

# Billings Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment

Management  
Learning  
Laboratories

August 2009

Management Learning Laboratories



# Method used in the needs assessment



- ***Focus groups*** with different segments of the community 126 individuals representing 76 groups
- ***Questionnaire development***
- ***Adult data collection with 16.5% response rate***
- ***Respondents represent the “general population” and not interest groups***

# Method used in the needs assessment

- ***Aggregate analysis of the adult data***
- ***Programming of CompuRec***
- ***This will allow for analysis by different demographic variables***



---

# Major Findings from Study

---



# Attendance of Facilities and Participation in Programs

(At least once in the last year)

- ***Pioneer*** **76%**
- ***Riverfront*** **70%**
- ***Special events in the parks*** **64%**
- ***Using community trail system*** **56%**
- ***Dehler Park Baseball Stadium*** **49%**
- ***Rose*** **46%**
- ***North*** **41%**

# Factors that influence participation

- ***Not having enough time*** **56%**
- ***Lack of restrooms*** **50%**
- ***Lack of information*** **46%**
- ***Lack of picnic shelters*** **39%**
- ***Lack of cleanliness*** **35%**
- ***Lack of parking*** **34%**
- ***Not interested in what is provided*** **32%**

# Communication

- ***Direct mailers to household*** **72%**
- ***Newspaper*** **72%**
- ***PSA on TV and radio*** **71%**
- ***Signs in parks*** **43%**
- ***E-mail*** **42%**
- ***Word of mouth*** **41%**
- ***City Website*** **40%**

# Facilities Opinions

It is important to maintain the existing facilities (97%)

Well-maintained parks add to the quality of life in the community (97%)

The Department needs to ensure that real estate developers provide adequately sized parks in new developments (90%).

I feel that it is safe to visit the parks (72%)

Billings needs additional regional parks such as Pioneer (71%)

It is important to build new facilities (63%)

I am satisfied with the aesthetic quality of city parks (68%)

The condition of athletic fields is satisfactory (59%)

Acquire large tracts of land for future development of recreation opportunities (58%)

# Programs Opinions

The Department provides an essential service to the community (83%)

There is a need for activities for the whole family (78%)

I am aware of the recreation programs and activities that are offered (58%)

# Administration Opinions

(Agree, Disagree, DK)

The Department staff are generally courteous and helpful (48%, 8%, 44%)

It is easy to register for programs and activities (37%, 13%, 50%)

The quality of leadership/supervision in Department programs is good (31%, 8%, 61%)

# Financial Opinions

(Agree, Disagree, DK)

I am willing to pay reasonable user fees for recreation opportunities (59%, 34%, 7%)

I feel that the Department needs more funding to better serve the community (54%, 25%, 21%)

Sell off park land to fund new development of recreation opportunities (15%, 65%, 20%)

# Financial Options

(Agree, Disagree, DK)

- ***It is important for the Department to be able to control its own funds (81%, 7%, 12%)***
- ***I would support a dedicated mill levy which would provide improved park maintenance and increased recreational opportunities (54%, 33%, 13%)***
- ***It is OK to reduce the frequency of mowing in parks like Pioneer, and at the cemetery from once a week to twice a month to save money (49%, 45%, 6%)***
- ***It is OK to reduce lobby hours at the Parks and Recreation offices (46%, 35%, 19%)***
- ***It is OK not to plow the multi-use trails as a way to save money (38%, 49%, 13%)***
- ***The Department should reduce or eliminate financial support of user groups as a way of saving money (27%, 40%, 33%)***
- ***It is OK to close park restrooms to save money (8%, 90%, 2%)***

# Recreation Interests

- *Passive recreation* 78%
- *Special Events* 77%
- *Outdoor Fitness* 68%
- *Gardening* 67%
- *Adventure activity classes* 64%
- *Indoor Fitness* 62%
- *Sports and Athletics* 61%
- *Aquatics* 56%
- *Environmental* 54%
- *Arts & Crafts* 51%
- *Hobbies* 51%

# Top Needs

- *Picnic tables* 89%
- *Nature trails* 86%
- *Connected walking/biking trails* 85%
- *Preservation of wild life* 84%
- *Natural areas* 83%
- *Preserve open space* 83%
- *Multi-use trails* 82%
- *Park playground equipment* 82%
- *Picnic shelters* 81%

# Top Needs

- Natural surface trails 78%
- Senior services at Billings Community Center 78%
- Family program activities 77%
- After school programs 76%
- Develop parks along the Yellowstone 75%
- Senior center 75%
- Healthy lifestyle programs 68%
- Athletic practice fields 67%
- Automated park irrigation 67%
- Baseball 67%

# Top Needs

- Indoor multi-use recreational facility 65%
- Special needs 65%
- Park for passive use 64%
- Additional staff for improved park maintenance 64%
- Historic programs 63%
- Indoor family aquatic center 63%
- Community gardens 62%
- Softball 62%
- Splash ground 62%
- Outdoor family aquatic facility 61%
- Additional staff for increased recreational programs 61%

# Summary

- Indoor recreation is very important for the growing community of Billings.
- Compared to other communities where MLL has worked, the respondents for the study who represent the Billings population, provide a nearly 100% endorsement for the Department claiming that the Department provides an essential service to the community that enhances the quality of life in Billings. Not many other communities provide this level of endorsement.
- Based on the data, there is evidence to suggest that some services might be marginally curtailed, but given the importance of the service and the positive assessment of the service, the data would support some increase in fees and a mill levy to maintain the high level of service offered.

# Questions and Comments

*For more information contact Ananda Mitra at:*

**1-877-789-5247**

**<http://www.m-l-l.org>**

