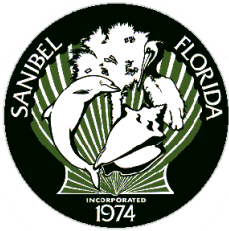


# **City of Sanibel Recreation Department**

# **Comprehensive Assessment, Analysis, & Evaluation Report**



February 7, 2023

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# PREFACE

Prior to the BerryDunn consulting team finalizing this project, the City of Sanibel was hit by Hurricane Ian on September 28, 2022, a Category 4 weather event that devastated the island with catastrophic damage inflicted on the City's buildings and infrastructure. In addition to the City's physical destruction, the City residents and island employees continue to deal with the human and emotional side of loss—homes, neighborhoods, businesses, utilities, infrastructure, and jobs. The entire Sanibel community as residents once knew it is gone. The bridge and causeway that connects Sanibel to Ft. Myers was breached in five places, eliminating access to the island, and preventing those who weathered the storm in their homes a safe, easy means to depart. At the time of this writing, City officials continue to assess the damage, respond to the needs of the community, and refine the action plan. The temporary bridge/causeway is now open to residents and contractors, and residents are starting to assess the damage and repair their property.

One of the focal points of this study is the Sanibel Recreation Center, and although it remains standing, it is not fully known the extent of the repairs needed or when the building will be open to the public. The City's focus for the foreseeable future will be on recovery and rebuilding from the devastating hurricane, meaning public recreation cannot be a City priority in the short-term.

Given the extensive damage to all the City's infrastructure and to almost all the houses and businesses on island, and the likelihood that a substantial number of ground-level properties may not be able to be renovated without meeting all the new building codes (including elevation), the community that emerges from the hurricane could be very different from the pre-Ian community, including in terms of the demographics of island residents. This means that future recreation needs may be very different in five to ten years compared to the needs prior Hurricane Ian.

On October 3, 2022, Director of Recreation Andrea Miller instructed the BerryDunn team to finish writing the report but canceled plans to present this report to City Council in November.

This document reflects information and data that was available prior to September 28, 2022. The consulting team is hopeful that the recommendations in this report can be used by the City and the Department as they rebuild for the future.

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## Project Team

Dana Souza, City Manager  
Andrea Miller, Recreation Director  
Gabby Cooper-Angeles, Program Coordinator  
Dave DeFonzo, Seniors Program Manager  
Char Durand, Recreation Services Supervisor  
Matt Fannon, Facility Maintenance Supervisor  
Steve Vela, Aquatics Manager  
Frank Spinuzza, Computer Support Specialist  
Holly Milbrandt, Natural Resources Director  
Roma Patel, Finance Department

## Sanibel Project Manager

Darla Letourneau

## Recreation Department Staff

Cassie Hill, Recreation Aide Specialist  
Jessica Gonnely, Seniors Program Assistant  
Connor Russell, Program Coordinator  
Donnell Field, Recreation Program Specialist  
Michele Herman, Lead Recreation Services Assistant  
Chris Menzel, Tradesworker  
Billy Holden, Tradesworker

## City Council

Holly Smith, Mayor  
Richard Johnson, Vice Mayor  
John Henshaw, Councilman  
Mike Miller, Councilman  
Dr. Scott Crater, Councilman

## BerryDunn Consulting Team

Lisa Paradis, Engagement Manager  
Elsa Fischer, Project Manager  
Becky Dunlap, Senior Consultant – Demographics and Trends  
Nikki Ginger, Senior Consultant – Staff Training and Development  
Jesse Myott, Manager – Cost of Service, Cost Recovery, Fees & Charges  
Hibah Salah, Staff Consultant – Social Pinpoint Support  
Lisa Wolff, Senior Consultant – Public Engagement Assistance





# Executive Summary

Incorporated in 1974, the City of Sanibel (City) is a barrier island separated from the mainland, and accessible by a causeway linking the island to the City of Fort Myers, Florida. The island is composed of 67% protected conservation land and 33% residential, business, and resort property, with approximately 6,400 year-round residents. A popular tourist destination, the island attracts both daily and longer-term visitors, swelling the seasonal population to over 30,000 in the months from January through April each year. The permanent population of the island is primarily older, with the median age at 68.4 years, and over 80% of the population aged 55 years and over. Embedded within the community is a vast array of volunteer and nonprofit organizations that act as a tapestry of support services throughout the island. There are many volunteer and nonprofit entities that serve the population in different ways; some independently, and some as formal partners to the City.

In January 2022, the City of Sanibel retained BerryDunn McNeil & Parker, LLC (BerryDunn) to assist in developing a comprehensive assessment of the Recreation Department (Department).

The Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment (project) set out to evaluate current operations, to understand how the Department is serving the needs of its residents, to uncover any gaps that may exist, and to make recommendations that support diverse and relevant recreational opportunities for the Sanibel community.

Simultaneous to the development of this project, over the period of mid-February to mid-August 2022, City Council undertook a major strategic planning process that resulted in Council approval of a Strategic Plan (vision, mission, core values, and five strategic goals) on July 19, 2022, followed by Council approval of objectives for the strategic goals on August 16, 2022. This Strategic Plan is to be implemented over a multiyear period.



The overall vision statement resulting from this process states:

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***"Sanibel is and shall remain a barrier island sanctuary; one where a diverse, multi-generational community lives in harmony with the island's wildlife, preserving natural habitats for the inspiration of future generations."***

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Throughout the development of the Strategic Plan, the goals and objectives adopted by Council were integrated into this project. Early in the project, the City identified the need for a holistic approach to the assessment, with the goal of supporting one of the City's strategic goals "Quality of Life," which states,

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***"Sustain the safety and well-being of residents, businesses, and visitors by providing below market rate housing, ensuring that resources are provided for law enforcement and disaster preparedness, and design on-island educational, historic, cultural, social and recreation activities for a diverse multi-generational citizenry."***

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One of the most important and difficult decisions an organization can make is to examine its current operations, organization, and service delivery to determine when and in what areas changes may need to be made.

The City of Sanibel Recreation Department embarked on this journey of self-evaluation to better understand the impact and effectiveness of its programs and services and to understand areas of opportunity that may exist. Each element of the project was painstakingly tackled with the underlying premise, “What is best for the Sanibel Island residents?” Discussions about the needs of the community and the current and future ability of the Department and its partners to respond to the needs of the community informed the plan’s goals and objectives pertaining to allocations of resources, financial and otherwise.

As a result of the comprehensive assessment process, this report is expected to guide the City in creating an actionable strategic framework that will allow for agile, responsive, and creative management of the Sanibel Recreation Department moving forward. The project has been divided into a series of phases outlined below.

## The Project Phases



## Data Gathering

Data and information were gathered from a broad range of resources including City documents, Department reports, meetings with staff, and data from the U.S. Census (Esri) and Florida League of Cities.

## Engagement

A robust and diverse public engagement process was undertaken that began with the creation of a dedicated community engagement website and included a comprehensive 23-question survey, an ideas wall for open commentary, an area that asked about future investment, and an area to weigh in on ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Department facilities. The site was accessible to the public for comment from March 24, 2022, through May 11, 2022, and was visited a total of 6,229 times, which included 1,569 unique stakeholders. The site gathered 462 survey responses and 650 comments, which by all accounts was a very healthy percentage of the population. A broad and far-reaching approach was taken to promote community member access to the site, using word of mouth, community and City newsletters, the City’s website, and social media.

The Recreation Department hosted an open house on April 9, 2022, which was well attended and garnered a significant amount of information from a wide variety of City residents.

Consultants and City staff hosted a pop-up tent at the City’s Farmers Market on Sunday, April 10, 2022, and gathered more information from hundreds of attendees. Additionally, a series of focus groups were conducted with nonprofit and volunteer organizations and other identified unique stakeholders in the community. A high-level Community Engagement Summary can be found on page 110 with all available data located in Appendix A.

## Assessment

In addition to the public-facing engagement, a series of in-person interviews with full-time, part-time, seasonal, and contractual staff were conducted to understand the current condition of the Department, with specific focus on the programs, facilities, and operations. The Recreation Program Assessment began with staff and key stakeholder meetings, including City Council members, to brainstorm strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in areas such as programming, facilities, marketing, and operations. The assessment included a review of programs and services offered during the last several years that were analyzed according to core program areas and connection to community need.

The outcome of this analysis helped to develop a strategic vision for program delivery, identify gaps, and make recommendations for strengthening program and service delivery.

A high-level facilities assessment was conducted to determine the best and highest use of the existing Recreation Center areas, as well as to identify needs for enhancements or additional spaces to better serve the community. Both the building and outdoor facilities (fields and basketball court) can be used much more efficiently with adjustments in programming and some physical alterations of the indoor space.

The consulting team inventoried and interviewed similar providers throughout the City to identify both opportunities for partnerships and to minimize duplication of services. Representatives from City partner organizations such as BIG Arts, The Community House, F.I.S.H., and Island Seniors, Inc., were interviewed with a similar set of questions to determine areas of challenges and opportunities, with special focus on innovative ideas for more effective and efficient partnership opportunities that would create broader access to programs and facilities for the entire Sanibel community. In many cases, there are unexplored opportunities for more comprehensive partnerships that would decidedly enhance current program offerings.

Shared usage of City facilities was also an area of focus, and several opportunities exist to collaborate.

As part of the operations assessment, consultants conducted a review of the staff training and professional development in the organization. The Department has not focused much attention on the development of staff and succession planning, and there is a great deal of room for improvement.

Concurrent with other focused assessments, a cost of service, cost recovery determination, and fees and charges analysis were completed. Using a Microsoft Excel-based cost model, consultants calculated the cost of service to be used as a basis for establishing fees and charges for programs and services. Suggestions were made to create a simplified fees and charges structure for the future.

## Emergent Themes Workshop

A workshop was conducted with the Recreation staff on June 29, 2022, to verify the key emergent themes that surfaced during the engagement process. These themes became the focus as the remainder of the research and analysis was conducted and provided a basis on which to focus the strategies for implementing recommendations.

Four main themes emerged from information that was gathered throughout the engagement and assessment process to guide the report and resulting recommendations:

Departmental and Cultural Leadership

Facility and Operations Efficiencies

Partnerships and Collaborations

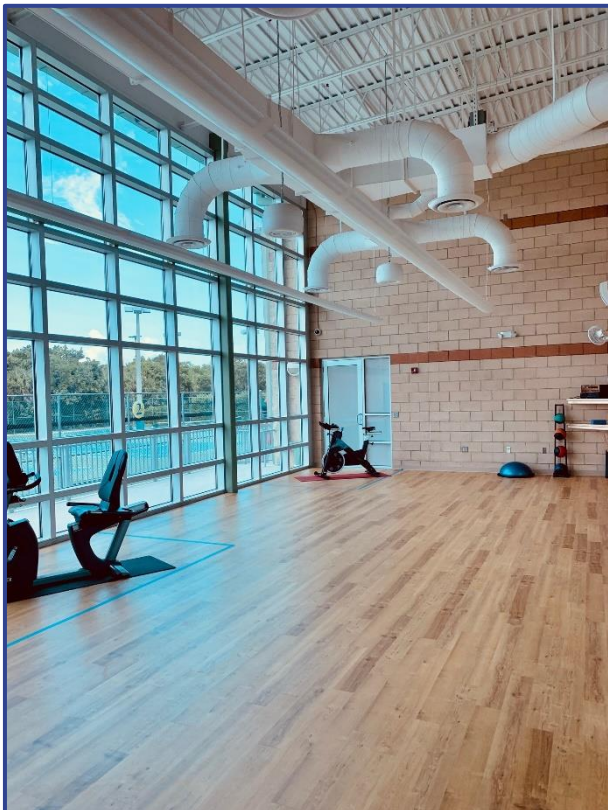
Multigenerational Programming

## Council Visioning Workshop

A public workshop was provided for City Council members on August 15, 2022. During this meeting, the consultants provided an overview of the following:

- Public engagement
- Demographic overview
- Current conditions (people, places and spaces, and product)
- Emergent themes workshop update
- Financial highlights

The Council then participated in a vision session.



The results of this meeting include the following overarching themes articulated by the Council. These City Council overarching themes set the stage for the remainder of the analysis and the following recommendations.

1

Recreation programs are a community service to be run in a business-like manner (efficient and cost-effective) to leverage the maximum benefit to taxpayers.

Sanibel has adopted a multigenerational community vision for the future (who they aspire to be).

2

3

Operational issues will be left up to the discretion of City Administration.

The City Council will set policy parameters for overall cost recovery and allow Department staff to achieve these goals

4



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

## Policy Recommendations

- ☑ Create a pricing policy and procedure—eliminate the need for the Council to approve all program fees annually.
- ☑ Develop a cost recovery percentage policy to guide staff on setting fee levels in alignment with desired cost recovery levels.
- ☑ Evaluate the relationship with Sanibel Sports, Inc. and consider taking over all youth sports.
- ☑ Eliminate the Council-appointed Financial Assistance Committee and create a system for the Director of Recreation to efficiently determine need and award program scholarships.
- ☑ Create a new Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee by City ordinance.
- ☑ Renegotiate the agreements with the Sanibel School and the Lee County to better define roles and responsibilities.



## Programming and Facilities Recommendations related to the Sanibel Senior Population

- ☑ City Manager convenes summit with key island nonprofits currently providing services to the senior population to develop a community-wide collaborative partnership for meeting the needs of the island senior population in the most cost-effective manner. Senior programming offered through the City Recreation Department should be managed 100% by the City.
- ☑ Council needs to determine a solution for meeting the social needs of the island senior population by evaluating the following options:
  - Continue the program in the Recreation Center Osprey Room (either short-term or long-term)
  - City-run drop-in center in a portion of the bank building
  - Island Seniors, Inc., as a stand-alone nonprofit, creates and funds a drop-in center

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CITY MANAGER AND STAFF

## Recreation Programming

### Hiring

- ☑ Reduce the obstacles to hiring new part-time staff and contractors (including instructors) to make it more attractive to work for the Department.
- ☑ Establish benefits for part-time staff to attract new employees. These could include reimbursement for the toll, free use of the Recreation Center, beach parking stickers, and more flexible scheduling. Sign-on bonuses, referral bonuses, and bonuses for working through a full season should also be considered.
- ☑ Create an effective onboarding process for full-time and part-time staff that prepares new hires for their responsibilities and provides a solid overview of the City and Department.

### Budgeting

- ☑ Create a system where programming staff can track the revenue and expenses for each program area by season.
- ☑ Provide staff financial information monthly so they can manage each program area effectively.
- ☑ Allow staff the ability to create new programs to increase revenue and provide flexibility with the City Council budget limit for part-time staff expenses.

### After School Program/Summer Camps

- ☑ Create a Request for Proposal to partner with or contract this service to another organization to increase efficiencies, free up staff time, and continue to provide a cost-effective program for local families.

### Recreation Center Memberships

- ☑ Revise the membership structure to be easy to understand for the customer and efficient to apply for the front desk staff. Consider resident and nonresident fees for daily passes, a 10-punch card, and monthly and annual passes (for individual, couple, and additional family member).
- ☑ For tracking purposes, separate out the daily fees and punch cards from the actual memberships (monthly and annual).
- ☑ Evaluate the full fee schedule and confirm that the nonresident difference is consistent across the structure.
- ☑ Revise the fee schedule so it is more cost-effective for visitors to use the Recreation Center daily.

### Aquatics

- ☑ Create a more balanced pool schedule that allows for free swim, family time, and swim lessons to create a more multigenerational experience.
- ☑ Create a better system to schedule part-time staff in a more flexible manner to attract new lifeguards to the Department.

### Fitness

- ☑ Create a more efficient system to hire part-time fitness instructors—explore hiring as employees (such as lifeguards) as opposed to contractors.
- ☑ Continue to add new classes, based on the public engagement input.



## Seniors

- ☑ Acquire this program area and have all the revenue and expenses go through the City system.
- ☑ Reduce the amount of full-time and part-time staff resources allocated for this program area by creating partnerships with local nonprofits and securing volunteers to assist in some key roles.
- ☑ Eliminate the discount for City recreation programs for Island Seniors, Inc. members.
- ☑ Work with nonprofits to determine which organization will offer which type of service to this age group to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies across the island.

## Indoor Sports

- ☑ Add specific weekly timeslots for open gym by age group (youth, teens, adult) and create an easy system for payment (daily fee, punch card, part of membership).

## Outdoor Sports

- ☑ Open the playground and skate park evenings and weekends when families are free to recreate. If there is a way to keep them open all day, that would be ideal for those younger than school age or those who are homeschooled.
- ☑ Make the tennis courts and athletic fields available evenings, weekends, and holidays when the school is closed.

## Other

- ☑ Seek opportunities to partner with island nonprofits (F.I.S.H., BIG Arts, and the Community House) as well as private business, to provide expanded and innovative programs and services to the island residents.

## Youth

- ☑ Add traditional youth programs such as art, dance, music, and swim lessons into the program menu.
- ☑ Offer seasonal/holiday events for young families to connect.
- ☑ Streamline the process to schedule a birthday party at the Recreation Center so children can celebrate their day with a pool or gym party that can easily include nonmembers of the Recreation Center.
- ☑ Review the program inventory listing, and have each programmer add new programs seasonally.
- ☑ Fund and plan for small family events to bring people together—these could involve pool parties or activities in the gym.

## Marketing and Communications

- ☑ Create a seasonal program guide/brochure (possibly starting with twice a year) so that everyone is aware of new opportunities and mail to all households—a sponsor could be secured to help defray mailing costs.
- ☑ Develop a sponsorship program to generate non-program revenue.
- ☑ Enhance marketing of programs and services with a stronger social media presence.
- ☑ Cross-promote programs and services throughout the Department.
- ☑ Following the adoption of the Recreation Reimagined plan, hold a Recreation Center membership drive.
- ☑ Allow residents to “opt in” for information they would like to receive from the Department.
- ☑ Enhance the Department’s website presence highlighting current offerings, facility hours, rental opportunities, open positions, current staffing, etc.

## Marketing and Communications (continued)

- ☑ Allow for online registration for all programs and services (including membership).
- ☑ Establish meaningful relationships with island service clubs, nonprofits, chamber of commerce, realtor associations, and homeowner's associations to keep them informed of Department programs and services.
- ☑ Post the Interlocal Agreements (ILAs) on the City website to provide transparency.

## Technology

- ☑ Improve the Wi-Fi at the Recreation Center.
- ☑ Provide staff with the technology to attend virtual meetings and trainings (cameras).
- ☑ Investigate purchasing technology for virtual programming.
- ☑ Review full list of staff RecTrac needs—determine if the software can provide what is needed. If the system can do what is needed, then enhance setup, and provide training. If the system cannot provide what's needed, then find a better solution and purchase (setup appropriately, and provide training).

## Financial

- ☑ Work with Accounting staff to set up system to track expenses by program area so that true cost recovery can be determined for each program.
- ☑ Simplify the Recreation Center fee structure:
  - Resident/nonresident
  - Daily, 10-punch, monthly, and annual
  - Individual, couple, additional family member

- ☑ Determine an appropriate nonresident fee (20% or 25% more than resident fees) and be consistent across the board.
- ☑ Determine what participation and financial metrics will be tracked and shared and create a schedule for sharing. Use this data to set goals for future time periods (month, quarter, annual). Some participation metrics to track include:
  - Number of programs offered
  - Number of programs offered by age segment
  - Number of new programs offered
  - Total number of participants in each course
  - Total number of nonresidents enrolled in all courses
  - Total number of canceled courses
  - Participant satisfaction levels
- ☑ Consider annual adjustments to program fees that would have the greatest impact increasing the Department's cost recovery percentage.
- ☑ Monitor targeted ranges of cost recovery annually related to specific activity and program and service categories, and consider adjusting fees accordingly.
- ☑ Establish a policy regarding fund balance targets.
- ☑ Consider implementing alternative pricing strategies to assist with the development of new activities and services.
- ☑ Continue to forecast revenues based on prior year actuals, as opposed to past budget figures.
- ☑ Undertake a thorough fee review every two to five years.
- ☑ Prepare an annual cost recovery and fiscal review to be presented to staff, stakeholders, City leadership, and City Council.

## Facilities

### Recreation Center

- ☑ Create a more open and inviting lobby area by removing the signage that is unwelcoming to customers. Suggest additional staff training on creating excellent customer experience.
- ☑ Continue to evaluate the usage of the athletic fields—expand programming or determine a more appropriate use for the space.
- ☑ Seek out options for additional parking either through a new partnership or by reconfiguring the existing lot.
- ☑ Evaluate the attendance at all the events where the Department permits space to outside groups to determine if this is the best use of the space. Consider limiting these events to once each month (or less) to free up space for new programming.

### Other

- ☑ Evaluate the possibility of adding outdoor pickleball on the island—former Center4Life site, athletic fields, or at Community Park next to the Community House.



## Operations

- ☑ Write a Recreation Center operations manual and make it available to all Department staff electronically; review annually and update as needed.
- ☑ Review all registration forms and processes and seek efficiencies.
- ☑ Eliminate the need for everyone entering the facility to undergo a background check.
- ☑ Create a preventive maintenance and replacement plan for all facility equipment.
- ☑ Streamline the payroll process so that staff are entering time once.
- ☑ Coordinate with the City Human Resources Department so that Recreation staff can recruit for their own open positions.
- ☑ Explore the possibility of hiring fitness instructors as employees (without requiring insurance) instead of as contractors.
- ☑ Determine a new process or location for the selling of beach parking passes and dog licenses.
- ☑ Create an evaluation process to obtain feedback from guests regarding Department programs and services.
- ☑ Create a robust volunteer program and recruit volunteers to assist the Department in meaningful ways that can reduce the potential need for some part-time staff positions.

## Training and Development

- ☑ Designate one person on staff to oversee the Department training and development program, using the information summarized in the Recreation Department Training and Development section of this report.
- ☑ Include funds in the annual budget and plan for a variety of training and development opportunities to staff at all levels in the Department.
- ☑ Utilize state and national associations for low-cost online learning, schools, networking, skill development, and conference attendance.
- ☑ Invest in national certifications such as the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP), Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE), and those for job-specific skills.

## Implementation Timeframe

As the Department works to rebuild, these recommendations can be organized into short-term goals (1 to 3 years), mid-term goals (4 to 6 years), and long-term goals (7 to 10 years). The budget implications of each will need to be considered during the designation process, and a staff person should be assigned to oversee each overarching goal. With the number of recommendations included in this report, it could take up to 10 years to complete all. Each year, as part of the budget process, all should be reviewed to confirm that the selected timeline is appropriate. Progress toward all goals should be shared with the team, City leadership, City Council, and the community (via the website).

Table 1 includes abbreviations, terms, and definitions that are used throughout this report.

**Table 1: Project Abbreviations, Terms, and Definitions**

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
ACE	American Council on Exercise
ACSM	American College of Sports Medicine
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AR	Augmented Reality
Assessment	Comprehensive Assessment
ATD	Association of Talent Development
BEBR	Bureau of Economic and Business Research
BerryDunn	Berry Dunn McNeil & Parker, LLC
CAPRA	Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies
CHR	Community Housing and Resources
CIP	Capital Improvement Plan
City	City of Sanibel
COAPRT	Council of Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professionals

Abbreviation/Term	Definition
CoS	Cost of Service
CPRE	Certified Park and Recreation Executive
CPRP	Certified Park and Recreation Professional
Department	Department of Recreation
FTE	Full-Time Employee
EIM	Exercise is Medicine
F.I.S.H	Food Programs/Island-Based Education/Social and Senior Services/Helping Hands & Financial Assistance
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
IT	Information Technology
LERN	The Learning Resource Network
MS	Microsoft
NRPA	National Recreation and Park Association
PDOP	Park District of Oak Park
ROI	Return on Investment
SEO	Search Engine Optimization
SHAPE	The Society of Health and Physical Educators
SME	Subject Matter Expert
State	State of Florida
SUP	Shared-Use Paths

# Demographic Report

The City demographic profile was developed to provide an analysis of household and economic data in the area. Data referenced throughout this report was sourced from the Bureau of Economic and Business Research (BEBR) from the University of Florida, as well as Esri Business Analysis. In addition, when applicable, other sources were referenced such as the American Community Survey and the Robert W. Johnson Foundation county Health Rankings for information about disabilities and health-related outcomes. Typically, BerryDunn uses Esri data alone for this type of a demographics report. However, when the most recent data was purchased and reviewed with City leadership, it was determined that the figures were likely not accurate. Esri predicted that the population would increase from 2010 to 2021 (6,469 to 7,547), but the data from BEBR reported that the population had actually decreased slightly (6,469 to 6,382) over this time period. This is in alignment with City leadership's opinion of the current population.

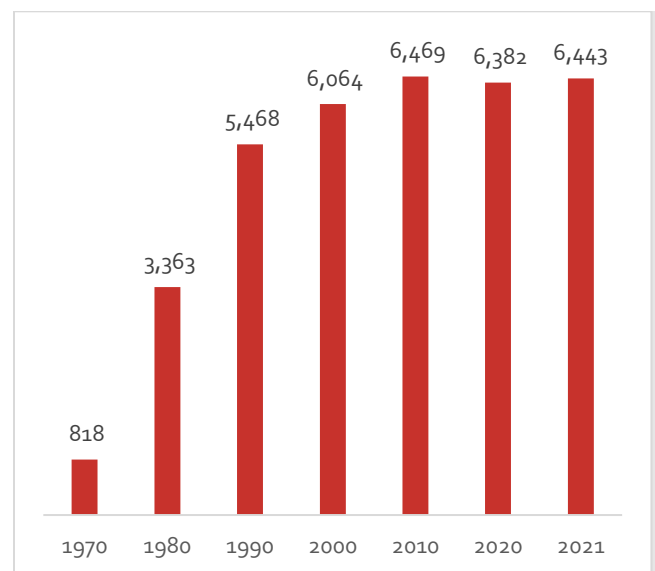
According to BEBR, the population decreased from 2010 to 2021. As the island is landlocked and no new housing development is planned, the project team is assuming that the population will not likely increase much over time. Each age group is likely to change, however, as the population ages. For this report, the BEBR population total for 2021 was combined with the percentages that Esri predicted for each age group in 2021. Although this is not the BerryDunn standard process, it does provide realistic demographic information for the City of Sanibel.

## POPULATION

The population in the City of Sanibel was estimated to be 6,443 (BEBR, 2021). From the time the City was incorporated in 1974, the area grew to over 6,000 residents in the year 2000 and has remained relatively steady since that time. Historically, the largest increase was the 10-year period from 1980 to 1990 when the population increased 62% from 3,363 to 5,468. Figure 2.1 depicts the change in population from 1970 to 2021. In terms of gender distribution, the City of Sanibel is made up of approximately 52.2% female and 47.8% male.



**Figure 2.1: Historical Population Growth in the City of Sanibel**



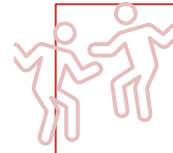
Source: BEBR, University of Florida



## AGE

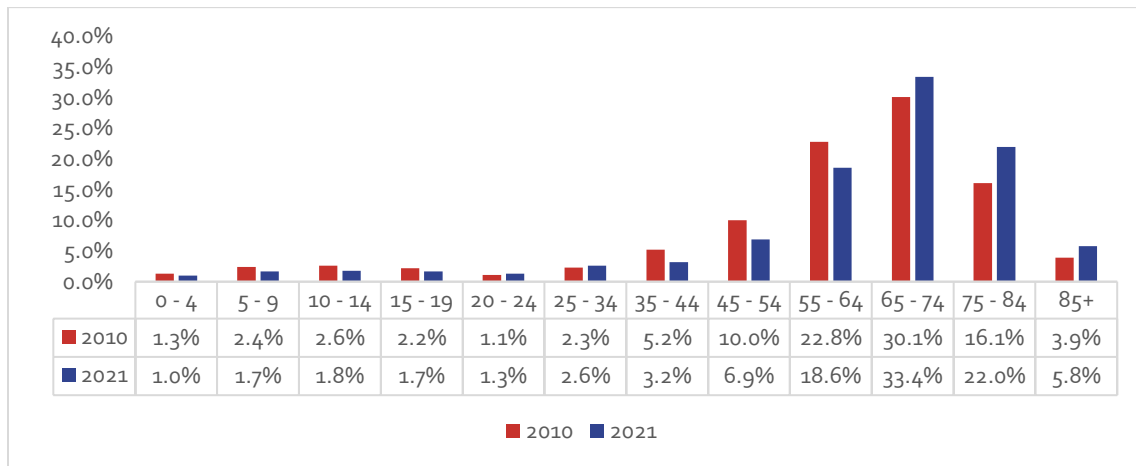
According to Esri Business Analyst, the median age in 2021 for the City of Sanibel was 68.4 years old, more than 20 years older than the State of Florida (42.8) and the United States (38.8). The median age is projected to increase to 69.9 in

Sanibel by 2026. The age distribution in the City of Sanibel during 2021 is a reflection of an older population that continues to age in place. From 2010 to 2021, those older than 65 increased in population. The age group projected to see the most change is those between the ages of 75 – 84, making up 16% in 2010 and 22% in 2021.



68.4  
Median Age

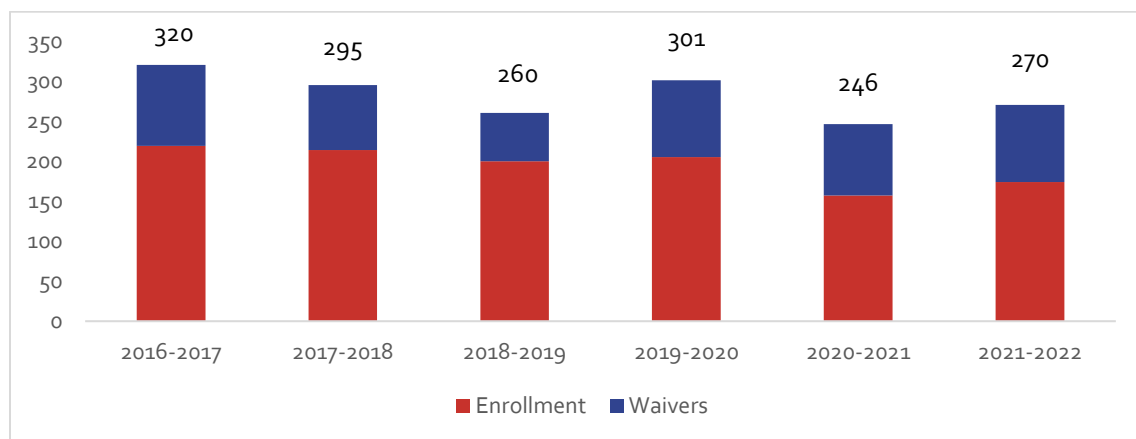
**Figure 2.2: Age Distribution Comparison from 2010 to 2021**



Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2021

The Sanibel School enrollment numbers indicate that the youth population has been declining over time on the island. In Figure 2.3 below, the total enrollment in the Sanibel School is depicted below, representing the students enrolled both from the island (dark blue) and those who live off the island but require a waiver to attend (green). School enrollment declined steadily from 2016 until 2019, then increased in 2019, but then continued to fluctuate in 2022.

**Figure 2.3: Total Enrollment in City of Sanibel Public Schools**

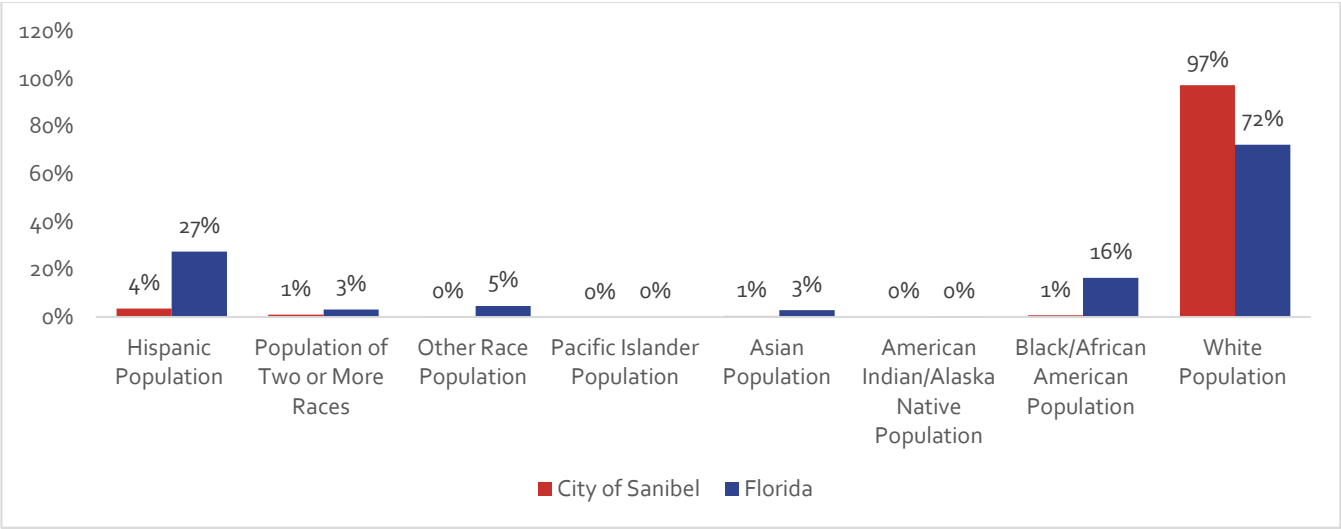


Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2021

# DIVERSITY IN SANIBEL

The City is generally less diverse than the State of Florida or the United States. Over 97% of residents identify as white, compared the 72% in the state. Just over 4% of residents identify as being of Hispanic origin, compared to the State of Florida at 27%. Figure 2.4 includes all the current ethnic data for the City of Sanibel.

Figure 2.4: Race/Ethnicity in City of Sanibel



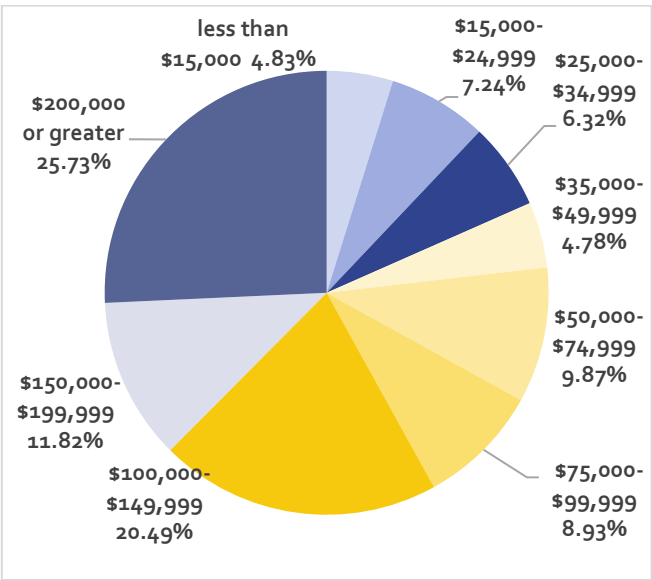
Source: Esri Business Analyst

# HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND SIZE

The median household income in the City of Sanibel was \$114,878 in 2021, higher than the State of Florida (\$58,462) and the United States (\$64,730). Over 20% of resident households earned between \$100,000 and \$149,999. Less than 7% of residents fell under the poverty level, compared to Florida (13.31%) and the United States (12.93%).

Over 25% of the Sanibel households earn more than \$200,000 annually. The average household size was 1.93 in 2021, less than the State of Florida (2.50) and the United States (2.58). Figure 2.5 includes the household income data for Sanibel for 2021.

Figure 2.5: City of Sanibel Income Distribution



## PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

According to the American Community Survey, 7.6% of Sanibel's population in 2020 experienced living with some sort of difficulty including hearing, vision, cognitive, ambulatory, self-care, and/or independent living challenges. This is lower than the state average at 13.6% but still reaffirms the importance of inclusive programming and ADA transition plans for parks and facilities. Types of disabilities recorded within the City of Sanibel:

Ambulatory difficulty – 3.7%

Hearing difficulty – 3.2%

Independent living difficulty – 2.6%

Self-care difficulty – 1.0%

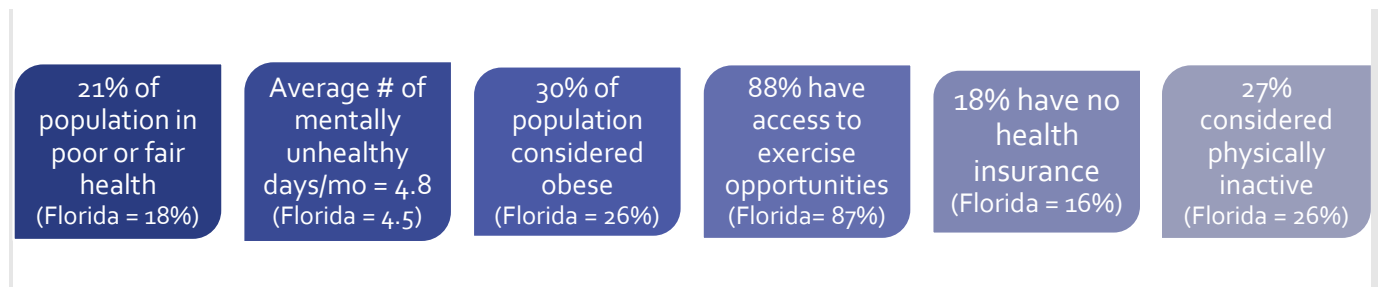
Cognitive difficulty – 0.5%

Vision difficulty – 0.5%

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Understanding the status of a community's health can help develop policies related to recreation and fitness. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings and Roadmaps provided annual insight on the general health of national, state, and county populations. Lee County, home to Sanibel, is ranked among the healthiest counties in Florida; in 2021, it ranked 16<sup>th</sup> out of 67 Florida counties for health outcomes. Figure 2.6 depicts Lee County's health and wellness data compared to the state of FL.

Figure 2.6: Lee County Health Rankings Overview



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

## SUMMARY

Like the rest of the country, the City of Sanibel is expected to continue to age over time. The City is unique, however, in that the overall population is not expected to increase over the next several years. This information was used to inform the final Recreation Assessment and the formulation of its recommendations.

# High-Level Engagement Summary

As part of the Recreation Department (Department) Comprehensive Assessment (Assessment) effort for the City, broad-based public engagement was sought. To get as many people involved in the community engagement, a great deal of promotion was done by the Department. The community engagement for this project included:

- Staff meetings
- Meetings with City Council members
- Key stakeholders' meetings
- Four focus groups: seniors, nonprofit representatives, families (adults with small children in the household), and a group of avid Recreation Center users
- A community open house
- A booth at the Farmers Market
- A robust Social Pinpoint virtual engagement website utilized to gather feedback online that included a survey, two community forums, and an Ideas Wall

This summary of the engagement conducted as part of this study provides a high-level overview of the meetings conducted and the information obtained. The full report can be found in the appendix.

For a small community (population 6,443), the opportunities for engagement were well-received, and the constituents provided a great deal of feedback used to shape the report and final recommendations. Input was obtained from all demographics: young and old; those who have lived on the island a long time and new residents; and those who utilize the Department and those who do not. There is a great deal of interest in making the Department the very best it can be to serve the variety of residents who call Sanibel home for part of the year or year-round.

## STAFF MEETINGS

The consulting team met individually with nine full-time staff representing Recreation, Finance, Natural Resources, and Information Technology (IT), and two part-time Department fitness instructors.

Despite the frustrations of many regarding being furloughed, all the staff were very engaged in the project meetings and expressed sincere interest in the planning process and a final report that can be used to make necessary improvements. According to the Department staff, the important issues that this plan should address include:



Overall, the staff presented a full menu of issues to the consulting team that the final plan should address in some format or another (whether in a final recommendation or in a suggestion to further study a situation). These staff meetings set the stage for the meetings with City Council members, the key stakeholders, and the focus groups

Clearly, the staff is aware of the many issues that need to be addressed to create a high-functioning Recreation Department that can meet the growing needs of the public.

## MEETINGS WITH COUNCIL MEMBERS

The consulting team met individually with City Council members to discuss their current opinions and future desires regarding recreation programming and services in Sanibel. Many of the issues raised by Council members are in alignment with the sentiments of staff. In each meeting, we discussed Department strengths, opportunities for improvement, future challenges, and new programming ideas.

The strengths mentioned included the Recreation Center being an asset in the community, the weight room, the After School Care and summer programs, and the outdoor pool.

The opportunities discussed included encouraging the staff to make decisions, enhanced partnerships, and improved communication with residents.

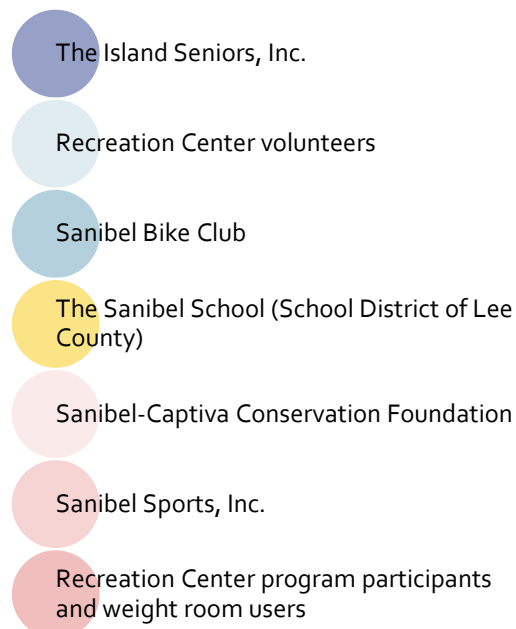
The future challenges focused on the recruiting and hiring of staff, solutions for the Recreation Center parking constraints, the potential separation of the Center4Life and Island Seniors, Inc., and attracting younger generations.

Ideas for future programming included additional pickleball, seminars for improved mental and physical health, socialization clubs, and more programs for children and families.



## KEY STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

Seven key stakeholder meetings were facilitated as part of the community engagement for this project. These key stakeholders represented several groups and organizations including:



All these people have a unique connection to the Department and have different desires and needs for recreation programming and services. Some of these people are highly engaged in the Department, and others have never participated in a program or utilized the facility. Similar to the meetings with Council members, the focus of each conversation was Department strengths, opportunities for improvement, future challenges, and new programming ideas. Many of the comments made by Council members were repeated by the stakeholders. Some additional topics included improved technology, the tracking and reporting of participation data, the future of the bank building, and finance concerns. Suggestions for new programs included bike safety, family events, multigenerational programming, and more opportunities to learn about and connect with the natural environment.

## FOCUS GROUPS

The BerryDunn consulting team facilitated a total of four focus groups:

- Families: Adults with small children in the household (6 participants)
- Nonprofit Representatives (6 participants)
- Recreation Center users (10 participants)
- Seniors (10 participants)

Although many of the sentiments shared by each group were similar, each had a slightly different perspective on what was most important and should be included as part of the study.

### Families

The group focusing on the needs of island families was made up of adults with small children in the household including new residents to the island (one year) as well as longtime residents (up to 30-plus years). One attendee has lived on Sanibel her entire life, and another grew up on Captiva. This group had a wide range of experiences with the Department, but what was clear is the desire for more traditional youth recreation programming including karate, swim lessons, martial arts, dance, gymnastics, and a return of the popular swim team.

### Nonprofits

The focus group for the nonprofit representatives included people from the Community House, Sanibel Library, Community Housing and Resources (CHR), Shell Museum, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, BIG Arts, F.I.S.H., and an island HOA.

Following a brief conversation regarding what these organizations provide to island residents and how they are funded, we discussed the relationship between these organizations and the City's Recreation Department. All are interested in additional partnering on the island, and they would love the City to take a lead role in pulling groups together.

### Recreation Center Users

All the attendees to this focus group have lived on the island (either part-time or full-time) for 10 years or more. Some had children who grew up on the island and took part in recreation programs in the past. A good number used the pool regularly, some used the weight room, a few participated in fitness classes, and another played pickleball. Although all have been Recreation Center members at some point in the past, some have discontinued and are unsure about returning.

This sentiment of this group is that the Recreation Center is a great benefit to island residents and guests. They also had a lengthy list of suggestions for changes at the Recreation Center including:

Expanded Recreation Center hours and programming

Improvements to customer service

A more streamlined financial assistance program

Weight room enhancements

The resurrection of the volunteer program

Improvements to the City's website

This group also provided many suggestions for new programs including more deep-water aerobics, more pickleball, a master swim program, and expanded hours at the skate park. This group also suggested the addition of an indoor or outdoor track (possibly around the ball fields) and tennis backboards. These residents were not in support of renovating the bank building for the Island Seniors, Inc.



## Senior Population

All 10 seniors attending this focus group have lived on the island for at least 10 years, with a couple of residents on the island for 40 years. Some use the Recreation Center, and some do not. Many are volunteers for Sanibel organizations such as BIG Arts, F.I.S.H., Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation (SCCF), and CHR. Of the 10 in attendance, 6 were members of Island Seniors, Inc. and four were not. The group had mixed opinions regarding what should be done with the Center4Life programming. The Island Seniors, Inc. members would like the atmosphere at the Center4Life re-created by the City elsewhere, while other participants suggested that Island Seniors, Inc. consider renting their own space with their own funds. The cost to maintain two City facilities in a relatively small community was a concern.

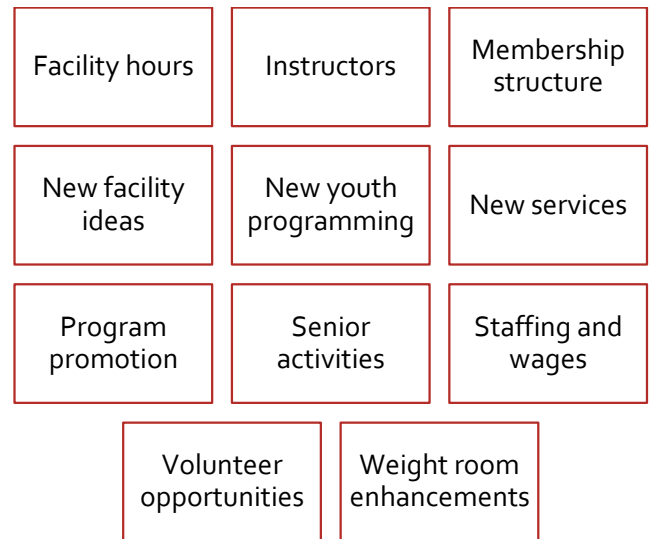
Many suggestions that were mentioned at the other focus groups also came up with this group such as improving customer service, increasing program offerings, creating more opportunities for young people and families, and increasing staff wages to attract and keep good staff.

## Open House and Farmers Market In-Person Engagements

The BerryDunn team collected information, ideas, and perceptions of the current Recreation Department during two engagement sessions over a two-day period in early April 2022. Residents were invited to a community open house at the Recreation Center as well as a pop-up booth at the Sanibel Farmers Market.

Nearly 200 people attended the open house and guests were able to make suggestions, share ideas, and comment on their experiences with the Recreation Department. In addition, the pool was open for public swim, there were games in the gym, and free hot dogs were served. Over 100 people stopped by the booth at the Farmers Market to share their thoughts as well.

Much of the same feedback obtained during the focus groups and the stakeholder meetings were shared during the in-person engagements including suggestions regarding:



Overall, people were very pleased with the in-person engagement opportunities provided to share their thoughts and ideas about the future of the Sanibel Recreation Department.

## Social Pinpoint

Social Pinpoint is an online engagement tool used that BerryDunn utilizes to gather community feedback. With the assistance of Department staff, the City's site was customized for the project with Department logo, colors, and community photos. The site was rolled out on March 25. The Sanibel site, which received a total of 6,229 visits, included four opportunities for visitors to provide input on the Assessment of the Department including:

- A survey with a total of 24 questions
- Two Forums:
  - If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?

- Please share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Center.
- An Ideas Wall with options to post comments regarding customer service, family activities, program instructors, program promotion, senior activities, and youth activities

The site also included downloadable documents, such as several press releases, a rack card, and details on the City's 2001 Parks and Recreation Master Plan. The site was closed for comment on May 11, 2022.

## Survey Results

A total of 462 surveys were submitted from people coming from 19 states. The survey asked several demographic questions, sentiments regarding Department programming, Recreation Center membership status (pre- and post-COVID), customer service, marketing, Center4Life participation, and Island Senior, Inc. membership status. A great deal of information was gleaned from this tool. See Appendix A for survey results by question.

## Forums

The Social Pinpoint site offered two Forum questions. A Forum is a specific question where participants can see all the responses. The Sanibel Forum questions were:

- If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?
- Please share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Center.

A total of 378 comments were shared for both Forum questions. Forum 1 received a total of 297 comments, and Forum 2 received 81 total comments.

The feedback received via the Forum questions is very similar to all the other engagements and included comments regarding:

Forum Themes	Center4Life
	Customer service
	Fitness programming
	Instructors
	New facility suggestions
	Pickleball
	Pool issues
	Programming
	Staffing
	Recreation Center hours and scheduling
	Weight Room scheduling and enhancements

## Ideas Wall

The Ideas Wall allowed site visitors to weigh in on six topic areas, including:

Customer Service (31 comments)
Family Activities (16 comments)
Parks and Facilities (78 comments)
Program Instructors (29 comments)
Senior Activities (91 comments)
Youth Activities (30 comments)

The Ideas Wall is an interactive tool and allows people to "like" or "dislike" comments. In addition, site visitors can also respond to a comment. In total, 275 comments were made on the Ideas Wall.

The feedback obtained on the Sanibel Ideas Wall was nearly identical to all the input obtained via the meetings with staff and City Council members, the focus groups, the stakeholder meetings, and the in-person engagement. See Appendix A for summary of comments by each topic area.

## EMERGENT THEMES

Following the conclusion of the engagement period, the BerryDunn consulting team reviewed in detail all the input received and organized into emergent themes. All the comments, ideas, suggestions, and frustrations heard during the engagement fit under one of these themes:

Partnerships and  
Collaboration

Facility and Operational  
Efficiencies

Departmental Culture and  
Leadership

Multigenerational  
Recreation Programming

These four key themes were then reviewed with Department staff at a workshop on June 29, 2022. The group concurred with the themes and started to discuss how to address each during the workshop. The analysis conducted after this workshop kept these four themes in the forefront and framed the final report recommendations.

## Recreation Department Review

### OVERVIEW OF PROCESS

The recreation programs assessment reviews the Department's recreation program and service offerings through a series of individual analyses. This report offers detailed insight and helps identify the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for future program direction. This report also assists with identifying program categories, programming gaps, and future considerations. The reports and data that informed the recreation assessment include Department marketing materials, participation data generated by staff, and Department revenues and expenses. Internal meetings with staff provided a great deal of insight and the integration of community engagement results helped to inform and drive program and service recommendations. The program data provided by staff and was used to seek program trends or gaps.

In most cases, BerryDunn begins the analysis by reviewing the program registration data pulled from the software system (RecTrac). Because the Department has not fully leveraged RecTrac, this type of analysis was not possible. The data tracked manually by staff was used for this report, and some errors were found when analyzing.

A recommendation was made to staff to determine the needs of staff, the shortcomings of the system, and to see if changes (upgrades) could be made to utilize the software more effectively in the future. The comparison between staff needs and the software capabilities may also lead the Department to replace the current system in the future.

At this time, the weight room and lap pool were made available via a reservation system. There were no classes and no weekend hours. Through the end of the fiscal year (September 30, 2020), the restrictions remained in place. The tennis courts were made available beginning in October 2020.

The facility did not fully reopen until June 2021, and even then, it was on a limited basis with many restrictions. It has been a very difficult process to rebuild the Department for a variety of reasons. In February of 2020, just before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Recreation Center was open seven days a week hosting a variety of programs and fitness opportunities for the community – primarily for the adult and senior populations.

## STAFF SWOT

This project kicked off in February with a full project team meeting following by individual conversations with team members. A high-level summary of the information gleaned from these meetings related to recreation programming follows. The consulting team learned during the public engagement phase that the perceptions of staff did not align fully with the sentiments of the community. These differences were discussed with staff during the Emergent Themes workshop with staff in June 2022.



## RECREATION CENTER MEMBERSHIPS

The Department operates on a member/nonmember basis like a private club that encourages residents to purchase facility passes. The membership structure is lengthy and complicated, and there are many membership types that have generated very little revenue over the years. Simplifying the structure could result in two positive benefits including improved customer service and additional revenue generation.

The current Department fee structure considers the daily and weekly passes as memberships. Typically, in other park and recreation agencies across the country, these are considered daily admissions—a different category from a membership.

The current membership structure includes the following:

**Eight pass types for residents:** individual and family (daily, weekly, six-month, annual)

**Eight pass types for island employees:** individual and family (daily, weekly, six-month, annual)

**Four pass types for guests of members:** individual and family (daily, weekly)

**Eight pass types for visitors:** individuals and family (daily, weekly, six-month, annual)

During the public engagement, several residents mentioned their frustration with the high cost for a visitor to use the Recreation Center daily. The consultants conducted some research, and it was less expensive to visit the competition rather than spend a day at the Recreation Center.

To simplify the structure, the BerryDunn consulting team recommends the following:

Resident/nonresident passes for individuals, couples, and additional family members for:

**Daily admission** (not considered a membership)

**10-punch card** (also not considered a membership; ideal for those on the island for a week or two)

**One-month pass** (beneficial for those on island only during peak season)

**Annual pass**

The Department can determine who can be considered a resident (i.e., those who work full-time on the island, or Lee County (incorporated) residents). Many agencies include those who work in the community full-time (but this does not always include the rest of the family).

The current fee structure is imbalanced across the board as increases in nonresident fees vary from pass to pass. A thorough review of the fee structure is recommended. The goal should be to price in a manner that encourages full-time residents to purchase a pass rather than pay the daily fee. Historically, more residents (double) have paid the daily fee than purchased an annual membership. Table 4.1 below depicts the residents passes sold for four fiscal years.

**Table 4.1: Resident Recreation Center Memberships Sold**

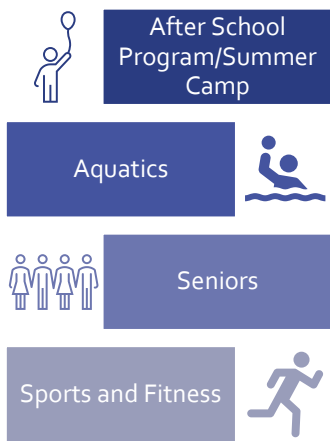
FY	Daily	Weekly	6-month	Annual
16/17	2,437	385	734	934
17/18	2,160	368	680	944
18/19	2,146	374	686	940
19/20	1,123	233	578	606

# PROGRAM MENU

This section of the report will review the menu’s core program areas. Department staff acknowledged during the first set of meetings in early February 2022, that a more diversified program menu was needed for the Department. The parents who attended the in-person engagement sessions echoed the same sentiment, requesting more traditional programming for youth be offered at the Recreation Center.

## CORE PROGRAMMING

According to Department staff, the current core program areas include:



Although the Department had provided some community special events and arts programming in the past, these types of programs have not been offered for several years. In all the data sets included in this section, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is apparent. Only a few program areas have fully recovered, and some have not been offered since the start of the pandemic. The Department continues to be in a rebuilding mode, hiring new staff and offering new programs.

The data sets in each core program area represent one person entering the facility for a specific purpose. If someone entered the building and stretched in the Egret room, worked out in the weight room, and swam

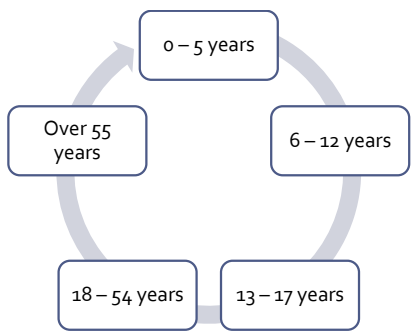
laps, they would have been counted three times. If a child signed up for swim team, they were counted each time they attended practice—not as one registration for a program.

The same is true for all programs. It is impossible to tell from this data the number of unique individuals served except for memberships where individual totals are available.

Typically, an agency will track the following by exporting data from the registration system by season:

Number of programs offered
Number of new programs offered
Total number of participants in each course
Total number of nonresidents enrolled in all courses
Total number of canceled courses

Some agencies with a more sophisticated and comprehensive program menu will track the number of programs offered for each age group seasonally:



This information can then be compared to local demographics to see how well program offerings align. It is imperative that this data is exported from the registration software system to ensure accuracy. The manual counting of any program data (except for free, walk-in events) should be avoided when possible.

Another metric that recreation agencies like to track is participation satisfaction. With an established evaluation process, satisfaction can be measured and compared from year to year. This feedback is shared with staff and used to improve programs and services.



## After School Program/Summer Camps

With the proximity to the Sanibel School, the Department's After School Care and programs and summer camps have been very popular. The After School Program operates at the Recreation Center, weekdays from 2:10 to 5:30 p.m. This counselor-led program provides opportunities for sports, games, and arts and crafts. On days when school was not in session (including winter and spring breaks), parents can enroll their children for a full day (8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.) of activities at the Recreation Center (Fun Days).

Table 4.2 includes the registration for these programs for five fiscal years beginning with FY 2016/2017. It is clear from this data how the Department was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Table 4.2: After School Programs and Summer Camp Enrollment – FY 16/17 through FY 20/21**

FY	After School	Fun Days	Holiday Breaks	Summer Camp	Teen Events	Total
16/17	9,496	554	302	2,630	78	13,060
17/18	8,832	327	233	2,290	0	11,682
18/19	10,101	329	254	2,683	0	13,367
19/20	5,654	398	0	484	0	6,536
20/21	164	0	0	0	0	164

The data in Table 4.2, like all the data in this report, was counted manually by staff. The numbers for all these programs are the total number of visits, not the number of unique children enrolled. Children who come over and over to the same program are counted multiple times. Agencies typically track the number of unique participants, not the total number of visits.

This program, like aquatics, has struggled to secure staff following the COVID-19 pandemic. This program is also very popular with 85 children enrolled and another 15 on a wait list. In September 2022, all the full-time Department staff members were working at this program multiple shifts each week. The number of full-time staff hours dedicated to the After School program takes away from all the staff's primary responsibilities. Sanibel also has some of the highest fees for this type of program compared to other organizations in the area.

Based on the cost and the amount of staff required to provide this type of program, many organizations across the country partner with another organization or contract this service to another provider. To continue to provide a high-quality program to parents and to allow staff to focus on their primary job functions, this appears to be a good option worthy of exploration for the Department. Some FL examples of this include Bonita Springs, which partners with its local YMCA, and both Naples and Marco contract this program to Sports Camp, Inc.

To start this process, the Department would prepare a Request for Proposal and publicize to see what interest there is in the area. The summer camp program could be incorporated into this RFP as well to reduce the staff time spend in this program area. There is clearly a demand for this type of program, and the Department needs to seek a more cost-effective and efficient way to provide at a lower cost to parents.

## Aquatics

The Department is fortunate to provide the Sanibel community with two pools: a lap pool with a small water slide, and a children's leisure pool and a splash pad. As the island's only public outdoor pool, this facility has received a great deal of use from island residents and guests of all ages since the facility opened in 2007.

Aquatic programming is made up of the following:

- Lap swimming
- Water fitness classes (aqua jogging, deep and shallow aerobics, and yagalates H2o)
- SWAT (the youth swim team)
- Visits to the leisure pool, splash pad, and slide
- Swim lessons (both group and private)
- Miscellaneous classes (triathlon training, swim gym, and lifeguard classes)

Table 4.3 includes the attendance for these activities for five fiscal years. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is evident for the last two fiscal years. The most popular aquatic program is lap swimming followed by water exercise classes.

The data in Table 4.3 was tabulated by staff manually counting participation – not from information from the registration software system. For the 11,445 lap swimmers, it is unclear how many unique individuals this includes. The same is true for all the programs in the table as the information represents total visits and not unique individuals served.

Since the Recreation Center reopened following the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been difficult to get the pools fully operational and scheduled with programs, lap swims, and open swims. This has been due to a lack of staff: primarily lifeguards and swim instructors. Public pools across the country are facing an extreme lifeguard shortage and Sanibel is no exception. It has become difficult to convince young people to become lifeguards and in Sanibel, with the commute from the mainland, the causeway toll, and the amount of traffic, it has been exceptionally hard. One of the suggestions that was raised during the public engagement was to establish some benefits for part-time staff to entice people to work at the Recreation Center. These could include reimbursement for the toll, free use of the Recreation Center (specifically the weight room, pools, and group exercise classes), and more flexible scheduling. Park and recreation agencies across the country are offering sign-on bonuses, referral bonuses, and bonuses for working through a full season.

Throughout the public engagement process, it was made very clear that opening the pool more hours and offering swim lessons, resuming the swim team, adding additional aquatic aerobic classes, and more lap swim opportunities were a huge priority for many people. Late in the summer of 2022, Department staff were able to hire a swim coach, and plans were on track to resume the swim team with 40 children enrolled with another 30 on a wait list.

**Table 4.3: Aquatic Enrollment – FY 16/17 through FY 20/21**

FY	Lap Swim	Water Fitness	SWAT	Leisure Pool	Swim Lessons	Misc.	Total
<b>16/17</b>	11,445	6,107	3,342	2,828	243	88	24,053
<b>17/18</b>	10,624	6,122	2,992	2,364	610	13	22,725
<b>18/19</b>	10,805	6,468	2,461	2,342	29	170	22,275
<b>19/20</b>	6,574	2,448	1,314	785	4	0	11,125
<b>20/21</b>	7,789	0	0	0	24	20	7,833

## Senior Programming

With nearly 80% of the population over the age of 55 years, senior programming is quite robust. The Department program menu includes:



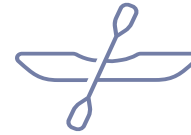
Book club



Fitness classes



Games (bridge, mahjong, cards, canasta) and Bingo



Kayaking



Potlucks, hot dog lunches, and social events



Seminars (technology, writing, coping) and classes (art, dancing)



Trips (off island for tours, lunches, casinos, etc.)

Unlike the other Department core program areas, the Center4Life program data has been tracked by calendar year instead of by fiscal year (October 1 – September 30). Table 4.4 includes the enrollment figures for senior programming for five years: 2016 through 2020.

**Table 4.4: Senior Programming 2016 – 2020**

YR	Fitness	Games/ Bingo	Book Club	Hot Dog Lunches	Potlucks	Trips	Seminars/ Classes	Kayaking	Lunch Club	Special Events	Total
2016	11,875	1,959	156	543	315	573	543	495	203	2,370	19,032
2017	10,794	2,354	132	471	1,168	668	423	449	171	1,639	18,269
2018	10,685	1,960	145	459	255	524	299	311	234	1,107	15,979
2019	10,962	1,816	160	432	230	391	372	382	209	792	15,746
2020	3,466	715	27	96	82	166	340	154	28	757	5,831

Historically, the most popular senior programs have been fitness and yoga, special events, and games. Like all the data in this report, these numbers are from manual tabulations made by staff. The special event totals include people who attended Island Seniors, Inc. fundraisers—these are not necessarily program participants. Normally an agency would track events differently and note that the tabulations were manual.

The BerryDunn consulting team found the senior programming situation interesting, unique, and complicated, and they conducted some additional research to learn more about how this core program area functions within the City.

Recreation and social programs designed specifically for the island's senior population date back to 1977 (three years after the incorporation of the City of Sanibel) when a group of nine residents formed a group (which they referred to as the Island Seniors Board) that determined there was a need to come together to create, organize, and execute activities specifically for island seniors. Activities and outings were held in homes and organized by volunteers. Between 1991 and 1993, talks were held between the Island Seniors Board and the City about creating a dedicated space for senior programs. Beginning in 1994, the Island Seniors, Inc. received its IRS 501 (c) (4) (social welfare organization) designation and has retained that status since. This is the IRS status held by many social clubs such as the Sanibel Bicycle Club.

In 1993, the City acquired the old library building (2401 Library Way) and established the "Civic Center" to provide for senior resident activities. In 2013, the City renamed the Civic Center the Center4Life in conjunction with the branding of Department programs to Fit4Life. While the focus has been on the Center4Life as a facility, the term is not just a building; it refers to the City's programs providing recreation and socialization activities for the senior population.



When the Rec Center opened in 2007, the Recreation Department took no action to integrate the operations of the Senior Center into the operations of the new Rec Center and its membership system.

From 1993 to March 2020, programs were held at the Center4Life building and financed by the City (\$297,000 in FY 22). The City provided two full-time staff and two part-time staff (for a total of three FTE) in the Recreation Department, dedicated to Center4Life operations. During these 27 years of Center4Life operations in the old library building separated from the rest of the Department, very few people understood the intricacies of the day-to-day operations. The City has never had a formal agreement with Island Seniors, Inc. to govern operations of the Center4Life. By contrast, the City has contractual agreements with three local 501 (c) 3 charitable nonprofits (Historical Village, BIG Arts, and CHR) that outline organizational and financial arrangements with the City. In most cases, governmental bodies only award grants to public charities. If the City wanted to enter into a formal agreement with the Island Seniors, Inc., in the future, then the Island Seniors, Inc. would first need to become a 501 (c) 3 charitable nonprofit.

Since 1993, the Island Seniors, Inc. has provided volunteers and in-kind contributions to enhance the City's programs (such as building furnishings, exercise equipment, and kayaks). The Island Seniors, Inc. Board assumed the unofficial role of directing senior activities and the City staff at the Center4Life and treating the building as its own, for conducting all its organization nonprofit activities including fundraising. The City staff assigned to the Center4Life facility have been conducting most of the administration functions of this organization, from managing their membership roster, writing and distributing the monthly newsletter, writing and submitting articles to the local newspaper regarding Island Seniors, Inc. activities, and assisting in organizing Island Seniors, Inc. functions, including fundraisers, potlucks, and special events.

The confusion between the Island Seniors, Inc. and the City's programs, staff, and facilities is evident by the monthly newsletter issues by the Island Seniors, Inc.

The newsletter is titled “Center4Life Newsletter” and includes a City logo. There is a “message from the president” (i.e., Island Seniors, Inc. president) with a list of Island Seniors, Inc. board members, followed by a list of staff members—all of whom are Recreation Department employees. The web address on the newsletter is [www.center4life.org](http://www.center4life.org), which is not an official City website; however, there is a link on this site to the Island Seniors, Inc. website.

The lack of clarity regarding the appropriate roles and responsibilities of the City Recreation Department versus the Island Seniors, Inc. allowed practices to evolve and resulted in a social welfare organization effectively running a City-owned building and directing City staff and resources, requiring residents to join their organization to access or receive a discounted rate for City taxpayer-funded services. Simultaneously, the Island Seniors, Inc. has served as an advocacy organization spearheading a decade-long campaign to

gain City Council support for a taxpayer-funded new Center4Life building.

To better understand how other FL cities provide programs and services for seniors, City staff conducted some research of communities with populations between 5,600 and 8,700, using 2019 data collected by the Florida League of Cities. A total of 41 communities were included. Each organization was asked several questions about how they provide programs to seniors. The results are included in Table 4.5. Of the 41 communities our size, only 6 (15%) provide senior programs with city staff. Nine cities (22%) have facilities operated by city staff. Statewide, 39% of Florida municipalities in our size category provide no senior services and 41% have no senior center facility operated by city staff. Of the other municipalities, 17% report having senior services and senior facilities in their community but not through local government.



Table 4.5: FL Senior Center Research

Municipality	County	Region	2019 Population	Survey Respondent?	Senior program - City operated by city employees	Senior program - Contracted out to another city	Senior program - Contracted out to the county	Senior program - Contracted out to a private entity	Senior citizens program - Combination of two or more of the previous options	Senior citizens program - Service available but not through local government	Senior citizens program - Service not provided
Fellsmere	Indian River	Central	5,611	1			1				
DeFuniak Springs	Walton	Northwest	5,629	1				1			
Fort Meade	Polk	Central	5,786	1						1	
Gulf Breeze	Santa Rosa	Northwest	5,849	1							1
Tequesta	Palm Beach	Southeast	5,850	1							1
Pahokee	Palm Beach	Southeast	5,907	1	1						
Surfside	Miami-Dade	Southeast	6,015	1				1			
Marianna	Jackson	Northwest	6,030	1						1	
Davenport	Polk	Central	6,038	1							1
Bay Harbor Islands	Miami-Dade	Southeast	6,039	1	1						
Lake Alfred	Polk	Central	6,199	1							1
Mascotte	Lake	Central	6,205	1							1
Islamorada, Village of Islands	Monroe	Southeast	6,211	1	1						
Lauderdale-By-The-Sea	Broward	Southeast	6,236	1				1			
Pembroke Park	Broward	Southeast	6,408	1							1
High Springs	Alachua	Northeast	6,444	1				1			
Fort Myers Beach	Lee	Southwest	6,520	1						1	
Newberry	Alachua	Northeast	6,573	1	1						
Indiantown	Martin	Central	6,728	1							1
St. Augustine Beach	St Johns	Northeast	6,749	1							1
Sanibel	Lee	Southwest	6,756	1	1						
Treasure Island	Pinellas	Central	6,873	1							1
Live Oak	Suwannee	Northeast	6,895	1						1	
Macclenny	Baker	Northeast	6,957	0							
Perry	Taylor	Northeast	7,031	1			1				
Longboat Key	Manatee,Sarasota	Southwest	7,043	1						1	
Neptune Beach	Duval	Northeast	7,213	1	1						
Dade City	Pasco	Central	7,314	1			1				
Inverness	Citrus	Central	7,340	1						1	
Belle Isle	Orange	Central	7,365	1							1
Southwest Ranches	Broward	Southeast	7,704	1							1
Arcadia	DeSoto	Southwest	7,770	0							
Springfield	Bay	Northwest	7,793	1							1
West Miami	Miami-Dade	Southeast	7,828	0							
Green Cove Springs	Clay	Northeast	7,841	1							1
Quincy	Gadsden	Northwest	7,874	0							
Clewiston	Hendry	Southwest	7,972	1							1
Palm Beach	Palm Beach	Southeast	8,321	1							1
Marathon	Monroe	Southeast	8,593	1			1				
Indian Harbour Beach	Brevard	Central	8,637	1							1
Brooksville	Hernando	Central	8,661	1						1	
Total:					6	0	4	4	0	7	16
Percentage:					15%	0%	10%	10%	0%	17%	39%



## FL Community Center Examples:

### Naples and Tallahassee

As part of the Recreation Department Assessment project public engagement process, comments were made by some community members that they wanted the City of Sanibel to provide the level of services that they indicated were provided to seniors by the Naples and Tallahassee city governments. A quick review of these two programs was undertaken (utilizing information available on their respective websites), which revealed that these are not examples of city-run programs. In fact, both are examples of high-performing nonprofits that are offering a comprehensive array of programs, activities, and opportunities designed to encourage active living, optimal aging, and social fitness for the senior population, financed primarily from their successful fundraising efforts.

With respect to the Naples Senior Center at JFCS, Inc., it is a nonprofit charitable 501(c)(3) organization that has no relationship, funding, or facilities provided by the City of Naples or Collier County governments. This nonprofit started in 2014 and in less than a decade has grown to 1,600 members, 12 professional staff, and over 200 volunteers. It has an annual operating budget of about \$3 million. It just completed a \$15 million capital campaign for a new building, which is to open by the end of FY 2022. Thus, the Naples Senior Center at JFCS, Inc. is an outstanding example of the power of a visionary nonprofit with the talent and resources to provide a wealth of community-wide programs and services to meet the needs of the senior population without any local government funding or involvement.

The Tallahassee Senior Center is a partnership between the nonprofit, Tallahassee Senior Citizens Foundation, Inc., and the City of Tallahassee. The Foundation was established in 1980 for the purpose of generating funding to support programs, services, and

participants of the Tallahassee Senior Services, which is a division of the City's Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Affairs Department. While the city owns the Senior Center facility and funds 43% of the costs of operating the Center, the Foundation provides most of the operating budget for the center and its related programs and appears to manage the finances, memberships, grants, and program development for the Center as well as the Leon County Senior Outreach program. While the Tallahassee program is not quite as "rich" or as independent as the Naples Senior Center at JCFC, Inc., they are both outstanding examples of the major role a nonprofit can play in funding, designing, and managing programs and facilities to provide community-wide programs and activities for their area's senior population.

### Island Seniors Inc., Recreation Center Memberships

One of the arrangements that the City made with the Island Seniors, Inc., (prior to the construction of the Recreation Center) is that members of the Island Seniors, Inc. (\$10/year membership fee), could take fitness classes at the Center4Life for a reduced class fee. Once the Recreation Center was built, this arrangement continued. Many figured out that if you were a member of Island Seniors, Inc., you did not need to join the Recreation Center to take advantage of fitness classes at Center4Life (such as yoga, which is popular). Some people dropped their memberships at the Recreation Center, and they would just pay for the fitness classes they took at the Center4Life.

Table 4.6 shows the number of Island Seniors, Inc. those who are taxpayers, those who are registered voters (residents), and those who are Recreation Center members. It's evident that the many nonresidents are benefitting from the arrangement above—only paying a minimal fee for classes. In essence, the City is providing fitness classes at a reduced rate for a good number of nonresidents.

Table 4.6: Island Senior Residency Data

As of 8/25/22				
	Island Srs Inc Members	Sanibel Taxpayers (Lee Co Property Appraiser)	Sanibel Registered Voters (Lee Co Supervisor of Elections)	Sanibel Recreation Center Members (RecTrac)
<b>Total Number</b>	277	185	124	82
<b>% of Island Srs Members</b>		67%	45%	30%

## Senior Kayaking

Senior kayaking is a popular program with the great majority of those participating being Island Seniors, Inc., members. From January 4, 2022, through September 20, 2022, there were 28 trips offered (five canceled). Total attendance totaled 269, with 259 of those spots taken by Island Seniors, Inc., members. The total revenue generated from this program is \$1,240. The City staff costs to make these trips possible was \$3,037. The other direct and indirect costs for these trips is not included in this amount. Based on the subsidy of over 60%, the BerryDunn team recommends that this program be opened to all ages and be contracted to a vendors.

## Sports and Fitness

### Indoor Sports

The sports program area includes the following indoor programs and services:

Weight room usage	Open gym	Usage of the Egret and Heron rooms (stretching)	Pick-up basketball	Indoor pickleball
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Although some youth may have attended open gym, nearly all the above programs are geared toward adults. Table 4.7 includes the usage of indoor sports programs from FY 2016 – 2017 through 2020 – 2021. The most popular amenity is the weight room followed by open gym.

Table 4.7 includes every visit to the programs, not unique individuals. Most agencies do track of the total visitation to open gyms and a fitness space, but this data is kept separate from the number of unique individuals who are served by each program. During the public engagement, many residents expressed a desire for the weight room to be expanded. Due to the number of times this expressed, this suggestion should be taken seriously.

The Week at a Glance schedule has not included specific times for youth to play basketball during open gym. This is a popular program across the country and often an agency will specify ages due to the popularity (youth, teen, adult). This could be a popular program in Sanibel with an easy-to-pay system through a daily fee or punch card. This could be part of the membership as well but the membership system can be a deterrent to those who are not members of the facility.

Table 4.7: Sports Participation FY 16/17 – FY 20/21

FY	Weight Room	Recum Bike	Open Gym	Egret & Heron Rooms	Pick Up Basketball	Indoor Pickleball	Total
16/17	33,516	3,057	1,449	2,692	664	2,335	43,713
17/18	32,546	3,362	1,692	2,737	435	2,833	43,605
18/19	32,107	3,387	1499	3,193	363	2,675	43,224
19/20	19,772	1,629	406	2,024	388	1,696	25,915
20/21	19,448	710	498	34	142	238	21,070

### Outdoor Sports

The sports program area also includes several outdoor recreation opportunities including:

Outdoor pickleball

Tennis court usage

Round Robin tennis

Playground usage

Skate park usage

During the public engagement, many expressed the need for additional opportunities to play pickleball. If the former Center4Life building comes down, this might be a suitable location for a complex.

Another suggestion was the Sanibel Community Park next to the Community House. Evaluating usage of athletic fields is also recommended as this might be another location to repurpose for pickleball.

Outdoor pickleball and tennis are geared toward adults, with the playground and skate park designed for youth. Unlike other park and recreation departments across the country, the playground and skate park have limited use due to their placement on school property. As you can see from the details below, the playground and skate park get little usage. Finding a way to make these amenities available to the public in the evenings and on weekends would be ideal and highly encouraged. The most popular outdoor activity is the usage of the outdoor tennis courts. Table 4.8 includes the participation in outdoor amenities and programs for FY 16/17 through FY 20/21.

Table 4.8: Participation in Outdoor Amenities for FY 16/17 – FY 20/21

FY	Outdoor Pickleball	Tennis Courts	Round Robin Tennis	Play-ground	Skate Park	Total
16/17	2	3,930	176	2	5	4,115
17/18	0	3,202	50	3	1	3,256
18/19	0	3,647	140	0	11	3,798
19/20	4	2,280	86	3	4	2,377
20/21	0	3,528	0	0	0	3,528

Based on consultant conversations with Department staff, the data in Table 4.8 is incomplete. There were many more pickleball players than listed, and pickleball usage and tennis usage were possibly combined. It is unclear what the playground and skate park data include. For tennis, it appears every visit is counted (court usage and lessons).

In most communities across the country, tennis courts are free and open to the public (when classes are not in session), like a playground or a skate park. Determining a way to open these up would be very beneficial to the taxpayers of Sanibel as they are a public resource.

## Fitness

Group exercise classes round out the fitness offerings, and there are some core programs that have been very popular for many years, including Zumba, indoor cycling, power sculpting, yoga, and interval training. Other courses have been added and eliminated over the years based on instructor availability and popularity including Pilates, tai chi, barre, run club, and Qi Gong.

The most popular program over the years has been yoga with several different types offered. The Department has also offered a program to educate people on how to use the weight room. Table 4.9 includes all the group exercise participation (excluding the water fitness classes that are included in aquatics) for FY 16/17 – FY 20/21. Again, it is very clear the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on fitness programming. The full year prior to the pandemic was an incredible year for this program area with over 19,000 visits to fitness classes.

**Table 4.9: Group Exercise Participation FY16/17 – FY 20/21**

FY	Cardio Sculpt	Zumba	Cycle	Power Sculpting	Yoga	Interval Training	Other	Wt. Room Orient	Total
16/17	964	4,274	4,201	1,929	5,679	391	818	66	18,322
17/18	891	5,012	4,267	2,442	5,762	315	172	85	18,946
18/19	-	5,753	4,087	2,763	5,764	623	354	13	19,357
19/20	-	2,295	2,187	1,586	2,768	674	219	-	9,729
20/21	-	391	435	244	258		154	-	1,482

During meetings with staff, it became clear that since the pandemic, hiring new fitness instructors has been difficult and time-consuming. All fitness instructors are contractual employees (not on staff like the lifeguards). For \$55/hour, each instructor is expected to:

- Obtain insurance
- Obtain a Sanibel business license
- Get fingerprinted (at their own cost; deducted from their monthly invoice)
- Be available prior and after class for participant questions/concerns
- Provide music
- Make announcements regarding Department information
- Attend mandatory orientation and training sessions (the contract is not clear what the pay rate is for these sessions)
- Attend quarterly meetings (the contract is not clear what the pay rate is for these meetings)
- Find subs when unable to instruct

This list seems to be a strong deterrent to recruiting and retaining quality instructors. It's also a time-consuming process from the time of application to obtaining approval and the staff perception is that good candidates are lost due to the length of time and the requirements of the contract.

In many park and recreation departments, these types of instructors are on staff, and are not required to provide insurance, obtain a city business license, or get fingerprinted. With staff being so difficult to find, an easier process that is more appealing to potential candidates is recommended. If the contractual arrangement must remain, a higher rate of pay is needed. Also, instructors should receive free memberships to the Rec Center.

## PROGRAM INVENTORY

Figure 4.1 includes a list of major program categories that park and recreation agencies throughout the country commonly provide. This list helps to identify if there are any common program areas not offered by an agency. Most agencies offer a majority of programs. In matching the Department's inventory of programs against this list, 30.4%, are represented (red text represents programs that are currently offered):

Figure 4.1: Program Inventory

Active Adult	Golf	Seniors
Aquatics	Gymnastics/Tumbling	Special/Community Events
Arts	Historical programs	Specialty Camps
Before/After school	Homeschool	Sports – Adult
Biking	Horseback Riding	Sports – Youth
Birthday Party Services	Ice Skating/Hockey	STEM/STEAM
Childcare	Language Arts	Summer Camp (day-long)
Cooking	Lifelong Learning	Sustainability/Green
Dance	Martial arts	Teen
Day/School break camps	Music	Tennis
E-Sports	Open Gym	Theatre/Acting
Early Childhood	Outdoor Adventure	Therapeutic Recreation
Environmental/Nature	Pets	Trips
Extreme Sports	Pickleball	Wellness
Fitness	Preschool	
General Interest	Running/Walking	

For comparison purposes, the consulting team reviewed the program category percentages against its database of park and recreation agencies nationwide. The comparison agencies' average percentage of program categories was 64.5%, which is far greater than the Department's 30.4%.

The program categories depicted in red text represent opportunities for program menu expansion aligned with expressed community needs. During the visioning session with the Council in June 2022, one of the four themes that they agreed to was to offer multigenerational recreation programming. Adding early childhood classes (music, art, movement), youth, and teen programs to the program menu would be consistent with this goal. To meet the goal of the City to provide multigenerational programming, programs that include multiple age groups are encouraged.

### Marketing and Communications

The Department distributes a *Week at a Glance* schedule to those in its system. This is unique, as most park and recreation systems create a seasonal brochure/program guide to inform residents and visitors of hours, services, programs, and rental opportunities. The consulting team highly recommends that the Department move in this direction. Ideally, this publication would be mailed to all Sanibel households. Although this can be costly, the Department could explore a sponsor to cover the mailing costs.

Businesses are often very interested in supporting park and recreation efforts.

The Department currently does not have a Facebook page that is specific to recreation. The staff expressed a desire to have access to Facebook to keep people informed in real-time of new programs being offered, changes in hours, or other new information. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are common tools used by agencies across the country to stay connected with constituents, as well as to create "buzz" that spurs more participation and community engagement.

## Best Practices

This section addresses key areas of best practices for recreation program and facility performance including the following attributes:



A key to developing consistent services is the use of service and program standards. The use of standards provides a more consistent service experience. As program growth continues, and as staff time permits, standards can be deployed throughout the entire recreation program system, such as customer requirements, instructor standards, safety, frequent/ongoing staff trainings, and program quality.

In addition to standards, efforts should be made to develop a listing of key customer requirements for core program/membership areas. Key customer requirements are defined as those areas of the program purchasing process that are most important to registrants. For example, an adult softball player's key requirements may include cost of the league, quality of athletic field maintenance, cleanliness of restrooms, quality of the umpires, game times, and location of the facility. Identifying key requirements is vitally important for staff to deliver in the items most important to the customer. This also reinforces key elements of service that staff should become familiar.

Key requirements should be identified by customers and can be included as part of an importance/performance matrix. This determines how important a requirement is to the customer and how Sanibel is performing. Surveys and program evaluations should include questions that assess customer satisfaction in these areas.

Another area of strengthening includes the development of key performance indicators.

Organizations that measure performance also have a documented process in place to ensure follow-through on results. A robust measurement system generally includes a more comprehensive set of measures, including:

- Number of programs per age segment
- Customer satisfaction (there should be a system-wide approach to measuring customer satisfaction; currently, there is no process in place in Sanibel for program evaluation). In addition, a process needs to be developed to help ensure follow-through on evaluations and surveys).
- Facility utilization rate
- Cost recovery rates by core program area
- Number of new programs offered annually (to drive innovation)
- Household percentage of program participation
- Customer retention, repurchase intent, and referral

Best practice agencies have identified cost recovery goals for core program areas. The goal can be calculated from actual performance in the three most recent years' financial results by core program area. This should be accompanied by a cost-of-service study to determine indirect charges and identification of true costs of service. The development of a cost-of-service study will also be helpful in creating a standardized approach to pricing services. Currently, a consistent methodology is not in place.



## Marketing

A detailed and formal marketing plan is recommended to create promotion strategies.

A seasonal program brochure is recommended to promote program opportunities. Announcing the programs and schedule for the upcoming season is especially important in a seasonal community such as Sanibel where many people want to plan their daily schedule before they arrive for the season. Once they lock in their season's schedule, it is hard to accommodate new activities added after the season starts.

The publication of a seasonal or quarterly program brochure is part of a greater strategy for communicating program opportunities. Along with posts to websites, email blasts, social media campaigns, and community presentations, the program brochure is one way to publicize programs, activities, policies, and events. Even as different communities may have different preferences for how they receive information, program brochures continue to be the most widely preferred method to parks and recreation program participants, regardless of location within the country or size of agency.

It is important to follow best practices when establishing a program brochure:

- Maximize return on investment (ROI) from the brochure by offering various registration tools, times, etc. Agencies should make it as easy as possible for patrons to enroll in classes and activities.
- Welcome notes and letters to patrons should not be placed on the front or back cover or on the first couple of inside pages. These are prime spaces for attracting registrants.

Program descriptions should follow "five C's" to attract registration:

### Clear

Be clear in a broad sense. Describe the activity in a way that does not limit the instructor: "This class may include crafts and music projects."

### Concise

Do not use phrases like "This class will" or "You will learn." Assume that they know it will be fun, but do not say it. All recreation classes should be fun. Do not say the age in the title or in the body of the description—it should already be listed in the activity category.

### Creative

Use different descriptive words. Try not to repeat the same words if possible.

### Consistent

Confirmation information should be at the end of the description. For example: "Bring sunscreen and a hat."

### Catchy

Description should be unique. A customer should not have to look at a page of activity descriptions that all start the same way.

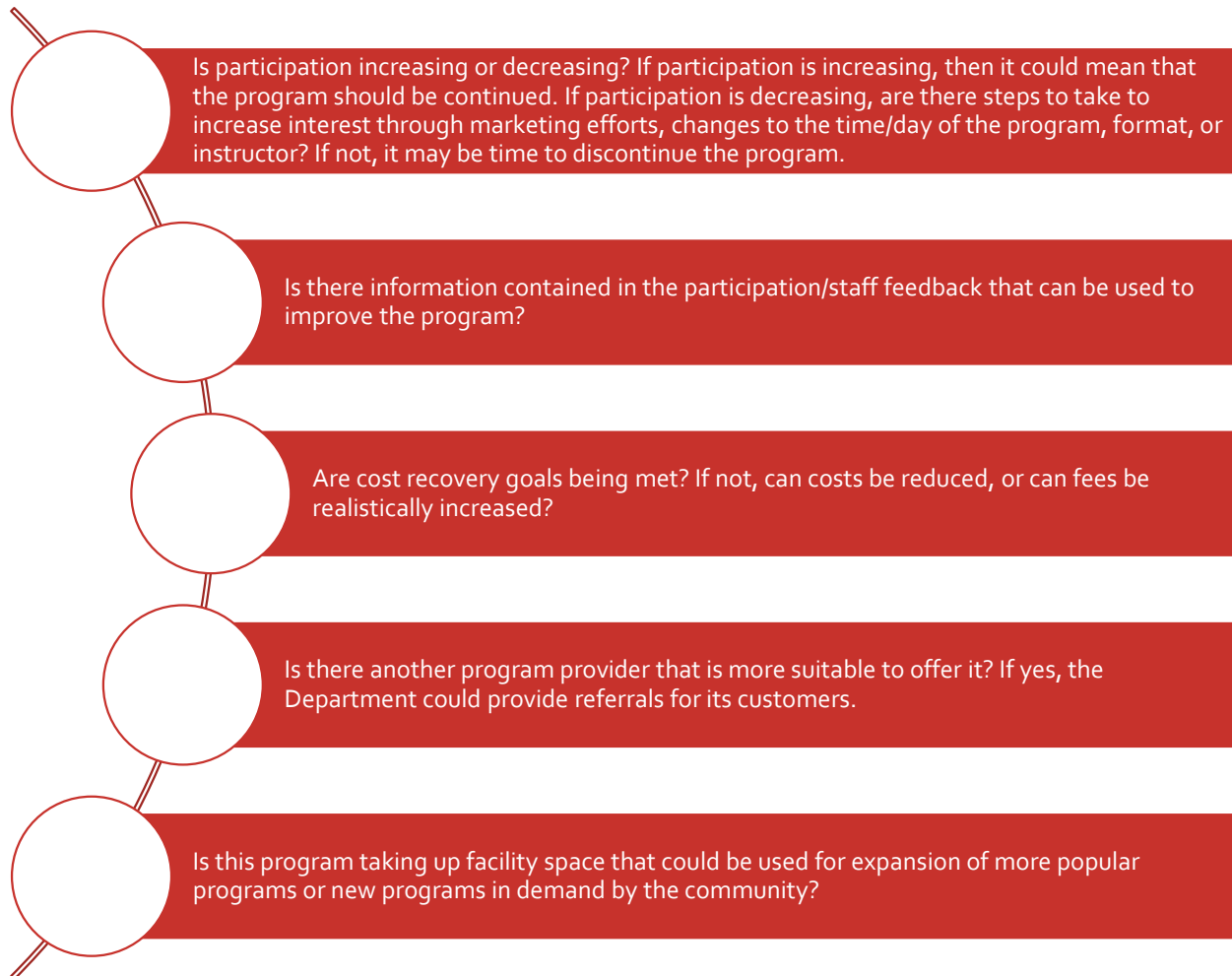
An automated registration system is important for most agencies. In addition to assisting with internal controls, an automated system can provide easy data reporting with real time, efficient program registration, and a higher level of quality customer service. Although Sanibel is using RecTrac for program registration, the system is not being leveraged to its full capabilities.

Distribution of the program brochure—best practices may call for either direct mail or distribution through a school system. Agencies need to be aware of the printing cost and potential perceptions around environmental issues when printing large quantities of program brochures.

Selling advertising space in the brochure may be an option to offset the cost of the brochure.

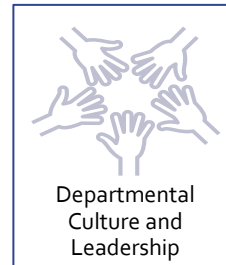
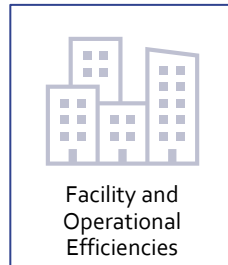
## Ongoing Evaluation of Programs

It is important to have a process in place for staff to continually evaluate the programs and activities offered. Comment cards with survey questions to rate the quality of the programs can work well to gauge user satisfaction. Performance measures, developed internally by staff, can be very effective in driving a program that continually improves. As staff develops and manages programs, the following questions may be helpful to ask:



# RECREATION PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

The emergent themes resulting from the public engagement included:



This thorough program review and the emergent themes have been the focus as the following recommendations were compiled.

## Budgeting

- ☑ Create a system where programming staff can track the revenue and expenses for each program area by season.
- ☑ Provide staff financial information monthly so they can manage each program area effectively.
- ☑ Allow staff latitude with creating new programs instead of limiting staff to a pre-established level of spending for part-time staff.

## Fitness Memberships

- ☑ Revise the membership structure to be easy to understand for the customer and efficient to apply for the front desk staff. Consider resident and nonresident fees for daily and a 10-punch card and monthly and annual passes (for individual, couple, and additional family member).
- ☑ For tracking purposes, separate out the daily fees and punch cards from the actual memberships (monthly and annual).
- ☑ Evaluate the full fee schedule and confirm that the nonresident difference is consistent across the structure.
- ☑ Revise the fee schedule so it is more cost-effective for visitors to use the Recreation Center daily.

## After School Program/ Summer Camps

- ☑ Create a Request for Proposal to partner with or contract this service to another organization to increase efficiencies, free up staff time, and continue to provide a cost-effective program for local families.

## Aquatics

- ☑ Create a more balanced pool schedule that allows for free swim, family time, and swim lessons to create a more multigenerational experience.
- ☑ Create a better system to schedule part-time staff in a more flexible manner to attract new lifeguards to the Department.

## Seniors

- ☑ Sever ties with Island Seniors, Inc. and take over all programming for senior population.
- ☑ Have all the revenues and expenses go through the City financial system.
- ☑ Reduce the amount of full-time and part-time staff resources allocated for this program area by creating partnerships with local nonprofits and securing volunteers to assist in some key roles.

- ☑ Eliminate the discount for City recreation programs for Island Seniors, Inc. members.
- ☑ Contract out for the kayaking program and open it up to people of all ages.
- ☑ Work with nonprofits to determine which organization will offer which type of service to this age group to reduce duplication and increase efficiencies across the island.

### Indoor Sports

- ☑ Add specific weekly timeslots for open gym by age group (youth, teens, adult) and create an easy system for payment (daily fee, punch card, part of membership).
- ☑ Evaluate the possibility of expanding the square footage of the weight room.

### Outdoor Sports

- ☑ Evaluate the possibility of adding outdoor pickleball on the island—former Center4Life site, athletic fields, or at Community Park next to the Community House.
- ☑ Open the playground and skate park evenings and weekends when families are free to recreate. If there is a way to keep them open all day, that would be ideal for those younger than school age or those who are homeschooled.
- ☑ Make the tennis courts and athletic fields available evenings, weekends, and holidays when the school is closed.

### Fitness

- ☑ Create a more efficient system to hire part-time fitness instructors—explore hiring as employees (like lifeguards) as opposed to contractors.



### General Youth Programming

- ☑ Add traditional youth programs such as art, dance, music, and swim lessons to the program menu.
- ☑ Offer seasonal/holiday events for young families to connect.
- ☑ Create a more efficient process to schedule a birthday at the Recreation Center so children can celebrate their day with a pool or gym party that can easily include nonmembers of the Recreation Center.
- ☑ Review the program inventory listing, and have each programmer add new programs seasonally.
- ☑ Evaluate the relationship with Sanibel Sports, Inc. and consider taking over all youth sports.

### Marketing and Communications

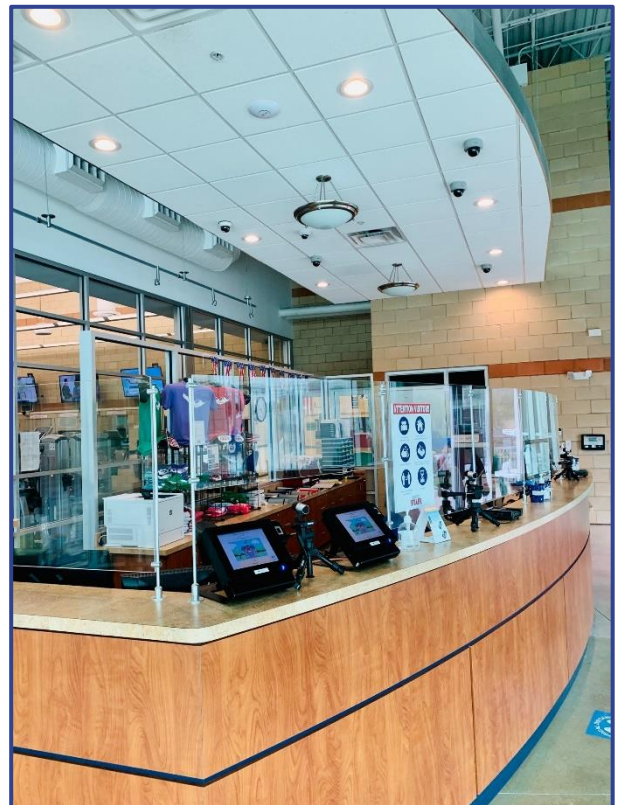
- ☑ Create a seasonal program guide and mail to all Sanibel households in October of every year.
- ☑ Create a sponsorship program to generate non-program revenue.
- ☑ Enhance marketing of programs and services with a stronger social media presence.
- ☑ Cross-promote programs and services throughout the Department.

## Financial

- ☑ Work with Accounting staff to setup system to track expenses by program area so that true cost recovery can be determined for each program.
- ☑ Create a pricing policy and procedure, and eliminate the need for the Council to approve all program fees annually.
- ☑ Simplify the Recreation Center fee structure:
  - Resident/nonresident
  - Daily, 10-punch, monthly, and annual
  - Individual, couple, additional family member
- ☑ Determine an appropriate nonresident fee (20% or 25% more than resident fees) and be consistent across the board
- ☑ Allow staff latitude with creating new programs instead of limiting staff to a pre-established level of spending for part-time staff.
- ☑ Determine what participation and financial metrics will be tracked and shared, and create a schedule for sharing. Use this data to set goals for future time periods (month, quarter, annual). Some participation metrics to track include:
  - Number of programs offered
  - Number of programs offered by age segment
  - Number of new programs offered
  - Total number of participants in each course
  - Total number of nonresidents enrolled in all courses
  - Total number of canceled courses
  - Participant satisfaction levels

## Technology

- ☑ Improve the Wi-Fi at the Recreation Center.
- ☑ Provide staff with the technology to attend virtual meetings and trainings (cameras).
- ☑ Investigate purchasing technology for virtual programming.
- ☑ Review full list of staff RecTrac needs; determine if the software can provide what is needed. If the system can do what is needed, then enhance setup and provide training. If the system cannot provide what is needed, then find a better solution and purchase (setup appropriately and provide training).



# Facilities Assessment

## Overview

As part of the City of Sanibel Comprehensive Recreation Assessment, this section provides a review of facilities that are operated directly by the Department as well as partner facilities that the Department uses for programs and services but are owned and operated by separate entities. The purpose of the assessment is to understand the usage and relevancy of each facility and to determine if the recreational needs of the community are being met.

If it is determined that there are unmet facility needs or efficiencies that are not being leveraged effectively, recommendations have been outlined that provide strategies to address the deficit. All recommendations have been offered with the interests of the entire Sanibel community in mind. Information and data were gathered initially from staff during focus groups, and several individual meetings with staff followed.

Key stakeholders were interviewed including members of the City Council, the Mayor, the City Manager, and leadership at Big Arts, the Community House, F.I.S.H., and volunteer organizations to understand areas of challenge as well as opportunity that might exist on the island. Additional information was collected from the community on the project's Social Pinpoint website and was used in this assessment.

## Sanibel Recreation Center

The City of Sanibel Recreation Department's hallmark indoor facility is the Sanibel Recreation Center (Center), located in the heart of the island at 3880 San-Cap Road. The original building was replaced, and the footprint was greatly expanded in 2007 and is now a full-service recreation center. Amenities include a large outdoor aquatics area with a lap pool with a small water slide and a leisure pool with a splash pad; a fitness center with cardio equipment, weight machines, and free weights; an indoor gym; an outdoor gym; and a variety of alternate-use spaces that house staff offices and meeting venues, and that are used for programs and services. The building is adjacent to the K – 8 public school, and the indoor gym is shared between the two entities, with a retractable wall that can separate the school areas from the recreation areas. Tennis courts (that can be lined for pickleball) are located behind the Center, and a covered outdoor basketball court can be found adjacent to the athletic fields behind the Center. A playground and skate park are in this location as well, but like the beaches and preservation areas, they are under the jurisdiction of the City of Sanibel Department of Public Works.

The Center is open Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 6:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.; and Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. The facility is closed on Sunday. As was pointed out during community engagement feedback, the hours of operation limit some of the population who work typical daytime hours from accessing the facility. The limited hours of operation on weeknights and Saturdays, with full closure on Sundays makes it difficult for families to access the facility when out of work or school in the evening or on the weekend, when they would typically have more disposable time. The limited schedule is driven by a shortage of staffing, which is a problem in virtually every business sector across the country and contributes to the unavailability of personnel to staff the current hours, much less to extend hours of operation. The unique island location makes it difficult for the City to attract new employees, since access on and off the island can only be traveled via the Sanibel Causeway. Traffic is a way of life for islanders, and it often can take 45 to 60 minutes to get from the causeway to the Recreation Center, which is a difficult selling point for a prospective employee.



The Center is located adjacent to the Sanibel K – 8 public school, and the two entities have a shared-use agreement in place that articulates usage of the gym, outdoor athletic fields, and at times, parking. Both Recreation Department leadership and public-school officials report that the agreement serves both user groups well. The buildings' adjacency is a challenge for the Recreation Department's ability to provide a welcoming and open environment to the public, however. Physical barriers, such as a metal gate and signage that states "Do Not Enter" are one of the first things seen when entering the building. Although the staff and long-time members of the Center may be accustomed to this greeting, it is off-putting to people upon a first-time visit. Because of the proximity to the school, the previous City administration required background checks for all prospective members, including those seeking a day pass or a limited time pass. It appears that this city policy is not consistent with state and county policies re: background checks, which are only required for staff, contractors, vendors, and volunteers who work directly with children.



## Recreation Center Amenities

	Type	Use
<b>The Heron Room</b>	Multipurpose room; hard surface floor; cinder block walls	<p>70% classes, i.e., personal training sessions, After School Care, fitness; 30% staff meetings and community events.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summers from 2017 to 2020, it was the spinning room.</li> <li>• Post COVID, it is now the computer training room (is now cycling room again).</li> </ul>
<b>Weight Room</b>	Fitness hub for the Recreation Center—fitness machines, cardio equipment, and weights	<p>Individual workout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The weight room contains a variety of workout equipment for members of the Recreation Center. The room is too small to house all the equipment; the machines are packed in tightly, and there is no room for expansion to add new and trending equipment, or to increase the free weight area.</li> </ul>
<b>The Spoonbill Room</b>	Multipurpose room; hard surface floor; cinder block walls	Mainly a youth art room used year-round. Occasionally it has been used for birthday room rentals due to its proximity to the pool and for daytime community events.
<b>The Osprey Room</b>	Multipurpose room; hard surface floor; cinder block walls	<p>Until early 2020 (pre-pandemic), the room was used primarily as the youth afterschool program center, and as the events rehearsal room, staff meeting room, small HOA meeting room, and the summer camp activity room.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post pandemic, the room now functions as the primary location for the Center4Life.</li> </ul>
<b>The Egret Room</b>	Multipurpose/fitness; floating floor; adjacent to the Fitness Center	This space is an individual workout and stretching area and used for 70/30 barre class, yoga, spin, and other fitness classes during the summer when summer camp takes the Pelican Room for activity, and a lunchroom.
<b>The Pelican Room</b>	Multipurpose room; hard surface floor; cinder block walls	<p>This room is the largest of the spaces in the Recreation Center and is also the only public municipal space large enough to host city events. Note: all the below usage is shuffled to other locations when the room is needed for an event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the summer, it is the summer camp hub and is occupied all day long; it is used for camper check-in, as the lunchroom, storage of backpacks, and for camp-wide events.</li> <li>• The remainder of the year, the room is used in the morning hours for fitness classes, meetings, HOA rentals, and interviews. In the afternoon hours, it is used for the After School Care snack room, a homework room, indoor activities, and movies.</li> <li>• Pre-pandemic, the room was frequently used in the evening, as there was staff to stay open later.</li> </ul>
<b>Gym</b>	Full-sized gym; wood floors; wall divider able to separate the area into two smaller courts	The space is used for physical education classes and school events during school hours. The Recreation Department's afterschool program uses the space for programming after school hours. This room is also where spinning, Zumba, and body sculpting classes are held. It is also where indoor pickleball is played both during the day and in the evenings. It is also used for pick-up basketball to some extent.
<b>Miscellaneous Use of Recreation Center</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation Center Lobby: Fire Department blood pressure screening</li> <li>• Heron/Spoonbill Room: Harris Dermatology</li> <li>• Heron/Spoonbill Room: Lions Club hearing and eye screening</li> <li>• Parking Lot: Mobile mammogram, Bloodmobile</li> </ul>

With the addition of the Center4Life and the hosting of the computers in the Heron Room—post COVID—the Department has become very inflexible with lack of space to expand to the hours, programs, and services that were once provided.

There was some conversation during the engagement if all the miscellaneous uses of the Recreation Center are the best use of the space. Staff are encouraged to track these uses to see how many people take advantage of the opportunities. For events that are sparsely attended, the Department may consider eliminating these activities or limiting this type of activity to once a month (or less).

## Athletic Fields

The City's athletic fields are located behind the Recreation Center and K – 8 public school at 3840 San-Cap Road. The public school uses the fields during regular school hours and at times, during the evenings and weekends for special events. The City has a usage agreement in place with Sanibel Sports, Inc., a designated LLC organization, which administers all youth sports on the island.

The athletic fields are in good to very good shape, with good infrastructure and perimeter fencing.



## Tennis and Pickleball Courts

Located behind the Recreation Center are six hard-surfaced, full-sized tennis courts. Four of the courts are alternately lined for pickleball. Members of the public cannot access the courts unless they are a member of the Recreation Center.

## Parking

Parking at the Recreation Center is a concern. Although not seen directly by the consulting team, the staff and community shared their thoughts regarding the lack of parking at this popular community facility during the peak season (January – April). It does not appear that land is available to purchase adjacent to the facility, so building new partnerships to address this situation is recommended. This could include the following:

Negotiate agreements with the school or nonprofits to provide additional parking during the season.

Explore an arrangement with the Community House where they offer the popular fitness classes (that do not require equipment) during the peak season (such as yoga or Zumba).

Approach the property owner to the northwest to discuss a partnership—this might be an option for staff with a path created through the trees. This would not be ideal for the public.

From an aerial view, it does appear that the lot could be reconfigured a bit to create more spaces—possibly removing the few islands that exist.

## Center4Life

Since the early 1990s, Island Seniors, Inc. has provided programs in what was known as the old Library building located at 2401 Library Way, sharing the 5,080-square-foot property with the island's affordable housing organization, Community Housing Resources, which has an agreement with the city. The City owned the building and then allowed it to be used as the Senior Center, as it was referred to until the Recreation Department launched its Fit4Life motto in 2010. The Senior Center was then renamed Center4Life. Beginning in 2013, the city considered including the Center4Life in a proposed civic campus, known as the Civic Core project. Consideration of this project ended in 2016, and the city undertook an updated space needs study in 2017 related to Center4Life. In 2019, the City purchased the San-Cap Community Bank on Library Way (4,340-square-foot building) with the intention of renovating it for future use as the City's Center4Life facility, and for housing the Community Housing Resources (CHR) office.

In March 2020, the existing Center4Life building was deemed unfit to continue to house the Island Seniors activities and the drop-in center due to the pandemic and air quality concerns. Center4Life and the Island Seniors, Inc. relocated to the Recreation Center, based out of the Osprey Room.

Many of the seniors providing feedback during public engagement and in focus groups relayed that they believed the Osprey Room to be an inadequate location for the Center4Life and the Island Seniors group, and especially for the drop-in center activities. Community members felt that the location at the Recreation Center was a more "sterile atmosphere" and they prefer a more "homey" feel than the Recreation Center can provide. As the Recreation Department continues to get back to more typical attendance in programs and services, the

dedicated use of the Osprey Room by the Island Seniors, Inc. for Center4Life has the effect of compressing other programs and events into spaces and generates some frustration with consistent shuffling of rooms from activities. The Osprey Room is difficult to access, especially as an older person, because navigating to the room requires multiple hallways and doors and requires that one exit the building and circumnavigate the pool area. The bathrooms, while spacious and accommodating, also may pose a challenge, as they are located down an outside hallway.

In contrast to the Island Seniors Inc. Board's desire for a separate building for all senior activities, many people in the community prefer a multigenerational "one-stop-shop" center where all groups and activities including the Center4Life, and Island Seniors would be housed under one roof in the Recreation Center. To make this happen, it will be challenging without significant renovation, attention to ADA concerns, and possible expansion of the building.

The BerryDunn team considered all the information gathered during the project and is recommending the following.

A hybrid approach to tackling wrap around senior services by offering some of the classes and activities at the Recreation Center and housing the drop-in center and Island Seniors/Center4Life in a different location. Because it falls squarely into the mission of the Recreation Department to offer fitness programs to the public, it is recommended to continue to offer (and potentially expand) health- and fitness-oriented programming for the senior population, which makes up almost 80% of the total residents on the island.



A drop-in center is desirable to address social isolation issues, as was indicated by nearly every group during the engagement phase of this project. There are four options to consider for drop-in space:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b>1</b></p> <p>Continue the program in the Recreation Center Osprey Room (either short-term or long-term)</p> | <p><b>2</b></p> <p>City-run drop-in center in a portion of the bank building</p>  |
| <p><b>3</b></p> <p>Island Seniors, Inc., as a stand-alone nonprofit, creates and funds a drop-in center</p>       | <p><b>4</b></p> <p>City Manager convenes summit with key island nonprofits currently providing services to the senior population to develop a community-wide place for a collaborative partnership for meeting the needs of the island senior population in the most cost-effective manner.</p> |

There are pros and cons for all four of these options.

### Osprey Room

#### Pros

- All recreation programming would remain under one roof, creating a multigenerational center as outlined as a desire by Council.
- There would be a cost savings to the City as there would be one recreation facility to own and operate instead of two.
- There would be a cost savings to the City with no duplication of support (staff such as front desk/registration staff and maintenance staff) or supervisory staff.

#### Cons

- The parking at the Recreation Center is limited, and it can be a long walk from the lot to the program space with limited handicapped spots.

### City provides a drop-in center in portion of the bank building

This option could involve little or no renovations and be a short-term or long-term option. The consulting team is not suggesting that the bank building be used for programming.

#### Pros

- The bank building is in a central location that is desirable to the senior population.
- This option frees up space at the Recreation Center for other types of programming in the Osprey Room.

#### Cons

- Duplication of staff (both support and supervisory) at the Recreation Center and bank building would increase cost.
- The preventive maintenance of two large indoor facilities and two parking lots would be more costly than one facility.
- There are more pressing needs of the City for the use of the bank space (staff offices at City Hall are in short supply with some staff in spaces that were designed as closets or storage).

## Island Seniors, Inc., as a stand-alone nonprofit, creates and funds a drop-in center

### Pros

- Allows the Island Seniors, Inc. to have a purpose after the City integrates senior programming into overall Department programming.
- Allows the Island Seniors, Inc. to provide activities and programming (beyond what the City will provide) for its members and the community, if they desire.
- Returns the Island Seniors, Inc. to its stated purpose as a nonprofit, treated in the same manner that the City treats all other nonprofits and service organizations versus an outside organization focused on directing City staff to provide taxpayer-funded programs and activities for its members.
- Operating as a charitable nonprofit (501(c)(3) provides Island Seniors, Inc., expanded fundraising opportunities. To transition to a true nonprofit, the Island Seniors, Inc., should consider working with experts such as the Sanibel Community Foundation, which assists local nonprofits in capacity building and strategic planning.
- If a storefront is leased for a drop-in space, it can be centrally located, potentially across the street from the old Center4Life.
- This option is consistent with the Council theme of using business-like practices to leverage the maximum benefit to taxpayers. Enhancing the role of nonprofits to serve community needs is part of how the City can leverage other resources to maximize the benefits for taxpayers.

### Cons

- This solution cannot be immediately executed, so it will need to be paired with another short-term transition option. Potentially, the Osprey Room could continue to serve the drop-in need until the Island Seniors, Inc. could get organized to provide this service.

## City Manager convenes summit with key island nonprofits currently providing services to the senior population to develop a community-wide place for a collaborative partnership for meeting the needs of the island senior population in the most cost-effective manner

### Pros

- With leveraging the expertise of F.I.S.H., Community House, BIG Arts, SCCF, the library, and faith-based groups, a strategy for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the social isolation could result from such a partnership.
- This holistic and comprehensive approach could benefit the entire community by following the SCCF model of building collaborative partnerships that have strengthened the community's voice and addressed environmental issues threatening the quality of life on Sanibel.
- This could serve as a beginning to building collaborative partnerships among nonprofits addressing similar goals to maximize benefits to the community by working together as opposed to competing.

### Cons

- This is a longer-term strategy that would need to be coupled with another short-term solution regarding a drop-in center space for seniors.
- Would require buy-in from the relevant nonprofit organizations to participate in the effort.



## Island Nonprofits

### Big Arts

Located at 900 Dunlop Road, Big Arts, according to their website, is a “nonprofit organization providing an array of quality entertainment, arts and education programs that enrich and nurture the lives of Sanibel and Captiva residents and visitors through:

Professionally led arts and enrichment classes and workshops for students of all ages.

Stimulating and informative lectures and group discussions with renowned national thought leaders and educators.

Dynamic visual and performing arts presentations of the highest caliber.

The center was renovated and reopened in 2019 and plays host to a variety of community events. There is a state-of-the-art theater space, multiple art galleries, and meeting spaces inside the building. The organization is open and welcoming to all collaborative ideas from the Recreation Department, opening possibilities for future programming.

### F.I.S.H. of Sanibel-Captiva ([fishofsancap.com](http://fishofsancap.com))

Located at 2430-B Periwinkle Way, Food Programs/Island Based Education/Social and Senior Services/Helping Hands & Financial Assistance (F.I.S.H.) is a “human services organization focused on ‘neighbors helping neighbors’ with a vision to create

communities where all people have the support they need to thrive.” The mission of F.I.S.H. “is to enrich the lives of all people in Sanibel and Captiva Islands by neighbors helping neighbors with social services, education and assistance” (per the F.I.S.H. website). F.I.S.H organizational leadership is actively looking to relocate and has indicated that a shared space would be amenable, perhaps leaving the door open for a shared-use environment with Center4Life/Island Seniors.

### The Community House ([sanibelcommunityhouse.net](http://sanibelcommunityhouse.net))

Located on 2173 Periwinkle Way, the Community House is operated by the Sanibel Community Association, a local nonprofit organization. The mission of Community House, per their website, is “to enrich community spirit through educational, cultural and social gatherings in our historic Community House.” The organization’s mission and service menu dovetail well with some of the offerings that are integral to the Center4Life. The Community House is hosting some of the Island Senior activities since the relocation of Center4Life. Leadership indicated a desire to continue to partner with the Island Seniors in the future. The organization expressed interest in collaborations and partnerships with Recreation Department as well.

## Private Island Facilities

### Sanibel Health Club ([sanibelhealthclub.com](http://sanibelhealthclub.com))

Located at 975 Rabbit Road, the Sanibel Health Club boasts a 2,500-square-foot cardio theater, well-equipped shower and locker rooms, and a smoothie café. In addition to the cardio and weight room, they recently added a yoga and Pilates studio. The club offers daily and weekly passes for purchase, and six-month or annual membership options.

### Sundial ([sundialresort.com](http://sundialresort.com))

The Sundial Beach Resort and Spa is located at 1451 Gulf Drive. In addition to offering overnight accommodations and dining, this facility is home to the largest pickleball facility in the area with 12 courts and stadium seating. There are also six clay tennis courts. The Sundial offers instruction, clinics, leagues, tournaments, and court time reservations in both tennis and pickleball. You can become a member of the Sundial or play as a guest.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Recreation Center

- Create a more open and inviting lobby area by removing the signage that is unwelcoming to customers. Suggest additional staff training on creating excellent customer experience.
- Continue to evaluate the usage of the athletic fields—expand programming or determine a more appropriate use for the space.
- Seek out options for additional parking, either through a new partnership or by reconfiguring the existing lot.
- Evaluate the attendance at all the events where the Department permits space to outside groups to determine if this is the best use of the space. Consider limiting these events to once each month (or less) to free up space for new programming.

## Senior Drop-In Opportunities

Determine a solution for meeting the social needs of the island senior population by continuing to evaluate the following options:

- Continue the program in the Recreation Center Osprey Room (either short-term or long-term).
- Provide a City-run drop-in center in a portion of the bank building.
- Island Seniors, Inc., as a stand-alone nonprofit, creates and funds a drop-in center.
- City Manager convenes summit with key island nonprofits currently providing services to the senior

population to develop a community-wide place for a collaborative partnership for meeting the needs of the island senior population in the most cost-effective manner.

## Other

- Add pickleball courts. Additional pickleball courts are needed to keep up with demand on the island. The existing courts are lined inside tennis courts, and therefore are difficult to manage, as the two sports compete for court time. Explore the possibility of expansion behind the Recreation Center.
- Seek opportunities to partner with the island nonprofits (F.I.S.H., Big Arts, and the Community House) as well as private businesses, to provide expanded and innovative programs and services to the island residents.



# Operations Assessment

Operations refer to all the policies, procedures, and systems that allow a department or organization to function. When all these items are running smoothly and simultaneously, a work group can run efficiently and seamlessly. When one part of the system is down, nonexistent, or not working well, there can be impacts on all aspects of the department from customer service to revenue generation.

Following the COVID-19 outbreak, the Department has struggled for several reasons. Many staff expressed frustrations with various facets of Department operations and how difficult it had become to solve problems and resolve issues.

The operational topics that were discussed during the staff focus groups or that were brought up during the public engagement include:

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Staff recruitment, onboarding, and training

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Changes to procedures

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Customer service focus

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Volunteer program

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Financial Assistance Committee

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Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

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Interlocal Agreements (ILA)

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Marketing

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Recreation Department reorganization

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## Staff Recruitment, Onboarding, and Training

The recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of part-time and contractual staff has been a struggle for the Department. It has been difficult for the Department to attract people to work in a part-time capacity (lifeguards, After School Care staff) or as contractors (fitness instructors). With the commute, the causeway toll, and the island traffic, few people are willing to work for the Department in a position that does not provide any benefits. In addition, several part-time staff are working full-time hours without benefits, and this has been a source of frustration. It was suggested during the staff meetings that several part-time positions could be combined to create new full-time positions. With the amount of City business conducted at the Recreation Center (including the selling of beach parking passes and dog licenses), many staff expressed that more full-time staff positions are needed at the front desk. An alternative would be to move this City business to a different location since this revenue does not go into the Recreation fund.

Benefits are needed to attract and maintain part-time staff and contractors to the Department. This has become the norm across the country for park and recreation agencies. Benefits can include (but not be limited to):



Regarding the fitness instructors (who are now contractors), the City should explore the possibility of hiring these key positions as staff without requiring the expensive insurance and all the additional long list of requirements. This is common across the country. It involves hiring people with the proper certifications, requiring continuing education to keep certifications current, evaluation and observation of instructors while teaching, and creating a team of fitness professionals who work together to provide a comprehensive group exercise program, filling in for each other when needed.

During the initial staff interviews frustrations were expressed regarding the Departments onboarding and training of staff. One staff member who was relatively new to the Department described their onboarding—they were handed a draft staff manual and that was it. No one could remember any recent trainings. In Sanibel, both onboarding and staff training appear to be lacking (or missing).

## Onboarding

The proper onboarding of new staff is critical to the success of the Department. Onboarding is the process of getting an employee set up in their role within the organization and typically begins with an orientation.

An unsuccessful onboarding program can cause staff to feel stressed out and disconnected from the rest of the team and can also result in mismanaged expectations. These issues can reduce productivity and morale. Organizations without strong onboarding programs end up spending more time and resources with hiring due to high turnover rates.

Typical onboarding activities can include:

- The job offer
- New hire paperwork
- Payroll setup
- Specific job training
- Systems access (time and attendance, RecTrac, and any other systems utilized by the Department)
- Policy training (for the City and the Department)
- Company culture training (mission, vision, values, expectations)
- Employee handbook training
- Benefits education

- Introductions: the team, leadership, other City departments, and key stakeholders
- Facility tours (In Sanibel, this could include the Recreation Center, the Sanibel School, City Hall, the public beaches, the park, and all the City nonprofits) Annual schedule (peak season, registration dates, budget schedule, etc.)

Some of the benefits of a strong onboarding process include:

- Allowing new hires to become productive as quickly as possible
- Helping new hires adjust to their new roles and their unique place within the Department
- Reducing new employee stress and anxiety
- Reducing turnover

## Training

Training is different from onboarding. Onboarding is provided at the start of employment to create a foundation, whereas training should be provided on an ongoing basis for all staff (full-time and part-time) to learn new skills or hone their expertise in a specific area. When the BerryDunn team met with staff initially in February and we asked about training, none of the staff could remember any recent trainings that had been provided. Training can be brief (part of a staff meeting) or take several hours depending on the topic. Trainings can be provided by the Department head, City staff from other departments, or guest speakers. It's also a great practice to encourage team members to help provide training for the Department based on their areas of expertise. Training can also occur by attending seminars, workshops, and conferences provided by other organizations. Membership and participation in the Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) activities is highly recommended.

FRPA has a comprehensive website ([frpa.org](http://frpa.org)) and provides many professional development activities along with an annual conference. Allocating some funds for enhanced Department training is highly recommended to build the expertise of the staff and create a high-functioning team of professionals.

Cross-training involves training multiple staff on key tasks. When this is done effectively, the Department can run smoothly when staff are out ill or using personal time off. This was also mentioned as a frustration of the Sanibel team—in some situations, only one staff person could complete a task so when they were out of the office, workflow stopped. Providing consistent customer service relies on appropriate staff training so that customer needs can always be met regardless of which staff are on duty.

More information regarding training is included in Chapter 8 of this report.

## Changes to Procedures

It was evident during the February meetings with staff that many of the current procedures should be revisited and revised. The public engagement in June reinforced the notion of the need for improved process. This section includes some suggested changes to procedures that will improve efficiencies and improve the customer service provided by the Department.

- In alignment with the need for ongoing staff training, there is no facility operating manual that is accessible to managers and staff. The one hard copy that does exist is not current. This document should be updated and shared with all staff in conjunction with training. An operations manual is a critical tool for all facility staff to ensure that operations are consistent from day to day.
- All forms and procedures should be reviewed annually with the goal of eliminating unnecessary procedures. Simplifying and streamlining all processes will help the staff be more efficient and improve customer service. This should be done with input from front desk staff and supervisors. Where automation is available, it should be implemented. People are familiar with, and desire, ease like ordering from Amazon. The more people can do online from home, the better.
- The past philosophy has been that everyone who enters the building needs to have a criminal background check. This is not done at any other department the BerryDunn team has worked with across the country. There are other ways to keep the building and the children using it safe without requiring these measures. Along these lines, consider removing the turnstile and provide members fobs for facility entry (like Wa Ka Hatchee regional park).
- The Department needs a replacement plan for equipment replacement and a preventive maintenance plan for facility. Creating these two plans will keep the fitness equipment current and

the building in good working order. What has happened in the past without these types of plans is that something breaks, and it becomes a crisis that takes over the time and focus of key staff members. Emergency repairs and replacements can also be expensive. These types of emergency situations can be nearly eliminated with good planning and budgeting.

- Recreation staff are required to keep track of their time in two places. It is time to remove the double timekeeping requirement, which sends signal to staff of distrust and is not consistent with other City departments.
- Due to the amount of time it currently takes the City HR Department to hire staff, allow Department staff to recruit for their own positions. Templates and training can be provided to create a system that the City HR staff support.
- Change the way the City views fitness instructors; consider hiring them as staff instead of as contractors and exempt them from requirement of having a business license and insurance.

Recreation departments across the country are not going to these lengths to hire quality group exercise instructors.

- The Recreation Department currently sells beach parking passes and dog licenses. The revenue from these sales do not go back into the Recreation Fund. Many staff and residents suggested that these sales be moved elsewhere in the City or moved online. In many communities, parking fees are now being paid through a smartphone app. This is worthy of further consideration.

As noted, all procedures should be evaluated at least annually to ensure that they still make sense and work for both the staff and the public. It appears that many Department procedures have been in place for years without anyone considering a review or asking if it is still necessary or has accomplished its intended purpose. A committee can be established to work on this task involving front desk staff, someone from leadership, and at least one programmer. This is a process that takes time and effort but is important to keep operations running smoothly.





## Customer Service Focus

The customer service experience was a hot topic during the public engagement with a handful of positive comments and several suggestions for improvement. Some areas that the Department can focus on include:



### Customer experience

The first feeling that someone gets when they walk into a new place is very important. When the BerryDunn team walked into the Recreation Center for the first time, it did not feel like a welcoming, community space. Can the registration space be reconfigured to create a more user-friendly atmosphere? Can the turnstiles be eliminated? Could an inviting gathering space be created for parents waiting for their children who are in classes, or for children who are waiting for a parent? Could more comfortable furniture be added? There are so many ways this space could be more inviting to visitors so that people would want to meet in this space.

### Retail sales

At many public recreation facilities across the country, retail sales have been incorporated into front desk operations to offer guests items they may have forgotten including water bottles, sports drinks, goggles, swim diapers, etc. This would be a nice amenity to provide, and it could also generate some additional revenue.

### Evaluation process

As noted in the recreation program review, an ongoing system and mechanism to solicit and share feedback from users is necessary. In addition to comment cards, the Department could offer periodic coffee/feedback events with Recreation Director and a few key staff/instructors for users of the building that day to drop in and informally provide feedback/ideas for improvements, changes, additional classes, etc. The staff could have some flip charts and Post-It-notes like the public open house to gather feedback. The goals of feedback systems are to allow customers to provide feedback and to motivate the staff to commit to continuous improvement.



There could be different days/times setup each month to accommodate weight room users, lap swimmers, families, and after school participants. These sessions would be good opportunities to recruit new Department volunteers, too.

## Create fun

As a provider of public recreation, the Department needs to create some fun! Suggestions for this include hosting a weekly or monthly Friday evening free community “pool party” as way of bringing together families and others in community, providing new residents an introduction to the Center, resulting in more memberships and usage. The Department could ask service clubs and nonprofits to take turns providing food and volunteers to promote their organizations, too.

## Demonstrations of new course offerings

To promote new program offerings, the Department could provide free demonstrations to give people a taste. Give people a chance to check out new class (especially if it is something that has never been offered at Recreation Center, like Cardio-Drumming, which is apparently popular in the area but never tried by the Department). These demonstrations could also be part of the community pool parties mentioned above under “create fun.”

## Seasonal schedule

To meet the needs of customers, a schedule of classes, activities, and family events should be planned and advertised prior to the start of each season. In many communities, program schedules are mailed four times a year including all programs offered, highlighting new programs, listing our rental opportunities, and outlining which staff are responsible for each. Customers want to plan and be able to count on a set schedule for the season and plug it into their daily calendars.

If customers cannot count on the Recreation Center delivering (which they have not been able to do for three years), they could go elsewhere. Announcing new classes and changes in hours constantly during a season is disruptive and erodes confidence in the Department and results in loss of membership and participation.

## Volunteer Program

The need for a robust Department volunteer program was suggested many times during the engagement process. There are many potential volunteers on Sanibel, but the City has never created a meaningful role for volunteers. There were a handful of volunteers who worked in the weight room but following the COVID-19 outbreak, this program no longer exists.

In communities across the country, recreation departments rely on volunteers for many meaningful tasks including:

Working family/senior events: setting up, decorating, providing activities, clean-up

Working with seniors: calling Bingo and playing games

Working with youth programs

Participating in workdays to maintain natural areas, pick-up trash, plant flowers, etc.

Provide general office help

Providing facility tours

Greeting those entering the facility and answering questions

Officiating youth sports

To be successful, there needs to be an official volunteer program, volunteer application process, volunteer job descriptions, training, supervision, tracking, and appreciation. If people feel that their time is well spent, then they will return and bring friends or family to participate

There are lots of potential volunteers on Sanibel, but the City never created a meaningful role for volunteers, so by 2019 there was no viable program,

and by the COVID-19 outbreak, it was dead. Based on best practices in other communities, the City should consider how to effectively use volunteers to not only deal with workload but create community engagement, which draws in more residents to participate in our programs.

Volunteers could help with youth programs and programs for seniors. Volunteers could also conduct tours of the facilities for new residents and new prospective members, making them ambassadors in the community.

### Financial Assistance Committee

Currently, anyone seeking financial assistance for the After School Care or Summer Camp programs complete an application. Applications are copied, the personal information is redacted, and the applications are provided to the City's Financial Assistance Committee, which is made up of residents appointed by City Council. This is a very time-intensive process for staff, and the BerryDunn team has never seen a process that involves residents.

The BerryDunn team highly recommends that this practice be stopped and the Committee be disbanded. A process can be put in place for the Director of Recreation to determine the need based on City Council-approved guidelines. In many communities, the income levels for the free or reduced lunch program are used. The city could also consider how F.I.S.H. may be able to assist with determining need.

Financial assistance should be available to any resident, regardless of age, for any type of recreation program offered. Most organizations will allow financial aid for programs and memberships, but not for services like personal training or massage. Assistance should be provided based on income level. The application process should be transparent, advertised, and shared with the schools and other nonprofit organizations that provide for people with lower income levels. Creating a relationship with a school social worker is a great place for the Department to start.

### Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Many parks and recreation agencies across the country have parks and recreation advisory committees. These committees are made up of residents and are typically appointed by elected officials. It is important that a committee of this nature have a big picture focus, looking out for the entire Sanibel community. It is important to avoid people with a special/specific interest or have an entire committee from one demographic. In addition to being the advisory body for recreation programs and services, the shared-use paths could be under this committee's purview.

This committee could provide a mechanism for residents to have their ideas considered and a way to communicate the community's desires to policymakers. This group could flag issues that need to be reviewed and bring them to the City Manager. Ideally, this committee would provide one forum for all the different types of users, so they are working together to balance the needs of the entire community. The alternative is separate advocacy groups (including those fighting for more attention to seniors, youth, families, swim team, youth sports, yoga, spin, pickleball, tennis, basketball, youth programs, shared-use paths (SUP), kayak launches, and park amenities), which should be avoided if possible. It is much more efficient to work with one committee made up of a variety of users as opposed to many.

The BerryDunn team recommends that this committee be formed by City ordinance with clearly identified responsibilities and defined necessity. The first step would be to research best practices for park and recreation committees that will help shape the scope, mandate, membership criteria, etc.

This committee, which would be appointed by the Council, could track implementing the recommendations of this Recreation Department Assessment Report. Based on the amount of public input gathered during the community engagement, there may be many residents interested in serving the

City in this capacity. Additionally, this committee could work on collaborative partnerships with other island nonprofits, the Sanibel School, and others providing educational programming on the island. Lastly, this group could spearhead the outreach for the new, enhanced volunteer program.

### City of Sanibel – Shared-Use Agreement Review

BerryDunn was tasked with reviewing five Interlocal Agreements (ILAs) between the School Board of Lee County, Florida (Schools) and the Board of County Commissioners of Lee County, Florida (BoCC), to gain full understanding of the relationship and possible updates that might benefit the organizations.

ILAs act as official documentation of a mutual understanding and/or relationship between two or more municipal entities. Recreation-related ILAs often outline the operational, ownership, financing, and/or maintenance details of community-based recreational facilities and service provision.

These documents are not currently easy to find; the BerryDunn team highly recommends that these be available on the City's website to provide transparency to taxpayers.

#### **May 18, 2004: SCHOOL BOARD OF LEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, (District) and the CITY OF SANIBEL FLORIDA (City)**

The agreement articulates the operation, maintenance, and use of District-owned lands and City-constructed or cost-shared and constructed recreational facilities on the District's property. The agreement is also intended to apply to facilities that may be located on District property in the future. The public facilities meet both the educational needs and the public recreational needs of students and public of Sanibel and Lee County, and therefore the agreement establishes roles and responsibilities for such spaces.

The School District's primary role is landowner; the City is the designing and constructing entity. The ILA establishes that the City will operate and maintain the recreation facilities; therefore, the School District will

help pay one-third of the operating expenses and share the cost of capital outlays exceeding \$750.

The school facilities will be used to support District education programs during typical school hours as well as the school's sports teams, and then available for City (public) use all other times. The ILA articulates the District's "sole use during regular school hours and after school for the intramural/extramural activities," provided the intramural/extramural activities are scheduled through the City's Recreation Department. The City's sole use is on weekends, school holidays, and before/after regular school hours, and when not in use by the school teams. There is an additional provision for some access to the school facilities during school days, provided they are not being used for school purposes. The school can have access to the facility for after school activities, so long as the City has not already scheduled the space and the request is at least 48 hours in advance. The school is supposed to provide two weeks' notice of the intramural/extramural activities to the City. Scheduling prioritization is outlined as: first priority is for school teams, and second priority is for recreational use on a first-come, first-served basis to the general public or other non-school users. The City may charge a rental fee. The agreement contains typical liability and agreement termination provisions.

The ILA provides a solid start to outlining roles and fiscal responsibilities. The defined quarterly payment installments provide an articulated structure to follow; however, the capital outlay payment provisions are not as well-defined and leave the share of funding undefined. Additional details regarding the capital outlay agreement process and physical access to the space could enhance the agreement. As currently outlined, the scheduling of the facilities outside of traditional school operating hours favors the school's team uses over public use. The two-week minimum notice of the school teams' schedules is not sufficient for Department or public seasonal use scheduling. The provision for the City's possible additional use during the school day is confusing, because the likelihood of that happening is slim provided the sole access

clauses. The provision that no charges or fees will be charged to either party should continue so long as both parties agree that the school and public use is well-balanced.

#### **November 22, 2005: ILA between Lee County School board and City of Sanibel FL**

The November 22, 2005, ILA was established because the City planned to construct a recreational capital project at the Sanibel School site for joint use. The ILA outlines each party's share in construction costs; long-term lease of school board property; and joint use, operation, and maintenance of the facility. The ILA defines the "Recreational Facilities Site" and proposed site plan that included an aquatics center, athletic center, fitness center, meeting rooms, arts and crafts room, lockers, and showers. The City retained an architect that provided preliminary plans for the design and construction of those recreational facilities and would be responsible for all construction-associated responsibilities. The agreement established a 99-year permission to use the land for the School Board-owned property, with provisions for a formal lease if deemed necessary. The Board agreed to provide fiscal compensation for the construction. The Board would own the land; the City would own the recreational facilities.

The use of the new recreational facilities mirrored the May 2004 agreement, except that half of the gymnasium space would be available throughout regular school hours for City use. The ILA states, "The intent of this agreement is that each party shall use best efforts to coordinate on scheduling of the events requested by the other party both prior to and during each calendar year in order to minimize any scheduling conflict." Both parties have the opportunity to host events using the whole gym space 14 days of the year. Both parties have the opportunity to charge rental fees for their half of the gym. Electric utility and capital outlay expenses would be shared on a percentage basis. Provisions for future ownership and first right of refusal were outlined.

When two parties are scheduling, and potentially renting, two halves of a whole, the potential for conflicting use can increase. Singular oversight can anticipate potential conflicts or problems—such as setup/takedown logistics, facility capacity, and disruptive activities between the two sides of the space—and can also maintain a single master scheduling calendar. Additionally, the likelihood of the school, City, and public being interested in the whole space for more than 28 days per year is quite high. Operational, maintenance, and equipment responsibilities could be more specifically defined, and oversight centralized.

#### **April 18, 2006: ILA between Lee County and City of Sanibel for the Sanibel Recreation Complex**

Due to the City's construction of a Recreational Complex, the April 18, 2006, ILA outlines the City and County's roles. The County's financial role in the proposed Recreation Complex's planning, design, permitting, and construction costs is "\$3,200,000.00 or 28% of the total construction costs for the Recreational Complex, whichever is less." The City is responsible for the design, construction, operations, and maintenance of the facilities. As part of this agreement, the County set as a condition that the use of the facilities shall be open to unincorporated Lee County residents at the same fees as City residents.

The agreement is quite detailed in the realm of what the County will contribute financially, and when it will pay. It is also clear in its intent to provide residents of the unincorporated parts of Lee County (approximately half of the 750,000 residents of the county) equal access to the Recreational Complex as City residents, even though the County contributed no funds to the ongoing operational costs of the Center.

#### **January 15, 2013: ILA between the School Board of Lee County and the City of Sanibel for the Construction and Use of a Playground at the Sanibel School**

In addition to the equipment the School Board already installed, the City will install additional equipment. The School Board will install ADA-compliant mulch once

per year and maintain all the playground equipment; the annual expenses will be shared equally by the entities. Open/close responsibilities of the playground in the morning and at night were also defined.

ILAs such as this one are quite common with shared-use amenities such as the playground equipment. Fiscal contribution, maintenance, and inspection use roles are clearly defined. The established security protocols of the playground are restrictive. A public playground used for school purposes should only be locked during times when school is in session and available to the public outside of school hours (late afternoon/evening, weekends, and holidays).

## Future ILAs

In instances where multiple governmental agencies are fiscally and/or operationally connected to the same space, they should work collaboratively to establish a single, multi-agency ILA. In this case, all three parties (the school, City, and County) have a vested interest in the Recreation Complex. Present-day needs have evolved since 2005 and therefore the City's current ILAs with the County and schools are outdated. BerryDunn recommends the three entities collaborate to update their shared expectations regarding ownership, funding, and operational requirements. In March 2022, the Board of County Commissioners updated its ILA with the School District related to all facilities that are co-located, and this can serve as a model for revising the ILA between the City of Sanibel and the School District and County Commission.

## Marketing

The staff and the community expressed an interest in enhanced marketing or Department programs and services. The suggestions received include:

- Once the "Recreation Reimagined" plan is adopted and an implementation plan envisioned, there should be a membership drive with the goal of increasing awareness of programs and services with the goal to increase the number of program participants and facility visits.
- The Department needs to ability to allow residents/guests to "opt in" to what they want to receive or "opt out" of what they do not want to receive. It is not efficient to send every email to everyone, and when people get too much email that does not relate to them, they stop reading.
- The City should enhance the Recreation Department website as it is difficult to navigate. The website should be more customer-friendly both in how it looks and how easy it is to access information.
- The Recreation Department needs a social media presence where it can more effectively distribute information regarding programs and services, create some buzz, allow members to post photos, comment, and share the posts with their networks. This is common in nearly every recreation system the BerryDunn team has worked with over the past several years and is critical to expanding the membership base and facility usage. This would be a great way to recruit new staff, too.
- Consider use of an electronic tool (such as SurveyMonkey) for all program participants and facility visitors to provide feedback on classes, instructors, and equipment and to provide ideas for new programming.
- Explore opportunities for the Recreation Department to develop relationships and an effective communication system with island service clubs, nonprofits, the chamber of commerce, realtor association, and homeowners' associations to keep them informed of programs and services. A speaker's bureau could be created where the Recreation Director (or designated staff) could provide regular Department updates.

## Recreation Department Potential Reorganization

Many communities across the country have departments that include both parks and recreation. In these systems, one department directly oversees the parks, park amenities, the recreation facilities, and all the programs. In Sanibel, moving the shared-use paths into a new Parks and Recreation Department could be beneficial. It will create opportunities for new synergies with management and programming, and it could create an opportunity for an overarching Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Operations

- ☑ Create an effective onboarding process for full-time and part-time staff that prepares new hires for their responsibilities and provides a solid overview of the City and Department.
- ☑ Include funds in the annual budget and plan for a variety of training and development opportunities to staff at all levels in the Department.
- ☑ Write a facility operating manual and make it available to all staff electronically – review annually and update as needed.
- ☑ Review all registration forms and processes and seek efficiencies.
- ☑ Eliminate the need for everyone entering the facility to have a background check.
- ☑ Create a preventive maintenance plan for all facility equipment.
- ☑ Create a replacement plan for all facility equipment.
- ☑ Streamline the payroll process so that staff are entering time only once.
- ☑ Coordinate with the HR Department so that Recreation staff can recruit for their own open positions.
- ☑ Explore the possibility of hiring fitness instructors as employees (without requiring insurance) instead of as contractors.
- ☑ Determine a new process or location for the selling of beach parking passes and dog licenses.
- ☑ Evaluate ways to make the entrance to the Recreation Center more inviting and welcoming for visitors.
- ☑ Create an evaluation process to obtain feedback from guests regarding Department programs and services.
- ☑ Fund and plan for small family events to bring people together; these could involve pool parties or activities in the gym.
- ☑ As new program offerings are created, offer free demonstrations to showcase to the public.
- ☑ Create a seasonal program guide/brochure (possibly starting with twice a year) so that everyone is aware of new opportunities and mail to all households—a sponsor could be secured to help defray mailing costs.
- ☑ Create a robust volunteer program and recruit volunteers to assist the Department in meaningful ways that can reduce the potential need for some part-time staff positions.
- ☑ Eliminate the financial assistance committee and create a system for the Director of Recreation to efficiently determine need and award program scholarships.
- ☑ Via a City ordinance, create a new Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.

- ☑ Renegotiate the agreements with the Sanibel School and the Lee County to better define roles and responsibilities.
- ☑ Post the ILAs on the City website to provide transparency

- ☑ Evaluate the potential of creating a Parks and Recreation Department to oversee the parks, park amenities, recreation facilities, and all programs.

## Marketing

- ☑ Following the adoption of the Recreation Reimagined plan, hold a Recreation Center membership drive.
- ☑ Allow residents to opt in for information they would like to receive from the Department.
- ☑ Enhance the Department's website presence highlighting current offerings, facility hours, rental opportunities, open positions, current staffing, etc.
- ☑ Allow for online registration for all programs and services (including membership).
- ☑ Create a social media presence throughout the community with Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
- ☑ Establish meaningful relationships with island service clubs, nonprofits, Chamber of Commerce, realtor associations, and homeowner's associations to keep them informed of Department programs and services





# Financial Analysis

## BACKGROUND

BerryDunn completed a Recreation Department (Department) Financial Analysis in support of the City Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment project. The financial and cost recovery analysis was performed by reviewing operating revenue and expense data and select capital improvement plan (CIP) expense data for the Department's core service areas. Additionally, BerryDunn reviewed the Department's fiscal year (FY) 2012 – FY 2021 applicable financial documents and fee schedules to gain greater insight into the Department's fees and charges environment.

The final project report includes recommendations based on the objective analytical findings and City institutional knowledge, as well as considerations related to best practices in policy, process, level of service, funding, and technology. The analysis has also identified possible barriers and challenges to implementing recommendations and considerations.

This report provides the City with an overview of Department revenue generated by way of user fees and charges, as well as associated expenses for select FYs per core service area. The report also documents the estimated percentage of full costs recovered by way of programs and services for which user fees and charges are currently assessed. This information will provide a foundation for the development of a thorough cost recovery and pricing policy, which will assist Department staff with assessing expenses and setting fee levels to help ensure the appropriate level of costs are recovered.

Furthermore, a formal policy will also help ensure that fee levels are set not only to cover the costs of providing services to the desired level, but also to help ensure equitable access to programs is available to all who want to participate.

To that end, the City has become increasingly aware that the cost of providing fee-applicable services and the ability to fund advanced service delivery goals may soon outpace the revenue generated by providing those services. For these reasons, the City is interested in understanding the full cost of providing fee-related services and considering recommendations that might better align fee levels in the future to reflect these costs, satisfy revenue requirements, fund future development and strategic initiatives, and maintain a sufficient fund balance to provide revenue stabilization and help ensure business continuity, if needed.

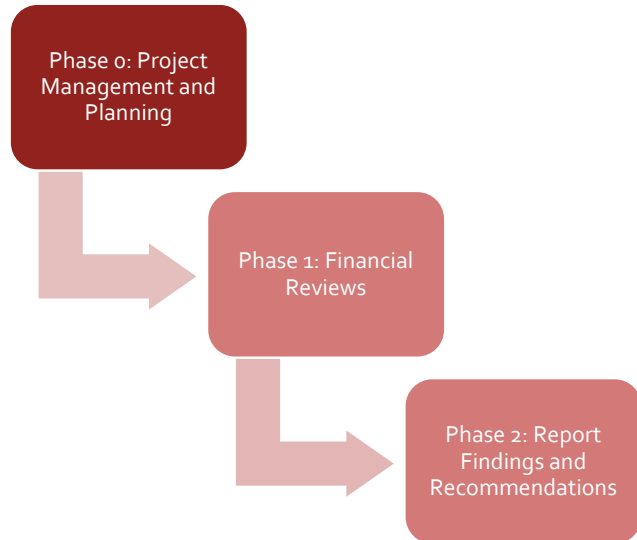
This final report provides the City with an overview of the current Department fees and charges environment, and associated revenues and expenses for each activity, permit, program, and service for which a fee is currently assessed. The report also documents the estimated percentage of full costs recovered to deliver specific programs and services at current fee levels, which will allow City officials to make informed policy decisions regarding adjustments to fees and charges, if so desired. Finally, this report also describes BerryDunn's approach to the analysis and understanding of the Department's organizational structure and services provided, findings, considerations, and recommendations.

## APPROACH AND WORK PERFORMED

This section of the report outlines how BerryDunn approached the financial analysis, summarizes the major tasks performed within each phase of the project, provides an overview of how the cost model was developed, and provides a high-level synopsis of the project deliverables.

### Work Performed

BerryDunn's approach to completing this study involved three phases:



BerryDunn reviewed applicable citywide financial and statistical data, Department-specific financial information and data, and information gathered from discussions with Department subject matter experts (SMEs) to assess the current revenue and expense environment and to develop future policy considerations. This information will help the Department understand its true cost of providing activities, programs, and services, identify target service levels, and understand what fee increases would be required to maintain existing operational frameworks and service levels, or advance to a higher level of service delivery. Department operating budget and select capital budget information and data across multiple FYs was used to perform forecasting scenarios to further assess the Department's revenue requirements and required funding levels to help ensure business and service continuity in future FYs.

BerryDunn reviewed financial and program data across multiple FYs and developed recommendations that might better align revenue generated with the cost associated with activities, programs, and services the Department commonly provides.

Furthermore, BerryDunn employed a standard cost accounting methodology to identify and assign actual and expected expense to activities, permits, programs, and services the Department provides. This methodology uses identified expenses—mainly from the Department's adopted FY 2012 through FY 2021 operating budget segments, and actual expenses incurred—to determine full cost allocation. Finally, where detailed and/or accurate data was nonexistent, BerryDunn developed assumptions and proportional assignment of expenses based on weighted averages and other standard analytical techniques.

Also included in the analysis are the identified revenues from FY 2012 through FY 2021 associated with providing activities, permits, programs, and services reflected on the Department's master fee schedule.

BerryDunn prepared a cost of service (CoS) model for the Department's programs and services analyzed for this project based on the Department's FY 2012 through FY 2021 adopted expenditure budgets, actual expenditures incurred, and FY 2012 through FY 2021 reported actual revenues reported in City financial documents. BerryDunn reviewed the study findings with the City project team on multiple occasions, identifying any needed revisions and allowing the City project team opportunities to give feedback and request additions and deletions before finalizing deliverables.

## Taxes versus Fees

The City collects taxes to satisfy its general revenue requirements. The level of service funded from tax levies is determined by the local jurisdiction and generally benefits all City residents, which is different from fees collected for providing specific services to nonresidents, services benefitting smaller groups, or services benefitting only individuals. Fees paid relieve residents of the burden of paying for discretionary

services they do not use; therefore, fee levels should reflect the reasonable, identified cost of the work City staff perform to deliver those services. To that end, in this financial analysis, BerryDunn analyzed financial data at the City level, the Department level, and, where it was available, the individual activity, permit, program, or service level.

## COST RECOVERY AND CURRENT FISCAL ENVIRONMENT

This section of the report provides a general overview of the Department's organizational structure, major technical findings identified, and BerryDunn's projections based on those findings.

### Preface: Impacts of COVID-19

Undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic created a severe financial strain and has dramatically reshaped the Department's budget in several ways since mid-March 2020. While the effects of the pandemic have impacted programs and services disparately, most core activities, programs, and service areas have been affected, leading to significant declines in revenue. As a result, the Department is projected to realize relatively moderate revenue increases in the coming years.

Unlike various downturns in previous years, the COVID-19 pandemic is a major revenue loss event. In many cases, this loss will not be recaptured completely, if ever, for several years. Therefore, the financial findings outlined below are not indicative of poor leadership or poor financial management. Prior to experiencing the full effects of the pandemic, the Department attempted to operate on a growth trajectory.

To further illustrate revenue and expense trajectories, and to underscore the severity of the pandemic's impact on the Department's budget, Table 7.1 contains aggregate Department revenue and expense data for the core service areas analyzed.

For the Department to maintain a growth trajectory in revenue levels year-over-year, a one-size-fits-all solution is not viable. It will be important for the Department to leverage its skilled management, staff experience, and service delivery experience to begin returning to an efficient and expanding fiscal environment. This may require a return to focusing on core service delivery and prudent fiscal management in the near-term, while keeping a strategic focus on a return to program development and growth, enhanced service delivery, and increased revenue generation in the coming years.

**Table 7.1: Parks and Recreation Revenue and Expense: FY 2016 – FY 2021**

FY	Fees and Charges Revenue	Expense	Fees and Charges Cost Recovery	Non Fees and Charges Revenue	Non Fees and Charges Revenue % of Total
2012 (actual)	\$565,687	\$1,957,386	28.9%	\$1,631,115	74.2%
2013 (actual)	\$572,583	\$2,870,877	19.9%	\$1,327,059	69.9%
2014 (actual)	\$640,649	\$2,130,024	30.1%	\$1,459,411	69.5%
2015 (actual)	\$705,956	\$2,278,466	31.0%	\$1,454,319	67.3%
2016 (actual)	\$714,560	\$2,280,766	31.3%	\$1,452,387	67.0%
2017 (actual)	\$667,048	\$2,135,167	31.2%	\$1,618,348	70.8%
2018 (actual)	\$703,747	\$2,274,882	30.9%	\$1,600,415	69.5%
2019 (actual)	\$716,377	\$1,983,471	36.1%	\$1,514,646	67.9%
2020 (actual)	\$451,304	\$1,564,837	28.8%	\$705,144	61.0%
2021 (projected)	\$272,707	\$1,331,299	20.5%	\$1,400,600	83.7%

## Department Overview

The Recreation Department delivers recreation and leisure opportunities that improve the health and well-being of the community, thereby enhancing the quality of life for all residents and visitors. The Department's stated mission includes the administering and delivering of safe, well-rounded community programs and facilities to meet the needs of residents and visitors alike.<sup>1</sup>

**Table 7.2: Departmental Overview**

Function	Function Description
Recreation Department	The Department has broad responsibilities, including organizing and delivering recreation activities, programs, and services throughout the City. The Department also provides community center and senior services through the Center4Life.
Programs and Activities	The Department offers a full range of recreational activities, programs, and services for participants of all ages, including but not limited to aquatics, arts, athletics, camps, special events, and health and fitness activities, programs, and services.

<sup>1</sup> "About Recreation," <[www.mysanibel.com](http://www.mysanibel.com)>

Function	Function Description
Facilities and Rentals	The Department operates and maintains facilities used for recreational activities and programs, senior recreational activities and programs, community and resident use, special events, and private rentals, including the Sanibel Recreation Center and the Center4Life.
Technology	The Department uses RecTrac to manage in-person, phone, and select online registrations for recreation programs, activities, and rentals.
Budget and Funding Structure	The Department accounts for fees and charges revenue and expenses related to the provision of Departmental programs and services in 11 operating budget categories. All revenues and expenditures are accounted for in a special revolving fund. The Department also receives significant funding support from the City's general fund, and through grants and donations.

## Current Fees and Charges Services Environment

The Department's current fees and charges structure can be divided into four core service environments: Summer Camps and After School Camps, Recreation Center Memberships and Services, Senior Programming and Services, and select Athletic Field Rentals and Services. Each of these core service environments are supported by a customer service element to assist with registrations and questions.

### Summer Camps and After School Camps

Summer Camps and After School Camps generated an estimated \$1,138,630 of revenue from FY 2012 through FY 2021, accounting for 18.9% of total Department fees and charges revenue generated. Table 7.3 highlights the year-over-year change in revenue:

**Table 7.3: Summer Camps and After School Camps: FY 2012 – FY 2021**

FY	Fees and Charges Revenue	Fees and Charges Revenue % of Department Total
2012	\$104,975	18.6%
2013	\$108,735	19.0%
2014	\$142,021	22.2%
2015	\$168,521	23.9%
2016	\$139,357	19.5%
2017	\$149,355	22.4%
2018	\$136,615	19.4%
2019	\$144,330	20.1%
2020	\$28,122	6.2%
2021 (projected) <sup>2</sup>	\$16,599	6.1%
<b>Total all FYs</b>	<b>\$1,138,630</b>	<b>18.9%</b>

<sup>2</sup> At the time of analysis, complete data for FY 2021 was not available.

## Recreation Center Memberships and Services

Recreation Center Memberships and Services generated an estimated \$3,906,663 of revenue from FY 2012 through FY 2021, accounting for 65.0% of total Department fees and charges revenue generated. Table 7.4 highlights the year-over-year change in revenue:

**Table 7.4: Recreation Center Memberships and Services: FY 2012 – FY 2021**

FY	Fees and Charges Revenue	Fees and Charges Revenue % of Department Total
2012	\$339,390	60.0%
2013	\$356,404	62.2%
2014	\$396,534	61.9%
2015	\$441,157	62.5%
2016	\$471,214	65.9%
2017	\$441,188	66.1%
2018	\$482,911	68.6%
2019	\$481,931	67.3%
2020	\$336,614	74.6%
2021 (projected)	\$159,320	58.4%
<b>Total all FYs</b>	<b>\$3,906,663</b>	<b>65.0%</b>

## Senior Programming and Services

Senior Programming and Services generated an estimated \$72,453 of revenue from FY 2012 through FY 2021, accounting for 1.2% of total Department fees and charges revenue generated. Table 7.5 includes the financial summary for senior programming and services.

**Table 7.5: Senior Programming and Services: FY 2012 – FY 2021**

FY	Fees and Charges Revenue	Fees and Charges Revenue % of Department Total
2012	\$4,781	0.8%
2013	\$4,981	0.9%
2014	\$5,000	0.8%
2015	\$6,810	1.0%
2016	\$8,781	1.2%
2017	\$8,866	1.3%
2018	\$10,785	1.5%
2019	\$12,393	1.7%
2020	\$10,056	2.2%
2021 (projected)	\$0	0.0%
<b>Total all FYs</b>	<b>\$72,453</b>	<b>1.2%</b>

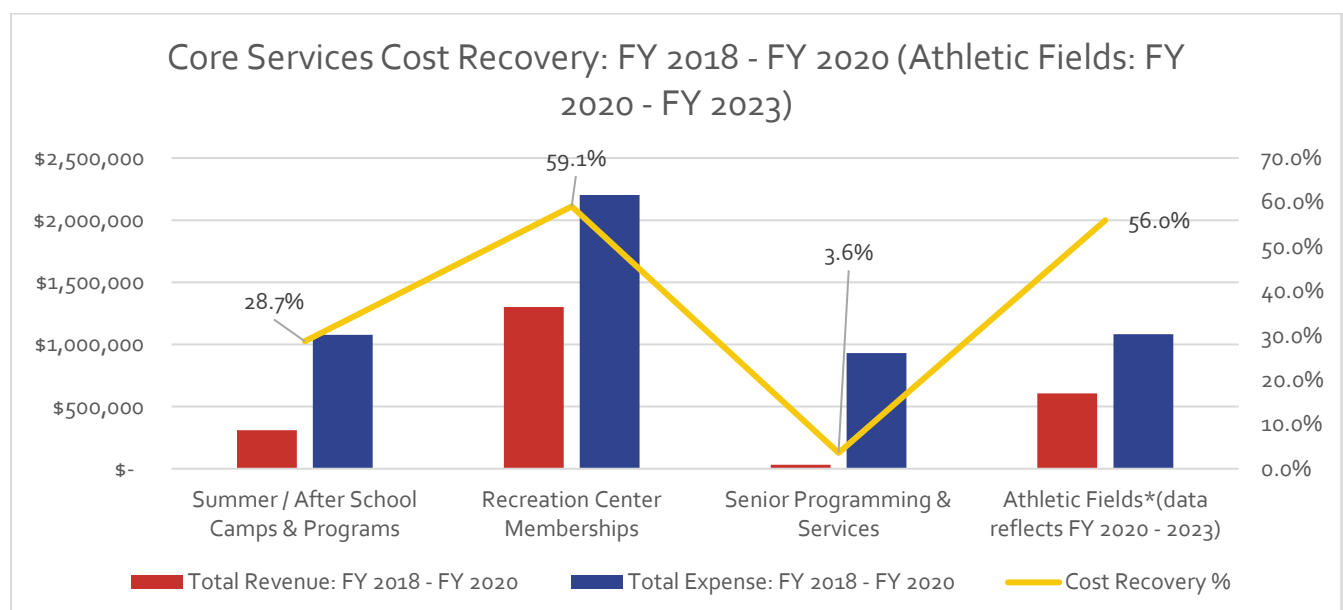
## Athletic Field Rentals and Services

Athletic Field Rentals and Services is projected to generate an estimated \$605,856 of revenue FY 2020 through FY 2023 (only years for which data was available), all of which comes from a cost-sharing agreement with Lee County and the School District related to the maintenance of the athletic fields. There are no user fees charged or collected for use of the athletic fields. Athletic field revenues account for an estimated 26.9% of total Department fees and charges revenue generated. The identified and estimated total cost to deliver services over that same period is estimated to be \$1,082,039. BerryDunn calculated the percentage of costs recovered by way of the current cost-sharing agreement, finding that Athletic Field Rentals and Services is projected to recover an estimated 56.0% of the cost to provide services over the time period analyzed.

### Current Fees and Charges Services Environment

The Department has become increasingly aware that expenditures have begun to outpace revenues year-over-year in certain core service categories, as demonstrated in the FY information above. To help assure that Department services continue to be delivered at current levels and that increased service levels can be achieved to accommodate increased customer demand, select fees may need to be systematically increased to help offset future increased expenditures. Figure 7.1 depicts the Department's core service areas and associated cost recovery FY 2018 – FY 2020 (Athletic Fields FY 2020 – FY 2023). BerryDunn recommends the Department consider increases of select fees and charges beginning in FY 2024 or FY 2025, which would result in additional revenue gains to help recover a greater portion of the costs incurred to deliver Department services, as well as to accommodate the Department's growth trajectory. Throughout FY 2023 the Department is encouraged to monitor key services to identify core services fees that would have the desired impacts for meeting revenue targets and cost recovery targets if adjusted in FY 2024 and/or FY 2025. Furthermore, the Department is encouraged to explore service areas where integration can take place allowing for greater operational efficiencies and a service framework more in line with the Department mission and community needs.

**Figure 7.1: Core Services Cost Recovery: FY 2018 – FY 2020 (Athletic Fields: FY 2020 – FY 2023)**





## Overall Department CoS Findings

BerryDunn reviewed all Department fees and charges revenue and associated expenditures for FY 2012 – FY 2022 for the 11 service areas identified. Average FY expenditures were \$2,080,718 to provide all activities, permits, programs, and services accounted for within the service areas. The identified and assigned average FY revenue was \$601,062. BerryDunn calculated the percentage of costs recovered by way of current fees and charges, finding that the 11 service areas are recovering an average 28.9% of the costs of providing programs and services each FY. While this overall cost recovery percentage may seem low when compared to peer-City park and recreation operations across the country that recover less than half of the costs associated with providing services, several factors, including activity and program participation trends and community priorities, should be considered when assessing the current cost recovery percentage compared to peers, or when assessing current fee levels. Furthermore, because of the unique nature of programs and services provided by the Department, many core service revenues tend to fluctuate widely on an annual basis and are dependent on macroeconomic and socio-economic trends well beyond the control of the Department, especially related the seasonal fluctuations in local population.

For these reasons, BerryDunn developed a revenue and expenditure forecast for the Department highlighting projected revenue and expense and associated cost recovery levels for the next three FYs 2023 – 2025. The scenario developed reflects current participation trends, revenue trends, expenditures trends, and is exclusive of program additions and fee increases. Non-fee funding increases of 10% year-over-year would be needed to sustain Department operations and maintain a sufficient fund balance, should no additional fees and charges revenue be generated or additional funding secured. Table 7.6 reflects the core elements of the forecast scenarios.



**Table 7.6: FY 2023– FY 2025 Service Areas Fee Revenue and Non-Fee Funding**

FY 2023 – FY 2026: Revenue Generating Core Service Areas			
Activity/Service Area	Projected Revenue	Projected Expense	Cost Recovery
FY 2023 - 11 Core Service Areas	\$619,094	\$2,205,561	28.1%
FY 2024 - 11 Core Service Areas	\$637,668	\$2,337,895	27.3%
FY 2025 - 11 Core Service Areas	\$656,795	\$2,408,031	27.3%
FY 2023 – 2026: Non-Fee Revenue Support			
Additional Funding Area	Revenue	Projected Expense	Cost Recovery (with Fee Revenue)
FY 2023 - General Fund / Grants / Donations / Miscellaneous	\$1,562,761	\$2,205,561	98.9%
FY 2024 - General Fund / Grants / Donations / Miscellaneous	\$1,685,024	\$2,337,895	99.3%
FY 2025 - General Fund / Grants / Donations / Miscellaneous	\$1,790,145	\$2,408,031	100.0%+
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,951,487</b>	<b>\$6,951,487</b>	<b>100.0%+</b>

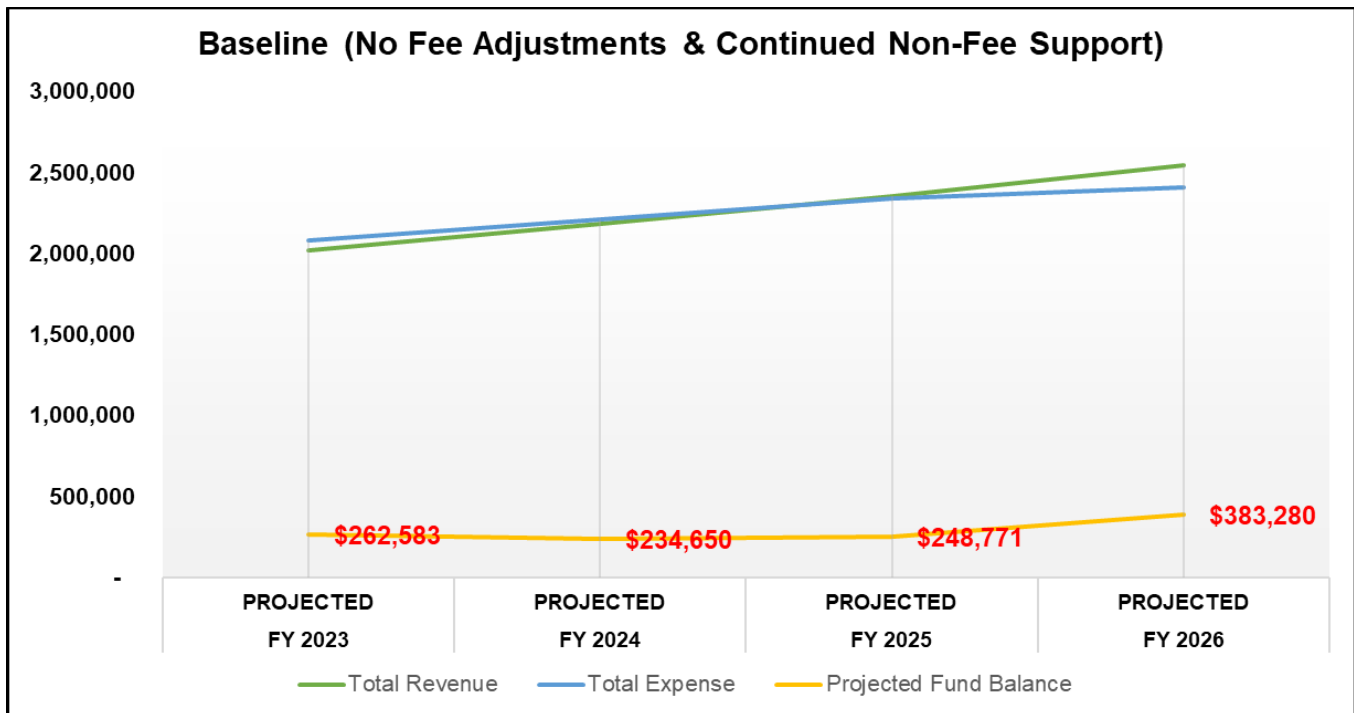
BerryDunn projects the Department will have a ceiling of 30.0% cost recovery specific to fees and charges revenue in future FYs. Without major operational adjustments altering the service delivery structure, sustained expenditure reductions, sustained funding increases, major fee increases, or without the addition of significant revenue generating programming, the current fees and charges environment is not currently expansive enough to generate revenue levels sufficient to consistently sustain Department operations at cost recovery levels greater than 30%. This is not necessarily a negative outcome. Rather, this allows for policy decisions to be made regarding increased revenue generation for core service segments in the future, if so desired.

### Recreation Reserve Fund Balance

The Department needs a fund balance sufficient to help ensure business and service continuity if a downturn in the economy or other unforeseen events or circumstances occur. The use of the reserve balance funds for select expenditures and the maximum allowable fund balance (fund balance ceiling) is generally determined by State legislative statute, local law and policy, or a combination of both. To that end, fees and charges are generally set at levels to generate sufficient revenue to cover the desired percent of operational cost of providing all services. Furthermore, fees and charges also need to be set at levels which allow revenue generation sufficient to maintain adequate reserves.

At the start of FY 2022, the Department has a projected fund balance of \$332,288, while average annual expenditures are generally in the \$2,000,000 range. Figure 7.2 depicts the Department's estimated fund balance FY 2023 through FY 2026:

Figure 7.2: Fund Balance Projection FY 2023 – FY 2026



## Summary of Technical Findings

Table 7.7 provides a summary of the key technical findings of BerryDunn’s analysis of the Department’s fees and charges environment. Note that this analysis is based on the cost recovery percentage that are average over the 12-year period for this project, though for the core service areas identified in the table below, the most recent FY cost recovery level is listed where data was available.

Table 7.7: Summary of Technical Findings

Summary of Findings	
Category	Findings
Overall Department Cost Recovery	BerryDunn identified and assigned an average of \$601,062 of revenue and \$2,080,718 of average expense per FY to the fee-applicable services analyzed for this study. The Department’s average cost recovery rate for all FYs analyzed in this study is 28.9%.
Summer/After School Camps and Programs	BerryDunn identified total revenue of \$1,138,630 generated by the fee-applicable services analyzed for this study. Summer/After School Camps and Programs services accounted for 18.9% of total revenue identified in this study. The most recent FY cost recovery rate for summer/After School Camps and Programs services is 10.0%.
Recreation Center Memberships and Services	BerryDunn identified total revenue of \$3,906,663 generated by the fee-applicable services analyzed for this study. Recreation Center Memberships and Services accounted for 65.0% of total revenue identified in this study. The most recent FY cost recovery rate for Recreation Center Memberships and Services is 58.3%.

Summary of Findings	
Category	Findings
Senior Programming and Services	BerryDunn identified total revenue of \$72,453 generated by the fee-applicable services analyzed for this study. Senior Programming and Services accounted for 1.2% of total revenue identified in this study. The most recent FY cost recovery rate for Senior Programming and Services is 3.6%.
Athletic Field Rentals and Services	BerryDunn projected an estimated \$605,856 of revenue and \$1,082,039 of estimated expense for FYs 2020 – 2023 for this study. The Department's projected cost recovery rate for Athletic Field Rentals and Services analyzed in this study is 56.0%. Note: the revenue here is from the cost-sharing agreement with Lee County and the School District, not from user fees.
Cost Recovery	BerryDunn estimates that the Department might realize a 1% to 2% increase in the cost recovery rate for each additional \$150,000 of revenue generated annually (FY 2022 baseline).
Fee Increases	BerryDunn estimates that select fee increases will be needed in FY 2024 or FY 2025, unless current funding sources can continue increased support in future FYs. Additionally, new fee additions should be considered where applicable, such as reservations for athletic fields and applicable open space.
Non-Fee Funding Support	BerryDunn identified an average general fund subsidy (non-fee funding support) of \$1,416,344 of each FY.
Revenue Forecasting / Budget Development	Prior to FY 2021 the portion of annual revenue requirements to be funded by fees and charges revenue was determined by the amount of general fund support allocated to the Department for each FY: that any additional revenue needed to fund operations above and beyond the general fund allocation was to be generated by fees and charges for services. While this approach to developing funding projections is not unique, the approach to addressing projected shortfalls (arbitrarily raising fees / or making budget cuts mid-year) on an annual basis is less common and created significant operational and customer impacts.
Reserve Fund Balance	BerryDunn identified a Department fund balance projected to be \$262,583 at the start of FY 2023, which is significantly lower than the average balance maintained over previous FYs.
Reserve Fund Balance	BerryDunn projects that the fund's reserve balance will continue to significantly decline through FY 2026 without additional revenue generation or continued non-fee funding support.
Charging Methodology	The Department does use expansive fee tables that could be made more concise for ease of calculation and understanding.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

This section of the report outlines various recommendations and considerations BerryDunn has provided based on the technical CoS analysis, current fees and charges environment analysis, peer comparisons, and meetings with staff and stakeholders to discuss Department and citywide priorities.

### Fee Rates

BerryDunn recommends the Department undertake a basic CoS analysis annually and conduct a formal fee study every three-to-five years, or when the City experiences a significant change in demand for services, organizational structure, or key business processes, or when it identifies budgetary issues. In the meantime, the Department is encouraged to adjust and update fees on an annual or ongoing basis using detailed data and information as it becomes available, especially using detailed data collected via the Department's electronic registration system, RecTrac.

BerryDunn recommends that fees be categorized by which ones need Council approval and which ones should be left to the discretion of the Department Director. For example, Council could approve membership and rental fee levels annually based on direction and guidance given by staff; while program fees for all other

Department activities (i.e., after school program, camps, individual activities, and classes, as well as corporate memberships) could be left to the discretion of Department staff to set but would be shared with the City Council annually for feedback and input.

BerryDunn recommends that the fee schedule for Council approval be presented on an annual basis, identifying what fees are remaining unchanged and what fees are proposed to be adjusted for the coming year.

BerryDunn recommends that fees not be increased until FY 2024, as the City needs to show that they are providing something of value that members are willing to pay before increased rates are considered. The Department also needs to use the coming year to collect and analyze RecTrac data about how members are using the Recreation Center to provide a basis for rate increases.

### Fee Structure

BerryDunn has provided recommendations in other report sections regarding the consolidation of fee tables to make them more concise and understandable, and ultimately more reflective of the customer categories who utilize facilities and services

BerryDunn recommends that changes to the fee structure be proposed by the Department for Council approval and implementation during 2023. This includes defining the fee structure with regards to "discounts" and when and for whom they would apply. For example, definitions of "resident" and "non-resident" have a profound effect on actual fee levels, and ultimately the customers paying the fees, when applied applicably, consistently, and fairly. Resident and non-resident fee categories are commonly used in parks and recreation

agencies across the country. Furthermore, consistent, and fair assessment of resident and non-resident fees across fee categories (i.e., membership fees, rental fees, program fees, etc.) may also have significant impact on revenue generation. By carefully defining who pays what fees based on certain criteria ensures that fees do not become regressive by creating a larger burden on those with the least ability to pay all the while ensuring those who use facilities and services pay their fair share to do so, if able.

Accomplishing these structural changes will require well designed and executed policies. Further definition of fee types and sub-groups is beyond the scope of this analysis but should nonetheless be considered and developed by Department staff in the near-term.

Finally, the Department should take every opportunity to simplify its fee structure. This will allow staff to calculate and assess fees more efficiently and accurately and will

provide an understandable and transparent fee structure for customers and the public.

## Cost Recovery Policy and Targets

BerryDunn recommends that the Department develop and adopt a cost recovery policy. This policy should outline the cost recovery percentage the Department desires to recover through all fees and charges assessed, specific to recreation activities, programs, and services.

An agency built upon sound business principles requires the adoption of defensible financial management policy and continuously justifying how tax dollars are spent and invested. Adopting a methodology encourages productivity and the pursuit of opportunities for efficiency and revenue growth, knowing that these efforts can help strengthen systems for the long term. By creating fiscal policy that aligns with fiscal reality, organizations enhance their chances of being financially resilient in the long term.

A cost recovery philosophy embodies a decision to generate revenues by charging fees for programs and services in relation to the total operational costs to provide them. In most cases, undertaking cost recovery as part of business practice does not imply that the goal is 100% recovery of the cost; however, a target cost recovery goal is established according to a variety of organizational and community values. Typical cost recovery goals may range from 0% to more than 100% of costs and are often associated with a community's service delivery mission and values. Adoption of conventional industry benchmarks are often the choice of many organizations but is generally not the most effective way to establish cost recovery goals. Given that

each community's economic conditions and communal makeup are vastly different, benchmarking solely against other communities can create inaccurate comparisons.

The Department does not currently have a cost recovery plan that could be used as a guideline for setting fees and systematic resource allocation. Leadership expressed a desire to adopt a more specific Department-wide cost recovery philosophy, which can provide guidance to staff and management for prioritizing core program areas, setting fees and charges, identifying tax subsidy levels, and allocating resources effectively within the Department.

The Department currently groups programs and services related to the operational budget development framework. However, to better define cost recovery targets, BerryDunn recommends that the Department also consider groupings of programs and services that are alike in some ways, in addition to continuing in the near-term to group activities, programs, and services based on budgetary requirements. This two-pronged method groups activities, programs, and services according to level or likeness of activity (e.g., introductory, intermediate, community events, merchandise for resale) and allows for differentiation of value to the individual and/or the community. Table 7.8 below shows a sample of possible groupings of services and definitions, included for reference and/or consideration.



**Table 7.8: Activity, Program, and Service Groupings**

Service Group	Cost Recovery/Tax and/or Other Funding
Open Access	Cost Recovery Target 0% - 10%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 90% - 100%
Drop-In Access	Cost Recovery Target 10% - 20%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 80% - 90%
Skill Based - Introductory	Cost Recovery Target 40% - 50%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 50% - 60%
Skill Based - Intermediate	Cost Recovery Target 50% - 60%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 40% - 50%
Skill Based - Advanced	Cost Recovery Target 60% - 70%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 30% - 40%
Community Education/Life Skills	Cost Recovery Target 40% - 50%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 50% - 60%
Rentals/Permits	Cost Recovery Target 70% - 80%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 20% - 30%
Special Events	Cost Recovery Target 70% - 80%   Tax/Other Funding Target: 20% - 30%
Retail Merchandise	Cost Recovery Target 100%+   Tax/Other Funding Target: 0%

In many agencies, activities are subsidized to greater and lesser levels based on priorities directly or indirectly identified by the codifying body. For example, activities for youth, teens, and seniors have been traditionally subsidized to a greater level than adult activities. Services targeted to low-income residents have traditionally been subsidized to a greater level than those targeted to middle- or higher-income residents.

Using newly developed groupings instead of traditional categories and determining the full cost of providing specific programs and services will assist staff with setting fees to desired levels. This approach will also allow staff the opportunity to forecast the revenue potential at specific fee levels and assess the subsidy levels for each program and service to better reflect the mission of the agency and community values.

Establishing a cost recovery policy and implementing the practice into routine fiscal exercises can provide the Department with several opportunities to improve service delivery and align fees with the mission and priorities of the community. Establishing a formal cost recovery policy for the Department might help:

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Enhance accuracy in identifying the cost of providing each Department service

---

Identify and categorize both direct and indirect costs

---

Define the amount of tax subsidy allocated to each service

---

Establish a basis of fees and rationale for the pricing structure

---

Demonstrate consistency, structure, and uniformity throughout the fee schedule

---

Promote transparency for the public, stakeholders, and staff

---

Justify future price increases

---

As outlined above, the Department's average cost recovery, the calculated percentage of aggregate costs in relation to the revenues generated, for providing all fee-applicable Department activities, programs, and services is 28.9%. For example, the offering of an activity or delivery of a service would achieve 100% cost recovery if the fees generated revenue sufficient to cover all associated costs related to the operation of an activity or program, or to deliver a specific service.

Increased demand for Department permits and services, and the associated expenses incurred providing the increased levels of service, have

outpaced revenue generated by way of current fees and charges for certain service segments, particularly for senior activities and services. It is also clear that setting fees at levels sufficient to generate revenue to recover a portion of the costs greater than 30.0% for providing activities, programs, and services will take some time and will most likely not be achieved with a single fee schedule adjustment. For this reason, BerryDunn recommends setting targeted ranges of cost recovery related to specific activity and service categories and adjusting fees within that service category accordingly.



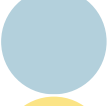
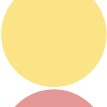

### Cost versus Price

Cost is generally defined as the aggregate of expenses incurred by the City for providing specific services. BerryDunn estimated the full cost of providing all recreation-related services analyzed in this study. After determining the cost of providing fee-applicable services, BerryDunn facilitated discussions with City leadership to discuss possible approaches should the City

desire to adjust current fee levels, to determine the price, and to set the new fee levels based on recommendations. This provides City leadership with the insight it needs to understand the implications of potential fee adjustments on the Department's overall budget.

### Pricing Strategies

The following are common pricing factors the Department could consider when developing fees and charges:

-  Cost to offer the program (limited direct costs (Department budgeted personnel, service, and supplies expenses) only, initially. The inclusion of indirect costs would require more advanced accounting techniques and capabilities beyond the ability of the Department to accurately calculate and assess, currently.)
-  History of fees charged
-  Number of participants per activity/program/service
-  Affordability for target audience. (it is important to understand how setting fee levels may build capacity to meet the needs of underserved groups, ensuring access to programs and services through financial assistance.)
-  Ability to attract participants

Establishing a price for a program can be done through a variety of strategies. Arbitrary pricing is not encouraged as it is difficult to justify and does not articulate use of tax subsidy in a way that ties to the Department's organizational or community mission. BerryDunn recommends the Department follow a cost recovery approach based on cost recovery goals within cost recovery goal percentage ranges. This method uses cost recovery goals as a primary pricing strategy, followed by either market pricing (for services with low alternative coverage, i.e., few if any alternative providers) or competitive pricing (for services with high alternative coverage, i.e., other alternative providers offer similar or like services).

Other strategies to consider include:

- **Market Pricing:** A fee based on demand for a service or facility, or what the Department estimates a participant is willing to pay for a service. Private sector businesses commonly use this strategy. One consideration for establishing a market rate fee is determined by identifying all similar providers (e.g., private sector providers, municipalities, non-profit providers) and, if it is determined that the service has excellent position in the market, establishing a fee that is higher than other similar providers.
- **Competitive Pricing:** A fee based on what similar service providers are charging. One consideration for establishing a competitive fee is determined by identifying all providers of an identical service (e.g., private sector providers, municipalities, non-profit providers), and establishing a fee that is at mid-point or lower.
- **Differential Pricing:** A fee that is grounded in the idea that different prices are charged for the same service when there is no real difference in the cost of providing the service. The same service might be offered at a more desirable time or location, or have other factors that attract a following, which may drive a higher price point. Alternatively, there might be services offered that are struggling to maintain a minimum and need a boost to stimulate more interest, driving a lower initial cost.
- **Non-Resident Pricing:** Many agencies use some form of non-resident surcharge pricing. Non-resident pricing is used to offset activity, program, and service tax dollar support to manage enrollments or demand, or to allow residential priority. The Department should consider developing a non-resident pricing policy to outline activities and services to which non-resident pricing applies and to establish a consistent methodology for calculating non-resident price levels.

## Reserve Fund Balance

BerryDunn recommends that the Department implement a plan to maintain the Department's reserve fund balance at sufficient levels. The Department is encouraged to monitor cost recovery levels annually to help ensure that current fee levels are set to levels that fund annual revenue requirements and allow for occasional contributions to fund balance. Given the steep decline in fund balance over the past few years, BerryDunn recommends that the Department develop a policy outlining a fund balance target to maintain. General targets for fund balance levels, if not defined by current policy or State statute, are usually established as

a percent of annual expenditures. Prior to the decline in fund balance experienced over the past few FYs, the Department maintained a fund balance in the realm of 28% to 33% of annual expenditures. Since a fund balance is usually maintained to ensure business continuity, BerryDunn recommends that a near-term target of 28% to 33% of annual expenditures be established for an average fund balance target with a longer-term goal of returning the average fund balance level to the 40% to 50 of annual expenditures level allowing for business continuity support, if needed, as well as opportunities for strategic investments to be made if warranted.

## Summary of Recommendations and Considerations

Table 7.9 includes all the BerryDunn recommendations and considerations related to the financial review.

**Table 7.9: Summary of Recommendations and Considerations**

Summary of Recommendations		
Category		Recommendation
1	Fee Updates	BerryDunn recommends that changes to the fee structure be proposed by the Department for Council approval and implementation during 2023. The Department should simplify its fee structure
2	Cost Recovery	BerryDunn recommends that the Department develop a cost recovery percentage policy, which would guide staff on setting fee levels in alignment with desired cost recovery levels. Once a formal policy is established and adopted, the Department should outline an approach to increase the desired cost recovery level year-over-year.
3	Cost Recovery	Using guidance from the cost recovery policy, once established, and the CoS study performed, staff should consider annual adjustments to fee levels that would have the greatest impact in increasing the Department's cost recovery percentage. Using the current 28.9% cost recovery level as a baseline, staff should consider adjusting fees to increase the Department's cost recovery to satisfy revenue requirements.
4	Cost Recovery	BerryDunn recommends monitoring targeted ranges of cost recovery annually related to specific activity, program, and service categories, and consider adjusting fees accordingly, when cost recovery levels begin to significantly impact the reserve fund balance.
5	Fund Balance	BerryDunn recommends a policy be established outlining a fund balance target to be maintained. A near-term target of 28% to 33% of annual expenditures should be established for the fund balance level initially, with a longer-term target of returning the fund balance level 40% to 50% annual expenditures.
5	Technology	BerryDunn recommends that the Department work with internal departments, mainly finance, to explore opportunities to track revenue and expenses for core services areas using the City's financial enterprise resource system. In the meantime, the Department is encouraged to internally track revenues and expenses associated with core service delivery to the greatest extent possible. This will provide the detailed data needed to support many of the cost recovery and fee recommendations outlined above.
6	Technology	BerryDunn recommends that the Department use its current registration system, RecTrac, to the greatest extent possible to perform detailed tracking and analysis of revenues and annual volumes per activity, program, and service type. Capturing this detail and incorporating it into cost recovery strategy will allow a more nuanced and accurate analysis of cost recovery levels per service type and will allow staff to assess the impact of specific fee adjustments on revenues and expenditures in detail.

Summary of Recommendations		
Category		Recommendation
7	Non-Resident Pricing	Many agencies use some form of non-resident surcharge pricing. Non-resident pricing is used to offset activity, program, and service tax dollar support, to manage enrollments or demand, or to allow residential priority. BerryDunn recommends that the Department consider developing a non-resident pricing policy to outline activities and services for which non-resident pricing applies and to establish a consistent methodology for calculating non-resident price levels.
8	General Pricing	BerryDunn recommends that the Department consider utilizing pricing strategies to assist with the development of new fees for activities and services as well as to help guide methodologies for adjusting current fee levels according to desired outcomes.
9	Revenue Forecasting / Budget Development	BerryDunn recommends that the Department continue the practice, begun in FY 2021, of forecasting revenues based on prior year actuals. This is a common technique used for revenue forecasting for budget development purposes agencies across the county use.
10	Fee Monitoring	BerryDunn recommends that the Department review all fee levels annually and consider adjustment in accordance with budgetary requirements, staff effort, and customer and service volume. The Department should undertake a thorough fee review every two to five years, or when major personnel or budgetary adjustments are made, or if macroeconomic events occur.
11	Transparency	BerryDunn recommends that the Department prepare an annual cost recovery and fiscal review to be presented to staff, stakeholders, City leadership, and the City Council. The review should highlight current success and challenges related to cost recovery goals and other established performance metrics.

# Trends Report

## INTRODUCTION

The following sections summarize regional and national trends that are relevant to Sanibel, Florida. This report details the trends and interests that were identified during the public engagement process.

The Sanibel Recreation Department does not manage the City's parks, beaches, or shared-use paths, so the focus of this report will be relevant trends related to recreation programming.

The information contained in this report can be used by staff when planning new programs, considering additions to parks and new park amenities, and creating the annual budget and CIP. Understanding trends can also help an organization reach new audiences and meet the community's needs. Trends can also help determine where to direct additional data collection efforts are needed.

A wide variety of sources were used in gathering information for this report, including:

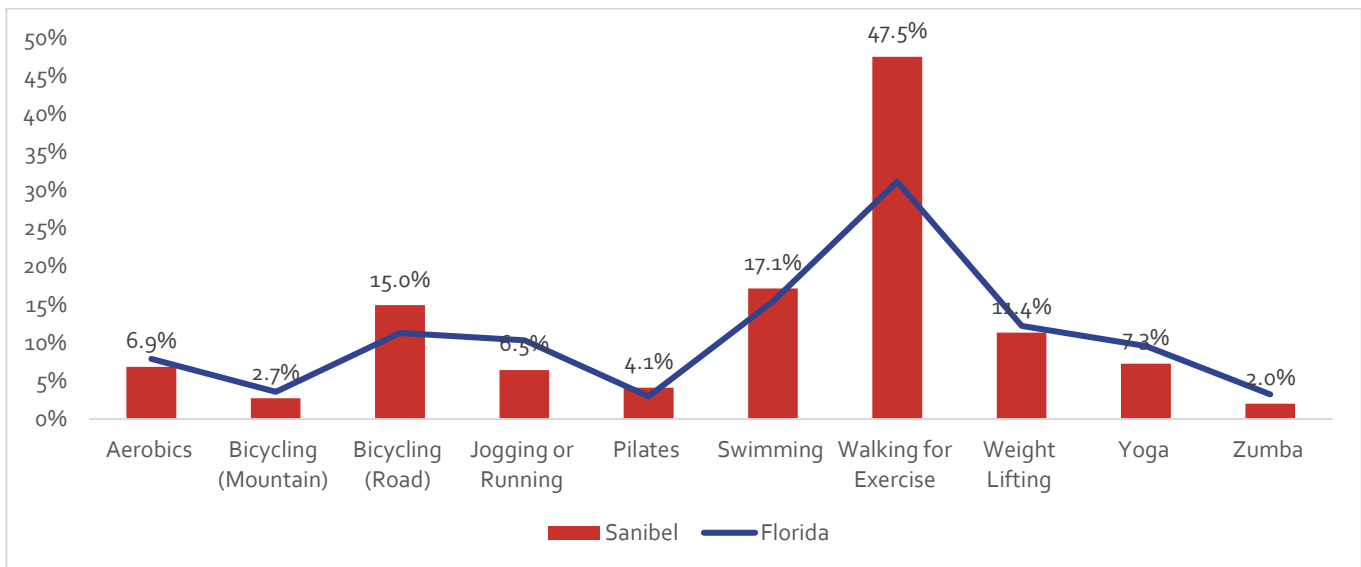
- American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
- American Council on Exercise (ACE)
- Forbes
- Harris Poll Results/The Stagwell Group
- Impacts Experience
- National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA)
- The Aspen Institute
- The Learning Resource Network (LERN)
- The New York Times
- The Outdoor Industry Association
- The Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE America)
- USA Pickleball website



## ESTIMATED LOCAL PARTICIPATION

This section identifies local participation estimated by Esri Business Analyst for fitness activities, outdoor recreation, and sports teams for adults 25 and older in Sanibel compared to the State of Florida. According to their website, Esri Business Analyst is “a solution that applies Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to extensive demographic, consumer spending, and business data to deliver on-demand analysis.” Activity participation is calculated with a specific methodology, combining 2022 tapestry segmentation data with the MRI Survey of the American Consumer to generate local behavioral and participation rates.

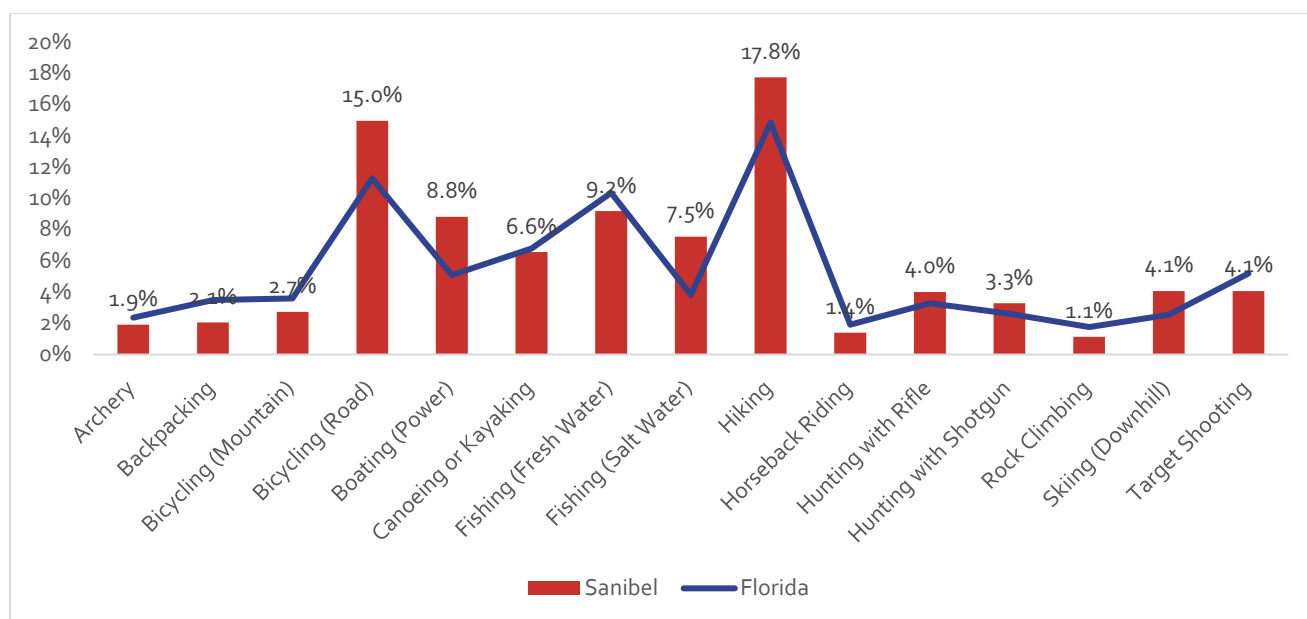
**Figure 8.1: Adult Participation for Fitness Activities**



*Regarding fitness activities, walking for exercise was the most popular, with almost 48% of adult participation—significantly higher than the State of Florida. Swimming followed next, with over 17% of adult participation. Road biking also was estimated to have 15% adult participation.*

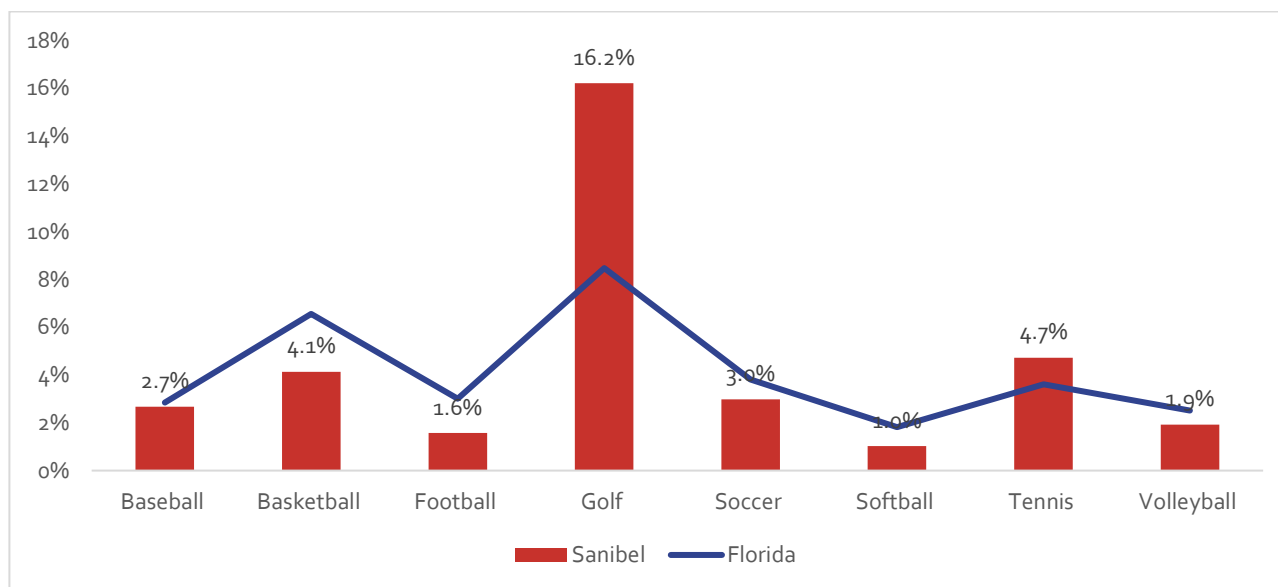


**Figure 8.2: Adult Participation in Outdoor Recreation Activities**



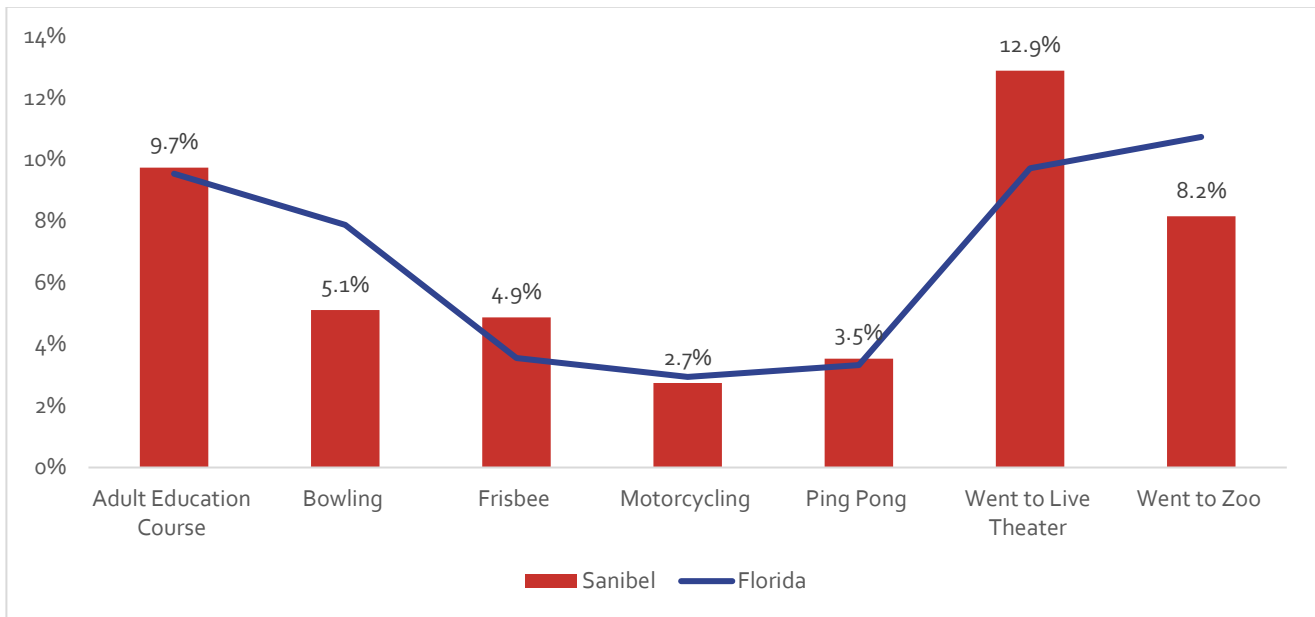
*The most popular outdoor recreation activity, like fitness activities, was hiking/walking, followed by road biking. Both activities in Sanibel were significantly higher than the State of Florida. Note: Not all activities listed are allowed in Sanibel i.e., hunting.*

**Figure 8.3: Adult Participation in Sports**

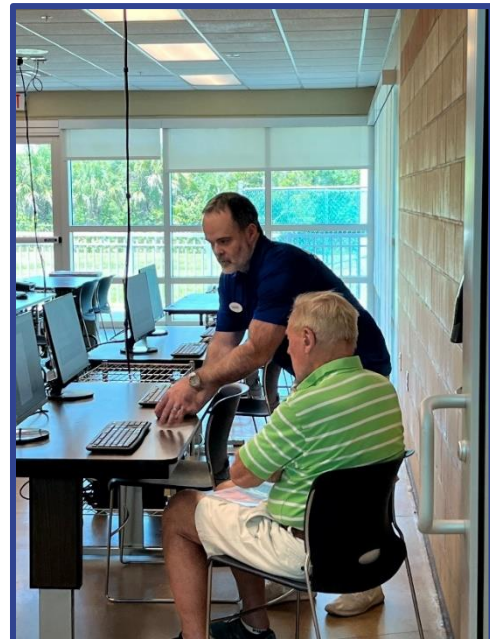


*The City of Sanibel had almost 16% of adults that participated in golf, compared to 8.5% in the State of Florida. Tennis was the next activity with the highest participation, with close to 5% of resident participation. Pickleball is also popular in FL and in Sanibel, but Esri did not include this activity in its data set.*

**Figure 8.4: Adult Participation in Leisure Activities**



*The City of Sanibel had high participation in leisure activities such as live theater and adult education courses, many of which are offered by other organizations such as nonprofits BIG Arts, SCCF, Ding Darling, the Community House, and the Sanibel Public Library. There are opportunities for the City of Sanibel to offer new recreation programming for adults—specifically lifelong learning, sustainability courses, and DIY projects.*



## ADMINISTRATIVE TRENDS

Municipal recreation structures and delivery systems have changed, and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with nonprofit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness. The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.

In addition, the role of recreation management has shifted beyond traditional facility oversight and activity programming. The ability to evaluate and interpret data is a critical component of strategic decision-making. In an article titled “The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec” in the Parks and Recreation Magazine from February 2019, there are several components that allow agencies to keep up with administrative trends and become an agent of change:<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> “The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec | Community Center | Parks and Recreation Magazine | NRPA.” Nrp.org, 2015, [www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/](http://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/). Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.

## Marketing

Digital marketing trends are changing rapidly, and many parks and recreation agencies may struggle to understand how to incorporate these new strategies. Agencies should define their target market, or the specific group of people to whom the agency wants to offer their programs and services. Fully understanding the needs and desires of their target market will provide valuable insight to improve an agency's marketing efforts.

In addition, consider the following platforms and how to best implement some of the following trends:

**Brand:** A brand should be reflective of the "personality" of the agency. A brand strategy can help tie together all elements of an agency that are visible to the public, including uniforms, signage, website graphics, and social media. The Sanibel brand is "Fit4Life." In Sanibel, the City Council has emphasized the need for sustained multigenerational programming.

*Sanibel's brand of "Fit4Life" can be used to target marketing directed towards community wellness programs.*

**Social Media:** An agency's social media accounts should inform and entertain, but the primary purpose should be as an engagement tool. Effective social media strategies incorporate interaction with their audience and show a "behind-the-scenes" look at an agency's operations. Instagram stories, Twitter polls, and live videos on Facebook are all examples of interactive content designed to engage an audience. Influencer marketing, which relies on partnerships with well-known social media accounts, provides additional opportunities for agencies to extend their reach beyond their typical audience.

**Website:** An agency's website should be mobile-friendly, utilize best practices for search engine optimization (SEO), and be oriented to reach an

agency's conversion goals. Conversion goals are objectives that an agency sets based on an action that they want visitors to take. Common conversion goals for parks and recreation agencies might include program registrations, membership sign-ups, or downloads of online recreation guides. An agency should set goals based on their overall operations' objectives. Agencies need to consider the upfront and ongoing resources that it takes to develop and maintain this type of system.

**Application Software:** Many agencies develop apps (either in-house or through a third-party developer) that are entirely accessible from mobile devices. The purpose of these varies, but they can be used for residents to report maintenance issues, create interactive activities through Augmented Reality (AR), or find parks through online GIS.

There are many opportunities for the City of Sanibel Recreation Department to improve efficiencies, better onboard and train staff, increase the use of technology, and enhance marketing efforts.

*Many active adults and seniors may rely on more traditional mediums of brochures, flyers, and signage to stay informed. While attention should be placed on making these materials relevant, timely, and easy-to-read, emphasis should also be placed on the ease of navigating the City website.*

*Those who are not intimately familiar with the City structure may not realize that the parks/public beaches belong under the Public Works Department, which could cause residents and visitors to not find maps and public beach park information easily. In addition, website administrators should consider any optimization of the website to help ensure mobile and tablet compatibility.*

## Social Media

In today's world, there is ample opportunity to promote and market parks and recreation services. The process of assessing marketing efforts begins with a needs assessment that details how the community prefers to receive information. Then, a marketing plan should be developed that is catered to the agency's resources, including staff, time, and budget. This should guide the agency for one to three years.

Technology has made it easier to reach a wide, location-dependent audience that can be segmented by demographics. However, it has also caused a gap in the way parks and recreation agencies are able to communicate. Agencies around the country have previously not dedicated substantial funding to marketing; however, it is becoming a critical piece to receiving participants. Without dedicated staff and support, it is difficult to keep up with social media trends, which seem to change daily. Furthermore, with

an overarching desire to standardize a municipality's brand, there may be limitations to the access and control that a parks and recreation agency has over their marketing. It is essential that professionals become advocates for additional resources, training, and education. Having a strong presence on social networks through email marketing and traditional marketing will help enhance the perception from the community.

***The City of Sanibel can consider strategic ways of collecting data that assists with the decision-making process. Utilizing the online presence from social platforms like Facebook (where there is already a strong following) can not only provide interesting data points, but can also serve as a primary means of marketing activities. Currently, the Recreation Department brand is "Fit4Life," which encompasses recreation programming and facilities, and the shared-use paths.***

## Agency Accreditation

Parks and recreation agencies are affirming their competencies and value through accreditation. This is achieved by an agency's commitment to 150 standards. Accreditation is a distinguished mark of excellence that affords external recognition of an organization's commitment to quality and improvement.

The National Recreation and Parks Association administratively sponsors two distinct accreditation programs: The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) approves academic institutions, and the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) approves agencies. It is the only national accreditation of parks and recreation agencies

and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community.

***The City of Sanibel should consider the CAPRA accreditation as a long-term goal, working toward some of the best practices and systems that lead to a greater standard of service. Pursuing accreditation should also be put on hold until after the Recreation Department becomes the Parks and Recreation Department.***



## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance

On July 26, 1990, the federal government officially recognized the needs of people with disabilities through the ADA. This civil right law expanded rights for activities and services offered by both state and local governmental entities (Title II) and nonprofit/for-profit entities (Title III). According to an article in Recreation Magazine titled "Changes Are Coming to ADA -- New Regulation Standards Expected for Campgrounds, Parks & Beaches," parks and recreation agencies are expected to comply by the legal mandate, which means eliminating physical barriers to provide access to facilities and providing reasonable accommodations regarding recreational programs through inclusive policies and procedures (2012).

It is a requirement that agencies develop an ADA Transition Plan, which details how physical and structural barriers will be removed to facilitate access to programs and services. The Transition Plan also acts as a planning tool for budgeting and accountability.

*Esri estimates that in 2021, 7.6% of individuals in Sanibel had some sort of disability. Planning for and implementing an updated ADA Transition Plan for any outdated facilities is critical for resident well-being and safety. It is a best practice for recreation agencies to review ADA standards periodically to help ensure compliance.*

## OUTDOOR AND ADVENTURE RECREATION TRENDS

### Conservation

One of the key pillars of parks and recreation is the role that it plays in conservation. Managing and protecting open space, providing opportunities for people to connect with nature, and educating communities about conservation are all incredibly important. Sanibel is a unique community in that almost 70% of its land is preserved.



*Conservation and sustainability are the primary reasons the City of Sanibel incorporated, and they will continue to be a top priority as the island develops strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change.*

### Nature Programming and Nature-Deficit Disorder

Playing in nature is an educational opportunity that has numerous benefits, from increasing active and healthy lifestyles, to developing a conservation mindset, to understanding the ecosystems and wildlife that depend on them. According to the report, "Nature Play & Learning Places: Creating and Managing Places where Children Engage with Nature," there is a genuine need today for learning spaces that spark creative play with natural materials, such as plants, vines, shrubs, rocks, water, logs, and other elements (2020).

Richard Louv introduced the term, "Nature-Deficit Disorder" in 2005, which describes the effects of urbanization, technological advances, and social changes. Scientific evidence suggests that this disorder contributes to emotional and physical illnesses, including attention difficulties, obesity, nature illiteracy, and an "epidemic of inactivity."

Environmental education, provided by nonprofits and parks and recreation agencies, can help combat nature-deficit disorder by sparking curiosity in the outdoors either through structured nature programming or through unstructured nature play. NRPA defines Nature Play as: “A designated, managed area in an existing or modified outdoor environment where children of all ages and abilities play and learn by engaging with and manipulating diverse natural elements, materials, organisms, and habitats, through sensory, fine motor and gross motor experiences.”

Sanibel should take full advantage of its unique island setting for a series of nature-based programs for all ages.

***For the Sanibel community to create the next generation of environmental stewards, in partnership with SCCF (which includes Sanibel Sea School), Ding Darling, Clinic for Rehabilitation of Wildlife (CROW), and other island nonprofits, the City can consider more structured environmental programs, in addition to passive recreation opportunities with educational signage.***

### Partnerships (Public, Private, and Intradepartmental)

Burgeoning populations require access to facilities outside of the current inventory in typical recreation agencies, and the ability to partner with other departments within a municipality is crucial to meeting the programming needs of a community. Forming healthy partnerships with public libraries and school districts to utilize facilities and collaborate on programs is one of the top priorities for agencies that do not currently have agreements in place.

Additionally, offering cooperative, consortium-based programs with existing nonprofit and private entities allows several organizations to join partnerships to collectively offer programs in specific niche areas. For example, if one organization has the best computer labs, facilities, and instructors, then they offer that program for the consortium. If another organization has the largest aquatic center with trained staff, then they offer aquatics programs for the consortium, potentially eliminating duplication in programming. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for partnerships due to budget and staff cuts.

***The City of Sanibel can leverage partnerships as an innovative way to facilitate new recreation programs and services to residents. By partnering with local clubs, nonprofits, and individuals, the City can reduce duplication of services. In addition, a citywide calendar can help these partners collaborate and market their services. Partnerships can also increase the availability of indoor spaces to deliver recreation programs without incurring the cost of adding or expanding City-owned buildings.***

## Outdoor Adventure Impact From COVID-19

Consumers sought activities to help them stay occupied and healthy as COVID-19 necessitated social distancing. As a result, several outdoor activities have experienced growth. Many sought out family-based activities to keep everyone safe and increase health. A Harris Poll from October 2020 found that 69% of Americans reported a heightened appreciation for outdoor spaces during the pandemic, with 65% sharing that they try to get outside of the house as much as possible.

Outdoor cycling tops the list of popular outdoor activities as bicycle sales increased 63% (as of June 2020) compared to the same time period the year prior. For the first several months of the COVID-19 outbreak, the growth in bicycle sales was from family-friendly bikes. Then the growth in sales shifted to higher-end bicycles (including road bikes and full suspension mountain bikes). This was likely due to a shortage of family-friendly bikes as well as from cyclists more willing to invest in the activity for the future. Biking continues to be a popular activity on Sanibel. For those lacking access to a bike, there are several locations on the island to rent bikes.

Paddle sports (including kayaks, paddleboards, rafts, and canoes) have also increased in popularity as the sale of equipment rose 56% in 2020 over the prior year. Inflatable versions of kayaks and paddleboards have gained in popularity due to their cost and the ability of the consumer to store these bulky pieces of equipment. Paddleboards are available for rental on Sanibel at several local businesses.

The New York Times published an article (May 2020) regarding the increase in bird-watching during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. To aid in their sightings, many purchased binoculars, which saw a 22% increase in sales in June 2020 over the prior year. Unique bird species can be found in rural areas and urban areas, which has contributed to the appeal of this activity.

With almost 70% of the land on Sanibel set aside as protected land (managed by the Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, the Sanibel-Captiva Consecration Foundation, and the City of Sanibel), this is a location for bird-watching.

***Although there is no hard data, given Sanibel's natural environment of green spaces, an extensive shared-use path, and off-road trail systems, outdoor recreational activities such as walking, hiking, biking, water sports, outdoor pickleball, and tennis thrived on the island during the COVID-19 pandemic.***



## Outdoor Recreation as an Economic Drive

Outdoor recreation has become a thriving economic driver, even during a global pandemic. In 2020, 53% of Americans over 6 years of age participated at least once in outdoor recreation—an increase of 7.1 million Americans over the previous year. However, several challenges continue to impact the industry, including retention of new COVID participants, lack of diversity, fewer outings, and stagnant female participation.<sup>4</sup>

*The Outdoor Recreation economy in Florida (2020) generated nearly:*

*384,198 direct jobs*

*\$17.8 billion in  
wages and salaries*

*\$33.2 billion in  
total outdoor  
recreation value  
added*

*3.0% share of GDP*

## TRANSPORTATION, FACILITIES, AND FITNESS TRAILS

### Active Transportation

The City of Sanibel has an extensive, award-winning 26-mile SUP that allows residents and visitors to reach the island's many destinations, attractions, and services through active transportation. Sanibel has been designated as a Bicycle-Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists since 2010, achieving the "Gold" level status in 2018. The City has collaborated with the Sanibel Bicycle Club and the Trails in Motion, a 501 (c) 3 organization, to improve the facilities and safety for users on an ongoing basis. An update to the original 2009 Sanibel SUP Master Plan was started in 2018 and is scheduled to be finalized during the winter of 2023.

Sanibel is certainly ahead of the game when it comes to biking and walking facilities. In many surveys and studies on participation in recreational activities, walking, running, jogging, and cycling are nearly universally rated as the most popular activities among youth and adults. These activities are attractive as they require little equipment or financial investment to get started, and are open to participation to nearly all segments of the population. For these reasons, participation in these activities is often promoted as a means of spurring physical activity, increasing public health, and as a mode of transportation to alleviate traffic congestion on the island roadways, especially during the peak season.

<sup>4</sup> 2021 Outdoor Participation Trends Report." *Outdoor Industry Association*, 2021, [outdoorindustry.org/resource/2021-outdoor-participation-trends-report/](https://outdoorindustry.org/resource/2021-outdoor-participation-trends-report/). Accessed 6 Oct. 2021

The design of a community's infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity; where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking in a community can have a major impact on improving public health and life expectancy.<sup>5</sup>

#### Public health trends related to cycling and walking include:

- Quantified health benefits of active transportation can outweigh any risks associated with the activities by as much as 77 to 1 and add more years to our lives than are lost from inhaled air pollution and traffic injuries.
- Regular cyclists took 7.4 sick days per year, while non-bicyclists took 8.7 sick days per year.

#### National cycling trends:

- There has been a gradual trend of increasing bicycling and walking to work since 2005.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.

## Trails and Health

A connected system of trails increases the level of physical activity in a community, according to the Trails for Health initiative of the CDC. Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding.

The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. A trail in the neighborhood, creating a "linear park," makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

***The City of Sanibel's extensive 26-mile SUP system and off-road trails, along with trails in the Ding Darling federal wildlife preserve and SCCF lands, provide ample opportunities for residents to improve their physical fitness and mental well-being. The City should make it a priority to complete and implement the SUP Master Plan Update.***



<sup>5</sup> Parks & Recreation | Active Living Research. "Activelivingresearch.org, 2015, [activelivingresearch.org/taxonomy/parks-recreation](https://activelivingresearch.org/taxonomy/parks-recreation). Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.



## Fitness Playgrounds

Some communities are installing fitness playgrounds that can be used by children and adults, such as Burke Playground's "ELEVATE" Fitness Course." With three levels of challenge and multiple options within each level, ELEVATE® offers experiences for beginner, intermediate, and advanced visitors to improve fitness and have fun.



Examples of ELEVATE Fitness Course



## Outdoor Fitness Trails

A popular trend in urban parks for health, wellness, and fitness activities is to install outdoor fitness equipment along trails. The intent of the outdoor equipment is to provide an accessible form of exercise for all community members, focusing on strength, balance, flexibility, and cardio exercise. These fitness stations—also known as “outdoor gyms”—are generally meant for adults but can be grouped together near a playground or kid-friendly amenity so that adults can exercise and socialize while supervising their children. The fitness equipment can also be dispersed along a nature trail or walking path, where space allows, to provide a unique experience to exercise in nature. Educational and safety signage should be placed next to equipment to guide the user in understanding and utilizing the outdoor gyms.

***With consideration to conservation and wildlife habitats, fitness facilities along paths can help adults on Sanibel stay active while enjoying local trails. There is currently a fitness trail at Bowman's Beach and managed by the City Public Works Department. Increased marketing could result in increased usage of this facility.***



## PROGRAMMING TRENDS

### Niche Programming

Decades ago, recreation agencies focused on offering an entire set of programs for a general audience. Since that time, market segments have been developed, such as programming specifically for seniors. Recently, more market segments have been developed for specialty audiences, such as the LGBTQ community, retirees, military veterans, cancer patients, people needing mental health support, and individuals with visible and invisible disabilities. Organizations are taking a much more holistic approach to program and service offerings, beyond what is typically thought of as a recreation program. In Sanibel, these niche programs could be offered through new partnerships.

### Community Events

Community events often act as memory-making activities for residents. During the public engagement process, the public expressed an interest in the Department sponsoring new community event opportunities with a focus on fostering connections for residents of all ages.

### Farmers Market

Park and recreation agencies often have the role of connecting communities to local, fresh foods. In fact, many local agencies are the largest providers of federally funded meals for the public. One in five agencies manage a Farmers Market. Sanibel has had a very successful Farmers Market, currently held at City Hall, for the past 14 years. With over 50 vendors, this is the spot to purchase local produce, baked goods, live plants, fresh seafood, cheese, pasta, meats, honey, pet treats, prepared foods, fresh fruits, vegetables, and variety of other local treats.

Figure 8.5: Overview of NRPA Farmers Market Report



Source: 2019 NRPA Farmers Market Report

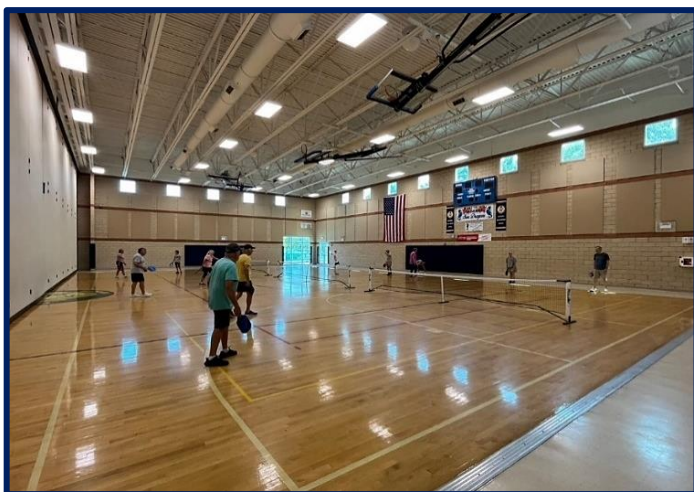
***The Sanibel Island Farmers Market, a partnership between the Sanibel Island Farmers Market, Inc., and the City, continues to be a thriving event for residents and visitors alike. Open on Sundays from 8a.m. to 1p.m. November through April, this market supports local small businesses and entrepreneurs. The Farmers Market is also used effectively by the City and island nonprofits for a variety of community engagement activities.***

## Pickleball

With 4.8 million people in the country playing pickleball, it is a trend not to be taken lightly. Though not at its peak, pickleball is still trending nationwide as the fastest growing sport in America with the active aging demographic, as 75% of core players are age 55 or older. Considered a mix between tennis, ping pong, and badminton, the sport initially grew in popularity with older adults but is now expanding to other age groups. It can be played as singles or doubles, indoors or out, and it is easy for beginners to learn but can be very competitive for experienced players. The game has developed a passionate following due to its friendly, social nature, and its multigenerational appeal.

Recreation facilities such as tennis or basketball courts can be temporarily or permanently converted to pickleball courts through lining a court. One consideration to recreation professionals before lining tennis courts is potential interference with competitive tennis requirements. Best practices regarding pickleball setup and programming can be found on [usapa.com](http://usapa.com), the official website for the United States Pickleball Association.

Pickleball has grown in popularity in Sanibel over this period as well. The Sundial Resort added 12 pickleball courts in 2017 and now provides a full complement of lessons, clinics, leagues, and tournaments. Recreation Department programming has been popular as well with courts setup in the gym and the use of the tennis courts.



*During the public engagement process, residents expressed a desire for additional opportunities to play pickleball (indoors and out). Options for additional outdoor courts include repurposing the athletic fields, demolishing the City's vacant former Center4Life building and adding a pickleball complex in that location, or replacing the sand volleyball courts with pickleball courts at the Sanibel Community Park.*

Table 8.1: Sport Participation for Pickleball, 2015 to 2020

	Definition	1-Year Change	2-Year Change	5-Year Average Annual Growth
	Pickleball	14.8%	39.3%	11.5%
Casual	1 – 12 times	21.9%	56.5%	15.4%
CORE	13+ times	0.1%	9.0%	4.4%

Source: 2021 SFIA Topline Report

## FITNESS TRENDS

Each year, the ACSM conducts a survey of worldwide fitness trends. Now in its 15<sup>th</sup> year, the ACSM circulates an electronic survey to thousands of fitness professionals around the world to determine health and fitness trends. The COVID-19 outbreak certainly impacted the results of the survey with the top trend now online training, which was number 26 in 2020. The list below includes the top 10 fitness trends for 2021.

### Online Fitness Training for Participants

Virtual online training was first included in the survey in 2019 and was number 3 before dropping to number 26 in 2020 when the word “virtual” was eliminated from the title. The big changes within the fitness industry because of the COVID-19 outbreak resulted in the temporary closure of fitness centers around the world, forcing innovation in the way classes are delivered. Online training was developed for the at-home exercise experience. This trend uses digital streaming technology to provide group or individual fitness programs online. Online training is available 24/7 and can be a prerecorded or live class.

### Wearable Technology

Wearable technology, which includes activity trackers, smartwatches, heart rate monitors, GPS tracking devices, and smart eyeglasses (designed to show maps and track activity), has been one of the top three trends since 2016. Examples include fitness and activity trackers such as those from Misfit, Garmin, Pebble Time, Samsung, Basis, Jawbone, Fitbit, and Apple. These devices can track heart rate, calories, sitting time, and much more. It is estimated that wearable technology is a \$95 billion industry.

### Body Weight Training

Body weight training uses minimal equipment, which makes it an inexpensive way to exercise effectively.

Although most people think of body weight training as being limited to push-ups and pull-ups, it can be much more than that. This type of training first appears in the trends survey in 2013 at number three.

### Outdoor Activities

Likely because of the COVID-19 pandemic, outdoor activities such as group walks, group rides, or organized hiking groups are gaining in popularity. These can be short events, daylong events, or planned weeklong excursions. Typically, people meet at a local park, hiking area, or bike trail with a designated leader. This trend for health and fitness professionals to offer outdoor activities to clients began in 2010 and has been in the top 20 ever since 2012. This has become much more popular the past several months as agencies work to offer fitness programs outdoors that help to ensure physical distancing

### High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

HIIT involves short bursts of high-intensity exercise followed by a short period of rest or recovery and typically takes fewer than 30 minutes to perform (although it is not uncommon for these programs to be much longer in duration). HIIT has been a top-five trend since 2014. Despite warnings by some fitness experts of the potential for increased injury using HIIT, this form of exercise is popular in fitness centers all over the world.

### Virtual Fitness Training

This is the first time that virtual training has appeared separately from virtual online training. Virtual training is defined as the fusion of group exercise with technology, offering workouts designed for ease and convenience to fit a variety of schedules and needs.

Typically, virtual workouts are played in gyms or fitness centers on a big screen, attracting a smaller number of participants compared with live classes while providing people of all fitness levels and ages with a different group fitness experience. Participants in virtual training can work at their own pace, making it ideal for those new to the class. As with online training, virtual training may be in the top 10 now due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

### Exercise is Medicine® (EIM®)

EIM® is a global health initiative that is focused on encouraging primary care physicians and other healthcare providers to include physical activity when designing treatment plans for patients and referring their patients to exercise professionals. In addition, EIM® recognizes fitness professionals as part of the healthcare team. EIM® was number 10 in 2019, jumping up to number 6 in 2020.

### Strength Training With Free Weights

Strength training remains popular in all sectors of the health and fitness industry and for many kinds of clients. Free weights, barbells, kettlebells, dumbbells, and medicine ball classes do not just incorporate equipment into another functional class or activity. Instructors begin by teaching the proper form and technique for each exercise and then progressively increase the resistance. New exercises are added periodically, starting with proper form and technique. Many younger clients of both community-based programs and commercial clubs train almost exclusively using weights. In today's gyms, however, there are many others (all genders, young and old, children, and people with stable chronic diseases) whose main focus is using weight training to improve or maintain strength.

### Fitness Programs for Older Adults

This trend continues to stress the fitness needs of the baby boomers and older generations. People are working longer, living longer, and remaining active much longer. Fitness professionals should take advantage of the growing market of older adults now retiring by providing age-appropriate and safe exercise programs for this sector of the population. The highly active older adult can be targeted to participate in more rigorous exercise programs, including strength training, team sports, and HIIT when appropriate. Even the elderly who are frail can improve their balance and ability to perform activities of daily living when given appropriate functional fitness program activities.

### Personal Training

Personal training is a one-on-one workout with a trainer that begins with fitness testing and goal setting. The trainer then works with the client and prescribes workouts specific to their needs. The profession of personal training is becoming more accessible online, in clubs, in the home, and in worksites that have fitness facilities. Many fitness centers continued to offer personal training during the COVID-19 outbreak. Since this survey was first published in 2006, personal training has been ranked in the top 10.

***Sanibel should look at these national trends and survey fitness participants to determine what new courses might good additions at the Recreation Center.***

# AQUATIC TRENDS

## Pool Design

Municipal pools have shifted away from the traditional rectangle shape, and instead have shifted to facilities that include zero-depth entry, play structures that include multiple levels, spray features, small to medium slides, and separate play areas segmented by age/ability.

Indoor warm water therapy pools continue to grow in popularity with the aging population, creating a shallow space for low-impact movement at a comfortable temperature enables programming options to multiply. “Endless” or current pools that are small and allow for “low-impact, high-intensity movement” are becoming popular, as well.

## Water Fitness

The concept of water fitness is a huge trend in the fitness industry, with many new programs popping up such as aqua yoga, aqua Zumba, aqua spin, aqua step, and aqua boot camp. Whether recovering from an injury, looking for ease-of-movement exercise for diseases such as arthritis, or simply shaking up a fitness routine, all demographics are gravitating toward the water for fitness. Partnerships can be important for parks and recreation agencies, such as working with hospitals to accommodate cardiac patients and those living with arthritis or multiple sclerosis.

***Sanibel outdoor pool facilities are an incredible resource. Expanded hours of operation, more water fitness classes, and additional swim lesson opportunities should be considered as staffing levels increase.***



## Youth Programming

Swim lessons generally include the most significant number of participants and revenues for public pool operations. Programs can be offered for all ages and levels, including private, semi-private, and group lessons. Access to swimming pools is a popular amenity for summer day camp programs, too.

## Spray Parks

Spray parks (or spray grounds) are now a common replacement for aging swimming pools, particularly because it provides the community with an aquatic experience without the high cost of traditional pools. Spray parks do not require high levels of staffing, require only minimal maintenance, and offer a no-cost (or lowcost) alternative to a swimming pool. A spray park typically appeals to children ages 2 – 12 and can be a stand-alone facility in a community or incorporated inside a family aquatic center.



## AGE-RELATED AND GENERATIONAL TRENDS

Activity participation varies based on age, but it also varies based on generational preferences. The Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) issues a yearly report on generational activity. In the 2020 SFIA report, millennials had the highest percentage of those who were “active to a healthy level,” but a quarter also remained sedentary. Nearly 28% of Generation X were inactive, with baby boomers at 33% inactive. Baby boomers prefer low-impact fitness activities such as swimming, cycling aquatic exercise, and walking for fitness.

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Generation Alpha: Born ~2010 – Present

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Generation Z: Born 1997 – 2010

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Millennials: Born 1981 – 1996

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Generation X: Born 1965 – 1980

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Baby Boomers: Born 1946 – 1964

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Silent Generation: Born 1928 – 1945

A condensed list of generational trends which may impact recreational services are below, consolidated from Pew Research Center:

- Baby boomers are staying in the workforce longer than generations before them (2019)
- Almost a third of millennials are not affiliated with religion, and half of them describe themselves as political independent (2014)
- Millennials have more financial hardships, such as student loan debt, poverty and unemployment, and lower levels of wealth, but are optimistic about their future (2014)
- Approximately 13% of young adults (Generation Z) said they have had a major depressive episode in the last year (2019)
- Those 60 and older (baby boomers) spend more of their leisure time (about four hours) a day in front of a screen (2019)
- Generation Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation, with only 52% identifying as non-Hispanic whites (2018).

### Trends for Adults Ages 55 and Over

#### Lifelong Learning

A Pew Research Center survey found that 73% of adults consider themselves lifelong learners. Do-it-yourself project classes and programs that focus on becoming a more “well-rounded” person are popular. Phrases such as “how to” can be added to the agency website’s SEO as consumers now turn to the internet as their first source of information regarding how-to projects.

#### Fitness and Wellness

Programs such as yoga, Pilates, tai chi, balance training, chair exercises, and others continue to be popular with the older generation.

#### Specialized Tours

Participants are looking for more day trips that highlight unique local experiences or historical themes. For example, a focus on authentic food, guided night walks, bike tours, concentration on a specific artist’s work, and ghost walks are among the themes being sought out.

## Encore Programming

This is a program area for baby boomers who are soon to be retired and focuses on a broad range of programs to prepare people for transitions into retirement activities. Popular programs for 55+ market include fitness and wellness (specifically yoga, mindfulness, tai chi, relaxation, personal training, etc.), drawing and painting, photography, languages, writing, computer and technology, social media, cooking, mahjong, card games, volunteering, and what to do during retirement.



## Creative Endeavors

Improv classes are specifically targeting age groups with classes that promote creative endeavors. Workshops and groups help seniors play, laugh, and let loose while practicing mental stimulation, memory development, and flexibility.

## Technology Courses

Classes for older adults might include learning the basics of navigating a website, checking email, and preventing fraud online. These classes can provide critical skills to seniors who may have never learned these skills in their lifetime.

***The Sanibel community has a wealth of nonprofits, service clubs, and other agencies/organizations that provide programs and services for adults over the age of 55 years. In addition, the City of Sanibel provides specialized recreation and social programs through its Center4Life program. Enhanced collaboration and partnership among all the organizations and agencies providing services to this demographic could be beneficial.***



# Staff Training and Development

## BACKGROUND

One component of the Sanibel Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment was a review of training and development for its staff. BerryDunn reviewed information around current training practices of Sanibel Recreation, gathered staff feedback via an online survey and focus group interviews, and reviewed documents, such as the recreation service supervisor manual, Thor Guard mobile lightning prediction system training document, and the front desk and RecTrac manual. The following information summarizes feedback from interviews and an employee survey, as well as national trends, and areas of consideration for the future.

It is important to note that the pandemic had a significant effect on the Sanibel Recreation Department; all recreation staff were furloughed for several months. Only 25% of staff returned to work, with the remaining openings filled by new employees. This loss of institutional knowledge, combined with the impact of the pandemic and furlough, has resulted in low morale, limited trust, and very little training.

## SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

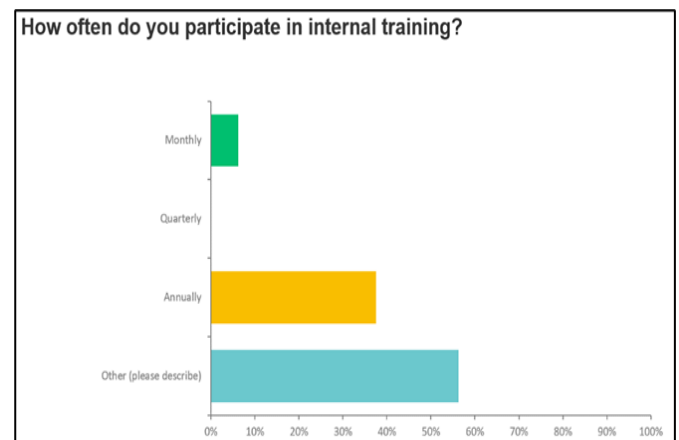
Sanibel Recreation staff were provided an opportunity to offer feedback on training via an online survey available to both full- and part-time employees. Results from this survey are summarized in the following pages and survey questions are included as an appendix.

As mentioned earlier, trust of administration by staff is an issue recognized by Sanibel Recreation leadership, therefore, the survey was distributed directly by BerryDunn. BerryDunn received 18 completed responses (58% of invited staff). Of those that completed the survey, 56% were full-time and approximately 61% have worked for Sanibel Recreation for less than two years.

Compliance training, such as CPR and first aid, were attended by 100% of the respondents in the last two to four years. Following very far behind (35%) was job specific skills training.

When asked how often staff participated in training, 56% stated that they either received no internal training or only training focused on compliance such as CPR and first aid.

One person commented: "We have received little to no training in anything outside of sexual harassment, and lifeguard/CPR training."



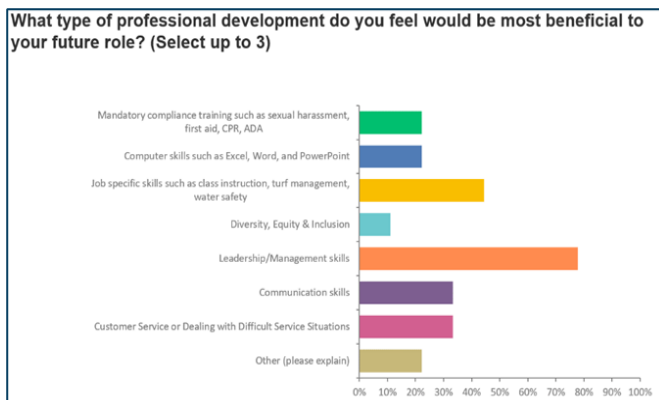
With regards to training that would be most beneficial to staff in their current role, 44% of respondents equally requested communication skills and job specific training (i.e., class instruction, turf management, and water safety), and leadership (39%). One individual commented that the mentoring that Director Miller offered prior to 2019 was beneficial.



Additional requests included:

- Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA) training
- Geriatrics/senior programming related skills or courses
- Lifeguard courses
- ADA
- Adobe Photoshop
- Marketing
- Communication

Looking towards the future, staff were most interested in leadership and management training (78%), followed by job specific courses (44%). Communication and customer service skills training were equally requested by 33% of respondents.



Staff also commented that they were interested in budget and finance training, as well as:

"Training towards CPRP/CPRE offered by NRPA to become more professional in the field."

Upon reflection of past trainings, one individual mentioned that "we used to have building in-services every 4-6 weeks."

Over 50% of respondents said that they have had less than two staff meetings in the last 12 months. Further, 100% of respondents stated they did not receive any training information during those meetings.

With regards to preparing new Sanibel Recreation staff for their role, a variety of options were offered including:

- CPR/AED
- Active shooter
- Shadowing of other employees
- Identifying child neglect and abuse
- Working with individuals with disabilities
- Cross training for multiple positions (lifeguarding, youth programs, fitness instruction)
- Computer skills
- Dealing with difficult situations
- Public speaking
- A hiring packet that includes a check list and paperwork needed

Some other comments received include:

- Every Department should follow the same orientation. It is way too separate and you are left on your own to figure it out.
- More staff development training is needed desperately. Barely any training is offered besides CPR and first aid. Rarely are there training[s] for part-time or even full-time [staff] other than supervisors.

- Onboarding must include more timely distribution of keys, fobs, computer access etc.
- It makes it hard to trust the City and upper management when you see people that have given 8+ years of their lives to the City and still are not in a position to move up the chain.
- Everything needs to be in one central area.
- We need focus groups, such as a Citizen Advisory Council comprised of Recreation Center user groups or future users.

Furthermore, of the staff that responded, 47% said they would be interested in leading internal trainings for Sanibel Recreation staff.

BerryDunn's interviews with staff further supported the survey results. Staff listed appreciation, recognition, and training, including with local and national associations, as items necessary to help change the culture of Sanibel Recreation.

## NATIONAL TRENDS IN TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Part of the BerryDunn assessment included a review of training and development by local government entities and park and recreation agencies from around the country. We are providing this information to Sanibel Recreation as a backdrop to our recommendations and to guide future thought and consideration for staff training and development.

The Association of Talent Development (ATD) is considered a valuable resource for training professionals around the globe. Professionals at public and private entities alike rely on information developed by ATD to help build and support staff training, regardless of organizational size.

According to the article Government Agencies Need to Improve the Employee Experience published by ATD in 2021:

The impact of those furloughs led to organizational issues including morale, compensation, recruitment and retention, employee development, and equity.

To recruit and retain staff, the article suggests that employers should ask themselves:

- Why would a talented person want to join your agency?
- What do current employees need to learn?

"CONCERN ABOUT STATE AND LOCAL BUDGETS LED TO A STEEP DROP-IN PUBLIC-SECTOR EMPLOYMENT BETWEEN FEBRUARY AND MAY 2020..."

"People want a workplace where they can be productive, engage, and have an enjoyable work experience. Those factors are not only the responsibility of human resources but everyone within the agency..."

To develop your agency's employer brand proposition, consider the candidate experience through these brand touchstones: social media, the agency website, the hiring process, the job announcement, and onboarding...And for employees, what does the first day of work look like, what are the learning and development and career development opportunities, and what is the workplace culture as a whole?"

The ATD article further references a 2022 research study of state and local workforce by the Mission Square Research Institute. Participating employers ranked external and internal staff training third and fifth most important to retention and development of staff. Further, employees that participated in the survey ranked appreciation and recognition, which can include professional development and career progression, as the third most important factor in the desire to stay with an organization.

## PARK AND RECREATION PERSPECTIVE

Throughout the field of parks and recreation, management of staff training varies by Department or agency but the best agencies, regardless of size, recognize that a training investment is one of the keys to success.

As part of our assessment, BerryDunn discussed training with departments and agencies in communities ranging in size from 7,000 to 55,000. All participating agencies offer training to their staff; however, the person assigned to manage this element can vary from individual managers to human resources or the executive director. For the most successful departments and agencies, training consistently goes beyond traditional compliance workshops into job specific skills.

As an example, Illinois agency Park District of Oak Park (PDOP) has been leading innovation with a keen focus on employee development. A creative tactic PDOP deployed opened career opportunities to a younger workforce which increased the candidate pipeline and empowered internal staff to mentor and share expertise. According to a recent article in NRPA Park and Recreation Magazine:

"[PDOP] designed a paid, one-year fellowship that includes a rotation through all aspects of the park district, from programming, park maintenance and human resources, to finance, safety, facility management, marketing and more. This fellowship provides a hands-on approach, with the real-life successes and failures that are so important for growth.

Depending on the Department, the fellow spends from two to six weeks working with a variety of leaders in each Department to learn about their specific area. For example, in parks and planning, the fellow spends time with the turf manager, building and parks supervisors, and the superintendent of parks and planning. Along the way, the fellow has specific deliverables, and at the end of the program the fellow receives help with identifying job opportunities and making contacts as appropriate. This program not only is a great career development opportunity for young professionals, but also provides our leadership team with the perspective of a recent graduate and a glimpse into the future leaders of the industry."

Jack Kardys, former director of Miami-Dade County, also discussed the importance of staff professional development in an article published by the NRPA:

"The right level of investment in human capital is the fundamental ingredient for all great organizations, and yet, it is our training and travel that are often the first cuts in balancing our budgets! Ultimately, a comprehensive and efficient

In 2021, the NRPA developed the Workforce Development Resource Guide for Parks and Recreation. Though focused primarily on developing future park and recreation professionals, the guide emphasizes the importance of staff training:

"Traditionally, job trainings have been focused on developing technical skills. In the field of parks and recreation, this has encompassed skills such as first aid, chainsaw safety and risk management. Now, job training programs are evolving into a broader sense of workforce development and are emphasizing essential skills first. Essential skills, or soft skills, are the social and professional norms required to navigate the contemporary workplace. These skills are a combination of behaviors and social attitudes and can include communication, problem solving, decision making, time management, work ethic, professionalism, teamwork, leadership, ability to focus on and attend to details, conflict management, flexibility and adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and appreciation, and more. More succinctly, essential skills are the everyday tools that people need for work, learning and life. The foundation for these skills is often created during a first job experience.

More and more, innovative workforce development programs in parks and recreation successfully pair both essential and hard skills in order to prepare participants for a successful career..."

approach to building effective and innovative human resource capacity requires a commitment to succession planning and investing in the recruitment, retention and professional development that enables a Department to promote from within and grow its future managers and executives.”

Jack continues:

“The success of our workforce members, including our directors, depends on providing opportunities to learn. Impactful organizational learning and agility in today’s ever-changing, globally competitive environment demands continual organizational learning.”

In short, park and recreation departments must embrace a culture of learning where individual improvement and accomplishments mesh with the needs of the agency.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the information shared in the online survey, focus groups, and national research, we recommend several ideas to support Sanibel Recreation staff’s professional development needs.

***Most importantly, Sanibel would benefit from a centralized and consistent training program that has detailed standards and expectations for each role. These standards may include annual required professional development hours, minimum training per role, compliance workshops, and a process and dedicated funds available for external trainings.***

Though Sanibel Recreation Department has limited staff, oversight of training should be assigned to one individual, such as the Director of Recreation, who can help ensure the quality and consistency of the program. This individual, or their designee, would be responsible for:

Launching an annual online needs assessment survey with staff and management

Developing training standards

Tracking compliance

Identifying external training opportunities

Assessing the quality, via survey and staff feedback, of all trainings

Conducting training as appropriate

Lead staff in each core program area should partner with the individual charged with overseeing professional development, be responsible for identifying training, and developing curriculum. To help with succession planning and growth, leadership should also identify and train individuals to facilitate training and act as SMEs to provide additional support. Sanibel Recreation may also consider developing a training and professional development committee to identify and fulfill training needs.

In addition, BerryDunn recommends:

- ☑ Utilizing state and national associations for low cost online learning, schools, networking, skill development, and conferences. For instance, FRPA has several professional development opportunities available on its website. NRPA also has a collection of online learning, webinars, and schools to support staff.
- ☑ Working with other park and recreation departments in the Sanibel area to share resources, develop training, and secure and share speaker costs.
- ☑ Identifying businesses such as banks and health care providers to lead financial and well-being workshops. Many large banks offer free financial workshop, and BerryDunn has found that local hospitals and health care agencies often provide free training as well.

- ☑ Partnering with local colleges, such as Florida Gulf Coast University and Florida Southwestern State University, to provide classes or workshops for staff. Universities are often willing to offer a free one-hour workshop to local nonprofits and government agencies.
- ☑ Reserving a specific budget line for staff training and developing a policy to support it.
- ☑ Investing in certifications such as the Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP), Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE), and those for job specific skills.
- ☑ Developing and launching trainings regarding any current operation manuals, such as the Front Desk and RecTrac Manual.
- ☑ Creating a comprehensive onboarding program that reviews operational procedures and expectations, introduces new staff around the Department, assigns a mentor, and sets the stage for long term success.
- ☑ Developing and conducting leadership training throughout all management levels.
- ☑ Creating a mentorship program that allows younger or newer staff to learn from leadership, which will not only help with retention but succession planning.

- ☑ Offering regularly scheduled training for all staff levels that include skills such as:
  - Leadership/Management
  - Communication
  - Technology
  - Emotional intelligence
  - Diversity, equity, and inclusion
  - CPR/AED
  - Active shooter
  - Child neglect and abuse
  - Working with children with disabilities
  - Computer skills
  - Dealing with difficult situations
- ☑ Creating a cross functional training program for multiple positions (lifeguarding, youth programs, fitness instruction), so staff can share responsibilities and build upon skills for their next role within the organization.
- ☑ Purchasing off-the-shelf online trainings for the Microsoft suite and other standard technologies.
- ☑ Creating learning paths that outline what skills are needed to move throughout the organization.
- ☑ Setting biweekly staff meetings to discuss Department updates/needs, training opportunities, and sharing ideas with staff.

In short, though having a professional development program in place requires an additional task on what may be an already taxed staff, the rewards of a successful program will mean more efficiencies, greater dedication, and increased staff morale.

# Implementation Strategies

The following is a listing of suggestions for successful implementation of the Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment, Analysis, and Evaluation Report (Assessment). These elements represent the commitment and discipline required to integrate the process into daily operations, both now and in the future.

- The Assessment becomes the guidepost for the Department. When decisions or response to the community are needed, the plan becomes the reference point for decision-making and whether new issues or responses to the community are of higher importance than what has been established as existing direction.
- The Assessment information should be included as part of the new employee orientation program.
- Post a summary or shortened version of the Assessment on the website and track results on the site. This will assist in providing the community with information about the Department's strategic direction and its commitment to results.
- A staff member or team should have the responsibility of being the project manager or "champion" of the Assessment's implementation to help ensure success. This staff person is responsible for monitoring the progress of the plan and working with other staff, City leadership, and other departments to effectively integrate the plan with operations.
- A staff member or team should be assigned accountability for each recommendation. The project lead will have responsibility for tracking progress of the plan.
- Post a chart of each year's recommendations in a staff area with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program.
- Conduct staff meetings on a quarterly or semi-quarterly basis to review the progress on the Assessment.
- Regular reporting of the progress on the Assessment should occur. Break the plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. Each initiative for the year should include a list of tactics that support its completion. The tactics are developed prior to each year for the upcoming list of initiatives and are developed by the staff members involved in completing the initiative. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on his/her initiative in a quarterly report. A suggestion is to enter each year's data on a spreadsheet or strategic planning software that lists the themes', objectives', and initiatives' start dates and completion dates, and the name of the staff member responsible for initiative completion.
- At the end of the fiscal year, perform an annual review of the Assessment and document any changes to initiatives to reflect any changes in priorities. This process can be included at an annual review meeting in which successive years' initiatives are discussed as part of the annual budget process. Initiatives will tie into both the operating and capital budget process.
- Update major stakeholders on the plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if these ideas supplant any existing initiatives.
- At the five-year mark of the plan, complete a shortened update, and consider conducting a statistically valid survey and new demographic projections. Adjust existing recommendations as necessary.



# City of Sanibel Recreation Department

## Appendix



# Appendices

## APPENDIX A – ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

### Introduction

As part of the Recreation Department (Department) Comprehensive Assessment (Assessment) effort for the City of Sanibel, FL (City), a great deal of public engagement was sought. The focus of the plan is to evaluate and analyze the Department on several factors and include the following:

- An inventory of City-owned recreation facilities
- An inventory of facilities owned/managed by non-City entities (Library, Big Arts, F.I.S.H., and Community House)
- A comprehensive assessment of City recreation indoor facilities and programs
- A use evaluation and analysis of the Recreation Center, Center4Life, and ballfields
- A summary of the facilities owned/managed by non-City entities (private)
- A SWOT analysis of the Recreation Department where we discussed Department strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- An analysis of the Recreation Department's Recreation Center memberships and customer service practices

This Assessment also includes a demographics review, a review of the Department's finances and training, and a trends report. The overarching goal is to prioritize resources to provide recreation programs and facilities that are responsive to the Sanibel community.

To get as many people involved in the community engagement, a great deal of promotion was done by the Department. Copies of the promotional pieces are included in Appendix A.

The community engagement for this project included:

- Staff meetings
- Meetings with City Council members
- Key stakeholders' meetings
- Four focus groups including seniors, nonprofit representatives, families (adults with small children in the household), and a group of avid Recreation Center users
- A community open house
- A booth at the Farmers Market

- A robust Social Pinpoint virtual engagement website utilized to gather feedback online that included a survey, two community forums, and an Ideas Wall

This report includes a summary of each of these engagements that will assist Department staff during the upcoming Emergent Themes workshop scheduled for June 29, 2022.

## Staff Meetings

The project kicked off with a series of staff meetings. The consulting team met individually with nine full-time staff representing Recreation, Finance, Natural Resources, and Information Technology (IT), and two part-time Department fitness instructors.

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Sanibel in March 2020, all recreation staff were furloughed. This was painful for this group of staff, and it has had an impact upon Department morale upon everyone's return.

Despite the frustrations, all the staff were very engaged in the project meetings and expressed sincere interest in the planning process and a final report that can be used to make necessary improvements. According to the Department staff, the important issues that this plan should address include the following:

### Staffing

- Hiring is a problem and needs to continue to be an area of focus – many current positions have been difficult to fill, and many full-time staff must handle responsibilities that take them away from their assigned roles (working After Care for example).
- Some part-time desk staff are working full-time hours with no benefits – there is a need for some benefits for part-time staff (e.g., facility use).
- The front desk staff are overwhelmed with other City tasks. Can the sale of beach parking passes and dog licenses be relocated to another facility and moved online?
- Department staff would like to get involved with the FL state recreation association as well as the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) for networking and training opportunities.
- Some pay rates should be evaluated (and possibly increased) to keep up with the competition (and the toll cost to get onto the island).
- A new system is needed for instructors seeking a substitute (fitness classes).
- The requirements to get hired are often a deterrent to work for the Department – having to obtain insurance, getting fingerprinted at your own expense (off the island), promoting your own programs, etc.
- Some part-time staff have not received a raise in 10 years.
- Can the volunteer program be resumed and expanded? There are plenty of active seniors on the island who may be interested in volunteering (facility greeters).

### Culture, morale, and training

- Many staff are demoralized and feel support from the top of the organization is lacking.

- More Department structure is needed (vision, confirmation of staff roles and responsibilities, effective team meetings with agendas and meeting notes, and the annual creation and tracking of individual and Department goals).
- Meetings for part-time staff are needed to keep everyone informed.
- A culture shift is desired, and team building was suggested.
- Training is lacking, and team members would like to see a concerted effort to improve onboarding, functional training, cross-training, and development opportunities for all levels of staff.
- Improved communication within the Department is desired through regular staff meetings, shared meeting notes, and weekly emails (for all levels of staff).
- Staff has been reactive and not proactive, and they would like to change this.

#### **Recreation Center**

- Determine which safety measures are required at the Recreation Center (due to being connected with the school) and which are not and make changes (what's being done now is not customer service friendly and may not be necessary).
- With better scheduling, the spaces in the Recreation Center could be used more efficiently.
- The parking situation should be studied – is there any way to add more parking at this location?
- There is a desire to relocate the computer training space to another City location (the new library, perhaps) so that room can be returned to the Department to provide recreation programming.
- More equipment is needed for classes.
- A microphone is needed for some classes, and the full sound system is not being used (acoustics are tricky).

#### **Marketing and communications**

- The website is difficult to navigate and does not include all necessary information.
- The Department does not have control of any social media outlets currently – a Facebook page for the Department is desired.
- Some residents are not aware of the Recreation Center or Department programming – more public relations efforts are needed.

#### **Technology**

- Much of the IT equipment is old and in need of replacement.
- The Department hasn't kept up with technology, and the training for the technology that is used is not adequate.
- The Wi-Fi in the Recreation Center is inadequate (staff cannot use a tablet for child check-in).

- More technology is needed following COVID (all need access to a camera for web meetings, and the technology to provide virtual programming is a desire).

### **Programming**

- Need to determine the future and structure of senior programming.
- New partnerships are needed and desired to keep up with resident expectations.
- Ball fields are underutilized.
- Youth sports leagues are not well-managed and could be improved (is it time for the Department to take over?).
- It's time to expand the service menu – pickleball has exploded but the City hasn't responded.
- A dedicated spin room would be ideal with more fans, updated equipment, and a reservation system for classes.
- Additional cardio classes are needed besides spin.
- What else can be offered in the room with the wood floor and the ballet bars? Dance? Tai Chi? Or could this room be combined with the weight room to make that space larger?

### **Miscellaneous**

- Budget limitations need to be addressed – the amount for part-time instructors is set regardless of revenue generation possibilities with new programs.
- The Recreation Center should be open (limited hours) on holidays when people are available to exercise and recreate.
- Families and children need to be embraced – the community is not just made up of seniors.

Overall, the staff presented a full menu of issues to the consulting team that the final plan should address in some format or another (whether in a final recommendation or in a suggestion to further study a situation). These staff meetings set the stage for the meetings with City Council members, the key stakeholders, and the focus groups. Clearly the staff is aware of the many issues that need to be addressed to create a high-functioning Recreation Department that can meet the growing needs of the public.

## **Meetings with City Council Members**

The consulting team met individually with City Council members to discuss their current opinions and future desires regarding recreation programming and services in Sanibel. Many of the issues raised by council members are in alignment with the sentiments of staff. The results of these meetings are summarized below.

### **Strengths**

- The Recreation Center is a great asset to the community, is well-maintained, and was well-used prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The weight room is well-used (but too small).
- The afterschool and summer programs are great and well-attended.
- The outdoor pool is an awesome facility, and (pre-COVID) the aquatics program was well-run.
- Historically, programming was strong (pickleball, spinning, and water aerobics).

### **Opportunities**

- Allowing and encouraging staff to make decisions to enhance and expand programs and services
- Enhanced partnerships (school) and new partnerships (nonprofits and private businesses) to enhance programming
- Improved communication with residents about programs and services (including HOAs, churches, service clubs, condo associations, and enhanced social media); the website is difficult to navigate and not well-used
- Better promotion of open positions on the island (active seniors who may want to work)
- Collaboration with nonprofits (F.I.S.H., Community House, Big Arts, etc.) to determine what is available for seniors locally and where gaps exist
- The weight room is too small
- Recreation Center pricing model – is there a better way?
- Changing the location for the sale of beach parking passes and dog licenses to allow Recreation Center front desk to focus on Department issues and customer service
- Continued engagement of the community to ensure the Department is providing for all the recreation needs for a wide span of ages
- Re-engaging former volunteers and enhancing the program
- Reform the Advisory Board Committee – educate them on issues and seek input

### **Future challenges**

- Recruiting and hiring staff for all open positions
- Convincing former staff and members to come back following the COVID-19 pandemic
- Solution for Recreation Center parking limitations (partnerships?)
- Center4Life and the future of the bank building – what's the best solution for senior programming?
- Keeping the community informed about (and engaged with) recreation programs and services
- Training and encouraging staff to become proactive instead of reactive
- Potential separation of Center4Life and Island Seniors
- Lack of indoor/outdoor recreation spaces

- Attracting younger generations
- Not enough revenue generation from tourists – can we find a way to capture our own bed tax?

#### **Ideas for future programming and facilities**

- Additional indoor and outdoor pickleball courts
- Additional classes for improved mental health and physical fitness
- Socialization clubs
- More programs for children and families



## Key Stakeholder Meetings

Seven key stakeholder meetings were facilitated as part of the community engagement for this project. These key stakeholders represented several groups and organizations including:

- The Island Seniors
- Recreation Center volunteers
- Sanibel Bike Club
- Sanibel Public School (see previous comment on possible wording change)
- Sanibel-Captiva Conservation Foundation
- Sanibel Youth Sports
- Recreation Center program participants and weight room users

All these people have a unique connection to the Department and have different desires and needs for recreation programming and services. Some of these people are highly engaged in the Department, and others have never participated in a program or utilized the facility.

### Department strengths

- Staff – The Department staff were mentioned several times by this group as a strength. Words like superb, helpful, friendly, upbeat, responsive, and good coordinators were used to describe the current staff. There were compliments regarding the part-time fitness instructors as well.
- Recreation Center – The facility was mentioned as a great source to provide community interaction. Some use the facility for the programming, the pool, and the weight room, and others use it for meetings and public presentations. Some noted that the facility was safe and clean and a very good deal for the cost.
- Programming – There were many positive comments regarding the youth after-school program. The senior programming that is provided by City staff was also noted as a strength.

### Opportunities

- Customer Service – Not all the stakeholders spoke highly of the staff. Some felt that improving customer service should be a priority and that this might be accomplished by moving the sales of the beach parking passes and dog licenses to another location (Police Department, Village Hall, or the new library). To some, the customer focus is missing from current operations.
- Pickleball – Participation in this game has increased greatly over the past few years, but the City has been slow to take notice and get involved. At Sundial, participation increased from 85 members in 2021 to 350 members currently. The tennis courts at the Recreation Center have been used for pickleball as well, but often, when temporary lines are put down, someone pulls them up. Clearly the Sanibel tennis players and the Sanibel pickleball players do not seem to get along. There's an opportunity for Department staff to bridge the gap.
- Marketing – A couple of the attendees spoke of the need for a marketing plan to get former Recreation Center users to come back. Many people were frustrated about the way the City closed the facility and terminated

Department staff during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they canceled their memberships and haven't returned. The rumor is that people were charged for their membership during the pandemic and were never refunded for the period when the facility was closed. It will take some effort and good will to get everyone to return.

- Communication – More is needed to inform people about what is available and to create awareness. It was suggested that all recreation activities be combined into one promotional piece (instead of separating out the seniors) making the announcements more holistic.
- Efficiencies – It was suggested that there is technology available that could be implemented to improve staff efficiencies (everything is on paper – there are no digital platforms) and technology that could be implemented to make it easier for the public to learn about facility usage (peak and non-peak hours) in advance of a visit.
- Technology – A more user-friendly website is desired. Cybersecurity has been used as an excuse to not expand participation (video access to City Council meetings), but there are plenty of ways to not infringe on privacy but still give people usable information. Additional virtual programming is a desire and should be explored.
- School Partnership – Enhance the partnership with the school by inviting the principal and teachers to use the Recreation Center free of charge. These staff would be great ambassadors for the facility and programs.
- Reporting – There is frustration that facility membership and program participation data are not tracked on a regular basis and reported to City Council and the public. It appears that record keeping is not up to date. And instead of leveraging the registration software to run reports, nearly everything is tracked manually at the Recreation Center.

### **Future challenges**

- Hiring – Similar to the Recreation Center members who are not anxious to come back to the facility, some of the staff who were furloughed (and ultimately terminated) are hesitant to come back as well. Some people are concerned that another unforeseen situation may lead to layoffs. In addition, many people who work for the Department cannot afford to live on the island and often commute from far away. The toll to get onto the island is also deterrent for many as well.
- Bank building – This group had a variety of opinions about renovating the bank building into the new Center4Life building. A couple felt that the City had started the process and should finish what they started. Others see the plan as controversial and expensive and don't believe it is necessary to have two separate recreation facilities and that the building should be used for another City purpose (staff offices). A couple of folks had little knowledge about the issue and therefore no opinion.
- Finances – Previously, there was a push to tie Recreation Center revenue to funding, but some believe that the Recreation Center should be community funded. The comment was made that local government should provide programs and services to all residents regardless of income and the ability to pay. The suggestion was made that the Department find new ways to support the community and to get the community more engaged with the Recreation Center and Department programming. It was also noted that the budget (perceived as small) is preventing improved technology.

### **Future Programming**

- Push bike safety whenever possible – provide more education about the proper etiquette for utilizing the biking and walking paths
- Create and implement more events, as these pull people together
- Offer more opportunities to learn about and connect with the natural environment
- With the high demand for lap swimming, consider a reservation system so people are not standing around waiting (the Department could likely charge a small fee for this service)
- Pickleball instruction and tournaments

## Focus Groups

The BerryDunn consulting team facilitated a total of four focus groups:

- Families: Adults with small children in the household (6 participant)
- Nonprofit Representatives (6 participants)
- Recreation Center users (10 participants)
- Seniors (10 participants)

### Families

The focus group made up of adults with small children in the household included new residents to the island (one year) as well as long-time residents (up to 30 plus years). One attendee has lived on Sanibel her entire life, and another grew up on Captiva. This group had a wide range of experiences with the Department, but what was clear is the desire for more traditional recreation programming including karate, swim lessons, martial arts, dance, gymnastics, and a return of the popular swim team.

### Wish list items:

- On-site childcare for adults working out in the facility
- Improved communications (recently the school principal wasn't invited to a City strategic planning meeting, and the parents at the focus group were concerned and frustrated by this)
- Pushing back the pick-up time for After School Care (later than 5 p.m.) so that parents could work out and then take their kids home
- Increase hours of operation by staying open later during the week and adding more weekend hours
- Hire new staff to resume pool hours to pre-pandemic levels
- Add open gym time slots
- Consider "adult only" hours from 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.
- Add new fitness classes to attract younger adults (HIIT instruction)
- Offer rental opportunities for birthday parties and family gatherings
- Open the skate park to the public
- Offer more programs for younger seniors
- Create new events geared toward the family
- Inter-organizational collaboration to create a Recreation Center that is a "community hub" for all ages
- Create new programming to educate children about the heritage of Sanibel and the natural world on the island (it's important to create the next generation of island caretakers)

- Connect with the many groups and organizations on the island to create new partnerships to enhance programming

#### **Concerns:**

- The poor design of the building is a frustration – the pool is too small, and the fishbowl design is troublesome.
- For families on the east end, participating in programming is very difficult. It was suggested that a shuttle bus transport children to and from the Recreation Center from one location on the east end.
- There is a lack of programming for children with special needs.
- The Recreation Center is lacking an “intergenerational focus,” and this should be addressed.
- So much focus is on senior programming – the perception is that if you are not a senior, you go to the back of the line.
- A scheduling strategy is needed to use all the Recreation Center spaces more efficiently.
- The hiring of quality part-time staff to work the after-school program was mentioned as a concern by several parents.
- Pay for part-time positions is too low – there have been no applications for front desk positions in nearly three months.

#### **Nonprofit representatives**

The focus group for the nonprofit representatives included people who represented the following organizations: Community House (board and staff), Sanibel Library, Sanibel Planning Commission, CHR (board and staff), Shell Museum board, Chamber of Commerce Board, Rotary, Big Arts, F.I.S.H., and an island HOA.

Following a brief conversation regarding what these organizations provide to island residents and how they are funded, we discussed the relationship between these organizations and the City’s Recreation Department. Some highlights of the conversation include:

- More partnering on the island is needed – It would be great if the City could take on this role with the nonprofits to increase the communication between them and to eliminate (or reduce) the duplication of services.
- Frustrations with the prior City Manager were mentioned and how some relationships felt adversarial instead of like true partnerships.
- It was suggested the City could promote more awareness about the services these nonprofits provide to residents.
- Communication with the Department can be difficult – obtaining simple answers is not an easy or speedy task.
- The application process for financial assistance is cumbersome, and it takes at least two months to get approved. All applications are submitted to a committee, and many felt that a committee review shouldn’t be necessary to obtain assistance. Some suggested the process could be more streamlined and more efficient.

- Senior programming should be combined within the Recreation Center – some see it as a mistake that these two areas are separated.
- The perception is that no one at the Recreation Center wants to take responsibility.
- City needs an updated website.
- More variety is needed for youth programming – it appears that the same programs are offered repetitively.
- The lack of parking at the Recreation Center is an issue that needs to be addressed.

### **Recreation Center users**

All the attendees to this focus group have lived on the island (either part-time or full-time) for 10 years or more. Some had children who grew up on the island and took part in recreation programs in the past. A good number use the pool regularly, some use the weight room, and a few take part in fitness classes. One mentioned playing pickleball twice a week at the Recreation Center. Although all have been a Recreation Center member at some point in the past, some have discontinued and are unsure about returning.

### *Department Strengths*

- The Recreation Center is fantastic and a benefit to the island.
- The Department employees some great staff who have been with the City for a long time.
- Strong maintenance team
- During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff did a great job scheduling pool usage.
- There are some terrific instructors teaching programs at the Recreation Center.

### *Frustrations*

- The comment made by an elected official to “cut the low hanging fruit” at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic hurt lots of the full-time and part-time staff. In this regard, this focus group mentioned their respect for the current staff and their willingness to return.
- All expressed a strong desire for expanded hours and programming – the Center currently closes too early for those who work, and many want to work out in the morning before work. Longer hours are needed to accommodate those who work and have families.
- The corporate membership structure should be reviewed and revised – it’s currently not appealing based on the cost.
- The island is home to many young adults who work and need leisure opportunities outside of the workday.
- The financial assistance program is difficult to navigate, and there are too many hoops to jump through.
- More volunteers are needed – so many organizations on the island utilize volunteers, so why not the Recreation Department? There are many retired people on the island with time to volunteer if the Department can make it attractive (with some benefits, perhaps).
- The fees for youth programs have continued to rise – it appears the City looks here to offset the deficit.



- City website is inadequate – it is difficult to find information.

#### *Customer Service*

- Often suggestions go unheeded – at the higher level, residents are not being heard.
- City business (beach parking passes and dog licenses) should be done elsewhere.
- When one complains, there is often no follow-up.
- How about offering a free month-long membership to those new to the island?

#### *Suggestions for future programs and services*

- More deep-water aerobics
- More pickleball opportunities – lessons, clinics, and tournaments
- Add more lanes to the pool – people don't like to share lanes
- Add an indoor or outdoor track (maybe around the ball fields)
- Add tennis backboards
- Create a master swim program
- Offer educational classes: triathlon training, Silver Sneakers, and Tai Chi
- Create more opportunities for families
- Expand the hours at the skate park
- The spin classes need a home
- Kayaking – it's offered for seniors, but how about offering to other age groups?
- Weight room – remove equipment that is not being used, add more benches, move the cardio equipment into another space to make the weight room bigger (it's too small now), and add more strength machines
- Would love to see more partnerships between the City and other groups such as F.I.S.H., the Sanibel Bike Club, the Sanibel Running Club, and other nonprofits

#### *Future of the Bank Building*

- Renovating this space for the Island Seniors is not the best use of funds – there are other ways to accomplish this goal.
- Could the City make an area outside of the pool for the seniors to hang out?
- The seniors need a new place to congregate.
- Create an intergenerational center, not separate spaces for different age groups.

#### **Seniors**

All the 10 seniors attending this focus group have been on the island for at least 10 years with a couple residing on the island for 40 years. They all started living on the island as “snowbirds” and eventually moved to Sanibel full-time. Some use the Recreation Center, and some do not. Many volunteer for other Sanibel organizations such as Big Arts, F.I.S.H., the food pantry, SCCF, and CHR. Of the 10 in attendance, six are Island Seniors members and four are not.

The group had mixed opinions regarding what should be done with the Center4Life programming. Those who are members of the Island Seniors would like the atmosphere at the Center4Life recreated at another location and, in their opinion, the Recreation Center is not the appropriate place due to parking, location (not central), and other constraints (lacking a “homey feel”). Some (not members of the Island Seniors) would like to see a recreation facility for people of all ages (and not two separate facilities). Concern was expressed about the cost to maintain two recreation facilities in a relatively small community (seven months out of the year).

A few of the focus group attendees are members of the Recreation Center. Those who are not members indicated that they aren’t because the atmosphere is unwelcoming, the staff aren’t friendly, and no one greets you when you walk in the front door. This is very different from the vibe at the former Center4Life building. Some expressed a desire for the City to renovate the old Center4Life building regardless of the cost, relocate CHR, and resume the programming at this location.

Some attendees expressed that there is so much going on in Sanibel for the senior population, but it’s not easy to find in one place. It was suggested that one entity pull together all the offerings and advertise in one place.

There was discussion regarding where the Center4Life programming could be held in the future if the former facility cannot be renovated. Suggestions included Nave Plumbing, the theater that Big Arts owns, or a vacant storefront location. A couple of attendees suggested that the Island Seniors investigate renting their own space with their own funds.

#### *Additional Suggestions*

- Improve customer service at the Recreation Center
- Increase recreation program offerings at the Recreation Center
- Create more opportunities for young people and families
- Increase wages to attract and keep good staff

## Open House and Farmers Market In-Person Engagements

The BerryDunn team collected information, ideas, and perceptions of the current Recreation Department during two different engagement strategies over a two-day period. Residents had the chance to speak directly with BerryDunn team members during a community open house at the Recreation Center as well as a pop-up booth at the Sanibel Farmers Market.

The Open House at the Recreation Center was held on Saturday, April 9, 2022, with over 200 people in attendance. Guests were able to make suggestions, share ideas, and comment on their experiences. The BerryDunn team members were able to speak directly with residents and participate in a series of visioning boards that provided thought-provoking statements. In addition, the pool was open for public swim, there were games in the gym, and free hot dogs were served.

The second in-person engagement opportunity took place at the Sanibel Farmers Market. The BerryDunn team staffed a booth on Sunday, April 10. Over 100 visitors stopped by to share their ideas and comments on two visioning boards. Overall, the Open House and Farmers Market Booth were successful events capturing a great deal of input regarding the City's Recreation Department.

The vision board themes and results from both engagement events are as follows:

### 6.1 What would you like to see more of?

#### *Instructors*

- Recruit, hire, and train new fitness instructors
- Consider cross-training opportunities for all staff
- Consider restructuring fitness programming
- Eliminate the charge for lifeguard certification

#### *Membership*

- Increase fees to cover operating costs
- Create a partial membership for pool use only
- The six-month membership doesn't work
- Create equity in pricing (single member vs. family)

#### *New Facilities*

- More pickleball courts
- More meeting spots for coffee and conversation
- Create a family-friendly outdoor facility beyond the present playground

#### *Pool*

- Add more open swim times for families and kids at both the kiddie pool, splash pad, and large pool, including after-school hours
- More opportunities for lap swimming
- More convenient entry and exit to the pool
- Hire more lifeguards
- Extend pool hours later in the day
- Add a drinking fountain to the pool deck

#### *Programming*

- Need more “on-island” youth programs
- Youth gymnastics
- Dance
- Martial arts
- Youth art and music lessons
- Swim team
- Swim lessons
- Programs for residents with special needs
- Indoor and outdoor pickleball for all ages
- More adult and youth sports programs and leagues
- Triathlon club, indoor triathlon event, running clinic
- Youth basketball and baseball
- Affordable summer recreational and sports camps
- Intergenerational programming

#### *Promotion & Communication*

- Consider year-round advertising in the local paper
- Create packages with hotels to promote the rec center
- Improve communication about pool issues

#### *Recreation Center*

- Should be the community hub
- Add spin bikes in the gym

- Extend kids activities to 6:30 p.m. on weekdays

#### *Senior Activities*

- Resume two kayak trips per week
- Work with Community House to combine senior activities and classes
- Consider reopening/remodeling the Center4Life
- Add new or additional senior programs (Mahjongg in the evening, chair yoga, senior history tours, senior causeway social)
- Add more parking at the Timbers (for previous Center4Life location at 2401 Library Way)

#### *Services*

- Create birthday party packages
- Offer building rentals
- Need more access to rental spaces
- Staffing and Wages
- Hire more staff
- Increase wages for all staff to hire and retain

#### *Volunteers*

- Recruit additional volunteers including parents

#### *Weight Room*

- Increase the size/space
- Provide instruction on how to properly use equipment
- Reduce the age for kids to work out with their parents
- Add more weights

## 6.2 What would you like to see less of?

#### *City Services*

- Change the location of the beach parking passes and dog license purchases to City Hall
- Less duplication of programs on the island
- Less prioritization for seniors during non-school hours Monday – Friday, 2:30 – 5:30 p.m. and weekends

## 6.3 Are there any opportunities that are just right?

- Ginger's classes are amazing
- Fitness room provides great opportunity for personal fitness
- Aqua classes and pool
- Hours are convenient
- After-school and out-of-school programs
- Exercise at the Community House is perfect

## 6.4 What are we doing well?

### *Facilities*

- Pool and splash pad
- Facilities are clean

### *Programs*

- Children's programs (after school and holiday options)
- Fitness classes (Zumba, HIIT, Spin, Barre)
- Bocce league

### *Staff*

- Staff does a great job
- Staff is friendly and helpful
- Front desk team
- Like a second family

## 6.5 Creative ideas to address staffing shortages

### *Provide incentives and benefits*

- Causeway passes
- Housing of island staff
- More full- and part-time benefits
- Ask the staff what they want most
- Sign-on bonus

### *Instructors*

- Consider letting external class instructors teach classes at the rec center as independent contractors with insurance coverage
- Use triathlon club to cross over with staff/lifeguards

#### *Training*

- Do not charge staff for lifeguard certification
- Begin a counselor and training program similar to Sea School

#### *Culture*

- Treat staff like professionals

#### *Volunteers*

- Seek volunteers to run classes
- Use parents as volunteers to staff and coach
- Seek residents who want to volunteer

#### *Wages*

- Increase wages for all staff, including lifeguards

#### *Young adults/students*

- Tap into the island high school students
- Work with local colleges and schools to discuss employment possibilities

#### *Seniors*

- Some younger seniors might love the opportunity to work part-time at the Recreation Center

### 6.6 Ideas to improve Department operations

- Modify hours at the Recreation Center
- Don't schedule classes at noon; it is difficult for those who work to attend
- Consider adding more young adult fitness activities and classes
- Run evening events; not everyone is retired

### 6.7 Do you have any "big ideas" to share?

- Redo East Gulf Drive bike paths
- Work directly with Community House for programs
- Add more City pickleball courts



Overall, people were very pleased with the open house. There were many positive comments about having the pool available for the kids to swim. People appeared to be happy to attend and share their thoughts about the future of the City's recreation programs and services.

## Social Pinpoint

Social Pinpoint is an online engagement tool used that BerryDunn utilizes to gather community feedback. With the assistance of Department staff, the City's site was customized for the project with Department logo, colors, and community photos. The site was rolled out on March 25. The Sanibel site included four opportunities for visitors to provide input on the Assessment of the Department, including:

- A survey with a total of 24 questions
- An Ideas Wall with options to post comments regarding customer service, family activities, program instructors, program promotion, senior activities, and youth activities
- Two Forums:
  - If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?
  - Please share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Center.

The site also included downloadable documents including several press releases, a rack card, and details on the master plan. The site was closed for comment on May 11, 2022.

It should be noted that this virtual tool is a great way to gather community feedback, but it does not take the place of a statistically valid survey. Respondents can participate in some or all tools, they can skip questions, and they can share the same (or a similar) comment more than once. Often participants will respond to a question with an unrelated topic (which occurred in with the Sanibel site). So, although a great tool, Social Pinpoint is only one of the tools used to gather feedback for this project.

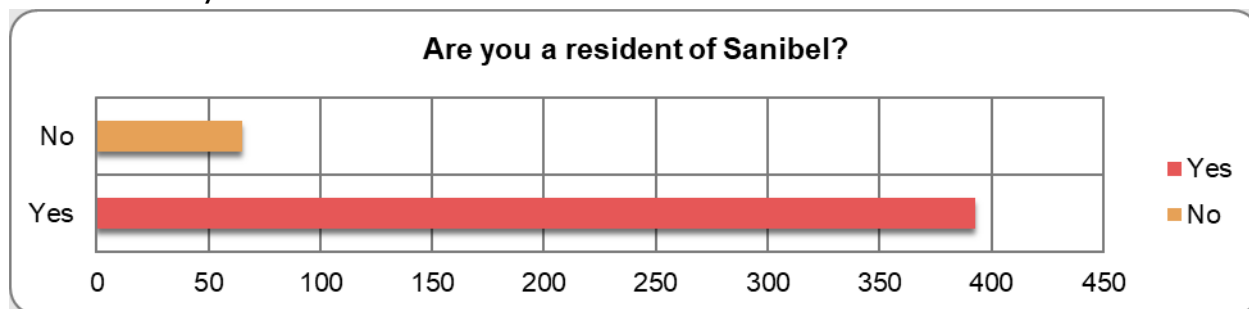


The site was closed for comment on May 11, 2022. In total, the site attracted 573 unique stakeholders who provided 650 comments and submitted 462 surveys.

This section of the engagement summary provides an overview of each Social Pinpoint opportunity.

## Survey

### Question 1. Are you a resident of Sanibel?



A total of 458 people responded to this question with five skipping it. Nearly 86% (393 respondents) indicated they are residents of Sanibel, with 14% (65 respondents) indicating that they are not residents of the island.

### Question 2. What is your ZIP code?

A total of 59 respondents answered this question with 404 skipping it. Fourteen of the respondents provided a four-digit number.

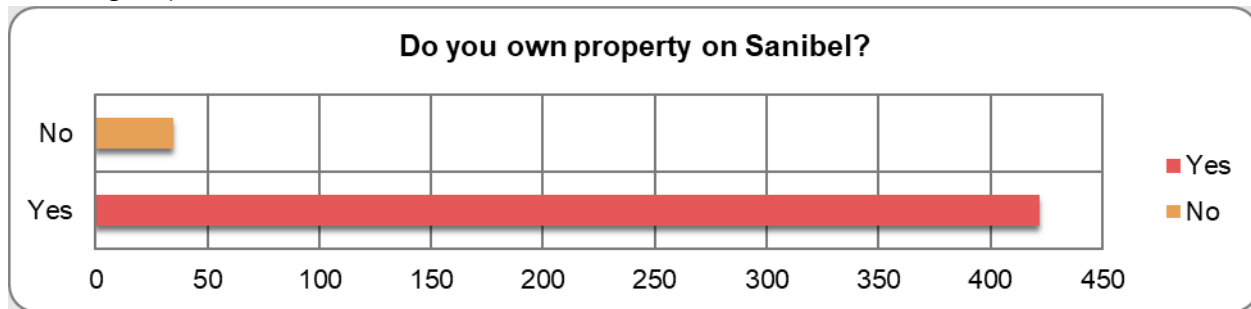
The 19 states listed and the number of each represented include:

- Delaware: 1
- Florida (all Ft. Myers): 8
- Iowa: 1
- Illinois: 2
- Indiana: 3
- Kentucky: 1
- Maryland: 1
- Michigan: 3
- Minnesota: 4
- Missouri: 1
- Montana: 1
- New York: 4
- Ohio: 3
- Pennsylvania: 2
- South Dakota: 1

- Texas: 2
- Virginia: 4
- Washington: 1
- Wisconsin: 2

### Question 3. Do you own property on Sanibel?

A total of 457 people responded to this question with 422 (92%) indicating they own property on Sanibel and 35 (8%) indicating they do not.



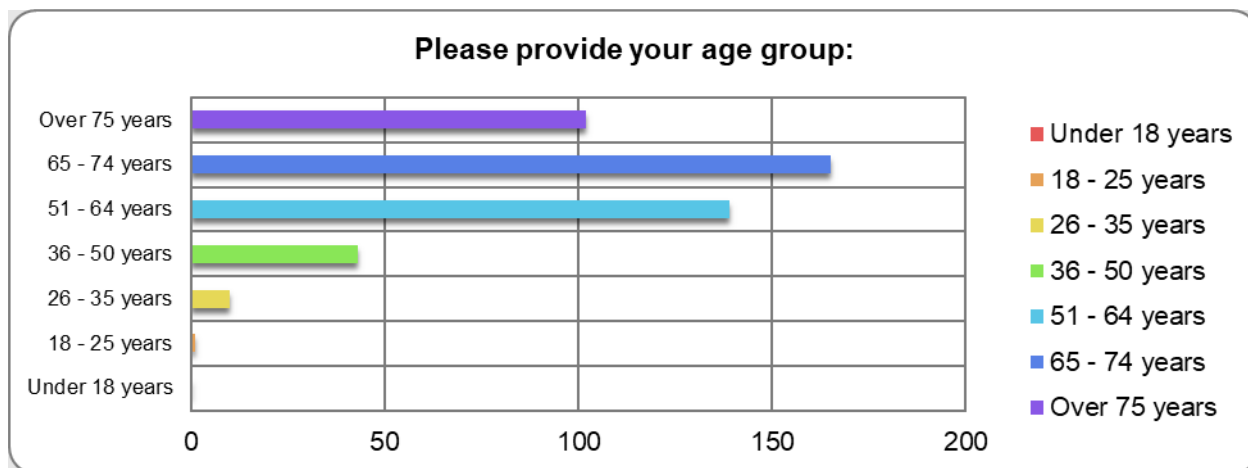
### Question 4. What months do you reside full-time on Sanibel?

A total of 447 people responded to this question while 16 people skipped it. February is the most popular month be on the island followed closely by January and March. The least popular month is August followed by July. All the results are as follows:

January	432	96.6%
February	433	96.9%
March	432	96.6%
April	414	92.6%
May	337	75.4%
June	272	60.9%
July	242	54.1%
August	236	52.8%
September	259	57.9%
October	340	76.1%
November	394	88.1%
December	395	88.4%

### Question 5. Please provide your age group.

No one under the age of 18 completed a survey, and only one person 18 to 25 years participated. The largest percentage of survey respondents were ages 65 to 74 years of age (36%) followed by 51 to 64 years (30%).



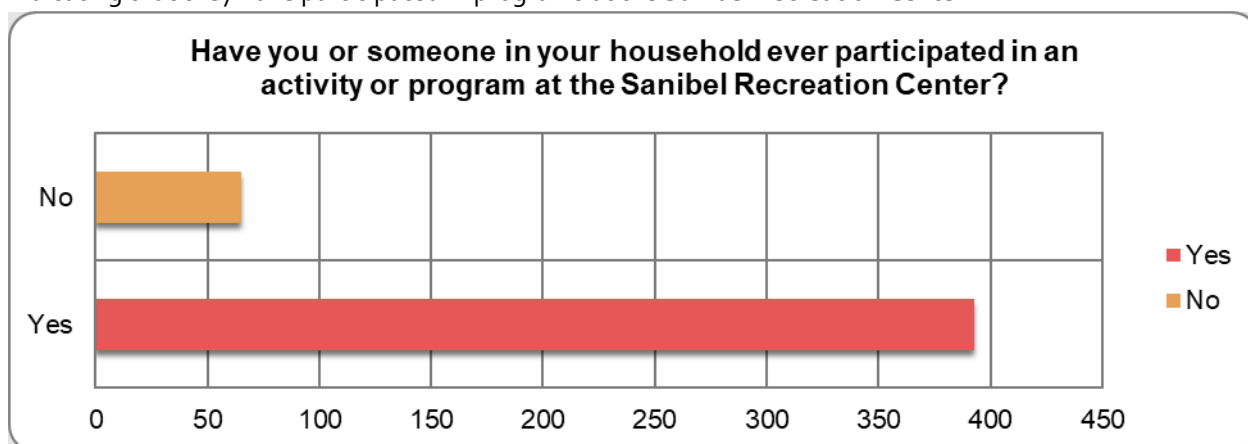
**Question 6. How many children (ages 0 – 18 years) reside in your Sanibel household?**

A total of 460 people responded to this question with nearly 88% (402) indicating that there were no children in the household. All the responses are as follows:

None	402	87.4%
1	18	3.9%
2	25	5.4%
3	10	2.2%
4 or more	5	1.1%

**Question 7. Have you or someone in your household ever participated in an activity or program at the Sanibel Recreation Center?**

A total of 458 people responded to this question (5 skipped it) with a large majority (86% or 393 respondents) indicating that they have participated in programs at the Sanibel Recreation Center.



**Question 8. What programs or activities do you or someone in your household participate in at the Sanibel Recreation Center?**

A total of 268 answered this question with 195 respondents skipping it. The most popular program per the respondents is yoga followed by lap swimming. All the responses are as follows:

After-school care	21	7.8%
Swim lessons	12	4.5%
Yoga classes	131	48.9%
Spin classes	59	22.0%
Aquatic aerobics	85	31.7%
Lap swimming	101	37.7%
Pickleball	65	24.3%
Tennis	31	11.6%

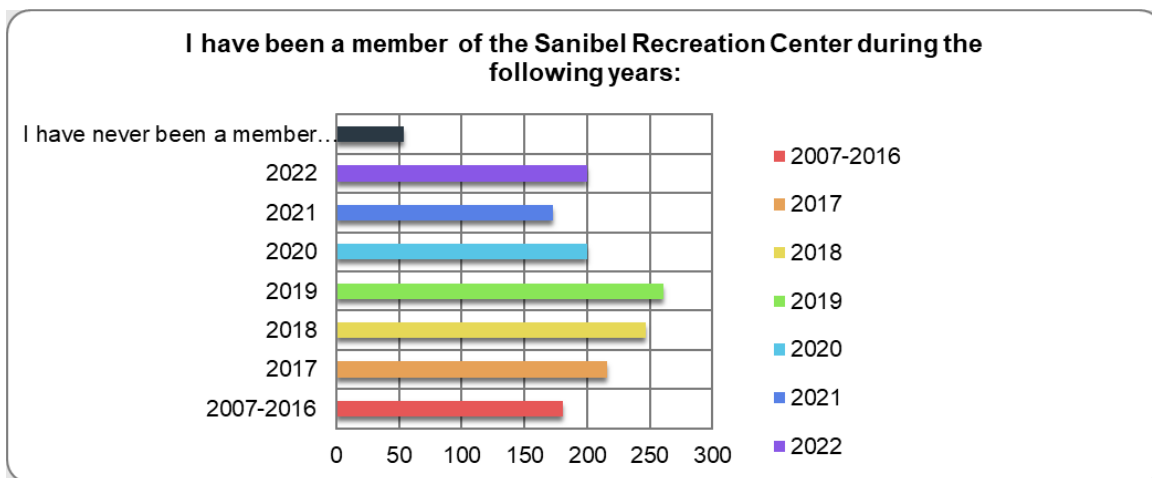
**Question 9. The most recent year I participated in activities at the Sanibel Recreation Center:**

Respondents were given eight options to choose from. A total of 451 people responded to the question with 12 skipping it. A good percentage of respondents (40% or 181 people) have participated in programs this year. Additionally, 10% of the respondents have never been a member and over 8% haven't used the facility since 2016. The full results are as follows:

2007 – 2016	37	8.2%
2017	5	1.1%
2018	18	4.0%
2019	74	16.4%
2020	55	12.2%
2021	34	7.5%
2022	181	40.1%
I have never been a member of the Rec Center	47	10.4%

**Question 10. I have been a member of the Sanibel Recreation Center during the following years:**

A total of 411 people responded to this question. The year with the highest membership was 2019 followed closely by 2018. A total of 54 respondents (over 13%) have never been a member of the Recreation Center. The full results are as follows:



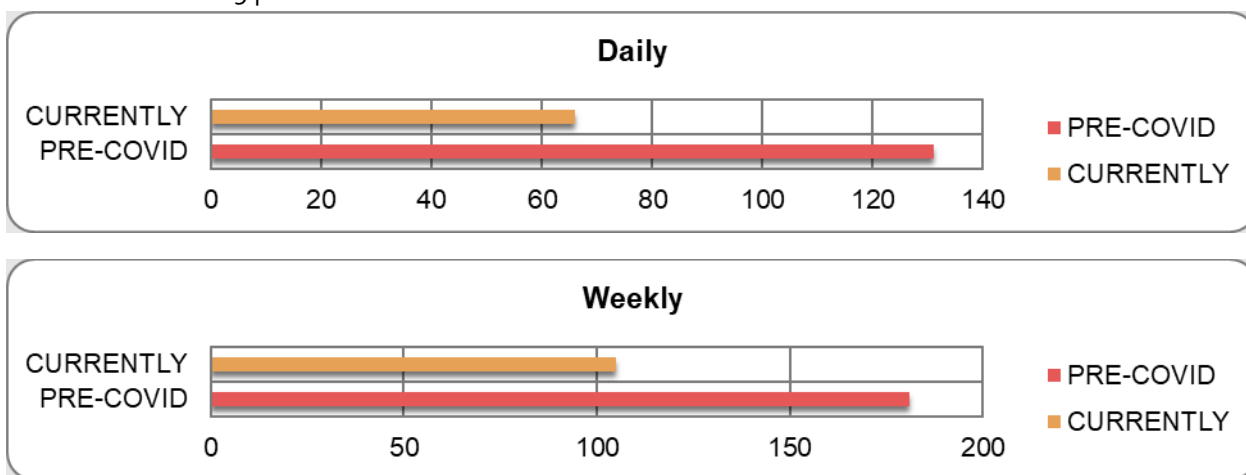
**Question 11. If you have ever been a member of the Sanibel Recreation Center, what type of membership did you purchase?**

A total of 439 people responded to this question with 24 skipping it. The family membership is the most popular with survey respondents at over 52%, and the annual individual is the least popular purchased at nearly 12%. Over 11% have never been a Recreation Center member. The full results are as follows:

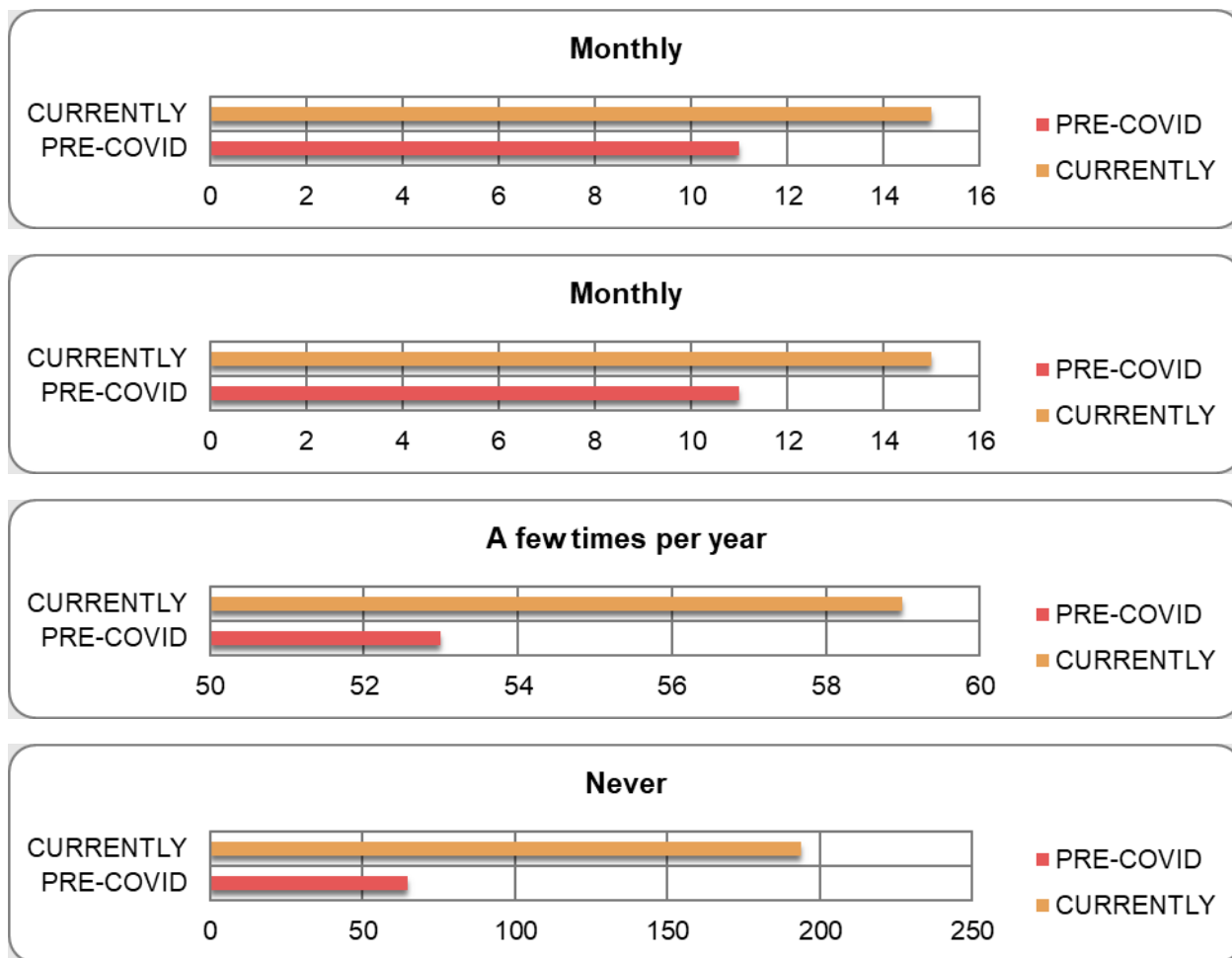
Individual 6-month	46	10.48%
Individual Annual	63	14.35%
Family 6-month	52	11.85%
Family Annual	229	52.16%
I have never been a member	49	11.16%

**Question 12: How often did you/do you visit the Recreation Center?**

This question compares current Recreation Center usage (daily, weekly, monthly, a few times per year, never) to before the COVID-19 pandemic.







As you can see from the charts, facility usage was much higher prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The daily and weekly usage prior to the pandemic were higher than today (both nearly cut in half). Conversely, the number of those people that visit a few times a year and those that never visit have both gone up. The number that never visit has gone up by nearly 30 percentage points from pre-pandemic until now. Below is a full summary of the results.

	Daily		Weekly		Monthly		A Few Times/Year		Never	
<b>Pre-COVID</b>	131	29%	181	40%	11	2%	53	12%	65	14%
<b>Currently</b>	66	15%	105	23%	15	3%	59	13%	194	43%

#### Question 13. Please rate your satisfaction with the following Sanibel Recreation Center facilities.

Respondents were asked to rate 10 different Recreation Center spaces as poor, fair, good, excellent, or I don't know. A total of 457 people responded to this question with six skipping it.

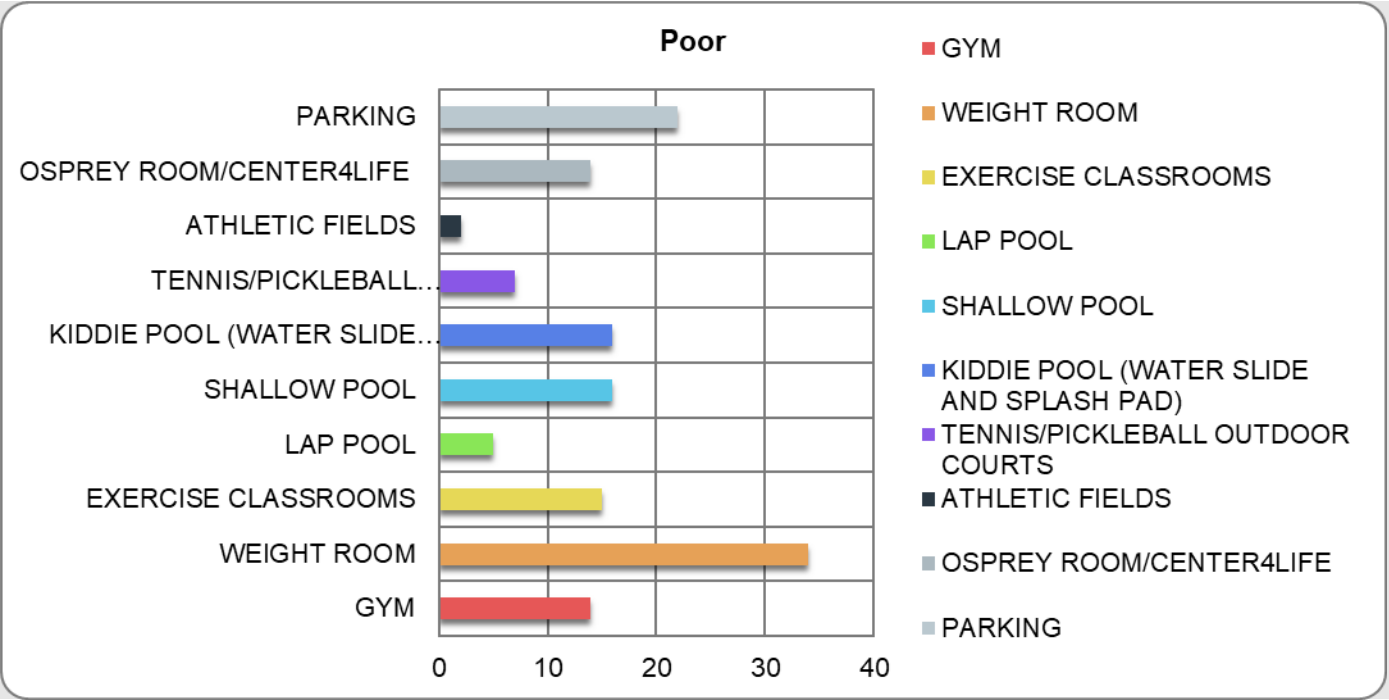
Poor Rating: The weight room had the highest poor rating followed by parking.

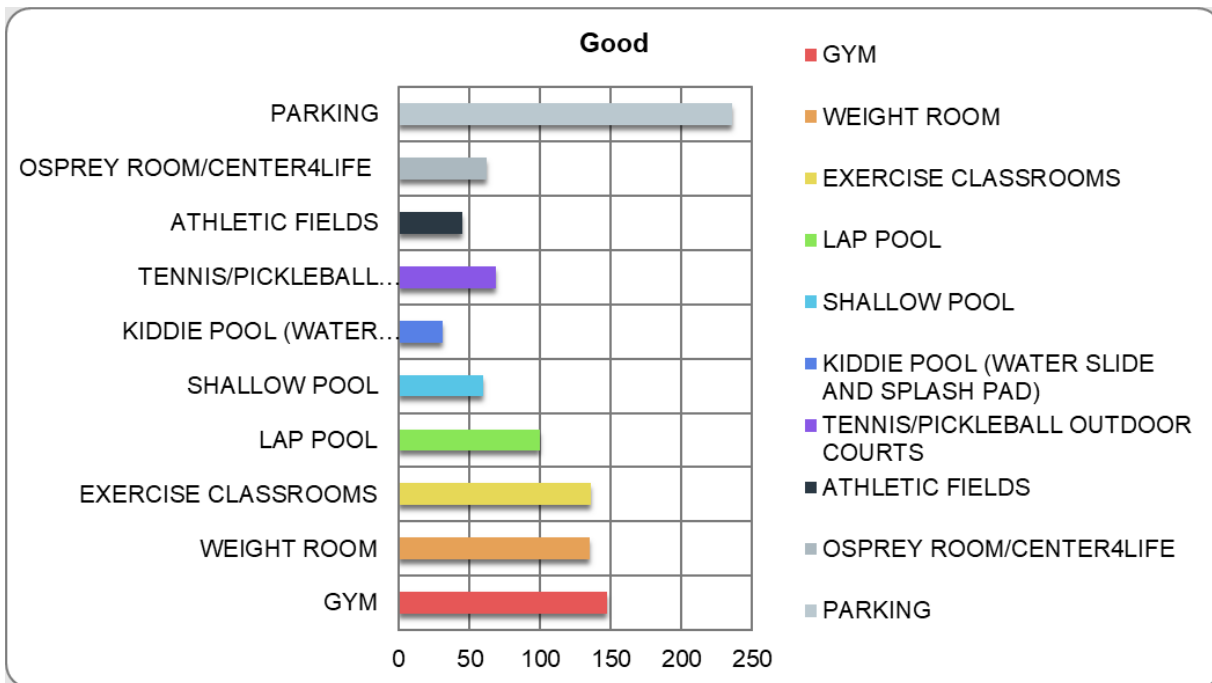
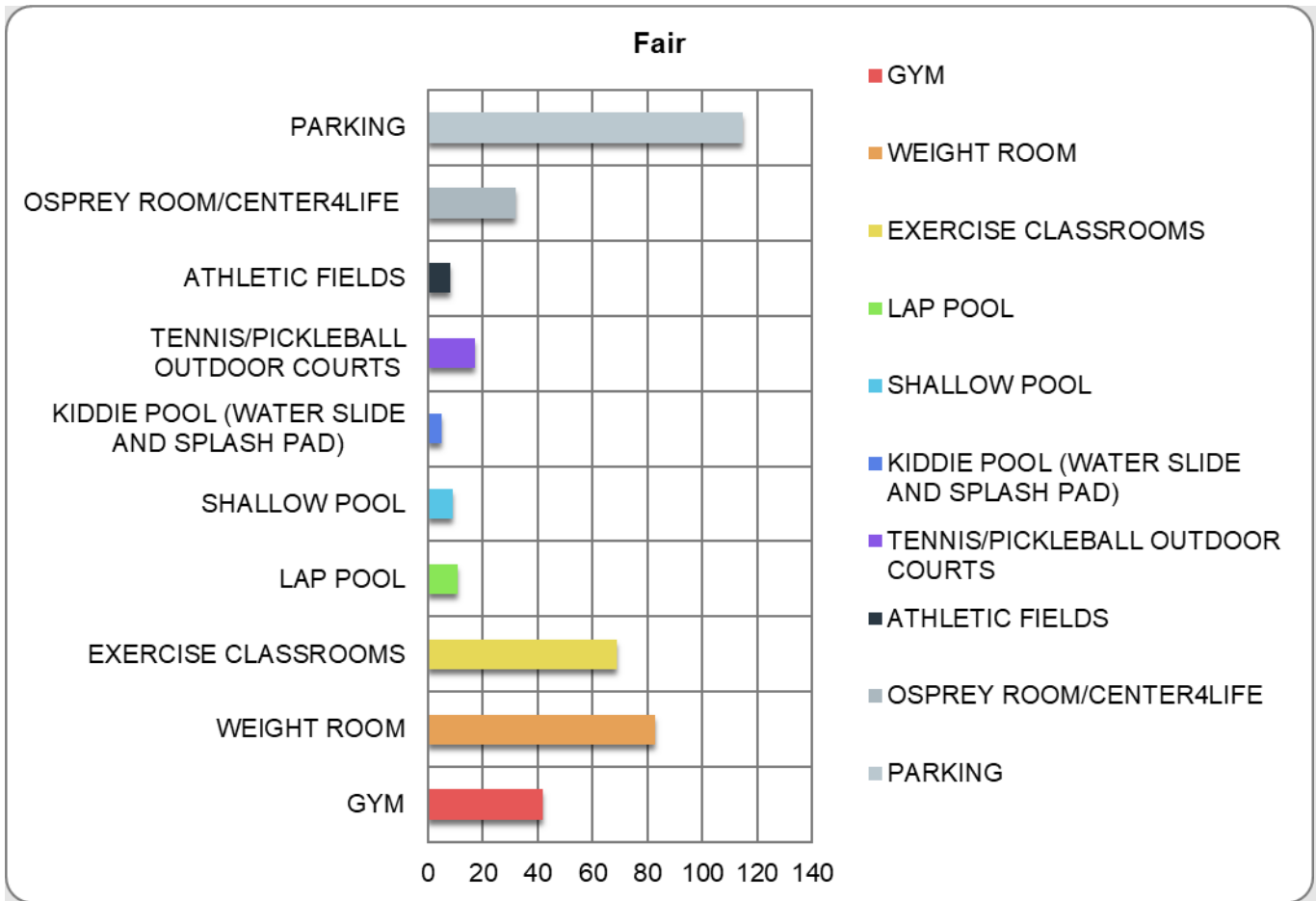
Fair Rating: The parking had the highest fair rating following by the weight room.

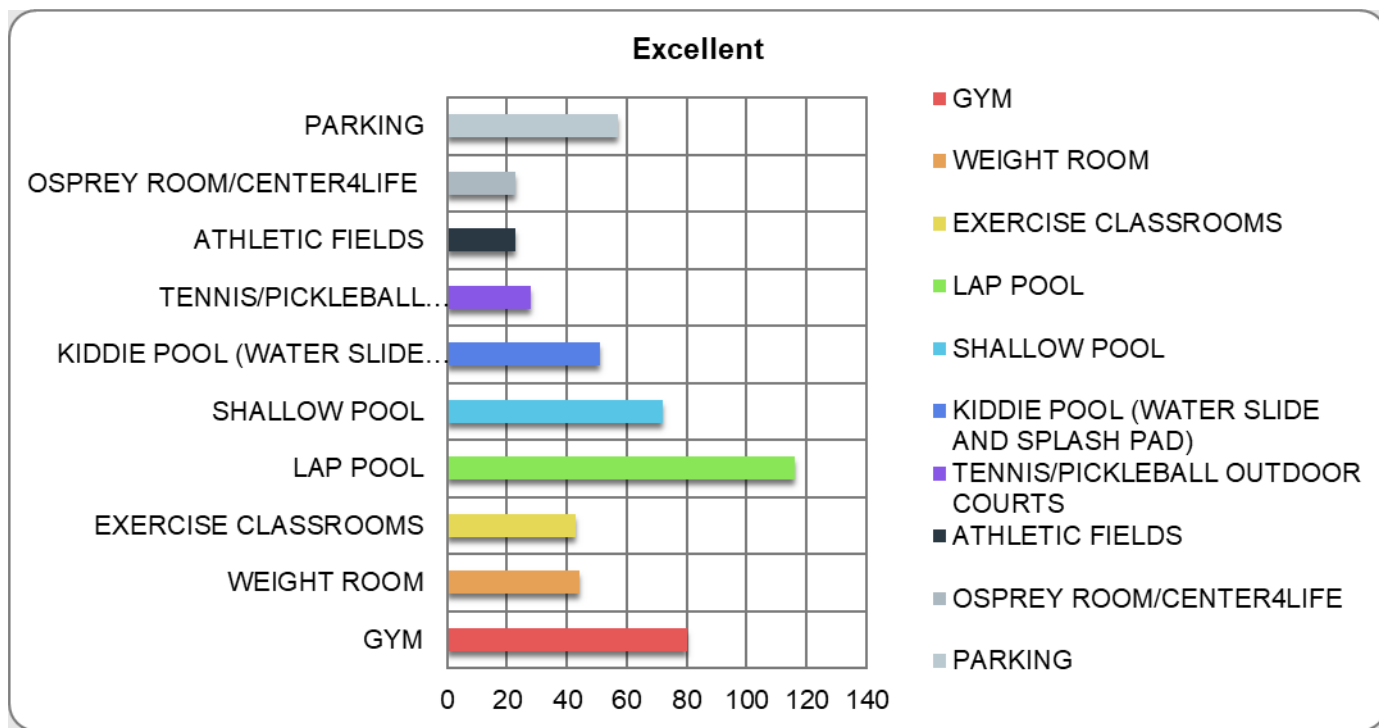
Good Rating: The parking had the highest good rating followed by the gym.

Excellent Rating: The lap pool had the highest excellent rating followed by the gym.

The full results are depicted in the charts below.







**Question 14. Please rate your satisfaction with the following Sanibel Recreation Center programs and activities.**

A total of 444 respondents answered this question with 19 people skipping it. Respondents were asked to rate nine different programs as poor, fair, good, excellent, or I don't know.

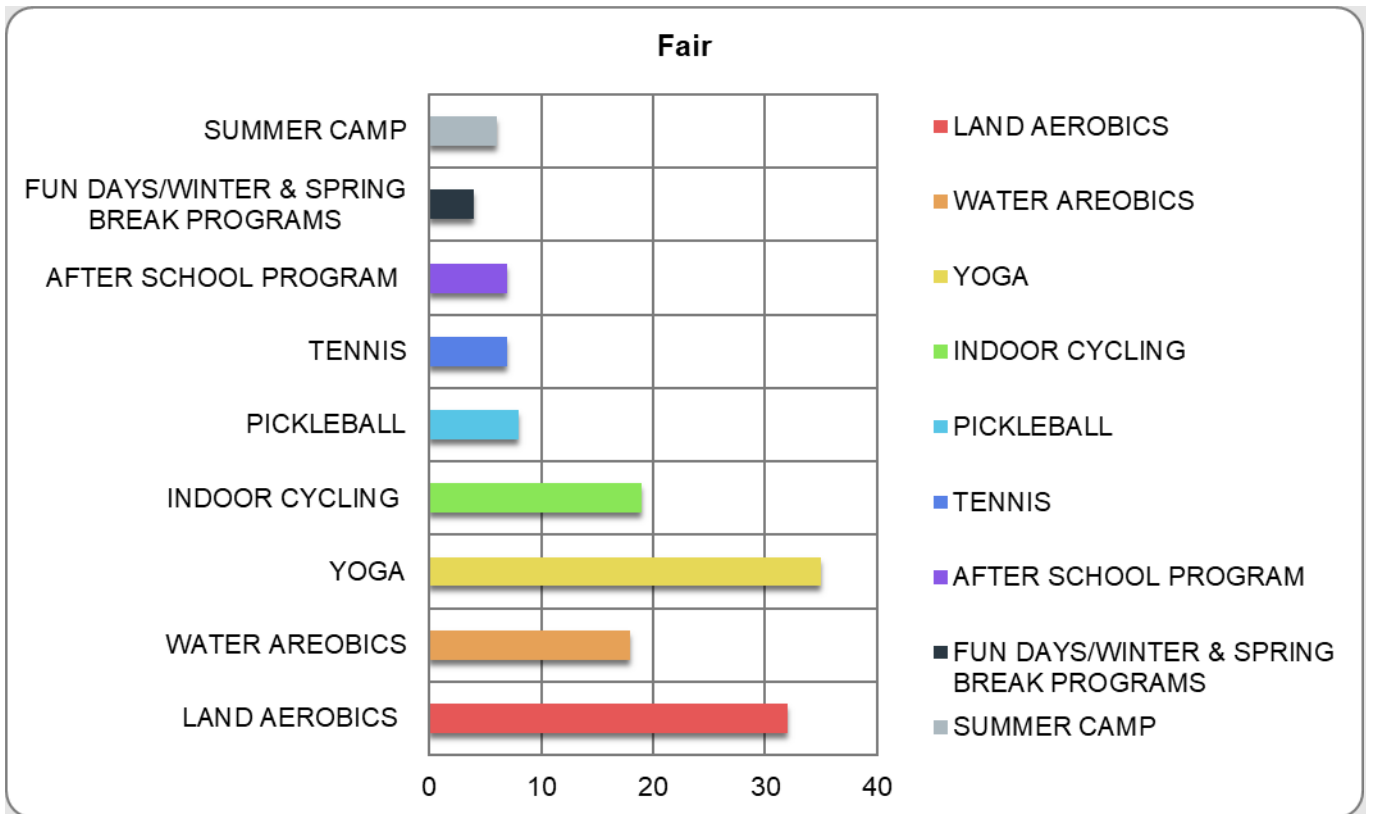
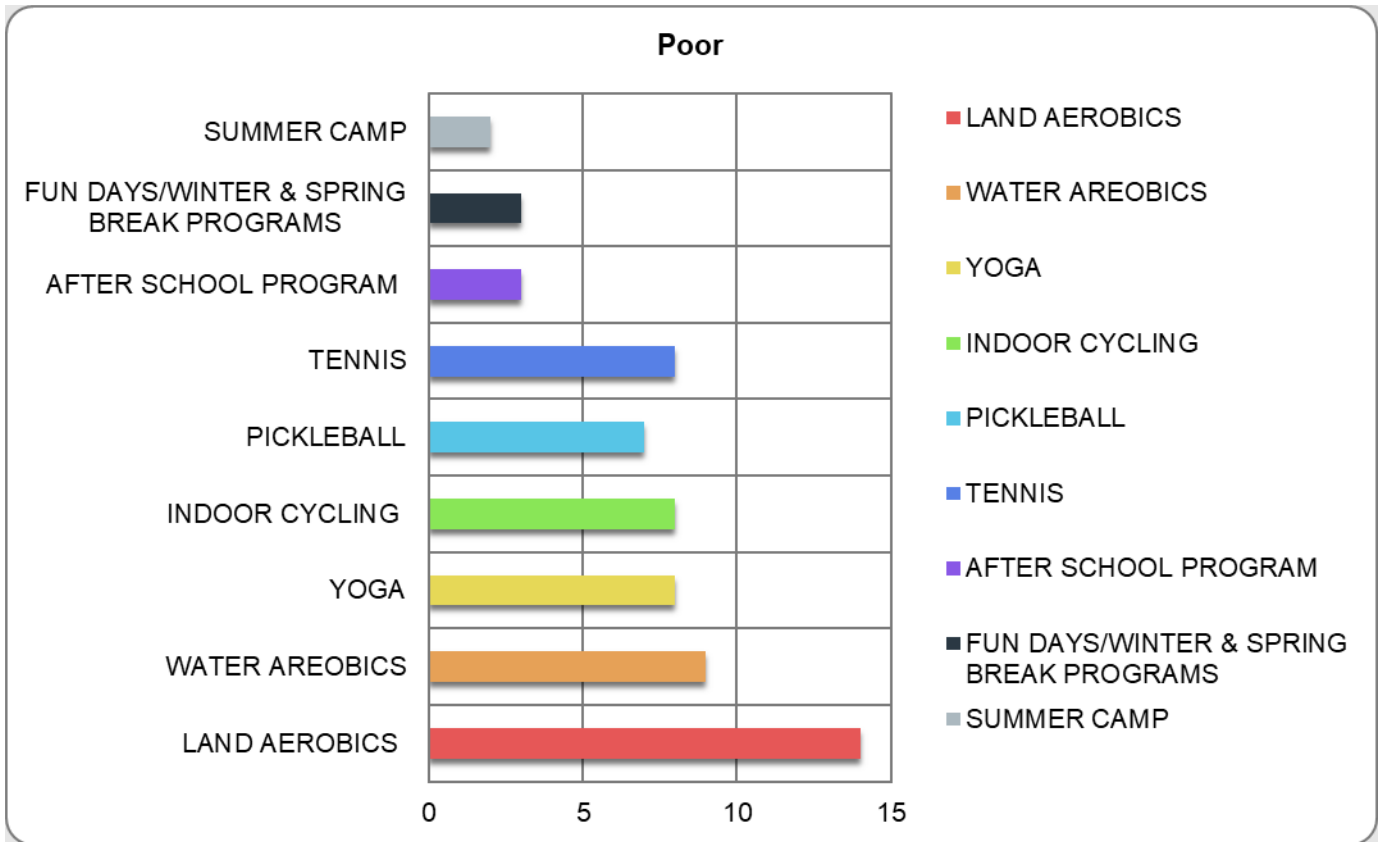
Poor Rating: Land aerobics had the highest poor rating followed by water aerobics.

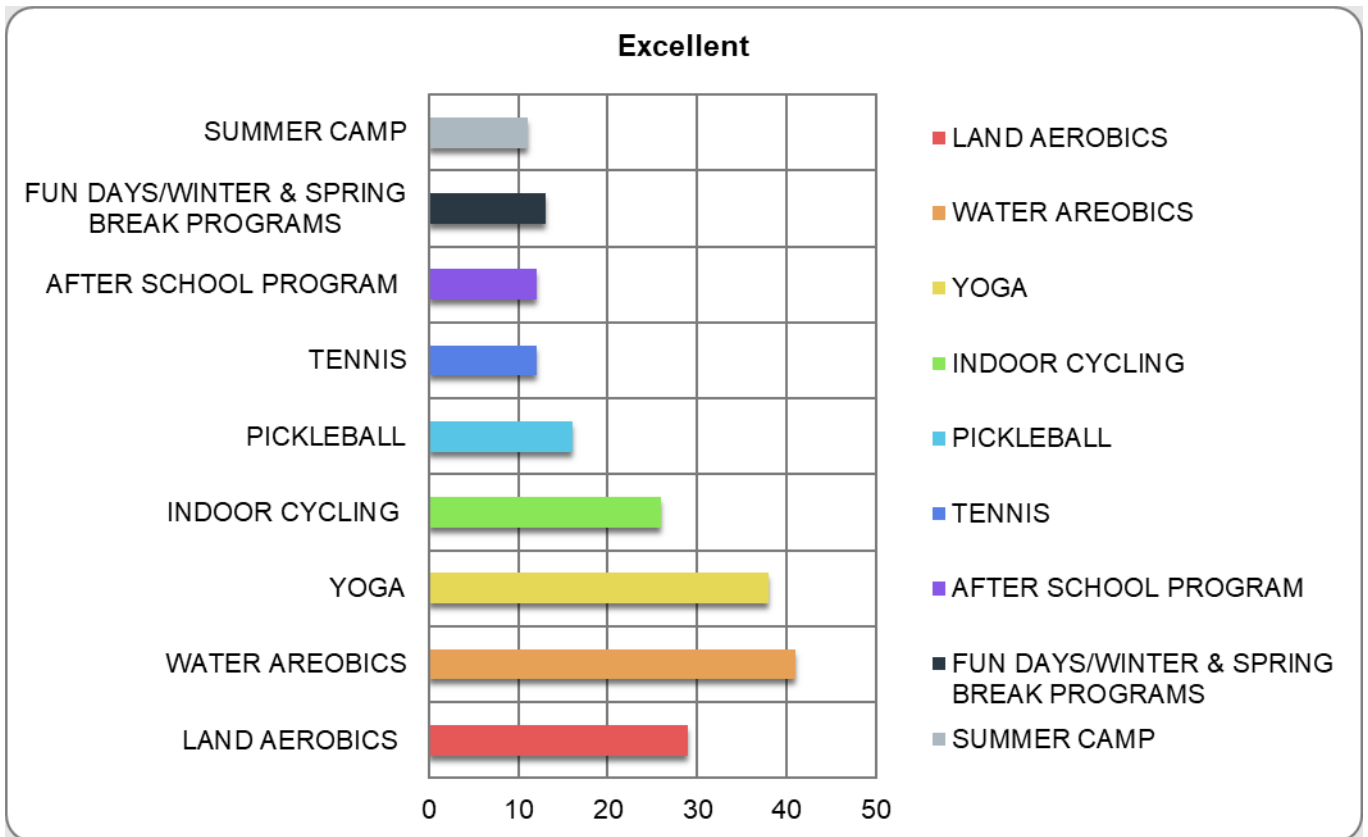
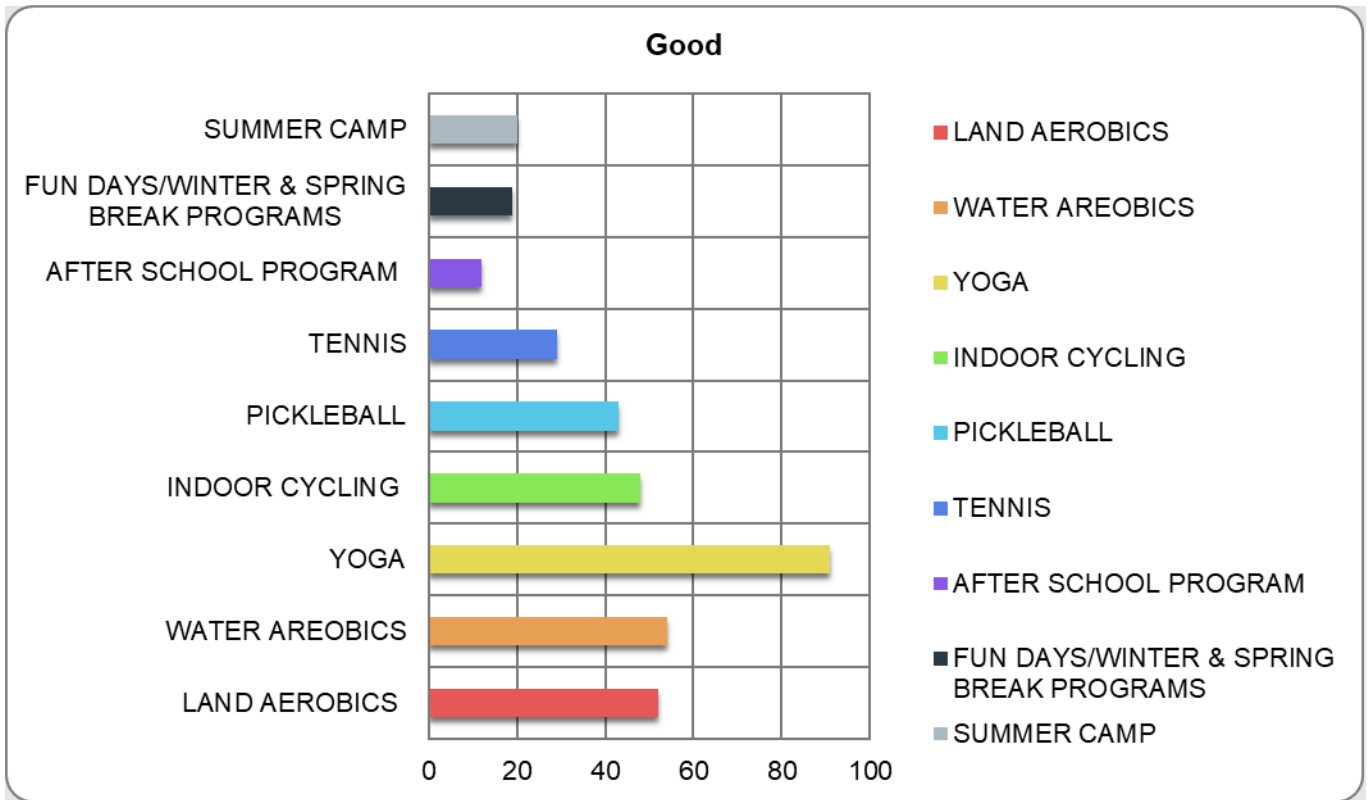
Fair Rating: Yoga had the highest fair rating followed by land aerobics

Good Rating: Yoga had the highest good rating followed by water aerobics.

Excellent Rating: Water aerobics had the highest excellent rating followed by yoga.

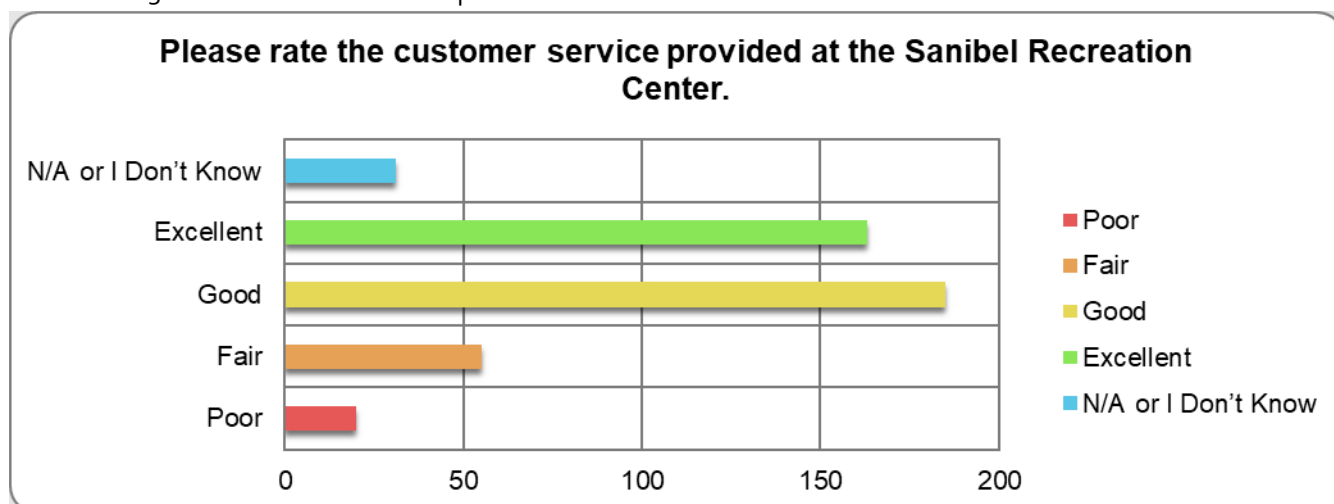
Respondents obviously feel strongly about the group fitness classes with some conflicting results. The full set of results are in the charts below.





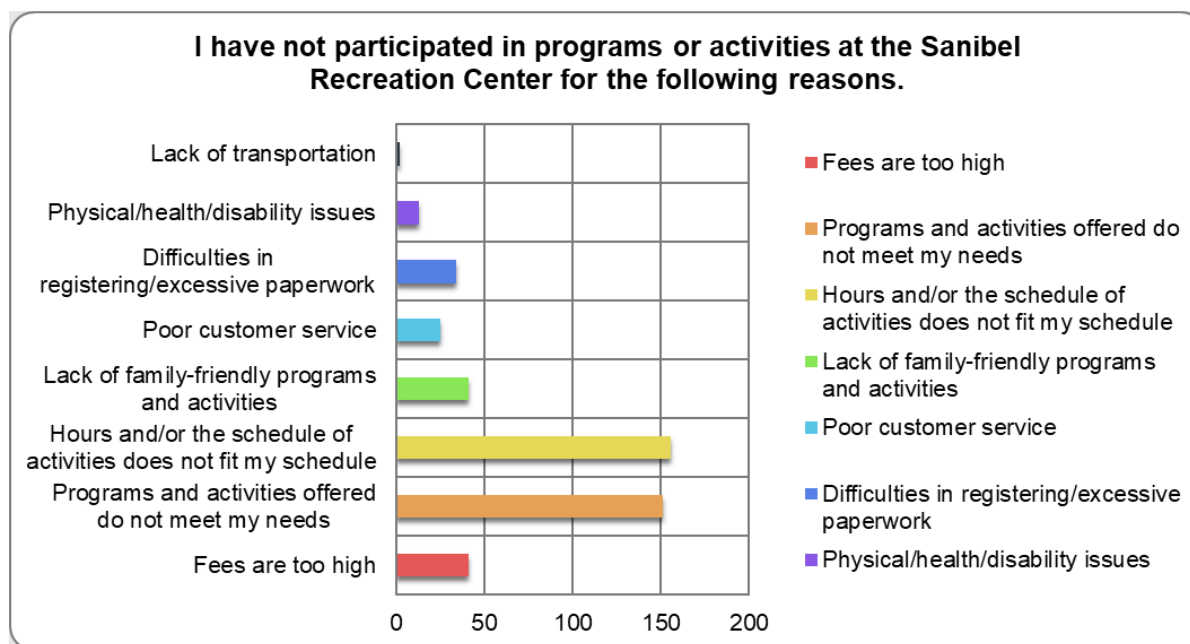
**Question 15. Please rate the customer service provided at the Sanibel Recreation Center.**

A total of 454 respondents answered with question with nine people skipping it. Respondents were asked to rate the customer service as poor, fair, good, excellent, or I don't know. The highest response at 41% was good followed by excellent at 36%. The full results are depicted in the chart below.



**Question 16. I have not participated in programs or activities at the Sanibel Recreation Center for the following reasons.**

A total of 313 responded to this question with 150 skipping it. Respondents were provided eight reasons for not participating in programs and asked to respond. The most popular reason for not participating in programs is that the "hours and/or schedule of activities do not fit my schedule" followed by "programs and activities offered do not meet my needs." The full set of results is depicted below.



The results are also outlined in the table below.



Fees are too high	41	13%
Programs and activities offered do not meet my needs	151	48%
Hours and/or the schedule of activities does not fit my schedule	156	50%
Lack of family-friendly programs and activities	41	13%
Poor customer service	25	8%
Difficulties in registering/excessive paperwork	34	11%
Physical/health/disability issues	13	4%
Lack of transportation	2	1%

**Question 17. I have used the Sanibel Recreation Center in the past but no longer do as I have found alternative ways to meet my recreation and exercise needs including the use of:**

A total of 247 people responded to this question with 216 skipping it. Eight options were provided as alternatives to the Sanibel Recreation Center. The most popular response to this question was “my home” at 60%. All the results are below.

Community House	40	16%
Sanibel Health Club	16	6%
Sundial Pickleball	19	8%
Private clubs	29	12%
Off-Island facilities	39	16%
My home	147	60%
Someone else’s private home	17	7%
Local faith-based organizations	4	2%

**Question**

**18. How do you receive information regarding Sanibel Recreation programs and activities?**

A total of 447 people responded to this question with 16 skipping it. Respondents were provided six options for how they obtain information. The top answer was Recreation Department emails followed by the City of Sanibel website. All the results are below.

Recreation Department emails	297	66%
City of Sanibel website	210	47%
Sanibel Recreation Department staff	45	10%
Local newspapers	137	31%
Word of mouth	98	22%
Island Seniors newsletter (Center 4 Life only)	72	16%

Question

#### 19. Have you ever participated in an activity or program at the Center4Life?

A total of 442 people answered this question with 21 people skipping it. The results are as follows:

Yes	152	34%
No	290	66%

Question

#### 20. Indicate which programs or activities you have participated in with Center4Life.

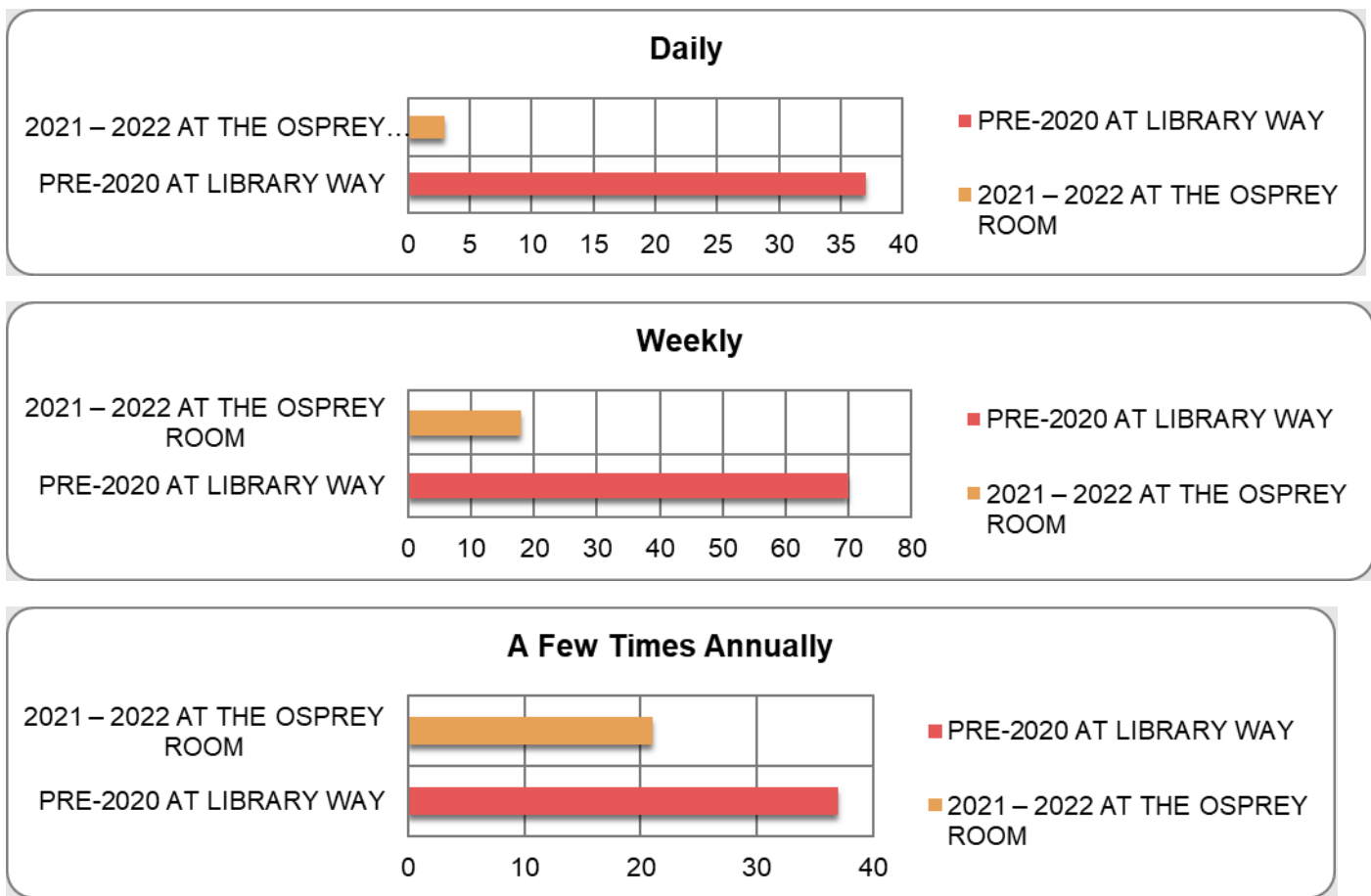
Those who answered “yes” to question 19 were asked which Center4Life programs they have taken advantage of. A total of 144 people responded to this question. Respondents were provided eight Center4Life programs to select and the program with the highest participation is yoga followed by trips. The results are as follows:

Coffee social	35	24%
Hot dog lunches	36	25%
Card games	30	21%
Book club	23	16%
Yoga classes	68	47%
Other classes (meditation, Qigong)	63	44%
Trips (kayaking, plays, museum visits, etc.)	65	45%

Question

#### 21. How often did you (pre-2020) or do you (2021 – 2022) visit the Center4Life?

Respondents were asked facility usage before the pandemic and currently (daily, weekly, monthly, a few times annually, and never). A total of 186 responses were submitted for this question. The results are in the tables below.

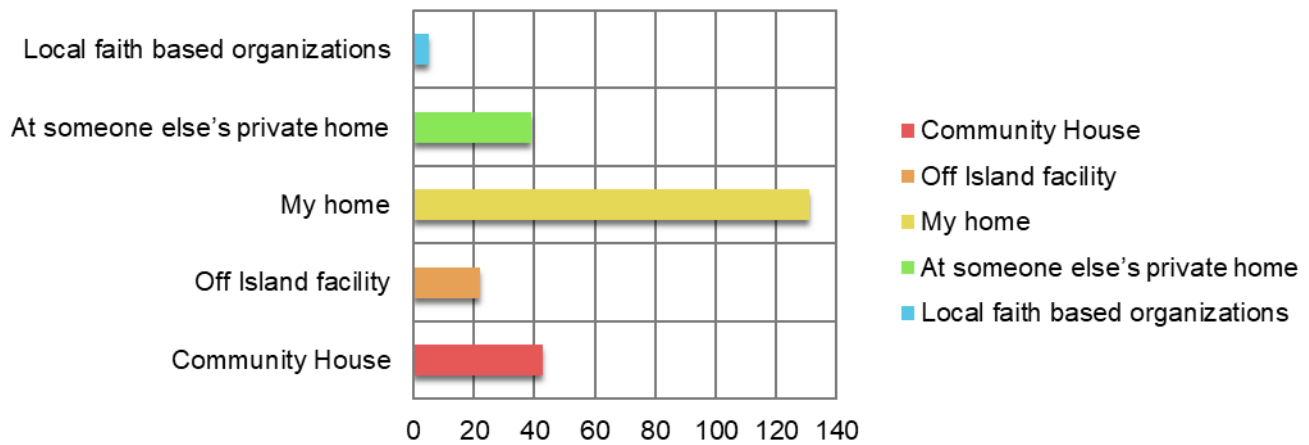


No one responded monthly or never at either time period or location. Clearly there was much more usage at the Library Way location prior to the pandemic for Center4Life programming than there has been at the Osprey Room at the Recreation Center.

**Question 22. When the Center4Life on Library Way closed in March of 2020, where did you go to meet your needs for socialization, recreation, and physical activity?**

A total of 199 people responded to this question. Five options were provided with the top response “My home” followed by the “Community House.” The results are as follows:

**When the Center 4 Life on Library Way closed in March of 2020, where did you go to meet your needs for socialization, recreation, and physical activity?**



**Question 23. Are you currently a member of Island Seniors?**

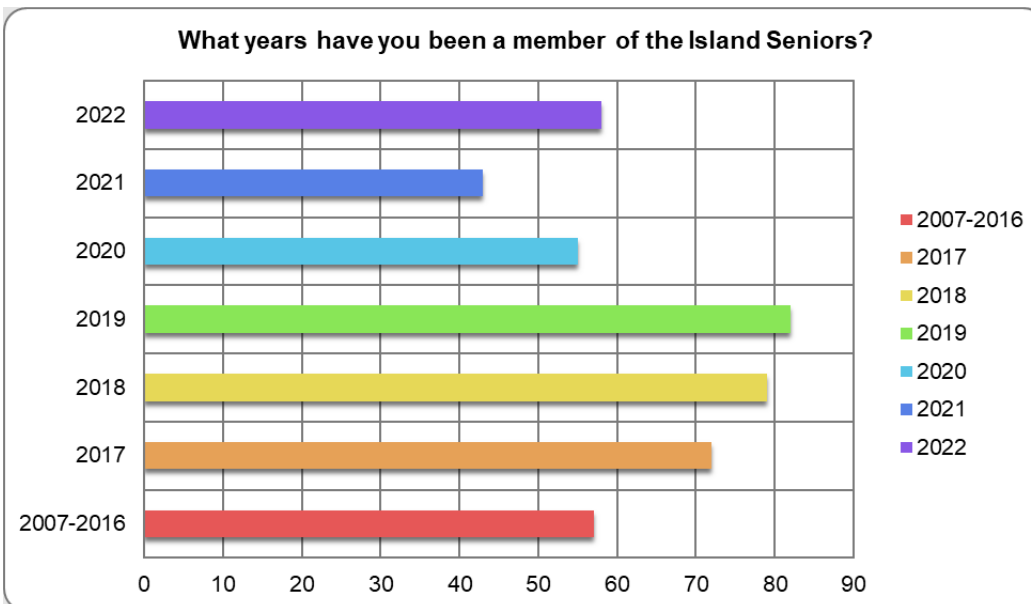
A total of 440 people responded to this question with 23 skipping it. The results are as follows:

Yes	73	16.6%
No	367	83.4%

Question

**24. What years have you been a member of the Island Seniors?**

A total of 111 people answered this question with 352 skipping it. The year with the highest Island Senior membership for the survey respondents was 2019 followed by 2018. The results are as follows:



## Forums

The Social Pinpoint site offered two forum questions. A forum is a specific question that is asked where participants can see all the responses. The Sanibel forum questions were:

If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?

Please share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Center.

A total of 378 comments were shared for both Forum questions. Forum one received a total of 297 comments and Forum two received 81 total comments.

### Forum One Summary

In Forum One, a total of 297 comments were received. The City's stakeholders were asked, "If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?" The topics that received the most feedback include:

- Center4Life: 24 total comments
- Multiple Topics: 21 total comments
- Pool Issues: 20 total comments
- Programming: 20 total comments
- Hours and Scheduling: 16 total comments
- Pickleball: 15 total comments
- Weight Room: 14 total comments

Stakeholders provided comments, suggestions, and ideas in Forum One. This section of the report will provide a summary of each topic area.

### *Center4Life*

The Center4Life received a total of 24 comments. Stakeholders indicated that the senior center and Center4Life are facilities that they desire to retain, renovate, rebuild (Center4Life at proposed building on 2475 Library Way), and continue receiving programming that will serve current and future senior citizens. Senior citizens make up 75% of the City's population. In their comments, stakeholders requested that the Department prioritize facilities and programs dedicated to senior citizens.

### *Multiple*

- There were 21 total comments that provided multiple issues in one comment box. Stakeholders who provided their feedback suggested the following issues be evaluated and improved:
- Programming and activities for children
- Reopen kids pool and splash pad
- Swimming programs for all ages

- Renovate pool
- Increased Recreation Center and pool hours and schedules to accommodate to a wide range of residents
- Childcare services at the Recreation Center
- Recruit and retain qualified staff
- Provide increased staff wages, benefits, training, and incentives
- Dedicated facility for senior citizens (Center4Life)
- Expand and renovate the weight room
- Increase the number of weights
- Upgrade weight room equipment
- Hire additional qualified fitness instructors
- Increase fitness programming

#### *Pool Issues*

A total of 20 comments were made regarding pool issues. Stakeholders are requesting that the Department provide:

- A fully operating children's pool, slide, and splash pad
- Increased pool and lap pool hours to better accommodate weekday, weekend, and seasonal schedules
- Reinstated SWAT swim team and swimming classes
- Additional swimming instructors
- Aquatic exercise classes
- Expansion of lap pool

The comments made by stakeholders indicate that there is a strong interest in utilizing, expanding, and renovating the Recreation Center pool. Aquatic programs and activities were also commented on, requesting that these items also be taken into consideration during planning efforts. Comments made regarding pool issues were supported by 100 stakeholders.

#### *Programming*

There is a strong desire that the Department provide increased youth, adult, and senior programming to residents. There were 20 total comments made regarding programming and over 80 stakeholders in support of those comments.

A topic that was referenced in various comments is the need for increased and improved youth programs, including swim programs. Stakeholders commented on the lack of youth programs being offered. There is a strong desire that the Department provide a variety of the youth programs, such as:

- SWAT swim team
- Gymnastics

- Dance
- Instruments
- Martial arts
- Tennis
- Golf
- Wood shop
- Pottery
- Sewing and knitting
- Community garden
- Pool, slide, and splash pad
- Skate park (area for teens to hang out)
- Appropriate hours for young programs

Stakeholders would also like the Department to expand adult and senior programs by providing a variety of fitness and recreational programs for all levels.

#### *Hours and Scheduling*

Residents and stakeholders provided important feedback on current hours and scheduling issues for the Recreation Center, weight room, and pool. A total of 16 comments were made regarding hours and scheduling.

There is frustration with the current hours and scheduling provided. Stakeholders' comments indicate that it is difficult to use the Recreation Center because operating hours are not conducive to work and family schedules. Over 100 stakeholders supported comments regarding hours and scheduling. There is a desire for the City to increase hours and the number of days the Recreation Center is open to better accommodate its members.

#### *Pickleball*

There is great interest for the Department to provide multiple dedicated outdoor pickleball courts that provide accommodating hours, reservations (including open hours), and programming. Comments made by a stakeholders suggested that the current tennis courts be transferred/refurbished into pickleball courts. There were 15 comments made regarding pickleball. Stakeholders are requesting the Department provide dedicated pickleball courts.

#### *Weight Room*

There is a strong desire for the Department to expand and renovate the current weight room that includes newer/updated equipment. There were 14 total comments made regarding weight room issues. Feedback and suggestions made by the stakeholders regarding the weight room are:

- Expand weight room
- Improve weight room space



- Update current equipment
- Purchase more equipment (separate from aerobic equipment)
- Increase days and hours of weight room

#### *Equipment*

There is a desire for the Department to upgrade and purchase additional equipment in the weight room. Requested equipment upgrades are:

- Weights and dumbbells
- Spin bikes
- Sound equipment
- Purchase additional equipment

#### *Staffing*

There were nine comments made regarding staffing. Stakeholders would like the Department to recruit and retain qualified staff. Poor customer service was noted as a staffing issue. It was suggested that the Department offer incentives, training, professional growth, promotion, and a competitive benefits package for full-time and part-time positions. It was recommended that positions be advertised on various communications channels targeting the desired work force.

#### *New Facilities*

Nine stakeholders shared their desire to have new facilities. While some stakeholders like the current facilities, others suggested the following:

- Dog park
- Running track
- Kids play area
- Volleyball courts
- More bike paths
- Additional pickleball courts
- Completion of Center4Life (new senior center)

#### *Fitness Programming*

Stakeholders shared their desire to have additional fitness programming. There were seven comments made regarding fitness programming. One comment that was supported by 16 stakeholders suggested that the Department provide more fitness programming, classes, and pre-registration for classes such as:

- Tai Chi

- Swim
- Basic ballroom dancing
- Yoga for athletes
- Walk for fitness
- Running for beginners
- Aerobics for beginners, medium, and advanced

#### *Miscellaneous Topics*

In addition to the topics that received the most feedback, stakeholders also provided a variety of miscellaneous topics that they would like to bring to the Department's attention. The 11 miscellaneous topics are:

- City Services: Received two comments regarding issues with the City's pavement and parking. Stakeholders are requesting the parking lot be paved and additional parking be provided around school and City properties.
- Communication and Promotion: Received three comments suggesting the Department increase advertisement for recruiting opportunities, particularly targeting high school and college students to fill lifeguard positions.
- Customer Service: Received two comments that desire friendlier and a more welcoming Recreation Center staff.
- Events: Received two comments from stakeholders requesting additional events be held for youth age kids, such as socials and dances. Parents are looking for the Department to provide recurring teen events.
- Facilities: Received four comments requesting the Department expand the Recreation Center, particularly the exercise room, and better maintenance of the tennis courts.
- Instructors: Received two comments requesting the Department hire a variety of qualified instructors to lead a wide range of fitness classes and levels. Stakeholders would like instructors to provide extended hours, including early mornings and evenings.
- Fees and Charges: Received three comments that suggest the Department reevaluate the current fee structure. Stakeholders recommend that the fee structure have three tiers: family, non-visitor (resident), and visitor.
- Membership: Received two comments from stakeholders that desire the Department provide a newer online scheduling system and suggested that membership fees have two tiers: resident and non-resident.
- Facility Maintenance: Received two comments requesting renovations be made to the shower floors and providing additional lighting in showers and on tennis courts.
- Facility Hours: Received one that was supported by with 27 stakeholders. There is a desire for additional hours of operation year-round, including weekend and holidays.
- Volunteer Program: Received one comment that was supported by 10 stakeholders requesting staff conduct outreach efforts to retain volunteers from the community.

## Forum Two Summary

Forum Two received a total of 81 comments. Stakeholders were asked to “Share thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of the Sanibel Recreation Center.” The topics that received the most feedback include:

- Pool Issues: 29 total comments
- Hours and Scheduling: 28 total comments
- Multiple Topics: 17 total comments
- Facility Maintenance: 11 total comments
- Programming: 11 total comments
- Weight Room: 11 total comments
- Staffing: 8 total comments

Stakeholders provided comments, suggestions, and ideas in Forum Two. This section of the report will provide a summary of each topic area.

### *Pool Issues*

Stakeholders provided important input about ongoing pool issues. A total of 29 comments were made regarding pool issues such as:

- Pool hours
- Schedule
- Increased programming for adult/youth/senior citizens
- Reopening of the kids’ pool, slide, and splash pad

There is great frustration that the kids’ pool is often closed and under-utilized. Additional frustrations are due to limited staff and lifeguards, pool hours, schedule, lap pool reservations, and aerobic classes.

Stakeholders are requesting the Department reopen the kids’ pool, slide, and splash pad, as well as reinstate youth SWAT swim team, and child/youth lessons and classes. Additionally, there is a desire the Department provide adult and senior citizen programming, classes, and expanded lap pool reservations. Comments regarding pool issues were supported by 194 stakeholders.

### *Hours and Scheduling*

A total of 28 comments were made regarding facility hours and scheduling. One issue that many commented on is the limited hours of use currently provided to Recreation Center members. Residents and stakeholders are requesting the Department expand the Recreation Center’s hours of operations (open earlier and close later) to accommodate and align with stakeholder’s work and family schedules. Additionally, there is a desire that program schedules be planned early in the year to allow members time to register and plan accordingly. Comments regarding hours and scheduling were supported by 315 stakeholders.

### *Multiple*

Stakeholders provided input on multiple issues in one comment box. There were 17 comments that provided feedback on multiple topics. Stakeholders who provided their feedback suggested the following issues be evaluated and improved:

- Better programming and activities for children
- Reopen kids pool and splash pad
- Reinstate swim programs for all ages and youth swim team
- Expand Recreation Center and pool hours and schedules
- Hire additional qualified fitness instructors
- Dedicated facility for senior citizens (Center4Life)
- Expand and renovate the weight room
- Increase the number of weights
- Upgrade weight room equipment
- Increase fitness programming
- Benchmark other competitive facilities

### *Facility Maintenance*

There were 11 comments made regarding maintenance of the Recreation Center. Feedback regarding maintenance issues include:

- Reuse of facility rooms and space for optimization
- Expand weight room
- Purchase additional equipment and weights
- Conserve facility power/energy
- Renovate/repair showers
- Increase trash bin throughout facility
- Install ceiling fans

### *Programming*

Stakeholders provided their input about the Department's programming. There were 11 comments submitted and 72 stakeholders who supported those comments. Recreation Center members are interested in year-round special programs, youth activities, childcare, and educational and nutrition classes.

### *Weight Room*

The weight room has been commented on in other topic areas, indicating that there is a strong desire for the Department to make several improvements to the weight room. There were 11 comments made regarding weight room issues. Suggested improvements to the weight room are:

- Expand the weight room
- Maintain existing equipment
- Purchase additional equipment
- Reuse space to optimize room usage

One comment suggested that the Department check similar neighboring facilities and incorporate their best practices.

### *Miscellaneous Topics*

In addition to the topics that received the most feedback, stakeholders also provided a variety of miscellaneous topics that they would like to bring to the Department's attention. The 16 additional topics are:

- **Staffing:** Received eight comments. Stakeholders are requesting the Department hire and retain qualified staff, and provide professional development and training opportunities, benefits, staff incentives, and better wages. It has been suggested that advertisements for open positions should be targeted toward high school and college students.
- **Facilities:** Received seven comments. Stakeholders desire a designated facility (Center4Life) dedicated to senior citizens. There's also a request to expand facility hours to accommodate work and family schedules and provide better customer service.
- **Fitness Programming:** Received seven comments regarding improved fitness programming. Stakeholders would like additional fitness classes, additional class hours (early mornings and evenings), qualified instructors, and fitness classes for all levels.
- **Customer Service:** Received five comments regarding improved customer service. Members are requesting the Department provide complete membership offerings and friendlier, more hands-on staff.
- **Center4Life:** Received four comments requesting the Department keep its commitment to providing a facility designated for senior citizens.
- **Fees and Charges:** Received four comments that suggested the Department reevaluate the current fee structure. Stakeholders recommend that the fee structure have three tiers: family, non-visitor (resident), and visitor.
- **Instructors:** Received four comments requesting the Department hire a variety of instructors to lead a wide range of fitness classes and levels. Stakeholders would like instructors to provide extended hours, including early mornings and evenings.
- **Membership:** Received three comments from stakeholders who would like the Department to provide a newer online scheduling system and suggested that membership fees have two tiers: resident and non-resident.

- New Facilities: Received two comments requesting the Department provide dedicated pickleball courts and a track around the field.
- Pickleball: Received two comments that would like to see half of the current tennis courts be converted to permanent pickleball courts or provide dedicated pickleball courts in addition to the tennis courts. There is a desire to have pickleball programming and tournaments.
- Services received two comments requesting the Department provide stronger internet service and additional senior citizen services, including a dedicated senior center facility.
- Events: Received two comments that desire additional events, such as a dance for all ages during the weekend and events catered for kids.
- Communication and Promotion: Received one comment requesting that fitness class schedules be posted on social media. To unite the community with Department staff, it was suggested the Department should spotlight a staff member and/or fitness instructor. The spotlights should be shared on social media and the Department's website.
- Equipment: Received one comment suggesting that weights and bands be replaced to avoid the risk of injury.
- Green Practices: Received one comment requesting the Department evaluate the pesticides being used on and around the playground and the potential harms it may have on children.

## Ideas Wall

The Ideas Wall allowed site visitors to weigh in on six topic areas, including:

- Customer Service
- Family Activities
- Parks and Facilities
- Program Instructors
- Senior Activities
- Youth Activities

The Ideas Wall is an interactive tool and allows people to "like" or "dislike" comments. In addition, site visitors can also respond to a comment. In total, 275 comments were made on the Ideas Wall. A summary of each topic area follows.

### Customer Service (31 comments)

The comments made in the customer service section have been organized into categories for easier reporting, including general, fitness programming, fees and charges, instructors, staffing, volunteer program, and weight room.

#### General

- Staff are not listening regarding feedback on instructors, classes being offered, or new ideas presented – participants need a systematic way to provide feedback and to see that someone is listening, and changes are being made. (12)

- We are pleased with the friendliness of the front desk staff – they are helpful, patient, and courteous. (10)
- Consider having a team of volunteers greet customers, answer questions, provide tours, etc. All non-Recreation Center functions should be removed from the front desk. (8)
- Staff was not friendly, no tour provided – customer service training is needed. (7)
- Need early hours (7 a.m.) and to be open on Sundays. (7)
- For those who paid during COVID and never got the benefit of using the facility, consider providing a complimentary annual membership. (4)
- Be more transparent – share information on revenues/expenditures. (4)
- Bring back the suggestion box and consider creating a resident advisory board for recreation to obtain input for operations and activities, the Center4Life, and SUP. (3)
- Staff don't return calls. (3)
- Expand the hours the kiddie pool is open.

#### *Fitness Programming*

- Personal training would be a great addition and provide more revenue to the Recreation Center. (9)
- Add a half an hour between the end of power sculpting and Saturday pickleball so that there is time to clean up after one activity before another begins. (2)

#### *Fees and Charges*

- We are vacationers who have enjoyed using the facility. The past couple of years the prices have increased, and we no longer sign up for our entire vacation – just on the days of body sculpting. (1)

#### *Instructors*

- Recruit new instructors and pay them enough to keep them involved at the Recreation Center. (17)
- A variety of instructors are needed – I don't want to take spin, yoga, Pilates, and strength training with the same instructor. (12)
- This is a fitness facility for all to use – not just retired people. Need classes that are challenging and a variety of instructors.

#### *Staffing*

- Pay the staff like valued members of the community and work hard to keep them to reduce turnover – consider incentives. (6)
- Hire more help for the front desk.



### *Volunteer Program*

- Other organizations utilize volunteers to augment their staff – especially with respect to community outreach and customer service. The Recreation Center should have a robust volunteer program with a focus on greeting people, providing information on programs and activities, answering questions, and providing tours. (16)
- I was a staff volunteer for several years, teaching new members how to use the equipment and general upkeep in the weight room. In the year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we received no encouragement or recognition for our work. It would be beneficial for the Recreation Center and the members to resume this program.

### *Weight Room*

- Triple the size of the weight room and the cardio area. (7)
- The weight room is too small for personal trainers, and this is a public facility. (2)
- We need more extensive weight training equipment with access 24/7.

### *Family Activities (16 comments)*

On the Ideas Wall under the Family Activities section, comments have been organized into the following categories for easier reporting: events, facility rentals, fees and charges, hours and scheduling, programming, and services.

### *Events*

- Organize a street festival where you close the street and have live music, craft beer, and food trucks. This could be done in the same location as the Farmers Market. Offer free admission to Recreation Center members. (2)
- Organize a 5K race on Sanibel along with a kid's fun run and give medals to participants.
- Bring in a bounce house, an inflatable slide for kids, and hire some live music.

### *Facility Rentals*

- Allow people to rent space at the Recreation Center swimming pool for birthday parties – this could generate revenue for the City and use an asset that is not currently being used. (8)

### *Hours & Schedule*

- The children's pool remains empty – please get this facility open for families – both residents and visitors. (20)
- Add more hours of operation so families can come and use the facility when parents are not working – for example 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on weekends with open gym and expanded pool hours. People want to use the Recreation Center in the evening. (17)
- More after-work fitness options and hours. Seems the Recreation Center is geared toward retirees. The working population needs access to the facility and fitness programming after 5 p.m. (9)
- The Recreation Center should be open on holidays (like private health clubs) when people are off work and interested in exercising. (4)

- I don't get any benefit from my family membership because the Center tends to only be open when I am at work. (2)

### *Programming*

- The Sanibel vision statement includes having a "diverse population," yet the City is moving away from diversity. All the activities appear to be geared toward seniors and in the middle of the day. The gym is closed nights and Sundays. The after-school program is a shell of its former self. Families are moving off island. If you want families, we need community resources. (7)
- I would love to see all the former programming back up and running – for young and old. (2)
- Senior programming has recently started to take precedence over youth and family programming. (2)
- Bring back the swim team.
- Tennis courts should be free and easily accessible with parking and bathroom facilities with lights for evening tennis.

### *Services*

- We have younger kids and older kids but can never do anything together at the Recreation Center because the pool is closed and there is no option for childcare. We would love a Kids Zone like the YMCA to accommodate the youngest members of the family while the rest of us enjoy all that the Sanibel Recreation Center has to offer. (4)

### *Parks and Facilities (78 comments)*

The comments regarding parks and facilities have been organized into the following categories for easier reporting: bike paths, City services, facility maintenance, fees and charges, green practices, hours and scheduling, new facilities and amenities, pickleball, pools, tennis, and weight room.

### *Bike Paths (11)*

- The Sanibel bike trail needs to be resurfaced, particularly on Middle Gulf. (12)
- The bike path along San-Cap Road needs some shade – plant more trees. (2)
- Planting trees along San-Cap Road is prohibitively expensive and unrealistic – wear a hat and sunscreen.
- Extend the bike path on West Gulf to Beach Access 7 – add a bike lane on West Gulf after Rabbit. (2)
- Please do not extend the bike path past Rabbit Road. West Gulf past Rabbit is a residential street with little traffic – not a place for tourists. (1)
- I travel the stretch of path of West Gulf daily and the road is dangerous. A shared use path would keep most people on the one side of the road, and it would be safer.
- Repave the large sections one at a time rather than patching. Sanibel should study which areas of the path should be widened when funds are available. The bike club provided info to the City, but no action has been taken.

- The bike paths need to be resurfaced – especially on Middle Gulf Drive.
- I use the bike paths regularly and I don't think there is a need to constantly repave and resurface them. The bike paths on Sanibel are good – no need to spend more money on them.
- Sanibel will soon be revising the master plan for the SUP. This should be debated there.

#### *City Services (6)*

- Trash cans are needed at Fulgur Street Park. (3)
- We need trash cans at the entrance to Beach Access 1 through Beach Access 7 on West Gulf. (2)
- There are trash cans on big public beaches. The small accesses are meant for residents. Trash cans must be emptied and that means more staff. Bring your own plastic bag and take your trash with you (along with trash left by others).
- No, we don't need trash cans on small beaches. Trash cans are permission to bring garbage to the beach. Take your trash with you!
- It would be wonderful to have more fishing available on Sanibel property. Fresh water fishing here is exciting and pretty solid. Not everyone has access to a boat or their own lake. This might require opening some bank areas (clearing selected vegetation).

#### *Facility Maintenance (1)*

- Improve the locker room facilities – specifically the showers.

#### *Fees and Charges*

- I think the current Recreation Center fee would be reasonable with additional programming and expanded hours. Residents get a break already.
- Weekly tourist passes are a good money-making idea – they pay for the ability to use the Center.
- Recreation Center fees should be lower. My annual property tax bill includes payment for the Recreation Center therefore I recommend a fee of \$50 for residents.

#### *Green Practices (4)*

- Conduct an energy audit at the Recreation Center and make changes to reduce electrical use. (1)
- Install solar panels on the Recreation Center. (1)
- Permeable pavement is better for the environment – and does not create dust. (2)  
<https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-permeable-pavement>

#### *Hours and Scheduling (5)*

- It would be great if there were hours at the Recreation Center for people who work – I work from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day, which means I can never use this facility. Not everyone is retired. (27)

- Recreation Center needs more hours. Open it earlier and keep open longer. It should be open on weekends like it used to be. Open the lap pool on weekends. Keep the lap pool open until the Center closes daily. (4)
- I think the way individual rooms are used needs to be rethought. So often the smaller rooms are empty and not used. Perhaps they could be combined to make a larger instructional area. Can the gym be used more effectively? It's not often used. Find a way to divide the space for various classes to be held simultaneously. Add acoustical tile to the gym to make this possible.
- My wife uses the weight room three to four times per week. I go with her on Tuesdays and Thursdays to play basketball in the gym. This is the only activity I do with my membership. Please continue to make the gym (or half) available for me to continue.

#### *New Facilities and Amenities (17)*

- Add more shade to the Community Park playground. (7)
- Add outdoor fitness stations at Periwinkle next to the playground. (4)
- Add a lighted basketball court to replace the sand volleyball court and shuffleboard courts at Community Park. (3)
- Build an off-leash dog park adjacent to the playground on Periwinkle. (3)
- Add a screened-in porch at the Recreation Center for group fitness classes. (3)
- Like the playground at Periwinkle, make the playground at the Recreation Center accessible to everyone, free of charge, so it can be used on Sundays – it's the only playground for older kids on this side of the island. (3)
- I enjoy the world-class "playground"/exercise park and skate park facilities at the Recreation Center, and I do not want to share the maintenance and liability expense that could jeopardize the continued use by sharing it with non-paying members.
- Pave the Recreation Center parking lot. (3)
- Designate an area for dogs for seniors who are less mobile – require registration.
- Add a Jacuzzi at the Recreation Center.
- Can there be a dedicated yoga studio with hardwood floors and bars without mirrors and a cement floor? (1)

#### *Other (6)*

- The Parks & Rec master plan from 2002 is in serious need of an update. Several improvements mentioned in the plan were not built or ended up differently than proposed. Other needs have developed over time. Sanibel should develop a new master plan for Parks & Recreation facilities on the island. Will your report include a new master plan for Parks & Recreation? (3)
- I am a full-time Sanibel resident and Recreation Center member. My firm designed many community recreation centers and higher education facilities. We consulted with specialists regarding operational efficiencies and space utilization. If you are teamed with a specialist in this area, then you are on the right path to success. (2)

- Is BerryDunn the right kind of consultant for the City? I thought they were experts in this area.
- Limit weekly passes for tourists. It's not right when residents who support the Recreation Center via taxes cannot use it because the classes and facilities are occupied by tourists. The Recreation Center should serve residents first, instead of making money on tourists' passes.
- For the Sanibel resident, the Recreation Center is the best deal on the island, and beyond! (1)

#### *Pickleball (10)*

- Add more dedicated outdoor pickleball courts. Lines painted on tennis courts are not desirable. (11)
- Pickleball popularity has exploded because it can be enjoyed by all ages and all ability levels. More dedicated courts are needed at the Recreation Center. Adding pickleball lines to a tennis court will not draw the same level of interest as dedicated courts. (5)
- Pickleball is the fastest-growing sport for people of all ages. It would be ideal if there were dedicated courts. Superimposing pickleball lines on a tennis court is quite acceptable but with better barriers between the courts. Let's enhance pickleball further. (4)
- Build pickleball courts next to the tennis courts or build new tennis courts. Separate the two activities instead of using the same courts for both. (2)
- Superimposing pickleball onto tennis courts is a huge distraction for tennis players and unacceptable. There are adequate pickleball courts indoors, and that's where they should remain unless new courts can be added outdoors without impacting the existing tennis courts.
- I would like to see outdoor pickleball courts added rather than combining with tennis as the additional lines are confusing.
- Would like outdoor pickleball courts available on the weekend.

#### *Pools (7)*

- The restrictive hours and persistent closure of the kids' pool is a missed opportunity for the Recreation Center to be a locus of family and community interaction. Parents, not just kids, could and would gather to share space and conversation in the children's area after work and school. (24)
- Extend the lap pool hours. The pool is very popular – why does it close at 4 p.m.? At a minimum, restore the old hours. Even better, extend the hours. Open the lap pool on the weekends for full days. The pool will get more crowded when the water classes and swim team are fully back. Every member should be able to swim without waiting for a long time. (6)
- Make the lap pool larger – add at least two lanes. The pool gets very crowded when classes and swim team are in session. A larger pool will allow more people to use it.
- The cost to add lanes would be prohibitive – we need to work with what we have. Maybe close off lap swimming while the swim team is in the pool.
- The cost to add lanes might be prohibitive, but the idea should be considered.

- When there is swim team, no one else can swim and it's difficult to get to the pool at other times.
- Add more shade and amenities at the leisure pool. (2)
- Add shade over the shallow pool for exercise classes.

#### *Tennis (2)*

- The tennis course should be available to members during closed hours via a side gate with a membership card reader. A tennis court, like a playground, does not require staff to be used. For people who work full-time, the ability to use the courts early in the day, late in the day, or on a Sunday would be extremely valuable. (5)
- The tennis courts are amazing resources! I would like to see a fall and spring tournament or regular league play for 3.0, 3.5, and 4.0 singles and doubles players. There are few options on the island for tournament or league play particularly for younger islanders (under 50) and those you cannot afford to join one of the private clubs. This could also be an intergenerational activity – pairing an under 50 and over 50 in doubles, etc. (1)

#### *Weight Room (10)*

- The weight room should be expanded should be expanded and the equipment updated. (8)
- The weight room needs to be larger. I recommend an opening from the weight room to the Egret room. The Egret room would house the free weights and stretching equipment. (8)
- The current weight room with only weight training equipment would be great. Move the cardio machines into another room. (3)
- The weight room should be enlarged and separated from the cardio equipment. There is also a poor selection of weight equipment with a great need to add free weights. I do not use the weight room because of the lack of free weights and the clutter in the free weight area.
- I agree that the cardio equipment should be in separate room than the weight room. Also, the weight room needs to be expanded with the addition of a full complement of free weights.
- I have seen "Power Plates" in several fitness facilities. They don't take up much space and have many benefits. This would be an excellent investment and popular with many members. (2)
- Add Pilates reformer equipment and classes. (1)
- The weight room needs a thorough cleaning beyond wiping down seats, handles, etc. It would be great if you could keep the weight room open until 7 p.m. Monday – Thursday. (1)

#### *Program Instructors (29 comments)*

The comments regarding program instructor have been organized for easier reporting into the following categories: events, fitness programming, instructors, programming, and services.

#### *Events (1)*

- Organize a triathlon on Sanibel and offer training classes in swimming, running, and cycling.

### *Fitness Programming (12)*

- Restore programs and hours cut by the City; bring back staff and programs cut during the pandemic. Do not raise taxes to pay for programs that are provided as basic services in most cities. (17)
- We need several levels of levels of Pilates classes. A more methodical, slow approach to Pilates would be helpful for the senior members. (8)
- Would like to have more aerobics classes. (8)
- We need more water aerobics classes at an earlier hour. Prior to the pandemic, there was a wider variety of classes that were well-attended. (6)
- Need to look at the Zumba classes. Seems we are at the bottom of the totem pole. We used to be the biggest class until you put us at noon. We need it back at 10 a.m. Listen to the people – you will have more members. (5)
- Please bring back a full schedule of aqua aerobics like we had pre-pandemic. (5)
- The International Health and Racquet Sports Association (IHRSA) has an annual trade show. They have speakers from the health and wellness industry, the newest equipment, the newest software, and many exhibits. This would be an excellent trade show to send a City representative to – I believe it would contribute to our Fit4Life programs at the Sanibel Recreation Center. (3)
- Please Zoom Ginger’s workouts so we can follow her when away from Sanibel. (3)
- Prior to COVID, water classes and Zumba were available daily. Please bring them all back. When there are COVID concerns, please consider holding an outdoor Zumba class. (2)
- The gym is empty many hours during the day and the classes have not been updated for years (except for the new Pilates classes taught by Ginger). How about looking for classes that would attract a more diverse population to the gym (including visitors). Add: HIIT classes, belly dancing, actual aerobics classes, Cardio drumming, MWF cycling, nutrition seminars, personal training opportunities. Check out the classes offered at the YMCA for inspiration. (2)
- Classes are too focused on Zumba! Several classes are too strenuous for members. Instructor availability and longevity should not dictate class offerings.
- Offer Tai Chi and Qigong classes. (2)
- Bring back the 10 a.m. MWF Zumba or similar step aerobics class. 9 a.m. is a better starting time. Stable instructors – better yet. Noon is too late for many of the former participants. Prior instructor qualifications were OK – stability and continuity of instructors was marginal. It may cost a bit more for stability, and that is OK.

### *Instructors (6)*

- Instructors are the most important resource at the Recreation Center, and they should be treated that way. Members want a choice of instructors with different styles, etc. Loyalty of members is often based on loyalty to a particular instructor. Recreation Center leadership/staff should periodically monitor the classes to ensure



each instructor is teaching safely and appropriately for the demographic/skill level of participants. We need to have a feeder system for recruiting, training, and retaining instructors. (15)

- We need trainers who offer a variety of programs who use different equipment. Most of the trainers get jaded, continue to just repeat the same class, and never change the routine. This gets boring and is one of the reasons I do not belong any longer. I would love to stay on the island to do my daily exercises. (13)
- I have been a member for 10 years. The strength classes are my favorite, but they have become repetitive and boring. The pace is also extremely fast. Attention needs to be paid to form and doing the exercises correctly. The exercises tend to be too complicated for many participants. (6)
- Patricia is the best yoga instructor I have ever experienced. (6)
- Can you beg Kim Kouril to return to teach Gentle Yoga and Chair Yoga classes? (2)
- We are so lucky to have this wonderful and cheerful facility! I am a Ginger fan – she is an amazing teacher. The classes are challenging. Maybe the instructors could give more suggestions to scale down an exercise to better include seniors. Or another person could randomly walk around and check posture to ensure safety.

#### *Programming (4)*

- Based on our demographics, I would like to see seminars directed at senior members like osteoporosis, osteopenia, heart health, weight loss, etc. These classes and seminars would be of interest to Center4Life members as well. Bring in guest speakers to cover Fitness and Longevity, Women's Health, Nutrition, and Healthy Aging, etc. (11)
- More program variety would be welcomed! It would be nice to have some options beyond the basics. Tai Chi or other martial arts and classes for children, families, and seniors such as family yoga. Why can't we intermingle? Wouldn't it be nice to get to know and interact with others on the island besides those in our direct age bracket? (6)
- Offer master swim class, pickleball program (lessons, clinics, tournaments), and hire guest instructors. Consider new classes such as barre, aerial yoga, boot camp, dance classes, hip hop, silent dance, paddleboarding, nutrition, and Silver Sneakers. Open the skate park longer hours. (1)
- My daughter loves to dance and would love a dance class at the Recreation Center. Reportedly, the PTA found an instructor willing to teach dance classes, but the Center did not hire her due to insurance liability reasons
- Can we hire a ballet instructor? (1)

#### *Services (1)*

- Provide kayaks and paddles for free or at a reduced cost on a rental basis to members. You might explore a partnership with Tarpoon Bay Explorers to offer free or reduced fees for Recreation Center members. (2)

#### *Senior Activities (91 comments)*

The comments regarding senior activities have been organized for easier reporting into the following categories: Center4Life (keep separate/combine), general, green practices, hours and scheduling, other, programming, seniors, and weight room.

*Center4Life/Senior Center/Bank Building – Keep Separate (34)*

- The Center4Life needs a center. Memberships dropped because of COVID, but now it's a lack of programs and space. The Recreation Center does not have the space – please do not make us borrow rooms from here and there as this will not be sustainable. Things seemed to be on the right track until recently. Please do the right thing. (24)
- Center4Life needs a separate space – 2475 Library Way was purchased in 2019 and committed to this purpose. Please proceed with this plan as quickly as possible to enable full programming for seniors and a much-needed home for CHR. (24)
- I greatly miss the senior center for many reasons: the tailored exercise classes, kayaking, organized trips, and social events. So many times, people with aging issues were assisted and the facility offered morale support for those who were grieving or dealing with health issues. This was a wonderful asset for the island. I watched it grow substantially since we moved here – it was a very welcoming environment and so many friendships developed there. (22)
- The senior center needs to be in another location as in the past for the multiple classes they previously offered such as bridge and kayaking. It was a place where people felt comfortable hanging out. Don't incorporate the senior center with the Recreation Center. The exercise classes the senior center offered in the past could be held at the Recreation Center rather than trying to create space for special senior exercise classes. This would involve more frequent class schedules that could benefit all. (19)
- Do not combine the Center4Life with the Recreation Center. The value of the Center4Life is that it was welcoming and homey. This environment cannot be duplicated at the Recreation Center. While the front desk staff provide good customer service, they do not project a warm, friendly, and welcoming attitude the way the staff and volunteers at the Center4Life did. (13)
- Although I participate regularly in the chair yoga and visit the weight room, I very much miss activities at the senior center on Library Way. It was an intimate and convenient gathering place, far different from the vast and impersonal ambience of the Recreation Center. I hope to live long enough to return to a facility dedicated to Island Seniors. (11)
- While the Recreation Center is okay as a temporary home for the Center4Life, it is not ideal. The Recreation Center is not convenient, the parking is even worse than the old Center4Life, and it's a long walk for seniors with disabilities to get to the rooms. The Recreation Center lacks the warmth of the old Center4Life. We need a home of our own as promised when the bank building was purchased. There is a lot of talk about using taxpayer money wisely, but remember seniors make up the majority of the Sanibel population and we pay taxes and vote. (11)
- The senior center was a very important resources for me and so many others. A sense of community and a deep concern for our wellness needs – exercise-related, social, and cultural – were the hallmarks of being involved there. (11)
- The total lack of consideration for the Center4Life as a vital part of the community is a slap in the face to all seniors who are interested in a specific place for them. There is a small group of people trying to stop this project from going forward. The Center4Life is an important social meeting place for seniors. (10)

- Sanibel seniors deserve their own building, with easy parking, pleasant surrounds, no crowds, no noise, with gardens around the building, and shaded outdoor space. (10)
- Follow as many of the suggestions as possible. Strive for a top-notch fitness and Recreation Center. Discontinue attempting to incorporate the needs of the Center4Life into the Recreation Center as the needs are different. The Center4Life is primarily social with fitness classes focused on aerobic/strength/balance at a different pace than the Recreation Center. (9)
- Please rehab the lovely, original Center4Life building on Library Way. It offered a special place for friends of similar ages and interest to gather for purposes that had little to do with “recreation.” (8)
- Seniors are put on the back burner for activities. New activities are all about the children. The island is made up of mostly seniors, and they pay a good portion of the taxes. Give them back a place to gather that belongs to them. I think the City has already purchased a building – when will it be ready for seniors? Stop trying to think of other uses for it? (7)
- Prior to COVID, a new senior facility was planned, and we are hoping that there will be plans continued to have a separate facility designed for seniors again. The programs and social atmosphere were ideal. (7)
- We need to support our seniors. They make up a vast majority of the voting and taxpaying population on Sanibel. We have a first-rate school on Sanibel, which I totally support and pay a lot of taxes to despite having no children. So, why are we holding back on our seniors? (6)
- Having a room or area designated as the Center4Life at the Recreation Center should be temporary. A commitment was made to the Island Seniors to remodel the old facility after the new planned facility was voted down by the island residents. When is the opening date for the Center4Life on Library Way? Who or what is standing in the way of this? (5)
- Stop putting seniors on the back burner. Most of the population is seniors – not children. Return to the original plan of a building for seniors only. (5)
- Stop delaying the new Center4Life building. It was a tremendous asset to the island. You have an eager and experienced group of volunteers—through the Island Seniors— anxiously waiting to bring it to life. There is no excuse for an island like Sanibel made up predominately of tax-paying seniors to not have a first-rate senior center and the Recreation Center does not cut it. You have the building – what is the hold up? We need it now more than ever before. (4)
- We desperately need a separate Center4Life facility. Using a room at the Recreation Center does not work. Renovate the old Center4Life building or the bank building that was purchased for the Center4Life. The Center was used intensively before the pandemic. (3)
- I want the new Center4Life as promised or bring back the old one. I live here all year, not just during season. Post season, most of the wonderful activities and organizations shut their doors. The past Center4Life provided a much appreciated and needed social support system for many island residents. Please bring it back. (3)
- I attended the Center4Life pre-pandemic, and the classes were so full the leaders were turning participants away. The remark that attendance was diminishing is not accurate. Please bring back the old facility or continue with progress of expanding with the new facility. (3)

- The Community House offers exercise classes that used to be offered at the Center4Life pre-pandemic, at a higher cost, without any insurance reimbursements. The Center4Life offered more than exercise classes, it provided all kinds of activities, plus a network of caring, supportive friends that all met there for various purposes. It was a home away from home for many. It continues all year. Most other organizations shut down after season. I live here full-time—I need full-time activities. (3)
- Separate the senior center as promised pre-COVID! (3)
- The Community House is an island gem but not appropriate for exercise classes (poor ventilation, etc.) or smaller group gatherings. Please make the senior facility on Library Way available as promised. (3)
- Bring back the Center4Life building. It needs its own space. A cold sterile room at the Recreation Center far from the City center does not cut it. It needs to be located where folks can drop in to visit one another and where seniors with limited mobility have easy access. Come on Sanibel, have a heart! Do what is right. (2)
- The Center4Life should be a separate building. The Recreation Center is not suitable for its purposes. (2)
- The Center4Life attendance did not fall off. There were 850+ members pre-COVID and most activities were very well-attended. There are records to prove this. The Center4Life has offered a plethora of activities through the years to keep everyone engaged. Where the activities took place is second to the fact that they center around The Center4Life is sorely missed by many. The Community House is nice, but not a substitute. (2)
- Rehab the old or open the new Center4Life building. I don't care. Just do something. The room at the Recreation Center is not enough. (2)
- I agree that the Center4Life needs its own space. Either renovate the new or the old building. The Community House is a nice facility for meetings. It has not and will never take over the role that the Center4Life plays in our community. This is a retirement community and, as such, it needs a senior center. (2)
- It is common these days in this country to have a senior center. Many municipalities have them, even with more activities than used to be offered in Sanibel. We care about seniors; we can afford the senior center. The majority of the population here (paying taxes) are seniors. Please stop attacks on the senior center – restore it, extend it, and keep it open. (2)
- We would no more expect that programs labeled for children would be appropriate for the general population, so why are we trying to do that with the senior programs? Different needs require different solutions, and we already have the bank building for the seniors. Many of us seniors pay taxes for our schools without complaint, so please let's support our residents on the other end of the spectrum of life. (2)
- I participated in yoga at the Center4Life. I tried yoga at the Recreation Center, but the concrete floor was too hard, even with two yoga mats.
- I agree and miss the senior center. It was a very welcoming place, and the volunteers were very willing to help. Change the name for a fresh start and offer help with electronic issues: phones, computers, Fitbits, etc. Would it be possible to partner with the school? The kids have all the answers.

*Center4Life/Senior Center/Bank Building – Combine (27)*

- The programming for the senior population should be integrated into the overall operations of the Recreation Center and managed by an integrated Recreation Department staff. The Recreation Department should develop programs and activities that promote intergenerational opportunities. (5)
- We don't need a new Center4Life – it is called the Sanibel Community House. It has been the heartbeat of the island since 1927. (2)
- Isn't the Center4Life a separate nonprofit organization? Why should the City and taxpayers fund their own building program? If the Center4Life is so popular, it can fundraise and buy its own facility. (2)
- How much will a separate facility for seniors cost? Maybe this money could be better spent improving programming at the Recreation Center for all ages. (1)
- The Recreation Center should be a welcoming facility to people of all ages. Seniors should be able to recreate at the Recreation Center as most of the classes are targeted at seniors. There is no need for a duplicate center. (1)
- Those that champion this cause are members of a stand-alone 501 c 3 club. There are many such clubs that add to the quality of life on Sanibel. Possibly illegal and certainly inappropriate to single out a certain club for City assistance. Government buildings must be used in the most productive manner possible for the benefit of all residents not any individual club or group. The City has endless needs on the horizon using this building for the benefit of all. (1)
- I don't understand why the City should pay for a building to benefit a nonprofit organization. Can't the Recreation Center offer programs for all ages?
- I don't understand why seniors need their own building apart from the rest of the community. Can't the old and young get along together?
- Why should senior activities be relegated to a separate facility? Why not have seniors at the Recreation Center where they can interact with youth and families? Save money by having all activities in a single facility. (2)
- Why can't seniors gather at the Recreation Center? The Recreation Center could offer programs for seniors to interact there. (2)
- The Recreation Center has good parking, no crowds, and no noise. Perhaps seniors can enjoy exercising there. (2)
- The Recreation Center is not for the children only; seniors deserve a place also. (2)
- Everything discussed here should be part of the new and improved recreational center programming. We have a fantastic \$20 million facility, let's maximize its potential. Everything in this discussion centers around staffing. A new perpetually expensive building isn't the need. Kayaking and trips don't take place inside a building. There are many coffee/social groups meeting throughout the island; this isn't the obligation of government. (1)
- The increasing popular events in the years preceding the pandemic didn't take place in the senior center (for example, kayaking, trips to Florida Rep, outings on the causeway). The current exercise programs at the

Community House are very popular. Great potential for Recreation Center programming. Expensive additional building with ongoing yearly expense is definitely not needed. (1)

- Anyone who regularly attended events pre-pandemic at the senior center knows attendance (except for exercise) dropped year over year. Exceptions were activities happening outside the center. Staff and facilities at the existing Recreation Center in tune to the needs of Sanibel residents is the perfect solution. 80% of Sanibel residents are seniors and the vast majority don't realize the Island Seniors club exists. (1)
- Seniors and youth should both enjoy the Recreation Center together. Seniors could volunteer to teach youth in classes for art, dance, etc. (1)
- Why should the seniors be separated from the rest of the community? Can't we develop programs for all ages? Youth and younger folks also enjoy kayaking. Can't the Recreation Center offer programs for all to enjoy? (1)
- Why can't the Recreation Center be warm and welcoming to all members? (1)
- Let's make the Recreation Center more personal – can't we all exist together? (1)
- Why can't seniors be included at the Recreation Center? All ages should be welcome. Seniors should mix with youth and families. (1)
- Why can't seniors recreate with younger folks? How much will a new building cost and wouldn't this money be better spend hiring staff to provide programming for all ages? (1)
- What are the financials of the Island Seniors? Their website says they have \$250,000, which is a lot of money for a senior organization. They charge \$20 per person per year membership and classes are \$4.10 for members, \$10.25 for guests. They have no expenses as they are not paying for rent at the Recreation Center or for the instructors. Why is this organization allowed to profit on taxpayer-funded space? Before the City funds a new multimillion dollar building, I think the financials need to be clearly outlined to taxpayers. (1)
- Why does a nonprofit organization get the City to use public funds for renovating a building to serve its members? The nonprofit should pay for its own building project. Taxpayer funds should benefit the community as a whole, not private interests
- Can't seniors interact with younger residents at the Recreation Center? This would benefit both groups.
- There are many youth and families in the community as well. We need opportunities to recreate along with seniors and not be separated into different groups by age.
- Why can't the seniors and youth both use the Recreation Center?
- The Center4Life is the Sanibel Community House. Senior activities are the focus of every entity on Sanibel. Attend any event and look around and 80% of those attending are seniors. Currently the Recreation Center offers a room where anyone can visit and socialize. All should be welcome to participate with zero strings attached.
- Accommodate the seniors at the Recreation Center. Why pay twice for duplicate recreation and exercise classes.

- Not all seniors living on Sanibel belong to the Island Seniors. All the clubs on the island are for seniors as the majority of Sanibel are seniors. The City should not be funding one club with a building just because they have the word “seniors” in their club name.
- Not sure why the Island Seniors club deserve their own building – and a taxpayer-funded building. Not sure why they are not happy with the free space they are receiving now funded by taxpayers. If they are not happy and they have specific needs, I think they should go out on their own and fund their own building like every other club. They can rent space using their \$200,000 from fundraising activities and membership dues.
- The Center4Life has three full-time staff and one part-time staff plus a fancy office. Why do they need all this staff? Perhaps they could be better utilized elsewhere.

#### *General (2)*

- This is a retirement community. We have an abundance of activities offered by the Community House, Big Arts, Sanibel Library, and the Recreation Center tailored to senior needs. There are endless nonprofits organizations anxious for all involvement. The quality of life achieved rests solely with each individual. Endless fun and rewarding experiences are around every corner. Make the best our fantastic abundance. Too many focus on newer/better when the best is right in front of them. (4)
- Expand the weight room into the space behind for access by more users. Machines are fully booked at 6:30 a.m.

#### *Green Practices (3)*

- When constructing recreation facilities (such as pickleball courts or additional Recreation Center parking), please adhere to and do not compromise the City’s environmental standards. Do you build in wetlands or facilities that negatively impact wildlife habitats (noise and lights) that impact the Refuge, reserves, or preserves? (5)
- It would be good to have electric car charge stations.
- Electric car charging is a good idea – how much would it cost to add a couple of stations?

#### *Programming (19)*

- Hire an intergenerational coordinator whose job is it to find activities appropriate for seniors and youth. Older adults bring years of knowledge, wisdom, and experience to the interaction, which is quickly transferred to younger people. (10)
- New trainers are needed for adults. The exercise classes were great when Becky Lui was there. The classes were geared toward every one of all fitness levels. The classes were enjoyed by all. Bring back the 7 a.m. class. (9)
- Land on Sanibel is 70% preserve, and there are only a handful of buildable lots remaining on the island. The population of the island will never increase appreciably. Anecdotally, recent new residents are largely still working, having discovered they can work from anywhere, and some young families with children still at home. Thus, the demographics of the island may get younger – not older. Programming of space and activities for seniors should take these facts into account. (8)

- Your wellness and exercise classes aimed at seniors are great! Please continue to schedule some in the afternoon hours – not everyone is ready before noon for health reasons. (6)
- More frequent yoga classes at all levels and times, including afternoons. Same for spin, gym/fitness, aerobics, and water aerobics classes. More options such as ballet barre, Tai Chi, and moving meditation. A larger and better stocked workout room with more, updated equipment. Swimming lessons for adults who are not competitive and/or triathletes. (5)
- Kayaking is a great program – can it be all year-round for those who live here? (3)
- The island has some fabulous activities for children and families through the Library, Sea School, shell museum, Ding Darling, and CECI, to name a few. Unfortunately, some of the Recreation Center activities have taken a hit due to COVID and have not yet returned. That goes for seniors as well as families. Stop acting like this has to be an either/or situation. I am all for swim team, open kid swims, summer programs, etc., but why does this have to be at the seniors' expense? (3)
- How about opening the kayaking program to everyone, not just those that belong to Island Seniors? (2)
- I would like to see activities designed for younger seniors. I'm 53 and I don't feel welcomed by the senior group on the island, which seems geared toward an older group. Soccer for adults, pickleball, or martial arts. I would also welcome a way to meet others close to my age socially. (2)
- Offer senior sports celebrity visit events that include nostalgic talks on their life, game, advice on staying fit and active as seniors, and autograph opportunities. Create a program for trainers to help seniors safely recharge old skills with basketball, softball, and a couple of bowling or duck pin lanes.
- Programs for seniors with disabilities are needed such as Rock Steady Boxing for those with Parkinson's and yoga.
- Bring back more water classes. We used to have deep and shallow water classes every weekday and one class on Saturday. Zumba in shallow water is too much for a lot of people (especially those with knee issues). Lots of seniors use the shallow water classes for balance (no fear of falling).
- Older seniors could volunteer to teach classes at the Recreation Center.

#### Youth Activities (30)

The comments regarding youth activities have been organized for easier reporting into the following categories: facilities, pool issues, programming, and services.

#### *Facilities (1)*

- Open the skate park so kids can skate and rollerblade. (2)

#### *Pool Issues (10)*

- Open pool and splash pads for kids. Bring swim team back. Have hours so people who work 9 to 5 jobs can utilize the center. (19)



- I can't believe we have to beg for a pool for our children to swim on this island with plentiful resources, but here we are. Ft. Myers Beach manage to keep a beautiful children's pool open for their residents and visitors. Not all of us on the island are fortunate enough to have a private pool. (14)
- Bring back swim lessons (for all ages since we are surrounded by water), and swim team. (3)
- Open the kiddie pool daily. (3)
- Bring aquatic programs back and expand the pool hours. (1)
- How about if every Saturday from 2 to 4 p.m., the Recreation Center opens the kiddie pool and water slides, and the parents would monitor their kids? (1)
- The water slide is never open during the After Care swimming – why not let the kids enjoy it? (1)
- The After School Care program only allows the kids to swim on Tuesdays. Why can't they swim every day?
- How many kids were on the SWAT swim team?

#### *Programming (16)*

- Would like to have more classes for kids like the basketball class you offered last fall. What about swim team, dance, karate, and gymnastics? (9)
- Support seniors and children in the community with enriching and mutually beneficial programming by implementing combination activities like arts and crafts, reading, cooking, outdoor education, board games, and music classes. There are so many life lessons, skills, and moments of enjoyment that can be possible when are two bookend generations collaborate and learn from one another. (6)
- Offer more youth classes in the evenings for parents who work 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. (4)
- Bring swim team back. Over the years there has been such a drop in activities available for children on the island. (3)
- The Recreation Center offers no programs for youth beyond After School Care. My daughter should be able to participate in programs like softball, acting, swimming, arts and crafts, badminton, ballet, baseball, basketball, Bingo, ceramics, checkers, cheerleading, theatre, hip hop, dance dodgeball, drawing and painting, flag football, floor hockey, golf, gymnastics, karate, kickball, music, nature fun, tumbling, roller skating, soccer, t-ball, table tennis, Tae kwon do, tap, tennis, track, etc. (1)
- The Recreation Center has lost any focus toward children and put all its focus on seniors. I understand this is a retirement community, but there are several new families moving to the island. (1)
- Would be wonderful for Sanibel to offer families with young children After Care and fun days with extended hours until 6 p.m.
- In the after-school program, older kids playing basketball are hitting younger kids with basketballs. Better separation is needed.
- In the After Care program, it would be nice to have gymnastics.

- Does the Recreation Center have a balance beam, bars, vault, ropes, etc., available? May need to budget to buy gymnastics equipment.
- Gymnastics equipment should be sturdy enough for young adult use and accessible to seniors.
- Why can't the kids do it in the school, after classes?
- Hire a new swim coach or assign a member of the Aquatics Department to this role and bring back the SWAT swim team. Our children swam for five years, and this is sorely missed. (2)
- Offer swimming, pickleball, tennis, volleyball, and floor hockey.
- Sanibel Sports, Inc. is offering a great t-ball program on the baseball fields Friday at 5:30 p.m. This start time coordinates very well with the end of the After Care program. Why can't the Recreation Center offer programs for kids following the After Care program in a similar way, like dance or martial arts?
- Summer camp needs exciting field trips and should offer kids more than videos. Kids like swimming, arts, and other activities. We understand COVID limited activities last year but want to see more enriching programs this summer. The summer program is good at producing schedules, so we know what activities are going on. Would like to see more collaboration with Ding Darling, CROW, Sea School, FISH, and other nonprofits in the summer program.

#### *Services (2)*

- Please add a Kids Zone (like the YMCA model) where kids can play and be supervised while parents exercise. (4)
- Why can't popular classes be shared online so I don't have to miss them when I am traveling?

## Appendix A1.

### News Release –For Immediate Release

May 6, 2022

City of Sanibel, FL

Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345

## Reminder! Public Participation for “Recreation Reimagined” Closes on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2022



**Click here** to participate in the online public engagement tool for the Recreation Reimagined project, open for input through May 11th. The goal of this project is to reimagine all components of the Recreation Department—the Recreation Center, Center4Life, and outdoor sports programs.

Don't miss your chance to have your voice heard through the "Social Pinpoint" site. This is an exciting community engagement platform designed for this project, and you are encouraged to participate in all four "boxes":

- Take the Survey: "Share Your Thoughts" [Box 1]
- Future Investment [Box 2]
- Operation of Recreational Department Facilities [Box 3]
- Ideas Wall [Box 4]

Your input will help the city make decisions about the types of recreation facilities, programs, and activities that citizens desire today and for the future.

SanibelFit4Life | Social Pinpoint ([mysocialpinpoint.com](https://mysocialpinpoint.com))

**News Release –For Immediate Release**

**April 22nd, 2022**

**City of Sanibel, FL**

**Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345**

Click [here](#) to participate in the online public engagement tool for the Recreation Reimagined project. Open for input through May 11, 2022.

## **Recreation Reimagined: Participate online through May 11th**







A comprehensive assessment of the City of Sanibel’s recreation facilities and services is underway, with the goal of reimagining all components of the Recreation Department—Recreation Center, Center4Life, and outdoor sports programs. Public participation is a key component of the study, and the Sanibel community’s participation in both the in-person and online tools have been impressive. To date, more than 350 people have provided input in person, while almost 300 surveys have been completed online, and over 300 individual comments have been posted online.

To gather more public input, The City has extended the window for participating online through May 11th. There’s a community conversation occurring online, with suggestions for improving customer service, providing more family and intergenerational activities, extending hours of operation, opening all the pools, upgrading the equipment and technology, expanding the weight room, providing a broader range of classes and instructors, providing outdoor pickleball courts, and how best to serve the needs of the senior population, just to name a few of the ideas that have been posted. Join the conversation!

There are exciting tools on the “Social Pinpoint” community engagement platform designed for this project, and you are encouraged to participate in all four “boxes”:

SanibelFit4Life | Social Pinpoint ([mysocialpinpoint.com](https://mysocialpinpoint.com))

**Help reimagine the future of Sanibel Recreation!**

 <p><b>Share Your Thoughts</b> Make an Impact</p> <p>START 25 Mar 2022      END 11 May 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Take a survey</a></p>	 <p><b>Future Investment</b> Share Your Comments</p> <p>START 25 Mar 2022      END 11 May 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Join The Discussion</a></p>
 <p><b>Operation of Recreation Department Facilities</b> Please share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve the operations of Sanibel Recreation Department Facilities!</p> <p>START 25 Mar 2022      END 11 May 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Join The Discussion</a></p>	 <p><b>Let Your Voice Be Heard</b> Join the community and share your ideas!</p> <p>START 25 Mar 2022      END 11 May 2022</p> <p><a href="#">Add Your Idea</a></p>

#### Take the Survey: "Share Your Thoughts" [Box 1]

The survey asks questions about your use (both present and past) of various Department facilities, programs, and activities. The survey consists of multiple-choice options that focus on your experiences [Only one submission per person].

Once your survey has been submitted, the next three boxes provide the opportunity to comment and share your comments or ideas for improvement.

#### Future Investment [Box 2]

If the City could invest in one change to the Recreation Department, what would it be?

#### Operation of Recreational Department Facilities [Box 3]

Share your thoughts and ideas of ways to improve operations.

#### Ideas Wall [Box 4]

The Ideas Wall is an opportunity to have an interactive community conversation centered around 6 topic areas: Customer Service, Parks & Facilities, Program Instructors, Family Activities, Seniors Activities, and Youth Activities.

For the Forum Questions (box 2 & 3) and the Ideas Wall (box 4), you can provide as many ideas and comments as you wish and can come back multiple times to take part in this interactive community conversation. Your comments remain anonymous and will be posted on the site for others to see, respond to (thumbs up/thumbs down), and prompt others to become part of the community conversation. To see all the comments posted to date, just click on the down sign next to “View Comments” and scroll down.

Future Investment

One Change!

If the City of Sanibel could invest in one change to the Sanibel Recreation Department, what would that be?

f

tw

in

Your Comment \*

500 characters left

Submit

View Comments (94) ▾

Close

Future Investment

Your Comment \*

500 characters left

Submit

View Comments (94) ^

Staff to teach more classes ie spin yoga, and maybe some new offerings. Early evening. 5:30. Classes and early am. 7 am classes. At least in season

Like (0)

Dislike (0)

Share

Reply

Need to expand hours and classes. To prepandemic level. Ex 7am spin class to make it to work . 8:30 is too late. No evening spin classes or yoga. Wt room now only open 2 evenings. Since rejoining only able to get to workout 1 time due to working during the day.

Like (0)

Dislike (0)

Share

Reply

Close

Once the participation window closes on May 11th, the community comments will be available on the website for viewing throughout the duration of the project.

Your input will help the City make decisions about the types of recreation facilities, programs, and activities that citizens desire today and for the future.

SanibelFit4Life | Social Pinpoint (mysocialpinpoint.com)



## News Release –For Immediate Release

April 12th, 2022

City of Sanibel, FL

Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345

Click [here](#) to participate in the online public engagement tool for the Recreation Reimagined project. Open for input through May 1st, 2022.



Thank You For Your Participation!

We hope everyone enjoyed the "Recreation Reimagined" open house event at the Sanibel Recreation Center this past weekend. There were over 200 attendees! We would like to thank the community members, volunteers, Sanibel nonprofits, HOA's service clubs, and staff who helped make this event possible.

There was also great attendance at the Farmer's Market with over 100 people stopping by to provide input.





The Open House and Farmer’s Market were the highly visible elements of a three-day public engagement effort. The feedback the City and our consulting team receive is invaluable!

Thank you to the 40+ community members who took part in focus groups which provided vital information for the recreation study. We would also like to thank Big Arts for hosting the focus groups at their facility.

A special thank you goes out to Sanibel Kiwanis Club for providing the food and beverages for the event as well as the Sanibel Bicycle Club that helped distribute the event rack cards to the community.

### **Reimagine Recreation:**

The in-person community engagement activities over the April 9th weekend were just part of the community conversation.

Click [Here](#) to participate online, using three exciting tools that can be found on the “Social Pinpoint” community engagement platform designed for Sanibel’s project. Please be sure to complete the survey. The engagement platform will be open for your comments through May 11, 2022. [Note: please use the Chrome Browser to access this website.]

## **Raffle Winner Announced!**



Congratulations to Robin Christian on winning the raffle for the tote bag filled with goodies. Thank you all for participating!

## News Release –For Immediate Release

March 25, 2022

City of Sanibel, FL

Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345



# We Need YOU!

The City of Sanibel has undertaken a Comprehensive Assessment of Recreation facilities and programs. The goal is to reimagine all components of Sanibel's Recreation Department (Recreation Center, Center4Life, and outdoor sports programs) to meet recreation needs of all residents (youth, adults, and seniors).

Public participation and your input will be a key component of the Study and will help to inform decisions that will guide the future development of the City's recreation facilities and services. A broad set of tools, both online and in person, will be used to engage the community in this important conversation.

## HOW TO GET INVOLVED

### 1. Open House -Saturday April 9th 2-4 p.m. at Recreation Center (3880 Sanibel Captiva Road)

Share your ideas and comments at "charrette" stations that will be set up in the Gym. Drop by anytime during the open house and visit all four "stations" at your leisure

Enjoy free and fun family-friendly activities while at the Recreation Center

The leisure pool and splash pad will be open for the whole family!

The Kiwanis Club of Sanibel will be serving free hot dogs, popcorn, and drinks!

Tours will be offered for all who are interested

### 2. Farmers Market - on Sunday April 10th, 8 a.m. -12:00 p.m. 800 Dunlop Road, Sanibel.

Visit the Project Booth at the Sanibel Farmer's Market to share your input on various topics/questions with the project team.

### 3. Online-Participate online, using three exciting tools that can be found on the "Social Pinpoint" community engagement platform designed for this project

Visit <https://berrydunn.mysocialpinpoint.com/reimagine-sanibel-rec> to access the Social Pinpoint Site

The online community engagement tools are available for use March 25 – May 1st.

All Sanibel citizens are invited to participate, including year-round residents, seasonal residents (whether you rent or own), island workers, island business owners, and island non-profit organization members. The items noted below are the additional steps in how to get involved.

#### **a. Take the Survey**

The survey asks questions about your use (both present and past) of the various facilities, programs, and activities. The survey consists of multiple-choice options that focus on your experiences. (Estimated Time to complete approx. 10 minutes [Only one submission per person (per email address)])

#### **b. Two Forum Questions**

- Investment ideas
- Improvement ideas for Recreation Department operations

Once the survey has been completed, the forum questions provide the opportunity to comment and address specific comments or ideas for improvement.

#### **c. Ideas Wall**

The Ideas Wall provides the opportunity to have an interactive community conversation centered around six topic areas: Customer Service, Parks & Facilities, Program Instructors, Family Activities, Seniors Activities, and Youth Activities.

For both the Forum Questions and the Ideas Wall, you can provide as many ideas and comments as you wish and can come back multiple times over the participation window (3/25-5/1) to take part in this interactive community conversation. Your comments remain anonymous and will be posted on the site for others to see, respond to (thumbs up/thumbs down), and prompt others to become part of the community conversation.

Once the participation window closes on May 1st, the community comments will be available on the website for viewing throughout the duration of the project.

#### **Other Community Engagement Activities**

In addition to the community engagement opportunities open to all citizens, during the initial project planning phase, the consultant team interviewed city officials and staff, City Council members, and key community stakeholders. On April 8-9, a series of focus groups with a cross-section of citizens will participate in a group discussion facilitated by the BerryDunn consultant team.

#### **Summary Message**

Your participation in all these public engagement opportunities is appreciated. Throughout the duration of this project, we encourage you to visit the project website often, both to participate in the online engagement tools (3/25-5/1), to view the community conversations, and to stay updated on the project developments. We hope you'll also encourage your friends and neighbors to participate in this important community conversation.

This study will result in a detailed report of options and alternatives for City Council consideration for reimagining the future of the City's Recreation Department facilities and services (Sanibel Recreation Center, Center4Life, and outdoor sports programs).

**Your input is vital!!! Please help the City of Sanibel make decisions about the types of recreation facilities, programs, and activities that citizens desire today and for the future.**

### [Social Pinpoint Site](#)



[Click Here](#) or scan the QR code to access the Social Pinpoint Site.



News Release – For Immediate Release March 31st, 2021

City of Sanibel, FL

Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345

## Sanibel Recreation Center Hosts Open House: Recreation Reimagined

**SANIBEL  
FIT4LIFE**  
RECREATION...REIMAGINED

**JOIN US!**

**OPEN HOUSE**  
APRIL 9TH, 2022  
2-4 P.M.

The Sanibel  
Recreation Center  
3880 Sanibel Captiva Rd,  
Sanibel FL 33957  
[www.mysanibel.com](http://www.mysanibel.com)

You are invited to join your neighbors and friends at the Sanibel Recreation Center Open House on Saturday, April 9 (2-4 p.m.). Enjoy free and fun family-friendly activities while participating in the “Recreation Reimagined” community conversation. The Leisure pool and Splash Pad will be open. There will be free food, music, and games for the whole family!

### Participate in the Community Conversation:

Take part in the Sanibel Recreation Comprehensive Assessment: Share your ideas and comments at “charrette” stations that will be set up in the Gym. Drop by anytime during the open house and visit all four “stations” at your leisure.

Public participation and your input will be a key component of the study and will help to inform decisions that will guide the future development of the City’s recreation facilities and services.

The goal is to reimagine all areas of Sanibel's Recreation Department (Recreation Center, Center4Life, and outdoor sports programs) to best meet the recreation needs of all residents (youth, adults, and seniors).

**Enjoy Family-Friendly Activities at the Recreation Center:**

Recreation staff will be available to supervise your children during activities so that you can take part in this important community conversation.

The Leisure pool and Splash Pad will be open for family swim time with lifeguards. All children under the age of 12 must be accompanied by an adult over the age of 18 years in the pool.

The Spoonbill Room will have crafts and a Foosball table, and there will be sidewalk chalk and an open playground for the children.

The Kiwanis Club of Sanibel will be serving free hot dogs, popcorn, and drinks! Enter the FREE Raffle to win a Tote Bag filled with goodies!

Tours of the Recreation Center will be available, too.

**Farmer's Market:**

Can't make the Open House? Visit the project booth at Sunday's Farmers Market (April 10th, 8 a.m. to 12 p.m.) to share your input on various topics/questions with the BerryDunn project team.

You can also enter the free raffle to win the Tote Bag.

**Participate online:**

[Click Here](#) to also participate online, using three exciting tools that can be found on the "Social Pinpoint" community engagement platform designed for this project. [Note: Use the Chrome Browser to access this website.]

Thank you for participating in this important community conversation.

News Release – For Immediate Release

February 4, 2022

City of Sanibel, FL

Contact: The Department of Recreation, (239) 472-0345

## **Sanibel Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment Kick-off Meeting with BerryDunn Consultants**



On Wednesday, February 2nd, 2022, BerryDunn consultants arrived at the Sanibel Recreation Center to kick-off the Recreation Department Comprehensive Assessment. The consultants met with City Manager Dana Souza as well as multiple team members from Recreation and other City Departments.

The Sanibel Recreation Center is located at 3880 Sanibel-Captiva Road. Daily, weekly, semi-annual, and annual memberships are available. For more information call the Sanibel Recreation Center at (239) 472-0345 or visit our web site at [www.mysanibel.com](http://www.mysanibel.com).



## APPENDIX B: SANIBEL STAFF TRAINING SURVEY QUESTIONS

What is your title?

Do you work full-time or part-time?

How long have you been in this role?

<1 year

1 – 2 years

2 – 5 years

6 – 10 years

>10 years

What type of internal training have you received in the past two to four years? (select all that apply)

Mandatory compliance training such as sexual harassment, first aid, CPR, ADA

Computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint

Job-specific skills such as class instruction, turf management, water safety

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Leadership/management skills

Communication skills

Customer service or dealing with difficult service situations

Other (please explain)

How often do you participate in internal training?

Monthly

Quarterly

Annually

Other (please describe)

What training or professional development do you feel has been the most impactful to your role? Why?

Mandatory compliance training such as sexual harassment, first aid, CPR, ADA

Computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint

Job-specific skills such as class instruction, turf management, water safety

Diversity, equity, and inclusion

- Leadership/management skills
- Communication skills
- Customer service or dealing with difficult service situations
- Other (please explain)

What type of training or professional development do you feel would be most beneficial for your current role? (Select up to 3)

- Mandatory compliance training such as sexual harassment, first aid, CPR, ADA
- Computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint
- Job-specific skills such as class instruction, turf management, water safety
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Leadership/management skills
- Communication skills
- Customer service or dealing with difficult service situations
- Other (please explain)

What type of professional development do you feel would be most beneficial to your future role? (Select up to 3)

- Mandatory compliance training such as sexual harassment, first aid, CPR, ADA
- Computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint
- Job-specific skills such as class instruction, turf management, water safety
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Leadership/management skills
- Communication skills
- Customer service or dealing with difficult service situations
- Other (please explain)

If you are in a supervisory role, what type of training do you feel would be beneficial to your staff? (Select up to 3)

- Mandatory compliance training such as sexual harassment, first aid, CPR, ADA
- Computer skills such as Excel, Word, and PowerPoint
- Job-specific skills such as class instruction, turf management, water safety
- Leadership/management skills
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion

Communication skills

Customer Service or dealing with difficult service situations

Other (please explain)

Please rate the current onboarding process for new employees. Are new employees well prepared to work with Sanibel Recreation? (1 – Poor through 5 – Excellent)

How many staff meetings have you attended in the past 12 months?

1 – 2

3 – 4

5 – 6

7 – 10

>10

Do you receive any information on training opportunities at staff meetings?

Yes

No

What type of training/professional development do you think would be valuable for a new employee?

Are you interested in facilitating a training workshop for your peers?

Yes, please describe

No

Have you ever attended a training outside of Sanibel Recreation? If so, what was the training?

Yes, please describe

No

Is there anything you would like to add about Sanibel Recreation Department onboarding, training, or staff development opportunities?