

Brooklyn Park Community Change and Sustainability of Athletic Fields—Group 2



Prepared by

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Prepared on Behalf of

City of Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks Department

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Resilient Communities Project

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

The project on which this report is based was completed in collaboration with the City of Brooklyn Park as part of the 2016–2017 Resilient Communities Project (RCP) partnership. RCP is a program at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA) that connects University faculty and students with Minnesota communities to address strategic projects that advance local resilience and sustainability.

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**Brooklyn Park Community
Change and Sustainability of
Athletic Fields**

**Resilient Communities
Project**

May 1, 2017

Connor Keefe, Tessa Tangney, Connor Mackie

Background Info

This project aims to improve the city of Brooklyn Park's Recreation and Park department first looking at and researching the cities, demographics as well as their operations. After conducting research our team has discovered some issues within such as language, communication, and education barriers, as well as the process for reserving a field or facility. A completely online form of registration, easy to read and access website, and field registration availability form are all examples of our solutions to these issues. The success of these measures will ultimately be measured by the number of people who are registering for these fields and facilities as well as the revenue driven in from these reservations. Success will also be measured by the number of people who are visiting the website as well as personal feedback from residents and users.

The Recreation and Parks Department of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota "is responsible for taking care of planning parks and recreation facilities, managing the public's use of parks and facilities, setting up recreation programs, and managing special facilities" (<http://www.brooklynpark.org/recreationandparks/>). Currently they serve the 79,000 residents in the city. Half of the population is comprised of people of color with 20% born outside the US, and around 25% speak another language than English. This leads to the lack of clear communication between park management and park users. As the 6th largest city in the state of Minnesota, the Brooklyn Park Recreation and Park District is looking to update their current system to make it more accessible and sustainable for future populations in the area. With over 1,350 acres of park, and 90 athletic fields, Brooklyn Park has a lot to offer its residents in terms of space to support their active and athletic lifestyles. While fields are usually scheduled to be used, as of recently park users are using the fields without registering to use them. This has been linked to overuse on the fields and additional maintenance of the fields which causes current registered users frustration within the system. Through a deeper analysis of the current system, public opinions, and recommendations, we hope to relieve both the park management and users of the issues surrounding field and facility registration.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to define the issues in regards to scheduling, the dissemination of information to groups and residents of Brooklyn Park and come up with ideas of ways to combat these problems that the residents and users of the fields have described. We hope that in the future other parks can look to our work as an example of how to resolve similar park and recreation issues.

Methods

Interviews (Via Conference Call & In-Person Meetings):

City of Brooklyn Park Administration

(Parks & Facilities Manager, Director, Resilient Communities Project, Parks Maintenance, Program Supervisor, Business Development Coordinator)

Various Outside Park Districts

(Superintendent of Parks and Superintendent of Recreation -- Berwyn, IL) /

(Parks and Recreation Coordinator - Cadott, WI) /

(Administrative Coordinator - Fridley, MN)

Survey:

Sent through Facebook groups

Sent through emails to existing users and known park user groups

Emails:

Sent to current park users/leagues & organizations to ask about their experience

Research on Park Use

Looked at various park websites from other cities

Survey

We created a survey using a Google Form to help us gain better insight into the issues facing the park district. We have included the complete survey in Appendix A and the Summary Results in Appendix B.

Out of the estimated 1000 people who have been exposed to this survey, we had 18 total responses. The survey was posted in a Facebook group and through email. 100% of the survey takers had reserved a field in the past. Additionally the results also showed that the majority of the people would like an online documentation process for reserving the fields. We also got information about the way people are communicating with the recreation and park district, and how that can provide a foundation for the city to build upon later to create a stronger relationship with the community.

Some limitations that we discovered was first, we did not know the best way to communicate and reach our target audience. We found that the people who took the survey are not representative of the people who are not reserving fields. From there we could only use this information to gain insight about people already involved with the park district. Although we hoped to reach a broader audience, we think this is a good starting place for future projects. As mentioned before this also led to a small sample size of only 1,000 out of the total 79,000 people in the Brooklyn Park population. Another limitation we came across was that the survey was

only live for 18 days, which could have limited the amount of people who were able to access and complete the survey. Overall we felt that we were able to collect enough data to provide an analysis and further recommendations for the Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks.

Findings

From what our data has shown, the groups we should be targeting include the residents of the cities that are a part of minority groups. Their biggest concerns are the lack of communication on how to reserve fields and the language barrier. We have found out that many of the residents simply do not know the process of how to reserve a field.

If we can lay out a step by step guide available in their primary language and English, we can take a step towards narrowing that gap. There might be ways to “test the waters” including days where the city of Brooklyn Park invites leaders to a private meeting where they can show the process of reserving fields and answer any questions, for example. Access to information is the biggest area of concern at the moment.

We have found that demographics created a challenge with communication. Diversity has resulted in underlying issues within the system. The best ways for improvement in these areas come in the form of education and stronger communication methods.

Recommendations

As the demographics show, one-half of the residents of the City of Brooklyn Park are people of color, with one-in-four residents listing English as their second language. There lies the biggest question we hope to address -- how to efficiently communicate information about reserving parks and facilities through the cities to all their residents in a fair and equitable manner. More specifically, we hope to examine the current issues with walk-up reservations and how we can simplify that process.

The data collection methods we have used to examine the problems include conference calls, emails, site visits, surveys and online research. From the residents’ perspective, their needs include but are not limited to:

- i. Addition of new fields
- ii. Fair priority list
- iii. Possible reduction of fees
- iv. Removal of language barrier

Based on the findings, we have divided our recommendations into two categories - short term & long term. Short term recommendations are designed to see improvements within 1-2 years and long term recommendations are designed to see improvements beyond 2 no longer than 5 years.

{Short-Term}

- Update website and online processes (mobile friendly)
- Switch to electronic paperwork (interactive forms) for reservations
- Stronger community involvement and awareness (collect & monitor user feedback)

{Long-Term}

- Addition/modifications of fields (ideas include multi-purpose, artificial turfs, convert open land)

APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Brooklyn Park Recreation and Parks Survey

A survey by the Resilient Communities Project (RCP) and the University of Minnesota

* Required

1. Reasons that you use the park (Check all that apply):

Check all that apply.

- Fun
- Leagues or Rec Teams
- Programs through the park
- Spend time with Family
- Exercise/Health
- Field use
- Facilities use
- Picnic/Events
- I don't

2. Are you aware of the field maintenance schedule? Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

Field and Facility Reservations

3. Have you ever reserved a field and or a facility in Brooklyn Park? * Mark only one oval.

- No
- Yes

4. How easy was it to do? * Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very Easy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Difficult

5. Why?

6. Would you change the process? * Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

7. Why?

8. Does the priority order make sense to you? * Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No

9. Would you rather have the reservation process be: * Mark only one oval.

- First come, first serve reservation
- Online reservation
- Phone call reservation
- App or Mobile/texting reservation
- Keep it the same
-

Other: _____

10. Rate the Communication Process * Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Needs Improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	It worked well

Additional Questions

11. Is English your primary language? * Mark only one oval.

- Yes
- No
-

Other: _____


12. Check all that apply, do you read: * Check all that apply.

- Flyer in utility bill
- The Recreation Brochure
- Recreation and Parks Website
- Brooklyn Park Facebook Groups
- Recreation and Parks Emails

1 . Any additional comments you would like to share?

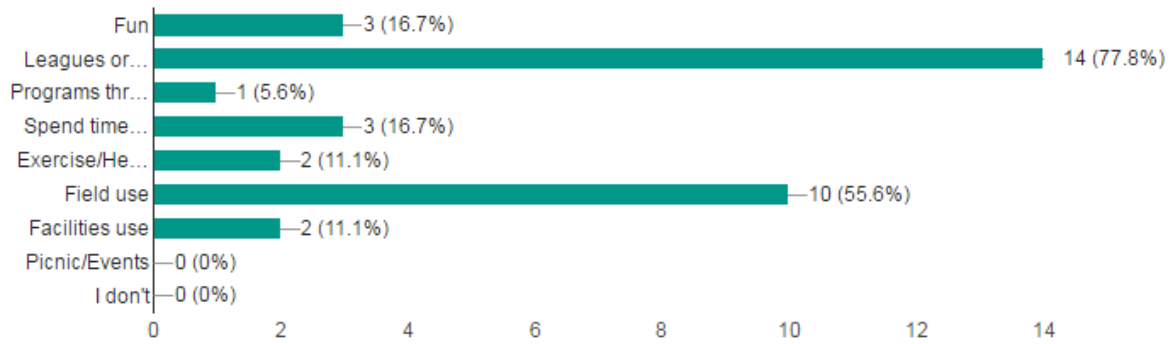
Thanks for completing the Survey! Enter your name and email below if you would like to be entered to WIN a \$25 VISA Gift Card!

14. Enter your NAME & EMAIL:

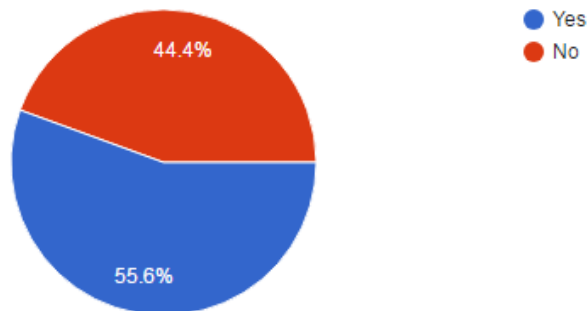
Powered by
 Google Forms

APPENDIX B: SUMMARY RESULTS

Reasons that you use the park (Check all that apply): (18 responses)

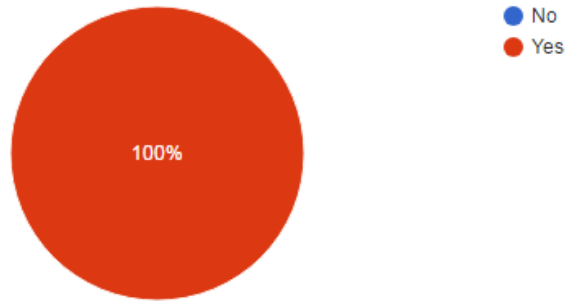


Are you aware of the field maintenance schedule? (18 responses)

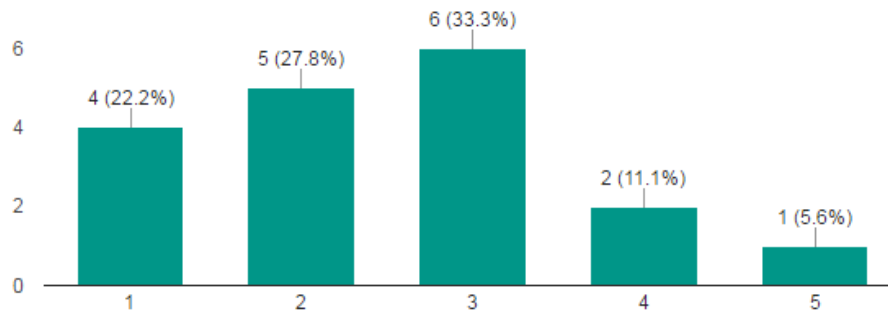


Field and Facility Reservations

Have you ever reserved a field and or a facility in Brooklyn Park? (18 responses)



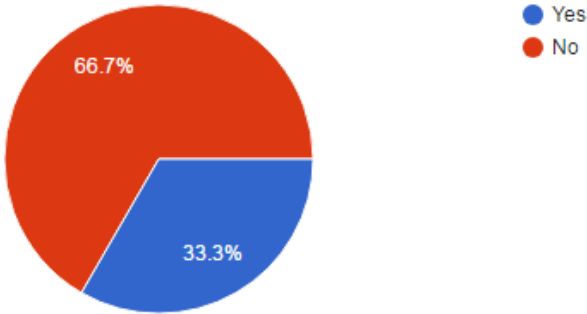
How easy was it to do? (18 responses)



Why? (9 responses)

Meeting Park usage requirements.
knowledable staff
There seems to be quite a lot of redundancy in the process. Streamline if possible
city controls some fields/gyms on public school property, but not others--can be confusing
No long wait; availability easy to ascertain
for the past two years our referee coordinator has been working with the city to schedule fields while scheduling his referees most efficiently for our games. It sometimes takes a couple of days to get confirmation, but the fields are being used very efficiently for the games we, and other users, play on them
paper work and wait time
No online capability to reserve fields.
Because it is more difficult to reserve a field than just calling and making a request and the field request process isn't too difficult.

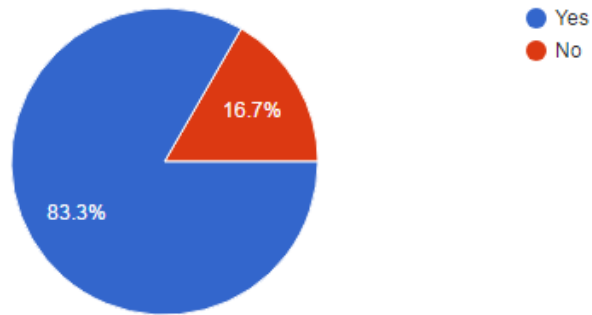
Would you change the process? (18 responses)



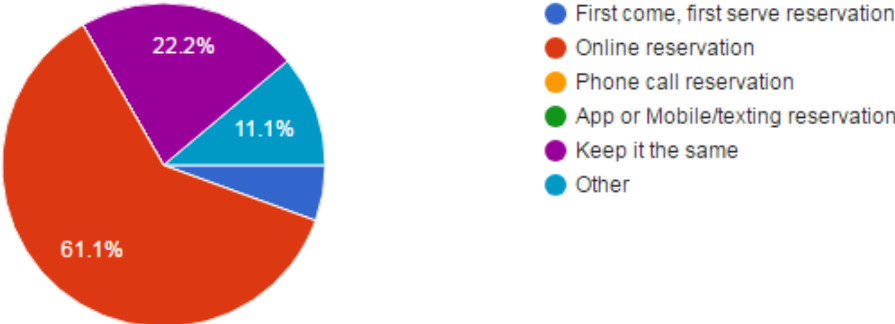
Why? (6 responses)

All online and easier sytem.
Its working fine
To make it more user friendly
More collaboration between city and D279, so all fields/gyms/etc. can be reserved the same way
Seems to work (for my own usage)
No online capability to reserve fields.

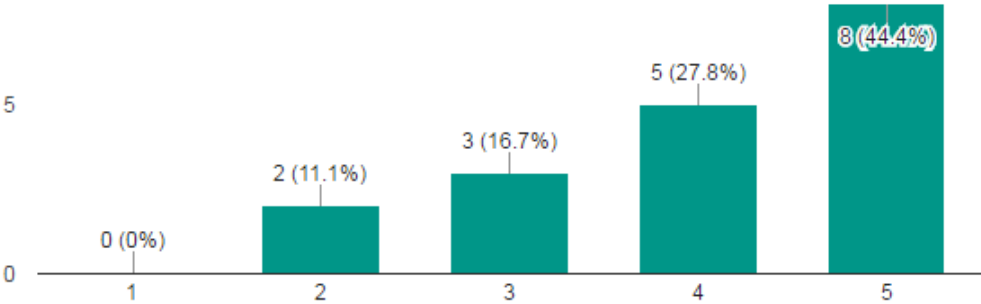
Does the priority order make sense to you? (18 responses)



Would you rather have the reservation process be: (18 responses)

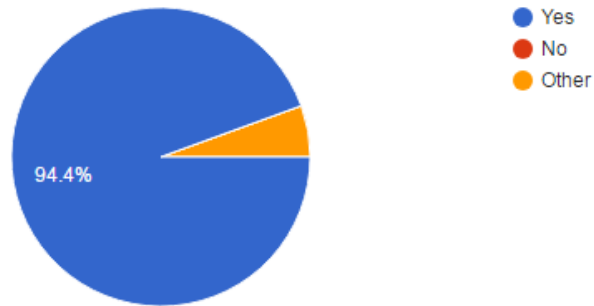


Rate the Communication Process (18 responses)

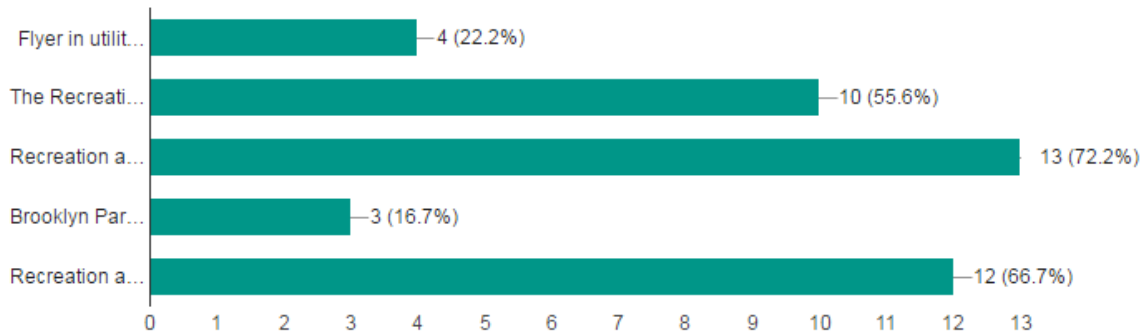


Additional Questions

Is English your primary language? (18 responses)



Check all that apply, do you read: (18 responses)



Any additional comments you would like to share? (2 responses)

Steve is very helpful with the process

I don't understand why public high schools have preference over private high schools when reserving fields, when they have fields of their own.