

Town of Shelby Park Committee Survey 2016 Summary

Introduction

The Shelby Park and Vacant Land Committee conducted a survey of residents in early 2016. Surveys were distributed via the Town website, at the Town Hall and at the polling site during the spring elections. Although this survey could not be considered a “scientific poll,” there are a few things that are clear about survey results.

Of the 98 surveys submitted, there was roughly an equal balance between men and women responding (53% Males / 45% women).
While we had at least one respondent from each age category, the majority were over 50 (27%) or over 60 years of age (37%).
Nearly half (43%) had no children in the household.
Though we didn’t get a lot of responses, we felt that we had a good representative mix of residents throughout the Township.

Use of the Parks and Desired Amenities

Overwhelmingly, residents use trails, whether paved or graded trails (83%) or natural surface trails (64%). This resonates with other statistics on desired amenities. Having paved or graded surfaces is of high priority for 66% of respondent households, and 69% ranked natural surface trails high.

Though the number of childless households is surprisingly high, residents report using the playgrounds and equipment at a rate of 57%.

The next categories of most highly desired amenities included:

Small neighborhood parks at 69%,
Playground equipment at 48% and
Picnic areas at 42%.

Consistent with these results, 54% reported using picnic, sitting areas.

Of related interest is that shelters ranked high for only 22%, and parking areas 18%.

The next most desired area for amenities seems to be landscaping with 40% ranking it high.

At the bottom of reported use were: Sports fields (18%), Tennis courts (18%), Athletic fields (16%) and Basketball courts (15%). These same areas received the lowest percentage of high rankings for desired amenities: Athletic fields 14%, Basketball courts 9%, Tennis courts 13%.

Areas Residents are Willing to Fund with Tax Dollars

Given the above results, it comes as no surprise that residents are overwhelmingly in favor of new and upgraded trails. Playground equipment – both new and upgraded – also is highly favored, as is landscaping.

In order of the highest level of agreement, the breakdown for areas to fund with tax dollars is:

Develop / connect natural surface trails	79% Agree
Replace existing / deteriorated playground equipment	75% Agree
Develop / connect new paved or graded trails	68% Agree
Landscaping	60% Agree
Picnic areas	56%

On the flip side, the the highest percentages of residents rated “disagree” in the following areas to fund with tax dollars:

New basketball courts	48% Disagree
New Tennis courts	48% Disagree
New Athletic fields	43% Disagree

The other areas of parking lot/ area, shelter and fishing areas showed mixed results, no clear opposition and no clear support.

Mormon Coulee Park

Residents were asked if they favored replacement of Mormon Coulee Shelter with the caveat that it would be a combination of donations and tax dollars. The response was very positive with 80% in favor of the new shelter.

There were several comments on the disc golf at MCP expressing diverse opinions. (See next section.)

Residents’ comments

The Park Committee strongly believes that the residents’ opinions and comments are extremely important to take into consideration.

Residents sounded off on the disc golf; multiple comments were made that it negatively affects the parks and the residents, while a couple of people appreciated the disc golf. There is concern that the beauty and character of the park with its serene nature has been destroyed with noisy, beer drinking, non-resident frisby golfers. Very strong comments were made that the stakeholders were not included in the decision making process.

A large number of people said they used the parks for mental health or relaxation. Some indicated that they wanted more green space. Multiple comments were made regarding the need for quality maintenance of what we have.

More bike trails was a common comment, as well as more hiking and walking trails. Yet one respondent expressed concern that Shelby is increasingly catering to the bike group.

Many people were disappointed that residents are not fully queried about changes made to their neighborhood parks. Another said, “A community should be respectful of all the people’s needs, not just the recreational needs but the quality of living of the people who live near park areas.”

Many were concerned with security in the parks. Taxes were high on the minds of Shelby residents. Several stated they are not interested in improvements that will increase taxes.

A creative respondent suggested pickleball courts and commented on its new popularity and offered it as a way to repurpose tennis courts. Other unique suggestions were a dog park, a skating rink, and community gardens.

What surfaces from this survey are:

- 1) Residents want more walking and biking trails and fewer “things” in their parks
- 2) Residents very much want more play areas for their children.
- 3) Residents overall do not want to see their taxes spent on anything but the above three features
- 4) Board members need to do a better job in querying local residents in general and before doing anything to their parks. This may include future surveys; our recommendation is that all future surveys be electronic, done through a service and ensure wide distribution.

The Park Committee recommends that this report be put on the Town of Shelby website. Residents deserve to know what their neighbors think, that the Board appreciates their responses, and that *we listened* to their concerns.

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Approved by Park and Vacant Land Committee 11/16/2016