

Snapshot of Recreation in Newark



Introduction

The City of Newark manages more than 650 acres of parkland and open space, which includes 32 parks with active recreation facilities. Newark's neighborhood park system puts parks within walking distance of the majority of residents. Park facilities include baseball, softball and soccer fields; basketball, tennis, roller hockey and horseshoe courts; children's play equipment; outdoor pools; a community center; single track natural and hard surface trails; shelters; picnic facilities; forested and meadow areas; and landscaping. Newark's recreation programs and community events include pre-school, youth, teen and adult programs in a variety of areas, including sports leagues, specialized instruction and camps, nature, arts and crafts, dance, music, theater, holiday and seasonal events, day trips, fitness and more.

Our Residents' Needs and Opinions

The 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends Survey (ORPTS)¹ provides valuable information on the recreation needs and preferences of Newark residents.

Recreation Preferences

The majority of Newark residents (91%) responding to the survey indicate that outdoor recreation is important to them personally. Figure 1 illustrates the most commonly cited reasons for participating in outdoor recreation activities.

When survey respondents were asked about their main reasons for choosing to visit a particular outdoor recreation facility, they identified living nearby (59%), the existence of facilities for activities of interest (39%), aesthetics (12%), the existence of facilities for children (9%), cleanliness (9%) and safety (5%).

Table 1 shows the facilities cited most often by those responding to the survey question about additional facilities for community parks.

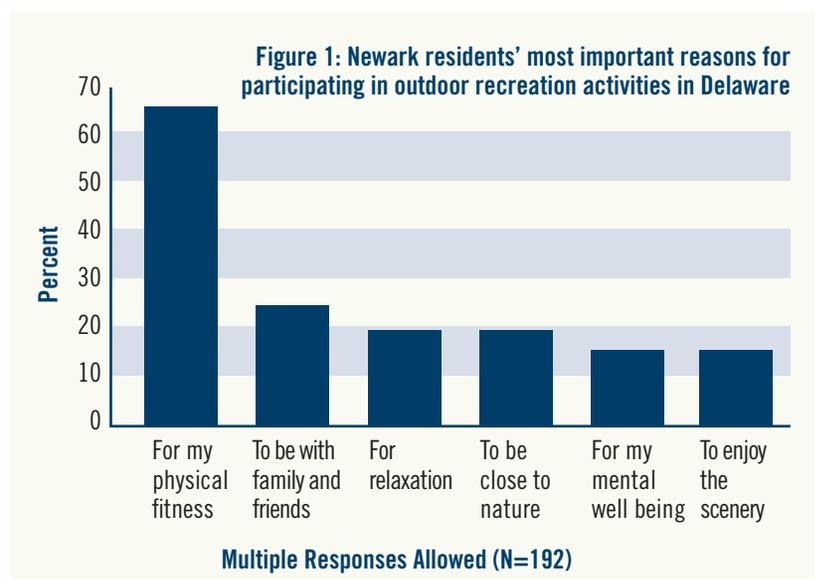


Table 1: Facilities Newark residents would like to see added to parks

Main Reason (Multiple Responses Allowed, N=80)	Percent
More cleaner, better bathrooms	16
Playgrounds for children ages 2–5	10
Playgrounds for children ages 6–12	10
Outdoor basketball courts	10
Hiking/walking trails	9
Biking paths	9
Indoor recreation facilities	9
Public tennis courts	9
Baseball fields	8
Paved walkways	6

Park Maintenance

Eighty-two percent of Newark residents responding to the survey rate the overall upkeep of parks and outdoor recreation areas in their community as “excellent” or “good.”

Funding Priorities

Since the majority of respondents consider outdoor recreation important to them personally, it’s not surprising that large percentages identify recreational programming as an important priority for state and local funding. Table 2 summarizes the programs identified as important priorities.

Additionally, 95% of respondents indicated that funding for public parks should be a “very” or “somewhat” important priority for state and local policy makers in Delaware.

Parks and Recreation Can Help Address Challenges Facing Our Residents

Parks and recreational programs provide a means for children and their families to be physically active and live a healthy lifestyle. This is critical given the childhood obesity epidemic nationally and in Delaware. Data from 2008 reveal that 39.7% of children ages two to 17 in Delaware are overweight or obese.² Parks and recreation programs provide children an outlet for engaging in positive activities.

Initiatives

The City of Newark is planning to implement a number of important initiatives that need funding and support. Newark is interested in expanding its recreational offerings and park facilities by developing the Curtis Paper Mill site and Old Paper Mill Road Park with active and passive recreation amenities, adding skateboard sites and a new hard surface trail, and enhancing Newark’s forest canopy. In addition, the city will need resources to continue to rehabilitate or replace older park facilities, surfaces and amenities.

References

1. The Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends Survey (ORTPS), a statewide telephone survey, informs development of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Parks Resource Office, Division of Parks and Recreation, Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control manage the SCORP. For more information on the SCORP, visit <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/parks/Information/Pages/scorp.aspx>.
2. Nemours Health and Prevention Services. 2008 Delaware Survey of Children’s Health.

Access to Recreation Opportunities

Ninety percent of survey respondents agree with the statement: “There are parks and/or outdoor recreation areas in or near my neighborhood that are easy to get to.” Proximity is important because many Newark residents (54%) said that more recreation opportunities close to home are likely to encourage them to participate more actively in outdoor recreation activities. Other important factors for encouraging Newark residents to participate in outdoor recreation activities include: more information about facilities and opportunities (45%); more opportunity to participate in organized activities (38%); and better security within facilities (34%).

Table 2: Percent of Newark residents who say that specific programs should be a “very” or “somewhat” important priority for state and local funding

Program (N=207)	Percent
Nature education programs	90
Outdoor recreation programs for teens	86
Outdoor recreation programs for children ages 4–12	85
Historic education	85
Outdoor recreation programs for people with disabilities	83
Cultural and arts programs	83
Outdoor recreation programs for senior citizens	78
Organized leagues for team sports	73