

TOWN OF LEESBURG, VIRGINIA



PARKS AND RECREATION SERVICE AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

SEPTEMBER 2011

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
II. Public Input	3
III. Web Based Household Survey.....	7
Respondent Demographics	7
Use and Opinion of Existing Facilities	11
Satisfaction.....	14
Greatest Needs	20
Communication.....	21
IV. Areas of Focus	25
Appendix – Survey Form, Open Ended Comments	31
Survey Form	31
Open Ended Comments	36



GreenPlay LLC
Lafayette, CO
303-870-7043



BalancedCommunity, Inc.
Boulder, CO
303-351-2881

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of This Plan

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Service and Needs Analysis is to identify needs, satisfaction levels, and potential gaps with regard to facilities, programs, and services provided by the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department. By doing so, the Department can act accordingly to strive to continue meeting its own high standards and the community's high standards for parks and recreation services.

B. Related Planning Efforts and Integration

This plan will be utilized in conjunction with existing planning documents for the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department including:

- 2010 – 2014 Strategic Plan
- 2002 Comprehensive 20-Year Parks, Recreation, Open Space, Trails, and Greenways Master Plan

C. Methodology of this Planning Process

This project was led by a team of managers and key staff within the Parks and Recreation Department, working with a contracted consulting firm, GreenPlay LLC. An extensive public input process was the key component of the project. The Town's project team met with consultants from GreenPlay to provide input throughout the planning process. This collaborative effort created a Service and Needs Assessment that not only fully utilized the consultants' knowledge, but also relied on significant input from a fully engaged staff which in turn would allow them to effectively utilize the results. The project consisted of the following tasks:

- Face-to-face public input opportunities including:
 - Four on-site focus groups of invited representatives of current and potential facility and programs users
 - One public meeting, open to anyone, to provide additional input on comment on focus group results
- A web-based household survey with the goal to assist in evaluating current service levels and future needs for parks and recreation programs, facilities, and amenities provided by Leesburg.
- The development of project website (balancedcommunity.com/leesburg/) to allow for community to follow the progress of the project and provide additional input as warranted.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

II. Public Input

Engaging the public with sufficient and meaningful mechanisms allows for frank and open discussions about the current state and the future of parks and recreation in the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department. To gain valuable insight to the needs and desires of the community the process included:

- Four focus group/stakeholder meetings
- One public meeting
- Opportunities to provide input via email
- Two SMS (Short Messaging Service) surveys
- One Web-based survey

Attendance at focus groups and the public meeting included 73 community members.

The following is an overview of community opinions in regards to strengths, weaknesses, essential services, needs, and desires with regard to Leesburg parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services.

A. Community and Stakeholder Input

Focus group, stakeholder, and public meeting participants were asked a variety of questions regarding Leesburg parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services. Responses to questions about current strengths and issues/needs/problems that the Department can address are summarized below.

Strengths
<u>Administrative</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality staff<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Professional/competent• Clean facilities• High maintenance standards• Safe facilities• Quality programs• Good communication with community• Visionary
<u>Services</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Variety of programs<ul style="list-style-type: none">– ages/ability• Variety of facilities• Ida Lee• Hours of operation• Special events• Easy registration process• Freedom Park fields

Weaknesses/Challenges
<u>Administrative</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Athletic field allocation<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Flag football• Lack of athletic field lights• Response to minor mechanical failures• Marketing/Information<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Facilities– Scholarships• Fees & charges<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Fitness classes– Child care• Awareness of school calendar
<u>Services</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hard to get access to indoor tennis• Lack of lights (fields/dog park)• Capacity issues<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Women's/family locker room– Fitness area/classes• Lack of youth programs for working parents• Parking lot security• Lack of programming of for 10 – 14 years

Other questions asked of the focus group participants were:

- What do you believe to be the most essential services the Town of Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department provides?
- What improvements/changes would you make in the parks and recreation facilities, programs and services in the Department today?
- Are there any underserved populations in the community either by age group, gender, and race? Why?
- What does Ida Lee mean to you?
- How important are special events produced by the Department to you and the community?
- Do you feel the amenities and programs provided by the Department are equally distributed throughout the town?

Those responses are summarized in the boxes below:

Essential Services of a Public Park and Recreation Provider

- Aquatics
- Trails and parks
- High maintenance standards
- Marketing and communication
- Safety and security
- Community building
- Planning for the future
- Athletic fields
- Balance between active and passive
- Restrooms
- Support for in house programs
- Forever fit programs
- Keeping up to date
- Special events

What does Ida Lee Mean to You

- Quality of life
- Heart of the City
- Highlight of the soccer schedule
- Model to rest of the county
- Health and wellness
- Family togetherness
- A pleasant happy place
- Preservation

Improvements You Would Like to See Today

Administrative

- Coaches training and certification
- Balance of active and passive
- Fees & charges philosophy
 - Fitness
 - Child care
 - Multi facility
- Improved communication
- Enforce age restrictions in locker rooms
- Spread out rented locker rooms
- Create a user advisory group

Services

- New spin bikes
- Orientation/Intro to fitness
- Additional lap pool
- Trail connectivity (in town)
- Additional fields
- Special needs programming
- More swings
- Individual sports
- Improved access to fields

Underserved Populations

- Low income households
- 10 – 15 year olds
- Passive senior classes
- Special needs population
- Entry level/introductory classes
- Physical therapy/rehab classes
- Working families

**How Important are
Department Special Events?**

- Show home town spirit
- Good for the local economy
- Spring/Summer season kick-off
- We want more
- Community pride
- Family time

**Are Amenities Equally Distributed
Throughout the Town?**

- Bus routes needed to facilities
- Need more pocket parks
- Ida Lee sized park cannot be everywhere
- Continue Parks and Recreation planning efforts as development occurs

B. Focus Group/Public Meeting Summary

The Leesburg Parks and Recreation Department provides a wide variety of facilities, programs, and services to Leesburg residents. Citizens recognize that Leesburg staff works hard to bring a high level of customer service and exceptional program offerings to variety of interest and age groups. The residents of Leesburg have come to expect dynamic, clean, and modern facilities in which to pursue their leisure interests.

Generally, focus group and public meeting participants agree that facilities, programs, and services offered by the Department are diverse and provide a wide variety of recreation opportunities. However, getting access to facilities is difficult for some sports such as flag football (athletic fields) and to the indoor tennis facility as demand is so high.

Participants also express dissatisfaction for having to pay separately for fitness classes and child care on top of admission fees to the recreation center.

Community members would like to see more opportunities for the 10 – 14 age group and additional input opportunities such as the creation of a user advisory group, and annual or semiannual surveys, to help the board guide the future of the Department.

Primary improvements participants would like to see a review of the pricing policy, resolving user conflicts (i.e. seniors and youths in the warm water pool, improved access to athletic fields), improved communication, better trail connectivity, and new spin bikes to name a few.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

III. Web Based Leesburg Parks and Recreation Household Survey

The web based household survey was hosted on the project website (balancedcommunity.com/leesburg/). Emails were sent to those who signed up for updates through the website as well as a variety of Department email lists. A press release was also published in the local paper. The survey remained open for three weeks. Overall, 602 household surveys were completed, representing over 2,400 individuals.

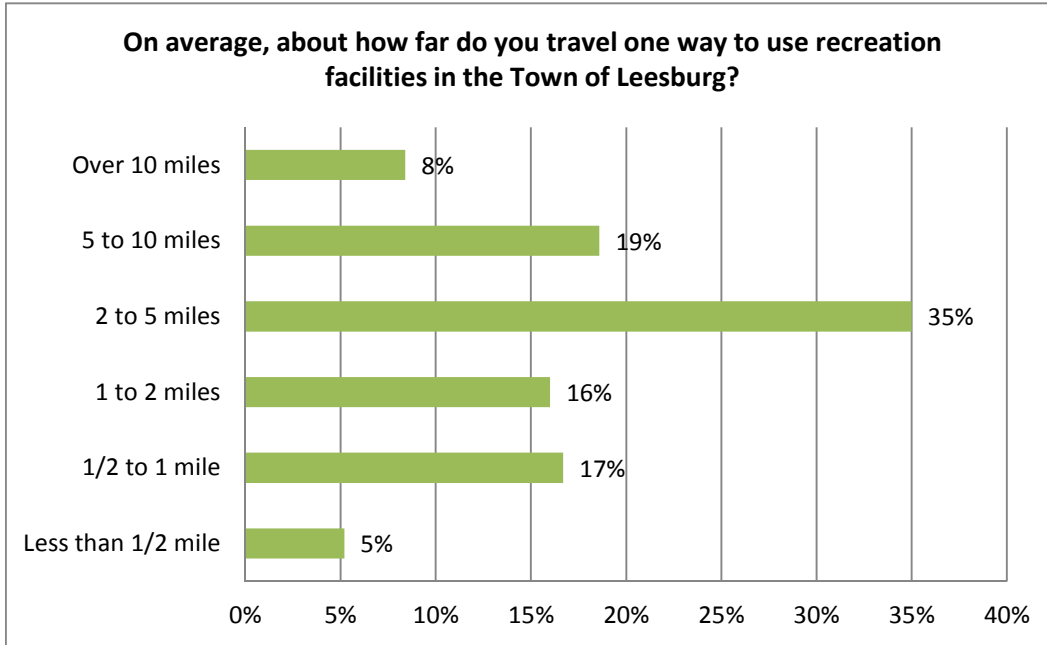
A. Respondent Demographics

Survey respondents vary by age, with the largest age group between 35 to 44 years (48%). Compared to the 2009 American Community Survey (a large national survey used for demographic comparisons), distribution by age group is relatively similar for householders between 15 to 24, 25 to 24, and 45 to 54. Survey responses show a much higher distribution for ages 35 to 44 years and a lower distribution for age 55 and up. This is may be due to the age demographic that uses recreation facilities or the general lesser knowledge and comfort that seniors have with web based activities. Overall, 80% of households responding to the survey have at least one child at home.

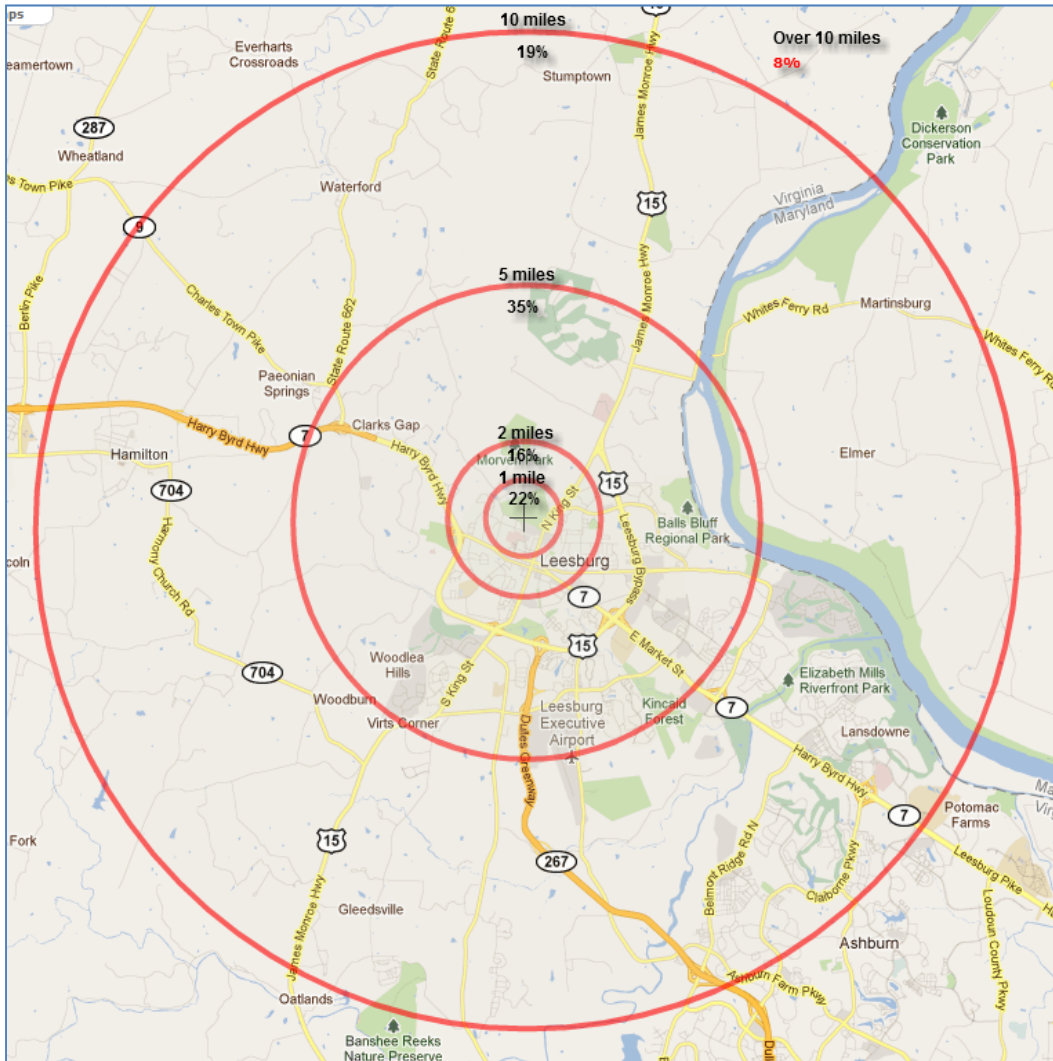
	ACS %	Survey %
15 to 24 years	3%	1%
25 to 34 years	20%	20%
35 to 44 years	29%	48%
45 to 54 years	24%	22%
55 to 64 years	14%	7%
65+ years	9%	4%
Total	100%	100%

Source: 2009 American Community Survey (census.gov/acs), 2011 Household Survey

Geographically, the majority of respondents (74%) travel five miles or less to use recreation facilities in Leesburg.

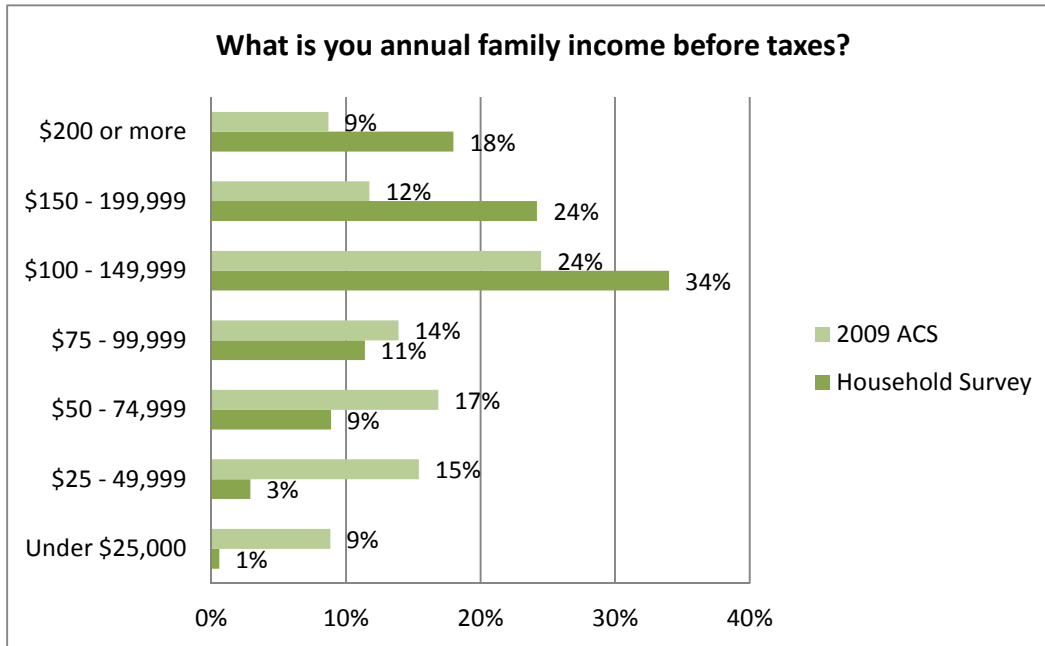


The below map provides a frame of reference for distance from the Ida Lee Park and Recreation Center. Visit the link below the image for a live map.



<http://www.scribblemaps.com/maps/view/Leesburg>

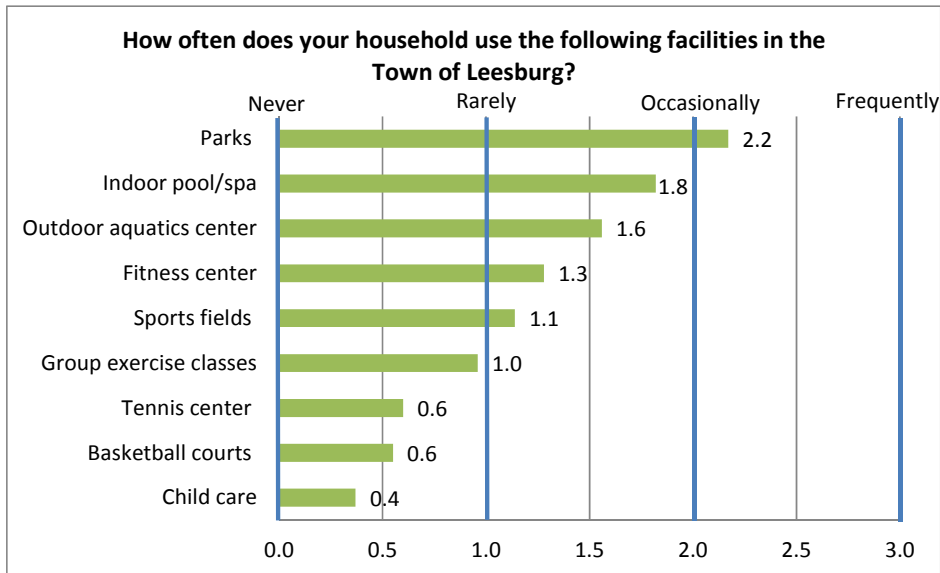
The largest category of respondents consists of individuals with a family income of between \$100,000 and \$149,999 (34%), followed by \$150,000 to \$199,999 (24%), and \$200,000 or more (18%). The income distribution of households responding to the survey is higher than the distribution of all households, as compared to the American Community Survey (census.gov/acs). This can be partly attributed to the age distribution of respondent households where the largest age category (35 to 44), make up 50 percent of households with family income over \$100,000. This group tends to be families with multiple wage earners.



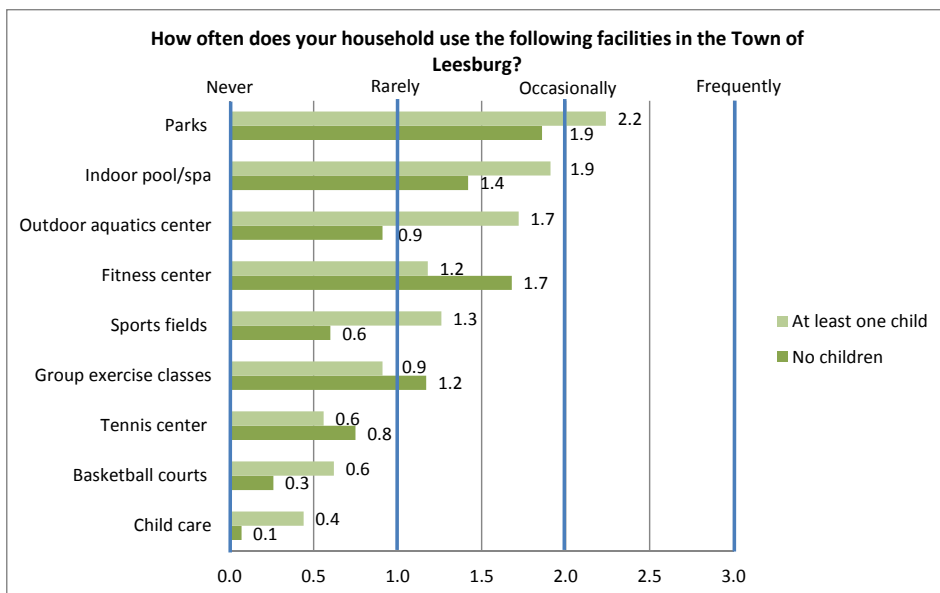
Source: 2009 American Community Survey, Leesburg Parks and Recreation Household Survey

B. Use and Opinion of Existing Facilities

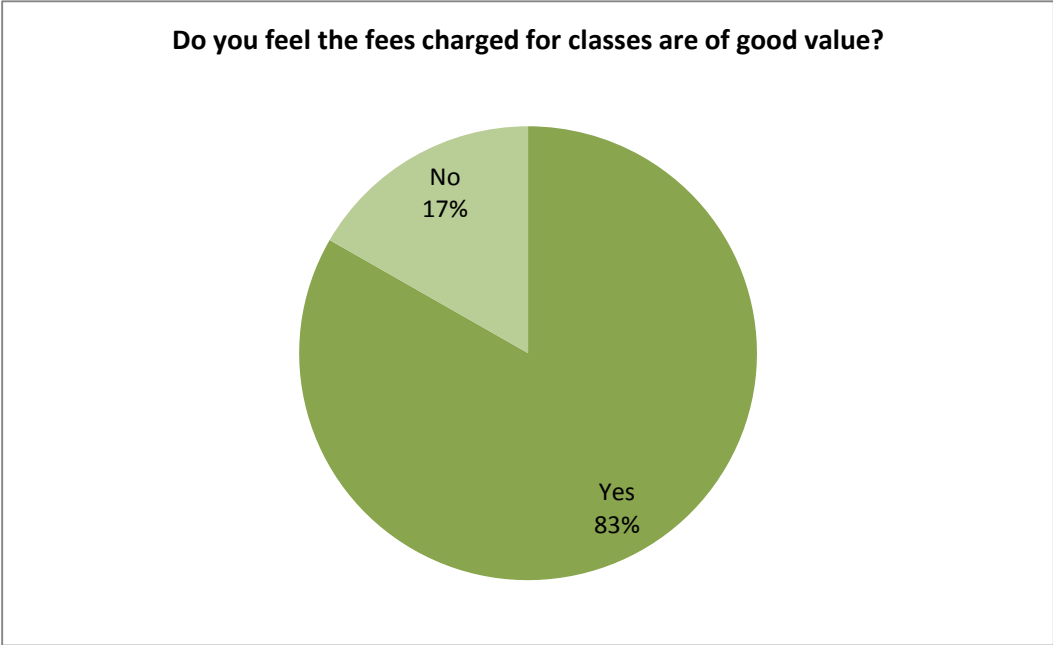
Respondents were asked to rate how often their household uses facilities in the Town of Leesburg on a scale of 0 – Never to 3 – Frequently. The chart below shows the average rating for each facility. On average, the most frequently used facilities are parks, followed by the indoor pool/spa, the outdoor aquatics center, the fitness center, and the sports fields. Those facilities that are used less frequently by respondents are the group exercise classes, tennis center, basketball courts, and child care.



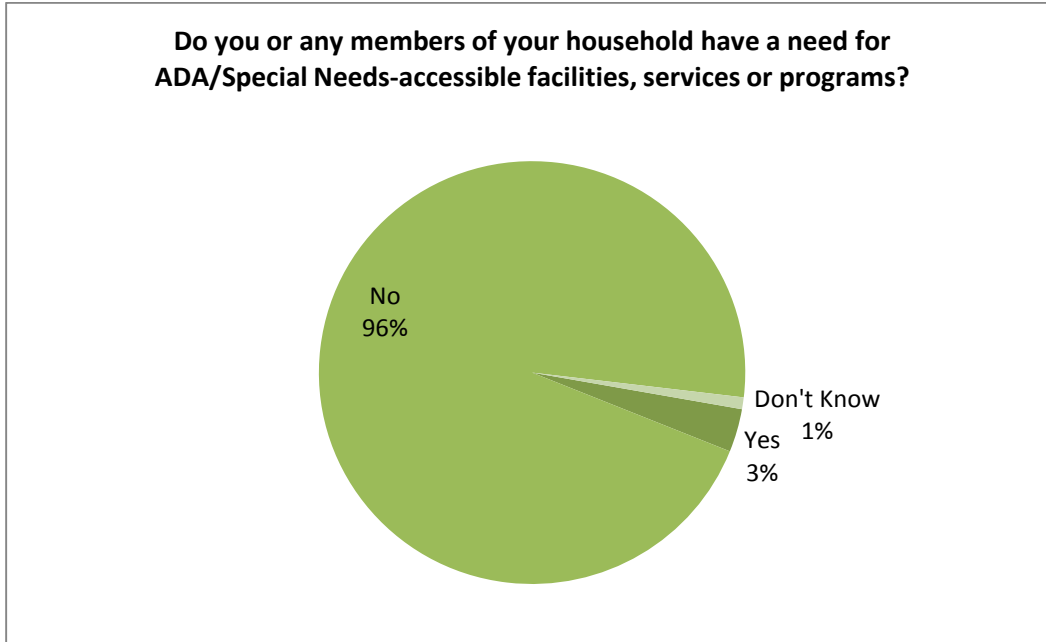
Frequency of use varies for households with children. On average, households with children at home use parks, indoor pool/spa, outdoor aquatics center, sports fields, basketball courts, and child care more frequently than those without children at home.



Respondents were asked if they feel that fees charged for classes are of good value. Overall, 83% said yes while 17 percent said no. A list of open ended comments is provided in **Appendix A**.



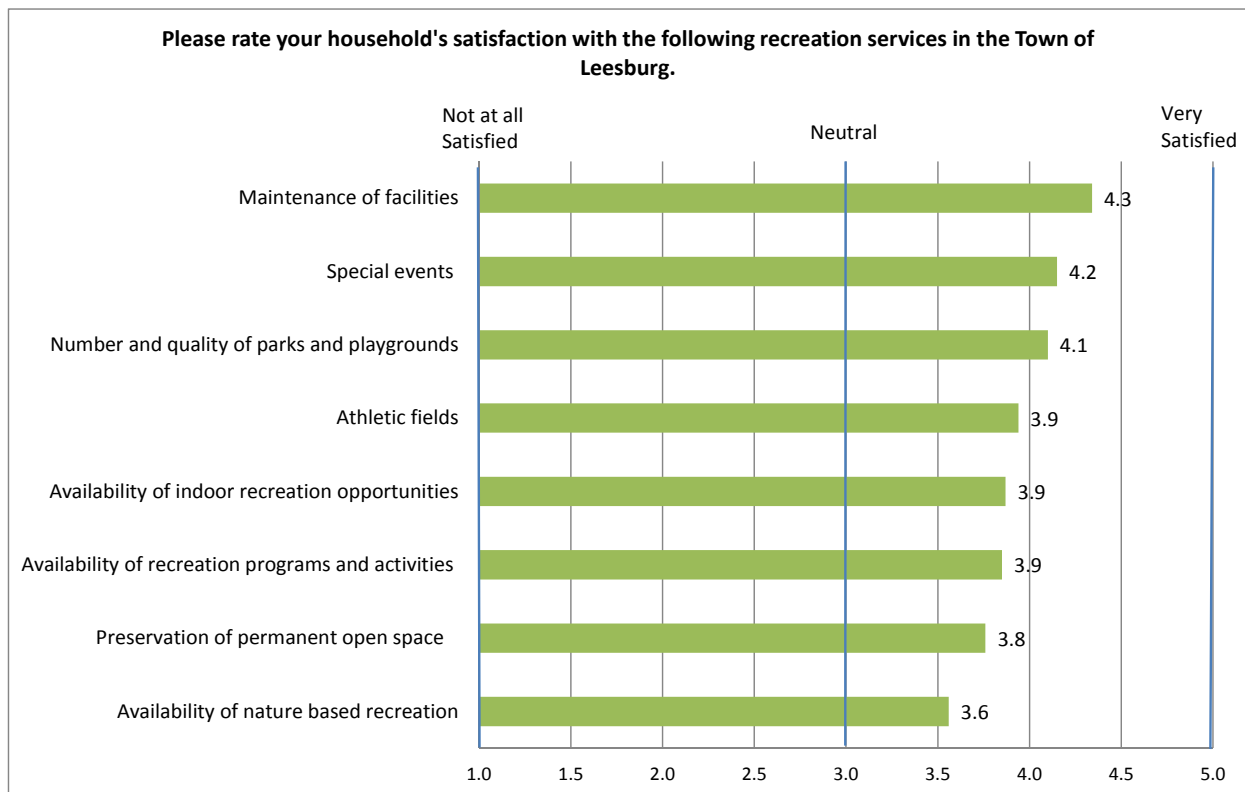
The large majority of respondents do not have a need for ADA/Special Needs-accessible facilities, services or programs (96%). Of those that do, some of the needs listed include an autism program, sign language and assistance for the hearing impaired, and more handicapped parking. A complete list of open ended comments is provided in **Appendix A**.



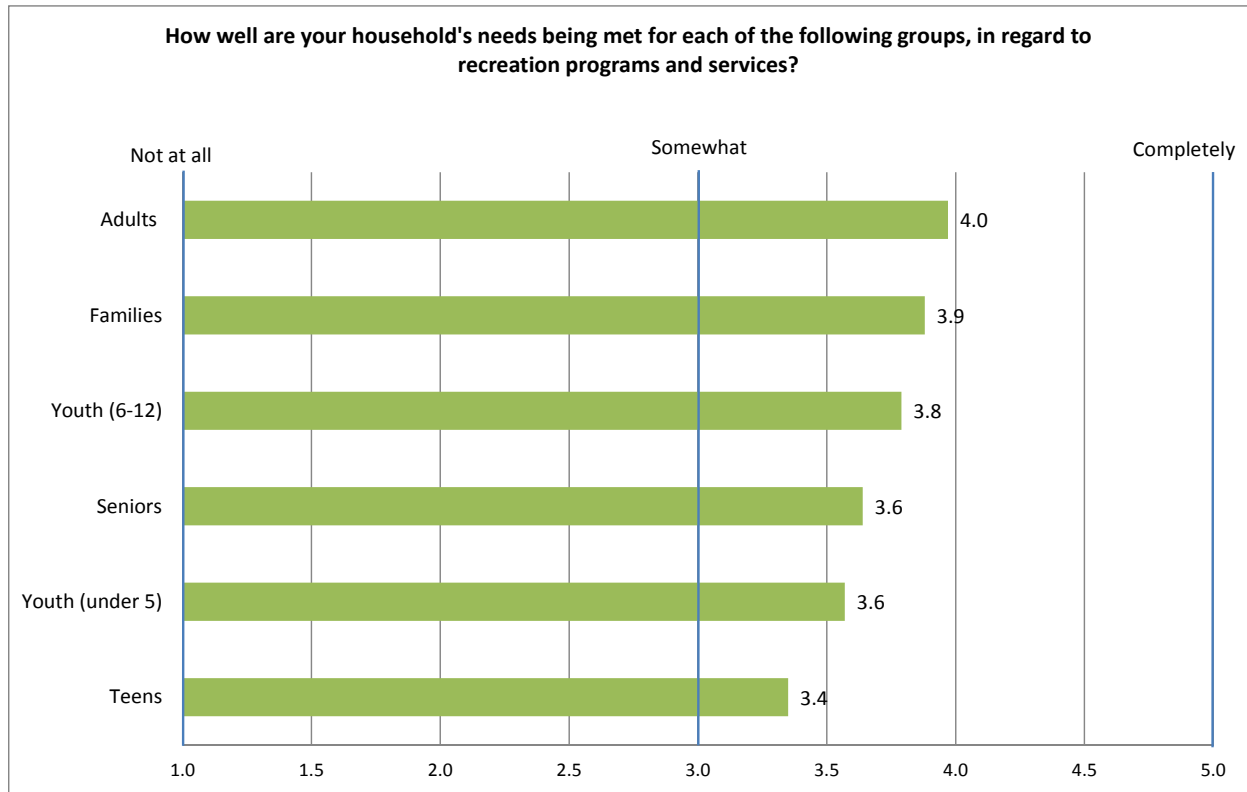
C. Satisfaction

Overall, households tend to be mostly satisfied with the recreation services provided by the Town of Leesburg. On average, households rated maintenance of facilities, special events, and the number and quality of parks and playgrounds the highest. Athletic fields, the availability of indoor recreation opportunities, and the availability of recreation programs and activities follow, with preservation of permanent open space and the availability of nature based recreation being rated the lowest on average.

Respondents who rated anything as “not at all satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” were asked to describe what they thought the Town could do better. Some of the trends that can be seen in the open ended comments include the need for more outdoor activities, preservation of open space, difficulties with access to swim lessons and the outdoor and indoor swimming pools, the lack of classes available after working hours, the cost of passes, and the regulations regarding in-town vs. out-of-town registration.



Respondents were asked how well their household’s needs are being met for different groups. On average, adults rated the highest, with their needs mostly being met. Following adults are families, youth (6-12), seniors, and youth under 5. The group with the lowest rating of needs met is teens.



Within each group, seniors have the largest variety of ratings, with 10 percent indicating that their needs are not at all being met, while 29 percent indicate that their needs are completely being met.

How well are your household’s needs being met for each of the following groups, in regard to recreation programs and services?

	Youth Under 5	Youth 6-12	Teens	Adults	Seniors	Families
Not at all	6%	3%	8%	1%	10%	1%
Not very much	15%	8%	17%	7%	10%	5%
Somewhat	19%	19%	24%	14%	14%	20%
Mostly	40%	47%	34%	50%	36%	53%
Completely	21%	23%	17%	28%	29%	21%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
AVG	3.6	3.8	3.4	4.0	3.6	3.9

Respondents were asked to provide their opinion concerning efforts by the Town in relation to recreation programs and facilities. The majority (82%) feel that efforts by the Town in providing current recreation programs are “about right.” Similarly, 87 percent feel that the Town’s efforts maintaining existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities are “about right.”

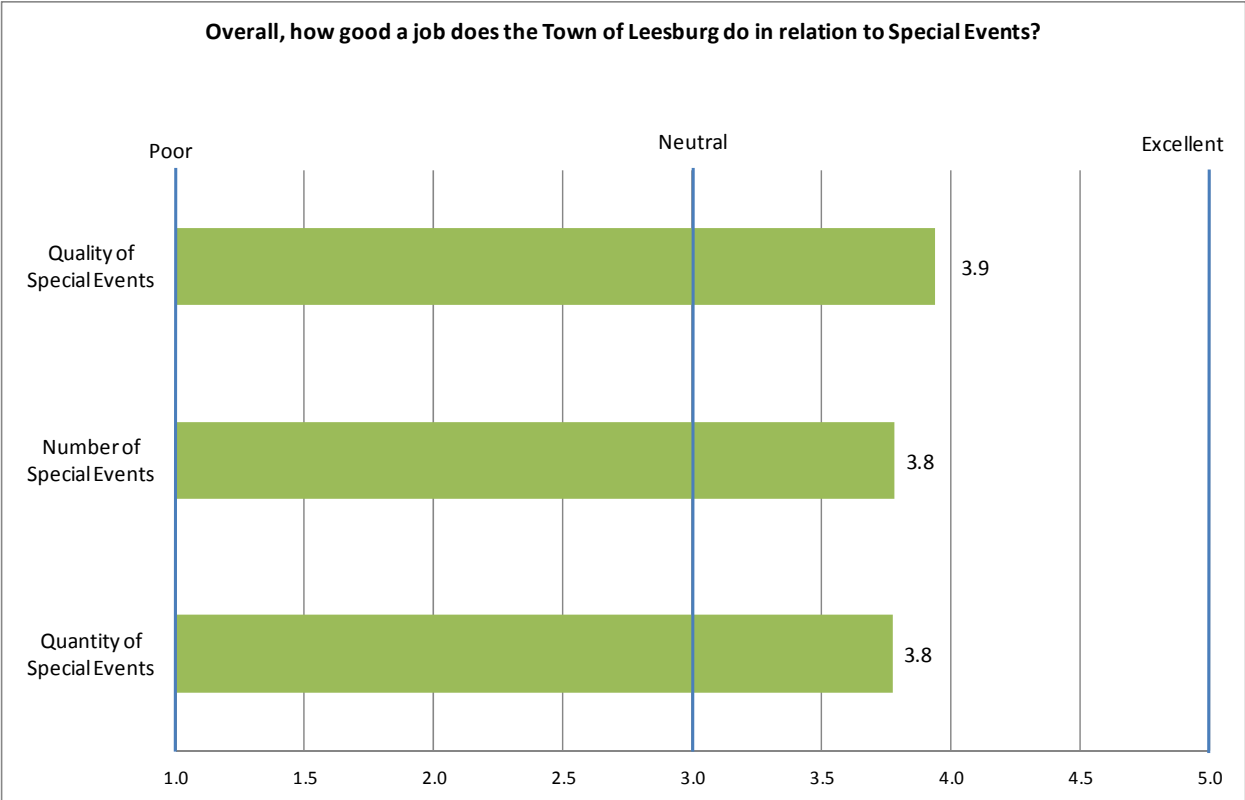
There is slightly more variety in opinions on the efforts by the Town to make improvements to existing parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities, with 77 percent indicating “about right” and 10% indicating “too little.” Another 12 percent did not know. Finally, while over 50 percent of respondents feel the efforts by the Town in building new parks, open space, trails, and recreation facilities are “about right,” a relatively large quantity (25%) indicated that the Town’s efforts are too little. Another 18 percent did not know.

What is your opinion concerning the efforts by the Town of Leesburg for each of the following?

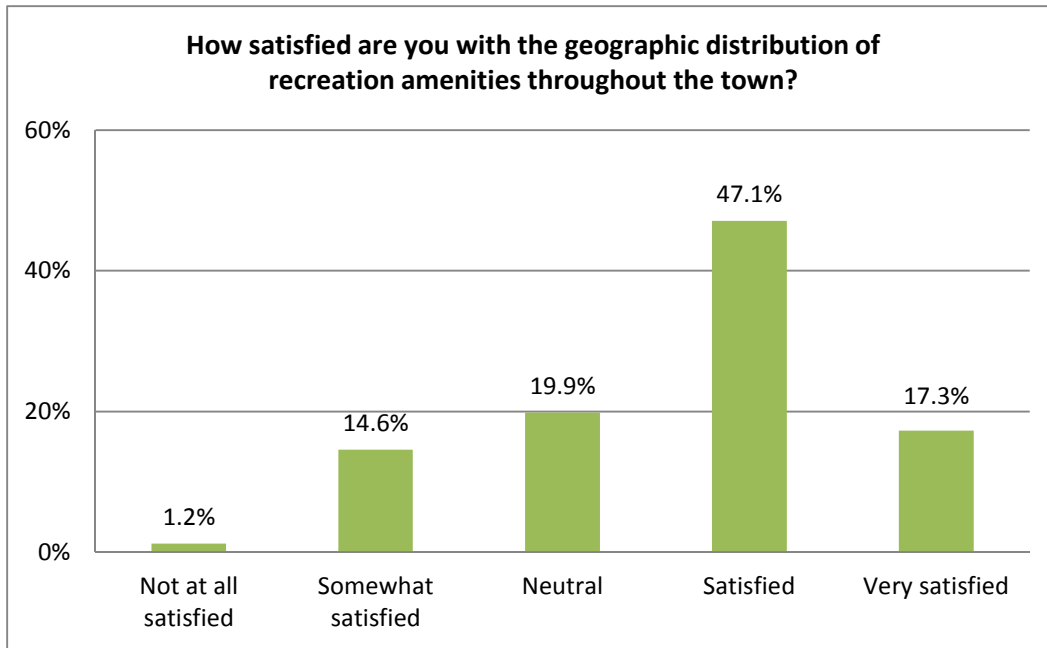
	Providing current recreation programs	Maintaining existing parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities	Improvements to existing parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities	Building new parks, open space, trails and recreation facilities
Too little	9%	6%	10%	25%
About right	82%	87%	77%	56%
Too much	1%	1%	1%	1%
Don’t know	8%	7%	12%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
AVG	1.91	1.94	1.89	1.71

Source: 2011 Household Survey

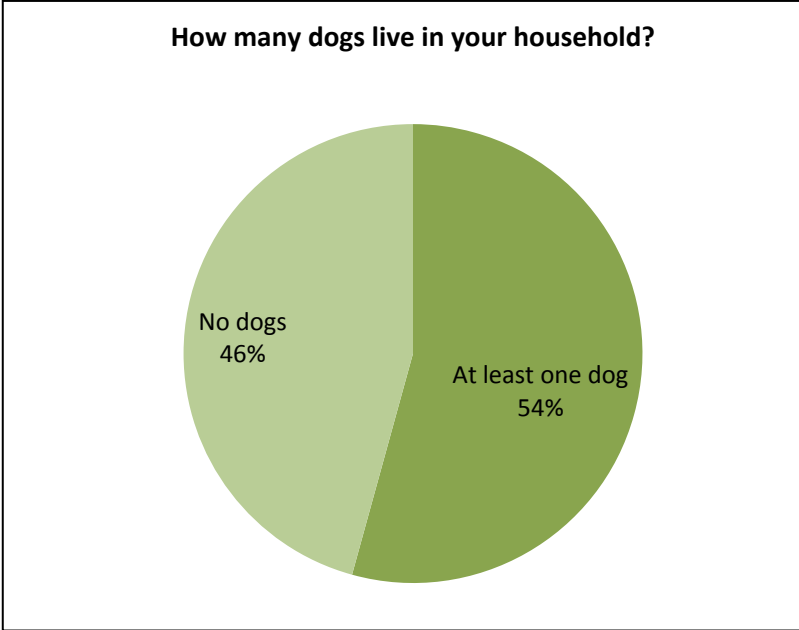
Respondents were asked to rate how good of a job the Town of Leesburg does overall in relation to special events. On average, respondents rated the quality of events the highest (3.9) with 74 percent indicating that the quality is either “good” or “excellent.” Rated slightly lower on average was the number of special events (3.8). For the number of special events, 68 percent indicated that the Town does a “good” or “excellent” job. Finally, the quantity of special events, on average, rated 3.8 with 65 percent indicating the Town does a “good” or “excellent” job. Few respondents (between two and four percent) indicated that the Town does a “somewhat poor” or “poor” job in relation to the quality, number, or quantity of special events.



Most respondents are either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” (64%) with the geographic distribution of recreation amenities throughout the Town. On average, the further respondents travel to use recreation facilities, the less satisfied they are with the geographic distribution.



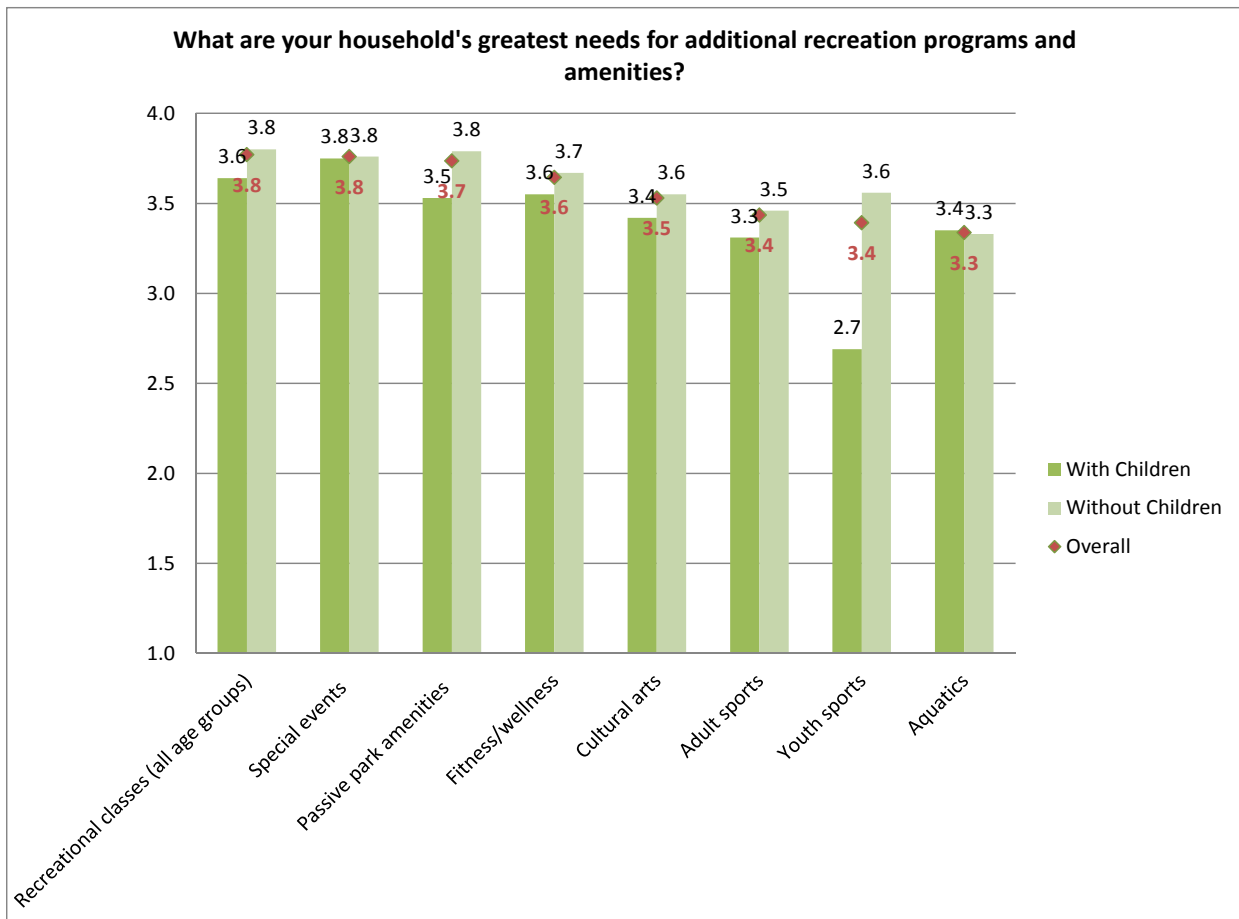
Over half of responding households have at least one dog at home. Of the households with dogs, a significant 65 percent do not use the dog park or do not know how they would rate the dog park. Of those that rated the dog park, 65 percent said that it was either “good” or “excellent.” Another 18 percent rated it neutral, while 16 percent said that the dog park is either “poor” or “somewhat poor.”



D. Greatest Needs

Respondents were asked to rate their household’s greatest needs for additional recreation programs and amenities, from “1 - Not at all important” to “5 - Very important.” On average, recreational classes for all age groups and special events were rated the most important, followed by passive park amenities, fitness/wellness, and cultural arts. Those that rated the least important on average were adult sports, youth sports, and aquatics.

Households with children gave more importance for additional recreation programs in every category than those without, with the exception of aquatics. Of those that frequently use the outdoor aquatics center, 41 percent indicate that aquatics are very important for additional recreation programs.



Respondents were asked to provide an open-ended response regarding the programs or amenities not currently offered that they would like to see provided. Some of the trends that can be seen in the open ended comments include additional adult sports leagues (basketball, volleyball, soccer), concerts, specialty classes (dance, cooking, photography), additional swim and aquatics classes, more biking and hiking trails and teen fitness options.

E. Communication

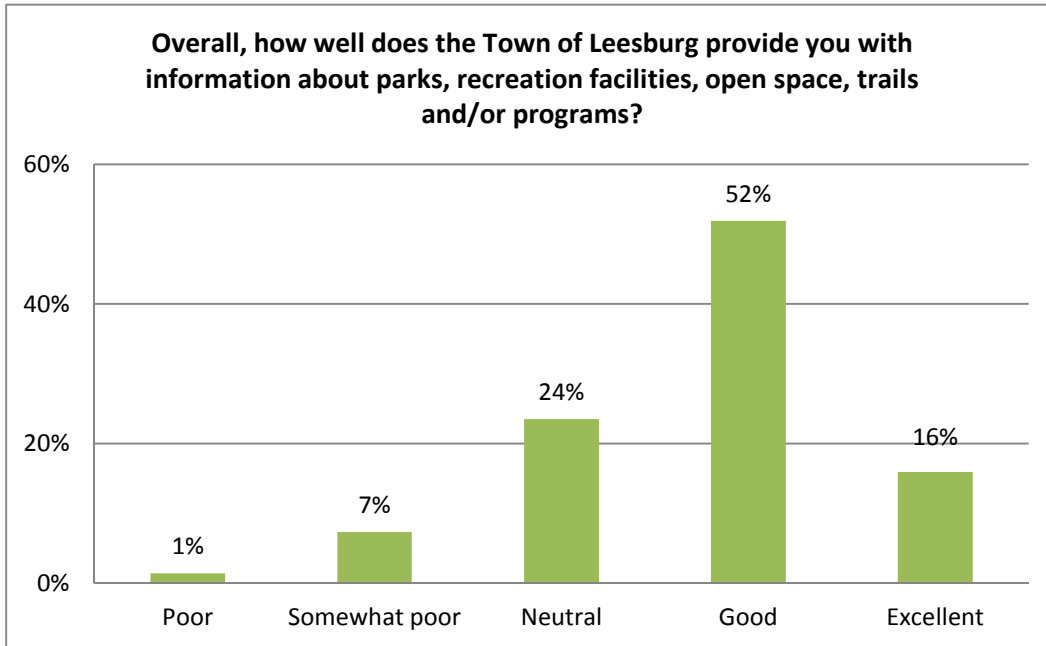
The majority of respondents receive information on parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs through the **Leesburg at Leisure Recreation Program Guide** (78%). Additionally, just under half receive information through the internet/website. Of those that receive information through the local newspaper, 24 percent read both *Leesburg Today* and the *Loudoun Times Mirror*, 55 percent just read *Leesburg Today*, 18 percent just read the *Loudoun Times Mirror*, and three percent indicated another newspaper.

How do you usually or currently receive information on parks, recreation facilities, services, and programs (whether Town of Leesburg-owned or not)?*

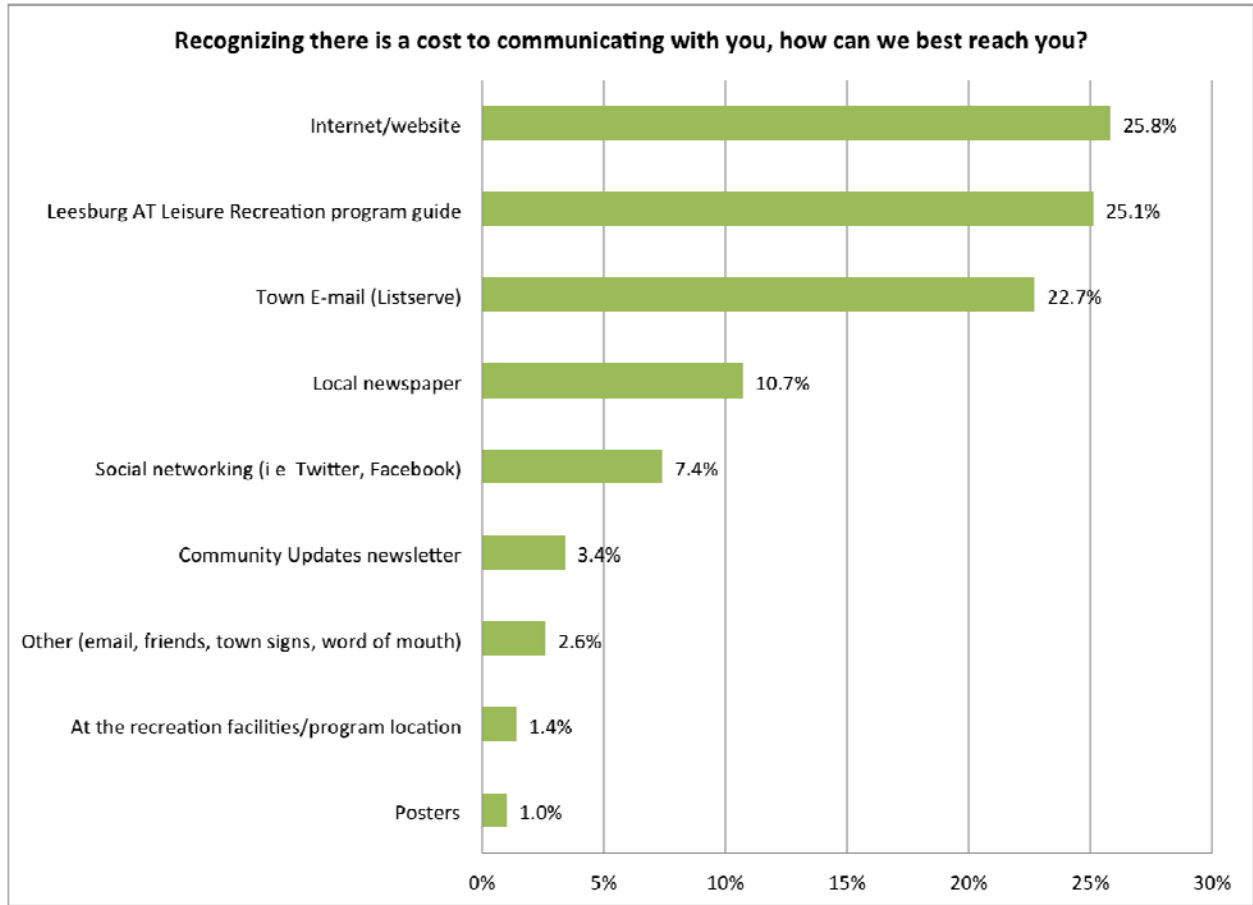
Leesburg At Leisure Recreation program guide	78%
Internet/website	45%
Local newspaper	29%
At the recreation facilities/program location	27%
Community Updates newsletter	15%
Town E-mail (Listserve)	14%
Social networking (i e Twitter, Facebook)	11%
Posters	4%
Other	4%
Leesburg cable TV channel	0%

*Multiple response question; percentages add to more than 100.

The majority of respondents (68%) feel that overall, the Town of Leesburg does a “good” or “excellent” job providing information about parks, recreation facilities, open space, trails, and/or programs. Of those that feel the Town does a “poor” or “somewhat poor” job communicating, 64 percent currently receive information through the **Leesburg at Leisure Recreation Program Guide**, 38 percent use the internet/web, and 28 percent receive information through the local newspaper.



Respondents were asked how they can best be reached, recognizing that there is a cost to communicating. The internet/website and the *Leesburg at Leisure Recreation Program Guide* were the most frequently chosen (between 25% and 26%), followed by the Town E-mail (Listserve) (22.7%), local newspapers (10.7%), and social networking (7.4%).



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

IV. Areas of Focus

Throughout this service and needs assessment process, it has been apparent that the leisure and recreation facilities, programs, and services offered by the Department are high quality and highly popular with the community. The following areas of focus seek to assist the Department in continually maintaining the high level of service that they already provide.

A. Develop Standard Practices for Customer Program and Facility Feedback

Developing programs based on customers' needs, wants, and expectations is important to the success of recreation programs.

Strategies

Developing a standard practice to get customer feedback (usually at the end of the program offering) will help improve programming by being able to respond to customer needs in a timely manner. Information sought from participants should include:

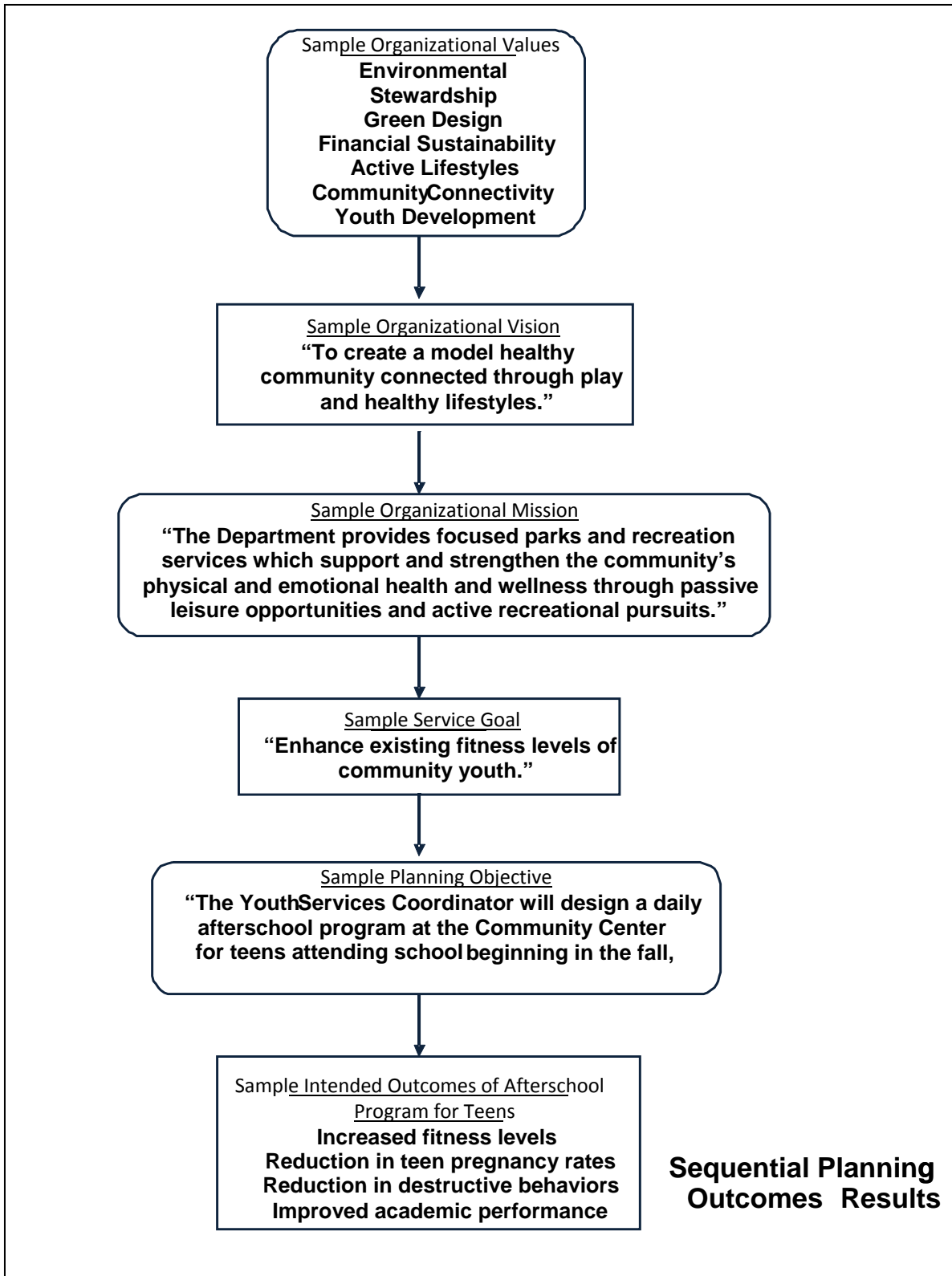
- Satisfaction levels and supporting reasoning
- Suggestions for improvements to programs
- Suggestions for new programs



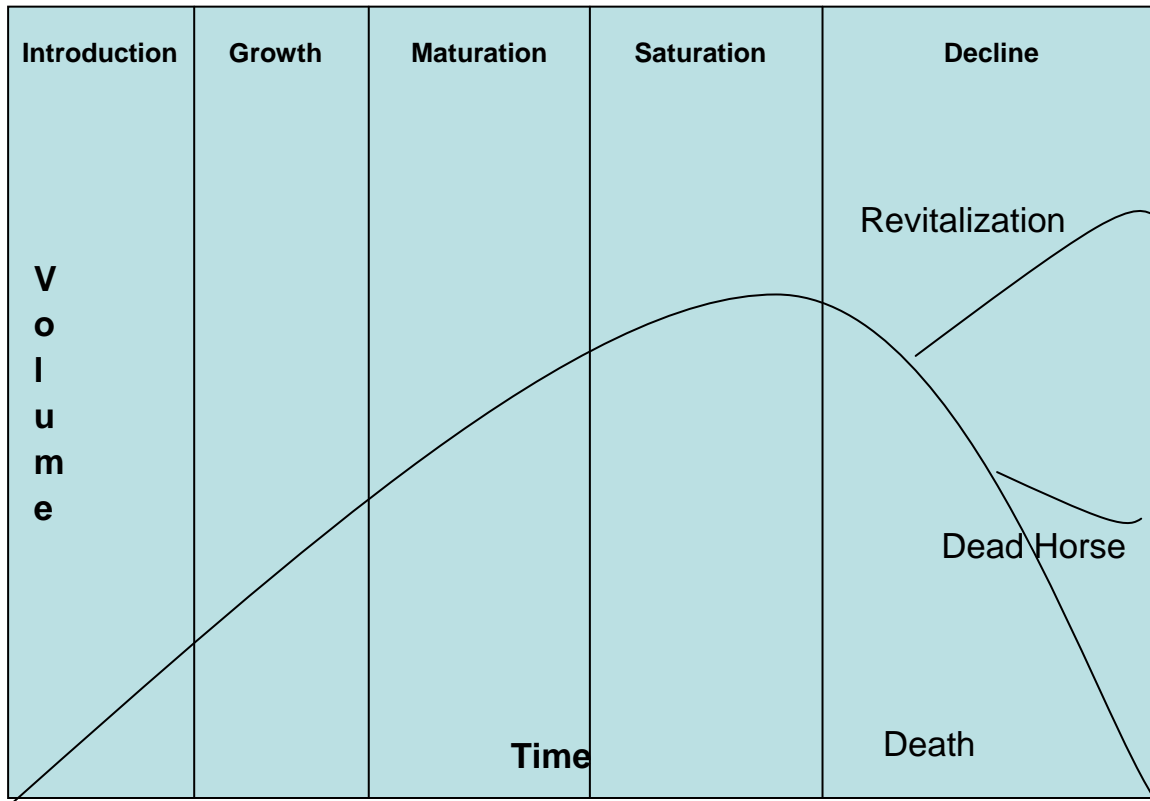
B. Develop Recreation Service Planning Methods

Strategies:

- Establish service goals and objectives to ensure that a program, activity, or event is needed or desired and that it is measured to determine success and effectiveness. Service goals and objectives are based on the agency's values, vision, and mission and are established at the onset of event planning so as to determine event intent, and success indicators. They must be measurable. A sample program plan follows.



- Conduct an analysis of the Program Life Cycle at the conclusion of each program, activity, or event. Once program evaluations are completed, a program, activity, or event's stage of existence should be considered as decisions are made relative to the future of any service. For example, if registrations continue to decline, staff may wish to evaluate the merits of attempting to re-vitalize a program with a new name, adjusting scheduling to another date or time, modifying a program's format, or simply discontinuing the program reallocating resources elsewhere. A graphic representation of this Life Cycle and the stages in a program, activity or event's life is illustrated below:



- Conduct formative (mid-term) and summative (post) participant evaluations for each program, activity, and event that address participant satisfaction, facility appropriateness, and future interest. Formative evaluations are necessary only when programs are offered for extended periods of time (eight week sessions as opposed to one week sessions). Response return is dependent on how evaluations are distributed and collected. Distribution should be strategic and be done with the greatest return in mind. It is a good practice to consider an incentive for completion and return of evaluations. These are critical to Department decision making.
- Conduct staff evaluations that include program, activity, and event description and details; objective review and analysis; participations, budget information including revenues and expenditures (consistently applied for each service), and participant evaluation data; and future recommendations.

C. Enhance Marketing Efforts

Strategies:

- The majority of respondents prefer using the internet to receive information, so it is imperative that this tool consistently provides easy access and direct connection to registration.
- Periodically evaluate the *Leesburg at Leisure Recreation Program Guide* distribution, and other promotional tools and publications to assess their ease of access and use. Programs, activities, and events should not rely on fliers and posters as primary publicity methods.
- Continue to advance the use of social networking vehicles such as Facebook and Twitter to engage and promote usage of the website.
- Consistently use the Department's logo and further develop a Department "brand" (vision statement).

D. Create and Implement a Cost Recovery Philosophy and Policy

Survey results show that a good portion of the community are comfortable with the fees and charges currently charged by the Department, but there seems to be a lack of understanding that it is the goal of the Department that facilities, programs, and services operate at a high level of cost recovery. There is also some apparent disconnect in that those community members with higher incomes are least satisfied with the fee levels (and may not feel that the Department considers them a "target market"). It is important for Town to develop and publicly articulate a **Pricing and Cost Recovery Philosophy** that reflects the values of the community and the responsibility it has to the community. This philosophy will be especially important if the Town moves forward in the development of new programs, additional and/or expanded facilities, and as it strives for sustainability and determines how much it is willing to subsidize operations.

One means of accomplishing this strategy is applying a process using an industry tool called the "**Pyramid Methodology.**" This methodology develops and implements a refined cost recovery philosophy and pricing policy based on current "best practices" as determined by the mission of the agency and the program's benefit to the community and/or individual.

Critical to this philosophical undertaking is the support and understanding of elected officials and, ultimately, citizens. Whether or not significant changes are called for, the agency wants to be certain that it is philosophically aligned with its residents. The development of the core services and cost recovery philosophy and policy is built on a very logical foundation, using the understanding of who is benefiting from parks, recreation, and natural resources service to determine how the costs for that service should be paid. An overview of the **Pyramid Methodology** will be provided to Department staff.

Action Steps:

- Develop ongoing systems that help measure cost recovery goals and anticipate potential pitfalls utilizing the following points:
 - Understand current revenue streams and their sustainability.
 - Track all expenses and revenues for programs, facilities, and services to understand their contribution to overall Department cost recovery.
 - Analyze who is benefiting from programs, facilities, and services and to what degree they should be subsidized.

- Fees for programs should acknowledge the full cost of each program (those direct and indirect costs associated with program delivery) and where the program fits on the scale of who benefits from the program or service to determine appropriate cost recovery targets.
- Program fees should not be based on ability to pay, but an objective program should be in place that allows for easy access for lower income participants, through availability of scholarships and/or discounts. In many instances, qualification for scholarships and/or discounts mirror requirements for free or reduced cost for lunch in schools.
- Define direct costs as those that typically exist purely because of the program and change with the program.
- Define indirect costs as those that typically would exist anyway (like full time staff, utilities, administration, debt service, etc.)
- Clearly articulate the reasoning for “in-Town” and “out of Town” fee differentials, such as basis of property tax providing a “discount” for in-Town residents.

E. Focus on Enhancing and Providing Additional Programming

The following steps can be taken to accomplish this:

- Reviewing athletic field allocation practices to ensure that distribution is reflective of demand and need for all sports.
- Engaging in a feasibility study to expand the number of indoor tennis courts to determine if the Department can maintain the high cost recovery and demand that the current indoor tennis center maintains today.
- Research local and national best practices and identify effective youth engagement models and programs. Resources might include:
 - Virginia Recreation and Parks Society
 - National Parks and Recreation Association Linked In discussion boards
- Create a Youth Advisory Board to identify opportunities and communication strategies to increase youth/teen (ages 10 to 15) programming participation. *(Examples include volunteering, employment opportunities and, counselor in Training program.)*