**MEMORANDUM**

To: Sisters Park & Recreation District

From: Scott Fregonese

Date: July 5, 2022

Project name: District Needs Assessment

RE: Presentation Summary

Sisters Park & Recreation District sought to better understand the park and recreation

needs of residents. The district conducted a series of focus group meetings with participants representative of the community to learn more about park and recreation needs. Demographic analysis of the Sisters Park & Recreation District accompanied the focus group questions during the presentation. Analysis outlined ethnicity share of population, economic data, educational data, household and age data, and at-risk population data.



Sisters Park & Recreation District (SPRD) is a special district formed in 1998 to provide after school programs. A separate entity than the City of Sisters, it is funded through a permanent tax rate of .22 per assessed $1,000, or a 5-year local option levy rate of .15 per assessed $1,000 (up for renewal in May 2023. SPRD has an operating budget of approximately $1.5 million and employs 9.5 FTE staff. A comparison of the City of Sisters and SPRD highlights the differing needs:

Between June 2nd and 3rd, four focus groups were held at varying times of day. A total of 18 participants were engaged, the participant demographics were:

During each of the four focus groups, 8 questions were asked of the participants:

1. Do you live in the City of Sisters or the surrounding area?
2. What is your reaction to this list? Were you aware that SPRD provided all these programs? Do any surprise you?
3. Are there any recreation programs not currently available that you would like to see in the future?
4. Currently, what is the biggest issue or need concerning Sisters Park & Recreation District?
5. If you could design the perfect park and recreation district for the Sisters area, what would it be like?
6. In general, how satisfied are you with the parks and recreational opportunities currently available from Sisters Park & Recreation District?
7. If you seldom use or do not use Sisters Park & Recreation District’s programs, what is the top reason?
8. What benefits of the parks and recreation system are most important to you?

The results of the focus groups were as follows. Question 1 revealed that participants came from the City of Sisters (16) and the surrounding area (22). Question 2 referred to this list:

The general reactions were:

* Surprised that SPRD offers a lot more than expected
* Most did not know about Jiu Jitsu and Tai Chi
* No one had heard of the Sisters Tasting Tour, they were very interested
* They felt that youth recreation seems to be geared toward team sports (bias towards athletics for athletes)
* Participants who had kids were more familiar with the programs
* The preschool and afterschool programs are well liked by the community
* All groups agreed that lacrosse needs to be a state sanctioned sport
* Some High School students didn’t know what SPRD was even though they see the building every day

Question 3 answers revealed the most interest in the following programs:

1. Outdoor Programs (Survival/Safety, Art, Science, etc.)
2. Pickleball Courts
3. Biking (Group Rides, Skills Classes, Mountain Bike Track)
4. Swimming (Lessons and a Pool)
5. Skiing (Bring back the night skiing program)

General feedback also included a desire for activities for all ages, an ice-skating rink, and a community pool. Outdoor activities were the overarching theme, and there were discussions of the need for more childcare.

Question 4 found the biggest issues or needs of the SPRD to be:

1. Staffing (both long-term and seasonal, qualified employees)
2. Better branding, messaging, marketing, and general communication
3. Funding
4. Competition with Bend and Redmond
5. Web site and program sign up page need to be updated
	1. Signups will be open but then the program will be canceled because not enough people signed up
	2. The process of signing up is difficult
	3. Registration times are too short
	4. Programs get full fast, there may be potential for a better wait list system
	5. Website registration is poor and needs work, it crashes, it’s difficult to sign in, can’t often access payment records for tax purposes
	6. Process of signup/enrollment is not working; you sign up thinking you are registered then show up and find out you are not on the list

Question 5 answers, regarding what would make a perfect SPRD saw:

* Recreation center (centralized facilities)
* Ice rink (hockey, curling, skating, etc.)
* Indoor and outdoor pool
* Connected trail system
* Senior Center
* More larger parks to create a full parks system
* Pickleball and tennis courts
* Safe place for kids to go with positive activities
* Robust funding
* Good people (Staff & Volunteers)
* Consistency and transparency, good communication to build trust, continuity of programs and philosophy
* More partnerships and overlapping with other organizations (Sisters Athletic Club, Seed to Table, Science Lab, Black Butte facilities, Folk Festival, etc.)

Question 6 comments on satisfaction with SPRD were:

* Overall participants spoke positively about SPRD
* Most said they we satisfied and that things seem to be improving
* Some gave SPRD a “B” but said it should strive for an “A”
* One group gave SPRD a 6 out of 10 score
* One group said that the kids' programs have improved but the adult programs have gone down hill
* One person was dissatisfied because there were no pickleball courts
* One person was not particularly satisfied (mostly due to impacts of COVID-19)
* Satisfied that SPRD is doing the focus groups and listening to the community
* Satisfied with preschool and youth sports
* Satisfied with the great teachers and staff
* Satisfied with the scholarship opportunities
* One person was slightly unsatisfied because there are not as many opportunities as there used to be

Question 7 responses as to why participants don’t currently use SPRD programs were:

* Hard to sign up, registration barriers, needs to be easier
* Timing of the program
* Transportation and accessibility (live too far away)
* Want more programs that aren’t offered
* Programs are geared towards kids, if you don’t have kids, you don’t use the programs as much
* Simply didn’t know that a program was offered

Lastly, question 8 responses highlighted the most important benefits for participants. The top 5 benefits are:

1. Community
2. Health
3. Education
4. Connections
5. Safe and fun place for kids

In addition to question specific feedback, participants provided general recommendations:

* SPRD needs big ideas now to grab people’s attention if the plan is to go after another levy, really have a plan and communicate it well way ahead of time
* SPRD can run tournaments to increase funding, tournaments can bring in thousands of dollars over a weekend
* COVID has been hard on SPRD, may need to take a loss to reestablish reputation and some programs, a 2–3-year span to develop a successful organization and programing
* Participants wanted to know how the recreation programs ranked in popularity
* Childcare is a huge need in the community
* All groups discussed reusing the grade school to create a community recreation facility (pool, courts, kitchen, classrooms, offices, etc.)
* Participants recommended an SPRD annual calendar
* The idea to develop a system where volunteer hours can be traded for program fees