

Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan

Community Survey Summary Report

*Experience the Fun!*TM

Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation

Prepared by:
**Virginia Beach
Parks and Recreation Department**
in conjunction with
Leisure Vision

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Executive Summary

The Virginia Beach Department of Parks and Recreation is conducting a comprehensive evaluation of its system, service offerings, recreation programming and facility development needs to support the development of a strategic plan. The strategic plan will identify a long-term vision and strategies to guide the Department for the next 10 years. This plan is being shaped through input from all of the park's major stakeholders including city leaders and the community at large across the city. The results of this survey will be used to assist in setting goals and determining the priorities of the community. Facilities and programs that the community assigned high priorities to are not guaranteed to be funded or implemented immediately. The quantitative survey data will be balanced with qualitative feedback collected through focus groups, public forums and key stakeholder interviews and available resources.

Survey Overview

As a key element of the community input process, a household survey was conducted. The survey was conducted during November and December of 2005 to help establish priorities for indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities for its residents. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout the City of Virginia Beach. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

The City retained Leisure Vision to work closely with Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation to develop the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

In November of 2005, surveys were mailed to a random sample of 2,500 households in the City of Virginia Beach. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed, each household that received a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed, Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone, either to encourage completion of the mailed survey or to administer the survey by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 500 completed surveys. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 541 surveys having been completed. The results of the random sample of 541 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-4.4%.

Households were asked to identify their geographic location by zip code and one (1) of nine (9) planning areas presented in **Figure 1** on the next page. The nine planning areas were organized into five groups:

- Group 1 – Planning Areas 1, 2, and 3
- Group 2 – Planning Areas 4 and 5
- Group 3 – Planning Area 6
- Group 4 – Planning Area 7
- Group 5 – Planning Areas 8 and 9

These designations allow for better focus and definition in understanding needs, issues and support throughout different areas of the City.

Key Findings

In general the survey shows that citizens consider Parks and Recreation as an important ingredient in their quality of life. Overall citizens view the facilities and programs offered by Parks and Recreation in a positive light however, there is room to improve to become a best-in-class organization. There is an obvious connection to the types of facilities desired by the citizens and the programs that are priorities. These rankings do not represent a guarantee to schedule or implement these programs. Following is a summary of key findings. More detailed support information follows in the remaining report.

Awareness and Usage

Parks - The awareness and usage of Virginia Beach parks is high with 72% of households visiting a City park within the last year. Virginia Beach residents are satisfied with the physical condition of the parks, consistent with national averages but below best-in-class systems. From the 72% of households who have visited a park in the last year, 88 %rated the physical condition of all the parks as either excellent (26%) or good (62%).

Programs – Community participation in recreation programs is above the national average of 29%. In Virginia Beach, 34% of residents have participated in a program in the last year. However, this is below best-in-class cities that experience 50% of resident participation in programs. Overall, our participants are very satisfied with the quality of program offerings with 90% rating the programs as excellent (34%) or good (56%).

Facility Needs and Priorities

Facility needs throughout the City are fairly consistent across the five groups. Seven (7) of the 28 parks and recreation facilities had over 50% of respondent households indicate they have a need for it. These seven facilities include: walking and biking trails (70%), recreation center (60%), small neighborhood parks (59%), large community parks (58%), picnic shelters/area (58%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (54%) and natural areas/nature trails/nature center (54%). From a list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, households were asked to identify the facilities they have a need for and indicate how well their need is being met. **Appendix A** presents the priority ranking from the list of 28 facility types. The results of the priority ranking were tabulated into three categories: High, Medium, and Low. Priorities are reported by group and as a citywide aggregate.

Recreation Program Needs and Priorities

The survey asked respondents to identify, from a list of 25 recreation programs, those that they have a need for and indicate how well their program needs are being met. **Appendix B** presents the priority ranking of the 25 program types. The results of the priority ranking were also tabulated into three categories: High, Medium, and Low. Priorities are reported by group and as a citywide aggregate. Five (5) of the 25 recreation programs were identified as having more than 25% of respondent households indicate they have a need for it. These five programs include: adult fitness and wellness programs (42%), large special events in the park (34%), nature based activities (29%), water fitness programs (29%), and Youth Learn to Swim programs (28%).

Funding

The survey responses provide clear direction on community support for spending priorities, funding sources, and the acceptable levels of tax subsidies. Respondents were moderately supportive of balancing user fees and tax dollars to pay for recreation programs and facilities. Youth, recreation centers, and senior programs had the highest response for tax subsidy with 50% being the highest level supported.

Community support for actions to improve and expand parks and recreation facilities is very strong. There is near universal support to renovate and expand walking and biking trails as well as strong support for additional passive use areas, indoor recreation facilities and environmental/natural areas.

There is strong support for maintaining existing facilities and developing new facilities for both active and passive recreation. When asked how they would allocate \$100 among 7 categories, respondents indicated they would allocate \$23 to improvements/maintenance of existing parks and playgrounds, \$19 for construction of new sports facilities, \$17 for walking and biking trail acquisition/development, \$15 for improvements/maintenance of existing recreation centers, \$13 to develop new indoor recreation facilities, \$9 for new park land and open space, and \$4 for various other facilities.

Survey Results

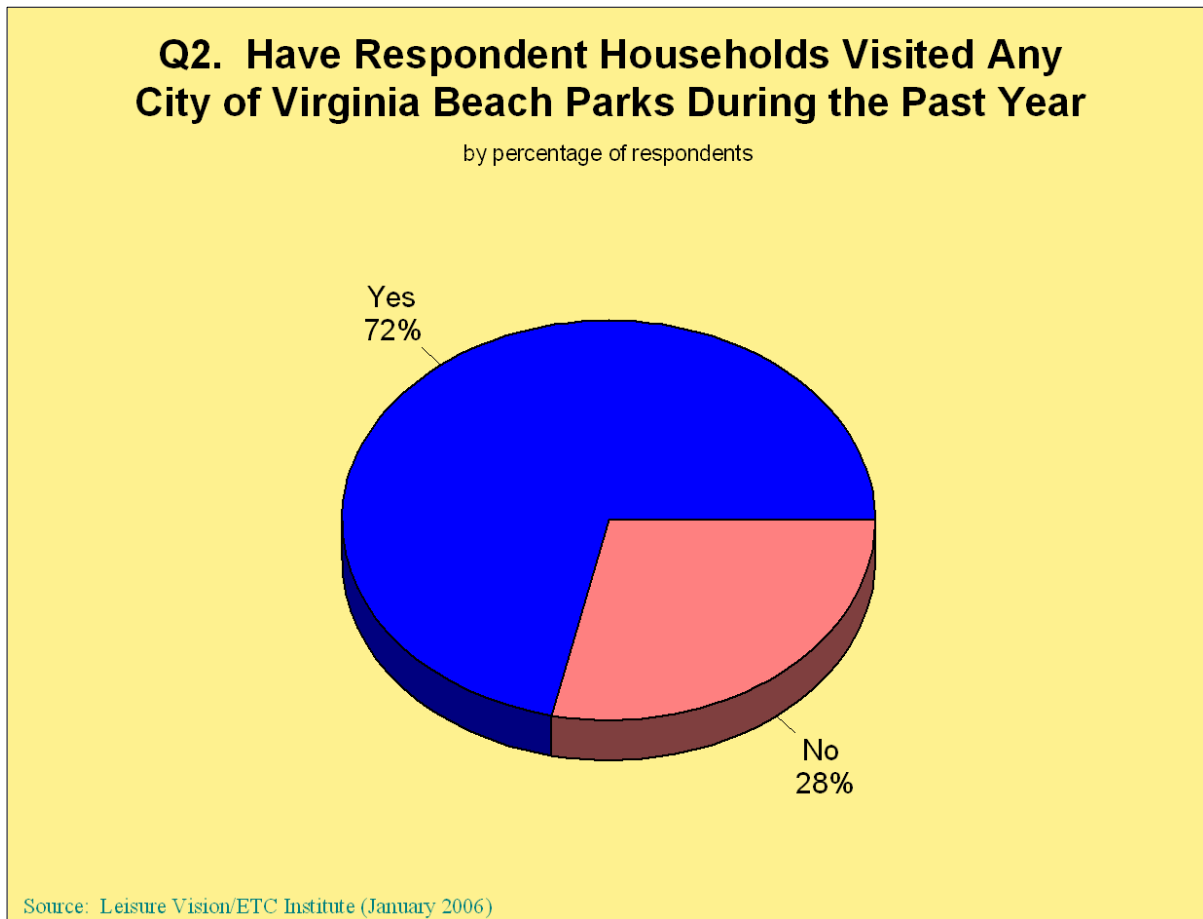
The survey questions are provided with the results.

Section 1 – Awareness and Usage

1.1 Visitation of Parks during the Past Year

Have you or members of your household visited any of the City of Virginia Beach parks during the past year?

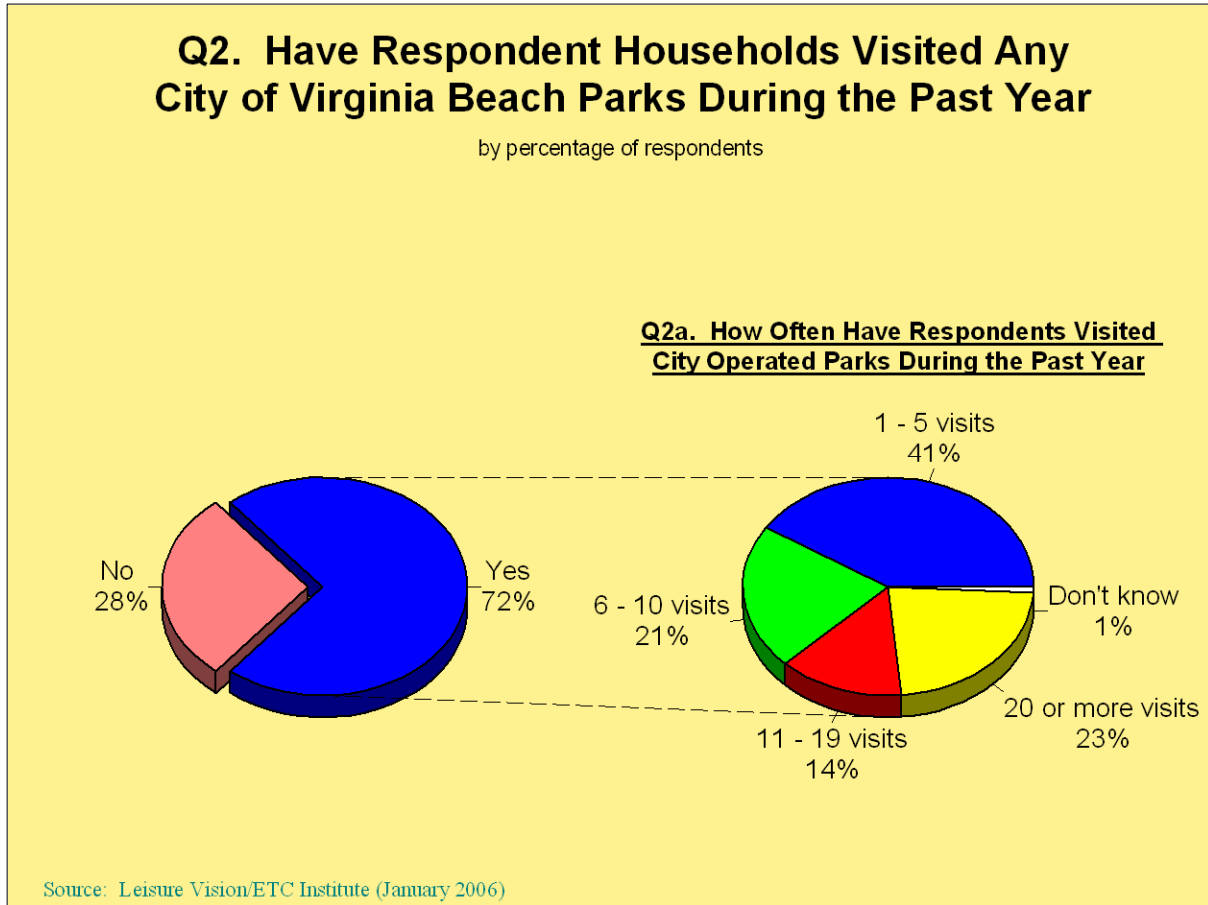
- 72% of respondent households have visited City of Virginia Beach parks during the past year.



1.2 Frequency of Visits to Parks

Approximately how often did you or members of your household visit City operated parks over the past 12 months?

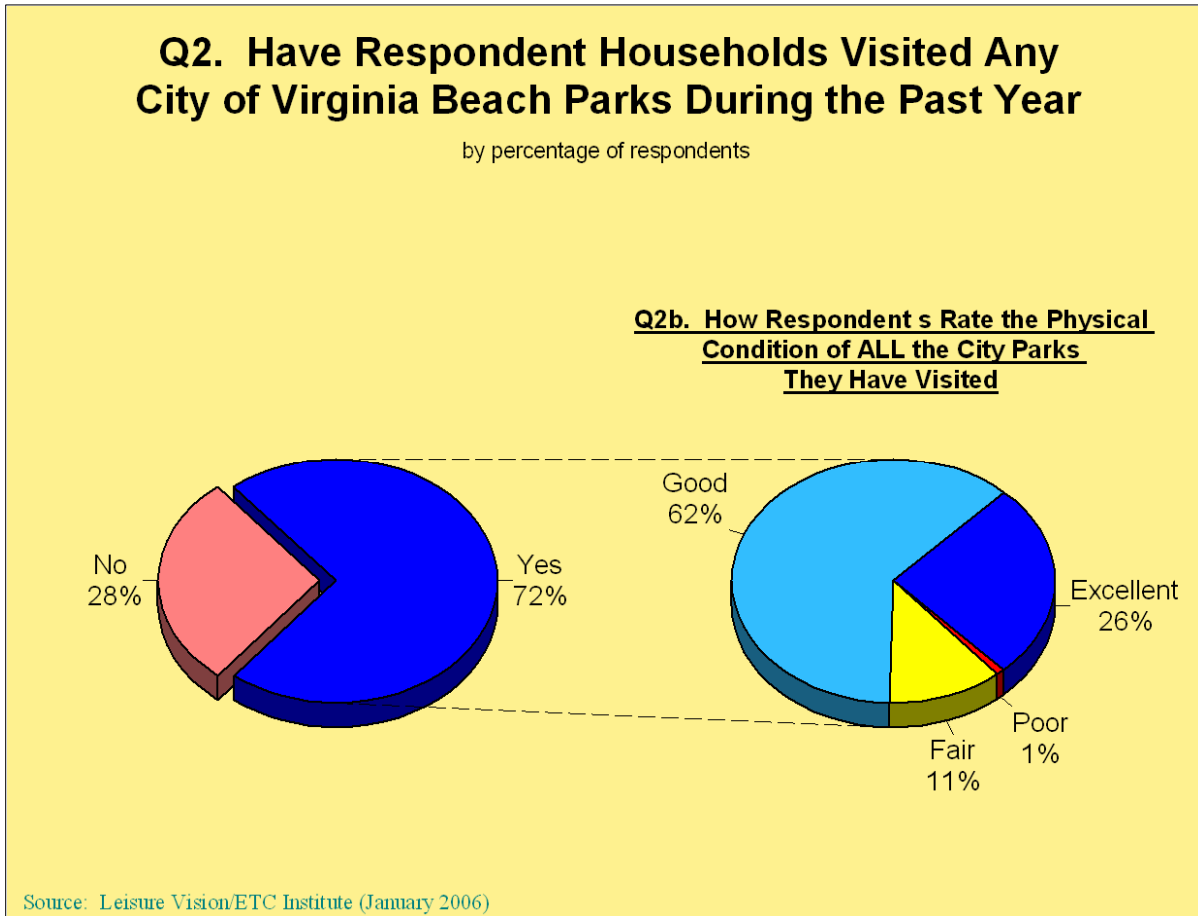
- Of the 72% of respondents that have visited City parks during the past year, 58% have made more than 5 visits to parks during that time. This includes 23% of respondents who have visited City parks 20 or more times, 14% who have visited parks 11-19 times, and 21% who have visited parks 6-10 times.



1.3 Physical Condition of Parks

How would you rate the overall physical condition of ALL the City parks you have visited?

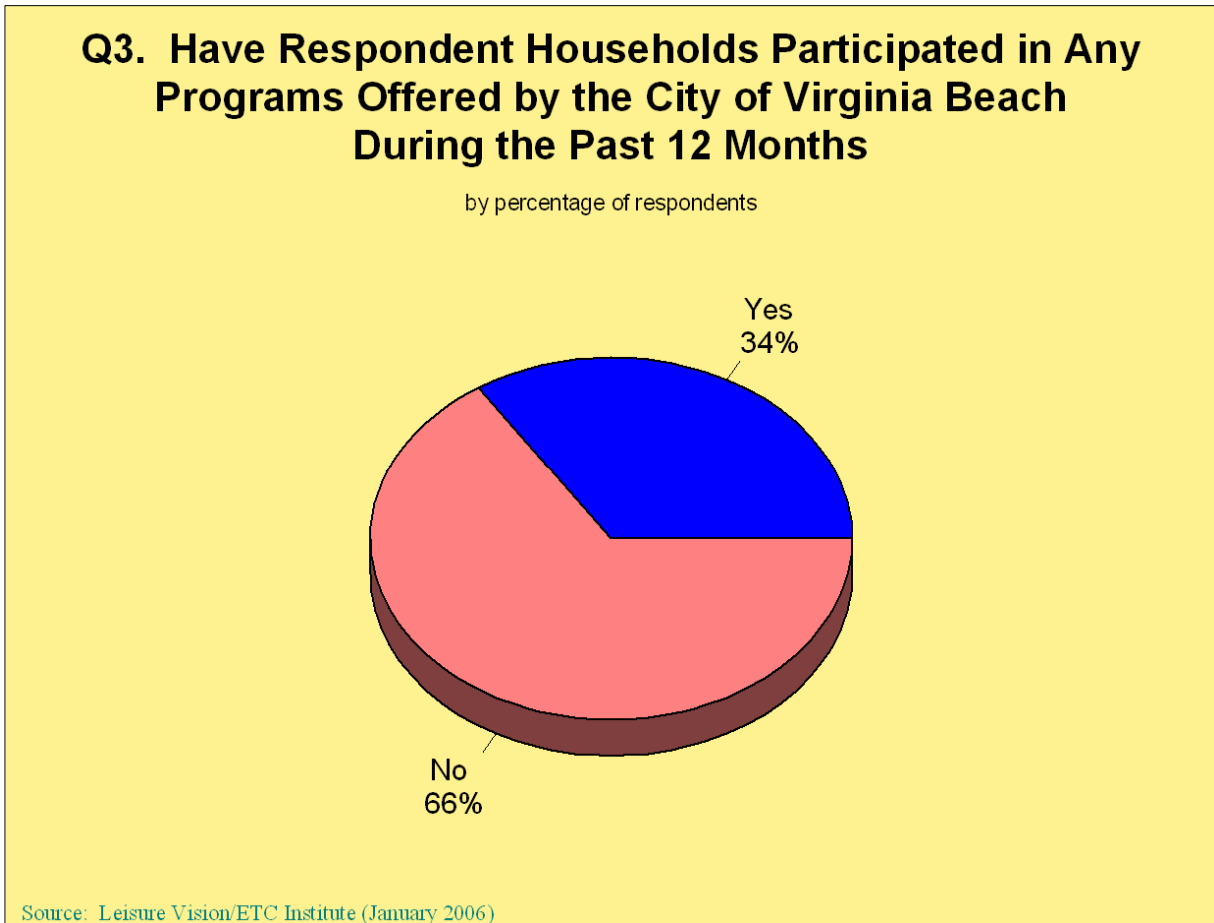
- Of the 72% of respondents that have visited City parks during the past year, 88% rated the physical condition of all the parks they have visited as either excellent (26%) or good (62%). An additional 11% of respondents rated the parks as fair, and only 1% rated them as poor.



1.4 Participation in City of Virginia Beach Recreation Programs

Have you or other members of your household participated in any recreation programs offered by the City of Virginia Beach during the past 12 months?

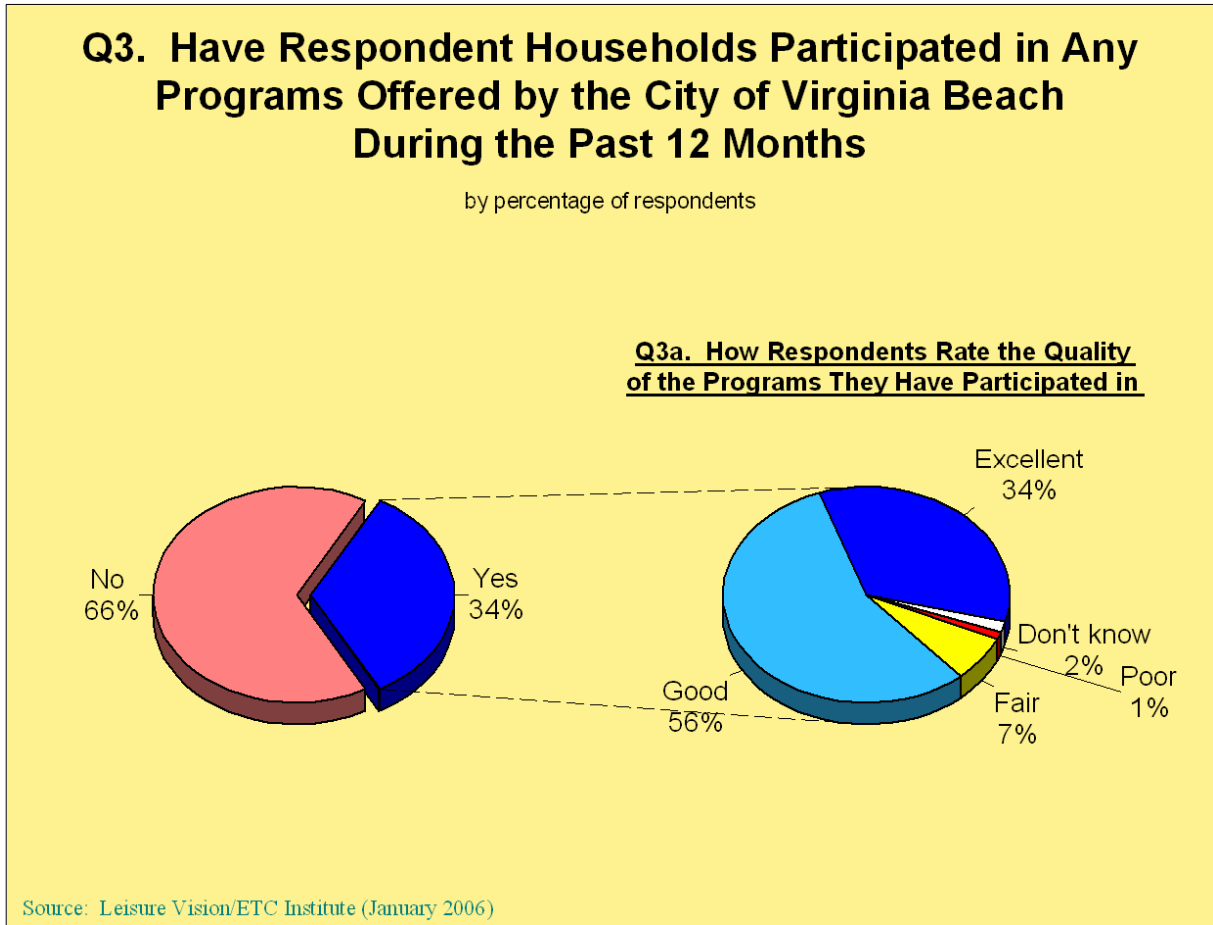
- 34% of respondent households have participated in recreation programs offered by the City of Virginia Beach during the past year.



1.5 Quality of City of Virginia Beach Recreation Programs

How would you rate the overall quality of the programs that you and members of your household have participated in?

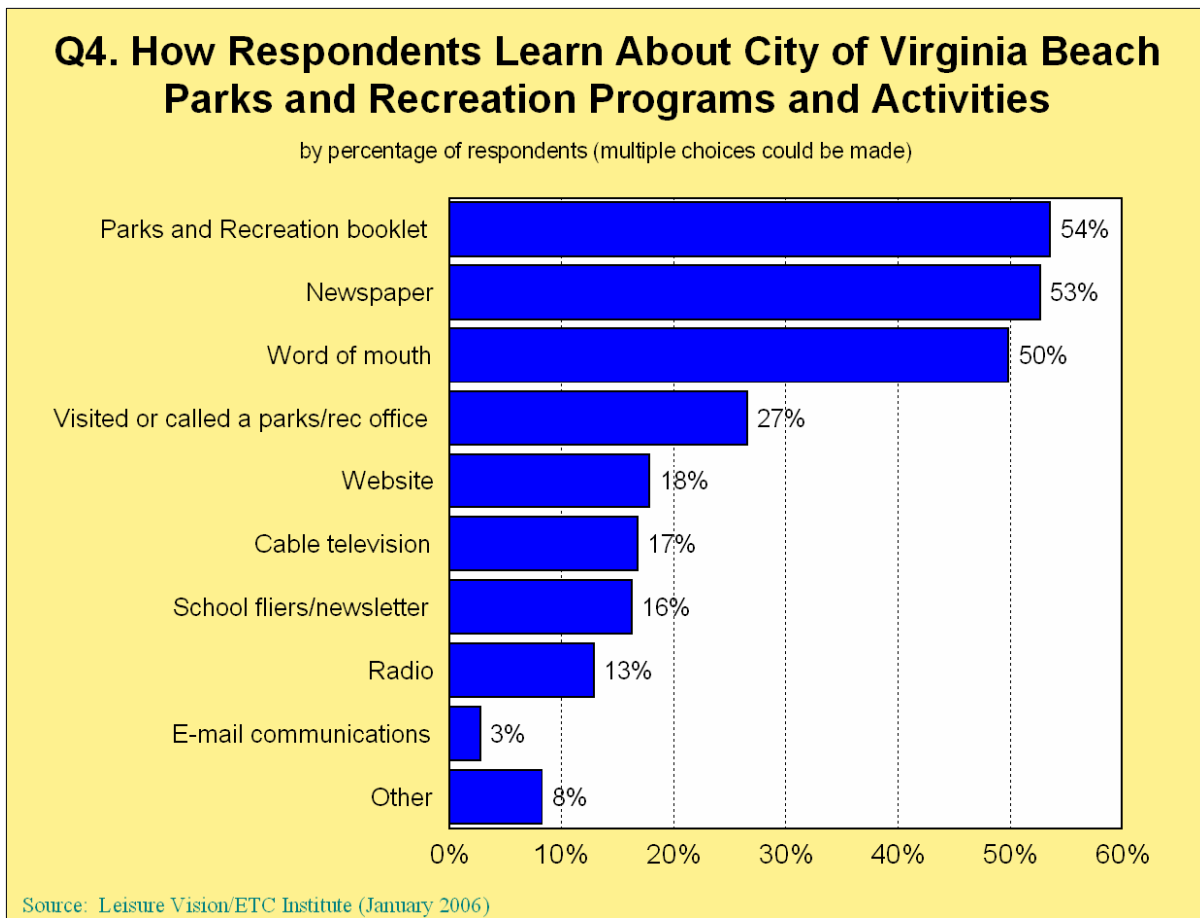
- Of the 34% of respondents that have participated in City recreation programs during the past year, 90% rated the programs as excellent (34%) or good (56%). In addition, 7% of respondents rated the programs as fair, only 1% rated them as poor, and 2% indicated “don’t know”.



1.6 Ways Respondents Learn About City Programs and Activities

Please check ALL the ways you learn about City parks and recreation programs and activities.

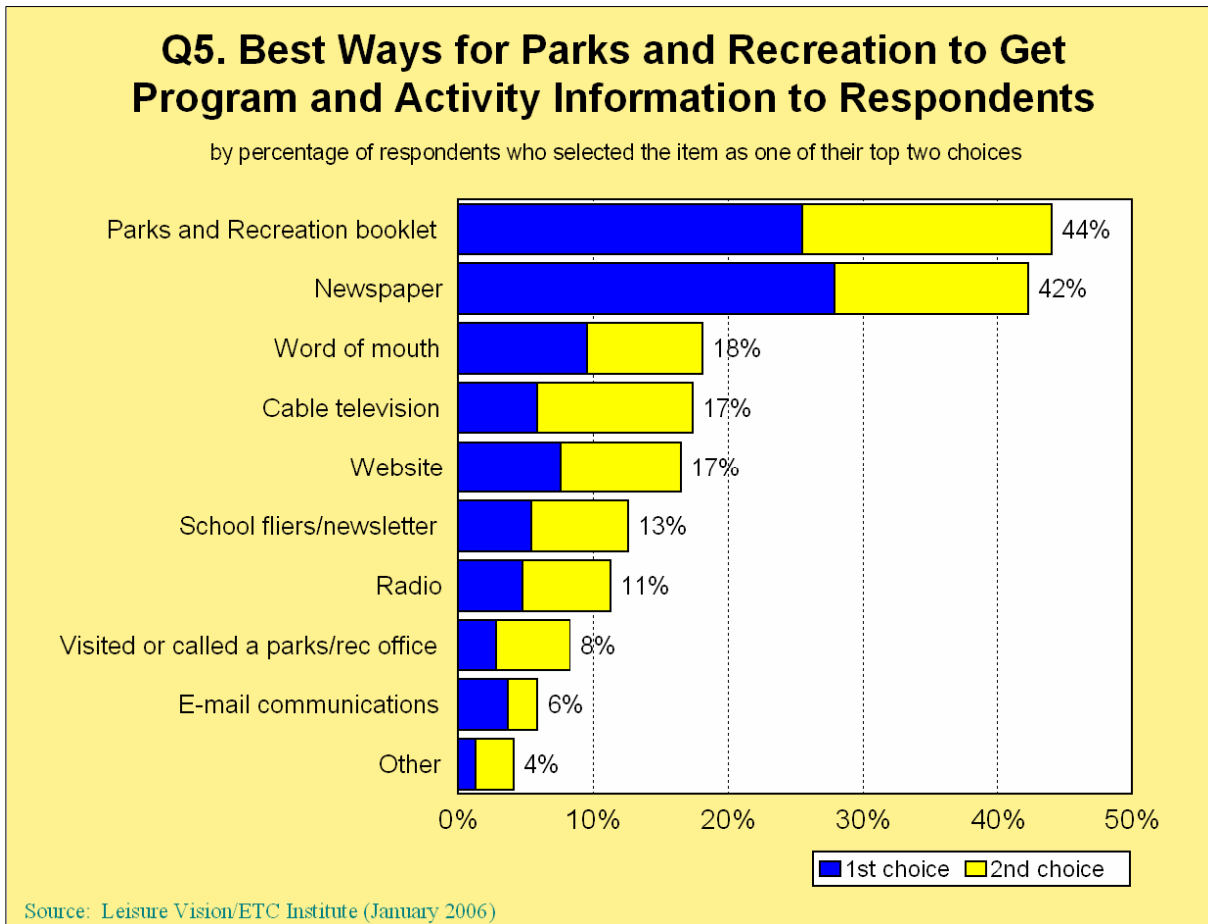
- The Parks and Recreation booklet Experience the Fun (54%) is the most frequently mentioned way that respondents have learned about City parks and recreation programs and activities. There are two other ways that at least 50% of respondents have learned about programs and activities, including: newspaper (53%), and word of mouth (50%).



1.7 Best Ways to Get City Program and Activity Information to Respondents

Which TWO of the ways from the list in Question #4 are the best ways for parks and recreation to get program and activity information to you?

- There are two ways that over 40% of respondents selected as one of the two best ways for the City of Virginia Beach to get them information on programs and activities: Parks and Recreation booklet Experience the Fun (44%) and newspaper (42%).

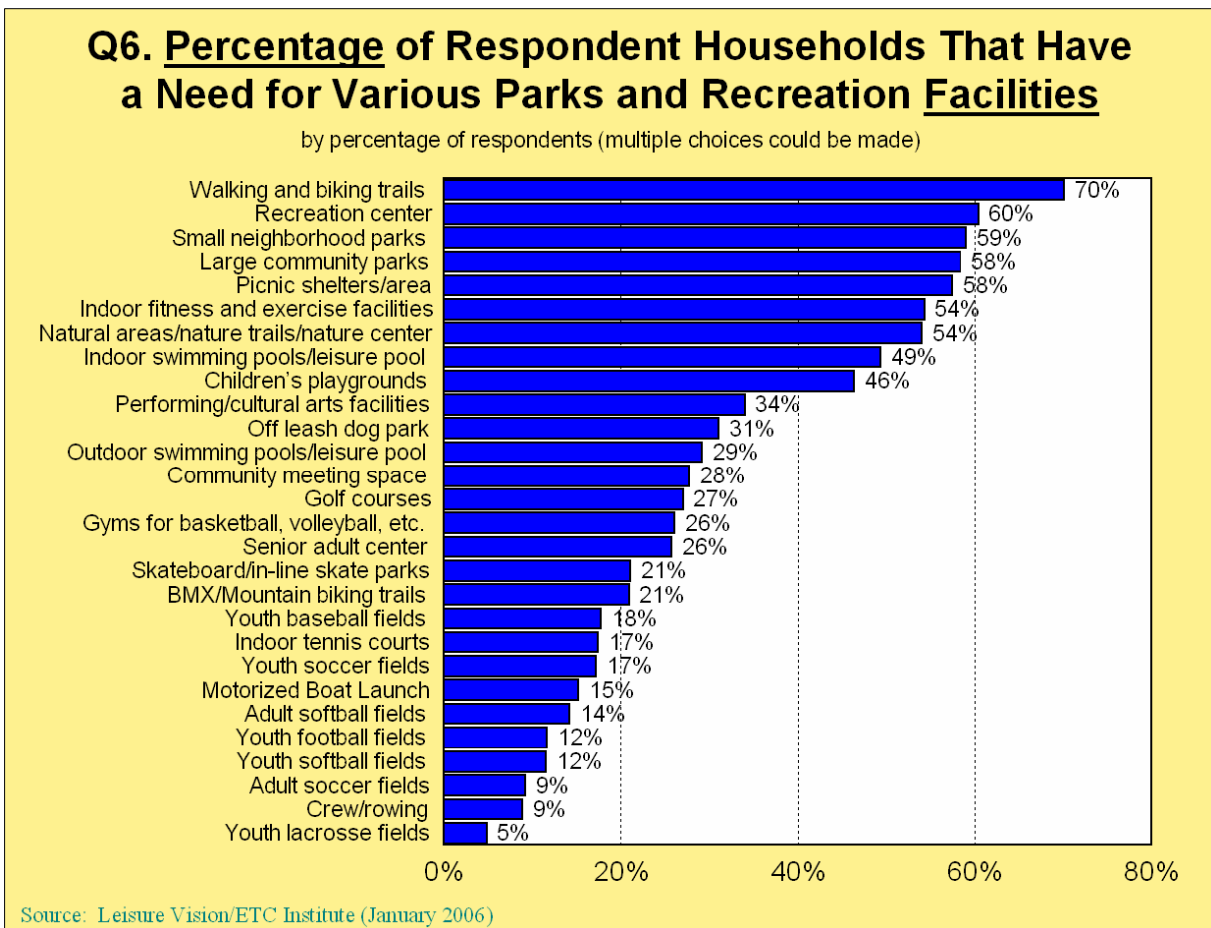


Section 2 – Facility and Program Need

2.1 Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the parks and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreational facility.

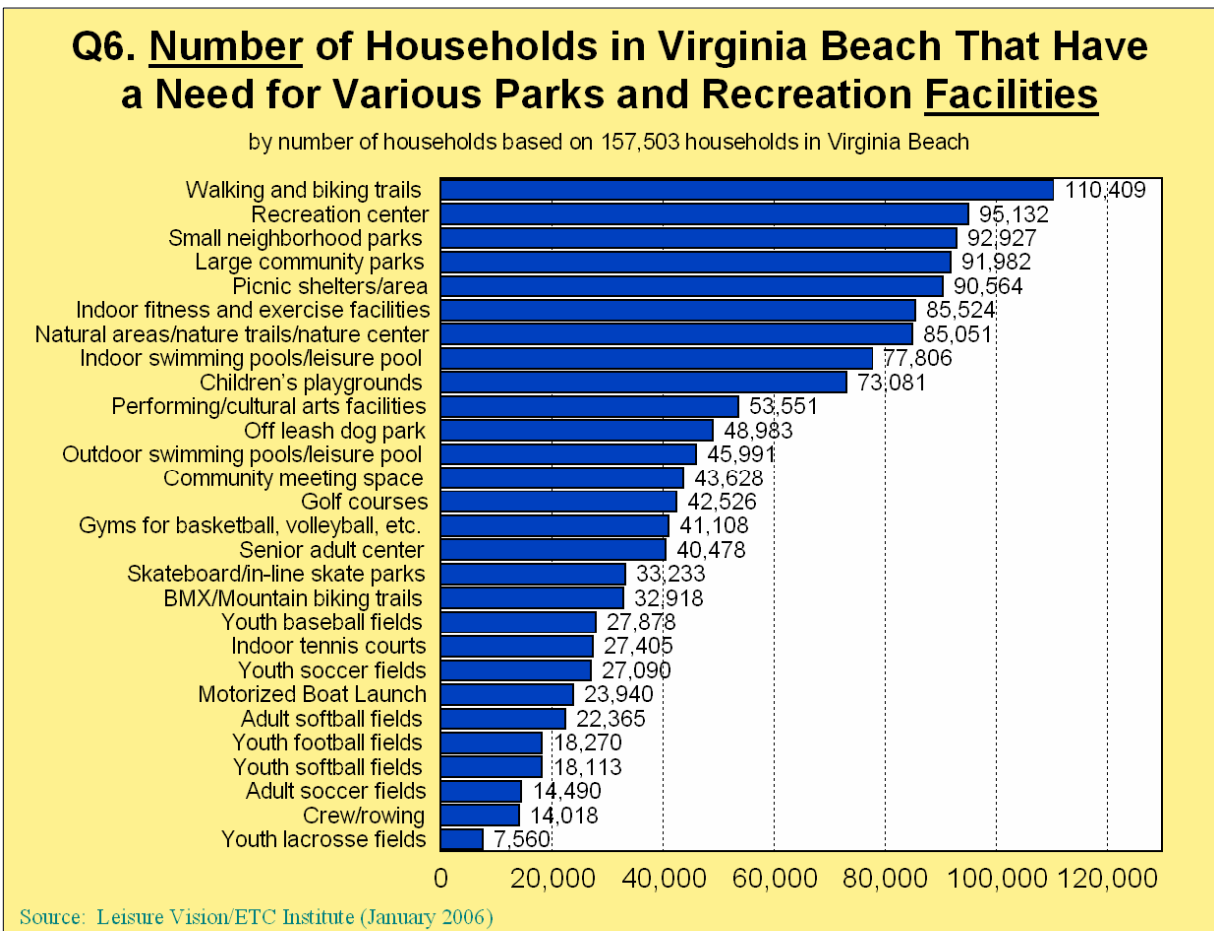
- Seven of the 28 parks and recreation facilities had over 50% of respondent households indicate they have a need for it. These seven facilities include: walking and biking trails (70%), recreation center (60%), small neighborhood parks (59%), large community parks (58%), picnic shelters/area (58%), indoor fitness and exercise facilities (54%) and natural areas/nature trails/nature center (54%).



2.2 Need for Parks and Recreation Facilities in Virginia Beach

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the parks and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreational facility.

- From the list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, respondents were asked to indicate which ones they and members of their household have a need for. The graph below summarizes key findings on the previous page by the number of households having a need for various parks and recreation facilities in the City of Virginia Beach, based on 157,503 households in the City.

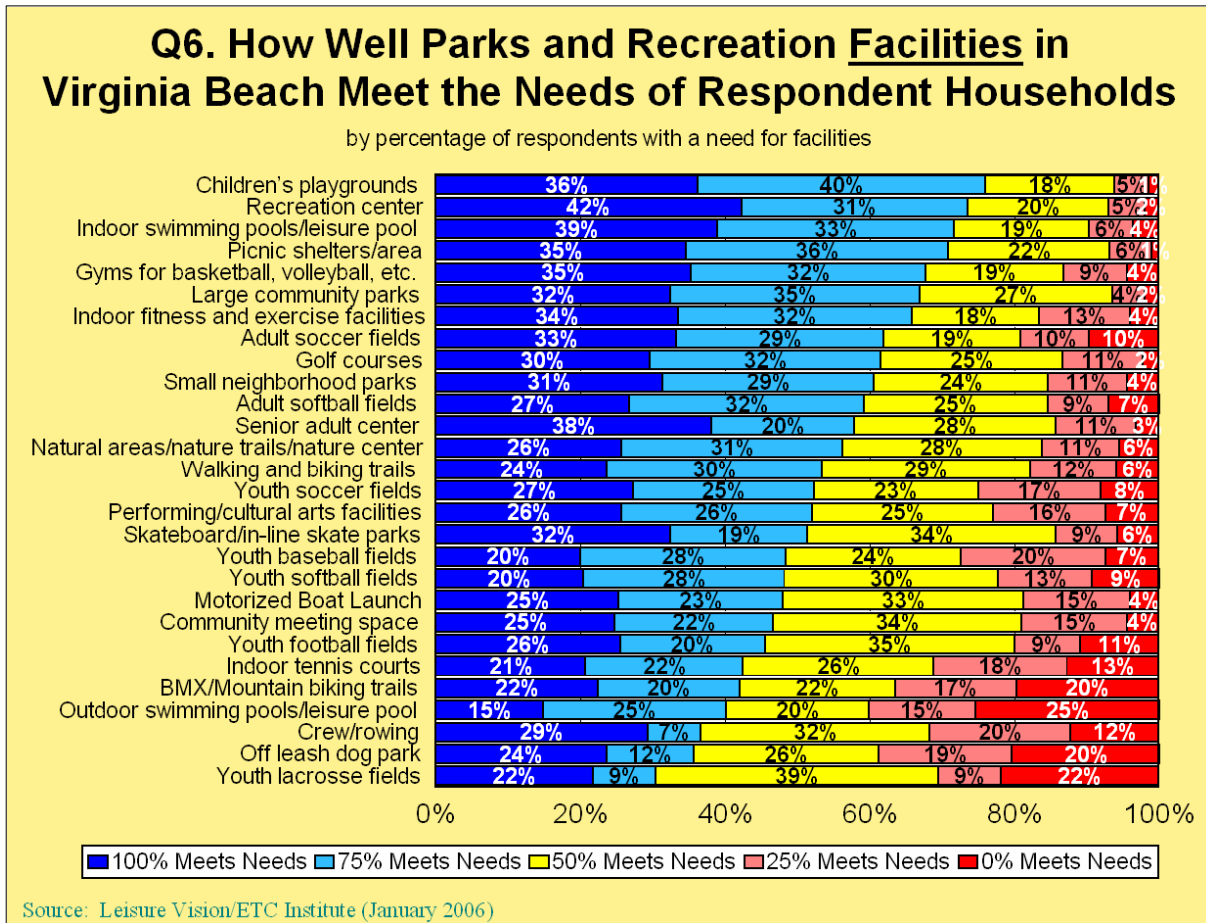


2.3 How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities Meet Needs

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the parks and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreational facility.

If YES, please rate ALL of the parks and recreation FACILITIES of this type in Virginia Beach on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means “100% Meets Needs” and 1 means “Does Not Meet Needs” of your household.

- For all 28 facilities, less than 50% of respondents indicated that the facility 100% meets the needs of their household.

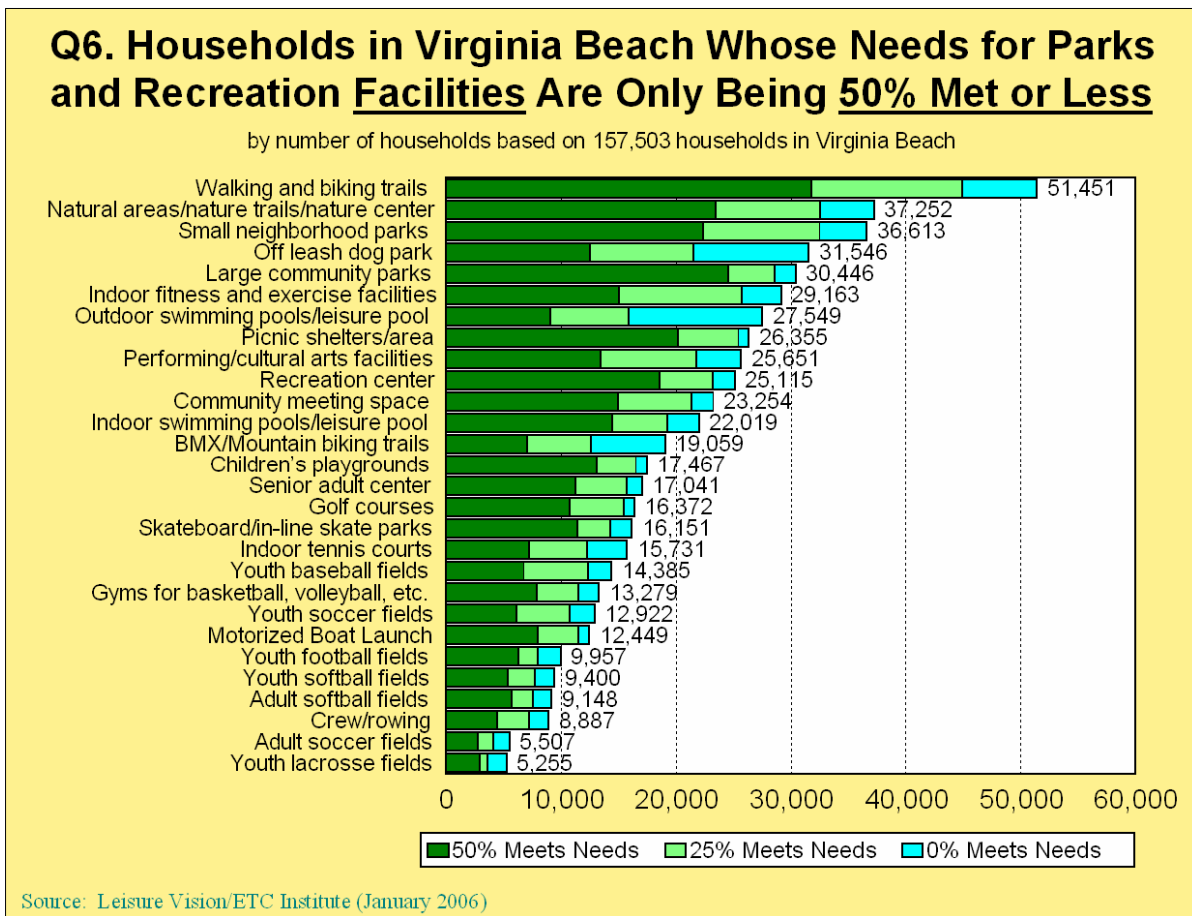


2.4 Households in Virginia Beach with 50% or Less of Their Facility Needs Being Met

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the parks and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreational facility.

If YES, please rate ALL of the parks and recreation FACILITIES of this type in Virginia Beach on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means “100% Meets Needs” and 1 means “Does Not Meet Needs” of your household.

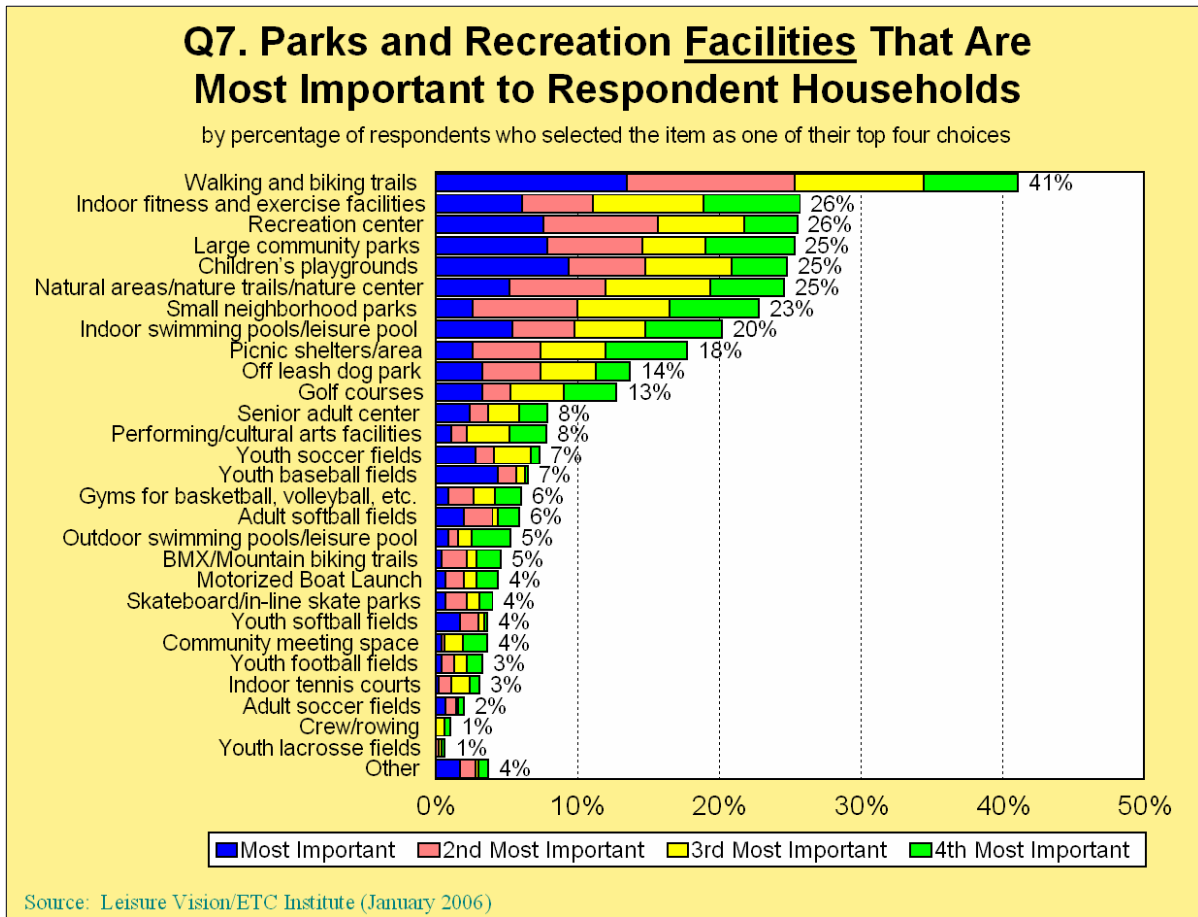
- From the list of 28 parks and recreation facilities, respondent households that have a need for facilities were asked to indicate how well those facilities meet their needs. The graph below shows the number of households in the City of Virginia Beach whose needs for facilities are only being 50% met or less, based on 157,503 households in the City.



2.5 Most Important Parks and Recreation Facilities

Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #6 are most important to your household?

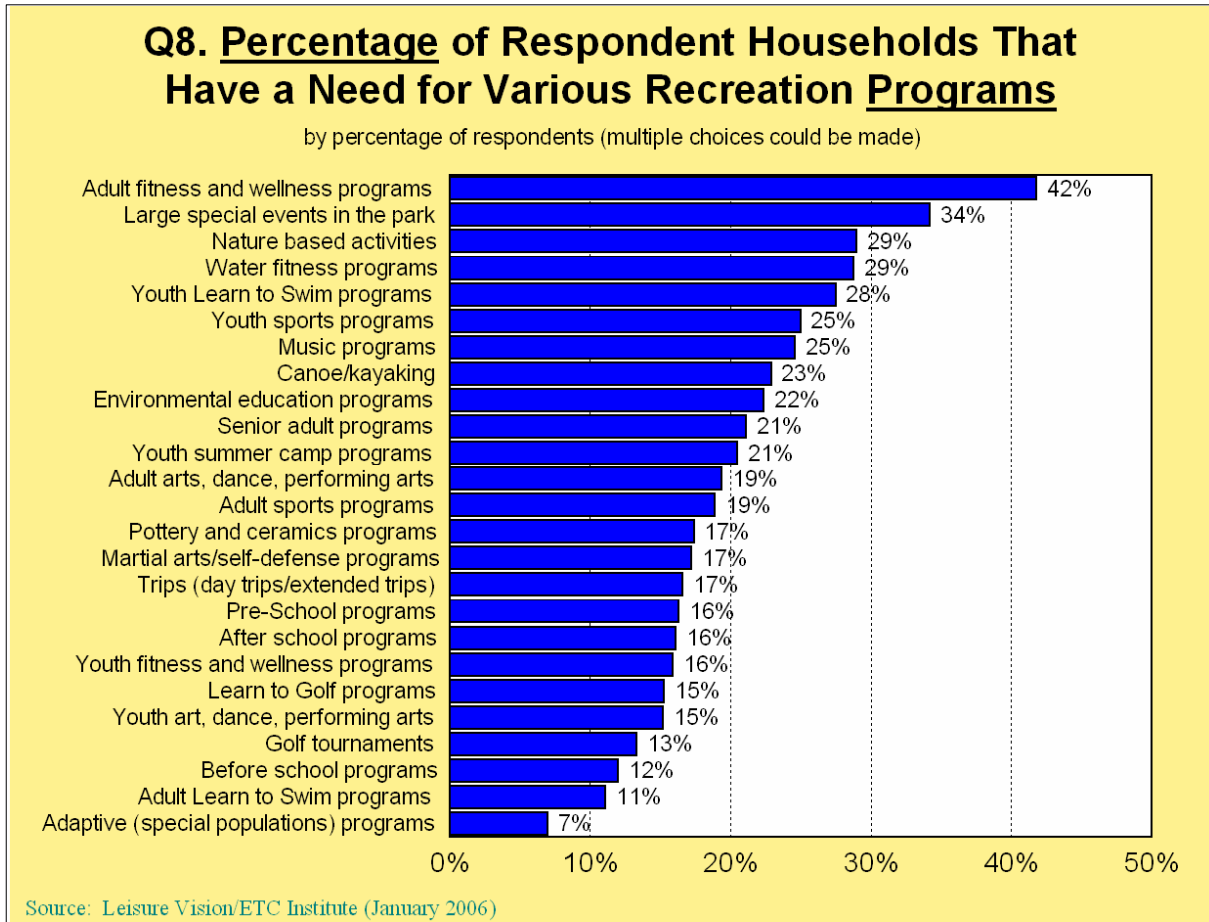
- Walking and biking trails (41%) had the highest percentage of respondents select it as one of the four most important facilities. There are five other facilities that at least 25% of respondents selected as one of the four most important, including: indoor fitness and exercise facilities (26%), recreation center (26%), large community parks (25%), children’s playgrounds (25%) and natural areas/nature trails/nature center (25%). It should also be noted that walking and biking trails had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the most important facility.



2.6 Need for Recreation Programs

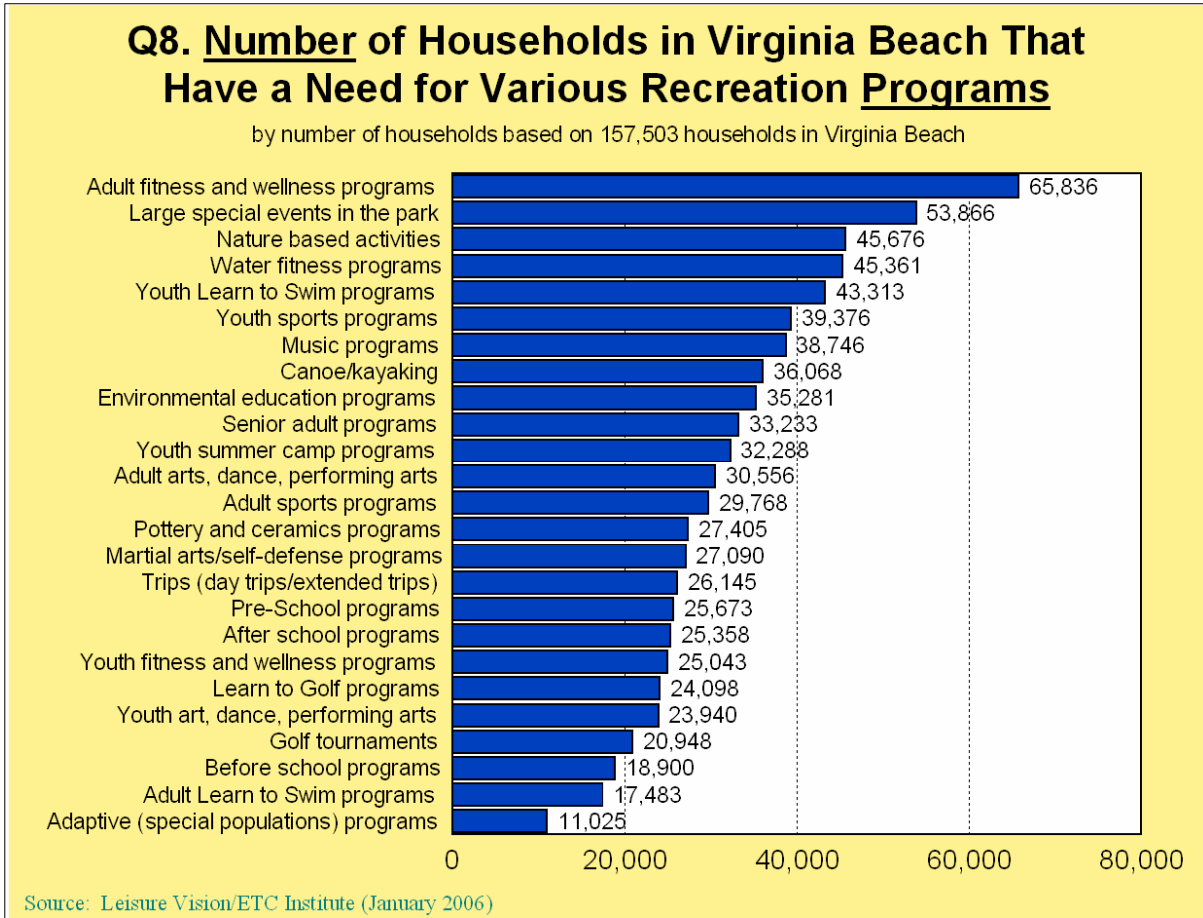
Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the recreation PROGRAMS listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreation PROGRAM.

- Five of the 25 recreation programs had over 25% of respondent households indicate they have a need for it. These five programs include: adult fitness and wellness programs (42%), large special events in the park (34%), nature based activities (29%), water fitness programs (29%), and Youth Learn to Swim programs (28%).



2.7 Need for Recreation Programs in Virginia Beach

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the recreation PROGRAMS listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreation PROGRAM.

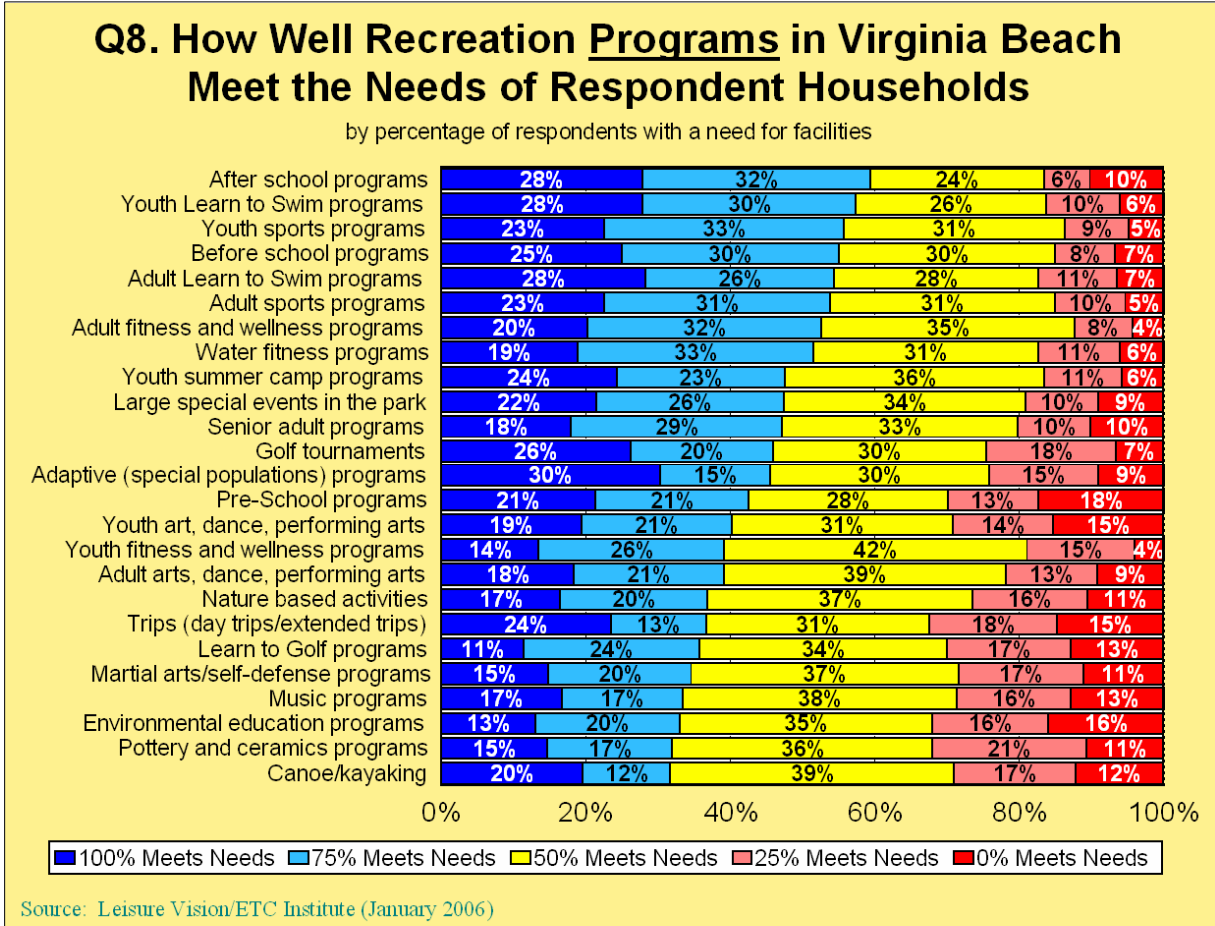


2.8 How Well Recreation Programs Meet Needs

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the recreation PROGRAMS listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreation PROGRAM.

If YES, please rate ALL of the recreation PROGRAMS of this type in Virginia Beach on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means “100% Meets Needs” and 1 means “Does Not Meet Needs” of your household.

- For all 25 facilities, less than 35% of respondents indicated that the facility 100% meets the needs of their household.

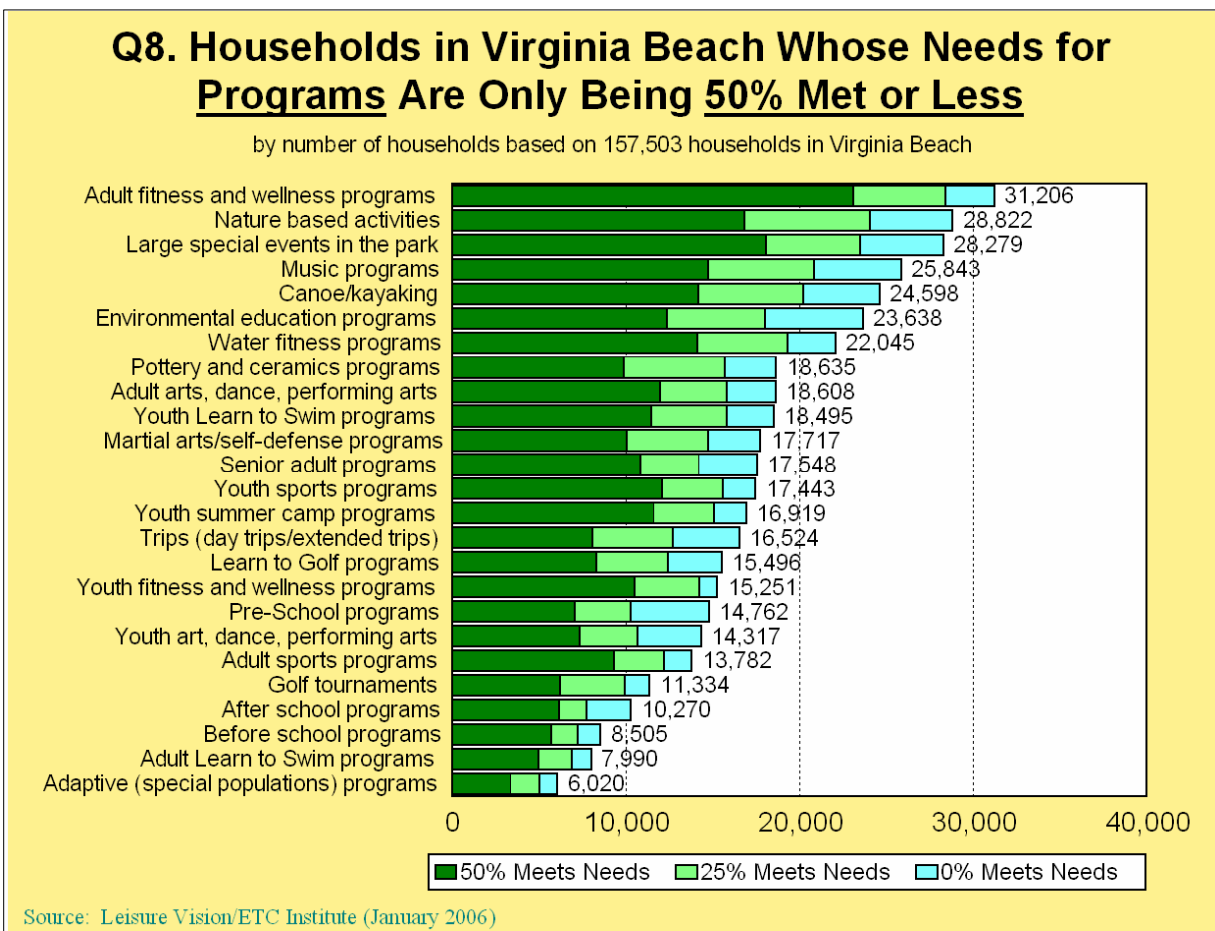


2.9 Households in Virginia Beach with 50% or Less of their Program Needs Being Met

Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the recreation PROGRAMS listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the recreation PROGRAM.

If YES, please rate ALL of the recreation PROGRAMS of this type in Virginia Beach on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means “100% Meets Needs” and 1 means “Does Not Meet Needs” of your household.

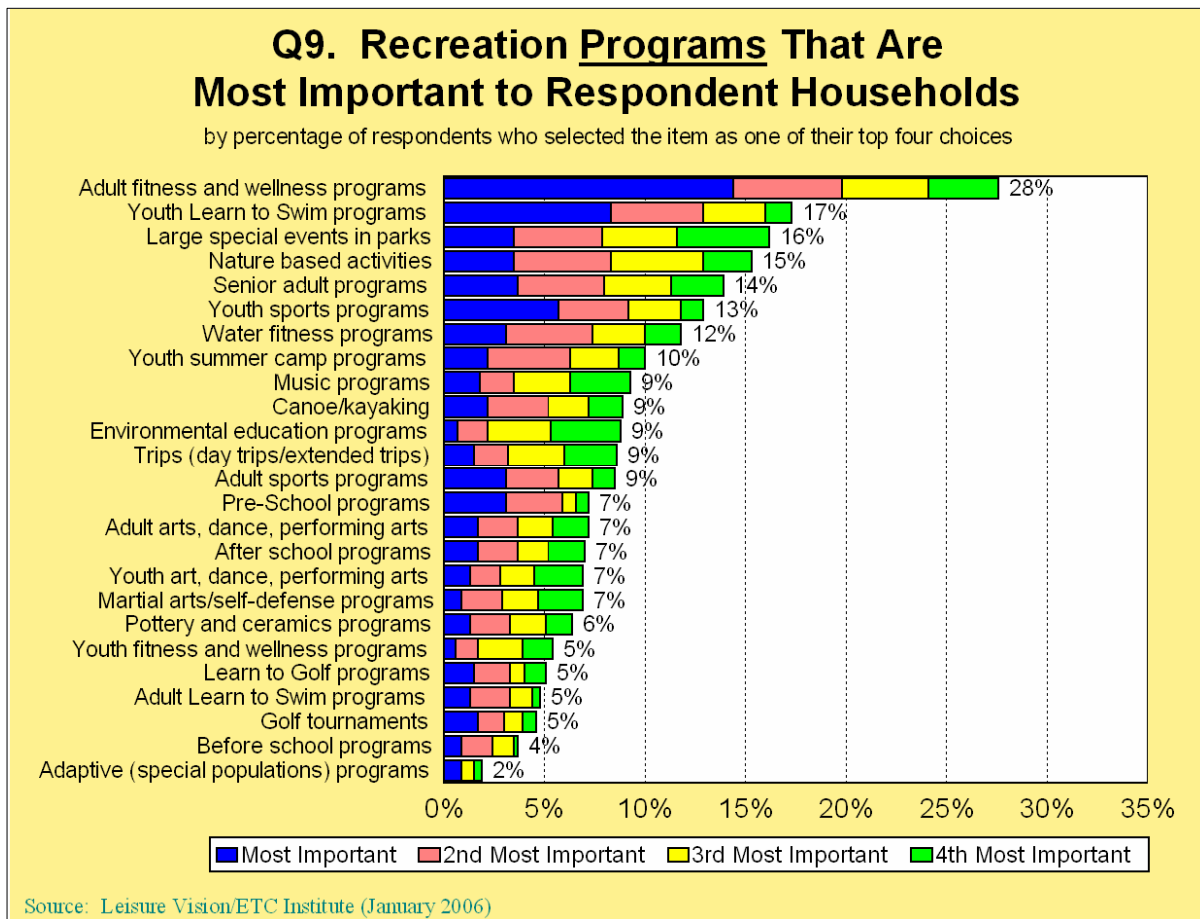
- From the list of 25 recreation programs, respondent households that have a need for programs were asked to indicate how well those programs meet their needs. The graph below shows the number of households in the City of Virginia Beach whose needs for programs are only being 50% met or less, based on 157,503 households in the City.



2.10 Most Important Recreation Programs

Which FOUR of the programs from the list in Question #8 are most important to your household?

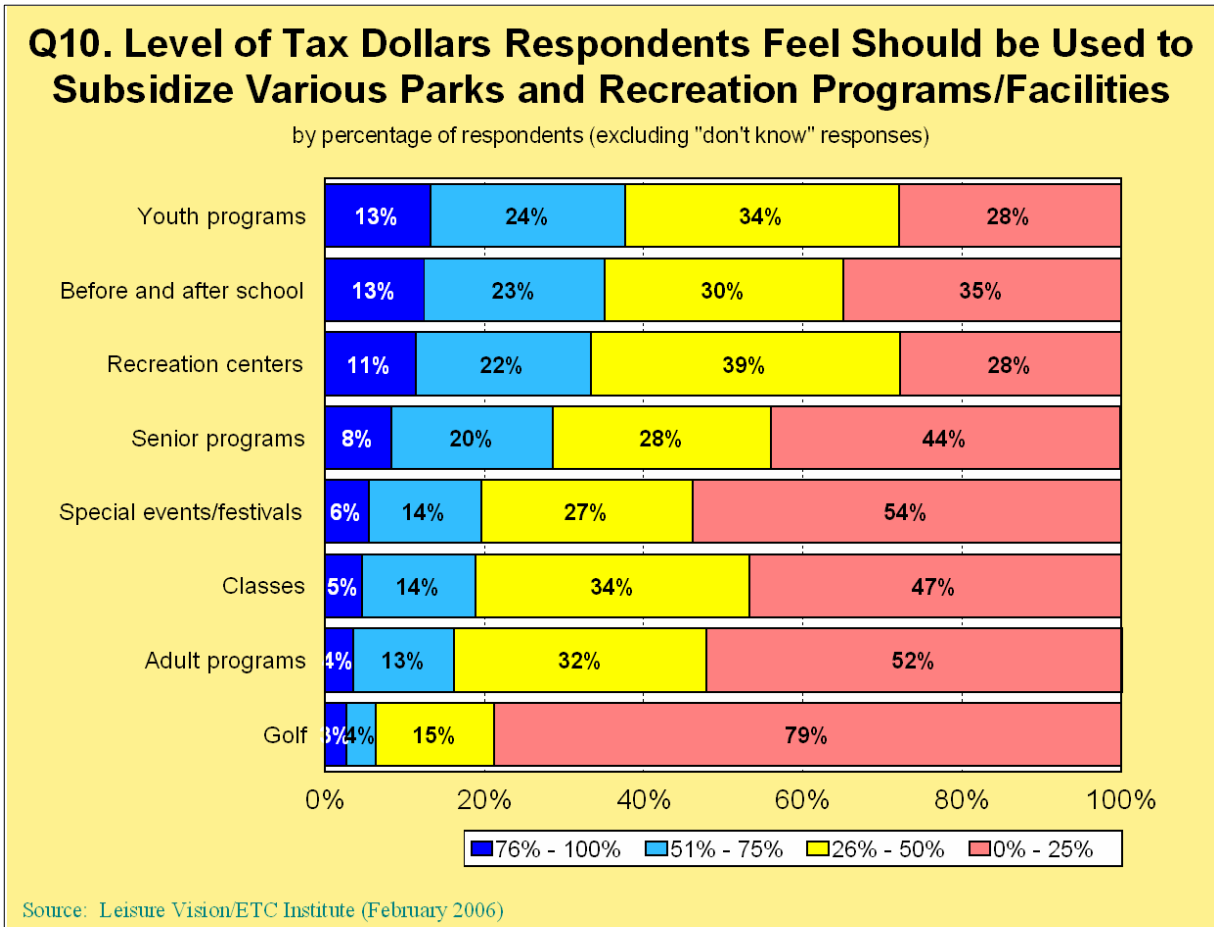
- Adult fitness and wellness programs (28%) had the highest percentage of respondents select it as one of the four most important programs. There are three other programs that at least 15% of respondents selected as one of the four most important, including: Youth Learn to Swim programs (17%), large special events in parks (16%), and nature based activities (15%). It should also be noted that adult fitness and wellness programs had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the most important program.



2.11 Using Tax Dollars to Subsidize Various Programs and Facilities

The Virginia Beach Parks and Recreation Department funds its operations through tax dollars and user fees. For the following list of programs and facilities, please indicate the level of tax dollars you believe should be used to subsidize the particular area.

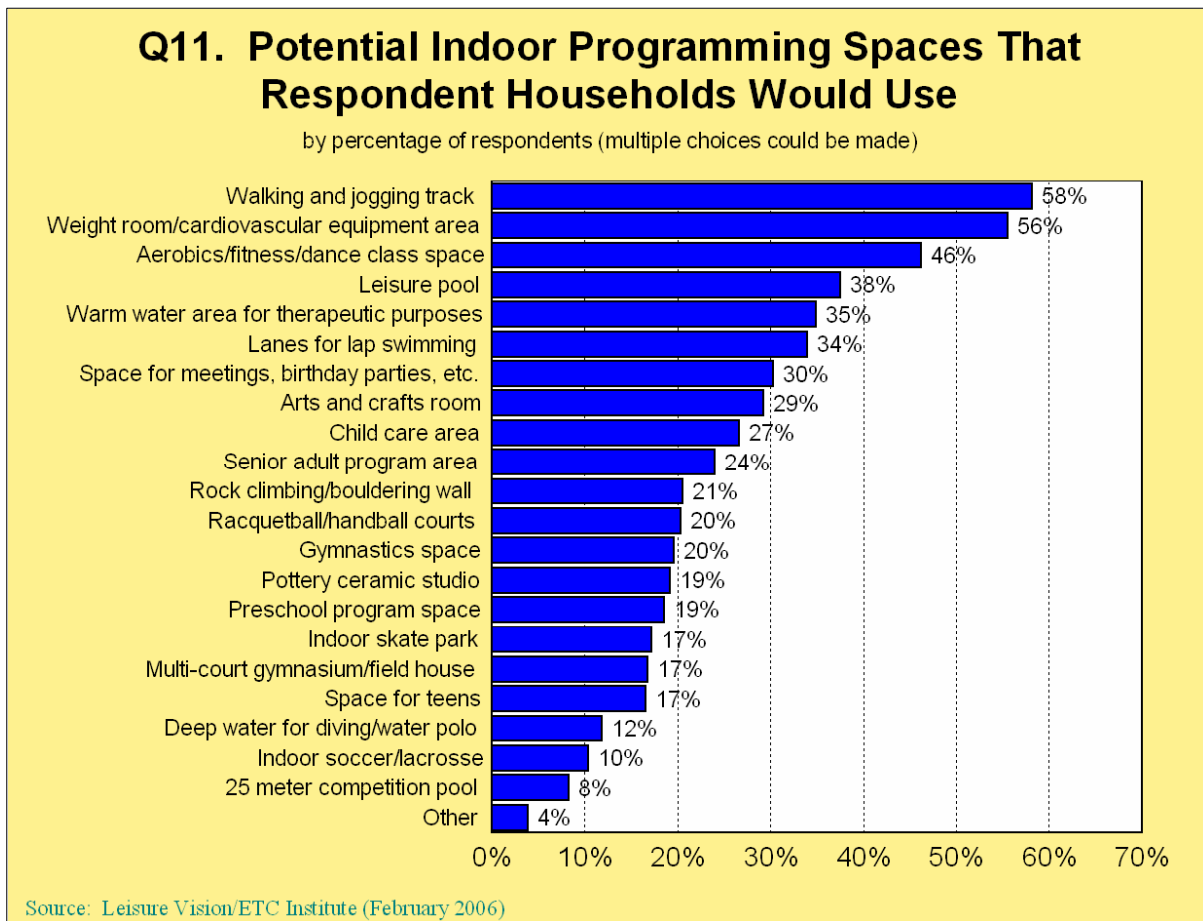
- The programs/facilities that the highest percentage of respondents feel should be at least 50% subsidized by tax dollars includes: youth programs (37%), before and after school programs (36%), recreation centers (33%), and senior programs (28%).



2.12 Potential Indoor Programming Spaces Respondents Would Use

The City is studying the usefulness of its indoor recreation space. From the following list, please check ALL the potential indoor programming spaces you and members of your household would use.

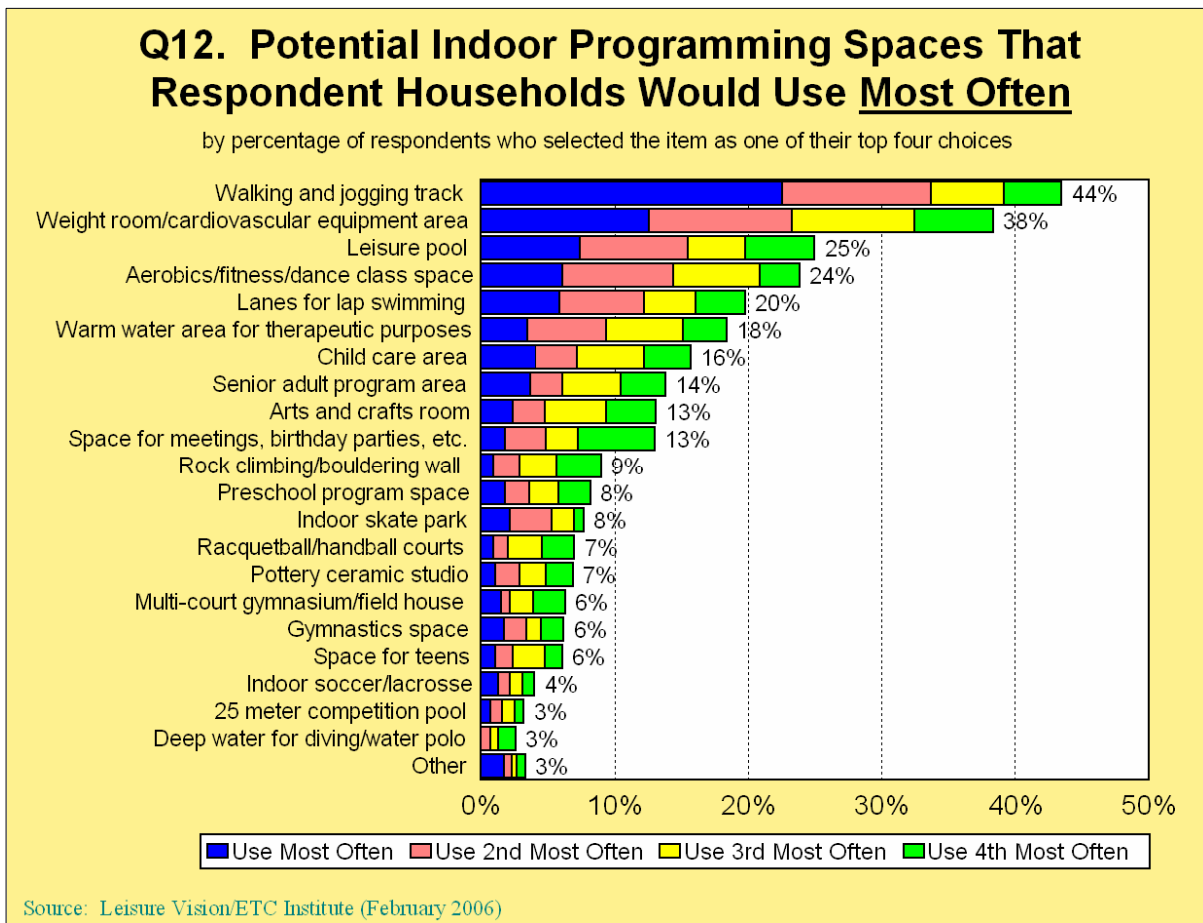
- Walking and jogging track (58%) is the programming space that the highest percentage of respondent households would use. There are three other programming spaces that over 35% of respondent households would use, including: weight room /cardiovascular equipment area (56%), aerobics/fitness/dance class space (46%), and leisure pool (38%).



2.13 Potential Indoor Programming Spaces Respondents Would Use Most Often

Which **FOUR** of the indoor spaces from the list in Question #11 would you and members of your household use the **MOST OFTEN**?

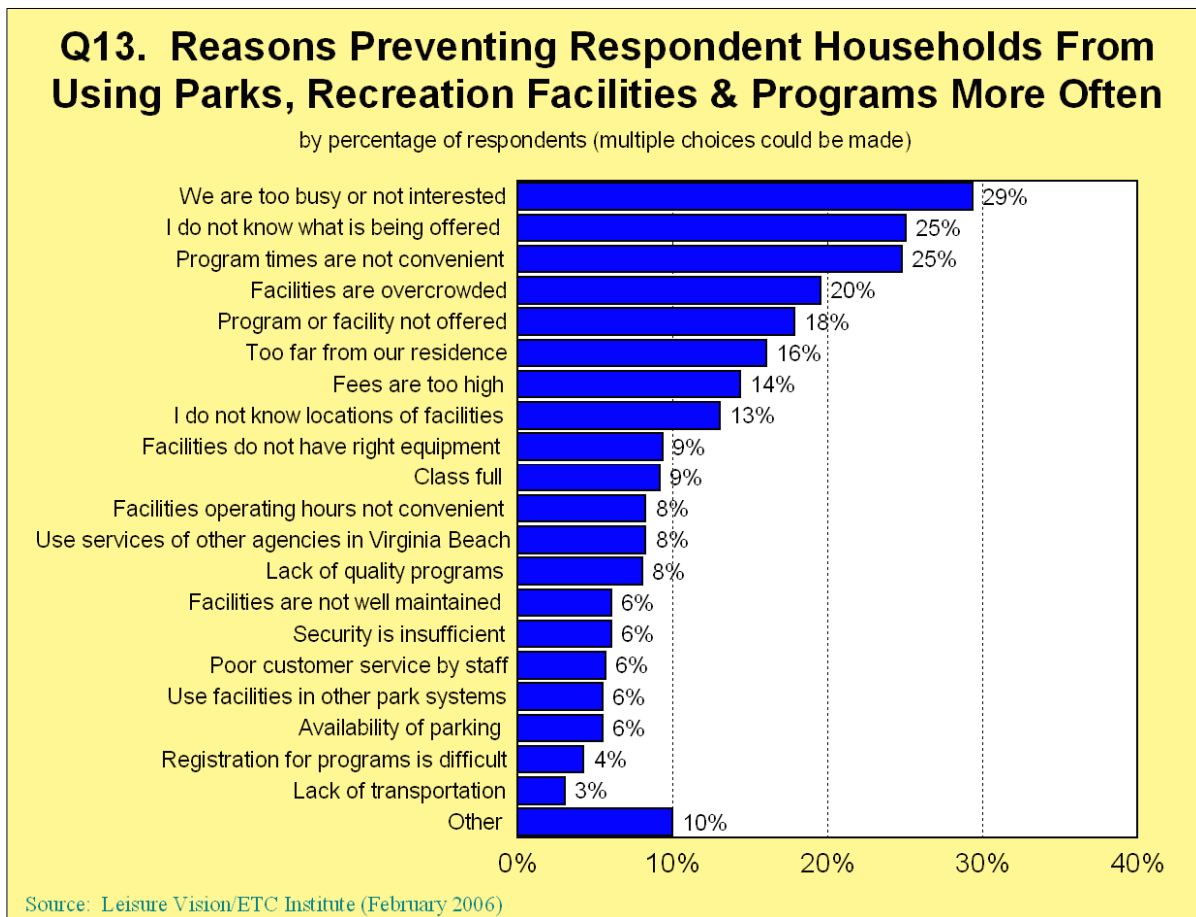
- Walking and jogging track (44%) had the highest percentage of respondent households select it as one of the four programming spaces they would use most often. There are three other programming spaces that over 20% of respondent households selected as one of the four they would use most often, including: weight room/cardiovascular equipment area (38%), leisure pool (25%), and aerobics/fitness/dance class space (24%). It should also be noted that a walking and jogging track had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the programming space they would use most often.



2.14 Reasons Preventing the Use of Parks, Facilities and Programs More Often

Please **CHECK ALL** the reasons that prevent you or other members of your household from using parks, recreation facilities and programs of the City of Virginia Beach more often.

- “We are too busy or not interested” (29%) is the reason that prevents the highest percentage of respondent households from using parks, recreation facilities, and programs of the City of Virginia Beach more often. There are two other reasons that prevent at least 25% of respondents from using parks, facilities, and programs more often, including: “I do not know what is being offered” (25%) and “program times are not convenient” (25%).

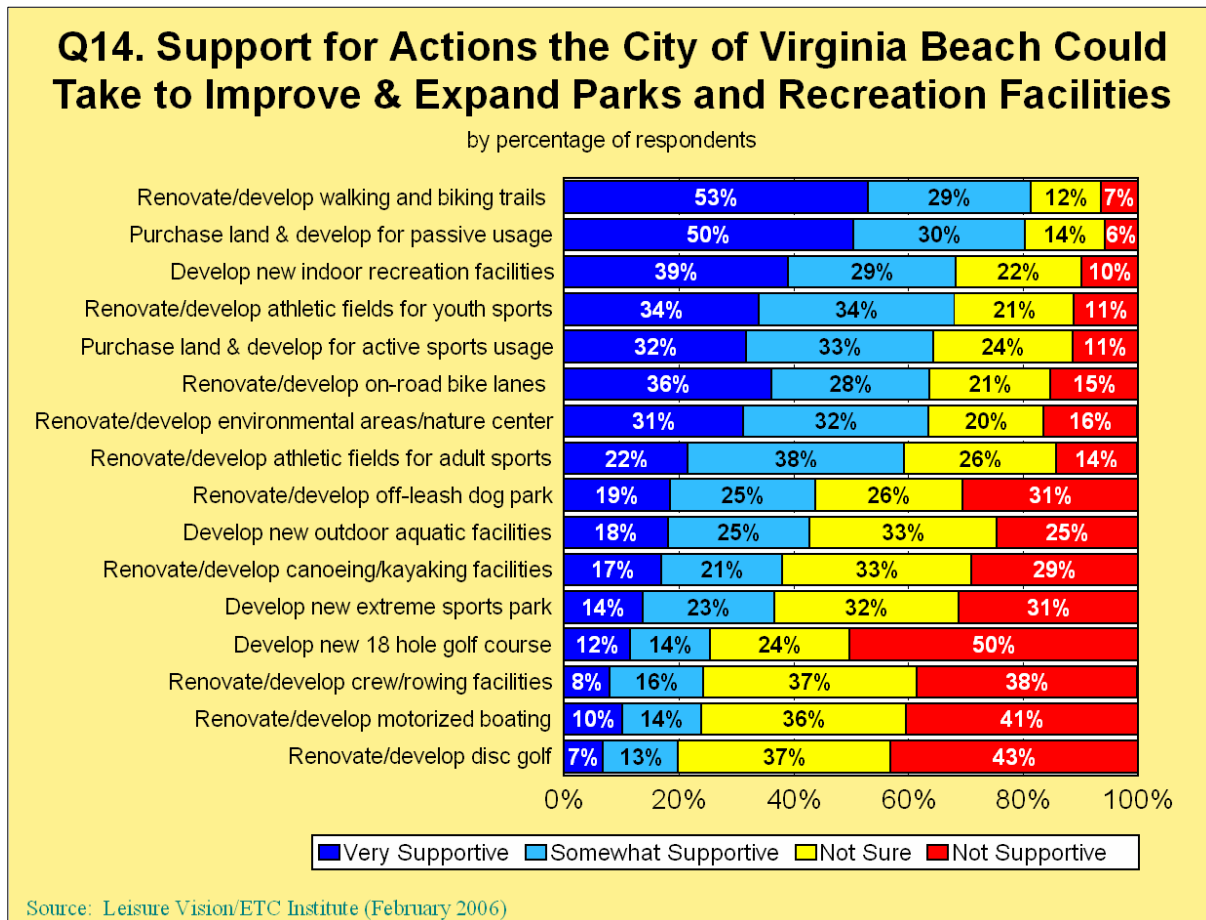


Section 3 – Support for Various Actions

3.1 Support for Actions to Improve and Expand Parks and Recreation Facilities

Following are listed a number of actions the City of Virginia Beach could take to improve and expand parks and recreation facilities. For each action please indicate whether you and your household are very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure, or not supportive of these actions.

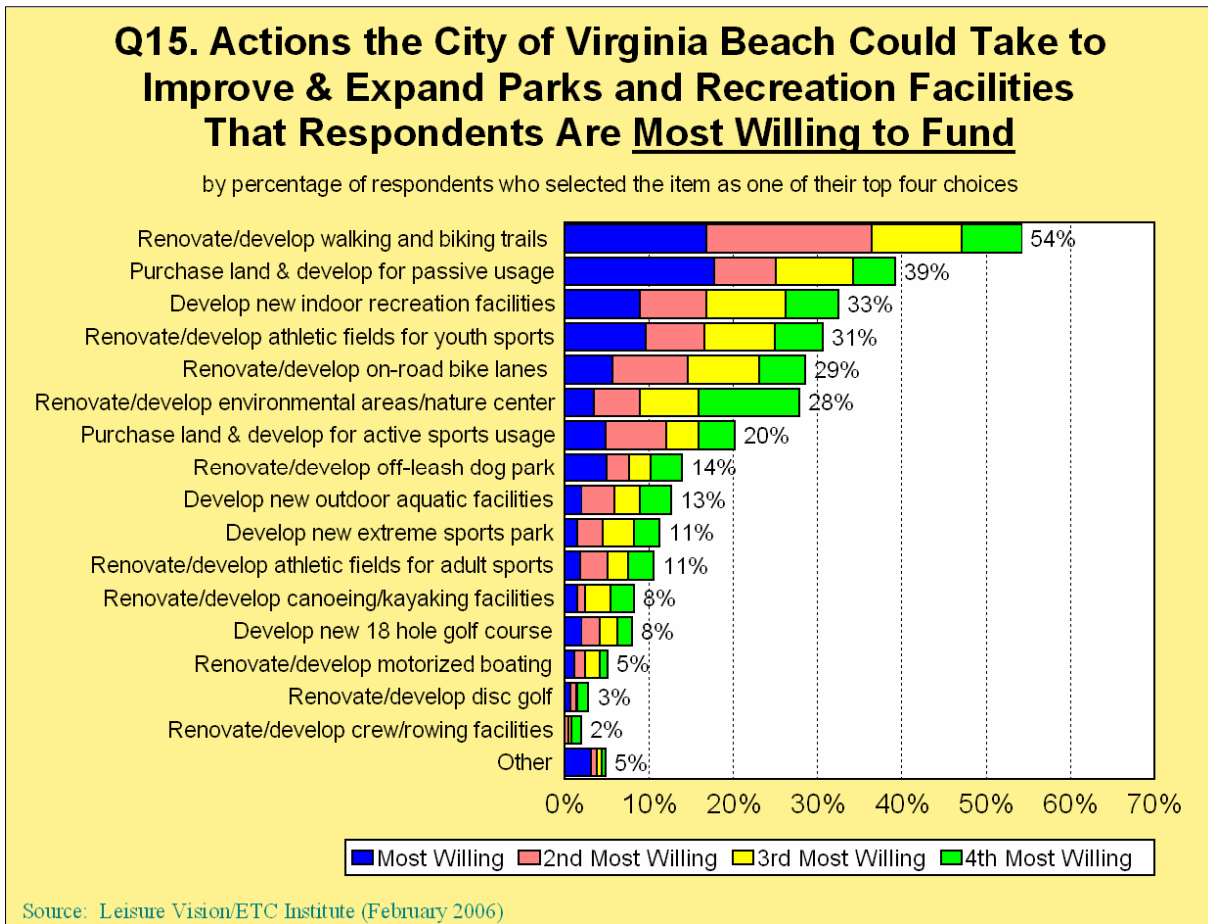
- Four of the 16 actions to improve and expand parks and recreation facilities had over 35% of respondents indicated being very supportive of them. These four actions include: renovate/develop walking and biking trails (53%), purchase land and develop for passive usage (50%), develop new indoor recreation facilities (38%), and renovate/develop on-road bike lanes (36%). It should also be noted that 8 of the 16 actions had at least 50% of respondents indicate being either very supportive of somewhat supportive of them.



3.2 Actions Most Willing to Fund with Tax Dollars

Which **FOUR** of the items from the list in Question #14 would you be most willing to fund with your tax dollars?

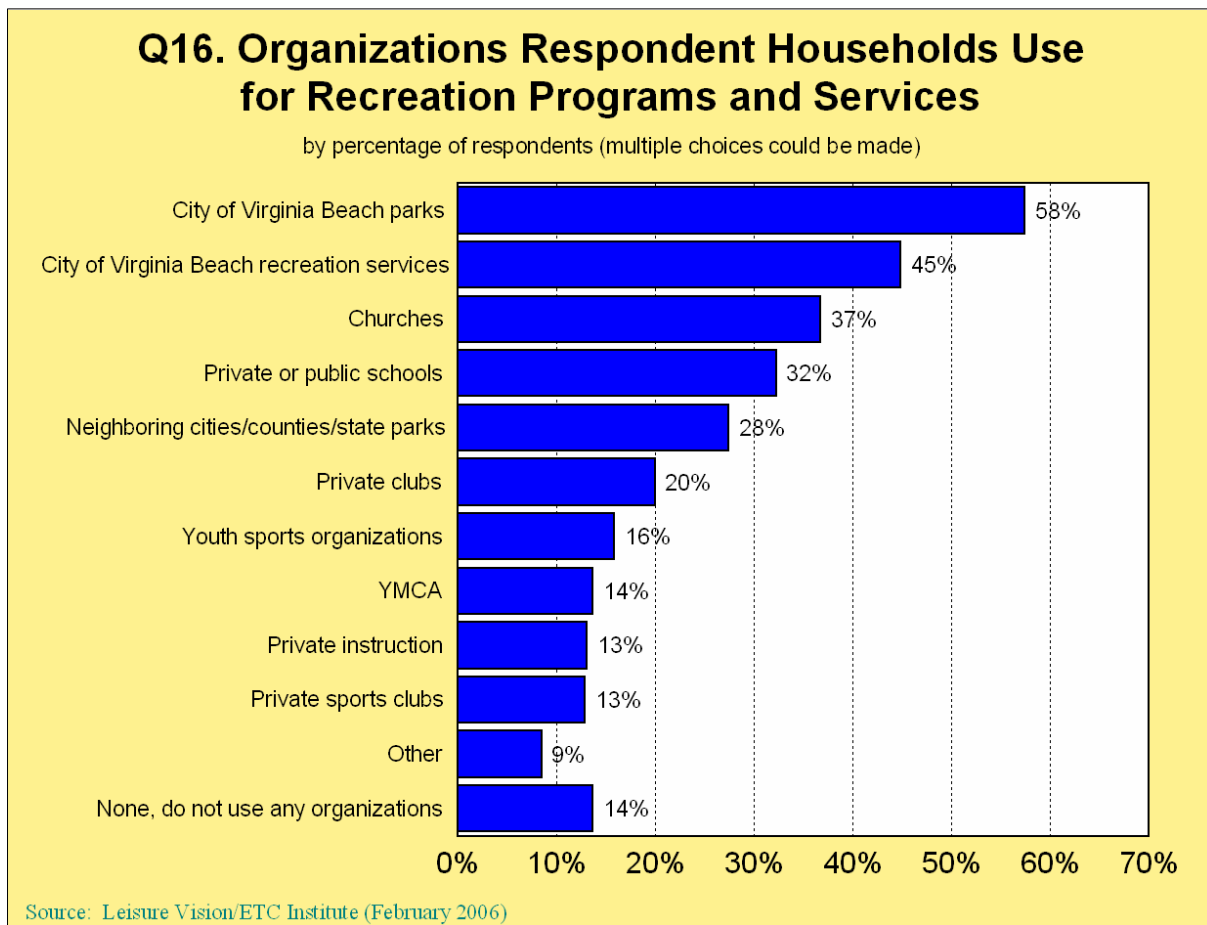
- Renovate/develop walking and biking trails (54%) had the highest percentage of respondents select it as one of the four actions they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars. There are two other actions that at least one-third of respondents selected as one of the four they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars, including: purchase land and develop for passive usage (39%) and develop new indoor recreation facilities (33%). It should also be noted that renovate/develop walking and biking trails had the highest percentage of respondents select it as their first choice as the action they would be most willing to fund with their tax dollars.



3.3 Organizations Used for Parks and Recreation Programs and Services

From the following list, please check ALL the organizations that you and members of your household use for recreation programs and services.

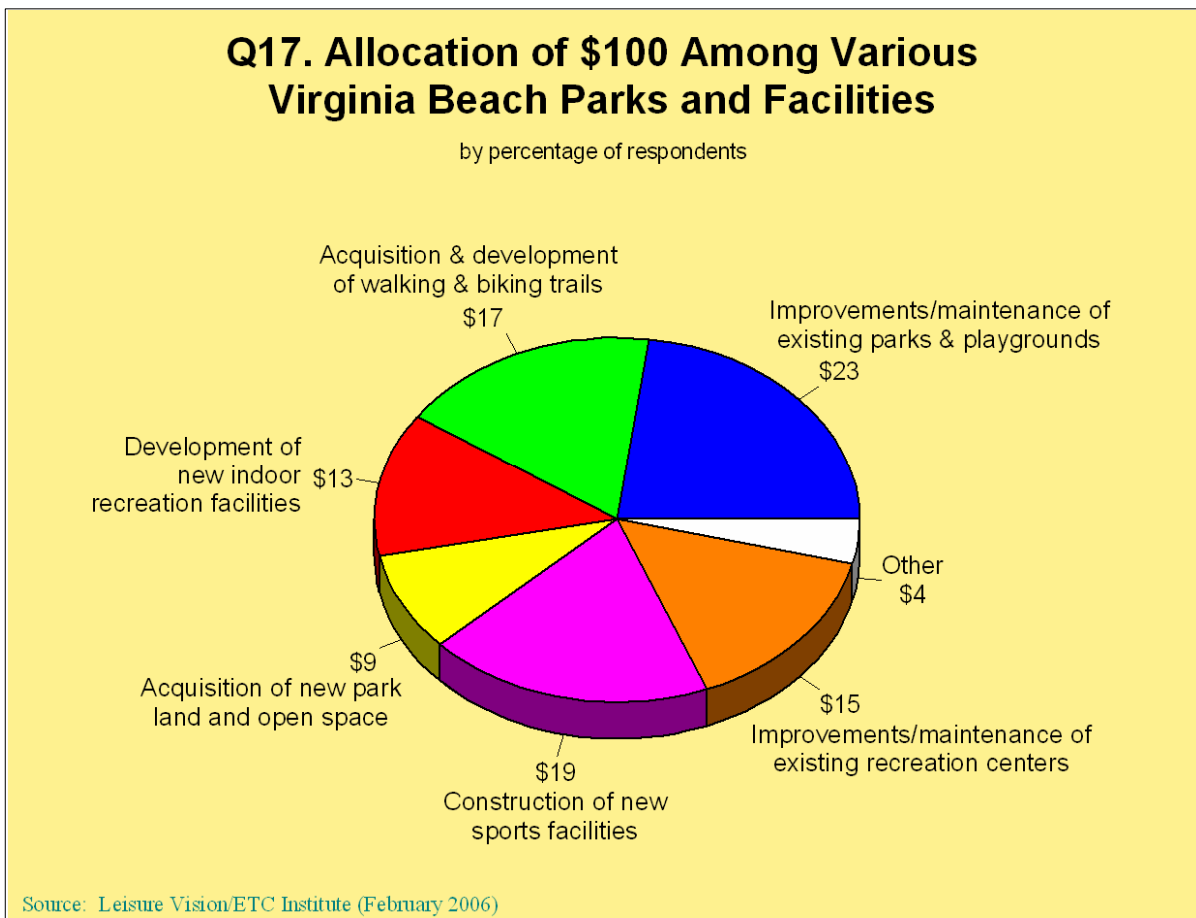
- City of Virginia Beach parks (58%) is the organization used by the highest percentage of respondent households. There are three other organizations used by over 30% of respondent households, including: City of Virginia Beach recreation services (45%), churches (37%), and private or public schools (32%).



3.4 Allocation of \$100 among Various Virginia Beach Parks and Facilities

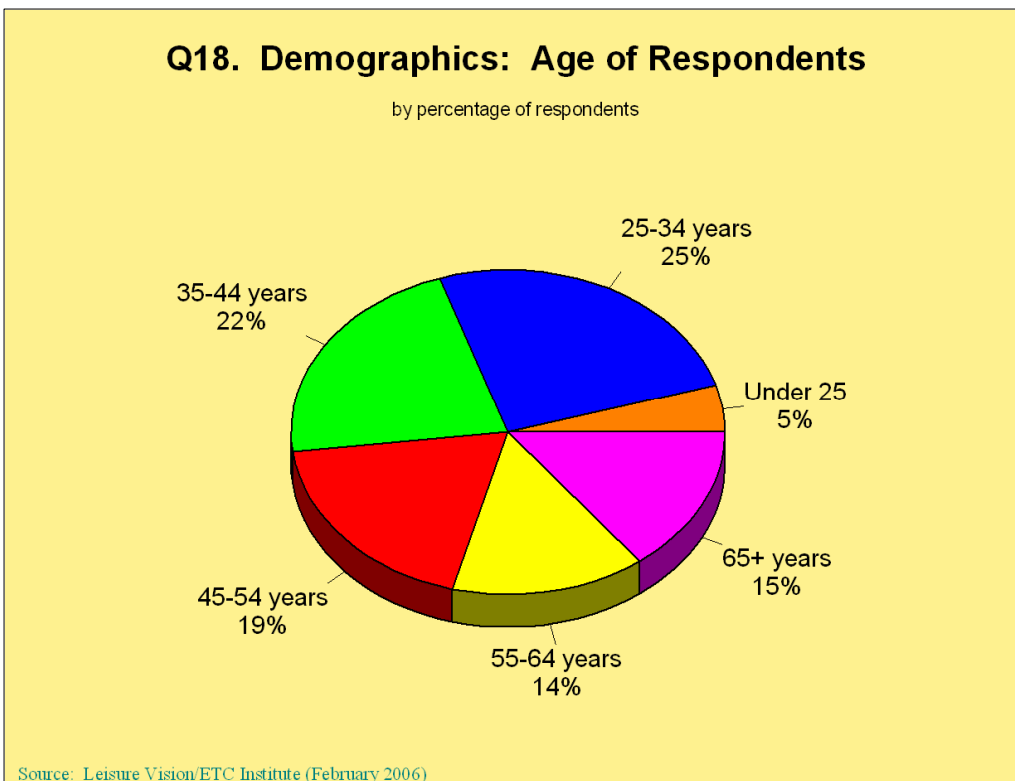
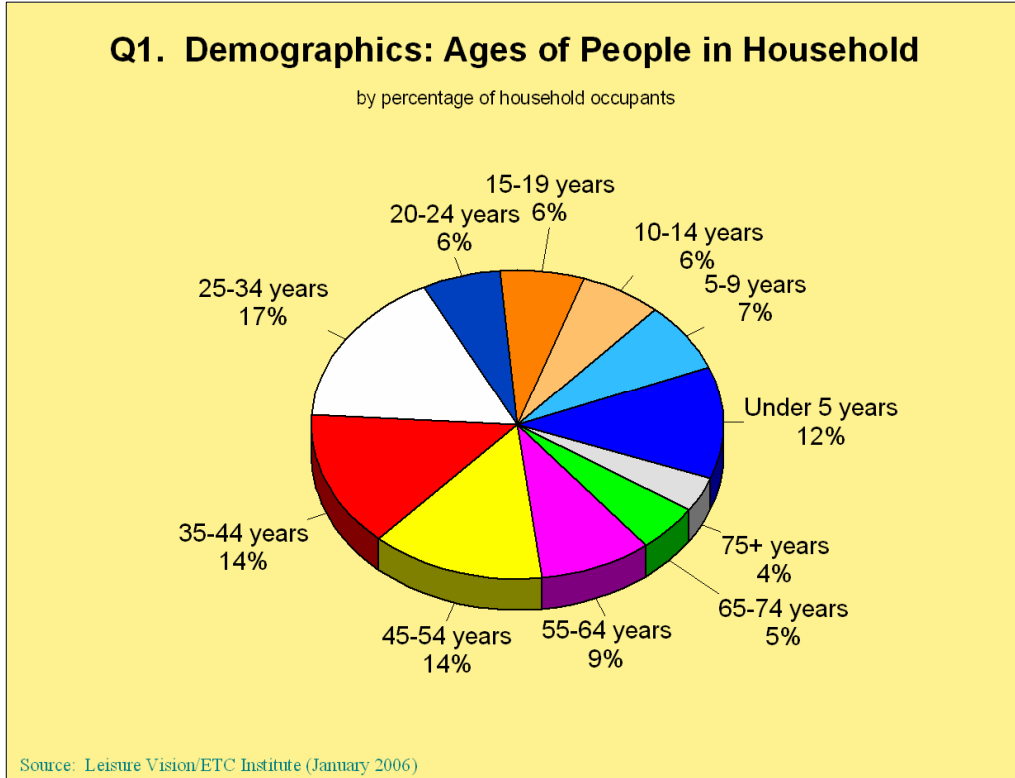
If \$100 were available for City of Virginia Beach parks and facilities, how would you allocate the funds among the categories of funding listed below?

- Respondents indicated they would allocate \$23 out of every \$100 to the improvement/maintenance of existing parks and playgrounds. The remaining \$77 were allocated as follows: construction of new sports facilities (\$19), acquisition and development of walking and biking trails (\$17), improvements/maintenance of existing recreation centers (\$15), development of new indoor recreation facilities (\$13), and acquisition of new park land and open space (\$9). The remaining \$4 was allocated to “other”.



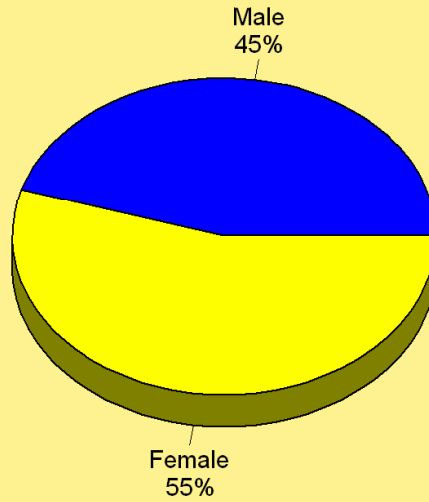
Section 4 – Demographics

The demographics of the survey respondents are a statistical mirror of the demographic make-up of the City of Virginia Beach.



Q19. Demographics: Gender

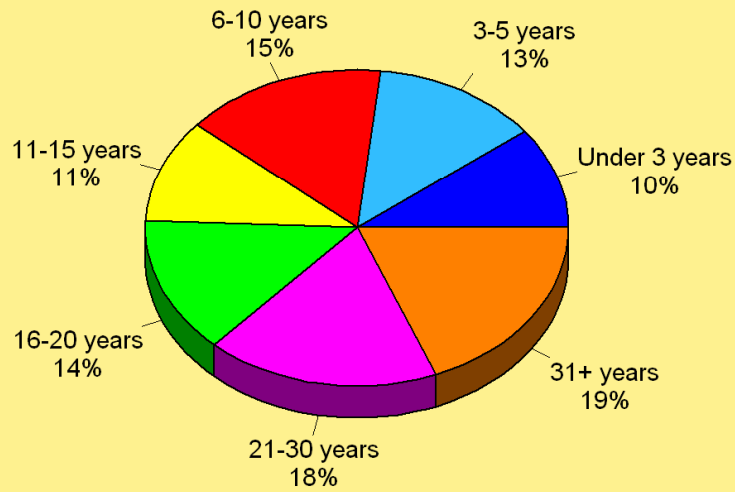
by percentage of respondents



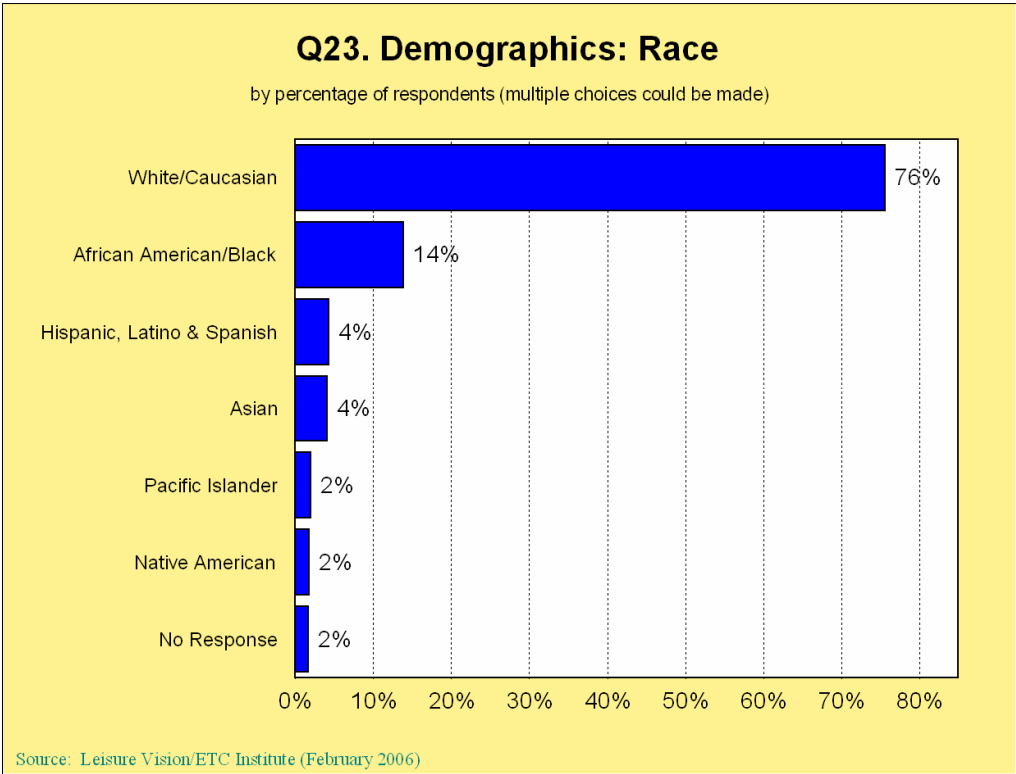
Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (February 2006)

Q21. Demographics: Number of Years Lived in the City of Virginia Beach

by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (February 2006)



Section 5 Appendices

Appendix A – Facility Priorities Matrix

	Planning Area	1, 2, & 3	4 & 5	6	7	8 & 9
Facility	City-wide Ranking	Group 1 Ranking	Group 2 Ranking	Group 3 Ranking	Group 4 Ranking	Group 5 Ranking
Walking & biking trails	1	1	1	1	1	1
Large community parks	2	6	4	3	2	3
Recreation center	3	9	3	4	4	2
Natural areas/nature trails/nature center	4	2	2	5	10	4
Off leash dog park	5	8	7	7	3	5
Picnic shelters/areas	6	3	6	9	8	7
Small neighborhood parks	7	7	9	6	9	8
Children's playground	8	10	11	21	6	9
Indoor fitness & exercise facilities	9	5	5	12	5	6
Indoor swimming pools/leisure pool	10	11	13	18	7	13
Performing/cultural arts facilities	11	15	12	14	14	10
Outdoor swimming pool/leisure pool	12	12	8	10	13	11
Community meeting space	13	13	14	15	17	12
Youth baseball fields	14	17	10	11	18	17
BMX/Mountain biking Trails	15	14	16	13	12	14
Youth soccer fields	16	18	18	17	25	15
Senior adult center	17	16	15	20	16	16
Golf courses	18	21	23	23	15	20
Skateboard/in-line skate parks	19	22	22	16	24	19
Gyms for basketball, volleyball	20	24	20	22	20	25
Indoor tennis courts	21	28	24	19	11	18
Youth softball fields	22	26	26	25	23	22
Adult softball fields	23	4	21	2	19	23
Motorized boat launch	24	20	17	28	26	24
Youth football fields	25	19	27	24	21	21
Crew/rowing	26	23	19	8	27	27
Adult soccer fields	27	27	28	26	22	26
Youth Lacrosse Fields	28	25	25	27	28	28

Legend
High Priority
Medium Priority
Low Priority

Appendix B – Program Priorities Matrix

Program	Planning Area	1, 2, & 3	4 & 5	6	7	8 & 9
	City-wide Ranking	Group 1 Ranking	Group 2 Ranking	Group 3 Ranking	Group 4 Ranking	Group 5 Ranking
Adult fitness & wellness programs	1	1	1	1	1	1
Youth Learn to Swim Programs	2	3	13	3	2	2
Water fitness programs	3	2	2	8	6	6
Youth sports programs	4	13	3	2	9	3
Nature based activities	5	5	4	5	4	10
Large special events in the park	6	4	10	4	11	8
Youth summer camp Programs	7	9	6	7	15	4
Music programs	8	7	8	18	5	7
Environmental education programs	9	8	7	11	13	9
Pre-school programs	10	6	18	6	7	17
Adult sports programs	11	20	5	15	3	13
Pottery & ceramics programs	12	10	17	12	10	5
Canoe/kayaking	13	12	12	9	14	12
Adult art, dance, performing arts	14	15	9	13	16	20
Youth fitness & wellness programs	15	18	14	14	19	14
Senior adult programs	16	14	16	23	12	15
Learn to Golf programs	17	11	15	10	25	11
Martial arts or self-defense programs	18	17	11	21	18	18
After school programs	19	16	21	20	8	19
Youth art, dance, performing arts	20	19	19	17	22	21
Trips	21	22	22	22	20	16
Before school programs	22	21	23	19	17	22
Adult Learn to Swim Programs	23	25	25	16	21	23
Golf tournaments	24	24	20	24	24	25
Adaptive programs	25	23	24	25	23	24

Legend
High Priority
Medium Priority
Low Priority