Regional Park Usage Among Select Communities of Color

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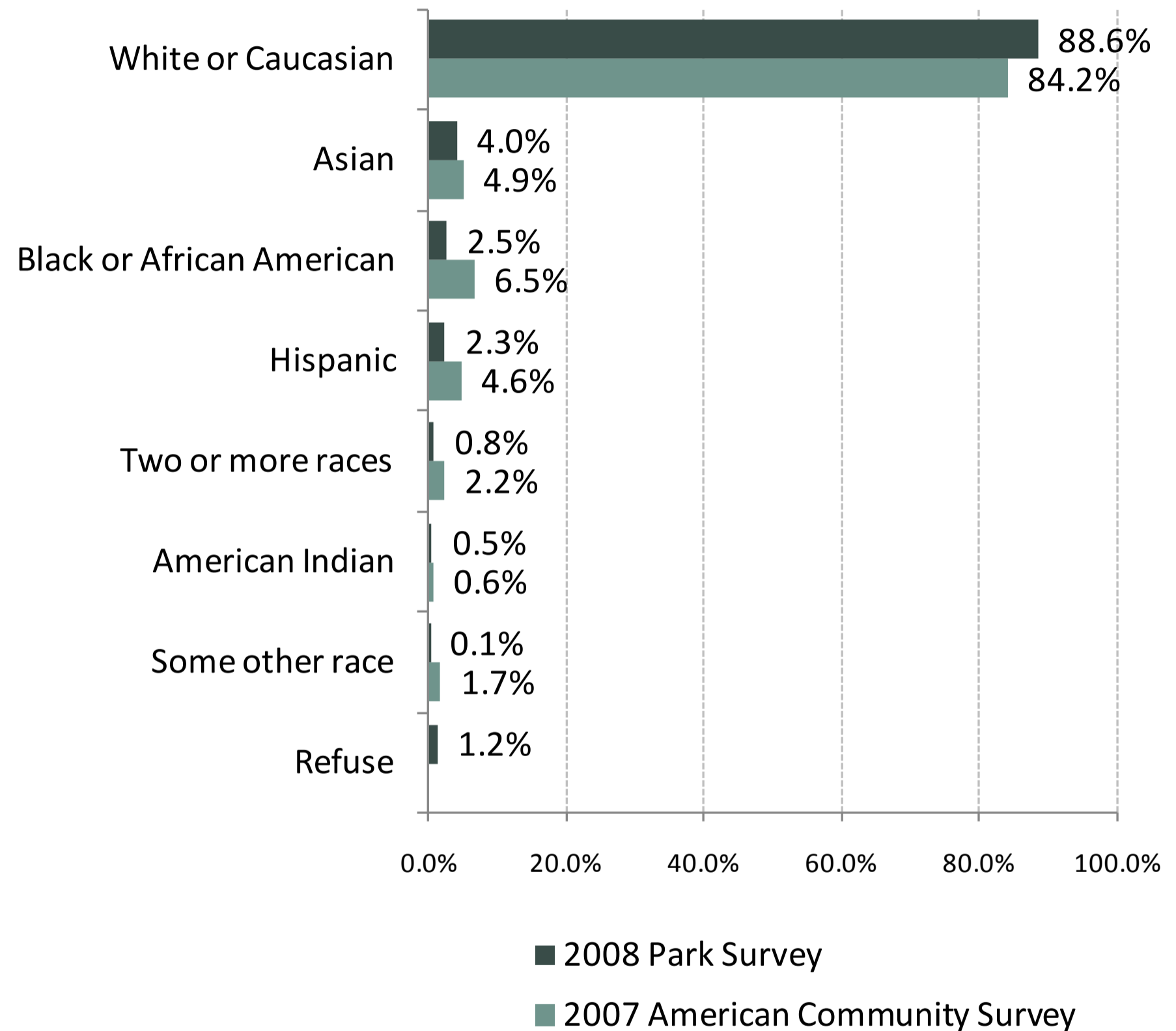
Community Development Committee

March 17, 2014

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Background

- 2008 Metropolitan Council Survey
  - Regional Parks System visitors

- Disparity between park users and population of the region
  - Different proportion of users as compared to residents of the region

White or Caucasian — 88.6% / 84.2%
Asian — 4.0% / 4.9%
Black or African American — 2.5% / 6.5%
Hispanic — 2.3% / 4.6%
Two or more races — 0.8% / 2.2%
American Indian — 0.5% / 0.6%
Some other race — 0.1% / 1.7%
Refuse — 1.2%

0.0%   20.0%   40.0%   60.0%   80.0%   100.0%

- 2008 Park Survey
- 2007 American Community Survey

(Source: Metropolitan Council, 2008 Park User Survey)

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Thrive Direction for Regional Parks Policy Plan

- **Strengthen equitable usage** of regional parks and trails by all our region's residents, such as across race, ethnicity, class, age, ability and immigrant status

**Lake Elmo Park Reserve—
Washington County**

**Dakota Rail Regional Trail—
Three Rivers Park District**

Research Purpose

- Explore non-utilization of regional parks and trails among distinct subpopulations within the region.

  Specifically, the study sought to explore:
  - Preferred outdoor recreational activities and desired amenities
  - Perceived barriers that prevent use of the system
  - Issues or concerns about the Regional Parks System
  - Recommendations and suggestions to enhance visitation

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Approach

- Partnered with five community-based organizations
  - Where appropriate, incentives provided
- Conducted focus groups October 2013-January 2014
  - Refreshments provided
  - Interpreters provided, if necessary
  - Gift cards
    - Where organizational partners deemed it appropriate
- Demographic data collected in written format
- Focus group sessions audio recorded
- Transcribed
  - Translated, if necessary
  - Third party reviewer
- Transcripts content analyzed
  - Coded
  - Emergent Themes

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Focus Group Participation

- Total of 16 focus group sessions
  - 45 minutes-1.5 hours in length
    - Semi-structured format
      - Pre-determined questions
  - Focus group size
    - Range: 5-36 people
    - Average=16 people
  - 263 total participants

Focus Group Composition and Amount

	Number of Focus Groups
Mixed race/ethnicity	5
Asian Immigrant/Asian American	4
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	3
African Immigrant	2
African American	2
Total	**16**

Participants

Demographic Information collected (n=257)

- 74.6% Female

- Age Range: 14-79 years old
  - Average age=39.6

- Children:
  - 72.4% had children under the age of 18
    - Range: 1-20 children
      - 64.2% had four or less children

- Transportation:
  - 71.3% owned a car

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Participants Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent
African Immigrant	76	29.6
Asian Immigrant or Asian American	74	28.8
Hispanic/Latino/Latina	66	25.7
African American	28	10.9
Caucasian	11	4.3
Multi-Racial	1	0.4
Native American	1	0.4
Total	**257**	**100.0**

- 23 distinct primary languages

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Findings

Preferred Outdoor Activities

	Top Outdoor Activities: All Groups
1	**Walk/Hike**
2	**Picnic/BBQ**
3	**Use Playground**
4	Swim/Go to Lake
5	Spend Time with Friends/Family
6	Bike
7	Fish
8	View Nature
9	Rest/Relax
10	Celebrate/Party

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Preferred Outdoor Activities by Focus Group Type

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian Immigrant or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
1	Picnic/BBQ	Use Playground	Walk	Celebrate/ Party	Walk
2	Bike	Walk	Fish	Picnic/BBQ	Use Playground
3	Basketball*	Be with Family	Rest/Relax	Be with Family	Swim/Go to Lake

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Who With?

- Family
- Friends
- Very few: alone

- Number of people typically with:
  - Range: alone to 250 people
  - Most frequently noted (same relative frequency):
    - Less than 5
    - 15-20 people

"Park"

	What comes to mind when the word "park" is mentioned: All Groups
1	Nature
2	Safety/Security
3	Amenities
	Animals/Wildlife
4	Playground Use
5	Picnics/BBQ
	Walk/Hike/Trails
6	Celebrations/Fun
	Bonding with Friends/Family
7	Solitude/Relaxation

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Park Visitation Facilitators

47% of participants had never visited a regional park

What makes it easy to go to regional parks?

1. Proximity
2. Transportation/Automobile
3. Awareness
4. Parking

Park Visitation Barriers: All Groups

	Why it is hard to visit a Regional Park
1	Lack of Awareness
2	Time
3	Fear/Safety Concerns
4	Lack of Transportation Options
5	Language Barrier
6	Weather
7	Cost
8	Map Challenges
9	No One to Go With
10	Cultural or Religious Insensitivity/Discrimination
	No Desire

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Park Visitation Barriers: All Groups

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Park Visitation Barriers by Focus Group Type

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian Immigrant or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
1	**Lack of Awareness**	Time	**Lack of Awareness**	**Lack of Awareness**	Time
2	Transportation	**Lack of Awareness**	Language Barriers	Time	**Lack of Awareness**
3	Fear/Safety Map Challenges Cultural Insensitivity/ Discrimination	Transportation	Weather	Cost	Fear/Safety

Lack of Awareness

a) What a regional park is

b) Where regional parks are located

c) How to get to regional parks

d) Regional park rules

e) What to do in regional parks

f) Events occurring in regional parks

"*I think visibility is also huge…I mean to be honest with you, a lot of people are not even really aware about regional parks or even, you know, like this is a regional park and what does it mean… the Met Council is just not visible to ordinary citizens*" (Female African American focus group member)

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Safety Explained

	Asian or Asian American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	African American Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
Fears	Snakes Bees Water-viruses Too big=lost Hunters Being alone Behavior of others (drinking)	Violent crime: rape, killing, stabbing Kids get lost Drowning Being alone Too big=lost	Water-viruses Getting Lost Darkness Crime Animals People Getting hurt	Violent crime: get jumped, shot Ran over Accidents Behavior of others*	Violent crime: kidnap Too big=lost Kids unsafe Strangers Crazy people Behavior of others (drinking, loitering) Animals
Needs	Security officers Ambassadors/ Guides	Security officers Cameras People around	Lighting	Security officers* Blue light callboxes People around Lighting Cameras	Security officers Ambassadors People around Lighting

Concerns

- **Safety**
- Behavior of Others
- Litter/Uncleanliness
- Lack of Information
- Dog Waste

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Cultural or Religious Insensitivity/Discrimination

- Nuanced
    - Do regional parks benefit different cultural preferences?
    - Will I feel welcome?
    - Do they accommodate my religious needs?
    - Are the employees culturally competent?
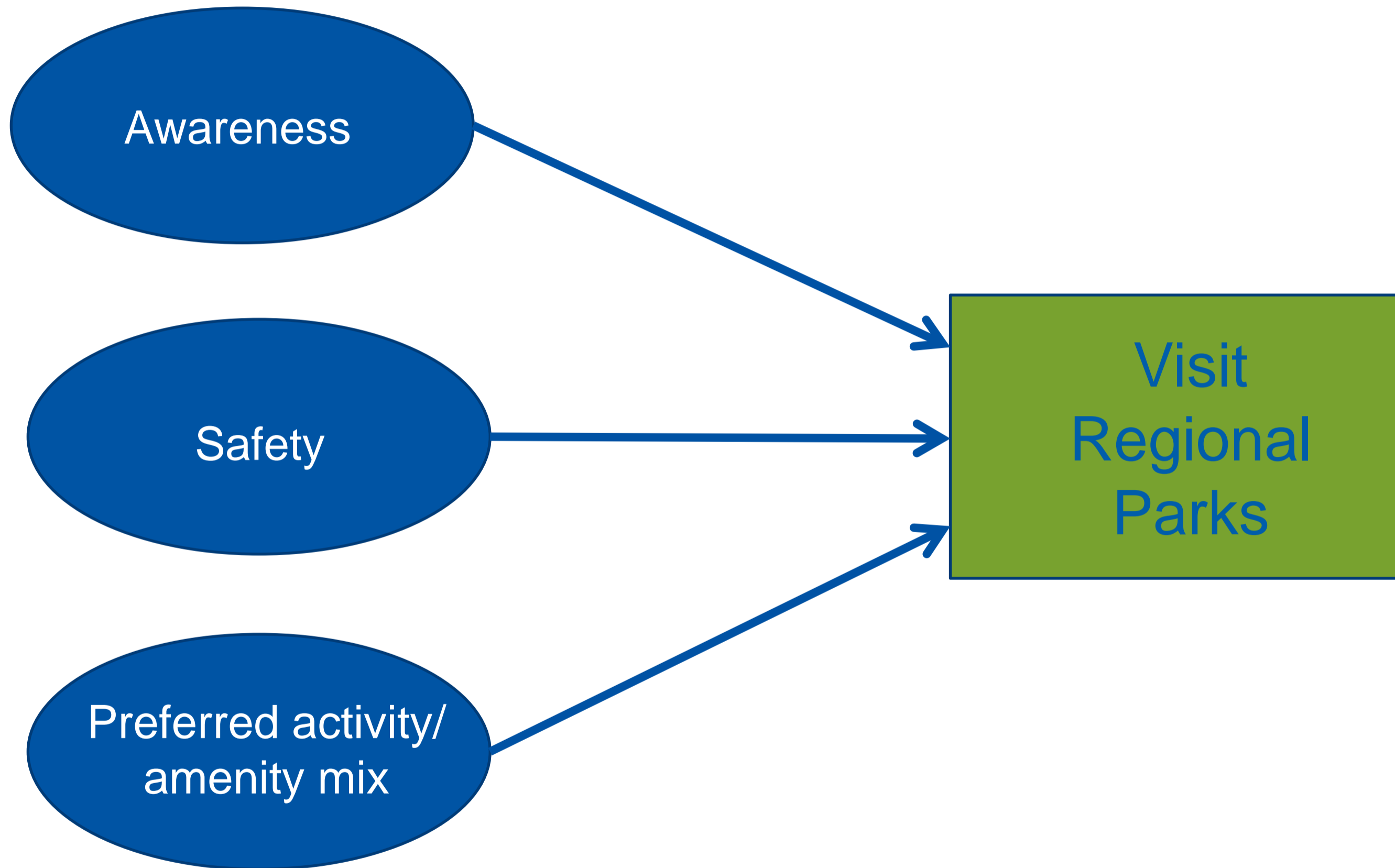   - Will I be stereotyped and discriminated against?

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Suggestions: All Groups

	Suggestions to increase visitation
1	Increase Awareness
2	Address Safety
3	**Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces**
	Create Ambassador Program
4	**Increase and Diversify Programming**
5	Provide More Events
6	Add or Enhance Playgrounds
7	Enhance Nature Quality
	Address Dog and Goose Waste
8	Clean Restrooms/Facilities

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Suggestions by Focus Group Type

	African American Focus Groups	African Immigrant Focus Groups	Asian or Asian American Focus Groups	Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina Focus Groups	Diverse Composition Focus Groups
1	**Increase Awareness**	Address Safety	Create Ambassador Program	**Increase Awareness**	**Increase Awareness**
2	Increase/ Diversify Programming	**Increase Awareness** Clean Restrooms Add/Enhance Playgrounds	Address Safety	**Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces**	Increase/ Diversify Programming
3	**Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces**	**Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces**	**Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces**	Address Dog Waste	Address Safety

Summary: Influential Factors

Important Considerations

- Role of the Metropolitan Council in the Regional Park System
  - Park Implementing Agencies

- Metropolitan Council provides:
  - **Funding assistance—**
    - **Non-competitive grants**
      - Development
      - Acquisition
      - Parks and Trails Legacy Fund approved expenditures
      - Pass through grants (Operations & Maintenance)
  - **Long-range planning of the entire system**
  - **Policy Plan**
    - Permissible activities
      - Nature-based system
    - Master plan requirements
      - Agencies individual master plan