



SECTION VI: PLANNING PROCESS FOR THE PROS PLAN

The planning process for the PROS Plan incorporated various methods to assist the community in assessing the park, recreation, and open space system. The process relied on both 1) a systems approach and 2) the use of comparison standards to analyze inventories, assets, needs, and deficiencies. The systems approach is defined in the 1995 publication entitled *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*, by James D. Mertes and James R. Hall, which described the systems approach to planning as “... the process of assessing the park, recreation, and open space needs of a community and translating that information into a framework for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy those needs.” The systems approach to planning incorporates information received from the public, including public meetings, comments, and surveys, in addition to recreation and open space inventories to determine recreational needs of the community. Recreational standards compare the existing park and recreational facilities to recreational standards. This is often done in conjunction with an analysis of existing facilities, neighborhood structure, recreation interests, and population demographics (e.g., age and income distribution) to determine community needs and deficiencies.

There are no set standards to determine the amount of open space needed for every community. Rather, information exists to determine the value of conserving and preserving biodiversity, such as the variety of plant and animal life that make up an environment. Such biodiversity often contributes to perceived quality of life. In addition to ecological biodiversity, the physical and functional features of open space (e.g., landforms, water, farmland, gardens) also can increase quality of life factors and provide elements of environmental sustainability.

A. The PROS Plan Steering Committee

A steering committee was created to draft the citizen survey, review goals and objectives, and develop an action plan. Members included a representative from the Recreation Advisory Committee, the City Planning Commission, the Downtown Development Authority, City Council, and two representatives from the Park Advisory Committee, in addition to staff from Planning and

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Development Services, Park Operations, Natural Area Preservation, and Park Administration and Rec & Ed. The steering committee met monthly to determine the course of the PROS Plan planning effort from January through September 2010.

B. Public Notification and Involvement

Public input is essential to help determine priorities for park and recreation programs, services, capital improvements, infrastructure improvements, and land acquisitions. The public was notified of the PROS Plan planning process in a number of ways, including approximately 60 press releases to local media outlets; postings on Parks and Recreation Facebook page and Twitter; email notifications through e-Gov Delivery (a voluntary email subscription for citizens, which sends notifications about City events and news); postcards, flyers and posters at all recreation facilities and other City facilities; a special website set up for the PROS Plan; and notifications on the Parks and Recreation website.

PROS PLAN MEDIA SITES:

- Ann Arbor Parks & Recreation's Facebook (www.a2gov.org/annarborparks), Twitter (www.twitter.com/a2parks) and GoogleBuzz (<http://google.com/profiles/annarborparks>) accounts.
- City of Ann Arbor's Facebook (www.facebook.com/cityofannarbor) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/cityofannarbor) accounts.
- City of Ann Arbor's e-mail subscription service (www.GovDelivery.com) to send out general bulletins to thousands of people who voluntarily sign up to receive information about City and, more specific, parks and recreation news.
- An online survey tool, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), for people to share their opinion of the parks and provide suggestions.
- Local newspaper's website to post community news updates (www.annarbor.com).
- City of Ann Arbor's website (www.a2gov.org).
- Created a web page on the Parks & Recreation homepage (www.a2gov.org/parks) specifically related to the PROS Plan (www.a2gov.org/prosplan).
- Created a project-specific mailbox for people to submit comments/provide feedback (prosplan@a2gov.org).

The PROS Plan planning process engaged residents, park users, City staff, advisory groups, and various stakeholders through public meetings, focus groups, individual comments, and an online survey. The findings provided significant understanding and direction necessary to evaluate and prioritize the future direction of the park and recreation system. Major findings are identified below:

- **MAINTENANCE.** The public provided clear feedback indicating that the extended mowing cycle, especially at athletic fields, generated a negative impression on park users. Athletic field users perceived long grass as both a safety hazard and causing adverse functionality of athletic play. Others perceived it as aesthetically displeasing. General maintenance of athletic field facilities were frequently identified as a concern, in addition to facility cleanliness relating to restrooms.

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- **TAKING CARE OF WHAT WE HAVE.** Placing an emphasis on maintaining our current park property and facilities instead of purchasing new property or creating new facilities was a recurring theme. Carefully evaluating merits of proposed acquisitions while weighing the cost of maintenance associated with any purchase should be emphasized.
- **EXISTING FACILITIES:** Much public feedback has been received regarding the importance of keeping open existing facilities such as Mack Pool and the Senior Center, and retaining all current park property as parkland, such as Huron Hills Golf Course.
- **PARK ACCESSIBILITY AND CONNECTIVITY.** Improving connectivity between parks was important to many individuals, including walking and biking paths between parks and to major destination points. For example, a number of individuals suggested a connection between river parks (i.e., Gallup Park) and downtown. Completion of the Border-to-Border trail was a recurring comment from the public.
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH/PROGRAMMING/PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT.** Ensuring the emphasis on public relations, especially without a daily printed newspaper, was a concern voiced by City staff and various committee members. Many individuals noted park events and programming were being advertised through “word of mouth,” indicating strong community social networking; however, other populations with limited social networks may not be receiving all available information on park programming.
- **LEADERSHIP FOR VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES.** Many people expressed a willingness to volunteer, but were unaware of volunteer opportunities. Need for more leadership in this area in addition to what is offered by NAP may be well received.
- **AFFORDABILITY AND FEES.** Ensuring that fees are affordable for team sports as well as all park facilities was important. Complaints about the state of field maintenance versus the fees teams pay was considered out of balance. Many residents felt that fees were quite reasonable, and should stay that way as a public entity.
- **FUTURE FACILITIES.** In the citizen questionnaire, a question was asked about park initiatives that should be prioritized for future implementation. Examples were provided of an in-ground concrete skate park that would be free and open to the public, development of a downtown greenway along the alignment of the Allen Creek, and an additional off-leash dog park facility, especially one more centrally located in the downtown area. The majority of respondents commented favorably to these potential amenities.

1. Online Survey

The online survey was the primary tool used to gain feedback from residents and park users. It was posted online from May 1, 2010 through July 1, 2010. A total of 822 surveys were completed. Survey results and additional comments from the survey will support the direction of park programs, amenities, and future initiatives. Below is a summary of the findings.

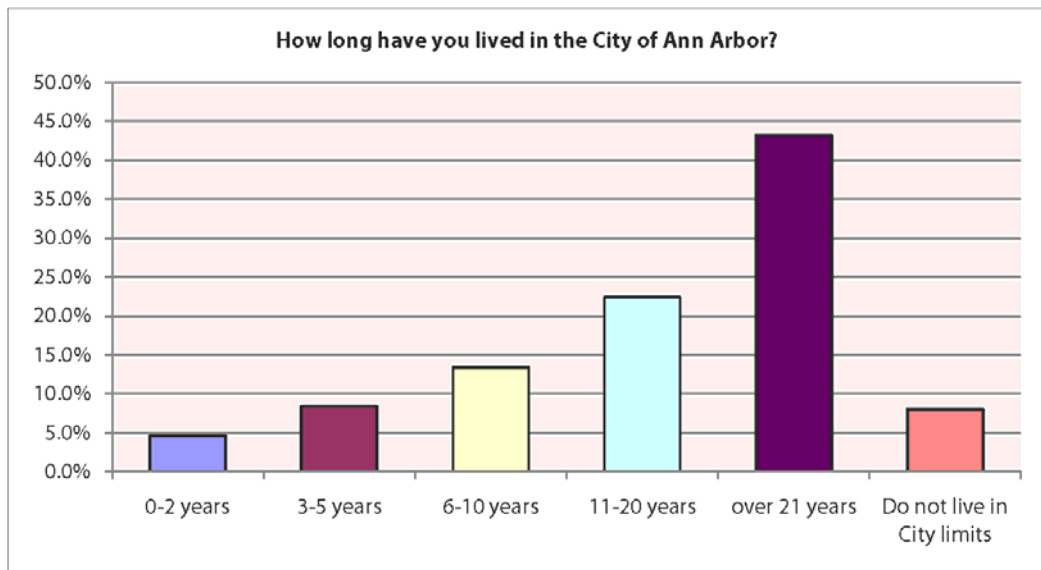
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a. RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS/ACTIVITY LEVEL

Questions #1 through #4 collected information regarding age, household size, identification of health problems or disabilities, and regular participation in recreational activities.

The majority of respondents reside in a one- or two-person household. The greatest number of household members (452) fell between the ages of 41-60, and 558 children under the age of 18 lived within all households.

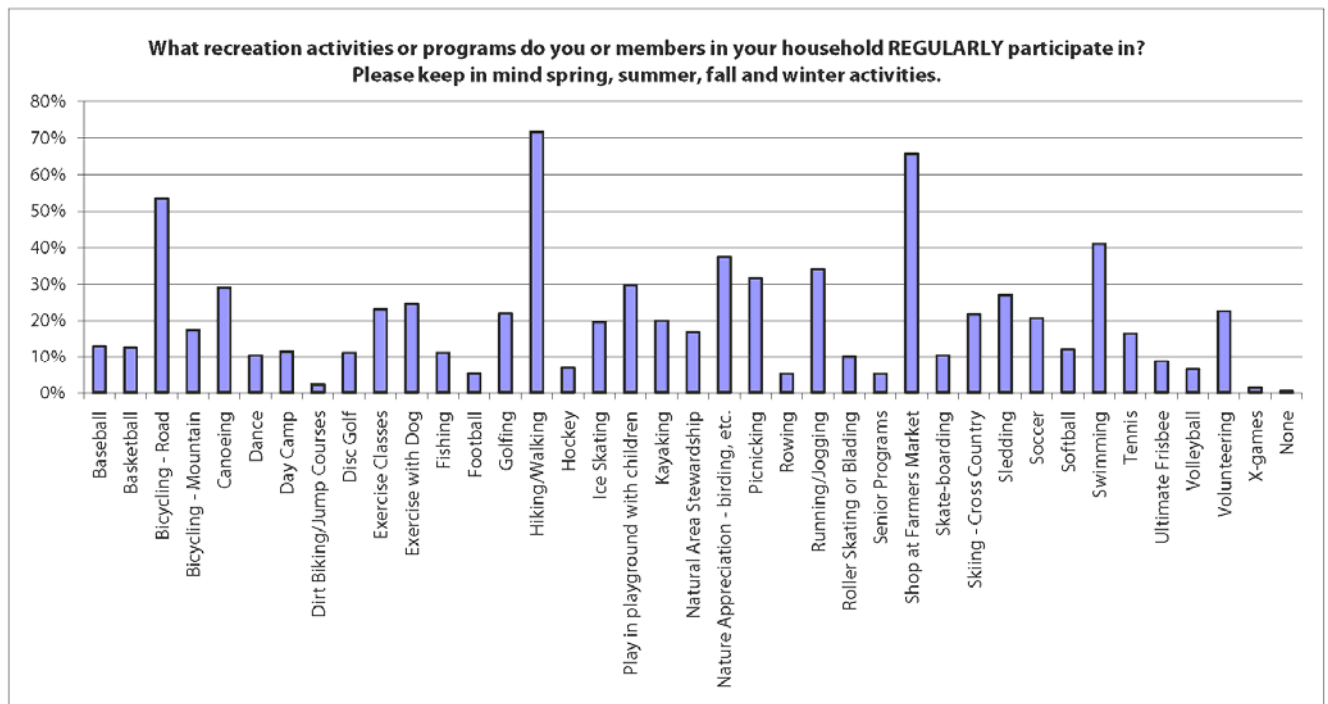
Almost 66% of the respondents resided in Ann Arbor for over ten years, including 350 that have lived in the City for over 21 years. Fewer than five percent of the respondents have resided in the City for two years or less.



Only 8% said they had a health problem or disability that limited their activity level. A number of accessibility improvements were suggested relating to health problems and disabilities, including improved wheelchair access, banisters at steps and docks, park entrance improvements, accessible bus stops, and additional ramps and benches. Some recommended pathway improvements, such as firmer surfaces for walking and wheelchairs, and handicapped accessible play structures.

Respondents and members of their household regularly participated in various activities such as hiking/walking (72%), shopping at the Farmers Market (66%), bicycling-roads (53%), and swimming (41%).

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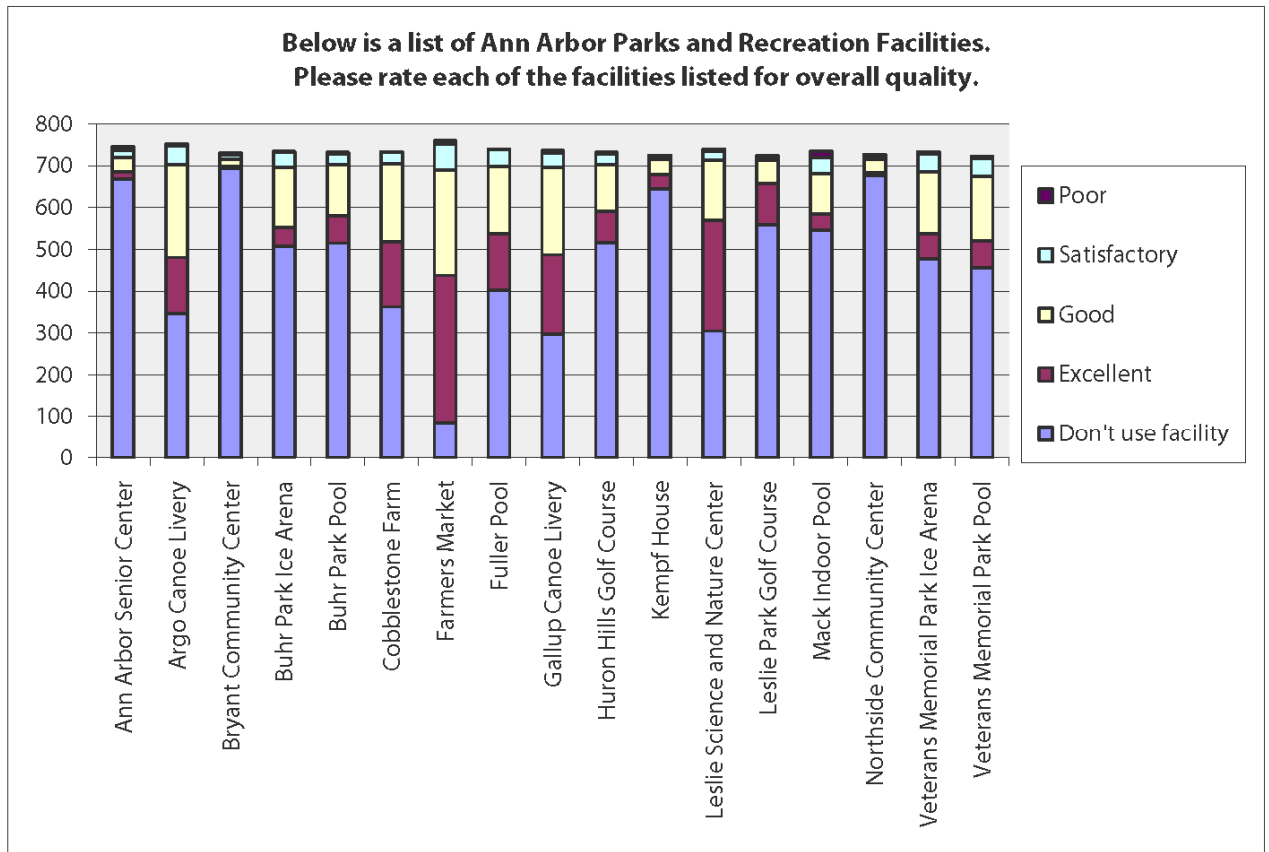


When asked which type of activity lacked adequate facilities, the majority of respondents to this question identified the lack of a skateboarding facility. Athletic field facilities, including adequate maintenance, were identified, specifically baseball, softball, and soccer fields. Maintenance was the number one concern regarding athletic fields. Additional facilities were suggested for kickball, tennis, kayaking, disc golf, walking, dog walking, hiking, ice skating, rollerblading, pool (more variety), and cross-country skiing.

b. QUALITY OF FACILITIES

A total of 17 park facilities were rated for overall quality. The majority of individuals who use a specific facility rated it either good or excellent. Of the 17 facilities listed in the survey, the Farmers Market had the greatest number of individuals rating it “excellent” (353), while Mack Indoor Pool had the most “poor” ratings, which included only 11 responses.

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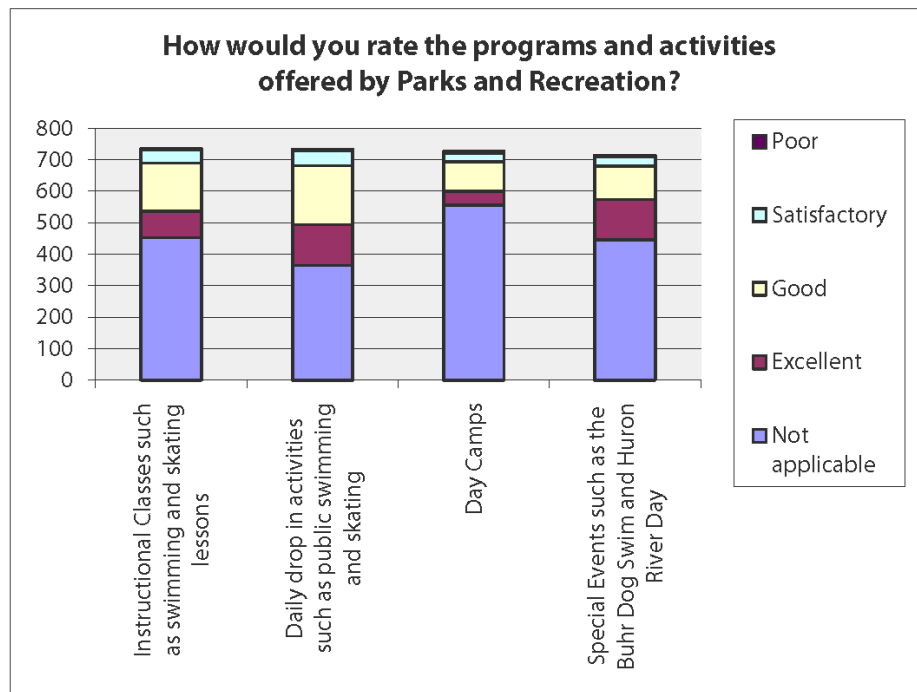
Survey respondents also were asked to identify their favorite facility and any facility concerns. Buhr Park and Buhr Pool were highly ranked, along with the Farmer’s Market, Gallup Park, Huron Hills Golf Course, Leslie Science and Nature Center, and Veterans Memorial Park. Concerns included poor ball field conditions, restroom and facility cleanliness, and general maintenance.

c. PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY RATINGS

Programs and activities were rated, including instructional classes, drop-in activities, day camps, and special events. At least one-half or more of the respondents did not participate in such activities. Of those who did participate, the majority rated the programs and activities as “good” or “excellent.”

Respondents were asked whether they would refer a person to one of the parks and recreation facilities. The majority of respondents answered “yes,” listing Gallup Park, Veterans Ice Arena and Pool, day camps, canoeing, the Ann Arbor Senior Center, and Huron Hills Golf Course as the most recommended facilities. Those who answered “no” were concerned primarily with program costs.

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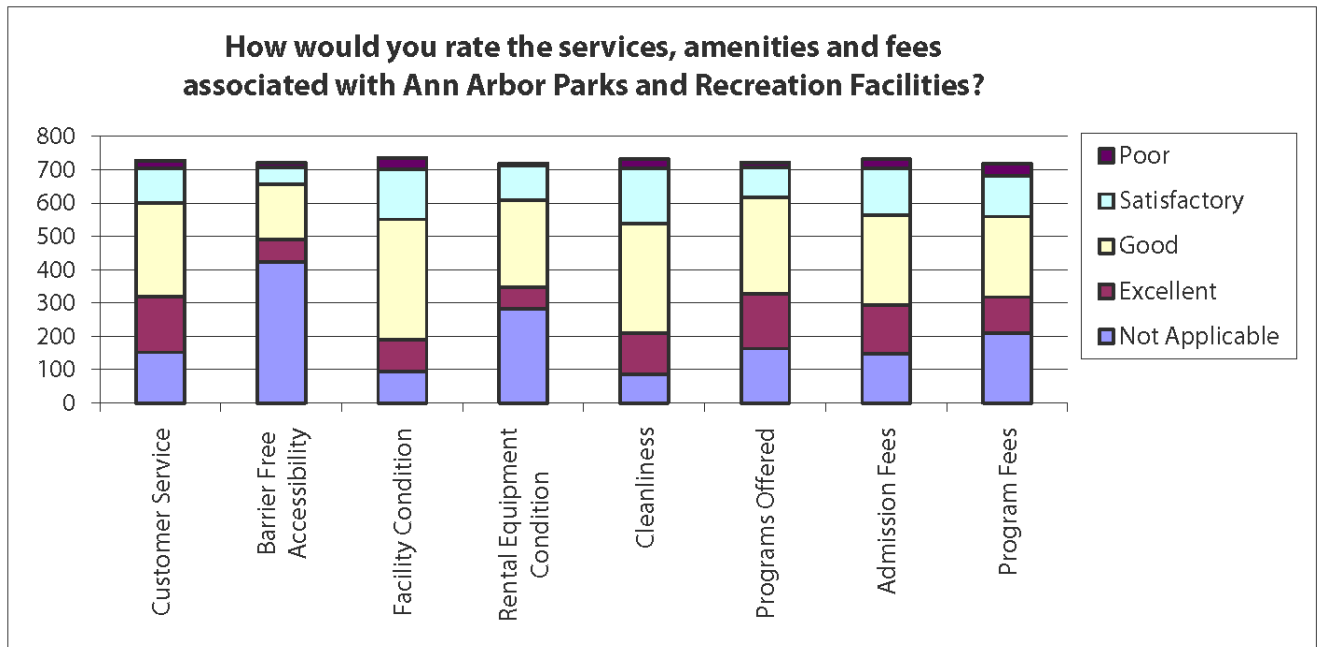


d. FACILITY SERVICE, AMENITIES, AND FEES

Survey respondents were asked to rate facility services, amenities, and fees, including customer service, barrier free accessibility, facility condition, rental equipment, cleanliness, programs offered, admission fees, and program fees. The majority of respondents answered “good” for each category. Barrier free accessibility, facility condition, rental equipment condition, cleanliness, and admission fees all had a greater number of “satisfactory” ratings when compared to the number of “excellent” ratings. Program fees and facility condition received the greatest number of “poor” ratings with 37 and 35 respectively.

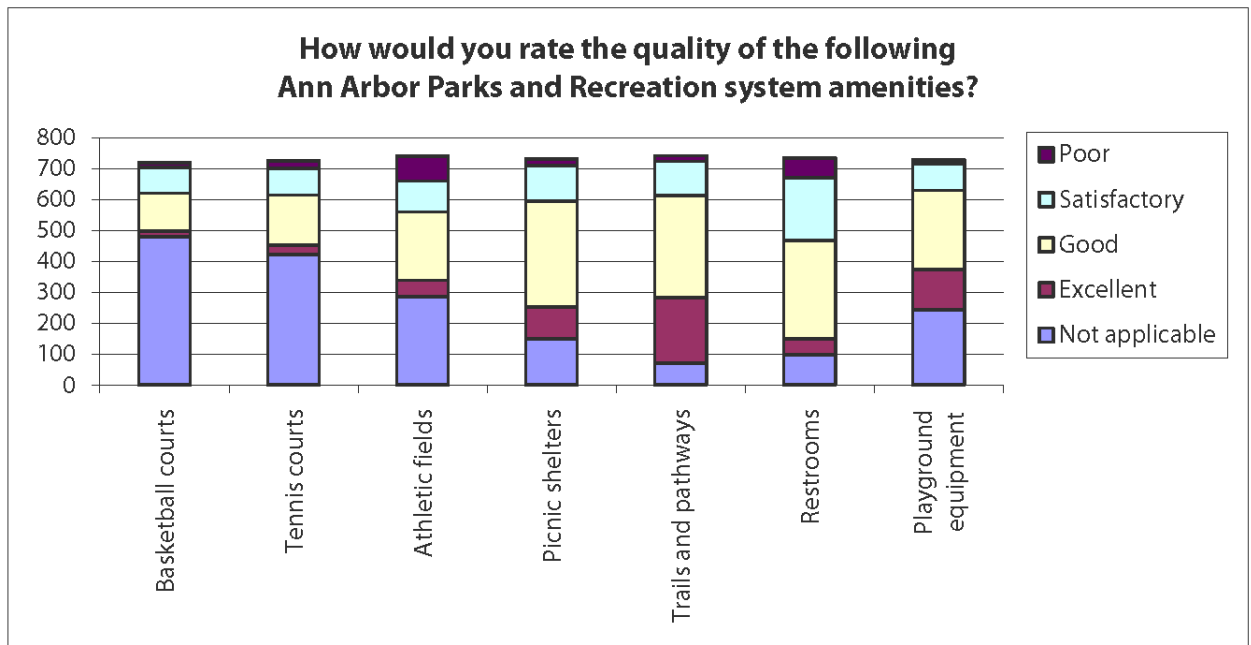
Additional comments focused primarily on issues relating to cost and fees, cleanliness, accessibility, and maintenance. A number of respondents felt services and amenities were wonderful assets offered at reasonable costs.

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e. SYSTEM AMENITIES

The quality of park and recreation amenities were rated, including basketball and tennis courts, athletic fields, picnic shelters, trails and pathways, restrooms, and playground equipment.



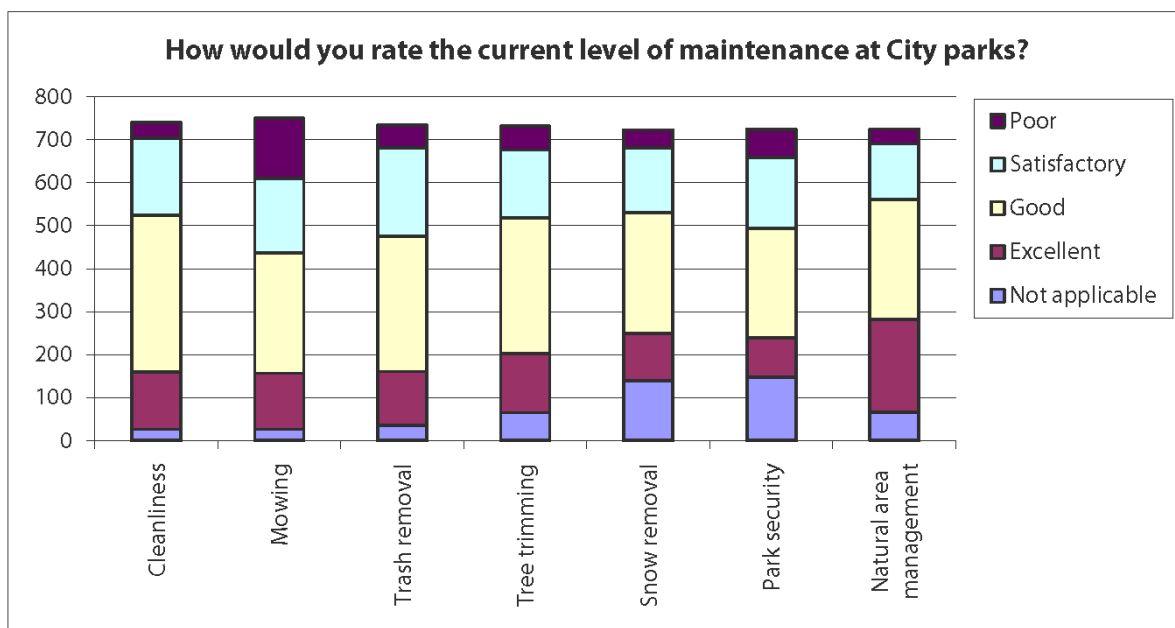
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The majority of respondents rated all park amenities as “good.” Trails and pathways had the greatest number of “excellent” ratings. Only two categories, athletic fields and restrooms, had more “poor” than “excellent” ratings.

Participants also were asked about deficiencies regarding system amenities. Athletic fields generated numerous concerns regarding infrequent mowing, poorly maintained infields, improved playgrounds and tennis courts, connectivity and maintenance of trails and pathways, and restroom accessibility and cleanliness.

f. LEVEL OF MAINTENANCE

Maintenance was rated, including cleanliness, mowing, trash removal, tree trimming, snow removal, park security, and natural area management.



The greatest number of responses for all categories was a “good” rating. Natural area management received the greatest number of “excellent” responses, while mowing received the most “poor” responses.

Additional comments included a number of concerns regarding athletic fields, especially mowing and overall poor condition of ballparks. Mowing in general was a significant concern. Other comments included enforcement of dog leash laws, the lack of visible security, excessive tree trimming, and improving trash removal.

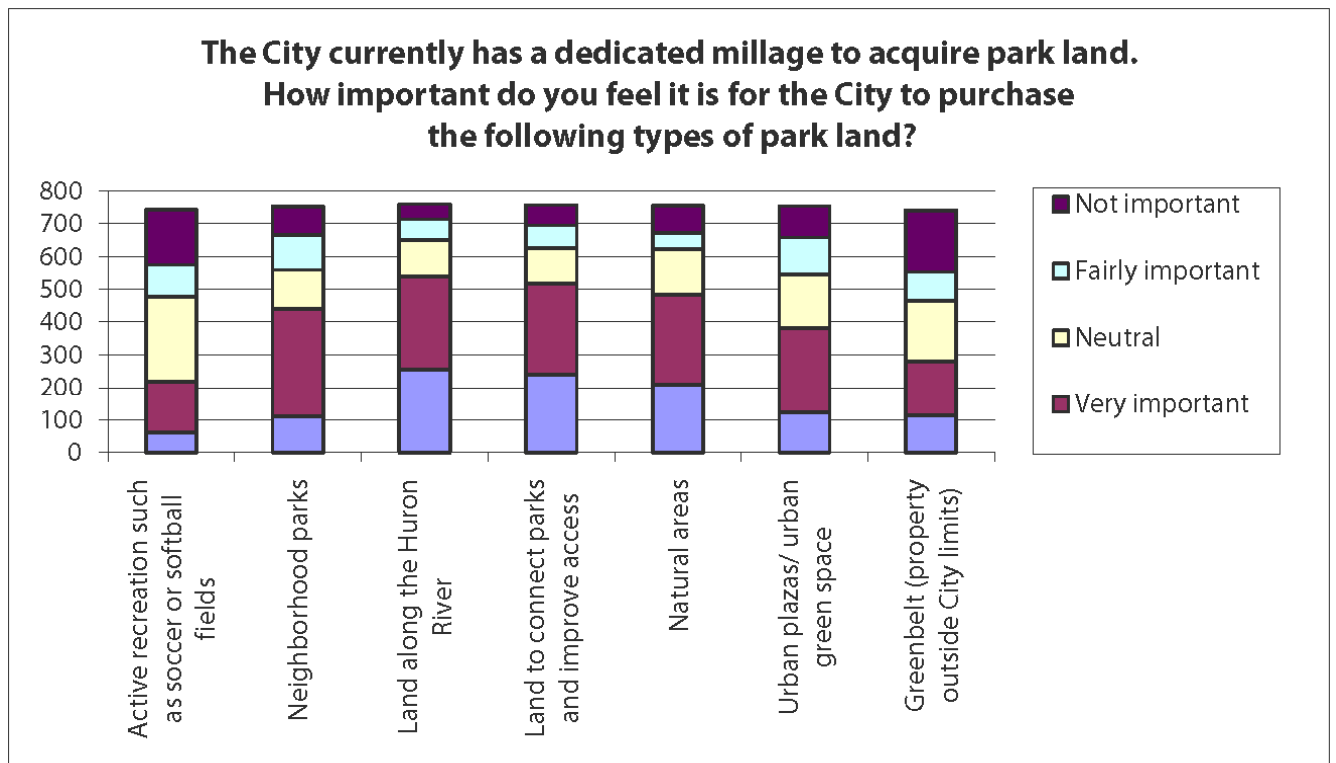
g. PARKLAND ACQUISITION

Survey participants were asked about parkland acquisition and the types of parks considered important to acquire, including active recreation, neighborhood parks, land along the river, land to connect parks, natural areas, urban plazas, and the

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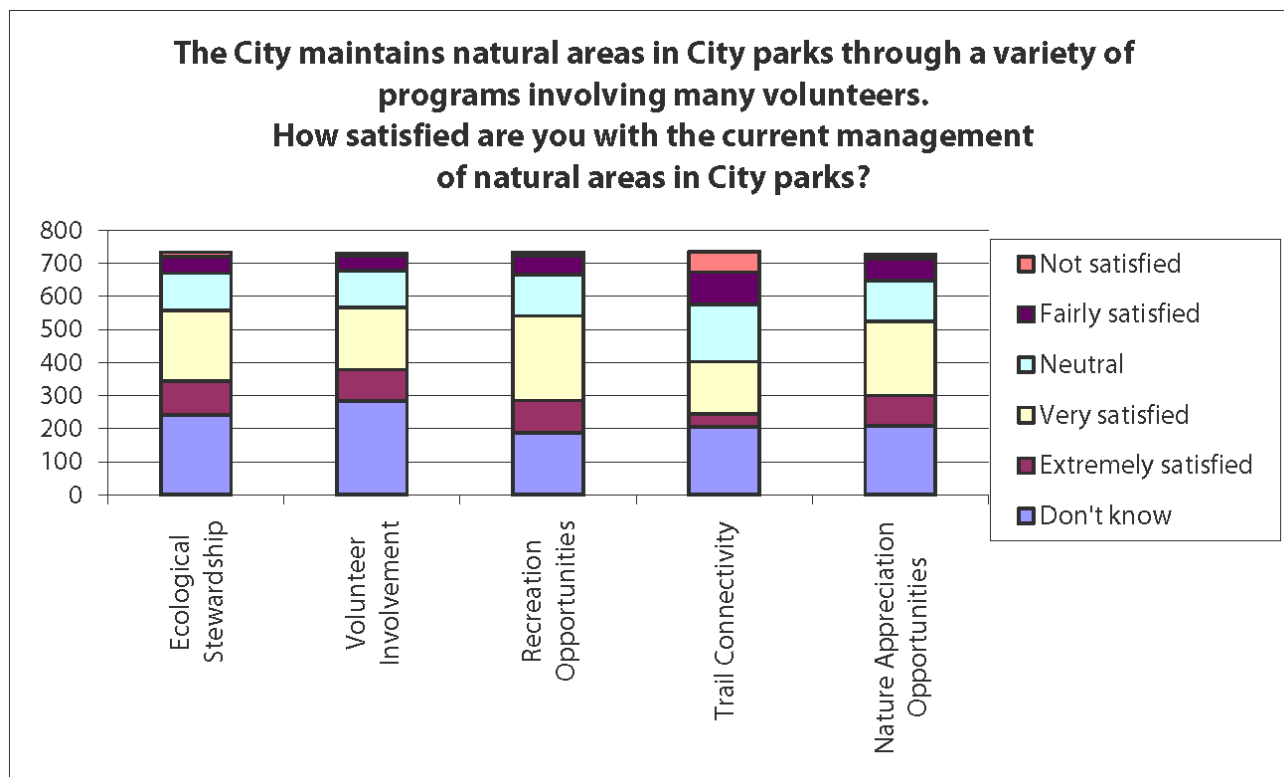
greenbelt. The greatest number of responses for each category was “very important,” with the exception of active recreation and the greenbelt.

Many respondents commented that the City had enough parkland and were concerned that additional acquisitions would compromise and compound existing maintenance issues. Respondents also were interested in achieving greater connectivity between parks both within the City and with parks and pathways outside of the City, such as the Border-to Border trail. Connectivity included planning that incorporated safety and access for the pedestrian and bicycle. While there were a number of comments supporting a greenway, especially along the Allen Creek, survey participants were generally concerned about the financial management, maintenance, and protection of existing parks.



h. NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT

Participants were asked their satisfactions regarding natural areas. While many respondents answered “neutral” or “don’t know,” indicating a possible lack of public education regarding natural areas and the City’s Natural Area Preservation program, many also indicated “very satisfied.” Trail connectivity had the most “not satisfied” responses (62).



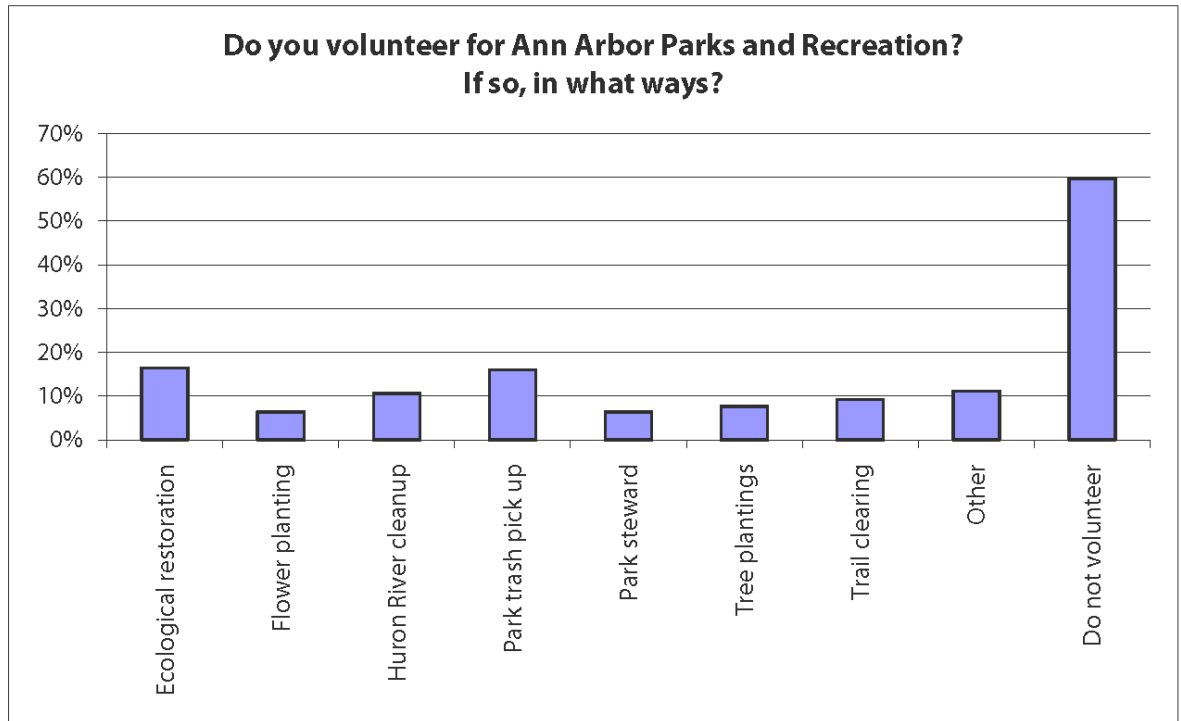
Additional comments indicated NAP is doing an exceptional job with natural area stewardship. Suggestions included improvements to public education and communication regarding prescribed burns, invasive species removal, volunteering, and park connectivity.

i. VOLUNTEERING

Approximately 40% of the respondents volunteer for one or more park and recreation activities, such as clean-up and stewardship.

When asked about possible involvement in improving Ann Arbor’s parks, many respondents indicated a willingness to volunteer, especially programs involving trash pick-up, trail and facility maintenance (i.e., athletic fields), natural area restoration, and committee participation. Many were unaware of opportunities, indicating a need to develop new programs to involve the public. Others indicated the need to involve or invite families and organization to help in volunteer efforts.

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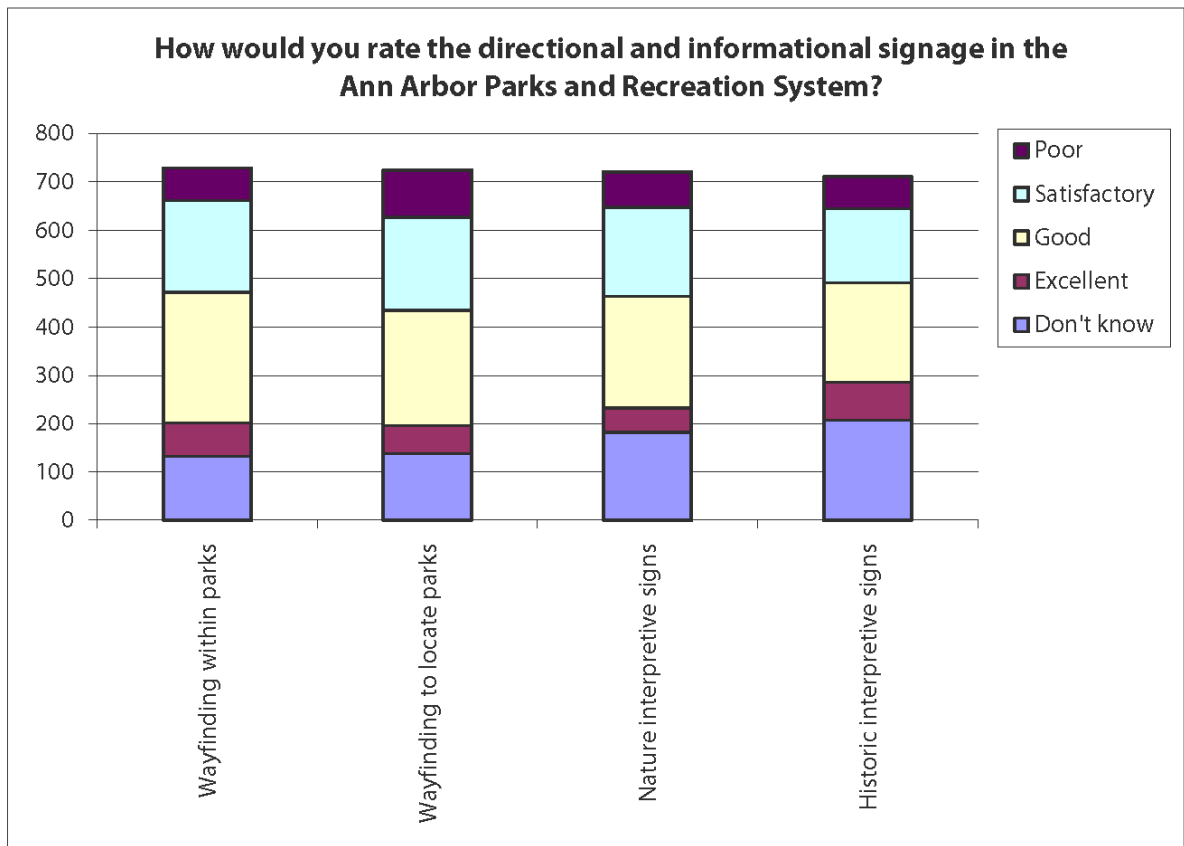
j. FUTURE INITIATIVES AND IMPLEMENTATION

When survey participants were asked about park initiatives that should be prioritized for future implementation, the survey provided examples of a skate park, downtown dog park, and downtown greenway. The majority of respondents supported such initiatives; however, additional suggestions included updates to the Ann Arbor Senior Center, maintenance of existing athletic fields and facilities, additional bike paths and facilities, park connectivity, retaining and improving golf facilities, more outdoor ice rinks, more natural areas and neighborhood parks, and ultimate Frisbee.

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k. DIRECTIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL SIGNAGE

Additional comments from survey respondents regarding directional and informational signage included improvements to signs along roadways to parks, adding interpretive signs, restoring damaged or missing signs, adding and improving signs on the internet, and adding field signs (Vets Park) and enforcement signs (pool rules, leash laws, etc.). Many of the respondents felt that there was enough existing signage and that signage should be minimized. Others thought that maintenance of the park facilities should be a priority over signage.

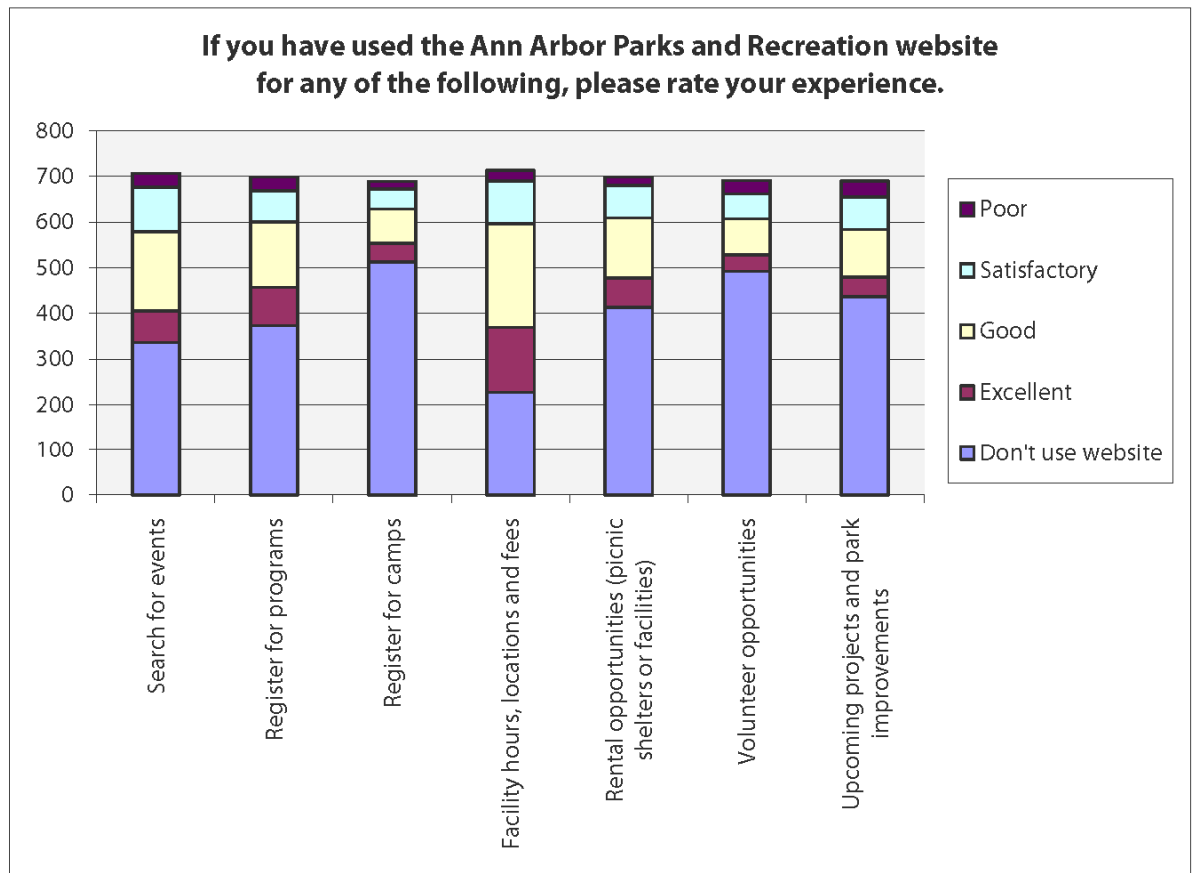


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1. OBTAINING INFORMATION ABOUT PARK AND RECREATION ACTIVITIES.

More than 63% of the survey participants obtain information about park and recreation activities through the City website. Over 38% continue to obtain information through the newspaper, especially the Ann Arbor Observer.

In addition to the categories above, a large number of survey participants gained information from “word of mouth,” friends, and neighbors. Others acquired information directly at facilities, email lists and newsgroups, and the Ann Arbor Observer.

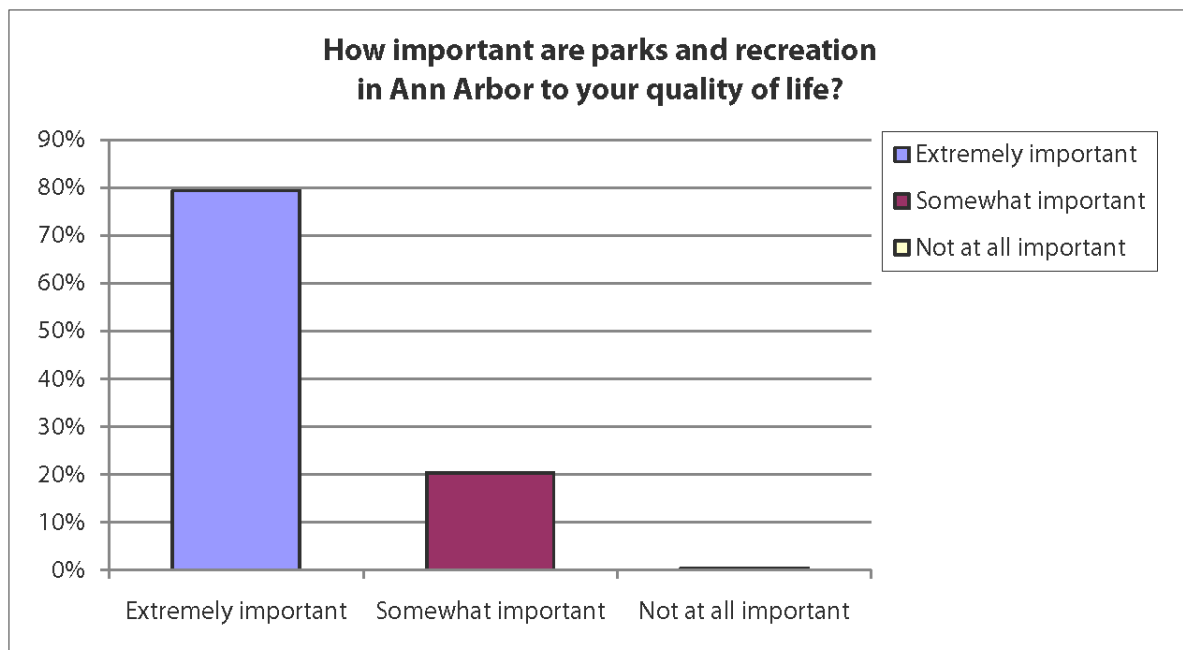


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m. PARKS AND RECREATION & QUALITY OF LIFE

Almost 80% of the survey participants felt the parks and recreation system was “extremely important” to one’s quality of life.

Comments regarding the importance of parks and recreation in Ann Arbor to “quality of life” included great appreciation of parks and the diversity of the recreation facilities. Most of the respondents indicated they were frequent users and considered the park system to be an essential component of Ann Arbor’s ambiance, attraction, diversity, history, and identity.



2. Focus Groups

Staff met with various groups to discuss and obtain more detailed information on specific topics pertaining to parks and recreation. Below are summaries from members of each focus group.

a. PARK ADVISORY COMMISSION AND LAND ACQUISITION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Dedicate a separate PROS Plan section to accomplishments from the previous PROS Plan cycle.
- 2) Five-year focus should be on continued maintenance and enhancement of existing facilities, fiscal prudence, funding for parks including green space in the urban downtown, and providing for underserved neighborhoods.
- 3) Some of the strengths of Parks and Recreation include strong customer service, community outreach, the wide variety of parks, accessibility to parks, and neighborhood park identity.

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- 4) Weaknesses include lack of public education about program availability, public understanding of budget and finances, staffing levels, funding issues, and need for increased public relations (i.e. improving website).
- 5) Challenges include clarification of how funding for parks and recreation functions, how to mitigate complaints, and determining formulas for maintenance.
- 6) Active recreation needs include a skate park, urban downtown dog park, Allen Creek greenway, continuation of the Huron River greenway, park water quality features, a soccer complex facility, and improving water quality of the Huron River to make it a swimmable river.
- 7) Passive recreation facilities, such as bicycle trails, should include improved signage/wayfinding and interpretive displays, although the facilities are generally excellent.
- 8) Programming needs include summer playground programs. Opportunities through private entities should be explored.
- 9) Land acquisition should address underserved neighborhoods, a soccer complex and park connectivity. Priority should be to acquire land in the City.
- 10) Funding should be better explained to the public. Millages are more secure than General Fund and should be retained. Mowing operations should remain in the general fund.
- 11) Public/private partnerships should be pursued, however, there is a desire to retain control of facilities and land. Collaborative management of community centers is a good example of what is successful. There are reservations regarding corporate sponsorship, cell towers/parking with UM for revenue. A cost/benefit analysis should be done on a case-by-case basis.
- 12) A list of maintenance priorities needs to be developed. A little less mowing would be acceptable.

b. RECREATION ADVISORY COMMISSION

- 1) Five-year focus should be on easy use/accessible trails for elderly, educational signage, proximity of parks to neighborhoods, maintenance costs, increasing safety, maximizing multiple use opportunities, and exploring partnerships.
- 2) Strengths include the number and distribution of neighborhood parks, incorporating trends into planning, shared park and school resources, community support and variety of parks and programs.
- 3) Weaknesses include the need more restroom facilities, parking lot availability, lack of winter maintenance, bike path connectivity, and funding issues.
- 4) Additional facilities might include a climbing wall and soccer complex.
- 5) Funding issues include the question of tax credits for land acquisition, public education about funding resources, and formation of a non-specific parks and recreation millage.
- 6) Public/private partnerships, including golf courses, corporate sponsorships, volunteer opportunities should be pursued.
- 7) Maintenance of ball fields and tennis courts needs to be improved (i.e., fencing, cracks). Consider acquiring fewer parks and focusing on better quality.

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c. FACILITY SUPERVISORS

1) Programming should stay competitive to keep up with changing trends. Ideas include the following:

- Provide more weekday programs and classes
- Provide additional school break day camps
- Create health and wellness programs, including classes such as boot camps.
- Collaborate with the YMCA, Rec & Ed, and NAP to generate more programs
- Provide more innovative programs such as geo-caching and disc golf classes
- Organize races, such as a triathlon event
- Run half-day and pre-kindergarten camps at Burns Park
- Expand programming at Senior Center to meet needs of seniors
- Encourage NAP to create more programs
- Include coffee shops and quality eateries at facilities
- Increase volunteer network to aid in running programs
- Explore additional evening programming to expand user groups

2) Stay abreast with changing trends by doing more research through the following avenues:

- Visit other park facilities
- Perform web searches to explore program ideas
- Attend conferences
- Review park related publications
- Utilize resources of larger organizations such as the National Parks and Recreation, Michigan Parks and Recreation, Michigan Senior Center Directors, and the National Senior Center Alliance

3) Provide park amenities to facilitate programming ideas:

- Provide better connection between Island and Fuller Parks
- Provide barrier free accessible kayak and canoe docks
- Improve restrooms for user friendliness and add restrooms to allow for programming at other parks
- Improve barrier free accessibility
- Improve mill race area at Argo for kayak and canoeing
- Improve access from Huron River to downtown to increase visibility
- Acquire parcels along Huron River for more park programming
- Construct more picnic shelters, especially at popular parks that do not have them, such as Furstenberg and Buhr Parks
- Encourage construction of a restaurant along the Huron River
- Provide more inclusive amenities to help keep facilities current

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4) Specific park facility improvements recommended by Facility Supervisors include:

- Argo – Provide boat storage for individuals (not at the livery); implement boat launch improvements; create a canoe bypass at Argo dam; construct a pedestrian bridge over North Main Street to connect the west side of City to Huron River to the river parks on the East side of the river, remove Argo Dam and create white water and turn millrace into canoe bypass, or keep Argo Dam and turn millrace into a canoe bypass by taking out portage and recreating pathway/bridge. Provide pathway connections to downtown from the Huron River; acquire as much riverfront property as possible near the downtown and through the City.
- Buhr – construct barrier free ramp into pool, construct picnic shelter, purchase bleachers, paint beams on steel structure over ice arena.
- Bryant Community Center – construct more space, including expanding facility with an addition. Reorganize existing space to better meet program demands.
- Leslie Park Golf Course – construct a pavilion for rental such as corporate events and weddings.
- Farmers Market – enclose part of market for more temperature comfort during winter.
- Fuller Pool – build a splash pad/water spray park, pave gravel section of parking lot and repave existing parking lot, build a second water slide, install more energy efficient outdoor lighting at parking lot.
- Gallup – Provide boat storage for individuals, implement boat launch improvements, improve directional and interpretive signage, expand patio seating at the Canoe Livery, reconfigure entry drive to reduce vehicle/pedestrian conflicts, reconfigure dock area to better serve kayak and canoe operations, improve meeting room space to include operable windows, and patio doors, improve barrier free access.
- Huron Hills – construct a meeting room and golf teaching room, construct a shelter/pavilion for event and public rentals.
- Leslie Science Center – Replace boiler in Leslie House basement. Redo all signage at the park, including entry signs, building signage, interpretive signage around the site and at raptor enclosures, and directional signage for trails. Construct barrier free pathway to access raptor enclosures. Implement parking lot improvements to eliminate erosion issues and install LED lighting in parking lot fixtures. Improve lighting and ventilation in the Leslie House, renovate kitchen, second floor of building and public entrance to Leslie House.
- Mack Pool – Renovate locker rooms, including replacing lockers, create party room and exercise room, build pool offices on pool deck and change entrance to facility so that it is separate from school entrance and clearer for public wayfinding.
- Senior Center – Improve media center, create coffee shop, renovate

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kitchen to allow for more programming, replace flooring, improve lighting and ventilation, rethink layout of Center to provide for enhanced programming, renovate parking lot, improve barrier free access and restrooms, create outdoor space to serve Center.

- Veterans Park – Construct new women’s locker room by removing some bleachers to create more space, provide new arena lights, replace arena flooring, and repaint steel beams.
- Other – Improve or eliminate concession areas, improve overall energy efficiency at facilities.

d. PARK OPERATIONS AND NATURAL AREA PRESERVATION STAFF

1) Maintenance issues that could be resolved through better design, equipment, and operations:

- Mowing – City budget restricts increases in frequency; large mower decks increase efficiency for open areas/athletic fields; however, large decks are difficult to maneuver in dense tree areas; taking areas out of mowing creates different kind of maintenance problem (NAP involvement); need to develop plan for mowing wet areas.
- Pathways – pathways are not designed to handle size and weight of maintenance equipment and this creates a problem with rutting and edges of pathways breaking.
- Trash – need to consider “carry out” trash policy instead of multiple interior trash receptacles. Signage could be installed at entrances to encourage individuals to carry out their own trash.
- Trees – small equipment may be needed to prevent damage; need to think about clumping trees and mulching to cut down on trim mowing.
- Plowing – take some areas out of winter use to cut down on maintenance; larger equipment would create efficiencies, although there is concern about increasing damage; need to continue plowing all sidewalks within public rights-of-way.
- Consider long-term maintenance implications with new projects and renovations.
- Facility staff should be involved in maintenance issues on a park system level.

2) Improvements to efficiencies as an organization:

- Improve communication and coordination within entire service area; email lists work well to communicate issues. Meetings are sporadically attended but are important to coordinate between service areas.
- Work as a team to reduce impact of staff reductions.
- Determine ways to provide balance and flexibility in millage spending between maintenance and capital projects.
- Consider another classification for open space land vs. active

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recreation areas.

- Need to determine how to and who should maintain pathway connections, such as school walks through neighborhoods that are not City-owned.
- Develop a prioritized list for maintenance practices such as mowing.

3) Trends:

- Develop strategic program for volunteerism.
- Work with volunteers on concept of food production in parks, such as community gardens and fruiting trees and shrubs.
- Incorporate native plant material in designs to decrease mowing and increase diversity.
- Establish 'showcase' areas in parks for events such as weddings.
- Promote the value of parks in terms of health, environment, air/water quality, economic/real estate impacts, etc.

4) Other Maintenance issues:

- Address disturbances to vegetation due to removal for safety reasons.
- Find ways to eliminate rutting along pathways.
- Keep fence lines clear from vegetation that undermine the integrity of the structures.
- Work on increasing programming to attract more people to under-utilized urban parks
- Work with police on enforcement issues such as alcohol use in parks, camping, safety issues and criminal activities.
- Clarify communication lines as it is difficult for the public to find the right staff person to resolve issues.

e. CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

- 1) Concerns were expressed regarding loss of flexibility for public land zoning designation if parks were to have a separate designation, as well as the uncertainty that specific zoning for parks would increase protection. The current public land classification is often vague where the 'PL' designation of public land may be interpreted as parkland.
- 2) Downtown parks and open space discussion included the cost of land in the downtown core, that parkland needs to be within walking distance, but not necessarily located in the core. Consider incorporating public amenities into existing space rather than creating new parks and planting larger trees to create more of an impact. Green space is important to the downtown, but needs to be considered carefully.
- 3) Developer contributions should be consider providing more publically accessible space within new developments, or to provide additional amenities within existing parks. Developer contributions could help fund a consultant who could create a coherent vision for downtown public amenities.

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- 4) Public/private partnerships might not be supported by the public for sponsorship of park amenities, but staff should explore all opportunities to generate revenue. A balanced view must include all possible risks inherent with acceptance of private funding.
- 5) The City needs to look more comprehensively at connections between parks and park facilities, in addition to the relationship between park planning and transportation in terms of accessibility. All parks should have non-motorized links.
- 6) The City should maintain and develop what parkland it already has, especially along the Huron River. There was limited support for additional parkland purchases at this time, including land for the proposed Allen Creek Greenway, although there was support for planning initiatives.

f. DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (DDA) BOARD

- 1) Planning for urban parks must take into consideration urban issues, including homelessness, panhandling, drinking, etc. All parks need to have “eyes and ears”. Open space alone does not mean a successful open park, and size and location are extremely important in the planning of a downtown open space. The successes and issues with Liberty Plaza, Sculpture Plaza, the U of M Diag, West Park, and the Library lot were discussed in this context. A downtown playground might not be needed as there are not enough households with children to support the idea.
- 2) New downtown parkland should be part of a larger master plan for downtown public space. This should include streetscape plans or maintenance that could be part of what developers contribute for the streetscape in front of their buildings. Any developer contributions should be available to the public, not just for the use of residents in the proposed development.
- 3) A large greenway, such as the proposed Allen Creek Greenway, may generate undesirable issues as there is no river destination to the south, and residential development is not likely in the immediate future.
- 4) Programming is essential for the success of certain downtown parks, and it is not necessarily guaranteed that programming will be frequent enough to make the park a success.

3. Public Meetings

Three public meetings were held to gather community input for the PROS Plan. The meetings were held on June 2, 2010 at the Senior Center, on June 17, 2010 at the Leslie Science and Nature Center, and on June 29, 2010 at Cobblestone Farm. The meetings were held on different days of the week to accommodate various household schedules. The meeting format consisted of a short presentation explaining the purpose and content of the Plan. It also provided an explanation of the different types of parks, amenities, and services in the system,

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including neighborhood parks, urban plazas, community wide parks, recreation facilities, historic, cultural and community centers, natural areas and parks with natural areas, trails and greenways, and parkland and greenbelt acquisition.

Discussion focused on the following suggestions, concerns, and comments:

- Huron Hills Golf Course – retain land for golf, concern expressed about privatization and commercialization.
- Improve maintenance of athletic fields, especially for safety and player retention.
- Veterans Memorial Park – address wet areas at Maple Road parking lot, increase trash pick-up.
- Mowing – too infrequent, mowing cycles need to be decreased.
- Allen Creek Greenway – include information about the importance of the floodplain to improve water quality. Discuss environmental benefits of preserving open space for infiltration. Include some plan for the greenway development.
- South Maple Park – more frequent trash removal; improve appearance.
- Growing food in parks – encourage food production as a part of what parks have to offer to the community in collaboration with residents.
- Bicycle paths along the Huron River – finish the Border-to-Border trail through the City.
- Fuller Road Station – concern over proposal in terms of whether it is an appropriate use of parkland. If project moves forward, it is important to include park improvements, such as trail system connections, Border-to-Border trail and connections across Huron River. Public comment should be obtained.
- Need a comprehensive plan for bicycles in parks; bicycle parking should be provided at all park facilities.
- Include a PROS Plan section on the accomplishments that have been made since the previous plan was updated.
- The boardwalk at Mary Beth Doyle path is too narrow. Trail is quite wet, consider modifications.
- Consider more natural play areas, designs for children and their comfort will encourage use by all.
- Purchase low maintenance land. Buy smaller tracts that connect to other parks.
- Improve Buhr Park lighting – why does parking lot lighting need to be on all the time? Consider turning off at night when programs are not running.
- Trees – service organizations have been helping to install trees. Explore the use of volunteers to install street trees.

4. Task Forces, Studies and Major Issues

a. ALLEN CREEK GREENWAY TASK FORCE

In 2005, a resolution creating a task force to plan a new greenway along the alignment of the Allen Creek storm drain was passed by City Council. Members consisted of staff and representatives of the Park Advisory Commission, Planning Commission, the Down Town Development Authority, City Council and other City residents. The task force developed concepts for a greenway which would be

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comprised of open space and a pathway generally following the Allen Creek storm drain. The task force agreed that the proposed Greenway should occupy the floodway portion of the City's three sites: 415 West Washington, 721 North Main, and the First and William Street parking lot, and that the pathway would connect to the Huron River, Border to Border trail. Conceptual designs for the three City sites, and various funding alternatives were proposed.

b. ATHLETIC FIELD TASK FORCE

In 2008, members of staff and the Park Advisory Commission evaluated conditions of soccer fields in parks, gathering information from user groups concerning their satisfaction with fields, as well as needs for additional fields. An athletic field task force was formed to make recommendations, which resulted in renovations to the soccer fields at Fuller and Olson Parks, including rebuilding the fields, installing fencing and irrigation. This also resulted in recommendations to continue to work towards improving the quality of baseball and softball fields within the City into the future.

c. GOLF COURSE TASK FORCE

In 2007, PAC sent a resolution to the City Council recommending that the City retain a consultant to evaluate City golf operations. A series of recommendations were made that would involve a significant capital investment and, in response, a task force was formed in 2008 to oversee funding allocated to the golf course for improvements. The task force includes citizens, PAC members, and staff, and continues to meet to review golf course performance.

d. HURON RIVER IMPOUNDMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN (HRIMP)/ARGO DAM

In 2006, the Ann Arbor Environmental Commission created the HRIMP committee and charged them with developing a Huron River and Impoundment Management Plan. The committee considered a broad range of management recommendations on aquatic vegetation, dams, and recreation. These included ensuring water quality and ecosystem health, improving and maintaining water quality, and evaluating public use and access. The committee developed a vision for the Huron River with alternative routes based on the repair or removal of Argo Dam and associated recommendation based on how the City chooses to use the river. No final recommendation was made by City Council to maintain or remove the dam.

e. MACK POOL TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

In July 2009, City Council created the Mack Pool Task Force to work with staff to examine options for increased revenue as well as potential cost reduction measures to sustain operations at Mack Pool. The Task Force presented a number of recommendations to reduce the cost on the City's General Fund to operate the pool by approximately \$40,000 per year. Recommendations included the purchase and installation of a thermal blanket for energy savings, LED lights on the pool deck, computer decrease, raise fees for season passes and Master's swimming, add

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Master's class, establish annual fundraiser, increase rental fees, cost share with school district, and explore "swim school" program.

f. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKLAND DEFICIENCIES

In December 2009, individuals from the Land Acquisition Committee of the Park Advisory Commission performed field surveys of various portions of the City to determine areas potentially underserved by neighborhood parks. Each survey area was visited and evaluated for recreational amenities, such as playground structures, multi-purpose fields, and natural areas. The approximate distance from the center of these respective areas was measured to the nearest public recreational facility fulfilling the need of a neighborhood park, whether owned by the public schools, the University of Michigan, or the City, to determine if traditional neighborhood recreation is available to the residents of these areas. Findings included that most of the City is well served; however there are some exceptions where isolated neighborhoods do not contain neighborhood parks. These findings will help inform future opportunities.

g. SENIOR CENTER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

In May 2009, City Council created the Senior Center Task Force to work with staff to examine operations for increased revenue as well as potential cost reduction measures to sustain operations at the Senior Center. Recommendations were presented to Council that potentially decrease General Fund cost to operate the Senior Center from just over \$150,000 to \$52,000 per fiscal year. Recommendations included increased programming, expand trip program, restructure Instructor Agreements, decrease computers, reduce staffing and increase volunteers, implement membership fee, increase rental availability and total rentals, increase fundraising and advertising, and use portion of bequest to offset operation costs.

5. Email Comments

Residents and park users were able to send individual comments to Parks and Recreation staff, in addition to receiving email notices for public meetings. Below is a summary of issues received via email.

- a. Maintenance of athletic fields is important. Safety should be a focus so that teams continue to play in Ann Arbor.
- b. Public land zoning should be evaluated.
- c. Trail connectivity, especially the completion of the trail system along Huron River and the Border-to-Border trail, is a high priority.
- d. Protection of the Huron River and the disposition of the recreational dams needs to be considered.
- e. Public/private partnerships and the potential ramifications should be considered carefully.

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C. Approval Process

The approval process for the PROS Plan is determined by Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008. This Michigan Planning Enabling Act states how various planning procedures are done, and contains a single set of procedures for all entities of government to follow. The City requires these procedures to be followed for the plan to become an element of the official City of Ann Arbor Master Plan. It is also determined by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Grant Management that outlines the format that the plan must follow in order to be approved by the state and enable the City to apply for grants.

A 42-day approval period must be provided for governing agencies, such as the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, the Washtenaw Area Transportation Study, Washtenaw County Parks and Recreation, neighboring communities, and utility companies within the jurisdiction of the plan.

The plan is also made available to the public through posting on the City's website, and hard copies at the libraries and City facilities.

After the public review period is over, the Park Advisory Commission, the City Planning Commission and City Council must all hold public hearings prior to approve of the plan.