

Public Input

In order to most effectively plan for parks and recreation facility and program development in Pender County, it was necessary to gather input from county residents to understand what types of recreation they currently participate in, and what types of opportunities they would like to see in the future. Historically, parks and recreation planners utilized a series of standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association that identified the type and quantity of facilities needed in a community based on population size. However, recreational demand is unique between different communities, and therefore parks and recreation planning has shifted to planning for facilities and programs based on the needs expressed through the solicitation of public input.

The public input used to make the recommendations in this plan was gathered in several ways. A public input survey was created and distributed throughout the county which allowed for a detailed assessment of current recreation trends, user demand, and other information. Second, Planning Staff held a series of six public input meetings at a variety of locations in the county at which comments and input was collected by staff, and surveys were also distributed and collected. Finally, the final draft of this plan was distributed and available for public comment from April 27, 2010 to May 14, 2010. Planning Staff welcomed any comment regarding the plan project or Pender County parks and recreation during the creation of this plan, and contact information was widely available to the public to allow for comment submission.

Public Meeting Findings

During January and February 2010, six public input meetings were held in five locations around the county. The meeting locations of Maple Hill, Penderlea, Hampstead, Malpass Corner, Rocky Point, and Burgaw allowed for county residents in all areas of the county to have an opportunity to attend a public input meeting near their home. More than 80 people came to the meetings to offer their input and opinions on the existing facilities and programs in Pender County, as well as their desired facilities and programs. Similar concerns and requests were mentioned at all meetings, and there was a general desire for an increase in facilities, programs, and partnerships within the county, as well as improvements to existing facilities and programs.

Summary of Comments from Individual Public Input Meetings

The following provides a summary of the comments received at each public input meeting. Please note that these summaries represent the input gathered from attendees at the public input meetings, and not the opinions of Planning Staff.

Public Input Meeting 1 – Maple Hill – January 7, 2010

- The ball fields at the Maple Hill Resource Center are makeshift and “primitive”, and because there is no fencing often the balls roll into the street. This can be a safety problem with children going into the street to chase after the balls.
- Unless there is someone at the Resource Center to unlock the doors, the restrooms are not available. The Resource Center cannot afford full-time staff, so often the doors are locked and the restrooms are unavailable.
- The Resource Center receives very little financial assistance from Pender County, and what it does receive from the county is not a fair percentage based on what the other recreation partners receive.
- More community-oriented programs are desired.
- Facilities desired include playground equipment, walking trails, a fitness trail, benches and water fountains along walking trails, and picnic areas and shelters. Additionally, restroom facilities are desired and not portable toilets.
- It would be better to improve upon the existing Maple Hill Resource Center rather than seek new park development. Improvements could include a football field, tennis courts, and a running track.
- The park on NC Highway 41 in Duplin County is a great example of a simple park that would be beneficial and appreciated in the Maple Hill area.
- No organized leagues include the Maple Hill area. An organized adult softball league would be a great addition to the county.

- The proximity of Maple Hill to existing recreation opportunities and schools puts residents at a disadvantage. Some children generally don't get dropped off from the school bus until around 6-7pm, and there is no time left for afterschool sports or recreation. Additionally, for residents, both children and adults, to participate in recreation or go to a park, they have to drive a great distance. Because of these circumstances, children are often not able to participate in middle and high school athletics because they could not participate in the sports from an early age. This can potentially lead to drop-outs and other social problems with the youth. Many parents and grandparents drive great distances to allow for their children to participate in sports and recreational opportunities, and this creates a time and cost burden for the families that could be alleviated by providing opportunities closer to the Maple Hill area.
- Many Maple Hill community members are willing to contribute to recreation and parks through financial donations and volunteering, but assistance from the county is still needed.
- Recreational programs desired by the Maple Hill area residents include programs for both children and adults, including literacy programs, health and wellness education, exercise, first aid, and CPR classes, vocational and computer training, and cooking classes.
- Transportation is a huge impediment to program participation. Children and adults alike are often not able to travel to the available programs, and therefore cannot participate.
- The proposed Sandy Run Savannahs State Natural Area is an exciting opportunity for the area, and a great chance for a partnership between the county, the state, and the community to provide needed recreational facilities and opportunities.
- An events center would be a great addition to the county, not necessarily in the Maple Hill area, but would provide a venue for special events including concerts, plays, art shows, fairs and carnivals, etc.
- More families are moving to the Maple Hill area as a result of the growth of the military installations in the surrounding areas, and it is necessary to plan ahead to accommodate these future parks and recreation users.



Image 2.1: Planning Staff held six public input meetings at different locations across the county to solicit input from county residents on parks and recreation.

Public Input Meeting 2 – Penderlea – January 14, 2010

- Many recreational facility desires were expressed in the Penderlea/Willard areas, including lighted youth and adult athletic fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, a fitness and wellness center, a senior center with programs, a swimming pool/aquatics center, a spray/sprinkler park, a handball court, a basketball court, nature-oriented facilities, a skateboard park, a rec center with pool tables, weights and exercise equipment, etc., community gardens, picnic areas and shelters with restrooms and grills, areas for the public to go fishing, and an outdoor theater/amphitheater.
- Programming is needed for people of all ages, from pre-school age children to seniors. The programming desires included intramural sports, senior programs, summer athletic programs, boy/girl scouts, activities for younger children while older siblings are participating in their own programs, jazz, ballroom, and other dance classes, afterschool programs that could provide snacks and help kids with homework, computer, arts, crafts, performing arts, health, and wellness classes, and tutoring and mentoring programs.
- Partnerships with existing community centers such as the Willard Outreach Organization would be an ideal way to provide recreational opportunities to county residents.
- New recreational facilities should include emergency call boxes similar to those found on university campuses that could be utilized in case of emergency.

- Lights at parks and fields could be similar to those found at the tennis courts in Burgaw that are run on a coin-operated timer.
- The existing asphalt area around Penderlea School could be used for tennis and basketball courts.
- Boy/girl scouts would definitely use nature-oriented recreational facilities and could be utilized for volunteer resources to assist with development and management.
- Penderlea School currently hosts “open gym” about once per week for pick-up games.
- There is nothing to do for pre-school age children in the Penderlea area.
- The former hosiery mill in Penderlea may be a good place for a new community center.
- The Willard Outreach Center could use rubber walking trails similar to the ones at Moores Creek National Battlefield.
- The younger meeting attendees indicated that a boys/girls club in the area would be great. There are currently not many activities for youth in the area.
- After an overview of the West Pender Rail-Trail project, meeting attendees agreed that it sounded like a good idea.

Public Input Meeting 3 – Hampstead – January 21, 2010

- Overwhelmingly meeting attendees agreed that a community/recreation center was needed in the Hampstead area. This facility could provide space for meetings and classrooms, as well as provide space for recreational programs. Facilities at the center should include indoor basketball courts, tennis courts, and a gym/fitness center.
- Conflicting use of facilities at the schools and at Hampstead Kiwanis Park are causing problems for recreational partners as well as the schools. Topsail Basketball Association continues to grow each year to the point that they are beginning to turn away interested players because of limited facilities and availability. The proposed transformation of the auxiliary gymnasium at Topsail Middle School would eliminate a facility that TBA currently uses, and therefore cause even more problems. Port City Soccer Club’s use of the fields at Hampstead Kiwanis Park is causing the student teams to have to practice late, possibly interfering with family and scholastic obligations. Public use of the tennis courts on the Topsail High School property is a continuing concern that needs to be reconciled.
- Existing and future facilities need lights so that the facilities may be used during non-daylight hours. By lighting the fields, the facilities may be used more and this would help reduce scheduling conflicts.
- Artificial turf fields for multiple sports would be good, despite they cost more upfront, they require less maintenance and last longer than traditional turf fields.
- It would be good to build-out existing facilities such as Hampstead Kiwanis Park before money is spent on developing new facilities.
- Revenue-generating facilities and programs would be beneficial to augment parks and recreation in the county.
- Many families and residents must travel to Wilmington/New Hanover County to participate in recreational and athletic programs and use park facilities.
- Many programs are desired in the Hampstead area, including programs for youth, adults, seniors, persons with disabilities.
- The county would strongly benefit from a large aquatics center. There is not currently a facility in the area large enough to host tournaments, and building a facility in the county would provide a tourism and economic benefit while simultaneously providing recreational opportunities.
- A partnership with YMCA or other private recreational facility could be an option to provide some recreational opportunities.
- Picnic areas and shelters, nature-oriented facilities, and passive recreation facilities were additional desires expressed.
- Several discussions regarding the relationship between Pender County Parks and Recreation and Pender County Schools ensued. Many concerns were raised regarding school facilities, including lack and overuse of existing facilities.
- Pender County and the Hampstead area in particular are projected for strong population growth, and it is important to fill the recreational and parks deficiencies and plan accordingly for the population growth.

Public Input Meeting 4 – Malpass Corner – February 11, 2010

- Many people, especially women, currently use the Malpass School campus for walking in the evenings because there is not another safe place to walk in the area. There are no walking trails in the area, and the roads are not safe to walk on due to the lack of shoulders and high speed and count of traffic.
- Playgrounds are needed in the area as well as in the county as a whole. There are not currently facilities in the western areas of the county for residents to enjoy, especially for parents to bring their children.
- Outdoor basketball facilities are needed in the area. The public was formerly allowed to use outdoor basketball facilities at the schools; however, this privilege was revoked because of issues including abuse and destruction of the facilities, and people leaving trash behind.
- The conversion of the abandoned rail corridor on the west side of the county would be a great project to create a multipurpose trail that could be used for walking, running, riding bikes, and possibly even equestrian use. This “rail-trail” concept is quite popular in other areas of the country, and also provides a tourism draw and allows for economic development.
- A facility somewhere in the county that could host large meetings would be a good idea. There is not currently a facility of the sort within the county, and this type of facility could host large meetings and also special events such as carnivals, circuses, and fairs.
- More boating access and public fishing areas are needed in the county, particularly on the west side of the county. Nearby facilities such as Sutton Lake are always crowded and popular places to be for individuals and families, particularly when the weather is nice. There is currently no public water access areas that provide access to the Black and Cape Fear Rivers, and some of the existing areas just outside of the county boundaries are not adequate for certain types of boats and generally do not provide areas for the public to fish from the shore.
- Picnic areas with shelters, restrooms, and grills are needed and would be enjoyed by families.
- Educational, recreational, and athletic programs are desired in the area. Some programs could be offered at the Canetuck Community Center through assistance and/or a partnership with the county. Specific programs could include fitness and self-defense classes, adult softball leagues, and programs for youths and seniors. After school programs for children are desired also, particularly programs that occur not at school but offer help with homework and also offer recreational opportunities.

Public Input Meeting 5 – Rocky Point – February 18, 2010

- More recreational opportunities are desired “closer to home”, as currently area residents must travel to Hampstead, Burgaw, or Wilmington to participate in programming or go to a park.
- Playgrounds are needed in the area as well as in other areas in the county; there are currently no places for children to play.
- Multi-use parks are needed and would cater to a variety of users. Greensboro has a great park system and one example of a good multi-use park is Owl’s Roost. Facilities that should be included at the multi-use park include bike trails, picnic shelters, basketball courts, ball fields, cook-out areas, etc.
- Soccer fields are desperately needed in the area. The fields that are currently used are at the schools, and suffer from lack of adequate maintenance, including no nets on the goals.
- Many opportunities exist to develop bicycle facilities, including BMX parks and mountain bike parks/trails. SORBA (Southern Off Road Bike Association) has built and maintains the mountain bike trails on Blue Clay Road in Wilmington, which is working very well, and has an MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) going before the Brunswick Board of County Commissioners soon. This MOA would allow for SORBA to build and maintain mountain bike trails at the Brunswick Nature Park. SORBA would be very interested in pursuing a similar relationship with Pender County, and this relationship and facility would be a draw for bikers all over the state and beyond, and therefore provide an increase in tourism and economic development within the county. Additionally, there is no BMX park in the area at all; the closest park is in Raleigh. Such a facility in Pender County would provide the same tourism draw and potential for economic development as the mountain bike facilities, and also be a revenue-generating venue that would augment the parks and recreation budget.
- Lanes Ferry used to be a great place for families to go to picnic, grill out, have family reunions and parties, etc. but is no longer there. Reviving the facility would be great, and could include amenities such as picnic shelters, grills, kayak and canoe access, etc.

- A swimming pool/aquatics center is needed in the county, and would provide a much needed recreational benefit and also be a revenue-generating facility.
- Areas for people to ride all-terrain vehicles and also equestrian use would be beneficial in the county. These groups could also volunteer to help manage and maintain such facilities.
- When planning for recreational facilities and opportunities, it is also important to plan for facilities and opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- A skateboard park is needed in the county, as there are not currently many places for people to legally go skateboarding. Although there is some liability risk, there are methods to reduce the county's liability such as waivers and staffing. Such parks exist and are working in many other counties and towns.

Public Input Meeting 6 – Burgaw – February 25, 2010

- More safe places to walk and ride bicycles are needed within the county, and the conversion of the abandoned rail corridor in the western portion of the county to a multi-purpose trail would provide a place for families and individuals to walk, bike, run, and possibly even ride horses. Rail-trails are popular in many places in the country, and provide not only a recreational benefit but also a tourism draw and opportunity for economic development.
- The county-owned property in Rocky Point (Millers Pond Park site) would be a great place for a park, and provide a venue for nature-oriented recreation such as walking, bird-watching, fishing, and passive recreation.
- The lack of recreation opportunities in Burgaw and the county in general is having a bad effect on the youth in the area. By providing more recreational opportunities such as a boys and girls club, a rec center, community center, programs, etc., we may be able to combat the growing obesity problem in our youths as well as adults. Plenty of funding is available through various Recovery Act opportunities, and also through Michelle Obama's new obesity prevention campaign.
- Outdoor basketball facilities should be developed in the county, especially in the Burgaw area. Pender Memorial Park is situated in a low-income area and should provide recreational amenities that cater to all user needs, not specifically to one group.
- Football, soccer, and multi-purpose fields that could be utilized for both sports are needed in all areas of the county. The current recreational programs that use the existing facilities are overwhelming the facilities, and this is leading to a limit of program participants. The schools allow for these programs to use their facilities at a cost, and after this cost is factored in with the other costs of running the program, including paying the referees, the programs are losing money. The existing soccer and multi-purpose fields at Hampstead Kiwanis Park could be used for football practice and play, except that no goalposts exist.

General Summary of Public Input Meeting Comments

Overall, the comments and concerns expressed at the public input meetings were consistent. Similar needs were expressed for both facilities and programs, as overviewed below.

Facilities

In summary, the attendees at the public input meetings wished for more facilities in their communities and within Pender County in general. Recreational facilities for all ages should be considered, from playgrounds for children, sports fields and amenities for all ages, and recreational and community centers convenient to everyone. Meeting attendees expressed that existing facilities are severely limited, and what is existing is overused and under-managed. Improvements are needed at existing facilities and new facilities need to be developed to alleviate the deficiencies and support the growing recreational programs in the county. Meeting attendees conveyed many ideas for new facilities and facility improvements, as well as partnership opportunities for facility development, maintenance, and management.

Programs

The attendees at the six public input meetings also agreed that there should be more programs within the county. Such programs should cater to persons of all age groups, persons with disabilities, and be available within a reasonable distance to each community. Programs within the county should include not only athletic-oriented programs, but also educational programs such as afterschool and literacy programs, and computer, vocational, self-defense, personal financial management, and other classes and seminars.

Community Survey Findings

From December 14, 2009 to February 28, 2010, the public input survey was available for county residents to complete. The survey was available in paper version as well as through the online survey tool www.surveygizmo.com. Announcements were sent to a multitude of email contacts, including to all Pender County employees and all Pender County Schools employees. The survey was also distributed at all public input meetings and to many community leaders who passed them on through churches, businesses, and other local contacts. In total, 295 surveys were completed online and 32 paper surveys were returned for a total of 327 surveys completed. Using a population estimate of 55,000 for the county, the 327 completed surveys yields a statistical accuracy of 95% with a +/- 5.4% sampling error, or a 99% confidence level with a +/- 7.1% sampling error.

The survey, which may be found in the *Appendix*, contained a total of 19 questions designed to assess a variety of data from the survey respondents, including current recreational trends, desired recreational opportunities, desired methods to fund park and recreation development and improvements, preferred registration methods, and household data. The survey was designed to fulfill the required key elements for the North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund (PARTF) grant application, as overviewed in the North Carolina PARTF 2009-2010 Grant Application. Conversations between Planning Staff and the NCDENR Recreation Resources Service’s Regional Recreation Consultant for Pender County were also beneficial as the survey was developed to ensure that it would meet the requirements for PARTF funding opportunities.

The following section provides a summary of the overall survey responses. A comprehensive review of the survey results is available in the *Appendix*.

Program and Activity Preferences

The first question on the public input survey provided a list of activities and programs and asked respondents to indicate how often they or any member of their household participated in each. Online respondents could choose between the following frequencies: *Daily, A few times per week, Once a week, A few times per month, Once a month, A few times per year, and Once a Year*, and residents who filled the paper survey out were asked to indicate the number of times of participation during the last year. “Never” was not included as an option as it was assumed that residents that did not participate in an activity would not choose an option.

The following are the top 25 preferred activities based on total responses received for each activity:

Rank	Activity	Responses	Rank	Activity	Responses
1	Swimming in a Pool	193	14	Camping	135
2	Basketball	188	15	Nature Hikes	134
3	Walking in a Nature Area	180	16	Attending a Concert	134
4	Bicycling	169	17	Boating/Sailing	132
5	Baseball/Tee Ball	168	18	Family Reunions	130
6	Eating Lunch in a Park	167	19	Jogging/Running	130
7	Fishing	164	20	Softball	128
8	Walking along a Trail	162	21	Art Show or Festival	121
9	Aerobics/Exercise	160	22	Photography	120
10	Playing at a Playground	160	23	Reading Outdoors	111
11	Picnicking with Family	159	24	Soccer	106
12	Playing Cards/Games	146	25	Using Fitness Trails	106
13	Bowling	143			

Facility and Program Priorities

Question 2 asked respondents to indicate all of the facilities/activities that they would like to see provided by Pender County. The following are the top 25 preferred facilities/activities based on responses received for each option, with the total responses received for each activity as well as the percentage of total responses for each:

Rank	Activity/Facility	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Rank	Activity/Facility	Number of Responses	Percentage of Responses
1	Walking Trails	169	55.41%	14	After School Programs	113	37.05%
2	Basketball	168	55.08%	15	Volleyball	109	35.74%
3	Playgrounds	163	53.44%	16	Concerts	109	35.74%
4	Baseball/Tee Ball	150	49.18%	17	Tennis	105	34.43%
5	Nature Area	147	48.20%	18	Camping	102	33.44%
6	Swimming in a Pool	146	47.87%	19	Fishing	102	33.44%
7	Softball	131	42.95%	20	Picnic Areas in a Park	100	32.79%
8	Bicycling	127	41.64%	21	Picnic Areas for Families	100	32.79%
9	Nature Hikes	126	41.31%	22	Aerobics/Exercise	97	31.80%
10	Swimming Lessons	126	41.31%	23	Jogging/Running	97	31.80%
11	Day/Summer Camp	116	38.03%	24	Soccer	94	30.82%
12	Fitness Trails	115	37.70%	25	Spaces for Family Reunions	94	30.82%
13	Picnic Areas for Groups	114	37.38%				

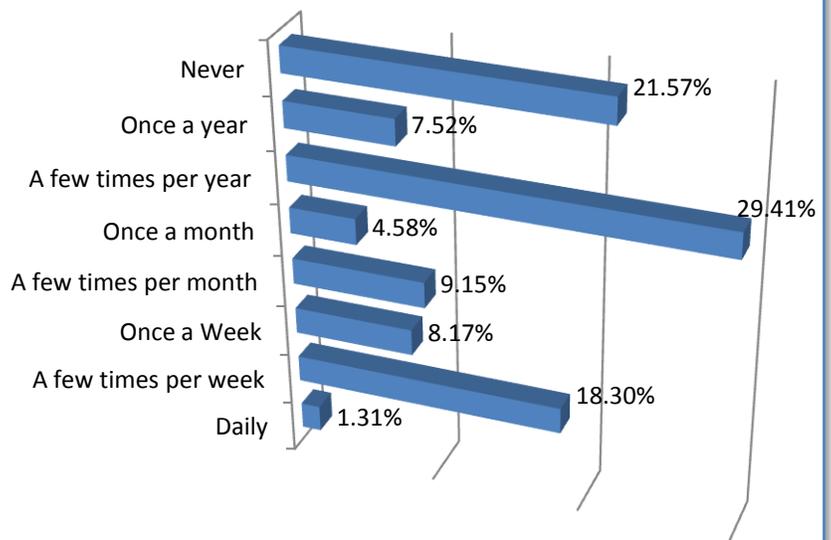
Program Participation

Question 6 was included on the survey to learn how often respondents or members of their households participate in the programs and services provided by the county. Out of the 306 responses to the question, *A few times per year* received the most responses (90 responses, 29.41%), while *Never* received the second highest number of responses (66 responses, 21.57%). Overall, less than half of respondents indicated that they participate at least once per month, with *A few times per week* receiving 56 responses (18.30%).

The responses for Question 6 indicate that the majority of respondents rarely or never participate in programs and services provided by Pender County, although nearly a fifth of respondents participate a few times per week. The low participation rates

indicated by the results to this question may be attributed to the lack of programs and services currently offered by the county or county residents being unaware of current programs and services. The latter is supported by many of the write-in responses to Question 9 (please see *Marketing* below), with many respondents indicating they are unaware of programs in the county.

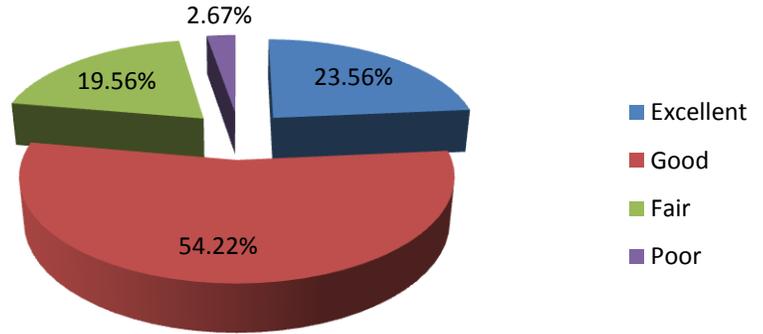
Figure 2.1: How often do you or a member of your household participate in the programs and services provided by Pender County?



Satisfaction with Programs

Question 4 asked *How would you rate the programs that you or any member of your household participated in during the last year?* to gauge survey respondents' satisfaction with the programs offered in the county. The responses indicated an overall favorable level of satisfaction, with nearly 78% of respondents indicating *Excellent* or *Good*. Forty-four respondents (19.56%) rated their experience as *Fair*, while a nominal number of respondents (6, or 2.67%) rated their experiences as *Poor*. These statistics glean that while the majority of respondents were satisfied with their program experiences, there is still some room for improvement.

Figure 2.2: How would you rate the programs that you or any member of your household participated in during the last year?



Park Usage

One question was included on the survey to gauge how often county residents visit any park in the county: *How often do you or a member of your household visit any park in Pender County?* The most responses were for *A few times per year* at 24.2% with 76 responses, followed by *A few times per week* at 23.89% with 75 of the 314 total responses. By grouping the responses together, a better snapshot of park usage can be seen; 37.26% of respondents indicated they go to a park in the county at least once per week, and 65% indicated at least once per month. However, 35% of respondents indicated they rarely or never visit any parks in the county; this group of rare or non-users may be attributed to the lack of parks near their communities.

Figure 2.3: How often do you or a member of your household visit any park in Pender County?

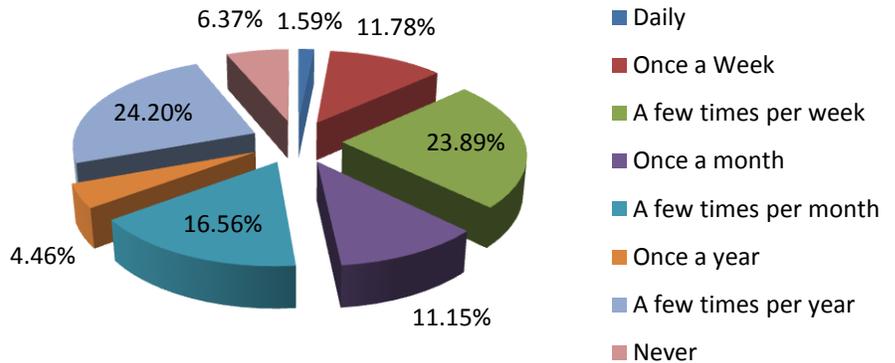
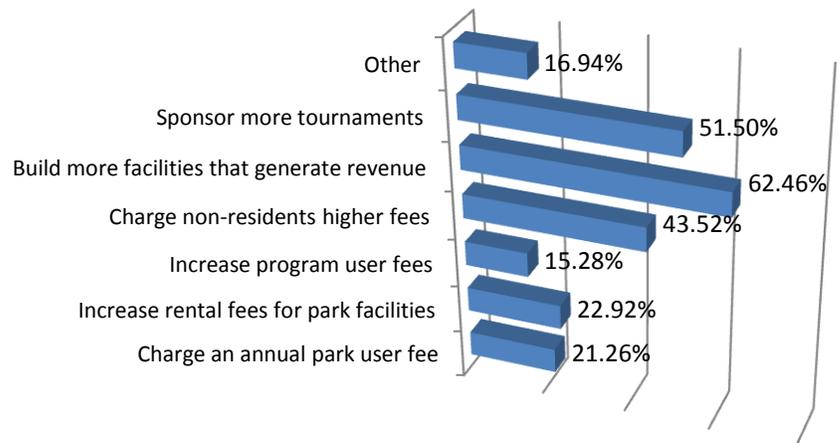


Figure 2.4: In order to generate needed revenue to improve park maintenance and diversify/increase programs offered by Pender County, please indicate ALL options that you would support for increasing funding for parks and recreation.



Willingness to Contribute to Improving Park Maintenance and Programming

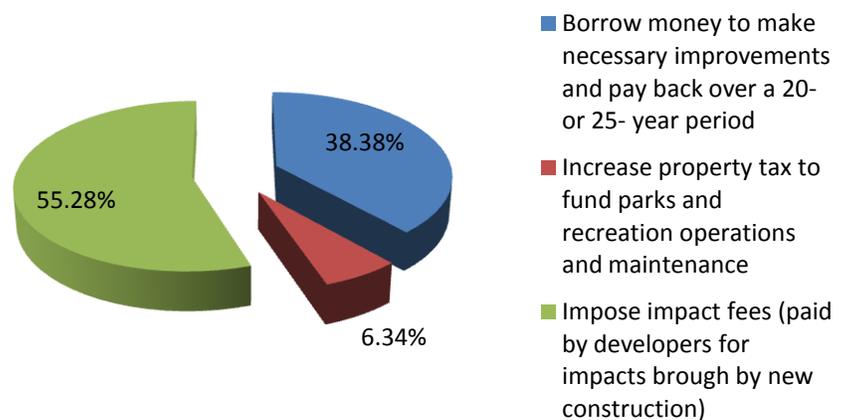
On the public input survey, Question 7 was designed to gather information on the methods preferred by county residents to fund park maintenance and improvements and increase and expand recreation programs. This question allowed respondents to indicate all of the options they support, as well as provided an opportunity for written

input. Collecting funds through revenue-generating facilities was the option with the highest response rate at 188 responses (62.46%), followed by *Sponsoring More Tournaments* with 155 responses (51.50%) and *Charge Non-Residents Higher Fees* with 131 responses (43.52%). Less than 25% of respondents supported charging an annual user fee, or increasing program user fees. As mentioned, this question provided an opportunity for respondents to write in their input for ideas for funding; several responses included ideas such as fundraisers, cash-based services at county parks, grants, a bond referendum, increased allocation towards parks and recreation from the county budget, and a tax increase. Based on the top responses, it may be assumed that the majority of county residents do not support additional financial burden on the tax payer, but rather prefer collecting funding from fee and revenue generation.

Funding for Capital Improvements

Question 8 on the survey offered respondents an opportunity to select their top choice to indicate their preference for funding needed park renovations, new park development, and other capital improvements. The majority of respondents (157 respondents, 55.28%) indicated that funding for parks and recreation capital improvements should be largely from contributions made from developers for impacts brought by new construction. *Borrowing money for necessary improvements and repaying over a 20 or 25 year period* received the second most responses, with 109 responses or 38.38% of total responses; this information suggests that a bond referendum may be an appropriate tool for funding parks and recreation capital improvements in the future. Finally, increasing property tax to fund parks and recreation capital improvements was an unpopular option, receiving only 18 responses or 6.34% of the total responses.

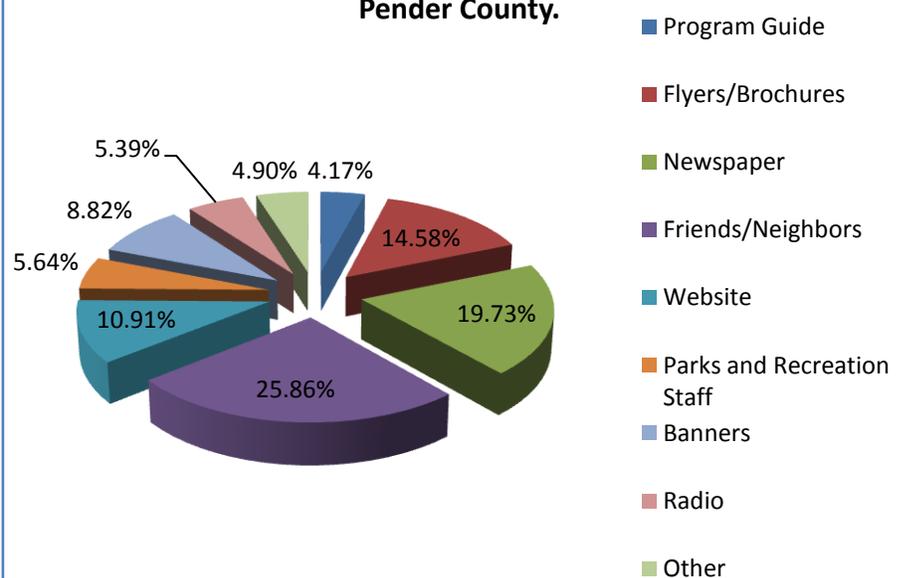
Figure 2.5: Please indicate your top choice for funding needed park renovations, new park development, and other capital improvements.



Marketing

Question 9 on the survey was included to determine how residents currently become aware of parks and recreation programs in the county, and offers respondents an opportunity to select from a list of choices, as well as provide their own input. Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated that they hear of parks and recreation programs through *Friends and Neighbors* (211 responses, 26.98%), *Newspapers* (161 responses, 20.59%), and *Flyers/Brochures* (119 responses, 15.22%). The other response options include *Website* (89 responses, 11.38%), *Banners* (72 responses, 9.21%), *Parks and Recreation Staff* (46 responses, 5.88%), and *Radio* (44 responses, 5.63%). Survey respondents were also provided

Figure 2.6: Please check all the ways that you learn about parks and recreation programs in Pender County.

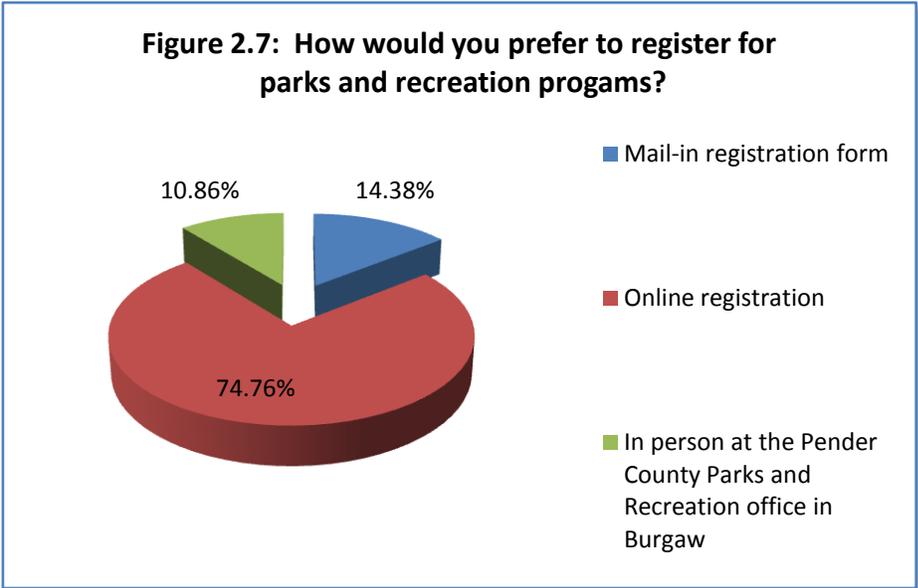


an input opportunity for “other”, in which several responses indicated that residents learned about parks and recreation programs through school, library, and several responses conveying that the survey respondent in fact does not hear about parks and programs at all.

Based on this input, it is clear that the majority of information about parks and programs in the county is spread by word of mouth through family, friends, school staff, coaches, etc. However, it is also clear that other publicity options should be explored, including improving the information available on the parks and recreation website, increasing press contact to improve media coverage, and creating an email newsletter targeted to subscribers who wish to stay abreast of current and special parks events, as well as programs offered in the county.

Program Registration

Survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated a desire to be able to register online for programs. Out of the 313 responses to Question 10, 234 respondents (74.76%) indicated that they would prefer to register online; followed by 45 respondents (14.38%) preferring to register for programs via mail-in registration forms, and 34 respondents (10.86%) preferred to register in person at the parks and recreation office in Burgaw. Implementing an online registration system that could be used to register for programs as well as reserve park facilities should be considered a top priority; such a system would provide more convenience to county residents, streamline the registration and reservation process, and free up staff resources that are currently devoted to fielding calls for program registration and facility reservation.

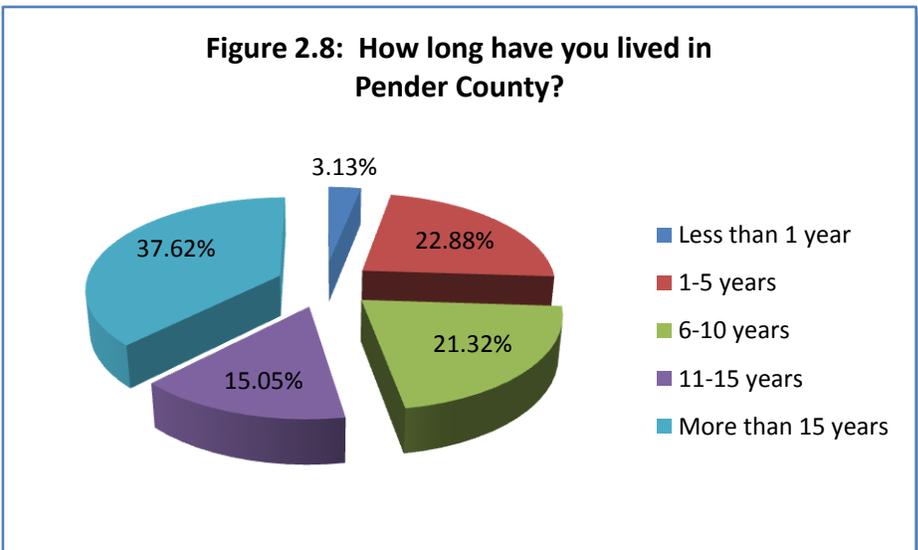


Respondent Demographics

Several questions were included on the survey to gather demographic information of the respondents and their households. In summary, a broad cross section of the population is represented by the survey results, and the following highlights some of the demographic information ascertained by the public input survey.

Duration of Pender County Residency

Question 11 asked *How long have you lived in Pender County?*, and respondents were given options to answer with: *Less than 1 year, 1-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, and More than 15 years.* The option with the majority of responses (120 responses, 37.62%) was *More than 15 years*, however, the combined response count of the other options indicates that the majority of survey takers that responded to Question 11 have lived in Pender County for less than 15 years. Only a small percentage of respondents (10 responses, 3.13%) indicated that they have lived in the county for less than one year.



Responses by Zip Code

Question 12 asked respondents for their zip code, and was the only required question on the survey. This question was made required so that Planning Staff could break down survey responses by zip code to better analyze the data, particularly the activities and facilities preferred. Because parks and recreation development is based largely on user needs, it was important to be able to filter the survey responses by zip code to better gauge the desired facilities and programs in different communities and populated areas within the county. By being able to review the responses filtered by zip codes, specific facilities and programs that are proposed in particular areas of the county may be better planned and will ultimately be more utilized.

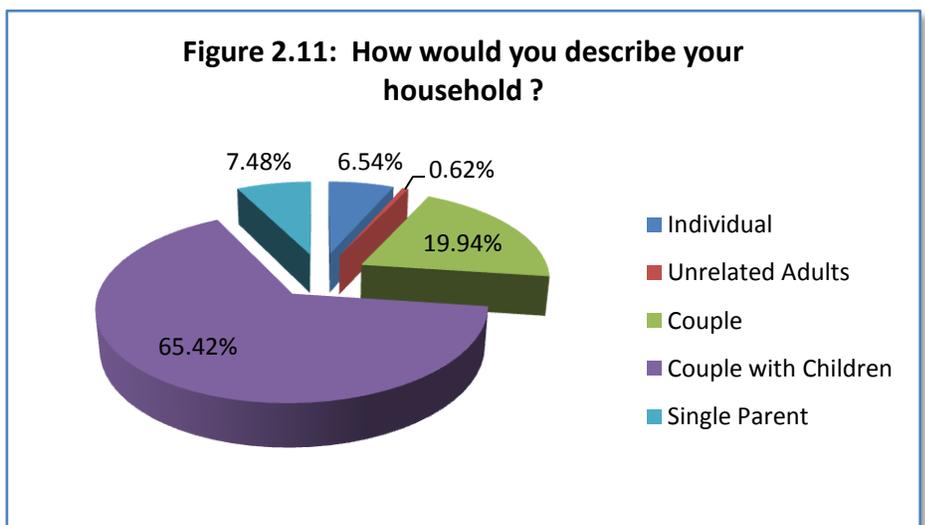
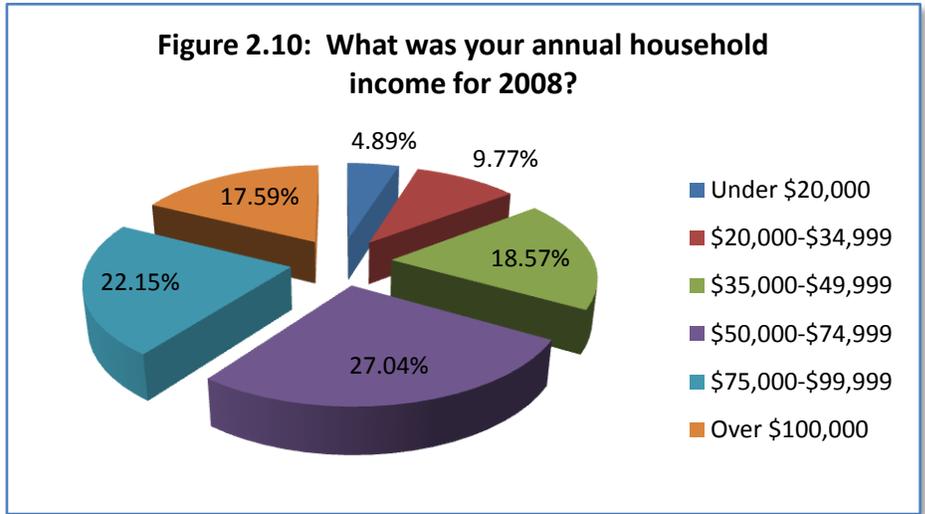
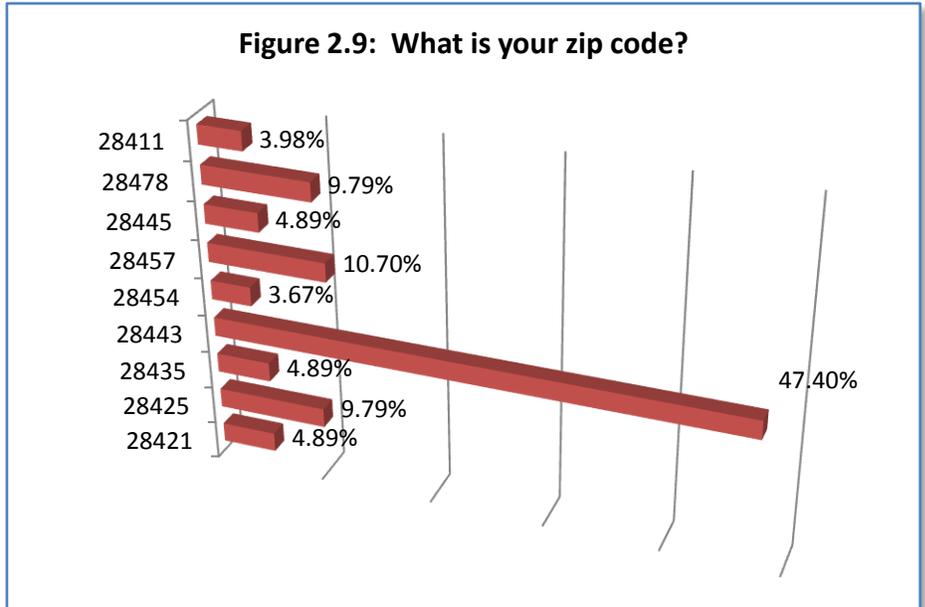
Nearly half of survey responses indicated their zip code as 28443 (155 responses, 47.40%). The zip codes with the other highest number of responses are 28457 (35 responses, 10.70%), 28425 (32 responses, 9.79%), and 28478 (32 responses, 9.79%). The remainder of the zip codes received comparable responses, between 12 and 16 respondents for each. A zip code map for Pender County may be found on Page 7 of this plan.

Annual Household Income

Question 15 on the survey allowed respondents to provide information on their annual household income, offering response choices of different income brackets. The income bracket that received the highest number of responses was \$50,000 - \$74,999, with 83 responses, or 27.04% of total responses. The lowest two income brackets received the lowest responses, with *Under \$20,000* receiving only 15 responses (4.89% of total responses).

Composition of Household

Question 16 provided respondents an opportunity to describe their household composition. Overwhelmingly, *Couple with Children* received the highest number of responses, with 210 responses or 65.42% of total responses. With 64 responses (19.94% of total responses), *Couple* was the second most selected responses to Question 16.



General Summary of Public Input Survey Results

Following is a brief summary of the public input survey results. A detailed overview of the survey results may be found in the *Appendix*, including all written-in comments.

Facilities

In summary, the facilities desired as conveyed in the public survey results are consistent with the preferred activities of the survey respondents. Walking trails, natural areas, basketball facilities, aquatics facilities, bicycling trails and routes, picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing areas, and baseball and softball facilities are among the amenities most desired within county parks.

Current park usage in the county is fairly split between rare and non-users and frequent users. Thirty-five percent of survey respondents indicated that they rarely or never visit any park in Pender County, while 37% conveyed that they visit a park in the county at least once per week. In total, 65% of respondents indicated that they visit a park in the county at least once per month.

Programs

Survey respondents indicated desires for various programs in Pender County, including nature hikes, swimming lessons, day and summer camps, after school programs, and fitness classes. Program participation is split between non- or rare users and frequent users; while 58.5% of survey respondents indicated participating in programs less than once per month, 41.5% indicated that they participate in programs and services offered by the county at least once per month. The majority of respondents rated the programs that they have participated in as excellent, good, or fair, with only a small percentage of respondents indicating dissatisfaction with the programs they had participated in.

Summary of Public Input

The input received residents at the public input meetings and through the survey conveys very similar concerns and desires from county residents. Residents have expressed desires for similar facilities and programs in their communities and in Pender County in general. Residents are concerned about the current lack of facilities and programs near their communities and generally within the county, and have concerns how the projected population growth will impact existing and future facilities and programs. Residents expressed concerns for the overuse and conflicts between users of the existing facilities and how the overuse and conflicts are exacerbated by the current limited parks facilities and recreation opportunities. Residents conveyed similar interests for new facilities and programs, and offered their input on the funding mechanisms they would prefer. Based on the number of survey responses received, it may be assumed that the input gathered through the survey and meetings provides a fair representation of the entire population of Pender County.