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# LENEXA AQUATICS STUDY

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May 2021



waters edge  
AQUATIC DESIGN

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## **Introduction**

The City of Lenexa has been engaged in an Aquatic Study since 2018 to evaluate and analyze the condition of the existing facilities and determine how they serve the overall needs of the community. The study was conducted in two phases.

**Phase I** included population and market analysis, existing facility conditions, strategy options and recommendations. The [full version of the Phase I study](#) is on the Lenexa website.

**Phase II** focused primarily on public engagement with three main goals:

1. Activate: Communicate to residents and let them know about opportunities to engage in the Phase II process.
2. Engage: Provide several avenues for public engagement including a statistically valid survey, in-person open house, online survey open to the public, and special user group meetings.
3. Educate: Offer information online to educate residents on current program offerings, staffing struggles, facility challenges and options for future growth.

Another important purpose of Phase II was to determine the aquatics needs of the entire community. This would enable the city to determine how and where to best meet those needs. This information will also help to determine if the City's previous decision to close Ad Astra or another pool and either reinvest in Indian Trails Aquatic Center or build a larger, more amenity rich regional aquatic facility is supported by the community and still makes sense.

The recommendations contained in this report are based on information from both Phase I and Phase II.

## **Background**

The City of Lenexa currently operates three outdoor swimming facilities and a recreation center with indoor aquatics. The outdoor facilities are located east of I-435 and the recreation center is just west of I-435. The eastern part of the city, which houses all three outdoor pools, is predominately made up of single-family residential neighborhoods and commercial areas consisting primarily of business parks, offices, and retail centers. This area of the community currently contains approximately 75% of the Lenexa population, which is growing but not as quickly as the central and western segments of the city.

The two largest outdoor facilities (Indian Trails Aquatic Center and Ad Astra Pool) are 1.1 miles away from each other and are both reaching the end of their useful life. If they continue to operate, both pools will require significant repairs and improvements. The following table(s) provides a background summary of each of Lenexa's pools.

	<b>Ad Astra</b>	<b>Flat Rock Creek</b>	<b>Indian Trails</b>	<b>Lenexa Rec Center</b>
<b>Location</b>	Close to I-435 near the northern edge of the city	Southeast corner of the city limits (103rd St. and Noland Rd.)	Sar-Ko-Par Trails Park	Lenexa City Center along 87th St., west of I-435
<b>Year Built</b>	1988	1970s	1976	2017
<b>Attendance*</b>	9,201	11,102	24,254	NA
<b>Cost Recovery*</b>	43%	49%	66%	100% (based off entire facility cost recovery)
<b>Amenities</b>	Zero-depth entry; deep water with two one-meter diving boards; eight 50-meter lap lanes and eight 25-yard cross lap lanes	Zero-depth entry; one-meter diving; climbing wall; three 25-yard lap lanes	Zero-depth entry with spray features; deep water; two large water slides with separate plunge pool; eight 50-meter lap lanes	Zero-depth entry, with kiddie pool; warm water wellness pool; diving well and rock wall; two large water slides with individual runouts; lazy river; three 25-yard lap lanes

\*Cost recovery and attendance based on average of years 2015-2018

## Conditions and Renovations

<b>Ad Astra</b>	The Ad Astra Pool was constructed in 1988. It was designed with a significant focus on competitive swimming practice and competition. In 2011 the filter system was replaced and in 2018 the wading pool was removed. Vertical movement in the pool deck has reportedly been an issue since the initial construction. The deck has been “mud jacked” through the years and was replaced in the early 2000’s. However, it still continues to experience vertical movement.
<b>Flat Rock Creek</b>	Original construction in 1970’s with an expansion of the zero-depth leisure pool in late 1980’s. In 2012 received major reconstruction with a new diving pool and bathhouse. Oldest structure that remains includes the leisure pool from late 1980’s. Facility is in good condition and experiences typical maintenance and upkeep for an aquatic center.
<b>Indian Trails</b>	The facility was originally constructed in 1976 and received the latest major renovation in 1998 which included new buildings, pool mechanical systems, water slides, and zero-depth entry. Lap area and deep water area, along with some below-grade piping remains the original 1976 construction and nearing its end of useful life. Even though the amenities are dated, the Indian Trails Aquatic Center provides the most comprehensive outdoor aquatic center for the city.

<b>Lenexa Rec Center</b>	Opened in 2017. As a recently constructed facility, the physical condition is very good. The facility should provide the needs of the community for decades to come. The Rec Center provides the most comprehensive aquatic center and is the only indoor facility offered by the city.
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The outdoor aquatics facilities collectively operate at relatively low cost recovery, with just above 60% of revenue to offset operational expenses. We would expect around 80% or more cost recovery for municipal, neighborhood pools. We believe Lenexa’s low cost recovery is due to two primary factors:

1. Low attendance and subsequent low revenue due to a lack of interest by the community. Visitors are not as likely to visit aquatic centers that lack modern amenities and have remained relatively the same for a significant period of time.
2. High expenses from operating three facilities with a large water surface area. The ratio of water surface area per capita is higher for the City of Lenexa than most cities in the Kansas City metro area.

We surveyed a number of Kansas City metro area facilities to compare the water surface area provided per capita.

**Table 8**

**Comparison of Water Surface Area per Capita  
Kansas City Metro Area Outdoor Aquatic Facilities**

<b>City</b>	<b>No. of Pools</b>	<b>Water Area SF</b>	<b>Est. Population</b>	<b>Water (sf) per capita</b>
Independence, MO	1	23,750	117,000	0.20
Lee's Summit, MO	1	25,500	96,076	0.27
Overland Park, KS	5	53,780	188,966	0.28
Olathe, KS	4	47,304	135,473	0.35
Gladstone, MO	1	10,800	27,114	0.40
Shawnee, KS	2	31,630	65,194	0.49
Leawood, KS	1	16,800	34,565	0.49
<b>Lenexa, KS</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43,400</b>	<b>55,344</b>	<b>0.78</b>
Gardner, KS	1	21,500	21,110	1.02
Prairie Village, KS	1	29,180	21,805	1.34
<b>Average</b>				<b>0.56</b>

*\*Includes an estimate of 6,000 s.f. for wave pool addition to Lee's Summit facility (summer 2020)*

As the water surface per capita increases, the ability to achieve a higher cost recovery becomes more difficult. For Lenexa, higher cost recovery is a challenge because the user base is diluted between facilities that are internally competing due to proximity. The average of cities surveyed is 0.56 s.f. per capita. At a total outdoor water surface area of 43,400 s.f. and a population base of 55,344, the City of Lenexa sits at a ratio of 0.78 s.f. of water surface per capita.

To better align with the average of 0.56 s.f. per capita, the City of Lenexa should provide 29,600 s.f. of water surface area, a reduction of 13,800 s.f. This would be more in line with industry best practices, efficiency in aquatics programming, and sustainability of operations.

## Outdoor Aquatic Trends

Best practices in the aquatics industry have changed since the original construction of Lenexa's two largest outdoor pools, Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center. In today's water recreational climate, pool users are looking for varied experiences, with a variety of engaging amenities, water depths, and opportunities to swim regardless of age and ability. Operators, owners, and cities are now looking at outdoor pools as a public service and need to consider subsidy and cost recovery levels. Revenue must be generated, expenditures managed, and efficiencies incorporated to maximize resources. Facility considerations for future improvements should incorporate characteristics including:

1. Interesting facilities with attractive amenities and flexible spaces that allow for optimum programming.
2. Appropriate-sized facilities with locations and market conditions that are optimum for serving the community while being fiscally responsible.
3. Successful management and operations that provide optimum programming and financial performance.



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## **Executive Summary**

### Public Engagement Overview

As previously noted, Phase II focused primarily on public engagement with emphasis on these goals:

- Activate: Cast broad net and reach as much of the community as possible through multiple channels.
- Engage: Through unbiased listening, get feedback on aquatics needs, preferences, challenges and opportunities using a variety of platforms.
- Educate: Provide residents with the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for outdoor aquatics.

### **User Group Meetings**

Hosted in-person meetings with 19 key stakeholders that allowed for in-depth discussion on aquatics facilities and programs. Groups included:

- Lenexa Lazercraft Swim and Dive Team participants
- Ad Astra Coalition Leadership
- Kansas City Blazers coaches and business manager
- Day camp and daycare providers

### **Statistically Valid Survey**

Waters Edge Aquatic Design contracted with ETC Institute to survey randomly chosen Lenexa residents. A five-page survey was completed by 506 residents. The survey was conducted to get feedback from a cross-section of the community to represent the community as a whole. The survey contained questions about respondent demographics, current utilization of outdoor pools and reasons for using them, support for outdoor pools, level of interest in different strategies to offer outdoor pools in Lenexa, and desired and needed amenities and programs.

### **Online Survey**

An online survey was available on Lenexa.com for six weeks in early 2021. A total of 791 responses were gathered from this survey. This survey was not intended to be statistically valid and did not limit how many times individuals could complete the survey. It was intended to allow for interested parties to provide feedback. It contained 13 questions about respondent demographics, current utilization of outdoor pools, support for outdoor pools, and desired amenities.

### **Online Feedback Form**

A feedback form accompanied an aquatics study website story through which 72 individuals shared feedback between February 2019 and March 2021.



## Open House

We hosted an open house March 18, 2021 to provide an in-person opportunity to engage with interested residents. 26 attendees signed in during the event.

## Communications Efforts

Several platforms were used to reach the public about Phase II to encourage participation including TownTalk, newsletters, social media and website stories. Additionally, the study was reported on by several television news stations and print publications who shared engagement opportunities with the public.

## Public Engagement Findings

Through public engagement, we hoped to determine whether there was community consensus on a core study question; should the City offer: 1) small outdoor pools in more locations with fewer amenities and more traditional swimming characteristics, or 2) offer fewer outdoor pools with more amenities for a wider demographic. There was no clear community consensus on this question, with responses being nearly equal between the two options.

Other key takeaways:

- Aquatics is strongly supported and important to the community; 94% feel it is valuable for the City to offer an aquatics program.
- There is more support for upgrading existing outdoor pool locations than constructing new outdoor pools.
- Location, fees and fun features and amenities all affect how people feel about outdoor pools.
- Most community members do not have access to an HOA pool.
- Those who have access to an HOA pool indicated they still want to use outdoor city pools.
- Most community members indicated they use a personal vehicle to get to outdoor pools and are willing to travel 10-minutes for a quality outdoor pool facility.
- Notably, Flat Rock Creek Pool was not identified as a priority and mostly absent from the data.

## Other considerations

Our efforts were successful in engaging a wide range of participants. It is of note that the those living near the Ad Astra Pool engaged at a higher rate than other parts of our community. This is likely due to their vested interest in the outcomes of Phase II.

The feedback collected through public engagement about the use of pools does not align with the historical data of actual pool usage. Any final decisions regarding aquatic investments should consider this data.

Hiring, training, and retaining quality staff for aquatic operations has increasingly become challenging, both regionally and nationally.

## Recommendations

As previously mentioned, there was not a clear consensus from the community on the option of having more small facilities with fewer amenities versus fewer facilities with more amenities. Therefore, other key indicators should be taken into consideration when developing options and recommendations, including:

- What the community is saying about existing outdoor pools regarding their location, features and amenities, and interest in use
- Where community members are swimming and their reasons for visiting those pools
- What community members are most interested in, what they find important, and where their priorities are in relation to their residence
- How far community members are willing to drive for quality aquatics facilities
- City needs and goals relating to outdoor pools (e.g., level of subsidy, staffing levels and demands, allocation of resources, etc.)
- Industry trends and best practices
- Actual attendance and financial data regarding pool operations

### Recommendation #1

Reinvest and renovate Indian Trails Aquatic Center with the goal of creating a regional-sized aquatic center with the right mix of amenities. This would allow for more efficient operations and maximize usage.

- The Priority Investment Rating\* data collected through the statistically valid survey should guide the mix of amenities and program spaces:

*Priority Investments for Amenities*

Amenity	PIR
Shade areas	175.5
Lazy river	161.7
Deck chairs	132.3
Active water features	130.6
Deck space for lounge seating/observation	119.0
Lap lanes	102.9

*Priority Investments for Programs*

Program	PIR
Water fitness classes/water aerobics	200.0
Senior aquatic programs	146.6
Lap swimming	142.9
Swim lessons	122.2
Special aquatic events (dive-in movie, night swim)	100.7

\* For a definition of Priority Investment Ratings (PIR) and further information, go to page 28.

### Recommendation #2

Reduce the overall amount of water surface offered through the outdoor pools.

- Close Ad Astra Pool and repurpose as another recreational amenity.
- Maintain operation of Flat Rock Creek Pool for the duration of its useful life.

### Recommendation #3

As part of any future park improvements or Parks and Recreation Master Plan updates, give future consideration to splash pad(s)/splash park(s). They could supplement water recreation opportunities and provide fully accessible and readily available water recreation amenities, especially for neighborhoods that would benefit most or are more remote.

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# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

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## Public Engagement

### About Public Engagement

The purpose of public engagement was to activate, engage and educate the community regarding outdoor swimming and pools, and collect feedback on aquatic goals, needs and preferences. That feedback will be used to develop informed options for outdoor aquatics moving forward.

Throughout the public engagement process, topics of discussion included:

- Existing outdoor pool conditions
- Priorities for investment
- Pool features and activities
- Types of future aquatic options

Goals of public engagement:

- Unbiased listening
- Engage a diverse group of community members
- Identify needs versus preferences
- Provide well-rounded education
- Collect feedback that can be used to create a fiscally responsible plan that makes sense for the entire community, not just one area or location

Public engagement methods included the following:

- Statistically valid survey
- Online survey (not statistically valid)
- Project web page with feedback form
- Open house
- User group meetings

### Steering Committee

A Steering Committee oversaw the development of the public engagement process. The Steering Committee included two City Council liaisons, one member from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Member and four staff members.

- **City Council Liaisons:** Bill Nicks, Daniel Roh
- **Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Member:** Mike Rzeszut
- **City Staff:** Todd Pelham, Denise Rendina, Logan Wagler, Mandy Danler

## Public Engagement Summary

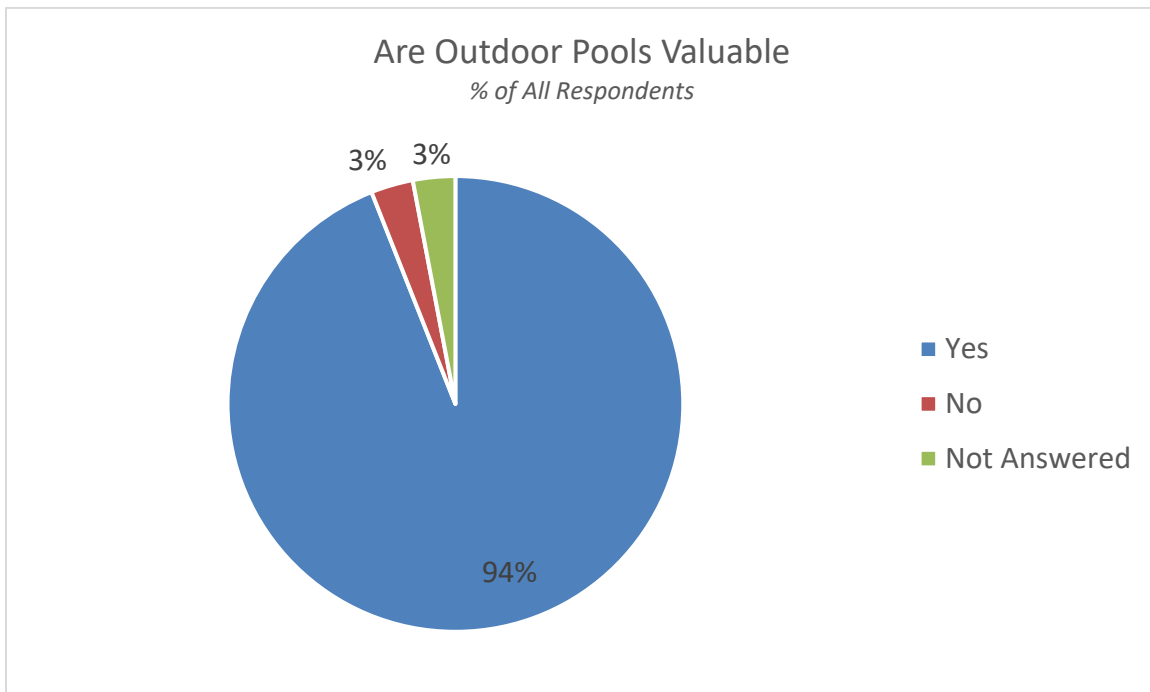
The level of engagement we received from the community for Phase II was positive and survey participation surpassed expectations.

	Participant Goal	Actual
Statistically Valid Survey	400	506
Online Survey	500 – 600	791

Following are key takeaways from the public engagement process.

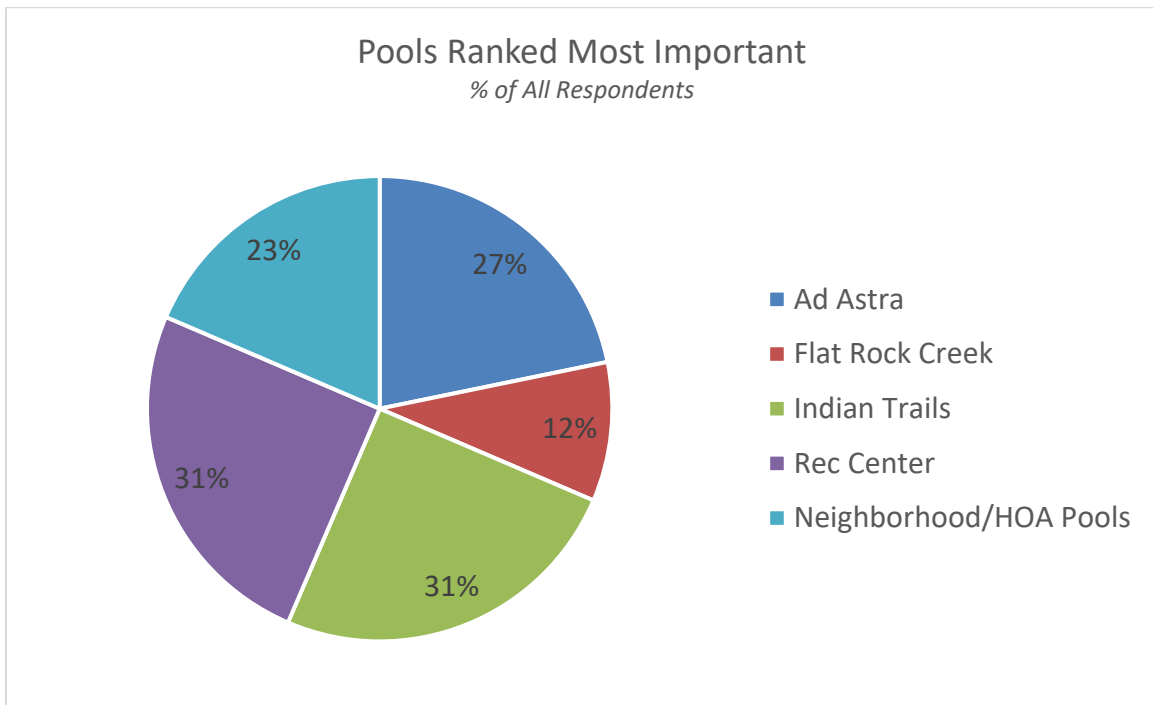
### Overall Support

Aquatics is overwhelmingly valued and supported in Lenexa, and there is support for each of the three outdoor pools.





Indian Trails Aquatic Center and Lenexa Rec Center ranked as the most important pools in Lenexa. Respondents submitted the top 2 pools most important to their household; the top ranked pools are shown below.



## Pool Usage

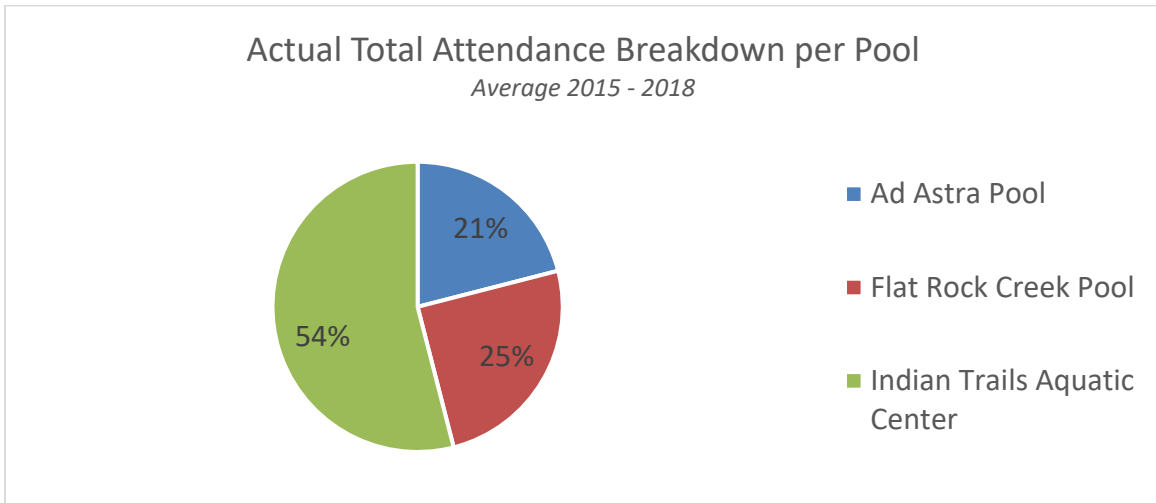
Just over half of respondents on the statistically valid survey reported visiting an outdoor pool between 2018 and 2020. This indicates that the Lenexa community has a need and interest in swimming facilities.

When asked which pools they visited, statistically valid survey participants responded:

- Lenexa Rec Center = 46%
- Indian Trails Aquatic Center = 36%
- Ad Astra Pool = 36%
- HOA pools = 32%
- Flat Rock Creek Pool = 17%

This reporting, however, does not align with actual past usage where, on average, Indian Trails Aquatic Center sees 54% of the attendance of the three outdoor pools. This reporting also implies that Ad Astra Pool would have higher attendance than Flat Rock Creek Pool, however actual attendance demonstrates that Flat Rock Creek Pool

has a higher attendance than Ad Astra Pool. A breakdown of average Actual Total Attendance is provided.



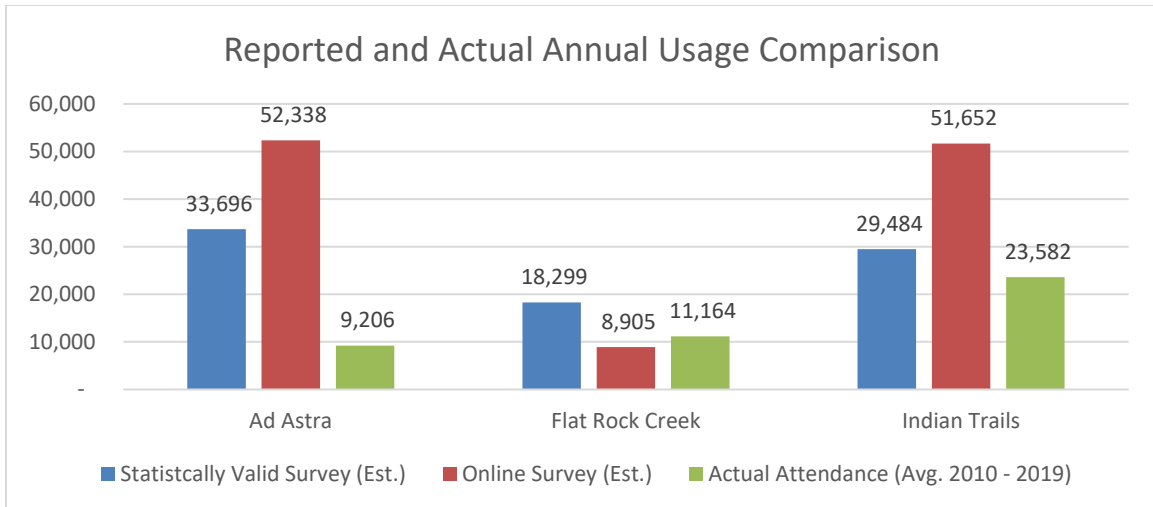
### Pool Usage Breakdown

Actual past usage was evaluated in relation to public engagement reporting because it is important to understand what is being reported versus what is happening. There is reason to believe there is overreporting or overrepresentation of pool use in the surveys.

To compare survey reporting of attendance to actual attendance, a formula was used to quantify survey attendance rates to produce an estimated number. Utilizing the lowest parameters for estimating annual Daily, Weekly, Monthly and Seasonal use for those who reported visiting the outdoor pools on the statistically valid and online surveys, there is a difference between the level of reported usage and actual usage. What is reported via the surveys is higher than actual use.

The statistically valid survey reporting is more in-line with actual participation at both Flat Rock Creek Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center, whereas reported use at Ad Astra Pool is much higher than actual usage. However, the survey response is still higher than actual attendance at all pools. Reported use on this survey could include both general admission and program use, whereas the actual attendance number does not. Ad Astra Pool is the home of several larger programs and may account for higher reporting of use, in addition to reporting due to interest in the outcomes of Phase II.

The online survey reporting shows much higher participation at Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center than actual attendance, whereas Flat Rock Creek reporting shows lesser attendance than actual. The higher reporting of use is expected in the online survey because respondents are often pool users and/or supporters of the pool(s) and may also have an interest in the outcomes of Phase II. Flat Rock Creek Pool may show less utilization because community members view Flat Rock Creek as a newer facility and not in a position to be closed or receive improvements, and therefore there were fewer respondents representing this pool.



Public engagement found that other outdoor pools commonly visited included Black Bob Bay in Olathe, Thomas A. Soetaert Aquatic Center in Shawnee, Young’s Pool in Overland Park, and The Prairie Village Pool. These pools offer multi-pool complexes, with various features and amenities typical of more modern aquatic centers. These facilities were discussed and mentioned specifically because of their updated features. This indicates that community members do not swim at all or only in Lenexa due to the disparity in more modern features between Lenexa pools and others.

## Aquatic Priorities

Location and quality of the facility are vital when considering future options as these are areas of high importance. Although there is varied use, there is support in maintaining the current facilities and upgrading them over developing new facilities. When exploring future options, the visitor cost to utilize a facility should be considered as this is important to community members.

Most community members are willing to drive up to 10-minutes for a quality outdoor pool facility and indicate they will travel via a personal vehicle to get there. Of note, all Lenexa outdoor pools are located within 10-minutes of each other. In addition to location and fees, fun features and amenities are desired. Features and amenities include flexibility to accommodate a variety of programs, modern amenities, varying water depths, and facilities that can serve multiple generations. A lazy river is one of the highest-ranking features and should be included in future pool planning.

The statistically valid survey developed a Priority Investment Rating (PIR) to determine priorities based on the identified unmet needs of an amenity/program and the importance of that amenity/program. The chart below shows those areas that have both a need that is unmet and a high level of importance.

*Priority Investments for Amenities*

*Priority Investments for Programs*

Amenity	PIR
Shade areas	175.5
Lazy river	161.7
Deck chairs	132.3
Active water features	130.6
Deck space for lounge seating/observation	119.0
Lap lanes	102.9

Program	PIR
Water fitness classes/water aerobics	200.0
Senior aquatic programs	146.6
Lap swimming	142.9
Swim lessons	122.2
Special aquatic events (dive-in movie, night swim)	100.7

Additionally, water slide(s), zero-depth beach entry and diving boards were amenities of higher interest. Lower-ranked features of interest include wave pool/surf simulation, deep water, shallow water, and active features (e.g., climbing wall, obstacle course, lily pad walk, zip lines, etc.). Amenities such as shade areas, deck chairs, and deck space increase visitor and user comfort. These were high priority and were referenced throughout the multiple methods of public engagement.

Through public engagement, we hoped to answer a core study question, should the City offer: 1) small outdoor pools in more locations with fewer amenities and more traditional swimming characteristics, or 2) offer fewer outdoor pools with more amenities for a wider demographic. There was no clear preference on this question, with responses being nearly equal between the two options.

## Pool Users versus All Respondents Comparison

Pool users are defined as those who indicated they utilize Lenexa’s outdoor pools, and all respondents are those who both did and did not indicate they utilize Lenexa’s outdoor pools. It should come as no surprise that pool users on the statistically valid survey ranked the value of outdoor pools higher than all respondents. They also indicated they have less access to HOA pools overall. Pool users ranked Indian Trails Aquatic Center the most important outdoor pool. Pool users are more willing to drive up to 10-minutes to participate in a quality outdoor pool facility and utilize a personal vehicle to visit.

## HOA Pool Considerations

One major question going into Phase II was the question of whether HOA pools impact use at the City’s outdoor pools and if so, how. Most community members do not have access to an HOA pool. Areas of the city that have more access to an HOA pool utilize Lenexa’s outdoor pools less and value them slightly less. Because HOA pools have

limited amenities, programs, character, water depth (including zero depth entry) and fun features those with access to an HOA pool indicate they are still interested in using City pools.

HOA pools are spread throughout the city and include both neighborhood HOA pools and apartment/condo pools. HOA pools are concentrated in the upper northeast, around I-435, and western portions of the city. According to past attendance records, residents living in these areas still utilize each of the city's three outdoor pools. However, the density of users is not as heavy as areas without access to an HOA pool. This indicates that there is not as strong of a need for a pool location in these areas as others. Additionally, use of private clubs/neighborhood/HOA pools were identified as the number one reason (31% of respondents) that prevents utilization of Lenexa's outdoor pools more often.

Western Lenexa has a lower percentage of respondents who value outdoor pools in relation to the eastern part of Lenexa. However, the majority of respondents value outdoor swimming and support existing facilities and a new facility in the western part of the city.

## Public Engagement Details

### User Groups Meetings

Individual and in-person meetings were conducted in January 2020 for each of the identified user groups. Meetings were led by Waters Edge Aquatic Design and representatives from the City were present for all meetings. Topics of conversation included:

- Expectations of an aquatic facility
- Scheduling needs
- How needs are currently being met
- Benefits and challenges of City of Lenexa outdoor pools
- Benefits and challenges of other outdoor pools
- Needs and preferences for outdoor pools in Lenexa

Representatives from the following user groups took part in these meetings:

<u>Group Name:</u>	<u># of Participants:</u>	<u>Meeting Date, Time, Location:</u>
Lenexa Lazers Swim and Dive Team	6	1/20/2020, 4:30 – 5:45 p.m. @ Lenexa City Hall
Ad Astra Coalition Leadership	8	1/20/2020, 6 – 8:15 p.m. @ Lenexa City Hall
Kansas City Blazers	2	1/23/2020, 9 – 10 a.m. @ Lenexa Rec Center
Day Camps/Daycare Providers	3	1/23/2020, 10 – 11 a.m. @ Lenexa Rec Center

Notes from these meetings can be found in Appendix E. The following themes emerged from the comments collected at the special user group meetings.

#### **Lenexa Lazers Swim and Dive Team**

It is the desire of the current participants that the Lenexa Lazers Swim and Dive team is offered in the summer, and the team needs a home pool that allows appropriate setup for practices and meets. It is beneficial to have swim and dive team at the same location for ease for families with athletes participating at different practice times. In addition, athletes participate in more than one team on the same day and changing locations would be challenging. Other mentioned preferences include:

- Changing facilities for showering and dressing before and after practices
- Swimmers need enough lanes to avoid overcrowding
- Diving blocks in 6 feet of water to train
- 25-yards is needed to practice and compete in the league, and 50-meters is a preference



Divers need 1-meter boards, and a 3-meter board is a preference

- Enhanced seating and shade are desired for spectators for dive meets

### **Ad Astra Coalition**

The Ad Astra Coalition was formed in 2019 by a group of Lenexa residents who live around Ad Astra Pool and who want to maintain a pool in Ad Astra Park. The Ad Astra Coalition reports to represent over 900 households surrounding Ad Astra Pool, and has a leadership team of approximately 11.

The Ad Astra Coalition supports the continued operation of a pool in Ad Astra Park, in part, because the neighbors do not have access to an HOA pool. The Coalition recognizes the maintenance challenges and conditions of Ad Astra Pool and would be supportive of a new smaller pool to replace the existing pool.

When asked about the suitability of Indian Trails Aquatics Center serving the needs of the Ad Astra Coalition, attendees expressed concern about crossing 87<sup>th</sup> Street to access Indian Trails Aquatic Center. They also indicated Indian Trails is too busy and lacks adequate parking and seating.

Throughout the public engagement process, there was feedback received that there is concern for a new outdoor pool to be built to the west, particularly when discussing closure of Ad Astra Pool and/or removing both Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center and developing a central waterpark to the west (as recommended in Phase 1 of this study).

### **Kansas City Blazers**

The Blazers find Lenexa a convenient location for practice. It is estimated that 70% of Blazer participant athletes are from the Blue Valley School District. They hope to grow participation in Lenexa. Water depths of 4 – 7 feet and long-course lanes (50-meters) are preferred although it is possible to practice in 25-yards.

### **Day Camps/Daycare Providers**

Two groups were represented in the process, Johnson County Parks and Recreation and Special Beginnings. Johnson County Parks and Recreation represents multiple summer camps operated in separate locations. These groups have utilized the Lenexa Pools for many years and have been power users at the three outdoor pools, consistently bringing kids to swim on weekdays in the summer.

Day camps and daycare providers regularly use Lenexa's three outdoor pools. These providers are looking for fun facilities, with separate areas for different ages and abilities, family changing rooms, and good visibility to watch kids. Reasonable fees are important, and there is a concern with over-crowding and lack of fun at smaller pools. If the City were to offer a larger facility that was designed with the above considerations, they would be interested in utilizing one facility versus traveling to multiple smaller pools. Desired pool features include slides, a lazy river and shallow water.

## Statistically Valid Survey Details

To get a representative sampling of feedback from residents regarding aquatics in Lenexa, a statistically valid survey was selected as the primary survey tool. Waters Edge Aquatic Design contracted with ETC Institute to design and administer a five-page survey. The goal was a minimum of 400 respondents. The survey was administered in January 2021 and 506 residents completed the survey.

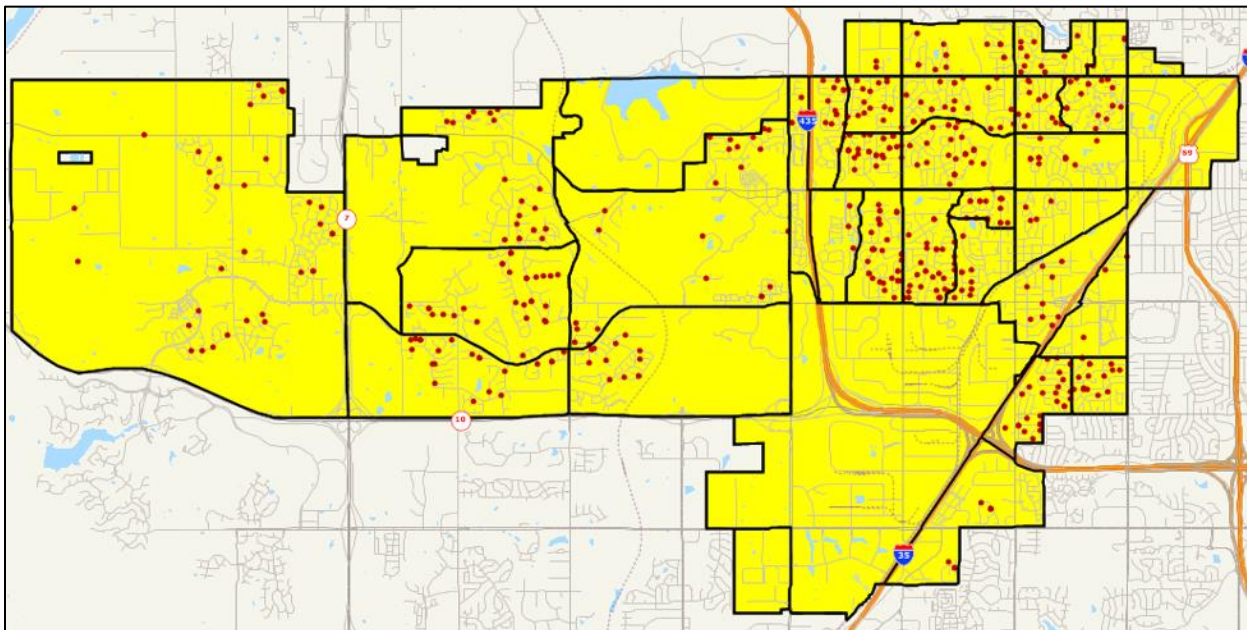
ETC Institute has confirmed the validity and results of the survey. The overall results for the sample of 506 households have a precision of at least  $\pm 4.3\%$  at the 95% level of confidence.

To determine “Pool Users” a cross tabulation for respondents who answered ‘Yes’ to having visited any of the outdoor pools was conducted. 260 respondents were identified as “Pool Users” (51% of all respondents). A comparison of Pool Users to All Respondents can be found in Appendix I.

A copy of the Findings Report in its entirety is located in Appendix J, and a cross-tabulation data set for those identified as Pool Users is in Appendix K.

This section of the report will focus on key takeaways. A breakdown of geographic locations of respondents is shown in the image below.

*Respondent Location Breakdown*



## Statistically Valid Survey: Key Takeaways

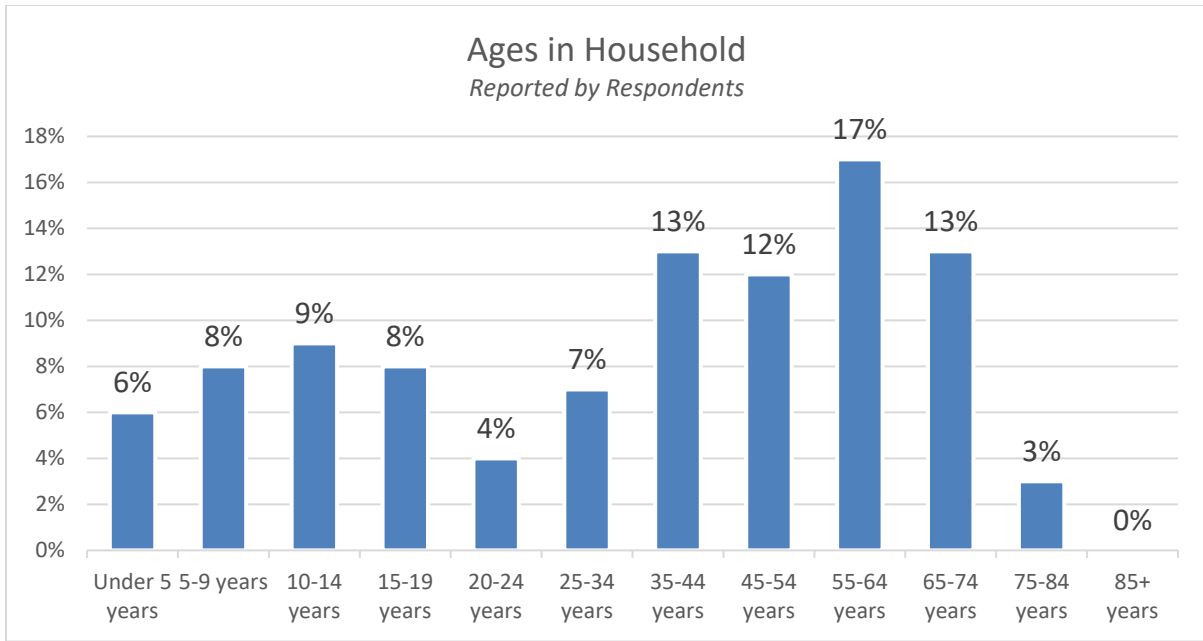
Aquatics is supported, and both Indian Trails Aquatic Center and Ad Astra Pool are important to the community. Flat Rock Creek Pool is also supported, but to a lesser degree than the other two. Upgrading existing outdoor pools has a higher level of support than developing new, and location, fees, and fun features and amenities are all important. Just under 60% of the community have access to an HOA pool.

## Statistically Valid Survey: Respondent Information

The overall makeup of households on the statistically valid survey represented a cross-section of the City of Lenexa in ages which meets expectations of a survey of this type. See the Ages in Household graph below for a breakdown of ages in the household as reported by respondents.

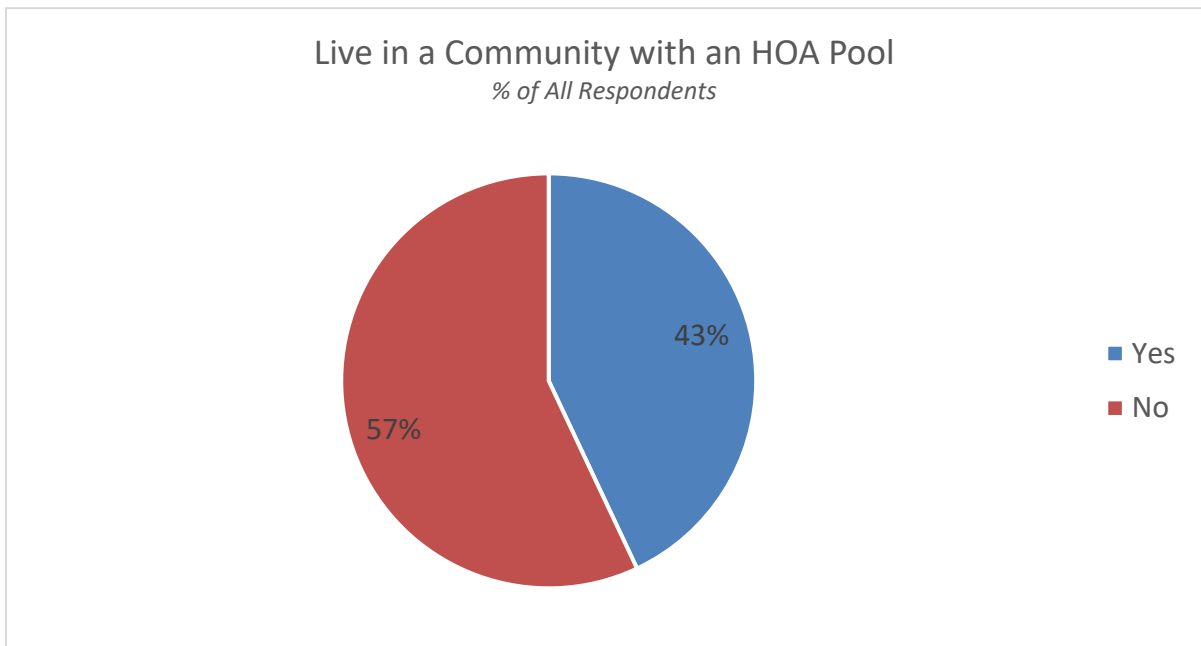
The age of respondents that took the survey varies between 18 to 65 years or older. 44% of respondents reported being 55 years of age and older. This is typical for a statistically valid survey, because it is expected that adults and older people in the household will complete a survey. This is noted because there is some level of inherent bias when reporting in favor of the respondent, even when the respondent is representing the household. Programs, features, uses, and priorities would all reflect the needs of the respondents, which is not necessarily representative of the general community and/or typical recreation users. For example, adult programs such as water fitness and senior programs ranked high for the PIR for Programs, which are in-line with the expected needs of those 55 years of age and older.

However, the reported household breakdown of ages is consistent with the actual demographic breakdown in the city, as is the primary tool used when verifying validity in representation. The exception to this is the 25–34-year category; this category is underrepresented in the survey, which is not abnormal for this type of survey,



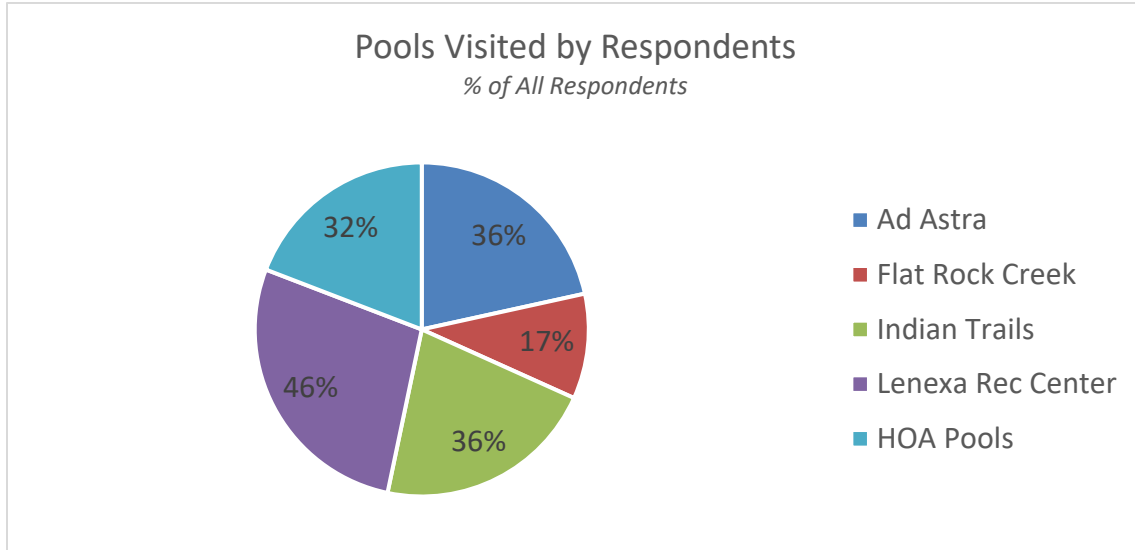
### Access to HOA Pools

Most respondents (57%) do not have access to an HOA pool. “Pool Users” (respondents indicated they had used a Lenexa outdoor pool) have less access to an HOA pool. Of note, in the online survey 70% of respondents said they did not have access to an HOA pool.



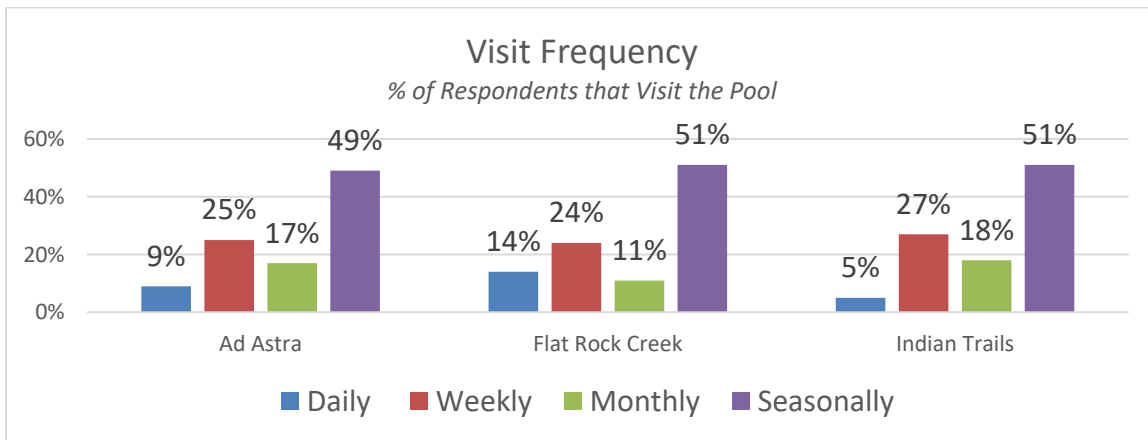
## Statistically Valid Survey: Pool Usage

The Pools Visited graph below shows the overall percentage of respondents reporting they visited particular pools.

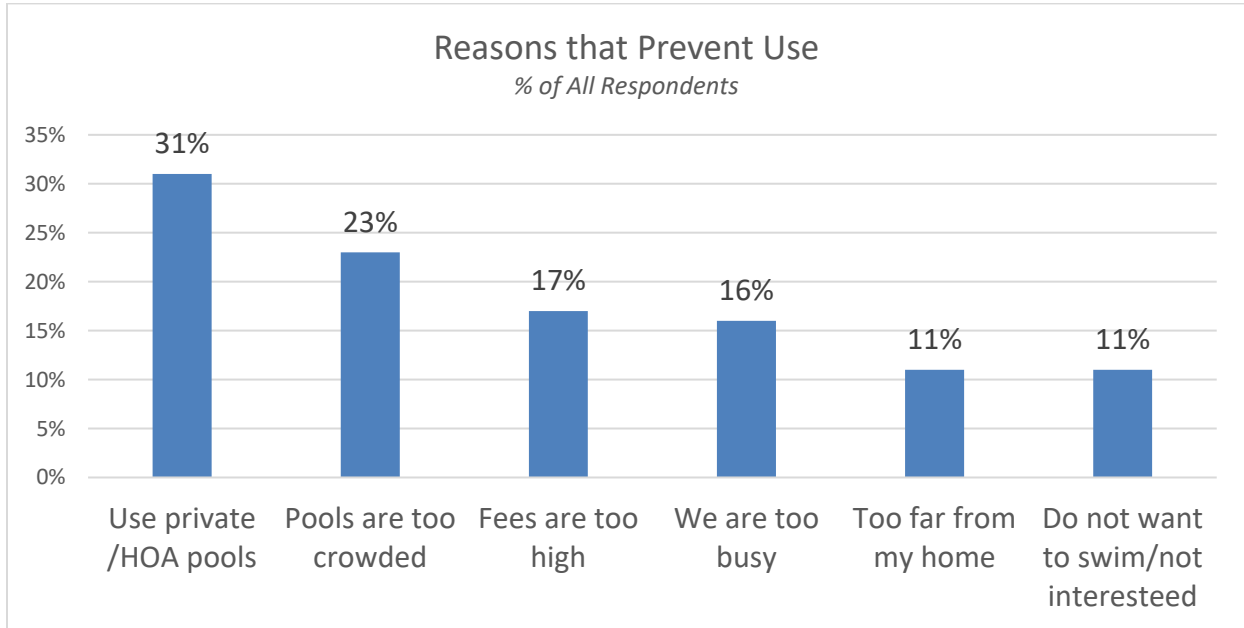


According to how frequently respondents reported visiting the outdoor pools from 2018 to 2020, Flat Rock Creek Pool outranked both Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center on reporting Daily and Weekly usage (38% versus 34% and 32% respectively). Although there is slight variation in the frequency of use between the three (3) outdoor pools, they function very similarly. This is in comparison to HOA pools, where 52% report Daily and Weekly usage.

Reported use at Flat Rock Creek Pool on this survey was higher than reporting from the online survey and other public engagement methods, and of actual use. A comparison of actual use and survey findings can be found in the Public Engagement Summary on pages 16-17.

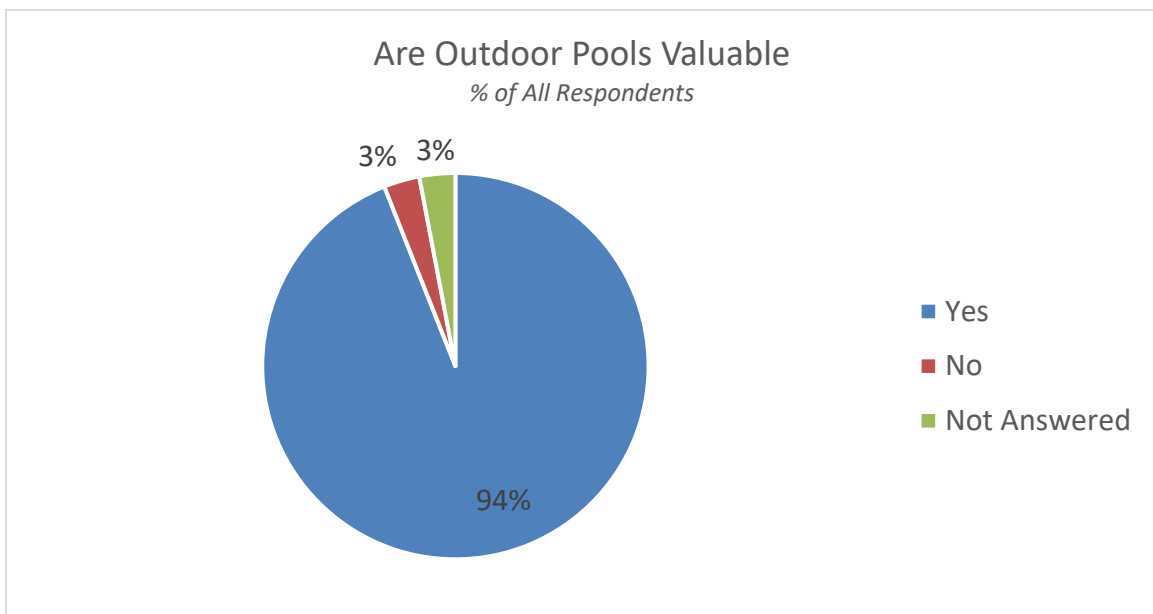


The top barriers that prevent utilization of the outdoor pools in the City of Lenexa are shown in the Reasons that Prevent Use graph below.



### Statistically Valid Survey: Aquatics Priorities

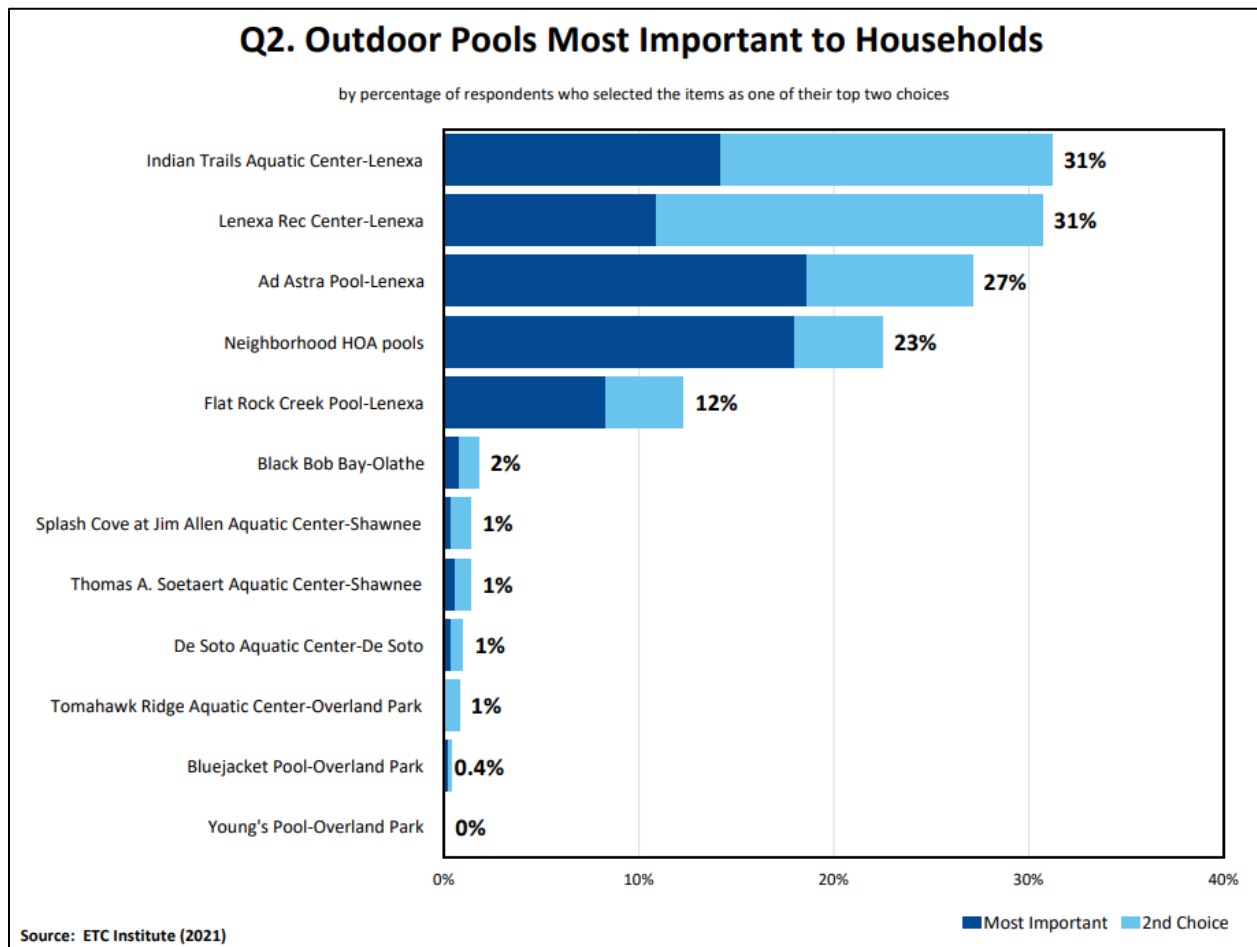
A large majority of respondents feel it is valuable to offer outdoor pools to the community.



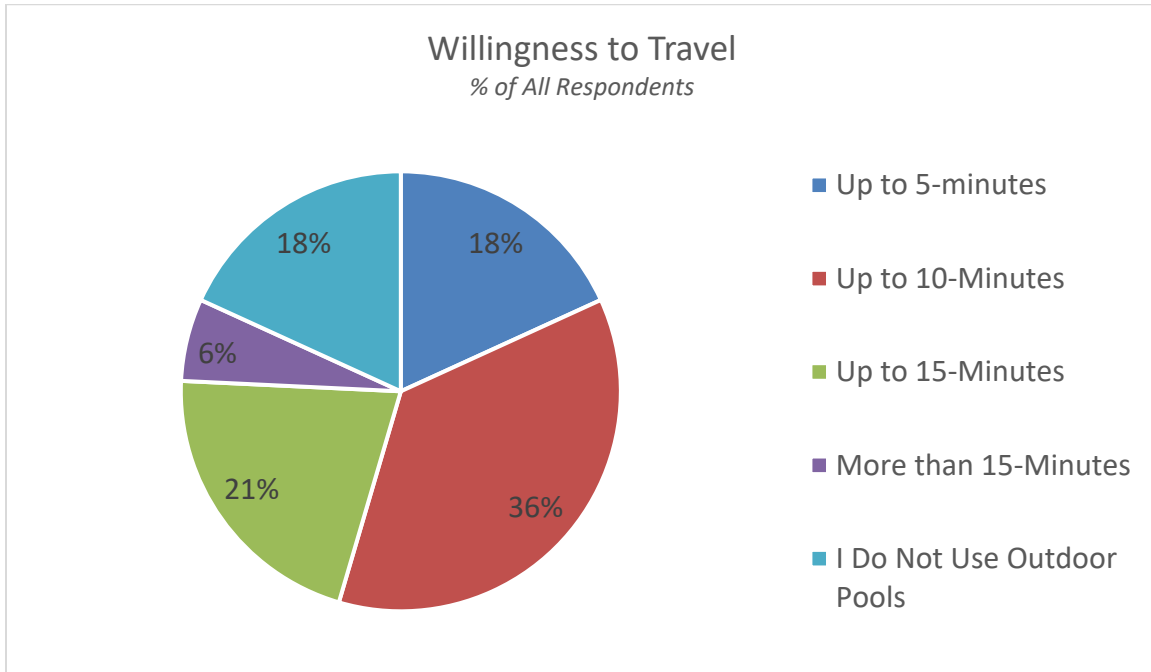


As seen in the chart below, Lenexa’s outdoor pools are valued differently. Indian Trails Aquatic Center and the Lenexa Rec Center are both the top-rated pools that are most important to respondents. Behind these two are Ad Astra Pool, HOA pools, and Flat Rock Creek (in descending order). Flat Rock Creek is over 10 percentage points lower than HOA Pools, and nearly 20 percentage points lower than Indian Trails Aquatic Center and Lenexa Rec Center.

This would indicate that Indian Trails Aquatic Center is an important outdoor pool facility in the City, followed by Ad Astra Pool. This is consistent with written feedback and submitted comments about both pools.



The majority of respondents, 63%, are willing to drive up to 10-minutes for a quality outdoor pool facility. Traveling via a personal vehicle is the primary method of visiting outdoor pools (67%). 89% of those who reported visiting a Lenexa outdoor pool visit outdoor pools via personal vehicle.



Fees/cost to use, fun features and amenities, and proximity to a residence are of high importance to respondents. The areas that should receive emphasis when planning for future outdoor pools in Lenexa are ranked below in descending order.

1. Fees/costs to use (62%)
2. Fun features and amenities (48%)
3. Proximity to your residence (39%)
4. Classes and/or programs offered (38%)
5. Location fits with and enhances economic development in the surrounding area (25%)
6. Operate to maximize cost recovery and minimize subsidy (21%)
7. Other park amenities near the swimming pool (16%)
8. Available space to grow or expand in the future (8%)

### **Needs**

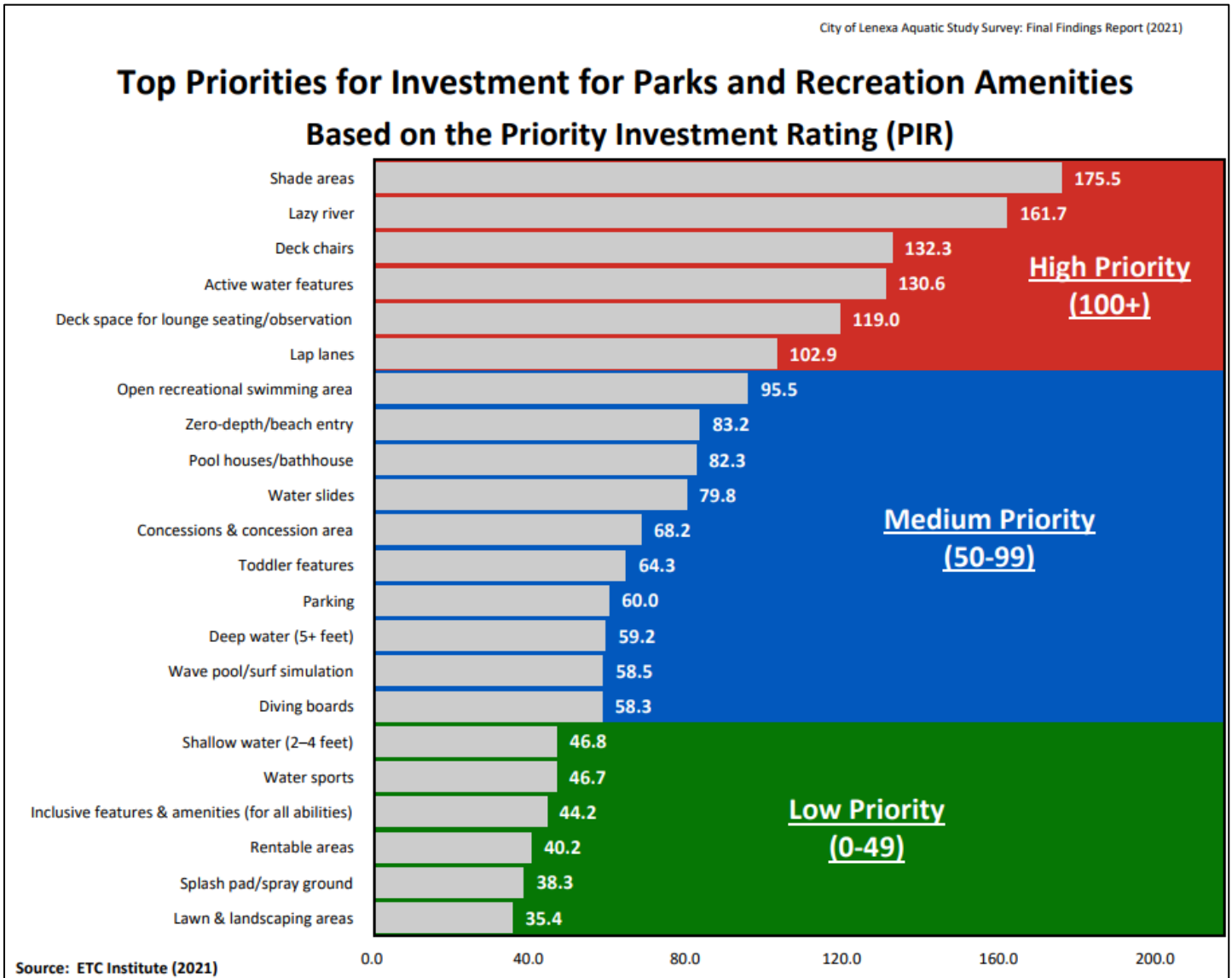
The Priority Investment Rating (PIR) for amenities and programs are shown below and indicate the top areas that have both a need that is unmet and a high level of importance. The higher the priority, the higher the importance ranking and the level of unmet need; improvements in the high PIR category are likely to have a positive impact

on the greatest number of households. More details about the PIR can be found in Appendix J.

A full ranking of amenities in relation to their priority category is shown in the graph below. The top priority amenities identified are listed below, and should be incorporated into any investments in outdoor aquatics:

1. Shade areas
2. Lazy river
3. Deck chairs
4. Active water features
5. Deck space for lounge seating/observation
6. Lap Lanes

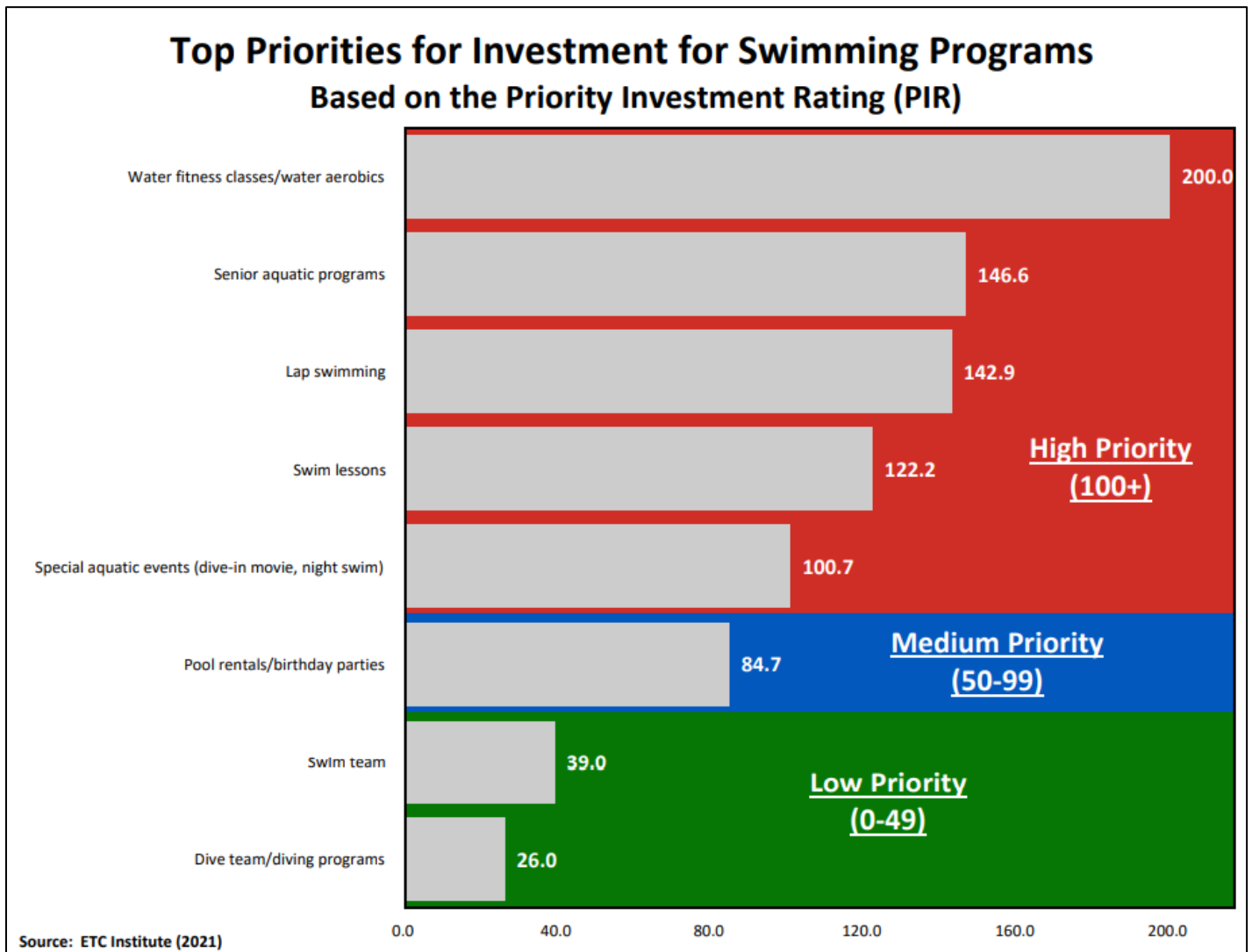
Priority Investment Rating - Amenities



A PIR was also developed for swimming programs. A full ranking of programs in relation to their priority category is shown in the graph below. The top priority programs identified are listed below, and should be incorporated into any investments in outdoor aquatics and programming efforts:

1. Water fitness classes/water aerobics
2. Senior aquatic programs
3. Lap swimming
4. Swim lessons
5. Special aquatic events (dive-in movie, night swim)

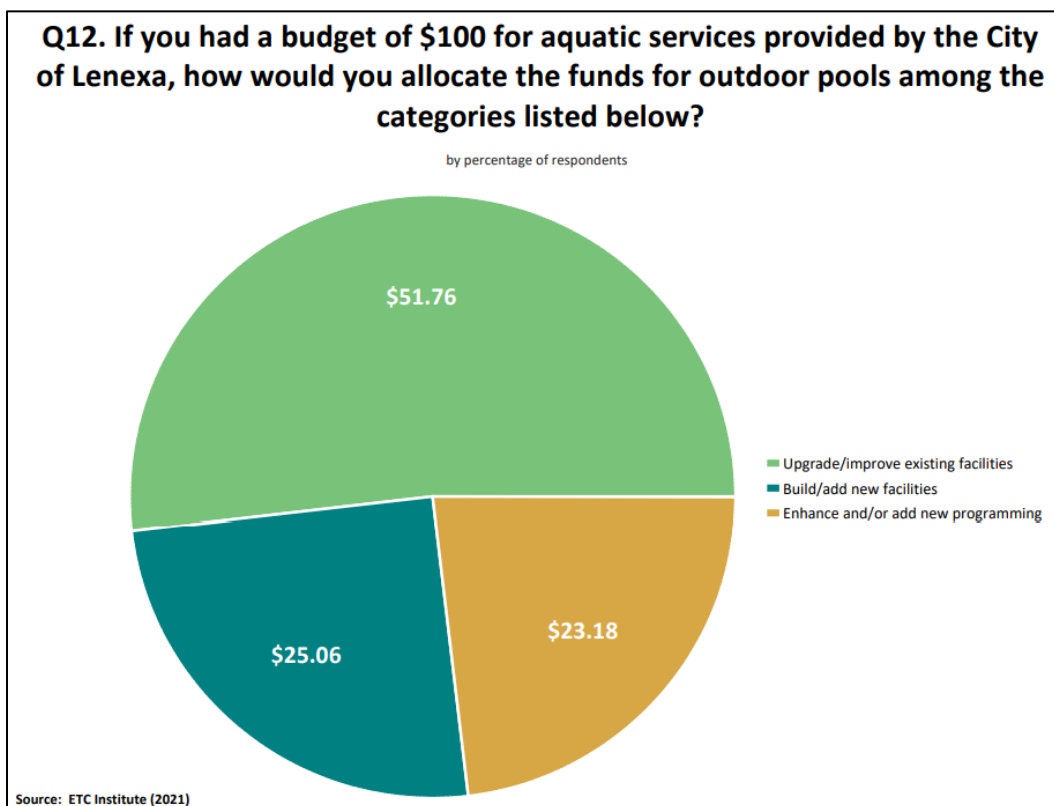
Priority Investment Rating - Programs



### **Support**

Respondents were asked how they would allocate \$100 for outdoor pools and services. They chose between upgrading/improving existing facilities, build/add new facilities, and enhance and/or add new programming.

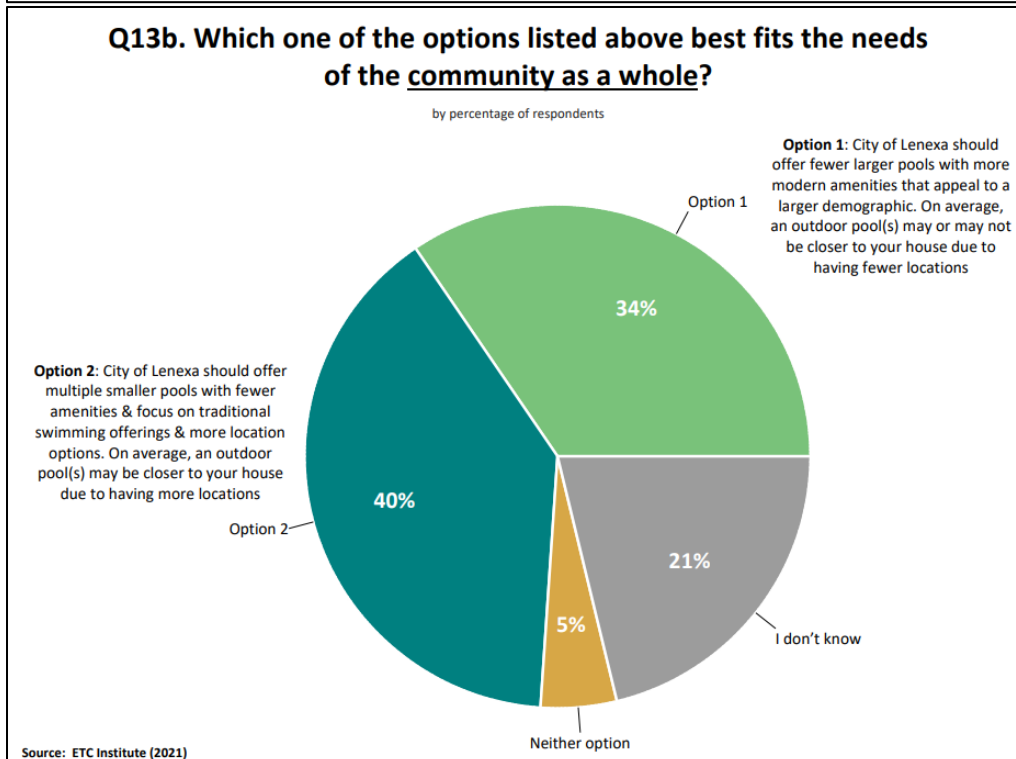
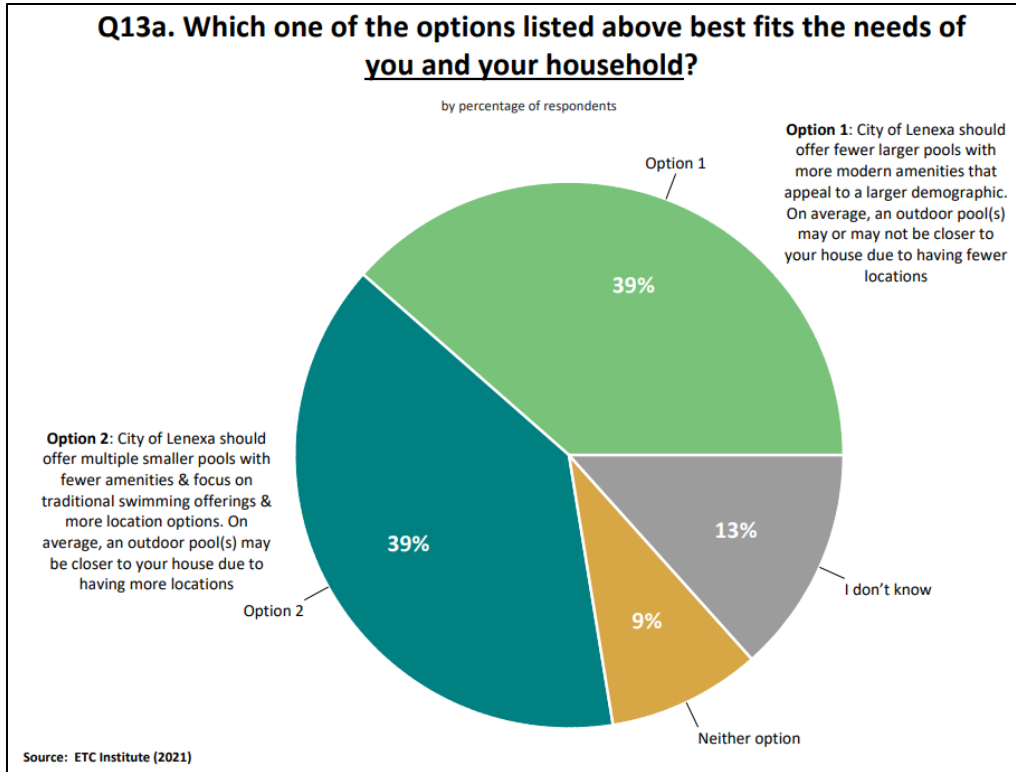
Respondents allocated over half of the funds towards upgrading/improving existing facilities. When allocating financial resources to outdoor pools, improving existing outdoor pools should be the focus for receiving those resources. There is support for investing in new facilities and programs, and it is acceptable to consider these when planning for improvements to existing outdoor pools and when establishing future aquatic services.



Respondents were asked which option best fits the needs of their household and of their community. Those options were:

1. The City of Lenexa should offer a fewer number of larger pools with more modern amenities that appeal to a larger demographic. In Option 1, on average, an outdoor pool(s) may or may not be closer to your house due to having fewer locations.
2. The City of Lenexa should offer multiple smaller pools with fewer amenities and focus on traditional swimming offerings and more location options. In Option 2, on average, an outdoor pool(s) may be closer to your house due to having more locations.

Survey results showed no distinct and clear preference between these two options. This indicates that the community is split between the options and that there is nearly a quarter of them who will rely on the education from this study and the City’s strategy for determining the solution that best fits the needs of the community as a whole.





## Online Survey Details

In addition to the statistically valid survey, an online survey was available to the community. The online survey, which is not statistically valid but offers further insight, was available mid-February 2021 through March 28, 2021. The goal for the survey was between 500 and 600 respondents and 791 respondents submitted their feedback.

The online survey was open to everyone, regardless of residency and demographic make-up. It was available through online methods (e.g., website, social media, etc.), and was set up so that only one (1) submission could be submitted per device. However, a respondent could use multiple devices to submit multiple surveys.

Full survey data can be found in Appendix L.

## Online Survey: Key Takeaways

Aquatics is supported, and both Indian Trails Aquatic Center and Ad Astra Pool are important to the community. Flat Rock Creek Pool was not as represented in this survey as the other two pools. Proximity to residence, fees, and fun features and amenities are all important, and over 60% are willing to drive up to 10-minutes for a quality outdoor pool facility. Just over 70% of the community do not have access to an HOA pool.

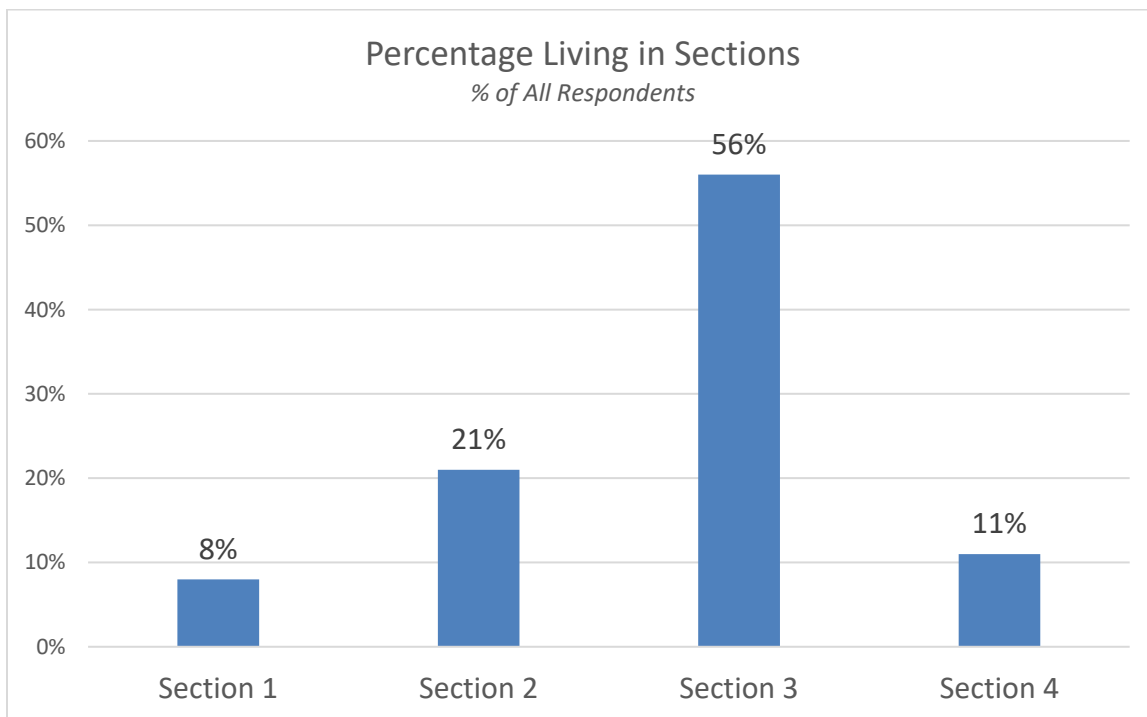
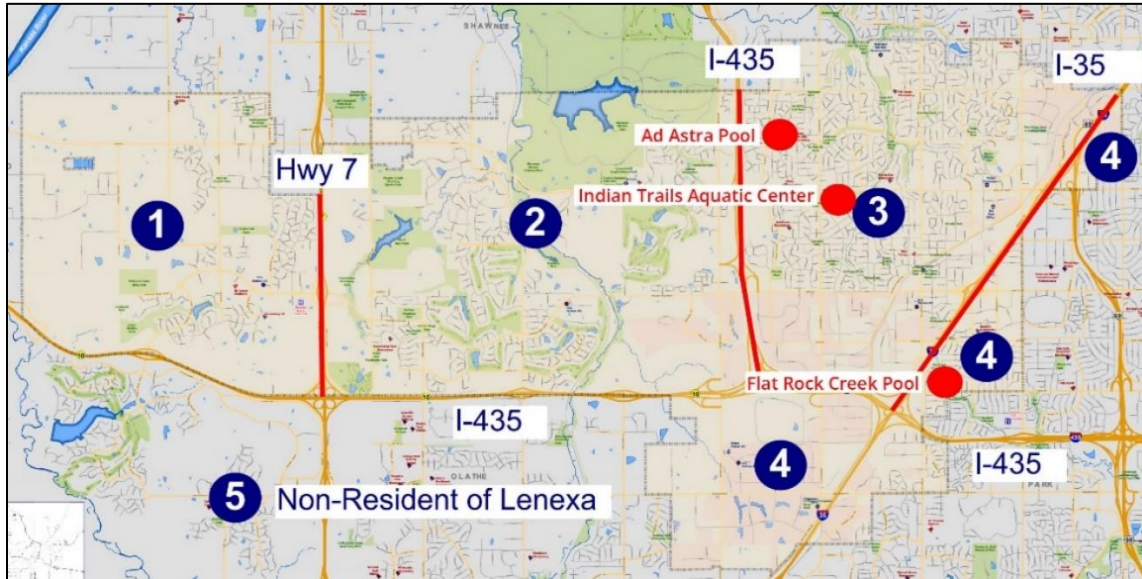
## Online Survey: Respondent Information

Overall respondent demographics indicate that households from across the city submitted feedback through the online survey.

In the online survey was a question regarding where the respondent lived geographically, referred to as a “Section”. It was anticipated that different Sections would have different needs and feedback, and a comparison was conducted between the Sections to find out more specific information about each one.

To see that comparison, an Online Survey Report with section comparisons can be found in Appendix F and a side-by-side Section Comparison in Appendix G. See the City Section Map for where each section is located.

City Section Map



This breakdown where respondents reported from is to be expected for several reasons.

- The section breakdown for respondents is similar to the overall population distribution across the city. An estimated 75% of the total population lives east of I-435 and therefore will have a naturally higher participation rate (Sections 3 and 4). An estimated 23% of the total population lives between K-7 and I-435 (Section 2) and an estimated 3% of the total population lives west of K-7 (Section 1).
- Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center are in Section 3.
- With the public conversations over the last several years about the pool study and possible options, it is anticipated that those who utilize and/or support the outdoor pools will have a higher rate of response compared to those who do not use or care about them. Additionally, with the public discussions about closing Ad Astra Pool, it is expected that there is higher or overrepresentation for feedback associated with that facility.

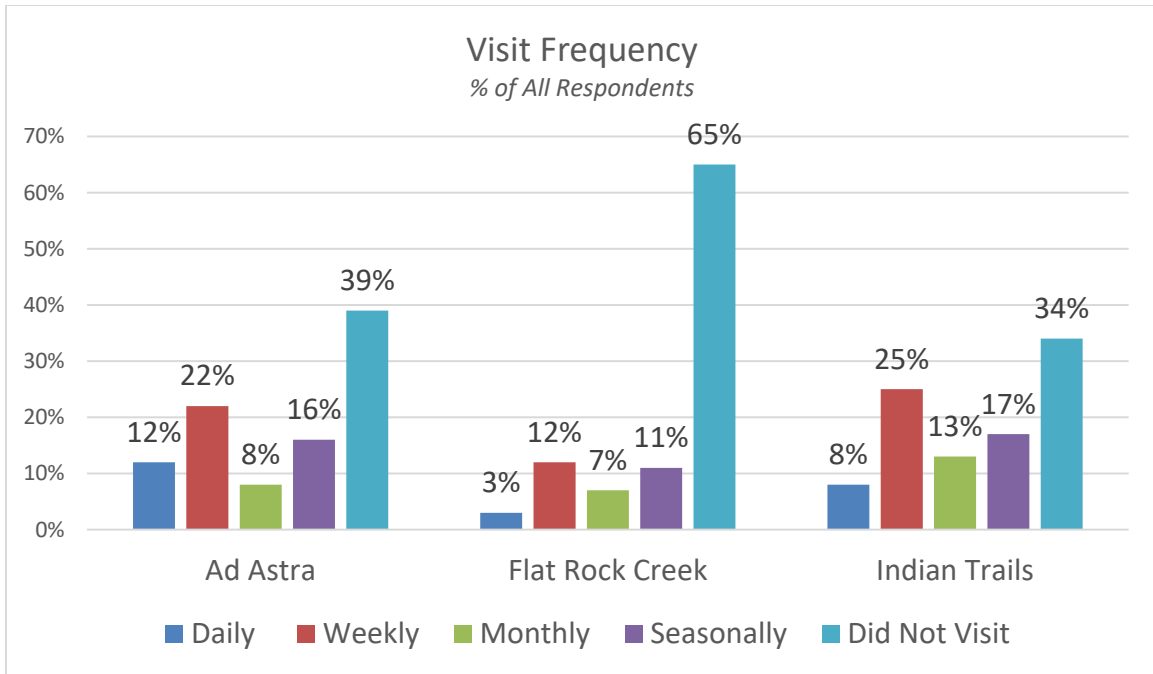
Respondent demographics show that:

- It is most common for households to have 2 or 4 people
- A large majority of respondents live in city limits
- Over half of respondents live in Section 3
- Just over 70% do not have access to an HOA pool (*Section 1 has the highest rate of access and section 4 has the lowest rate*). It is of note that access to an HOA pool is lower for those who completed the online survey than those who completed the statistically valid survey (57% do not have access). Possible reasons are because respondents on the online survey were more likely to be outdoor pool users and users of Lenexa pools, the locations of respondents and having less access due to location, and the correlation between pool users and pool users having less access to an HOA pool.

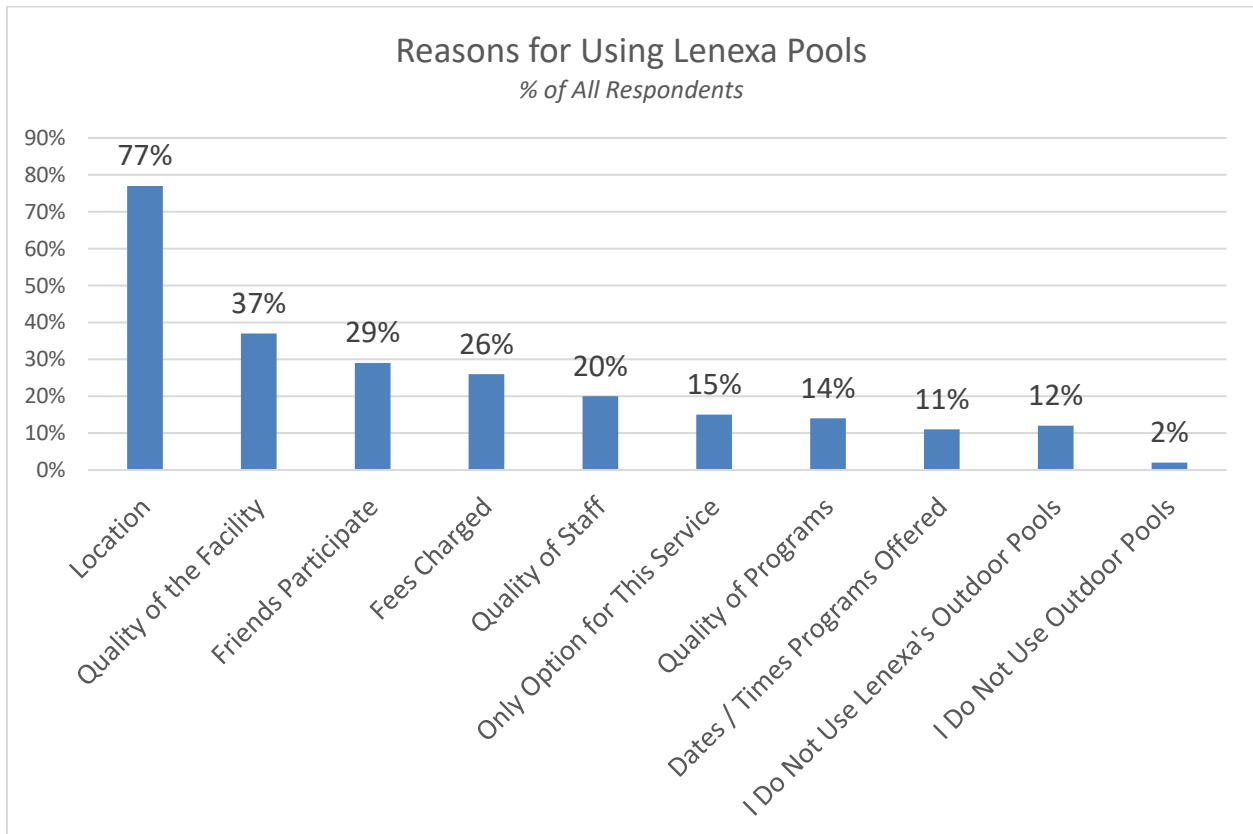
## Online Survey: History of Pool Usage

According to how frequently respondents reported visiting the outdoor pools from 2018 to 2020, Indian Trails Aquatic Center narrowly outranked Ad Astra Pool. When looking at the frequency rate of Daily and Weekly, Ad Astra Pool narrowly outranked Indian Trails Aquatic Center; however, a higher percentage of respondents reported not visiting Ad Astra Pool. Flat Rock Creek Pool was visited less frequently than the other two. This is in opposition to actual attendance at each of these pools, where Indian Trails Aquatic Center actually receives 54% of the total attendance (23,254 visits), Flat Rock Creek receives 25% (11,102), and Ad Astra Pool receives 21% (9,201). A comparison of actual use and survey findings can be found in the Public Engagement Summary on pages 16-17.

See the Visit Frequency graph for a detailed breakdown of frequency reporting.

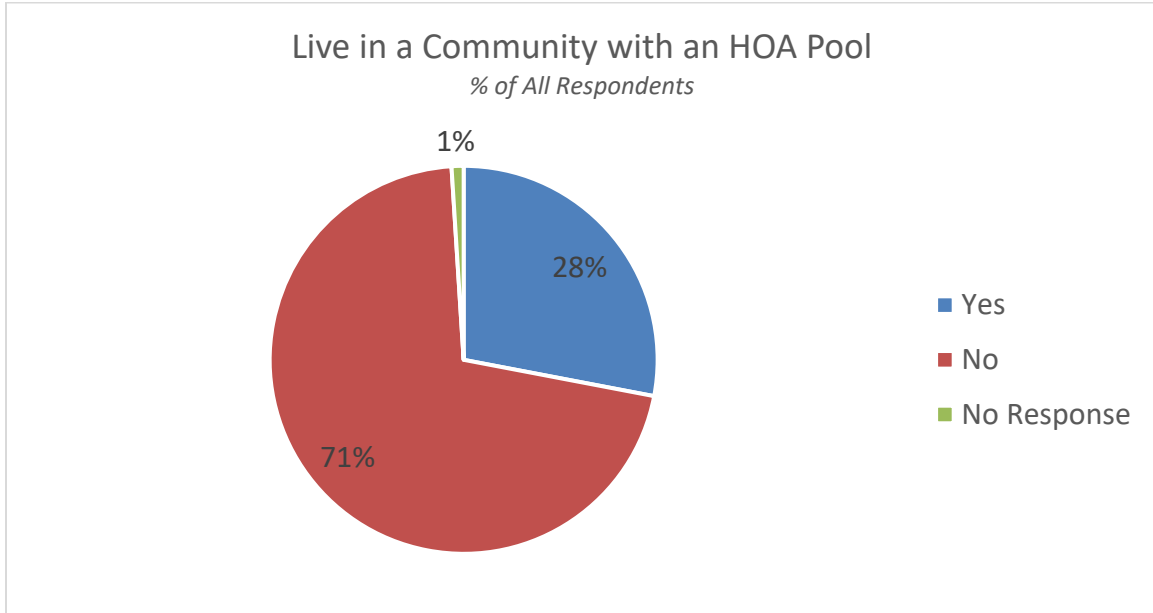


Location, quality of the facility, friends participate, and fees charged are the primary reasons respondents use Lenexa’s outdoor pools.



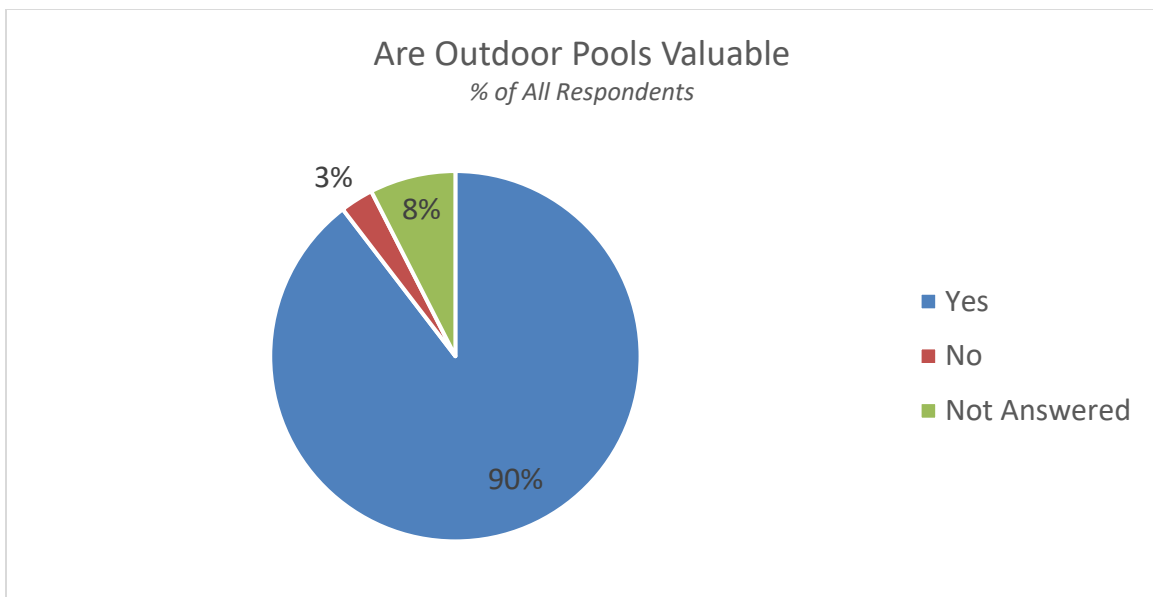
## Online Survey: Access to HOA Pools

A large majority of respondents of the online survey do not have access to an HOA pool.

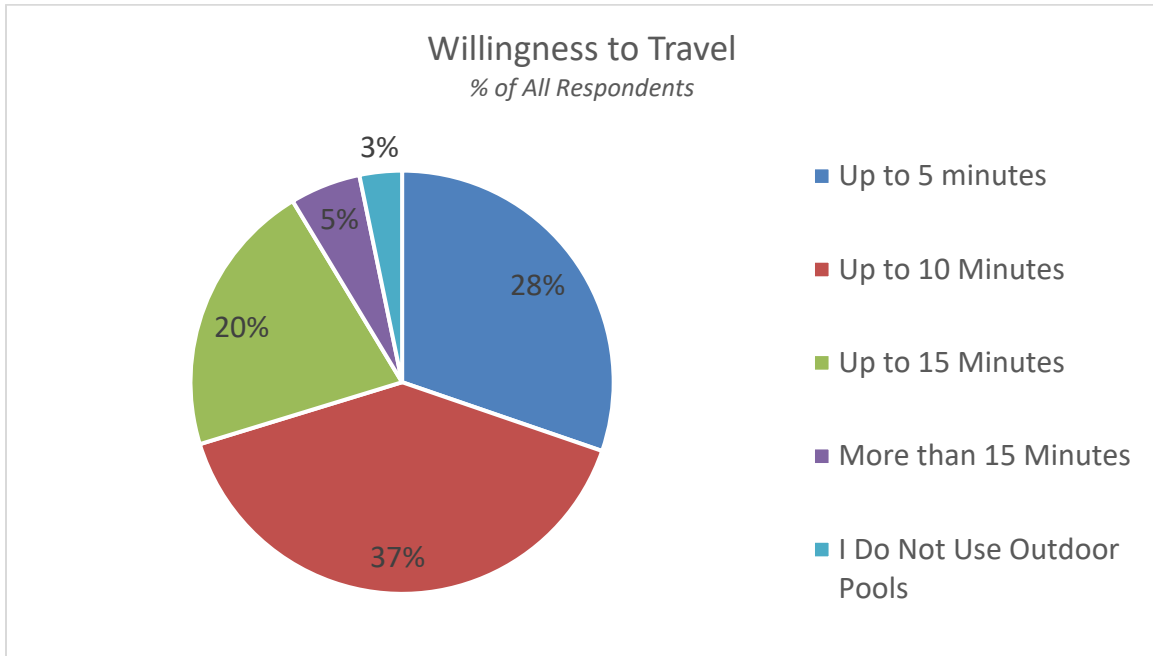


## Online Survey: Aquatics Priorities

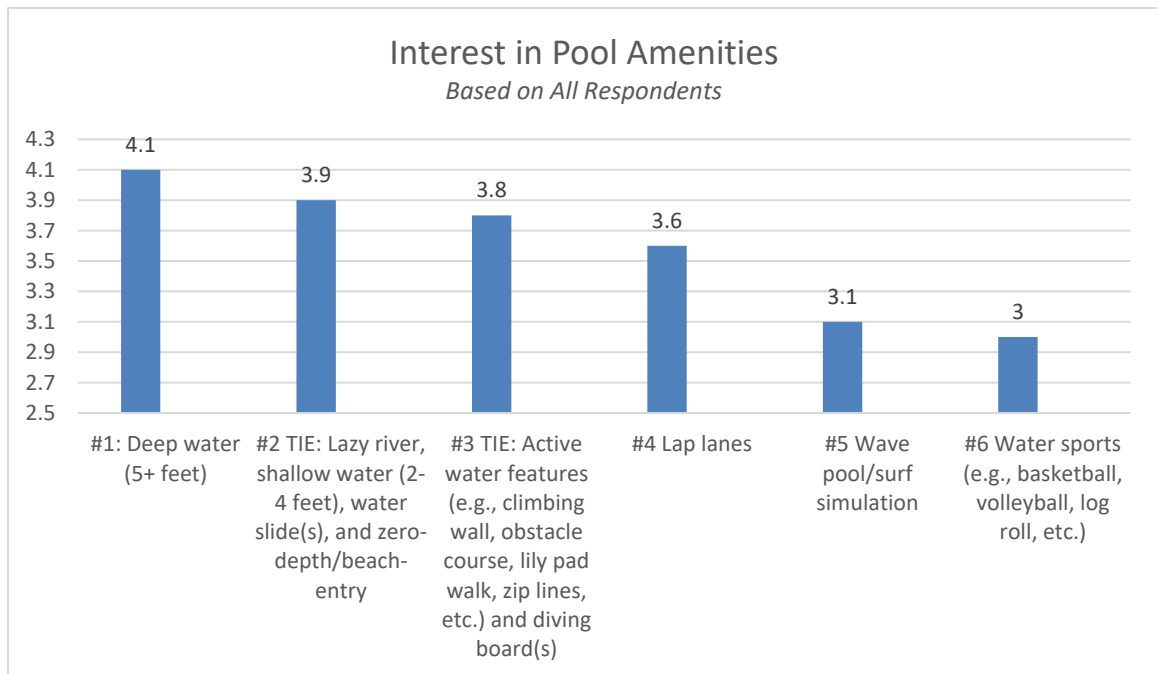
A large majority of respondents feel it is valuable to offer outdoor pools to the community.



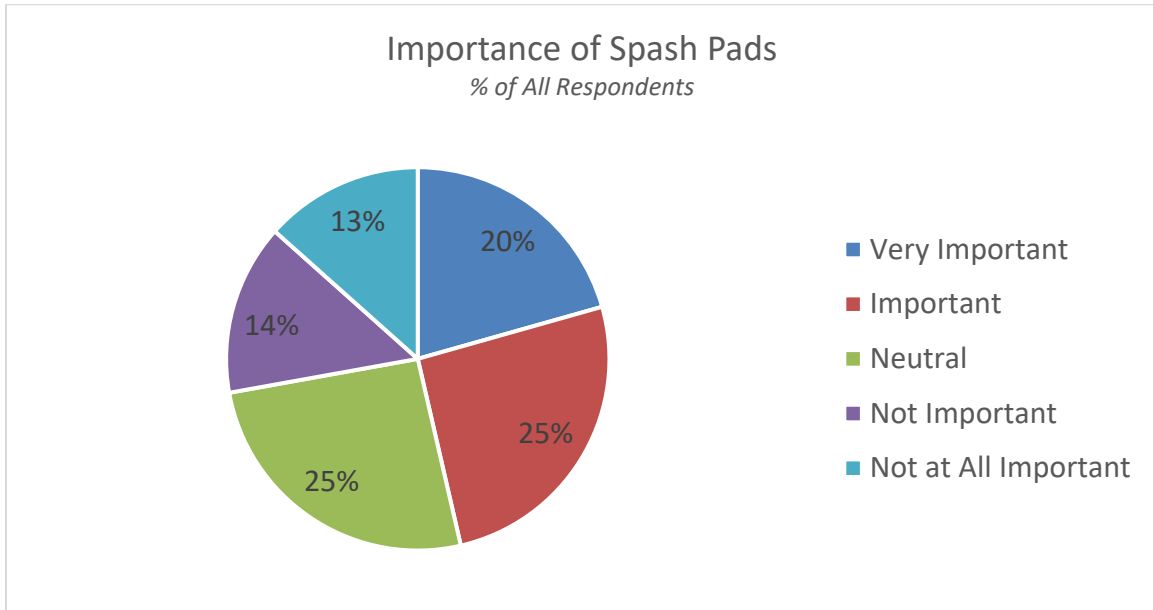
The highest percentage of respondents are willing to drive up to 10-minutes for a quality outdoor pool facility. This was consistent with the statistically valid survey results.



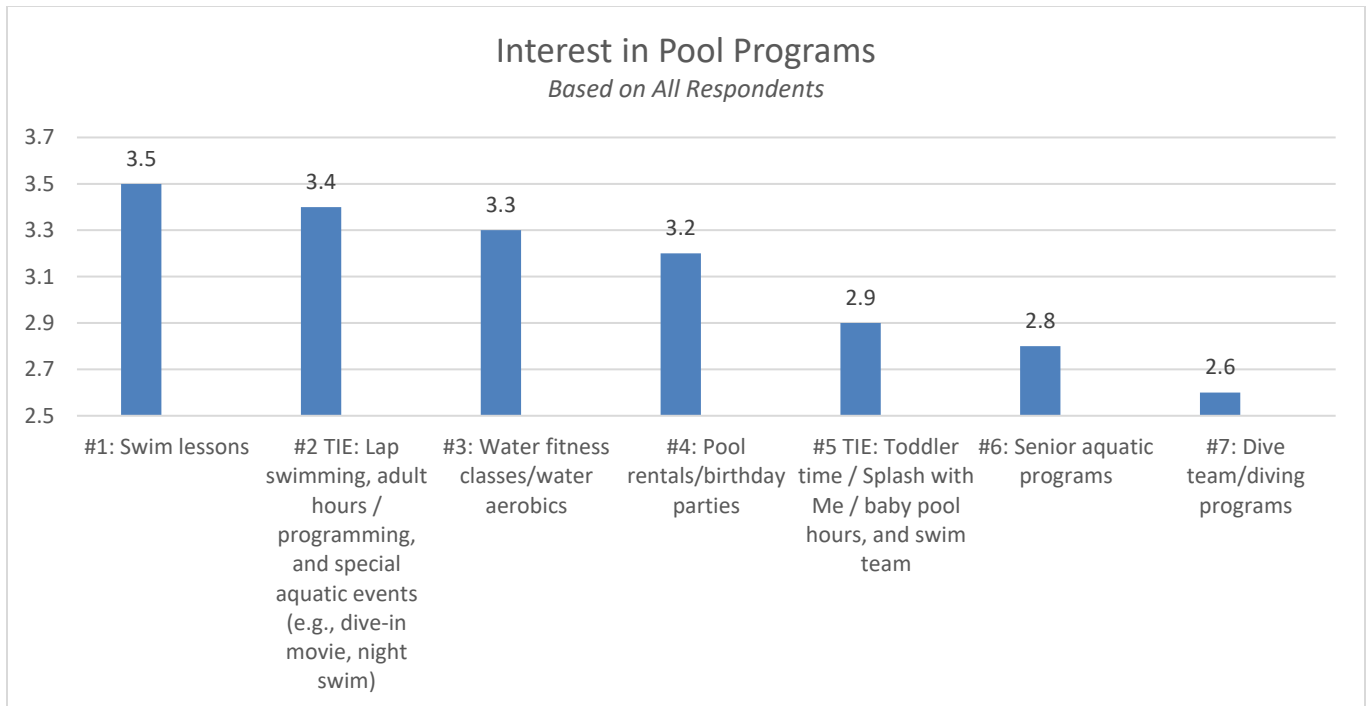
A variety of pool features and amenities were identified as being of interest by respondents, with deep water (5+ feet) as the highest ranked item. The features and amenities that have the most interest are show below based on a weighted score, the higher the score the higher the ranking.



45% of respondents reported that splash pads are very important or important to offer in Lenexa.



A variety of programs and activities were identified as being of interest by respondents, with swim lessons being the highest ranked program. The programs and activities that have the most interest are show below based on a weighted score, the higher the score the higher the ranking.





## Online Survey: Written Comment Themes

To understand the user perspective and how that will influence the success of aquatics in the future, written feedback submitted on the Online Survey has been broken down into themes. Written comments submitted on the Online Survey can be found in Appendix L.

### **General Support**

Overall, most comments showed support for aquatics in Lenexa. Although there are varying viewpoints on what should be done in the future, the sentiment is positive.

### **HOA Pools**

There were two primary viewpoints regarding HOA pools and how the city should offer public outdoor pools in relation to them. There is one perspective that those who do not have an HOA pool are in need of an outdoor city pool more than those who have access. Another perspective is that although HOA pools are offered to parts of the community, they are often basic and do not provide the size and features a city pool does.

### **Ad Astra Support**

There is support through the online survey and other public engagement methods to maintain a pool in the area where Ad Astra Pool is located. This support was also seen in focus group meetings and the open house. Ad Astra serves neighborhoods that do not have access to an HOA pool.

### **Indian Trails Support**

There is support for the continued operation of Indian Trails Aquatic Center. There were no comments submitted specifically stating that Indian Trails Aquatic Center should close or be converted to another use. There were comments submitted that Indian Trails is a good location due to being located within an established park and that Indian Trails could receive improvements. Additionally, this facility serves neighborhoods that do not have access to an HOA pool.

### **Consolidation**

There is split feedback on if the city should offer more or fewer outdoor pools, often specifically related to the closure of Ad Astra Pool. However, there is expressed support for offering fewer outdoor pools and/or modifying how they are offered. This divide was also seen in the statistically valid survey.

### **Modern and Upgraded Features**

There was conflicting feedback about what types of pools should be offered in Lenexa. On one end there is support that outdoor pools should be simpler and focus on offering water space to more people through more locations and on the other that outdoor pool(s) should offer more exciting and modern features. Regardless of the quantity of pools, there is interest in offering outdoor pools with upgraded features.

### **Splash Pads**

Splash pads are of some interest to the community, with variation on where they would be best located. There is expressed interest in Ad Astra Pool not being replaced with a splashpad and support in replacing Ad Astra Pool with a splashpad.

### **Lap Lanes**

Comments were submitted about the need for dedicated lap lanes. There were comments submitted regarding Ad Astra Pool specifically being desired because of the dedicated and available lap lanes, and that the other two pools did not offer the same dedicated lap lane space.

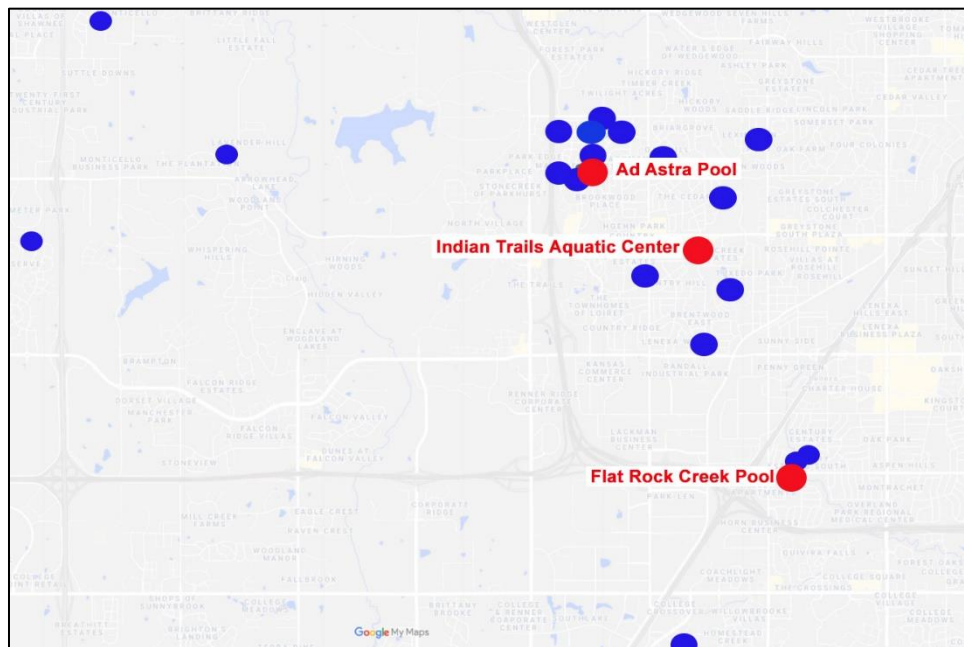
## Open House

There were originally four open house meetings scheduled for Phase II in the summer of 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic they were cancelled. An open house was held at the Lenexa Community Forum on March 18, 2021, from 5 – 7 p.m.

Open house key notes can be found in Appendix N.

26 visitors signed in, however some of those visitors also had guests; the total visitor count is estimated at 35-40. There were 19 individual households, primarily located between I-435 and I-35, with a cluster around Ad Astra Pool. See the Visitor House Location map for a breakdown of where visitors came from.

*Visitor House Location*



Materials and activities available at the open house included:

- Conditions of existing facilities: physical, cost recovery, use
- Current schedule, programs, etc.
- Feedback on existing facilities
- Amenity rankings
- Open dialogue
- Comment cards available (1 submitted back)
- Paper version of the online survey
- Online polls were available during the open house but were not utilized by participants

## Open House: Key Takeaways

Those who are familiar with Ad Astra Pool understand that there are significant challenges with the existing pool and pool site, and would be supportive of a new pool being constructed in a different location at Ad Astra Park. There is utilization at Indian Trail Aquatic Center, however access to Indian Trails is a concern due to the need to cross 87<sup>th</sup> Street.

There is a desire for upgraded amenities and features within Lenexa, however there is concern that a splash pad would not serve older children, teens, and adults.

Open house key notes can be found in Appendix N.

## Online Feedback Form

A page about the project was created on the City's website to inform the community about the study. It included updates on the Phase I study and shared information about the current state of aquatics in Lenexa.

The page shared ways to provide feedback (open house and online survey) and included an online feedback form.

*Lenexa.com – Project Website*



72 comments were submitted through the online feedback form between February 2019 and May 2021. These comments can be found in Appendix M.

## Online Feedback Form: Key Takeaways

There is varying support for Ad Astra Pool, including support for closing the facility and support for maintaining its operation. Lap swimming options at Ad Astra Pool are well received. If Ad Astra Park and/or Pool is improved, the neighborhood should be consulted when developing a plan for the site.

Indian Trails Aquatic Center is supported, however there are concerns over it being over-crowded due to parking constraints, lack of seating, and number of dare care participants.

## Committee and Board Meetings

At the time of this report, project status update meetings included:

- City Council Liaison Meeting/Steering Committee Meeting – 1/20/2020
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting – 2/12/2020
- Steering Committee Meeting – 3/4/2020
- Parks and Recreation Advisory Board Meeting – 4/14/2021
- Meet with Steering committee prior to the final report presented to City Council

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Recommendations

Recommendations developed for the future of aquatics should create a solution for the community as whole. Three important perspectives should be taken into account: public goals and needs, city goals and needs, and consultant experience/industry trends. By blending these perspectives together, a thoughtful, transparent, and well-informed solution can be developed.

### Primary Goals

- More modern outdoor aquatic facilities should be provided for the citizens of Lenexa.
- The overall water square footage of outdoor aquatics facilities should decrease by reducing the number of outdoor pools. Providing fewer facilities, that are larger and more operationally efficient compared to more neighborhood pools, would result in better sustainability and more efficient operations. This would still provide space and flexibility for the desired aquatics programs that serve the community and would provide overall better service through flexibility of use and attractiveness to a more diverse user group.
- Any future pool facility or facilities offered should serve the city as a whole, in a location that is easily accessible and supported by the community.

### Recommendation #1

The recommendation is to develop a modernized regional aquatic center with the right mix of amenities at Indian Trails Aquatic Center.

This approach would best serve the community and meet the needs as identified through public engagement and as seen in communities like Lenexa. Although the regional facility will not have the size, visibility, access, and operational performance that accompanies a central water park, it will provide a facility that can accommodate all the city's aquatic programs and result in a more efficient operational performance than the neighborhood approach. Constructing a more inclusive, regional facility would allow for more amenities to be constructed at a larger scale, making the facility more attractive for higher attendance and revenue. Neighboring facilities, such as Black Bob Bay in Olathe and Thomas A. Soetaert Aquatic Center in Shawnee, are examples of facilities that offer the character and features representative of what is being recommended for Lenexa.

Recommended features for an enhanced Indian Trails Aquatic Center include:

- Comfort and Support Amenities
  - Shade areas
  - Deck chairs and space for lounge seating/observation
  - Rentable areas



- Concessions
- Bathhouse with family changing areas and bathrooms
- Adequate parking
- Pool Features
  - Zero-depth/beach entry
  - Shallow water (3 – 4 feet) and deep water (5+ feet)
  - Lap lanes (with option to dedicate lap lanes without obstruction)
  - Lazy river
  - Sprays and toddler features/slide
  - Large water slide(s)
  - Diving board(s)
  - Active features

It will be important to accommodate all existing and future programs without major service interruptions of other groups or programs, which is feasible under this approach with the right amenities and features. There have been expressed interests, and concerns, about pool layout and how users can interact with the facility. Care should be taken so that if a body of water is shut down (e.g., swim meet, dive meet, team practice, fecal contamination, special program, etc.), that the remainder of the facility can continue to operate. It is also recommended that there be dedicated lap swimming made available as much as possible.

There is currently concern with over-crowding, particularly at Flat Rock Creek Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center. There should be layout and design considerations that help spread visitors apart and allow for more deck seating, which also supports social interactions and spending time with friends and family. Parking should be considered to ensure adequate stalls and accessibility.

## **Recommendation #2**

Reduce the overall size of Lenexa's outdoor aquatics facilities by reducing the total amount of water offered.

Reducing the overall amount of outdoor pool water offered in Lenexa's outdoor aquatics facilities will improve the ability to staff and operate the outdoor aquatics facilities and will result in improved financial operating conditions and efficiencies.

Ad Astra Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center are each very large facilities and are located in very close proximity. Both facilities serve the same general population geographically and they compete for use; neither facility experiences substantial attendance given their size and proximity. Closing one of these two pools will create better operational efficiencies. This will also allow for resources to be made available to increase recreational offerings in each location.

We recommend that this goal be accomplished by maintaining Flat Rock Creek Pool for the duration of its useful life, enhancing Indian Trails Aquatic Center to be a regional facility with updated and modern amenities, and closing Ad Astra Pool and repurposing the space into another recreational amenity.

Regarding the existing Ad Astra Pool, it is recommended to repurpose the site to maintain recreational use, preferably use that is multi-functional, multi-generational, and dynamic, with possible water elements incorporated. It would be of utmost importance to include neighborhood participation to gain consensus on the repurposing of the park.

Indian Trails Aquatic Center is the recommended location to receive enhancements due to several key reasons:

- The overall facility and site are in good condition.
- Offers existing infrastructure that is in good condition and provides significant cost benefits to utilize in lieu of full replacement.
- Centrally located in the city's most densely populated residential area.
- Currently receives over half of annual attendance.
- There is room on the site to expand.
- Has visibility from 87<sup>th</sup> Street and is surrounded by other recreational amenities in an established and pleasant park setting.
- Ranked the most important pool (along with the Lenexa Rec Center) and showed utilization during public engagement from across the city.
- Written feedback during public engagement was largely positive, with general support for Indian Trails Aquatic Center.

Ad Astra Pool was considered and studied as a possible location for a regional pool facility. Although there is support for Ad Astra Pool, particularly from directly adjacent neighborhoods, Ad Astra is not recommended as the facility to receive enhancements and upgrades. Several examples of why Ad Astra Pool is not recommended include:

- The entire facility is in poor overall condition and would require all new development, which would be more costly than Indian Trails Aquatic Center.
- The site where the pool currently sits would require additional study and possible remediation for subgrade conditions if structures were to be developed.
- There is minimal space to expand.
- Does not have visibility or direct access from a major street(s).
- Is located in a primarily residential neighborhood.

We recommend keeping Ad Astra Pool open and operating in the summer until a renovated Indian Trails Aquatic Center opens, assuming no catastrophic events take place. Flat Rock Creek Pool and Indian Trails Aquatic Center are in a

position to geographically serve the community and can accommodate the existing outdoor aquatics programs that would be transitioned from Ad Astra Pool.

When evaluating current use patterns, support, and priority levels, in combination with overall public goals, adding a new facility to the western part of the city is not recommended at this time. However, as the population changes and demand for water space increases in the future, it should be considered as a location for future development of an outdoor pool facility.

### **Recommendation #3**

As a part of a comprehensive approach to the city's aquatic needs, we recommend splash parks be included to provide additional and readily available water recreation amenities, especially for neighborhoods that would benefit most or are more remote and for those who do not or cannot visit swimming pools (e.g., proximity, fees, overall disinterest, etc.). We recommend that the following be considered:

- A splash park in the eastern portion of the city, which would provide access to the more densely populated portions of the city,
- A splash park in the western portion of the city, which would provide for those who are in more remote locations away from the regional facility and Flat Rock Creek Pool.

# Appendix