

2014/2015 Portland Open Space Community Survey Results

Survey Open: 10/24/2014 – 2/18/2015

Total Responses: 1,107 On-line / Manual Entries: 60

Survey Purpose: To gather information from Portland residents about public parks and other open spaces on a variety of topics, including: (1) current use and perception, (2) desired use, amenities and programming, and (3) priorities for future action.

Survey Demographics:

Of the 902 responses, 54% are female and 95% are White. Nearly half (47%) of survey participants have children within their household under the age of 18. 51% of residents have lived in their community for more than ten years. Among those reporting, 773 people (85%) have their primary residences in Portland¹, 61 people (7%) have primary residences within neighboring towns that border Portland including: South Portland, Falmouth and Westbrook; and 54 people (6%) have primary residences in nearby towns including Scarborough, Gorham, Yarmouth, Cumberland, Gray and Freeport. The neighborhood of North Deering had the most participants (15%), and the neighborhoods of West Bayside and Valley Street had the least number of participants (less than 1% each). People of all ages took the survey (see below).

Age 18 and below: <1%

Age 18 – 34: 22%

Age 35 – 49: 43%

Age 50 – 64: 27%

Age 65+: 7%

Although the methodology does not lead to results that are statistically significant for the residents of Portland, in other words -- guaranteed to reflect the views of everyone in the community -- it is an excellent response and a great body of information to help guide the planning process for the future of Portland's park and open space system.

Summary:

These survey results showcase several important takeaways for the future planning of parks and open spaces:

Use of Portland City Parks and Open Spaces:

- 75% of the survey responders agree that they live close to a park or open space that they can access easily.
- Half of all participants go to a city park and open space a few times per week (or more).
- Over 2/3 of participants go to a park or open space to exercise.
- 45% of the participants either walk or bicycle to get to city parks and open spaces. Nearly half use a motor vehicle.
- Although swimming is the activity with the most participation, it also has the highest percentage of dissatisfied participants.

¹ <http://click.portlandmaine.gov/portlandparcels/>

Recommendations for Portland City Parks and Open Spaces:

- Increase the spaces for dog friendly activities. 1 in 4 participants visited Quarry Run Dog Park within the past year; and throughout this survey it was reiterated that more residents want open space off-leash areas for their dogs.
- Better maintain trails, open spaces and athletic fields / cleaner facilities
- Provide more multi-purpose athletic fields for ultimate Frisbee, football, baseball, softball etc.
- Have more events / live music /arts (accompanied by proper publicity of these events)
- Create more bike paths and bike trails connecting to destinations people want to travel to
- Provide more urban gardening opportunities
- Improve signage and maps of the existing trails

Support for Portland City Parks and Open Spaces:

- 9 in 10 participants would support a general obligation bond where the funds would be used to acquire lands for athletic fields, parks, open spaces, or trails.

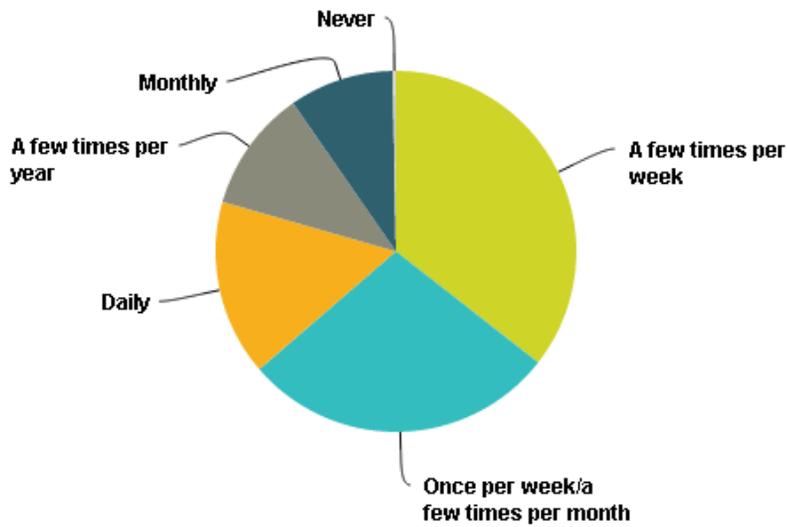
1. Which Portland City Parks have you visited in the last year? (*check all that apply*)

Responses to this question revealed 7 particularly popular parks (visited by 50% or more of participants) and 13 unpopular parks (visited by less than 10% of participants) in the City’s system of 38 parks.

Most Frequently Visited Parks	Least Frequently Visited Parks
Eastern Promenade	Heseltine Park
Back Cove Trail	Fessenden Park
Deering Oaks Park	Pine Grove Park
Payson Park	Bedford Park
Peaks Island	Belmade Park
Western Promenade	Trinity Park
Fort Allen Park / Eastern Promenade	Quaker Park

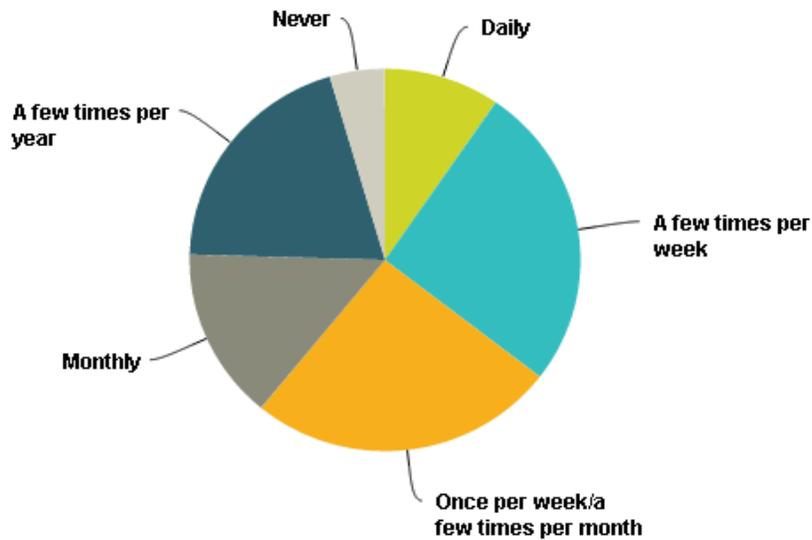
2. How often do you visit any of the City Parks and open spaces in Portland?

Of the 1,055 responses, approximately half of the participants visited a city park or open space few times per week (or more).



3. How often do you use trails in Portland?

Of the 1,052 responses, approximately 40% of the participants use the trails in Portland a few times per week (or more).



4. Besides the City of Portland's parks and open spaces, have you visited other parks or spaces in other communities within the past year? If yes, which ones?

Of the 1,035 responses, 83% have visited other parks or spaces in other communities in the past year. About 1 in 4 have visited Quarry Run Dog Park within the past year. These are the most frequently visited parks and open spaces:

Quarry Run Dog Park	162
Falmouth	126
Fort Williams	72
Bradbury	55
Mackworth Island	55
Yarmouth	41
Cumberland	45
Westbrook	28
Willard	26

4a. How often have you visited any of these other parks and open spaces within the past year?

Of the 1,001 responses, 37% visit these other parks and open spaces a few times per year. 10% visit these other parks a few times per week, and 10% have not visited these parks within the year (it is possible they misunderstood the question in 4 if they answered “never” in 4a).

5. Have you visited or kept a plot in a community garden in Portland within the past year?

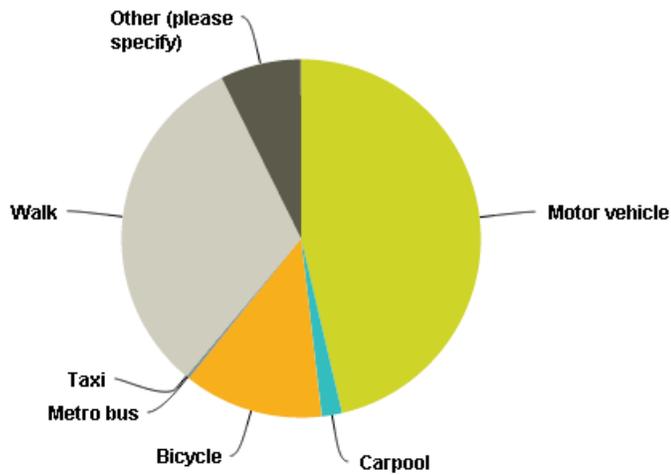
Of the 1,040 responses, 82% said they have not visited or kept a plot in a community garden, and 18% said they had.

5a. If you have visited or kept a plot, which community gardens have you been to? (*Check all that apply*)

Of the 235 responses, the most visited community gardens are: North Street Gardens: East End (89) and Brentwood Street Garden – Deering Center Neighborhood (68). The least visited community garden is Clark Street Gardens: West End (23).

6. How do you usually travel to these parks and open spaces in Portland? (*Check one*)

Of the 986 responses, motor vehicle was the most used form of transportation (46%). Many of the “other” responses include combination transportation, such as 50/50 walking + driving, depending on distance to the park. Boat/ferry and run were the most popular “other” answers provided.



7. What do you usually do while at parks and open spaces? (Check all that apply)

Of the 1,012 responses, exercise is the most popular activity, followed by relaxing in the park.

Activity	%
Exercise	66
Sit and Relax	44
Meet Friends	43
Other	42
Winter activities	35
Attend Events	31
Picnic	30
Playground	24
Baseball	14
Soccer	12
Tennis	7
Art	7
Softball	6
Garden	6
Basketball	6

For “other” category, most popular responses are:

1. Walk dogs
2. Mountain biking/ biking
3. Farmers Market

8. What would bring you to a park or open space more often?

Of the 682 responses, these were the most common responses (in ranked order from more frequent to less frequent):

1. More time in the day

2. Dog friendly / have dogs off leash
3. Better maintenance / cleaner facilities
4. More athletic fields for Ultimate Frisbee, football, baseball, etc.
5. Events / live music /arts
6. More bike paths and bike trails
7. Having parks in closer proximity to home
8. More urban gardens

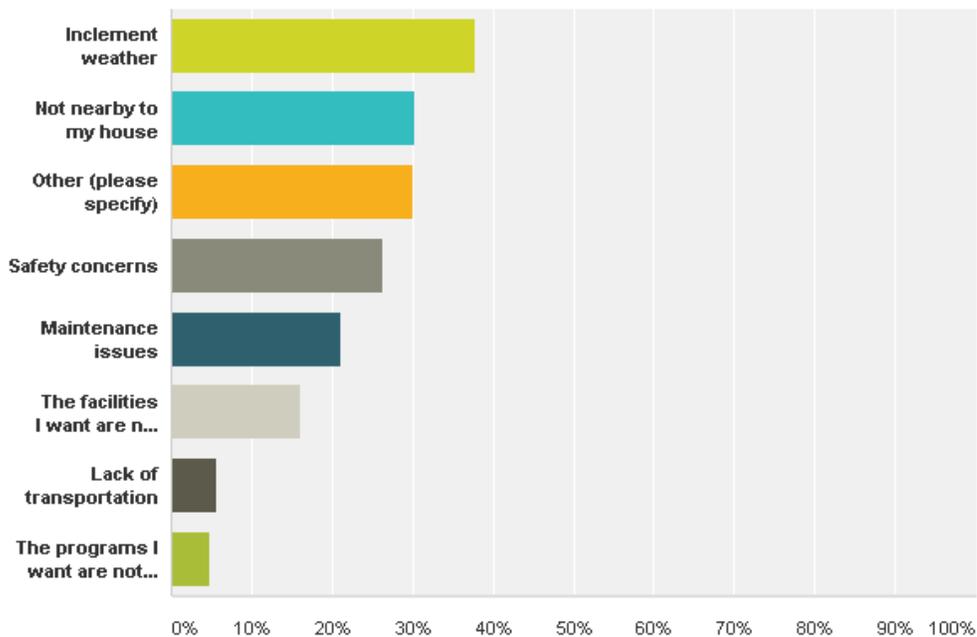
9. What would encourage you to use trails in Portland more often?

Of the 588 responses, these were the most common responses (in ranked order from more frequent to less frequent):

1. More time in the day
2. Dog friendly
3. Maintenance and visibility at night
4. Better bicycle, transit, and bus connections to and amongst park and open space destinations
5. Better signage and maps
6. More bike trails

10. What barriers prevent or discourage you from going to parks or open spaces? *(Check all that apply)*

Of the 793 responses, poor weather discourages the most people from visiting a park or open space.



The “other” responses included the following (in ranked order from more frequent to less frequent):

1. Time/too busy
2. Not enough off-leash areas for dogs
3. Darkness / lack of well-lit areas
4. Not enough fields to play sports
5. Lack of facilities

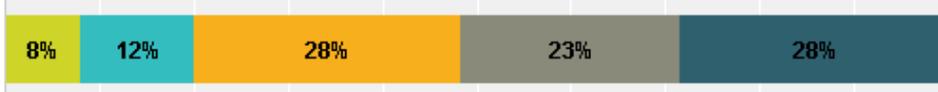
11. Please rate the following statements from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).



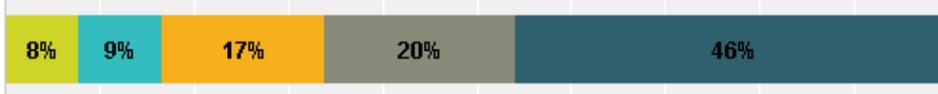
I live close to a park or open space that I can access easily.



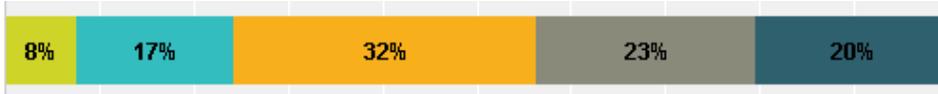
I have sufficient access to recreational facilities (i.e. pool, ice rink).



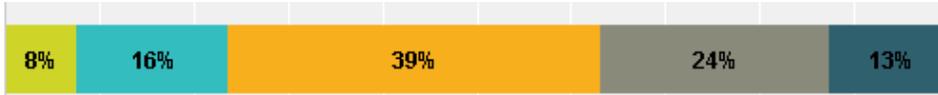
I can easily access trails close by my house.



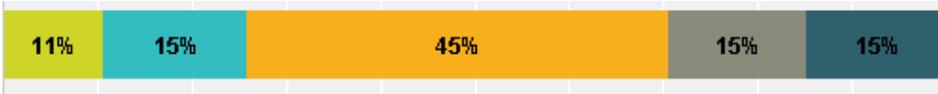
Trails connect to destinations I want to travel to.



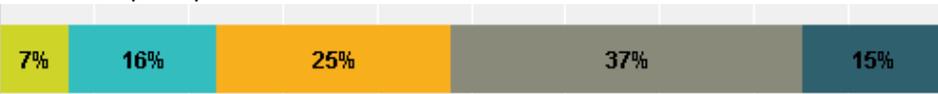
Existing recreation programs meet my needs.



Existing community gardens meet my needs.



Parks and open spaces in Portland are well maintained.



These results show that 75% of the survey responders agree/strongly agree that they live close to a park or open space that they can access easily. More than 65% similarly agree/strongly agree that they can easily access trails close to their house.

Residents are fairly divided in their perceptions about maintenance – 52% think that parks and open spaces in Portland are well maintained but about 25% disagree. There is a bigger disparity on other topics:

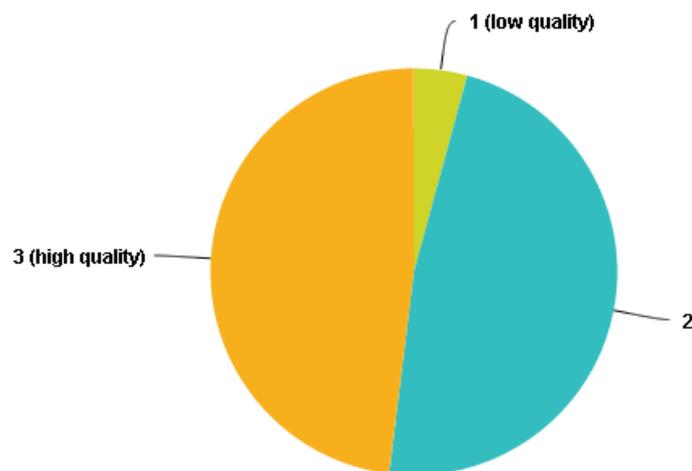
- 43% think that trails are connecting to the destinations they want to get to but 25% disagree.
- 37% think that recreation programs are meeting their needs and 24% disagree.
- 30% think that existing community gardens are meeting their needs but 26% disagree. (About 45% are neutral on the topic).

Some people wrote in comments related to this question. The frequently mentioned comments were:

1. Have access to trails and athletic fields but they are not well maintained
2. Trails need to be connected – more cohesive system
3. Need more trash cans
4. Encourage more community gardens and urban gardening

12. Overall, on a scale of 1 (low quality) to 3 (high quality), how would you rate the quality of the park and open space system in Portland?

About 50% of people surveyed categorize the quality of the park and open space system in Portland as high quality.



13. In which activities do you or any member of your household actively participate? Please rate your level of satisfaction with the City's delivery of these activities.

Swimming was the activity with the most participation, at 48%, with senior adult programming and Therapeutic recreation as the lowest levels of participation.

Activity	# of respondents	# satisfied participants	% of satisfied participants	# of dissatisfied participants	% dissatisfied participants
Swimming	358	179	50%	119	33%
Skating	317	179	56%	85	27%
Gardening	252	115	46%	61	24%
Arts and Crafts	252	129	51%	26	10%
Soccer	222	140	63%	49	22%
Nature Program	222	135	61%	41	18%
Basketball	208	152	73%	28	13%
Yoga	201	94	47%	35	17%
Summer camps	143	95	66%	19	13%
Hockey	136	90	66%	24	18%
Therapeutic recreation	94	52	55%	22	23%
Senior adult programming	58	36	62%	14	24%
Other	285	53	19%	62	22%

Within the comments of this question, the “other” category – the second most dissatisfied group - was mainly articulating concerns around biking, walking dogs, and athletic sports that we not listed (baseball, softball, Ultimate Frisbee, and football). Within the comment section, the main complaint about swimming activities was the scheduling of open swim.

Although swimming is the activity with the most participation, it also has the highest percentage of dissatisfied participants.

14. From the following list, which would you most like to see more of in Portland’s open spaces?
(Choose top 3 choices)

Responses from 897 people included these top choices:

- Hike, Bike and Walk Trails (60%)
- Open Space and Nature areas (43%)
- Amphitheater / Performing Arts Space (38%)
- Food trucks or other vendors (30%)
- Picnic areas and Pavilions (27%)
- Community Gardens (21%)

Although Frisbee golf, baseball fields, football fields, and softball fields all did not rank high individually, when the percentages are combined, it is over 50% - showcasing the need for additional multi-purpose athletic fields.

15. If you had \$100 to spend on improving our park, trail, and open space system, how would you allocate the funding?

Of the 842 responses, the highest value was placed on acquiring new land for parks or open spaces, followed by renovating existing parks and maintaining parks or open spaces to higher standards. The category that was allocated the least amount of funding was to offer new or more programming.

16. As you may know, from time to time, the city issues general obligation bonds to fund a variety of needs. Would you favor or opposed a general obligation bonds where the fund would be used to acquire lands for athletic fields, parks, open spaces, or trails?

9 in 10 responses favored a general obligation bond where the funds would be used to acquire lands for athletic fields, parks, open spaces, or trails.