

# City of Santa Clara Resident Perceptions About Parks & Recreation Facilities & Programs Telephone Survey Executive Highlights

*(April 28, 2014; Strategic Research Associates)*

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## Objectives

In February 2014, the City of Santa Clara Parks & Recreation Department contracted Strategic Research Associates (SRA) to develop and conduct a statistically valid, community public opinion survey related to resident perceptions about: renovation of the George F. Haines International Swim Center and inclusion of the International Swimming Hall of Fame; a new housing development impact fee for parks and open space; and, a Youth Sports Complex inclusive of soccer fields. Information gleaned from the survey would assist in the staff and consultant analysis related to each of these areas of study as well as providing overall feedback on the City's Parks & Recreation system.

The telephone survey explored:

- Reasons why residents choose to live in Santa Clara
- Frequency of use of Santa Clara park system facilities
- Perceptions about Santa Clara's existing park system
- Desirability of specific park system improvement options
- Perceptions about improvements proposed for the International Swim Center

## How the Survey was Conducted

- **Population target:** Santa Clara residents aged 18 and older currently living in ZIP codes 95050, 95051, or 95054
- **Sample size:** 400
- **Interview dates:** Between March 5 and April 2, 2014
- **Method:** Representative sample. Respondents were randomly selected using a form of random-digit dialing including both mobile phone and landline users. Sampling roughly matched population proportions for gender and age.
- **Questionnaire length:** 56 questions.

## Summary of Research Outcomes

- **Reasons why residents choose to live in Santa Clara**

The most important reasons residents choose to live in the City of Santa Clara is that: their home is near their place of employment, they have grown up in the area, Santa Clara is conveniently located, the city is safe, it offers a high quality of life, or Santa Clara exhibits a good sense of community.

- **Frequency of use of Santa Clara's park system facilities**
  - **One-third of residents visit park system facilities an average of once a week.** Thirty-four percent (34%) said that, within the last six months, they had been visiting Santa Clara park system facilities "four or more times a month." However, 23% had not visited any park facility.

## Perceptions of City Residents (continued)

- **Younger respondents, those with children, and the more affluent tend to use the park system more often than others.** Among all respondents, six in ten (62%) had recently visited a city park other than Central Park and 59%, Central Park. Four in ten had visited a city playground (42%) or one of the city's biking or creek trails (40%) and three in ten, one of the city's recreational centers (32%) or a city-owned public athletic field (30%). Seventeen percent (17%) had visited the International Swim Center within the last six months.
- **Perceptions about Santa Clara's existing park system**
  - **Residents tend to favorably grade the city's park system.** Six in ten (59%) rated the overall quality of the city's park and recreation facilities as "better than average" compared to other cities like Santa Clara, a positive result. Rating outcomes for maintenance and safety were almost as favorable. Only a small fraction (4% to 5%) rated each as "worse than average," suggesting no serious-but-unaddressed park-related issues. Older respondents and more frequent park users were more likely than others to favorably evaluate the park system.
  - **Residents tend to cite park equipment and maintenance improvements when asked to recommend ways to improve the park system.** Asked to name, unaided, the one most desirable improvement to the city's park system, respondents produced a range of answers, but not much consensus. The most frequently cited recommendations included improving park equipment (such as playground equipment, tables, and benches), placing more emphasis on general maintenance, adding more restrooms, and giving more emphasis to retaining existing natural areas.
- **Desirability of specific park system improvement options**
  - **Among six options, residents give higher priority to park system improvement options related to jogging and biking trails, preserving natural areas, and adding additional children's play areas.** Respondents, asked to rate their interest in each of six improvement options and then to judge their propensity to support additional funding for each, produced the following preference ordering:
    1. Expand and improve city jogging and biking trails to link city parks (63% said they are "very interested," and 59% "favor" additional public funding for it)
    2. Incorporate more natural open space in existing city parks (57% and 56%)
    3. Develop additional children's playgrounds and play areas (53% and 48%)
    4. Build a state-of-the-art community recreation center with gymnasium (41% and 42%)
    5. Renovate and expand the International Swim Center in Central Park (38% and 39%)
    6. Build a new youth sports park to provide more soccer fields (34% and 33%)
  - **Among consistent voters (those almost always voting in local elections), more than half said they favor funding both city trails and natural open space.**
  - **Residents tend to favor two potential locations for new soccer fields: under-utilized industrial land inside Santa Clara near the Dog Park, and Montague Park.** These two sites

## Perceptions of City Residents (continued)

were favored in the total sample, among parents, and among those most interested in a new youth soccer park.

- **Residents are roughly four times more likely to “favor” than “oppose” a proposal to increase developer parkland set-aside requirements from 3 to 4.6 acres.**
- **Perceptions about potential improvements of the International Swim Center and potential inclusion of the International Swimming Hall of Fame**
  - **Residents generally show the most interest in two ISC improvement options: adding more facility parking, and adding community water play areas for families and children.** Respondents were asked to rate their interest in each of five potential ISC improvements. This was the rank-ordering among all respondents:
    1. Add more facility parking (45% “very interested”)
    2. Add community water play areas for families and children (43%)
    3. Upgrade competition swimming facilities to attract additional competitive swimming events (34%)
    4. Add an Olympic dry-land training facility with fitness, therapy, and weight-training equipment (28%)
    5. Add the International Swimming Hall of Fame to the facility (24%)
  - **However, among those with a strong interest in ISC renovation, the most attractive improvement is the upgrading of competition facilities.** Among the 38% in the sample “very interested” in ISC improvements, this rank-ordering was produced:
    1. Upgrade competition swimming facilities to attract additional competitive swimming events (58% “very interested”)
    2. Add community water play areas for families and kids (55%)
    3. Add more facility parking (52%)
    4. Add an Olympic dry-land training facility with fitness, therapy, and weight-training equipment (42%)
    5. Add the International Swimming Hall of Fame to the facility (36%)
  - **Residents are more likely to favor leaving an expanded ISC at its current location than moving it.** Asked to select their preferred location, existing location or placement adjacent to the Community Recreation Center on Kiely Blvd., respondents were almost three times more likely (49% to 17%) to recommend keeping the facility at its current location.
  - **To pay for ISC improvements, almost half tend to favor some form of public funding.** Four in ten (42%) recommended “50% private and 50% public funding,” while 22% said “100% private funding,” and 5% stated “100% public funding.” (The rest had no opinion.) Further, when asked about likelihood for contribution to funding ISC improvements, fifteen percent (15%) claimed their household would be “very likely” to contribute to funding ISC improvements and 36%, “somewhat likely.” Members of the most affluent income category (\$120,000 or more) were significantly more likely than others to say they would help.