



PARKS, TRAILS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Online Questionnaire Summary

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A. INTRODUCTION

In Spring 2013, El Dorado County and the City of South Lake Tahoe partnered to create a new *Parks, Trails and Recreation Master Plan* for the South Shore. The project area includes the City of South Lake Tahoe, the communities of Meyers and Meek's Bay, and the Tahoe Basin area of El Dorado County. This plan will provide direction for enhancing recreation opportunities for residents and visitors by improving City and County parks, recreation facilities, trails, events and programs.

As part of this planning process, the project team designed an online survey to collect community feedback on parks visitation, community priorities and tradeoffs for parks and recreation facilities and programs. The questionnaire was available on both City and County websites from August 20 through October 6, 2013. Its launch was coordinated with other outreach events, including a focus group meeting and two intercept events, so that participants could help publicize the questionnaire. As a joint effort between the City and County, staff and Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) members further publicized the questionnaire to maximize responses from City residents, County residents and visitors to the area. Outreach included emails to sports leagues and special interest recreation groups and web link cards distributed at recreation and tourism businesses, as well as community centers, trailheads and the Explore Tahoe Visitor Center. In addition, the questionnaire link was included in an Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority (LTVA) newsletter distributed to 46,000 contacts.

A total of 885 people participated in the questionnaire. Not everyone provided an answer to every question, and so response levels are reported based on the total number of participants who responded to the individual questions.

This report is organized into the following three sections:

- A. Demographics;
- B. Key Findings; and
- C. Responses by Question.

In addition, 75 pages of write-in comments were collected in response to open-ended questions in the online questionnaire. These responses appear in a memo under a separate cover. All questionnaire findings will be combined with other outreach results to assess community needs for parks, trails, and recreation services.

B. PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

This online questionnaire was open to all respondents and designed to encourage participation from as many people as possible. In other words, results do not reflect participation of a random or representative sample of the population. However, comments due tend to reflect the insights of people who are most interested in parks and recreation in the community. To understand who these people are, the questionnaire included a number of demographic questions, resulting in the following profile:

- Over fifty percent of question respondents (309 individuals) live in the City of South Lake Tahoe. Approximately 20 percent live in Meyers or Meek's Bay, ten percent live nearby in El Dorado County, and 6 percent live nearby in Douglas County, Nevada. Another 10 percent were not from the area, but were visitors who took the time to respond.
- Despite efforts to reach area visitors (including an announcement in the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority newsletter sent to 46,000 people), only 61 participants (10 percent of respondents) identified themselves as visitors to the area. Of those, 66 percent stated that they visit during any season, while 41 percent typically visit in the summer and 11 percent typically visit in the winter. In addition, nearly 50 percent indicated that they visit several times a year, and another 15 percent noted that they visit frequently, because they have a vacation home, condo, or timeshare here.
- Adults aged 25-54 account for nearly 72 percent of participants who provided information regarding their age. Twenty-two percent identified themselves as between ages 25 and 34, and 18 percent between 55 and 64.
- Almost one-half (47.5%) of all respondents have children living in their homes.
- Eighty-six percent of respondents identified themselves as Caucasian, compared to 74 percent of the total City of Lake Tahoe population. Only 5.5 percent of questionnaire participants identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. In comparison, nearly one-third (31%) of all City residents are Hispanic or Latino.¹
- Females responded to the questionnaire at a higher rate than males (56 percent of respondents were female, compared to 44 percent of males).

¹ Note: To reach more youth and Hispanic/Latino respondents, the City of South Lake Tahoe is working with the Lake Tahoe Unified School District to distribute a shorter questionnaire available in English and Spanish.

C. KEY FINDINGS

Key questionnaire findings are as follows:

- **Value of parks and recreation:** Nearly 95 percent of people noted that parks and recreation are very or extremely important to the quality of life in the South Shore area.
- **Benefits of parks and recreation:** According to respondents, the most important benefits of parks and recreation in priority order include:
 - Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors (72.1%)
 - Improve health, wellness and fitness (55.9%)
 - Strengthen families, neighborhoods and our community (40.2%)
 - Protect our natural environment (37.0%)
- **Low ratings for quality of facilities and services:** Over fifty percent of respondents rated the City and County's recreation facilities, programs, and availability of information about recreation opportunities as only "fair" or "poor" (see question #3 in Section D). Forty-three percent of respondents rated overall quality of services as "fair" or "poor"; 46 percent gave parks this same rating. Despite the national renown for its outdoor recreation opportunities, only 4 to 8 percent of respondents rated the quality of parks, facilities, programs, information and services as "excellent." While 47 percent of participants rated the overall quality of park and recreation services provided by the City and County as "good," these scores are much lower than typically reported in recreation-oriented communities.
- **Most frequently visited parks and facilities:** Lakeview Commons, Bijou Park and Regan Beach stand out as the most frequently visited parks and facilities noted in open-ended, write-in responses. Beaches, trails, sports fields, and even the Kahle Community Center were also noted frequently.
- **Visitation:** Because of the variety and numbers of recreation opportunities in the area, few individual sites are visited frequently by respondents (see question #4 in Section D). However, 37 percent of respondents reported visiting U.S. Forest Service (USFS) trails and 20 percent reported visiting Lakeview Commons at El Dorado Beach at least once a week. Lakeview Commons also ranked highest as far as parks and facilities visited a couple of times per month (USFS trails and State Parks in the area ranked a close second and third, respectively). This is consistent with trends nationwide, where trails and large multi-use parks are most popular.

- **Barriers to visitation:** Top reasons for not visiting South Shore parks include crowds or lack of parking (26% of question respondents), inability to walk or bike there safely (24%), lack of time (25%), and lack of available facilities (22%). One-fifth of question respondents stated that lack of knowledge or information about park location or availability prevents them from visiting.
- **Needed parks:** According to results, over 50 percent of respondents believe parks with protected natural areas and outdoor recreation opportunities are most needed in the South Shore area. Only 23 to 27 percent of respondents noted needs for other types of parks in this priority order: neighborhood parks, community parks in the city, regional parks for tourists and residents, and community parks outside the city.
- **Needed facilities and amenities:** From a list of 11 different types of amenities and facilities, trails and pathways were noted by 46 percent of respondents as the types facilities most needed in the South Shore area. A bike park, a large amphitheatre or event venue, and facilities providing additional access to water also rate highly. Only 21 percent of respondents indicated that a new field house was needed.
- **Trails needed for park access and connectivity:** More than 75 percent of respondents indicated that more trails are needed. Surprisingly, the top priorities for trail development are trails that enhance connectivity and access. The top two reasons to develop more trails include: To make it easier to walk or bike to other destinations, e.g., school, work, grocery store, etc. (63.1% of respondents) and to make it easier to walk or bike to parks and recreation facilities (42.4% of respondents).
- **Natural resource protection balance with recreation:** When asked what role parks and recreation departments should play in protecting natural areas, nearly 70 percent of respondents stated that accessible natural areas should be acquired to both protect resources and provide outdoor recreation opportunities. Another 56 percent agreed that recreation facilities should be designed to carefully to minimize impacts to natural resources. In comparison, only 4 percent of respondent favored acquisition of natural areas with not public access.
- **Satisfactory programs, classes and events:** Forty percent of respondents rate the availability and variety of recreation classes and programs provided in the South Shore area as “satisfactory.” Only 17 percent rate them as either “excellent” or “very good”. Twenty-five percent are “not sure”.
- **Current participation in programs and events.** Most respondents and/or family members (53%) currently take advantage of the variety of community events offered in the area. Another 40 percent participate in fitness or health and wellness classes,

- 33 percent participate in small watercraft sports (sailboats, canoes, paddleboats, sailboards, etc.), and 26 percent in field sports.
- **Program/event space needs:** When asked which programs, classes or events respondents would participate in if better facilities and more programs were available, top answers included 1) fitness or health and wellness classes (38%); 2) community events (33%); and 3) environmental education and nature programs (31%). At 30 percent, “personal enrichments, certification or skill-building classes” also ranked among top responses.
 - **Funding options:** Over 60 percent of question respondents support the implementation of user fees to help bridge gaps in funding for parks and recreation. Of that group, 73 percent believe that visitors should be required to pay more than residents. On the other hand, only 26.5 percent of people thought that a tax measure should be pursued, which is only slightly higher than the number of people favoring business sponsorships (26.1 %) and volunteer efforts (23.8%) to support new projects.
 - **Support for new field house:** Over 72 percent expressed some level of support for building a new field house (35% strongly supporting and 37% somewhat supporting), compared to 17 percent who expressed some level of opposition and 10 percent who chose “don’t know.” In terms of overarching priorities, a field house is not as highly supported as other types of facilities.
 - **Spending priorities:** Top spending priorities include expanding the existing trail network (44%) and improving and maintaining the condition of existing parks and facilities (43% of respondents). “Adding more recreation facilities in existing parks” was selected by 20 percent of respondents, and investing in new big facilities (such as a field house) was supported by just 17.5 percent of respondents.

D. RESPONSES BY QUESTION

This section presents tables summarizing responses to each question. All open-ended comments and “other” question responses are available under separate cover.

1. How important are parks, recreation, trails programs and special events to our quality of life?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Extremely important	497	74.5%
Very important	136	20.4%
Moderately important	30	4.5%
Slightly important	4	0.6%
Not at all important	0	0.0%
No opinion	0	0.0%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>667</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

2. Which of the following benefits of parks, recreation and trails are most important to you? Choose three.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors	492	72.1%
Improve health, wellness and fitness	381	55.9%
Strengthen families, neighborhoods and our community	274	40.2%
Protect our natural environment	252	37.0%
Support youth development	159	23.3%
Promote South Tahoe as a tourist destination	140	20.5%
Provide special events and social opportunities	131	19.2%
Provide opportunities to learn new things	31	4.5%
Attract residents and businesses	72	10.6%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

3. Please rate the quality of each of the following provided by the City of South Lake Tahoe and El Dorado County as they relate to parks and recreation.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't Know	<i>Total number of respondents</i>
Overall quality of services	6.1%	46.7%	36.4%	6.2%	4.5%	642
Recreation Facilities	6.2%	39.9%	38.7%	11.4%	3.7%	641
Programs	4.7%	31.2%	40.5%	12.2%	11.4%	597
Parks	8.1%	43.7%	33.6%	11.9%	2.7%	639
Availability of information about recreation opportunities	6.3%	29.5%	39.4%	20.2%	4.6%	630

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4. How frequently have you visited the following parks and facilities over the past year?

	At least once a week	A couple of times per month	Every few months	Once or twice a year	Never	Total number of respondents
Sports fields in the Tahoe area	12.4%	13.1%	17.7%	27.0%	29.7%	603
Tahoe Recreation and Swim Complex	11.0%	10.6%	18.2%	31.6%	28.6%	611
South Tahoe Ice Arena	3.6%	2.5%	12.5%	36.5%	44.9%	606
Bijou Community Park	10.6%	16.6%	28.6%	26.7%	17.6%	615
Lakeview Commons at El Dorado Beach	20.0%	28.4%	22.7%	16.5%	12.5%	631
Regan Beach	12.1%	19.1%	24.0%	28.9%	16.0%	613
Explore Tahoe Visitor Center	1.3%	2.3%	10.7%	32.8%	52.8%	600
Campground by the Lake	1.0%	1.3%	6.6%	19.4%	71.7%	593
Tahoe Paradise Park	5.4%	6.9%	13.0%	27.8%	46.9%	576
Van Sickle Park	4.3%	10.3%	20.0%	29.7%	35.7%	585
Kahle Community Center	7.3%	10.8%	16.6%	30.1%	35.3%	592
State Parks in this area (Sugar Pine Point, Bliss, Emerald Bay and Washoe Meadows State Parks)	9.0%	26.5%	28.8%	30.4%	5.4%	635
USFS trails in this area	36.8%	27.9%	17.7%	14.2%	3.4%	639
USFS campgrounds in this area	2.2%	8.2%	17.1%	37.6%	34.9%	598

6. What keeps you from visiting South Shore parks more often? Check any that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Too crowded/not enough parking	180	26.4%
No time available	168	24.6%
I can't walk or bike there safely	162	23.8%
Lack of facilities	147	21.6%
Don't know where they are/don't know what's available	136	19.9%
Other	115	16.9%
Poorly maintained	108	15.8%
I don't live in the area	85	12.5%
Not interested	45	6.6%
I don't have transportation	21	3.1%
Feel unsafe	18	2.6%
I am physically unable to participate	10	1.5%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

7. Which of the following type of parks are needed in the South Shore area?

Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Parks with protected natural areas and outdoor recreation opportunities	343	50.3%
More neighborhood parks in my area	181	26.5%
A community park to serve city residents (located in the city)	178	26.1%
A special use park to serve tourists and the entire region	171	25.1%
A community park to serve County residents (located outside the city)	158	23.2%
Other	142	20.8%
No more parks are needed	46	6.7%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

Note: Common “other” responses include a bike park, bike paths and trails, a skatepark, and dog-friendly parks and beaches.

8. Which of the following recreation facilities are most needed in the South Shore area? Choose up to three.

Answer	Count	Percentage
More trails and pathways	315	46.2%
Bike park	241	35.3%
Large amphitheater or event venue	208	30.5%
Water access (for swimming, fishing, tubing, rafting, etc.)	207	30.4%
Field house/recreation center for indoor sports and programs	145	21.3%
Splash park	101	14.8%
Other	97	14.2%

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Answer	Count	Percentage
Playgrounds	96	14.1%
Picnic shelters and pavilions	89	13.0%
Regional sports field complex	67	9.8%
Sport fields	56	8.2%
None are needed	10	1.5%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

9. Are more trails needed in the South Shore area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Yes	453	75.9%
No	80	13.4%
No opinion	64	10.7%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>597</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

9A. What is the primary reason to develop more trails in the South Shore area? Choose two.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Make it easier to walk or bike to other destinations (e.g., school, work, grocery store, etc.)	286	63.1%
Make it easier to walk or bike to parks and recreation facilities	192	42.4%
Provide opportunities for recreation and leisure	140	30.9%
Provide opportunities to exercise	119	26.3%
Provide opportunities to experience nature	118	26.0%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>453</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

10. How would you rate the importance of protecting natural areas?

Answer	Count	Percentage
5 Very Important	465	73.1%
4	75	11.8%
3 Important	74	11.6%
2	16	2.5%
1 Not Important	6	0.9%
Don't Know	0	0.0%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>636</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

11. What role should parks and recreation play in protecting natural areas?

Choose two.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Acquire natural areas for resource protection and outdoor recreation (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, camping, wildlife watching)	466	68.3%
Design recreation facilities in parks carefully to minimize impacts to natural resources	384	56.3%
Acquire natural areas for resource protection and environmental education	195	28.6%
Acquire natural areas with no public access for preservation	28	4.1%
No role	19	2.8%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>682</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

12. How would you rate the variety and availability of recreation classes and programs provided in the South Shore area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Satisfactory. There are some opportunities to do some of the recreation classes and programs I enjoy.	223	40.4%
Not sure. I don't know what is offered.	138	25.0%
Not very good. There are a few opportunities to do a few of the recreation classes and programs I enjoy.	83	15.0%
Very Good. There are several opportunities to do a lot of the recreation classes and programs I enjoy.	76	13.8%
Excellent. There are many opportunities to do all or most of the recreation classes and programs I enjoy.	20	3.6%
Totally inadequate. There are no opportunities to do any of the recreation classes and programs I enjoy.	12	2.2%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>552</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

13. What types of recreation programs, classes, or events do you or family members currently participate in? Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Community events (such as Lake in the Sky Air Show, Race the Lake of the Sky SUP, Live at Lakeview Summer Concerts, etc.)	330	53.1%
Fitness or health and wellness classes (aerobics, yoga, weight training, etc.)	247	39.8%
Small watercraft sports (sailboats, canoes, paddleboats, sailboards, etc.)	203	32.7%
Field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, football, etc.)	163	26.2%
Aquatics lessons, programs, water fitness, swim team	150	24.2%
Environmental education and nature programs	145	23.3%
Drop-in fitness (weights, exercise machines, etc.)	131	21.1%
Arts, dance and culture programs	118	19.0%
Personal enrichment, certifications or skill-building classes	98	15.8%
Volunteer programs	98	15.8%
Ice skating or hockey	92	14.8%
Children and teen summer camps	92	14.8%
Golf programs or events	80	12.9%
Children and youth preschool or afterschool programs	80	12.9%
Indoor court sports (basketball, pickleball, racquetball, indoor soccer, etc.)	62	10.0%
Other	62	10.0%
Senior programs, services and trips	45	7.2%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

14. Which recreation programs, classes, or events would you participate in if better facilities and more programs were available? Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Fitness or health and wellness classes (aerobics, yoga, weight training, etc.)	235	37.8%
Community events (such as Lake in the Sky Air Show, Race the Lake of the Sky SUP, Live at Lakeview Summer Concerts, etc.)	206	33.2%
Environmental education and nature programs	192	30.9%
Personal enrichment, certifications or skill-building classes	185	29.8%
Drop-in fitness (weights, exercise machines, etc.)	160	25.8%
Arts, dance and culture programs	154	24.8%
Small watercraft sports (sailboats, canoes, paddleboats, sailboards, etc.)	151	24.3%
Aquatics lessons, programs, water fitness, swim team	141	22.7%
Indoor court sports (basketball, pickleball, racquetball, indoor soccer, etc.)	100	16.1%
Volunteer programs	95	15.3%
Field sports (baseball, softball, soccer, football, etc.)	91	14.7%
Golf programs or events	81	13.0%
Children and teen summer camps	73	11.8%
Children and youth preschool or afterschool programs	68	11.0%
Other	62	10.0%
Ice skating or hockey	58	9.3%
Senior programs, services and trips	51	8.2%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>621</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

15. Because of funding limitations, the City and County currently struggle to staff and maintain their parks and recreation facilities. How do you think park maintenance, programs, and new parks and facilities should be funded? Select your top two answers.

Answer	Count	Percentage
User fees (visitors pay more than residents)	269	44.8%
A tax measure (with money to take care of new and existing parks)	159	26.5%
Sponsorships by local businesses	157	26.1%
Volunteer efforts	143	23.8%
A bond measure (with money to build new things)	131	21.8%
Efforts by non-profit groups	105	17.5%
User fees (same price for everyone)	102	17.0%
Don't know	31	5.2%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

16. To what extent would you support or oppose building a new stand-alone field house or recreation center for indoor sports and programs?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Somewhat support	211	37.1%
Strongly support	201	35.4%
Somewhat oppose	59	10.4%
Don't know	58	10.2%
Strongly oppose	39	6.9%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>568</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

17. Tell us how you would spend money if you were in charge! What are your top two priorities? Choose two.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Expand the trail network	262	43.6%
Improve maintenance and condition of existing parks & facilities	256	42.6%
Add more recreation facilities in existing parks	122	20.3%
Offer more programs, events and activities	105	17.5%
Invest in big facilities that support tourism and the local economy	105	17.5%
Other	80	13.3%
Protect more natural areas	76	12.6%
Provide more information about parks and recreation opportunities	69	11.5%
Build new parks	61	10.1%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	<i>601</i>	<i>100.0%</i>

19. What is your age?

Answer	Count	Percentage
35-44	163	27.6%
45-54	134	22.7%
25-34	129	21.8%
55-64	108	18.3%
65+	40	6.8%
18-24	12	2.0%
Under 18	5	0.8%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	591	100.0%

20. What is your gender?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Female (F)	324	55.7%
Male (M)	258	44.3%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	582	100.0%

21. Do you live in, work in, or visit the South Shore area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Live in the City of South Lake Tahoe	309	52.2%
Live in Meyers or Meek's Bay	117	19.8%
Live nearby in El Dorado County	62	10.5%
Visit the South Lake Tahoe area	61	10.3%
Live nearby in Douglas County, Nevada	38	6.4%
Work in the South Shore area, but do not live here	5	0.8%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	592	100.0%

21a. How many years have you lived in the South Shore area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
More than 20 years	180	35.4%
11-20 years	132	25.9%
6-10 years	91	17.9%
2-5 years	57	11.2%
Less than 2 years	49	9.6%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	509	100.0%

21b. How often do you visit the South Lake Tahoe area?

Answer	Count	Percentage
Several times a year	30	49.2%
Once a month or so	13	21.3%
Once a year or so	9	14.8%
Frequently, because we have a vacation home, condo, or timeshare here	9	14.8%
Have only been there once	0	0.0%
Every 3-5 years or so	0	0.0%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	61	100.0%

21c. When do you typically visit? Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
Any season	40	65.6%
Summer	25	41.0%
Winter	7	11.5%
Other	4	6.6%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	61	100.0%

22. Do any children or youth live in your household? Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
No, but I still like to play!	279	46.7%
There are no children in my home.	107	17.9%
Yes, children ages 6 to 12	102	17.1%
Yes, children under age 6	101	16.9%
Yes, teens ages 13 to 17	81	13.5%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	598	100.0%

23. How do you describe yourself? Check all that apply.

Answer	Count	Percentage
White	517	86.5%
Hispanic or Latino	33	5.5%
Other	24	4.0%
Asian, Asian Indian or Pacific Islander	17	2.8%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	1.0%
Black or African American	3	0.5%
<i>Total number of respondents</i>	598	100.0%