

## COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

This section provides an overview of the interests, desires and stated needs of the community for parks and recreation facilities. Additionally, this section outlines some key parks and recreation trends that will inform priorities and facilities decisions. In combination with the Facility Needs Assessment, this is a critical element of understanding the needs for parks and recreation facilities.

In order to better understand the needs and interests of Davis residents, a number of opportunities were provided for public input in this planning process. The comprehensive community needs assessment and public involvement program has included:

- a city-wide, random sample, statistically-valid telephone survey;
- a community web survey;
- a community-wide intercept survey;
- a youth survey;
- sports group surveys and interviews;
- aquatic group surveys and focus group; and
- a neighborhood workshop.

More than 8,000 people, representing a wide spectrum of Davis residents, have been involved in the preparation of this Master Plan Update. The variety of input methods used in this process has generated both quantitative and qualitative data that have been reviewed by the project team. The telephone survey is a statistically-valid baseline that serves as a strategic reference point for citizen preferences and priorities throughout this project. While the public has provided input to the Parks and Community Services Department through a variety of methods, the phone survey results are given the highest priority.

Specific details and assessment of the facilities, standards, needs and priorities are addressed in the Facilities Needs Assessment section of this plan.

## KEY FINDINGS

Through all of the surveys and inputs, Davis residents consistently showed they believe that neighborhood parks, the greenbelt system and outdoors activities, particularly walking and hiking, are the most important and most highly used elements of the park system. These preferences will be used to guide decision making and financial investment as the City of Davis strives to provide its residents with the recreation facilities and opportunities they desire. Following are some key findings from the needs assessment:

- **USE:** Residents use park facilities at a very high rate (75% from the web survey and over 90% in the telephone survey).
- **BENEFIT:** Parks provide residents with an opportunity to enjoy nature, improve health and wellness and to connect with their community and families.
- **VALUE:** Davis residents highly value the City’s neighborhood parks and associated recreation amenities, as well as the undeveloped natural areas for their environmental benefits and as buffers to urban development.
- **MOST POPULAR ACTIVITY:** Walking/hiking for exercise, watching wildlife, and exercising a dog, is the most popular recreation activity in Davis.
- **FACILITY EXPANSION:** Greenbelts in Davis are an outstanding feature that residents use frequently for many purposes, from bicycle commuting, and walking the dog to enjoying nature. They are a high priority for expansion.
- **FACILITY PRIORITIES:** Overall the highest priorities for recreational facilities are:
  - Neighborhood parks
  - Walking or hiking trails
  - Greenbelts
  - Open space
  - Public swimming pools
  - Sports fields
- **ACTIVITY PRIORITIES:** The highest priorities in terms of activities are:
  - Biking
  - Walking
  - Recreational swimming
  - Jogging
  - Soccer
  - Basketball
  - Dog Walking
  - Tennis

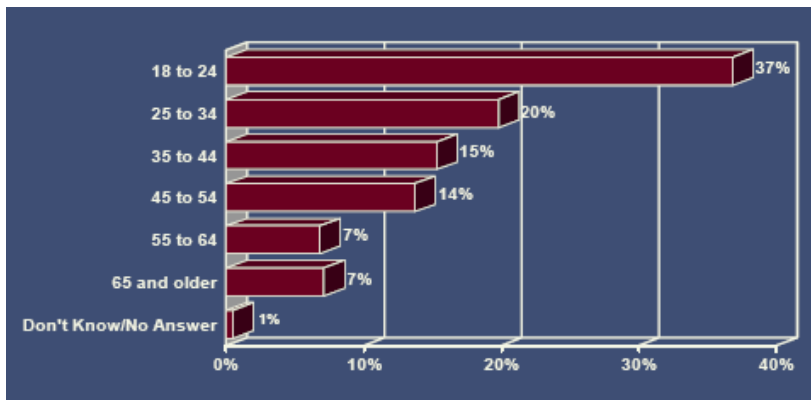
## TELEPHONE SURVEY

A telephone survey of 400 randomly selected residents, representing approximately 49,072 adults in the city, was conducted by Godbe Research between October 1 and October 7, 2007. The study parameters resulted in a margin of error of plus or minus 4.9 percent.

### Methodology

The highest percentage of residents interviewed were between the ages of 18 to 24 (37%) followed by residents between the ages of 35 to 54 (29%) and between the ages of 25 to 34 (20%). Once collected, the data were compared with the adult population in the City of Davis to examine possible differences between the demographics of the sample and the actual population. After examining the details, the data were weighted to the actual demographic proportions of the voters. More specifically, the sample was weighted by respondent age and ethnicity.

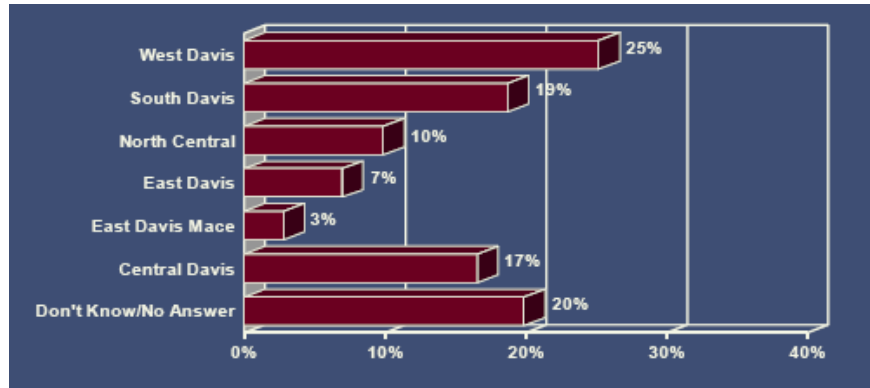
### Age of respondents



To avoid the problem of systematic position bias, where the order in which a series of questions asked systematically influences the answers, several questions in the survey were randomized such that the respondents were not consistently asked the questions in the same order.

Respondents to the survey were spread through out the city with the highest number of respondents from West Davis (25%); South Davis (19%) and Central Davis (17%). A relatively large number of respondents (20%) did not indicate where they lived.

### Location of Respondents



### Findings

The telephone survey provides a clear indication that the City of Davis residents enjoy and regularly use parks. Overwhelmingly, the survey indicated that people want to increase and enhance the opportunities to enjoy the outdoors through open spaces, greenbelts and other outdoor activities. Significant to the findings are that the facilities and activities identified as important and used the most are those that serve the widest range of individuals regardless of age. Specialized facilities or indoor facilities did not rise to the top in any of the metrics. The implications to Davis are a focus on the maintenance and enhancement of its significant greenbelt and open space facilities along with the continued provision and enrichment of programs supporting outdoor activities.

### Benefits of Parks

Identifying the inherent benefits of parks to a community is a critical element to understand how parks are perceived, supported and should be developed in the future. The telephone survey provided a list of benefits and respondents were asked to pick the most important ones. The four cited most often were:

- Provide opportunities to enjoy nature outdoors (65%)
- Improve health and wellness (61%)
- Protect the natural environment (59%)
- Connect people together, build stronger families and neighborhoods (57%)

Different subgroups had slightly different responses to these elements. One of the most significant differences was that “Connect people together, building stronger families and neighborhoods” was most important to homeowners and those of all ages but in the 25 to 34 year old group. Women significantly chose “provide opportunities to enjoy nature” over men. Additionally, “improve health and wellness” was considerably more important to homeowners than renters.

## Recreational Facilities Importance and Use

The telephone survey identified 3 key facility types as very important to Davis Residents: neighborhood parks; walking or hiking trails; and greenbelts. The level of importance is closely correlated to the frequency of use of the facilities as shown in Table 15, below.

Table15: Recreational Facility Importance and Use

FACILITY IMPORTANCE ( <i>Very Important</i> )	FREQUENCY OF USE				
	Once a week or more	1 - 3 times a month	A few times a years	Not at all	Don't Know
<b>1. Neighborhood Parks (77%)</b>	<b>62 %</b>	<b>21 %</b>	<b>9 %</b>	<b>9 %</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>2. Walking/Hiking Trails (73%)</b>	<b>50 %</b>	<b>25 %</b>	<b>16 %</b>	<b>10 %</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>3. Greenbelts (68%)</b>	<b>48 %</b>	<b>17 %</b>	<b>10 %</b>	<b>23 %</b>	<b>3 %</b>
4. Open Space (59%)	20 %	25 %	24 %	31 %	0 %
5. Public Swimming Pools (55%)	16 %	19 %	29 %	35 %	1 %
6. Children's Play Areas (55%)	18 %	15 %	12 %	54 %	1 %
7. Community Centers (48%)	2 %	12 %	45 %	41 %	0 %
8. Sports Fields (45%)	26 %	15 %	19 %	41 %	0 %
9. Senior Centers (44%)	3 %	5 %	16 %	76 %	0 %
10. Lighted Sports (38%)	14 %	16 %	20 %	49 %	0 %
11. Skate Parks (34%)	10 %	12 %	17 %	62 %	0 %
12. Dog Parks (31%)	13 %	8 %	16 %	63 %	0 %
13. Teen Centers (30%)	1 %	6 %	12 %	81 %	1 %
14. Tennis Courts (24%)	7 %	19 %	21 %	53 %	0 %
15. Batting Cages (20%)	4 %	9 %	12 %	75 %	1 %
16. Private Swimming (20%)	13 %	14 %	16 %	56 %	1 %

- Sports fields, though eighth on the list of importance, is the fourth most frequently used type of facility.
- The least frequently used facilities were:
  - Batting cages
  - Senior centers
  - Teen centers
  - Community Centers
  - Senior Centers

Differences in subgroups include an increase in use of parks by respondents who have children in the household; more frequent use of greenbelts by long-term residents (five years or more) than residents of fewer than five years; and open space is used more often by residents of West, North Central, East, East/Mace Ranch, and Central Davis than by residents of South Davis.

### Park System Improvements

Consistent with the frequency of use and importance of facilities, over 50% of respondents felt that greenbelt expansion and acquisition of natural areas was the most important park system improvement. Respondents also felt that it was at least somewhat important to:

- upgrade existing parks
- increase maintenance standards for parks and greenbelts
- develop new parks from existing lands
- acquire new land for parks
- increase the number of parks

In comparison, only 25% of respondents thought that “building major new facilities such as pools, community centers” or “modifying the greenbelt for additional recreation activities” were very important.

Looking at subgroups, upgrading existing parks is significantly more important to respondents with children in the household than to those without children. Additionally, expanding the greenbelt system is significantly more important to 35 to 44 year old respondents compared to 18 to 24 year olds, and to homeowners compared to renters.

Table 16: Improvement Importance by Subgroup

	South Davis	West Davis	East Davis	North Central	East Davis Mace	Central Davis	TOTAL
Expand the greenbelt system	1.25	1.39	1.26	1.41	<b>1.68</b>	1.63	<b>1.38</b>
Acquire natural areas	1.19	<b>1.51</b>	1.43	1.22	1.43	1.37	<b>1.37</b>
Upgrade parks	1.16	1.35	1.4	1.1	<b>1.48</b>	1.04	<b>1.21</b>
Increase maintenance service standards	0.97	1.23	0.85	<b>1.13</b>	0.6	1.11	<b>1.11</b>
Modify the greenbelt for additional activities	0.96	<b>1</b>	1.05	0.68	0.88	0.78	<b>0.88</b>
Build major new facilities	0.91	0.92	0.85	0.92	<b>1.32</b>	0.91	<b>0.93</b>

The responses to the following question were recoded to compute mean scores: “Not Important” = 0, “Somewhat important” = +1, “Very Important” = +2.

There were several preferences based on location of residents as indicated in Table 16. Most notable was that residents in East Davis Mace are the most interested in expanding the greenbelt, upgrading parks and building major new facilities; those in West Davis want to acquire natural areas and modify the greenbelts for additional activities; and in North Central residents want to see an increase in maintenance service standards.

*NOTE: The Community & Neighborhood Park Service Areas Map is useful here and/or we may need to link it to the Facility assessment section as East Davis Mace is one of the best “covered” area in terms of parks in the city.*

### Sports, Recreational, and Leisure Activities

The City of Davis residents are very active and prefer outdoor oriented activities and recreation. Their interests reflect their facility priorities with the top leisure interests being outdoor activities such as walking, hiking, and wildlife viewing and active outdoor sports and recreational activities. When asked what types of sports and recreation activities residents preferred, an overwhelming number indicated that they liked to bike (71%) and to walk/hike or view wildlife (68%). The table below lists the top twelve activities according to importance and how frequently residents participate in those activities.

Table 17: Sports/Recreational Activities Frequency and Importance

ACTIVITY IMPORTANCE (Very Important)	FREQUENCY OF USE			
	Once a week or more	1 - 3 times a month	A few times a years	Not at All
Biking (71%)	68 %	13 %	6 %	12 %
Walking/Hiking/Wildlife Viewing (68%)	53 %	28 %	11 %	8 %
Recreational Swimming (44%)	20 %	24 %	29 %	27 %
Soccer (42%)	23 %	14 %	16 %	47 %
Jogging (38%)	43 %	18 %	12 %	27 %
Dog Walking (35%)	31 %	7 %	7 %	55 %
Basketball (24%)	11 %	19 %	20 %	49 %
Tennis (22%)	5 %	21 %	21 %	53 %
Water Aerobics and Water Play (21%)	5 %	12 %	18 %	65 %
Baseball (17%)	5 %	15 %	10 %	73 %
Football (15%)	4 %	8 %	16 %	71 %
Softball (12%)	3 %	7 %	16 %	74 %

While the importance of facilities and the frequency of use are consistent with biking and hiking, the correlation with other activities is not as strong. For instance, only 38% of respondents thought that jogging was important yet 43% of respondents participated in the activity once or more a week. Another example is that 22% of respondents thought tennis was important, yet only 5% participated once a week or more.

Based on both the importance of activities and the frequency of participation indicated in Table 17, the facilities that should receive the highest priority attention in terms of improvement and maintenance efforts are those that provide additional opportunities and support the sports and recreation activities in the top tier.

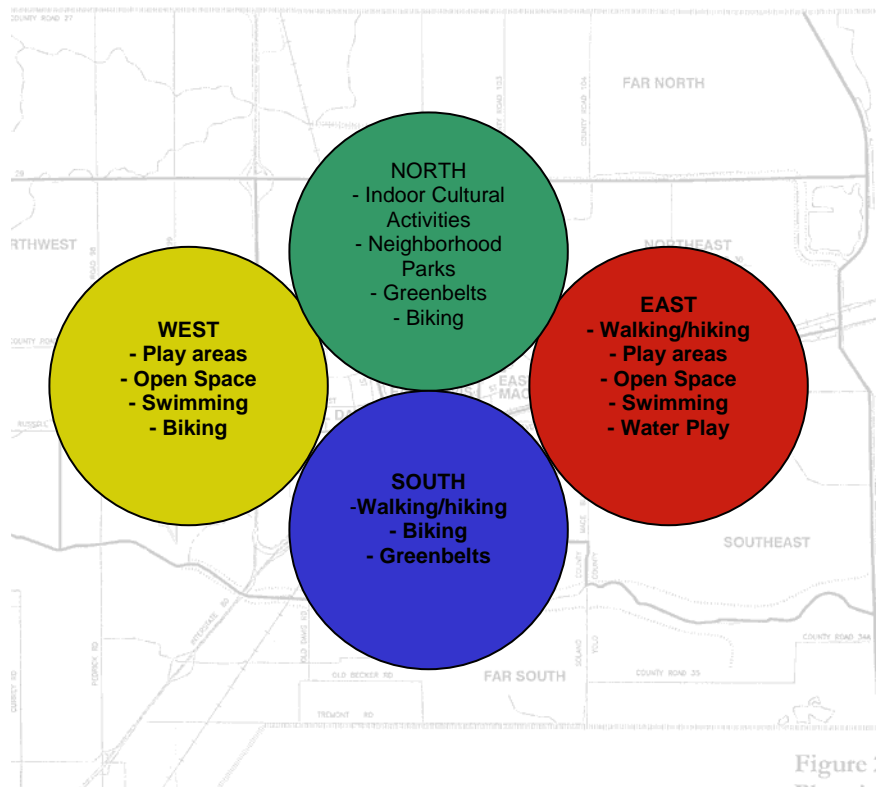
In looking at the subgroups, several trends emerged based on respondent age, household type and location. Older respondents are more likely than younger age groups to rank outdoor sports and recreational activities as

most important. Biking, recreational swimming, and soccer are more important to residents having children in the household. Biking is most important to active adults and jogging is more important to those without children in the home.

Recreational swimming is most important to residents age 35 to 54 and is most important in East Davis, and least important in South Davis. Residents from East and West Davis are the most frequent swimmers.

Priority activities vary throughout the city, as indicated in Figure 1. Notable trends include the North/Central area interest in indoor cultural activities and the south's lack of interest in swimming. Open space and greenbelts remain a top priority throughout the city.

Figure 1: Activity Trends Citywide

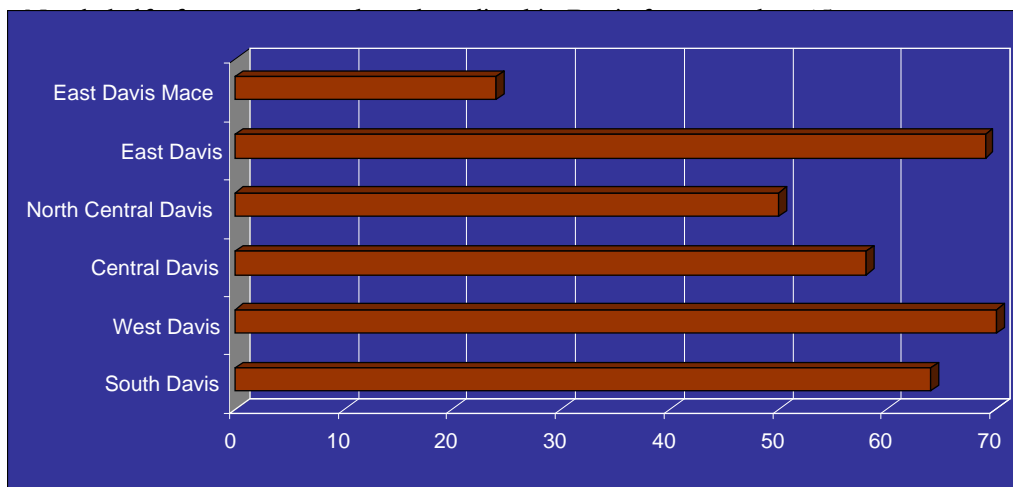
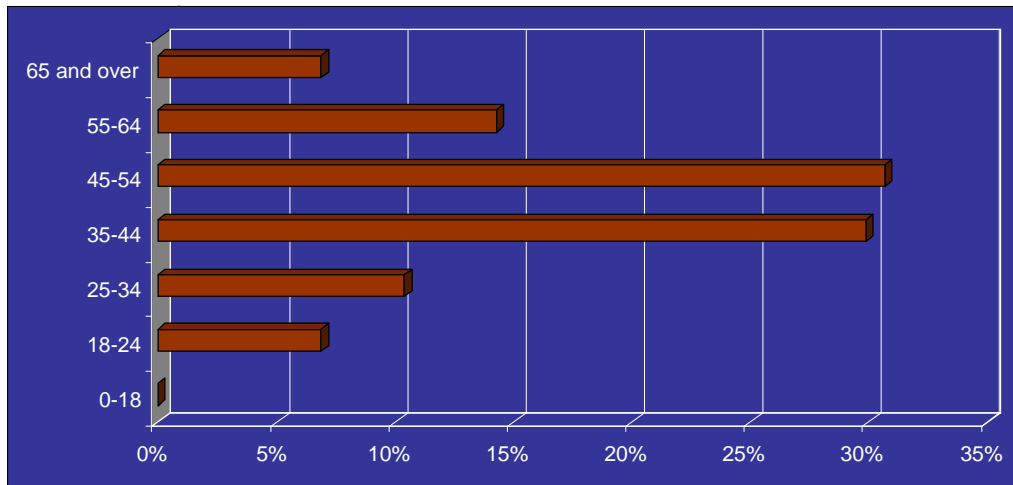


## COMMUNITY WEB SURVEY

A community web survey was conducted from November 2007 through January 2008. The survey was advertised throughout the city using various media outlets. The purpose of the survey was to provide another opportunity for citizens to participate in the planning process. The results, although not scientifically valid, provide another layer of information about community needs.

In all, 345 people responded to the survey. The responses from South, East, and East Davis Mace planning areas were roughly proportional to the percentage of the Davis total population residing in those areas. The response rate from the West and North Central planning areas were higher than their percentages of total population. The largest disparity between population and survey participation occurred in Central Davis; with 40% of the population, their responses made up 17% of total responses.

### Age of Respondents



once a week or more. Other parks (not greenbelts) are used by 72% of respondents once a week or more.

While the natural areas and greenbelts are very highly valued, there is an overall increased interest and desire for formal facilities such as sports fields, and restrooms represented in the Web Survey.

### **Benefits of Parks**

Similar to the telephone survey, providing opportunities to enjoy the outdoors was most important followed by promoting youth activity and connecting people together, building stronger families and neighborhoods.

### **Parks and open space**

Unlike the telephone survey, suggested improvements for building major new facilities such as pools, community centers, or a dedicated sports complex rated as important. Comparable to the phone survey, upgrading existing parks and acquiring natural areas is also important.

The park types that respondents said are most needed in Davis include natural areas, large multi-use parks that serve the whole community, a park consisting primarily of sports fields, and greenbelts.

The recreation amenities most needed and used, as indicated by survey respondents, are consistent with most needed park types which include, walking/biking paths, multi-use sports fields (soccer, lacrosse), restrooms, unstructured play areas and dog exercise areas. Swimming pools and children's play areas were facilities that are highly used in addition to those above.

### **Indoor Facilities**

The web survey asked what types of indoor facility spaces are most needed in Davis. Respondents indicated the following:

- multi-use community center
- spaces for recreation department classes
- a large multi-purpose/reception room
- space for teen activities

### **Recreation Programs**

The web survey provided additional input in regards to recreation programs. More than 58% of respondents participate in recreation or sports programs offered by the City of Davis and co-sponsor groups. The programs survey respondents would most like to see the City of Davis offer or expand are:

- special events
- outdoor/environmental programs
- fitness classes
- general interest classes

## COMMUNITY-WIDE INTERCEPT SURVEY

On May 17, 2007, the city-wide *Celebrate Davis* event was held in Community Park. While sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, the City of Davis is a platinum sponsor and signature participant in this popular special event. To kick-off the master planning process, an intercept survey was administered by Parks and Community Services staff during the event. The intercept surveys were designed to engage both children and adults about their parks usage, preferences and desires for the future. Over 900 complete surveys were collected and analyzed. Key findings are listed below.

- **High Participation**
  - Nearly 60% of Davis adults visit Davis Parks daily or multiple times a week
  - Over 35 % of respondents to the adult survey said they visit Davis parks twice a week or more and 21 percent said they visit a Davis park everyday.
- **Walking/running and playing (37%) with kids are primary reasons for adult park visits**
  - Another 22 percent said taking children to play is the primary reason they visit Davis parks.
  - Over half of the adult survey respondents currently have kids in school
  - Another 10 percent noted visiting pools as the primary reason they visit Davis parks.
- **Most popular park:**
  - Community Park/Rainbow City Park are the most popular park for Davis youth (34%).
  - Other parks that captured the “favorite” classification included Manor Hill /Slide Hill Park (12 %) and Arroyo Park (7 %).
- **Most needed Recreational Amenities:**
  - Pools
  - Picnic Areas
  - Bocce Ball
  - Walking Paths
  - Dog Exercise areas
- Survey respondents offered a number of suggestions in response to the question “What, if anything, is missing from current Davis Parks and Recreation programming?”
  - Increased after-school and evening programs and passive recreation opportunities were the most often mentioned programming requests.
  - In response to a question about kids programs, adults indicated a desire for increased athletic offerings, summer camps and dance classes.

## SPORTS GROUP SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

The sports groups surveyed represent over 4,800 participants in softball, baseball, soccer, Little League, tennis, cricket, and junior football. League and team coordinators were asked to share participation data for the last five years, describe participation trends, any conflicts with other sports groups and describe future facility needs and desires. In addition, groups were asked to describe their interest in partnering with the city to develop facilities. Below is a summary of key comments from the sports group's surveys and interviews:

- Facilities, in general, meet the needs of users.
- There are few scheduling conflicts except between Little League and softball.
- Sports groups are interested in collaborating to accommodate each others needs as much as possible. All groups support the development of a sports complex that will accommodate multi-use fields where a variety of teams can practice and play games.
- The loss of Nugget Fields will impact lacrosse and soccer. Relocating activities that currently take place at Nugget to fields at Harper Junior High School will minimize any disruptions to the current schedule.
- Projections for growth in number of participants vary and are often limited by available field space.
- There is some interest on the part of sports groups, though not a groups, such as AYSO, have the capacity to make a financial contribution to facility development, others are willing to offer organizational support for these efforts.
- Maintenance of current facilities is a priority. Softball, rugby and baseball groups all indicated that they contribute a significant amount of hours to the maintenance of the facilities they use. While grateful to the City for the current maintenance standard provided, groups explained that field quality can always be enhanced to increase safety. Groups also expressed a desire for greater recognition of the maintenance efforts they currently make.
- Sports user groups are interested in renting City facilities. Lacrosse and junior football representatives expressed a preference for renting facility space from the City rather than the school district.
- Civic Field is a critical resource to youth baseball teams like the Riverdogs and Davis Pony.

Based on the sports group surveys and interviews, additional soccer, baseball and softball fields are needed to support youth and adult recreation activities in Davis.

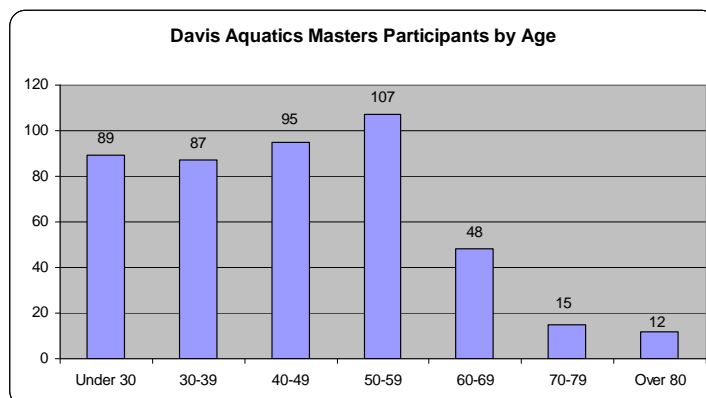
## AQUATIC GROUP SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

1,800 aquatics facility users were surveyed, representing youth and adult recreational, and competitive swimming groups. Aquatics activities are very popular in Davis and groups coordinate to make the most of the available aquatics facilities through the aquatics council. Interest in participating in aquatics programs continue to increase, despite limited capacity.

An aquatics focus group made up of representatives from the Davis Aquatic Masters, Aquadarts, AquaStarz and Davis Water Polo Club indicated a strong desire for a 50 meter pool and supporting facilities at Community Park. The facility was suggested for its capacity to support simultaneous team practices and offer staffing and operational facilities. Some aquatics representatives acknowledged that a 33 meter pool, configured to allow for simultaneous practices may suffice.

Other issues identified through surveys and focus groups include:

- Aquatics groups would like exclusive use of aquatics-related facilities
- Additional desired facilities include locker rooms and support facilities
- Potential short-term system improvements, including:
  - ✓ Additional concession facilities
  - ✓ Improved seating and lighting at Arroyo Pool
  - ✓ Expansion of the Civic Center pool.
- There is interest in exploring partnerships that may provide additional funding for the improvement and expansion of aquatics facilities in Davis.
- Development of additional aquatics facilities will allow Davis to host regional and tournament-level competitions that will attract visitors and an increased spotlight on Davis.
- The Davis Aquatics Masters group represents a broad spectrum of adult Davis residents. The group provided relevant age data of their active participants that is depicted in figure xx below:



## YOUTH SURVEY

During the winter of 2007/2008, the City of Davis Parks and Community Services Department distributed a youth survey to middle school and high school students in Davis and received over 2,100 responses. The survey was designed to give youth an opportunity to provide input about their park usage preferences, priorities and desires for the future, and other comments about parks, recreation and community services in Davis. The number of surveys distributed at each school was decided upon by school principals individually.

### Key Findings

As other survey findings indicated, the youth of Davis are active park users that enjoy biking and walking to parks for a variety of active and passive recreation activities. While they enjoy hanging out with friends in a variety of locations, Davis youth are also interested in entertainment activities and special events like concerts and dances in parks or dedicated facilities. According to survey findings, the Teen Center is neither well-regarded nor very often visited by Davis youth. Lack of money or transportation do not prohibit most Davis youth from participating in recreational activities. Davis youth did express interest in using recreation centers developed on school grounds, and indicated that they would visit for up to an hour multiple times a week to enjoy lounge areas, table games, and gym facilities.

- School sports teams, school clubs, running and soccer are the most often cited activities that youth participate in. Computer gaming was the 6<sup>th</sup> most cited activity.
- Sports teams and working a part time job were more popular responses for high schoolers than for middle schoolers. Middle schoolers expressed greater interest in basketball, skiing and snowboarding than high schoolers.

Other activities identified by respondents included:

- Skateboarding;
- Music;
- Badminton;
- Cycling;
- Field Hockey; and
- Track and Field.

### Best place to Hang Out

When asked where the best place to hang out and have fun in Davis is, students overwhelmingly chose “Friend’s/My House”. Downtown and greenbelts were the second and third most cited places. Middle schooler and high schooler responses were similar with the following distinctions:

- The teen center was a more popular response for middle schoolers than for high schoolers
- UC Davis and leaving town to hang out were more popular responses for high schoolers.

- Other responses included: visiting neighboring towns and cities, specific downtown businesses like Borders and Delta of Venus, movie theaters, and specific park areas like skate parks and tennis courts.

### Most needed facilities

In response to the question “Which of the following recreation facilities are most needed by youth in Davis,” students expressed a strong interest in under-21 dance clubs and entertainment related facilities such as a movie theater, bowling alley, or miniature golf. Areas for special events or festivals and improved greenbelts were the second most popular answers. Middle schooler and high schooler responses were similar for this question.

Other recreation facilities cited by youth included:

- Skate parks;
- Movie theaters; and
- Additional soccer fields.

### Most needed programs

When asked “Which types of recreation activities/ programs are most needed by youth in Davis,” special events like dances, concerts in the park, and festivals was the most popular. This programmatic response reinforces earlier responses indicating a preference for additional facilities to support this activity. Outdoor adventure activities like rock climbing, scuba diving and snowboarding, and dance clubs are the second most popular types of activities. Arts activities are more popular with high schoolers, while lock-ins are more popular with middle schoolers.

### Location of activities

Students strongly favor parks as the location for recreation activities. Other popular responses to a question regarding the preferred location for recreation programming included “School” and “the Mall.” Middle schoolers indicated a stronger preference for activities at the Teen Center than high schoolers. An overwhelming amount of the open-ended responses mentioned Downtown specifically as the desired location for youth recreation activities.

A majority of respondents have not visited the Teen Center in the last 6 months (76 percent) and in general middle schoolers visit the facility more often than high schoolers.

Of those respondents that have visited three times or less during the last six months, the most commonly cited reason was “I do know about the programs-don’t want to participate.” Transportation and distance are greater barriers to participation for middle schoolers, who cited these reasons more frequently than high schoolers.

Open ended responses generally indicated a lack of interest in participating, some more colorfully than others.

## NEIGHBORHOOD WORKSHOP

On May 20, nearly 30 Davis residents and UC Davis students attended a neighborhood workshop to provide input about the future of parks and facilities in Davis.

Attendees provided input regarding current parks and facilities issues and ideas for additional parks and facilities as well as suggestions for additional programming. An overall theme of the workshop was the potential role the Davis park system can play in creating community and building resident awareness and appreciation of the region and natural environment.

The input provided is summarized below:

### Issues

#### **Park Landscaping and Design**

Participants made a number of suggestions related to park landscaping and design including a general request for more dynamic park design that creates space for passive recreation and social gathering in addition to spaces for active recreation. Participants expressed concern about underutilized turf areas and suggested less resource intensive landscaping for these spaces.

#### **Safety**

Participants requested additional lighting at North Start Ponds. When discussing plaza spaces downtown, UC Davis students explained that the safety of the walk between campus and downtown needs to be improved.

#### **Parkland Development Policy**

A number of policy recommendations were made at the meeting, including:

- ✓ Evaluate park usage to identify potential opportunities for facility reuse
- ✓ Limit development of buildings on remaining parkland
- ✓ Prioritize development of new parks in the parts of town with highest density

Additional policy related questions were posed regarding the capacity of greenbelts to support the bicycling population in Davis and how the Parks and General Services department will respond to the potential impacts of resource shortages on the park system.

### Additional Parks and Facilities

#### **Amenities**

Additional amenities such as shade structures and informal picnic areas were requested. Participants also requested additional place-based public art that celebrates Davis' agricultural history and regional context.

#### **Skate Plazas**

Participants suggested the development of decentralized skate plazas that are community oriented and integrated into a park rather than separated from it.

### **Dog Parks**

Davis residents are enthusiastic about dog parks and interested in additional ones. Additional fencing and the development of dog parks for smaller dogs was also suggested.

### **Social Gathering Areas**

A number of suggestions and ideas discussed at the workshop focused on social gathering areas such as outdoor amphitheaters and picnic areas with natural landscaping and minimal hardscape. Participants expressed interest in bocce ball courts and community gardens as spaces that serve both a social and recreational purpose. In addition to social gathering areas in general, participants discussed public plazas in particular.

Existing plazas such as G Street and E Street Plaza are very popular and participants expressed interest in additional spaces like them. Plazas are seen as a complement to the existing park system and participants suggested developing spaces that host informal gatherings where people can sit and relax. Rooftop plazas were also suggested as a potential addition to the park system.

### **Recreational facilities**

A number of additional recreational facilities were requested by participants, including exercise equipment for the aging population such as walking paths and space for activities like Tai Chi. A need for a formalized BMX area was identified as well as additional lit basketball courts in North Davis.

### **Programming**

Participants requested additional arts and culture programming that celebrates the heritage of Davis residents. Street fairs in particular were noted as a potential event that people would be interested in.

## RECREATION AND FACILITY TRENDS

As indicated in the Environmental Scan, the City of Davis median age of 25.2 years is young. However, there are fewer numbers of children and seniors in Davis than in surrounding communities. While the large number of college students – Fall '05 enrollment at UCD was over 30,000 – will continue to keep Davis's median age low, the national trend of an aging population with one in five over the age of 60 by 2010 and the doubling of the senior population by 2020, will impact Davis's recreation and facility needs.

Additionally the increasing diversity of the community will affect what community members will look for in parks and recreation. Over a third of Asian-Americans and Hispanic-Americans live in California. Currently, Asians represent the highest ethnicity in Davis.

Below is a discussion of some of the key national trends which may impact the City of Davis and its development of future parks and recreation.

### The Outdoor Life Style

According to the Outdoor Industry Association, in America today 159 million people over the age of 16 participate in outdoor activities. These activities are characterized by a sense of wellness, promotion of social interaction and a connection to the outdoors. The need for flexibility in recreation program, as adults find less and less time to participate is critical, as well as the need to provide opportunities for stress release.

As evidence of the increased popularity of outdoor activity, retail sales of outdoor products (outdoor apparel, equipment, accessories) has outpaced general U.S. retail growth in 2004. Not surprisingly, the baby-boomer generation (people aged 42-60) and the millennial generation (ages 27 and younger) are the largest segments driving this new outdoor lifestyle trend.

### What the Outdoor Lifestyle Means for Cities

Today, the active outdoor lifestyle has gone mainstream characterized by wellness and quality time with family and friends. To meet this new and changing demand, people are looking for ways to be outdoors in an urban area. Due to time demands of family and jobs, convenience and accessibility is critical. The opportunity before parks and recreation professionals is to provide meaningful outdoor activity in urbanized environments. Cities that can deliver compelling trails, integrate unique open space, and wetlands and provide interesting park opportunities will have a competitive advantage to retain and attract people.

**Recreation Oriented Development** is the new term for the aligning of parks, recreation and open space to drive new investment and focus development in established communities.

In order to effectively assess and develop a successful city park system, we need to understand the nature and extent of the new outdoor lifestyle generating demand for parks and recreation. We need to understand how outdoor amenities provide opportunities to activate cities in new ways, including aligning park development with new housing, with visitor

services; land development; business development; and community development.

## **Integrated Park and Open Space System**

A City's park and open space system must offer a hierarchy of spaces ranging from small pocket parks and plazas to pedestrian boulevards and destination parks, all connected by pathways, trails, bikeways and green streets. Each space plays a distinct and key role in the system. Some will serve as large cultural venues and draw users regionally and beyond, some may become vital urban plazas linked to transit, restaurants and retail, while others may offer small green respites from the urban environment. Looking to other cities in the United States as well as Europe and beyond, we can think beyond the traditional concept of open space and explore how the spaces between buildings or how certain streets may play a role in creating a green infrastructure.

## **The Child in the City**

One of the greatest challenges cities nationwide are facing, is how to retain and support families in the urban environment. This challenge includes creating an appropriate park system for child development – physical, social and cognitive – creating the opportunity to enjoy and experience nature, as well as provide safe streets and accessible schools. More than the development of tot lots, considering children in the city means looking at the entire network, from streets and plazas to trail and parks, as an interconnection support system. Each element of the system must consider children of all ages and families.

To effectively understand this demographic, we will need to consider a number of age groups: 0 - 5 year olds; 5 - 12 year olds; 13 – 18 year olds; young adults, and families as a whole. Each group presents particular demands that need to be weighed in the programming of the parks and open space system. Teenagers and young adults are perhaps the most challenging of this group. As a whole, they do not want to be categorized with children, may not want to be part of an organized group, and are often more interested in exploring a larger realm. Evaluating how to provide safe and interesting experiences for this group will be paramount to serving the full needs of residents.

## **Aging population**

One of the strongest trends through out the United States, California and the region is the aging of our population. While Davis has a younger population than many communities, it must consider and develop facilities and programs that will serve older adults with a variety of needs and interests. Seniors can no longer be lumped into a single, 65-plus category and be effectively served. With healthier lifestyles, people live longer and more actively than ever before. Parks and recreation providers need to consider multiple stages and interests of seniors' diverse lives. Facilities and programs must provide for seniors who are: interested in developing new skills, participating in new activities; for those with some health issues and access concerns; for passive and more contemplative activities; for seniors

looking for intergenerational interactions and for those who want more quiet environments.

### Technology

Technology is offering parks and recreation providers with broad new opportunities as well as new challenges. Baby boomers tend to be more educated and more technology dependent, desiring more high tech and “amenity” rich experiences. Technology can simultaneously provide a mass communication tool while improving affordability and accessibility to community members. Opportunities for tech-aided recreation are growing while a conflicting trend for techno-free parks and environments is emerging. Finding the right balance and appropriate use for technology in parks and recreation facilities and programming will be an evolving effort.

### Economics and Financing

Parks and recreation professionals have often had to fight for resources to build and maintain a high quality system of parks. This pressure continues with the trend towards higher cost-recovery requirements and higher user fees for new facilities. The need for new sources for revenue generation is encouraging parks and recreation professionals to become more entrepreneurial. Expanding opportunities for sponsorships, as well as looking to new potential partners for funding programs and facilities is becoming a priority. Additionally, identifying and securing long-term funding sources for maintaining and renovating existing parks is an ongoing challenge.

### Implications for the City of Davis

As a progressive and well planned City, Davis is well positioned to build on its numerous assets and directly address these new trends. The extensive greenbelt system, dedication to enhancing natural areas, and an already very active community will allow Davis to be a leader in creating innovative facilities and activities to serve its community.

Some of the key concepts for Davis to consider based on the Community Needs Assessment include:

- Maintain and enhance existing greenbelts and continue development of more greenbelts, particularly ones that improve connections to other greenbelts and trails.
- Identify, rehabilitate and strengthen natural areas.
- Look for ways to sensitively integrate technology as a recreational amenity.
- Maintain and increase community gathering areas and plazas in the core city and in other neighborhoods.

- Consider “Complete Streets”<sup>1</sup> concept and how that can work with providing urban open space and strong community connections.
- Boost health and wellness activities through coordinated programming and facility development.
- Provide flexibility in new facility development to enable them to evolve with population.
- Training recreation program coordinators to understand the different needs of young and old teens as well as in professionals who understand broad range of needs for seniors.
- Continue to serve and address needs of active sports and aquatics groups by developing a new sports complex and renovating existing facilities.
- Where possible develop additional neighborhood parks or improve existing neighborhood parks.
- Develop specific standards in the general plan to expand the definition of parks to include all public gathering areas and plazas.

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<sup>1</sup> Complete Streets is a policy and concept that advocates multi-modal streets with the development and redevelopment of arterials and boulevards to serve pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and vehicles more equally.