

# Public Input

Public input is the driving force behind all parks and recreation master plans. For the plan to be effective it must accurately reflect the facilities and programs most desired by the citizens of the community. The citizens are the participants in and users of the parks system, and without strong support and usage by them, the parks system becomes ineffective. The recommendations contained later in this master plan were driven by public input gathered through a variety of forums—input recorded in interviews, public meetings, a steering committee workshop and a user survey randomly distributed to 3,600 Blount County residents.

The input process started with interviews that included meetings with parks and recreation staff, commission board members and other city and county staff. These interviews were necessary to develop an understanding of how the parks and recreation organization functions as well as to develop an understanding of issues that exist within the community and the department itself. The issues identified in the workshop included everything from rapid growth and funding limitations to the need for new and renovated facilities. Interviews with city and county representatives helped to uncover past and current planning efforts related to greenway development as well as efforts to track and accommodate the rapid population growth of Blount County.

## Interviews

Parks and Recreation Commission staff interviews were held to develop an understanding of the day-to-day operations of the commission. These interviews outlined staff responsibilities and factors related to support staff, funding and facilities—all contributors to limiting the ability to expand recreation opportunities. The parks and recreation commission board member interviews served to provide a historical perspective of the evolution of parks and recreation in the community as well as to provide additional opinions for needed new facilities.

Interviews with city and county officials and staff revealed facts about the community that are both current and potentially future contributing factors to the increased demand for parks and recreation. They also examined funding limitations that exist as a result of other community service needs as well as the impacts that the continuing county growth will have on schools, roads and other services as well as on the parks and recreation programs and planning. One factor specifically mentioned in the interview process was the extension of the Pellissippi Parkway, which is proposed to link Route 33 to U.S. Highway 321 in Alcoa and Maryville. This extension is proposed to route traffic to the east of Maryville and Alcoa and will help contribute to the significant growth that is already occurring east and south of the Maryville-Alcoa urban area. This growth has produced overcrowded schools and escalated the need for increased recreation services to a critical level. The interview process also revealed that since so few active parks have been developed in recent years, the scarcity of sports activity locations for athletic teams has also become critical.

## **Steering Committee Workshop**

A steering committee workshop was held on Thursday February 5, 2004 at the new Senior Adult Center in Everett Park. The Committee was made up of 23 members of the community who were selected for their involvement in parks and recreation activities or for their ability to provide good representation for a particular segment of the population. Committee members were divided into five teams and asked to work through a series of sessions lasting approximately five hours. The information provided by the steering committee workshop helped identify specific focus areas for future public input and provided a basis for survey questions which were drafted after the workshop. The following are the results that were recorded the day of the workshop.

### **1. What are the five most critical issues facing the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks and Recreation Commission?**

#### **Group 1 Critical Issues**

1. Growth of the County – keeping up enough Parks and Recreation for citizens in relation to the location of the population.
2. Centralized areas to consolidate sports – i.e., attract regional sports competitions
- 3 Increased options for teenagers – after-school programs, dances etc. (i.e., alternatives to school sports)
4. Upkeep and renovation of current facilities.
5. More options for all ages and income levels to health and fitness access (addresses childhood obesity and family health for all socio-economic brackets.)

#### **Group 2 Critical Issues**

1. Funding, short- and long-term
2. Maintenance – upgrading facilities, trails, codes
3. Multigenerational facility (Similar to Pigeon Forge)
4. Programming for youths to seniors
5. Marketing and Partnerships (city schools) Communication of these partnerships to the public

**Group 3  
Critical Issues**

1. Providing programs and facilities for a booming population
2. Acquiring land for recreational use
3. Funding and financing
4. Staffing with certified personnel
5. Program diversity lifetime (ongoing) Pioneering new programs (adults and kids)

**Group 4  
Critical Issues**

1. Resources: how do we fund? (staff and program expansion)
2. Population growth: how and who
3. Facilities management, more adult fields, more youth fields with a variety of programs, winter sports, recreation, winter programming and education.
4. Safety and security, senior and youth physical safety. Volunteers – more professionalism, more qualified, better trained.
5. Community involvement

**Group 5  
Critical Issues**

1. Lack of available/affordable land for needed facilities
2. Decrease in grants available
3. Governments working together for funding priorities
4. Changing demographics (i.e., aging population)
5. Staffing and maintenance for additional responsibilities

**2. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Parks and Recreation Commission's programs and facilities.**

**Group 1  
Strengths and Weaknesses**

Strengths – Facilities

- Greenbelt
- Everett Center Complex
- Maintain facilities well for amount of funds available

Weaknesses – Facilities

- South Hall Pool
- Springbrook Gym
- Programs and facilities are scattered

Strengths – Programs

- Youth programs
- Willingness for suggestions

Weaknesses – Programs

- Lack of programs for teenagers
- Communication of programs that are available
- Lack of uniting vision for all three governments that make up Parks and Recreation

**Group 2  
Strengths & Weaknesses**

Strengths – Facilities

- Green belt/ways
- Some well kept
- Some new

Weaknesses – Facilities

- Out moded
- How much are they used?
- Ability to maintain
- Spread out

Strengths - Programs

- Leadership dedicated/history
- Signature events
- Good at current programs

Weaknesses – Programs

- Budget cuts
- Cost effective
- Volunteers
- Is the public interested?

**Group 3  
Strengths & Weaknesses**

Strengths – Facilities

- Great Senior facility
- Kept historical facility (Everett Gym)
- Greenbelt trails, lighting, clean, safety
- Good city parks
- Pavilions

Weaknesses – Facilities

- Security/vandalism
- Restrooms – Springbrook
- Not enough tennis courts
- More Soccer fields
- Indoor swimming (Maryville College)
- # of facilities

Strengths – Programs

- Maximize their limitations (provide good services with insufficient funding and facilities)

Weaknesses – Programs

- Need more programs
- Under-used amphitheater
- More mountain-related programs: hiking (partner with US Parks – trail maintenance programs)
- Something related to animals – zoo
- Theater/partner with palace

**Group 4  
Strengths & Weaknesses**

Strengths – Facilities

- What we have are kept up
- Trails #1 - well kept
- Few facilities are great
- most are “kept up”

Weaknesses – Facilities

- Advertising of hours and individual pickup-type games
- Non-centralized building for sports/recreation
- Parking
- Lack of facilities
- Safety
- Old facilities need work

Strengths – Programs

- Staff knowledgeable, professional, common sense
- Very organized
- Good communication
- Youth sport program is strong
- Every community has something

Weaknesses – Programs

- Fill up programs quickly, some people get left out
- Not enough variety
- Mercy of funding
- Need more seasonal activity

**Group 5  
Strengths and Weaknesses**

Strengths – Facilities

- Maintenance of existing facilities
- Heavily used

Weaknesses – Facilities

- Outdated ADA
- Lack of facilities
- Parking and access to playgrounds, picnic areas, etc.

Strengths – Programs

- Community support: partnerships, volunteers
- Qualified staff
- Program variety

Weaknesses – Programs

- Diversity
- Lack of knowledge of community needs
- Parent/Coaches training

**3. If money and politics were not issues, what programs would you include in the ideal park system for Blount County? What facilities would you include?**

**Group 1  
Programs**

- Teenage programming
- Lifetime activity development
- Coaching clinics
- Arts & Crafts
- Dance – variety of types
- Climbing/rappelling courses
- Ropes course

### **Facilities**

- Aquatic center – indoor/outdoor/diving
- Multi-purpose community center
- Indoor/outdoor tennis center
- Frisbee golf course
- Extreme sports center
- Football complex
- Softball complex
- Soccer complex
- Par 3 golf course (lighted)
- Children’s playground complex

### **Group 2 Programs**

- Soccer, youth and adult
- Indoor and outdoor
- Softball/baseball
- Swimming programs
- Adult education – nutrition, etc.
- Skate boarding/in-line hockey
- Arts and crafts
- Racquetball
- Basketball
- Fitness and weight training
- Youth football
- Adult flag football

### **Facilities**

- Multi-purpose facility
- Indoor pool
- Fitness
- Soccer Complex
- Softball fields
- Tennis courts
- Skate park
- Rugby pitch
- Center for creative play/retirement and education
- Indoor climbing center
- Indoor shooting range
- Playgrounds
- Trails

### **Group 3**

#### **Programs**

- Training program for coaches and officials
- Extended hours on camp program/clinics (poor overlap of hours)
- Teen center
- Fitness program/nutrition
- Photography
- Arts & Crafts
- Newcomer's packet for Blount County
- Market Parks & Recreation program and facilities

#### **Facilities**

- Heated?
- Community Center (3)
- Multiple recreation fields (tournaments)
- Cultural Center

### **Group 4**

#### **Programs**

- Youth Sports, team sports: basketball, tennis, swimming, soccer, baseball, softball
- Classes: rock climbing, kayaking, dance, group exercise, yoga, pilates
- Winter sports
- Clubs: walking, hiking, biking
- Summer community programs: table tennis, wiffle ball, etc.
- Education: cooking classes, first aid, youth safety, outdoor concerts
- Cards, painting, arts & crafts

#### **Facilities**

- Sport Complex / cultural and community center
- Pools
- Gym / weight room
- Inline skating trails
- Racquet sports
- Bike trails / track
- Par 3 golf course
- Game room / table tennis / foosball
- Continue Greenway throughout community

### **Group 5**

#### **Facilities**

- Multi-purpose complex
- Skateboard – extreme sports
- Civic center
- Indoor / outdoor tennis complex

- Dog park
- Par 3 golf course
- Parks/playgrounds – outlying areas
- Teen facility
- Water playground
- Disc golf
- Biking trails
- Additional pavilions
- Indoor aquatic center

Programs

- Soccer tournaments
- Indoor soccer
- Health/wellness
- Pays (parent training)
- Outdoor adventure
- Tennis tournament/leagues
- Pre-school
- Teens
- Performing arts

**4. Prioritize the lists of ideal programs and facilities.**

FACILITIES	NUMBER
Multi purpose complex with sports fields: football, soccer, baseball	47
Community Center indoor pool, gym, climbing walls, weights fitness, racquet sports	41
Indoor/outdoor tennis center	16
Skate park/extreme sports	14
Par 3 golf course	12
Continue Greenways make more bike- and walker-friendly	8
Civic center/auditorium/performance hall	4
Teen facility	3
Bike trails	3
Center for creative play / retirement education	3
Disc golf course	3
Indoor shooting range	2
New parks/playgrounds in outlying areas	2
Water playground/outdoor pools	2
Rugby pitch	0

Dog park – off leash	0
Pavilions	0

PROGRAMS	NUMBER
Tournaments/special events	17
Coaches and official training programs	13
Tennis leagues	12
Soccer all ages indoor and out	11
Teen programs	11
Softball/baseball	10
Swimming	9
Youth football	8
New comer park marketing packet	7
Winter sports and programs	6
Skate boarding, inline hockey	6
Pays (parent training)	6
Racquet ball	5
Club/walking, hiking, bicycling	5
Outdoor concerts	4
Lifetime activity development/ cooking, first aid, safety	4
Climbing, rappelling, kayaking, canoeing	4
Dance/yoga/pilates	3
Preschool programs	2
Adult education, nutrition/fitness	2
Arts and crafts	2
Summer community programs (i.e. wiffle ball, table tennis)	2
Photography	2
Youth team sports	1

**5. How should the Parks and Recreation Commission fund the recommendations that will be identified in this master plan?**

Funding Ideas: (Group Discussion)

- Revenue generation
- Grants
  - Personnel assigned to grant writing/tracking
- Memorial Donations
- Naming rights
- Wheel tax
  - Redirect hotel/motel tax
- Hotel/Motel Tax to fund multi-purpose complex
- Sale of surplus land
- Impact fees

- Foundations
- Fund raisers
- Friends of parks

### Workshop Results

The steering committee workshop served to identify some of the critical issues and needs of the community. Common themes relative to the need for funding, increased programming, renovated and new facilities and keeping up with growth were prevalent among all the groups. The opinions also expressed the positive attitude toward overall maintenance and current staff and management and reflected a pride in the greenbelt.

Workshop participants were asked to identify the ideal park system relative to facilities and programs. Question #4 represents the results of that discussion as well as the priority in the minds of participants of where those programs should be ranked in future implementation. While some facilities and programs may have fallen to the bottom of the list, the key factor is that they have been identified as needs or desires.

Another exercise conducted the night of the workshop was a discussion of appropriate facility standards that should be used as benchmarks for future park development. The discussion took into consideration standards developed by the National Recreation and Parks Association. The NRPA standards were developed in the 1980s and were intended as guidelines for communities to follow when determining the appropriate number of facilities to provide for residents. These standards have not been updated since their original inception, and whereas recreation trends have changed over the past 20 years, most of the guidelines are still applicable. Workshop participants were asked to evaluate the existing standards and determine if they were appropriate based on trends in the local community. The following represents the new standards that were suggested by the group. As shown, several of the standards were determined to be too high while others were considered too low.

NRPA Standards for Park Facilities	NRPA Recommended Standard	Workshop Participant Standards
Acreage	10.5/1000	6.5/1,000
Outdoor Basketball	1/5,000	1/5,000
Tennis	1/2,000	1/4,000
Volleyball	1/5,000	1/10,000
Baseball/Softball	1/2,500	1/2,500
Football	1/20,000	1/20,000
Soccer	1/10,000	1/5,000
Swimming Pool**	1/20,000	
Aquatic centers		1/100,000
Outdoor pools		1/50,000
Running Track	1/20,000	1/100,000
Indoor Roller Hockey	1/100,000	1/100,000
Golf Course (18 Hole)	1/50,000	1/100,000
Golf Driving Range	1/50,000	1/100,000
Multiple Recreation Court	1/10,000	1/25,000
	Developed Standard	Workshop Participant Standards
Trail System	1mile/3,000	1 mile/5,000
Gymnasium	1/20,000	1/20,000
Playground	1/1,000	1/5,000
Cultural Center	1/100,000	
Community Center	1/50,000	1/50,000
Picnic Pavilion	1/2,000	1/5,000
Soccer	1/4,000*	1/5,000
Outdoor Roller Hockey	1/25,000*	
Inline Skating Court	1/25,000*	1/100,000
Skate Park	1/100,000*	1/100,000

\* Standard developed by Lose & Associates, Inc. to respond to recreation trends and growth in certain sports since 1983.

\*\* NRPA standards do not differentiate between indoor and outdoor aquatic facilities.

## Public Meetings

Another form of public input utilized during the master plan process was open public meetings. The first of these meetings was held at the Blount County Public Library on March 24, 2004 with approximately 75 people in attendance. A large crowd representing the tennis community was present at the meeting. Input specific to tennis included a desire to see more tennis courts at William Blount High School. Additionally, members at the meeting expressed interest in having an indoor tennis complex. It was noted that a large number of adults play tennis in the Knoxville/Blount County region with over 68 adult teams in the Knoxville Tennis Association.

Members in attendance the night of the meeting also represented the fine arts interests of the community. It was noted that a performing arts center had been discussed in conjunction with Maryville College; however, a facility to meet the needs of cultural arts was also desired. Over 400 students currently participate in arts activities in programs that are separate from the schools, utilizing facilities at the college and in local churches.

The swim community was also represented at the public meeting. Members of the swim community pointed out that there are 775 competitive swimmers in the community with no public indoor facility. Swimmers currently use Maryville College even though it was expressed that the facility was extremely inadequate and did not sufficiently meet the needs of the community. Members in attendance drew attention to the fact that activities like swimming and tennis are lifetime activities and in a world with many overweight and obese children the opportunity to participate is extremely important.

Several attendees at the meeting were concerned with the need for a skate park. There is not currently any place where kids can skate without getting in trouble. Many drive as far away as Johnson City and places in Georgia for organized skate facilities.

Another comment was made relative to the need for additional racquetball courts. Citizens currently use facilities at a private recreation center downtown but there are only two courts, limiting availability. Racquetball, handball and squash were said to be growing in popularity with no facilities (public or private) available in the area.

A second public meeting was held on March 25, 2004 at the Everett Recreation Center. There were approximately 40 people present at the meeting. Topics of discussion included tennis, the need for a skate park, rugby and lifetime sports and activities.

The concerns regarding tennis were again for lack of facilities. Heritage High School was described as having inadequate tennis courts. School teams therefore utilize courts in John Sevier Park. The need for school teams to use park facilities displaces recreation users in the park.

The need for more athletic fields was also discussed at the Everett Center public meeting. Representatives from the rugby community described their frustration with trying to find available playing time on existing park or school fields. Pearson Springs Park and two fields located at the Vulcan soccer complex are most often utilized; however, availability is secondary to all school and recreation teams. It was noted that school fields are

typically not available for private recreation leagues to use. If the activity is not affiliated with parks and recreation or the schools, then the fields are likely off-limits.

A large crowd was present at the meeting representing the skate park community. As with the Library meeting, concerns were expressed about the lack of an available skate facility in the community.

### **Community Survey**

In March of 2004 a survey was mailed to 3,600 Blount County residents. The mailing list was a random sample of residents of both incorporated and unincorporated areas. Questions were derived from results of the interview process, the steering committee workshop and the public meetings. Approximately 10% of the surveys were returned and tabulated; this percentage provides a confidence level of 95 percent with a sampling error of  $\pm 3$  percent. Survey results were intended to provide a confirmation of the community's desires for public recreation that were expressed in the workshop, public meetings and interviews. The survey (Appendix C) contained 18 questions assessing the types of programs in which citizens are currently participating and those that show a future interest of participation. Questions also assessed the priority for future facility development and renovations that should be undertaken by the parks and recreation commission as well as possible options for funding the improvements. The following charts and graphs provide a graphic representation of survey results. Also included are selected comments respondents wrote on their survey forms.

### **Survey Analysis**

A review of survey responses was quite revealing. The top fourteen are listed below:

*Passive/Individual Activity*

Concerts in the Park (211)

Playgrounds (180)

Running/Walking (173)

Special Events – Health Fairs, Holiday Activities, etc. (173)

Hiking (162)

Arts and Crafts (147)

Nature/Outdoor Programs (127)

Music (88)

*Active/League Sports*

Swimming (129)

Youth Baseball (112)

Youth Basketball (108)

Youth Soccer (104)

Adult Softball (87)

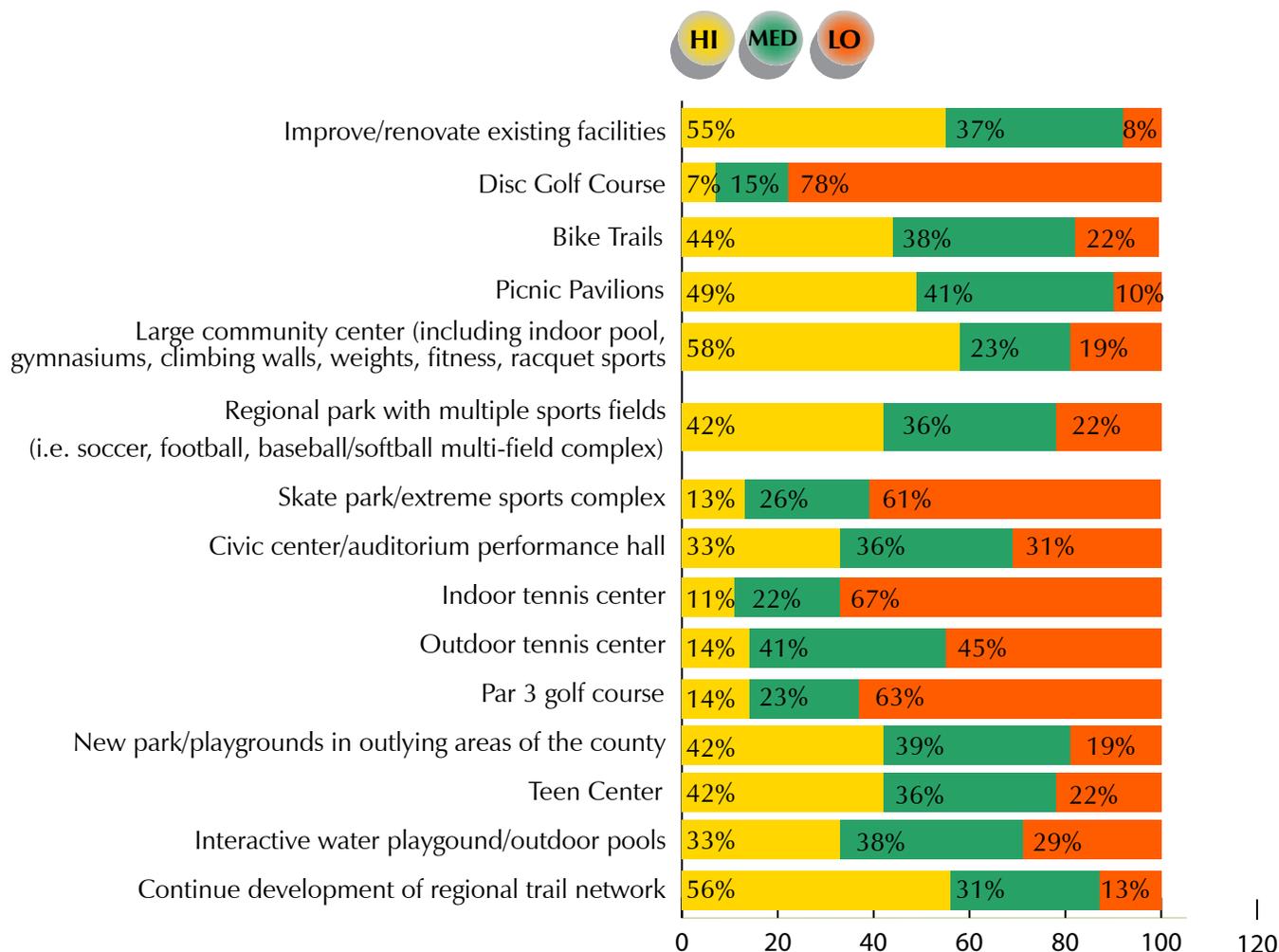
Youth Football (90)

These activities are exactly what one would expect from a community that has a strong youth athletic following and has a well developed greenway system. The location of the Great Smokey Mountains National Park in close proximity to Blount County would also

create the atmosphere for a community of hikers, walkers and nature enthusiasts. Many indicated participating in special events and concerts in the park as one might expect with a state-of-the-art amphitheater centrally located within the City of Maryville.

When asked to consider what renovations or new facilities should receive the highest priority, 58 percent of survey respondents indicated that a community center that offered indoor facilities for swimming, weightlifting and fitness, racquet sports and gymnasium space should receive top consideration. This was closely followed by continuing development of the regional trail network (56 percent) and improving/renovating existing facilities (55 percent).

**2) Please indicate with the appropriate number whether you think the following should have a (1) high priority, (2) medium priority, or (3) low priority for implementation:**



When the numbers for both “high priority” and “medium priority” are combined, the priorities adjust somewhat: improving existing facilities received 92 percent support, the regional trail network received 87 percent support and the community center received 81 percent support. Other high priority items were picnic pavilions, bike trails, new parks/playgrounds in outlying areas and a regional park with multiple sports fields for soccer, baseball, softball and multi-sport play. Items receiving lower priority included a par 3 golf course, indoor tennis center, skate park/extreme sports complex and a disc golf course.

*“We need more swimming pools for the community.”*

*“Additional sports fields are greatly needed!”*

*“Now is the time to buy land to preserve green spaces for parks, etc.”*

*“Tennis program is great but Maryville has needed an indoor facility for years! You have to go to Knoxville to play indoors in the winter.”*

*“Absolutely need indoor tennis facility.”*

*“One large or a few small indoor swimming pools please.”*

*“We really need a skateboard park...”*

*“Desperately need comprehensive athletic facility that includes 4 or 5 fields softball/baseball complex.”*

*“We need more softball fields to accommodate the growing number of teams!”*

*“I would really like to see a new indoor facility...with pool, tennis courts, workout area and climbing wall.”*

*“...an indoor year round community center and pool would be a very welcomed addition to our county.”*

*“Our tennis group needs a covered court(s) we could play on year around.”*

*“...minimum of two 4-plex fields would allow...ASA league play...ASA tournaments could be sanctioned and played several times each summer.”*

*“The area desperately needs a skate park.”*

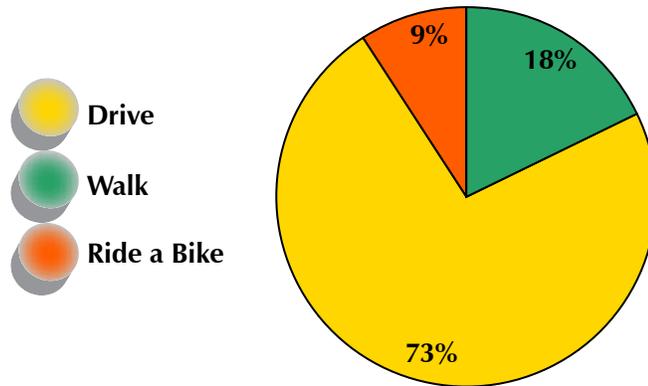
*“I think the area needs a softball complex.”*

*“We need a swimming pool for the high schools and summer programs.”*

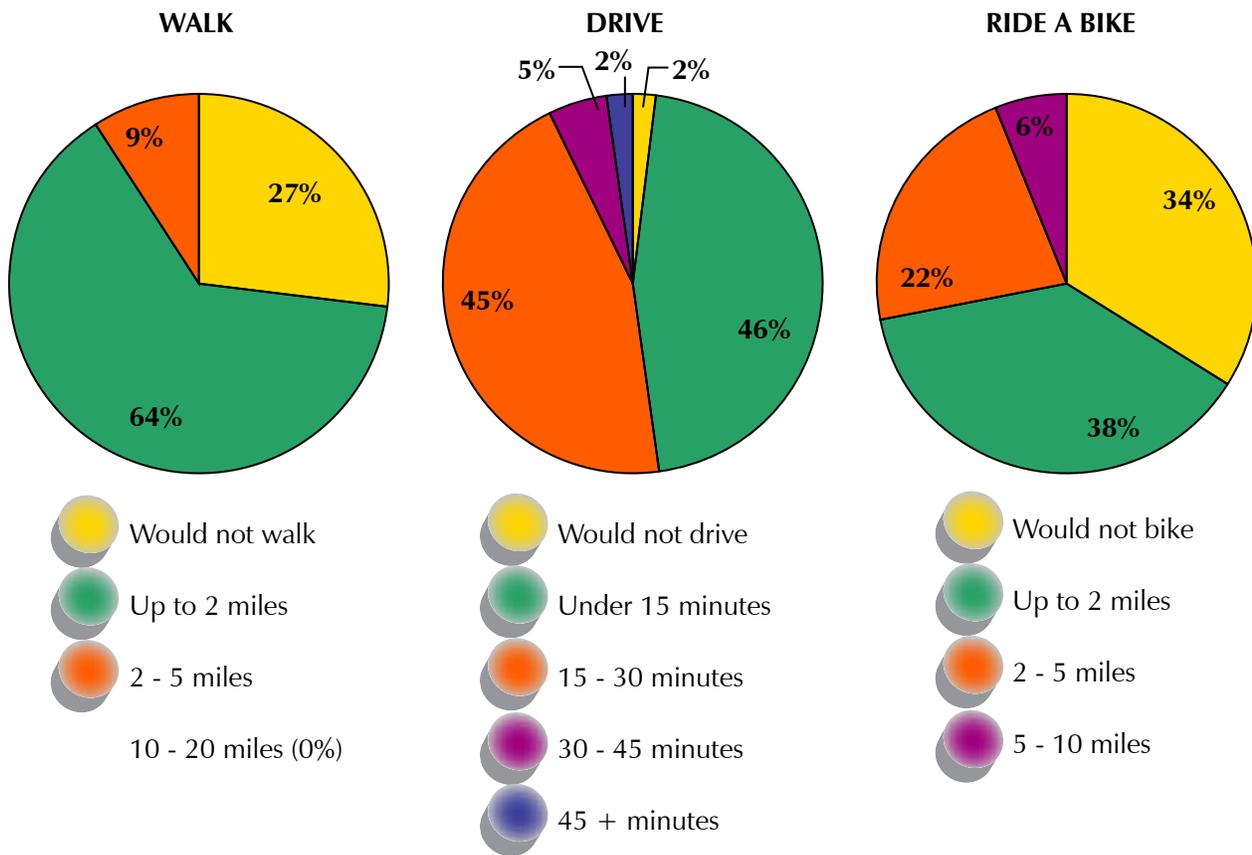
### **Access to the Parks**

Evaluation of other survey responses found that 73 percent of respondents drive to the park facility they use most often. Of those polled, 64 percent said they would be willing to walk up to 2 miles to a park if safe routes were available. Others indicated they would not want to drive more than 15 minutes to a park (46 percent) while 45 percent said they would be willing to drive 15-30 minutes. Those who would be willing to ride a bike up to 2 miles included 38 percent of the survey respondents while 22 percent would ride 2 to 5 miles and 6 percent would ride 5 to 10 miles. Travel time willingness may also be dependent upon the type of activity at a particular park.

**3) Do you currently (1) walk, (2) drive, or (3) ride a bike to the park facility you use most often?**



**4) How far would you be willing to walk, drive, or ride a bike to park and recreation facilities?**



*“Need more parks in outlying areas.”*

*“We must currently go into the city to get access to park systems. It would be nice to have more park access in outlying county.”*

*“...we need parks within walking distance.”*

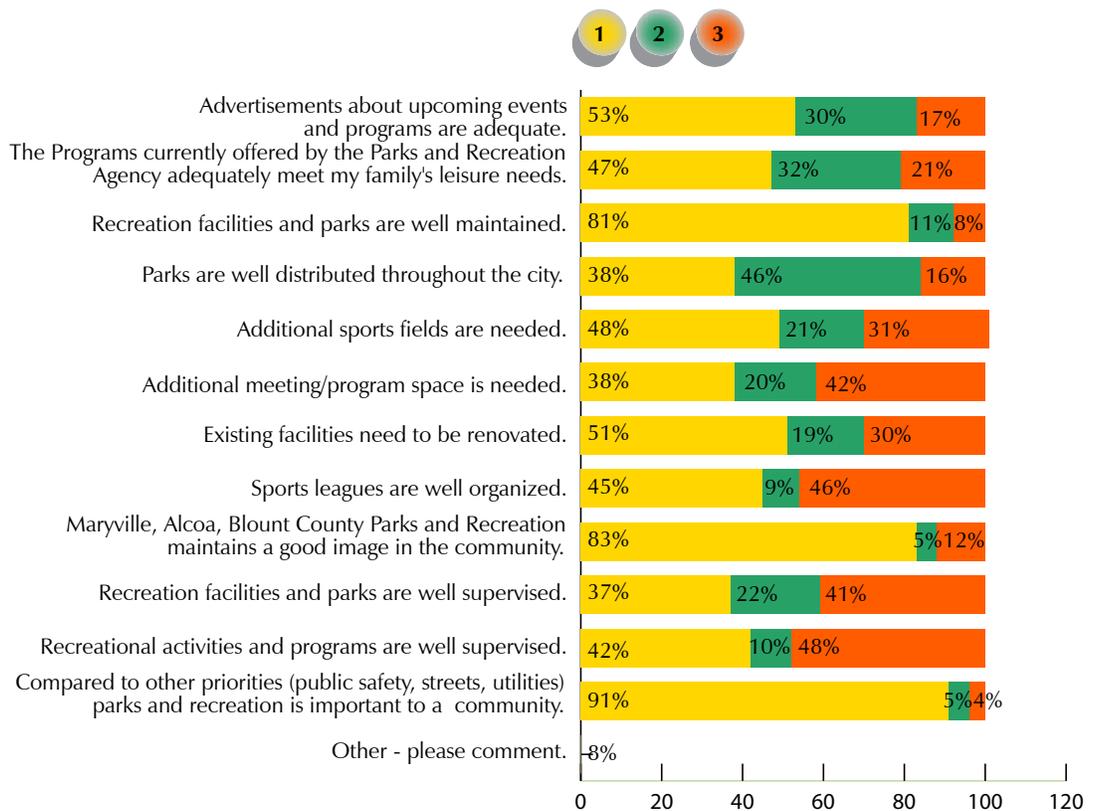
*“I live in Townsend and the only knowledge I have of your services in Townsend consists of Monday night Pilates class that I participate in and the basketball free form that my grandchildren attend. We need access to facilities more often than one night a week... nothing is done here for the citizens that I am aware of. Why?”*

### **Overall Performance**

Questions directed at evaluating the overall performance and quality of the parks and recreation are totaled below:

	AGREE	DISAGREE/DON'T KNOW
Event advertising is adequate	168	147
Program offerings are adequate	159	178
Facilities/parks are well maintained	<b>264</b>	63
Proper distribution of parks	125	200
Additional sports fields needed	156	168
More meeting/program space needed	121	196
Renovation needed at existing facilities	160	156
Sports leagues are well organized	142	176
Parks and Recreation Commission has good image in the community	<b>267</b>	54
Facilities and parks well supervised	117	202
Parks and recreation are important to a community	<b>294</b>	29

5) Please indicate with the appropriate number if you (1) agree, (2) disagree, or (3) don't know about the following statements:



The three most consistent responses are ones for which Blount County Parks and Recreation can be proud: **The citizens take pride in the way their parks are maintained; the Parks and Recreation Commission has a very positive image in the community; and the citizens believe in and will, thus, support expanding the recreation offerings in the county.**

Many of the “Disagree/Don’t Know” numbers are high due to a majority of respondents marking the “Don’t know” column. This may indicate that a number of non-users of the county’s recreational services took the time to respond to the survey, which can be a very positive incentive to get more citizens involved in future park plans. The most negative response and the one receiving the largest number of “Disagree” votes concerns the equitable distribution of the current parks within the county. The other strong “Disagree” categories were those questioning the adequacy of the programs currently offered in meeting their families’ needs and the effectiveness of the marketing of programs to the general public.

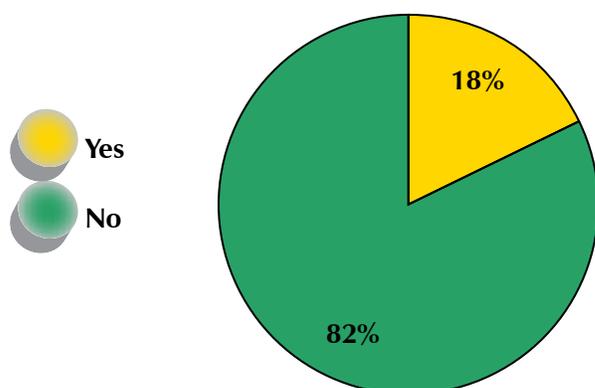
- “The greenbelt is a great community asset. Continue to expand it and promote it.”
- “The Greenbelt project is an invaluable plus for this community.”
- “Staff at Parks & Rec. office is hardworking, helpful and friendly.”
- “The staff at Parks & Rec. is super – hard-working, dedicated and helpful!”
- “You all do a great job!!”

“The Maryville Greenway is beautiful..”  
“The Greenbelt is a tremendous asset to our community.”  
“I am thrilled with our Greenbelt.”

### Marketing

In an attempt to see how members of the community find out about existing programs and activities, the survey asked respondents to indicate the most common method

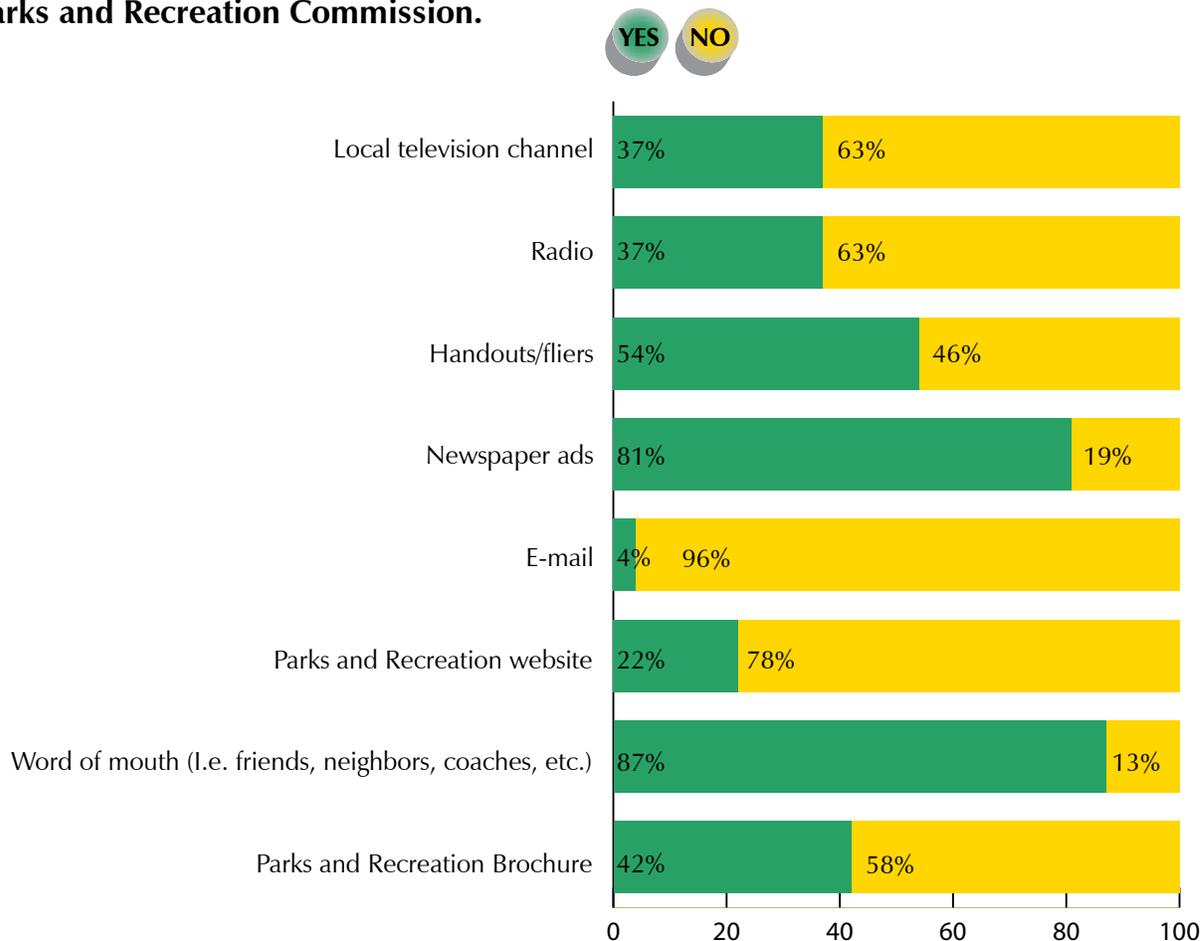
#### 6) Do you use the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks and Recreation Commission website to access information about programs, schedules and facilities?



for obtaining information. An overwhelming 82 percent indicated they did not use the parks and recreation web site to get information. The most common method used was through word of mouth. The most common information dissemination (87 percent) was through friends and neighbors while 81 percent said they obtain information about upcoming events through newspa-

per ads. This category also includes the department brochure, which is distributed as an insert in the newspaper. The least common methods were through email or the parks and recreation web site. Less than half of respondents (42 percent) indicated they use the parks and recreation brochure, but they might not have been able to distinguish between the newspaper and the brochure insert.

7) Please indicate by checking "yes" or "no" how you obtain information about upcoming programs and events that are offered by the Maryville-Alcoa-Blount County Parks and Recreation Commission.



*"Need better communications with outlying areas regarding activities and events. We have volunteered for the Foothills Fall Festival for the past 3 years and that is the only communication we have ever received from Parks & Rec."*

*"Parents of youth programs need to be better informed. Also, parents need to be welcomed more to be involved..."*

*"Events at the parks and the website need to be more widely advertised/distributed in all types of media."*

*"...registration details are rarely communicated..."*

*"Better job of letting this community know what is going on."*

*"Was not aware that you have a website or I would have been using it."*

*"Need better advertising regarding activities."*

*"Most communities where I've lived in the past have mailed bi-annual or quarterly newsletters with classes and events."*

*"ADVERTISE!!!"*

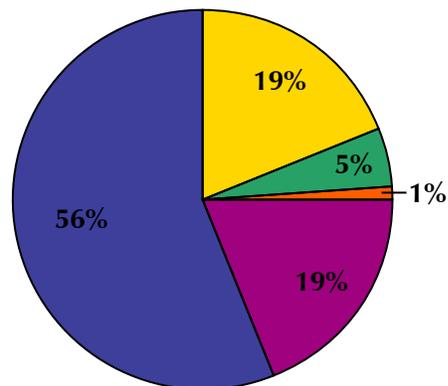
**Program Adequacy**

When asked about the adequacy of youth programs, a majority (55 percent) did not participate at all in youth programs. Of those who did, 44 percent felt that programs were

adequate for boys and girls, and 44 percent felt additional programs were needed for both boys and girls. Eleven percent felt that the programs offered for girls were insufficient while only 3 percent felt that additional programs were needed for boys.

**8) Do you feel there are adequate youth programs for boys and girls offered through Parks and Recreation?**

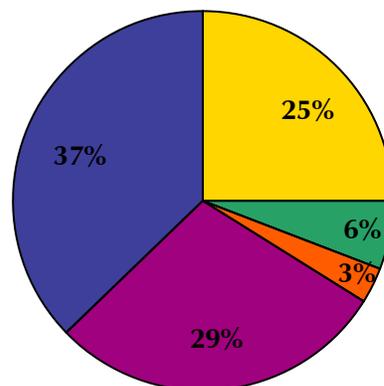
-  A) Yes, programs are adequate for boys and girls.
-  B) No, additional programs are needed for girls.
-  C) No, additional programs are needed for boys.
-  D) Additional programs are needed for both boys and girls.
-  E) Not sure, I am not involved in programs for youth.



The same question regarding adult programming revealed again that a majority (51 percent) did not participate in adult programming. Of those participating, 41 percent felt that the adult programming was adequate for men and women, and 46 percent felt that additional programs were needed for both. Nine percent felt more programming was needed for women and 5 percent felt more programs were needed for men.

**9) Do you feel there are adequate adult programs for men and women offered through Parks and Recreation?**

-  A) Yes, programs are adequate for men and women.
-  B) No, additional programs are needed for women.
-  C) No, additional programs are needed for men.(0%)
-  D) Additional programs are needed for both men and women.
-  E) Not sure, I am not involved in programs for adults.



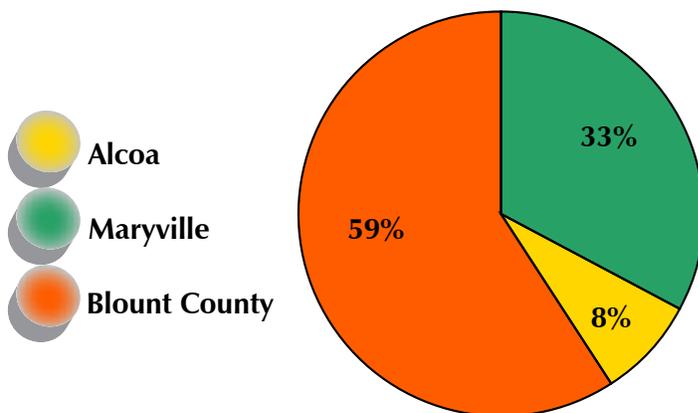
Again, the fact that a majority of respondents participated in neither adult nor youth programs but took the time and effort to send back the survey form indicated an interest in having a voice about the future of Blount County’s recreational future even though they were currently non-users of the parks.

*“Springbrook needs total renovation and total updating.”*  
*“...need more adult programs/activities.”*  
*“There seems to be more of a need on the Alcoa end for sports, activities, etc.”*  
*“There seems to be plenty to do within the city limits but not in the county areas.”*  
*“Plan well and I will support you.”*

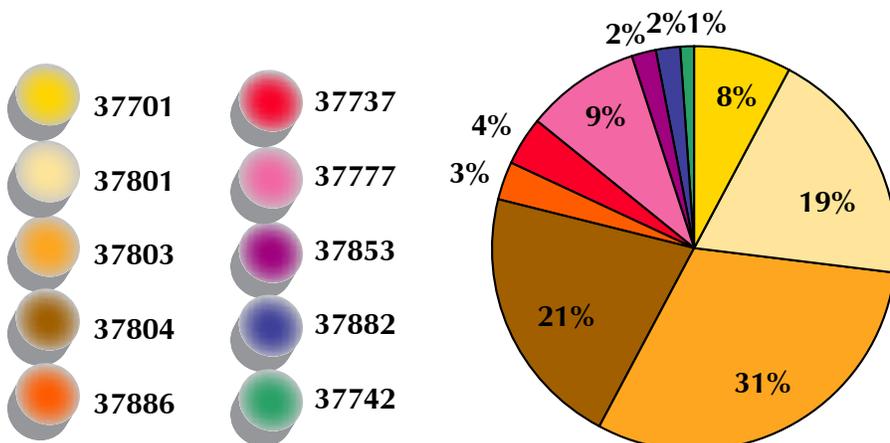
### Respondent Demographics

Survey questions directed at gaining a perspective into the demographic makeup of respondents revealed that 59 percent of survey participants were Blount County residents while 33 percent were City of Maryville residents and 8 percent were City of Alcoa residents. The age of respondents was fairly evenly distributed with 16 percent aged 25-34, 24 percent aged 35 to 44, 25 percent aged 45 to 54, 19 percent aged 55 to 64 and 10 percent aged 65 to 74. A small number, 5 percent, were over the age of 75 while only 1 percent were 24 years of age or younger.

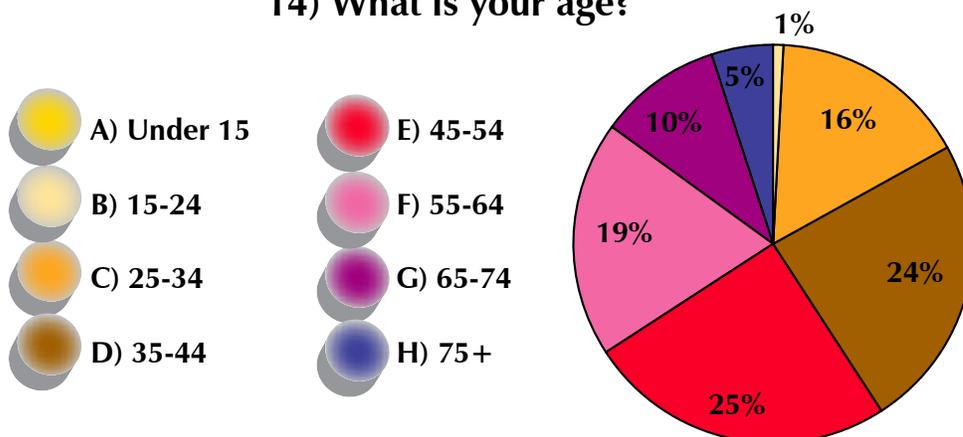
### 12) Are you currently a county resident or do you reside in Maryville or Alcoa?



### 13) Please indicate your zip code



### 14) What is your age?



Review of the makeup of the types of households that responded found that 47 percent had children under the age of 18 in the home. Of those, 9 percent were single-parent households. Twenty three percent of respondents were couples with no children and 14 percent were single adults. Retired households with no children at home represented 16 percent of the survey responses. A look at the age of children in the homes of survey respondents indicated that the majority (40 percent) had children who were aged 12 to 18. Those with children under the age of six accounted for 31 percent and those with children aged 6 to 11 accounted for 29 percent of the households who responded. As with the ages of respondents, income levels were fairly equal with 17 percent reporting an income of \$20,000 to \$34,999, 19 percent reporting an income between \$35,000 and \$49,999, 27 percent with an income \$50,000 to \$74,999, and 17 percent reporting an income between \$75,000 and \$99,999. The smallest income segments were for those under \$20,000 (8 percent) and over \$100,000 (12 percent).

*"I am not even aware of all adult programs since they are not well advertised and would be very interested in finding out more about them (grandparent)."*

*"Much improvement is needed for the elderly."*

*"There should be provisions that are interesting and affordable for retirees."*

### Parks & Recreation Office Access Convenience

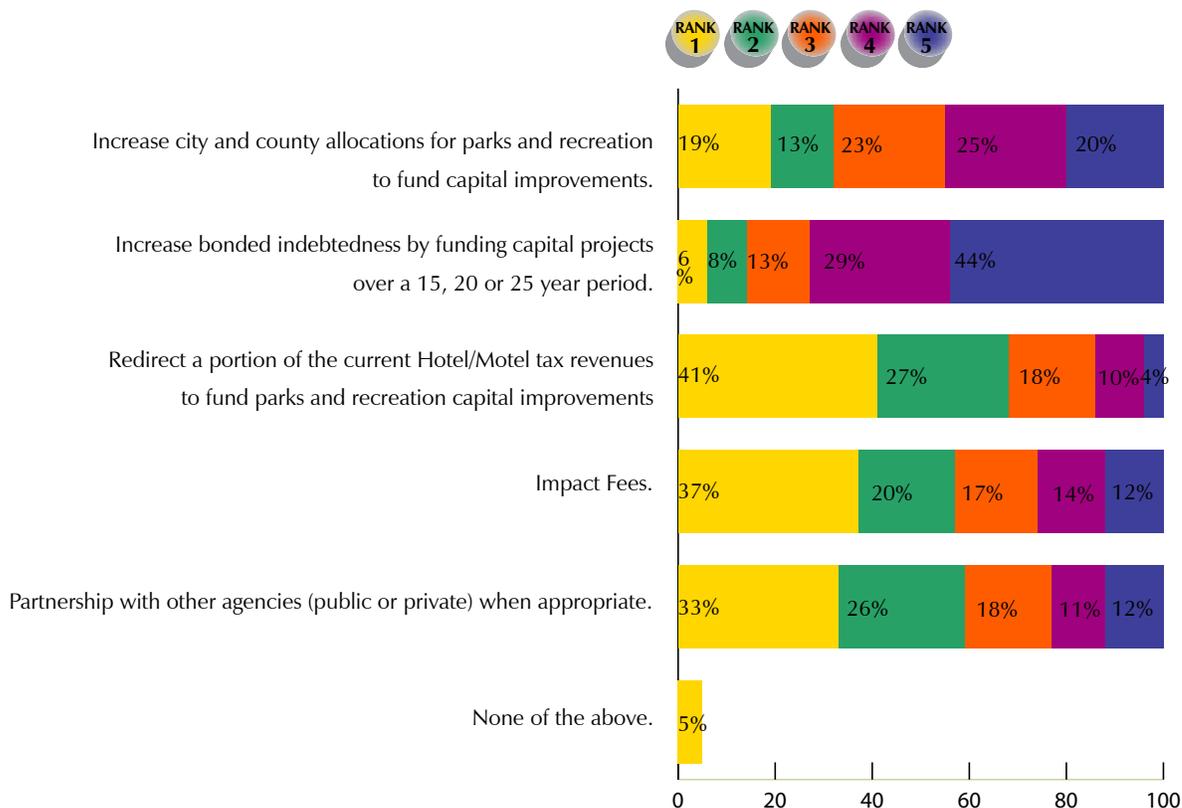
Asked to assess the convenience of the parks and recreation office location and hours, 83 percent of survey participants said the office was conveniently located while 84 percent said office hours and registration times were convenient.

### Future Funding

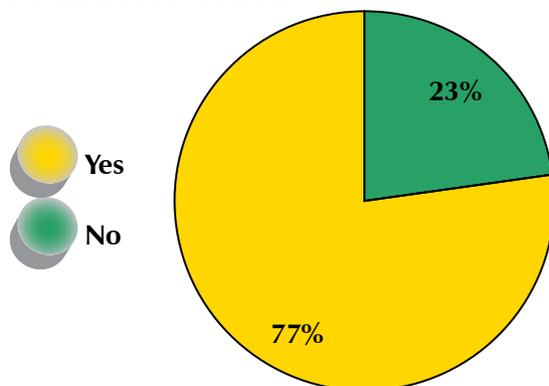
Most importantly, survey respondents were asked to share their views on funding for parks and recreation improvements. An impressive 77 percent said they would be in favor of redirecting a greater portion of existing city and county revenues to parks and recreation. The most favorable funding mechanism to survey respondents was redirecting a portion of the hotel/motel tax to help fund park capital improvements followed by

impact fees paid by new development. The least favored form of funding was increasing bonded indebtedness with 43 percent giving this the lowest priority. It should be noted that 9 percent of survey respondents answered none of the above while a large portion did not respond to the question at all because they did not have a good understanding of the viability of the funding mechanisms presented.

**10) Please provide a rank order for the following funding options for completing needed park renovations, new park development and other capital improvements.**



**11) Would you support increased city and county funding from current revenues for Parks and Recreation?**



## **Summary of Public Input**

The completion of public input brought about consistent themes throughout the various stages of the process. While some input forums had stronger desires for specific facilities over others, the overall direction for future improvements was relatively parallel among all the groups. The priorities were also consistent with the deficiencies noted during the planning team's analysis of the current parks and recreation system. The most consistent evaluation throughout the entire process was that, given the constraints under which the Parks and Recreation Commission works, the public takes great pride in the quality of care and maintenance provided and has indicated strong support of and respect for the Commission and parks staff.

The top priorities identified during the steering committee workshop were a large multi-sport athletic complex, indoor recreation center with swimming, tennis, fitness and other recreation opportunities, indoor/outdoor tennis center, skatepark/extreme sports complex and continued development of the greenway. With the addition of the need for a cultural/performing arts center, public meeting comments paralleled the steering committee workshop priorities.

The random survey was intended to further gauge the desires of the community regarding the various facilities identified in the steering committee workshop. As with the public meetings, the top priorities were the same. A few that had been highly desired in the public meetings and workshop did, however, receive a lower priority by survey respondents. These included the indoor tennis center and the skatepark. It could be assumed that many survey respondents were not as well informed as to the critical need for these facilities as those who were directly involved in the other input forums.

The planning team's analysis of the existing park system noted the distribution of existing parks in the system. The current practice of each government entity developing its own parks has led to the concentration of all parks within the cities of Maryville and Alcoa. A very small number of parks are found in the county resulting in poor recreation delivery to citizens of the rapidly growing residential developments in the county. This poor distribution was reflected in the survey responses with citizens indicating the desire to see more parks developed in the outlying areas of the county.

Various funding solutions were discussed throughout the public input process. The high priority facilities that have been identified are high cost items for a park system and will require a series of funding solutions to bring them to reality. The response by survey participants was a desire to see increased allocations from existing city and county revenues followed by redirecting a portion of the hotel/motel tax. The most common method utilized by city and county governments to fund large capital projects is through bonds. This funding method was not highly favored by survey participants; however, it may be necessary if existing budget revenues do not allow for large capital projects.