



# Council Communication

Office of the City Manager

Date	June 18, 2007
Agenda Item No.	<u>49</u>
Roll Call No.	<u>07-</u>
Communication No.	<u>07-381</u>
Submitted by:	Donald M. Tripp, Park and Recreation Director

## AGENDA HEADING:

Approving a professional services contract with Leisure Vision, ETC Institute (Dr. Elaine Tatham, President, Olathe, KS), for development and implementation of a resident Recreational Needs and Satisfaction Assessment Survey.

## SYNOPSIS:

This action approves a professional services contract for the development and implementation of a Recreational Needs and Satisfaction Assessment Survey for parks, green space, recreation facilities and sports/recreational programming. The last needs assessment survey was conducted in 1993, and the Park and Recreation Department has a goal to repeat this type of assessment every ten years to help assist in short- and long-range planning and strategic decision-making. This action also authorizes the City Manager to sign the agreement.

## FISCAL IMPACT:

Amount: \$28,150

Funding Source: FY 2007-08 Operating Budget, Park and Recreation Marketing, GE001 PKS011200, page 224 - \$14,075 and Park Improvement Planning, GE001 PKSO40400, page 226 - \$14,075.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The City first began using the services of ETC Institute in 2004 to administer its *DirectionFinder*® Survey to gauge resident satisfaction with overall city services. ETC Institute was selected as the survey administrator for two reasons. First, survey findings from ETC can be benchmarked against results from communities across the nation. Second, the City experienced significant savings by utilizing ETC, as opposed to its previous vendor.

The Leisure Vision arm of ETC Institute has conducted more than 450 surveys specifically for parks and recreation clients and, with a database of more than 60,000 survey responses, is able to provide an unparalleled benchmarking database regarding needs, priorities, etc. This park and recreation database is much more extensive than even that of ETC's *DirectionFinder*, which concentrates on all city services. Benchmarking "national averages" have been developed for numerous strategically important park and recreation planning and management issues including: customer satisfaction and usage of parks and programs; methods for receiving marketing information; reasons that prevent members of

households from using parks and recreation facilities more often; and priorities in recreation programs, parks facilities and trails to be improved or developed.

A needs assessment survey conducted in 1993 provided core information for development of the Park and Recreation Department's 1995 *Parklands, A Celebration of Des Moines' Community Spirit* comprehensive plan, which led to major changes in the way the department operates. Resulting programs and facilities from that plan include Gray's Lake Park, the Brenton Ice Skating Plaza, Principal Riverwalk, James W. Cownie Soccer Park, environmental awareness and conservation initiatives and efforts to create "safe parks" through increased off-duty police security, lighting, security phones, alcohol bans, and park design. The Parklands study is now 12 years old, and the Parks Department intends to embark on development of a new plan to address the next ten years. This recreation needs assessment survey will initiate the process.

Questions on the survey will address a full range of strategically-important issues affecting short- and long-range planning, management practices, programming and allocation of resources. The department seeks to gain an understanding of city-wide usage and priorities of proposed improvements that could have impacts on operating and capital costs. Both passive and active recreation topics will be surveyed, including: land-based activities such as golf and soccer, ice-skating, camping, trails, and shelters; water-based activities of boating, fishing, indoor and outdoor swimming, water parks, sunbathing, watercraft dining and entertainment; and conservation measures of water quality, use of chemicals, environmental practices and preservation and labor-saving practices.

The survey instrument will be developed jointly by ETC Institute and Des Moines Park and Recreation Department staff and will be administered through a combination of mail, phone and web-based methods to maximize the overall level of response. 3200 surveys will be mailed to a randomly selected sampling of resident households to complete a guaranteed sampling of no less than 800 households within the City of Des Moines. Overall results will have a 95% level of confidence, with a +/-3.5% overall margin of error. The sample size of 800 is the smallest size that ETC recommends in order to maintain statistical significance when sub-dividing the survey results across the four council wards. With this sample size, ETC will provide results for an additional sub-region, which will allow us to analyze results for the downtown area in addition to the four wards. This sample size will also allow analysis of results by specific demographic groups.

The fee of \$28,150 will include the base fee to develop, analyze and report findings (\$23,950) as well as additional options of national benchmarking (\$1,500), importance/satisfaction analysis (\$1,200), and web-based surveying (\$1,500). In the past with administration of the *DirectionFinder* survey, the city has used only phone and mail for responses. Offering a web-based response option is expected to increase the response rate. Because the City has worked with ETC on the resident satisfaction survey, ETC already has verified city addresses that allow for in-house geocoding of the tabular data. The city will save approximately \$1,200 by internally performing the geographical analysis on an as-needed, question-by-question basis.

The contract includes a four-month timeline for completing the survey and reporting the results to the City. A formal presentation of results will be made to City staff, Park and Recreation Board members and City Council.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S): NONE**

**BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S): NONE**

**ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS:**

The findings will be reported to Council and the Park and Recreation Board in the fall.