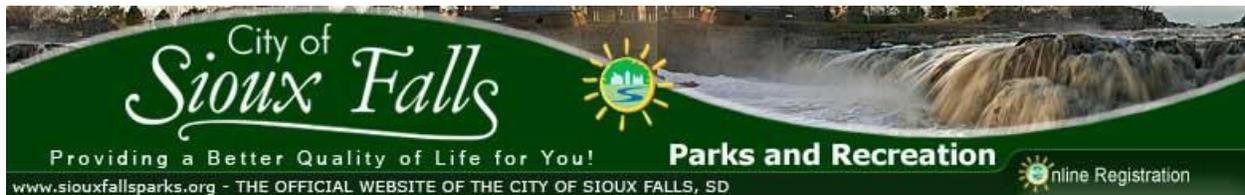


# City of Sioux Falls Recreation Needs Assessment

April 2011



Conducted by

Management Learning Laboratories

[www.m-l-l.org](http://www.m-l-l.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>READING AND INTERPRETING THE REPORT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY</b> .....	<b>5</b>
DETERMINATION OF THE SAMPLE.....	5
DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE .....	5
QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENTS .....	6
PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTERING AND ANALYZING THE QUESTIONNAIRES .....	7
<b>RESULTS OF THE STUDY: DEMOGRAPHICS</b> .....	<b>9</b>
DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION .....	9
<i>Gender</i> .....	9
<i>Age</i> .....	9
<i>Income</i> .....	10
<i>Length of residence in Sioux Falls</i> .....	10
<i>Household composition</i> .....	10
<i>Place of residence</i> .....	11
<b>RESULTS OF THE SURVEY: GENERAL FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>12</b>
RECREATION ACTIVITY INTERESTS .....	12
TIME AND ATTENDANCE INCLUDING THE BEST TIME FOR PARTICIPATION.....	13
INFORMATION DELIVERY .....	18
OPINIONS ABOUT RECREATION IN SIOUX FALLS .....	19
<i>Opinions about recreation facilities</i> .....	19
<i>Opinions about programming</i> .....	20
<i>Opinions about administration</i> .....	22
<i>Opinions about finances and funding</i> .....	22
AREAS OF EMPHASIS .....	24
<i>Areas of need – Facilities</i> .....	24
<i>Areas of need – Programming</i> .....	27
<b>CONCLUDING REMARKS</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS STUDY</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b> .....	<b>32</b>

## TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1: Recreation Interest (percentage claiming great to some interest) .....	13
Table 2: Participation (percentage visiting at least once) .....	15
Table 3: Barriers to Participation .....	16
Table 4: Best times for recreation .....	17
Table 5: Information Distribution .....	19
Table 6: Opinions about Recreation Facilities .....	20
Table 7: Opinions about Programming .....	21
Table 8: Opinions about Administration .....	22
Table 9: Opinions about Finances .....	23
Table 10: Areas of Need – Facilities .....	26
Table 11: Areas of Need – Programming .....	28

## READING AND INTERPRETING THE REPORT

This report is the final outcome of the Needs Assessment Study (henceforth referred to as “study”) that was commissioned by Sioux Falls Parks and Recreation Department (henceforth referred to as “THE DEPT”) in 2010. In reading and interpreting this report, it is important to note that the results are presented in several ways. First, there is a narrative description of the findings, which then are supported by tables of data. **Key findings and summaries are underlined in the body of the report.** Recommendations are made across the entire body of the report and are always supported by data. *All recommendations are presented in italics in the body of the report.*

Additionally, this report needs to be considered a “snap shot” of the results of the study. The tables and numbers in the report should be considered carefully. Since there were in some cases several questions that addressed similar issues, these items were distributed in different parts of the questionnaire. When combined, these pieces of information together make up the entire report and results. *In many cases, the importance attached to a particular piece of numeric data must be interpreted along with other similar questions in the instrument.*

Moreover, before drawing specific conclusions, it is important to recognize that a universal yardstick cannot be used to interpret the results. For example, the results from one section of the questionnaire may suggest that a particular facility, considered by 40% of the respondents to be needed in Sioux Falls, is in fact a significant necessity because most of the other facilities listed in that section received far less endorsement. On the other hand, a particular activity that is considered necessary by 40% of the respondents may be very insignificant in a particular section if there were other activities that received far more support. **It is the ranking, as presented in the tables, that is most important.** Consequently, it is impossible to try to find one percentage as the cut-off point for all of the questions. Each question needs to be considered separately and as a part of the section to which it belongs.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

The study was designed to elicit interest, behavior, demographic, and attitude information from the citizens served by THE DEPT concerning parks, recreation and leisure. It is important to note that this component of the study was intended to obtain information from the entire community and not any specific user group. Since this was a community-wide study, the statistically random sample was selected to represent the opinion of the entire population of Sioux Falls. The objective of the study was to obtain the relevant information that will help THE DEPT do its job more effectively by enabling it to be more responsive to the recreation needs of the residents of the town (henceforth also referred to as the “community”). Additionally, the information can also be used to better organize the everyday operation of THE DEPT to stay in tune with the current and future needs of the community. This also implies that THE DEPT will benefit by learning about the residents’ awareness of the recreation activities within the town. In summary, this study was not a user’s survey, but a more comprehensive assessment of the recreation needs, attitudes and opinions of the residents of the entire town. Thus, it should be noted that the primary goal of the study was to obtain information about parks and recreation in the town. A secondary goal of the study was to compare the data collected in 2011 to the data collected by MLL nearly 10 years ago. This comparison is presented as the last section of the report.

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF THE STUDY**

### *Determination of the Sample*

While it is desirable to question all of the residents of the town, it is not possible to do so due to a variety of constraints including cost, available time and access. However, using the principles of random sampling, it was possible to collect data from a part of the population and then make projections about the entire population. For this reason, a statistically viable and reliable random sampling procedure was used for this study. Given the fact that it was a random sample of the population, it is possible to claim that, within a small margin of error (3 to 4.00%), the sample is reliably representative of the community as a whole.

In this case, a sample of 6,000 addresses was selected from a complete list of addresses in Sioux Falls. Addresses were chosen randomly from this sampling frame so that every address had an equal chance of being selected. The addresses then were used in mailing the questionnaires to the residents.

### *Development of the Questionnaire*

Before the development of the first draft of the instrument, information was collected about THE DEPT and recreation in and around Sioux Falls. This information included several examples of program brochures and flyers from the past several years, literature about recreational facilities and other materials distributed by THE DEPT as well as material from the reports of the focus groups conducted by staff.

Several “focus group” meetings with groups from the area were conducted so that those in attendance could identify issues relating to parks and recreation in Sioux Falls. The meetings were moderated by MLL staff and sometimes included THE DEPT staff observers. Overall, the meetings were well attended.

The people attending the group discussions included:

- THE DEPT staff members
- Representatives of special needs
- People interested in recreation and open space
- Senior citizens
- People interested in cultural arts
- Members of Sioux Falls businesses

- Members of service clubs
- Youth representatives
- Representatives from athletic organizations and sports groups
- General community members

The use of focus groups for questionnaire design is now an accepted and preferred tool for developing an instrument that will be appropriate for determining the needs of a specific community. This approach facilitates the production of a unique questionnaire for a specific community and eliminates the need to fall back upon a “standard” questionnaire containing generic questions that may be irrelevant for residents of a particular locale. Each meeting lasted for about sixty minutes and various issues surrounding recreation in the Sioux Falls area were discussed and compiled.

All of the background information gathered in these meetings was used to produce the first draft of the instrument, which contained questions and items specific to Sioux Falls. These early drafts were then reviewed by the consulting team, as well as by the members of THE DEPT. After a thorough review, a final draft of the questionnaire was approved by THE DEPT. It should also be noted that the questionnaire used in 2000 was also consulted to maintain some amount of comparability between the previous data and the data collected in 2011.

### *Questionnaire Contents*

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit respondent interest in many different categories of recreation such as “arts and crafts,” “environmental,” “special events” and similar categories. The respondents were asked to indicate their level of interest in each category and respondents were also offered examples of recreation within each category.

The next of the questionnaire was designed to measure the level of participation in various recreation programs and visitation to various facilities. Respondents were asked to indicate how often they had participated in the previous year, and the list included both the major recreation facilities for general use as well as specialized activities like golf, walking and jogging.

The next section of the questionnaire elicited information about the primary barriers to participation. Respondents were asked to indicate if reasons like cost, lack of maintenance, poor customer service or lack of information were important reasons for their inability to participate in the recreation opportunities offered by the DEPT. This was followed by a section that was designed to elicit information about the best times for the respondents to participate in recreation and leisure activities.

This was followed by a section on the best ways of informing the respondent about the recreation opportunities offered by the DEPT. The list included both the traditional forms of information such as direct mailers to household and emergent methods such as the use of digital media. Respondents were asked to indicate the effectivity of the different methods of providing information.

The next section dealt with the future needs of the community. Numerous programmatic- and facility-related items were listed, and respondents were asked to indicate whether they or any family members would use the program or facility if it was available in the future. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they felt that the facility or program was important for Sioux Falls and they were asked to point out if the program should be paid for by existing taxes or user fees.

The next section of the questionnaire was intended to elicit the personal opinions of the respondents. There was a series of statements for which they could indicate their level of agreement on a four-point scale that ranged from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree,” with a fifth “don’t know” option. These items dealt with issues such as:

- Respondents’ personal knowledge and feelings about THE DEPT and its offerings,
- Specific improvements that THE DEPT could make in its services,
- General recreation issues related to THE DEPT,
- Opinions about the effectiveness of marketing and publicity efforts of THE DEPT, and
- General questions about the quality of life in Sioux Falls.

Responses to these questions can offer THE DEPT a better understanding of the factors that make THE DEPT attractive to the people they serve. A separate section was set aside to measure their level of support for various ways of funding recreation.

The last section of the questionnaire included general demographic questions concerning gender, age, marital status, household composition, length of residence in Sioux Falls, and where the respondent lives in the community.

### *Procedures for Administering and Analyzing the Questionnaires*

Once the 6,000 addresses were compiled, each of those households was mailed the questionnaire with a postage-paid envelope included to facilitate return. A reminder postcard was mailed following the mailing of the questionnaire. After eliminating the non-deliverables 5842 questionnaires were received by the sample. At the end of the mailing, a total of 925 usable questionnaires were returned, resulting in an overall response rate of 15.7%. Data entry

procedures maintained confidentiality of all sample members, as well as anonymity of individual respondents.

The data were analyzed using the *CompuRec* data analysis and query program. *CompuRec* is a data analysis package specifically designed to analyze recreation-related data. Data analysis consisted primarily of frequency distributions for each response category on each questionnaire item, in order to determine the percentage of respondents who selected each answer option. This was done for the sample as a whole, and then broken down further into gender, age, and other demographic categories such as geographic location, to support recommendations. Furthermore, additional and advanced data analysis in the form of reliability checks, factor analysis and tests for significant difference of mean responses between groups were conducted as background to the report. While this analysis is not reported in this document, they can all be performed using *CompuRec*.

It is important to note that the analysis reported here, as well as the recommendations presented, is primarily based on the aggregate information and data. Furthermore, it should be noted that the data presented in this report are based only on the responses obtained in the community-wide study and the descriptive and narrative information collected in the focus group meetings. There are no presumptions about the actual performance of THE DEPT; only the perceptions of the community are reported. It is quite possible that many of the perceptions do not match the actual activities of THE DEPT. However, the purpose of this report is to present the perception, accurate or inaccurate, to demonstrate how the community feels about THE DEPT.

## RESULTS OF THE STUDY: DEMOGRAPHICS

### *Description of the Population*

A set of questions was designed to elicit demographic information such as age, marital status, gender, etc. These questions can provide information about a community's makeup and therefore its possible recreation needs. It is useful to note that the percentages reported and tabulated sometimes add up to 101% or 99% due to the effects of rounding off decimals. The data presented here shows the actual proportions of the different demographic attributes as reported by the respondents. In some cases, the aggregated percentages from the self reports were different from the data available through City Data – a provider of demographic data for communities in the USA basing the information from the latest Census (<http://www.city-data.com/city/Sioux-Falls-South-Dakota.html>).

#### Gender

The sample was made up of 47% male and 53% female respondents which are close to the 49% and 51% reported by City Data.

#### Age

Respondents were asked to report their age based on the age categories provided in the questionnaire; the percentages are reported below. The median age for the respondents is in the 45 to 54 years range. This suggests that a slightly higher age group than the population responded to the questionnaire which could have introduced minimal bias in the findings.

<b>Age Category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-24	2%
25-34	13%
35-44	18%
45-54	21%
55-64	23%
65-69	8%
70-74	5%
Over 75	11%

## Income

The household income distribution varied from under \$25,000 to over \$130,000 per year, with the median income being in the \$55,000 to \$70,000 range. This is higher than the median income reported for 2009 by City Data. The specific income categories were as follows:

<b>Income Category</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under \$25,000	15%
\$25-40,000	14%
\$40-55,000	19%
\$55-70,000	14%
\$70-85,000	13%
\$85-100,000	7%
\$100-115,000	11%
\$115-130,000	7%
Over \$130K	15%

## Length of residence in Sioux Falls

About 8% of the respondents claimed that they have lived in Sioux Falls for one to three years, while another 16% reported that they have lived there between four and ten years. Another 6% indicated that they have lived in Sioux Falls for eleven to fourteen years. The remaining 70% indicated that they have been in Sioux Falls for more than fifteen years.

## Household composition

The results show that 63% of the households have two adults in the home, while 21% have one adult in the household. Furthermore, nearly 30% have one or more children under five years of age, 19% have at least one child in the five to ten year range, and 22% of the respondents indicated that they have at least one child in the eleven to eighteen year age range. In terms of home ownership 85% of the respondents indicated that they own their own homes. The respondents indicated that 45% belonged to a home where two adults worked outside of the home, and 35% belonged to a household where one adult worked outside of the home. Nearly

11% of the respondents also indicated that they currently had at least one member of the family with a disability. Almost all the respondents (97%) claimed to be Caucasian.

Place of residence

The respondents were provided a map of Sioux Falls area and they were asked to indicate the part of the service area in which they live. The map was divided into ten areas within the Sioux Falls and the respondents were also offered the opportunity to indicate if they lived outside the metropolitan area. The results are tabulated below.

<b>Area of Residence</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
57107 or 57104	14%
57110 or 57103	32%
57105 or 57106	40%
57108	14%

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY: GENERAL FINDINGS

The following sections of this report describe the findings about the various recreational needs of the residents of Sioux Falls. The questionnaire was used to explore their recreation and leisure interests and the reasons they may choose to participate in recreation opportunities or visit THE DEPT sites. Moreover, information was elicited about their opinions about various recreation-related issues, including how recreation should be funded, and what they believe should be areas of emphasis for Sioux Falls parks and recreation. Unless otherwise specified, numbers in parentheses refer to the percentage responding positively to a question. Furthermore, it should be noted that the percentages are estimates and can vary between plus or minus three percentage points.

### *Recreation Activity Interests*

The first section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate their level of interest in several different recreation categories. A total of nine different categories were offered and each category was accompanied with examples to explain what the category referred to.

The most popular recreation category was social recreation with nearly half the respondents indicating an interest in activities such as clubs, dancing, and other social activities. Results from other sections of the questionnaire also indicate the same trend with interest in family activities. This is an important finding about Sioux Falls and the *DEPT should ensure that community is offered sufficient opportunities to participate in social activities.*

The next most popular recreation category was hobbies with nearly a third of the respondents indicating an interest in activities that would be typically considered to be hobbies ranging from flower arrangement to playing chess. Much like social recreation, participating in hobby-related activities offer opportunities to socialize with like-minded people and thus the *DEPT should ensure that community is offered sufficient opportunities to express their personal interests and meet with other people who have similar interests.*

The focus on personalized recreation is continued with interest in arts and crafts and self improvement with nearly a third of the respondents indicating an interest in activities that fell into a large range including typical arts and crafts activities such as theater, concerts, ballets to self-improvement activities that could also include classes to learn about computers and self-

defense. These two interests indicate that the respondents are interested in gaining opportunities for self-improvement with a particular emphasis on arts and crafts and the *DEPT should ensure that community is offered sufficient opportunities to for arts and crafts activities as well as self-improvement activities where some could easily overlap.*

The rest of the items listed were of interest to 20% or fewer portion of the respondents.

The lower percentage is not an indicator of a lack of participation in the activities currently offered by the DEPT, but given that this was a community-wide study, it would indicate that at the overall level there is a greater interest in activities that lead to self-improvement and offer the respondents to pursue their personal recreation interests. The other categories such as sports and athletics are important categories and is usually of great importance to those who are regular users of such opportunities. All the items are listed in the next table.

**Table 1: Recreation Interest (percentage claiming great to some interest)**

Social	48%
Hobbies	37%
Arts & Crafts	36%
Self Improvement	30%
Travel & Tourism	19%
Environmental	18%
Performing Arts	14%
Sports, Athletics & Aquatics	10%
Special Events	10%

***Time and attendance including the best time for participation***

The next section of the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate the frequency with which they have visited a park site or participated in an activity in the past year. A total of eleven different items were listed and respondents were asked to indicate how often they had participated within a range of never to 25 times of more.

The most popular sites were parks such as Sherman Park and Dugan, with nearly 88% of the respondents claiming that they have been to regional parks at least once in the twelve months prior to the data collection and 83% claiming that they have used the neighborhood parks in the past year. These parks were also rated highly in the focus group meetings. The parks are

important and visible facilities and the *DEPT should ensure that such facilities are well maintained and remains attractive to the community.*

The next most popular facilities were trails, with almost 78% of the respondents visiting the facility at least once in the time period indicated on the questionnaire, and most visiting the park once or twice in the year. The use of trails reflects the interest in self-improvement related to leading a healthy life style and the *DEPT should ensure sufficient opportunities are provided for the use of clean, safe and well-maintained trails.*

Picnic shelters were also highly attended and nearly 71% of the respondents indicated that they have used picnic shelters in the past year. This finding is consistent with the fact that a large portion of the respondents indicated a high level of use of regional and neighborhood parks. *THE DEPT should offer picnic shelters in their parks.*

Nearly two-thirds of the respondents indicate that they have visited the municipal athletic complexes within the past year. This suggests that there is a sufficiently large portion of users of such complexes just as there is a sufficiently large portion (62%) of respondents who use the municipal community centers. *The DEPT should continue to provide the municipal complexes and centers.*

Nearly half the respondents indicate that they have visited the outdoor aquatic center within the past year. The aquatic center is an important facility to the community and elsewhere the respondents have indicated a need for additional aquatic opportunities. *The DEPT should ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for aquatic activities in the community.*

The respondents indicated that the remaining facilities and activities were attended by less than half the respondents. It should again be noted that the study was geared to elicit the responses of the general community and not specific users. Thus, even if the facilities appear to run at capacity it is the case that these facilities and programs could benefit from better promotions

The results from these items are presented in the following table.

**Table 2: Participation (percentage visiting at least once)**

Regional parks (e.g., Sherman Park)	88%
Neighborhood parks (e.g., Dugan, Morningside)	83%
Trails	78%
Picnic shelters	71%
Municipal athletic complexes	65%
Municipal community centers	62%
Outdoor aquatic facilities	55%
Municipal golf courses	43%
Winter activities (e.g., skiing, tubing and skating)	40%
Municipal tennis courts	25%

The next section of the questionnaire was aimed at investigating the key barriers that respondents felt stood in their way of participating in the programs and facilities reported in the previous section. The list of barriers was developed on the basis of past experience with similar communities and on the basis of the information gathered at the focus group meetings. Respondents indicated if they felt that the item on the list was a barrier for participation.

The most important barrier to participation was lack of information. About 42% of the respondents indicated this to be the reason. When coupled with the fact that respondents felt that they were not interested in the opportunities offered by the Department, it is important for the DEPT to relate these two findings. This findings is also related to the fact that 23% if the respondents did not know where to go for activities. It could well be the case that people claim lack of interest because they are unaware of the opportunities. Thus *THE DEPT must make a concerted effort to promote its programs and facilities using the methods enumerated later in this report.*

Another important barrier to participation was participation in competing activities, which was also selected by nearly 42% the respondents. This information needs to coupled with the facts that there is a lack of information about the recreation opportunities offered by the DEPT as well as with the fact that there is a lack of interest in what is actually offered. This barrier could be overcome with better promotion of the activities and facilities as well as by tuning the offerings to match with the needs discovered in this study.

Another important barrier to participation was lack of time, which was selected by nearly a third of the respondents. This is a common reason for lack of participation across the United States. Unfortunately there is not much that a recreation department could do to assist with this matter. At the same time, nearly a quarter of the respondents felt that events were offered at

times inconvenient to them. *The DEPT must offer more recreation opportunities at times convenient to the community by examining the data from this study.*

Nearly a third of the respondents felt cost was a barrier to participation, and the DEPT needs to address this matter. It could well be that lack of information is the reason for this perception, but it is important for the DEPT to consider the different income categories and see if some offerings could be too expensive for some groups. *THE DEPT should offer affordable recreation to the community with appropriate cost adjustments to fit the financial abilities of different groups.*

Issues related to the facilities were also considered to be barriers by nearly a quarter or fewer portion of the respondents. About a quarter of the respondents indicated that overcrowding and lack of parking acted as a barrier to recreation. However, other issues related to facilities such as safety was not considered to be a barrier. *THE DEPT should ensure that there are sufficient facilities with adequate parking to avoid overcrowding.*

The results for the key barriers are presented in the following table.

**Table 3: Barriers to Participation**

	<b>Yes</b>
Lack of information	42%
Competing activities	42%
Not interested	38%
I do not have the time	33%
Too expensive	30%
Inconvenient timing of events	25%
Don t know where to go	23%
The facilities are too crowded	23%
Lack of parking	20%
Lack of child care	6%
Lack of appropriate staffing	4%
I cannot get to the facilities	4%
Unsafe facilities	1%

The next section of the questionnaire was aimed at investigating the best times for recreation for the respondents. The questionnaire offered a grid with each day of the week being broken down in hour segments. This information would allow the DEPT to offer recreation opportunities at times that is optimal for the community.

The data suggests that nearly half the respondents prefer week nights as the best time for recreation with about half also suggesting that weekend afternoons are good times for recreation too. Generally the time period between 6 to 8 pm is a good time for recreation on weekdays whereas most of the afternoon and evening is good on weekends. Given that inconvenient timing of events is an important barrier to recreation, it is important for the DEPT to consider offering recreation opportunities at times that are indicated by the data. The findings are presented in the next table.

**Table 4: Best times for recreation**

6 to 8 pm T	53%	2 to 4 F	13%
6 to 8 pm TH	53%	10 to Noon W	12%
2 to 4 SU	51%	10 to Noon TH	12%
6 to 8 pm W	51%	10 to Noon F	12%
6 to 8 pm F	51%	2 to 4 M	12%
6 to 8 pm M	50%	2 to 4 T	12%
2 to 4 SA	46%	10 to Noon T	11%
4 to 6 SA	40%	6 to 8 SA	10%
4 to 6 SU	40%	8 to 10 M	10%
10 to Noon SA	37%	8 to 10 W	9%
Noon to 2 SA	37%	8 to 10 TH	9%
Noon to 2 SU	36%	8 to 10 F	9%
6 to 8 pm SA	36%	6 to 8 M	8%
6 to 8 pm SU	34%	6 to 8 SU	8%
4 to 6 M	27%	8 to 10 T	8%
4 to 6 T	27%	6 to 8 T	7%
4 to 6 W	27%	6 to 8 W	7%
10 to Noon SU	26%	6 to 8 TH	7%
4 to 6 F	26%	6 to 8 F	7%
8 to 10 SA	25%	Noon to 2 M	7%
4 to 6 TH	25%	Noon to 2 TH	7%
8 to 10 pm SA	20%	Noon to 2 T	6%
8 to 10 pm F	18%	Noon to 2 W	6%
8 to 10 SU	17%	Noon to 2 F	6%
8 to 10 pm SU	16%	10 to 6 SA	5%
8 to 10 pm M	15%	10 to 6 SU	4%
8 to 10 pm T	15%	10 to 6 M	3%
8 to 10 pm W	14%	10 to 6 F	3%
8 to 10 pm TH	14%	10 to 6 T	2%
10 to Noon M	13%	10 to 6 W	2%
2 to 4 W	13%	10 to 6 TH	2%
2 to 4 TH	13%		

## ***Information Delivery***

This section of the questionnaire was aimed at investigating the principal ways in which the community would like to remain informed of recreation opportunities offered by the DEPT. Given that the lack of information was a significant barrier to recreation, the respondents were asked to indicate the effectivity of several communication methods. There were 11 different methods offered and respondents indicated which methods they preferred.

Traditional media such as TV, radio and newspapers were considered effective by nearly 60% of respondents, with 64% of the respondents indicating that television and radio to be effective. These are important means of getting information to the community and has worked for a long period of time. It is important to note that the presence has to be more broad-based than just the City Link TV channel which was considered effective by only 16% of the respondents. *The DEPT should maintain a strong presence in the traditional mass media so that all sections of the community have access to the information about recreation opportunities.*

The next most preferred method was a printed brochure mailed directly to the household, which was selected by nearly 56% of the respondents. This is usually the preferred method across most communities in the USA and the *DEPT should offer a direct mailed brochure to the community.*

Electronic and digital media received endorsements from nearly a third of the respondents, with an interest in seeing e-mail and Web based information distribution. With increasing number of the respondents claiming access to the Internet, these methods should be pursued vigorously given that these methods are often less expensive than other means of information distribution and more current information can be sent out using these techniques, although social media systems were considered effective by only about 17% of the respondents. *The DEPT should consider expanding on digital modes of information distribution.*

Signs in parks were also considered to be effective by about a third of the respondents. This method of informing people could be used to announce special events and they can also serve as information points within parks. *The DEPT should make effective use of signage in and around the parks as well in other parts of the community.*

All the items are listed in the next table.

**Table 5: Information Distribution**

	<b>Yes</b>
TV or radio	64%
Newspaper	59%
Direct mailers to household	56%
E-mail	39%
City website	37%
Flyers in public places	27%
Word of mouth	18%
Social media such as Facebook and Twitter etc	17%
City Link - Channel 16 Access Channel	16%
Flyers at schools	16%
Electronic reader boards	10%

***Opinions about Recreation in Sioux Falls***

This section of the questionnaire contained several opinion statements with which respondents could agree or disagree. A four-point scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” was provided, along with a fifth “don’t know” option in case the respondents did not have enough experience with a particular issue to form an opinion about it. For the sake of simplicity of presentation, the results have been collapsed into the categories “agree,” “disagree” and “don’t know.” These opinion items were generated in part on the basis of the focus group meetings with staff and residents, and they reflect some of the larger issues surrounding the operation of THE DEPT. Although the items were arranged somewhat randomly in the questionnaire, the results are presented here around four major topic areas.

Opinions about recreation facilities

Nine of the items in the opinions section of the questionnaire specifically addressed the facilities maintained by THE DEPT. These tap into opinions about the development of new facilities and use of existing ones, and considered alongside the possible facility-related needs they will help the staff further understand what preferences and needs there may be.

There is generally a very positive perception about facilities in Sioux Falls. Nearly all the respondents felt that the facilities satisfy their needs, were safe, clean and well maintained. This

is a very strong endorsement specially when connected with the fact that a large portion of respondents visited the different kinds of facilities. Some of these findings are reflected in the data from other parts of the study as well and, *THE DEPT should ensure that the level of maintenance and safety of parks and facilities should continue at its current level.*

Priorities and preferences related to specific items such as trails was also tested and the data shows that three quarters or more of the respondents were satisfied with the playground equipment and the trails. This is an important finding because there is evidence that there is a lot of interest in parks in general and walking. In addition about the half the respondents felt that there should be more trails and there should be lighting in the parks. As such, the *DEPT should ensure that the trails and playgrounds are maintained and remain available to the community.*

The results from the facility-related opinion items are presented in the next table.

**Table 6: Opinions about Recreation Facilities**

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
In general, the facilities that I have visited satisfy my needs	96%	3%	1%
I believe the facilities maintained by the SFPR are safe	95%	2%	3%
The park facilities I visit are clean and well maintained	93%	6%	1%
The trails I visit are clean and well maintained	83%	4%	13%
I am satisfied with the playground equipment available in the parks	73%	9%	18%
I have access to parks within walking distance from my home	70%	28%	2%
I believe Sioux Falls should have more natural areas within parks	50%	32%	18%
The SFPR should build more paved trails	49%	32%	19%
The SFPR should increase the amount of security lights at its parks	45%	27%	28%

Opinions about programming

Ten of the items in the opinions section were specific to issues of programming.

Nearly 83% of the respondents felt that the DEPT was responsive to the needs of the community. This strong endorsement was further underscored by the fact that nearly half of the respondents also felt that there was sufficient recreation for all the different age groups. Finally nearly 42% of the respondents felt that there ought to be more collaboration with other public

agencies. This was a sentiment that was often repeated in the focus group meetings as well. As such, *the DEPT should continue to provide the services it currently does and should consider working together with other public agencies like schools.*

Nearly two thirds of the respondents also indicated that the DEPT needs to provide more opportunities for the entire family to do things together. This is an important finding and resonates with a growing need for family-based recreation in the USA. This also needs to be coupled with the fact that 46% of the respondents felt that there was a greater need for recreation for people with disabilities. *The DEPT should continue to offer recreation for the whole family including families with special needs.*

It should be noted that in some cases a fair portion of the respondents responded with the “Don’t Know” option mainly because it was a community-wide study and the respondents might not have known about all the opportunities. However, in most cases larger portion of respondents felt positively about the DEPT compared to those who felt negatively. Finally, a majority (84%) of the respondents agreed that they go to the parks to enjoy nature which is consistent with other findings and supports the recommendations made earlier.

The programming-related results are presented in the next table.

**Table 7: Opinions about Programming**

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
I go to parks to enjoy nature	84%	13%	3%
The SFPR is responsive to community recreation needs	83%	9%	8%
The SFPR should provide more activities where the whole family can participate	65%	15%	20%
SFPR provides adequate recreation activities for adults (ages 16 to 54)	55%	18%	27%
SFPR provides adequate recreation activities for youth (ages 2 - 15)	54%	14%	32%
There is a need for more activities for people with disabilities	46%	18%	36%
I prefer to organize my own recreation as opposed to the SFPR providing it for me	44%	42%	14%
The SFPR needs to have more collaborative recreation programs with other agencies	42%	23%	35%
SFPR provides adequate recreation activities for seniors (ages 55 and better)	39%	19%	42%
The SFPR provides adequate indoor recreation	35%	35%	30%

### Opinions about administration

There were two items within the opinions section of the questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate various aspects of how THE DEPT is run.

More than two thirds of the respondents felt that they had adequate information about recreation opportunities and that the staff was courteous. Although people felt that lack of information was a reason for non-participation those who were looking for information were getting the information they needed. The confidence in the staff is also encouraging. The DEPT should continue to make efforts to provide information and encourage their staff to maintain the high quality of service.

The results from the administration-related items are presented in the next table.

**Table 8: Opinions about Administration**

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
The SFPR s staff is courteous and helpful	73%	5%	22%
I am aware of the recreation programs and activities the SFPR offers	69%	23%	8%

### Opinions about finances and funding

Two of the items in the opinions section of the questionnaire were related to finances and recreation. These items provide insight about perceived cost and value of recreation in the community. Another section of the questionnaire also measured the level of support for different modes of financing recreation efforts in the community.

Nearly 80% of the respondents indicated a willingness to pay reasonable user fees for new recreation opportunities. This may enable THE DEPT to add new programs and publicize them sufficiently so that those residents who currently feel there is nothing of interest to them may be able to find programs and facilities that meet their recreation needs. Many respondents also generally feel satisfied with the recreation opportunities they receive for their tax dollars (79%) suggesting a high level of trust within the community with respect to the way in which funds would be used by the DEPT. As such, *THE DEPT could explore different fee-based service given there is a willingness to pay user fees for services.*

The respondents felt that private donations and corporate sponsorships should be primary forms of funding for the DEPT with nearly all the respondents agreeing with these forms of

funding. In a similar manner nearly 87% of the respondents also supported the use of grant money for recreation development. These are important findings because these suggest that the community is open to seeing sponsors for the events and the respondent is not resistant to the presence of sponsors for public recreation events. *The DEPT should actively pursue private and grant support for its activities and facilities.*

Nearly 89% of the respondents also indicated that they are willing to see more enterprise operations at activities and facilities. When coupled with the fact that 83% are also willing to pay user fees for activities there is support for activities that are funded directly by the users. There is much less support for bonds supported by property taxes. *The DEPT should consider using appropriate user fees for its operations and offer concessions at activities and facilities to develop a new funding stream.*

The results from the finance-related items are presented in the following table.

**Table 9: Opinions about Finances**

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities I receive for my tax dollars	79%	14%	7%
I am willing to pay reasonable users fees for new recreation opportunities	79%	15%	6%
<b>FUNDING</b>			
Private individual donations	93%	2%	5%
Corporate sponsorship and donations	91%	2%	7%
Enterprise Operations (i.e. concession stands, gift shops, golf courses, etc.)	89%	6%	5%
Grants from state, federal, & private sources	87%	6%	7%
Program user fees for recreation programs	83%	12%	5%
Existing sales tax revenues	79%	12%	9%
Existing property tax revenues	61%	30%	9%
Impact Development Fees	49%	22%	29%
Bonds issue to be paid by voter approved property taxes	44%	41%	15%
I am satisfied with the recreation opportunities I receive for my tax dollars	79%	14%	7%
I am willing to pay reasonable users fees for new recreation opportunities	79%	15%	6%

## *Areas of Emphasis*

One section of the questionnaire was designed to determine the relative importance of the various recreation needs there may be in the community. Sixty-five possible needs were listed for the respondents, and they were asked to indicate whether the DEPT should place emphasis on the item, and how the respondent felt that the item should be financed either by user fees or by taxes. The comparison between user fees and taxes offers information about the perception of the community with respect to the “public good” of the item. These results can help THE DEPT prioritize its future additions in terms of what the community perceives as important and valuable to the community. The information from this part of the questionnaire can complement the results discussed in the report this far. The items were listed in alphabetical order in the questionnaire but they have been divided into facilities and programs for ease of analysis and presentation.

### Areas of need – Facilities

Twenty-eight possible facilities were listed for the respondents, based on issues that surfaced in the focus group discussions. As would be expected, respondents generally preferred tax dollars for funding more general use facilities and user fees for funding more specialized facilities.

First, trails of different kind were considered very important, with between three-quarters and two-thirds of the respondents indicating that bike trails, walking trails and connected trails must be emphasized. The respondents also indicated that tax dollars should be used for such facilities. The interest in trails connects with the strong support for natural areas (67%) and improvement to the river greenway (67%). These results reinforce earlier recommendations made about trails and *THE DEPT should make efforts to offer tax-supported trails, natural areas and greenways for the community.*

The respondents placed significant importance on a series of items that all fit together in a multi-use indoor recreation complex with 60% of the respondents supporting an indoor aquatic facility, 57% supporting an indoor multi-use facility, nearly 56% of the respondents felt that it is important to place emphasis on an indoor performing arts area, and about half the respondents emphasizing the importance of an indoor ice skating rink, and a large gym for multi-purpose use. Other indoor facilities were also supported with about 30% to 50% of the respondents indicating the importance of several indoor facilities including aerobic facilities, playgrounds and running tracks. Furthermore, the respondents continue to indicate that while some of the indoor facilities should be supported by taxes, those that are of interest to smaller groups could be supported by

user fees as well. These findings suggest that *THE DEPT should examine the feasibility of providing a multi-purpose indoor facility with different options as indicated in this data.*

The respondents placed some importance on a dog park with 50% of the respondents supporting the idea. There was some discussion about the need for a dog park in the focus group meetings and *THE DEPT should further examine the level of need for a dog park.*

Other facilities that were considered to be important by half or more of the respondents included baseball fields and holiday lighting. The remaining facilities were considered important by fewer than one third of the respondents. This does not mean that these less significant needs should be ignored, but rather they should remain lower in priority than the more pressing needs.

The results from the facility-related needs are summarized in the following table. The items have been prioritized based on the importance attached to the item. The second column of the table indicates the ratio of respondents who suggested taxes should be used to support the item. Thus, for example, a ratio of 5:1 suggests that five times more people suggested taxes compared to the people who suggested user fees, whereas a ratio of 1:1 means that equal number of people suggested taxes and user fees, whereas a ration of 1:5 suggests that five times more people suggested user fees as compared to those who suggested taxes.

**Table 10: Areas of Need – Facilities**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Ratio, Tax:UF</b>
Bike trails	75%	7:1
Walking trails	75%	6:1
Connected trails	67%	5:1
Natural Areas	67%	3:1
Improve River Greenway	66%	5:1
Holiday lighting	65%	3:1
Indoor aquatic center	60%	1:7
Multi-use indoor recreation center	57%	1:3
Indoor performing arts area	56%	1:3
Indoor ice skating opportunities	51%	1:5
Indoor water aerobics fitness	51%	1:7
Large gym for multi-purpose sports	51%	1:3
Baseball fields	50%	1:1
Dog Parks	50%	2:1
Arboretum and flower gardens	48%	1:1
Ongoing land acquisition	48%	3:1
Visual art in parks	48%	1:1
Teen center	47%	1:1
Indoor running track	46%	1:3
Indoor aerobics facilities	43%	1:7
Outdoor aquatic facility	43%	1:3
Indoor playgrounds	41%	1:2
Cardio Equipment	40%	1:2
Indoor water slides	40%	1:9
Indoor zero depth pool	37%	1:7
Indoor wave pool	35%	1:9
Outdoor ice hockey facilities	35%	1:2
Indoor lazy rivers	31%	1:9
Arts and crafts rooms	30%	1:4
Indoor batting cages	30%	1:7
Indoor tennis courts	30%	1:7
Indoor soccer	28%	1:6
Racquetball Handball courts	28%	1:5
Skateboard areas	25%	1:3
Poolside landscaping	24%	1:1
Go-cart track	23%	1:9
Indoor hot tubs	23%	1:10
Indoor rollerblading areas	23%	1:6
Weight training room	23%	1:5
BMX Track	22%	1:3

## Areas of need – Programming

In addition to facilities, twenty-four items related to programming also were included in this section of the questionnaire.

Special events appear important to this community, with 60% to 80% of the respondents supporting seasonal events, special events and concerts in parks. Given the findings reported in other sections of this report, this finding is consistent with the overall attitudes of the community. *THE DEPT should continue to provide and expand upon special activities in their facilities.*

The importance of year-round recreation is also important to this community, with 55% of the respondents indicating the importance of winter activities. This finding should be examined in light of the string interest in an indoor facility and *THE DEPT should consider ways in which it can offer recreation opportunities in winter, especially in an indoor setting.*

The respondents indicated interest in educational programs. Nearly half the respondents indicated interest in adult education and instructional programs. When coupled with the interest in self-improvement, this reinforces earlier recommendations about the need for programs that allow for self-improvement through education and training.

The respondents indicated interest in programs for specific population groups. Nearly half the respondents indicated interest in senior programs and programs with people with special needs. These are significant segments of the population and with perhaps the least access to recreation other than what is provided affordably by public agencies, and the *DEPT should ensure that programming is offered equitably to all segments of the population irrespective of the ability to participate in the most popular activities.*

The data also shows that there is interest in special activities that would be popular to smaller groups in the community. These should not be ignored by the DEPT but when prioritizing resource allocation, the items that rank higher deserve greater importance.

The results from the facility-related needs are summarized in the following table. The second column of the table provides the same information as in the previous table.

**Table 11: Areas of Need – Programming**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Ratio, Tax:UF</b>
Concerts in parks	80%	1:1
Seasonal festivals in parks	71%	1:1
Special events	62%	1:3
Adult education	57%	1:6
Dining along the river	57%	1:3
Senior programs	57%	1:1
Winter activities	55%	1:2
Theater and drama	53%	1:3
Indoor water aerobics fitness	51%	1:7
Arts and crafts programs	50%	1:4
Educational and instructional programs	49%	1:5
Programs for special needs populations	49%	1:1
Fishing	48%	1:1
Trips and tours	47%	1:6
Lap swimming	44%	1:6
Preschool programs	42%	1:2
Canoeing Kayaking	41%	1:2
Gardening	40%	1:2
Disc Golf	37%	1:1
Paddle boating	35%	1:6
Indoor soccer	28%	1:6
Handball	19%	1:4
Synchronized swimming	17%	1:7
Cricket	8%	1:5

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

This section of the report is arranged as a series of frequently asked questions about the study and its principal findings. All the answers are based on the aggregate data that has been reported here.

*What do the respondents consider to be the most important leisure facilities/activities?*

Based on use information and the needs expressed, the issues important to the respondents include neighborhood and regional parks, trails related to living a healthy life style with sufficient access to open spaces, and the need for an indoor multi-use facility. The community is also supportive of creative ways of financing recreation including solicitation of private gifts and corporate sponsorships while the community is also willing to pay reasonable user fees for recreation opportunities.

*When considering the whole population, what should THE DEPT emphasize for the future?*

In general a certain set of trends emerge in terms of programs and facilities and it is possible to take the entire data from the study and suggest a set of priorities that emerge. Although not in a specific hierarchical order, these remain the top issues that THE DEPT has to address in the near and long term:

1. Neighborhood parks
2. Regional parks
3. Availability of trails
4. An indoor multi-use facility
5. Engage in fund raising through solicitation of sponsorships
6. Better advertise location of facilities and programs
7. Programming for seniors and special needs populations
8. Special events
9. Offering activities at times convenient to the community
10. Programming for year-round recreation

## COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS STUDY

This section of the report takes some of the key recommendations from the study conducted in 2000 and demonstrates how those recommendations compare to the data collected in 2011. Since the questionnaire items were developed new in 2011, exact comparison between questionnaire items is less informative than taking some of the findings and comparing them with the findings this time. The methodology used in 2000 was similar to the one reported here with a slightly higher (16.8%) response rate and smaller (4,500) mailings. The information is presented in a tabular manner showing the recommendation and data from 2000 and then providing commentary based on the data reported here.

2000	2011
<b>The focus group discussions consistently suggested the people were interested in special events and athletic activities. This was represented in the finding that Special events, sports and athletics were of interest to 92% of the respondents.</b>	There is a continuing interest in special events with a slight diminishing of the interest in athletics. This might be a result of the fact that the respondent group in 2011 is made up of a slightly older population. However, the data also shows that there is sufficient use of athletic facilities.
<b>Bike trails and athletic complexes are the most popular facilities.</b>	The interest in trails is seen again, demonstrating that there is a continuing need to provide these facilities.
<b>The survey data suggests that competing activities was considered a significant reason for non-attendance.</b>	Competing activities still remains one of the two important reasons for non-attendance, now sharing its top rank with lack of information which was the second most important reason for non-attendance in 2000.
<b>In the case of SFPRD the most effective means of publicity include brochures, direct mail and newspaper advertising. The Internet was considered the least effective way of keeping people informed</b>	There is little change in this feeling with the traditional means of communication remaining important ways of informing the community, although now the Internet has become important too.
<b>In the case of Sioux Falls, the most popular time slot for recreation for the adults, regardless of day, is between 7:00 and 10:00 pm.</b>	This trend continues with a slight shift to an earlier time slot (6 pm to 8 pm).

<b>In the case of SFPRD most of the respondents felt that the park facilities (87%), the trails (78%), and the playground equipment (72%) are clean and well maintained.</b>	The positive assessment of the quality of facilities continue with a greater level of endorsement
<b>More than half (57%) indicated a willingness to pay reasonable user fees for new recreation opportunities.</b>	This continues with a larger portion willing to pay user fees.
<b>In the case of SFPRD there seems to be a perception that SFPRD activities are mostly youth-oriented.</b>	This perception seems to have disappeared from the community as the DEPT has become more responsive to the recreation needs of different demographic groups.
<b>Nearly three-fourths of the respondents (73%) agreed that there is a need for a multi-use recreation center.</b>	This need continues.
<b>Most (65%) considered an aquatic center to be a need.</b>	This matter has become somewhat more complex as there is a need for both a recreation center and aquatic facilities.

In addition to the comparison of the major findings, it is also possible to claim that the following recommendations made in 2000 remain important in 2011.

1. *SFPRD should consider ways to enhance programming related to the performing arts, nature appreciation and environmental interests, as well as self-improvement opportunities.*
2. *Arts and crafts (72%), aquatics (66%), hobbies (65%), and social activities (55%) should be included as programming options where possible in order to meet the needs of all of the residents of Sioux Falls.*
3. *SFPRD should concentrate its activities on weekends, and watch for possible overcrowding at facilities on these days.*
4. *SFPRD should consider ways of engaging in collaborative efforts in order to provide more and varied recreation opportunities for the residents of Sioux Falls.*
5. *SFPRD should look into the possibility of providing activities related to the performing arts.*
6. *SFPRD should look into the possibility of providing increased lighting at facilities that could benefit most from it.*
7. *SFPRD needs to also consider facilities for more specialized interests, such as arts, aerobics and weight training if a multi-use center is built.*
8. *SFPRD should consider using radio, flyers and cable television to share information about upcoming recreation opportunities.*

## **APPENDICES**

Several elements are included in the appendices including copies of the questionnaire, the cover letter and other relevant information about the way in which the study was conducted.