Community Interest and Opinion Survey

Report of Results

August 2017
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Executive Summary

The City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) conducts a biennial survey of residents to determine how well it is meeting the needs and expectations of the community. Part of the Alexandria’s Vision is to have a community with flourishing arts, culture and education, with healthy residents of all ages. RPCA plays an important role in making this vision reality, and the survey can help measure how it is doing.

Completed surveys were returned from 262 of the 2,400 randomly selected households who received invitations to participate, for response rate of 11%. The 95% confidence interval for the survey results is plus or minus 6.1 percentage points.

➤ One of the goals from the City’s Strategic Plan is that arts, culture and recreation will flourish in Alexandria, with a network of accessible parks and public open spaces and activities that are available and accessible to residents of all ages and abilities.

➤ About 8 in 10 respondents and/or their household members had visited a City of Alexandria park in the last 12 months.

➤ About 2 in 10 had participated in a City sponsored class or program.

➤ About 4 in 10 had attended a special event in the last year.

➤ Those who had visited a park, participated in a program or attended a special event gave very positive evaluations, with over 80% rating them as excellent or good.

➤ The proportion of households using the City’s parks, classes or programs and special events has remained steady since 2011, and the evaluations of them have also remained quite positive.

➤ Another of the goals from the City’s Strategic Plan is that the community have equal and ready access to opportunities that promote mental and physical well-being and a happy, active lifestyle.

➤ Because of their participation in programs, activities and events offered by RPCA, about 9 in 10 respondents agreed that they had:

➤ Improved health and well-being,

➤ Increased connectedness to the community, and

➤ Increased quality of life.

About a third of respondents did not have an opinion on these items, likely for some because they had not used the offerings of the Department. The barriers to using RPCA programs was assessed through the survey.

➤ The barrier experienced by the greatest proportion of respondents who had not used a program was not knowing what was being offered, indicated by two-thirds of respondents who had not used a program, while another 20% of those who had not participated in a class or program said they did not know the locations of the facilities.
Eight in 10 respondents gave a positive rating to the appearance and condition of public spaces in the City of Alexandria, such as the medians, rights-of-way and street trees.

About 7 in 10 respondents were not aware of the City of Alexandria’s public art program. Only 4% considered themselves “very aware” of it.

Local governments have to make decisions of how to best use limited resources to meet the needs of the community. Several trade-offs were presented to those completing the survey for their input.

Three-quarters of respondents leaned toward using parks and recreation facilities for quiet relaxation and individual uses, while about a quarter used them for social reasons – to see familiar faces and meet people.

Over 9 in 10 survey participants preferred that parks in Alexandria serve passive uses that are open to the whole community rather than active uses such as sports and paid programs requiring user fees.

If the RPCA Department would have to make reductions in their budget, respondents had a slight preference that all existing programs and facilities be maintained, but at lower levels of service, favored by 55% of respondents.

The other 45% of respondents preferred that some programs and facilities be eliminated with the remaining programs kept at current levels of service.

To gauge the importance placed by residents on various budget priorities, survey participants were given an exercise to allocate $100 hypothetical budget dollars among four potential efforts.

On average, the $100 were allocated in the following ways:

- $41 to improve parks and outdoor recreational facilities and fields
- $22 for the acquisition of additional parkland and open space
- $22 to improve indoor recreational facilities, and
- $15 to develop new recreational facilities.

The 24% of respondents who had interacted with an RPCA staff member in the previous 12 months awarded high marks to the customer service provided; 8 in 10 gave an excellent or good rating.
The most widespread source of information used by Alexandria residents to learn about the offerings of RPCA was word of mouth – from friends and neighbors. The most common formal information sources were the City of Alexandria Website and the Recreation brochure/program guide.

In addition to learning how residents get information about RPCA, the Department desired to ascertain how the public would like to engage with RPCA to provide feedback and input into their planning efforts. The most popular ideas were:

- to provide feedback through additional surveys (86% somewhat or very likely),
- to communicate directly with staff (69%), and
- to provide comments and feedback through social media (63%).

About half would be interested in attending web-based public meetings, in-person meetings or discussion groups, or a formal board or commission meeting. About 4 in 10 said they might join a board or commission. Only about a third would be likely to attend a telephone town hall.

A large portion of the survey was devoted to understanding the needs of the community for recreation programs and facilities, and what unmet needs are of greatest importance to the residents of Alexandria.

Survey respondents were presented with a list of programs or facilities, and asked whether they or anyone in their household had a need for the particular item, and if they did, how well that need was being met with the current offerings. They were also asked to choose the four items from each list that were of greatest importance to their household. The average unmet need was plotted against the importance ratings for each of the programs and facilities included on the survey. The programs and facilities with the highest unmet need of high importance to the greatest proportion of residents are those on which RPCA may wish to concentrate.

The programs of higher importance with higher unmet need included:

- Cultural special events,
- Adult open play,
- Lap swimming,
- Adult technology programs, and
- Youth learn to swim instruction.

The facilities of higher importance with higher unmet need included:

- Biking trails,
- Outdoor running/walking track,
- Indoor pools,
- River/stream activities,
- Playgrounds, and
- Outdoor public art.
Survey Background

The City of Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) conducts a regular periodic survey of residents to determine how well it is meeting the needs and expectations of the community. Part of the Alexandria’s Vision is to have a community with flourishing arts, culture and education, with healthy residents of all ages. RPCA plays an important role in making this vision reality, and the survey can help measure how it is doing.

A random selection of households within the city limits of Alexandria received the survey. A group of 1,700 households was first selected and were contacted by mail a total of three times in June 2017. The first mailing was a prenotification postcard announcing the upcoming survey. About a week after the prenotification postcard was sent the first wave of the survey was sent. This packet included the five-page questionnaire with a cover letter signed by Mark Jinks, the City Manager, and a postage-paid return envelope. A week later a second survey was mailed, with instructions to recycle the survey if they had already responded to the first survey. A total of 208 completed surveys were received, for a 12% response rate, at the low end of the typical range for a survey of this type (usually between 12% and 30%). In order to boost the total number of surveys, a second mailing list was generated with 700 recipients. These recipients were mailed two waves of a postcard invitation to the online survey in July of 2017. A total of 54 responses were garnered in this manner, for a response rate of 8%. In total, 262 surveys were received, with a combined response rate of 11%. The 95% confidence interval is plus or minus 6.1 percentage points.

Survey results were weighted so that respondent gender and age, housing tenure (rent versus own) and race and ethnicity were represented in the proportions reflective of the entire city. More information about the survey methodology can be found in Appendix E: Survey Methodology, while a copy of the survey materials is included in Appendix F: Survey Materials. The full set of responses to every survey question is provided in Appendix A: Complete Set of Survey Responses. When a table or a figure for a question that only permitted a single response does not total to exactly 100%, it is due to the customary practice of rounding percentages to the nearest whole number. When the total exceeds 100% in a table for a multiple-response question in which the respondent can choose more than one category, it is because some respondents are counted in multiple categories. Survey results were compared by a number of respondent characteristics. These crosstabulations are presented in Appendix D: Selected Survey Responses by Respondent Characteristics. Comparisons to survey results from previous years are found in Appendix C: Survey Results Over Time.
Overall Use and Ratings of Parks and Recreation

One of the goals from the City’s Strategic Plan is that arts, culture and recreation will flourish in Alexandria, with a network of accessible parks and public open spaces and activities that are available and accessible to residents of all ages and abilities. Several questions were included on the survey to measure use of and participation in the facilities and programs provided by the City of Alexandria’s Recreation, Park and Cultural Activities Department (RPCA).

About 8 in 10 respondents and/or their household members had visited a City of Alexandria park in the last 12 months, while 2 in 10 had participated in a City-sponsored class or program (see Figure 1 below). About 4 in 10 had attended a special event in the last year. Most who had participated in a program or class in the last year had enrolled in one to three of them; about 30% had gone to four or more programs (see Table 4 in Appendix A: Complete Set of Survey Responses). Likewise, most respondents who had attended a special event had been to one to three of them; about 20% had gone to four or more (see Table 8).

Compared to previous surveys, a similar proportion of respondents had visited a park in the last 12 months in 2017 as in 2015, 2013 and 2011 (see Table 44 in Appendix C: Survey Results Over Time).

Those who had visited a park, participated in a program or attended a special event were asked to rate the quality of these offerings. All were given very positive evaluations, with over 80% of respondents rating them as excellent or good. The ratings of the City’s parks were similar to what had been seen in 2015, and a bit higher than in 2013 and 2011 (see Table 46).

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**Figure 1: Percent of Respondents Who Have Visited a City of Alexandria Park, Participated in a City-Sponsored Program or Class, or Attended a Special Event**

- Visited a City of Alexandria Park: 84%
- Participated in a City-Sponsored Class or Program: 22%
- Attended a Special Event: 38%

**Figure 2: Ratings of City of Alexandria Parks, City-Sponsored Programs or Classes and Special Events**

- City of Alexandria Parks: 30% Excellent, 56% Good, 14% Fair, 0% Poor
- City-Sponsored Classes or Programs: 41% Excellent, 44% Good, 15% Fair, 0% Poor
- Special Events: 34% Excellent, 59% Good, 7% Fair, 0% Poor
Another of the goals from the City’s Strategic Plan is that the community have equal and ready access to opportunities that promote mental and physical well-being and a happy, active lifestyle.

Respondents were asked to what extent they felt that they and/or their household benefited by their participation in the programs, activities and events offered by RPCA. Nine in 10 respondents with an opinion somewhat or strongly agreed that they felt an increased connection to the community, and increase in their quality of life, and improved health and well-being.

**Figure 3: Perception of Benefit from RPCA**

To what extent do you agree that you and/or your household personally benefit from participation in programs, activities and events offered by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities in each of the following ways?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Somewhat agree</th>
<th>Do not agree at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased connectedness to community</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased quality of life</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved health &amp; well-being</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About a third of respondents did not have an opinion on these items, likely for some because they had not used the offerings of the Department (see Table 15 in *Appendix A: Complete Set of Survey Responses*). The barriers to using RPCA programs was assessed through the survey by asking those who had not used them for the reasons they had not done so. The barrier experienced by the greatest proportion who had not used a program was not knowing what was being offered, indicated by two-thirds of those who had not participated in a program (see Figure 4 on the next page). Two in 10 of those who had not participated in a program said they did not know the locations of the facilities.

Other barriers indicated by about 1 in 10 respondents who had not used a program included inconvenient programs times and fees that were too high. Some mentioned that they use a private business or HOA facility or that their preferred program is not offered by RPCA.
Figure 4: Barriers to Using RPCA Programs

Please CHECK ALL the reasons that prevent you or other members of your household from using the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities programs.

- I do not know what is being offered: 62%
- I do not know locations of facilities: 20%
- Program times are not convenient: 9%
- Other*: 8%
- Fees are too high: 7%
- I use a private business/HOA facility: 6%
- Preferred program not offered at facility: 5%
- Lack of parking by facilities and parks: 4%
- Location inconvenient: 4%
- Prefer facilities in other cities-counties: 4%
- Program full: 3%
- Lack of quality programs: 3%
- Facilities lack the right equipment/amenities: 3%
- Security is insufficient: 2%
- Facilities operating hours not convenient: 2%
- Facilities are too often unavailable: 1%
- Not accessible for people with disabilities: 1%
- Registration for programs is difficult: 1%
- Poor customer service by staff: 1%
- Facilities are not well maintained: 1%
- Use services of other agencies: 0%

Percent of Respondents Who Had Not Participated in a Program or Class

*Other sources used by respondents can be found in Appendix B: Verbatim Answers to Open-Ended Questions.
The public spaces such as medians and rights-of-way were evaluated by respondents. Eight in 10 gave a positive rating, with 3 in 10 considering the appearance and condition of these areas as excellent and 5 in 10 as good. About 2 in 10 rated them as fair, with only 1% considering the appearance and condition poor.

**Figure 5: Ratings of Appearance and Condition of Public Spaces**

How would you rate the appearance and condition of public spaces (the landscaping of medians, rights-of-way, street trees, etc.) in the City of Alexandria?

Most of the respondents, 7 in 10, were not aware of the City of Alexandria’s public art program. Only 4% considered themselves “very aware” of it.

**Figure 6: Awareness of the City of Alexandria’s Public Art Program**
Resident Priorities for Parks and Recreation

Local governments have to make decisions of how to best use limited resources to meet the needs of the community. Several trade-offs were presented to those completing the survey for their input.

When asked if they used parks and recreation facilities mostly for social reasons – to see familiar faces and meet people – or for quiet relaxation or individual uses, most about three-quarters of respondents leaned toward quiet relaxation and individual uses, while about a quarter used them for communal purposes.

![Figure 7: Use of Parks and Recreation Facilities for Social versus Individual Uses](image)

A variety of activities can be accommodated in parks, and these tend to be categorized as either “active” uses, such as organized sports or programs, or “passive” uses such as picnics, nature walks, etc. Over 9 in 10 survey participants preferred that parks in Alexandria serve passive uses that are open to the whole community rather than active uses such as sports and paid programs requiring user fees.

![Figure 8: Preference for Parks to Serve Passive or Active Pursuits](image)
If the RPCA Department would have to make reductions in their budget, respondents had a slight preference that all existing programs and facilities be maintained, but at lower levels of service, favored by 55% of respondents. The other 45% of respondents preferred that some programs and facilities be eliminated with the remaining programs kept at current levels of service.

**Figure 9: Preference for Budget Trade-Offs**

When considering potential budget reductions, the Parks and Recreation Department should...

- Maintain all existing recreational programs and facilities and parks but at a lower level of service (e.g. park maintenance on fewer days per week; reduced hours at recreation facilities; fewer recreation program offerings within each category)
- Eliminate some programs and facilities, but keep the remaining programs and facilities at current levels of service (e.g. close some facilities but keep all others on current schedules; cut some types of recreation programs)

![Preference for Budget Trade-Offs](image)

11% 15% 29% 17% 14% 14%

To gauge the importance placed by residents on various budget priorities, survey participants were given an exercise to allocate $100 hypothetical budget dollars among four potential efforts. The greatest share was given to improving parks and outdoor recreational facilities and fields, with an average of $41 earmarked for this purpose. Acquisition of additional parkland and open space, and improvements of indoor recreational facilities were given the next highest amounts of $22 on average each. The lowest amount was assigned to development of new indoor recreational facilities, at $15.

**Figure 10: Priorities for Various Types of Facilities**

If it were up to you (and assuming each costs about the same), how would you allocate $100 among each of the following parks and recreation facilities for the City of Alexandria?

- Improve parks and outdoor recreational facilities and fields, $41
- Develop new indoor recreational facilities, $22
- Acquisition of additional parkland and open space, $22
- Improve indoor recreational facilities, $22
Unmet Needs For and Importance Placed On Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

A large portion of the survey was devoted to understanding the needs of the community for recreation programs and facilities, and what unmet needs are of greatest importance to the residents of Alexandria. Survey respondents were presented with a list of programs or facilities, and asked whether they or anyone in their household had a need for the particular item, and if they did, how well that need was being met with the current offerings. They were also asked to choose the four items from each list that were of greatest importance to their household.

Parks and Recreation Programs

When asked about their need for various parks and recreation programs, about two-thirds said they or their household had a need for cultural special events, and over half had a need for adult fitness and wellness programs (see Figure 11 on the next page). The next most common program needs, indicated by about 40% of respondents, were for volunteer/community projects, walking/biking groups and lap swimming. About a third wanted adult nature programs, adult organized sports programs, adult cooking programs, adult continuing education or adult creative and performing arts.

Youth programs were needed by 5% to 18% of households, but as would be expected, a high proportion of those households with children or teenagers felt a need for youth programming (see Table 103 in Appendix D: Selected Survey Responses by Respondent Characteristics). For youth, the greatest need was seen for nature programs, open play and sports classes.

Those who indicated their household needed an item then rated to what extent their needs were being met. Some of the programs with the greatest unmet need (among those who wanted the programs) included: youth cooking programs, youth martial arts programs, programs for preschool age, adult day and weekend travel programs, adult creative and performing arts and youth open play (see Figure 12 on page 14). It should be noted that a couple of these had high unmet needs among those who wanted them but relatively few people who wanted them; youth cooking and youth martial arts were desired by only 5% of households.

The five programs deemed most important by respondents (the ones selected as a top four most important program by the greatest proportion of respondents) were cultural special events, walking/biking groups, volunteer/community projects, adult cooking programs and adult fitness and wellness programs (see Figure 13 on page 15). These were also among the programs for which the greater proportion of households felt a need.
Figure 11: Programs for Which Alexandria Households Have a Need

Below is a list of some recreation and cultural programs provided by the City of Alexandria. Please indicate if you or any members of your HOUSEHOLD have a need for each of the recreation or cultural programs listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the program. (Percent of households with the need.)

- Cultural special events: 64%
- Adult fitness and wellness programs: 56%
- Volunteer/community projects: 44%
- Walking/biking groups: 41%
- Lap swimming: 39%
- Adult nature programs/env education: 34%
- Adult organized sports programs: 34%
- Adult cooking programs: 33%
- Adult continuing education programs: 33%
- Adult creative and performing arts: 32%
- Adult open play: 27%
- Water fitness programs: 27%
- Programs for older adults: 26%
- Athletic special events: 25%
- Tennis lessons and leagues: 25%
- Adult day and weekend travel programs: 22%
- Adult technology programs: 21%
- Adult learn to swim instruction: 21%
- Multi-generational programs: 20%
- Youth learn to swim instruction: 18%
- Programs with your pets: 17%
- Adult martial arts programs: 15%
- Youth nature programs/env education: 15%
- Youth open play: 14%
- Programs for preschool age: 13%
- Youth sports classes: 11%
- School break camps: 11%
- Programs for people with disabilities: 10%
- Programs for teens: 10%
- Youth creative and performing arts: 9%
- Before and after school care programs: 9%
- Youth technology programs: 8%
- Youth fitness and wellness programs: 8%
- Youth martial arts programs: 5%
- Youth cooking programs: 5%
### Figure 12: Unmet Need for Programs

If your household has a need for the program, how well are your needs already being met?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>0% Met</th>
<th>5% Met</th>
<th>10% Met</th>
<th>15% Met</th>
<th>20% Met</th>
<th>25% Met</th>
<th>30% Met</th>
<th>35% Met</th>
<th>40% Met</th>
<th>45% Met</th>
<th>50% Met</th>
<th>55% Met</th>
<th>60% Met</th>
<th>65% Met</th>
<th>70% Met</th>
<th>75% Met</th>
<th>80% Met</th>
<th>85% Met</th>
<th>90% Met</th>
<th>95% Met</th>
<th>100% Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth technology programs</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before and after school care programs</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs for teens</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Programs for older adults</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walking/biking groups</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>Water fitness programs</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer/community projects</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth cooking programs</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth fitness and wellness programs</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<td>Programs for preschool age</td>
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<td>Programs with your pets</td>
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<td>Youth nature programs/env education</td>
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<td>Adult day and weekend travel programs</td>
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</table>
Figure 13: Top Four Most Important Programs

Which FOUR of the programs are MOST IMPORTANT to your household?

- Cultural special events: 23%
- Walking/biking groups: 22%
- Volunteer/community projects: 22%
- Adult cooking programs: 19%
- Adult fitness and wellness programs: 16%
- Adult open play: 11%
- Adult technology programs: 10%
- Lap swimming: 10%
- Youth learn to swim instruction: 9%
- Adult nature programs/env education: 8%
- Tennis lessons and leagues: 8%
- Youth open play: 7%
- Programs with your pets: 7%
- Adult learn to swim instruction: 7%
- Adult organized sports programs: 6%
- Adult creative and performing arts: 6%
- Water fitness programs: 6%
- Athletic special events: 5%
- Programs for people with disabilities: 5%
- Adult day and weekend travel programs: 5%
- Adult continuing education programs: 5%
- Programs for older adults: 5%
- Youth sports classes: 4%
- Before and after school care programs: 4%
- Adult martial arts programs: 3%
- Youth creative and performing arts: 3%
- School break camps: 3%
- Multi-generational programs: 3%
- Programs for teens: 3%
- Programs for preschool age: 2%
- Youth martial arts programs: 1%
- Youth technology programs: 1%
- Youth nature programs/env education: 1%
- Youth fitness and wellness programs: 1%
- Youth cooking programs: 0%
A matrix was created in which the unmet need was plotted against the importance ratings for each of the programs included on the survey, as shown in Figure 14 below. The upper right-hand corner represents those programs on which respondents placed higher importance, but also experienced greater unmet need. Each program is followed by two percents: the first is the percent of households who chose the program as one of their top four most important; the second is the average percent of unmet need (among those who expressed a need) for the program.¹

The programs in this corner, on which RPCA may wish to concentrate, include cultural special events, adult open play, lap swimming, adult technology programs and youth learn to swim instruction.

![Figure 14 Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix for Programs](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Priorities</th>
<th>Top Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower importance/higher unmet need</td>
<td>Higher importance/higher unmet need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth open play, 7%, 62%</td>
<td>• Cultural special events, 23%, 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adult learn to swim instruction, 7%, 52%</td>
<td>• Adult open play , 11%, 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Programs with your pets, 7%, 52%</td>
<td>• Lap swimming, 10%, 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adult creative and performing arts, 6%, 59%</td>
<td>• Adult technology programs, 10%, 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adult organized sports programs, 6%, 52%</td>
<td>• Youth learn to swim instruction, 9%, 57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adult day and weekend travel programs, 5%, 62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adult continuing education programs, 5%, 58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Programs for people with disabilities, 5%, 52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth sports classes, 4%, 53%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adult martial arts programs, 3%, 61%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-generational programs, 3%, 56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Programs for preschool age, 2%, 57%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth fitness and wellness programs, 1%, 60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth martial arts programs, 1%, 59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth nature programs/environmental education, 1%, 52%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Youth cooking programs, 0%, 58%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest Priorities</th>
<th>Continued Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower importance/lower unmet need</td>
<td>Higher importance/lower unmet need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Walking/biking groups, 22%, 49%</td>
<td>• Tennis lessons and leagues, 8%, 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volunteer/community projects, 22%, 48%</td>
<td>• Adult nature programs/environmental education, 8%, 49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adult cooking programs, 19%, 49%</td>
<td>• Water fitness programs, 6%, 48%</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Adult fitness and wellness programs, 16%, 48%</td>
<td>• Athletic special events, 5%, 50%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Programs for older adults, 5%, 47%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Before and after school care programs, 4%, 44%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Youth creative and performing arts, 3%, 48%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• School break camps, 3%, 47%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Programs for teens, 3%, 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Youth technology programs, 1%, 38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ This was calculated as 1 x percent with 0% need met, 0.75 x percent with 25% need met, 0.50 x percent with 50% need met, 0.25 x percent with 75% need met and 0.00 x percent with 100% need met.

Report of Results (2017-08-25)
Parks and Recreation Facilities

The facilities for which the highest proportion of households expressed a need were walking paths (considered a need by about 9 in 10 respondents), Farmers’ Markets (about 8 in 10) and natural areas and wildlife (about 7 in 10, see Figure 15 on the next page). Biking trails and outdoor running and walking tracks were a need of about 6 in 10 households. About half desired picnic shelters and open lawns areas. Nearly half (46%) had a need for indoor exercise and fitness facilities.

Among those respondents who said their household had a need for a particularly type of facility, the greatest unmet need was for indoor play space, outdoor performance space, rock climbing walls, fishing areas, facilities for people with disabilities, water spray ground, outdoor competitive swimming pool and skateboard parks (see Figure 16 on page 19).

The facilities most likely to be considered one of the four most important ones were a Farmers’ Market and walking paths; these were each chosen as one of the top four facilities by about 3 in 10 respondents (see Figure 17 on page 20). These were also the facilities most likely to be needed by respondents. Other important facilities included biking trails, outdoor running/walking track, indoor pools, marina/waterfront, open lawns and landscape and river/stream activities.
### Figure 15: Facilities for Which Alexandria Households Have a Need

Please indicate if you or any members of your HOUSEHOLD have a need for each of the parks, recreation, or cultural facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the facility. (Percent of households with the need.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>Percent of Respondent Households Who Have a Need for This Facility</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walking paths</td>
<td>89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farmers' Markets</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural areas and wildlife habitats</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biking trails</td>
<td>62%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor running/walking track</td>
<td>61%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open lawns and landscape</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic shelters/areas</td>
<td>51%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marina/waterfront</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor exercise and fitness facilities</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River/stream activities</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor pools</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor social gathering spaces</td>
<td>41%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor leisure/recreational pool</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community gardens</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nature Center</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor running/walking track</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor fitness station/equipment</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor courts</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor gym space</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rock climbing walls</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor public art</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Off-leash dog areas</td>
<td>24%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor performance space</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor performance/art facilities</td>
<td>23%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multi-purpose sports fields</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fishing areas</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor competitive swimming pool</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor sports fields</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor social lounge</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baseball/softball fields</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water spray ground</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor rental space</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor multi-purpose areas</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor rental space</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racquetball/squash courts</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor play space</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batting cages</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for people with disabilities</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics room</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboard parks</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 16: Unmet Need for Facilities

If your household has a need for the facility, how well are your needs already being met?

- 100% Met
- 75% Met
- 50% Met
- 25% Met
- 0% Met

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facility</th>
<th>0% Met</th>
<th>10% Met</th>
<th>20% Met</th>
<th>30% Met</th>
<th>40% Met</th>
<th>50% Met</th>
<th>60% Met</th>
<th>70% Met</th>
<th>80% Met</th>
<th>90% Met</th>
<th>100% Met</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Off-leash dog areas</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor courts</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers' Markets</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gymnastics rooms</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic shelters/areas</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Walking paths</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor social gathering spaces</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racquetball/squash courts</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-purpose sports fields</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina/waterfront</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilities for people with disabilities</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor rental space</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>22%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor sports fields</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>31%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community gardens</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor gym space</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batting cages</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open lawns and landscape</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indoor play space</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Biking trails</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Playgrounds</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor multi-purpose areas</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature Center</td>
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<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor exercise and fitness facilities</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor performance/art facilities</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>13%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball/softball fields</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor fitness station/equipment</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fishing areas</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor running/walking track</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor running/walking track</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural areas and wildlife habitats</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River/stream activities</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor pools</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor social lounge</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor leisure/recreational pool</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor performance space</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rock climbing walls</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor public art</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor competitive swimming pool</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor rental space</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water spray ground</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skateboard parks</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 17: Top Four Most Important Facilities

Which FOUR of the facilities are MOST IMPORTANT to your household?

- Farmers’ Markets: 31%
- Walking paths: 28%
- Biking trails: 21%
- Outdoor running/walking track: 13%
- Indoor pools: 12%
- River/stream activities: 10%
- Open lawns and landscape: 10%
- Marina/waterfront: 10%
- Natural areas and wildlife habitats: 9%
- Playgrounds: 8%
- Outdoor public art: 8%
- Off-leash dog areas: 7%
- Indoor exercise and fitness facilities: 7%
- Picnic shelters/areas: 5%
- Outdoor social gathering spaces: 5%
- Indoor gym space: 5%
- Outdoor leisure/recreational pool: 4%
- Outdoor fitness station/equipment: 4%
- Community gardens: 4%
- Rock climbing walls: 3%
- Racquetball/squash courts: 3%
- Outdoor courts: 3%
- Outdoor competitive swimming pool: 3%
- Nature Center: 3%
- Multi-purpose sports fields: 3%
- Indoor play space: 3%
- Facilities for people with disabilities: 3%
- Water spray ground: 2%
- Indoor sports fields: 2%
- Indoor running/walking track: 2%
- Indoor performance/art facilities: 2%
- Indoor multi-purpose areas: 2%
- Outdoor performance space: 1%
- Indoor social lounge: 1%
- Indoor rental space: 1%
- Skateboard parks: 0%
- Outdoor rental space: 0%
- Gymnastics room: 0%
- Fishing areas: 0%
- Batting cages: 0%
- Baseball/softball fields: 0%
As with the programs, a matrix was created in which the unmet need for facilities was plotted against the importance ratings. The upper right-hand corner represents those facilities on which respondents placed higher importance, but also experienced greater unmet need. Each facility is followed by two percents: the first is the percent of households who chose the program as one of their top four most important; the second is the average percent of unmet need (among those who expressed a need) for the program.²

The top priorities for facilities, those items with higher importance and higher unmet need, included biking trails, outdoor running/walking track, indoor pools, river/stream activities, playgrounds and outdoor public art.

![Figure 18: Importance-Unmet Needs Matrix for Facilities](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower Priorities</th>
<th>Top Priorities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower importance/higher unmet need</td>
<td>Higher importance/higher unmet need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor leisure/recreational pool, 4%, 54%</td>
<td>• Biking trails, 21%, 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor fitness station/equipment, 4%, 52%</td>
<td>• Outdoor running/walking track, 13%, 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor competitive swimming pool, 3%, 64%</td>
<td>• Indoor pools, 12%, 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rock climbing walls, 3%, 59%</td>
<td>• River/stream activities, 10%, 53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor play space, 3%, 56%</td>
<td>• Playgrounds, 8%, 55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilities for people with disabilities, 3%, 54%</td>
<td>• Outdoor public art, 8%, 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Water spray ground, 2%, 65%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor running/walking track, 2%, 53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor sports fields, 2%, 53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor performance space, 1%, 59%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor social lounge, 1%, 54%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skateboard parks, 0%, 74%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fishing areas, 0%, 60%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Baseball/softball fields, 0%, 53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest Priorities</th>
<th>Continued Emphasis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lower importance/lower unmet need</td>
<td>Higher importance/lower unmet need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community gardens, 4%, 47%</td>
<td>• Farmers’ Markets, 31%, 45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nature Center, 3%, 51%</td>
<td>• Walking paths, 28%, 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor courts, 3%, 49%</td>
<td>• Open lawns and landscape, 10%, 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Racquetball/squash courts, 3%, 48%</td>
<td>• Marina/waterfront, 10%, 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multi-purpose sports fields, 3%, 48%</td>
<td>• Natural areas and wildlife habitats, 9%, 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor multi-purpose areas, 2%, 48%</td>
<td>• Indoor exercise and fitness facilities, 7%, 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor performance/art facilities, 2%, 46%</td>
<td>• Off-leash dog areas, 7%, 39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indoor rental space, 1%, 45%</td>
<td>• Outdoor social gathering spaces, 5%, 48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outdoor rental space, 0%, 51%</td>
<td>• Indoor gym space, 5%, 44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Batting cages, 0%, 51%</td>
<td>• Picnic shelters/areas, 5%, 43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gymnastics room, 0%, 37%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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² This was calculated as 1 x percent with 0% need met, 0.75 x percent with 25% need met, 0.50 x percent with 50% need met, 0.25 x percent with 75% need met and 0.00 x percent with 100% need met.
Interactions with RPCA Staff

About a quarter of respondents said they had interacted with any staff of the Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities in the past 12 months (see Table 10 in Appendix A: Complete Set of Survey Responses). Those respondents were then asked to rate the quality of the customer service provided by Department staff. High marks were given, with 43% saying they had received excellent customer service and 36% saying they had received good customer service. Twenty-one percent gave a fair rating, and no respondent thought the customer service was poor.

![Figure 19: Ratings of Customer Service Provided by RPCA Staff](image-url)

RPCA Staff Customer Service

- Excellent: 43%
- Good: 36%
- Fair: 21%
- Poor: 0%

Percent of Respondents
How Residents Receive Information About and Would Like to Engage With RPCA

The most widespread source of information used by Alexandria residents to learn about the offerings of RPCA was word of mouth – from friends and neighbors, cited as a source by about a third of respondents. The most common formal information sources were the City of Alexandria Website and the Recreation brochure/program guide, used by about 3 in 10 respondents each.

*Other sources used by respondents can be found in Appendix B: Verbatim Answers to Open-Ended Questions.*
In addition to learning how residents get information about RPCA, the Department desired to ascertain how the public would like to engage with RPCA to provide feedback and input into their planning efforts.

About 4 in 10 of those completing the survey said they would be very likely to provide feedback through additional surveys, and over 8 in 10 would be at least somewhat likely to do so. (Of course, these are people who were willing to complete a survey, so their willingness to do so again would be expected to be relatively high.)

About 7 in 10 would be at least somewhat likely to communicate directly through staff, while about two-thirds would like to engage by providing comments and feedback through social media.

About half would be interested in attending web-based public meetings, in-person meetings or discussion groups, or a formal board or commission meeting. About 4 in 10 said they might join a board or commission. Only about a third would be likely to attend a telephone town hall.

Figure 21: Likelihood of Engaging with RPCA

The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities often seeks feedback from residents to improve and design park and recreation services. How likely, if at all, would you be to engage with the Department in upcoming processes each of the following ways?