



**2019 Myrtle Beach Parks,  
Recreation, and Sports  
Tourism Department Need  
Assessment and Strategic  
Plan Prepared By:**

**CLEMSON<sup>®</sup>**  
PARKS, RECREATION AND  
TOURISM MANAGEMENT



# Table of Contents

	Page
Study Introduction and Overview .....	1
Purpose of Assessment .....	1
Methods .....	1
Focus Groups .....	2
Online Survey .....	2
Deliverables .....	3
Study Objectives .....	3
Study Respondents .....	3
Myrtle Beach Demographics .....	4
Table 1: Myrtle Beach Respondents by Gender .....	4
Table 2: Myrtle Beach Respondents by Age .....	4
Table 3: Myrtle Beach Respondents by Race .....	5
Table 4: Percentage of Respondents Living in City Limits .....	5
Table 5: Myrtle Beach Respondents by Number of Dependent Children .....	5
Table 6: Myrtle Beach Respondents by Number of Dependent Adults Living in Home .....	6
Table 7: Myrtle Beach Program/Facility Usage per Week .....	6
Table 8: Overall Importance/Satisfaction of Myrtle Beach Recreation Programs and Facilities .....	6
Overall Data .....	7
Table 9: Myrtle Beach Facility Importance/Satisfaction Gap Analysis .....	8
Table 10: Myrtle Beach Program Importance/Satisfaction Gap Analysis .....	9
Table 11: Myrtle Beach Residents' Facility Priorities .....	10

Table 12: Myrtle Beach Residents' Program Priorities.....	11
Table 13: Attendance at Events/Programs Outside of Myrtle Beach.....	12
Myrtle Beach Residents' Medium Used for Information .....	13
Table 14: Medium Used for Information.....	13
Graph 1: Medium Used for Information .....	14
Myrtle Beach Residents' Willingness to Pay .....	15
Graph 2: Willingness to Pay.....	15
Policy Information.....	16
Table 16: Myrtle Beach Policy Question.....	16
Observations.....	xx
Recommendations.....	xx

## **Study Introduction and Overview**

Public agencies, like the Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department, are frequently confronted with an increasing demand for services, while working within an environment characterized by static or decreasing financial resources and understaffing. In particular, park and recreation agencies are heavily dependent on public appropriations, tax levies, philanthropic support, and user fees, while being faced with numerous service delivery challenges, not the least of which is the provision of the adequate distribution of high-quality programs, facilities, and parks. A more educated and vocal public expects public entities to be more accountable and measured in their allocation of limited public monies. However, this is also a time when society is beginning to fully understand the importance of providing high quality, well-run parks and recreation facilities and programs in promoting the long-term health and economic development of the region.

At the same time, rapid changes are occurring in the makeup and demographic distribution of the area. As the Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department adopts a more proactive, consumer-centric approach to the production and delivery of park and recreation facilities and programs, the practice of actively soliciting input and feedback from the jurisdiction's populace to document the current and projected use of existing and future facilities and programs is critical to success. Public needs assessments are conducted to measure felt or expressed needs, interests, and use among the general public. This process allows the agency to "take the pulse of the entire community, being responsive and accountable to more than just the vocal and visible interest groups of the agency" (Crompton, 2000). The results are then used to help guide decision-makers in the efficient, effective, and equitable delivery of facilities and services across the entire jurisdiction.

This report details the process and results of a needs assessment conducted by Clemson University (with assistance from Coastal Carolina University) researchers in October-December of 2019 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and provides strategic recommendations to inform recreation facilities and programs planning to meet existing and projected future needs.

## **Purpose of the Assessment**

To solicit public input regarding the parks and recreation facility, program, and service needs of residents living within the municipality in order to develop recommendations that will guide the provision of parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services for the next five to seven (5-7) years.

## **Methods**

A two-stage methodology was employed to assess the park and recreation needs of Myrtle Beach residents. First, an online web survey was distributed to residents throughout Myrtle Beach, helping to ensure the broadest possible coverage of views were captured to inform city-wide recommendations. The survey was open for a 4-week period and yielded

1,199 total responses. In the second stage, researchers from Clemson University conducted eight (8) focus groups and a public input session with stakeholders over a two and a half (2.5) day period. The focus groups generally consisted of five to ten 5-10 individuals per group. The composition of each focus group varied according to session, but all consisted of community leaders, residents, and/or stakeholder groups with a vested interest in the future trajectory of the parks and recreation facilities and programs in Myrtle Beach. During each session, researchers took notes while engaging the participants through facilitated conversations.

### *Focus Groups*

Focus groups were designed to explore the recreation program and facility needs of selected stakeholders in depth. Focus groups were organized, and participants recruited by the Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department in Myrtle Beach. Sessions included five to ten (5-10) individuals representing a particular stakeholder group such as Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism staff, local leadership, trail and greenway users, seniors, youth sports coaches and officials, parents of community youth, etc.

Each focus group was moderated by a researcher from Clemson University (with assistance from Coastal Carolina University) who began each session by prompting participants with the following question, "If you were to wave a magic wand and have your parks and recreation needs and wants met, what facilities, programs, and services would that include? What is going well, what needs to be improved, and what needs to be built/developed? However, you must be reasonable and responsible with the magic wand." Focus groups were otherwise unstructured. During participant discussion, two 2 researchers took notes and asked follow-up questions to acquire more information about stated recreation program and facility needs and wants. Upon completion of the focus group sessions, researchers compared notes, outlined themes, and outlined recommendations based on participant discussion.

### *Online Survey*

An online survey was designed to allow any and all residents to voice their recreation program and facility needs and wants. The online survey was advertised through a variety of forums including e-mails, social media, and local newspaper articles. The majority of the survey was an importance-satisfaction scale that first measured how important program, service, and facility categories were to each respondent/respondent's family, followed by how satisfied the respondent/respondent's family was with the program, service, and facility categories. A gap analysis of importance-satisfaction was conducted by subtracting the percentage of respondents satisfied with a particular program, service, or facility from the percentage who had ranked it as important in order to identify and prioritize areas of need.

In addition to the importance-satisfaction gap, participants were asked to provide demographic information and respond to several questions pertaining to potential policies impacting recreation, parks, historic, and cultural affairs. The survey also included several

qualitative input exercises. These exercises were designed to force participants to rank their individual top-3 priorities for programs and facilities and provide their individual willingness to pay for current and improved levels of parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services.

The research team analyzed data collected from these sources to formulate a strategic plan focused on recreation and parks program and facility needs.

### *Deliverables*

The outcome of this process is this report that details both large and small-scale projects, priorities, and other recommendations that the City should pursue and invest in to meet the needs of Myrtle Beach residents moving forward. In addition to this formal report, a PowerPoint version is also included.

Specifically, this study addressed the following objectives:

## **Study Objectives**

1. Determine public opinion about recreation and leisure service needs of the City of Myrtle Beach.
2. Determine potential partners and roles partners might play in the provision of recreation and parks programs, services, and facilities.
3. Determine how public opinion of needs align with program, service, and facility needs and trends based on current and future demand.
4. Determine the public's willingness to pay fees for programs, services, and facilities.
5. Provide recommendations regarding the provision of parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services for the next five to seven (5-7) years.

## **Study Respondents**

### **Explanation of Tables 1-8 (following three [3] pages):**

In the following tables (Tables 1-8), provide a description of the respondents to the study, including gender, age, ethnic background, residency, number of children in the household, if they have dependent adults living in the home, and the type of recreation program/facility used and provider, and the *overall* importance/satisfaction of recreation programs and facilities in the City of Myrtle Beach. The percentages in Table 8 were calculated by subtracting the very satisfied/satisfied percentage from the very important/important percentage to yield a gap percentage for the City of Myrtle Beach. The

table also includes the Highly Important/Important and Very Satisfied/Satisfied measures for Myrtle Beach.

**Table 1. Myrtle Beach Respondents by Gender**

<i>Myrtle Beach Respondents by Gender (by %)</i>	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	38%
Female	58%
Prefer not to Answer	4%

**Table 2. Myrtle Beach Respondents by Age**

<i>Myrtle Beach Respondents by Age (by %)</i>	
<b>Age</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-25	2%
25-34	11%
35-45	16%
46-55	19%
56-65	24%
66+	28%

**Table 3. Myrtle Beach Respondents by Race**

<i>Myrtle Beach Respondents by Race (by %)</i>	
<b>Race</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Black/African American	4%
Hispanic/Latino	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander/Native American	1%
White	90%
Other	3%

**Table 4: Respondents Living in City Limits**

<i>Myrtle Beach Respondent's Living in City Limits (by %)</i>	
<b>In City Limits</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	58%
No	40%
Unsure	2%

**Table 5. Myrtle Beach Respondents by Number of Dependent Children**

<i>Number of Children Living in the Home (by %)</i>				
<b>Age of Children</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3+</b>
5 & Younger	84%	10%	4%	2%
6-12	78%	11%	10%	1%
13-18	80%	13%	5%	2%

**Table 6. Dependent Adults Living in Home**

<i>Dependent Adults Living in Home (by %)</i>	
<b>Dependent Adults</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	9%
No	91%

**Table 7. Myrtle Beach Program/Facility Usage Per Week**

<i>Program/Facility Usage Per Week (%)</i>				
	<b>Type of Organization</b>			
<b>Weekly Attendance</b>	<b>Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism</b>	<b>Other Public Recreation Agencies (Horry County, Conway)</b>	<b>Private Recreation Businesses</b>	<b>Non-Profit Recreation Organizations</b>
0	12%	40%	59%	78%
1-2	38%	42%	19%	15%
3-4	30%	12%	13%	4%
5-6	16%	4%	6%	2%
7+	4%	2%	3%	1%

**Table 8: Overall Importance/Satisfaction of Myrtle Beach Recreation Programs and Facilities**

<i>Overall Importance/Satisfaction of Myrtle Beach</i>			
	<b>High Importance /Important</b>	<b>Very Satisfied/Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Important/Important-Very Satisfied/Satisfied (Gap)</b>
Myrtle Beach	99%	54%	<b>45%</b>

## **Overall Data**

### **Facility and Program Needs and Facility and Program Priorities**

This report presents the findings from the combined focus groups, public input session and online survey data for the City of Myrtle Beach.

#### **Explanation of Tables 9-13 (following four (5) pages):**

Table 9 presents the importance-satisfaction gap analysis for facilities. These percentages were calculated by subtracting the very satisfied/satisfied percentage from the very important/important percentage to yield a gap percentage for each type of facility. The table also includes the Highly Important/Important and Very Unsatisfied/Unsatisfied measures for each facility.

Table 10 presents the importance-satisfaction gap analysis for recreational program offering. These percentages were calculated by subtracting the very satisfied/satisfied percentage from the very important/important percentage to yield a gap percentage for each type of program. The table also includes the Highly Important/Important and Very Unsatisfied/Unsatisfied measures for each program.

Table 11 presents data collected during the online survey. Each individual was asked to list their top three (3) facility priorities and percentages are based on the aggregate of people who listed the facility in their top three (3).

Table 12 presents data collected during the online survey. Each individual was asked to list their top three (3) recreational program priorities and percentages are based on the aggregate of people who listed the program in their top three (3).

Table 13 presents data collected during the community forum and online survey. Here, survey respondents were asked to list events and programs they traveled outside of Myrtle Beach to attend.

**Table 9. Myrtle Beach Facility Importance/Satisfaction Gap Analysis**

<i>Facility Importance/Satisfaction (by %)</i>			
	<b>Very Important/ Important</b>	<b>Very Satisfied/ Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Important/Important- Very Satisfied/Satisfied (Gap)</b>
Availability of Trails and Greenways	82%	33%	<b>49%</b>
Availability of Cultural/Arts Facilities	67%	24%	<b>43%</b>
Availability of Passive Parks/Open Space	80%	40%	<b>40%</b>
Availability of Indoor Aquatic Facilities	63%	31%	<b>32%</b>
Availability of Center for Older (Senior) Adults	64%	35%	<b>29%</b>
Availability of Outdoor Swimming Pools/Aquatics Facilities/Waterparks	49%	20%	<b>29%</b>
Availability of Indoor Recreation Facilities	82%	54%	<b>28%</b>
Availability of Picnic Shelters	62%	35%	<b>27%</b>
Availability of Outdoor Sports Courts (basketball, bocce ball, etc.)	49%	23%	<b>26%</b>
Availability of Water Access	42%	19%	<b>23%</b>
Availability of a Library	74%	53%	<b>21%</b>
Availability of Tennis/Pickleball Courts	46%	29%	<b>17%</b>
Availability of Disc Golf Facilities	27%	16%	<b>12%</b>
Availability of Dog Parks	46%	37%	<b>9%</b>
Availability of Multi-Purpose/Rectangle Athletic Fields	51%	44%	<b>7%</b>
Availability of Diamond Athletic Fields	42%	44%	<b>0%</b>

**Table 10. Myrtle Beach Program Importance/Satisfaction Gap Analysis**

<i>Program Importance/Satisfaction (by %)</i>			
	<b>Very Important/ Important</b>	<b>Very Satisfied/ Satisfied</b>	<b>Very Important/Important- Very Satisfied/Satisfied (Gap)</b>
Outdoor Recreation/Adventure Programs	65%	22%	<b>43%</b>
Non-Sport Adult Recreation Programs (Art/Environmental)	71%	28%	<b>43%</b>
Cultural/Art/Performing Art Programs	68%	30%	<b>38%</b>
Volunteer Opportunities	66%	30%	<b>36%</b>
Dance, Music, and Art Programs	62%	27%	<b>35%</b>
Fitness and Wellness Programs	84%	50%	<b>34%</b>
Programs for Youth/Adults with Disabilities	52%	19%	<b>33%</b>
Programs for Teens	55%	22%	<b>33%</b>
Adult Athletics Programs	68%	37%	<b>31%</b>
Aquatic Programs	61%	31%	<b>30%</b>
Senior Programs	70%	41%	<b>29%</b>
Social Events/One-Time Events	69%	41%	<b>28%</b>
Camps(Holiday, Spring Break)	44%	25%	<b>19%</b>
Recreational/Instructional Youth Athletics	52%	33%	<b>19%</b>
Non-sport Youth Recreation Programs (Afterschool, Environmental)	43%	25%	<b>18%</b>
Competitive/Travel Youth Athletics	34%	26%	<b>8%</b>

**Table 11. Myrtle Beach Residents' Facility Priorities**

<i>Facility Priorities (by %)</i>	
<b>Facility Type</b>	<b>Facility Priority Percentage</b>
Trails and Greenways	13.35%
Passive Parks/Open Space	11.06%
Indoor Recreation Facility	10.91%
Recreation Center for Active (Senior) Adults	10.27%
Indoor Aquatic Facility	8.90%
Cultural/Art/Performance Facility	8.83%
Multi-purpose Rectangle Fields	5.67%
Library	5.46%
Tennis Courts/Pickleball Courts	5.03%
Disc Golf Facility	3.80%
Dog Parks	3.59%
Outdoor Aquatic Center	3.45%
Other	3.09%
Diamond Fields	2.15%
Water Access	2.15%
Outdoor Sport Courts (basketball, bocce ball)	1.22%
Picnic Shelters	1.08%

**Table 12. Myrtle Beach Residents' Program Priorities**

<i>Program Priorities (by %)</i>	
<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Program Priority Percentage</b>
Fitness/Wellness Programs	12.87%
Senior Programs	10.07%
Outdoor Recreation/Adventure Programs	10.01%
Adult Athletic Programs	8.45%
Cultural/Art Programs	7.41%
Non-competitive, Instructional Youth Sports Programs	7.08%
Special Events	6.11%
Non-Sport Adult Recreation Programs	5.98%
Aquatic Programs	5.00%
Dance, Art, Music Programs	4.81%
Competitive Youth Sports	3.77%
Other	3.70%
Volunteer Opportunities	3.44%
Programs for Teens	3.12%
Programs for Youth/Adults with Disabilities	2.79%
Camps (Holiday, Spring Break)	2.73%
Non-sport Youth Recreation Programs (Art/Environmental)	2.66%

**Table 13: Event/Programs Traveled to outside of Myrtle Beach**

<i>Event/Programs Traveled to outside of Myrtle Beach (by %)</i>	
<b>Event Type</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Ice-related Events and Activities (hockey, skating, curling)	22.62%
Disc Golf Tournaments	12.61%
Outdoor Concerts/Festivals	9.01%
Competitive Running/Biking Events	9.01%
Performing Art Events	8.11%
Organized Adult Sports Competitions (tennis, softball, volleyball)	4.50%
Art Galleries/Exhibitions	4.50%
Organized Youth Sports Competitions	4.50%
Outdoor Pickleball	3.60%
Senior-related Events (aquatics, line-dancing)	3.60%
Food Trucks/Farmers Markets	2.70%
Holiday Events	2.70%
Outdoor Education Programs	2.70%
Renaissance Fairs	1.80%
Library Programs	1.80%
Skate and Bike Parks/Events	1.80%
Air and Water Shows	1.80%

## Myrtle Beach Residents' Medium Used to Obtain Information Related to Events offered by the Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department

### Explanation of Table 14:

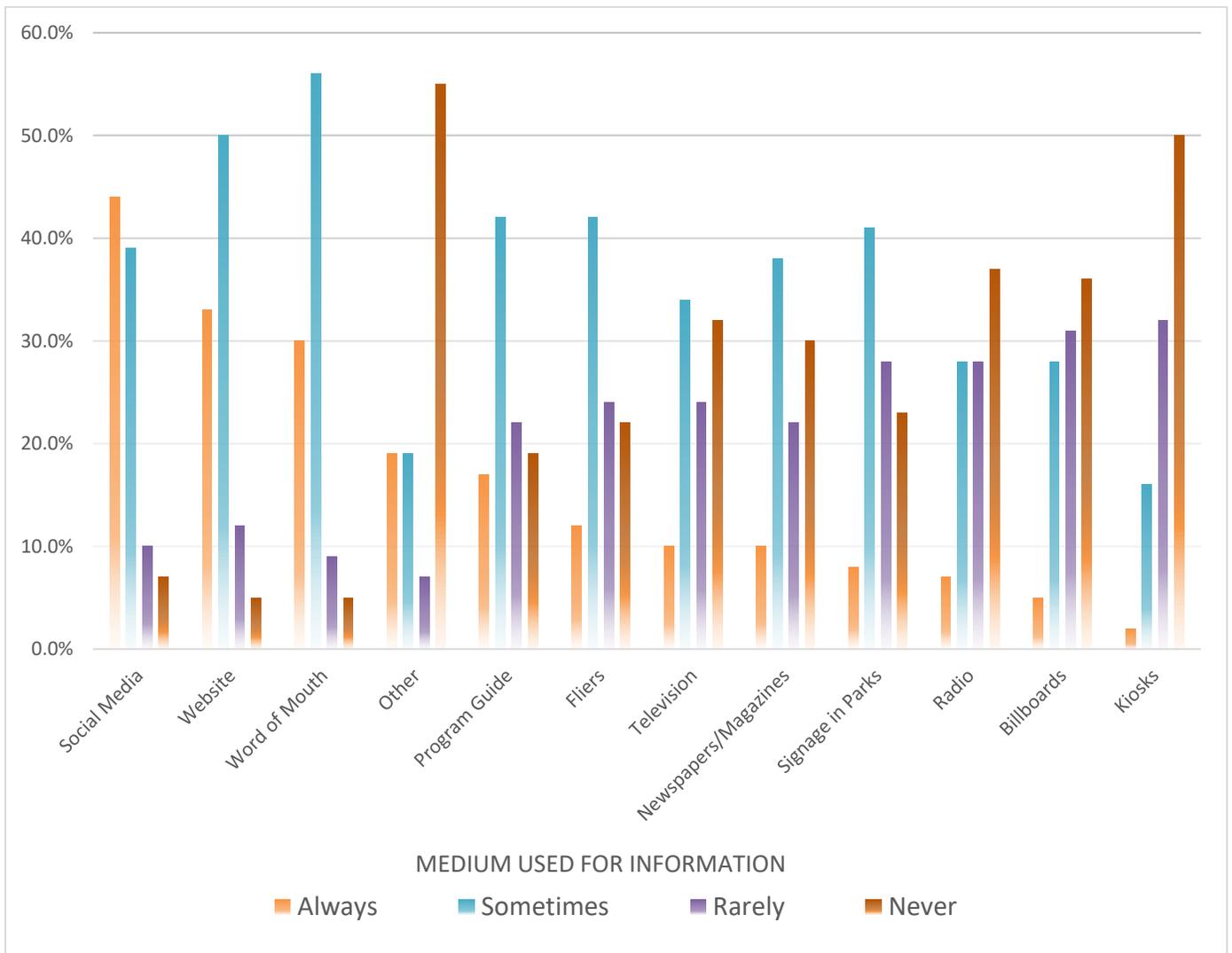
The information in Table 14 (and corresponding chart) details the sources Myrtle Beach residents typically use to obtain information related to parks, recreation, and sports events offered through the Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department, as well as frequency of use. To attain this information survey respondents were asked, "How do you keep up with programs, facilities, and services offered by Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism", and given a variety of mediums in which to select from. Survey respondents had the option of including a source not listed in the survey by selecting "other" and writing in their response. Information is sorted by "Always" response, greatest-to-least.

**Table 14. Myrtle Beach Residents' Medium Used to Obtain Information Related to Events/Programs**

<i>Medium Used to Obtain Information Related to Events (by %)</i>				
	Frequency			
Medium Used to Obtain Information	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Social Media	44%	39%	10%	7%
Website	33%	50%	12%	5%
Word of Mouth	30%	56%	9%	5%
Other	19%	19%	7%	55%
Program Guide	17%	42%	22%	19%
Fliers	12%	42%	24%	22%
Television	10%	34%	24%	32%
Newspaper/Magazine	10%	38%	22%	30%

Signage in Parks	8%	41%	28%	23%
Radio	7%	28%	28%	37%
Billboards	5%	28%	31%	36%
Kiosks	2%	16%	32%	50%

**Graph 1: Myrtle Beach Residents' Medium Used to Obtain Information Related to Events/Programs**

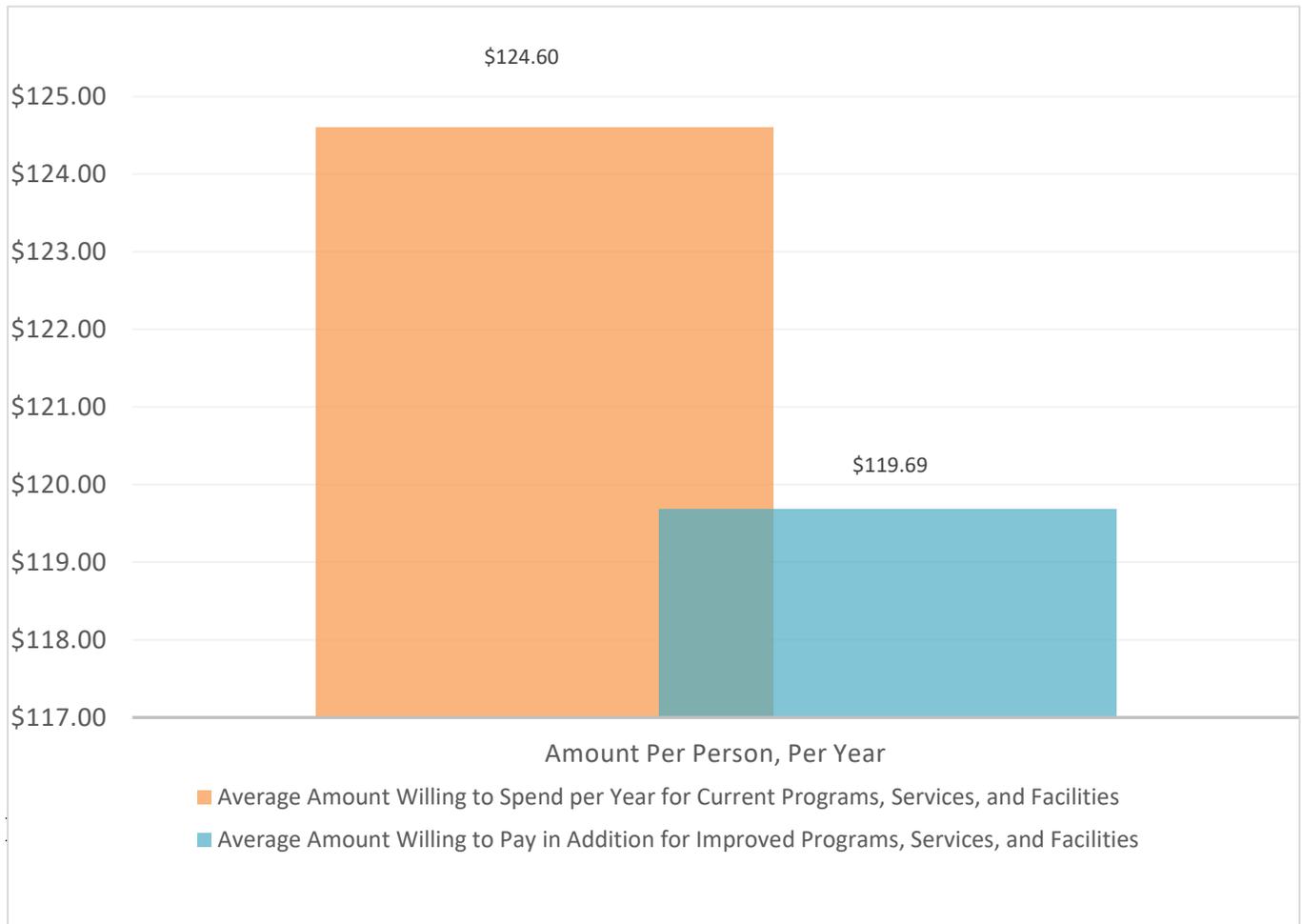


## Myrtle Beach Residents' Average Willingness to Pay per Year for Current and Improved Programs, Services, and Facilities

### Explanation of Graph 2.

The information in Graph 2 represents the results of the willingness to pay exercise. Survey respondents were asked to provide the amount they are willing to pay per person, per year for the current programs, services, and facilities and what they would be willing to pay in addition each year if programs, services, and facilities were developed. This question was presented to each respondent in the form of a fictitious scenario. In the scenario, the researchers informed respondents that they had seized all of the recreational and park facilities and programs in Myrtle Beach. The researchers then asked how much each respondent would be willing to pay to obtain use of/or get these park and recreation facilities and programs back (highlighted by light orange column). In the second part of the scenario, the researchers informed respondents that they would be willing to build and institute new parks and recreation facilities and programs for the municipality and asked how much each respondent would be willing to pay in addition to the previous amount (light blue column). The table below is an average from all of the combined respondents. Each one is broken down later in the report.

**Graph 2: Willingness to Pay**



**Explanation of Table 15:**

Policy questions asked respondents about their preferences regarding recreational policy, intergovernmental agreements, and tax allocation to assist in meeting recreational program and facility needs. The following table shows the questions presented to the respondents and their answers based on an aggregate percentage.

**Table 15. Myrtle Beach Policy Questions**

<i>Policy Questions</i>			
	<b>Strongly Agree/ Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>Appropriate to develop intergovernmental agreements between the school district and public recreation agencies to share facilities</b>	79%	18%	3%
<b>Appropriate to allocate tax resources to support the development and operation of recreation programs, facilities, and services</b>	89%	9%	2%
<b>Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism should play a vital role in protecting green and open spaces for public use</b>	95%	5%	0%

## Observations

- The City of Myrtle Beach Department of Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism is comprised of a very professional and dedicated staff that provides high quality programming and facilities for the Myrtle Beach community.
- As demonstrated by the response rate on the survey and participation in focus groups and the town hall meeting, Myrtle Beach is comprised of conscientious and invested citizens who have a true interest in and understanding of the importance of parks and recreation in enhancing individual development and overall quality of life.
- The Department of Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism successfully provides a wide variety of services including maintaining of cemeteries, beaches and right of ways to libraries and youth sport for the constituents of Myrtle Beach. The scope and diversity of the areas of responsibility that fall under this department is extremely unique and complex.
- While the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism offers a wide variety of services, opportunities to invest in improvements to and new facilities, amenities, programs, and services that enhance the quality of life for Myrtle Beach residents still exist.
- It is vitally important for the City of Myrtle Beach to provide balanced access to all facilities, amenities, programs, and services to and across all socio-demographic groups. It is also important to ensure that residents have adequate access to facilities that are leveraged to drive tourism through tournaments and events.
- Myrtle Beach has done an excellent job of creating facilities to attract sports tourism events. However, opportunities definitely exist to expand those offerings to diversify your market reach.

## Recommendations

### Facilities and Amenities

#### Maintain and Upgrade Current Facilities and Amenities

- The department does an excellent job of identifying and requesting capital improvements for current facilities each year. Working with city administration and council to create a comprehensive and sustainable plan that puts the city in a better position to proactively maintain and upgrade current and future facilities should be a priority.

#### Trails, Greenways Connectivity/Safe Walking and Biking including Additional Fitness Trails

- Across multiple measures, the survey indicated that this was the top-level need in the city. There is a desire for both hard- and soft-surface walking, biking, and mountain bike trails.
- Priorities should include connecting and expanding existing trails/trail networks including the East Coast Greenway, the A10, and other assets. It was noted that there are a number of nice existing assets and opportunities that have been developed in the area but that the connections between these assets is lacking.
- To provide a variety of options for residents, consider expanding and improving the track at Crabtree. The intent of this project is for the track to be asphalt and not converted to a competition level track.
- Continue to pursue the rails to trails project from the Train Depot to the Intercoastal Waterway. In addition to the potential development along the trail and future connection across the intercoastal, an opportunity to create a riverwalk experience along the intercoastal waterway could further enhance economic development and the Myrtle Beach area as a destination and place to live and work.
- An estimate of the potential economic impact of the initial trail development project to connect downtown to the intercoastal will be completed as a separate report.
- There is plethora of research and examples of the impact trails, greenways, and connectivity have on community and economic development efforts.

#### Provide and Protect Green and Open Space

- Passive parks and open space were important or very important to 80% of survey respondents (3<sup>rd</sup> highest) and had the third highest gap between importance and satisfaction. However, when respondents were asked to rank their top-3 priorities, passive parks and open space was second on the list. Additionally, the survey asked respondents if Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sport tourism should play a vital role in protecting green and open spaces for public use. Ninety-five (95) percent of

respondents agreed or strongly agreed with that statement.

- The 87-acre, county-owned property adjacent to the City owned Warbird Park in the Market Common area was identified as a potential partnership opportunity to begin meeting this important priority. Current city assets (Warbird Park, Barc Parc South, A10 trail, etc.) are adjacent to this property. Access roads and parking exist on the site and some low-cost amenities could be developed immediately that would drive use and provide new and additional opportunities for residents. This site would be an excellent location for a tournament level disc golf course (\$25,000) and additional trails. Future development of restroom facilities and other appropriate, low impact amenities like picnic shelters should be considered.
- It is important to be vigilant in identifying additional green/open space properties as growth and development will potentially outpace the city's ability to provide and protect passive recreational resources.
- Because of high population growth rates and the pace of development, review zoning regulations and consider options that require developers to protect and provide public access to green and open space. Review impact fees and consider expanding the scope of fees to include funds for parks and recreation facilities and amenities.

#### Additional Multi-Use Space for Arts, Culture, and Other Indoor Programming (including Gymnasium)

- Other indoor spaces were a high priority in the survey data as well as information provided by focus groups including culture and arts facilities, indoor recreation facilities, and additional spaces for a variety of other programs.
- Addition of flexible, multi-use space for meetings, fitness programs, classes, and other events that primarily serve residents and will increase program offering, capacity, and availability for programs that currently fill up quickly.
- Addition of 3-4 gyms to primarily serve the recreational needs of local residents while providing overflow capacity for sport tourism events.
- When considering new and additional space, storage and office space is currently at a premium and should be added as facilities are upgraded or repurposed and new facilities are developed.

#### Outdoor Courts and Games Areas

- To serve both residents and visitors, consider developing 3-4 areas with outdoor basketball courts, volleyball courts, bocce ball, etc. that are available for open, public use.

## Library

- Plans for a new library facility are in the early stages of development and should be or remain a high priority.
- Consider rebranding and/or developing an on-going promotional strategy to better reflect the variety and scope of programs, amenities, and education/information services provided by a modern library.
- Multi-use spaces in a new library can be used for expanding existing and new programming for the community that meet the mission and goals of the Parks, Recreation, and Sport Tourism Department. For example, the library currently hosts yoga classes. In the future the library can and should continue to be a location for an expanded menu of recreational, leisure, and lifelong learning offerings. Highlight the fact that the library can and should provide a variety of programs, services, and experiences that *support wholistic wellness including intellectual, spiritual, social, and occupational development.*
- Carefully consider repurposing of existing library facility. This building has some historic value and can potentially be used to address other space needs identified in this plan.

## *Sport Tourism Facilities that also Serve Residents*

### Tournament Level Multi-Use Rectangle Field Complex

- Develop a 15, 120x80 field complex to include a championship field.
- Include all amenities; e.g. - restrooms, concessions, lighting, storage, meeting space, shade structures, adequate parking, etc.
- Consider and determine the appropriate mix of artificial and natural turf fields to serve residents and attract events. With field complexes, what you don't see is equally or more important than what you do see on the surface. The importance of a proper base and drainage system cannot be overstated, particularly in a low-lying coastal area. Consider installing misters on artificial turf fields to provide cooling during summer months when playing surface will be considerably hotter than natural turf fields.
- While survey data did not indicate that rectangle fields were a top priority, focus group information and the ability to increase sports tourism activity warrant making this project a priority.

### Tournament Level Tennis/Pickleball Complex

- Develop a 32-tennis court and 12 dedicated pickleball court facility to include a championship/spectator court.

- Include all amenities; e.g. – clubhouse (should be the focal point of the complex), restrooms and locker rooms, pro shop, storage, meeting room/conference room, at least 2 offices, adequate parking, lighting, misters, shade structures, etc.
- While survey data did not indicate that tennis/pickleball facility was a top priority, focus group information and the ability to increase sports tourism activity warrant making this project a priority.
- With both tennis and pickleball, there is potential to attract 24-40+ medium to large scale events each year. An estimate of the potential economic impact of this facility will be completed as a separate report.

#### Competitive Aquatics Complex

- Explore the feasibility of developing a 50-meter by 25-yard competitive pool with spectator seating and other amenities like locker rooms, concessions, etc.
- In addition to attracting sport tourism events, this facility can serve local residents interested in competitive and higher-end fitness swimming and training.
- The addition of this type of facility would open up time and space in the existing pools to expand programming opportunities and better manage the pools for recreational use.
- Indoor aquatic space was in the top-5 priorities based on survey data and focus group information.
- As aquatics facilities often still require some level of public subsidies to break even, the development of a competitive aquatics facility should only be pursued as a partnership. Potential partners may include Horry County, the school system, and Coastal Carolina University.

#### Doug Shaw

- Conduct a feasibility study to increase capacity at Doug Shaw by developing an additional rectangle field and warm-up track.
- This potential project will likely require the relocation of some existing competition areas.

#### Beach Sports Venue

- As a unique option to continue the development of Myrtle Beach as a sports tourism development, explore the possibility and potential of creating a beach sports venue.
- Beach space for flag football, ultimate frisbee, volleyball, soccer, etc. should be identified and developed if feasible.
- While this will be a challenging endeavor, the market for beach-based events is a

natural fit and can be an area of growth for sports tourism.

#### Baseball Diamonds

- As a longer-term project/secondary, consider adding 3 large 350-ft baseball diamonds to expand capacity to attract high-school and collegiate baseball events.

#### *Other Facility Considerations*

##### Downtown Master Plan

- As the downtown master planning process develops, identify opportunities to locate initiatives identified in this plan in the downtown area.
- As an overall objective of the downtown master planning process, consider taking the perspective that your entire downtown district be planned as a park-like setting (focus on human scale with planning for green space and trees and sight lines that are aesthetically pleasing). The city of Greenville's downtown area is a great example of this type of planning.

##### City Stage

- At current staffing levels, City Stage appears to be outside the capacity the department and potentially presents some level of risk to personnel who are tasked with operating the stage.
- Ensure that budget level and staffing are adequate and appropriate to continue operations of the stage.

##### Mobile Library and Recreation Unit

- Provide access to programs among vulnerable populations (low income youth and adults, seniors, etc.) that lack of transportation and other factors that hinder their ability to participate.
- Parks and recreation staff and the library staff and board expressed an interest in creating mobile library and recreation units that can be utilized to meet residents where they are and provide programming in neighborhoods and other areas and sites to increase participation.

## **Programs**

### Outdoor Recreation and Adventure Programs

- Survey, focus group, and national data demonstrate that interest in outdoor recreation and adventure programs is a high priority and interest area.
- A variety of programs and services including instructional courses, trips, equipment rental programs, environmental education, etc. can be developed to address this need.

### Fitness and Wholistic Wellness Programs

- Survey, focus group, and national data demonstrate that fitness and wellness programming should be a high priority and are a primary interest area among residents.
- Fitness class capacity is becoming an issue due to space constraints. As new and additional facilities are developed capacity can increase. In the interim, the department should do an audit to determine if moving some classes may address some capacity issues for popular classes. For example, a class that currently meets in a smaller multi-use room may be able to serve additional participants if moved to a gymnasium space.
- Create easy to follow workout routines for casual/daily users of weight and fitness areas in recreation centers. Ensure that staff are available on a regular basis to orient users to proper use of equipment and daily workouts.
- As space and capacity increase, focus group information points to a desire for additional wholistic wellness offerings in the areas of nutrition, healthy lifestyle/preventative exercise, and mental health programming.

### Arts and Culture Programs

- Arts and cultural programming was indicated as a high level priority in the survey and focus group data.
- The department has an impressive menu of offerings in this area this may be somewhat of a marketing/promotion issue. A recommendation for a coordinated cross-departmental promotional strategy is included below.
- As the downtown master planning process continues to unfold and if a downtown arts center becomes a reality, ensure that partnerships are created to avoid duplication of programs while maximizing opportunities for residents in the most efficient manner possible.

### Lifelong Learning/STEM/STEAM

- Due to the fact that the library falls under the Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism department, there was discussion among focus group participants about the department's role in providing educational programs that build knowledge and skills while enhancing creativity and critical thinking across a variety of disciplines and topic areas from cooking to robotics to coding to carpentry.
- Additionally, programming in these areas can support and supplement learning for K-12 students as well as all residents across the lifespan.

### ***Operational and Other Recommendations***

#### Online/Mobile Registration System

- In an effort to assist in making it easier for residents to register for programs, a procedure for on-line and mobile registration should be made available.
- Focus Group participants voiced a preference for online/mobile registration and survey data indicated that online and mobile were highest used sources of information.
- An on-line/mobile registration platform would also allow for improved data analytics. Staff mentioned that it would be extremely helpful to have an app-based platform that they use on phones or iPads in the field.

#### Staffing

- While current full-time staff levels are adequate, an emphasis should be placed on insuring that qualified full-time employees are recruited, compensated, provided with appropriate opportunities for professional development. Additionally, as the number of facilities and services increase full-time employees will need to be added to meet demand while maintaining quality and level of service expectations.
- Again, as the department grows in its scope of service, more part-time employees will also be needed. The city should review and revisit the part-time employee pay structure to become more competitive in the area. A recent salary survey commissioned by the South Carolina Recreation and Parks Association demonstrated that Myrtle Beach Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism's part-time pay structure is inadequate.
- Given the population of retirees, the department should look into creative use of volunteers. These individuals are often interested in sharing their recreation/leisure passions with young people and the Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism Department can provide that outlet. During focus groups, many retirees expressed an interest in getting young people involved in their sports (e.g. - pickleball or tennis). Another retiree expressed interest in creating or enhancing programs to encourage disadvantaged youth involved to explore STEM/STEAM. These individuals can bring skill sets to the department that the part-time and full-time staff may not have.

- Incentive programs could be started to recognize and reward these volunteers such as punch cards for participation in classes or memberships to recreation centers.

### Security

- Safety concerns were a common theme expressed throughout the focus group process. Specific areas of concern included Midway Park, the Library, and several playgrounds.
- The homeless population, which is a nationwide problem, was at the root of several of the expressed concerns. While no specific issues were mentioned, a sense the uneasiness of coming in contact with the homeless caused some people to shy away from the library.
- The potential of moving the library would help to minimize some of the security issues associated with the homeless population. Improvements to Midway Park would improve the park activation and usage which could help to reduce some of the safety issues there.
- One last concern that was expressed was part-time staff having to deal with security issues. The full-time staff suggested that it should not be the responsibility of part-time staff to handle these issues. Having on-site professional security to handle situations that may arise would be more appropriate.

### Membership Pricing and Structure

- Complete an audit of membership and program pricing structures.
- Myrtle Beach's philosophy of providing low cost access to facilities, programs, and services to tax-paying residents is excellent. However, there may be an opportunity to adjust prices for non-resident participants and maximize revenue generation that can then be used to enhance programs and facilities.
- As the area continues to grow and people from outside the city limits look to use and participate in Myrtle Beach's high-quality programs and facilities, it is important to make sure that non-resident participants do not fill-up programs before residents have the opportunity to register. All programs should have a period of time where only residents are eligible to register before the activity is opened up to non-residents.

### Promotion and Marketing Plan

- As is often the case in many communities, residents do not realize the types and variety of programs and facilities available to them.
- Due to the diverse locations and focus of the department, a cross-promotional strategy should be developed.
- Interactive video boards could be included at each facility.

- Staff at all sites should be trained and informed to provide comprehensive, departmental wide information. For example, a patron of the library should be able to ask library staff for information about programs at Crabtree Memorial Gym and vice-versa.
- The city should allow the department to create and manage its own website that can act as an effective one-stop shop for information for residents and non-resident users.
- Survey data indicated that Word of Mouth, Social Media, and the Website are the most utilized sources to obtain information.