Metro Parks

The Plan

Columbus and Franklin County Metropolitan Parks District

2016

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From the Director

Every year, more than 8 million Central Ohio residents and visitors enjoy the beauty, facilities and educational resources of the 19 parks within Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks. From nature hikes to family picnics, biking and organized recreational or educational events, Metro Parks serve a vast range of interests and needs within our community. Metro Parks protects more than 27,000 acres of land and water in seven counties, offering free year-round recreational and educational opportunities for youth and adults. We also provide more than 200 miles of trails. Throughout, we are guided by a twofold mission: to manage our resources and to provide an experience for our visitors.

Manage our resources

Provide an experience for our visitors

We're only open EVERY day!

To conserve open spaces while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature

To ensure that we continue to meet taxpayer expectations while fulfilling our mission's mandate, in 2015 we initiated a self-study to understand the perspectives of both Franklin County residents and park staff. Our focus related specifically to the visitor experience and resource management. A comprehensive review of their feedback led to the formation of this plan. This plan represents the collation of the voices of over 235 staff members, individual visitors at each of our parks, and a random telephone survey of over 600 Franklin County residents. Their feedback was used to identify the goals and objectives and define the 2016 initiatives. With a focus on financial stewardship and in keeping with our mission, the purpose of this plan is to set the standards by which we will responsibly manage our resources, while enhancing visitor experiences.

This plan provides the framework and serves as a guide for Metro Parks staff. It is a living document, built with the understanding that the ability to complete initiatives is predicated on the availability of financial and human resources. The initiatives will be reviewed and updated annually, reflecting new ideas identified by the staff, measurable goals and opportunities arising within our community. The goals and objectives, however, will remain constant as they provide the foundation that supports the mission of Metro Parks.

I hope that you'll join me in this unique opportunity to celebrate our accomplishments and establish the framework to move forward with a plan that unites staff behind a common vision for the future of Metro Parks.
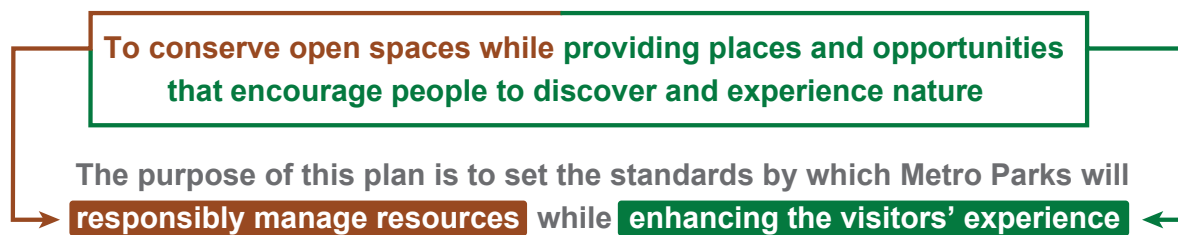
Sincerely,

Tim Moloney

Executive Summary

DATA COLLECTION

By identifying goals and objectives in six areas of strategic focus, this plan serves as a guide for Metro Parks staff. It offers staff a framework to accomplish our mission using data driven goals and objectives. The initiatives are the individual actions that suggest how staff may achieve the goals and objectives. It is the initiatives that will be reviewed and updated as part of the annual planning process, linking available resources with action items that can be accomplished in a fiscally responsible manner.

To conserve open spaces while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature

The purpose of this plan is to set the standards by which Metro Parks will responsibly manage resources while enhancing the visitors' experience

The data used to formulate this plan was collected from multiple constituents including staff, park visitors, Franklin County voters and the Metro Parks Board of Directors. It was through the collective voices of these groups that we were able to establish the areas of strategic focus, goals, objectives and initiatives. The following terms are used throughout the plan:

- **Strategic focus**: The trends that emerged from the data indicating areas of significant importance.

- **Goals**: A primary outcome, consistent with the mission, within each area of strategic focus.

- **Objectives**: Specific statements of what will be done to achieve the goal. These were established based on reviewing the data and determining what staff and visitors expect from the park district. There are two defined objectives for each goal.

- **Initiatives**: Individual action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. Since the parks have varying needs, and each boasts unique attributes, the initiatives will vary from park to park.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

GOAL

Objective 1
- Initiative

Objective 2
- Initiative

THE PLAN

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS PLAN

In an effort to seek input from a broad demographic, data was collected over a period of nine months from July 2015 – March 2016. This plan represents feedback from staff and the collective feedback of visitors, the Board of Directors, and over 600 registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio. Staff surveys began in July 2015, visitor surveys and focus groups followed. An analysis of each dataset revealed recurring themes. Survey responses from staff were used to determine questions that were posed to visitors. Results from surveys and focus groups helped derive questions that were used in the polling phase.

SURVEYS

POLLING

Results from surveys and focus groups, helped derive questions that were used in the polling phase
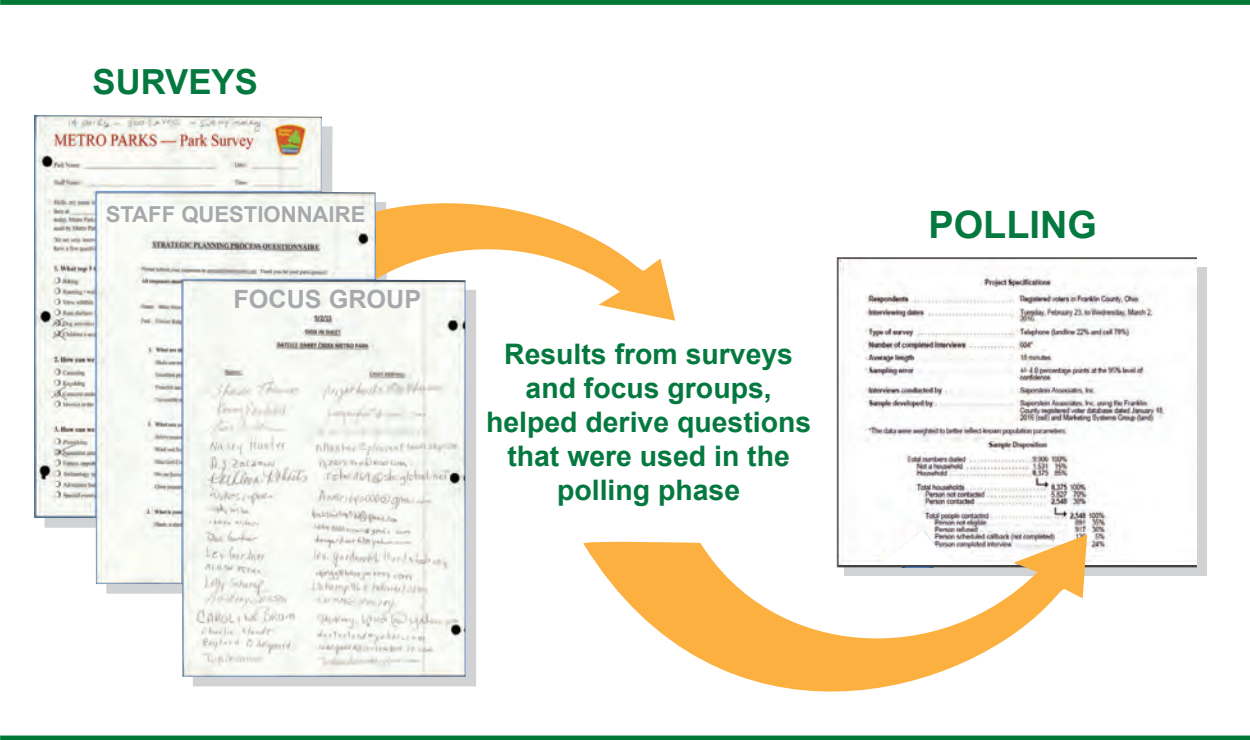
Metro Parks sought to understand the perspectives of both Franklin County residents and park staff relative to the visitor experience and the management of the district. A comprehensive review of their feedback helped identify:
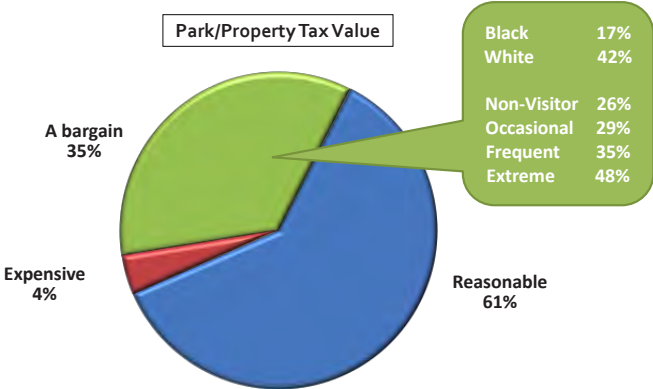
What brings people out to the parks

What could be done to increase visitation

What areas need attention

Expectations regarding capital improvements and land acquisition

In collating the data, we were able to determine what was important to these audiences, individually and collectively. This data became the foundation for the plan:

Constituency	Method	Participation
Park Staff	A survey with 15 questions was distributed in the summer of 2015. Staff completed the survey, either individually, or as a team. The questions were open-ended.	18 of the Metro Parks submitted responses. 120 full-time and part-time staff participated.
District Staff	The questions (12-15), varied by department and staff was asked for candid feedback. The responses from many of the departments were visionary. Other comments regarded communication barriers, programming and the use of technology.	Surveys were completed by the following departments: Finance, Human Resources, Operations, Planning, Programming, Public Information, Resource Management
Park Visitors[1]	The audience for this survey represented a non-probability sampling of the Metro Parks visitors.[1] Eight questions were asked and participants responded with their top three choices.	The surveys were conducted across 18 Metro Parks and Greenways. Each park was asked to approach a minimum of 25 visitors.
Focus Groups	Six questions were posed; the answers represent a narrative expression of the opinions and ideas of the individuals who were present.	Meetings were conducted at four parks, approximately 120 attendees.
Polling	Telephone interviews were conducted on cell phones (78%) and landlines (22%), the interviews were completed from February 23 to March 2, 2016, and averaged 18 minutes in length.	A random sample of more than 600 registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio. The margin of error for this study is ±4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence

[1] Participants were selected because of their convenient accessibility or proximity to the Park Rangers. This method is sometimes referred to as a convenience sample or an accidental sample.

Six out of ten residents consider their Metro Parks property tax reasonable. More than a third, however, consider it a bargain.

Park/Property Tax Value

Black	17%
White	42%
Non-Visitor	26%
Occasional	29%
Frequent	35%
Extreme	48%

A bargain 35%

Expensive 4%

Reasonable 61%

18

Q9: The Metro Parks are funded, in part, with property taxes – about two dollars a month for every $100,000 a home is worth. Do you consider this expensive, reasonable, or a bargain?

DATA DRIVEN STRATEGIC FOCUS

In collating the data, there were trends that emerged indicating that the following areas were of significance: CONSERVATION, TRAILS, FACILITIES, PROGRAMS, ACCESS and COMMUNICATION . Goals, objectives and initiatives were then formulated within each category.

Communication | Conservation | Trails | Facilities | Programs | Access

Surveys revealed recurring themes and provided insight as to expectations

Staff, visitors and residents clearly indicated what they expect from Metro Parks, this data was used to establish our objectives and goals

GOALS

OBJECTIVES

Strategic Focus	Significance
Conservation	The first component to Metro Parks' mission statement is to conserve open spaces. The data clearly called for a continued commitment to biological diversity and the protection of habitats in Central Ohio.
Trails	Visitors consistently commented on their reliance on Metro Parks trails. While many use them to escape into nature, others find significance in using them to commute, exercise or walk their pets.
Facilities	Metro Parks' mission is to provide places for people to discover and experience nature. Staff and visitors clearly indicated a preference for modernizing facilities and providing amenities which enhance that experience.
Programs	The data indicated that Central Ohio residents rely on Metro Parks for educational programming and as a destination for organized and informal gatherings. This suggests that Metro Parks continues our emphasis on positive staff interaction and providing venues to support programs that promote community engagement.
Access	Accurate and consistent directions were common requests in each of the surveys. It seems that staff and visitors would like it to be easier to locate and access all of the Metro Parks.
Communication	Staff indicated that more advertising and promotion of their programs, rules, and unique attributes is needed and should be a priority in order to increase visitation. Visitors made it very clear that they rely heavily on the website and social media for information.

A snapshot of some of the survey results is listed below. Each data source has a dedicated section in this document that provides additional detail.

	Park visitor, focus group and staff surveys	Survey of Franklin County residents conducted by Saperstein Associates
Conservation	• The top three choices among visitors were to acquire land to protect it from development; to acquire land that contains diverse or endangered plants/wildlife; to acquire land for water quality improvement • Over 80% of the visitors agreed that viewing wildlife and escaping into nature were the other primary reasons for visiting	• Creating quiet areas was second to expansion of the Greenway trails in terms of items that residents indicated were a high priority • 34% of residents indicated that expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County was a high priority
Trails	• 100% of the visitors surveyed marked running/walking as one of their three primary reasons for visiting • Park connectivity was the top request among all visitors surveyed • There was consensus among all parks, where the visitor survey was conducted, that adding more trails would increase the value of the parks	• For six out of 10 residents, more Greenway Trails is a high priority • Roughly six out of 10 residents want more trails for walking, running and hiking

For six out of 10 residents, more Greenway trails is a high priority.

Expansion

More Greenway trails	59%
Creating quiet areas	41%
Expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County	34%
Creating new parks in surrounding counties	29%
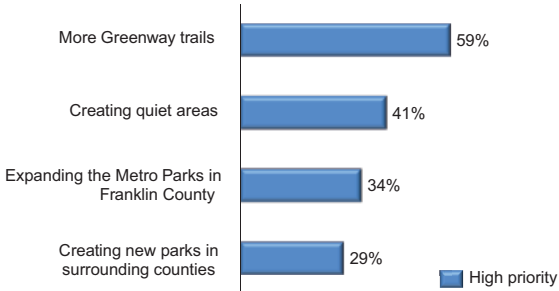
■ High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Roughly six out of 10 residents want more trails for walking, running, and hiking.

Trails

Walking and running trails	63%
Hiking trails	57%
Pet-friendly trails	49%
Cycling trails	45%
Paved trails	43%
Backpacking trails	31%
Obstacle/exercising trails	31%

■ High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

	Park visitor, focus group and staff surveys	Survey of Franklin County Residents conducted by Saperstein Associates
Facilities	• Over 80% of the visitors agreed that viewing wildlife and escaping into nature were the other two primary reasons for visiting • All visitors agreed that restrooms require immediate attention. There was consensus among all parks that replacing pit toilets would increase the value of the parks • With the exception of two parks (Prairie Oaks and Clear Creek) roads were selected with the least amount of frequency for requiring immediate attention	• Overall, 67% agree strongly that the Metro Parks have a welcoming atmosphere • Technology enhancements were of special interest to residents age 35 to 54 • For the majority of residents, a smart phone app and a monthly email newsletter are high priorities
Programs	• At 12 of 18 parks, visitors selected hike and bike programs as one of the top three things that Metro Parks can offer to get them to come to the parks more frequently • Trail etiquette was a recurring theme in both the staff surveys and focus groups. Courtesy and adherence to policies among multiple users, accessing trails for different activities were common complaints	• For seven out of 10 residents, expanding educational programs for children is a high priority • For five out of 10 residents family activity programs were a high priority

Events

For seven out of 10 residents, expanding educational programs for children is a high priority.

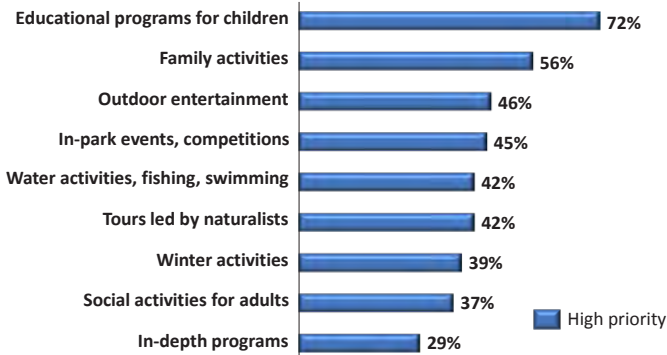| Program	High priority
Educational programs for children	72%
Family activities	56%
Outdoor entertainment	46%
In-park events, competitions	45%
Water activities, fishing, swimming	42%
Tours led by naturalists	42%
Winter activities	39%
Social activities for adults	37%
In-depth programs	29%

Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

	Park visitor, focus group and staff surveys	Survey of Franklin County Residents conducted by Saperstein Associates
Access	• Accurate and consistent directions were common requests in each of the surveys. Park staff has indicated that confusion also arises from parks with multiple entrances. Some of the signage is inconsistent or not placed on enough major routes leading to each different park or park entrance • Park staff has indicated that the public has a difficult time getting to their parks because driving directions from GPS maps are different than driving directions offered on the Metro Parks website and in Metro Parks brochures	• Over the past two years, half the residents had visited more than one Metro Park • Most residents (90%) consider the Metro Parks safe. Four out of 10 consider them very safe, an increase since 2013 (three in 10 considered parks very safe in 2013)
Communication	• 100% of visitors selected website as their primary source of communication. Visitors at 17 of the 18 parks also selected social media as one of their three choices • Many parks state that more advertising and promotion of their programs, rules and unique attributes is needed and should be a priority in order to increase visitation and alert the public to the different options each Metro Park offers. The promotion could also include park specific websites that are updated in real time	• 53% of residents currently obtain information about the Metro Parks from an online source • For a plurality of residents, the Metro Parks website is the preferred source for information about the parks. Notably, three out of four residents prefer an online source; few prefer print

For a plurality of residents, the Metro Parks website is the <u>preferred</u> source for information about the parks. Notably, three out of 4 residents prefer an online source; few prefer print.
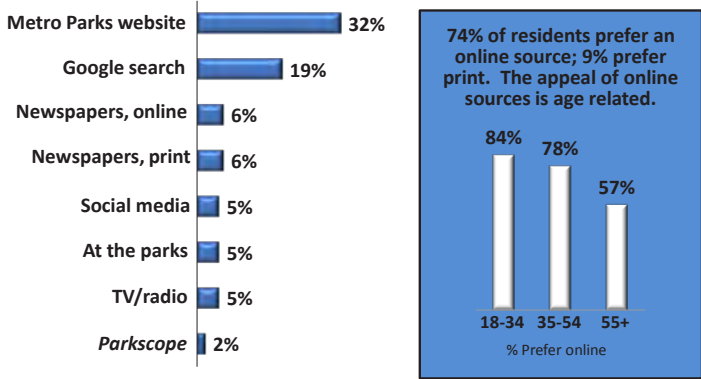
Source	%
Metro Parks website	32%
Google search	19%
Newspapers, online	6%
Newspapers, print	6%
Social media	5%
At the parks	5%
TV/radio	5%
Parkscope	2%

74% of residents prefer an online source; 9% prefer print. The appeal of online sources is age related.

Age	% Prefer online
18-34	84%
35-54	78%
55+	57%

% Prefer online

Q33: If there was one ... source you could count on for information about the Metro Parks, other than family and friends, what would it be?

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals have been established within each area of strategic focus. Each goal speaks to both aspects of the mission statement.

The primary objectives relate directly to our Mission Statement, and correlate to each Strategic Focus area.

The Plan

Mission — To conserve open spaces while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature

Responsibly manage conservation

Enhance visitor experience

Strategic Focus	Goals
Conservation	Take care of the natural, environmental and cultural resources entrusted to us
Trails	Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful
Facilities	Provide welcoming, well maintained facilities
Programs	Provide programs and events that promote community engagement
Access	Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services
Communication	Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff

To achieve these goals, objectives have been established. These objectives, along with the initiatives, will be used in the **annual budget planning process** where available resources and specific action items will be linked to the plan.

	GOALS	OBJECTIVES
Conservation	**Manage the natural, environmental and cultural resources entrusted to us**	• Acquire land that protects bodies of water, riparian corridors, and diverse or endangered plants and wildlife. • Communicate environmental restoration and management efforts which will inspire visitors to take environmentally responsible action on behalf of Central Ohio's wildlife; natural, historical and cultural resources.
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway Trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, educational programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and on-line media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/ private partners through improved communication.

INITIATIVES

The core elements of the plan are the initiatives which stem directly from staff comments and the survey data. These are the individual action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. Since the parks have varying needs, and each boast unique attributes, the initiatives will vary from park to park. The initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Staff is encouraged to identify new initiatives and in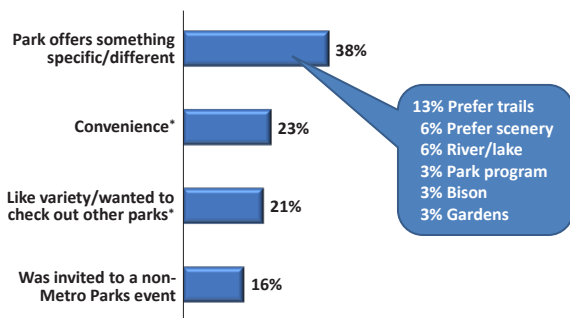corporate them into the annual budget planning process. Completion of these initiatives will be contingent upon many factors (funding, staffing, etc), which makes this a living document that will help park staff determine priorities during the annual planning process. Metrics and deadlines can be added as part of that annual planning process.

> *The initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015*

The initiatives detailed in the park by park section relate to how individual parks are providing places and *opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature*. While *caring for the natural, historical and cultural resources entrusted to us* is the common thread through each area of focus, initiatives specific to conservation are addressed in the Resource Management Plan. **Examples follow that illustrate how initiatives can support the goals and objectives.**

Among residents who visited more than one Metro Park, many were attracted by a specific offering.

Reason	Percentage
Park offers something specific/different	38%
Convenience*	23%
Like variety/wanted to check out other parks*	21%
Was invited to a non-Metro Parks event	16%

13% Prefer trails
6% Prefer scenery
6% River/lake
3% Park program
3% Bison
3% Gardens

31

Q31: You mentioned a moment ago that you've visited more than one Metro Park during the past two years. Why is that: In other words, was there something different about each of those parks that drew you to them, was it just convenience, or was there some other reason? *Response is mutually exclusive.

Eight out of 10 residents have visited at least one Metro Park (and could name it) over the past two years.
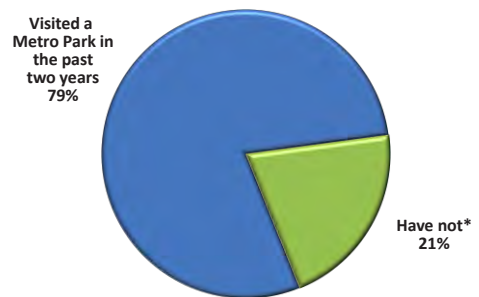
Visited a Metro Park in the past two years 79%

Have not* 21%

Q24: Have you been to a Metro Park during the past two years?
*Some residents claimed to have been to a Metro Park, but visited only city or state parks

STRATEGIC FOCUS: CONSERVATION

GOAL: *Manage the natural, historical and cultural resources entrusted to us*

The mission of Metro Parks is to conserve open spaces, while providing places and opportunities that encourage people to discover and experience nature. This plan emphasizes our commitment to conservation of resources within open spaces through cultivation of biological diversity and the protection of habitats in Central Ohio. Objectives related to the mission are established by the executive director and his staff. Initiatives or action items related to achieving the mission are established by the Metro Parks resource management team. The resource management team works with every park in the district to achieve this mission. This team created and utilizes a document called the Resource Management Plan, which identifies specific initiatives or action items that each park can perform to achieve the Metro Parks mission as it relates to conservation and work toward optimal diversity of native species and habitat. The resource management team meets annually with individual parks and staff to review the plan and implement best practices based on their location and unique park attributes.

Conservation through optimal diversity of native species and habitats

Objective: *Acquire land that protects bodies of water, riparian corridors, and diverse or endangered plants and wildlife.*

Examples of park level initiatives

- When acquiring land, we will diligently preserve that land and protect the natural resources within and adjacent to that land.
- When considering opportunities for land acquisition the first motivation is preservation and conservation of that land.
- Acquire property adjacent to bodies of water and provide the proper environment for aquatic species to thrive while enhancing water quality.
- Continue efforts to acquire, restore and maintain large portions of property in a natural undeveloped state. If individual parks can identify 80% of their park land which has remained undeveloped, then tout this as a legacy of the park district, showcasing the protection of natural beauty for future generations to enjoy.

Objective: *Communicate environmental restoration and management efforts which will inspire visitors to take environmentally responsible action on behalf of Central Ohio's wildlife; natural, historical and cultural resources*

Examples of park level initiatives

- Continue efforts to re-introduce lost or extirpated species, including plant life, wild life and aquatic life
- Actively and constantly educate the public on the success Metro Parks has had through leadership in conservation efforts.
- Find creative ways to aggressively eradicate non-native invasive species including bush honeysuckle.
- Encourage and mobilize the next generation of conservation leaders.
- Engage the public, volunteers, school children etc...

STRATEGIC FOCUS: TRAILS

GOAL: *Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful*

Metro Parks' trails are diverse, serving both community-wide and highly-individualized uses. Visitors consistently commented on their reliance on Metro Parks trails. While many use them to escape into nature, others find significance in using them to commute, exercise or walk their pets. This plan provides a framework for managing and improving trails to serve the varied needs of our visitors.

Objective: *Expand Greenway Trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Request capital improvement dollars to improve asphalt conditions on Greenway trails.
- Request capital improvement dollars to connect Greenway trails to adjacent neighborhoods.
- Request capital improvement dollars to close gaps in the current district wide trail network.
- Focus on acquisition, development and management of more Greenway trails for cyclists.

Objective: *Meet the needs of individual park visitors by adding or improving park trails.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Developing and installing dog-only trails.
- Initiating projects that focus on improving trails in Franklin County.
- Investing in the improvement of internal park walking/running trails including an emphasis on ADA accessibility (grass, asphalt and gravel).
- Request capital dollars for additional equipment for pruning along trails, especially along the Greenway trails where cyclists may encounter obstructed views causing safety hazards.

100% of the respondents in the visitor survey marked running/walking as one of the top 3 reasons for visiting.

Park connectivity was the top trail focused request

STRATEGIC FOCUS: FACILITIES
GOAL: *Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities*

Metro Parks are a destination for both passive and active engagement with nature. A visitor may seek a quiet escape or their motivations may relate to recreation or education. An integral part of this plan pertains to providing facilities that are welcoming and well maintained. These amenities will enhance the visitor's engagement with nature.

Objective: *Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Request capital dollars to improve internal educational park signage regarding plant life or animal wildlife to enrich the experience of the public with the outdoors.
- Explore use of technology tools that will aid visitors who wish to use personal electronic devices to access information that will enhance their experience.

Objective: *Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Evaluate facilities for efficiency and sustainability, invest in improving these items
- Research, create or participate in programs like Gov Deals to increase revenue
- Invest in modernization and improvement of park facilities with deficiencies.
- Request capital dollars to invest in various forms of modern technology upgrades.
- Invest in infrastructure specific to dog/pet activities like a fenced impoundment around the dog beach area for Wag Fest.
- Additional strategically placed waste and recycling receptacles.

Question 4
- All visitors agreed that restrooms require immediate attention

STRATEGIC FOCUS: PROGRAMS
GOAL: *Provide programs and events that promote community engagement*

Central Ohio residents rely on Metro Parks as a destination for both organized and informal gatherings. This suggests that Metro Parks should continue our emphasis on positive staff interaction and provides venues that support programs and promote community engagement.

Objective: *Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Create programs that encourage and focus on personal connections with nature and wildlife.
- Invite and encourage public participation in the development of Metro Parks programs.
- Craft programs for specific audiences, tailored specifically for adults only, families with children, academics etc.
- Now that Mud Runs and Yappy Hours have been proposed, implemented and completed successfully what other programs or events can staff propose to excite the public about coming to the Metro Parks
- Encourage employees to find new and enticing ways to get larger segments of the public into the Metro Parks.

Objective: *Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Develop educational programs focused on Trail Etiquette.
- Explore designating diverse age ranges for programs beyond Metro Five-0
- Explore Spanish speaking programs.
- Ensure a welcoming experience and commitment to inclusion and diversity by striving to meet the needs of diverse ages and interests, including encouraging racially and ethnically diverse participation in programs and all other visitor experiences.
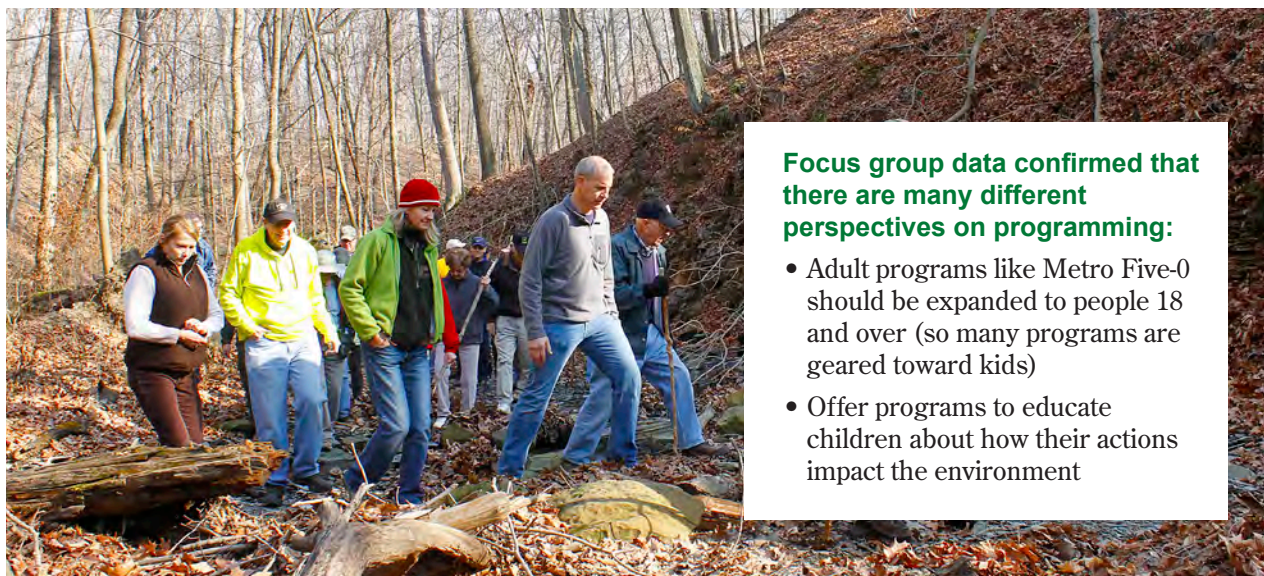
Focus group data confirmed that there are many different perspectives on programming:

- Adult programs like Metro Five-0 should be expanded to people 18 and over (so many programs are geared toward kids)
- Offer programs to educate children about how their actions impact the environment

STRATEGIC FOCUS: ACCESS
GOAL: *Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services*

Metro Parks operates 19 parks, yet surveys indicate many visitors are uncertain of the locations and unaware of services or unique attributes of the individual parks. In concert with our communication strategy, this plan will establish a standard that make Metro Parks easier to discover and our services convenient to access.

Objective: *Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Help the public to find, engage and use our parks by investing in/requesting capital dollars to improve directional signage and communication that eliminates confusion and allows the public to find and get to individual parks with ease.
- Establish a standard for parks to follow regarding signage, so that directions to each park are consistent and easily identified.

Objective: *Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitors. Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Invest in additional staff at parks that present compelling justification based on operational needs or for the safety of the public, or for the protection of Metro Parks property from vandalism.
- Establish benchmarks so that visitors receive excellent customer service when registering for programs or reserving facilities, both online and over the phone.
- Effectively communicate visitor demand for new programs, facilities etc...

Discrepancies with GPS

Many parks state that the public has a difficult time getting to their parks because driving directions from GPS maps are different than driving directions offered on the Metro Parks website and in Metro Parks brochures.

STRATEGIC FOCUS: COMMUNICATION
GOAL: *Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff*

Metro Parks serves visitors that span multiple generations, with varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Our staff communicates with community-wide and culturally-individualized audiences. The strategy calls for improved methods of communication and collaboration to cultivate a sense of pride for our Metro Parks.

Objective: *Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Help the public to find, engage and use our parks by investing in/request capital dollars to improve directional signage and communication that eliminates confusion and allows the public to find and get to individual parks with ease.
- Invest in technology to improve efficiency.

Objective: *Foster collaboration both internally and with public/private partners through improved communication.*

Examples of park level initiatives
- Seek to build relationships with underrepresented groups to grow awareness of various opportunities Metro Parks has to offer, from enjoyment of the natural environment to educational programming to employment opportunities.
- Encouraging staff to act as Metro Parks ambassadors who are empowered to engage community stakeholders to utilize spaces they have specifically invested in for recurring events. For instance inviting Honda to hold monthly luncheons at the Honda Wetland.
- Find ways to encourage community networking events to be held at various parks in the district.
- Explore and implement collaboration and partnerships with various community and government agencies.
- Engage in public outreach to stakeholders like government officials, board members, community leaders, environmental advocates and Friends of Metro Parks to identify ways in which Metro Parks can be of service that is mutually beneficial.

Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks
@Columbus.Metro.Parks

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Timeline   About   Events   Join My List   More ▾

The majority of visitors surveyed selected the web and social media as their preference for how to be informed
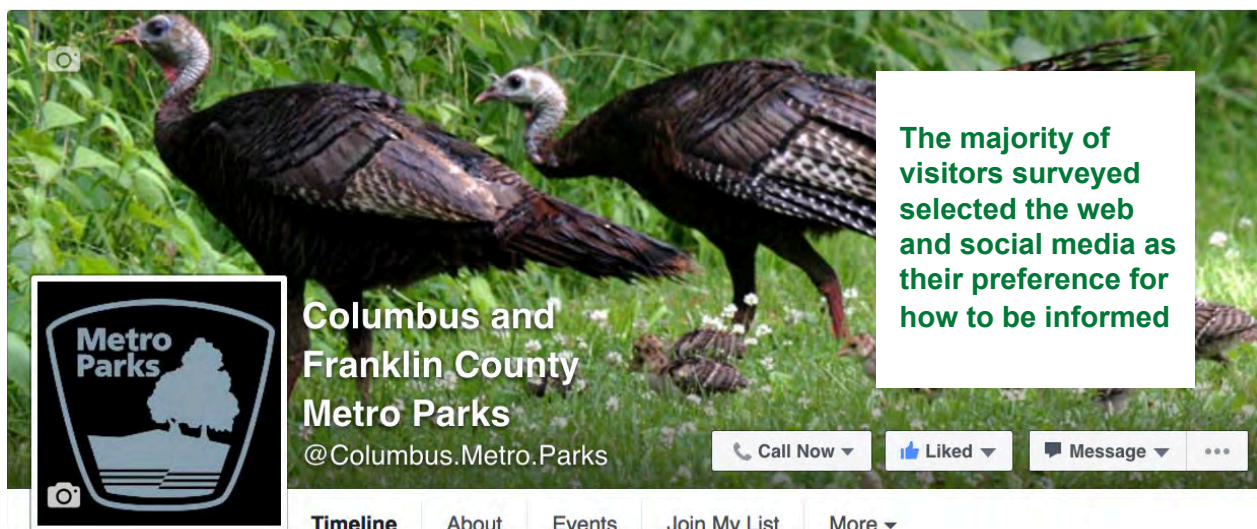
THE
PROCESS

Staff Survey Summary

Staff Survey Summary

Surveys were distributed in summer/fall of 2015 to district headquarter (HQ) staff and park managers. The surveys were designed to get candid feedback from each department and from the individual parks. At HQ, the questions (12-15) varied by department. The responses from many of the departments were visionary. Other comments regarded communication barriers, programming and the use of technology. Fifteen questions were posed to park staff, 18 of the parks responded. Those responses were categorized into four subgroups, facilities/operations, visitor experience, access and communication. The collated data is summarized in this section with additional detail for each of the individual parks provided in the Park by Park section. When summarizing responses there is a risk of losing the voice of the staff, so we included some specific quotes extracted from the various surveys.

HEADQUARTERS STAFF RESPONSES

Headquarters staff collaborated with their departments and submitted responses. Questions were open-ended and responses were categorized into four subgroups: vision, communication, programming and technology. The following departments submitted responses to the survey:

- Finance – Responses were compiled from reservations, accounting, payroll and front desk staff
- Human Resources – Indicated that two people from the department collaborated their responses
- Operations – Six staff members collaborated on the survey responses
- Planning – Five individuals completed surveys, four from planning and one from GIS
- Programming – Thirty individuals collaborated on the survey
- Public Information – Response came from Public Information Coordinator
- Resource Management – Four members collaborated on the survey responses

VISIONARY

While not specifically asked, some departments offered responses that were visionary:

- **Customer service** – Communicate what makes each park unique, improve reservation process and reservable facilities, keep humans accessible to visitors
- **Distinction** – Develop unique experiences for our visitors so they choose to spend their leisure time with Metro Parks, versus other nearby destinations
- **Diversity** – A diverse workplace will attract diverse visitors
- **Legacy** – The quality of the Metro Parks visitor experience should result in visitors wanting to attend the parks now and in the future

COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

There were a number of comments that pointed to barriers in communication.

- **Branding** – HQ staff members felt Metro Parks are confused with city parks. There was also mention of a lack of focus on promoting return visits and cross-marketing to encourage visits to other parks within the district

- **Community Engagement** – more awareness could result in more programs/partnerships for things like invasive plant removal, prairie seed picking

- **Interoffice communication** – there were comments related to the role communication plays in employee commitment to programs and in the ability to get everyone on the same page. Some departments indicated that more transparency was necessary, and that a lack of communication impeded the success of Metro Parks programs

PROGRAMMING

Programming staff offered responses from three different perspectives, the visitors, educators and staff. Each group had varied opinions on what programs bring them to the parks, what they want from Metro Parks programs and what's missing. The following factors also influence programming: communication, competition/distractions, accessibility, language barriers, training and staffing. All of these variables made it difficult to summarize the responses from this department. This lends itself to a need to establish a vision for this department. Is their role to educate the community on natural resources? Provide fitness activities? Promote interaction with nature? Teach conservation? All of the above?

ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES

Headquarters staff indicated that improvements to the IT infrastructure would result in operational efficiencies, specifically in sharing information (GIS, Resource Management) and recruitment (HR). There were also a number of technology suggestions to enhance the visitor's experience.

- **Web-based Technologies** – leverage social networks for promoting parks, improve online registration, pocket naturalist with geo-enabled walking tours, mini-documentaries sharing natural history of parks, virtual tours, online maps

- **GIS** – rising demand from Greenways users for distance calculations, could also advertise events based on a visitor's location

Let each park have its own Facebook page so they can post individually. Use Facebook to promote programming overall, not just special events and regardless of how many "likes" are received – PROGRAMMING

When RM windows of management are missed, it is likely missed for a minimum of six months and possibly a full year. This puts the habitat management behind, which further puts behind the results and goals for the Metro Parks, RM and desired interaction for the public.– RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Lack of accurate maps/GPS addresses easy to get lost going to or at park – OPERATIONS

Champion what the park visitor wants – PLANNING

Provide better documentation of projects and allow planning to become an integral part of the process of park design and construction – PLANNING

Comments From Headquarters Staff

Use social media to post mini-documentary style videos to share/educate about natural history in our parks. Could reach a much broader audience – PROGRAMMING

Systems could be more user friendly – FINANACE

More accessible information about the quality of natural resources, species that make up our ecosystems, role of visitors and impacts (good and bad) to our ecosystems and opportunities to connect with the natural world both structured and individually to improve the quality of life for all in Central Ohio – RESOUCE MANAGEMENT

Information could also be greatly expanded within the website to provide more information to the public about individual species, ecosystems and natural areas, Central Ohio's natural history, and management information related to the Metro Parks – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We could offer face time interviews for out of town individuals, but that requires WiFi or larger bandwidth that wouldn't affect other employees when we are doing so – HUMAN RESOURCES

Virtual tours may inspire some people to visit the parks, adding WiFi might help stimulate repeat visits – PUBLIC INFORMATION

Visitors to the park district need more positive interaction with our staff and knowledge about what we do – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

We need to provide updated facilities that are more comfortable for visitors … provide visitors with opportunities that are of a level and quality that will make them rave about the parks – PLANNING

Metro Parks is competing with technology distractions and other time pressures. To remain relevant to future populations, we need to emphasize what we are and what we can do for them – PROGRAMMING

Metro Parks struggles with letting the public know of all the wonderful good things that are happening in terms of environmental restoration and management. This is an area where we can improve drastically with a plan and support – PROGRAMMING

By developing unique experiences for visitors that will make them decide to spend their leisure time in a Metro Park for their adventures versus a city park, the zoo or other attraction – PUBLIC INFORMATION

Comments From Headquarters Staff

GIS tools for visualizing community plans (balanced growth plans, trail plans, etc.) could be used for a community-wide, coordīnated approach to open space development. GIS could also be used to promote transparency, including a novel approach to planning, utilizing social media and crowd-sourced input – PLANNING

The next generation needs to want to visit the parks so that they will support them as adults. The continued RM goals of habitat preservation, conservation, education and providing areas of quality natural experiences (aesthetically, emotionally and spiritually) along with the other functions of the Metro Parks should result in visitors wanting to attend and enjoy the parks now and in the future – RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

PARK STAFF SURVEY

Park Staff completed the surveys, either individually, or as a team. The collective responses represent over 120 full-time and part-time staff. The following parks participated:

Name/abbreviation		Location	Name/abbreviation		Location
Battelle Darby Creek	BDC	SW	Highbanks	HBK	NW
Blacklick Golf	BGC	SE	Inniswood	INS	NE
Blacklick Woods	BLK	SE	Pickerington Ponds	PKN	SE
Blendon Woods	BLN	NE	Praire Oaks	POK	NW
Chestnut Ridge	CHS	SE	Scioto Audubon	SIO	SW
Clear Creek	CLC	SE	Sharon Woods	SHN	NE
Glacier Ridge	GLR	NW	Slate Run Farm	SLR	SE
Greenways	GRN		Three Creeks	TCR	SE
Heritage Park	HER	NW	Walnut Woods	WAL	SE

PARK STAFF RESPONSES

The responses provided by staff across 18 individual parks indicated recurring themes in the areas of park operations, visitor experience, access and communication. Within each of those groups, additional needs were identified, as indicated below.

PARK OPERATIONS

Improve restrooms

Staff reported that visitors frequently requested improvements to restroom facilities, specifically to upgrade existing flush facilities, to replaceme pit toilets. Staff at certain parks felt this would greatly increase the number of visitors at their parks. The inference seems to be that if visitors discover a given park does not have flush toilets they are less likely to return because in our modern era those parks with flush toilets provide a higher-quality experience.

Building/maintenance issues

Staff reported facilities that need to be upgraded and modernized due to age, especially some of the oldest parks in the district. Some parks needed additional facilities to support the high volume of visitors in the form of shelters or bike repair stations, like in the case of the Greenways group.

Road/path conditions

Staff reported complaints from visitors about the condition of multiuse trails (could be smoother to accommodate rollerblading), pot holes in parking lots, and lack of paved parking lots.

Recreation structure needs

Staff at certain parks responded that, due to visitor requests, they were seeking improvements to existing structures or the addition of equipment or facilities pertaining to recreational activity.

Additional staffing needed

Staff reported the need for more personnel to adequately handle park operations. The type of staff requested included full-time naturalists, maintenance workers, park rangers, roving resource management (or dedicated RM personnel to tend to resource management upkeep), program staffing to increase visitor attendance, and educational staff to engage the public.

As the oldest park in the district we incur constant maintenance issues with old facilities (AG restroom) and utilities (failing water lines)…– BLK

We can generate more revenue by renovating the barn and rent it out like a reservable shelter – GLR

A full-time naturalist, with programs geared around spring, fall and winter when we traditionally have higher program attendance – CLC

[Seen success with] The carry in/out program and other eco-friendly/green incentives we installed while developing the park – POK

We would turn away fewer people if our naturalist staff were increased, allowing us to offer more programs – GLR

Lack of time and staff to take care of controlling invasives – WAL

Somali-speaking educator, Spanish-speaking educator, programs focused or tailored to these populations – SHN

Our roads here are on the radar and will need funds at some point (a lot of money) but others need it sooner – SLR

Quotes Regarding Facilities/Operations

Increase program staff levels – BDC

More staff to watch the park while programs are taking place, or to allow for more programs – BLN

Children's play equipment, and stretch racks for exercisers – CLC

Flush toilets would be nice and very much appreciated but carry a heavy price tag… family and school kid friendly restroom – SLR

Making a program room in the nature center (we have been preparing to propose the back patio be renovated into a three or even four season room) – BLN

More drinking fountains and bike repair stations – GRN

… expansion of basketball court, addition of play equipment in reserve area, additional exercise structures at stretch rack areas, obstacle course – BLK

VISITOR EXPERIENCE

New or expanded programs

Staff at many parks indicated visitor requests for additional activities and programs. They ranged from water activities to evening family camp outs. Comments typically stemmed from embracing the unique attributes of each specific park.

Parking issues

At many parks, staff reports a need for additional parking. The reasons vary, in some cases visitors request more parking, in other cases certain park attractions are so popular that the amount of parking provided in a particular area is not adequate, i.e., Sharon Woods, Schrock Lake area, and could be expanded to accommodate peak parking.

Trail etiquette issues

Staff at some of the parks stated that they had problems with trail etiquette and offered suggestions on how to address these problems.

WiFi/ technology enhancements

The technology upgrades requested included:

- Surveillance cameras for parking lot either for safety or to show visitors on the internet how busy the park was if they were planning a visit.
- Interactive "you are here apps"
- Virtual tours of trails and parks which could be placed on the Metro Parks website or used as an app for self-guided park tours.
- "QR codes" and or bar codes to identify vegetation or animals seen in each park were popular requests.
- Field computers and iPad for programming, education and law enforcement staff as a means to connect with younger or more tech savvy visitors and as an efficiency tool for law enforcement while they are patrolling in vehicles.

More shade/shelters

Staff reported that in many instances visitors will ask about more shade/shelter, especially in areas where large members of the public seem to congregate.

Improve intra-park signage/map

Park managers often reported that visitors are requesting more accurate maps of the park.

Concerns with incidences of crime

In response to the question what has changed over the past few years, a number of park staff mentioned an increase in crime.

Pet trail enhancements

In response to the two questions: what do visitors frequently tell you they want and what could bring more visitors into your park; pet amenities were commonly mentioned. Pet drinking fountains, pet shower options, or in the case of POK a fenced impoundment around the dog beach Prairie Oaks area for Wag Fest; other parks indicated that visitors had requested that their park develop a dog park, create areas to walk dogs or create dedicated dog trails that are separate from the multiuse trails.

Have more technological interpretation on the trails… (technology enhancements) would help us engage visitors on the trails. A new eagle cam would be great – HBK

Visitors want…
Pet trail and public hunting area
– CHS

Most people are not going to drive to Clear Creek for a 1-hour program. Long hikes and extended "getting dirty" looking for nature types of programs (looking for salamanders and things like that) bring the highest turnout. Backpacking and extended hiking programs or activities – CLC

More public programs that have a "fun"/ educational theme to attract a wider variety of visitors to the park – POK

We are missing a park map – BGC

Visitors need more…Canoe programs – TCR

Quotes Regarding Visitor Experience

We do not have any trails that allow pets – SHN

I have spoken to many visitors who have experienced concern for their safety while exercising on the less used portions of the trail – GRN

Add senior exercise stations – HBK

It would be a big asset to have WiFi available to the public. People need a place to be able to relax and still use their devices or do research/study – INS

Need to enforce litter violations (fisherman, trail users) – TCR

Because of multiple entrances and many variations on which parts of our trails people use, we get many questions about distances – GLR

Opportunities for families to fish at Schrock Lake... kept the rule to catch and release for all – SHN

Need additional trees for shade and wind breaks during the winter months – SIO

Regarding behavior, visitors seem more demanding and exhibit a sense of entitlement – INS

Missing… An outdoor stage/ amphitheatre – SIO

Streaming more clips about neat things seen in the park. Expand the Geo Cache program to maybe 10 spots in the park each very different than the others – SLR

Continue to stress safety and cooperation among user groups on the MUT's – GLR

Quotes Regarding Visitor Experience

Online fishing reports, real-time trail conditions – TCR

Provide WiFi for visitors to use throughout the park for the purpose of GPS points in the park so visitors can find places while hiking and take a virtual tour of them, which would incorporate more tech-knowledge into outdoor education – POK

The multi-use trails will flood often with heavy rains – WAL

Phone app of trails and a map. GPS coordinates logged throughout trails for markers to help EMS, dispatch, other agencies – GRN

Improve GPS coordinates – CHS

Interactive Metro Park app with trails and highlights of features along the trails – GLR

Park visitors need more manners; respect for grounds… (ie amount of waste produced and litter left by picnic groups) – SHN

ACCESS

New or Expanded programs

Staff at many parks indicated visitor requests for additional activities and programs. They ranged from water activities to evening family camp outs. Comments typically stemmed from embracing the unique attributes of each specific park.

Request for directional signage

Accurate and consistent directions were common requests in each of the surveys. Park managers indicate that confusion also arises from parks with multiple entrances. Managers feel that more should be done to clarify and address this issue. It seems that employees and visitors would like to make it easier for the public to locate and access all of the different Metro Parks. Currently some of the signage is inconsistent or not placed on enough major routes leading to each different park or park entrance

Discrepancies with GPS

Many parks state that the public has a difficult time getting to their parks because driving directions from GPS maps are different than driving directions offered on the Metro Parks website and in Metro Parks brochures.

Connectivity to Greenways

Many responses indicate the need for more Greenway connections to their parks and facilities. In some cases this connectivity is underway. In other cases park managers are seeing an increase in bicyclists and would like to expand the opportunities for connections to visitors. Some park managers would like to see as many Metro Parks as possible connected to each other by Greenway trails.

Pedestrian/public transit connectivity

There were comments from some park staff referencing connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and accessibility from public transit.

Need: bigger directional signage outside of the park – CHS

We are known as an "Event Park" Close proximity (walking distance) to actively growing neighborhoods – GLR

Google maps and internet directions confuse visitors – BDC

When visitors Google the park or get directions via internet/GPS it takes them to the main part of the park on the Madison County side – POK

Some want to connect our trail to Groveport Rec Center and some do not. I would say a little more people are on the "do not connect." A lot of visitors came from Three Creeks and said they will not go back because of the bicyclists traveling so fast – WAL

Connect the Darby Creek Greenway Trail south to Batelle Darby Creek and north to Heritage Trail – POK

Signage along the important highways is minimal – GLR

Quotes Regarding Access

... there was a plan developed for an MUT along with a connector trail along the Big Walnut Creek up to Hoover, however it's been on hold for several years now – BLN

Information provided by Google is wrong. Signage to the park from the outer belt highway missing – BLN

GPS/mapping apps confuse the public due to multiple park entrances and no consistency for directions – TCR

Confusion on multiple entrances (lack of you are here signage), limited access to the multi-use trail and multi-use trail connection to Blacklick Woods – PKN

Complete the Greenway under Refugee Rd and pave half of the trail from the Nature Center to Ash Grove, additional bikers could use the park that currently can't take their road bikes on parts of the MUT that are still aggregate – BLN

Connect trails to more sections of Franklin County Make trails easier to access. Educate public about trails – GRN

COMMUNICATION

This section refers to comments that specifically related to marketing the parks.

Request for advertising

Many parks state that more advertising and promotion of their programs, rules and unique attributes is needed and should be a priority in order to increase visitation and alert the public to the different options each Metro Park offers. The promotion could also include park specific websites that are updated in real time.

Build on partnerships

Some parks commented on the importance of community and corporate support in terms of partnerships. There are also parks that hold unique designations such as "Nature Preserve" or "Audobon Certified Sanctuary," these affiliations contribute to the unique characteristics of the parks.

The Wind and Solar Learning Center has also never performed (from a program perspective) as well as it should. Technical problems have plagued it from the outset. However, many of those problems have been solved. We hope that its potential can be more fully realized – GLR

Through our partnership The First Tee of Central Ohio, we will continue to build in programming for our youth here in Central Ohio – BGC

Promote visitor safety and awareness thru a "Park Watch." Frequently monitor websites like Yelp capturing user comments and evaluate. Programs for Prairie Oaks and Heritage Trail parks. – POK

The "Lack of continual promotion" is a hindrance to getting to our park – BGC

Update website and keep it current – CHS

Promote programming and ranger services with short videos on social media and TV – TCR

With Walnut Woods being new I believe not a lot of folks are aware that we are here – WAL

Quotes Regarding Promotion

Link WSLC directly to the schools that we work with – GLR

CRPD Partnership –TCR

Partner with groups from Columbus such as Outdoor Pursuits and other low-impact recreational groups – CLC

Advertise Natural Play Area, improve signage and awareness – SHN

Many people still have no idea what this building (Audobon) is... integrating more into the park, without taking away their focus of birds, the river corridor and the forest within our border – SIO

Internal cross training of staff from park to park, so Metro Parks employees can address questions. – HR

While we enjoy some of the changes that are in the process of being made (such as the mud run-obstacle course), and other promotional events & activities that generate more enthusiasm with the public, we hope to keep the park mostly the same. Just with enough updates to keep up with today's society – BLN

Park Operations	BDC	BGC	BLK	BLN	CHS	CLC	GLR	GRN	HBK	HER	INS	PKN	POK	SIO	SHN	SLR	TCR	WAL
Improve restrooms																		
Bldg/Maintenance issues																		
Road/path conditions																		
recreation structure needs																		
need more staff																		
Visitor Experience	BDC	BGC	BLK	BLN	CHS	CLC	GLR	GRN	HBK	HER	INS	PKN	POK	SIO	SHN	SLR	TCR	WAL
new or expanded programs																		
parking issues																		
trail etiquette issues																		
wifi/ technology enhancements																		
More shade/shelters																		
park signage/map																		
concerns crime																		
pet trail enhancements																		
Access	BDC	BGC	BLK	BLN	CHS	CLC	GLR	GRN	HBK	HER	INS	PKN	POK	SIO	SHN	SLR	TCR	WAL
request for signage																		
discrepancies with GPS																		
connectivity to Greenway																		
pedestrian/public transit connectivity																		
Communication	BDC	BGC	BLK	BLN	CHS	CLC	GLR	GRN	HBK	HER	INS	PKN	POK	SIO	SHN	SLR	TCR	WAL
request for advertising																		
build on partnerships																		

RECURRING THEMES –
STAFF AND FOCUS GROUPS

The technology upgrades requested included:

- **Directions** – better use of technology, i.e. Global Positioning System (GPS) and traditional street signs for finding the parks
- **On-demand** – staff and visitors concurred that there is a need to provide program, trail conditions and event details online
- **Trail usage** – While the preferences varied for how the trails are used (pedestrians, photographers, pet owners, roller blades, road bikes, mountain bikes), etiquette and connectivity were frequently referenced
- **Interaction** – Staff interaction with visitors is highly regarded. The focus groups emphasized their preferences for engaging with rangers during programmed events. However, there seemed to be a general consensus among the staff surveys that many parks need more staffing to better serve park visitors.

More detail about the focus groups can be found in the Focus Group Summary Section.

WHAT STAFF DIDN'T SAY

Many of the issues that came up in the focus groups were consistent with staff feedback. There were some themes that were common among the four focus groups that were not reflected in the staff surveys, namely:

- **Clubs/volunteers** – focus groups mentioned how different organizations were working together to either volunteer in the parks or use them as a destination to exercise

- **Comparison** – there were a number of references to events at other Metro Parks (Cleveland, Dayton and Cincinnati)

- **Large scale programs** – Metro Five-0 and Commit To Be Fit were well liked by the focus groups, but there was no reference to those programs in the staff reports.

In the Park by Park section, visitor survey responses are included to illustrate the perspectives of the visitors and staff in regards to what brings people to the park, engagement and what needs immediate attention.

Focus Group Summary
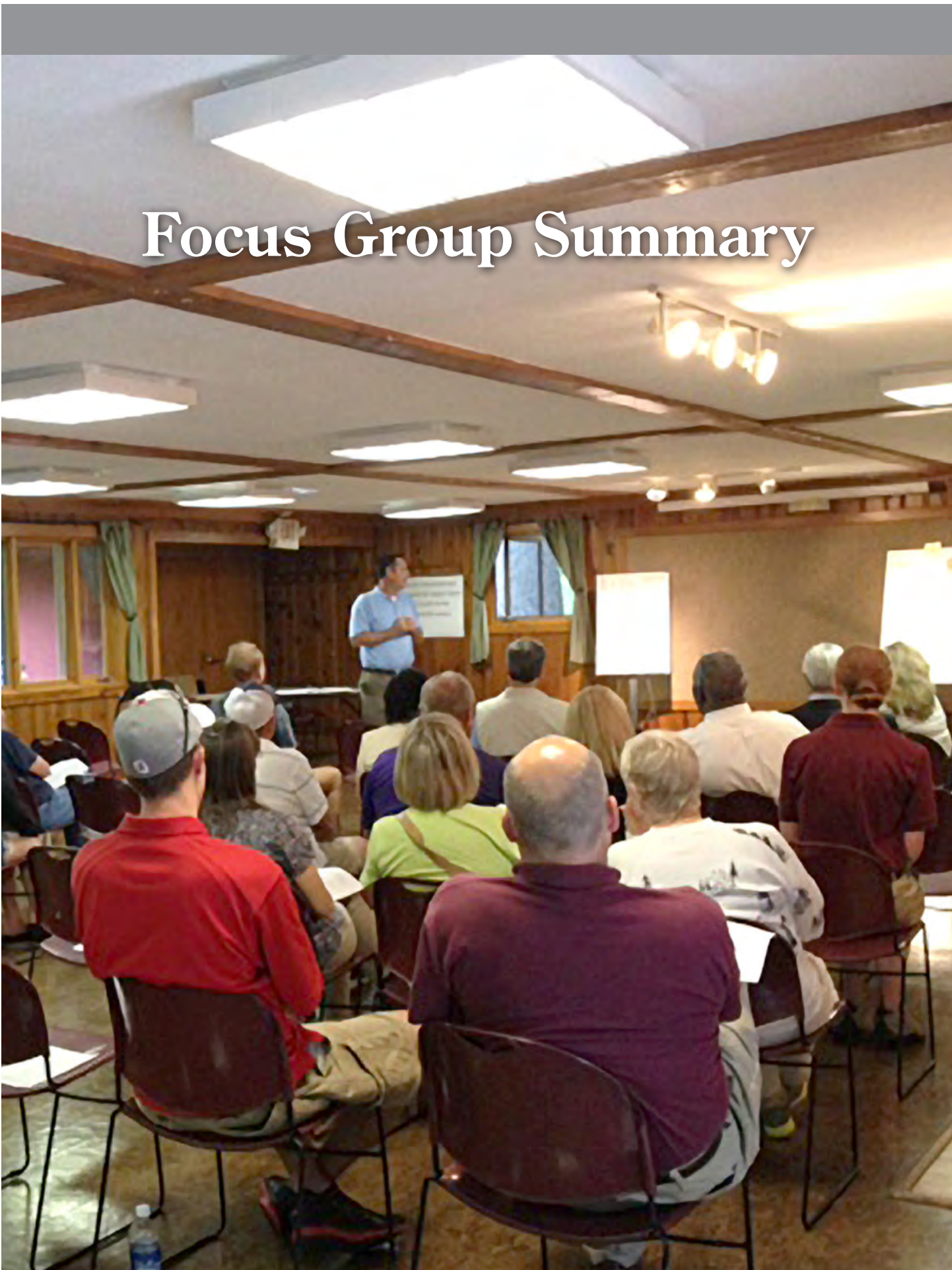
Focus Group Input

DATA SOURCE

	Approx # of participants	Hand written reponses	Collected
Highbanks Metro Park	23	13	August 26, 2015
Blacklick Woods	20	3	August 28, 2025
Scioto Audubon	46	16	August 31, 2015
Battelle Darby Creek	28	10	September 2, 2015

SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP RESPONSES

The questions were open-ended; they represent a narrative expression of the opinions and ideas of the individuals who were present. This summary represents an overall snapshot of the views of the approximately 120 attendees. Verbal responses were recorded by staff, written responses were also collected (42 total).

① **In Franklin County a household pays about $23 annually for a house valued at $100,000. How would you like to see Metro Parks spend this money?**

There were essentially four categories that the responses fell into; capital, trails, programs, promotion and staff.

①	CAPITAL
BDC	Park inside 270
BDC	Renovate Blendon Woods and Blacklick Woods nature centers
BDC	Keep restoring natural lands that maintain indigenous plants and animals
BDC	Put subtle signs to show folks where to take a photo
BDC	Underpass signs that say what bridge you went under
BDC	Canopy walk (i.e. Holden Arb)
BLK	More plants native in parks to add beauty
HBK	Buy land to conserve corridors for animals
HBK	Coordinate w/Columbus Rec and Parks to help them maintain better parks (eg) Antrim
HBK	More water fountains
HBK	Maintain the parks
HBK	Expand property tax zone to counties that parks are in
HBK	Continue protecting natural areas
HBK	Buy more land and protect trees
HBK	Eagle videos
HBK	Connect Greenways and especially Highbanks
SIO	Plant more trees in conjunction with other organizations (x2)
SIO	Put budget on web and other transparent indicators
SIO	More trees and rare plants (native orchids)
SIO	Find a way to have outside counties help pay or donate
SIO	Further land acquisition
SIO	Acquire more land and conserve it or restore it to natural
SIO	Birding and Tree ID
SIO	Repair rockwall
SIO	Build more boulders to climb
SIO	More benches

.

①	PROGRAMS
BDC	Programs with schools like OSU and Columbus State with photographers
BDC	Education, history and preservation
BLK	Programs
BLK	More in - school programs will make kids want to (come) to the parks
BLK	Some programs at the Southeast Parks such as Chestnut Ridge, Slate Run and Pickerington Ponds even if (the parks) don't have a full time naturalist
BLK	Education funding schools
BLK	More preschool (education) - Have to start earlier than 5th grade
BLK	More Patches and incentives for participation
HBK	Keep programs
HBK	Keep tram
HBK	Farmers markets and donate food to pantry at Inniswood
HBK	Winter Hikes at all parks especially the three new ones
HBK	Return Commit To Be Fit hikes
SIO	How do we validate programs and do we do all or some of the schools
SIO	More programs
SIO	Teenage related programs
SIO	More outreach

①	STAFF
BDC	Mounted unit at large parks like Battelle Darby Creek
BDC	Location emergency to help bikers
BLK	Good maintenance and upkeep (keep up the good work)
BLK	More staff - naturalists at every park - (including) new ones
BLK	Naturalists at Slate Run - Fall Fest
SIO	Rangers and naturalists at every park

①	PROMOTION
BLK	More advertising
BLK	More advertising - use social media for fitness and fun
SIO	More networking with national conservation organizations
SIO	More marketing

①	**TRAIL FOCUSED**	
BDC	More trails	
BDC	More signage to indicate trail mile markers	
BLK	Clear Creek reroute trail	
BLK	More pet trails	
BLK	Mixture trails - not all paved	
BLK	Safety concerns - more staff rangers on trails	
BLK	Hikers who want to hike with their dogs have been left behind. Please open up some trails that are challenging and Do Not have bikes on them. I am halfway between Chestnut Ridge and Slate Run and have 1.5 miles of trail to hike my dogs. These are huge parks that have room	
BLK	Have longer dog trails.	
HBK	Trail connectivity	
HBK	Signage trails Greenways color coded for better rate usage	
HBK	Technical signs bar codes for trails to get maps	
HBK	Trail operating system	
HBK	Expanded educational opportunities beyond SEED: lesson plans that include geography (with maps); math (calculating distances, amount of trails); outdoor school (i.e. overnight cabins for city school groups); fitness (PE)	
HBK	Distance markers on trails (i.e. 1 mile between signs)	
SIO	More nature trails	
SIO	Wider trails	
SIO	Paved trails to help wheelchairs	

①	**PRESERVE**	
BDC	More passive open space	
BDC	Do NOT make it overly active like baseball fields	
BDC	Keep the space natural	
BDC	No baseball / soccer	

2 Metro Parks manages miles of trail systems outside of the parks. What would you like us to do with these trail systems?

There were essentially seven categories that the responses fell into; capital, connectivity, signage/maps, programs, promotion, pets and etiquette.

②	CAPITAL
BDC	Trails cost money beware of costs and budgetary issues
BDC	Make Olentangy Trail wider
BDC	Small pull off areas
BDC	More resting areas
BDC	Nature spurs off main trail
BDC	Make trails more identified with roads / streets or mile markers
BDC	Pave Batelle Darby Creek and Prairie Oaks trails - too much maintenance with rain
BDC	Great job on new Alum section by Easton
BDC	More trails - expand program
BDC	Build upon success of Camp Chase
BDC	Create trail heads on Camp Chase at Galloway Rd parking lot
BDC	Buy more land
BDC	Widen Heritage Trail in old Hilliard
BLK	Traffic problems
BLK	Refugee Rd/RR pass development - can public assist in process with RR i.e. petitions? X 2
BLK	Inside Blacklick Woods - in late winter/early spring - the gravel trail is wet - priority but would like paved and use in winter/wet months - and you don't know until you get here what it's like
BLK	Within parks have a variety of trail types - some well- developed and some more natural - a little of both
BLK	Between Livingston and nature center pave half - not safe to inline skate on crushed limestone or in vehicle traffic
HBK	Focus on safety / design
HBK	Finish Alum Creek Trail
HBK	Natural area focus for trail development
SIO	Expand system
SIO	More soft trails
SIO	Put bird houses/id trees on the trails
SIO	Metro Parks "can't do it all"

②	CONNECTIVITY
BDC	Link Camp Chase to Darby Creek Greenway trail and nature center
BDC	Good job on Camp Chase make more local connections
BDC	Connect Olentangy to Highbanks
BLK	Gap between trails
BLK	No easy access to restaurants (?) path to main ways (?)
BLK	More direct route (i.e. follows freeway) to downtown (from Blacklick Woods) instead of routing to Canal Winchester
HBK	Link them up and make them both bike- and walker-friendly
HBK	Benches, sight amenities, neighborhood connectors, maintain water quality
HBK	Connect Highbanks to Hills Market, keep them clean for rollerblades and bikes, public service videos/TV on trail etiquette
HBK	Connect Highbanks to Hills market
HBK	Trail access / connections / safety
SIO	Link to community with trails to rec centers, open spaces and parks
SIO	Heritage to PC / Link (?)
SIO	Link to neighborhoods and open space
SIO	Connect downtown to Scioto
SIO	Connect to other parks

②	SIGNAGE / MAPS
BDC	Need site identification like "Where are we now.."
BDC	Make Camp Chase more educational/signage/ info
BDC	More directional info/signs to locate features
BDC	Like signs / info
BDC	Add more trail usage signs i.e. "Trail Etiquette"
BDC	Need map / of Camp Chase and general trails
BLK	Proper signs - Blacklick Woods only for bikes
BLK	Connect all parks (bike) and or signage that directs you via side roads that will get you to the next park
HBK	Greenway needs maps and signage to connect Greenway trails
HBK	Need a Metro Parks Greenways map
SIO	Signage and markings
SIO	More maps/signage/information/electronic maps
SIO	Maps with parking locators

②	PROGRAMS	
BDC	Groups / trainers need more space	
BDC	Tie fitness / distance / info with walkers and runners	
BDC	Use education as tool with trails	
BLK	Blacklick Woods leave some nature trails - nature, pavement of all is not necessary! X2	
HBK	Programs for trail use	
SIO	Special events / programs on trails	
SIO	Obstacle courses with trails	
SIO	Make trails more educational	
SIO	YAY bikes programs	
SIO	Community system = shared responsibility - Volunteers to help maintain trail running groups	

②	PROMOTION	
BLK	Let people know where the trails are! Get the word out - paper, news, social media, user groups	
SIO	Partnerships with businesses	
SIO	Friends dedications of trees and benches on trails	
SIO	Give $$ to "Friends of Metro Parks"	

②	PETS	
SIO	Pet trails	
SIO	Scenic pet trails with shade trees	
SIO	Expanded pet trails 5	
SIO	More dog programs	

②	ETIQUETTE	
BLK	Bikes riding three across on road - we have paths for them but they don't use them	
HBK	Find a way for bikers/runners to coexist on trails (speed limits, Etc.)	
SIO	Encourage road (bike) riders to move to trails	

3 What is the most important thing to you about Metro Parks and why?

③	CAPITAL
BLK	Trails and nature centers x 2
SIO	Comprehensive planning
SIO	Wages
SIO	Other counties should pay
SIO	Area maps
SIO	Where's the water? (mapping)

③	ESCAPE INTO NATURE
BDC	Preservation of nature
BDC	Enjoy nature and Metro Parks keep parks natural
BDC	Like nature NOT ballparks - passive recreation maintain
BDC	Poison ivy signs make more prevalent in natural play areas
BDC	Keep parks natural *
BDC	Encouraging use of natural areas and still keep preservation
BDC	Stay with passive recreation
BDC	Variety and close to the city
BDC	Feel safe in the Metro Parks
BDC	Passive recreation, let kids play with worms and dirt
BDC	Peaceful
BLK	Experience nature in an urban area. Good for people to reconnect.
BLK	Valuing nature in our community x 2
BLK	Safety and the chance to experience and enjoy nature
BLK	Preserve green space and nature
BLK	Getting as many youth as possible to experience outdoors/nature especially those who don't often get an opportunity
BLK	More naturalists / educators x 2
BLK	Least important - Man made play equipment
HBK	Walking trails through natural areas (forest, wetland...) because we enjoy walking through areas that protect wildlife. X 2
SIO	Natural areas
SIO	Back to natural areas
SIO	Nature
SIO	Learning about nature

③	ESCAPE INTO NATURE, cont.	
SIO	Naturalists!!!!!!	
SIO	Access to bodies of water	

③	PRESERVE AND CONSERVE	
BDC	Variety and conservation	
BDC	Each Metro Park is different	
BDC	Different ecosystems	
BDC	Water quality protection	
BDC	Keep development away (buffering)	
BDC	Darby Creek	
BDC	Continue restoring prairies	
BDC	Preservation	
BDC	Education and preservation of history	
BDC	Preservation and protection of Big and Little Darby Creeks	
BLK	Great diversity of parks	
BLK	More land around Pickerington	
HBK	Conserving the resource x 2	
HBK	Free, safe, clean, quiet, spacious, (hills) and "so many more parks growing;" soft dirt, clay paths	
HBK	Acquiring more land	
SIO	Land acquisition	
SIO	Conservation	
SIO	Preservation	
SIO	Open space is preserved	
SIO	Purchasing lakes, quarries	
SIO	Control invasives	
SIO	Planting trees	
SIO	Love the open spaces	
SIO	Manicured beauty	

③	BIKING	
BDC	Use the bike trails a lot	
BDC	Bike rentals at Scioto Audubon	
BLK	Connecting bike trails	
HBK	Need mountain bike trails on the northend for younger age groups	
SIO	Biking and walking	
SIO	Pump and tool stations	

③ PROGRAMMING

BDC	Parkscope not only provides programs but it's a wealth of information
BLK	Adult educational programs
BLK	Wild areas. Wildlife and programming
BLK	Best and most affordable golf
BLK	Guided hikes (Commit To Be Fit) reinstate
BLK	Other seasonal hike series
HBK	Senior programs
HBK	Animals
HBK	Tram
SIO	Diversity, types, programs, Slate Run Farm, hikes, choices
SIO	Educational programs
SIO	Senior programming
SIO	Bee programs
SIO	Youth, adult, family programming
SIO	Gardens
SIO	Kayaking
SIO	Paddle boarding
SIO	Return Commit To Be Fit!!
SIO	Kite flying areas
SIO	Geocaching
SIO	Opportunities to exercise

③ PROMOTION

BDC	Everybody' s voice is equal and how it is heard at Metro Parks
BLK	Keep bulletin boards updated and easy to find, closer to play areas
SIO	Creating new stakeholders
SIO	Networking with nurseries
SIO	Promoting diversity

③ TRAILS

BDC	Open spaces and trails
HBK	Walking trails for senior citizens
SIO	Trail system
SIO	Walking trails
SIO	Dog parks and pet trails

4 What can we do to get you outside having fun in your Metro Parks?

④	PROGRAMS
BDC	Offer kid programs later in the day during the week and at staggered times on the weekends for parents who work during the week
BDC	Program to introduce children to the source of their food
BDC	Programs to educate children about how their actions impact the environment (Eg. Darby Creek is clean, how do they keep it that way) compared to other bodies of water downtown that are not as clean
BDC	Outdoor Expo (Eg. Five Rivers MP) a weekend program that includes kayaking, dog activities, mountain biking, kids doing BMX stuff, class where people learn how to change a tire, rock climbing, camping
BDC	Programming geared towards people with disabilities and special needs (live recreational therapy) eg. naturalist led hikes (on paved trails) not only wheel chairs but also am bulatory people
BDC	Target the special needs population through programs and volunteering
BDC	Continue education programs
BDC	Offer family backpacking and camping classes
BDC	Put in a disc golf course on the west side (Batelle Darby Creek / Prairie Oaks)
BDC	Zip line
BDC	Frisbee golf with friends
BDC	Small climbing wall (around different Metro Parks)
BDC	Offer classes on "How to build your own prairie at home"
BDC	Offer a specific internship for naturalists that lasts for at least one season
BLK	More naturalist programs
BLK	Naturalist at every park for programs
BLK	More programs at southeast parks (Slate Run, Pickerington Ponds, Chestnut Ridge)
BLK	More festivals - theme focused
BLK	More tram rides
BLK	Nature centers expanded
BLK	More guided hikes
BLK	More interactive learning for all ages
BLK	Corporate team building activities
BLK	Overnight and day access for scout and youth groups
BLK	Fall Fest at Slate Run
BLK	Tim doing adventure hikes

④		PROGRAMS, cont.
	BLK	More naturalists, add recreation specialist - i.e. rock climbing, canoeing
	BLK	More fishing access and areas
	HBK	Inside programming "Taking the planet to dinner" Cleveland Metro Parks program
	HBK	Dog related events love Wag Fest! Involve local rescue groups! Adoption events, Walk with a Vet/Trainer; Programming on dog park behavior!
	HBK	Senior programming
	HBK	Family events and programming
	HBK	Adult programs like Metro Five-0 expanded to people 18 and over (so many programs are geared towards kids)
	HBK	Family theme programs should appeal to all ages (not just 8-year-olds and below)
	HBK	Keep Winter Hikes
	HBK	Keep shuttles for seniors and guests
	HBK	Birding / butterflies
	HBK	Pioneer days like Cleveland Metro Parks
	HBK	Farmers Markets like Cleveland Metro Parks
	HBK	Bug City like Cleveland Metro Parks
	HBK	Volunteer
	HBK	Special one-day or multi-day workshops focusing on a nature ID topic (birds, trees, geology etc.)
	HBK	Commit To Be Fit hikes
	HBK	Something like Slate Farm on north side of town
	HBK	Art exhibits
	HBK	Overnight camping
	SIO	Programs
	SIO	More programs for kids similar to wetland activities with nets
	SIO	Kayak lessons
	SIO	Contests for landscape architects to create amenities in the parks
	SIO	Outdoor movies
	SIO	Continue Commit To Be Fit and Winter Hkes
	SIO	Photo contest

④		PROMOTION
	BDC	ParkScope at senior centers
	BDC	More signs around explaining birds and plants etc
	BLK	Private companies give gift cards to visitors
	BLK	Website should say which parks have water/river access; Where can you access; Put on front page of web for easy access; discuss the water levels on the website
	BLK	More COTA access to Metro Parks

④	PROMOTION, cont.	
SIO	Promote unimproved serenity paths in quiet places	
SIO	Highlight what is special today along the paths	
SIO	Work with Ohio Historical Center or local historical societies to conduct historical reenactments	
SIO	Partner with COTA to get people access to Metro Parks	
SIO	Name all ponds (eg. Chestnut Ridge has a nice pond that is NOT named) Some but not ALL ponds have names	

④	CAPITAL	
BLK	Update nature centers	
BLK	More reserveable shelters and lodges, at other parks	
HBK	Zoe Snyder © says More Monkey Bars (thanks Jill)	
SIO	Build bigger more creative playgrounds	
SIO	Hammock poles	
SIO	Slackline poles	
SIO	Create "natural playgrounds" eg. build a fort; learn to play in the mud down by the stream; have kids use nature to build and do stuff	
SIO	Buy bodies of water	

④	STAFF	
BDC	Visible; accessible volunteers or naturalists that can educate visitors on history of each park (at every park) and significant sites in each park (eg. the mounds at Highbanks) B/C people unknowingly have dogs, children etc disrespecting these areas since they are unaware of their significance. (The Zoo does this)	
HBK	Keep volunteers @ eagles	
SIO	Naturalists at ALL Metro Parks esp Slate Run and Pickerington Ponds	

④	TRAIL	
BDC	More trails along the water (esp near Darby Creek)	
BDC	More big loop trails (two to three miles long)	
BDC	Trails connecting all Metro Parks	
BDC	More trails (both paved and not paved) please pave and connect all Metro Parks by trail	
BDC	Within the Metro Parks offer more shaded trails	
BDC	Educate visitors along trails and creeks about the surrounding environment	
BLK	Ski races or trail runs	
HBK	Hikes, especially off-trail with a naturalist	
SIO	Sponsor law to get bikers OFF the roads and ON bike trails for safety	
SIO	Promote paths for walkers and bikers in conjunction with all highway projects	
SIO	Paths	

5

What word or emotion comes to mind when you think of your Metro Parks?

⑤ BDC

Heart

Heart

Heart (conservation / passive feelings)

Sentimental feelings of when we brought our kids here who are now grown

⑤ BLK

Accessible		
Beautiful	Neat	Great
Free	Safe	Green
Therapeutic	Wonderful	

⑤ HBK

Calm	Connection	Cool	Escape
Green	Love	Nature x 3	Not recreational
Rejuvenation	Serenity x 3	Time travel	

Gratitude (tram, parents older, volunteer app. @ u8 for all the programming?) memorial benches and trees

⑤ SIO

Beauty	Nice	Connection	Outdoors
Contentment	Peace	Peace x2	Education
Pride	Freedom	Relaxing	Love x3
Stressful	Nature x2	Therapy	Diversity plants and animals

6 — What would you like to see at this Metro Park?

⑥ BDC

I want to see WiFi in the Metro Parks

Ability to see the bison in summer in tall grass (platform)

Observation towers for birding at the wetlands (best of the best areas) catails overgrown

More interpretive signage along trails (and no pets signage)

Dyer Mill Trail needs improvement in flood prone areas next to Big Darby Creek

Develop plans for the training barn and grandstand

More portable user-friendly goals (posts) other sports pick-up type equipment

Acquire more land that is becoming available northward along Big Darby Creek (Scioto Darby Road)

Disc golf course area

Liked that we repaired the Darby Greenway Trail; look forward to the rest being finished

Connect Darby Creek Greenway to the Camp Chase Trail

More trails in general

Another lodge (due to high demand)

Also more reserve areas because they fill up quickly

Overnight facilities / camping

It would be nice to have horse trails here at Batelle Darby Creek

Restroom accommodations out near the outdoor race track

Expand unimproved challenging running - capable trails

Make "Fox" tract more accessible to recreation

More invasive species control i.e. honeysuckle taking over forested areas (Darby Bends Lakes to 1-70)

⑥ BLK

Programming for (people) over 5O (x 3)

Daytime (weekday) programs for adults and seniors

Use ONV Ohio Naturalist Volunteers OSU Program (?)

Expand nature center

Parking area at Tussing Road for the new trail extension. Extension is great but no where to park to get on it except side of busy road

More activities for pre-teens (water fountains)

Guided hikes three times per week - lunch time (too)

⑥ BLK, cont.

Re-open the trading post

Soccer goals, frisbee golf, kickball in open field in Ash Grove

No additional recreation

Dog area

Offer golf memberships at Golf Course

Hold state public links golf tournament at Blacklick Woods

⑥ HBK

Walk with a vet program

Late night programs

More ranger involved programs

A place to do physical activity or do different types of activity

Involve clubs (orienteering? etc) a way to share info between visitors and clubs

6 or 8 weeks, w/ 3 outing?(Blendon Woods, Slate Run, Lake Erie) field trips without fee covered bus to Lake Erie started March ended beginning of April, 90's timeframe (see John Watts he remembers)

Trails, greenways

Roadway resurfaced

Coaches and track teams (yelling and continue to run up and down same hill)

Meadow exploring, different areas (habitats) to explore

Another entrance (off Powell Road)

Obstacle courses

Acquire the land south of the park ('Butt' family land and Camp Mary Orton)

Connect park to Hills Market

⑥ SIO

New programs

Friday night events (for youths)?

More community events

Naturalists

Targeting the youth

Fishing! (More areas along the river)

More bouldering rocks throughout the park

Partnerships with more retail partners to bring in more active recreation activities

⑥	SIO, cont.
	Acquisition of CSX property and development of BMX course
	Let people paint under the I-71 bridge where the graffiti is
	More wildlife habitat
	Wolves (bring em back)
	Bike trail open
	Downtown Expo Ctr (?)
	Partnership
	Trees!!! x 3
	Expansion / connection to Marion Village Reach (?)
	Mud Run connection
	Play area expansions throughout the district
	Zip line
	Climbing wall expansion
	Increase wetlands
	More trees at the dog park
	More passive recreation x 2
	More trails
	Water
	Food trucks at lunch
	Better advertising of this park

Visitor Survey Summary

Summary of Visitor Surveys

The findings in this report represent a non-probability sampling of the Metro Parks visitors.[1] Future random sampling surveys should be conducted to validate the trends and preferences illustrated by these responses. The results from surveys conducted across 18 Metro Parks report the top three options selected for each question. Color coding was used to identify the order of preference for the top three answers:

GREEN = highest # of times an option was selected

YELLOW = Second highest # of times an option was selected

ORANGE = third highest # of times an option was selected

Variables to consider when reviewing these results:

- For each of the eight questions, the respondent was asked to select three options.
    - Some visitors did not respond to all the questions, or may have selected less than three options in some of their responses.
- All surveys were conducted during the same time frame (late summer); therefore the responses may reflect a bias toward the preferences of seasonal visitors.
- The number of surveys completed at each park varied.
- Demographic information was not collected.

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[1] Participants were selected because of their convenient accessibility or proximity to the park rangers. This method is sometimes referred to as a convenience sample or an accidental sample.

DISTRICT WIDE VIEWS

With the exception of the responses to questions two and three, the responses in this survey generally indicated consensus.[2] The responses to questions two and three were distributed across the majority of the options, indicating that no three from either question were consistent district wide. The remaining six questions revealed the following district wide views:

1

QUESTION 1: What people do when they visit Metro Parks
- 100% of the visitors marked running/walking as one of their three primary reasons for visiting. Over 80% of the visitors agreed that viewing wildlife and escaping into nature were the other two primary reasons for visiting.

4

QUESTION 4: What visitors agree requires immediate attention
- All visitors agreed that restrooms require immediate attention
- With the exception of two parks (Prairie Oaks and Clear Creek) roads were selected with the least amount of frequency for requiring immediate attention

5

QUESTION 5: What would increase the value of the Metro Parks:
- There was consensus among all parks that replacing pit toilets and adding more trails would increase the value of the parks

6

QUESTION 6: Trail focused requests:
- Park connectivity was the top request among all visitors surveyed

7

QUESTION 7: Regarding land acquisition:
- The top three choices among visitors were to acquire land to protect it from development; to acquire land that contains diverse or endangered plants/wildlife, to acquire land for water quality improvement

8

QUESTION 8: How visitors would like to be kept informed:
- 100% of visitors selected website as one of their three choices. Visitors at 17 of the 18 parks also selected social media as one of their three choices.

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[2] There was a difference in opinion when visitors were asked how we could engage visitors more (question 2). Although escaping into nature, hike/bike programs and animal encounters were among the most frequently selected options, the top three varied by each park (for example Battelle Darby Creek visitors selected these most frequently, but at Rocky Fork, fitness opportunities were more popular then escaping into nature.)

1 What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?

	Tally	# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Running/walking	1729	All
Viewing wildlife	1210	16
Escape into nature	1156	15
Biking	700	2
Children's activities and programs	490	1
Dog activities	444	3
Photography	428	
Visit a nature center	376	
Fishing	271	
Naturalist interpretive programs	211	
Rent shelters/lodges for events	145	

		Running/walking	Viewing wildlife	Escape into nature	Biking	Children's activities and programs	Dog activities	Photography	Visit a nature center	Fishing	Naturalist interpretive programs	Rent shelters/lodges for events
GW	Greenways	120	60	69	128	17	31	17	12	19	4	7
NE	Rocky Fork	63	26	31	20	24	26	5	9	5	2	4
NE	Sharon Woods	162	93	115	33	58	23	26	27	13	10	11
NE	Inniswood	62	44	48	8	10	3	17	11	1	24	3
NE	Blendon Woods	92	95	84	16	36	10	43	54	5	18	18
NW	Prairie Oaks	70	49	41	12	14	39	21	10	28	4	6
NW	Highbanks	88	72	72	7	19	12	22	38	8	10	3
NW	Glacier Ridge	49	35	30	11	43	11	11	23	7	5	11
SE	Walnut Woods	137	95	94	62	25	109	33	16	21	16	8
SE	Three Creeks	63	48	38	35	16	25	10	8	21	8	3
SE	Slate Run	140	102	86	36	81	18	44	38	35	30	22
SE	Pickerington	144	117	81	100	7	27	49	15	22	6	3
SE	Clear Creek	79	60	65	16	14	10	32	13	16	32	0
SE	Chestnut	157	91	109	88	31	31	27	8	25	11	12
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	21	14	11	7	3	4	4	4	1	2	10
SE	Blacklick Woods	89	54	45	32	38	7	16	33	5	7	12
SW	Scioto Audubon	69	38	49	39	10	39	16	9	13	2	0
SW	Battelle Darby Creek	124	117	88	50	44	19	35	48	26	20	12

2 How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?

		# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Concerts	929	16
Winter	854	12
Kayaking	774	9
Canoeing	766	6
Movies	711	7
Tree houses	563	
Hay rides	561	1
Backpacking	534	2
Fishing	396	
Gardening	332	1
Scuba	201	

		Concerts	Winter	Kayaking	Canoeing	Movies	Tree houses	Hay rides	Backpacking	Fishing	Gardening
GW	**Greenways**	71	60	77	70	37	28	29	39	15	26
NE	**Sharon Woods**	80	59	65	71	58	49	62	45	26	37
NE	**Blendon Woods**	59	52	39	41	42	44	48	27	17	22
NE	**Inniswood**	46	33	12	14	25	14	13	5	4	26
NE	**Rocky Fork**	39	28	15	13	25	22	16	14	7	11
NW	**Prairie Oaks**	35	23	38	27	23	23	20	19	23	8
NW	**Highbanks**	37	35	34	35	23	34	22	23	19	22
NW	**Glacier Ridge**	36	33	15	24	34	27	23	14	15	10
SE	**Three Creeks**	42	21	33	29	35	17	23	14	19	15
SE	**Clear Creek**	27	40	44	42	25	17	15	48	27	12
SE	**Walnut Woods**	69	81	71	67	58	33	55	56	36	16
SE	**Chestnut Ridge**	74	98	59	59	54	49	28	62	33	19
SE	**Slate Run**	79	75	39	61	81	57	73	39	42	27
SE	**Blacklick Woods Golf Course**	45	40	27	24	40	31	41	16	13	12
SE	**Blacklick Woods**	16	13	8	10	12	5	8	2	4	4
SE	**Pickerington Ponds**	72	66	74	62	48	36	27	44	46	27
SW	**Scioto Audubon**	41	34	51	33	34	28	10	30	16	22
SW	**Battelle Darby Creek**	61	63	73	84	57	49	48	37	34	16

3

How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?

	# of votes	# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Escape into nature	949	13
Hike/bike programs	892	12
Animal encounters	823	9
Fitness opportunities	761	8
Overnight camping opportunities/programs	677	6
Special events	639	
Adventure based activities	567	
Naturalist interpretive programs	468	
Options for self-guided tours and education	433	
Picnicking	430	
Technology upgrades (WiFi in the parks)	306	

		Escape into nature	Hike/bike programs	Animal encounters	Fitness opportunities	Overnight camping opportunities/programs	Special events	Adventure based activities	Naturalist interpretive programs	Options for self-guided tours and education	Picnicking	Technology upgrades (WiFi in the parks)
GW	Greenways	48	93	35	64	50	42	38	23	24	22	29
NE	Rocky Fork	26	29	23	32	19	14	25	9	6	7	9
NE	Sharon Woods	85	74	72	75	42	52	41	32	41	44	29
NE	Inniswood	35	24	21	29	8	30	5	35	16	7	7
NE	Blendon Woods	63	39	65	34	44	42	30	44	36	34	13
NW	Prairie Oaks	38	27	32	26	31	24	28	21	9	11	8
NW	Highbanks	57	40	38	26	31	23	27	22	27	12	12
NW	Glacier Ridge	25	25	28	14	25	23	17	17	14	17	8
SE	Walnut Woods	74	50	89	63	63	69	50	36	38	38	58
SE	Three Creeks	33	36	36	35	28	18	17	13	16	17	9
SE	Slate Run	91	53	73	54	71	63	65	29	42	57	25
SE	Pickerington Ponds	84	84	58	75	50	45	44	37	37	36	27
SE	Clear Creek	64	57	38	25	37	13	11	50	10	20	4
SE	Chestnut Ridge	74	100	53	75	60	56	56	22	31	32	20
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	7	11	10	13	2	14	5	4	5	9	3
SE	Blacklick Woods	27	29	45	35	26	39	44	16	15	23	10
SW	Scioto Audubon	39	46	24	41	40	24	29	11	19	12	17
SW	Battelle Darby Creek	79	75	83	45	50	48	35	47	47	32	18

4 — What three existing things need immediate attention?

		# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Restrooms	**931**	All
Trails	**736**	15
Directional Sign	**622**	7
Nature centers	427	
Technology	404	
Interpretive sign	381	
Shelters	380	
Roads	312	

The responses indicate that with the exception of restrooms, each park has a unique perspective on what needs immediate attention.

		Restrooms	Trails	Directional sign	Roads	Technology	Shelters	Nature centers	Interpretive sign
GW	Greenways	89	78	36	23	34	29	18	19
NE	Rocky Fork	14	27	11	4	5	4	10	9
NE	Sharon Woods	86	80	57	15	31	36	39	36
NE	Inniswood	30	28	23	2	10	10	17	23
NE	Blendon Woods	41	36	46	10	35	21	32	22
NW	Prairie Oaks	22	28	19	27	12	8	13	14
NW	Highbanks	24	15	32	20	10	11	6	14
NW	Glacier Ridge	19	24	9	5	10	12	15	7
SE	Walnut Woods	60	54	38	33	42	28	42	38
SE	Three Creeks	26	16	24	4	11	21	14	10
SE	Slate Run	139	52	50	16	42	33	55	34
SE	Pickerington Ponds	56	74	60	29	26	29	54	25
SE	Clear Creek	42	27	39	59	16	9	29	26
SE	Chestnut Ridge	123	78	53	13	32	49	37	31
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	21	9	5	1	6	13	5	3
SE	Blacklick Woods	33	24	21	19	17	20	22	10
SW	Scioto Audubon	38	30	22	11	28	21	7	15
SW	Battlelle Darby Creek	68	56	77	21	37	26	12	45

5 — What three capital improvements should Metro Parks invest in?

		# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Build more trails	**1355**	16
Replace all pit toilets with flush toilets	**1165**	17
Acquisition of more park land	**952**	10
Additional nature centers	702	2
More places to play	672	5
Safety and security enhancements	612	3
Build more reservable facilities	332	

		Build more trails	Replace all pit toilets with flush toilets	Acquisition of more park land	More places to play	Safety and security enhancements	Additional nature centers	Build more reservable facilities
GW	Greenways	122	77	66	30	53	36	21
NE	Rocky Fork	45	28	20	26	10	11	8
NE	Sharon Woods	113	92	76	57	76	66	26
NE	Inniswood	41	42	25	12	30	22	14
NE	Blendon Woods	72	74	61	48	25	49	34
NW	Prairie Oaks	46	32	31	32	23	26	16
NW	Highbanks	56	55	48	27	11	25	9
NW	Glacier Ridge	27	38	28	31	15	31	13
SE	Walnut Woods	117	90	93	63	78	46	29
SE	Three Creeks	41	42	29	23	20	26	15
SE	Slate Run	99	151	65	59	68	81	35
SE	Pickerington Ponds	127	84	75	45	55	57	22
SE	Clear Creek	84	58	53	24	10	52	6
SE	Chestnut Ridge	138	124	111	53	35	39	23
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	8	0	6	10	15	7	14
SE	Blacklick Woods	44	51	28	39	28	38	9
SW	Scioto Audubon	63	43	43	34	16	30	11
SW	Battelle Darby Creek	112	84	94	59	44	60	27

6 What are your top trail focused requests?

		# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Connect all parks by trails	1253	All
Create more trails with shade/trees	774	12
Connect trails to adjacent neighborhoods	769	8
Create dog only trails	665	7
Create an EAST-WEST connection for the Greenways	545	
Education and signage on trail etiquette	518	
Metro Parks staff visibility	508	
Make bike trails wider	473	
Bike repair stations along Greenways	318	

		Connect all parks by trails	Connect trails to adjacent neighborhoods	Create dog only trails	Create more trails with shade/trees	Make bike trails wider	Create an EAST-WEST connection for the Greenways	Metro Parks staff visibility	Bike repair stations along Greenways	Education and signage on trail etiquette
GW	Greenways	120	68	28	36	67	54	31	32	22
NE	Blendon Woods	53	50	36	52	25	29	32	15	39
NE	Inniswood	28	31	17	29	13	10	24	4	24
NE	Sharon Woods	119	60	63	67	48	40	43	22	44
NE	Rocky Fork	37	24	22	22	14	14	13	4	12
NW	Glacier Ridge	36	36	23	21	14	14	18	9	13
NW	Highbanks	55	37	22	36	6	25	18	16	21
NW	Prairie Oaks	42	27	23	34	11	24	20	12	18
SE	Blacklick Woods	52	25	29	25	27	24	20	17	26
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	13	7	12	9	7	4	10	3	9
SE	Chestnut Ridge	110	66	57	72	30	55	26	34	45
SE	Clear Creek	60	28	37	40	13	30	22	10	24
SE	Pickerington Ponds	127	66	43	50	45	60	31	38	37
SE	Slate Run	89	67	68	75	45	25	75	22	45
SE	Three Creeks	49	21	25	31	14	17	17	20	26
SE	Walnut woods	109	65	93	75	44	30	53	16	46
SW	Battelle Darby Creek	99	51	40	69	32	62	42	21	49
SW	Scioto Audubon	55	40	27	31	18	28	13	23	18

7

What are your top land acquisition priorities?

Land to protect it from development	1772
Land that contains diverse and/or endangered plants and wildlife	1645
Land for water quality improvement	1160
Franklin County	674
Inside 270	597

8

How would you like to be kept informed about Metro Parks programs....?

		# of parks selecting this as one of top 3
Web	1591	All
Social Media	1208	17
Email alerts	1015	11
Parkscope	957	7
Park signage	700	1
TV	557	1
Paper	421	
Blogs	123	

		Web	Social Media	Email	Parkscope	Tv	Paper	Blogs	Signage
GW	Greenways	116	82	60	52	37	44	9	59
NE	Rocky Fork	55	32	29	23	13	9	3	18
NE	Sharon Woods	137	108	101	68	42	29	8	56
NE	Inniswood	38	12	43	55	19	31	3	11
NE	Blendon Woods	109	70	81	70	25	16	10	35
NW	Prairie Oaks	62	45	40	31	24	19	6	21
NW	Highbanks	68	55	44	50	22	20	2	37
NW	Glacier Ridge	53	38	32	22	18	7	4	21
SE	Walnut Woods	143	109	72	85	57	42	5	69
SE	Three Creeks	57	42	41	46	33	15	2	29
SE	Slate Run	138	107	80	90	67	37	7	58
SE	Pickerington Ponds	116	104	76	70	37	28	19	68
SE	Clear Creek	67	54	54	74	28	19	6	24
SE	Chestnut Ridge	140	118	93	66	35	27	15	62
SE	Blacklick Woods Golf Course	21	15	13	7	14	7	1	7
SE	Blacklick Woods	66	48	49	43	19	24	8	30
SW	Scioto Audubon	74	70	38	22	24	17	6	34
SW	Battelle Darby Creek	131	99	69	83	43	30	9	61

Park by Park Summary
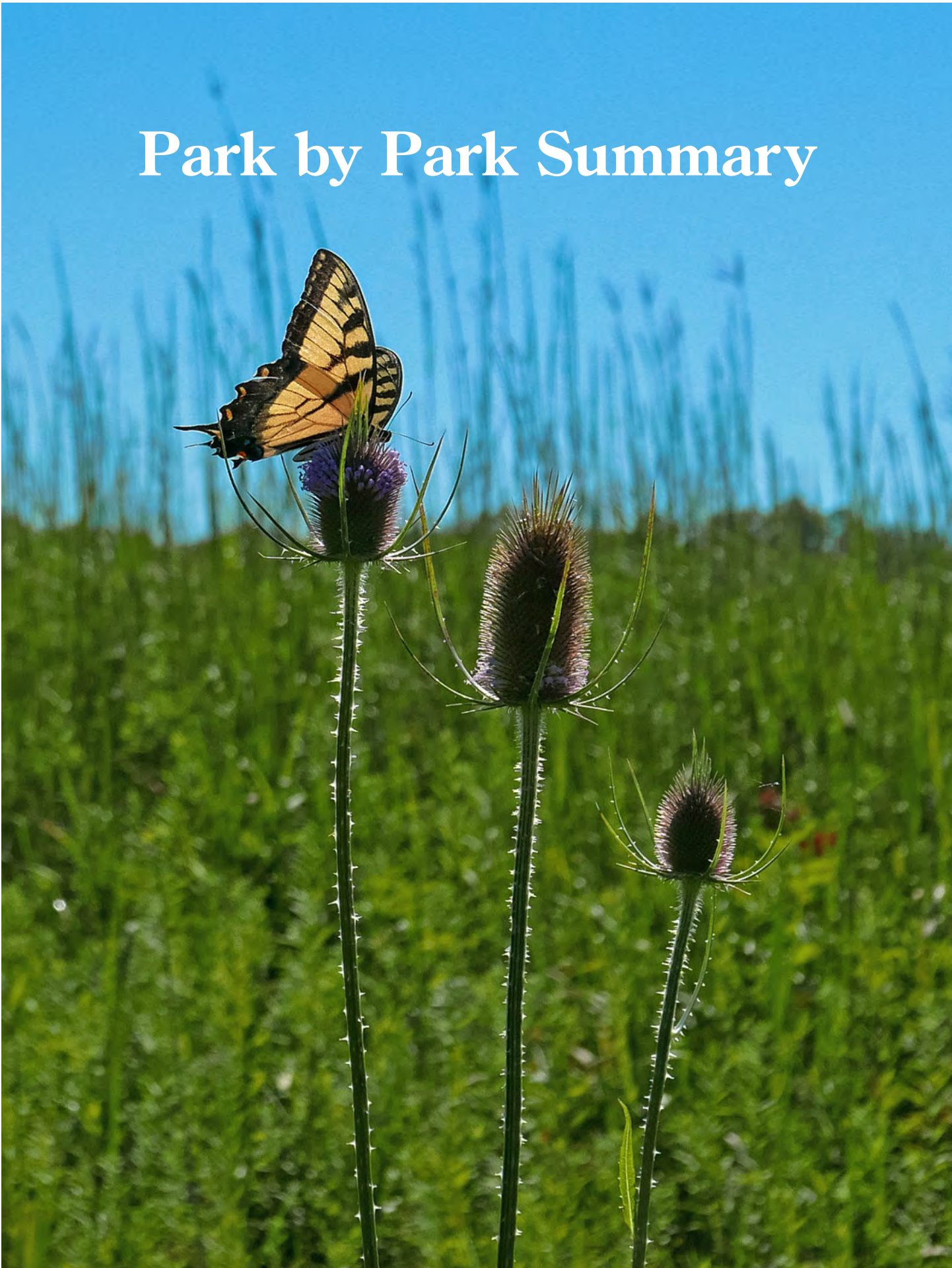
INTRODUCTION

This plan provided us with the opportunity to collect key data about each individual park and combine it in a single repository. This section merges that data with the goals and objectives, offering the framework for how Metro Parks will achieve its mission. Our research indicated that the favorability of our parks significantly increases when an individual frequently visits them. With this plan's focus on enhancing the visitors' experience, we have identified areas of focus and actionable initiatives that will have a positive impact on increasing visitation.

Since each park has unique attributes, how they go about contributing to the goals and objectives of the plan will vary; that variation is illustrated in the park initiatives. While caring for the natural, environmental and cultural resources entrusted to us is the common thread through each area of focus, initiatives specific to conservation are addressed in the Resource Management Plan. The individual park initiatives in this section were derived from staff comments (surveys completed in July 2015) and visitor data (see staff survey data and visitor survey data sections). Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission. Understanding that the ability to complete these initiatives will be contingent upon many factors (funding, staffing, etc), priorities and allocation of resources will occur during the annual budget planning process.

In addition to the initiatives, the following pages contain:

- a synopsis of each individual park
- the park's unique natural, environmental and cultural resources
- data points and a synopsis of staff's voice which provided the context for the initiatives

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Battelle Darby Creek

7,103 Acres | Galloway | Franklin County

ABOUT

Battelle Darby Creek features more than 7,000 acres of forest, prairies and wetlands. It stretches along the Big and Little Darby Creeks, both State and National Scenic Rivers. Besides the areas surrounding the creeks, there are also over 1,600 acres of restored wetlands and prairies. Bison have been reintroduced to the park and roam freely within two enclosed pastures.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Bordering both sides of Big and Little Darby Creeks Federal and State Scenic Rivers for nearly eighteen miles, Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park preserves one of the few isolated mature riparian corridors in Central Ohio. Five federally-listed and nearly 30 state-listed or rare species occur within the park. Nearly 1,200 species have been documented in the park. Excellent examples of mature mixed floodplain forest communities are found along Big and Little Darby creeks. Native prairie remnants are scattered throughout the park ranging in size from less than one acre to 10 acres. A large-scale prairie restoration project has been implemented using only native Darby Plains genetic material. Currently over 1,300 acres have been restored and numerous species of native wetland and grassland birds can be found in these areas. In 2011, a small herd of bison was restored to some of the prairie restoration area near the nature center, returning the largest land mammal in Ohio to the Darby Plains.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Rangers, naturalists, maintenance, managers, land management coordinator were all solicited as individual groups for input. Managers consolidated and summarized the input. Responses were generalized with specific quotes extracted to illustrate staff's voice.

Specifically replacing "pit toilets"

"Increase program staff levels"

What is missing from your park?

"Upgraded/ modern play equipment, restroom facilities, maintenance facility"

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✓
Building/maintenance issues	✓
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	✓
Need more staff	✓

"Purchase Trapper Johns Livery"

Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	✓
Pet trail enhancements	

Incidences of crime have risen in the past three years.

"Google maps and internet directions confuse visitors"

To get more visitors, improve
- Road signs directing visitors to different areas
- Public transportation to the park

Access	
Request for directional signage	✓
Discrepancies with GPS	✓
Connectivity to Greenway	✓
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	✓

No connection to Cedar Ridge from Ohio to Erie Trail

Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (124) • Viewing wildlife (117) • Escape into nature (88)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Picnicking • Recreational hotspot canoe access • Nature center (bison)
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?[1]**	• Canoeing (84) • Kayaking (73) • Winter (63)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• A better map • Canoe rentals • Better bison viewing
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Animal encounters (83) • Escape into nature (79) • Hike/bike programs (73)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Modern restrooms and running water • Road signs • Public transportation • Public awareness
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Directional signs (77) • Restrooms (68) • Trails (56)

[1] District wide concerts received more votes, but canoeing and kayaking were more popular among visitors surveyed at Battelle Darby Creek.

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Finish connection of the Camp Chase Trail to Cedar Ridge, Camp Chase to downtown, and Battelle Darby Creek to Prairie Oaks. • Improve bison viewing areas along trails with deck(s) or overlooks.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Create visitor awareness of the over 1,300 acres of restored native wetland and related species. • Investigate the possibility of adding modern play structures and replacing pit toilets.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Update the operational agreement with the commercial canoe livery on the Darby. • Continue to address safety issues within park (e.g. cameras, additional patrol, and reduction of vehicle break-ins).
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service	• Revise directional signage and improve online maps. • Determine what additional programs could increase visitation and develop the Parker Cabin area for scout type camping.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Identify most appropriate means to improve public awareness of location and purpose. • Identify opportunities to increase public transportation to the park.

Blacklick Woods

643 Acres (Golf Course 235 Acres) | Reynoldsburg | Franklin/Fairfield County

ABOUT

Blacklick Woods features 643 acres of woods, fields, seasonal swamp ponds, a small prairie and a golf course. It has the best remaining beech-maple forests in Central Ohio along with a buttonbush swamp. The forest areas are laced with trails that wind through a swamp forest with oak and white ash along with red maple, elm, shagbark, bitternut hickory and dogwood.

Golf Course: Blacklick Woods features two challenging courses and is rated in the top ten most difficult public golf courses in Greater Columbus by *Business First* magazine.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

 The first Metro Park purchased in 1944, Blacklick Woods is a combination of successional fields and mature forests. The park contains a 100-acre beech-maple forest, which integrates into a mixed pin-oak swamp forest. A small buttonbush swamp is located within the wooded area. The 54-acre Walter A. Tucker Scenic Nature Preserve that was dedicated in 1973 is located within the main wooded area. The preserve is designated as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service. A water mite (Chimerathyas cooki) discovered in the spring of 2001 by Dr. Rodger D. Mitchell in the swamp forest vernal pool was a new species, not known to science.

Forty acres of the golf course's 235 acres are natural area—a place where birds and birdies peacefully coexist. Audubon International has certified the golf courses as a Cooperative Sanctuary for their comprehensive environmental management and protection of wildlife habitats. Metro Parks has developed the courses with a long-range vision of protection and enhancement of the natural environment.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff members at Blacklick Woods and the Golf Course participated in the staff survey. Responses were generalized with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	✔
Need more staff	
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✔
Access	
Request for directional signage	
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	✔
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	

As the oldest park in the district we incur constant maintenance issues with old facilities (Ash Grove restroom) and utilities (failing water lines)…

Technology could be better utilized …. Scan codes on displays throughout the park could be done

Increased access to wireless internet would be something our visitors would appreciate.

Better pet trail

… Complete the Greenway under Refugee Rd and pave half the trail from the nature center to Ash Grove…

Increase educational opportunities for our visitors most of whom do not venture down to the nature center but are concentrated in Ash Grove, Meadows and the Reserve area.

The lack of connectivity to the Pickerington Ponds' section of Greenway hinders additional bikers from utilizing the Blacklick Woods section of trail.

With promotion and advertising it (function room) could be used more through the week by small businesses etc… for meetings and workshops.

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

		Blacklick Woods	Golf Course
Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Biking (32) • Running/walking (89) • Viewing wildlife (54)	• Running/walking (21) • Viewing wildlife (14) • Escape into nature (11)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Multi-use trail/exercising(running/biking/walking) in park • Picnic shelters/areas • Nature viewing/photography	• A state of the art golf learning facility • A National Audubon Certified Sanctuary ranked championship 18 holes golf course • The First Tee of Central Ohio
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Concerts (45) • Hay rides (41) • Winter (40) / Movies (40)	• Concerts (16) • Movies (12) • Winter (13)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Finished paved greenway trail both at Refugee Rd and from nature center to Ash Grove • better location of Ash Grove restroom • Full-court basketball instead of 1/2 court	• The general theme is for better rates
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Animal encounters (45) • Adventure based activities (44) • Special events (39)	• Special events (14) • Fitness opportunities (13) • Hike/bike programs (11)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	…With the size of this park, we could not handle additional visitors in our picnic areas. We also feel that additional visitors in those areas will detract from the overall experience due to overcrowding. We do feel that an under-represented segment of potential visitors are (road) bikers	•We are currently three years into our golf course strategy plan of 2013. This is a long term commitment to our community, but we have seen tremendous results over the first three years. • Communication
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Restrooms (33) • Trails (24) • Shelters (20)	• Shelters (13) • Restrooms (21) • Trails (9)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and/or needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Connect Greenway to Livingston Ave. Complete the Blacklick Creek Greenway under Refugee Rd. • Invest in improvement of trail from the nature center to Ash Grove.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Prioritize and implement a list of improvements that will increase visitation. • Assess condition of amenities to determine useful life; create a plan for replacement/ improvement; review the conversion of reservable shelters into first come-first served type.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Identify how partnerships with The First Tee and other organizations can increase rounds played at the golf course and promote the distinction that Blacklick Woods is the youth golf center of Central Ohio. • Create educational opportunities for our visitors that are concentrated in Ash Grove, Meadows and the reservable picnic areas.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Revise directional signage and improve online maps. • Investigate alternate funding sources for the marketing of the golf course reservable spaces.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Task Golf Course staff with exploring creative ways to obtain revenue which can be used to identify relevant methods to promote the golf course. • Work with partner agencies to promote National Audubon Certified Sanctuary rating as one of two facilities to have this distinct recognition in the Central Ohio region. Educate the public about activities staff must perform in order to achieve and maintain this rating, including following very stringent resource management guidelines structured by their national organization.

Blendon Woods/Rocky Fork

BLN 653 Acres, | Westerville | Franklin County
Rocky Fork 1,003 Acres | Westerville | Franklin County

ABOUT

Blendon Woods contains spectacular stream-cut ravines with exposed ripple rock sandstone and open fields surrounded by beech-maple and oak-hickory forests. The 653-acre park is a great place to see a variety of songbirds, waterfowl and other wildlife, especially the flock of wild turkeys meandering about in search of food. The 118-acre Walden Waterfowl Refuge with its 11-acre Thoreau Lake provides a sanctuary for hundreds of birds, ducks and other wildlife. Open year-round, it features two elevated observation shelters with spotting scopes for viewing waterfowl.

Rocky Fork Metro Park features more than two miles of walking trails that wind through woods and fields. There is even an off-leash trail for dogs, a play area for kids and a large shelter for family picnics. Enjoy sitting in the big wooden chairs as you look for wildlife in the open fields.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Blendon Woods is over 50% forested with oak-hickory, beech-oak-red maple, and beech-maple forests. Numerous ravines and streams dissect the wooded areas. Locally significant geological features such as "ripple marks" can be observed in the Mississippian sandstone outcrops. A 120-acre refuge, known as Walden Wildlife Refuge, is located within the park and contains the 11-acre Thoreau Lake which has been visited by 24 species of native waterfowl. The forested areas also support a very nice diversity of native woodland wildflowers.

Rocky Fork has a mixture of successional woodland areas and future restoration areas, much of the land and younger woods is reverting through natural succession. The forest can be characterized as a combination of mixed upland and swamp forest containing large numbers of beech, sugar maple, oaks and hickories. The swamp forest areas naturally drain into the headwaters of Rocky Fork Creek and in some cases create sub-watershed and drainage patterns within the forested areas. Open former agricultural areas of the park provide potential areas for grasslands and old fields. Two wetland mitigation projects were developed by previous owners and continue to develop. Wood frogs occur within a few vernal pool areas, representing some of the last remaining native populations in Franklin County.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Fourteen staffers participated in the survey. Responses were generalized with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Making a program room in the nature center (we have been preparing to propose the back patio be renovated into a 3- or even 4-season room)

More staff to watch the park while programs are taking place, or to allow for more programs

Better biking opportunities, such as more accessible bike trails

Better interpretive signs (hope to tie in with nature center update), trail signs indicating "you are here" (in the process)

Incorporating in the nature center update, filming the reserve shelters & other amenities for online availability (in progress). Incorporating those bar code type symbols in new "you are here" trail signs

… MUT (there was a plan developed for an MUT along with a connector trail along Big Walnut Creek up to Hoover, however it's been on hold for several years now)

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	✔
Connectivity to Greenway	✔
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	✔
Communication	
Request for advertising	
Build on partnerships	

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

		Blendon Woods	Rocky Fork
Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (92) • Viewing wildlife (95) • Escape into nature (84)	• Running/walking (63) • Escape into nature (31) • Viewing wildlife (26)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Picnicking • Disc golf • Exercising actives (i.e. running, hiking, dog walking, etc.)	No data available at the time survey was taken
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Concerts (59) • Tree houses (44) • Hay rides (48)	• Concerts (39) • Winter activity (28) • Movies (25)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Better biking opportunities	No data available at the time survey was taken
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Animal encounters (65) • Hay rides (48) • Naturalist programs/ Overnight camping programs (44)	• Escape into nature (26) • Fitness (32) • Adventure based (25)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Address the biking issues • More/better advertisement	No data available at the time survey was taken
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Directional signs (46) • Restrooms (41) • Trails (36)	• Trails (27) • Restrooms (14) • Directional sign (11)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Add a connector trail along Big Walnut Creek up to Hoover and complete the east-west connector trail through Rocky Fork. • Improve accessibility for bicyclists.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Explore WIFI options throughout park. • Update nature center, renovate back patio into a 3- (or 4-) season room.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Review staffing needs to determine if additional staff would allow for more programs. Consider 'dark park' status. • Upgrade all old park signage to routed plastic.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service	• Improve interpretive signs (as part of nature center update); add trail signs indicating "you are here". • Replace signage to the park from I-270. • Improve passive recreational opportunities while focusing on user desired amenities.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Create deck/boardwalk enhancements, increasing visitor experiences at the Walden Wildlife Refuge. • Continue operational collaboration with cities of New Albany and Columbus at Rocky Fork Metro Park.

Chestnut Ridge

486 Acres | Carroll | Fairfield County

ABOUT

Chestnut Ridge is the first ridge in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains. The ridge spans about 4,500 feet and rises to about 1,116 feet. Black oak, shagbark hickory and northern red oak trees grow on the upper slopes of the ridge and enhance the woodland beauty of the 486-acre park. Sugar maples and American beech are plentiful on the lower slopes.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The core of the park is a 246-acre mixed mesophytic forest. Other habitats such as old fields, brush and briar areas, and created or restored wetlands can also be found at Chestnut Ridge. The lake and wetland in the main picnic area were constructed in 1992/1993. The American chestnut historically grew on the sandstone ridge, which is also a significant geological feature of the area. Evidence of sandstone quarries, orchards and old farms are evident throughout the park. The park is also home to one of the northern-most populations of red salamanders and tiger spike-tail dragonflies.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	✔
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	✔
Park signage/map	
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✔
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	✔
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	

Need more… naturalist programs

Need more… parking at the Mountain Bike Trail

Need more… shade structure at the Mountain Bike Trail and fishing docks

Visitors want…. Pet trail and public hunting area

Need: bigger directional signage outside of the park

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Escape into nature (109) • Running/walking (157) • Viewing wildlife (91)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Nature trails, fishing, Mountain Bike Trail and playground
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Concerts (74) • Backpacking (62) • Canoeing (59) / kayaking (59)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Pet trail and public hunting area
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Hike/bike programs (100) • Fitness opportunities (75) • Overnight camping opportunities/ programs (60)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Pet trail, naturalist programs and better fishing opportunities
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Restrooms (123) • Trails (78) • Directional signs (53)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Investigate the possibility of installing shade structures at Mountain Bike Trail; adding pet and accessible trails.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Investigate the possibility of adding water fountains; improving restroom facilities.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Consider public hunting areas, and addition of concerts (per visitor survey). • Change fishing regulations to be more user friendly (i.e. eliminate age restrictions, catch and release).
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Address inaccuracies in GPS coordinates; improve signage directing people to park.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Continue partnership with Central Ohio Mountain Biking Organization (COMBO) to promote mountain biking events. • Integrate Chestnut Ridge and Pickerington Ponds into one management unit.

Clear Creek

5,390 Acres | Rockbridge | Hocking/Fairfield County

ABOUT

Clear Creek Metro Park features over 5,300 acres of woodland interspersed with blackhand sandstone cliffs, ravines and creeks and is home to more than 2,200 species of plants and animals. Forested areas range from Canadian hemlocks and ferns, to oak and hickory, to Ohio's last remaining colonies of rhododendron. Clear Creek is also home to Ohio's largest state nature preserve.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Over 95% of the park is mature forest containing oak-hickory forests, Appalachian oak forests, hemlock ravines and mixed floodplain forests. The 4,769-acre Clear Creek nature preserve is the largest dedicated State Nature Preserve in Ohio. The park hosts over 100 species of breeding birds annually, including 21 species of eastern wood warblers. Nearly 2,000 species of plants and animals have been documented in the park. Outstanding geological features including blackhand sandstone outcrops, cliffs, and slump blocks occur throughout the park. Nearly 30 species of state endangered and threatened plants and animals occur within the park. A number of southern Appalachian species are scattered across the property such as the state- threatened great rhododendron.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Four staff members and a part-time naturalist participated in the staff survey. Responses were generalized with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

…An additional public restroom possibly in the Creekside Meadows Area.

A full time naturalist, with programs geared around spring, fall and winter when we traditionally have higher program attendance.

A better way to notify people coming from Columbus about park conditions, particularly related to weather.

Partner with groups from Columbus such as – Outdoor Pursuits and other low impact recreational groups.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	✔
Recreation structure needs	✔
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✔
Access	
Request for directional signage	
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	✔

The district should also understand that most people are not going to drive to Clear Creek for a 1-hour program. Long hikes and extended "getting dirty" looking for nature types of programs (looking for salamanders and things like that) bring the highest turnout. Backpacking and extended hiking programs or activities

We would like to see an additional dog trail or a better location (the current dog trail is a short section of the Chestnut Trail in the Barnebey Hambleton area), perhaps the west end of the Creekside Meadow Trail

We are a Metro Park but also a nature preserve. Of course, we want more, and new people to discover Clear Creek but if we become overly crowded will could lose our niche in the park district as a place where people can explore wilderness close to home

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?	• Running/walking (79) • Viewing wildlife (60) • Escape into nature (65)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Hiking, remote trails and escaping the hustle of the city. Wildlife and nature viewing, particularly birding, wildflowers and seasonal changes.
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Kayaking (44) • Backpacking (48) • Canoeing (42)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Dog trails, drinking water, camping sites/overnight backpack options and better road maintenance on the Good Hope twp section of Clear Creek Road. Access to some of the backcountry trails.
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Escape into nature (64) • Hike/bike programs (57) • Naturalist interpretive programs (50)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	"A balance of what we are (a nature preserve), why people are coming now (most people like that Clear Creek is not over crowded), …. This also raises questions, of how many people do we want and how much money will tax payers be willing to spend on a park so far away from Franklin County?"
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Roads (59) • Restrooms (42) • Directional signs (39)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Add trail from: Thomas Mathias lot to the Cemetery Ridge Trail or Winnowing Rock.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Modernise restroom in the Creekside Meadow area.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• When creating programs, take into consideration that Clear Creek attracts people who are fairly knowledgeable about nature, and willing to make the 1-hour drive. • Improve the effectiveness of the lottery hunt.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Improve visitor experience through the use of web-based tools for mapping and navigation to get visitors to the correct area of the park. • Cellular service is inconsistent in the park; consider developing online tools that can be downloaded before you visit.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Implement a better way to notify people coming from Columbus about park conditions, particularly related to weather. • Partner with groups from Columbus such as Outdoor Pursuits and other low-impact recreational groups.

Glacier Ridge/Homestead/Heritage Trail

GLR 1,083 Acres | Plain City | Union County
Homestead 44 Acres (+87 Heritage) | Hilliard | Franklin County

ABOUT

Glacier Ridge was named for the end moraine or glacial debris left behind when the glaciers retreated some 12,000 to 17,000 years ago. Much of the 1,037-acre park was once covered with farmland. Visitors can traverse a boardwalk through the Honda Wetlands Area or climb a 25-foot observation tower to see waterfowl and other animals.

Homestead: This 44-acre park offers a quiet, country atmosphere with a covered bridge, train station replica and two barns. Other features include shelters, a 2.5-acre fishing pond, play equipment, and courts for sand volleyball and basketball. A three-quarter mile paved trail, great for walking, biking or running, winds through the park and connects to the 6.1-mile Heritage Rail Trail.

Heritage Trail: The 87-acre Heritage Trail Park is adjacent to the Heritage Rail Trail, a 6.1-mile multipurpose trail converted from abandoned right-of-way, with a parallel bridle trail. The paved trail starts in Old Hilliard off Main Street and continues toward Plain City.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A combination of successional woodlands and restoration areas, Glacier Ridge provides a great example of how habitats succeed and mature from one phase of growth to another. These young areas still provide very productive habitat for a variety of wildlife. The north grasslands support breeding bobolinks, Henslow's sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, eastern meadowlark as well as wintering short-eared owls and northern harriers. The south wetland has hosted state-listed breeding bird species such as king rail, least bittern, Virginia rail and sora. The forest can be characterized as a mixed upland forest containing large numbers of beech, sugar maple, oaks and hickories. Vernal pools within the woodland support a variety of amphibians, including spotted salamanders.

Located in the western portion of the county, the Homestead Park and Heritage Trail areas, while more passive recreationally oriented, support a nice group of expected plants and animals. The pond at Homestead provides a quality fishing area as well as supporting other species such as frogs, aquatic insects, turtles and a resident pair of green herons. The edges of the Heritage Trail between Homestead Park and the Heritage Trail Park are undergoing natural succession but are maintained at a mid-level stage of plant succession. This area has annually hosted a nesting pair of bell's vireos, a rare breeding bird in Central Ohio, for several years.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Responses were generalized with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park. At the time the staff survey was conducted, Glacier Ridge staff responded on behalf of each park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	✓
Need more staff	✓

Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	✓
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	✓
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✓

Access	
Request for directional signage	✓
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	✓

Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	✓

Side quotes:

"We would turn away fewer people if our naturalist staff were increased, allowing us to offer more programs."

"Ability to link Wind and Solar Learning Center performance to Metro Parks' website. Interactive Metro Parks app with trails and highlights of features along the trails"

"Signage along the important highways is minimal"

"Continue to stress safety and cooperation among user groups on the MUT's."

"Missing… shade, a shelter of some kind to accompany each parking lot"

"Because of multiple entrances and many variations on which parts of our trails people use, we get many questions about distances…"

"We are known as an "Event Park," Close proximity (walking distance) to actively growing neighborhoods"

"Link Wind and Solar Learning Center directly to the schools that we work with."

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks). The responses below are specific to Glacier Ridge.

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (49) • Viewing wildlife (35) • Children's programs (43)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Multi-use trails and access to community trails, excellent programming. Peaceful natural environment, enhanced by boardwalk, observation tower and accessible nature
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Movies (34) • Concerts (36) • Tree houses (27)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Additional MUT's. A pedestrian trail adjacent to the entrance road at the wetland area would be especially appreciated. Dedicated pet areas • At least one more shelter • Rollerbladers request improved, smoother MUT surface.
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Animal encounters (28) • Overnight camping / programs (25) • Hike/Bike programs (25) • Escape into nature (25)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Creation of a dog park at the Hayden Run Road trail head for Heritage Trail dramatically increased attendance. I think the same thing would happen at Glacier Ridge if a dog park were created. Find a magic bullet to reduce the number of ticks during the spring/summer/fall months
Visitor	**What 3 existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (24) • Restrooms (19) • Nature centers (15)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Extend Heritage Trail from Hilliard to connect with the Scioto Trail along the Scioto River and complete the trail to the west connecting with Plain City. • Add a pedestrian trail adjacent to the entrance road at the wetland area. • Evaluate the addition of a dog park.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Explore use of technology tools that will aid visitors who wish to use personal electronic devices to access information (i.e. create an interactive app with trails and highlights of features along the trails). • Continue with the reforestation plan as well as the continued removal of all invasive species.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Identify programming opportunities for amphitheater, adjacent to area 2. Investigate additional park features to attract more visitors (i.e. challenge course). • Continue to stress safety and cooperation among user groups on the multiuse trails (MUT's).
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Create signage that eliminates the confusion caused by multiple park entrances. • Increase signage along the important highways. • Add distance markers to trails and maps to ease the navigation issues that have caused confusion for our visitors.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Address technical problems that prohibit The Wind and Solar Learning Center (WSLC) from performing to its programming potential. • Consider linking Wind and Solar Learning Center directly to the schools that we work with, and to the Metro Parks website.

Greenway Trails

98 miles of trails throughout Central Ohio

ABOUT

The Central Ohio Greenways are multi-use trails used for recreation and alternative transportation. Greenways connect people to the places they live, work and play as well as preserve open space to promote air and water quality. Metro Parks works with several agencies and communities to create and maintain these trails for the citizens of Central Ohio.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	✓
Need more staff	✓
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	✓
Trail etiquette issues	✓
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	✓
Pet trail enhancements	
Access	
Request for directional signage	✓
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	✓
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	✓

More drinking fountains and bike repair stations

By increasing the number of natural play areas and canoe/kayak access points

I have spoken to many visitors who have experienced concern for their safety while exercising on the less used portions of the trail.

General confusion on how to access trails

More programs that are park run. Reaching out to urban kids – especially along trail where they live

Patience for other types of trail users, patience for closures and working areas

Phone app of trails and a map. GPS coordinates logged throughout trails for markers to help EMS, dispatch, other agencies.

Connect trails to more sections of Franklin County Make trails easier to access. Educate public about trails

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Biking (128) • Running/walking (120) • Escape into nature (69)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Trails without vehicles • Paved trails for commuting, recreational use
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Canoeing (70) • Kayaking (77) • Concerts (71)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Water fountains • Wider trails • Safe trails
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Hike/bike programs (93) • Fitness opportunities (64) • Overnight camping/programs (50)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Aggressive advertising; targeted programs
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (78) • Restrooms (89) • Directional signs (36)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Establish east/west connector trails, in partnership with City of Columbus, other suburbs and Central Ohio Greenways. • Increase ranger patrols along less frequented portions of the Greenways. Consider widening of trails.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• To enhance the visitor's experience, explore use of technology tools that will aid visitors who wish to use personal electronic devices to access information (i.e. create phone app of trails and a map). • Investigate the possibility of additional restrooms, drinking fountains, more parking and bike repair stations.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Implement education/interpretive programs along trails with a Greenways dedicated programmer. • Create trail etiquette programs that promote patience for other types of trail users and patience for closure/working areas.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Develop and improve the signage used throughout the park including trail head maps. • Evaluate text alert initiative, document success and make modifications for improvement.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Investigate the possibility of creating a virtual tour to help visitors discover Greenways. • Log GPS coordinates throughout trails for markers to help EMS, dispatch and other agencies. Continue positive partnership with MORPC.

Highbanks

1,200 Acres | Lewis Center | Delaware/Franklin County

ABOUT

Highbanks is named for its massive 100-foot-high shale bluff towering over the Olentangy State Scenic River. Tributary streams cutting across the bluff have created a number of deep ravines in the western part of the 1,200-acre park. Ohio and Olentangy shales, often containing outstanding large concretions, are exposed on the bluff face and sides of the ravines.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Over 50% forested with large stands of oak-hickory, beech-maple, and mixed floodplain communities. Located within the park is the 206-acre Edward F. Hutchins Nature Preserve, which is a Dedicated State Nature Preserve. Two and one-half miles of the Olentangy State Scenic River flows along the west boundary of the park. Outstanding geological features such as end moraines, concretions, deep ravines, plant and animal fossils and Ohio black shale outcrops are found throughout the park. Earthworks of the Adena and Cole prehistoric cultures are also found in the park. The Cole earthwork is the longest open earthwork in Ohio and is dedicated as a National Natural Landmark. Highbanks is home to the national champion sycamore, representing the largest tree of this species in the nation.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Thirteen staffers participated and their responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

We can generate more revenue by renovating the barn and rent it out like a reserve shelter

The roadway and the pit toilets. It is an older park and there is wearing on the facilities but we are maintaining them to the best of our ability

Add senior exercise stations

Have more technological interpretation on the trails… (technology enhancements) would help us engage visitors on the trails. A new eagle cam would be great

If we had more staff we could do more… There is not enough resource management staff. We are involved in succession mowing, invasive species removal, and hazardous tree removal

We do not have any signs off OH 315 or OH 750 that direct people to the park. We would also like a blue ODOT tourist sign on US 23

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	✔
Recreation structure needs	✔
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✔
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	✔

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (62) • Viewing wildlife (44) • Escape into nature (48)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Trails, reserves, picnics • Natural resources (ravines, river, eagles, fall colors) • Programs/ nature center • Sledding and cross-country skiing
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Gardening (26) • Concerts (46) • Movies (25)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Visitors tell us they want more trails, a viewing scope for the eagles, a better webcam to view the eagles, a dog park off-leash area
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Escape into nature (35) • Naturalist interpretive programs (35) • Special events (30)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• We do not have any signs off of OH 315 or OH 750 that direct people to the park. We would also like a blue ODOT tourist sign on US 23
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (28) • Restrooms (30) • Signage (23)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Continue efforts to link the park to the Greenways system and other local connections, providing non-vehicular access to the park. • Assess condition of trails and use-level to determine sustainability and potential new uses.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Determine best way to add technological interpretation on the trails to help engage visitors on the trails. • Investigate the possibility of a new eagle cam. • Improve roadways and replace pit toilets. • Incorporate fitness elements into the existing trails.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Collaborate with other Metro Parks to introduce new programs that engage community. • Investigate the possibility of adding programs to promote trail etiquette.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Develop and improve signage off OH 315 and/or OH 750. • Explore revenue potential if barn were to be renovated and available for rental.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Identify collaboration opportunities with Ohio tourism to increase promotion of park (i.e. a blue ODOT tourist sign on US 23).

Inniswood Metro Gardens

123 Acres | Westerville | Franklin County

ABOUT

Nestled within a scenic nature preserve, the 123-acre Inniswood Metro Gardens is a source of inspiration for all ages. Streams and woodlands filled with wildflowers and wildlife provide a majestic backdrop to the beautifully landscaped areas. Inniswood boasts more than 2,000 species of plants, specialty collections and several themed gardens.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

While best known for its formal garden plantings, the majority of the 123 acres at Inniswood is a mature mixed forest that supports a diversity of nesting birds and amphibians. The combination of formal gardens, edges and mature forest also attracts a good diversity of migrant birds in the spring and fall. The formal garden areas and edges also support over 50 species of butterflies.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Fifteen staffers participated and their responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Connect the younger visitors as well as the older group to gardening through edible plants

It would be a big asset to have WiFi available to the public. People need a place to be able to relax and still use their devices or do research/study

Missing rangers, need more since our ranger operation was moved to Shanon Woods

Have more technological interpretation on the trails… (technology enhancements) would help us engage visitors on the trails

Need an ADA pathway to Rose Garden

Exhibits and outdoor interactive demo gardens

Regarding behavior, visitors seem more demanding and exhibit a sense of entitlement where photographers and trail users are inconsiderate of other visitor groups

Need more signage directing people to garden areas, restrooms, trails, plant identifying labels, The Pavilion, The Sisters Garden, etc.

Internal cross-training of staff from park to park, so Metro Parks employees can address questions

Promotion through new outlets like Columbus Underground, Instagram that are specific to our park and identify as a Garden

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	✔
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	✔
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	✔

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (62) • Escape into nature (48) • Viewing wildlife (44)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Garden experience • Serene natural environment • Programs for all ages in the natural sciences
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Concerts (46) • Movies (25) • Winter (33)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• More plant identifying labels. We get many questions about the ID and culture of plants • Signage to pavilion, restrooms, Sisters' Garden, other garden features
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Escape into nature (35) • Naturalist interpretive programs (35) • Special events (30)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Tap into the hot topics for programming: sustainability. • Better advertising and promotion of events/programs through new outlets • More PR and identity • Exhibits and outdoor interactive demo gardens • Internal cross-training of staff from park to park, so Metro Parks employees can address questions
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Restrooms (30) • Trails (28) • Signage (23)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Inventory trails in the adjacent communities to determine Greenway connectivity options. • Improve internal walkways and accessible pathways.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Update and improve directional signage to the various gardens and provide a better detailed map of where things are. • Implement WiFi service in main areas of the formal gardens.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Investigate the possibility of adding creative programs that appeal to multiple generations i.e. connect the younger visitors as well as the older group to gardening through edible plants. • Continue to work with park visitors and photographers on the rules and etiquette when visiting the formal gardens. Revisit current special event/wedding policies to better serve demand.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Create multi-media tools/apps for use when visiting the gardens.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Identify opportunities for better advertising and promotion of events/programs through Social Media outlets. • Collaborate with other parks to mutually share information.

Pickerington Ponds

1,600 Acres | Canal Winchester | Franklin/Fairfield County

ABOUT

Pickerington Ponds is a premier spot for bird watching, with more than 260 species seen. The combination of seasonal ponds and rich wetland vegetation, with bordering woodlands, serve as a magnet for migrating waterfowl, shore birds and flightless birds. Deer, beaver, fox and other wildlife can be seen near the ponds and adjoining woods and fields of this 1,608 acre park.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The original central 450-acre tract is a series of open water areas separated by an emergent cattail marsh, young succession woods, and shrubby thickets. The main body of water, Ellis Pond, is a 54-acre remnant glacial kettle lake and represents one of only a few such lakes remaining in Central Ohio. Over 260 species of birds have been documented at this site. Audubon Ohio has designated Pickerington Ponds as one of Ohio's 95 Important Bird Areas (IBA). The buttonbush swamp and other small ponds have large numbers of breeding amphibians including the regionally rare tiger salamander. Four hundred and thirteen acres of this site have been dedicated as the Pickerington Ponds State Nature Preserve. Since 2002, nearly 700 acres of land has been restored to various types of wetlands to provide critical wildlife habitat, a natural buffer to the dedicated nature preserve and Ellis Pond, and important groundwater recharge to the area. The park hosts a pair of nesting ospreys and the state-endangered sandhill crane.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Additional wildlife viewing areas closer to the water, roving south-end naturalist, bike stations with repair/water/shade and more shade along the trails

Adequate staffing levels to properly maintain park facilities and wetlands, naturalist programming, natural play area and giraffe

Frisbee disc golf course, natural play area

A negative … Inconsiderate trail users

Improve GPS coordinates

Confusion on multiple entrances (lack of you are here signage), limited parking access to the multi-use trail and multi-use trail connection to Blacklick Woods.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Biking (100) • Running/walking (144) • Viewing wildlife (117)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Birding opportunities, nature viewing/ photography and multi-use trail
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Kayaking (74) • Concerts (72) • Winter (66)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Place for kids to play, dedicated pet trail not the multi-use trail
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Escape into nature (84) • Hike/bike programs (84) • Fitness opportunities (75)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Frisbee disc course, natural play area and better advertising
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (74) • Technology (26) • Directional signs (60)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Complete multi-use trail connection to Blacklick Woods. • Investigate the possibility of adding shade structures/trees, wildlife viewing areas and bike stations.
Facilities	**Provide-welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Explore use of technology tools to aid visitors in accessing information, particularly for those who wish to use personal electronic devices. • Investigate the possibility of additional wildlife viewing areas closer to the water, bike stations with repair/water/shade and more shade along the trails.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Develop a comprehensive plan to illustrate the positive impact on visitation if programming opportunities were expanded. • Create trail etiquette signage and install where appropriate.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Improve GPS coordinates. • Prioritize a list of improvements that will have a positive impact on park accessibility and participation.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Develop a template to provide frequent, interesting updates about the park to add to website, if it proves successful in increasing visitation, share template with other parks.

Prairie Oaks

2,143 Acres | West Jefferson | Madison/Franklin County

ABOUT

Prairie Oaks features nearly 500 acres of lush flowering prairies and grasslands that were restored using seeds native to the Darby Plains. The spectacular scenery of the Big Darby State and National Scenic River, which flows through the 2,123-acre park, provides a beautiful backdrop for outdoor adventure. The park also has several deep lakes for fishing and boating.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Bordering both sides of Big Darby Creek Federal and State Scenic River for over two miles, Prairie Oaks Metro Park protects critical upstream riparian habitat. Large tracts of former agricultural land have been converted to native Darby Plains prairies, wetlands and cool-season grasslands. Pothole wetland restorations have been completed in both warm and cool-season grassland areas. The upland forests are comprised of second growth mixed forest communities. The park is home to one of the largest remaining burr oaks in the Darby Plains. Approximately 1,200 federally endangered northern riffleshell mussels have been released within the park boundaries as part of a larger population augmentation project for this species in Big Darby and Little Darby creeks. This park is also the only site in Franklin County for the Duke's skipper, dion skipper, northern hairstreak and the Appalachian eyed brown butterflies.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Eight staffers contributed to this survey, responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

The gravel road and parking lot at Sycamore Plains and Beaver Lake areas, visitors complain of driving through or around potholes

Observation tower/ deck to view wetlands and Big Darby Creek. More ADA accessible trails for older/disabled visitors to enjoy.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	✓
Roads/path conditions	✓
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✓
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✓
Access	
Request for directional signage	✓
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	✓
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	✓

Provide WiFi for visitors to use throughout the park for the purpose of GPS points in the park so visitors can find places while hiking and take a virtual tour of them, which would incorporate more tech-knowledge into outdoor education

More public programs that have a fun / educational theme to attract a wider variety of visitors to the park.

Increased vehicle break-ins due to increased visitation to the park surveillance cameras installed at Darby Bend Lakes and Sycamore Plais to deter vehicle break-ins.

The separation of all the areas of the park and being in two different counties, when visitor's Google the park or get directions via internet/GPS it takes them to the main part of the park on the Madison County side.

Connect the Darby Creek Greenway trail south to Battelle Darby Creek and north to Heritage Trail

Promote visitor safety and awareness through a Park Watch Frequently monitor websites like Yelp capturing user comments and evaluate.

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (70) • Viewing wildlife (49) • Escape into nature (41)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Water accessibility on four lakes and Big Darby Creek for fishing, boating access. • A dog beach, reputation as a dog-friendly park, and WAG Fest. • Bridle trail. • Running, hiking, and bike trail access
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Canoeing (27) • Kayaking (38) • Concerts (35)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Canoe access. • Public hunting area • Swimming area • A fenced impoundment around the dog beach area • Drinking water at Darby Bend Lakes
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Adventure-based activities (28) • Escape into nature (38) • Overnight camping opportunities/programs (31)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• More ADA accessible trails for mobility / impaired visitors to enjoy. Variety of visitors to the park. Construct a fenced impoundment around the dog beach. Several visitors have mentioned that they would use the dog beach if they didn't have to worry about their dogs running outside the area.
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Roads (27) • Trails (28) • Directional signs (19)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Connect the Darby Creek Greenway trail south to Battelle Darby Creek and north to Heritage Trail. • Improve accessibility of trails.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Consider incorporating tech-knowledge into outdoor education by providing WiFi for visitors to use throughout the park (GPS for visitors who hike virtual tours). • Pave gravel parking lots in high-use areas. Fence in the dog beach area.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Develop a plan to attract a wider audience with programming that is educational and fun. Investigate the possibility of a mountain bike trail. • Install additional surveillance cameras where needed.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Identify ways to improve directions that are offered by Google. • Prioritize and implement a list of improvements that will increase access to and participation at the park.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Identify ways to use YELP/social media to increase visitation. Share ideas with other parks. • Continue operational collaboration with Battelle Darby Creek.

Scioto Audubon

120 Acres | Columbus | Franklin County

ABOUT

Set amid a once industrial landscape, Scioto Audubon has been transformed from a blighted brownfield into a green oasis where wildlife and birds thrive and flourish. The 120-acre park is a recreational and educational destination for visitors of all ages. Located along the banks of the Scioto River just south of downtown Columbus, the park resulted from a partnership between the city of Columbus, The National Audubon Society and The Columbus and Metro Parks to bring nature to the heart of downtown Columbus.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A park that has a long and varied history of public use from waste disposal to warehouse occupation and the location of the city impound lot, Scioto Audubon Metro Park is unique in its location downtown on the banks of the Scioto River. These severe uses of the property have driven the approach to habitat restoration and environmental site remediation required non-traditional measures to ensure safe facilitation of this park. Native grasses and wildflowers have been established in the open areas and a series of small wetlands developed to attract a diversity of wildlife. Scioto Audubon has a well-established resident and migratory bird population that has gained the site its Important Bird Area status. Ospreys nest on a light pole that was part of the former City of Columbus impound lot. The riparian forest restoration, the preservation of river in the floodplains, and the reinstitution of historic hydro-periods are vital to maintaining and increasing these bird populations that serve as indicators for the health of the entire ecosystem. This area supports a very healthy population of expected riparian corridor species and serves as important migratory habitat along the Scioto River corridor.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Three staffers contributed to this survey, responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Add a naturalist to work with the Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC), again, not to change their focus, but to help enhance the experience: teaching, programming, marketing, so that people aren't asking, "What is that building is" or "What is there to do in that building".

Additional trees for shade and wind breaks during the winter months

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✔
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	
More shade/shelters	✔
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	✔
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	✔

Missing… A real restroom at the Central, instead of Porta-Johns.

Missing… An outdoor stage/amphitheatre

Educators to help the education manager at the GIAC, so that their success is also OUR success.

There is a lack of signage on the highway directing potential visitors to this park.

Continue our work with the GIAC, or increase our work with the GIAC, as many people still "have no idea what this building is". … integrating more into the park, without taking away their focus of birds, the river corridor and the forest within our border.

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Biking (39) • Running/walking (69) • Dog activities (39) • Escape into nature (49)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Amenities: climbing wall, obstacle course and dog park • Proximity to downtown and community events • The trail system
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Kayaking (51) • Concerts (41) • Movies (34)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• A real restroom at the C.A.A., instead of Porta-Johns. • An outdoor stage/amphitheatre
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Fitness opportunities (41) • Overnight camping opportunities/ programs (40) • Hike/bike programs (46)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Additional amenities such as a disc golf course, obstacles throughout the park, shelters for use/rent. • More trees throughout the park for shade. Water/shower access at both the obstacle course and dog park. • Longer hours = 24 hour access. • A restroom at the climbing wall.
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (30) • Technology (28) • Restrooms (38)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Continue working with the City of Columbus to develop a pedestrian bridge connecting the northern end of the park to the Brewery District. • Plant additional shade trees.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Continue partnership with Grange Insurance Audubon Center (GIAC) to use the interactive technology and signage that is currently being developed. • Investigate the possibility of a modern restroom and/or a performance stage in the Central Activity Area.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Investigate the possibility of adding a naturalist to work with the GIAC, to help enhance the experience: teaching, programming, marketing, so that people aren't asking, "What that building is" or "What is there to do in that building". • Continue to address the homeless issue and its impact on park visitation.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Develop and improve signage on highway directing potential visitors. • Investigate the possibility of adding a water feature at dog park and obstacle course for visitors to rinse off.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Build off success of climbing wall volunteer program identifying opportunities through other user groups to promote park (dog park users, obstacle course, sand volleyball, kickball). • Continue our work with GIAC, integrating more into the park, without taking away their focus of birds, the river corridor and the forest within our border.

Sharon Woods

761 Acres | Westerville | Franklin County

ABOUT

Sharon Woods is a mixture of forests and fields with towering oak, hickory and beech trees and an 11-acre lake. Tucked inside the 761-acre park is the Edward Thomas Nature Preserve, named for the renowned Ohio naturalist and one of the founders of the park system. Many seasonal pools are present and provide critical spring breeding habitat for amphibians and other wildlife.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

A nearly 50% mixture of woods, open fields and successional areas, Sharon Woods offers a nice diversity of habitats. A mixed swamp forest community is the dominant resource feature of the park; however fine examples of mixed mesophytic and silver maple swamp forests also exist in here. Numerous vernal pools associated with the swamp forest communities are present and provide critical spring breeding habitat for amphibians as well as many other types of wildlife. In 2007, Metro Parks worked with several other partners and successfully reintroduced wood frogs to the swamp forest area. They can be heard during early spring with their clucking-like calls. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Natural Areas and Preserves dedicated the 319-acre central portion of woods in 1975 as the Edward S. Thomas Nature Preserve. Scattered throughout the park are several oaks that represent old growth and possibly original trees.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Eleven staffers participated in this survey; responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

A designated program area with a roof; many times our naturalists use one of the large shelters for outdoor programs in case of inclement weather. This takes up a popular shelter that visitors would otherwise use

Opportunities for families to fish at Schrock Lake... kept the rule to catch and release for all

Website link for education staff; for program options, pre- and post-field trip/school activities. Podcast or audio tour of the park or specific trail. Permanent QR code scavenger hunt. Interactive maps for self-guided hike in the park

Somali-speaking educator, Spanish-speaking educator, programs focused or tailored to these populations

Adequate parking in the Lake Area; Nearly every weekend these two parking lots fill up

Park visitors need more manners; respect for grounds. (ie) amount of waste produced and litter left by picnic groups

Dog walking area; we do not have any trails that allow pets

Advertise natural play area, improve signage and awareness

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	✔
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	✔
Trail etiquette issues	✔
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✔
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✔
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✔
Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	✔

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (162) • Viewing wildlife (93) • Escape into nature (115)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	1. By far the Multipurpose Trail for exercising, running, walking, cycling and cross-training. 2. Use of picnic areas; playgrounds and family shelters for small families to large community gatherings 3. Fishing
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Canoeing (71) • Concerts (80) • Hay rides (62)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Pet trail/ opportunities for pet, dog walkers • More parking • Fishing for all ages
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Fitness opportunities (75) • Escape into nature (85) • Hike/bike programs (74)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• More parking, particularly at the Lake Area • Allow fishing for all ages • Dog trail
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (80) • Directional signs (57) • Restrooms (86)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Complete the Westerville extension connecting the park to the Alum Creek Trail. • Create dog friendly trails or areas. • Develop a marked trail system connecting the main area of the park to the northern areas of the park.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Implement self-guided hiking maps and way-finding tools. • Consider adding a program area with a roof. • Investigate parking alternatives in high utilization areas.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Develop a comprehensive plan which increases access and opportunities for visitors to enjoy Schrock Lake beyond fishing. • Identify ways to encourage visitors to properly dispose of trash and respectfully share the park (staff identified trend in visitors lacking manners and respect for grounds). • Consider addition of bilingual educators that appeal to unique demographic of visitors (i.e. Somali and Spanish speaking)
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Develop and improve the signage package used throughout the park including information on the Edward Thomas State Nature Preserve. • Explore updating website with link for education staff; for program options, pre- and post-field trip/school activities. • Consider adding electricity to shelter areas.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Explore creation of a podcast or audio tour of the park or specific trail, if successful, share with other parks. • Continue operational collaboration with Inniswood and Metro Parks headquarters. • Work with the Somali community on access and user-friendly initiatives.

Slate Run

1,705 Acres | Canal Winchester | Pickaway County

ABOUT

Slate Run features a variety of habitats ranging from the open areas of grasslands, wetlands and meadows to the forested areas of beech, oak, hickory and sugar maple. Wildlife viewing opportunities abound at the 1,705-acre park. Sandhill cranes have nested in the 156-acre wetland and the northern bobwhite quail have been reintroduced in the park.

Slate Run Historical Farm — Time has been turned back to the 1880s at Slate Run Living Historical Farm. Experience first-hand what life was like on an Ohio farm. As you stroll through the gardens, barns and farmhouse, you will see the farm costumed staff and volunteers going about their daily chores. Pigs, geese, turkeys, Percheron horses and other heirloom animals can be seen.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Centered around a large upland wooded tract containing the deep ravine and small stream known as Slate Run, this woods represents one of the larger single forested areas in Pickaway County away from riparian areas. This ravine contains several Ohio black shale outcrops, locally rare ravine habitat, and the stream for which the park was named. The forest can be characterized as a mixed upland forest containing large numbers of beech, sugar maple, oaks and hickories. In the eastern part of the forested area is a 2 to 3 acre buttonbush swamp that represents one of the finest examples of this habitat in Ohio. Open former agricultural areas of the park have been reseeded with grass mixtures creating large grasslands and old fields that support breeding populations of Henslow's sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, savannah sparrows, barn owls, and reestablished northern bobwhite quail. At least 14 species of amphibians occur in the park. In 1999, the 156-acre wetland complex in the southwest corner of the park was constructed as a mitigation bank and hosts one of the southernmost populations of breeding sandhill cranes, state endangered in Ohio.

The gothic revival farmhouse was built in 1856 and restored by Metro Parks for authenticity. Guests can tour the living room, parlor and kitchen and watch the ladies prepare the meals and tend the house. The multi-bay barn was built by Samuel Oman, the fourth owner of Slate Run Farm, and restored by Amish carpenters.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff at both Slate Run and the Historical Farm completed surveys; responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	✓
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	✓
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✓
Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	✓
Access	
Request for directional signage	
Discrepancies with GPS	
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	
Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	

Our roads here are on the radar and will need funds at some point (a lot of money) but others need it sooner

Fishing at Buzzard's Roost, iceskating in the wetlands

Many visitors may relate to technology and may utilize it for more info if staff not present, but it needs to be discreet so it does not detract from authenticity, I would hate to visit a historic site and see bar codes all over the place

Flush toilets would be nice and very much appreciated but carry a heavy price tag… family and school kid-friendly restroom

Sometimes not enough staff to help visitors fully experience the Farm, school programs seem rushed often due to limited staff and bus schedules

Streaming more clips about neat things seen in the park. Expand the Geo Cache program to maybe 10 spots in the park each very different than the others

Three Creeks is 14 miles from Slate Run, Walnut Woods is seven miles from Slate Run, Chestnut Ridge is 10 miles from Slate Run, Pickerington Ponds is 12 miles from Slate Run. We have a lot of parks in these almost rural areas and most of us are individual destination parks

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

There was not a separate survey done at the Historical Farm Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	**What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?**	• Running/walking (140) • Viewing wildlife (102) • Escape into nature (86)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	Historical Farm: • Ample space for a group or family outing/lack of large crowds • A beautiful well maintained park that is safe to take your family to
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Concerts (79) • Movies (81) • Winter (75)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Horseback riding, better restrooms
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Escape into nature (91) • Overnight camping opportunities/ programs (71) • Animal encounters (73)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Question is… do we want more visitors?
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (52) • Restrooms (139) • Nature centers (55)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Inventory trails in the adjacent communities to determine Greenway connectivity options. • Expand pet trails and pet-friendly amenities.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Investigate ways to incorporate technology for visitors to self-discover park attributes without distracting from historical theme of the park. • Investigate the possibility of additional family/school child-friendly restrooms.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Develop a comprehensive plan which increases access and opportunities for visitors to enjoy Buzzard's Roost Lake beyond fishing. This should also include the investigation of winter activities in the area. • Improve the signage both inside and outside the park directing visitors to the right locations.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Develop an online registration system for school programs at the farm.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Develop a plan to use video clips to illustrate neat things seen in the park. Expand the Geo Cache.

Three Creeks

1,100 Acres | Groveport | Franklin County

ABOUT

Three Creeks is named for the confluence where Alum, Big Walnut and Blacklick Creeks join. Owls, great blue herons and more than 100 species of birds have been sighted. Visitors may catch a glimpse of beaver, mink, coyote and deer. The 1,100-acre park is a partnership with the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Located at the confluence of Blacklick Creek, Alum Creek and Big Walnut Creek, which converge on the property to form the southern reaches of Big Walnut Creek, Three Creeks possesses one of the finest examples of a floodplain forest remaining in Central Ohio. Along the Confluence Trail in the spring is one of the largest populations of bluebells, in Franklin County. Historically numerous rare species of fish and freshwater mussels occurred within the park but were impacted by changes in water quality. Recently however, rare species such as the state-threatened tippecanoe darter were found in the park indicating a return of higher water quality. The site also hosts a nesting pair of bald eagles. Three Creeks Park is managed in a lease agreement between Metro Parks and the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Thirteen staffers participated in this survey; responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	✓
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	✓
Need more staff	✓

Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✓
Parking issues	
Trail etiquette issues	
WiFi/ technology enhancements	✓
More shade/shelters	✓
Park signage/map	✓
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	

Access	
Request for directional signage	✓
Discrepancies with GPS	✓
Connectivity to Greenway	
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	

Communication	
Request for advertising	✓
Build on partnerships	✓

Callouts:

- Visitors need more shelters, water fountains, playgrounds.
- Need to enforce litter violations (fisherman, trail users)
- GPS/mapping apps confuse the public due to multiple park entrances and no consistency for directions
- Visitors need more canoe programs,
- Online fishing reports, real-time trail conditions
- Negative…. theft from motor vehicles
- Promote programming and ranger services with short videos on social media, TV
- Columbus Recreation and Parks Department Partnership

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?	• Running/walking (63) • Viewing wildlife (48) • Escape into nature (38)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Multi-use trail (MUT) • Fishing • Dog park • programming
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Kayaking (33) • Concerts (42) • Movies (35)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• More water fountains • Bow hunting/fishing
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Fitness opportunities (35) • Hike/bike programs (36) • Animal encounters (36)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• Better signage • Additional playground/shelter Heron Pond
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Directional signs (24) • Shelters (21) • Restrooms (26)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Acquire the necessary permissions to complete the trail crossings at the railroad. • Address flooding issues along bike trail.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Explore options for online fishing reports, text alerts for trail conditions. • Investigate the possibility of adding flush toilets and more drinking fountains.
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Conduct needs analysis to determine if bow hunting/fishing would increase visitation. • Determine appropriate programs to address trail etiquette and enforce litter violations.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Invest in signage on freeways and the SR 33 pedestrian bridge. • Provide details to justify acquisition of portable electronic devices for rangers.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Explore creative ways to promote ranger and programming services (i.e. video). • Continue to maintain positive partnership with Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) for Sycamore Fields, other potential partnering opportunities at the Smith Farms area.

Walnut Woods

1,098 Acres | Groveport | Franklin County

ABOUT

Walnut Woods features 1,098 acres of woodlands and fields, bordered by Walnut Creek to the north. The Tall Pines Area features dramatic stands of pines and sweetgum trees, and the Buckeye Area has long rows of old nursery trees such as serviceberry, crab apple and red maples. The park also features restored wetlands and vernal pools.

NATURAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The central 486-acre tract was the area known formerly as the Eastside Nursery. Prior to acquisition by Metro Parks, this land had functioned as an operating tree and shrub nursery since the early 1960s. In 2010, as part of an American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funded project, nearly 70 acres of wetlands, over 7,000 feet of Big Run and 83 acres of upland forest were restored. Part of this acreage also includes 2,700 feet of stream restoration and 22.5 acres of wetlands that were restored as a consolidated wetland mitigation bank. On the west side of Richardson Road a 220-acre tract acquired from the City of Columbus provides a reverting successional area with a variety of trees and shrubs. The park is known to support rare breeding birds such as Bell's vireo, blue grosbeaks and ospreys. A small wood frog colony also exists at the park, which is rare for Franklin County.

STAFF SURVEY SUMMARY

Staff responses were grouped into categories that showed potential district-wide trends, with specific quotes extracted to illustrate specific staff perspectives at this park.

Park Operations	
Improve restrooms	
Building/maintenance issues	
Roads/path conditions	
Recreation structure needs	
Need more staff	✔

Visitor Experience	
New or expanded programs	✔
Parking issues	✔
Trail etiquette issues	✔
WiFi/ technology enhancements	
More shade/shelters	
Park signage/map	
Concerns with incidences of crime	
Pet trail enhancements	

Access	
Request for directional signage	✔
Discrepancies with GPS	✔
Connectivity to Greenway	✔
Pedestrian/public transit connectivity	

Communication	
Request for advertising	✔
Build on partnerships	

The fact that we are Carry-In/Carry-Out is very helpful and I believe if you start a new park out that way, the visitors are trained from the beginning to utilize it in that fashion

Lack of time and staff to take care of controlling invasives

Naturalist position, I do some programs currently (groups that call and ask) but it is limited

In time we may be needing more parking once visitation picks up

The multi-use trails will flood often with heavy rains, requiring mass amounts of debris/ deposition to be removed from many areas

Lack of external signage around the park

GPS location takes visitors automatically to the Tall Pines Area

Some want to connect our trail to Groveport Rec Center and some do not. I would say a little more people are on the do not connect. The people that do not want to connect are the people who enjoy the trails without speeding bicyclists.

With Walnut Woods being new I believe not a lot of folks are aware that we are here

VISITOR SURVEY SUMMARY

Four of the eight questions posed to the visitors of this park were similar to the questions that staff answered on their survey. The top three choices and frequency in which they were selected is noted as well as staff responses to similar questions (visitors were offered multiple choice, staff filled in blanks).

Visitor	What are the top three things you do when you come to the Metro Parks?	• Running/walking (137) • Viewing wildlife (95) • Dog activities (109)
Staff	**What are the top three things that bring visitors to your park?**	• Our dog parks, and for being considered dog friendly • Our trails, visitors like them because they are serene and quiet and not a lot of speeding bicyclists • Wildlife viewing, in all areas of the park
Visitor	**How can we engage you more in our Metro Parks?**	• Canoeing (67) • Concerts (69) • Winter (81)
Staff	**What do visitors frequently tell you they want at your park?**	• Drinking fountain at the large dog park • Shelter at the large dog park pond • Public drinking fountains
Visitor	**How can we get you to come to the Metro Parks more often?**	• Special events (69) • Escape into nature (74) • Animal encounters (89)
Staff	**How can we get more visitors into your park?**	• By offering programs • External road signage directing visitors to the park • I think that time alone will get more visitors to the park since it is still fairly new
Visitor	**What three existing things need immediate attention?**	• Trails (54) • Interpretive signs (38) • Directional signs (38) • Restrooms (60)

INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are the suggested action items that can be undertaken to achieve the goals within each area of focus. These initiatives represent a snapshot of opportunities and needs that were identified when the surveys were conducted in 2015. Moving forward, staff has the flexibility to modify, add and change initiatives, provided they are consistent with our mission.

	GOAL	OBJECTIVES	INITIATIVES
Trails	**Provide trails that are safe, navigable and useful**	• Expand Greenway trails by closing gaps, connecting communities and acquiring land for additional trails. • Meet the needs of individual park visitors through adding or improving park trails.	• Connect our trail to the Groveport Community Center. • Address flooding of multi-use trails.
Facilities	**Provide welcoming, well-maintained facilities**	• Expand educational park signage and evaluate use of current technology to enhance the self-guided experience. • Enhance visitor experience by investing in the modernization and improvement of park facilities.	• Identify features that could be part of a Metro Parks app. • Investigate the possibility of adding drinking fountains (for pets and people).
Programs	**Provide programs and events that promote community engagement**	• Increase visitation using events, programs and partnerships that are relevant, enticing and generate loyalty. • Identify and address communication barriers that negatively impact visitor interaction (trail etiquette, cultural or language barriers).	• Work with the staff of the Groveport Community Center and the Groveport area to develop a series of programs which utilize the natural resources of Walnut Woods. • Identify opportunities to use programming to promote trail etiquette.
Access	**Provide equitable, reliable and safe access to parks and services**	• Improve directional signage, print and online media to make parks easier to locate and navigate upon arrival. • Improve access to facilities and programs by blending modern technology and excellent customer service.	• Identify ways to improve directions that are offered by GPS. • Develop a series of programs facilitated by the Three Creeks naturalist staff.
Communication	**Deliver timely information that resonates with our diverse community and staff**	• Use appropriate communication outlets to deliver information, showcase unique park attributes and engage visitors. • Foster collaboration with internal and public/private partners through improved communication.	• Work with other parks to help promote Walnut Woods. • Work with Chestnut Ridge, Pickerington Ponds, Slate Run and Clear Creek to best share and manage resource management operations.

The 2016
Metro Parks Survey

The 2016 Metro Parks Survey

March 2016

Table of Contents

Project Specifications

Respondents .... Registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio

Interviewing dates .... Tuesday, February 23, to Wednesday, March 2, 2016

Type of survey.. Telephone (landline 22% and cell 78%)

Number of completed interviews 604*

Average length.. 18 minutes

Sampling error .... +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95% level of confidence

Interviews conducted by.................................. Saperstein Associates, Inc.

Sample developed by .... Saperstein Associates, Inc. using the Franklin County registered voter database dated January 18, 2016 (cell) and Marketing Systems Group (land)
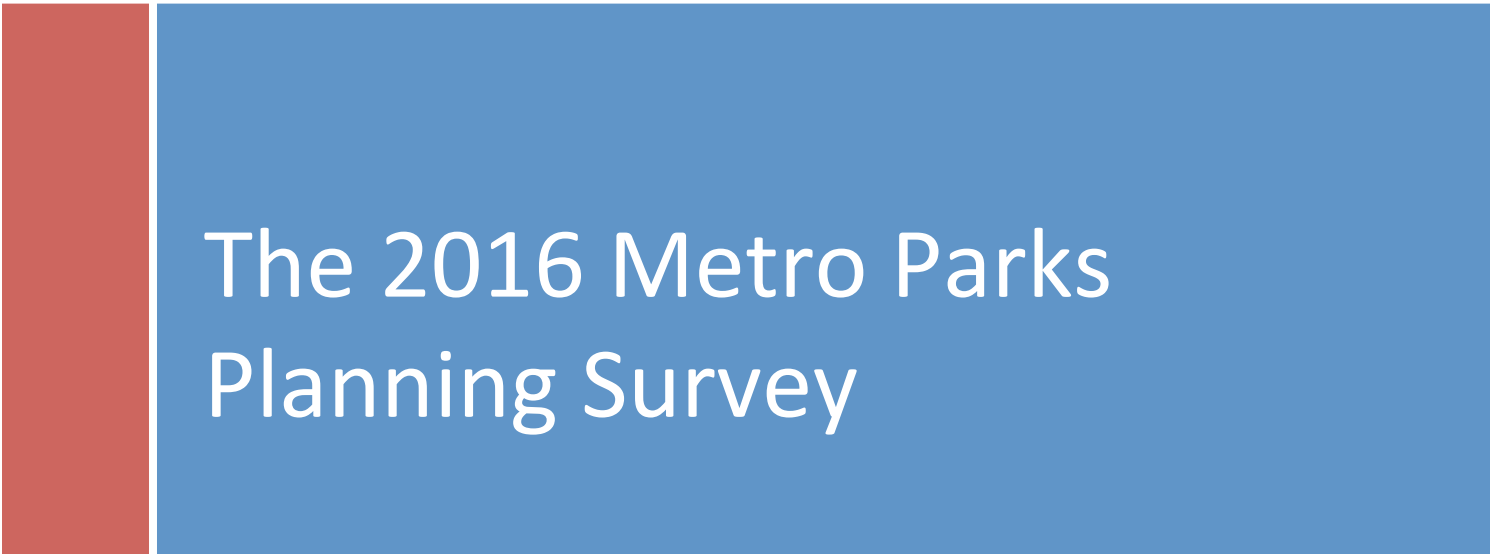
*The data were weighted to better reflect known population parameters.

Sample Disposition

Total numbers dialed …………………………**9,906**   100%
    Person not contacted 1,531   15%
    Person contacted **8,375**   85%

Total households ……………………………**8,375**   100%
    Person not contacted.............................5,827   70%
    Person contacted **2,548**   30%

Total people contacted **2,548** 100%
    Person not eligible... 891   35%
    Person refused...917   36%
    Person scheduled callback (not completed) 136   5%
    Person completed interview...............................**604**   24%

	Population*	Sample
Gender		
Male	48%	47%
Female	52%	53%
Age		
18 to 24	12%	14%
25 to 34	22%	23%
35 to 44	18%	18%
45 to 54	17%	16%
55 to 64	16%	15%
65 to 74	9%	9%
75 or older	6%	5%
Race		
White	66%	67%
African-American	22%	20%
Household characteristics		
Own home	54%	57%
Child younger than 18	31%	31%
City		
Columbus	65%	67%
Not Columbus	35%	33%

*Gender, race, home ownership, and children under 18 in household: American Community Survey, 2010-2014; age and city: Franklin County Board of Elections

The 2016 Metro Parks Planning Survey

Saperstein Associates, Inc. | March 2016

Introduction

This research gives residents of Franklin County a voice as the Metro Parks board and staff develop a long-term strategic plan.

Methodology

- Telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of more than 600 registered voters in Franklin County, Ohio.

- Conducted on cell phones (78%) and landlines (22%), the interviews were completed from February 23 to March 2, 2016, and averaged 18 minutes in length.

- The margin of error for this study is ±4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent level of confidence.

- Data collected during the interviews were weighted to better reflect known population parameters.

- Where appropriate, data from this survey are compared with data from a similar study conducted in 2013.

- To avoid confusion, near the beginning of each interview, all 18 Metro Parks were listed.

- The questionnaire developed for this survey incorporates many of the findings that emerged from the qualitative research conducted with park staff and visitors.

The survey respondents represent Franklin County's adult residents on several key dimensions, including gender, age, ...

	Population*	Sample
Male	48%	47%
Female	52%	53%
18 to 24	12%	14%
25 to 34	22%	23%
35 to 44	18%	18%
45 to 54	17%	16%
55 to 64	16%	15%
65 to 74	9%	9%
Older than 74	6%	5%

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2014; Franklin County Board of Elections

… race, home ownership, the presence of children at home, and geography.

	Population*	Sample
White	66%	67%
African-American	22%	20%
Own home	54%	57%
Child younger than 18	31%	31%
Columbus	65%	67%
Not Columbus	35%	33%

*Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2014; Franklin County Board of Elections

Overall Impressions

Among Franklin County's adult residents, more than nine out of ten have positive impressions of the Metro Parks. Little has changed since 2013.
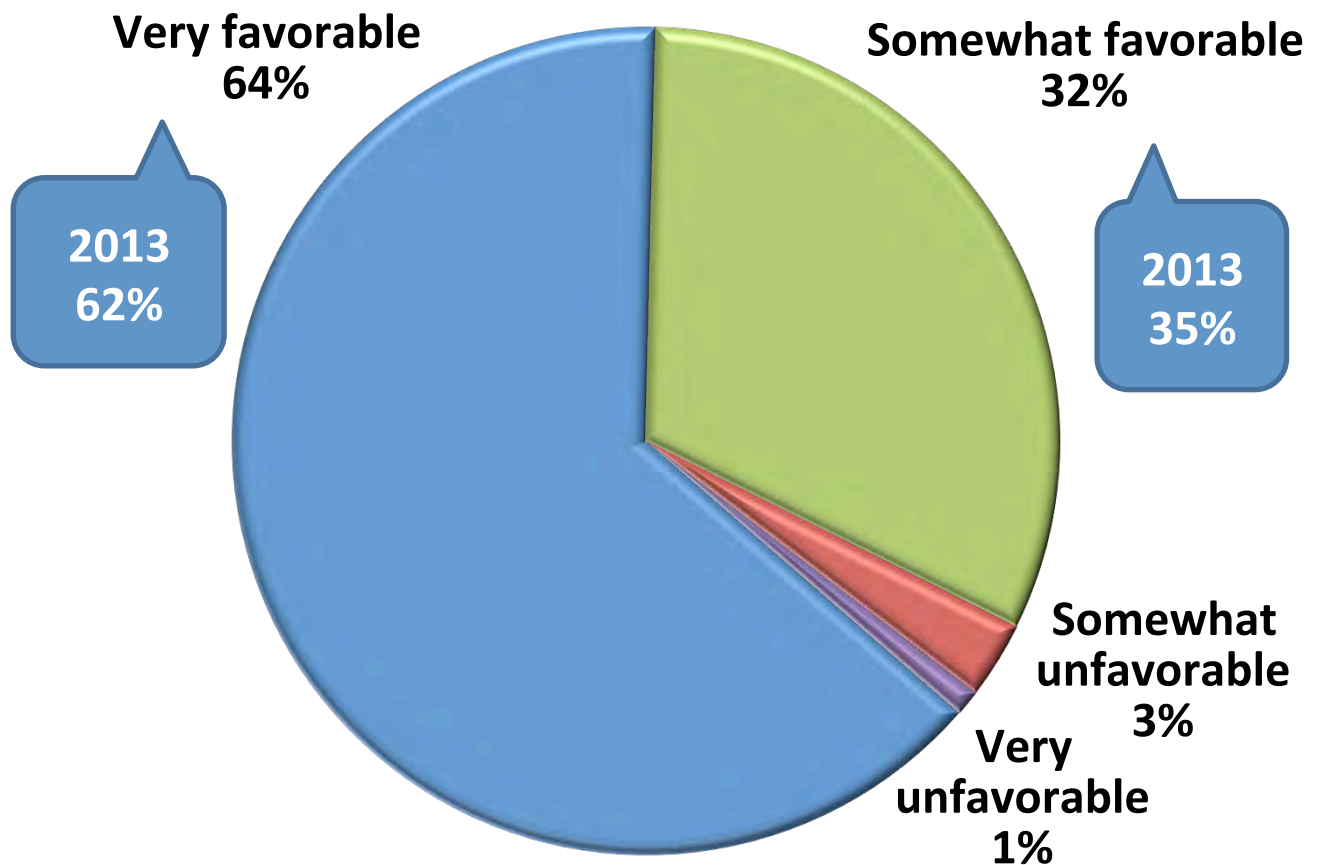
Very favorable
64%

2013
62%

Somewhat favorable
32%

2013
35%

Somewhat unfavorable
3%

Very unfavorable
1%

Q4(c): Are your overall impressions of this destination very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

Positive impressions of the Metro Parks are more common among women, older residents, parents of young children, White residents, suburban residents, and those who visit the system frequently. Positive impressions are <u>least</u> common among residents who have not visited a Metro Park over the past two years.
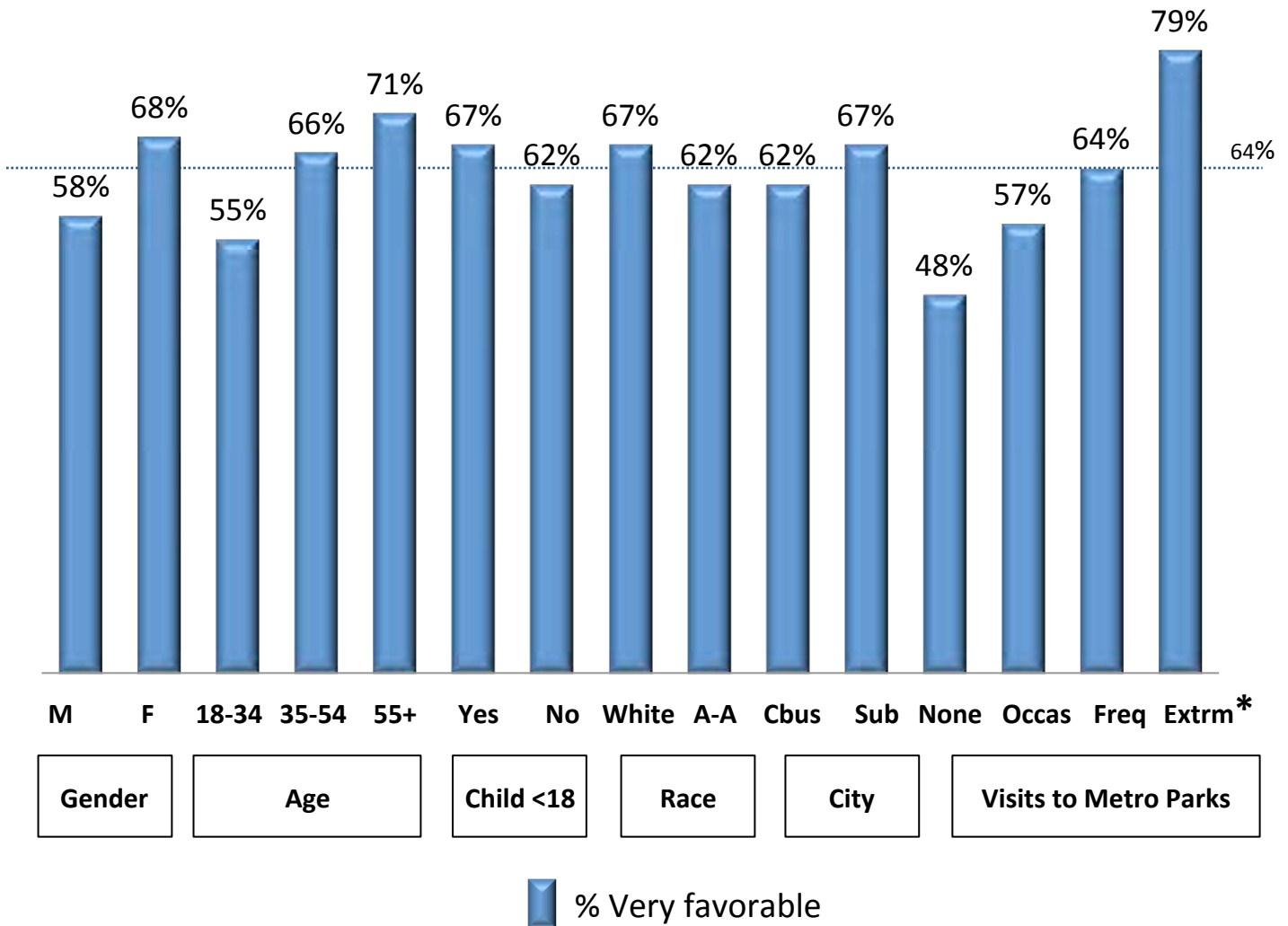
M	F	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	White	A-A	Cbus	Sub	None	Occas	Freq	Extrm*
58%	68%	55%	66%	71%	67%	62%	67%	62%	62%	67%	48%	57%	64%	79%

Gender	Age	Child <18	Race	City	Visits to Metro Parks

64%

■ % Very favorable

Q4(c): Are your overall impressions of <u>this</u> destination very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable?

*Occasional = 1 to 5 visits; Frequent = 6 to 20 visits; Extreme = more than 20 visits

Positive impressions extend to the hours the parks are open, the rangers, the upkeep of picnic and play areas, the way-finding signs ...

The hours parks are open — 88%

The training, judgment, and behavior of park rangers — 87%

The upkeep of the picnic and play areas — 87%

The directional, or way-finding, signs — 83%
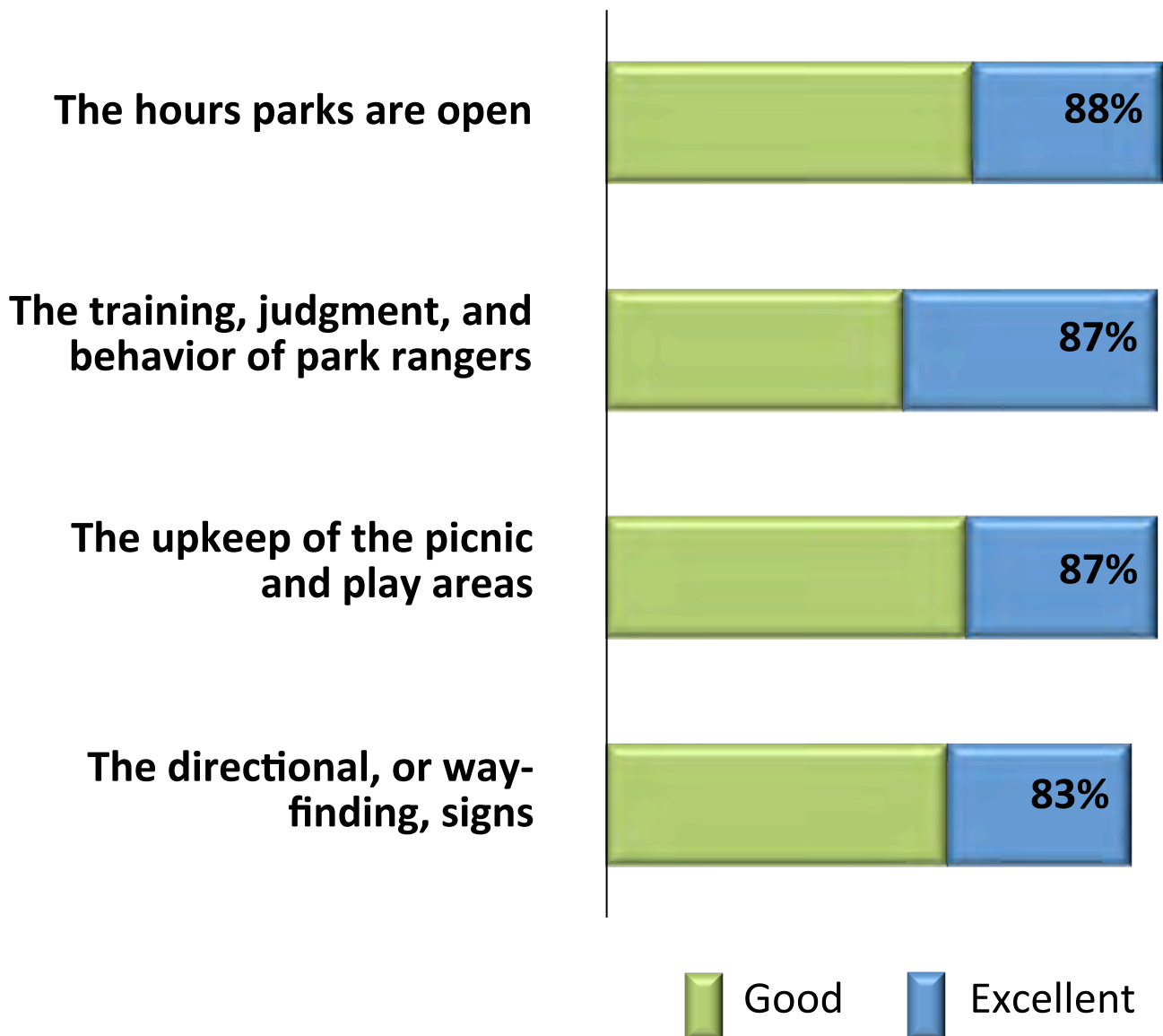
Good ▮ Excellent ▮

Q5: Would you rate this excellent, good, just fair, or poor?

… programs and events, accommodations for visitors with disabilities, and the number of picnic shelters. Fewer are pleased with the restrooms.

The variety of programs and events available to visitors — 81%

The accommodations for visitors with disabilities — 78%

The number of picnic shelters — 76%

The condition of the restrooms — 63%

■ Good ■ Excellent

Q5: Would you rate <u>this</u> excellent, good, just fair, or poor?

— 148 —
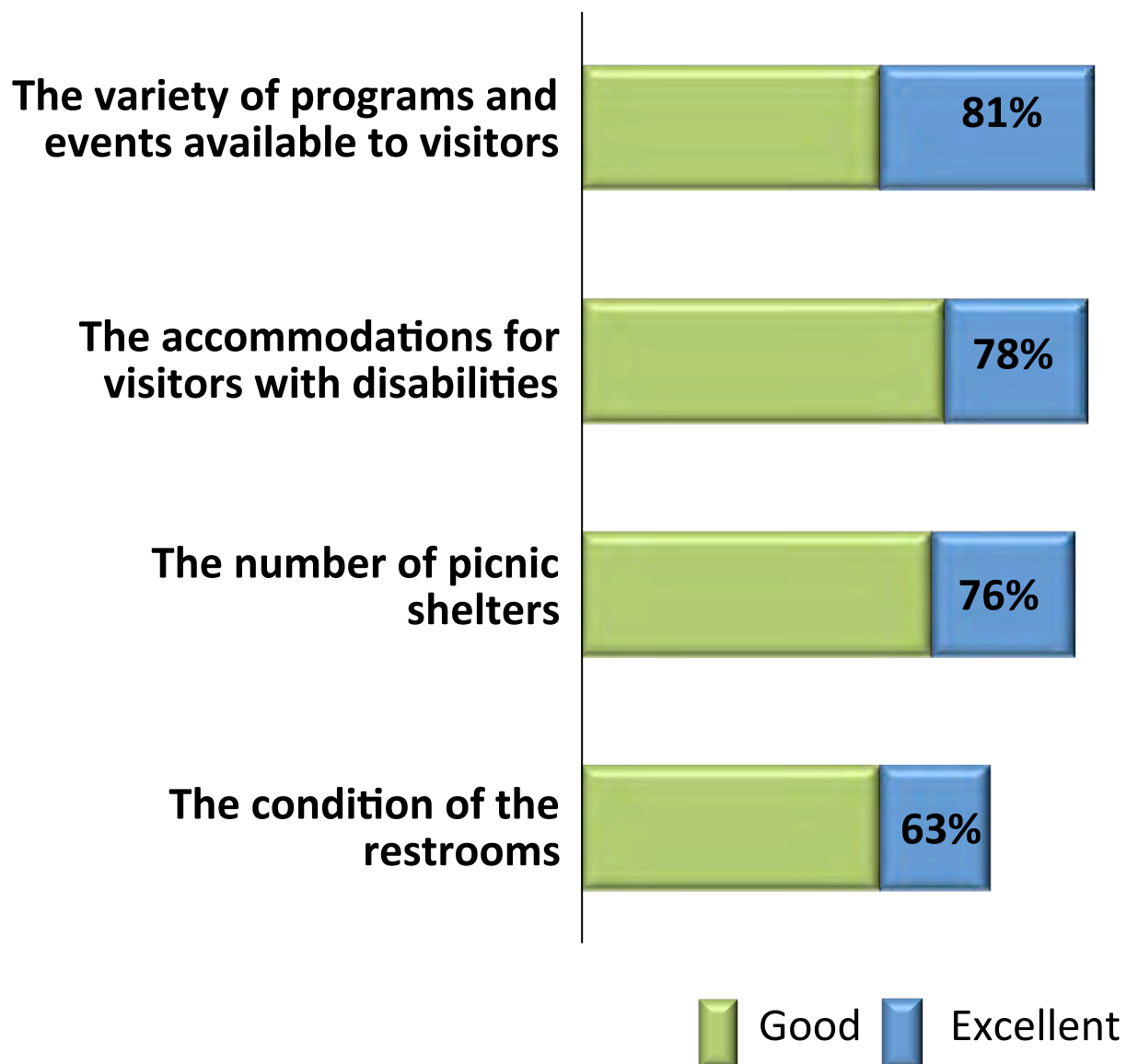
Positive ratings were most common among the most frequent visitors and least common among the non-visitors.

(Total Excellent %)	Gender		Age			Children in House-hold		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Park rangers (40%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More positive	Less positive	Average	More positive	Less positive	Average	More positive	Average
Program variety (33%)	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	More positive	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Hours (30%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More positive	Less positive	Average	Average	More positive
Upkeep of picnic and play areas (30%)	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less positive	Less positive	Average	More positive
Directional signs (29%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	Average	More positive
Number of shelters (22%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	Average	More positive
Accommodations for disabilities (22%)	More positive	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	Average	Average
Restrooms (17%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less positive	Average	More positive

Legend: ■ More positive   ■ Average   ■ Less positive

Most agree that the Metro Parks have a welcoming atmosphere and are relevant for every age group. They also agree that park-related information is easy to find.
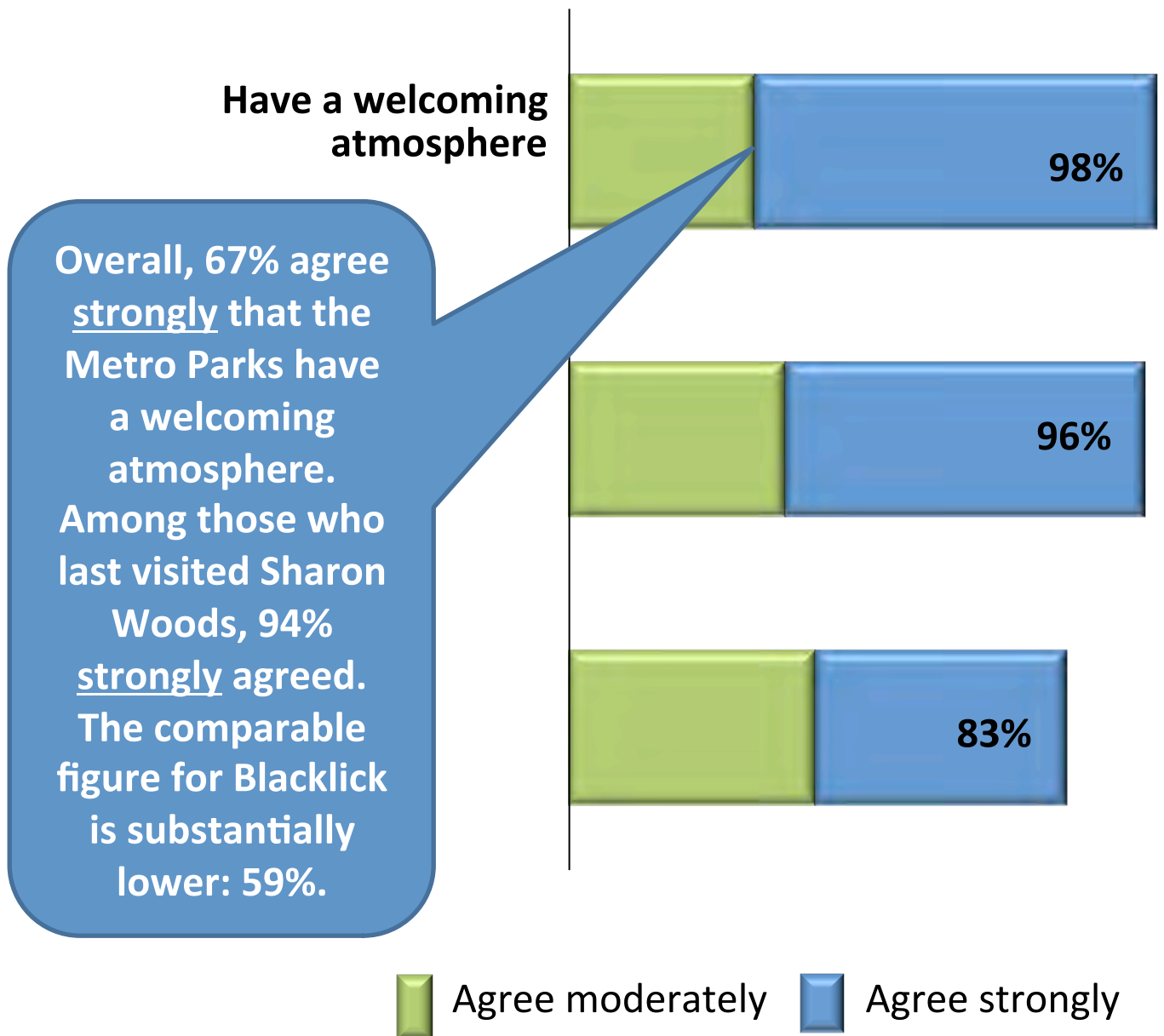
Have a welcoming atmosphere

98%

96%

83%

Overall, 67% agree **strongly** that the Metro Parks have a welcoming atmosphere. Among those who last visited Sharon Woods, 94% **strongly** agreed. The comparable figure for Blacklick is substantially lower: 59%.

■ Agree moderately ■ Agree strongly

Q7: For each of the following statements about the Metro Parks, tell me if you agree strongly, agree moderately, disagree moderately, or disagree strongly.

One resident in three considers the Metro Parks crowded. Two out of three disagree. African-Americans are more likely than White residents to consider the Metro Parks crowded.

Some Metro Parks Have So Many Visitors, it Makes the Experience Less Enjoyable
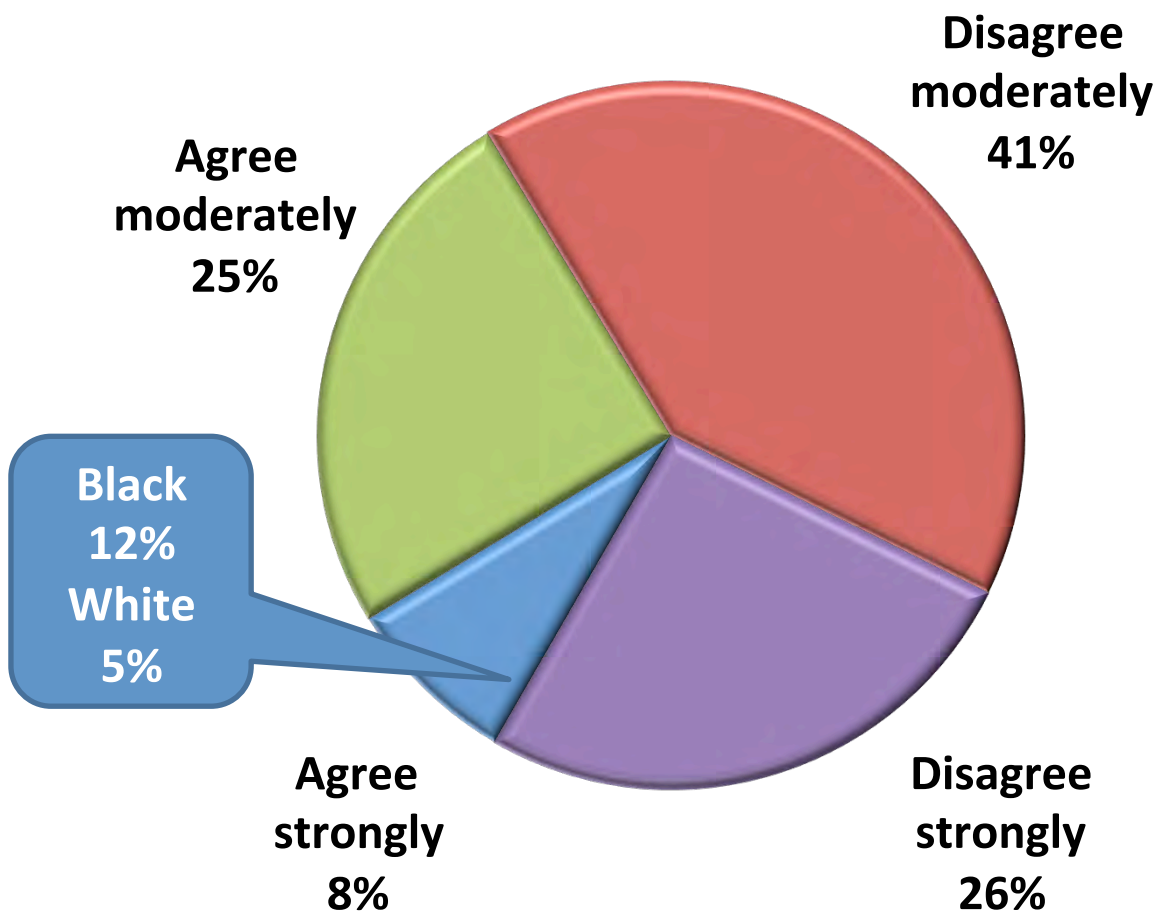
Disagree moderately
41%

Agree moderately
25%

Black
12%
White
5%

Agree strongly
8%

Disagree strongly
26%

Q7: For each of the following statements about the Metro Parks, tell me if you agree strongly, agree moderately, disagree moderately, or disagree strongly.

Most residents consider the Metro Parks safe. Four out of ten consider them <u>very</u> safe, an increase since 2013. This latter perception is less common among African-Americans.

Park Safety

Black
32%
White
43%

Very safe
40%

2013
30%

Somewhat
safe
50%

2013
58%

Depends
on park
3%
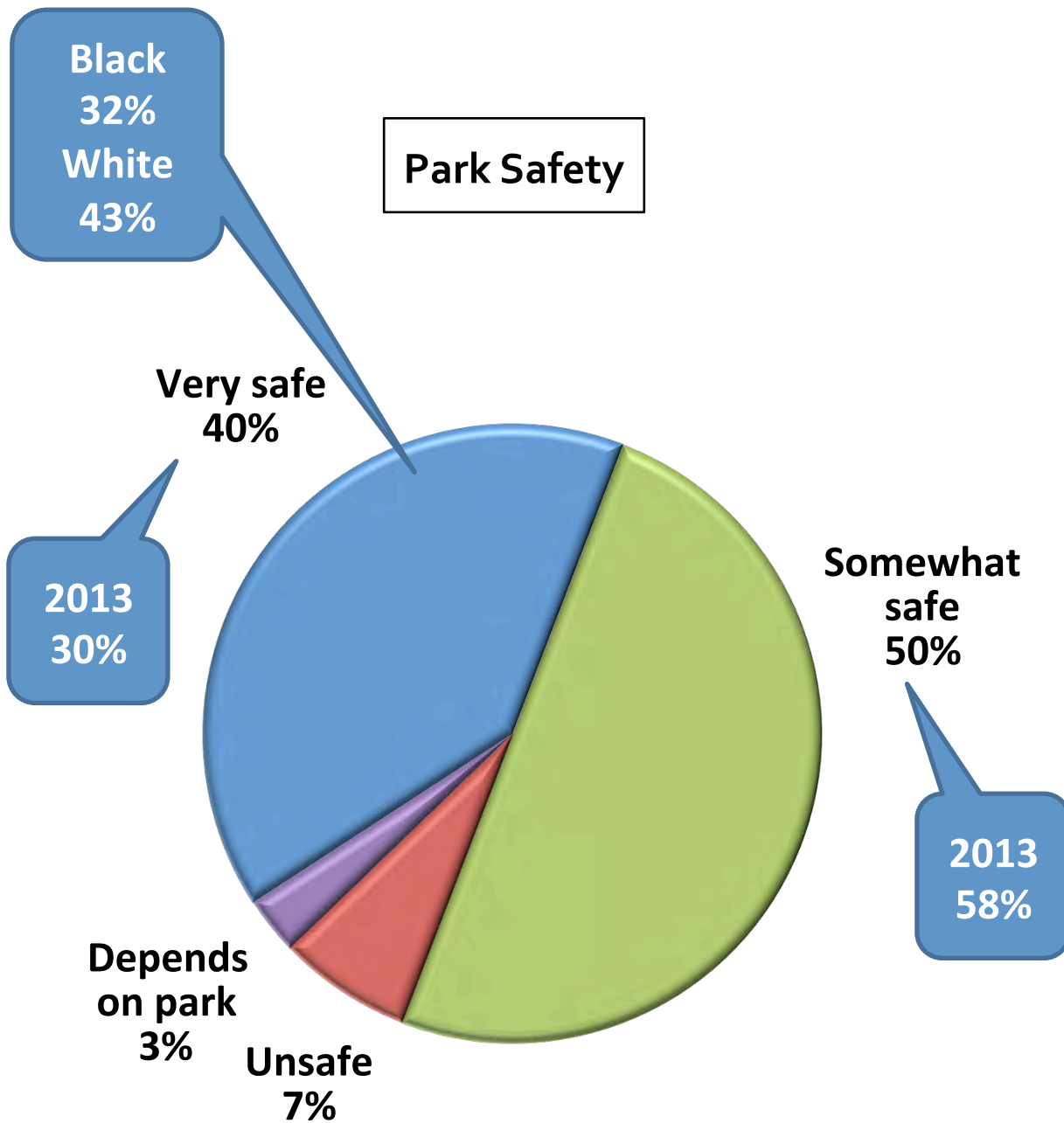
Unsafe
7%

Q6: When it comes to crime and other dangerous behavior, are the Metro Parks very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

Six out of ten residents consider their Metro Parks property tax reasonable. More than a third, however, consider it a bargain.

Park/Property Tax Value

A bargain
35%

Expensive
4%

Reasonable
61%

Black
17%
White
42%

Non-Visitor
26%
Occasional
29%
Frequent
35%
Extreme
48%
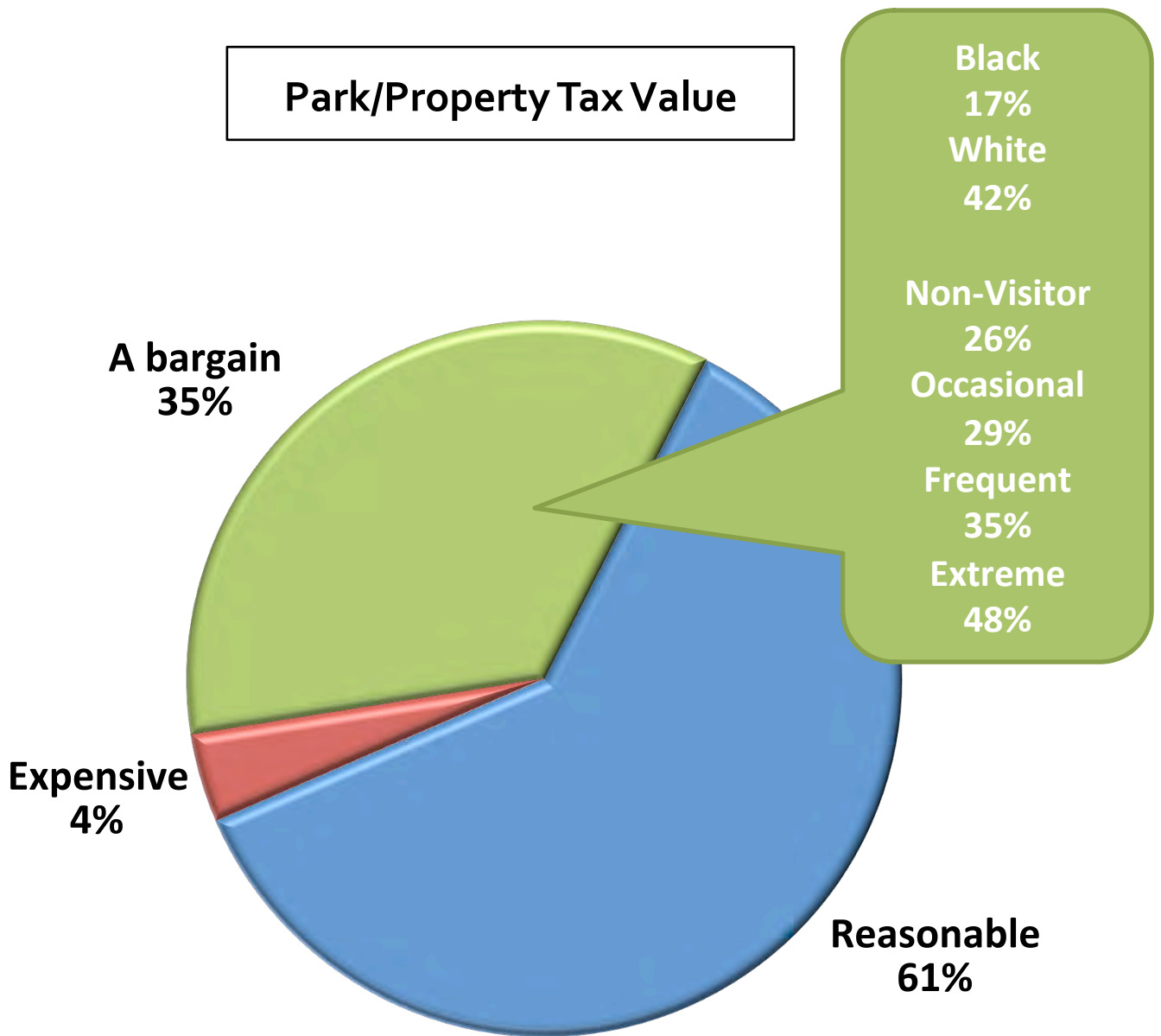
Q9: The Metro Parks are funded, in part, with property taxes – about two dollars a month for every $100,000 a home is worth. Do you consider this expensive, reasonable, or a bargain?

Usage

Eight out of ten residents have visited at least one Metro Park (and could name it) over the past <u>two</u> years.

**Visited a Metro Park
in the past two years
79%**

**Have not*
21%**

Q24: Have you <u>been</u> to a Metro Park during the past two years?
*Some residents claimed to have been to a Metro Park, but visited only city or state parks

— 155 —
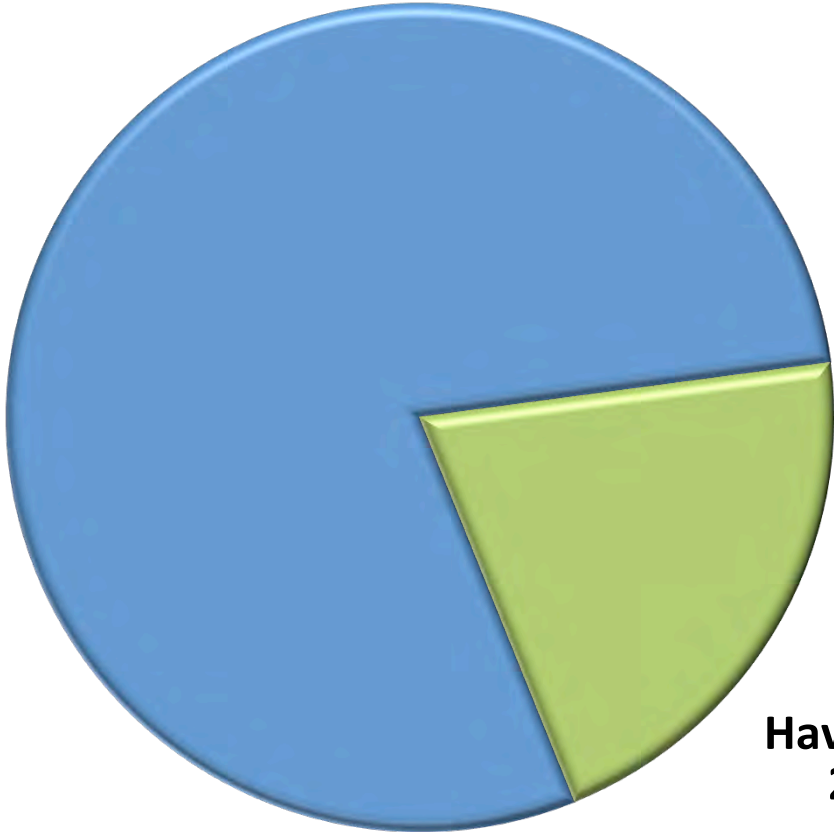
Metro Parks visitors are more common among parents with children at home, White residents, and residents living in Franklin County's suburban communities.

Male	Female	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	White	A-A	Cbus	Sub
77%	80%	77%	80%	79%	85%	76%	83%	75%	76%	85%

Reference line: 79%

Gender	Age	Child <18	Race	City

■ % Visited in past two years
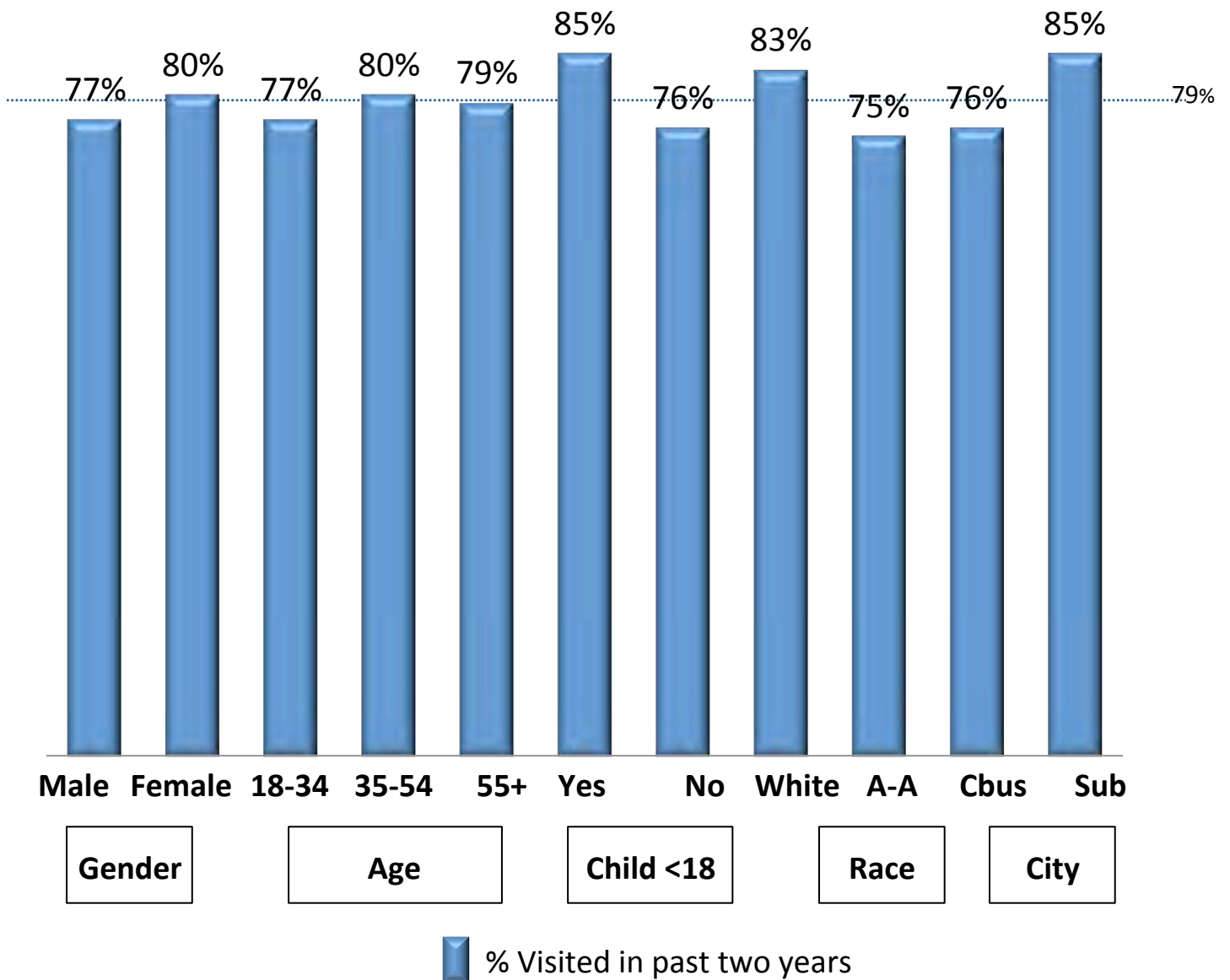
Q24: Have you been to a Metro Park during the past two years?

Among residents who visited at least one Metro Park over the past two years, the median number of visits is 10. The mean is 22, suggesting that many residents visit the parks more than once a month.
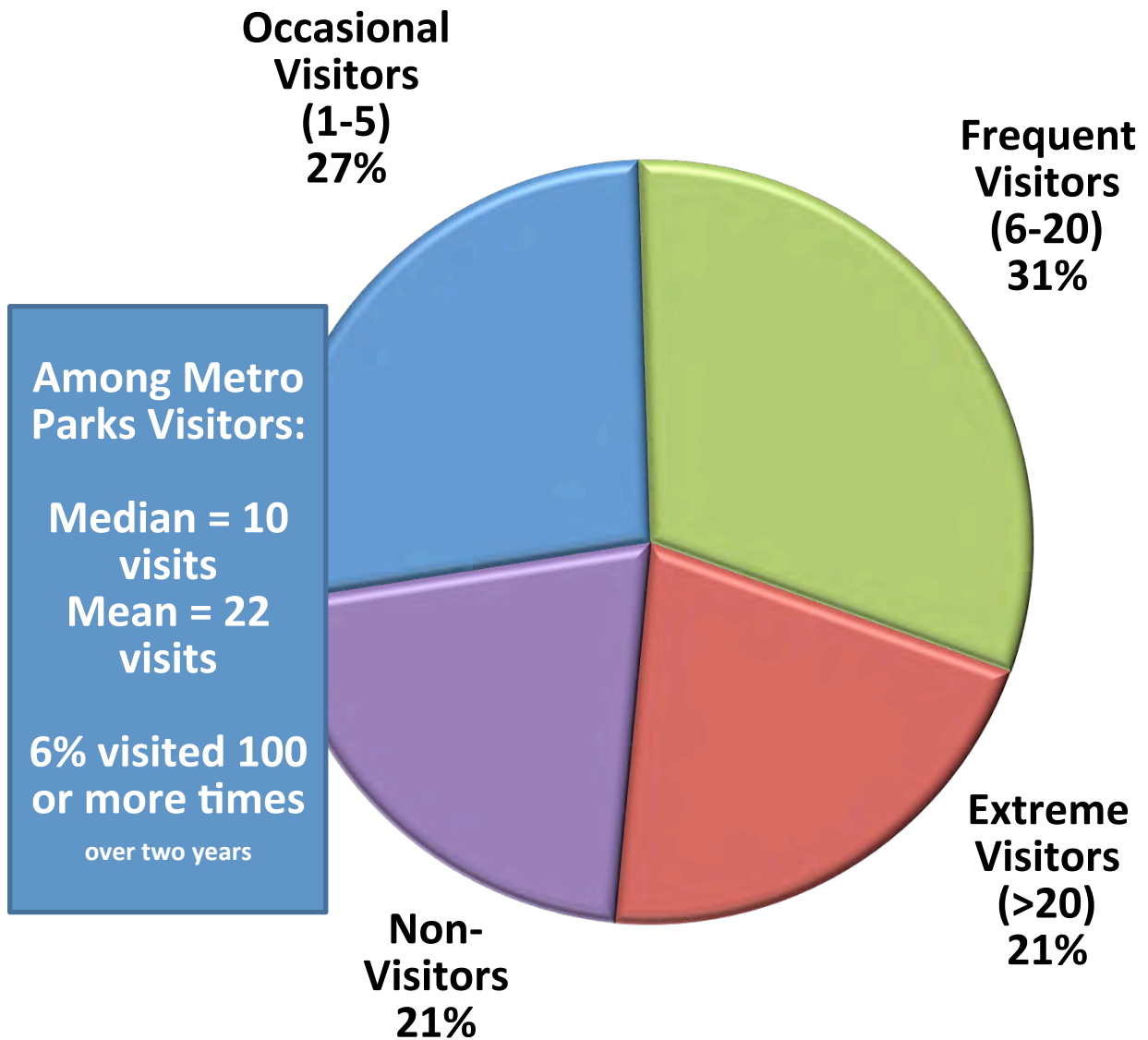
Occasional Visitors (1-5) 27%

Frequent Visitors (6-20) 31%

Among Metro Parks Visitors:

Median = 10 visits
Mean = 22 visits

6% visited 100 or more times over two years

Non-Visitors 21%

Extreme Visitors (>20) 21%

Q27: During the past two years, how many times, in total, have you been to (that Metro Park / those Metro Parks) – approximately?

Extreme Visitors / Non-Visitors

Extreme Visitors tend to be men, residents ages 35 to 54, White residents, and residents who live close to a Metro Park.

	M	F	18-34	35-54	55+	Yes	No	White	A-A	Cbus	Sub	1-5	6-10	>10
% Extreme Visitors	32%	24%	29%	33%	19%	26%	28%	30%	20%	29%	24%	38%	26%	20%
% Non-Visitors	23%	20%	23%	20%	21%	15%	24%	17%	25%	24%	15%	15%	15%	27%

Gender		Age			Child <18		Race		City		Minutes to MP		

Legend: ■ % Extreme Visitors ■ % Non-Visitors

Q27: During the past two years, how many times, in total, have you been to (that Metro Park / those Metro Parks) – approximately?

Non-Visitors tend to be residents with no children at home, African-Americans, and residents who live more than ten minutes from the nearest Metro Park.
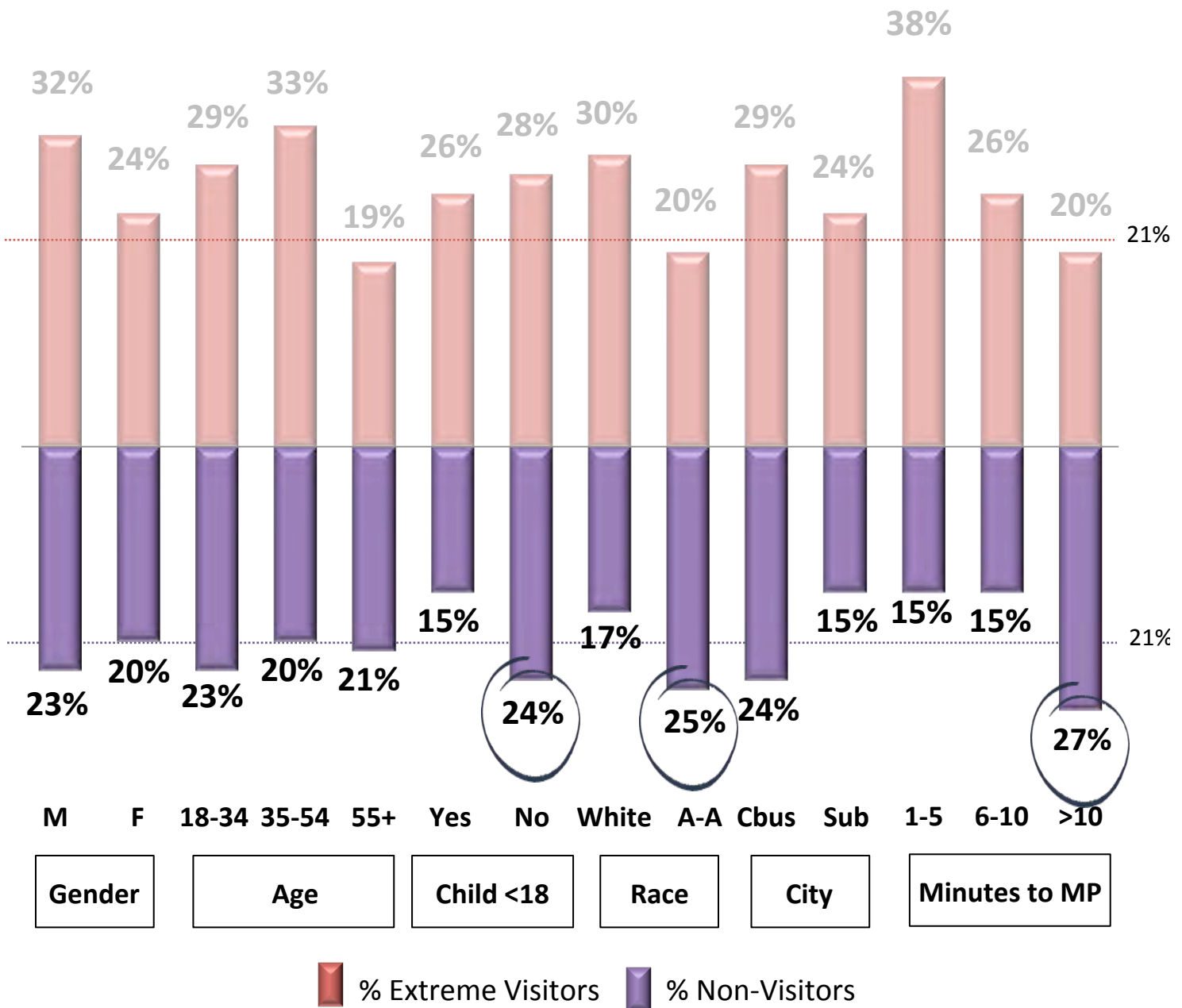
Chart showing % Extreme Visitors (pink) and % Non-Visitors (purple) with a 21% reference line.

Category	Group	% Extreme Visitors	% Non-Visitors
Gender	M	32%	23%
Gender	F	24%	20%
Age	18-34	29%	23%
Age	35-54	33%	20%
Age	55+	19%	21%
Child <18	Yes	26%	15%
Child <18	No	28%	24%
Race	White	30%	17%
Race	A-A	20%	25%
City	Cbus	29%	24%
City	Sub	24%	15%
Minutes to MP	1-5	38%	15%
Minutes to MP	6-10	26%	15%
Minutes to MP	>10	20%	27%

Legend: ■ % Extreme Visitors   ■ % Non-Visitors

Q27: During the past two years, how many times, in total, have you been to (that Metro Park / those Metro Parks) – approximately?

Among all residents, average drive time to the nearest Metro Park is 11 minutes. Drive time and the number of visits are inversely related.

Average Drive Time

All residents	11 min
Visitors	10 min
Non-Visitors	13 min
Occasional	12 min
Frequent	11 min
Extreme	9 min

Q8: If you were to drive to the Metro Park nearest your home, how long would it take you to get there?

— 160 —

Highbanks, Sharon Woods, and Blacklick are the most popular Metro Parks.

Park	Percentage
Highbanks	38%
Sharon Woods	36%
Blacklick Woods	32%
Battelle Darby Creek	26%
Blendon Woods	24%
Inniswood	20%
Scioto Audubon	17%
Three Creeks	14%
Slate Run Park and Farm	11%
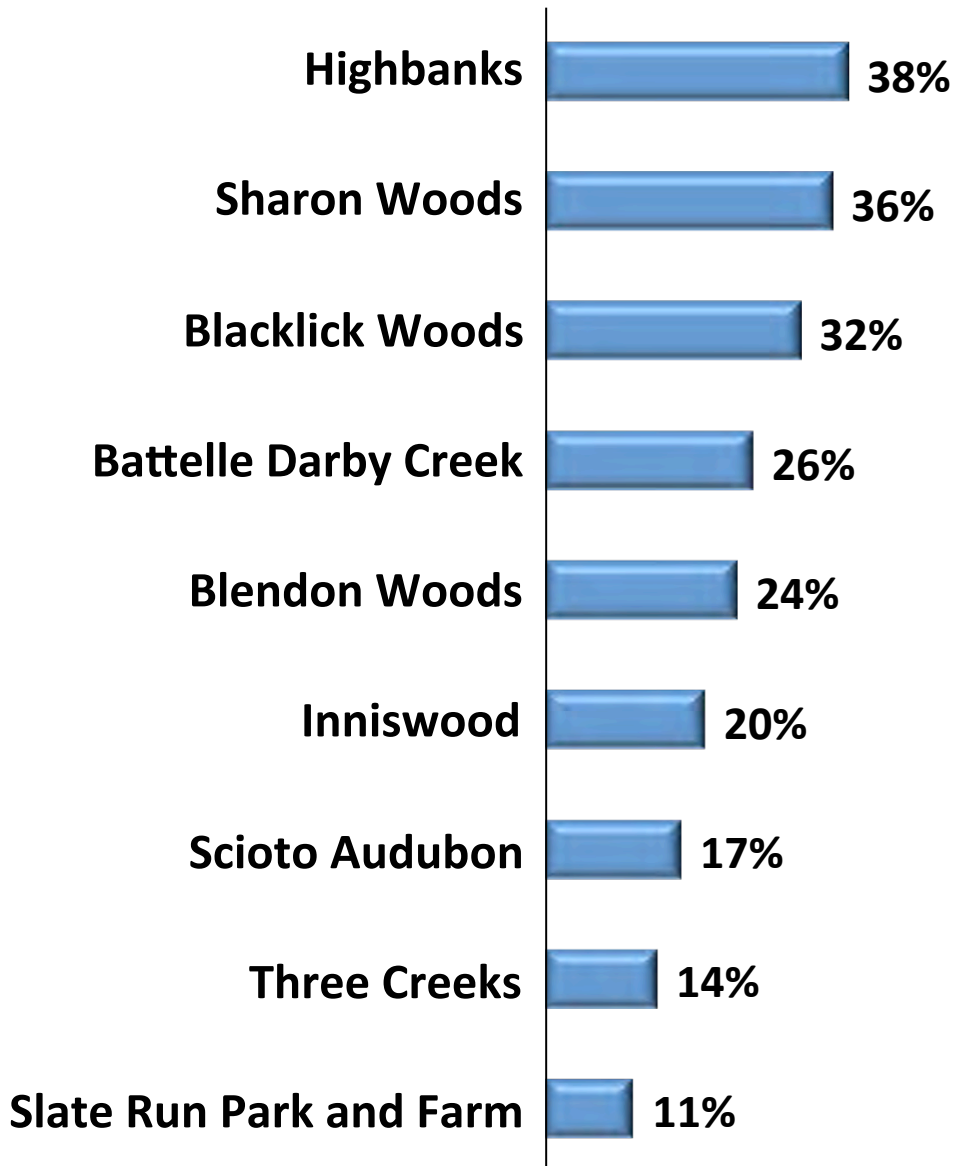
Blacklick and Sharon Woods tend to attract African-Americans. Battelle Darby Creek, Blendon Woods, and Highbanks tend not to.

Blacklick Woods tends to attract older visitors. Scioto Audubon tends to attract younger visitors.

■ Visited in past two years

Q26: During the past two years, which Metro Parks have you been to? (Based on Metro Parks visitors.)

The least popular Metro Parks are Chestnut Ridge, Walnut Woods, Rocky Fork,* Homestead, and Heritage Trail.
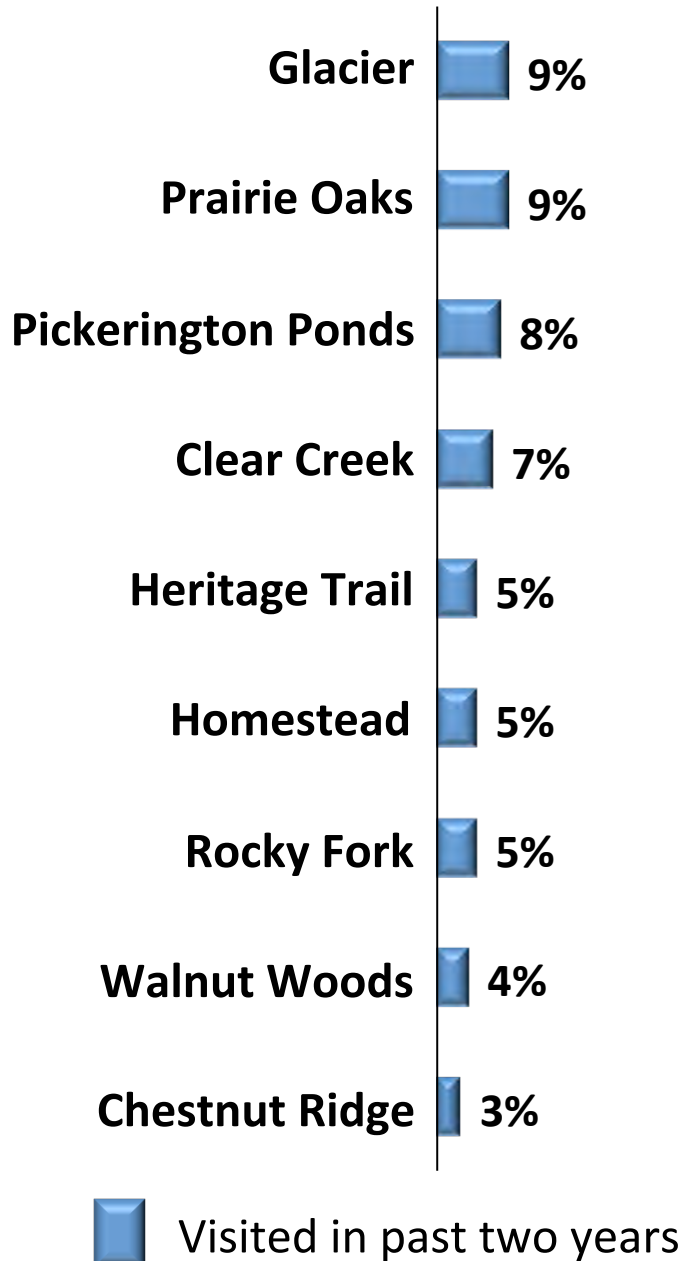
Park	Visited in past two years
Glacier	9%
Prairie Oaks	9%
Pickerington Ponds	8%
Clear Creek	7%
Heritage Trail	5%
Homestead	5%
Rocky Fork	5%
Walnut Woods	4%
Chestnut Ridge	3%

Visited in past two years

Q26: During the past two years, which Metro Parks have you been to? (Based on Metro Parks visitors.)
*Recently opened

Residents who visited a Metro Park were accompanied most often by family.

Family — 55%

Friends — 32%

No one/alone — 11%

Group (e.g., church, scouts) — 6%

Pets — 5%
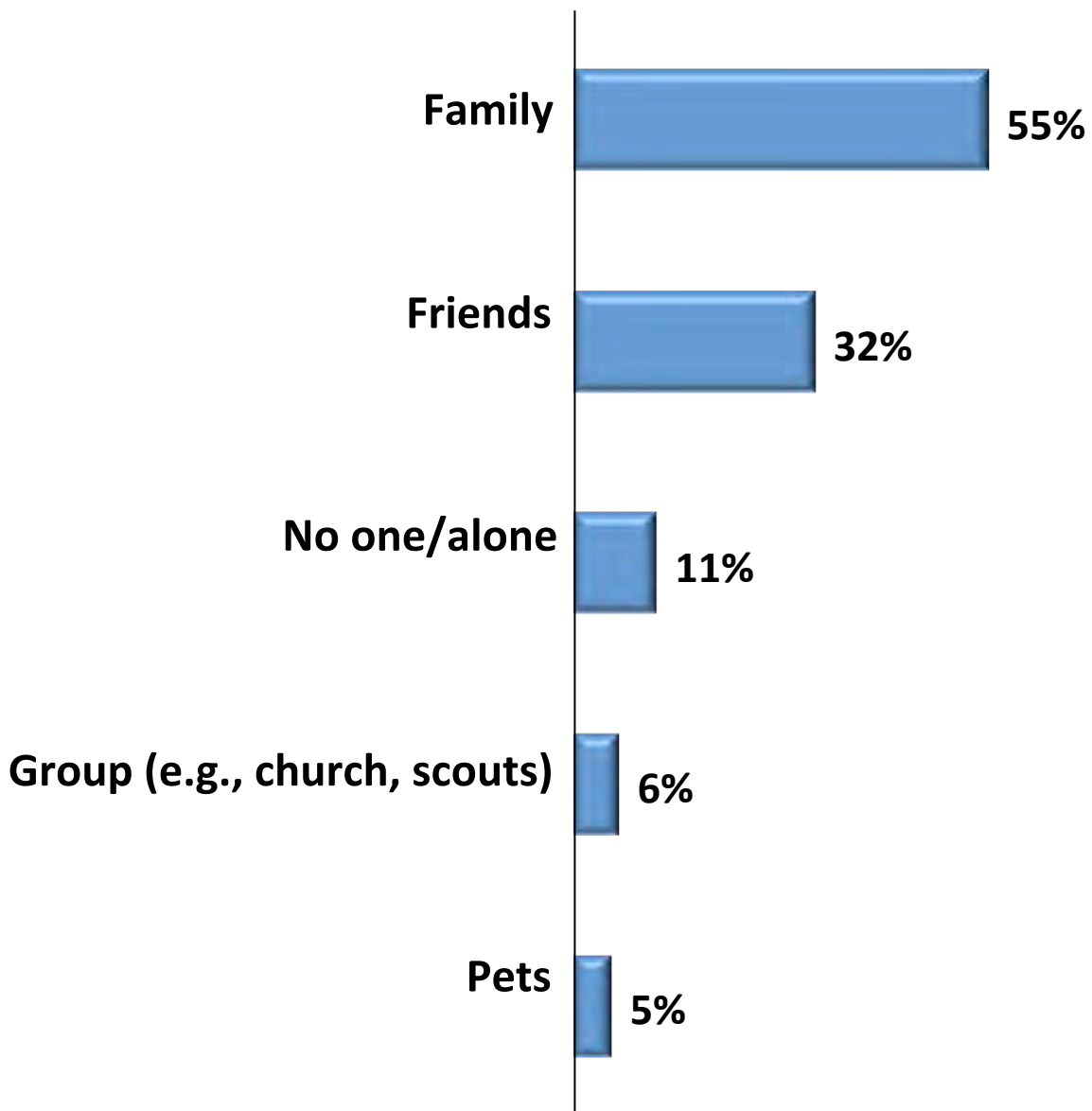
Q30: Who did you go with and what did you do when you got there? (Based on Metro Parks visitors.)

Residents who visited the Metro Parks …
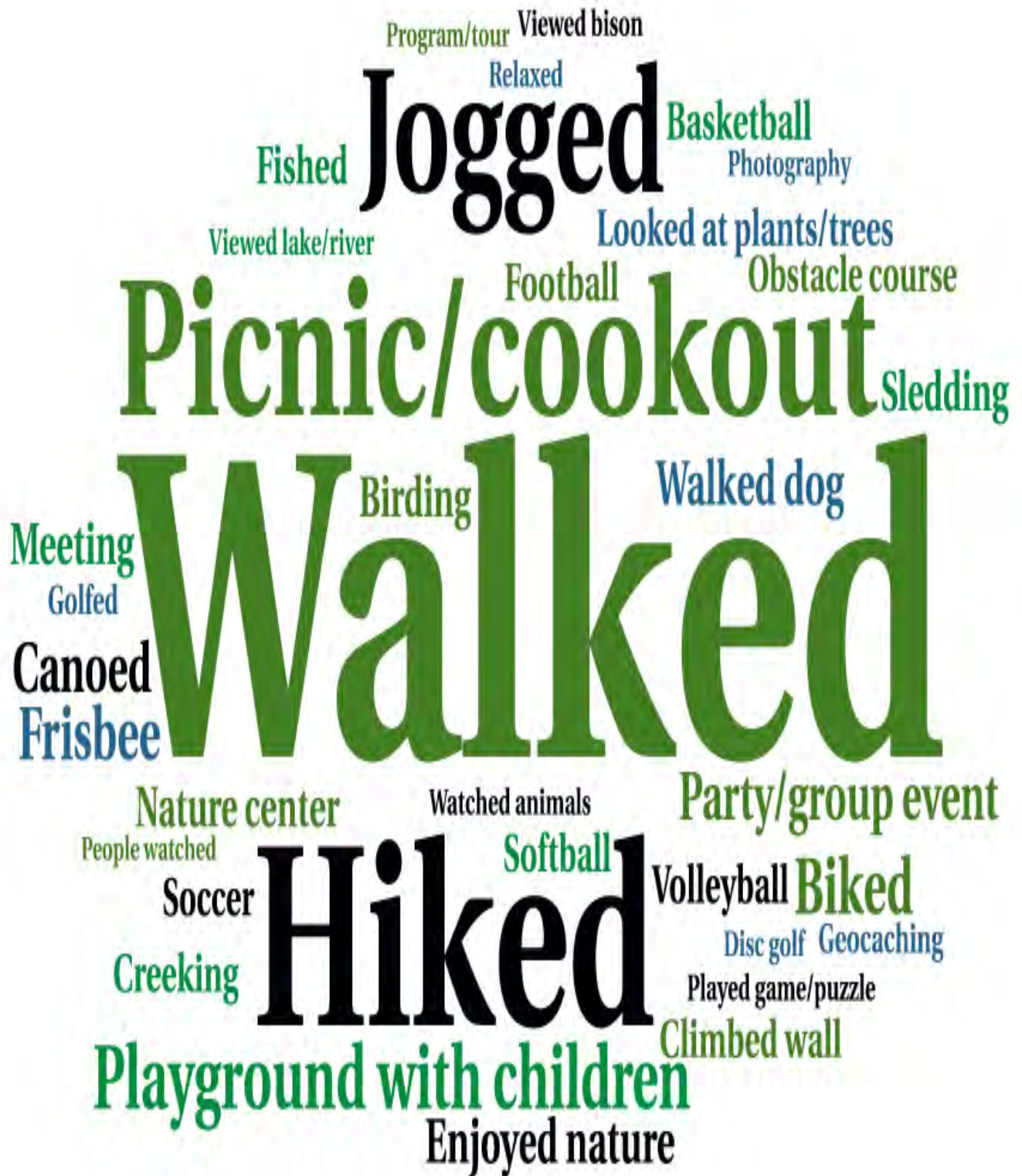
Q30: Who did you go with and what did you do when you got there?

— 164 —

Over the past two years, half the residents had visited more than one Metro Park.

One park
27%

Two parks
22%

None
21%

More than two
30%

Among Metro Parks Visitors:

Mean = 3 parks
Median = 2 parks
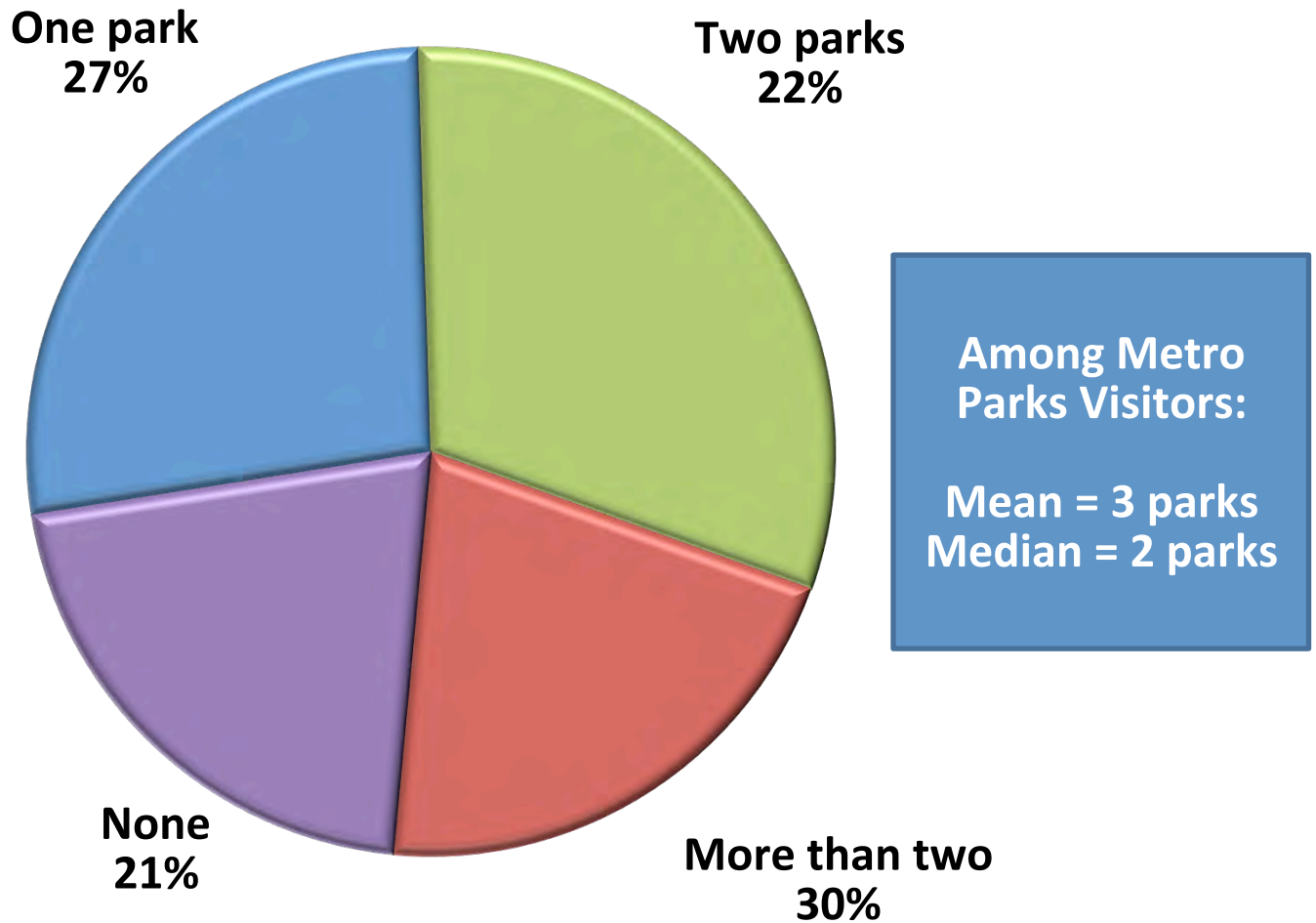
Q26: During the past two years, <u>which</u> Metro Parks have you been to?

Among residents who visited more than one Metro Park, many were attracted by a specific offering.

Park offers something specific/different — 38%

Convenience* — 23%

Like variety/wanted to check out other parks* — 21%

Was invited to a non-Metro Parks event — 16%

13% Prefer trails
6% Prefer scenery
6% River/lake
3% Park program
3% Bison
3% Gardens
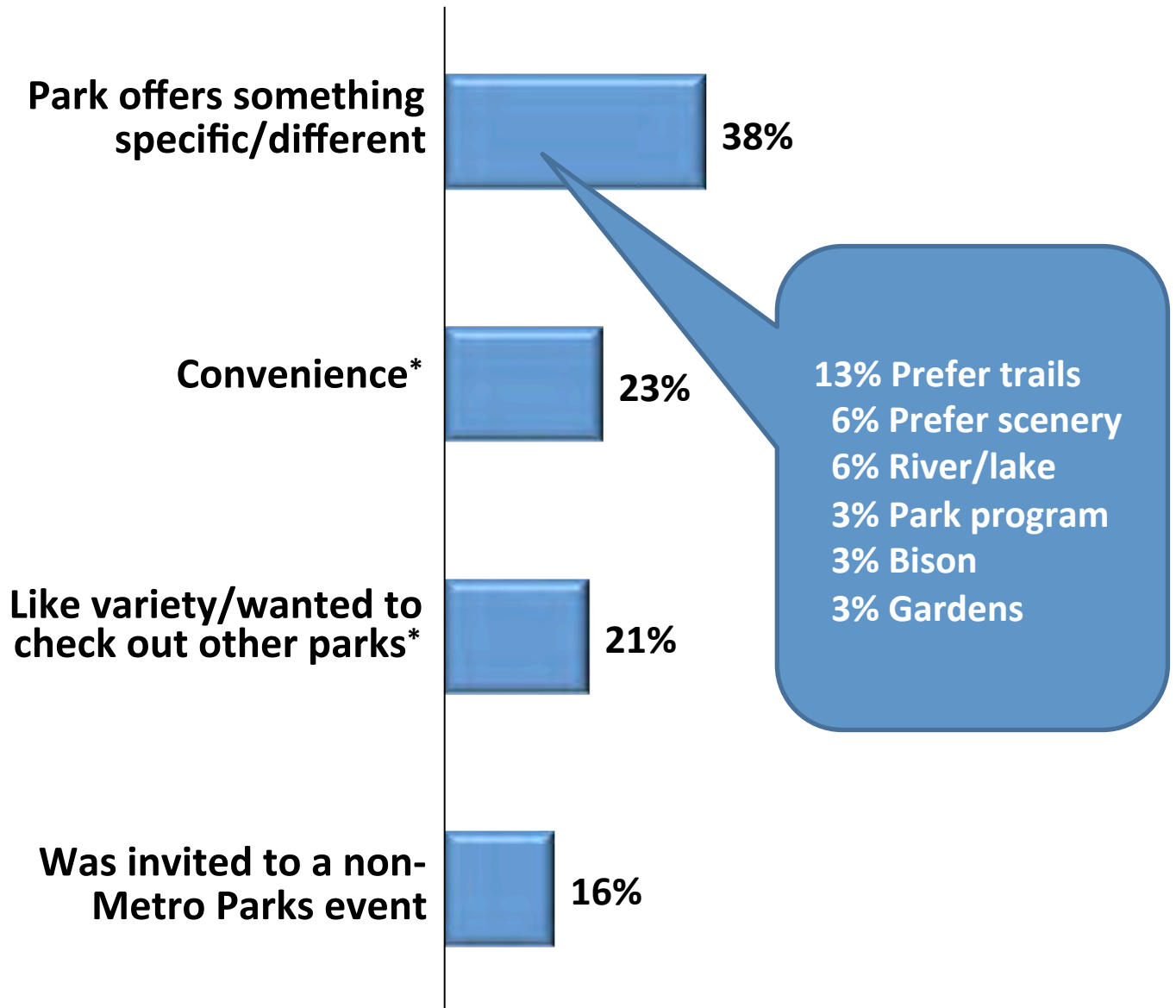
Q31: You mentioned a moment ago that you've visited more than one Metro Park during the past two years. Why is that: In other words, was there something different about each of those parks that drew you to them, was it just convenience, or was there some other reason?
*Response is mutually exclusive.

There's something different about each park. For example, if we want to take a longer hike, we go to Highbanks. We usually go late fall/ early winter because the landscape is nice.

We like the gardens at Inniswood and the prairie at Battelle Darby Creek.

I go to different parks when there are different activities, such as a reunion, cook-out, or family gathering.

I go to Three Creeks for the bike trails. My boyfriend lives near Inniswood.
We went to Darby Creek to see the bison.

We wanted to experience a different park. Darby Creek is just a little more rural and Scioto Audubon has a really good dog park.

We go to the park closest to where we are at the time. It might be near our house or we might be out running errands.

Q31: You mentioned a moment ago that you've visited more than one Metro Park during the past two years. Why is that: In other words, was there something different about each of those parks that drew you to them, was it just convenience, or was there some other reason?

The Metro Parks website is the most popular source of information about the Metro Parks, followed by online searching. Print sources are much less popular.

Source	Percentage
Metro Parks website	26%
Google search	19%
Family, friends	16%
Social media, other online	15%
At the parks	12%
Newspapers, print	10%
TV/radio	8%
Parkscope	7%

53% of residents currently obtain information about the Metro Parks from an online source.
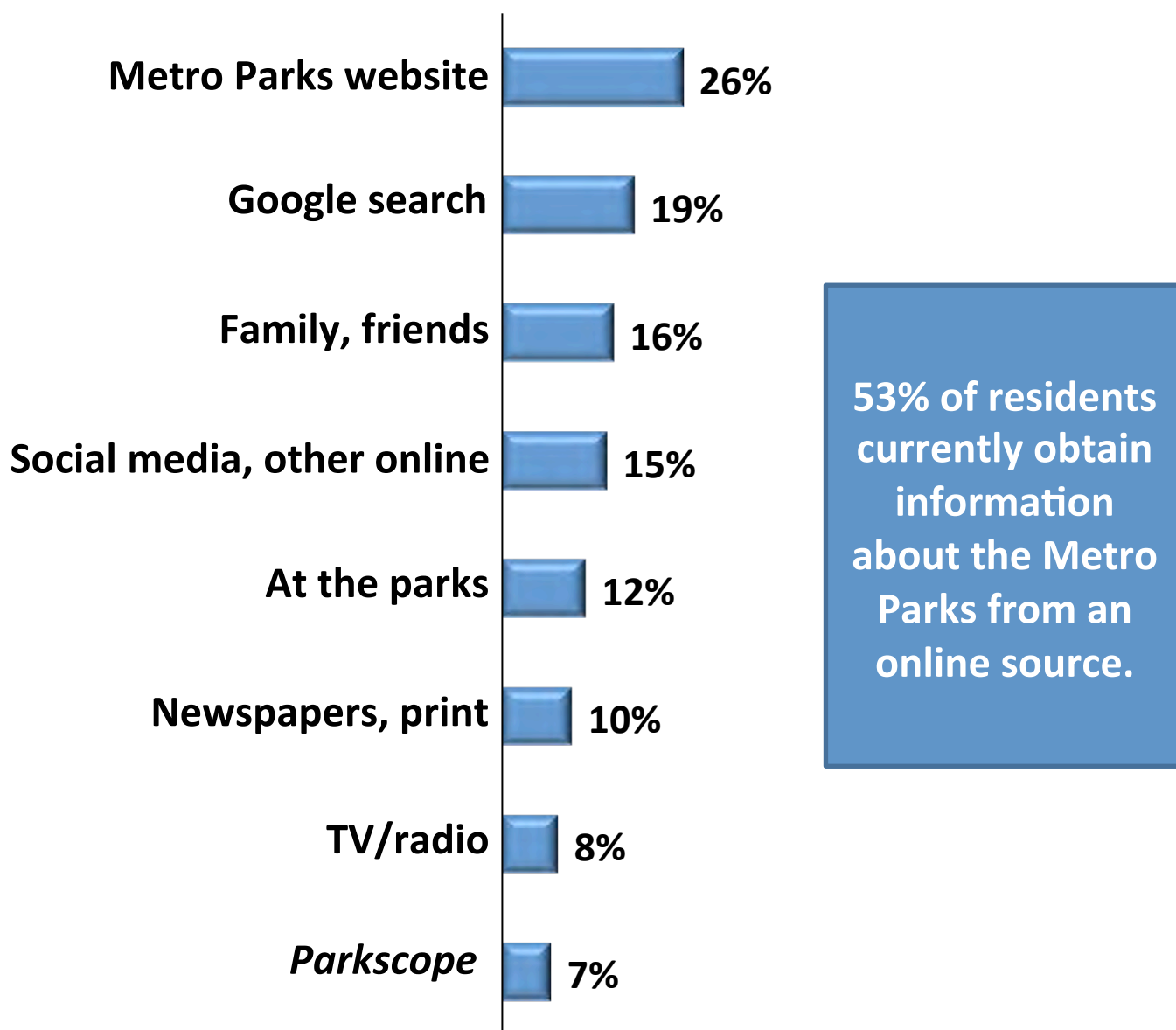
Q32: Where do you get information about the Metro Parks, involving, for example, their programs, events, facilities … and even locations?

For a plurality of residents, the Metro Parks website is the <u>preferred</u> source for information about the parks. Notably, three out of four residents prefer an online source; few prefer print.

Metro Parks website	32%
Google search	19%
Newspapers, online	6%
Newspapers, print	6%
Social media	5%
At the parks	5%
TV/radio	5%
Parkscope	2%

74% of residents prefer an online source; 9% prefer print. The appeal of online sources is age related.

84%   78%   57%

18-34   5-54   55+

% Prefer online
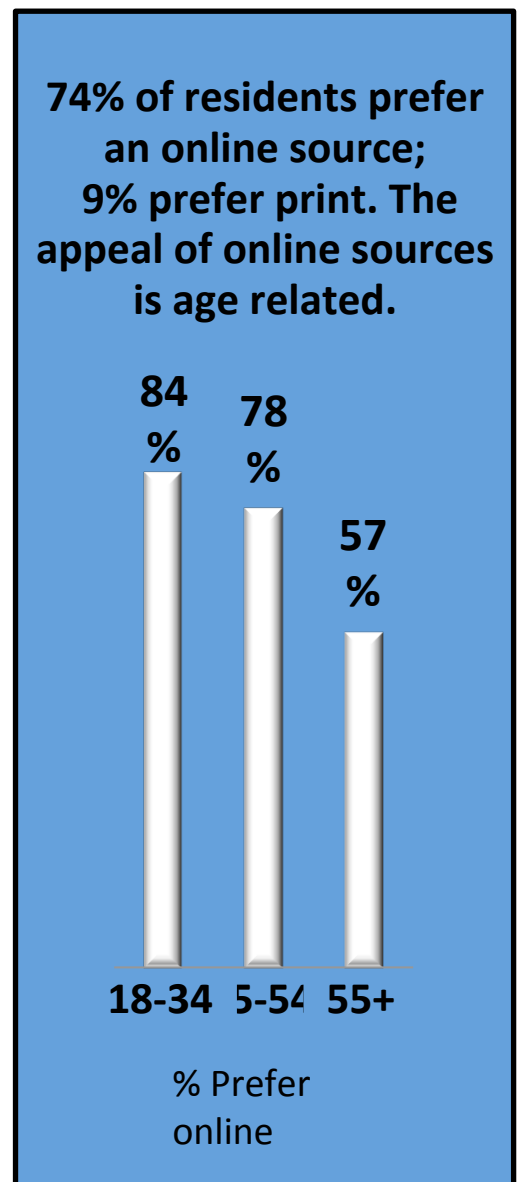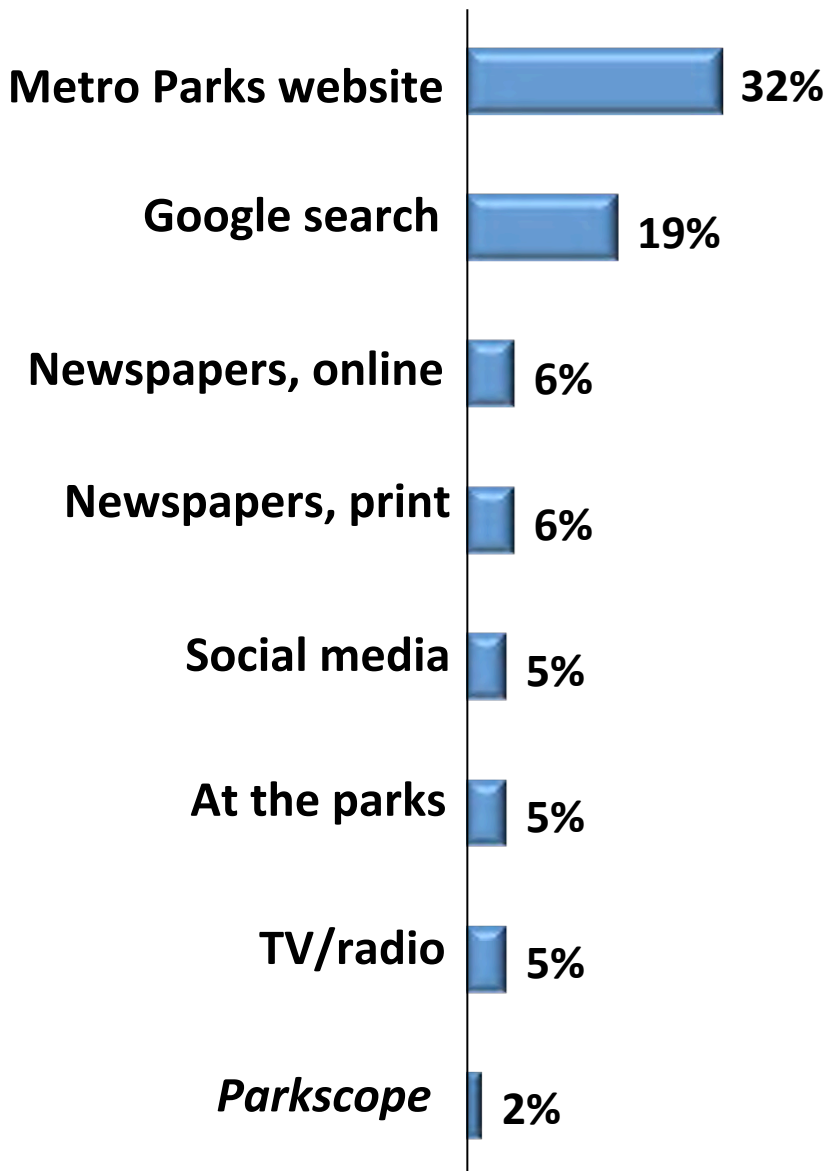
Q33: If there was one … source you could count on for information about the Metro Parks, other than family and friends, what would it be?

Among residents who have <u>not</u> visited a Metro Park during the past two years, the most common reason involves poor health, often age-related. Other non-visitors were unaware of the Metro Parks or were not motivated to visit by the offerings available.

26%	**Poor health**	*It's my age and infirmity. I can't get around much. I've had major sur-geries in the last ten years.*
11%	**Not aware of Metro Parks**	*I do not know they exist or where they are.*
10%	**Limited offerings**	*I have time in the winter, but there usually is not much going on there.*

Q25: Many people tell us they don't visit the Metro Parks (more often) because they're just too busy and don't have the time. Is there some other reason that <u>you</u> haven't visited a Metro Park (during the past two years)?   (NA = 41%)

Priorities

Residents were presented 37 potential enhancements to the Metro Parks and instructed to assign each one a high, medium, or low priority.

Presented one by one in a randomized sequence, the items were grouped into six "buckets" …

Expansion: Greenways, parks in Franklin County, parks in surrounding counties, quiet areas in parks
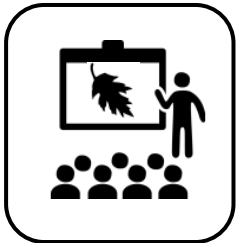
Events: Programs for families, children, adults; outdoor entertainment; in-park competitions; nature tours; water and winter activities; in-depth programs

Trails: Walking, running, hiking, cycling, backpacking, paved, pet friendly, exercise

Technology: Smartphone app, email newsletter, cell phone reception, free Internet, interactive displays

Infrastructure: Flush toilets, nature centers, signage, shelters, parking

Adventure: Kayaks, canoes, bicycles, athletic fields, climbing walls, zip-lines, archery, golf courses

Expansion

For six out of ten residents, more Greenway trails is a high priority.

More Greenway trails	59%
Creating quiet areas	41%
Expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County	34%
Creating new parks in surrounding counties	29%

High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make <u>this</u> a high, medium, or low priority?

— 174 —
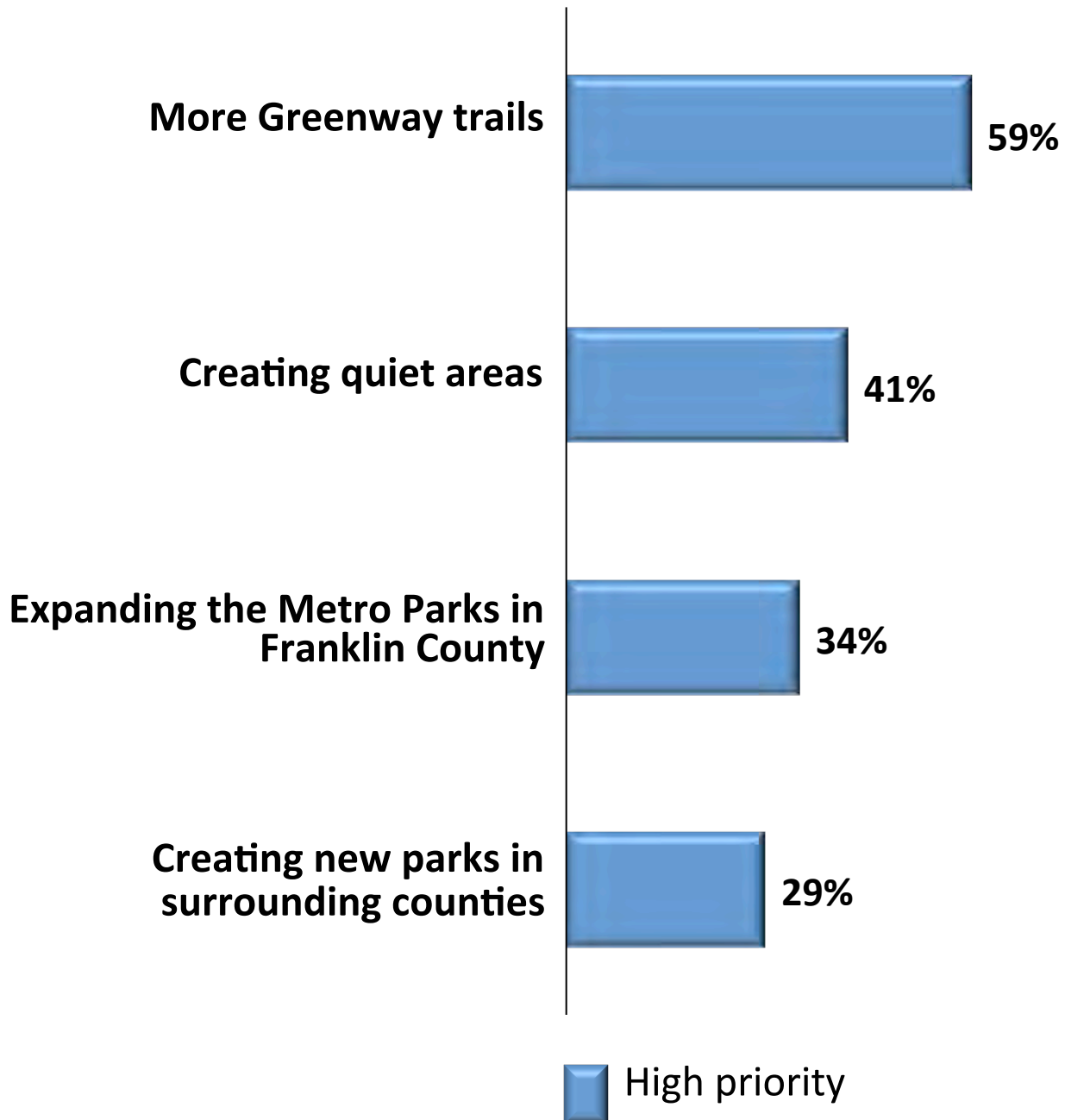
![Expansion icon]

Expanding the parks is especially appealing to the parks' most frequent visitors.

Expansion

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in Household		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Greenway trails (59%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More
Quiet areas (41%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
More land in (34%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	More
New parks out (29%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More

🟩 More interest   🟦 Average interest   🟥 Less interest

For seven out of ten residents, expanding educational programs for children is a high priority.

Category	High priority
Educational programs for children	72%
Family activities	56%
Outdoor entertainment	46%
In-park events, competitions	45%
Water activities, fishing, swimming	42%
Tours led by naturalists	42%
Winter activities	39%
Social activities for adults	37%
In-depth programs	29%
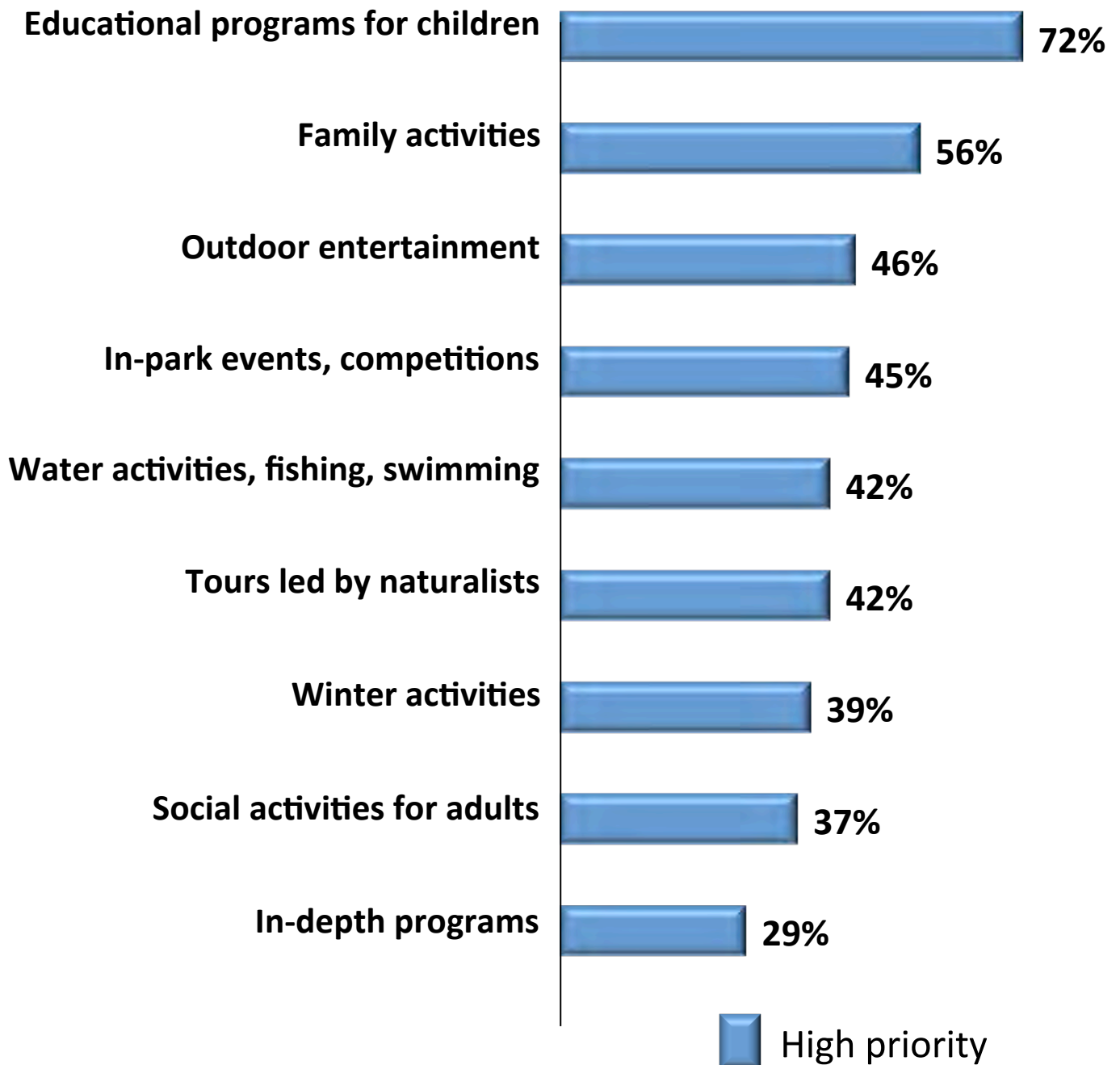
High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?
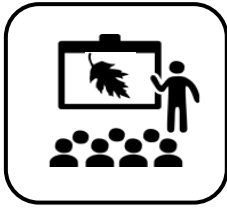
Events

Many of these items are of special interest to African-Americans and parents with children at home.

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in House-hold		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Children's programs (72%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average
Family activities (56%)	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Less	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Less
Outdoor events (46%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Average
In-park competitions (45%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Water activities (42%)	Average	Average	Average	More	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Average
Naturalist tours (42%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Less	Average	More
Winter activities (39%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Adult social activities (37%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	More	More	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average
In-depth programs (29%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Average

Legend: More interest (green) — Average interest (blue) — Less interest (red)
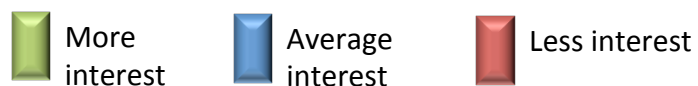
Trails

Roughly six out of ten residents want more trails for walking, running, and hiking.

Trail type	High priority
Walking and running trails	63%
Hiking trails	57%
Pet-friendly trails	49%
Cycling trails	45%
Paved trails	43%
Backpacking trails	31%
Obstacle/exercising trails	31%
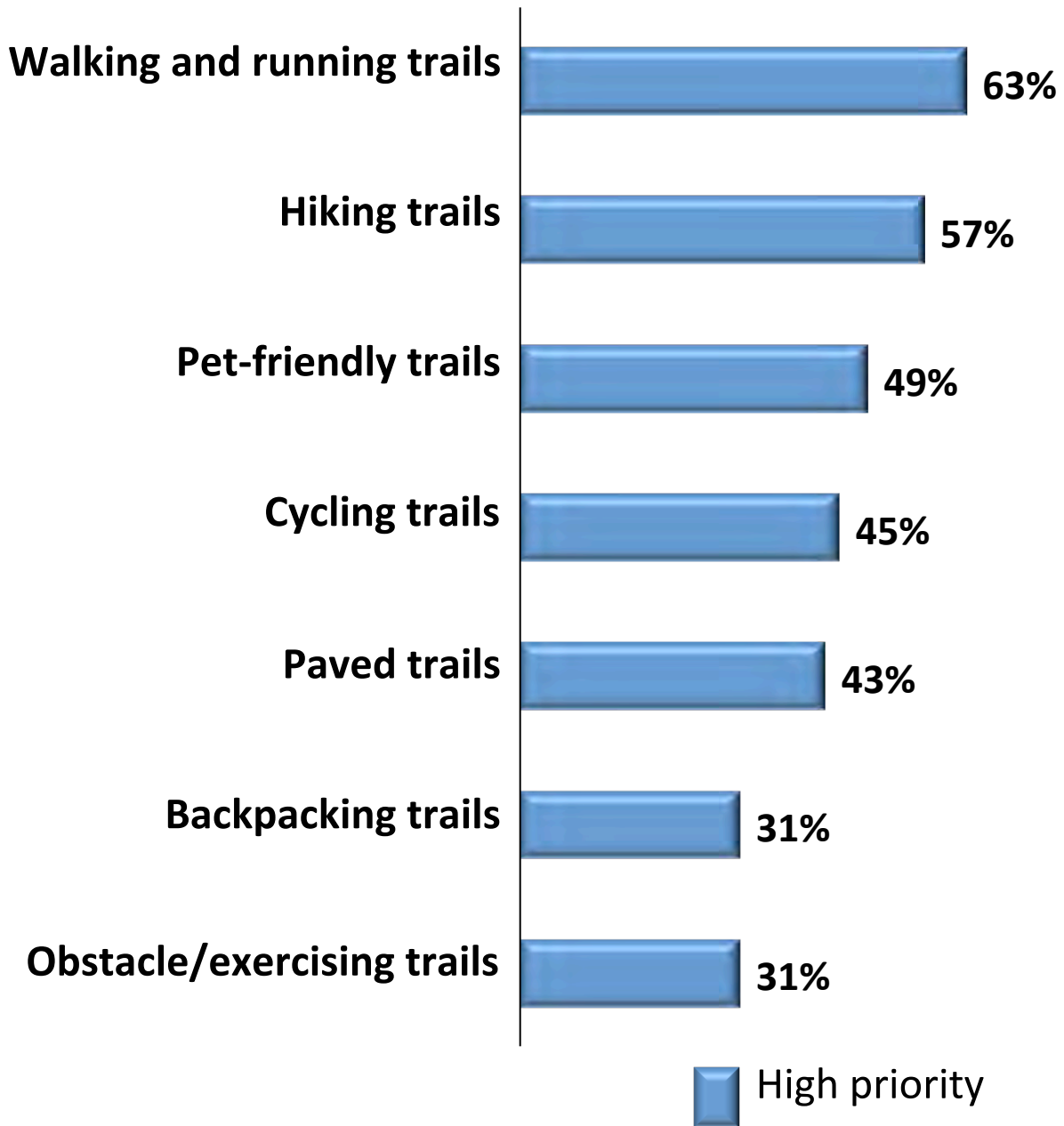
High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Trails

Extreme visitors want more trails for hiking, cycling, and backpacking.

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in House-hold		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Female (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Walking and running (63%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Hiking (57%)	More	Average	Average	Average	Less	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	More
Pet-friendly (49%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average
Cycling (45%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More
Paved (43%)	Less	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Backpacking (31%)	More	Less	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	More
Obstacles/exercising (31%)	Average	Average	Average	More	Less	More	Average	Less	More	More	Less	More	Average	Average	Average

🟩 More interest 🟦 Average interest 🟥 Less interest

Flush toilets dominate the desired enhancements in infrastructure.

Infrastructure

Flush toilets — 63%

Nature centers — 35%

Directional signs — 31%

Picnic shelters — 31%

Parking — 26%
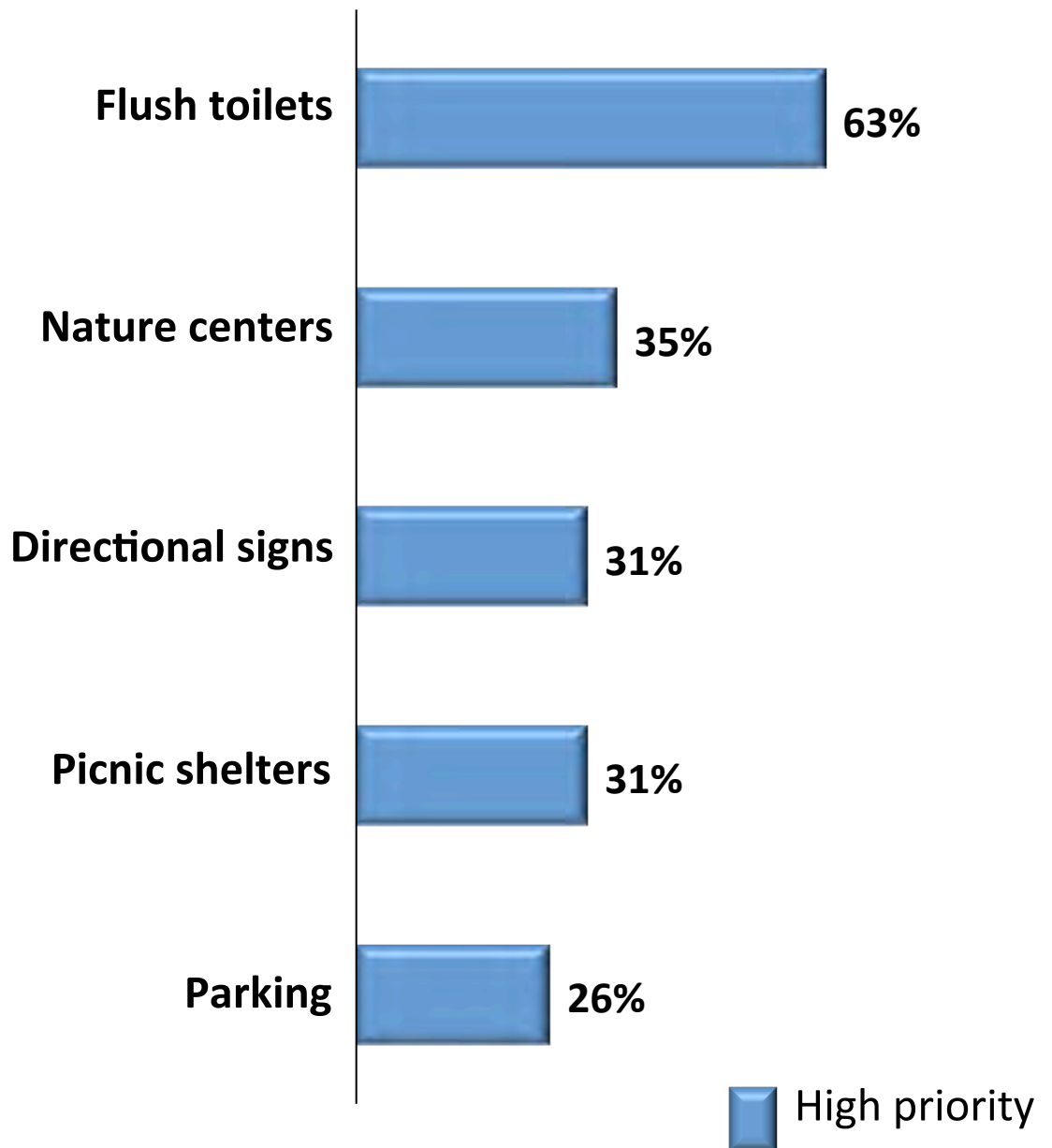
High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

![Infrastructure icon]

Infrastructure

Flush toilets are of special interest to women, older visitors, occasional visitors, and non-visitors. Extreme visitors tend to be less interested in these amenities.

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in House-hold		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Replacing toilets (63%)	🟥	🟩	🟥	🟦	🟩	🟦	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟦	🟥
Nature centers (35%)	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟥	🟦	🟦	🟩	🟦	🟥	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟥
Directional signs (31%)	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟩	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟩	🟦	🟦
Picnic shelters (31%)	🟥	🟩	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟥	🟥
Parking (26%)	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟦	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟦	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟦	🟦

🟩 More interest   🟦 Average interest   🟥 Less interest

Technology

For a majority of residents, a smartphone app and a monthly email newsletter are high priorities.

Smartphone app	56%
Monthly email newsletter	50%
Cell phone reception	40%
Free Internet access	31%
Interactive displays	24%
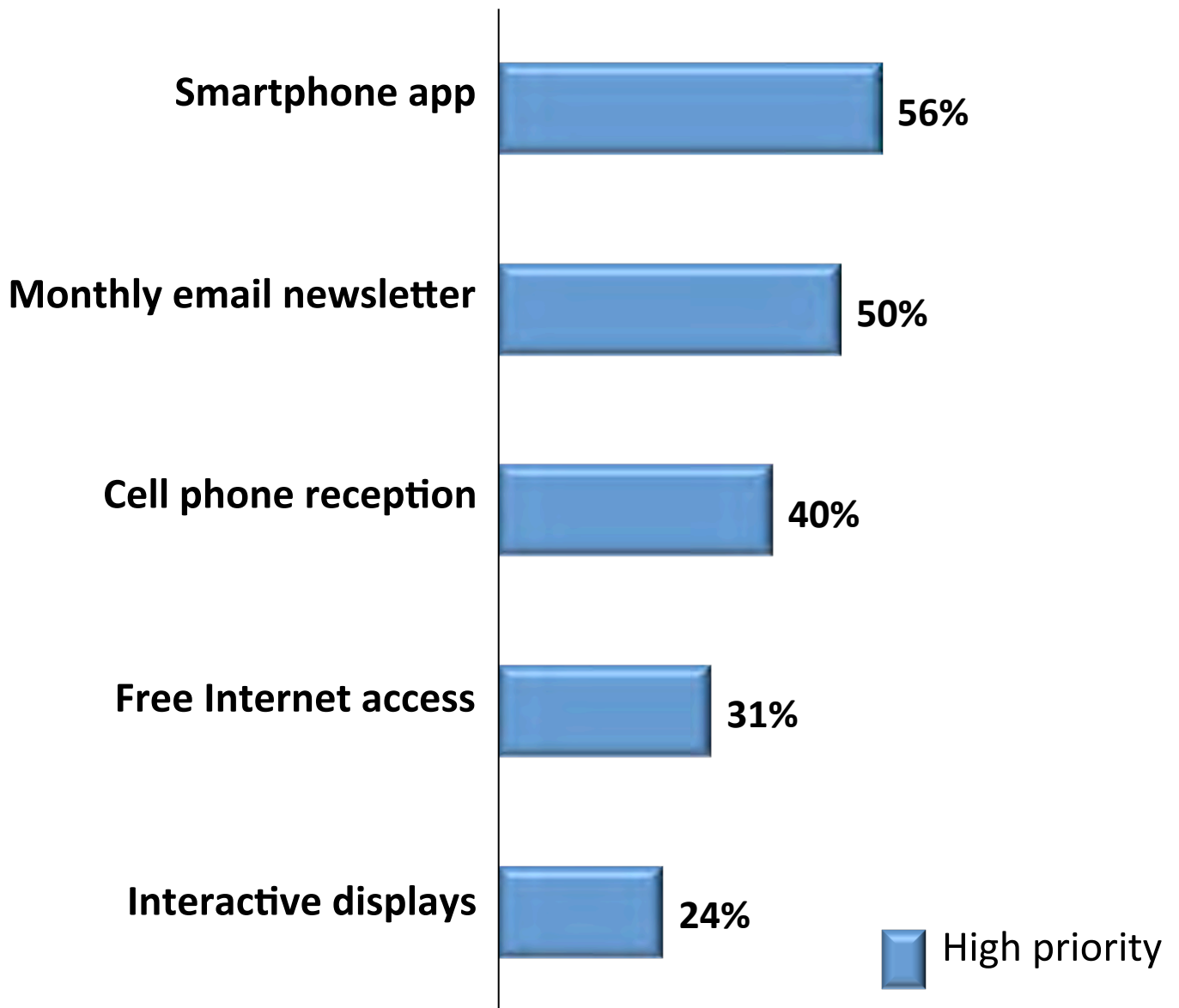
High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Technology enhancements were of special interest to residents ages 35 to 54.

Technology

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in House-hold		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Smartphone app (56%)	Average	Average	Less	More	Less	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	More
Email newsletter (50%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Less	More	Average	Average
Improve cell (40%)	Average	Average	Less	More	Average	More	Less	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Less
Free Internet (31%)	Average	Average	Less	More	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Less
Interactive displays (24%)	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average

Legend: More interest (green) · Average interest (blue) · Less interest (red)

— 183 —

Adventure

In the adventure category, renting bicycles, kayaks, and canoes evoked the most interest, followed by more athletic facilities.
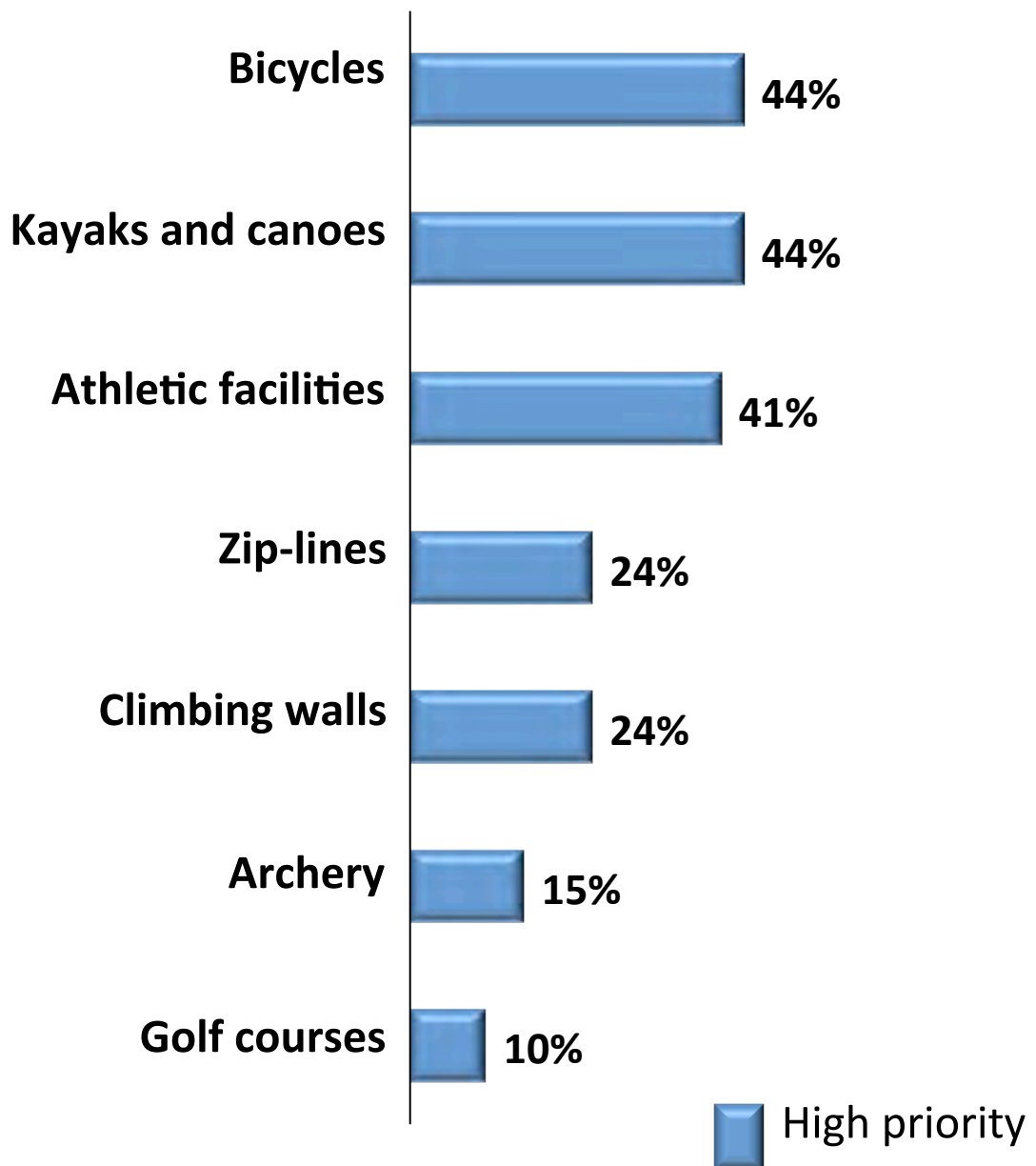
Bicycles — 44%

Kayaks and canoes — 44%

Athletic facilities — 41%

Zip-lines — 24%

Climbing walls — 24%

Archery — 15%

Golf courses — 10%

High priority

Items in this grouping were especially appealing to the youngest cohort and least appealing to the oldest.

Adventure

(High priority %)	Gender		Age			Children in Household		Race		City		Visits to Metro Parks			
	Male (47%)	Fe-male (53%)	18-34 (37%)	35-54 (34%)	55 or older (29%)	Yes (31%)	No (69%)	White (67%)	A-A (20%)	Cbus (67%)	Sub-urban (33%)	None (21%)	Occas (27%)	Freq (31%)	Extrm (21%)
Bicycles (44%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Kayaks/canoes (44%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Less	More	Average
Athletic facilities (41%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Less	Less	More	Average	Average	Less	Average	Average	Less
Zip-lines (24%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Average
Climbing walls (24%)	Average	Average	Average	More	Less	More	Average	Less	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average
Archery (15%)	Average	Average	More	Average	Less	Average	Average	Average	More	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average
Golf courses (10%)	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average	More	Less	Average	Average	Average	Average	Average

Legend: 🟩 More interest   🟦 Average interest   🟥 Less interest

Eight of the 37 items were deemed a high priority by at least half the residents.

Item	High priority
Educational programs for children	72%
Flush toilets	63%
Walking and running trails	63%
Greenway trails	59%
Hiking trails	57%
Family activities	56%
Smartphone app	56%
Monthly email newsletter	50%
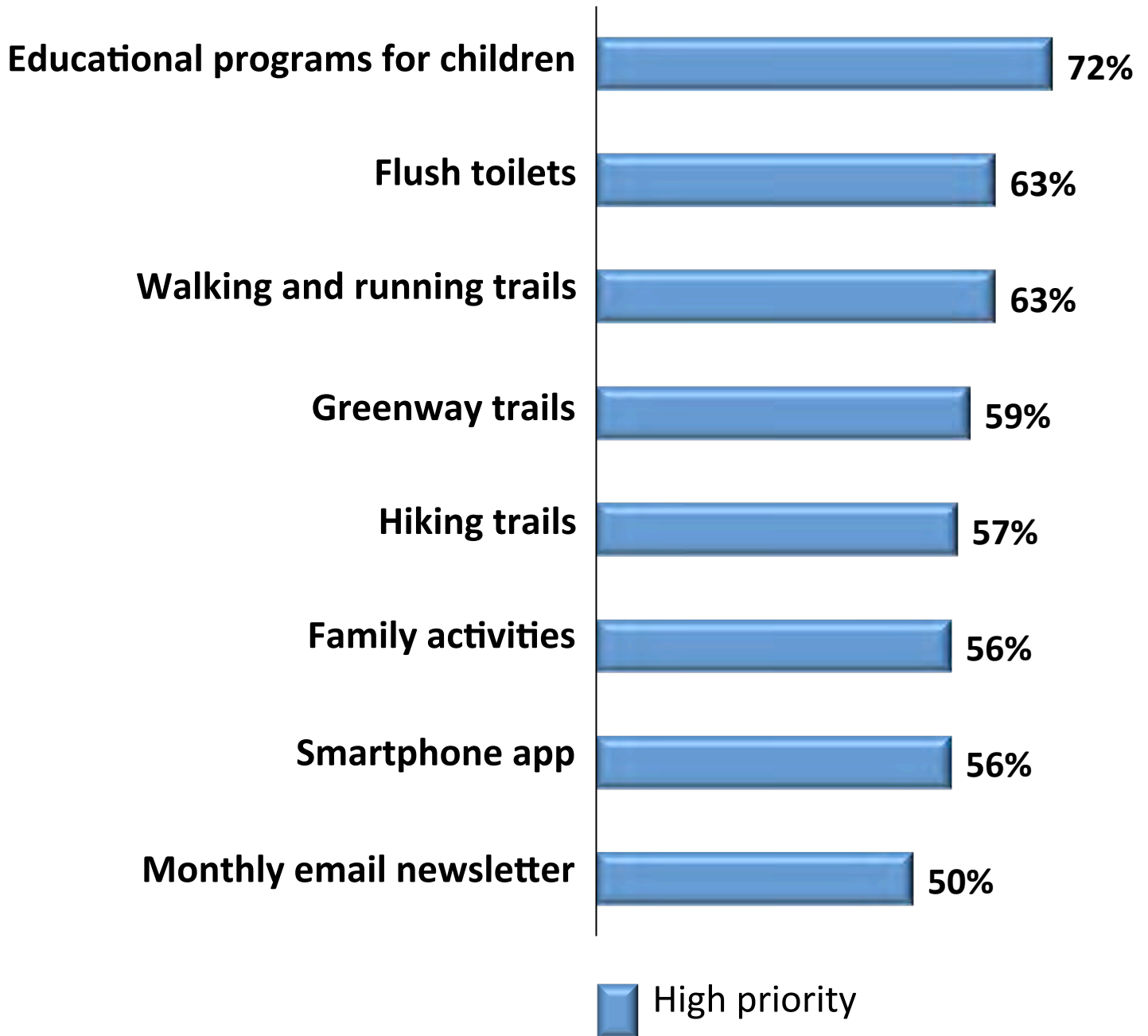
■ High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Another eight were deemed a high priority by only three residents in ten – or fewer.

Creating new parks in surrounding counties — 29%

In-depth programs — 29%

Parking — 26%

Interactive displays — 24%

Zip-lines — 24%

Climbing walls — 24%

Archery — 15%

Golf courses — 10%
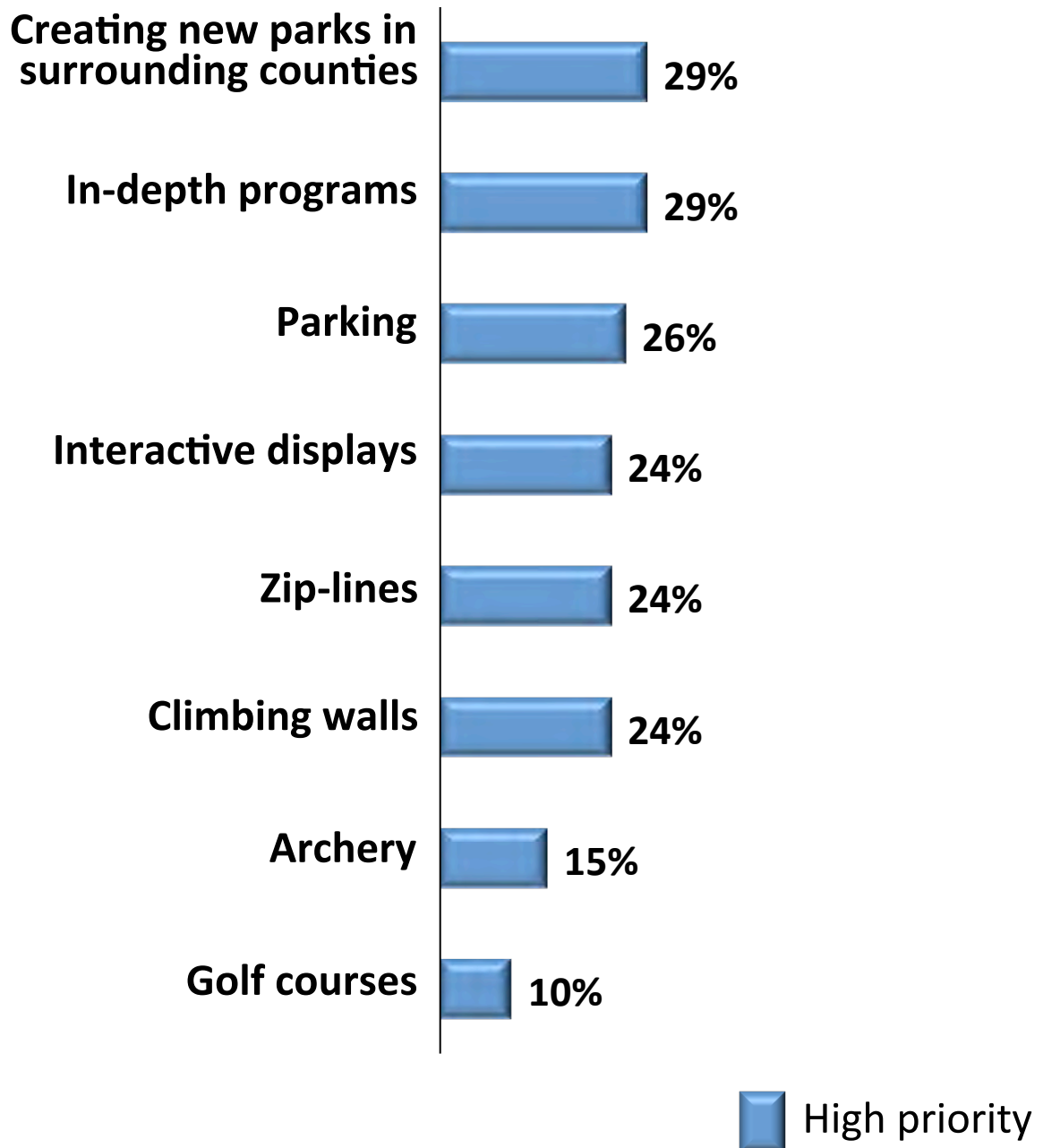
High priority

Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Gender

MALE:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Greenway trails
- Hiking trails
- Walking and running trails
- Family activities

FEMALE:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Flush toilets
- Walking and running trails
- Greenway trails
- Family activities

Bottom Five

- Zip-lines
- Parking*
- Interactive displays*
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Backpacking trails*
- Interactive displays*
- Zip-lines
- Climbing walls
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique across related demographic categories
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Age

18 TO 34:
Top Five

- Ed programs for children
- Greenway trails
- Walking and running trails
- Hiking trails
- In-park competitions

35 TO 54:
Top Five

- Ed programs for children
- Smart app
- Walking and running trails
- Flush toilets
- Family activities

55 OR OLDER:
Top Five

- Flush toilets
- Ed programs for children
- Walking and running trails
- Greenway trails
- Family activities

Bottom Five

- Picnic shelters
- Archery
- Parking*
- Interactive displays*
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Climbing walls*
- Interactive displays*
- Zip-lines
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Exercise trails*
- Zip-lines*
- Climbing walls
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Children Younger Than 18 in Household

CHILDREN:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Family activities
- Flush toilets
- Walking and running trails
- Smart app

NO CHILDREN:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Walking and running trails
- Greenway trails
- Flush toilets*
- Hiking trails*

Bottom Five

- Parking
- In-depth programs
- Backpacking trails
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Interactive displays
- Zip-lines
- Climbing walls
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Race / Ethnicity

WHITE:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- **Greenway trails**
- Walking and running trails
- **Hiking trails**
- Flush toilets

AFRICAN-AMERICAN:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Flush toilets
- **Family activities**
- Walking and running trails
- **Cell phone reception**

Bottom Five

- **Exercise trails***
- Zip-lines*
- **Parking**
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- **Climbing walls**
- Zip-lines
- **Backpacking trails**
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique
Q: Should the Metro Parks make <u>this</u> a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: City

COLUMBUS:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Flush toilets
- Walking and running trails
- Greenway trails
- Family activities

SUBURB:
Top Five

- Educational programs for children
- Walking and running trails
- Hiking trails
- Flush toilets
- Greenway trails

Bottom Five

- New parks in surrounding cities*
- Interactive displays*
- Climbing walls
- Zip-lines
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Parking
- Climbing walls
- Interactive displays
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Visits to Metro Parks

NON-VISITORS:
Top Five

- **Educational programs for children**
- **Flush toilets**
- **Walking and running trails**
- **Family activities**
- **Greenway trails**

Bottom Five

- **Backpacking trails**
- **Climbing walls**
- **Zip-lines**
- **Archery**
- **Golf courses**

*Tied
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Priorities: Visits to Metro Parks

OCCASIONAL:
Top Five†

- Ed programs for children
- Flush toilets
- Family activities
- Walking and running trails

FREQUENT:
Top Five

- Ed programs for children
- Flush toilets
- Family activities*
- Smart app*
- Walking and running trails*

EXTREME:
Top Five

- Ed programs for children*
- Greenway trails*
- Walking and running trails
- Hiking trails
- Smart app

Bottom Five

- Backpacking trails
- Interactive displays
- Zip-lines
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Interactive displays
- Climbing walls
- Parking
- Archery
- Golf courses

Bottom Five

- Climbing walls
- Zip-lines
- Parking
- Archery
- Golf courses

*Tied; items highlighted in yellow are unique / †Three additional items tied for fifth place
Q: Should the Metro Parks make this a high, medium, or low priority?

Summary Tabulations

The 2016 Metro Parks Survey
(n = 604)*

1. Hello. May I speak with_____, please?

2. Hello, (Mr. / Ms.)_____?

3. My name is   .   I'm calling from Saperstein Associates, an opinion research firm here in Central Ohio. We are conducting a confidential survey about important issues in your community – and you have been randomly selected to participate.This is not a sales call; we are interested only in your opinions. Is this a convenient time to conduct an interview? I need about ten minutes.

4. I'd like to begin this interview by reading a short list of destinations in the Central Ohio area that residents go to for entertainment or recreation. As I read each one, tell me if your overall impressions of it are very favorable, somewhat favorable, somewhat unfavorable, or very unfavorable, don't know/refused. Okay? Here's the first one ...

	VF	SF	SU	VU	DK RF
a. The Columbus Zoo and Aquarium	80%	12%	3%	1%	4%
e. COSI	61%	28%	2%	1%	8%
c. The Metro Parks	57%	30%	3%	1%	9%
b. Franklin Park Conservatory	54%	30%	2%	1%	13%
d. Columbus Commons, the park downtown where City Center was	5%	41%	7%	4%	23%

SOURCE: Saperstein Associates, Inc., March 2016, 16001

5. These next few questions involve the Metro Parks, which, as you probably know, include the following 18 parks: Battelle Darby Creek, Blacklick Woods, Blendon Woods, Chestnut Ridge, Clear Creek, Glacier Ridge, Heritage Trail, Highbanks, Homestead, Inniswood Metro Gardens, Pickerington Ponds, Prairie Oaks, Rocky Fork, Scioto Audubon, Sharon Woods, Slate Run Park and Farm, Three Creeks, and Walnut Woods. If you've never been to a Metro Park, feel free to base your answers on whatever you've heard or read about them. Now, first, I'd like you to rate the Metro Parks on each of the following items, choosing from excellent, good, just fair, or poor. Okay? Let's begin with ...

		Exc	Good	Just Fair	Poor	DK RF
e.	The training, judgment, and behavior of park rangers	32%	38%	9%	2%	19%
b.	The variety of programs and events available to park visitors	30%	44%	15%	2%	9%
a.	The hours the parks are open	29%	55%	11%	1%	4%
g.	The upkeep of the picnic and play areas	29%	54%	11%	1%	5%
f.	The directional, or way-finding, signs throughout the parks	28%	50%	14%	2%	6%
d.	The number of picnic shelters	20%	49%	19%	3%	9%
h.	The accommodations for visitors with disabilities	18%	44%	15%	2%	21%
c.	The condition of the restrooms	16%	41%	25%	8%	10%

6. When it comes to crime and other dangerous behavior, are the Metro Parks very safe, somewhat safe, somewhat unsafe, or very unsafe?

    - 39% Very safe
    - 49% Somewhat safe
    - 6% Somewhat unsafe
    - <1% Very unsafe
    - 3% Depends on the park
    - 3% DK / R

7. Now, for each of the following statements about the Metro Parks, tell me if you agree strongly, agree moderately, disagree moderately, or disagree strongly. Okay? Here's the first one ...

	AS	AM	DM	DS	DKRF
d. The Metro Parks have a welcoming atmosphere	64%	30%	2%	1%	3%
a. The Metro Parks offer something for everyone regardless of age	57%	35%	3%	2%	3%

b. Information about the programs, events, and activities

at the Metro Parks is easy to find   40%   39%   12%   5%   4%

d. Some Metro Parks have so many visitors, it makes
the experience less enjoyable   7%   24%   41%   25%   3%

8. If you were to drive to the Metro Park nearest your home, how long would it take you to get there?

29%	Five minutes or less
32%	Six to 10 minutes
35%	More than 10 minutes
4%	DK / RF
11	Mean
10	Median

9. The Metro Parks are funded, in part, with property taxes – about two dollars a month for every $100,000 a home is worth. Do you consider this expensive, reasonable, or a bargain?

4%	Expensive
60%	Reasonable
35%	Bargain
1%	DK / RF

10.   If the Metro Parks could do one thing to improve the experience of visitors like you, what would it be?

16%	**Infrastructure (net)**
4%	More shelters
2%	Have courts (e.g., tennis, volleyball)
2%	More or better way-finding signs / maps
2%	More parking
6%	Other comments about infrastructure
11%	**Programs (net)**
6%	More programs, not specified
2%	Programs for kids
3%	Other comments about programs
9%	**Trails (net)**
2%	More hiking trails
2%	More trails, not specified
5%	Other comments about trails
5%	**Pet related (net)**
2%	Dog friendly, not specified
2%	More trails for dogs
1%	Area for unleashed dogs
5%	**Restrooms (net)**
4%	Cleaner restrooms
1%	Other comments about restrooms
3%	**Activities (net)**
33%	**Other (net)**
10%	More commercials or ads about parks / programs
4%	Safer, not specified
3%	Better hours
3%	Consideration of disabled / older people
3%	More rangers / ranger presence
11%	Other comments

27% DK / RF / Nothing

11. Looking ahead, tell me if the Metro Parks should make each of the following a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one ...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
c.	Building more Greenway trails, which link parks and neighborhoods throughout Franklin Country, are paved, often runalong waterways, and are not used by motor vehicles	59%	32%	9%	<1%
d.	Creating quiet areas in the parks for reading, listening to and watching wildlife, or just sitting and contemplating	41%	40%	18%	1%
b.	Expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County by acquiring more land	34%	38%	27%	1%
a.	Creating new parks in the counties surrounding Franklin County	28%	40%	30%	2%

1.6 Average number of high priority items

12. And, which of those should be given the highest priority?

44% Building more Greenway trails, which link parks and neighborhoods throughout Franklin County, are paved, often run along waterways, and are not used by motor vehicles
14% Creating quiet areas in the parks for reading, listening to and watching wildlife, or just sitting and contemplating
13% Expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County by acquiring more land 8% Creating new parks in the counties surrounding Franklin County
<1% DK / RF
21% None given a high priority

(SHUFFLE QUESTIONS 13/14, 15/16, 17/18, 19/20, 21/22 AND THE ITEMS WITHIN EACH BATTERY)

13. Here are some other options. Again, as I read each one, tell me if the Metro Parks should make it a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one ...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
d.	Creating a Smartphone app that describes the parks' plants and animals for visitors taking self-guided tours and features maps of all Metro Parks' trails	55%	33%	11%	<1%
e.	Creating a monthly email newsletter with information about programs, events, and activities, as well as other news involving the Metro Parks		36%	14%	<1%
a.	Improving cell phone reception throughout the parks	40%	27%	32%	1%

b.   Providing free Internet access . . . . 31%   26%   43%   <1%

c.   Creating digital, interactive displays and exhibits in the
nature centers 24%   42%   33%   1%

2.0 Average number of high priority items

14. And, which of these should be given the highest priority?

    30%   Creating a Smartphone app that describes the parks' plants and animals for visitors
          taking self-guided tours and features maps of all Metro Parks' trails
    22%   Creating a monthly email newsletter with information about programs, events, and
          activities, as well as other news involving the Metro Parks
    16%   Improving cell phone reception throughout the parks
     9%   Providing free Internet access
     6%   Creating digital, interactive displays and exhibits in the nature centers

     1%   DK / RF
    16%   None given a high priority

15.   As you probably know, the Metro Parks have different types of trails. As I mention each type, tell me if creating
      more of them should be a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one ...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
c.	Trails for walking and running	62%	31%	6%	1%
e.	Trails for hiking	56%	34%	9%	1%
a.	Trails that are pet-friendly	48%	38%	13%	1%

		High	Medium	Low	DK/RF
b.	Trails for cycling	45%	37%	17%	1%
f.	Trails that are paved	42%	38%	19%	1%
d.	Trails for backpacking	30%	46%	22%	2%
g.	Trails equipped with obstacles or stations primarily for exercising	30%	37%	32%	1%

3.1 Average number of high priority items

16. And, which of these should be given the highest priority?

...... 49%

20% Trails for walking and running
17% Trails for hiking
16% Trails that are paved
15% Trails that are pet-friendly
10% Trails equipped with obstacles or stations primarily for exercising
10% Trails for cycling2% Trails for backpacking
 1% DK / RF
 9% None given a high priority

17. This next list has some different options. And, again, as I read each one, tell me if the Metro Parks should make it a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
c.	Replacing pit toilets with flush-toilets	62%	25%	12%	1%
d.	Building more nature centers for indoor, park-sponsored, events and programs	35%	46%	19%	<1%
e.	Improving the directional, or way-finding, signs	31%	43%	25%	1%
b.	Building more picnic shelters	30%	43%	26%	1%

a. Increasing the amount of parking 26%   40%   33%   1%

  1.8 Average number of high priority items

18. And, which of these should be given the highest priority?

    42% Replacing pit toilets with flush-toilets
    15% Building more nature centers for indoor, park-sponsored, events and programs
     9% Building more picnic shelters
     9% Improving the directional, or way-finding, signs
     6% Increasing the amount of parking
    <1% DK / RF
    19% None given a high priority

19. Now, listen to these options. Again, as I read each one, tell me if the Metro Parks should make it a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one ...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
g.	Renting kayaks and canoes	44%	41%	14%	1%
e.	Renting bicycles	43%	39%	17%	<1%
c.	Adding athletic facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, baseball diamonds, and soccer fields	40%	32%	27%	<1%
a.	Adding climbing walls	24%	40%	35%	1%
f.	Adding zip-lines	24%	31%	43%	2%
d.	Adding archery	15%	32%	51%	2%
b.	Adding golf courses	10%	20%	69%	<1%

  2.0 Average number of high priority items

20. And, which of these should be given the highest priority?
    21%   Adding athletic facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, baseball
          diamonds, and soccer fields
    20%   Renting bicycles
    19%   Renting kayaks and canoes
    7%   Adding zip-lines
    4%   Adding climbing walls
    2%   Adding archery
    2%   Adding golf courses

    <1%   DK / RF
    24%   None given a high priority

21. Here are some other options. Again, as I read each one, tell me if the Metro Parks should make it a high, medium, or low priority. Okay? Here's the first one ...

		High	Medium	Low	DK RF
a.	Expanding educational programs for children	72%	24%	4%	<1%
f.	Offering more activities specifically for families	55%	37%	7%	1%
d.	Offering more outdoor entertainment, such as concerts, live theater, and movies	46%	32%	22%	<1%
c.	Sponsoring more in-park events and competitions, such as mud runs, dog festivals, hikes, and fitness challenges	44%	38%	17%	<1%
b.	Offering additional tours about plants and animals led by naturalists	42%	45%	12%	1%
e.	Offering more water activities, such as fishing, swimming, and scuba diving	42%	34%	23%	1%
g.	Offering more winter activities	39%	41%	19%	1%
h.	Offering more social activities where adults of similar ages and interests might meet each other	37%	39%	24%	<1%
i.	Offering programs on common topics specifically for visitors with deeper, more serious interests	28%	54%	17%	1%

    4.1   Average number of high priority items

22. And, which of these should be given the highest priority?

    32%   Expanding educational programs for children 15% Offering more activities specifically for families
    12%   Offering more outdoor entertainment, such as concerts, live theater, and movies
     8%   Offering more water activities, such as fishing, swimming, and scuba diving
     7%   Sponsoring more in-park events and competitions, such as mud runs, dog festivals, hikes, and fitness challenges
     6%   Offering additional tours about plants and animals led by naturalists
     6%   Offering more social activities where adults of similar ages and interests might meet each other
     3%   Offering more winter activities
     2%   Offering programs on common topics specifically for visitors with deeper, more serious interests
     1%   DK / RF
     8%   None given a high priority

23. Now, of all the ideas I've mentioned, from the beginning of this interview, what two or three do you think the Metro Parks should give the highest priority?

23% Expanding educational programs for children
17% Replacing pit toilets with flush-toilets
13% Creating a Smartphone app that describes the parks' plants and animals for visitors taking self-guided tours and features maps of all Metro Parks' trails
13% Offering more activities specifically for families
10% Offering more outdoor entertainment, such as concerts, live theater, and movies
9% Building more Greenway trails, which link parks and neighborhoods throughout Franklin County, are paved, often run along waterways, and are not used by motor vehicles
9% Creating a monthly email newsletter with information about programs, events, and activities, as well as other news involving the Metro Parks
9% Trails that are paved
9% Trails that are pet-friendly 8% Renting kayaks and canoes
7% Trails for cycling
7% Trails for walking and running 6% Building more picnic shelters
6% Improving cell phone reception throughout the parks
6% Offering more water activities, such as fishing, swimming, and scuba diving
6% Trails for hiking
5% Adding athletic facilities, such as tennis and basketball courts, baseball diamonds, and soccer fields
5% Expanding the Metro Parks in Franklin County by acquiring more land
5% Increasing the amount of parking
5% Offering additional tours about plants and animals led by naturalists
5% Trails equipped with obstacles or stations primarily for exercising
4% Adding zip-lines
4% Creating digital, interactive displays and exhibits in the nature centers
4% Offering more social activities where adults of similar ages and interests might meet each other
4% Renting bicycles
3% Sponsoring more in-park events and competitions, such as mud runs, dog festivals, hikes, and fitness challenges
2% Adding archery
2% Adding climbing walls
2% Creating new parks in the counties surrounding Franklin County
2% Improving the directional, or way-finding, signs
2% Making parks more accessible for disabled or older visitors
2% Making the parks safer
2% Offering more winter activities

23. (cont'd) Now, of all the ideas I've mentioned, from the beginning of this interview, what two or three do you think the Metro Parks should give the highest priority?

2% Providing free Internet access
2% Trails for backpacking
1% Adding golf courses
1% Adding more rangers
1% Creating quiet areas in the parks for reading, listening to and watching wildlife, or just sitting and contemplating
1% Improving general upkeep / maintenance / cleaning

        <1%   Building more nature centers for indoor, park-sponsored, events
                and programs
        <1%   Offering programs on common topics specifically for visitors with deeper,
                more serious interests
         1%   Other
         5%   DK / RF / Nothing

24. Thank you for sticking with me; we're almost done. Have you <u>been</u> to a Metro Park during the past two years? Have you been to a Metro Park in the past <u>ten</u> years?

89%	Yes, past two years	(SKIP TO 26)
5%	Yes, past ten years	(GO TO 25)
5%	No	(GO TO 25)
1%	DK / RF	(SKIP TO 32)

25. Many people tell us they don't visit the Metro Parks (more often) because they're just too busy and don't have the time. Is there some other reason that <u>you</u> haven't visited a Metro Park (during the past two years)? (n = 62)

       23%   Too old / have health problems
       11%   Not sure what Metro Parks is or where they are located
       10%   Not much to do there
        5%   Not safe
        4%   Do not have transportation there / not on a bus line
        3%   Can't walk / in wheelchair or scooter
        3%   Prefer neighborhood park
        2%   Nearest park is too far away
        3%   Other
       41%   DK / RF / No

    (SKIP TO 32)

26. During the past two years, which Metro Parks have you been to? (n = 538)

89% **Metro Parks**
34% Highbanks
32% Sharon Woods
28% Blacklick Woods
23% Battelle Darby Creek
21% Blendon Woods
17% Inniswood Metro Gardens
15% Scioto Audubon
13% Three Creeks
10% Slate Run Park and Farm
 8% Glacier Ridge
 8% Prairie Oaks
 7% Pickerington Ponds
 6% Clear Creek
 5% Heritage Trail
 4% Homestead
 4% Rocky Fork
 4% Walnut Woods
 3% Chestnut Ridge
 1% Olentangy Trail
16% **Other parks (net) 7%   DK / RF**

27. And, during the past two years, how many times, in total, have you been to (that Metro Park / those Metro Parks) – approximately? (n = 538)

36% One to five
37% Six to 20
26% More than 20
 1% DK / RF
 22 Mean
 10 Median

28. (IF MORE THAN ONE PARK IN 26, GO TO 29; OTHERWISE, SKIP TO 30)

14% Blacklick Woods
14% Highbanks
10% Battelle Darby Creek 10%   Sharon Woods
 7% Blendon Woods
 7% Scioto Audubon
 6% Inniswood Metro Gardens 4%   Three Creeks
 2% Glacier Ridge
 2% Slate Run Park and Farm 1%   Chestnut Ridge
 1% Clear Creek
 1% Heritage Trail
 1% Homestead
 1% Olentangy Trail
 1% Pickerington Ponds
 1% Prairie Oaks
 1% Rocky Fork
<1% Walnut Woods

10% **Other parks (net)**
 6% **DK / RF**

30. Think for a moment about your last visit to_____: Who did you go with and what did you do when you got there? (n = 538)

    a. Went with:

        54%   **Family (net)**
        25%   Family
        17%   Spouse / partner / fiancé
        12%   Children
        5%   Grandchildren
        2%   Parents
        2%   Other family

        33%   **Friend / boyfriend / girlfriend**
        11%   **ALONE**
        6%   **Group (net)**
        4%   Group (e.g., school, church)
        2%   Co-workers

        5%   **Pet**
        <1%   **DK / RF**

30. (cont'd) Think for a moment about your last visit to_____: Who did you go with and what did you do when you got there? (n = 538)

    b. Did:

        67%   **Trail related (net)**
        39%   Walked trails
        14%   Hiked trails
        10%   Jogged / ran on trails
        7%   Biked trails
        7%   Walked dog / played with dog on trails

        19%   **Event (net)**
        12%   Ate / small picnic / cookout
        7%   Group picnic / party /
        <1%   event meeting at shelter house

        17%   **Looked at scenery (net)**
        7%   Enjoyed nature
        3%   Looked at plants / trees / gardens
        2%   Looked at bison
        2%   Looked at ponds / lake / river
        2%   Relaxed / enjoyed day
        2%   Watched animals
        1%   Other comments about looking at scenery

        11%   **Other physical activity (e.g., disc golf, golf, volleyball) (net)**

        21%   **Other (net)**

10%   Went to playground / watched the kids play

5%   Went to nature center

2%   Photography

2%   Played game / puzzle / read / etc.

4%   Other

<1%   DK / RF

(IF MORE THAN ONE PARK IN 26, GO TO 31; OTHERWISE, SKIP TO 32)

You mentioned a moment ago that you've visited more than one Metro Park during the past two years. Why is that: In other words, was there something different about each of those parks that drew you to them, was it just convenience, or was there some other reason? (n = 311)

38%   Park specific
13%   Has better walking, hiking, and running trails / prefer the trails at some parks
6%   Has more appealing scenery / landscape
6%   Has water / river / lake
3%   Attended a Metro Parks-sponsored program
3%   Has bison
3%   Has gardens / flower gardens
3%   Has / has better cycling trails
2%   Has a climbing wall
2%   Has a farm / farm animals and activities
2%   Has disc golf
2%   Has golf
2%   Is better for taking pictures
2%   Is more pet-friendly
2%   Offers more to do / more variety
11%   Other park specific reason

16%   Attended a non-Metro Parks event (e.g., birthday party, reunion)
3%   Other
23%   Convenient location (mutually exclusive)
21%   Like variety / want to check out the different parks (mutually exclusive)
2%   DK / RF

31. Now, where do you get information about the Metro Parks, involving, for example, their programs, events, facilities ... and even locations?
26%   Metro Parks website
19%   Google search
16%   Family, friends
12%   At the parks (e.g., in a nature center)
10%   Newspapers – print
8%   TV / radio
7%   Seasonal program guide (*Parkscope*)
6%   Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
5%   Newspapers – online
4%   Internet, not specified
4%   Other

12%   DK / RF / Don't get information

32. If there was one place or source you could count on for information about the Metro Parks, other than family and friends, what would it be?

33%   Metro Parks website
20%   Google search
6%   Newspapers – online
6%   Newspapers – print
5%   At the parks (e.g., in a nature center)
5%   Internet, not specified
5%   Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
5%   TV / radio
2%   App
2%   City government site
2%   Email
2%   Seasonal program guide (*Parkscope*)
2%   Other
5%   DK / RF / Don't get information

33. Finally, just a few questions about you and your household. First, what is your home ZIP code?

21%   Central
24%   Northeast
23%   Northwest
18%   Southeast
13%   Southwest
1%   DK / RF

34. Do you own or rent your home?
57%   Own
39%   Rent
4%   DK / RF / Other (live with parents)

35. Employment
66%   Employed full-time
9%   Student
3%   Homemaker
2%   Temporarily unemployed
14%   Retired
2%   Disabled
4%   DK / RF

36. Do any children younger than 18 live in your home?
31%   Yes
68%   No
1%   DK / RF

37. Age
14%   18 to 24
23%   25 to 34
18%   35 to 44
16%   45 to 54

15%   55 to 64
9%   65 to 74
5%   Older than 74
0%   DK / RF

38. And, finally, do you consider yourself White, Black or African-American, Asian, Hispanic, or another race?
    67%   White
    20%   Black, African-American
    3%   Asian
    4%   Hispanic
    3%   Bi- or multi-racial
    1%   Native American
    2%   DK / RF

39. Oh ... one last thing: Have I reached you today on a landline or cell phone?
    22%   Landline
    78%   Cell phone
    0%   DK / RF

40. That was my last question. Thank you for sharing your opinions with me. Good-bye. Gender
    47%   Male
    53%   Female

- City (from sample)
    67%   Columbus
    33%   Not Columbus

- Number of Metro Parks visited in the past two years
    28%   One
    22%   Two
    13%   Three
    16%   More than three
    6%   DK / RF
    11%   None (excluded from mean and median)
    4%   Been to other parks (e.g., Park of Roses, Columbus Commons)
          (excluded from mean and median)

    3   Mean
    2   Median

Columbus & Franklin County METRO PARKS

O'Shaughnessy Reservoir

Alum Creek Reservoir

Hoover Reservoir

Glacier Ridge
Brock Rd
Hyland Croy Rd

Highbanks
Powell Rd

Sharon Woods
Main St
Park Rd
Hempstead Rd

Rocky Fork

Inniswood

Blendon Woods
Dublin-Granville Rd

Riverside Drive
Cemetary Pike
Post Rd
Cosgray Rd
Amity Pike

Heritage Trail
Heritage Trail Park
Hayden Run Rd

Homestead
Darby Creek Trail

Prairie Oaks
Roberts Rd

High Free Pike
Amity Rd
Broad St
Darby Creek Dr
Darby Creek Trail

Camp Chase Trail

Little Darby Creek
Big Darby Creek
Alkire Rd

Battelle Darby Creek

Harlem Rd
Schleppi Rd
Rocky Fork
Brevelhymer Rd

Walnut St

E. Schrock Rd
Dempsey Rd

Cherry Bottom Rd
Hamilton Rd

Blacklick Creek

Cleveland Ave
Morse Rd
Big Walnut Creek

Olentangy Trail
Olentangy River
High St

Scioto Darby Rd
Wilcox Rd
Tuttle Rd
Tuttle Crossing Blvd
Dublin Rd

Scioto Darby Rd
Scioto River

Scioto Trail

Scioto Audubon
Scioto Trail

Alum Creek Trail
Alum Creek

I-670 Trail

Blacklick Woods
& Golf Courses

Main St
Livingston Ave
Alum Creek Dr
Hamilton Rd
Brice Rd

Blacklick Creek
Blacklick Creek Trail
Bowen Rd
Long Rd
Wright Rd

Gender Rd
Wright Rd
Bowen Rd
High St
Hill Rd

Pickerington Ponds

Three Creeks
Spangler Rd
Winchester Pike

Waterloo Rd
Pickerington Rd

Parsons Ave
Williams Rd
Groveport Rd

Scioto Grove

London Groveport Rd

Bixby Rd
Norton Rd

Walnut Woods
Richardson Rd
Lithopolis Rd

Winchester Rd
Lithopolis-Winchester Rd
Slough Rd
Mason Rd
Amanda Northern Rd
Winchester Rd

Chestnut Ridge

Walnut Creek
Winchester Rd
Perrill Rd
Neiswander Rd

Duvall Rd

Slate Run Farm and Park
Marcy Rd

Seven miles south of Lancaster on US 33

Clear Creek
Clear Creek Rd (CR 116)
Clear Creek
To Lancaster

— **Greenway Trails**

www.metroparks.net