LAUREL CITIZEN SURVEY - PARKS

CITY OF LAUREL MONTANA

nvision RESEARCH

Experience you can count on

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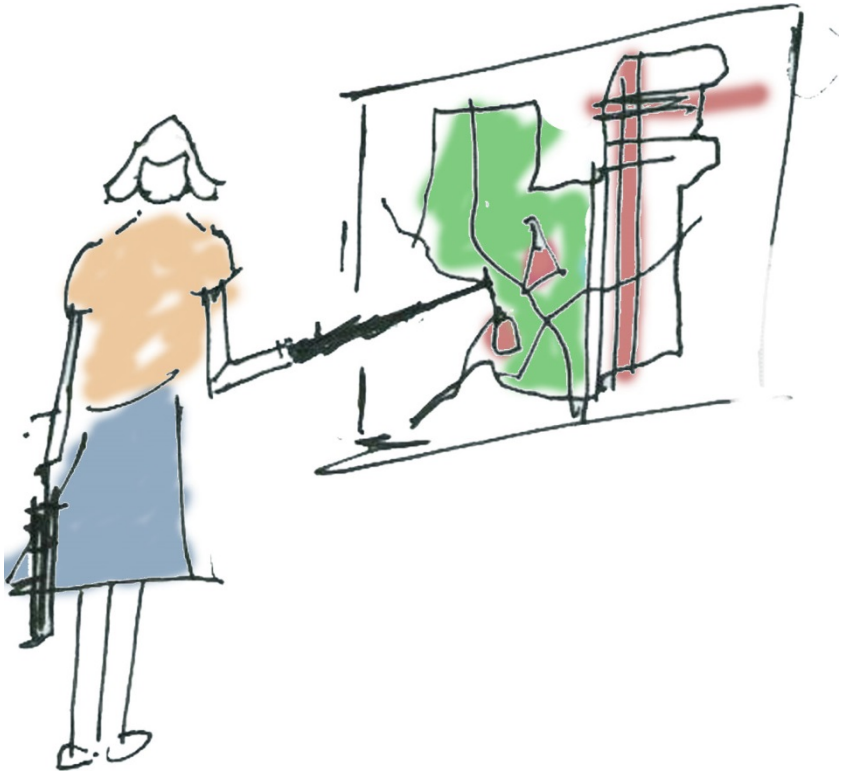
Agenda

1) Welcome
2) Goals
3) Survey Results
4) Participant Feedback
5) Next Steps



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Purpose & Outcomes

Purpose:

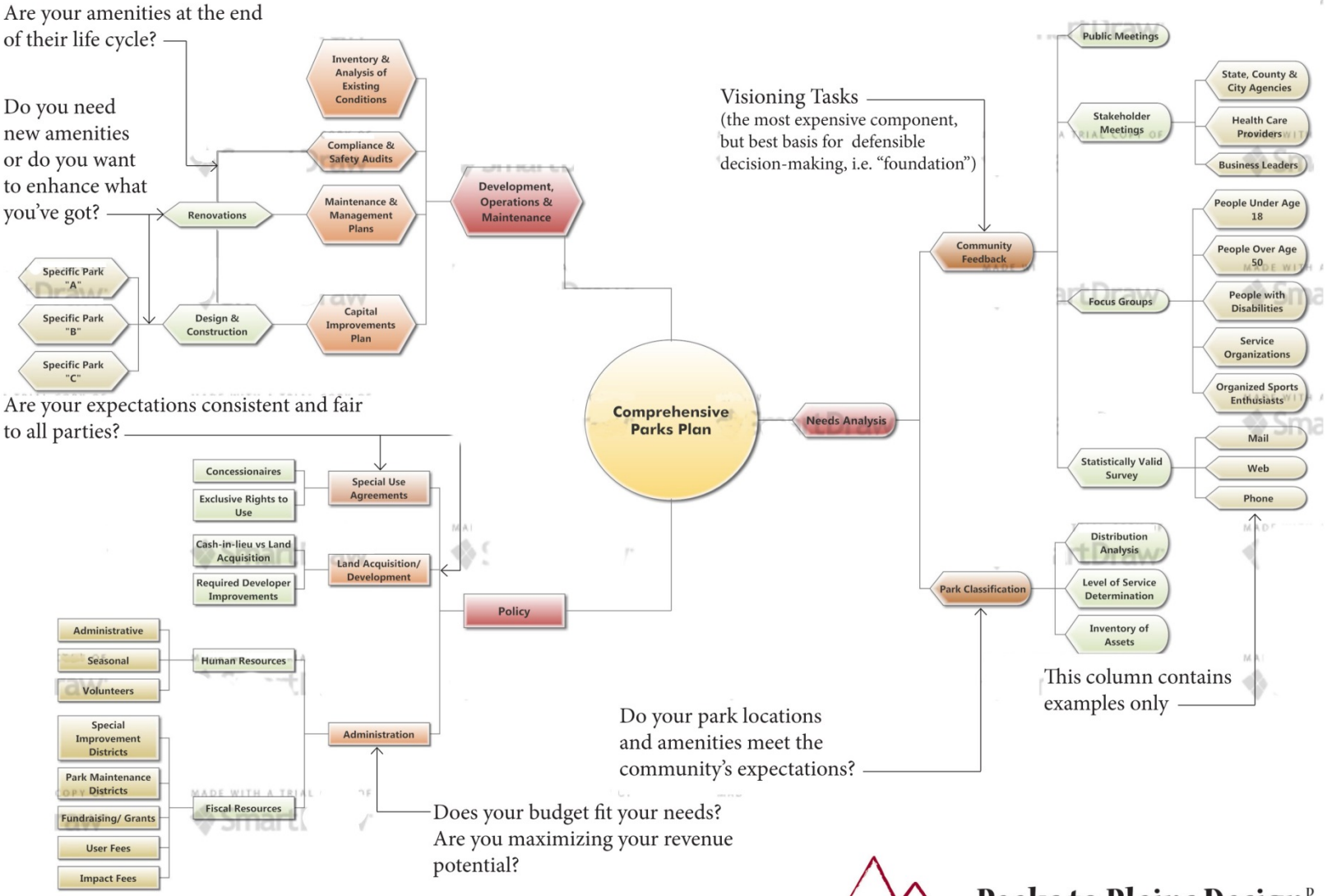
To provide an opportunity for the general public to participate in the future planning for the parks in Laurel.

Outcomes:

1) Attendees are informed about the feedback that the City has received as a part of this project;
2) Attendees will have a greater understanding of the process for developing a comprehensive parks plan;
3) Participants will have the opportunity to express their opinion regarding this planning process.

Comprehensive Park Planning

What are your *first* priorities?



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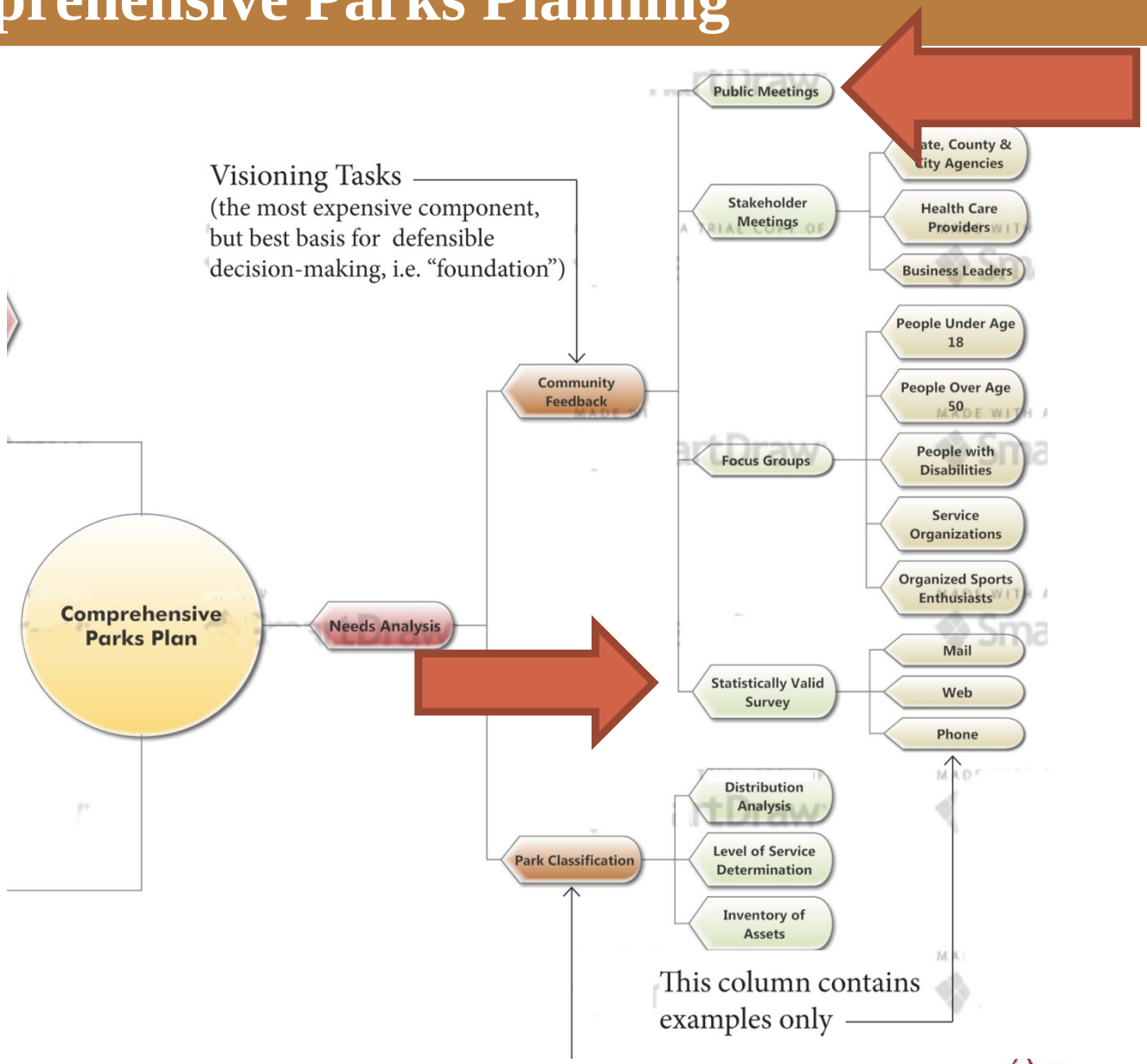
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / PLANNING / ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

PARKS PLANNING FOR LAUREL

Comprehensive Parks Planning



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PARKS PLANNING FOR LAUREL

Survey Objectives & Methodology

- Survey conducted in October 2013
- 705 addresses were selected for the survey sample
- 314 surveys were returned, 44.7% completed response rate

LAUREL CITIZEN SURVEY

I. YOUR USAGE OF LAUREL PARKS

1. Please provide your best estimate of how often **during the past 12 months** you or other members of your household visited each of the parks shown. *(Please select an answer for each park shown, or "Never" if you didn't visit a park at all during the past year.)*

A. Developed parks	Never	1-2 times	3-6 times	7-12 times	13-24 times	25+ times
Elena Park NW Maryland and Duval	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Firemen's Park South 1st Ave & East Main Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Kiwanis Park (Kid's Kingdom) 2nd Ave North & Mountain View Lane	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Lions Family Park (South Pond) South 8th Ave & East Railroad Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Murray Heights Park 5th Ave North & West 13th Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Nutting Park Alder Ave & East 6th Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Riverside Park Hwy 212 South & Yellowstone River	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Russell Park Maple Ave & South 5th Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Soccer Field Park First Ave & East 8th Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
State Firemen's Memorial Park North 2nd Ave & West 1st Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑
Thomson Park 1st Ave North & East 6th Street	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑	❑

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Survey Objectives

The survey questionnaire was designed to:

- Determine residents' usage of Laurel Parks.
- Assess citizen satisfaction with existing parks and preferences for various types of park lands.
- Obtain citizen feedback on how well Laurel Parks serve the community.
- Assess citizen preferences for potential new park facilities.
- Determine residents' positions on issues regarding future management, funding, and strategies for development of Laurel's parks.
- Profile park users and issue preferences by demographic characteristics.

4. Now, please indicate how important the types of facilities shown below are to you (and other members of your household), and how satisfied you are with the pool and playgrounds available in Laurel.

a. Outdoor swimming pool

How **important** is this type of facility to you (and your household)?	Not at all important	Of little importance	Moderately important	Very important
	❑	❑	❑	❑

How **satisfied** are you with the existing swimming pool in Laurel?	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
	❑	❑	❑	❑

❑ Check here if you are unfamiliar with the Laurel swimming pool.

b. Playgrounds

How **important** is this type of facility to you (and your household)?	Not at all important	Of little importance	Moderately important	Very important
	❑	❑	❑	❑

How **satisfied** are you with the existing playgrounds in Laurel?	Very dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied
	❑	❑	❑	❑

❑ Check here if you are unfamiliar with the playgrounds in Laurel.

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Survey Sample and Mailing Process

The survey covers all households in Laurel. A commercial list of residences was obtained, reflecting households with Laurel addresses in ZIP Code 59044, excluding rural routes. The list contained 2,614 addresses, from which 705 were randomly selected for the sample.

Sampled addresses were contacted up to 4 times:

Sep-19: Announcement letter (from Mayor Olson)
Oct-07: Questionnaire packet
Oct-14: Thank you/reminder letter
Oct-21: Duplicate questionnaire packet (to non-responders only)*

The sample is household-based, though a single respondent (typically a 'head of household') would generally complete the questionnaire. Where survey findings relate to an individual (e.g., voter registration), this respondent is represented; where survey findings relate to a household (e.g., frequency of park usage), the entire household is represented.

*Questionnaires were numbered to avoid including duplicate responses.

Quality Control

All completed returns received through October 29 are included in this report of findings, excluding:

- 4 respondents who identified themselves as living outside the Laurel city limits
- 3 respondents who removed the survey tracking number from their questionnaires prior to returning the completed form (this exclusion was to avoid possible duplication)
- 6 duplicate responses (only the first return received from a given household was accepted)

Questionnaires received were reviewed for completeness and consistency; in some cases, editing of certain items was applied (e.g., to eliminate duplicate answers to a single question, to assure consistency on household composition questions, and to eliminate responses to the tax rate sensitivity question if all four parts were given the same value). After review, questionnaires were data entered and 100% verified to assure accuracy of the entry process. Survey comments were transcribed and edited to remove identifying information.

USAGE/PERCEPTIONS OF LAUREL PARKS

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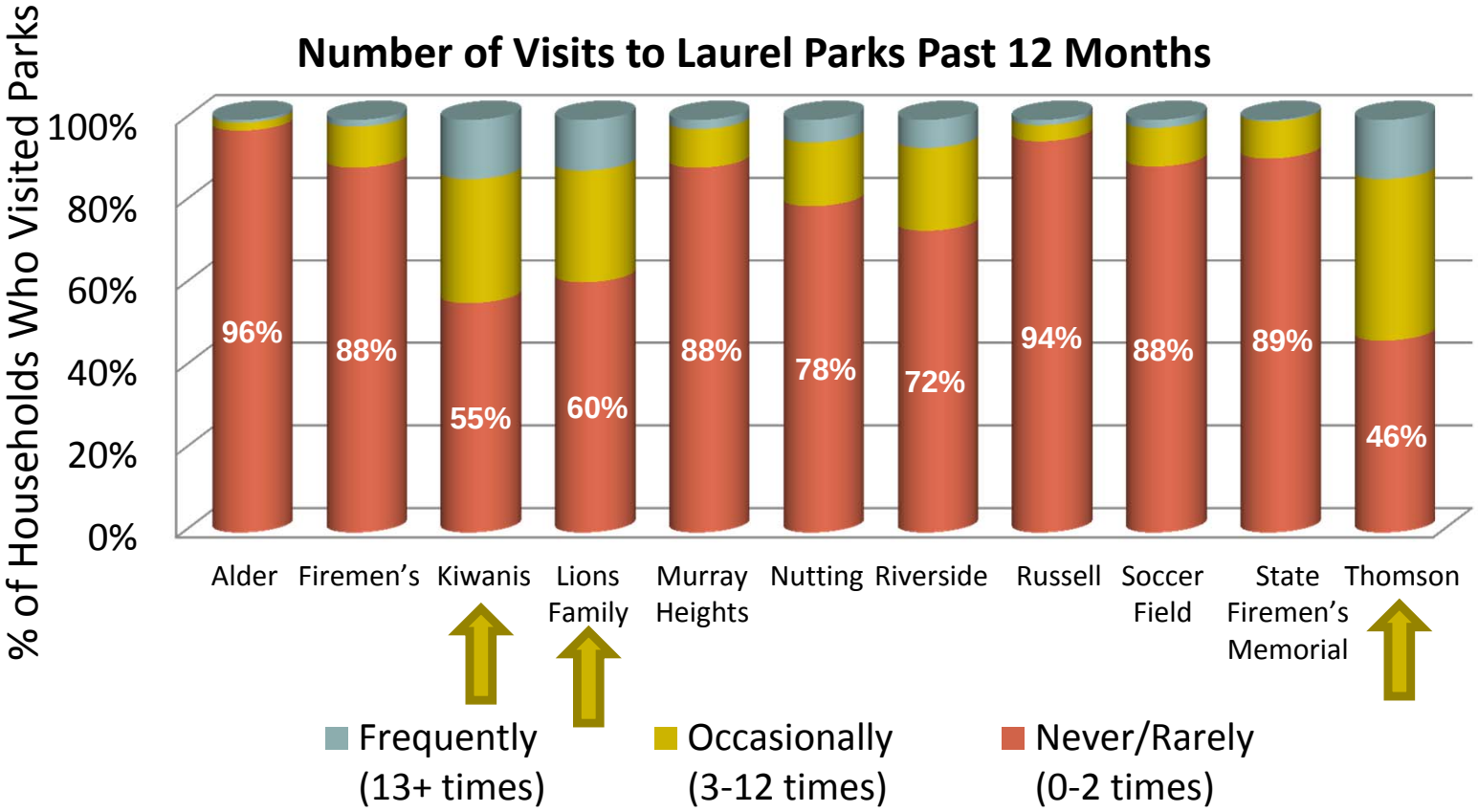
Frequency of Visits – Developed Parks

There are 6 of the 11 developed parks in Laurel that 85% or more of the City's households never or rarely visit. Conversely, Kiwanis (Kid's Kingdom), Lions Family Park (South Pond), and Thomson Park are frequent destinations (more than 12 times per year) for between 12%-14% of Laurel households.



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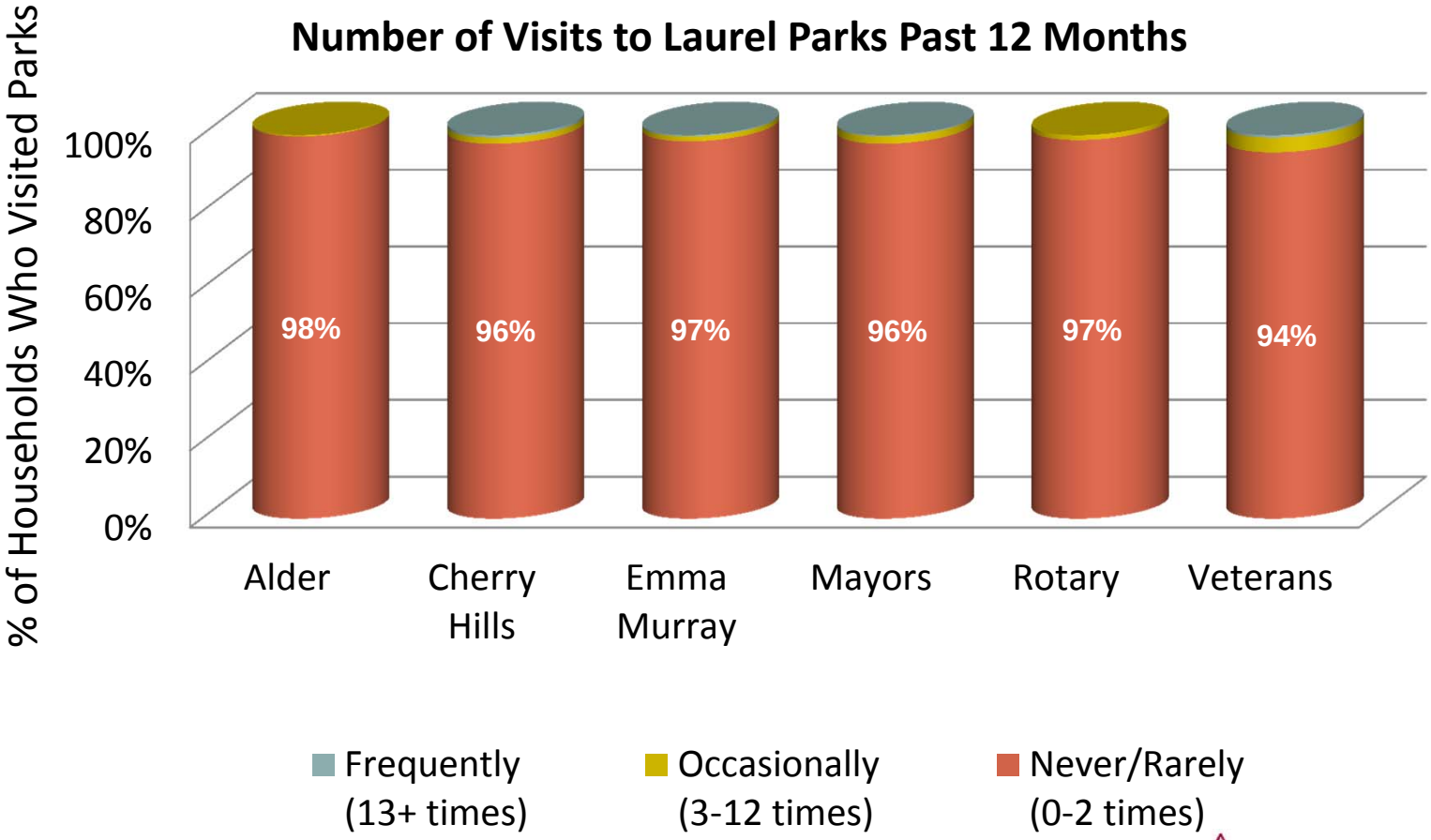
Frequency of Visits – Undeveloped Parks

Only a very small percentage of Laurel households utilize any of Laurel's undeveloped parks.



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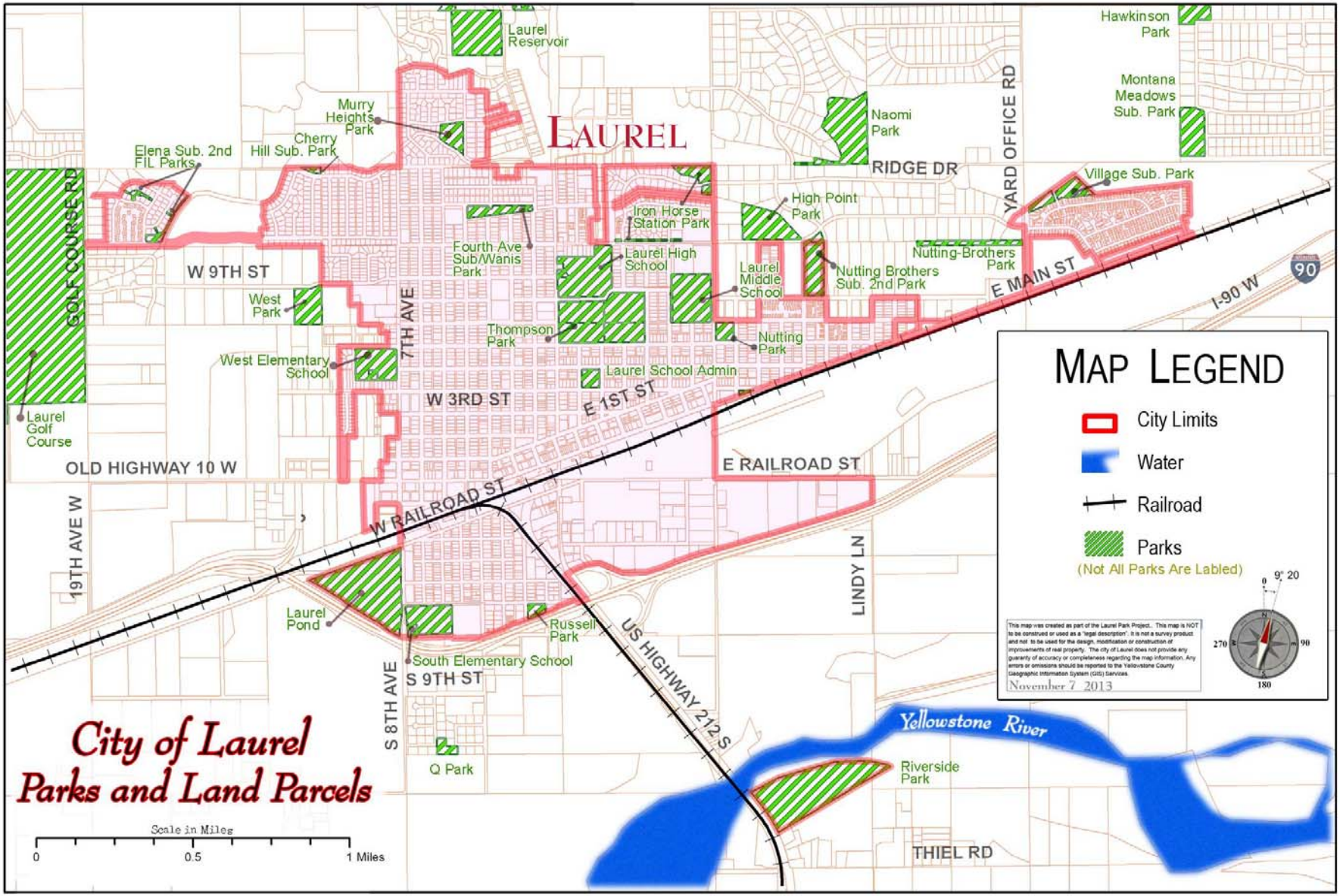
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November 7 2013
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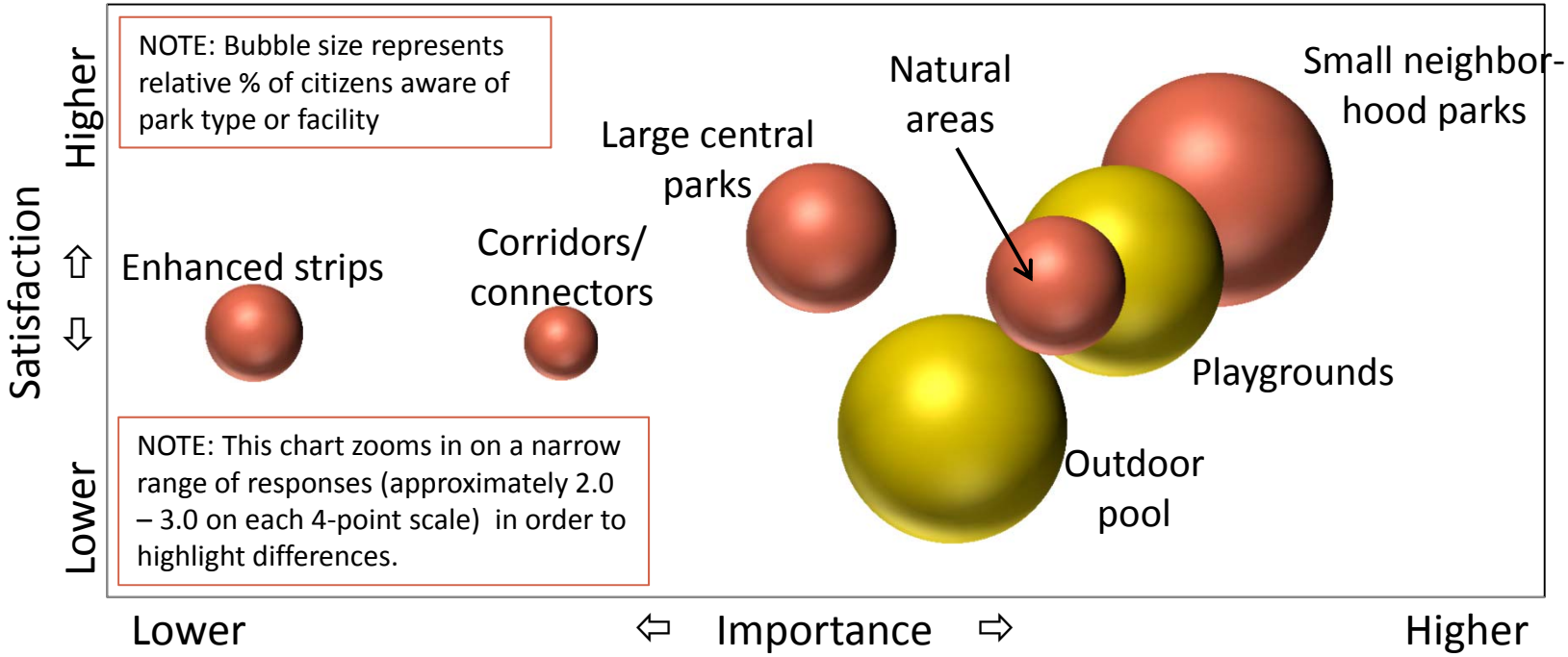
Satisfaction with Park Lands and Facilities

Relative Importance and Satisfaction with Park Types and Facilities



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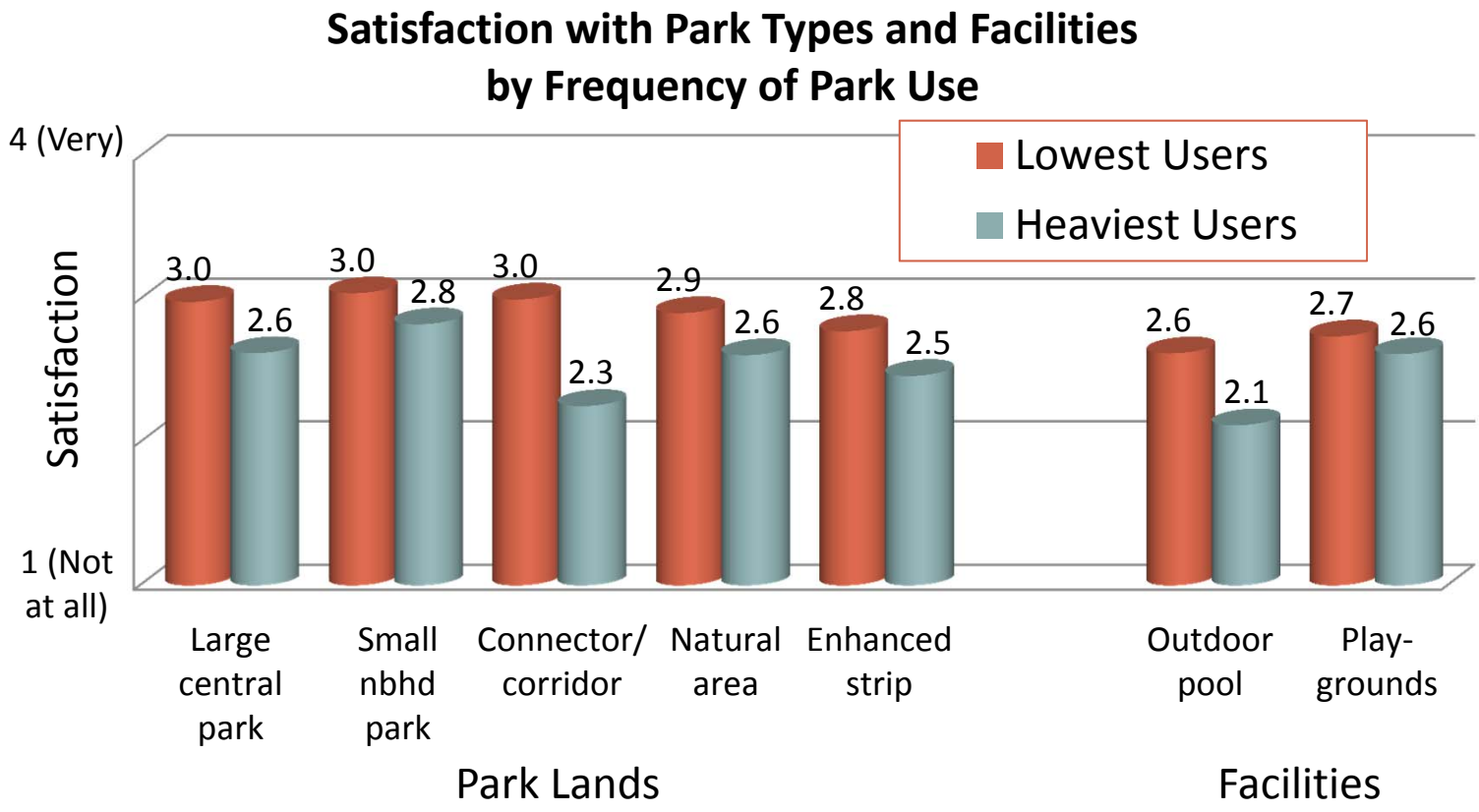
Satisfaction Related to Frequency of Park Use



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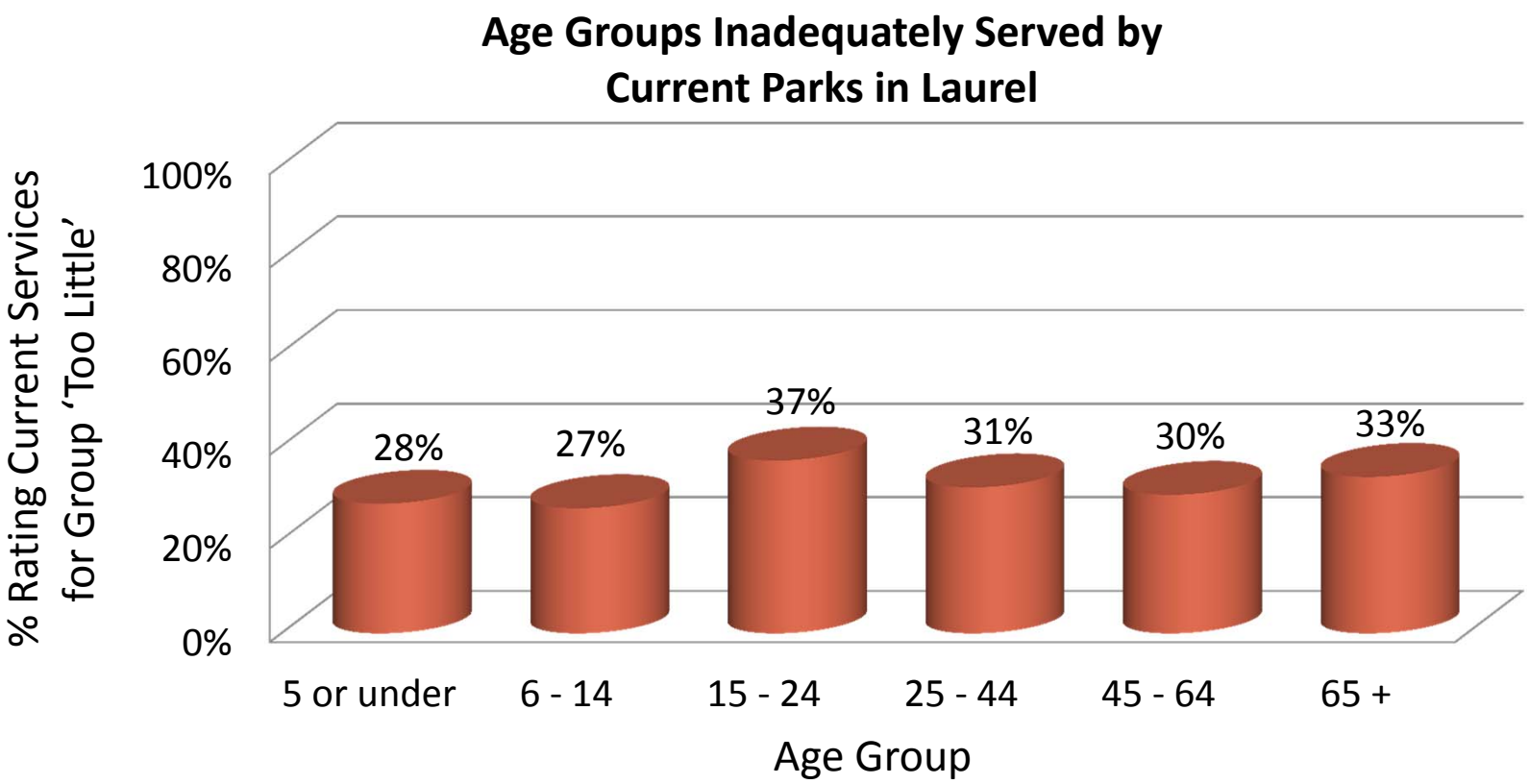
Underserved Age Groups

Slightly more households perceive inadequate opportunities for the 15-24 age group (37%) than for children under 15.

"...small children are covered, but our teens don't have anything."



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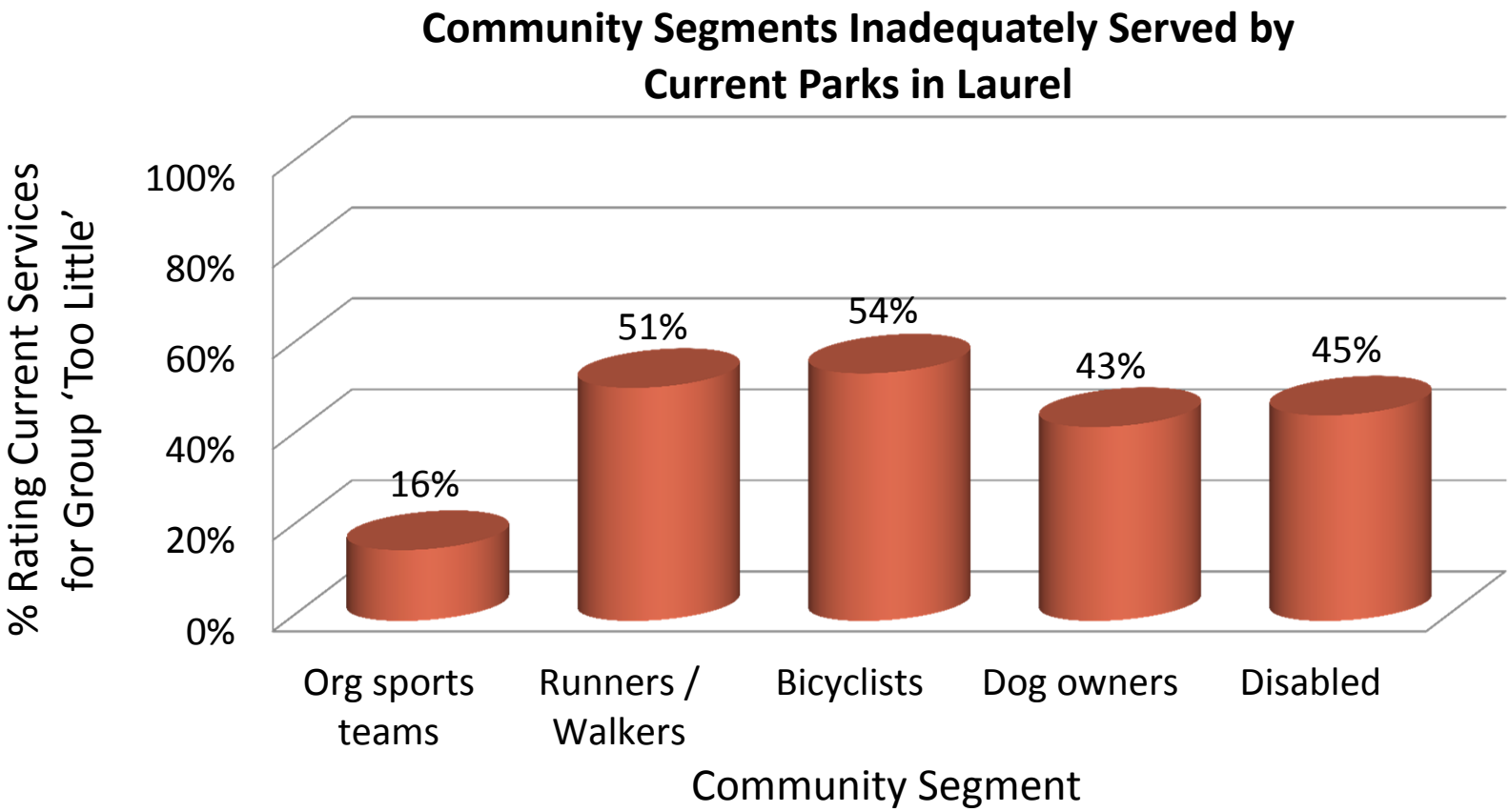
Underserved Community Segments



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PARK DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCES

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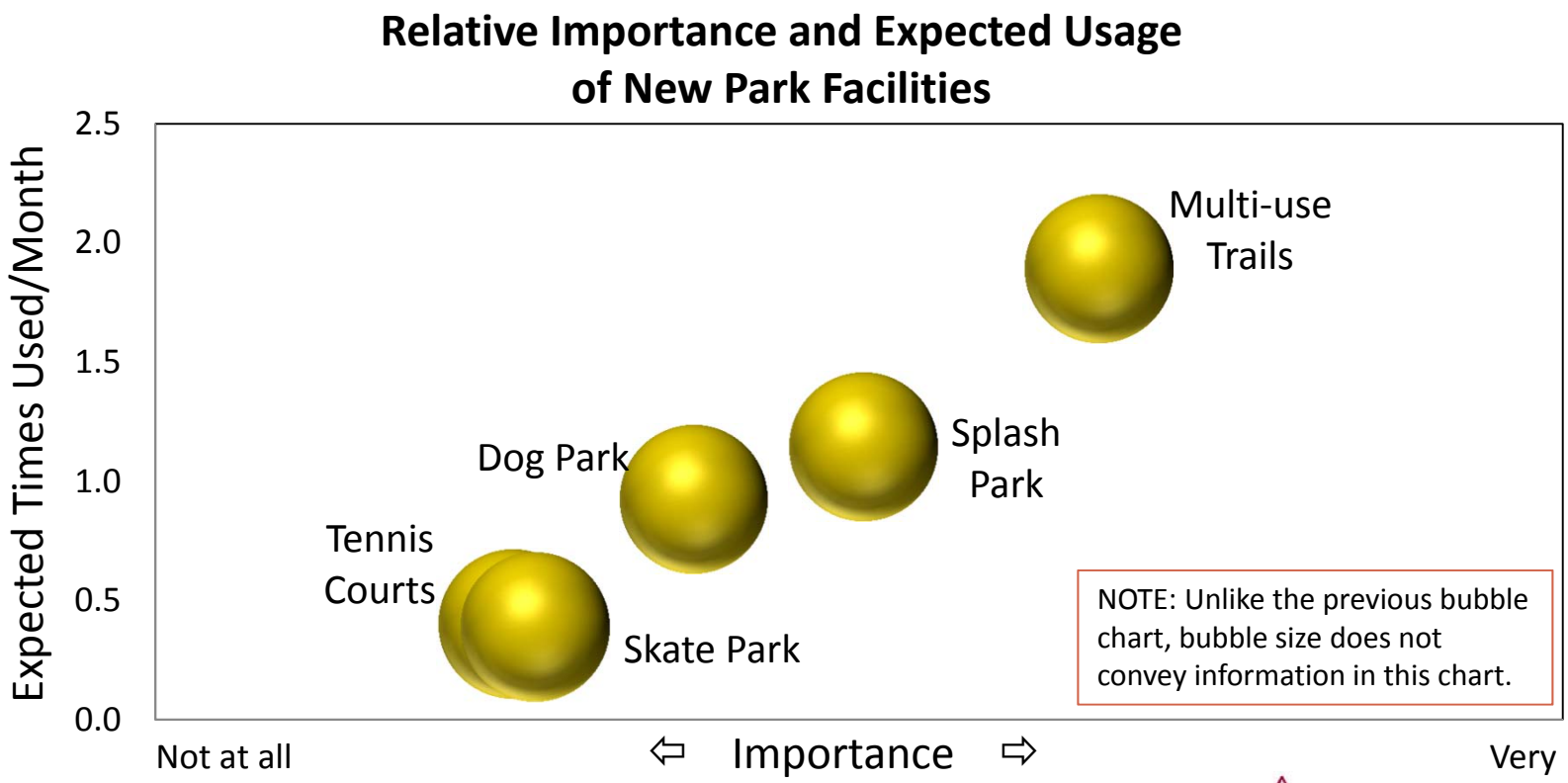
Importance and Usage of New Park Facilities



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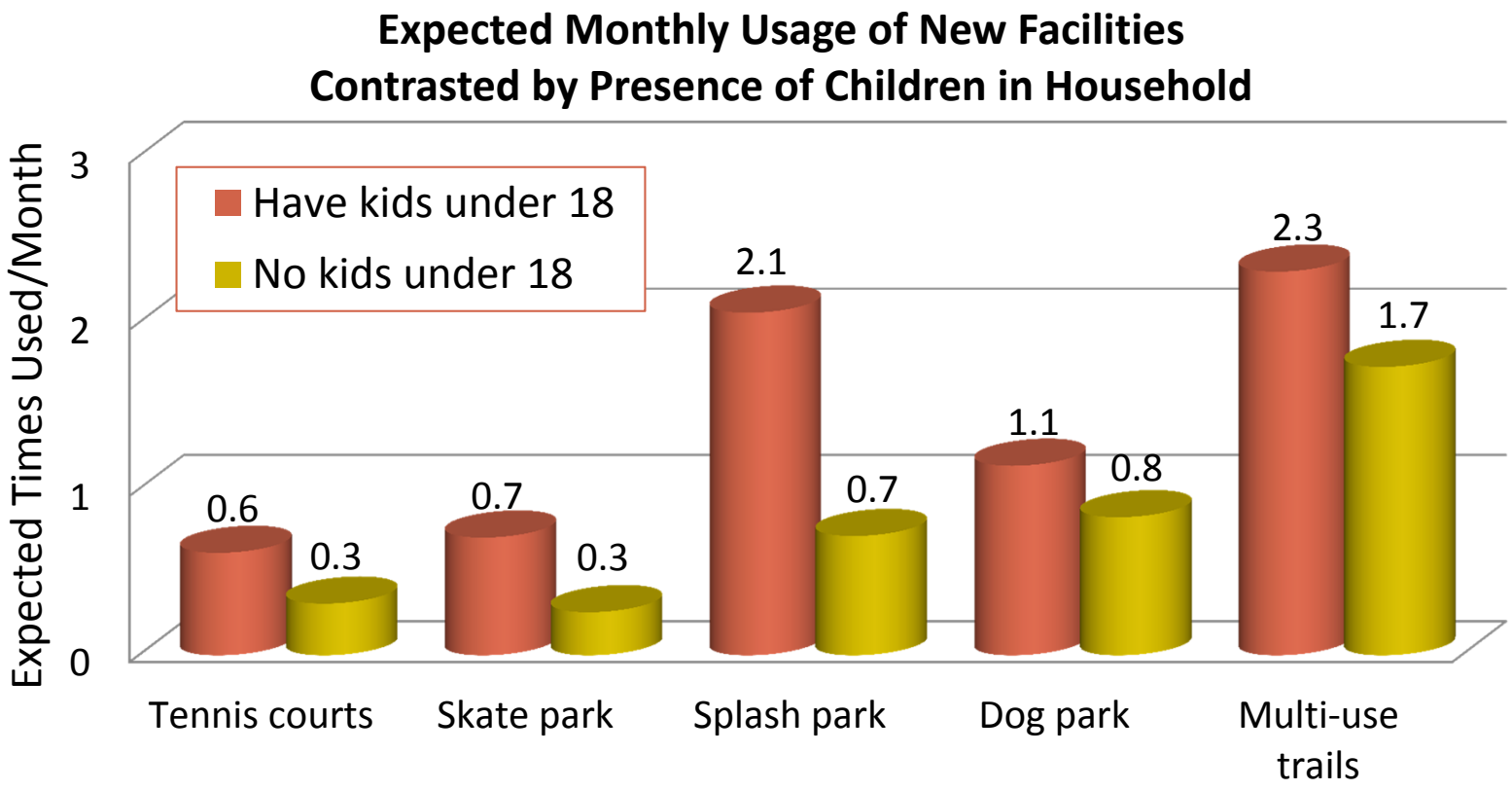
Expected Facility Usage by H/H with Children



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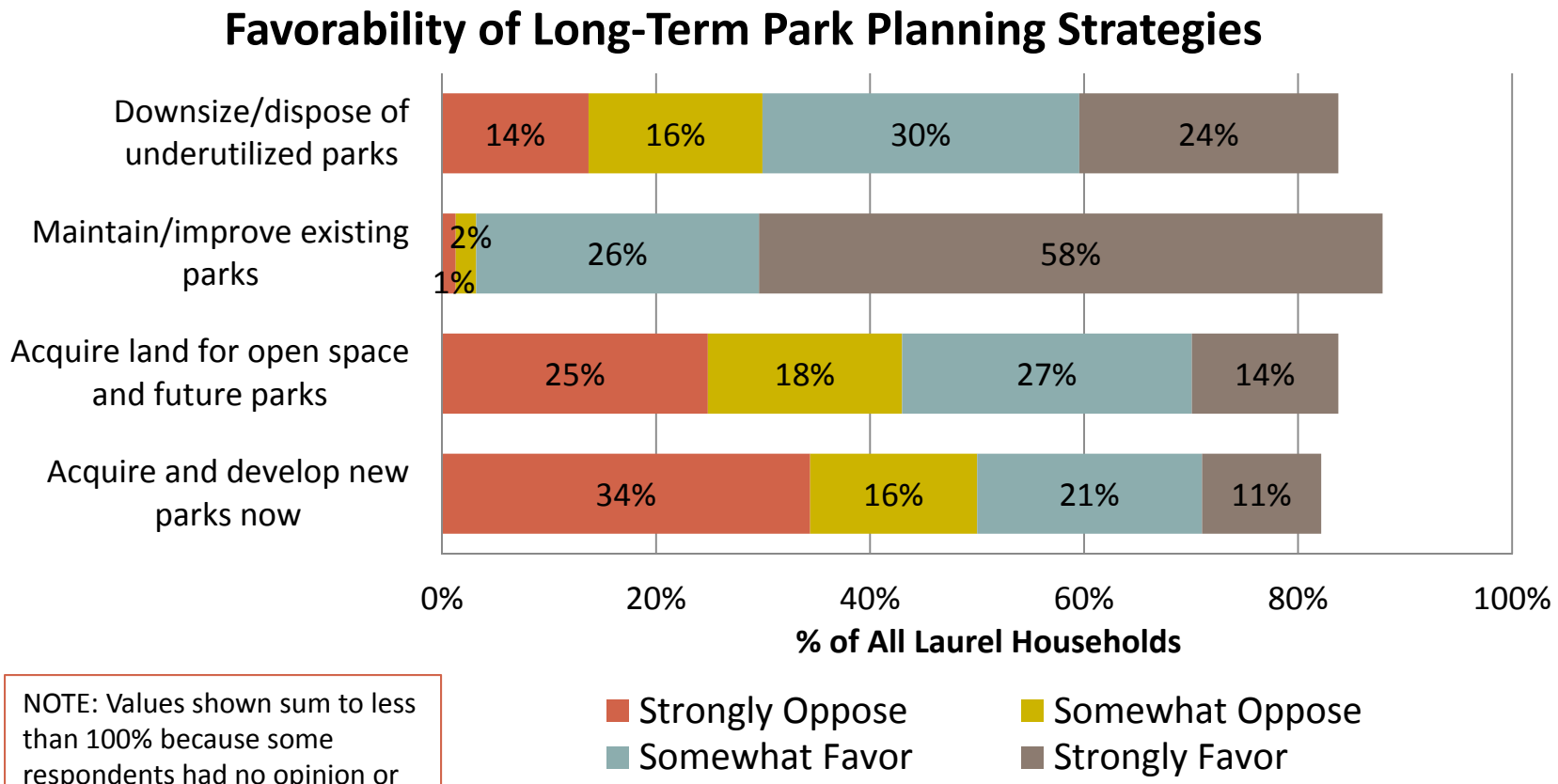
Preferences for Long Term Park Strategy Options



NOTE: Values shown sum to less than 100% because some respondents had no opinion or did not answer the questions.

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ACCEPTANCE OF TAX INCREASES

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Tax Rate Sensitivity Analysis

- Current annual property tax revenue used for parks/household: $90/year
- Can the City generate additional tax revenue specifically for parks?

They were then asked to provide tax bill amounts that they felt corresponded to the following concepts:

a. What annual tax amount on the average household would you consider *so low that you would question whether parks could even be maintained adequately* by the City?

b. What annual tax amount on the average household would you consider a *good value for parks* that meet your needs?

c. What annual tax amount on the average household would you consider *expensive, but worth it,* as long as the parks meet your needs?

d. What annual tax amount on the average household would you consider *too expensive for parks* in Laurel; that is, you would oppose a levy that included this amount for parks?

IV. YOUR PREFERENCES FOR NEW PARK FACILITIES

The remaining questions in this survey will ask you about priorities for park facilities, your willingness to fund parks and potential improvements, and your opinions about how the parks in Laurel and the surrounding area should be developed and managed. Please read the information below, which will provide background that will help you answer these questions.

LAUREL PARKS MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

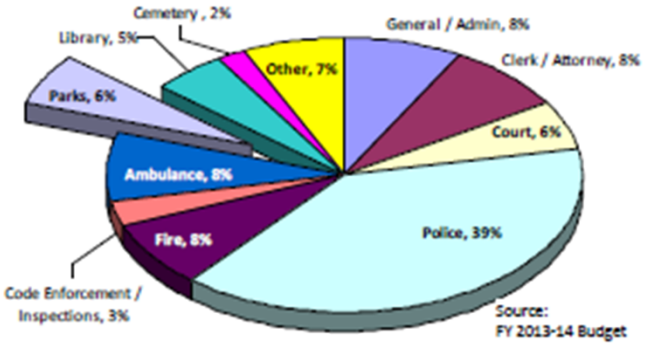
Currently, the Public Works Department has responsibility for park development and maintenance. Laurel's Public Works Department is also responsible for street maintenance, cemetery management, water, sewer, and solid waste disposal.

The budget for parks in Laurel varies from year to year, depending on City priorities and on the availability of tax revenue. The budgeted expenses generally fall under the category of maintaining existing park grounds and facilities. For Fiscal Year 2013-14, parks account for about 6% of the City's General Fund budget.

In total, the budget for parks represents planned expenditures of about $244,000. There are approximately 2,800 households in Laurel. Thus, for the purposes of this survey, consider *that the average Laurel household pays taxes totaling approximately $90/year for parks.*

City of Laurel General Fund Budgeted Appropriations

Total Expenditures: $4.2 Million



COSTS OF IMPROVING PARKS AND PARK FACILITIES

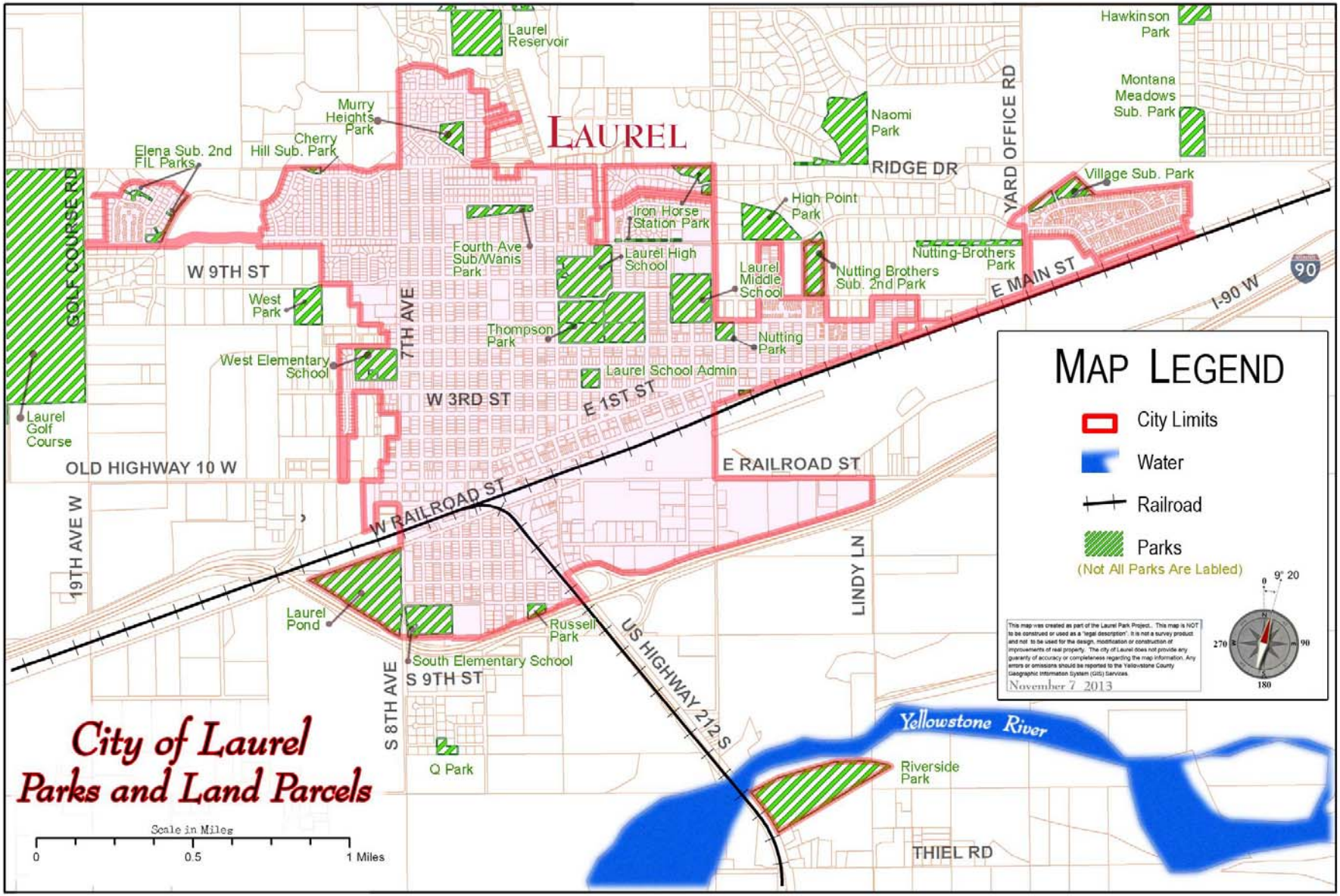
The tables below show examples of the approximate costs for a variety of investments in parks to help you form opinions about the issues addressed in this survey.

Park land acquisition	Cost
5-acre neighborhood park	$125,000
25-acre community park	$625,000
50-acre regional park	$1 million

Facility construction	Cost
Dog park (per acre)	$50,000
Tennis court (unlighted)	$65,000
Playground (including surfacing)	$75,000

Facility construction	Cost
Splash park fountain	$500,000
Skate park (concrete)	$500,000
Multi-use trail (concrete, per mile)	$515,000

Costs shown are approximate, and depend on location, terrain, and size of improvement.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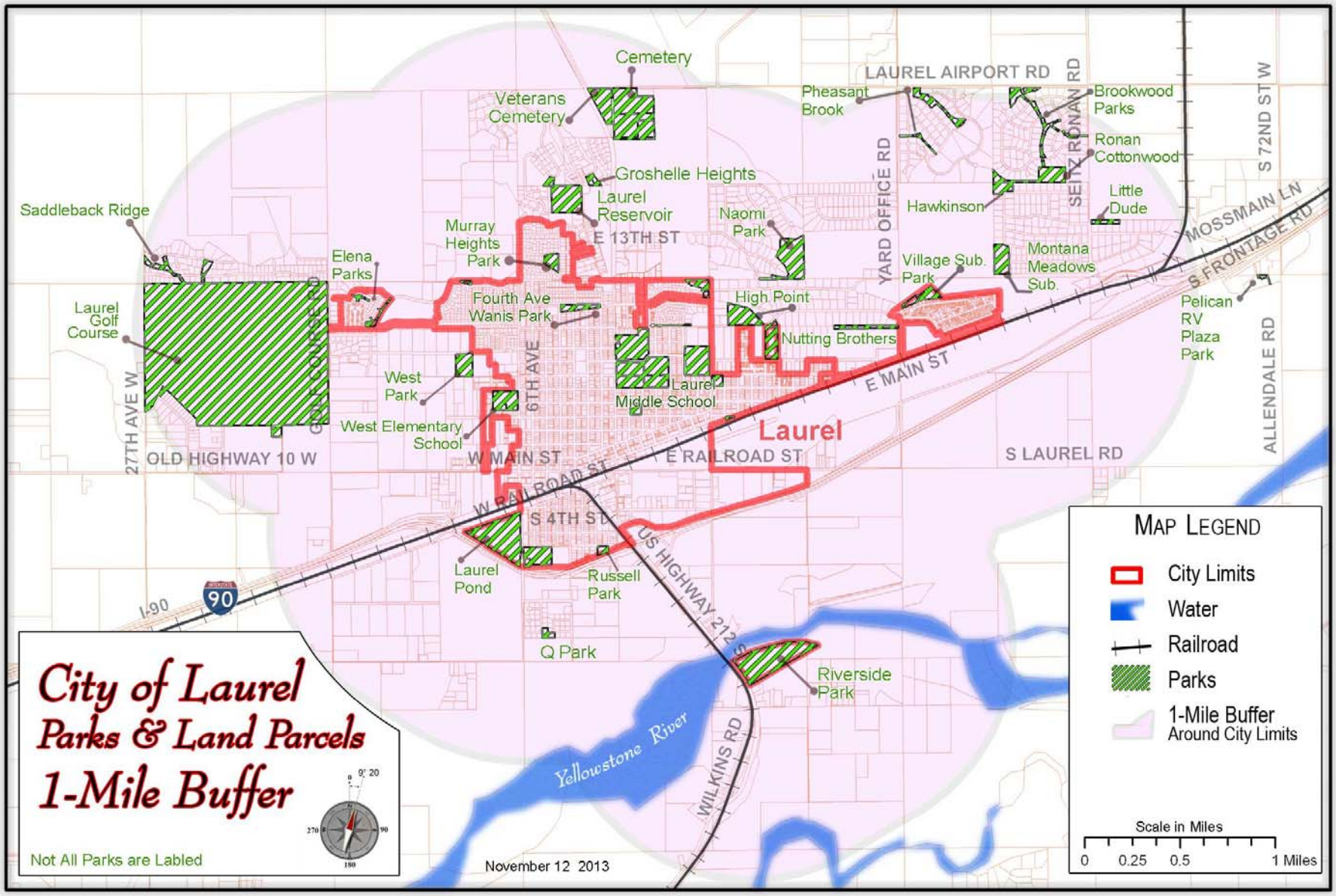
City of Laurel
Parks & Land Parcels
1-Mile Buffer
Not All Parks are Labled
November 12 2013
Map Legend
City Limits
Water
Railroad
Parks
1-Mile Buffer
Around City Limits
Scale in Miles
0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles
Laurel
Cemetery
Veterans Cemetery
Groshelle Heights
Laurel Reservoir
E 13TH ST
Saddleback Ridge
Elena Parks
Murray Heights Park
Fourth Ave Wanis Park
Laurel Golf Course
West Park
West Elementary School
Laurel Middle School
Naomi Park
High Point
Nutting Brothers
Village Sub. Park
Montana Meadows Sub.
Hawkinson
Little Dude
Pheasant Brook
Brookwood Parks
Ronan Cottonwood
Pelican RV Plaza Park
Laurel Pond
Russell Park
Q Park
Riverside Park
Yellowstone River
LAUREL AIRPORT RD
YARD OFFICE RD
SEITZ RONAN RD
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MOSSMAIN LN
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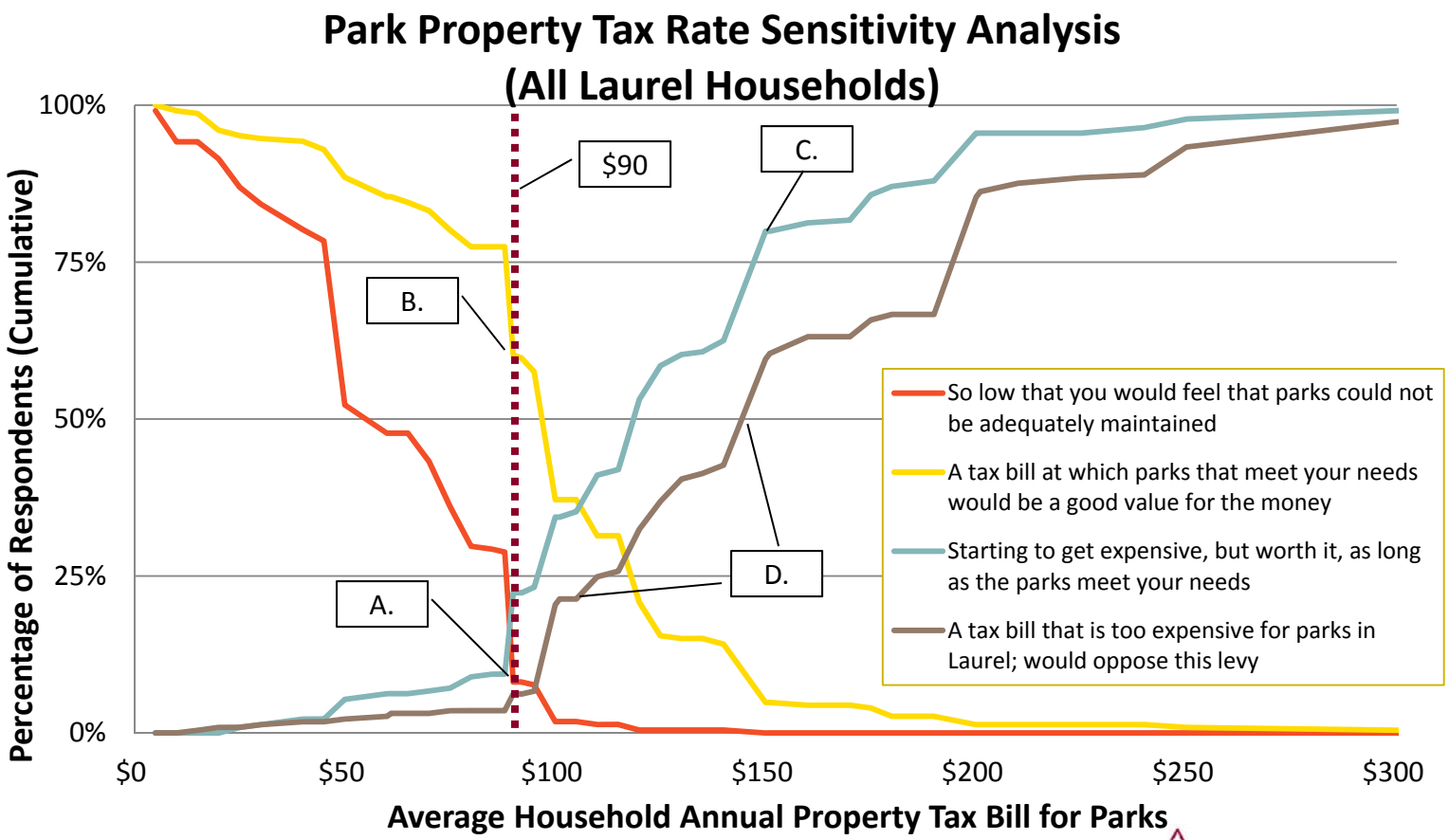
6TH AVE
27TH AVE W
GOLF COURSE RD
OLD HIGHWAY 10 W
S LAUREL RD
ALLENDALE RD
US HIGHWAY 212 S
WILKINS RD
I-90
90

Tax Rate Sensitivity – All Households

A. Only about 8% feel more than $90/year is required to assure minimum maintenance.
B. About 60% feel a bill as low as $90/year is a good value for parks that meet their needs. However, this percentage declines rapidly above $90.
C. Almost 20% consider a bill of $150/year or more to be worth the price of parks that meet their needs.
D. 50% feel a bill as high as $145/year is too expensive. Only 20% feel $100/year or more is too expensive.



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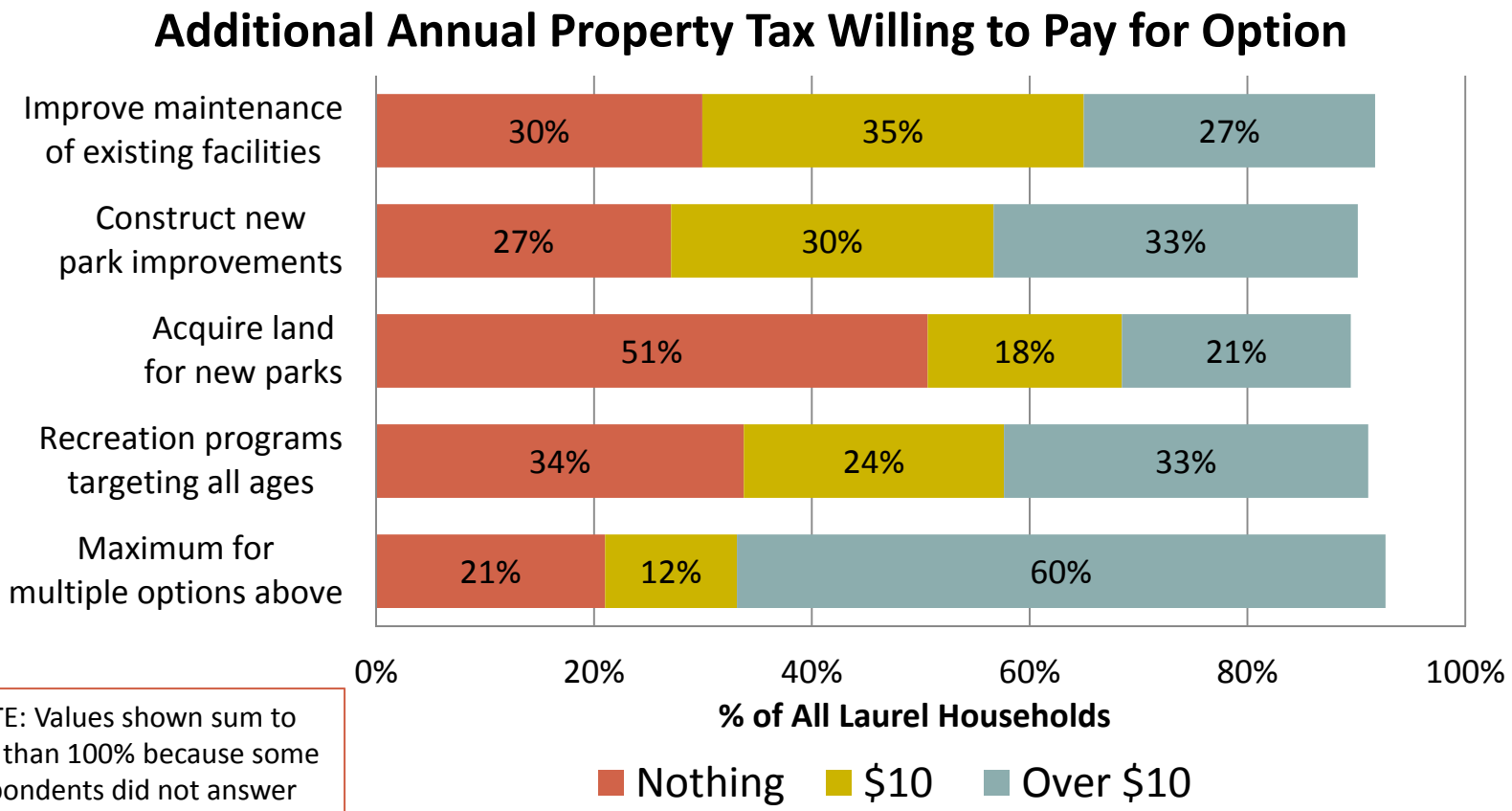
Willingness to Accept a Tax Increase

- 21% or more are unwilling to pay any additional tax
- 51% are unwilling to pay to acquire park land



NOTE: Values shown sum to less than 100% because some respondents did not answer the questions.

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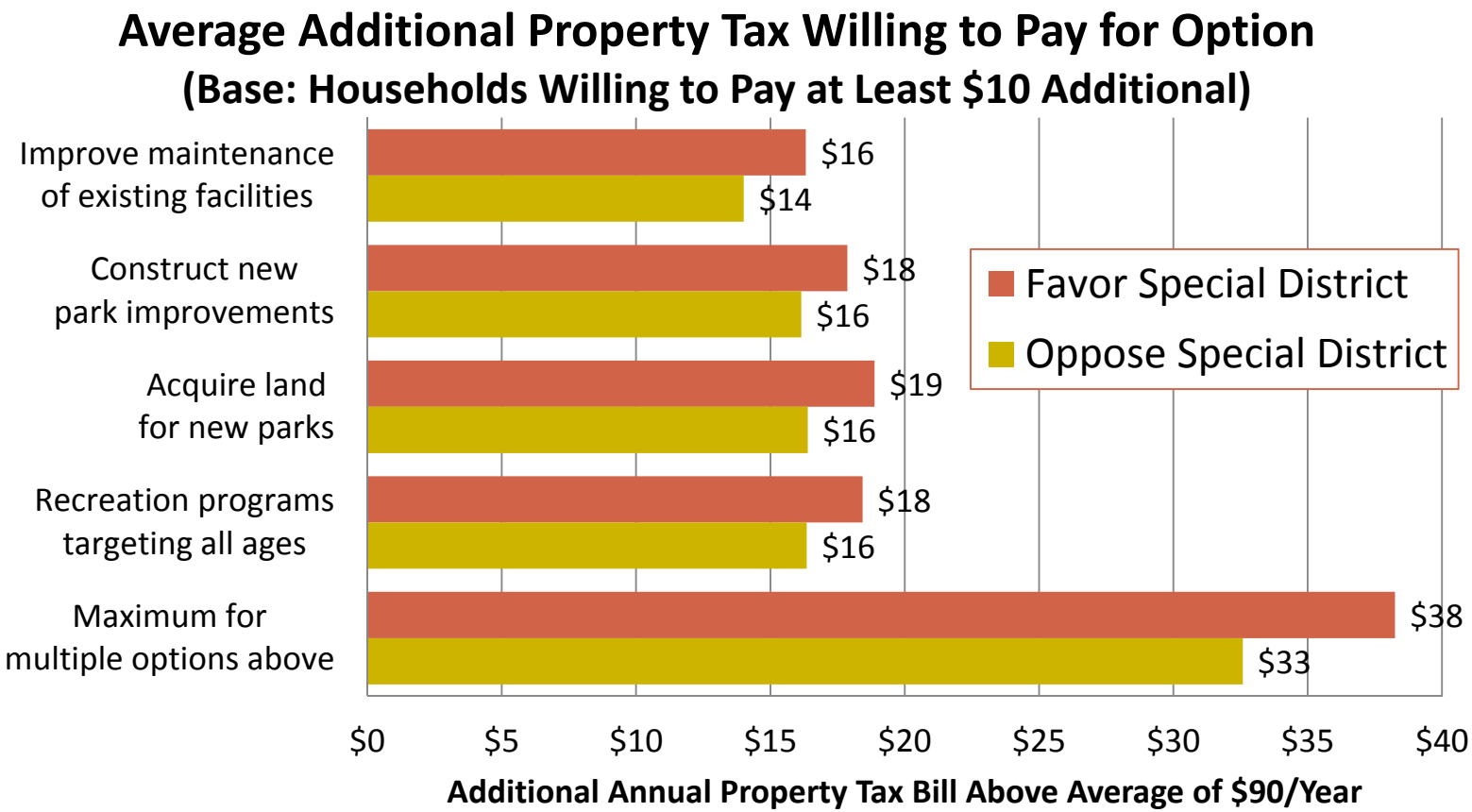
Willingness to Pay by Special District Support



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SUPPORT FOR SPECIAL PARK DISTRICT

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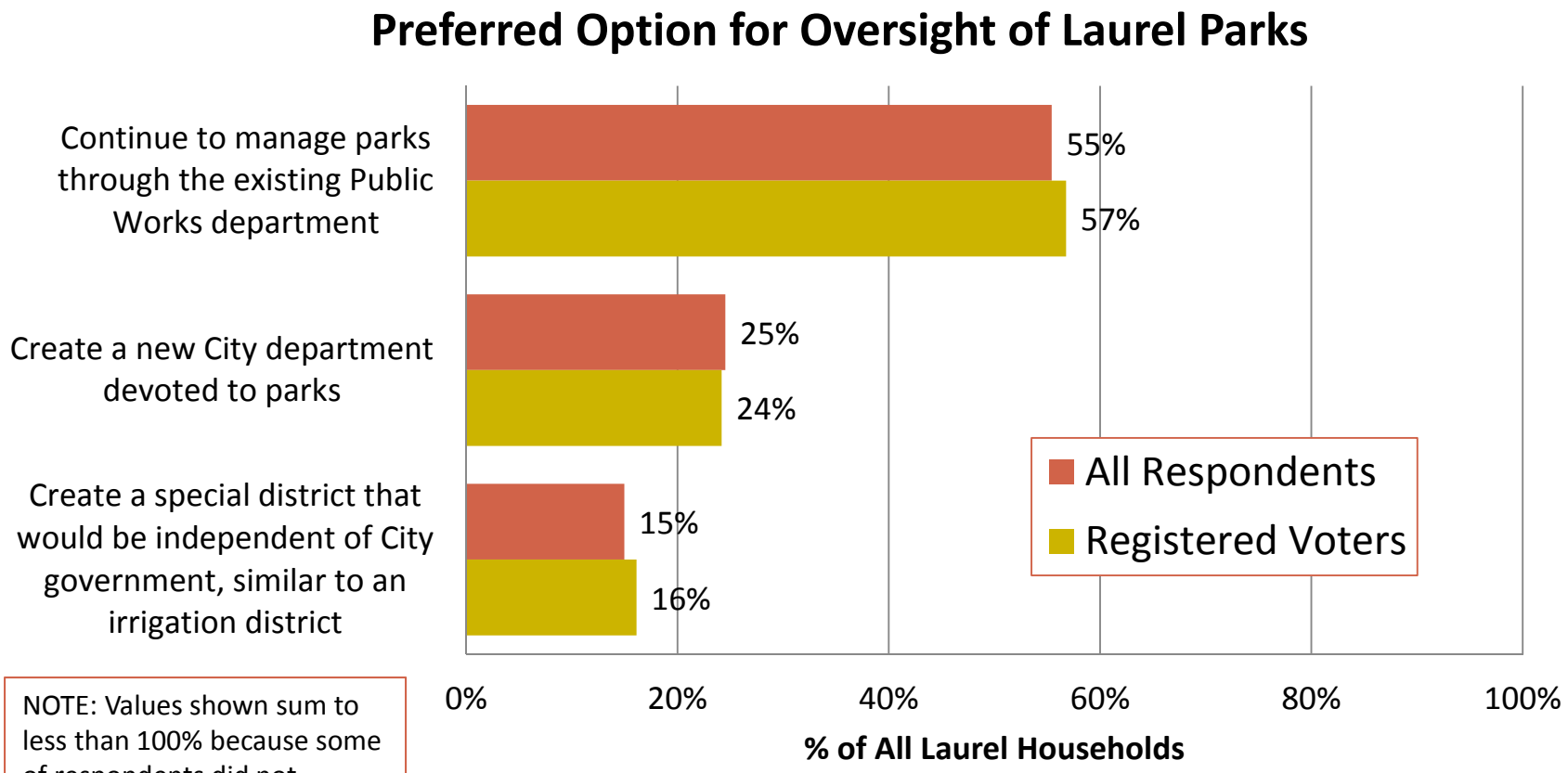
City of Laurel's Options

- Continue to fund parks with general fund revenues, competing with fire, EMT, streets, water, sewer and police (as-is)
- Council can state by resolution a minimum allowance of mills guaranteed annually specifically for parks
- MCA 7-11-1003 allows for the creation of a Special District, such as a park district, to generate revenue and governance
    - City-run district
    - County-run district (i.e. irrigation districts)
- Partner with a private or non-profit entity to fundraise and pursue grants for specific improvements

City vs Special District Control of Parks



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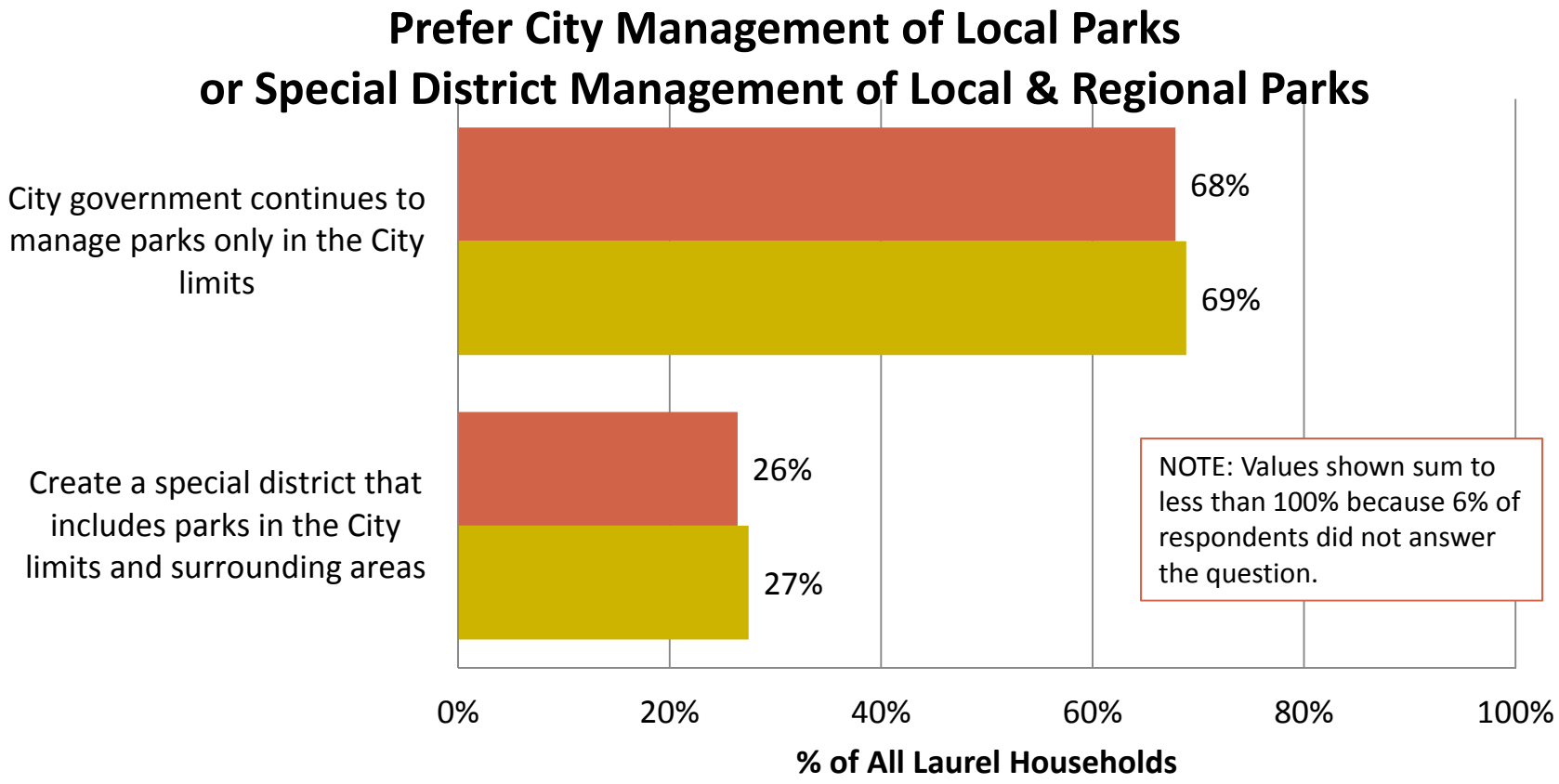
Local vs Regional Parks



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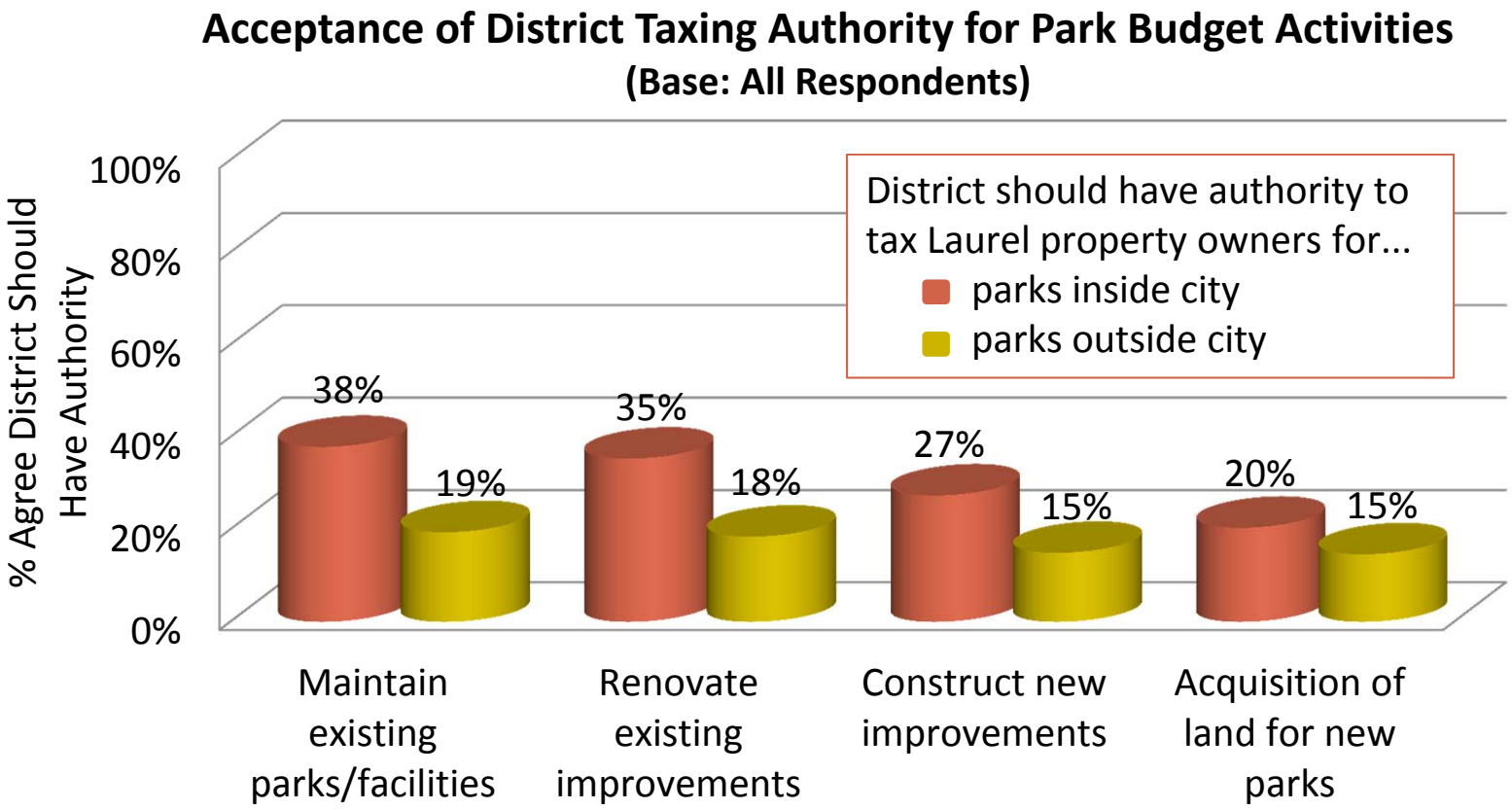
Support for Special District Tax Authority



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Voluntary Comments (Over 130 submitted)

- "I very much enjoy the parks in Laurel and think they should be improved…as opposed to new ones being built."
- "There could be more (covered) garbage cans."
- "Please, please, please establish family friendly bike/walking/running trails, priority one."
- "I feel the parks we have in Laurel are adequate. I do not want to see an increase in taxes for park expansion."
- "I think Russell Park needs to be upgraded. Get a little playground for the kids. I would like to see walking trails also."
- "Sell underutilized park property; use the money to improve others."
- "Question the process involved in setting district that would have the taxing authority for both city and rural."

Next Steps

1. Inventory the existing park facilities.
    1. Can be done with volunteers.
2. Decide whether or not to pursue a Special District for Laurel's parks.
    1. Additional taxation can only realistically generate between $85K - $114K per year above the current general fund allocation within City limits.
3. Identify & prioritize potential improvements to the highest use park lands.
    1. Pursue grants & donations
4. Consider selling underutilized park land & applying those funds to park improvements.

For More Information

CONTACT

Please contact:

Peaks to Plains Design, P.C.
404 North 31 Street, Suite 405
Billings, Montana 59101
(406) 294-9499
www.peakstoplains.com

nVision Research
1602 S. Parker Road, Suite 203
Denver, Colorado 80231
(303) 322-1220
www.nvisionresearch.com

This is a project of the City of Laurel's Park Board

Connecting People To Their Environment

Peaks to Plains Design