in the surveys (55%), which is typically the case in the surveys we have conducted. The 35 to 44 age group was the most responsive with 26% of the surveys. A very low response was gathered from residents under the age of 35 (7%). Seniors represent 28% of the respondents, but most respondents were middle-aged adults from 35-54 (44%). This may explain some of the survey responses that indicate the desire for a wide variety of programs and facilities for children to seniors.

Figure 3.15 is a chart of the respondents' household types. The majority of respondents were couples with children (44%). Of those respondents that had children in their homes, most had children ages 5 to 11. The next most common household for the respondents was couple with no children and retired, which may be the same respondent since multiple selections were possible.

Figure 3.14: Respondent Gender and Age

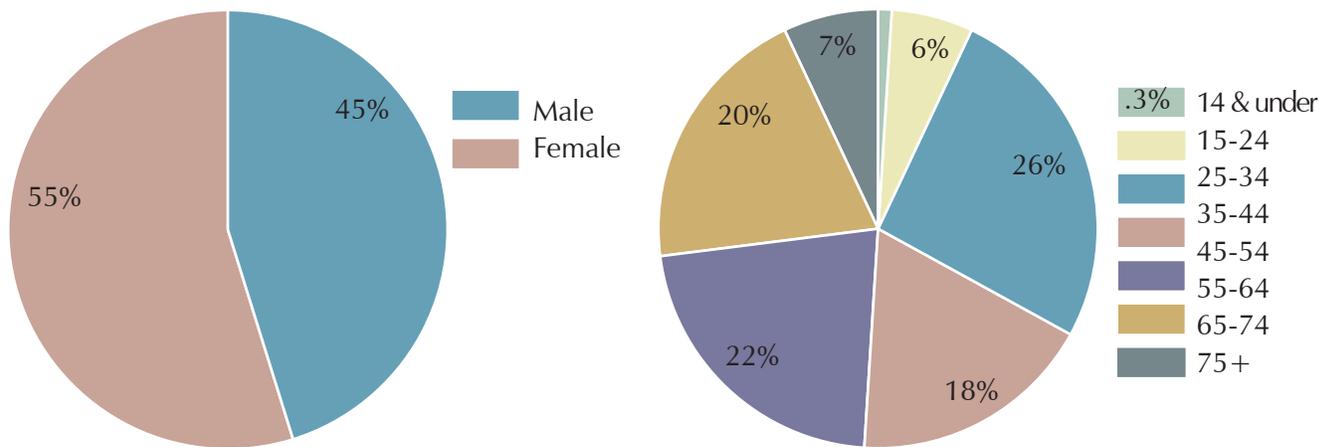
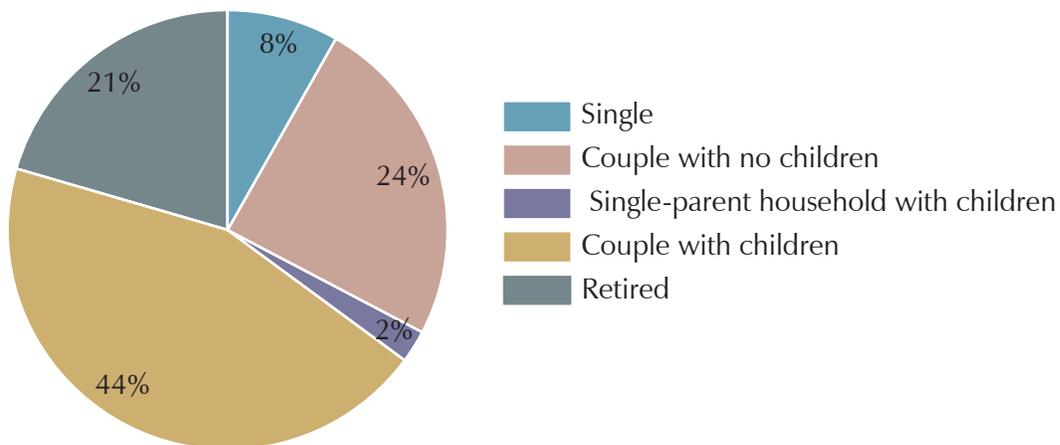


Figure 3.15: Respondent Household Types



Summary of Public Input

Public input is a critical part of any planning process. Through public meetings, we gathered information from residents who are generally represent current park users. The mail and online surveys include a mixture of both users and non-users, which is why it is such an important component of the overall response. While some had stronger desires for specific facilities over others, the overall direction for future improvements was relatively parallel among all the groups. The priorities were also consistent with the deficiencies noted during the planning team's analysis of the current parks and recreation system.

In conclusion, the public input process brought forward consistent themes. The residents of Dunwoody would like more park facilities close to their homes and they want access to these parks through walking and bicycling. They asked for the renovation of existing facilities, and they would like greater variety of programs and facilities. Lastly, they want more communication and information about Dunwoody Parks and Recreation. The residents and stakeholders realize that there are cost associated with these improvements. The survey points to support for dedicated funding for parks, a willingness by the residents to help with land easements and funding, and the use of creative ideas of public-private partnerships to improve public spaces for all residents to enjoy.