

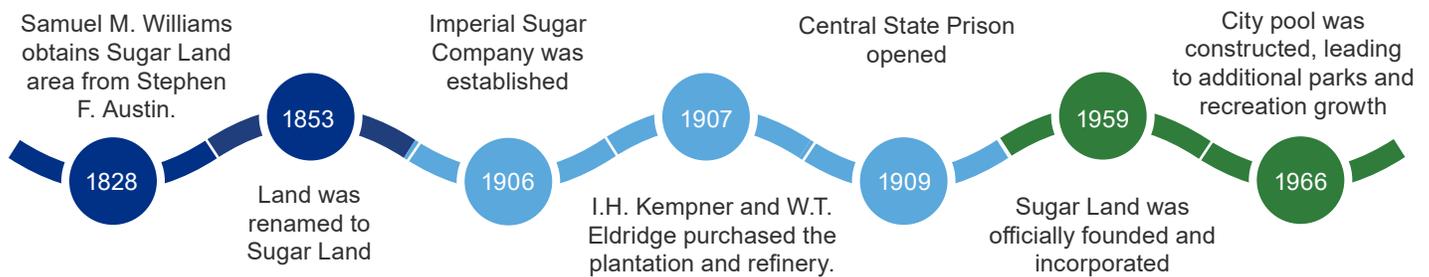
UNDERSTANDING THE COMMUNITY

2



The primary purpose of this Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan is to ensure that the community of Sugar Land is provided with recreational opportunities that are appropriate and adequately serve current and future residents and visitors. As such, the community will be analyzed in terms of its history; regional context; demographics; and past, present, and projected population growth to understand the current state of Sugar Land and its residents. Public input gathered throughout this planning process will be examined in order to determine the wants and needs of the community.

Figure 2.1, Sugar Land's History



History

Originally owned by the Mexican government, the land in the Sugar Land area was obtained by an entrepreneur named Samuel M. Williams from Stephen F. Austin in 1828. At the time, Williams labeled the property Oakland Plantation because of the plethora of oak trees. The area was opportunely located near the coast which provided access to freight boats traveling along the United States coast. During one fateful boat shipment, a small load of sugar cane stalks was delivered to Williams. After planting the stalks in Texas' ideal climate, sugar cane quickly took root and the sugar industry in the area followed shortly thereafter with the building of the first sugar mill. Later, in 1853, Benjamin Franklin Terry and William Jefferson Kyle, bought Oakland Plantation and renamed it Sugar Land.

Terry and Kyle purchased 2,500 acres of land and paid to have the railroad alignment altered to run through Sugar Land, thus providing freight access for sugar shipments. In 1906, the sugar refining operation was established as the Imperial Sugar Company. For the next 50 years, Sugar Land was a company-run town with growth and development stemming from Imperial Sugar. In 1907, I.H. Kempner and W.T. Eldridge purchased the plantation and refinery, and were prominent catalysts that provided residents an excellent town for work and life, leading to rapid population growth. They were able to provide functioning schools, infrastructure, and employee benefits and pay. In 1909, the Central State Prison opened and prisoners were utilized (up through the 1920's) as cheap labor on sugar plantation fields, lumber, mining, and agriculture. In 1959, the City of Sugar Land was officially incorporated after 50 years of being a company-owned town. Later that year, Sugar Land's first mayor was appointed and in January 1960 the first City Council meeting was held.^{1,2,3}

Over the years, Sugar Land emerged as one of Houston's most successful suburban neighbors as a result of its rapid growth. In 1968, Sugar Land experienced its first large, upscale master planned



Imperial Sugar Mill

Photo courtesy of: <http://www.visitsugarlandtx.com/About-Us/Sugar-Land-History.aspx>



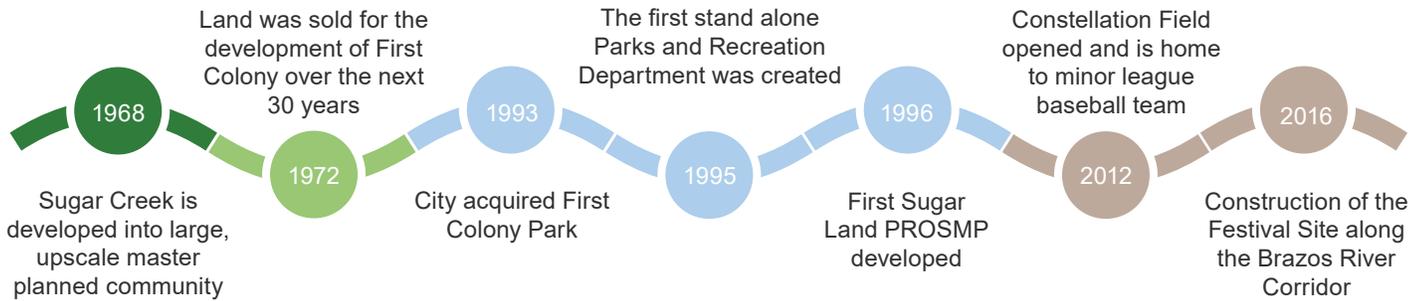
Central State Prison

Photo courtesy of: https://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/connections/SeptOct2011/features_vol19no1.html

¹ Handbook of Texas Online, Margaret Swett Henson, "Williams, Samuel May," accessed September 7, 2016, <https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fwi35>

² "Sugar Land History," City of Sugar Land, <https://www.visitsugarlandtx.com/SugarLandTour/media/SugarLandTour/Downloads/FUN-FACTS.pdf>

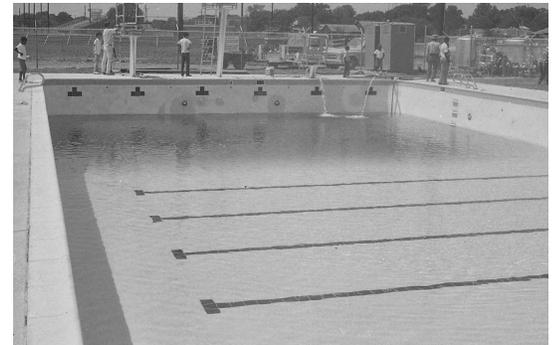
³ "History," City of Sugar Land, <https://www.sugarlandtx.gov/index.aspx?nid=204>



community (Sugar Creek), when the Imperial Cattle Ranch was sold to a developer. Just shortly after that in 1972, one of the largest land sales in Texas' history transpired and 7,500 acres of land were sold, leading to the First Colony community being developed over the next 30 years. Growth of Sugar Land propelled in the 1980's and 1990's due to the annexations of master-planned communities. The first annexation in Sugar Land occurred in 1986. The City multiplied by obtaining major residential communities such as Sugar Creek and First Colony. Imperial Sugar ceased operations within the City in 2002.

Recent annexations have expanded the City's corporate limits to 35.16 square miles.¹

Sugar Land's park and recreation system began to form its current state in 1966 with the construction of the city pool at Lion's Club City Park. After the installation of the public pool, parks and recreation gradually developed further through the 1970's and 1980's. Tremendous population growth and the resulting additional needs for recreational activities forced the City to take action in producing greater parks and recreational opportunities. During the 1990's, the City acquired First Colony Park (1993), established the first stand alone Parks and Recreation Department (1995), and developed its first Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan (1996). Since the first Plan, the City has gone through two updates in 2005 and 2011. Many acres of parkland have been acquired since 2005, such as Brazos River floodway property in the Greatwood Development and within the City limits, Gannoway Lake Park, and Settlers Way Park, among others. In 2012, Sugar Land opened the Constellation Field baseball stadium which is home to the minor league baseball team, The Skeeters. The City has made substantial improvements and expansions to the parks system in recent years and in 2016 started construction of the Festival Site along the Brazos River Corridor and annexed Cullinan Park into the City limits.¹



Lions Club Pool

Photo courtesy of: <http://wateringholdclubhouse.blogspot.com/2013/10/more-images-of-old-sugar-land.html>



Constellation Field

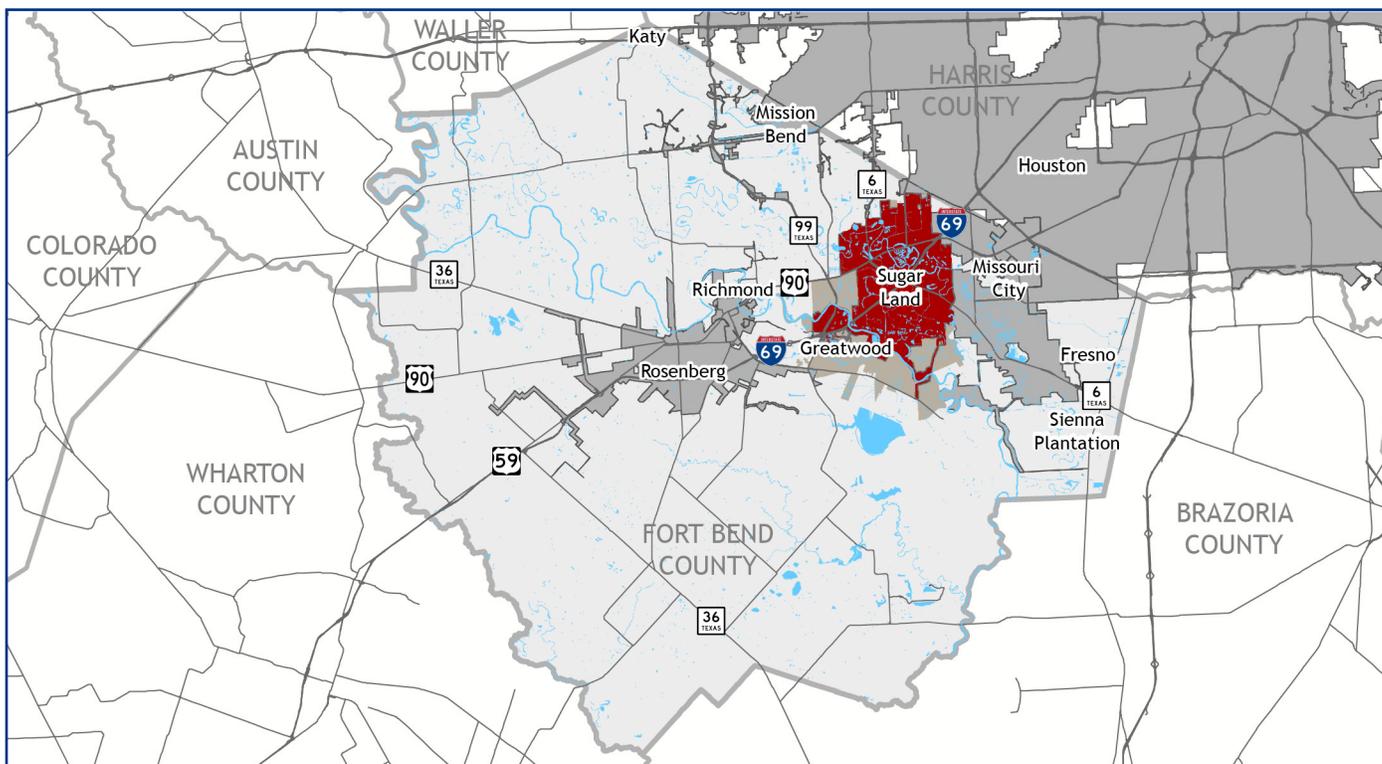
Photo courtesy of: <http://www.sitterlehomes.com/7-ways-to-have-a-relaxing-weekend-in-sugar-land-tx/>

¹ City of Sugar Land 2005 Parks, Recreation & Open Space Master Plan, Carter & Burgess, Inc.

Regional Context

The City of Sugar Land is situated in the northeast quadrant of Fort Bend County, located in southeast Texas. The City includes a total area of 35.67 square miles (including both full- and limited-purpose annexation areas). Sugar Land is located approximately 25 miles southwest of Houston, and is grouped within the Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land metropolitan area, which is the fifth-most populated metropolitan area in the United States. As a neighbor of the most populated city in Texas (Houston), Sugar Land's population has been partially shaped by this close proximity. As a major international hub, Houston draws many tourists, cultural diversity, and key industries (e.g., energy). Sugar Land is also very diverse and has been rapidly growing in recent decades. The City includes two significant waterways as well as a series of man-made lakes. Oyster Creek runs from the northwest to the eastern City limits and into Missouri City. The Brazos River, the longest river in Texas, flows through the southwestern and southern portion of the City and into Brazoria County. Sugar Land is fortunate to have direct access to roughly 3,600 acres of floodway property along the Brazos River and nine miles of river frontage in the City.

Map 2.1, Regional Context



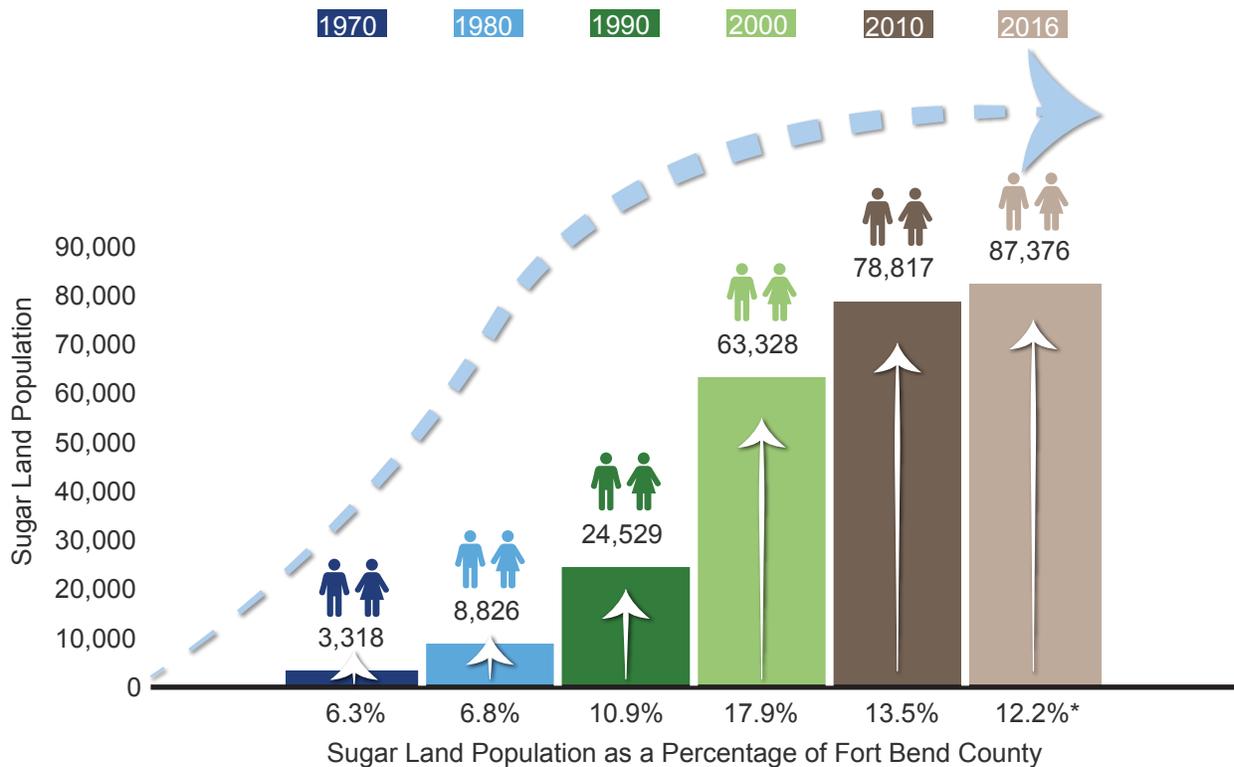
There are three key thoroughfares connecting Sugar Land to the surrounding metropolitan areas. Interstate 69 runs southwest to northeast through the heart of Sugar Land, effectively splitting the City in half and providing connections to downtown Houston. State Highway 6 runs from the northwest to southeast and provides connections to Galveston and Northwest Houston. Lastly, U.S. Highway 90 Alternate provides east-west connectivity through the northern half of the City.

Demographics

Historic Population Growth

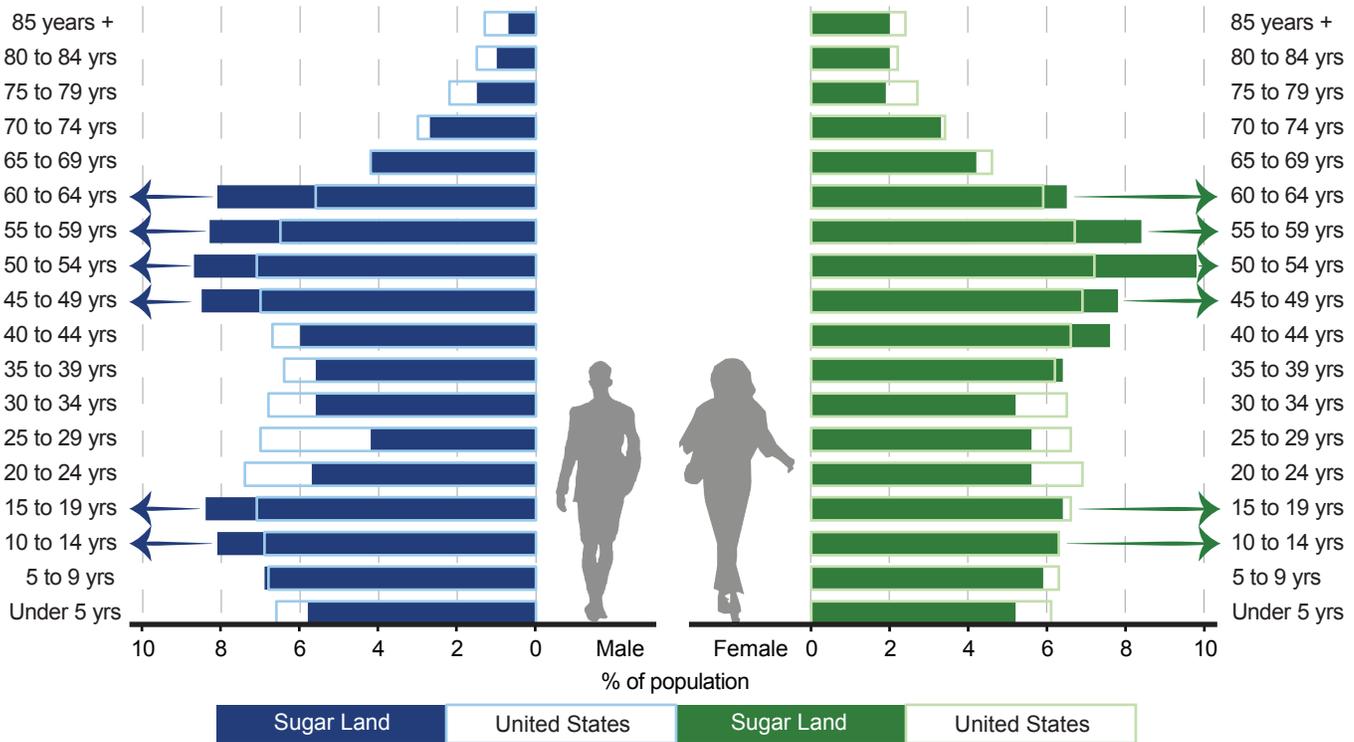
The City of Sugar Land has experienced a significant increase in its population since 1970. By January 2016, the population had increased by greater than 2,000 percent (see Figure 2.2, *Historic Population Growth*). During this time, the City annexed a variety of areas including Sugar Creek, Fort Bend County MUDs 12 and 16, and a number of First Colony MUDs. As the City continues to grow, park and recreation needs of the community grow proportionally.

Figure 2.2, Historical Population



* Fort Bend County population estimates reflect the latest available U.S. Census Bureau estimates (2015)
 Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, City of Sugar Land 2016, Fort Bend County

Figure 2.3, Sugar Land Age Distribution



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Age and Sex, Table S0101

Table 2.1, Age Comparisons

Age Distribution & Comparisons

Overall age characteristics are a continuously fluctuating number in a community. Understanding age distribution helps the City determine the needs for appropriate recreational opportunities for different age brackets. A comparison of the age distribution in Sugar Land, Greatwood, New Territory, Fort Bend County, and Texas can be found in Figure 2.3, *Sugar Land Age Distribution* and Table 2.1, *Age Comparisons*. It is important to note that over the course of a 10-year master plan, as residents age, their recreational needs also shift. With the annexation of Greatwood and New Territory, understanding the age breakdown of their populations will help the City to plan for shifting needs as they arise.

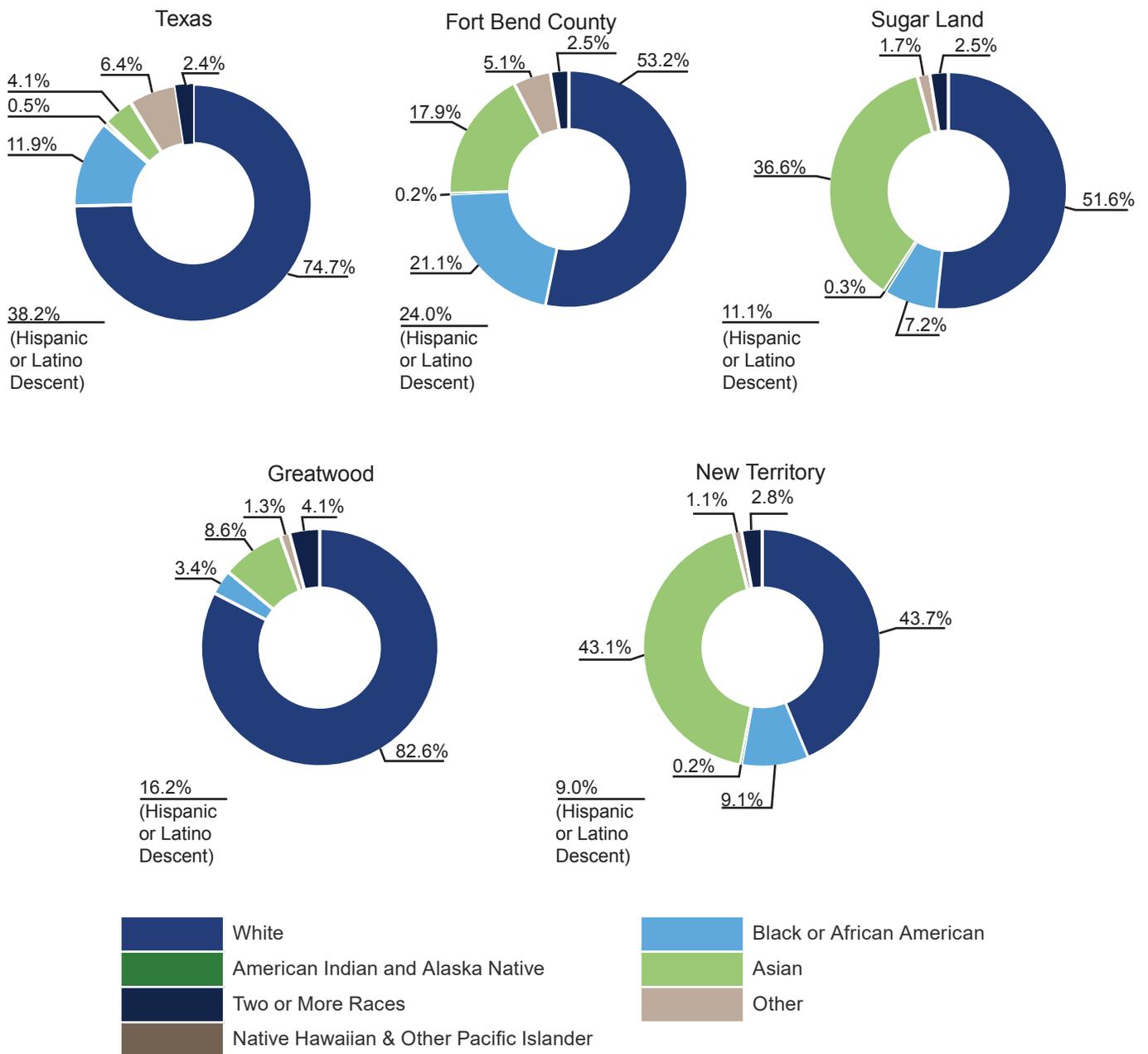
AGE RANGE	TEXAS	FORT BEND COUNTY	SUGAR LAND	GREATWOOD	NEW TERRITORY
Under 5 years	7.4%	7.1%	5.5%	7.8%	4.6%
5 to 9 years	7.6%	8.3%	6.4%	8.4%	6.8%
10 to 14 years	7.4%	8.3%	7.2%	11.4%	10.5%
15 to 19 years	7.3%	7.6%	7.4%	7.2%	9.3%
20 to 24 years	7.4%	5.7%	5.7%	2.7%	6.4%
25 to 34 years	7.3%	5.7%	4.9%	1.7%	5.7%
30 to 34 years	7.1%	6.7%	5.4%	6.2%	4.9%
35 to 39 years	6.8%	7.6%	6.0%	7.4%	5.7%
40 to 44 years	6.8%	7.8%	6.8%	8.8%	7.6%
45 to 49 years	6.6%	7.5%	8.1%	9.0%	11.0%
50 to 54 years	6.6%	7.5%	9.2%	6.2%	10.2%
55 to 59 years	5.8%	6.7%	8.4%	5.7%	8.1%
60 to 64 years	4.9%	5.0%	7.3%	3.7%	2.9%
65 to 69 years	3.7%	3.3%	4.2%	5.0%	1.5%
70 to 74 years	2.6%	2.2%	3.0%	5.2%	2.1%
75 to 79 years	1.9%	1.3%	1.7%	1.4%	0.8%
80 to 84 years	1.4%	1.0%	1.5%	0.9%	1.1%
85 years +	1.3%	0.8%	1.4%	1.3%	0.8%
Median Age	33.9	35.3	41.2	37.7	36.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Age and Sex, Table S0101

Race and Ethnicity

Sugar Land is home to a very diverse population (see Figure 2.4, *Race and Ethnicity*). This creates opportunities to celebrate the different customs and cultures of the City's residents through activities, programs, and festivals.

Figure 2.4, Race and Ethnicity

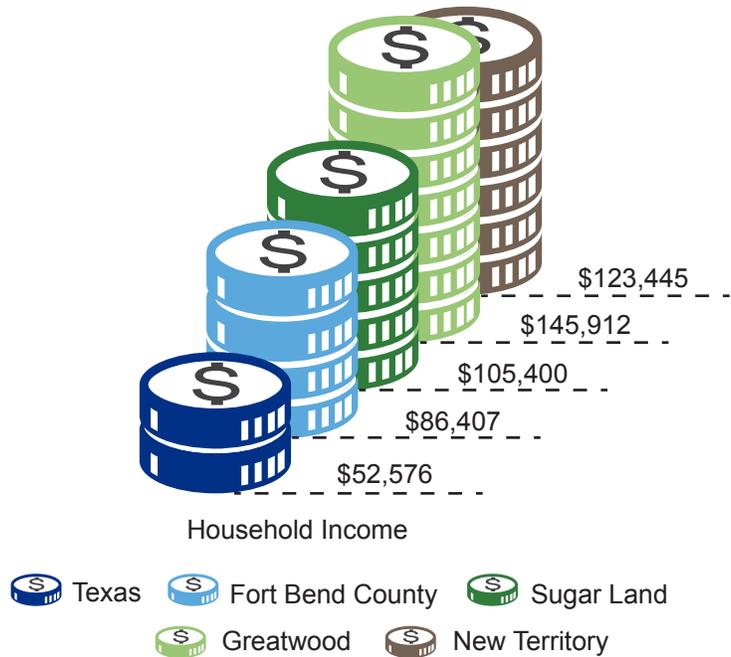


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table DP05: ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates

Household and Family Income

When compared to the rest of Texas, the residents of Sugar Land, Greatwood, and New Territory are a prosperous population (see Figure 2.5, *Household Income*). With greater income typically comes greater discretionary funds for recreational pursuits. This could include both fee-based recreation as well as programmed and unprogrammed activities which include more costly equipment (e.g., golf, bicycle racing, etc.). As the City decides potential recreational amenities and programs to provide, a wider economic range of activities can be considered.

Figure 2.5, Household Income

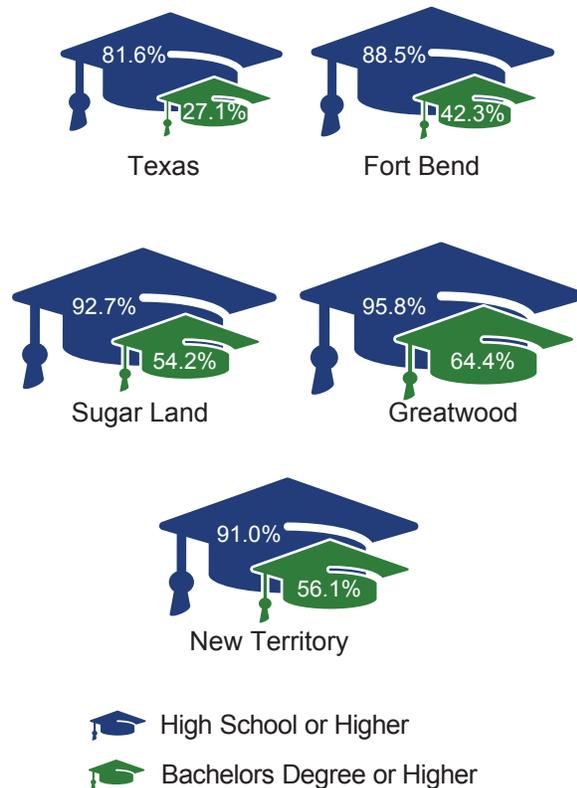


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics

Educational Attainment

Sugar Land, Greatwood, and New Territory are highly educated communities (see Figure 2.6, *Educational Attainment*), which likely directly correlates to the greater income the populations generate. Education plays a pivotal role in obtaining the qualifications necessary for various white-collar jobs. Generally speaking, people working in white-collar jobs tend to spend concentrated hours inside. This, and the associated elevated stress levels, frequently results in people wanting to spend their free time outdoors experiencing the physical and mental relief of recreation.

Figure 2.6, Educational Attainment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimate, Table S1501: Educational Attainment

Occupation by Industry

Understanding how residents spend their working hours can assist in providing the appropriate types of recreation within a city. If a city had one or two professions that were strongly represented, it may be reasonable to provide some recreational activities and amenities that cater to those populations. As a highly educated community with a large percentage of residents working in the educational sector (see Figure 2.7, *Local Industries*), the addition of educational-based programming and signage in the parks would likely be appreciated and could be used for outdoor learning opportunities for local schools.

Resident and Non-Resident Employment

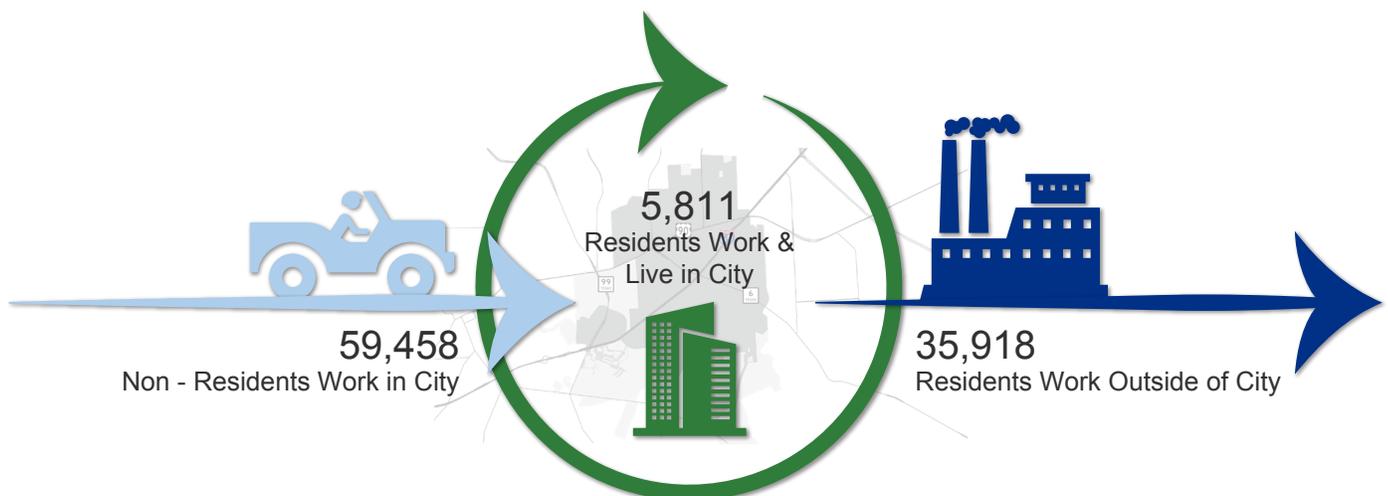
Both residents and visitors use and enjoy the City's parks, recreation, and open space. It is important to note that, while people may not live in the City, if they work in Sugar Land, they are spending the majority of their week there. This population may use the parks system almost as much as residents and thus create an additional constituency for which the City should plan. Through the provision of high-quality parks and recreational amenities for the overall community, the City is sending a message about its standards, its level of care, and its desire to be a one-of-kind community. In Sugar Land there are over 65,000 individuals that commute into the City for work and nearly 35,000 who commute out of the City for work. Notably, only seven percent of residents both live and work in Sugar Land (see Figure 2.8, *Resident and Non-Resident Employment*). Residents and non-residents may be commuting into and out of the City due to a high cost of living, a congested housing market, or a saturated job market.

Figure 2.7, Local Industries



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2014 5-Year American Community Survey, DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics

Figure 2.8, Resident and Non-Resident Employment



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, <http://onthemap.ces.census.gov>

Population and Growth Projections

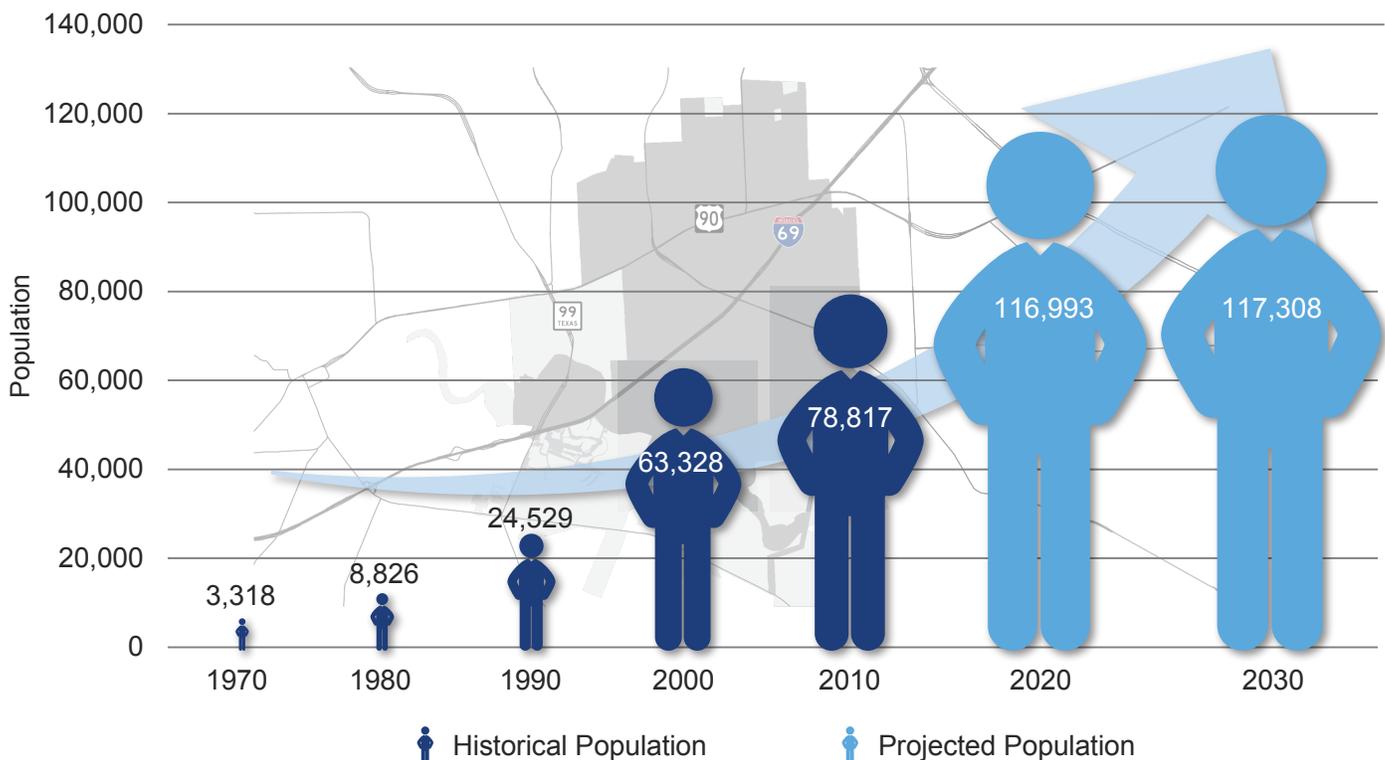
Although the City of Sugar Land’s population projection is estimated to significantly increase during the horizon of this Plan, it will not significantly impact the City’s ability to provide parks and recreation services. Indeed, the City’s projection indicates a population increase of almost 50 percent from 78,817 persons in 2010 to a projected 116,993 persons by 2020.¹ (see Figure 2.9, *Sugar Land Historical and Projected Population*).

However, the population projection takes into account the annexations of both the New Territory and Greatwood neighborhoods and the build-out of Imperial. Since these areas are already (or will be) developed with comprehensive HOA-owned and operated parks, recreation, trails, and other facilities and amenities, the additional population will not significantly increase demand on the City’s park and recreation system.

With the annexations of both New Territory and Greatwood, the City has limited opportunity to expand its geographic boundaries beyond Riverstone and other small areas within its extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). It is also largely developed. Consequently, Sugar Land will start to see a decreasing percentage of population increase until it reaches its ultimate build-out population of 134,127 persons. The combination of strong HOA-managed park and recreation resources and limited new growth demand provides the City with a unique opportunity to pursue more larger-scale community parks and unique destination activity centers.

¹ City of Sugar Land 2016 Population Estimates and Projections released by the City’s Long Range Planning Program in March 2016.

Figure 2.9, Sugar Land Historical and Projected Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and City of Sugar Land population and projection estimates, 2016

Public Engagement

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the community's thoughts and ideas, a variety of different engagement types were used throughout the planning process. Through the use of different engagement strategies, varying user types were given a chance to express their opinions in the way most comfortable to them. Stakeholder meetings; Parks, Art, Recreation, Culture, and Streetscapes (PARCS) Board meetings; a statistically valid public survey; open house public meetings; HOA "meetings in a box"; a Sugar Land Online Town Hall; City Council meetings; and Planning and Zoning Commission meetings were all included in the public engagement component of this PROSMP. Highlights from the different engagement strategies are described below. Highlights are first presented as they were voiced by the public during each engagement method, even though the opinions may differ between different engagement components (e.g., public survey responses may differ from public open house results). A composite summary analysis of all the public engagement will be presented at the end of the chapter.

Stakeholder Meetings & Key Person Interviews

A series of seven stakeholder meetings and key person interviews were held over the course of two days at the beginning of the planning process. The meetings were held with a variety of user groups and provided insight on the varying opinions in the community. Over 50 people attended the meetings including fitness instructors; Fort Bend Green; youth and adult sports leagues; seniors; Imperial Park Recreation Center and T.E. Harman Senior Center staff; City staff representing Economic Development, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Special Events, Engineering, Public Works, Police Department, Planning, Animal Services, Environmental Services, and Food Inspection; and Assistant City Managers. Throughout the various meetings, a series of trends regarding the needs of the City were identified.

Some of the key elements, wants, and needs identified in the meetings are summarized below.

- Interest in planning for growth - adding more parks, events, programming
- Along with that growth - an expressed need for more space; indoor space for activities, outdoor space for more athletics
- Need for additional space to allow for the staffing and equipment needed to accommodate growth
- Excitement about taking on new large projects like the Festival Site and Cullinan Park
- Expressed interest in maintaining the level of quality which sets Sugar Land apart from any other jurisdiction
- Concern about being able to handle the growth (more parkland, events, programming) with existing resources. Need for more staffing to accommodate weekend hours, event staffing, etc.
- More focused attention on providing water-based activities to meet market demand



Stakeholder meetings were held to gather the thoughts from varying user groups in Sugar Land.

Public Survey

As part of the Sugar Land PROSMP planning process, a statistically valid survey was developed and distributed. ETC Institute administered the needs assessment survey for the City during the summer of 2016. The survey was administered to objectively assess a wide range of issues related to the City's parks and recreation. The survey results will guide the City in making improvements to existing and future parks, trails, and recreational programs to best serve the needs of residents. The survey will also help the City establish priorities for the future improvement of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services within the community.

Methodology

A survey packet was mailed to a random sample of households in the City. Each survey packet contained a cover letter, a copy of the survey, and a postage paid return envelope. Residents who received the survey were given the option of returning the survey by mail or completing it online.

Ten days after the surveys were mailed, ETC Institute sent emails and placed phone calls to the households that received the survey to encourage participation. The emails contained a link to the online version of the survey to make it easy for residents to complete it. To prevent people who were not residents of the City of Sugar Land from participating, everyone who completed the survey online was required to enter their home address prior to submitting the survey. The addresses that were entered online were then matched with the addresses that were originally selected for the random sample. If the address from a survey completed online did not match one of the addresses selected for the sample, the online survey was not counted towards the statistically valid responses.

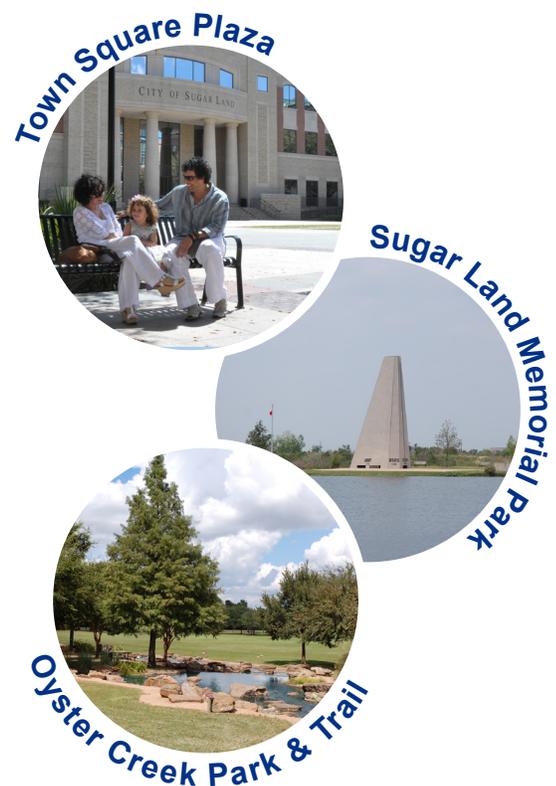
The goal was to obtain completed surveys from at least 400 residents. The goal was exceeded with a total of 402 residents completing the survey. The overall results for the sample of 402 households have a precision of at least +/- 4.9% at the 95% level of confidence.

The major findings of the survey are summarized below and on the following pages.

Overall Facility Use

Overall Use: 77 percent of households surveyed indicated they had visited any of the City of Sugar Land parks, rented a recreational facility, or attended an event at a City facility during the past 12 months. The three most visited parks were Town Square Plaza, Sugar Land Memorial Park and Brazos River Corridor, and Oyster Creek Park and Trail (see Figure 2.10, *Most Visited Parks*).

Figure 2.10, Most Visited Parks



Program Participation and Ratings

Overall Participation: 16 percent of households surveyed indicated that they had participated in the City of Sugar Land recreation programs during the past 12 months.

Use: When asked how many different recreation programs or activities their household had participated in, the greatest number of respondents indicated between one and three programs (see Figure 2.11, *Program Participation*). Over half (65%) of respondents indicated the reason they participate is because of the location of the program facility, 50 percent indicated it was the cost of the program or activity, and 33 percent indicated it was because of the quality of the program facility. During the past 12 months 80 percent of respondents had participated in one, two, or three City events.

Organizations and Facilities Used for Parks and Recreation Programs and Cultural Facilities

Over one-third of respondents (36%) indicated their household uses the City of Sugar Land PARD for parks and recreation programs and cultural facilities. The top three organizations, not including the City of Sugar Land, households use most often include: homeowners association parks and recreation (31%), Fort Bend Independent School District (FBISD) (25%), and the Houston Museum of Natural Science in Sugar Land (22%) (see Figure 2.12, *Organizations Most Used by Residents*).

Respondents were then asked to indicate which two organizations and facilities their household uses the most often for different age groups. The most used organizations are illustrated in Figure 2.13, *Organizations Most Used by Age Groups*.

When respondents were asked to compare parks in Sugar Land with other cities, over half (63%) of respondents indicated they were either “much better” (26%) or “better” (37%). Only five percent said “worse,” and no respondents indicated they were “much worse”.

Barriers to Park, Facility and Program Usage

Using a list of 17 potential reasons, respondents were asked to identify what prevents them from using outdoor parks, indoor recreation centers, and programs offered by the City of Sugar Land PARD more often. The top four reasons selected were lack of time (44%), lack of awareness about programs (29%), “I’m interested, but have not explored yet” (28%), and use of services from other providers (11%).

Figure 2.11, Program Participation



Figure 2.12, Organizations Most Used by Residents

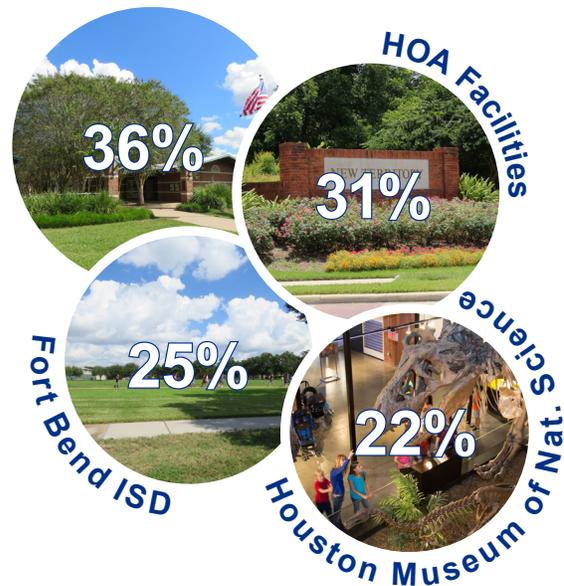


Figure 2.13, Organizations Most Used by Age Groups

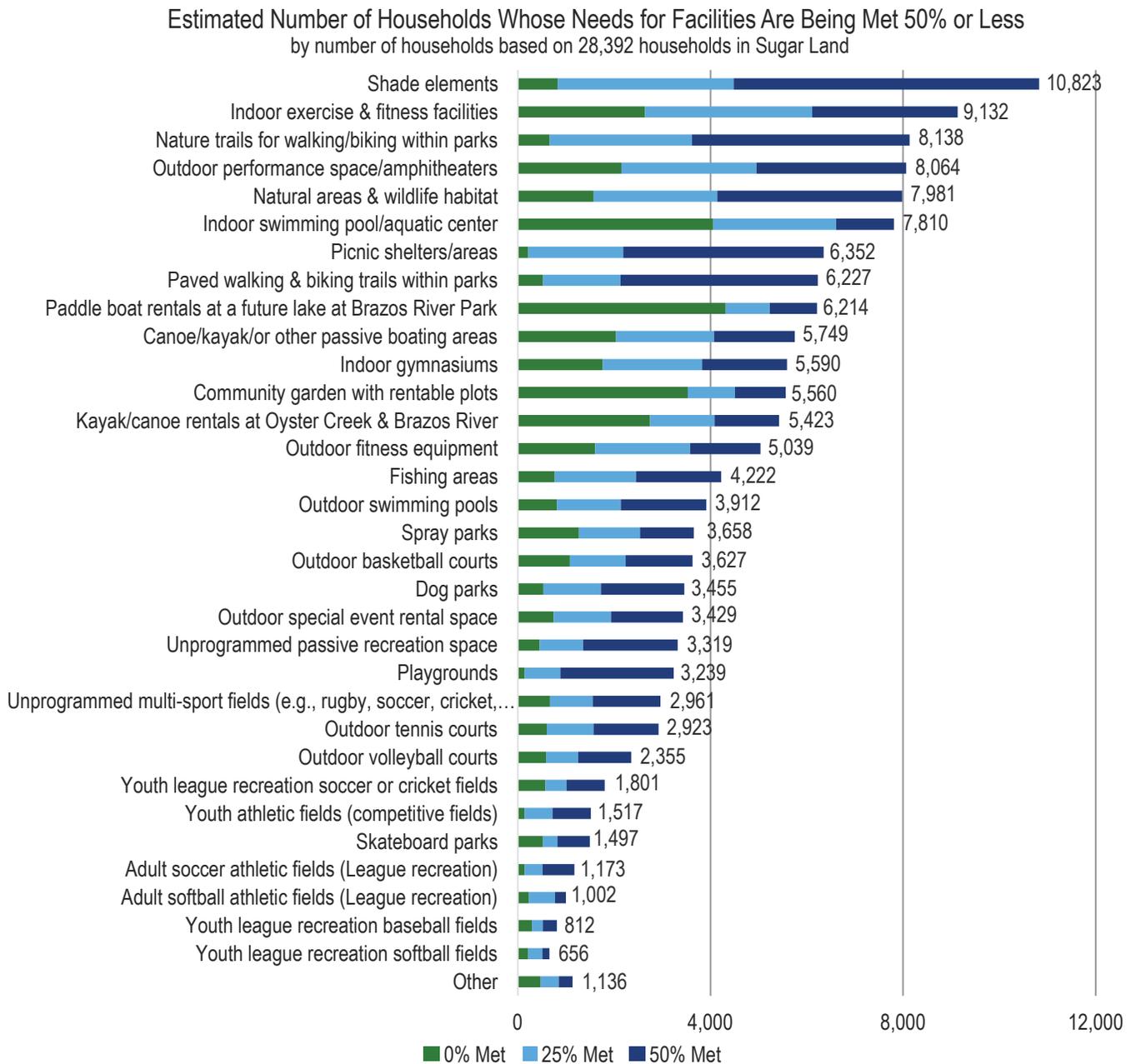


Facility Needs and Priorities

Facility Needs: Respondents were asked to identify if their household had a need for 32 recreation facilities and amenities. They were then asked to rate how well their needs for each were currently being met. Based on this analysis, the number of households in the community that had the greatest “unmet” need for various facilities was able to be estimated.

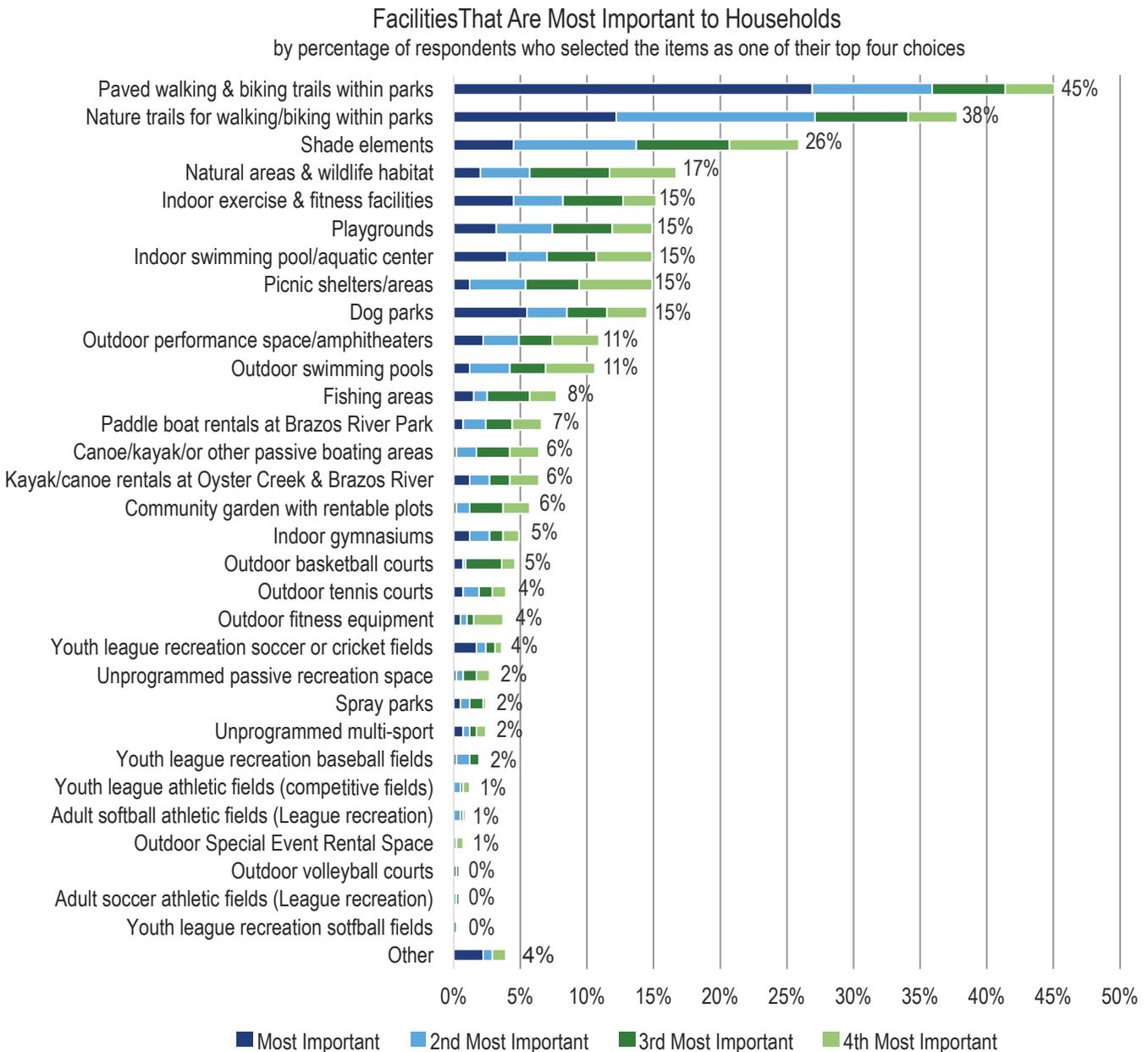
The three recreation facilities with the highest percentage of households that indicated a need or desire for the facility were: paved walking and biking trails within parks (74%), nature trails for walking and biking within parks (65%), and shade elements (61%). Seen below, Figure 2.14, *Unmet Facility Needs* illustrates the estimated number of households who both indicated a need for a facility and that their needs are only being met 50 percent of the time or less. For example, it is estimated that 10,823 of the 28,392 households in Sugar Land desire shade elements in parks and only 50 percent or less of the time these elements are actually provided. The key takeaway being that the elements ranked highest in the figure below are areas the City should consider concentrating on to meet the community’s needs.

Figure 2.14, Unmet Facility Needs



Facility Importance: In addition to assessing the needs for each facility, the importance that residents place on each facility was also identified. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the three most important facilities to residents were paved walking and biking trails within parks (45%), nature trails for walking and biking within parks (38%), and shade elements (26%). The percentage of residents who selected each facility as one of their top four choices is shown in Figure 2.15, *Importance of Facilities*.

Figure 2.15, Importance of Facilities



Priorities for Facility Investments: The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) was developed by ETC Institute to provide organizations with an objective tool for evaluating the priority that should be placed on parks, recreation, and open space investments. The PIR equally weights the importance residents place on facilities and how many residents have unmet needs for the facility. Details regarding the methodology for this analysis are provided in Appendix D, *Sugar Land Parks, Recreation, & Open Space Needs Assessment Survey Findings Report*.

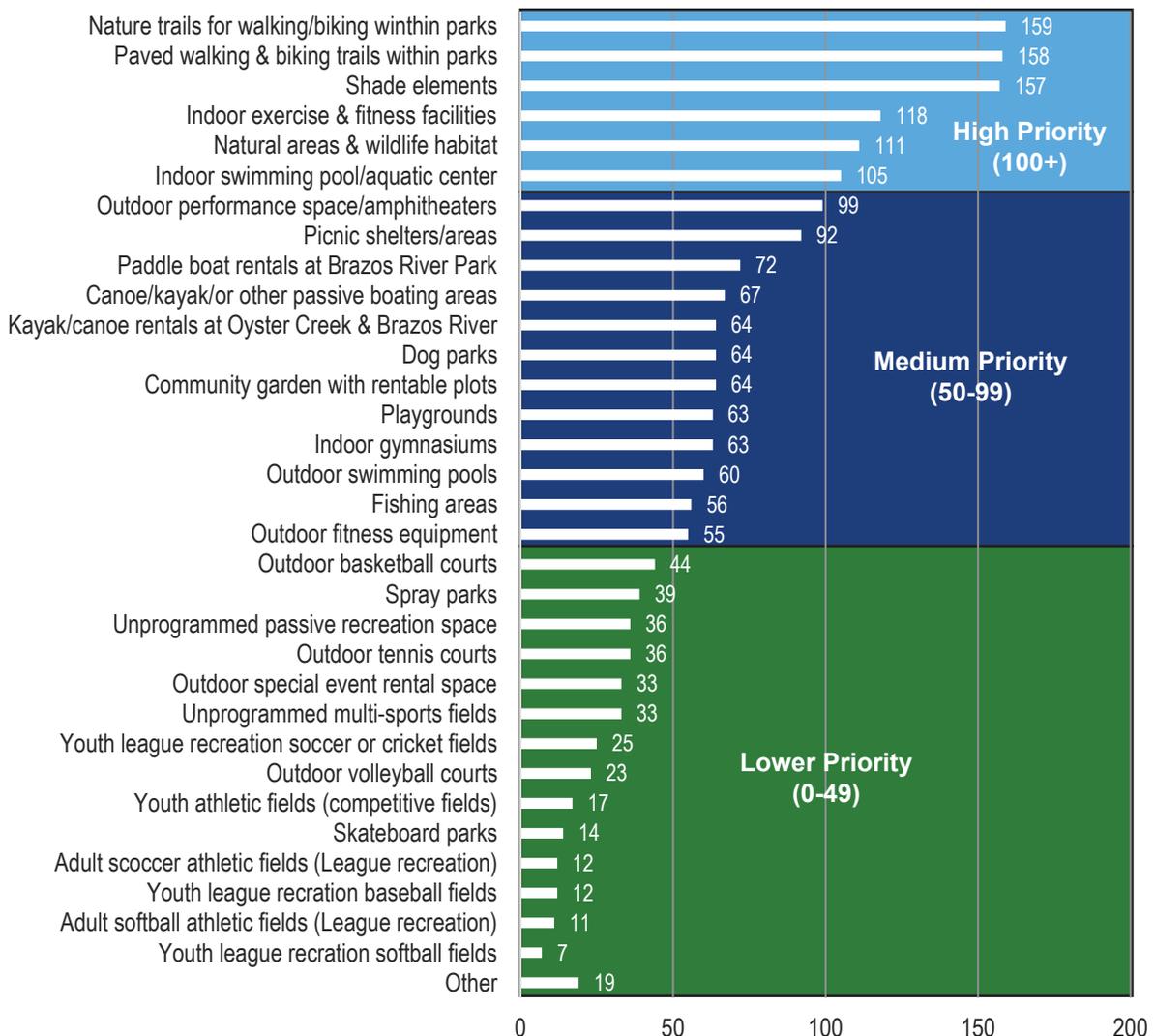
Based on the PIR, the following six facilities were rated as high priorities for investment:

- Nature trails for walking and biking within parks (PIR=159)
- Paved walking and biking trails within parks (PIR=158)
- Shade elements (PIR=157)
- Indoor exercise and fitness facilities (PIR=118)
- Natural areas and wildlife habitat (PIR=111)
- Indoor swimming pool/aquatic center (PIR=105)

PIRs for each of the 32 facilities/amenities that were assessed are illustrated in Figure 2.16, *Recreation Facility Priorities*.

Figure 2.16, Recreation Facility Priorities

Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Facilities Based on the Priority Investment Rating

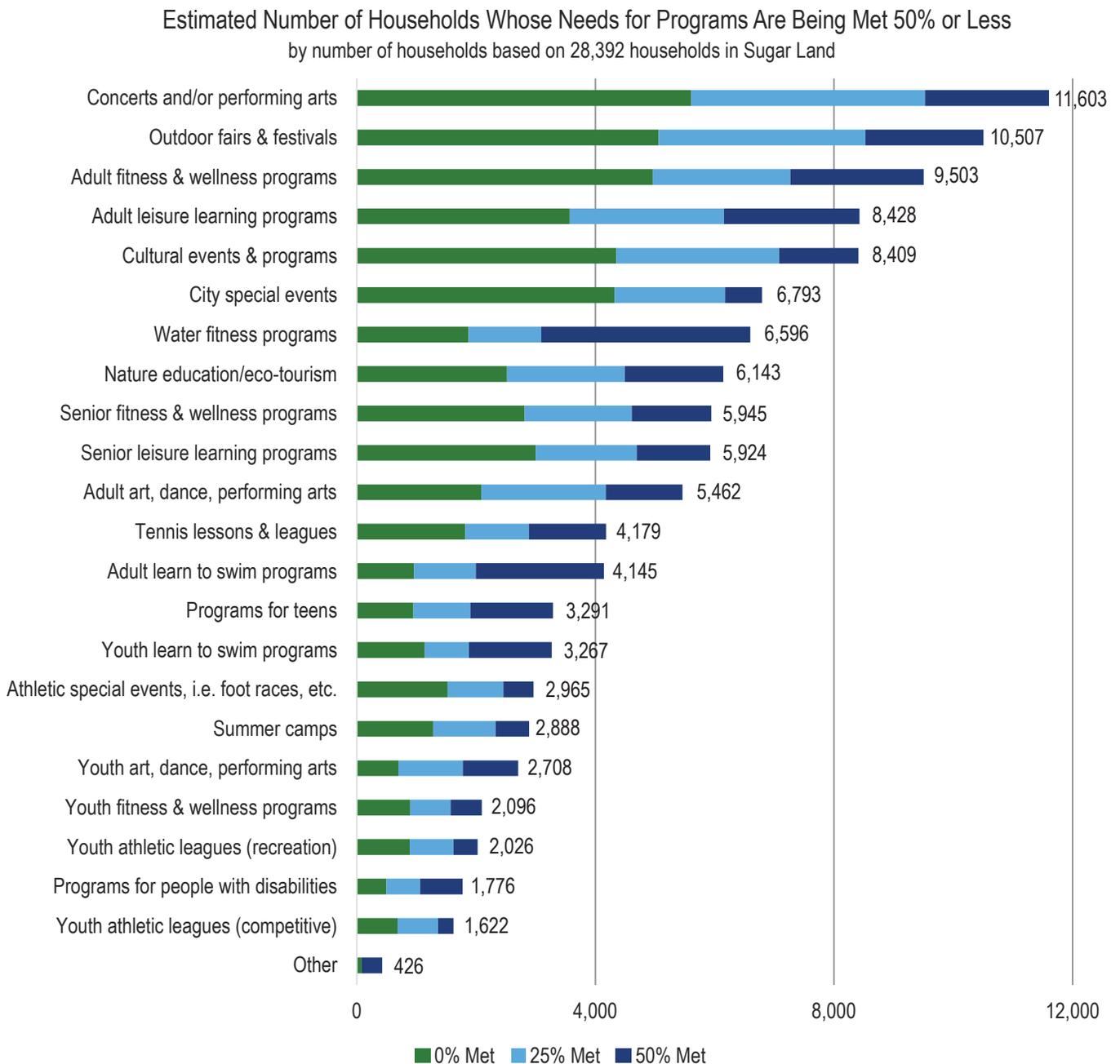


Programming Needs and Priorities

Programming Needs. Respondents were also asked to identify if their household had a need for 22 recreational programs and rate how well their needs for each program were currently being met. Based on this analysis, the number of households in the community that had “unmet” needs for each program was estimated.

The three highest needed/desired programs were concerts and/or performing arts (55%), outdoor fairs and festivals (55%), and City special events (44%). Similar to Figure 2.14, *Unmet Facility Needs*, the figure below illustrates those programs which have the greatest unmet need. Notably, in addition to being the most desired, the top two programs previously listed also have the highest unmet need among the 22 programming-related areas that were assessed. The estimated number of households that have unmet needs for each of the 22 programs that were assessed is shown in Figure 2.17, *Unmet Program Needs*.

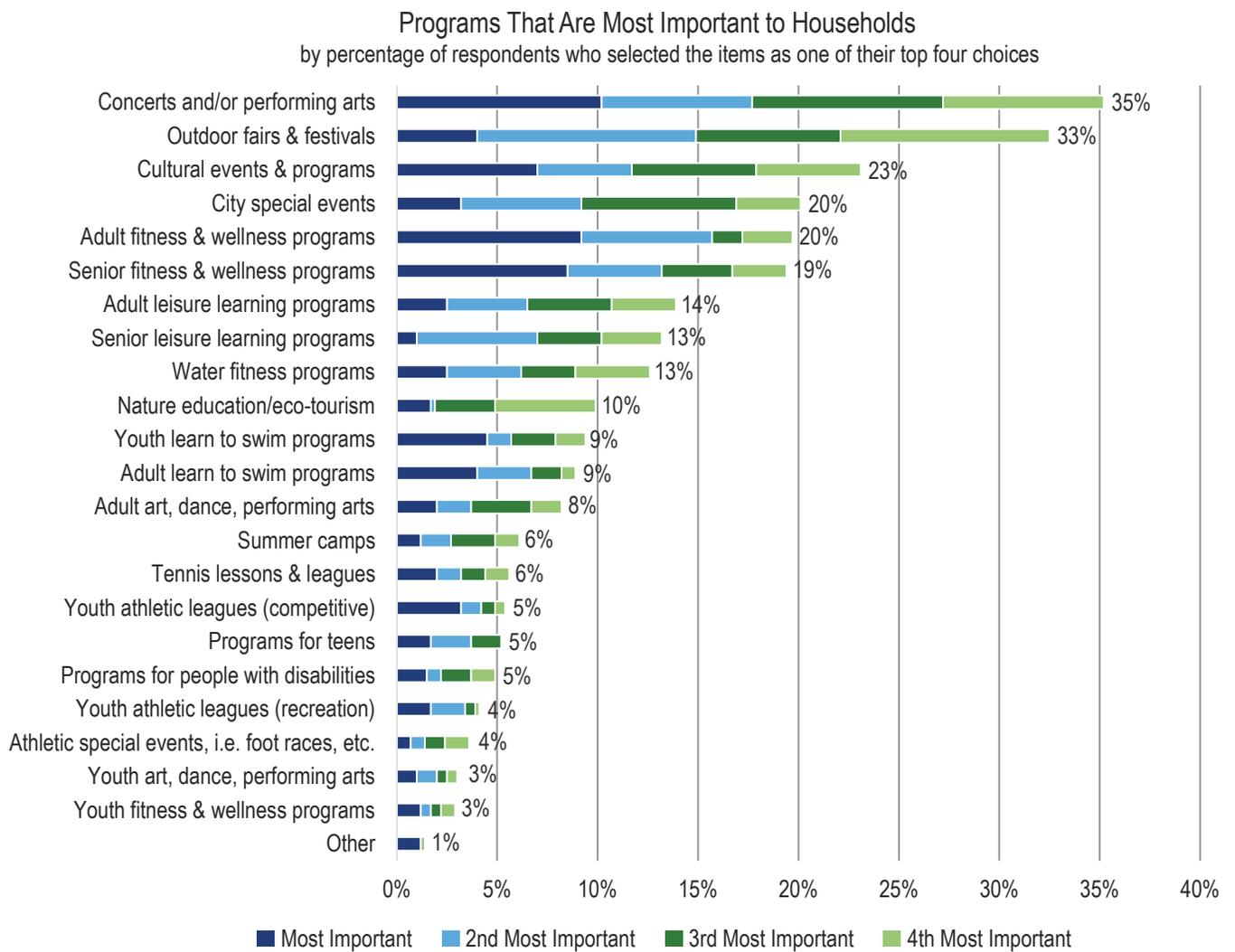
Figure 2.17, Unmet Program Needs



Program Importance. In addition to assessing the needs for each program, the importance that residents place on them was also identified. Based on the sum of respondents' top four choices, the three most important programs to residents were: concerts and/or performing arts (35%), outdoor fairs and festivals (33%), and cultural events and programs (23%).

The percentage of residents who selected each program as one of their top four choices is shown in Figure 2.18, *Importance of Programs*.

Figure 2.18, Importance of Programs



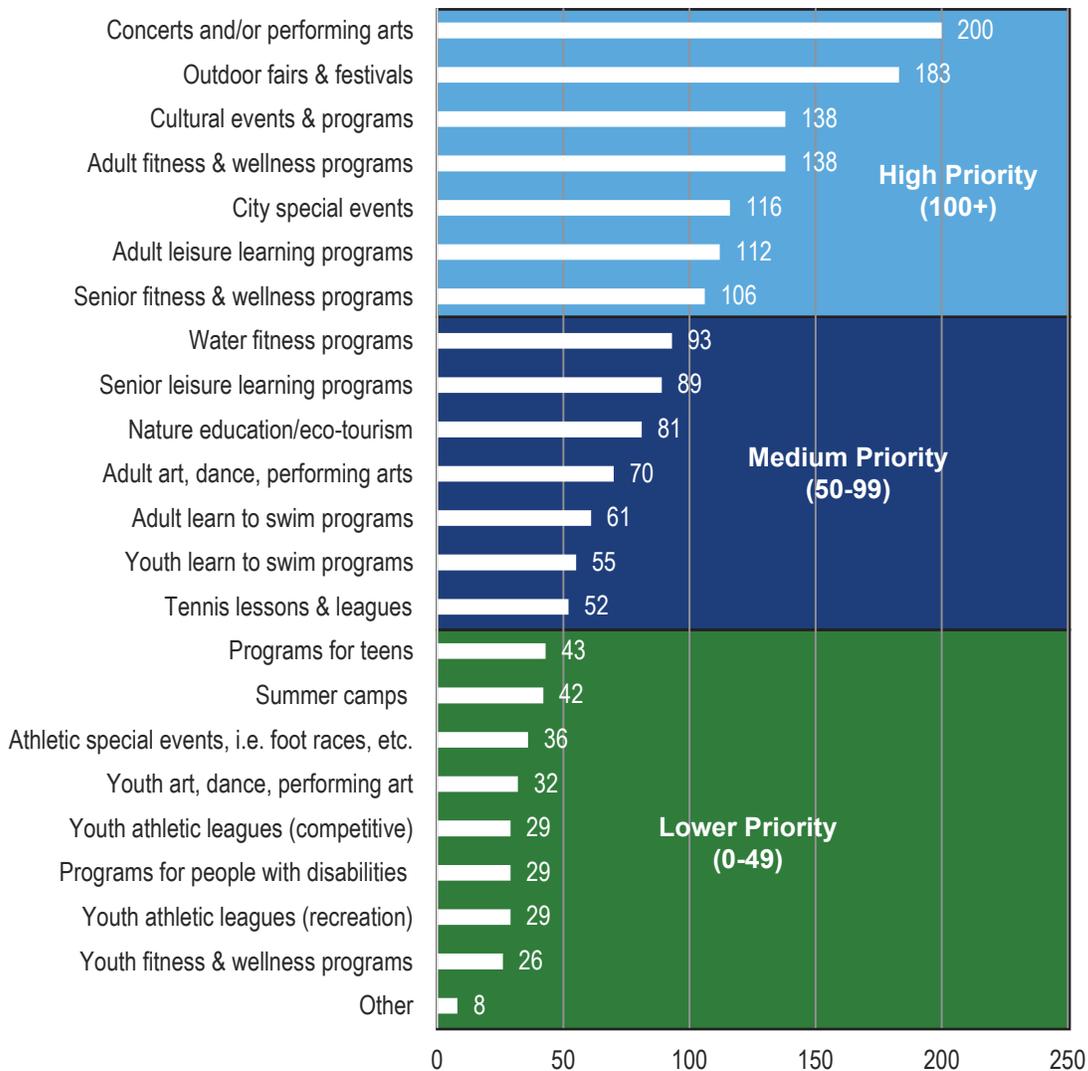
Priorities for Programming Investments. Based the priority investment rating (PIR), the following seven programs were rated as “high priorities” for investment:

- Concerts and/or performing arts (PIR=200)
- Outdoor fairs and festivals (PIR=183)
- Cultural events and programs (PIR=138)
- Adult fitness and wellness programs (PIR=138)
- City special events (PIR=116)
- Adult leisure learning programs (PIR=112)
- Senior fitness and wellness programs (PIR=106)

Figure 2.19, *Recreation Programming Priorities* shows the PIR for each of the 22 programs that were rated.

Figure 2.19, Recreation Programming Priorities

Top Priorities for Investment for Recreation Programs Based on the Priority Investment Rating



Additional Findings

Respondents were asked to rate their level of support on various actions the City could take. The top three actions which received the highest percentage of “very important” and “important” responses include: upgrade existing neighborhood parks, playgrounds, shelters, etc. (74%); develop additional walking and biking trails within parks (68%); and work to increase the amount of public open space and natural areas (65%). The action that received the lowest level of support in the survey was upgrading the existing skate park (22%).

The three items which received the highest level of priority from survey respondents, based on the sum of their top four choices include: upgrade existing neighborhood parks, playgrounds, shelters, etc. (37%); further develop Brazos River Park (30%); and develop additional walking and biking trails within parks (30%) (see Figure 2.20, *Highest Priority Actions*). Level of priority differs from level of importance in that respondents could indicate an unlimited number of options as important but were asked to choose their top four priorities.

The City has several large tracts of land that are located in or near sensitive natural resources and are intended to be developed with more nature-based passive recreation. These properties include Brazos River Park, Gannoway Park, and Cullinan Park. With this in mind, respondents were asked to indicate how important they believe a list of amenities are that could be developed on the above-mentioned properties. Based on the sum of “very important” and “important” responses the three most important facilities or amenities include: trailheads with parking, shade, picnic areas, pavilions, and restrooms (78%); natural-surface trails (77%); and paved walking and biking trails (75%) (see Figure 2.21, *Nature-Based Passive Recreation Amenities*).

Respondents were also asked to indicate how important they believe a list of amenities are that could be developed at the new community park along in the Telfair development. The three most supported facilities or amenities include: picnic shelters, pavilions, and restrooms (74%); pedestrian and bicycle connections to the citywide trail system and nearby areas (69%); and the development of a perimeter loop trail (63%) (see Figure 2.22, *New Community Park Amenities*).

Figure 2.20, Highest Priority Actions



Figure 2.21, Nature-Based Passive Recreation Amenities

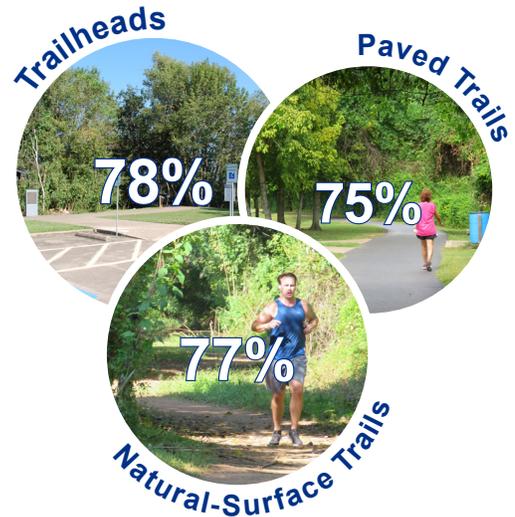


Figure 2.22, New Community Park Amenities



In order to meet the needs of its growing population, the PARD may require additional funding. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of support for five financing strategies that would increase the amount of funding available to the Department. Increasing the Department's annual budget through General Fund reallocation received the most support, increasing fees for athletic league use of City facilities was second, increasing fees for those who participate in recreation programming was third, increasing rental and membership fees for park facilities was fourth, and raising funds for new signature facilities through bond initiatives received the lowest amount of support.

The City continues to add additional interior loop trails within parks. In order to take a resident-driven approach to continued development, respondents were asked to rate the importance of 12 different trail-related design elements or amenities. The three elements most frequently rated as very important were access to restrooms, shade opportunities (trees or structures), and lighting (see Figure 2.23, *Importance of Trail Amenities*).

Figure 2.23, Importance of Trail Amenities



Public Open House #1

In August of 2016, the first public open house was held at Sugar Land City Hall. The open house included an introductory presentation to familiarize the public with the parks, recreation, and open space planning process and then attendees were presented a variety of parks and recreation options in order to determine their priorities for the future of the City's park and recreation system. Attendees were asked to provide their feedback regarding their desires and needs for parks and recreation, social connectedness, preferred athletics, types of programs and amenities, programming and elements in key parks, and citywide park design policies. A total of 58 people attended the first open house including City residents and people living in Sugar Land's ETJ and beyond. Key results of the meeting are summarized on the following pages.



Open house attendees provided feedback on a number of parks and recreation options.

Desires and Needs

Attendees were presented with a summary of the 14 key wants and needs voiced by the public during the project kick-off meetings and asked to indicate all of the items with which they agreed. The issues that attendees most strongly agreed with were the desires for more senior recreational programs (36%), to plan for growth by adding more parks (34%), and to ensure that parks are universally appealing to all ages (24%). Attendees were the least concerned about balancing athletic league and open play park users (9%), making parks more technologically engaging (9%), and adding more overall recreational programming (7%).

Figure 2.24, Community Desires & Needs

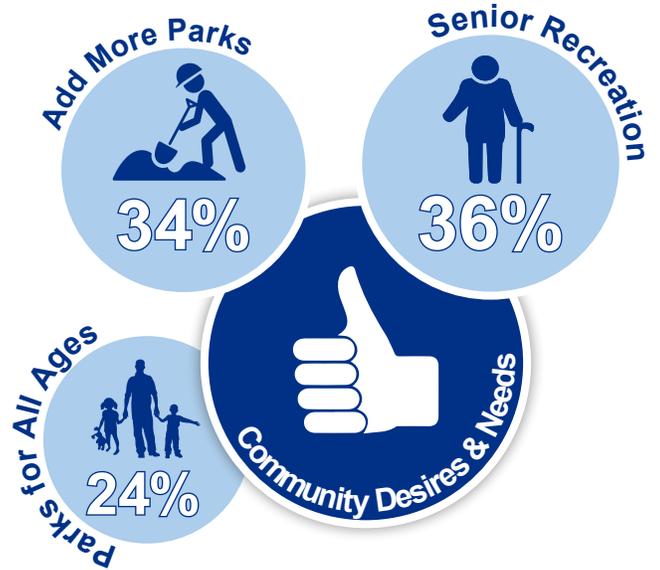
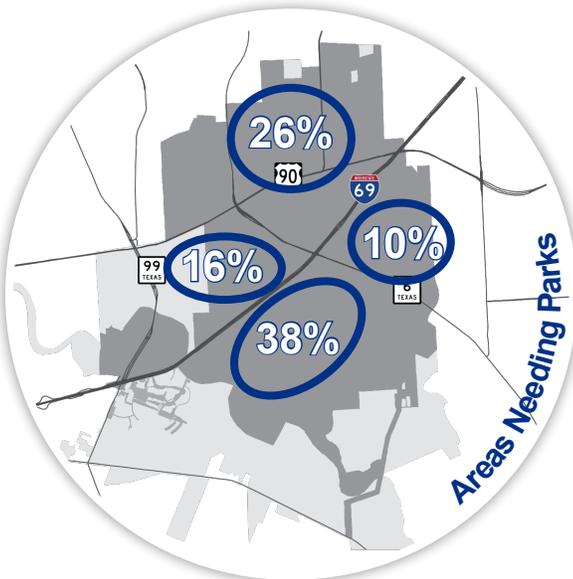


Figure 2.25, Areas Needing Parks



Areas Needing Parks

When shown a map of the City and all existing parks, attendees were asked to place up to two stickers in the locations where they felt parks are most needed. The largest percentage of responses (38%) were located in the southern portion of the City, especially in the areas south of State Highway 6 and U.S. Highway 59/Interstate 69. Within this area, many responses were concentrated directly along the southeast edge of U.S. Highway 59/Interstate 69. Months after the Open House, Brazos River Park, Festival Site, and the plaza at Smart Financial Center, which are all located in the southern portion of the City, were completed and open to the public.

Economic Development

The City is known for hosting both local and regional events and has taken action in recent years to boost its attractiveness for festivals, sporting events, etc. As such, attendees were asked to select the two types of special events they felt the City should prioritize. The top two selected event types were music-related (34%) and family-oriented (26%) events. Attendees were also asked if they felt local events geared towards residents or regional events intended to draw in outside users were more important. While the responses were close, local events was selected by 29 percent of attendees and regional events by only 24 percent.

Figure 2.26, Economic Development



Figure 2.27, Social Connectedness



Athletics

Attendees were asked what types of athletics are most needed and what age groups those athletics should primarily serve. The athletics that received the most votes were senior softball (77%), youth cricket (25%), disc golf (21%), and youth swimming (19%).

Social Connectedness

Parks provide excellent opportunities for residents to interact with one another in a safe and relaxing environment. In order to determine the public’s opinions regarding social interaction, attendees were presented with a variety of activities and asked to select up to three options which they felt were most important. The top rated activities were classes in parks such as fitness and arts and crafts (26%); park specific events such as movies in the park and rotating park open houses (24%); and rental pavilions, dog parks, and disc golf, all of which were selected by 17 percent of attendees.

Figure 2.28, Athletics



Figure 2.29, Recreation Programs



Recreation Programs

As the City plans its recreational programming, it is important to understand what types of programs are most desired by the public. Open house attendees were asked to indicate the two types of programs they are most interested in. The highest ranked program type was health and fitness programming, as chosen by 29 percent of attendees. Athletics and programs for special populations (e.g., senior programs) were the next highest ranked programs (24%).

Adult Recreation Programs

Attendees were then asked a follow up question regarding adult-oriented recreation programming. When asked to choose their top three interests, 66 percent indicated that adult sports such as softball or cricket were a top interest. Another strong percentage indicated interest in a cardio or weight room (31%).

Figure 2.30, Adult Recreation Programs



Figure 2.31, Gannoway Park Programming



Destination Park: Cullinan Park

Cullinan Park includes over 750 acres of natural land such as prairies, woodlands, creeks, and lakes. In an effort to preserve the natural qualities of the site, the City plans to develop the park for nature-based recreation. The top three programmatic uses chosen by attendees were nature trails (e.g., meadows, wetlands, woodlands) (36%), development of a paddling trail connecting to Gannoway Park (33%), and wildlife viewing areas (e.g., bird blinds, overlooks) (24%).

Destination Parks

The City is currently faced with key opportunities to develop a variety of large destination parks throughout the community. In order to gauge the community’s interests and priorities, attendees were asked to choose their priorities for each park. Key interests, as voted on by attendees, are illustrated below. The programmatic elements provided as options at each park were based on the physical and environmental characteristics of the sites.

Destination Park: Gannoway Park

Gannoway Park includes approximately 70 acres of prairies, wetlands, floodplain, and Gannoway Lake. Due to the sensitive environmental resources on the site, attendees were presented with a variety of environmental education and passive recreation options and asked to choose the top three uses they were most interested in. Similar to survey results, the top three uses chosen by attendees were natural-surface trails (29%), paved walking and biking trails (22%), and development of a paddling trail connecting to Cullinan Park (19%).

Figure 2.32, Cullinan Park Programming



Destination Park: Brazos River Corridor

The Brazos River Corridor includes hundreds of acres of parkland along the Brazos River which provide excellent opportunities for passive recreation. When shown a series of programmatic uses, the top three chosen by attendees were disc golf (47%), hiking and biking trails (40%), and public art elements (21%).

Figure 2.33, Brazos River Corridor Programming



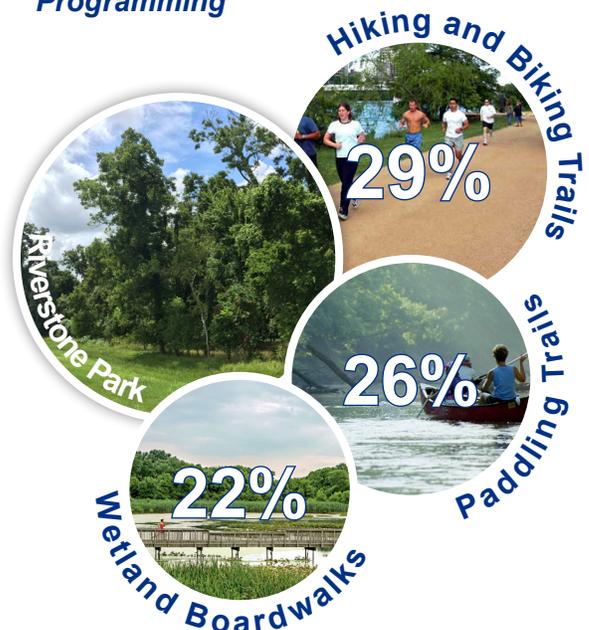
Figure 2.34, New Community Park Programming



Destination Park: New Community Park

The 65-acre City-owned parcel located between the residential and commercial parts of the Telfair development includes large, flat lawn areas. Based on this, the site provides opportunities for athletics and family-friendly activities. The top three programmatic activities chosen by attendees were spray grounds and water play (26%), pedestrian and bicycle connections to the citywide trail system and nearby areas (19%), and multi-purpose soccer and cricket fields (17%).

Figure 2.35, Riverstone Park Programming



Destination Park: Riverstone

The 280 acres of property located along the Brazos River which is being dedicated as part of the Riverstone development includes woodlands, floodplain, and a conservation easement. When presented with a variety of passive, water-based recreation options for the site, the top three activities chosen by attendees were hiking and biking trails (29%), development of a paddling trail (26%), and wetland boardwalks (22%).

Prioritizing Development of Destination Parks

After providing their opinions regarding the development of each destination park, attendees were asked to identify which two they felt the City should prioritize for development. The top two ranking parks were the Brazos River Corridor (53%) and the new community park in the Telfair area (28%), with Cullinan Park (26%) coming in as a close third.

Figure 2.36, Development of Destination Parks



Figure 2.37, Other Destination Park Amenities



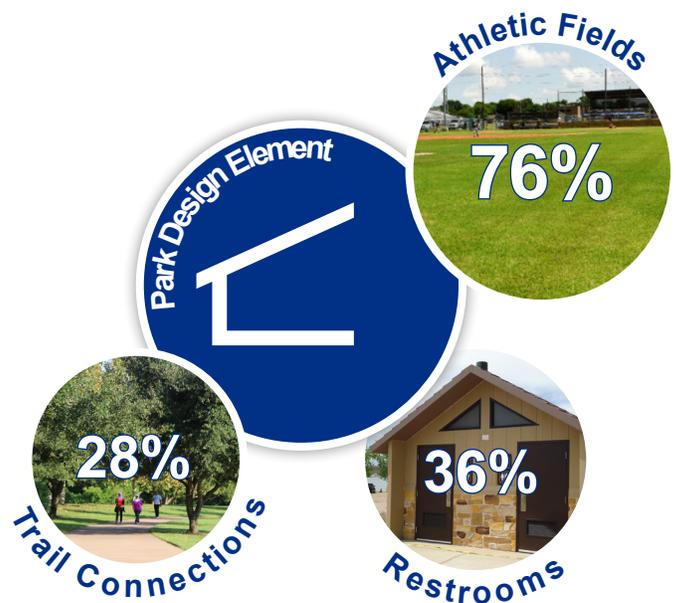
Other Destination Park Amenities

As the City of Sugar Land considers upgrades to existing parks and development of new parks, it is important to understand resident's desires for various park amenities. Attendees were asked to select the three amenities in which they are most interested. Cricket was selected as a top priority by 28 percent of the respondents. Other high priority special amenities included nature play (22%), disc golf (22%), and the addition of more dog parks (21%).

Park Design Element

When designing a park, there are typically key elements which residents consider essential. Open house attendees were presented a series of typical park design elements and asked to choose their three highest priorities for neighborhood or community parks. The top selected elements were athletic fields (76%), restrooms (36%), and trail connections to pedestrian routes outside of parks (28%).

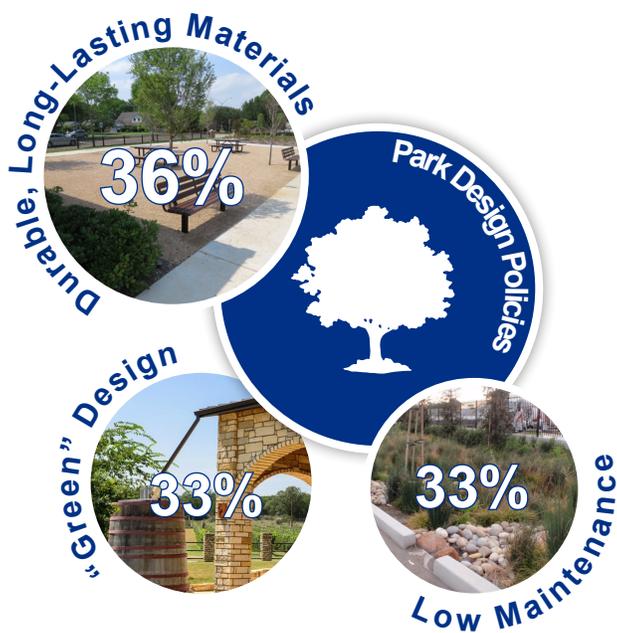
Figure 2.38, Parks Design Element



Park Design Policies

While the City considers the overall design of the parks system, there are a variety of overarching design policies which could be used to guide design. Open house attendees were shown a series of five design policies and asked to indicate which policies they supported. The top ranked policies were designing and constructing park facilities using durable, long-lasting materials (36%), designing parks and facilities using sustainable, efficient “green” design solutions (33%), and designing parks and facilities to require minimal maintenance (33%).

Figure 2.39, Park Design Policies



Grand Ideas

During the kick-off meetings, the community expressed some new big ideas for the City. Attendees were asked to select the three ideas they supported most or add their own idea. The most popular ideas among attendees were linking parks to the citywide trail system (38%), developing a new nature education center (31%), building a new indoor recreation center (29%), and providing a new or renovated public pool (29%).

Figure 2.40, Grand Ideas



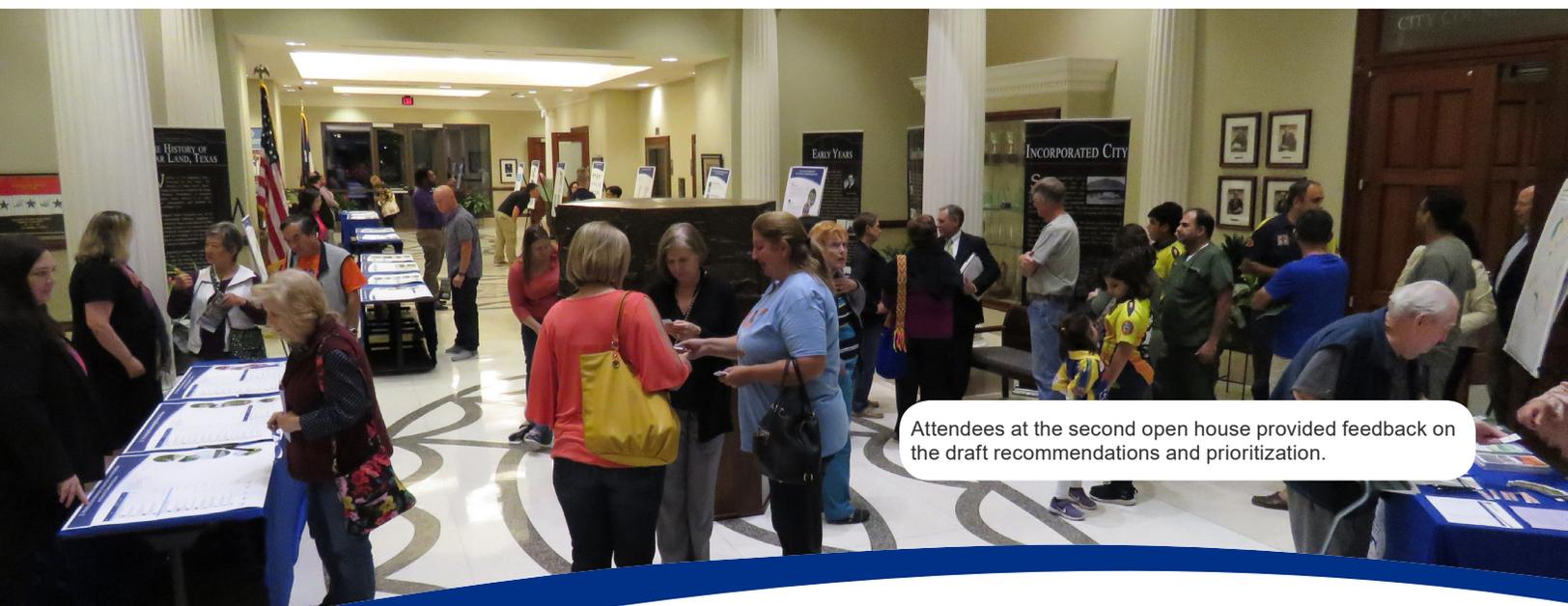
The open house provided an opportunity for residents to both provide their opinions and discuss their thoughts with fellow residents.

Public Open House #2

In October of 2017, the second public open house was held at Sugar Land City Hall. A total of 48 people attended the event. The second open house included an introductory presentation to overview highlights from the planning process including a summary of the public engagement to-date and an overview of high priority recommendations. Attendees were then presented with detailed public engagement results from throughout the planning process, an overview of the park service areas and needs analysis results, the Plan vision statement and goals, and all of the draft recommendations and prioritization. Attendees were asked to provide comments on the recommendations and the proposed prioritization and initiation time frames for implementation. Overall, attendee comments were in favor of the draft recommendations.

Key highlights from the second open house are summarized below:

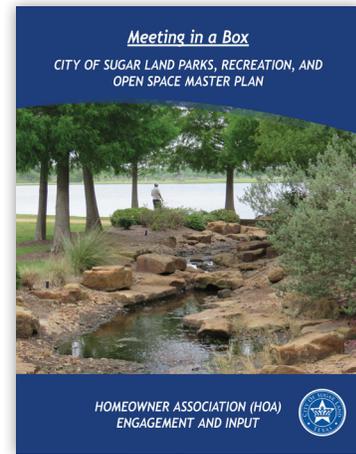
- Desire to keep Cullinan Park largely natural.
- Support for land acquisition in the Brazos River corridor and the provision of wildlife movement corridors through the City.
- Support for addressing parkland needs in Greatwood.
- Desire for additional cricket fields and a cricket tournament in the City.
- Strong support for addressing the need for additional space and recreation programs at the T.E. Harman Senior Center.
- Support for evaluating the feasibility of discontinuing non-resident recreation memberships to address the attendance and spacial challenges.
- Support for public private partnerships to help build and develop facilities.
- Support for environmental education and the integration of native and pollinator species into the parks system.
- Support for integrating food trucks into the parks system.



Attendees at the second open house provided feedback on the draft recommendations and prioritization.

Homeowner Associations “Meeting in a Box”

The City’s homeowner associations play a large role in the provision of quality parks and recreation within Sugar Land. As such, it is particularly critical to engage this stakeholder group in the PROSMP planning process. In order to involve this user group, a portable “meeting in a box” was offered to homeowner associations throughout Sugar Land to be administered by neighborhoods and small groups, thus allowing them to specifically identify issues and opportunities both within their immediate neighborhood and the larger City. The “meeting in a box” was presented at a quarterly homeowner association meeting which was attended by approximately 25 homeowner associations. The “meeting in a box” included both individual and group questions and mapping exercises which asked respondents what they like best about the parks and recreation system; what they feel needs improvement; and how they think the City can supplement programs, facilities, and amenities their homeowner association offers. Local boy scouts used this framework to begin park discussions with New Territory residents. Moving forward, the “meeting in a box” can continue to serve as a tool to initiate discussion between homeowner associations and their members.



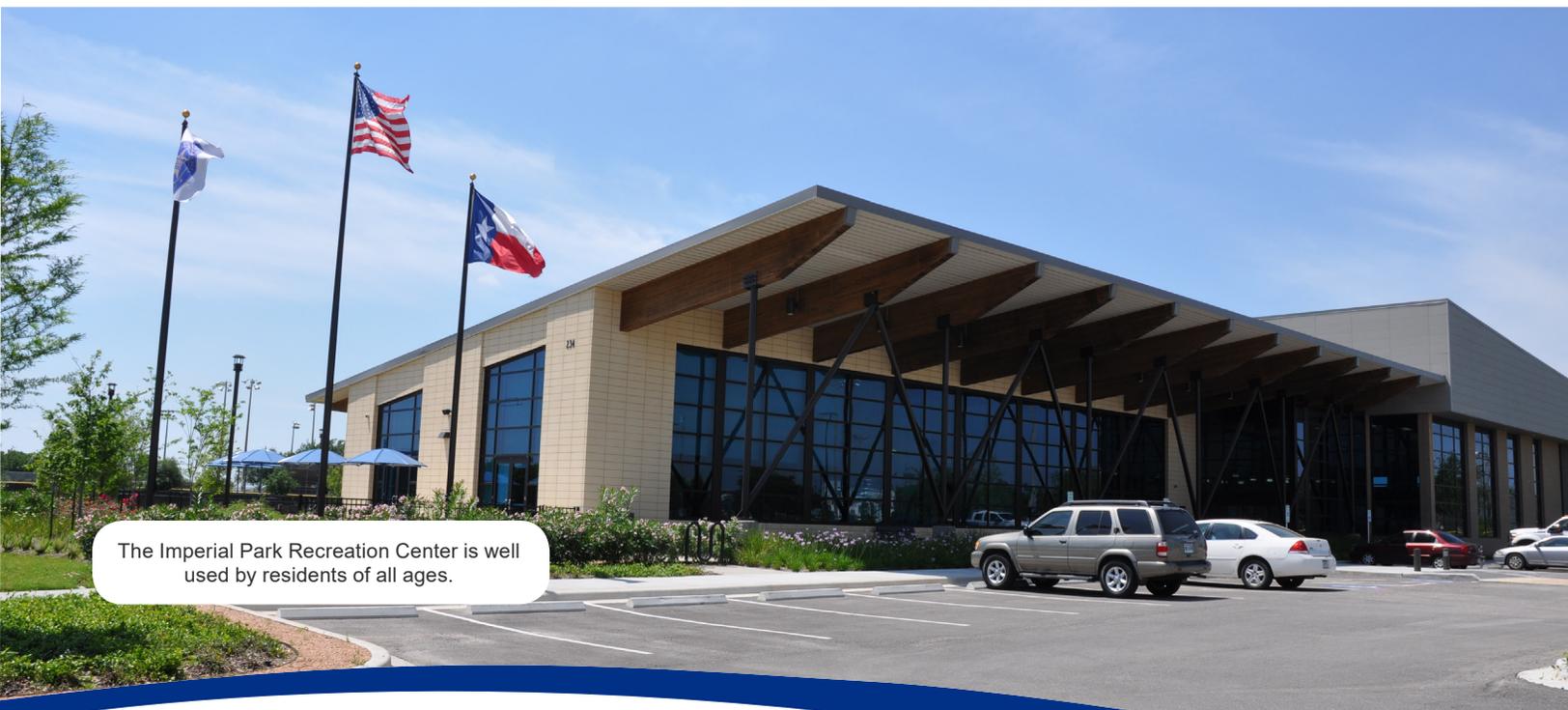
HOA Meeting in a Box handout

Additional Resident Requests

The Imperial Park Recreation Center opened five years ago. Since March of 2012, the City has tracked customer requests for additional amenities they would like to see added to the facility. The results of the “survey” of the Recreation Center customers illustrated in *Table 2.2, Recreation Center Amenity Requests* clearly indicate a public desire for a cardio weight room and pool.

Table 2.2, Recreation Center Amenity Requests

AMENITY	NUMBER OF REQUESTS
Cardio Weight Room	1,225
Pool	457
Track	114
Racquetball Courts	27
Youth Basketball League	13
Tennis Court	4



The Imperial Park Recreation Center is well used by residents of all ages.

Public Engagement Summary

Throughout the different public engagement components, a variety of trends emerged regarding key facilities/amenities, programs, and parkland development the residents desire. While specific elements are noted below, a few key overarching trends that emerged were the desire for more family-friendly, universally appealing parks, trails, and events; more health and wellness programming; opportunities to interact with and observe nature; and multigenerational and diversified athletic programming. It is evident that Sugar Land residents value social interactions and their health and well-being. Key elements that were voiced by the community as highly important are summarized below.

Facilities/Amenities

- Natural trails for walking/biking within parks
- Paved walking and biking trails within parks
- Shade elements
- Indoor exercise and fitness facilities
- Natural areas and wildlife habitat
- Indoor swimming pool/aquatic center
- Outdoor performance space/amphitheaters
- Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between parks
- Improved pool
- Additional athletic fields
- Cardio and weight room at the Imperial Park Recreation Center
- Paddling trail connections between parks, when possible
- Disc golf

Programs

- Concerts and/or performing arts
- Outdoor fairs, festivals, and family-friendly events
- Cultural events and programs
- Multigenerational fitness and wellness programs
- City special events, including park-specific events
- Adult leisure learning programs
- Additional senior recreation programs (e.g., dance, aerobics, cricket, tennis)

Figure 2.42, Overarching Community Desires



Understanding the Community

Multigenerational athletics including softball, cricket, soccer, and swimming

Water-based recreation (e.g., splashpads, canoeing, kayaking)

Recreational classes in parks

Need for more advertisement of programming

Parkland Development

Further develop Brazos River Corridor, the new community park at Telfair, and Cullinan Park

Upgrade existing neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and shelters

Increase amount of public open space and natural areas

Maintain the City parks as high-quality amenities for the community

Planning and Zoning Commission

As set out in Sec. 5.01(c) of the City's Home Rule Charter, the Planning and Zoning Commission is tasked with the responsibility of making a recommendation to the City Council on the City's master plans. This authority stems from Section 213.003 of the Texas Local Government Code, which stipulates that the Planning and Zoning Commission, if one exists, is supposed to review the Comprehensive Plan before it is adopted or amended. As set out in state law, the Comprehensive Plan can be a single document or a compilation of individual plans and studies.

In Sugar Land, the PROSMP is a designated sub-plan of the overall Comprehensive Plan. Accordingly, the Planning and Zoning Commission was engaged in the process during workshops and regularly scheduled meetings (November 2016, July 2017 and December 2017) to review and provide their input prior to it being sent to the City Council. On January 9, 2018, the Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing and sent a recommendation of approval to the City Council.

City Council

As the legislative body of the City of Sugar Land, the City Council is required to officially adopt the PROSMP by ordinance. As such, they were engaged throughout the process. Prior to the project kick-off, the City Council provided their guidance as to the strategic directions of the Plan. Mid-point briefings, workshops, and regularly scheduled meetings were also used to solicit their interim feedback and directions.

After considering the PARCS Board and Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendations, the City Council adopted the PROSMP on February 20, 2018.

Parks and Recreation Department Business Plan

Sugar Land's Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) is the principle entity responsible for implementing the overall vision of the City's park and recreation system. Indeed, the PARD is in the business of planning, developing, implementing, and professionally managing the parks, programs, policies, facilities, special events and leisure services established under the leadership of the City Council, City Administration, and the associated advisory boards of the City of Sugar Land. It has been guided by an overarching business plan since 2009. The mission and vision of the PARD is as follows:

Mission Statement

"To create and maintain unparalleled recreational opportunities and unique, high quality parks and public spaces enhancing our community, with exceptional customer service."

Vision Statement

"The City of Sugar Land Parks & Recreation Department will provide safe, beautiful, inclusive and environmentally responsible parks & recreation facilities. We will be key contributors to creating destination activity centers, great neighborhoods, bicycle/pedestrian mobility and outstanding cultural, educational and recreational opportunities. Parks & Recreation will play an integral role in the balanced development and redevelopment of the community. We will facilitate economic, cultural and tourism opportunities and will be a primary factor in the pride our citizens hold for Sugar Land."

The full PARD business plan can be found in Appendix B, *PARD Business Plan*.

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