



# **Executive Summary of the 2017 Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Satisfaction Survey**

## **Purpose**

The Town of Herndon Parks and Recreation Department is updating the Department's Strategic Plan for the 2019-2023 cycle. This was last completed in 2013 for the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan. This survey is part of the revision process and is being completed to gauge the opinions and needs of the citizens of the Town of Herndon and the population utilizing the Parks and Recreation Department's facilities and programs.

## **Methods**

Sample populations for the survey were drawn from two sources to capture the primary populations for the Department. The two samples represent those living within the Town of Herndon and those who have utilized the Parks and Recreation Department programs, facilities or services. A sample population of Town of Herndon citizens was selected from the Town of Herndon Water Bill mailing list. The second sample population was created from the department's database of all users.

Two initial random samples of 500 were generated from each list. Ultimately the viable survey sample was 957. Analysis was done utilizing the 176 responses received to the survey as of January 11, 2018. This was an 18.4% response rate which exceeded the 10-15% average expected response rate predicted by SurveyMonkey.com for this type of survey.

Recipients had the opportunity to complete a paper survey and return it to the Herndon Parks and Recreation Department via postage paid envelope, or complete the survey on line via the link provided in the mailing. An option to receive a translated version of the survey was offered.

Returned responses were tracked only by an identifying code so that follow up post cards could be sent to non-respondents. The paper survey mailing followed the first postcard by 14 days. The second postcard was mailed 14 days after the paper survey mailing. After an additional 44 days the survey was closed on January 11.

## Analysis

In response to the overall importance questions, respondents in 2017 seem very satisfied with the Parks and Recreation Department. The percent agreement in some areas showed slight declines compared to respondents in 2014 but the weighted average increased. For all question where applicable Agreement is rated on a scale of one (Strongly Disagree/Negative) through five (Strongly Agree/Positive). Both numbers are detailed below. This indicated a higher level of strongly agrees in 2017 versus 2014. In absolute numbers, the strongly agree responses increased from 8 to 18 for each statement from 2014 to 2017 (in parentheses next to the weighted averages, change amount is subtracting the 2014 strongly agree responses from the 2017 strongly agree responses).

“High quality parks and recreational areas are meaningful to the overall quality of life in Herndon.”

2017 agreement	2014 agreement	change from 2014-2017
98.8% (169/171) (2)	100.0% (179/179) (0)	1.2% decline
4.74 (131/171)	4.67 (120/179)	0.07 increase (+11)

“The park athletic fields (and the volunteer-organized teams sports played on those fields) are important to the overall quality of life in Herndon.”

2017 agreement	2014 agreement	change from 2014-2017
92.4% (158/171) (13)	94.4% (168/178) (10)	2.0% decline
4.49 (98/171)	4.43 (89/178)	0.06 increase (+9)

“The open spaces and natural resources in the park (such as trees, meadows, wetlands and streams) enhance the overall quality of life in Herndon.”

2017 agreement	2014 agreement	change from 2014-2017
97.6% (166/170) (4)	98.9% (177/179) (2)	1.3% decline
4.76 (135/170)	4.70 (128/179)	0.06 increase (+8)

“The Herndon Community Center and the recreation programs offered there for both children and adults are important to the overall quality of life in Herndon.”

2017 agreement	2014 agreement	change from 2014-2017
94.6% (157/166) (9)	97.2% (173/178) (5)	2.6% decline
4.58 (110/166)	4.48 (92/178)	0.10 increase (+18)

“You would recommend the Herndon Community Center to a friend or colleague.”

2017 agreement	2014 agreement	change from 2014-2017
95.7% (156/163) (7)	95.4% (165/173) (8)	0.3% increase

We received 72 explanations in response to why you would or would not recommend the Herndon Community Center to a friend or colleague (Question 17 open response). Amongst the open comments the majority were positive (76.4%) with comments about programming (31.9%) and the facility (23.6%) being most common. 9.7% of comments were negative with almost half of those including both positive and negative aspects. 11.1% of comments were in regards to a lack of knowledge about the Community Center or the Department. 18.1 % of comments couldn't be labelled as positive or negative (including the lack of knowledge category).

### **Community Center and Facilities**

Around 57% of respondents had been to HCC for reasons other than a program, event or to vote AND for a class, program or event.

Amongst pre-determined options, "...not interesting to me" was the most common reason in both categories why people had not come. 23.9% in the category of those coming for a class, program or event and 30.2% in the category other than a class, program or event. "Not aware of..." was the second most common for both categories. 17.5% in the category of those coming for a class, program or event and 14.3% in the category other than a class, program or event.

There were 65 total responses for why respondents did not visit the Community Center. The top 3 open response reasons were: no time to use the facility (15), gym membership elsewhere (10), and other interests (6).

On average the Herndon Community Center rated mostly good or better (4.00 or higher) for the four categories we chose (cleanliness, customer service, fitness equipment, personal training) except for Fitness Equipment which ranked just below Good (3.84).

The top 3 facility needs for families were Neighborhood parks, Multi-purpose trails, and Indoor pool. The table below details the rankings over three time frames.

Facility	Family		
	1 year	3 year	5 year
Neighborhood parks	1	3	2
Multi-purpose trails	2	1	3
Indoor pool	3	2	1

For Personal use the same three were in the top 3 for the immediate needs time frame, but varied further in the future. The table below details the rankings of the top 4 facilities over three time frames.

Facility	Personal		
	1 year	3 year	5 year
Multi-purpose trails	1	1	1
Neighborhood parks	2	3	2
Indoor pool	3	4	4
Strength & cardio gym equipment	4	2	3

51 people responded with additional comments about the Community Center or the Department of Parks and Recreation. Overall categorized the responses as positive, negative, suggestion and other. Some responses included multiple aspects and were tallied for all categories/subcategories appropriate. The positive and negative responses were also broken out into subcategories. The majority of responses (54.9%) were positive followed by 51.0% of responses that included suggestions for improvements or something new. Negative responses were 17.7% followed by 9.8% of responses that were categorized as Other.

Amongst negative responses three subcategories (price, security and maintenance) were equally most common with one third of respondents mentioning them. Amongst positive responses the most common subcategory was about the equipment/facilities mentioned by 39.3% of respondents followed by other with 25.0% and then a tie for the staff and programming subcategories mentioned by 17.9%. Raw responses were included in the detailed analysis section.

## Programming

Recreation classes, programs and events offered by the Herndon Parks and Recreation Department received a 4.01 average rating for the variety of programs offered and a 3.99 rating for the value of programs offered. Comments for improving the variety of classes included: need varied class times during the day, walk in yoga, quality of instructors, more Dancercize or Zumba over the lunch hour, and cost.

Comments for improving the value of classes included: too expensive, more discounts for seniors, large families and income depending upon the program, class and/or event.

For personal and family programming needs, Events was the top priority for all the present and future time periods. Events had ranked 5<sup>th</sup> for Children and 10<sup>th</sup> for Adults during the 2014 survey. The previous top 3 for Adults (Fitness – Land based, Yoga/Pilates and Aquatics classes) shifted down the

rankings as a result. The tables below show the top 3 results over three time frames for Personal and Family needs.

Program	Personal		
	1 year	3 year	5 year
Events (concerts, festivals, holiday events)	1	1	1
Fitness-land based	2	2	2
Yoga/Pilates	3	3	3

Program	Family		
	1 year	3 year	5 year
Events (concerts, festivals, holiday events)	1	1	1
Aquatics (swim lessons, diving, swim team)	2	3	2
Fitness-land based	3	2	5
Yoga/Pilates	9	9	3

## Parks

81% of citizens have visited a Herndon Park in the past year.

On a 5 point scale, Alabama, Bruin and Stanton Parks received less than a 3.5 for maintenance quality (3.36, 3.37 and 3.43 respectively). All of the remaining parks scored above 3.5 and 7 of the 12 parks received 4.0 or above. Haley Smith scored highest with 4.41.

Alabama Park received less than a 3.0 for safety, and Bruin and Stanton Parks received less than a 3.5 for safety. All of the remaining parks scored above 3.5 and Haley Smith scored highest with 4.23.

Of those who did not visit a Herndon Park in the past year 70.8% said it was because they were "Too busy/no time for recreation." 8.3% responded that they "did not know these parks existed."

## Interactions

There was no clear majority for most preferred method to receive information. The top 3 are Direct Mail (30.4%), Program and Events Guide (24.7%), and Email (23.8%).

Facebook (3.1%) and friends/family (1.8%) are the least preferred methods for receiving information about our programs.

Clear majority of our citizens prefer to register online (69%) for programs.

## Demographics

42.1% of respondents were male and 57.9% were female. We had no one respond with "Other" or "Prefer not to answer" who began this section. According to the 2016 American Community Survey (ACS) estimate 49.8% of the Town of Herndon population is male indicating men are underrepresented

in our sample. The 2014 survey results had 32.2% male respondents thus the 2017 results reflect increased representation by males in this survey.

The largest demographic by age is 30-39 year olds who constitute 18.0% of the household populations. 18-21 year olds are the smallest with 3.9% of the household population. The 2017 survey age brackets are aligned to meet our internal needs and do not align with either the ACS age brackets or the 2014 age brackets. For future surveys the age brackets should be evaluated again to determine what will serve our needs best.

The respondents are primarily white (78.9%) followed by Asian (12.0%). The percentage of white respondents exceeds the ACS Town of Herndon (TOH) estimate of 55.9% and is further shifted from the 2014 survey result of 71.8%. The Asian response rate is below the ACS ratio of 17.7% and is a drop from the 2014 survey number of 16.0%. In this survey 2.1% of respondents label themselves Hispanic which is significantly below the ACS estimate of 33.9% of the TOH population and a drop from the 2014 survey result of 4.9%. The black response rate of 2.8% is also below the ACS estimate of 8.9% of the population. The multi-racial response rate of 4.9% is fairly representative of the ACS estimate of 5.5% of the population.

41.7% of respondents report their household income as \$150,000 or higher. This is 12.1% above the ACS TOH 2016 estimate of 29.6% of the population and 13.7% higher than the 2014 survey result of 28.0%. Especially comparing to the ACS TOH 2016 results the income levels overall of the survey respondents is shifted upwards from the general population with the lowest income brackets being most underrepresented and then decreasingly so until the highest bracket is overrepresented.

		<b>ACS TOH 2016</b>	
<b>Income brackets</b>	<b>2017 survey result</b>	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Less than \$50,000	6.82%	18.80%	-11.98%
\$50,000 – \$99,999	16.67%	27.40%	-10.73%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	21.97%	24.20%	-2.23%
\$150,000+	41.67%	29.60%	12.07%
Prefer not to answer	12.88%		

With the underrepresented groups in several categories from the 2017 survey respondents versus the ACS TOH 2016 population estimates it may be worth conducting additional surveys or focus groups to acquire feedback from the underrepresented segments of the population. It should also be noted that 17-25% of respondents to the 2017 survey skipped each of the demographic questions limiting the power of the conclusions to be drawn from these demographic trends.

### Other response trends

Out of 176 respondents, 94 submitted paper surveys (53.4%) and 82 completed the survey online (46.6%).

There was a big bounce in daily responses after the paper surveys were sent out and after Thanksgiving. The online survey daily responses also increased after the paper surveys were sent.

59.7% of respondents were from the Water Bill list and 40.3% were from the RecTrac sample. 31 respondents said they would be willing to participate in Focus Groups.

## Conclusions

The response rate was above expectations as compared to typical Survey Monkey results, however, the respondents' representation of the community's demographics falls short in several areas. Staff suggests we do smaller populations surveys and focus groups with a purpose of reaching out to demographic groups that were underrepresented in this survey.

The significant increase in demand for 'events' on both an individual and family level warrants further exploration. Identifying types of events being sought, threshold for fee-based vs free events, and age groups to target could be topics in a future survey or focus group. Further, the impact of events to the department's revenue recovery, staff workload, and value for the citizenry should be explored and articulated. Generally, events have minimal cost recovery rate, high demand on staff resources (within and outside the P&R department), and lack the long-term impact of a skill class or program. While events generally reach a larger portion of the community at one time, it is difficult to design an event that attracts the broad spectrum of the population. In their favor, they can be customized to many types of interests, demand minimal time, commitment, and pre-planning effort by attendees, and generally have high marketing exposure.

Discussions will need to be had with programmers about how to guide our offerings to align with the community's needs and also with other staff and the Town Council about increasing event offerings and the impact upon cost recovery if we take this approach.

Interest in recreation amenities not currently present in town but that the community might seek was not covered in this survey. A future questionnaire might be of value to explore more urban style amenities as the downtown and HTOC redevelops, and those that would be attractive to either millennials or an aging population.

Comments concerning Herndon Community Center not having facilities and programs that are interesting to the respondent are another area that warrants additional research. Staff has suggested a focus group would be an appropriate way to get more specific information that would illuminate why these responses were made and if there are solutions available to the Department that would make a difference for respondents with this opinion.

Follow up surveys could include a clipboard (iPad) survey to travel along with National Night Out teams, reaching out to alternative community groups to get diverse opinions and doing a specific events focused survey to dig into this area of interest further.

The overall support to the department, its facilities and programs remained highly favorable. The conversion of more respondents from Agree to Strongly Agree when asked whether high quality parks and recreational areas are meaningful to the overall quality of life in Herndon demonstrates the value of the investment the town makes into parks and recreation facilities, programs and staff, as well as the importance of the town's relationships with the Fairfax County Park Authority, Neighborhood and Community Services, and NOVA Parks, which provide complementary facilities for the town's residents.

## Calculations

### **Margin of Error**

$d = t \cdot \sqrt{p \cdot q / n}$        $t$  is 1.96 for sample size >120, used conservative  $p$  and  $q$  of .5,  $n$  = sample size of 176

$$d = 1.96 \cdot \sqrt{.5 \cdot .5 / 176}$$

$$d = 0.07387$$

$$d = 7.39\%$$

To achieve a Margin of Error of 5% a sample size of 385 would have been required:

$n = t^2 \cdot p \cdot q / d^2$       Same as above but assuming  $d = .05$  and solving for  $n$

$$n = 1.96^2 \cdot .5 \cdot .5 / .05^2$$

$$n = 385 \text{ (384.16 rounded up)}$$

### **Response Rate**

Requests selected = 1005 (501 water bill, 504 RecTrac)

Requests returned/rejected = water bill (2 RTS [return to sender], 1 deceased) 3 + RecTrac (41 RTS, 4 duplicates from water bill) 45 = 48

Potential requests = 501 + 504 - 3 - 45 = 957

Responses received = 176

Response rate = 0.183908

18.39%

Typical external survey response rates are 10-15% according to [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) so we received above average response rate

### **To Achieve 5% Margin of Error**

To achieve a 5% margin of Error would have required at least 385 responses. Assuming the response rate and returned to send rates are the same 2,191 surveys would need to have been mailed.

385 responses / .1839 (response rate) = 2,094 potential responses

2,049 potential responses / .956 (non-return to sender) = 2191 mailed surveys