

APPENDIX A

---

## Community Assessment





This appendix summarizes the findings of the community assessment conducted in 2007-2008 as part of the City of San José *Greenprint Update: A Strategic Plan for Parks, Recreation Facilities and Trails until 2020*.

The community needs assessment is a critical part of the strategic planning process. To develop a solid foundation for the *Update*, input was solicited from residents regarding their needs and preferences. An assessment of the City's population, existing facilities, current programs and finances also was conducted. The community assessment process included:

- Community meetings in each Council District to identify the gaps in facilities and services within the community
- Surveys at community meetings and via the internet
- Staff analysis of the projected population growth in the City of San José
- Telephone survey of 1,000 San José households
- PRNS staff input
- Recreation program and service assessment
- Inventory and analysis of San José's existing parks, recreation facilities and schools
- Financial analysis by staff, covering funding sources and financing mechanisms

At least two community meetings were held in each of the 10 Council Districts. In the first round of meetings the participants had the opportunity to voice their concerns, needs and preferences and ask questions of staff. In the second round of meetings they prioritized their needs. The community meeting announcements were made in English, Spanish and Vietnamese in local newspapers, including the San Jose Mercury News, Metro, Almaden Times, La Oferta and the Viet Tribune, to ensure the participation of a diverse cross section of the San José community. Further, meeting notices in English, Spanish and Vietnamese were e-mailed, mailed and/or posted at various libraries and community centers to encourage resident participation.

Community members were surveyed in each round of the community meetings and the same surveys were posted on the internet. The results of the community and internet survey, as well as the telephone survey, are included in the discussion and findings.

Based on the surveys, staff analysis of San José's existing schools, parks and recreation facilities and financial analysis covering funding sources and financing mechanisms, a report was developed to identify major themes that emerged during the planning process.

The results of the findings from the telephone survey, internet surveys, community meetings and management staff workshops are detailed under their respective headings. The results from the surveys were used in the development of goals and strategies for the *Greenprint Update*.

### Telephone Survey

A Citywide telephone survey of 1,000 San José residents over the age of 18 to assess priorities and concerns regarding San José’s parks, recreation facilities and programs was conducted by BW Research, Inc. The survey findings include:

#### *Overall Quality of Life Rating*

Just over three out of every four residents felt the quality of life in their neighborhood was either “Excellent” (26%) or “Good” (51%), 18 percent perceived it as “Fair,” and five percent felt it was “Poor” (4%) or “Very Poor” (1%).

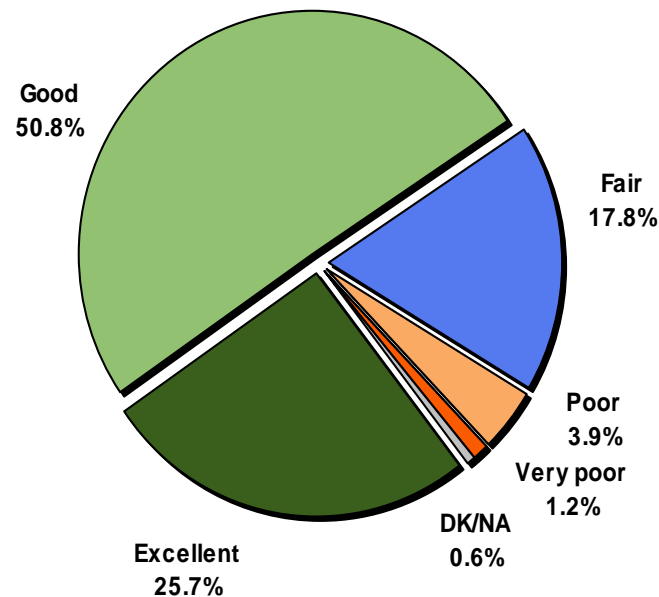


Figure 5: *Quality of life rating*

*Quality Of Life Getting Better, Worse, Or Staying the Same*

Over four times as many residents felt the quality of life in their neighborhood was getting better or staying the same (80%) as compared to getting worse (19%). More specifically, 60 percent of residents felt the quality of life in their neighborhood was “Staying about the same,” 19 percent felt it was “Getting better” and 19 percent viewed it as “Getting worse.” The majority of residents who viewed the quality of life in their neighborhood as “Poor” or “Very Poor” viewed the direction as “Getting worse,” whereas the majority of residents who provided a more positive or neutral rating viewed it as “Staying about the same.”

*General Parks and Recreation Issues*

Eighty-five percent of residents felt that “Maintaining the City’s parks and recreation facilities” was either “Extremely important” or “Important” to them personally, 79 percent felt that “Providing adequate funding for parks and recreation opportunities throughout the City” was important and 74 percent felt that “Developing and implementing the City’s Green Vision for greater sustainability” was important. Residents viewed each of these three parks and recreation issues as more important than “Preventing local tax increases” (70%).

*Specific Parks and Recreation Priorities*

“Maintaining and operating, city-run indoor recreation facilities such as community centers” (72% “Extremely important” or “Important”), “Expanding and improving the trails, paths and walkways to complete the City’s planned trail system” (69%) and “Increasing recreation opportunities by completing the plans to build out larger City parks, such as Kelley Park” (64%) were viewed as the top three most important priorities.

*Priorities for New Parks and Facilities*

Over 60 percent of residents viewed renovating and improving school grounds so they can be better used by residents for recreation activities (63% “High priority”) and renovating and improving existing neighborhood parks to increase use as the top priorities for new parks and facilities. These two were followed by developing new recreation facilities, such as a community center (43%) and increasing the amount of land for parks (40%) as the number three and four priorities.

## *Parks & Outdoor Recreation Areas*

Approximately 85 percent of San José residents have visited a park or outdoor recreation area within the City of San José in the last 12 months. Further, 38 percent of households were classified as frequent users, having visited a park or outdoor recreation area just about every day or at least once a week. Playgrounds for children (40%) and parks for walking without a dog (33%) were the top uses among those who have visited. Overall, 85 percent of users were satisfied with the parks and outdoor recreation areas provided by the City of San José, with 32 percent reporting they were “Very satisfied” and 54 percent indicating they were “Somewhat satisfied.” Comparatively, 13 percent were dissatisfied (9% “Very dissatisfied,” 4% “Somewhat dissatisfied”) and two percent declined to state.

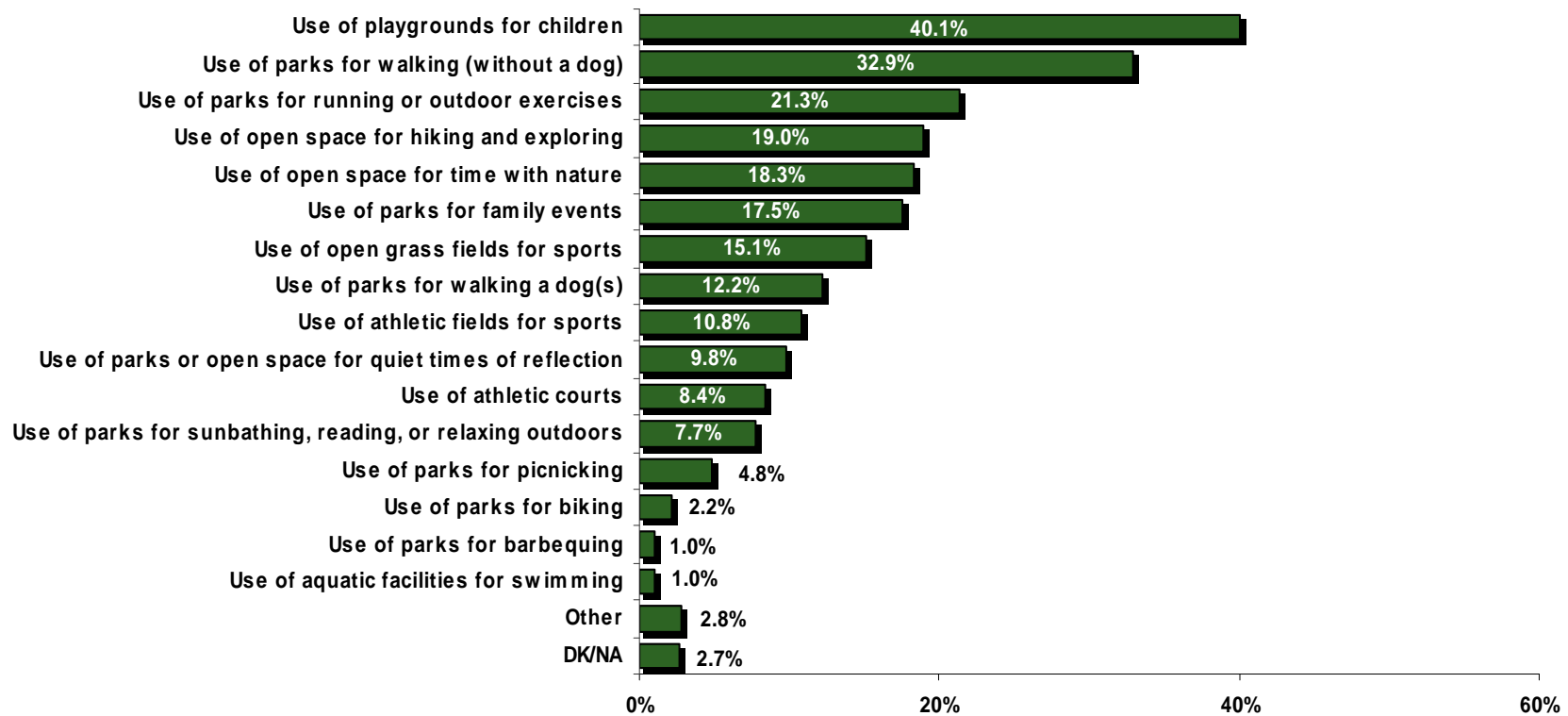


Figure 6: Household use of parks and outdoor recreation areas in the last 12 months

*Most Used Outdoor Recreation Area: Park or School Grounds*

Residents living in a household that had visited a San José park or outdoor recreation area in the past year were next asked to think about the outdoor recreation area that their household used most often.

Approximately 76 percent of user households indicated that they typically used a park and 21 percent most often used a recreation area on school grounds. Extrapolating this figure out to all households results in approximately 65 percent of all San José households most often using parks and 18 percent most often visiting outdoor recreation areas on school grounds, with the remaining 17 percent not using either. The majority of households that typically went to parks drove, whereas the majority that typically used school grounds walked. On average, residents spent 10 minutes getting to the park or school grounds they used most often.

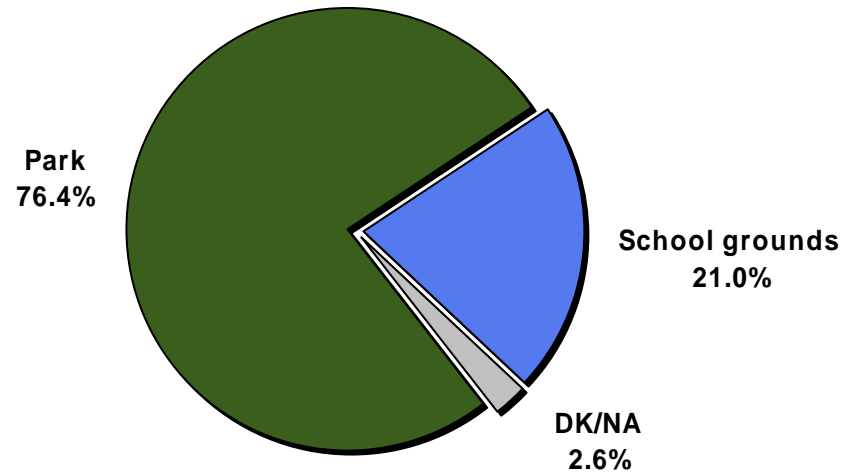


Figure 7: Most frequently used outdoor recreation area

Overall, 85 percent of residents who provided an opinion and who used parks or local public schools for recreation were satisfied with neighborhood parks and recreation areas at local schools within San José. Of those, 28 percent were “Very satisfied” and 57 percent were “Somewhat satisfied.” The remaining 15 percent were either “Somewhat” (11%) or “Very dissatisfied” (4%). There were no reported differences in satisfaction by whether the household typically used a park or whether they used school grounds.

### *School Grounds as an Outdoor Recreation Area*

Overall, 53 percent of park and outdoor recreation users have used a local public school for recreation. Extrapolating this figure out to all households, results in approximately 45 percent of all San José households having used a local public school for recreation. The majority of park and recreation users who have not used a local public school revealed that the facilities were available for their use, 22 percent indicated that they were not and 28 percent did not know. Among those who indicated facilities were not available for use, the most frequently cited reason for not using them was that the facilities were locked after school hours.

*Trails and Walkways*

The assessment showed that 70 percent have used one of the City’s trails or walkways in the last 12 months. Of these, ten percent of households used them just about every day, 19 percent at least once a week, 19 percent at least once a month and 23 percent once to several times a year. Overwhelmingly, 73 percent of households used trails to walk for exercise. Two other popular trail activities were biking (24%) and running (17%) for exercise. Statistics identified that Forty-seven percent of the households that used San José trails and walkways typically drove to them, 41 percent typically walked, 10 percent biked and one percent used public transportation. On average, residents spent 11.9 minutes traveling to the trail or walkway they used most often. Overall, 90 percent of users were satisfied with the trails and walkways within the City of San José. Of those, 41 percent were “Very satisfied” and 49 percent were “Somewhat satisfied.” The remaining 10 percent were either “Somewhat” (8%) or “Very dissatisfied” (2%) or declined to provide an opinion (1%).

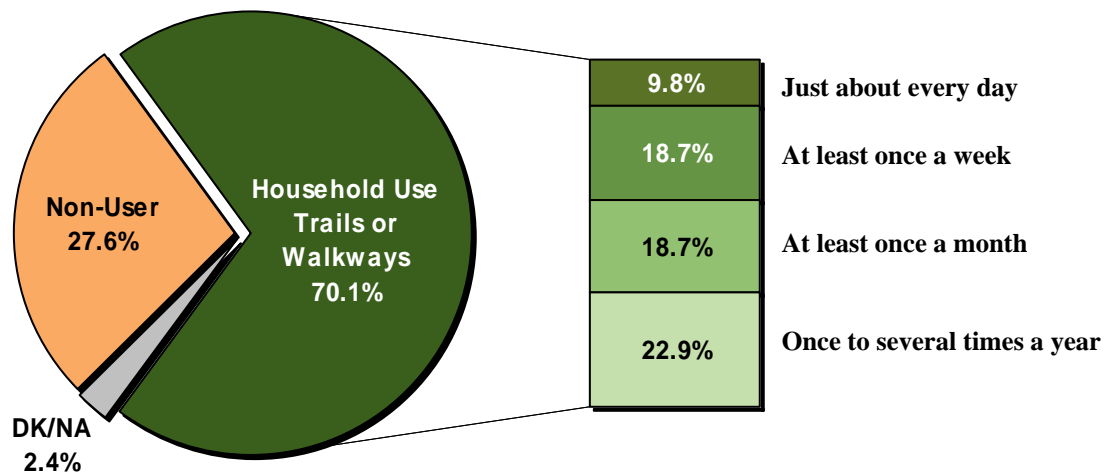


Figure 8: Household use of trails and walkways in the last 12 months

## Indoor Recreation

In the past 12 months, approximately 40 percent of the households in San José have participated in an indoor recreation activity, such as exercising in a gym or playing sports such as basketball indoors.

Of these households that participated in indoor recreation activities forty-three percent did so at a private health club, 20 percent at a City community recreation center and 19 percent at a YMCA or other non-profit community center. Among households that participated in indoor recreation activities, lifting weights and strength training was the most popular activity (40%), followed by treadmill and cardio training (26%) and indoor basketball and volleyball (26%). The most common reasons for not using indoor recreation facilities were “Our household has no interest in indoor recreation activities” (29%), “Indoor recreation facilities do not offer the activities I’m interested in” (21%), and “Indoor recreation facilities are not close or convenient to our residence” (19%).

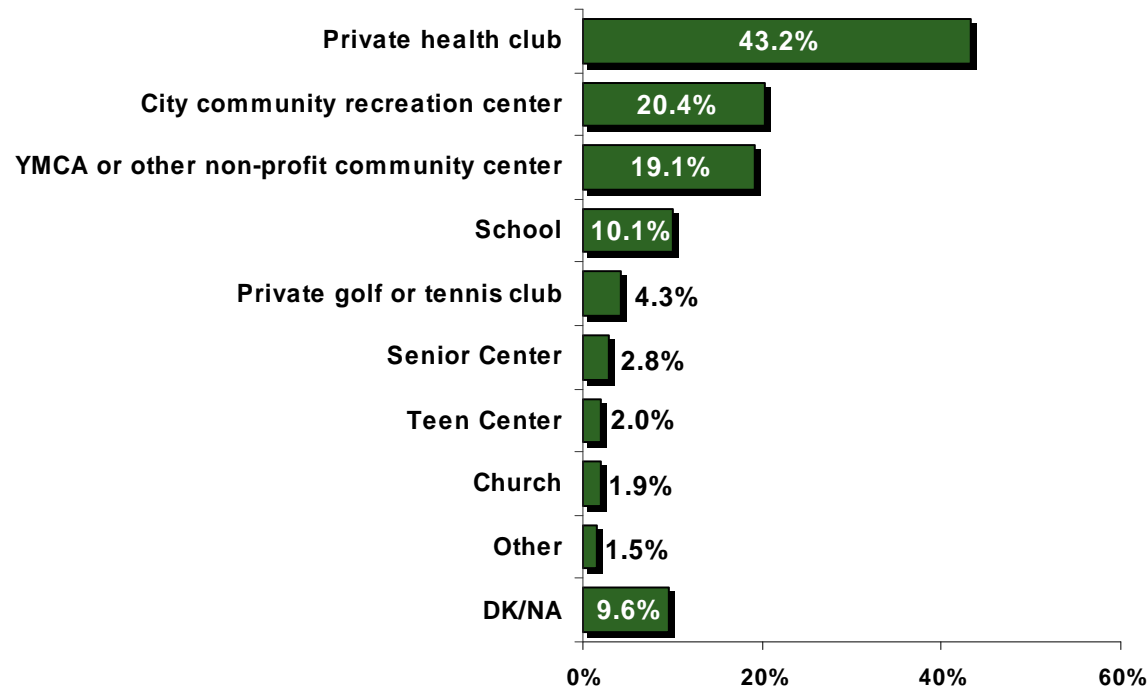


Figure 9: Indoor recreation activities

*Citywide Activity Guide*

Approximately 23 percent of San José households indicated that their household received the Citywide Activity Guide, which provides information on San José’s parks, recreation programs and services. Two-thirds of households indicated that they were not receiving the Guide and an additional 11 percent did not know, potentially indicating a lack of awareness or unfamiliarity with the Guide.

*Interest in After School and Summer Programs*

After school recreation programs received the highest percentage of “Very interested” (49%) among households with children, followed by after-school tutoring (48%), supervised computer labs (43%), and one to two week summer camp programs offered by the City (41%). With the exception of child care for children four years and younger, at least 40 percent of households with children indicated they were “Very interested” in each of the other four programs.

**Internet Surveys & Community Meetings**

An assessment of the results from the two Internet surveys and over 20 community meetings, provide the following key findings:

*Internet Survey #1*

The first internet survey had 143 responses with questions that focused on residents’ current park

and recreation priorities. Profiles were developed of respondents’ use of park and recreation resources, as well as their preferences for the types of facilities the City should provide. The creation of the profiles provided some insights into the preferences and priorities of “high use” residents. They include:

- About half of respondents (51%) primarily participated in outdoor sports (such as running, biking or soccer), almost twice as many (29%) as those that primarily participated in both outdoor and indoor sports (swimming, basketball, tennis and the gym) and more than twice as many as those who primarily participated (21%) in indoor sports.
- Over half of respondents (57%) primarily participated in solo sports (run, swim, golf or tennis), a third (33%) primarily participated in team sports and 1 out of 10 primarily participated in both team and solo sports. It should be noted that 39 percent of respondents did not indicate a sport that they played.
- In examining the top recreation facilities the City should provide, parks and open space (57%), trails (44%), indoor exercise facilities (43%), and community centers (42%) were reported by the most respondents. These four categories can be combined into two green space (parks and trails) and grey space (indoor exercise and centers).

- Evaluating respondents' top recreation facility, indoor exercise facilities were a higher priority among respondents 35 to 54 than their younger or older counterparts, while green space was a higher priority for older respondents (55+).
- Respondents who primarily participated in outdoor sports placed a higher priority on green space but also indicated the City should provide some grey space. Respondents who primarily participated in indoor sports, or both, were much more likely to indicate the need for grey space, such as swimming pools and community centers.
- Solo sports participants, such as runners or tennis players, placed a higher priority on green space compared to grey space, while team sports participants, such as soccer players or basketball players, placed a higher priority on grey space.
- Respondents 55 and older, as well as respondents from Districts 1, 2, 3, 5 and 9, were more likely to have booked a community center room than younger respondents and respondents living in Districts 4, 6, 8 and 10.
- Team sports participants and respondents 35 and older were more likely to use an aquatic center than solo sports participants and younger respondents.

### *Internet Survey #2*

The second internet survey had 70 responses with questions that focused on residents' willingness to pay for different revenue measures and their priorities for the facilities and services the City should provide.

- Respondents were more likely to mention indoor recreation facilities (pools, gyms, basketball courts) and centers (community centers, senior centers, teen centers) when asked which facilities the City should provide in their District and Citywide. Trails and parks closely followed centers and indoor exercise facilities in terms of prioritization. Please note that the question asked about "recreation facilities" was more likely to remind respondents of structures and less likely to connect to trails, parks or green space.
- In questions asking which recreation services the City should provide, respondents were more likely to indicate youth related programs and services, such as homework centers, after school programs or youth sports. Swimming and aquatic programs were also a high priority among internet survey respondents.
- Support for a Citywide assessment, either to fund operational costs or maintenance costs, received mixed support from this small sample of internet survey respondents. Approximately half of the respondents said they would not

support an assessment (21%) or only a \$25 annual assessment (30%). A quarter of respondents would support an annual assessment of \$100 or \$125. Support for an increased Conveyance Tax was lower than support for any of the assessments that were evaluated.

**Community Meetings**

Over 400 people participated in over 20 community meetings that were focused on residents’ priorities for parks and recreation facilities and services. Respondents in each meeting were asked about their priorities for recreation programs and services and park amenities.

*Priorities for Recreation Programs and Services:* Anti-graffiti and anti-litter programs were priorities among respondents, particularly from respondents in Districts 5 and 6. Senior programs were a priority among respondents, which may be a reflection that over half of the respondents were 50 years and older. Sports leagues and indoor sports programs were a priority among respondents in District 8, while fitness classes and youth programs were important among respondents throughout the City.

*Priorities for Park Amenities and Facilities:* Swimming pools and restrooms were a top priority among respondents, with support for these facilities found throughout the City. Dog parks were a top priority among respondents in District 6, while basketball courts and community centers were a priority among respondents from Districts 6 and 8.

*Priorities for Citywide and Regional Facilities:* Respondents’ priorities for Citywide and regional facilities including parks, trails and facilities varied by District. Lake Cunningham Park was a top priority among respondents from Districts 5 and 8, while respondents from Districts 1 and 4 placed the highest priority on the Los Gatos Creek Trail. Alum Rock Park was a top priority among respondents from District 3, and the Los Alamitos Creek Trail was most important among respondents from District 10. The Japanese Friendship Garden was the top priority among respondents from District 7.

**Staff Workshop**

The Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department staff participated in a workshop designed to solicit their input regarding the current state of the Department as well as to consider issues affecting the Department’s future.

Staff went through the same exercises as the community, including prioritization by voting. Staff focused on issues that could become important parts of the strategic plan. These issues included program, facility and organizational improvements.

Highlights from the staff workshop are:

- Support for more intense use of parks and recreation facilities with improvements to neighborhood parks
- Senior and youth programs and after school recreation were identified as high priorities for recreation programs and services
- The most frequent suggestions for park amenities and facilities were trees and natural areas, lighted fields and large parks for family gatherings
- Other suggestions for improvements included better gym/fitness programs in recreation facilities, tot lots in playgrounds and the addition of softball fields

### Conclusions

#### *Driving Quality of Life in San José's Neighborhoods*

San José residents typically indicated that the quality of life in their neighborhood was either excellent (26%) or good (51%). While the strong overall results are notable, it is also valuable to

understand the relationships that drive satisfaction with the quality of life among San José's residents.

In San José there are three key determinants of a relatively higher quality of life: visiting the parks and outdoor recreation areas in San José just about everyday, living in the southern (Almaden, Calero, Coyote and Edenvale) part of the City, and living in a household that earns \$150,000 annually or more.

The first determinant, visiting parks and outdoor recreation areas on an almost daily basis, points to the need for developing the *Greenprint* in San José that increases access to parks and outdoor recreation areas for all residents. It also reveals the importance that the *Greenprint* has in some of the most fundamental measures of residents' satisfaction with their lives. The relationship between household income and perceived quality of life that exists in San José is not unique to this City, but it is something that should be considered when deciding on the location of the parks and recreation areas that should be improved or developed. It is worth noting that that two regions in the City where average resident household income is relatively lower, downtown and the eastern (Alum Rock, Evergreen and San Felipe) part of the City, placed the greatest importance on providing funding for parks and recreation opportunities in the City.

*Planning and investment priorities for the Greenprint*

Community input from the telephone survey, the Internet surveys and the community meetings consistently placed a high priority on three aspects of the Greenprint: 1) maintaining and developing indoor recreation facilities and community centers, 2) increasing access to parks and recreation opportunities and expanding and 3) completing the trails and walkways.

Maintaining and developing indoor recreation facilities and community centers was consistently a priority among residents regardless of age, income or where the resident lives in the City. It is interesting to note that even among residents who are not likely to use indoor recreation facilities, they still place a high priority on indoor community facilities. Some of this can be explained by the fact that community centers are tied with indoor recreation facilities and serve uses beyond recreation, whether that is senior programs or after school programs for youth.

Increasing access to parks and recreation opportunities was important to most residents but particularly those households with children. Residents indicated they were generally very supportive of maximizing the use of current resources by renovating and improving the recreation opportunities on school grounds or

improving existing parks to increase overall access. An overall assessment of the community input shows that residents generally support more intense use of the current parks and are also generally supportive of new and creative ways of expanding access to the parks and recreation opportunities that already exist.

The one exception to this is the relatively low importance residents placed on developing new parks and recreation facilities over freeways. This can be largely attributed to people’s lack of awareness of this type of park. We would expect residents to place a higher priority on this type of resource as they become more familiar with it and the benefits it can bring in increasing access to parks and outdoor recreation areas.

Expanding and completing the trails and walkways was also a priority among just about every resident in San José, even among those households that are less active and do not regularly use the current trails and walkways. While residents were almost universally satisfied with the trail system (90% overall satisfaction among users), they still placed a high importance on continuing to expand and complete the City’s trail system. Oftentimes as residents’ satisfaction with a recreation attribute increases, its importance to them may decrease, which is not the case with trails and walkways among residents of San José.

It should also be noted that community input was not always consistent between the telephone survey and the other community input opportunities. Dog parks were ranked as a priority among respondents at the community meetings, particularly among respondents from District 6, whereas dog parks were a relatively low priority among residents who participated in the telephone survey. This should not be altogether surprising, as a small number of residents can have a substantial impact on the results of a community meeting while the telephone survey is gathering information from a larger more diverse, randomly selected resident pool. This also indicates that dog parks are not a relatively high priority for a large portion of residents in San José, but they may be very important among a small, vocal group of residents.

From the results of the community assessments major themes were identified to address priorities in the Capital Action Plan and the development of strategies. Residents also identified the following program needs during the survey and assessment:

- *Ensure that recreation programs and infrastructure assets are sustainable and support the City of San José's priorities* – San José has a long history of adopting sustainable practices. Ensuring sustainable construction and promoting green building practices are an essential component of our Green Vision.
- *Provide environmentally responsible recreation facilities* – The City has adopted aggressive standards for requiring green building practices for City facilities. Therefore the City and its partner agencies will ensure that programs and facilities are provided in environmentally responsible recreation facilities.
- *Provide accessible recreation opportunities that are responsive to the community's health and wellness needs* – The City of San José and its partners will promote the health and well being of its residents by providing recreation opportunities, programs and services in accessible locations and being responsive to the challenges of the residents (stress, age and disability, ethnic diversity, etc.).
- *Partner with the community to promote environmental stewardship and volunteerism* - The City of San José will continue to promote stewardship of the City's natural resources. Opportunities for volunteerism will be expanded to enhance a sense of community among residents and to improve facilities and services with cost savings.
- *Improve community image and livability by providing quality recreation facilities and programs* - San José residents recognize the importance of parks, community facilities, recreation programs and neighborhood services in creating a livable community. The facilities and services provided by the City of San José

and partner agencies will attract businesses and residents alike and help revitalize neighborhoods.

- *Provide parks, trails, open space and recreation amenities to meet the community's growing needs* - As San José continues to grow, a critical priority will be to balance development with adequate parks, trails and open space. San José's trails are the backbone of the City's parks and recreation system and will be expanded to accommodate the growth in trail related recreation and natural resources.

These themes became the goals for the development of strategies presented in the *Greenprint Update*.

