



Champaign Park District Public Perception Survey

Spring 2014

706 Kenwood Road
Champaign, IL 61821

Marketing@cparkdistrict.com
www.champaignparks.com

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Executive Summary

Champaign-area residents were asked to participate in an anonymous survey to help the District's marketing department evaluate a number of public perception and marketing areas. The survey included questions about commonly associated parks, facilities, events, and programs as well as questions about effective marketing avenues, the website, and online registration as well as the public's perception of the District as a whole. A total of 249 complete and valid survey responses were received. The survey was promoted on Facebook and Twitter as well as by staff and through listservs from April 4th through May 1st, 2014. The survey data provides clear goals, focus areas, and suggestions for staff although the small sample size may limit the survey's overall representativeness. Staff should consider the results in context and look for overall themes as the sample size was not large enough to provide detailed representative data.

Methodology

The survey questions were developed with input from marketing professionals, marketing staff, Directors, and general staff with a known interest in either marketing or survey research. Several drafts of the survey were sent to this group who were asked to respond to the questions and make suggestions for possible changes, additions, or deletions.

The final survey form was created on Survey Monkey and the link was distributed via email, social media, and staff contact lists. Respondents who completed the entire survey and entered their email address at the end (optional) were put in a drawing to win a \$100 Park District gift card. At the close of the survey on May 2nd, a staff member unassociated with the survey process was asked to choose a number from 1 to 230 (the number of people who entered their email addresses). The staff member chose number 229, and that person was then selected as the winner of the gift card.

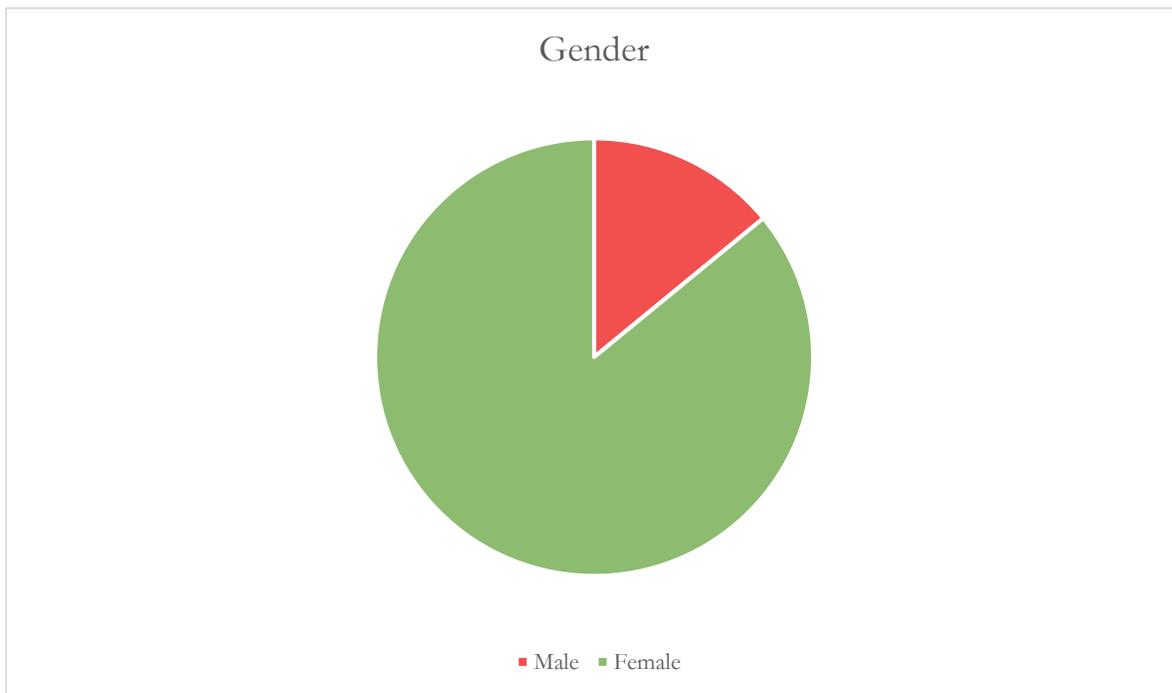
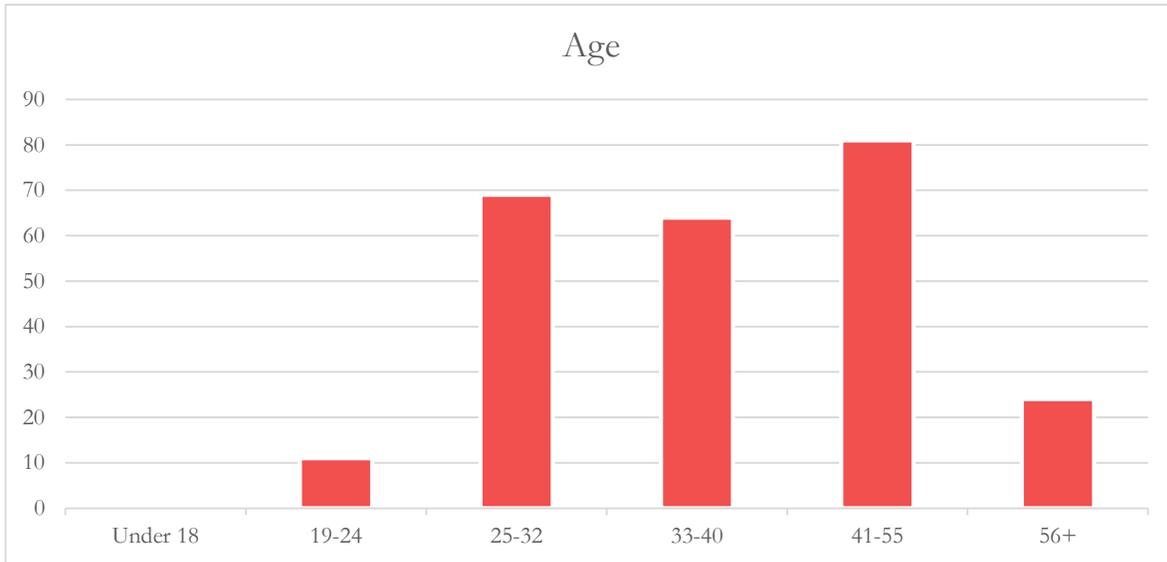
Questionnaire topics included:

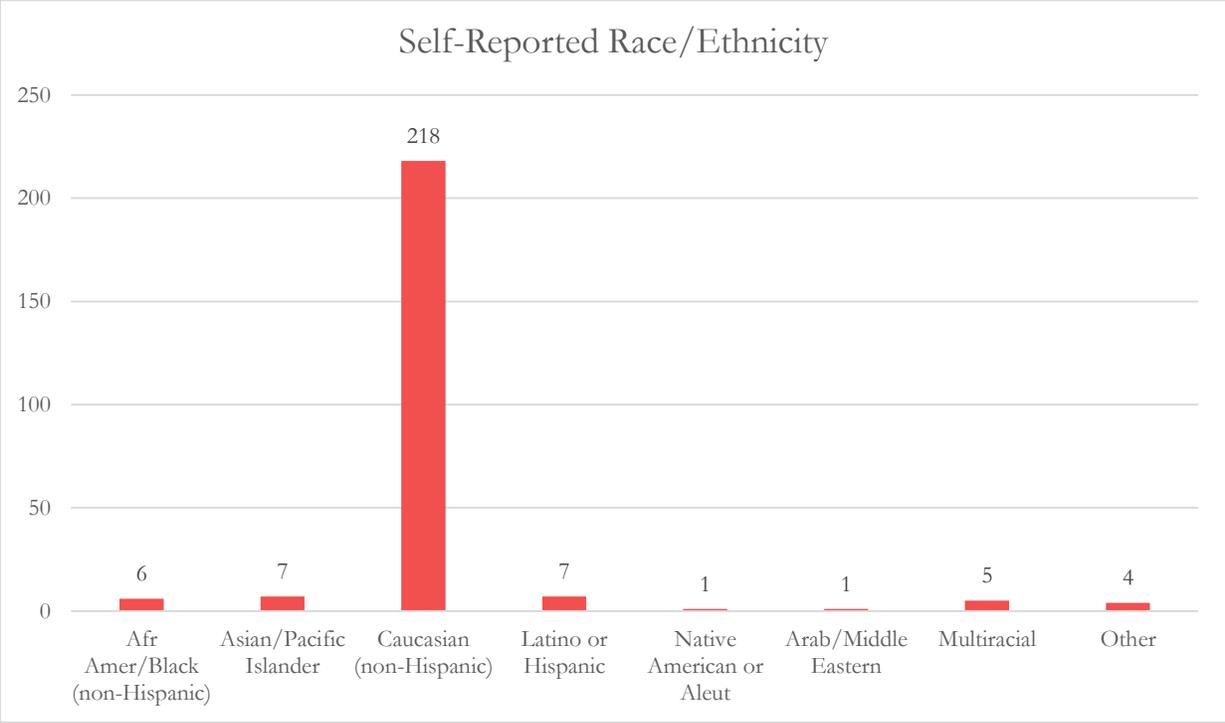
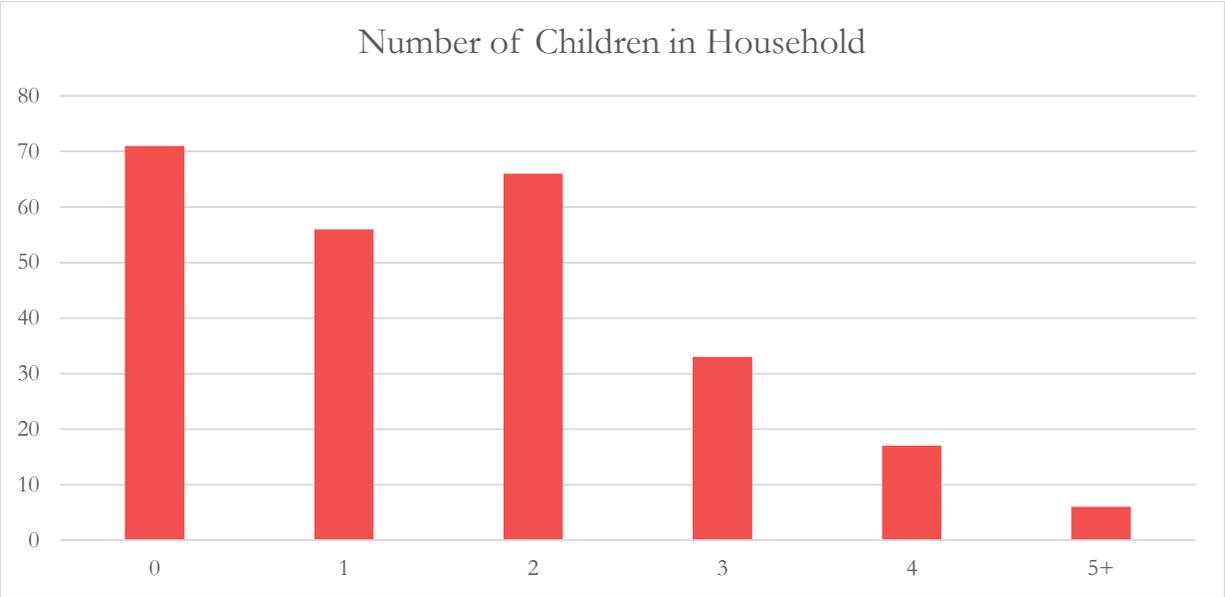
- Perception of the Park District as an organization
- Most commonly associated facilities, parks, events, and programs
- Preferred marketing avenues for reaching residents (i.e. TV, radio, CU-MTD ads, etc)
- Suggestions to improve the website, online registration, and the Park District overall
- Demographic information

Note: The results reported can only be considered the opinions of the survey participants. They cannot be generalized to represent the entire resident population as a whole.

Demographics

All demographic information was self-reported. Data and numbers shown indicates the actual number of people who provided that particular response, not the percentage of people who did so. Survey respondents reported the following characteristics:





Survey Results

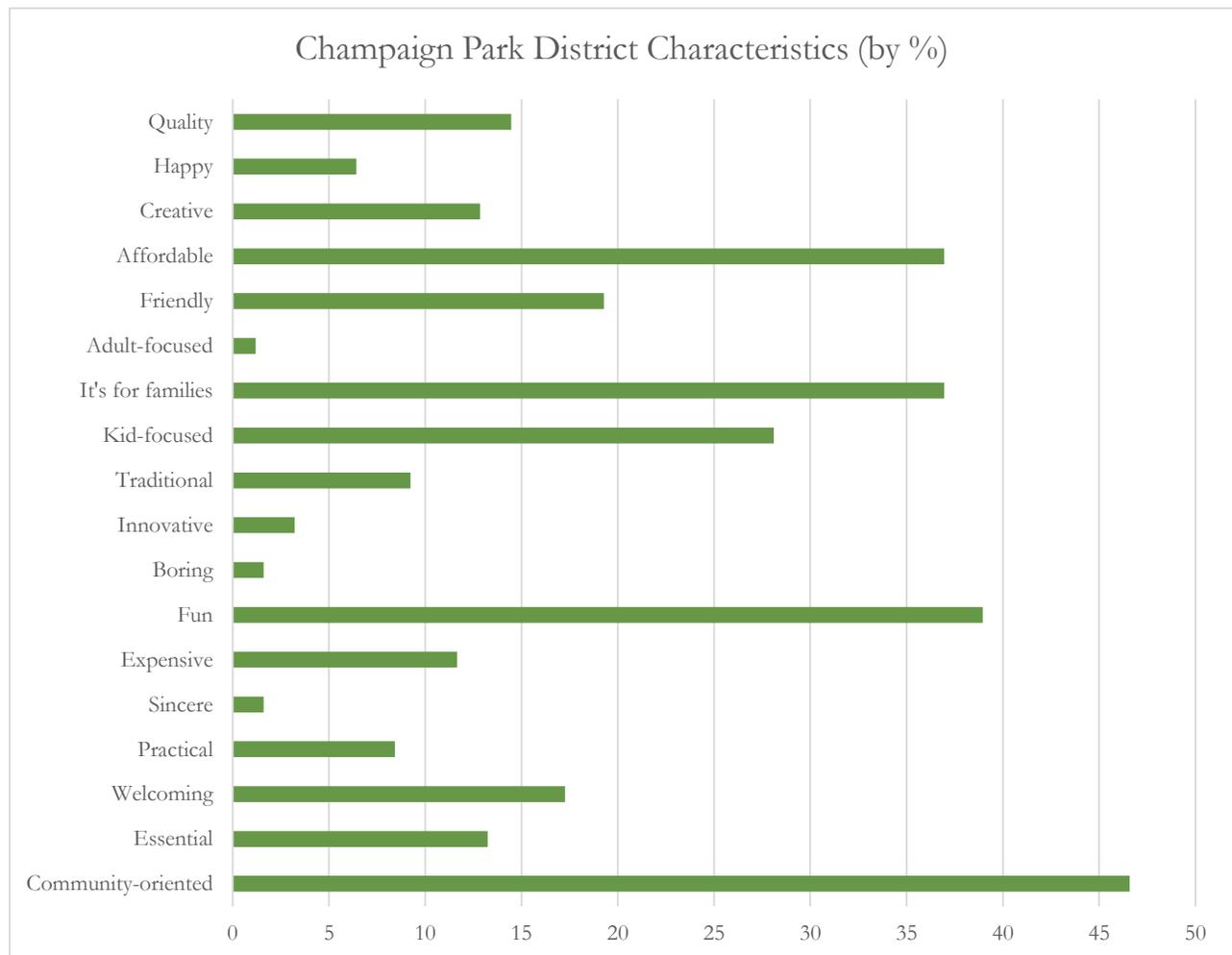
Below are the results of each survey question in the order in which it was asked. Graphs and charts display the percentage of respondents who provided any one particular answer, not the actual number of respondents who did so.

Question 1:

When you think about the Champaign Park District, what three characteristics come to mind first? (Please choose your top 3 choices). Participants were asked to choose the top three characteristics that came to mind when they thought about the Champaign Park District. Respondents were provided with the following options:

- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Community-oriented | 8. Boring | 15. Affordable |
| 2. Essential | 9. Innovative | 16. Creative |
| 3. Welcoming | 10. Traditional | 17. Happy |
| 4. Practical | 11. Kid-focused | 18. Quality |
| 5. Sincere | 12. It's for families | 19. Other (please specify) |
| 6. Expensive | 13. Adult-focused | |
| 7. Fun | 14. Friendly | |

Of these nineteen (19) options, the five most commonly chosen were community-oriented (46.59%), fun (38.96%), affordable (36.95%), It's for families (36.95%) and kid-focused (28.11%) and the bottom five least chosen were happy (6.43%), innovative (3.21%), sincere (1.61%), boring (1.61%), and adult-focused (1.2%). Few respondents chose "Other, please specify" and there was no theme in the answers among those who did.



Question 1 Analysis: Overall the responses to this question were positive and encouraging. Staff was pleased to see that “fun,” “affordable,” “community-oriented,” and “It’s for families” were at the top of the list as those are key goals for Park District programming.

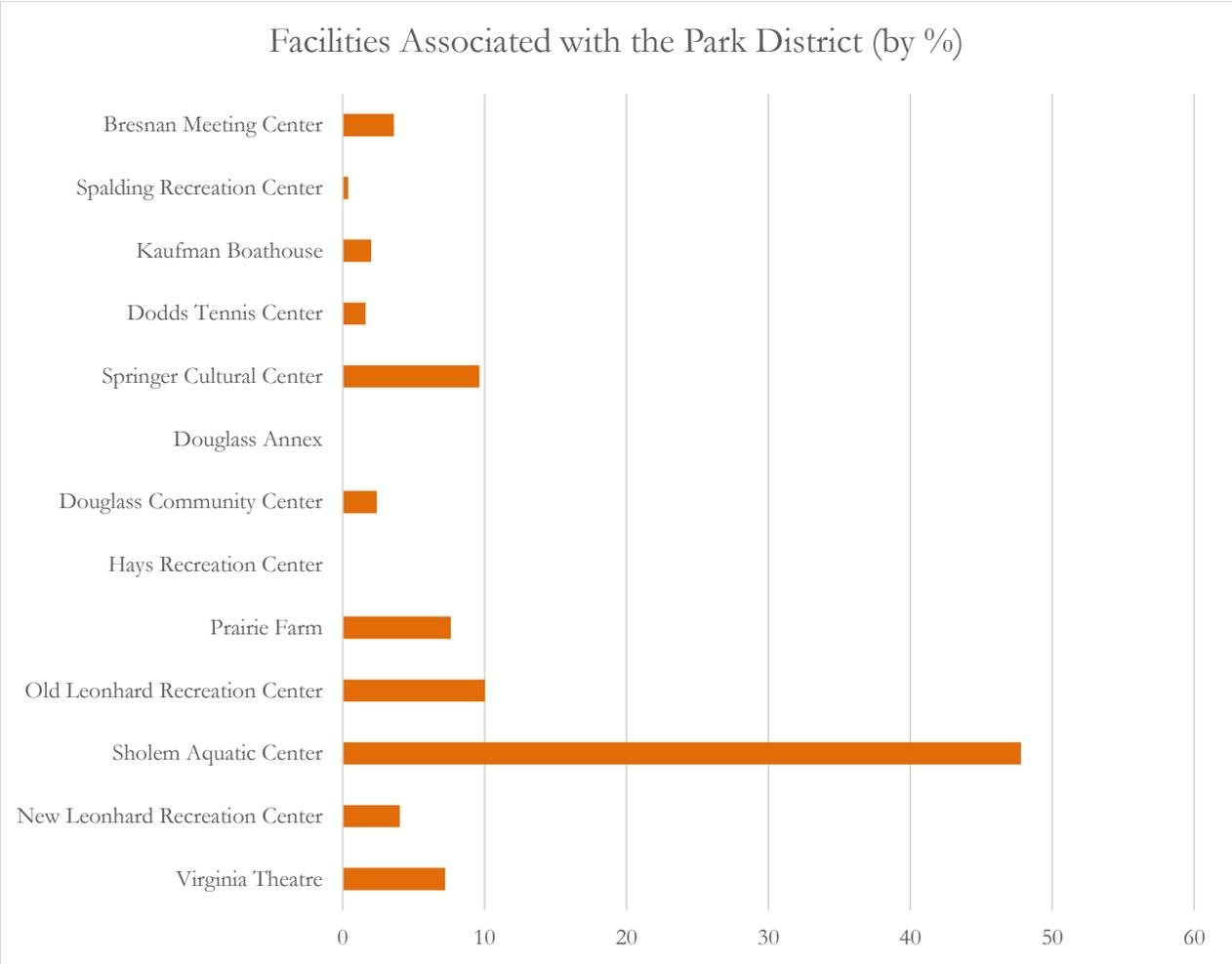
The bottom five least chosen characteristics are more complicated to interpret. It is likely that “sincere” and perhaps even “happy” were confusing answer choices – especially given that “fun” was high on the top 5 list. Staff was encouraged to see that “boring” was at the bottom of the list, but a bit discouraged to see “innovative” at the bottom as well. It may be that while elements of Park District programs, or even some single programs like Zombie Run, may be innovative - the District as a whole is still seen as a traditional parks and recreation delivery organization. Perhaps that is not a bad image if it comes along with “fun” “affordable” and “community oriented.”

Staff were also encouraged to see that “Expensive” was relatively low at 11.65% of respondents, especially given that this sample appears to be heavy on Sholem users. Sholem users tend to think that the non-resident rates in particular are too steep and that is a frequent comment on their surveys. Overall feedback from this question indicates that the District is on track although staff would like to see “innovative” come out of the bottom five in subsequent survey cycles.

Question 2: *Which of the following facilities do you most closely associate with the Champaign Park District?* Participants were asked to choose the one Park District facility that they most closely associate with the Champaign Park District as a whole. Respondents were given the following choices:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Virginia Theatre | 9. Springer Cultural Center |
| 2. New Leonhard Recreation Center | 10. Dodds Tennis Center (indoor tennis center) |
| 3. Sholem Aquatic Center | 11. Kaufman Lake & Boathouse |
| 4. Old Leonhard Recreation Center | 12. Spalding Recreation Center |
| 5. Prairie Farm | 13. Bresnan Meeting Center (administrative offices) |
| 6. Hays Recreation Center (CUSR/Seniors) | 14. Other (please specify) |
| 7. Douglass Community Center | |
| 8. Douglass Annex | |

Of these fourteen (14) options, the three most commonly chosen were Sholem Aquatic Center (47.79%), old Leonhard Recreation Center (10.04%) and Springer Cultural Center (9.64%) while the three least commonly chosen facilities were the Douglass Annex (0%), Hays Center (0%) and Spalding Recreation Center (3.5%). The full results are shown in the chart below. Only nine (9) people chose “Other, please specify,” and aside from two of these responses (“none of these” and “Leonhard and Sholem”) all other written-in answers were actually the names of parks and not facilities.



Question 2 Analysis: The responses to this question may be more telling about our sample of respondents than any other question on the survey in that such a high percentage chose “Sholem Aquatic Center” while facilities like the Virginia Theatre (7.23%) and even the new Leonhard Recreation Center (4.02%) did not score as highly as expected. This could be explained two main ways – one explanation is that Sholem users were the primary respondents to this survey. This hypothesis is supported by several factors including the demographics of the survey respondents (Caucasian women with children) and the fact that Sholem users are active on social media which is where we promoted this survey the most.

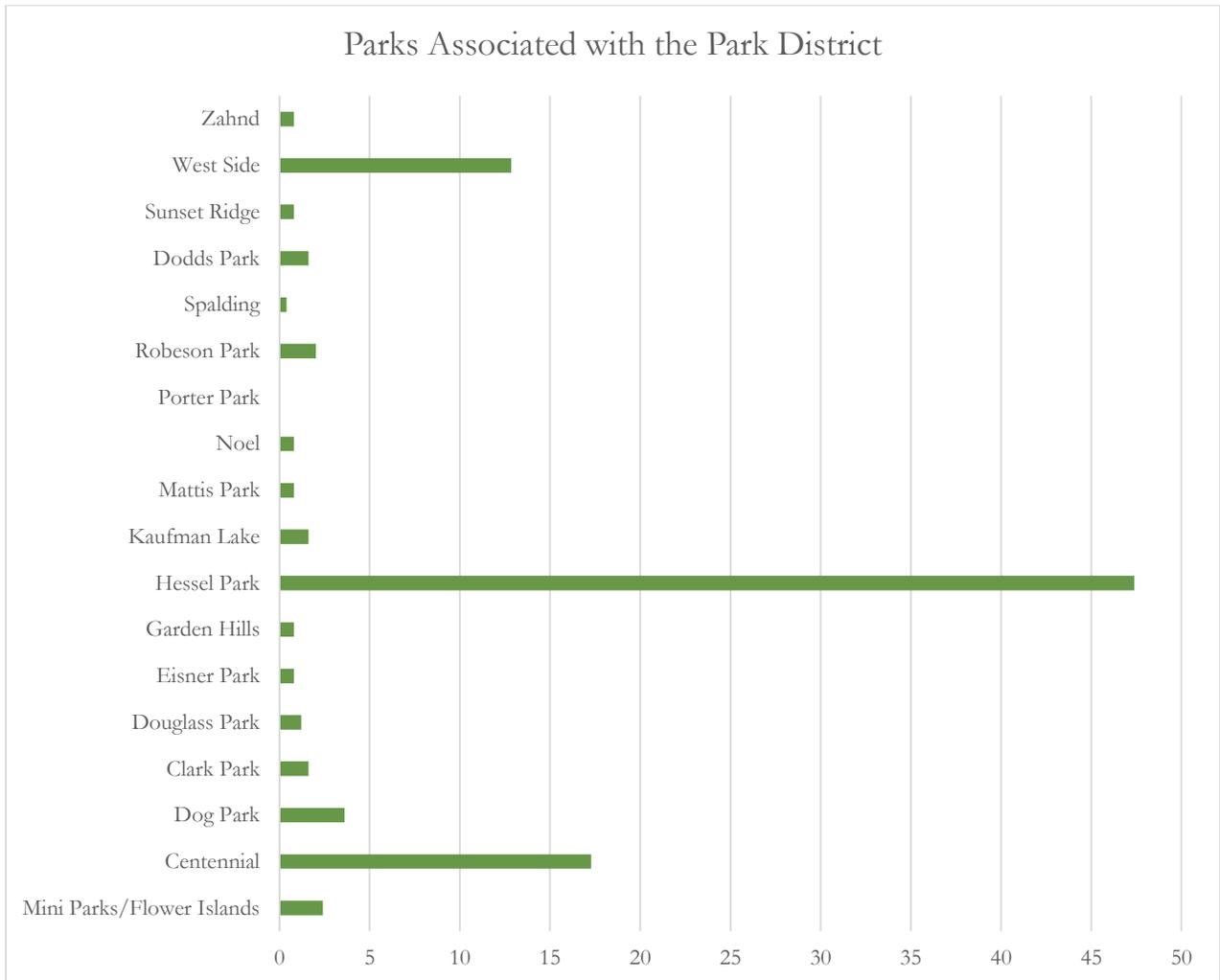
Another explanation is that Sholem Aquatic Center really is the facility that residents most closely associate with the Champaign Park District. At the time this survey was released, there was some media coverage of the new Leonhard Recreation Center but it was not to the level it reached by the beginning of May. Although EbertFest occurred towards the tail end of the survey response period, it is possible that the community does not realize that the Park District runs the Virginia Theatre or that when the public thinks “Park District” they do not first think of the Virginia Theatre. These two explanations bear further examination.

What was also striking about the responses to this question is that no other facility (save for the old Leonhard Recreation Center at just over 10%) even registered in the double digits. In fact, Bresnan Meeting Center at 3.61% beat out facilities like the Dodds Tennis Center, Douglass Community Center, and Hays – all programming sites. This suggests again that perhaps the primary respondents to this survey were active Sholem Aquatic Center users.

Question 3: Which of the following parks do you most closely associate with the Champaign Park District? Participants were asked to choose the one Park District park that they most closely associate with the Champaign Park District as a whole. Respondents were given the following choices:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Mini Parks/Flower Islands | 10. Mattis |
| 2. Centennial | 11. Noel |
| 3. Dog Park | 12. Robert C. Porter Family Park |
| 4. Clark | 13. Robeson |
| 5. Douglass | 14. Spalding |
| 6. Eisner | 15. Sunset Ridge |
| 7. Garden Hills | 16. West Side |
| 8. Hessel | 17. Zahnd |
| 9. Kaufman | 18. Other (please specify) |

Respondents' choices are listed below – the bar next to each park indicates the percentage of respondents that chose that park. The top three parks were Hessel Park (47.39%), Centennial Park (17.27%) and West Side Park (12.85%). Only one park, Robert C. Porter Family Park, did not receive any votes. Twelve (12) people chose “Other, please specify,” and many of those wrote in the names of parks that were answer choices already. Four (4) people wrote in “Dodds Park” which was inadvertently left off the park list so that was added to the chart below.



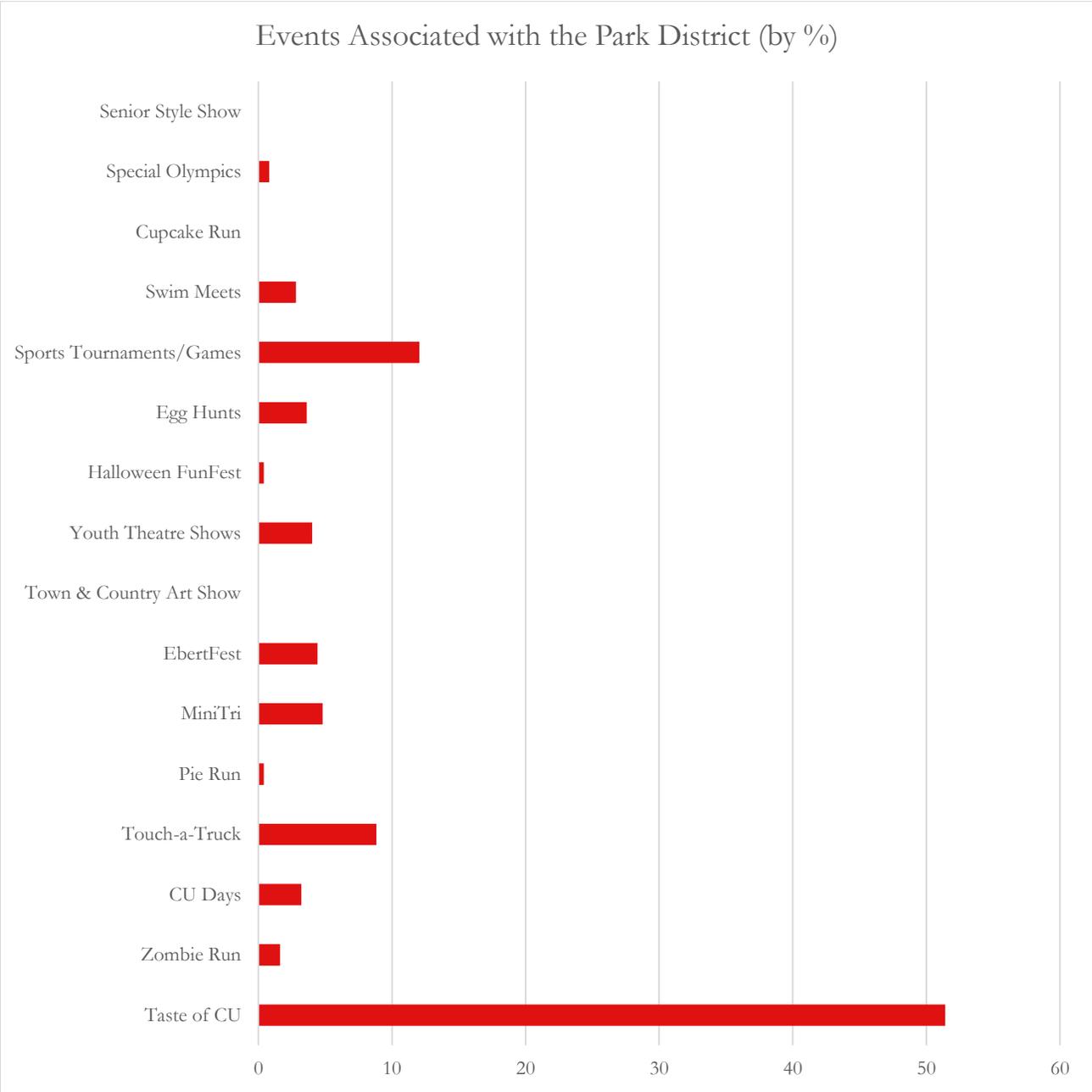
Question 3 Analysis: Staff was not surprised to see Hessel Park, West Side Park, and Centennial Park as the three parks most associated with the Park District. The overwhelming popularity of Hessel Park and the visibility of Centennial and West Side make them clear choices for residents. However, it was surprising to see the Mini Parks/Flower Islands low on the list as anecdotally staff have thought the flower program was one of the defining programs for the Park District. It may be that, compared to the actual parks, flowers rank lower or it may be that this particular sample of residents is more attuned to actual park space.

Staff was also disappointed to see that Porter Park did not receive any votes. It may be the way the park was presented on the survey (“Robert C. Porter Family Park” vs “Porter Park” as it is colloquially known) or it may be that as a newer, more passive use park in a more isolated area of town people are just less aware of its existence. Marketing staff will take more pictures and make more mentions of the park on social media this summer to see if that helps raise the profile of this great new park space.

Question 4: *Which of the following events do you most closely associate with the Champaign Park District?* Participants were asked to choose the one Park District event that they most closely associate with the Champaign Park District as a whole. Respondents were given the following choices:

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|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Taste of Champaign-Urbana | 9. Youth Theatre Shows |
| 2. Zombie Run | 10. Halloween FunFest |
| 3. CU Days | 11. Egg Hunts |
| 4. Touch-a-Truck | 12. Sports Tournaments/Games |
| 5. Pie Run | 13. Swim Meets |
| 6. MiniTri | 14. Cupcake Run |
| 7. EbertFest | 15. Special Olympics |
| 8. Town & Country Art Show | 16. Senior Style Show |

Respondents’ choices are listed below – the bar next to each event indicates the percentage of respondents that chose that event. The top three events were Taste of Champaign-Urbana (51.41%), Touch-a-Truck (8.84%), and Sports Tournaments/Games (12.05%) while the least chosen were Cupcake Run (0%), Senior Style Show (0%), and the Town and Country Art Show (0%). Four (4) people chose “Other, please specify,” and their choices were: “none,” “Taste of CU and EbertFest,” “camps,” and “music in the park.” No other write-in choices were specified.

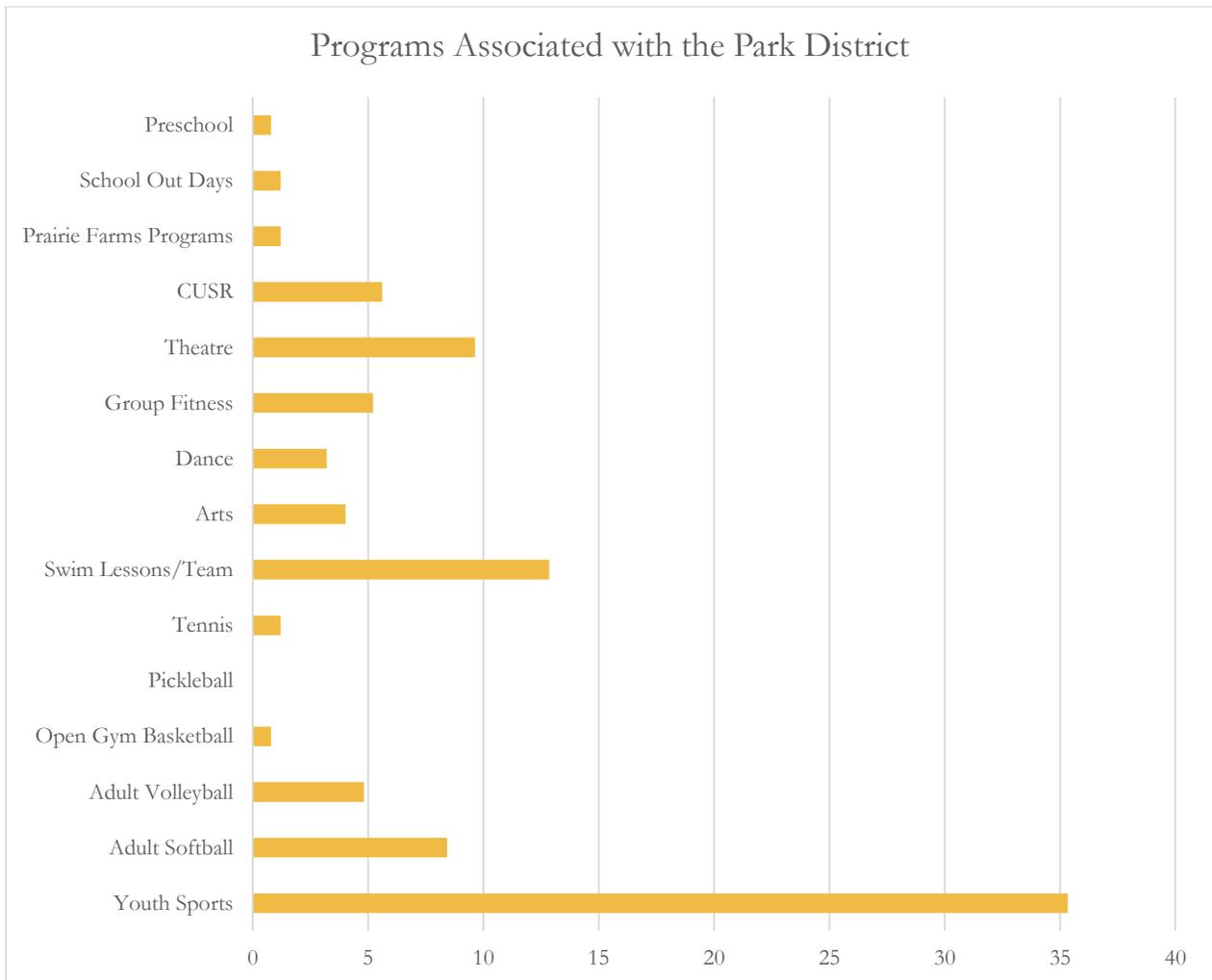


Question 4 Analysis: Staff was not surprised to see Taste of Champaign-Urbana at the top of the list although it was ranked significantly above any other event. In this case, staff do not believe that sample bias was at play; instead, it is very likely that Taste of Champaign is the District’s signature event. Hopefully the new date, format, and renewed marketing materials for this event will help elevate its status even more. The second and third highest ranked events were Touch-a-Truck (a family favorite and often a very well attended event) and Sports Tournaments/Games. The fact that these were top choices makes sense given their popularity, attendance, and longevity and also fit with survey respondents’ view of the District as family-friendly. Unlike other answer choices, it was nice to see a variety of events fall out fairly evenly below Touch-a-Truck including CU Days, MiniTri, Ebert Fest, Egg Hunts, Swim Meets, and (to an extent) Zombie Run. Events that may need more advertising or a closer tie to the Park District include the Town and Country Art Show, Cupcake Run (new last year), Special Olympics, and the Senior Style Show.

Question 5: Which of the following programs do you most closely associate with the Champaign Park District? Participants were asked to choose the one Park District program that they most closely associate with the Champaign Park District as a whole. Respondents were given the following choices:

- | | |
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| 1. Youth sports (soccer, t-ball, basketball) | 8. Arts programs |
| 2. Adult softball | 9. Dance |
| 3. Adult volleyball | 10. Group fitness classes |
| 4. Open gym basketball | 11. Theatre programs/productions |
| 5. Pickleball | 12. Champaign-Urbana Special Recreation programs |
| 6. Tennis | |
| 7. Swim lessons or swim team | |

Respondents' choices are listed below – the bar next to each program indicates the percentage of respondents that chose that program. The top three programs were Youth Sports (35.34%), Swim lessons/swim team (12.85%) and Theatre Programs/Productions (9.64%) while the least chosen were Open Gym Basketball, Pickleball, and Tennis. Twenty-two (22) people chose “Other, please specify,” and their choices were: Prairie Farms Programs (3), School Out Days (3), Preschool Programs (2), and Disc Golf (1). These have been added to the graph below. All other write-in votes were either already-existing answer choices (i.e. swim team) or they were not actually programs (i.e. flower beds).

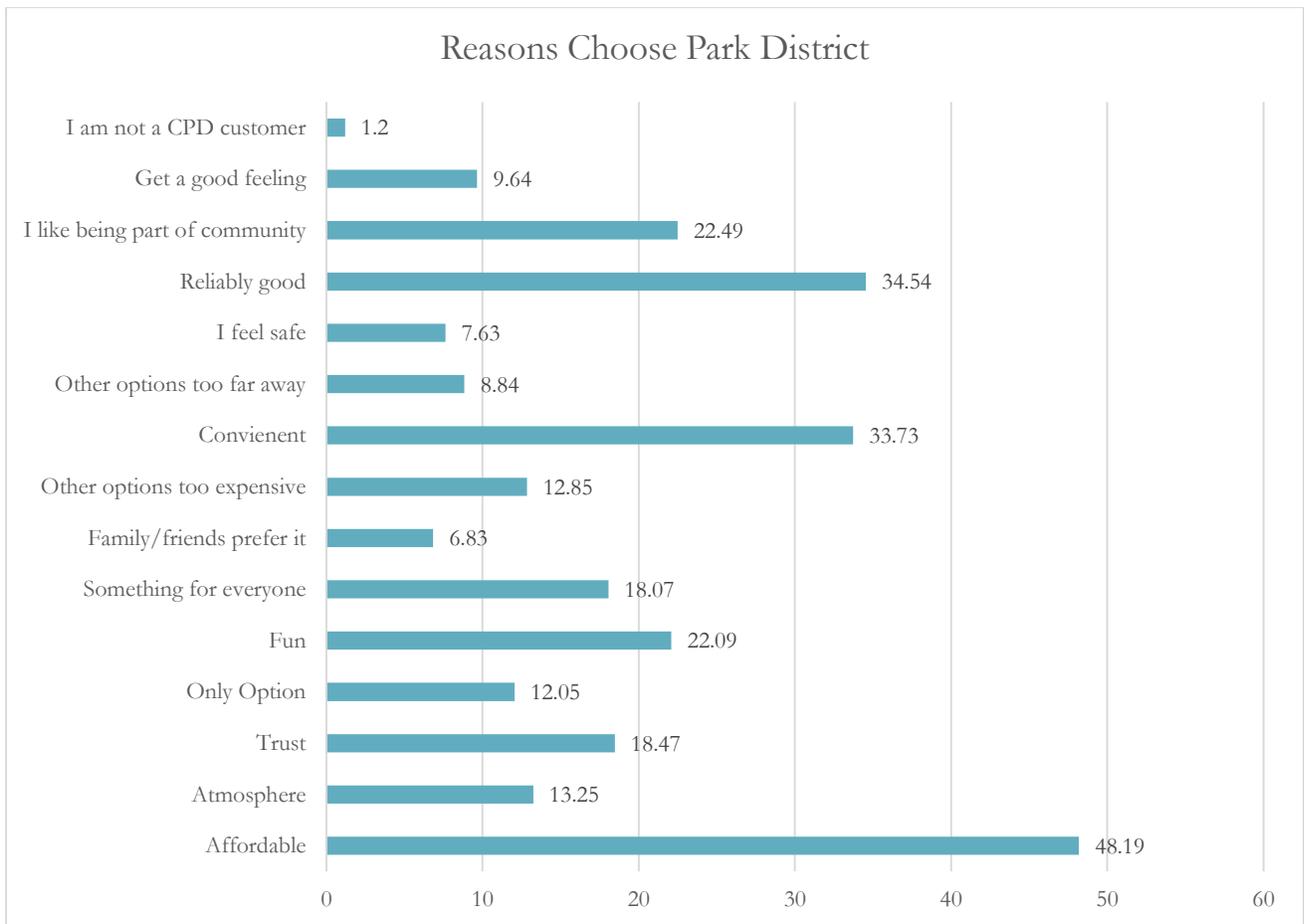


Question 5 Analysis: It was not surprising to see youth sports towards the top, nor was it all that surprising to see swim programs towards the top given that respondent's other answers seem to favor pool use. However, it was a bit surprising to see youth theatre towards the top – while it is a popular and very successful program – theatre did not rank as highly anywhere else on the survey. Staff have always felt that youth theatre is a hallmark program, so it was nice to see that supported here. It was also surprising to see tennis so low although the question asked about programs and not facilities – so it's likely that most casual recreational tennis users just use our outdoor courts and do not attend tennis programs. Lower ranking programs may need a boost or it may just be that their participants were not represented in this survey. A combination of registration data and this survey data may shed more light on those questions and provide clear goals for program and marketing staff.

Question 6: *Given other options, why do you choose Champaign Park District programs, events, or facilities? (Please select your top 3 answers).* Participants were asked to select the top three reasons that they choose to be customers of the Champaign Park District. Respondents were given the following choices:

1. It's affordable/it's a good value for the cost.
2. I enjoy the atmosphere.
3. I trust the Park District.
4. It's the only option for what I want to do.
5. I know my family/group/I will have fun.
6. There's something for everyone in my family/group.
7. My family/friends prefer it.
8. Other options are too expensive.
9. It's convenient.
10. Other options are too far away.
11. I feel safe.
12. Reliably good programs/events/facilities.
13. I like being part of the community.
14. I just get a good feeling from participating in Park District programs/events.
15. I do not visit Park District programs, events or facilities.

Respondents' choices are listed below – the bar next to each answer choice indicates the percentage of respondents that chose that answer. The top three responses were “Affordable” (48.19%), “Reliably good programs/events/facilities” (34.54%), and “It's convenient” (33.73%) while the least chosen were “I am not a CPD customer,” “Family/friends prefer it,” and “I feel safe.” Nine (9) people chose “Other, please specify” and their responses were: “It's very well organized;” “Some events are innovative and I like to try new things;” “I only use the aquatics. I may do the Leonhard center;” “I have more awareness of CPD programs because of their catalog;” “Close to my home;” “Limited options elsewhere (fishing);” “I like to meet new people in our community;” “Rarely pick;” and “CUSR involvement.”



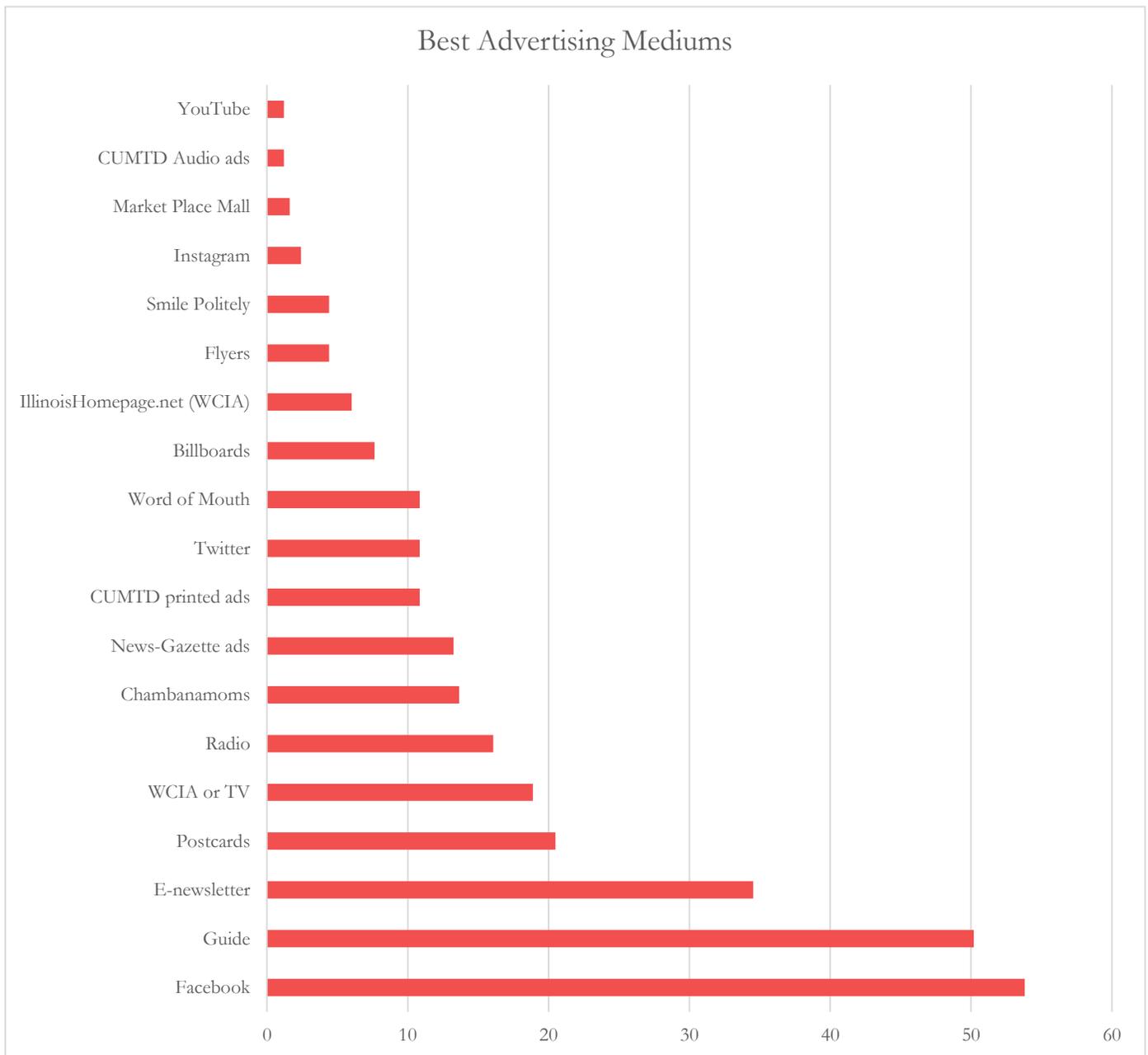
Question 6 Analysis: Staff was thrilled to see “Affordable” as the most common reason that respondents choose Park District programs. Affordability is a high priority for Park District staff and commissioners, and the results of this survey indicate that we are doing well on that front. It was also exciting to see “reliably good” at the top of the list. One of the most important things the Park District can do is to provide consistently high quality programming that makes good use of tax dollars and keeps patrons coming back year after year. “Convenient” rounded out the top three and suggests that the District is doing a nice job offering a variety of programs in a variety of settings that are easy to attend and it is also likely that respondents find it easy to locate information about our programs and find that convenient as well. The lower ranking choices (i.e. “I am not a CPD customer” or “Friends/family prefer it”) were also choices that staff would prefer to see lower on the list. “I feel safe” was also low on the list, but that is likely because other qualities (i.e. affordable, reliably good, etc.) were more important to respondents than safety.

Question 7: *If the Park District wanted to promote a new program, event, or facility - which of the following would best reach you or your friends and family? (Please choose your top 3).* Respondents were provided with the following list of options:

1. Facebook posts
2. Funformation Guide (our mailed brochure)
3. Emailed newsletter(s)
4. Mailed postcards
5. WCIA or other local TV
6. Radio ads
7. ChambanaMoms online ads
8. News-Gazette printed ads
9. CU-MTD (bus) printed bus ads
10. Twitter posts
11. Word of mouth recommendations
12. Billboard ads
13. IllinoisHomepage.net (WCIA) website or app
14. Flyers around town
15. Smile Politely online ads

- 16. Instagram posts
- 17. Ads at Market Place Mall

- 18. CU-MTD (bus) audio ads
- 19. YouTube videos



Question 7 Analysis: The intent of this question was to help the Marketing Department and programmers select good outlets for spending their media dollars. This survey went out via social media, so it was not surprising to see Facebook posts at the top of the list. The Funformation Guide has shown up at the top of the list in countless surveys over the years, so that also was not surprising. Emailed newsletters, again given the technological savvy of survey respondents, was not surprising to see at the top of the list but was also nice given our renewed focus on E-newsletters and our recent purchase of MailChimp access. Marketing is looking forward to sharing these results with programmers to help them make good choices about spending their ad dollars.

cause of the ease of access to tennis courts as their parks. Even though it's brand new, my favorite is Sunset Ridge. I can't wait to see how it improves over time and they complete the project.

Excellent resource in our community. Offers so much! Has great parks & trails; well maintained. Best tax dollars I ever spent :)

SO many choices for programs and parks! They do a really great job beautifying our community with parks and flower gardens. They have special events, art programs, sports and community programs for everyone. And they really take pride in what they do!

Affordable fun for all families. Even as a single mom I was able to give my son the chance to be on a team and to learn sports with scholarship. The program really values children and their experiences.

The best resource in the Champaign area. It has a little bit of everything for everyone.

It has to be one of the best park districts in the country. There are well-maintained parks all over the city, and there is a wide variety of programs and events for all ages.

The instructors generally care about their topic and the children. Program offerings are abundant and good quality.

Question 9: *How could we improve your experience(s) at Champaign Park District facilities, events and/or programs?* This open-ended question allowed respondents to provide us with suggestions in their own words. Just as with Question 8, for this question we chose to create a “Wordle” (see below image). To create this image, we entered summarized text from all 198 open-ended responses into an online program called “Wordle.” We used summary data instead of the raw data because a significant number of respondents answered “There’s nothing you can do better” or similar, and those results were skewing the word frequency image. Also, unlike Question 8, many people said the same kinds of things using different key words so the frequencies did not really match with the actual responses. By summarizing the results and rewriting responses so that they used the same key words, a better image emerged. Wordle then analyzed these summarized answers and looked for word frequencies. Words that came up the most often are larger whereas words that came up least often are smaller. This offers a nice clean way to present a lot of data in a brief report. The full list of responses is always available for review in the raw data set.

This question resulted in some common themes including:

- Add more evening and weekend youth programming for working parents – particularly for preschoolers.
- Advertise your programs more and more broadly – do not always know about everything you offer.
- Add a diving well or deep water to Sholem Aquatic Center.
- Program staff, particularly volunteer coaches, are not always of consistent quality.
- Pricing can be too high, particularly for non-residents. This came up a lot about pool passes.
- Keep parks and facilities up to date and well maintained. Of note, one respondent mentioned our “old fashioned” signs and a few others mentioned repairs/updates needed at the dog park and Dodds Tennis Center.
- Add more adult programs – particularly at night and on weekends. Respondents mentioned water aerobics, art, dance, and young adult fitness classes in particular.
- There is not enough parking at some facilities and parks.

Website Improvements: Word Frequency Chart



Question 10 Analysis: More than Questions 8 and 9, the responses from Question 10 presented some very clear themes. Many respondents indicated that either they do not use our website, or they have no issues with our website. Those responses were removed prior to analysis so that we could focus on improvement suggestions. The responses that remained were very clear – respondents want our website to be more easily searchable, they want a version of the Program Guide that is easy to navigate, they want the website as a whole to be more navigable, they want our content updated more frequently, they want the online registration process to be simpler, and they want the website to be mobile responsive. The good news is that all of these goals are being addressed by our website rebuild process.

Question 11: *How can we improve our online registration process to better meet your needs?* This open-ended question allowed respondents to provide us with suggestions to improve our online registration system in their own words. Just as with the previous open-ended questions, for this question we chose to create a “Wordle” (see below image). To create this image, we entered summarized text from all 184 open-ended responses into an online program called “Wordle.” We used summary data instead of the raw data because at least half of respondents answered “I do not use online registration” or “It works fine for me” or similar, and those results were skewing the word frequency image and were omitted. As with previous questions, many people said the same kinds of things using different key words so the frequencies did not match the actual responses. By summarizing the results and rewriting responses so that they used the same key words, a better image emerged. Words that came up the most often are larger whereas words that came up least often are smaller. This offers a nice clean way to present a lot of data in a brief report. The full list of responses is always available for review in the raw data set.

Registration Improvements: Word Frequency Chart



Question 10 Analysis: As with Question 10, the responses from Question 11 presented some very clear themes. Many respondents indicated that either they do not use our online registration system, or they have no issues with our system. Those responses were removed prior to analysis so that we could focus on improvement suggestions. The responses that remained were very clear – respondents want an online registration process that is more user-friendly and intuitive, easily searchable, streamlined, and accepts more forms of payment like Paypal. Parents of multiple children in particular asked for a system where they could easily add programs to their cart for all their children in an intuitive way. At least one respondent indicated that they would like an “Amazon.com” experience. Many of these goals are being addressed by our website rebuild process – but as that process must be done in conjunction with RecTrac, it will be useful to have these key points in mind during that collaboration.

Conclusion

This process was very useful for marketing staff, and will provide actionable information for programming and technology staff as well. Marketing recommends conducting this survey annually, but broadening its reach through increased awareness, printed and mailed versions, social media sponsored posts, and other methods. The goal for next year should be at least 500 returned surveys from a wider range of Park District users. In the meantime, marketing will work with Recreation and Cultural Arts to help implement the suggestions, ideas, and feedback from this year’s survey results.