

Oak Brook Park District Community Engagement Report

Community Survey &
Focus Groups Summary



Winter 2024 — Summer 2025





About Us	4
Introduction	5
Survey Brief	6
Focus Group Brief	14
Key Takeaways & Action Items	17



Mission

To provide the *very best* in **park and recreational opportunities, facilities, and open lands** for our community.

Since 1962, the parks, programs, and facilities of the Oak Brook Park District have become uniquely connected with the identity of Oak Brook. Over time, individuals' lives have also been enhanced through the Park District's mission to help its residents to be happy, fit, and active. A strong mission and core values have sustained an organizational culture focused on accessibility and inclusion, collaboration, communication, holistic wellness, customer service, and environmental conservation stewardship.

Culture and history contribute to the vibrancy of the community and serve as a catalyst for economic activity, tourism, and development. Our boundaries have 9,138 residents (2024 DuPage County GIS population for Park District Boundaries). The Oak Brook Park District is a reflection of this lively community.

VISION

To provide a diverse range of opportunities designed to keep the members of the Greater Oak Brook Community happy, fit and active. By maintaining fiscally responsible practices and focusing on communication, environmental stewardship, diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility, the Oak Brook Park District works to help our community as a whole be its very best and feel its very best.

During the winter months of 2024, the Oak Brook Park District partnered with Campfire Concepts to conduct a comprehensive community survey aimed at gathering input from Oak Brook residents. This effort was designed to assess current satisfaction levels, identify usage patterns and preferences, highlight potential gaps in existing offerings, and help guide the prioritization of future investments in programs, facilities, and services.

While the survey provided meaningful data, the overall response rate was slightly lower than that of comparable efforts conducted by other park districts across Illinois. To supplement these results and deepen our understanding of resident perspectives, the Park District engaged EGV Consulting to conduct a series of focus groups in May, 2025.

By combining the quantitative findings from the survey with the qualitative insights gathered through focus group discussions, the Oak Brook Park District has developed a more holistic and nuanced understanding of community needs and individual experiences. This integrated approach will help ensure that future planning efforts reflect both broad trends and the diverse voices within our community.

This document details the findings of both the survey and focus groups, which together support our key takeaways and recommended action items for the coming years.



**OAK BROOK PARK DISTRICT
SURVEY BRIEF**

Completed For
The Oak Brook Park District
By
Campfire Concepts
Champaign, IL
February, 2025

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This report presents observations, commentary, and analysis of the Oak Brook Park District community survey that was conducted during the winter months of 2024. The overarching goal of the study is to assess resident needs and preferences regarding local parks, recreation facilities, and programs. Understanding community perspectives is critical for effective planning and resource allocation. This study is a unique starting point for enabling the Oak Brook Park District to strategically enhance existing resources, develop new initiatives, and ultimately better serve the needs of its residents.

The study was designed to gather information regarding several key areas:

- Utilization of existing resources and satisfaction levels regarding parks and facilities.
- Understanding use patterns, preferences, and customer satisfaction are essential components for identifying areas of strength and opportunities for improvement.
- This study explores gaps in current offerings and seeks to identify potential demand for new opportunities. Understanding these unmet needs allows for targeted development and ensures resources are allocated effectively.
- Prioritization of future investments: Given limited resources, it is crucial to understand resident direction about capital projects and budgetary spending as well as types of recreation services and offerings through data-driven decision making.
- Demographic analysis of user groups: Examining responses across different demographic groups allows for a nuanced understanding of diverse needs and preferences to ensure access and programming for all community members.

The data collected through this survey provides important information regarding the community's vision for its parks and recreation system and Oak Brook Park District operations and services. This report details a brief overview of survey methodology, presents observations about the findings, and offers recommendations to enhance resident engagement through a mixed methods approach. The information contained herein can be utilized as an important component to help shape the future direction of the Oak Brook Park District.





APPROACH TO INITIAL ENGAGEMENT

The Oak Brook Park District chose to distribute its survey as a census by sending a quick response code (QR code) link to the survey by postcard to each household within its district boundaries. This type of public input holds a unique position among data collection methods due to its goal of allowing every household an opportunity to participate in the study.

Unlike sample surveys that extrapolate findings from a subset of the population, a census aims to capture data from as many resident individuals or households as possible. While it can be resource-intensive, the comprehensive nature of a census provides a

foundational dataset that may serve as a benchmark to compare with other studies and offer insights into the attitudes and interests of Oak Brook Park District residents.

While a census provides a comprehensive snapshot of Oak Brook Park District residents at a specific point in time, intercept surveys can offer valuable supplementary insights and context. In this case, the census response did not achieve desired outcomes, so intercept surveys of residents were conducted at Park District facilities to gather additional responses.

The combined effort produced 197 responses, which is roughly 7% of households. This figure is slightly lower than census response totals for other park districts. Therefore, it is recommended to proceed with a mixed methods approach to supplement the information that has been received. A series of focus groups will provide an additional method for residents to share their opinions, attitudes, and interests. This approach will combine quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more holistic understanding of community needs and preferences and will offer insight into broad trends and individual experiences.



ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS



The initial question solicited responses regarding the participant's neighborhood of residence. More than 20 neighborhoods were listed, with Brook Forest, York Woods, Briar Woods, Saddle Brook, and Oak Brook Club receiving the highest response rates. Additionally, a number of the responses listed the participant's street or address. Overall, it appears the census achieved a balanced and comprehensive response despite the limited number of participants.

Question two asked, "During the last 12 months, has anyone in your household participated in the following? Please check all that apply."

Park use by participants is slightly below average, recreation programs are equal to the anticipated use average, and recreation facilities use patterns are above average when compared with other Illinois park district surveys and national standards. Park use appears to be at an all-time high post-COVID and a deeper probe into slightly lower park use patterns may be warranted.

Question three inquired about how residents learn about the Park District's offerings. Compared to other recent, similar survey responses, social media and virtual seasonal brochure use are lower than average and word of mouth is higher than average. This appears to be reflective of Oak Brook's demographics and possible use of these types of technology.

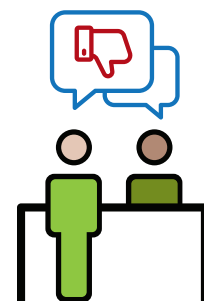


Subsequent questions addressed respondent satisfaction levels for facilities, amenities, programs, and customer service. The responses followed common “don’t use” patterns and averages. However, it is rare for an agency to receive a majority of its top response for each category to be “very satisfied.” Additionally, dissatisfaction did not exceed ten percent (10%) which is a benchmark for addressing concerning items. Based on the number of written comments and satisfaction levels, it would be recommended to learn more about residents’ customer service experiences and communication desires.



Key themes for written responses regarding programming are as follows:

- **Program Access & Availability:** This is a common concern in general for Park District survey respondents in Illinois. This can encompass a wide range of items from limited program offerings and restrictive times to difficulty accessing classes and lack of information. It is a challenge for any Park District to be all things for everyone.
- **Customer Service:** Several respondents expressed dissatisfaction with frontline customer service particularly regarding attitudes and responsiveness.



If survey participants chose to use other recreational facilities or programming outside of Oak Brook Park District offerings, there was no one glaring reason why. Quality of the offerings and condition of the facilities are slightly higher than other responses, but when compared to high satisfaction levels for facilities and programs, both are not an obvious reason for use patterns.



Written responses to the question that inquired about use of other recreation facilities primarily focused on limited availability of lap swim lanes, a lack of a steam room, and use of other facilities, such as the YMCA, private tennis clubs, and fitness centers in neighboring towns due to a lack of comparable amenities or preferred services at the Oak Brook Park District.

Key themes for written responses regarding other recreation provider use patterns are as follows:

- Less appeal for serious fitness enthusiasts: Some highlight a lack of amenities (i.e., steam room, more pickleball, and improved fitness equipment), limited class offerings (no 5am classes, lack of intense classes), and a perceived focus on recreation over serious athletic development.
- Preference for alternative facilities: Others utilize facilities in other towns due to factors like preferred amenities, perceptions about customer service, and more convenient locations.



It is no surprise when considering current trends that walking paths received high marks and that passive recreation options were the most preferred activity for respondents. Maintaining trails, updating ADA play areas, and renovating outdoor pickleball courts also received the most support for prioritization, which follows recent local and national trends. This is also true in the programming and special events arena as use patterns support passive activities related to health, fitness, and special events.



Overall satisfaction for the park district was higher than average (almost 73% are very satisfied or satisfied).

Respondents expressed a desire to continue to be informed and involved. They desire safe and affordable opportunities that increase access and local health and wellness.

It appears that respondents are less supportive of naming rights, but they believe the Park District programs and service fees are good value for the money. There is an overwhelming desire for the Park District to prioritize maintenance of current facilities, parks, amenities, and trails.

Winter lights and the summer concert series lead the way in popularity. Several events appear to be lower than expected, however, the Pink 5k and aquatics related offerings have a more regional focus of support based on special interest (breast cancer awareness) and membership (aquatics).

Surveys typically generate higher response rates from older caucasians who are affluent, as was the case with this survey's results. More than 72% of the respondents were over the age of 55. The median average age in Oak Brook is 52. However, nearly 50% of the response was over the age of 65. This statistic indicates the importance of engaging other age groups in future research.





In conclusion, the Oak Brook Park District's community survey provides valuable insights into resident preferences, satisfaction, and areas for improvement regarding parks, recreation facilities, and programs. While the survey response rate was lower than anticipated, a mixed-methods approach, including interviews and focus groups, will enhance the current data set. The findings highlight key priorities, such as maintaining existing trails and facilities, expanding passive recreation options, improving pickleball opportunities, and considering front line customer service staff training. Residents also expressed a desire for more diverse programming and greater accessibility, particularly in fitness offerings and community events. Additionally, there is a strong preference for affordable, safe opportunities that promote health and wellness.



With a high level of satisfaction overall, the survey's data will serve as an informative tool to influence decision-making for the Oak Brook Park District to meet the evolving needs of all residents.

**OAK BROOK PARK DISTRICT
FOCUS GROUPS BRIEF**

Completed For
The Oak Brook Park District
By
EGV Consulting
July, 2025

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EGV Consulting was engaged by the Oak Brook Park District to facilitate a series of focus group sessions held over two days, May 28–29, 2025. Five distinct groups participated: Preschool/Youth, Tennis, Senior Programming, Membership, and a general “State of the District” group. Each session lasted approximately one to one and a half hours. Participants were first asked six general questions about the Park District, followed by more targeted questions specific to their area of focus. At the end of each session, participants were given the opportunity to share any additional thoughts or comments.



Recent community feedback reveals strong appreciation for the Oak Brook Park District, paired with a clear desire for growth, improved access, and enhanced programming. Residents are engaged, passionate, and eager to shape the future of the Park District.

KEY THEMES & TRENDS



Expanded Programming

Participants expressed strong interest in new offerings tailored to adults and seniors, such as:

- Step aerobics, Cribbage, Bingo luncheons
- Cultural events like Oktoberfest and international nights
- Sports like cricket and additional pickleball

Registration & Access

While satisfaction is high, residents reported challenges such as:

- Challenges with reserving spots in high-demand programs
- Suggested improvements to scheduling and registration software

Facility Enhancements

Desire for:

- Modernized fitness equipment and amenities (e.g., cold plunges, Pilates)
- Dedicated orientation for new users
- Renovated playgrounds and trail upgrades

Aquatic Amenities

Strong interest in:

- Extended lap swim hours
- Re-evaluation of swim fees for seasonal residents/snowbirds

Community Role

Many residents view the Park District as a de facto “town center” due to the absence of a formal downtown. Support for increased community involvement through:

- Focus groups, open houses, and HOA partnerships
- Broader outreach to underrepresented age groups

Resident vs. Non-Resident Dynamics

A consistent theme emerged around balancing resident priorities with the financial necessity of non-resident participation*:

- Recognition that non-residents are essential to program sustainability
- Calls for clearer communication around this value and a review of fee structures

* There seems to be a large population of the community that are “snowbirds.” These folks leave their Oak Brook residence 3-6 months of the year. Due to such a large number of people who are “away” from the Park District annually the Park District would not be able to sustain itself (fill classes and programs, etc.) without the out-of-district participants.

Program & Facility Enhancements

- Launch more adult programming (step aerobics, crafts, cultural events)
- Improve tennis and program registration platforms
- Expand pickleball and cricket courts
- Modernize fitness center equipment and layout

Accessibility & Inclusion

- Add rubberized park surfaces for inclusive play
- Improve communication tools (app notifications, class updates)
- Offer new-user fitness orientations monthly

Capital Investment Planning

- Conduct a feasibility study for long-term facility upgrades
- Create a Master Facilities Plan to avoid short-term fixes
- Engage community on bond referendums and design priorities

In District vs. Out of District Strategy

- Review fee structures and communicate financial impact of out-of-district participation
- Consider seasonal passes for snowbirds and part-time residents





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, RESIDENTS FIRST, AND TRANSPARENCY

The Oak Brook Park District is committed to clear communication and meaningful community engagement. As part of this commitment, the District wants residents to know they receive a two-week priority registration window for all programs and are encouraged to sign up for text reminders to stay informed. All community members are welcome to attend Park District Board Meetings and are invited to contact the Executive Director directly with any questions or concerns. Looking ahead, the District will continue to prioritize transparency and resident input, especially when considering future capital projects. Larger initiatives, such as potential facility expansions, will be thoughtfully evaluated based on community interest and majority support.



CONCLUSION

Oak Brook residents deeply value their Park District and see it as central to community life. While satisfaction levels are high, the community has a strong appetite for growth, inclusion, and modernization. The insights gathered through this mixed-methods approach provide a clear roadmap for creating a more connected, responsive, and future-ready Park District.



The Oak Brook Park District is committed to continuous **improvement** and **collaboration**, using this feedback to ensure it meets the **evolving needs** of all residents **today** and in the **future**.





Oak Brook Park District

A National Gold Medal Agency

Providing the very best in **park** and **recreational opportunities, facilities, and open lands** for **our community.**

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