

Sunnyvale Parks and Recreation Department
Parks of the Future Plan

Web Survey Summary
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Prepared by:



Executive Summary

The City of Sunnyvale Parks and Recreation Department is developing the Parks of the Future Plan to guide parks and recreation facilities planning for the next 20 years. The department has been seeking community input and involvement in this process in order to better serve community needs in the future.

The project website, www.parksofthefuture.com, was launched in January 2008. Along with providing basic information about the planning process, the site hosted an online web survey designed to collect opinion about community preferences for parks and recreation activities.

The survey was designed to determine residents' perceptions of the Parks and Recreation Department's provision of services; assess residents' perceptions of facility and program needs; evaluate residents' priorities for future park and recreation efforts; and gather attitudinal, demographic, and behavioral information to profile park users and non-users. It also allowed residents to provide additional comments and opinions about parks and recreation programming in Sunnyvale.

The survey was advertised through a variety of methods, including notices and links to the survey on the City of Sunnyvale website and a press release to local media. Hard copies of the survey were made available at Parks and Recreation Facilities throughout Sunnyvale during early 2008 and these responses were included in the overall survey results.

The survey questions were closely modeled after the statistically valid phone survey, providing an additional opportunity for Sunnyvale residents to give input to the Parks of the Future planning efforts. The Parks of the Future team recognizes that the data generated by this survey is just one of many public involvement efforts and is treated as such. Web survey respondents are typically self-selecting and the concerns they express are balanced with opinions expressed by the broader community throughout the entire Parks of the Future planning process.

More than 800 people responded to the survey, an average response rate for this type of project. Some highlights of the results include:

- When asked to identify their preferred activities, and given multiple choices, 80.4% of respondents indicated they prefer to participate in active sports or recreational activities during their leisure time.
- 65.4% of respondents indicated they visited Sunnyvale parks at least once a week or more. 31.2% indicated that children's play areas were the recreational facilities they used the most.
- Slightly more than half (53%) of respondents indicated that the community had "about enough" parks and facilities. Less than one percent indicated there were "too many".

- Almost 40% of respondents indicated the system could be most improved by upgrading existing parks. This finding is consistent with findings from other communities in California.
- When given the opportunity to identify two types of parks most needed in Sunnyvale, the most popular responses were greenbelts and dedicated walking and biking paths (40.1%) and natural areas (28.9%). Small neighborhood parks (24.5%) were the third most popular response.
- When asked about additional amenities, 42.9% of respondents indicated that walking/biking paths were the most needed amenity in Sunnyvale.

Summary of Responses

Leisure Activities

Overall, active outdoor sports and recreational activities were identified as the top leisure activity by Sunnyvale residents. This was followed by dining out, movies and outdoor social gatherings. Cultural activities, indoor sports and spectator sports rounded out the list of preferred leisure activities.

Recreational Programs

When asked what kinds of recreational programs Sunnyvale should expand or offer that are not currently offered most expressed an interest in special events, such as park concerts, dances and festivals. This was followed by a desire for outdoor or environmental programs, fitness classes, and drop-in activities.

Park Types

When asked what types of parks are most needed in Sunnyvale, most expressed a need for greenbelts or dedicated walking and biking paths. Natural areas, neighborhood parks, and community parks were also mentioned.

Recreational Facilities

Overall, respondents indicated that there are enough available sports and recreational facilities in Sunnyvale. The most popular recreational facilities are children's play areas, athletic fields, greenbelts, and lawn areas. Residents expressed a desire to have more walking/biking paths, playgrounds, and restrooms in the parks.

Residents were asked their opinion about three specific facilities in or proposed for Sunnyvale: golf courses, a teen center, and multi-use sports complex. Respondents were given background information regarding the two current golf facilities in Sunnyvale; an 18-hole golf course without warm-up or training facilities and a 9-hole golf course with a driving range and training facilities.

Respondents were asked if they thought the 9-hole golf course would still be needed, if the 18-hole golf course were converted into a full-service golfing facility. Forty-nine percent felt the 9-hole course would still be needed, and 30 percent responded that they didn't know. There were mixed attitudes about the ideal future configuration of golf courses in Sunnyvale, but no clear consensus.

Over 41 percent of respondents indicated they would support the development of a free standing teen center.

Park Benefits

Many respondents felt that parks were most beneficial when they provide opportunities for the community to enjoy nature and the outdoors, followed by promoting activities for youth and senior citizens, and connecting families and neighborhoods.