

Snapshot of Recreation in Wilmington



Introduction

The city park system brings great economic value to the City of Wilmington. A recent study conducted by the Trust for Public Land estimates that the park system in Wilmington provided the city government with direct revenue of more than \$1.36 million and added to the general wealth of the citizenry by nearly \$11 million, as well as providing residents with savings of over \$47 million, and the city government with savings of more than \$448,000.¹

Our Residents' Needs and Opinions

The 2008 Outdoor Recreation Participation and Trends Survey (ORPTS)² provides valuable information on the recreation needs and preferences of Wilmington residents.

Recreation Preferences

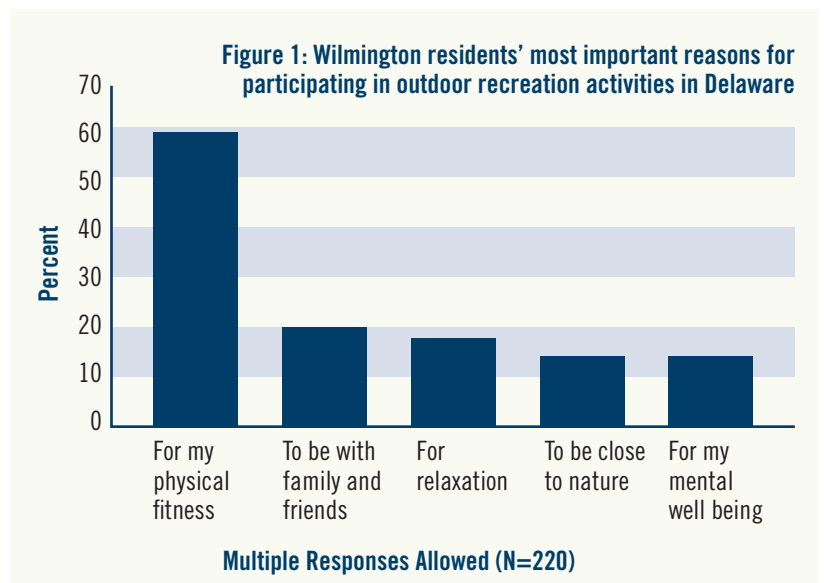
The majority of Wilmington residents (92%) responding to the survey say that outdoor recreation is “very” or “somewhat” important to them personally. Figure 1 illustrates the most commonly cited reasons for participating in outdoor recreation activities.

The attributes cited most often by Wilmington residents responding to the survey question about additional facilities for community parks include:

- More, cleaner, better bathrooms (14%);
- Outdoor public swimming pools (13%);
- Hiking/walking trails (11%);
- Playgrounds for children ages two to five (10%);
- Playgrounds for children ages six to 12 (10%);
- Biking paths (8%); and
- More/better security (8%).

Access to Recreation Opportunities

The majority (84%) of Wilmington residents 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 (48%) Wilmington residents said that more recreation opportunities close to home are likely to encourage them to participate more actively in the outdoors.



Other important factors for encouraging Wilmington residents to participate in outdoor recreation activities include:

- More opportunity to participate in organized activities (37%)
- More information about facilities and opportunities (35%);
- Better security within facilities (33%);
- Better repair of facilities (29%); and
- Increased accessibility for persons with disabilities (27%).

When survey respondents were asked about their main reasons for choosing to visit a particular outdoor recreation area, they identified living nearby (66%); the existence of facilities for activities of interest (26%); aesthetics (14%); cleanliness (13%); safety (9%); and the existence of facilities for children (5%). Most (79%) Wilmington residents responding to a survey question about distance between their home and the recreation area they visit most indicate that they live between one and nine miles away.

Park Maintenance

Eighty-one percent of Wilmington residents rate the overall upkeep of parks and outdoor recreation areas in their community as “excellent” or “good.”

Funding Priorities

Table 2 highlights the programs that Wilmington residents think should be important priorities for state and local funding.

Virtually all (98%) Wilmington residents indicate that funding for public parks should be an important priority for state and local policy makers in Delaware.

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

Programs (N=231)	Percent
Nature education programs	92
Historic education programs	90
Outdoor recreation programs for teens	87
Programs for children ages 4–12	87
Outdoor recreation programs for persons with disabilities	87
Cultural and arts programs	83
Outdoor recreation programs for senior citizens	81
Organized leagues for team sports	65

Parks and Recreation Can Help

Address Challenges Facing Our Residents

The City of Wilmington, like many urban areas, faces a number of challenges that threaten the well being of its young residents. These challenges include juvenile crime and violence, teen pregnancy and high rates of childhood obesity. Parks and recreation programs provide children an outlet for engaging in positive activities.

Initiatives

Wilmington’s parks and recreation system is planning to implement a number of important initiatives that need funding and support. The following initiatives are all designed to provide significant benefit to all of Wilmington’s residents, as well as ensuring that the city park system continues to bring great economic value to the City of Wilmington:

- Spray parks (an interactive water playground);
- Wilmington Games;
- College visitation;
- Summer Youth Employment Program; and
- Park beautification projects.

References

1. Harnik, P. (2009). How much value does the City of Wilmington Receive from its park and recreation system? A report by the Trust for Public Land’s Center for City Excellence.
2. 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>.