

APPENDIX 6

Open Space Opinion Survey

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Process and Public Participation portion of Section 2 (Introduction) pointed to the use of a standardized questionnaire to survey public opinion on open space in Boston as one of the means of broadening input into the plan. The results of the survey are presented here. Based on the survey results and the other means of public input, a brief statement of community goals and priorities was presented in Section 6, the plan's Open Space Goals, Objectives, and Action Plan.

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS

Questionnaire Development, Distribution, and Coding

The Policy and Resource Development Unit of the Parks Department devised a survey questionnaire with the goal of learning the needs of a cross section of the public. The first page of the questionnaire had generally open-ended questions that gave the respondents the opportunity to freely provide specific information relevant to their own situation. It also asked about neighborhood of residence, age, length of residency in Boston, family size, and the name of their nearest park or the one they used most often.

The second page of the questionnaire provided discrete statements and a given set of answers along a scale of agreement, from strongly agree and somewhat agree to somewhat disagree and strongly disagree. All the statements were written in a positive tone to limit question construction bias. Two questions had only agree-disagree responses, as they were more factual in

nature, asking respondents whether their nearest park was within walking distance and if such park had children's play equipment. At the end of the second page, a small open-ended section for comments was provided that helped plan authors better understand some of the earlier open-ended responses. A copy of the questionnaire is shown on pages 496-497.

The questionnaire was distributed to individuals attending different public forums over the course of the plan's development including the following:

- March 1998, National Town Meeting on Public Parks, a forum open to the public at the Centennial Celebration and Conference for the National Recreation and Park Association, held in Boston.
- May 1998, a half-day conference on the Greening of Dorchester, sponsored by the Dorchester Gardenlands Preserve and Development Corporation.
- June 1998, the second meeting of the Boston Youth Sports Congress, convened to discuss the need for a coordinating organization to more effectively promote and increase participation in youth sports programs in Boston.
- Through 1998 and 1999, at various public meetings sponsored by the Boston Redevelopment Authority's Boston 400 city master plan process.
- November 1999, at a meeting of the East Boston Greenway Coordinating Council.
- February 2000, at a meeting of the Neponset River Greenway Coordinating Council.
- April 2000, at a citywide public forum on open space sponsored by the Parks Department. Articles about the forum and the availability of preliminary drafts of the plan were published in the various neighborhood newspapers, resulting in requests for the survey questionnaire.

This resulted in 289 survey questionnaires being returned. This is not a traditional, statistically scientific random sampling method. The number and process to obtain such a sample would have been beyond the means of the Parks Department. Instead, this is simply a standardized way of polling a population of interested, active citizens who likely reflect the opinions of the broader public. This method does not differ from the method used by public officials when receiving mail or other communication from the public. The concept is that the constituent letter, while only directly representing one person's opinion, will likely represent the opinions of other persons who simply may not have the time or wherewithal to concretely express that opinion.

The questionnaires were coded using standardized categories based on a reading of a sub-sample of the completed questionnaires to minimize differences in interpretation of open-ended responses. Then the standardized categories were applied to all the open-ended responses of all questionnaires. The Microsoft Access database software was used for the coding. The output was then converted to the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet software for analysis and presentation.

SURVEY RESULTS

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Neighborhood Residency

While the proportional distribution of survey respondents across city neighborhoods is generally comparable to the actual distribution as found in the 2000 Census, 6 out of the 15 BRA-designated neighborhood planning districts have a considerable variance between the population proportion of the census versus the survey sample (see Table A6-1 and Figure A6-1). While the 2000 census population of Allston-Brighton is 12% of the city's population, the sample percent is only 7%, a difference of 5 percentage points. One likely explanation is that Allston-Brighton has a very large college student population that does not have a significant long-term stakehold in the community the way the long-time renter population and more especially the homeowner population would. For the limited number of students that engage in political activity, it is more likely to be either campus-oriented, or more abstractly oriented, such as national or international affairs. It would be less likely for students to attend public meetings or forums on local land use or environmental issues, so therefore they would likely be underrepresented in the survey sample.

While the 2000 census population of Jamaica Plain is 6% of the city's population, the sample percent is 13%, a difference of 7 percentage points. One likely explanation is that Jamaica Plain, with its considerable acreage of public open space and its good public transit access to downtown, is a popular location for residents in the city with a stronger than average appreciation of the role of open space in daily life. This neighborhood has a history of organizing to protect existing open space resources and create new open spaces, such as the Southwest Corridor Park. Therefore, conversely to the Allston-Brighton case, it has a considerable number of long-term stakeholders with an acute awareness of the need for open space in daily life. Many of these stakeholders have a history of organizing and activism at the local level on land use and environmental issues. Therefore, they are very likely to attend public meetings or forums on such issues. These attendees would be likely to complete and return the survey questionnaire. Therefore, they would likely be overrepresented in the survey sample.

Only four other neighborhoods have a census-to-sample population proportion differential of greater than 2 percentage points: Hyde Park (3 point differential), Mattapan (4 point differential), South Boston (3 point differential), and South End (3 point differential). The first three neighborhoods have a smaller proportion in the survey sample population than in general population (2000 census), while the South End has a larger proportion in the survey sample population than in general population (2000 census).

The neighborhood distribution comparison between the survey sample population and the census-derived population did not include the 4 respondents (1% of the 289 respondents) who were not residents of Boston. The Neighborhood Residency: Sample table (see Table A6-2) shows the neighborhood distribution for the entire sample, including the non-Boston residents.

Age

The age distribution of survey respondents compared to the general population (1990 census) is quite different, yet understandable (see Table A6-3 and Figure A6-2; also Table A6-4). While 16% of city residents are 14 years or younger, less than 1% of the survey respondents were in that age group. Obviously, very few children of this age would attend forums on land use or environmental issues. It would be expected that caregivers such as parents or guardians would represent their interests at these meetings. This phenomenon of underrepresentation continues through ages 15 to 34, likely due to the general orientation of this age group on education and establishment of careers and families. We find instead that respondents aged 35 to 64 are overrepresented as compared to the population as a whole. This would be the age group that are or aim to be long-term stakeholders in the community with the greatest interest in local land use and environmental issues that could affect their families and their homes, usually their most significant investment. The older age groups, 75 and older, are somewhat underrepresented in the sample as compared to the city's general population.

Given the sample distribution, it is expected that while the 17 and under age group is underrepresented, its interests are considered in the responses of the overrepresented 35 to 64 age group. The group that is most vulnerable to underrepresentation is the 18 to 34 age group. The 35 to 64 age group may not adequately consider their needs, especially given rapid changes in recreation trends. However, given the goal of the Department toward broadly serving all users to the maximum extent feasible, and the recreation trend toward continuing recreation pursuits begun at younger ages for the long-term health benefits, it can be assumed that despite the different shape of the sample's age distribution curve, the sample can be relied upon to generally reflect the concerns and needs of the city's overall population.

Years as Boston Resident

Even a casual comparison of the Years as Boston Resident table (Table A6-5) with the Age table would show that the cliché of a Boston populated only by life-long residents no longer applies. Fully 25% of respondents have lived in Boston 12 years or fewer; this compares to less than 1% of respondents who are 14 years of age or younger. Obviously many older folks have moved into Boston, and have quickly learned to enjoy and value its open space, if it was not a feature that attracted them here in the first place.

Family Size

The survey's family size table (Table A6-6) shows a concentration of respondents from one- and two-person families (47%), while 11% of respondents are from families in the six or more persons category. Three- to 5-person families make up 39% of the sample.

Nearest Park

We wanted to find out what park was located nearest the respondent's home, how often they used it, and what activities they pursued there. First we asked them to name their nearest park. The table labeled Nearest Park (Table A6-7) shows the responses in descending order from the parks with the most frequent responses to the parks with the least frequent responses. Parks with the same number of responses were ordered alphabetically in the table. The larger parks tend to have the higher number of responses, in the 6 or more range. Jamaica Pond Park, Franklin Park, the Back Bay Fens, the Southwest Corridor Park, the Arnold Arboretum, Joe Moakley Park, and the Riverway are large parks that 6 or more respondents identified as their nearest park. The Charles River Reservation was identified by 5 respondents. Several smaller parks with well-organized constituencies, such as Hynes Playground, Dorchester Park, Fallon Field, and Peters Park were also identified by 6 or more respondents. Otherwise, a variety of open space types is represented throughout this question's responses.

Frequency of Park Use

To determine how often the respondents used the park nearest home, we asked, "How often do you and your family use this park? _____ (days per year)." We then asked if they used another park more often, and requested the name in a questionnaire item further down the page. From a reading of the entire sample, it appears that in supplying the number of days of park use some respondents may have referred to the park they use most often rather than the nearest park. Therefore, we will interpret the responses as a general frequency of park use rather than the frequency of use of the nearest park.

Three tables are provided to portray the responses to this question. The first table (Table A6-8) shows the number of respondents who supplied a particular response (respondents supplied their own answer rather than check off a predetermined range of values).

The second table (Table A6-9) shows the central tendency measures based on the table of original non-aggregated values (Table A6-8). Central tendency measures provide statistical shorthand that summarizes the overall data. The most commonly known such measure is the average (aka the mean). The mode is simply the value that has the largest number of responses. The median is the value that represents where half the total responses lie either above or below that value. This is a measure typically used where the data tends to be skewed toward one end of a distribution. A commonly used example of the median is to describe income distribution. A small quantity of millionaires can skew an income distribution such that the average would show general income of a population being much higher than should be conveyed by fuller knowledge of the data. The median reduces that skewing effect by better reflecting the actual number of individuals in the middle of the range of income values.

The third table (Table A6-10) and an accompanying bar chart (Figure A6-3) shows the number of respondents per aggregated categories of days/year. While the mode for both the non-aggregated and aggregated tables is daily or nearly daily use of the park, approximately 30% reported spending only 0 to 15 days per year, about once a month or less, in their park. Yet approximately 50% of respondents reported spending 50 days per year (the median) or more, a rate of about once a week or more in their park. We can see that many respondents have sufficient frequency of park use to express opinions based on experience.

General Activity in Nearest Park

To keep the array of activities manageable, a set of activity categories was provided on the questionnaire as standardized responses to the question of what activity the respondent pursued in the park. The respondents were not restricted to one activity, as the question stated they could check off all the categories that applied. Thus the total number of responses will not equal the number of respondents, 289, and in fact well exceeds that number. Rather than a percentage analysis, a bar chart is used to display the values (Table A6-11).

The top two categories by frequency of choice are Simple Relaxation and Enjoy Nature. These are introspective activities that given the types of parks most frequently reported in the Nearest Park table, such as Jamaica Pond Park, Franklin Park, and the Arnold Arboretum, would be expected. Exercise/Fitness

was the third most frequently chosen category, a clear expression of the greater health consciousness in recent years. Spending Time with Family/Friends and Attend Special Events are two activity types with a social/non-competitive orientation that can be undertaken by persons of almost all ages, hence its popularity. The social/competitive activity categories of Individual Sports (such as running) and Organized Sports (such as league play for baseball, soccer, basketball, etc.) were the least frequently chosen by the survey respondents. Sixty-two respondents chose the generally relaxing but somewhat obligatory activity Walk Your Dog.

Other Activity in Nearest Park

The questionnaire item that asked what activity was pursued in the park provided an open-ended response called Other. The specific responses were categorized into activity types, as shown in the table and chart titled General Activity in Nearest Park: Other Activity (Table A6-12). There were a limited number of responses. Aside from Other, the modal category was Linear Aerobic Activities, followed by Relaxation/Passive Pastimes. The next two categories by frequency were artistic pursuits and Court Sports.

Other Park Used

As noted in the Nearest Park table (Table A6-7), based on the responses to the question of whether the nearest park named was the one they used most often, 103 respondents (36% of the 289 survey respondents) said their nearest park was not the one they used most frequently.

Those who said their nearest park was not the one they used most frequently were asked the name of the park they used instead. Respondents who did use their nearest park most often were also asked to name a park they used that was not their nearest park. This was an open-ended response question. The coding allowed for up to 2 responses. The results are displayed in the Other Park Used table (Table A6-13).

While it appears that several of the parks which were frequent responses in the Nearest Park table were also frequent responses here, other parks which did not appear in the Nearest Park table or which had a small number of responses were frequent choices in the Other Park Used table. Only 3 respondents cited Boston Common as their nearest park, but 10 respondents cited it as another park they used. Not surprisingly, other regional parks like Boston Common were frequent choices as Other Park Used but far less frequent choices as nearest park: Charles River Reservation, Strandway/Castle Island, Public Garden, and East Boston Piers Park. An example of a park which did not appear in the Nearest Park Table, but now shows up as Other Park Used are Carter Playground in the South End, and Larz Anderson Park in Brookline. Larz Anderson Park is a large regional

park near the Boston-Brookline boundary, near the Jamaica Plain/Roslindale/West Roxbury area. Carter Playground is situated in the South End near the Fenway, Roxbury, and Jamaica Plain/Mission Hill neighborhoods. It contains numerous tennis courts that support programs and non-programmed play; in this part of the city such courts are a major attraction. It also has a children's play lot, playing fields, and basketball courts. It is a well-rounded recreation area serving a part of the city with few such facilities.

General Activity in Other Park

Respondents were asked to use the general activity categories from question 8 for the other park they used. The shape and order of frequency of the distribution of responses (see Table A6-14) was very similar to the distribution for the table/chart General Activity in Nearest Park (A6-12) with two exceptions. In the order of frequency, the fifth and sixth most frequent activities are reversed in the other park than for the nearest park; that is Attend Special Events is the sixth most frequent general activity in the other park, while it was the fifth most frequent general activity in the nearest park (this would support the concept of bringing special event programming to neighborhood parks as a more effective means of reaching a wider audience). Walk Your Dog was the fifth most frequent category for the other park, but only the sixth most frequent category for the nearest park; this makes sense in that the other park would likely be a larger regional park that would allow the dog greater scope for exercise.

A similar reversal of order of frequency occurs for individual sports versus organized sports. Again, this makes sense from the perspective of the more limited number of parks with sports-oriented features, and therefore the need to travel to a park that is not the one closest to one's home.

Other Activity in Other Park

The questionnaire item that asked what activity was pursued in the other park provided an open-ended response called Other. The specific responses were categorized into activity types, as shown in the table and chart titled General Activity in Other Park: Other Activity (Table A6-15). There were a limited number of responses. Far and away the most frequent category was Linear Aerobic Activities with 34 responses. This makes sense from the perspective of the more limited number of parks with long pathways that support linear aerobic activities and therefore the need to travel to a park that is not the one closest to one's home. The responses for other categories did not exceed single digits.

Like Most about Park Used

Survey respondents were asked an open-ended question on what they liked the most about the park they used. The responses provided were categorized by a category set developed by a reading of a small selection of the survey sample. That category set was then applied to the entire sample's responses. The results are shown in the table/chart titled Like Most about Park Used (Table A6-16).

Considering the large number of respondents who use the larger regional parks that allow for more extensive vegetated landscapes, it is not surprising to see Has Scenic Beauty as the most frequent category in the table/chart. The next two most frequent categories are Proximity to Residence and Has Desired Facility, both practical reasons. Surprisingly, the fifth most frequently suggested response was Provides Relaxation, with only 18 respondents. This contrasts with Relaxation as an activity in the park used, typically the second most frequent category as an activity. However, given that scenic beauty is an intrinsic quality of certain open spaces that engenders relaxation (an Olmsted concept), and the question asked about the most liked feature of the park itself, this discrepancy may be understandable.

Like Least about Park Used

The next question asked the survey respondents what they liked the least about the park they used. The categories to apply to the open-ended responses were developed by simply providing the opposite of the categories for the Like Most about Park Used table/chart (Table A6-16). The results are shown in the table/chart titled Like Least about Park Used (Table A6-17).

By far the most frequently suggested response category for Least Like about Park Used was Poor Safety/Cleanliness. Given responses to subsequent questions, this is quite understandable. Public safety and maintenance are still important goals to be fully achieved in the park system.

The next two categories most frequently suggested were Lacks Desired Facility and Difficult to Access. The remaining categories have responses in the single digits.

The category Other, which is simply the catchall for responses that cannot be characterized by the coder into the other response categories has the most responses, 107. This would suggest that either a re-analysis of the categories would be fruitful in further work on this survey data, or that in future surveys a different category set should be developed.

Facilities/Activities Would Add to Park Used

Survey respondents were asked an open-ended question on what facilities or activities they would add to the park they used. The responses provided were categorized by a category set developed by a reading of a small selection of the survey sample. That category set was then applied to the entire sample's responses. The results are shown in the table/chart titled Facilities/Activities Would Add to Park Used (Table A6-18).

By far the most frequently suggested category of responses was Physical Features (37%). The second most frequently suggested category of responses was Programs and Special Events (8%), then Maintenance (6%), followed by Active Sports (4%). This data would suggest that capital planning and design for future and existing facilities will continue to be an important factor in the public's satisfaction with the park system.

Perceived Open Space Needs for Own Neighborhood

Survey respondents were asked an open-ended question on what they believed the park, recreation, and open space needs are in their neighborhood. The responses provided were categorized by a category set developed by a reading of a small selection of the survey sample. That category set was then applied to the entire sample's responses. The results are shown in the table/chart titled Perceived Open Space Needs for Own Neighborhood (Table A6-19). The most frequently suggested category was More Neighborhood Open Space (15%) followed by Improve Landscape/Trees (10%) and Improve Maintenance (10%). The other categories were suggested by less than 10% of the respondents. However, two of these less frequent categories, More Sports Open Space (8%) and More Linear Open Space (7%) amplify the modal category More Neighborhood Open Space, suggesting the importance in the minds of the public of acquiring many types of open spaces. Improved landscaping and maintenance were also expressed as important needs.

Desired Changes in Parks Used Five Years Hence

The category set developed for the previous question on neighborhood open space needs was used to categorize the open-ended responses to the question of what changes the respondent would like to see in the parks they used five years from now. The results are displayed in the table/chart titled Desired Changes in Parks Used Five Years Hence (Table A6-20).

The most frequent response category was Improve Maintenance (18%), followed by Improve Landscape/Trees (15%), Improve/Add Park Facilities (13%), and Improve/Add Programs and Special Events (11%). As the question asks about changes in the parks the respondents use, the responses that can be categorized by More Open Space (Neighborhood, Linear, Sports, or Regional) would not be expected to draw large numbers.

Improved maintenance and landscaping were expressed as important needs more emphatically here than for the more general neighborhood open space needs question.

Parks as Important Reason for Residential Location

The last 12 questions on the questionnaire used an agreement scale to record responses. The agreement scale runs from Strongly Agree and Somewhat Agree to Somewhat Disagree and Strongly Disagree. A fifth response category called N/A was provided, which respondents were asked to use to indicate Not Applicable, No Answer, or Don't Know.

The first of this series of questions (Question 15) posed a statement asserting that neighborhood parks were an important reason for choosing where the respondent now lives (see Table A6-21). Strongly Agree was the most frequent choice (43%) of the respondents, followed by Somewhat Agree (25%). Only 14% disagreed somewhat or strongly with the statement. It would appear that overall those sampled felt parks do have a part in the choice of residential location.

Parks as Important Neighborhood Attraction

The next question provided a statement that while the respondent knew nothing about the neighborhood's parks before moving into their current home, the parks have become an important reason to stay in their neighborhood. The most frequent choice (see Table A6-22) was Somewhat Agree (24%), followed by N/A (21%), Strongly Agree (19%), Strongly Disagree (17%), and Somewhat Disagree (13%).

The high frequency of the N/A response may result from having answered the prior question (Question 15), which asserted knowledge of the neighborhood's parks as a reason to locate in the neighborhood. This question (Question 16) asserts parks as a reason to stay despite ignorance of them in the respondent's initial residential location decision-making. A positive (some form of agreement) response to Question 15 may cause some respondents to determine that since the condition of prior ignorance of the neighborhood's parks is asserted in Question 16, Question 16 would therefore not apply in their case. The 30% of respondents who disagreed with the Question 16 statement could be having the same substantive response as the respondents who chose N/A. Some of the disagreeers may be expressing that parks were a reason for their original residence choice, so they disagree with this statement. Other disagreeers may be disagreeing only with the portion of the question where parks are an important reason to stay in their neighborhood. Obviously, the question construction needs improvement. However, looking at the responses to both Question 15 and 16, it appears from the high frequency of agreement with both statements, an overall conclusion can be reached that parks are an important neighborhood asset that can affect to some degree individual decisions to locate or remain in Boston.

Perceived Need for Street Trees

Question 17 made the statement that the respondent's street had many trees that met the need for shade and beauty. The distribution of responses (see Table A6-23) was generally flat: Strongly Agree, 21%, Somewhat Agree, 25%, Somewhat Disagree, 23%, and Strongly Disagree, 24%. While those who strongly agree feel the current situation is satisfactory, the other responses indicate some degree of dissatisfaction with their street's public shade trees or lack thereof. Given the narrow sidewalks in many of the city's residential neighborhoods and the high demand for street trees, some of which the Parks Department has satisfied, the response distribution for Question 17 is understandable.

Perceived Need for Access to Nature

This question was designed to determine if natural areas – that is, areas such as many urban wilds designated to be managed primarily for their natural resource values – were a part of the spectrum of consciousness and use of these more active and involved citizens. Question 18 asked whether one agreed or disagreed that a natural area existed in one's neighborhood and that it provided the respondent good access to nature.

Given the coder's knowledge of natural areas throughout the city, and the location of the homes of many of the respondents, it appears that many respondents may have defined the term natural area as any green landscape, such as the manicured parks of Boston Common and the Public Garden. Therefore, rather than providing information on natural area consciousness and use, Question 18 provides us with information on the respondents' sense of connection to nature via green open spaces, whether landscaped or natural.

Most respondents (see Table A6-24) felt their neighborhood had good access to nature via a "natural area:" 39% strongly agreed with the statement in Question 18, while 28% somewhat agreed with that statement. Those who somewhat or strongly disagreed represented 25% of the respondents. Whether it derives from an area managed for its natural resource values or a park managed for its scenic or landscape values, most respondents felt a sense of connection to nature thanks to the park system now in place.

Perceived Need for Community Garden

Question 19 attempts to determine a need for a community garden in the respondent's neighborhood. It makes a statement that the respondent lives in an apartment and wants to garden and thanks to a nearby community garden he/she can do so. The most frequent response category (see Table A6-25)

was N/A at 53%. The next most frequent response category was Strongly Disagree, with 18%, followed by Strongly Agree with 12%. The high frequency for N/A may reflect the probability that many respondents are homeowners with garden space on their property, so that the question would not apply to their situation. Other respondents who chose N/A may be apartment dwellers who do not want to garden. Among those who did not choose N/A (41%), those who disagreed with the statement represented a larger proportion of the sample than those who agreed with the statement (23% versus 18%). Therefore, there appears to be a perceived need for community garden space among the majority of those who responded on the agreement scale.

Perceived Need for Youth Sports Fields

Question 20 seeks to determine a perceived need for youth sports fields in their community. It asks for a response to the statement that their park provides their child's league with practice and play space. The most frequent response category is N/A with 52%, while the remaining distribution along the agreement scale has a generally flat shape with a slight weighing toward the Agree end of the scale (see Table A6-26). Those replying Strongly Agree were 14% of the sample, while Somewhat Agree was 13% for a total of 27% on the agree end of the scale. Strongly Disagree outweighed Somewhat Disagree, 11% versus 8%, for a total of 19%. Thus, the portion of the sample that did not answer N/A perceived some need for youth sports fields.

The considerable size of the N/A response category may be due to respondents not having children or children of youth sports playing age. Alternatively, some respondents with preschool or school-age children may not have their children enrolled in local youth sports leagues.

Park within Walking Distance of Residence

Question 21 asked for simple agreement/disagreement with the statement that the closest park was within easy walking distance of home. A walk time of 10 to 15 minutes was specified. An overwhelming number of respondents, 92%, agreed with the statement (see Table A6-27). Only 4% disagreed. It appears that the nearest park is within a 10- to 15-minute walk of home for most of these respondents. This reinforces that this group of respondents has a solid base of knowledge about their local park. Given the responses in Question 15 and 16, it may be likely that this survey's respondents would choose to live in homes within easy walking distance of parks.

Perceived Need for Children's Play Lot

Question 22 asked for simple agreement/disagreement with the statement that the closest park contained pre-school/pre-teen children's play equipment. This would help determine whether there is a perception that children's play needs are being met. The most frequent response, 65%, was Agree, while only 18% selected Disagree (see Table A6-28). Given the responses in Question 15 and 16, it may be likely that this survey's respondents would choose to live in homes near parks with children's play lots.

Perceived Accessibility of the Boston Harbor Islands

Question 22 asked for the degree of agreement with the statement that the Boston Harbor Islands – the subject of a state park and a national recreation area – are easily accessible. Respondents who somewhat agreed with the statement (23%) equaled the number who somewhat disagreed with the statement (23%) (see Table A6-29). Those who strongly disagreed with the statement (19%) slightly outnumbered those who strongly agreed with the statement (17%). Thus, those who disagreed with the statement in some fashion (a total of 42%) slightly outnumbered those who agreed with the statement (a total of 41%). The strength of the “somewhat” sentiment, whether agree or disagree, may be an acknowledgement that while a ferry system already does exist, more needs to be done to achieve the kind of common use by average citizens that the Charles River Reservation, Jamaica Pond Park, or Boston Common experience. Certainly the 42% who disagreed in some fashion are testament to a need to improve accessibility of the Harbor Islands.

Perceived Accessibility of Waterfront/Riverfront Open Space

Question 24 asked for the degree of agreement with the statement that one can easily access a park or a walk on the harbor or on a river, or that one lives close to the water's edge, even if there is no park or walk there. Agreement generally outnumbered disagreement with the statement (see Table A6-30). Somewhat Agree slightly outnumbered Strongly Agree, 28% to 24%. Those who agreed in some fashion totaled 52% while those who disagreed in some fashion totaled 37%. Strongly Disagree slightly outnumbered Somewhat Agree, 20% to 17%. Given the number of people who live at a remove from rivers and the harborfront in Boston, this probably reflects overall public perception. Some improvement in access would help, especially given the high costs of supporting various water pollution control projects. However, the results here may reflect that much has already been done to make the water's edge accessible.

Perceived Availability of Bike Path in Boston

Question 25 asked for the degree of agreement with the statement that one can bicycle on a bike path without going outside of the city to do so, that is without having to visit regional paths like the Minuteman Bikeway, the Cape Cod Rail Trail, or the Norwottuck Rail Trail. This question sought to determine the consciousness and use of bike paths within Boston, such as the White Path in the Charles River Reservation, the Emerald Necklace Bike Path, or the Lallement Bike Path in the Southwest Corridor Park.

The most frequent response category was Strongly Agree (36%), followed by Somewhat Agree (21%), for a total on the agreement end of the scale of 57% (see Table A6-31). Strongly Disagree slightly outnumbered Somewhat Disagree, 14% to 13%, for a total of 27%. The results show an overall perception that bike paths are available in Boston, yet a substantial percentage, 27%, did not share that perception. As these bike paths are not evenly distributed throughout the city, it would be understandable that a portion of the respondents feels access to a bike path is, at best, limited.

Attitude toward Use of Federal & State Taxes for Local Parks

The final question, Question 26, asked for the degree of agreement with the statement that like highways and boulevards, federal and state tax dollars should be allocated to local parks. The questionnaire was distributed at a time when several stories, op-ed articles, and editorials had appeared in general and neighborhood circulation newspapers regarding the issue of restoration of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), a federal program that provided grants for state and local parks. During the mid-1990s, Congress gave only minimal funding to this program. A big national campaign was developed to fight for restored funding for the LWCF, and a group of environmental activists and Boston city officials made a concerted effort to bring the issue to prominence locally in the late 1990s. This resulted in the aforementioned media attention.

By far the most frequent response category was Strongly Agree, 81% (see Table A6-32). Somewhat Agree was chosen by 13% of the respondents, while the Somewhat Disagree and Strongly Disagree categories totaled only 2%. If these respondents reflect the public, it appears that the public accepts a definite role for federal funding for local parks and open spaces.



Boston's Open Space Plan: *Making the Connection*

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Boston's Parks and You

1. In which neighborhood do you live? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. How long have you lived in Boston? _____
4. How many members are in your immediate family? _____
5. What is the name of the park nearest you? _____

How often do you and your family use this park? _____ (days per year)

Is this the park that you and your family use most often? ____ If "Yes" go to 8.
If "No", go directly to 9.

8. What do you do in this park? (Check off all that apply)
- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organized sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise/Fitness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend special events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Simple relaxation | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk your dog |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with family/friends | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy nature |

Other _____

9. If you also use another park, what is the name of this park and *why* do you use it?
Also, please use the categories from question 8 for *what* you do in this park.

10. What do you like the most about the park you use? _____

11. What do you like the least about the park you use? _____

12. What facilities/activities would you add to the park you use? _____

13. In your neighborhood, what do you believe are the park, recreation, and open space needs?

14. Five years from now, what changes would you like to see in the parks you use?



Boston's Open Space Plan: *Making the Connection*

Thomas M. Menino, Mayor

Physical Orientation Survey

Parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces are part of our city, part of our neighborhood. Some feel they are as basic to our city and neighborhood as the house we live in, the street we travel on, and the water, sewer, and other utility lines we use every day. In that spirit, we are undertaking to look ahead at what our needs are, to set goals and objectives, and to recommend ways to achieve our open space vision.

We want to understand your orientation to parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces. This will assist us as we begin to develop our city-wide open space plan. **Please circle your answer, and if you like, write some thoughts or explanation in the space at the bottom (please reference item number).** (This survey is seeking an accurate picture of conditions: the answer that most closely reflects your actual response is the "right" answer, even if it is "don't know," "not applicable," or "no answer.")

N/A = Not Applicable, No Answer, or Don't Know

15. The parks in my neighborhood are a very important reason why I chose to live there in the first place.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

16. I knew nothing about the parks in my neighborhood when I moved there, but now they are a very important reason why I continue to live there.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

17. There are many trees on my street. They meet my street's need for shade and beauty.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

18. There is a natural area in my neighborhood that provides me with good access to nature.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

19. I live in an apartment and want to garden, and I can, thanks to a community garden nearby.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

20. My park provides my child's sports league with the space needed to practice and play.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

21. I am within easy walking distance of my closest local park (10-15 minutes).
Agree *Disagree* N/A

22. My closest local park contains children's play equipment for pre-school and pre-teen children.
Agree *Disagree* N/A

23. The Boston Harbor Islands are easy to get to – just hop on a ferry and go!
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

24. I can get to the harbor/riverfront walk or park easily given how far I live/I don't live far from the water's edge.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

25. I can bicycle on a bike path without going outside of Boston to do so.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

26. Local parks are important – I want a fair portion of my federal and state tax dollars used for local parks as well as for highways and boulevards.
Strongly Agree *Somewhat Agree* *Somewhat Disagree* *Strongly Disagree* N/A

Comments _____

