
2019 Prince William County Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Executive Summary

Overview

ETC Institute administered a Parks and Recreation Survey for Prince William County in the winter of 2019. The survey was conducted as part of the County's efforts to assist in prioritizing demands and opportunities that will improve and maintain parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services. The results of this survey will guide the County in making decisions that will best serve the needs of its residents.

Methodology

ETC Institute mailed a survey packet to a random sample of households in Prince William County, Virginia. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online at www.PWCSurvey.org.

Ten days after the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute sent emails and placed phone calls to the households that received the survey to encourage participation. The emails contained a link to the online version of the survey to make it easy for residents to complete. To prevent people who were not residents of Prince William County from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. ETC Institute then matched the addresses that were entered online with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not counted.

The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 2,400 residents. The goal was exceeded with a total of 2,455 residents completing the survey. The overall results for the sample of 2,455 households have a precision of at least +/-1.97% at the 95% level of confidence.

This report contains the following:

- Charts showing the overall results of the survey (Section 1)
- Priority Investment Rating (PIR) that identifies priorities for facilities and programs (Section 2)
- Benchmarking analysis comparing the City's results to national results (Section 3)
- Tabular data showing the overall results for all questions on the survey (Section 4)
- A copy of the survey instrument (Section 5)

The major findings of the survey are summarized on the following pages.

Use and Rating of Parks and Facilities

Use. Seventy-four percent (74%) of respondent households indicated they had visited Prince William County Parks and Recreation parks or facilities in the past 12 months.

Rating. Of the households that had visited Prince William County Parks and Recreation parks or facilities in the past 12 months (74%), over three-quarters (77%) rated the overall physical condition of the parks and facilities as “excellent” (19%) or “good” (58%). Nineteen percent (19%) of respondents gave the overall physical condition of the parks/facilities a “fair” rating, 2% of respondent households gave the overall physical condition of the parks/facilities a “below average” rating and 1% of respondents gave the overall physical condition of the parks/facilities a “poor” rating.

Organizations Used for Parks and Recreation Needs

Respondent households were asked, from a list of 12 various organizations, to indicate the entities they have used for parks, trails, and recreation activities during the past 12 months. The highest rated include: Prince William County parks (60%), State of Virginia (48%), and National parks (41%). Respondents indicated the organizations that they and/or their household members use most, based on the sum of their top two choices, were: Prince William County parks (39%), schools (19%), and State of Virginia parks (18%).

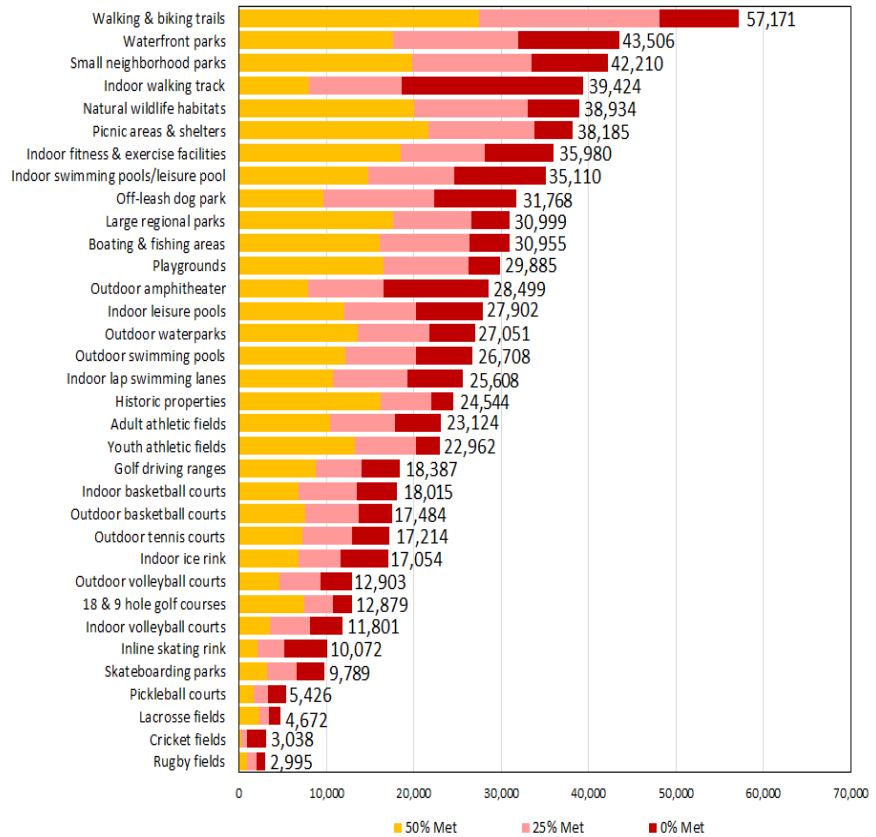
Facility Needs and Priorities

Facility Needs: Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 34 recreation facilities and rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various facilities.

The top four recreation facilities with the highest percentage of households that indicated a need for the facility were: walking and biking trails (72%), picnic areas and shelters (56%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (55%), and small neighborhood parks (52%). ETC Institute estimates a total of 105,676 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for walking and biking trails, an estimated total of 81,592 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for picnic areas and shelters, and an estimated total of 80,133 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for indoor fitness and exercise facilities. ETC Institute estimates a total of 57,171 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for walking and biking trails, an estimated total of 43,506 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for waterfront parks, an estimated total of 42,210 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for small neighborhood parks and an estimated total of 39,424 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for an indoor walking track. The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 34 facilities that were assessed is shown in the chart at the top of the following page.

Q4. Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs for Facilities are Being Met 50% or Less

by number of households based on an estimated total of 145,961 households in Prince William County, Virginia



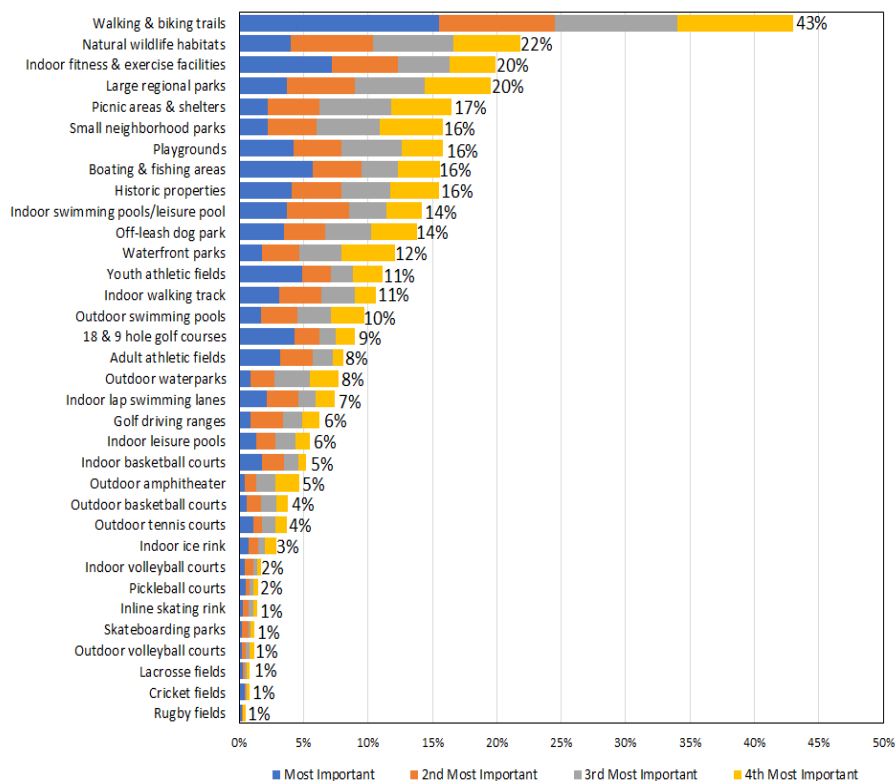
Facility Importance: In addition to assessing the needs for each facility, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each facility. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the four most important facilities to residents were:

1. walking and biking trails (43%),
2. natural wildlife habitats (22%),
3. indoor fitness and exercise facilities (20%), and
4. large regional parks (20%).

The percentage of residents who selected each facility as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart at the top of the following page.

Q5. Facilities That Are Most Important to Respondent Households

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

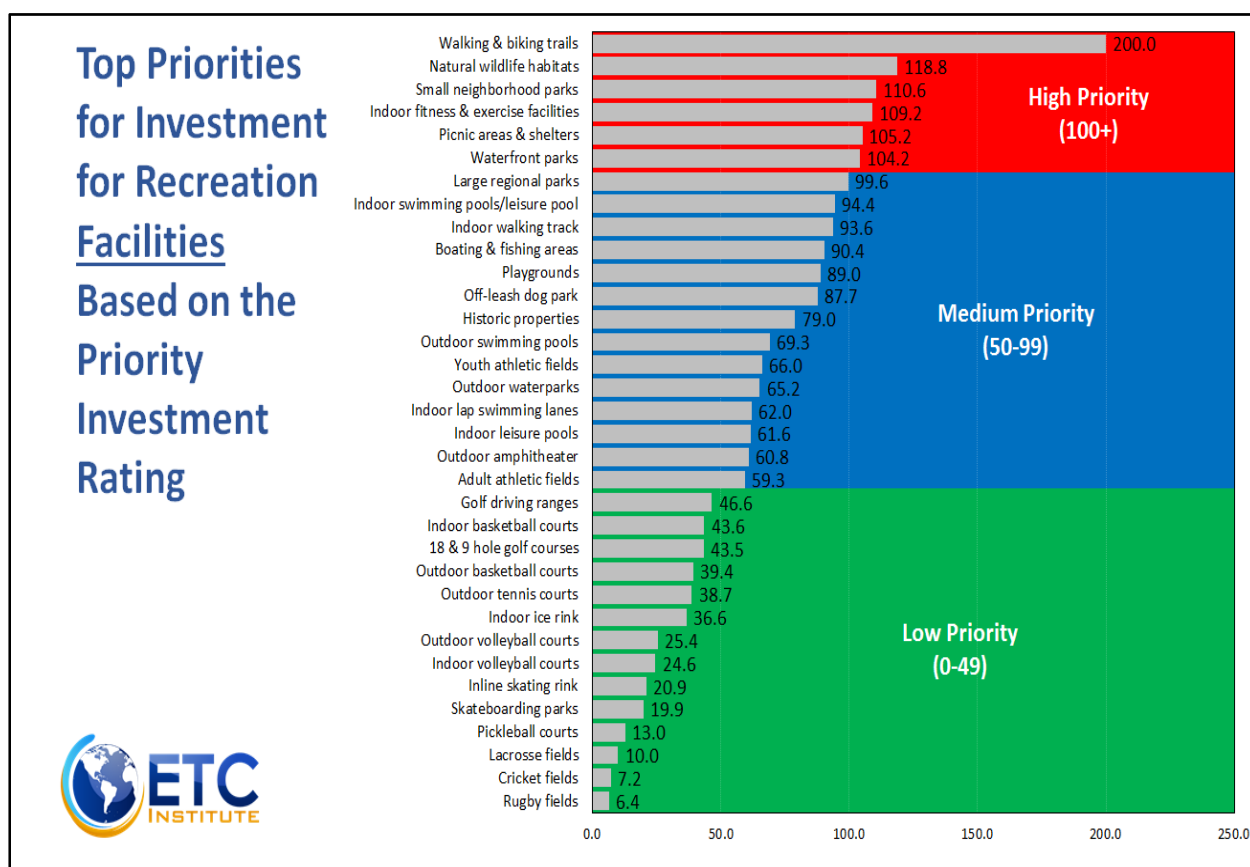


Priorities for Facility Investments. The **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)** was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on Parks and Recreation investments. The **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)** equally weights (1) the importance that residents place on facilities and (2) how many residents have unmet needs for the facility. [Details regarding the methodology for this analysis are provided in Section 2 of this report.]

Based the **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)**, the following six facilities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Walking and biking trails (PIR=200.0)
- Natural wildlife habitats (PIR=118.8)
- Small neighborhood parks (PIR=110.6)
- Indoor fitness and exercise facilities (PIR=109.2)
- Picnic areas and shelters (PIR=105.2)
- Waterfront parks (PIR=104.2)

The chart at the top of the following page shows the **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)** for each of the 34 facilities that were assessed on the survey.



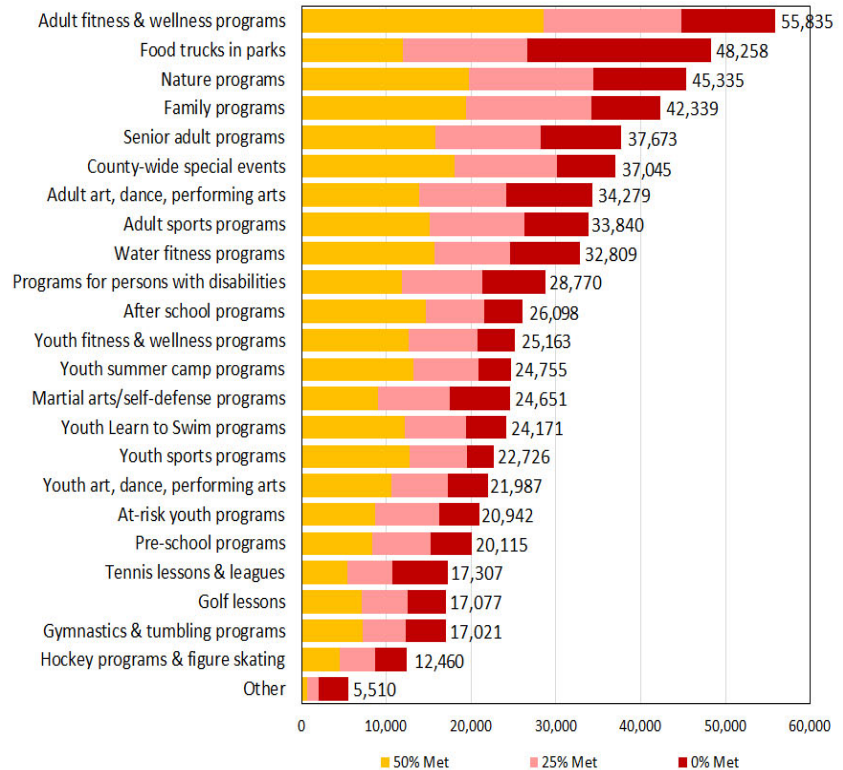
Program Needs and Priorities

Program Needs. Respondents were also asked to identify if their household had a need for 23 recreational programs and rate how well their needs for each program were currently being met. Based on this analysis, ETC Institute was able to estimate the number of households in the community that had “unmet” needs for each program.

The four programs with the highest percentage of households that had needs were: adult fitness and wellness programs (64%), nature programs (43%), family programs (40%), and food trucks in parks (38%). ETC Institute estimates a total of 93,999 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for adult fitness and wellness programs, an estimated total of 62,617 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for nature programs, an estimated total of 58,968 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for family programs, and an estimated total of 56,049 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have a need for food trucks in parks. ETC Institute estimates a total of 55,835 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for adult fitness and wellness programs, an estimated total of 48,258 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for food trucks in parks, an estimated total of 45,335 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for nature programs, and an estimated total of 42,339 households out of the 145,961 households in Prince William County have unmet needs for family programs. The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 23 programs that were assessed is shown in the chart at the top of the following page.

Q9. Estimated Number of Households Whose Needs for Recreation Programs are Being Met 50% or Less

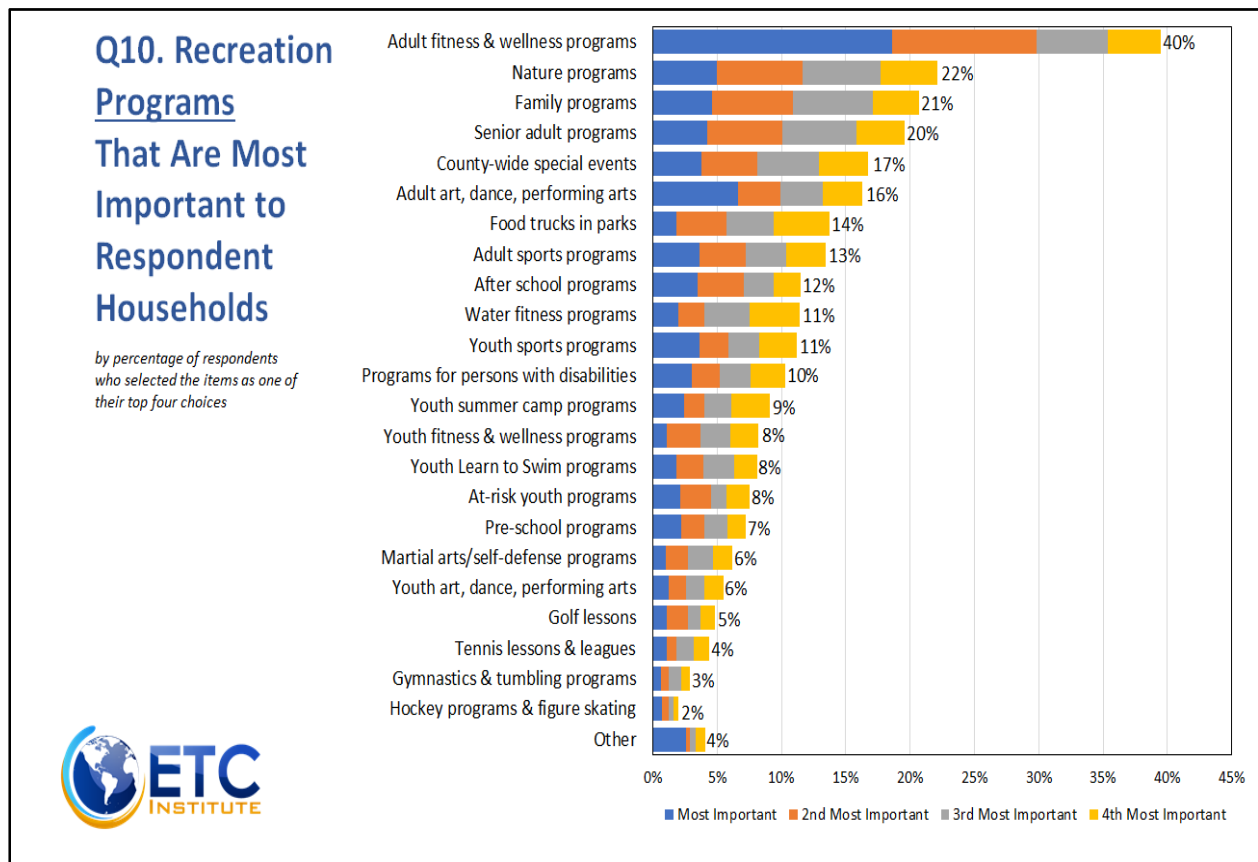
by number of households based on an estimated total of 145,961 households in Prince William County, Virginia



Program Importance. In addition to assessing the needs for each program, ETC Institute also assessed the importance that residents placed on each program. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the four most important programs to residents were:

1. adult fitness and wellness programs (40%),
2. nature programs (22%),
3. family programs (21%), and
4. senior adult programs (20%).

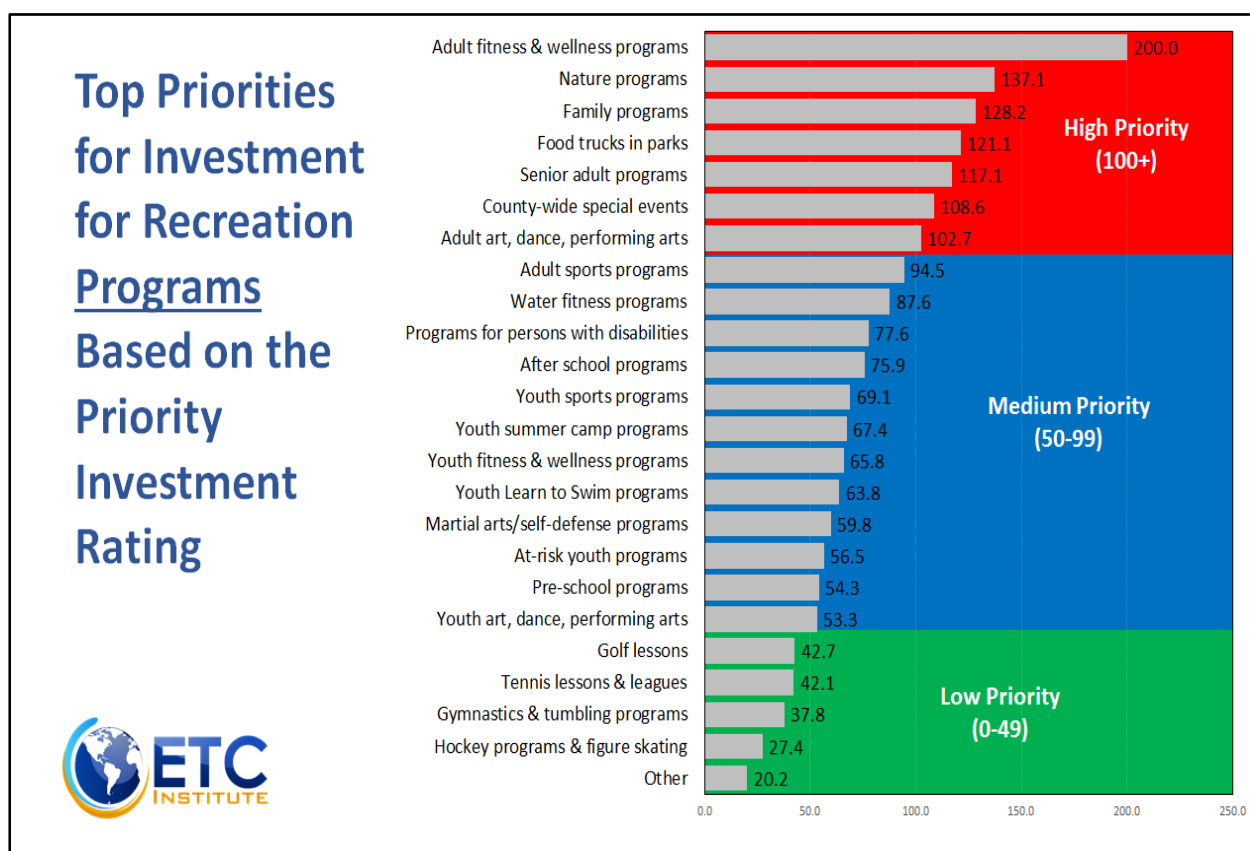
The percentage of residents who selected each program/activity as one of their top four choices is shown in the chart at the top of the following page.



Priorities for Program Investments. Based on the **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)**, which was described briefly on Page iv of this Executive Summary and is described in more detail in Section 2 of this report, the following seven programs were rated as “high priorities” for investment:

- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=200.0)
- Nature programs (PIR=137.1)
- Family programs (PIR=128.2)
- Food trucks in parks (PIR=121.1)
- Senior adult programs (PIR=117.1)
- County-wide special events (PIR=108.6)
- Adult art, dance, performing arts (PIR=102.7)

The chart at the top of the following page shows the **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)** for each of the 23 programs that were rated.



Additional Findings

Purchasing. The highest levels of support for various actions that the County could take to improve the Parks and Recreation system, based on the combined percentages of “very supportive” and “supportive” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: purchasing land for passive use parks and trails (89%) and land to preserve open space/green space for future generations (88%).

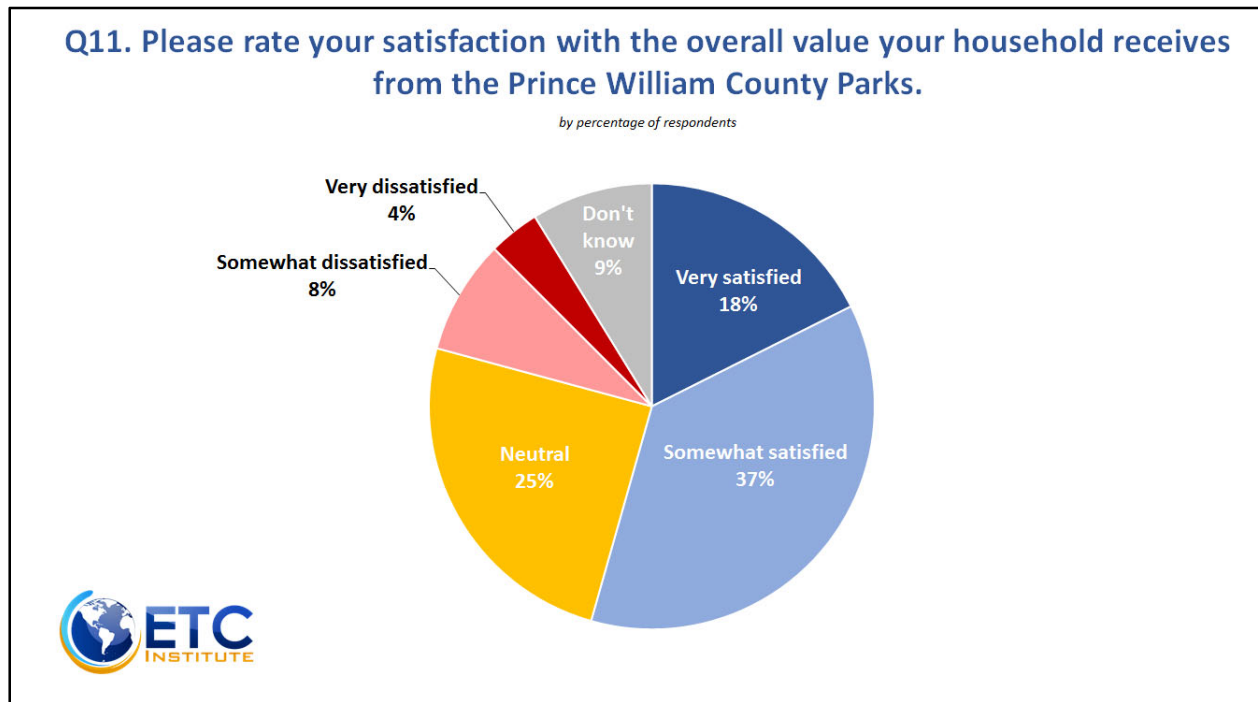
Developing. The highest levels of support for various actions that the County could take to improve the Parks and Recreation system, based on the combined percentages of “very supportive” and “supportive” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: develop new walking/biking trails and connect existing trails (91%), develop new indoor recreation centers with pool, fitness gyms, etc. (73%), and develop new community gardens (67%).

Expanding. The highest levels of support for various actions that the County could take to improve the Parks and Recreation system, based on the combined percentages of “very supportive” and “supportive” responses among residents *who had an opinion*, were: fix-up/repair existing outdoor park facilities (90%), inclusion support and programs for people with disabilities (61%), and upgrade existing recreation centers (82%).

The Parks and Recreation facilities that are most important to their household, based on the sum of respondents’ top four choices, were: new walking/biking trails and connect existing trails (41%), land to preserve open space/green space for future generations (30%), and land for passive use parks and trails (23%). The actions that the County could take to improve the Parks

and Recreation system, that are most important to respondent households, were: new walking/biking trails and connect existing trails (32%), land to preserve open space/green space for future generations (31%), fix-up/repair existing outdoor park facilities (24%), and land for passive use parks and trails (22%).

Over half (55%) of respondents indicated they are either “very satisfied” (18%) or “somewhat satisfied” (37%) in the overall value their household receives from the Prince William County Parks.



Respondents were given a list of 20 various reasons that prevent them or household members from using parks, trails, recreation facilities, or programs of Prince William County Parks more often. The top-rated reasons that prevent the usage of parks were: I do not know what is being offered (39%), parks too far from our residence (29%), lack of trails (26%), and I do not know locations of parks/facilities (25%).

Forty-four percent (44%) of respondent households indicated they currently learn about parks, trails, programs, and activities of Prince William County Parks from friends and neighbors. The most preferred method of learning about parks, trails, programs, and activities of Prince William County Parks, based on the sum of respondents' top three choices, were: quarterly Parks and Recreation magazine (42%) and Parks and Recreation website (41%).

Over half (65%) of respondent households indicated that if a referendum were held to fund a dedicated tax to increase parks and recreation resources in Prince William County, they would either “vote in favor” (35%) or “might vote in favor” (30%).

Recommendations

To ensure Prince William County meets the needs and expectations of the community, ETC Institute recommends that the Parks and Recreation Department sustain and/or improve the performance in areas that were identified as “high priorities” by the **Priority Investment Rating (PIR)**. The facilities and programs with the highest PIR ratings are listed below.

Facility Priorities

- Walking and biking trails (PIR=200.0)
- Natural wildlife habitats (PIR=118.8)
- Small neighborhood parks (PIR=110.6)
- Indoor fitness and exercise facilities (PIR=109.2)
- Picnic areas and shelters (PIR=105.2)
- Waterfront parks (PIR=104.2)

Program Priorities

- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=200.0)
- Nature programs (PIR=137.1)
- Family programs (PIR=128.2)
- Food trucks in parks (PIR=121.1)
- Senior adult programs (PIR=117.1)
- County-wide special events (PIR=108.6)
- Adult art, dance, performing arts (PIR=102.7)