

*Thrive MSP 2040* indicates that, where appropriate, communities should plan and develop connections to the regional parks and trails system and develop local policies, plans, and practices that improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation, including access to regional parks. Our region’s population is changing in ways that will influence the shape of our future growth and development. By 2040, 40% of the population will be people of color, compared to 24% in 2010. This Fact Sheet identifies barriers and ways to enhance regional park visitation among communities of color. The information in this Fact Sheet can help communities planning for their local parks, recreational programming, trails, and any potential connections to the regional system. Thinking broadly about the types of users and their needs can help communities shape parks and trail planning in a way that is inclusive and equitable.

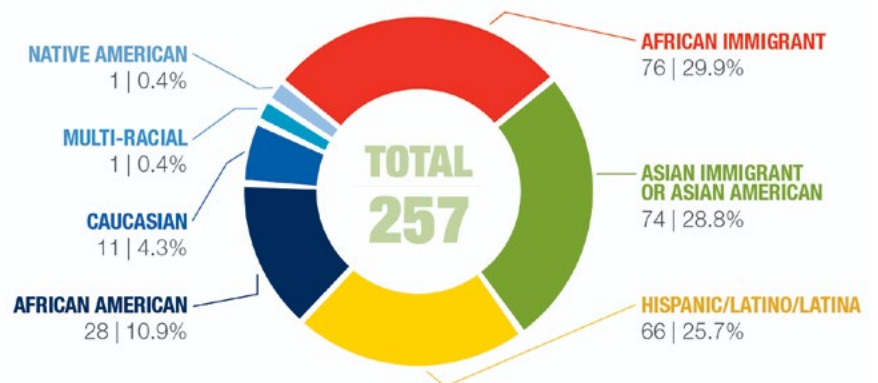
## REGIONAL PARK USE AMONG SELECT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

The Regional Parks System boasts nearly 55,000 acres of parklands and over 300 miles of trails and attracts 45 million visits annually. However, a Metropolitan Council survey of Regional Parks System visitors in 2008 showed that use of our regional parks did not represent the overall demographic makeup of the region, specifically for communities of color.

Metropolitan Council staff conducted a qualitative research project to identify barriers to regional park visitation among communities of color. The study sought to explore: a) preferred outdoor recreational activities and desired amenities, b) perceived barriers that prevent use of the system, c) issues or concerns about regional parks and d) recommendations and suggestions to increase and enhance park visits. The study and full report is on our website at: [metrocouncil.org/ParkUseCommColor.aspx](http://metrocouncil.org/ParkUseCommColor.aspx)

Metropolitan Council staff partnered with local community-based organizations and public agencies to organize focus groups throughout the region. The Council conducted 16 focus group sessions with 263 participants, which represented various racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. A total of 23 different primary languages were reported.

Race/Ethnicity of Regional Park Usage Focus Group Study Participants



\*Does not equal 100.0 due to rounding; demographic information not provided by every participant.

## PREFERRED OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

The most frequently noted preferred outdoor activity was walking, followed by picnicking and/or barbecuing. The third most preferred activity was playground use. Swimming or going to the lake and spending time with friends or family rounded out the top five preferred activities. Differences between the various focus group types did emerge in their top three preferred outdoor activities.

- Asian Immigrant/Asian American focus groups identified their top three preferred activities as walking, fishing and rest or relaxation.
- African Immigrant focus groups most frequently noted playground use, walking and being with family.
- Hispanic participants most frequently noted celebrations and parties, followed by picnicking and/or barbecuing and spending time with family.
- African American participants identified picnicking and/or barbecuing as the most frequent preferred activity, followed by biking and basketball.
- Walking, playground use and swimming or going to the lake were the top three most frequently noted preferred activities among diverse composition focus groups.



### Most Prominent Perceived Barriers to Regional Park System Visitation among Focus Group Participants

Lack of Awareness	Lack of Transportation Options
Time Available	Map Challenges
Fear/Safety Concerns	No Companions
Language Barrier	Cultural or Religious
Weather	Insensitivity/Discrimination*
Cost	No Desire*

\*items tied

## SUGGESTIONS TO ENHANCE REGIONAL PARKS SYSTEM VISITATION

The top suggestion was to increase awareness.

*“I think for a lot of people, if it’s not part of your culture—I mean, if you didn’t grow up going to the park with your family, you’re not going to necessarily think about going to the park yourself and you’re not going to teach your kids to go the park either”*

Female African American focus group member

The second most recurrent suggestion to enhance visitation focused on addressing safety concerns.

*“Security is important. If we don’t feel secure in the park, we will not visit the park.”*

Male African American focus group member



The third most notable suggestion focused on park design and onsite amenities. Several participants emphasized family gatherings with multiple generations. Other participants expressed the desire to have amenities close to one another so that multigenerational families could be together, yet enjoy their respective recreational activities. Additionally, participants focused on the need to enhance the capacity for large group gatherings. In this respect, participants most frequently identified the need to increase accommodations for larger groups at picnic areas.

Many participants expressed preferences for outdoor recreational activities that are not accommodated in the regional park system, including basketball, soccer, football, baseball and tennis.

Another top suggestion was to create an ambassador program to serve as a resource for potential visitors, both on- and off-site.

The fourth most prominent suggestion to enhance regional park visitation among focus group participants was linked to programming. Programming for both families and children tended to focus on organized play. Rarely did participants suggest nature-based or environmental education-based programming.

The last major theme that emerged about enhancing regional park visits was associated with events.

### Suggestions from Focus Group Participants

Increase Awareness

Address Safety

Enhance Capacity of Gathering Spaces\*

Create Ambassador Program\*

Increase and Diversify Programming

Provide More Events

\*items tied

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