

Public Participation and Citizen Survey

In preparation for the referendum to establish a Parks, Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund on the November 2003 ballot, the Hudson County Office on Strategic Revitalization developed an informational brochure that included a survey, which assessed park and facilities use and the importance of parks and recreation to its residents.

The citizen survey asked residents to respond about how they felt about different types of open space. The survey indicated that a significant percentage (over 95%) of the respondents place a high value on the county's park and recreational facilities – fully 74% said it these facilities were “very important,” and another 21 % said they were “important.” The survey also showed similar support for the preservation of historically significant sites, with over 95% of the respondents stating that they either “strongly agreed” (75%) or “agreed” (22%) that such sites ought to be preserved for future generations.

In terms of the facilities and activities that should be available in the county recreational system, the numbers were fairly evenly distributed across the various choices offered in terms of sports activities (Baseball/Softball Fields, Basketball Courts, Boating or Fishing, Football Fields, Natural Areas/Open Space, Picnic Areas, Playgrounds, Restrooms, Soccer Fields, Tennis Courts, Trails/Paths for Walking and Biking) and indicated high levels of concern for each of them (the numbers for each showed over 70% of the respondents saying

these facilities were “very important” or “important” to them). The strongest support was seen in the non-athletic facilities. For instance, over 95% reported that open spaces, restrooms, playgrounds, and walking trails were either “very important” or “important” to them, and over 90% thought picnic areas were “very important” or “important.”

- ♦ 84% had used a county or municipal park or participated in a local recreation program over the past year
- ♦ 47% visited local parks on a weekly basis, 19% on a daily basis, 18% on a monthly basis, 10% on a yearly basis and only 6% responded that they had never use a park
- ♦ 75% felt that parks and recreational opportunities were very important
- ♦ 75% felt that historic places should be preserved



Facility	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Baseball/ Softball Fields	40%	44%	16%
Basketball Courts	37%	42%	21%
Boating or Fishing	27%	45%	28%
Football Fields	33%	38%	29%
Natural Areas/ Open Space	80%	18%	2%
Picnic Areas	58%	33%	9%
Playgrounds	69%	27%	4%
Restrooms	80%	18%	2%
Soccer Fields	35%	40%	25%
Tennis Courts	34%	43%	23%
Trails for Walking and Biking	79%	19%	2%
Historic Preservation	75%	23%	2%

The survey also asked respondents to list other outdoor facilities that they would like to see at recreation areas near them. The recommendations made by the citizens could be broken into four basic issues.



Equipment & Maintenance

One group of comments focused on equipment that residents wanted to see, or were related to maintenance concerns. These concerns are either universal to all parks, such as working drinking fountains and more benches or they are more specific maintenance concerns for parks in particular. (Number of times)

- Working Drinking Fountains (8)
- More Benches (7)
- Better Restrooms (5)
- More Restrooms (4)
- More Jungle Gyms, Swings, Teeter-Totters (3)
- More Trees (3)
- More Historic Plaques (3)
- More Garbage Cans (2)
- Working Payphones
- Clean The Parks, Grounds And Bodies Of Water
- All Tennis Courts Should Rebuilt Like Lincoln Park
- Swings And Seesaws In All Parks
- Redo Stairs From Troy Towers To Base Of Cliff
- Revamp Bayside Park
- Larger Parking Areas
- Covers For Soccer Fields
- Better Cleaning Services
- Professional Gardeners And Groundskeepers

Activities

The next group of comments related to activities that citizens would like to take place in local recreation areas or sponsored by a recreation program. (Number of times)

- Horseback Riding (3)
- Horseback Ride For Kids

- Kite Flying
- Outdoor Summer Concerts
- Senior Citizen Activities
- Arts & Crafts Programs
- Ice hockey
- Marbles
- Carnivals

Policy and Vision

Another group of comments were directed at the basic direction that the County and the Parks Departments should take toward the development and improvement of parks and open spaces. It is important to note that there was a concern about safety and police presence in the parks. Partnerships with local law enforcement and park personnel should stress better park safety and security. Some of the comments were not in favor of more recreation facilities at all and wanted to focus on open space preservation while others advocated the opposite and requested more facilities. Others provided insights into accessibility and connectivity or specific recommendations for park properties. Other comments advocated separate use areas or age-restricted facilities. (Number of times)

- Safety/ More Police Presence (3)
- Testing For Contamination
- Fines For Litterers
- No More Ball Fields (2)
- No More Parking Lots
- No More Construction/ Just Preservation
- No More Facilities
- Stop Over-Development
- Don't Drain Wetlands And Pave Over
- More Handicap Accessibility
- Preservation Of Old Trees
- More Bike Paths To Parks
- Connect Bike Trails Along Coastline
- Better Transit Services

- More Fields And Parks
- Turn Old Reservoir Into Bird Preserve
- Leave Columbia Park Open Space Only Grass And Trees
- Create Separate Sports Facilities
- Bathrooms Kept Open Only During Evenings And Weekends
- Senior Citizen Parks With No Children Allowed
- Playgrounds For 8-12 Yr. Olds

Facilities

The next group of comments directly relates to new facilities that residents wanted for recreation in the County. The list is rather



comprehensive but you will see they fall into groups and show some obvious choices for consideration in any park acquisition, developments and capital improvement plans. (Number of times)

The most popular recommendations were for dog runs and swimming pools. It seems obvious that there is a need for this type recreation.

- Dog Runs (24)
- Swimming Pools (18)
- Sprinklers (3)
- Swimming pool in North Bergen

There were various suggestions for different active recreation facilities. The most requested facilities were for volleyball courts and skating rinks.

- Volleyball Courts (8)
- Roller/Ice-Skating Rink (7)
- Shuffleboard Courts (2)
- Health Club/Gymnasium (2)
- Picnic areas (2)
- Chess tables (2)
- Skate parks (2)
- Barbeque Area
- Cross-country ski trails
- Cricket ground
- Horseshoes
- Rifle range
- Racquetball court
- Handball courts

Golf courses and relates facilities were a popular choice.

- Golf Courses (6)
- Small Golf Course - Chip & Put (2)
- Golf driving range (2)
- Miniature Golf

Paths, tracks and trails were also popular.

- Running/jogging paths (5)
- Outdoor Tracks (4)
- Bike Paths (4)
- Hiking Trails (3)
- Fitness trails (2)
- Walking Track
- Bicycle path along Hudson River
- Rollerblading trails

There was a large demand for a band shell or amphitheatre. Other amusements were also suggested.

- Band Shell/Amphitheatre (10)
- Food court (4)



- Petting Zoo
- Train Ride

Greenspaces of all kinds; formal gardens, beautification projects and community gardens were popular.

- Formal gardens (7)
- Decorative Water Fountains (4)
- Sheltered areas (3)
- Community Gardens
- Butterfly gardens
- Bird sanctuaries
- Greenspace
- Wetlands

Activity fields and water front recreation were also mentioned.

- Multi-Purpose Fields
- Separate Soccer and Football Fields
- Soccer field in North Hudson Park
- More seating for games
- Need more parking for games
- Closer boat launches
- Rowboat rentals
- Canoe kayak launching & storage
- Fishing/crabbing piers

One resident was wise enough to mention accessibility issues.

- Wheelchair accessible areas
- ADA accessible trails
- ADA accessible parking spaces
- ADA accessible picnic areas

- ADA accessible walking trails
- ADA accessible pathways

The referendum successfully passed in the November election with a 62% to 38% margin.

Aside from the citizen survey information, County officials conducted meetings directly with municipal representatives and community organizations concerning open



space priorities, programs and partnership opportunities.

- Bayonne
- East Newark
- Guttenberg
- Harrison
- Hoboken
- Jersey City
- Kearny
- North Bergen
- Secaucus
- Union City
- Weehawken
- West New York

County officials consulted with numerous area non-profit groups about open space needs, recreation programs and co-operative acquisition programs. Those non-profits consulted included:

- Friends of Liberty State Park
- Hamilton Park Neighborhood Association
- 6th Street Embankment Coalition
- Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy
- NY/NJ Baykeeper
- American Littoral Society
- Hackensack Riverkeeper
- Hackensack Meadowlands Preservation Alliance
- New Jersey Conservation Foundation

