

CHAPTER ONE – COMMUNITY PROFILE AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

1.1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department Launched their Comprehensive System Plan in January 2019. The Department desired a robust public engagement process to inventory the current conditions of the system and to help determine the needs and priorities for the future. The planning process incorporated a variety of input from the community. This included a series of key stakeholder interviews and focus group discussions, as well as three public forums, a statistically valid survey, and an online community survey. The following sections in this chapter summarize and highlight the key findings from each stage of the rigorous community input process.

1.1.1 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP SUMMARY

In January of 2019, the consultant team conducted on-site focus groups over two days and included approximately 54 individuals. These interviews included City leaders and elected officials, current and potential partners, event sponsors, local businesses, the Parks and Recreation Board, local education leaders, similar program providers and partners, health care organizations, and representatives from the State and various departments within the City.

Based on feedback from these stakeholder interviews and focus groups, the following key themes regarding the Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation system emerged.

- **People value the parks and recreation services in Sioux Falls**, especially the access to a variety of experiences within the system along with partnerships in the community to make it all happen. Many agree the connectivity through bike and pedestrian paths, increase in parks, sports fields, programs, and events are great assets to the Sioux Falls residents. Interviewees commended the importance that the Department puts on maintenance and recognized there are aging facilities and amenities within the system that are aging to the point of renovation or replacement. There is also a recognition of the efforts with new development to bring the City together in public gathering spaces building community.
- **Equity is important to the future of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation services.** People interviewed and in focus groups commented on the equitable distribution of parks as a strength that makes Sioux Falls such a great place to live. However, equity in distribution of parks in recently developed areas is not to the standard set by the City. Participant’s perception is that the development of new parks has not kept pace with the new developed areas of the City. It will be important in the level of service planning work to verify whether the City is keeping pace or not. Distribution of sports fields and facilities into these areas was also mentioned. People appreciate the social equity within the City for facility use and would like to see programming distributed more equitably across the city and closer to their homes
- **The overarching strength of the Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation system is the Department’s management in providing quality parks, recreation and facilities.** Several Industries highlight the parks and recreation system and all it offers when attracting potential employees. Sound planning has provided great opportunities that are beneficial to residents and visitors including the many facility partnerships, enhancements to walkability in the City, Falls Park and the events. Well maintained parks and facilities allow assets to reach their full life providing many years of enjoyment for residents.

- **The general perception of the parks and recreation system is a quality system with areas that need improvement.** Interviewees are genuinely concerned about funding the quality parks and recreation system in an equitable manner across the City, as it pertains to new park development, facility renovations, and new or replacement amenities. Other areas where improvements are needed most is capital assets which included neighborhood parks, facilities, sports fields, aging pools, playgrounds, restrooms, shelters, parking, improved safety in parks, and the ice rinks length of season. Strategies to address aging facilities and amenities need to be prioritized, funded and communicated so residents know when to expect renovation or replacement.
- **The overarching challenge of the Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department is funding to address all of the needs.** The needs include renovation or replacement of aging facilities and amenities that have reached their useful life and begin to require major repairs that may be cost prohibitive to continue maintaining. The interviewees also believe the staff and system needs to grow commensurate with the City and include parks, facilities, and amenities in newly developed areas and planned future development. Environmental challenges exist in the system as well and include three most mentioned, the Emerald Ash Borer, the water quality of the Big Sioux River, and the levee at Family Park. The strategies to alleviate these environmental issues needs to include partnerships and appropriate levels of funding
- **The Department could improve marketing and communication to tell the story and increase awareness of the system and services, as well as improving social media engagement and special event approval process.** Many of those interviewed appreciate the system and City investments however, for it to be truly appreciated by partners and users, streamlining communications and processes is extremely important. As a positive realization from the interview process, many also expressed they appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the process and providing feedback. They look forward to more community engagement in the Comprehensive System Plan process and future development in the system.
- **The key outcome desired from the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive System Plan is a unified vision involving residents, leaders, and staff for the system to better meet the needs of residents.** The interviewees believe the vision should include strategies for addressing the greatest needs through a prioritized action plan including better long-range planning, management, streamlined processes, improved communications, and funding to achieve the outcomes. Assets and activities that were mentioned multiple times were also captured from participant's responses. These include; the water quality of Big Sioux River, development of outdoor adventure in and around the City, better partnerships with surrounding municipalities and service providers to avoid duplication and stretch resources, neighborhood parks and amenities to distribute services more equitably increasing access, pedestrian and bike safety, marketing and communication improvement, and most importantly a funding strategy.
- **Specific program, facility, amenity and service needs most frequently identified by interviewees included:**
 - Walking/biking trails and connectivity

- Aquatics Centers/pools
- Recreation center and pool combinations (indoor/outdoor pools)
- Adequate parking
- Restrooms
- More river access points and enhanced access points
- Bocce Courts for Special Olympics
- Indoor archery facility
- Playground downtown Sioux Falls
- Synthetic turf fields
- New rugby field could be enhanced with additional fields for lacrosse
- Single track, mountain bike trails
- Parks in outlying areas of the City newly developed
- More extreme sports and warrior races
- SDGFP has funds available for archery, gun safety, and outdoor adventure
- Keep programs affordable and create more social equity by offering them closer to my neighborhood
- Field space/green space for pick-up games.
- Other similar providers impact the park and recreation system by getting the word out attracting people and there needs to be better promotion and awareness of Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation
- Blue ways/ paddle trails
- Senior activities
- More downtown events. New diamond for canaries
- Need more urban fisheries, another lake or pond to sustain fish and allow use
- Water recreation area (dam up a creek) that would allow for this type of environment to be created.
- Bring back the paddleboats - Covell Lake in Terrace Park
- Summer Recreation needs promoted more and staff levels should be higher and quality activities



1.1.2 PUBLIC FORUMS

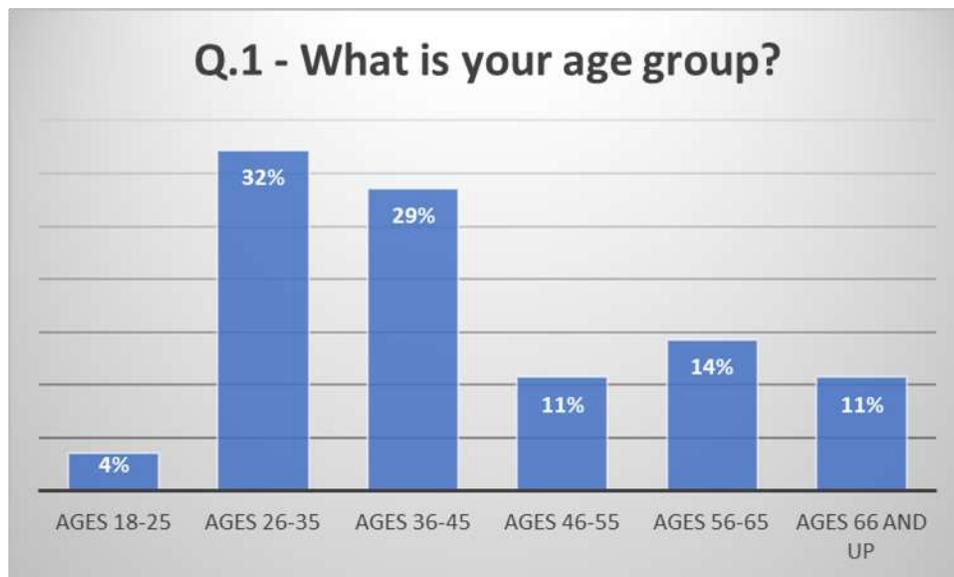
In tandem with the stakeholder and focus group interviews, the project team also hosted three public forums designed to further engage residents of the community. The public forum was an open call to the public to share the Comprehensive System Plan process, as well as an opportunity for residents to offer feedback on the parks and recreation system through live polling devices. Approximately 28 participants, representing a variety of interests, were present at the public forums.

LIVE POLLING

One key approach for soliciting feedback from attendees of the public forum was through live polling of the audience. Following the initial process presentation, each attendee used a polling device (i.e. 'clicker') to answer a series of questions related to usage and satisfaction levels of parks, trails, facilities, and programs. The following charts share the survey results from the live polling portion of the public forum meeting.

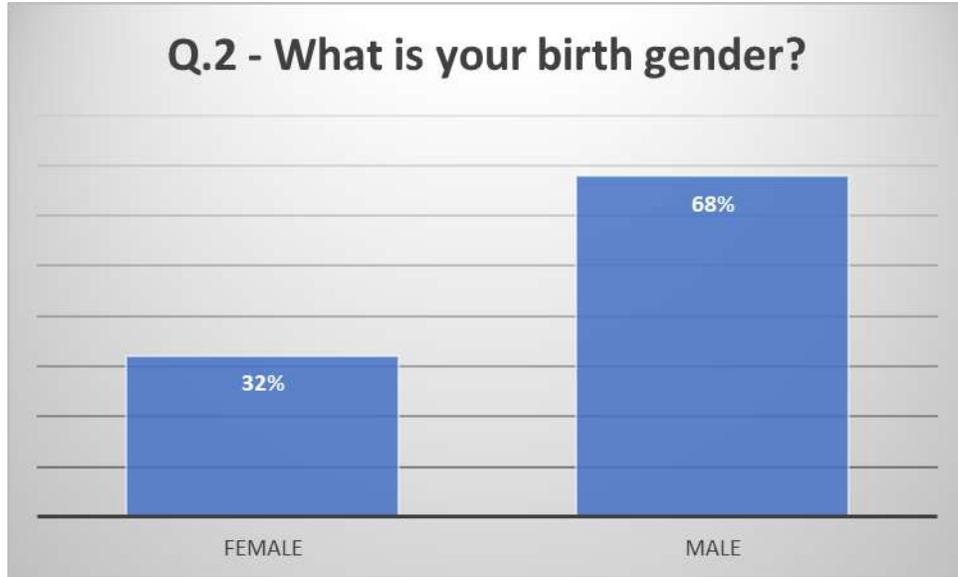
Q.1 - WHAT IS YOUR AGE GROUP?

Almost one-third (32%) of respondents are ages 26-35, while 29 percent are ages 36-45 and ages 18-26 are represented at four percent.



Q.2 - WHAT IS YOUR BIRTH GENDER?

The respondents represent 68 percent male and 32 percent female.



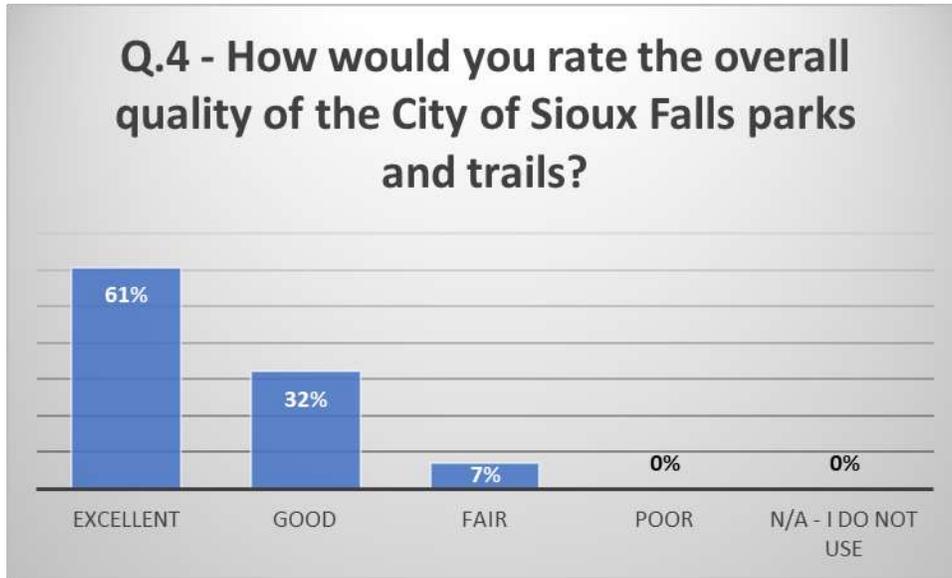
Q.3 HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE CITY OF SIOUX FALLS PARKS OR TRAIL SYSTEM?

The majority of respondents use the parks or trail system at least weekly (39%), while 32 percent are using the systems at least monthly.



Q.4 - HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF THE CITY OF SIOUX FALLS PARKS AND TRAILS?

The vast majority of respondents rate the quality of the parks and trail system as excellent (61%) and good (32%), while seven percent (7%) rate the quality as fair. No responses were received for poor and not applicable.



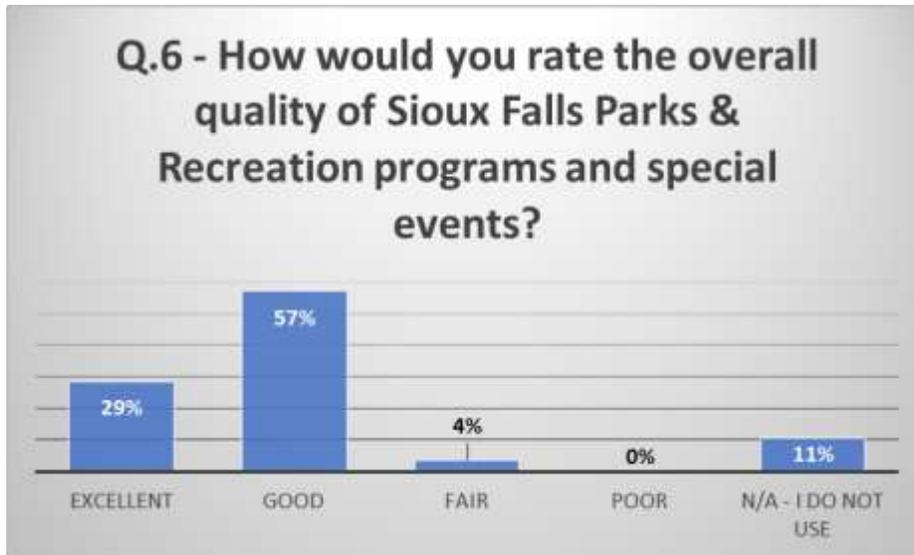
Q.5 - HOW OFTEN DO YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY SIOUX FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS?

Almost one-third of respondents participate in programs at least six times per year (32%) and almost one-third participate two to five times per year, while 18 percent participate one time per year or less.



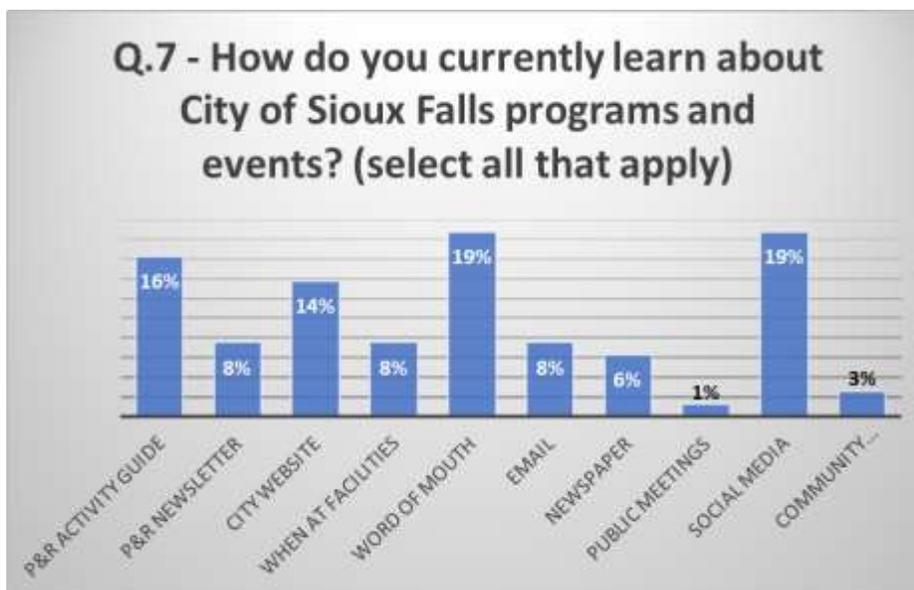
Q.6 - HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF SIOUX FALLS PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS AND SPECIAL EVENTS?

Eighty-six percent (86%) of respondents rate the overall quality of programs and special events as good to great, while four percent rate the quality as fair.



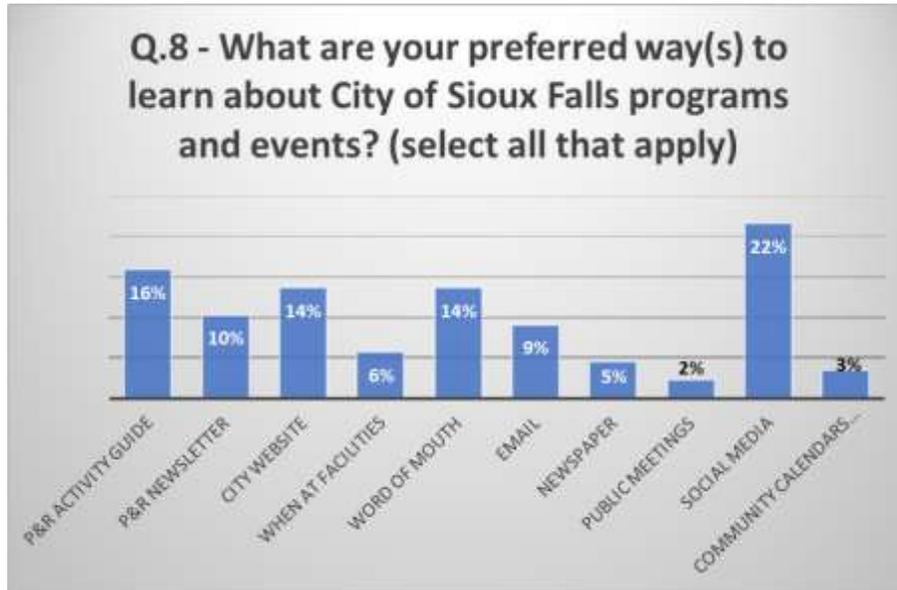
Q.7 - HOW DO YOU CURRENTLY LEARN ABOUT THE CITY OF SIOUX FALLS PROGRAMS AND EVENTS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

Thirty-eight percent (38%) of respondents learn of programs and events from word of mouth and social media. These are typically connected as people learn in the social media feeds and share when in conversation with friends and family. The activity guide is valuable at 16%, while City website is 14% of responses. Eight percent (8%) identified learning through P&R newsletter, when at facilities, and via email.



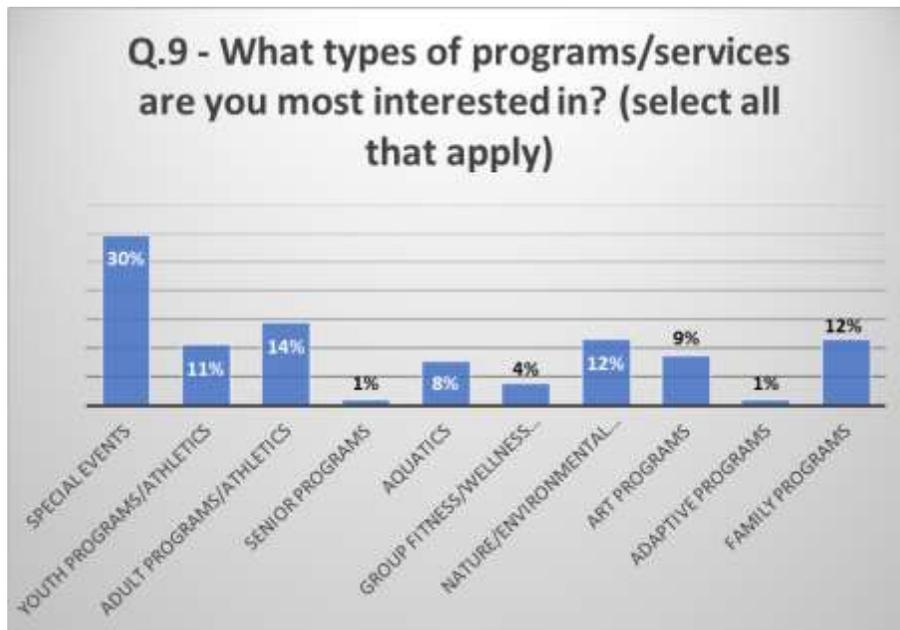
Q.8 - WHAT ARE YOUR PREFERRED WAY(S) TO LEARN ABOUT CITY OF SIOUX FALLS PROGRAMS AND EVENTS? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

Social media is the most preferred way respondents want to learn of programs and events (22%), while 16% want to learn from the activity guide. The City website and word of mouth, both have fourteen percent (14%) that responded these are their preferred ways to learn of programs and events followed by 10% through the P&R newsletter.



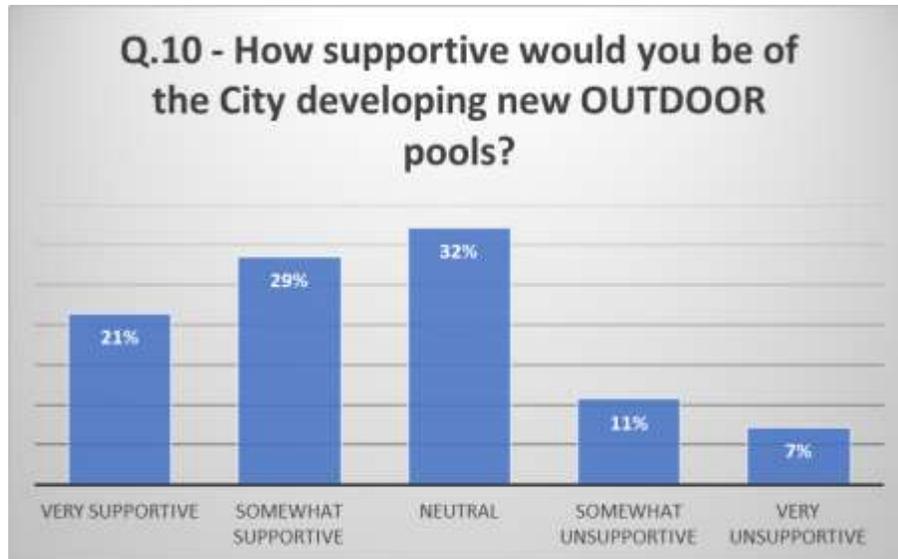
Q.9 - WHAT PROGRAMS/SERVICES ARE YOU MOST INTERESTED IN? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)

The most interest is with special events (30%), while adult programs and athletics follows it with 14% of responses. Family programs and nature/environment are 12%, while youth programs follow with 11% of responses.



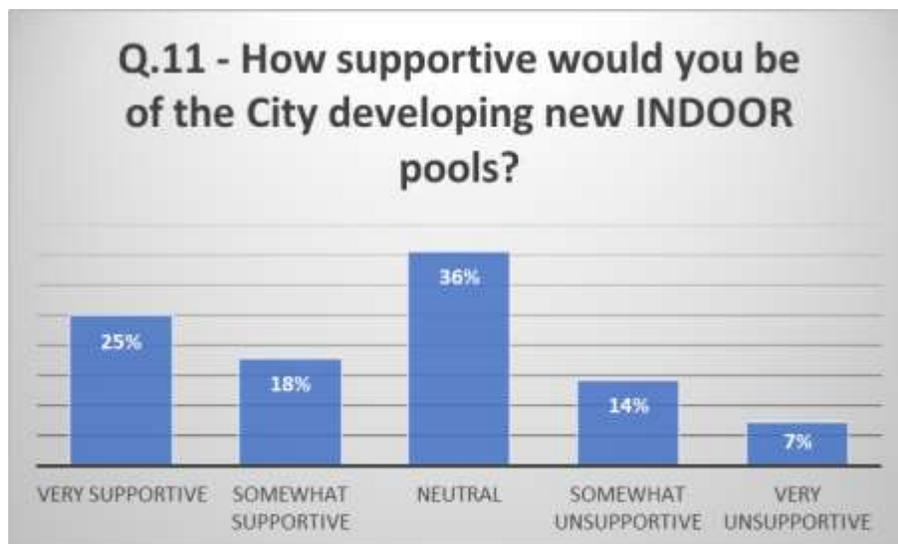
Q.10 - HOW SUPPORTIVE WOULD YOU BE OF THE CITY DEVELOPING NEW OUTDOOR POOLS?

The greatest responses are 32% neutral on the support for developing new outdoor pools, somewhat supportive are 29%, very supportive are 21%, while a total of 18% are somewhat to very unsupportive.



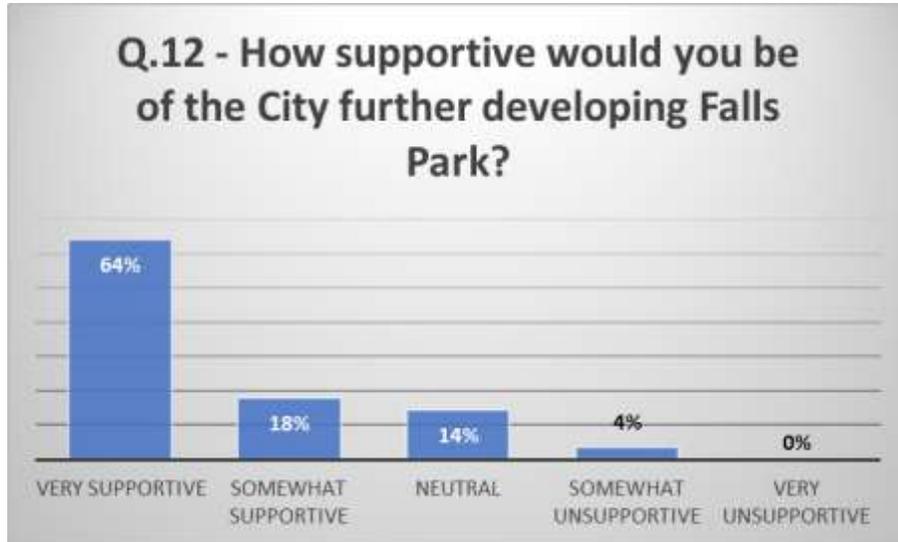
Q.11 - HOW SUPPORTIVE WOULD YOU BE OF THE CITY DEVELOPING NEW INDOOR POOLS?

The greatest responses are 36% neutral on the support for developing new indoor pools, very supportive are 25%, somewhat supportive 18%, while a total of 21% are somewhat to very unsupportive.



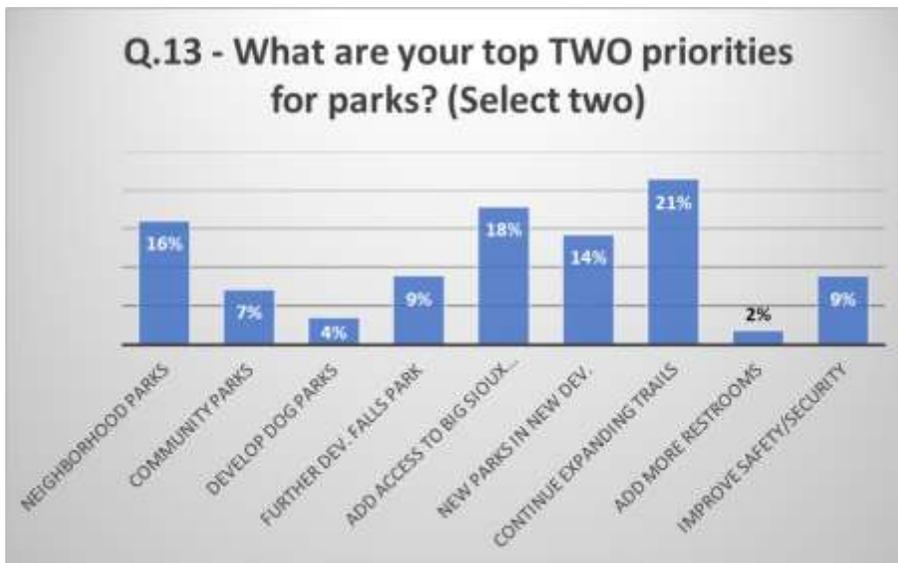
Q.12 - HOW SUPPORTIVE WOULD YOU BE OF THE CITY FURTHER DEVELOPING FALLS PARK?

Very supportive of further developing Falls Park are 64%, while 18% are somewhat supportive, neutral towards further development are 14% and 4% somewhat unsupportive.



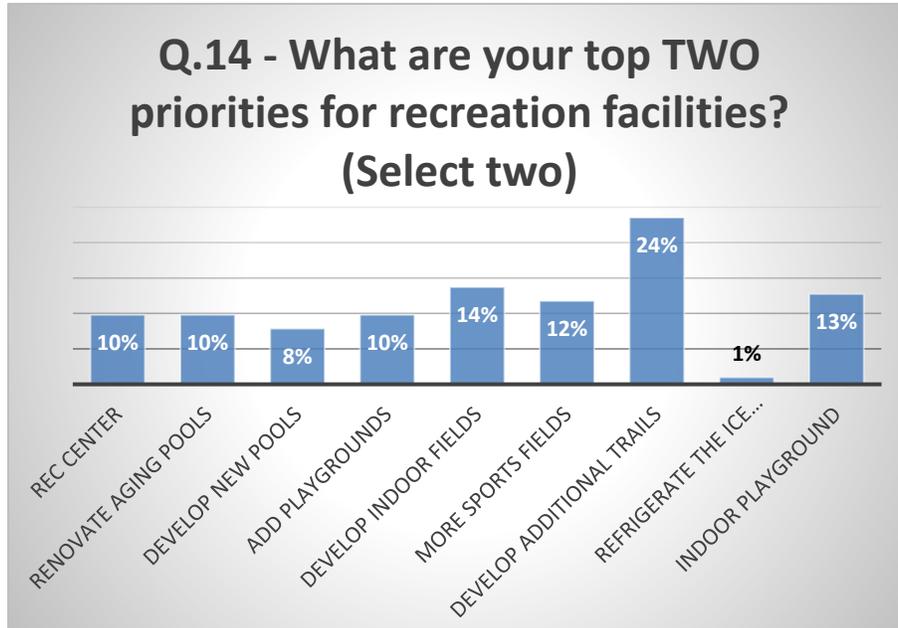
Q.13 - WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TWO PRIORITIES FOR PARKS? (SELECT TWO)

Continue expanding trails has the most responses (21%), with 18% desiring more access to the Big Sioux River, neighborhood parks at 16%, new parks in newly developed areas of the City are 14%, and further develop Falls Park and improve security are at 9%.



Q.14 - WHAT ARE YOUR TOP TWO PRIORITIES FOR RECREATION FACILITIES? (SELECT TWO)

Develop additional trails tops the list with 24%, followed up by develop indoor fields, and indoor playground to round out the top three responses. More sports field is fourth with 12% of respondents, while recreation center, renovate aging pools, and additional playgrounds follow with 10% each.



Q.15 - IF YOU COULD IMPROVE JUST ONE THING ABOUT THE CURRENT CONDITION OF THE PARK SYSTEM, WHICH ONE WOULD YOU CHOOSE?

Improve the equity of parks received 32% of the responses, while preserve natural /green spaces received 25%. Following the top two are improve safety/security (14%), update playgrounds (11%) and increase signage (7%).

