

# Strategic Plan 2012-2015



As a **Nationwide leader** in our field, be the **premier provider of community-driven and innovative** park and recreation experiences while maintaining **financial stability**



*promoting fun • preserving nature*



promoting fun • preserving nature



4374 Old Grand Avenue  
Gurnee, Illinois 60031  
TEL 847.623.7788  
FAX 847.623.8121  
www.gurneeparkdistrict.com

2/21/12

Dear Community Member,

Thank you for your interest in the Gurnee Park District. Enclosed is the Park District's Strategic Plan for 2012-2015 that was approved by the Board of Commissioners at the February 21, 2012 Board meeting.

This Strategic Plan was formulated over a ten-month period organized by phases of:

1. Broad-based community input
2. Staff research and planning
3. Community review and refinement

Details of the strategic planning process are outlined in the Executive Summary on pages 5-6.

The Park District's vision is "*As a nationwide leader in our field, be the premier provider of community-driven and innovative park and recreation experiences, while maintaining financial stability.*" This plan moves us closer to that vision.

The Board and staff are excited about the plan and look forward to sharing the successful completion of our goals with you in the future.

Again, thank you for taking the time to review this plan. If you have any questions, please feel free to call Susie Kuruvilla, Executive Director at 847-623-7788.

Sincerely,

*Libby A. Baker*

President



Libby Baker  
President

Vicki Paddock  
Vice President

Jim Goshorn  
Secretary

Gerald Crews  
Commissioner

Michelle Klemz  
Commissioner

Mike Szpylman  
Treasurer

Susie Kuruvilla, CPA, CPRP  
Executive Director

**STRATEGIC PLAN FOR**

**GURNEE PARK DISTRICT**

**2012 - 2015**

# GURNEE PARK DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015

## STRATEGIC PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Dr. Jeff Brierton.....	WTHS Principal, O'Plaine campus
Keith Eldrup.....	Local Business Owner & Resident
Aaron Fleming.....	Resident
Dr. John Hutton .....	Superintendent, Gurnee School District 56
Michelle Lazar.....	Resident
Bob Monahan .....	Resident
Joan Morris .....	Woodland School District 50 Board
Nicole Piszkeiwicz .....	Resident
Stefan Rosuck.....	Resident
Donna Stanciak.....	Resident
James Tan.....	Resident

## EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

Michelle Klemz.....	Park Board Representative
Susie Kuruvilla.....	Executive Director
Jeff Reinhard.....	Superintendent of Parks
Lisa Sheppard.....	Superintendent of Recreation
Mike Szpylman.....	Superintendent of Business
Jennifer Gilbert.....	Marketing/PR Manager
Janet Billiter.....	Customer Service Registration Clerk
Vicki Zika.....	Accountant
Kelly Petersen.....	Grounds & Equipment Operations Assistant
Steve Becker.....	Parks & Grounds Operations Supervisor
Scott Crowe.....	Aquatics Manager
Kristi Murray.....	Cultural Arts, Special Events & Community Relations Div. Mgr.
Sue McDougale.....	Early Childhood Division Manager
Suzanne Gage.....	Recording Secretary
Charlie Williams.....	Facilitator

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# **GURNEE PARK DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015**

Adopted February 21, 2012

## **BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS**

Libby A. Baker, President  
Victoria Paddock, Vice President  
Jim Goshorn, Secretary  
Gerald Crews, Commissioner  
Michelle Klemz, Commissioner

## **MISSION**

*Promoting fun and preserving nature.*

## **VISION**

*As a nationwide leader in our field, be the premier provider of community driven and innovative park and recreation experiences, while maintaining financial stability.*

## Gurnee Park District Customer Service Standards



### Serve

- Embrace Differences.
- Make the experience enjoyable.
- Sincere Service with care.
- Be flexible and anticipate needs.
- Ensure safety and promote happiness.

### Ownership

- Knowledge of your job, Gurnee Park District and community.
- Accountability equals responsibility.
- Own your attitude.
- Leave it better than you found it.
- Turn challenges into opportunities.
- Create a climate of empowerment.
- Take pride in the Gurnee Park District and what you do.

### Family

- Be a good neighbor.
- Create partnerships.
- Embrace diversity.
- Create a family atmosphere and a sense of belonging.
- Support one another.

### Fun

- Smile (10/5 rule).
- Share your passion.
- Leave your funk at the door.
- Foster interactions.
- Create a happy environment.

### Integrity

- Doing a good job when no one is looking.
  - Honesty
  - Respect
  - Character
  - Loyalty
- Be the Example!

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Gurnee Park District Board and staff initiated strategic planning in early 2011 to set future (2012-2015) direction for the Park District.

Early in the process, a Vision Team was formed to review the District's mission and vision statements. After considerable research, debate and refinement, updated mission and vision statements were adopted.

**Mission Statement:** Promoting fun and preserving nature.

**Vision Statement:** As a nationwide leader in our field, be the premier provider of community-driven and innovative park and recreation experiences, while maintaining financial stability.

It is vital to gather community input to guide the strategic planning process. To best serve that purpose, an outside consulting firm, Leisure Vision, was hired to conduct a community survey. An independent consultant Charlie Williams was also chosen by the Board to facilitate the strategic plan process. During the months of May and June 2011, Leisure Vision collaborated with the Board and staff to develop and field a survey to 2,000 randomly selected households. Community response was excellent with 23% of the surveys being completed and returned. Survey results indicated an overall high level of satisfaction with the park district while also revealing potential growth and improvement areas. Details of the survey results are attached as part of this document.

During the same period of time, Charlie Williams conducted interviews with many of the community leaders to receive their perspective on the Park District. The interview results showed an exceptional level of satisfaction with the Gurnee Park District's operations, services and image.

While the survey and interviews showed positive results, these research tools also revealed many future growth opportunities.

**Based on the District's vision and the community needs identified through the research, an Executive Steering Committee developed the following eight strategic initiatives:**

1. Deliver Innovative Programs and Services that align with current and future needs of the community.
2. Attract and Retain High Quality Employees at all Levels
3. Sustain Long Term Financial Strength
4. Maximize Operational Efficiency through Technology
5. Enhance the Park Experience
6. Explore Opportunities for Additional Parks and Facilities
7. Broaden External Relations to Maximize District Effectiveness
8. Expand Visibility and Strengthen Community Awareness



In October 2011, a Strategic Plan Advisory Committee (SPAC) comprised of eleven community members along with staff and Board representatives, reviewed and refined the initiatives and developed recommendations. The SPAC met three times during the months of October and November and provided valuable feedback to the Board and staff, which was incorporated into the final plan.

In January 2012, the final draft of the strategic plan was made available to the public through the park district website to receive further comments and feedback. The final plan was then approved by the Park Board at the Board meeting on February 21, 2012.

This plan is a result of broad-based community input, extensive staff work and valuable feedback from key community stakeholders. It establishes a road map for the park district to achieve excellence in all areas of its operations and provide the community with an increased sense of pride in their park district. The Board and staff are confident that this plan will lead us towards achieving our vision within the next four years.

## STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVES

### **Initiative #1: Deliver Innovative Programs and Services that Align with Current and Future Needs of the Community**

The Gurnee Park District currently does an outstanding job exceeding expectations of the community by offering Customer Driven Programming. According to the 2011 community survey, 48% of those who participate in Gurnee Park District programs rate the quality of the programs as “excellent.” This is considerably higher than the national benchmark of 34% and Illinois benchmark of 37%.

Even though the District rating is significantly higher than average, the District’s goal is to continue to be the leader in programs and services and provide the best experiences possible. The preschool and before and after school programs that are currently offered are extremely popular and close to capacity. The District offers a variety of youth athletic programs that are supported primarily by dedicated volunteers. In the last 5 years Gurnee Park District has also expanded its ability to provide fitness programs with the addition of the Hunt Club Park Fitness Center. The first Gurnee Park District gym opened in 2006 allowing the district to dramatically expand open gym opportunities to youth and adults. In the 2007 community wide survey, residents indicated that they loved and wanted more special events to which the district responded by doubling free special events. In the last strategic plan, Gurnee Park District was also asked to address the lack of indoor aquatic space to expand swim programs. They were able to address this need by entering into a lease with Special Education District of Lake County (SEDOL) to operate Gages Lake Pool on a full-time basis.

In the future the District will need to continue to anticipate and plan for unrealized community needs. Based on research, analyzing trends and by listening to customer feedback, the District plans to identify areas of growth in the next three years.

It is also important when investigating new programs and services, that the Gurnee Park District utilizes facilities, sports fields and staffing resources efficiently. At times, it may be more effective to collaborate with other organizations and agencies to achieve services, such as competitive athletic leagues.

In order to enhance the quality of life for our residents, it is important that Gurnee Park District maintain high quality, customer-driven programs while striving to provide new and unique experiences to customers.

### **Initiative #2: Attract and Retain High Quality Employees at All Levels**

In order to achieve exceptional customer service, it is vital to attract and retain high quality staff. The Gurnee Park District promotes a culture in which each member of the team plays a vital role in promoting the mission and vision of the Park District. The District realizes that one of the reasons it is a Gold Medal Park District is due to the quality of its staff.

Gurnee Park District currently excels in this area with a retention rate of over 90%. In addition, the 2011 Employee Survey indicated over 95% employee satisfaction.

The Park District presents many different options for employment; whether it is full time, permanent part-time, part-time or seasonal positions. This diversity also presents challenges because of the individualized training that each department requires, the different ways that staff prefers to be communicated to, and the way they view their position, as a short term job or a career.

As a result of the last Strategic Plan, Gurnee Park District has initiated a successful customer service model called S.O.F.F.I. This stands for Serve, Ownership, Fun, Family and Integrity. The service model is a road map that provides direction for all employees. The purpose is to develop an organization-wide system that enables staff to deliver reliable service, ensuring consistency in response to customer needs and perpetuating the service culture of the Park District. This insures that all employees operate within that culture.

To continue to attract and retain high quality employees it is vital that the District remain focused on training, communication and internal and external customer service. The goal of Gurnee Park District is to provide staff with the tools needed to provide excellence to Park District customers. In order to accomplish that goal, Gurnee Park District needs to provide a strong foundation so that staff can present a professional, skilled and trusted image to the community.

### **Initiative #3: Sustain Long Term Financial Strength**

The Gurnee Park District has worked diligently for many years to reach its current strong financial position. Fiscal responsibility is a key element in the Park District's core values and thus the District adheres to the policy of a balanced operating budget. The majority of the Park District revenues are generated through property taxes and fees and charges for services, accounting for 50% and 45% of total revenue, respectively. This diversification of revenue is important to the financial strength of the Park District. By implementing strong business strategies, the District is able to manage recreation operations as a successful business. Many of the capital needs for recreational activities are funded through the revenue generated from programs. The Park District adopted a fund balance policy in 1997 which requires that at least 25% of operating expenditures are kept as fund balance in each fund. This goal is met in all funds except the aquatic center fund where the goal is to set aside 25% of annual operating expenses which has been met, plus an unmet 20% of the original construction costs.

The current economic climate has impacted the financial outlook for the Park District. From the early 1990's through 2008 the Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) of the Park District increased steadily primarily due to new construction. However, with the slowdown of new construction and decreasing property values, the Park District's EAV has decreased each of the past two years. It is projected that the EAV will drop slightly and then flatten out over the next several years. The Park District will rely more than ever on revenue generated through fees and charges for its operations.

Going forward, the Park District will have to look at expanding existing alternative revenue sources

as well as identify new ones. The Gurnee Park District is an attractive partner for businesses. The District needs to maximize advertising and sponsorship revenue opportunities while maintaining core values. It can also expand resources by maximizing relationships with other government agencies as well as private businesses.

According to most financial experts, the toughest of economic times appear to be over; however, the recovery is expected to be a long drawn out process. The success of sustaining our financial strength will be through planning. Gurnee Park District must continue the practice of long term capital planning to keep the aging park system current. Multi-year financial planning will be used so the Park District can be proactive and adapt to changing economic conditions. The Park District has solid financial policies in place to insure that our financial position remains an overall strength.

#### **Initiative #4: Maximize Operational Efficiency through Technology**

For the past many years, the Park District has invested a great deal of resources in technology to better accommodate the needs of its internal and external customers. Since technology is growing at a rapid pace, the customers' expectations are also increasing.

The Park District Board recently approved a System Plan that is a road map for upgrading the majority of the District's technology components. The System plan is scheduled to be implemented in four phases; Phase I is the upgrade of the network infrastructure, Phase II is the conversion of the recreation registration system, Phase III is the conversion of the financial/accounting system, and Phase IV is identifying and implementing any other system needs (i.e. employee intranet site, maintenance/work order system). Phase I has been completed and the upgrades to the network infrastructure insure that the Park District is operating with current technology as well positioning the district for future growth. Phase II has commenced and will be completed by the end of the current fiscal year (April 2012). Phase III and IV will be completed by 2014. The conversion and acquisition of new recreation registration, financial/accounting, and other software systems will greatly enhance the customer service delivered by the Park District while enabling it to use internal data to make sound business decisions.

The Park District also recently updated its website which has given the site greater capabilities and flexibility to the growing demands for mobility.

The Park District has created strong partnerships with third party vendors in all technology areas and has made a commitment to allocate the appropriate funds to keep technology assets current. The key is to make sure that the Park District is utilizing technology to maximize operational efficiency without sacrificing effectiveness. By working with strategic partners, the Park District will strive to use current technology to increase the positive experience for customers. Money saving and environmentally friendly opportunities will also be available through the operational efficiencies gained with the proper use of available technology.

#### **Initiative #5: Enhance the Park Experience**

The usage of and satisfaction with our park system is rated as one of the highest in the nation

according to the 2011 community survey. Cleanliness, security and safety in the parks were well documented. According to the survey 56% of the users rated the physical condition of the parks as excellent, up from 47% in 2007. Comparatively, the national benchmark for excellence in this area is 31% and the Illinois benchmark is 36%, respectively. Safety and park maintenance is the number one desire of the District residents and walking and biking trails and outdoor swimming pools remained important. The 2011 Park Survey reported that satisfaction with the overall value received from the Gurnee Park District had increased since 2007 and is among the highest in the Country and Illinois.

The Park District currently maintains 28 park sites, 25 playgrounds, 6 tennis courts, 23 outdoor basketball courts, 21 soccer fields, 16 baseball/softball fields, 3 outdoor skate parks, 8 picnic shelters and 6 outdoor restrooms. Of the 400 acres maintained by the district, 174 acres are pristine oak /hickory woodlands, wetlands, or other natural amenities. The District also has two Community Centers, and one Aquatic Center that are used for recreational programming.

The Hunt Club Park Community Center houses a gymnasium, fitness center, dance studio, multipurpose studio, meeting room, recreation offices, 3 preschool rooms, and a large activity room for before and after school programming. At the Viking Park Community Center there are 4 preschool rooms, dance studio, meeting room, administration offices, summer kitchen and a large dance hall that is rented for special occasions. The Aquatic Center is a 1500 bather load pool with a zero depth area, 6 water slides, various play features, an area for tots, lap pool, sand play, sand volleyball, and plenty of shade and lounge chairs.

Over the last three years the District has upgraded three park sites that were originally built in the early 1990's and is currently working on a fourth site. Not only were the playgrounds improved to today's higher standards, the sites were not considered complete until updates were made to the parking lots, and other park amenities. The goal when designing new playground areas is to advance contemporary design and innovative materials with each subsequent project. The industry trend for the future includes adding natural features to playgrounds. The District accomplished this before it was even aware of the trend. For example, rock and stone features were added in the playgrounds and last year artificial turf was installed at several sites providing the look and feel of natural grass under playground equipment. This progressive material also added the benefit of increased fall height protection and handicap accessibility. In 2010, an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Accessibility Assessment was conducted of the facilities and parks. Based on the study and the transition plan, a schedule of ADA improvements has been outlined for the next 10 years.

Since the last strategic plan, Village Park playground and park site was completed, a planned development that took over 30 years to complete. Over 3,000 residents who live in this area now have access to one of the District's best playgrounds to date.

The next three years we will be focused on maintaining the high quality of the infrastructure as indicated by respondents of the survey. With security and safety high on the list of things the District should continue to concentrate on, it has begun by adding a digital camera system at

Viking Park to match the systems already installed at Hunt Club Park Community Center and Aquatic Center. Gurnee Park District remains committed to keeping indoor and outdoor facilities at a very high level of cleanliness. The community survey results mirrored the District's current initiative to keep our parks safe and well maintained.

#### **Initiative #6: Explore Opportunities for Additional Parks and Facilities**

The Park District should always be mindful of potential opportunities when land or resources become available. Although the total acres for the Park District is more than recommended by NRPA, the District has a deficiency of community park acres based on current population and usable space. The District should continue to explore current land use to see if it is being utilized it to its fullest potential.

Community surveys conducted in 2007 and 2011 clearly state that there is a need for more walking and biking trails. Many of the District's community and neighborhood parks currently have trails. However, residents indicate a need for a connection to larger trail systems and interconnectivity throughout the District boundaries. This is a challenge for the Park District. Gurnee Park District will need to explore the options that are available by partnering with the other agencies that have larger trail systems like the Village of Gurnee and Lake County Forest Preserve.

The 2010 Master Plan shows that Gurnee Park District currently has a sufficient amount of park land for the current population. However, 174 out of the total 400 acres are natural areas which are not considered usable open space as defined by National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Additionally, the planning areas by population showed that the area around Hunt Club Park was about 50 acres short of community park land. The District contends that it currently owns enough land based on activity levels and function. The District should still continue to investigate additional land purchases based on future development.

In 2006 Gurnee Park District opened the new 41,000sf Hunt Club Park Community Center. Even though it currently meets community needs for indoor recreation space, this may change in the future based on resident demands. The capacity at which it operates and future demands must be analyzed and anticipated in the next few years to determine what additional facilities may be required. Also, as opportunities present themselves, the Park District needs to be open to acquiring more open space and building more facilities as long as it has available resources and community support to do so.

#### **Initiative #7: Broaden External Relations to Maximize Park District Effectiveness**

The Park District has an excellent working relationship with local governmental agencies. The cooperation with these agencies leads to sharing facilities and equipment to the mutual benefit of residents while avoiding duplication of services. The Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center was made possible by the cooperation between the Village of Gurnee and the Park District. The District is

able to meet the communities' indoor swim lesson needs by utilizing the Warren High School pool as well as the SEDOL Gages Lake pool. Intergovernmental cooperation is an essential factor for continued success as well as ensuring the effective use of public resources.

The Park District also cooperates well with local service clubs, not-for-profit organizations and athletic organizations. In fact, many of the local service clubs' fundraisers are held at park district facilities. The District plays a primary role in the annual community event "Gurnee Days" working closely with the Gurnee Days Corporation. Many of the local athletic organizations are affiliates of the Park District. It is important to continue these relationships to ensure the positive placement the District has established in the community and also to best serve the residents.

The Park District cooperates with the business community in Gurnee by being a member of the Gurnee Chamber of Commerce and also partnering with many businesses. Sponsorship opportunities are provided to area businesses to the mutual benefit of the business and the recreational program. For the last two years, the Park District partnered with the Village of Gurnee, Gurnee Chamber of Commerce and the Lake County Visitor's Bureau to market the Gurnee community by being a partner in "Gurnee's Got It" campaign.

The Park District's vision is to continue to be a national leader in the park and recreation field. It is important that the District is well represented at various state and national park and recreation organizations such as Illinois Association of Park Districts (IAPD), Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA), National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), Park District Risk Management Agency (PDRMA) etc. The District currently belongs to and staff is actively involved with most of these agencies. These relationships need to be further enhanced in the coming years to keep Gurnee Park District at the forefront.

The Park District has excellent relationships with its legislators. The District board and staff work closely with the legislators for the benefit of the community. Legislators are invited to various District events and staff makes a conscious effort to keep them informed. The District's active influence impacts legislation affecting parks and recreation.

### **Initiative #8: Expand Visibility and Strengthen Community Awareness**

According to the survey, 86% of the Gurnee community has some type of a relationship with the Park District, whether they have visited a park, participated in a program, volunteered with or employed by the organization. This is a high level of penetration in the community; however, it can be further increased by harnessing the changes in communication and technology to better meet the changing communication needs of the residents.

Since 2008, the District has been focused on enhancing their marketing and communication strategies in an effort to develop a contemporary brand and a relevant connection with residents. Earning the National Park and Recreation Gold Medal and Illinois Association of Park Districts' Distinguished Agency Accreditation, were two efforts to showcase the District's high level of professionalism and service to the community, while highlighting the District's role as a national leader in the field of parks and recreation.

The District has focused on adapting to residents' communication needs by maximizing available technologies such as e-blast, electronic customer service surveys, a state of the art website and utilizing new social media like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Additionally, the District has been incorporating television and online advertising to keep current with changing consumer use of media.

The District has much to offer to the community in terms of facilities and services. It is integral that residents, despite their age, activity level, or usage, find value in what the District provides to the community. The District will be tasked with generating more efficiency to provide more to residents while utilizing less. It will be a challenge for the next several years, considering the state of the economy.



**GURNEE PARK DISTRICT  
STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015**

**Initiative #1: Deliver Innovative Programs and Services that align with current and future needs of the community**

		<u>Objective</u>	<u>Fiscal Yr.</u>	<u>Assigned to:</u>
1.1		Address the growing need for flexibility in our programs and services.	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Recreation
1.2		Encourage outdoor activities and the nationwide "No child left inside" initiative.	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Recreation
1.3		Implement special events around State, National and world campaigns such as World Day of Play, NRPA Parks and Recreation Month, etc	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Recreation
1.4		Address the health and fitness needs of all ages through interactive programs and education	12/13	Supt. of Recreation
1.5		Address the needs of adults, including the Baby Boomer generation in parks and programs.	12/13	Supt. of Recreation
1.6		Address the gap between travel (competitive) and recreational athletics	13/14	Supt. of Recreation
1.7		Continue to review trends, demographics and lifecycles of recreation programs annually	12/13	Supt. of Recreation
1.8		Recognize the diverse needs of our community.	12/13 – 13/14	Supt. of Recreation & Exec. Director
1.9		Develop policies and procedures on customer satisfaction survey and program evaluations.	12/13	Supt. of Recreation & Marketing Manager
1.10		Benchmark survey results from programs and services	12/13	Supt. of Recreation

**Initiative #2: Attract and Retain High Quality Employees at All Levels**

		<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Fiscal Yr.</u></b>	<b><u>Assigned to:</u></b>
2.1		Develop and implement a formal customer service training program for all staff	12/13	Supts. of Recreation and Business
2.2		Develop a “general” orientation and on-going training so that all staff has consistent training in park district history, safety, emergency preparedness, public relations, etc. that is on-line	12/13	Supts. of Recreation, Business, Parks and Marketing Manager
2.3		Develop and implement a volunteer training program that is on-line	13/14	Supt. of Recreation and Marketing Manager
2.4		Increase specialized training unique to each position	12/13	Supts. of Recreation, Business & Parks
2.5		Provide training for staff so that lifelong career skills are developed	12/13 – 13/14	Supt. of Recreation
2.6		Develop tools for staff to have easy access to Park District communications	14/15	Supts. of Recreation, Business and Marketing Manager
2.7		Refine employment application process to better screen applicants	12/13	Supt. of Recreation
2.8		Continue to conduct a compensation study to stay competitive in the marketplace	13/14	Executive Director
2.9		Review full-time and part-time employee benefits	12/13	Executive Director
2.10		Develop procedures for exit interviews with all staff when they leave the district	12/13	Supt. of Recreation

**Initiative #2 continued**

2.11	Explore the options for a Human Resource position through restructuring existing positions and without impacting the District financially.	14/15	Executive Director
2.12	Implement policies and procedures to recognize volunteers on an ongoing basis	12/13	Supt. of Recreation
2.13	Hold focus groups with part-time and seasonal staff semi annually to gain new ideas	12/13	Supts. of Recreation, Parks and Business
2.14	Offer diversity training for staff on an ongoing basis	12/13	Executive Director
2.15	Evaluate diversity in the workplace and make recommendations.	12/13	Executive Director
2.16	Develop a succession plan for key positions	13/14	Executive Director
2.17	Develop policies and procedures to improve tracking various training programs	13/14	Supt. of Recreation

**Initiative #3: Sustain Long Term Financial Strength**

		<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Fiscal Yr.</u></b>	<b><u>Assigned to:</u></b>
3.1		Formalize fund balance policy and maintain fund balance goals	12/13	Supt. of Business
3.2		Develop 3-year financial planning	13/14	Supt. of Business
3.3		Annually review and update the long-term financial plans for both capital projects and overall operations	12/13-13/14	Supt. of Business & Executive Director
3.4		Evaluate resident vs. non-resident fee difference in all recreation programs and memberships and make recommendation to maximize program participation	13/14	Supts. of Business and Recreation
3.5		Maximize grant opportunities to increase funds available for capital needs by entering into a contract with a grant writer	12/13-13/14	Executive Director, Supts. of Parks & Business
3.6		Review the Park District guidelines for sponsorship and set concrete objectives that align with our revenue policies	12/13	Supt. of Business & Marketing Mgr.
3.7		Revisit the in-house vs. contractor program philosophy: overall balance, percentage split criteria, and cross marketing. Analyze the financial impact of independent contractor agreements to optimize value to the District	13/14	Supts. of Business & Recreation
3.8		Investigate corporate partnership opportunities to enhance revenue streams for major program areas.	13/14	Supts. of Business, Recreation & Marketing Mgr.
3.9		Develop a plan and strategy to maximize fees/charges appropriateness through fee comparisons	12/13	Supts. Of Business & Recreation

**Initiative #3 continued**

3.10		Develop and implement a strategy to increase fund balance to meet the goal in the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center Fund	13/14	Supts. Of Business, Recreation & Executive Director.
3.11		Explore the concept of outsourcing opportunities to supplement existing staff and for non-core business operations	14/15	Supts. Of Business, Recreation, Parks and Marketing Manager
3.12		Develop procedures to strengthen internal controls	12/13-14/15	Supt. of Business
3.13		Develop a procedure and operations manual for the Business Department	14/15	Supt. of Business

**Initiative #4: Maximize Operational Efficiency through Technology**

		<u>Objective</u>	<u>Fiscal Yr.</u>	<u>Assigned to:</u>
4.1		Complete the implementation of the new recreation registration software	13/14	Supt. of Business
4.2		Complete the implementation of new financial/accounting/payroll software	13/14	Supt. of Business
4.3		Identify and capitalize on the efficiencies available from these new systems	12/13-14/15	Supts. Of Business & Recreation
4.4		Through the new recreation registration software, convert paper communications with customers (i.e. receipts, confirmation postcards, invoices) to electronic methods	13/14	Supt. of Business & Marketing Mgr.
4.5		Develop employee intranet site to communicate general employee news and information as well as password-protected individual employee information	14/15	Supt. of Business & Marketing Mgr.
4.6		Utilize the new payroll software and intranet site to require direct deposit for all employees and electronically distribute payroll check stubs	14/15	Supt. of Business
4.7		Eliminate all paper timecards through the use of Timepro and the new finance/accounting/payroll system	13/14	Supt. of Business
4.8		Investigate implementing Wi-Fi at facilities and parks	13/14	Supts. Of Business & Parks
4.9		Increase emphasis on customer interaction (communication, registration, etc.) using mobile devices and mobile device applications	12/13 – 14/15	Marketing Mgr. & Supt. of Parks

**Initiative #4 continued**

4.10		Explore the use of technology in the Parks Team; maintenance reporting software system, communication, park design, remote operation and monitoring of aquatic facilities	12/13-14/15	Supts. Of Parks and Business
4.11		Maximize the marketing capabilities of the software systems.	12/13	Marketing Manager & Supt. of Business
4.12		Implement necessary measures to address emergencies such as storm, flood etc. using technology as a tool	12/13	Supt. of Business, Marketing Manager & Supt. of Parks
4.13		Implement online membership for fitness and aquatic center	12/13	Supt. of Business
4.14		Research and implement staff scheduling software to be used consistently throughout the Park District	13/14	Supt. of Business
4.15		Obtain direction from the Board on delivery of Board packet and implement accordingly	12/13	Executive Director

**Initiative #5: Enhance the Park Experience**

		<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Fiscal Yr.</u></b>	<b><u>Assigned to:</u></b>
5.1		Analyze security measures for the park system to include policing, lighting, surveillance (security cameras), etc	12/13	Supt. of Parks
5.2		Investigate adding multi-use sports fields with artificial surfacing.	12/13-14/15	Supt. of Parks
5.3		Inventory and “ <i>fine tune</i> ” current park amenities; repair and replace benches, picnic tables, signs, shelters, garbage receptacles, etc. as needed.	12/13 – 13/14	Supt. of Parks
5.4		Upgrade playgrounds presented in the playground replacement schedule	12/13 – 14/15	Supt. of Parks
5.5		Make accessibility upgrades yearly as per our 2010 ADA Transition Plan	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks
5.6		Investigate various alternative power sources for our parks, facilities and vehicles. Include different, more efficient lighting for our parks and buildings as new sources become available	14/15	Supt. of Parks
5.7		Maximize park location and amenity awareness through technological components. Enhance communication efforts with residents during construction projects	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks & Marketing Manager
5.8		Consider developing an “Adopt a Park” program that gives neighbors or volunteer groups the opportunity to contribute to the beautification and safety of our parks	12/13	Supt. of Parks & Marketing Manager



**Initiative #5 continued**

5.9		Revisit the Parks Maintenance Management plan to update and include schedule of estimated work	12/13	Supt. of Parks
5.10		Develop/update policy on use of sports fields	12/13	Supt. of Parks

**Initiative #6: Explore Opportunities for Additional Parks and Facilities**

		<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Fiscal Yr.</u></b>	<b><u>Assigned to:</u></b>
6.1		Research the need for an indoor field house with a multi sport venue and make recommendations	12/13 - 14/15	Supts. Of Parks and Recreation
6.2		Explore the possibility of connecting trails in Gurnee by working with the Village, Lake County Forest Preserve and other taxing agencies in the area.	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks
6.3		Analyze building usage and capacity to determine the need for expansion	14/15	Supt. of Recreation
6.4		Evaluate the need for additional skate parks or water play features in our parks	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks
6.5		Explore the possibility for additional land or facilities as potential opportunities become available	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks & Executive Director
6.6		Utilize District 56 new schools to continue and expand our CARE program and other programs to meet the needs of the families that attend those schools	12/13 - 13/14	Supt. of Recreation
6.7		Plan for upgrades to older facilities (i.e., Dance Hall, Bungalow, Summer Kitchen, and Viking Park washroom)	13/14 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks
6.8		Study existing parkland to maximize its use to full potential.	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks
6.9		Investigate upgrades or additions to the Parks Team maintenance and storage facilities at Viking and Hunt Club Parks	12/13 - 14/15	Supt. of Parks

**Initiative #7: Broaden External Relations to Maximize District Effectiveness**

		<u>Objective</u>	<u>Fiscal Yr.</u>	<u>Assigned to:</u>
7.1		Develop or maintain strategic alliances with area government agencies to maximize program effectiveness.	12/13-14/15	Executive Director & Marketing Mgr.
7.2		Actively follow local, state and national legislation impacting Parks & Recreation	12/13 - 14/15	Executive Director
7.3		Increase relationships with local business sector	12/13 - 14/15	Marketing Manager & Executive Director
7.4		Foster positive image with media	12/13 -14/15	Marketing Manager
7.5		Strengthen relationships with area park district Marketing/Public Relations professionals.	14/15	Marketing Manager
7.6		Develop policies and procedures outlining staff participation in various professional and service organizations.	12/13	Executive Director
7.7		Continue to meet quarterly with Administrators from other local taxing agencies to enhance communication and partnership	12/13 -14/15	Executive Director
7.8		Work closely with WSRA to further market programs for those with disabilities	12/13	Marketing Manager
7.9		Develop opportunities for legislators and Park Board to meet on advocacy issues important to the park district	12/13 - 13/14	Executive Director & Marketing Manager

**Initiative #8: Expand Visibility & Strengthen Community Awareness**

		<b><u>Objective</u></b>	<b><u>Fiscal Yr.</u></b>	<b><u>Assigned to:</u></b>
8.1		Identify and evaluate additional opportunities to network with the community on an electronic basis	12/13	Marketing Manager & Supt. of Business
8.2		Identify non-district owned locations to showcase programs to community	13 - 14	Marketing Manager & Supt. of Recreation
8.3		Expand marketing efforts using available technology and addressing changing communication outlets	12/13 - 14/15	Marketing Manager
8.4		Identify underserved areas	12/13 -14/15	Marketing Manager
8.5		Expand public relations knowledge through additional staff training and possible accreditation for Marketing Team	12/13 -14/15	Marketing Manager
8.6		Develop a group of advocates for GPD to stay informed of the District and promote the District	12/13 -14/15	Exec. Director
8.7		Explore options (utilizing technology) to enhance communication with the public during emergencies and for program changes and cancellations	12/13 -14/15	Marketing Manager
8.8		Define clear roles, responsibility and accountability for marketing functions	12/13 -13/14	Marketing Manager
8.9		Revisit branding strategy and make necessary changes	14/15	Marketing Manager
8.10		Explore the opportunity to market the Park District and its various events by placing information at all playground locations. Look at the possibility of using technology (QR codes) to assist in this area	12/13 -14/15	Marketing Manager & Supt. of Parks

## **ATTACHMENTS/RESOURCE MATERIAL**

- A. Snapshot of the Park District
- B. Community Survey Results
- C. Trend Analysis Summary
- D. Summary of Focus Groups & Community Leader Interviews
- E. Strategic Plan Advisory Committee Feedback

## SNAPSHOT OF THE PARK DISTRICT

### **The Gurnee Park District and Its Services**

The Gurnee Park District, incorporated in 1968, is located in Northeastern Lake County, approximately 45 miles northwest of the Chicago Loop, adjacent to the city of Waukegan. The Park District is governed by a five member Board of Commissioners, elected for overlapping four-year terms. The Board appoints an Executive Director, Treasurer and an Attorney each year. The Park District currently encompasses 14.73 square miles and serves a population of approximately 34,170.

The Gurnee Park District provides 28 park sites and 25 playgrounds as well as a wide range of recreational services including Adult Leisure, Arts & Crafts, Before and After School CARE, Dance, Fitness, Gymnastics, Aquatic programs, Preschool, Senior mixers, Sports, Day Camps and Special Events. The Park District is a member of the Warren Special Recreation Association, which provides recreation services to individuals with special needs. The Park District owns and operates the 1500-bather capacity Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center, the Viking Park Community Center and the Hunt Club Park Community Center. The majority of programs take place at either the Viking Park Community Center or the Hunt Club Park Community Center but the District also uses space at the three local School Districts (#50, #56 and #121) and leases Gages Lake indoor pool from the Special Education District of Lake County.

### **Staff**

The District employs 39 full time, approximately 200 year round part time and 130 seasonal staff. Part of the success of the Gurnee Park District is the reputation of staff as friendly, flexible and professional individuals. To continue to attract and retain high quality employees it is vital that the District remain focused on training, communication and internal and external customer service. As a result of the last Strategic Plan, GPD initiated a successful customer service model called S.O.F.F.I. This stands for Serve, Ownership, Fun, Family and Integrity. This serves as a road map that provides direction for all employees and insures that all operate within that culture.

### **Finances**

The Park District experienced strong growth in taxable valuation in the 1990's and early 2000's because of new residential, commercial and industrial construction. In the next few years, only very modest growth is expected in both residential and commercial development. Equalized assessed valuation of \$1.275 billion for tax year 2010, represents a 5.8% decrease from 2009. Over the next three to five years, the park district expects revenue from property taxes to be relatively flat. Seventy-eight percent of the Recreation budget however, comes from user fees. Both the fitness center and aquatic center are self-supporting facilities. The Park District maintains a balanced budget and has a policy to set aside 25% of operating expenditures in fund balances. Any excess fund balance above the goal is transferred to the Capital Development/Replacement fund for future capital needs. The Park District has met this policy in all but one fund. Because of this policy, the Park District is positioned to weather any future economic storms.

### **Accolades**

The Park District was selected as the Grand Award Winner among park and recreation agencies

nationwide for the 2010 National Gold Medal Award for Excellence in Park and Recreation Management. This award is the highest achievement a Park District can receive nationally. The Gold Medal is a comprehensive award that looks at the challenges and resources of an agency and how it is meeting those challenges. Finalists compete through a series of application, master planning, and visual documentation to vie for the Grand Award, which is annually bestowed on less than 1% of all agencies. The award is offered through the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) and American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration (AAPRA).

In addition to the National Gold Medal Award, the Park District received Distinguished Accreditation from the Illinois Association of Park Districts and the Illinois Parks and Recreation Association after completing an intensive review program in the fall of 2010. The goal of the Illinois Distinguished Accreditation program is to improve the delivery of recreation services to the residents of Illinois through a voluntary comprehensive evaluation process. The desired result is to improve the quality of life for Illinois residents and to recognize those agencies that provide this quality service. Park district benefits include increased operational efficiency and policy effectiveness. The accreditation also acknowledges that the Park District employs qualified professionals and recognizes the Park District as a leader in the State of Illinois in the field of Parks and Recreation.

The Park District's Annual Budget has won the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for the past two years. The GFOA established the Distinguished Budget Presentation Awards Program (Budget Awards Program) in 1984 to encourage and assist state and local governments to prepare budget documents of the very highest quality that reflect the GFOA's best practices on budgeting and then to recognize individual governments that succeed in achieving that goal.

The Park District has also received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for its Comprehensive Financial Report for 13 consecutive years. The certificate of achievement is the highest form of recognition in governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government and its management.

Gurnee Park District maintains accreditation with PDRMA (Park District Risk Management Agency), achieving the highest safety standards in the field of parks and recreation. In 2010, the District received the highest score among all PDRMA agencies – 99.92%.

Gurnee Park District lifeguards are licensed by Ellis & Associates, the premier lifeguard body in the world. The guards have achieved the coveted Platinum Award and have achieved first place finishes in the IPRA State Lifeguard Games for the past several years.

## **Major Projects**

Major renovations were completed in 2011 at Betty Russell Park in Pembroke subdivision and at Vineyard Park in Elysian Fields subdivision. The construction of Village Park was also completed, the longest anticipated park in the District's history. Village Park is located west of Delany Road and north of Continental Drive in the northeast section of the Park District and within the City of Waukegan. It will serve about 3,000 residents in that area. Another major project was a restroom

facility that was completed in Hunt Club Park. It will serve the day camp program and athletic participants.

A major project currently underway is the conversion of the park district's registration and financial software. The park district's software needs were evaluated by staff and consultants and proposals received for new recreation software. Vermont Systems' RecTrac was chosen and will be implemented in spring 2012. The same process will also be used to choose new financial software in 2012. Having software in place that can best meet the needs of the park district will enable us to provide even better service to our customers, make better-informed business decisions, and increase our marketing research, customer relations and efficiency of the staff.

With the completion and implementation of the latest strategic plan, the district will be poised to continue on the path of sustained excellence.



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Management Executive Report for the Gurnee Park District

September 18, 2011

Ms. Susie Kuruvilla, CPRP, CPA  
Executive Director  
Gurnee Park District  
4374 Old Grand Avenue  
Gurnee, Illinois 60031

RE: NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

Dear Ms. Kuruvilla:

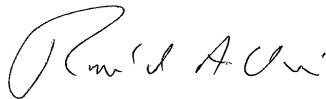
Please accept the top ten (10) findings from the 2011 needs assessment survey of Park District residents. For the vast majority of findings comparisons to the 2007 needs assessment survey are also shown. Additional for the park usage, and satisfaction charts we have provided comparisons of survey findings to benchmarking findings from other Illinois Park Districts and park systems across the country that Leisure Vision has conducted surveys for.

1. A high percentage of residents continue to use parks and participate in programs as they did in 2007. Excellent ratings for the conditions of parks and the quality of recreation programs remain high with park ratings of excellence significantly higher. Usage of the park system, participation in programs, and excellent ratings for parks conditions and program quality are all higher than Illinois and National benchmarks. (Slide top of page 3).
2. Very satisfied ratings for the overall value received from the Gurnee Park District are significantly higher in 2011 than in the 2007 survey, with the overall value ratings significantly higher than Illinois and National benchmarks. (Slide top of page 3).
3. Satisfaction levels for key Park District services have improved in all areas in 2011 compared to survey results in the 2007 survey. (Slide bottom of page 3).
4. Safety in parks and cleanliness of Park District parks and facilities are the top 2 services that should receive the most attention over the next 3 years based on the 2011 survey. These were also the top 2 services to receive attention in the 2007 survey. (Slide top of page 4).
5. Walking and biking trails, outdoor swimming pools/water parks, playground equipment, indoor swimming pool, indoor fitness and exercise facilities, indoor running/walking track, off-leash dog park, and youth soccer fields are the most important facilities to residents based on the 2011 survey. Walking and biking trails and outdoor swimming pools/water parks remain the top 2 priorities. All of these facilities were rated among the 10 most important facilities in the 2007 survey. (Chart top of page 5)
6. The Gurnee Park District is doing an excellent job meeting the needs of each of the above facilities, with the exception of an indoor pool and off-leash dog park. Generally an excellent job is done if over 30% of households indicate that there needs are 100% being met. (Chart bottom of page 5)

7. Adult fitness and wellness programs, Park District special events, youth learn to swim programs, youth sports programs and nature programs are the most important programs to residents in the 2011 survey. The same five (5) programs were the most important programs in 2007). (Chart top of page 6)
8. The Park District is doing an excellent job in meeting the needs of 6 of the 8 most important programs to residents. Water fitness programs and nature programs are the only two of the 8 most important programs that less than 30% of residents indicated their needs were 100% being met. (Chart bottom of page 6)
9. Usage has remained high at the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center and has substantially increased since 2007 at the Hunt Club Park Community Center. Usage is down substantially at the Viking Park Community Center since 2007. Only 39% of respondents who used the Viking Park Community Center rated the condition of the Center as excellent, as compared to excellent ratings from 71% of respondents who used the Hunt Club Community Center and 64% of respondents who used the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center. (Chart top of page 7)
10. Respondents would allocate \$49 out of a \$100 to improvements/maintenance of existing parks, pools, and recreation facilities. They would allocate \$25 to construction of new indoor and outdoor facilities and \$21 to the acquisition of new park land and open space. \$5 would be allocated to other parks and recreation categories. (Chart bottom of page 7)

I look forward to presenting the full 2011 Citizen Needs Assessment Survey results to members of the Gurnee Park District Board and staff.

Sincerely,



Ronald A. Vine, President

# 2011 Community Survey

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## Executive Summary Report

### Overview of the Methodology

Leisure Vision conducted a Community Survey on behalf of the Gurnee Park District during August and September of 2011. The purpose of the survey was to help establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the Gurnee Park District. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Gurnee Park District officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 2,000 households throughout the Gurnee Park District and in the surrounding area. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an automated voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys from Gurnee Park District households. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 457 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 457 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-4.6%.

The following pages summarize major survey findings.

➤ **Visiting Park District Parks.** Seventy-nine percent (79%) of households have visited Gurnee Park District parks during the past year. This is higher than the national benchmarking average of 72%, and the Illinois benchmarking average of 77%.

Of the 79% of households that have visited Park District parks during the past year, 97% rated the physical condition of the parks they've visited as either excellent (56%) or good (41%). This is significantly higher than the national benchmarking average (85%) and Illinois benchmarking average (90%) of households who rated the physical condition of parks as either excellent or good.

➤ **Participation in Park District Programs.** Forty-five percent (45%) of households have participated in Gurnee Park District programs during the past year. This is significantly higher than the national benchmarking average of 30%, and the Illinois benchmarking average of 39%.

Of the 45% of households that have participated in Park District programs during the past year, 96%

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rated the quality of the programs as either excellent (47%) or good (49%). This is significantly higher than the national benchmarking average (88%) and Illinois benchmarking average (90%) of households who rated the quality of programs as either excellent or good.

➤ **Ways Respondents Learn about Park District Programs and Activities.** The most frequently mentioned ways that respondents learn about Gurnee Park District programs and activities are: the Gurnee Park District Brochure (85%), Park District website (43%), and from friends and neighbors (32%).

➤ **Use of Park District Major Recreation Facilities.** Forty-eight percent (48%) of households have used the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center, 44% have used the Hunt Club Park Community Center, and 33% have used the Viking Park Community Center.

Of those that have used recreation facilities, 99% rated the physical condition of the Hunt Club Park Community Center as excellent or good, 98% rated the Hunt Club Park Aquatic Center as excellent or good, and 90% rated the Viking Park Community Center as excellent or good.

➤ **Organizations Used for Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Activities.** The organizations used by the highest percentage of households for indoor and outdoor recreation activities are: the Gurnee Park District (57%), the Lake County Forest Preserve District (46%), and Warren Township (38%).

➤ **Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities.** The parks and recreation facilities that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: walking and biking trails (70%), outdoor swimming pools/water parks (54%), playground equipment (44%), indoor swimming pool (43%), and indoor fitness and exercise facilities (42%).

➤ **Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the parks and recreation facilities that households rated as the most important are: walking and biking trails (51%), outdoor swimming pools/water parks (36%), playground equipment (27%), indoor swimming pool (24%), and indoor fitness and exercise facilities (23%).

➤ **Need for Recreation Programs.** The recreation programs that the highest percentage of households have a need for are: adult fitness and wellness programs (42%), Park District special events (36%), youth learn to swim programs (28%), youth sports programs (26%), and nature programs (25%).

➤ **Most Important Recreation Programs.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that households rated as the most important are: adult fitness and wellness programs (29%), Park District special events (18%), youth learn to swim programs (18%), and youth sports programs (16%).

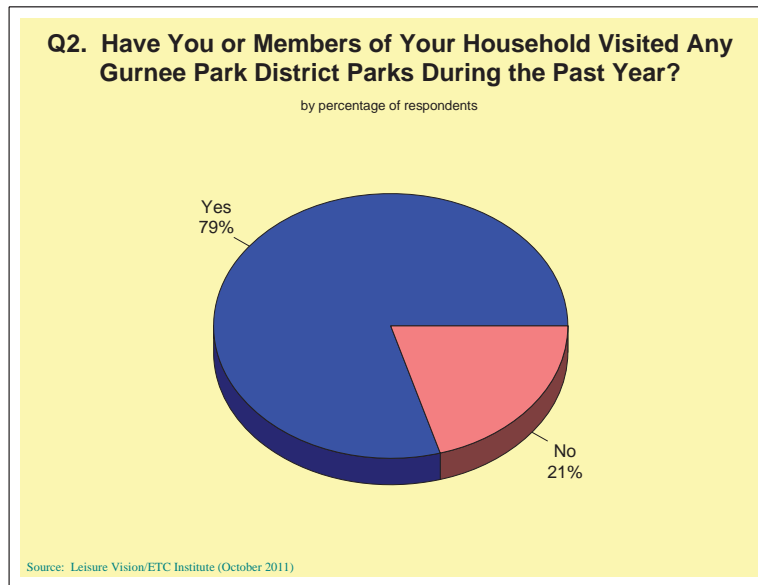
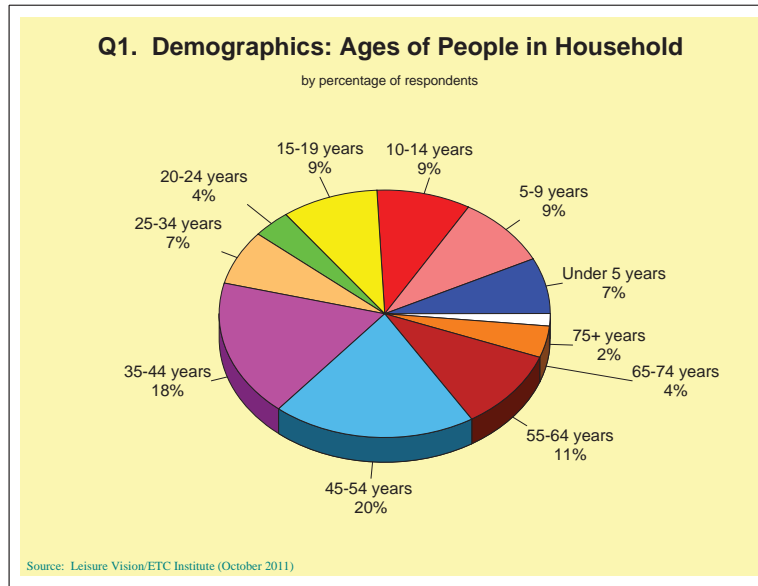
➤ **Recreation Programs Participated in Most Often at Park District Facilities.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the recreation programs that households currently participate in most often at Gurnee Park District facilities are: Park District special events (17%), youth sports programs (14%), youth learn to swim programs (13%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (12%).

## Community Attitude and Interest Survey for the Gurnee Park District

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- **Level of Satisfaction with Park District Services.** The Park District parks and recreation services that the highest percentage of households are very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with are: cleanliness of Park District parks and facilities (96%), friendliness/professionalism of Park District staff (90%), quality of indoor facilities (90%), and availability of information about Park District programs and facilities (88%).
- **Park District Services That Households Feel Should Receive the Most Attention.** Based on the sum of three top four choices, the parks and recreation services that households feel should receive the most attention from Park District officials over the next three years are: safety in parks (29%), cleanliness of Park District parks and facilities (25%), fees charged for recreation programs (21%), and innovation in developing new programs (20%).
- **Most Important Benefits Provided by Parks Trails, and Recreation Facilities and Programs.** Based on the sum of their top three choices, the most important benefits provided by parks, trails, and recreation facilities and programs are: improve physical health and fitness (48%), make Gurnee a more desirable place to live (38%), and help reduce crime (29%).
- **Allocation of \$100 Among Various Parks and Recreation Categories.** Respondents would allocate \$49 out of \$100 for the improvement/maintenance of existing parks, pools, and recreation facilities. The remaining \$51 were allocated as follows: construction of new indoor and/or outdoor facilities (\$25), acquisition of new park land and open space (\$21), and “other” (\$5).
- **Level of Satisfaction with the Overall Value Received from the Park District.** Seventy-five percent (75%) of households are either very satisfied (42%) or somewhat satisfied (33%) with the overall value their household receives from the Gurnee Park District. Only 6% of households are either somewhat dissatisfied (3%) or very dissatisfied (3%) with the Park District. In addition, 11% of respondents rated the Park District as “neutral”, and 8% indicated “don’t know”.

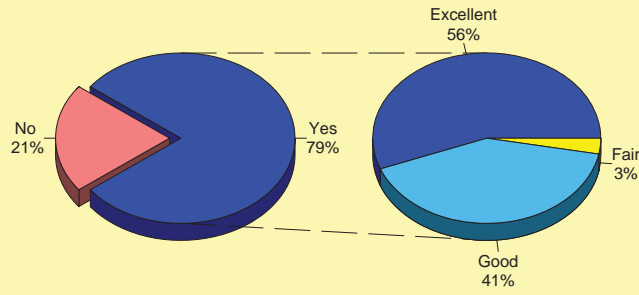
2011 Community Survey for the Gurnee Park District



**Q2. Have You or Members of Your Household Visited Any Gurnee Park District Parks During the Past Year?**

by percentage of respondents

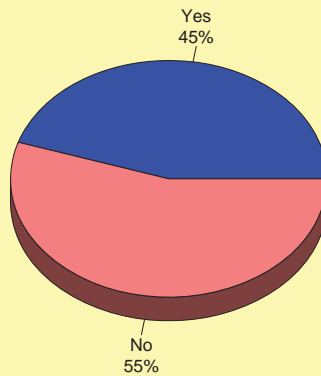
**Q2a. How Would You Rate the Physical Condition of All the Gurnee Park District Parks You Have Visited?**



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

**Q3. Have You or Members of Your Household Participated in Any Recreation Programs Offered by the Gurnee Park District During the Past Year?**

by percentage of respondents

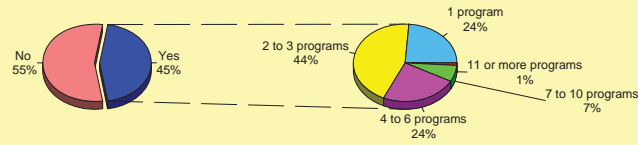


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

**Q3. Have You or Members of Your Household Participated in Any Recreation Programs Offered by the Gurnee Park District During the Past Year?**

by percentage of respondents

**Q3a. Number of Different Park District Recreation Programs That Households Have Participated in Over the Past Year**

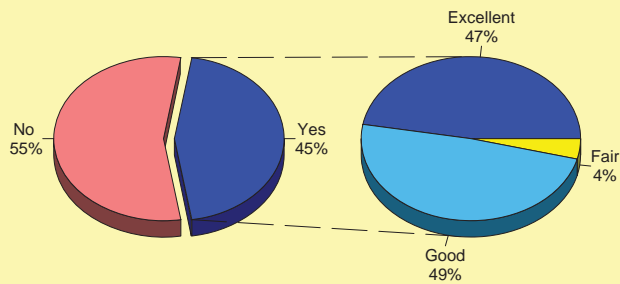


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

**Q3. Have You or Members of Your Household Participated in Any Recreation Programs Offered by the Gurnee Park District During the Past Year?**

by percentage of respondents

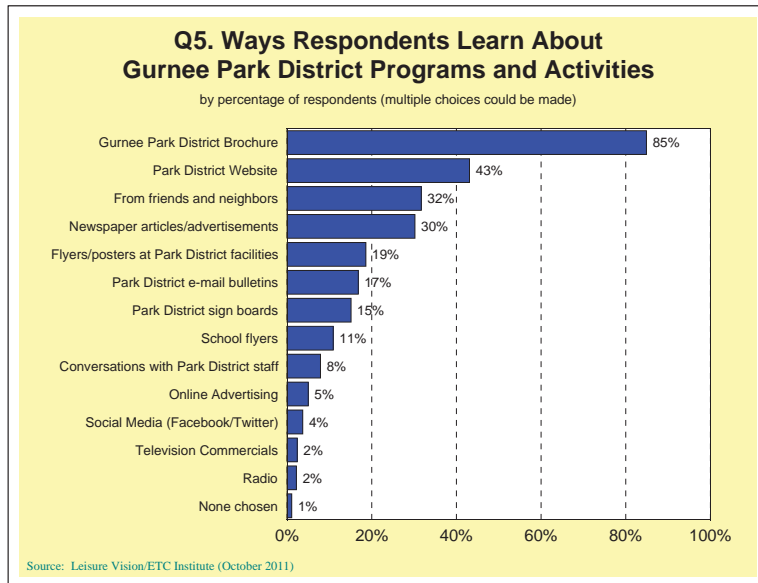
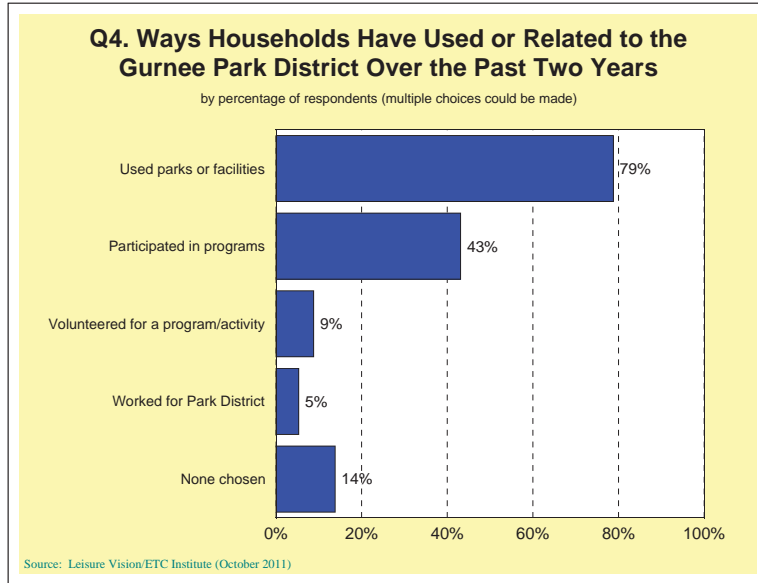
**Q3b. How Would You Rate the Overall Quality of the Park District Recreation Programs Your Household Has Participated in?**



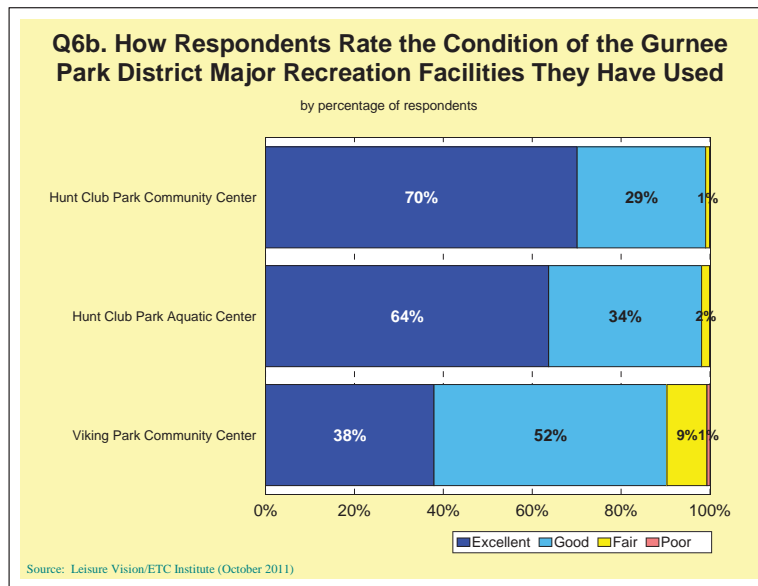
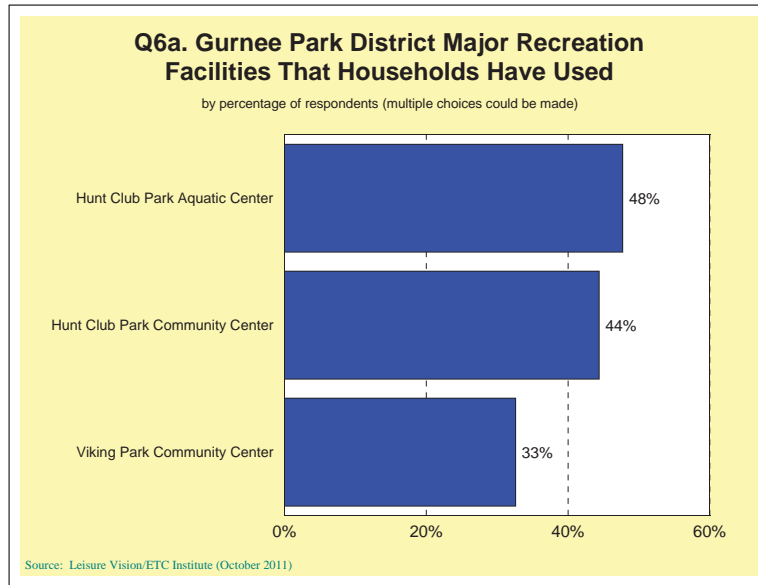
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)



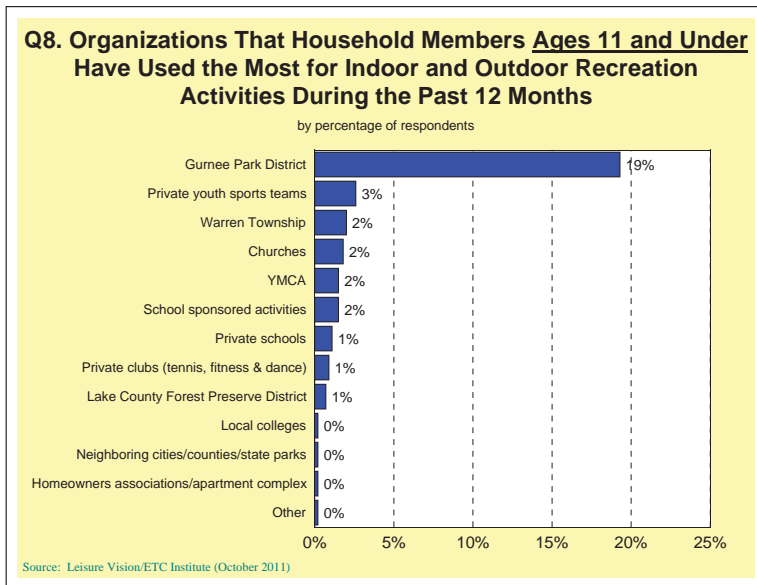
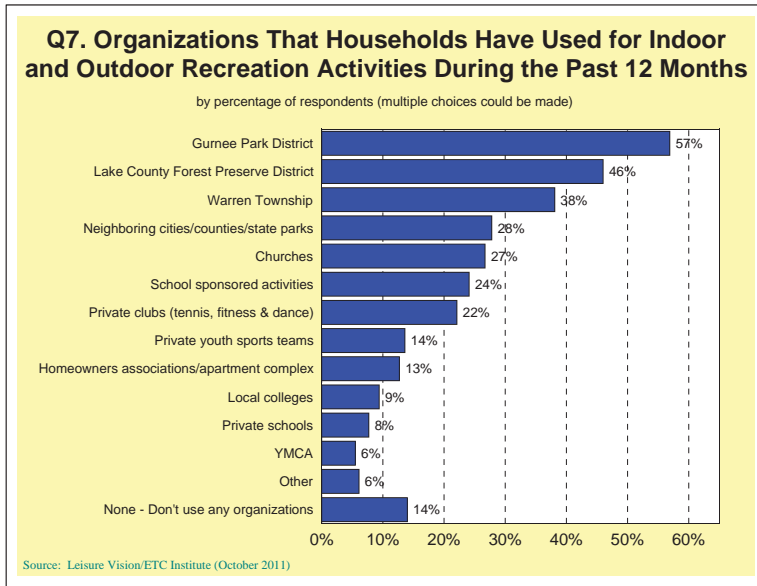
2011 Community Survey for the Gurnee Park District

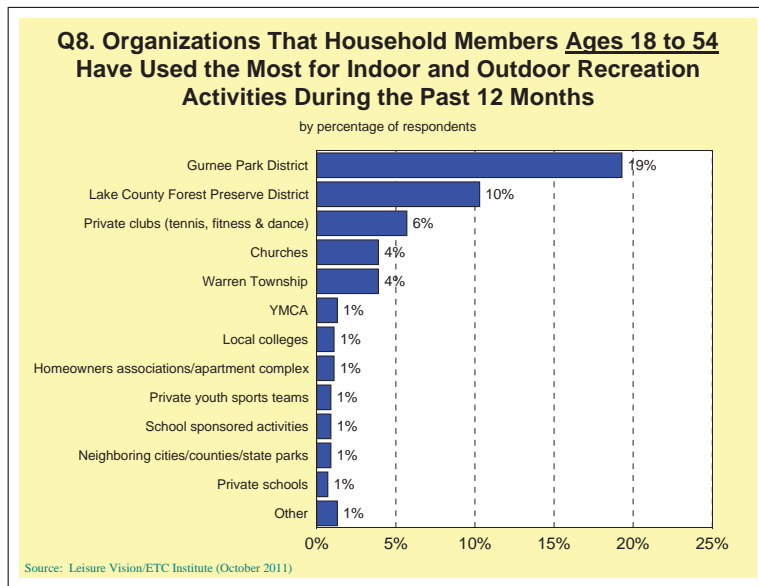
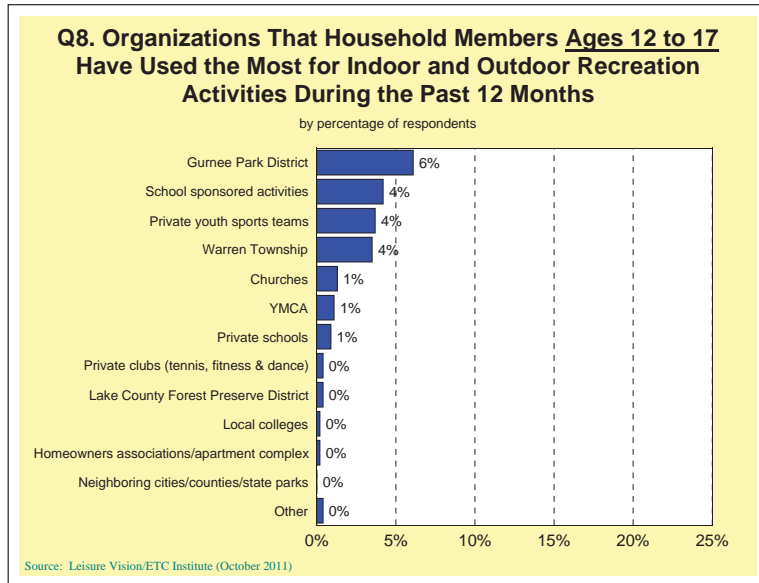


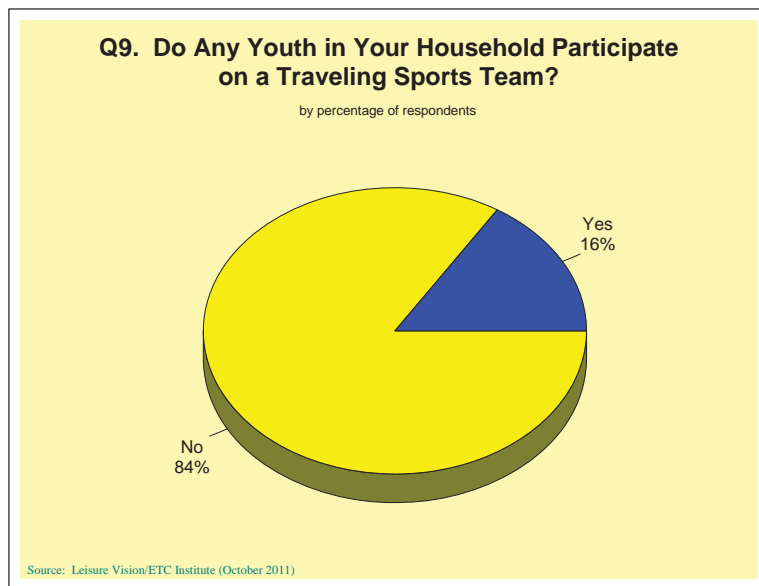
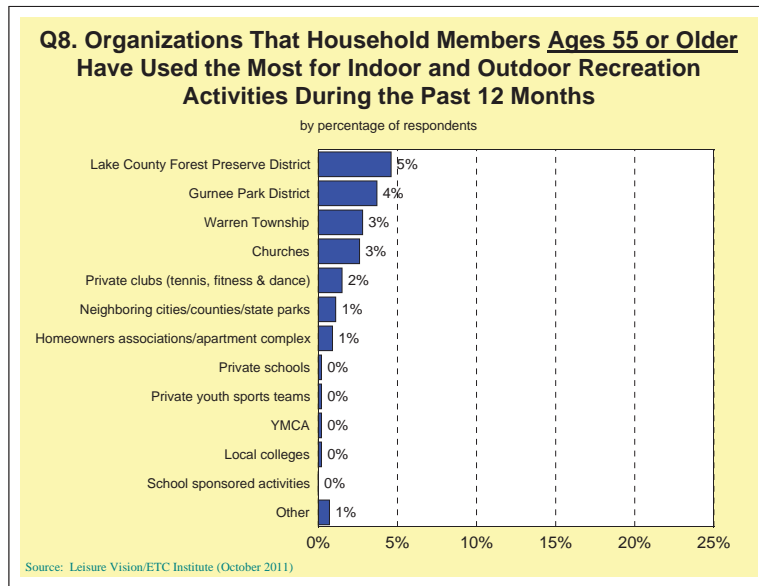
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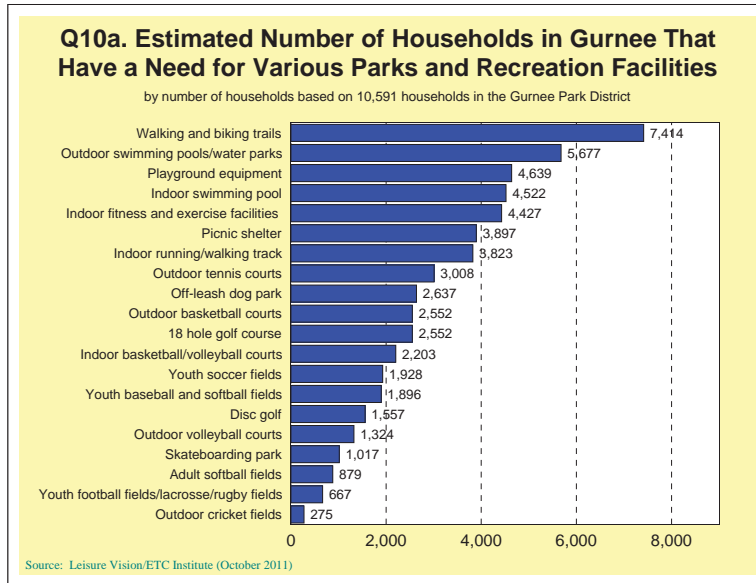
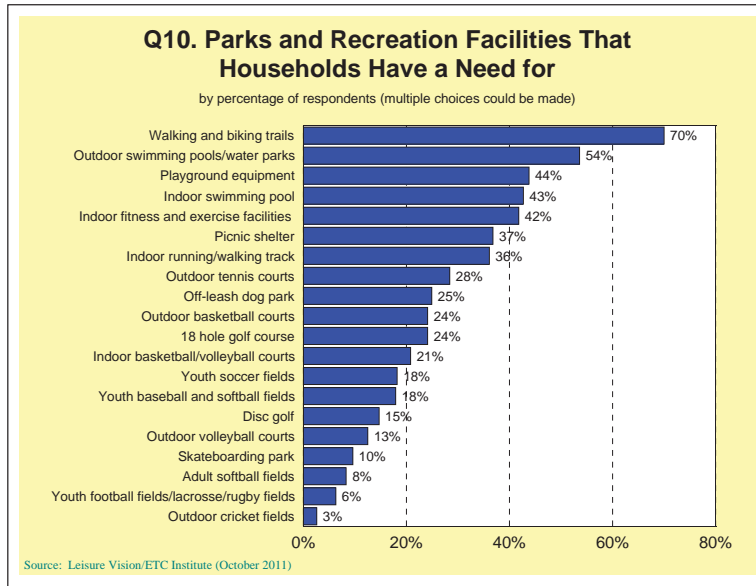
2011 Community Survey for the Gurnee Park District



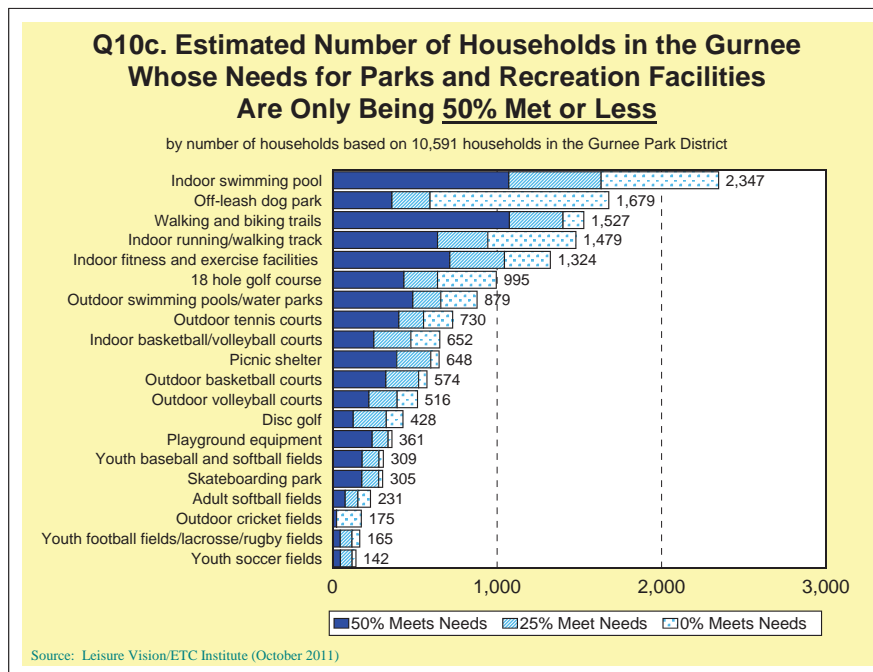
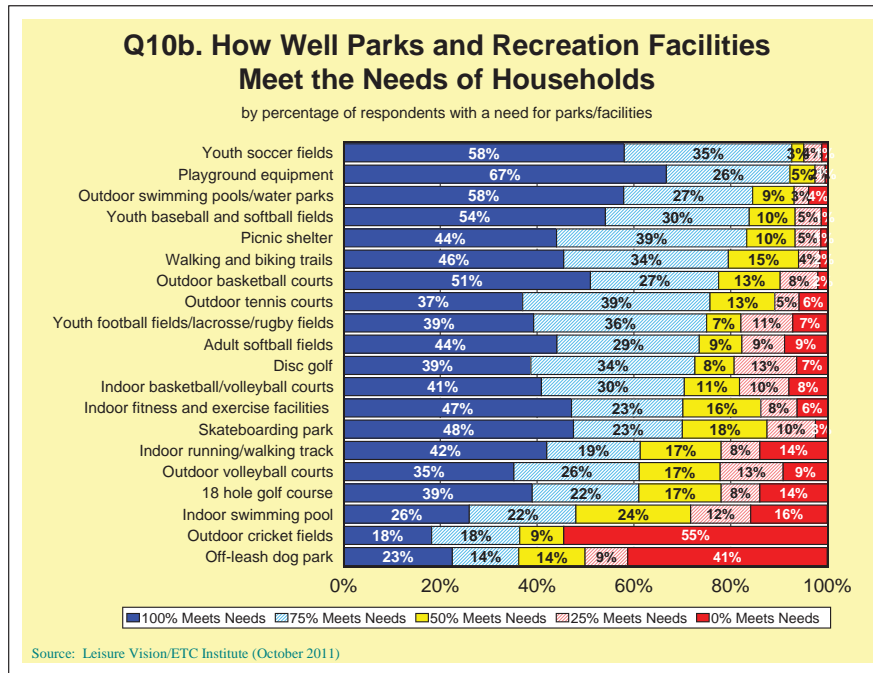




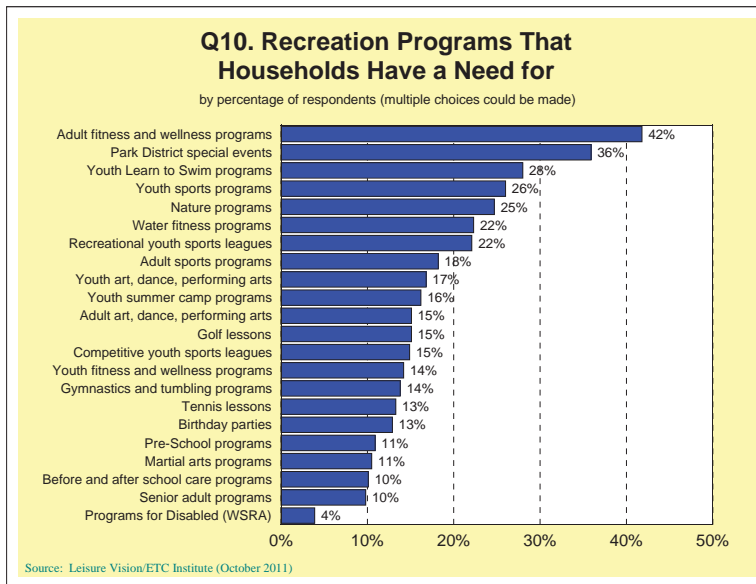
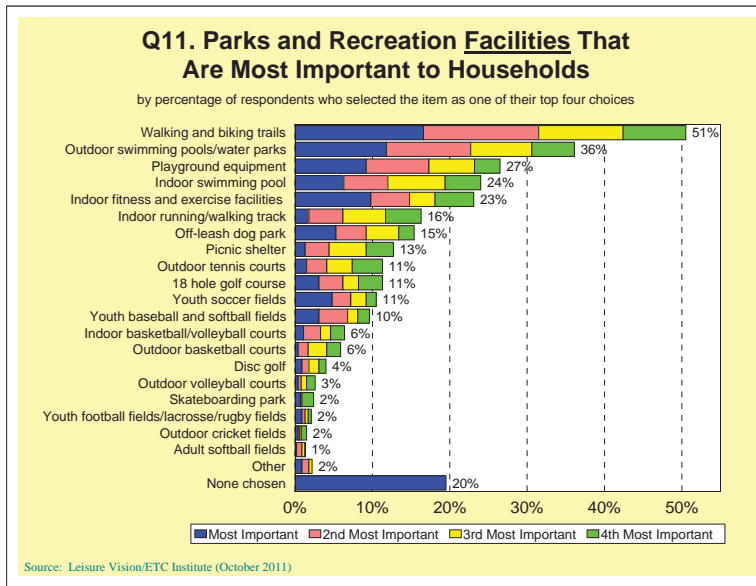
2011 Community Survey for the Gurnee Park District



## 2011 Community Survey for the Gurnee Park District

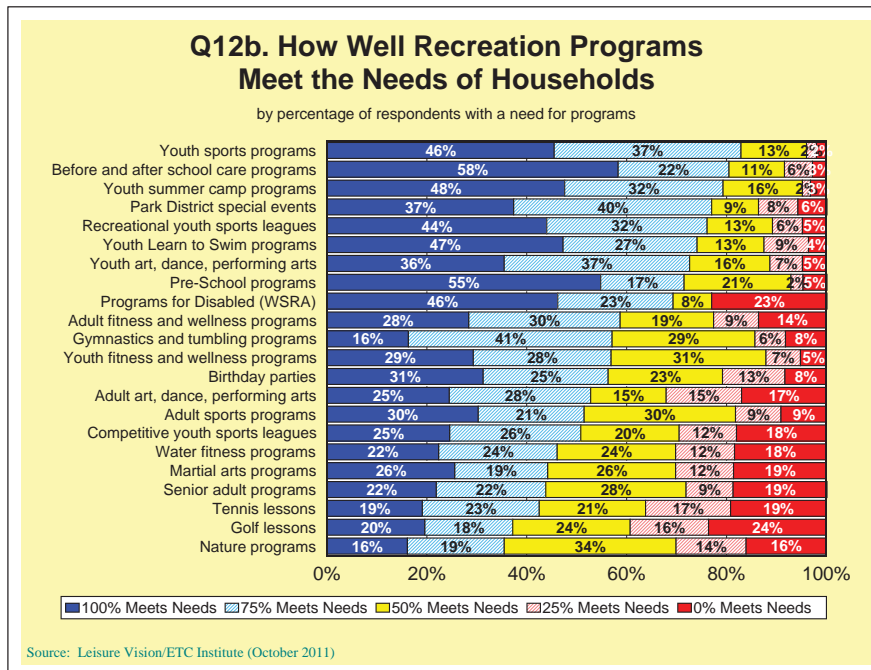
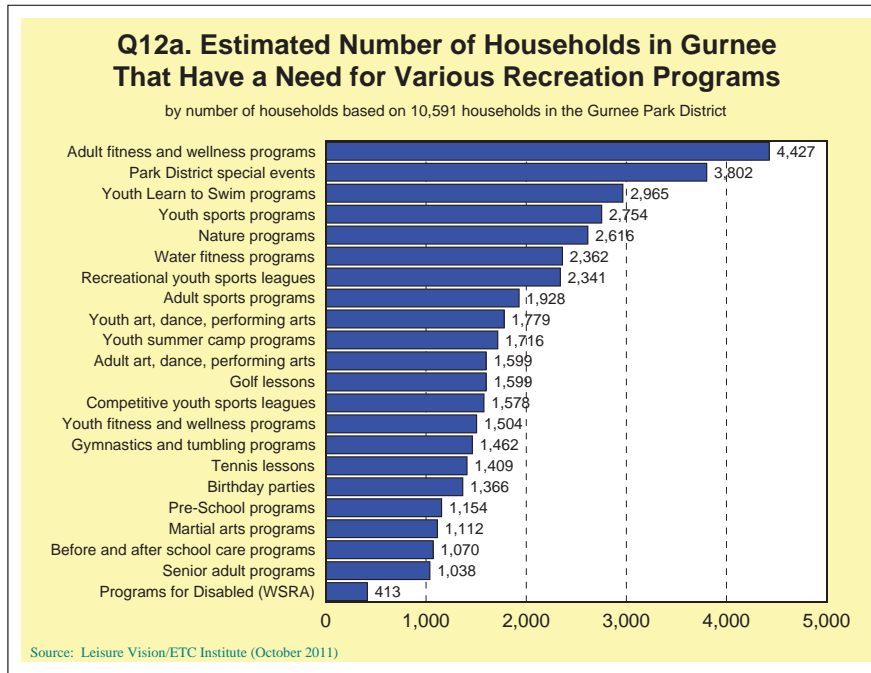


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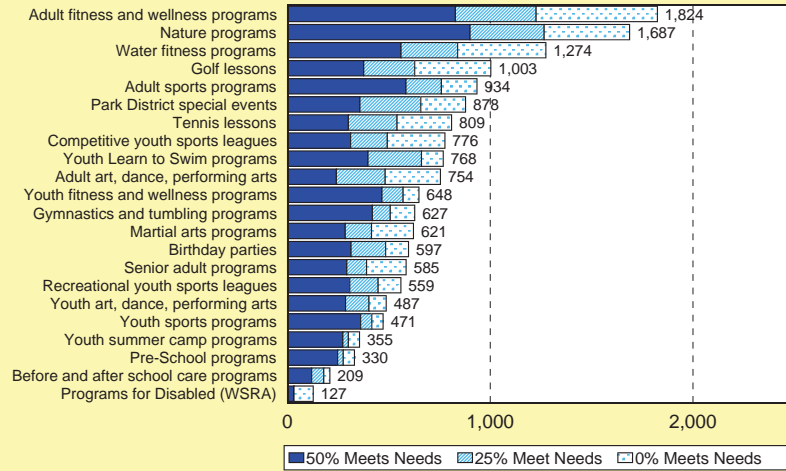
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### Q12c. Estimated Number of Households in Gurnee Whose Needs for Recreation Programs Are Only Being 50% Met or Less

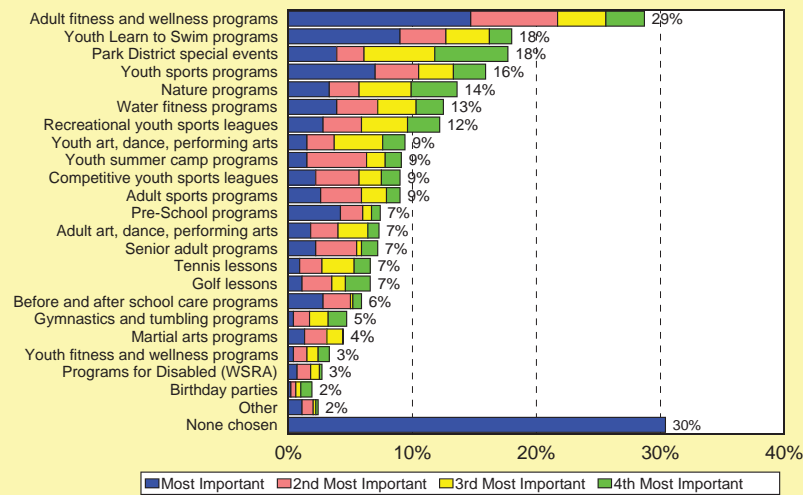
by number of households based on 10,591 households in the Gurnee Park District



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

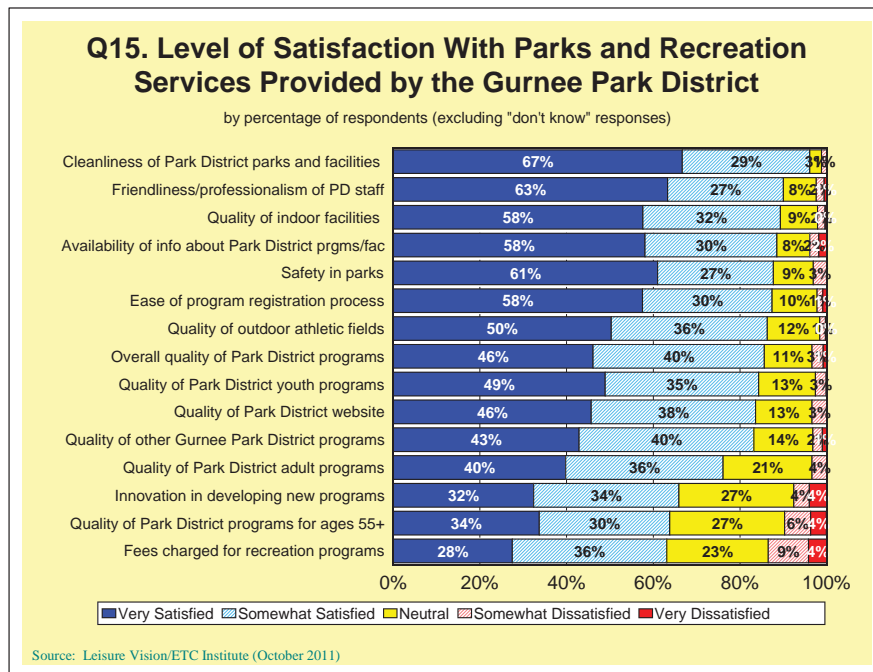
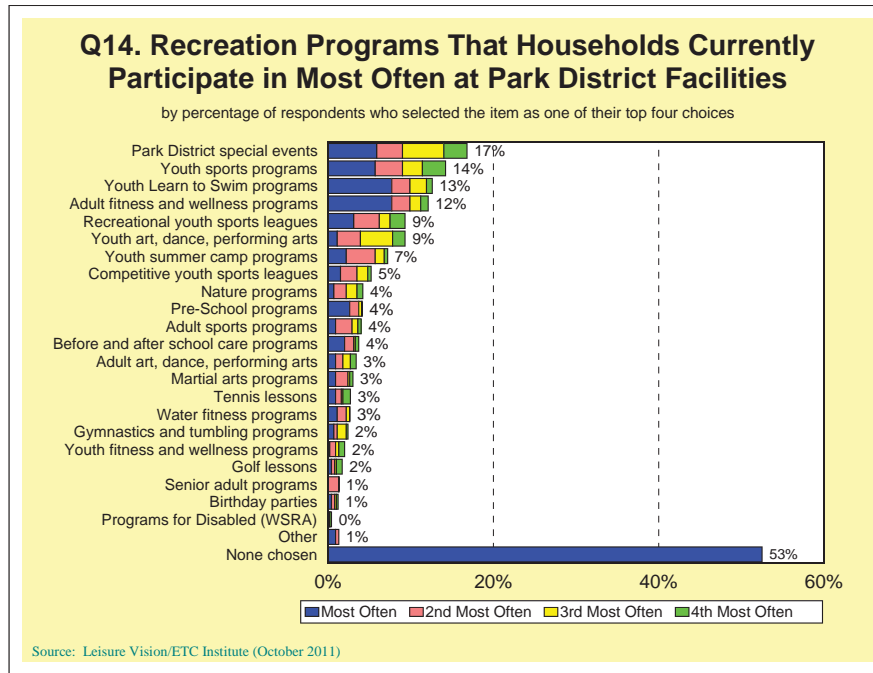
### Q13. Recreation Programs That Are Most Important to Households

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

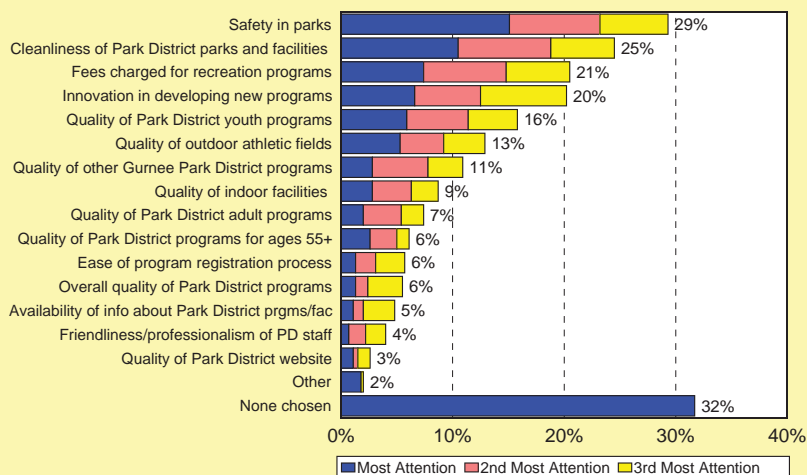
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### Q16. Parks and Recreation Services That Households Feel Should Receive the Most Attention From Gurnee Park District Officials Over the Next Three Years

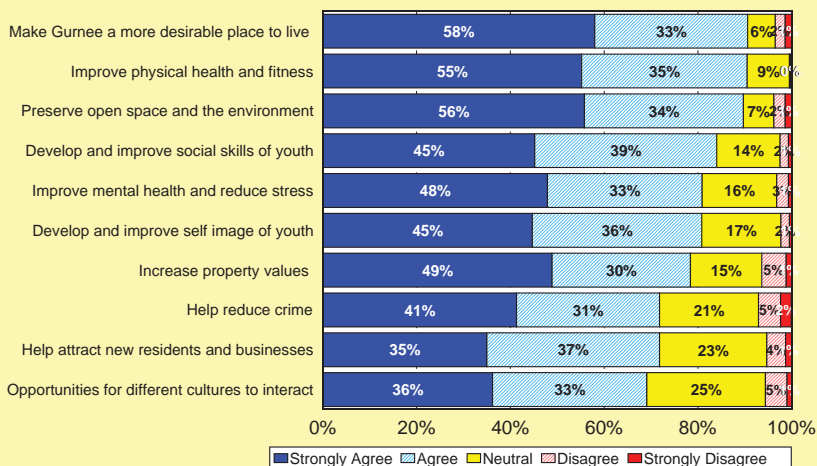
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

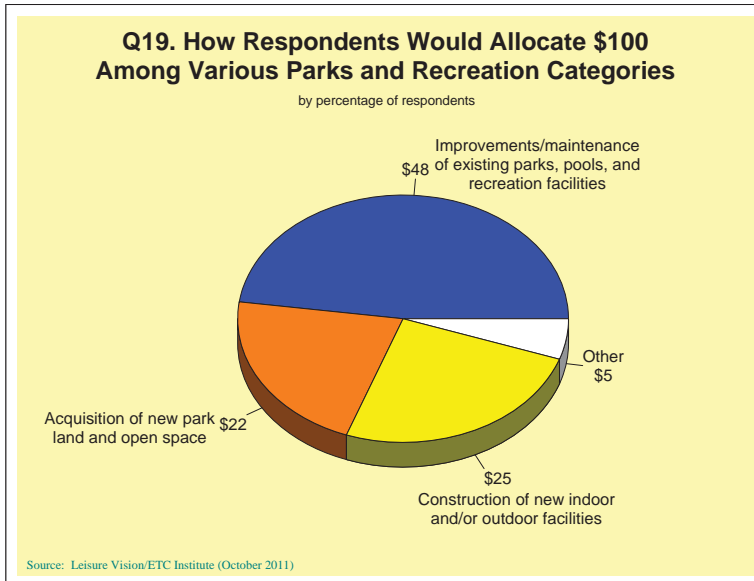
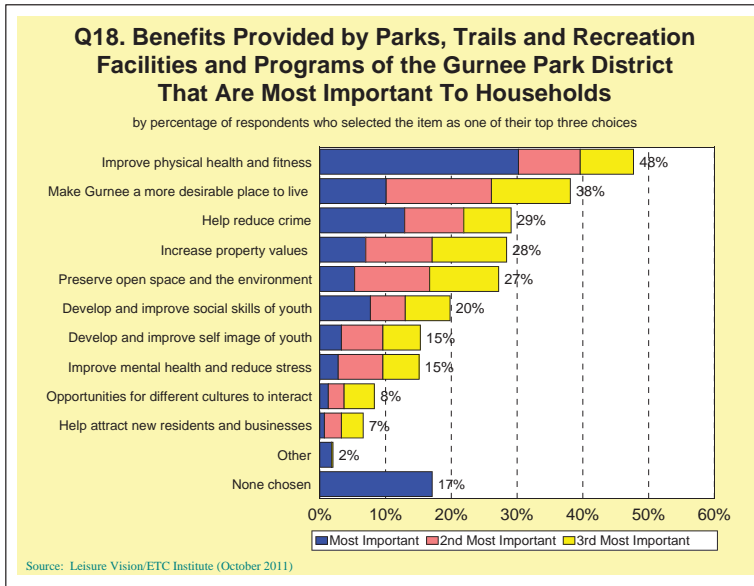
### Q17. Level of Agreement with Potential Benefits Provided by Parks, Trails and Recreation Facilities and Programs of the Gurnee Park District

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know" responses)

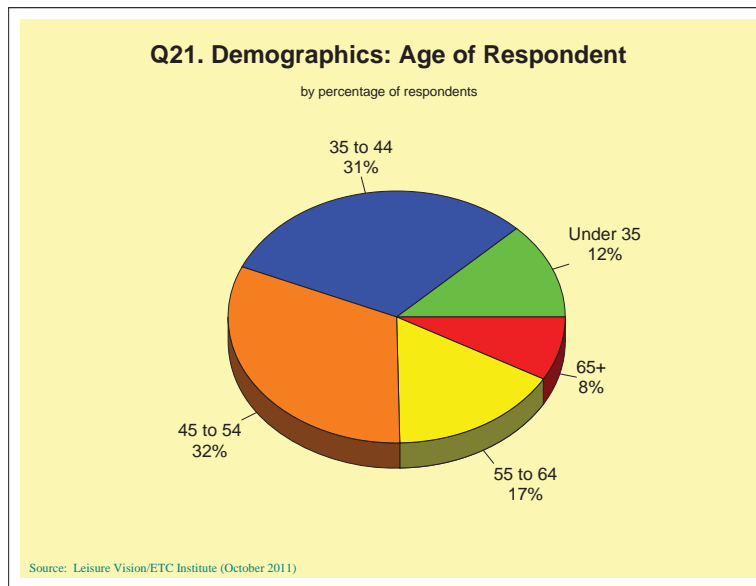
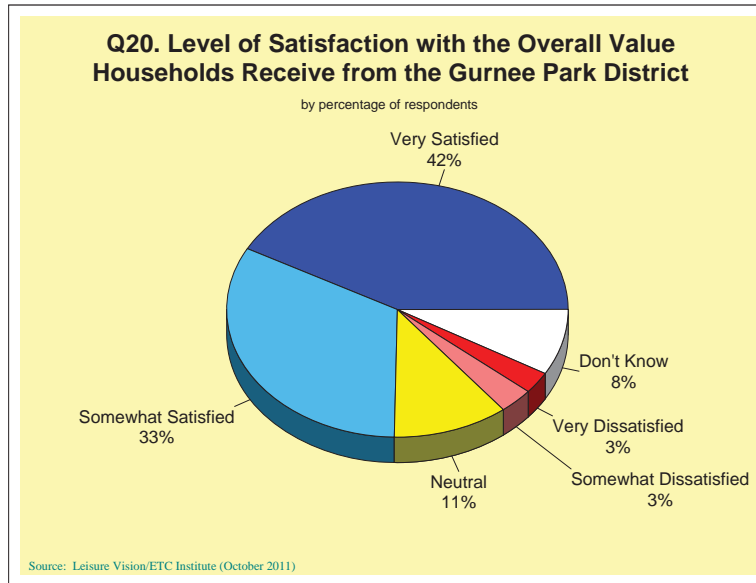


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (October 2011)

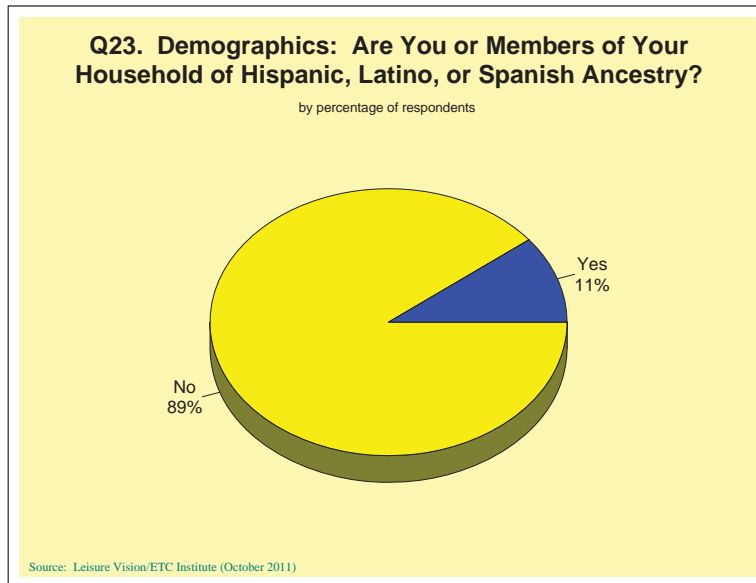
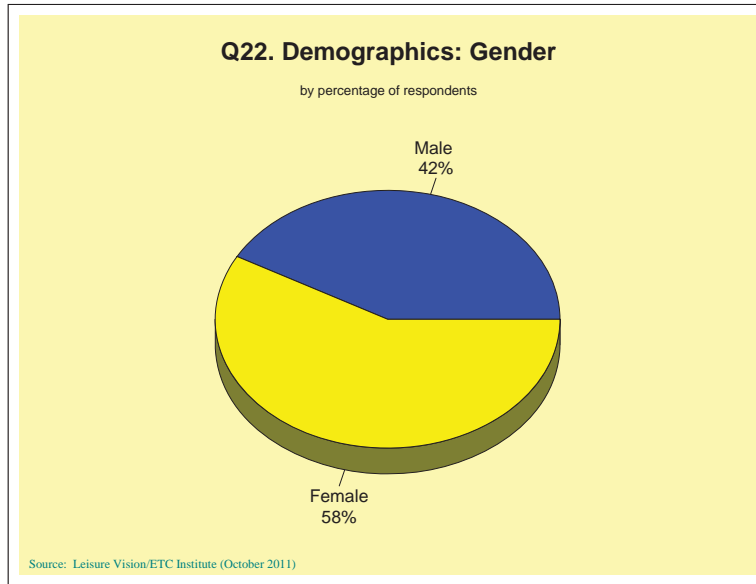
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## TREND ANALYSIS SUMMARY

### Recreation

1. Flexible scheduling for before & after school CARE and camp – pay for 2 or 3 or 4 days rather than five days.
2. Technology – want to be connected to and responded to immediately (especially when it involves their children)
3. Groupon – alternate marketing - ways to entice new customers
4. Baby boomers – have different leisure needs – cannot program for them the way they have in the past.
  - Fastest growing fitness/gym group. Fitness memberships up 387% since 1987.
  - They like teams – softball, pickleball
  - have many hobbies
5. Health issues of young athletes (concussion, etc.). New legislation and increased awareness in the media.
6. Synthetic versus natural turf fields
7. Younger sport specialization- also expected to do it year round (must choose one sport)
8. Growing demand for external youth leagues’ usage of facilities
9. Enrichment for youth sports - Offer a 3rd day for training with a professional. (now its a practice day and game day only)
10. Trends of the “Let’s Move” campaign and “No child left inside”. Recreation van that goes to different parks every night – for both nature, crafts programming, etc.
11. Group fitness has had phenomenal growth; it is more social-based.
12. Corporate wellness is a trend – means lower insurance claims cost to the corporation
13. Aquatics – increasing impact of government regulations that keep changing. (i.e. Virginia Graeme Baker Act, new ADA regulations)
14. Splash pads & spray grounds – in neighborhoods
15. Therapy pool-fitness therapy
16. Shaded areas –sun exposure concerns
17. Geo-caching
18. Bicycle-friendly parks and programs
  - Non-vehicle transport/paths/interconnection
19. Decrease in preschool enrollment because new families are not moving in (because houses aren’t selling)
20. More drop in child care for any program or general personal needs
21. Early Childhood Yoga movement – spatial awareness for young children

### Parks

1. Reduce cost to maintain parks (do more with less)
2. Increase efficiency
3. 25% of districts surveyed have splash pads in their parks (Waukegan and Grayslake have them) 28.5% plan to add them in the next 3 years
4. Playgrounds –
  - adding natural colors and elements
  - synthetic turf
5. ADA accessibility – we are ahead because we have our plan completed, but we need to act on it.



6. Skate parks -3rd favorite youth activity in 2010
7. Trails - interconnectivity
8. Dog parks – 25.7% of districts have dog parks
9. Artificial turf is trend in high schools and will become more so in the future. There is a safety aspect to artificial turf
10. Must be efficient in our system without sacrificing effectiveness
11. “Going Green” trend – green initiatives

## **Business**

1. Technology –keeping up – there are five components to technology:
  - network infrastructure
  - desktop equipment
  - major software systems (Rec Reg. & financial)
  - telephone system
  - mobile devices

Budget appropriately each year because catch-up is costly. Have the right partnerships (Excalibur, consultant Garry Vaccaro) make sure they understand the park district world.

  - Training-people have to know how to use it. Trend is going paper-less.
  - Customer needs versus security –Wifi – there are security issues with providing it to customers in our facilities.
2. Definition of a household- many participants do not fall into the category of the “traditional” household.
  - The ‘household’ factors into how we do business.
  - Treat our customers consistently but maintain the integrity of what we want our policies to be.
  - Really listen to the front line people who deal with this issue.
3. Communication-we communicate to customers and to our employees.
  - Ways to communicate – choose the communication means that satisfies the customers as they would like, but spend our money wisely.
  - Employee communication – intranet site –push out information to our employees. General information and benefit information would also be available to them.
4. Tax dollars/EAV/economy
  - Questioning government agency spending
  - Taxpayers want to know where dollars are going and what the value is
  - EAV-trend is that the EAV is dropping in the park district. The days of the EAV increasing are over.
  - Proposed legislation questions - if there is drop in EAV, the agency won’t be able to increase the tax levy. If tax law stays the same, we need to explain this to taxpayers who pay the same or more even though their house value goes down.
  - Analyze and maximize program revenue.
5. Employee benefits-
  - Compensating and recognizing employees
  - our salary study is important
  - Benefits size-we can’t compete with private sector. Much is out of our control (pension).
  - Health insurance cost – we can be diligent as an agency but costs can be out of our control.
  - Stay on the front line – continue membership in PDRMA and communicate with employees (e.g. if there is a large increase in premiums).
  - Health Insurance/Health care reform – we don’t know the whole impact of it yet.
6. Treasury management-

- Affected by low interest rates
  - Be true to our investment policy
  - There is the negative trend of on line hacking and fraud
  - Make sure we have the right banking partners and they offer us products to make us safe.
7. Transparency in government-
- lots of legislation – e.g. Open Meetings Act, FOIA
  - Monitor policies and procedures so we have them in place and up to date
  - Respect the policies and the people heavily involved in making those policies

### **Marketing/Public Relations**

1. Technology
  - Website- the way we receive information from customers is changing
  - Different platforms - iPads, smart phones. Continue to monitor. They look at us as a business not a government. We have to keep up.
2. Competition-
  - many private sector choices available – travel teams, fitness and other major revenue producing services – after school care, preschool, etc.
3. Shrinking journalism & PR
  - Journalists are going away. How news is delivered is changing. More is being produced by marketing and PR people and being applied to news sources. Factualness is suspect. If we don't do it, no one will.
4. Social relationships
  - trend that businesses have a personality
  - Social media-Groupon, Living Social, Twitter.
  - Expectation is growing that it is a 24 hr. business.
5. Alternate revenue sources- a lot of businesses realize they have a lot to gain by partnering with us.
  - Sponsors
  - Partnerships
  - Exchange of services
  - Support program revenue
  - Subsidize
6. Communications –
  - public is expecting instantaneous response
  - Technology-(alternate forms)
  - Staff is reevaluating emergency plans currently and that will evolve over time

## SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUPS & COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEWS

A series of focus groups and interviews were conducted in June 2011 to obtain background information and input for the 2012-2015 Gurnee Park District Strategic Plan.

A total of 50 park district residents participated in 4 focus groups and 11 interviews. The focus groups consisted of 1) Gurnee Park District Board of Commissioners (5 participants), 2) selected Gurnee Park District Staff (13 participants), 3) active Gurnee Park District users (11 participants) and 4) Gurnee Park District volunteers (10 participants). Individual interviews consisted of key Gurnee community government and educational leaders.

Current Perceptions of Gurnee Park District:

Well-run organization (good business model), prudent fiscal operations, enthusiastic staff, benefit to the entire community, great cooperation with other taxing bodies, excellent leaders, history of strong board, very professional staff, taxpayers are well-served, wonderful coordination across community organizations (schools, village,...), terrific partners with schools, well-run, marketing is great, wonderful achievements and awards, very open to working with other community organizations, great park district...but must continue to move forward, great leadership, excellent cooperation with other taxing bodies, very-high standards...but must not get complacent, great staff, gorgeous facilities, 2nd to no one, great leadership and good boards, great-relationships across community.

Key themes that emerged (In order of frequency of mentions):

1. Maintain current standards (diverse programming, great parks, safety, security, maintenance, customer-service focus, and staff quality)...insure that there is no drop-off!
2. Create more indoor programming space; gym space, fitness space, community casual gathering space.
3. Develop more sports fields; to accommodate current needs and emerging sports such as la crosse, cricket, rugby, disc golf.
4. Anticipate and plan for adverse economic scenarios.
5. Investigate and develop more partnerships; programs with schools, programs with the library, the village, and Warren Township.
6. Recognize the need for an indoor community swimming pool.
7. Develop more bike and walking trails to interconnect the village.
8. Improve program scheduling. Insure more coordination between class start times vs. day-care drop off, possible conflicts between school activities vs. park district activities.
9. Understand changing demographics; specifically, unmet needs for teens and seniors.
10. Market and tell the park district story; it's a great park district. Keep spreading the word.

## STRATEGIC PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS SUMMARY

The Park District conducted three meetings with 11 residents composing the “Strategic Plan Advisory Committee” on October 19, November 9 and November 16, 2011.

The committee members were presented with a general overview of the Gurnee Park District including its Demographics, Finances, Parks and Facilities, Recreation Services, and Park District Strengths, Challenges, and Goals.

Facilitator Charlie Williams explained the strategic planning process, the new mission and vision statements, and then shared the 2011 Community Survey results.

As department heads presented each of eight initiatives, the committee members shared feedback or asked questions. The eight initiatives were presented at the October 19 meeting. Specific objectives were offered for each initiative on the succeeding meeting nights and additional feedback was received.

**Initiative #1: Deliver Innovative Programs and Services that align with current and future needs of the community**

Comments on this initiative included the need for more walking and biking trails and the need to connect the trails that exist. While the survey showed some unmet needs in Park District services, none of these was listed by respondents as a “top four unmet need”. A participant commented that some needs are met through other nearby agencies, so the need is met. “Because the Park District does so much already, perhaps we are reaching the point of diminishing marginal returns.” Comment was also made that Warren Special Recreation Association services need to be publicized more widely perhaps through early childhood services in the schools.

Comments regarding the objectives presented on 11/9 were positive. GPD should encourage more free play in parks perhaps through a “park leader” program. An employee would be available certain hours of the day in a park for structured activities, guidance and supervision. Another commented that the recreation needs of the baby boomers should be addressed; they are different from older seniors. Youth sport skills classes would be helpful to fill the gap between recreation and competitive sport teams or in the off-season.

**Initiative #2: Attract and Retain High Quality Employees at All Levels**

The objectives presented were received positively by the committee. Comments included that while refinement of and efficiencies in staffing decisions and training opportunities make sense, the District should not lose a sense of the human touch because it is a big part of the GPD image and a source of pride. Hiring a diverse staff was important to the committee. The mentoring program should be continued and enhanced. Exit interviews and keeping in touch with summer employees once they go on to their professional life was a suggestion as well.

**Initiative #3: Sustain long-term financial strength**

The objectives for this initiative were discussed. The policy on serving non-residents was explained. Ultimately, GPD wants to serve residents first but we also make it attractive to non-residents so that programs meet minimums. It was commented that the word ‘strength’ is preferred to ‘stability’ in this title because it is more powerful and in tune with what the Park District has already accomplished. Corporate sponsorship for youth leagues was suggested. “It can be a good thing if it’s handled right”. Scholarships for needy individuals was important to the committee.

#### Initiative #4: Maximize Operational Efficiency through Technology

Feedback on this initiative and objectives included the request to continue to have the phone answered by a person and not resort to an automated phone system. It was also suggested that it would be helpful for the new Recreation software to be capable of suggesting classes (target marketing) e.g. based on sex and age of child. Another committee member commented that she wants the convenience of the website storing her credit card information.

#### Initiative #5: Enhance the park experience

Walking and biking trails were discussed. There needs to be a consolidated place to find out where trails are located. The Park District trail map is in the brochure but could be added to the Village and Library websites. The placement of QR codes in parks would tell where nearby trails are located. Trail lengths should also be marked as part of “fine tuning” current amenities. Security in parks was raised as an issue and the recent addition of cameras at Viking Park was noted by staff. Neighborhood Watch groups could get involved in security of parks. “Park liaisons” or “Adopt-a-Park” programs were suggested to add beautification and enhance safety. Artificial turf was suggested at Hunt Club Park as well as lights on the fields. Staff noted that lights could be a problem for adjoining residents however. In general, lights in neighborhood parks would increase park usage and enhance the sense of security. Restroom availability at neighborhood parks was noted as a need of those with children.

#### Initiative #6: Explore Opportunities for Additional Parks and Facilities

GPD should work with the Village and Lake County Forest Preserve regarding connectivity of trails. Perhaps a Village committee could be re-established for this purpose. The Village and Police Department could endorse a connection from trail to trail on a less traveled, bike-friendly route and add signage to that effect.

The District 56 school in Wadsworth as well as O’Plaine School were suggested as CARE sites by the Superintendent. It was suggested that the camp manual explain what happens on rain days. Some parents assume that children stay where they are dropped off.

#### Initiative #7: Broaden External Relations to Maximize District Effectiveness

Advice was given to “... not wait for relationships to happen – go out and seek the relationship”. It was also suggested that sponsorships be explored further. Perhaps more advocates are needed to assist the Board in following legislation that affects the Parks and Recreation field or to create opportunities for

legislators to meet with the Board on issues important to the District.

#### Initiative #8: Expand Visibility and Strengthen Community Awareness

Free Wi-Fi was suggested for facilities and in parks. Staff is researching this currently but there are security issues to consider, especially relating to GPD financial systems. It was suggested that more “big picture” information be placed on the GPD website regarding programs like dance or soccer to explain the levels as you progress through a program. Better search criteria could enhance the website so that you can easily see for example, what camps are offered for a 2nd grader or at a particular time or day. For parents new to a program, it would be helpful to have someone act as a liaison such as a volunteer in the program, a coach that had been in the program or offer an information session before a program begins. It was suggested that GPD spotlight a sport such as baseball in Gurnee. It was explained that GPD could not put another program’s information out if we already affiliate with one particular organization.