

Parks and Recreation Survey Results

All recreational facilities, including those provided by the public sector, are market based. Generally, their use is voluntary and public facilities compete for everyone’s free time with private facilities and programs, as well as other leisure activities such as watching TV and home/garden activities. Therefore, to determine whether our public facilities are meeting the needs and desires of the public they serve, it seemed appropriate to survey the public or market in the service area. In January 2003, the Planning Department surveyed the community regarding its current leisure and recreation activities, its current facility usage and its future recreation facility wants and needs. Fifteen hundred names and addresses were randomly extracted from the list of residential-occupant utility users. In the end 1,428 surveys were mailed. Of these, 54 were returned undeliverable and 320 were returned completed, which equates to a response rate of 23%. This survey helped us identify where the focus should be. Some of the questions pertained to the entire household while others seek the needs and desires of each member of the household. For a mail-back survey, a 23% response rate is considered satisfactory, although well below the level of response needed for a scientific survey. Since the responses were fairly evenly distributed throughout the city and over age groups, staff and the plan committee both felt that, when supported by their own anecdotal (and in many cases expert) information, the survey results could be relied upon. In fact, the survey results generally provided no surprises to staffs (both Planning and Parks and Recreation) or the committee. ***Clearly, because of its unscientific status, the survey should be used purely as an informational tool rather than a true and accurate reflection of the opinions of the citizens of Gastonia. While we would have preferred a scientific survey, whereby a confidence level and margin of error could be statistically determined, that alternative was cost-prohibitive. The committee and staff also weighed the alternative of doing no survey for fear of an unscientific survey misleading us. It was determined that the lower cost alternative of an unscientific survey would be acceptable so long as we could get a reasonable response rate and we were pleased with the 23%. A copy of the survey instrument is found in the appendix.***

The first section was completed as it pertained to the entire household.

The average household contains 1.91 adults and 0.70 children (under age 18)

The age of persons completing the survey:

#	%	Age
0	0	17 and under
44	14	18-34
154	48	35-59
77	24	60 and over
44	14	No Response

This appeared to be a fairly representative distribution of respondents. The goal was to do a separate survey of high school students, using student volunteers; however, this was not accomplished. Therefore,

the survey should be viewed as a purely adult response. Youth were involved in the committee and provided meaningful and helpful input throughout the planning process. As members of the Mayor’s Youth Council, these youth interacted with a larger committee of youth, as well as other peers, to enhance their participation on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Planning Committee.

Since the surveys were mailed to utility users it is not unusual that the rate of city residents is virtually 100%.

#	%	
316	99	The Gastonia City limits
0	0	Gaston County (incl. other Gaston cities)
0	0	Another county
4	1	No Response

If they checked “Gastonia City Limits” above, they were asked which zip code best describes their address.

#	%	
72	23	My zip code is 28056
20	6	My zip code is 28052, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
60	19	My zip code is 28052, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard
55	17	My zip code is 28054, and I live north of Franklin Boulevard
99	31	My zip code is 28054, and I live south of Franklin Boulevard

Current Activities

Applicants were asked what activities their family participates in on a regular basis. For this survey, regular means an average of twice a month (weather permitting/in season). Since this question referred to the entire family they indicated how many family members participated in the various activities.

Activity	Total Number of Participants
Walking	362
Gardening	197
Swimming	191
Playground	164
Bicycling	151
Hiking	117
Running/Jogging	106
Weight Training	105
Arts & Crafts	104
Golf	103
Basketball	96
Aerobics	78
Soccer	62
Baseball/T-Ball	59

Activity	Total Number of Participants
Dance	52
Tennis	51
Shooting	41
Softball	36
Skateboarding	35
Volleyball	34
Football	29
Yoga	19
Martial Arts	18
Equestrian Recreation	15
Racquetball/Squash	5
BMX Bicycling	2

Current City of Gastonia Facility Usage

The survey asked which city facilities members of their family have used over the past 12 months

Facility	Number of Participants
Schiele Museum Nature Trails	138
Playgrounds	123
Greenway	111
Picnic Areas	108
Golf Course	76
Community Centers	44
Outdoor Team Sports	40
Adult Recreation Centers	35
Pools	33
Indoor Team Sports	23
Instructional Classes	23
Tennis Courts	21
Other1	7



Greenways rated highest among respondents in terms of preference for new facilities, as did greenway associated recreational activities such as, walking, running, jogging, and cycling

New Facilities

Each participant was asked to rate the top five (1 through 5) new facilities that they think Gastonia needs the most, with one (1) being the highest priority, two (2) second highest, etc. The columns labeled 1-5 in the following table contain the total number of people that ranked each facility one through five. Weights were assigned to each rank as follows those ranked one received five points; those ranked two received four points, etc. The “weighted sum” column is the sum of the weighted ranking.

New Facility	Ranking					Weighted Sum
	1	2	3	4	5	
Greenway Trail	38	19	28	19	19	407
Aquatics Center	31	22	16	16	16	339
Water Park	30	20	19	14	12	327
Indoor Track	28	23	13	15	14	315
Downtown Park	19	13	11	13	24	230
Indoor Gyms	17	13	13	14	7	211
Nature Center	7	17	15	22	16	208
Amphitheatre	10	12	16	18	22	204
Arts in Parks	7	12	19	20	17	197
*Extreme Sports Complex	20	6	14	9	10	194
Ice Skating Rink	6	16	16	10	21	183
Children's Splash/Sprayground	12	11	12	9	10	168
Southeast Community Center	16	11	3	8	8	157
Small Gathering Places	4	13	14	9	19	151
Off Leash Dog Park	12	7	8	10	12	144
Competition Sports Complex	9	11	9	5	5	131
Mountain Bike Trail	9	12	4	8	7	128
Girl's/Women's Sports Complex	9	9	7	9	7	127
Skate Parks	3	7	8	11	5	94
Garden Plots	3	9	5	5	8	84

* Extreme sports complexes typically include skateboard park, BMX bike tracks and stunt area

Each applicant was asked how much he or she is willing to pay to use these new and improved recreational facilities. Sixty one percent indicated a willingness to pay something (\$10 to \$40 per year) but 39% were unwilling to pay anything (or the lowest choice of \$10). Their responses follow.

Amount	Total	%
\$10 per year	64	20
\$20 per year	80	25
\$40 per year	51	16
Nothing	125	39

Each applicant was asked which funding methods they would support to improve the quality of our recreational facilities? Twenty-three percent would support a bond issue, but user fees was the most preferred choice at 39%. Their responses follow.

Method	Total	%
Bond Issue	72	23%
Tax Increase	7	2%
User Fees	126	39%
Bond and Tax	17	5%
Bond and User	21	7%
Tax and User	4	1%
None	58	18%
No Response	15	5%

The survey asked the following general questions.

1. I feel safe at city park and recreation facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	11	129	89	44	12
Percent	4	45	31	15	4

2. A major priority of Gastonia’s Park and Recreation plan should include a new aquatic center.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	53	87	89	38	19
Percent	19	30	31	13	7

3. Gastonia does not have enough indoor community recreation centers.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	42	119	93	23	10
Percent	15	41	32	8	3

4. Greenways and sidewalks should be used to interconnect neighborhoods to park and recreation facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	77	140	50	15	6
Percent	27	49	17	5	2

5. Gastonia’s indoor recreational facilities are properly dispersed to meet the needs of the community.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	9	50	128	80	19
Percent	3	17	45	28	7

6. I am easily able to participate in my favorite recreation activity using Gastonia’s recreational facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	8	106	100	58	14
Percent	3	37	35	20	5

7. Gastonia needs more undeveloped public natural areas similar to Crowder’s Mountain State Park, Broad River Greenway, McDowell Park and Kings Mountain State Park.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	67	113	69	31	6
Percent	23	40	24	11	2

8. New private developments should include common open space, greenways and natural areas.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	84	142	43	14	4
Percent	29	49	15	5	1

9. New housing developers should contribute land or money for added public recreational facilities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	75	133	49	22	9
Percent	26	46	17	8	3

10. Upgrading and improving current facilities should be done before new facilities are constructed.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	46	146	71	21	4
Percent	16	51	25	7	1

11. Gastonia's current recreational programs include adequate activities for all ages, abilities and genders.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	20	53	114	89	10
Percent	7	19	40	31	3

12. Gastonia's sports programs meet the need of my family.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	9	93	138	41	5
Percent	3	33	48	14	2

13. Gastonia's recreation facilities keep up with current trends in public recreation and leisure activities.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	7	71	113	83	11
Percent	2	40	39	16	2

14. Gastonia's recreation facilities are well maintained.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Count	7	115	112	45	7
Percent	2	40	39	16	2