

[History of MPRB](#)[Mission & Vision](#)[Organizational Structure](#)[Commissioners](#)[Meeting Schedules](#)[Park Board Budget](#)[Code of Ordinances](#)[Comprehensive Plan](#)[Sustainability 2013](#)[News & Events](#)[Quick Facts](#)[MPRB FAQ](#)[Community Partners](#)[Commitment to Diversity](#)[Tobacco Use Policy](#)[Website Policy](#)[Contact Us](#)[Home](#) < [About MPRB](#)[Back to What's New Listing](#)

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Survey confirms broad public trust in the MPRB; citizens want governing independence maintained

Residents place high value on facilities, services

A landmark survey commissioned by the Minneapolis Parks Foundation illustrates just how important the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) is to its residents and its pivotal role in the city's quality of life. The survey report was presented at the June 17 meeting of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board of Commissioners.

There is an overwhelming public perception that the Minneapolis Park System is the "jewel in the crown" of the city and the current governance structure should be preserved, summed up Dr. Bill Morris, president of Decision Resources Ltd., which conducted the survey. "The results are the most positive we've seen in any polling we've done not only in Minnesota, but the nation. It's a sweeping mandate for maintaining an independent Park Board."

The survey conducted April 28 through May 15 queried Minneapolis residents on their general perceptions of the Park System. Notable results presented during Morris' presentation are:

- 99 percent see the parks and lakes as a unique and valuable asset for the city.
- 99 percent think the Park System plays an important role in serving the public by offering free or low-cost recreational facilities and activities.
- 96 percent favorably rate the quality, overall appearance and maintenance of the Minneapolis Park System.
- 96 percent think the parks and lakes play a key role in the physical health and wellness of city residents.
- 94 percent report existing parks and facilities meet the needs of households.
- 94 percent say the Minneapolis Park System contributes to the economy by increasing the value of properties near parks.
- A very high 48 percent report there is "nothing" they dislike about Minneapolis parks. In comparison, other "Least Liked" issues (such as too crowded, unsafe, lack of parking, high fees

and maintenance) were all six percent and below.

"The average score for resident perceptions was 97 percent and the consistency of such positive results, one after the other after the other, is what differentiates the Minneapolis parks from any other system across the state," Morris said.

A Public Mandate to Maintain Park Board Independence

"The strong public support of the Park Board and its reputation for excellence is not surprising," said Tom Nordyke, President of the Board of Commissioners. "In addition, there has been particular interest in the Park Board's independence due to the recent unsuccessful effort by several Minneapolis City Councilpersons to eliminate the Park Board and have parks overseen by the City Council."

The survey determined that 82 percent of the respondents decisively supported an independent Park Board compared to seven percent that opposed an independent Board. The report stated that the Park Board has established "not only a deep and broad reservoir of goodwill among Minneapolis residents, but also an optimism that this valuable asset will continue in the future to be governed well." Of the arguments presented to respondents for maintaining an independent Park Board four emerged as particularly persuasive:

- The Minneapolis Park Board is responsible for just the operation of the park system and not additional services. (90 percent)
- The Minneapolis City Council is responsible for many departments, such as police, fire, and street maintenance. Our parks are too important an asset to become just another department in city government. (81 percent)
- The Minneapolis Park Board holds land in the city in a public trust so it is preserved and not developed. (86 percent)
- If the City Council oversaw and operated the parks, they might sell parkland to raise revenue for the city in difficult economic times. (86 percent)

"The survey reinforces the perception that there's a huge public trust in the organization. They don't want the independence of the Park Board to be compromised because they don't want their park system compromised," said Cecily Hines, President of the Minneapolis Parks Foundation.

"We have accomplished amazing things during tough economic times and the survey confirms that," said Jon Gurban, MPRB Superintendent. "In addition to the great value the public places on our services and facilities, they sent a clear message about who should have responsibility for managing our city's most valuable asset. We are grateful for the faith the public has placed in us and are committed to maintain our park system so

it continues to enhance our city's quality of life."

"The Foundation commissioned the survey to gain a better understanding of usage patterns and preferences so that as the Foundation selects where to place its efforts and resources, it is well informed about community needs and desires," said Hines. "We also realized that given the current discussions about the independent management of our parks, a survey of this kind would be very useful and informative for the citizens of Minneapolis."

Decision Resources Ltd., Minnesota's foremost public affairs research firm, conducted the phone survey to 600 randomly selected adult residents across Minneapolis. Dr. Morris is widely considered one of Minnesota's leading analysts of public opinion and political trends. The results of the study are projectable to all residents on the City of Minneapolis within ± 4.1 percent in 95 out of 100 cases.

The Minneapolis Parks Foundation is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that advocates for, invests in and visions for the future of the Minneapolis park system.

Related File: [Executive Summary - Board Presentation](#)

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