

TOWN OF SULLIVAN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Outdoor Public Space Planning Survey

2016

Survey Results & Statistics

Prepared by:

Sullivan Planning Board

Executive Summary

Recreation spaces in Sullivan today seem not to be as available or well-maintained as they could be, nor are they set up to promote the activities that residents are most interested in. Jewett Park is one such space, which happens also to be located in Sullivan's designated Scenic District. The Sullivan Outdoor Public Space Planning Survey ("survey"), conducted March 8-31, 2016, aimed to assess the need for access to public recreation space near the town center, such as the park.

The overall survey objective was to provide informative results and descriptive statistics that would help Sullivan officials to plan for use of outdoor public space. That objective was met. The results show that attending events, walking/snowshoeing, gathering/picnicking, and relaxation/leisure are the activities that would have the highest participation according to respondents.

Sufficient interest was expressed that it may warrant a study being undertaken by the town to assess the feasibility of renovating and improving access to outdoor public space, to better meet the needs of residents. An added benefit of improving outdoor public space near the center of town, such as Jewett Park, is that it could enhance the scenic beauty of the town while building community and a sense of place.

Introduction

Public space is the key to a town's "sense of place." Today, outdoor public space in Sullivan's center is much less used than in the past, as illustrated in the 2015 Sullivan Master Plan: the former school yard is no longer available, and Jewett Park (a 3-acre park in the town's designated scenic area created as part of the Sullivan Bicentennial celebration in 1987) has had limited maintenance recently and is rarely visited. In contrast, it was not so long ago that the town was a much livelier place, with outdoor activities such as concerts often taking place in the town center for the enjoyment of the whole community.

The Sullivan Outdoor Public Space Planning Survey ("survey") was conducted to assess the need for outdoor public space near the town center. The overall objective was to provide informative results and descriptive statistics that will allow Sullivan officials to better plan for use of outdoor public space. If sufficient interest was expressed, it was indicated that a study may be undertaken by the town at a later date to assess the feasibility of renovating and improving access to outdoor public space to better meet the needs of residents.

To generate data to answer the questions, "Should the town support utilization and maintenance of outdoor public space? If so, how would it be enjoyed?", the one-page survey asked a series of questions about the number of household members who would participate in various activities, how often they would participate (in season), and what additional recreational facilities would be utilized. The formats for those questions were either matrix or multiple choice responses. The survey also asked for demographic information (number of members of the household, and age brackets), and whether any household members would be willing to help implement and maintain park improvements.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by the Sullivan Planning Board with the permission of the Selectmen. It was available to town residents during the period from March 8th through March 31st, 2016. The survey was publicized in advance via the Sullivan newsletter, the Post Office, the Town Hall, the Sullivan Public Library, the town web site, and the Sullivan Fun blog site. In addition, the Nelson School was contacted to distribute the survey to Sullivan pupils to bring home, but no response was received from the principal, so that was not done. The March 8th survey launch coincided with the Town Election, and Planning Board representatives stationed outside the polling place were able to obtain completed surveys from the majority of voters.

Each household was to complete one survey. In all, 57 completed surveys were handed in (n= 57), representing 129 individual respondents. The response rate among households was over 20% (57 of 282), considerably better than that of some of the planning-level mail-out surveys that had been conducted in the past.

Completed survey forms were assigned identifying numbers. Data were then entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, which was independently inspected for quality control. In cases where survey form responses were ambiguous (e.g. left blank or entered as question marks; numerical ranges entered instead of single values) or did not correctly respond to the question (e.g. response applied to putative visitors rather than household members), data were entered based on judgment of the respondents' intentions. Those subjective decisions about the data were described and recorded in the "Notes on Data" sheet of the Excel workbook.

The original completed survey forms and printouts (initialed and dated by QC) of the Excel workbook, containing compiled data, notes, and contact information for volunteers, were placed in the Planning Board files where they will be retained for a minimum of five years.

The survey demographics (Table 1) indicate that all age cohorts are roughly proportionately represented with the exception of the 65 and older age cohort, which is overrepresented compared to Sullivan as a whole with 34% of respondents versus 12% of residents. The proportion of responding households with children aged 14 years and under was 16%.

Table 1. Survey Demographics

Survey Respondent Population		Sullivan, NH Population (U.S. Census 2010*)	
14 yrs and under	13%	17 yrs and under	19%
15-19 yrs	1%		
20-44 yrs	19%	18 to 64 yrs	69%
45-64 yrs	33%		
65 yrs and older	34%	65 yrs and older	12%

* Per 2015 Sullivan Master Plan, Tables 3-5

The survey results are presented in the following section.

Survey Questions and Responses

Number of Participants per Responding Household

Activities that would engage the greatest number of people per household were Attend Event, Walking/Snowshoeing, Gathering/Picnicking and Relaxation/Leisure, with over 70% of responding households saying they would participate, with median numbers of participating members at 2 per household (Table 2).

Other activities engaging fewer than 50% of households, in descending order of expected participation, were: Horseshoes or like, Volleyball or like, and Use Playground. Of those households indicating they would participate in those activities, the median numbers of participants were 1 or 2 for Horseshoes, 2 for Volleyball, and 3+ for Use Playground.

Table 2.

How many people in your household would participate in the following activities?				
	None	1	2	3 or more
Attend Event	12%	23%	47%	18%
Relaxation/Leisure	28%	21%	39%	12%
Gathering/Picnicking	28%	19%	39%	14%
Use Playground	75%	5%	5%	14%
Volleyball or like	68%	9%	18%	5%
Horseshoes or like	53%	21%	21%	5%
Walking/Snowshoeing	25%	23%	39%	14%

Frequency of Participation by Responding Households

Activities that would have the greatest frequency of participation per household (in season) were Attend Event, Walking/Snowshoeing, Gathering/Picnicking and Relaxation/Leisure, with over 50% of responding households saying they would participate at least once per month (Table 3). Median uses per month of participating households were 1 to 3 for each of those.

Other activities engaging fewer than 50% of households, in descending order of expected frequency of use, were: Horseshoes or like, Volleyball or like, and Use Playground. Of those households indicating they would participate in those activities, the median numbers of uses per month were 2 for each.

Table 3.

How many times per month total would members of your household participate in the following (in season)?					
	Less than 1	1 to 3	4 to 5	6 to 10	More than 10
Attend Event	26%	67%	4%	4%	0%
Relaxation/Leisure	44%	46%	7%	4%	0%
Gathering/Picnicking	46%	44%	7%	4%	0%
Use Playground	79%	12%	7%	2%	0%
Volleyball or like	79%	18%	4%	0%	0%
Horseshoes or like	68%	28%	4%	0%	0%
Walking/Snowshoeing	33%	47%	14%	2%	4%

The activity in which the greatest proportion of responding households indicated they would participate more if adequate facilities were made available (49%) was Gathering/Picnicking. Other activities for which there was demand for adequate facilities were Horseshoes/Bocce (26% of responding households), Taking Children to Playground (21%), and Volleyball/Basketball (12%).

Table 4.

What activities would members of your household participate in more often if the community had an adequate facility?	
	% Selecting "Yes"
Volleyball/Basketball	12%
Horseshoes/Bocce	26%
Taking children to playground	21%
Gathering/Picnicking	49%

Willingness to Volunteer to Help with Park Improvements and Maintenance

Of the 57 households that completed surveys, 26 indicated that they would be willing to volunteer to help renovate the park by cutting brush, mowing, etc.

Conclusions

1. The proportion of Sullivan households responding to the survey (>20%) and the demographic profile of the population included in the completed surveys are adequate to provide data representative of the town for planning purposes.
2. The survey's objective of providing informative results and descriptive statistics that will allow Sullivan officials to better plan for use of outdoor public space was met.
3. The high proportion of responding households indicating that they would volunteer to work on the park (26 out of 57) suggests that there is sufficient interest and enthusiasm for accessible public outdoor space to justify further study in to the feasibility of undertaking improvements.
4. Attending Events, Walking/Snowshoeing, Gathering/Picnicking, and Relaxation/Leisure are the most popular activities in terms of proportions of responding households expecting to participate, numbers of participants per responding household, and numbers of expected uses per month.
5. The overall proportion of responding households that would use a Playground was low (25%), but for those households that would use one the median frequency would be high (3 or more times per month).
6. High demand was indicated for access to Picnicking/Gathering facilities, as well as some demand for Horseshoes/Bocce, Playground, and Volleyball/Basketball facilities.
7. Further ad hoc analyses stratifying response data by age bracket or household demographics could yield additional insights into the needs of residents.



Sullivan Outdoor Public Space Planning Survey

2016

This survey is to assess the need for outdoor public space near the town center. If sufficient interest is expressed, a study may be undertaken by the town at a later date to assess the feasibility of renovating and improving access to outdoor public space to better meet the needs of its residents.

Should the town support utilization and maintenance of outdoor public space? If so, how would it be enjoyed?

PLEASE: RETURN ONLY ONE SURVEY PER HOUSEHOLD

1. How many people in your household would attend an **event** in town space? ____
2. How many people in your household would participate in **relaxation/leisure** in town space? ____
3. How many people in your household would participate in **gathering/picnicking** in town space? ____
4. How many people in your household would use **playground facilities**? ____
5. How many people in your household would participate in **volleyball, or like activities**? ____
6. How many people in your household would participate in **horseshoes, or like activities**? ____
7. How many people in your household would use **walking/snowshoeing trails** in town? ____
8. Check any that your household would participate in MORE OFTEN if your community had an adequate facility:
 Volleyball/Basketball Horseshoes/Bocce Taking children to playground Gathering/picnicking
9. How many times PER MONTH total (in season) would you and members of your household:
 Attend an **event** in town space? ____ Participate in **relaxation/leisure** in town space? ____
 Participate in **gathering/picnicking** in town space? ____ Use **playground** facilities? ____
 Participate in **volleyball** or similar? ____ Participate in **horseshoes** or similar? ____
 Use **walking/snowshoeing** trails in town? ____
10. How many members of your household are:
 14 years old and under? ____ 15 to 19 years old? ____ 20 to 44 years old? ____
 45 to 64 years old? ____ 65 years old and older? ____
11. Would anyone in your household volunteer to help renovate the park by cutting brush, mowing, etc.? YES NO If YES, please provide name and email or phone: _____

Thank you! COMMENTS/IDEAS? _____

