

# THE ROCKFORD PARK DISTRICT

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## *CITIZEN SURVEY 2015*

August 2015



ROCKFORD  
PARK DISTRICT

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Continuing to seek public input to guide decision making, the Rockford Park District conducted a survey of area residents in May and June 2015. Surveys were sent to a random sample of 6,000 households within the RPD service area as well as an online version which was open to anyone who chose to respond. This is the first time this Citizen Survey was available electronically. Similar to previous years (seven similar surveys since 1999), RPD chose to use Health Systems Research of the University of Illinois at Rockford to administer the survey. Of the mailed surveys, 723 were returned (12.1% response rate) and 644 surveys were recorded online by persons residing within the RPD service area.

Almost unanimously (96.7%), respondents say that park space and recreation are essential for the community's quality of life. Nine in ten (92.1%) agree that RPD's role is to provide diverse and well-supported recreational activities and seven in ten (69.7%) say that RPD's recreational opportunities contribute to their healthy lifestyle. Respondents rate RPD's service/value/quality as an asset to the community at 8.26 on a 10-point scale (1 lowest to 10 highest). For questions about the value of recreation and RPD's role in providing those opportunities, agreement in 2015 rose from 2012, especially the "strongly agree" levels. This improvement occurs for most questions even when comparing 2012 to 2015 mail only results.

Showing a record high, 91.1% of 2015 respondents or their household members have visited a RPD facility or participated in a RPD program in the past year. Family time and fun/enjoyment are the top two priorities for spending recreation and leisure time, though other reasons matter such as skill development, socialization, health/wellness, and relaxation/stress reduction, each of which ranked similarly. Those who do not participate cite lack of time or cost to participate as the main two causes for not participating.

RPD should offer outdoor environmental education say more than nine in ten (93.1%) respondents, while almost as many (88.0%) advocate for teaching introductory sports skills. As environmental actions, reforestation/tree planting (93.3%), preserving natural areas and prairies (91.0%), and green alternatives (87.7%) get high support, and somewhat less for community beautification (83.2%). Children 12 and under, persons with disabilities, and teens 13-18 are the leading three groups that RPD should target for programming.

Three in four respondents believe that RPD fees are reasonable (74.7%) and say that they know about discounts for RPD programs and services (77.1%), both of which show significant gains over 2012 levels. Likewise, more 2015 respondents feel safer in RPD places than was true in 2012. For safety in outdoor places, the 2015 agreement of 70.5% surpasses the 61.0% in 2012 and resembles 2010 at 70.2%. Feeling safe at RPD indoor facilities stands at 78.1% in 2015, a big jump over 69.8% in 2012 and 71.2% in 2010. Agreement that RPD parks and recreational facilities are well-maintained has remained almost constant since 2010 (82.6% in 2015).

## 2015 Rockford Park District Citizen Survey

Response Highlights by Priority Result

Research by Health Systems Research

1,367 valid responses

Participant Demographics <sup>1</sup>					
	2012	2015	Difference	2013 Census %	Over/Under Representation
Gender					
Female	65.2	66.4	+1.2	51.3	+15.1
Male	30.6	33.6	+3.0	48.7	-15.1
Age Group					
18-29	4.3	4.5	+0.2	20.4	-15.9
30-44	18.3	22.1	+3.8	25.4	-3.3
45-64	40.7	42.5	+1.8	34.8	+7.7
65+	33.1	30.9	-2.2	19.5	+11.4
Children under 18 living in the home					
Yes	24.7	30.6	+5.9	31.9	-1.3
No	70.0	69.4	-0.6	68.1	-1.3
Highest level of schooling completed					
Less than high school	3.1	1.3	-1.8	15.6	-14.3
High school diploma/GED	18.3	12.7	-6.1	32.8	-20.6
Some college, no degree	23.7	22.7	-1.0	22.9	+0.2
Associate or similar degree	13.1	13.1	-0-	7.5	+5.6
Bachelor's degree	21.0	28.1	+7.0	13.4	+15.4
Graduate degree	17.2	22.0	+4.8	7.8	+14.2
Racial or ethnic group					
Asian	0.6	1.1	+0.5	2.7	-1.6
Black or African American	6.4	4.9	+1.5	16.1	-11.2
Hispanic	3.1	3.3	+0.1	14.2	-11.2
Multi-racial	0.9	2.0	+1.1	2.3	+0.3
White	81.4	86.9	+5.5	64.9	+22.0
Other	1.4	1.9	+0.5	0.3	+1.6

Zip code <sup>2</sup>	2012	2015	Difference	District Population Proportion <sup>3</sup>	Over/Under Representation
61101 - Rockford NW	9.0	6.4%	-2.6	10.3	-3.9
61102 - Rockford SW	5.0	4.8%	-0.2	8.8	-4.0
61103 - Rockford North End	10.8	15.5%	+4.7	10.7	-4.8
61104 - Rockford Midtown	5.3	4.3%	-1.0	9.4	-5.1
61107 - Rockford NE	21.5	23.0%	+1.5	14.0	+9.0
61108 - Rockford SE	13.6	14.0%	+0.4	14.4	-0.4
61109 - Rockford Bypass	10.3	8.6%	-1.7	10.8	-2.2
61111 - Loves Park	9.3	10.2%	+0.9	11.0	-0.8
61114 - Rockford Far NE	9.1	11.5%	+2.4	7.8	+3.7
Other and no answer	6.1	1.6%	-4.5	-0-	+1.6

<sup>1</sup> Chapter 1, Table 1.4

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 1, Tables 1.1-1.3

<sup>3</sup> Based on WinGIS map overlays with 2010 Census input

Numerical differences of greater than +/- three include footnote references; numerical increases are blue and decreases are red.

**Global Priority Result:** Park space and recreation are essential to the quality of life in the Rockford Park District, resulting in a high return on investment of available resources

Agree/Strongly Agree Responses	2012	2015	Difference
Park space and recreation opportunities are essential for the quality of life in our community. <sup>4</sup>	93.6	96.7	+3.1
Property taxes paid to RPD are a fair return on my investment. <sup>5</sup>	57.6	64.6	+7.0
What could the RPD do that would make that number higher? <sup>6</sup>	<i>See full report</i>		
Is there anything else you would like your Park Board to consider when making decisions about programs, services, or funding?			

On a 10-point scale, with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest, how would you rate the overall services, value, and quality of the RPD as an asset to the community? (1 lowest, 10 highest ranking) <sup>7</sup>	2012	2015	Difference
1-3	1.4	2.3	+0.9
4-7	23.5	22.0	-1.5
8-10	69.2	75.6	+6.4
No Answer	4.8	1.4	-3.4
Mean Rating	8.16	8.26	+0.1

**Priority Result I:** Well-maintained park space and recreational facilities meet the recreational needs of this and succeeding generations of District residents.

Agree/Strongly Agree Responses	2012	2015	Difference
It is important that RPD continues to invest resources to keep parks and recreation facilities well-maintained. <sup>8</sup>	94.2	97.7	+3.5
RPD parks and recreation facilities are well-maintained. <sup>9</sup>	78.7	82.6	+3.9
Provide natural areas and prairies for preservation and wildlife habitat for public access. <sup>10</sup>	86.0	91.0	+5.0

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2, Table 2.2

<sup>5</sup> Chapter 2, Table 2.8

<sup>6</sup> Chapter 2, Tables 2.10-11

<sup>7</sup> Chapter 2, Table 2.9

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 2, Table 2.6

<sup>9</sup> Chapter 5, Tables 5.6-7

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 4, Tables 4.3-4

Numerical differences of greater than +/- three include footnote references; numerical increases are blue and decreases are red.

**Priority Result II: Residents are involved in diverse and well-supported recreational activities for their health, well-being, and entertainment.**

<b>Agree/Strongly Agree Responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
RPD services should provide residents with diverse and well-supported recreational activities.	89.2	92.1	+2.9
I feel safe when using RPD parks, recreation paths, and outdoor spaces. <sup>11</sup>	61.0	70.5	+9.5
I feel safe when using RPD indoor facilities. <sup>12</sup>	69.8	78.1	+8.3
Teach introductory sports skills (such as tennis, golf, ice skating, swimming, and soccer) so people can be active and use these skills for a lifetime. <sup>13</sup>	82.5	88	+5.5
Continue to offer outdoor environmental education programs and provide places for children to learn about nature.	90.6	93.1	+2.5
Continue to invest in museums to enhance the culture, education, and quality of life in our community. <sup>14</sup>	77.9	84.9	+7.0
Providing tax-supported recreation programs and services for the following groups is very important:			
For children 12 and under	90.2	90.2	-0-
Teenagers 13-18	88.9	87.0	-1.9
Adults 19-54 <sup>15</sup>	79.8	71.7	-8.1
Adults 55+	79.3	77.2	-2.1
People with low income	74.4	76.6	+2.2
People of all ages with disabilities	86.6	87.5	+0.9

<b>Affirmative Responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
A member of their household visited a park, facility, museum, or attended an RPD program in the past year <sup>16</sup>	81.6	91.1	+9.5

Among households that did not participate in RPD programs or activities, the barriers that prevent them from doing so (marked all that apply): <sup>17</sup>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Lack of time	30.1	30.9	+0.8
Need public transportation to RPD sites	7.1	6.2	-0.9
Cost to participate	23.0	28.4	+5.4
Not interested	22.1	28.4	+6.3
Language	3.5	1.2	-2.3
Locations or times not convenient	15.9	18.5	+2.6
Age, health, or disability	35.4	37.0	+1.6
Not aware of offerings	24.8	28.4	+4.0
Other barrier	1.8	7.4	+5.6

<sup>11</sup> Chapter 5, Tables 5.3-5

<sup>12</sup> Chapter 5, Tables 5.3-5

<sup>13</sup> Chapter 4, Tables 4.1-2

<sup>14</sup> Chapter 4, Tables 4.1-2

<sup>15</sup> Chapter 4, Tables 4.5-6

<sup>16</sup> Chapter 3, Table 3.1

<sup>17</sup> Chapter 3, Table 3.2

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**Priority Result III: Residents value recreation as essential for a healthy life.**

<b>Agree/Strongly Agree Responses<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Recreation is an essential part of my health/life.	76.5	86.3	+9.8
Recreational opportunities offered by the RPD encourage me to have a healthy lifestyle.	62.3	69.7	+7.4

<b>Agree/Strongly Agree Responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
The Rockford Park District should...			
Help address health risks by encouraging [physical activity <sup>19</sup> ] and playing outdoors.	88.0	89.8	+1.8
Pursue green alternatives (recycling, alternative energy sources, reduce use of pesticides and herbicides) to help protect the environment.	86.0	87.7	+1.7
Continue community beautification with floral gardens, flower baskets, and planters along streets. <sup>20</sup>	76.8	83.2	+6.4
Continue reforestation efforts and planting trees. <sup>21</sup>	90.0	93.3	+3.3

<b>Ranked priorities for use of recreation and leisure time.<sup>22</sup></b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015 Ranking 5-6</b>
1. Family time	n/a	46.8
2. Fun/enjoyment		46.3
3. Health and wellness		34.8
4. Relaxation/stress reduction		34.3
5. Skill development		37.0
6. Socialize		36.2

**Priority Result IV: Residents have exceptional parks and recreation facilities, services, and programs at a reasonable cost.**

<b>Agree/Strongly Agree Responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
The Rockford Park District should...Continue to invest in facilities for economic and tourism growth. <sup>23</sup>	n/a	83.4	n/a
Fees are generally reasonable to participate in Park District facilities, programs, and services.	67.0	74.7	+7.7

<b>Affirmative Responses</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>Difference</b>
I am aware that RPD residents receive discounted rates for user fees on RPD programs and services. <sup>24</sup>	48.4	77.1	+28.7

Updated 8/14/2015

<sup>18</sup> Chapter 2, Tables 2.4-5

<sup>19</sup> Changed from "childhood obesity" in 2012 to "health risks" in 2015

<sup>20</sup> Removed specification of "City of Gardens" which many people may not be familiar with; Chapter 4, Tables 4.3-4

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 4, Tables 4.3-4

<sup>22</sup> Changed from "mark all that apply" to ranking to reveal citizen prioritization; Chapter 3, Tables 3.3-3.5

<sup>23</sup> New question in 2015; Chapter 4, Table 4.1

<sup>24</sup> Struck the word "all" in 2015; Chapter 5, Table 5.2

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